



The Book Of Jeremiah

Served As God's Spokesman
For Judah

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Jeremiah

OVERVIEW:

WHAT is success? Most definitions include references to achieving goals and acquiring wealth, prestige, favor, and power. “Successful” people enjoy the good life—being financially and emotionally secure, being surrounded by admirers, and enjoying the fruits of their labors. They are leaders, opinion makers, and trendsetters. Their example is emulated; their accomplishments are noticed. They know who they are and where they are going, and they stride confidently to meet their goals.

By these standards, Jeremiah was a miserable failure. For 40 years he served as God’s spokesman to Judah; but when Jeremiah spoke, nobody listened. Consistently and passionately he urged them to act, but nobody moved. And he certainly did not attain material success. He was poor and underwent severe deprivation to deliver his prophecies. He was thrown into prison (Jeremiah 37) and into a cistern (Jeremiah 38), and he was taken to Egypt against his will (Jeremiah 43). He was rejected by his neighbor’s (Jeremiah 11:19-21), his family (Jeremiah 12:6), the false priests and prophets (Jeremiah 20:1-2; Jeremiah 28:1-17), friends (Jeremiah 20:10), his audience (Jeremiah 26:8), and the kings (Jeremiah 36:23). Throughout his life, Jeremiah stood alone, declaring God’s messages of doom, announcing the new covenant, and weeping over the fate of his beloved country. In the eyes of the world, Jeremiah was not a success.

But in God’s eyes, Jeremiah was one of the most successful people in all of history. Success, as measured by God, involves obedience and faithfulness. Regardless of opposition and personal cost, Jeremiah courageously and faithfully proclaimed the word of God. He was obedient to his calling. Jeremiah’s book begins with his call to be a prophet.

The next 38 chapters are prophecies about Israel (the nation united) and Judah (the southern kingdom). Jeremiah 2-20 are general and undated, and Jeremiah 21-39 are particular and dated. The basic theme of Jeremiah's message is simple: "Repent and turn to God, or he will punish." But then, because the people rejected this warning, Jeremiah moved to predicting specifically the destruction of Jerusalem.

This terrible event is described in Jeremiah 39. Jeremiah 40-45 describe events following Jerusalem's fall. The book concludes with prophecies concerning a variety of nations (Jeremiah 46-52).

As you read Jeremiah, feel with him as he agonizes over the message he must deliver, pray with him for those who refuse to respond to the truth, and watch his example of faith and courage. Then commit yourself to being successful in God's eyes.

THE BLUEPRINT

A. GOD'S JUDGMENT ON JUDAH (Jeremiah 1:1-45:5)

Jeremiah confronts many people with their sins: kings, false prophets, those at the temples, and those at the gates. A lack of response made Jeremiah wonder if he was doing any good at all. He often felt discouraged and sometimes bitter. To bring such gloomy messages to these people was a hard task. We too have a responsibility to bring this news to a fallen world: those who continue in their sinful ways are eternally doomed.

Although we may feel discouraged at the lack of response, we must press on to tell others about the consequences of sin and the hope that God offers. Those who tell people only what they want to hear are being unfaithful to God's message.

1. The call of Jeremiah
2. Jeremiah condemns Judah for her sins
3. Jeremiah prophesies destruction
4. Jeremiah accuses Judah's leaders
5. Restoration is promised
6. God's promised judgment arrives

Jeremiah 1:1-45:5

These are the words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, one of the priests from Anathoth, a town in the land of Benjamin. [2] The Lord first gave messages to Jeremiah during the thirteenth year of King Josiah's reign in Judah. [3] He continued to give messages throughout the reign of Josiah's son, King Jehoiakim, until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah's reign in Judah. In August of that year, the people of Jerusalem were taken away as captives.

[4] The Lord gave me a message. He said, [5] "I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my spokesman to the world."

[6] "O Sovereign Lord," I said, "I can't speak for you! I'm too young!"

[7] "Don't say that," the Lord replied, "for you must go wherever I send you and say whatever I tell you. [8] And don't be afraid of the people, for I will be with you and take care of you. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

[9] Then the Lord touched my mouth and said, "See, I have put my words in your mouth! [10] Today I appoint you to stand up against nations and kingdoms. You are to uproot some and tear them down, to destroy and overthrow them. You are to build others up and plant them."

[11] Then the Lord said to me, "Look, Jeremiah! What do you see?"

And I replied, "I see a branch from an almond tree."

[12] And the Lord said, "That's right, and it means that I am watching, and I will surely carry out my threats of punishment."

[13] Then the Lord spoke to me again and asked, "What do you see now?"

And I replied, "I see a pot of boiling water, tipping from the north."

[14] "Yes," the Lord said, "for terror from the north will boil out on the people of this land.

[15] Listen! I am calling the armies of the kingdoms of the north to come to Jerusalem. They will set their thrones at the gates of the city. They will attack its walls and all the other towns of Judah. [16] I will pronounce judgment on my people for all their evil—for deserting me and worshiping other gods. Yes, they worship idols that they themselves have made!"

[17] "Get up and get dressed. Go out, and tell them whatever I tell you to say. Do not be afraid of them, or I will make you look foolish in front of them. [18] For see, today I have made you immune to their attacks. You are strong like a fortified city that cannot be captured, like an iron pillar or a bronze wall. None of the kings, officials, priests, or people of Judah will be able to stand against you. [19] They will try, but they will fail. For I am with you, and I will take care of you. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

[2:1] The Lord gave me another message. He said, [2] "Go and shout in Jerusalem's streets: 'This is what the Lord says: I remember how eager you were to please me as a young bride long ago, how you loved me and followed me even through the barren wilderness. [3] In those days Israel was holy to the Lord, the first of my children. All who harmed my people were considered guilty, and disaster fell upon them. I, the Lord, have spoken!' "

[4] Listen to the word of the Lord, people of Jacob—all you families of Israel! [5] This is what the Lord says: "What sin did your ancestors find in me that led them to stray so far? They worshiped foolish idols, only to become foolish themselves. [6] They did not ask, 'Where is the Lord who brought us safely out of Egypt and led us through the barren wilderness—a land of deserts and pits, of drought and death, where no one lives or even travels?'

[7] "And when I brought you into a fruitful land to enjoy its bounty and goodness, you defiled my land and corrupted the inheritance I had promised you. [8] The priests did not ask, 'Where is the Lord?' The judges ignored me, the rulers turned against me, and the prophets spoke in the name of Baal, wasting their time on nonsense. [9] Therefore, I will bring my case against you and will keep on accusing you, even against your children's children in the years to come. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

[10] "Go west to the land of Cyprus; go east to the land of Kedar. Think about what you see there. See if anyone has ever heard of anything as strange as this. [11] Has any nation ever exchanged its gods for another god, even though its gods are nothing? Yet my people have exchanged their glorious God for worthless idols! [12] The heavens are shocked at such a thing and shrink back in horror and dismay, says the Lord.

[13] For my people have done two evil things: They have forsaken me—the fountain of living water. And they have dug for themselves cracked cisterns that can hold no water at all!

[14] "Why has Israel become a nation of slaves? Why has she been carried away as plunder? [15] Lions have roared against her. The land has been destroyed, and the cities are now in ruins. No one lives in them anymore. [16] Egyptians, marching from their cities of Memphis and Tahpanhes, have utterly destroyed Israel's glory and power. [17] And you have brought this on yourselves by rebelling against the Lord your God when he wanted to lead you and show you the way!

[18] "What have you gained by your alliances with Egypt and Assyria? What good to you are the waters of the Nile and the Euphrates? [19] Your own wickedness will punish you. You will see what an evil, bitter thing it is to forsake the Lord your God, having no fear of him. I, the Lord, the Lord Almighty, have spoken! [20] Long ago I broke your yoke and tore away the chains of your slavery, but still you would not obey me. On every hill and under every green tree, you have prostituted yourselves by bowing down to idols.

[21] "How could this happen? When I planted you, I chose a vine of the purest stock—the very best. How did you grow into this corrupt wild vine? [22] No amount of soap or lye can make you clean. You are stained with guilt that cannot be washed away. I, the Sovereign Lord, have spoken!

[23] "You say, 'That's not true! We haven't worshiped the images of Baal!' But how can you say that? Go and look in any valley in the land! Face the awful sins you have done. You are like a restless female camel, desperate for a male! [24] You are like a wild donkey, sniffing the wind at mating time. Who can restrain your lust? Those who desire you do not even need to search, for you come running to them! [25] Why do you refuse to turn from all this running after other gods? But you say, 'Don't waste your breath. I have fallen in love with these foreign gods, and I can't stop loving them now!'

[26] "Like a thief, Israel feels shame only when she gets caught. Kings, officials, priests, and prophets—all are alike in this. [27] To an image carved from a piece of wood they say, 'You are my father.' To an idol chiseled out of stone they say, 'You are my mother.' They turn their backs on me, but in times of trouble they cry out for me to save them! [28] Why don't you call on these gods you have made? When danger comes, let them save you if they can! For you have as many gods as there are cities and towns in Judah. [29] Why do you accuse me of doing wrong? You are the ones who have rebelled, says the Lord. [30] I have punished your children, but it did them no good. They still refuse to obey. You yourselves have killed your prophets as a lion kills its prey.

[31] "O my people, listen to the words of the Lord! Have I been like a desert to Israel? Have I been to them a land of darkness? Why then do my people say, 'At last we are free from God! We won't have anything to do with him anymore!' [32] Does a young woman forget her jewelry? Does a bride hide her wedding dress? No! Yet for years on end my people have forgotten me.

[33] "How you plot and scheme to win your lovers. The most experienced prostitute could learn from you! [34] Your clothing is stained with the blood of the innocent and the poor. You killed them even though they didn't break into your houses!"

[35] And yet you say, 'I haven't done anything wrong. Surely he isn't angry with me!' Now I will punish you severely because you claim you have not sinned.

[36] "First here, then there—you flit from one ally to another asking for help. But your new friends in Egypt will let you down, just as Assyria did before. [37] In despair, you will be led into exile with your hands on your heads, for the Lord has rejected the nations you trust. You will not succeed despite their help.

[3:1] "If a man divorces a woman and she marries someone else, he is not to take her back again, for that would surely corrupt the land. But you have prostituted yourself with many lovers, says the Lord. Yet I am still calling you to come back to me.

[2] "Look all around you. Is there anywhere in the entire land where you have not been defiled by your adulteries? You sit like a prostitute beside the road waiting for a client. You sit alone like a nomad in the desert. You have polluted the land with your prostitution and wickedness. [3] That is why even the spring rains have failed. For you are a prostitute and are completely unashamed. [4] Yet you say to me, 'Father, you have been my guide since the days of my youth. [5] Surely you won't be angry about such a little thing! Surely you can forget it!' So you talk, and keep right on doing all the evil you can."

[6] During the reign of King Josiah, the Lord said to me, "Have you seen what fickle Israel does? Like a wife who commits adultery, Israel has worshiped other gods on every hill and under every green tree. [7] I thought that after she had done all this she would return to me. But she did not come back. And though her faithless sister Judah saw this, [8] she paid no attention. She saw that I had divorced faithless Israel and sent her away. But now Judah, too, has left me and given herself to prostitution. [9] Israel treated it all so lightly—she thought nothing of committing adultery by worshiping idols made of wood and stone. So now the land has been greatly defiled. [10] But in spite of all this, her faithless sister Judah has never sincerely returned to me. She has only pretended to be sorry," says the Lord.

[11] Then the Lord said to me, "Even faithless Israel is less guilty than treacherous Judah! [12] Therefore, go and say these words to Israel, 'This is what the Lord says: O Israel, my faithless people, come home to me again, for I am merciful. I will not be angry with you forever. [13] Only acknowledge your guilt. Admit that you rebelled against the Lord your God and committed adultery against him by worshiping idols under every green tree. Confess that you refused to follow me. I, the Lord, have spoken!'"

[14] "Return home, you wayward children," says the Lord, "for I am your husband. I will bring you again to the land of Israel—one from here and two from there, from wherever you are scattered. [15] And I will give you leaders after my own heart, who will guide you with knowledge and understanding.

[16] "And when your land is once more filled with people," says the Lord, "you will no longer wish for 'the good old days' when you possessed the Ark of the Lord's covenant. Those days will not be missed or even thought about, and there will be no need to rebuild the Ark.

[17] In that day Jerusalem will be known as The Throne of the Lord. All nations will come there to honor the Lord. They will no longer stubbornly follow their own evil desires. [18] In those days the people of Judah and Israel will return together from exile in the north. They will return to the land I gave their ancestors as an inheritance forever.

[19] "I thought to myself, 'I would love to treat you as my own children!' I wanted nothing more than to give you this beautiful land—the finest inheritance in the world. I looked forward to your calling me 'Father,' and I thought you would never turn away from me again. [20] But you have betrayed me, you people of Israel! You have been like a faithless wife who leaves her husband," says the Lord.

[21] Voices are heard high on the windswept mountains, the weeping and pleading of Israel's people. For they have forgotten the Lord their God and wandered far from his ways.

[22] "My wayward children," says the Lord, "come back to me, and I will heal your wayward hearts."

"Yes, we will come," the people reply, "for you are the Lord our God. [23] Our worship of idols and our religious orgies on the hills and mountains are completely false. Only in the Lord our God will Israel ever find salvation. [24] From childhood we have watched as everything our ancestors worked for—their flocks and herds, their sons and daughters—was squandered on a delusion. [25] Let us now lie down in shame and dishonor, for we and our ancestors have always sinned against the Lord our God. We have never obeyed him."

[4:1] "O Israel, come back to me," says the Lord. "If you will throw away your detestable idols and go astray no more, [2] and if you will swear by my name alone, and begin to live good, honest lives and uphold justice, then you will be a blessing to the nations of the world, and all people will come and praise my name."

[3] This is what the Lord says to the people of Judah and Jerusalem: "Plow up the hard ground of your hearts! Do not waste your good seed among thorns. [4] Cleanse your minds and hearts before the Lord, or my anger will burn like an unquenchable fire because of all your sins.

[5] "Shout to Jerusalem and to all Judah! Tell them to sound the alarm throughout the land: 'Run for your lives! Flee to the fortified cities!' [6] Send a signal toward Jerusalem: 'Flee now! Do not delay!' For I am bringing terrible destruction upon you from the north."

[7] A lion stalks from its den, a destroyer of nations. And it is headed for your land! Your towns will lie in ruins, empty of people. [8] So put on clothes of mourning and weep with broken hearts, for the fierce anger of the Lord is still upon us.

[9] "In that day," says the Lord, "the king and the officials will tremble in fear. The priests and the prophets will be struck with horror."

[10] Then I said, "O Sovereign Lord, the people have been deceived by what you said, for you promised peace for Jerusalem. Yet the sword is even now poised to strike them dead!"

[11] The time is coming when the Lord will say to the people of Jerusalem, "A burning wind is blowing in from the desert. It is not a gentle breeze useful for winnowing grain. [12] It is a roaring blast sent by me! Now I will pronounce your destruction!"

[13] Our enemy rushes down on us like a storm wind! His chariots are like whirlwinds; his horses are swifter than eagles. How terrible it will be! Our destruction is sure! [14] O Jerusalem, cleanse your hearts that you may be saved. How long will you harbor your evil thoughts? [15] From Dan and the hill country of Ephraim, your destruction has been announced.

[16] "Warn the surrounding nations and announce to Jerusalem: 'The enemy is coming from a distant land, raising a battle cry against the towns of Judah. [17] They surround Jerusalem like watchmen surrounding a field, for my people have rebelled against me,' "says the Lord. [18] "Your own actions have brought this upon you. This punishment is a bitter dose of your own medicine. It has pierced you to the heart!"

[19] My heart, my heart—I writhe in pain! My heart pounds within me! I cannot be still. For I have heard the blast of enemy trumpets and the roar of their battle cries. [20] Waves of destruction roll over the land, until it lies in complete desolation. Suddenly, every tent is destroyed; in a moment, every shelter is crushed. [21] How long must this go on? How long must I be surrounded by war and death?

[22] "My people are foolish and do not know me," says the Lord. "They are senseless children who have no understanding. They are clever enough at doing wrong, but they have no talent at all for doing right!"

[23] I looked at the earth, and it was empty and formless. I looked at the heavens, and there was no light. [24] I looked at the mountains and hills, and they trembled and shook. [25] I looked, and all the people were gone. All the birds of the sky had flown away. [26] I looked, and the fertile fields had become a wilderness. The cities lay in ruins, crushed by the Lord's fierce anger.

[27] This is what the Lord says: "The whole land will be ruined, but I will not destroy it completely. [28] The earth will mourn, the heavens will be draped in black, because of my decree against my people. I have made up my mind and will not change it."

[29] At the noise of marching armies, the people flee in terror from the cities. They hide in the bushes and run for the mountains. All the cities have been abandoned—not a person remains! [30] What are you doing, you who have been plundered? Why do you dress up in your most beautiful clothing and jewelry? Why do you brighten your eyes with mascara? It will do you no good! Your allies despise you and will kill you.

[31] I hear a great cry, like that of a woman giving birth to her first child. It is the cry of Jerusalem's people gasping for breath, pleading for help, prostrate before their murderers.

[5:1] "Run up and down every street in Jerusalem," says the Lord. "Look high and low; search throughout the city! If you can find even one person who is just and honest, I will not destroy the city. [2] Even when they are under oath, saying, 'As surely as the Lord lives,' they all tell lies!"

[3] Lord, you are searching for honesty. You struck your people, but they paid no attention. You crushed them, but they refused to turn from sin. They are determined, with faces set like stone; they have refused to repent.

[4] Then I said, "But what can we expect from the poor and ignorant? They don't know the ways of the Lord. They don't understand what God expects of them. [5] I will go and speak to their leaders. Surely they will know the Lord's ways and what God requires of them." But the leaders, too, had utterly rejected their God. [6] So now a lion from the forest will attack them; a wolf from the desert will pounce on them. A leopard will lurk near their towns, tearing apart any who dare to venture out. For their rebellion is great, and their sins are many.

[7] "How can I pardon you? For even your children have turned from me. They have sworn by gods that are not gods at all! I fed my people until they were fully satisfied. But they thanked me by committing adultery and lining up at the city's brothels. [8] They are well-fed, lusty stallions, each neighing for his neighbor's wife. [9] Should I not punish them for this?" asks the Lord. "Should I not avenge myself against a nation such as this?

[10] "Go down the rows of the vineyards and destroy them, but leave a scattered few alive. Strip the branches from the vine, for they do not belong to the Lord. [11] The people of Israel and Judah are full of treachery against me," says the Lord. [12] "They have lied about the Lord and have said, 'He won't bother us! No disasters will come upon us! There will be no war or famine! [13] God's prophets are windbags full of words with no divine authority. Their predictions of disaster will fall on themselves!' "

[14] Therefore, this is what the Lord God Almighty says: "Because the people are talking like this, I will give you messages that will burn them up as if they were kindling wood. [15] O Israel, I will bring a distant nation against you," says the Lord. "It is a mighty nation, an ancient nation, a people whose language you do not know, whose speech you cannot understand. [16] Their weapons are deadly; their warriors are mighty. [17] They will eat your harvests and your children's bread, your flocks of sheep and your herds of cattle. Yes, they will eat your grapes and figs. And they will destroy your fortified cities, which you think are so safe.

[18] "Yet even in those days I will not blot you out completely," says the Lord. [19] "And when your people ask, 'Why is the Lord our God doing this to us?' you must reply, 'You rejected him and gave yourselves to foreign gods in your own land. Now you will serve foreigners in a land that is not your own.'

[20] "Make this announcement to Israel and to Judah: [21] Listen, you foolish and senseless people—who have eyes but do not see, who have ears but do not hear. [22] Do you have no respect for me? Why do you not tremble in my presence? I, the Lord, am the one who defines the ocean's sandy shoreline, an everlasting boundary that the waters cannot cross. The waves may toss and roar, but they can never pass the bounds I set.

[23] "But my people have stubborn and rebellious hearts. They have turned against me and have chosen to practice idolatry. [24] They do not say from the heart, 'Let us live in awe of the Lord our God, for he gives us rain each spring and fall, assuring us of plentiful harvests.' [25] Your wickedness has deprived you of these wonderful blessings. Your sin has robbed you of all these good things.

[26] "Among my people are wicked men who lie in wait for victims like a hunter hiding in a blind. They are continually setting traps for other people. [27] Like a cage filled with birds, their homes are filled with evil plots. And the result? Now they are great and rich. [28] They are well fed and well groomed, and there is no limit to their wicked deeds. They refuse justice to orphans and deny the rights of the poor. [29] Should I not punish them for this?" asks the Lord. "Should I not avenge myself against a nation such as this?

[30] "A horrible and shocking thing has happened in this land— [31] the prophets give false prophecies, and the priests rule with an iron hand. And worse yet, my people like it that way! But what will you do when the end comes?

[6:1] "Run for your lives, you people of Benjamin! Flee from Jerusalem! Sound the alarm in Tekoa! Send up a signal at Beth-hakkerem! Warn everyone that a powerful army is coming from the north to destroy this nation. [2] O Jerusalem, you are my beautiful and delicate daughter—but I will destroy you! [3] Enemy shepherds will surround you. They will set up camp around the city and divide your pastures for their flocks. [4] They shout, 'Prepare for battle and attack at noon! But now the day is fading, and the evening shadows are falling. [5] So let us attack by night and destroy her palaces!' "

[6] This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Cut down the trees for battering rams. Build ramps against the walls of Jerusalem. This is the city to be punished, for she is wicked through and through. [7] She spouts evil like a fountain! Her streets echo with the sounds of violence and destruction. Her sickness and sores are ever before me. [8] This is your last warning, Jerusalem! If you do not listen, I will empty the land."

[9] This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Disaster will fall upon you. Even the few who remain in Israel will be gleaned again, as when a harvester checks each vine a second time to pick the grapes that were missed."

[10] To whom can I give warning? Who will listen when I speak? Their ears are closed, and they cannot hear. They scorn the word of the Lord. They don't want to listen at all. [11] So now I am filled with the Lord's fury. Yes, I am weary of holding it in!

"I will pour out my fury over Jerusalem, even on children playing in the streets, on gatherings of young men, and on husbands and wives and grandparents. [12] Their homes will be turned over to their enemies, and so will their fields and their wives. For I will punish the people of this land," says the Lord.

[13] "From the least to the greatest, they trick others to get what does not belong to them. Yes, even my prophets and priests are like that! [14] They offer superficial treatments for my people's mortal wound. They give assurances of peace when all is war. [15] Are they ashamed when they do these disgusting things? No, not at all—they don't even blush! Therefore, they will lie among the slaughtered. They will be humbled beneath my punishing anger," says the Lord.

[16] So now the Lord says, "Stop right where you are! Look for the old, godly way, and walk in it. Travel its path, and you will find rest for your souls. But you reply, 'No, that's not the road we want!' [17] I set watchmen over you who said, 'Listen for the sound of the trumpet!' But you replied, 'No! We won't pay attention!'

[18] "Therefore, listen to this, all you nations. Take note of my people's condition. [19] Listen, all the earth! I will bring disaster upon my people. It is the fruit of their own sin because they refuse to listen to me. They have rejected all my instructions. [20] There is no use now in offering me sweet incense from Sheba. Keep your expensive perfumes! I cannot accept your burnt offerings. Your sacrifices have no sweet fragrance for me."

[21] Therefore, this is what the Lord says: "I will put obstacles in my people's path. Fathers and sons will both fall over them. Neighbors and friends will collapse together."

[22] This is what the Lord says: "See a great army marching from the north! A great nation is rising against you from far-off lands. [23] They are fully armed for slaughter. They are cruel and show no mercy. As they ride forward, the noise of their army is like a roaring sea. They are marching in battle formation to destroy you, Jerusalem."

[24] We have heard reports about the enemy, and we are weak with fright. Fear and pain have gripped us, like that of a woman about to give birth. [25] Don't go out to the fields! Don't travel the roads! The enemy is everywhere, and they are ready to kill. We are terrorized at every turn! [26] Now my people, dress yourselves in sackcloth, and sit among the ashes. Mourn and weep bitterly, as for the loss of an only son. For suddenly, the destroying armies will be upon you!

[27] "Jeremiah, I have made you a tester of metals, that you may determine the quality of my people. [28] Are they not the worst of rebels, full of slander? They are as insolent as bronze, as hard and cruel as iron. All of them lead others into corruption. [29] The bellows blow fiercely. The refining fire grows hotter. But it will never purify and cleanse them because there is no purity in them to refine. [30] I will label them 'Rejected Silver' because I, the Lord, am discarding them."

[7:1] The Lord gave another message to Jeremiah. He said, [2] "Go to the entrance of the Lord's Temple, and give this message to the people: 'O Judah, listen to this message from the Lord! Listen to it, all of you who worship here! [3] The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Even now, if you quit your evil ways, I will let you stay in your own land. [4] But do not be fooled by those who repeatedly promise your safety because the Temple of the Lord is here. [5] I will be merciful only if you stop your wicked thoughts and deeds and are fair to others; [6] and if you stop exploiting foreigners, orphans, and widows; and if you stop your murdering; and if you stop worshiping idols as you now do to your own harm. [7] Then I will let you stay in this land that I gave to your ancestors to keep forever.'

[8] " 'Do you think that because the Temple is here you will never suffer? Don't fool yourselves! [9] Do you really think you can steal, murder, commit adultery, lie, and worship Baal and all those other new gods of yours, [10] and then come here and stand before me in my Temple and chant, "We are safe!"—only to go right back to all those evils again?

[11] Do you think this Temple, which honors my name, is a den of thieves? I see all the evil going on there, says the Lord.

[12] "Go to the place at Shiloh where I once put the Tabernacle to honor my name. See what I did there because of all the wickedness of my people, the Israelites. [13] While you were doing these wicked things, says the Lord, I spoke to you about it repeatedly, but you would not listen. I called out to you, but you refused to answer. [14] So just as I destroyed Shiloh, I will now destroy this Temple that was built to honor my name, this Temple that you trust for help, this place that I gave to you and your ancestors. [15] And I will send you into exile, just as I did your relatives, the people of Israel.'

[16] "Pray no more for these people, Jeremiah. Do not weep or pray for them, and don't beg me to help them, for I will not listen to you. [17] Do you not see what they are doing throughout the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? [18] No wonder I am so angry! Watch how the children gather wood and the fathers build sacrificial fires. See how the women knead dough and make cakes to offer to the Queen of Heaven. And they give drink offerings to their other idol gods! [19] Am I the one they are hurting?" asks the Lord. "Most of all, they hurt themselves, to their own shame."

[20] So the Sovereign Lord says: "I will pour out my terrible fury on this place. Its people, animals, trees, and crops will be consumed by the unquenchable fire of my anger."

[21] This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Away with your burnt offerings and sacrifices! Eat them yourselves! [22] When I led your ancestors out of Egypt, it was not burnt offerings and sacrifices I wanted from them. [23] This is what I told them: 'Obey me, and I will be your God, and you will be my people. Only do as I say, and all will be well!'

[24] "But my people would not listen to me. They kept on doing whatever they wanted, following the stubborn desires of their evil hearts. They went backward instead of forward. [25] From the day your ancestors left Egypt until now, I have continued to send my prophets—day in and day out. [26] But my people have not listened to me or even tried to hear. They have been stubborn and sinful—even worse than their ancestors.

[27] "Tell them all this, but do not expect them to listen. Shout out your warnings, but do not expect them to respond. [28] Say to them, 'This is the nation whose people will not obey the Lord their God and who refuse to be taught. Truth has vanished from among them; it is no longer heard on their lips. [29] O Jerusalem, shave your head in mourning, and weep alone on the mountains. For the Lord has rejected and forsaken this generation that has provoked his fury.'

[30] "The people of Judah have sinned before my very eyes," says the Lord. "They have set up their abominable idols right in my own Temple, defiling it. [31] They have built the pagan shrines of Topheth in the valley of the son of Hinnom, where they sacrifice their little sons and daughters in the fire. I have never commanded such a horrible deed; it never even crossed my mind to command such a thing! [32] So beware, for the time is coming," says the Lord, "when that place will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter. They will bury so many bodies in Topheth that there won't be room for all the graves. [33] The corpses of my people will be food for the vultures and wild animals, and no one will be left to scare them away.

[34] I will put an end to the happy singing and laughter in the streets of Jerusalem. The joyful voices of bridegrooms and brides will no longer be heard in the towns of Judah. The land will lie in complete desolation.

[8:1] "In that day," says the Lord, "the enemy will break open the graves of the kings and officials of Judah, and the graves of the priests, prophets, and common people. [2] They will dig out their bones and spread them out on the ground before the sun, moon, and stars—the gods my people have loved, served, and worshiped. Their bones will not be gathered up again or buried but will be scattered on the ground like dung. [3] And the people of this evil nation who survive will wish to die rather than live where I will send them. I, the Lord Almighty, have spoken!

[4] "Jeremiah, say to the people, 'This is what the Lord says: When people fall down, don't they get up again? When they start down the wrong road and discover their mistake, don't they turn back? [5] Then why do these people keep going along their self-destructive path, refusing to turn back, even though I have warned them? [6] I listen to their conversations, and what do I hear? Is anyone sorry for sin? Does anyone say, "What a terrible thing I have done"? No! All are running down the path of sin as swiftly as a horse rushing into battle! [7] The stork knows the time of her migration, as do the turtledove, the swallow, and the crane. They all return at the proper time each year. But not my people! They do not know what the Lord requires of them.

[8] " 'How can you say, "We are wise because we have the law of the Lord," when your teachers have twisted it so badly? [9] These wise teachers will be shamed by exile for their sin, for they have rejected the word of the Lord. Are they so wise after all?

[10] I will give their wives and their farms to others. From the least to the greatest, they trick others to get what does not belong to them. Yes, even my prophets and priests are like that. [11] They offer superficial treatments for my people's mortal wound. They give assurances of peace when all is war. [12] Are they ashamed when they do these disgusting things? No, not at all—they don't even blush! Therefore, they will lie among the slaughtered. They will be humbled when they are punished, says the Lord. [13] I will take away their rich harvests of figs and grapes. Their fruit trees will all die. All the good things I prepared for them will soon be gone. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

[14] "Then the people will say, 'Why should we wait here to die? Come, let's go to the fortified cities to die there. For the Lord our God has decreed our destruction and has given us a cup of poison to drink because we sinned against the Lord. [15] We hoped for peace, but no peace came. We hoped for a time of healing, but found only terror. [16] The snorting of the enemies' warhorses can be heard all the way from the land of Dan in the north! The whole land trembles at the approach of the terrible army, for it is coming to devour the land and everything in it—cities and people alike.'

[17] "I will send these enemy troops among you like poisonous snakes you cannot charm," says the Lord. "No matter what you do, they will bite you, and you will die."

[18] My grief is beyond healing; my heart is broken. [19] Listen to the weeping of my people; it can be heard all across the land.

"Has the Lord abandoned Jerusalem?" the people ask. "Is her King no longer there?"

"Oh, why have they angered me with their carved idols and worthless gods?" asks the Lord.

[20] "The harvest is finished, and the summer is gone," the people cry, "yet we are not saved!"

[21] I weep for the hurt of my people. I am stunned and silent, mute with grief. [22] Is there no medicine in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why is there no healing for the wounds of my people?

[9:1] Oh, that my eyes were a fountain of tears; I would weep forever! I would sob day and night for all my people who have been slaughtered. [2] Oh, that I could go away and forget them and live in a shack in the desert, for they are all adulterous and treacherous.

[3] "My people bend their tongues like bows to shoot lies. They refuse to stand up for the truth. And they only go from bad to worse! They care nothing for me," says the Lord.

[4] "Beware of your neighbor! Beware of your brother! They all take advantage of one another and spread their slanderous lies. [5] They all fool and defraud each other; no one tells the truth. With practiced tongues they tell lies; they wear themselves out with all their sinning. [6] They pile lie upon lie and utterly refuse to come to me," says the Lord.

[7] Therefore, the Lord Almighty says, "See, I will melt them in a crucible and test them like metal. What else can I do with them? [8] For their tongues aim lies like poisoned arrows. They promise peace to their neighbors while planning to kill them. [9] Should I not punish them for this?" asks the Lord. "Should I not avenge myself against a nation such as this?"

[10] I will weep for the mountains and wail for the desert pastures. For they are desolate and empty of life; the lowing of cattle is heard no more; the birds and wild animals all have fled.

[11] "I will make Jerusalem into a heap of ruins," says the Lord. "It will be a place haunted by jackals. The towns of Judah will be ghost towns, with no one living in them."

[12] Who is wise enough to understand all this? Who has been instructed by the Lord and can explain it to others? Why has the land been ruined so completely that no one even dares to travel through it?

[13] The Lord replies, "This has happened because my people have abandoned the instructions I gave them; they have refused to obey my law. [14] Instead, they have stubbornly followed their own desires and worshiped the images of Baal, as their ancestors taught them. [15] So now, listen to what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Look! I will feed them with bitterness and give them poison to drink. [16] I will scatter them around the world, and they will be strangers in distant lands. Their enemies will chase them with the sword until I have destroyed them completely."

[17] This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Think about what is going on! Call for the mourners to come. [18] Quick! Begin your weeping! Let the tears flow from your eyes. [19] Hear the people of Jerusalem crying in despair, 'We are ruined! Disaster has come upon us! We must leave our land, because our homes have been torn down.' "

[20] Listen, you women, to the words of the Lord; open your ears to what he has to say. Teach your daughters to wail; teach one another how to lament. [21] For death has crept in through our windows and has entered our mansions. It has killed off the flower of our youth: Children no longer play in the streets, and young men no longer gather in the squares. [22] And the Lord says, "Bodies will be scattered across the fields like dung, or like bundles of grain after the harvest. No one will be left to bury them."

[23] This is what the Lord says: "Let not the wise man gloat in his wisdom, or the mighty man in his might, or the rich man in his riches. [24] Let them boast in this alone: that they truly know me and understand that I am the Lord who is just and righteous, whose love is unfailing, and that I delight in these things. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

[25] "A time is coming," says the Lord, "when I will punish all those who are circumcised in body but not in spirit— [26] the Egyptians, Edomites, Ammonites, Moabites, the people who live in distant places, and yes, even the people of Judah. Like all these pagan nations, the people of Israel also have uncircumcised hearts."

[10:1] Hear the word of the Lord, O Israel! [2] This is what the Lord says: "Do not act like other nations who try to read their future in the stars. Do not be afraid of their predictions, even though other nations are terrified by them. [3] Their ways are futile and foolish. They cut down a tree and carve an idol. [4] They decorate it with gold and silver and then fasten it securely with hammer and nails so it won't fall over. [5] There stands their god like a helpless scarecrow in a garden! It cannot speak, and it needs to be carried because it cannot walk. Do not be afraid of such gods, for they can neither harm you nor do you any good."

[6] Lord, there is no one like you! For you are great, and your name is full of power. [7] Who would not fear you, O King of nations? That title belongs to you alone! Among all the wise people of the earth and in all the kingdoms of the world, there is no one like you.

[8] The wisest of people who worship idols are stupid and foolish. The things they worship are made of wood! [9] They bring beaten sheets of silver from Tarshish and gold from Uphaz, and they give these materials to skillful craftsmen who make their idols. Then they dress these gods in royal purple robes made by expert tailors. [10] But the Lord is the only true God, the living God. He is the everlasting King! The whole earth trembles at his anger. The nations hide before his wrath.

[11] Say this to those who worship other gods: "Your so-called gods, who did not make the heavens and earth, will vanish from the earth."

[12] But God made the earth by his power,
and he preserves it by his wisdom.
He has stretched out the heavens
by his understanding.
[13] When he speaks, there is thunder in the heavens.
He causes the clouds to rise over the earth.
He sends the lightning with the rain

and releases the wind from his storehouses.

[14] Compared to him, all people are foolish
And have no knowledge at all!

They make idols, but the idols will disgrace their makers,
for they are frauds.

They have no life or power in them.

[15] Idols are worthless; they are lies!

The time is coming when they will all be destroyed.

[16] But the God of Israel is no idol!

He is the Creator of everything that exists,
including Israel, his own special possession.

The Lord Almighty is his name!

[17] "Pack your bag and prepare to leave; the siege is about to begin," [18] says the Lord. "For suddenly, I will fling you from this land and pour great troubles upon you. At last you will feel my anger."

[19] My wound is desperate, and my grief is great. My sickness is incurable, but I must bear it.

[20] My home is gone, and no one is left to help me rebuild it. My children have been taken away, and I will never see them again. [21] The shepherds of my people have lost their senses. They no longer follow the Lord or ask what he wants of them. Therefore, they fail completely, and their flocks are scattered. [22] Listen! Hear the terrifying roar of great armies as they roll down from the north. The towns of Judah will be destroyed and will become a haunt for jackals.

[23] I know, Lord, that a person's life is not his own. No one is able to plan his own course.

[24] So correct me, Lord, but please be gentle. Do not correct me in anger, for I would die. [25] Pour out your wrath on the nations that refuse to recognize you—on nations that do not call upon your name. For they have utterly devoured your people Israel, making the land a desolate wilderness.

[11:1] The Lord gave another message to Jeremiah. He said, [2] "Remind the people of Judah and Jerusalem about the terms of their covenant with me. [3] Say to them, 'This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Cursed is anyone who does not obey the terms of my covenant! [4] For I said to your ancestors when I brought them out of slavery in Egypt, "If you obey me and do whatever I command you, then you will be my people, and I will be your God." [5] I said this so I could keep my promise to your ancestors to give you a land flowing with milk and honey—the land you live in today.' "

Then I replied, "So be it, Lord!"

[6] Then the Lord said, "Broadcast this message in the streets of Jerusalem. Go from town to town throughout the land and say, 'Remember the covenant your ancestors made, and do everything they promised. [7] For I solemnly warned your ancestors when I brought them out of Egypt, repeating over and over again to this day: "Obey me!" [8] But your ancestors did not pay any attention; they would not even listen. Instead, they stubbornly followed their own evil desires. And because they refused to obey, I brought upon them all the curses described in our covenant.' "

[9] Again the Lord spoke to me and said, "I have discovered a conspiracy against me among the people of Judah and Jerusalem. [10] They have returned to the sins of their forefathers. They have refused to listen to me and are worshiping idols. Israel and Judah have both broken the covenant I made with their ancestors. [11] Therefore, says the Lord, I am going to bring calamity upon them, and they will not escape. Though they beg for mercy, I will not listen to their cries. [12] Then the people of Judah and Jerusalem will pray to their idols and offer incense before them. But the idols will not save them when disaster strikes! [13] Look now, people of Judah, you have as many gods as there are cities and towns. Your altars of shame—altars for burning incense to your god Baal—are along every street in Jerusalem.

[14] "Pray no more for these people, Jeremiah. Do not weep or pray for them, for I will not listen to them when they cry out to me in distress. [15] What right do my beloved people have to come to my Temple, where they have done so many immoral things? Can their sacrifices avert their destruction? They actually rejoice in doing evil!

[16] "I, the Lord, once called them a thriving olive tree, beautiful to see and full of good fruit. But now I have sent the fury of their enemies to burn them with fire, leaving them charred and broken. [17] I, the Lord Almighty, who planted this olive tree, have ordered it destroyed. For the people of Israel and Judah have done evil, provoking my anger by offering incense to Baal."

[18] Then the Lord told me about the plots my enemies were making against me. [19] I had been as unaware as a lamb on the way to its slaughter. I had no idea that they were planning to kill me! "Let's destroy this man and all his words," they said. "Let's kill him, so his name will be forgotten forever."

[20] O Lord Almighty, you are just, and you examine the deepest thoughts of hearts and minds. Let me see your vengeance against them, for I have committed my cause to you.

[21] The men of Anathoth wanted me dead. They said they would kill me if I did not stop speaking in the Lord's name. [22] So this is what the Lord Almighty says about them: "I will punish them! Their young men will die in battle, and their little boys and girls will starve. [23] Not one of these plotters from Anathoth will survive, for I will bring disaster upon them when their time of punishment comes."

[12:1] Lord, you always give me justice when I bring a case before you. Now let me bring you this complaint: Why are the wicked so prosperous? Why are evil people so happy? [2] You have planted them, and they have taken root and prospered. Your name is on their lips, but in their hearts they give you no credit at all. [3] But as for me, Lord, you know my heart. You see me and test my thoughts. Drag these people away like helpless sheep to be butchered! Set them aside to be slaughtered!

[4] How long must this land weep? Even the grass in the fields has withered. The wild animals and birds have disappeared because of the evil in the land. Yet the people say, "The Lord won't do anything!"

[5] Then the Lord replied to me, "If racing against mere men makes you tired, how will you race against horses? If you stumble and fall on open ground, what will you do in the thickets near the Jordan? [6] Even your own brothers, members of your own family, have turned on you. They have plotted, raising a cry against you. Do not trust them, no matter how pleasantly they speak.

[7] "I have abandoned my people, my special possession. I have surrendered my dearest ones to their enemies. [8] My chosen people have roared at me like a lion of the forest, so I have treated them as though I hated them. [9] My chosen people have become as disgusting to me as a vulture. And indeed, they are surrounded by vultures. Bring on the wild beasts to pick their corpses clean!"

[10] "Many rulers have ravaged my vineyard, trampling down the vines and turning all its beauty into a barren wilderness. [11] They have made it an empty wasteland; I hear its mournful cry. The whole land is desolate, and no one even cares. [12] Destroying armies plunder the land. The sword of the Lord kills people from one end of the nation to the other. No one will escape! [13] My people have planted wheat but are harvesting thorns. They have worked hard, but it has done them no good. They will harvest a crop of shame, for the fierce anger of the Lord is upon them."

[14] Now this is what the Lord says: "As for all the evil nations reaching out for the inheritance I gave my people Israel, I will uproot them from their lands just as Judah will be uprooted from hers. [15] But afterward I will return and have compassion on all of them. I will bring them home to their own lands again, each nation to its own inheritance. [16] And if these nations quickly learn the ways of my people, and if they learn to swear by my name, saying, 'As surely as the Lord lives' (just as they taught my people to swear by the name of Baal), then they will be given a place among my people. [17] But any nation who refuses to obey me will be uprooted and destroyed. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

[13:1] This is what the Lord said to me: "Go and buy a linen belt and put it around your waist, but do not wash it." [2] So I bought the belt as the Lord directed me and put it around my waist. [3] Then the Lord gave me another message: [4] "Take the linen belt you are wearing, and go to the Euphrates River. Hide it there in a hole in the rocks." [5] So I went and hid it at the Euphrates as the Lord had instructed me.

[6] A long time afterward, the Lord said to me, "Go back to the Euphrates and get the linen belt that I told you to hide there." [7] So I went to the Euphrates and dug it out of the hole where I had hidden it. But now it was mildewed and falling apart. The belt was useless.

[8] Then I received this message from the Lord: [9] "The Lord says: This illustrates how I will rot away the pride of Judah and Jerusalem. [10] These wicked people refuse to listen to me. They stubbornly follow their own desires and worship idols. Therefore, they will become like this linen belt—good for nothing! [11] As a belt clings to a person's waist, so I created Judah and Israel to cling to me," says the Lord. "They were to be my people, my pride, my glory—an honor to my name. But they would not listen to me.

[12] "So tell them, 'The Lord, the God of Israel, says: All your wineskins will be full of wine.' And they will reply, 'Of course, you don't need to tell us how prosperous we will be!' [13] Then tell them, 'No, this is what the Lord means: I will make everyone in this land so confused that they will seem drunk—from the king sitting on David's throne and from the priests and the prophets, right on down to the common people. [14] I will smash them one against the other, even parents against children, says the Lord. I will not let my pity or mercy or compassion keep me from destroying them!'"

[15] Listen! Do not be proud, for the Lord has spoken. [16] Give glory to the Lord your God before it is too late. Acknowledge him before he brings darkness upon you, causing you to stumble and fall on the dark mountains. For then, when you look for light, you will find only terrible darkness. [17] And if you still refuse to listen, I will weep alone because of your pride. My eyes will overflow with tears because the Lord's flock will be led away into exile.

[18] Say to the king and his mother, "Come down from your thrones and sit in the dust, for your glorious crowns will soon be snatched from your heads." [19] The towns of the Negev will close their gates, and no one will be able to open them. The people of Judah will be taken away as captives. They will all be carried into exile.

[20] See the armies marching down from the north! Where is your flock—your beautiful flock—that he gave you to care for? [21] How will you feel when the Lord sets your foreign allies over you as rulers? You will writhe in pain like a woman giving birth! [22] You may ask yourself, "Why is all this happening to me?" It is because of your many sins! That is why you have been raped and destroyed by invading armies. [23] Can an Ethiopian change the color of his skin? Can a leopard take away its spots? Neither can you start doing good, for you always do evil.

[24] "I will scatter you, just as chaff is scattered by the winds blowing in from the desert. [25] This is your allotment, that which is due you," says the Lord. "I have measured it out especially for you, because you have forgotten me and put your trust in false gods. [26] I myself will expose you to shame. [27] I am keenly aware of your adultery and lust, and your abominable idol worship out in the fields and on the hills. Your destruction is sure, Jerusalem! How long will it be before you are pure?"

[14:1] This message came to Jeremiah from the Lord, explaining why he was holding back the rain: [2] "Judah wilts; her businesses have ground to a halt. All the people sit on the ground in mourning, and a great cry rises from Jerusalem. [3] The nobles send servants to get water, but all the wells are dry. The servants return with empty pitchers, confused and desperate, covering their heads in grief. [4] The ground is parched and cracked for lack of rain. The farmers are afraid; they, too, cover their heads. [5] The deer abandons her newborn fawn because there is no grass. [6] The wild donkeys stand on the bare hills panting like thirsty jackals. They strain their eyes looking for grass to eat, but there is none to be found."

[7] The people say, "Lord, our wickedness has caught up with us. We have sinned against you. So please, help us for the sake of your own reputation. [8] O Hope of Israel, our Savior in times of trouble! Why are you like a stranger to us? Why are you like someone passing through the land, stopping only for the night? [9] Are you also confused? Are you helpless to save us? You are right here among us, Lord. We are known as your people. Please don't abandon us now!"

[10] So the Lord replies to his people, "You love to wander far from me and do not follow in my paths. Now I will no longer accept you as my people. I will remember all your wickedness and will punish you for your sins."

[11] Then the Lord said to me, "Do not pray for these people anymore. [12] When they fast in my presence, I will pay no attention. When they present their burnt offerings and grain offerings to me, I will not accept them. In return, I will give them only war, famine, and disease."

[13] Then I said, "O Sovereign Lord, their prophets are telling them, 'All is well—no war or famine will come. The Lord will surely send you peace.' "

[14] Then the Lord said, "These prophets are telling lies in my name. I did not send them or tell them to speak. I did not give them any messages. They prophesy of visions and revelations they have never seen or heard. They speak foolishness made up in their own lying hearts. [15] Therefore, says the Lord, I will punish these lying prophets, for they have spoken in my name even though I never sent them. They say that no war or famine will come, but they themselves will die by war and famine! [16] As for the people to whom they prophesy—their bodies will be thrown out into the streets of Jerusalem, victims of famine and war. There will be no one left to bury them. Husbands, wives, sons, and daughters—all will be gone. For I will pour out their own wickedness on them.

[17] "Now, Jeremiah, say this to them: 'Night and day my eyes overflow with tears. I cannot stop weeping, for my virgin daughter—my precious people—has been run through with a sword and lies mortally wounded on the ground. [18] If I go out into the fields, I see the bodies of people slaughtered by the enemy. If I walk the city streets, there I see people who have died of starvation. The prophets and priests continue with their work, but they do not know what they are doing.' "

[19] Lord, have you completely rejected Judah? Do you really hate Jerusalem? Why have you wounded us past all hope of healing? We hoped for peace, but no peace came. We hoped for a time of healing but found only terror.

[20] Lord, we confess our wickedness and that of our ancestors, too. We all have sinned against you. [21] For the sake of your own name, Lord, do not abandon us. Do not disgrace yourself and the throne of your glory. Do not break your covenant with us. Please don't forget us!

[22] Can any of the foreign gods send us rain? Does it fall from the sky by itself? No, it comes from you, the Lord our God! Only you can do such things. So we will wait for you to help us.

[15:1] Then the Lord said to me, "Even if Moses and Samuel stood before me pleading for these people, I wouldn't help them. Away with them! Get them out of my sight! [2] And if they say to you, 'But where can we go?' tell them, 'This is what the Lord says: Those who are destined for death, to death; those who are destined for war, to war; those who are destined for famine, to famine; those who are destined for captivity, to captivity.'

[3] "I will send four kinds of destroyers against them," says the Lord. "I will send the sword to kill, the dogs to drag away, the vultures to devour, and the wild animals to finish up what is left.

[4] Because of the wicked things Manasseh son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, did in Jerusalem, I will make my people an object of horror to all the kingdoms of the earth.

[5] "Who will feel sorry for you, Jerusalem? Who will weep for you? Who will even bother to ask how you are? [6] You have forsaken me and turned your back on me," says the Lord.

"Therefore, I will raise my clenched fists to destroy you. I am tired of always giving you another chance. [7] I will winnow you like grain at the gates of your cities and take away everything you hold dear. I will destroy my own people, because they refuse to turn back to me from all their evil ways.

[8] "There will be more widows than the grains of sand along the seashore. At noontime I will bring a destroyer against the mothers of young men. I will cause anguish and terror to come upon them suddenly. [9] The mother of seven grows faint and gasps for breath; her sun has gone down while it is yet day. She sits childless now, disgraced and humiliated. And those who are left, I will hand over to the enemy to be killed," says the Lord.

[10] Then I said, "What sadness is mine, my mother. Oh, that I had died at birth! I am hated everywhere I go. I am neither a lender who has threatened to foreclose nor a borrower who refuses to pay—yet they all curse me."

[11] The Lord replied, "All will be well with you, Jeremiah. Your enemies will ask you to plead on their behalf in times of trouble and distress. [12] Can a man break a bar of iron from the north, or a bar of bronze? [13] Because of all my people's sins against me, I will hand over their wealth and treasures as plunder to the enemy. [14] I will tell their enemies to take them as captives to a foreign land. For my anger blazes forth like fire, and it will consume them."

[15] Then I said, "Lord, you know I am suffering for your sake. Punish my persecutors! Don't let them kill me! Be merciful to me and give them what they deserve! [16] Your words are what sustain me. They bring me great joy and are my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty. [17] I never joined the people in their merry feasts. I sat alone because your hand was on me. I burst with indignation at their sins. [18] Why then does my suffering continue? Why is my wound so incurable? Your help seems as uncertain as a seasonal brook. It is like a spring that has gone dry."

[19] The Lord replied, "If you return to me, I will restore you so you can continue to serve me. If you speak words that are worthy, you will be my spokesman. You are to influence them; do not let them influence you! [20] They will fight against you like an attacking army, but I will make you as secure as a fortified wall. They will not conquer you, for I will protect and deliver you. I, the Lord, have spoken! [21] Yes, I will certainly keep you safe from these wicked men. I will rescue you from their cruel hands."

[16:1] The Lord gave me another message. He said, [2] "Do not marry or have children in this place. [3] For this is what the Lord says about the children born here in this city and about their mothers and fathers: [4] They will die from terrible diseases. No one will mourn for them or bury them, and they will lie scattered on the ground like dung. They will die from war and famine, and their bodies will be food for the vultures and wild animals.

[5] "Do not go to their funerals to mourn and show sympathy for them," says the Lord, "for I have removed my protection and peace from them. I have taken away my unfailing love and my mercy. [6] Both the great and the lowly will die in this land. No one will bury them or mourn for them. Their friends will not cut themselves or shave their heads in sadness. [7] No one will offer a meal to comfort those who mourn for the dead—not even for the death of a mother or a father. No one will send a cup of wine to console them.

[8] "And do not go to their feasts and parties. Do not eat and drink with them at all. [9] For the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: In your own lifetime, before your very eyes, I will put an end to the happy singing and laughter in this land. The joyful voices of bridegrooms and brides will no longer be heard.

[10] "When you tell the people all these things, they will ask, 'Why has the Lord decreed such terrible things against us? What have we done to deserve such treatment? What is our sin against the Lord our God?' [11] Tell them that this is the Lord's reply: It is because your ancestors were unfaithful to me. They worshiped other gods and served them. They abandoned me. They did not keep my law. [12] And you are even worse than your ancestors! You stubbornly follow your own evil desires and refuse to listen to me. [13] So I will throw you out of this land and send you into a foreign land where you and your ancestors have never been. There you can worship idols all you like—and I will grant you no favors!"

[14] "But the time is coming," says the Lord, "when people who are taking an oath will no longer say, 'As surely as the Lord lives, who rescued the people of Israel from the land of Egypt.' [15] Instead, they will say, 'As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the people of Israel back to their own land from the land of the north and from all the countries to which he had exiled them.' For I will bring them back to this land that I gave their ancestors."

[16] "But now I am sending for many fishermen who will catch them," says the Lord. "I am sending for hunters who will search for them in the forests and caves. [17] I am watching them closely, and I see every sin. They cannot hope to hide from me. [18] I will punish them doubly for all their sins, because they have defiled my land with lifeless images of their detestable gods and filled my inheritance with their evil deeds."

[19] Lord, you are my strength and fortress, my refuge in the day of trouble! Nations from around the world will come to you and say, "Our ancestors were foolish, for they worshiped worthless idols. [20] Can people make their own god? The gods they make are not real gods at all!"

[21] "So now I will show them my power and might," says the Lord. "At last they will know that I am the Lord."

[17:1] The Lord says, "My people act as though their evil ways are laws to be obeyed, inscribed with a diamond point on their stony hearts, or with an iron chisel on the corners of their altars. [2] Even their children go to worship at their sacred altars and Asherah poles, beneath every green tree and on every high hill. [3] So I will give all your wealth and treasures—together with your pagan shrines—as plunder to your enemies, for sin runs rampant in your land. [4] The wonderful inheritance I have reserved for you will slip out of your hands, and I will send you away as captives to a foreign land. For you have kindled my anger into a roaring fire that will burn forever."

[5] This is what the Lord says: "Cursed are those who put their trust in mere humans and turn their hearts away from the Lord. [6] They are like stunted shrubs in the desert, with no hope for the future. They will live in the barren wilderness, on the salty flats where no one lives.

[7] "But blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence. [8] They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they go right on producing delicious fruit."

[9] "The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? [10] But I know! I, the Lord, search all hearts and examine secret motives. I give all people their due rewards, according to what their actions deserve."

[11] Like a bird that hatches eggs she has not laid, so are those who get their wealth by unjust means. Sooner or later they will lose their riches and, at the end of their lives, will become poor old fools.

[12] But we worship at your throne—eternal, high, and glorious! [13] O Lord, the hope of Israel, all who turn away from you will be disgraced and shamed. They will be buried in a dry and dusty grave, for they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living water.

[14] O Lord, you alone can heal me; you alone can save. My praises are for you alone! [15] People scoff at me and say, "What is this 'message from the Lord' you keep talking about? Why don't your predictions come true?"

[16] Lord, I have not abandoned my job as a shepherd for your people. I have not urged you to send disaster. It is your message I have given them, not my own. [17] Lord, do not desert me now! You alone are my hope in the day of disaster. [18] Bring shame and terror on all who persecute me, but give me peace. Yes, bring double destruction upon them!

[19] Then the Lord said to me, "Go and stand in the gates of Jerusalem, first at the gate where the king goes out, and then at each of the other gates. [20] Say to all the people, 'Listen to this message from the Lord, you kings of Judah and all you people of Judah and everyone living in Jerusalem. [21] This is what the Lord says: Listen to my warning and live! Stop carrying on your trade at Jerusalem's gates on the Sabbath day. [22] Do not do your work on the Sabbath, but make it a holy day. I gave this command to your ancestors, [23] but they did not listen or obey. They stubbornly refused to pay attention and would not respond to discipline.'

[24] "But if you obey me, says the Lord, and do not carry on your trade or work on the Sabbath day, and if you keep it holy, [25] then this nation will continue forever. There will always be a descendant of David sitting on the throne here in Jerusalem. Kings and their officials will always ride among the people of Judah in chariots and on horses, and this city will remain forever. [26] And from all around Jerusalem, from the towns of Judah and Benjamin, from the western foothills and the hill country and the Negev, the people will come with their burnt offerings and sacrifices. They will bring their grain offerings, incense, and thanksgiving offerings to the Lord's Temple.

[27] "But if you do not listen to me and refuse to keep the Sabbath holy, and if on the Sabbath day you bring loads of merchandise through the gates of Jerusalem just as on other days, then I will set fire to these gates. The fire will spread to the palaces, and no one will be able to put out the roaring flames.'

[18:1] The Lord gave another message to Jeremiah. He said, [2] "Go down to the shop where clay pots and jars are made. I will speak to you while you are there." [3] So I did as he told me and found the potter working at his wheel. [4] But the jar he was making did not turn out as he had hoped, so the potter squashed the jar into a lump of clay and started again.

[5] Then the Lord gave me this message: [6] "O Israel, can I not do to you as this potter has done to his clay? As the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand."

[7] If I announce that a certain nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down, and destroyed, [8] but then that nation renounces its evil ways, I will not destroy it as I had planned. [9] And if I announce that I will build up and plant a certain nation or kingdom, making it strong and great, [10] but then that nation turns to evil and refuses to obey me, I will not bless that nation as I had said I would.

[11] "Therefore, Jeremiah, go and warn all Judah and Jerusalem. Say to them, 'This is what the Lord says: I am planning disaster against you instead of good. So turn from your evil ways, each of you, and do what is right.' "

[12] But they replied, "Don't waste your breath. We will continue to live as we want to, following our own evil desires."

[13] Then the Lord said, "Has anyone ever heard of such a thing, even among the pagan nations? My virgin Israel has done something too terrible to understand! [14] Does the snow ever melt high up in the mountains of Lebanon? Do the cold, flowing streams from the crags of Mount Hermon ever run dry? [15] These can be counted on, but not my people! For they have deserted me and turned to worthless idols. They have stumbled off the ancient highways of good, and they walk the muddy paths of sin. [16] Therefore, their land will become desolate, a monument to their stupidity. All who pass by will be astonished and shake their heads in amazement at its utter desolation. [17] I will scatter my people before their enemies as the east wind scatters dust. And in all their trouble I will turn my back on them and refuse to notice their distress."

[18] Then the people said, "Come on, let's find a way to stop Jeremiah. We have our own priests and wise men and prophets. We don't need him to teach the law and give us advice and prophecies. Let's spread rumors about him and ignore what he says."

[19] Lord, help me! Listen to what they are planning to do to me! [20] Should they repay evil for good? They have set a trap to kill me, though I pleaded for them and tried to protect them from your anger. [21] So let their children starve! Let the sword pour out their blood! Let their wives become widows without any children! Let their old men die in a plague, and let their young men be killed in battle! [22] Let screaming be heard from their homes as warriors come suddenly upon them. For they have dug a pit for me, and they have hidden traps along my path.

[23] Lord, you know all about their murderous plots against me. Don't forgive their crimes and blot out their sins. Let them die before you. Deal with them in your anger.

[19:1] The Lord said to me, "Go and buy a clay jar. Then ask some of the leaders of the people and of the priests to follow you. [2] Go out into the valley of the son of Hinnom by the entrance to the Potsherd Gate, and repeat to them the words that I give you. [3] Say to them, 'Listen to this message from the Lord, you kings of Judah and citizens of Jerusalem! This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I will bring such a terrible disaster on this place that the ears of those who hear about it will ring!'

[4] " 'For Israel has forsaken me and turned this valley into a place of wickedness. The people burn incense to foreign gods—idols never before worshiped by this generation, by their ancestors, or by the kings of Judah. And they have filled this place with the blood of innocent children.'

[5] They have built pagan shrines to Baal, and there they burn their sons as sacrifices to Baal. I have never commanded such a horrible deed; it never even crossed my mind to command such a thing! [6] So beware, for the time is coming, says the Lord, when this place will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter. [7] For I will upset the battle plans of Judah and Jerusalem and let invading armies slaughter them. The enemy will leave the dead bodies as food for the vultures and wild animals. [8] I will wipe Jerusalem from the face of the earth, making it a monument to their stupidity. All who pass by will be appalled and will gasp at the destruction they see there. [9] I will see to it that your enemies lay siege to the city until all the food is gone. Then those trapped inside will have to eat their own sons and daughters and friends. They will be driven to utter despair.'

[10] "As these men watch, Jeremiah, smash the jar you brought with you. [11] Then say to them, 'This is what the Lord Almighty says: As this jar lies shattered, so I will shatter the people of Judah and Jerusalem beyond all hope of repair. They will bury the bodies in Topheth until there is no more room. [12] This is what I will do to this place and its people, says the Lord. I will cause this city to become defiled like Topheth. [13] Yes, all the houses in Jerusalem, including the palace of Judah's kings, will become like Topheth—all the houses where you burned incense on the rooftops to your star gods, and where drink offerings were poured out to your idols.' "

[14] Then Jeremiah returned from Topheth where he had delivered this message, and he stopped in front of the Temple of the Lord. He said to the people there, [15] "This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I will bring disaster upon this city and its surrounding towns just as I promised, because you have stubbornly refused to listen to me."

[20:1] Now Pashhur son of Immer, the priest in charge of the Temple of the Lord, heard what Jeremiah was saying. [2] So he arrested Jeremiah the prophet and had him whipped and put in stocks at the Benjamin Gate of the Lord's Temple.

[3] The next day, when Pashhur finally released him, Jeremiah said, "Pashhur, the Lord has changed your name. From now on you are to be called 'The Man Who Lives in Terror.' [4] For this is what the Lord says: I will send terror upon you and all your friends, and you will watch as they are slaughtered by the swords of the enemy. I will hand the people of Judah over to the king of Babylon. He will take them captive to Babylon or run them through with the sword. [5] And I will let your enemies plunder Jerusalem. All the famed treasures of the city—the precious jewels and gold and silver of your kings—will be carried off to Babylon. [6] As for you, Pashhur, you and all your household will go as captives to Babylon. There you will die and be buried, you and all your friends to whom you promised that everything would be all right."

[7] O Lord, you persuaded me, and I allowed myself to be persuaded. You are stronger than I am, and you overpowered me. Now I am mocked by everyone in the city. [8] Whenever I speak, the words come out in a violent outburst. "Violence and destruction!" I shout. So these messages from the Lord have made me a household joke. [9] And I can't stop! If I say I'll never mention the Lord or speak in his name, his word burns in my heart like a fire. It's like a fire in my bones! I am weary of holding it in!

[10] I have heard the many rumors about me. They call me "The Man Who Lives in Terror." And they say, "If you say anything, we will report it." Even my old friends are watching me, waiting for a fatal slip. "He will trap himself," they say, "and then we will get our revenge on him."

[11] But the Lord stands beside me like a great warrior. Before him they will stumble. They cannot defeat me. They will be shamed and thoroughly humiliated. Their dishonor will never be forgotten. [12] O Lord Almighty! You know those who are righteous, and you examine the deepest thoughts of hearts and minds. Let me see your vengeance against them, for I have committed my cause to you. [13] Now I will sing out my thanks to the Lord! Praise the Lord! For though I was poor and needy, he delivered me from my oppressors.

[14] Yet I curse the day I was born! May the day of my birth not be blessed. [15] I curse the messenger who told my father, "Good news—you have a son!" [16] Let him be destroyed like the cities of old that the Lord overthrew without mercy. Terrify him all day long with battle shouts, [17] for he did not kill me at birth. Oh, that I had died in my mother's womb, that her body had been my grave! [18] Why was I ever born? My entire life has been filled with trouble, sorrow, and shame.

[21:1] The Lord spoke through Jeremiah when King Zedekiah sent Pashhur son of Malkijah and Zephaniah son of Maaseiah, the priest, to speak with him. They begged Jeremiah, [2] "Please ask the Lord to help us. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon has begun his attack on Judah. Perhaps the Lord will be gracious and do a mighty miracle as he has done in the past. Perhaps he will force Nebuchadnezzar to withdraw his armies."

[3] Jeremiah replied, "Go back to King Zedekiah and tell him, [4] 'this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I will make your weapons useless against the king of Babylon and the Babylonians who are attacking you. Yes, I will bring your enemies right into the heart of this city. [5] I myself will fight against you with great power, for I am very angry. You have made me furious! [6] I will send a terrible plague upon this city, and both people and animals will die. [7] And then, says the Lord, even after King Zedekiah, his officials, and everyone else in the city have survived war, famine, and disease, I will hand them over to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. He will slaughter them all without mercy, pity, or compassion.'

[8] "Tell all the people, 'this is what the Lord says: Take your choice of life or death! [9] Everyone who stays in Jerusalem will die from war, famine, or disease, but those who go out and surrender to the Babylonians will live. [10] For I have decided to bring disaster and not good upon this city, says the Lord. It will be captured by the king of Babylon, and he will reduce it to ashes.'

[11] "Say to the royal family of Judah, 'Listen to this message from the Lord! [12] This is what the Lord says to the dynasty of David: Give justice to the people you judge! Help those who have been robbed; rescue them from their oppressors. Do what is right, or my anger will burn like an unquenchable fire because of all your sins. [13] I will fight against this city of Jerusalem that boasts, "We are safe on our mountain! No one can touch us here." [14] And I myself will punish you for your sinfulness, says the Lord. I will light a fire in your forests that will burn up everything around you.' "

[22:1] Then the Lord said to me, "Go over and speak directly to the king of Judah. Say to him, [2] 'Listen to this message from the Lord, you king of Judah, sitting on David's throne. Let your officials and your people listen, too. [3] This is what the Lord says: Be fair-minded and just. Do what is right! Help those who have been robbed; rescue them from their oppressors. Quit your evil deeds! Do not mistreat foreigners, orphans, and widows. Stop murdering the innocent! [4] If you obey me, there will always be a descendant of David sitting on the throne here in Jerusalem. The king will ride through the palace gates in chariots and on horses, with his parade of officials and subjects. [5] But if you refuse to pay attention to this warning, I swear by my own name, says the Lord that this palace will become a pile of rubble.' "

[6] Now this is what the Lord says concerning the royal palace: "You are as beloved to me as fruitful Gilead and the green forests of Lebanon. But I will destroy you and leave you deserted, with no one living within your walls. [7] I will call for wreckers, who will bring out their tools to dismantle you. They will tear out all your fine cedar beams and throw them on the fire. [8] People from many nations will pass by the ruins of this city and say to one another, 'Why did the Lord destroy such a great city?' [9] And the answer will be, 'Because they violated their covenant with the Lord their God by worshiping other gods.' "

[10] Do not weep for the dead king or mourn his loss. Instead, weep for the captive king being led away! For he will never return to see his native land again. [11] For this is what the Lord says about Jehoahaz, who succeeded his father, King Josiah, and was taken away as a captive: "He will never return. [12] He will die in a distant land and never again see his own country."

[13] And the Lord says, "Destruction is certain for Jehoiakim, who builds his palace with forced labor. By not paying wages, he builds injustice into its walls and oppression into its doorframes and ceilings. [14] He says, 'I will build a magnificent palace with huge rooms and many windows, paneled throughout with fragrant cedar and painted a lovely red.'

[15] "But a beautiful palace does not make a great king! Why did your father, Josiah, reign so long? Because he was just and right in all his dealings. That is why God blessed him. [16] He made sure that justice and help were given to the poor and needy, and everything went well for him. Isn't that what it means to know me?" asks the Lord. [17] "But you! You are full of selfish greed and dishonesty! You murder the innocent, oppress the poor, and reign ruthlessly."

[18] Therefore, this is the Lord's decree of punishment against King Jehoiakim, who succeeded his father, Josiah, on the throne: "His family will not weep for him when he dies. His subjects will not even care that he is dead. [19] He will be buried like a dead donkey—dragged out of Jerusalem and dumped outside the gate! [20] Weep, for your allies are all gone. Search for them in Lebanon. Shout for them at Bashan. Search for them in the regions east of the river. See, they are all destroyed. Not one is left to help you.

[21] "When you were prosperous, I warned you, but you replied, 'Don't bother me.' Since childhood you have been that way—you simply will not listen! [22] And now your allies have all disappeared with a puff of wind. All your friends have been taken away as captives. Surely at last you will see your wickedness and be ashamed. [23] It may be nice to live in a beautiful palace lined with lumber from the cedars of Lebanon, but soon you will cry and groan in anguish—anguish like that of a woman about to give birth.

[24] "And as surely as I live," says the Lord, "I will abandon you, Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah. Even if you were the signet ring on my right hand, I would pull you off. [25] I will hand you over to those who seek to kill you, of whom you are so desperately afraid—to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and the mighty Babylonian army. [26] I will expel you and your mother from this land, and you will die in a foreign country. [27] You will never again return to the land of your desire.

[28] "Why is this man Jehoiachin like a discarded, broken dish? Why are he and his children to be exiled to distant lands? [29] O earth, earth, earth! Listen to this message from the Lord! [30] This is what the Lord says: Let the record show that this man Jehoiachin was childless, for none of his children will ever sit on the throne of David to rule in Judah. His life will amount to nothing."

[23:1] "I will send disaster upon the leaders of my people—the shepherds of my sheep—for they have destroyed and scattered the very ones they were expected to care for," says the Lord.

[2] This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says to these shepherds: "Instead of leading my flock to safety, you have deserted them and driven them to destruction. Now I will pour out judgment on you for the evil you have done to them. [3] But I will gather together the remnant of my flock from wherever I have driven them. I will bring them back into their own fold, and they will be fruitful and increase in number. [4] Then I will appoint responsible shepherds to care for them, and they will never be afraid again. Not a single one of them will be lost or missing," says the Lord.

[5] "For the time is coming," says the Lord, "when I will place a righteous Branch on King David's throne. He will be a King who rules with wisdom. He will do what is just and right throughout the land. [6] And this is his name: 'The Lord Is Our Righteousness.' In that day Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety.

[7] "In that day," says the Lord, "when people are taking an oath, they will no longer say, 'As surely as the Lord lives, who rescued the people of Israel from the land of Egypt.' [8] Instead, they will say, 'As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the people of Israel back to their own land from the land of the north and from all the countries to which he had exiled them.' Then they will live in their own land."

[9] My heart is broken because of the false prophets, and I tremble uncontrollably. I stagger like a drunkard, like someone overcome by wine, because of the holy words the Lord has spoken against them. [10] For the land is full of adultery, and it lies under a curse. The land itself is in mourning—its pastures are dried up. For the prophets do evil and abuse their power.

[11] "The priests are like the prophets, all ungodly, wicked men. I have seen their despicable acts right here in my own Temple," says the Lord.

[12] "Therefore, their paths will be dark and slippery. They will be chased down dark and treacherous trails, where they will fall. For I will bring disaster upon them when their time of punishment comes. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

[13] "I saw that the prophets of Samaria were terribly evil, for they prophesied by Baal and led my people of Israel into sin. [14] But now I see that the prophets of Jerusalem are even worse! They commit adultery, and they love dishonesty. They encourage those who are doing evil instead of turning them away from their sins. These prophets are as wicked as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah once were."

[15] Therefore, this is what the Lord Almighty says concerning the prophets: "I will feed them with bitterness and give them poison to drink. For it is because of Jerusalem's prophets that wickedness fills this land. [16] This is my warning to my people," says the Lord Almighty. "Do not listen to these prophets when they prophesy to you, filling you with futile hopes. They are making up everything they say. They do not speak for the Lord! [17] They keep saying to these rebels who despise my word, 'Don't worry! The Lord says you will have peace!' And to those who stubbornly follow their own evil desires, they say, 'No harm will come your way!'

[18] "But can you name even one of these prophets who knows the Lord well enough to hear what he is saying? Has even one of them cared enough to listen? [19] Look! The Lord's anger bursts out like a storm, a whirlwind that swirls down on the heads of the wicked. [20] The anger of the Lord will not diminish until it has finished all his plans. In the days to come, you will understand all this very clearly.

[21] "I have not sent these prophets, yet they claim to speak for me. I have given them no message, yet they prophesy. [22] If they had listened to me, they would have spoken my words and turned my people from their evil ways. [23] Am I a God who is only in one place?" asks the Lord. "Do they think I cannot see what they are doing? [24] Can anyone hide from me? Am I not everywhere in all the heavens and earth?" asks the Lord.

[25] "I have heard these prophets say, 'Listen to the dream I had from God last night.' And then they proceed to tell lies in my name. [26] How long will this go on? If they are prophets, they are prophets of deceit, inventing everything they say. [27] By telling these false dreams, they are trying to get my people to forget me, just as their ancestors did by worshiping the idols of Baal. [28] Let these false prophets tell their dreams, but let my true messengers faithfully proclaim my every word. There is a difference between chaff and wheat! [29] Does not my word burn like fire?" asks the Lord. "Is it not like a mighty hammer that smashes rock to pieces?

[30] "Therefore," says the Lord, "I stand against these prophets who get their messages from each other— [31] these smooth-tongued prophets who say, 'This prophecy is from the Lord!' [32] Their imaginary dreams are flagrant lies that lead my people into sin. I did not send or appoint them, and they have no message at all for my people," says the Lord.

[33] "Suppose one of the people or one of the prophets or priests asks you, 'What prophecy has the Lord burdened you with now?' You must reply, 'You are the burden! The Lord says he will abandon you!' [34] If any prophet, priest, or anyone else says, 'I have a prophecy from the Lord,' I will punish that person along with his entire family.

[35] You should keep asking each other, 'What is the Lord's answer?' or 'What is the Lord saying?' [36] But stop using this phrase, 'prophecy from the Lord.' For people are using it to give authority to their own ideas, turning upside down the words of our God, the living God, the Lord Almighty.

[37] "This is what you should say to the prophets: 'What is the Lord's answer?' or 'What is the Lord saying?' [38] But suppose they respond, 'This is a prophecy from the Lord!' Then you should say, 'This is what the Lord says: Because you have used this phrase, "prophecy from the Lord," even though I warned you not to use it, [39] I will forget you completely. I will expel you from my presence, along with this city that I gave to you and your ancestors. [40] And I will make you an object of ridicule, and your name will be infamous throughout the ages.' "

[24:1] After King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon exiled Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, to Babylon along with the princes of Judah and all the skilled craftsmen, the Lord gave me this vision. I saw two baskets of figs placed in front of the Lord's Temple in Jerusalem. [2] One basket was filled with fresh, ripe figs, while the other was filled with figs that were spoiled and could not be eaten.

[3] Then the Lord said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?"

I replied, "Figs, some very good and some very bad."

[4] Then the Lord gave me this message: [5] "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: The good figs represent the exiles I sent from Judah to the land of the Babylonians. [6] I have sent them into captivity for their own good. I will see that they are well treated, and I will bring them back here again. I will build them up and not tear them down. I will plant them and not uproot them. [7] I will give them hearts that will recognize me as the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me wholeheartedly.

[8] "But the rotten figs," the Lord said, "represent King Zedekiah of Judah, his officials, all the people left in Jerusalem, and those who live in Egypt. I will treat them like spoiled figs, too rotten to eat. [9] I will make them an object of horror and evil to every nation on earth. They will be disgraced and mocked, taunted and cursed, wherever I send them. [10] I will send war, famine, and disease until they have vanished from the land of Israel, which I gave to them and their ancestors."

[25:1] This message for all the people of Judah came to Jeremiah from the Lord during the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign over Judah. This was the year when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon began his reign.

[2] Jeremiah the prophet said to the people in Judah and Jerusalem, [3] "For the past twenty-three years—from the thirteenth year of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah, until now—the Lord has been giving me his messages. I have faithfully passed them on to you, but you have not listened.

[4] "Again and again, the Lord has sent you his prophets, but you have not listened or even tried to hear. [5] Each time the message was this: 'Turn from the evil road you are traveling and from the evil things you are doing. Only then will I let you live in this land that the Lord gave to you and your ancestors forever. [6] Do not make me angry by worshiping the idols you have made. Then I will not harm you.'

[7] "But you would not listen to me," says the Lord. "You made me furious by worshiping your idols, bringing on yourselves all the disasters you now suffer. [8] And now the Lord Almighty says: Because you have not listened to me, [9] I will gather together all the armies of the north under King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, whom I have appointed as my deputy. I will bring them all against this land and its people and against the other nations near you. I will completely destroy you and make you an object of horror and contempt and a ruin forever. [10] I will take away your happy singing and laughter. The joyful voices of bridegrooms and brides will no longer be heard. Your businesses will fail, and all your homes will stand silent and dark. [11] This entire land will become a desolate wasteland. Israel and her neighboring lands will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years.

[12] "Then, after the seventy years of captivity are over, I will punish the king of Babylon and his people for their sins, says the Lord. I will make the country of the Babylonians an everlasting wasteland. [13] I will bring upon them all the terrors I have promised in this book—all the penalties announced by Jeremiah against the nations. [14] Many nations and great kings will enslave the Babylonians, just as they enslaved my people. I will punish them in proportion to the suffering they cause my people."

[15] Then the Lord, the God of Israel, said to me, "Take from my hand this cup filled to the brim with my anger, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink from it. [16] When they drink from it, they will stagger, crazed by the warfare I will send against them."

[17] So I took the cup of anger from the Lord and made all the nations drink from it—every nation the Lord sent me to. [18] I went to Jerusalem and the other towns of Judah, and their kings and officials drank from the cup. From that day until this, they have been a desolate ruin, an object of horror, contempt, and cursing. [19] I went to Egypt and spoke to Pharaoh, his officials, his princes, and his people. They, too, drank from that terrible cup, [20] along with all the foreigners living in that land. So did all the kings of the land of Uz and the kings of the Philistine cities of Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and what remains of Ashdod. [21] Then I went to the nations of Edom, Moab, and Ammon, [22] and the kings of Tyre and Sidon, and the kings of the regions across the sea. [23] I went to Dedan, Tema, and Buz, and to the people who live in distant places. [24] I went to the kings of Arabia, the kings of the nomadic tribes of the desert, [25] and to the kings of Zimri, Elam, and Media. [26] And I went to the kings of the northern countries, far and near, one after the other—all the kingdoms of the world. And finally, the king of Babylon himself drank from the cup of the Lord's anger.

[27] Then the Lord said to me, "Now tell them, 'The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Drink from this cup of my anger. Get drunk and vomit, and you will fall to rise no more, for I am sending terrible wars against you.' [28] And if they refuse to accept the cup, tell them, 'The Lord Almighty says: You must drink from it. You cannot escape!' [29] I have begun to punish Jerusalem, the city where my own name is honored. Now should I let you go unpunished? No, you will not escape disaster. I will call for war against all the nations of the earth. I, the Lord Almighty, have spoken!"

[30] "Now prophesy all these things, and say to them, 'The Lord will roar loudly against his own land from his holy dwelling in heaven. He will shout against everyone on the earth, like the harvesters do as they crush juice from the grapes.'

[31] His cry of judgment will reach the ends of the earth, for the Lord will bring his case against all the nations. He will judge all the people of the earth, slaughtering the wicked with his sword. The Lord has spoken!" "

[32] This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Look! Disaster will fall upon nation after nation! A great whirlwind of fury is rising from the most distant corners of the earth!"

[33] In that day those the Lord has slaughtered will fill the earth from one end to the other. No one will mourn for them or gather up their bodies to bury them. They will be scattered like dung on the ground.

[34] Weep and moan, you evil shepherds! Roll in the dust, you leaders of the flock! The time of your slaughter has arrived; you will fall and shatter like fragile pottery. [35] You will find no place to hide; there will be no way to escape.

[36] Listen to the frantic cries of the shepherds, to the leaders of the flock shouting in despair, for the Lord is spoiling their pastures. [37] Peaceful meadows will be turned into a wasteland by the Lord's fierce anger. [38] He has left his den like a lion seeking its prey, and their land will be made desolate by the sword of the enemy and the Lord's fierce anger.

[26:1] this message came to Jeremiah from the Lord early in the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah. [2] The Lord said, "Stand out in front of the Temple of the Lord, and make an announcement to the people who have come there to worship from all over Judah. Give them my entire message; include every word. [3] Perhaps they will listen and turn from their evil ways. Then I will be able to withhold the disaster I am ready to pour out on them because of their sins.

[4] "Say to them, 'This is what the Lord says: If you will not listen to me and obey the law I have given you, [5] and if you will not listen to my servants, the prophets—for I sent them again and again to warn you, but you would not listen to them— [6] then I will destroy this Temple as I destroyed Shiloh, the place where the Tabernacle was located. And I will make Jerusalem an object of cursing in every nation on earth.' "

[7] The priests, the prophets, and all the people listened to Jeremiah as he spoke in front of the Lord's Temple. [8] But when Jeremiah had finished his message, saying everything the Lord had told him to say, the priests and prophets and all the people at the Temple mobbed him. "Kill him!" they shouted. [9] "What right do you have to prophesy in the Lord's name that this Temple will be destroyed like Shiloh? What do you mean, saying that Jerusalem will be destroyed?" And all the people threatened him as he stood in front of the Temple.

[10] When the officials of Judah heard what was happening, they rushed over from the palace and sat down at the New Gate of the Temple to hold court. [11] The priests and prophets presented their accusations to the officials and the people. "This man should die!" they said. "You have heard with your own ears what a traitor he is, for he has prophesied against this city."

[12] Then Jeremiah spoke in his own defense. "The Lord sent me to prophesy against this Temple and this city," he said. "The Lord gave me every word that I have spoken. [13] But if you stop your sinning and begin to obey the Lord your God, he will cancel this disaster that he has announced against you. [14] As for me, I am helpless and in your power—do with me as you think best.

[15] But if you kill me, rest assured that you will be killing an innocent man! The responsibility for such a deed will lie on you, on this city, and on every person living in it. For it is absolutely true that the Lord sent me to speak every word you have heard."

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

[17] Then some of the wise old men stood and spoke to the people there. [18] They said, "Think back to the days when Micah of Moresheth prophesied during the reign of King Hezekiah of Judah. He told the people of Judah, 'This is what the Lord Almighty says: Mount Zion will be plowed like an open field; Jerusalem will be reduced to rubble! A great forest will grow on the hilltop, where the Temple now stands.' [19] But did King Hezekiah and the people kill him for saying this? No, they turned from their sins and worshiped the Lord. They begged him to have mercy on them. Then the Lord held back the terrible disaster he had pronounced against them. If we kill Jeremiah, who knows what will happen to us?"

[20] (At this time, Uriah son of Shemaiah from Kiriath-jearim was also prophesying for the Lord. And he predicted the same terrible disaster against the city and nation as Jeremiah did. [21] When King Jehoiakim and the army officers and officials heard what he was saying, the king sent someone to kill him. But Uriah heard about the plot and escaped to Egypt. [22] Then King Jehoiakim sent Elnathan son of Acbor to Egypt along with several other men to capture Uriah. [23] They took him prisoner and brought him back to King Jehoiakim. The king then killed Uriah with a sword and had him buried in an unmarked grave.)

[24] Ahikam son of Shaphan also stood with Jeremiah and persuaded the court not to turn him over to the mob to be killed.

[27:1] this message came to Jeremiah from the Lord early in the reign of Zedekiah son of Josiah, king of Judah.

[2] The Lord said to me, "Make a yoke, and fasten it on your neck with leather thongs. [3] Then send messages to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon through their ambassadors to King Zedekiah in Jerusalem. [4] Give them this message for their masters: 'this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: [5] By my great power I have made the earth and all its people and every animal. I can give these things of mine to anyone I choose. [6] Now I will give your countries to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who is my servant. I have put everything, even the wild animals, under his control. [7] All the nations will serve him and his son and his grandson until his time is up. But then many nations and great kings will conquer and rule over Babylon. [8] So you must submit to Babylon's king and serve him; put your neck under Babylon's yoke! I will punish any nation that refuses to be his slave, says the Lord. I will send war, famine, and disease upon that nation until Babylon has conquered it.'

[9] " 'Do not listen to your false prophets, fortune-tellers, interpreters of dreams, mediums, and sorcerers who say, "The king of Babylon will not conquer you." [10] They are all liars, and I will drive you from your land and send you far away to die. [11] But the people of any nation that submits to the king of Babylon will be allowed to stay in their own country to farm the land as usual. I, the Lord, have spoken!' "

[12] Then I repeated this same message to King Zedekiah of Judah. "If you want to live, submit to the king of Babylon and his people," I said. [13] "Why do you insist on dying—you and your people? Why should you choose war, famine, and disease, which the Lord will bring against every nation that refuses to submit to Babylon's king? [14] Do not listen to the false prophets who keep telling you, 'The king of Babylon will not conquer you.' They are liars. [15] This is what the Lord says: I have not sent these prophets! They are telling you lies in my name, so I will drive you from this land. You will all die—you and all these prophets, too."

[16] Then I spoke to the priests and the people and said, "This is what the Lord says: Do not listen to your prophets who claim that soon the gold utensils taken from my Temple will be returned from Babylon. It is all a lie! [17] Do not listen to them. Surrender to the king of Babylon, and you will live. Why should this whole city be destroyed? [18] If they really are the Lord's prophets, let them pray to the Lord Almighty about the gold utensils that are still left in the Lord's Temple and in the king's palace and in the palaces of Jerusalem. Let them pray that these remaining articles will not be carried away with you to Babylon!"

[19] "For this is what the Lord Almighty says about the bronze pillars in front of the Temple, the bronze Sea in the Temple courtyard, the bronze water carts, and all the other ceremonial articles. [20] King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon left them here when he exiled Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, to Babylon, along with all the other important people of Judah and Jerusalem. [21] Yes, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says about the precious things kept in the Temple and in the palace of Judah's king: [22] They will all be carried away to Babylon and will stay there until I send for them, says the Lord. But someday I will bring them back to Jerusalem again."

[28:1] One day in late summer of that same year—the fourth year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah—Hananiah son of Azzur, a prophet from Gibeon, addressed me publicly in the Temple while all the priests and people listened. He said, [2] "The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I will remove the yoke of the king of Babylon from your necks. [3] Within two years, I will bring back all the Temple treasures that King Nebuchadnezzar carried off to Babylon. [4] And I will bring back Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and all the other captives that were taken to Babylon. I will surely break the yoke that the king of Babylon has put on your necks. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

[5] Jeremiah responded to Hananiah as they stood in front of all the priests and people at the Temple. [6] He said, "Amen! May your prophecies come true! I hope the Lord does everything you say. I hope he does bring back from Babylon the treasures of this Temple and all our loved ones. [7] But listen now to the solemn words I speak to you in the presence of all these people. [8] The ancient prophets who preceded you and me spoke against many nations, always warning of war, famine, and disease. [9] So a prophet who predicts peace must carry the burden of proof. Only when his predictions come true can it be known that he is really from the Lord."

[10] Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke off Jeremiah's neck and broke it. [11] And Hananiah said again to the crowd that had gathered, "The Lord has promised that within two years he will break the yoke of oppression from all the nations now subject to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon." At that, Jeremiah left the Temple area.

[12] Soon afterward the Lord gave this message to Jeremiah: [13] "Go and tell Hananiah, 'This is what the Lord says: You have broken a wooden yoke, but you have replaced it with a yoke of iron. [14] The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I have put a yoke of iron on the necks of all these nations, forcing them into slavery under King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. I have put everything, even the wild animals, under his control.' "

[15] Then Jeremiah the prophet said to Hananiah, "Listen, Hananiah! The Lord has not sent you, but the people believe your lies. [16] Therefore, the Lord says you must die. Your life will end this very year because you have rebelled against the Lord."

[17] Two months later, Hananiah died.

[29:1] Jeremiah wrote a letter from Jerusalem to the elders, priests, prophets, and all the people who had been exiled to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. [2] This was after King Jehoiachin, the queen mother, the court officials, the leaders of Judah, and all the craftsmen had been deported from Jerusalem. [3] He sent the letter with Elasar son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiah, when they went to Babylon as King Zedekiah's ambassadors to Nebuchadnezzar. This is what Jeremiah's letter said:

[4] The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, sends this message to all the captives he has exiled to Babylon from Jerusalem: [5] "Build homes, and plan to stay. Plant gardens, and eat the food you produce. [6] Marry, and have children. Then find spouses for them, and have many grandchildren. Multiply! Do not dwindle away! [7] And work for the peace and prosperity of Babylon. Pray to the Lord for that city where you are held captive, for if Babylon has peace, so will you."

[8] The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says, "Do not let the prophets and mediums who are there in Babylon trick you. Do not listen to their dreams [9] because they prophesy lies in my name. I have not sent them," says the Lord. [10] "The truth is that you will be in Babylon for seventy years. But then I will come and do for you all the good things I have promised, and I will bring you home again. [11] For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. [12] In those days when you pray, I will listen. [13] If you look for me in earnest, you will find me when you seek me. [14] I will be found by you," says the Lord. "I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes. I will gather you out of the nations where I sent you and bring you home again to your own land."

[15] You may claim that the Lord has raised up prophets for you in Babylon. [16] But this is what the Lord says about the king who sits on David's throne and all those still living here in Jerusalem—your relatives who were not exiled to Babylon. [17] This is what the Lord Almighty says: "I will send war, famine, and disease upon them and make them like rotting figs—too bad to eat. [18] Yes, I will pursue them with war, famine, and disease, and I will scatter them around the world. In every nation where I send them, I will make them an object of damnation, horror, contempt, and mockery. [19] For they refuse to listen to me, though I have spoken to them repeatedly through my prophets. And you who are in exile have not listened either," says the Lord.

[20] Therefore, listen to this message from the Lord, all you captives there in Babylon. [21] This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says about your prophets—Ahab son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah—who are telling you lies in my name: "I will turn them over to Nebuchadnezzar for a public execution. [22] Their terrible fate will become proverbial, so that whenever the Judean exiles want to curse someone they will say, 'May the Lord make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon burned alive!' [23] For these men have done terrible things among my people. They have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives and have lied in my name. I am a witness to this," says the Lord.

[24] The Lord sent this message to Shemaiah the Nehelamite in Babylon: [25] "This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: You wrote a letter on your own authority to Zephaniah son of Maaseiah, the priest, and you sent copies to the other priests and people in Jerusalem. You said to Zephaniah, [26] 'The Lord has appointed you to replace Jehoiada as the priest in charge of the house of the Lord. You are responsible to put anyone who claims to be a prophet in the stocks and neck irons. [27] So why have you done nothing to stop Jeremiah from Anathoth, who pretends to be a prophet among you? [28] Jeremiah sent a letter here to Babylon, predicting that our captivity will be a long one. He said we should build homes and plan to stay for many years. He said we should plant fruit trees, because we will be here to eat the fruit for many years to come.' "

[29] But when Zephaniah the priest received Shemaiah's letter, he took it to Jeremiah and read it to him. [30] Then the Lord gave this message to Jeremiah: [31] "Send an open letter to all the exiles in Babylon. Tell them, 'This is what the Lord says concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite: Since he has prophesied to you when I did not send him and has tricked you into believing his lies, [32] I will punish him and his family. None of his descendants will see the good things I will do for my people, for he has taught you to rebel against me. I, the Lord, have spoken!'"

[30:1] The Lord gave another message to Jeremiah. He said, [2] "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Write down for the record everything I have said to you, Jeremiah. [3] For the time is coming when I will restore the fortunes of my people of Israel and Judah. I will bring them home to this land that I gave to their ancestors, and they will possess it and live here again. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

[4] This is the message the Lord gave concerning Israel and Judah: [5] "This is what the Lord says: I have heard the people crying; there is only fear and trembling. [6] Now let me ask you a question: Do men give birth to babies? Then why do they stand there, ashen-faced, hands pressed against their sides like women about to give birth? [7] In all history there has never been such a time of terror. It will be a time of trouble for my people Israel. Yet in the end, they will be saved!

[8] "For in that day, says the Lord Almighty, I will break the yoke from their necks and snap their chains. Foreigners will no longer be their masters. [9] For my people will serve the Lord their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.

[10] "So do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant; do not be dismayed, Israel, says the Lord. For I will bring you home again from distant lands, and your children will return from their exile. Israel will return and will have peace and quiet in their own land, and no one will make them afraid.

[11] For I am with you and will save you, says the Lord. I will completely destroy the nations where I have scattered you, but I will not destroy you. But I must discipline you; I cannot let you go unpunished.

[12] "This is what the Lord says: Yours is an incurable bruise, a terrible wound. [13] There is no one to help you or bind up your injury. You are beyond the help of any medicine. [14] All your allies have left you and do not care about you anymore. I have wounded you cruelly, as though I were your enemy. For your sins are many, and your guilt is great. [15] Why do you protest your punishment—this wound that has no cure? I have had to punish you because your sins are many and your guilt is great.

[16] "But in that coming day, all who destroy you will be destroyed, and all your enemies will be sent into exile. Those who plunder you will be plundered, and those who attack you will be attacked. [17] I will give you back your health and heal your wounds, says the Lord.

"Now you are called an outcast—'Jerusalem for whom nobody cares.' [18] But the Lord says this: When I bring you home again from your captivity and restore your fortunes, Jerusalem will be rebuilt on her ruins. The palace will be reconstructed as it was before. [19] There will be joy and songs of thanksgiving, and I will multiply my people and make of them a great and honored nation. [20] Their children will prosper as they did long ago. I will establish them as a nation before me, and I will punish anyone who hurts them. [21] They will have their own ruler again, and he will not be a foreigner. I will invite him to approach me, says the Lord, for who would dare to come unless invited? [22] You will be my people, and I will be your God."

[23] Look! The Lord's anger bursts out like a storm, a driving wind that swirls down on the heads of the wicked. [24] The fierce anger of the Lord will not diminish until it has finished all his plans. In the days to come, you will understand all this.

[31:1] "In that day," says the Lord, "I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they will be my people. [2] I will care for the survivors as they travel through the wilderness. I will again come to give rest to the people of Israel."

[3] Long ago the Lord said to Israel: "I have loved you, my people, with an everlasting love. With unfailing love I have drawn you to myself. [4] I will rebuild you, my virgin Israel. You will again be happy and dance merrily with tambourines. [5] Again you will plant your vineyards on the mountains of Samaria and eat from your own gardens there. [6] The day will come when watchmen will shout from the hill country of Ephraim, 'Come, let us go up to Jerusalem to worship the Lord our God.'

[7] Now this is what the Lord says: "Sing with joy for Israel! Shout for the greatest of nations! Shout out with praise and joy: 'Save your people, O Lord, the remnant of Israel!' [8] For I will bring them from the north and from the distant corners of the earth. I will not forget the blind and lame, the expectant mothers and women about to give birth. A great company will return! [9] Tears of joy will stream down their faces, and I will lead them home with great care. They will walk beside quiet streams and not stumble. For I am Israel's father, and Ephraim is my oldest child.

[10] "Listen to this message from the Lord, you nations of the world; proclaim it in distant coastlands: The Lord, who scattered his people, will gather them together and watch over them as a shepherd does his flock. [11] For the Lord has redeemed Israel from those too strong for them. [12] They will come home and sing songs of joy on the heights of Jerusalem. They will be radiant because of the many gifts the Lord has given them—the good crops of wheat, wine, and oil, and the healthy flocks and herds. Their life will be like a watered garden, and all their sorrows will be gone. [13] The young women will dance for joy, and the men—old and young—will join in the celebration. I will turn their mourning into joy. I will comfort them and exchange their sorrow for rejoicing. [14] I will supply the priests with an abundance of offerings. I will satisfy my people with my bounty. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

[15] This is what the Lord says: "A cry of anguish is heard in Ramah—mourning and weeping unrestrained. Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be comforted—for her children are dead."

[16] But now the Lord says, "Do not weep any longer, for I will reward you. Your children will come back to you from the distant land of the enemy. [17] There is hope for your future," says the Lord. "Your children will come again to their own land. [18] I have heard Israel saying, 'You disciplined me severely, but I deserved it. I was like a calf that needed to be trained for the yoke and plow. Turn me again to you and restore me, for you alone are the Lord my God. [19] I turned away from God, but then I was sorry. I kicked myself for my stupidity! I was thoroughly ashamed of all I did in my younger days.'

[20] "Is not Israel still my son, my darling child?" asks the Lord. "I had to punish him, but I still love him. I long for him and surely will have mercy on him.

[21] "Set up road signs; put up guideposts. Mark well the path by which you came. Come back again, my virgin Israel; return to your cities here. [22] How long will you wander, my wayward daughter? For the Lord will cause something new and different to happen—Israel will embrace her God."

[23] This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "When I bring them back again, the people of Judah and its cities will again say, 'The Lord bless you—O righteous home, O holy mountain!' [24] And city dwellers and farmers and shepherds alike will live together in peace and happiness. [25] For I have given rest to the weary and joy to the sorrowing."

[26] At this, I woke up and looked around. My sleep had been very sweet.

[27] "The time will come," says the Lord, "when I will greatly increase the population and multiply the number of cattle here in Israel and Judah. [28] In the past I uprooted and tore down this nation. I overthrew it, destroyed it, and brought disaster upon it. But in the future I will plant it and build it up," says the Lord.

[29] "The people will no longer quote this proverb: 'The parents eat sour grapes, but their children's mouths pucker at the taste.' [30] All people will die for their own sins—those who eat the sour grapes will be the ones whose mouths will pucker.

[31] "The day will come," says the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. [32] This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant, though I loved them as a husband loves his wife," says the Lord.

[33] "But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day," says the Lord. "I will put my laws in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. [34] And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their family, saying, 'You should know the Lord.' For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will already know me," says the Lord. "And I will forgive their wickedness and will never again remember their sins."

[35] It is the Lord who provides the sun to light the day and the moon and stars to light the night. It is he who stirs the sea into roaring waves. His name is the Lord Almighty, and this is what he says: [36] "I am as likely to reject my people Israel as I am to do away with the laws of nature! [37] Just as the heavens cannot be measured and the foundation of the earth cannot be explored, so I will not consider casting them away forever for their sins. I, the Lord, have spoken!

[38] "The time is coming," says the Lord, "when all Jerusalem will be rebuilt for me, from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. [39] A measuring line will be stretched out over the hill of Gareb and across to Goah. [40] And the entire area—including the graveyard and ash dump in the valley, and all the fields out to the Kidron Valley on the east as far as the Horse Gate—will be holy to the Lord. The city will never again be captured or destroyed."

[32:1] The following message came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the tenth year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah. This was also the eighteenth year of the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar. [2] Jerusalem was under siege from the Babylonian army, and Jeremiah was imprisoned in the courtyard of the guard in the royal palace. [3] King Zedekiah had put him there because he continued to give this prophecy: "This is what the Lord says: I am about to hand this city over to the king of Babylon. [4] King Zedekiah will be captured by the Babylonians and taken to the king of Babylon to be judged and sentenced. [5] I will take Zedekiah to Babylon and will deal with him there. If you fight against the Babylonians, you will never succeed."

[6] At that time the Lord sent me a message. He said, [7] "Your cousin Hanamel son of Shallum will come and say to you, 'Buy my field at Anathoth. By law you have the right to buy it before it is offered to anyone else.' "

[8] Then, just as the Lord had said he would, Hanamel came and visited me in the prison. He said, "Buy my field at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin. By law you have the right to buy it before it is offered to anyone else, so buy it for yourself." Then I knew for sure that the message I had heard was from the Lord.

[9] So I bought the field at Anathoth, paying Hanamel seventeen pieces of silver for it. [10] I signed and sealed the deed of purchase before witnesses, weighed out the silver, and paid him. [11] Then I took the sealed deed and an unsealed copy of the deed, which contained the terms and conditions of the purchase, [12] and I handed them to Baruch son of Neriah and grandson of Mahseiah. I did all this in the presence of my cousin Hanamel, the witnesses who had signed the deed, and all the men of Judah who were there.

[13] Then I said to Baruch as they all listened, [14] "The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Take both this sealed deed and the unsealed copy, and put them into a pottery jar to preserve them for a long time. [15] For the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Someday people will again own property here in this land and will buy and sell houses and vineyards and fields."

[16] Then after I had given the papers to Baruch, I prayed to the Lord: [17] "O Sovereign Lord! You have made the heavens and earth by your great power. Nothing is too hard for you! [18] You are loving and kind to thousands, though children suffer for their parents' sins. You are the great and powerful God, the Lord Almighty. [19] You have all wisdom and do great and mighty miracles. You are very aware of the conduct of all people, and you reward them according to their deeds. [20] You performed miraculous signs and wonders in the land of Egypt—things still remembered to this day! And you have continued to do great miracles in Israel and all around the world. You have made your name very great, as it is today.

[21] "You brought Israel out of Egypt with mighty signs and wonders, with great power and overwhelming terror. [22] You gave the people of Israel this land that you had promised their ancestors long before—a land flowing with milk and honey. [23] Our ancestors came and conquered it and lived in it, but they refused to obey you or follow your law. They have hardly done one thing you told them to! That is why you have sent this terrible disaster upon them.

[24] "See how the siege ramps have been built against the city walls! Because of war, famine, and disease, the city has been handed over to the Babylonians, who will conquer it. Everything has happened just as you said it would. [25] And yet, O Sovereign Lord, you have told me to buy the field—paying good money for it before these witnesses—even though the city will soon belong to the Babylonians."

[26] Then this message came to Jeremiah from the Lord: [27] "I am the Lord, the God of all the peoples of the world. Is anything too hard for me? [28] I will hand this city over to the Babylonians and to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and he will capture it. [29] The Babylonians outside the walls will come in and set fire to the city. They will burn down all these houses, where the people caused my fury to rise by offering incense to Baal on the rooftops and by pouring out drink offerings to other gods. [30] Israel and Judah have done nothing but wrong since their earliest days. They have infuriated me with all their evil deeds," says the Lord. [31] "From the time this city was built until now, it has done nothing but anger me, so I am determined to get rid of it.

[32] "The sins of Israel and Judah—the sins of the people of Jerusalem, the kings, the officials, the priests, and the prophets—stir up my anger. [33] My people have turned their backs on me and have refused to return. Day after day, year after year, I taught them right from wrong, but they would not listen or obey. [34] They have set up their abominable idols right in my own Temple, defiling it. [35] They have built pagan shrines to Baal in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and there they sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molech. I have never commanded such a horrible deed; it never even crossed my mind to command such a thing. What an incredible evil, causing Judah to sin so greatly!

[36] "Now I want to say something more about this city. You have been saying, 'It will fall to the king of Babylon through war, famine, and disease.' But this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: [37] I will surely bring my people back again from all the countries where I will scatter them in my fury. I will bring them back to this very city and let them live in peace and safety. [38] They will be my people, and I will be their God. [39] And I will give them one heart and mind to worship me forever, for their own good and for the good of all their descendants.

[40] "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, promising not to stop doing good for them. I will put a desire in their hearts to worship me, and they will never leave me. [41] I will rejoice in doing good to them and will faithfully and wholeheartedly replant them in this land. [42] Just as I have sent all these calamities upon them, so I will do all the good I have promised them. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

[43] "Fields will again be bought and sold in this land about which you now say, 'It has been ravaged by the Babylonians, a land where people and animals have all disappeared.' [44] Yes, fields will once again be bought and sold—deeds signed and sealed and witnessed—in the land of Benjamin and here in Jerusalem, in the towns of Judah and in the hill country, in the foothills of Judah and in the Negev, too. For someday I will restore prosperity to them. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

[33:1] While Jeremiah was still confined in the courtyard of the guard, the Lord gave him this second message: [2] "The Lord, the Maker of the heavens and earth—the Lord is his name—says this: [3] Ask me and I will tell you some remarkable secrets about what is going to happen here. [4] For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Though you have torn down the houses of this city and even the king's palace to get materials to strengthen the walls against the siege weapons of the enemy, [5] the Babylonians will still enter. The men of this city are already as good as dead, for I have determined to destroy them in my terrible anger. I have abandoned them because of all their wickedness.

[6] "Nevertheless, the time will come when I will heal Jerusalem's damage and give her prosperity and peace. [7] I will restore the fortunes of Judah and Israel and rebuild their cities. [8] I will cleanse away their sins against me, and I will forgive all their sins of rebellion. [9] Then this city will bring me joy, glory, and honor before all the nations of the earth! The people of the world will see the good I do for my people and will tremble with awe!"

[10] "This is what the Lord says: You say, 'This land has been ravaged, and the people and animals have all disappeared.' Yet in the empty streets of Jerusalem and Judah's other towns, there will be heard once more [11] the sounds of joy and laughter. The joyful voices of bridegrooms and brides will be heard again, along with the joyous songs of people bringing thanksgiving offerings to the Lord. They will sing,

'Give thanks to the Lord Almighty, for the Lord is good.

His faithful love endures forever!'

For I will restore the prosperity of this land to what it was in the past, says the Lord.

[12] "This is what the Lord Almighty says: This land—though it is now desolate and the people and animals have all disappeared—will once more see shepherds leading sheep and lambs. [13] Once again their flocks will prosper in the towns of the hill country, the foothills of Judah, the Negev, the land of Benjamin, the vicinity of Jerusalem, and all the towns of Judah. I, the Lord, have spoken!

[14] "The day will come, says the Lord, when I will do for Israel and Judah all the good I have promised them. [15] At that time I will bring to the throne of David a righteous descendant, and he will do what is just and right throughout the land. [16] In that day Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will live in safety. And their motto will be 'The Lord is our righteousness!' [17] For this is what the Lord says: David will forever have a descendant sitting on the throne of Israel. [18] And there will always be Levitical priests to offer burnt offerings and grain offerings and sacrifices to me."

[19] Then this message came to Jeremiah from the Lord: [20] "If you can break my covenant with the day and the night so that they do not come on their usual schedule, [21] only then will my covenant with David, my servant, be broken. Only then will he no longer have a descendant to reign on his throne. The same is true for my covenant with the Levitical priests who minister before me. [22] And as the stars cannot be counted and the sand on the seashores cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David, my servant, and the Levites who minister before me."

[23] The Lord gave another message to Jeremiah. He said, [24] "Have you heard what people are saying?—'The Lord chose Judah and Israel and then abandoned them!' They are sneering and saying that Israel is not worthy to be counted as a nation. [25] But this is the Lord's reply: I would no more reject my people than I would change my laws of night and day, of earth and sky. [26] I will never abandon the descendants of Jacob or David, my servant, or change the plan that David's descendants will rule the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Instead, I will restore them to their land and have mercy on them."

[34:1] King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came with all the armies from the kingdoms he ruled, and he fought against Jerusalem and the towns of Judah. At that time this message came to Jeremiah from the Lord: [2] "Go to King Zedekiah of Judah, and tell him, 'This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I am about to hand this city over to the king of Babylon, and he will burn it. [3] You will not escape his grasp but will be taken into captivity. You will stand before the king of Babylon to be judged and sentenced. Then you will be exiled to Babylon.'

[4] "But listen to this promise from the Lord, O Zedekiah, and king of Judah. This is what the Lord says: 'You will not be killed in war [5] but will die peacefully among your people. They will burn incense in your memory, just as they did for your ancestors. They will weep for you and say, "Alas, our king is dead!" This I have decreed, says the Lord.' "

[6] So Jeremiah the prophet delivered the message to King Zedekiah of Judah. [7] At this time the Babylonian army was besieging Jerusalem, Lachish, and Azekah—the only cities of Judah with their walls still standing.

[8] This message came to Jeremiah from the Lord after King Zedekiah made a covenant with the people, proclaiming freedom for the slaves. [9] He had ordered all the people to free their Hebrew slaves—both men and women. No one was to keep a fellow Judean in bondage. [10] The officials and all the people had obeyed the king's command, [11] but later they changed their minds. They took back the people they had freed, making them slaves again.

[12] So the Lord gave them this message through Jeremiah: [13] "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I made a covenant with your ancestors long ago when I rescued them from their slavery in Egypt. [14] I told them that every Hebrew slave must be freed after serving six years. But this was never done. [15] Recently you repented and did what was right, following my command. You freed your slaves and made a solemn covenant with me in my Temple. [16] But now you have shrugged off your oath and defiled my name by taking back the men and women you had freed, making them slaves once again.

[17] "Therefore, this is what the Lord says: Since you have not obeyed me by setting your countrymen free, I will set you free to be destroyed by war, famine, and disease. You will be considered a disgrace by all the nations of the earth. [18] Because you have refused the terms of our covenant, I will cut you apart just as you cut apart the calf when you walked between its halves to solemnize your vows. [19] Yes, I will cut you apart, whether you are officials of Judah or Jerusalem, court officials, priests, or common people—for you have broken your oath. [20] I will give you to your enemies, and they will kill you. Your bodies will be food for the vultures and wild animals. [21] I will hand over King Zedekiah of Judah and his officials to the army of the king of Babylon. And though Babylon's king has left this city for a while, [22] I will call the Babylonian armies back again. They will fight against this city and will capture and burn it. I will see to it that all the towns of Judah are destroyed and left completely empty."

[35:1] This is the message the Lord gave Jeremiah when Jehoiakim son of Josiah was king of Judah: [2] "Go to the settlement where the families of the Recabites live, and invite them to the Lord's Temple. Take them into one of the inner rooms, and offer them some wine."

[3] So I went to see Jaazaniah son of Jeremiah and grandson of Habazziniah and all his brothers and sons—representing all the Recabite families. [4] I took them to the Temple, and we went into the room assigned to the sons of Hanan son of Igdaiah, a man of God. This room was located next to the one used by the palace officials, directly above the room of Maaseiah son of Shallum, the Temple gatekeeper.

[5] I set cups and jugs of wine before them and invited them to have a drink, [6] but they refused. "No," they said. "We don't drink wine, because Jehonadab son of Recab, our ancestor, gave us this command: 'You and your descendants must never drink wine. [7] And do not build houses or plant crops or vineyards, but always live in tents. If you follow these commands, you will live long, good lives in the land.' [8] So we have obeyed him in all these things. We have never had a drink of wine since then, nor have our wives, our sons, or our daughters. [9] We haven't built houses or owned vineyards or farms or planted crops. [10] We have lived in tents and have fully obeyed all the commands of Jehonadab, our ancestor. [11] But when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon arrived in this country, we were afraid of the Babylonian and Aramean armies. So we decided to move to Jerusalem. That is why we are here."

[12] Then the Lord gave this message to Jeremiah: [13] "The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Go and say to the people in Judah and Jerusalem, 'Come and learn a lesson about how to obey me. [14] The Recabites do not drink wine because their ancestor Jehonadab told them not to. But I have spoken to you again and again, and you refuse to listen or obey. [15] I have sent you prophet after prophet to tell you to turn from your wicked ways and to stop worshiping other gods, so that you might live in peace here in the land I gave to you and your ancestors. But you would not listen to me or obey. [16] The families of Recab have obeyed their ancestor completely, but you have refused to listen to me.'

[17] "Therefore, the Lord God Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Because you refuse to listen or answer when I call, I will send upon Judah and Jerusalem all the disasters I have threatened."

[18] Then Jeremiah turned to the Recabites and said, "This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: You have obeyed your ancestor Jehonadab in every respect, following all his instructions. [19] Because of this, Jehonadab son of Recab will always have descendants who serve me. I, the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, have spoken!"

[36:1] During the fourth year that Jehoiakim son of Josiah was king in Judah, the Lord gave this message to Jeremiah: [2] "Get a scroll, and write down all my messages against Israel, Judah, and the other nations. Begin with the first message back in the days of Josiah, and write down every message you have given, right up to the present time. [3] Perhaps the people of Judah will repent if they see in writing all the terrible things I have planned for them. Then I will be able to forgive their sins and wrongdoings."

[4] So Jeremiah sent for Baruch son of Neriah, and as Jeremiah dictated, Baruch wrote down all the prophecies that the Lord had given him. [5] Then Jeremiah said to Baruch, "I am a prisoner here and unable to go to the Temple. [6] So you go to the Temple on the next day of fasting, and read the messages from the Lord that are on this scroll. On that day people will be there from all over Judah. [7] Perhaps even yet they will turn from their evil ways and ask the Lord's forgiveness before it is too late. For the Lord's terrible anger has been pronounced against them."

[8] Baruch did as Jeremiah told him and read these messages from the Lord to the people at the Temple. [9] This happened on the day of sacred fasting held in late autumn, during the fifth year of the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah. People from all over Judah came to attend the services at the Temple on that day.

[10] Baruch read Jeremiah's words to all the people from the Temple room of Gemariah son of Shaphan. This room was just off the upper courtyard of the Temple, near the New Gate entrance.

[11] When Micaiah son of Gemariah and grandson of Shaphan heard the messages from the Lord, [12] he went down to the secretary's room in the palace where the administrative officials were meeting. Elishama the secretary was there, along with Delaiah son of Shemaiah, Elnathan son of Acbor, Gemariah son of Shaphan, Zedekiah son of Hananiah, and all the others with official responsibilities. [13] When Micaiah told them about the messages Baruch was reading to the people, [14] the officials sent Jehudi son of Nethaniah, grandson of Shelemiah, and great-grandson of Cushi, to ask Baruch to come and read the messages to them, too. So Baruch took the scroll and went to them. [15] "Sit down and read the scroll to us," the officials said, and Baruch did as they requested.

[16] By the time Baruch had finished reading, they were badly frightened. "We must tell the king what we have heard," they said. [17] "But first, tell us how you got these messages. Did they come directly from Jeremiah?"

[18] So Baruch explained, "Jeremiah dictated them to me word by word, and I wrote down his words with ink on this scroll."

[19] "You and Jeremiah should both hide," the officials told Baruch. "Don't tell anyone where you are!" [20] Then the officials left the scroll for safekeeping in the room of Elishama the secretary and went to tell the king.

[21] The king sent Jehudi to get the scroll. Jehudi brought it from Elishama's room and read it to the king as all his officials stood by. [22] It was late autumn, and the king was in a winterized part of the palace, sitting in front of a fire to keep warm. [23] Whenever Jehudi finished reading three or four columns, the king took his knife and cut off that section of the scroll. He then threw it into the fire, section by section, until the whole scroll was burned up. [24] Neither the king nor his officials showed any signs of fear or repentance at what they heard. [25] Even when Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah begged the king not to burn the scroll, he wouldn't listen.

[26] Then the king commanded his son Jerahmeel, Seraiah son of Azriel, and Shelemiah son of Abdeel to arrest Baruch and Jeremiah. But the Lord had hidden them.

[27] After the king had burned Jeremiah's scroll, the Lord gave Jeremiah another message. He said, [28] "Get another scroll, and write everything again just as you did on the scroll King Jehoiakim burned. [29] Then say to the king, 'This is what the Lord says: You burned the scroll because it said the king of Babylon would destroy this land and everything in it. [30] Now this is what the Lord says about King Jehoiakim of Judah: He will have no heirs to sit on the throne of David. His dead body will be thrown out to lie unburied—exposed to hot days and frosty nights. [31] I will punish him and his family and his officials because of their sins. I will pour out on them and on all the people of Judah and Jerusalem all the disasters I have promised, for they would not listen to my warnings.' "

[32] Then Jeremiah took another scroll and dictated again to his secretary Baruch. He wrote everything that had been on the scroll King Jehoiakim had burned in the fire. Only this time, he added much more!

[37:1] Zedekiah son of Josiah succeeded Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim as the king of Judah. He was appointed by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. [2] But neither King Zedekiah nor his officials nor the people who were left in the land listened to what the Lord said through Jeremiah. [3] Nevertheless, King Zedekiah sent Jehucal son of Shelemiah and Zephaniah the priest, son of Maaseiah, to ask Jeremiah, "Please pray to the Lord our God for us." [4] Jeremiah had not yet been imprisoned, so he could come and go as he pleased.

[5] At this time the army of Pharaoh Hophra of Egypt appeared at the southern border of Judah. When the Babylonian army heard about it, they withdrew from their siege of Jerusalem. [6] Then the Lord gave this message to Jeremiah: [7] "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to ask me what is going to happen, that Pharaoh's army is about to return to Egypt, though he came here to help you. [8] Then the Babylonians will come back and capture this city and burn it to the ground. [9] The Lord says: Do not fool yourselves that the Babylonians are gone for good. They aren't! [10] Even if you were to destroy the entire Babylonian army, leaving only a handful of wounded survivors, they would still stagger from their tents and burn this city to the ground!"

[11] When the Babylonian army left Jerusalem because of Pharaoh's approaching army, [12] Jeremiah started to leave the city on his way to the land of Benjamin, to see the property he had bought. [13] But as he was walking through the Benjamin Gate, a sentry arrested him and said, "You are defecting to the Babylonians!" The sentry making the arrest was Irijah son of Shelemiah and grandson of Hananiah.

[14] "That's not true!" Jeremiah protested. "I had no intention of doing any such thing." But Irijah wouldn't listen, and he took Jeremiah before the officials. [15] They were furious with Jeremiah and had him flogged and imprisoned in the house of Jonathan the secretary. Jonathan's house had been converted into a prison. [16] Jeremiah was put into a dungeon cell, where he remained for many days.

[17] Later King Zedekiah secretly requested that Jeremiah come to the palace, where the king asked him, "Do you have any messages from the Lord?"

"Yes, I do!" said Jeremiah. "You will be defeated by the king of Babylon."

[18] Then Jeremiah asked the king, "What crime have I committed? What have I done against you, your officials, or the people that I should be imprisoned like this? [19] Where are your prophets now who told you the king of Babylon would not attack you? [20] Listen, my lord the king, I beg you. Don't send me back to the dungeon in the house of Jonathan the secretary, for I will die there."

[21] So King Zedekiah commanded that Jeremiah not be returned to the dungeon. Instead, he was imprisoned in the courtyard of the guard in the royal palace. The king also commanded that Jeremiah be given a loaf of fresh bread every day as long as there was any left in the city. So Jeremiah was put in the palace prison.

[38:1] Now Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah son of Pashhur, Jehucal son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur son of Malkijah heard what Jeremiah had been telling the people. He was saying, [2] "This is what the Lord says: Everyone who stays in Jerusalem will die from war, famine, or disease, but those who surrender to the Babylonians will live. [3] The Lord also says: The city of Jerusalem will surely be handed over to the army of the king of Babylon, who will capture it."

[4] So these officials went to the king and said, "Sir, this man must die! That kind of talk will undermine the morale of the few fighting men we have left, as well as that of all the people, too. This man is a traitor!"

[5] So King Zedekiah agreed. "All right," he said. "Do as you like. I will do nothing to stop you."

[6] So the officials took Jeremiah from his cell and lowered him by ropes into an empty cistern in the prison yard. It belonged to Malkijah, a member of the royal family. There was no water in the cistern, but there was a thick layer of mud at the bottom, and Jeremiah sank down into it.

[7] But Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, an important palace official, heard that Jeremiah was in the cistern. At that time the king was holding court at the Benjamin Gate, [8] so Ebed-melech rushed from the palace to speak with him. [9] "My lord the king," he said, "these men have done a very evil thing in putting Jeremiah the prophet into the cistern. He will soon die of hunger, for almost all the bread in the city is gone."

[10] So the king told Ebed-melech, "Take along thirty of my men, and pull Jeremiah out of the cistern before he dies."

[11] So Ebed-melech took the men with him and went to a room in the palace beneath the treasury, where he found some old rags and discarded clothing. He carried these to the cistern and lowered them to Jeremiah on a rope. [12] Ebed-melech called down to Jeremiah, "Put these rags under your armpits to protect you from the ropes." Then when Jeremiah was ready, [13] they pulled him out. So Jeremiah was returned to the courtyard of the guard—the palace prison—where he remained.

[14] One day King Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah to meet him at the third entrance of the Lord's Temple. "I want to ask you something," the king said. "And don't try to hide the truth."

[15] Jeremiah said, "If I tell you the truth, you will kill me. And if I give you advice, you won't listen to me anyway."

[16] So King Zedekiah secretly promised him, "As surely as the Lord our Creator lives, I will not kill you or hand you over to the men who want you dead."

[17] Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "The Lord God Almighty, the God of Israel, says: If you surrender to Babylon, you and your family will live, and the city will not be burned. [18] But if you refuse to surrender, you will not escape! This city will be handed over to the Babylonians, and they will burn it to the ground."

[19] "But I am afraid to surrender," the king said, "for the Babylonians will hand me over to the Judeans who have defected to them. And who knows what they will do to me?"

[20] Jeremiah replied, "You won't be handed over to them if you choose to obey the Lord. Your life will be spared, and all will go well for you."

[21] But if you refuse to surrender, this is what the Lord has revealed to me: [22] All the women left in your palace will be brought out and given to the officers of the Babylonian army. Then the women will taunt you, saying, 'What fine friends you have! They have betrayed and misled you. When your feet sank in the mud, they left you to your fate!' [23] All your wives and children will be led out to the Babylonians, and you will not escape. You will be seized by the king of Babylon, and this city will be burned."

[24] Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "Don't tell anyone you told me this, or you will die! [25] My officials may hear that I spoke to you. Then they may say to you, 'Tell us what you and the king were talking about. If you don't tell us, we will kill you.' [26] If this happens, just tell them you begged me not to send you back to Jonathan's dungeon, for fear you would die there."

[27] Sure enough, it wasn't long before the king's officials came to Jeremiah and asked him why the king had called for him. But Jeremiah followed the king's instructions, and they left without finding out the truth. No one had overheard the conversation between Jeremiah and the king. [28] And Jeremiah remained a prisoner in the courtyard of the guard until the day Jerusalem was captured.

[39:1] it was in January during the ninth year of King Zedekiah's reign that King Nebuchadnezzar and his army returned to besiege Jerusalem. [2] Two and a half years later, on July 18, the Babylonians broke through the wall, and the city fell. [3] All the officers of the Babylonian army came in and sat in triumph at the Middle Gate: Nergal-sharezer of Samgar, and Nebo-sarsekim, a chief officer, and Nergal-sharezer, the king's adviser, and many others.

[4] King Zedekiah and his royal guard saw the Babylonians in the city gate, so they fled when the darkness of night arrived. They went out through a gate between the two walls behind the king's garden and headed toward the Jordan Valley. [5] But the Babylonians chased the king and caught him on the plains of Jericho. They took him to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who was at Riblah in the land of Hamath. There the king of Babylon pronounced judgment upon Zedekiah. [6] He made Zedekiah watch as they killed his sons and all the nobles of Judah. [7] Then he gouged out Zedekiah's eyes, bound him in chains, and sent him away to exile in Babylon.

[8] Meanwhile, the Babylonians burned Jerusalem, including the palace, and tore down the walls of the city. [9] Then Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, sent to Babylon the remnant of the population as well as those who had defected to him. [10] But Nebuzaradan left a few of the poorest people in Judah, and he assigned them fields and vineyards to care for.

[11] King Nebuchadnezzar had told Nebuzaradan to find Jeremiah. [12] "See that he isn't hurt," he had said. "Look after him well, and give him anything he wants." [13] So Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, and Nebushazban, a chief officer, and Nergal-sharezer, the king's adviser, and the other officers of Babylon's king [14] sent messengers to bring Jeremiah out of the prison. They put him under the care of Gedaliah son of Ahikam and grandson of Shaphan, who was to take him back to his home. So Jeremiah stayed in Judah among his own people.

[15] The Lord had given the following message to Jeremiah while he was still in prison: [16] "Say to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, 'The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I will do to this city everything I have threatened. I will send disaster, not prosperity.'

You will see its destruction, [17] but I will rescue you from those you fear so much. [18] Because you trusted me, I will preserve your life and keep you safe. I, the Lord, have spoken!" "

[40:1] The Lord gave a message to Jeremiah after Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, had released him at Ramah. He had found Jeremiah bound in chains among the captives of Jerusalem and Judah who were being sent to exile in Babylon.

[2] The captain of the guard called for Jeremiah and said, "The Lord your God has brought this disaster on this land, [3] just as he said he would. For these people have sinned against the Lord and disobeyed him. That is why it happened. [4] Now I am going to take off your chains and let you go. If you want to come with me to Babylon, you are welcome. I will see that you are well cared for. But if you don't want to come, you may stay here. The whole land is before you—go wherever you like. [5] If you decide to stay, then return to Gedaliah son of Ahikam and grandson of Shaphan. He has been appointed governor of Judah by the king of Babylon. Stay there with the people he rules. But it's up to you; go wherever you like."

Then Nebuzaradan gave Jeremiah some food and money and let him go. [6] So Jeremiah returned to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah and lived in Judah with the few who were still left in the land.

[7] The leaders of the Judean guerrilla bands in the countryside heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam as governor over the poor people who were left behind in Judah, and that he hadn't exiled everyone to Babylon. [8] So they came to see Gedaliah at Mizpah. These are the names of the leaders who came: Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan and Jonathan, sons of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth, the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, Jaazaniah son of the Maacathite, and all their men.

[9] Gedaliah assured them that it would be safe for them to surrender to the Babylonians. "Stay here, and serve the king of Babylon," he said, "and all will go well for you. [10] As for me, I will stay at Mizpah to represent you before the Babylonians who come to meet with us. Settle in any town you wish, and live off the land. Harvest the grapes and summer fruits and olives, and store them away."

[11] When the Judeans in Moab, Ammon, Edom, and the other nearby countries heard that the king of Babylon had left a few people in Judah and that Gedaliah was the governor, [12] they began to return to Judah from the places to which they had fled. They stopped at Mizpah to discuss their plans with Gedaliah and then went out into the Judean countryside to gather a great harvest of grapes and other crops.

[13] Soon after this, Johanan son of Kareah and the other guerrilla leaders came to Gedaliah at Mizpah. [14] They said to him, "Did you know that Baalis, king of Ammon, has sent Ishmael son of Nethaniah to assassinate you?" But Gedaliah refused to believe them.

[15] Later Johanan had a private conference with Gedaliah and volunteered to kill Ishmael secretly. "Why should we let him come and murder you?" Johanan asked. "What will happen then to the Judeans who have returned? Why should the few of us who are still left be scattered and lost?"

[16] But Gedaliah said to Johanan, "I forbid you to do any such thing, for you are lying about Ishmael."

[41:1] But in midautumn, Ishmael son of Nethaniah and grandson of Elishama, who was a member of the royal family, arrived in Mizpah accompanied by ten men. Gedaliah invited them to dinner. While they were eating, [2] Ishmael and his ten men suddenly drew their swords and killed Gedaliah, whom the king of Babylon had appointed governor. [3] Then they went out and slaughtered all the Judean officials and Babylonian soldiers who were with Gedaliah at Mizpah.

[4] The next day, before anyone had heard about Gedaliah's murder, [5] eighty men arrived from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria. They had come to worship at the Temple of the Lord. They had shaved off their beards, torn their clothes, and cut themselves, and had brought along grain offerings and incense. [6] Ishmael left Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he went. When he reached them, he said, "Oh, come and see what has happened to Gedaliah!"

[7] But as soon as they were all inside the town, Ishmael and his men killed all but ten of them and threw their bodies into a cistern. [8] The other ten had talked Ishmael into letting them go by promising to bring him their stores of wheat, barley, oil, and honey that they had hidden away. [9] The cistern where Ishmael dumped the bodies of the men he murdered was the large one made by King Asa when he fortified Mizpah to protect himself against King Baasha of Israel. Ishmael son of Nethaniah filled it with corpses.

[10] Ishmael made captives of the king's daughters and the other people who had been left under Gedaliah's care in Mizpah by Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard. Taking them with him, he started back toward the land of Ammon.

[11] But when Johanan son of Kareah and the rest of the guerrilla leaders heard what Ishmael had done, [12] they took all their men and set out to stop him. They caught up with him at the pool near Gibeon. [13] The people Ishmael had captured shouted for joy when they saw Johanan and his men. [14] And all the captives from Mizpah escaped and began to help Johanan. [15] Meanwhile, Ishmael and eight of his men escaped from Johanan into the land of Ammon.

[16] Then Johanan son of Kareah and his officers led away all the people they had rescued—warriors, women, children, and palace officials. [17] They took them all to the village of Geruth-kimham near Bethlehem, where they prepared to leave for Egypt. [18] They were afraid of what the Babylonians would do when they heard that Ishmael had killed Gedaliah, the governor appointed by the Babylonian king.

[42:1] Then all the army officers, including Johanan son of Kareah and Jezaniah son of Hoshiaiah, and all the people, from the least to the greatest, approached [2] Jeremiah the prophet. They said, "Please pray to the Lord your God for us. As you know, we are only a tiny remnant compared to what we were before. [3] Beg the Lord your God to show us what to do and where to go."

[4] "All right," Jeremiah replied. "I will pray to the Lord your God, and I will tell you everything he says. I will hide nothing from you."

[5] Then they said to Jeremiah, "May the Lord your God be a faithful witness against us if we refuse to obey whatever he tells us to do! [6] Whether we like it or not, we will obey the Lord our God to whom we send you with our plea. For if we obey him, everything will turn out well for us."

[7] Ten days later, the Lord gave his reply to Jeremiah. [8] So he called for Johanan son of Kareah and the army officers, and for all the people, from the least to the greatest. [9] He said to them, "You sent me to the Lord, the God of Israel, with your request, and this is his reply: [10] 'Stay here in this land. If you do, I will build you up and not tear you down; I will plant you and not uproot you. For I am sorry for all the punishment I have had to bring upon you. [11] Do not fear the king of Babylon anymore, says the Lord. For I am with you and will save you and rescue you from his power. [12] I will be merciful to you by making him kind, so he will let you stay here in your land.'

[13] "But if you refuse to obey the Lord your God and say, 'We will not stay here,' [14] and if you insist on going to live in Egypt where you think you will be free from war, famine, and alarms, [15] then this is what the Lord says to the remnant of Judah. The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'If you insist on going to Egypt, [16] the war and famine you fear will follow close behind you, and you will die there. [17] That is the fate awaiting every one of you who insists on going to live in Egypt. Yes, you will die from war, famine, and disease. None of you will escape from the disaster I will bring upon you there.'

[18] "For the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'Just as my anger and fury were poured out on the people of Jerusalem, so they will be poured out on you when you enter Egypt. You will become an object of damnation, horror, cursing, and mockery. And you will never see your homeland again.'

[19] "Listen, you remnant of Judah. The Lord has told you: 'Do not go to Egypt!' Don't forget this warning I have given you today. [20] For you were deceitful when you sent me to pray to the Lord your God for you, saying, 'Just tell us what the Lord our God says, and we will do it!' [21] And today I have told you exactly what he said, but you will not obey the Lord your God any better now than you have in the past. [22] So you can be sure that you will die from war, famine, and disease in Egypt, where you insist on going."

[43:1] When Jeremiah had finished giving this message from the Lord their God to all the people, [2] Azariah son of Hoshaiah and Johanan son of Kareah and all the other proud men said to Jeremiah, "You lie! The Lord our God hasn't forbidden us to go to Egypt! [3] Baruch son of Neriah has convinced you to say this, so we will stay here and be killed by the Babylonians or be carried off into exile."

[4] So Johanan and all the army officers and all the people refused to obey the Lord's command to stay in Judah. [5] Johanan and his officers took with them all the people who had returned from the nearby countries to which they had fled. [6] In the crowd were men, women, and children, the king's daughters, and all those whom Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, had left with Gedaliah. Also included were the prophet Jeremiah and Baruch. [7] The people refused to obey the Lord and went to Egypt, going as far as the city of Tahpanhes.

[8] Then at Tahpanhes, the Lord gave another message to Jeremiah. He said, [9] "While the people of Judah are watching, bury large rocks between the pavement stones at the entrance of Pharaoh's palace here in Tahpanhes. [10] Then say to the people of Judah, 'The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I will surely bring my servant Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, here to Egypt. I will set his throne on these stones that I have hidden. He will spread his royal canopy over them. [11] And when he comes, he will destroy the land of Egypt. He will bring death to those destined for death; he will bring captivity to those destined for captivity; he will bring the sword against those destined for the sword. [12] He will set fire to the temples of Egypt's gods, burning all their idols and carrying away the people as captives. He will pick clean the land of Egypt as a shepherd picks fleas from his cloak. And he himself will leave unharmed. [13] He will break down the sacred pillars standing in the temple of the sun in Egypt, and he will burn down the temples of Egypt's gods.' "

[44:1] This is the message Jeremiah received concerning the Judeans living in northern Egypt in the cities of Migdol, Tahpanhes, and Memphis, and throughout southern Egypt as well: [2] "This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: You saw what I did to Jerusalem and to all the towns of Judah. They now lie in ruins, and no one lives in them. [3] Because of all their wickedness, my anger rose high against them. They burned incense and worshiped other gods—gods that neither they nor you nor any of your ancestors have ever known.

[4] "Again and again I sent my servants, the prophets, to plead with them, 'Don't do these horrible things that I hate so much.' [5] But my people would not listen or turn back from their wicked ways. They kept right on burning incense to these gods. [6] And so my fury boiled over and fell like fire on the towns of Judah and into the streets of Jerusalem, and now they are a desolate ruin.

[7] "And now the Lord God Almighty, the God of Israel, asks you: Why are you destroying yourselves? For not one of you will survive—not a man, woman, or child among you who has come here from Judah, not even the babies in your arms. [8] Why arouse my anger by burning incense to the idols you have made here in Egypt? You will only destroy yourselves and make yourselves an object of cursing and mockery for all the nations of the earth. [9] Have you forgotten the sins of your ancestors, the sins of the kings and queens of Judah, and the sins you and your wives committed in Judah and Jerusalem? [10] To this very hour you have shown no remorse or reverence. No one has chosen to follow my law and the decrees I gave to you and your ancestors before you.

[11] "Therefore, the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I have made up my mind to destroy every one of you! [12] I will take this remnant of Judah that insisted on coming here to Egypt, and I will consume them. They will fall here in Egypt, killed by war and famine. All will die, from the least to the greatest. They will be an object of damnation, horror, cursing, and mockery. [13] I will punish them in Egypt just as I punished them in Jerusalem, by war, famine, and disease. [14] Of those who fled to Egypt with dreams of returning home to Judah, only a handful will escape."

[15] Then all the women present and all the men who knew that their wives had burned incense to idols—a great crowd of all the Judeans living in Pathros, the southern region of Egypt—answered Jeremiah, [16] "We will not listen to your messages from the Lord! [17] We will do whatever we want. We will burn incense to the Queen of Heaven and sacrifice to her just as much as we like—just as we and our ancestors did before us, and as our kings and princes have always done in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For in those days we had plenty to eat, and we were well off and had no troubles! [18] But ever since we quit burning incense to the Queen of Heaven and stopped worshiping her, we have been in great trouble and have suffered the effects of war and famine."

[19] "And," the women added, "Do you suppose that we were worshiping the Queen of Heaven, pouring out drink offerings to her, and making cakes marked with her image, without our husbands knowing it and helping us? Of course not!"

[20] Then Jeremiah said to all of them, men and women alike, who had given him that answer, [21] "Do you think the Lord did not know that you and your ancestors, your kings and officials, and all the people were burning incense to idols in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? [22] It was because the Lord could no longer bear all the evil things you were doing that he made your land an object of cursing—a desolate ruin without a single inhabitant—as it is today. [23] The very reason all these terrible things have happened to you is because you have burned incense to idols and sinned against the Lord, refusing to obey him and follow his instructions, laws, and stipulations."

[24] Then Jeremiah said to them all, including the women, "Listen to this message from the Lord, all you citizens of Judah who live in Egypt. [25] The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: You and your wives have said that you will never give up your devotion and sacrifices to the Queen of Heaven, and you have proved it by your actions. Then go ahead and carry out your promises and vows to her!

[26] "But listen to this message from the Lord, all you Judeans now living in Egypt: I have sworn by my great name, says the Lord, that my name will no longer be spoken by any of the Judeans in the land of Egypt. None of you may invoke my name or use this oath: 'As surely as the Sovereign Lord lives!' [27] For I will watch over you to bring you disaster and not good. You will suffer war and famine until all of you are dead.

[28] "Only a small number will escape death and return to Judah from Egypt. Then all those who came to Egypt will find out whose words are true, mine or theirs! [29] And this is the proof I give you, says the Lord, that all I have threatened will happen to you and that I will punish you here: [30] I will turn Pharaoh Hophra, king of Egypt, over to his enemies who want to kill him, just as I turned King Zedekiah of Judah over to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

[45:1] The prophet Jeremiah gave a message to Baruch son of Neriah in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, after Baruch had written down everything Jeremiah had dictated to him. He said, [2] "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says to you, Baruch: [3] You have said, 'I am overwhelmed with trouble! Haven't I had enough pain already? And now the Lord has added more! I am weary of my own sighing and can find no rest.'

[4] "Baruch, this is what the Lord says: I will destroy this nation that I built. I will uproot what I planted. [5] Are you seeking great things for yourself? Don't do it! But don't be discouraged. I will bring great disaster upon all these people, but I will protect you wherever you go. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

B. GOD'S JUDGMENT ON THE NATIONS (Jeremiah 46:1-52:34)

Jeremiah lived to see many of his prophecies come true—most notably the fall of Jerusalem. The fulfillment of this and other prophecies against the foreign nations came as a result of sin. Those who refuse to confess their sin bring judgment upon themselves.

1. Prophecies about foreign nations
2. The fall of Jerusalem

Jeremiah 46:1-52:34

The following messages were given to Jeremiah the prophet from the Lord concerning foreign nations.

[2] This message concerning Egypt was given in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, the king of Judah, on the occasion of the battle of Carchemish when Pharaoh Neco, king of Egypt, and his army were defeated beside the Euphrates River by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

[3] "Buckle on your armor and advance into battle! [4] Harness the horses, and prepare to mount them. Put on your helmets, sharpen your spears, and prepare your armor. [5] But look! The Egyptian army flees in terror. The bravest of its fighting men run without a backward glance. They are terrorized at every turn, says the Lord. [6] The swiftest cannot flee; the mightiest warriors cannot escape. By the Euphrates River to the north they stumble and fall.

[7] "Who is this, rising like the Nile River at flood time, overflowing all the land? [8] It is the Egyptian army, boasting that it will cover the earth like a flood, destroying every foe. [9] Then come, you horses and chariots and mighty warriors of Egypt! Come, all you allies from Ethiopia, Libya, and Lydia who are skilled with the shield and bow!

[10] For this is the day of the Lord, the Lord Almighty, a day of vengeance on his enemies. The sword will devour until it is satisfied, yes, drunk with your blood! The Lord, the Lord Almighty, will receive a sacrifice today in the north country beside the Euphrates River. [11] Go up to Gilead to get ointment, O virgin daughter of Egypt! But your many medicines will bring you no healing. [12] The nations have heard of your shame. The earth is filled with your cries of despair. Your mightiest warriors will stumble across each other and fall together."

[13] Then the Lord gave the prophet Jeremiah this message about King Nebuchadnezzar's plans to attack Egypt.

[14] "Shout it out in Egypt! Publish it in the cities of Migdol, Memphis, and Tahpanhes! Mobilize for battle, for the sword of destruction will devour everyone around you. [15] Why have your warriors fled in terror? They cannot stand because the Lord has driven them away.

[16] They stumble and fall over each other and say among themselves, 'Come, let's go back to our homeland where we were born. Let's get away from the sword of the enemy!' [17] There they will say, 'Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, is a loudmouth who missed his opportunity!'

[18] "As surely as I live," says the King, whose name is the Lord Almighty, "one is coming against Egypt who is as tall as Mount Tabor or Mount Carmel by the sea! [19] Pack up! Get ready to leave for exile, you citizens of Egypt! The city of Memphis will be destroyed, without a single person living there. [20] Egypt is as sleek as a young cow, but a gadfly from the north is on its way! [21] Egypt's famed mercenaries have become like fattened calves. They turn and run, for it is a day of great disaster for Egypt, a time of great punishment. [22] Silent as a serpent gliding away, Egypt flees. The invading army marches in; they come against her with axes like woodsmen. [23] They will cut down her people like trees," says the Lord, "for they are more numerous than grasshoppers. [24] Egypt will be humiliated; she will be handed over to men from the north."

[25] The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "I will punish Amon, the god of Thebes, and all the other gods of Egypt. I will punish its rulers and Pharaoh, too, and all who trust in him.

[26] I will hand them over to those who want them killed—to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and his army. But afterward the land will recover from the ravages of war. I, the Lord, have spoken!

[27] "But do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant; do not be dismayed, Israel. For I will bring you home again from distant lands, and your children will return from their exile. Israel will return and will have peace and quiet, and nothing will make them afraid. [28] Fear not, Jacob, my servant," says the Lord, "for I am with you. I will destroy the nations to which I have exiled you, but I will not destroy you. But I must discipline you; I cannot let you go unpunished."

[47:1] This is the Lord's message to the prophet Jeremiah concerning the Philistines of Gaza, before it was captured by the Egyptian army.

[2] This is what the Lord says: "A flood is coming from the north to overflow the land. It will destroy the land and everything in it—cities and people alike. People will scream in terror, and everyone in the land will weep. [3] Hear the clatter of hooves and the rumble of wheels as the chariots rush by. Terrified fathers run madly, without a backward glance at their helpless children.

[4] "The time has come for the Philistines to be destroyed, along with their allies from Tyre and Sidon. Yes, the Lord is destroying the Philistines, those colonists from Crete. [5] The city of Gaza will be demolished; Ashkelon will lie in ruins. You remnant of the Mediterranean plain, how long will you lament and mourn?

[6] "Now, O sword of the Lord, when will you be at rest again? Go back into your sheath; rest and be still! [7] But how can it be still when the Lord has sent it on an errand? For the city of Ashkelon and the people living along the sea must be destroyed."

[48:1] This message was given concerning Moab.

This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Destruction is certain for the city of Nebo; it will soon lie in ruins. The city of Kiriathaim will be humiliated and captured; the fortress will be humiliated and broken down. [2] No one will ever brag about Moab again, for there is a plot against her life. In Heshbon plans have been completed to destroy her. 'Come,' they say, 'we will cut her off from being a nation.' The city of Madmen, too, will be silenced; the sword will follow you there. [3] And then the roar of battle will surge against Horonaim, [4] for all Moab is being destroyed. Her little ones will cry out. [5] Her refugees will climb the hills of Luhith, weeping bitterly, while cries of terror rise from Horonaim below. [6] Flee for your lives! Hide in the wilderness! [7] Because you have trusted in your wealth and skill, you will be taken captive. Your god Chemosh, with his priests and princes, will be exiled to distant lands!"

[8] "All the towns will be destroyed, both on the plateaus and in the valleys, for the Lord has spoken. [9] Oh, that Moab had wings so she could fly away, for her cities will be left empty, with no one living in them. [10] Cursed be those who refuse to do the work the Lord has given them, who hold back their swords from shedding blood!"

[11] "From her earliest history, Moab has lived in peace. She is like wine that has been allowed to settle. She has not been poured from flask to flask, and she is now fragrant and smooth. [12] But the time is coming soon," says the Lord, "When I will send troublemakers to pour her from her jar. They will pour her out, then shatter the jar! [13] At last Moab will be ashamed of her idol Chemosh, as Israel was ashamed of her gold calf at Bethel.

[14] "You used to boast, 'We are heroes, mighty men of war.' [15] But now Moab and her towns will be destroyed. Her most promising youth are doomed to slaughter," says the King, whose name is the Lord Almighty. [16] "Calamity is coming fast to Moab; it threatens ominously.

[17] "You friends of Moab, weep for her and cry! See how the strong scepter is broken, how the beautiful staff is shattered! [18] Come down from your glory and sit in the dust, you people of Dibon, for those who destroy Moab will shatter Dibon, too. They will tear down all your towers. [19] The people of Aroer stand anxiously beside the road to watch. They shout to those who flee from Moab, 'What has happened there?'

[20] "And the reply comes back, 'Moab lies in ruins; weep and wail! Tell it by the banks of the Arnon River: Moab has been destroyed!' [21] All the cities of the plateau lie in ruins, too. Judgment has been poured out on them all—on Holon and Jahaz and Mephaath, [22] and on Dibon and Nebo and Beth-diblathaim, [23] and on Kiriathaim and Beth-gamul and Beth-meon, [24] and on Kerioth and Bozrah—all the cities of Moab, far and near.

[25] "The strength of Moab has ended. Her horns have been cut off, and her arms have been broken," says the Lord. [26] "Let her stagger and fall like a drunkard, for she has rebelled against the Lord. Moab will wallow in her own vomit, ridiculed by all. [27] Did you not make Israel the object of your ridicule? Was she caught in the company of thieves that you should despise her as you do?"

[28] "You people of Moab, flee from your cities and towns! Live in the caves like doves that nest in the clefts of the rocks. [29] We have heard of the pride of Moab, for it is very great. We know of her loftiness, her arrogance, and her haughty heart. [30] I know about her insolence," says the Lord, "but her boasts are false; they accomplish nothing. [31] Yes, I wail for Moab; my heart is broken for the men of Kir-hareseth.

[32] "You people of Sibmah, rich in vineyards, I will weep for you even more than I did for Jazer. Your spreading vines once reached as far as the Dead Sea, but the destroyer has stripped you bare! He has harvested your grapes and summer fruits. [33] Joy and gladness are gone from fruitful Moab. The presses yield no wine. No one treads the grapes with shouts of joy. There is shouting, yes, but not of joy. [34] Instead, their awful cries of terror can be heard from Heshbon clear across to Elealeh and Jahaz; from Zoar all the way to Horonaim and Eglath-shelishiyah. Even the waters of Nimrim are dried up now.

[35] "I will put an end to Moab," says the Lord, "for they offer sacrifices at the pagan shrines and burn incense to their false gods. [36] My heart moans like a flute for Moab and Kir-hareseth, for all their wealth has disappeared. [37] They shave their heads and beards in mourning. They slash their hands and put on clothes made of sackcloth. [38] Crying and sorrow will be in every Moabite home and on every street. For I have smashed Moab like an old, unwanted bottle. [39] How it is broken! Hear the wailing! See the shame of Moab! She has become an object of ridicule, an example of ruin to all her neighbors.

[40] "An eagle swoops down on the land of Moab," says the Lord. [41] "Her cities will fall; her strongholds will be seized. Even the mightiest warriors will be as frightened as a woman about to give birth. [42] Moab will no longer be a nation, for she has boasted against the Lord.

[43] "Terror and traps and snares will be your lot, O Moab," says the Lord. [44] "Those who flee in terror will fall into a trap, and those who escape the trap will step into a snare. I will see to it that you do not get away, for the time of your judgment has come," says the Lord. [45] "The people flee as far as Heshbon but are unable to go on. For a fire comes from Heshbon, King Sihon's ancestral home, to devour the entire land with all its rebellious people.

[46] "O Moab, your destruction is sure! The people of the god Chemosh are destroyed! Your sons and daughters have been taken away as captives. [47] But in the latter days I will restore the fortunes of Moab," says the Lord.

This is the end of Jeremiah's prophecy concerning Moab.

[49:1] This message was given concerning the Ammonites.

This is what the Lord says: "What are you doing? Are there no descendants of Israel to inherit the land of Gad? Why are you, who worship Molech, living in its towns? [2] I will punish you for this," says the Lord, "by destroying your city of Rabbah. It will become a desolate heap, and the neighboring towns will be burned. Then Israel will come and take back the land you took from her," says the Lord.

[3] "Cry out, O Heshbon, for the town of Ai is destroyed. Weep, O people of Rabbah! Put on your clothes of mourning. Weep and wail, hiding in the hedges, for your god Molech will be exiled along with his princes and priests. [4] You are proud of your fertile valleys, but they will soon be ruined. You rebellious daughter, you trusted in your wealth and thought no one could ever harm you. [5] But look! I will bring terror upon you," says the Lord, the Lord Almighty. "Your neighbors will chase you from your land, and no one will help your exiles as they flee. [6] but afterward I will restore the fortunes of the Ammonites," says the Lord.

[7] This message was given concerning Edom.

This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Where are all the wise men of Teman? Is there no one left to give wise counsel? [8] Turn and flee! Hide in deep caves, you people of Dedan! For when I bring disaster on Edom, I will punish you, too! [9] Those who harvest grapes always leave a few for the poor. If thieves came at night, even they would not take everything. [10] But I will strip bare the land of Edom, and there will be no place left to hide. Its children, its brothers, and its neighbors—all will be destroyed—and Edom itself will be no more. [11] But I will preserve the orphans who remain among you. Your widows, too, will be able to depend on me for help."

[12] And this is what the Lord says: "If the innocent must suffer, how much more must you! You will not go unpunished! You must drink this cup of judgment! [13] For I have sworn by my own name," says the Lord, "that Bozrah will become an object of horror and a heap of rubble; it will be mocked and cursed. All its towns and villages will be desolate forever."

[14] I have heard a message from the Lord that an ambassador was sent to the nations to say, "Form a coalition against Edom, and prepare for battle!"

[15] This is what the Lord says: "I will cut you down to size among the nations, Edom. You will be despised by all. [16] You are proud that you inspire fear in others. And you are proud because you live in a rock fortress and hide high in the mountains. But don't fool yourselves! Though you live among the peaks with the eagles, I will bring you crashing down," says the Lord.

[17] "Edom will be an object of horror. All who pass by will be appalled and will gasp at the destruction they see there. [18] It will be like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighboring towns," says the Lord. "No one will live there anymore. [19] I will come like a lion from the thickets of the Jordan, leaping on the sheep in the pasture. I will chase Edom from its land, and I will appoint the leader of my choice. For who is like me, and who can challenge me? What ruler can oppose my will?"

[20] Listen to the Lord's plans for Edom and the people of Teman. Even the little children will be dragged off, and their homes will be empty. [21] The earth will shake with the noise of Edom's fall, and its cry of despair will be heard all the way to the Red Sea. [22] The enemy will come as swiftly as an eagle, and he will spread his wings against Bozrah. Even the mightiest warriors will be as frightened as a woman about to give birth.

[23] This message was given concerning Damascus.

This is what the Lord says: "The towns of Hamath and Arpad are struck with fear, for they have heard the news of their destruction. Their hearts are troubled like a wild sea in a raging storm. [24] Damascus has become feeble, and all her people turn to flee. Fear, anguish, and pain have gripped her as they do a woman giving birth. [25] That famous city, a city of joy, will be forsaken! [26] Her young men will fall in the streets and die. Her warriors will all be killed," says the Lord Almighty. [27] "And I will start a fire at the edge of Damascus that will burn up the palaces of Ben-hadad."

[28] This message was given concerning Kedar and the kingdoms of Hazor, which were attacked by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

This is what the Lord says: "Advance against Kedar! Blot out the warriors from the East! [29] Their flocks and tents will be captured, and their household goods and camels will be taken away. Everywhere shouts of panic will be heard: 'We are terrorized at every turn!' [30] Flee for your lives," says the Lord. "Hide yourselves in deep caves, you people of Hazor, for King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon has plotted against you and is preparing to destroy you.

[31] "Go up and attack those self-sufficient nomadic tribes," says the Lord. "They live alone in the desert without walls or gates. [32] Their camels and cattle will all be yours. I will scatter to the winds these people who live in distant places. I will bring calamity upon them from every direction," says the Lord. [33] "Hazor will be inhabited by jackals, and it will be desolate forever. No one will live there anymore."

[34] This message concerning Elam came to the prophet Jeremiah from the Lord at the beginning of the reign of King Zedekiah of Judah.

[35] This is what the Lord Almighty says: "I will destroy the archers of Elam—the best of their marksmen. [36] I will bring enemies from all directions, and I will scatter the people of Elam to the four winds. They will be exiled to countries around the world. [37] I myself will go with Elam's enemies to shatter it. My fierce anger will bring great disaster upon the people of Elam," says the Lord. "Their enemies will chase them with the sword until I have destroyed them completely. [38] I will set my throne in Elam," says the Lord, "and I will destroy its king and princes. [39] But in the latter days I will restore the fortunes of Elam," says the Lord.

[50:1] The Lord gave Jeremiah the prophet this message concerning Babylon and the land of the Babylonians.

[2] This is what the Lord says: "Tell the whole world, and keep nothing back! Raise a signal flag so everyone will know that Babylon will fall! Her images and idols will be shattered. Her gods Bel and Marduk will be utterly disgraced. [3] For a nation will attack her from the north and bring such destruction that no one will live in her again. Everything will be gone; both people and animals will flee.

[4] "Then the people of Israel and Judah will join together," says the Lord, "weeping and seeking the Lord their God. [5] They will ask the way to Jerusalem and will start back home again. They will bind themselves to the Lord with an eternal covenant that will never again be broken.

[6] "My people have been lost sheep. Their shepherds have led them astray and turned them loose in the mountains. They have lost their way and cannot remember how to get back to the fold. [7] All who found them devoured them. Their enemies said, 'We are allowed to attack them freely, for they have sinned against the Lord, their place of rest, the hope of their ancestors.'

[8] "But now, flee from Babylon! Leave the land of the Babylonians. Lead my people home again. [9] For look, I am raising up an army of great nations from the north. I will bring them against Babylon to attack her, and she will be captured. The enemies' arrows will go straight to the mark; they will not miss! [10] Babylonia will be plundered until the attackers are glutted with plunder," says the Lord.

[11] "You rejoice and are glad, you plunderers of my chosen people. You frisk about like a calf in a meadow and neigh like a stallion. [12] But your homeland will be overwhelmed with shame and disgrace. You will become the least of nations—a wilderness, a dry and desolate land. [13] Because of the Lord's anger, Babylon will become a deserted wasteland. All who pass by will be horrified and will gasp at the destruction they see there.

[14] "Yes, prepare to attack Babylon, all you nations round about. Let your archers shoot at her. Spare no arrows, for she has sinned against the Lord. [15] Shout against her from every side. Look! She surrenders! Her walls have fallen. The Lord has taken vengeance, so do not spare her. Do to her as she has done to others! [16] Lead from Babylon all those who plant crops; send all the harvesters away. Let the captives escape the sword of the enemy and rush back to their own lands.

[17] "The Israelites are like sheep that have been scattered by lions. First the king of Assyria ate them up. Then King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon cracked their bones." [18] Therefore, the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Now I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, just as I punished the king of Assyria. [19] And I will bring Israel home again to her own land, to feed in the fields of Carmel and Bashan, and to be satisfied once more on the hill country of Ephraim and Gilead. [20] In those days," says the Lord, "no sin will be found in Israel or in Judah, for I will forgive the remnant I preserve.

[21] "Go up, my warriors, against the land of Merathaim and against the people of Pekod. Yes, march against Babylon, the land of rebels, a land that I will judge! Pursue, kill, and completely destroy them, as I have commanded you," says the Lord. [22] "Let the battle cry be heard in the land, a shout of great destruction. [23] Babylon, the mightiest hammer in all the earth, lies broken and shattered. Babylon is desolate among the nations! [24] Listen, Babylon, for I have set a trap for you. You are caught, for you have fought against the Lord.

[25] "The Lord has opened his armory and brought out weapons to vent his fury against his enemies. The terror that falls upon the Babylonians will be the work of the Sovereign Lord Almighty. [26] Yes, come against her from distant lands. Break open her granaries. Crush her walls and houses into heaps of rubble. Destroy her completely, and leave nothing! [27] Even destroy her cattle—it will be terrible for them, too! Slaughter them all! For the time has come for Babylon to be devastated. [28] Listen to the people who have escaped from Babylon, as they declare in Jerusalem how the Lord our God has taken vengeance against those who destroyed his Temple.

[29] "Send out a call for archers to come to Babylon. Surround the city so none can escape. Do to her as she has done to others, for she has defied the Lord, the Holy One of Israel. [30] Her young men will fall in the streets and die. Her warriors will all be killed," says the Lord.

[31] "See, I am your enemy, O proud people," says the Lord, the Lord Almighty. "Your day of reckoning has arrived. [32] O land of pride, you will stumble and fall, and no one will raise you up. For I will light a fire in the cities of Babylon that will burn everything around them."

[33] And now the Lord Almighty says this: "The people of Israel and Judah have been wronged. Their captors hold them and refuse to let them go. [34] But the one who redeems them is strong. His name is the Lord Almighty. He will defend them and give them rest again in Israel. But the people of Babylon—there will be no rest for them!"

[35] "The sword of destruction will strike the Babylonians," says the Lord. "It will strike the people of Babylon—her princes and wise men, too. [36] And when it strikes her wise counselors, they will become fools! When it strikes her mightiest warriors, panic will seize them! [37] When it strikes her horses and chariots, her allies from other lands will become as weak as women. When it strikes her treasures, they all will be plundered. [38] It will even strike her water supply, causing it to dry up. And why? Because the whole land is filled with idols, and the people are madly in love with them."

[39] "Soon this city of Babylon will be inhabited by ostriches and jackals. It will be a home for the wild animals of the desert. Never again will people live there; it will lie desolate forever. [40] I will destroy it just as I destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighboring towns," says the Lord. "No one will live there anymore."

[41] "Look! A great army is marching from the north! A great nation and many kings are rising against you from far-off lands. [42] They are fully armed for slaughter. They are cruel and show no mercy. As they ride forward, the noise of their army is like a roaring sea. They are marching in battle formation to destroy you, Babylon. [43] The king of Babylon has received reports about the enemy, and he is weak with fright. Fear and pain have gripped him, like that of a woman about to give birth."

[44] "I will come like a lion from the thickets of the Jordan, leaping on the sheep in the pasture. I will chase Babylon from its land, and I will appoint the leader of my choice. For who is like me, and who can challenge me? What ruler can oppose my will?"

[45] Listen to the Lord's plans against Babylon and the land of the Babylonians. Even little children will be dragged off, and their homes will be empty. [46] The earth will shake with the noise of Babylon's fall, and her cry of despair will be heard around the world.

[51:1] This is what the Lord says: "I will stir up a destroyer against Babylon and the people of Babylonia. [2] Foreigners will come and winnow her, blowing her away as chaff. They will come from every side to rise against her in her day of trouble. [3] Don't let the archers put on their armor or draw their bows. No one will be spared! Young and old alike will be completely destroyed. [4] They will fall dead in the land of the Babylonians, slashed to death in her streets. [5] For the Lord Almighty has not forsaken Israel and Judah. He is still their God, even though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel."

[6] Flee from Babylon! Save yourselves! Don't get trapped in her punishment! It is the Lord's time for vengeance; he will fully repay her. [7] Babylon has been like a golden cup in the Lord's hands, a cup from which he made the whole earth drink and go mad. [8] But now suddenly, Babylon, too, has fallen. Weep for her, and give her medicine. Perhaps she can yet be healed. [9] We would have helped her if we could, but nothing can save her now. Let her go; abandon her. Return now to your own land, for her judgment will be so great it cannot be measured. [10] The Lord has vindicated us. Come, let us announce in Jerusalem everything the Lord our God has done.

[11] Sharpen the arrows! Lift up the shields! For the Lord has stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes to march against Babylon and destroy her. This is his vengeance against those who desecrated his Temple. [12] Raise the battle flag against Babylon! Reinforce the guard and station the watchmen. Prepare an ambush, for the Lord will fulfill all his plans against Babylon.

[13] You are a city rich with water, a great center of commerce, but your end has come. The thread of your life is cut. [14] The Lord Almighty has taken this vow and has sworn to it by his own name: "Your cities will be filled with enemies, like fields filled with locusts, and they will lift their shouts of triumph over you."

[15] He made the earth by his power,
and he preserves it by his wisdom.

He has stretched out the heavens
by his understanding.

[16] When he speaks, there is thunder in the heavens.

He causes the clouds to rise over the earth.

He sends the lightning with the rain
and releases the wind from his storehouses.

[17] Compared to him, all people are foolish
and have no knowledge at all!

They make idols, but the idols will disgrace their makers,
for they are frauds.

They have no life or power in them.

[18] Idols are worthless; they are lies!

The time is coming when they will all be destroyed.

[19] But the God of Israel is no idol!

He is the Creator of everything that exists,
including his people, his own special possession.

The Lord Almighty is his name!

[20] "You are my battle-ax and sword," says the Lord. "With you I will shatter nations and destroy many kingdoms. [21] With you I will shatter armies, destroying the horse and rider, the chariot and charioteer. [22] With you I will shatter men and women, old people and children, young men and maidens. [23] With you I will shatter shepherds and flocks, farmers and oxen, captains and rulers.

[24] "As you watch, I will repay Babylon and the people of Babylonia for all the wrong they have done to my people in Jerusalem," says the Lord.

[25] "Look, O mighty mountain, destroyer of the earth! I am your enemy," says the Lord. "I will raise my fist against you, to roll you down from the heights. When I am finished, you will be nothing but a heap of rubble. [26] You will be desolate forever. Even your stones will never again be used for building. You will be completely wiped out," says the Lord.

[27] Signal many nations to mobilize for war against Babylon. Sound the battle cry! Bring out the armies of Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz. Appoint a leader, and bring a multitude of horses!

[28] Bring against her the armies of the kings of the Medes and their generals, and the armies of all the countries they rule

[29] Babylon trembles and writhes in pain, for everything the Lord has planned against her stands unchanged. Babylon will be left desolate without a single inhabitant. [30] Her mightiest warriors no longer fight. They stay in their barracks. Their courage is gone. They have become as fearful as women. The invaders have burned the houses and broken down the city gates. [31] Messengers from every side come running to the king to tell him all is lost! [32] All the escape routes are blocked. The fortifications are burning, and the army is in panic.

[33] For the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Babylon is like wheat on a threshing floor, about to be trampled. In just a little while her harvest will begin."

[34] "King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon has eaten and crushed us and emptied out our strength. He has swallowed us like a great monster and filled his belly with our riches. He has thrown us out of our own country. [35] May Babylon be repaid for all the violence she did to us," say the people of Jerusalem. "May the people of Babylonia be paid in full for all the blood they spilled," says Jerusalem.

[36] The Lord says to Jerusalem, "I will be your lawyer to plead your case, and I will avenge you. I will dry up her river, her water supply, [37] and Babylon will become a heap of rubble, haunted by jackals. It will be an object of horror and contempt, without a single person living there.

[38] "In their drunken feasts, the people of Babylon roar like lions. [39] And while they lie inflamed with all their wine, I will prepare a different kind of feast for them. I will make them drink until they fall asleep, never again to waken," says the Lord. [40] "I will bring them like lambs to the slaughter, like rams and goats to be sacrificed.

[41] "How Babylon is fallen—great Babylon, praised throughout the earth! The world can scarcely believe its eyes at her fall! [42] The sea has risen over Babylon; she is covered by its waves. [43] Her cities now lie in ruins; she is a dry wilderness where no one lives or even passes by. [44] And I will punish Bel, the god of Babylon, and pull from his mouth what he has taken. The nations will no longer come and worship him. The wall of Babylon has fallen.

[45] "Listen, my people, flee from Babylon. Save yourselves! Run from the Lord's fierce anger. [46] But do not panic when you hear the first rumor of approaching forces. For rumors will keep coming year by year. Then there will be a time of violence as the leaders fight against each other. [47] For the time is surely coming when I will punish this great city and all her idols. Her whole land will be disgraced, and her dead will lie in the streets.

[48] The heavens and earth will rejoice, for out of the north will come destroying armies against Babylon," says the Lord. [49] "Just as Babylon killed the people of Israel and others throughout the world, so must her people be killed. [50] Go, you who escaped the sword! Do not stand and watch—flee while you can! Remember the Lord, even though you are in a far-off land, and think about your home in Jerusalem."

[51] "We are ashamed," the people say. "We are insulted and disgraced because the Lord's Temple has been defiled by foreigners."

[52] "Yes," says the Lord, "but the time is coming when Babylon's idols will be destroyed. The groans of her wounded people will be heard throughout the land. [53] Though Babylon reaches as high as the heavens, and though she increases her strength immeasurably, I will send enemies to plunder her," says the Lord.

[54] Listen! Hear the cry of Babylon, the sound of great destruction from the land of the Babylonians. [55] For the Lord is destroying Babylon. He will silence her. Waves of enemies pound against her; the noise of battle rings through the city. [56] Destroying armies come against Babylon. Her mighty men are captured, and their weapons break in their hands. For the Lord is a God who gives just punishment, and he is giving Babylon all she deserves.

[57] "I will make drunk her officials, wise men, rulers, captains, and warriors," says the King, whose name is the Lord Almighty. "They will fall asleep and never wake up again!"

[58] This is what the Lord Almighty says: "The wide walls of Babylon will be leveled to the ground, and her high gates will be burned. The builders from many lands have worked in vain, for their work will be destroyed by fire!"

[59] The prophet Jeremiah gave this message to Zedekiah's staff officer, Seraiah son of Neriah and grandson of Mahseiah, when he went to Babylon with King Zedekiah of Judah. This was during the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign. [60] Jeremiah had recorded on a scroll all the terrible disasters that would soon come upon Babylon. [61] He said to Seraiah, "When you get to Babylon, read aloud everything on this scroll. [62] Then say, 'Lord, you have said that you will destroy Babylon so that neither people nor animals will remain here. She will lie empty and abandoned forever.' [63] Then, when you have finished reading the scroll, tie it to a stone, and throw it into the Euphrates River. [64] Then say, 'In this same way Babylon and her people will sink, never again to rise, because of the disasters I will bring upon her.' "

This is the end of Jeremiah's messages.

[52:1] Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. His mother's name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah from Libnah. [2] But Zedekiah did what was evil in the Lord's sight, just as Jehoiakim had done. [3] So the Lord, in his anger, finally banished the people of Jerusalem and Judah from his presence and sent them into exile.

Then Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. [4] So on January 15, during the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon led his entire army against Jerusalem. They surrounded the city and built siege ramps against its walls. [5] Jerusalem was kept under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah's reign.

[6] By July 18 of Zedekiah's eleventh year, the famine in the city had become very severe, with the last of the food entirely gone. [7] Then a section of the city wall was broken down, and all the soldiers made plans to escape from the city. But since the city was surrounded by the Babylonians, they waited for nightfall and fled through the gate between the two walls behind the king's gardens. They made a dash across the fields, in the direction of the Jordan Valley.

[8] But the Babylonians chased after them and caught King Zedekiah on the plains of Jericho, for by then his men had all abandoned him. [9] They brought him to the king of Babylon at Riblah, in the land of Hamath, where sentence was passed against him. [10] There at Riblah, the king of Babylon made Zedekiah watch as all his sons were killed; they also killed all the other leaders of Judah. [11] Then they gouged out Zedekiah's eyes, bound him in bronze chains, and led him away to Babylon. Zedekiah remained there in prison for the rest of his life.

[12] On August 17 of that year, which was the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, an official of the Babylonian king, arrived in Jerusalem. [13] He burned down the Temple of the Lord, the royal palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem. He destroyed all the important buildings in the city. [14] Then the captain of the guard supervised the entire Babylonian army as they tore down the walls of Jerusalem. [15] Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, then took as exiles some of the poorest of the people and those who remained in the city, along with the rest of the craftsmen and the troops who had declared their allegiance to the king of Babylon. [16] But Nebuzaradan allowed some of the poorest people to stay behind in Judah to care for the vineyards and fields.

[17] The Babylonians broke up the bronze pillars, the bronze water carts, and the bronze Sea that were at the Lord's Temple, and they carried all the bronze away to Babylon. [18] They also took all the pots, shovels, lamp snuffers, basins, dishes, and all the other bronze utensils used for making sacrifices at the Temple. [19] Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, also took the small bowls, firepans, basins, pots, lampstands, dishes, bowls used for drink offerings, and all the other utensils made of pure gold or silver.

[20] The bronze from the two pillars, the water carts, and the Sea with the twelve bulls beneath it was too great to be measured. These things had been made for the Lord's Temple in the days of King Solomon. [21] Each of the pillars was 27 feet tall and 18 feet in circumference. They were hollow, with walls 3 inches thick. [22] The bronze capital on top of each pillar was 7 1/2 feet high and was decorated with a network of bronze pomegranates all the way around. [23] There were ninety-six pomegranates on the sides, and a total of one hundred on the network around the top.

[24] The captain of the guard took with him as prisoners Seraiah the chief priest, his assistant Zephaniah, and the three chief gatekeepers. [25] And of the people still hiding in the city, he took an officer of the Judean army, seven of the king's personal advisers, the army commander's chief secretary, who was in charge of recruitment, and sixty other citizens. [26] Nebuzaradan the commander took them all to the king of Babylon at Riblah. [27] And there at Riblah in the land of Hamath, the king of Babylon had them all put to death. So the people of Judah were sent into exile from their land.

[28] The number of captives taken to Babylon in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign was 3,023. [29] Then in Nebuchadnezzar's eighteenth year he took 832 more. [30] In his twenty-third year he sent Nebuzaradan, his captain of the guard, who took 745 more—a total of 4,600 captives in all.

[31] In the thirty-seventh year of King Jehoiachin's exile in Babylon, Evil-merodach ascended to the Babylonian throne. He was kind to Jehoiachin and released him from prison on March 31 of that year. [32] He spoke pleasantly to Jehoiachin and gave him preferential treatment over all the other exiled kings in Babylon. [33] He supplied Jehoiachin with new clothes to replace his prison garb and allowed him to dine at the king's table for the rest of his life. [34] The Babylonian king also gave him a regular allowance to cover his living expenses until the day of his death.

MEGATHEMES

THEME: Sin

EXPLANATION:

King Josiah's reformation failed because the people's repentance was shallow. They continued in their selfishness and worship of idols. All the leaders rejected God's law and will for the people. Jeremiah lists all their sins, predicts God's judgment, and begs for repentance.

IMPORTANCE:

Judah's deterioration and disaster came from their callous disregard and disobedience of God. When we ignore sin and refuse to listen to God's warning, we invite disaster. Don't settle for half measures in removing sin.

THEME: Punishment

EXPLANATION:

Because of sin, Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple was ruined, and the people were captured and carried off to Babylon. The people were responsible for their destruction and captivity because they refused to listen to God's message.

IMPORTANCE:

Unconfessed sin brings God's full punishment. It is useless to blame anyone else for our sin—we are accountable to God before anyone else. We must answer to him for how we live.

THEME: God is Lord of all

EXPLANATION:

God is the righteous Creator. He is accountable to no one but himself. He wisely and lovingly directs all creation to fulfill his plans, and he brings events to pass according to his timetable. He is Lord over all the world.

IMPORTANCE: Because of God's majestic power and love, our only duty is to submit to his authority. By following his plans, not our own, we can have a loving relationship with him and serve him with our whole hearts.

THEME: New hearts

EXPLANATION:

Jeremiah predicted that after the destruction of the nation, God would send a new shepherd, the Messiah. He would lead them into a new future, a new covenant, and a new day of hope. He would accomplish this by changing their sinful hearts into hearts of love for God.

IMPORTANCE:

God still restores his people by renewing their hearts. His love can transform the problems created by sin. We can have assurance of a new heart by loving God, trusting Christ to save us, and repenting of our sin.

THEME: Faithful Service

EXPLANATION:

Jeremiah served God faithfully for 40 years. During that time the people ignored, rejected, and persecuted him. Jeremiah's preaching was unsuccessful by human standards, yet he did not fail in his task. He remained faithful to God.

IMPORTANCE:

People's acceptance or rejection of us is not the measure of our success. God's approval alone should be our standard for service. We must bring God's message to others even when we are rejected. We must do God's work even if it means suffering for it.

TIMELINE

Zephaniah becomes a prophet 640 B.C.

Jeremiah becomes a prophet 627

King Josiah killed in battle 609

Daniel taken captive 605

Ezekiel begins to prophesy in Babylonia 593

Judah falls: Jerusalem destroyed;

Jeremiah's ministry ends 586

First exiles return to Judah 538

An invitation is given to open your heart's door.

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print