

Jeremiah 36-52

Introduction

The book of Jeremiah is one of the longest and most complex books in the Old Testament. It contains the prophecies and narratives of Jeremiah, a prophet who lived and ministered in Judah during the turbulent times of last 5 kings of Judah during the seventh and sixth centuries BC. Jeremiah witnessed multiple Babylonian campaigns against Judah including the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian exile, and he warned the people of Judah and the surrounding nations of God's impending judgment and mercy.

The book of Jeremiah is not arranged in chronological order, but rather in thematic sections. Chapters 36-52 are the last section of the book, and they contain historical narratives, prophecies, and oracles against the nations. These chapters cover the events leading up to and following the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BC, as well as the fate of the survivors and the exiles. They also reveal God's sovereign plan for the nations and his promise of a new covenant for his people.

Summary of Jeremiah 36-52

- **Chapter 36:** Jeremiah dictates a scroll to his scribe Baruch, containing all the words that God had spoken to him. It takes Jeremiah and Baruch about a year to write the scroll, then Jeremiah instructs Baruch to read the scroll to the people in the temple, hoping that they will repent and avoid God's wrath. The officials seem to take the message seriously and the scroll is sent to the king. However, when the scroll is read to King Jehoiakim, he is unmoved and instead burns the scroll and orders the arrest of Jeremiah and Baruch. They escape and God tells Jeremiah to write another scroll with the same words, plus more judgments against Jehoiakim.
- **Chapter 37:** Zezekiah (the last king of Judah and Jehoiakim's brother) is made king by Nebuchadnezzar and Jehoiachin is dethroned. Zedekiah sends messengers to Jeremiah, asking him to pray for Judah, as the Babylonians are besieging Jerusalem. Jeremiah tells them that the Babylonians will capture the city and burn it. He also warns Zedekiah not to trust the Egyptians, who are coming to help Judah, but will retreat. Jeremiah is arrested by the officials, who accuse him of defecting to the Babylonians. He is put in prison, where he remains until the fall of Jerusalem.
 - The start of the messages of discouragement.
 - ⁹ "This is what the LORD says: Do not deceive yourselves, thinking, 'The Babylonians will surely leave us.' They will not! ¹⁰ Even if you were to defeat the entire Babylonian^l army that is attacking you and only wounded men were left in their tents, they would come out and burn this city down."
- **Chapter 38:** This chapter describes how Jeremiah was thrown into a cistern by some of the king's officials, who accused him of treason for urging the people to surrender to the Babylonians. He is rescued by Ebed-Melech, an Ethiopian eunuch, who appeals to Zedekiah. Zedekiah secretly meets with Jeremiah and asks him for a word from the Lord. Jeremiah tells him to surrender to

the Babylonians, and he will live and save the city. Zedekiah fears the reaction of the people and the Babylonian defectors, and asks Jeremiah not to reveal their conversation. He orders Jeremiah to be kept in the courtyard of the guard until the city falls.

- ¹⁷ Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, “This is what the LORD God Almighty, the God of Israel, says: ‘If you surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, your life will be spared and this city will not be burned down; you and your family will live. ¹⁸ But if you will not surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, this city will be given into the hands of the Babylonians and they will burn it down; you yourself will not escape from them.’”
- ¹⁹ King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, “I am afraid of the Jews who have gone over to the Babylonians, for the Babylonians may hand me over to them and they will mistreat me.”
- ²⁰ “They will not hand you over,” Jeremiah replied. “Obey the LORD by doing what I tell you. Then it will go well with you, and your life will be spared. ²¹ But if you refuse to surrender, this is what the LORD has revealed to me: ²² All the women left in the palace of the king of Judah will be brought out to the officials of the king of Babylon. Those women will say to you:
- “‘They misled you and overcame you— those trusted friends of yours. Your feet are sunk in the mud; your friends have deserted you.’”
- ²³ “All your wives and children will be brought out to the Babylonians. You yourself will not escape from their hands but will be captured by the king of Babylon; and this city will be burned down.”
- **Chapter 39:** We see that Zedekiah doesn’t listen to Jeremiah’s advice to surrender. Instead, the Babylonians siege Jerusalem for a year and a half and finally break through the wall and sack the city in 586 BC. Zedekiah is captured. Zedekiah’s sons were killed before him, and then his eyes were put out. He was taken to Babylon in chains. The Babylonians burned the city and the temple, and deported most of the people. The Babylonians released Jeremiah from prison and gave him the choice to stay in Judah or go to Babylon. Jeremiah chose to stay with the remnant in Judah.
 - Zedekiah given a choice and told the consequences of each.
 - **Fear of Man vs Fear of God**
- **Chapter 40:** The Babylonians appointed a governor named Gedaliah over the remnant in Judah, and how Jeremiah joined him in Mizpah after he was freed. Gedaliah welcomed the Jews who had fled to neighboring countries, and encouraged them to live peacefully and serve the Babylonians. He also refused to believe the warning of Johanan, a Jewish leader and all the army officers, that Ishmael, a member of the royal family, was plotting to assassinate him with encouragement from the Ammonite king Baalis.

- **Chapter 41:** Ishmael assassinated Gedaliah and all the men of Judah in the city, and also killed some Babylonian soldiers and some pilgrims who came to Mizpah. He then took the people of Mizpah captive, including the king's daughters, and fled to the Ammonites. Johanan and his men pursued him, and rescued the captives, but Ishmael escaped. Johanan and the rescued captives decide to go to Egypt because they were afraid of the Babylonian retribution.
- **Chapter 42:** Johanan and the people asked Jeremiah to pray to God for guidance, and promised to obey whatever God said. Jeremiah prayed for ten days, and then delivered God's message, which was to stay in Judah and not to go to Egypt, for God would protect them and restore them. If they go to Egypt they will die by the same sword, famine and plague that they are running from.
 - The Judah remnant is given a choice and the consequences of each.
 - **Do you pray for God's answer or for your answer?**
 - ⁵ Then they said to Jeremiah, "May the LORD be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not act in accordance with everything the LORD your God sends you to tell us. ⁶ Whether it is favorable or unfavorable, we will obey the LORD our God, to whom we are sending you, so that it will go well with us, for we will obey the LORD our God."
 - ⁷ Ten days later the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah. ⁸ So he called together Johanan son of Kareah and all the army officers who were with him and all the people from the least to the greatest. ⁹ He said to them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, to whom you sent me to present your petition, says: ¹⁰ 'If you stay in this land, I will build you up and not tear you down; I will plant you and not uproot you, for I have relented concerning the disaster I have inflicted on you. ¹¹ Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon, whom you now fear. Do not be afraid of him, declares the LORD, for I am with you and will save you and deliver you from his hands. ¹² I will show you compassion so that he will have compassion on you and restore you to your land.'
 - ¹³ "However, if you say, 'We will not stay in this land,' and so disobey the LORD your God, ¹⁴ and if you say, 'No, we will go and live in Egypt, where we will not see war or hear the trumpet or be hungry for bread,' ¹⁵ then hear the word of the LORD, you remnant of Judah. This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'If you are determined to go to Egypt and you do go to settle there, ¹⁶ then the sword you fear will overtake you there, and the famine you dread will follow you into Egypt, and there you will die. ¹⁷ Indeed, all who are determined to go to Egypt to settle there will die by the sword, famine and plague; not one of them will survive or escape the disaster I will bring on them.' ¹⁸ This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: 'As my anger and wrath have been poured out on those who lived in Jerusalem, so will my wrath be poured out on you when you go to Egypt. You will be a curse^(b) and an

object of horror, a curse[□] and an object of reproach; you will never see this place again.'

- **Chapter 43:** Johanan and the officials accused Jeremiah and Baruch of lying so that the remnant would be handed over to the Babylonians. The remnant disobeyed God and went to Egypt forcing Jeremiah and Baruch with them. Jeremiah prophesied against Egypt, saying that the Babylonians would invade and conquer it, and that the Jews who fled there would die by sword or be made captives. He also performed a symbolic act of burying some stones in the pavement of the temple of the sun in Tahpanhes, signifying that the Babylonian king would set his throne there.
 - ⁸ In Tahpanhes the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: ⁹ "While the Jews are watching, take some large stones with you and bury them in clay in the brick pavement at the entrance to Pharaoh's palace in Tahpanhes. ¹⁰ Then say to them, 'This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I will send for my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and I will set his throne over these stones I have buried here; he will spread his royal canopy above them. ¹¹ He will come and attack Egypt, bringing death to those destined for death, captivity to those destined for captivity, and the sword to those destined for the sword. ¹² He will set fire to the temples of the gods of Egypt; he will burn their temples and take their gods captive. As a shepherd picks his garment clean of lice, so he will pick Egypt clean and depart. ¹³ There in the temple of the sun[□] in Egypt he will demolish the sacred pillars and will burn down the temples of the gods of Egypt.'"
- **Chapter 44:** Jeremiah confronted the remnant in Egypt, who had reverted to idolatry and worshiped the Queen of Heaven (Ishtar) and other gods. He reminded them of the disaster that befell Judah because of their sins, and predicted that the same would happen to them in Egypt. He also singled out the women, who defiantly claimed that they had prospered when they worshiped the Queen of Heaven, and that they would continue to do so. Jeremiah declared that God would punish them and their husbands, and that only a few would survive and return to Judah.
 - **Learn from your mistakes else you'll get the same consequences**
 - **44** This word came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews living in Lower Egypt—in Migdol, Tahpanhes and Memphis—and in Upper Egypt: ² "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: You saw the great disaster I brought on Jerusalem and on all the towns of Judah. Today they lie deserted and in ruins ³ because of the evil they have done. They aroused my anger by burning incense to and worshiping other gods that neither they nor you nor your ancestors ever knew. ⁴ Again and again I sent my servants the prophets, who said, 'Do not do this detestable thing that I hate!' ⁵ But they did not listen or pay attention; they did not turn from their wickedness or stop burning incense to other gods. ⁶ Therefore,

my fierce anger was poured out; it raged against the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem and made them the desolate ruins they are today.

- ⁷“Now this is what the LORD God Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Why bring such great disaster on yourselves by cutting off from Judah the men and women, the children and infants, and so leave yourselves without a remnant? ⁸ Why arouse my anger with what your hands have made, burning incense to other gods in Egypt, where you have come to live? You will destroy yourselves and make yourselves a curse and an object of reproach among all the nations on earth. ⁹ Have you forgotten the wickedness committed by your ancestors and by the kings and queens of Judah and the wickedness committed by you and your wives in the land of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem? ¹⁰ To this day they have not humbled themselves or shown reverence, nor have they followed my law and the decrees I set before you and your ancestors.
- ¹¹“Therefore this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: I am determined to bring disaster on you and to destroy all Judah. ¹² I will take away the remnant of Judah who were determined to go to Egypt to settle there. They will all perish in Egypt; they will fall by the sword or die from famine. From the least to the greatest, they will die by sword or famine. They will become a curse and an object of horror, a curse and an object of reproach. ¹³ I will punish those who live in Egypt with the sword, famine and plague, as I punished Jerusalem. ¹⁴ None of the remnant of Judah who have gone to live in Egypt will escape or survive to return to the land of Judah, to which they long to return and live; none will return except a few fugitives.”
- ¹⁵ Then all the men who knew that their wives were burning incense to other gods, along with all the women who were present—a large assembly—and all the people living in Lower and Upper Egypt, said to Jeremiah, ¹⁶“We will not listen to the message you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD! ¹⁷ We will certainly do everything we said we would: We will burn incense to the Queen of Heaven and will pour out drink offerings to her just as we and our ancestors, our kings and our officials did in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. At that time we had plenty of food and were well off and suffered no harm. ¹⁸ But ever since we stopped burning incense to the Queen of Heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have had nothing and have been perishing by sword and famine.”
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- ²⁹“‘This will be the sign to you that I will punish you in this place,’ declares the LORD, ‘so that you will know that my threats of harm against you will

surely stand.’³⁰ This is what the LORD says: ‘I am going to deliver Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt into the hands of his enemies who want to kill him, just as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the enemy who wanted to kill him.’”

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- **Chapter 45** A brief message from God to Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe and companion, as a footnote to the historical narrative of chapters 36 through 44. While writing the scroll in chapter 36, Baruch complained about his troubles and wished for peace. God told him not to seek great things for himself, but to be content with his life, for God was about to bring disaster on the whole world, but Baruch would escape with his life.
- Chapters 46-51: A series of oracles against the nations compiled from different time periods of Jeremiah's ministry.
 - Egypt (46)
 - A message against the army of Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt, which was defeated at Carchemish on the Euphrates River by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah.
 - A message about the coming of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to attack Egypt
 - ²⁵ The LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “I am about to bring punishment on Amon god of Thebes, on Pharaoh, on Egypt and her gods and her kings, and on those who rely on Pharaoh. ²⁶ I will give them into the hands of those who want to kill them—Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and his officers. Later, however, Egypt will be inhabited as in times past,” declares the LORD.
 - A message of hope for greater Israel – they would not be completely destroyed like other nations, but brought back from exile
 - Philistia (47)
 - A message concerning the Philistines before Pharaoh attacked Gaza. God says that he will bring a flood of destruction from the north, referring to the Babylonians, and they will overflow and devastate the land of the Philistines. He says that no one will escape the sword of the Lord, and that the Philistines will cry and wail for their ruin.
 - Moab (48)
 - God says that he will bring judgment on Moab for its arrogance and idolatry. He says that he will destroy its cities, its fortresses, its warriors, and its rulers. He also says that he will put an end to its boasting and its worship of Chemosh, its national god. He also laments for the devastation of Moab, and says that he will restore its fortunes in the latter days.
 - Ammon, Edom, Damascus, Kedar and Hazor, and Elam (49)
 - God says that he will punish them for their violence, their pride, their cruelty, their complacency, and their opposition to his people. He says that he will bring

the sword, the fire, the wind, and the captivity on them, and that they will be no more.

- He also says that he will restore the fortunes of Ammon and Elam in the latter days. Edom's orphans and widows can rely on Him.
- Babylon (50-51)
 - An oracle against Babylon, the main enemy and oppressor of Israel. God says that he will bring judgment on Babylon for its wickedness and its violence against his people. He says that he will raise up a great nation of many kings from the north, referring to the Persian Empire, and they will attack and destroy Babylon. He also says that he will cause the Babylonians to flee and to be scattered. God will avenge his people and his temple. He also calls his people, Judah and Israel, to come out of Babylon and return to their land. He says that he will forgive their sins and make a new covenant with them. They should trust in God's power and sovereignty.
 - ⁵⁹ This is the message Jeremiah the prophet gave to the staff officer Seraiah son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, when he went to Babylon with Zedekiah king of Judah in the fourth year of his reign. ⁶⁰ Jeremiah had written on a scroll about all the disasters that would come upon Babylon—all that had been recorded concerning Babylon. ⁶¹ He said to Seraiah, "When you get to Babylon, see that you read all these words aloud. ⁶² Then say, 'LORD, you have said you will destroy this place, so that neither people nor animals will live in it; it will be desolate forever.' ⁶³ When you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it and throw it into the Euphrates. ⁶⁴ Then say, 'So will Babylon sink to rise no more because of the disaster I will bring on her. And her people will fall.'"
- Chapter 52: This chapter is a historical appendix that summarizes the fall of Jerusalem and the exile of Judah. It largely repeats the information from 2 Kings 24-25, with some variations and additions. It records the dates and details of the siege and capture of Jerusalem, the deportation and execution of the king and the people, the burning and looting of the city and the temple, the numbers of the exiles, the appointment and assassination of Gedaliah, the flight to Egypt, and the release and elevation of Jehoiachin in Babylon.
 - So Judah went into captivity, away from her land. 28 This is the number of the people Nebuchadnezzar carried into exile:
 - in the seventh year, 3,023 Jews;
in Nebuchadnezzar's eighteenth year, 832 people from Jerusalem;
in his twenty-third year, 745 Jews taken into exile by Nebuzaradan the commander of the imperial guard.
 - There were 4,600 people in all. (probably just counting men – est. 14,000 to 18,000 total)
 - Population estimate before exile: 120,000 – 150,000, both kingdoms: 840,000
 - About 2% of the greater Israel population survived Assyria and Babylon