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Jeremiah 37 - 44



Jeremiah - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg provides a detailed analysis of chapters 37-44 in the book of Jeremiah. The events narrated in the passage cover a turbulent period in Jerusalem's history, including the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, the Babylonian siege of the city, and the subsequent rule of Gedaliah. Jeremiah's prophetic messages condemning the people's sins and predicting their downfall are highlighted, as well as his personal struggles, including imprisonment and near-death experiences. Through a careful examination of the text, Steve Gregg draws insights about God's sovereignty, mercy, and justice, and encourages listeners to heed the warnings and teachings of Scripture.

Transcript

Now, we're picking up the story at Jeremiah chapter 37, and in chapter 36, Jeremiah commissioned Baruch, his scribe, to write down all the words of his prophecies and to read them before King Jehoiakim, and Jehoiakim cut the scroll into pieces and burned it in the fire in contempt for the word of God. Just the opposite reaction as that which his father Josiah had had when the book of the law had been found in the temple and brought and read to him. He trembled, and he didn't destroy the scroll, he destroyed his clothes.

He tore his clothes and repented. Jehoiakim was a man of entirely different character than his father Josiah, as were, of course, all the kings in the latter end of Jerusalem as it went downhill. Now, in chapter 37, Jehoiakim is no longer king, it's now in the reign of King Zedekiah.

It says the king Zedekiah, then King Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, reigned instead of Keniah, which Keniah is, of course, Jeconiah, or Jehoiakim, the son of Jehoiakim, who Ned Bekneser, king of Babylon, made king in the land of Judah. You may recall Jehoiakim was the son of Josiah, and Jeconiah, the next king, was the son of Jehoiakim, but only reigned for three months. And so, Ned Bekneser removed Jehoiakim, took him into captivity, and placed Zedekiah in his place.

And Zedekiah was the brother of Jehoiakim and another son of Josiah. So that's how this

genealogy works out. Zedekiah was the uncle of the previous king.

But neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land gave heed to the words of the Lord which he spoke by the prophet Jeremiah. We just saw an example of how Jehoiakim did not listen to the words of the Lord as they were read to him and he destroyed the scroll. We're told now that Zedekiah also did not do so.

Zedekiah was a little bit sentimental, though, it seems, toward Jeremiah and did consult him from time to time, but he never really followed the instructions he received from him. And Zedekiah the king sent Jehuchal, the son of Shalamiah, and Zephaniah, the son of Meaziah, the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Pray now to the Lord our God for us. Now Jeremiah was coming and going among the people for they had not yet put him in prison.

Now we have seen in some earlier chapters when he was in prison, for example, when he purchased the land in the year before Jerusalem fell. But this is before that time. Again, the chapters in Jeremiah are not at all arranged chronologically.

Then Pharaoh's army came up from Egypt and when the Chaldeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard news of them, they departed from Jerusalem. Now this Pharaoh is Pharaoh Hophra. The previous Pharaoh, Necho, had been the one against whom Babylon had fought at Carchemish and had defeated him.

It was also Pharaoh Necho who had killed Josiah in battle. And this is now Hophra, the next Pharaoh, and he's coming up against Babylon during the siege, or at least, yeah, it was during the siege of Jerusalem. And so the Babylonians withdrew briefly, giving Jerusalem a bit of a respite.

And maybe some of the people in Jerusalem began to feel like, Wow, we're delivered. We're not going to fall after all. But that was not to be so.

So because of Egypt's advances, the Chaldeans, that's the Babylonians who were besieging Jerusalem, heard the news of them and departed from Jerusalem just briefly. Actually, as it turned out, Hophra withdrew quickly. He did not actually engage the Babylonians.

When the Babylonians were coming, the Pharaoh withdrew his troops and they didn't fight. So there's no way to defeat the Chaldeans when God is determined to destroy you by fire. Even if there were only wounded Chaldeans left, wounded Babylonians, they would still defeat you if God is on the side of your enemies.

And it happened when the army of the Chaldeans left the siege of Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army, that Jeremiah went out of Jerusalem to go to the land of Benjamin to claim his property there among the people. And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the guard was there whose name was Arijah, the son of Shalamiah, the son of

Hananiah, and he sees Jeremiah the prophet saying, You are defecting to the Chaldeans. Now, this would be a reasonable suspicion against Jeremiah.

Jeremiah had been counseling people to surrender to the Chaldeans. He had been saying you have a choice. You can either stay and fight and resist and die, or you can surrender and live.

You can go off into Babylon as captives and you'll live. So Jeremiah was actually counseling people to defect. And one might think, well, if he's counseling others to do it, that's what he's doing.

It would only be reasonable to assume it. Though interestingly, Jeremiah was counseling others to do it but was not doing it himself because he was called to stay in the city and prophesy. But he could have escaped.

He certainly knew that was the path of safety, but that was not what he had in mind. This would be a strange time to accuse him of it, of defecting to the Chaldeans, since the Chaldeans had withdrawn now. If the Chaldeans were still besieging the city, surrendering to them might make sense.

But since they were gone, and to the natural eye, it looked as if the danger was over, defecting to the Chaldeans would not be—this would not be the time to be strong as tempted to do that. So it's somewhat reasonable and somewhat not as reasonable for this guard at the gate to think that he's defecting to the Chaldeans at this time. Then Jeremiah said, it is false.

I'm not defecting to the Chaldeans. But he did not listen to him, so a righteous seized Jeremiah and brought him to the princes. Now, it just says in verse 12 that Jeremiah took the opportunity to go out to the land of Benjamin, where he was from.

He's from Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, and claimed his property there among the people. This does not appear to be the property that we read about earlier, that his cousin came and told him he needed to redeem. And the reason I say that is because this is earlier than that.

He was in prison when his cousin came to him to ask him to redeem the property. We have read about that property earlier, but it's not yet in his hands. So this must be some other property.

Perhaps someone in the family had died, and he had inherited some property, and he had to go and do some kind of legal transaction. But we don't read any more about it. He never got there.

Therefore the princes were angry with Jeremiah, and they struck him and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe, for they had made that the prison. Now, most

houses, at least of important people, had cisterns in them for water, though many times these cisterns had leaks and didn't hold water very well. Earlier, in Jeremiah chapter 2, God said that the Israelites had committed two evils.

They had forsaken God, the fountain of living waters, and had hewn for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that could hold no water. Of course, he was using that metaphorically, but cisterns often would be broken. In the kind of soil they had and such, they would often have a hard time.

They would plaster or cement the insides of the cisterns at times, but even that would crack. Our cement cracks, and ours was much better than theirs, so you can imagine how hard it would be for them, because it was hard to get down in there to work on them. They were kind of a pear-shaped hole, narrow at the top and wide at the bottom.

In times when they caught captives and needed a place to keep them, they'd often throw them down into dry cisterns. That's what Joseph was thrown into, a dry cistern, by his brothers when they first captured him before they sold him into slavery. This was no doubt a cistern.

I think most commentators would agree. This prison in the house of Jonathan was a cistern in a house that was dry, and therefore he was incarcerated there. When Jeremiah entered the dungeon and the cells, and Jeremiah had remained there many days, then Zedekiah the king sent him and took him out.

The king asked him secretly in his house and said, Is there any word from the Lord? And Jeremiah said, There is. Then he said, You should be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. Moreover, Jeremiah said to the king of Zedekiah, What offense have I committed against you, against your servants, or against this people that you have put me in prison? Where now are your prophets who prophesied to you, saying, The king of Babylon will not come against you and against this land? Therefore, please hear now, O my lord, the king, please.

Let my petition be accepted before you, and do not make me return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there. Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit Jeremiah to the court of the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread from the baker's street until all the bread of the city was gone. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

So the court of the prison was above ground anyway. He could see some sunlight and breathe some fresh air once in a while. And they were going to give him a piece of bread a day.

They weren't giving him any bread in the cistern apparently, so he would just die unless well-wishers would come and give him food. That was true in ancient prisons, even in

Rome where Paul was imprisoned. The government didn't feed the prisoners.

Friends of the prisoner had to do so. And if you didn't have many friends, you could go hungry. In this case, they're actually going to feed him a piece of bread.

There's a shortage of food in the city, so for them to give him a piece of bread a day was actually fairly generous to do to a man who was probably considered a political prisoner. Chapter 38, Now Shephethiah the son of Matan, Gadaliah the son of Pasher, Jucal the son of Shalamiah, and Pasher the son of Malachiah, heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken to the people, saying, Thus says the Lord, He who remains in this city shall die by the sword, by famine and by pestilence. But he who goes over to the Chaldeans shall live.

His life shall be as a prize to him, and he shall live. Thus says the Lord, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which shall take it. Therefore the princes said to the king, Please let this man be put to death.

Now here Jeremiah was already in prison, and it's not likely he had the ear of the people at this time, so it's just because of what he had said before. He thought, Well, imprisonment is not really adequate punishment for what he's done. He's a traitor.

He's trying to get people to surrender to the enemy, so he should die as a traitor. They said, Please let this man be put to death, for he weakens the hands, which means discourages, the men of war who remain in the city, and the hands of all the people by speaking such words to them. For this man does not seek the welfare of the people, but their harm.

Then Zedekiah the king said, Look, he's in your hand, for the king can do nothing against you. This king was very weak, and he should have had some backbone, but he was somewhat afraid of the princes, and he says so later on, too. He actually tells Jeremiah that privately, that he's afraid of the princes.

He's afraid of the other people. Let's face it, the city's not too happy, and when you're not happy with the king, or when you're not happy with circumstances, the king is often the one who's to blame, and this is the kind of situation that may lead to a coup, or to an assassination, or both. Therefore, Zedekiah is walking on eggs around the other powerful men, hoping not to get on their bad side.

He just says, I can't do anything against you guys, just do what you want. They took Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah, the king's son, which was in the court of the prison, and they let Jeremiah down with ropes, and in the dungeon there was no water but mud, so Jeremiah sank in the mud, in the mire. Now, they wanted to kill him, but they didn't want to just kill him with a sword.

They just left him in this dungeon where they expected him to die of starvation.

Obviously, they weren't giving him a piece of bread every day anymore. This place was foul.

If it had been used as a prison before, there may have been others who had died in there before him, and therefore their bodies, their bones may have been in there. He's sinking in the mud in the bottom of it. Not a pleasant area, and you have to realize he's not seen any daylight.

Just imagine just sitting even in an attractive place for a day and not having a book to read or anything to occupy your attention. Just sit there and do nothing, but imagine if it was dark and you had to sit there for days and days. Couldn't tell how many days were passing because you never knew if it was day or night.

It would be really a miserable situation. There was a man sympathetic to Jeremiah named Ebed-Melek, the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs, that is someone who was in the court of the king, who was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon. When the king was sitting at the gate of Benjamin, Ebed-Melek went out of the king's house and spoke to the king, saying, My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon, and he is likely to die from hunger in the place where he is, for there's no more bread in the city.

There actually was some bread in the city still. According to chapter 52 and verse 6, the bread ran out exactly the same day the Babylonians broke through the wall. But the city was, I mean, to say there's no more bread in the city was a hyperbole, but not much.

There was very little food. Then the king commanded Ebed-Melek, the Ethiopian, saying, Take from here 30 men with you and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon before he dies. Now some manuscripts say three men.

It would only take maybe three men to lift him out of the dungeon rather than 30. But on the other hand, 30 is not a bad number because they might run into some opposition. Remember the princes wanted him there.

So Ebed-Melek could show up with something of a show of power with 30 men appointed by the king to get him out of there before he dies. So Ebed-Melek took the men with him and went into the house of the king under the treasury and took from there old clothes and old rags and sort of made a rope with a loop at the end of it, of course, and let them down by ropes into the dungeon to Jeremiah. Then Ebed-Melek, the Ethiopian, said to Jeremiah, Please put these old clothes and rags under your armpits, under the ropes.

And Jeremiah did so. Probably didn't have the strength to hold on to the rope and be pulled up, so they had to just loop it around him under his armpits. So they pulled Jeremiah up with ropes and lifted him out of the dungeon, and Jeremiah remained in the

court of the prison as he was before.

Then Zedekiah, the king, sent and had Jeremiah, the prophet, brought to him at the third entrance of the house of the Lord. And the king said to Jeremiah, I will ask you something. Hide nothing from me.

Now this was actually going to end up being the last encounter between this king and the prophet before the king's death. Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, If I declare it to you, will you not surely put me to death? And if I give you counsel, you will not listen to me. So Zedekiah, the king, swore secretly to Jeremiah, saying, As the Lord lives, who made our very souls, I will not put you to death, nor will I give you into the hand of these men who seek your life.

I don't know that I'd really trust any oath that Zedekiah made. First of all, he'd made an oath to King Nebuchadnezzar at the beginning of his reign and broke his oath three years later, which is what caused this attack at this time. Later, he had made an oath in a covenant to release all the slaves in the city, and then he'd broken that without any good reason.

The man didn't have any integrity. In fact, it seemed like the more he swore in the name of God, the less likely he was to keep his oaths. Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, Thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel, If you surely surrender to the king of Babylon's princes, then your soul shall live.

This city shall not be burned with fire, and you and your house shall live. But if you do not surrender to the king of Babylon's princes, then this city shall be given into the hand of the Chaldeans. They shall burn it with fire, and you shall not escape from their hand.

And Zedekiah, the king, said to Jeremiah, I'm afraid of the Jews who have defected to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they abuse me. Now, many Jews who were upset with Zedekiah had fled and done what Jeremiah said, had defected to the Chaldeans, and therefore, as Jeremiah said, were going to survive. They were upset with the king for bringing this calamity on the city, and Zedekiah thought, well, these ones, my own people who defected, they might abuse me.

The Babylonians might turn me over to them to be mistreated. I'm afraid of them. What a wimpy king.

He's told he can either save the city and himself or not. Well, but saving the city would mean I might get abused by some people who don't like me. You know, what a wimp.

And by the way, because he didn't do what Jeremiah said, his sons were killed, and his eyes were put out. So his not wanting to be abused by these defectors cost the life of his own sons and his own eyesight. Not a good choice.

But Jeremiah said, they shall not deliver you. That is, the Babylonians won't turn you over to those people. Please obey the voice of the Lord which I speak to you, so it will be well with you and your soul shall live.

But if you refuse to surrender, this is the word that the Lord has shown me. Now behold, all the women who are left in the king of Judah's house shall be surrendered to the king of Babylon's princes. And those women shall say, your close friends have set upon you and prevailed against you.

Your feet have sunk in the mire, and they have turned away again. This is apparently a taunt song that the women will sing against Zedekiah. That they'll be talking about how his feet have sunk in the mire, as Jeremiah's had in the prison, but a figure of speech.

That basically these women will taunt Zedekiah for having been abandoned by all his friends and having gotten himself trapped. So they shall surrender all your wives, your children to the Chaldeans. You shall not escape from their hand, but they shall be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon.

And you shall cause this city to be burned with fire. Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, let no one know of these words, and you shall not die. But if the priests hear that I have talked with you, and they come to you and say to you, declare to us now what you have said to the king, and also what the king said to you, do not hide it from us, and we will not put you to death.

Then you shall say to them, I presented my request before the king that he would not make me return to Jonathan's house to die there. Then all the princes came to Jeremiah and asked him, and he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded. So they stopped speaking with him, for the conversation had not been heard.

That is, the conversation between Zedekiah and him. Now Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken, and he was there when Jerusalem was taken. So the king was afraid that if he defected, he would be handed over to the ones who had surrendered to the Babylonians, and they would abuse him.

He was also afraid that the princes would find out that he had had this conversation with Jeremiah and had sought counsel from Jeremiah, and so he said, oh, do not let them know. This king is very easily terrified. Chapter 39, we see that he is so terrified he leaves his city and flees.

When the city is in danger, instead of being a captain going down to the ship, he escapes and leaves his people in the hands of the invading soldiers. In the ninth year of Zedekiah, king of Judah, in the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and all his army came against Jerusalem and besieged it. In the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the

fourth month, on the ninth day of the month, the city was penetrated.

So this was 18 months. The day of the siege was January 10, 588 B.C. The day that it fell was July 9, 587 B.C., just almost exactly 18 months. And the city was penetrated by the Babylonians.

Then all the princes of the king of Babylon came in and sat in the middle gate, Nergal, Cherizer, Samgar-Nebo, Sarsikim, Rabseres, Nergal, Cherizer, and Rabmag, and the rest of the princes of the king of Babylon. So it was when Zedekiah, the king of Judah, and all the men of war saw them that they fled and went out of the city by night, by way of the king's garden, by the gate between the two walls, and he went out by way of the plain, that the Chaldean army pursued them and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. And when they had captured him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, to Riblah, in the house of Hamath, where he pronounced judgment on him.

Then the king of Babylon killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes in Riblah. The king of Babylon also killed all the nobles of Judah. Moreover, he put Zedekiah's eyes out and bound him with bronze fetters to carry him off to Babylon.

Now, verses 8 through 10 are a shorter version of something we get more detail about in chapter 52. Chapter 52 is going to be a historical epilogue to the story and going to cover some of the same information. We get more detail there than here in these verses.

The Chaldeans burned the king's house and the houses of the people with fire and broke down the walls of Jerusalem. Then Nebuchadnezzar, the captain of the guard, carried away a captive to Babylon, the remnant of the people who remained in the city, and those who defected to him, with the rest of the people who remained. But Nebuchadnezzar, the captain of the guard, left in the land of Judah the poor people who had nothing and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

So rather than just let the land go back wild, he left the people that were not a threat at all to them, the poor and the peasants, to farm the land. Now, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuchadnezzar, the captain of the guard, saying, take him and look after him and do him no harm. But do to him just as he says to you.

Now, it's not clear how Nebuchadnezzar knew that Jeremiah was not a threat to him, but it must have been told to him that Jeremiah had been counseling. You know, all those Jews who had defected earlier may have communicated to the Babylonians, you know, we defected because there was a guy in there named Jeremiah. He's a political prisoner, and the king of Zedekiah is keeping him in prison now, but he told us to surrender to you.

So by the time the city was broken through, Nebuchadnezzar may have heard about

Jeremiah and known that he had been actually giving counsel that was favorable to the cause of the Babylonians, so he said to Nebuchadnezzar, don't do him any harm, but just let him do what he wants to do. Do for him what he says. So Nebuchadnezzar, the captain of the guard, sent Nebuchadnezzar, Shazban, Rabseres, Nergal-Sharizer, Rabmag, and all the king of Babylon's chief officers.

Then they sent someone to take Jeremiah from the court of the prison and committed him to Gedaliah, the son of Ahicham, the son of Shaphan, that he should take him home so that he dwelt among the people. Again, this is, there's more detail of this coming up later on. This is more of a summary statement.

Now the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah while he was shut up in the court of the prison, saying, go and speak to Ebed-Melech, the Ethiopian, saying, thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, behold, I will bring my words upon this city for adversity and not for good, and they shall be performed in that day before you, and I will deliver you in that day, says the Lord, and you shall not be given into the hand of the men of whom you are afraid, for I will surely deliver you, and you shall not fall by the sword, but your life shall be as a prize to you because you have put your trust in me, says the Lord. So this last bit of this chapter is a prophecy of hope and a promise to Ebed-Melech, the good guy, the Ethiopian eunuch who interceded for him and got him out of the pit. There's a similar prophecy given to Baruch, his other friend, in chapter 45.

Again, both of them are told their life will be a prize to them, meaning God's going to let them survive as a reward to them for taking the right side and an unpopular side. That is Jeremiah's. Now the story continues in chapter 40.

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord after Nebuchadnezzar, the captain of the guard, had let him go from Ramah when he had taken him bound in chains among all who were carried away captive from Jerusalem and Judah who were carried away captive to Babylon. That is, Jeremiah had originally been carried off in chains a few miles, about six miles from Jerusalem to Rabah, and that must be the point from which he was released. And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah and said to him, the Lord your God has pronounced this doom on this place.

And has done just as he said because you people have sinned against the Lord and not obeyed his voice. Therefore, this thing has come upon you. So the Babylonians themselves who are pagans recognize that this happened to Jerusalem because of their sins against their God.

And now look, I free you this day from the chains that were on your hand. If it seems good to you to come with me to Babylon, come and I will look after you. But if it seems wrong for you to come here, see all the land is before you wherever it seems good and convenient for you to go, go there.

Now while Jeremiah had not yet gone back, Nebuchadnezzar said, go back to Gedaliah, the son of Ahicham, the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon has made governor over the cities of Judah and dwell with him among the people or go wherever it seems convenient for you to go. So the captain of the guard went to Gedaliah. Then Jeremiah went to Gedaliah, the son of Ahicham, to Mizpah and dwelt with him among the people who were left in the land.

So Jerusalem was in ruins. The capital wasn't going to be there anymore. Mizpah now a few miles away was going to be the new place from which it was going to be the new administrative center where the governor would live.

And Jeremiah went to live with him. Now the choice to live with Gedaliah had been favorable to Jeremiah. One of the sons of Shaphan was his father.

And this family, quite a number of people who were descended from Shaphan or sons of Shaphan had been somewhat sympathetic to Jeremiah in earlier chapters of the book. And so this was a sympathetic man toward him in all likelihood. Now it says, now when all the captains of the armies who were in the fields, they and their men had come to Gedaliah the son of a high governor in the land and had committed to him men, women and children in the poorest of the land who had not been carried away captive to Babylon.

Then they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah. Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, Johanan the son of Jonathan, the son of Korea, Sariah the son of Tanhumath, the sons of Ephi the Netaphathite of Amalekithite and their men. Now these were men who were said to be captains of armies that were in the fields.

Probably these were groups of soldiers under certain leaders which had been stationed in various positions away from Jerusalem during the crisis, prepared to engage the enemy if necessary in their regions. Now that the war was over they came back to Mizpah which was now in charge of the country, Gedaliah. And Gedaliah the son of Ahicham, the son of Shaphan, took an oath before them and their men saying do not be afraid to serve the Chaldeans.

Dwell in the land and serve the king of Babylon and it shall be well with you. As for me I will indeed dwell at Mizpah to serve the Chaldeans who come to us. But you, gather wine and summer fruit and oil, put them in your vessels and dwell in the cities where they were in Moab among the Ammonites.

And Edom and who were in the countries heard that the king of Babylon had left the remnant of Judah and that he had said over them Gedaliah the son of Ahicham, the son of Shaphan, then all the Jews returned out of their places where they had been driven and came to the land of Judah to Gedaliah at Mizpah and gather wine and summer fruit and put them in their vessels in the land to keep things from going to seed. But then

after the Babylonians had left with their captives those Jews who had fled to these surrounding lands felt okay it's safe now to come back. Actually that was premature but they did believe that the crisis was over and they could all come back and serve peaceably under Gedaliah.

It says in verse 13 Moreover Johanan the son of Kareah who were in the fields came to Gedaliah at Mizpah and they said to him do you certainly know that Baelus the king of the Ammonites has sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to murder you. Now Ishmael was mentioned in verse 8 as one of the captains of one of the groups of soldiers that were spread out from Jerusalem who came back in. And Johanan this other man who's reporting on him is another one of them.

In all likelihood Ishmael was in fact hired by Baelus the Ammonite and had shared his conspiracy with these other men who were reluctant to take part in it. And so they decided to come and inform Gedaliah about it. But Gedaliah the son of Ahicham did not believe them.

Then Johanan the son of Kareah spoke secretly to Gedaliah in Mizpah saying let me go please and I will kill Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and no one will know it. But why should he murder you so that all the Jews who are gathered to you would be scattered and the remnant of Judah perish. That is if he kills you you're appointed by Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar will be angry it'll be another rebellion against Babylon as he'll come and destroy the rest of us who are here. But Gedaliah the son of Ahicham said to Johanan the son of Kareah you shall not do this thing because it does kill Gedaliah and it does bring the Babylonians down to do some final cleaning up of the area and wiping out the remnant. But you know Gedaliah could have avoided his own death and this tragedy if he had simply consulted Jeremiah it would seem to me.

Jeremiah was there with him. He could have said listen I've heard there's a conspiracy against me from this guy Ishmael. What does the Lord say? He was I think probably a decent fellow a good hearted guy.

He couldn't imagine that these people who were his soldiers his captains under him would be such evil men as Ishmael proved to be. So he just discounted it. Chapter 41 now it came to pass in the seventh month.

Now by the way chapter 39 verse 2 tells us that this breach of the city is the seventh month. So now this is the seventh month three months later although here it doesn't say which year it is and therefore some people think it's the seventh month of some other year. Now if we say well it seems like it would be the seventh month of the last mentioned year and I think that's true but some have thought that the seventh month may be mentioned as the day of atonement feast of trumpets all belong to the seventh month and therefore in saying it was in the seventh month regardless what year it was it

would be suggesting that it was a festival time and the Jews had gathered from all over but that's only one theory.

I think the seventh month is probably the seventh month of the same year and therefore only only three months after he took power. Ishmael the son of Elisha and the royal family of the officers of the king came with ten men to Gedaliah the son of Ahicham at Mizpah and there they ate bread together at Mizpah. Then Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and the ten men who were with him arose and struck Gedaliah the son of Ahicham the son of Shaphan with the sword and killed him whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land.

Ishmael also struck down all the Jews who were with him that is with Gedaliah at Mizpah and the Chaldeans who were around there the men of war and it happened on the second day after they had killed Gedaliah when as yet no one knew of it that certain men came from Shechem from Shiloh and from Samaria 80 men with their beards shaved and with their clothes torn having cut themselves with offerings and incense in their hand to bring them to the house of the Lord. Now the fact that they had this was actually forbidden in the law to cut themselves that's how the pagan people sometimes worship their demons but these people were rather ignorant they were more influenced by paganism over the centuries than by the law they at least were coming to the house of the Lord intending to worship Yahweh but their methods were somewhat you know ignorant and uninstructed but these 80 men knew nothing about what was going on at Mizpah they were just coming to the house of the Lord I don't know what the house of the Lord was in this case because the temple was destroyed but in all likelihood it was maybe some kind of a tabernacle that was set up at this time now Ishmael the son of Nethaniah went out from Mizpah to meet them weeping as he went along and faking like he was in mourning like they were and it happened as he met them that he said to them come to Gedaliah the son of Ahichem so it was when they came that Nethaniah killed them and cast them into the midst of the pit he and the men who were with him now why did he kill these people it's not entirely clear why he killed Gedaliah is not clear he was hired by the king of Ammon to do it but exactly why that was I mean the assumption would be that because Gedaliah was a collaborator with the Babylonians he was therefore resented by these patriots on the other hand what these 80 men were doing they were coming from Shiloh which may have some significance but I'm not sure what significance that would be in any case you can see if you're familiar with the story of Jehu how much like Jehu this man was Jehu was a reformer in the days of Elisha who wiped out Jezebel and Ahab's family and a lot of innocent people too including men who were coming up to visit from Judah and so forth he just killed everyone in his path but in this case it's not entirely clear what his motive was for killing so many people this man's bloodthirsty like him but 10 men were found among them who said to Ishmael do not kill us for we have treasures of wheat barley oil and honey in the field there's we've hidden some food and there's a shortage so if you keep us alive we can show you where the

food is so he desisted and did not kill them among their brethren and the son of whom he had slain because of Gedaliah was the same as the one Asa the king had made for fear of Baasha the king of Israel Ishmael the son of Nethaniah filled it with the slain then Ishmael carried away captive all the rest of the people who were in Mizpah the king's daughters and all the people who remained in Mizpah whom Nebuchadnezzar the captain of the guard had committed to Gedaliah he parted to go over to the Ammonites which proves that he in fact was in the employment of the king of Ammon that he'd want to go back and live with his patron over there that was in the north transjordanian area over where Gad and Reuben and Manasseh had settled in Gilead on the other side of the Jordan was where the Ammonites were and the son of Korea and that's the one who had warned Gedaliah about the plot but was not heeded when he and all the captains of the forces that were with him heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done they took all the men and went to fight with Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and they found him by the great pool that is in Gibeon so it was that all the people who were with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Korea and all the captains of the forces who were with him that they were glad this is the people who were captured by Ishmael were being taken away to Ammon they were glad to see rescuers coming after them then all the people whom Ishmael had carried away captive from Isba turned around and came back and went to Johanan the son of Korea so they were liberated and Ishmael of course wouldn't stop them he had to flee for his life but Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men and went to the Ammonites then Johanan the son of Korea and all the captains of the forces that were with him took from Isba all the rest of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah after he had murdered Gedaliah the son of Ahicham and mighty men of war and the women and the children and the eunuchs whom he had brought back from Gibeon that is from the captivity that's where they caught up with Ishmael and they departed and dwelt in the habitation of Chimham which is near Bethlehem as they went on their way to Egypt so they were escaping to Egypt or wanting to escape to Egypt they really didn't get all the way there immediately they decided to consult Jeremiah and see if that was the right plan but they were on their way to Egypt they figured that Egypt is the only safe place within walking distance that they could perhaps avoid the reprisals from Nebuchadnezzar who would certainly be coming back to avenge the death of the governor that he had appointed because of the Chaldeans for they were afraid of them because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had murdered Gedaliah the son of Ahicham whom the king of Babylon had made governor in the land chapter 42 then all the captains of the forces Johanan the son of Kuriah Jezaniah no Jezaniah excuse me the son of Hoshiah and all the people from the least to the greatest came near and they said to Jeremiah the prophet please let our petition be acceptable to you and pray for us that the Lord your God to the Lord your God for all the remnant since we are left but a few of many as you can see that the Lord your God may show us the way in which we should walk and the thing which we should do then Jeremiah the prophet said to them I have heard indeed I will pray to the Lord your God according to your words and it shall be that

whatever the Lord answers you I will declare it to you I will keep nothing back from you then they said to Jeremiah let the Lord be true and faithful witness between us if we do not do according to everything which the Lord your God sends us by you now they didn't of course obey his words which is here they swore they would and these people who swear in the name of the Lord and then just don't consider themselves bound by I've never understood how people can not fear God any more than that I mean if you don't believe in God that's one thing if you do believe in God as they seem to to swear in his name and then violate your oath I mean it should be understood that's no one is held guiltless who takes the name of the Lord in vain according to the third commandment they say whether it is pleasing or displeasing we will obey the voice of the Lord our God to whom we send you that it may be well with us when we obey the voice of the Lord our God and it happened after ten days that the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah this I think is really interesting these people were sweating it out wondering how soon the Babylonians might come back and they're sitting here in a sense in harm's way wanting to go to Egypt and they're waiting to hear back from God and it takes ten days before God gives the word to Jeremiah in the past we don't read of God taking so long necessarily to answer Jeremiah when he prayed but one thing this shows is that you can't just get a word from the Lord whenever you want to a lot of people charismatic people especially today sometimes get the impression that if you just pray and then listen God will speak to you you know just because you want him to even Jeremiah the prophet who got pretty reliable oracles from God on a regular basis he couldn't just get God to speak whenever he wanted him to God speaks when he wants to speak in this case he waited ten days and you can imagine ten days is a long time to be waiting while you're wondering you know are the Babylonians on the horizon yet are they coming you know and you want to get as much a head start against them as you can and yet God just made him wait and sweated out and so ten days later the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah then he called Johannes the son of Curry and all the captains the forces which were with him and all the people from the least even to the greatest and said to them thus says the Lord the God of Israel to whom you sent me to present your petition before him if you will still abide in this land then I will build you and not pull you down and I will plant you and not pluck you up for I relent concerning the disaster that I have brought upon you do not be afraid of the king of Babylon of whom you are afraid do not be afraid of him says the Lord for I am with you to save you and deliver you from his hand and I will show you mercy that he may have mercy on you and cause you to return to your own land so they could have just stayed there the king of Babylon would show mercy on them because they had not been part of the plot against Gedaliah and they could they could be secure but if you say we will not dwell in this land disobeying the voice of the Lord your God saying no but we will go to the land of Egypt where we shall see no war nor hear the sound of the trumpet nor be hungry for bread and there we will dwell then hear now the word of the Lord O remnant of Judah thus says the Lord of hosts the God of Israel if you wholly set your faces to enter Egypt and go to sojourn there then it shall be that the sword which you feared shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt the famine

of which you were afraid shall follow you close after you there in Egypt and there you will die so shall it be with all the men who set their faces to go to Egypt to sojourn there they shall die by the sword by famine and by pestilence and none of them shall remain or escape from the disaster that I will bring upon them for thus says the Lord of hosts the God of Israel as my anger and my fury have been poured out in the inhabitants of Jerusalem so will my fury be poured out on you when you go into Egypt and you shall be an oath an astonishment a curse and a reproach and you shall see this place no more the Lord said concerning you O remnant of Judah do not go into Egypt know certainly that I have admonished you this day for you were hypocrites in your hearts when you sent me to the Lord your God saying pray for us to the Lord our God and according to all that the Lord your God says so declare to us that we will do it and I have this day declared it to you but you have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God or anything which he has sent you by me now therefore know certainly that you shall die by the sword and by famine and by pestilence in the place where you desire to go sojourn so he tells them not to go but he knows they're going to go anyway he says you were hypocrites when you asked me that's how it is sometimes when people come and talk to a pastor or something or a Christian friend for counsel they're not looking for counsel they're looking for permission they're looking for someone to agree that what they want to do is the right thing to do and if you tell them what they don't want to hear they're just going to ignore it anyway because they already know what they want to do they're determined to do it this is often true when people when young people want to get married they sometimes go to marriage counselors and I have found that almost never can a marriage counselor dissuade a couple from getting married if it looks like a bad choice usually they're just coming for permission coming to hopefully get some support in the decision they made or likewise when they later want to get a divorce when someone wants to get a divorce they go to their friends who they think will be sympathetic and they're looking for counsel but if they're told not to get a divorce in most cases they'll just ignore it and do it anyway people often say counsel me let me know what the Lord would want me to do but they already know what they want to do and they're going to do that anyway in some cases not every time but there are definitely people who are not submitted to the Lord and act like they are like these people they were hypocrites when they asked Jeremiah to go and ask the Lord because they already knew what they planned to do God knew that and so Jeremiah busts them on that calls them on it chapter 43 now it happened when Jeremiah had stopped speaking to all the people all the words of the Lord their God for which the Lord their God had sent him to them all these words that Ezariah the son of Hoshea Johanan the son of Korea and all the proud men spoke saying to Jeremiah you speak falsely the Lord our God has not sent you to say do not go to Egypt and sojourn there but Baruch the son of Neriah has sent you against us to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans that they may put us to death or carry us away captive to Babylon now I don't know why Baruch ended up being accused of this maybe because they figured Jeremiah is getting it from somewhere not the Lord and the only friend Jeremiah has is Baruch so it must be that

guy Baruch telling you that but why Baruch would be interested in delivering them into the hands of Chaldeans is nowhere suggested and it just doesn't make sense they're suggesting that that Baruch he's the one who's really the mastermind behind your prophecies he's the mastermind behind what you're doing Jeremiah sort of like a movie I saw which you may have seen too called Without a Clue about Sherlock Holmes and Watson and Watson was really the brains and Sherlock Holmes was just an actor and he was acting like he was solving the cases but Watson was really the brains behind the whole thing just the reversal of the real stories about Sherlock Holmes and it's kind of like this you know well Jeremiah is the front man who everyone thinks is the prophet but the real power behind him is Baruch telling him everything to say and everything to do it's kind of a ridiculous theory so Johanan the son of Kareah all the captains of the forces and all the people would not obey the voice of the Lord to remain in the land of Judah but Johanan the son of Kareah and all the captains of the forces took all the remnant of Judah who had returned to dwell in the land of Judah from all the nations where they had been driven men, women, children the king's daughters and every person whom Nebuchadnezzar the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan and Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch the son of Neriah that is they took Jeremiah and Baruch with them against their will they took them captive to go down to Egypt with them so they went to the land of Egypt for they did not obey the voice of the Lord and they went as far as Tahpanes and the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah in Tahpanes saying take large stones in your hand and hide them in the sight of the men of Judah in the clay of the brick courtyard which is at the entrance to Pharaoh's house in Tahpanes and say to them thus says the Lord of hosts the God of Israel behold I will send and bring Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon my servant and will set his throne above these stones that I have hidden and he will spread his royal pavilion over them so by laying these stones in the ground he's basically setting up a foundation for King Nebuchadnezzar's throne to be put on because he's coming so might as well build him a throne to sit on because he's coming down here and he's going to spread his pavilion right here where we're standing when he comes he shall strike the land of Egypt and deliver to death those appointed for death and to captivity those appointed for captivity and to the sword those appointed for the sword I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt and he shall burn them and carry them away captive and he shall array himself with the land of Egypt as a shepherd puts on a garment and he shall go out from there in peace he shall also break the sacred pillars of Beth Shemesh that are in the land of Egypt and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians he shall burn with fire there is a fragmentary Babylonian text that has been found by archeologists that records no details but just mentions that Babylon invaded Egypt Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt in 568 to 567 B.C. which was less than 20 years after this and he actually removed Hophra the pharaoh and put Amosis the pharaoh in his place and so this must be the time when these prophecies were fulfilled Chapter 44 this is the final confrontation between Jeremiah and these refugees who had taken him captive the word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews who dwell in the land of Egypt who dwell at Migdal at Topaniz at

Nath and in the country of Pathros now this is perhaps sometime later because the Jews now were spread out throughout much of Egypt not just at Topaniz but they now had filtered off into other cities that were not really very close by at all how he got this word to all of them we don't know whether he sent a letter out to them or visited them or whether they all gathered at some festival or something in one place we're not told but here's how he spoke to them thus says the Lord of hosts the God of Israel you have seen all the calamity that I have brought on Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah and behold this day they are in a desolation and no one dwells in them because of the wickedness which they have committed to provoke me to anger and that they went to burn incense and to serve other gods whom they did not know they nor you nor your fathers however I have sent to you all my servants the prophets rising early and sending them saying oh do not do this abominable thing that I hate but they did not listen or incline their ear to turn from their wickedness to burn no incense to other gods so my fury and my anger were poured out and kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem and they are wasted and desolate as it is this day now therefore thus says the Lord the God of hosts the God of Israel why do you commit this great evil against yourselves to cut off from you man and woman child and infant out of Judah leaving none to remain in that you provoke me to wrath with the works of your hands burning incense to other gods in the land of Egypt where you have gone to dwell and that you may cut yourself off and be a curse and a reproach among the nations of the earth so he is saying that now you are in Egypt you are doing the same sins that brought judgment upon you when you were in Jerusalem why can't you learn your lesson in particular we will find that they are accused of burning incense to the queen of heaven which is Ishtar who was the wife of Baal and she was worshipped among other things by baking cakes and there was an earlier prophecy about how the children and the fathers you know participate and the wives all participate to make cakes to the queen of heaven this was one of the things that God complained about in an earlier prophecy chapter 7 and verse 18 we saw this but verse 9 says have you forgotten the wickedness of your fathers the wickedness of the kings of Judah the wickedness of their wives your own wickedness and the wickedness of your wives which they committed in the land of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem they have not been humbled to this day nor have they feared they have not walked in my law or in my statutes that I set before you and your fathers therefore thus says the Lord of hosts the God of Israel behold I will set my face against you for catastrophe and for cutting off all Judah and I will take the remnant of Judah who have set their faces to go to the land of Egypt to sojourn there and they shall all be consumed and fall in the land of Egypt they shall be consumed by the sword and by famine and they shall die from the least to the greatest by the sword and by the famine and they shall be an oath and an astonishment and a curse and a reproach for I will punish those who dwell in the land of Egypt as I have punished Jerusalem by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence so that none of the remnant of Judah who have gone into the land of Egypt who sojourn there shall escape or survive lest they return to the land of Judah to which they desire to return and dwell for none shall return except those who escape so there will be some like

none of you are going to survive except the ones who do that's kind of what he says he does say later in chapter in verse 28 he says yet a small number who escape the sword shall return from the land of Egypt so what he's saying is generally true except for a very tiny remnant who may make it back then all the men who knew that their wives had burned incense to other gods with all the women who stood by a great multitude in all the people who dwelt in the land of Egypt and in Pathros answered Jeremiah saying as for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord we will not listen to you but we will certainly do whatever has gone out of our own mouth to burn incense to the queen of heaven and to pour out drink offerings to her as we have done we and our fathers and our kings and our princes in the cities of Judah in the streets of Jerusalem for then we had plenty of food were well off and saw no trouble but since we stopped burning incense to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her we have lacked everything and have been consumed by the sword and the famine so they're saying you know when we were doing what you say we shouldn't do that's when things were going good for us when we actually repented which they never did and stopped you know burning incense to other gods which they didn't ever really do but what they're saying when we actually started to act like believers in your god then things went really badly for us now this is often how people choose what religion they'll go with you know which religion makes me feel good makes me comfortable provides for me well I'll tell you what serving mammon will make you rich it'll make you comfortable but you can't serve god and mammon sometimes serving god will make you poor sometimes serving god will end up causing you to be persecuted serving god can be the opposite of what you would want in your flesh the circumstances and yet it's the right thing to do turning from their idolatry was the right thing to do their circumstances didn't get better but that's partly because they had been so committed to idolatry that the trajectory that the nation was on was irreversible it was of course their idolatry that brought the disasters but they couldn't see that all they saw was we were doing better back when we were just worshipping the idols when we started listening to Jeremiah which of course they never did but when he started preaching to us then things got worse you know the Romans blamed the Christians for earthquakes and disasters and things like that too because the Christians were not worshipping the idols and telling people they shouldn't worship idols in the Roman Empire and then when some disaster would come like Vesuvius or something blowing up the Christians would be blamed for it because they were making the gods angry by not worshipping the gods the same thing in fact I believe that people often will say that the problems coming on America may be because of the bigoted Christians we haven't been blamed for everything yet but I wouldn't be surprised if that came on us you know that when things go wrong the people who worship God are blamed in many cases and that's what Jeremiah is being blamed for here the women also said and when we burned incense to the queen of heaven and poured out drink offerings to her did we make cakes for her and worship her and pour out drink offerings for her without our husband's permission then Jeremiah spoke to all the people the men, the women and all the people who had given him that answer saying the incense that you

burned in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem you and your fathers your kings and your princes and the people of the land did not the Lord remember them and did it not come into his mind so the Lord could no longer bear it because of the evil of your doings and because of the abominations which you committed therefore your land is desolation and astonishment a curse and without an inhabitant as it is this day because you have burned incense and because you have sinned against the Lord and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord or walked in his law in his statutes or in his testimonies therefore the calamity has happened to you as it is this day moreover Jeremiah said to all the people and to all the women hear the word of the Lord all Judah who are in the land of Egypt thus says the Lord of hosts the God of Israel saying you and your wives have spoken with your mouths and fulfilled with your hands saying we will surely perform our vows that we made to burn incense to the Queen of Heaven and to pour out drink offerings to her you will surely fulfill your vows and perform your vows therefore hear the word of the Lord all Judah who dwell in the land of Egypt behold I have sworn by my great name okay you've made vows God's making a vow that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt saying the Lord God lives behold I will watch over them for adversity and not for good and all the men of Judah who are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by famine until there is an end to them yet a small number who escape the sword shall return from the land of Egypt to the land of Judah and all the remnant of Judah who have gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there shall know that those words or excuse me shall know whose words will stand mine or theirs and this shall be a sign to you says the Lord that I will punish you in this place that you may know that my words will surely stand against you for adversity thus says the Lord behold I will give Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies and into the hand of those who seek his life as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon his enemy who sought his life and as I mentioned back when we were talking about chapter 43 King Hophra was removed from office and then three years later killed by a family member Amos Amose his I don't remember what the relationship was but Amose became king in his place with Babylon's patronage Babylon came down and conquered Hophra and replaced him with Amose and so the prophecy came true and this is actually the end of the story except in chapter 52 there will be a historical epilogue going over some of the same ground again in more detail what we have next are simply oracles the short one in chapter 45 given to Baruch and then the rest of them are going to be to pagan nations round about and we'll come back to these next time