



Those Who Make History

Kings and generals are in the foreground; priests and charlatans provide the people with the kind of truth they want to hear. Wars and famines have brought people to their knees: who is carrying forward the mission of Israel, the instrument of God in the world?

God looks for someone to whom he may *give authority* not over Israel, but over *all the nations*, and he entrusts him, not with the mission to speak, but to *uproot and destroy, to build and to plant*. In a word, God gives him the mission to speed up history. This man will be Jeremiah, a boy from Anathoth, who comes from a family of priests.

It was Jeremiah who has pronounced the discourses found in this book, but it is also he who lived the events as witness to God. He cooperated with God – the word should not frighten us – in his supreme decisions which gave direction to history.

If indeed history is the result of many known and unknown forces, it is God who draws everything together and guides events in such a way that one fails while another succeeds. God is at work in history through the works, words, writings and prayers of countless people. He also stirs up more profound forces that shake up lifeless hearts and strengthen the yearning for justice in the world. In the spheres of activity which God has reserved for himself, only those who totally surrender to him are able to cooperate with him.

God's friends share in his sovereign rule over events: Abraham (Gen 18:16), Moses (Ex 32:14), the martyrs (Rev 20:4). Jeremiah, the quiet and peaceful lad from Anathoth became one of them because he was emptied of his own will to such an extent that God revealed to him his *jealous love* for Israel and his *anger* over sin. So he was able to utter condemnations of Israel which would become reality and to foretell the times of the New Covenant.

The Jews of later times believed that, after his death, Jeremiah was present before God interceding for them (2 Mac 2:1 and 14:14). When prophets after him spoke of a suffering Savior, they remembered Jeremiah's trials.

Historical Background

Between Isaiah's last prophecies (690 B.C.) and Jeremiah's call from God (around 626) there is a span of sixty years, almost fifty of which correspond to Manasseh's reign. This ruler persistently offended the faith of the Jews (2 K 21). Then in 640 a child, Josiah, came to the throne and the embers of faith were slowly rekindled.

This was the time when the discovery of the Book of the Law brought about a religious renewal, *Josiah's Reform* (2 K 22). A few years before that, God had called Jeremiah.

Then, the events which followed and which Jeremiah witnessed, took a tragic turn. They are related in 2 Kings 23:25 and repeated in Jeremiah 39.

32:7 **1** ¹ These are the words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiyah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. ² The word of Yahweh came to him in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah. ³ It came again during the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the eleventh year of Zedekiah son of Josiah, king of Judah. In the fifth month of that year, the inhabitants of Jerusalem were taken into exile.

The call of Jeremiah

• ⁴ A word of Yahweh came to me, ⁵ “Even before I formed you in the womb I have known you; even before you were born I had set you apart, and appointed you a prophet to the nations!”

⁶ I said, “Ah, Lord Yahweh! I do not know how to speak; I am still young!”

⁷ But Yahweh replied, “Do not say; ‘I am still young’, for now you will go whatever be the mission I am entrusting to you, and you will speak of whatever I command you to say. ⁸ Do not be afraid of them, for I will be with you to protect you – it is Yahweh who speaks!”

⁹ Then Yahweh stretched out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me,

“Now I have put my words in your mouth. ¹⁰ See! Today I give you authority over nations and over kingdoms to uproot and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.”

¹¹ A word of Yahweh came to me

again, “Jeremiah what do you see?” I said, “I see the branch of a *watching tree*.” ¹² And Yahweh said to me, “You are right. I too am watching to fulfill my word.” ¹³ The word of Yahweh came to me a second time, “What do you see?” I replied, “I see a boiling caldron coming from the north and it is tilted towards this direction.” Then Yahweh said to me,

¹⁴ “From the north disaster will boil down on all the people of this land. ¹⁵ I am calling all the kingdoms of the north – it is Yahweh who speaks. Each of them will come and encamp at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem; against all its surrounding walls and against all the cities of Judah.

¹⁶ I will pass judgment on my people because of the evil they do in forsaking me; they have burned incense to foreign gods and worshipped gods their hands have made.

¹⁷ But you, get ready for action; stand up and say to them all that I command you. Be not scared of them or I will scare you in their presence!

¹⁸ See, I will make you a fortified city, a pillar of iron with walls of bronze, against all the nations, against the kings and princes of Judah, against the priests and the people of the land.

¹⁹ They will fight against you but shall not overcome you, for I am with you to rescue you – it is Yahweh who speaks.”

Outline of the Book of Jeremiah

It is difficult to say who drew up the book of Jeremiah and how. It seems that Baruch, the “secretary”, meaning the chancellor of the king, had an important part in it, and that Jeremiah himself dictated much of it to him. Various indications suggest that there has been a fusion of two texts which are partly overlapped.

The book has four parts:

- Prophecies against Judah and Jerusalem: chapters 1–25.
- Prophecies against the nations. Announced at the end of chapter 25, they form chapters 46–51.
- Promises of happiness: chapters 29–35.
- Jeremiah’s sufferings: chapters 36–45.

Am
8:2
Dn
9:14

2K
22:17

Is
50:7
Ezk
3:8
Mic
3:8

Acts
18:9
26:17

Is
42:1
Gal
1:15

Ex
4:11

Ex
3:12
Jdg
6:12

Is
6:7
Ezk
2:9–
3:3

Dn
10:16

Acts
9:15

The infidelities of Israel

2 ¹A word of Yahweh came to me, ²“Go and shout this in the hearing of Jerusalem. This is Yahweh’s word:

Dt
2:7
8:4
Ezk
16:60
Hos
2:16

I remember your kindness as a youth,
the love of your bridal days,
when you followed me in the wilderness,
through a land not sown.

³Israel was holy to Yahweh,
the first-fruits of his harvest.
All who ate of it had to pay
and misfortune fell on them –
it is Yahweh who speaks.

Ps
105:
14

⁴Hear the word of Yahweh, people of Jacob,
all you families of the nation of Israel.

⁵What wrong did your fathers find in me
that they strayed far from me?
Why did they pursue what is worthless
and become worthless themselves?

2k
17:15
Wis
13:1

⁶And they did not say: ‘Where is Yahweh
who brought us out of Egypt
and led us in the wilderness,
through a land of deserts and pits,

Dt
32:10-
18

• **1.4** Jeremiah says little about his vocation. We have no flashing revelation from God. The two visions – the branch of the *watching-tree* (the almond tree) and the boiling caldron – seem quite ordinary for such a transcendental mission. This helps us understand that God’s call was first of all something interior.

I have put my words in your mouth. Jeremiah is made a prophet: from now on, he will proclaim the word of God. That does not mean that God will always tell him what he must announce, rather, since he now thinks and feels like the Lord, he will be able to comment on every word of God given to him.

To all those I send you, you will go. From now on, Jeremiah will be guided by the power of the Spirit; he will obey, whatever the risks and in spite of the resistance of his timid nature. *Have no fear before them, or I will make you afraid in their presence.* This is an amazing revelation of the demanding love of Yahweh. He has decided to make this lad his chosen one and forces him to overcome and forget his human weakness.

I am with you to rescue you. Yahweh repeats what he said to Moses when he called him (Ex 3:12) and what he will also say to Paul (Acts 26:17). Moreover, Jeremiah is assured that the Lord destined him for this mission, of which he had never thought, and which frightens him: *Even before I formed you in the womb I have known you; even before you were born I had set you apart.* Later, the same will be said of John the Baptist (Lk 1:15), of Christ (see Is 49) and of Paul (Gal 1:15).

These words spoken to Jeremiah are, somehow, also meant for us: we are not the product of chance. In Ephesians 1, Paul praises this foreknowledge of God who called us from eternity to know Christ and to have a share in the divine riches. But what is said to Jeremiah urges us to reflect that God, in his eternal designs, clearly sees – next to Christ – those who are given a more transcendental mission. It would be difficult for them to escape God’s irresistible call.

God seems to force Jeremiah’s freedom, but that is but an impression of ours because we have not experienced the real freedom, and words rarely fully express reality.

I give you authority over the nations; to uproot and to pull down. From now on, Jeremiah will carry Yahweh’s creative word. In the first years, this word seems rather destructive. Jeremiah knows that when he pronounces a condemnation, he expresses God’s judgment which will shortly take place.

Jeremiah’s mission: “*To uproot and to pull down; to build and to plant*” will be the mission of any worker in the Lord’s vineyard. There can be no compromise between a semblance of Christian life and authentic faith; the genuine apostle must *destroy* in order *to build*.

• **2.1** Chapters 2–6 except for 3:6-18 contain Jeremiah’s preaching in the first years following his call. After the godless kings Manasseh and Amon, there was very little concern for religion; Jeremiah daringly opposes general indifference. His language resembles

a land of drought and darkness,
a land still untrodden and without inhabitants?'

⁷I brought you to a fertile land
to eat of the choicest fruit.

As soon as you came you defiled my land
and dishonored my heritage!

Lev
10:11
Num
27:21
Ezk
7:26
Hos
4:6
Mic
3:11

⁸The priests did not ask, 'Where is Yahweh?'
The masters of my teaching did not know me;
the pastors of my people betrayed me;
the prophets followed worthless idols
and spoke in the name of Baal.

⁹Therefore I contend with you –
it is Yahweh who speaks –
and I will contend with your children's children!

¹⁰Cross to the coasts of Cyprus and see,
or send to Kedar and observe with care
if there has ever been such a thing!

Ps
106:
20
Rom
1:23

¹¹Has a nation exchanged its gods,
false though they be?
But my people have exchanged their Glory
for what is worthless!

Is
1:2

¹²Be aghast at that, O heavens!
Shudder, be utterly appalled –
it is Yahweh who speaks –

17:13
Hos
10:10
Jn
4:10

¹³for my people have done two evils:
they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water,
to dig for themselves leaking cisterns
that hold no water!

that of Hosea who, a century before, had spoken in similar circumstances in the northern kingdom. For the Israelites, Yahweh is God, or a god, but not someone who lives close to them. For Jeremiah he is both Father and Husband.

I remember your kindness as a youth. You will note the longing for the time of the desert, the days of Moses, when the people were wandering and poor, but trusted in Yahweh who helped them. As they built their houses, planted their vineyards and had children, the Israelites became rich and forgot their benefactor: "No one can serve two masters." Yahweh appears as the jealous husband: those people, so easily satisfied, had not yet discovered God's passionate love.

My people have exchanged their Glory for what is worthless. Jeremiah is thinking about his contemporaries who are unable to discover the invisible God and who feel secure with their painted gods and predictions which chase after all that is flashy and new.

They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water. Abandoning God had taken three forms:

– Their leaders stopped seeking the will of

God. The three categories of authority in Judah are named: priests, shepherds (governors) and prophets.

– They restored the worship of false gods, to whom they offered sacrifices and vows.

– They formed alliances with powerful nations like Assyria and Egypt with the idea of guaranteeing their own security, but without seeing that such alliances were making them just like other peoples. Their vocation was to keep their faith in Yahweh, knowing that he would never abandon them if they carried out justice among the people.

See also the commentary on Isaiah 30:22.

Know and see that it is bitter and evil to forsake Yahweh, your God. Maybe Jeremiah and the prophets sometimes had an overly simplistic vision of the justice of God in this world. We know that prosperity or misfortune are not the sure proof that we are leading good or evil lives. Nevertheless, those who meditate on their lives and on history do verify Jeremiah's words: sin always brings its punishment.

The blood of the innocents (v. 34). In many parts of the Bible we find reference to children sacrificed to the idols.

¹⁴Did I make Israel a slave
 or was he born in bondage?
 How then did you become the spoil of others?
¹⁵The lions have roared against you,
 loudly indeed have they roared,
 making your country a wasteland,
 your cities a ruins without inhabitants.
¹⁶Even the Egyptians of Memphis and Tahpanhes have humbled you!
¹⁷Didn't you bring this on yourself
 by forsaking Yahweh, your God,
 even as he led you in the way?
¹⁸Now why call to Egypt?
 Will the water of the Nile heal you?
 And why go to Assyria?
 What good will the water of the River do you?
¹⁹Your own wickedness chastises you
 and your own unfaithfulness punishes you!
 Know, and see that it is bitter and evil
 to forsake Yahweh your God
 and no longer to fear me –
 it is Yahweh, the God of hosts, who speaks!
²⁰It was long ago that you broke your yoke
 and burst your bonds,
 saying: 'I will not serve!'
 On every high hill
 and under every green tree
 you played the harlot!
²¹I planted you a choice vine, a shoot of wholesome stock;
 why have you become degenerate, a wild vine?
²²Even if you wash with soda
 and use soap in abundance,
 the stain of your sin is always before me –
 it is the Lord Yahweh who speaks.
²³How do you dare say: 'I am not defiled,
 I have not gone after the Baals?'
 See your footprints in the valley,
 admit what you have done,
 O restive young she-camel, running here and there.
²⁴Wild ass of the desert,
 sniffing the wind in her desire,
 who can restrain her lust?
 Those who pursue her, need not tire themselves,
 at mating time they will find her.
²⁵Run if you wish, until your feet are sore,
 and your throat is dry!
 But you say: 'It's no use,
 I love foreign gods, it is them I follow.'

Dt
 4:6
 Pro
 1:7
 Bar
 3:12

Dt
 12:2
 1K
 14:23
 Is
 1:29
 Hos
 4:14
 Mt
 11:30
 Is
 5:1
 Ps
 80:9

2K
 23:10

The crimes of Jerusalem

²⁶ As a thief is shamed when caught,
so is the house of Israel,
they, their kings, their princes,
their priests and their prophets!

²⁷ To a tree they say: 'You are my father!'
and to a stone: 'You gave me birth!'

For they have turned their back on me
instead of their face!

In the day of misfortune
they will call me: 'Rise and save us!'

^{Dt 32:37} ^{Is 2:8} ²⁸ Where, then, are the gods of your own
making?

Let them rise and save you if they can,
in the time of your distress,
for your gods, O Judah! are as many
as your cities.

²⁹ Why argue with me? You have all be-
trayed me – it is Yahweh who speaks.

^{Is 1:20} ³⁰ In vain did I strike your children,
they did not learn a lesson!
And your sword, like a destroying lion
devoured your prophets!

³¹ All you of this generation, hear what
Yahweh says:

Have I been a desert for Israel,
a land of darkness?

Why do my people say:
'We will depart from you
and no more return to you'?

³² Does a virgin forget her ornaments, or a
bride her sash?

But my people have forgotten me
for days without number!

³³ How well you direct your steps in your
search for lovers,
even to walking along with crime!

³⁴ Look at your garments
stained with the blood of the innocent
poor, although you did not catch them break-
ing in!

³⁵ I know you say: 'I am innocent. Why
does his anger not turn away from me?'

I will accuse you: Yes, you have sinned!

^{Is 30:3} ³⁶ How lightly do you change your way!
You will be put to shame by Egypt as you
were by Assyria.

²⁵ ^{13:19} ³⁷ You will also leave that place with your
hands on your head,
for Yahweh has rejected those you trust,
and they will not help you!

Are you really returning to me?

3 ¹ If a man divorces his wife and
she leaves him and marries an-
other man, should he come back to
her? Wouldn't the land be totally pol-
luted? But you, you are a harlot with
many lovers, and you still have the
nerve to return to me? – it is Yahweh
who speaks.

² Lift your eyes to the hills and see: ^{Gen 38:14} ^{Ezk 16:25}
Where have you not been violated? By
the wayside you sat waiting for your
lovers, like an Arab in the wilderness,
and you have dishonored the land with
your evil and your harlotry!

³ The showers held back and there ^{Am 4:7}
was no spring rain for you, yet you
have a harlot's brow and refuse to be
ashamed! ⁴ Worse still you called to me:
'Father, guide of my youth! ⁵ Will you
always be angry? Will your wrath last
forever?' That is what you said, and did
evil as much as you were able to." ^{Dt 28:23}

Comparison of the two sisters

⁶ During the reign of King Josiah, Yah-
weh said to me, "Have you seen what faith-
less Israel has done? She has gone on every
high hill and under every green tree and there
played the harlot! ⁷ So I thought: After all this
she will return to me; but she did not.

Her perverse sister, Judah, saw ⁸ that for ^{Is 50:1}
all the adulteries of that unfaithful Israel, I sent
her away with a certificate of divorce. Yet I
saw that the disloyal Judah had no fear and
that she too went and played the harlot!
⁹ Because of her harlotry, she dishonored the
land, sinning with stones and trees. ¹⁰ And
even after that her sister, the unfaithful
Judah, did not come to me wholeheartedly. It
was only pretense. It is Yahweh who speaks."

¹¹ And Yahweh continued, "Rebellious Is-
rael has been less guilty than false Judah.
¹² Go and shout this message to the north:

Come back, unfaithful Israel – it is Yahweh

• **3.1** This is the beginning of the poem
which will continue in 3:19-4:2.

If a man divorces his wife. We cannot under-
stand sin if we have not known love. Jeremiah
declares that this hard-hearted people, "the
bride" of Yahweh has behaved like a prostitute.
An adulterous woman who abandoned her hus-
band and sacrificed her children to go after other
men.

Contrary to what usually happens, the aban-

doned husband looks for the guilty woman.
Judah does not deserve Yahweh's return and
people cannot complain when misfortunes be-
fall them. Yet, Yahweh's love urges him to look
for these unfaithful people.

• **6.** This part begun in 3:1 is interrupted by
two paragraphs.

3:6-13. These verses were written when
Josiah recaptured part of the northern kingdom

who speaks – I will not let my anger fall on you for I am merciful, I will not be angry forever.

¹³ Simply confess your guilt; you have rebelled against Yahweh your God, and have scattered your favors among strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed my voice – it is the word of Yahweh.

The new Jerusalem

¹⁴ Come back, faithless people – it is Yahweh who speaks – for I am your master. I will select one from a city and two from a family and bring you to Zion. ¹⁵ Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and prudence.

¹⁶ And when you have increased and multiplied in the land in those days – it is Yahweh who speaks – people will no longer speak of the ark of the covenant of Yahweh; it will not be remembered or missed, nor shall it be made again!

¹⁷ Then they will call Jerusalem ‘The Throne of Yahweh’ and all the nations will gather there to honor the name of Yahweh and no longer will they follow the stubbornness of their wicked hearts.

¹⁸ In those days the people of Judah will unite with the people of Israel and together they will return from the north to the land that I gave to their ancestors as a heritage.

Continuation of the poem for conversion

¹⁹ And I thought: How gladly would I have placed you among my children and given you as your inheritance a beautiful land, the most splendid among all the nations! And I thought you would call me ‘my father’ and not turn from following me!

²⁰ But, like a woman unfaithful to her husband, you have been unfaithful to me, O people of Israel! – it is Yahweh who speaks.”

²¹ A cry is heard in the barren heights, the weeping and pleading of the children of Israel, because they have perverted their way and have forgotten Yahweh their God!

²² “Come back, unfaithful people, I will heal you of your rebelliousness!”

‘Yes, we come to you, for you are Yahweh our God!

²³ Truly the temples on the heights and the feasts on the hills are useless; only Yahweh our God can save Israel.

²⁴ The infamous god has devoured all the fruits of our ancestors’ labor since our youth, their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. ²⁵ Let us lie down in our

shame and let our confusion cover us, for it is against Yahweh our God that we have sinned from our youth until this day, we and our fathers, and we have not obeyed the voice of Yahweh our God!’

Disaster foretold

4 ¹ “If you return to me, O Israel – it is Yahweh who speaks – if you convert to me and remove your dirty idols from my sight you will have no need to hide from me; ² if you truthfully, justly and honestly swear by Yahweh’s life, then you will be a blessing for all nations, and you will be their glory.”

³ For thus says Yahweh to the people of Judah and Jerusalem, “Break up deeply your fallow land and do not sow among the thorns.

⁴ O men of Judah and Jerusalem! circumcise yourselves for Yahweh and purify your hearts, lest my wrath spread like a fire that cannot be quenched because of your evil deeds.”

⁵ Announce this in Judah, proclaim it in Jerusalem.

Sound the trumpet through the land; shout aloud and say:

“Assemble and go to the fortified cities!

⁶ Raise a banner towards Zion!

Run for your lives, do not tarry,

for I will bring evil and great destruction from the north.

⁷ The lion has come out of his den; the destroyer of nations has set out to devastate your country and make your cities ruins without inhabitants!

⁸ Because of this, wrap yourselves in sackcloth; lament and groan, for the fury of Yahweh’s anger has not turned away from us.

⁹ On that day – it is Yahweh who speaks – the king and the leaders will be discouraged, the priests will be terrified and the prophets will be astounded. ¹⁰ People will say, “Ah! Lord Yahweh, you have truly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying: ‘You will have peace’ even as the sword is at our throat.”

¹¹ When the time comes it will be said to the people of Jerusalem:

“Wearing wind from the desert heights is coming to the daughter of my people, neither to winnow nor to cleanse!

¹² A strong wind comes from there.

Now I will declare my judgments against them.”

¹³ See! Someone comes like the clouds, his chariots are like a whirlwind, his horses swifter than eagles!

Ezra
9:6

Dt
6:13

Hos
10:12
Mt
13:22

Dt
6:3
2Mac
2:5

Ezk
43:7
Rev
22:3

Is
63:16
Ezk
20:6

Hos
14:5

Ezk
13:10

1:14

(Kingdom of Israel). See the commentary on 2 Kings 23:15. Even after so many threats, the hope of conversion is never lost.

3:14-18. These words were probably proclaimed by Jeremiah after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 and they contain promises of

restoration. They were inserted here in the book to tone down the pessimistic impression caused by so many condemnations. In fact, these threats of punishment had to be completely carried out before God would offer new hope.

Is
1:16
Ezk
18:31
Jas
4:8
Woe to us for we are ruined!
14 Cleanse your heart of every evil, Jerusalem, that you may be saved! How long will you harbor evil plans within you?

15 A voice from Dan declares of a coming disaster from Mount Ephraim! "Warn the nations. 16 Let everyone know in Jerusalem and Judah that enemies are coming from a distant land." 17 They encircle Jerusalem like watchers guarding a field, because she has rebelled against me – it is Yahweh who speaks.

18 "Your own conduct and actions have brought this upon you. How bitter is your punishment and how it deeply penetrates your heart because you have rebelled against me!"

Barren soil

19 I am in anguish! I tremble in the depths of my being; my heart beats wildly. I cannot remain silent for I hear the sound of the trumpet and the clamor of war!

20 Disaster after disaster; all the land is laid waste; my tents are suddenly destroyed and in an instant all that shelters me is wiped out. 21 For how long must I see the banner raised and hear the sound of the trumpet?

22 "This happens because my people are foolish and do not know me. They are senseless and have no understanding, – wise in doing evil but stupid in doing good!"

Gen
1:2
23 I looked at the earth and I found it formless and void; I looked at the sky but darkness engulfed it.

24 I looked at the mountains and they were quaking, and all the hills were swaying to and fro.

25 I looked and saw there was no one at all; even the birds deserted the skies.

26 I looked and saw that the fruitful land was a desert and that all the cities were in ruins because of Yahweh and his fierce anger.

27 Yahweh says, "The whole land may be desolate but I will not totally

destroy it! 28 Because of this the earth shall mourn and the skies be darkened: I have declared my purpose and will not relent; I have made up my mind and will not change it."

29 At the sound of the horsemen and archers every town takes flight; some go to the thickets and climb among the rocks. All the towns are deserted and no one is left.

30 And you, desolate one, what will you do? Even if you are garbed in scarlet and wear jewels of gold and put make-up on your eyes, in vain do you beautify yourself, for your lovers despise you and are ready to take your life.

31 I hear a cry as of a woman in labor, anguish as of one giving birth the first time. It is the cry of the daughter of Zion, gasping for breath with hands outstretched: "Woe is me! I am fainting amidst a band of murderers!"

Not one is upright

5 • 1 "Go through the streets of Jerusalem; observe carefully and take note. Search the entire city squares and find, if you can, even one man who acts justly and seeks the truth, that I may forgive this city." 2 Even though they swear, "As surely as Yahweh lives" they do not mean what they say.

3 O Yahweh, are you not looking for truth? You struck them but they did not feel it; you crushed them but they rejected correction. They set their faces harder than a rock and refused to repent.

4 Then I thought: "Such are the poor, they act foolishly because they do not know the way of Yahweh, the law of their God! 5 So I will go to the well-to-do and speak to them for they know the way of Yahweh and the law of their God." But they, too, have broken their yoke and burst their bonds!

6 That is why the lion from the forest will slay them and the wolf from the desert will destroy them, while the leopard lurks around their cities. Anyone who comes out is torn to pieces, for great is their sin and many are their desertions!

7 "Why should I pardon you? Your children have rejected me and sworn by false gods. I gave them all they needed and yet they committed adultery and trooped to the

2K
9:30
Ezk
23:40

Is
1:8

Gen
18:20
Ezk
22:30
Mic
7:2
Ps
14:2

• 5.1 This passage referring to an invasion from the north was begun in Chapter 4. Search the entire city squares and find, if you can, even one man who acts justly and seeks the truth. Yahweh would forgive every-

thing for the sake of one "just person," just as we saw in Genesis 18. The search is in vain, and Jeremiah also looks in vain for someone who would understand. After so many invasions this one sounds the alarm announcing the final

^{Ezk} 22:11 harlot's house. They are well-fed, ⁸ lusty stallions, each one neighing for his neighbor's wife.

⁹ Shall I not call them to account – it is Yahweh who speaks – shall I not take vengeance against a nation like this?

¹⁰ Go up, nations, through her vineyards and ravage them, but do not entirely destroy my vine. Cut off her branches for they are not Yahweh's. ¹¹ For the people of Israel and Judah have been utterly unfaithful to me – it is Yahweh who speaks.

¹² They have spoken falsely of Yahweh, saying, "He does not exist; no harm will happen to us; we shall see neither the sword nor famine!" ¹³ As for the prophets, they are but wind. God doesn't speak to them."

^{Is} 10:17 ¹⁴ Because of this, Yahweh the God of hosts has spoken, "This is what I am going to do to them: I will put words in your mouth. They will be like a fire, and this people will be the wood it devours."

¹⁵ People of Israel! I will bring against you a nation from afar – it is Yahweh who speaks – () whose language you do not understand.

¹⁶ () All of them are mighty warriors.

^{Dt} 28:33 ¹⁷ They will devour your harvest and your food,

devour your sons and daughters,
devour your flocks and herds,
devour your vines and your fig trees.
They will devastate with the sword
the fortified cities in which you trust.

¹⁸ But even in those days – it is Yahweh who speaks – I will not utterly destroy them.

^{Is} 7:3 ¹⁹ And when they ask, "Why has Yahweh our God done all this to us?" you shall say to them, "Just as you have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your land, so shall you serve strangers in a land that is not your own."

²⁰ Declare this to the people of Jacob and make it known in Judah,

^{Is} 6:9
^{Mt} 13:15 ²¹ listen, stupid and senseless people!
who have eyes and do not see,
who have ears and do not hear!

^{Job} 38:11 ²² Do you not fear me? –
it is Yahweh who speaks –
Will you not tremble before me?

I set the sand as a limit to the sea, an everlasting barrier it may never pass;
its waves toss but cannot prevail;
they roar but are unable to go beyond it.

^{Dt} 11:14 ²³ But this people's heart is rebellious and stubborn; they have turned aside and gone away! ²⁴ They do not say in their hearts, "Let us fear Yahweh our God who sends in season the rain, and has in store for us the harvest."
²⁵ Your crimes have turned order into

chaos, your sins have deprived you of these blessings, ²⁶ for among my people are scoundrels; they set traps like fowlers and catch human beings.

²⁷ Their houses are filled with loot,
like a cage full of birds.

It has turned them rich and powerful;
²⁸ they have become fat and sleek.

Great is their wickedness;
there is no justice in their judgment,
for they do not protect the orphan's rights
nor defend the needy's cause!

²⁹ Should I not severely punish them for such things? – it is Yahweh who speaks –
Should I not exact vengeance against a people like them?

³⁰ A terrible and abominable thing has happened in the land, ³¹ prophets prophesy lies and priests teach what pleases them, and my people like it to be so. But what will you do soon?

Jerusalem is besieged

6 ¹ People of Benjamin! Seek safety beyond Jerusalem.

Sound the trumpet in Tekoa,
raise a signal in Beth-hacherem,
for misfortune pours out from the north:
it will be a huge disaster.

² Shall I not compare you, daughter of Zion, to a beautiful pasture? ³ Shepherds with their flocks are coming to her, they pitch their tents and feed their flocks all over her.

⁴ Declare a holy war against her,
attack her at noontime.

Woe to us! For the day declines;
the evening shadows lengthen!

⁵ Rise up! We shall attack by night
and destroy her palaces!

⁶ For Yahweh of hosts has spoken: "Cut down trees and build a siege-ramp against Jerusalem. This city must be punished for all in her is oppression. ⁷ Evil springs from her as water from a well. Violence and oppression are heard in the city, suffering and cruelty are always before me.

Jeremiah's threats

⁸ Take warning, Jerusalem, lest I turn away from you and make you a desolation, a no-man's land."

⁹ Yahweh of hosts further said, "You shall glean thoroughly as a vine, what is left of Israel. You shall do what the grape-gatherer does when his hand goes over the branches again."

¹⁰ To whom shall I speak, whom shall I warn? No one of them wants to listen, that they may understand. Their ears are stuffed

destruction. This is how people and nations remain deaf until they perish. In the New Testament, John the Baptist and then Jesus and his

apostles try to arouse their compatriots and they issue the same call: be converted because the tragedy – the judgment – is at hand.

and they pay no attention. They scorn what Yahweh says and refuse to listen.

20:9 ¹¹The anger of Yahweh has filled me and I can bear it no longer!

“Then pour it out on the children in the street and on the gathering of young men; both husband and wife will be caught, both the elderly and those who are not of age. ¹²Their houses will be passed to others, together with their fields and their wives, when I stretch out my hand and strike the people of the land – it is Yahweh who speaks.

4:10 ¹³All of them – from the least to the greatest – are greedy for gain; prophet and priest alike are deceitful. ¹⁴They treat lightly the disaster of my people saying, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace.

¹⁵They should be ashamed of their abominable deeds. But they have no shame and don’t even know how to blush. Surely they shall fall with those who will fall; when I ask them to account they will stumble – it is Yahweh who speaks.

Mt 11:29 ¹⁶This is what Yahweh says, “Stand in the roads and look. Ask for the ancient paths and know where the good way is. Walk on it and experience peace for yourselves.” But you said, “We will not take it.” ¹⁷Then Yahweh set watchmen over you: “Pay attention to the sound of the horn!” But you said, “We will not listen.”

¹⁸Listen nations; know what will befall them! ¹⁹Listen earth! I am bringing disaster on this people! It is the fruit of their rebellion, because they ignored my words and despised my Law.

Is 1:11 43:23 Heb 10:5 ²⁰The incense from Sheba is useless for me, don’t bring me the fragrant cane from a distant land. Your burnt offerings are not acceptable to me nor do I find your sacrifices pleasing.”

²¹This is what Yahweh says, “I will place stumbling blocks before this people to make them stumble, parents and children, neighbors and friends together.”

²²It is Yahweh who speaks, “See, a people

comes from the north, a powerful nation from the ends of the earth. ²³Armed with bow and spear they are cruel and merciless. Their voice roars like the roaring sea. Mounted on horses, in battle formation they come as a fire, against you, daughter of Zion.”

²⁴When we heard this our hands went limp, anguish seized us like the birthpangs of a woman. ²⁵“Let us not go to the fields or onto the roads, for the enemy’s sword brings terror on every side.”

²⁶O my people! Wrap yourself in sackcloth and roll in ashes; mourn with bitter lament as for an only child, for the destroyer is coming against us. Am 8:10 Zec 12:10

²⁷“I have appointed you as an examiner among my people, that you may see and appreciate their ways.”

²⁸They are all rebels and slanderers. They are like bronze and iron and all are corrupt. ²⁹The bellows blow to burn away the lead with fire, but the smelter works in vain for the evil elements remain. ³⁰They will be called “worthless silver” for Yahweh has rejected them. Ezk 22:18 Is 1:22

I can destroy this temple

7 ¹These words were spoken by Yahweh, to Jeremiah, ²“Stand at the gate of Yahweh’s house and proclaim this in a loud voice: Listen to what Yahweh says, all you people of Judah (who enter these gates to worship Yahweh). ³Yahweh the God of Israel says this: 26:1

Amend your ways and your deeds and I will stay with you in this place.

⁴Rely not on empty words such as: ‘Look, the Temple of Yahweh! the Temple of Yahweh! This is the Temple of Yahweh!’ Am 5:14

⁵It is far better for you to amend your

• **7.1** For four centuries Yahweh protected Jerusalem. The Jews were convinced that there was a blessing for them and for the Temple, the dwelling place of Yahweh, where he was present, and from where he blessed his people.

The temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh! They come there and, confident in Yahweh’s gifts, they think that they do not need to change their lives. It is true that Yahweh ordered the sacrifices, but can people be reconciled to Yahweh at the cost of a sacrificed animal? What is the value of these rituals if there is no change in behavior?

What I did in Shiloh, I will likewise do to this Temple. God has successively destroyed the sacred objects and the institutions he gave his people. People always replace God with means

that lead to God, or with holy objects, or with persons who represent God. We are forever fleeing from a personal encounter whether it be with God or neighbor, because it makes us afraid and we take refuge in the bazaar of religion.

All that God gives is for a time in order to make us cross into another stage: God gave kings and then suppressed them, he demanded sacrifices and then he destroyed the temple when he gave us the Son “in whom dwells the fulness of God.” He gave the Law, and later showed how ineffective it was. He gave priests and then replaced them with Christ.

Here Jeremiah speaks of the *Temple*. In 3:16 he also speaks of the *Ark of the Covenant*: they will no longer exist in the time of the New Covenant. In 4:4, Jeremiah mentions *circumci-*

2K 21:6 defiled it. ³¹They have built the temple of Topheth in the valley of Hinnom where they burn their sons and daughters, something I never commanded or even thought of.

³²Hence the time will come when it will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of Hinnom, but rather the valley of Slaughter, for they will bury the dead in Topheth for lack of space elsewhere. ³³And the corpses of this people will be eaten by birds and animals; and none will scare them away.

³⁴In the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem I will bring to an end all expressions of joy and happiness, the songs of the bride and bridegroom, for the land will become a wilderness.

2K 23:16 **8** • ¹When that time comes – it is Yahweh who speaks – they will bring from the tombs the bones of the kings of Judah, the bones of their leaders, priests, prophets and of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ²They will expose them to the Sun and Moon and all the gods of the skies, because they have loved and served them, and they have followed and worshiped them. These bones will not be gathered up to be replaced in tombs but will remain like dung on the ground.

Rev 9:6 ³Death will be preferable to life for the survivors of this perverse race who remain in places to which I have driven them.

Sin and punishment

⁴This is what Yahweh told me, “You will say to them: Doesn’t the one who falls get up and the one who goes away return? ⁵Why then has this people turned away in stubborn rebellion? They make a habit of deceit and refuse to repent.

⁶I listened attentively; they did not speak truthfully nor did they repent of their wickedness. No one says: ‘What have I done!’ They all follow their own course like horses plunging into battle. ⁷Even the stork in the sky knows her times; the dove, the swallow and the crane know the time to return, but my people do not know the ordinances of Yahweh.

8 • ⁸How dare you say: ‘We are wise and the Law of Yahweh is with us’ when the deceiving pen of the scribe has turned it into a lie? ⁹The wise will be put to shame; they shall be

Rom 2:17

dismayed and trapped. Since they have despised the word of Yahweh, what then is left as the basis of their wisdom?

1Cor 1:19

¹⁰That is why I will give their wives to other men, their fields to conquerors, for all of them, the smallest to the greatest, are greedy for gain. All, from the prophet to the priest, practice deceit. ¹¹They treat lightly the wound of my people saying ‘Peace, peace!’ when there is no peace.

6:12-15

¹²They should be ashamed of their abominable deeds. They have no shame and don’t even know how to blush. Surely they shall fall along with those who will fall; for I will ask them to account and they will stumble.

¹³I will make an end of them – it is Yahweh who speaks – for the vine yields no grapes, the fig tree no figs, even the leaves are withered. I will hand them over to the passersby.”

Mk 11:13

¹⁴“Why do we sit still? Get up! We shall go to the fortified cities to perish there. See, Yahweh our God wants us to die and gives us poisoned water, because we have sinned against him.

¹⁵We hoped for peace and we see nothing good! for a time of healing, but terror came! ¹⁶From Dan we hear the snorting of his horses; at the sound of the neighing of his stallions the whole earth trembles.”

– “They are coming to devour the land and all it contains, the city and all who dwell in it. ¹⁷For I am letting loose against you snakes and adders that cannot be charmed, and they will bite you.”

¹⁸Sorrow takes hold of me, my heart fails me. ¹⁹The pleading of the daughter of my people is heard all over the land: Has Yahweh abandoned Zion? Is her king no longer there? —“Why have they provoked me with their images, with their foreign gods?”

²⁰The harvest is over, the summer is past and we have not been saved. ²¹I am brokenhearted because of my people’s misfortune.

I am crushed and dismayed. ²²Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no healer there? Why is no remedy given to my people?

²³I would that my head were a well of water and my eyes a fountain of tears to weep day and night for the slain of my people.

Lm 1:16

• **8.1** These three chapters combine several of Jeremiah’s oracles which were delivered in the days of King Jehoiakim.

Our Bible did not yet exist in those days. The parts of it which were already written never left the Temple library. For the people the word of God consisted of the traditions kept by the priests, and their decisions that applied the Law of God; it also meant the words of the prophets who transmitted the word of God for their day.

However, these two sources of faith were corrupted: it was no longer possible to know the meaning of the events which the nation was experiencing.

In 8:10-12 we have a repetition of what was said in 6:12-15.

In 8:21 and 8:23 we see Jeremiah’s sensitivity to the misfortunes of his people.

9¹Who will give me a lodging, in the desert, that I may leave my people and go far from them?

For they are all adulterers,
a band of traitors.

²They bend their tongue like bows.
Deceit and not truth prevail in the land.
They commit one crime after another
and do not know me.

Mic
7:5
Ps
41:10

³Each one is suspicious of his friend
and no one trusts his brother,
brother deceives brother,
friend slanders friend.

⁴They deceive each other;
no one speaks the truth.
Their tongues are addicted to lying;
they are perverse and too hardened to
repent.

⁵They live amidst deceitfulness
and deceitfulness prevents them from
knowing me.

⁶That is why – word of Yahweh God of
hosts –

I will refine and test them,
for what else can I do for my people?

Ps
57:5

⁷Their tongues are like deadly arrows,
uttering deceitful words.
With their friend they speak of peace
but in their heart they set a trap for him.

Rom
2:2

⁸Isn't it reason enough for me to punish
them?
Shall I not avenge myself on such a na-
tion?

⁹On the mountains there will be weeping
and wailing, and on the prairies of the wilder-
ness a dirge, because they have been burnt
and deserted, and the sound of flock is heard
no more. The birds of the sky and the beasts
have all fled and are gone.

¹⁰I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a
den of jackals.

True wisdom

• ²²It is Yahweh who speaks:
“Let not the wise boast of his wisdom,
nor the valiant of his valor
nor the wealthy of his wealth!
²³But if someone wants to boast,
let him boast of this:
of understanding and knowing me.

Mic
6:8
Jn
17:3

I will make the cities of Judah a wasteland
without inhabitants.”

• ¹¹Who is wise enough to understand
these events? And who is the one Yahweh has
chosen to reveal them? Why has the land
perished and been laid waste like a desert
where no one passes?

Hos
14:10
Dt
32:39

¹²Yahweh answered, “It is because they
have forsaken the Law that I gave them. They
have not listened to me ¹³but in the stubborn-
ness of their heart they have followed the
Baal as they were instructed by their ances-
tors.”

¹⁴That is why Yahweh, the God of hosts
and the God of Israel says, “I will make this
people eat bitter food and I will give them
poisoned water. ¹⁵I will scatter them among
nations that neither they nor their ancestors
knew and I will send the sword after them until
I have finished with them.”

Rev
8:11

¹⁶Listen! Call for the wailing women to
come, send for the most skillful!

¹⁷Let them hasten to intone a funeral song,
and let us weep,
our eyes running with tears.

¹⁸The sound of wailing is heard in Zion.
A terrible disaster has befallen us!
How great our shame to leave the land,
to see our homes broken down!

¹⁹You women, take heed of what Yahweh
says, let your ears pay attention to his words.
Teach this lament to your daughters
and each of them to their friends:

²⁰“Death has come through our windows
and invaded our palaces,
cutting down the children in the street
and young men in the squares!

Jl
2:9

²¹The corpse are scattered in the fields like
dung;
like sheaves cut by the reaper
with no one to gather them!”

• **9.11** As we have said with regard to 8:8, the wisdom of believers is not like a rule of individual life which everyone could read in the same way in the Bible and practise regardless of the place and time. Their wisdom consists in “understanding events.” In every age, the people of God should respond to the challenge that God offers them through the circumstances of the present time.

Nowadays it is not enough to know the letter of the Bible: we need to have guidance of the Church and its prophets help us apply the text to our present situation.

• **22.** We put a great deal of emphasis on helping young people to study. Many parents make sacrifices throughout their lives to have one of their children become a good technician

1Cor
1:31
2Cor
10:17

I am Yahweh, the merciful;
I implement justice
and rule the world with righteousness.
For in these things I delight,
– this is Yahweh’s word.

²⁴“The time is coming,” Yahweh says, “when I will ask to account both those who are circumcised and those who are not: ²⁵Egypt, Juda, the Amonites and the Moabites with all the Arabs of the desert, for all these nations are not circumcised, and the people of Israel are not circumcised in their heart.”

Idols and the true God

10 ¹ Hear the word which Yahweh speaks to you, people of Israel,

² “Do not follow the way of the foreign nations and do not fear signs in the sky as they do. The Awesome God of these nations is but nothing. ³ It is only wood cut from a tree in the forest and shaped by a craftsman’s chisel. ^{4a} They adorned it with silver and gold – ⁹ silver from Tarshish and gold from Ophir – work of a carver and a goldsmith’s hand, all the work of artists; they are dressed in violet and purple cloth woven by skilled weavers. ^{4b} It is fastened down with nails to keep it from falling over. ⁵ Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field; they cannot speak. They have to be carried because they cannot walk. Have no fear of them; they can do neither harm nor good.”

⁶ No one equals you, Yahweh, you are great. Power is yours, and great is your Name! ⁷ Who would not fear you, King of nations? You are to be feared, for among the wise of the nations and in all their kingdoms no one equals you.

⁸ They are all brutish and stupid; their idols are proof of their foolishness. ¹⁰ But Yahweh is the true God, the living God and eternal King. His anger makes the earth quake; the nations cannot endure his fury.

¹¹ You will say this to them, “The gods who did not make either the heavens or the earth shall disappear from the earth and from under the heavens.”

¹² By his power he made the earth, by his wisdom he established the world;

Ps
104:
24

by his understanding he extended the heavens.

¹³ When he raises his voice the waters pile up in the heavens.

He calls the clouds from the ends of the earth; he sends lightning with the rain and from his storehouse sends out the wind.

¹⁴ At this everyone feels stupid and without knowledge. Every goldsmith is ashamed of his idol which is a fraud without breath. ¹⁵ They are worthless, ridiculous objects; they shall perish when the time of retribution comes.

¹⁶ He instead has formed the universe and Israel as well, the tribe of his inheritance, for he is the portion of Jacob:

Yahweh, God of hosts is his name.

¹⁷ Gather up your belongings and leave the land, you who are the victims of siege,

¹⁸ for thus says Yahweh, “I am hurling far away the inhabitants of this land, and I will let them be pursued and captured.”

¹⁹ Woe is me! What suffering! My wound is incurable! But I shall say; “Mine is this illness, I must bear it.”

²⁰ My tent is destroyed, all its cords are snapped. My children have left me and are no more;

no one is left to pitch my tent or to set my shelter up.

²¹ For the pastors have become senseless and have not consulted Yahweh; they have not prospered and all their flocks are scattered.

²² Heed the news! Pay attention! A great commotion is heard from the north; they are coming to make the cities of Judah a desolate land, a den of jackals.

Jeremiah’s prayer

• ²³ You know, Yahweh, that man’s life is not within his own control and it is not for him to direct his steps! ²⁴ Cor-

Ps
16:5

Ezk
12:3

Pro
16:1
20:24

or go to the university. Jeremiah reminds us that this alone does not give true wisdom. We should be ashamed when we compare the time we spend with sterile occupations (interminable gossiping, profitless reading, superficial programs on TV) with the time we dedicate to knowing God.

Knowing Yahweh, *the merciful, who imple-*

ments justice and rules the world with righteousness is the means whereby we remain steadfast in the face of evil: it will stir up our desire to imitate God and to dedicate ourselves to bringing kindness, law and justice into this world.

• **10.23** *Correct us, Yahweh, with prudence.* Here, suddenly, the heart of Jeremiah manifests

Ps 38:2 rect us, Yahweh, with prudence, not in anger, lest you destroy us completely.

²⁵ Put out your anger on the nations that do not know you, on the people who do not call on your Name. For they have devoured Jacob and consumed him thoroughly; his homeland is already laid waste.

Jeremiah supports Josiah's reform

11 • ¹This is the word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh: ²Say to the people of Jerusalem: ³Cursed be anyone who does not heed the terms of this covenant ⁴which I ordained for your ancestors the day I freed them from that cleansing furnace that Egypt is. I said to them: 'If you obey my voice and do all that I command you, you will be my people and I will be your God. ⁵Then I will fulfill the promise I swore to your ancestors, to give you a land flowing with milk and honey,' (as it is today)."

I replied, "Amen, Yahweh."

⁶Yahweh said to me, "Publish what I say in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, 'Hear the terms of this covenant and keep them.' ⁷When I brought your forebearers out of Egypt, I solemnly warned them and have continued to tell them: 'Obey me.' ⁸But they did not listen to me or heed what I said; each one followed his own stubborn heart. So I fulfilled against them all the words of this covenant that I had commanded them, but which they did not follow."

⁹Yahweh said to me, "There is a conspiracy among the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ¹⁰They have returned to the sins of their forebearers who refused to obey me; they have followed and served foreign gods. The nation of Israel and the nation of Judah have broken the covenant I made with their ancestors."

¹¹That is why Yahweh says to you, "I will bring upon them a disaster from which there will be no escape. When they cry to me I will not listen. ¹²Then the cities of Judah and the people of Jerusalem will go crying to the gods they worship, but these will not help them in the time of misfortune. ¹³For you, Judah, have as many gods as there are cities; as numerous as the streets in Jerusalem are the altars you have raised to Baal."

7:16 ¹⁴For your part, do not intercede for this people, nor offer a plea or petition because I will not listen when they cry to me in the time of their distress.

¹⁵What is my beloved doing in my House? She is plotting evil deeds.

Will your vows and the meat of your victims cleanse you from your wickedness and allow you to rejoice?

Yahweh had called you

¹⁶ 'Beautiful Green Olive Tree — fair and fruitful!'

But with the roar of a storm, its foliage took fire

and its branches were broken.

¹⁷ And Yahweh, God of host, who planted you, has condemned you to shame. Indeed the nation of Israel and the nation of Jacob harmed themselves when they worshiped Baal and aroused my anger.

Plot against Jeremiah

¹⁸Yahweh made it known to me and so I know! And you let me see their scheming: (12 ⁶) "Take care, even your kinsfolk and your own family are false with you and behind your back they freely criticize you. Do not trust them when they approach you in a friendly way."

¹⁹But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter. I did not know it was against me that they were plotting, "Let us feed him with trials and remove him from the land of the living and let his name never be mentioned again."

²⁰Yahweh, God of hosts, you who judge with justice and know everyone's heart and intentions, let me see your vengeance on them, for to you I have entrusted my cause.

²¹This is what Yahweh has to say against the people of Anathoth who threatened me with death and said, "Do not prophesy any more in the name of Yahweh and we will spare your life."

²²Yahweh says to them, "This is how I will punish you: the young men shall die by the sword; their sons and daughters shall die of hunger. ²³No one will survive when I bring disaster on the people of Anathoth in the year of their punishment."

Hos
14:7

Is
53:7
Ps
109:
13

1Thes
2:4
1P
2:23

Am
2:12
7:16

itself. He does not forget he is an Israelite and he asks God to restore justice, to punish those powerful nations that come to destroy Judah whenever they like. After repeating many times

that those enemy nations were sent by God himself against Judah, he now rebels.

• **11.1** This chapter is one of the few offer-

Why do the wicked prosper?

12

Hb
1:13
Job
12:6
Ps
73:3

• ¹Yahweh, you are always right
when I complain to you;
nevertheless, where is your justice?
Why do the wicked prosper?

And why do traitors live in peace?
²You plant them and they take root;
they grow and are fruitful;
they honor you with words
but their heart is far from you.

Is
29:13
Mk
7:6

³But you, Yahweh, you know me and see me;
you search my heart – it is close to you.
Send them off like sheep to be butchered;
put them aside for the day of slaughter.

Ps
139:
1-4

⁴How long will the land be in mourning
and the grass of the fields remain withered?
The birds and the beasts have perished
because of the wickedness of the inhabitants,
for they say: ‘God does not see what we do.’

Hos
4:3

⁵“If you tire when running with those on foot,
how can you compete with horses?
If you do not feel secure in a peaceful land,
what will you do in the thickets of the Jordan?”

⁷I have abandoned my house,
I have given up my own people;
I have given over those I most cherished
into the hands of their enemies.

⁸My own have been for me like a lion in the
forest;
they have roared against me – now I hate
them.

⁹My own have become for me like a bird of
prey.

Let all the birds of prey attack them.
Come here, all you wild beasts and devour
them!

¹⁰Many shepherds have ravaged my vine;
they have trampled my beloved field
and made it a desolate wasteland,

¹¹parched and mournful in my sight.
But no one cares!

¹²To every height in the desert destroyers
have come,
for Yahweh has a devouring sword.

It reaches from one end of the land to the
other;

no one is safe!

¹³They have sown grain and reaped
thorns;
they have toiled for nothing.

Your harvests bring shame on you be-
cause of Yahweh’s anger.

¹⁴Yahweh declares, “Because all my
wicked neighbors have laid hands on the land
I gave my people Israel, I will uproot them
from their own land, and I will uproot the
people of Judah from among them. ¹⁵But
after I have done this, I will have compassion
on them and bring them back to their posses-
sion, each one to his own land.

Is
19:18-
24

¹⁶If then they learn the ways I taught my
people and call upon my name when taking
an oath, they who once taught my people to
swear by Baal, may settle among my people.

¹⁷But if then any nation does not obey me, I

ing us the preaching of Jeremiah in the years following the “discovery of the Law” and Josiah’s reform (see 2 K 22). For a while, wishing to do his best to serve Yahweh, King Josiah aroused a new fervor. Yet, when we read what Jeremiah says here, we see that the conversion of the people was not, nor could be, in depth. Jeremiah knew that in order to be faithful to

God, one must be moved and transformed by him.

• **12.1** For the first time, Jeremiah questions the prosperity of evil people, as will Psalms 73 and 49 and, above all, the book of Job. It is not without reason that Jeremiah wonders: for he is constantly persecuted.

will uproot and destroy it – it is Yahweh who speaks.”

The linen belt

13 ¹This is what Yahweh said to me: “Go! Buy yourself a linen belt and put it around your waist; do not put it in water.” ²So I bought the belt as Yahweh ordered and put it around my waist.

³The word of Yahweh came to me a second time, ⁴“Take the belt you bought, the one you put around your waist, and go to the torrent Perah; hide it there in a hole in the rock.” ⁵I went and hid it as Yahweh instructed me.

⁶After many days Yahweh said to me, “Go to the torrent Perah and get the belt I ordered you to hide there.” ⁷I went to the torrent and dug up the belt but it was ruined and good for nothing, ⁸and Yahweh said to me, ⁹“In this way I will destroy the pride and great glory of Judah, ¹⁰this wicked people who refuse to heed what I say, this stubborn people who go after other gods to serve and worship them. And they shall become like this belt which is now good for nothing.

¹¹For just as a belt is to be bound around a man’s waist so was the people of Israel and Judah bound to me – it is Yahweh who speaks – to be my people, my glory and my honor; but they would not listen.

The broken wine jars

• ¹²You will say to them this word of Yahweh the God of Israel, “Every pitcher should be filled with wine.” And they will say: “Don’t we know that a pitcher should be filled with wine?”

¹³You will reply, “You are the pitchers that Yahweh will fill until you are drunk. I am going to fill with drunkenness all who live in this land – kings who suc-

ceed David, the priests, the prophets and all who live in Jerusalem. ¹⁴I will dash them one against another, parents and children together.

I will have neither compassion nor mercy: I am going to destroy them.”

A vision of exile

¹⁵Hear and pay attention; do not be proud, for Yahweh has spoken!

¹⁶Give glory to Yahweh your God before he brings darkness, and your feet stumble in the darkening hills.

You were hoping for light, but he will turn it into the darkness of death and deep gloom!

¹⁷If you do not heed this warning I will weep in secret because of your pride and I will shed tears when Yahweh’s flock has been taken captive.

¹⁸Say to the king and the queen mother, “Humble yourselves, for the crown of glory has fallen from your head.

¹⁹The cities of the Negeb have been shut and no one comes to open them, all Judah is deported, completely carried off.”

²⁰Look up Jerusalem and see those who come from the north. Where is the flock that was entrusted to you and where are your beautiful sheep?

²¹What will you say when those you let take liberties with you come back to oppress you?

Won’t your pain be like that of a woman giving birth? ²²And if you ask yourself, “Why has all this disgrace fallen on me?” It is because of your great wickedness that they have torn away your clothes and dealt violently with you.

²³Can an Ethiopian change his skin or a leopard his spots? And can you do good, you who are accustomed to doing evil?

²⁴I will scatter you like straw blown by the desert wind; ²⁵that is your reward – it is Yahweh who speaks – because you have forgotten me and trusted in falsehood.

²⁶I myself will pull your skirts over your face and your shame shall be seen. ²⁷Your adultery, your neighing, your brazen prostitu-

Am
8:9
Ecl
12:2
Jn
11:10
12:35

Rom
9:22

Is
51:17

If you tire when running with those on foot, how can you compete with horses? Yahweh’s answer seems harsh: it only predicts more cruel trials for Jeremiah (that is the meaning of the refrain). When his true friends hesitate, God does not make the way easier for them: he

knows that by proposing new sacrifices to them, he will once again, bring about their generous surrender.

• **13.12** Those who refuse to see, God will make blind (Jn 9:39). Those who scorn him, God

tion, all this abomination I have seen on the hills and in the fields.

Woe to you Jerusalem! When at last will you be cleansed?"

The great drought

14

¹The word of Yahweh concerning drought came to Jeremiah:

²Judah mourns, the cities languish,
desolate, they sink to the ground.

From Jerusalem a cry is heard.

³The rich sent the poor for water,
but they found none at the cisterns,
and returned with empty vessels.

⁴The soil is cracked
because there is no rain in the land;
the farmers are dismayed
and have covered their heads like mourners.

⁵Even the doe in the fields
abandons her newborn calf
because there is no pasture.

⁶The wild donkeys stand on the heights
sniffing the air like jackals
and languish as they find not even a thistle!

⁷Even if our faults accuse us,
you Yahweh, work for the glory of your Name.
In truth, many have been our rebellions
and great is our sin against you.

⁸O Yahweh! Hope of Israel,
you who save in the time of distress,
why are you as a stranger in this land,
or like a traveler who stays only a night?

⁹Why should you be as if bewildered,
like a warrior unable to save?
But you are in our midst Yahweh,
and on us your Name has been invoked.
Do not abandon us!

Dn
3:34

Ex
29:45
Dt
28:10
Is
43:7

will bring to disgrace through their own evil ways (Rom 1:24). Those who prefer to follow foolish ways, God will make drunk so that they will lose themselves because of their own foolishness.

• **14.1** The passage beginning here concludes in 15:4. Jeremiah appears before Yahweh as the Jews used to do in the Temple to publicly confess the sins of the people, in the hope that the priests would give them an encouraging answer on behalf of the God who forgives. Jeremiah stands in solidarity with his people and with their sins. But God does not want to listen to him.

Do not abandon us, O Yahweh! Jeremiah is

distressed over his people's situation. Maybe God cannot forgive; maybe he cannot save? Here the human being is confronted by the mystery of God. Jeremiah does not get an answer: God does not answer Job either; and Jesus does not get an answer in his agony in the garden of Gethsemane.

You know what the prophets are saying: you will not see the sword (13). There are plenty of false prophets reassuring a society based on false principles. Compared with them, Jeremiah appears weak and bitter, as the one who does not give Yahweh's answer. A true prophet is not accepted by his own people whereas those who provide opium for the people are praised.

Do not intercede for this people

¹⁰This is what Yahweh says about this people, "They like to wander here and there, not stopping for a moment, so Yahweh takes no pleasure in them; he remembers their wickedness and will punish their sins."

¹¹And Yahweh said, "Do not pray for the well-being of this people! ¹²If they fast I will not listen to their cry; if they offer me burnt offerings and oblations, I will not accept them. Instead I am going to make an end of them with sword, famine and plague."

¹³And I said, "Ah, Lord Yahweh! You know what the prophets are saying to them: 'You will not see the sword nor suffer famine for I will give you true peace in this place.'" 4:10
Ezk
13:10

¹⁴But Yahweh said, "These prophets have proclaimed untruths in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. False visions, worthless divinations and delusions of their own imagination – that is what they prophesy."

¹⁵And Yahweh added, "These prophets whom I did not send and who prophesy in my name, saying that the sword and famine will not touch this land – these same prophets will perish by the sword and famine."

¹⁶As for the people listening to them, their corpses will be thrown into the streets of Jerusalem. There will be no one to bury them or their wives, their sons or daughters, when they die of famine and by the sword. For I shall make their own malice fall upon them.

¹⁷This you will say to them: Let my eyes shed tears night and day without ceasing! For with a great wound has the virgin daughter of my people been wounded, a most grievous wound. Is
22:4

¹⁸If I go into the country, I see those slain by the sword. If I enter the city I see the ravages of famine. For the prophet and the priest did not understand what was happening in the land."

¹⁹Have you then rejected Judah forever? Do you abhor Zion? Why have you wounded us and left us with no hope of recovery?

We hoped for salvation but received nothing good; we waited for healing, but terror came!

²⁰Yahweh, we know our wickedness and that of our ancestors, and the times we have sinned against you. Dn
9:4

²¹For your name's sake do not despise us; do not dishonor the throne of your glory. Remember us. Do not break your covenant with us!

²²Among the worthless idols of the na-

tions, are there any who can bring rain, or make the skies send showers?

Only in you, Yahweh our God, do we hope, for it is you who do all this.

15 ¹Yahweh answered me, "Even if Moses and Samuel came in person to plead for this people, my heart would have no pity. Send them away from my presence! Let them go! ²And if they say: 'Where shall we go?' tell them: Yahweh says this: Those destined for the plague, to the plague; for the sword, to the sword; for starvation, to starvation; those for captivity, to captivity. Ezk
14:14
Ps
99:6
14:12
Rev
13:10

³For I shall send them four kinds of destroyers: the sword to slay, dogs to ravage, birds of the sky and beasts of the earth to devour and destroy. ⁴I shall make them an object of horror for all the kingdoms of the world because of what Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, king of Judah, did in Jerusalem. Ezk
14:21

The horrors of war

⁵Who will take pity on you, Jerusalem?

Who will feel sorry for you?

Who will turn to ask how you are?

⁶It was you who rejected me – word of Yahweh – you turned your back on me, and because of that I have stretched out my hand to destroy you. Am
7:8

I was weary of showing mercy!

⁷I winnowed them with a fork in the cities of the land,

I left my people without children;

I brought them to ruin,

but they did not change their ways.

⁸Their widows are more numerous than the sand of the seas. On the mothers of youths I have brought a destroyer who ravages in broad daylight. Suddenly terror and fear grips them.

⁹The mother who had seven children is confused and discouraged as if breathing her last. Although it is still day her sun has set.

As for those who remain, I shall let them be slain by the sword in sight of their enemies – it is Yahweh who speaks.

¹²Can you break iron that comes from the north, or bronze?

¹³I will let your wealth and your treasures be handed over to plunderers,

not for a price but because of all your sins within your frontiers.

¹⁴You shall be slaves of your enemies among a people you do not know, for the fury of my anger is on fire and will burn you up."

Yahweh, remember me!11:18
17:14
20:7

• ¹⁰Woe is me, Mother, why did you bring me to the light?
A man of dissension throughout the land!
I owe them nothing, neither do they owe me,
yet they all curse me!

Ps
69:8

¹¹Tell me Yahweh, if I have not served you well!
Did I not plead with you for my enemies
in the time of their shame and disgrace?
¹⁵You know I have, Yahweh!
Take care of me, defend me;
take vengeance on my persecutors.

Remember! For you I have suffered great humiliations.

Ps
19:9
Jn
4:34

¹⁶I devoured your words when they came.
They were my happiness
and I felt full of joy
when you made your Name rest on me.

Never did I associate with worldly people,
¹⁷amusing myself with scoffers!

When your hand was upon me I stood apart
and you filled me with your anger.

Mic
1:9

¹⁸Why is there no end to my sorrow
or healing for my wound?

Why do you deceive me,
and why does my spring suddenly dry up?

¹⁹Then Yahweh spoke to me,
“If you return I will take you back
and you will serve me again.

Draw the gold from the dross
and you will be as my own mouth.

You must draw them to you and not go over to them.

²⁰I will make you a fortress
and a wall of bronze facing them;
if they fight against you
they will not overcome you;

²¹I am with you to free you and save you.
I will redeem you from the wicked
and free you from the hands of tyrants.”

• **15.10** An amazing text where Jeremiah reveals his own personal crisis.

Being a prophet is not easy at all. God's word is not welcomed. Anyone who struggles for the truth is surrounded by people wishing evil on him and trying to bring him down: he is rarely understood even in his own home. The situation is even worse for God's prophet. The Lord shares with him his own way of seeing and feeling things. The prophet can no longer join in the cheap joy and the meaningless conversations that fill so many lives.

Your words were my happiness. God's word

brings the taste of truth and something of the very presence of God. The price of this joy is that he is condemned to live alone. Today the prophet feels the presence of God who helps him, but as a creature he begins to doubt: What if God keeps himself aloof tomorrow? And he becomes faint.

God does not approve of his prophet's weakness: *Draw the gold from the dross*, namely, let what is good and noble in you speak out, and silence these fears and complaints which come from a weak nature.

Do not take a wife

16 • ¹The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms: ²“Do not take a wife nor have sons and daughters in this place, ³for this is what Yahweh says about sons and daughters born here, and about fathers and mothers who bring them to light in this country:

Ezk
24:16
Mt
19:12
1Cor
7:26

⁴All will die of fatal diseases and no one will mourn for them or bury them; their corpses will be like dung on the ground. They will perish by the sword and by starvation and their corpses will be devoured by birds of prey and wild animals.”

Ezk
24:23

⁵Yahweh further insisted, “Do not go into a house of mourning; neither weep nor loudly lament with the bereaved for I have already withdrawn my peace from these people – even my unwavering love and compassion. ⁶Both the great and the lowly in this country will perish and no one will mourn for them or bury them. No one shall gash his skin or shave his head as an act of mourning. ⁷No funeral meal shall be shared to comfort the bereaved or console them on the death of their fathers and mothers.

25:10

⁸Do not go to a house of celebration to feast with them before foods and drinks, ⁹for Yahweh, Saboath God of Israel has this to say:

In this place and before your very eyes, I will muffle every sound of pleasure and joy, even the song of the newly-wed.

• ¹⁰When you announce all these things to the people, they will ask you: ‘Why has

Yahweh decided to bring such terrible disasters on us? What wickedness or sin have we committed against Yahweh our God?’

¹¹Then you shall tell them: ‘It is because your ancestors turned away from me and went after other gods to serve and worship them. They have forsaken me and refused to obey my Law. ¹²But you are worse than your forebearers because each of you has gone his own evil ways following his stubborn heart in complete defiance of me. ¹³Therefore, I will kick you out of this land into a place which is strange to you and your forebearers. There, you will serve other gods day and night, and you will get no compassion from me.’ ”

Dt
4:28

¹⁴Yahweh says, “The days are coming when people will no longer say, ‘Yahweh is a living God for he brought the Israelites out of Egypt,’ ¹⁵Rather, they will say, ‘Yahweh is a living God for he liberated the Israelites out of the northern land and out of all the countries where he had banished them.’ Yes, I will bring them back to their own country – the land that I bestowed to their forebearers.”

23:7-8

¹⁶But now Yahweh says, “I am sending for many fishermen to catch them. Afterwards, I will send for many hunters to hunt them down on every mountain, hill and cave in the rocks. ¹⁷The things that they do are manifest before my eyes and the sins that they commit are not hidden from me. ¹⁸I will make them pay double for their wickedness and sin; they have contaminated my land with their idols that are as dead as corpses and have filled it with their abominations.”

Ezk
12:13

2:13

Will people make their own gods?

¹⁹Yahweh, my strength and my fortress, my refuge in times of distress!
From the furthest limits of the earth nations will come to you and say,
“Our ancestors possessed only falsehood, worthless idols bereft of power.”

2S
22:3
Tb
14:6

²⁰Will people make their own gods?
Then they are not gods!

²¹Hence Yahweh says: “I will show and let them know my power and my might.

And they will know that Yahweh is my name.”

• **16.1** *Do not take a wife.* The prophets discover that God is the true Spouse. God’s passionate and faithful love for his people is the model for married love. Since prophets become the mouthpiece and the representative of God, all that they do becomes a sign. Thus, they cannot seek a happy marriage as long as Israel, Yahweh’s bride, turns her back on her God.

And so, before Jeremiah, another prophet, Hosea, only knew the suffering of the betrayed husband in his home and he had to constantly forgive his adulterous wife (Hos 3:1). Ezekiel

sees his wife die suddenly (Ezk 24:15). Jeremiah will have neither wife nor children; it is not fitting for him to marry at the very time the first covenant is being destroyed. Later, neither John the Baptist, nor the apostle John, nor Paul will marry: this will become a sign. Thus, they will help us understand that they only live for the coming marriage of Christ and his glorified Church, of which marriage is only an image.

• 10. Following we have parts of discourses that Jeremiah made on very different occasions.

^{Job 19:24} **17** ¹The sin of Judah is engraved with a tool of steel, with a point of diamond. It is written on the tablets of their hearts as on the horns of their altars. ²Their altars and sacred poles witness of it beside every green tree, ³on the high hills and in the open country! I will give away your wealth and your treasures as plunder because of your sin in the high places of your land.

^{Dt 28:48} ⁴Because of your fault you will lose the land I gave you. I will give you as slaves to your enemies in a land that you have never known before, for you have kindled the fire of my anger and it will burn forever.

Words of wisdom

^{Ps 146:3} ⁵This is what Yahweh says, “Cursed is the man who trusts in human beings and depends on a mortal for his life, while his heart is drawn away from Yahweh!

^{Job 20:17} ⁶He is like a bunch of thistles in dry land, in parched desert places, in a salt land where no one lives and who never finds happiness.

^{Ezk 47:12} ⁷Blessed is the man who puts his trust in Yahweh and whose confidence is in him! ⁸He is like a tree planted by the water, sending out its roots towards the stream.

^{Ps 1:3} He has no fear when the heat comes, his leaves are always green; the year of drought is no problem and he can always bear fruit.

^{Job 34:11} ⁹Most deceitful is the heart. What is there within man, who can understand him? ¹⁰I, Yahweh, search the heart and penetrate the mind. I reward each one according to his ways and the fruit of his deeds.

^{Heb 4:12} ¹¹Like a partridge hatching eggs it did not lay, is someone who hoards riches that he unjustly gained.

At the noontime of his life, his wealth will abandon him; at the twilight of his breath, his folly will be confirmed.”

¹²What a glorious and exalted throne

is our Sanctuary! ¹³Yahweh, hope of Israel, all who forsake you will be put to shame and those who turn from you will be cast out from your land, for they have rejected Yahweh, the fountain of living water. ^{15:18}

¹⁴Heal me, Yahweh, and I shall be whole; save me and I shall be safe, O you, my hope!

¹⁵People say to me, “Where are Yahweh’s threats? Let them be carried out now!” ^{Is 5:19}

¹⁶But I did not urge you to bring devastation ^{2P 3:4}

nor a time of tragic death; you well know my desire and my pleading is in your ears.

¹⁷Do not terrorize my heart; be my refuge in the day of disaster.

¹⁸Let my persecutors be humbled, rather than me!

Let them be terrified but not me!

Let the day of misfortune fall on them!

Crush them twice over!

Observance of the Sabbath

• ¹⁹The word of Yahweh came to me in these terms,

“Go and stand at the gate they call the People Gate, where the kings of Judah enter and leave; ²⁰and tell the king and all the people of Judah that this is what Yahweh says:

²¹For the sake of your lives, be careful not to carry a load on the sabbath day or bring it through the gates of Jerusalem. ²²Carry no burden out of your adobes and refrain from work on the day of the sabbath. Uphold its sacredness as I commanded your forefathers. ^{Ex 16:23} ^{Ne 13:15}

²³They did not obey me or pay attention to what I said. Stiff-necked as they were, they would not hear or accept my warnings.

²⁴But if you pay attention – it is Yahweh who speaks – and keep the sabbath holy, not

– You will notice in 17:5-11 that similar content is found in several Psalms, and especially in Psalm 1. Where it says “he”, can also be read as “she”.

– The prayer 17:14-18.

• **17.19** *Take care not to carry a load on*

the Sabbath. Jeremiah often denounces the religious practices which are not accompanied by an upright life; but that does not mean that he minimizes the respect towards God which is manifested externally.

The Law of Rest (such is the meaning in Hebrew of the word *Sabbath*) is a way for us to

working or carrying loads²⁵ through the gates of Jerusalem, then you will be witnesses to the entry of kings of David's descent through these gates, riding in chariots and on horses. You shall see them and their princes along with the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city shall last forever.

²⁶ People will come from the towns of Judah and from the suburbs of Jerusalem, from the territory of Benjamin, from the Lowland and the hill country and from the Negeb, bringing into the Temple burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings and incense, as an act of thanksgiving to Yahweh.

²⁷ But if you do not listen and do not keep the sabbath holy, if you work and carry loads through the gates of Jerusalem, then I will set fire to those gates. It will burn the city and will not be quenched."

At the potter's house

18 • ¹ This is the word of Yahweh that came to Jeremiah: ² "Go down to the potter's house and there you will hear what I have to say."

Gen
2:7
Is
64:7

³ So I went to the potter's house and found him working at the wheel. ⁴ But the pot he was working on was spoiled in his hands, so he reworked it all over again into another pot that suits his desire.

⁵ Meanwhile Yahweh sent me his word, ⁶ "People of Israel, can I not do with you what this potter does? As clay in the potter's hand so are you in my hands.

⁷ At times I warn a nation or a kingdom that I will uproot or destroy it. ⁸ But if they change their ways, I then relent and refrain from doing the harm I had intended to do.

⁹ At other times I declare that a nation or kingdom will be built up and

planted ¹⁰ but then they do what displeases me and do not listen to me, so I decide to reverse the good deeds that I intend to do."

Gen
6:6

¹¹ And Yahweh added, "Now tell the people of Judah and to those who live in Jerusalem: Yahweh says to you, 'Listen, I am planning to destroy you; I am hatching a devastating plot against you! Turn from your evil ways; rectify your conduct and your deeds.' ¹² But you reply: 'It's no use! We shall follow our own plans'; and each one goes on obeying his stubborn heart."

My people have forsaken me

¹³ Because of this Yahweh has to say: Ask among the nations, 'Has anyone heard the like of this? The Virgin Israel has done a most abominable thing.

¹⁴ Does the snow of Lebanon ever leave the rocky heights of the field? Do the fresh waters of great rivers ever dry up?

¹⁵ Yet my people have forgotten me, offering incense to empty idols that made them stumble on their way as they left the ancient paths. Now they have taken the wrong way, the crooked way that leads nowhere.

¹⁶ Their land will be left desolate, and an object of lasting derision. All who pass by will be astonished and shake their heads.

¹⁷ Like the wind that blows from the east I will scatter them before their enemies;

I will turn my back to them, not my face, in the day of their disaster!

Do not forgive their sin

¹⁸ Then, they said, "Come, let us plot against Jeremiah, for even without him, there will be priests to interpret the Teachings of the Law; there will always be wisemen to impart counsel and prophets to proclaim the word.

allow room for God in our life. Not working on that day is a way to state that people will not be happier by becoming slaves to work, but rather by giving something to God which God will give back a hundredfold (see Gen 2:3; Ex 20:8; Lev 25:20).

• **18.1** In several parts of the Bible, the comparison with the potter serves to show that God is absolute master and directs the lives of all according to his will: individuals as well as nations (see Is 29:16 and Rom 9:20). Here the same comparison is used to provide another teaching

which complements the first: namely that we are free.

If they change their ways, I will then refrain from doing the harm I had intended to do. At any time, one can be converted and God will act accordingly. There is no plan of God written beforehand that we have to follow, pushed to do good or evil by some fatal destiny. God is continually creating us and he achieves his plan for the world while renewing each day the free relation it maintains with us. The Bible supports these two statements, that nothing escapes God and that we are free.

Come, let us accuse him and strike him down instead of listening to what he says.”

¹⁹Hear me, O Yahweh!

Listen to what my accusers say.

²⁰Is evil the reward for good?

Why do they dig a grave for me?

Remember how I stood before you to speak well on their behalf

so that your anger might subside.

²¹Now let their children starve; hand them over to the sword!

Let their wives become childless and widows!

Let their men be victims of plague and their young men be slain in battle!

²²Let cries be heard in their houses when you suddenly bring bandits against them,

for they have dug a pit to trap me and hidden snares to catch my feet.

²³O Yahweh, you know all of their plots to take my life!

Forgive not their crime; forget not their sin;

crush them on the day of your anger.

The broken jar

^{13:12} **19** ¹This was an order of Yahweh to Jeremiah, “Go and buy a jar from the potter. Take with you some elders of the people and a few senior priests, ²and go out to the valley of Ben-Hinnom at the entrance to the Potsherd Gate. Proclaim there what I tell you.

³Say this: Hear the word of Yahweh, kings of Judah and citizens of Jerusalem! Yahweh the God of hosts and the God of Israel is the one who speaks. I am about to send a disaster upon this place that will make the ears of those who hear it tingle. ⁴Here they have forsaken me, offering incense to foreign gods that neither they, their ancestors nor the kings of Judah have known. They have profaned this place by filling it with the blood of the innocent. ⁵They have put up high places for Baal to burn their children in fire as a sacrifice. This is something that I have never commanded them to do, much less conceived in my mind.

⁶Hence, I, Yahweh, tell you now that the days will surely come when this place will no longer be called Topheth or the Valley of Ben Hinnom, but the Valley of Massacre.

⁷In this place I will frustrate the plans of Judah and Jerusalem and let them be slain by their enemies – the very people who have doggedly sought their lives. Then, I will commit their corpses to the birds and the beasts

as food. ⁸I will transform this city into a horrible wasteland – an object of scorn and a panorama of horror that will shock passers-by and make them kiss upon witnessing the terrible catastrophe! ⁹The city will be surrounded by the enemies who have vowed to massacre the people. No one will be able to flee from this tight siege and the people in the city will be forced to eat the flesh of one another, even that of their very own children.

¹⁰Then, you shall break the jar before the people who have accompanied you ¹¹and you will tell them that I, Yahweh the God of hosts, will smash the people of this city like the shattered jar of the potter which is beyond repair. People will bury the dead even in Topheth, for there is no more space in the land to bury them. ¹²This is precisely what I will do to Jerusalem and its citizens, making this city like Topheth. ¹³The houses of Jerusalem and the palaces of the kings of Judah will be defiled like Topheth because the roofs of these houses have been used to burn incense for the stars of the skies and to pour wine-offerings for strange gods.’ ”

Confrontation in the temple

• ¹⁴Then Jeremiah left Topheth where Yahweh had sent him to prophesy, and stood in the porch of the House of Yahweh. There he told all the people, ¹⁵“Listen to the word of Yahweh, God of Israel: I am about to bring on this city and the towns surrounding the disaster that I have already foretold, because they are a stiff-necked people and will not listen to me.”

20 ¹When the priest Pashur, son of Immer, who was the chief officer in the House of Yahweh, heard Jeremiah prophesying like this, ²he ordered his people to beat Jeremiah and put him in chains at the Gate of Benjamin, the upper gate at the House of Yahweh. ³The next day, after Pashur ordered the release of Jeremiah, the latter told the former, “Yahweh has already changed your name. It is not Pashur anymore but ‘Terror on every side.’ ⁴For Yahweh says: I am going to hand you over to

• **19.14** Jeremiah is prophesying alone. Apparently he has no followers or religious groups to help him. Some people are getting tired of always hearing him threaten. The leaders and

the priests are angry at this individual’s condemnation of a society in which they live without problems.

terror, you and your friends. They will fall under the sword of their enemies while you look on.

I will deliver the people of Judah into the hands of the king of Babylon who will deport them to Babylon or slay them by the sword. ⁵I will likewise allow the enemies plunder all the wealth of

this city. All the possessions and treasures of the kings of Judah will be seized and carried off to Babylonia. ⁶As for you, Pashur, you and your entire family will be taken as captives to Babylon where you will die and be buried – you and all your friends whom you deceived with lies.”

You have seduced me

• ⁷Yahweh, you have seduced me
and I let myself be seduced.

You have taken me by force and prevailed.
I have become a laughingstock all day long;
they all make fun of me,
⁸for every time I speak
I have to shout, “Violence! Devastation!”
Yahweh’s word has brought me
insult and derision all day long.

⁹So I decided to forget about him
and speak no more in his name.
But his word in my heart becomes like a fire
burning deep within my bones.
I try so hard to hold it in,
but I cannot do it.

¹⁰I hear many people whispering,
“Terror is all around!
Denounce him! Yes, denounce him!”
All my friends watch me to see if I will slip:
“Perhaps he can be deceived,” they say;
“then we can get the better of him
and have our revenge.”

¹¹But Yahweh, a mighty warrior, is with me.
My persecutors will stumble and not prevail;
that failure will be their shame
and their disgrace will never be forgotten.

¹²Yahweh, God of hosts, you test the just
and probe the heart and mind.

Jon
1:3
Am
3:8

Ps
40:15

• **20.7** This “confession” recalls the one in chapter 15. The Bearer of the Truth is rejected and mocked simply because he speaks by virtue of a personal mission which the people do not accept. Let us not forget that Jeremiah lived six centuries before Jesus, long before there was any thought of the beyond, so we will have a better understanding of why he cries for divine justice.

You have taken me by force: is there anything more understandable if God is Love?

But his word is like a fire in my bones. What

is really amazing is the irresistible power of God’s Word. It is more difficult to resist it than to face human opposition. Paul will declare, in a fairly similar way, that he cannot evade the responsibility of preaching the Gospel (1 Cor 9:16). This text forces us to revise and deepen the very simplistic ideas we have concerning our freedom: being faithful to the most demanding mission is also to be free.

The curse which follows in verses 14-18 will be picked up and developed in the third chapter of Job.

Let me see your revenge on them,
 for to you I have entrusted my cause.
¹³ Sing to Yahweh! Praise Yahweh and say:
 he has rescued the poor from the clutches of the wicked!

^{Job 3:3} ¹⁴ Cursed be the day I was born!
 Bless not the day my mother brought me
 to light!

¹⁵ Cursed be the man who broke the news
 to my father: 'It's a boy!'
 and it made him joyful!

¹⁶ Let him be like the towns that Yahweh
 destroyed without mercy.

Let him hear a warning shout in the morn-
 ing

and a battle cry at noon!

^{Job 3:11} ¹⁷ For he did not kill me in the womb,
 that my mother would have been my grave,
 and have carried me forever.

¹⁸ Why did I ever leave the womb
 to live in trouble and sorrow,
 and spend my days in shame?

An answer for Zedekiah

21 ¹ These words of Yahweh came to
 Jeremiah when king Zedekiah sent
 Pashur, son of Malchiah and the priest Zephaniah
 son of Maaseiah, to say to him: ² "Consult
^{2K 22:13} Yahweh on our behalf, for Nebuchadnezzar,
 king of Babylon, has started a war with us.
 Perhaps Yahweh will work a few of his
 miracles and make the enemy withdraw."

³ Jeremiah replied, "This is what Yahweh
 the God of Israel says to Zedekiah: ⁴ I am
 about to bring back to you the weapons with
 which you are fighting outside the wall the
 king of Babylon and the Chaldeans who are
 besieging you; and I will pile up these weap-
 ons in the center of the city.

⁵ Then I myself will fight against you with
 outstretched hand and mighty arm, with anger
 and fury and great wrath, ⁶ I will strike all
 in the city, both humans and animals, and
 they will perish in a terrible plague.

⁷ After this – it is Yahweh who speaks – I will
 hand over Zedekiah, king of Judah, his ser-
 vants and the citizens who survive the plague,
 the sword and famine over to Nebuchadnezzar,
 king of Babylon. I will hand them over to their
 enemies, to those who have been hounding
 their blood. They shall be slain without
 mercy or compassion."

⁸ Then Yahweh instructed me to say this to

the people: "Take heed! I, Yahweh, am pre-
 senting you a choice between the way that
 leads to life and the way that leads to death.

⁹ Those who remain in the confines of the city
 will meet their deaths by the sword, famine or
 plague; those who go out and surrender to the
 Chaldeans besieging the city will live and will
 be the only ones to be saved.

¹⁰ For I am turning to this city for its ruin,
 not for its good – word of Yahweh – it will be
 given over to the king of Babylon who will
 destroy it by fire."

Lev 20:3
 Am 9:4

Address to the royal family

¹¹ You will give this message to the King's
 officials. To the royal family of Judah say this:
¹² Officials of David's palace, hear the word of
 Yahweh:

"Give judgment each morning
 and deliver the oppressed from the hand of
 the oppressor,
 lest my fury break loose like a fire
 with no one to quench it."

¹³ This is Yahweh's word, "See, I am com-
 ing to you
 who live in the hills overlooking the valley,
 you who say, 'Who will come against us
 and enter this secure place?'

¹⁴ I will punish you according to your deeds,
 and in your forests I will kindle a fire
 that will devour all that surrounds it."

Against evil kings

22 • ¹ Yahweh said to me, "Go to the pal-
 ace of the king of Judah and give him
 this message: ² Hear the word of Yahweh, O
 king of Judah who sit on the throne of David.
 To you, your servants and all who enter by
 these gates, ³ Yahweh says:

Practice justice and do good.
 Free the oppressed from their oppressor.
 Harm not the foreigners, the orphans and
 the widows; do them no violence, and let no
 innocent blood be spilled in this place.

⁴ If you do this, kings succeeding King
 David will enter these gates riding on their
 chariots and horses, together with their ser-
 vants and their people.

Ex 22:20
 Dt 19:10

• **22.1** The passage in 21:1-10 refers to the
 second siege of Jerusalem in 588. Then from
 22:1-28 we have several oracles against the
 royal family, before the first siege, in the years
 605-598. See 2 Kings 23:31-37 concerning
 those kings.

In those days, the nobility and the civil ser-
 vants of Jerusalem lived as usual, without being

concerned about the ongoing crises of the
 kingdom. Yet, before long, they would all be
 killed or exiled.

The same is also true now: rich countries and
 people are enjoying themselves and live in indif-
 ference on top of a volcano. A few words of Dom
 Helder Camara are appropriate here:

"There has always been violence. But now it is

⁵But if you do not heed my word – it is Yahweh who speaks I swear by myself that this place will become a ruin.”

^{Is} ^{37:24} ⁶For this is what Yahweh says of the royal house of Judah:

For me you are like Gilead, like a peak of Lebanon! And yet I will transform you into a desert, a city where no one lives. ⁷I will prepare destroyers to attack you, each with an axe in his hand. They will cut down your choice cedars and throw them into the fire.

^{Dt} ^{29:23} ⁸Pagans without number will pass by this city and say to one another, “Why has Yahweh dealt with this great city in such a way?” ⁹And they will answer, “Because they broke their covenant with Yahweh, their God, and worshiped and served other gods!”

¹⁰Weep not for the one who is dead! grieve not for him.

Mourn rather for him who is in exile for he will never return to see his homeland again!

¹¹For this is what Yahweh has said of King Josiah’s son, Shallum, who succeeded his father as king of Judah:

¹²“He will never return, for he will die in the place to which he has been deported and will never see this land again.

Against Jehoiakim

^{Mic} ^{3:10} ^{Hb} ^{2:9,} ¹² ¹³Damned is the one who builds his house with stolen goods, and extends it upwards by means of injustice;

he who makes his fellowman work for nothing and refuses to give him his wages!

¹⁴So you build for yourself a fine palace with spacious upper rooms!

So you have large windows put in, you have it paneled with cedarwood and painted vermillion.

¹⁵Does amassing cedar make you more of a king?

Was not your father a just man? He ate and drank to his life’s content, but he acted justly and all went well for him.

^{9:23} ^{Hos} ^{6:6} ¹⁶He defended the cause of the poor and needy: this is the meaning of knowing Yahweh.

¹⁷But your eyes and heart are set

on selfish gain, on the shedding of innocent blood, and oppressive violence.

¹⁸Therefore this is what Yahweh says concerning Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah:

No one shall lament for him saying: Alas, my brother! Alas, O sister! No one shall lament for him saying: Alas, my lord! Alas, your majesty! ¹⁹He will be given the burial of a donkey, dragged away and thrown out beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

²⁰Go up to Lebanon and cry out; weep from the heights of Bashan cry out from Abarim,

for all your lovers have been crushed.

²¹I spoke to you in more fortunate days, but you said: ‘I will not listen.’

You have been like that since your youth, paying no attention to my word.

²²All your shepherds will be scattered by the wind and your lovers will be taken captive; then you will be covered with shame because of your evil deeds.

²³You who call your house: ‘Lebanon’ and made your nest of cedarwood, how you will groan when sorrow comes like the birthpangs of a woman in labor!

²⁴By my life – says Yahweh – even if Jeconiah, Jehoiakim’s son, king of Judah, were the signet ring on my right hand I would pull him off!

²⁵I will hand you to those who seek your life, to the Chaldeans you fear. ²⁶Then I will hurl you and the mother who bore you into a foreign land where you were not born. There you shall die, ²⁷for to the land for which you long, you will never return!”

²⁸Is this Jeconiah a broken and useless crock that no one wants? Why has he been expelled, he and his family, to a land they do not know?

²⁹Land, land, land! Hear what Yahweh says. ³⁰These are his words, “List this man as childless!” None of his race will succeed; not one will be fortunate to sit on David’s throne and rule again over Judah.

The good shepherd

23 ¹“Woe to the shepherds who mislead and scatter the sheep of my pasture!”

²This is the message of Yahweh, God

perhaps more massive than ever; it is everywhere and it takes on many forms: brutal, open, subtle, blind, rationalized, consolidated, anonymous, abstract, irresponsible.

If the powerful of the underdeveloped world do not have the courage to let go of their privileges and to bring justice to millions of people living in subhuman situations; if governments make re-

forms only on paper; how can we stop the young people who are tempted to adopt radically violent positions?

How long will atomic bombs be feared more than the bomb of poverty which is being built in the heart of the third world?”

• **23.1** *Woe to the shepherds who mislead*

of Israel, to the shepherds in charge of my people, "You have scattered my sheep and driven them away instead of caring for them. Now I will deal with you because of your evil deeds.

³I will gather the remnant of my sheep from every land to which I have driven them and I will bring them back to the grasslands. They will be fruitful and increase in number. ⁴I will appoint shepherds who will take care of them. No longer will they fear or be terrified. No one will be lost."

⁵Yahweh further says, "The day is coming when I will raise up a king who is David's righteous successor. He will rule wisely and govern with justice and righteousness. ⁶That will be a grandiose era when Judah will enjoy peace and Israel will live in safety. He will be called *Yahweh-our-justice!*"

Is
9:6
Mic
5:3

Is
43:18

⁷"The days are coming," says Yahweh, "when people shall no longer swear by Yahweh as the living God who freed the people of Israel from the land of Egypt. ⁸Rather, they will swear by Yahweh as the living God who restored the descendants of Israel from the northern empire and from all the lands where he had driven them, to live again in their own land!"

Lying prophets

- ⁹About the prophets:
My heart breaks within me,
and all my bones tremble,
I am like a drunken man,

and scatter! This new attack against evil leaders is the prelude to words of hope.

I will gather the remnant of my sheep (v. 3). The destruction of the "physical" Israel prepares for the coming of the "spiritual" Israel. People were used to seeing their leaders abuse power, and their rulers become richer. But God is preparing for his people a shepherd who will look after the sheep.

They will call him *Yahweh-is-our-justice*: this is a way of contrasting him with the king of the time, Zedekiah, which means *Yahweh-is-my-justice*.

I will appoint shepherds who will take care for them (v. 4). As well as the just king, Jeremiah sees other shepherds: besides the only Shepherd, Christ, there is room for others determined to be responsible for their brothers and sisters.

No longer will they fear. God promises lasting peace. The new people of God will be more

like a man overcome by wine because of Yahweh and his holy words.

¹⁰The land is full of adulterers. Because of this I put a curse on the country; it is in mourning and the desert grasslands have withered. They follow an evil path and readily act unjustly. ¹¹Even the prophet and the priest are corrupt; I have found out about their wickedness in my House – word of Yahweh.

Lm
4:13

¹²That is why their path will become slippery in the dark, making them stumble and fall when I bring evil upon them in the year of their punishment.

¹³I well know how stupid the prophets of Samaria were; they prophesied in the name of Baal and led my people Israel astray. ¹⁴But among the prophets of Jerusalem I have likewise seen horrors: for they are adulterers and liars!

They encourage the evildoers so that none of them turns away from wickedness. For me all of them are like Sodom; and the common people like Gomorrah.

¹⁵That is why Yahweh the God of hosts speaks against the prophets: I will give them bitter food to eat and poisoned water to drink, for from the prophets of Jerusalem evil has spread all over the land.

¹⁶Thus Yahweh warns, "Do not listen to what the prophets say. They give you false hope and tell you their own illusions, and not what comes from the mouth of Yahweh. ¹⁷They dare say to those who despise me: 'Yahweh has spoken, be at peace'; and to those who follow their own stubborn hearts they say: 'No misfortune will come upon you!'"

Lm
2:14

¹⁸Who then has been present in the council of Yahweh? Who has heard and understood his word? Who has paid attention to his word and is able to pass it on?

¹⁹The storm of Yahweh's wrath breaks forth and a whirling hurricane bursts upon the

Is
29:6

than a mere continuation of the old kingdom of Israel, and the new king will be more than the earthly kings (see how Jesus develops this point in John 10).

Humankind hopes for unity in peace, and the Church now must offer the witness of different peoples gathered in Christ. The reality, however, will be achieved only in the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev 21:22).

Jeremiah expresses the same hope elsewhere, especially in 33:15-18. In Ezekiel 34 we find the same image of the Good Shepherd preparing for what Jesus will say in John 10, Luke 15:4 and Matthew 9:36.

- 9. See also Deuteronomy 13:6 and 18:22 and Jeremiah 28 on the subject of *false prophets*.

Those who are not well-versed in their faith marvel at visions and dreams, forgetting that dreams can be particularly deceptive.

Nh 1:3 head of the wicked! ²⁰Yahweh's wraths will not relent before the full accomplishment of his plans. The time will come when you will understand what it is.

²¹I did not send these prophets, yet they went running. I did not speak, yet they prophesied! ²²Were they present in my council? Then let them proclaim my word to my people and have them turn away from their evil ways and their wicked deeds.

Acts 7:49 ²³Am I a God only when I am near – it is Yahweh who speaks – and not when I am far off? ²⁴If someone hides in secret places do I not see him? – Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?

²⁵I have listened and heard the lies that the prophets have proclaimed in my name. All said: 'I had a dream! I had a dream!' ²⁶How long will there be prophets of lies who proclaim their own illusions? ²⁷They would like to make the people forget my Name by the dreams they relate to one another, just as their ancestors forgot my Name when they followed Baal. ²⁸The prophet who has a dream prophesies a dream, whereas the one who receives my word proclaims the word of truth.

What have straw and wheat in common? ²⁹Isn't my word like fire, like the hammer that shatters a rock?

³⁰That is why I oppose the prophets who steal from one another words that are supposedly mine. ³¹I am against the prophets who have only to move their tongues to utter oracles. ³²I am against those whose prophecies are based on lying dreams, who lead my people astray with their trickery and pretensions. I did not commission or charge them to transmit my orders, so they are of no benefit to my people – word of Yahweh.

³³And when these people, or a prophet or a priest jestingly asks you: What is the 'Burden' of Yahweh? you will answer: 'You are the burden – and I am going to get rid of you.' This is Yahweh's word. ³⁴And the prophets, priests or common people who say: 'Burden' of Yahweh, will be punished, and their household as well.

³⁵This is what you should say, to one another, among yourselves, "What is Yahweh's answer?" or "What has Yahweh said?" ³⁶But there must be no mention of "Burden" of Yahweh for it shall be burden-

some for the one who says it. ³⁷And if you want to know, ³⁸this is what Yahweh says:

³⁹Since you use this expression in spite of my prohibition, I will cast you off and thrust you out of my sight, – you and the city I gave to you and your ancestors. ⁴⁰I will bring upon you everlasting shame and dishonor that will be yours forever.

The two baskets of figs

24 • ¹Yahweh showed me two baskets of figs placed in front of the Temple. It was after Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon had deported Jekoniah, son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah together with the princes of Judah, the blacksmiths and metalworkers and had taken them to Babylon.

²One of the baskets had choice figs that ripen early, the other had bad ones, so bad that they couldn't be eaten. ³Yahweh said to me, "What do you see Jeremiah?" I replied, "Figs. The good figs are excellent but the bad figs are so rotten they cannot be eaten!"

⁴So the word of Yahweh came to me: ⁵"Just as these figs are good, so do I consider good those who have been deported from Judah to the land of the Chaldeans. ⁶I will look kindly on them and bring them back to this land. I will restore and not destroy them, I will plant and not uproot them. ⁷I will dispose their heart to know me as Yahweh. They will be my people and I will be their God for they will come back to me with all their heart.

⁸"But as far as King Zedekiah of Judah is concerned, I will deal with him as one deals with rotten figs – so rotten they cannot be eaten. I will likewise deal with his princes and the remnants of Jerusalem – those who have stayed in the country and those who have migrated to Egypt.

⁹I will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, a reproach and a byword, an object of ridicule, a curse in all the countries to which I will drive them. ¹⁰I will also bring sword, famine and plague upon them until they are utterly erased from the land I gave to them and to their ancestors.

Seventy years of captivity

25 • ¹This is the word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, which was the first year of Nebuchad

2K
24:15
Am
8:1

30:22
31:33

15:4
29:18

• **24.1** The first siege of Jerusalem occurred in 598, along with the capitulation of king Jehoiakin, and a first exile. In the ten years that followed, the new king Zedekiah along with the people who remained, acted as if nothing had happened. Though they were defeated and poor, the people of Jerusalem came to think that they were better off and that they only had to lament over the fate of those in exile. Jeremiah rejects this opinion. God is interested in those in

exile for they are the beginning of the future renewed people. On the other hand, something worse is going to happen to those remaining in Jerusalem.

• **25.1** This chapter combines: 25:1-13, an introduction which must have come before Jeremiah's prophecies against the people of Judah and which now form chapters 1-24 of his book. Note in this passage the prophecy concerning

nezzar, king of Babylon. ²And this word was transmitted by the prophet Jeremiah to all the people of Judah and to all the citizens of Jerusalem:

³“For twenty-three years, that is, from the thirteenth year of Josiah son of Amon until today, the word of Yahweh has come to me and I have continuously spoken to you, ⁴but you would not listen. Besides Yahweh has sent his servants the prophets to you again and again, but you neither listened nor paid attention. ⁵They said, ‘Turn from your evil ways and repent of your wicked deeds that you may live in the land that Yahweh gave to you and your ancestors forever and ever. ⁶Do not turn after other gods to serve and worship them. Do not provoke my anger with these things your own hands have made, and I will do you no harm.’ ⁷But you refused to listen – it is Yahweh who speaks – and provoked my anger with these gods you yourselves have made to your own detriment.

⁸That is why Yahweh God of hosts says to you: Since you have not listened to what I said, ⁹I will summon all the clans of the north – it is Yahweh who speaks – and my steward Nebuchadnezzar will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy these people, making them desolate, an object of ridicule, an everlasting ruins. ¹⁰I will banish from them every sound of joy and happiness, the song of the bride and bridegroom, the noise of the mill and the light of the lamp.

^{2Chr} ^{36:20} ¹¹All the land will be a ruin and a desolation and for seventy years these nations will serve the king of Babylon.

^{29:10} ^{Dn} ^{9:2} ¹²(But after seventy years I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation for their guilt – it is Yahweh who speaks – and I will make it forever desolate!)

¹³On this land I will now bring all that I foretold, all that is written in this book. ¹⁴They will be subject to great nations and kings! I will repay them according to their deeds and the work of their hands.”

The cup of God’s wrath

^{Ezk} ^{23:32} ¹⁵Yahweh, the God of Israel, instructed me, “Take from my hand this cup of wine and let all the nations to whom I send you drink from it. ¹⁶They will drink and stagger and lose control of their minds before the sword I am sending among them.”

¹⁷So I took the cup from Yahweh’s hand and made all the nations to whom he sent me drink from it: ¹⁸() to bring them in ruins, a

desolation which is an object of ridicule and curses, as they are today. ¹⁹Then I gave it to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to his ministers, his princes and all his people, to all the countries of the west, ²⁰to all the kings of Uz, to all the kings of the Philistines in Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and those left at Ashdod; ²¹to all the people of Edom, Moab and Ammon; ²²all the kings of Tyre and Sidon: the kings of the coastlands across the sea; ²³Deda, Tama, Buz and ²⁴all the kings of Arabia and the kings of the west and the kings of those who live in the desert; ²⁵all the kings of Zimri, Elim and Media and ²⁶all the kings of the north, far and near, one after the other; all the kings that are found on the face of the earth! And after them the king of Babylon shall drink it!

²⁷You will say to them, “This is the message of Yahweh the God of hosts and the God of Israel: ‘Drink, get drunk, vomit, fall without raising again in front of the sword I am sending against you.’

²⁸But if they refuse to take the cup from your hand to drink, tell them, ‘Yahweh the God of hosts has spoken: You also must drink. ²⁹When you see that I am punishing first the city where my Name rests, do you think you will be spared? No, you will not, for I am personally bringing down a sword on all the inhabitants of the earth – it is Yahweh God of hosts who speaks.’

³⁰You will communicate all these words to them and say, “Yahweh roars on high and from his holy dwelling threatens all the inhabitants of the world. His mighty roar echoes to the farthest ends of the earth. ³¹For Yahweh judges all the nations and passes sentence against all humankind, and he abandons the wicked to the sword – word of Yahweh.”

³²Yahweh, God of hosts, says, “See, disaster spreads from nation to nation. A storm arises from the ends of the earth. ³³On that day Yahweh’s victims will be spread from one end of the earth to the other. No one will mourn for them; no one will gather them up or bury them – they will be like dung on the soil! ³⁴Howl, shepherds, and lament!

Roll in the dust you leaders of flocks for the day of slaughter and dispersal has come for you and you will fall like fattened rams.

³⁵The shepherds will find no refuge and the leaders of the the flocks will not be able to escape.

³⁶The shepherds cry out and the leaders of flocks wail, ³⁷for Yahweh lays waste the grasslands, and the pastures are silent because of the fury of Yahweh’s anger.

³⁸Like a lion he leaves his lair; because of

Jl
4:16
Am
1:2

Is
66:16

the seventy years which was to be the duration of the exile of the Jews in Babylon. It is a symbolic number since there were two exiles, in 598 and 587 and many left after 538.

25:15-38 an introduction which must have come before the prophecies against the foreign nations gathered in chapters 46–51.

his fierce wrath the land has been stricken by the sword and has become a wasteland.”

Jeremiah is arrested and judged

26 • ¹At the beginning of the reign of Judah’s king Jehoiakim son of Josiah, the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah: ²Yahweh says this, “Stand in the courtyard of Yahweh’s House and say to all who come from the towns of Judah to worship in Yahweh’s house – all that I command you to say; do not omit anything! ³Perhaps they will listen to you. Perhaps each one will turn from his wicked ways. Then I will change my mind and forget the destruction that I have planned to inflict on them because of their wicked deeds.

7:1-15
Rev
22:19

⁴Tell them: This is what Yahweh says:

“You have not obeyed me and you have failed to walk according to my Law which I have set before you. ⁵You have not heeded my servants, the prophets, whom I have persistently sent to you. If you stubbornly close your ears to them, ⁶I will treat this House of mine as I treated the sanctuary of Shiloh and let all the nations see that Jerusalem is a cursed city.”

⁷The priests, the prophets and all the people heard what Jeremiah said in Yahweh’s House. ⁸When Jeremiah finished saying all that Yahweh had commanded, he was besieged by the priests and prophets saying, “You are bound to die! ⁹How dare you speak in Yahweh’s Name telling us that this House will be treated like Shiloh and this city is to become a deserted ruin.”

And all the people gathered around Jeremiah in the House of Yahweh.

¹⁰Upon hearing this, the leaders of Judah came up from the king’s palace to the House of Yahweh and took their place at the entrance of the New Gate. ¹¹Then the priests and the prophets said to the leaders of the people: “This man must die for he has spoken against the city as you have heard with your own ears!”

¹²Jeremiah replied, “I have been sent by Yahweh to prophesy against this House and this city all that you have heard. ¹³Hence, reform your ways and your deeds and obey Yahweh your God that he may change his mind and not bring upon you the destruction he had intended.

¹⁴As for me I am in your hands; do with me whatever you consider just and right. ¹⁵But know that I am innocent and if you take my life you commit a crime that is a curse on yourselves, on the city and the people. In truth it was Yahweh who sent me to say all that I said in your hearing.”

¹⁶Then the leaders, backed by the people, said to the priests and the prophets, “This man does not deserve death; he spoke to us in the Name of Yahweh.”

¹⁷Some of the elders of the land addressed the people’s assembly saying, ¹⁸“Micah of Moresheth prophesied publicly in the time of Hezekiah, king of Judah:

Mic
3:12

‘Zion will become like a field, Jerusalem a heap of rubble and the Temple Mount a hill of overgrown thickets.’

• **26.1** In 7:1-15 we had the discourse against people who trust in the Temple. Here Jeremiah’s secretary, Baruch – about whom we will speak later – summarizes the discourse and tells us what impact it had.

– The people defend Jeremiah against the priests and the prophets.

– Jeremiah maintains his position firmly: he cannot provide proof or miracles to confirm what he is saying. He is saved by the conversion of the people: they have recognized the voice of truth.

– They recall the words of the prophet Micah 3:12 in the previous century.

– At the end of the chapter, there is mention of the family of Shaphan, the secretary of the king who had favored the religious reform of King Josiah (see 2 K 22:8). Shaphan and his family will protect Jeremiah on several occasions.

The confrontation between Jeremiah and the priests is not accidental. Oftentimes the priests who kept the word of God opposed the prophets of their times. John the Baptist was ignored by

Acts
5:39

¹⁹Did King Hezekiah of Judah and the people of Judah kill him? They instead feared Yahweh and implored his pardon until they succeeded in their plea to make him change his mind; and Yahweh did not inflict the harm with which he had threatened them. How can we commit such a crime?”

²⁰There was another man, by the name of Uriah son of Shemaiah from Kiriath Jearim who also prophesied in the name of Yahweh. He spoke against this city and this country in words similar to those of Jeremiah. ²¹When King Jehoiakim together with his officials heard his words, he decided to do away with him. When Uriah came to know about it, he was scared and fled to Egypt. ²²But King Jehoiakim sent Elnathan son of Achbor with some people into Egypt. ²³They brought Uriah out of Egypt and took him to King Jehoiakim who had him slain and his body thrown into the common people’s burial place.

²⁴As for Jeremiah he was befriended by Ahikam, son of Shaphan, and was not handed over to those who wanted him put to death.

The yoke of Nebuchadnezzar

27 ¹In the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, son of Josiah, the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah in this way, ²“Make for yourself ropes and a yoke and put them on your neck. ³Then send word to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon through their ambassadors, who have come to Jerusalem, to see Zedekiah king of Judah. ⁴Give them these instructions for their masters:

Dn
4:14

Yahweh God of hosts tells you what you ought to say to your masters: ⁵By means of my great power and mighty deeds I made the earth, as well as the people and animals that inhabit it, and I give them to whom ever I wish. ⁶Now I have given all these lands into the hands of my steward Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and I will even make the beasts of the field subject to him. ⁷All nations will serve him, his son and his grandson until the time for his land comes and then he will be overpowered by powerful nations and great kings.

⁸As for the nation or kingdom that refuses to serve Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, I will punish it with the sword, famine and plague – word of Yahweh – until I completely wipe it out.

⁹Hence you must no longer pay attention to your prophets, diviners, interpreters of dreams, astrologists or sorcerers who say that you must not submit yourselves to the king of Babylon. ¹⁰For they are prophets of lies which will cause you to be finally driven from your land. I myself will drive you out and you will perish. ¹¹But the nation that submits to the yoke of the king of Babylon and serves him, that nation I will leave in its own land – word of Yahweh – to till it and live there.”

¹²Then I gave the same message to King Zedekiah of Judah, “Place your neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon. Serve him and his people and you will live. ¹³Why should you and your people die by the sword, famine and plague as Yahweh has threatened any nation that will not serve the king of Babylon? ¹⁴Do not listen to the prophets when they say, ‘You will not have to serve the king of Babylon.’ For they are deceiving you with their prophesies. ¹⁵I did not send them, says Yahweh, and they falsely use my name in their prophesying. Let it not be that I drive you out of your land and you perish, you and the prophets who have spoken to you.”

¹⁶Then I spoke to the priests and the people, “Yahweh tells you not to listen to your prophets who say: ‘Very soon now the articles from Yahweh’s House will be brought back from Babylon.’ They prophesy lies. ¹⁷Do not listen to them; instead serve the king of Babylon and survive. Why should this city become a ruins? ¹⁸If they were prophets and if they had Yahweh’s word in their hearts, they would now be praying to Yahweh God of hosts not to allow the objects still remaining in the House of Yahweh and in the royal palace and in Jerusalem to be carried off to Babylon.

¹⁹For, Yahweh says something about the pillars, the Sea, the movable stands and the other objects still in this city ²⁰which Nebuchadnezzar did not carry off when he deported Jekoniah son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah from Jerusalem to Babylon together with all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem. ²¹Yes, this is what Yahweh the God of hosts says about the objects remaining in the House of Yahweh and in the royal palace in Jerusalem: ²²“They will be taken to Babylon and there they will remain until the day I deal with them. Then I will bring them back and restore them to this place.”

Jeremiah and Hananiah

28 ¹Early in the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah, in the fifth month

the priests, and Jesus was condemned by them. The reason is that often the ministers of religion think first of preserving the institutions and the system of which they are the guardians and

which provide them with a livelihood, whereas the prophets invite us to forge ahead and be mindful of what is essential.

of the fourth year, the prophet Hananiah spoke to me. Hananiah son of Azzur from Gibeon proclaimed in Yahweh's House in the presence of the priests and the people, ²“This is what Yahweh the God of hosts and the God of Israel says: I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. ³Within two years I will bring back to this place all the objects that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon took away from Yahweh's House and carried to Babylon. ⁴I will likewise bring back Jekoniah son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and all who were taken from Judah and deported to Babylon. For I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon – word of Yahweh.”

⁵Then Jeremiah replied to Hananiah in the presence of the priests and all the people, ⁶“So be it! May Yahweh fulfill the words you have spoken and bring back from Babylon to this place the objects taken from the House of Yahweh and all the exiles. ⁷Yet hear now what I say in your hearing and the hearing of all the people.

⁸The prophets who came before you and me continually prophesied war, disaster and plague to many nations and great kingdoms. ⁹So the prophet ^{Dt 18:22} who prophesies peace will not be recognized as truly sent by Yahweh, until his predictions are fulfilled.”

¹⁰Then Hananiah took the yoke from the neck of Jeremiah and broke it. ^{1K 22:24}

¹¹Hananiah proclaimed in the presence of all the people, “Yahweh says this: In the same manner within two years will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar from the neck of all the nations.” Then Jeremiah the prophet went on his way.

¹²Some time later, a word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah, ¹³“Go and tell this to Hananiah: This is what Yahweh says: You have broken a wooden yoke but in its place you will get a yoke of iron.

¹⁴For this is what Yahweh the God of hosts and the God of Israel says: I am placing a yoke of iron on the neck of all the nations to make them serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and they will serve him. I will even give him control over the wild animals.”

¹⁵Then Jeremiah said to Hananiah, “Listen! Hananiah, you have not been sent by Yahweh and yet you have deceived these people, giving them false hope with your lies. ¹⁶That is why Yahweh says with regard to you: I am removing you from the face of the earth. You will die this very year because you have counseled rebellion against Yahweh.”

¹⁷And in the seventh month of that year Hananiah died.

• **28.1** As we saw in 22:1, the ten years separating the two sieges of Jerusalem, from 598 to 588, were times of madness and false illusions. People were always predicting the collapse of the empire of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and the return of the exiles. Jeremiah rises courageously against such false hope and predicts submission to Nebuchadnezzar and so the Jewish leaders consider him an enemy of the nation.

Jeremiah confronts the false prophets. When prophets do not agree, how can people know the authentic prophet? See Dt 13:6 and 18:22 on this.

The prophet who prophesies peace will not be accepted until his predictions are fulfilled

(v. 9). Jeremiah says something more than Deuteronomy. Ever since Elijah (see 1 K 19:18), the mission of the prophets had been to predict the gradual fall of the kingdom of Israel and to announce that another kingdom would come later. They predicted a few victories, but these would not stop a continuous slipping towards destruction. Therefore, the Jews should have distrusted Hananiah who was promising prosperity more than Jeremiah who insisted on Yahweh's threats.

The prophets were sent to a sinful people to form their conscience regarding sin and not to put it to sleep. When we live in the midst of injustice, we must distrust those who promise prosperity.

PROPHECIES OF BLESSING

The letter to the exiles

29 • ¹This is the text of the letter the prophet Jeremiah sent to the rest of the elders, to the priests, the prophets and to all the people that Nebuchadnezzar had deported from Jerusalem to Babylon. ²This was after King Jehoniah, the queen mother, the officials, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the smiths and metalworkers had left Jerusalem.

^{2K}
^{24:1}

³The letter was hand-carried by Elashah son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. It said:

⁴This is what Yahweh God of hosts and God of Israel says to all those deported from Jerusalem to Babylon:

⁵“Build houses and live in them, plant gardens and eat what they produce, ⁶marry and have children, seek wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too will have children. While there, increase in number; do not decrease. ⁷Pull yourselves together for the welfare of the land to which I have sent you and intercede on its behalf as you pray to Yahweh; for its welfare will be your welfare.”

¹⁰This is what Yahweh says, “When the seventy years allowed to Babylon have been completed I will come to you and fulfill my promise of restoring you back to this place. ¹¹For I know what my plans for you are, plans to save you and not to harm you, plans to give you a future and to give you hope.”

¹²And Yahweh says, “When you call on me I will listen. ¹³You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart.” ¹⁴For Yahweh says,

^{Dt}
^{4:29}
^{Is}
^{55:6}

“I will let myself be found by you and I will gather you from among all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you and bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

¹⁵Indeed you are trusting in prophets allegedly raised for you by Yahweh in Babylon. ¹⁶But this is the word of Yahweh: ⁸Do not be deceived by the prophets and seers who are among you. Do not believe in their dreams or be confident in their illusions. ⁹For I did not send them and they take advantage of my name to foretell lies. As for the king who sits on the throne of David and all the people who live in this city (your kinsfolk who did not go into exile with you); ¹⁷thus says Yahweh God of hosts, “I am sending sword, famine and plague against them. I will make them like rotten figs, so rotten they cannot be eaten. ¹⁸I will pursue them with sword, famine and plague. They will be a horror for all the kingdoms of the earth, a curse, an abomination, a sign of desolation, mockery and ridicule among all the nations where I scatter them. ¹⁹For they did not heed my words when I sent them again and again my servants, the prophets. They refused to pay attention.

²⁰As for you, exiles, whom I sent away from Jerusalem to Babylon, hear the word of Yahweh. ²¹This is what Yahweh the God of hosts and the God of Israel says concerning Ahab son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah who prophesy lies in my name, “I will hand them over to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon and he will slay them before your eyes. ²²This will give rise to a curse widely used by the captives from Judah in Babylon: ‘May the Lord treat you like Zedekiah and Ahab, who were roasted in the fire by the king of Babylon!’ ²³for they have acted outrageously: they have committed adultery with their neighbors’ wives and have used my name to proclaim lies which I did not command them. I know it and have witnessed it,” declares Yahweh.

^{23:14}

²⁴After that Shemaiah of Nehelam ²⁵sent

• **29.1** In the years from 598 to 587, while the people in Jerusalem are becoming more and more blind, Jeremiah wants to guide the exiles. There is a temptation for them to believe that things could revert to what they were before. There are even prophets among them who keep up the illusion of a quick defeat of Babylon. One of them sends letters to Jerusalem to have Jeremiah put in jail (vv. 24-28).

In fact, they have to accept defeat, to realize their unfaithfulness to Yahweh, which is the

actual cause of their humiliation, and change their outlook. At that very moment another prophet, Ezekiel, who is a true prophet speaks in a similar way among the exiles.

A slow transformation is going to take place among the priests, the nobility, the artisans and the civil servants who are exiled and, after seventy years of exile, their children will return to Jerusalem as “the poor ones looking for Yahweh.”

letters in his own name to all the people in Jerusalem and to Zephaniah, son of Maa-seiah the priest and to all the priests saying, ²⁶“Yahweh has made you priest in place of Jehoiada to be in charge in the House of Yahweh to arrest every mad prophet and put him in the stocks and neck-irons. ²⁷So why have you not rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth, a would-be prophet in your midst? ²⁸In this role he sent a message to us in Babylon: You will be there for a long time! Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce.”

²⁹When Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the hearing of the prophet Jeremiah, ³⁰the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah, ³¹“Send this message to all the exiles: This is what Yahweh says concerning Shemaiah of Nehelam: Shemaiah prophesied although I did not send him and he made you trust in lies. ³²Because of that I will punish Shemaiah and his descendants; none of them will live to witness the blessings I will bestow on my people, for he incited my people to rebel against Yahweh.”

The restoration of the northern kingdom

30 • ¹This is another word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh:

²Yahweh, God of Israel says, “Write in a book all that I have communicated to you, ³for the days are coming when I shall bring my captive people Israel and Judah back to the land I gave to their ancestors as their inheritance.”

⁴These are words spoken by Yahweh to Israel:

⁵We have heard cries of fear,
terror and not peace!

⁶Ask and see:

Does a man bear children?

Then why do I see every strong man
with his hands on his hips like a woman in
labor,

every face turned a ghastly color?

⁷How terrible that day!

there is none to equal it!

It is a time of distress for Jacob,
but he will be saved.

⁸On that day, – declares Yahweh of hosts – I will break the yoke around his neck and burst his bonds, that strangers may no longer enslave them. ⁹They will instead serve

Yahweh their God and David their king whom I will raise up for them.

¹⁰Yahweh says, “Fear not, Jacob my servant. Be not dismayed, Israel, for I will rescue you and your descendants from that far-off land where you are captive. Jacob shall return and know peace, molested by no one.

¹¹I am with you to save you. I will utterly destroy the nations where you are scattered. You alone shall not be destroyed, but I will discipline you justly and not let you go unpunished.”

¹²Yahweh says,

“Your wound is incurable,
your injury is grievous.

¹³There is no one to plead your cause.
There is a remedy for an ulcer
but no healing for you!

¹⁴All your lovers have forgotten you;
they care nothing for you.

For I struck you as an enemy does,
with a cruel punishment,
because of your great guilt
and the wickedness of your sin.

¹⁵Why cry out now that you are hurt?
Is there no cure for your pain?

Because of your great crime and grievous sin I have done this to you.

¹⁶Yet all who devour you will be devoured. Your oppressors will be taken captive; your plunderers will be plundered and those who despise you will be despised. ¹⁷Because you were called ‘outcast – Zion for whom no one cares,’ I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,” says Yahweh.

¹⁸Yahweh says, “I will restore my people into Jacob’s tents and have pity on his dwellings. The city will be rebuilt over its ruins and the palace restored on its proper place. ¹⁹From them will come songs of praise and the sound of merrymaking.

I will multiply them and they shall not be few. I will bestow honor on them and they shall not be despised. ²⁰Their children will be as before and their community will be established before me. I will ask their oppressors to account.

²¹Their leader will be one of themselves, their ruler shall emerge from their midst. I will bring him close to me for who would dare to approach me? ²²You shall be my people and I shall be your God.”

Mt
24:21
Rev
16:18

Is
44:2
Mic
4:4

Nh
3:19

Is
54:6

Dt
17:15

Lev
26:12

• **30.1** Chapters 30 and 31 bring us back to the happy years of King Josiah. Besides promoting the renewal of faith and the worship of Yahweh, he managed to conquer part of what had been the kingdom of Israel before it became an Assyrian province after the fall of Samaria.

The days are coming when I shall bring back my captive people Israel (3). The Israelites had been expelled from the land and scattered. Now, they are not there to listen to Jeremiah, but he

addresses them through time and space. What he is telling them also applies to Judah which, in its turn, is going to be destroyed and dispersed.

This time Yahweh speaks like the Father to the prodigal son. He recalls their sins of the past which forced him to punish them and he promises that he will bring about the return of his dispersed children.

Similar promises fill chapters 40–55 of the Book of Isaiah.

²³ See the storm of Yahweh bursting forth in fury; like the turmoil of a hurricane it sweeps down on the head of the wicked.

^{Jn 13:7} ²⁴ The fierce wrath of Yahweh will not turn away until he has done and accomplished the purpose of his heart.

In the latter days you will understand this.

^{Ezk 11:20} ^{Hos 11:4} **31** ¹ Yahweh declares that when that time comes he will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they will be his people.

² Thus says Yahweh: The people who survived the sword have found grace in the desert. As Israel was seeking for his rest

³ Yahweh appeared from afar saying, I have loved you with a love everlasting, so I have kept for you my mercy. ⁴ I will restore you again, and you shall be rebuilt, O virgin Israel!

You will take up your tambourines and go out dancing joyfully. ⁵ You will plant vineyards

again on the hills of Samaria, and the farmers who plant them will enjoy their fruit.

⁶ There shall be a day when watchmen will call out on the hills of Ephraim, "Come, let us go to Zion, to Yahweh our God!"

⁷ For Yahweh says this: Shout with joy for Jacob;

rejoice for the greatest of nations.

Proclaim your praise and say:

"Yahweh has saved his people, the remnant of Israel!"

⁸ Look, I will bring them back from the land of the north, gather them from the ends of the earth, the lame and the blind, mothers and women in labor – a great throng will return.

⁹ They went away weeping, they will return in joy.

I will lead them by the streams of water, on a level path so that no one will stumble,

for I am Israel's father and Ephraim is my firstborn.

He who scattered Israel now gathers them!

¹⁰ Hear the word of Yahweh, O nations, proclaim it on distant coastlands:

He who scattered Israel will gather them and guard them as a shepherd guard his flock.

¹¹ For Yahweh has ransomed Jacob and redeemed him from the hand of his conqueror.

¹² They shall come shouting for joy, while ascending Zion; they will come streaming to Yahweh's blessings –

the grain, the new wine and the oil, the young of the flocks and herds.

They will be like a well-watered garden; no more will they be afflicted.

¹³ Maidens will make merry and dance, young men and old as well.

I will turn their mourning into gladness, I will give them comfort and joy for sorrow.

¹⁴ I will fill the priests with abundance, and satisfy my people with my bounty – this is Yahweh's word.

¹⁵ Thus speaks Yahweh:

"In Ramah, a voice

of mourning and great weeping is heard, Rachel wailing for her children and refusing to be consoled, for her children are no more."

¹⁶ Yahweh says this to her:

"Weep no more and wipe the tears of your eyes; your sorrow will have redress.

They will come back from the enemy's land.

^{Is 49:25}

^{Is 58:11}

^{Ps 132:16}

^{Gen 35:19}
^{Mt 2:18}

¹⁷ There is hope for your descendants;
your children will return to their own borders.

¹⁸ I heard Ephraim saying in grief:
'You disciplined me like an untamed calf,
and I have been disciplined.
Bring me back, and I will return,
for you are my God, my Lord.

Ps
80:3

¹⁹ Yes, I strayed, but I have repented.
Now I understand and I beat my breast;
I bear the disgrace of my youth,
and I blush with shame and humiliation.'

²⁰ Is not Ephraim my favored son,
the child in whom I delight?
Often have I threatened him,
but I still remember him,
and my heart yearns for him.
I must show him mercy," declares Yahweh.

Hos
11:8-9

²¹ Set up road signs,
put up guideposts;
focus your attention to the highway,
the road by which you went.
Return, O virgin Israel,
return to these cities of yours.

²² How long will you remain wandering,
O unfaithful daughter?

Yahweh is creating something new on
earth –
the woman finds her husband again."

Restoration of Judah

²³ These are words of Yahweh, God of hosts and God of Israel, "When I bring back the captives to the land of Judah and its towns, the people will once more use the expression: 'Yahweh bless you, O dwelling of righteousness, holy mountain!'

²⁴ All Judah and its towns, the farmer and those who move about with their herds will live there in peace. ²⁵ I will refresh the weary and lift up the downhearted."

²⁶ Then I awoke and looked around; my sleep had been peaceful.

²⁷ "The days are coming – this is the word of Yahweh – when I shall sow the people of Israel and the people of Judah with the seed of man and of beasts. ²⁸ It will happen that just as I watched over them to uproot and overthrow, to destroy and bring disaster, so shall I likewise build and plant – word of Yahweh.

²⁹ No longer will it be said: 'The parents have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge.'

³⁰ Instead everyone will die because of their own sin; whoever eats sour grapes will have his teeth set on edge!

Dt
24:16
Ezk
18:2

The new covenant

• ³¹ The time is coming – it is Yahweh who speaks – when I will forge a new covenant with the people of Israel and the people of Judah. ³² It will not be

2Cor
3:6
Heb
9:15

• **31.31** Here we must underscore 31:31-34 where Jeremiah delivers his most famous prophecy. During the bitter days which the Jewish people are experiencing, God reveals and Jeremiah announces the New and eternal Covenant between God and his people.

I will forge a new covenant. This is like saying that the Sinai Covenant which made Israel God's people, had become obsolete or insufficient. God had bound himself to a family (Abraham's) which became a people under Moses' leadership. And apparently his promises were more for the community than for individuals.

The expression the prophet uses, "a new covenant" does not mean that God is forsaking his former promises to Israel. It clearly illustrates the characteristic of the covenant which God

wants to establish between him and humanity through Israel. This novelty is that of love, because true love is always fresh and new. Although the people of God had broken the covenant, God who is always faithful, will respond by a gift, through his son, born of Mary.

They broke my covenant. Actually, this covenant between Yahweh and Israel on Sinai had failed, through Israel's fault, not Yahweh's. But it is not a matter of renewing it as Joshua, Samuel, Hezekiah and Josiah had done so many times. Nor is it a matter of making another one like it, since this old covenant had already proven its weakness: people are sinful and unable to escape from their sins. Moreover, no laws, or human solidarity, or any form of education can bring God's grace to a nation or a collectivity and

like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt. For they broke my covenant although I was their Lord.

^{Ezk 36:28} ^{Zec 8:8} ³³This is the covenant I shall make with Israel after that time: I will put my Law within them and write it on their hearts; I will be their God and they will be my people.

^{24:7} ^{Is 54:13} ^{Jn 6:45} ³⁴And they will not have to teach each other, neighbor or brother, saying: 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the greatest to the lowliest, for I will forgive their wrongdoing and no longer remember their sin."

³⁵This is the word of Yahweh, he who gives the sun for light during the day and orders the moon and the stars to give light at night,

he who stirs the sea and makes the waves roar, and who is called Yahweh, God of hosts:

³⁶"Only if these laws vanish from my sight, – says Yahweh – will the descendants of Israel cease to be a nation before me.

³⁷Only when the skies above are measured and the foundations of the earth are found below, only then will I reject the descendants of Israel because of what they have done – word of Yahweh.

³⁸Behold, the days are coming when the city will be rebuilt for Yahweh from the Tower

of Hananel to the Corner Gate ³⁹and the measuring tape will stretch from there to the hill of Gareb and then turn to Goah. ⁴⁰The whole valley where dead bodies and ashes are thrown and all the fields as far as the brook of Kidron and the corner of the Horse Gate on the east will be holy to Yahweh. Never again will the city be uprooted, never again destroyed."

Jl 4:17

Jeremiah buys a field

32 ¹This is the word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh in the tenth year of Zedekiah's reign as king of Judah, the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. ²At that time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem and the prophet Jeremiah was imprisoned in the Guards' Courtyard of the royal palace of Judah.

³Zedekiah king of Judah had him shut up after saying to him, "Why do you prophesy in the name of Yahweh as you do? Yes, you said: 'I am going to hand this city to the king of Babylon who will take it. ⁴And King Zedekiah will not escape from the Chaldeans; he will be delivered into the power of the king of Babylon, speak face to face to him and see him with his own eyes. ⁵Zedekiah will be brought to Babylon where he will remain until I deal with him. In any case your fight against the Chaldeans is hopeless'."

⁶So at that time the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah: ⁷'Hanamel, son of your uncle Shallum, is going to visit you and ask you to buy his field at Anathoth as it is your right to do so.' ⁸Then my cousin Hanamel came to

Lev 25:24-34

preserve them in the faith. Only a personal accepting of the divine Truth makes one a true believer. The true people of God cannot be confused with any people or human community: only those who are reborn will become part of God's people.

I will put my Law in their hearts. Now, Jeremiah knows the secret of the New Covenant. For he is aware of the change which occurred in him when Yahweh made him a prophet. Then, he discovered an intimate relationship with God which is entirely different from a religion of mere practices.

I will make another covenant with Israel. Jeremiah predicts the day when Yahweh will reveal himself to all believers as he had done with his great prophets. The law will be in their hearts and the hand of God will keep them on the right path, as was the case with Jeremiah when he doubted.

I will forgive their sins. A New Covenant will be achieved through the death of Christ on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. In celebrating the Last Supper, Jesus says: "This cup is the New Covenant sealed in my blood" (Lk 22:20). The author of the Letter to the Hebrews will develop the meaning of the New Covenant (see Heb 8:8 and 10:16).

The Gospel of John will also clarify the meaning of *they will all know me*: in the Christian faith, not everyone receives personal revelations, but everyone is guided by the Father to Christ in whom are found all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom.

Perhaps Jeremiah himself had not seen all the consequences of this revelation, but it certainly throws a decisive light on the history of the people of Israel. We understand that God's teaching, his way of leading and instructing his people through events was a pedagogy, leading to a definitive truth to be given through Christ and through the gift of the Spirit. It is understandable that Jesus and his apostles so often recalled the message of the prophets to justify the revolution of the Gospel and the birth of a Church rooted in the Jewish people but now independent of its national history.

• **32.1** During the second siege and prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, Jeremiah buys a field as if to prove that the land has not lost its worth; one day the fallen nation will rise again. The end of the chapter (32:37) renews for Judah the same promise of the new covenant which Jeremiah had predicted for Israel a few years before (chapters 30 and 31:31).

me in the courtyard of the Guards and said, 'Purchase my field at Anathoth since you have the right of possession and the redemption is yours; buy it for yourself.'

⁹I then understood this was the word of Yahweh and I bought the field from Hanamel and I weighed out the silver for it, seventeen shekels of silver. ¹⁰Then I signed and sealed the deed, had it witnessed and the silver weighed on the scales. ¹¹Then I took the deed of purchase (the sealed copy containing the terms and conditions and the open copy). ¹²I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch, son of Neriah, son of Mahseiah, in the presence of Hanamel my uncle and the witnesses who signed the deed and before all the Jews who were sitting in the court of the Guards. ¹³Then in their presence I commanded Baruch:

¹⁴This is what Yahweh the God of hosts and the God of Israel says: Take these documents, both the sealed and the unsealed copies of the deed of purchase. Place them in an earthenware jar so that they may last a long time ¹⁵for Yahweh God of hosts and God of Israel says this: Houses, fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land."

Prayer of Jeremiah

¹⁶When I had given the deed of purchase to Baruch son of Neriah, I prayed to Yahweh: ¹⁷"Ah, Lord Yahweh, you have made the heavens and the earth with your great power and mighty deeds. Nothing is impossible to you! ¹⁸You show mercy to thousands but bring the punishment for the parents' sins on their children. Great and Mighty, Yahweh God of hosts is your name! ¹⁹You are great in planning and mighty in deeds, your eyes follow the ways of all the humans, and you give to each one according to his conduct and the fruit of their actions.

²⁰You have continually worked signs and wonders, in the land of Egypt, in Israel and among all humankind. Hence you have become famous, as we see today. ²¹You brought your people from the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, with your great power and your mighty deeds.

²²You gave your people this land which you had promised with an oath to their ancestors, a land flowing with milk and honey. ²³But as soon as they entered and conquered it, they did not listen to you and did not walk according to your Law. They refused to do what you commanded and you brought great misfortune on them. ²⁴You see, O Yahweh, the mounds built up to take the city are reaching it. And the city exhausted by the sword, famine and plague will be given over to the Chaldeans. What you foretold has happened as you can now see! ²⁵And yet you told me, O Lord Yahweh, to buy a field with silver and have the purchase witnessed in the

very days the city is falling to the Chaldeans!"

God's answer

²⁶The word of Yahweh then came to Jeremiah: ²⁷"I am Yahweh, the God of all humankind. Is there anything impossible for me? ²⁸Therefore this is what Yahweh says: I am about to hand the city over to the Chaldeans and Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon who will take it. ²⁹The Chaldeans who are attacking the city will come in and set it on fire. They will burn the houses where the people aroused my anger by burning incense to Baal and pouring drink offerings to foreign gods. ³⁰For the people of Israel and Judah have done nothing but evil in my sight from their youth. ³¹All they did was to arouse my anger with the work of their hands – it is Yahweh who speaks – for this city has so aroused my anger and fury from the time it was built to this day, ³²that I must remove it from my sight. It is on account of all the evil the people of Israel and Judah have done to anger me – they, their kings and princes, their priests and prophets, the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

³³They turned their backs to me and not their faces. Although I taught them time and time again they did not listen nor have they learned the lesson. ³⁴They even put their idols in the sanctuary that houses my Name to defile it. ³⁵They built high places to Baal in the valley of Ben-Hinnom where they worshipped Baal and sacrificed their sons and daughters to Moloch. This I never commanded nor did I ever think they could do such a detestable thing and so make Judah so sinful.

I will bring them back

³⁶As you say, this city exhausted by the sword, famine and plague will be handed over to the king of Babylon. But now listen to what Yahweh the God of Israel says: ³⁷"See, I am going to gather them from all the countries where I scattered them in my anger, fury and great wrath.

I will bring them back to this place and have them live in safety. ³⁸They will be my people and I shall be their God.

³⁹I will have them think and act in another way, so that they may always fear me for their own good and the good of their children.

⁴⁰I will forge an eternal covenant with them by which I shall never cease to do them good and I shall place my fear in their heart so that they may never turn away from me.

⁴¹I shall rejoice in doing them good and I shall plant them securely in this land with all my heart and soul."

⁴²And Yahweh says, "Just as I brought great disaster on this people, so shall I bring

Gen
18:24
Num
11:23
Zec
8:6
Lk
1:37

Ex
20:5

Ezk
11:17

Is
24:5

Zep
3:17

them all the happiness I promised them.
⁴³Then fields will be bought in this land about which you say that it is a wasteland without people or animals and given over to the Chaldeans.

⁴⁴Fields will be bought for silver, and deeds written and sealed and witnessed in the territory of Benjamin and the region around Jerusalem, in the towns of Judah, in the towns of the hill country, in the towns of Shephelah and those of the south.

Yes, I will bring back their captives” – word of Yahweh.

Another promise of restoration

33 ¹When Jeremiah was still detained in the Guards’ Court the word of Yahweh came to him a second time:

²He who made the earth, who fashioned and established it, he whose Name is Yahweh is speaking to you, ³“Call me and I shall answer. I will reveal to you great and mysterious things you have not known.” ⁴For this is what Yahweh God of Israel says, “You have seen how the houses of Jerusalem and the royal palace of Judah were demolished and used as a defense against the siege mounds in the ⁵fighting against the Chaldeans. But they have been filled with dead bodies, for I slew these people in the fury of my anger when I no longer looked to this city because of their wickedness.

⁶However I will apply a remedy for its healing. I will cure them and make them enjoy peace and truth. ⁷I will bring back the captives of Judah and Israel and rebuild them as before. ⁸I will cleanse them from the guilt of their sin against me and their infidelity. ⁹This city will be for me a cause of joy, praise and glory in the sight of all the nations of the earth, when they hear of all the good I do for them. They will fear and tremble when they see all the good and all the peace I provide for them.”

¹⁰Thus says Yahweh, “You say of this city that it is a wasteland without humans or animals. But in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem which are a ruins without people or animals ¹¹there will be heard again the sound of merriment and happiness, the song of the newlywed and the voice of those who pray: ‘Praise to Yahweh God of hosts, for Yahweh is good and his love endures forever!’ When I restore the fortune of the land as it was before,” says Yahweh, “the voice of those who sing praise in the House of Yahweh will be heard.”

¹²Thus says Yahweh God of hosts: In this

place, which is a wasteland without people or animals and in all its towns, there will once again be pastures where the shepherds will tend their flocks. ¹³In the towns of the hill country, Shephelah and the south, in the territory of Benjamin and the villages around Jerusalem and in the towns of Judah, flocks will pass under the hand of the one who counts them – word of Yahweh.

Promises to David’s descendants

¹⁴The days are coming when I shall fulfill the promise that I made in favor of Israel and Judah.

¹⁵In those days and at that time I will cause to sprout the shoot of righteousness from David’s line; he will practice justice and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶In those days Judah will experience salvation and Jerusalem will live in safety. He will be called Yahweh-Our-Righteousness.”

¹⁷For Yahweh says, “David will never be without a descendant seated on the throne of Israel, ¹⁸nor will the priests and Levites be left without descendants to stand before me and to present burnt offerings, grain offerings and sacrifices.”

¹⁹The word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah as follows, ²⁰“If you are able to break my covenant with the day or my covenant with the night so that night and day would not follow at their appointed times, ²¹then might my covenant with David my servant be broken. Only then would there be no descendant to reign on his throne and no priests or Levites to minister before me. ²²Just as the stars in the sky or the sand on the seashore cannot be counted, to the same extent shall I multiply the descendants of David and the Levites who minister before me.”

²³Again the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah, ²⁴“Have you not noticed what these people say: ‘Yahweh has rejected the two kingdoms he chose.’ So they despise my people, and no longer consider them a nation. ²⁵But Yahweh says: If I have not established my covenant with day and night, if I have not fixed the laws of the heavens and the earth, ²⁶then I can reject the descendants of Jacob and David my servant and not take from among them rulers for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For I am going to restore their fortune and show compassion on them.”

A promise to Zedekiah

34 ¹This was the word of Yahweh addressed to Jeremiah when Nebu-

23:6
Is
1:26

Ps
132

Ps
89:35

32:1

Ezk
36:25
Acts
13:38

• **34.1** This chapter includes two events from the second siege of Jerusalem.

34:1-7: Jeremiah invites Zedekiah to surrender to the Chaldeans as Jehoiakin had done

during the first siege. This dialogue is also related in 21:1-7.

34:9-22: Concerning the liberation of slaves. The Bible does not allow that any member of the

chadnezzar, king of Babylon, and his army as well as all the kingdoms of the earth that were under his dominion, and all the peoples were fighting against Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah:

²This is the word of Yahweh, God of Israel, “Go and say this to Zedekiah king of Judah: ‘See, I am giving this city to the king of Babylon and he will set it on fire.’ ³You will not escape from his hands but will surely be captured and given over to him. You will see him face to face and speak directly to him and you will go to Babylon.’ ⁴Just listen, Zedekiah, king of Judah, to the word of Yahweh! This is what Yahweh says about you, ‘You will not be slain by the sword; ⁵no, you will die in peace. As they made funeral pyres in honor of your ancestors, former kings, so will they make a fire in your honor and lament ‘Alas, my master! – word of Yahweh.’”

⁶Then Jeremiah the prophet gave this message to Zedekiah, king of Judah in Jerusalem. ⁷At that time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem and the cities of Judah which were still resisting – Lachish and Azekah. These were the only fortified cities remaining in Judah.

About the liberated slaves

⁸The word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah after King Zedekiah had made a treaty with all the people of Jerusalem to proclaim freedom for the slaves. ⁹Everyone was to free his Hebrew slaves, male and female, so that no fellow Jew would be kept in bondage.

¹⁰The princes and all the citizens agreed to this. They made a treaty and so set them free. ¹¹Yet they changed their mind afterwards and brought back the slaves they had freed and used them as slaves again.

¹²Then the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah, ¹³“Yahweh the God of Israel says this: I made a covenant with your ancestors the day I brought them out of Egypt from the house of slavery and I said: ¹⁴At the end of every seven years

Dt
12

people of God should lose freedom forever. If due to debts a person had to sell himself and become the servant of his creditor, this was not to last more than seven years. Every seven years a sabbatical year was proclaimed (see Dt 15:12) during which slaves of Hebrew descent were to be given their freedom.

The truth is that the social laws were poorly observed in those days. And so, before the threat

you will free any Hebrews who have been sold to you and have served you for six years, you are to send them free from your services. But your ancestors did not listen and paid no attention.

¹⁵Recently you repented and did what was right in my sight when each one proclaimed liberty to one another and you made a covenant with me in the House where my Name rests. ¹⁶But now you have gone back on your word and profaned my Name. You have brought back your slaves, male and female, to whom you had given complete freedom and you have again reduced them to slavery.

¹⁷That is why Yahweh says: Since you have not obeyed me in proclaiming freedom for your friends and neighbors I now proclaim ‘freedom’ for you, freedom to fall by the sword, plague and famine. I will make you detestable to every kingdom on earth. ¹⁸Those who have sinned against my covenant, who have not observed the terms of the alliance they made before me, I will liken them to the calf they cut in two and then walked between its halves. ¹⁹The princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the court officials, the priests and all the people of the land who walked between the pieces of the calf, ²⁰I will hand them over to their enemies. Their corpses will serve as food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth.

²¹Zedekiah and his officials I will give over to the hands of their enemies. You saw the army of the king of Babylon withdrawing from you. ²²But now I am issuing an order to bring them back to this city. They will attack and capture the city and set it on fire. As for the

of siege, the most believing among the people of Jerusalem realized that the best way to obtain God’s blessing would be to follow the social laws of the Bible and to liberate their slaves.

Yahweh rises in favor of the oppressed: he will destroy his own country if that is necessary to punish those who so despise their brothers and sisters.

2K
4:1

1K
8:43

Lev
19:12

towns of Judah I will reduce them to a wasteland without inhabitants.”

The example given by the Rechabites

35 ¹A message from Yahweh came to Jeremiah in the days of Josiah’s son Jehoiakim, king of Judah: ²“Go to the Rechabite family; speak to them and bring them to a room in the House of Yahweh; then give them wine to drink.”

³So I went to get Jaazaniah, son of Jeremiah, son of Habazziniah, his brothers and sons and all the household of the Rechabites. ⁴I brought them to the House of Yahweh, into the room of the sons of Hanan, son of Igdaliah, the man of God. It was close to the room of the leaders which is above the room of the doorkeeper Maasekah, son of Shallum. ⁵I then placed pitchers of wine and cups before the Rechabites and told them, “Drink wine!”

⁶But they answered, “We don’t drink wine because our father Jonadab son of Rechab commanded us: ‘Never drink wine, you as well as your children; ⁷don’t build a house and don’t sow seeds. You shall not plant or own a vineyard; do nothing like that but live in tents all your days so that you may live for a long time in the land where you dwell!’”

⁸We have observed all the commands of our father Jonadab, son of Rechab, always abstaining from wine, we, our wives, our sons and daughters. ⁹We haven’t built houses to live in and we have no vineyards, fields or seeds. ¹⁰We live in tents and we obey and practice all that our father Jonadab ordered us. ¹¹But when king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon attacked the land, we said: “Come,

we shall go to Jerusalem to escape from the army of the Chaldeans and the army of the Arameans. This is why now we stay in Jerusalem.”

¹²Yahweh spoke again to Jeremiah, ¹³“Yahweh the God of hosts and the God of Israel bids you to go and tell the people of Judah and the citizens of Jerusalem: Will you reject a correction and refuse what I say? – word of Yahweh. ¹⁴Jonadab son of Rechab commanded his children not to drink wine, and his words have been observed; to this day they have obeyed their father by not taking wine. As for you, I have spoken to you time and time again and you have not listened to me! ¹⁵I have sent you my servants the prophets again and again saying: ‘Turn away from your wickedness, reform your way of life and do not follow other gods to serve them. Then you will live in the land that I gave you and your forebearers.’ But you neither heeded nor listened to me. ¹⁶The descendants of Jonadab son of Rechab have carried out their father’s order but this nation has not obeyed me.”

¹⁷Therefore this is what Yahweh the God of hosts and the God of Israel says,

“I am going to bring on Judah and on everyone living in Jerusalem all the disaster I foretold, because I spoke and they would not listen, I called and they would not respond.”

¹⁸Then Jeremiah said to the Rechabites, “This is what Yahweh God of hosts and God of Israel says: ‘Because you have been obedient to your father Jonadab and observed all his instructions, because you have acted according to his commands, ¹⁹because of that – word of Yahweh – Jonadab shall always have a descendant to stand before me.’”

THE SUFFERINGS OF JEREMIAH

The scroll is burned

36 • ¹This word from Yahweh came to Jeremiah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah.

²“Get a scroll and write on it all that I have spoken to you concerning Jerusalem, Judah and all the nations, from the first day I spoke to you in the time of Josiah until this day. ³Perhaps when the people of Judah hear of all

the afflictions I intend to send them, to make each of them turn away they would decide to turn from their wicked ways. Hence I may forgive their wickedness and sin.”

⁴Jeremiah then called Baruch son of Neriah and while Jeremiah dictated, Baruch wrote on the scroll all that Yahweh had said.

⁵Then Jeremiah commanded Baruch, “I am in jail and cannot go to Yahweh’s House.

• **36.1** Chapters 36-44 could be called “Jeremiah’s sufferings:” they describe the fate of the prophet during the sieges of 598 and 587 and after the destruction of Jerusalem.

These are the last days of the kingdom of Judah. The events briefly related at the end of the second book of Kings take on a new meaning here because someone with much insight is experiencing them. In the midst of the masses who suffer without understanding, Jeremiah

knows what God’s plans are. These people, who neither believe nor obey the Lord, must lose their material illusions, and then later the best of their children will come to a more profound faith.

Nevertheless, Jeremiah is crushed by his people’s disaster. After having suffered because of them, he is now suffering with them and he becomes the figure of the suffering Savior, Christ.

Baruch, son of Neriah, was *secretary* (36:26),

⁶So you go to Yahweh's House on a day of fasting and read publicly all that you wrote as I dictated. Read it to all the people of Judah who come in from their towns. ⁷Perhaps they will entreat Yahweh and each one will turn from his wickedness, for great is the wrath of Yahweh and the punishment with which he has threatened this people."

⁸So Baruch Neriah's son did all that the prophet Jeremiah had commanded about this reading in the House of Yahweh.

⁹In the ninth month of the fifth year of Josiah's son Jehoiakim, king of Judah, a fast before Yahweh was proclaimed to all the people in Jerusalem and all the people who came from the towns of Judah.

Then in the House of Yahweh Baruch read publicly the words of Jeremiah written in the scroll. ¹⁰This he did in the room of the secretary Gemariah Shaphan's son, in the upper court at the entry of the New Gate of the House of Yahweh.

¹¹When Micaiah son of Gemariah, son of Shaphan heard all of Yahweh's words written on the scroll ¹²he went to the secretary's room in the king's house where all the officials were sitting – Elishama, the secretary, Delaiah, son of Shemaiah; Elnathan, son of Acbor; Gemariah, son of Shaphan; Zedekiah, son of Hananiah, and the rest of the officials.

¹³Micaiah told them all that he had heard when Baruch read the the content of the scroll

to the people. ¹⁴Then all the officials sent Jehudi, son of Netaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cush, to say to Baruch, "Bring the scroll from which you read to all the people and come!" So Baruch went with the scroll in his hand. ¹⁵They told him to sit down and read it to them, and Baruch read it to them.

¹⁶When they heard all that, they gazed at one another in fear and said, "We ought to tell this to the king."

¹⁷They then asked Baruch, "May we know how you wrote that." He said, ¹⁸"As he dictated these words, I wrote them in ink on the scroll." ¹⁹Then the officials instructed Baruch, "Jeremiah and you have to hide and let no one know where you are."

²⁰They kept the scroll in the room of Elishama the secretary and went to the king in the courtyard and reported all to him.

²¹The king then sent Jehudi to bring him the scroll. Jehudi brought it from Elishama's room and read it to the king and to all the officials standing around him. ²²Now it was the ninth month and the king was sitting in the winter palace while a fire was burning in the fire pot in front of him. ²³Whenever Jehudi finished reading three or four columns, the king would cut them off into pieces with the secretary's knife and cast them in the fire until the whole scroll was burned.

something like the chancellor of the king. He was also Jeremiah's secretary and he may have written these chapters.

V. 23. The episode of the burned scroll takes place during the first blockade. Let us remember that in those days people wrote on strips of parchment, or sheepskin, which were rolled up.

37: Zedekiah is respectful toward Jeremiah. He is, in fact, at the mercy of his officials. Here, as in the Passion of Jesus, the rulers do not rule, but follow the mood of the majority.

IS JEREMIAH A TRAITOR?

How strange is Jeremiah's attitude during this war in which the Jews defend their independence to death!

Jeremiah accuses his people and not the Chaldeans in whom he only sees God's instrument.

Jeremiah advises surrender and submission to the foreign power. He even invites the exiled Jews to promote the prosperity of their conquerors.

And we cannot say that these are mistakes on the part of the prophet since his attitude cannot be separated from his message. Two reasons clarify Jeremiah's position:

– On one hand, the Jewish nationalists do not know what God wants to do with Israel in the future. They see only defeat and slavery and they prefer to fight to death. Jeremiah, however, knows the extraordinary future that Yahweh has

in store for Israel. Israel bears the hopes of the future world, and so they must not disappear in a hopeless struggle.

– On the other hand, the Jewish leaders focus only on the appearances of freedom and patriotism. To them, everything seems lost if they submit to foreign authority. Jeremiah, for his part, focuses on the heart. To be Jewish means to preserve Israel's ideals and reasons for living; to be free means to serve Yahweh alone. And so, it is essential to him that his compatriots do not become contaminated by the gods and the false values of the Chaldeans; by comparison, to submit to the yoke of a Chaldean master seems a much lesser evil. Besides, Jeremiah shares the ideas expressed particularly in the book of Judges: if Israel keeps faith and observes the Law, sooner or later it will recover its independence and return home.

Put in modern terms, Jeremiah's attitude can be summarized like:

– Do not insist on fighting for causes or institutions which are no longer relevant to a world which has undergone irreversible changes and in which God calls us to a different mission.

– Know that a people's true independence is seen in their moral and cultural independence. It would be tragic if their children, dazzled by a foreign way of life, were to sacrifice their traditional moral values, or in a subservient way adopt norms and forms of development imposed from outside.

²⁴Neither the king nor his officials were afraid when they heard all these words and they did not tear their garments. ²⁵And yet Elnathan, Deliah and Gemariah had urged the king not to burn the scroll, but he did not listen.

²⁶Instead the king ordered Jerahmeel, a son of the king, Seraiah son of Azriel and Shelemiah son of Abdeel to arrest Baruch the secretary and Jeremiah the prophet; but Yahweh concealed them.

²⁷A word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah after the king burned the scroll with the words Baruch had written as Jeremiah dictated, ²⁸“Take another scroll and write on it all the words that were on the first one which Jehoiakim burned. ²⁹And tell Jehoiakim this message of Yahweh: You have burned the scroll and you said: This man dared to write that the king of Babylon will certainly destroy this land and wipe away from it men and animals! ³⁰That is why Yahweh has spoken against Jehoiakim, king of Judah: Not one of his descendants will sit on the throne of David. His dead body will be exposed to the heat of day and the chill of night. ³¹I will ask him to account as well as his children and his attendants for their wickedness. I will pour out on them all the disasters and it will be the same for the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem I have foretold against them, because they have paid no attention.”

³²Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch son of Neriah, the secretary. He wrote on it all the words of the scroll that Jehoiakim king of Judah burned in the fire, and he added many more similar words.

Zedekiah consults Jeremiah

37 ¹Josiah's Zedekiah was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to be king of Judah in the place of Jehoiakin son of Jehoiakim. ²But neither he nor his attendants nor the people of the land paid attention to the words of Yahweh spoken through Jeremiah the prophet.

³King Zedekiah sent Jehucal son of Shelemiah with the priest Zehaniah son of Maseiah to Jeremiah to say, “Intercede for us with Yahweh our God!” ⁴At that time Jeremiah had not yet been imprisoned and he was still going about among the people. ⁵Pharaoh's army had come out of Egypt and when the Chaldeans heard of this, they withdrew from Jerusalem.

⁶Then the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah the prophet: ⁷“Yahweh the God of Israel has spoken. Say this to the king of Judah who sent you to consult me: Pharaoh's army which was on its way to help you is about to return to its own land, ⁸and the Chaldeans will come back and attack this city. They will capture it and set it on fire.

⁹Do not deceive yourselves by saying that the Chaldeans are not to come back, because they surely will. ¹⁰Even if you had defeated the whole Chaldean army and they were left with only wounded men, they would all come out of their tents and set fire to this city.”

Jeremiah in the well

¹¹While the Chaldean army was withdrawing from Jerusalem because of the advance of Pharaoh's troops, ¹²Jeremiah left Jerusalem to go to the territory of Benjamin to receive an inheritance there. ¹³But upon reaching the Benjamin Gate he was stopped by a sentry named Irijah, son of Shelemiah, son of Hananiah who said, “You are deserting to the Babylonians!”

¹⁴Jeremiah answered, “There's no truth to that!” But Irijah did not listen. He nabbed Jeremiah and brought him to the officials. ¹⁵They were so angry with Jeremiah, they beat him and locked him in the house of Jonathan the secretary which had been transformed into a prison.

¹⁶Jeremiah was put in the dungeon cells and was kept there for a number of days. ¹⁷Then King Zedekiah sent for him and secretly questioned him in his house: “Is there any word from Yahweh?” Jeremiah replied, “Yes, there is!” and added, “You will be handed over to the king of Babylon!”

¹⁸Then Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, “What wrong have I done to you, to your servants or to the people that you should have me imprisoned? ¹⁹Where are your prophets ²⁰who said to you: ‘The King of Babylon will never come to attack you and destroy this land?’ Now listen to me, my lord king! Take heed of my plea and do not send me back to the house of Jonathan the secretary, for there I am doomed to die!”

²¹So King Zedekiah ordered that Jeremiah be transferred to the Guards' Court and that every day he be supplied with loaf of bread from the bakers' street until there was no more bread. So

Jeremiah remained in the Guards' Court.

38¹ Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah son of Pashhur son of Malchiah heard what Jeremiah said publicly² in the name of Yahweh, "Anyone who stays in the city will perish by the sword, famine and plague, but whoever surrenders to the Chaldeans will survive although he may lose everything.³ For Yahweh has spoken: I have handed over this city to the king of Babylon and he will take it."

⁴ Then the officials told the king, "This man should be put to death, because he is weakening the will of the fighting men and the people left the city. In fact he is not out to save the people but to do harm."⁵ King Zedekiah said, "His life is in your hands for the king has no power against you."

Dn
6:16
14:30

⁶ So they took Jeremiah and threw him into the cistern of Malchiah the king's son, in the Guards' Court. They lowered him by means of ropes. There was no water in the cistern but only mud and Jeremiah sank into the mud.

⁷ Ebedmelech, an Ethiopian official of the king's house, heard that they had lowered Jeremiah in the cistern. While the king was sitting at the Benjamin Gate,⁸ Ebedmelech went and spoke to him,⁹ "My lord king! These men have acted wickedly in all they did to Jeremiah the prophet. They threw him into the cistern where he will die."

¹⁰ So the king ordered Ebedmelech the Ethiopian: "Take three men with you from here and draw Jeremiah the prophet out from the cistern before he dies."

¹¹ Ebedmelech took the men with him and went into the king's house beneath the treasury. There he got pieces of rags and old clothes which he lowered by means of ropes to Jeremiah in the cistern.¹² Ebedmelech said to Jeremiah, "Put the pieces of rags and old clothes under your armpits, over

the ropes." This Jeremiah did.¹³ Then Jeremiah was pulled up from the cistern by means of the ropes and was brought to the Guards' Court to stay there.

¹⁴ King Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah the prophet and received him at the third entrance of Yahweh's House and there said to him, "I am going to ask you a question; hide nothing from me!" Jeremiah said to Zedekiah,¹⁵ "If I tell you something, won't you put me to death? And if I advice you, will you listen to me?"¹⁶ King Zedekiah swore secretly to Jeremiah: "As Yahweh lives who gave us a soul, I will not have you die and I will not hand you over to those who want to kill you."

¹⁷ Jeremiah told to Zedekiah, "This is what Yahweh God of hosts and God of Israel says: If you surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon you will survive and the city will not be burned. You and your household will live.¹⁸ But if you surrender not to the king of Babylon, this very city will be handed over to the Chaldeans and they will set it on fire. For your part, you will not escape."

¹⁹ King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "I am afraid of the people of Judah who have surrendered to the Chaldeans. I fear the Chaldeans will give me over to them and they will ill-treat me."²⁰ Jeremiah said, "They will not hand you over. Listen to what Yahweh says to you through me; it will be well with you and you will live.²¹ But if you refuse to surrender, this is what Yahweh has let me see:

²² All the women left in your palace will be handed over to the officers of the king of Babylon and will sing this song: 'Your friends have deceived and overcome you. When your feet have sunk into the mud, they turn away from you!'²³ All your wives and children shall be led out to the Chaldeans and you will not escape from them. You will be nabbed by the king of Babylon and this city will be burned down!"

²⁴Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, “Let no one know about this conversation lest you will die. ²⁵If the officials hear that I have spoken with you and if they come to you and ask you what I spoke of to you, even though they threaten you, ²⁶you will say to them: I only made a petition to the king not to send me back to the house of Jonathan to die.”

²⁷All the officials came to Jeremiah and questioned him. He replied just as the king had instructed him, and they said no more since no one had overheard the conversation.

^{38:13} ^{39:14} ²⁸But Jeremiah remained in the Guards’ Court until the day Jerusalem was taken.

The fall of Jerusalem and the fate of Jeremiah

^{52:1-6} **39** ¹In the tenth month of the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came with his entire army and they besieged Jerusalem. ²On the ninth day of the fourth month in Zedekiah’s eleventh year a breach was made in the city wall. ³All the officials of the king of Babylon entered and took their seats at the Middle Gate: Nergal-Sherazer of Samgar, Sarsekim chief officer, Nergal-Sherazer a high official and all the officials of the king of Babylon.

⁴Upon seeing this, King Zedekiah of Judah and all the military fled from the city by night, going out by way of the king’s garden through the gate between the two walls in the direction of Arabah. ⁵But the Chaldean army chased them and caught up with Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. They took him and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath. There Nebuchadnezzar passed sentence on him. ⁶The king of Babylon slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah in his presence and all the nobles of Judah. ⁷He gouged Zedekiah’s eyes and bound him with a double bronze chain to take him to Babylon.

⁸The Chaldeans burned the King’s palace along with the people’s abodes and then broke down the walls of Jerusalem. ⁹Nebuzaradan, commander of the guards, deported to Babylon the remainder of the people who stayed in the city as well as those who had deserted to his side and those craftsmen who were still there. ¹⁰As for the poorest

people who owned nothing, Nebuzaradan left them at that time in the land of Judah, giving them vineyards and fields.

¹¹Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had given orders about Jeremiah to Nebuzaradan chief of the guards: ¹²“Take him and look after him; do him no harm but deal with him just as he tells you.” ¹³Nebuzaradan commander of the guards, Nebushazban a chief officer, Nergal-Sherazer, a high official and all the other officers of the king of Babylon ¹⁴sent and had Jeremiah taken from the Guards’ Court and given over to Gedaliah son of Ahikam son of Shaphan. So he remained among the people.

Reward for Ebedmelek

• ¹⁵Now the word of Yahweh had come to Jeremiah while he was imprisoned in the Guards’ Court: ¹⁶“Go and talk to Ebedmelek the Ethiopian: Tell him this word of Yahweh the God of hosts and the God of Israel: You see on that day that I am about to carry out what I have foretold in the past, disaster and not prosperity for this city. ^{38:7-13}

¹⁷But I will save you on that day – word of Yahweh – and you will not be handed over to those whom you fear. For I will certainly save you and you will not perish by the sword. ¹⁸You will be able to escape and live because you have trusted me – it is Yahweh who speaks.”

Jeremiah is freed

40 ¹The word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah after Nebuzaradan, commander of the guards, had released him at Ramah when he had taken him, bound in chains, with those to be deported from Jerusalem and Judah to Babylon. ²The commander of the guards took Jeremiah and said to him, “Yahweh your God foretold this calamity for this place. ³Now he has implemented what he then said he would do because you have sinned against him and have not listened to him. ⁴But I have been removing today the fetters off your hands and releasing you to be free... You may wish to go with me to Babylon and I will take care of you. However I am not obliging you if you decide not to go. You have the choice to go wherever you like in this land.” ⁵Nebuzaradan added, “Why don’t you go back to Gedaliah son of Ahikam son of Shaphan? He has been appointed governor over the towns of Judah by the King of Babylon. You could stay with him among your people. Yet go wherever it seems right for you to go.” The commander of the guards gave him provisions and a gift and set him on

• **39.15** Just as Jesus in his passion, Jeremiah has something to give back to the people who were compassionate towards him.

his way. ⁶ And so Jeremiah went to Gedaliah son of Ahikam who was residing at Mizpah. He stayed with him among the people who were left in the land.

Gedaliah, the governor

⁷ Now all the army chiefs in the open country with their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam to be governor over the land and put him in charge of the men, women and children and the lowliest of the people who had not been deported to Babylon. ⁸ They came to Gedaliah at Mizpah: Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth, the sons of Ephai the Netophathite and Jaazaniah son of Maacathite and their men.

⁹ Gedaliah son of Ahikam son of Shaphan swore to them and their men: "Don't be afraid to serve the Chaldeans; remain in the country, serve the king of Babylon and all will be well with you. ¹⁰ As for me, I am based here in Mizpah and I am your representative with the Chaldeans who settle at this place. For your part gather wine, fruit and oil; store it in your vessels and stay in the towns you have occupied."

¹¹ The Jews who were in Moab, Ammon, Edom and in the other lands also learned that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of the population and that he had placed over them Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan. ¹² All of these Jews returned from the places where they had been dispersed and came to Gedaliah at Mizpah in the land of Judah. There they gathered in wine and fruit in great quantities.

Gedaliah murdered

¹³ Johanan son of Kareah and all the chiefs of guerrilla warfare came to Gedaliah at Mizpah ¹⁴ and said, "Don't you know that Baalis, king of the Ammonites has commissioned Ishmael son of Nethaniah to assassinate you?" ¹⁵ But Gedaliah, son of Ahikam, did not believe him.

Then Johanan spoke secretly to Gedaliah at Mizpah, "Let me go and kill Ishmael son of Nethaniah without anyone knowing. Don't allow him to kill you lest all the Jews assembled with you be dispersed and the rest of Judah perish." ¹⁶ But Gedaliah son of Ahikam said to Johanan son of Kareah, "Don't do that because what you have said about Ishmael is a lie."

41 ¹ It was the seventh month when Ishmael son of Nethaniah son of Elishama, a member of the royal family who had been chief officer of the king, came with ten men to Gedaliah, son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan at Mizpah. While they were eating together ² Ishmael and the men with him stood up and slew Gedaliah with the sword, thus killing the man whom the king of Babylon had appointed governor of the land.

³ Ishmael also killed the Jews who were with Gedaliah at Mizpah as well as the Chaldean soldiers who were there.

⁴ Two days after the assassination of Gedaliah and before anyone had heard of it, ⁵ eighty men from Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria arrived with beards shaved, torn clothes and their bodies slashed, carrying offerings and incense to the House of Yahweh.

⁶ Ishmael son of Nethaniah left Mizpah to meet them weeping as they went. He said to them, ⁷ "Come along to Gedaliah, son of Ahikam." But as soon as he came to the center of the town, Ishmael son of Nethaniah and the men with him killed them and threw their bodies into a cistern. ⁸ Ten of these men, however, said to Ishmael, "Don't kill us for we have provisions hidden in the country, corn, oil barley and honey." These Ishmael did not kill with the others.

⁹ The cistern where Ishmael had thrown the corpses of these people he had killed was the large cistern built by King Asa when he had to defend himself against Basha king of Israel. Ishmael son of Nethaniah filled it with their corpses.

¹⁰ Ishmael took captive the small population of Mizpah, the royal princesses whom Nebuzaradan, commander of the bodyguard had left in the care of Gedaliah. Ishmael obliged them to follow him and set out for the land of the Ammonites.

¹¹ When Johanan son of Kareah and the army officers with him heard of the crimes of Ishmael they assembled their men and set off to fight Ishmael. ¹² They caught up with him at the great pool of Gibeon.

¹³ As soon as the people Ishmael had taken by force from Mizpah saw Johanan, son of Kareah and the army officers with him, they rejoiced ¹⁴ and turned back to join Johanan. ¹⁵ In the meantime Ishmael was able to flee from Johanan with eight men and went to the Ammonites.

¹⁶ Then Johanan and the army officers

2K
25:25

• **40.7** The Chaldeans had made Judah a province of their empire. As its governor they named a Jew, Gedaliah, belonging to the Shaphan family who had always been favorable to Jeremiah. The resistance party murders him and only gains a new dispersion of the Jews.

Chapters 42-44 show us Jeremiah fighting his people for the last time. There is not even one faction that listens to the prophet. Those favoring resistance to the Chaldeans, as well as those in favor of submission, follow their own whims and refuse to obey Yahweh.

with him took the people he had rescued from Ishmael, son of Nethaniah. They were those men, women, children and court officials that Ishmael carried off by force from Mizpah after slaying Gedaliah. Johanan brought them from Gibeon, ¹⁷ and they stayed at Geruth Chimham near Bethlehem. They planned to go on later towards Egypt ¹⁸ for fear of the Chaldeans because Ishmael had slain Gedaliah who was appointed governor of the land by the king of Babylon.

The flight to Egypt

42 ¹ Then the army officers, especially Johanan, son of Kareah and Jezaniah son of Hoshaiiah, and all the people from the smallest to the greatest came to speak to Jeremiah: ² “Listen to our plea and pray to Yahweh our God for us, this remnant of people, because really we are few from many, as you can see. ³ May Yahweh your God show us the way we should go and what we should do.”

⁴ Jeremiah the prophet answered them, “I have heard you. Yes, I am going to speak to Yahweh as you have requested. And whatever be the word of Yahweh, I shall let you know it without hiding anything.”

⁵ They said to Jeremiah, “May Yahweh be a true and worthy witness against us if we do not act according to every word that Yahweh your God will say to us through you! ⁶ Whether it be good or bad for us we will obey Yahweh our God to whom we are sending you, so it will be well with us for having obeyed the voice of Yahweh our God.”

⁷ Ten days later the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah. ⁸ He then called Johanan, son of Kareah and the army officers with him and all the people from the least to the greatest ⁹ and said to them, “This is the word of Yahweh, God of Israel to whom you sent me with your petition: ¹⁰ If you wish to live peacefully in this land I will build you up and not pull you down, I will plant you and not uproot you for I will relent of the harm I did you. ¹¹ You are afraid of the king of Babylon, but do not fear him – word of Yahweh – for I am with you to save you and rescue you from his hand. ¹² I will put mercy in his heart so that he may have mercy on you and let you live in your own land. ¹³ But if you say: ‘No, we will no longer live in this land,’ disobeying the voice of Yahweh your God, ¹⁴ and if you say: ‘No, we shall go to Egypt where we shall no more have wars or hear the trumpet call, where we shall not be hungry for bread!’ ¹⁵ Then hear the word of Yahweh, remnant of Judah! Yahweh God of hosts and God of Israel speaks: “If you turn towards Egypt to go there and stay there, ¹⁶ the sword you fear will strike you there in the land of Egypt and famine which you dread will be yours there in Egypt and you will die.

¹⁷ All those who turn towards Egypt to enter and live there will die by sword, famine and pestilence. No one will escape or flee from the misfortune that I will bring upon them.”

¹⁸ This is what Yahweh God of hosts and God of Israel says, “Just as my burning anger was poured out on the people of Jerusalem, so will my fury be poured out on you when you go to Egypt. You will become a curse and a reproach and you will never again see this place.” ¹⁹ That is what Yahweh has foretold, O remnant of Judah. Do not go to Egypt; be quite sure that I have warned you today. ²⁰ You risked your lives when you sent me to Yahweh your God saying: ‘Pray for us to Yahweh our God and tell us all that Yahweh says and we shall do it.’ ²¹ I have told you today though you still do not obey Yahweh your God in all that he told you through me. ²² Be sure of this, it will be by the sword, famine and pestilence that you will die in the place where you want to go and live.”

43 ¹ Jeremiah had hardly finished giving the message of Yahweh to the people – all that Yahweh had sent him to say – ² when Azariah son of Hoshiah and Johanan son of Kareah and all the arrogant men said to Jeremiah, “You are lying! Yahweh our God did not send you to tell us not to go and settle in Egypt. ³ No, Baruch son of Neriah is prompting you to hand us over to the Chaldeans either to be killed or deported to Babylon!”

⁴ So neither Johanan son of Kareah nor the army officers nor the people heeded Yahweh’s command to stay in the land of Judah. ⁵ Instead Johanan and the army officers led away the remnant of the Jews who had returned to the land of Judah from the nations where they had been driven. ⁶ They also led away the men, women, children and the royal princesses – all those that Nebuzaradan, commander of the bodyguard, had left in the care of Gedaliah, son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, with Jeremiah, the prophet and Baruch, son of Neriah. ⁷ So in defiance of Yahweh’s order they entered Egypt and arrived at Tahpanhes.

Jeremiah foretells the invasion of Egypt

⁸ There at Tahpanhes the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah: “While the Jews are watching you, ⁹ take some large stones and bury them in clay in the brick terrace at the entrance to Pharaoh’s house at Tahpanhes ¹⁰ and then say to them: This is what Yahweh God of hosts and God of Israel says: I am sending for my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and he will set his throne over these stones that I have hidden here and spread a royal canopy. ¹¹ He shall come and strike the land of Egypt bringing death to

2K
25:26

those destined to die, captivity for those destined to be taken captive, sword for those destined for the sword. ¹² He will set fire to the temples of the Egyptian gods; these gods will be burned or carried away. As a shepherd wraps himself in a cloak, so will the king of Babylon wrap the land of Egypt about himself and depart in safety. ¹³ He will break the sacred pillars at Heliopolis and burn the temples of the gods in Egypt.”

Jeremiah's last warnings

44 ¹ A word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews living in Egypt especially in the cities of Migdal, Tahpanhes and Memphis, as well as in the territory of Patros: ² “You have seen all the disaster that I brought on Jerusalem and the towns of Judah. ³ These are no more than ruins without inhabitants because of the evil they have done. They have provoked my anger by offering incense to foreign gods that neither they nor their fathers knew.

⁴ I sent them my servants the prophets time and time again to tell them: ‘Do not do this abominable thing that I detest!’ ⁵ But they did not listen or pay attention; they did not turn away from their evil ways or give up worshiping strange gods. ⁶ Then the fury of my anger was loosed and blazed in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem making them the desolate ruins they are today.

⁷ And now Yahweh the God of hosts and the God of Israel asks you: Why do you bring such great harm on yourselves? Because of your deeds every man, woman, child and infant will be taken from Judah and you will be left without a remnant. ⁸ Why do you provoke my anger with the work of your hands? Why do you worship foreign gods in Egypt where you came to live? Surely you will decrease in number and be a curse and an object of reproach among all the nations? ⁹ Have you forgotten the wickedness of your fathers and the misdeeds of the kings of Judah and its princes, and the evil behavior of your wives in the land of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem?

¹⁰ So far they have had no contrition and have not followed my law and my decrees that I set before you and your ancestors.”

¹¹ Because of this Yahweh God of hosts and God of Israel warns you, “I am turning my face away from you to bring disaster on you and to completely destroy Judah. ¹² The remnant of Judah that chose to enter Egypt and live there will all perish. They will be destroyed by the sword and famine and become an object of horror and cursing, of condemnation and reproach. ¹³ I will punish those in Egypt as I punished Jerusalem with the sword, famine and pestilence. ¹⁴ None of the remnant of Judah that came to Egypt will

escape or flee, and return to Judah where you long to go and live.”

¹⁵ Then all the men who knew their wives were offering incense to foreign gods and all the women, a great assembly, replied to Jeremiah in a louder voice. ¹⁶ “As for what you say in the name of Yahweh we will not listen; ¹⁷ we want to do all that we said we wanted to do: burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out wine to her as we did, we and our fathers, our kings and princes in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem. Then we had our fill of bread and were prosperous and free from misfortune. ¹⁸ But since we stopped burning incense to the queen of heaven we have been in need of everything and have perished by the sword and famine.” ¹⁹ And the women added, “When we offered incense and poured libations to the queen of heaven, didn’t our husbands know that we made sacrificial cakes decorated with her image?”

²⁰ Jeremiah then answered all the people, men and women, who had told him this: ²¹ “Is it not better that Yahweh remembered the incense you burned in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, you, your fathers, your kings, princes, and all the people?

Do you think it slipped his memory? ²² Yahweh could no longer bear the sight of your evil and abominable deeds. That is why your land has become the desolate waste that it is today!

²³ All the misfortune that you are suffering today has happened because you burned incense and sinned against Yahweh, by not obeying him or following his law, his instructions and his commands.”

²⁴ Jeremiah then addressed all the people especially the women, “Listen to Yahweh’s message: ²⁵ This is what Yahweh the God of hosts and the God of Israel says: You and your wives think that what you say with your lips becomes an obligation you must fulfill. You say: ‘We are bound to keep the vows we have made to burn incense and pour out wine to the queen of heaven.’ Go ahead! Fulfill your vows and do what you promised! ²⁶ Nevertheless listen, all you Jews living in Egypt, listen to what Yahweh says to you: By my own great Name I swear – word of Yahweh – that throughout Egypt no one from Judah will invoke my Name; no one will be left to say: ‘As the Lord Yahweh lives.’ ²⁷ I am watching over them but not for their good. All the people of Judah in Egypt will perish by the sword and famine until they are wiped out. ²⁸ Only a few will escape the sword and return from Egypt to Judah; and the remnant who came to settle in Egypt will understand whose word comes true, theirs or mine! ²⁹ And this is the sign that I will punish you in this place, says Yahweh, that you may know

7:18
Hos
2:7
1Mac
1:11

Is
11:11
Ezk
6:8

that my threatening words to you will be fulfilled: ³⁰I will hand over the Pharaoh Hophra, king of Egypt to his enemies who want to slay him, just as I let Zedekiah, king of Judah, be taken by his adversary, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, who was determined to kill him.

^{32:12}
^{36:4-}
¹⁸
^{43:3} **45** ¹These are the words of Jeremiah the prophet to Baruch, son of Neriah who wrote on a scroll what Jeremiah dictated. It

was in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josias king of Judah when he said ²“There is a word of Yahweh for you, Baruch. Why do you complain: ³‘Alas for me! I am weary of sighing and I find no rest!’ ⁴Yahweh says: ‘When I am knocking down what I have built and pulling up what I planted, ⁵why do you want great things for yourself? Don’t look for them! Yet, though I am about to send disaster on everyone – word of Yahweh – you will be safe wherever you go.”

Lm
5:5
39:18

PROPHECIES AGAINST FOREIGN NATIONS

Against Egypt

46 ¹These are Yahweh’s words addressed to the prophet Jeremiah concerning the nations.

²Concerning Egypt, this is the message against the army of Pharaoh Neco, king of Egypt, which was defeated at Carchemish on the Euphrates by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah:

³“Prepare shield and buckler,
and march to battle!

⁴Harness the horses.

Into your saddles, horsemen!

To your ranks, with your helmets on!

Polish your spears!

Put on your breastplates!

⁵But what do I see?

With broken ranks they fall back; their warriors are routed.

They flee headlong without looking back, as terrors explode on every side.

⁶The swift cannot flee,
nor the hero escape.

In the north by the Euphrates,
they stumble and fall.

⁷Who is this surging forward like the Nile,
like rivers of billowing waters?

⁸Egypt surges like the Nile,
like rivers of billowing waters.

She says, ‘I will rise and flood the earth;
I will sweep cities and their people away.’

⁹Charge, horses!

Drive madly, charioteers!

March on, warriors –

men of Cush and Put, with your shields,
men of Lydia, with your bows.

¹⁰This is the day of Yahweh God of hosts,
a day of vengeance on his foes.

The sword devours, drunk with blood;
for Yahweh Sabaoth holds a sacrifice
in the north country by the Euphrates.

¹¹Go up to Gilead in search of balm,
virgin daughter of Egypt.

You have taken medicines in vain,
but for you there is no healing.

¹²The nations have heard of your shame,
the earth is filled with your cries;
warrior has stumbled against warrior,
and both have fallen together.”

Invasion of Egypt

¹³This is the message Yahweh gave to the prophet Jeremiah about the coming of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, who was to attack Egypt:

¹⁴“Announce this in Egypt, and proclaim it in Migdol, Memphis and Tahpanhes. Say to them:

Take your posts; prepare for the worst!
The sword has devoured your neighbors.

¹⁵Why has Apis fled?

Your black bull god did not make a stand!
Why? Because Yahweh thrust him down

¹⁶and caused him to stumble and fall.

Then they said to each other:

‘Get up, let us go back to our people,
to the land of our birth,
away from the devouring sword.’

¹⁷Pharaoh, king of Egypt, will be called
‘The noisy one who lets his chance slip by.’

¹⁸As surely as I live – says the King
whose name is Yahweh Sabaoth –
one will come who is like Tabor,
like Carmel above the sea.

¹⁹Pack your belongings ready for exile,
you who live in Egypt,
for Memphis will be laid waste,
without inhabitants and desolate.

Is
30:7

Ezk
12:3

• **46.1** In Jeremiah as well as in the other prophets, we can read prophecies against foreign nations. The prophets lived in a specific time and their mission was to spread a new breed of people, more lucid, more responsible, and with a more interior faith, in a world which was falling apart. While the prestigious civilizations of

Egypt and Babylon inhibited people and did not allow them to discover new values, the individualism of small nations led them to disappear. It was not Israel alone that had to pass through death, but all peoples; however, only Israel would rise up for a much greater destiny.

²⁰ Egypt is a beautiful heifer,
but a gadfly from the north has come upon
her.

²¹ The mercenaries in her ranks
are like fattened calves;
but they too have fled
failing to stand their ground,
for the day of their calamity has come,
the time of their punishment.

²² She makes a sound like a fleeing ser-
pent

as her enemies advance in force,
coming against her with axes,
like loggers cutting down trees.

²³ Dense though her forest be,
they will raze it – says Yahweh.
They are beyond number,
more numerous than locusts.

²⁴ The daughter of Egypt will be abased,
handed over to the people of the north.”

²⁵ Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel, has
said: “I will punish Amon of Thebes, and
Egypt with her gods and kings, Pharaoh and
those who trust in him. ²⁶ I will hand them over
to those who seek their lives, to Nebuchad-
nezzar, king of Babylon, and his ministers.
Later, however, Egypt will be inhabited again
as in times past – it is Yahweh who says so.

²⁷ But fear not, my servant Jacob; be not
dismayed, O Israel. I will deliver you from a
distant land, your descendants from their
place of exile. Jacob will again find rest, and
no one will make him afraid.

²⁸ Fear not, Jacob my servant, for I am
with you – Yahweh speaks – I will make an
end of the nations among which I scattered
you, but I will spare you. I will discipline you,
though, with justice; I will not let you go
unpunished.

Against the Philistines

47 ¹ This is Yahweh’s word that came to
the prophet Jeremiah concerning the
Philistines before Pharaoh attacked Gaza.
² Thus says Yahweh:

“Look, waters rise from the north;
soon they will become a raging flood
overflowing the land and all it contains,
the towns and their inhabitants.
All dwellers in the land will wail

³ at the sound of the hooves of stamping
steeds,
the rattle of chariots, the rumbling of
wheels.

Parents forget their children,
as their hands fall limp.

⁴ The day of ruin has come upon the
Philistines;

Tyre and Sidon, the last of their allies, are
cut off from them.

Yahweh is set to destroy the Philistines,
the remnant from the coasts of Caphtor.

⁵ Gaza is shaved bald,
Ashkelon has perished.
O remnant in the valley,
how long will you gash yourselves?

⁶ O sword of Yahweh,
how long before you rest?
Return to your scabbard;
stop and keep still!

⁷ But how can it rest,
when it is Yahweh who commanded it
to attack Ashkelon and the seacoast?”

Against Moab

48 ¹ Concerning Moab. Yahweh the God of
Israel, says this:

“Woe to Nebo, for it is laid waste.
Kiriathaim is captured and disgraced;
the fortress is shattered and abased.

² No more will Moab be praised;
men in Heshbon are plotting her downfall:
‘Let us put an end to that nation!’

You, too, Madmen, will be subdued;
behind you stalks the sword.

³ Listen, a cry from Horonaim –
a cry of ruin and destruction!

⁴ Moab is destroyed;
her cry is heard as far as Zoar.

⁵ Her little ones go up the way to Lihit,
weeping bitterly as they make the ascent.

On the descent to Horonaim
the cry of destruction is still heard.

⁶ Flee, run for your lives,
like the wild asses in the desert.

⁷ Since you trusted in your deeds and
riches,

you also will be captured.
Chemosh will go into exile,
together with her priests and officials.

⁸ Upon every city the destroyer comes,
and not a single city escapes.

The valley is despoiled,
the plain plundered,
as Yahweh has declared.

⁹ Bury Moab for she has perished!
Her cities will become desolate,
with no inhabitant left.

¹⁰ A curse be on him who is lax in per-
forming the work of Yahweh! A curse be on
him who holds back his sword from shedding
blood!

¹¹ From his youth Moab has lived at ease
resting complacently upon lees,
never having gone into exile,
never having been decanted;
so she kept her own flavor as wine,
her aroma remained the same.

¹² And so the day will come – Yahweh says
– when I will send decanters to her. They will
empty her flasks and break her jars. ¹³ Then
Moab will be ashamed of Chemosh, as Israel
has been ashamed of Bethel, in which they
put their trust.

¹⁴ How can you say, ‘We are heroes and

valiant men of war?' ¹⁵ Moab will be destroyed, her towns shattered; her finest young men will be slaughtered – it is the King who speaks, whose name is Yahweh Sabaoth.

¹⁶ Moab's ruin is near at hand;
her downfall comes at top speed.

¹⁷ All you her neighbors, mourn for her,
all you who knew her well;
say, "How the mighty scepter is broken,
the glorious rod!"

¹⁸ Come down from glory,
sit on the parched ground,
all you who dwell in Dibon;
Moab's destroyer has come against you,
he has destroyed your stronghold.

¹⁹ Stand by the way and watch closely,
you who dwell in Aroer;
ask the men who flee, the women who
escape,
ask them what has happened.

²⁰ Moab is shamed, oh, yes, destroyed;
howl and cry out for her.
Announce it by the Arnon
that Moab is ruined.

²¹ Judgment has come on the tableland:
on Holon, Jahzah and Mephaath, ²² on Dibon,
Nebo and Bethdiblahaim, ²³ on Kiriathaim,
Bethgamul and Bethmeon, ²⁴ on Kerioth and
Bozrah, on all the cities of Moab, far and near.
²⁵ The horn of Moab is cut off and her arm
broken – it is Yahweh who speaks.

²⁶ Make her drunk! Because she magnified
herself against Yahweh, Moab will wallow in
her vomit and become a laughingstock in
turn. ²⁷ Was not Israel a laughingstock to you?
Was she found among thieves, that whenever
you speak of her you wag your head?

²⁸ Leave the cities and dwell in the rocky
cliffs,

O inhabitants of Moab.

Learn from the dove that makes its nest
out of reach on the edge of a cliff.

²⁹ We have heard of the pride of Moab,
of her loftiness and arrogance,
of the haughtiness of her heart.

³⁰ Yahweh says: I know her insolence;
her words are false,
her deeds are vain.

³¹ And so I wail for Moab;
for the whole of Moab I moan;
for the people of Kir-heres I mourn.

³² O vineyard of Sibmah,
I weep for you more than for Jazer.
Your branches spread as far as the sea,
all the way to the sea of Jazer.

The destroyer has fallen
on your harvest and your vintage.

³³ Jubilation is at an end
in the fruit gardens of Moab;
the vintage shout of joy is not heard,
for I have drained the wine from the wine
vats.

³⁴ The cry of Heshbon and Elealeh is heard
as far as Jahaz. From Zoar to Horonaim and
Eglathshelishiyah, their lament is heard, for
even the waters of Nimrim have become
desolate.

³⁵ Yahweh says: I will bring to an end any
one in Moab who offers sacrifice on the high
place and burns incense to his gods.

³⁶ And that is why my heart, like a flute, ^{Is}
sobs for Moab, moans for the people of Kir- ^{16:11}
heres whose accumulated riches have all
perished. ³⁷ Every head is shorn, every beard
cut off; gashes are on their hands, sackcloth
covers their loins. ³⁸ There is nothing but
lamentation on all the housetops and in the
public squares of Moab, for I have shattered
her like a vessel that no one wants – says
Yahweh.

³⁹ What terror has seized Moab, what wail-
ing! Oh, how she has turned back in shame!
Moab has become a laughingstock and a
horror to her neighbors.

⁴⁰ For thus says Yahweh: Look, an eagle is ^{Dt}
swooping down, spreading its wings over ^{28:49}
Moab.

⁴¹ The towns will be captured, the strong-
holds seized.

The heart of Moab's warriors on that day
will be like the heart of a woman in travail.

⁴² Moab will be destroyed as a nation be-
cause she defied the Lord.

⁴³ Terror, pit, and snare be upon you, O
people of Moab – says Yahweh.

⁴⁴ He who flees from terror will fall into the ^{Am}
pit; he who climbs out of the pit will be caught ^{5:19}
in the snare; for I will let this happen to Moab
in the year of her punishment – says Yahweh.

⁴⁵ Fugitives stop in the shadow of Hesh- ^{Num}
bon, for a fire has gone from the house of ^{22:28}
Sihon, burning Moab's skull and her ^{Num}
boasters' crown. ^{24:17}

⁴⁶ Woe to you, Moab,
people of Chemosh who suffer calamity!
Your sons are taken into exile,
your daughters into captivity.

⁴⁷ But in the days to come I will restore the ^{46:26}
fortunes of Moab – Yahweh declares."

The judgment on Moab ends here.

Against Ammon

49 ¹ Concerning the Ammonites. Yahweh
says this:

"Has Israel no sons?
Has she no heir?

Why then has Milcom disinherited Gad,
why have his people settled in its cities?

² But the days are coming
– says Yahweh –

when I will sound the battle alarm
against Rabbah of the Ammonites.

It will become a heap of ruins,
its villages destroyed by fire.

Then Israel will dispossess

those who had dispossessed her
– Yahweh says.

³ Wail, Heshbon, for the destroyer
marches!

Howl, inhabitants of Rabbah!
Put on sackcloth, lament,
run to and fro, gashing yourselves;
for Milcom goes into exile,
along with his priests and officials.

⁴ Why boast of your valleys,
your valleys flowing with fruit,
O faithless daughter,
trusting in your riches and saying,
'Who will dare attack me?'

⁵ Look, I will bring terror upon you;
you will be driven away,
everyone making his own way,
with no one to gather the fugitives.

⁶ Yet I will restore the fortunes
of the Ammonites later on.
It is Yahweh Sabaoth who speaks."

Against Edom

⁷ Concerning Edom, this is what Yahweh
says:

"Is there no more wisdom left in Teman?
Has counsel perished from the prudent?
Has their understanding decayed?

⁸ Flee or hide in dark caves,
you inhabitants of Dedan,
for I will bring destruction upon Esau
when I come to punish him.

⁹ If grape pickers worked in your vineyard,
would they not leave gleanings behind?
If thieves came to you at night,
would they not steal only as much as they
want?

Mal
1:3 ¹⁰ But I will strip Esau bare;
his hiding places I will uncover.
His relatives, children and neighbors
will perish, and he will be no more.

¹¹ Leave your widows and orphans behind,
and rest assured I will keep them alive."

25:15-
21
Is
63:6 ¹² For thus says Yahweh: "Even those not
sentenced to drink the cup must drink it. Why
then should you go unpunished? You, too,
shall drink! ¹³ By my own self have I sworn,
says Yahweh: Bozrah shall become an object
of horror and disgrace, a desolation and a
curse. All her towns and cities shall be ruins
forever."

¹⁴ I have received a message from Yahweh,
a herald has been sent among the
nations:

"Assemble! Prepare for battle!
March against these people!

Ob 2 ¹⁵ Look, I will reduce you among the
nations, make you despised among human-
kind.

¹⁶ The terror that you inspire
and your pride have deceived you,
you who live in the crags,
on the rocky heights of the hill.

Though you build your nest as high as the
eagle's,

I will bring you down from there – it is
Yahweh who speaks.

¹⁷ Edom will become a horror, shocking
every passerby who will catch his breath at
the sight of her wounds. ¹⁸ As when Sodom,
Gomorrah, and their neighboring towns were
overthrown, no one shall dwell or visit there –
thus Yahweh proclaims.

¹⁹ As when a lion comes from the thicket of
Jordan to a rich feeding ground, so I, in an
instant, will drive Edom from its land. Whom
will I choose for this task? Who is like me and
can call me to account? What shepherd can
stand against me?

²⁰ Therefore hear Yahweh's plan against
Edom, against those who live in Teman. They
will be dragged away, even the smallest
sheep; their pasture will be destroyed on
account of them.

²¹ The earth will tremble at the sound of
their fall; to the Sea of Reeds their cry will
resound.

²² Look! An eagle will soar and spread its
wings over Bozrah. On that day the heart of
Edom's warriors will pound like the heart of a
woman in labor."

About the Syrian cities

²³ Message concerning Damascus:

"Hamath and Arpad are confused,
having heard bad news.

Their hearts are faint with fear
like the waters of a troubled sea.

²⁴ Damascus has become feeble
and turns to flee in panic,
gripped by anguish and pain,
like a woman in travail.

²⁵ How the renowned city is forsaken,
the city of delight!

²⁶ Her young men will fall in the streets,
her soldiers will be silenced on that day.
Yahweh declares:

²⁷ I will set fire to the walls of Damascus; it
will consume Ben-Hadad's fortresses."

Against the Arabic tribes

²⁸ A message concerning Kedar and the
kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadnezzar
king of Babylon attacked. This is what
Yahweh says:

"Arise and attack Kedar,
destroy the people of the east!

²⁹ Their tents and flocks will be taken
away,

their goods and camels carried off
as men shout, 'Terror on every side!'

³⁰ Flee, dwell in deep caves,
you who live in Hazor – says Yahweh.

For Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has
devised a plot against you.

³¹ Arise and attack a nation at ease,

which lives in confidence,
 a nation that has neither bars nor gates,
 a people that dwells alone complacently.
³² Their camels will become plunder, their
 large herds will be spoils;
 I will scatter to the winds
 those who are in far-off places;
 I will bring disaster
 on them from every side.
³³ Hazor will be a jackal's haunt,
 forever a wasteland
 uninhabited by humans,
 unvisited by anyone."

Against Elam

³⁴ This is the *Word of Yahweh against Elam*, which came to the prophet Jeremiah at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah. ³⁵ Yahweh Sabaoth says this:

"See, I will break the bow of Elam, the mainstay of their might. ³⁶ I will bring the four winds against her from the four quarters of the heavens, and there will be no nation on earth to which Elam's exiles will not be dispersed.

³⁷ I will shatter Elam before their foes, before those who seek their lives. I will bring disaster upon them, even my fierce anger. I will pursue them with the sword until I have made an end of them.

³⁸ I will set my throne in Elam and destroy her king and officials. ³⁹ Yet I will restore the fortunes of Elam in the days to come – says Yahweh."

Against Babylon

Is 21:1-10 **50** ¹ This is the word Yahweh spoke against Babylon and the land of the Chaldeans, through the prophet Jeremiah:

² "Do not hide this, but announce among the nations that Babylon is taken, Bel confounded, Merodach dismayed; her images are put to shame, her idols destroyed.

³ A people from the north marches against her, set to turn her into a wasteland abandoned by both people and beast.

Hos 3:5 ⁴ In those days – declares Yahweh – the people of Israel and Judah will come in tears to seek their God Yahweh.

⁵ Their faces turned toward Zion, they will ask the way to it. They will come and say, 'Let us join ourselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant never to be forgotten.'

⁶ My people were lost sheep misled by their shepherds and left to roam on the mountains. They wandered from hill to hill and lost the way to their fold.

⁷ They were devoured by enemies who chanced upon them and said, 'We have no guilt. This is their due for they sinned against Yahweh, their true shepherd and hope of their ancestors.'

⁸ Flee from Babylon, leave the land of the Chaldeans, be like the rams that lead the flock!

⁹ For I will stir up nations from the north to march against Babylon. Their arrows are like those of skilled warriors, that never return empty-handed; and Babylon will be captured.

¹⁰ Chaldea will be plundered, and the plunderers will be filled.

¹¹ Rejoice as long as you can,
 you plunderers of my inheritance!
 Frolic like heifers threshing grain,
 and neigh like stallions!

¹² But your mother will be disgraced;
 she will be the least of the nations,
 laid waste and a desert.

¹³ Yahweh's fury will leave her desolate,
 an empty solitude, uninhabited.
 Every passerby will be horrified
 at the sight of the wounds of Babylon.

¹⁴ Take your posts around the city,
 all you who bend the bow.

Shoot at her, spare no arrows,
 for great is her iniquity.

¹⁵ Raise the war cry!
 Now she surrenders!

Her walls are torn down, her towers fallen.
 Since this is Yahweh's vengeance,
 take revenge on her;
 do to her as she has done to others.

¹⁶ Cut off the sower from Babylon,
 and the reaper with his sickle at harvest time.

Escape from the oppressor's sword;
 let everyone return to his own people,
 let everyone flee to his own land.

Zec 10:2-3

Gen 19:15
 Is 48:20
 Zec 2:10

• **50.1** Chapters 50 and 51 have the oracles against Babylon: various discourses dealing with the fall of Babylon and the return of the exiles.

You were my hammer (51:20). A century before, Isaiah had seen in Assur the rod with which God would punish the nations. But Assur was destroyed by Babylon which became the hammer with which Yahweh was beating the nations and destroying them. After blindly fulfilling God's will against Judah, Babylon would also head towards its own collapse: fifty years later, it would be destroyed by the Persians.

Jeremiah urges us not to fear the great powers of today's world. In the past, great nations

emerged and tried to destroy Christianity which had become complacent and asleep; revolutions and persecutions destroyed the fragile structures in which Christians had placed their trust. But before the next generation, another giant appears and overcomes the first, while the Church, seemingly despoiled and poorer, rises with renewed strength.

When we finish reading Jeremiah, we can turn to the 40th chapter of Isaiah: the small land of Judah will come back to life while the great empires of Assyria and Babylon will leave behind nothing but ruins.

¹⁷ Israel was a straying sheep which lions pursued. First to devour her was the Assyrian; and the last to crush her bones was Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

¹⁸ Therefore Yahweh, God of Israel, says: I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as once I punished the king of Assyria.

¹⁹ But I will return Israel to her fold, to feed on Bashan and Carmel and on Mount Ephraim and Gilead, till she has her fill.

²⁰ In those days, Yahweh says, a search will be made for Israel's guilt, but none will be found, and for the sins of Judah, and none will be found; for I will forgive the remnant whose lives I have spared.

²¹ Attack the land of Merathaim, and those who live in Pekod; pursue and kill them, says Yahweh; do all as I have commanded. ²² Battle alarm is in the land, the alarm of great destruction. ²³ How broken and shattered is the hammer of the whole earth! How horrifying has Babylon become among the nations!

²⁴ You ensnared yourself, O Babylon, and were caught before you knew it; you were found out and seized because you challenged Yahweh. ²⁵ Yahweh has opened his armory, brought out the arms of his fury, for Yahweh Sabaoth has work to do in the land of Chaldea.

²⁶ Come against her from every side; break open her granaries; pile her up like heaps of grain, destroy her, leaving no remnant. ²⁷ Slay all her oxen, down to the slaughterhouse with them! Woe to them! Their day has come, the time for their chastisement.

²⁸ Listen! Fugitives and refugees from the land of Babylon have come to announce in Zion Yahweh's vengeance for his temple. ²⁹ Surround Babylon with archers, and leave her no way of escape. Repay her as her deeds deserve; do to her as she has done to others. Give her the due for her defiance of Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel.

³⁰ That day her warriors and young men as well will fall and lie in silence. ³¹ I am against you, arrogant one! It is Yahweh Sabaoth who speaks – the time to punish you has come.

³² The arrogant one will stumble; no one will help her up. In her towns I will kindle a fire that will consume everything around.

³³ Thus says Yahweh Sabaoth: The people of Israel are oppressed, and the people of Judah as well, for their captors hold them fast and refuse to let them go. ³⁴ But strong is their avenger, Yahweh Sabaoth is his name. He will fight for their cause and succeed; he will give them rest in their land, but unrest to those who live in Babylon.

³⁵ A sword upon the Chaldeans, upon the people of Babylon, her princes and sages!

³⁶ A sword upon her false prophets: may they lose their wits! A sword upon her warriors:

may they tremble in terror! ³⁷ A sword upon her mercenaries: may they become women!

A sword upon her treasures: may they be plundered! ³⁸ A sword upon her waters: may they dry up! For hers is a land of idols that go mad with terrors.

³⁹ So, desert beasts will live there; there will the owl and ostrich dwell. From generation to generation, the land will never be inhabited again. ⁴⁰ As when God overturned Sodom and Gomorrah with their neighbors, nobody will live there any more, no one will make his home there again.

⁴¹ A strong people is coming from the north, a mighty nation. Stirred up from the far ends of the earth ⁴² are men armed with bows and spears who are cruel and without mercy. They sound like the roaring sea as they ride on galloping steeds. They come in battle formation against you, daughter of Babylon.

⁴³ Your king has heard news of them, and his hands hang limp. Anguish has gripped him, and pain as that of a woman in travail.

⁴⁴ As a lion comes from the thicket of Jordan to a rich feeding ground, so I, in an instant, will drive them off, and whom I choose I will establish there. For who is like me? And who can call me to account? What shepherd can stand against me?

⁴⁵ Therefore hear Yahweh's plans against Babylon, against the land of the Chaldeans: they will be dragged away, even the smallest sheep, their pasture will be destroyed on account of them.

⁴⁶ The earth quakes at the cry 'Babylon is captured!' Among the nations the outcry is heard."

The Lord against Babylon

51 ¹ This is what Yahweh says: "I will stir up a devastating wind against Babylon and the Chaldeans.

² I will send foreigners to Babylon to winnow her and lay waste her land. On the day of her affliction they will besiege her from all sides.

³ Let not her archers bend their bows, let them not stand up in their armor. Spare not her young men; destroy the host of her warriors.

⁴ They will fall fatally wounded in the streets of Babylon.

⁵ For Israel and Judah have not been forgotten by their God, Yahweh Sabaoth, though their land is guilt-ridden before the Holy One of Israel.

⁶ Save your lives, flee from Babylon! Partake not of her punishment; this is a time of Yahweh's vengeance, a time of his recompense to her.

⁷ Babylon was a golden cup in Yahweh's hand, a cup which made the whole earth drunk.

Is
13:21

49:19

Is
34:7

Rev
18:4

Is
44:25

Ps
75:9
Rev
14:8

The nations drank her wine,
and they have become mad.

⁸ Babylon's fall is sudden.
Wail for her, wail!

Bring balm for her wounds,
if she could yet be healed.

Rev 18:5 ⁹ 'We have tried to heal Babylon,
but she is beyond healing.

Let us go back, each to his own land,
and leave her to her judgment
which rises up to heaven.'

¹⁰ Yahweh has defended our rights,
come, let us declare in Zion
what our God Yahweh has done.

¹¹ Sharpen the arrows,
take up the shields!

Yahweh has aroused Media's kings
in his resolve to destroy Babylon.

This is Yahweh's vengeance,
vengeance for his temple.

¹² Raise a flag on the walls of Babylon,
and make the watch strong.

Post guards, prepare an ambush!

Yahweh will carry out his purpose, his
words against the people of Babylon.

Nh 2:14 ¹³ You who dwell by mighty waters,
Rev you who are rich in treasures,
17:1, 15 this is your end; the time

for you to be cut off has come.

¹⁴ Yahweh Sabaoth has sworn:
Surely I will fill you with troops,
thick as a swarm of locusts;

they will exult over you and raise the
vintage shout.

Hymn

Is 45:18 ¹⁵ He made the earth by his power,
founded the world by his wisdom,
spread out the sky by his discernment.

Job 38:34 ¹⁶ When he thunders, the heaven roars;
from the earth he makes clouds rise;
he sends lightning with the rain,
and from his vaults brings out the wind.

¹⁷ Everyone stand stupefied at this;
artisans blush, for the idols they made
have no life and are a fraud.

¹⁸ They are worthless, ridiculous;
when judgment comes they will perish.

Dt 32:9 ¹⁹ The Portion of Jacob is not like them,
for he is the creator of all;
Yahweh Sabaoth is his name,
and his heritage is Israel.

The hammer of Yahweh

²⁰ You were my hammer, my weapon of
war. With you I wrecked nations, with you I
demolished kingdoms.

²¹ With you I wrecked horse and rider,
chariot and charioteer. ²² With you I wrecked
man and woman, youth and aged, young
man and maiden.

²³ With you I wrecked shepherd and flock,
farmer and draft animal, rulers and officials.

²⁴ But now I will repay Babylon and those

who dwell in Chaldea for the wrong they did
to Zion. ²⁵ I am against you, ravaging moun-
tain, ravager of the whole earth! It is Yahweh
who speaks.

I will lay my hands on you, roll you down
over the crags, and make you a parched,
eroded mountain. ²⁶ No cornerstone will be
taken from you, or foundation stone; forever
shall you be a ruins, Yahweh says.

²⁷ Raise a signal on the earth, among the
nations blow the trumpet. Prepare the nations
for war, summon the kingdoms to battle
Ararat, Minni and Ashkenaz. Marshal a great
force against her; bring up the cavalry,
swarming and bristling.

²⁸ Prepare the nations to battle her, the
Medes with their kings, their governors and
officials, all the countries they rule.

²⁹ The earth trembles and writhes as
Yahweh carries out his process of turning the
land of Babylon into a desert where no one
lives. ³⁰ Her warriors have ceased to fight;
they cower in their strongholds. Their
strength is dried up, their homes are burned
and their gates broken.

³¹ One after another couriers run to the
king, bringing news that his entire city is
fallen: ³² The fords have been seized, the for-
tresses set afire, and all the warriors terrified.
³³ Yahweh Sabaoth, God of Israel, says:
Babylon is like a threshing floor at the time it
is trodden. A little while, and the time of the
harvest grain will come for her."

³⁴ The people of Zion said: 'Nebuchadnez-
zar, king of Babylon, has consumed and
routed me. He has left me as an empty vessel.
Like a dragon he has swallowed me, and filled
his belly; he cast me out of my Eden.

³⁵ May the violence done to my flesh be Mt 27:25
upon Babylon, says the city of Zion. May my
blood be upon the Chaldeans,' says Jerusa-
lem.

³⁶ Yahweh says to his people: "See now, I Rev 16:12
defend your cause and avenge you. I will dry
up her sea and drain her springs. ³⁷ Babylon
shall become a heap of ruins, a haunt of
jackals, an object of horror and derision, a
place where no one lives.

³⁸ Her people will roar like lions; they will
growl like lion cubs. ³⁹ But while they are
feverish, I will prepare a drink for them and
make them drunk till they grow drowsy and
fall into eternal sleep, never to wake up again.

⁴⁰ I will bring them down like lambs to the
slaughter, like goats and rams.

⁴¹ How has Babylon been seized, the glory
of the world taken captive! How has Babylon
become a horror among nations!

⁴² The sea has risen over Babylon and
covered her with its roaring waves. ⁴³ Her
cities have become desolate, a land of
drought and a desert, a land where no one
dwells, a land through which no one travels.

⁴⁴ I will punish Bel in Babylon and make him belch out what he devoured. No longer will nations stream to him. The wall of Babylon has fallen.

^{Mt 24:8} ⁴⁵ My people, come out of her! Run for your lives! Run from Yahweh's fierce anger. ⁴⁶ Do not lose heart or be afraid when rumors are heard, when rumors come year after year, rumors of violence and disaster, intrigues of ruler against ruler.

⁴⁷ The time will surely come when I will punish the idols of Babylon; her land will be put to shame when all around her lie slain.

^{Rev 18:20} ⁴⁸ Then heaven and earth and all therein will rejoice over Babylon, for out of the north the destroyers will come to attack her – it is Yahweh who speaks.

⁴⁹ Babylon must fall for the slain of Israel, just as the slain of all the earth have fallen because of Babylon.

^{Ps 137:5} ⁵⁰ You who have escaped the sword, leave and do not linger. Remember Yahweh from this far country and think of Jerusalem:

^{Ps 79:1} ⁵¹ 'We have been put to shame, dishonor has covered our faces; because aliens have entered the holy places of Yahweh's house.'

⁵² But days will come – Yahweh declares – when I will punish her idols, the wounded will groan all over her land. ⁵³ Though Babylon mount skyward, though she fortify her heights, the mere threat of the destroyers I send is enough to make her terrified.

⁵⁴ Listen! Loud cries from Babylon, the sound of terrible destruction from the land of the Chaldeans! ⁵⁵ That is Yahweh laying waste the city, silencing her monstrous din. Well may her waves roar and their clamor be heard afar! ⁵⁶ Upon Babylon the destroyer has come; her warriors are captured, their bows are broken.

For Yahweh is a God who rewards, who repays her enemies in full. ⁵⁷ I will make her rulers and sages drunk, her governors, her officers and warriors; they will sleep the sleep of death and never awake, says the King whose name is Yahweh Sabaoth.

^{Hb 2:13} ⁵⁸ Yahweh Sabaoth says this: The wide ramparts of Babylon will be razed to the ground, her high gates burned down. The people's labor will go to naught; the nation's toil will end in fire."

The written oracle thrown into the river

⁵⁹ This is the message Jeremiah gave to Seraiah, son of Neriah who is Mahseiah's son, when he went to Babylon at the command of Zedekiah, who was then in the fourth year of his reign as king of Judah.

⁶⁰ Jeremiah had written on a scroll the entire disaster that was to befall

Babylon – all these words recorded here.

⁶¹ Jeremiah then said to Seraiah, "When you get to Babylon, see that you read all these words aloud. ⁶² Then say: 'Yahweh, you yourself have proclaimed that this place will be destroyed, that neither people nor beast will ever live here again, for it will remain 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 and rise no more because of the disaster I will bring upon her."

Here end the words of Jeremiah.

The fall of Jerusalem

52 ¹ Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother, Hamutal by name, was the daughter of Jeremiah from Libnah.

² He did evil in the sight of Yahweh just as Jehoiakim had done. ³ All that happened in Jerusalem and Judah came about because of Yahweh's anger until the day when he drove them out of his sight.

Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon; ⁴ so in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched with his entire army and laid siege to Jerusalem. They camped outside the city and built siege works all around it. ⁵ The city was under siege up to the eleventh year of Zedekiah.

⁶ On the ninth day of the fourth month famine became a serious problem in the city, and throughout the land there was no bread for the people. ⁷ When the city was opened by a breach in the wall the Judean army fled. They left the city by night through the gate between the two walls near the king's garden. While the Chaldeans were still surrounding the city they fled towards the Arabah. ⁸ The Chaldeans followed in hot pursuit of King Zedekiah. They caught up with him in the plains of Jericho. All his army deserted and scattered.

⁹ The Chaldeans seized the king and led him away to Riblah in the territory of Hamath and there the king of Babylon passed sentence on him. There at Riblah, the king of Babylon slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah in his presence and also killed all the officials of Judah. ¹⁰ He then put out the eyes of Zedekiah, bound him with a double bronze chain and took him to Babylon. ¹¹ He was

Rev
18:21

2K
24:18

^{Ezk 12:13} imprisoned there in the house of the guards until the day of his death.

¹² On the tenth day of the fifth month in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan commander of the bodyguard and servant of the king of Babylon, entered Jerusalem and set fire to the House of Yahweh and the royal palace as well as to all the houses in Jerusalem. ¹³ He also burned every important building. ¹⁴ The Chaldean army under the commander of the bodyguard completely demolished all the walls around Jerusalem.

¹⁵ Nebuzaradan commander of the bodyguard carried off into exile some of the poorest among the people, the remnant of Jews left in the city, and those who had deserted to the king of Babylon and the remainder of the artisans. ¹⁶ But Nebuzaradan left behind those among the very poor who were capable of working in vineyards and cultivating the soil.

¹⁷ The Chaldeans broke into pieces the bronze pillars, the stands and the bronze Sea in the House of Yahweh and carried off all this bronze to Babylon.

¹⁸ They also took the pots, shovels, wick trimmers, the spoons and all the bronze articles used in the temple service. ¹⁹ The commander of the bodyguard took the basins, censers, sprinkling bowls, pots, lampstands, ladles and bowls – all that was made of gold or silver.

²⁰ The two pillars, the Sea and the twelve bronze bulls underneath it, the movable stands which King Solomon had made for the House of Yahweh – all this bronze was of an immeasurable weight.

²¹ The pillars were each eighteen cubits high with a circumference of twelve cubits. Each had a thickness of four fingers and was hollow. ²² On the top of each pillar was a

bronze capital five cubits high and above this and around the capital was filigree work with pomegranates in bronze. ²³ Ninety-six pomegranates hung down and in all the filigree decoration there was a total of a hundred pomegranates.

²⁴ The commander of the bodyguard took captive Seraiah the chief priest and Zephaniah the next priest in rank, as well as three doorkeepers.

²⁵ He also took from those in the city a eunuch in command of the fighting men, seven personal advisers to the king who were discovered in the city, ²⁶ the commander's secretary responsible for military conscription and sixty of his men who were found in the city. Nebuzaradan took all these away to the king of Babylon at Riblah. ²⁷ There at Riblah in the territory of Hamath the king of Babylon had them put to death. So Judah was taken captive and taken away from its own land.

²⁸ This is the number of the population deported by Nebuchadnezzar: in the seventh year 3,023 Jews; ²⁹ in the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar 832 people from Jerusalem; ³⁰ in his 23rd year 745 Jews deported by Nebuzaradan commander of the bodyguard – in all 4,600 people.

³¹ On the 25th day of the 12th month in the 37th year of the exile of Jehoiakin king of Judah, Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the year he came to the throne pardoned Jehoiakin king of Judah and released him from prison. ³² He spoke kindly to him and gave him more honorable treatment than the other kings who were with him in Babylon. ³³ Jehoiakin put aside his prisoner's garment and for the rest of his life ate at the king's table.

³⁴ Day by day for as long as he lived he was maintained by the king of Babylon.

^{2K 25:30}