

Jeremiah's Prophecy Concerning the Nations: Elam (c. 597–596 BC)

Jeremiah 49:34–39

34 The word of Yahweh that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning Elam at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah the king of Judah, saying,

35 “Thus says Yahweh of hosts:

‘Look, I *am* going to break the bow of Elam,
the first and best of their might.

36 And I will bring to Elam four winds,
from the four corners of heaven,
and I will scatter them to all these winds,
and there will not be a nation
where the scattered people of Elam will not go.

37 So I will shatter Elam before their enemies,
and before the seekers of their life.
And I will bring disaster upon them,
my burning anger,’ declares Yahweh.
‘And I will send after them the sword
until I have destroyed them.

38 And I will set my throne in Elam
and I will destroy from there king and officials,’ declares Yahweh.

39 ‘And then in the last of the days
I will restore the fortunes of Elam,’ declares Yahweh.”

Jeremiah's Prophecy Concerning the Nations: Babylon's Doom (c. 597–596 BC)

Jeremiah 50

Announcement of Babylon's Doom

1 The word that Yahweh spoke concerning Babylon, concerning the land of *the* Chaldeans, by the hand of Jeremiah the prophet:

2 “Declare among the nations and proclaim,
and lift up a banner.
Proclaim, you must not conceal *it*.
Say, ‘Babylon is captured,
Bel is ashamed,
Merodach is filled with terror,
her idols are ashamed,
her idols are filled with terror.

3 For a nation will come up against her from *the* north.
It will make her land as a horror,
and an inhabitant will not be in her.
From humans to animals they *all* will wander *off*.
They will go *away*.

4 In those days and in that time,” declares Yahweh,
“the people of Israel will come,
they and the people of Judah together.
Weeping as they go, they will go,
and Yahweh their God they will seek.

5 They will ask *the* way to Zion,
turning their faces there.
They will come and join themselves to Yahweh
by an everlasting covenant *that* will not be forgotten.

6 My people have become lost sheep,
their shepherds have caused them to go astray.
They led them away *to the* mountains.
From mountain to hill they have gone,
they have forgotten their resting place.

7 All *those who* found them have devoured them.

And their foes have said, ‘We are not guilty,
because they have sinned against Yahweh, the true pasture,
even Yahweh, the hope of their ancestors.’

- 8 Flee from the midst of Babylon,
and from the land of *the* Chaldeans.
Go out and be like he-goats
before *the* flock.
- 9 For look, I *am* going to stir up,
and I *am* going to bring against Babylon
a contingent of great nations
from *the* land of *the* north.
And they will draw up a battle formation against her,
from there she will be captured.
Their arrows *are* like a warrior *who has* achieved success,
he does not return without success.
- 10 And Chaldea will be as booty,
all *those who* plunder her will be satisfied,” declares Yahweh.

Explanation for Its Punishment

- 11 “Though you rejoice, though you exult,
O plunderers of my inheritance,
though you frisk about like a heifer on the grass,
and you neigh like the powerful stallions,
12 your mother will be very ashamed.
She who gave birth to you will be humiliated.
Look, *she will be the* least of *the* nations,
a desert, dry land, and wilderness.
- 13 Because of the anger of Yahweh she will not be inhabited,
but she will be a wasteland, all of her.
Everyone *who* passes by Babylon will be appalled
and will hiss because of all her wounds.
- 14 Draw up a battle formation at Babylon all around,
all those who bend *the* bow, shoot at her.
You must not spare arrows,
for she has sinned against Yahweh.
- 15 Raise a war cry against her on all sides.
She has surrendered.
Her towers have fallen,
her walls are ruined.
For this *is* the vengeance of Yahweh.
Take revenge on her.
As she has done to *others*,
so do to her.
- 16 Cut off *the* sower from Babylon,
and *the* one who uses *the* sickle in *the* time of harvest.
Because of the sword of the oppressor
each one will turn to their people,
and each one will flee to their land.
- 17 Israel *is* a sheep scattered,
lions drove *them* away.
The first who devoured it *was* the king of Assyria,
and now *at* the end Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, gnawed its bones.”

The Restoration of Israel

- 18 Therefore thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel,

“Look, I *am* going to punish the king of Babylon and his land
just as I punished the king of Assyria.

- 19 And I will restore Israel to its pasture,

and it will feed *on* Carmel, and *in* Bashan,
and on the hills of Ephraim, and *in* Gilead
its hunger will be satisfied.

- 20 In those days and at that time," declares Yahweh,
"the guilt of Israel will be sought, but there *is* none,
and the sins of Judah, but they will not be found,
for I will forgive those I left behind.

God's Wrath against Babylon

- 21 To the land of Merathaim,
go up against her,
and against the inhabitants of Pekod,
massacre and destroy them," declares Yahweh,
"and do according to all that I have commanded you.
- 22 *The* sound of battle *is* in the land,
and great destruction.
- 23 How the blacksmith's hammer of all the earth is cut down and broken!
How Babylon has become as a horror among the nations!
- 24 I laid a bird snare for you, and you were caught, *O* Babylon.
But you yourself *did* not know.
You were discovered and seized,
because with Yahweh you measured yourself.
- 25 Yahweh has opened his armory,
and he has brought out the weapons of his wrath,
for it *is* a word for my Lord Yahweh of hosts
in the land of *the* Chaldeans.
- 26 Come against her from *the* end,
open her granaries.
Pile her up like heaps and destroy her.
Let there be no remnant for her.
- 27 Massacre all her bulls,
let them go down to the slaughtering.
Woe to them, for *their* day has come,
the time of their punishment.
- 28 *There is the* sound of fugitives and survivors
from the land of Babylon,
to declare in Zion the vengeance of Yahweh our God,
the vengeance for his temple.
- 29 Summon archers against Babylon,
all those who bend *the* bow.
Encamp all around her,
there must not be for her an escape.
Take revenge on her according to her deeds.
According to all that she has done, *so* do to her.
For against Yahweh she has behaved insolently,
against the Holy One of Israel.
- 30 Therefore her young men will fall in her public squares,
and all her soldiers will perish on that day," declares Yahweh.
- 31 "Look, I *am* against you, *O* arrogant *one*,"
declares Lord Yahweh of hosts,
"for your day has come,
the time *when* I will punish you.
- 32 And *the* arrogant *one* will stumble and fall,
and there is no *one who* raises *him* up.
And I will kindle a fire in his cities,
and it will devour everything around him."

The Desolation of Babylon

- 33 Thus says Yahweh of hosts:

- “The people of Israel *are* oppressed,
and the people of Judah likewise,
for all their captors have seized them,
they refuse to let them go free.
- 34 Their redeemer *is* strong,
his name *is* Yahweh of hosts.
Surely he will plead their case,
in order to make peace *for* the earth,
but to cause unrest to the inhabitants of Babylon.
- 35 A sword against *the* Chaldeans,” declares Yahweh,
“and against the inhabitants of Babylon,
and against her officials,
and against her wise men.
- 36 A sword against the oracle priests,
and they will become foolish.
A sword against her warriors,
and they will be filled with terror.
- 37 A sword against his horses,
and against his chariots,
and against all the foreign troops who *are* in the midst of her,
so that they may become as women.
A sword against her treasures,
so that they may be plundered.
- 38 A drought *will come* against her waters,
and they will dry up,
for it *is* a land of images,
and because of the frightful *objects*, they act like madmen.
- 39 Therefore desert creatures will live *there* with jackals,
and daughters of ostriches will inhabit her.
And she will not be inhabited again forever,
and she will not be dwelt in for all generations.
- 40 As *when* God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah
and their neighbors,” declares Yahweh,
“no one will live there,
and *the* son of humankind will not dwell as an alien in her.

Babylon’s Helplessness

- 41 Look, a people *is* about to come
from *the* north,
and a great nation and many kings are woken up
from *the* remotest part of *the* earth.
- 42 They keep hold of bow and short sword.
They *are* cruel and they have no mercy.
Their sound *is* like the sea, it roars,
and upon horses they ride.
Drawn up for battle as a man for the battle,
against you, O daughter of Babylon.
- 43 The king of Babylon heard their report
and his hands grew slack.
Anxiety has seized him,
fear and pain like the *woman who* gives birth.
- 44 Look, like a lion he comes up from the thickets of the Jordan
against a pastureland by a constantly flowing stream,
so I will chase them away quickly from her,
and I will appoint whoever *is* chosen over her.
For who *is* like me, and who can summon me,
and who *is* this shepherd who can stand before me?
- 45 Therefore hear the plan of Yahweh

that he has planned against Babylon,
and his plans
that he has planned against the land of *the* Chaldeans.
Surely they will drag them away,
the little *ones* of the flock.
Surely he will cause *their* grazing place
to be desolate over them.

- 46 At *the* sound, 'Babylon has been captured,'
the earth will quake,
and a cry for help among the nations
will be heard."

Jeremiah's Prophecy Concerning the Nations: Babylon's Coming Fall (c. 597–596 BC)

Jeremiah 51:1–58

The Lord's Vengeance on Babylon

1 Thus says Yahweh:

"Look, I *am* going to stir up against Babylon
and against the inhabitants of Leb-qamai a destructive wind.

- 2 And I will send winnowers to Babylon,
and they will winnow her,
and they will lay waste her land,
for they will be against her from all sides on *the* day of disaster.
- 3 Let not him who bends the bow shoot his bow,
and let him not rise high in his body armor.
And you must not spare her young men;
destroy her whole army.
- 4 And they will fall slain in the land of *the* Chaldeans,
and pierced through in her streets.
- 5 For neither Israel nor Judah *is* a widower from their God,
from Yahweh of hosts,
though their land is full of guilt
against the Holy One of Israel."
- 6 Flee from the midst of Babylon and save each one his life.
You must not perish because of her guilt.
For this *is the* time of vengeance for Yahweh,
he *will* repay her what is deserved.
- 7 Babylon *was* a cup of gold in the hand of Yahweh,
making drunk all the earth.
The nations drank of her wine.
Therefore *the* nations acted like madmen.
- 8 Suddenly Babylon has fallen and she is shattered.
Wail over her!
Take balm for her wounds,
perhaps she may be healed.
- 9 We tried to heal Babylon, and she was not healed.
Forsake her and let us go each one to his country,
for her judgment has reached to the heavens,
and it has been lifted up to *the* skies.
- 10 Yahweh has brought forth our vindication.
Come and let us make known in Zion the work of Yahweh our God.
- 11 Sharpen the arrows, fill the quivers!
Yahweh has stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes.
Because his plan concerning Babylon *is* to destroy it,
for that is the vengeance of Yahweh,
the vengeance for his temple.
- 12 Against the walls of Babylon raise a banner;
post a strong watch, post watchmen, prepare the ambushes,

for Yahweh has both planned as well as performed what he has spoken concerning the inhabitants of Babylon.

- 13 *O you who* live by mighty waters, rich in treasures,
your end has come, the measure of your life.
- 14 Yahweh of hosts has sworn by himself,
“Surely I will fill you *with* troops like the creeping locusts,
and they will sing over you a war cry.”

A Hymn of Praise to the Lord

- 15 *He is the one who* made *the* earth by his power,
the one who created *the* world by his wisdom,
and by his understanding he stretched out *the* heavens.
- 16 At the giving of his voice
there is a roar of waters in the heavens,
and he causes *the* patches of mist
to go up from *the* end of *the* earth.
He makes lightning for the rain,
and he brings out *the* wind from his storehouses.
- 17 All humankind turns out to be stupid,
without knowledge.
Every goldsmith is put to shame
by *the* divine image.
For his cast image *is* a lie,
and *there is* no breath in them.
- 18 They *are* worthless,
a work of mockery.
At the time of their punishment,
they will perish.
- 19 The portion of Jacob *is* not like these,
for he *is* the creator of everything,
and the tribe of his inheritance.
Yahweh of hosts *is* his name.

God's Power against Enemies

- 20 *He says,* “You *are* a war club for me,
a weapon of battle,
and I smash nations with you,
and I destroy kingdoms with you.
- 21 And I smash *the* horse with you,
and its rider,
and I smash *the* chariot with you,
and its rider.
- 22 And I smash man and woman with you,
and I smash *the* old man and *the* boy with you,
and I smash *the* young man and *the* young woman with you.
- 23 And I smash *the* shepherd and his flock with you,
and I smash *the* farmer and his team with you,
and I smash *the* governors and *the* officials with you.
- 24 And I will repay Babylon,
and all the inhabitants of Chaldea,
all their wickedness that they have done in Zion
before your eyes,” declares Yahweh.
- 25 “Look, I *am* against you,
O mountain of the destruction,” declares Yahweh,
“*the one* that destroys the whole earth.
And I will stretch out my hand against you,
and I will roll you down from the cliffs,
and I will make you as a mountain burned away.
- 26 They will not take from you

a stone for a corner,
and a stone for a foundation,
for you will be an everlasting desolation,” declares Yahweh.

Nations Summoned against Babylon

- 27 Raise a banner in the land;
blow a horn among the nations;
prepare for holy war against her;
summon *the* nations against her,
the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz;
summon against her an official;
bring up horses like bristling creeping locusts.
- 28 Prepare *the* nations for holy war against her,
the kings of the Medes,
with their governors and all their officials,
and every land of their dominion.
- 29 And the land quakes and writhes,
for the plans of Yahweh against Babylon stand,
to make the land of Babylon as a horror,
without inhabitant.
- 30 The warriors of Babylon have ceased to fight,
they remain in the strongholds,
their power has dried up,
they have become as women.
Her dwelling places are set on fire,
her bars are broken.
- 31 *one* runner runs to meet *another* runner,
and *one* messenger to meet *another* messenger,
to tell the king of Babylon that his city has been captured,
from end to end.
- 32 And the fords have been seized,
and the reed marshes have been burned with fire,
and the soldiers are horrified.

A Call for Retribution

- 33 For thus says Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel,

“The daughter of Babylon *is* like a threshing floor
at the time it *is* trodden down,
just a little while
and the time of the harvest will come for her.”
- 34 Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon
has devoured me *and* sucked me dry;
he has made me an empty vessel;
he has swallowed me like the sea monster;
he has filled his belly with my delicacies;
he has rinsed me.
- 35 “*May* the violence done to me and to my flesh *be* on Babylon,”
the inhabitants of Zion will say;
and “My blood *be* upon the inhabitants of Chaldea,”
Jerusalem will say.

God Answers the Call—Payback Time!

- 36 Therefore thus says Yahweh,

“Look, I *am* going to contend your case,
and I will avenge your vengeance,
and I will cause her sea to dry up,
and I will cause her fountain to dry up.

- 37 And Babylon will become as a heap of stones,
a lair of jackals,
an object of horror, and *an object of hissing*,
without inhabitants.
- 38 They will roar together like the young lions,
they will growl like the cubs of lions.
- 39 At their becoming hot I will set their banquets,
and I will make them drunk,
so that they will fall into a swoon,
and they will sleep an everlasting sleep,
and they will not wake up,” declares Yahweh.
- 40 “I will bring them down like young rams to slaughter,
like rams and goats.
- 41 How Sheshach is captured,
and the glory of all the earth is seized!
How Babylon has become as an *object of horror*
among the nations!
- 42 The sea has risen over Babylon,
she has been covered by the roar of its waves.
- 43 Her cities have become as an *object of horror*,
a dry land and a wilderness,
a land in which no person lives,
nor does a son of humankind pass through it.
- 44 And I will punish Bel in Babylon,
and I will wrench out from his mouth what he has swallowed.
And *the* nations will not stream towards him *any* longer
what’s worse, the wall of Babylon has fallen.

An Appeal to Flee from Babylon

- 45 Come out from her midst, my people,
and save each one his life
from the burning anger of Yahweh.
- 46 Now so that you are not fainthearted,
and you are afraid at the rumors that are heard in the land—
and in the year the rumor comes,
and in the year after it the rumor,
and violence *is* in the land,
with ruler against ruler—
- 47 therefore look, days *are* coming,
and I will punish the images of Babylon,
and all her land will be put to shame,
and all her slain ones will fall in the midst of her.
- 48 Then *the* heaven and *the* earth and all that *is* in them
will shout for joy over Babylon,
for from *the* north
the destroyers will come to it,” declares Yahweh.

Another Warning of Babylon’s Coming Destruction

- 49 Babylon must fall not only *because of* the slain ones of Israel,
but also because of Babylon the slain ones of all the earth have fallen.
- 50 Survivors of *the* sword, go!
You must not linger!
Remember Yahweh from far *away*,
and let Jerusalem come to your mind.
- 51 We are ashamed,
for we have heard taunts,
disgrace covers our faces,
for strangers have come to the holy places of the house of Yahweh.
- 52 “Therefore look, days *are* coming,” declares Yahweh,

- “and I will punish her images,
and *the* fatally wounded will sigh through all her land.
- 53 Though Babylon goes up *to* the heavens,
and though she fortifies the high place of her strength,
from me destroyers will come to her,” declares Yahweh.
- 54 *The* sound of a cry for help from Babylon,
and a great collapse from the land of *the* Chaldeans.
- 55 For Yahweh *is* devastating Babylon,
and he obliterates *her* loud noise from her.
Their waves roar like mighty waters,
the roar of their voices resounds.
- 56 For a destroyer *is* coming against her, against Babylon,
and her warriors are captured.
Their bows are broken;
for Yahweh *is* a God of recompense,
certainly he will repay.
- 57 “And I will make drunk her officials, and her wise men,
her governors, and her officials, and her warriors,
and they will sleep an everlasting sleep,
and they will not wake up,”
declares the King, Yahweh of hosts *is* his name.

58 Thus says Yahweh of hosts:

“The broad walls of Babylon will be utterly demolished,
and her high gates will burn with fire,
and *the* peoples will labor for nothing,
and *the* nations for fire,
and they will grow weary.”

Zedekiah Travels to Babylon / Jeremiah Sends the Babylon Prophecy (Tishri [October] 595–Adar [March] 594 BC)

Jeremiah 51:59–64

- 59 The word that Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah, the son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, at his going with Zedekiah, the king of Judah, *to* Babylon in the fourth year of his reign. Now Seraiah *was the* quartermaster.
- 60 And Jeremiah wrote all the disasters that would come on Babylon in one scroll, all these words that are written concerning Babylon.
- 61 And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, “At your coming *to* Babylon, then you must see *that* you read aloud all these words.
- 62 And you must say, ‘Yahweh, you yourself spoke against this place, to destroy it, so that *there will* not be in it *anything* living, from humankind to animals, for it will be an everlasting desolation.’
- 63 And then when you finish reading aloud this scroll, you must tie a stone on it, and you must throw it into the middle of *the* Euphrates.
- 64 And you must say, ‘Babylon will sink, and she will not rise, because of the face of the disasters that I *am* bringing on her, and they will grow weary.’” Thus far the words of Jeremiah.

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Chronological Notes

- 1) The historical context of Jeremiah 50–51 is the early years of the reign of Zedekiah (cf. Jer 51:59–64). Jeremiah’s prophecies against Babylon were written on one scroll and taken to Babylon itself so they could be read aloud (51:60–61).