

Jeremiah's Vision of Two Baskets of Figs (597 BC)

Jeremiah 24

Description of the Figs

1 The LORD showed me two baskets of figs sitting before his temple. This happened after King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon deported Jehoiakim's son, King Jeconiah of Judah. He deported him and the leaders of Judah, along with the craftsmen and metal workers, and took them to Babylon.

2 One basket had very good-looking figs in it. They looked like those that had ripened early. The other basket had very bad-looking figs in it, so bad they could not be eaten.

3 The LORD said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" I answered, "I see figs. The good ones look very good. But the bad ones look very bad, so bad that they cannot be eaten."

Meaning of the Good Figs

4 The LORD said to me,

5 "I, the LORD, the God of Israel, say: 'The exiles whom I sent away from here to the land of Babylon are like those good figs. I consider them to be good.

6 I will look after their welfare and will restore them to this land. There I will build them up and will not tear them down. I will plant them firmly in the land and will not uproot them.

7 I will give them the desire to acknowledge that I am the LORD. I will be their God and they will be my people. For they will wholeheartedly return to me.'

Meaning of the Bad Figs

8 "I, the LORD, also solemnly assert: 'King Zedekiah of Judah, his officials, and the people who remain in Jerusalem or who have gone to live in Egypt are like those bad figs. I consider them to be just like those bad figs that are so bad they cannot be eaten.

9 I will bring such disaster on them that all the kingdoms of the earth will be horrified. I will make them an object of reproach, a proverbial example of disaster. I will make them an object of ridicule, an example to be used in curses. That is how they will be remembered wherever I banish them.

10 I will bring war, starvation, and disease on them until they are completely destroyed from the land I gave them and their ancestors.'"

Jeremiah's Letter to the Exiles in Babylon (597 BC)

Jeremiah 29

Sending of the Letter

1 The prophet Jeremiah sent a letter to the exiles Nebuchadnezzar had carried off from Jerusalem to Babylon. It was addressed to the elders who were left among the exiles, to the priests, to the prophets, and to all the other people who were exiled in Babylon.

2 He sent it after King Jeconiah, the queen mother, the palace officials, the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen, and the metal workers had been exiled from Jerusalem.

3 He sent it with Elasah son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiah. King Zedekiah of Judah had sent these men to Babylon to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The letter said:

Settle Down in Babylon

4 "The LORD God of Israel who rules over all says to all those he sent into exile to Babylon from Jerusalem,

5 'Build houses and settle down. Plant gardens and eat what they produce.

6 Marry and have sons and daughters. Find wives for your sons and allow your daughters get married so that they too can have sons and daughters. Grow in number; do not dwindle away.

7 Work to see that the city where I sent you as exiles enjoys peace and prosperity. Pray to the LORD for it. For as it prospers you will prosper.'

Warning against False Prophets

8 "For the LORD God of Israel who rules over all says, 'Do not let the prophets or those among you who claim to be able to predict the future by divination deceive you. And do not pay any attention to the dreams that you are encouraging them to dream.

9 They are prophesying lies to you and claiming my authority to do so. But I did not send them. I, the LORD, affirm it!'

10 "For the LORD says, 'Only when the seventy years of Babylonian rule are over will I again take up consideration for you. Then I will fulfill my gracious promise to you and restore you to your homeland.

11 For I know what I have planned for you,' says the LORD. 'I have plans to prosper you, not to harm you. I have plans to give you a future filled with hope.

12 When you call out to me and come to me in prayer, I will hear your prayers.

13 When you seek me in prayer and worship, you will find me available to you. If you seek me with all your heart and soul,

14 I will make myself available to you,' says the LORD. 'Then I will reverse your plight and will regather you from all the nations and all the places where I have exiled you,' says the LORD. 'I will bring you back to the place from which I exiled you.'

15 "You say, 'The LORD has raised up prophets of good news for us here in Babylon.'

16 But just listen to what the LORD has to say about the king who occupies David's throne and all your fellow countrymen who are still living in this city of Jerusalem and were not carried off into exile with you.

17 The LORD who rules over all says, 'I will bring war, starvation, and disease on them. I will treat them like figs that are so rotten they cannot be eaten.

18 I will chase after them with war, starvation, and disease. I will make all the kingdoms of the earth horrified at what happens to them. I will make them examples of those who are cursed, objects of horror, hissing scorn, and ridicule among all the nations where I exile them.

19 For they have not paid attention to what I said to them through my servants the prophets whom I sent to them over and over again,' says the LORD. 'And you exiles have not paid any attention to them either,' says the LORD.

20 'So pay attention to what I, the LORD, have said, all you exiles whom I have sent to Babylon from Jerusalem.'

21 "The LORD God of Israel who rules over all also has something to say about Ahab son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah, who are prophesying lies to you and claiming my authority to do so. 'I will hand them over to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and he will execute them before your very eyes.

22 And all the exiles of Judah who are in Babylon will use them as examples when they put a curse on anyone. They will say, "May the LORD treat you like Zedekiah and Ahab whom the king of Babylon roasted to death in the fire!"

23 This will happen to them because they have done what is shameful in Israel. They have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives and have spoken lies while claiming my authority. They have spoken words that I did not command them to speak. I know what they have done. I have been a witness to it,' says the LORD."

Shemaiah Resists Jeremiah's Message

24 The LORD told Jeremiah, "Tell Shemaiah the Nehelamite

25 that the LORD God of Israel who rules over all has a message for him. Tell him, 'On your own initiative you sent a letter to the priest Zephaniah son of Maaseiah and to all the other priests and to all the people in Jerusalem. In your letter you said to Zephaniah,

26 "The LORD has made you priest in place of Jehoiada. He has put you in charge in the LORD's temple of controlling any lunatic who pretends to be a prophet. And it is your duty to put any such person in the stocks with an iron collar around his neck.

27 You should have reprimanded Jeremiah from Anathoth who is pretending to be a prophet among you!

28 For he has even sent a message to us here in Babylon. He wrote and told us, "You will be there a long time. Build houses and settle down. Plant gardens and eat what they produce."'"

God's Message to the Exiles About Shemaiah

29 Zephaniah the priest read that letter to the prophet Jeremiah.

30 Then the LORD spoke to Jeremiah.

31 "Send a message to all the exiles in Babylon. Tell them, 'The LORD has spoken about Shemaiah the Nehelamite. "Shemaiah has spoken to you as a prophet even though I did not send him. He is making you trust in a lie.

32 Because he has done this," the LORD says, "I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite and his whole family. There will not be any of them left to experience the good things that I will do for my people. I, the LORD, affirm it! For he counseled rebellion against the LORD."'"

Jeremiah's Prophecy to Judah—Promises of Restoration (c. 597 BC)

Jeremiah 30

Introduction

1 The LORD spoke to Jeremiah.

2 "The LORD God of Israel says, 'Write everything that I am about to tell you in a scroll.

3 For I, the LORD, affirm that the time will come when I will reverse the plight of my people, Israel and Judah,' says the LORD. 'I will bring them back to the land I gave their ancestors and they will take possession of it once again.'"

Promise of Restoration for Israel

4 So here is what the LORD has to say about Israel and Judah.

5 Yes, here is what he says:

"You hear cries of panic and of terror;
there is no peace in sight.

6 Ask yourselves this and consider it carefully:

Have you ever seen a man give birth to a baby?

- Why then do I see all these strong men
grabbing their stomachs in pain like a woman giving birth?
And why do their faces
turn so deathly pale?
- 7 Alas, what a terrible time of trouble it is!
There has never been any like it.
It is a time of trouble for the descendants of Jacob,
but some of them will be rescued out of it.
- 8 When the time for them to be rescued comes,”
says the LORD who rules over all,
“I will rescue you from foreign subjugation.
I will deliver you from captivity.
Foreigners will then no longer subjugate them.
- 9 But they will be subject to the LORD their God
and to the Davidic ruler whom I will raise up as king over them.
- 10 So I, the LORD, tell you not to be afraid,
you descendants of Jacob, my servants.
Do not be terrified, people of Israel.
For I will rescue you and your descendants
from a faraway land where you are captives.
The descendants of Jacob will return to their land and enjoy peace.
They will be secure and no one will terrify them.
- 11 For I, the LORD, affirm that
I will be with you and will rescue you.
I will completely destroy all the nations where I scattered you.
But I will not completely destroy you.
I will indeed discipline you, but only in due measure.
I will not allow you to go entirely unpunished.”

Promise of Healing for an Incurable Wound

12 Moreover, the LORD says to the people of Zion,

- “Your injuries are incurable;
your wounds are severe.
- 13 There is no one to plead your cause.
There are no remedies for your wounds.
There is no healing for you.
- 14 All your allies have abandoned you.
They no longer have any concern for you.
For I have attacked you like an enemy would.
I have chastened you cruelly.
For your wickedness is so great
and your sin is so much.
- 15 Why do you complain about your injuries,
that your pain is incurable?
I have done all this to you
because your wickedness is so great
and your sin is so much.
- 16 But all who destroyed you will be destroyed.
All your enemies will go into exile.
Those who plundered you will be plundered.
I will cause those who pillaged you to be pillaged.
- 17 Yes, I will restore you to health.
I will heal your wounds.
I, the LORD, affirm it!
For you have been called an outcast,
Zion, whom no one cares for.”

Promise of Restoration of the Fortunes of Israel

18 The LORD says,

“I will restore the ruined houses of the descendants of Jacob.
I will show compassion on their ruined homes.
Every city will be rebuilt on its former ruins.
Every fortified dwelling will occupy its traditional site.

19 Out of those places you will hear songs of thanksgiving
and the sounds of laughter and merriment.

I will increase their number and they will not dwindle away.
I will bring them honor and they will no longer be despised.

20 The descendants of Jacob will enjoy their former privileges.
Their community will be reestablished in my favor
and I will punish all who try to oppress them.

21 One of their own people will be their leader.
Their ruler will come from their own number.
I will invite him to approach me, and he will do so.
For no one would dare approach me on his own.
I, the LORD, affirm it!

22 Then you will again be my people
and I will be your God.

The Fierce Anger of the Lord

23 Just watch! The wrath of the LORD
will come like a storm.

Like a raging storm it will rage down
on the heads of those who are wicked.

24 The anger of the LORD will not turn back
until he has fully carried out his intended purposes.
In days to come you will come to understand this.

Jeremiah's Prophecy to Judah—The New Covenant (c. 597 BC)

Jeremiah 31

The Rebuilding of Israel

1 At that time I will be the God of all the clans of Israel
and they will be my people.
I, the LORD, affirm it!”

2 The LORD says,

“The people of Israel who survived
death at the hands of the enemy
will find favor in the wilderness
as they journey to find rest for themselves.

3 In a far-off land the LORD will manifest himself to them.
He will say to them, ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love.
That is why I have continued to be faithful to you.

4 I will rebuild you, my dear children Israel,
so that you will once again be built up.
Once again you will take up the tambourine
and join in the happy throng of dancers.

5 Once again you will plant vineyards
on the hills of Samaria.
Those who plant them
will once again enjoy their fruit.

6 Yes, a time is coming
when watchmen will call out on the mountains of Ephraim,

“Come! Let us go to Zion
to worship the LORD our God!””

Return of the Scattered People

7 Moreover, the LORD says,

“Sing for joy for the descendants of Jacob.
Utter glad shouts for that foremost of the nations.
Make your praises heard.
Then say, ‘LORD, rescue your people.
Deliver those of Israel who remain alive.’

8 Then I will reply, ‘I will bring them back from the land of the north.
I will gather them in from the distant parts of the earth.
Blind and lame people will come with them,
so will pregnant women and women about to give birth.
A vast throng of people will come back here.

9 They will come back shedding tears of contrition.
I will bring them back praying prayers of repentance.
I will lead them besides streams of water,
along smooth paths where they will never stumble.
I will do this because I am Israel’s father;
Ephraim is my firstborn son.”

10 Hear what the LORD has to say, O nations.
Proclaim it in the faraway lands along the sea.
Say, “The one who scattered Israel will regather them.
He will watch over his people like a shepherd watches over his flock.”

11 For the LORD will rescue the descendants of Jacob.
He will secure their release from those who had overpowered them.

12 They will come and shout for joy on Mount Zion.
They will be radiant with joy over the good things the LORD provides,
the grain, the fresh wine, the olive oil,
the young sheep and calves he has given to them.
They will be like a well-watered garden
and will not grow faint or weary any more.

13 The LORD says, “At that time young women will dance and be glad.
Young men and old men will rejoice.
I will turn their grief into gladness.
I will give them comfort and joy in place of their sorrow.

14 I will provide the priests with abundant provisions.
My people will be filled to the full with the good things I provide.”

The End of Rachel’s Weeping for Her Children

15 The LORD says,

“A sound is heard in Ramah,
a sound of crying in bitter grief.
It is the sound of Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted, because her children are gone.” [\[Matt 2:17–18\]](#)

16 The LORD says to her,
“Stop crying! Do not shed any more tears!
For your heartfelt repentance will be rewarded.
Your children will return from the land of the enemy.
I, the LORD, affirm it!

17 Indeed, there is hope for your posterity.
Your children will return to their own territory.
I, the LORD, affirm it!

18 I have indeed heard the people of Israel say mournfully,
‘We were like a calf untrained to the yoke.

You disciplined us and we learned from it.
Let us come back to you and we will do so,
for you are the LORD our God.

- 19 For after we turned away from you we repented.
After we came to our senses we [struck] our [thigh] in sorrow.
We are ashamed and humiliated
because of the disgraceful things we did previously.’
- 20 Indeed, the people of Israel are my dear children.
They are the children I take delight in.
For even though I must often rebuke them,
I still remember them with fondness.
So I am deeply moved with pity for them
and will surely have compassion on them.
I, the LORD, affirm it!
- 21 I will say, ‘My dear children of Israel, keep in mind
the road you took when you were carried off.
Mark off in your minds the landmarks.
Make a mental note of telltale signs marking the way back.
Return, my dear children of Israel.
Return to these cities of yours.
- 22 How long will you vacillate,
you who were once like an unfaithful daughter?
For I, the LORD, promise to bring about something new on the earth,
something as unique as a woman protecting a man!’”

Description of Future Blessing

23 The LORD God of Israel who rules over all says,

“I will restore the people of Judah to their land and to their towns.
When I do, they will again say of Jerusalem,
‘May the LORD bless you, you holy mountain,
the place where righteousness dwells.’

- 24 The land of Judah will be inhabited by people who live in its towns
as well as by farmers and shepherds with their flocks.
- 25 I will fully satisfy the needs of those who are weary
and fully refresh the souls of those who are faint.
- 26 Then they will say, ‘Under these conditions I can enjoy sweet sleep
when I wake up and look around.’”

27 “Indeed, a time is coming,” says the LORD, “when I will cause people and animals to sprout up in the lands of Israel and Judah.

28 In the past I saw to it that they were uprooted and torn down, that they were destroyed and demolished. But now I will see to it that they are built up and firmly planted. I, the LORD, affirm it!”

Repudiation of a Popular Saying

29 “When that time comes, people will no longer say, ‘The parents have eaten sour grapes, but the children’s teeth have grown numb.’

30 Rather, each person will die for his own sins. The teeth of the person who eats the sour grapes will themselves grow numb.

Announcement of a New Covenant

31 “Indeed, a time is coming,” says the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah.

32 It will not be like the old covenant that I made with their ancestors when I delivered them from Egypt. For they violated that covenant, even though I was like a faithful husband to them,” says the LORD.

33 “But I will make a new covenant with the whole nation of Israel after I plant them back in the land,” says the LORD. “I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts and minds. I will be their God and they will be my people.

34 “People will no longer need to teach their neighbors and relatives to know me. For all of them, from the least important to the most important, will know me,” says the LORD. “For I will forgive their sin and will no longer call to mind the wrong they have done.” [[Heb 8:8–12; 10:16–17](#)]

God's Assurance of Israel's Eternal Duration

- 35 The LORD has made a promise to Israel.
He promises it as the one who fixed the sun to give light by day
and the moon and stars to give light by night.
He promises it as the one who stirs up the sea so that its waves roll.
He promises it as the one who is known as the LORD who rules over all.
- 36 The LORD affirms, "The descendants of Israel will not
cease forever to be a nation in my sight.
That could only happen if the fixed ordering of the heavenly lights
were to cease to operate before me."
- 37 The LORD says, "I will not reject all the descendants of Israel
because of all that they have done.
That could only happen if the heavens above could be measured
or the foundations of the earth below could all be explored,"
says the LORD.

God's Promise that Jerusalem Will be Rebuilt

- 38 "Indeed a time is coming," says the LORD, "when the city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt as my special city. It will be built from the Tower of Hananel westward to the Corner Gate.
39 The boundary line will extend beyond that, straight west from there to the Hill of Gareb and then turn southward to Goah.
40 The whole valley where dead bodies and sacrificial ashes are thrown and all the terraced fields out to the Kidron Valley on the east as far north as the Horse Gate will be included within this city that is sacred to the LORD. The city will never again be torn down or destroyed."

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