

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

Jeremiah 49:34–39

34 Early in the reign of King Zedekiah of Judah, the LORD spoke to the prophet Jeremiah about Elam.

35 The LORD who rules over all said,

“I will kill all the archers of Elam,
who are the chief source of her military might.

36 I will cause enemies to blow through Elam from every direction
like the winds blowing in from the four quarters of heaven.

I will scatter the people of Elam to the four winds.
There will not be any nation where the refugees of Elam will not go.

37 I will make the people of Elam terrified of their enemies,
who are seeking to kill them.

I will vent my fierce anger
and bring disaster upon them,” says the LORD.

“I will send armies chasing after them
until I have completely destroyed them.

38 I will establish my sovereignty over Elam.

I will destroy their king and their leaders,” says the LORD.

39 “Yet in days to come

I will reverse Elam's ill fortune,” says the LORD.

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

Jeremiah 50

Announcement of Babylon's Doom

1 The LORD spoke concerning Babylon and the land of Babylonia through the prophet Jeremiah.

2 “Announce the news among the nations! Proclaim it!

Signal for people to pay attention!
Declare the news! Do not hide it! Say:
‘Babylon will be captured.

Bel will be put to shame.

Marduk will be dismayed.

Babylon's idols will be put to shame.

Her disgusting images will be dismayed.

3 For a nation from the north will attack Babylon.

It will lay her land waste.

People and animals will flee out of it.

No one will inhabit it.’

4 “When that time comes,” says the LORD,

“the people of Israel and Judah will return to the land together.

They will come back with tears of repentance

as they seek the LORD their God.

5 They will ask the way to Zion;

they will turn their faces toward it.

They will come and bind themselves to the LORD

in a lasting covenant that will never be forgotten.

6 “My people have been lost sheep.

Their shepherds have allowed them to go astray.

They have wandered around in the mountains.

They have roamed from one mountain and hill to another.

They have forgotten their resting place.

7 All who encountered them devoured them.

Their enemies who did this said, ‘We are not liable for punishment!

For those people have sinned against the LORD, their true pasture.

They have sinned against the LORD in whom their ancestors trusted.’

8 “People of Judah, get out of Babylon quickly!

- Leave the land of Babylonia!
Be the first to depart!
Be like the male goats that lead the herd.
- 9 For I will rouse into action and bring against Babylon
a host of mighty nations from the land of the north.
They will set up their battle lines against her.
They will come from the north and capture her.
Their arrows will be like a skilled soldier
who does not return from the battle empty-handed.
- 10 Babylonia will be plundered.
Those who plunder it will take all they want," says the LORD.

Explanation for Its Punishment

- 11 "People of Babylonia, you plundered my people.
That made you happy and glad.
You frolic about like calves in a pasture.
Your joyous sounds are like the neighs of a stallion.
- 12 But Babylonia will be put to great shame.
The land where you were born will be disgraced.
Indeed, Babylonia will become the least important of all nations.
It will become a dry and barren desert.
- 13 After I vent my wrath on it Babylon will be uninhabited.
It will be totally desolate.
All who pass by will be filled with horror and will hiss out their scorn
because of all the disasters that have happened to it.
- 14 "Take up your battle positions all around Babylon,
all you soldiers who are armed with bows.
Shoot all your arrows at her! Do not hold any back!
For she has sinned against the LORD.
- 15 Shout the battle cry from all around the city.
She will throw up her hands in surrender.
Her towers will fall.
Her walls will be torn down.
Because I, the LORD, am wreaking revenge,
take out your vengeance on her!
Do to her as she has done!
- 16 Kill all the farmers who sow the seed in the land of Babylon.
Kill all those who wield the sickle at harvest time.
Let all the foreigners return to their own people.
Let them hurry back to their own lands
to escape destruction by that enemy army.
- 17 "The people of Israel are like scattered sheep
which lions have chased away.
First the king of Assyria devoured them.
Now last of all King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon has gnawed their bones.

The Restoration of Israel

- 18 So I, the LORD God of Israel who rules over all, say:
'I will punish the king of Babylon and his land
just as I punished the king of Assyria.
- 19 But I will restore the flock of Israel to their own pasture.
They will graze on Mount Carmel and the land of Bashan.
They will eat until they are full
on the hills of Ephraim and the land of Gilead.
- 20 When that time comes,
no guilt will be found in Israel.
No sin will be found in Judah.
For I will forgive those of them I have allowed to survive.

I, the LORD, affirm it!”

God’s Wrath against Babylon

- 21 The LORD says,
“Attack the land of Merathaim
and the people who live in Pekod!
Pursue, kill, and completely destroy them!
Do just as I have commanded you!
- 22 The noise of battle can be heard in the land of Babylonia.
There is the sound of great destruction.
- 23 Babylon hammered the whole world to pieces.
But see how that ‘hammer’ has been broken and shattered!
See what an object of horror
Babylon has become among the nations!
- 24 I set a trap for you, Babylon;
you were caught before you knew it.
You fought against me.
So you were found and captured.
- 25 I have opened up the place where my weapons are stored.
I have brought out the weapons for carrying out my wrath.
For I, the Lord GOD who rules over all,
have work to carry out in the land of Babylonia.
- 26 Come from far away and attack Babylonia!
Open up the places where she stores her grain!
Pile her up in ruins! Destroy her completely!
Do not leave anyone alive!
- 27 Kill all her soldiers!
Let them be slaughtered!
They are doomed, for their day of reckoning has come,
the time for them to be punished.”
- 28 Listen! Fugitives and refugees are coming from the land of Babylon.
They are coming to Zion to declare there
how the LORD our God is getting revenge,
getting revenge for what they have done to his temple.
- 29 “Call for archers to come against Babylon!
Summon against her all who draw the bow!
Set up camp all around the city!
Do not allow anyone to escape!
Pay her back for what she has done.
Do to her what she has done to others.
For she has proudly defied me,
the Holy One of Israel.
- 30 So her young men will fall in her city squares.
All her soldiers will be destroyed at that time,” says the LORD.
- 31 “Listen! I am opposed to you, you proud city,”
says the Lord GOD who rules over all.
“Indeed, your day of reckoning has come,
the time when I will punish you.
- 32 You will stumble and fall, you proud city;
no one will help you get up.
I will set fire to your towns;
it will burn up everything that surrounds you.”

The Desolation of Babylon

- 33 The LORD who rules over all says,
“The people of Israel are oppressed.
So too are the people of Judah.
All those who took them captive are holding them prisoners.

- They refuse to set them free.
- 34 But the one who will rescue them is strong.
He is known as the LORD who rules over all.
He will strongly champion their cause.
As a result he will bring peace and rest to the earth,
but trouble and turmoil to the people who inhabit Babylonia.
- 35 “Destructive forces will come against the Babylonians,” says the LORD.
“They will come against the people who inhabit Babylonia,
against her leaders and her men of wisdom.
- 36 Destructive forces will come against her false prophets;
they will be shown to be fools!
Destructive forces will come against her soldiers;
they will be filled with terror!
- 37 Destructive forces will come against her horses and her chariots.
Destructive forces will come against all the foreign troops within her;
they will be as frightened as women!
Destructive forces will come against her treasures;
they will be taken away as plunder!
- 38 A drought will come upon her land;
her rivers and canals will be dried up.
All of this will happen because her land is filled with idols.
Her people act like madmen because of those idols they fear.
- 39 Therefore desert creatures and jackals will live there.
Ostriches will dwell in it too.
But no people will ever live there again.
No one will dwell there for all time to come.
- 40 I will destroy Babylonia just like I did
Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring towns.
No one will live there.
No human being will settle in it,” says the LORD.

Babylon’s Helplessness

- 41 “Look! An army is about to come from the north.
A mighty nation and many kings are stirring into action
in faraway parts of the earth.
- 42 Its soldiers are armed with bows and spears.
They are cruel and show no mercy.
They sound like the roaring sea
as they ride forth on their horses.
Lined up in formation like men going into battle,
they are coming against you, fair Babylon!
- 43 The king of Babylon will become paralyzed with fear
when he hears news of their coming.
Anguish will grip him,
agony like that of a woman giving birth to a baby.
- 44 “A lion coming up from the thick undergrowth along the Jordan
scatters the sheep in the pastureland around it.
So too I will chase the Babylonians off of their land.
Then I will appoint over it whomever I choose.
For there is no one like me.
There is no one who can call me to account.
There is no ruler that can stand up against me.
- 45 So listen to what I, the LORD, have planned against Babylon,
what I intend to do to the people who inhabit the land of Babylonia.
Their little ones will be dragged off.
I will completely destroy their land because of what they have done.
- 46 The people of the earth will quake when they hear Babylon has been captured.
Her cries of anguish will be heard by the other nations.”

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 The LORD says,
“I will cause a destructive wind to blow
against Babylon and the people who inhabit Babylonia.
- 2 I will send people to winnow Babylonia like a wind blowing away chaff.
They will winnow her and strip her land bare.
This will happen when they come against her from every direction,
when it is time to destroy her.
- 3 Do not give her archers time to string their bows
or to put on their coats of armor.
Do not spare any of her young men.
Completely destroy her whole army.
- 4 Let them fall slain in the land of Babylonia,
mortally wounded in the streets of her cities.
- 5 “For Israel and Judah will not be forsaken
by their God, the LORD who rules over all.
For the land of Babylonia is full of guilt
against the Holy One of Israel.
- 6 Get out of Babylonia quickly, you foreign people.
Flee to save your lives.
Do not let yourselves be killed because of her sins.
For it is time for the LORD to wreak his revenge.
He will pay Babylonia back for what she has done.
- 7 Babylonia had been a gold cup in the LORD's hand.
She had made the whole world drunk.
The nations had drunk from the wine of her wrath.
So they have all gone mad.
- 8 But suddenly Babylonia will fall and be destroyed.
Cry out in mourning over it!
Get medicine for her wounds!
Perhaps she can be healed!
- 9 Foreigners living there will say,
‘We tried to heal her, but she could not be healed.
Let's leave Babylonia and each go back to his own country.
For judgment on her will be vast in its proportions.
It will be like it is piled up to heaven, stacked up into the clouds.’
- 10 The exiles from Judah will say,
‘The LORD has brought about a great deliverance for us!
Come on, let's go and proclaim in Zion
what the LORD our God has done!’
- 11 “Sharpen your arrows!
Fill your quivers!
The LORD will arouse a spirit of hostility in the kings of Media.
For he intends to destroy Babylonia.
For that is how the LORD will get his revenge—
how he will get his revenge for the Babylonians' destruction of his temple.
- 12 Give the signal to attack Babylon's wall!
Bring more guards!
Post them all around the city!
Put men in ambush!
For the LORD will do what he has planned.
He will do what he said he would do to the people of Babylon.
- 13 “You who live along the rivers of Babylon,
the time of your end has come.
You who are rich in plundered treasure,
it is time for your lives to be cut off.

- 14 The LORD who rules over all has solemnly sworn,
‘I will fill your land with enemy soldiers.
They will swarm over it like locusts.
They will raise up shouts of victory over it.’

A Hymn of Praise to the Lord

- 15 He is the one who by his power made the earth.
He is the one who by his wisdom fixed the world in place,
by his understanding he spread out the heavens.
- 16 When his voice thunders, the waters in the heavens roar.
He makes the clouds rise from the far-off horizons.
He makes the lightning flash out in the midst of the rain.
He unleashes the wind from the places where he stores it.
- 17 All idolaters will prove to be stupid and ignorant.
Every goldsmith will be disgraced by the idol he made.
For the image he forges is merely a sham.
There is no breath in any of those idols.
- 18 They are worthless, objects to be ridiculed.
When the time comes to punish them, they will be destroyed.
- 19 The LORD, who is the portion of the descendants of Jacob, is not like them.
For he is the one who created everything,
including the people of Israel whom he claims as his own.
He is known as the LORD who rules over all.

God’s Power against Enemies

- 20 “Babylon, you are my war club,
my weapon for battle.
I used you to smash nations.
I used you to destroy kingdoms.
- 21 I used you to smash horses and their riders.
I used you to smash chariots and their drivers.
- 22 I used you to smash men and women.
I used you to smash old men and young men.
I used you to smash young men and young women.
- 23 I used you to smash shepherds and their flocks.
I used you to smash farmers and their teams of oxen.
I used you to smash governors and leaders.”
- 24 “But I will repay Babylon
and all who live in Babylonia
for all the wicked things they did in Zion
right before the eyes of you Judeans,” says the LORD.
- 25 The LORD says, “Beware! I am opposed to you, Babylon!
You are like a destructive mountain that destroys all the earth.
I will unleash my power against you;
I will roll you off the cliffs and make you like a burned-out mountain.
- 26 No one will use any of your stones as a cornerstone.
No one will use any of them in the foundation of his house.
For you will lie desolate forever,” says the LORD.

Nations Summoned against Babylon

- 27 “Raise up battle flags throughout the lands.
Sound the trumpets calling the nations to do battle.
Prepare the nations to do battle against Babylonia.
Call for these kingdoms to attack her:
Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz.
Appoint a commander to lead the attack.
Send horses against her like a swarm of locusts.
- 28 Prepare the nations to do battle against her.

- Prepare the kings of the Medes.
Prepare their governors and all their leaders.
Prepare all the countries they rule to do battle against her.
- 29 The earth will tremble and writhe in agony.
For the LORD will carry out his plan.
He plans to make the land of Babylonia
a wasteland where no one lives.
- 30 The soldiers of Babylonia will stop fighting.
They will remain in their fortified cities.
They will lose their strength to do battle.
They will be as frightened as women.
The houses in her cities will be set on fire.
The gates of her cities will be broken down.
- 31 One runner after another will come to the king of Babylon.
One messenger after another will come bringing news.
They will bring news to the king of Babylon
that his whole city has been captured.
- 32 They will report that the fords have been captured,
the reed marshes have been burned,
the soldiers are terrified.

A Call for Retribution

- 33 For the LORD God of Israel who rules over all says,
'Fair Babylonia will be like a threshing floor
which has been trampled flat for harvest.
The time for her to be cut down and harvested
will come very soon.'
- 34 "King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia
devoured me and drove my people out.
Like a monster from the deep he swallowed me.
He filled his belly with my riches.
He made me an empty dish.
He completely cleaned me out."
- 35 The person who lives in Zion says,
"May Babylonia pay for the violence done to me and to my relatives."
Jerusalem says,
"May those living in Babylonia pay for the bloodshed of my people."

God Answers the Call—Payback Time!

- 36 Therefore the LORD says,
"I will stand up for your cause.
I will pay the Babylonians back for what they have done to you.
I will dry up their sea.
I will make their springs run dry.
- 37 Babylonia will become a heap of ruins.
Jackals will make their home there.
It will become an object of horror and of hissing scorn,
a place where no one lives.
- 38 The Babylonians are all like lions roaring for prey.
They are like lion cubs growling for something to eat.
- 39 When their appetites are all stirred up,
I will set out a banquet for them.
I will make them drunk
so that they will pass out,
they will fall asleep forever,
they will never wake up," says the LORD.
- 40 "I will lead them off to be slaughtered
like lambs, rams, and male goats."

- 41 “See how Babylon has been captured!
See how the pride of the whole earth has been taken!
See what an object of horror
Babylon has become among the nations!
- 42 The sea has swept over Babylon.
She has been covered by a multitude of its waves.
- 43 The towns of Babylonia have become heaps of ruins.
She has become a dry and barren desert.
No one lives in those towns any more.
No one even passes through them.
- 44 I will punish the god Bel in Babylon.
I will make him spit out what he has swallowed.
The nations will not come streaming to him any longer.
Indeed, the walls of Babylon will fall.”

An Appeal to Flee from Babylon

- 45 “Get out of Babylon, my people!
Flee to save your lives
from the fierce anger of the LORD!
- 46 Do not lose your courage or become afraid
because of the reports that are heard in the land.
For a report will come in one year.
Another report will follow it in the next.
There will be violence in the land
with ruler fighting against ruler.”
- 47 “So the time will certainly come
when I will punish the idols of Babylon.
Her whole land will be put to shame.
All her mortally wounded will collapse in her midst.
- 48 Then heaven and earth and all that is in them
will sing for joy over Babylon.
For destroyers from the north will attack it,” says the LORD.

Another Warning of Babylon’s Coming Destruction

- 49 “Babylon must fall
because of the Israelites she has killed,
just as the earth’s mortally wounded fell
because of Babylon.
- 50 You who have escaped the sword,
go, do not delay.
Remember the LORD in a faraway land.
Think about Jerusalem.
- 51 ‘We are ashamed because we have been insulted.
Our faces show our disgrace.
For foreigners have invaded
the holy rooms in the LORD’s temple.’
- 52 Yes, but the time will certainly come,” says the LORD,
“when I will punish her idols.
Throughout her land the mortally wounded will groan.
- 53 Even if Babylon climbs high into the sky
and fortifies her elevated stronghold,
I will send destroyers against her,” says the LORD.
- 54 Cries of anguish will come from Babylon,
the sound of great destruction from the land of the Babylonians.
- 55 For the LORD is ready to destroy Babylon,
and put an end to her loud noise.
Their waves will roar like turbulent waters.
They will make a deafening noise.

- 56 For a destroyer is attacking Babylon.
Her warriors will be captured;
their bows will be broken.
For the LORD is a God who punishes;
he pays back in full.
- 57 “I will make her officials and wise men drunk,
along with her governors, leaders, and warriors.
They will fall asleep forever and never wake up,”
says the King whose name is the LORD who rules over all.
- 58 This is what the LORD who rules over all says,
“Babylon’s thick wall will be completely demolished.
Her high gates will be set on fire.
The peoples strive for what does not satisfy.
The nations grow weary trying to get what will be destroyed.”

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

Jeremiah 51:59–64

- 59 This is the order Jeremiah the prophet gave to Seraiah son of Neriah, son of Mahseiah, when he went to King Zedekiah of Judah in Babylon during the fourth year of his reign. (Seraiah was a quartermaster.)
- 60 Jeremiah recorded on one scroll all the judgments that would come upon Babylon—all these prophecies written about Babylon.
- 61 Then Jeremiah said to Seraiah, “When you arrive in Babylon, make sure you read aloud all these prophecies.
- 62 Then say, ‘O LORD, you have announced that you will destroy this place so that no people or animals live in it any longer. Certainly it will lie desolate forever!’
- 63 When you finish reading this scroll aloud, tie a stone to it and throw it into the middle of the Euphrates River.
- 64 Then say, ‘In the same way Babylon will sink and never rise again because of the judgments I am ready to bring upon her; they will grow faint.’” The prophecies of Jeremiah end here.

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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).