

Jeremiah 29 - Jeremiah's Letter to the Captives

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Jeremiah 29

(3) With the false prophets Ahab, Zedekiah, Shemiah of the exile (29:1-32)

(A) Jeremiah's first letter to the exiles (29:1-23)

(a) Introductory matters (29:1-3)

(i) Addressees (29:1)

1 Now these are the words of the letter which Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the rest of the elders of the exile, the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

1 Now these are the words of the letter which Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the rest of the elders of the exile, the priests, the prophets and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

1 These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, to the priests, to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon,

1 Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon;

- A group of letters to those who are captive in Babylon. These people were the people that were taken captive in the first siege. So Jeremiah is sending letters from Jerusalem to these slaves.

— These captives are not in chains in prison, they are in villages farming and they are given instructions that they observe throughout the Diaspora. He is writing to these captives, the elders, priests, and to prophets, Ezekiel and Daniel, and to the people.

(ii) Date (29:2)

2 (This was after King Jeconiah and the queen mother, the high officials, the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen, and the metalworkers had departed from Jerusalem.)

2 (This was after King Jeconiah and the queen mother, the court officials, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem.)

2 after King Jeconiah, the queen mother, the palace officials, the officials of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen, and the smiths left Jerusalem.

2 (After that Jeconiah the king, and the queen, and the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, and the carpenters, and the smiths, were departed from Jerusalem;)

- Here is a parenthetical edition that Jeconiah the king with the blood curse and Nehusta the queen is always mentioned with Jeconiah because he was only around eighteen.

— When Nebuchadnezzar conquered someone, he picked the best, the brightest young men, like Daniel and his three friends. He took the craftsmen and the artisans to beautify Babylon.

(iii) Deliverers (29:3)

3 The letter was sent by the hand of Elasar the son of Shaphan and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, saying,

3 The letter was sent by the hand of Elasar the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, saying,

3 The letter was sent by Shaphan's son Elasar and by Hilkiah's son Gemariah, whom King Zedekiah of Judah sent to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon in Babylon, and it said,

3 By the hand of Elasar the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, (whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent unto Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon) saying,
- Bear in mind there is an emissary going from Zedekiah the puppet king to Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, with Zedekiah's permission, Jeremiah is allowed to send some letters along to the captives.
- Elasar the son of Shaphan is the brother of Ahiakim (Jer 26:24; agreed with Jeremiah, welcomed in Babylon), and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah is probably Josiah's high priest (2 Kings 22:3-4).

(b) Content (29:4-23)

(i) Plan for a lengthy stay in Babylon (29:4-7)

4 "This is what the LORD of armies, the God of Israel, says to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon:

4 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon,

4 "This is what the LORD of the Heavenly Armies, the God of Israel, says to all the exiles who were taken from Jerusalem into exile to Babylon,

4 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon;

5 'Build houses and live *in them*; and plant gardens and eat their produce.

5 'Build houses and live *in them*; and plant gardens and eat their produce.

5 'Build houses and live in them. Plant gardens and eat their produce.

5 Build ye houses, and dwell *in them*; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them;

6 Take wives and father sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may give birth to sons and daughters; and grow in numbers there and do not decrease.

6 Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease.

6 Take wives and father sons and daughters. Take wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so they may have sons and daughters. Increase in numbers there, don't decrease.

6 Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished.

Settle in; they will be there for a couple of generations. This is exactly the kind of posture that the Jews took after the dispersion by the Romans. In 70 AD, Titus Vespasian and the four legions leveled Jerusalem and dispersed the Jews throughout the world; for 1,900 years they wandered homeless. During that period of time they did exactly this. Wherever they found themselves, they built houses, dwelt in them, planted gardens, ate from them, took wives. There is no indication that they are to take pagan wives, Deuteronomy has not been repealed. But they populated and had families. Centuries of dispersion, they followed the same pattern.

7 Seek the prosperity of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD in its behalf; for in its prosperity will be your prosperity.'

7 Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.'

7 Seek the welfare of the city to which I've exiled you and pray to the LORD for it, for your welfare depends on its welfare.'

7 And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

- Pray for captors (Cf. Matt 5:43). The only place that you can find it where they are to pray for peace of the city in which they are captives.

— That is exactly what they do and in Ezra, Cyrus the Persian asks them to pray for him (Ezra 6:10; 1 Macc 7:33)

— Forgive offenders, learn from offence (Cf. 1 Peter 2:11-17; 1 Tim 2:1-4)

(ii) Reject the messages of the false prophets predicting a shortstay
(29:8-9)

8 For this is what the LORD of armies, the God of Israel says: 'Do not let your prophets who are in your midst or your diviners deceive you, and do not listen to *their interpretations* of your dreams which you dream.

8 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Do not let your prophets who are in your midst and your diviners deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream.

8 For this is what the LORD of the Heavenly Armies, the God of Israel, says: 'Don't let the prophets and diviners who are among you deceive you, and don't listen to them when they tell you their dreams.

8 For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that *be* in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed.

9 For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them,' declares the LORD.
9 For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them,' declares the LORD.
9 Indeed, they're prophesying lies to you in my name. I didn't send them,' declares the LORD.
9 For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD.

(iii) Captivity to last 70 years (29:10-14)

10 "For this is what the LORD says: 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit **you** and fulfill **My good word to you**, to bring you back to this place.
10 "For thus says the LORD, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.
10 "For this is what the LORD says: 'When Babylon's seventy years are completed, I'll take note of you and will fulfill my good promises to you by bringing you back to this place.
10 For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.
- "...you" - the promises of this passage are directed to a specific group of people, in a peculiar set of circumstances (Babylonian exile, v1)
- "...fulfill My good word to you" - God had a plan for Israel, outlined in the various covenants (specifically the Abrahamic and Mosaic in this passage)

11 For I know the **plans** that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for prosperity and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.
11 For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.
11 For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for well-being, and not for calamity, in order to give you a future and a hope.
11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.
- This verse shows up everywhere—on bookmarks, bumper stickers, posters, graduation cards, signature lines in emails, even cross-stitched onto pillows—cited as God's personal promise to every believer who finds himself in severe straits.
- "...plans" - the "thoughts" or "plans" God has for them are based on the Abrahamic Covenant (God's promise of protection for Abraham's seed, who will ultimately bring blessing to all nations) and the Mosaic Covenant (the promise of prosperity for obedience and cursing for disobedience).
— Jeremiah is warning a nation that is in disobedience that they are about to suffer the consequences previously promised in the Mosaic Covenant (Deut 28-30), but also to remind them of His pledge of ultimate restoration (Abrahamic Covenant).

- Both blessing and cursing are in store for Jeremiah's audience, which is precisely what God promised nearly 1,000 years earlier (Deut 30:1-3)
- Follow the flow of the chapter and there are other boundaries placed on the promises:
 - v2-7 show God's intention to limit the promise to a precise set of circumstances in Judah's history
 - v10 identifies the time of fulfillment (when 70 years have been completed)
 - v14 gives the specific content of the "plans for welfare" and the "future...hope."
- This promise cannot be lifted and used for Christians today, since it was not written to them and does not include them

12 Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.
 12 Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.
 12 When you call out to me and come and pray to me, I'll hear you.
 12 Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

13 And you will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.
 13 You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.
 13 You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart.
 13 And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.
 - After the 70 years, an opening into Dan 9:2
 — Daniel was reading this knowing that the 70 years were about accomplished. He begins to pray and Gabriel interrupts and gives Daniel the mathematical prophecy that predicts the very day that Jesus Christ presents Himself as King that we celebrate as Palm Sunday. 173,880 days in advance God calls His shot.

14 I will let Myself be found by you,' declares the LORD, 'and I will restore your fortunes and gather you **from all the nations** and all the places where I have driven you,' declares the LORD, 'and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.'
 14 I will be found by you,' declares the LORD, 'and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,' declares the LORD, 'and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.'
 14 I'll be found by you,' declares the LORD, 'and I'll restore your security and gather you from all the nations and all the places to which I've driven you,' declares the LORD. 'I'll bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.'
 14 And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the

LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

- "...from all the nations" - NOT the return from Babylon; that was a return from **one** nation
- He specifically says here from *all the nations*, not just Babylon
- Is 11:11: The first regathering started May 14, 1948. The climax for God's entire plan for man is being set up. The second regathering will be in preparation for the Messianic Kingdom.

(iv) God will destroy Jerusalemites (29:15-20)

15 "Because you have said, 'The LORD has raised up prophets for us in Babylon'—

15 "Because you have said, 'The LORD has raised up prophets for us in Babylon'—

15 "Indeed, you have said, 'The LORD has raised up prophets for us in Babylon.'

15 Because ye have said, The LORD hath raised us up prophets in Babylon;

16 for this is what the LORD says concerning the king who sits on the throne of David, and concerning all the people who live in this city, your brothers who did not go with you into exile—

16 for thus says the LORD concerning the king who sits on the throne of David, and concerning all the people who dwell in this city, your brothers who did not go with you into exile—

16 "But this is what the LORD says about the king who sits on David's throne, and about the people who live in this city—your brothers who didn't go with you into exile:

16 *Know that thus saith the LORD of the king that sitteth upon the throne of David, and of all the people that dwelleth in this city, and of your brethren that are not gone forth with you into captivity;*

17 this is what the LORD of armies says: 'Behold, I am sending upon them the sword, famine, and plague; and I will make them like rotten figs that cannot be eaten due to rottenness.

17 thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Behold, I am sending upon them the sword, famine and pestilence, and I will make them like split-open figs that cannot be eaten due to rottenness.

17 This is what the LORD says: 'I'm about to send the sword, famine, and plague on them, and I'll make them like rotten figs that cannot be eaten because they're so bad.

17 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil.

- The duet of fig trees

18 I will pursue them with the sword, with famine, and with plague; and I will make them an object of terror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse and an object of horror and hissing, and a disgrace among all the nations where I have driven them,

18 I will pursue them with the sword, with famine and with pestilence; and I will make them a terror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse and a horror and a hissing, and a reproach among all the nations where I have driven them,

18 I'll pursue them with the sword, with famine, and with plague, and I'll make them a horrifying sight to all the kingdoms of the earth. I'll make them a curse, an object of horror, and scorn, and a desolation in all the nations to which I've driven them,

18 And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them:

19 because they have not listened to My words,' declares the LORD, 'which I sent to them again and again by My servants the prophets; but you did not listen,' declares the LORD.

19 because they have not listened to My words,' declares the LORD, 'which I sent to them again and again by My servants the prophets; but you did not listen,' declares the LORD.

19 because they didn't listen to my words,' declares the LORD. 'When I sent my servants, the prophets, to you again and again, you didn't listen,' declares the LORD.

19 Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the LORD, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending *them*; but ye would not hear, saith the LORD.

- The Lord is the author of the exile

20 'You, therefore, hear the word of the LORD, all you exiles, whom I have sent away from Jerusalem to Babylon.

20 You, therefore, hear the word of the LORD, all you exiles, whom I have sent away from Jerusalem to Babylon.

20 "Now, all you exiles whom I sent from Jerusalem to Babylon, listen to this message from the LORD!

20 Hear ye therefore the word of the LORD, all ye of the captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon:

(v) God will destroy false prophets Ahab and Zedekiah (29:21-23)

21 'This is what the LORD of armies, the God of Israel says concerning **Ahab** the son of Kolaiah and concerning **Zedekiah** the son of Maaseiah, who are prophesying to you falsely

in My name: "Behold, I am going to hand them over to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he will kill them before your eyes.

21 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab the son of Kolaiah and concerning Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, who are prophesying to you falsely in My name, 'Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he will slay them before your eyes.

21 This is what the LORD of the Heavenly Armies, the God of Israel, says about Kolaiah's son Ahab and Maaseiah's son Zedekiah, who are prophesying lies to you in my name, 'I'm about to give them into the domination of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he will kill them before your eyes.

21 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, of Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you in my name; Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall slay them before your eyes;

- He will make them a reproach to all the nations of the earth, not just Babylon.

- "...Ahab...Zedekiah" - don't get these two names confused, they are not the Ahab from the Northern Kingdom and this is not the Zedekiah the King, they are two false prophets mentioned by name

22 Because of them a curse will be used by all the exiles from Judah who are in Babylon, saying, 'May the LORD make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire,'

22 Because of them a curse will be used by all the exiles from Judah who are in Babylon, saying, "May the LORD make you like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire,

22 What happens to them will be the basis for a curse for all the Judean exiles who are in Babylon. People will say, "May the LORD make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the LORD roasted in the fire,

22 And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which are in Babylon, saying, The LORD make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire;

- Nebuchadnezzar had a thing about roasting with fire.

— Dan 3 (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego as a type, Nebuchadnezzar as the AntiChrist and the three Jews as Israel going through the tribulation).

— Fire is an OT idiom for the Tribulation

- There is another play on words here. Ahab the son of Kolaiah, because Kolaiah as a noun means curse and as a verb means to *burn or roast*.

23 because they acted foolishly in Israel, and committed adultery with their neighbors' wives, and falsely spoke words in My name which I did not command them. I am He who knows, and a witness," declares the LORD."

23 because they have acted foolishly in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives and have spoken words in My name falsely, which I did not command them; and I am He who knows and am a witness," declares the LORD."

23 because they did something stupid in Israel. They committed adultery with their neighbors' wives, and in my name they spoke lies that I didn't command them. I'm the one who knows, and I'm a witness," declares the LORD."

23 Because they have committed villainy in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them; even I know, and *am* a witness, saith the LORD.

(B) Shemiah's letter to the Jerusalemites to have Jeremiah rebuked (29:24-29)

24 Now you shall speak to Shemaiah the Nehelamite, saying,

24 To Shemaiah the Nehelamite you shall speak, saying,

24 "You are to say to Shemaiah of Nehelam:

24 *Thus* shalt thou also speak to Shemaiah the Nehelamite, saying,

- Nehelamite sounds like a geographical place, it also means *the dreamer*

25 "This is what the LORD of armies, the God of Israel says: 'Because you have sent letters in your own name to all the people who are in Jerusalem, and to the priest Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah, and to all the priests, saying,

25 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Because you have sent letters in your own name to all the people who are in Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah, the priest, and to all the priests, saying,

25 'This is what the LORD of the Heavenly Armies, the God of Israel, says: "Because you sent letters in your own name to all the people who are in Jerusalem, to Maaseiah's son Zephaniah the priest and to all the priests—

25 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Because thou hast sent letters in thy name unto all the people that *are* at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all the priests, saying,

- This Zephaniah is like the sergeant of arms, he was the chief warden in charge of the police regulations of the Temple

26 "The LORD has made you priest instead of Jehoiada the priest, to be the overseer of the house of the LORD for every insane person who prophesies, to put him in the stocks and in the iron collar.

26 "The LORD has made you priest instead of Jehoiada the priest, to be the overseer in the house of the LORD over every madman who prophesies, to put him in the stocks and in the iron collar,

26 The LORD made you a priest instead of Jehoiada the priest to serve in the LORD's Temple as an official against every crazy prophet, and to put him in stocks and restraints.

26 The LORD hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest, that ye should be officers in the house of the LORD, for every man *that is* mad, and maketh himself a prophet, that thou shouldest put him in prison, and in the stocks.

27 So now, why have you not rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth who prophesies to you,

27 now then, why have you not rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth who prophesies to you?

27 And now, why didn't you rebuke Jeremiah from Anathoth who prophesies to you?

27 Now therefore why hast thou not reproved Jeremiah of Anathoth, which maketh himself a prophet to you?

28 seeing that he has sent *word* to us in Babylon, saying, 'The exile will be long; build houses and live *in them*, and plant gardens and eat their produce'?"'"

28 For he has sent to us in Babylon, saying, '*The exile* will be long; build houses and live *in them* and plant gardens and eat their produce."'"

28 So he sent a message to us in Babylon: 'The exile will be long, so build houses and live in them. Plant gardens and eat their produce."'"

28 For therefore he sent unto us *in* Babylon, saying, This *captivity* is long: build ye houses, and dwell *in them*; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

29 Now Zephaniah the priest read this letter to Jeremiah the prophet.

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

29 Then Zephaniah the priest read this letter to Jeremiah the prophet,

29 And Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet.

(C) Jeremiah's second letter to the exiles (29:30-32)

(a) Shemiah's false prophecy (29:30-31)

30 Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying,

30 Then came the word of the LORD to Jeremiah, saying,

30 and this message from the LORD came to Jeremiah:

30 Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying,

31 "Send *word* to all the exiles, saying, 'This is what the LORD says concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite: "Because Shemaiah has prophesied to you, although I did not send him,

and he has made you trust in a lie,"

31 "Send to all the exiles, saying, 'Thus says the LORD concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite, "Because Shemaiah has prophesied to you, although I did not send him, and he has made you trust in a lie,"

31 "Send a message to all the exiles: 'This is what the LORD says about Shemaiah from Nehelam, "Because Shemaiah has prophesied to you, even though I didn't send him, and has made you trust a lie,"

31 Send to all them of the captivity, saying, Thus saith the LORD concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite; Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie:

(b) Shemiah's judgment (29:32)

32 therefore this is what the LORD says: "Behold, I am going to punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite and his descendants; he will not have anyone living among this people, and he will not see the good that I am going to do for My people," declares the LORD, "because he has spoken falsely against the LORD."'"

32 therefore thus says the LORD, "Behold, I am about to punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite and his descendants; he will not have anyone living among this people, and he will not see the good that I am about to do to My people," declares the LORD, "because he has preached rebellion against the LORD."'"

32 therefore, this is what the LORD says: "I'm about to judge Shemaiah from Nehelam along with his descendants. He won't have anyone related to him living among these people. Nor will he see the good that I'll do for my people," declares the LORD, "because he advocated rebellion against the LORD."'"

32 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among this people; neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the LORD; because he hath taught rebellion against the LORD.