

Reading Guide for Jeremiah 46:1-28

Introduction to the Collection of Oracles to the Nations (46:1)

This verse serves as a heading for the entire collection of Jeremiah's oracles against foreign nations (46:1-51:64). Like similar sections in the other prophetic books, the aim of these oracles is 1) to affirm Yahweh as Lord over all nations, 2) to pronounce judgment upon them for their idolatry and wickedness, and 3) to dissuade Judah from making alliances with them.

Three Oracles Concerning Egypt's Judgment (46:2-26)

1. The First Oracle Concerning Egypt, 605 B.C. (46:2-12)

Up to this point, Jeremiah had spent over twenty years prophesying concerning the Lord's judgment upon Judah through the coming Babylonian invasion (Jer 36:1-3) and it is now about to come to pass. According to the superscription (46:2), this oracle was given in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (605 B.C.), an extremely significant year in Biblical history. This was the year that Egypt led by Pharaoh Neco was defeated by the Babylonian army led by Nebuchadnezzar at the Battle of Carchemish. Four years earlier, in 609 B.C., Egypt had taken control of Judah after the fall of the Assyrian empire (2 Ki 23:33-35), but now they were forced to retreat back to Egypt, securing Babylon's control of Judah and the surrounding nations (2 Ki 24:7). With Babylon's grip on the region secure, they immediately subjugated Judah.

2. The Second Oracle Concerning Egypt, undated (46:13-24)

Jeremiah's second oracle predicts the Babylonian invasion of Egypt. The exact event and date of the battle that Jeremiah is referring to cannot be determined with certainty. Nevertheless, it powerfully describes the failure of Egypt's gods and kings to help them, even in their own land.

3. Egypt's Judgment and Eventual Restoration, undated (46:25-26)

This third oracle concerning Egypt again depicts their defeat at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, specifically pointing out the Lord's judgment upon the nation, their king, and their gods, as well as all who trust in them. However, this is not the final word. This oracle ends with the Lord declaring that, despite Egypt's defeat and exile, it will not last forever—as the Lord brought judgment, so also will He bring restoration. Babylon's dominance over Egypt and the exile of its people will end and the nation will once again be populated. Egypt's restoration is spoken of in similar language in Isaiah 19:18-25 and Ezekiel 29:13-16.

Israel's Judgment and Eventual Restoration (46:27-28, cf. 30:10-11)

In light of the previous oracle regarding Egypt's restoration, Israel is reminded that they *too* will return to their land after their own judgment and exile. It is true that God must discipline them for their sin, but He calls them to remember that He will not utterly destroy them but will preserve a remnant.