

Reading Guide for Jeremiah 40-44

INTRODUCTION (40:1-6)

These first six verses link the previous episode to the following one and explain how Jeremiah was released and allowed to settle among the Judean community that remained after the exile. Although this section opens with a message-reception formula that introduces a divine oracle, the word of the Lord does not actually appear until 41:9, indicating that in order for the oracle to be properly understood, the context behind it must be established.

The narrative opens with Nebuzaradan, a Babylonian captain, first recounting the reason for Jerusalem's disaster, then giving the option for Jeremiah to either go with him to Babylon or remain in Judah. The fact that Jeremiah wishes to stay provides an expectation of hope for the remaining community of Judeans.

Message-reception Formula with Occasion (40:1)

Nebuzaradan's Speech to Jeremiah (40:2-5b)

Reason for the Destruction of Jerusalem (vv. 2-3)

Jeremiah Given the Option to Stay in Judah (vv. 4-5ab)

Jeremiah Released and Given Provision (40:5c)

Jeremiah Chooses to Stay in Judah (40:6)

THE REMAINING JUDEANS FLEE TO EGYPT (40:7-43:7)

The next part of the narrative begins with a hopeful Judean community gathering under Gedaliah's governorship at Mizpah, and how the hope is tragically dashed when he is assassinated. This turn of events causes an upheaval in the new Judean community who, fearful of Babylonian retribution, desire to flee to Egypt. Although they appeal to Jeremiah for a word to the Lord, and promise to obey it, when the Lord says they should not go to Egypt, they refuse to listen. Because of their disobedience, they will face only curses from the Lord in Egypt.

A New Community Gathers to Gedaliah at Mizpah (40:7-12)

The Military Officers Gather to Gedaliah (vv. 7-8)

Gedaliah's Speech of Assurance (vv. 9-10)

The Remnant Community Gathers to Gedaliah (vv. 11-12)

Ishmael Assassinates Gedaliah and Slaughters the Pilgrims (40:13-41:9)

Johanah Reveals the Assassination Plot to Gedaliah (vv. 13-16)

Gedaliah Assassinated by Ishmael (41:1-3)

Ishmael Deceives and Slaughters the Pilgrims (vv. 4-9)

The Judean Community Begins their Flight to Egypt (41:10-18)

Johanah Rescues the Prisoners (vv. 10-14)

Ishmael Flees to Ammon (v. 15)

Johanah and the Judean Community Prepare to Flee to Egypt (vv. 15-18)

The Community Request a Word from the Lord (42:1-7)

The Community Requests a Word (vv. 1-3)

Jeremiah's Reply (v. 4)

The Community's Response (vv. 5-6)

Jeremiah Receives the Oracle (v. 7)

The Oracle from the Lord to the Community Concerning Going to Egypt (42:8-22)

Narrative Introduction (vv. 8-9a)

Quotation Formula (v. 9b)

Conditional Oracle of Blessing if They Obey the Word (vv. 10-12)

Conditions for Blessing (v. 10)

Exhortation to Not Fear (v. 11)

They Will Receive Mercy (v. 12a)

They Will Return to Their Land (v. 12b)

Conditional Oracle of Curse if They Disobey (vv. 13-18)

Conditions for the Curse (vv. 13-15a)

The Community will Fall Victim to What They Fear (vv. 15b-17)

The Community will Become A Horror and a Taunt in Egypt (v. 18abc)

They Will Not Return to the Land (v. 18d)

Jeremiah Reinforces the Oracle (v. 19)

Jeremiah Pronounces the Curse in Light of Their Disobedience (vv. 20-22)

Community Response (43:1-7)

The Community Refuses to Obey God's Word (vv. 1-4)

The Community Flees to Egypt (vv. 5-7)

ORACLE FROM EGYPT: THE JUDEANS WILL FIND NO SAFETY THERE (43:8-13)

Now in Egypt, Jeremiah delivers a sign-act and then reveals its interpretation. He is called to bury stones with mortar at the entrance to Pharaoh's palace, symbolizing that Nebuchadnezzar would shortly conquer Egypt and set up his throne over those stones. The Judean community that so desperately wanted to escape Nebuchadnezzar's judgment will inevitably face it again in Egypt.

Message-reception Formula (43:8)

Sign-Act: Jeremiah Marks a Spot in Pharaoh's Palace (43:9-10a)

Interpretation: Nebuchadnezzar will Conquer and Destroy Egypt (43:10b-13)

ORACLE TO THE JUDEANS IN EGYPT (44:1-30)

Jeremiah's last recorded prophecy is given to the Judeans in Egypt. They are reminded that the reason Judah was judged was to prevent them from continuing in that same sin. However, because they refused to turn from their ways, the same curses that they faced in Judah will come to them in Egypt. The community responds by justifying their actions, saying that, from their perspective, things were better when they worshipped other gods. The Lord responds, leaving them to their stubborn will, assuring them they will not escape judgment.

Judgment Oracle (44:1-14)

Message-reception Formula with Setting (v. 1)

Quotation Formula (v. 2a)

Rebellion to the Word of the Lord is the Reason for the Past Disaster (vv. 2b-6)

Accusation: Why Continue in Sin? (vv. 7-10)

Sentence: The Judeans who Fleed to Egypt will Not Survive (vv. 11-14)

The Community's Response (44:15-19)

Narrative Introduction (v. 15)

The Community will Not Obey the Lord, but Rather Serve Other Gods (vv. 16-19)

Jeremiah's Reply (44:20-23)

Narrative Introduction (v. 20)

Rebellion to the Word of the Lord is the Reason for the Past Disaster (vv. 21-23)

Judgment Oracle (44:24-30)

Narrative Introduction (v. 24a)

Call to Hear the Word of the Lord (v. 24b)

Accusation: Worshipping Other Gods (v. 25)

Sentence: Those Who Fleed to Egypt will Suffer Curses (vv. 26-28)

A Confirming Sign (v. 29)

Oracle: The King of Egypt will be Conquered by Nebuchadnezzar (v. 30)