

## **Jeremiah 42:1-22**

### **Treachery After Jerusalem's Destruction**

During the siege, many Jews had fled to surrounding countries like Moab, Edom and the Ammonites. Now they were returning at the urging of Gedaliah, the man Babylon had placed as governor of Judah after the destruction of Jerusalem.

But some groups were still opposed to anything related to Babylon. Johanan the son of Kareah was in command of a group of Jewish fighters who returned and warned Gedaliah that another leader, Ishmael, was planning to murder him on orders from the king of the Ammonites. But Gedaliah did not believe the report.

According to Josephus, Gedaliah hosted a banquet and invited Ishmael and his group. When Gedaliah was full of wine, Ishmael slaughtered him. Later they also killed another group of returning Jews as well as some Babylonian officials, and threw all the bodies into a pit.

Apparently some of the daughters of King Zedekiah had been left in the care of Gedaliah. Ishmael took them along with the rest of the retinue of murdered governor and started toward the land of the Ammonites.

But they were intercepted by Johanan, who had heard about Ishmael's treachery. He attacked and freed all the captives, sending Ishmael back to the king of Ammon empty handed.

But now the situation was precarious. The Babylonians would be enraged by the death of their chosen governor Gedaliah and their own officials. Johanan's plan was to try to escape to Egypt. and since Jeremiah was among the freed captives, they approached the prophet to ask him to seek the will of the Lord on what to do.

After 10 days, Jeremiah gave his response.

**Jeremiah 42:19** - "The LORD hath said concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah; Go ye not into Egypt: know certainly that I have admonished you this day."

Furthermore, Jeremiah said, their sincerity was false. They had no intention of staying, no matter what God said.

This was the same message he had always given. God would protect and bless them if they stayed in the land. If they fled to Egypt they would be destroyed.

### **Babylon and Egypt**

Spiritually, Babylon represents false religion, while Egypt represents the world system generally.

The Children of Israel were slaves in Egypt. They went there because of a famine, not trusting that God would meet their needs in the Promised Land. Their troubles centered on work - making bricks without straw. The temptation was to seek help from Egypt/the world, either for food or protection.

Israel was not described as being particularly tempted to worship the gods of Egypt. It was all about toil and labor and physical survival. Egypt was described as a "furnace" (**Deuteronomy 4:20**) because of the suffering, oppression and harsh conditions there.

Isaac is warned not to go to Egypt:

- **Genesis 26:1-2** - "And there was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar. And the Lord appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of."

But Jacob in similar circumstances is told to go to Egypt:

- **Genesis 46:3-4** - "And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes."

Part of God's plan was to test them in Egypt, and allow them to increase in numbers until after 400 years "the sin of the Amorites becomes full" and they could claim the Promised Land.

But we are only strangers and pilgrims in this world. We are "in the world, but not of the world" (**John 17:10-15**).

After the Exodus, the world/Egypt could not be a legitimate source of help. Jacob did not want to be buried in Egypt, and they carried his bones to the land God had promised:

- **Genesis 47:29** - "...bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt." So Jacob was buried with his ancestors in the cave of Machpelah (**Genesis 49:29-31**).

The prophets were continually warning Israel against seeking alliance or aid from Egypt.

- **Isaiah 30:1-2** - "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin: That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!"

## **Babylon**

In contrast, Israel is sent to Babylon because they had been going there spiritually all along - first worshipping idols, Baal and other strange gods, and later participating in a form of worship of Yahweh without power, a false piety filled with hypocrisy, trusting in their works.

Babylon is pictured as a great whore who sits on "many waters" (**Revelation 17:1**) - i.e. all the peoples of the earth go to her for illicit sexual/spiritual relations.

- **Revelation 18:23** - "...by thy sorceries were all nations deceived."

Israel's idolatry had made her just like Babylon and the rest of the pagan world.

Sexual union is a picture of spiritual union. The ideal is the Bride and the Bridegroom - Israel was said to be married to God. Later the church is described as the Bride and Christ is the Bridegroom, a relationship based on self-giving love.

When Israel began to worship idols, she was said to be "playing the harlot" like an adulterous, unfaithful wife.

Spiritual interaction with false gods, idols, sorcery and magic is illegitimate and is called both adultery and prostitution, and is reflective of mutual self-seeking and gain. In fact, Israel was said to be in the unusual case of a prostitute paying her lovers rather than the other way around (**Ezekiel 16:33-34**). The payment would be offerings to the gods.

By spiritually playing the harlot Israel took on the characteristics of the Great Whore, Babylon.

God's command to Israel was to not go down to Egypt for help.

His command concerning Babylon was to "come out of her, my people!" (**Revelation 18:4**)

If you are in Babylon, your thinking goes along these lines:

'I SIT as A QUEEN AND I AM NOT A WIDOW, and will never see mourning," (**Revelation 18:7**).

Israel and Babylon are actually merged in Jeremiah's view, and the clue is in their foreheads:

- **Jeremiah 3:3** - "Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed."

- **Revelation 17:5** - "And upon her forehead a name was written a name, a mystery, 'Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth'"

Babylonian "doctrine" is a mishmash of positive thinking, pride, self-regard and self-

deception. The relationship is solely transactional. Suffering has no meaning. The true God is nowhere in sight. And the interaction leaves you empty rather than satisfied.

## Bondage

Egypt and Babylon are two ways of signifying bondage, which is really slavery to sin and self:

- **John 8:34** - "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."

- **2 Peter 2:19** - "...a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him."

- **Galatians 4:7-9** - "So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, you are also an heir through God. 8 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. 9 But now that you know God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you are turning back to those weak and worthless principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?"

- **Galatians 5:1** - "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

We can also be in bondage to the Law, depending on our good works for salvation rather than grace. This is just a form of false religion/Babylon. But the "Jerusalem that not is" is also a reflection of Egypt:

- **Revelation 11:8** - "And [the two witnesses'] bodies will lie in the street of the great city which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified."

Like Babylon, Sodom was another city where Lot and his family were summoned to "come out of her" before it was destroyed.

## The End of Jeremiah's Story:

This Jewish group did flee into Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them. When they arrived, they burned incense "unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her" (**Jeremiah 44:19**) just as they had done in the land of Judah.

The Queen of Heaven was the Babylonian fertility goddess Ishtar/Astarte, who served as the template for Babylon as the Great Whore of Revelation (**Revelation 17**).

Rabbinical sources and early church fathers Tertullian and Jerome say that Jeremiah was martyred by stoning in Egypt by his own people. The words "some died by stoning" in **Hebrews 11:37** are quite possibly an allusion to Jeremiah's death.

And then those Jews who stoned him were all either killed themselves or taken back to

Babylon when Babylon invaded Egypt, just as Jeremiah had foretold.

An Alternate view - Jerusalem as Babylon

<https://bible.org/seriespage/chapter-4-evidence-jerusalem-harlot>