

PART TWO

**ORACLES AGAINST
THE NATIONS**

JEREMIAH 25:15-38 and 46-51

NOTE. In the Greek Septuagint Version the 'Oracles against the Nations' (which are numbered as chapters 46-51 in the Hebrew Bible) are inserted into chapter 25:15-38. Not only the placing of the Oracles, but also the sequence is different from the Hebrew Bible. I have decided to follow the Greek by placing the Oracles here, as this probably represents the order in an earlier Hebrew Version. However I will be following the same sequence as the Hebrew Bible. The Header of every odd page gives the Hebrew reference. The reference to the Greek is included in brackets.

^{25:15}For thus YHWH, the God of Israel, said to me: Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. ¹⁶They shall drink and stagger and go out of their minds because of the sword that I am sending among them.

¹⁷So I took the cup from YHWH's hand, and made all the nations to whom YHWH sent me drink it: ¹⁸Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, its kings and officials, to make them a desolation and a waste, an object of hissing and of cursing, as they are today; ¹⁹Pharaoh king of Egypt, his servants, his officials, and all his people; ²⁰all the mixed people; all the kings of the land of Uz; all the kings of the land of the Philistines—Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod; ²¹Edom, Moab, and the Ammonites; ²²all the kings of Tyre, all the kings of Sidon, and the kings of the coastland across the sea; ²³Dedan, Tema, Buz, and all who have shaven temples; ²⁴all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the mixed peoples that live in the desert; ²⁵all the kings of Zimri, all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of Media; ²⁶all the kings of the north, far and near, one after another, and all the kingdoms of the world that are on the face of the earth. And after them the king of Sheshach shall drink. ²⁷Then you shall say to them, Thus says YHWH of hosts, the God of Israel: Drink, get drunk and vomit, fall and rise no more, because of the sword that I am sending among you. ²⁸And if they refuse to accept the cup from your hand to drink, then you shall say to them: Thus says YHWH of hosts: You must drink! ²⁹See, I am beginning to bring disaster on the city that is called by my name, and how can you possibly avoid punishment? You shall not go unpunished, for I am summoning a sword against all the inhabitants of the earth, says YHWH of hosts.

In the Greek Septuagint Version, this passage is found in chapter 32:15-29, after the 'oracles against the nations' which are in chapters 25:14 to 32:14 in the Septuagint.

McKane comes down on the side of those who think that it is probable that Jeremiah's prophetic mission was directed to Judah, and that he did not utter the 'oracles against foreign nations' (see his commentary page 647; see also the commentary on Jeremiah 1:5,10).

The image of a cup of wine, identified the God's anger, is a traditional one (see Jeremiah 51:7; Obadiah 16; Ezekiel 23:31-34; Isaiah 51:17, 22; Habakkuk 2:16; Zechariah 12:2; Lamentations 4:21; Psalm 75:9).

The action is presented as bringing about the effect it symbolises (compare 13:1-7; 19:1-2, 10-11).

Jerusalem and the towns of Judah head the list of peoples to suffer the effects of YHWH's anger (verses 18 and 29), but all nations come under God's judgment.

If, as is likely, the reference to 'the kings of Media' (verse 25) is a reference to Persia, this passage could belong to the Persian (and so post-exilic) period.

This final passage in chapter 25 [chapter 32 in the Greek version] is an appendix to 25:15-19. It oscillates between YHWH's judgment of Judah and his judgment of all the nations at the time of Nebuchadrezzar when the whole area was torn apart in an orgy of destruction.

In verse 30 the flow of red grape juice from the treading of the grapes is a fitting image for the spilling of blood. Nebuchadrezzar is the one causing the bloodshed (see 25:9, 16, 27), but the authors see him as an instrument of YHWH's judgment.

The whole passage is stating that there is no avoiding YHWH's devastating judgment.

³⁰You, therefore, shall prophesy against them all these words, and say to them: YHWH roars from on high, from his holy habitation raises his voice; he roars mightily against his fold, and shouts, like those who tread grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth.

³¹The clamour resounds to the ends of the earth, for YHWH has an indictment against the nations; he is entering into judgment with all flesh, and the guilty he puts to the sword, says YHWH.

³²Thus says YHWH of hosts: Disaster is spreading from nation to nation, a great tempest is stirring from the farthest parts of the earth!

³³Those slain by YHWH on that day shall extend from one end of the earth to the other. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried; they shall become dung on the surface of the ground.

³⁴Wail, you shepherds, and cry out; roll in ashes, you lords of the flock, for the days of your slaughter have come—and your dispersions, you shall fall like a choice vessel.

³⁵Flight shall fail the shepherds, there shall be no escape for the lords of the flock.

³⁶Hark! the cry of the shepherds, the wail of the lords of the flock! For YHWH is despoiling their pasture, and the peaceful folds are devastated, because of the fierce anger of YHWH.

³⁸Like a lion he has left his covert; for their land has become a waste because of the cruel sword, and because of his fierce anger.

Egypt defeated by Babylon

46:1The word of YHWH that came to the prophet Jeremiah concerning the nations.

2Concerning Egypt, about the army of Pharaoh Neco, king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates at Carchemish and which King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon defeated in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah:

3Prepare buckler and shield,
and advance for battle!

4Harness the horses;
mount the steeds!
Take your stations with your helmets,
whet your lances,
put on your coats of mail!

5Why do I see them terrified?
They have fallen back;
their warriors are beaten down,
and have fled in haste.
They do not look back—
terror is all around! says YHWH.

6The swift cannot flee away,
nor can the warrior escape;
in the north by the river Euphrates
they have stumbled and fallen.

7Who is this, rising like the Nile,
like rivers whose waters surge?

8Egypt rises like the Nile,
like rivers whose waters surge.
It said, Let me rise,
let me cover the earth,
let me destroy cities
and their inhabitants.

9Advance, O horses,
and dash madly, O chariots!
Let the warriors go forth:
Ethiopia and Put
who carry the shield,
the Libyans, who draw the bow.

The Septuagint does not have verse 1. It was inserted by those responsible for moving these oracles to the end of the scroll. 46:2-9 is 26:2-9 in the Greek. Holladay concludes that these oracles are 'by and large authentic to Jeremiah' (Vol 2, page 313). Other scholars (see Carroll, pages 751-759) conclude that there are no compelling reasons to attribute any of the oracles in this section to Jeremiah. Like Isaiah 13-23 and Ezekiel 25-32, they are introduced into the scroll by later editors.

A key theme of Jeremiah is that YHWH is king. It is YHWH who used Babylon to punish Judah for its infidelity. These oracles give expression to the sentiment expressed well in Psalm 96:10, 'Say among the nations, YHWH is king!'

In the first part of this section (chapters 46-49), we see the same kind of dynamic in relation to other nations, beginning with Egypt (note 43:10-13; 44:30). Finally, Babylon itself has to face the consequences of its over-arching pride and unjust violence (chapters 50-51).

Verse 2 attaches the following poem (verses 3-12) to the defeat of Egypt at Carchemish in 605 by the Babylonian army led by the crown prince, Nebuchadrezzar. Is it a ritual incantation composed at that time (though not by Jeremiah)?

In verses 3-9 the kind of imagery we have learned to expect in relation to Babylon's aggression against Judah is now utilised against Egypt.

Verse 6 echoes from Amos 2:14.

The Egyptian defeat is seen as a 'Day of YHWH'. Egypt is being punished (for the murder of King Josiah at Megiddo in 609?).

Egypt was renowned for its skill in medicine. Here the Jewish poet is challenging Egypt to seek healing in Israel. One is left with the impression that healing is impossible.

**¹⁰That day is the day of the Lord
YHWH of hosts,
a day of retribution,
to gain vindication from his foes.
The sword shall devour and be sated,
and drink its fill of their blood.
For the Lord YHWH of hosts
holds a sacrifice
in the land of the north by the
river Euphrates.**

**¹¹Go up to Gilead, and take balm,
O virgin daughter Egypt!
In vain you have used many medicines;
there is no healing for you.**

**¹²The nations have heard of your shame,
and the earth is full of your cry;
for warrior has stumbled against warrior;
both have fallen together.**

46:13 The word that YHWH spoke to the prophet Jeremiah about the coming of King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon to attack the land of Egypt:

14 Declare in Egypt, and proclaim in Migdol;
proclaim in Memphis and Tahpanhes;
Say, "Take your stations and be ready,
for the sword devours all around you."

15 Why has Apis fled? Why did your bull not stand?
Because YHWH thrust him down.

16 The rabble stumbles and falls,
and one says to another,
"Come, let us go back to our own people
to the land of our birth,
away from the destroying sword."

17 Give Pharaoh, king of Egypt, the name
"Braggart who missed his chance."

18 As I live, says the King, YHWH of hosts,
this word will come to you
as sure as Tabor is among the mountains,
and Carmel is by the sea.

19 Pack your bags for exile,
you who reside in Egypt!
For Memphis shall become a waste,
a ruin, without inhabitant.

20 A beautiful heifer was Egypt;
a gadfly from the north attacked her.

21 Even her mercenaries in her midst
were like fatted calves;
they too have turned and fled together,
they did not stand firm;
for the day of their calamity overtook them,
the time of their punishment.

22 She makes a sound like a snake slithering away;
for her enemies march in force,
and come against her with axes,
like those who fell trees.

23 They have cut down her forest, says YHWH,
though it is boundless,
because they are more numerous than locusts;
they are too many to count.

24 Egypt has been shamed;
handed over to a people from the north.

This passage is in chapter 26 in the Septuagint.

The only solidly attested attack of Egypt by Nebuchadrezzar was in 568. It was a punitive expedition, rather than a full-scale military invasion. The poem (verses 14-24) seems to have been occasioned by that expedition, and its author was hoping for a complete defeat of Egypt – a hope that was never realised.

The prophet Jeremiah does see Nebuchadrezzar as YHWH's instrument in punishing Judah, but to extend this to see him as YHWH's instrument to bring about the collapse of Egypt does seem to suggest an interest that is outside the bounds of the urgent concerns that occupied Jeremiah.

'Memphis' (verse 14) was the capital of Lower (northern) Egypt. 'Apis' (verse 15) is the bull of Memphis, sacred to the god of the city, Ptah.

It was to Tahpanhes that Johanan and the other Judeans fled (43:7-8; 44:1).

The poem is urging the soldiers of Egypt, including the mercenaries, to desert. There is no hope of their surviving against the forces of Babylon.

'Amon'(verse 25) is the god of Thebes, the capital of Upper (southern) Egypt.

YHWH is portrayed as being behind the punitive expedition.

Verse 26 is not found in the Septuagint. It appears to be a late insertion, recognising the fact that Egypt never experienced the kind of annihilation spoken of by the preceding poem.

Verses 27-28 (also in 30:10-11) echo the kind of message that is found in the Third Part of the Isaiah scroll. It may well be exilic and from the same community of temple singers.

Nebuchadrezzar, who is portrayed in the previous verses as being YHWH's instrument in the defeat of Egypt, is the same Nebuchadrezzar whom YHWH uses as his instrument in punishing Judah. Judah, however, need not fear, for YHWH is with them and will bring them salvation.

**²⁵YHWH of hosts, the God of Israel, said:
See, I am bringing punishment upon
Amon of Thebes, and Pharaoh, and Egypt
and her gods and her kings, upon Pharaoh
and those who trust in him. ²⁶I will hand
them over to those who seek their life, to
King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon and his
officers. Afterward Egypt shall be inhab-
ited as in the days of old, says YHWH.**

**²⁷But as for you, have no fear,
my servant Jacob,
and do not be dismayed, O Israel;
for I am going to save you
from far away,
and your offspring from the land
of their captivity.
Jacob shall return and have quiet
and ease,
and no one shall make him afraid.**

**²⁸As for you, have no fear,
my servant Jacob, says YHWH,
for I am with you.
I will make an end of all the nations
among which I have banished you,
but I will not make an end of you!
I will chastise you in just measure,
and I will by no means leave you
unpunished.**

The Philistines

^{47:1}The word of YHWH that came to the prophet Jeremiah concerning the Philistines, before Pharaoh attacked Gaza:

²Thus says YHWH:

**See, waters rising out of the north
have become an overflowing torrent;
they flow over the land
and all that fills it,
the city and those who live in it.
People cry out in distress,
all the inhabitants of the land wail.**

**³At the noise of the pounding
of the hoofs of his stallions,
at the clatter of his chariots,
at the rumbling of their wheels,
parents do not turn back for children,
so feeble are their hands,**

**⁴because the day of spoiling has come
to destroy all the Philistines,
to cut off from Tyre and Sidon
every helper that remains.
YHWH is destroying the Philistines,
the remnant of the island of Caphtor.**

**⁵Shaved is the head of Gaza,
Ashkelon is silenced.
O remnant of the Anakim!
How long will you gash yourselves?**

**⁶Ah, sword of YHWH!
How long until you are quiet?
Put yourself into your scabbard,
rest and be still!**

**⁷How can it be quiet,
when YHWH has given it an order?
Against Ashkelon and against
the seashore—
there he has appointed it.**

This passage is 29:1-7 in the Septuagint.

For other oracles against Philistia see Amos 1:6-8; Isaiah 14:29-32; Ezekiel 25:15-17; Zephaniah 2:4-7; Zechariah 9:5-7.

It is possible that those responsible for the introductory note (verse 1) are associating the following poem with an attack on Gaza by Pharaoh Neco on his way to, or on his return from, Megiddo (where Josiah was killed) in 609. They seem by the word 'before' to want to present the poem as a prediction by Jeremiah.

However there are no persuasive reasons to associate the poem with Jeremiah. The author appears to be celebrating the attack on Philistia by Nebuchadrezzar after his victory at Carchemish in 605, with the aim of presenting this as a carrying out of YHWH's purpose (see verse 4).

The reference to 'Tyre and Sidon' (verse 4) is unexpected in a poem about the Philistines. 'The island of Caphtor' may refer to Crete.

In Joshua 11:22, the Deuteronomic School write: 'None of the Anakim was left in the land of the Israelites; some remained only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod.'

For other oracles against Moab (see map page 189) see Isaiah 15-16; Amos 2:1-3; Zephaniah 2:8-11; Ezekiel 25:8-11.

Apart from the introductory note, the rest of verse 1 through to verse 11 is a poem celebrating the destruction of Moab. The enemy is not named, but, as in the earlier oracles, it is YHWH acting through Nebuchadrezzar and the Babylonian army.

Nebo, Kiriathaim and Misgab are in northern Moab. It would appear from verse 2 that the poet is envisaging Heshbon as already occupied. A council of war there is planning the rest of the campaign.

Horonaim (verse 3) is in the south of Moab, as is Zoar and Luhith.

Chemosh (verse 8) is the god of Moab. The god has been taken, and so the whole country is lost. There are parallels here with the oracle on the destruction of Moab found in Isaiah 15 (see especially 15:5). It is possible that both poems come from the same scribal community.

Here again, the destruction of Moab is envisaged as the work, ultimately, of YHWH for the failure of the Moabites to carry out 'the work of YHWH' (verse 10).

¹Concerning Moab. Thus says YHWH of hosts, the God of Israel:

**Alas for Nebo, it is laid waste!
Kiriathaim is put to shame, it is taken;
Misgab is put to shame and broken down.**

²The renown of Moab is no more.

**In Heshbon they planned evil against her:
"Come, let us put an end to that nation!"
You also, O Madmen, shall be silenced;
the sword pursues you.**

**³Hark! a cry from Horonaim,
"Desolation and great destruction!"**

**⁴"Moab is destroyed!"
At Zoar cries of anguish are heard.**

**⁵For at the ascent of Luhith
they go up weeping bitterly;
for at the descent of Horonaim
a lament is heard.**

**⁶Flee! Save yourselves!
Be like a wild ass in the desert!**

**⁷Surely, because you trusted in your
deeds and in your strongholds,
you also shall be taken;
Chemosh shall go out into exile,
with his priests and his attendants.**

**⁸The destroyer will come upon every town,
and no one will escape.
the valley will perish,
and the plain will be destroyed,
as YHWH has spoken.**

**⁹Make Moab a salt waste,
for she will surely fall;
her towns shall become a desolation,
with no inhabitant in them.**

**¹⁰Accursed is the one who is slack in doing
the work of YHWH;
and accursed is the one who keeps back
the sword from bloodshed.**

**¹¹Moab has been at ease from his youth,
settled like wine on its dregs;
not been emptied from vessel to vessel,
nor ever decanted;
therefore his flavour has remained
and his aroma is unspoiled.**

Destruction in Moab

48:12Therefore, the time is surely coming, says YHWH, when I shall send to him decanters to decant him, and empty his vessels, and break his jars in pieces. **13**Then Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel, their confidence.

14How can you say, "We are heroes and mighty warriors"?

15Moab's destroyer will mount an attack, and the choicest of his young men will gone down in a slaughter, says the King, whose name is YHWH of hosts.

16The calamity of Moab is near at hand and his doom approaches swiftly.

17Mourn over him, all you his neighbours, and all who know his name; say, "How the mighty scepter is broken, the glorious staff!"

18Come down from glory, and sit on the parched ground, inhabitants of Dibon! For the destroyer of Moab will mount an attack on you he will destroy your strongholds.

19Stand by the road and watch, you inhabitants of Aroer! Ask the man fleeing and the woman escaping; say, "What has happened?"

20Moab is put to shame, for it is broken down; wail and cry! Tell it by the Arnon, that Moab is laid waste.

21Judgment has come upon the tableland, upon Holon, and Jahzah, and Mephaath, **22**and Dibon, and Nebo, and Beth-diblatthaim, **23**and Kiriathaim, and Beth-gamul, and Beth-meon, **24**and Kerioth, and Bozrah, and all the towns of the land of Moab, far and near. **25**The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is broken, says YHWH.

This passage is in 31:12-25 in the Septuagint.

Moab prided itself on its wine-making. It has grown indolent and its wine jars will be shattered.

Verses 14-20 is another poem celebrating the destruction of Judah's traditional enemy, Moab – a destruction determined by 'the King whose name is YHWH of hosts'(verse 15).

Dibon sits on two peaks. It will be forced to crumble into the surrounding desert.

Aroer is a few miles to the southwest of Dibon.

The River Arnon is the northern border of ancient Moab, and divided south from north Moab when the Moabites extended north into the ancient lands of the Amorites (and the territory claimed by the tribe of Gad).

The prose supplement (verses 21-22) highlight the comprehensive destruction of Moab.

Comparison with Isaiah 15-16 suggests a connection between the two oracles.

The element of lament that is expressed in the oracle underscores the extent of the devastation that will be experienced when YHWH's punishment of Moab is realised.

'Sibmah' (verse 32) is in the region of Moab controlled from Heshbon. The tribe of Reuben laid claim to it (see Numbers 32:38).

²⁶Make him drunk, because he magnified himself against YHWH; let Moab wallow in his vomit; he too shall become a laughingstock. ²⁷Israel was a laughingstock for you, though he was not caught among thieves; but whenever you spoke of him you shook your head!

**²⁸Leave the towns, and live on the rock,
O inhabitants of Moab!
Be like the dove that nests
on the sides of the mouth of a gorge.**

**²⁹We have heard of the pride of Moab—
he is very proud—
of his loftiness, his pride, and his arrogance,
and the haughtiness of his heart.**

**³⁰I myself know his insolence, says YHWH;
his boasts are false, his deeds are false.**

**³¹Therefore I wail for Moab; I cry out for all Moab;
for the people of Kir-heres I mourn.**

**³²More than for Jazer I weep for you, O vine of Sibmah!
Your branches crossed over the sea,
reached as far as Jazer;
upon your summer fruits and your vintage
the destroyer has fallen.**

**³³Gladness and joy have been taken away
from the fruitful land of Moab;
I have stopped the wine from the vats;
no one treads the grapes with shouts of joy;
the shouting is not the shout of joy.**

³⁴Heshbon and Elealeh cry out; as far as Jahaz they utter their voice, from Zoar to Horonaim and Eglath-shelishiyah. For even the waters of Nimrim have become desolate. ³⁵And I will bring to an end in Moab, says YHWH, those who offer sacrifice at a high place and make offerings to their gods. ³⁶Therefore my heart moans for Moab like a flute, and my heart moans like a flute for the people of Kir-heres; for the riches they gained have perished. ³⁷For every head is shaved and every beard cut off; on all the hands there are gashes, and on the loins sackcloth. ³⁸On all the housetops of Moab and in the squares there is nothing but lamentation; for I have broken Moab like a vessel that no one wants, says YHWH. ³⁹How it is broken! How they wail! How Moab has turned his back in shame! So Moab has become a derision and a horror to all his neighbours.

There is no escape

⁴⁰For thus says YHWH:

Look, he swoops down like an eagle,
and spread his wings against Moab;

⁴¹the towns are taken
and the strongholds seized.

The hearts of the warriors of Moab,
on that day,
shall be like the heart of a woman
in labour.

⁴²Moab shall be destroyed as a people,
because he magnified himself
against YHWH.

⁴³Terror, pit, and trap
are before you, O inhabitants of Moab!
says YHWH.

⁴⁴Everyone who flees from the terror
shall fall into the pit,
and everyone who climbs out of the pit
shall be caught in the trap.
For I will bring these things upon Moab
in the year of their punishment,
says YHWH.

⁴⁵In the shadow of Heshbon
fugitives stop exhausted;
for a fire has gone out from Heshbon,
a flame from the house of Sihon;
it has destroyed the forehead of Moab,
the scalp of the people of tumult.

⁴⁶Woe to you, O Moab!
The people of Chemosh have perished,
for your sons have been taken captive,
and your daughters into captivity.

⁴⁷Yet I will restore the fortunes of Moab
in the latter days, says YHWH.

The oracle of doom against Moab ends
here.

Verses 40-41 and 45-47 are not found in the Septuagint. The rest are found in chapter 31. This highlights the difficulty of ascertaining with any precision when texts were incorporated into the scroll as we now have it.

This final section completes a long chapter concerned with the fate of Moab. The length itself shows how focused the writers of Judah were on their neighbour on the far side of the Dead Sea. They certainly didn't wish them well, though verse 47 indicates that the final authors recognised that the destruction hoped for and commented on in chapter 48 did not lead to a complete collapse. Moab was in good shape at the time the scroll was finalised.

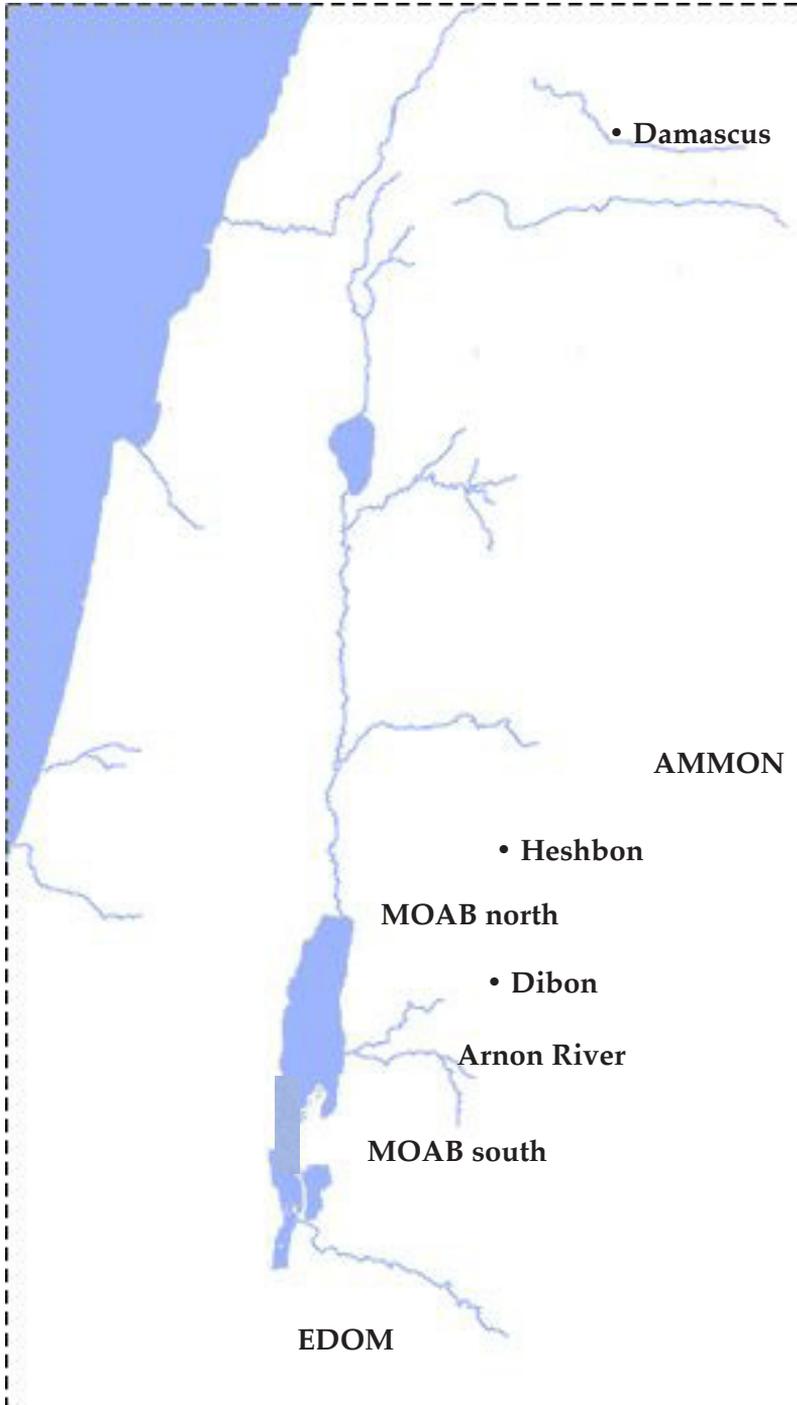
The reference to Sihon (verse 45) is an allusion to the time when Moab's northern border was the Arnon River. North of that, and centred on Heshbon, Amorite invaders had taken control. The Book of Numbers – itself a post-exilic supplement to the Torah – retrojects this struggle between the Amorites and the Moabites back to the time of Moses, when Sihon is portrayed as being defeated by the Israelites prior to their entering the Promised Land, and the Amorite territory (north Moab) was given to the tribes of Gad and Reuben. In relation to verses 45-46 see Numbers 21:28-29.

Moab Jeremiah 48

Ammon Jeremiah 49:1-6

Edom Jeremiah 49:7-22

Damascus Jeremiah 49:23-27



^{49:1}Concerning the Ammonites. Thus says YHWH:

Has Israel no sons?
Has he no heir?
Why then has Milcom dispossessed
Gad,
and his people settled in its towns?

²Therefore, the time is surely coming,
says YHWH,
when I will sound the battle alarm
against Rabbah of the Ammonites;
it shall become a desolate mound,
and its villages shall be burned
with fire;
then Israel shall dispossess those
who dispossessed him,
says YHWH.

³Wail for the city is laid waste!
Cry out, O daughters of Rabbah!
Put on sackcloth, lament,
and slash yourselves with whips!
For Milcom shall go into exile,
with his priests and his attendants.

⁴Why do you boast in your strength?
Your strength is ebbing,
O faithless daughter.
You trusted in your treasures,
saying, "Who will attack me?"

⁵I am going to bring terror upon you,
says the Lord YHWH of hosts,
from all your neighbours,
and you will be scattered,
each headlong,
with no one to gather the fugitives.

⁶But afterward I will restore the fortunes
of the Ammonites, says YHWH.

This passage is in 30:17-21 of the Septuagint.

This oracle against the Ammonites (see map page 189) lacks any keen prophetic insight, or even connection with historical reality. One might even see it as encouraging illusions.

For other oracles against Ammon see Amos 1:13-15; Zephaniah 2:8-11; Ezekiel 21:20, 28-32; 25:1-7.

The author finds no sense in the Ammonites occupying territory given by YHWH to the tribe of Gad. Even though Gad has been wiped out (see Amos 1:3,13), the territory by right belongs to Israel.

Milcom is the god of Ammon. The author appears confident that the territory will revert to YHWH, and so to Israel!

Verse 3 associates with Milcom funeral rites and a cult of the dead that the Bible elsewhere associates with worship of Molech.

Verse 6 is not found in the Septuagint. It may have been added when Ptolemy Philadelphos restored Rabbah in the second century BC and renamed it Philadelphia.

This is an oracle full of violent imagery. The lack of any element of lament is noticeable. The author experiences a violent joy at the thought of the destruction of Judah's long-standing foe to the south (see map page 189).

Another interesting factor is the close relationship of much of the language with the prophetic scroll of Obadiah.

'Teman' (verse 7) is in the north of Edom. 'Dedan' (verse 8) is to the south-east of Edom. Its inhabitants are in danger of being caught up in the destruction.

For verses 9-10 compare Obadiah 5-6.

'Bozrah' (verse 13) was Edom's chief city.

For verses 14-16 compare Obadiah 1-4.

⁷Concerning Edom.

Thus says YHWH of hosts:

**Is there no longer wisdom in Teman?
Has counsel perished from the
prudent?**

Has their wisdom vanished?

**⁸Flee, turn back, get down low,
inhabitants of Dedan!**

**For I will bring the calamity of Esau
upon him,
the time when I punish him.**

**⁹If grape-gatherers came to you,
would they not leave gleanings?
If thieves came by night,
even they would pillage only
what they wanted.**

**¹⁰But as for me, I have stripped Esau bare,
I have uncovered his hiding places,
and he is not able to conceal himself.
His offspring are destroyed, his kinsfolk
and his neighbours; and he is no more.**

**¹¹Am I to maintain your orphans?
Are your widows to rely on me?**

**¹²For thus says YHWH: If those who do not
deserve to drink the cup still have to drink
it, shall you be the one to go unpunished?
You shall not go unpunished; you must
drink it. ¹³For by myself I have sworn, says
YHWH, that Bozrah shall become an ob-
ject of horror and ridicule, a waste, and an
object of cursing; and all her towns shall be
perpetual wastes.**

**¹⁴I have heard tidings from YHWH,
and a messenger has been sent
among the nations:**

**"Gather yourselves together and
come against her,
and rise up for battle!"**

Oracle against Edom

^{49:15}For I will make you least among
the nations,
despised by humankind.

¹⁶The terror you inspire
and the pride of your heart have
deceived you,
you who live in the clefts of the rock,
who hold the height of the hill.
Although you make your nest as high
as the eagle's,
from there I will bring you down,
says YHWH.

¹⁷Edom shall become an object of horror;
everyone who passes by it will be horrified
and will hiss because of all its disasters. ¹⁸As
when Sodom and Gomorrah and their neigh-
bors were overthrown, says YHWH, no one
shall live there, nor shall anyone settle in it.

¹⁹Like a lion coming up from the thickets
of the Jordan against a perennial pasture,
I will suddenly chase Edom from it;
and I will appoint over it
whomever I choose.
For who is like me? Who can summon me?
Who is the shepherd who can
withstand me?

²⁰Therefore hear the plan that YHWH has
made against Edom and the purposes that he
has formed against the inhabitants of Teman:
Surely the little ones of the flock shall be
dragged away; surely their fold shall be ap-
palled at their fate.

²¹At the sound of their fall the earth
shall tremble;
their cry shall be heard at the Red Sea.

²²Look, he shall mount up and swoop down
like an eagle,
and spread his wings against Bozrah,
and the heart of the warriors of Edom
in that day
shall be like the heart of a woman
in labour.

This passage is 30:9-16 in the
Septuagint.

According to the author respon-
sible for the oracle, YHWH is de-
termined to see Edom crushed.

The neighbours of Sodom
and Gomorrah are Admah and
Zeboiim.

Verses 19-21 are found again
in reference to Babylon (see
Jeremiah 50:44-46), and verse
22 is almost identical with the
words found earlier in relation
to Moab (see 48:40-41).

The oracle against Edom would
appear to have been patched
together from other sources in a
desire to round out the oracles of
woe against Judah's neighbours.
Along with the other oracles in
this section, it would be difficult
to find a solid reason for attach-
ing the oracle to the prophet
Jeremiah. The material appears
to have been composed in a late
post-exilic period.

Hamath was an independent state in the upper reaches of the Orontes. Arpad, another independent state, was further north near Aleppo. They are pictured as terrified to see what has happened to the mighty kingdom of Damascus to the south.

Verse 25 appears to be a gloss, reflecting on the failure of Damascus to come to the aid of Jerusalem 'the city which is my joy' (see Psalm 48:3 and Lamentations 2:15).

The Ben-hahad mentioned here appears to be a reference to the son of Hazael, who was ruler of Damascus in the opening years of the 8th century (see 2Kings 13:3-7). He witnessed the collapse of the kingdom of his father.

²³Concerning Damascus.

**Hamath and Arpad are dismayed,
for they have heard bad news.
Their nerve has gone,
they cannot find composure.**

**²⁴Damascus has become feeble,
she turned to flee,
and panic seized her;
anguish and sorrows have taken
hold of her,
as of a woman in labour.**

**²⁵How it failed to help the famous city,
the city which is my joy!**

**²⁶Therefore her young men shall fall
in her squares,
and all her soldiers shall be destroyed
in that day, says YHWH of hosts.**

**²⁷And I will kindle a fire at the wall
of Damascus,
and it shall devour the strongholds
of Ben-hadad.**

Kedar is devastated

49:28 Concerning Kedar and the kingdom of Hazor that King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon defeated. Thus says YHWH:

**Rise up, advance against Kedar!
Destroy the people of the east!**

**29 Take their tents and their flocks,
their curtains and all their goods;
carry off their camels for yourselves,
and a cry shall go up:
"Terror all around!"**

**30 Flee, wander far away,
hide in deep places,
O inhabitants of Hazor! says YHWH.
For King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon
has made a plan against you
and formed a purpose against you.**

**31 Rise up, advance against a nation
at ease,
unaware of its insecurity, says YHWH,
that has no gates or bars,
that lives alone.**

**32 Their camels shall become booty,
their herds a spoil.
I will scatter to every wind
those who have shaven temples,
and I will bring calamity
against them from every side,
says YHWH.**

**33 Hazor shall become a lair of jackals,
an everlasting waste;
no one shall live there,
nor shall anyone settle in it.**

This passage is found in 30:23-28 in the Septuagint.

Kedar (see map page 196) refers to the bedouin inhabiting the edges of the Arabian desert east of Ammon and Moab. Hazor is not the famous city in northern Palestine, but refers to an unwalled village in Kedar.

The language of tents, flocks, curtains and camels is appropriate to the bedouin of Kedar.

Nebuchadrezzar's army was involved in a campaign in Arabia in 599-598. It may be this campaign that lies behind the poem.

The poem is presented as an oracle of YHWH against Kedar. This comes out of a mentality that sees YHWH as controlling history, and therefore ultimately behind every military campaign, for his own mysterious purpose. Since YHWH is just (by definition), his purpose must be punishment for some crime – in this case for opposition to Judah, God's chosen people!

Hazor's fate demonstrates the fate of the whole of Kedar.

In the Septuagint, it is this oracle against Elam (see map page 196) that heads the list. It would seem that 'Elam' is interpreted by the second century translators as Persia, and this passage either rejoices in the collapse of the Persian Empire, or looks forward to when YHWH has decided to see to its downfall.

The Elamites were noted for their skill in archery (see verse 35).

Verse 36 appears to be a later insert, disturbing the earlier flow from verse 35 to 37.

For the second part of verse 37 see Jeremiah 9:15 (possibly the source from which the author of the poem borrowed).

For verse 39 see 48:47 (in regards to Moab) and 49:6 (in regards to Ammon).

As with the other oracles against the nations, there is no solid reason from within the text to attribute this poem to Jeremiah. It is likely that we are dealing with later editors who saw the need to include in the Jeremiah scroll oracles against the surrounding nations. This is another way of re-stating their belief that Judah is special to YHWH, and that the other nations would, in God's good time, be reduced to ruins.

³⁴The word of YHWH that came to the prophet Jeremiah concerning Elam, at the beginning of the reign of King Zedekiah of Judah.

³⁵Thus says YHWH of hosts:

**I am going to break the bow of Elam,
the mainstay of their might;**

**³⁶and I will bring upon Elam
the four winds**

**from the four quarters of heaven;
I will scatter them *with* these winds,
and there shall be no nation
which the exiles from Elam
shall not reach.**

**³⁷I will terrify Elam before their enemies,
and before those who seek their life;
I will bring disaster upon them,
my fierce anger, says YHWH.**

**I will send the sword after them,
until I have consumed them;**

**³⁸and I will set my throne in Elam,
and destroy their king and officials,
says YHWH.**

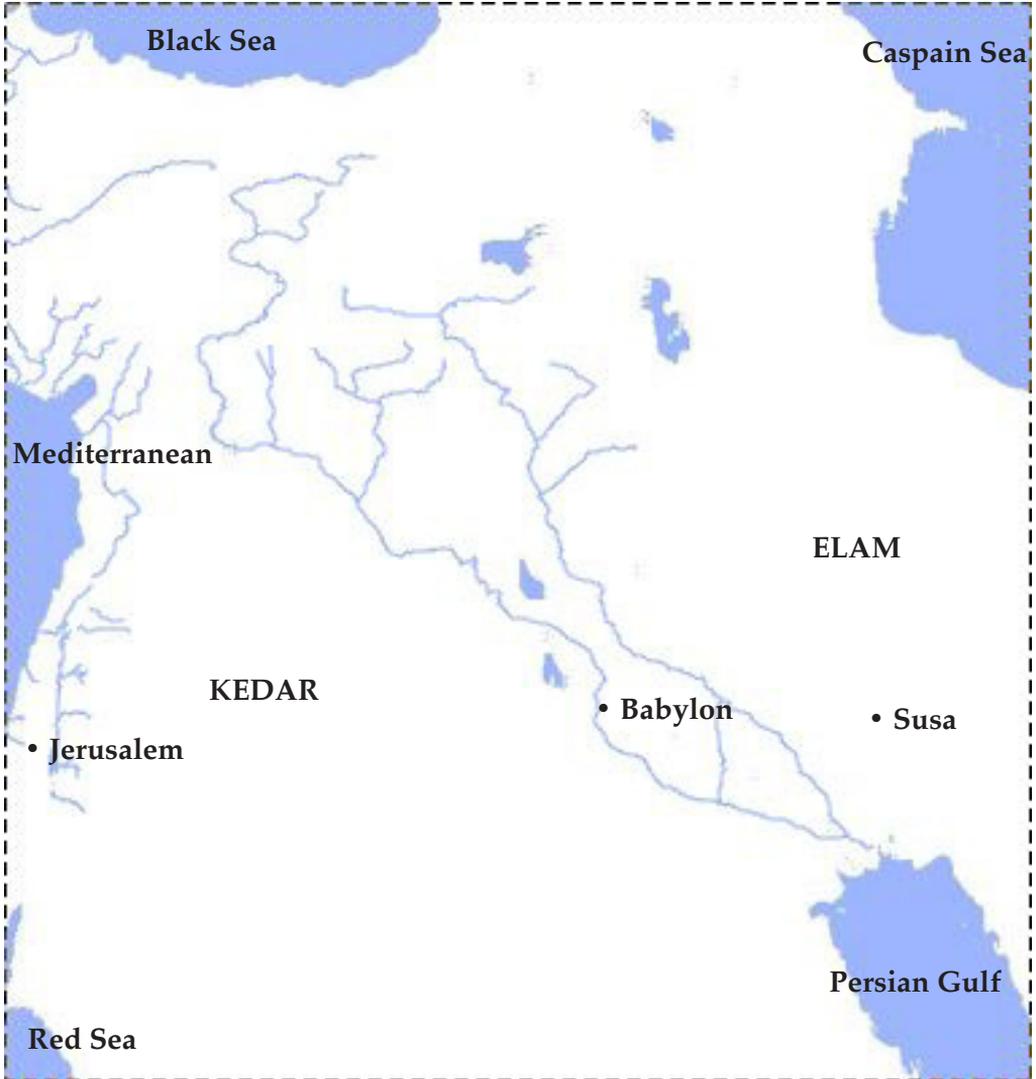
**³⁹But in the latter days I will restore the
fortunes of Elam, says YHWH.**

Jeremiah 49 - 51

Kedar Jeremiah 49:28-33

Elam Jeremiah 49:34-39

Babylon Jeremiah 50-51



To this point we have looked to Babylon as YHWH's instrument in punishing the nations. Now it is Babylon's turn to suffer the consequences of her violence and injustice. The final verdict of the Jeremiah scroll is that it is only YHWH's supreme power that matters.

This runs counter to the oracles of the historical Jeremiah as regards Babylon, though it is attributed here in the editorial verse 1 to the character Jeremiah 'the prophet'. The Septuagint reads simply: 'The word that YHWH spoke against Babylon.'

The imperatives in verse 2 are all plural. YHWH wants the message to be spread far and wide.

'Bel' ('Lord') was a title for many of the ancient Akkadian gods. 'Marduk' is the god of Babylon.

Verses 4-7 is a prose insert speaking of the return of all the exiles of the north (Israel) as well as of Judah. It introduces verse 8 which tells the exiles from Judah to get out of Babylon before it is destroyed by YHWH. The exiles deserved their punishment but, now repentant, they are to return to the Promised Land.

Verses 9-10 state that the fall of Babylon is YHWH's doing. There is no attempt to justify this action.

¹The word that YHWH spoke concerning Babylon, concerning the land of the Chaldeans, by the prophet Jeremiah: ²Declare among the nations and proclaim, set up a banner and proclaim, do not conceal it, say:

**Babylon will be taken,
Bel put to shame, Marduk dismayed.
Her images discredited,
her idols shattered.**

³Out of the north a nation will attack her; it shall make her land a desolation, and no one shall live in it; both human beings and animals shall flee away.

⁴In those days and in that time, says YHWH, the people of Israel shall come, they and the people of Judah together; they shall come weeping as they seek YHWH their God.

⁵They shall ask the way to Zion, with faces turned toward it, and they shall come and join themselves to YHWH by an everlasting covenant that will never be forgotten. ⁶My people have been lost sheep; their shepherds have led them astray, turning them away on the mountains; from mountain to hill they have gone, they have forgotten their fold.

⁷All who found them have devoured them, and their enemies have said, "We are not guilty, because they have sinned against YHWH, the true pasture, YHWH, the hope of their ancestors."

⁸Flee from Babylon, and go out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be like male goats leading the flock.

⁹For I am going to stir up against Babylon a company of great nations from the land of the north; they shall array themselves against her; from there she shall be taken. Their arrows are like the arrows of a skilled warrior who does not return empty-handed.

¹⁰Chaldea shall be plundered; all who plunder her shall be sated, says YHWH.

YHWH's wrath at Babylon

- ^{50:11}Though you rejoice, and exult,
O plunderers of my heritage,
though you frisk about like a heifer
at threshing and neigh like stallions,
¹²your mother shall be utterly shamed,
she who bore you shall be disgraced.
Lo, she shall be the last of the nations,
a wilderness, dry land, and a desert.
- ¹³Because of the wrath of YHWH
she shall not be inhabited,
but shall be an utter desolation;
everyone passing by Babylon shall be appalled
and hiss because of all her wounds.
- ¹⁴Take up your positions around Babylon,
all you that bend the bow;
shoot at her, spare no arrows,
for she has sinned against YHWH.
- ¹⁵Raise a shout against her from all sides,
"She has surrendered;
her bulwarks have fallen,
her walls are thrown down."
For this is the vengeance of YHWH:
take vengeance on her,
do to her as she has done.
- ¹⁶Cut off from Babylon the sower,
and the wielder of the sickle in time of harvest.
From the destroying sword
all of them shall return to their own people,
and flee to their own land.

¹⁷Israel is a hunted sheep driven away by lions.
First the king of Assyria devoured it, and now
at the end King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon has
gnawed its bones. ¹⁸Therefore, thus says YHWH of
hosts, the God of Israel: I am going to punish the
king of Babylon and his land, as I punished the
king of Assyria. ¹⁹I will restore Israel to its pasture,
and it shall feed on Carmel and in Bashan, and
on the hills of Ephraim and in Gilead its hunger
shall be satisfied. ²⁰In those days and at that time,
says YHWH, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought,
and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and
none shall be found; for I will pardon the remnant
that I have spared.

This passage is found
in 27:11-20 in the
Septuagint.

A key thesis of the his-
torical prophet Jeremiah
was that Nebuchadrezzar
(Babylon) was YHWH's
instrument in punishing
(and so purifying) Judah.

This oracle against Babylon
comes from a completely
unrelated perspective.
YHWH is determined to
punish Babylon. The per-
spective is one of revenge
(see verse 15).

The second part of verse 13
draws on Jeremiah 19:8.

The prose insert (verses 17-
20) explains the destruc-
tion of Babylon as YHWH's
will to punish Babylon for
what it did to Judah (so
different from the perspec-
tive of Jeremiah). This is
followed by an expres-
sion of faith and hope that
Israel will be restored.
This is possible because
of YHWH's commitment
to forgiveness.

The 'land of Merathaim' could refer to the delta of the Tigris and Euphrates in the extreme south of Babylonia. 'Pekod' (compare Ezekiel 23:23) is east of the Tigris, near the border of Persia.

Verses 21-29 delights in the fall of the Babylonian Empire. This is the work of YHWH (verse 25), because, in her pride, Babylon 'challenged YHWH' (verse 24).

YHWH is exercising 'vengeance' for what the Babylonians did to his temple (verse 28), and for her defying of 'YHWH, the Holy One of Israel' (verse 29; compare Isaiah 37:23).

- ²¹Go up to the land of Merathaim;
go up against her,
and attack the inhabitants of Pekod
and utterly destroy the last of them,
says YHWH;
do all that I have commanded you.**
- ²²The noise of battle is in the land,
and great destruction!**
- ²³How the hammer of the whole earth
is cut down and broken!
How Babylon has become
a horror among the nations!**
- ²⁴You set a snare for yourself
and you were caught, O Babylon,
but you did not know it;
you were discovered and seized,
because you challenged YHWH.**
- ²⁵YHWH has opened his armoury,
and brought out the weapons of his wrath,
for the Lord YHWH of hosts
has a task to do
in the land of the Chaldeans.**
- ²⁶Come against her from every quarter;
open her granaries;
pile her up like heaps of grain,
and destroy her utterly;
let nothing be left of her.**
- ²⁷Kill all her bulls,
let them go down to the slaughter.
Alas for them, their day has come,
the time of their punishment!**
- ²⁸Listen! Fugitives and refugees from
the land of Babylon are coming
to declare in Zion the vengeance of
YHWH our God,
vengeance for his temple.**
- ²⁹Summon archers against Babylon,
all who bend the bow.
Encamp all around her;
let no one escape.
Repay her according to her deeds;
just as she has done, do to her
for she has arrogantly defied YHWH,
the Holy One of Israel.**

^{50:30}Therefore her young men shall fall
in her squares,
and all her soldiers shall be destroyed
on that day, says YHWH.

³¹I am against you, O arrogant one,
says YHWH, YHWH of hosts;
for your day has come,
the time when I will punish you.

³²The arrogant one shall stumble and fall,
with no one to raise him up,
and I will kindle a fire in his cities,
and it will devour everything
around him.

³³Thus says YHWH of hosts:
The people of Israel are oppressed,
and so too are the people of Judah;
all their captors have held them fast
and refuse to let them go.

³⁴Their Redeemer is strong;
YHWH of hosts is his name.
He will surely plead their cause,
that he may give rest to the earth,
but unrest to the inhabitants of Babylon.

³⁵A sword against the Chaldeans,
says YHWH,
and against the inhabitants of Babylon,
and against her officials and her sages!

³⁶A sword against the diviners,
so that they may become fools!
A sword against her warriors,
so that they may be destroyed!

³⁷A sword against her horses and chariots,
and against all the foreign troops
in her midst,
so that they may become like women!
A sword against all her treasures,
that they may be plundered!

³⁸A drought against her waters,
that they may be dried up!
For it is a land of images,
and they go mad over idols.

This passage is found in 27:30-38
in the Septuagint.

Verses 30-32 continue YHWH's
call for Babylon to be destroyed.
He is punishing the city and em-
pire for its arrogance.

The authors appear to want to
balance the thrust of Jeremiah's
message. Yes, YHWH did sum-
mon Babylon to punish Judah, but
Judah is still YHWH's favourite,
and Babylon will herself be pun-
ished in God's time.

Verse 33 focuses on the treatment
that Babylon meted out to the
exiles from Judah. It is this that
merited Babylon's downfall.

'Redeemer' (go'el) would perhaps
be better translated 'Advocate' in
this context (compare Proverbs
23:11; Psalm 119:154). This is
its only occurrence in Jeremiah
(it is a term frequently found in
Isaiah 40ff).

In verses 35-38 YHWH passes
judgment on Babylon for its
treatment of Israel (see verse
33). He calls for the downfall of
Babylon.

Verses 40-46 have been added from other parts of the Jeremiah scroll.

Verse 40, see 49:18.

Verses 41-43, see 6:22-24.

Verses 44-46, see 49:19-21.

As Carroll observes (page 833):

The interchangeability of material in the book of Jeremiah indicates the conventional nature of the poetry used to construct the tradition.

**³⁹Therefore desert animals shall live
with jackals in Babylon,
and desert-owls shall inhabit her;
she shall never again be peopled,
or inhabited for all generations.**

**⁴⁰As when God overthrew Sodom and
Gomorrah and their neighbours, says YHWH,
so no one shall live there, nor shall anyone
settle in her.**

**⁴¹Look, a people is coming from the north;
a mighty nation
and many kings are stirring
from the farthest parts of the earth.**

**⁴²They wield bow and spear,
they are cruel and have no mercy.
The sound of them is like the roaring sea;
they ride upon horses,
set in array as a warrior for battle,
against you, O daughter Babylon!**

**⁴³The king of Babylon heard news of them,
and his hands fell helpless;
anguish has seized him,
pain like that of a woman in labour.**

**⁴⁴Like a lion coming up
from the thickets of the Jordan
to lush pasture,
I will suddenly chase them away from it;
and I will appoint for slaughter
the pick of the rams.
For who is like me? Who can summon me?
Who is the shepherd who can
withstand me?**

**⁴⁵Therefore hear the plan that YHWH has made
against Babylon, and the purposes that he has
formed against the land of the Chaldeans:
Surely the shepherd-boys will be scattered;
surely their pasture shall be appalled
at their fate.**

**⁴⁶At the sound of the capture of Babylon
the earth shall tremble,
and her cry shall be heard among
the nations.**

Babylon is punished as she deserves

¹Thus says YHWH:

I am going to stir up a destructive wind
against Babylon and the Chaldeans
who inhabit it.

²I will send winnowers to Babylon,
and they shall winnow her.

They shall empty her land
when they come against her from every side
on the day of trouble.

³Let the archer bend his bow,
and let him array himself in his coat of mail.
Do not spare her young men;
utterly destroy her entire army.

⁴They shall fall down slain in the land
of the Chaldeans,
and the wounded in her streets.

⁵Israel and Judah have not been forsaken
by their God, YHWH of hosts,
for the land of Babylon is full of guilt
incurred against the Holy One of Israel.

⁶Flee from the midst of Babylon,
save your lives, each of you!
Do not perish because of her guilt,
for this is the time of YHWH's vengeance;
he is repaying her what is due.

⁷Babylon is a golden cup in YHWH's hand,
making all the earth drunken;
the nations drank of her wine,
and so the nations went mad.

⁸Suddenly Babylon has fallen
and is shattered;
wail for her!

Bring balm for her wound;
perhaps she may be healed.

⁹We tried to heal Babylon,
but she could not be healed.
Forsake her, and let each of us go
to our own country;

for her judgment has reached up to heaven
and has been lifted up even to the skies.

¹⁰YHWH has brought our righteousness
to light;
come, let us declare in Zion
the work of YHWH our God.

This passage is found in 28:1-10
in the Septuagint.

In verses 1-4 YHWH threatens
destruction on Babylon.

In chapter 25, Jeremiah declared
that Babylon was YHWH's in-
strument in punishing Judah.
He did not say that Babylon
was an innocent instrument, and
here in chapter 51 later scribes
are declaring that Babylon is
being punished by YHWH, and
not simply as an act of venge-
ance, but deservedly, because of
Babylon's behaviour: 'Babylon
is full of guilt incurred against
the Holy One of Israel' (verse
5). 'YHWH is repaying Babylon
what is her due' (verse 6).

'Israel and Judah 'have not been
forsaken by their God' (verse
5). They must escape and
avoid Babylon's destruction
(verse 6).

As verse 9 makes clear, the final
words in verse 8 are ironic: there
is no point in hoping Babylon
will be healed. The judgment
passed against Babylon (the
sentence of destruction) is
equal to the enormity of her
crimes, which 'reached up to
heaven' (verse 9).

Those responsible for verse 10
appear confident in Jerusalem's
'righteousness', vindicated
by YHWH's punishment of
Babylon. We are a long way
from the insistent preaching
of Jeremiah.

Those whom YHWH is raising up to punish Babylon are identified here as the Medes.

There are echoes of Isaiah 38:12 in the final line of verse 13.

Verses 15-19 have already been inserted in Jeremiah 10:12-16. They highlight the patchwork nature of the scroll, and show that the scroll as it has come down to us 'never received a single, comprehensive, redaction' (McKane page 1309).

**¹¹Sharpen the arrows! Fill the quivers!
YHWH has stirred up the spirit of the
kings of the Medes,
because his purpose concerning Babylon
is to destroy it,
for that is the vengeance of YHWH,
vengeance for his temple.**

**¹²Raise a standard to attack the walls
of Babylon;
make the watch strong; post sentinels;
prepare the ambushes;
for YHWH has both planned and done
what he spoke
concerning the inhabitants of Babylon.**

**¹³You who live by mighty waters,
rich in treasures,
your end has come,
the thread of your life is cut.**

**¹⁴YHWH of hosts has sworn by himself:
Surely I will fill you with troops
like a swarm of locusts,
and they shall raise a shout of victory
over you.**

**¹⁵It is he who made the earth by his power,
who established the world by his wisdom,
and by his understanding stretched out
the heavens.**

**¹⁶When he utters his voice there is a tumult
of waters in the heavens,
and he makes the mist rise from the ends
of the earth.
He makes lightnings for the rain,
he brings out the wind from his storehouses.**

**¹⁷Everyone is stupid and without knowledge;
goldsmiths are all put to shame by their idols;
for their images are false,
and there is no breath in them.**

**¹⁸They are worthless, a work of delusion;
at the time of punishment they shall perish.**

**¹⁹Not like these is YHWH, the portion of Jacob,
for he is the one who formed all things,
and Israel is the tribe of his inheritance;
YHWH of hosts is his name.**

Babylon repayed

^{51:20}**You are my war club, my weapon of battle:**

**with you I smash nations;
with you I destroy kingdoms;**

²¹**with you I smash the horse and its rider;
with you I smash the chariot and the
charioteer;**

²²**with you I smash man and woman;
with you I smash the old and the young;
with you I smash the young man and
the girl;**

²³**with you I smash shepherds and their
flocks;
with you I smash farmers and their teams;
with you I smash governors and deputies.**

²⁴**But I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea before your very eyes for all the wrong that they have done in Zion, says YHWH.**

²⁵**I am against you, O destroying mountain,
says YHWH,
that destroys the whole earth;
I will stretch out my hand against you,
and roll you down from the crags,
and make you a burned-out mountain.**

²⁶**No stone shall be taken from you for a
corner
and no stone for a foundation,
but you shall be a perpetual waste,
says YHWH.**

This passage is found in 28:20-26 in the Septuagint.

The author recognises that Babylon has been a tool in YHWH's hand to punish the nations. However, as verse 24 states, that does not exempt Babylon from punishment for the wrong it did in carrying out YHWH's mission.

Picturing Babylon as a mountain is difficult if we think in terms of geography, since the city is built in the Tigris plain. The author is speaking metaphorically of Babylon's power and pride. It has been reduced to a 'perpetual waste', and such is its destruction that nothing can be constructed from it.

Urartu, Mannai and Ashkenaz are all in the region of Armenia.

Dispatch after dispatch bring news of the collapse of the Babylonian Empire. The destruction of Babylon is seen as inevitable and complete.

Nebucharezzar's dreadful treatment of the inhabitants of Jerusalem (he fed on them like a voracious monster) demands revenge.

- ²⁷Raise a standard in the land,
blow the trumpet among the nations;
prepare the nations for war against her,
summon against her the kingdoms,
Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz;
appoint a marshal against her,
bring up horses like bristling locusts.**
- ²⁸Prepare the nations for war against her,
the kings of the Medes,
with their governors and deputies,
and every land under their dominion.**
- ²⁹The land trembles and writhes,
for YHWH's has carried out his plans
against Babylon,
to make the land of Babylon a desolation,
without inhabitant.**
- ³⁰The warriors of Babylon have given up,
they remain in their strongholds;
their strength has failed,
they have become women;
her buildings are set on fire,
the bars of her gates are broken.**
- ³¹One runner hastens to meet another,
and one messenger to meet another,
to tell the king of Babylon
that his city is taken from end to end:**
- ³²the fords have been seized,
the forts have been burned with fire,
and the soldiers are in panic.**
- ³³For thus says YHWH of hosts, the God
of Israel:
Babylon is like a threshing floor
at the time when it is trodden;
yet a little while and the time of her
harvest will come.**
- ³⁴King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon has
devoured me, he has crushed me;
he has made me an empty vessel,
he has swallowed me like a monster;
he has filled his belly with my delicacies,
he has spewed me out.**
- ³⁵May my ruin be avenged on Babylon,
the inhabitants of Zion shall say.
May my blood be avenged on the
Chaldeans, Jerusalem shall say.**

Babylon in ruins

^{51:36}Therefore thus says YHWH:
I am going to defend your cause
and take vengeance for you.
I will dry up her river
and make her fountain dry;
³⁷and Babylon shall become a heap of ruins,
a den of jackals,
an object of horror and of hissing,
without inhabitant.

³⁸Like lions they shall roar together;
they shall growl like lions' whelps.
³⁹I will lace their draughts with poison
and make them drunk, till they shake
and then sleep a perpetual sleep
and never wake, says YHWH.
⁴⁰I will bring them down like lambs to
the slaughter,
like rams and goats.

⁴¹How Sheshach is taken,
the pride of the whole earth seized!
How Babylon has become
an object of horror among the nations!
⁴²The sea has risen over Babylon;
she has been covered by its tumultuous
waves.
⁴³Her cities lie in ruins,
a land of drought and a desert,
a land in which no one lives,
and through which no one passes.

This passage is found in 28:36-43
in the Septuagint.

YHWH is taking up Judah's
cause and wreaking vengeance
on Babylon.

Babylon's ferocious roar,
which once terrified the nations,
is powerless before
YHWH's destructive vengeance.

'Sheshach' is Babylon (see
25:26).

If 'the sea' refers to the
primaeval ocean we are in the
sphere of myth.

Her cities are in ruins (compare
50:13, 23), and the
land is uninhabited (compare
50:40).

‘Bel’ is not mentioned in the Septuagint. The fact that verses 44b-49a are also absent, and that there are a number of parallels between verses 44b-49a and 49b-53, point to verses 44b-49a being a later filling out of the earlier text available to the Greek translators.

This whole section is just one more attempt to speak of the downfall of Babylon, determined by YHWH as punishment for her pride.

Note that the exiles are called ‘my people’ (verse 45).

The surviving exiles must not remain in the empire (verse 59).

44 I will punish Bel in Babylon,
and make him disgorge what he has
swallowed.

The nations shall no longer stream to him;
the wall of Babylon has fallen.

45 Come out of her, my people!
Save your lives, each of you,
from the fierce anger of YHWH!

46 Do not be faint-hearted or fearful
at the rumours heard in the land—
one year one rumour comes,
the next year another,
rumours of violence in the land
and of ruler against ruler.

47 Assuredly, the days are coming
when I will punish Babylon’s idols;
her whole land shall be put to shame,
and all her slain shall fall in her midst.

48 Then the heavens and the earth,
and all that is in them,
shall shout for joy over Babylon;
for the destroyers shall come against
them out of the north, says YHWH.

49 Babylon must fall for the slain of Israel,
as the slain of all the earth have fallen
because of Babylon.

50 You survivors of the sword,
go, do not linger!
Remember YHWH in a distant land,
and let Jerusalem come into your mind:

51 We are put to shame, for we have heard
insults;
dishonour has covered our face,
for aliens have come
into the holy places of YHWH’s house.

52 Therefore the time is coming, says YHWH,
when I will punish her idols,
and through all her land
the wounded shall groan.

53 Though Babylon ascends to heaven,
and though she should fortify her strong
height,
from me destroyers would come upon her,
says YHWH.

Babylon is sacked

^{51:54}**Listen!—a cry from Babylon!**
Great ruin in the land of the Chaldeans!
⁵⁵**For YHWH is laying Babylon waste,**
and stilling her loud clamour.
Waves of attackers thunder like
mighty waters,
the sound of their clamour resounds;
⁵⁶**for a destroyer has come against Babylon;**
her warriors are taken,
their bows are broken;
for YHWH is a God of retribution,
he will repay in full.
⁵⁷**I will make her officials and her sages**
drunk,
also her governors, her deputies, and
her warriors;
they shall sleep a perpetual sleep
and never wake,
says the King, whose name is
YHWH of hosts.

⁵⁸**Thus says YHWH of hosts:**
The broad wall of Babylon
shall be levelled to the ground,
and her high gates shall be burned
with fire.
The peoples exhaust themselves for
nothing,
and the nations weary themselves
only for fire.

This passage is found in 28:54-58 in the Septuagint.

When Cyrus took over control of Babylon in 539, there was no major destruction. The city opened its gates to welcome him. He permitted exiles, including those from Judah, to return to their countries, and this happened without any need to avoid the catastrophe of war.

Major damage was inflicted on the city by Xerxes when he put down a revolt there in 485.

The final part of verse 58 echoes Habakkuk 2:13.

Jeremiah sent a letter to the exiles in Babylon telling them to accept their lot and to contribute in a positive way to the community where they are exiled (see 29:4-9). It is difficult to imagine him also instructing Seraiah to perform the provocative act described in these verses.

The author of the anti-Babylonian oracle (Jeremiah 50-51) provides a historical setting for the pronouncing of 'all these words that are written [by Jeremiah] concerning Babylon' (verses 60).

The words addressed to YHWH refer back to verse 26.

Seraiah's action is seen as symbolic. The sinking of the stone puts a curse on Babylon and assures the same fate to the city. It will 'sink and rise no more' (verse 64).

⁵⁹The word that the prophet Jeremiah commanded Seraiah son of Neriah son of Mahseiah, when he went with King Zedekiah of Judah to Babylon, in the fourth year of his reign. Seraiah was the quartermaster. ⁶⁰Jeremiah wrote in a scroll all the disasters that would come on Babylon, all these words that are written concerning Babylon. ⁶¹And Jeremiah said to Seraiah: "When you come to Babylon, see that you read all these words, ⁶²and say, 'YHWH, you yourself threatened to destroy this place so that neither human beings nor animals shall live in it, and it shall be desolate forever.' ⁶³When you finish reading this scroll, tie a stone to it, and throw it into the middle of the Euphrates, ⁶⁴and say, 'Thus shall Babylon sink, to rise no more, because of the disasters that I am bringing on her.'" Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.

