
JEREMIAH 40: 1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, after that Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he had taken him being bound in chains among all the captives of Jerusalem and Judah, who were carried away captive to Babylon.

This and the four following chapters contain a distinct account of what passed in the land of Judah from the taking of Jerusalem to the retreat of the remnant of the people to Egypt; together with the prophecies of Jeremiah concerning that place, whither he himself accompanied them. In this chapter we have an account of the enlargement of Jeremiah by Nebuzar-adan, the captain of the guard, who advises him to put himself under the jurisdiction of Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land of Judea, Jer 40:1-5. The prophet and many of the dispersed Jews repair to Gedaliah, Jer 40:6-12. Johanan acquaints the governor of a conspiracy against him, but is not believed, Jer 40:13-16.

Verse 1

The word that came to Jeremiah - This and the four following chapters contain a particular account of what passed in the land of Judea from the taking of the city to the retreat of the people into Egypt, and the prophecies of Jeremiah concerning them there.

Had let him go from Ramah - This has embarrassed most of the commentators. Dr. Blayney has thrown much light upon it by his translation and note: - "The word that came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, after that Nebu-Zaradan captain of the guards had taken him, and let him go from Ramah: for he had been bound with chains among all the captives of Jerusalem and Judah, who were carried away captive to Babylon." "Had Taken Him, and Let Him Go. - Most interpreters have understood אתו בקחתו bekachto otho of Nebuchadnezzar's having first taken Jeremiah as a captive unto Ramah. But if the order of the sentence be well observed, as well as the more common use of the verb לקח lakach, it will, I think, rather appear that those words relate to his taking or having him brought to him, in order to give him his discharge."

JEREMIAH 40: 2 The captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said to him, the LORD your God pronounced this evil on this place;

Verse 2

The Lord thy God hath pronounced - I know that thou art a true prophet, for what thou hast predicted from thy God is come to pass.

JEREMIAH 40: 3 and the LORD has brought it, and done according as he spoke: because you have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing has come on you.

JEREMIAH 40: 4 Now, behold, I release you this day from the chains which are on your hand. If it seems good to you to come with me into Babylon, come, and I will take care of you; but if it seems bad to you to come with me into Babylon, don't: behold, all the land is before you; where it seems good and right to you to go, there go.

Verse 4

Come; and I will look well unto thee - Thou art now at full liberty to do as thou pleasest; either to come to Babylon or to stay in thy own land.

JEREMIAH 40: 5 Now while he had not yet gone back, Go back then, he said, to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon has made governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people; or go wherever it seems right to you to go. So the captain of the guard gave him food and a present, and let him go.

Verse 5

Go back also to Gedaliah - If thou wilt stay in thy own land, thou hadst best put thyself under the protection of thy countryman Gedaliah, whom the King of Babylon has made governor of the land.

JEREMIAH 40: 6 Then went Jeremiah to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah, and lived with him among the people who were left in the land.

JEREMIAH 40: 7 Now when all the captains of the forces who were in the fields, even they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land, and had committed to him men, and women, and children, and of the poorest of the land, of those who were not carried away captive to Babylon;

JEREMIAH 40: 8 then they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, and the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah the son of the Maacathite, they and their men.

Verse 8

Ishmael the son of Nethaniah - This is he who afterwards murdered Gedaliah. He had been employed to do this by Baalis, king of the Ammonites, with whom he appears to have taken refuge during the siege. See Jer 40:14.

JEREMIAH 40: 9 Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan swore to them and to their men, saying, Don't be afraid to serve the Chaldeans: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you.

JEREMIAH 40: 10 As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to stand before the Chaldeans who shall come to us: but you, gather wine and summer fruits and oil, and put them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that you have taken.

JEREMIAH 40: 11 Likewise when all the Jews who were in Moab, and among the children of Ammon, and in Edom, and who were in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan;

JEREMIAH 40: 12 then all the Jews returned out of all places where they were driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah, to Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer fruits very much.

JEREMIAH 40: 13 Moreover Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces who were in the fields, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah,

JEREMIAH 40: 14 and said to him, Do you know that Baalis the king of the children of Ammon has sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to take your life? But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam didn't believe them.

Verse 14

But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam believed then not - The account given of this man proves him to have been a person of uncommon greatness of soul. Conscious of his own integrity and benevolence, he took the portrait of others from his own mind; and therefore believed evil of no man, because he felt none towards any in his own breast. He may be reproached for being too credulous and confident: but any thing of this kind that may be justly charged against him serves only to show the greatness of his mind. A little soul is ever suspicious, and ready to believe the worst of every person and thing. A great mind acts always on the contrary.

JEREMIAH 40: 15 Then Johanan the son of Kareah spoke to Gedaliah in Mizpah secretly, saying, Please let me go, and I will kill Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no man shall know it: why should he take your life, that all the Jews who are gathered to you should be scattered, and the remnant of Judah perish?

JEREMIAH 40: 16 But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said to Johanan the son of Kareah, You shall not do this thing; for you speak falsely of Ishmael.

Verse 16

Thou shalt not do this thing - He cannot be so base.

Thou speakest falsely of Ishmael - He thought it quite possible that the man who was capable of becoming an assassin was capable of telling a lie; and therefore he would not credit what he said. Had he been a little more distrustful, he would have saved his own life. The next chapter shows that Johanan's information was too true. So noble Gedaliah lost his life by not believing that evil of others of which he himself was incapable.