

CHAPTER 29

INTRODUCTION TO JEREMIAH 29

Thus chapter contains a letter of Jeremiah to the captives in Babylon; and gives an account of another sent from thence by Shemaiah to the people at Jerusalem; and is closed with threatening him with punishment for so doing. Jeremiah's letter concerns both the captives at Babylon, and the people left at Jerusalem, The persons to whom and by whom it was sent, and the time of writing and sending it, are mentioned in (^{29:1-3}Jeremiah 29:1-3); and though the prophet was the amanuensis, God was the author of it, as well as of their captivity, (^{29:4}Jeremiah 29:4); the contents of, it, respecting the captives, are advices to them to provide for their comfortable settlement in Babylon, and not think of returning quickly, by building houses, planting gardens, marrying, and giving in marriage, (^{29:5,6}Jeremiah 29:5,6); and to seek and pray for the prosperity of the place where they were; in which their own was concerned, (^{29:7}Jeremiah 29:7); to give no heed to their false prophets and diviners, (^{29:8,9}Jeremiah 29:8,9); and to expect a return to Jerusalem at the end of seventy years; which they might be assured of, since God had resolved upon it in his own mind, (^{29:10,11}Jeremiah 29:10,11); and especially if they called upon him, prayed to him, and sought him heartily, (^{29:12-14}Jeremiah 29:12-14); the other part of the letter respects the Jews in Jerusalem; concerning whom the captives are directed to observe, that both the king and people should suffer much by sword, famine, pestilence, and captivity, with the reason of it, (^{29:15-19}Jeremiah 29:15-19); particularly it is foretold, that Ahab and Zedekiah, two lying prophets, should be made an example of vengeance; and a proverbial curse should be taken of them, because of their villany, lewdness, and lies, (^{29:20-23}Jeremiah 29:20-23); next follows some account of Shemaiah's letter from Babylon, to the people and priests at Jerusalem, stirring them up against Jeremiah the prophet; which came to be known, by the priests reading it to him, (^{29:24-29}Jeremiah 29:24-29); upon which Shemaiah is threatened with punishment, and his seed after him, (^{29:30-32}Jeremiah 29:30-32).

Ver. 1. *Now these [are] the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem,* etc.] The argument and tenor, the sum and substance, of an epistle, which the prophet Jeremiah, being at Jerusalem, wrote, under the inspiration of God, to his countrymen abroad, afterwards described; so the prophets under the Old Testament instructed the people, sometimes by their sermons and discourses delivered by word of mouth to them, and sometimes by letters and epistles; as did the apostles of the New Testament; and they were both ways useful and profitable to men:

unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captive; some perhaps dying by the way, and others quickly after they came to Babylon; some were left, who had been rulers or civil magistrates in Judea, and perhaps of the great sanhedrim:

and to the priests, and to the prophets: false prophets, as the Syriac version; for we read only of one true prophet that was carried captive, and that was Ezekiel; but of false prophets several:

and to all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon; which was eleven or twelve years before their last captivity thither. This was a catholic epistle, common to all the captives of every rank and class, age or sex.

Ver. 2. *After that Jeconiah the king,* etc.] Of Judah; the same with Jehoiachin, who was carried captive into Babylon when he had reigned but three months:

and the queen; not Jeconiah's wife, for he had none; but his mother, whose name was Nehushta, and who was carried captive with him, (¹²⁴⁸2 Kings 24:8,12);

and the eunuchs; or "chamberlains" to the queen; the Targum calls them princes; these were of the king's household, his courtiers; and such persons have been everywhere, and in all ages, court favourites:

and the princes of Judah and Jerusalem; the noblemen and grandees of the nation:

and the carpenters, and the smiths, were departed from Jerusalem; whom Nebuchadnezzar took with him, partly for his own use in his own country; and partly that the Jews might be deprived of such artificers, that could

assist in fortifying their city, and providing them with military weapons; (see Gill on “^{240E}Jeremiah 24:1”).

Ver. 3. *By the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan*, etc.] Perhaps the brother of Ahikam, and of Jaazaniah, (^{242E}Jeremiah 26:24 ^{248E}Ezekiel 8:11);

and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah; to distinguish him from Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, (^{266E}Jeremiah 36:10);

whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent unto Babylon, to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; as his ambassadors, on what account it is not certain; perhaps to pay the tribute money to him; or to treat with him about the restoration of some of the captives; or to cultivate friendship, and promise submission, and that he would faithfully keep the covenant he had made with him: and perhaps he might be jealous of Jeconiah using his interest with the king of Babylon for his restoration, which could not be acceptable to Zedekiah; and this might be one reason why he admitted his messengers to carry Jeremiah’s letter to the captives, if he knew of it, or saw it; since it exhorted them not to think of a returns, but provide for a long continuance where they were; however, by the hand of these messengers Jeremiah sent his letter to them:

saying; as follows:

Ver. 4. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel*, etc.] For the letter was written by the order of the Lord, was ended by him, and was sent in his name, the prophet was only his amanuensis; and the titles which the Lord here takes are worthy of notice: “the Lord of hosts”: of the armies above and below, that does according to his pleasure in heaven and in earth, with whom nothing is impossible; who could easily destroy the enemies of his people, and deliver them, either immediately by his power, or mediately by means of armies on earth, whom he could assemble, and send at pleasure; or by legions of angels at his command: “the God of Israel”; their covenant God; who still continued to be so, notwithstanding their sins and transgressions, and though in captivity in a foreign land; and a good him this, to preserve them from the idolatry of the country they were in, and to observe unto them that he only was to be worshipped by them:

unto all that are carried away captives: or, “to all of the captivity”; or, “to the whole captivity”^{f548}; high and low, rich and poor; this letter was an interesting one to them all:

whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon; for though their sins and iniquities were the moving, meritorious, and procuring causes of their captivity; and Nebuchadnezzar and his army the instruments; yet God was the efficient cause: the Chaldeans could never have carried them captive, if the Lord had not willed it, or had not done it by them; for there is no “evil [of this kind] in a city, and the Lord hath not done it”, (^{<10R6>}Amos 3:6).

Ver. 5. *Build ye houses, and dwell [in them]*, etc.] Intimating hereby that they must not expect a return into their own land in any short time, but that they should continue many years where they were; suggesting also, that as they had ability, so they should have liberty, of building themselves houses; nor should they be interrupted by their enemies; nor would their houses be taken from them, when built; but they should dwell peaceably and quietly in them, as their own; which they might assure themselves of from the Lord, who gives these, and the following directions:

and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; and live as comfortably as you can in a foreign country; plant your gardens with vines and pomegranates, and all sorts of fruitful trees the country produces; and fear not the fruit being taken away from you; depend upon it, you shall eat the fruit of your own labour, and not be deprived of it.

Ver. 6. *Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters*, etc.] That is, such as had no wives, who were either bachelors or widowers; not that they were to take wives of the Chaldeans, but of those of their own nation; for intermarriages with Heathens were forbidden them; and this they were to do, in order to propagate their posterity, and keep up a succession:

and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands; or “men”^{f549}; preserving and establishing the right of parents to give their children in marriage, and pointing to them their duty to provide suitable yoke fellows for them; and hereby is signified, that not only they, but their children after them, should continue in this state of captivity:

that they may bear sons and daughters, that ye may be increased there; and not diminished; like their ancestors in Egypt, who grew very numerous amidst all their afflictions and bondage.

Ver. 7. *And seek the peace of the city*, etc.] The prosperity and happiness of Babylon, or any other city in Chaldea, were they were placed: this they

were to do by prayer and supplication to God, and by all other means that might be any ways conducive to the good of the state where they were:

whither I have caused you to be carried away captives; and as long as they continued so; for being under the protection of the magistrates of it, though Heathens, they owed them submission, and were under obligation to contribute to their peace and welfare:

and pray unto the Lord for it; the city, where they dwelt; for the continuance, safety, peace, and prosperity of it; and therefore much more ought the natives of a place to seek and pray for its good, and do all that in them lies to promote it; and still more should the saints and people of God pray for the peace of Jerusalem, or the church of God, where they are born, and brought up in a spiritual sense; (see ^{<5011>}1 Timothy 2:1,2 ^{<49216>}Psalm 122:6-9);

for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace; which is an argument taken from self-interest; intimating, that while the city in which they were was in safety and prosperity, was in a flourishing condition, as to its health and trade, they would partake more or less with them of the same advantages; and on the other hand, should they be distressed with the sword, famine, or pestilence, or any grievous calamity, they would be involved in the same.

Ver. 8. *For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel*, etc.] (See Gill on ^{<29116>}Jeremiah 29:4”);

let not your prophets and your diviners, that [be] in the midst of you, deceive you; their false prophets, as the Targum; and there were many such in the captivity; (see ^{<29111>}Ezekiel 13:2-4); and such who pretended to divine and foretell future things, and so impose upon the people, who were too apt to believe them; these insinuated, that in a little time they should have their liberty, and return to their own land again, contrary to the prophecies that came from the Lord himself:

neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed; for that of a speedy return to their own land was no other than a dream, which they both dreamed themselves; their thoughts running on it in the daytime, they dreamed of it at night; and fancied it was from the Lord; a divine dream; and so built much upon it; and also which they encouraged the false prophets and diviners to dream, and tell their dreams, by their listening to them, and being pleased with them, giving credit to them as if they came from God.

Ver. 9. *For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name,* etc.] They pretended to have the authority of God for what they said; that their prophecies and dreams were from him, and as such they delivered them in his name; though they were false ones; that they might be the better received by the people:

I have not sent them, saith the Lord; they had no mission or commission from the Lord, no warrant or authority from him; they set up themselves; and ran without being sent; and prophesied out of their own hearts what came into their heads, the fancies of their own brain, or the delusions of Satan, under whose power and influence they were; therefore sad must be the case of a people giving heed to such seducing spirits.

Ver. 10. *For thus saith the Lord, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon,* etc.] These seventy years are not to be reckoned from the last captivity under Zedekiah; nor from the precise present time; nor from the first of Jeconiah's captivity; but the fourth year of Jehoiakim, and the first of Nebuchadnezzar, when he first came up against Jerusalem; (see ^{<251>}Jeremiah 25:1,2,11);

I will visit you; in a way of mercy, by stirring up Cyrus king of Persia to grant them their liberty:

and perform my good word towards you, in causing you to return to this place; meaning the promise of return from their captivity to their own land; which was a good word of promise, a promise of good things; which was good news to them, and of which there was no doubt of its performance, since God is faithful who has promised, and is able also to perform. It was from hence, and (^{<251>}Jeremiah 25:11,19); that Daniel learned the time of the captivity, and the return from it, (^{<210>}Daniel 9:2).

Ver. 11. *For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord,* etc.] The purposes and resolutions of his heart concerning their welfare, particularly the restoration of them to their own land; these were within him, and known to him, and him only; they were remembered by him, and continued with him, as the "thoughts of his heart are to all generations"; and so would not fail of being performed; men think and forget what they have thought of, and so it comes to nothing; but thus it is not with God; he has taken up many thoughts in a way of love, grace, and mercy, concerning sinful men; about their election in Christ; a provision of all spiritual

blessings for them; redemption and salvation by Christ; their effectual calling, adoption, and eternal life:

thoughts of peace, and not of evil: or “for evil”^{f550}; these thoughts were concerning the temporal peace and prosperity of the Jews in Babylon, and not of anything to their hurt; yea, even their captivity was for their good, (²⁰¹⁵Jeremiah 24:5); and thoughts concerning his spiritual Israel, their peace and reconciliation with God, and the manner of bringing it about, by the blood, sufferings, and death of his Son in human nature, with whom he consulted and agreed about this matter; and concerning their inward spiritual peace of mind and conscience now, and their eternal peace hereafter: nor does he ever think of evil for them; whatever evil he thinks towards others, angels or men, he thinks none towards them; and whatever evil befalls them, he means it for good, and it does work for good unto them; he cannot think otherwise concerning them, consistent with his everlasting and unchangeable love to them; since he has designed so much good for them, does so much to them, and has so much to bestow upon them. The issue of all which is,

to give you an expected end; a very desirable one; such as they wished and hoped to have, and expected; such as would put an end to all their troubles, and put them into the enjoyment of all good things promised and waited for. This, in the mystical sense, may have reference to the Messiah, in whom all God’s thoughts of peace, concerning his special people, issue; he is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, of all things, (⁶⁰⁰³Revelation 1:8); of all things in creation; of the Scriptures, promises and prophecies of it: “the end of the law for righteousness”, (⁵¹⁰⁴Romans 10:4): the fulfilling end of it, by his obedience, and sufferings, and death; and who was to come, and did come, at the end of the Jewish world, at the end of their civil and ecclesiastical state: he was long promised and prophesied of and was much waited for and expected, by the saints before the flood; from thence to Moses; from Moses to David; from David to the Babylonian captivity; from thence to the times of his coming, when there was a general expectation of him; and expected end was then given, as an instance of grace and good will to men. It may also be applied to salvation by Christ; the end of all God’s gracious purposes and designs; the end of the covenant of grace, the provisions, blessings, and promises of it; the end of Christ’s coming into the world, and of his obedience and death; the end of his prayers and preparations now in heaven; and the end of the faith of the saints on earth: this is an end hoped, waited for, and expected by faith;

and for which there is good reason; since it is wrought out, prepared, and promised; saints are heirs of it; and now it is nearer than when they believed; and will be bestowed as a free grace gift, through Jesus Christ our Lord; and will be enjoyed as the issue and result of God's eternal thoughts of peace concerning them. Some render it, "an expected reward"^{f551}; which is given at the end of the work: others, "posterity and hope"^{f552}; a numerous posterity, and hope and expectation of good things from the Lord, promised in the days of the Messiah.

Ver. 12. *Then shall ye call upon me*, etc.] When the expected end is about to be given; when God intends and is about to bestow a mercy, he gives his people a spirit of prayer to ask for it; and even the promise of it is a considerable argument to encourage and engage more to pray for it:

and ye shall go and pray unto me: walk in my ways; so Jarchi, Kimchi, and Ben Melech; or rather ye shall go into your private closets, or into those public places where prayer was wont to be made, and there put up your petitions; or it may be the meaning is, that they should continue praying unto him; should pray without ceasing, until they enjoyed the blessing, and had the expected end given them:

and I will hearken unto you: God is a God hearing prayer; he listens to the requests of his people, and answers them in his own time and way; which is no small encouragement to pray unto him.

Ver. 13. *And ye shall seek me, and find [me]*, etc.] When persons seek the Lord aright, they always find him; a God hearing prayer; a God in Christ; bestowing favours upon them; granting them his presence; indulging them in communion with him; and favouring them with fresh supplies of his grace, and everything needful for them; every mercy, temporal and spiritual; that is, when they seek him in Christ, who is the only way to the Father, under the guidance and influence of the blessed Spirit; in the exercise of faith upon him and his promises; with fervency of spirit and ardour of mind; with diligence and importunity; with earnest desires and strong affections; and, as follows, with all sincerity of soul:

when ye shall search for me with all your heart; which, as Calvin rightly observes, does not design perfection, but integrity and sincerity; when they draw nigh with a true heart, and call upon him in truth, and search for him with eagerness, with a hearty desire to find him, as men search for gold, and silver, and hid treasure.

Ver. 14. *And I will be found of you, saith the Lord,* etc.] As he is; when his favour is shown, his presence is enjoyed, and the blessing sought for is obtained:

and I will turn away your captivity; this designs the captivity of Jeconiah, or of the Jews that were carried captive with him; and which had its accomplishment when the Jews returned to their own land, upon the edict of Cyrus:

and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the Lord; for though the greatest part might be carried to Babylon, and continue there; yet others might be removed or moved into other countries; and besides, this may respect their brethren who should come into captivity, and return with them at the end of the seventy years; for the expressions are very large and general:

and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive; that is, Jerusalem, and the land of Judea; though the Vulgate Latin version renders it,

“and I will make you to return from the place to which I have caused you to go captive;”

meaning Babylon. The sense comes to the same; but the common rendering is most agreeable to the Hebrew text.

Ver. 15. *Because ye have said,* etc.] That is, some of them; for here the Lord, by the prophet, turns from the godly among the captives, whom he had been advising, encouraging, and comforting before, to those who gave heed to the false prophets, who promised them a speedy return to their own land, and which they believed; and therefore rejected and despised the prophecies of Jeremiah, and others:

the Lord hath raised us up prophets in Babylon; and therefore stood in no need of other prophets that were in Judea, or in Jerusalem, nor should hearken to them; but believe those that were raised up among themselves, rather than others at a distance; and though these were false prophets, yet, being such that prophesied to them things that were agreeable, they were willing to believe them, and to consider them, and receive them, as prophets sent of God, when they were not.

Ver. 16. [*Know that thus saith the Lord*, etc.] Or “for”, or “wherefore thus saith the Lord”^{f553}; for the word “know” is not in the text, and seems needless; though it is also supplied by other interpreters^{f554}. The words are illative, and follow upon the former; and the sense is, that since they gave heed to their false prophets in Babylon, who told them that they should quickly return; therefore the Lord sent the following message to them, informing them that it was so far from being true that they should in a short time return to Jerusalem, that, on the other hand, they that were there should soon be with them in captivity, or be destroyed:

of, or “concerning”

the king that sitteth on the throne of David; that is, King Zedekiah, who was then the reigning king at Jerusalem:

and of all the people that dwelleth in this city; the city Jerusalem, where Jeremiah was, and from whence this letter was written, in the name of the Lord, to the captives at Babylon:

and of your brethren that are not gone forth with you into captivity; that lived in the several parts of the land of Judea, who were left behind, and not carried captive, when those were to whom these words are directed.

Ver. 17. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, behold, I will send upon them the sword*, etc.] The sword of the Chaldeans, by which many of them should fall, as they did. The Targum is,

“I will send upon them those that kill with the sword:”

who, though they were prompted to come against the Jews, through a natural and ambitious desire of conquering and plundering, yet were sent of God; nor would they have come, had he not willed and suffered it:

the famine and the pestilence; to destroy others that escaped the sword; both these raged while Jerusalem was besieged by the Chaldeans:

and will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil; to which they are compared, (^{24:8}Jeremiah 24:8). The sense is, that as they had made themselves wicked and corrupt, like naughty and rotten figs, so the Lord would deal with them as men do with such, cast them away, as good for nothing. The word^{f555} for “vile” signifies something horrible; and designs such figs so bad, that they even strike the eater of them with horror.

Ver. 18. *And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence,* etc.] Or, “follow after^{f556} them”; such as should make their escape out of the city, and go into Egypt, or other countries, for shelter and safety, should be pursued by the vengeance of God, and should fall by sword, famine, or pestilence, in other places:

and will deliver them; such as should not perish by the above mentioned calamities:

to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth; where they should be scattered, and live in exile: or “for a shaking to all the kingdoms of the earth”^{f557}; who should shake and tremble at such a dreadful spectacle of vengeance; or rather they should shake and tremble at the wrath of God upon them; or else their enemies, among whom they should be, should shake their heads at them, by way of insult and triumph over them:

to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them; where men shall look at them with amazement, and curse them, and hiss at them, and reproach them, as the offscouring of the world.

Ver. 19. *Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the Lord,* etc.] Which were spoken to them by the prophets; not hearkening to them, but despising them, were the same as not hearkening to him, and despising him; contempt of God, and his word, was the cause of their ruin; (see ⁴⁸⁶⁵2 Chronicles 36:15,16);

which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets; such as Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, and others:

rising up early, and sending [them]; which denotes the frequency of their mission; the diligent care of God towards them; and his earnest solicitude for their welfare; and the plenty of means they were favoured with; all which were aggravations of their sin:

but ye would not hear, saith the Lord; the words of the Lord by his prophets; the counsel and admonitions he gave them; but pursued their own ways and counsels, and listened to the false prophets.

Ver. 20. *Hear ye therefore the word of the Lord,* etc.] What he was now about to say concerning their false prophets:

all ye of the captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon; all that were carried captive along with Jeconiah. Some parts of this letter are directed to one sort of the captives, and others to another sort of them; some being good men, some bad; but what follows all are called upon to observe, good and bad; it being a prediction of a certain event, which they would see fulfilled in a short time; and therefore might be of service of them; to the godly, for the confirmation of them in the belief of what the Lord had promised; and to the rest, to make them stop giving heed to false prophets, that should here after arise.

Ver. 21. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel*, etc.] (See Gill on ^{29:4}Jeremiah 29:4”);

of Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you: two false prophets, of whom we have no account any where else but here; and are, no doubt, the prophets, or however two of them, that they of the captivity boasted of that God had raised unto them in Babylon, (^{29:15}Jeremiah 29:15). The Jews^{f558} say, and so Jerom relates, that these are the two elders that attempted the chastity of Susannah:

behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon: they should be suffered to commit some crime against the state, of which notice should be given, and they should be seized as seditious persons; which was so permitted in providence, that they might be brought to punishment for other sins they were guilty of:

and he shall slay them before your eyes; by roasting them with fire: as follows:

Ver. 22. *And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which [are] in Babylon*, etc.] A form of cursing; when they cursed anyone, or wished him ill, it should be in such like manner as follows; so odious and detestable would these men be afterwards to them, whom they, at least some of them, took to be the prophets of the Lord:

saying, the Lord make thee like Zedekiah, and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire; or “burnt them”^{f559}; not at once, but with a slow fire; so the Maccabees were roasted,

“Then the king, being in a rage, commanded pans and caldrons to be made hot: “ (2 Maccabees. 7:3)

Burning persons with fire, and casting them into a fiery furnace, were ways used by the Chaldeans in putting persons to death, (²⁰⁸⁶Daniel 3:6); and roasting men at a fire was used by the Chinese^{f560}.

Ver. 23. *Because they have committed villany in Israel*, etc.] Or “folly”^{f561}; as the sins of adultery, and prophesying falsely, are afterwards mentioned. This was not the reason why the king of Babylon put them to death; though the Jews^{f562} have a tradition that they attempted the chastity of Nebuchadnezzar’s daughter, for which reason he cast them into a furnace; but rather it was on account of their prophesying immediate destruction to Babylon; and telling the captives that they should be delivered in a short time; and stirring them up to prepare to go to their own land; but the reasons here given are those which moved the Lord to deliver them into the hands of the king of Babylon for their destruction:

and have committed adultery with their neighbours’ wives; which was a piece of villany, as well as folly; and which abundantly showed that these men were not the prophets of the Lord, or were sent by him, being such impure wretches:

and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them; as that the people should return to their own land in a short time; this was another part of their villany and folly, and for which they were given up into the hands of the king of Babylon, to be punished:

even I know, and [am] a witness, saith the Lord; for though their adulteries might be very secretly committed, and their lying prophecies were not seen to be such by the people in common; yet God, who is omniscient, saw all their impurity, and knew all their lies and falsehood, and was, and would be, a swift witness against them, here and hereafter. The Targum is,

“and before me it is manifest, and my word is a witness, saith the Lord.”

Ver. 24. *[Thus] shalt thou speak to Shemaiah the Nehelamite*, etc.] Or, “the dreamer”^{f563}; because he pretended to have dreams from the Lord; or because what he delivered as prophecies were mere dreams; as that the captives should quickly return to their own land; so Kimchi: but Jarchi takes it to be the name of a place, from whence he was so called; perhaps the place of his birth, or habitation formerly; so the Targum, paraphrasing

“who was of Halem;”

he was, another of the false prophets in Babylon. This latter part of the chapter is of a later date than the former; and refers to what was done after the above letter of Jeremiah came to the captives in Babylon; and after, the return of the messengers from thence, who brought, account how it was received, and what umbrage it gave to the false prophets:

saying; as follows:

Ver. 25. *Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying,* etc.] (See Gill on "^{290b}Jeremiah 29:4");

because thou hast sent letters in thy name unto all the people that [are] at Jerusalem; not in the name of the captives, whom he consulted not; nor with Ezekiel the prophet of the Lord, who was of the captivity; but in his own name, taking upon him to direct and order what should be done in Jerusalem. These letters were sent, very probably, by the hands of the king's messengers, when they returned, whose names are mentioned, (^{291B}Jeremiah 29:3); some of them were sent to the people, to set them against the prophet of the Lord, Jeremiah, that they might not give any heed and credit to him; and others to the priests, as follows:

and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest; not the high, priest, but his sagan or deputy; the second priest, as he is called, (^{262d}Jeremiah 52:24); for Seraiah was high priest, unless he was now become high priest in his room. This Maaseiah was either his immediate parent, or else the head of that course to which Zephaniah belonged, as a common priest, which was the twenty fourth in order, (^{131B}1 Chronicles 24:18);

saying; as follows:

Ver. 26. *The Lord hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest,* etc.] The same with Seraiah, who might have more names than one, and Jehoiada be one of them, who either was removed, or carried captive; and this Zephaniah, his sagan of deputy, succeeded him. Some think he refers to the famous Jehoiada in the times of Joash, a great reformer; and that this man was another such an one for his zeal, or at least ought to be, which he would have him exert against Jeremiah; but the former seems most probable:

that ye should be officers in the house of the Lord; or "visitors", or "overseers"^{f564} there; that is, Zephaniah, and the rest of the priests; or that he should see to it, that there were proper officers set there, to take care of

it, and suffer none to come in and prophesy there, to the hurt of the people, as he would insinuate:

for every man [that is] mad, and maketh himself a prophet; or, “against every man”^{f565}; to prevent all enthusiastic persons, and such as are troubled with a frenzy in their brain, and set up themselves for prophets, from speaking in the name of the Lord; so the true prophets of old, and the apostles of Christ, and faithful ministers of the word, have always been represented as beside themselves, and as taking upon them an office that did not belong to them; and therefore should be restrained and persecuted by the higher powers:

that thou shouldest put him in prison, and in the stocks; the former of these words, according to the Hebrew, signifies an engine or instrument, in which the neck was put, like our pillory; and the latter an iron instrument for the hands, a manacle, or handcuff, as Kimchi; (see ~~240~~Jeremiah 20:2); though this rather better agrees with the pillory, being a strait narrow place, in which the hands, feet, and neck, were put^{f566}.

Ver. 27. *Now therefore why hast thou not reprov'd Jeremiah of Anathoth*, etc.] Not by words only, but by actions; by beating and scourging, by pillory or imprisonment, and so restraining him from prophesying to the people:

which maketh himself a prophet unto you? takes upon him such an office, though not sent of the Lord, as he would insinuate: this shows the haughtiness and insolence of the false prophets in Babylon, to assume such authority to themselves, to dictate to the high priest, as Kimchi takes him to be, or however the second priest, what he should do, and to rebuke him for not doing his office.

Ver. 28. *For therefore he sent unto us [in] Babylon, saying*, etc.] That is, Jeremiah the prophet; and this was the reason, because his mouth was not stopped, and he restrained from prophesying; so that Shemaiah lays all the blame on Zephaniah, and his brethren the priests; who, had they done their duty, would have prevented Jeremiah's letter to the captives, as he suggests; the purport of which was,

this [captivity] is long; so Kimchi, Abarbinel, and Ben Melech, supply it; or, “it [is] long”^{f567}; it will be a long time before the captives shall return to their own land; and therefore they should not think of it, or provide for it;

but, on the contrary, for their continuance in Babylon; giving the following advice:

build ye houses, and dwell [in them]; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; referring to Jeremiah's letter; (see Gill on “^{אֲבִיבִים}Jeremiah 29:5”).

Ver. 29. *And Zephaniah the priest read this letter,* etc.] Of Shemaiah's to him, and the other priests:

in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet: whether out of good will, to let him know who were his enemies abroad; or out of ill will, to stir up the people against him; or in pretence of proceeding equitably with him; not taking him up, and punishing him before he brought the accusation and charge against him; and acquainted him who were his accusers, and what evidence there was, and heard what he had to say in his own defence whether one or the other is uncertain; however, by this means Jeremiah came to the knowledge of Shemaiah's letter.

Ver. 30. *When came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah,* etc.] After he had heard the letter read:

saying; as follows:

Ver. 31. *Send to all them of the captivity,* etc.] Another letter; not to Shemaiah, but to the people, that they might all know that he was a false prophet; and how his lies were resented by the Lord; and what punishment should be inflicted on him and his, on account of them:

saying, thus saith the Lord concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite; the letter, though written by the prophet, must be sent in the name of the Lord, declaring what he would do with the person mentioned, and the reason of it; which follows:

because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie; that they should in a very little time return from their captivity to Jerusalem.

Ver. 32. *Therefore thus saith the Lord,* etc.] Because he prophesied without being sent of God, and prophesied lies, by which the people were deceived:

behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed; not him only, but his posterity also: thus God sometimes visits the sins of parents on their

children, they being, as it were, a part of themselves, and oftentimes partners with them in their iniquities:

he shall not have a man to dwell among this people; either at Babylon, or at Jerusalem, whither he had promised a speedy return:

neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the Lord; by returning them, after seventy years captivity, to their own land, and to the enjoyment of all their privileges, civil and religious:

because he hath taught rebellion against the Lord; or, “a departure^{f568} from [him]”; taught men to revolt from him, and not give heed to his prophets; to disbelieve what he said by them, concerning their continuance in Babylon; which is called a rebellion against him; and being so heinous a crime, deserved the punishment denounced on him and his; rebels and their offspring are punished among men.