

CHAPTER 42

This chapter contains a request of the Jews to Jeremiah, to pray to the Lord for them to direct them, and the Lord's answer to it. The request is made by the captains and all the people, (²⁴⁰⁵Jeremiah 42:1-3); which Jeremiah undertook to present to the Lord, (²⁴⁰⁶Jeremiah 42:4); they promising to go according to the direction that should be given, (²⁴⁰⁵Jeremiah 42:5,6). After ten days an answer is returned, and the prophet calls the captains and people together to hear it, (²⁴⁰⁷Jeremiah 42:7,8); the purport of which was, that if they continued in the land of Judah, it would be well with them, and they would be safe, (²⁴⁰⁸Jeremiah 42:9-12); but if they went into Egypt, they should die by the sword, famine, and pestilence, and be a curse and reproach, and never see their own land more, (²⁴⁰⁹Jeremiah 42:13-18); they are charged with dissimulation and disobedience, (²⁴¹⁰Jeremiah 42:19-21); and the chapter is concluded with an assurance of their perishing by the above judgments in the place they were desirous of dwelling in, (²⁴¹¹Jeremiah 42:22).

Ver. 1. *Then all the captains of the forces*, etc.] Having taken up their residence at the habitation of Chimham, in their way to Egypt, where they were desirous of going, and being afraid of the Chaldeans, as they pretended:

and Johanan the son of Kareah; or, “even Johanan”^{f763}; especially and particularly he, the principal captain and chief spokesman in this affair:

and Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiah; said to be the son of a Maachathite, (²⁴¹²Jeremiah 40:8);

and all the people from the least even unto the greatest: a phrase expressive of the universality of them in the strongest terms:

came near; that is, to Jeremiah; who either was at Mizpah when Gedaliah was slain, but preserved by the Lord; and though carried captive by Ishmael with the rest, was rescued by Johanan; and now along with him: or rather after he had been with Gedaliah at Mizpah, and made a short stay there, he went to Anathoth, and there abode till now; and when Johanan took those that were left at Mizpah, he gathered together all the rest of the Jews in different places to him, in order to go to Egypt, and among the rest

the Prophet Jeremiah; for it can hardly be thought, had he been at Mizpah when Ishmael was there, he would have escaped without a miracle.

Ver. 2. *And said unto Jeremiah the prophet*, etc.] That is, some one of them, as the mouth of the whole body, very probably Johanan:

let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee; they treat the prophet with great respect, and are very humble and submissive, as if they were very hearty and sincere in their request:

and pray for us unto the Lord thy God; as if they were conscious of their own inability to pray for themselves, and of their unworthiness to call God their God; and as if they had a high opinion of, he prophet, as having an interest in God, and great power with him in prayer, whom he could not well deny anything:

[even] for all this remnant; this poor remnant, this handful of people, left of the sword, famine, and pestilence, left in the land by the Chaldeans, and who had escaped the cruelty of Ishmael; and for whom it might be hoped the Lord would still have a regard, since he had so mercifully and wonderfully preserved them:

for we are left [but] a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us; the number of the people had been very large, but by the judgments of the sword, famine, and pestilence, and captivity, they were greatly reduced; here was their whole number before the prophet; his eyes beheld them, and the condition they were in: this they said to move his compassion, and very likely to suggest to him how improbable it was that they should ever be able to continue in their own land; but that it would be better to put themselves under the protection of a neighbouring nation, Egypt, whither they were inclined to go; and hoped to have a word from the Lord by the prophet, to direct them thither.

Ver. 3. *That the Lord thy God may show us the way wherein we may walk*, etc.] Not the way of their duty as to religious worship, or their moral conversation, which was the way of God's commandments, and had been shown them, and they knew it; but which way they should steer their course for their safety; they had departed from Mizpah of themselves, and had taken up their dwelling at Geruthchimham, in the way to Egypt; whither they had set their faces, and where their hearts were, only they wanted the Lord's sanction for it, pretending they would be directed by him:

and the thing that we should do; the steps they should take in order to proceed; and what they should do before they left their own country, and went into another.

Ver. 4. *Then Jeremiah the prophet said unto them, I have heard [you],* etc.] He took notice of what they said to him, and found himself disposed to comply with their request, and readily granted it:

behold, I will pray unto the Lord your God, according to your words; be an intercessor for them; use his interest with his God, and their God; and, on account of relation, might expect to be heard; whom he would humbly entreat to direct what they should do, as they desired:

and it shall come to pass, [that] whatsoever thing the Lord shall answer you, I will declare [it] unto you; I will keep nothing back from you; but faithfully make known the whole mind and will of God, just as it is delivered, be it in what way soever: and though it is not expressed, he might suggest that he had some doubt on his mind whether they would obey it or not; and that he expected they would be open and free in declaring themselves on that point; since he had so readily complied with their request, and was determined to act the faithful part to them; hence the following reply:

Ver. 5. *Then they said to Jeremiah, the Lord be a true and faithful witness between us,* etc.] Which is the form of an oath; a solemn appeal to God, as a witness to what they were about to say, and to the sincerity of their hearts in it; who is true to his word, and faithful to his promises and threatenings; and who bears a true and faithful testimony, and will do what is just and right; and yet these people never intended to perform what they promised; which is a most shocking piece of atheism in a professing people; and who, at this very time, could not but observe the judgments of God upon their nation, city, and temple:

if we do not even according to all things for the which the Lord thy God shall send thee to us; they promise to do everything the Lord should signify by the prophet as his will; and, if they did not, wish the severest judgments of God might fall upon them.

Ver. 6. *Whether [it be] good, or whether [it be] evil,* etc.] Not morally good, or evil; for nothing but what is good, and not evil, in this sense, can come from God; but whether pleasantly or profitably good or evil; whether agreeable or disagreeable, pleasing or displeasing, advantageous or not;

whether it seemed to them good or evil, be it what it would in their opinion and esteem:

we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, to whom we send thee; this was well spoken, had they been sincere in it; and had they implored and depended on the grace of God to have enabled them to obey; but they spoke not in the uprightness of their hearts; and, did they, it was with too much confidence of their own strength, and the power of their free will:

that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the Lord our God; they spoke as if they knew their own interest; for so it was, that it was well or ill with those people, as they obeyed or disobeyed the voice of the Lord; and yet they acted not according to it; and, what was worse still, did not intend it. What a wretched scene of hypocrisy is here!

Ver. 7. *And it came to pass after ten days, that the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah.*] Abarbinel thinks it was on the tenth day of the seventh month, the day of atonement, that the answer was returned; but it is clear, from the context, that it was ten days from the time the Jews applied to the prophet to inquire of the Lord for them, and he promised to do it, that this word came from the Lord to him; not that he was praying all this while, as some think; but, having spread the case before the Lord, he waited for an answer; which was deferred, that it might have the greater weight with it when it came; and that it might appear that it was not of the prophet himself, a device of his own; and chiefly this was to mortify these people, who were impatient of an answer; and whose hypocrisy the Lord knew; and whose disobedience he foresaw; and therefore did not think fit to give the answer directly, but keep them in suspense awhile.

Ver. 8. *Then called he Johanan the son of Kareah,* etc.] That is, Jeremiah, as soon as he had received the answer from the Lord, called to Johanan; who, after the death of Gedaliah, was a person of the greatest authority, and had the command of the people, to come unto him, and hear what it was: he either called to him vocally and by name; or he sent a proper messenger to him, to meet him at some convenient place, to receive it; and not him only, but

all the captains of the forces which [were] with him, and all the people, from the least even unto the greatest; they were all convened together, as it was proper they should, to hear the word of the Lord; and the rather, since they all joined in a request to the prophet, (²⁴⁰¹Jeremiah 42:1).

Ver. 9. *And said unto them, thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel,* etc.] That had chosen Israel; had a favour for that people, and bestowed many blessings on them, and continued in a covenant relation to them; and therefore what he said should be regarded by them. This preface is made by the prophet, to show that what he was about to say was not of himself, and in his own name; but was from the Lord, and who bore a good will to them; and therefore whatever he said should be taken in good part, and as what was best for them:

unto whom ye sent me, to present your supplication before him; or, “to cause your supplication to fall before him”¹⁷⁶⁴; to make it in the most humble and submissive manner; and which carries in it other arguments to engage them to obey the word of the Lord he brought to them; both because they had sent him to the Lord on this errand, to get a word from him; and by him had entreated him for it, in the most suppliant manner. The word from the Lord follows:

Ver. 10. *If ye will still abide in this land,* etc.] In the land of Judea, their native country, where they had always lived, and where they continued when their brethren were carried captive; and yet they thought of going out of it, which the Lord knew; and therefore to encourage them to abide in it, and not think of departing into Egypt; that if they would take up their residence in it, and determine to continue there, he thus promises them:

then will I build you, and not pull [you] down: and I will plant you, and not pluck [you] up; that is, they should be firm and stable, happy and prosperous; and abound with all kind of blessings, and increase in numbers, wealth, and riches. The metaphors are taken from building houses, and planting fields and vineyards:

for I repent me of the evil that I have done unto you; not that he had done any unjust thing to them; or that he changed his mind concerning them; but that he had compassion on them, and would change his way and course of providence towards them, according to his unchangeable will.

Ver. 11. *Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid,* etc.] Lest he should revenge the death of Gedaliah upon them, which was a groundless fear; (see ²⁴¹⁸Jeremiah 41:18); or that they should be dealt hardly with by him, and be cruelly oppressed, and not able to live in subjection to him; (see ²⁴¹⁹Jeremiah 40:9);

be not afraid of him, saith the Lord: who, being omniscient, knew they were; and, being omnipotent, a greater King than the king of Babylon, the King of king?, they had no reason to fear anything from him, since they were under his protection:

for I [am] with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand; from his avenging and oppressing hand; though they were not to be delivered as yet from subjection to him, or being tributaries to him; which they might be, and yet dwell in peace and safety.

Ver. 12. *And I will show mercies unto you,* etc.] Bestow blessings of goodness upon them, out of pure mercy and compassion to them, and not according to their merits; or I will cause others to show mercy to them, even the king of Babylon, as follows: God shows mercy to men when he stirs up the compassion of others towards them:

that he may have mercy upon you; and not avenge the death of Gedaliah, or any way cruelly oppress them, but show them all the favour they could wish for or expect under such a government, and in such circumstances; giving them vineyards and fields, and allowing them to gather the fruits of them, and enjoy them:

and cause you to return to your own land: this is said, not of the captives in Babylon, as Kimchi and Abarbanel, since these were not to return till seventy years were ended; and when they did, it was not by the order and direction of the king of Babylon, but of the king of Persia: this is said of those who, from the time that Jerusalem had been besieged, had deserted their houses and fields, but should have liberty to return to them; or of those who more lately had been carried captive by Ishmael, from the places where they had settled, but should be returned to them again, and live peaceably and comfortably there under the government and protection of the king of Babylon.

Ver. 13. *But if ye say, we will not dwell in this land,* etc.] Or continue any longer in it, but go into Egypt;

neither obey the voice of the Lord your God; or, “so as not to hearken to” or “obey”, etc.^{f765}; for they did not say in so many words that they would not obey the voice of the Lord; they had promised they would; but resolving, against his declared will, that they would not abide in the land, but go into Egypt, was interpretatively saying they would not obey his voice.

Ver. 14. *Saying, no, but we will go into the land of Egypt,* etc.] It was all one as if they had said, no, we will not obey the voice of the Lord to continue in our own land; we are determined to go into Egypt, induced by the following reasons:

where we shall see no war; either internal, or with a foreign enemy; as both of late in their own land, and which they feared would be again; but promised themselves exemption from both in the land of Egypt, and therefore coveted to dwell there:

nor hear the sound of the trumpet; neither hear of wars nor rumours of wars; not the sound of the trumpet in the armies of the enemy, or among themselves, to gather together and prepare for battle; or, as Jarchi thinks, the sound of the trumpet blown by the watchman, giving notice to the people of the approach of an enemy:

nor have hunger of bread; as they had had while Judea was invaded and Jerusalem besieged, and a foreign army in the land; and though they had no reason to fear this now, yet they thought they should be more out of the danger of it in Egypt, a fruitful country, overflowed by the Nile:

and there will we dwell; in peace, prosperity, and safety: this was their resolution, to go and abide there; and this their confidence, that such would be their happy state.

Ver. 15. *And now therefore hear the word of the Lord, ye remnant of Judah,* etc.] A small remnant indeed, a few that were left in the land; who ought therefore to have admired the distinguishing goodness of Providence in preserving them in it; where they should have continued and made use of their privilege, to the glory of God and their mutual good:

thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; the Lord of armies above and below, the Lord God omnipotent, and so able to protect them in their land; and who had a peculiar favour to Israel, and stood in a particular relation to them, and therefore would do it, of which they had no reason to doubt; but, disobliging him, what judgments might they not expect?

if you wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt: are resolved upon it, and are actually engaged in it; turning their faces from Judea towards Egypt, and obstinately pursuing it, nor can be reclaimed from it: the phrase expresses their resolution, impudence, and obstinacy:

and go to sojourn there: to be sojourners and strangers there, as their fathers had been before; the remembrance of which was enough to set them against going into Egypt any more.

Ver. 16. *Then it shall come to pass*, etc.] That the various judgments following should come upon them:

[that] the sword, which ye feared, shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt; that is, the sword; of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, which they feared they should fall by in Judea; this should come after them in Egypt, and there overtake them, as it did; Egypt being destroyed by the king of Babylon, as it was foretold it should, (^{<24625>}Jeremiah 46:25,26);

and the famine, whereof you were afraid, shalt follow close after you there in Egypt; the famine they were afraid would come upon them in Judea, should pursue them, overtake them, seize on them, and cleave unto them, in Egypt; thus the evils they thought to escape, by moving from one place, should befall them in another; there is no fleeing from the presence, power, and hand of God:

and there ye shall die; either by the sword, or by famine, or by pestilence, as in the (^{<2407>}Jeremiah 42:17).

Ver. 17. *So shall it be with all the men that set their faces to go into Egypt to sojourn there*, etc.] Not all that went into Egypt, but all that were resolutely set upon it; that were obstinately bent to go there, and did go, contrary to the express command of God; for otherwise there were some that were forced to go against their wills, as Jeremiah, Baruch, and no doubt others:

they shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence; three of the Lord's sore judgments; some should die by one, and some by another, and some by a third; all should die by one or the other:

and none of them shall remain or escape from the evil that I will bring upon them; that is, none of those who wilfully, and of their own accord, went down to Egypt; they all perished there, none could escape the hand of God, or the evil he determined to bring upon them; which is to be understood of the above judgments.

Ver. 18. *For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel*, etc.] (See Gill on ^{<24215>}Jeremiah 42:15");

as mine anger and my fury hath been poured forth upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem; like a large hasty shower of rain; or rather like melted metal, which suddenly and swiftly runs, and spreads itself, and burns and consumes with a violent heat; such was the wrath of God on Jerusalem, in the destruction of it by the Chaldeans:

so shall my fury be poured forth upon you, when ye shall enter into Egypt; as soon as they had well got there, quickly after they were settled there; for it was in the time of the then present king of Egypt, Pharaohhophra, and by the then present king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, that the destruction of Egypt was, in which these Jews suffered:

and ye shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach; men should be astonished at the hand of God upon them, reproach them for their sins; and when they made any imprecation on themselves, it would be in this form, if it be so, let the same calamities come upon me as upon the Jews in Egypt:

and ye shall see this place no more; and so their case would be worse than their brethren in Babylon; who, after a term of years were expired, would return to their own land, which these would never see any more.

Ver. 19. *The Lord hath said concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah*, etc.] Or, “unto you”^{f766}; by the mouth of the prophet; or, “against you”^{f767}; that which was contrary to their inclination and will, as follows:

go ye not into Egypt: this was the express command of God:

know certainly that I have admonished you this day; not to go into Egypt: or, “have testified unto you”^{f768}; the will of God concerning this matter; and therefore they could not plead ignorance.

Ver. 20. *For ye dissembled in your hearts*, etc.] Did not honestly and faithfully declare their intentions; they said one thing with their mouths, and meant another in their minds; they pretended they would act according to the will of God, as it should be made known to them by him, when they were determined to take their own way. Some render it, “ye have deceived [me] in your hearts”^{f769}; the prophet, so Kimchi; by that which was in their hearts, not declaring what was their real intention and design: or, “ye have deceived your souls”^{f770}; you have deceived yourselves and one another; I have not deceived you, nor the Lord, but you have put a cheat upon your

own souls: or, “you have used deceit against your souls”^{f771}; to the hurt of them, to your present ruin and everlasting destruction:

when ye sent me unto the Lord your God; the prophet did not go of himself, they desired him to go:

saying, pray for us unto the Lord our God; to be directed in the way they should go; so that the prophet did nothing but what they desired him to do:

and according to all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do [it]; they pressed him to a faithful declaration of the will of God to them, and promised they would act according to it. Now he had done all this; he had been wire God, prayed unto him as they requested, and had brought them his mind and will, and made a faithful relation of it, and yet they did not attend to it; so that the deceit was not in him, but in them, as follows:

Ver. 21. *And [now] I have this day declared [it] unto you*, etc.] The whole will of God, and had not kept back anything from them:

but ye have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God; or, “ye will not obey”^{f772}; the prophet knew they would not obey the command of the Lord not to go into Egypt, either by his conversation with them during the ten days the answer of the Lord was deferred, by which he plainly saw they were determined to go into Egypt; or by their countenances and behaviour, while he was delivering the Lord’s message to them; by what he observed in them, he knew what was said was not agreeable to them, and that their mind was to go into Egypt: or he had this, as others think, by divine revelation; though without that he knew the cast of this people, and what a rebellious and disobedient people they were, and had been, never obeying the voice of the Lord:

nor any [thing] for which he hath sent me unto you: not anyone particular thing respecting this present affair; nor indeed any of his prophecies had they regarded, with which he had been sent to them before.

Ver. 22. *Now therefore know certainly*, etc.] Or, “in knowing know”^{f773}; they might assure themselves of this, that it would certainly come to pass, and most justly and deservedly; since it was at their own request the prophet sought the mind of the Lord for them, and had faithfully related it to them, and they had promised to observe it; wherefore, should they go

into Egypt, as their inclination scented to be entirely that way, they must expect what follows:

that ye shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence; by one or other of these, or all of them; some by one, and some by another, as before threatened; evils they thought to escape by going thither, but which should surely follow them, and overtake them:

in the place whither ye desire to go [and] to sojourn; that is, in Egypt, to which they had a strong inclination, where they greatly desired to be, pleased themselves with the thoughts of, and which they chose of their own will and pleasure for their habitation.