

CHAPTER 43

INTRODUCTION TO JEREMIAH 43

This chapter contains the answer of the princes and people to the prophet's message; a relation of their going into Egypt; and a prophecy of the destruction of that land. The persons that gave the answer are described, some by name, and all by their character; and the time of their giving it is mentioned, in which they charge the prophet with a falsehood; impute the whole to an instigation of Baruch, and an ill design of his, and so were disobedient to the command of God, (^{<2481>}Jeremiah 43:1-4); and went into Egypt, and carried all with them, of every rank, age, and sex, and even Baruch, and the prophet too, and came to Tahpanhes, the seat of the kings of Egypt, (^{<2485>}Jeremiah 43:5-7); upon this a prophecy is delivered out, concerning the destruction of that country, which is signified by a symbol explained; the person, the instrument of it, is mentioned by name, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; the devastation he should make is expressed by slaying with the sword, and carrying into captivity; by burning the temples of their gods, and breaking their images in pieces, (^{<2488>}Jeremiah 43:8-13).

Ver. 1. *And it came to pass, [that] when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking unto all the people,* etc.] The princes and the people, the whole body of them, who had desired the prophet to seek the Lord for them, and whom he called together to relate his answer, and declare his will; (see ^{<2481>}Jeremiah 42:1,8); they heard him out, and that was as much as they did; for as soon as he had done, they rose up and contradicted him: however, he faithfully declared

all the words of the Lord their God, for which the Lord their God sent him to them, [even] all the words; which are related in the preceding chapter, which were the words of the Lord, and so ought to have been regarded; and the rather, as they were the words of their God, whom they professed, and which he had sent his prophet to declare unto them; and who had kept back nothing, but had made known the whole; he had told the truth, and nothing but the truth, and all the truth.

Ver. 2. *Then spake Azariah the son of Hoshaiiah*, etc.] Perhaps the same with Jezaniah, or a brother of his, (^{240B}Jeremiah 42:1); he is mentioned first, it may be, because he was the contriver of this scheme to go into Egypt, advised unto it, and was most for it it. The Septuagint and Arabic versions call him the son of Maaseiah;

and Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the proud men; the great men among them, who are commonly proud of their greatness; of their descent, family and blood; of their wealth and riches, and posts of honour; perhaps the captains of the forces are meant, who elsewhere are mentioned along with Johanan, (^{240B}Jeremiah 40:13 41:11,13,16 42:1,8); these were men full of themselves, had a high opinion of their own wisdom, and were prudent in their own eyes; and could not bear to be contradicted or advised by the prophet, nor even by the Lord himself; and are justly, by the Targum, called wicked men; and so the Syriac version renders it; their pride was the cause of their rebellion against God, and disobedience to him, and of their ungenteel and insolent behaviour to the prophet

saying unto Jeremiah, thou speakest falsely: or, “a lie”^{f774}; it being contrary to their minds: so the prophets of the Lord, the ministers of the word, and even the word of God itself, are charged with falsehoods, when contrary to men’s sentiments and lusts;

the Lord our God hath not sent thee to say, go not into Egypt to sojourn there; they did not care to own it was the word of the Lord, Whatever convictions of it they had in their minds; because they would not openly appear to be fighters against God, whom they professed to be their God; but deny that the prophet was sent by him with any such message to them; when they had all the reason to believe by former prophecies, which had had their fulfilment, that Jeremiah was a true prophet of the Lord, and that he had acted a very faithful part in the present affair: they themselves had sent him to the Lord to pray for them; he had done so, and the Lord had returned an answer by him; of which they had no reason to doubt, but their pride would not allow them to receive it.

Ver. 3. *But Baruch the son of Neriah setteth thee on against us*, etc.] First they charge the prophet with a lie, and deny his mission from the Lord; and now to lessen the prophet’s crime they charged him with, they lay the blame on Baruch, as if he, out of ill will to them, had instigated the prophet to deliver such a message; which is not at all likely, that he should be prevailed upon by a younger person, and his secretary, to take such a step:

nor can it be thought that Baruch should have any interest to serve by it; and, besides, both he and the prophet were too good men, the one to instigate, and the other to be instigated, to declare a falsehood in the name of the Lord. The end proposed, they suggest, was

for to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they might put us to death, and carry us away captives into Babylon; either that he or the prophet might deliver them into the hands of the Chaldeans, to be put to death by them, or be carried captive; which is not at all probable, it being inconsistent with that piety and humanity which were conspicuous in them both, and with their conduct, who chose rather to abide in their own land, with this small and despicable handful of people, than to go and live in the court of Babylon, where good care would have been taken of them.

Ver. 4. *So Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and all the people,* etc.] The generality of them, at least, all agreed together, were of the same mind, and in the same sentiment and practice: and so

obeyed not the voice of the Lord, to dwell in the land of Judah; it was the command of the Lord they should dwell there, and not go into Egypt; but they would not believe this was the voice of the Lord, only a scheme concerted between the prophet and Baruch; or which the former was instigated to deliver as the word of the Lord by the latter, and therefore would not give heed unto it; though the truth of the matter was, it was contrary to their inclination and resolution, and therefore, though they had reason to believe it was the will of God they should abide in their own land, yet they were determined they would not, but go into Egypt, as they, did.

Ver. 5. *But Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces,* etc.] Who were united in their resolution to go into Egypt, contrary to the declared will of God:

took all the remnant of Judah, that were returned from all nations whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah; both such who were left in the land, when the rest were carried captive into Babylon, more particularly mentioned in (²⁴⁰⁶Jeremiah 43:6); and those, who upon the invasion of the land, and siege of Jerusalem, had fled to other countries, but now were returned from thence, in order to settle in it; having heard that a governor from among the Jews was appointed over it; as from Moab, Ammon, Edom, and other countries; (see ²⁴⁰¹Jeremiah 40:11,12);

these, some of their own accord, others through persuasion, and others by force, went along with, or were taken and carried by the above captains into Egypt.

Ver. 6. [*Even] men, and women, and children, and the king's daughters,* etc.] This, according to the supplement of our version, explains who they were that were taken and had into Egypt, persons of every sex, age, and rank; though rather these words design and describe persons distinct from the former, that came out of other countries; (see ^{<2410>}Jeremiah 41:10);

and every person that Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan: even the poor of the land to till it; and to whom he gave fields and vineyards, and committed them to the care and government of Gedaliah, when the rest were carried captive to Babylon; and now these, in some sort, may be said to be carried captive by their own brethren into Egypt:

and Jeremiah the prophet, and Baruch the son of Neriah; whom they forced with them, partly to punish them, and partly to give countenance to their conduct; but not without the will of God, who so ordered it in his providence, that they might have the prophet with them, to reprove them for their sins, and warn them of their danger and ruin, and so leave them inexcusable.

Ver. 7. *So they came into the land of Egypt,* etc.] They set out from the habitation of Chimham, where they were, (^{<2417>}Jeremiah 41:17); and proceeded on their journey, till they entered the land of Egypt:

for they obeyed not the voice of the Lord; to continue in Judea, and not to go into Egypt; and though the prophet of the Lord, who was with them, might, as they went along, advise them to go back, they regarded him not, but still went on:

thus came they [even] to Tahpanhes; the same with Hanes, (^{<2304>}Isaiah 30:4); and might be so called, as here, from a queen of Egypt of this name, (^{<3119>}1 Kings 11:19,20). The Septuagint version, and others after that, call it Taphnas. It is thought to be the Daphnae Pelusiae of Herodotus^{f775} It was a seat of the king of Egypt, as appears from (^{<2439>}Jeremiah 43:9); and no less a place would these proud men stop at, or take up with, but where the king's palace was. Tyrius^{f776} calls it Tapium, and says it was in his time a very small town.

Ver. 8. *Then came the word of the Lord to Jeremiah, at Tahpanhes, etc.]* Where he was with the rest the captains carried thither with them; and as soon as he and they had got here, the word of the Lord came unto him, declaring the destruction of this place, and of the whole land. Here Jerom says the prophet was stoned to death;

saying; as follows:

Ver. 9. *Take great stones in thine hand, etc.]* In both his hands, as big as he could carry:

and hide them in the clay in the brick kiln; there was much clay in Egypt, through the overflowing of the Nile, and particularly at this place Tahpanhes, which had its name of Pelusiae from hence; and here was a brick kiln; not a place where bricks were burnt, but where they were forged; and so here was the clay of which they were made, and in which these stones were to be hid:

which [is] at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes; this brick kiln stood not directly at the entrance into the king's palace, but at the door of a wall of a park or garden, which belonged to the palace, from whence there was an open way to it; here the stones were to be laid. Since a brick kiln so near a king's palace seems not agreeable, Gussetius^{f777} thinks [^]bl m signifies a poplar walk, from hnb1 , a poplar tree, whose shade is very grateful, (²⁰⁴³Hosea 4:13); to which the courtiers betook themselves at certain times, and walked in for pleasure;

in the sight of the men of Judah; not in the sight of the Egyptians, who would not understand the design of it, nor were they to be instructed by it; but in the sight of the Jews, who would at once imagine that something was intended, being used to such symbols, and would inquire the meaning of it; and which is explained in (²⁴¹⁰Jeremiah 43:10).

Ver. 10. *And say unto them, etc.]* The men of Judah, now in Egypt:

thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; (see Gill on "²⁴¹⁵Jeremiah 42:15");

behold, I will send and take Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; as all men are by creation, and as he was in a very eminent sense, being an instrument in his hand of executing his designs, both on the Jews and other nations; him he would send for, and take to perform his counsel;

secretly work upon and dispose his mind to such an undertaking, and lay a train of providences, and, by a concourse of them, bring him to Egypt to do his will:

and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; which he had ordered the prophet to hide, and which he did by him; signifying, that the king at Babylon should come with his army against this city, and should take it, and set up his throne, and keep his court here:

and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them; his tent; he shall place here his beautiful one, as the word^{f778} signifies; this should be set up where these stones were laid, as if they were designed for the foundation of it, though they were only a symbol of it; and would be a token to the Jews, when accomplished, of the certainty of the divine prescience, and of prophecy, with respect to future events, even those the most minute and contingent.

Ver. 11. *And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt*, etc.] Here is a various reading: the “Cetib”, or textual writing, is, “when it cometh, it shall smite”; which Kimchi rightly interprets of the camp or army of Nebuchadnezzar; and the “Keri”, or marginal reading, which we follow, is, “when he cometh, he shall smite”; that is, the king of Babylon; both are to be received: when Nebuchadnezzar should come with his army to Tahpanhes, he would not only take that, but go through the land of Egypt, and subdue and destroy the inhabitants of it, all that dwelt in it, sojourners as well as natives; and so the Jews that were come hither to dwell, against the express command of God, to whom this prophecy was delivered, and to whom it has a particular respect:

[and deliver] such [as are] for death to death; who are appointed to death, either by pestilence or famine; that is, he shall oblige them to flee to, or block them up in, places where they shall perish by one or other of these:

and such [as are] for captivity to captivity: such as are designed to be carried captive, these shall be taken by him, and carried captive into Babylon, and the provinces of it:

and such [as are] for the sword to the sword; who are destined to fall by the sword, these should be slain by the sword of Nebuchadnezzar, and his soldiers; so that, what by one way or another, a general destruction should be made.

Ver. 12. *And I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt,* etc.] Not only men should not be spared, but their gods also, and their temples should be burnt, as was usually done when cities were taken and destroyed: this is ascribed to God, to his wrath and vengeance; idolatry being a sin highly displeasing to him; though the Chaldeans were the instruments of it, yet it being done by the order, direction, and providence of God, it is rightly attributed to him:

and he shall burn them, and carry them away captives; that is, Nebuchadnezzar shall do this; he shall burn their temples, and carry away their idols of gold and silver; so Kimchi, who adds, or the sense is, he shall carry captive their worshippers; but rather the meaning is, he shall burn their idols, such as are made of wood, or any base matter, not worth saving; and he shall carry away with him their idols, such as are made of gold and silver, or any precious matter:

and he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd putteth on his garment. The Targum is,

“he shall spoil the land of Egypt.”

The meaning is, that he shall load and cover himself and his army with the spoil of the land of Egypt, as a shepherd covers himself with his garment; and he shall do it as easily as a shepherd puts on his coat; and as completely he shall roll up all the spoil, wealth, and riches of the land, and carry it off, even as a shepherd rolls up the covering of his tent; and, as Kimchi’s father observes, as well as puts on his garment, and leaves nothing behind him, when he removes from place to place; and as he is unmindful of his clothes, or what he wears in the heat of the day; but at night, when he returns home from keeping his sheep, puts on his clothes, the best he has; so should the king of Babylon and his army return richly laden with the spoil of Egypt, when he should leave it. Or the sense rather is, he shall cover the land of Egypt with his forces, as a shepherd is covered and wrapped up in his garment against the inclemency of the weather; or else, as Bochart^{f779} suggests, the destruction of Egypt may be compared to an old worn out garment, or such a mean and sordid garment as shepherds wear:

and he shall go forth from thence in peace: there shall be none to molest and disturb him, to stop him and take away the spoil from him, or hinder

his return to his own country; whither he should go in safety, and with great booty.

Ver. 13. *He shall break also the images of Bethshemesh, that [is] in the land of Egypt,* etc.] Or, “of Heliopolis”, as the Septuagint; the “city of the sun”; and so “Bethshemesh” here signifies the “house of the sun”; either it designs the temple of the sun, or the city where it was worshipped; as Heliopolis was famous for the worship of the sun, and for a magnificent temple in it, built for that purpose, and where abundance of persons resorted on that account, as Herodotus^{f780} observes; here were many images of the sun; and these now should be broke to pieces, when this city should become the city of destruction, as is foretold it should by Isaiah, (^{<23198>}Isaiah 19:18); where the Targum expressly calls it the city Bethshemesh, that is to be destroyed; (see Gill on “^{<23198>}Isaiah 19:18”). This is the same city that was formerly called On, and had a priest in Joseph’s time, (^{<0445>}Genesis 41:45);

and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians shall he burn with fire; which is repeated, that it might be taken notice of, and for the confirmation of it; though the words may be rendered, so as to remove the tautology, “and with the houses of the gods of the Egyptians shall he burn [it] with fire”^{f781}; that is, Bethshemesh, or “the house of the sun”, that shall not escape, being a principal temple. The gods they worshipped were Mnevis and Apis, which were oxen consecrated to the sun and moon^{f782}. So says Porphyry^{f783}, speaking of the Egyptians,

“they consecrate oxen to the sun and moon: that which is sacred to the sun at Heliopolis is called Mnevis, and is the greatest of them: it is very black, because much sun makes human bodies black; and the hairs of its tail, and of its whole body, contrary to other oxen, turn upwards, as the sun makes its course contrary to the pole; its testicles are the largest, because by the heat of the sun venereal desires are excited; hence the sun is said to make nature fruitful. To the moon they dedicate Taurus (or the bull), which they call Apis, and is blacker than others, bearing the signs of the sun and moon, because the light of the moon is from the sun; and the sign of the sun is the blackness of its body, and also the beetle that is under its tongue;”

and these were the images and gods of Bethshemesh or Heliopolis, that were to be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Of his expedition into Egypt,

whereby this prophecy was fulfilled, not only Josephus makes mention, but some Heathen writers gave plain hints of it. The Jewish historian says^{f784}, that Nebuchadnezzar, five years after the destruction of Jerusalem, led his army into Coelesyria, and took it; and made war with the Ammonites and Moabites; and, having subdued these nations, made a push into Egypt, in order to destroy that, and slew the king of it: and Berosus says^{f785}, that

“Nebuchadnezzar having settled his affairs in Egypt, and other countries; and having committed to his friends the captives of the Jews, Phoenicians, Syrians, and the nations about Egypt, went to Babylon:”

and Megasthenes^{f786} relates, that

“he conquered the greatest part of Lybia (or Africa) and Iberia;”

or, as it is elsewhere^{f787} expressed,

“he led his army into Lybia and Iberia; and, having subdued these, carried colonies of them to the right of Pontus.”