

**Jer. 40:1 ¶ The word that 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 that were carried away captive of Jerusalem and Judah, which were carried away captive unto Babylon.**

This verse adds a bit to the information we were given in the last chapter. It seems that Jeremiah was gathered up with all those left in Jerusalem and Judah at the time the city fell and bound in chains to be taken captive to Babylon. The gathering point is identified as Ramah, about 5 miles north of Jerusalem in the land of Benjamin.

**Jer. 40:2 And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, The LORD thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place.**

**Jer. 40:3 Now the LORD hath brought *it*, and done according as he hath said: because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come upon you.**

After Nebuchadnezzar gave instructions for Jeremiah to be given special treatment, Nebuzaradan had to locate Jeremiah and found him among the captives. He seemed to understand that “the LORD thy God” had pronounced judgment upon His people because of their disobedience and that their defeat of Judah/Jerusalem was the result of that judgment. Evidently, those who had surrendered to the Babylonians before the siege ended had told the Babylonian soldiers the message that Jeremiah was declaring from God to His people.

**Jer. 40:4 And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which *were* upon thine hand. If it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come; and I will look well unto thee: but if it seem ill unto thee to come with me into Babylon, forbear: behold, all the land *is* before thee: whither it seemeth good and convenient for thee to go, thither go.**

**Jer. 40:5 Now while he was not yet gone back, *he said*, Go back also to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon hath made governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people: or go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee to go. So the captain of the guard gave him victuals and a reward, and let him go.**

**Jer. 40:6 Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land.**

Nebuzaradan then released Jeremiah and gave him the option of going to Babylon under his protection or staying in Judah and going wherever he chose.

I think the NLT translation for verse 5 is clearer: “*If you decide to stay, then return to Gedaliah....*” Having told him that he would see to his care in Babylon, he let him know that he would also be taken care of if he stayed. Nebuchadnezzar had appointed Gedaliah as governor, and Jeremiah could go stay with him or anywhere else he chose.

Jeremiah was then given food and “a reward” and allowed to go. Jeremiah chose to go and stay with Gedaliah in Mizpah with the people in that area. Mizpah was located northwest of Jerusalem in the land of Benjamin.

**Jer. 40:7 ¶** Now when all the captains of the forces which *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 unto him men, and women, and children, and of the poor of the land, of them that were not carried away captive to Babylon;

**Jer. 40:8** Then they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even 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 a Maachathite, they and their men.

**Jer. 40:9** And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan sware unto them and to their men, saying, Fear not to serve the Chaldeans: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you.

**Jer. 40:10** As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah to serve the Chaldeans, which will come unto us: but ye, gather ye wine, and summer fruits, and oil, and put *them* in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that ye have taken.

My first thought is—What forces? Weren’t all but the poor taken captive. It would seem that there were groups of men hidden throughout the country that were overlooked or just no longer considered a threat by the Babylonians. Their focus seemed to be on those living in and around the cities. The NLT uses the term “guerilla bands,” which I think is a good comparison. The leaders of these groups got word that Nebuchadnezzar had appointed Gedaliah governor and decided to come and meet with him. Gedaliah told them that if they would submit to the rule of the Babylonians, things would go well with them. He informed them that he would headquarter in Mizpah, evidently according to his agreement with the Babylonians who would make routine visits for reports on the status quo. They were free to farm the land and make homes in the cities they chose to occupy.

**Jer. 40:11** Likewise when all the Jews that *were* in Moab, and among the Ammonites, and in Edom, and that *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;

**Jer. 40:12** Even all the Jews returned out of all places whither they were driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah, unto Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer fruits very much.

Word finally got around to Jews that had escaped to the surrounding nations (such as Moab, Ammon and Edom) that Nebuchadnezzar had left some people to live in Judah and had appointed Gedaliah as their governor. This appointment must have met with their approval since they decided to come home and take part in the harvest of the summer crops.

**Jer. 40:13** Moreover Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* in the fields, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah,

**Jer. 40:14** And said unto him, Dost thou certainly know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites hath sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to slay thee? But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam believed them not.

**Jer. 40:15** Then Johanan the son of Kareah spake to Gedaliah in Mizpah secretly, saying, Let me go, I pray thee, and I will slay Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no man shall know *it*: wherefore should he slay thee, that all the Jews which are gathered unto thee should be scattered, and the remnant in Judah perish?

**Jer. 40:16** But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said unto Johanan the son of Kareah, Thou shalt not do this thing: for thou speakest falsely of Ishmael.

Now we are told that one of the guerilla leaders, Johanan the son of Kareah, led a delegation of some of the other guerilla leaders to warn Gedaliah that another one of the guerilla leaders, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, had been hired by the king of the Ammonites to kill Gedaliah. Ishmael was a descendant of the royal line of David.

*Jeremiah 41:1 "Now it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah the son of Elishama, of the seed royal...."*

Some commentators think Ishmael was motivated by the fact that he thought he should have been appointed governor; some by the fact that he considered Gedaliah to be a traitor. As far as I can ascertain, scripture doesn't reveal his motive. His actions after killing Gedaliah (as recorded in the next chapter) indicate that he was motivated by greed and the desire for power.

Gedaliah did not believe them. Johanan decided to try one more time and made a secret visit to Gedaliah. He offered to go on a secret mission to kill Ishmael. He reasoned that it would be better for the Jews in the land to live under the rule of Gedaliah than to fall prey to the king of Ammon. For some reason, Gedaliah still did not believe Johanan and accused him of lying. He told him not to harm Ishmael.

I can maybe understand that Gedaliah might not believe one man's report, especially one that volunteers to murder someone. It seems a bit odd, however, that he didn't at least give possible credence to such a serious accusation affirmed by many others.