

Jer. 46:1 ¶ The word of the LORD which came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Gentiles;

Jer. 46:2 Against Egypt, against the army of Pharaohnecho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah.

The next six chapters are a record of messages from the LORD directed to the Gentile nations surrounding Israel. This first one is directed to Pharaohnecho of Egypt and was received during the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim in Judah. It was also intended for the ears of the Egyptian army stationed at Carchemish. This city was located on the west bank of the Euphrates River and Egypt's army had assembled in support of Assyria. The battle fought here by these allies against the forces of Babylon would culminate in the final fall of the Assyrian empire and the ascendancy of the Babylonian empire.

Though God had singled out the nation of Israel as His particular possession among the nations, it did not mean that He is not interested in or have a purpose and plan for the peoples of these nations. When God uses His prophets to speak to the Gentile nations, He is declaring His sovereignty over all nations.

Jer. 46:3 Order ye the buckler and shield, and draw near to battle.

Jer. 46:4 Harness the horses; and get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth with *your* helmets; furbish the spears, *and* put on the brigandines.

Jer. 46:5 Wherefore have I seen them dismayed *and* turned away back? and their mighty ones are beaten down, and are fled apace, and look not back: *for* fear *was* round about, saith the LORD.

Jer. 46:6 Let not the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape; they shall stumble, and fall toward the north by the river Euphrates.

Reminder—Though we are reading this with hindsight, this message is being delivered as a word of prophecy.

Verses four and five paint a word picture of the Egyptian army confidently preparing for battle as they strapped on their armor, readied their chariots and took hold of their weapons. Abruptly in verse five the army is pictured running in fear in the face of the enemy. They are pictured as stumbling over one another and falling victim to the enemy.

Jer. 46:7 Who is this *that* cometh up as a flood, whose waters are moved as the rivers?

Jer. 46:8 Egypt riseth up like a flood, and *his* waters are moved like the rivers; and he saith, I will go up, *and* will cover the earth; I will destroy the city and the inhabitants thereof.

Jer. 46:9 Come up, ye horses; and rage, ye chariots; and let the mighty men come forth; the Ethiopians and the Libyans, that handle the shield; and the Lydians, that handle *and* bend the bow.

Jer. 46:10 For this *is* the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall

be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord GOD of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.

This section of verses describe the armies of Egypt as comparable to a great, powerful flood spreading out over the region. They are confident and full of pride. They enjoy reinforcements by mercenaries from Ethiopia and Libya that are skilled with handling the shield and those from Lydia that are experts with the bow and arrow.

No matter how fortified and how well equipped this army may be, point is made that they are facing the vengeance of the LORD. They have declared themselves His enemies, and He is going to bring them to judgment at the hand of their enemies.

Some commentators identify God's vengeance against Egypt as a response to the death of King Josiah, but I have a hard time accepting this conclusion based upon the biblical record.

2 Chronicles 35:20–21 "After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him. But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not."

Jer. 46:11 Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt: in vain shalt thou use many medicines; for thou shalt not be cured.

Jer. 46:12 ¶ The nations have heard of thy shame, and thy cry hath filled the land: for the mighty man hath stumbled against the mighty, and they are fallen both together.

"virgin" = "...also (figuratively) a city or state..." JFB makes a good observation regarding the use of this word: "Egypt is so called on account of her effeminate luxury, and as having never yet been brought under foreign yoke."

"Gilead" = According to Easton's, the region of Gilead abounded in spices and aromatic gums. One of the primary balms it produced was known as *tsori* and it was highly valued for its medicinal qualities.

The LORD is declaring that the Egyptians will be destroyed. Their soldiers would not find healing even if they were able to get to Gilead. God has determined that they are to be humbled before the nations at the shameful report of their defeat and how they run like cowards before their enemy trampling over each other in the process.

Jer. 46:13 The word that the LORD spake to Jeremiah the prophet, how Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon should come and smite the land of Egypt.

Jer. 46:14 Declare ye in Egypt, and publish in Migdol, and publish in Noph and in Tahpanhes: say ye, Stand fast, and prepare thee; for the sword shall devour round about thee.

In this section of verses I believe we jump forward in time to connect with the prophecies delivered to the Jews in the last few chapters. Jeremiah is declaring to the Egyptians that they would be conquered by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in Egypt as well. This message was to be declared in all of Egypt, but pointed reference was made to three cities. Migdol was an important fortified city in the northern part of Egypt. Noph is another name for the city of Memphis on the western bank of the Nile and was the capital of Lower Egypt. Tahpanhes, as noted in the previous chapters, was the location to which the Jews fled for refuge. These were all cities in the north that would experience the initial onslaught of the Babylonians.

I remember learning in my study of Ezekiel that the LORD was going to give Egypt to Babylon in reward for their actions against Tyre.

Ezekiel 29:17–20 “And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first month, in the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it: Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army. I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord GOD.”

I think it is interesting to note how God weaves His plan so that action taken in judgment against one nation also serves as a reward to another nation for their part in moving God's plan forward.

Jer. 46:15 Why are thy valiant *men* swept away? they stood not, because the LORD did drive them.

Jer. 46:16 He made many to fall, yea, one fell upon another: and they said, Arise, and let us go again to our own people, and to the land of our nativity, from the oppressing sword.

Jer. 46:17 They did cry there, Pharaoh king of Egypt *is but* a noise; he hath passed the time appointed.

In this section Jeremiah's message declares that it will be the hand of the LORD that causes Egypt to fall and her soldiers to head for home in fear. It seems that they will blame the Pharaoh for not providing proper leadership. I think they are basically saying that his bark is much worse than his bite.

Jer. 46:18 As I live, saith the King, whose name *is* the LORD of hosts, Surely as Tabor *is* among the mountains, and as Carmel by the sea, so shall he come.

Jer. 46:19 O thou daughter dwelling in Egypt, furnish thyself to go into captivity: for Noph shall be waste and desolate without an inhabitant.

Jer. 46:20 Egypt is like a very fair heifer, but destruction cometh; it cometh out of the north.

Jer. 46:21 Also her hired men are in the midst of her like fatted bullocks; for they also are turned back, and are fled away together: they did not stand, because the day of their calamity was come upon them, and the time of their visitation.

Jer. 46:22 The voice thereof shall go like a serpent; for they shall march with an army, and come against her with axes, as hewers of wood.

Jer. 46:23 They shall cut down her forest, saith the LORD, though it cannot be searched; because they are more than the grasshoppers, and are innumerable.

Jer. 46:24 The daughter of Egypt shall be confounded; she shall be delivered into the hand of the people of the north.

Verse 18 is very clear in identify the speaker as “the King...the LORD of hosts.” I think the word picture of the last part of the verse is of a giant conqueror coming against a much smaller foe. The message is one of complete defeat for Egypt. This defeat will result in many being taken into captivity and in the destruction of many cities. The mercenaries who had joined up with the Egyptian forces are shown deserting and heading back home; they are described as fatted calves too out of shape to fight and ready for slaughter.

The NLT gives a clear picture of verses 22-24: *“Silent as a serpent gliding away, Egypt flees. The invading army marches in; they come against her with axes like woodsmen. They will cut down her people like trees,” says the LORD, “for they are more numerous than grasshoppers. Egypt will be humiliated; she will be handed over to men from the north.”*

I liked Burton Coffman’s comment on verse 22: “The serpent was sacred to one of the most prominent Egyptian gods; and this symbol of the whole nation is probably sarcastically referred to in this verse. The woodsmen are represented as clearing the forest, and the serpent slithers away to hide! It is as if one said of the USA, The eagle is trapped and is flapping his wings in vain!”

Jer. 46:25 The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saith; Behold, I will punish the multitude of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt, with their gods, and their kings; even Pharaoh, and all them that trust in him:

Jer. 46:26 And I will deliver them into the hand of those that seek their lives, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of his servants: and afterward it shall be inhabited, as in the days of old, saith the LORD.

God is emphasizing that not only is He going to destroy the nation and its cities, He is also asserting Himself over their false gods and all those that trust in them. He is personally going to deliver them into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and his troops.

I can’t help but think of the passage in Isaiah in which the LORD calls out the false gods and challenges them to prove themselves able to prophesy future events or act on behalf of those that worship them.

Isaiah 41:22–24 “Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination is he that chooseth you.”

Then at the end of verse 26 God gives a ray of hope for the future of Egypt; it will once again be inhabited as in the past. I think this is probably referencing the time prophesied by Ezekiel in which he declares that He will bring them home from captivity after 40 years.

Ezekiel 29:12–15 “And I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities among the cities that are laid waste shall be desolate forty years: and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries. Yet thus saith the Lord GOD; At the end of forty years will I gather the Egyptians from the people whither they were scattered: And I will bring again the captivity of Egypt, and will cause them to return into the land of Pathros, into the land of their habitation; and they shall be there a base kingdom. It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations.”

As I am working on this chapter (January 2011), the people of Egypt are protesting in the streets in the face of the police and the military and calling for regime change and a better way of life. I’m sorry to say that I believe things will ultimately continue to get worse for the people of Egypt because of the times in which we live. But just as the LORD gave the Egyptians of Jeremiah’s day a ray of hope for the future, I believe there is an even greater future yet in store for the people of Egypt. When the Messiah returns and establishes His kingdom, Egypt will experience blessing and will walk in fellowship with the people of Israel.

Isaiah 19:21–25 “And the LORD shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the LORD in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the LORD, and perform it. And the LORD shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to the LORD, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them. In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: Whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.”

Jer. 46:27 But fear not thou, O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel: for, behold, I will save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make *him* afraid.

Jer. 46:28 Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the LORD: for I *am* with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee:

but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.

The LORD now directs His message back to His own people. He promises that the time is coming when they will return to the land from captivity and experience rest and security. No matter how bleak things may seem to be because of the judgment God has declared upon His people, their future is one of blessing. This will be the result of God's refining fire of judgment upon His people that will eventually produce a believing remnant that will turn back to God in obedience never to rebel again.

God is going to destroy the nations that have been used in executing His judgment upon them. I can hear some saying now that that is not right. We have no right to question the actions of the Creator, the Almighty Righteous God. I am, however, reminded of a couple of passages that give some insight on God's actions.

Isaiah 10:12–15 “Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man: And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped. Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood.”

Isaiah 47:5–11 “Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms. I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou didst shew them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke. And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it. Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me....For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me. Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth....”

In these passages it stands out that pride is fundamentally at the root of all sin and most often is expressed through wickedness and cruelty towards others.

(6/11) Note Again—God is incorporating the desires and choices of these wicked nations to accomplish His purposes. They are still, however, accountable for those actions before God.