

Jer. 47:1 ¶ The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Philistines, before that Pharaoh smote Gaza.

In this small chapter the LORD directs Jeremiah to deliver a message to the Philistines. It is identified as being delivered before Gaza had been attacked by Egypt; in other words the message was prophetic. Evidently, this wording is due to the fact that the message was being recorded after Egypt had attacked Gaza.

Gaza was one of the five main cities of the Philistines and was located furthest south. Verse 4 seems to connect it with a campaign against Tyre and Sidon as well which seems to be directed toward gaining control of the whole Mediterranean coast between Sidon (in today's Lebanon) and Gaza.

Jer. 47:2 Thus saith the LORD; Behold, waters rise up out of the north, and shall be an overflowing flood, and shall overflow the land, and all that is therein; the city, and them that dwell therein: then the men shall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land shall howl.

Jer. 47:3 At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his strong horses, at the rushing of his chariots, and at the rumbling of his wheels, the fathers shall not look back to their children for feebleness of hands;

Jer. 47:4 Because of the day that cometh to spoil all the Philistines, and to cut off from Tyrus and Zidon every helper that remaineth: for the LORD will spoil the Philistines, the remnant of the country of Caphtor.

The commentators don't seem to agree when trying to identify the timing described in this prophecy. The wording here seems to indicate that the attack on the Philistines is coming from the north.

Many commentators assume that the prophecy is referencing an attack on the Philistines by Egypt because of the wording in verse 1. Frankly, I'm not convinced. The first verse could have been establishing a timeframe. If not Egypt, then who? Maybe Nebuchadnezzar en route to conquer Egypt. I really don't think we can know for sure. Because of the character of God, however, I know that the prophecy was fulfilled.

To the Philistines it would seem that they were being overrun by a great army that is pictured as a great flood covering the land. This army is noted for the number of chariots and horses, and it must be noted that this was a signature feature of the Egyptian army.

Verse four affirms that the Philistines originated from Caphtor, and many assume this to be a reference to Crete. Others, however, identify this area as part of Egypt since they are listed as descendants of Mizraim in the table of nations in Genesis 10; Mizraim is the Hebrew word for Egypt. I think the fact that Caphtor is recognized as a country by Jeremiah precludes Egypt but indicates that they probably descended from the same people group.

Jer. 47:5 Baldness is come upon Gaza; Ashkelon is cut off with the remnant of their valley: how long wilt thou cut thyself?

Describing Gaza as bald paints a picture of the city being leveled. Now we are told that Ashkelon, another one of the five main Philistine cities, would suffer along with Gaza. The reference to “cut thyself” I think is a reference to mourning as indicated by the NLT translation. This was a common practice among the heathen nations, and God had forbidden His people to imitate such practices.

Leviticus 19:28 “Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD.”

Deuteronomy 14:1–2 “Ye are the children of the LORD your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead. For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.”

Jer. 47:6 O thou sword of the LORD, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still.

Jer. 47:7 How can it be quiet, seeing the LORD hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea shore? there hath he appointed it.

These verses are questioning how long LORD is going to cause the Philistines to suffer. The implied answer—Until the declared judgment has accomplished God’s purpose.

The sword of the LORD is deadly because it represents the word of God, and God’s word always accomplishes its purpose.

Ephesians 6:17 “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:”

Revelation 19:11–15 “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war....and his name is called The Word of God....And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations....”

Isaiah 55:8–11 “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”