

Jeremiah 34

Read Jeremiah 34:1-7: God tells Jeremiah to tell King Zedekiah that he will not escape from King Nebuchadnezzar. In fact, he says “behold”. In other words, God is saying “Go look outside...it’s happening now”. God mentions two interesting things here.

The Coalition

Jeremiah says that not only did Babylon attack Jerusalem. He says that all of the nations on earth under the control of Babylon would rally alongside to help bring Jerusalem down. It seems like overkill; but God is making a point. God allowed Babylon and Egypt to get into a turf and empire war. This created a land grab towards Israel from both sides. Otherwise, Israel would have been of limited interest. Later on, God would punish these cooperating nations. Here are a few participants in the fall of Jerusalem:

Edom helped plunder/loot Jerusalem when they were trying to escape and were captured.

“Thus says the Lord GOD: “Because of what Edom did against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and has greatly offended by avenging itself on them,” therefore thus says the Lord GOD: “I will also stretch out My hand against Edom, cut off man and beast from it, and make it desolate from Teman; Dedan shall fall by the sword. (Ezekiel 25:12-14)

“For violence against your brother Jacob, Shame shall cover you, And you shall be cut off forever. In the day that you stood on the other side— In the day that strangers carried captive his forces, When foreigners entered his gates And cast lots for Jerusalem— Even you were as one of them. “But you should not have gazed on the day of your brother In the day of his captivity; Nor should you have rejoiced over the children of Judah In the day of their destruction; Nor should you have spoken proudly In the day of distress. You should not have entered the gate of My people In the day of their calamity. Indeed, you should not have gazed on their affliction In the day of their calamity, Nor laid hands on their substance In the day of their calamity. You should not have stood at the crossroads To cut off those among them who escaped; Nor should you have delivered up those among them who remained In the day of distress. (Obadiah 1:11-14)

Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom The day of Jerusalem, Who said, “Raze it, raze it, To its very foundation!” (Psalm 137:7)

Moab and Ammon helped bring Jerusalem down to destruction.

Say to the Ammonites, ‘Hear the word of the Lord GOD! Thus says the Lord GOD: “Because you said, ‘Aha!’ against My sanctuary when it was profaned, and against the land of Israel when it was desolate, and against the house of Judah when they went into captivity, indeed, therefore, I will deliver you as a possession to the men of the East, and they shall set their encampments among you and make their dwellings among you; they shall eat your fruit, and they shall drink your milk. And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels and Ammon a resting place for flocks. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.”’ For thus says the Lord GOD: “Because you clapped your hands, stamped your feet, and rejoiced in heart with all your disdain for the land of Israel, indeed, therefore, I will stretch out My hand against you, and give you as plunder to the nations; I will cut you off from the peoples, and I will cause you to perish from the countries; I will destroy you, and you shall know that I am the LORD.”’ Thus says the Lord GOD: “Because Moab and Seir say, ‘Look! The house of Judah is like all the nations,’ therefore, behold, I will clear the territory of Moab of cities, of the cities on its frontier, the glory of the country, Beth Jeshimoth, Baal Meon, and Kirjathaim. To the men of the East I will give it as a possession, together with the Ammonites, that the Ammonites may not be remembered among the nations. And I will execute judgments upon Moab, and they shall know that I am the LORD.” (Ezekiel 25: 3-11)

Tyre supported the fall of Jerusalem too.

And it came to pass in the eleventh year, on the first day of the month, that the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Son of man, because Tyre has said against Jerusalem, ‘Aha! She is broken who was the gateway of the peoples; now she is turned over to me; I shall be filled; she is laid waste.’ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Behold, I am against you, O Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against you, as the sea causes its waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. (Ezekiel 26:1-4)

2 Kings 24:1-9 The following year (605BC), King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invades Judah and King Jehoiakim is forced to become a vassal king (see 8 on [Map 60](#)).

After three years (in 602BC), Pharaoh Neco of Egypt re-takes Gaza from the Babylonians (see Jeremiah 47:1), and Jehoiakim rebels against his overlord, Nebuchadnezzar. In December 599BC, Babylonian, Aramean, Moabite and Ammonite forces are deployed against Judah. Jehoiakim is killed and is succeeded by his son Jehoiachin in 598BC.

Secondly, these verses talk about how it was not only Jerusalem that fell in this campaign. It talks about all of the *cities of Jerusalem*. What cities are those? Nebuchadnezzar took the fortified cities of Lachish. Then he took Ashkelon, then in the next year, he took Gaza, then

Aphek and Ekron. Basically, Nebuchadnezzar was systematically taking territory formerly controlled by Egypt.

Read Jeremiah 34:8-22: The Bible clearly tells us to treat others as we want to be treated. If we do not see that clearly, we can find ourselves in someone else's shoes, until we do appreciate their needs. The Jews were losing their freedom; and God gave a last-second mercy opportunity. God told the Jews to release their Hebrew slaves. He gave them an opportunity to do something merciful. It is ironic that victims of slavery were hardened towards others about slavery.

Hebrew slavery among the tribes was limited to 7-year periods. They were indentured servants. If you had a debt or no means of survival you could sign over 7 years of your life in exchange. You could not enslave your countryman for life. It was a debt repayment contract only. God would have surely taken this into account in his judgements against Jerusalem. They actually did release their slaves; but then they reversed that decision....and recaptured them. Very cruel and heartless. When God has you in peril, that is no time to show yourself to be unmerciful to others. When you are broke, that is the best time to lend to those in need.

“For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?” “Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?” (Roams 11:34-35)

That was a terrible decision. God will deal with us in the same way that we deal with others.

With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; With a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless; With the pure You will show Yourself pure; And with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd. (Psalm 18:25-26)

In a sense, the USA could really help itself in so many ways to bless Israel even more. That does not make up for our moral lapses, but it does bring mercy.

But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.” (1 Peter 4:7-8).

It is like the parable of the debtor. Judah needed mercy in a big way...but they showed no mercy to others.

Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ Then the

master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt. “But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ And his master was angry and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. “So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.” (Matthew 18:21-35)

Not only was this whole Babylonian invasion *poetic justice* for past cruel and corrupt behavior...but the Jews were *still* abusing each other. The Jews were judged to begin with because of their unfairness to each other. There was no law and order. The government was corrupt. Nothing had changed...even now, in the face of death.

O LORD, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, “Violence!” And You will not save. Why do You show me iniquity, And cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me; There is strife, and contention arises. Therefore the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds. “Look among the nations and watch— Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days Which you would not believe, though it were told you. For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, a bitter and hasty nation Which marches through the breadth of the earth, To possess dwelling places that are not theirs. They are terrible and dreadful; Their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves.
(Habakkuk 1:2-7)

They are still not repenting. They are technically sentencing themselves with God, as they continue to be cruel to each other. We get ourselves into stuck places; and we need to be released. God set up periodic releases and re-sets to free people financially and socially.

Leviticus 25 speaks of this limitation on debt and fresh start concept:

- VV. 1-7: 7 year cycle for farmland (6 cultivate & 1 year fallow)
- VV8-17: 49 year cycle for land sales and reversionary interests (title always reverts to original owner)
- VV 39-55 (Exodus 21:2): 7 year cycle for indentured servants

The Shmita (release) concept is a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing to break the bond to this world for others and yourself. The other side of it brings a curse to non-participants. God is telling them that unlike their slaves, he would free them with the sword, disease and famine. He will give the slave owners to others to become slaves themselves.

Once again, we learn about the quality of life received being the same as the quality of life extended. It's not karma; since there is no such thing. Every tough and easy situation is the opportunity to make merciful and loving decisions to honor God.