

# *Lessons for Those Leaving the Lord:* Jeremiah 34:1-22

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## **Introduction:**

Jeremiah is unique among the prophets because his central oracle about the Lord's judgment on Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity are repeated several times in his writings.

Furthermore, he is the only prophet who makes specific predictions and then points out their literal fulfillment (Jer. 52:1-34)

## **1A. A Reassuring Message for the King: 34:1-7**

### **1b. The context of the message: 34:1**

Jeremiah is unique among the prophets because his central oracles about the Lord's judgment on Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity are repeated several times in his writings. Then too, he is the only prophet who makes specific predictions and points out their literal fulfillment (Jer. 52:1-34).

34: 1 The word which came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and all his army, and all the kingdoms of the earth of his dominion, and all the people, fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities thereof, saying,

### **1c. The specter of enemy armies:**

The siege of Jerusalem lasted from 588-586 B.C. (39:1-2). The prophecies in this chapter can be dated to the early stages of the assault. Jeremiah is not yet imprisoned and the nearby cities of Lachish and Azekah had not yet been captured (v. 7)

#### **1d. The Babylonians**

#### **2d. The confederates**

Soldiers from subject countries came to join in the siege (2. Kgs. 24:2)

### **2c. The siege of Judean cities:**

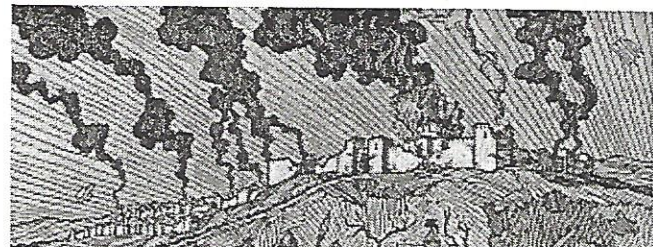
### **2b. The content of the message: 34:2-5**

#### **1c. The person of Zedekiah: 34:2**

### **2c. The prophecies for Zedekiah:**

#### **1d. The prophecies concerning the city of Jerusalem: 2**

<sup>2</sup> "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: 'Go and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah and tell him, "Thus says the Lord: 'Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.'"



1e. Jerusalem's conquest:

2

2e. Jerusalem's conflagration:

2d. Prophecy concerning the king of Judah: 3-5

<sup>3</sup>And you shall not escape from his hand, but shall surely be taken and delivered into his hand; your eyes shall see the eyes of the king of Babylon, he shall speak with you face to face and you shall go to Babylon.'""

Zedekiah could not escape the consequences of his treasonous rebellion in breaking his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar. However, he would not be slain but die in captivity (v. 4).

1e. His capture by Nebuchadnezzar:

2e. His conversation with Nebuchadnezzar:

3e. His deportation to Babylon:

While Jerusalem would fall to the enemy and the temple would be burned, verses 4-5 must have been reassuring to Zedekiah.

4e. His deliverance from the sword: 4

<sup>4</sup>Yet hear the word of the Lord, O Zedekiah king of Judah! Thus says the Lord concerning you: 'You shall not die by the sword.'

5e. His death in peace: 5

<sup>5</sup>You shall die in peace; as in the ceremonies of your fathers, the former kings who were before you, so they shall burn *incense* for you and lament for you, *saying*, "Alas, lord!" For I have pronounced the word, says the Lord.

6e. His distinction even in death announced:

Zedekiah would be honored with royal funeral rites.

The funeral fire involved the custom of burning spices at the royal funerals (2. Chron. 16:14; 21:19).

3b. The commitment of Jeremiah: 34:6-7

<sup>6</sup>Then Jeremiah the prophet spake all the words unto Zedekiah King of Judah in Jerusalem,

<sup>7</sup> When he king of Babylon's army fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities of Judah that were left, against Lachish, and against Azekah: for these defenced cities remained of the cities of Judah.

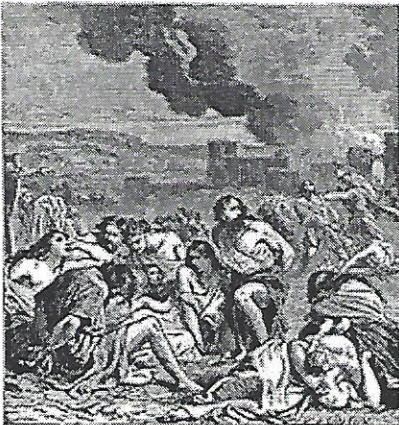
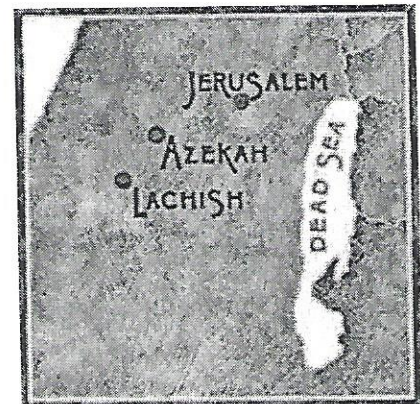
1c. The accuracy of his message:

2c. The assault by Babylon: 7

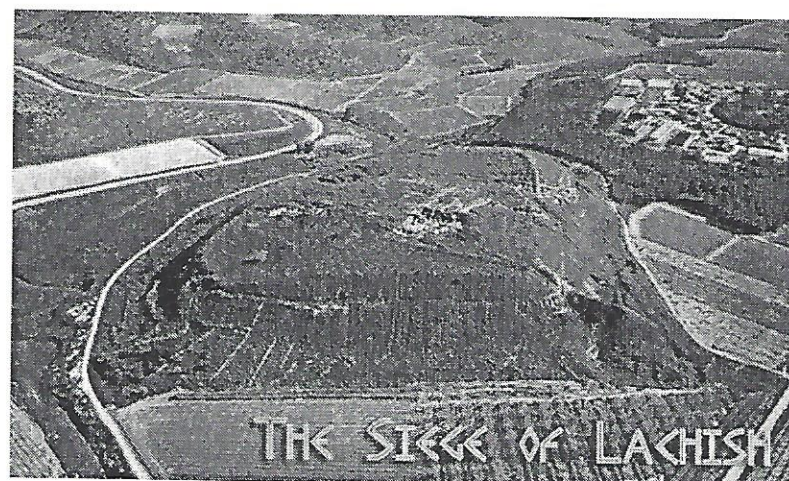
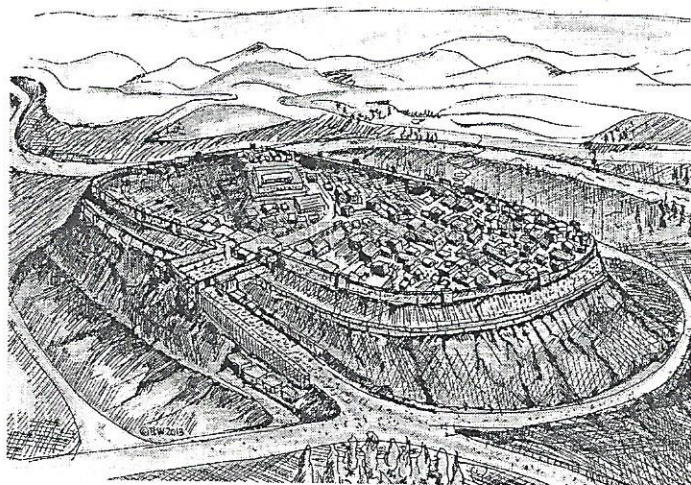
1d. Against Jerusalem

2d. Against Lachish: 23 miles SW of Jerusalem

3d. Against Azekah: 11 miles N of Lachish

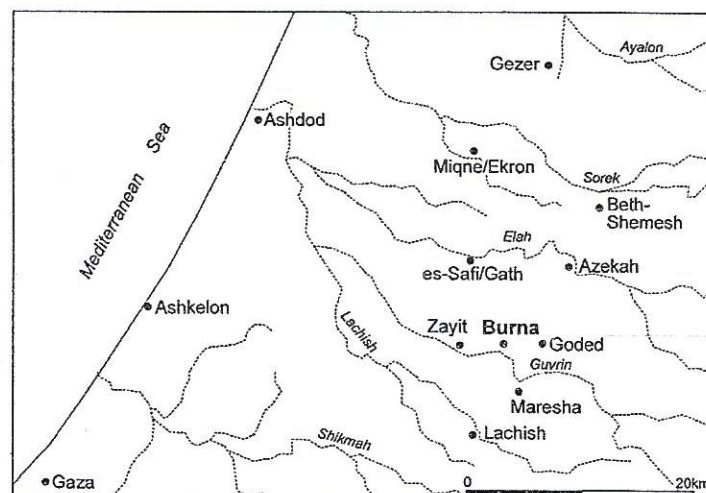
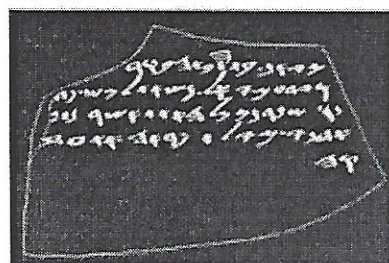
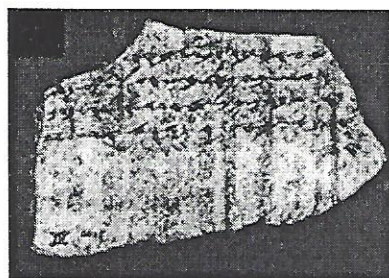






## BAR Jr.: "Lachish and Azekah Were the Only Fortified Cities of Judah That Remained" (Jeremiah 34:7)

By Rodney Wright



Professor Larry Geraty of Andrews University gave his class in Biblical Archaeology the instructive assignment of writing a **BAR Jr.** column. In this issue, we print one of the papers submitted in response.

Talk about bringing the Bible to life!

Imagine you're digging at a Judean outpost southeast of Jerusalem, and you unearth correspondence written shortly before the Babylonians destroyed the city in 586 B.C. That's what happened to British archaeologist John L. Starkey digging at Biblical Lachish in the 1930s.



Azekah (Tell-el-Zakariya)



## 2A. A Rebuking Message for the People: 34:8-22

4

### 1b. The occasion of the message: 8-10

<sup>8</sup>This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, after King Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people who were at Jerusalem to proclaim liberty to them: <sup>9</sup>that every man should set free his male and female slave—a Hebrew man or woman—that no one should keep a Jewish brother in bondage. <sup>10</sup>Now when all the princes and all the people, who had entered into the covenant, heard that everyone should set free his male and female slaves, that no one should keep them in bondage anymore, they obeyed and let *them* go.

### 1c. Zedekiah's covenant with the people:

#### 1d. The content of the covenant:

##### 1e. Grant liberty to bondservants:

##### 2e. Release of Hebrew servants from bondage:

#### 2d. The cause for the covenant:

It is not stated why the slaves were set free. One of the more interesting explanations is given by Bernhard Duhm, the German-Swiss theologian and caustic critic of the Bible:

During the siege the slaves were useless because they served without a doubt primarily in the agricultural activities without the city walls. Indeed, they were burdensome, because they consumed the groceries needed by the defenders of the city. It was determined in self-interest to get rid of these useless mouths as the besieging army got ever closer. The decision was void of any religious or moral motive (*Das Buch Jeremia*, Tübingen und Leipzig, 1901, 280. Translation by this writer).

#### 2d. The compliance of the people:

#### 3d. The countermanding of the covenant: 11

<sup>11</sup>But afterward they changed their minds and made the male and female slaves return, whom they had set free, and brought them into subjection as male and female slaves.

### 2c. God's covenant with Israel: 12-14

<sup>12</sup>Therefore the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, <sup>13</sup>"Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, saying, <sup>14</sup>"At the end of seven years let every man set free his Hebrew brother, who has been sold to him; and when he has served you six years, you shall let him go free from you.'" But your fathers did not obey Me nor incline their ear.

#### 1d. The circumstances of the covenant: 13

#### 2d. The content of the covenant: 14



1e. Hebrew slaves to serve only six years. 5

4

2e. Hebrew slaves to be freed in the seventh year.

3d. The callousness of the slave masters:

1e. They were disobedient after **1445 B.C.**

2e. They were disobedient in **586 B.C.**

When the siege was temporarily lifted because of the approach of the Egyptian army, the Jews forced the liberated slaves back into bondage.

2b. The violation of the covenant: 15-16

<sup>15</sup> Then you recently turned and did what was right in My sight—every man proclaiming liberty to his neighbor; and you made a covenant before Me in the house which is called by My name. <sup>16</sup> Then you turned around and profaned My name, and every one of you brought back his male and female slaves, whom you had set at liberty, at their pleasure, and brought them back into subjection, to be your male and female slaves.'

Merrill F. Unger underscores the severity of the sin:

Jeremiah scathingly condemns the perfidious hypocrisy as one more glaring example of the notorious faithlessness of the people of Jerusalem. Zedekiah's last year being the sabbatical, it was a just retribution that they who enslaved their own brethren should be doomed to bondage themselves, and that the bondservants should experience the sabbatical emancipation at the hands of their enemy, which their own fellow countrymen so shamefully denied them (*Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1430).

1c. The masters' obligation to keep the covenant: 15

2c. The masters' failure to set the servants free: 16

2c. The pollution of the name of God:

3b. The punishment of the violators:

1c. The failure to keep their covenant:

2c. Their refusal to grant liberty to the servants gave God the liberty for punishment upon the masters: 17

<sup>17</sup> "Therefore thus says the Lord: 'You have not obeyed Me in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother and every one to his neighbor. Behold, I proclaim liberty to you,' says the Lord—'to the sword, to pestilence, and to famine! And I will deliver you to trouble among all the kingdoms of the earth.'

The divine rebuke is filled with irony, as Feinberg so ably demonstrates:

Since the actually had given the slaves freedom, God ironically declares that the people themselves would be freed—freed from his protecting hand. The guilty would be freed for doom and destruction. Because they had enslaved their brothers and sisters, they were to be subjected to their enemies (*Jeremiah: A Commentary*, 1982, 242).



- 1d. Sword
- 2d. Pestilence
- 3d. Famine
- 4d. Dispersion to all nations

4b. The seriousness of their rebellion: 18-19

<sup>18</sup>And I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in two and passed between the parts of it— <sup>19</sup>the princes of Judah, the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf—

1c. The solemnity of making a covenant:

Unger explains the ritual of making a covenant and the severe application of its violation to the Jews:

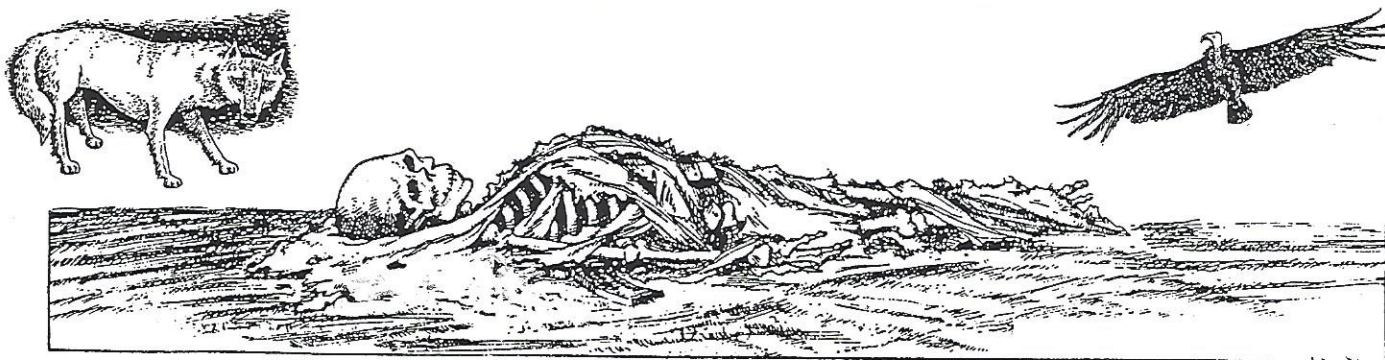
The prophet assured the faithless people of Jerusalem that they would be punished in the manner implied in their covenant ritual—**when they cut the calf in two** (NASB; Gen. 15:9-17). The transgressor would incur the same fate as the slaughtered animal. **19.** The contracting parties in the covenant of manumission are pictured passing through the parts of the animal cut in two and praying to be dismembered (Matt. 24:51) if they violate the covenant (*Ibid.*, 1430, emphasis in the original).

2c. The sinners singled out as rebels:

- 1d. Princes of Judah
- 2d. Princes of Jerusalem
- 3d. Eunuchs (actually, court or state officials)
- 4d. Priests
- 5d. People

5b. The corpses devoured by birds and beasts: 20

<sup>20</sup>I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their life. Their dead bodies shall be for meat for the birds of the heaven and the beasts of the earth.



### 3A. The Resume of Jehovah's Judgments: 34:21-22

<sup>21</sup>"And I will give Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes into the hand of their enemies, into the hand of those who seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon's army which has gone back from you. <sup>22</sup>Behold, I will command," says the Lord, "and cause them to return to this city. They will fight against it and take it and burn it with fire; and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without inhabitant."



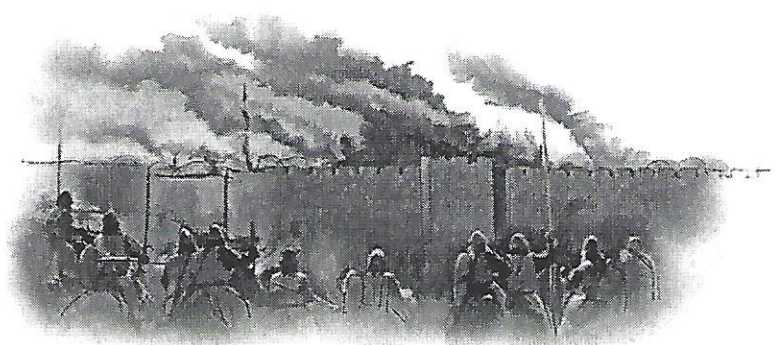
- 1b. Zedekiah and the princes would be carried into captivity:

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Zedekiah's fate is revealed in 52:1-11

The king was captured by the Babylonians, his sons were slain, so were the princes, and his eyes were put out. However his life was spared and he spent his remaining years in a Babylonian prison.

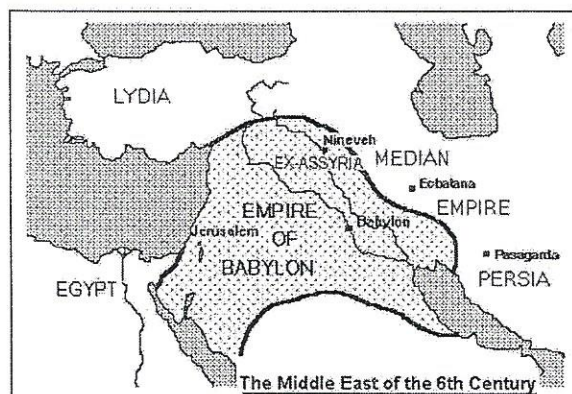
- 2b. The Babylonians would return to Jerusalem:  
3b. The Babylonians would conquer and burn the city:  
4b. All major cities will be destroyed and the inhabitants deported:





# Theo-sophical Ruminations

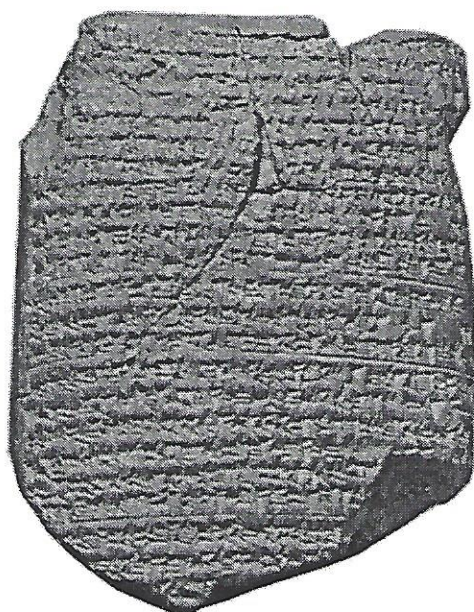
August 24, 2011



## Biblical Archaeology 23: Babylonian Chronicles

Posted by Theosophical Ruminator under [Archaeology](#)

[1 Comment](#)



2 Kings 24:1,6,8a,10-17 During Jehoiakim's reign, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon attacked. Jehoiakim was his subject for three years, but then he rebelled against him. 6 He passed away and his son Jehoiachin replaced him as king. ... 8 Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. ... 10 At that time the generals of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon marched to Jerusalem and besieged the city. 11 King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to the city while his generals were besieging it. 12 King Jehoiachin of Judah, along with his mother, his servants, his officials, and his eunuchs surrendered to the king of Babylon. The king of Babylon, in the eighth year of his reign, took Jehoiachin prisoner. 13 Nebuchadnezzar took from there all the riches in the treasures of the Lord's temple and of the royal palace. He removed all the gold items which King Solomon of Israel had made for the Lord's temple, just as the Lord had warned. 14 He deported all the residents of Jerusalem, including all the officials and all the soldiers (10,000 people in all). This included all the craftsmen and those who worked with metal. No one was left except for the poorest among the people of the land. 15 He deported Jehoiachin from Jerusalem to Babylon, along with the king's mother and wives, his eunuchs, and the high-ranking officials of the land. 16 The king of Babylon deported to Babylon all the soldiers (there were 7,000), as well as 1,000 craftsmen and metal workers. This included all the best warriors. 17 The king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in Jehoiachin's place. He renamed him Zedekiah. (NET)

Discovered in 1887, the Babylonian chronicles cover hundreds of years of history. The chronicle pictured here (3.25" x 2.44") covers events of Babylonian kings between 605-594 BC. Written in cuneiform, this tiny tablet Records three events:

1. The Battle of Carchemish where Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh Necho in 605 BC.
2. The Accession to the throne of Nebuchadnezzar II.
3. The defeat of Jerusalem on March 16, 598 BC.

In regards to the third event, it reads:

*In the seventh month (of 599 BC), in the month Chislew (Nov/Dec) the king of Babylon assembled his army, and after he had invaded the land of Hatti (Syria/Palestine) he laid siege to the city of Judah. On the second day of the month of Adara (March 16<sup>th</sup> of the next year) he conquered the city and took the king (Jehoiachin) prisoner. He installed in his place a king (Zedekiah) of his own choice, and after he had received rich tribute, he sent (them) forth to Babylon.*

Significance:

1. The Babylonian account confirms the Biblical account in very precise terms.