

Jer. 40, The Rule of Gedaliah
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Overview

Chapters 40-44 discuss what happened after the fall of Jerusalem. In a word, they show that the people who remain in the land are no more receptive to the word of the Lord than those to whom Jer has previously preached.

1. 40, Jer is released and joins the relatively comfortable remnant in Mizpeh.
2. 41, the governor of the remnant is assassinated.
3. 42-43, flight to Egypt: though God tells them not to, the remnant goes south.
4. 44, in Egypt, they return to their idolatry.

There should be no surprise about this. For the remnant to prosper in the land would have been contrary to 24:8-10. But the point made here is that this suffering is fully deserved by the people; they in fact had a chance at peace and relative comfort, and God even encouraged them to stay and enjoy it, but they brought upon themselves the judgment of dispersion.

Application: This is an OT illustration of Rom. 1, in which God's wrath is achieved simply by abandoning people to their own sinful tendencies. Unbelievers harbor this image of God as a meanie trying to spoil their fun. In fact, he lovingly and patiently pleads with his people; it is their own folly that brings upon them the destruction of which he warns.

A. 1, Where's the Word?

This IF leads us to expect an oracle, but there isn't one--at least, not until 42:7, where God tells the people not to flee to Egypt, and they disobey. But to understand that oracle, we need to follow the story up to that point. This introduction tells us that the history we're about to read is not here just to entertain us, but to set the stage for a word from God.

B. 2-6, Jer's release

1. 1, The Setting.

Nebuzaradan, whom Neb. made responsible for Jer's well-being in 39:11-14, now finds him chained among those on their way to captivity. Somehow Jer has been brought into bondage by the Babylonians after his initial release from prison. (Compare 40:5 "go back to Ged" with 39:14 "committed him to Ged".) Two suggestions have been offered:

- a) that Jer was accidentally arrested and is here set free;

- b) that through love for his people and identification with them he surrendered himself so that he could be with them. I find this entirely credible, especially since it takes some persuading to get him to return to freedom (5a).

Application: If this is so, it is a precious illustration of the conduct that our Lord enjoins upon us in Matt. 5:43-48, "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who despitefully use you and persecute you." Though they have abused Jer fearfully, still he persists in loving them, and wants to remain with them to continue to urge them to turn to the Lord.

2. 2-5, Nebuzaradan's Advice.

- a) 2-3, he reminds Jer of why these Jews are going into captivity: because they have disobeyed the Lord. Note the plural verbs; he is speaking collectively of the nation, NOT of Jer. In fact, it's likely that he knows that this is what Jer has been preaching; Neb has likely released Jer precisely because Jer's preaching is known and he is viewed by the Babylonians as a sympathizer and supporter. So Nebuzaradan's words here have the sense, "Jer, you don't belong here. This is the punishment that God has decreed for those who disobey him; that's true of your people as a whole, but certainly not of you."

Application: Interesting to see an unbeliever reciting spiritual truths! This suggests two lessons for us:

- 1) Don't conclude that just because someone spouts good doctrine, they're saved. Even Satan can quote the Bible, as he does when tempting the Lord. Salvation is the result of the HS working in the heart, not the outward appearance.
 - 2) Don't fear that God's word is powerless on the unsaved. It is alive and powerful, and will prosper in that to which God sends it, even among unbelievers. It is the sword of the Spirit. So we have no excuse for hiding it from them.
- b) 4, he sets Jer free. If he wants to go to Babylon, he may do so as a free man, under Nebuzaradan's protection. If he wants to remain in Judah, he may do that as well.
- c) 5, Jer hesitates. This strongly suggests that he is back in chains at his own choice, and he is wavering over whether to accept this offer of freedom. So Nebuzaradan encourages him more specifically to go back to Gedaliah, to whom he was originally sent (39:14), and even gives him food and a present (\$\$?) to help him get started.

3. 6, Jer takes Nebuzaradan's advice. And as we will see in the next few chapters, this is God's leading. The captives in Babylon already have faithful spiritual helpers there, Ezekiel and

Daniel. The remnant will shortly need a word from God, on more than one occasion, and thanks to Nebuzaradan, Jer is there, though his ministry is not a pleasant one.

Application: It's hard enough to think of an unbeliever saying spiritual things, but even harder to see him as an agent of divine guidance. But "the heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water, and he turns it whichever way he pleases," Prov. 21:1. God can and does guide us through the unbelievers around us, as well as through his children. We must weigh everything they say by the scriptures, and remain sensitive to the Spirit's direction, but if God can speak to Balaam through a jackass, he can certainly use anyone around us to call our attention to his purposes.

C. 7-16, Prosperity under Ged

This section shows us, by means of three interviews with Ged, what kind of person he is, and sets the stage for the sad events of the next chapter. Before we consider the interviews, let's gather what background we can on him.

1. Who is Gedaliah?

We only know that he is the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, but this tells us quite a bit, since these folk are mentioned elsewhere in the Bible.

Technique: Use your concordance to get acquainted with people whom you meet in the Bible. One needs to be careful, because occasionally different people have the same name, but when we have names of fathers and grandfathers as here, it's pretty easy to figure things out.

- a) In 2 Kings 22 (622 BC), Shaphan is a leading scribe under King Josiah, and the one who brings to the king the book of the law discovered in repairing the temple.
- b) In the same chapter, he and his son Ahikam are sent by Josiah to inquire of the Lord as a result of discovering the scroll.
- c) In Jer 26, when Jer was on trial because of his sermon in the temple, Ahikam was instrumental in protecting him.
- d) Thus Gedaliah comes from a family that
 - 1) has been a part of the court for several generations;
 - 2) has been sympathetic to God's gracious intreaties to the nation over the years.

What tremendous potential for the remnant, in living under his rule! And the subsequent interviews show that he is indeed a good man, but that he has not inherited the most important aspect of his ancestors' faith.

For each of the interviews, note who comes to him, what their concern is, and how he deals with it.

2. 7-10, Interview with the guerilla commanders

a) 7, Who are these people?

"the captains of the forces which were in the fields."

"Forces" are military units. The names are Jewish. "In the fields" contrasts with the armies in the city of Jerusalem. So these are guerilla units that managed to survive in the countryside.

b) 9, What is their concern?

They have been part of the opposition. If they come out of hiding now, and Neb catches them, they fear harsh treatment.

c) 10, How does Gedaliah reassure them?

1) Oath: a solemn promise.

2) His position: he is confident that he will be able to protect them from Neb. "to serve the Chaldeans," that is, to stand before them, representing the Jewish community.

3) The abundance available to them: with so few people living in the land, even though the crops have not been tended well during the siege, there will still be ample to eat, if they only harvest it. This is late summer, harvest time, so they need to lay up store for the winter ahead.

4) NO reference to the Lord! No reference to Jer's promises about a remnant, or hope that "the Lord will take care of us." Gedaliah's hope seems to be only in his position and the existence of food.

3. 11-12, Interview with the refugee Jews

a) 11-12, Who are these people?

1) 12, "driven" into other places.

2) 11, lived across the Jordan.

3) These are war refugees, like the Iraqis living in Jordan, or the Kuwaitis in London.

b) What is their concern?

They want to come home. Israel has long been in tension with the transjordanian states, and living there must have been difficult, preferable only to the war in Jerusalem. They are glad that a Jew is now governor, and feel safe returning to Judah.

c) How are they reassured?

1) 11, the king of Babylon has left a remnant to Judah. NOT the Lord!

2) 12, same trust in material riches as in the previous paragraphs.

4. 13-16, Interview with Johanan

- a) 13, Who are these people?
Again, the captains of the guerilla forces. In v.8 Ishmael headed up this group. Now Johanan is in the forefront, and evidently Ishmael is not there.
- b) 14-15, What is their concern?
They have reason to believe that Ishmael is acting on behalf of the king of Ammon, to kill Gedaliah and thus perhaps open the way for extending his control over Judah. They want to preserve the stability that Gedaliah has brought, and so Johanan offers to kill Ishmael.
- c) 16, How are they reassured?
Gedaliah sees this as infighting among the rival guerilla leaders, like the internal fighting in Lebanon today.
 - 1) He correctly refuses to authorize indiscriminate killing among rival leaders.
 - 2) But again, there is no mention of seeking counsel from the Lord, or of taking reasonable steps to check out the story.

5. What do these episodes tell us about Gedaliah?

- a) From Neb's perspective, he is a diligent, responsible man, trying to do his duty to manage the province well and represent it before Babylon.
- b) He is kind to his people, and cares for their material needs.
- c) He is not given to suspicion or rash action.
- d) BUT in spite of all these good qualities, he does not focus the mind of the remnant on the Lord.
- e) *Application:* We must remember that "nice people" and believers are two different things. Believers should be responsible, upstanding folk (though sometimes they have problems that make them seem otherwise); but just because someone is a "good person" does not make them a believer. Gedaliah has learned a responsible life style from his godly family, but he has not learned the source of that life style, faith in God. Even nice people need to be born again, or they will never see the kingdom of God.

Summary

The repeated emphasis of this chapter is how nice people can be and still not be believers. Gedaliah is a fine governor, but his failure to direct his people to the Lord at the moment of their greatest need shows that he is not a believer. Nebuzaradan is a pagan, but he can still quote scripture to Jer and persuade him on the basis of spiritual principles. You are not a believer because you live a good life and quote scripture. You are a believer because you have received the Lord Jesus and his Holy Spirit now lives within you. Don't let your own spiritual well-being be compromised by stopping short of a full experience of salvation; and don't withhold the

gospel from others whose upright lives fool you into thinking that they really are God's children.

Hymn: 111, "O Sacred Head"

Analysis

To what does the IF in 40:1 refer? I've found four theories.

1. K&D: all prophecies from here through the end of the book. But this doesn't fit the prose/poetry distinction.
2. Holladay: inverts 2a and 4b to put the oracle on the lips of Jer, but no mss evidence.
3. Feinberg: "word" here means history.
4. Me: This is another expanded quote formula, introducing the quote at 42:7ff. For simplicity, promote sublevels.

A. First part of quote f: 40:1 HA/D.FBFR):A\$ER-HFYFH)EL-YIR:M:YFHW. M"/)"T Y:HWFH

B. 40:2-6, Time of quote f: ampl p: Jer's release

1. text: temporal p

a) text:)AXAR \$AL.AX)OT/OW N:BW.ZAR:):ADFN RAB-+AB.FXIYM MIN-HF/RFMFH

b) time: comment p

1) text: B.:/QAX:T./OW)OT/OW

2) comment <)OTOW>: W:/HW.)-)FSW.R B.F/)ZIQ.IYM B.:/TOWK:

K.FL-G.FLW.T Y:RW.\$FLAIM WI/YHW.DFH HA/M.UG:LIYM B.FBEL/FH

2. ampl: quote p

a) quote f: 40:2 WA/Y.IQ.AX RAB-+AB.FXIYM L:/YIR:M:YFHW. WA/Y.O)MER)"LFY/W

b) quote:

1) Interpretation of the defeat

a> Y:HWFH):ELOHEY/KF D.IB.ER)ET-HF/RF(FH HA/Z.O)T)EL-HA/M.FQOWM HA/Z.EH

b> 40:3 WA/Y.FB")

c> WA/Y.A(A& Y:HWFH K.A/):A\$ER D.IB."R

d> K.IY-X:A+F)TEM LA/YHWFH

e> W:/LO)-\$:MA(:T.EM B.:/QOWL/OW

f> W:/HFYFH L/FKEM {D.FBFR} [HA/D.FBFR] HA/Z.EH

2) execution p

a> command: alternation p

1> setting: 40:4 W:/(AT.FH HIN."H PIT.AX:T.IY/KF HA/Y.OWM MIN-HF/)ZIQ.IYM):A\$ER (AL-YFD/EKF

2> alt-1: conditional p

a: if:)IM-+OWB B.:/("YNEY/KF LF/BOW))IT./IY BFBEL

b: then:

1: B.O)

2: W:/)F&IYM)ET-("YNIY (FLEY/KF

3> alt-2: conditional p

a: if: W:/)IM-RA(B.:/("YNEY/KF LF/BOW)-)IT./IY BFBEL

b: then:

1: X:ADFL

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2: R:) "H K.FL-HF/)FREC L:/PFNEY/KF
3: )EL-+OWB W:/)EL-HA/Y.F$FR B.:/("YNEY/KF
LF/LEKET $FM.FH L"K:
b> execution: 40:5 W:/(OWD/EN.W. LO)-YF$W.B

3) execution p (** note additional component, enablement)
a> command: alternation p
1> alt-1:
a: W:/$UBFH )EL-G.:DAL:YFH BEN-):AXIYQFM B.EN-$FPFN
):A$ER HIP:QIYD MELEK:-B.FBEL B.:/(FR"Y Y:HW.DFH
b: W:/$"B )IT./OW B.:/TOWK: HF/(FM
2> alt-2:
a: )OW )EL-K.FL-HA/Y.F$FR B.:/("YNEY/KF LF/LEKET L"K:
b> enablement
1> WA/Y.IT.EN-L/OW RAB-+AB.FXIYM ):ARUXFH W./MA&:) "T
2> WA/Y:$AL.:X/"HW.
c> execution
1> 40:6 WA/Y.FBO) YIR:M:YFHW. )EL-G.:DAL:YFH
BEN-):AXIYQFM HA/M.IC:P.FT/FH
2> WA/Y."$EB )IT./OW B.:/TOWK: HF/(FM HA/N.I$:)FRIYM
B.F/)FREC S

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C. 40:7-16, Prosperity under Ged

1. Interview with the guerilla commanders

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a) awareness quote p:
1) aq f: 40:7 WA/Y.I$:M:(W. KFL-&FR"Y HA/X:AYFLIYM ):A$ER
B.A/&.FDEH H"M.FH W:/)AN:$"Y/HEM
2) quote:
a> K.IY-HIP:QIYD MELEK:-B.FBEL )ET-G.:DAL:YFHW.
BEN-):AXIYQFM B.F/)FREC
b> W:/KIY HIP:QIYD )IT./OW ):ANF$IYM W:/NF$IYM WF/+FP
W./MI/D.AL.AT HF/)FREC M"/):A$ER LO)-HFG:LW. B.FBEL/FH
b) 40:8 WA/Y.FBO)W. )EL-G.:DAL:YFH HA/M.IC:P.FT/FH W:/YI$:MF(")L
B.EN-N:TAN:YFHW. W:/YOWXFNFN W:/YOWNFTFN B.:N"Y-QFR"XA
W./&:RFYFH BEN-T.AN:XUMET W./B:N"Y {(OWPAY} [{"YPAY}]
HA/N.:+OPFTIY WI/YZAN:YFHW. B.EN-HA/M.A(:AKFTIY H"M.FH
W:/)AN:$"Y/HEM
c) quote p: Ged reassures the Jews
1) quote f: 40:9 WA/Y.I$.FBA( L/FHEM G.:DAL:YFHW.
BEN-):AXIYQFM B.EN-$FPFN W./L:/)AN:$"Y/HEM L"/)MOR
2) quote:
a> )AL-T.IYR:)W. M"/(:ABOWD HA/K.A&:D.IYM
b> $:BW. BF/)FREC
c> W:/(IB:DW. )ET-MELEK: B.FBEL
d> W:/YIY+AB L/FKEM
e) contrast p
1> 40:10 WA/):ANIY HIN/:NIY YO$"B B.A/M.IC:P.FH
LA/(:AMOD LI/P:N"Y HA/K.A&:D.IYM ):A$ER YFBO)W.
)"L"Y/NW.
2> W:/)AT.EM
a: )IS:PW. YAYIN W:/QAYIC W:/$EMEN
b: W:/&IMW. B.I/K:L"Y/KEM
c: W./$:BW. B.:/(FR"Y/KEM ):A$ER-T.:PA&:T.EM

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2. Return of the refugee Jews

a) awareness quote p:

1) aq f: 40:11 W:/GAM K.FL-HA/Y.:HW.DIYM):AŞER-B.:/MOW) FB
W./BI/B:N"Y-(AM.OWN W./BE/):EDOWM WA/):AŞER
B.:/KFL-HF/):ARFCOWT \$FM:(W.

2) quote:

a> K.IY-NFTAN MELEK:-B.FBEL \$:) "RIYT LI/YHW.DFH
b> W:/KIY HIP:QIYD (:AL"Y/HEM)ET-G.:DAL:YFHW.
B.EN-):AXIYQFM B.EN-\$FPFN

b) 40:12 WA/Y.FŞUBW. KFL-HA/Y.:HW.DIYM MI/K.FL-HA/M.:QOMOWT
) :AŞER NID.:XW.-\$FM

c) WA/Y.FBO)W.)EREC-Y:HW.DFH)EL-G.:DAL:YFHW. HA/M.IC:P.FT/FH

d) WA/Y.A)AS:PW. YAYIN WF/QAYIC HAR:B."H M:)OD P

3. Interchange p: Yoxanan tries to warn Ged of assassination
Transition paragraph. Major IF at 41:1 shows that the break is
there; and this one continues the mood of relative prosperity
initiated in ch.40. But the subject matter clearly points
forward.

a) setting: 40:13 W:/YOWXFNFN B.EN-QFR"XA W:/KFL-&FR"Y
HA/X:AYFLIYM):AŞER B.A/&.FDEH B.F)W.)EL-G.:DAL:YFHW.
HA/M.IC:P.FT/FH

b) iu: quote p

1) quote f: 40:14 WA/Y.O)M:RW.)"LFY/W

2) quote: awareness quote p

a> aq f: H:A/YFDO(A T."DA(
b> quote: K.IY B.A(:ALIYS MELEK: B.:N"Y-(AM.OWN \$FLAX
)ET-YIŞ:MF(")L B.EN-N:TAN:YFH L:/HAK.OT/:KF NFPEŞ

c) tu: rej W:/LO)-HE):EMIYN L/FHEM G.:DAL:YFHW. B.EN-):AXIYQFM

d) iu: quote p

1) quote f: 40:15 W:/YOWXFNFN B.EN-QFR"XA)FMAR
)EL-G.:DAL:YFHW. BA/S."TER B.A/M.IC:P.FH L"/)MOR

2) quote:

a>)"L:KFH N.F)
b> W:/)AK.EH)ET-YIŞ:MF(")L B.EN-N:TAN:YFH
c> W:/)IYŞ LO) Y"DF(
d> LFM.FH YAK.EK.FH N.EPEŞ
e> W:/NFPOCW. K.FL-Y:HW.DFH HA/N.IQ:B.FCIYM)"LEY/KF
f> W:/)FB:DFH \$:) "RIYT Y:HW.DFH

e) tu: rej: quote p

1) quote f: 40:16 WA/Y.O)MER G.:DAL:YFHW. BEN-):AXIYQFM
)EL-YOWXFNFN B.EN-QFR"XA

2) quote:

a>)AL-{T.A(A& } [T.A(:A&"H))ET-HA/D.FBFR HA/Z.EH
b> K.IY-\$EQER)AT.FH DOB"R)EL-YIŞ:MF(")L S