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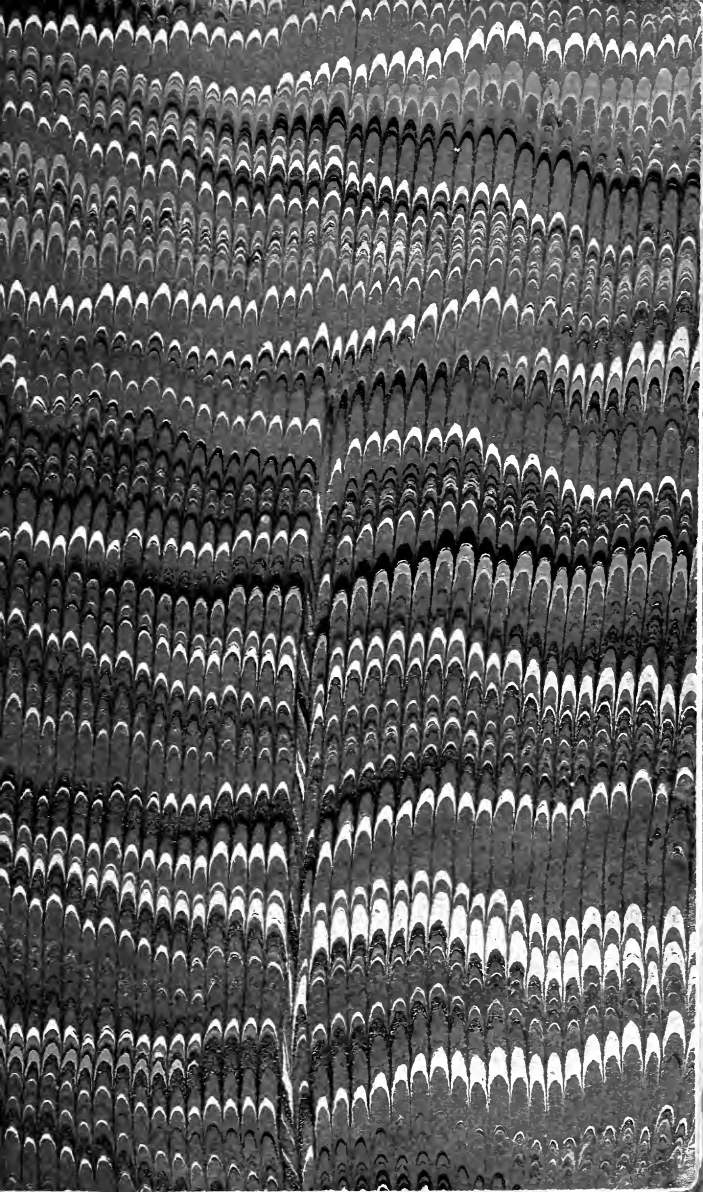
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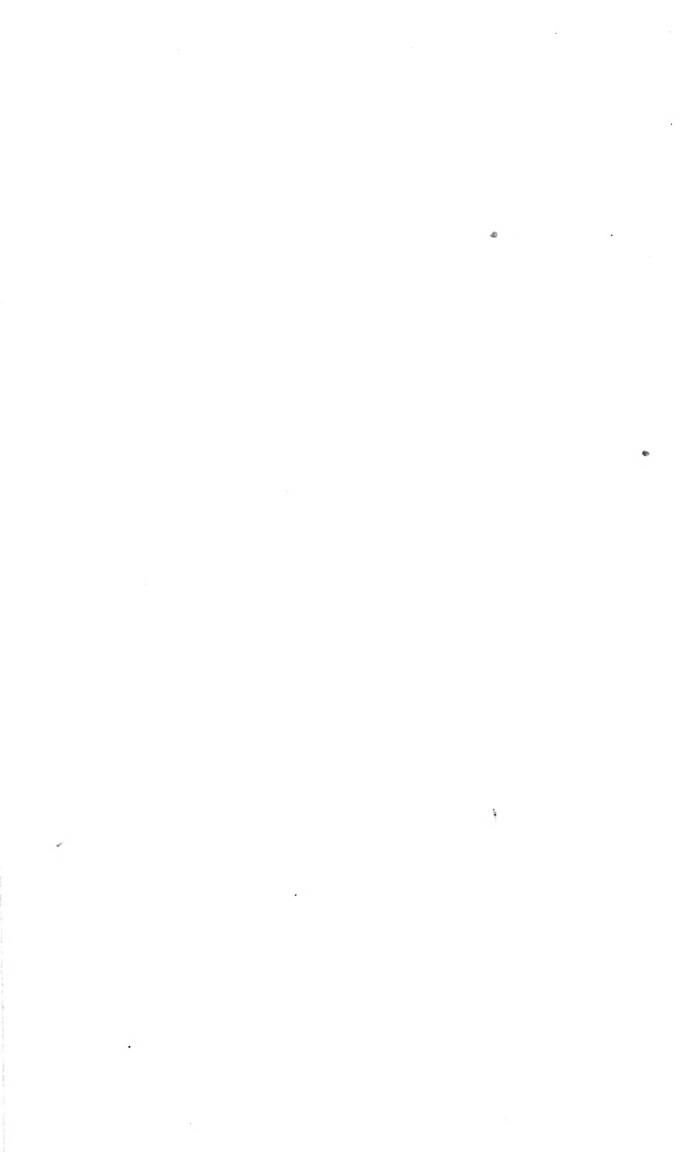
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OF THE

PROPHET JEREMIAH.

11
Jerusalem, people
Written for the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society, and
revised by the Committee of Publication.



BOSTON:

MASSACHUSETTS SABBATH SCHOOL SOCIETY.

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THE
PROPHET JEREMIAH.

CHAPTER I.

JEREMIAH was born in Anathoth, about sixteen hundred and twenty years before the birth of our Savior. Anathoth was one of the thirteen cities that were given to the priests in the time of Joshua. It was situated about three miles north of Jerusalem, within the limits of the tribe of Benjamin. Jeremiah was thus of the sacerdotal or priestly race. His father's name was Hilkiah. Some have supposed that this was the high-priest who found the book of the law in the temple, in the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah: but this is not probable. He is said to be, 'Hil-

kiah of the priests that were in Anathoth.” If he had been the high-priest, it would doubtless have been mentioned. The only ground for the opinion, is, the sameness of the names ; but as the name was a very common one among the Jews, it was doubtless borne by more than one individual at the same time.

Prophets were the special, messengers of the Almighty, were commissioned, as he saw fit, from every rank and employment in life, and were not confined to the family of *priests*. Elisha was called while ploughing in the field, and Amos was “an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamine fruit.”

Prophets were charged with making known the will of God to men. God delivered his messages to them in various ways ; sometimes by an audible voice, sometimes in visions or trances, and sometimes in dreams of the night. They delivered their messages to men in various ways ; sometimes by direct address, sometimes by parables, and sometimes by signs or symbols which the habits of the eastern nations rendered it easy for them to understand.

Sometimes they wrote their prophecies on pieces of parchment, and caused them to be hung up in the temple where all men could read them.

They went very plainly clothed, led a laborious, self-denying life; and were often exposed to suffering from poverty and persecution.

Jeremiah, like Samuel, was called at an early age to this solemn and responsible office. The word of the Lord came unto him, saying, "Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest out of the womb, I sanctified thee; I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." Jeremiah at first attempts to excuse himself on account of his youth. "Ah Lord God!" said he, "behold I cannot speak; for I am a child." But the Lord kindly encourages him, and gave him his solemn commission. "Say not I am a child; for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces, for I am with thee to deliver thee." Jehovah then

put forth his hand and touched his mouth, and said, "Behold I have put words into thy mouth, see, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant."

He then caused him to see in a vision the rod of an almond tree and a seething pot, with the face thereof towards the north. By these were indicated the nearness and the severity of the divine judgments that Jeremiah was to denounce, and the quarter from whence the executors thereof were to come. As the almond rod is rapid in its growth, so the judgments of God would soon appear; and as the seething or boiling pot is violent, so would be the approaching judgments: the face thereof being toward the north, showed that from the "north an evil should break forth."

The Almighty then commanded him to prepare himself for the discharge of the duties of the office to which he had thus solemnly been set apart. He again graciously encouraged him, promising to be with him and to

deliver him from every evil that should threaten him. Thus was Jeremiah consecrated to this holy office.

During the whole of the above scene, he was probably in a vision or trance. It was in this way that many of the prophets were set apart to their work. Thus it was with Isaiah, and Ezekiel, and Daniel, and the beloved disciple, John, when he was commissioned to write the revelation of Jesus Christ.

This solemn ordination of Jeremiah occurred in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah, king of Judah, who was so zealous in purging the kingdom from idolatry, and in striving to bring back the people to the service of the living God. In the eighteenth year of his reign, Hilkiah, the high-priest, found the book of the law, that is, the copy of the Holy Scriptures that was kept in the temple. So far had both priest and people gone in idolatry, that the law of God seems to have lain neglected and lost in his own house. It was found, probably, while removing the monuments of idolatry with which the temple had

been filled. It was carried to the king, who caused it to be read in his presence; and he rent his clothes as he heard of the judgments which were recorded against the violators of his law. He then assembled all the elders, and priests, and Levites, and all the people, and the law having been read in their hearing, he caused them all to promise to obey it, and to enter into a covenant to walk after the Lord, and to keep all the words that were written in the book. Thus there was, at least, a professed turning of all the people unto the Lord.

CHAPTER II.

JOSIAH'S reign continued eighteen years after Jeremiah received his commission. The prophecies which Jeremiah uttered during this period, are contained in the first twelve chapters of the book that bears his name. The reader is not to suppose that the whole book

was written at one time, or in the order in which we find it. It consists of a series of discourses, delivered by the prophet at different times, during a course of at least forty-two years. These discourses, when committed to writing, formed separate prophecies. It is probable they were left in this manner by the prophet, at the time of his death, and that they were collected into one book by some person who lived in after times. To what cause it was owing that the order of time was not preserved, it is impossible for us to learn.

The reader is also, it is probable, aware of the fact, that the division of the Scriptures into chapters and verses, forms no part of their inspiration, and is comparatively of modern date. It is very convenient by way of reference, yet the sense is often thereby obscured. In pointing out, therefore, the various discourses of the prophet, no regard is to be paid to the ordinary divisions of chapters and verses.

The prophecies that were delivered during the reign of Josiah, at least those that have been placed on record, are comprised in the

first twelve chapters of the prophecy as found in our Bibles. They have been divided into four distinct discourses.

The first is contained in the second and first five verses of the third chapter. It appears to have been delivered soon after his consecration to the prophetic office.

In this discourse, God expresses his continued regard for the Jews; expostulates with them on account of their ungrateful returns for his past goodness—and shows them that the miseries which they had suffered, and to which they were still exposed, were in consequence of their great wickedness: the discourse closes with a pathetic address, exhorting the Jews to return to their Creator, and warning them of the fatal consequences of neglect.

May not the same address of the Almighty be applied to us? Has he not shown us continued kindness, giving food and raiment, health and friends, the blessings of education and the means of grace? Have we not been ungrateful? Have not our sins been great? Does it not become us to return to God, that we

“perish not by the way when his wrath is kindled but a little?”

The second discourse begins at the sixth verse of the third chapter and goes to the end of the sixth chapter. It appears to have been delivered a number of years after the one above noticed,—probably not till after the eighteenth year of Josiah’s reign. In that year, as we have seen, the book of the law was found, and there was an apparent turning of all the people unto the Lord. In this prophecy they are accused of insincerity. It is said; “Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the Lord.” The conquest and desolation of the land, by the Chaldeans, was also predicted in this discourse. This prophecy was fulfilled while the prophet was yet living, so that the truth of his mission was fully attested.

The third discourse, extending from the beginning of the seventh to the end of the tenth chapter, appears to have been delivered soon after the former. It seems there were false prophets in the land, who denied the

truth of Jeremiah's predictions in regard to the conquest and ruin of Judah—who persuaded the people that they had nothing to fear. They pretended that the sacredness of the temple would save the city from capture: that God had too much regard for his house to suffer it to be profaned, and the “habitation of his holiness given into the hands of strangers.”

Jeremiah exhorts the people not to trust to these assurances: to give no heed to the lying words of those who cried, “the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.” He taught them that sanctity of place would afford no protection to the guilty. In proof thereof, he calls on them to consider Shiloh, where he had set his name at first, and see what he had done to that, *for the wickedness of his people Israel*; and declares that he would do unto the temple as he had done to Shiloh, unless they repented.

People in gospel times are as liable to be deceived with false teachers as were the Jews. There are those in every age, who cry peace

when there is no peace, who preach doctrines that will not save the soul. We too, like the Jews, are in danger of making our sacred things the grounds of trust as to our salvation. We are in danger of looking to our privileges, to our pious friends, to revivals of religion, as grounds of hope for safety ; when it is a solemn truth, that, unless we repent and receive the Lord Jesus Christ, no possession of privileges, no pious friends, no abused mercies can save us. They will only add to our guilt and increase the weight of our condemnation at the day of Judgment.

The fourth discourse, comprising the eleventh and twelfth chapters, was delivered near the close of the reign of Josiah ; when the people had forgotten the solemn covenant they had entered into in the eighteenth year of his reign. In this discourse they are recalled to their duty, and sharply rebuked for their sins. The divine judgments are also denounced against them.

The faithfulness of the prophet in reproving sin would by no means be calculated to please

those who were guilty. He spared neither priest nor people, but boldly charged them with their sins, and foretold the vengeance of God. Many were displeased with him, especially among his fellow citizens of Anathoth. So high did their hatred arise, that they formed a horrid plot to take away his life ; and this was done by the priests who were consecrated to the service of Jehovah. We can form some idea of the wickedness to which the people had sunk, when the priests could conspire to destroy the special messenger of that God at whose altars they were appointed to serve. They resolved to rid themselves of so faithful a reprover. They said, " Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered."

Jeremiah was ignorant of this conspiracy. *He was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter*, and knew not that *they had devised devices against him*. But the Lord was not ignorant of it ; neither was he forgetful of the promise he made to his servant when

he set him apart to his office. "They shall not prevail against thee ; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee." He revealed unto his servant the danger that threatened him, so that he was enabled to take measures to secure his safety.

Not long after this the good king Josiah was slain. He went out against the king of Egypt without consulting the will of the Lord, and strangely persevered in his purpose of opposing him, notwithstanding he was assured that the king of Egypt was charged with a commission from Jehovah. Josiah was slain in the battle which his rashness provoked, and was brought back to Jerusalem and buried amid great lamentations. The prophet Jeremiah was greatly afflicted, foreseeing the evil that would follow the accession of evil rulers. He composed certain lamentations on the occasion, which have been supposed to be the same that are found in our Bible ; but as those were evidently written after the conquest by the Chaldeans, we must suppose that those composed on the death of Josiah have been

lost. From the fate of Josiah, we learn that even good men are not safe when they are not in the path of duty.

CHAPTER III.

JEHOAHAZ was made king in the place of his father ; but at the end of three months he was deposed by the king of Egypt, and his brother Jehoakim was placed on the throne. During this reign, which was of eleven years' [and four months' Jahn] continuance, Jeremiah delivered the prophecies recorded in the thirteenth to the twentieth chapter, inclusive, also in the twenty-second, twenty-third, twenty-fifth, twenty-sixth, twenty-seventh, twenty-eighth, thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth chapters. These have been divided into twelve separate discourses.

The first appears to have been uttered in the early part of the reign of Jehoachim. It

foretells the utter destruction of the whole nation, and mentions, in particular, the downfall of the king and queen. This fearless proclamation of unwelcome truth, even at the foot of the throne, was not calculated to promote the speaker's worldly interests. It probably offended the wicked king, and encouraged the enemies of the prophet in their designs against him. He suffered so much from their persecutions, that he made his complaint unto the Lord. He again received the most explicit promises of the divine protection and presence. "I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall ; and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee ; for I am with thee, to save thee, and to deliver thee, saith the LORD : and I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible."

But the assurance of the divine favor which he had received, did not lessen the hatred or put a stop to the evil designs of his enemies. They could not bear to have their guilt charged so fearlessly upon them ; they could not

bear to have the vengeance of the Lord held up so constantly to view. The voice of this one man of God troubled them more than all the evils that threatened them. They said their priests were well enough acquainted with the law, and did not need this disturber to call it to their remembrance : that they had wise men among them, and hence did not need his counsel ; and moreover, they had prophets who would prophesy unto them smooth things. They therefore resolved not *to give heed to any of his words*, and *digged a pit for his soul*. The prophet again carried his case to God, and in his prayer prophetically denounces against them the judgments of that God who has said, “ touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.”

He was next directed to procure a potter's vessel, and to take with him the ancients of the people, and the ancients of the priests, and to go into the valley of Hinnom, which was also called Tophet, and there proclaim a most solemn message from the Lord. This valley was “ by the entrance of the east gate.” It

had been in ancient times exceedingly verdant and beautiful. In the time of Solomon, the worship of Moloch was there set up. A brazen image of this God was erected, with extended hands. The wicked idolaters used to heat it with a fire within, and place their infants on the burning hands. A great noise was made with drums and other instruments, in order to drown the outcries of the little victims. Hence the valley was sometimes called Tophet, Tophet being the Hebrew name for a drum.

Josiah, in his zeal against idolatry, "defiled Tophet," 2 Kings xxiii. 10. He caused all manner of filth to be carried thither from the city, that it might forever be loathsome. After this it continued to be a receptacle for filth, and fires were kept burning there, night and day, to purify the air. To this place the prophet repaired and foretold the judgments to come on the Jews, on account of their sins. "Behold the days shall come, saith the LORD, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the Son of Hinnom, but The

valley of Slaughter. And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place ; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives ; and their carcases will I give to be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth. And I will make this city desolate, and an hissing : every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss, because of all the plagues thereof. And I will cause them to eat of the flesh of their sons, and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend, in the siege and straitness wherewith their enemies and they which seek their lives shall straiten them.”

Then, breaking the potter's vessel, he said, “ Thus saith the Lord of hosts, even so will I break this people, and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again ; and they shall bury them in Tophet till there be no place to bury.”

Having delivered the prophecy he was commissioned to utter in the valley, he went and

stood in the court of the Lord's house, and said to all the people, "Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold I will bring upon this city, and upon all her towns, all the evil that I have pronounced against it; because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words."

These fearful predictions were not long afterwards literally fulfilled.

When Pashur the son of Immer the priest, who was chief governor in the house of the LORD, and also one of the false prophets noticed above, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things, he was greatly enraged, and smote him, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the Lord. On the morrow he set him at liberty. Jeremiah then repeated the unwelcome message that had caused his confinement, and foretold to the false prophet and persecutor the doom that awaited him. "And thou Pashur and all that dwell in thine house, shall go into captivity: and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there shalt thou die,

and shalt be buried there, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied."

Pashur was not the only enemy that the faithfulness of the prophet occasioned. He was slandered, and abused, and mocked, and insulted daily. Such consequences following the delivery of the messages of God, he, in the weakness of his flesh, resolved to cease, and not to make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, "but," he remarks, "his word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." Like the apostle of after times, a necessity was laid upon him.

After his release from the hand of Pashur, the prophet was sent with a message to the king. In it was contained a severe rebuke, and an account of that which should befall him. "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong: that useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work; that saith, I will build me a wide house, and

large chambers, and cutteth him out windows ; and it is ceiled with cedar and painted with vermilion ! Shalt thou reign because thou closest thyself in cedar ? Did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him ? He judged the cause of the poor and needy ; then it was well with him : was not this to know me ? saith the LORD. But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence to do it. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, They shall not lament for him, *saying*, Ah my brother ; or, Ah sister ! they shall not lament for him, *saying*, Ah lord ! or, Ah his glory ! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.” He also foretold the captivity of his son Jechoniah, and the perpetual exclusion of his posterity from the throne.

What effect this solemn rebuke had upon the king is not known. The prophet does

not appear to have suffered in consequence of the bold discharge of his duty. God was with him to deliver him.

The next discourse of the prophet was directed against the false prophets and workers, and is recorded in the twenty-third chapter.*

In the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, Jeremiah was directed to foretell the conquest of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, and the captivity of the people for seventy years—and the destruction of Babylon at the end of that period. This prophecy is contained in the twenty-fifth chapter. These predictions were very literally fulfilled, the former during the lifetime of the prophet. At the end of the seventy years' captivity, Babylon was conquered by Cyrus, the commander of the united armies of the Medes and Persians.

In the same year in which the above prophecy was delivered, the prophet was directed to go and stand in the court of the Lord's house, where all the people were assembled,

* Some say earlier.

and proclaim to them the speedy destruction of their temple and city, unless the displeasure of the Lord were removed by their repentance.

When he had delivered this message, the priests, and false prophets, and all the people rose against him in a great rage, and took him, saying, "Thou shalt surely die. Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant?"

A council of the princes of Judah was called, and Jeremiah was brought before them. The priests and the prophets bitterly accused him, saying, "This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears."

Jeremiah was then permitted to speak in his defence. Though in the hands of his bitter enemies, who were determined to take his life, he had no fear, for his confidence was in God. His answer to the charges brought against him was as follows. "The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house, and against this city, all the words that ye have heard.

Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the **LORD** your God ; and the **LORD** will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you. As for me, behold, I am in your hand ; do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you. But know ye for certain, that, if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the **LORD** hath sent me unto you, to speak all these words in your ears.”

The princes, or members of the council, and the people (for they were present) were struck with the justness of his defence, and were not willing to proceed against one that bore a commission from on high. They said to the priests and the false prophets, “This man is not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the **LORD** our God.”

Certain elders of the land arose and spoke in defence of the prophet, and brought forward the example of Micah who prophesied against Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah,

but was not punished on account of his faithfulness. "Micah," said they, "prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Zion shall be ploughed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest. Did Hezekiah king of Judah, and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls."

Notwithstanding this decision of the council, and defence of the elders, it is probable that the prophet would not have escaped from the malice of the priests and false prophets, had it not been for the powerful influence of Ahikam the son of Shaphan which was exerted in his behalf. Thus was Jeremiah again delivered out of the hands of his enemies, according to the promise of the Lord.

In the same year in which the events last

mentioned occurred, Jeremiah was directed to commit to writing the prophecies which he had uttered. And the Lord said, "Take a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day that I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil that I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin."

Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah, and repeated to him all the words that the Lord had spoken to him, and Baruch wrote the same in a book.

In the next year king Jehoiakim proclaimed a fast before the Lord to all the people of Jerusalem and Judah. All the people assembled on this occasion at Jerusalem. The prophet then directed Baruch to take the roll*

* The ancient books were not bound like ours, but rolled up, like a piece of cloth.

on which were written his prophecies, and read them in the ears of all the people.

Baruch complied with his instructions, and read the prophecies to the people from a conspicuous place in the temple. An individual having heard the words that were read, went immediately to the princes who were assembled in council, and gave information of what had been done. The princes sent a messenger to Baruch, requiring him to appear before them, and to bring with him the volume from which he had read. He came, and at their command, read it in their hearing. They were greatly alarmed at the judgments that were denounced in the name of the Lord: for though these were but the repetition of prophecies that had been previously uttered by the prophet, yet it is probable they had been forgotten. So soon do the wicked forget the most solemn messages of the Lord.

They questioned Baruch, and found that he had written only what Jeremiah had dictated. "He pronounced," said Baruch, "all

these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in the book.”

They then told him that they should inform the king, and advised him and Jeremiah to hide themselves where they could not be found.

They then laid up the volume in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and went to the king and told him what had taken place. The king then sent Jehudi for the volume, and caused him to read it. It was in winter, and a fire was burning on the hearth. When Jehudi had read three or four leaves, the king became so angry that he seized the volume and cut it with a penknife and cast it into the fire. A few of the princes besought him not to burn it, but he would not hear them. It was entirely consumed.

Then the king sent to apprehend Baruch and Jeremiah, but the Lord had warned them of their danger and assisted them to escape ; so they were not taken.

The king and his princes paid no regard to the message of the Lord that was read in their

hearing ; they had withstood so many warnings that they were hardened in their impenitence.

Jeremiah was commanded by the Lord to take another volume, and to cause Baruch to write again the words of the books that the king had burned with fire : to this were added special judgments against the king.

Baruch was afraid on account of the part he had taken in this matter : the prophet was commissioned to assure him that no attempts against his life should succeed. [45th chap.]

The predictions uttered by the prophet after this time, during the reign of Jehoiachim, are contained in the forty-sixth, forty-seventh, forty-eighth and forty-ninth chapter to the end of the third-third verse. In these, the overthrow of Egypt, Philistia, Tyre, Moab, the Ammonites, Edom, Damascus and Kedar are foretold. All of which have been accomplished.

In the seventh year of the reign of Jehoiachim, the king of Babylon made war upon him, and he submitted : but at the end of three years he rebelled, and the king of Bab-

ylon came up against him again, and took him and bound him in fetters of brass and carried him to Babylon. Jehoiachin his son succeeded him, but after a short reign he was deposed by the king of Babylon, who placed his brother Zedekiah on the throne, and made him swear by the Almighty that he would remain subject to him. Where Jeremiah was amid these changes we are not informed: probably he lived quietly in retirement, either at Anathoth or some more obscure place. At least he was preserved alive, and discharged the duties of his office during the reign of Zedekiah.

CHAPTER IV.

ZEDEKIAH had occasion to send Elasah and Gemeriah with a message to the king of Babylon, whom he had engaged to serve. Jeremiah sent by them a letter to those who

had been carried away captive to Babylon, in which he exhorted them to build themselves houses, and prepare for a long residence in that land. He exhorted them not to believe the false prophet that flattered them with the prospect of a speedy return to Judea, and assured them that the captivity should continue for seventy years. He foretold the violent death of two false prophets in particular, namely, Ahab and Zedekiah. "And of them," says he, "shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which are in Babylon, saying, The LORD make thee like Zedekiah, and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire."

After the receipt of this letter by the Jews at Babylon, one of their number, Shemaiah the Nehelamite, wrote to Zephaniah, the chief-priest, and to all the priests, complaining that Jeremiah was permitted to prophesy, and to say to the captives, as he had done in his letter, that their captivity should be long. Zephaniah read this letter to Jeremiah. "Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah,

saying, Send to all them of the captivity, saying, Thus saith the Lord concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite, Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie; therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among this people; neither shall he behold the good that he shall do for my people, saith the Lord; because he hath taught rebellion against the Lord." Thus severe were the judgments of the Lord against those who spoke falsely in his name!

In the fourth year of the reign of Zedekiah, messengers arrived from the neighboring nations inviting him to join a league against the king of Babylon. Jeremiah went to the king, and assured him that his only safety laid in his being subject to the king of Babylon. He besought him not to hearken unto the prophets that gave him contrary advice, because they prophesied lies. He also repeated the same to the priests and the people. Then Haniah, a false prophet, stood up, and in his

presence, and prophesied that the yoke of the king of Babylon should be broken within two years, and that the rebels of the Lord's house which had been carried to Babylon, should be restored to their place. Jeremiah, at length, was directed to address him as follows, "Hear now, Hananiah, The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will cast thee off from the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord." In the same year, in the seventh month, Hananiah died, according to the word of the Lord by the prophet.

The fiftieth and fifty-first chapters contain predictions respecting the utter destruction of Babylon. These were committed to writing by the prophet and sent to Babylon by the hand of Seraiah. He was directed to read the book to the captives, and then to bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates, and say, "Thus shall Babylon sink,

and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her.”*

In the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, he rebelled against the king of Babylon. In the same year king Nebuchadnezzar, with all his army, came against Jerusalem, and besieged it round about. Zedekiah, while he despised and abused the prophet in time of safety, remembered him in time of danger and sought his aid. He sent messengers unto him, desiring him to inquire of the Lord whether he would not deliver him from the king of Babylon. The prophet bade them tell Zedekiah that the king of Babylon should prevail, that the Lord himself would fight against him—“I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, and such as are left in the city, from the pestilence, from the sword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and into

* An account of the fulfilment of these and other prophecies relating to Babylon, may be found in a little book entitled, “The true word of Prophecy ; or, Prophecy fulfilled in the Destruction of Babylon.”

the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those that seek their life ; and he shall smite them with the edge of the sword ; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy." He was also directed to inform the people, that those that remained should die by the sword, and pestilence, and famine, while those that went out to the Chaldeans should save their lives.

At another time during the sieges, Jeremiah went to the king and told him that he would be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon, but that he would not die by the sword but in peace.

In the mean time the king of Egypt brought up an army against the king of Babylon, who left the siege of Jerusalem to go and meet him. The king sent unto Jeremiah to know if the Chaldeans would return to the siege, and to desire him to pray unto the LORD for the king and the city. Jeremiah assured him that the Chaldeans would return, and that the city should certainly be taken.

When the army of the Chaldeans had thus

departed, Jeremiah resolved to leave Jerusalem, and to go into his own country, the land of Benjamin; that he might not be in the midst of those who were doomed to destruction. As he was passing out at the gate of Benjamin, the captain of the gate, who was named Irijah, arrested him, and accused him of the intention of going over to the Chaldeans. Jeremiah denied the charge, but Irijah did not believe him. He brought him before the princes, who smote him, and put him in prison. When he had been in prison many days, the king sent secretly and took him out of prison, brought him to his house and asked him, "Is there any word from the LORD? And Jeremiah said, There is: for, said he, thou shalt be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon."

Jeremiah then complained to the king of the severe treatment he had received,— "What," said he to the king, "have I offended against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison? Where are now your prophets that

prophesied unto you, saying, 'The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land?'" He also earnestly besought the king that he would not send him back to the prison whence he had taken him, lest the hardships to which he was exposed should occasion his death. The king granted his petition in part: perhaps, if disposed, he did not dare to set him at liberty for fear of the princes: he therefore commanded "that they should commit Jeremiah into the court of the prison, and that they should daily give him a piece of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city were spent."

During his confinement in this place, he uttered the prophecy respecting the return of the Jews from Babylon which is recorded in the thirty-fifth chapter, and that respecting the coming of the Messiah in the thirty-sixth.

Severer sufferings were soon to befall this faithful, fearless servant of the Lord. Some of the princes came to the king and complained of the prophecies he uttered respecting the taking of the city by the Chaldeans. They

said to the king, "We beseech thee, let this man be put to death ; for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them : for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt. Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold he is in your hand : for the king is not he that can do any thing against you." They then took Jeremiah and let him down with cords into a deep dungeon, and left him, designing that he should perish there. There was no water in the dungeon, but mire : so Jeremiah sunk in the mire. Here he would soon have perished, had not the Lord stirred up the spirit of Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian eunuch of the king's house, who came to the king and spake in his behalf, saying, "My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon ; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is ; for there is no more bread in the city. Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian,

saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon before he die." So the Ethiopian took men with him, and let down ropes, and old clothes and rags and directed the prophet to put the old clothes and rags around the ropes under his arms, that he might be drawn up without pain. So they drew him up, and he remained as before in the court of the prison.

Here he soon after received a message from the Lord for Ebed-melech, assuring him that he should be delivered in the taking of the city from those of whom he was afraid, and that his life should be preserved because he had put his trust in the Lord. Thus the Lord blesses those of every nation that put their trust in him.

When the siege was well nigh ended, Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah, and said, "I will ask thee a thing ; hide nothing from me." Jeremiah promised that he would faithfully answer him, provided he would not put him to death. And the king swear secretly unto him, "As the LORD liveth that made us this soul, I will

not put thee to death, neither will I give thee into the hands of these men that seek thy life.”

Jeremiah then assured him that if he would go forth to the king of Babylon, his life should be safe, and the city should not be destroyed : but if he did not go out, he should be taken, and the city burned with fire. Zedekiah expressed his fear lest the Chaldeans should deliver him into the hands of those Jews who had deserted to them, and he should thus be mocked ; but the prophet assured him they would not thus deliver him, and urged him to obey the voice of the Lord and live. The king charged him to preserve silence as to what he had said, and dismissed him, but did not follow his advice. Thus it ever is with the wicked. They will call on the righteous for assistance in the day of trouble, but when they are told to obey their God they too often dismiss their advisers and go on in sin.

The king of Babylon, in the mean time, pressed the siege. The famine and consequent suffering became extreme. At length, king Zedekiah, and his princes, and men of

war, resolved to attempt an escape, and left the city by night. The Chaldeans pursued after them, and overtook them in the plains of Jericho. They took Zedekiah and brought him to the king of Babylon at Riblah, who caused his sons to be slain before him, and his eyes to be put out. He then sent him in chains to Babylon.

The Chaldeans broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all the city, and carried away captive the remnant of the people that remained in the city. Some of the poorest class of people were left to till the land.

Nebuchadnezzar gave especial charge to the captain of the guard respecting Jeremiah, requiring him to take care of him, and to do for him every thing that he should desire. It seems that he had been brought with the other prisoners, bound in chains, to Ramah. The captain of the guard there set him at liberty, and said unto him, "Behold I loose thee this day from the chains which were upon thine hands. If it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come, and I will look

well unto thee ; but if it seem ill unto thee to come with me into Babylon, forbear : behold, all the land is before thee : whither it seemeth good and convenient for thee to go, thither go.”

Jeremiah expressing a desire to return and dwell in his native land, the captain dismissed him with presents, and commended him to Gedaliah, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the cities of Judah. This Gedaliah was the son of that Ahikam through whose influence the life of the prophet was spared, at the time when he was arraigned before the council. Thus Jeremiah dwelt in the midst of the remnant of his people. It is probable that the book of Lamentations was written at this time.

Ere long a conspiracy was formed against Gedaliah by the king of the Ammonites, which resulted in his death. This was a great grief to the Jews, for under his wise government they had begun to prosper. After this event, the leaders of the Jews gathered them together, with the intention of going down to Egypt, flattering themselves that they would there be

beyond the reach of the Chaldeans, and the distresses of war. They sent unto Jeremiah to inquire the will of the Lord, promising to obey that which should be declared unto them. Jeremiah, in the name of the Lord, forbade their going into Egypt ; promised them mercies if they remained in the land, but threatened them with the sword, and famine, and death, if they departed.

When he had declared his message, the wicked leaders charged him with falsehood, saying, "Thou speakest falsely: the LORD our God hath not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there." Regardless of the warnings of God, they gathered all the people together, and took Jeremiah with them, and went down to Egypt, and came to Tahpanhes.

Here many of the Jews became idolaters and burned incense to other gods. Jeremiah sharply reproved them, and solemnly announced the punishment that God would inflict. But his reproofs and warnings had no effect. They openly declared their purpose of perse-

vering in idolatry. The following seem to be the last words that were spoken to the wicked people from the Lord. "Behold I have sworn by my great name, saith the LORD, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord God liveth. Behold I will watch over them for evil and not for good; and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them. Yet a small number, that escape the sword, shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah; and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs."

Further than this we have no means of tracing the history of the prophet. It is said that the idolatrous Jews stoned him to death, in consequence of his faithfulness in reproofing them. This is not certain. It is also said, by some, that he returned to Judea, and ended his days there. But the sacred volume does

not inform on this subject, and hence we must remain in uncertainty. Whenever or wherever he was called, he was doubtless willing to go, as his assurance of salvation must have been firm, and he had seen and suffered too much to allow him to desire a prolonged residence on the earth.

In the foregoing history we have many illustrations of the fact that God will by *no means spare the guilty*; that *he is faithful concerning his promise*; protecting those that put their trust in him; and that *the word of the Lord standeth sure*, inasmuch as the predictions uttered in his name, have been fully accomplished. Great is the Lord and greatly to be feared.

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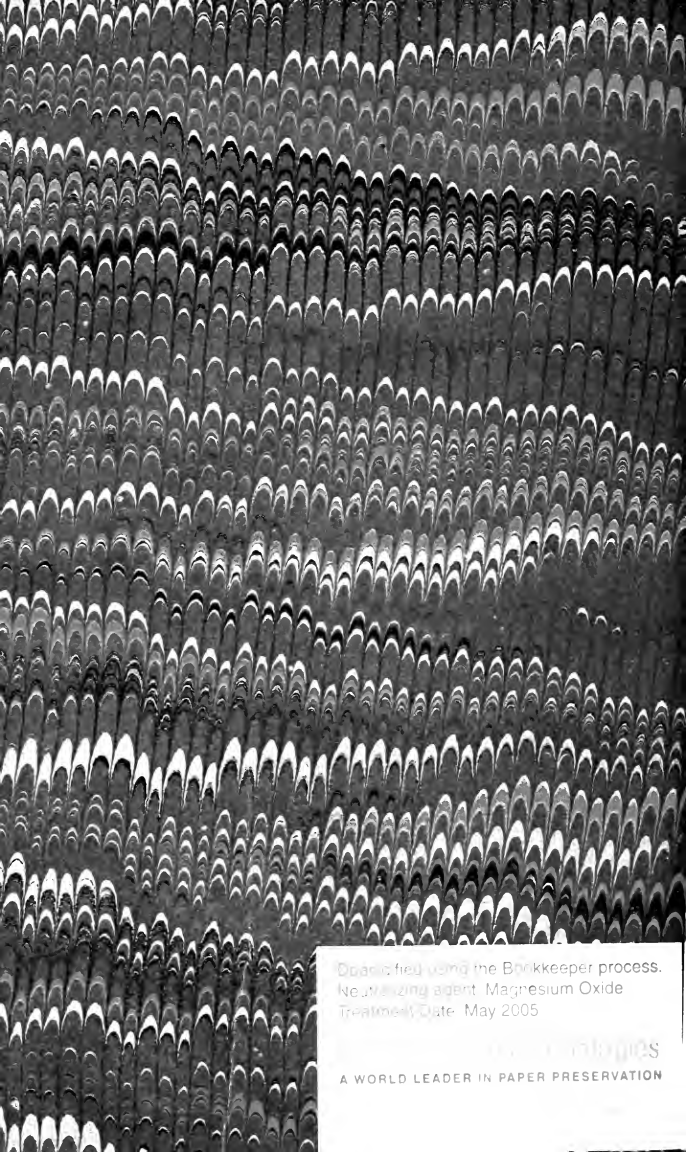
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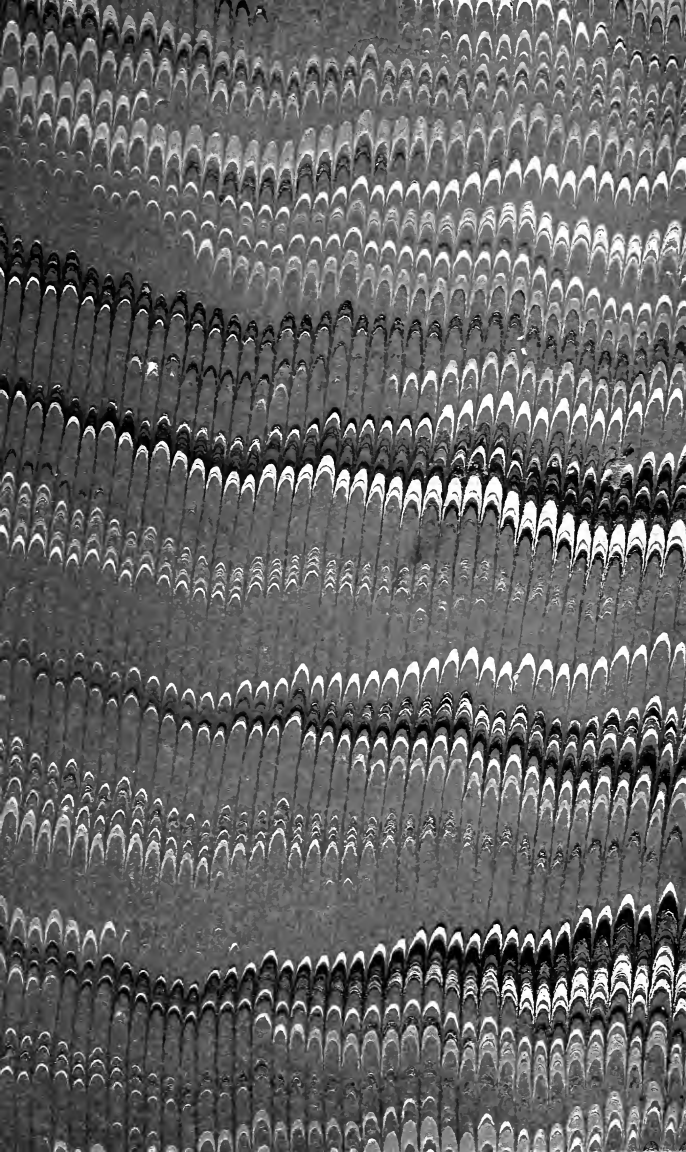


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