

Having A Basic Understanding of Some Old Testament Truths

Part 324 – Jeremiah Is Freed Through Ishmael's Betrayal (Jeremiah 40:1-41:18)

1. Did Nebuzaradan have any understanding about why Judah was punished?

Yes, he knew the Lord had brought the punishment upon Judah: *“(1) The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, after that Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he had taken him being bound in chains among all that were carried away captive of Jerusalem and Judah, which were carried away captive unto Babylon. (2) And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, The Lord thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place. (3) Now the Lord hath brought it, and done according as he hath said: because ye have sinned against the Lord, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come upon you” (Jeremiah 40:1-3).*

- God made known His judgment against His people to all (**Jeremiah 6:19**, **Jeremiah 22:29**, **Lamentations 2:15-17**, and **Micah 6:2**).
- The heathen could recognize the obvious – God was just in His judgment (**Nehemiah 9:33**; cf. **Zephaniah 3:5**).

2. Did Nebuzaradan seek to help or destroy Jeremiah?

He helped him: *“(4) And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which were upon thine hand. 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. (5) Now while he was not yet gone back, he said, Go back also to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon hath made governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people: or go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee to go. So the captain of the guard gave him victuals and a reward, and let him go. (6) Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land” (Jeremiah 40:4-6).*

- As we learned in the previous chapter, Nebuzaradan was ordered to set Jeremiah free and to look to his wellbeing (**Jeremiah 39:11-14**).

3. Why did many Jews come to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam?

Because he had been made governor, given servants, and could offer safety to them, and the remnant was with him: *“(7) Now when all the captains of the forces which were in the fields, even they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land, and had committed unto him men, and women, and children, and of the poor of the land, of them that were not carried away captive to Babylon; (8) Then they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, and the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men. (9)*

And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan sware unto them and to their men, saying, Fear not to serve the Chaldeans: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. (10) As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah to serve the Chaldeans, which will come unto us: but ye, gather ye wine, and summer fruits, and oil, and put them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that ye have taken. (11) Likewise when all the Jews that were in Moab, and among the Ammonites, and in Edom, and that were in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan; (12) Even all the Jews returned out of all places whither they were driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah, unto Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer fruits very much” (Jeremiah 40:7-12).

- **II Kings 25:22-23**

- Gedaliah gave the message of not fearing submission to Babylon (**Jeremiah 24:1-10, Jeremiah 27:12-22, Jeremiah 38:1-3, and Jeremiah 38:17-18**).
- Think about what it means of Gedaliah that he could freely serve at the pleasure of his captives (**Proverbs 22:29**).
- The job of those who gained this safety – gather wine and fruits (**Jeremiah 39:10**).

4. Did Gedaliah believe Johanan’s report concerning Ishmael the son of Nethaniah?

No: *“(13) Moreover Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were in the fields, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, (14) And said unto him, Dost thou certainly know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites hath sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to slay thee? But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam believed them not. (15) Then Johanan the son of Kareah spake to Gedaliah in Mizpah secretly, saying, Let me go, I pray thee, and I will slay Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no man shall know it: wherefore should he slay thee, that all the Jews which are gathered unto thee should be scattered, and the remnant in Judah perish? (16) But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said unto Johanan the son of Kareah, Thou shalt not do this thing: for thou speakest falsely of Ishmael” (Jeremiah 40:13-16).*

- God had warned His people not to be too trusting (**Jeremiah 9:4-6 and Micah 7:5-6**).
- At the same time, you should not just believe every evil reports either (**Psalms 50:20, Proverbs 10:18, Proverbs 11:9, and Proverbs 18:13**).
- It is a delicate balance between not being gullible (**Proverbs 14:15**) and not execute a false judgment (**Psalms 7:11-17**).
- The next chapter will reveal whether or not Gedaliah should have investigated these charges more carefully (**John 7:24**).

5. Should Gedaliah have believed Johanan’s report concerning Ishmael?

Yes, for Ishmael ends up killing Gedaliah, the Jews with him, and the Chaldeans there as well: *“(1) Now it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, and the princes of the*

king, even ten men with him, came unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and there they did eat bread together in Mizpah. (2) Then arose Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and the ten men that were with him, and smote Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan with the sword, and slew him, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land. (3) Ishmael also slew all the Jews that were with him, even with Gedaliah, at Mizpah, and the Chaldeans that were found there, and the men of war” (Jeremiah 41:1-3).

- Just because someone dines with you doesn't mean their not up to something evil (**II Samuel 13:23-28**, **Proverbs 23:6-8**, and **Matthew 26:17-25**).
- Ishmael killed all he could that were there (**II Kings 25:25**).

6. What did Ishmael do to those who came to bring offerings to the house of the Lord? Killed most and kept alive those who bribed him for their lives: *“(4) And it came to pass the second day after he had slain Gedaliah, and no man knew it, (5) That there came certain from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria, even fourscore men, having their beards shaven, and their clothes rent, and having cut themselves, with offerings and incense in their hand, to bring them to the house of the Lord. (6) And Ishmael the son of Nethaniah went forth from Mizpah to meet them, weeping all along as he went: and it came to pass, as he met them, he said unto them, Come to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam. (7) And it was so, when they came into the midst of the city, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah slew them, and cast them into the midst of the pit, he, and the men that were with him. (8) But ten men were found among them that said unto Ishmael, Slay us not: for we have treasures in the field, of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and of honey. So he forbore, and slew them not among their brethren. (9) Now the pit wherein Ishmael had cast all the dead bodies of the men, whom he had slain because of Gedaliah, was it which Asa the king had made for fear of Baasha king of Israel: and Ishmael the son of Nethaniah filled it with them that were slain. (10) Then Ishmael carried away captive all the residue of the people that were in Mizpah, even the king's daughters, and all the people that remained in Mizpah, whom Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had committed to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam: and Ishmael the son of Nethaniah carried them away captive, and departed to go over to the Ammonites” (Jeremiah 41:4-10).*

- Though Ishmael's deeds were unknown to man, they are not unto God (**Proverbs 11:21**).
- The appearances of these eighty men was indicative of repentance (**I Kings 21:27-29** and **Isaiah 22:12**). It should be noted though, this doesn't mean they would be heard of God (**Jeremiah 6:19-21**).
- Ishmael put on a fake cry (**Proverbs 26:24-26**).
- God had warned about trap setters (**Proverbs 1:10-19** and **Jeremiah 5:26**).
- Ten men bought their lives with their wealth (**Proverbs 13:8**).
- Bribery works with the evil (**Psalms 26:9-10**).
- No record of this pit (**I Kings 15:16-22** and **II Chronicles 16:1ff.**)
- The Ammonites will not get away with this (**Ezekiel 25:1-7**).

7. How did Johanan and all the captains of the forces react to what Ishmael did?

They went after them and freed the captives that Ishmael took: *“(11) But when Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done, (12) Then they took all the men, and went to fight with Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and found him by the great waters that are in Gibeon. (13) Now it came to pass, that when all the people which were with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, then they were glad. (14) So all the people that Ishmael had carried away captive from Mizpah cast about and returned, and went unto Johanan the son of Kareah” (Jeremiah 41:11-14).*

8. Did Ishmael escape?

Yes: *“But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men, and went to the Ammonites” (Jeremiah 41:15).*

- Sometimes sinners escape judgment (**Ecclesiastes 8:11**), but ultimately there is no escape (**Psalms 9:17** and **Isaiah 3:11**).

9. Where did Johanan and the people with him end up going?

They went to Egypt for fear of the Chaldeans: *“(16) Then took Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, all the remnant of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, from Mizpah, after that he had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, even mighty men of war, and the women, and the children, and the eunuchs, whom he had brought again from Gibeon: (17) And they departed, and dwelt in the habitation of Chimham, which is by Bethlehem, to go to enter into Egypt, (18) Because of the Chaldeans: for they were afraid of them, because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon made governor in the land” (Jeremiah 41:16-18).*

- God had told them NOT to go to Egypt (**Isaiah 30:1-3**, **Isaiah 36:1-7**, and **Jeremiah 37:6-9**).
- Israel did well when they trusted in God rather than others (**Psalms 20:7-8**).
- Jeremiah will teach them about this (**Jeremiah 42:1-22**).
- They will not take heed to Jeremiah’s teaching (**Jeremiah 43:1-7**).