

# Jeremiah Prays for Wisdom

## 32: 16-25

**DIG:** How does Jeremiah's prayer serve as a witness to all those present? Is this a prayer of affirmation or resignation? Why do you think so? What truths did Yirmeyahu proclaim about God's nature? How did Jeremiah summarize the LORD's role and Isra'el's role in their relationship throughout history? Why was Jeremiah left to marvel over what he had just done? How does the prayer end? Why?

**REFLECT:** Where do you think the world will be in seventy years? Wow! How hard is it for you to put stock in the present when the world looks so grim? What investment would the LORD want you to make in the future of your world, as a testimony of your radical faith in God? Where do you look to for wisdom?

**587 BC at the end of the eleven-year reign of Zedekiah**

Pious men and women of the Bible are often seen as the subject of human weakness. Though filled with passionate faith, they do not always escape the chilling winds of skepticism. It is indeed, this obvious humanity of its heroes and heroines that make the Bible a help and inspiration to those who strive and aspire, yet fall and rise again. A wave of doubt now passes over Yirmeyahu when he contemplates how his transaction is not only a tragic precursor to the fall of Jerusalem, but also to the messages he had so often prophesied in the name of ADONAI of the overthrow of the Judean state. In anguish of spirit he prays to God and receives a reassuring answer.

**God's power:** The sale of the property from Hanam'el to Jeremiah concluded with a prayer. This prayer differs greatly from Yirmeyahu's usual style. It is more like a liturgy than one of his impassioned outbursts. **After I had given the deed of purchase to Baruch son of Neriah, I prayed to the LORD (32:16).**

ADONAI, God! You made the heaven and earth by your great power and outstretched arm; nothing is too hard for You (32:17 CJB). This extreme statement seems to allude back to **Genesis 18:1-10**, where what was not impossible for God was the birth of a child to an old, barren couple. **And yet, such is the mixture of faith and doubt that often is in the crisis of life.** You display Your steadfast love (Hebrew: *hesed*), which God had persistently showed to the northern kingdom of Isra'el and the southern kingdom of Judah. That statement of God's goodness, however, is balanced with the reality that Ha'Shem also repays (Hebrew: *shalem*) the guilt of the fathers into the lap of their children **of those who hate Me (32:18a).**

Then **Jeremiah** provides a list of the "impossibilities" **YHVH** has produced. **Great, powerful God, whose name is ADONAI-Tzva'ot, Your purposes (counsel) are great and Your deeds are mighty! Your eyes are open to all the ways of mankind. Since nothing escapes Your notice, You can reward each person according to their conduct and as their deeds merit (32:18b-19).**

**God's** character was displayed in **His** deeds throughout **Isra'el's** history. From the time of the **Exodus** **God's** signs and wonders (**Deuteronomy 4:34, 26:8, 29:3 and 34:11**) **are remembered to this very day** in **Isra'el** and among all mankind, and have gained the recognition that is still **His**. **And in a reminiscence of Deuteronomy 4:34, Jeremiah** declared: **You brought Your people Isra'el out of Egypt with signs and wonders, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with great terror. You gave them this Land You had sworn to give their ancestors, a Land flowing with milk and honey (32:20-22).**

**Isra'el's disobedience:** Unfortunately, when **Isra'el** took possession of the Land they did not obey **Your** prophets or follow **Your** Torah; they did not do what **You** commanded them to do. Therefore, **YHVH's** actions turned from salvation to judgment and **He** had no choice but to bring all this disaster on them (32:23).

The pleadings were ignored and the judgment came. **Babylonian** armies captured the **City** and deported the queen mother, 10,000 high government officials, skilled laborers and soldiers of **Jerusalem** into exile in **the second deportation**. Eleven years (597 BC to 586 BC) followed in which the people who were left behind had a measure of personal freedom but were politically subject to **Babylon**. They could have continued decent lives in those conditions, but after several years of restlessness and agitation they plotted to throw off **the Babylonian** yoke by joining an alliance with **Egypt**. It didn't work. The conspiracy provoked severe retaliation from **Babylon**. **The Egyptians** saw that they couldn't profit out of the affair and abandoned the scene. **The Babylonians** hopelessly outclassed **Judah's** militarily. To that point, it was the blackest time in **her** history. Doomsday was just around the corner. In a short time **the City** would be plundered and everyone marched off to exile. There was absolutely no hope at all.

At the time of the prayer **the siege** had been lifted, but it had been in progress some time before **the Babylonian** armies were pulled back to attack **the** advancing **Egyptians**. **Yirmeyahu** gives a picture of the conditions at that time: **See how the siege ramps are built up to take the City. Because of the sword, famine and plague, the City will be given into the hand of the Babylonians who are attacking it. The whole sad story was playing out right before his eyes. Everything has happened just as you said (32:24 NLT).**

**Jeremiah's dilemma:** The point of **Jeremiah's** prayer seems basically to be an expression of wonderment that, given the catastrophe at **Judah's** doorstep, **God** would encourage **Jeremiah** to purchase **land**. The initial **O ADONAI, God** (used elsewhere in **1:6, 4:10** and **14:13**) refers to an expression of uncertainty or puzzlement (not dismay or accusation) that **Yirmeyahu** raises about **the land** purchase. In a time of war and devastation, this peaceful, everyday act seems so absurd! This prayer is not a sign of crisis in the life of **Jeremiah**, but a matter of **Jeremiah's** understanding about what **YHVH** is about in the matter of the land purchase. As **He** did with Moshe (see the commentary on **Exodus At - I Am Has Sent Me To You**), **YHVH** reveals more clearly what **He** is all about in response to being questioned.<sup>335</sup>

**Jeremiah's** prayer ends with a great "yet." **Yet You, O ADONAI, God, have said to me, "Buy the field for money, and call witnesses; even as the City is being turned over to Babylonians (32:25 CJB). Jeremiah** did what at the time appeared to be absolutely crazy because at that very moment the Babylonian army was camped on it! **He himself** was in prison with no prospects for getting out. The enemy was pounding the city walls and about to take the people off to exile. At that moment **Yirmeyahu** bought a field on which **he** would never plant an olive tree, prune a grapevine, or build a house . . . a field that in all probability **he** would never even see.

Why did **Yirmeyahu** do it? **He** did it because **he** was convinced that the troubles **Judah** was experiencing were at the very moment being used by **God** in what would eventually turn out to be the salvation of that land. For **Jeremiah**, it wasn't so much that the Babylonians were camped on that field in Anathoth but that **ADONAI** was using that ground to fulfill **His** promises. Consequently, **the prophet** bought the field as an investment in **Ha'Shem's** grand plan for **Isra'el**.<sup>336</sup>