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Jeremiah Freed
40: 1-6

Jeremiah freed DIG: What "word" comes to Jeremiah (39:11-14)? How did the prophet's prediction about Ramah (31:15) come true in his day? In Jesus' day (Matthew 2:18)? Why does Nebuchadnezzar grasp what no Judean king ever did? Why would Nebuzaradan offer to take care of Jeremiah in Babylon? Why did Yirmeyahu say no?

REFLECT: How do you respond to unexpected setbacks? Have you ever been "freed" by an unbeliever to pursue God's will? If so, how did that feel?

586 BC after the fall of Yerushalayim

Jerusalem had fallen. **The prophet** was therefore vindicated. **YHVH** will not be mocked. And for mocking **God**, **Zion** was destroyed. Life, however, went on. **The third deportation** (**to see link click Gt – In the Thirty-Seventh Year of the Exile Jehoiachin was Released from Prison**) did not empty **the Land**. People still lived there, and because people still lived there, there was a need for order and governance. But a different kind of governance. On which would be loyal, trustworthy and committed to **Babylon**. **She** had the "right" and the power to have **her** own kind of government in **Y'hudah.**

The word came to Jeremiah from ADONAI after Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard had released him at Ramah (40:1a). But no divine word followed! The clause is to be understood as a general introduction to the whole narrative that follows. The actual word comes later in Chapter 42. Ramah is several miles north of **Zion** and served as a point of departure for **the captives** to be taken **to Babylon**. It was the home of **Samuel** and it was also near the place where Jacob buried his favorite wife Rachel.

After **Yirmeyahu** had been released from **the courtyard of the guard (39:14)** in **the City**, **he** was walking down the streets **Yerushalayim** soldiers were gathering

up **the captives**. **The prophet** was mistakenly taken captive again because the soldiers did not recognize **him**. **Although Nebuchadnezzar had ordered that the prophet was to be treated with consideration (39:12) it is easily understood how the command may have been overlooked in the fog of war. He was caught up in a later roundup and bound in chains. However, the mistake was rectified at Ramah. Nebuzaradan had found Jeremiah bound in chains among all the captives from Yerushalayim and Judah who were being carried into exile to Babylon (40:1b).**

Nebuzaradan recognized the sovereignty of **God** in the fall of **Jerusalem**. So the narrative places the theological explanation in the mouth of **the Babylonian** military officer, much like **Mark** placed the final confession of **Messiah** in the mouth of a Roman soldier, **“Surely, this man was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39). When the commander of the guard found Jeremiah, he said to him, “the LORD you God decreed this disaster for this place, and now ADONAI has brought it about; He has done just as He said He would. All this happened because you people sinned against God and did not obey** (Hebrew: *shema*) **Him” (40:2-3).** Once again, the astounding contrast between the spiritual insight of these Gentiles and the spiritual blindness of the Jews. **He** also recognized the reason for the judgment . . . **they** had **sinned against God and did not obey Him. He** was not a believer, but **he** did have spiritual insight.



Nebuzaradan gave **Jeremiah** a choice. But in that choice there was extreme irony. On the one hand, **Yirmeyahu** was entirely vindicated. On the other hand, to be so well treated by the occupying force can hardly be a popular outcome. It is the treatment given to someone who has become a traitor. Consequently, in the very moment of **his** vindication, **the prophet** is marked as a traitor by **the priests** and

the false **prophets he** had condemned **(26:11** and **38:4)**. **He** said: **Today I am freeing you from the chains on your wrists. Come with me to Babylon, if you like, and I will look after you; but if you do not want to, then don't come** and stay in **Judah (40:4a).**

Look, the whole country lies before you; go wherever you please" (40:4b). This phraseology is very similar to what Abram said to Lot overlooking the plain of the Jordan toward Zoar, and what **Abimelech**, king of Gerar, said to Abraham at Gerar, in the land of the Philistines near the Egyptian border: **So Abram said to Lot, "The whole countryside is open to you. Take your choice of any section of the land you want and we will separate. If you want the land to the left, then I'll take the land on the right. If you prefer the land on the right, then I'll go to the left" (Genesis 13:9 NLT).**

Abimelech said, "Behold, my land is before you; settle wherever you please" (Genesis 20:15 NASB). Abraham could **go to Gedaliah at Mizpah**, a few miles further north of **Ramah**, or **go to Babylon** with **Nebuzaradan**.

However, before Jeremiah turned to go, Nebuzaradan said: **Go back (shuwb) to Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon has appointed over the towns of Judah, and live with him among the people, or go anywhere else you please (40:5a). Jeremiah** did not respond verbally. What is being said here is that **Jeremiah** did not **return (shuwb)** an answer. **Nebuzaradan** took **his** silence (**he** did not want to insult **the commander of the imperial guard**) to mean **he** didn't want **to go**. So after a while . . . **Nebuzaradan** said: All right, then **go back to Gedaliah.**

Yirmeyahu is not a traitor. **He** chose poverty in **the Land** rather than wealth in **Babylon**. **He** did not leave **his** people voluntarily.

Nebuzaradan provided for **Yirmeyahu**. **Then the commander gave him provisions and a present and let him go (40:5b). So Jeremiah went to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah** (the most northern city in **Y'hudah**) **and stayed with him among the people who were left behind in the field (40:6). Jeremiah did not return to Jerusalem because, no doubt, he felt that his place was by the side of Gedaliah to help him in his difficult task of governorship over a stricken land.**