

הפטרת בא

HAFTARAH FOR BO

JEREMIAH 46:13-28

This *haftarah* is part of a series of prophecies against Egypt that begin with Jer. 46:2. They constitute the first group of Jeremiah's pronouncements against foreign nations, collected in chapters 46-51. The anti-Egyptian oracles in the *haftarah* (46:13-26), varying in content and in style, are followed by two positive oracles about Israel in verses 27-28. Jeremiah's doom oracles against Egypt are given a historical setting in verses 13 and 25-26, where King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon is identified as the avenger. The *parashah* also presents a polarity of Egyptian doom and Israelite salvation.

Following the taunting proclamations of the Egyptian call to arms and the ensuing flight and fear (46:14-16), the assertive voice of the Lord, proclaiming doom and desolation, provides a counterpoint. This contrast is underscored by the mocking epithet for "Pharaoh king of Egypt: / 'Braggart who let the hour go by'" (v. 17). In contradistinction, God "the King, / Whose name is LORD of Hosts" swears by His own being that the words of doom "shall . . . come to pass" (v. 18). The aura of inevitability is reinforced by the repeated use of the Hebrew particle *ki*, with the sense of "for" and "surely" (vv. 14-15, 18-19, 21-23).

In these oracles, "The LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel" is the universal Lord of history, inflicting punishment "on Egypt, her gods, and her kings"

(v. 25). Total destruction will not be the outcome, however, because God's final word to the Egyptians prophesies their eventual restoration (v. 26).

The concluding oracles in verses 27 and 28 of the *haftarah* breathe another spirit. The prophet repeatedly exhorts the Israelites to overcome fear and loss though assurances that the Lord will deliver them from their land of captivity (v. 27). They will receive judgment in proper measure, without unilateral doom (v. 28). One senses here a consolation for the dismayed. The promise of calm and quiet is not yet a reality.

RELATION OF THE HAFTARAH TO THE PARASHAH

The theme of Israelite servitude in Egypt in the *parashah* is counterpoised with a promise of Egypt's destruction in the *haftarah* (vv. 14-24). The plague of locusts described in the *parashah* (Exod. 10:3-20) is echoed in Jeremiah's prophecy as a metaphor for the overwhelmingly numerous armies that will descend on Egypt in its hour of doom (Jer. 46:23). Nebuchadnezzar's "coming" in judgment against Pharaoh (v. 13) responds to Moses' ancient "coming" in supplication before Pharaoh (Exod. 10:1). God will wreak judgment on the gods of Egypt (Jer. 46:25), as He declared long ago ("I will mete out punishments to all the gods of Egypt," Exod. 12:12).

46 ¹³The word which the LORD spoke to the prophet Jeremiah about the coming of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to attack the land of Egypt:

¹⁴Declare in Egypt, proclaim in Migdol,

מו ¹³הַדְּבַר אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה אֶל-יְרֵמְיָהוּ הַנָּבִיא לְבֹא נְבוּכַדְרֶאצַּר מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל לְהַכּוֹת אֶת-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

¹⁴הַגִּידוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם וּבְהַשְׁמִיעוּ בְּמִגְדוֹל

Proclaim in Noph and Tahpanhes!

Say: Take your posts and stand ready,
For the sword has devoured all around you!

15 Why are your stalwarts swept away?

They did not stand firm,

For the LORD thrust them down;

16 He made many stumble,

They fell over one another.

They said:

"Up! Let us return to our people,

To the land of our birth,

Because of the deadly sword."

17 There they called Pharaoh king of Egypt:

"Braggart who let the hour go by."

18 As I live—declares the King,

Whose name is LORD of Hosts—

As surely as Tabor is among the mountains

And Carmel is by the sea,

So shall this come to pass.

19 Equip yourself for exile,

Fair Egypt, you who dwell secure!

For Noph shall become a waste,

Desolate, without inhabitants.

20 Egypt is a handsome heifer—

Jeremiah 46:14. in Migdol . . . Noph and Tahpanhes The Egyptian place-names have been hebraized. Migdol is a Semitic name meaning "Tower." It was used for several frontier towns in the eastern delta. Noph is a corruption of Moph (see Hos. 9:6) or Memphis (Saqqara, in the lower Nile). Tahpanhes is derived from two words, meaning "fortress of the Nubian" (Tel Daphne).

16. Up! Let us return to our people This refers either to the mercenaries or to the foreign traders who flee from Egypt.

17. Braggart who let the hour go by The Hebrew phrase is difficult. The word translated "braggart" (*sha-on*, literally "uproar, tumult") is

וְהַשְׁמִיעוּ בְּנֵי וְכַתְּחַפְּנָחַס

אָמְרוּ הַתִּיַּצְבּ וְהִכֵּן לָךְ

כִּי-אָכְלָה חֶרֶב סְבִיבֶיךָ:

15 מִדּוֹעַ נִסְחַף אֲבִירֶיךָ

לֹא עָמְדוּ

כִּי יְהוָה הִדָּפוּ:

16 הִרְבָּה בּוֹשָׁל

גַּם-נָפַל אִישׁ אֶל-רֵעֵהוּ

וַיֹּאמְרוּ

קוּמָה! וְנִשְׁבָּה אֶל-עַמָּנוּ

וְאֶל-אֶרֶץ מוֹלַדְתֵּנוּ

מִפְּנֵי חֶרֶב הַיּוֹנָה:

17 קָרְאוּ שֵׁם פֶּרַעַה מֶלֶךְ-מִצְרַיִם

שֶׁאוֹן הַעֲבִיר הַמוֹעֵד:

18 חִי-אֲנִי נָא-הַמֶּלֶךְ

יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ

כִּי כְתוּבָה בְּהָרִים

וּכְכָרְמֵל בָּיִם

יָבוֹא:

19 כְּלִי גֹלָה עָשִׂי לָךְ

יוֹשֶׁבֶת בַּת-מִצְרַיִם

כִּי-נָתַן לְשִׁמָּה תְהִיָּה

וְנִצַּחְתָּ מֵאִין יוֹשֵׁב: ס

20 עֲגִלָּה יִפֶּה פִּיהָ מִצְרַיִם

understood as "loudmouth." The Targum understands the term more literally, referring to Pharaoh as one who made a big tumult. The noun can also mean "desolation" or "destruction." On this basis, Radak dubbed Nebuchadrezzar "king of Destruction."

18. As surely as Tabor . . . / So shall this come to pass The simile is puzzling. As rendered here, the analogy suggests that as surely as Tabor is among the mountains the event will come to pass (Rashi and Radak). Alternatively, the verb ("will come") refers to the advent of Nebuchadrezzar (i.e., "he shall come").

20. Egypt is a handsome heifer This meta-

A gadfly from the north is coming, coming!

²¹The mercenaries, too, in her midst

Are like stall-fed calves;

They too shall turn tail,

Flee as one, and make no stand.

Their day of disaster is upon them,

The hour of their doom.

²²She shall rustle away like a snake

As they come marching in force;

They shall come against her with axes,

Like hewers of wood.

²³They shall cut down her forest

—declares the LORD—

Though it cannot be measured;

For they are more numerous than locusts,

And cannot be counted.

²⁴Fair Egypt shall be shamed,

Handed over to the people of the north.

²⁵The LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, has said: I will inflict punishment on Amon of No and on Pharaoh—on Egypt, her gods, and her kings—on Pharaoh and all who rely on him. ²⁶I will deliver them into the hands of those who seek to kill them, into the hands of King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon and into the hands of his subjects. But afterward she shall be inhabited again as in former days, declares the LORD.

phor may have been chosen to allude to the Egyptian bull god, Apis.

from the north The reference to an enemy from the north here and in verse 24 is unspecified. Elsewhere in Jeremiah the designation of an enemy from the northland is similarly vague (see 3:18, 6:22, 10:22, 16:15). Only in 605 B.C.E. does the prophet identify this enemy with Babylon (Jer. 25:9).

25. inflict punishment Hebrew: *poked*. This summary statement is linked to “their day of disaster” (*et p’kudatam*) in verse 21. The verb *poked* has the sense of inflicting punishment for wrongdoing. It is used that way in the Decalogue (Exod. 20:5) and in the list of divine attributes (Exod.

²⁵ אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הִנְנִי
פֹקֵד אֶל-אֲמוֹן מִנְּאָ וְעַל-פָּרֹעַה וְעַל-
מִצְרַיִם וְעַל-אֱלֹהֵיהֶּ וְעַל-מַלְכֵיהֶּ וְעַל-
פָּרֹעַה וְעַל הַבְּטָחִים בּוֹ: ²⁶ וְנָתַתִּים בְּיַד
מִבְקָשֵׁי נַפְשָׁם וּבְיַד נְבוּכַדְרֶאצַּר מֶלֶךְ-
בָּבֶל וּבְיַד-עַבְדָּיו וְאַחֲרֵי-כֵן תִּשְׁכֵּן כִּימֵי-
קִדְּם נְאֻם-יְהוָה: ס

34:7). Significantly, the phrase “I will not leave you unpunished” (*nakkei lo anakkeka*) in the last verse of the *haftarah* echoes the phrase in Exod. 34:7 which declares that God “does not remit all punishment” (*nakkei lo y’nakkeh*).

Amon Amon, or Amon Re, was the imperial god of Egypt. The chief center of his worship was the Temple of Karnak in Thebes.

No Thebes; *niwt* (The City) in Egyptian. It was the chief city of Upper Egypt, starting with the Middle Kingdom (2000 B.C.E.). Jeremiah lived during the time when the center of government shifted from Thebes to Sais, a city in the upper delta. Even so, Thebes and its Temple of Karnak remained prominent.

יִרְמְיָה מו
קִרְץ מִצְפּוֹן בָּא בָּא:
גַּם-שִׁכְרִיָּה בְּקִרְבָּהּ
בְּעֻגְלֵי מִרְבֵּק
כִּי-גַם-הִמָּה הִפְנוּ
נִסּוּ וַיִּחְדְּדוּ לֹא עָמְדוּ
כִּי יוֹם אִידָם בָּא עֲלֵיהֶם
עַת פְּקֻדָּתָם:
קוֹלָהּ בְּנֹחַשׁ יִלָּךְ
כִּי-בַחִיל יֵלְכוּ
וּבְקִרְדָּמוֹת בָּאוּ לָהּ
כַּחֲטָבֵי עֵצִים:
כָּרְתוּ וַיַּעֲרָה
נְאֻם-יְהוָה
כִּי לֹא יִחָקֵר
כִּי רַבּוֹ מֵאֲרָבָה
וְאֵין לָהֶם מִסְפָּר:
הַבִּישָׁה בֶּת-מִצְרַיִם
נִתְּנָה בְּיַד עַם-צִפּוֹן:

27But you,
Have no fear, My servant Jacob,
Be not dismayed, O Israel!
I will deliver you from far away,
Your folk from their land of captivity;
And Jacob again shall have calm
And quiet, with none to trouble him.
28But you, have no fear,
My servant Jacob

—declares the LORD—

For I am with you.
I will make an end of all the nations
Among which I have banished you,
But I will not make an end of you!
I will not leave you unpunished,
But I will chastise you in measure.

27 וְאַתָּה
אֶל-תִּירָא עַבְדִּי יַעֲקֹב
וְאֶל-תַּחַת יִשְׂרָאֵל
כִּי הִנְנִי מוֹשִׁיעַךָ מֵרְחוֹק
וְאֶת-יֹרְעֶךָ מֵאֶרֶץ שָׁבוִים
וְשָׁב יַעֲקֹב * וְשָׁקֵט
וְשָׁאֲנוּ וְאִין מַחְרִיד: ס
28 אַתָּה אֶל-תִּירָא
עַבְדִּי יַעֲקֹב
נֹאמֵר-יְהוָה
כִּי אִתְּךָ אֲנִי
כִּי אַעֲשֶׂה כָלֹה בְּכָל-הַגּוֹיִם
אֲשֶׁר הִדְחֵתִּיךָ שָׁמָּה
וְאַתָּה לֹא-אַעֲשֶׂה כָלֹה
וְיִסְרֹתֶיךָ לְמִשְׁפָּט
וְנִקְּהָ לֹא אֲנַקֶּךָ: ס

v. 27. מלא ר

27-28. *Have no fear ... have no fear* These oracles exhort the people to courage and hope. The same usage is found in prophecies addressed to the nation in exile (Isa. 43:1, 44:2).

Jerusalem was the chief city of the Kingdom of Judah, and the Temple of the Lord was in the city. The city was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. The Temple was destroyed, and the people were taken into exile. The prophecy of Jeremiah 46:27-28 is a message of hope to the people of Judah, assuring them that they will be delivered from their land of captivity and that Jacob will have calm and quiet. The prophecy is addressed to the people of Judah, who are in a state of despair and fear. The message is one of courage and hope, assuring them that they will be delivered from their land of captivity and that Jacob will have calm and quiet. The prophecy is a message of hope to the people of Judah, assuring them that they will be delivered from their land of captivity and that Jacob will have calm and quiet.