

Creative Nonfiction is a handy portal for entering into an obscure or difficult-to-appreciate historical event, and thereby understand and appreciate it in a new and greater way.

The following series of articles is an attempt to illuminate a passage of the Bible that most people are unaware of. It starts with a front page **newspaper article** stating the facts (in a somewhat biased way) of the incident, followed by three very different **letters to the editor** (which should balance out some of the bias). These are then followed by a **remembrance** of the perpetrator of the events, then things conclude by a **summary from above**.

May you be drawn into this historical event and be motivated to explore it further. Bible references are included in brackets.

God bless, Reggie H.

Jerusalem Post

Freedom for (almost) All

After many long months of total lock-down, the city gates were open yesterday to the relief of the entire population of Jerusalem. The rumors of help from Egypt would seem to be confirmed as the only possible reason for Babylon to drop their siege and depart the city. This help from our southern neighbor will certainly come at a cost, but such philosophical thoughts were pushed aside as the population rushed out of the city walls in a desperate search for food and water. Some of the city's residents, unfortunately, were trampled underfoot at the city gates and did not survive to enjoy the long sought freedom. But apart from this, the citizen's behaved lawfully as they scavenged through neglected gardens and raided fruit trees for anything nourishing and edible. The gates were again closed at sundown and the residents enjoyed a peaceful night.

In a related incident, one criminal added to his long record-sheet of arrests and beatings and imprisonments. It seems that the cantankerous, old prophet Jeremiah was caught trying to leave the city in the hopes of catching up with his friends, the Babylonians. For years now, this renegade priest and prophet has been predicting doom for our beloved city and temple at the hands of these enemies. When the old man saw them departing it must have been too much for him to bear. But he was apprehended by the alert guardsman named Irijah Ben Shelemiah.

The clever old man attempted to argue his way out of the arrest with some ridiculous explanation about just wanting to see some land he recently bought. A wire must be loose in his head because no one would believe such an outlandish claim. A prophet of doom buying real estate in a doomed land! What will this eccentric think of next! The argument was solved when Irijah took the perpetrator to the royal officials and they had him whipped and beaten and imprisoned. Such treatment has done little in the past to deter the prophet, but the prison he is in now is the worst of the bunch. He won't be causing any more trouble for a while. [Jer. 37:11-16]

Letters to the Editor (two days later)

Letter #1

Let him rot

Dear editor,

Please let me express my opinion in your newspaper. That traitor in Jonathon's house (the worst prison in the land) can just rot there forever. Yes, that man Jeremiah speaks only poison and doesn't deserve to live. As a court recorder I want to take this opportunity to list some of his crimes. Surely all can agree that he deserves to die.

1. As far back as the reign of king Josiah this man was saying our nation would be completely destroyed. These are his own obscene words: "The enemy will break open the graves of the kings and officials of Judah, and the graves of the priests, prophets, and common people of Jerusalem. They will spread out their bones on the ground before the sun, moon, and stars -- the gods my people have loved, served, and worshiped. Their bones will not be gathered up again or buried. but will be scattered on the ground like manure." [Jer. 8:1-2] Who in his right mind would compare the bones of our nobles to manure?
2. He compared our nation to his own dirty underwear [Jer. 13:1-9] and a perfectly good clay pot that he smashed in the eyes of all [Jer. 19:10-11].
3. He has been saying that Babylon would deport us all out of our land for a period of 70 long years [Jer. 25:11].
4. He wore a cow's yoke around his neck for months and spoke to the ambassadors of our allied countries, telling us all to forfeit our sovereignty and bow down to King Nebuchadnezzar [Jer. 27:1-13]. This is outright treason! He then went public with it and was allowed to live and further spread his propaganda.

5. He has repeatedly stated his belief that our glorious temple will be destroyed and the "City of David" will be destroyed [Jer. 26:1-9]. Surely we noble citizens should not have to put up with such pessimistic, cynical, contrary preaching. Does he even know what he is saying?

My considered opinion is this, let this troublemaker **rot in jail** till the day he dies. Then proclaim a national holiday.

Signed,
Unhappy court recorder

Letter #2

Loose wires

I am writing in regard to the news article in your paper where it states that my cousin, Jeremiah Ben Hilkiyah, has some wires loose in his head for saying that he recently bought land and wanted to see it.

I, Hanamel Ben Shallum, want to set the record straight and also call on you (the Jerusalem Post) to do a better job of investigative reporting in the future so as to get your facts straight. My cousin was indeed speaking the truth. The person he bought land from was me. I approached him at the court of the king's guard where he was held prisoner and asked if he would buy the land since he has the right of first ownership. I was surprised that he had been expecting me and was prepared to buy it without further explanation. He paid 17 shekels of silver. We signed all the necessary paperwork and the transaction was completed in the eyes of official witnesses [Jer. 9-12]. The land is in Anathoth, only a few kilometers away from Jerusalem. Had you or the royal officials simply investigated his claims the record is there for all to see.

I do, though, want to comment more on my cousin. We as his family are very ashamed of his behavior over these past decades. He is so different than all the rest of us. He does all sorts of crazy things and doesn't care what people think. He is guided by one thing and one thing only – the word and instructions of his God. There were times when our close relatives truly wanted him dead,[11:18-21] but their plots all failed and we have all come to pretty well ignore him any more. And this headache won't last much longer. He is old. He never married. Has no children. And even the land he bought we come back to me again when he dies.

Thank you,
H.B.S.

Letter #3

Most Loyal Subject

I take exception to your front page article last Tuesday and its strongly biased description against the greatest of men, Jeremiah, the true prophet of the Living God of Israel. Yes. I may be a foreigner, but I have spent decades studying the unique religion and lifestyle of you Jews and I must say that you are truly a most privileged people. Your history is full of miracles that no idol could ever perform, yet the majority population seeks only a life of ease and comfort, while true spirituality is non-existent.

This is what makes Jeremiah so great. He is **in daily touch with the Living God** and speaks with authority the message that **you all hate to hear**. There is none more loyal to Jerusalem than Jeremiah. He is the only one willing to stick his neck out to try and save the city. But none of you are willing to heed his call for repentance. This is the one way to save your city and your nation. Rather than take note of this truly great man you have subjected him to ridicule, humiliation, beatings, imprisonments, and yet he continues to speak God's truth for the good of all you Jews.

I want to state it for the record that Jeremiah, the prophet of God, is the most loyal of all the king's subjects. He rises above everyone else in his efforts to save Jerusalem and Judah. He does this for the good of you all.

Respectfully yours,
E.M. [Jer. 38:7-13]

Jeremiah's memoirs

Beaten and arrested again

Perhaps I should have known I wouldn't get very far. Perhaps I was still angry over this whole "landowner" incident with God. After all, it was God himself who forbid me to marry and have children – so why should I buy some land? It was God who put me on public record time and time again saying that Babylon would destroy this place and take us all captive. Then, by telling me to buy the land He has made me look stupid, irrational, and incompetent in the eyes of all. "There's that big-mouthed Jeremiah contradicting everything he ever said!"

There wasn't any real need for me to see the land I bought, but the walk through the open spaces to Anathoth seemed like a good change from the cramped-ness and hostility of the city. I wish I was immune to the pain by now, but this flogging was extra

bad. I'd like to complain to my God, but he sure hasn't been sympathetic in the past [Jer. 12:2, 5-7; 15:15-19]. But my sores must certainly be infected in this damp, infested hole. Fever will set in soon. I won't last long [Jer. 37:16, 20].

Penning off,
Jeremiah Ben Hilkiyah

A word from Heaven

I have asked a lot from my servant, Jeremiah. Desperate times call for desperate measures. He had good reason (humanly speaking) to be upset when I told him to publicly purchase his cousin's land. He has no use for it: He will be wandering and homeless for the rest of this life. I have forbidden him to marry [Jer. 16:1-4], so he has no one to pass it down to. To the eyes of all the people, this purchase makes no sense. However, Jeremiah needs to know, all my people need to know, that I AM NOT DONE WITH ISREAL AND JERUSALEM. That the greatness of the past is NOTHING compared to the greatness that is yet to come [Jer. 32:36-44; 33:6-9, 14-26]! I know what I am doing!

I left the choice of leaving the city up to him. I could have prevented anyone from recognizing him, but I chose not to interfere. He has been so loyal to me and I wish the suffering could end here, but there are even darker days ahead. He has learned to look beyond his personal suffering to see the even greater suffering that I endure [Jer. 14:17; 8:21-9:2].

As a result of his faithfulness, the account of his obedience and his words will last through all of time, and many will line up in heaven to meet him. It is **he** who has announced the purpose and length of my people's captivity [Jer. 24:4-7; 25:11-12]; it is **he** who announced the New Covenant [Jer. 31:31-34; 32:40-41]; and it is **he** to whom my Son while on earth will be frequently compared [Mat. 16:14].

I have prepared for Jeremiah, my faithful servant, an eternity of reward. He has surely earned the words, "Well done, my good and faithful servant." And why not, at the resurrection of the dead I will give this very portion of prime land to my faithful servant to be enjoyed by him and his multitude of spiritual offspring forever [Jer. 32:40-41].