

Series: Jeremiah – A Question And Decision

Chapters 40-44



Jeremiah mourns in the ruins of Jerusalem by Horace Vernet [1844]. Jeremiah was in his mid-50s when Jerusalem was destroyed.

Jeremiah began his ministry at age 17 probably around the year 627 BC. This was in the middle of the reign of King Josiah 640-609 BC. When Jerusalem falls in 587 or 586 BC, he is in his mid to late 50s. The events of Jeremiah 40-44 take place in a period of around 5 years following the destruction of Jerusalem.

“A Decision on the Border of Egypt”

Jeremiah 43:4-10



Chapter 43 of Jeremiah takes place at the border city of Tahpanhes called by the Greeks “Daphne”. It was staffed by Greek mercenaries. Built by Pharaoh Psamtik [664-610]. to protect against the Assyrians but failed. In 588 BC Pharaoh Apries, would lead an army primarily of Mercenaries from here in an attempt to bring relief to Jerusalem during the Babylonian siege. His army refused to engage in battle and retreated.

Pharaoh Apries [589-570 BC]
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Nov. 13, 2022

“A Decision on the Border of Egypt”

Jeremiah 43:4-10



This had been as Jeremiah had predicted to King Zedekiah who had placed faith in his Egyptian alliance. [Jeremiah 37:7]. In Deuteronomy 17:16 God forbid the leader of the nation of Israel to attempt to return to Egypt. Here the commanders of Judah' militias in their panic were attempting to do that very thing.

Pharaoh Apries [589-570 BC]
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Jeremiah 43:4-10 [ESV]

4 So Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces and all the people did not obey the voice of the LORD, to remain in the land of Judah. **5** But Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces took all the remnant of Judah who had returned to live in the land of Judah from all the nations to which they had been driven — **6** the men, the women, the children, the princesses, and every person whom Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan; also Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch the son of Neriah. **7** And they came into the land of Egypt, for they did not obey the voice of the LORD. And they arrived at Tahpanhes.”

Jeremiah 43:4-10 [ESV]

8 Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah in Tahpanhes: **9** "Take in your hands large stones and hide them in the mortar in the pavement that is at the entrance to Pharaoh's palace in Tahpanhes, in the sight of the men of Judah, **10** and say to them, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will set his throne above these stones that I have hidden, and he will spread his royal canopy over them.'

“A Decision on the Border of Egypt”

Jeremiah 43:4-10



Pharaoh Apries ruled Egypt when the Jewish refugees arrive at Tahpanhes. The fact that Jeremiah could break up the brick floor of a royal platform and bury large stones under the bricks indicates the weakness of the Egyptian border guard. Apries seems to have help fulfill this prophesy of Jeremiah 18 years later. While Nebuchadnezzar would not hazard another attempt to invade Egypt. But he provided logistical and financial support from Tahpanhes.

Pharaoh Apries [589-570 BC]
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“A Decision on the Border of Egypt”

Jeremiah 43:4-10



Pharaoh Apries failures militarily led to wide-spread insurrection encouraged by the Babylonians. In 570 Apries fled to Babylon during a coup by his main general Amasis who seized the throne. The Babylonians then financed and equipped an army to return Apries to the throne in 567. Apries led raiding parties into Egypt. Apries was eventually captured and executed but his raids had done lasting

Pharaoh Apries [589-570 BC] damage to the stability of Egypt.

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Jeremiah 36:5-10 *1-19 [ESV]

605 BC [Battle of Carchemish] 604 [likely official mourning for hostages taken to Babylon].

5 And Jeremiah ordered Baruch, saying, "I am banned from going to the house of the LORD, 6 so you are to go, and on a day of fasting in the hearing of all the people in the LORD's house you shall read the words of the LORD from the scroll that you have written at my dictation. You shall read them also in the hearing of all the men of Judah who come out of their cities. 7 It may be that their plea for mercy will come before the LORD, and that every one will turn from his evil way, for great is the anger and wrath that the LORD has pronounced against this people."

Jeremiah 36:5-10 *1-19 [ESV]

8 And Baruch the son of Neriah did all that Jeremiah the prophet ordered him about reading from the scroll the words of the LORD in the LORD's house.

9 In the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, in the ninth month, all the people in Jerusalem and all the people who came from the cities of Judah to Jerusalem proclaimed a fast before the LORD. 10 Then, in the hearing of all the people, Baruch read the words of Jeremiah from the scroll, in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the secretary, which was in the upper court, at the entry of the New Gate of the LORD's house.

“A Decision on the Border of Egypt”

Jeremiah 43:4-10

Baruch was the son of a prominent Jewish noble Neriah and the brother of Seraiah, who was an advisor to King Zedekiah also a close friend of Jeremiah. It is strange that such a man would risk so much.

Baruch the Scribe of Jeremiah
by Gustave Dore [1832-1883].



“A Decision on the Border of Egypt”

Jeremiah 43:4-10

Baruch would spend at least 19 years in close association with Jeremiah. He would risk his own life to do the bidding of Jeremiah in 605. King Jehoiakim had had prophets executed for prophesying against him.

Baruch the Scribe of Jeremiah
by Gustave Dore [1832-1883].



Jeremiah 45:1-5 [ESV] 605 BC

1 The word that Jeremiah the prophet spoke to Baruch the son of Neriah, when he wrote these words in a book at the dictation of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah: 2 "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to you, O Baruch: 3 You said, 'Woe is me! For the LORD has added sorrow to my pain. I am weary with my groaning, and I find no rest.' 4 Thus shall you say to him, Thus says the LORD: Behold, what I have built I am breaking down, and what I have planted I am plucking up — that is, the whole land. 5 And do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not, for behold, I am bringing disaster upon all flesh, declares the LORD. But I will give you your life as a prize of war in all places to which you may go."

“A Decision on the Border of Egypt”

Jeremiah 43:4-10

God’s message to Baruch was that God would watch over him even in the midst of the chaos. We sometimes live in chaotic circumstances and God promises to watch over us when we choose to act in faith.

Baruch the Scribe of Jeremiah
by Gustave Dore [1832-1883].



“A Decision on the Border of Egypt”

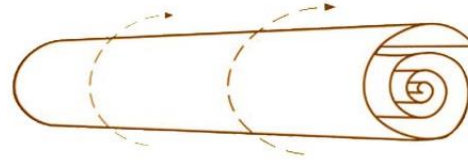
Jeremiah 43:4-10

Elephantine Marriage Contract 409 BC

Jewish Aramaic Persian era

How papyrus legal scrolls were made

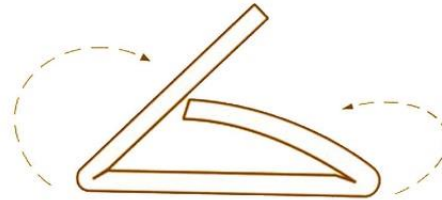
Rolled



Flattened



Folded in 3rd



Strung and
clay stamped
to make seal



Obverse (inside)



Reverse (outside)



Endorsement visible
when folded

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This is how legal documents were handled in the centuries before and after Jeremiah.

Nov. 13, 2022

Jeremiah 32:8-12 *6-44 [ESV] 588 BC

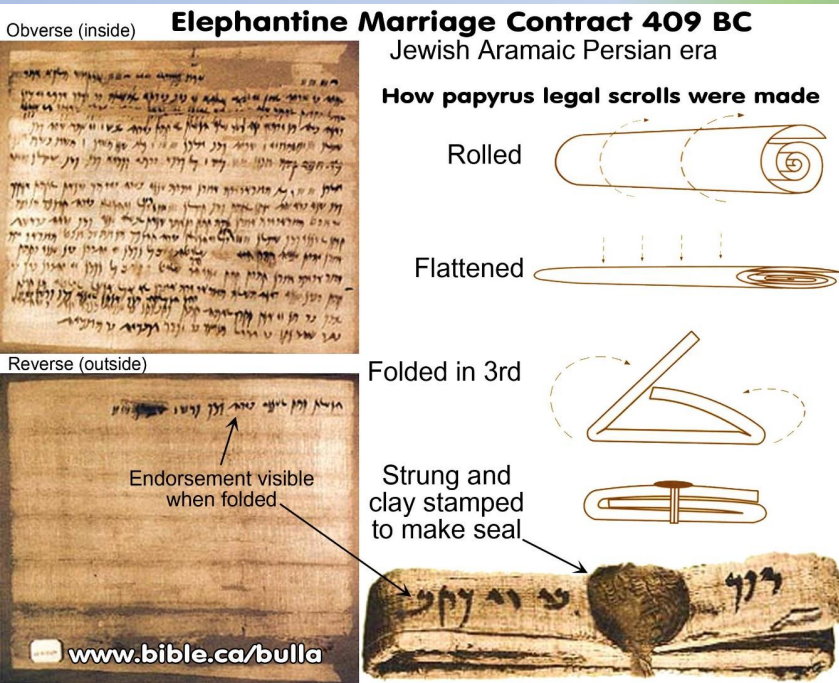
8 Then Hanamel my cousin came to me in the court of the guard, in accordance with the word of the LORD, and said to me, 'Buy my field that is at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, for the right of possession and redemption is yours; buy it for yourself.' Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD. 9 "And I bought the field at Anathoth from Hanamel my cousin, and weighed out the money to him, seventeen shekels of silver. 10 I signed the deed, sealed it, got witnesses, and weighed the money on scales.

Jeremiah 32:8-12 *6-44 [ESV] 588 BC

11 Then I took the sealed deed of purchase, containing the terms and conditions and the open copy. 12 And I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah son of Mahseiah, in the presence of Hanamel my cousin, in the presence of the witnesses who signed the deed of purchase, and in the presence of all the Judeans who were sitting in the court of the guard.

“A Decision on the Border of Egypt”

Jeremiah 43:4-10

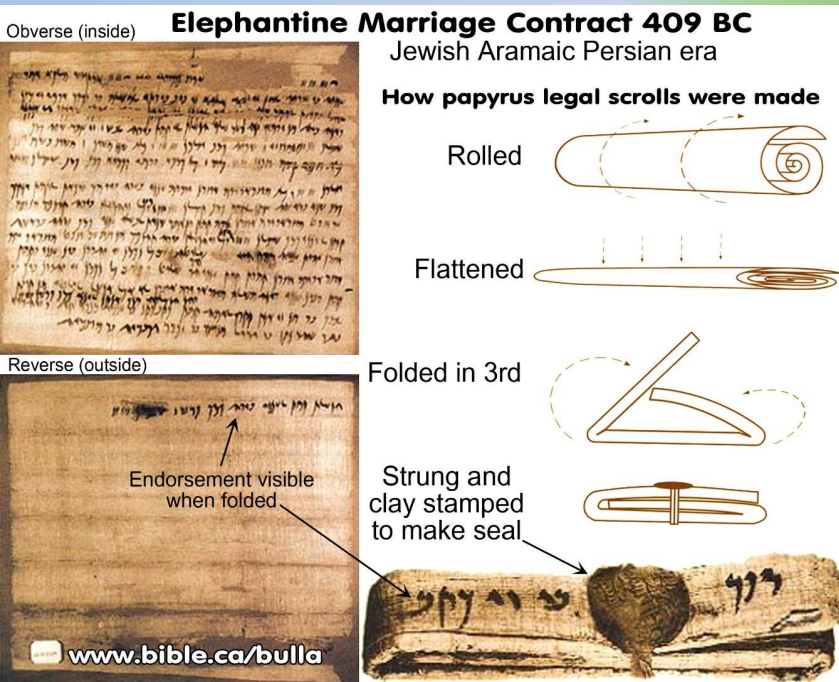


This seemed like a silly action, at the time the Babylonian army was entrenched on the very ground that Jeremiah had just bought to the northwest of Jerusalem. His cousin had sold this land in Anathoth due to panic. The siege ramps were being constructed, the situation seemed hopeless.

This is how legal documents were handled in the centuries before and after Jeremiah.

“A Decision on the Border of Egypt”

Jeremiah 43:4-10

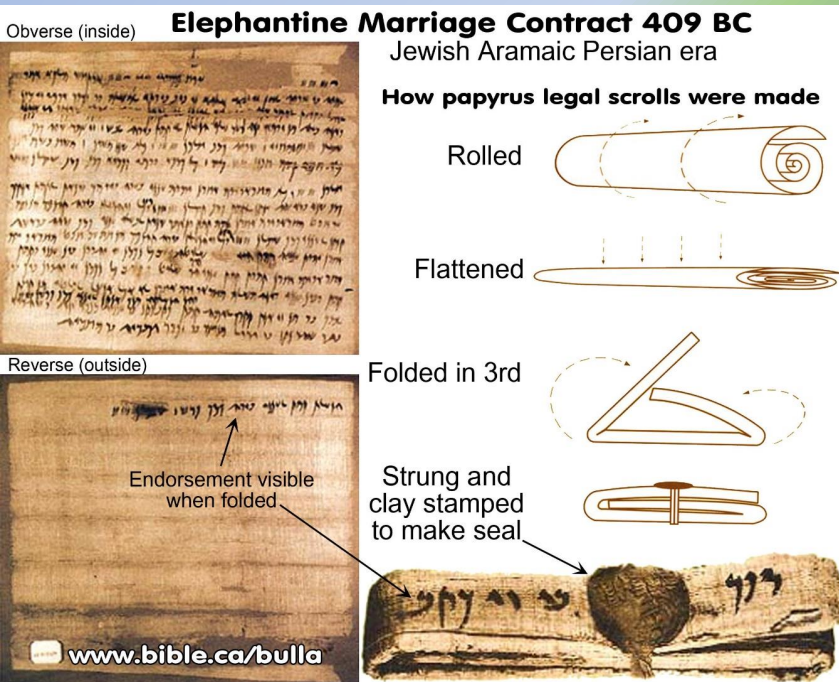


Baruch was instructed to preserve the deed in a clay pot to ensure its endurance through out the 70 years of Exile. The promise was that land would again be bought and sold in Judah. If people were willing to trust God in the chaos He re-establish Judah’s future. Jeremiah questions God at the end of this chapter.

This is how legal documents were handled in the centuries before and after Jeremiah.

“A Decision on the Border of Egypt”

Jeremiah 43:4-10



Perhaps it is this promise given in the midst of the siege that Baruch held onto and was so opposed to the plans of the militia captains to flee to Egypt. In their panic they would doom their descendants not to be part of God’s future for Judah.

This is how legal documents were handled in the centuries before and after Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 51:59-61 [ESV] 594 BC

59 The word that Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the son of Neriah, son of Mahseiah, when he went with Zedekiah king of Judah to Babylon, in the fourth year of his reign. Seraiah was the quartermaster.

60 Jeremiah wrote in a book all the disaster that should come upon Babylon, all these words that are written concerning Babylon.

61 And Jeremiah said to Seraiah: "When you come to Babylon, see that you read all these words,

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Jeremiah 43:4-10



A cuneiform tablet from Babylon recounting the conquest and deportation of king Jehoiachin and the elevation of his uncle Zedekiah in 597 BC.

King Zedekiah was summoned to Babylon in 597, Seraiah, Baruch’s brother was to accompany him. There he was to read a prophecy against Babylon then throw the prophecy in the Euphrates river near Babylon to give a sense of urgency to the prophecy. Seraiah did this. Later he would go into Exile with Zedekiah but seems to have gained favor in the Babylonian court.

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Jeremiah 43:4-10

Seraiah’s acceptance in Babylon was probably why Baruch was not trusted by the militia commanders.

A willingness to follow God’s directive even in the face of opposition and fear will win the respect of people. Jesus would instruct his disciples not to fear what men could do to them.



A cuneiform tablet from Babylon recounting the conquest and deportation of king Jehoiachin and the elevation of his uncle Zedekiah in 597 BC.

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Isaiah 8:11-14 [ESV]

11 For the LORD spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying: 12 "Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. 13 But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. 14 And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.


“A Decision on the Border of Egypt”

Jeremiah 43:4-10


Obverse (inside) **Elephantine Marriage Contract 409 BC**
Jewish Aramaic Persian era

How papyrus legal scrolls were made

Rolled 

Flattened 

Folded in 3rd 

Strung and clay stamped to make seal 

Reverse (outside) 
Endorsement visible when folded

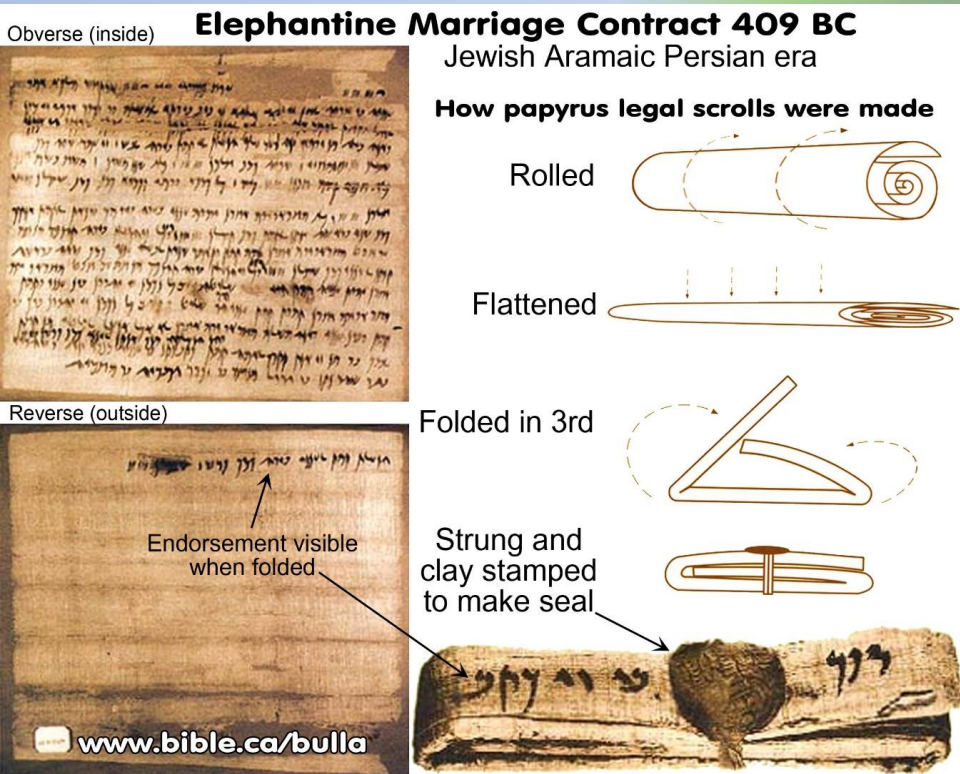
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This Jewish marriage contract dates to nearly 180 years after Jeremiah 43. It was found on the island of Elephantine at a Jewish settlement over 600 miles up the Nile from Tahpanhes. Once the Jewish refugees fled to Egypt they had to keep running.

This is how legal documents were handled in the centuries before and after Jeremiah.

“A Decision on the Border of Egypt”

Jeremiah 43:4-10



In 404 this Jewish settlement disappeared. The Egyptians threw off the yoke of the Persians who protected the Jewish refugees and pushed the Jewish people further up the Nile. It would not be until after Christ’s coming that the descendants of these Jewish refugees would be heard from again.

This is how legal documents were handled in the centuries before and after Jeremiah.

Hebrews 10:35-11:2 [ESV]

10:35 Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. 37 For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; 38 but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." 39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

11:1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

2 For by it the people of old received their commendation.

“A Decision on the Border of Egypt”

Jeremiah 43:4-10

Often, we run away from our fears because we lack faith in God’s ability to deal with circumstances or evil in the world. The writer of Hebrews describes this struggle of faith. The most destructive part of panic in the face of faith is that what we fear usually follows us and we must continue to run.



Jeremiah by Michelangelo

“A Decision on the Border of Egypt”

Jeremiah 43:4-10

Jeremiah counsels the Jewish commanders to face the fear that they are experiencing and trust in the promise of God in the midst of their misgivings.

Jeremiah said that once the Jewish refugees began to run southward from there they would be hounded by their fears until they were left destitute.



Jeremiah by Michelangelo

“A Decision on the Border of Egypt”

Jeremiah 43:4-10

Panic in our faith walk with Christ will drive us further and further away from the will of God and more and more into our own machinations. As the writer of Hebrews indicates such a clear lack of faith leads to spiritual weakness and if catered to will lead to destruction.



Jeremiah by Michelangelo

Zephaniah 3: [ESV]

9 "For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord. 10 From beyond the rivers of Cush my worshipers, the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering. 11 "On that day you shall not be put to shame because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me; for then I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain.

“A Decision on the Border of Egypt”

Jeremiah 43:4-10

In 1987 after the acceptance ethnic and religious continuity of the Ethiopian Jews to the rest of the Jewish people the Israeli government began to expatriate them to Israel as Zephaniah had promised. These Jewish people were discovered in one of the most inaccessible places in Africa at the headwaters of the Blue Nile in Ethiopia beyond the rivers of Cush [Sudan].



An Israeli soldier of Beta Israel [Ethiopian Jewish] descent, 2006.

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Jeremiah 43:4-10

They still practice the Jewish faith. Their discovery in the 1400s was a bit of a shock.

They are believed to be the descendants of those Jewish people who went to Egypt and kept going up the Nile. They stopped running. And God eventually returned them to Judah as He promised.



An Israeli soldier of Beta Israel [Ethiopian Jewish] descent, 2006.

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“A Decision on the Border of Egypt”

Jeremiah 43:4-10



Jeremiah mourns in the ruins of Jerusalem by Horace Vernet [1844]. Jeremiah was in his mid-50s when Jerusalem was destroyed.

When we decide to ignore God’s direction in our lives and follow our own logic the consequences are devastating. But when we decide to stop running and trust God, He brings purpose and direction to our lives.