Jeremiah

Chapter 46

*A Message About Egypt*

**This is the word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the nations: 2 Concerning Egypt: This is the message against the army of Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt, which was defeated at Carchemish on the Euphrates River by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah: 3 “Prepare your shields, both large and small, and march out for battle! 4 Harness the horses, mount the steeds! Take your positions with helmets on! Polish your spears, put on your armor! 5 What do I see? They are terrified, they are retreating, their warriors are defeated. They flee in haste without looking back, and there is terror on every side,” declares the LORD. 6 “The swift cannot flee nor the strong escape. In the north by the River Euphrates they stumble and fall. 7 “Who is this that rises like the Nile, like rivers of surging waters? 8 Egypt rises like the Nile, like rivers of surging waters. She says, ‘I will rise and cover the earth; I will destroy cities and their people.’ 9 Charge, O horses! Drive furiously, O charioteers! March on, O warriors— men of Cush and Put who carry shields, men of Lydia who draw the bow. 10 But that day belongs to the Lord, the LORD Almighty—a day of vengeance, for vengeance on his foes. The sword will devour till it is satisfied, till it has quenched its thirst with blood. For the Lord, the LORD Almighty, will offer sacrifice in the land of the north by the River Euphrates. 11 “Go up to Gilead and get balm, O Virgin Daughter of Egypt. But you multiply remedies in vain; there is no healing for you. 12 The nations will hear of your shame; your cries will fill the earth. One warrior will stumble over another; both will fall down together.” 13 This is the message the LORD spoke to Jeremiah the prophet about the coming of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to attack Egypt: 14 “Announce this in Egypt, and proclaim it in Migdol; proclaim it also in Memphis and Tahpanhes: ‘Take your positions and get ready, for the sword devours those around you.’ 15 Why will your warriors be laid low? They cannot stand, for the LORD will push them down. 16 They will stumble repeatedly; they will fall over each other. They will say, ‘Get up, let us go back to our own people and our native lands, away from the sword of the oppressor.’ 17 There they will exclaim, ‘Pharaoh king of Egypt is only a loud noise; he has missed his opportunity.’ 18 “As surely as I live,” declares the King, whose name is the LORD Almighty, “one will come who is like Tabor among the mountains, like Carmel by the sea. 19 Pack your belongings for exile, you who live in Egypt, for Memphis will be laid waste and lie in ruins without inhabitant. and lie in ruins without inhabitant. 20 “Egypt is a beautiful heifer, but a gadfly is coming against her from the north. 21 The mercenaries in her ranks are like fattened calves. They too will turn and flee together, they will not stand their ground, for the day of disaster is coming upon them, the time for them to be punished. 22 Egypt will hiss like a fleeing serpent as the enemy advances in force; they will come against her with axes, like men who cut down trees. 23 They will chop down her forest,” declares the LORD, “dense though it be. They are more numerous than locusts, they cannot be counted. 24 The Daughter of Egypt will be put to shame, handed over to the people of the north.” 25 The LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: “I am about to bring punishment on Amon god of Thebes, on Pharaoh, on Egypt and her gods and her kings, and on those who rely on Pharaoh.  26 I will hand them over to those who seek their lives, to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and his officers. Later, however, Egypt will be inhabited as in times past,” declares the LORD. 27 “Do not fear, O Jacob my servant; do not be dismayed, O Israel. I will surely save you out of a distant place, your descendants from the land of their exile. Jacob will again have peace and security, and no one will make him afraid. 28 Do not fear, O Jacob my servant, for I am with you,” declares the LORD. “Though I completely destroy all the nations among which I scatter you, I will not completely destroy you. I will discipline you but only with justice; I will not let you go entirely unpunished.”**

**46:1–51:64** See notes on 25:1–38; 25:13; 25:19–26. Chs. 46–51 consist of a series of prophecies against the nations (see Isa 13–23; Eze 25–32; Am 1–2; Zep 2:4–15). They begin with Egypt (ch. 46) and end with Babylonia (chs. 50–51), the two powers that vied for control of Judah during Jeremiah’s ministry. The arrangement of the prophecies is in a generally west-to-east direction. (CSB)

**46:1** *This is the word of the Lord… concerning.* See 14:1; 47:1; 49:34; 50:1. (CSB)

This is a general title to the following collection of prophecies, written concerning different nations, which had less or more connection with the Jews, either as enemies, neighbors, or allies. (ACC)

*nations.* To whom Jeremiah was called to prophesy (see 1:5 and note). (CSB)

This verse serving as a superscription of a series of prophecies directed against various foreign peoples. (Kretzmann)

**46:2** *Concerning Egypt.* See Isa 19–20; Eze 29–32. (CSB)

*Neco.* Ruled Egypt 610–595 b.c. *Carchemish.* See 2Ch 35:20; Isa 10:9. The name means “fortress of Chemosh” (chief god of Moab; see 2Ki 23:13), as clarified by the Ebla tablets (see Introduction to Genesis: Background; see also chart on “Ancient Texts Relating to the OT”). (CSB)

This was the person who defeated the army of Josiah, in which engagement Josiah received a mortal wound, of which he died, greatly regretted, soon after at Megiddo. After this victory, he defeated the Babylonians, and took Carchemish; and, having fortified it, returned to his own country. Nabopolassar sent his son Nebuchadnezzar with an army against him, defeated him with immense slaughter near the river Euphrates, retook Carchemish, and subdued all the revolted provinces, according to the following prophecies. (ACC)

*by Nebuchadnezzar.* Egypt’s defeat by Babylonia at Carchemish was one of the most decisive battles in the ancient world, ending Egypt’s agelong claims and pretensions to power in Syro-Palestine. (CSB)

*fourth year of Jehoiakim.* 605 b.c., the first year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign (see 25:1). (CSB)

**46:3** *Prepare.* Spoken to the Egyptians in sarcasm (see, e.g., Na 2:1; 3:14). (CSB)

SHIELDS…LARGE AND SMALL – The smaller protecting shield was called a buckler. The large shield was big enough for a person behind which the entire body could be hidden. (Kretzmann)

MARCH OUT FOR BATTLE – It is a description picturing the preparations for battle, with a call to battle which enlivens the narrative. (Kretzmann)

**46:4** *horses.* Egypt was a prime source for the finest horses (see 1Ki 10:28). (CSB)

POLISH YOUR SPEARS – Cleanse, brighten, and sharpen them; from the Franco-Gallic *fourbir*, to polish, brighten. (ACC)

*put on your armor.* See 51:3. (CSB)

A coat of mail, especially that which was made scale fashion; one plate overlapping the other, like the scales of fish. (ACC)

But now the prophet sees the army, which was so eager for the attack, most miserably defeated. (Kretzmann)

**46:5** THEY ARE TERRIFIED – What! such a numerous, formidable, and well-appointed army panic-struck? So that they have turned back—fled apace, and looked not round; while their mighty ones—their generals and commanders, striving to rally them, are beaten down. (ACC)

*terror on every side.* The phrase is used in 6:25 (see note there) with reference to the Babylonian army (see 6:22 and note). (CSB)

**46:6** SWIFT CANNOT FLEE – Even the swiftest shall not be able to escape. (ACC)

NORTH BY THE RIVER – By the Euphrates, which was northward of Judea. Here the Egyptian army was routed with great slaughter. ((ACC)

STUMBLE AND FALL – The prophet sees their defeat so vividly that the tottering and falling are accomplished facts before his eyes. A second scene of battle is now painted, more detailed, more concrete than the first. (Kretzmann)

**46:7–8** *rivers of surging waters.* In the northern Egyptian delta, where the Nile branches out into numerous streams. (CSB)

**46:7** WHO IS THIS – The vast concourse of people is here represented as a river: for instance, the Jordan, suddenly swollen with the rains in harvest, rolling its waters along, and overflowing the whole country. A fine image to represent the incursions of vast armies carrying all before them. Such was the army of Pharaoh-necho in its march to Carchemish. (ACC)

**46:8** *rise and cover the earth.* The same metaphor is used of Assyria in Isa 8:7–8 (see note there). (CSB)

*cities.* The Hebrew for this word is in the singular but is used as a generic plural (“city” is generic also in 8:16). (CSB)

Such was the proud boast of Egypt in relying on its own strength. (Kretzmann)

**46:9** *Charge.* See note on v. 3; see also 8:6; Na 3:3. (CSB)

Horses rearing back with impatience. (Kretzmann)

*Drive furiously, O charioteers!* See Na 2:4. (CSB)

As in uncontrollable anger (Kretzmann)

*Put.* See note on Ge 10:6. (CSB)

*Lydia.* See note on Isa 66:19. Men from Cush, Put and Lydia were mercenaries in the Egyptian army. (CSB)

Hebrews Cush, Phut, and the Ludim. This army was composed of many nations. Cush. which we translate Ethiopians, almost invariably means the Arabians; and here, those Arabs that bordered on Egypt near the Red Sea. Phut probably means the Libyans; for Phut settled in Libya, according to Josephus. Phut and Cush were two of the sons of Ham, and brothers to Mitsraim, the father of the Egyptians, Genesis 10:6; and the Ludim were descended from Mitsraim; see Genesis 10:13. Bochart contends that the Ludim were Ethiopians, and that they were famous for the use of the bow. Phaleg, lib. 4:26. (ACC)

These mercenary troops being chosen for their skill in using this weapon of defense in battle. (Kretzmann)

**46:10** *day of vengeance.* See Isa 34:8 and note. The Lord will avenge Egypt’s cruelties toward Judah (see, e.g., 2Ki 23:29, 33–35). (CSB)

The Egyptians belonging to this class, not only for the killing of Josiah and the subsequent humiliation of Judah, but since ancient times. (Kretzmann)

*sword will devour.* See v. 14. (CSB)

Filled to the point of being surfeited (to feed or supply to fullness or excess, to satiate). (Kretzmann)

*quenched its thirst with blood … offer sacrifice.* Battles are often compared with sacrifices (see Isa 34:5–7 and notes; Zep 1:7–8). (CSB)

**46:11** *Gilead … balm.* See 8:22 and note. (CSB)

An irony. Egypt is so completely enfeebled by this overthrow, that her political wound is utterly incurable. This figure is used with the more propriety here, as the Egyptians have been celebrated from the remotest antiquity for their knowledge of medicine. (ACC)

*Virgin Daughter of Egypt.* See v. 19; Isa 23:12 and note; Isa 47:1; see also 14:17 and note; 18:13; 31:4, 21. (CSB)

A personification of Egypt.

*remedies in vain … no healing for you.* The statement is ironic in the light of Egypt’s reputation for expertise in the healing arts. (CSB)

**46:12** *stumble … fall.* See vv. 6, 16. (CSB)

This was in the confusion of headless flight. It is a most vivid description of the utter defeat which would strike the Egyptians by God's counsel, for His judgment invariably finds His enemies. (Kretzmann)

**46:13** *Nebuchadnezzar … to attack Egypt.* In 568–567 b.c. (see note on 43:11), long after the battle of Carchemish (see note on v. 2). (CSB)

**46:14** *Migdol.* See note on 44:1. (CSB)

Likely served as an outpost on the border between Judah and Egypt. Sites excavated in the region included Greek and Egyptian pottery, leading the exactor to propose that the Judean kings had hired mercenaries to supplement their forces. (TLSB)

*Memphis and Tahpanhes.* See 44:1; see also notes on 2:16; Isa 19:13. (CSB)

These were the regions along the northeastern boundary and in Memphis, the capital of the northern part of the country. (Kretzmann)

*Take your positions.* See v. 4. (CSB)

*sword devours.* See v. 10. (CSB)

THOSE AROUND YOU – The Phoenicians, Philistines, Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites, all prostrated by the arms of the Chaldeans. (ACC)

**46:15** *warriors.* The Hebrew for this word is not the same as that for “warrior” in vv. 5, 9, 12. It is lit. “strong ones,” often referring to powerful animals (“stallions” in 8:16; 50:11; “steeds” in 47:3; Jdg 5:22). In Ps 22:12; 50:13; 68:30; Isa 34:7 the Hebrew word is translated “bulls” (see note on Ps 68:30). (CSB)

*be laid low.* The Hebrew for this phrase is translated “Apis has fled” in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT). Apis was a bull-god worshiped in Egypt, especially at Memphis (see v. 14). An alternative translation of v. 15 would then read as follows: “Why did Apis flee? Why did your bull [many manuscripts have the singular form] not stand? Because the Lord pushed him down.” (CSB)

The Lord panic-struck them, and drove them back. (ACC)

The king with all his mighty men was powerless against the attack of the Lord, against the punishment meted out by Him through the Chaldean king. (Kretzmann)

**46:16** *They will stumble repeatedly.* See vv. 6, 12; lit. “He will make many stumble.” (CSB)

In their terror and confusion ranks fell on ranks, and overturned each other. (ACC)

*They will say, ‘… let us go.’* The mercenaries in Pharaoh’s army (see v. 9 and note) will decide to return to their homelands. (CSB)

Thus the confederates and mercenaries of Egypt would make ready to save their own lives in the general destruction. (Kretzmann)

*sword of the oppressor.* See 25:38; 50:16. (CSB)

**46:17** *only a loud noise.* In Isa 30:7, Egypt is called “the Do-Nothing.” (CSB)

Pharaoh Neco’s pompous declaration of military prowess tuened out to be empty braggadocio. (TLSB)

*missed his opportunity.* After the battle of Carchemish (see v. 2), Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylonia on learning of his father’s death. Egypt failed to press its advantage at that time. (CSB)

**46:18** *As surely as I live.* See notes on Ge 22:15; 42:16. (CSB)

The supreme Ruler of the universe, in a most solemn oath by His own life. (Kretzmann)

*King.* God is called “King” also in 8:19; 10:7, 10; 48:15; 51:57. (CSB)

*one.* Nebuchadnezzar. (CSB)

*Tabor … Carmel.* Two prominent mountains in Israel (see notes on Jdg 4:6; SS 7:5; Isa 33:9). (CSB)

Tabor **–** This mountain is situated in the plain of Esdraelon in Galilee, on the confines of the tribes of Zebulun and Issachar, Joshua 19:22. It stood by itself, separated from all the other mountains by deep valleys, and is the highest of the whole. (ACC)

Carmel is a mountain on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, on the southern frontier of the tribe of Asher. Were the Egyptians as distinguished for valor and strength as the mountains Tabor and Carmel are for height among the other mountains in their vicinity, they should not be able to stand the shock of the Chaldean army. (ACC)

**46:19** *Pack your belongings for exile.* Echoed in Eze 12:3. (CSB)

They were to get ready vessels and containers for food on the journey into exile. (Kretzmann)

*Egypt.* Lit. “Daughter of Egypt” (see v. 11 and note). (CSB)

*laid waste.* Judah is so described in 2:15; 9:12. (CSB)

Such being the fate of the proud capital according to the judgment of God upon it. (Kretzmann)

**46:20** *heifer.* Perhaps an ironic reference to Egyptian bull-worship (see note on v. 15). (CSB)

Fruitful and useful; but destruction cometh out of the north, from Chaldea. It may be that there is an allusion here to Isis, worshipped in Egypt under the form of a beautiful cow. (ACC)

*gadfly.* Nebuchadnezzar. Insects are often used to symbolize an attacking enemy (see note on Ex 23:28). (CSB)

**46:21** *mercenaries.* See note on v. 9. (CSB)

*calves.* See note on v. 20. (CSB)

They were provided with the best of everything, in order to keep them favorably inclined. (Kretzmann)

TURN AND FLEE – Perhaps there is a reference here to the case of a cow stung with gnats. She runs hither and thither not knowing where to go; so shall it be with this scattered people. (ACC)

*day of disaster.* See 18:17. (CSB)

*time for them to be punished.* See 11:23; 23:12; 50:27. (CSB)

When God would visit His anger upon them. (Kretzmann)

**46:22** *serpent.* Often used by Egyptian pharaohs as a symbol of their sovereignty (see note on Ex 4:3). (CSB)

Hissing from her thicket as she hears some one approaching. (Kretzmann)

*the enemy … like men who cut down trees.* See 21:14; see also Isa 10:18–19, 33–34 and notes. (CSB)

As the human forest of Egypt would be hewn down, she would flee with a noise as that of rustling leaves, weakly hissing out her protest, but without power effectually to resent it. (Kretzmann)

**46:23** *more numerous than locusts.* Here an invading army is compared to locusts. In Joel 2:11, 25 locusts are compared to an invading army. (CSB)

**46:24** *Daughter of Egypt.* See note on v. 11. (CSB)

PEOPLE OF THE NORTH – The Chaldean hordes. (Kretzmann)

**46:25** *Amon.* The chief god of Egypt during much of its history. Wicked King Manasseh may have named his son after the Egyptian deity (see 2Ki 21:18; 2Ch 33:22). (CSB)

אמון מנא Amon minno, the Amon of No, called by the Greeks Διοσπολις, or Jupiter’s city. It was the famous Thebes, celebrated anciently for its hundred gates. Amon was the name by which the Egyptians called Jupiter, who had a famous temple at Thebes. (ACC)

*Thebes.* The capital of Upper (southern) Egypt (see Eze 30:14–16). (CSB)

**46:26** *Egypt will be inhabited as in times past.*† Cf. 48:47; 49:6, 39. Egypt would join the many nations of the Messianic kingdom which will be enabled to “go up to the mountain of the Lord” (see Isa 2:2–3 and notes; 19:23–25). (CSB)

**46:27–28** Repeated almost verbatim from 30:10–11 (see notes there). (CSB)

**46:27** SAVE YOU – In the midst of wrath God remembers mercy. Though Judah shall be destroyed, Jerusalem taken, the temple burnt to the ground, and the people carried into captivity, yet the nation shall not be destroyed. A seed shall be preserved, out of which the nation shall revive. (ACC)

**46:28** I WILL DISCIPLINE YOU – for the visitation of the Lord is intended to lead men to repentance. All this is figurative of the one great deliverance by which the Lord saved His people from all their enemies and established His Church of the New Testament. (Kretzmann)