

Jeremiah

Chapter 32

Jeremiah Buys a Field During the Siege

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. 2 At that time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem, and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the guard that was in the palace of the king of Judah. 3 For Zedekiah king of Judah had imprisoned him, saying, “Why do you prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the LORD: Behold, I am giving this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall capture it; 4 Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him face to face and see him eye to eye. 5 And he shall take Zedekiah to Babylon, and there he shall remain until I visit him, declares the LORD. Though you fight against the Chaldeans, you shall not succeed?’” 6 Jeremiah said, “The word of the LORD came to me: 7 Behold, Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle will come to you and say, ‘Buy my field that is at Anathoth, for the right of redemption by purchase is yours.’ 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. 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. 13 I charged Baruch in their presence, saying, 14 ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Take these deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware vessel, that they may last for a long time. 15 For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.’

32:1–44† Jeremiah obeys the Lord’s command to buy a field in Anathoth from his cousin (see vv. 8–9) even as the Babylonians are besieging Jerusalem (see vv. 2, 24). (CSB)

The promise of redemption, proclaimed in chs 30–31, is highlighted by a visual demonstration of what it means to act on faith’s conviction that nothing is too hard for the Lord (vv 17, 27). (TLSB)

32:1 *tenth year of Zedekiah ... eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar.* 587 B.C., the year before Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians (see 52:12–13). The siege began in 588 (see 39:1; 52:4). (CSB)

32:2 *shut up in the courtyard of the guard.* See Ne 3:25 and note. Jeremiah was imprisoned by King Zedekiah (see 37:21) and remained in the courtyard of the guard until Jerusalem fell (see 38:13, 28; 39:14). (CSB)

Part of the palace complex. How Jeremiah came to be shut up there is told in chs 37–38.

2:5 *until I visit him.* After his capture by the Babylonians, Zedekiah was taken to Babylon, where he eventually died (see 52:11). (CSB)

Depending on circumstances, God's action described by this verb can be a promise of deliverance or a threat of punishment (cf 29:10; Is 29:6). (TLSB)

you shall not succeed. Since it is God who has exiled his people, they are to submit to their captors and not rebel against them. (CSB)

32:7 *Anathoth.* Jeremiah's hometown. (CSB)

It was already overrun by the enemy. (TLSB)

right of redemption by purchase. In accordance with the ancient law of redemption (see Lev 25:23–25; see also notes on Ru 2:20; 4:3 – *kinsman-redeemers*. Redemption is a key concept in Ruth (see Introduction: Theme and Theology). The kinsman-redeemer was responsible for protecting the interests of needy members of the extended family—e.g., to provide an heir for a brother who had died (Dt 25:5–10), to redeem land that a poor relative had sold outside the family (Lev 25:25–28), to redeem a relative who had been sold into slavery (Lev 25:47–49) and to avenge the killing of a relative (Nu 35:19–21; “avenger” and “kinsman-redeemer” are translations of the same Hebrew word). Naomi is encouraged when she hears that the Lord has led Ruth to the fields of a relative who might serve as their kinsman-redeemer. This moment of Naomi's awakened hope is the crucial turning point of the story.) (CSB)

Ludicrous as the transaction might appear, Jeremiah recognized in it God's call to illustrate, louder than words, how certain it was that the land would again be occupied by the people seemingly doomed to extinction. (TLSB)

32:8 *came to me in the courtyard.* Though imprisoned, Jeremiah was allowed to have visitors. (CSB)

The cousin got through enemy lines during a lull in the siege when Nebuchadnezzar had to fight off an Egyptian army. (TLSB)

in the land of Benjamin. Some time earlier, Jeremiah had been on his way home “to get his share of the property” in Benjamin (37:12), but he was arrested, falsely accused of treason, and thrown into prison (see 37:13–16). (CSB)

32:9 *and I bought.* In obedience to the Lord's command (see v. 7). (CSB)

In the NT, the purchase of this field and the 30 shekels paid in wages to Zechariah (Zec 11:12–13) are cited as prophetic foreshadowing of the acquisition of the potter's field (Mt 27:9). (TLSB)

weighed out. Coinage had not yet been invented. (CSB)

seventeen shekels of silver. The size of the field is unknown, but the price was probably not exorbitant (contrast Ge 23:15; see note there). (CSB)

32:10 *sealed.* Not to attest his signature but to guarantee the contents of the deed and keep it from being tampered with (see Isa 8:16; 29:11; Da 12:4, 9; Rev 15:1–5). (CSB)

Seals were lumps of clay stamped with a signet ring or cylinder that impressed the clay with a person's official insignia. They were placed over the strings that bound a folded document, which kept it closed.

Nearly 400 clay seals (bullae) have been discovered in Israel, many from the “house of Bullae” in Jerusalem, which was likely burned when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 587 BC. The fire hardened and preserved these seals. Two seals have been discovered that name Baruch the Son of Neriah the scribe (v. 12), which could have come from Jeremiah’s secretary. (TLSB)

32:11 *open copy*. For ready reference, the authenticity of which would then be guaranteed by the sealed copy if the unsealed deed should be lost, damaged or changed (deliberately or otherwise). Examples of tied and sealed papyrus documents of the fifth and subsequent centuries B.C. have been found at Elephantine in southern Egypt, in the desert of Judah west of the Dead Sea, and elsewhere. (CSB)

One copy was rolled and sealed to prevent opening. The other remained unsealed for ready reference. (TLSB)

32:12 *Baruch*. Means “blessed (by the Lord).” He was Jeremiah’s faithful secretary and friend. (CSB)

all the Judeans – Perhaps people visiting other prisoners. (TLSB)

in the court – Normally legal transactions took place at the city gates, prevented here by Jeremiah’s arrest. (TLSB)

32:14 *put them in earthenware...long time*. Documents found in clay jars at Elephantine and Qumran (west of the Dead Sea) were preserved almost intact for more than 2,000 years. (CSB)

Effective means of preserving documents. *last for a long time*. Until the return from Babylonian exile. (TLSB)

32:15 Jeremiah’s deed of purchase would enable him (or his heirs) to reclaim the field as soon as normal economic activity resumed after the exile. (CSB)

32:1–15 God tells Jeremiah to buy a parcel of land near Anathoth as a visible promise that life would return to normal after the exile (which would last a long time). Surrounded by the enemy army, it may have seemed foolish to buy land for the future, but obeying God is always the right thing to do. When trouble surrounds you, cling to the Lord’s commands and promises. In His mercy, God will save His people and bring them to safety, a promise ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ. • Lord, help us look past the present trouble to see with joy and confidence our eternal home in Jesus Christ. Amen. (TLSB)

Jeremiah Prays for Understanding

16 “After I had given the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed to the LORD, saying: **17** ‘Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you. **18** You show steadfast love to thousands, but you repay the guilt of fathers to their children after them, O great and mighty God, whose name is the LORD of hosts, **19** great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the children of man, rewarding each one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds. **20** You have shown signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, and to this day in Israel and among all mankind, and have made a name for yourself, as at this day. **21** You brought your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders, with a strong hand and outstretched arm, and with great terror. **22** And you gave them this land, which you swore to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey. **23** And they entered and took possession of it. But they did not obey your voice or walk in your law. They did nothing of all you commanded them to do.

Therefore you have made all this disaster come upon them. 24 Behold, the siege mounds have come up to the city to take it, and because of sword and famine and pestilence the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans who are fighting against it. What you spoke has come to pass, and behold, you see it. 25 Yet you, O Lord GOD, have said to me, “Buy the field for money and get witnesses”—though the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans.” 26 The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: 27 “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me? 28 Therefore, thus says the LORD: Behold, I am giving this city into the hands of the Chaldeans and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall capture it. 29 The Chaldeans who are fighting against this city shall come and set this city on fire and burn it, with the houses on whose roofs offerings have been made to Baal and drink offerings have been poured out to other gods, to provoke me to anger. 30 For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have done nothing but evil in my sight from their youth. The children of Israel have done nothing but provoke me to anger by the work of their hands, declares the LORD. 31 This city has aroused my anger and wrath, from the day it was built to this day, so that I will remove it from my sight 32 because of all the evil of the children of Israel and the children of Judah that they did to provoke me to anger—their kings and their officials, their priests and their prophets, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 33 They have turned to me their back and not their face. And though I have taught them persistently, they have not listened to receive instruction. 34 They set up their abominations in the house that is called by my name, to defile it. 35 They built the high places of Baal in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, though I did not command them, nor did it enter into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

32:16-25 As under other trying circumstances, Jeremiah acted in obedience to the word of the Lord. Nevertheless, on this occasion he revealed how faith had to do battle with doubt even in a prophet’s heart. He also showed how to win; he discussed his problem with the Lord, reciting an array of biblical truths to support the proposition that he should question God’s power, wisdom, justice, and goodness. (TLSB)

32:17 *have the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm.* A similar phrase is used to describe God’s powerful redemption of Israel at the exodus (see 32:21; Dt 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 26:8), but here God turns his wrath against his own people. (CSB)

Nothing is too hard for you. See note on Ge 18:14. The Lord’s reply to Jeremiah echoes these words (see v. 27). – (The answer is no, for Sarah as well as for her descendants Mary and Elizabeth (see Lk 1:34–37). Nothing within God’s will, including creation (see Jer 32:17) and redemption (see Mt 19:25–26), is impossible for him.) (CSB)

God would begin His answer to the prayer by restating Jeremiah’s words here in the form of a rhetorical question (v 27). (TLSB)

32:18 *show steadfast love to thousands but ... punishment for the guilt of fathers.* See Ex 20:5–6; 34:7. In the treaty language of the ancient Near East the “love” owed to the great king was a conventional term for total allegiance and implicit trust expressing itself in obedient service.) (CSB)

32:19 *great in counsel.* See Ps 66:5; Isa 9:6; 28:29. (CSB)

His almighty power being directed by His boundless wisdom, both in devising and in executing His plans for the benefit of man. (Kretzmann)

rewarding each one...fruits of his deeds. Repeated verbatim from 17:10 – Lit. “the fruit of his deeds” (cf. 6:19). (CSB)

In accordance with his deeds, as the expression of his heart's condition. (Kretzmann)

32:20 *signs and wonders.* These would be miraculous deeds, which served to bring out the majesty of His essence. (Kretzmann)

to this day. The wonder-working power of Jehovah, set in operation at that time, had continued to exert its might through the centuries. (Kretzmann)

32:22 *land flowing with milk and honey.* See 11:5; see also note on Ex 3:8 – (The traditional and proverbial description of the hill country of Canaan—in its original pastoral state.) (CSB)

32:24 *siege mounds.* To help the invaders bring up battering rams and scale the walls (see 2Sa 20:15). (CSB)

These are promises of future safety. Because the king of Assyria was now besieging the city, they were looking for nothing else than a cloud of spears and a very swift entrance. Against this hopelessness of the people the prophet offers them consolation. (Luther)

sword, famine and pestilence – Curses for violating God's covenant (see Lev 26:25–26); the first occurrence of this triad, which occurs 15 times in Jeremiah. (CSB)

32:25 Jeremiah expresses his doubts concerning what must seem to him to be an unwise investment. Nevertheless, he remains the obedient servant (see vv. 8–9). (CSB)

Although the city, by the word of the Lord and according to the evidence visible in the presence of the besieging army, was doomed to destruction, yet Jeremiah had received the command which, in view of the situation, seemed very strange to him. So he looks to the Lord for an explanation regarding the future. (Kretzmann)

32:27 *the LORD, the God of all flesh.* Echoes Nu 16:22; 27:16, emphasizing God's universal dominion. (CSB)

Is anything too hard for me? † Responds to the description in Jeremiah's prayer, stressing God's omnipotence. God is capable of fulfilling his promises. (CSB)

32:28 thus says the Lord – Echoes the inspired words spoken by Jeremiah. Cfc h 7. (TLSB)

32:29 *whose roofs.* The kings of Judah had built pagan altars on the roof of the palace in Jerusalem (see 2Ki 23:12). The Ugaritic Keret epic of the 14th century B.C. *Ancient Texts Relating to the OT* describes a similar practice: “Go to the top of a tower, bestride the top of the wall ... Honor Baal with your sacrifice ... Then descend ... from the housetops.”) (CSB)

drink offerings... to other gods. The Lord's complaint with regard to these transgressions being repeated time and again. In our days the gross idolatry of ancient days has been replaced by a finer form of false worship, but its guilt is just as bad as in those days. (Kretzmann)

32:30 *youth*. This was that attending the idolatry which had been practiced in the northern kingdom since the time when Jeroboam set up the golden calves at Bethel and Dan. Upon this cry the Lord answers in a strain of coaxing appeal. (Kretzmann)

work of their hands. A reference to idols. (CSB)

32:31 *remove it from my sight*. This being the object which its inhabitants had in mind with their idolatrous behavior. (Kretzmann)

32:32 *kings ... officials ... priests ... prophets*. The whole nation would defy the prophet and his God.) (CSB)

32:33 *taught them persistently* – The Hebrew idiom underlying this phrase is found frequently in Jeremiah (v. 25; 11:7; 25:3–4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14–15; 44:4), but appears nowhere else in the OT.) (CSB)

This was done through priests and prophets. (TLSB)

32:34 All pictures of idols being abhorred in the sight of the Lord, especially since the glory of His own name was besmirched by such acts. (Kretzmann)

32:35 *Molech*. The god of the Ammonites). (CSB)

This was the derisive name for Baal. (TLSB)

32:16–35 God charges His people with idolatry, violating the First Commandment (cf Ex 20:4–6). Because they turned their back on God, He will turn them over to the Babylonians for the city’s destruction and the people’s exile. Fundamental to the relationship between God and His people is their exclusive loyalty and trust, much like a marriage. Because of His love, He will eventually recall His people from the land of exile and keep His promise to send a Savior for all humanity. • O Holy Spirit, keep us faithful to our Lord, who is ever loyal to us. In Jesus’ name. Amen. (TLSB)

They Shall Be My People; I Will Be Their God

36 “Now therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city of which you say, ‘It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine, and by pestilence’: **37** Behold, I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation. I will bring them back to this place, and I will make them dwell in safety. **38** And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. **39** I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. **40** I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. **41** I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul. **42** “For thus says the LORD: Just as I have brought all this great disaster upon this people, so I will bring upon them all the good that I promise them. **43** Fields shall be bought in this land of which you are saying, ‘It is a desolation, without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.’ **44** Fields shall be bought for money, and deeds shall be signed and sealed and witnessed, in the land of Benjamin, in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, in the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the Shephelah, and in the cities of the Negeb; for I will restore their fortunes, declares the LORD.”

32:36 *You*. The pronoun is plural, referring to the people of Judah as a whole. (CSB)

sword, famine and pestilence – Curses for violating God’s covenant (see Lev 26:25–26); the first occurrence of this triad, which occurs 15 times in Jeremiah. (CSB)

32:37 *my anger...my wrath...great indignation* – Probably quoted from Dt 29:28, where the Hebrew for this phrase is translated “in furious anger and in great wrath.” (CSB)

Climax presented by the synonyms indicating that He was possessed with the highest degree of indignation. (Kretzmann)

bring them back ... make them dwell in safety. The Hebrew underlying the first phrase sounds like that underlying the second. (CSB)

All this is stated of the future security of the Church. (Kretzmann)

32:39 *one heart* – Inner spiritual and moral transformation that results in single-minded commitment to the Lord and to his will. (CSB)

their children after them. See Dt 4:9–10. (CSB)

32:40 *everlasting covenant*. † Unlike the old covenant (see 31:32; Isa 24:5), the new covenant would never be superseded. (CSB)

The same comprehensive term Jeremiah used to describe the relationship God will establish with His chastened people (see note, 31:31). It will be everlasting because He will never cease to supply the strength for a wholehearted commitment to His will. (TLSB)

fear of me in their hearts – “Fear” in this phrase has the sense of reverential trust in God that includes commitment to his revealed will (word). (CSB)

not turn away from me. The Lord here represents Himself as an eager and diligent Educator, a faithful Pedagog, who follows His pupils everywhere in order to impart to them the instruction which they needed for the proper way of living. (Kretzmann)

32:41 *rejoice in doing them good*. It will be His greatest delight to shower benefits upon them. (Kretzmann)

32:43–44 *fields shall be bought*. The field purchased by Jeremiah (see v. 9) is symbolic of the many fields that will be purchased in Judah after the Babylonian exile, when economic conditions return to normal. (CSB)

32:43 *desolation, without men or beast*. The striking repetition of “I looked” at the beginning of each verse ties this poem together and underscores its visionary character, as the prophet sees his beloved land in ruins after the Babylonian onslaught. Creation, as it were, has been reversed. (CSB)

32:44 *land of Benjamin*. See 1:1. Here Benjamin is mentioned first because it was the region in which Jeremiah’s hometown was located. (CSB)

To the north “in the land of Benjamin”; to the west in the Shephelah or coast plain; to the south in the Negeb. (TLSB)

hill country. Sloping toward the Mediterranean. (CSB)

Negev. The dry wasteland stretching southward from Beersheba. The same Hebrew word is translated “south” in 13:14. (CSB)

32:36–44 The Lord promises to return His exiled people to their homeland. More than that, He will renew His covenant with them and change their hearts. Because of our fallen nature, we cannot trust God or obey Him by our own reason or strength. Only He can create and sustain saving faith and faithful living in His people. Repent of your sins. In the new covenant established by Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit creates faith within us and leads us every day as God’s children. • O Holy Spirit, cleanse our hearts of sinful desires, and lead us to live for You. Amen. (TLSB)