A Jeremiah Apocryphon (Mingana translation)

Syriac and Arabic apocrypha (anonymous) (medieval, from Syriac and Garshuni manuscripts)

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Prefatory Note and Translation

(i) A Jeremiah Apocryphon.

Prefatory Note.

IN the following pages I give the translation (accompanied by a critical apparatus) of a rather strange work purporting to contain the history of the events that preceded and followed the deportation of the Jews to Babylon. I have followed in my edition two manuscripts: Paris 65 and Mingana Syr. 240, in the custody of the Rendel Harris Library, Birmingham, designated hereafter by the letters P. and M. respectively. P. is dated 1905 of the Greeks (A.D. 1594), and M. has lost its colophon, but on palæographical grounds may be ascribed to about A.D. 1650. The former was written at amāt, and the latter was recently acquired by me in Kurdistan. No attention has been paid to Paris 238, 273, and 276, because all the above MSS. seem to contain only two different recensions of the story, and Paris 65 and Mingana Syr. 240 offer the best specimen of each recension.

From footnotes that I have added to the following pages the reader will conclude that I believe that P. which is now in Garshūni was transcribed from a MS. written in Arabic characters and executed in Egypt. The same, however, could not be said of M. This fact induces us to suppose that the two recensions of the story referred to above may provisionally be divided into an Egyptian recension and a Syrian, Palestinian, or Mesopotamian recension. The discrepancies and verbal differences which characterise the two recensions are profound and unmistakable. I first tried to establish from all the above MSS. a good text for the body of the story and relegate the numerous variants to the footnotes, but in the course of my transcription I discovered that the plan was impracticable, and I was driven to the conclusion that the best method to give an adequate idea of each recension would be to edit separately all the text of its best specimen, and this is the reason why the reader finds for his guidance in the present work a complete set of facsimiles of all P. and of all M. The same difficulty presented itself to me in the translation. To note all the variants of each recension seemed to me to be cumbersome and useless, so I confined myself to refer in short notes only to the most important variants exhibited by the two MSS. In a few cases the translation represents a combination of both P. and M. and the purely verbal discrepancies and still more the orthographical variants have been completely ignored.

The Arabic used in the story is grammatically and lexicographically more correct than that used in the "Exhortation to Priesthood" which I edited and translated on pp. 97-120, but it is still much below the standard of what a good piece of classic Arabic should be. If it comes to be established that the Arabic text is a translation from a foreign language—an opinion to which I cannot subscribe—I might be tempted to assert that the story was originally written in Greek, from which it was translated into Syriac, and that the Syriac gave rise to the recension represented by M. As to the recension represented by P. it was possibly translated either direct from Greek or more probably from a Coptic intermediary, before it came under the influence of the Syrian copyists. I was not aware till very late that P. had been transcribed in Arabic characters and translated in R.O.C. 1910, pp. 255-266, 398-404, and 1911, pp. 128-143. The MS. has lost nothing, however, by a more critical edition.

The story itself appears to me to emanate from a man who lived either in Egypt or in Western (not Eastern) Palestine.

Translation.

We will write concerning the deportation of the Children of Israel to Babylon at the hand of the King Nebuchadnezzar in the days of the prophet Jeremiah. And the word of God came to the prophet Jeremiah saying: "Say to the King Zedekiah and to the people of the Children of Israel, 'Why do you add sins to your sins, and iniquity to your iniquity? My eye has seen your deeds, and my ear has heard your sayings. If you had fasted, I would have been merciful to you; and if you had prayed, I would have listened to you, says the Lord Omnipotent. You have not fasted to me, nor have you stretched your hands towards me, but you have fasted to Baal and prayed to Zeus, and you have forgotten the Lord God of Abraham and said, Who is the God of Israel?' You have been unmindful of all my goodness to you when I took you out of the land of Egypt, delivered you from the servitude of Pharaoh, and smote the inhabitants of Egypt with plagues. I cared for you like a tender mother cares for her virgin daughters until she delivers them up to the bridegroom, in order that no harm may befall you in all your ways.

"I have glorified you above all nations, and have called you my people, O Children of Israel. I have brought you out of a wilderness full of scorpions and vipers, and made you dwell in the desert forty years while your dresses did not wear out, your shoes were not torn up, and the hair of your heads did not grow up, and in all that length of time your clothing did not show any dirt on it. I gave you the bread of angels from heaven, while a column of light shone upon you by night, and a cloud protected you by day. I guarded you with my right hand and my holy arm, and delivered you from the hands of your enemies and made you possess that for which you had not toiled. I took you out of the depth of the sea, and you beheld your enemies behind you standing by the sea like statues. I sent down angels from heaven to assist you in crossing the middle of the sea, and drowned the chariots of Pharaoh in its depth with promptitude. I ordered the abysses to cover them, and made you enter a land for which you had not toiled, a land that flows with milk and honey, and put your fear in the hearts (of your enemies).

"After all these things which I did for you, you have forgotten my name and said, 'There is no God but Baal and Zeus.' You have returned to me evil for good, forsaken me, offered sacrifices to Baal, and immolated your sons and daughters to Zeus. You have turned away from me, all of you, old and young, and have committed injustices against one another. The seed of adultery has appeared in your midst, and there is no just judge among you. If you persist in these deeds, says the Lord, I will inflict calamities on you and cause my wrath to flow like a flowing river which does not turn back. Your young men will die smitten with the sword, and your old men of hunger and thirst; your children will be deported while you look at them, and your great city will be destroyed. Your land shall become a deserted waste, because I lost patience with you, says the Lord Omnipotent. I bore with you so that perchance you may repent and return to me, and I return to you. But now I have turned my face away from you.

"While you were doing my will and were calling me, 'O Lord, O Lord,' I was listening to you with promptitude; but now were you to cry to me I would not answer you and say, 'Here I am,' nor would I send down to you dew in time and rain in season. In the days when you were obedient to me, all the nations were trembling before you. Each one of you used to chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, and my angels preceded you anywhere you halted. But when you offended me, all the earth turned against you; and the sun and the moon mourned over you because they beheld your prevarication, your worship of idols, and all the iniquity which is within you, and which you perpetrated before the idol of Zeus. You kindled my wrath and did not return to me, says the Lord Omnipotent, God of Israel.'"

The prophet Jeremiah rose up then and went to King Zedekiah. He saw him sitting in the Sun-Gate, and with him was a company of false prophets, who were prophesying falsely to him. When King Zedekiah saw the prophet Jeremiah, he stood up before him and received him and said to him: "O seer, hast thou the word of God in thy mouth in these days?" And Jeremiah the prophet said to him: "Here is the word;" and he narrated to him the word of God before all the people. When the king heard the words of the prophet Jeremiah he waxed very angry, and asked the people and the false prophets who were round him whether that young man was mad. And Hananiah, the liar, rose up, put on his head horns of iron, and began to speak and say, 'This is what the Lord God says: "Thou, O king, shalt triumph over thy enemies and over these'—and he made a sign to north, south, east, and west—and proceeded thus: No one will be able to contradict thee, O king, nor dwell in the land." And there was then no word of God in the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah.

When the king heard these words from Hananiah, the liar and the deceiver, in the presence of all the false prophets his companions, he said to those of his servants that were present: "Take this Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon, in the lowest pit, which is full of mire, in order that he may die; no other food should be given to him apart from a little bread and water in order that we may know whether the word of God is with him or not." Then they threw forthwith Jeremiah in the place which the king had designated. When Abimelech, a servant in constant attendance on the king, heard that King Zedekiah had thrown Jeremiah

into prison, he rose up and inquired after the place where King Zedekiah was staying, and went to him. When the king saw the servant approaching him, he said to him: "Be welcome, O faithful servant; thou hast come to-day to us; what is thy request?" And the servant said to him: "O king what has the prophet Jeremiah done, that you should have acted with him in this way? Do you not fear God, O king, in casting the prophet of the Lord into prison and in extinguishing the lamp of Israel which shone on the people of God?" Then King Zedekiah said to him: "Thou hast done well in reminding me to-day of him, O Ephti, take some men with thee, and go and take him out of prison."

Then Abimelech took with him men, old rags, and strong ropes, and repaired to the prison in which Jeremiah was lying; he threw to him the old rags, and let down to him the strong ropes and said: "Attach these to your armholes so that we may draw you up." He did as he was told, and they drew him out of prison and gave him his freedom.

Then the Lord said to the prophet Jeremiah: "O you whom I have elected and honoured, arise and go for the second time to Zedekiah and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel, How long will you irritate my spirit, shed innocent blood, cause pregnant women to miscarry, and take the fruit of their wombs and burn it with fire before the statue of Baal. The blood of those whom you have unjustly killed cried towards the throne of my glory, and the cry of the unjustly treated went up to the gates of heaven. Why have you trodden in the path of Manasseh and forsaken the ways of David, your father? If you persist before me in these deeds, I will bring down my wrath and anger on you, and strip you of your glory; I will overthrow your throne and give your kingdom to your enemy who will put out your eyes and place them in your hands, and slay your two children and place one at your right hand and the other at your left; and put a chain round your neck like a dog. In this way you will be deported into Babylon, tied to the chariot of the king Nebuchadnezzar, and you will die there while driving the mule that pulls the stone of the flour-mill. This great people will also be led into captivity with you, and Jerusalem will be destroyed to its foundations, because you have dishonoured my name by your worship of foreign gods and have broken my covenant which I made with your fathers.'" All these words utter you before the elders of the children of Israel."

The prophet Jeremiah then said: "No, my Lord and my God, Lord of mercy and creator of the universe; no, O Lord, do not send me to King Zedekiah, because he is a man who hates Thy pious ones, and he will wax angry if I mention Thy name before him, and his anger will be brought to the highest pitch if I mention the name of Thy saints who have been slain and of Thy holy ones who have been stoned. He has further sought my destruction, and if I go back to him he will throw me in the pool of mire, in the lowest dungeon, and I shall die there." The Lord said then to the prophet Jeremiah: "Rise up and go to him. It is I who send you in my name, and be not afraid." Then the prophet Jeremiah rose up and went to King Zedekiah and to the people of the children of Israel. He had an audience with the king, and he related to him all the words of God. King Zedekiah became exceedingly angry, and ordered the prophet Jeremiah to be thrown for the second time in the lowest cistern, the

cistern of mire. When Abimelech heard of the imprisonment of the prophet Jeremiah, he went to King Zedekiah and saved him like the first time and set him free.

Then the word of God came for the third time to the prophet Jeremiah saying: "O Jeremiah whom I have elected, arise and go to King Zedekiah and utter to him the words of the Lord, God of Israel." Then the prophet Jeremiah fell down before the Lord, lifted his hands to Him, worshipped before Him and said to Him: "No, my Lord, do not send me to King Zedekiah, because if I mention to him Thy holy name he will wax angry and kill me." Then the Lord ordered the prophet Jeremiah to write down in a book all that was revealed to him and deliver it to his disciple Baruch, to bring to King Zedekiah. The prophet Jeremiah did what God ordered him to do, and he wrote a letter and sent it to King Zedekiah with his disciple Baruch and ordered him to read it before him and before the company of the children of Israel. And Baruch went to the palace of the king whom he saw sitting with his boon-companions. He stood before him with the letter in his hand, and uttered the words of God. When the king heard the speech of the disciple Baruch he became exceedingly angry, took the letter from him, and burned it with fire that he made there before all the children of Israel. He also ordered at once Baruch, the disciple of the prophet Jeremiah, to be flogged—and he was cruelly lashed—and asked him where (his master) lived. The disciple told the king his master's whereabouts, and the king ordered that he should be brought before him bound with chains and fetters.

The servants went out to look for him and they found him in a sepulchral crypt braiding fresh twigs and leaves. They seized him forthwith and did with him what the king had ordered them to do, and they presented him to King Zedekiah. When he stood before the king, Satan filled the latter's heart and he began to gnash his teeth at him and said to him: "I will shed your blood and pour it in the plate from which I eat, I will deliver your flesh to the birds of heaven and your bones to the carnivores of the earth, for the written words that your disciple uttered before me. What is between me and you, O Jeremiah, that you should prophesy falsely against me and against my kingdom and say, 'Your kingdom shall be taken from you and your throne shall be overthrown, and the people shall be deported and Jerusalem shall be destroyed to its foundations?' I swear to you by the great gods Baal and Zeus that I shall torment you with a grievous torment, and not finish you off quickly, but shall cast you into the lowest pit of the prison, and see whether your words will apply to me truly or not."

The king ordered him to be tied hands and feet with iron and thrown into the pit which he had named; he further ordered that no bread and water should be given to him, in order that he may die of hunger and thirst. The prophet Jeremiah turned then towards the king and said to him before the people of the children of Israel: "May God judge between thee and me, O King Zedekiah; I have prophesied for many years on behalf of the Lord, and no lie has ever come out of my mouth, and thou art throwing me for the third time in prison, in the lowest pit, wishing me to die there. Thou hast confidence in the false prophets who

prophesy to thee falsely. This being the case listen to the words of God which are in my mouth :

"Thou hast angered me with thy iniquitous deeds, and I shall turn my face away from thee and from the people of the children of Israel. I shall kindle my wrath and anger against this land, and the king of the Chaldeans shall come with men as numerous as locusts, and shall dismantle to its foundations the rampart of the city of Jerusalem and fix his throne in its midst. And thou, O King Zedekiah, when thou seest these things with thy eyes, pangs of travail will take possession of thee like a woman who gives birth to a child. Thou shalt extend on thy bed and cover thy face with thy mantle as with a shroud, and thy servants will carry thee on their necks like a corpse and run with thee towards the Jordan in order that they may cross it and save thee. God then will move the hearts of the servants of Nebuchadnezzar, who will seek thee in thy bed-chamber and not find thee, and they will follow thee and overtake thee on the river Karmlis; they will throw thee on the ground, uncover thy face, and strip thee of thy mantle, and present thee to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the Chaldeans, and thou shalt see his eyes with thy eyes, and thy mouth shall speak with his mouth. He will put a chain round thy neck like a dog, bring thy two sons to thy presence, and slay one at thy right hand and the other at thy left. He will put out thy eyes and place them in thy hands, and carry thee with him to the countries of Babylon, tied to his chariot, with mud, mire and ashes on thy head. Thou shalt eat bread, weeping and sighing, and shalt drink water with grief and hardship, and shalt die there while driving the mule that pulls the stone of the flour-mill."

When Jeremiah finished these words he was seized by the servants to do with him what King Zedekiah had ordered. And the prophet Jeremiah said to the servants of Zedekiah: "Have a little patience with me until I finish the words of God which are in my mouth. And King Zedekiah said: "Leave him until he utters all that he has to say. While the prophet Jeremiah was left alone he turned to all the people standing before the king and said: "Listen to what the Lord Omnipotent says: 'I protected your fathers when I took them out of the land of Egypt, but because you have forgotten the great goodness I did to your fathers in the desert, you shall be requited with a much greater evil. When I took your fathers out of the land of Egypt, and they dwelt forty years in the desert, their dresses did not wear out, their shoes were not torn up, and the hair of their heads did not grow. You, however, shall be deported and shall be in the way to your destination only a month and your dresses shall wear out and become like old skins; they shall tear up, and you shall sew them with cords made of palm-tree fibres, of alfa, and palm-tree leaves.

The hair of your heads shall come down to your shoulders like the hair of women, and instead of the column of light which shone upon your fathers day and night and went before them in their way, you shall be deported and walk in the heat of the sun and the cold of the night, and you shall experience the most intense heat of the summer and severe cold of the winter. I shall order the moon and the stars which shine at night not to shed their light on

you, in order that you may be in darkness. You shall crawl on your hands in groping your way, and shall stumble on one another with vehemence, intense pains, and bitter weeping.

"You shall hunger after bread, and thirst after water, and you shall sigh and say, 'Thou art just, O Lord, and Thou hast done everything with wisdom; Thou hast acted towards us according to our merits.' Instead of the manna and the quails which God sent to your fathers, and the sweet water which He caused to jet forth for them from the rock, there shall descend on you from heaven, earth, dust, and a fiery wind that will cling to your bodies and inflict on them sores, wounds, and blisters that do not heal. I shall render your drinking water brackish and bitter in your mouths, in order to desiccate your bodies and dry up your bones. Instead of the light of the sun that (God) caused to shine on your fathers, you shall have lice and vermin to consume your bodies. You shall remain seventy years in the captivity and servitude of the Chaldeans until the Lord turns His wrath away from you."

When the prophet Jeremiah finished all these words to King Zedekiah and to the elders and princes of the people who were surrounding him, they cried one and all, saying, 'Long live thou King Zedekiah.' The king then ordered the prophet to be cast into the dungeon, in the place where the cistern of mire was found. The description of this dungeon is that people walked three hours underground in the dark until they reached it; its sides were as thin as a glass bowl; no one was able to stand in that place, except on the joint of his knees; it was full of mire and pitch which reached the armpits of a man. And the prophet Jeremiah remained in that place for several days in great pains.

When Abimelech, the servant of the king heard the story of the prophet Jeremiah, he visited him every day, by giving a denarius to the gaoler in order to let him enter, and gave the prophet Jeremiah bread and water, and then returned to his master. He did this for twenty-one days, after which he went to King Zedekiah and said to him: "I felt the necessity of presenting myself before you for the sake of the prophet Jeremiah. Was it not sufficient for you, O king, to imprison the prophet of God a first time and a second time, that you should have thrown him a third time into prison? You have extinguished the lamp of the children of Israel, which was shedding light on the people of God; and he did not speak before thee except what God had revealed to him." Then the king said to him, "O Abimelech, you have done well in reminding me of him to-day; rise up, go and take men with thee and draw him out of the dungeon, and place him in a house until we ascertain if his words are true or not, and test the truth of his sayings."

Abimelech went then immediately and took with him two servants from the palace of the king, and drew up the prophet Jeremiah from the dungeon, after he had spent there twenty-one days, and placed him in a house of peace and rest. Then the prophet Jeremiah said to Abimelech: "Blessed be thou, O my child Abimelech, because thou hadst pity on me in the time of my trials. Thus says the Lord Omnipotent, 'He who does good to those in trouble, or in prison, and to the poor, God will remember him with His grace, and with His help and assistance.' Thou shalt not see the destruction of Jerusalem, O my child, and thou shalt not go to the hardship of the captivity; thou shalt not die, but shalt live until the Lord turns

away His wrath. The sun shall nurture thee and the firmament shall rear thee, and the earth on which thou shalt sleep shall give thee rest, and the stone shall protect thee from the cold of the winter and the heat of the summer, and thy soul shall be in joy and pleasure for seventy years until thou seest Jerusalem in its glory and rebuilt as it was before."

After this King Zedekiah returned to sin before the Lord, and he entered the house of the Lord and took out the two columns of marble which gave light in it without a lamp and placed them in the temple before the statues of Baal and Zeus, and he carried the precious and holy plates to the place where he used to sit and drink with his concubines. He pulled down the altar on which sacrifices were offered, and he made it a table to himself in the temple which belongs to Baal and Zeus. He brought out also the ark of the covenant, and out of the gold of the candle-stick he made a crown which he placed on the head of the idol. He ordered that oxen should be offered to Baal the idol, and summoned the pregnant women in travail and commanded that their offspring should be taken out of their wombs and sacrificed on the fire to Baal and Zeus. He also ordered that all children from two years old and under should likewise be sacrificed and their blood taken and offered to Baal and Zeus.

In that very day the earth shook and its (four) points quaked, and the Lord thundered from heaven and his wrath spread over all the earth, and He ordered the angel of anger to come down to it with fury, and had it not been for the intervention of the angels and the holy ones who knelt down before the Lord and besought Him to turn away His wrath from His people, all would have perished. The Lord perceived the odour of their sighing and their holy lamentations, had mercy upon the people of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and removed His wrath and did not destroy them.

And the word of God came to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, 'Jeremiah, Jeremiah,' and he answered, 'Here I am, O Lord.' And the Lord said to him: "I have sworn that I shall not remove my wrath, and I say to you that I shall not do anything before I have told it to you. Were it not for your prayers that have surrounded Jerusalem none of its inhabitants would have been alive, and I would have destroyed it to its foundations, because my eyes are covered with tears over the innocent blood of the children that has been shed; they cry and say, 'Avenge our blood.' Lo, concerning this people among whom you live examine the three following punishments: do you wish me to order Satanael, the angel of wrath, to destroy them and exterminate them from their young ones to their adults, with their old men and young men? Or do you wish me to inflict famine on them and to command heaven which is above them to become brass and the earth which is below them to become iron, so that no dew may fall from heaven and no fruits should come from the earth; and I shall destroy all the trees and annihilate their storehouses that are full so that they may eat one another and fall in the streets of the city from hunger and thirst? Or do you wish me to allow Nebuchadnezzar who is King of Babylon to subdue them and lord it over them for seventy years, and they be slaves of the Chaldeans to the point of destruction, in order that they may know that I am the God who hold their spirits in my hands?"

When the prophet Jeremiah heard these words from the Lord, he fell down in worship on his face before Him and wept and said: "O God of all mercy; Thou art the God of gods and Creator of the universe. Look, O Lord, upon the children of Thy servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to whom Thou sworest that their seed shall be like the stars of heaven; no, O Lord, do not destroy them one and all, and let not the angel Satanael come down on them because he will not leave a single one of them. Where is the oath that Thou sworest to our father Abraham, Thy beloved, in saying to Him, 'Thy seed shall not cease under heaven,' and if Thou sendest against them famine and dearth, and Thou restrainest heaven from sending down its dew, and the earth from yielding its fruit, the children of Thy servants will perish from the surface of the earth, and where shall be the covenant that Thou gavest to Thy servant Israel in saying to him, 'Thy children shall remain for ever and ever.' And do not be angry, O Lord, because of the ill-treatment that I receive at the hands of Thy servants: Thy people who sinned against Thee. If Thou orderest for them, O Lord, a deportation by Nebuchadnezzar and a captivity to Babylon, verily a father chastises his sons and a master his servants."

Then the Lord summoned forthwith the angel Michael, the head of the angels, and said to him: "Arise and go to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon and say to him: 'Go to Judea, to the city of Jerusalem, and spread thy hand and the hand of the Chaldeans who are with thee over its land, and bring into captivity all the inhabitants of the land of Israel, lord it over them, and take them to the land of the Chaldeans, and enslave them there for seventy years. Their adults shall do brickwork and clay work, and their old men shall hew wood and draw water, and their women shall spin and weave wool, and they shall show thee their work every day, and thou shalt make accounts with them as if they were slaves. Act, however, with mercy and justice towards them, because (in the end) I shall have pity upon them.'"

Michael worshipped then the Lord immediately and went in haste to Babylon, which he reached in that very night. He nudged Nebuchadnezzar the king in the right side and said to him: "O Nebuchadnezzar, arise quickly so that I may speak with you." When Nebuchadnezzar awoke from his sleep and saw the angel of God with shining eyes like the star of the morning, with a spear in his hand, with loins girded with a sword, with feet covered with hot polished brass, and with a terrifying speech, he said to him: "Woe is me, O my master, because in no time have I seen the like of you. Are you not one of the gods of Babylon? Or perchance are you the God who spread heaven and established the earth, and fashioned every thing?" And the angel answered him saying: "I am not God, but His servant. I am one of the seven angels who stand before the throne of the Lord God, and here is what the Lord God says, 'Arise with all your might and with the Chaldeans, and spread your hand over all the land of Judea and deport its inhabitants and bring them to the land of Babylon. And they shall be slaves to you: their adults shall work at clay and bricks, and their old men shall hew wood and draw water, and their women shall spin and weave wool, and they shall bring in their work every day like slaves, and you shall settle their accounts, but show mercy towards them. I have delivered them to you for punishment, and after that I shall have pity on them for ever and ever.'"

And Nebuchadnezzar said to the angel Michael: "Woe is me, O my master, the Lord has perchance waxed angry with me because of the great number of my sins, and He wishes me to go to foreign lands in order to destroy my life in them; do destroy me with your hand; this would be more advantageous for me than that I and all who are with me should die in a foreign land. Who is the king of Babylon, and who is Nebuchadnezzar before the people of God the Most High? And who am I that I should go to Jerusalem and fight the people of God? Is it not the people whom Pharaoh fought, and God drowned him in the abysses, and water covered him? Is it not the people whom the Amorites fought, and they all perished? In this way five nations were destroyed before them. Who am I then, O Lord, that I should fight a just people and conquer it, a people who when they go to war do not take with them any material of war, but, if they stretch out their hands, angels help them from heaven and fight on their behalf?

And the angel Michael said to Nebuchadnezzar: "Every thing you said is true. Every people who keep the commandments of God, no one is able to overcome them; but if they forsake His commandments and His law, He delivers them into the hands of their enemies, and they perish at their hands. Now, this people have sinned, prevaricated, and increased their iniquity; arise thou, then, and destroy them that they may know that God is the only one that lasts for ever and ever." When the angel Michael finished his words to Nebuchadnezzar, he stretched his hand, anointed him, and fortified him against the (Jewish) people, and went up to heaven.

After the angel Michael had gone, Nebuchadnezzar arose and went to his wife Hilkiah whom he awakened from her sleep. He narrated to her all that the angel had told him. When she heard those words from him she was greatly perplexed and fell down weeping, and said to Nebuchadnezzar: "Woe is me, my lord, and my brother; take me with thee wherever thou goest, because I shall not see thee another time. Who is the king who fought this people and was saved? Dost thou not know that this is the people of God, and that everything that they ask from God they obtain it forthwith?" And Nebuchadnezzar said to her: "It is their God that has delivered them up to me." And she said to him: "O my lord, listen attentively to what I am going to say to thee: if thou goest to fight them, take with thee a ram, and when thou art near the city of Judea alight from thy chariot, lay the sceptre of gold that is in thy hand on the head of the ram and let it go; if it take the direction of Judea, follow it, and know that the Lord has delivered them up to thee; but if the ram does not proceed forward to Judea but turns its face towards Babylon, return thou with it and fight not the people of God; if you are like the number of the sand of the sea not a single soul will return alive with thee."

When the wife said these words to the king, he accepted them from her, and he rose forthwith and summoned his generals Cyrus and Isarus, and narrated to them all that God had promised him through His angel. And they said to the king: "May you live for ever! It is their God that is angry with them. This people has sinned; send therefore at once a messenger to Zedekiah, king of Jerusalem, to convey to him words of conciliation, and despatch

gifts with him, and make inquiries whether his people have worshipped foreign gods and forsaken the words of the Lord, and whether they have refused (to listen to) the prophets who were with them and who interceded with the Lord on their behalf. If not, do not proceed to their land, as He has destroyed others who fought them, and fire will come down on us from heaven and consume us along with our land."

These words pleased King Nebuchadnezzar, who sent forthwith a messenger from his generals, accompanied by a thousand horsemen, and he wrote with him a letter to King Zedekiah, and despatched gifts to him: a great quantity of carmine, gold, and frankincense. The general departed then for Jerusalem with his party. When he reached it, King Zedekiah was informed that the messenger of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had arrived. He at once went out to meet him, surrounded by the women of the children of Israel dancing before their king. Then King Zedekiah dismounted and received the general of the king (of Babylon) and accepted the gifts from him. He took the gold and of it he made a crown which he placed on the head of the idol; as to the frankincense he burnt it before Baal and Zeus. He was also pleased with the letter of the King Nebuchadnezzar, and he wrote to him to Babylon an answer to his letter in the following terms:

"Zedekiah, King of Judea, writes to Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, thus: 'Peace be with you. This peace exists between you and me. My gods are your gods, and your gods are my gods.'" He sealed the letter, handed it to the general, and despatched with him gems and precious stones. When the priests of Baal, the idol, heard (this) they said to the king: "Where is Jeremiah who said, 'The king of Babylon shall come and take possession of this land?'" A few days later the general reached Babylon with the thousand horsemen who were with him, and handed to Nebuchadnezzar the answer to his letter. When the king understood its meaning perfectly he roared like a lion and neighed like the horse which pulls the wheel, and said to Cyrus and his retinue: "Prepare at once your horses, the troops and the soldiers."

And Nebuchadnezzar went forth in those days and with him were all the Chaldeans to the number of six hundred thousand horsemen and six hundred thousand chariots, and on each chariot were sixteen horsemen, in all six thousand thousand thousand, and six hundred thousand, with spears, weapons, and leather shields, and they marched on the right hand of the king and on his left, until they reached the partition of the roads between Babylon and Jerusalem. There Nebuchadnezzar alighted from his chariot, stripped himself of the royal robe, removed the crown from his head, brought the sceptre of his kingdom, and put it on the head of the ram. The ram took immediately the road of Judea, and the direction of Jerusalem. The king then said to all who were with him: "I am very much surprised, but the Lord God has delivered the (Jewish) people to me. Then the king ordered that his ram should be brought to him and placed on the sceptre of his kingdom pitched in the ground; and then he placed his robe at his right hand, and removed his crown and laid it under his feet, and he turned his face towards the direction of the east, and said: "O God whom I do not know, God of the pious Hebrews, and of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, O God whose

name I am not worthy to pronounce with my mouth that has sinned and my lips that have deceived.

I am afraid that thou shouldest not deliver the (Jewish) people to me because I am a sinner. My sins and those of my people have perchance increased before Thee. Then he proceeded: "O God of Israel and God of heavens and earth, whose name has reached me, the unworthy servant, God who has power over heavens and earth, I beseech thee, O Lord, to tell me whether that man who came to my house and nudged me is Thy angel, and whether it is Thy will that I should fight this people. I implore Thee to give a sign to this effect to me and to these men who are standing before Thee, because I am Thy servant, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. Thou hast, O Lord, hardened in the times of yore the heart of Pharaoh, until the sea submerged him and those who were with him. If I have sinned before Thee, and Thou wishest my destruction, destroy me while I am still in the borders of my own land with all those who are with me; but, O Lord, if Thou truly deliverest (the Jewish people) to me, let the shade of my sceptre return towards me."

And at that instant the sun moved and the shade of the sceptre of Nebuchadnezzar turned towards his head. (The king) then left the sceptre at his left side and the liver of the goat at his right side and said: "O Lord fortify my heart." And the Lord gave him courage and bravery, and he ascertained that it was the God of the Jewish people who had delivered them to him.

And God who is God of mercy remembered Abimelech and his kindness towards the prophet Jeremiah in the days in which King Zedekiah had imprisoned him in the dungeon. And the Lord did not wish him to be in the captivity of Babylon and in the servitude of Nebuchadnezzar. And the servant Abimelech according to his daily habit went to the garden of his master, who was the boon-companion of Zedekiah, in order to bring him fruits. He took a basket which he filled with grapes, figs, and other fruits from the garden of his master, and covered them with green foliage, and carried them in order to bring them to the house of his master. While he was still on the way God remembered the words which He spoke to the prophet Jeremiah, that he "shall not see the destruction of Jerusalem, nor be under the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. While he was walking and looking towards heaven, and while the distance (to his destination) was about an hour's (walk), he saw a cave in which there was shade and much refreshing humidity, and he said to himself: "I have gone out before my time, and have not taken to-day bread to the prophet, the man of God, my father Jeremiah; so I shall sit here awhile and sleep for an hour in this refreshing shade. He therefore repaired towards the shade and slept; and he placed the basket near his head, and it was full of grapes, figs, peaches, and pears, covered with foliage.

The earth gave him rest, and the rock of the cave expanded over him and covered him like the roof of a house; the dew fortified him and the sun nurtured him, and he did not hunger nor thirst, and he was not affected by the cold of the winter nor the heat of the summer till the time when Jerusalem was destroyed and then rebuilt afresh; (all this happened to him) by the great power of God, which protected him.

After this King Nebuchadnezzar reached Judea, with all his Chaldean generals, and he subjugated all Judea and all the towns round Jerusalem. His troops spread over the land of Israel like locusts, and they clapped with their hands and danced with their feet and said : "Let us go and fight the Hebrews, plunder their possessions and destroy them, because all other people are now in arms against the people of Israel whom nobody has dared approach and subdue down to this day. Their rod was over all the nations by the power of God, their God who fights for them." All the young men of the children of Israel fell before Nebuchadnezzar, and all their power was weakened, and the people of Israel became before him like pregnant women at the time of their travail. He ordered them to gather together before him bound in fetters of iron. He who was on the roof did not come down except with bonds, and he who was in the sown field did not enter the city except with fetters, and each one of them was seized in the spot where he was, and none was left who did not come to King Nebuchadnezzar who had fixed his throne at the gate of Jerusalem, the ramparts of which he had ordered to be demolished instantly.

When King Zedekiah heard this he was greatly agitated and the pangs of travail overtook him like a woman in labour. He stretched on his bed and spread his mantle over him and covered his face with a kerchief, like a shrouded dead man. His servants took him with the intention of crossing the Jordan with him and fleeing to save him. And King Nebuchadnezzar gave orders that King Zedekiah be brought before him, and Cyrus, his general, went to the residence of Zedekiah, and saw it ornamented with silk, gold, and silver, and his sleeping chamber perfumed with incense and fine aloes-wood, and in it was the idol which he used to worship. And God put in the hearts of the servants of King Nebuchadnezzar to pursue the servants of King Zedekiah, and they overtook them with the bed-litter on their shoulders in the valley of the sea of Karmlis. They threw him from their shoulders, and took the mantle that was over him, and presented him to Cyrus the first general of the King Nebuchadnezzar. The latter summoned the Chaldeans and ordered that Zedekiah's eyes be put out and placed in his hands, and that his two children be killed and placed one at his right side and the other at his left, and that a collar be tied round his neck in order that he may be led like a dog.

They presented him in this state to King Nebuchadnezzar, who commanded that he should be attached to the tail of his horse as far as Babylon, and that there he should drive the mule that pulls the stone of the flour-mill, and be given for food a small quantity only of bread and water. The King Nebuchadnezzar ordered also that all the elders of the children of Israel should be bound and that their necks should be tied to their feet until the bones of their necks were broken, and that the pregnant women should have stones placed on their wombs until they aborted.

The heart of Nebuchadnezzar was hardened against them like the horses which neigh under the wheels, and he said to the Hebrews: "Where is Jeremiah, the prophet of God, that I may ask him whether I should return to my country and to my land, and inquire of him concerning the ark of the Lord, in which are the tables written with the finger of the Lord,

and which, I have been told, proceeds before you." And the congregation of the children of Israel cried with weeping and said: "Where can we find the blessed prophet? The prophet Jeremiah has been imprisoned by King Zedekiah, who ordered that no bread and no water should be given to him until he dies." While the Hebrews were saying this, lo! a spirit carried Jeremiah and placed him before King Nebuchadnezzar, and he informed him that the ark was no more because it was on the mountains of Jericho and had disappeared owing to the great quantity of dust that was heaped on it through the effect of the winds. As to the tabernacle of the ark Zedekiah placed it under the idol of Baal. Then the elders of the children of Israel cried and said: "Live, O king, for ever and ever, and allow us to speak before you." And Nebuchadnezzar said to them: "Speak; it is your God who has humbled and dejected you; who is there to save you?" And they said to him: "This prophet whom you have summoned is young, do not listen, therefore, to his words, and be not deceived by his personality, as there is nothing to distinguish him from the other men of his own age; here there is a congregation of the children of Israel standing before you: hand to them staves of olive-trees; he whose staff comes into leaf in his hand is the true prophet."

The king agreed, and summoned before him all the young men of the children of Israel, and their number was two hundred and twenty thousand, and he handed to them staves of olive-trees. In that very moment the angel carried Jeremiah and presented him to King Nebuchadnezzar, while the staff which was in his hand had come into leaf. When the king saw this, he was greatly astonished and rose from his throne and bowed down to the ground before the prophet Jeremiah and said to him: "Thou art the true prophet of God; go, therefore, and ask God, if it is He who has sent me to this land; if not, I shall decamp away from you. And the prophet Jeremiah said to him: "Loosen the fetters of these bound men and give them a little rest from their pain until I go and ask the Lord. And King Nebuchadnezzar loosened their bonds, and the prophet Jeremiah went to the temple of the Lord, and saw it sprinkled with the blood of the young children, and he wept bitterly and said: O God, King of all kings, and Lord of all lords, I beseech Thee and implore Thee to-day to look from the height of heavens and show mercy towards Thy people who are under the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, and deliver them from the hands of their enemies and their haters. O God of mercy and compassion have pity. And he bowed down on his face to the ground in adoration, interceding in favour of the people.

And a voice came to him from the Lord, saying: "O Jeremiah whom I have elected, thou hast interceded sufficiently for this iniquitous nation and this harsh and insensible people. Dost thou not know that I am a compassionate and merciful God? This people numbers more than eight hundred thousand thousand souls, and in this sixth hour of the day take a lamp in thy hand and walk in all Jerusalem and see if thou canst find a single man among them in whom there is justice; if thou findest such a one, I shall cancel the deportation order for all the people, and shall not let them go with Nebuchadnezzar; if thou findest one whose mouth is unpolluted by sacrifices to idols, I shall deliver the people from servitude and shall not allow them to go into captivity; if thou findest a single man who loves his brother or his friend, I shall save them all; but if thou findest no one, enter the temple and

place the burning lamp on the candlestick, and it will not burn out until seventy years have elapsed, when the people shall have returned, walking in my ways, following my law and not forsaking what is due to me. When thou hast placed the burning lamp in its place, remove the garment of light from thee, and accompany the people into captivity where they shall be under the power of Nebuchadnezzar for seventy years."

When the prophet Jeremiah heard this from the Lord he went out with a burning lamp in his hand. Some men from the people said to him: "O father Jeremiah, why dost thou walk with a burning lamp in daylight?" And he answered: "I am in search of a man in whom there is justice and I am not able to find any." Some others said to him: "O father Jeremiah why dost thou walk with a lamp in daylight?" And he answered: "I am in search of a man whose mouth is unpolluted by sacrifices to idols, and I am not able to find any." Yet some others said to him: "O Father Jeremiah why dost thou walk with a lamp in daylight?" And he answered: "I am in search of a man in whom there is love for his friend or his neighbour, and I am not able to find any."

And Jeremiah searched among all the people, but he was unable to find any man (with the above qualifications). Then he wept bitterly, and went into the temple of God and placed the lamp burning to itself on the candlestick; and he entered the place in which the holy vestments are kept, and brought out the garment of the High Priest, and he mounted the terrace of the temple and addressed the stone which was the head of the corner; "To thee I say that thou hast been a great honour to all those that surround thee and thou hast consolidated them, and thou art like the eternal Son of God who shall come into the world: the faithful King, and the Lord of the two testaments, the old and the new; for this reason I shall say to thee that this temple shall only be demolished up to the place of the corner-stone; this is the reason why thou hast received this honour. Open now thy mouth and receive the garment of the High Priest and keep it with thee until the time God wishes and brings back Israel, his people."

The stone immediately opened its mouth and received the broidered coat of priesthood from the hand of the prophet Jeremiah. Then he took the mitre on which was written the name of the Lord Sabaoth, the Omnipotent, which Aaron and his sons used to place on their heads at the divine service, and lifted it to heaven and said to the sun: "To thee, I say, O owner of the great light, and O hidden chief, I cannot see the like of thee in all the creatures of God, be therefore the keeper of this head covering on the sides of which is written the name of God the Omnipotent, keep it till the day in which God brings back from captivity the children of Israel to this place." And he threw the mitre towards it, and a ray of the sun took it up. And Jeremiah hid the rest of the belongings of the house of the Lord.

When Jeremiah finished all this he removed from himself the garment of light in the middle of the temple, and put on sackcloth and girded himself with a linen girdle on his loins, and worshipped the Lord before the sanctuary, and bowed down his head to the ground; then he took the keys of the temple of the Lord and threw them upon the door-post and said: "O threshold of the temple of the Lord, receive these keys until the Lord brings back the

people from captivity." And immediately the high door-post received them from the hand of the prophet Jeremiah. After this Jeremiah presented himself to the king of the Chaldeans. When the people noticed that Jeremiah was wearing sackcloth, and that his head was full of earth, they all cried with wailing and weeping, and threw earth on their heads, because they had ascertained that the Lord had not forgiven them. They were aware of the fact that when Jeremiah entered the temple and interceded in favour of the people, if the Lord had pity on them and had accepted his prayer and his intervention on their behalf, he came out to them wearing a white garment and his head perfumed with scent down to his beard and the opening of his robe.

When Jeremiah finished these things, he said to Nebuchadnezzar: "Ride on thy chariot and proceed to Babylon, because the Lord has delivered this people to thee for punishment; and no harm shall befall thee." And Nebuchadnezzar arose like a lion and went to Babylon, his country. He ordered his generals and the head of his army to gather together all the Jews and march them in front of them. And the prophet Jeremiah walked in front of them weeping, with bare feet and a bare head. When the king noticed him he said to him: "What fault hast thou, O prophet of God? Come and ride with me; but it is not fitting to ride with the king while thou art wearing sackcloth." And the prophet Jeremiah answered him and said: "I have sinned before the Lord more than all the people; by the living Lord, my God, I shall not remove this garment from me until the Lord turns away His wrath and puts an end to the captivity of His people." Then King Nebuchadnezzar ordered his generals to make the prophet Jeremiah ride with them by force.

The Hebrew people walked to Babylon in great hardship and pain, and in less than a month their dresses were spoiled, and became like old and worn out skins, and their shoes were torn from their feet, and the hair of their heads grew up and came down to their shoulders like that of women, and the sun scorched their bodies to the point of destruction, and mud and muck mounted their bodies and stuck to them, and gave rise to blisters, wounds, and sores in their flesh; and the cold of the moon and of the stars affected them by night until they fell down on their faces, and they lost their way in the intensity of darkness that overtook them. They wept and fell upon one another, and were on the point of dying from hunger and thirst; they cried with a sigh and lifted their eyes towards heaven and said: "What a difference between this and the manna and the quails which God gave to Moses, and the spring of sweet water that jetted forth from a rock in the desert." Instead of this God caused dust to come on them from heaven, and changed the sweet water into a brackish and bitter water, until they were affected with a mange and scab for which there was no remedy.

The pregnant women aborted from the fatigue of the journey, and those who suckled threw their young ones from their shoulders because their breasts dried up from the hunger and thirst that overtook them, and could not give suck to their infants, and they cried with bitter weeping and great grief and said: "O Lord, Thy judgments are just, and everything Thou hast done to us is done with wisdom, because Thou hast requited us according to our deeds; we have sacrificed our children to the idols, and Thou art punishing us according to

our works. Because we have revolted against Thee and sinned before Thee, all this calamity has befallen us, and we deserve a punishment more severe than this." And Nebuchadnezzar brought them to Babylon, and he entered his palace and kissed the faces of his children and his wife. He was filled with joy in seeing them, and he narrated to them all that happened to them from the day he left them and went out of the country of the Chaldeans to the day he came back to them. Then he put on royal garments and sat for the trial of the Hebrews, and the arrangement of the business of their work and hire. He counted them and discovered that they had diminished by two hundred and twenty thousand and fifty souls; these had perished in the way from fatigue, hunger, and thirst, not counting the infants who had died on the arms of their mothers.

King Nebuchadnezzar ordered that the adults should do clay-work and brickwork, that the old men should hew wood and draw water, and that the women should spin and weave wool; he further ordered that they should all show their work every day like slaves, and that every day they should be given a little food consisting of bread and water. And the Hebrews served in Babylon under the yoke of slavery, and King Nebuchadnezzar built through them many villages, towers, houses, granaries, and forts on the shores of the sea which surrounds Babylon. The Chaldeans used to go every day to the river with their harps, and guitars, and used to ask the Hebrews, saying: "Show us how you sing to your Lord and your God." And the Hebrews used to answer with weeping and sighing: "How can we sing the praise of the Lord in a strange land?" The people of the Lord were greatly subdued and they cried while weeping and sobbing, and said: "The Lord has justly inflicted upon us this calamity, according to our deeds. Now, O Lord, look upon us, with mercy, because our faces have been put to shame before us; Thou our Lord and our God, do not requite us according to the iniquity of our deeds, because it is we who have kindled Thy wrath, and not listened to Thy prophets in Jerusalem."

The Hebrews toiled for the king in Babylon, and his servants drove them about, and greatly tormented them. And Jeremiah the prophet prayed night and day in Babylon, and interceded with God in favour of the people, when he saw their tribulations and their pains. As to Zedekiah he was tied to the chariot of Nebuchadnezzar until he reached Babylon, and there he was appointed to drive the horse of the flour-mill for forty years in captivity. He was in great tribulation all this time; then he died in wretchedness and bodily exhaustion that he felt more than other people. And Nebuchadnezzar showed mercy towards the Hebrews all the time of his life. When Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon died, he was succeeded by Cyrus the Persian, who greatly tormented the Hebrews with hunger and thirst, and reduced the rations of the food which they were given in the time of Nebuchadnezzar. He gave to each one of them one loaf of bread once in two days, and diminished the quantity of water to be given to them. He also increased their labours, and inflicted upon them grievous harm, and their number began to dwindle. After they had numbered one hundred thousand thousand and eighty thousand thousand, nothing remained of them but eighty thousand thousand.

Some Hebrew children, seventy in number, used to learn with Chaldean children. Among them was a young boy called Ezra. His mother took him to the scribes while he was still very young, not distinguishing good from evil. And the spirit of God was upon him. And the children of the Hebrews and the children of the Chaldeans used to go every day and carry water on their shoulders for their teachers. When they went one day to carry water, the jar of Ezra fell down and broke. Then the children of the Chaldeans turned to the children of the Hebrews and said to them: "Fie! O miserable, weak, and despicable ones!" And they clapped their hands and said: "O Hebrews, you are weak people in whom there is no energy." And they laughed at Ezra, who lifted his eyes towards heaven, sobbed, wept bitterly, and said: "O my Lord, and God Omnipotent, turn towards us and have mercy upon us for the sake of Abraham Thy beloved, and Isaac Thy servant, and Israel Thy holy one. Do not forget the covenant that Thou hast established with Thy servants our fathers, and do not remove from us Thy face and Thy mercy. We are hated by all nations, and despised and rejected in this nation. Now, O Lord, look upon us, and show us mercy from Thyself. We have sinned before Thee, but Thou art forgiving and merciful, O Lord. Thou forgivest sins and Thou desirest not the death of sinners."

When Ezra finished his prayer, he took off his mantle and went into the sea, and filled it with water as if it were a jar; then he placed it on his shoulder and walked with his fellow-students, and not a single drop fell from it. When he reached the scribes, he began to sprinkle the place with water from his mantle; then he put it on immediately, and it was as dry as before. When the teacher saw him, he rose up and bowed down to the ground before him and said: "Verily I say unto thee, O Ezra, my child, it is thou who shalt deliver thy people from captivity." And Ezra was growing every day in grace before God, and men, he and the other children of the Hebrews. A few days later the children wished to go out to draw water as was their wont. The children of the Chaldeans went out and said to one another: "Let us separate ourselves from the children of the Hebrews, and not have any intercourse with them, and not eat and drink with them, because they do not worship our gods." And they seceded from them, beat them, sneered at them and insulted their God. When Ezra saw what had happened, he wept over his companions and implored God to help them. Then he struck a rock with his feet, and water sprang from it like a sea, and it increased in volume until it reached the feet of the Chaldeans as if to drown them. The teacher rose up instantly and knelt down before Ezra and kissed his hands and his feet and said to him: "What is there between thee and these dogs? Dost thou wish to destroy all the town because of them?

Then Ezra had pity on his teacher, when he noticed his weeping, and he repaired to the spot where the rock was found and laid his foot on it and said: "O earth, open thy mouth and swallow this water, because the Lord has said, 'No second flood of water shall come unto the earth, but that fire shall come which will consume the earth to its foundations and purify it, in the last day." The earth opened then its mouth at once and swallowed all the water. And Ezra rose up and took all the children of the Hebrews, and removed them from the school of the Chaldeans. After all this King Cyrus summoned the people of the

Hebrews before him, and said to them: "Bring me all your harps through which you praise your God, and play them before me." And they said to King Cyrus: "We fear to play them in a strange land, because our God does not wish it." And Cyrus said to them: "As you praised your God in Jerusalem so do here." And they answered him saying: "The sons of Levi whom God has chosen take precedence of us and play the harps." And King Cyrus summoned the tribe of Levi before all the Hebrews and ordered that they should begin and sing to the accompaniment of the harps. They came before them and played the harp, and while shouting in unison they clapped their hands and beat the earth with their feet. Then the ground lifted immediately those who were standing on it, and mounted upwards, as if to cause the children of Israel to descend upon their own land, and their voices were heard that day in Jerusalem.

The Chaldeans feared then and became disturbed, and a cloud came down from heaven, and overshadowed the temple in Jerusalem. All those who were in Jerusalem ascertained in that day that the Lord had mercy upon the people of Israel, and that He was willing to deliver them from captivity. When Cyrus, king of the Chaldeans, noticed what had happened through the play on the harps, he feared greatly and said to the Hebrews: "Do not move the strings of your harps with your hands as long as you are in these countries, until you go to your own countries and praise your God in the town of Jerusalem." When the seventy years of the captivity had elapsed, there were three young men : Ezra son of Yaratha, and Daniel son of Betariah, and Ezekiel son of Buzi, to whom God spoke, and who prophesied in Babylon. They said to one another : " Let us take a lamb and go out to the desert and there offer a sacrifice to the God of Israel, as our fathers were wont to do, for the remission of their sins, and God used to send down to them from heaven a rod of fire and receive their sacrifices after they had offered them. Let us go and do the same because the grace of God and His mercy have perhaps come near us, and the Lord will send His angel to receive our sacrifice from us." And they did this.

Then Ezra took wood of nard, wood of styrax, and wood of ebony, in all three varieties of wood, placed a ram on the wood, turned his face towards the sunrise, and looked towards Jerusalem, and prayed to God of Israel, saying : " O Lord God of our pious fathers, the One and Eternal God, who heard Abel, the first murdered man, and took his revenge from his brother Cain ; who created the image of Seth beforehand according to His own image, and removed from him the power of darkness; who caused Enoch to ascend to heaven with his body on account of the purity of his heart, and taught him the secrets of heaven and what is to take place at the end of the world; who delivered Noah because of his justice, and granted to him the power of Adam before his fall and made him the lord of everything which is under heaven: I pray Thee and beseech Thee, O Lord, O Omnipotent God, to hear my supplication and listen to my prayer, and to my tears. Remember the covenant which Thou hast made with our father Abraham when Thou saidst to him, 'If thy sons keep My covenant, I will destroy their enemies.' Now, O Lord, I implore Thee to visit Thy servants, who are ready to die for Thy holy name. Listen to us to-day from the height of Thy heaven, and receive our sacrifice, smell its odour, and show pity and forgiveness to Thy people."

When Ezra finished his prayer with his brethren who were with him, their supplication reached the throne of the Lord, and their words penetrated the hearing of the Lord Sabaoth, who sent His angel, in the figure of a man, to take up their offerings to the Lord. Michael, the head of the angels, came down from heaven, and stood on their altar, and burned the wood and the lamb with a rod of fire that he held in his hand, and after the fire had consumed everything that was there, he ascended to heaven. He stood up in the air, looked at the three young men, and blessed them with the heavenly blessing, and then heaven opened and received him.

As to the prophet Jeremiah he went while wearing sackcloth to King Cyrus. He further interceded with the Lord in favour of the people, and while standing in prayer before the Lord, he said: "O Lord, O Lord, O God of my spirit and of my body, listen now to the supplication of Thy servant on behalf of the tribulations of this people against whom the days of Thy wrath have ended. Fulfil (Thy promise about) the appointed time that Thou hast decreed for the deliverance of Thy people." And the Lord summoned the angel Michael saying: "Make haste and go down to the land of the Chaldeans, and save the people and take them out of their captivity. If the inhabitants of Babylon impede them, I shall make heaven stick to the earth and I shall cause My wrath to dwell in them until they allow them to go from under their hands. Go also to the prophet Jeremiah, My elected one, and impart this news to him; take him to the king of Babylon, and deliver the people from him. If the king of the Chaldeans impedes them I shall destroy him with his people as I destroyed Pharaoh in the times of yore with the Egyptians who were with him, and all his chariots."

While the prophet Jeremiah was in the sepulchral vault weeping over the sins of the people, lo! the angel Michael came to him and said to him: "Peace be with you, O elected prophet of God. Grow cheerful because it is time for cheerfulness." And the prophet Jeremiah looked at Michael, the angel of God, and said to him: "Here I am, O angel of the Lord. I recognised thy greeting, and thy words have strengthened my bones. Where wast thou that thou didst not appear to me till this day in which I am in great trouble with this people, like a father with his children?" And the angel said to the prophet Jeremiah: "Here I am to-day before you in order to deliver your people, because I have been sent by God for this purpose, on account of your prayer which has been accepted. Thus says the Lord whom I serve, 'I have mercy on this people and I wish to send them back to their land and their country in order that they may serve Me there. If the kings of Babylon do not allow them to go, I shall wax angry with them and destroy their land, in order to force them to send them back, and if in spite of this they refuse I shall do with them what I did with Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.'"

After the angel Michael had said this to the prophet Jeremiah, he addressed him thus: "You remain here until I go and summon all the people to you." And the angel Michael went out and took the form of a Hebrew man, and assembled all the people of Israel in one place as if they were one man, and he repaired to those who were making bricks and clay and said to them: "You have worked sufficiently; go now to your father Jeremiah, because the Lord has saved you from this toil." And he went to those who were hewing wood and drawing water,

and said the same thing to them. And he went to town to those women who were weaving wool, and he said to them: "You have had enough work and toil; the Lord has saved you from your work, and given you deliverance. Come on and go to your father Jeremiah." And none was left, but all gathered together. The angel Michael gathered them all together with the prophet Jeremiah, and all went to King Cyrus and to the first general of the Chaldeans. And Jeremiah said to Cyrus and to Emesis his first general. "Listen to the words of the Lord, God of Israel." And he began to repeat to them the words uttered to him by the angel Michael. And Cyrus and Emesis said to the prophet Jeremiah: "And who is the God of Israel? You, O Hebrews, return to your work, and throw such words away from you." And the king ordered the prophet Jeremiah to be flogged before them; and this was done in a cruel way. And King Cyrus and Emesis went then out of the palace, and ordered the superintendents of the work of the Hebrews to strike the latter and torment them until they did their duty. And Cyrus and Emesis rode and went out themselves in order to torment the Hebrews.

In that very hour a cloud and mist appeared, the earth shook, a big earthquake occurred, wind became fierce, the sun suffered eclipse in the middle of the day, and darkness covered the earth. The inhabitants of the earth mixed pell-mell, horsemen with the crowds, and the feet of the horses that were ridden sunk deep into the earth like pegs; until all the Chaldeans cried to King Cyrus and to Emesis and said to them: "Is not this sufficient for you? Do you wish the Lord to do with us as He did with the Amorites?" As to King Cyrus he fell from his horse and his backbone broke; likewise the first general Emesis fell and his right arm broke to the elbow-joint. Then the two cried: "O God of Abraham and God of Isaac and God of Israel, God of the Hebrews, have pity on us; we have sinned against Thee, because we have not allowed Thy people to get out of our land. We pray Thee and beseech Thee, O Lord, to have mercy upon us and not to punish us for our sins. Pity us and heal us, and we shall let them go to their land in joy and peace." And the prophet Jeremiah had pity on them when he heard their words and their sobs, and he approached King Cyrus and raised him up from the ground and healed his bone which was broken; he did likewise heal the arm of the first general of the Chaldeans.

When the Lord noticed that their hearts had turned away from that on which they were bent, He gave orders and the earth and all the inhabited globe became quiet, and the sun shone on the surface of the earth. Then King Cyrus and Emesis summoned the Hebrews, reckoned their working days, and paid them their wages in full, and gave them much gold and silver. The king helped then the prophet Jeremiah to mount his own steed, and clothed him in royal garments, and placed his crown upon his head, and delivered to him many horses, mules, and camels, laden with provisions for the journey. He further wrote letters to all the land of the Chaldeans ordering (its inhabitants) to welcome the prophet Jeremiah and his people (when they passed by them), and wish them Godspeed in joy and merriment, and to honour them and render service to them until they left them. And the king presented also the prophet Jeremiah with twelve slaves.

And the prophet Jeremiah left the towns of the Chaldeans with all the people of the Hebrews. The number of the Hebrews who went out of Babylon was eighty thousand thousand; they had thus diminished by a hundred thousand thousand during their stay in captivity. When they left Babylon they began with prayers and supplications, saying: "Rise, rise, O Jerusalem, and rejoice, and wear thy diadem in joy and gladness, because thy children who had left thee with tears, fear, and sadness, have come to thee with joy, and jubilation." And the prophet Jeremiah went out to his land in joy and gladness, and all the towns of the Chaldeans honoured him, and horsemen were riding before him up to Jerusalem in order to praise it and to honour it with the people; and in this state they reached Jerusalem. As to the servant Abimelech, he awoke from his sleep and went out of the place in which he was sleeping, and the stone that was over him moved away. He looked at the basket of grapes, figs, and other fruits and saw that their dust was still on them, and noticed that the green foliage with which they were covered had become longer and broader. And Abimelech said to himself: "I have not overslept and my head is still heavy with sleep; I shall get some more rest and rise up and go to town, because it is time for me to take some food to the prophet Jeremiah, my blessed father, who is in prison."

When Abimelech awoke from his sleep, exactly seventy years had elapsed. He carried the basket of grapes, figs, and other fruits, which were as fresh as when they were picked, and entered Jerusalem. When he saw that its rampart was demolished and the town itself destroyed, and when he noticed that vines and fig-trees were just showing their buds, the palm-trees their spadices, and the sycamore trees their sprouts, he was amazed and bewildered. When he went inside the town and noticed that its streets had changed and its walls had either altered or were demolished, and that the destroyed buildings in it were reconstructed, and the reconstructed buildings in it destroyed, and when he did not find in it anyone whom he could recognise, his mind became confused, and he stood and said: "O my Lord and my God, what is this delusion that has overtaken me?"

Then he saw an old man collecting firewood, and he went to him, and the old man said to him: "What can I do for my son?" And he said to him: "What did King Zedekiah do to-day with my father, the prophet Jeremiah? Did he free him from the dungeon?" And the old man said to him: "What are these words you are uttering, my son? Who is Zedekiah, and who is Jeremiah? Seventy years have elapsed this day from the day in which Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, and carried the people into captivity to Babylon, and the prophet Jeremiah was among them." And Abimelech said to him: "Had you not been an old man I would have said to you that you were mad. I went a little while ago to the garden of my master and brought him fruits, but my eyes being somewhat heavy, I slept for a short time. Is it in this short time that the people were carried into captivity? Is it possible that darkness has overtaken them and covered them? Or that the moon has swallowed them that I am unable to see any of them?"

The old man answered then and said: "You are truly a holy man, and God spared you the sight of the destruction of Jerusalem, the great tribulations of the road and the subjection to

Nebuchadnezzar. He has brought down sleep upon you in order that you may see Jerusalem reconstructed as in the days of her glory. If you wish to ascertain the truth of my words: this is the first day in which the prophet Jeremiah arrived accompanied by all the people; this should be a proof for you that Jerusalem has returned to its former state. You are truly a holy man of the Lord, who had pity on you and granted you rest for seventy years, until the people came back to their place. O my son, these grapes and figs which are with you, the present time is not their season. Look, my son—and you are a holy man of God—look at the trees, how they are at this time of year, and know that this is not the time for grapes and other fruits.

This month is the month of April, and this day is the first day in which the prophet Jeremiah reached Jerusalem, after a stay of seventy years in captivity. The words that you have uttered square with one another. Lo, the people are coming now and with them branches of palm-trees, and holding in their hands twigs of aromatic bushes and olive-trees." Then Abimelech saw the prophet Jeremiah riding the horse of the king and shining like the sun, and he hastened to him and bowed down before him. When Jeremiah saw him he dismounted from his horse, embraced him, cried aloud to him and said: "Be welcome, be welcome, O my beloved Abimelech! Look at the honour that God bestowed on you. He does this to anyone who is merciful and charitable to his fellow-creatures. You had pity on me in the day of my tribulations, and the Lord has overshadowed you with His holy arm and placed you in a refreshing sleep till you saw Jerusalem reconstructed and glorified for the second time. You have not tasted of the food of subjection, nor have you borne the yoke of King Nebuchadnezzar during the last seventy years which we spent in captivity and persecution. God spared you this great hardship because of your charitable deeds. Let all those who hear your story do acts of charity and mercy with everybody, and God will spare them all trouble."

When Jeremiah finished his address to him, they all entered the town together. And Abimelech did not cease to be held in honour by the prophet Jeremiah and by the rest of the people all the time of his life. When the prophet Jeremiah entered the town he glorified God with this canticle: "Rejoice, O Jerusalem! Arise and wear thy diadem. Thy sons had gone out of thee with tears and sadness, and have now come to thee in joy and jubilation. Let heaven rejoice and earth jubilate over the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who have returned to their land. Let our fathers take their harps in their hands, and sing before the Lord, because God has brought back again their children who had been carried into captivity in which they had almost perished; Let Cherubim and Seraphim sing and praise with us over the sons of Abraham, and let them rejoice over the children of Israel who have returned again to their land and their country."

When Jeremiah entered the door of the Temple, he said to the door-post: "To thee I say, O threshold of the house of God, bring out the keys which I had confided to thee." And it immediately brought out the keys and delivered them to the prophet Jeremiah. And he opened the door of the Temple and he went into it with all the people, and they worshipped

before the Lord. And he entered the Holy of Holies where he saw the lamp burning as if it was fresh, and its light was shining, in the way in which he had left it, without diminution. It was with it that he had searched Jerusalem to discover if there was in it a man in whom there was mercy, and he did not find any. All of them worshipped God saying: "Holy, holy, holy! Thou art, O Lord, a just Lord, in all Thy actions, and Thou hast done everything with wisdom. Thou didst with us all this in order to punish us in the measure of our sins, and Thou hast requited us in proportion with our iniquities."

The prophet Jeremiah called the sons of Aaron and said to them: "Arise now and offer sacrifices to the Lord, and be pure according to the prescriptions of your priesthood." And he also went up to the terrace of the house of the Lord, and he stood on the corner-stone, and said: "To thee I say, O stone, Open thy mouth and bring out thy trust: the garment of the High Priest, because we are in need of it." And it brought out the garment, and Jeremiah handed it to the High Priest. And after that he went out before the sun, and said to it: "To thee, I say, O sun, the great luminary of heaven, bring out the mitre which I confided to thee and on which is the name of the Lord, the Holy One, because the Lord had mercy on His people, and we are in need of it for the service of the altar." Then the prophet Jeremiah stretched his hand towards the rays of the sun and the mitre came down from it, and he handed it to the High Priest. And he handed also to the High Priest the rest of the vestments of the house of the Lord which he had taken with him to Babylon.

[And the head of the priests who came with them from captivity wore the priestly robe, the garment and the mitre on which was written the name of the Lord, and the prophet Jeremiah put on the garment of the prophetic office—which God had ordered him to remove from him when he went into captivity and place in the Temple until his return from the deportation to Babylon—and approached the sanctuary of the Lord. The latter was filled with the glory of God, which spread over all the Temple and the people, and the glory of the Lord increased upon them with His mercy. And the God of Israel dwelt among them with the Cherubim and Seraphim]. As to the sons of Aaron they performed their duty, each one according to his own rank and order, and shouted with their horns, and offered sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord descended and filled all the house. And the fire came down from heaven and consumed the holocaust. All the people observed as a feast the twenty-fifth day of April and glorified the Lord with great joy."

Here as above (p. 173) it is very difficult to ascertain what was in the author's mind in using such terms as tailasan, kalansuah, izar, mandil, and rida. 2 M. "And Jeremiah spread his mantle and the mitre fell in it." 3 Read al-lati. Here again P. writes "Cherubim" with an initial shin, which denotes an Egyptian origin. All this paragraph between brackets is missing in M. P. adds "and harps. In Arabic hamalū "they lifted" which denotes the Syriac assek meaning "to lift" and "to offer sacrifice. (See above p. 180. Here again M. has the Hebrew-Syriac Nisān and P. the Coptic Barmudah which indicates its Egyptian origin. 9 Mingana 240 ends here with the following colophon: "Glory, praise, honour, and worship be to the Lord of hosts for ever and ever, Amen! Here [And the prophet Jeremiah worshipped

before the Lord and said : " Blessed be the Lord, God of Israel, and blessed be His name for ever and ever. He remembered His holy covenant and His oath to our father Abraham that his seed will last for ever. He looked from the heights of heaven upon His people and the heirs of His inheritance, He saw their grief and the sobbing of their hearts, delivered them with His mighty arm and powerful hand, and brought them back to His holy Temple.

To Him be glory, honour, majesty, and power, because He is the God of Israel, who destroyed His enemies who turned their hearts away from His service, and sacrificed to the idol of Baal, and worshipped it instead of God, their Lord, and offered incense to gods made with hands, and offered the blood of infants to the stars of heaven and to demons, and impeded them from walking in the way of God, their Lord. For this reason God delivered them to their enemies in order that they may wreak vengeance upon them. They uprooted their memory from the earth, and destroyed their seed from among the children of Israel, His people."

[Then the prophet Jeremiah arose and turned his face towards the people, and congratulated them on their safety and beautiful deliverance. He blessed them and made a covenant with them that they shall not relinquish the service of God, their Lord, and worship the idol of Baal for a second time. And they offered in that day numerous sacrifices, burnt-offerings, holocausts, and they rejoiced greatly in the house of the Lord, and thanked God immensely, and glorified His name, saying : " Blessed be the name of the Lord, God of Israel, who visited and delivered His people, and saved them from the hardships of the Chaldeans ; who took them out of Babylon and ends the story of the children of Israel and glory be to the Lord of lords, and King of kings, for evermore, Amen ! And praise be to the Lord of the worlds, Amen ! Here ends the story of the deportation of the children of Israel from Jerusalem into Babylon. May God have pity on the weak scribe, on the reader and the pious hearers. Amen ! Amen ! Amen !"

I give in the lines above between brackets the translation of the end of the story in the Paris MS. This end seems to be a later addition and is much under the influence of the Gospel of St. Luke i. 67-73. brought them to His land and His inheritance, which He granted to them; who returned to them their kingdom, prophecy, and priesthood; who did not allow His wrath to dwell with them for ever, but had pity on them and delivered them." [And the people did not cease to serve God with a good and perfect service, and with offerings and sacrifices, in all the lifetime of the prophet Jeremiah. And glory, praise, and thanks be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, now and for evermore, Amen! [Here ends, by the assistance of the Holy Trinity, this great story of the deportation of the children of Israel into Babylon. Remember, O Lord, Thy sinning servant, Cyriacus, who is unworthy of the name of man, because of the great number of his sins. He copied this from a bad MS., and he who finds in it a mistake and corrects it, God will forgive him his sins, because its scribe is the weakest, the most imperfect, and the lowliest of all the (men) of the world.]

Source. English translation by Alphonse Mingana, from ***Woodbrooke Studies: Christian documents in Syriac, Arabic and Garshūni***, edited and translated by A. Mingana, with introductions by Rendel Harris, volume 1 (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1927); public domain. The text was read by machine (Mistral OCR) from a scan of the 1927 volume at the Internet Archive and has not been proofread against the printed book. SermonIndex has removed running heads and page numbers, joined words split across lines, and divided the text into chapters and short sections; the wording is the translator's own. Footnotes and the editor's introduction are left out. Rendel Harris's introduction and the Syriac text in facsimile are also left out. No original-language text is shown beside it, and no modern English version has been made.

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