I. **43:8-13:** This oracle is intended to show that Egypt is no safe refuge from Nebuchadnezzar, the servant of God (25:9; 27:6), who led a successful raid against Amasis (Ahmosis II) in 568/567, some years after this oracle (46:13-26).

1. This is the first in a series of prophecies delivered by Jeremiah to the Jews in Egypt.

2. Jeremiah indirectly repeats the prediction (42:15-17) that the destruction which has already come to Jerusalem will now come to the disobedient Jews seeking refuge in Egypt.

3. This is an oracle predicts Babylonian invasion and subjugation of Egypt, stated in terms that have been heard before in regard to Jerusalem.

4. The language of the oracle betrays the fact that it is primarily a warning to the Jews that they in Egypt are no more righteous than their neighbors.

5. Egypt is like a second Jerusalem.

6. **44:1-14:** Addressed to the Jewish diaspora in Egypt, this oracle is Jeremiah’s warning against repeating the mistakes of their fathers in Judah and suffering the same consequences. Migdol is located just north of the present day Tell el-Heir, east of Tahpanhes. Memphis and Tahpanhes had been mentioned earlier: “Moreover, the people of Memphis and Tahpanhes have broken the crown of your head” (2:16). Pathros, “Land of the South,” is upper, i.e., southern Egypt, where there probably already existed by this time the colony at Elephantine, known from discoveries of Aramaic papyri dating from the 5th century.

II. **Disaster because of Idolatry, 44:1-30**

A. This final chapter details the debate, begun in chapter 37, between the Jews in Egypt and Jeremiah over the reasons for their sad condition.

1. The Lord speaks an admonition through the mouth of Jeremiah in 44:1-14.

2. The Jewish men and women reject this with bitterness in verses 15-19.

3. Jeremiah rebukes them for their attitude in 44:20-23.
4. The LORD closes with a second admonition and a sign in verses 24-30.

5. The tone is more strident, as the Lord becomes increasingly exasperated with the people’s growing obstinane.
   a. Familiar words, words whose fulfillment has been witnessed before, are ignored once again.
   b. And in the end, an all too familiar fate awaits Jeremiah’s hard-hearted audience.

B. 44:1-14: The admonition of the LORD in these verses is filled with expressions common to Jeremiah and the Books of Kings.

1. He describes:
   a. What has happened to Jerusalem (vv. 2-6),
   b. He brought great disaster on the people of Judah (v. 2; cp. 2 Kgs 21:12; Jer 11:11) because they provoked [LORD] to anger (v. 3; cp. 2 Kgs 17:11,17; 21:6,15; 22:17; 23:26; Jer 7:18,19; 11:17; 25:6-7; 32:29-32) by burning incense (cp. 2 Kgs 17:11; 22:17; 23:5,8; Jer 1:16; 7:9; 11:12,13,17; 19:4,13; 32:29) and by worshiping other gods (cp. 1 Kgs 9:6; Jer 16:13)
   c. He sent his servants the prophets to warn them (v. 4; cp. 2 Kgs 9:7; 17:13,23; 24:2; Jer 7:25; 25:4; 26:5); but they did not listen or pay attention (v. 5; cf. Jer 7:24,26; 11:8; 17:23; 25:4; 34:14; 35:15)
   d. So, his fierce anger was poured out (v. 6; cp. 2 Kgs 22:13,17; Hos 5:10; Jer 7:20; 10:25; 42:18; Ezek 20:8,13,21, 33,34) on Judah and Jerusalem (cp. 7:17; 11:6).

2. He then transitions to an indictment of the present audience, using similar expressions in accusing them, and piling on additional common phrases (vv. 7-10):
   a. He says they are bringing great disaster on themselves (v. 7), such that they will leave themselves without a remnant
b. They too have provoked his anger (v. 8) by burning incense to other gods; and so they will become an object of cursing and reproach (cp. Jer 24:9; 25:18; 26:6; 42:18; 49:13), just like their fathers and the kings and queens of Judah (v. 9).

3. He passes sentence by summarizing and adding more themes:
   a. He will bring disaster on them, just as he had on Jerusalem (v. 11)
   b. He will do away with the remnant who have gone to Egypt (vv. 12,14), rather than rebuild the nation with it; none of them will return to their homes.
   c. Instead, these people will suffer the same humiliating fate as those before them: they will die by the sword, famine and plague (v. 13; cp. Jer 14:12; 21:7,9; 24:10; 27:8,13), and they will become an object of cursing and horror, of condemnation and reproach (v. 12; cp. Jer 24:9; 25:18; 29:18,22; 42:18).

4. The result is that these Egyptian Jews are now in the mainstream of apostate sinners.
   a. They have escaped the Babylonians for the moment, but they are no better than their relatives and neighbors who have already been exiled.
   b. In fact, these expressions seem to make them the worst of the lot.
   c. This is because these people have been given the most opportunities to repent, yet they still refuse.
   d. They should know that idolatry leads to destruction
   e. They should recognize that the fall of Jerusalem was a result of the Lord’s wrath for their idolatry
   f. They should know the importance of “hearing the word of the LORD.”
   g. But they still refuse.
C. **44:15-19:** The refugees return to the worship of the *queen of heaven* (7:16-20), the Babylonian-Assyrian goddess Istar, goddess of the “star” Venus, also known in various cultures as the Canaanite Astarte, the Greek Aphrodite, and the Roman Venus.

1. **Queen of Heaven:**
   a. Probably first introduced by Manasseh (2 Kgs 21:1-18), suppressed by Josiah (2 Kgs 23:4-14), and restored by Jehoiakim (2 Kgs 23:36-24:7), the cult was especially popular among women, who had an inferior role in the cult of the Lord.
   b. Offerings included wine and star-shaped or crescent-shaped cakes or figurines bearing the image of the goddess.
   c. The cult persisted into the Christian centuries, and features of it were incorporated by the early Syrian church in the veneration of the Virgin.
   d. Of interest is how easy the misapplication of religious understanding can be.
   e. The people attribute their misfortune not to their disobedience to the God of heaven, but to their disobedience to the queen of heaven!

2. The response of the men (vv. 15-18) is one of open defiance.
   a. They make no denials and offer no apologies for their sinful actions.
   b. They admit that their predecessors in Jerusalem worshiped the Queen of Heaven, and they openly say, “We will not listen...” (V.16)
   c. Zedekiah’s humiliation for not listening (37:2) has had no effect on them.
   d. In their warped perception of past events, prosperity accompanied idolatry, and decline came with the worship of the Lord
e. The reader sees that they stand to suffer the same fate as er Zedekiah, and their parallel response to Jeremiah’s warnings fore cl shadows the fact that they will suffer that fate.

3. 19: And the women said

a. This is not in the Hebrew but is implied in the context as without our husbands' being involved? indicates

b. Making cakes might indicate that the women led the way in worshiping the Queen of Heaven.

c. That women would be drawn to the worship of a female deity is not surprising.

d. The reference to their husbands indicate too that, even at a time when it was considered unacceptable by the religious leaders in the nation, they continued rst to prepare what amounted to sacrifices to a foreign god, with the full knowledge of their husbands.

e. Such actions illustrate the true hypocrisy of the people and illustrate why the LORD regarded the reform as halfhearted (Jer 3:10).

D. 44:20-23 Jeremiah's response is a straightforward a reappraisal of the situation.

1. The Lord has brought Jerusalem down because of the idolatry of its inhabitants (v. 21).

2. Prosperity while practicing idolatry only showed the Lord's mercy

3. Once the Lord's patience reached its limit, he brought upon them the destruction he had been warning about for so long (v. 22).

4. So Jerusalem did not fall because its inhabitants turned away from their idols (as these people claimed) but because they have not obeyed (“heard”) the Lord or followed his laws or his decrees (cp. v. 10)

5. Like Zedekiah, they exemplify what happens to those who “hear” the Lord’s commands but refuse to “hear” (“obey”) them.
E. **44:24-30** The LORD now pronounces a final judgment on the people.

1. Their words of apostasy have been realized in their actions (vv. 24-25), so he hands them over to their sinfulness rather than wasting his time with any more calls for repentance (cp. Rom 1:21-23).
   
   a. He knows for certain that they will not “hear” him. He tells them to fulfill their oaths, and then he follows this with an ironic oath of his own. He swears by his own great name that none of them there will ever swear by his name again (v. 26).
   
   b. To swear by the Lord’s name was a right reserved for (and an opportunity accorded to) his people and nobody else (Deut 6:13; 10:20).
   
   c. Now, that right and opportunity has been taken away

2. **27-28:** brings the book full circle and ties the book together.

   a. The Lord has watched over his listeners — something introduced at Jeremiah’s call (1:12), when he told Jeremiah that he would be “watching to see that my word is fulfilled.”

   b. This theme of watching was then used in 31:28 as reassurance to those going into exile that he would one day bring them back to their land.

   c. Now it is used in the opposite sense, as he is watching over them for harm, and their decimation will show them whose word will stand.

F. **29-30** closes out the final message of judgment with a sign, something not used anywhere else in Jeremiah (cp. 2 Kgs 19:29;)

1. The sign takes the reader back to the beginning of this narrative section.

2. The Egyptian Pharaoh will suffer the same basic fate as King Zedekiah, by falling into the hands of his enemies.
3. Zedekiah’s shadow has already fallen across the career of Johanan; now it extends to the reign of Hophra as well.

4. The Jewish refugees have fled to Egypt for protection from the wrath of the Lord, but even those who are expected to provide protection there are endangered by their apostasy.

G. **Summary:** This section illustrates the basic struggle of faith:

1. Whom a person will serve (cp. Josh 24:14-15)

2. Faith is crucial because much of our life is lived in anticipation of what the Lord will do for us

3. Based on promises he has made to us. “We walk by faith, not by sight.”

4. But there are other “powers” in our life that make promises to us.

   a. Economic conditions and political conditions and health conditions affect the quality of our lives.

   b. People consider competing economic forecasts and philosophies, he opposing political ideologies and platforms, and a complex spectrum of physical and mental health traditions in deciding how to live me their lives.

   c. All those things lay claim to some power, to the ability to improve our lives.

   d. Among the various choices available, some conform to the will and commandments of the Lord.

   e. Every person must decide whose position to follow.