

### 23.17 Governor Gedaliah (2 Kings 25:22–25; Jeremiah 39:11–14; 40:1–16; 41:1–15)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] Brackets indicate a remark to the teacher that will not be read aloud; they also show answers to questions.

#### Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials. Please give credit to the sources of pictures. Likenesses of characters might change with the variety of pictures. Hopefully, this isn’t too confusing to young minds.
- Chains
- Fig Newtons® or dried figs to show and perhaps taste, or see picture below

**Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach:** Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print on colorful cardstock and cut apart.

- *surrender*: to give in to the enemy. Often, surrender is considered to be cowardly. That’s one reason why King Zedekiah didn’t like the idea. However, in the case of Jerusalem, God had said to surrender to the Chaldeans.
- *governor*: In the U.S.A., each state has a governor, one who is the head of the government. He is not president, nor is he king. He governs a smaller unit of government than a country.
- *summer fruit*: figs
- *remnant*: people left in a country after most have been taken away; spiritually, those who remain true to God while others forsake Him
- *shaved beard, torn clothes*: actions done by Jewish men to show sorrow

#### Scripture: (ESV)

Jeremiah 39:11 Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave command concerning Jeremiah through Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, saying, 12 “Take him, look after him well, and do him no harm, but deal with him as he tells you.” 13 So Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, [and others], and all the chief officers of the king of Babylon 14 sent and took Jeremiah from the court of the guard. They entrusted him to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, that he should take him home. So he lived among the people.

40:1 The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord after Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he took him bound in chains along with all the captives of Jerusalem and Judah who were being exiled to Babylon. 2 The captain of the guard took Jeremiah and said to him, “The Lord your God pronounced this disaster against this place. 3 The Lord has brought it about, and has done as he said. Because you sinned against the Lord and did not obey his voice, this thing has come upon you. 4 Now, behold, I release you today from the chains on your hands. If it seems good to you to come with me to Babylon, come, and I will look after you well, but if it seems wrong to you to come with me to Babylon, do not come. See, the whole land is before you; go wherever you think it good and right to go. 5 If you remain, then return to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon appointed governor of the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people. Or go wherever you think it right to go.” So the captain of the guard gave him an allowance of food and a present, and let him go. 6 Then Jeremiah went to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, at Mizpah, and lived with him among the people who were left in the land.

7 When all the captains of the forces in the open country and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land and had committed to him men, women, and children, those of the poorest of the land who had not been taken into exile to Babylon, 8 they went to Gedaliah at Mizpah—Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, Johanan the son of Kareah, Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, Jezaniah the son of the Maacathite, they and their men. 9 Gedaliah the son of

Ahikam, son of Shaphan, swore to them and their men, saying, “Do not be afraid to serve the Chaldeans. Dwell in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. 10 As for me, I will dwell at Mizpah, to represent you before the Chaldeans who will come to us. But as for you, gather wine and summer fruits and oil, and store them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that you have taken.” 11 Likewise, when all the Judeans who were in Moab and among the Ammonites and in Edom and in other lands heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant in Judah and had appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, as governor over them, 12 then all the Judeans returned from all the places to which they had been driven and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah. And they gathered wine and summer fruits in great abundance.

13 Now Johanan the son of Kareah and all the leaders of the forces in the open country came to Gedaliah at Mizpah 14 and said to him, “Do you know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites has sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to take your life?” But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam would not believe them. 15 Then Johanan the son of Kareah spoke secretly to Gedaliah at Mizpah, “Please let me go and strike down Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no one will know it. Why should he take your life, so that all the Judeans who are gathered about you would be scattered, and the remnant of Judah would perish?” 16 But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said to Johanan the son of Kareah, “You shall not do this thing, for you are speaking falsely of Ishmael.”

41:1 In the seventh month, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, son of Elishama, of the royal family, one of the chief officers of the king, came with ten men to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, at Mizpah. As they ate bread together there at Mizpah, 2 Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and the ten men with him rose up and struck down Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, with the sword, and killed him, whom the king of Babylon had appointed governor in the land. 3 Ishmael also struck down all the Judeans who were with Gedaliah at Mizpah, and the Chaldean soldiers who happened to be there.

4 On the day after the murder of Gedaliah, before anyone knew of it, 5 eighty men arrived from Shechem and Shiloh and Samaria, with their beards shaved and their clothes torn, and their bodies gashed, bringing grain offerings and incense to present at the temple of the Lord. 6 And Ishmael the son of Nethaniah came out from Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he came. As he met them, he said to them, “Come in to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam.” 7 When they came into the city, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and the men with him slaughtered them and cast them into a cistern. 8 But there were ten men among them who said to Ishmael, “Do not put us to death, for we have stores of wheat, barley, oil, and honey hidden in the fields.” So he refrained and did not put them to death with their companions.

9 Now the cistern into which Ishmael had thrown all the bodies of the men whom he had struck down along with Gedaliah was the large cistern that King Asa had made for defense against Baasha king of Israel; Ishmael the son of Nethaniah filled it with the slain. 10 Then Ishmael took captive all the rest of the people who were in Mizpah, the king’s daughters and all the people who were left at Mizpah, whom Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, had committed to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam. Ishmael the son of Nethaniah took them captive and set out to cross over to the Ammonites.

11 But when Johanan the son of Kareah and all the leaders of the forces with him heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done, 12 they took all their men and went to fight against Ishmael the son of Nethaniah. They came upon him at the great pool that is in Gibeon. 13 And when all the people who were with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah and all the leaders of the forces with him, they rejoiced. 14 So all the people whom Ishmael had carried away captive from Mizpah turned around and came back, and went to Johanan the son of Kareah. 15 But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men, and went to the Ammonites.

### **Introduction/Review:**

Nebuchadnezzar had accomplished God’s judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem [locate] by capturing the city and by burning it to the ground. Jeremiah had told Jerusalem’s King Zedekiah that there was opportunity for Jerusalem not to be burned. How could King Zedekiah have saved Jerusalem from being burned? [By surrendering to the Chaldeans.] Did King Zedekiah surrender? The obvious answer, since Jerusalem was burned, is no. What did King Zedekiah do instead? [Tried to escape.] What happened to him? [First, his

army deserted him. His sons were slain before his eyes; then his eyes were put out, and he was taken to Babylon [locate], where he was put in prison.]

The Chaldeans were ruthless, slaying both men and women, young and old. There was a very great slaughter of lives when Jerusalem was taken. But some escaped being slain. Why? [Because they surrendered.]

## **Story:**

### ***Care of Jeremiah***

What happened to Jeremiah when Jerusalem was taken by the Chaldeans? Was he slain, or did he survive? Remember, God had said Jeremiah would escape punishment and not be harmed (15:4). But what if Jeremiah stayed in the city? Wouldn't he be slain all the rest of the people who were slaughtered?

Now, Nebuchadnezzar had commanded Nebuzaradan, the captain of the Chaldean soldiers, to send men to take Jeremiah out of prison. "Take Jeremiah and look after him, and do him no harm; but do to him just as he says to you."

Isn't that something!? The conquering king knew about Jeremiah and chose to be kind to him. How did he know to protect Jeremiah? God had caused him to be kind (Jer. 15:11). Isn't our God awesome?

However, strangely, Nebuzaradan then chained Jeremiah along with the other captives and set off for Babylon. The mass of people got as far as the town of Ramah [locate], north of Jerusalem, when Nebuzaradan perhaps stopped and checked on all these people to determine if they would go on to Babylon. Nebuzaradan found Jeremiah and asked, "Now look. I free you today from the chains. If you want to come with me to Babylon, come, and I will look after you. But if it seems wrong for you to come with me to Babylon, remain here. Wherever it seems good and convenient for you to go, go there."

Before Jeremiah answered, Nebuzaradan seemed to know what Jeremiah wanted. He said, "Go back to Gedaliah, whom the king of Babylon has made governor over Judah, and dwell with him among the people. Or go wherever it seems convenient for you to go. Here is some food and some money. You are free to go." So Jeremiah went back to Gedaliah in the town called Mizpah [locate]

### ***Gedaliah***

Let me tell you about this Gedaliah. He was not a Chaldean from Babylon. No, he was one of the people from the land of Judah. About twenty years before, Gedaliah's father had saved Jeremiah from people who wanted to slay him. Since Gedaliah's father had respected Jeremiah, he probably taught his son to respect Jeremiah and his words. Therefore, he probably had surrendered to the Chaldeans, and they saw in him the qualities of leadership they wanted for the governor of the land. He was loyal to Nebuchadnezzar.

We haven't talked about this before, but you can imagine that lots of people, when they knew Nebuchadnezzar was coming to take Jerusalem, left Judah and lived in some of the countries around Judah—Edom, Moab, Ammon. [Locate these three countries south to north on the east side of the Jordan.] These folks, when they heard that one of their own, Gedaliah, was governor in Judah, went back to Judah, staying close to Gedaliah. They had an abundant harvest of summer fruit (figs) and grapes for wine.

When King Zedekiah's scattered army captains heard that Nebuchadnezzar had made Gedaliah governor, they also came to him—some, ✓ perhaps, to check him out; others, to give their support. Gedaliah said to this group of captains, "Do not be afraid to serve the Chaldeans. Live in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. As for me, I will indeed dwell at Mizpah and serve the Chaldeans who come to us. But you, harvest the summer fruit (figs). Dwell in your cities."

### ***The threat of Ishmael***

Those were kind words to the army captains. However, sometimes such people, having had a lot of power, want more power. Some of these captains had heard that one of them, Ishmael, a relative of King Zedekiah,

wanted to slay Gedaliah. The other captains came to Gedaliah and said, “Do you know that the king of the Ammonites has sent Ishmael to murder you?”

“I don’t believe it,” answered ✓kind-hearted Gedaliah.

Johanan, one of those captains, was so concerned for the safety of Gedaliah and the remnant of Judah that he secretly spoke to Gedaliah. “Let me go, please, and I will kill Ishmael. No one will know it. Why should he murder you? If he does, all the people here will be scattered, and the remnant in Judah will perish.”

“No,” answered Gedaliah. “You may not do this thing. You are speaking falsely about Ishmael.”

Okay, what do you think? Is Gedaliah too kind or naive about Ishmael? Is the rumor true? Does Ishmael want to murder Gedaliah?

### ***Ishmael's treachery***

Well, in less than three months, Ishmael himself came with ten men to visit Gedaliah. Gedaliah warmly welcomed them, even having a nice meal prepared and eating with them. But Ishmael and the ten men rose up against Gedaliah and slew him with a sword. Then, in order not to let the news spread, they slew all the Jews and Chaldeans who were with him, even men of war, and threw all their corpses into a cistern. No one knew what Ishmael had done.

One or two days later, eighty men came through Mizpah from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria [locate these cities of the northern tribes] on their way to Jerusalem. They all had shaved their beards and torn their clothes as Jews do when they are sad, but they had even cut themselves as the heathen do. Their intention was to go to the Temple site and offer sacrifices and incense to the Lord ✓because of God’s judgment upon Judah.

Ishmael, pretending to be as sorrowful as they, went to meet these eighty men, hypocritically weeping as he walked. When he reached them, Ishmael said, “Come and see Gedaliah.”

Unsuspecting, the eighty followed Ishmael into the middle of the city. What do you think happened to them? Wicked Ishmael slew them, too, and cast all their dead bodies into a pit. Ten of these eighty men, however, thought fast and said to Ishmael, “Don’t slay us, for we have treasures in the field. We have wheat, barley, oil and honey.”

✓“Okay!” said Ishmael. Then he took captive all the other people, including the king’s daughters and everyone who was still in Mizpah. Where did they go? To the country of ✓his friend, the Ammonite king [locate], just as the king of Babylon had taken captives to Babylon.

### ***Saved by Johanan***

Johanan, the captain who had been Gedaliah’s friend, got together other captains and chased after Ishmael to fight him. When Johanan defeated Ishmael, all of Ishmael’s captives were delighted, for they no longer had to go with Ishmael but with a kinder man, Johanan. Ishmael and eight men, however, escaped into the country of the Ammonites. We never hear of them again.

What would happen to this remnant now that their governor was dead? Would the Chaldeans come back and take them to Babylon? Would they remain in Judah? What would happen to Jeremiah? We will learn more next week.

### **Lessons from this lesson:**

- We see Jesus:

When everything and everyone around him was in distress, Jeremiah was encouraged by being cared for because of Nebuchadnezzar’s command. Jesus told the people who would experience the second destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in A.D. 70 to be encouraged—to “stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (Luke 21:28). Many years have passed since Jesus

made that statement; our redemption is nearer than it was then. Be encouraged by the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Be kind to people, but also be careful and discerning.
- God kept His promise to protect Jeremiah. He will keep His promises to us.
- Expect punishment for disobedience.

#### Activities:

- Play dough: sword, figs
- Snack: Fig Newton<sup>®</sup> cookies or dried figs (There's no guarantee that students will like them.)
- Review questions: (Game: As for last week's game, make a paper chain with 8 links. A student who answers a question correctly may tear a chain link, showing Jeremiah's being freed.)
  1. What had Nebuchadnezzar commanded regarding Jeremiah? [To do him no harm but do what he said to do.]
  2. Whom did Nebuchadnezzar set over Judah as governor? [Gedaliah.]
  3. Johanan, one of Gedaliah's friends, warned him about what? [That Ishmael wanted to kill him.]
  4. How did Gedaliah respond to this warning? [He said it wasn't true; he invited Ishmael to a feast.]
  5. What did Ishmael do to Gedaliah? [Slew him.]
  6. Eighty men came from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria to Jerusalem to do what? [Worship at the Temple site.]
  7. What did Ishmael do to the eighty men? [Slew all but ten of them.]
  8. Who rescued the people from Ishmael? [Johanan (Gedaliah's friend) and other captains.]

#### Memory Verse[s]: (ESV)

- Psalm 1 (The KJV has visuals at [psalm 1 - Bing images](#) words only, and [Tree & Psalm 1 - Openclipart](#) with a tree in the picture. The ESV has one at [\(840\) Pinterest](#) with a lamp and a Bible in the picture.)

**1** Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,

nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

**2** but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

**3** He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season,  
and its leaf does not wither.

In all that he does, he prospers.

**4** The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

**5** Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the  
righteous;

**6** for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

#### Handwork:

- Print the clipart page of figs. Have students color the picture and glue on barley and wheat.

**surrender**

**governor**

**summer fruit**

**remnant**

**shaved beard, torn clothes**















[FreeBibleimages :: The fall of Jerusalem :: Babylonians destroy Jerusalem and take the Jews into exile \(2 Kings 24:1 - 25:26\)](#)





[Blog – Gedaliah: Governor of Judah \(onochurch.org\)](http://onochurch.org)





[Ishmael Slaying Gedaliah - 2 Kings \(blueletterbible.org\)](http://blueletterbible.org)



**Figs (“summer fruit”)**





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## THE CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH

2 Chron. 36 : 11-21.

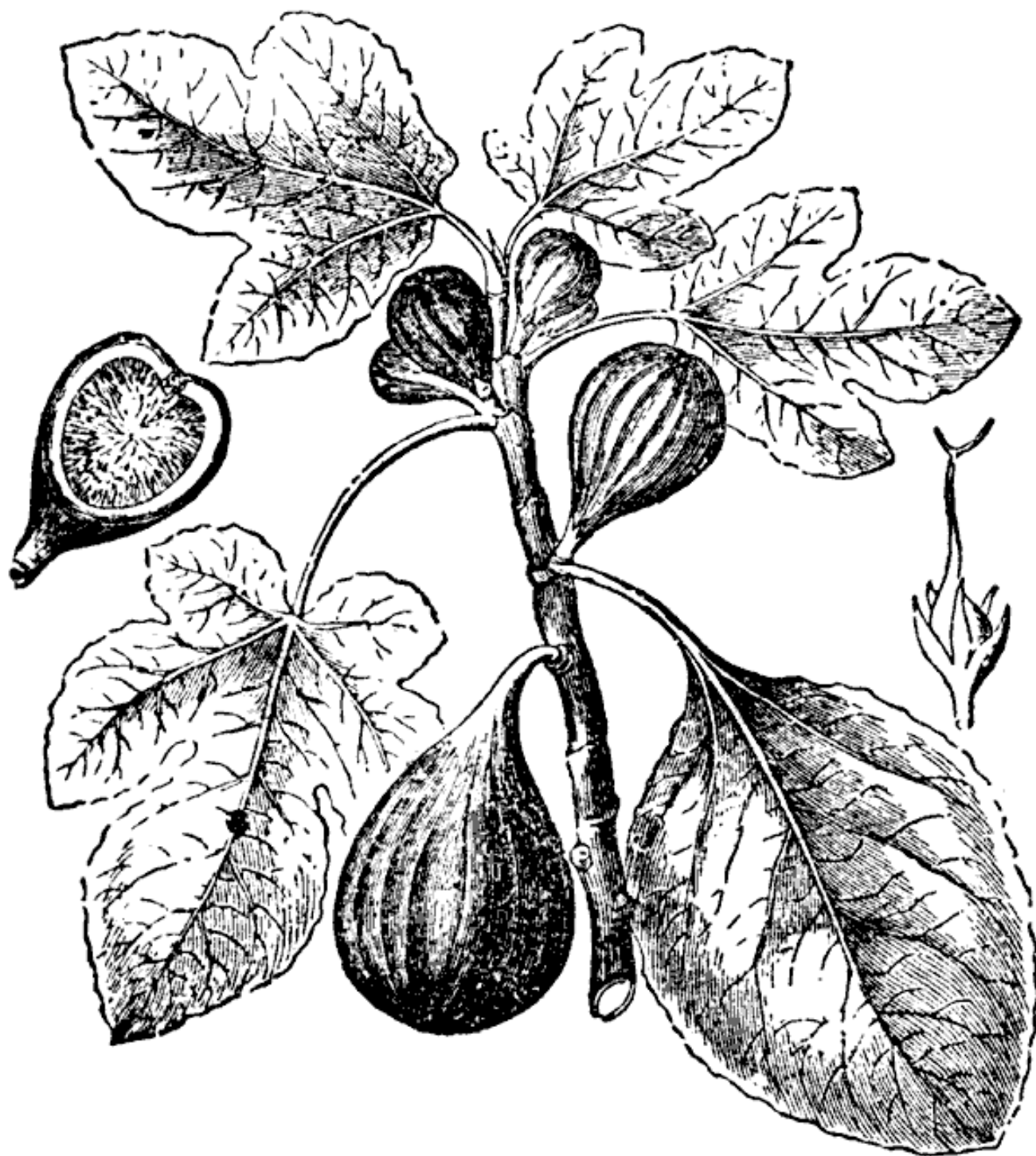
GOLDEN TEXT :—Be sure your sin will find you out.

Num. 32 : 23.





"There came certain from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria."—*Jer. xli. 5.*



## **Summer Fruit** (figs)

Color the fruit green, purple, or brown.

Color the leaves green.