

2 Kings 24 — According to the Word of the LORD — Nebuchadnezzar Comes Up, Jehoiachin Opens the Gates, Ten Thousand Go to Babylon, and a King Named Righteousness Takes a Tilting Throne

2 Kings 24: Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon comes up and Jehoiakim serves him three years, then rebels; the LORD sends bands of Chaldees, Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites against Judah for the sins of Manasseh and the innocent blood he would not pardon; Jehoiachin reigns three months, surrenders Jerusalem, and is carried to Babylon with the ten thousand of the first great deportation, the temple treasures with them; Nebuchadnezzar sets Mattaniah on the throne under the name Zedekiah — the commencement of whose reign is the very year of Lehi's call in 1 Nephi 1, c. 600 BC by the Book of Mormon's reckoning (secular chronologies date Jehoiachin's surrender to 597 BC).

One chapter ago the last good light in Judah went out on the plain of Megiddo. Josiah — the king who found the book, tore his clothes, renewed the covenant, and turned to the LORD "with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might" (2 Kgs. 23:25) — fell to an Egyptian arrow, and the kingdom he had scrubbed clean began to spoil at once. His son Jehoahaz reigned three months before Pharaoh hauled him to Egypt in chains and set another son on the throne under a new name, Jehoiakim, with the land taxed to pay for its own conquest (2 Kgs. 23:31–35). Judah has already stopped choosing its own kings.

Hebrew Word Studies

gedud (H1416) / davar (H1697) (גֶּדּוּד / דָּבָר) — **raiding band, marauding troop / word, speech, matter v. 2.** Two nouns share verse 2, and between them they carry the chapter's theology. *Gedud* is a raiding band — not an army with banners but the fast, ragged troops that hit farms and villages and vanish. It is the very word behind 2 Kings 5:2, where Syrian raiders "had gone out by companies" and carried off the little maid who pointed Naaman to the prophet — the Lord has used *gedud* traffic before, and in both directions: one band carried a witness into Syria; these bands carry a verdict into Judah. Four times the word drums through the verse — bands, bands, bands, bands — and the sentence's subject never changes: *the LORD sent*. Then comes *davar*, the "word" of the LORD spoken by his servants the prophets — the noun that governed the whole Elijah cycle (1 Kgs. 17:16). Hebrew lets *davar* mean both "word" and "thing, event," and this verse is the dark proof of the identity: what the prophets spoke and what the raiders did are one *davar* at two stages of its life. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void" (Isa. 55:11) is a promise when the word is mercy — and exactly as unbreakable when it is not.

naqiy (H5355) / salach (H5545) (נָקִי / סָלַח) — **innocent, clean, free of guilt / to pardon, forgive v. 4.** Two words face each other across this verse like plaintiff and judge. *Naqiy* — innocent — is doubled in the Hebrew as in the English: innocent blood, innocent blood, as though the narrator cannot say it only once. It is the word of Deuteronomy's ancient warning "that innocent blood be not shed in thy land... and so blood be upon thee" (Deut. 19:10). *Salach* is its counterweight, and its résumé makes the verse shattering: in the entire Hebrew Bible, *salach* is used only of God — never of one man pardoning another. It is the word of Solomon's temple prayer, where "hear thou in heaven... and forgive" tolls like a bell (1 Kgs. 8:30), and of Naaman's tender request that the LORD "pardon thy servant" his unavoidable bows in Rimmon's house (2 Kgs. 5:18) — a request the prophet answered with peace. That is what makes 2 Kings 24:4 one of the darkest clauses in scripture: the verb that exists only as God's prerogative appears here only to be withheld. *Would not pardon* — not could not; would not. Against a nation that institutionalized the shedding of innocent blood and would not turn, even the pardoning God lets justice speak. The gospel's answer to this verse is not that God grew softer; it is that innocent blood was finally shed *willingly*, once for all — and that blood, alone in history, cries out for mercy on the guilty rather than against them (Heb. 12:24; D&C 45:4).

galah (H1540) / golah (H1473) (גָּלָה / גּוֹלָה) — **to uncover, to reveal — and to go into exile; the exiles, the captivity vv. 14–16.** The Hebrew verb behind "carried away" and "captives" in verse 14 is *galah*, one of the most theologically loaded double meanings in the language. Its root sense is to uncover, to strip bare — and from that one root the Bible gets both its word for *revelation* and its word for *exile*. When the Lord discloses his counsel, he "uncovers" it: "Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he *revealeth* his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7) — that is *galah*. And when a nation is torn from its land, stripped of walls, temple, and throne, that is *galah* too; its noun *golah*, "the captivity," names the exile community in verses 15–16. The pun is the chapter's whole doctrine in one root: Judah refused the LORD's uncovering by

word, so it received the uncovering by event. God had laid his secret bare through Isaiah, Huldah, Jeremiah, Lehi, and "many prophets" (1 Ne. 1:4); a people that would not let the word strip their illusions was finally stripped of everything else. But the root keeps its double edge even in mercy — for it was to the *golah*, the stripped ones by Chebar's canal, that the heavens themselves were next uncovered (Ezek. 1:1). Revelation and exile are the same word because they are, in the end, the same act: God removing what covers, so that what is real can at last be seen.

Mattanyah (H4983) / Tsidqiyyahu (H6667) (מַתַּנְיָהוּ / צִדְקִיָּהוּ) — "gift of Jehovah" / "Jehovah is righteousness" vv. 17–18. Names are sermons in Hebrew, and verse 17 preaches two of them over one man. He was born *Mattanyah* — gift of Jehovah — a hopeful name from Josiah's reforming household. Nebuchadnezzar strips it and issues *Tsidqiyyahu* — Jehovah is righteousness — from *tsedeq*, the great covenant word for things being *right*: right weights (Lev. 19:36), right judgment (Deut. 16:20), the righteousness counted to believing Abraham (Gen. 15:6). The narrator lets the irony stand at full height: the last king of Judah reigns under a name that announces the very attribute his reign will prove — that Jehovah is righteous, and the throne is not. Jeremiah, who watched this king waver and break for eleven years, took the name and performed prophetic surgery on it: the day is coming, he said, when God will raise unto David a righteous Branch, a true King — "and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer. 23:5–6), *Yahweh tsidqenu*, Zedekiah's own name turned right side out. Not "Jehovah is righteousness" as an accusation over a failing throne, but "Jehovah is *our* righteousness" as the gift of a faithful one. The pun is the whole gospel in Hebrew: what the last son of David wore as a borrowed label, the final Son of David would be in fact — righteousness not demanded of us but given to us, a true *mattanyah*, gift of the LORD, at last (2 Ne. 2:3–8; Rom. 3:22).

From the Chapter's Architecture

But the true structure of the chapter is not the panels; it is the citations. Four times the narrator interrupts his own war reporting to file a source: "according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets" (v. 2); "surely at the commandment of the LORD came this" (v. 3); "as the LORD had said" (v. 13); "through the anger of the LORD" (v. 20). Strip those clauses out and you have a competent Babylonian chronicle — armies, sieges, tribute, deportation, a puppet king. Put them back in and the genre changes: this is not history with theology sprinkled on it, but prophecy's ledger being reconciled line by line, a hundred years of spoken warnings — Isaiah's, Huldah's, the Manasseh oracle, Jeremiah's — each stamped fulfilled in the margin. The chapter's architecture is an audit. And the auditor's finding is the one Judah could never make itself believe until the gates opened: the word of the LORD is the only load-bearing structure in the world. Thrones, alliances, temples full of gold, walls, armies — the chapter watches every one of them carried off to Babylon. The word alone does exactly what it said, to the letter, on schedule. Which means the same word's promises — seventy years, a returning remnant, a righteous Branch, six hundred years to a Messiah — hold the same weight.