

J E R E M I A H

—prophet to Judah, late seventh and early sixth centuries

Introductory Material

1. Date

Jer. 1:2-3, from 13th year of Josiah to 11th year of Zedekiah

Josiah	640-609 BC (13th year = 627 BC)
Jehoahaz	609 (= Shallum in 22:11-12)
Jehoiakim	609-597
Jehoiachin	597 (13:18-19; 22:24-30; cf. 2 Kings 24:12, 15)
Zedekiah	597-587 (11th year = 587 BC)

—these verses indicate range 627-587 BC

Jer. 25:1-3, 23 years, from 13th year of Josiah to 4th year of Jehoiakim, which was also first year of Nebuchadnezzar

Josiah's 13th year = 627 BC

Jehoiakim's 4th year = Nebuchadnezzar's 1st year = 605 BC

605 a big year for Jeremiah; cf. 36:1,2 - wrote prophecy up to that point (burned in 36:23)

Jer. 40-44, story of Jews in Jerusalem after 605 BC

includes Jews under governor Gedaliah and commander Johanan, with refugees going to Egypt
date, ca. 580 BC (?)

Jer. 52:31-34, record of elevation of Jehoiachin in Babylon

37th year of Jehoiachin's exile = 561 BC

accession of Evil-Merodach (= Amel-Marduk) = 562 BC

Conclusion: about a 65-year ministry, 627-561 BC
about age 21-86

2. The prophet Jeremiah

Jeremiah's family

1:1, priestly family

territory of Benjamin

Anathoth, Levite city, 1-1/4 miles north of Jerusalem (Josh. 21:18); Abiathar lived there after he was deposed for helping Adonijah against Solomon (1 Kings 2:26)

father Hilkiah, probably not the Hilkiah of 2 Kings 22-23, who found the law under Josiah (that one lived in Jerusalem and was of the line of Zadok)

probably born about the same time as Josiah was born, 648 BC

16:1-2, not married

Jeremiah's call

recorded in Jer. 1

emphasis on being able to be a prophet, "a child" (cf. I Tim. 4:12)

Jeremiah's reception

had royal favor until 609 BC, then opposition

2 Chron. 35:25, "Jeremiah lamented for Josiah"

Jeremiah's ministry

brave in the face of opposition

—he preached surrender, 2:8,9; 38:2

7:2, stand in the temple

17:19, in the gates of the city

22:1, in the gate of the king's house

the "weeping prophet"

4:19; 8:20-22; 9:1; 10:19, 23-24; Lam. 1:16

9:1 Oh, that my head were waters, And my eyes a fountain of tears, That I might weep day and night For the slain of the daughter of my people!

in spite of all, a burning compulsion to preach, 20:7-9

3. Historical background

(for earlier history, see under Micah)

622 BC, revival in Judah under King Josiah

612 BC, Nabopolassar of Babylon, along with the Scythians, destroys Nineveh; Ashuru-ballit II leads Assyrians to Haran

609 BC, Josiah dies at Megiddo trying to prevent Egyptian Pharaoh Neco II from helping the Assyrians against the Babylonians

Josiah's son Jehoahaz reigns only 3 months, is taken by Neco to Egypt, where he later dies

Neco installs a second son of Josiah, Eliakim (= Jehoiakim), as a vassal king in Judah

605 BC, battle of Carchemish; Nebuchadnezzar defeats Neco and the Assyrians and begins captivity of Judah; he makes Jehoiakim his vassal, and carries away captives, including Daniel and his three friends

during this year Jeremiah sends his scroll to King Jehoiakim (Jer. 36)

597 BC (March 15-16 per Babylonian Chronicle); Jehoiachin rebels, is taken with his family to Babylon as a captive, along with 10,000 other Jews (the "good figs" of Jer. 24, like Ezekiel's family)

*Archives at the Ishtar gate of Babylon mention provision for "Yaukin, king of Yahud"

Nebuchadnezzar installs Jehoiachin's uncle (another son of Josiah's) as vassal-king, Zedekiah

Zedekiah is the one who had Jeremiah thrown in a pit

589 BC, Zedekiah rebels against Babylon

588-587 BC, Nebuchadnezzar comes again, besieges Jerusalem, captures and destroys the city, kills Zedekiah and his children, installs Gedaliah as governor; takes nearly all the survivors in captivity to Babylon; leaves Jeremiah and only a few poor people

ca. 580 BC (?), Ishmael leads plot to kill Gedaliah

Johanan takes over; the people decide to flee to Egypt; Jeremiah goes with them

562 BC, Evil-Merodach (Amel-Marduk) succeeds father Nebuchadnezzar as king of Babylon

Evil-Merodach allows captive Jehoiachin more comfortable conditions in Babylon

Prophets contemporary with Jeremiah's earlier ministry: Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk

Prophets contemporary with Jeremiah's later ministry: Daniel, Ezekiel

4. Unity and authorship of Jeremiah

Arguments against the unity of Jeremiah are based solely on unproved critical theories, assuming that parts of Jeremiah must be later than the prophet:

10:1-16 quotes "Deutero-Isaiah"

17:19-27 depends on the P document

ch. 30-31 teaches a later "messianic hope"

A major problem with Jeremiah is the original text of the book.

1) The LXX is 1/8 shorter (2700 words) than the MT (massoretic text). The DSS manuscripts are divided, some of the MT type, others of the LXX type.

2) Also, the order of the LXX text is different:

(approximate LXX order) ch. 1-25
 ch. 45-51
 ch. 25-45

(See Gleason Archer article for LXX relation of Jeremiah to MT: *Trinity Journal* 12:2:135-150, Fall 1991.)

Some have suggested the possibility of two original editions produced by Jeremiah himself (cf. 36:32).

It is possible that ch. 52, coming much later than the bulk of the prophecy, was appended by Baruch.

There are chronological flashbacks throughout the book, but many synchronisms. The order appears related to the subject matter, to emphasize for each new king the history leading up to him.

The oriental mind is not necessarily chronological, but may deliberately use repetition for the sake of emphasis and teaching.

5. Archaeological notes

Babylonian Chronicles of Nebuchadnezzar

esp. for the years near 600 BC

includes Jehoiachin's captivity in 597 AD:

“Year 7, month Kislimu: The King of Akkad moved his army into Hatti land, laid siege to the city of Judah (Ia-a-bu-du) and the king took the city on the second day of the month Addaru. He appointed in it a (new) king of his liking [Zedekiah], took heavy booty from it and brought it into Babylon.” (ANET, p. 564; see D. J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings in the British Museum*, p. 73, plate 5, script on plates 14-16)

Lachish Ostraka

found at Lachish in 1932-38 by J. L. Starkey

carbon ink on pottery pieces, Old Hebrew script

written by military captain Hoshaiiah to his superior Joash in Lachish during Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Lachish in 588 BC (cf. Jer. 34:7)

*mention “the prophet”

pictures in Michael Avi-Yonah, ed., *History of the Holy Land*, p. 104; text in ANET, p. 322

Tablet confirming Nebuchadnezzar's "chief officer," Nebo-Sarsekim, with Nebz at the siege of Jerusalem in 587 BC: Jer 39

Tablet translated at British Museum in 2007, confirming the historicity of Nebo-Sarsekim

The tablet references this official's payment of .75 kg of gold to a temple in Babylon

For more info: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/07/11/ntablet111.xml>

6. Summary outline of Jeremiah

(For a clearer Hebrew structure, see Dorsey, p. 237, for his arrangement of seven blocks of material built around the keystone message of hope in chapters 30-33.)

1. Jeremiah's call, ch. 1
2. Prophecies against Judah, ch. 2-29
 - a. Against the people, ch. 2-18

- b. Against the rulers, ch. 19-29
- 3. Prophecies of the Messiah and the restoration, ch. 30-33
- 4. Disintegration of the kingdom, ch. 34-39
 - a. Zedekiah's false liberty proclamation, ch. 34
 - b. The Rechabites' good example, ch. 35
 - c. Jehoiakim burns Jeremiah's scroll, ch. 36
 - d. Jeremiah's experiences during the siege and capture of Jerusalem, ch. 37-39
- 5. Jeremiah after the captivity, ch. 40-45
 - a. Jeremiah in Judah, ch. 40-41
 - b. Decision to go to Egypt, ch. 42-43
 - c. Prophecies against the stubborn Jews in Egypt, ch. 44
 - d. Compensation to Baruch (605 BC), ch. 45
- 6. Prophecies against the nations, ch. 46-51
- 7. Historical appendix, ch. 52

Outline and Contents of Jeremiah

1. Jeremiah's call, ch. 1

v. 10, Jeremiah's ministry

cf. God's providence in 18:7-9; 31:27,28

vv. 11-12, *a pun*

almond tree, שָׂדֵךְ *shaqed*

I am watching, שֹׁדֵךְ *shoqed*

vv. 13-15, boiling pot, symbol of war

eastern armies approach from the north

2. Prophecies against Judah, ch. 2-29

a. Against the people, ch. 2-18

errant wife, 2:2, 32; 3:1-9, 14

hypocrisy under Josiah, 3:10

individual salvation needed, 4:3-4, 14 (**כַּבַּשׁוּ** *cabas*, “wash your heart”); 6:16; 9:23-24; 17:14; 18:11

4:4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, And take away the foreskins of your hearts, You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, ... 14 O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, That you may be saved.

desolation to come, 4:23-26, 30; 5:15-19; 6:22-23

apostasy, 2:11-13, 28; 5:1, 4, 30-31; 6:7, 10; 7:31 (human sacrifice)

total depravity, 13:23; 17:9

17:9 " The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?

no peace, 6:14; 8:11

Mosaic covenant repeated and broken, 7:5-7; especially 11:1-13; 17:24-27; 18:1-12 (potter's vessel)

worthless idols and superstitions, 10:2-5

God's power, 10:6-16

Jeremiah's sympathy, 4:19-26; 8:18-22; 9:1; 13:17; 14:17; cf. Lamentations

plea for mercy from God, 10:23-25; drought, ch. 14-15

10:23 O LORD, I know the way of man *is* not in himself; *It is* not in man who walks to direct his own steps.
24 O LORD, correct me, but with justice; Not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing.

future restoration for Israel, largely based on promises to the fathers, 3:15-19; 12:15; 16:14-15

covenant for Israel's neighbors, 12:14-17

Jeremiah's sash and long walks, 13:1-11

Jeremiah not popular in Anathoth, 11:21-23; 18:23

b. Against the rulers, ch. 19-29

speech in Hinnom, “Valley of Slaughter” because of child sacrifice; potter’s vessel, 19:1-13

speech in temple court, 19:14-15

Jeremiah in stocks, and speech to chief temple officer, Pashur, 20:1-6

response of Jeremiah is “MaggorMissabib,” literally “terror on every side!”

compulsion to preach, 20:7-9

20:9 But *His word* was in my heart like a burning fire Shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding *it* back, And I could not.

submission to Babylon, 21:8-10

last minute covenant, 22:4-5

(probably spoken earlier)

weeping for exiles, 22:10

prophecy for Jehoahaz, 22:11-12

prophecy for Jehoiakim, 22:18-19

prophecy for Jehoiachin that requires the virgin birth of Christ, 22:24-30

22:24 " As I live," says the LORD, "though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet on My right hand, yet I would pluck you off; ... 30 Thus says the LORD: 'Write this man down as childless, A man *who* shall not prosper in his days; For none of his descendants shall prosper, Sitting on the throne of David, And ruling anymore in Judah.' "

the future king in the kingdom age, “the Lord our righteousness,” 23:3-8

this opening section describes the false shepherd kings, in contrast to the coming good Shepherd. The following section indicts the false prophets.

false prophets, 23:9-40

good and bad figs, ch. 24

(written after 597 captivity of Jehoiachin)

beginning of the 70-year captivity, 25:1,12

11 'And this whole land shall be a desolation *and* an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

12 ' Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, *that* I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,' says the LORD; 'and I will make it a perpetual desolation.

start in 605 BC (25:1)

finish with return of Zerubbabel under King Cyrus in 536 BC

70 years, see 25:11-12; 29:10 (noted in Dan. 9:2)

2 Chron. 36:20-21; cf. Lev. 26:34-35

interesting note: also 70 years that the temple was destroyed, from 587 BC destruction to being rebuilt in the sixth year of Darius (Ezra 6:15; start rule in 522)

year of Josiah's death, 609 BC, 26:1

"last chance," 26:3-4, 13

close call, saved by princes, who quoted former prophet Micah (26:8-24; ch. 1:18-19; Micah 3:12 - 4:1)

but prophet Uriah killed (26:20ff.)

probably a textual error in 27:1; cf. vv. 3, 12, 20; esp. 28:1

probably should be 4th year of Zedekiah (594 BC); see NIV text and footnotes

sovereignty of God, 27:5

command for all nations to submit to Nebuchadnezzar

bonds and bars, ch. 27-28

Hananiah and iron bars, ch. 28:16

false optimistic prophecy, 28:11ff.

Jeremiah's letter to the captives: "settle into captivity...", 29:1-23

v. 10, 70 years

message to Shemiah, another false prophet, 29:24-32

3. Prophecies of the Messiah and the restoration, ch. 30-33

first tribulation, then the kingdom, ch. 30

Time of Jacob's trouble: 30:7 Alas! For that day *is* great, So that none is like it; And it *is* the time of Jacob's trouble, But he shall be saved out of it.

Cf. Dan 12:1

THE NEW COVENANT, 30-33

The New Covenant grows out of God's covenant with Abraham in His plan to restore His creation design, and it promises a Davidic King (30:9). This covenant is new, not in its promises, but in that both sides will henceforth keep its terms. The covenant faithful God will put His law within the heart of the people so that they all keep covenant, not just the original representatives.

Hebrews 8 & 9 further elaborate on Jeremiah's clear statement of the New Covt. Ezekiel 36:24-27 also describes the new heart that God gives, as well as the promises of the renewed earth.

Jer. 31:31-40; cf. 32:38-40; Ezek. 36:24-27; Heb. 8:6-13

31 " Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah -- 32 "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. 33 "But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

note particular physical promises; e.g., 30:18; 31:23-26, 38-40

Israel's conversion promised, 30:9; 31:9, 18-19, 33-34

Jeremiah under "house arrest," 32:1-2 (588 BC)

Jeremiah buys field in Anathoth from his uncle Hanamel for 17 shekels of silver; this investment serves as an earnest that God's people will have future back in the land, 32:9

the power of God, 32:17-19, 27

captivity, then return and the kingdom, 32:36-44

“everlasting covenant,” v. 40

38 'They shall be My people, and I will be their God; 39 'then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them. 40 'And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me. 41 'Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will assuredly plant them in this land, with all My heart and with all My soul.' 42 " For thus says the LORD: 'Just as I have brought all this great calamity on this people, so I will bring on them all the good that I have promised them.

kingdom covenant confirmed in Messianic Branch, 33:14-26

15 'In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David A Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. 16 In those days Judah will be saved, And Jerusalem will dwell safely. And this *is the name* by which she will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.' 17 "For thus says the LORD: 'David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel;

preceded by salvation, 33:8

covenant is faithful as day and night, creation, and now covenant, witnesses, 33:20, 25

20 "Thus says the LORD: 'If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, 21 'then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levites, the priests, My ministers. 22 'As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so will I multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.' "

4. Disintegration of the kingdom, ch. 34-39

a. Zedekiah's false proclamation of liberty, ch. 34:8ff.

note covenant form of the proclamation involving sacrifice, vv. 15,16, 18-19; cf. Gen. 15

18 'And I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in two and passed between the parts of it -- 19 'the princes of Judah, the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf --

b. The Rechabites' good example, ch. 35 (cf. II Chron. 2:55)

(ch. 35 and 36 are in the time of Jehoiakim) This family of Nazirites perhaps descended from Caleb or the Kenites.

c. Jehoiakim burns Jeremiah's scroll, ch. 36

the curse given to Jehoiakim (v. 30) is same as that for Jehoiachin in 22:30

d. Jeremiah's experiences during the siege and capture of Jerusalem, ch. 37-39

false to hope in Egypt, ch. 37

quite a statement, v. 10

Jeremiah beaten, imprisoned

(dungeon → court of the guard)

Jeremiah rescued from the pit by Ebed-Melech, ch. 38

cf. 39:15-18

capture of Jerusalem, ch. 39

5. Jeremiah after the captivity, ch. 40-45

a. Jeremiah in Judah, ch. 40-41

b. Decision to go to Egypt, ch. 42-43

43:10, Nebuchadnezzar's throne in Egypt; cf. 44:30

Pharaoh Hophra (589-570 BC)

similar predictions against him in Ezek. 29:1-16; 30:20-26; ch. 31-32 (587-585 BC), and in Ezek. 29:17 - 30:19 (570 BC)

Pharaoh Hophra was killed in a revolt in 570 BC; Nebuchadnezzar then invaded Egypt in 568-567 BC.

a fragmentary historical text: "in the 37th year, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, marched against Egypt to deliver a battle . . ." (ANET, p. 308d)

c. Prophecies against the stubborn Jews living in Egypt, ch. 44

d. Compensation to Baruch, ch. 45

(during time of Jehoiakim, 605 BC)

6. Prophecies against the nations, ch. 46-51

(similar to Amos 1-2 and Isaiah 13-23)

Egypt, ch. 46

vv. 2-12, battle of Carchemish in 605 BC

vv. 13-26, Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Egypt in 568 BC

Philistia, ch. 47

Moab, ch. 48

Ammon, 49:1-6

Edom, 49:7-22

Syria, 49:23-27

Kedar and Hazor, 49:28-33

Kedar was second son of Ishmael (Gen. 25:13); it was in the distant east in Jer. 2:10, a tribe in northern Arabia (see article in ZPEB by A. A. MacRae); it was destroyed by Assurbanapal and by Nebuchadnezzar.

Elam, 49:34-39

son Shem, Gen. 10:22

capital of the Persian empire; cf. Acts 2:9

Babylon, ch. 50-51

appropriate conclusion, end with Babylon

51:11, Medes = the tool against Babylon

51:36, "dry up the waters of Babylon"

51:41, **שֶׁשַׁק** *sheshak* = an "Athbash" (i.e., a cryptogram **אֶתְבַּשׁ**) for **בָּבֶל** *Babel*

51:59-64, this judgment book against Babylon is thrown into the Euphrates in the 4th year of Zedekiah

7. Historical appendix, ch. 52

from Zedekiah to the elevation of Jehoiachin in 561 BC

vv. 28-30, 3 “captivities” = 4600 people

see Keil II, pp. 327-31 for discussion of problems

cf. 2 Kings 25:18-21