

Jeremiah

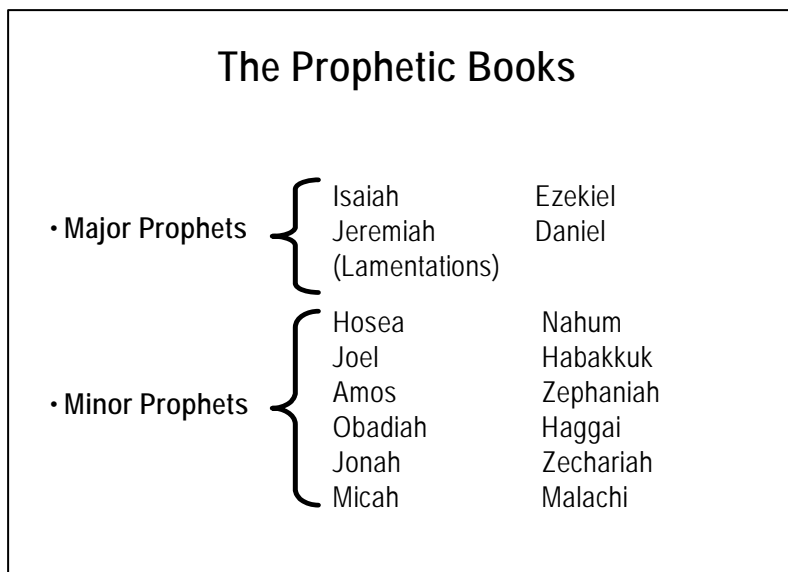
Introductory Issues

I. Message

Divine judgment for sin serves as a warning to all and a precursor to blessing for those who put their hope and trust in God.

II. Title

The title of the book in English, Greek (IEREMIAS, LXX), and Hebrew (יֵרֵמְיָהוּ) is “Jeremiah,” the author of the book. Interpreters differ as to the meaning of the name with suggestions including “YHWH founds (or establishes),” “YHWH exalts,” “YHWH throws down,” “YHWH hurls,” or “Yahweh loosens (the womb).”¹ The book is included among the prophets in the Hebrew (Latter), Greek LXX, and the English Bibles.



III. Authorship

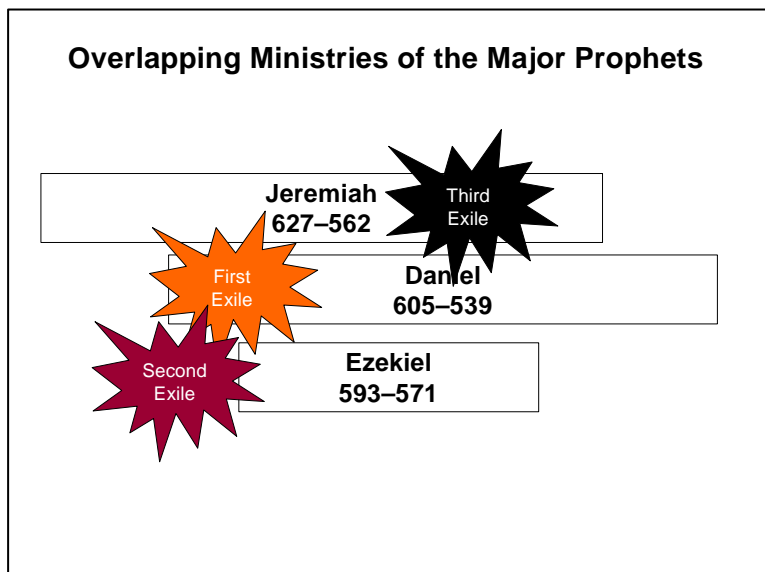
There is little real doubt that Jeremiah is the author of the book that bears his name.² The book is replete with personal details about its author. For example, we read that he was from a priestly family, the son of Hilkiah, from the village of Anathoth (1:1). The book also details his ministry, mistreatment, and melancholy spirit.

¹ The name is fairly common with at least nine other men bearing the name (1 Chr 5:24; 12:4, 10, 13; Neh 10:2; 12:1, 34; Jer 35:3; 52:1).

² It is possible that a latter redactor (Baruch?) was responsible for the third person biographical sections (chps. 26–29; 32–45) and the final arrangement of Jeremiah’s material.

IV. Date

The issue of dating Jeremiah really involves two issues: (1) the date of the prophecies, and (2) the date of the final composition. Concerning the date of the prophecies, Jeremiah himself notes that he began his ministry on “the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah [640–609 B.C.] or 627/26 B.C. (1:2). According to 1:3, Jeremiah’s ministry extended “down to the fifth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah (597–586 B.C.). But Jeremiah 40–44 suggests that the prophet’s ministry extended a bit beyond that since the book records Jeremiah’s forced travel into Egypt following the murder of Gedaliah. Unfortunately, no date is given but there is some evidence to suggest that it was in 582 B.C.³ Jeremiah 52 refers to the release of Jehoiachin from prison in Babylon which occurred in 562 B.C. Although, he would have been quite old, Jeremiah could have penned this chapter as well. Others suggest that Baruch or someone else appended this chapter to the end of the book sometime after 562 B.C. This suggestion appears to be bolstered by 51:64 which states that the words of Jeremiah ended there. As far as the final composition of the book, it would have been after 562 B.C, probably shortly after.



V. Recipients

The original recipients of Jeremiah are not explicitly identified. Jeremiah’s messages were preached primarily to pre-exilic Judah, but the final written form was likely intended for an exilic audience. This appears to be supported by the inclusion of chapter 52 which not only refers to an exilic period event, but would also have provided hope and encouragement for the Jewish exiles in Babylon.

³ In 52:30, we note that 745 people were exiled to Babylon. This event occurred in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar or 582 B.C. The text does not state the reason for the deportation, but it could have been in retaliation for the murder of Gedaliah. If that is the case then Jeremiah’s ministry extended to at least around 582 B.C.

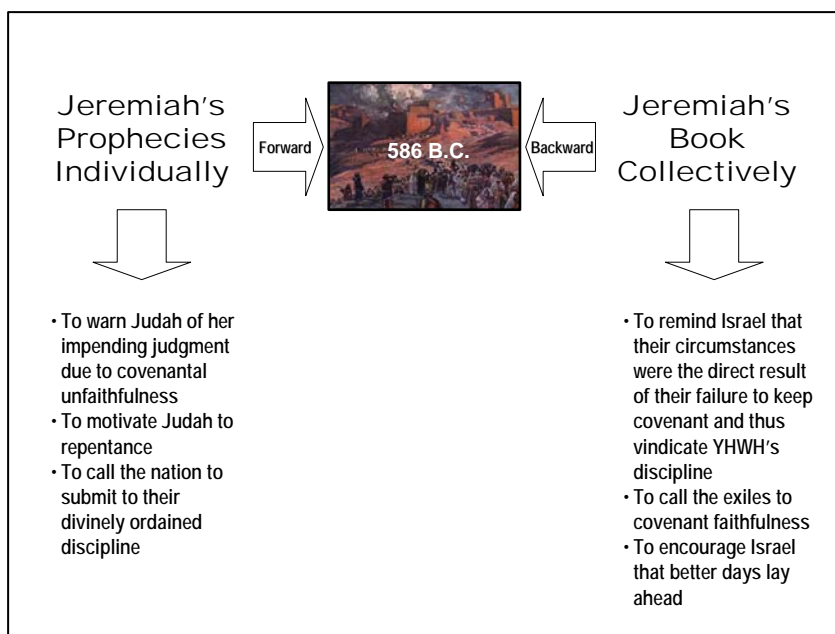
VI. Occasion and Purpose

The Book of Jeremiah is set in pre-exilic Judah. It begins during the thirteenth year of the reign of the reformist king Josiah (627 B.C.) and extends to the release of Jehoiachin from prison in Babylon in 562 B.C (cf. 2 Kgs 21–25; 2 Chr 33–36). Jeremiah’s ministry overlapped those of Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Ezekiel, and Daniel. During this period Judah experienced both religious reforms under Josiah (cf. 2 Chr 34:8–21) and a spiritual decline under a succession of wicked kings. The political situation was unstable with the decline of the Assyrians, the rise of the Babylonians, and the ever present influence of the Egyptians. All of these factors would culminate in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C. and exile to Babylon just as Jeremiah prophesied.

In discussing the purpose of the Book of Jeremiah we must distinguish between the original purpose of the individual messages given primarily in pre-exilic Jerusalem and the purposes of the Book of Jeremiah given to the exiles in Babylon.

The original purposes of Jeremiah are at least threefold. First, Jeremiah was written to warn Judah of her impending judgment due to covenantal unfaithfulness. Second, in light of the first purpose, Jeremiah’s messages were given to motivate Judah to repentance. Third, when Judah failed to repent, Jeremiah called the nation to submit to their divinely ordained discipline.

The Book of Jeremiah which was completed during the exilic period was written for at least three reasons. First, the Book of Jeremiah reminded Israel that their circumstances were the direct result of their failure to keep covenant and thus vindicate YHWH’s discipline. Second, because of reason one, Jeremiah calls the exiles to covenant faithfulness. Third, Jeremiah was written to encourage Israel that better days lay ahead. Israel’s covenantal relationship with YHWH was damaged not destroyed and God had not forsaken His people although they had forsaken Him.



VII. NT Contribution

| Christological | Other |
|---|---|
| 1. Jeremiah is seen as a type of Christ by some 2. Two messianic passages (23:5–6; 33:14–17) 3. The New Covenant in Jeremiah is intimately tied to the ministry of Christ (e.g., Heb 8) | 1. There are about 5 quotations of Jeremiah in the New Testament. 2. There are about 120 allusions or verbal parallels from Jeremiah in the NT |

VIII. Literary Features and Structure

Literary Features

In this section we will discuss five literary features of Jeremiah: (1) chronological displacement, (2) autobiographical emphasis, (3) literary variety, (4) symbolic activities, and (5) logical/topical⁴ arrangement.⁵

Chronological displacement

Interpreters have been quick to note that the material in Jeremiah is not arranged in chronological order. Charles Feinberg suggests the following arrangement.

Reign of Josiah — chs. 1–6

Reign of Jehoahaz — nothing (cf. 22:10–12)

Reign of Jehoiakim — 7:1–13:17; 13:20–20:18; 25–26; 35–36; 45:1–46:12; 47; 48 (?); 49

Reign of Jehoiachin — 13:18–19; chs. 22–23 (?)

Reign of Zedekiah — chs. 21; 24; 27–34; 37–44; 46:13–28; 50–52⁶

Autobiographical emphasis

It is frequently noted that Jeremiah contains more personal details about the prophet's life and emotions than any of the other writing prophets. Concerning his personal background we are told who his father was (Hilkiah), that he was born into a priestly family, and that his home town was Anathoth. We are told about his call to ministry as well as a number of incidents that occurred in his ministry. Jeremiah frequently bears his soul (11:18–23; 12:1–4; 15:10–21; 17:12–18; 18:18–23; 20:7–18) he laid bare the deep struggles of his

⁴ Dyer uses logical and Feinberg uses topical but both appear to refer to the same concept.

⁵ The following is indebted to Charles Dyer's categories and discussion although the material has been reshaped a bit (Charles H. Dyer, "Jeremiah," in *Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck [Wheaton, IL: Scripture Press Publications, Victor Books, 1985], 1127-8).

⁶ Charles Lee Feinberg, "Jeremiah," in *Isaiah-Ezekiel*, vol. 6, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein and Richard P. Polcyn. 12 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 367.

inmost being, sometimes making startlingly honest statements about his feelings toward God (12:1; 15:18). He has been frequently referred to as the “weeping prophet.”

Literary variety

The Book of Jeremiah is rich in literary forms. There are at least three basic types of forms contained in Jeremiah: (1) poetic discourses, (2) prose discourses, and (3) prose narratives (see table below). There is some disagreement concerning which sections are prose and which are poetry. This can be seen in comparing arrangements in the various English translations.⁷ Jeremiah’s poetry is characterized by skillful use of devices such as repetition of key words, cryptograms (e.g., 25:26; 51:1, 41), alliteration and assonance (e.g. 51:2; 24:17).

Chapters 1–25 Mixture of poetic and prose discourse with occasional narrative

Chapters 26–29 Mixture of prose discourse and narrative

Chapters 30–31 Poetic discourse

Chapters 32–33 Prose discourse

Chapters 34–36 Mixture of prose discourse and narrative

Chapters 37–45 Narrative in chronological order

Chapters 46–51 Poetic discourse

Chapter 52 Narrative in chronological order⁸

Symbolic Activities

Another interesting feature of Jeremiah is the abundant use of symbolic activity, a form living parables. These symbolic activities include a linen waistband (13:1–11), a commitment to celibacy (16:1–4), the potter’s house (18:1–10), a broken jar (19:1–6), a basket of figs (24:1–10), offering a cup of God’s wrath (25:15–29), a yoke (27:1–22), buying a field in Anathoth (32:6–15), the Rechabites (35:1–19), burying large stones in the pavement at the entrance to Pharaoh’s palace in Tahpanhes (43:8–13), and instructing Seraiah, son of Neriah and brother of Baruch to read a scroll and then throw it into the Euphrates River (51:59–64).

Logical/Topical arrangement

We have already noted the Jeremiah is not arranged chronologically. But this is not to say that there is no order to the arrangement of the materials. Dyer suggests that Jeremiah

... used a broad logical arrangement of his material to convey an overall message to the people. That is, as Jeremiah compiled his subsequent collections of his prophecies, he rearranged them in a logical pattern. The arrangement developed his theme of God’s judgment. Chapters 2–45 focused on God’s judgment on Judah and chapters 46–51 focused on God’s judgment on the Gentile nations.⁹

⁷ Some suggest that Jeremiah is primarily poetic whereas Feinberg suggests that “the book contains both prose and poetry in practically equal portions” (Ibid., 368).

⁸ Dyer, “Jeremiah,” 1127.

⁹ Ibid., 1128.

While Dyer may be correct, the issue of the structure of Jeremiah has confounded many interpreters as will be noted in the discussion of structure.

Structure

Identifying the structure of Jeremiah is a universally recognized problem. Robert Carroll calls Jeremiah “enigmatic”¹⁰ and John Bright speaks of a “hopeless hodgepodge thrown together without any discernable principle of arrangement at all.”¹¹ Terence Fretheim notes that, “Several factors contribute to this difficulty, including less than obvious development of thought, the lack of consistent chronological ordering, the references to various scrolls and other writings, and the differences between the Hebrew Bible and the LXX.”¹² If one adds to this the possibility the Jeremiah is not a book in “the normal sense of that word; it does not move from beginning to end, following a clear logic and inner development” but rather “an anthology, or more precisely an anthology of anthologies,” then things get complicated indeed.¹³ But that being said, surely the author/redactor did not put together the material (anthology or not) in a totally haphazard way. The fact that the material appears to be purposefully dischronologized suggests some overarching rationale. Our approach will be to take a thematic and theological approach which will be closely aligned to the purpose of encouraging exilic Israel to covenant faithfulness by avoiding the mistakes of the past and looking forward to God’s redemption and restoration of the nation.

- I. Jeremiah is called to be a prophet to Judah (1:1–19).
- II. Jeremiah prophesies concerning Judah’s sin and judgment (2:1–25:38).
- III. Jeremiah’s ministry and experiences as a prophet in Judah (26:1–29:32).
- IV. Jeremiah prophesies of the restoration of Israel and Judah (30:1–33:26).
- V. Jeremiah’s ministry and experiences as a prophet in Judah (34:1–45:5).
- VI. Jeremiah prophesies against the nations (46:1–51:64).
- VII. Jeremiah’s ministry is vindicated and his message summarized in the judgment of Judah and the encouraging release of Jehoiachin (52:1–34).

¹⁰ Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, Old Testament Guides 9 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), 9.

¹¹ John Bright, *Jeremiah: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, vol. 21, Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), lvi.

¹² Terence E. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, Smith & Helwys Bible Commentary, ed. Samuel E. Balentine (Macon, GA: Smith & Helwys, 2002), 17.

¹³ Peter C. Craigie, Page H. Kelley, and Joel F. Drinkard, Jr., *Jeremiah 1–25*, vol. 26, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glen W. Barker (Dallas: Word, 1991), 31.

Exposition

I. Jeremiah is called to be a prophet to Judah (1:1–19).

A. The prophet and the book are introduced (1:1–3).

| Historical Situation | | |
|-------------------------------|----------|------------|
| Neo-Assyria (c. 850-612) | Isaiah | c. 740-680 |
| | | |
| | Jeremiah | c. 627-580 |
| Neo-Babylonia (c. 612-539) | Ezekiel | c. 593-571 |
| | | |
| Persia (c. 559-326) | Daniel | c. 605-536 |

B. Jeremiah is called to be a prophet (נביא) to the nations (1:4–10).

| Prophetic Designations |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prophet (נביא, <i>nabi'</i>) • Seer (ראה, <i>ro'eh</i>) • Seer (הזה, <i>hozeh</i>) • Man of God (איש אלהים, <i>ish 'elohim</i>) • Servant of the LORD (עבד יהוה, <i>ebed Yahweh</i>) • Messenger of the LORD (מלאכ יהוה, <i>mal'ak Yahweh</i>) |

| Observations from Jeremiah's Call: |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A call is made in time but planned in eternity ("Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart") • A call is a setting apart ("I set you apart") • The scope of one's call is determined by God ("I appointed you as a prophet to the nations") • A call of God is not limited by our perceived limitations ("I do not know how to speak; I am only a child") • A call is an extension of God's sovereignty (the Divine "I") • A call is enabled by God Himself ("Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth") • A call is not to proclaim our message, but God's message ("I have put my words in your mouth") • A call will include both negative and positive responsibilities ("to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant") |

C. Jeremiah is given two confirmatory visions (1:11–16).

1. Jeremiah is given the vision of the blooming almond branch (1:11–12).
2. Jeremiah is given the vision of the boiling pot (1:13–16).

D. Jeremiah is challenged and affirmed (1:17–19).

| Challenges | Affirmations |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get yourself ready! • Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. • Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land—against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests and the people of the land. • I am with you and will rescue you. |

II. Jeremiah prophesies concerning Judah’s sin and judgment (2:1–25:38).

| Categories of Prophetic Oracles | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Oracular Categories | Description | Preexilic Emphasis | Postexilic Emphasis |
| Indictment | Statement of the offense | Focus primarily on idolatry, ritualism, and social justice | Focus on not giving proper honor to the Lord |
| Judgment | Punishment to be carried out | Very little offered, generally return to God by ending wicked conduct | Interprets recent or current crises as punishment |
| Instruction | Expected response | Very little offered; generally return to God by ending wicked conduct | Slightly more offered, more specifically addressed to particular situation |
| Aftermath | Affirmation of future hope or deliverance | Presented and understood as coming after an intervening period of judgment | Presented and understood as spanning a protracted time period Religious: Now Socioeconomic: Potential Political: Eventual |

A. Judah is guilty of covenant unfaithfulness (2:1–3:5).

1. Israel’s initial covenant relationship is recounted (2:1–3).
2. Israel’s history of covenant violations and rebellion are recounted (2:4–3:5).

B. Judah will be judged for covenant unfaithfulness (3:6–6:30).

1. The Northern Kingdom Israel had been judged for covenantal unfaithfulness as an example to Judah and motivation for her to repent (3:6–4:2).
2. Judah is called to repentance in the face of imminent judgment from the north (4:3—6:30).

- a. Judah and Jerusalem are called to repent by circumcising their hearts lest they be judged (4:3–4).
- b. Judah and Jerusalem are facing imminent invasion from the north and thus need to repent (4:5–18).

Different Explanations of 4:10:

- Jeremiah was speaking as an Israelite rather than as a prophet
- Jeremiah was quoting the people
- Jeremiah was quoting the false prophets

- c. Jeremiah’s anguish is an indirect call to repentance (4:19–26).
- d. The land will be made an utter desolation and thus the people need to repent (4:27–31).
- e. The lack of righteousness justifies Judah’s punishment from a “distant nation” (5:1–31).
- f. Judah is called to flee the forthcoming siege and fall of Jerusalem and repent (6:1–30).



- C. Judah’s false religion hinders her repentance (7:1–10:25).
 1. Jeremiah’s temple sermon and an oracle against false religion (7:1–8:3).
 - a. Judah is warned not to trust in deceptive words which place false security in the temple and sacrifices since the temple will be destroyed (7:1–15).
 - b. Jeremiah is commanded not to pray for the people since they worship the Queen of Heaven (7:16–20).
 - c. YHWH seeks obedience rather than sacrifices (7:21–26).
 - d. YHWH predicts that the people will not listen and that Jerusalem and Judah will be destroyed (7:27–34).

Two Explanations of 7:29:

- Related to Nazarite Vow (cut off hair as sign of breaking the vow)
- Related to mourning (cut off hair as sign of mourning)

e. Even the graves of Judah's kings will be desecrated and the bones exposed to the gods they once worshipped (8:1–3).

2. Judah stubbornly refuses to repent and is judged (8:4–13).

Principle: Jeremiah 8:8

Having the Word of God is important.

How you handle the Word of God is more important.

3. Judah realizes that there will be no peace but an invasion (8:14–17).

4. Jeremiah laments for his people (8:18–9:6).

5. YHWH must punish Judah for their covenant violations but such punishment saddens Him (9:7–16).

6. Mourners are called to lament over Jerusalem's destruction (9:17–22).

7. The only hope for anyone is to practice kindness, justice, and righteousness because mere physical circumcision is not sufficient to save (9:23–26).

8. Idols do not compare to YHWH and worshipping them is both foolish and leads to punishment by exile (10:1–22).

9. Jeremiah prays that YHWH will discipline in justice not anger in relation to Judah but that he will also judge the nations who do not acknowledge Him and mistreat His people (10:23–25).

D. Judah has sinned by breaking covenant and by plotting against His prophet (11:1–12:17).

1. Judah has broken covenant and will be judged (11:1–13).

2. YHWH forbids Jeremiah to pray for the covenant breakers (11:14–17).

3. The covenant breakers plot against Jeremiah's life (11:18–12:17).

a. YHWH reveals the plot to Jeremiah (11:18–20).

b. YHWH assures Jeremiah that those who have plotted against him will be punished (11:21–23).

4. The plot against Jeremiah leads him to complain about the seeming prosperity of the wicked, a charge that YHWH does not answer (12:1–6).

| |
|--|
| <p>Explanations for imprecations in the Bible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The imprecation may be understood as poetic hyperbole • The imprecation may be understood as a real, although hyperbolic, expression of the author's frustration • The imprecation may be understood as a request for divine retribution and justice • The imprecation may be understood as a hyperbolic indication of the seriousness of sin • The imprecation may be understood as a request for the vindication of God's holy character |
|--|

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- The imprecation may be understood as a request for the vindication of God's holy character

5. Instead of answering Jeremiah's complaint, YHWH makes his own complaint against His people and promises judgment (12:7–13).
 6. YHWH will also judge the nations unless they repent (12:14–17).
- E. A linen belt and a parable of wine jars reveal the sinful corruption of the people and their imminent judgment (13:1–27).
1. A ruined linen belt reveals the sinful corruption of Israel and Judah (13:1–11).
 2. A parable of broken wine jars illustrates the “drunkenness” and destruction of the people (13:12–14).
 3. A call to forgo pride and repent because judgment from the north is coming (13:15–27).
- F. Laments occasioned by droughts (14:1–15:21).
1. The messages concerning a drought are introduced (14:1).
 2. Judah mourns and prays concerning a drought (14:2–9).
 3. YHWH rejects the appeal of His people (14:10–12).
 4. False prophets represent a drought of the Word (14:13–16).
 5. Jeremiah laments and the people pray (14:17–22).
 6. YHWH rejects the appeal of His people and will not relent (15:1–9).
 7. Jeremiah's complains and YHWH rebukes him (15:10–21).
- G. Jeremiah's life symbolizes Judah's judgment (16:1–21).
1. Jeremiah is commended to a life of singleness and sorrow (16:1–9).

| Hosea | Jeremiah |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Prophet commanded to marry | Prophet commanded not to marry |
| Children with symbolic significance | Lack of children is symbolically significant |
| Referent is Israel | Referent is Judah |
| Pictures God's restoration | Pictures God's judgment |

2. Judah will experience sorrowful judgment (16:10–13).
 3. In the midst of judgment there is hope for Judah (16:14–15).
 4. But judgment will come first and no one will escape (16:16–18).
 5. In the midst of judgment the nations will turn to YHWH (16:19–21).
- H. Judah's sin will bring consequences (17:1–13).
1. Judah's irremovable sin will bring irrevocable judgment (17:1–4).
 2. The wise will know how to choose between YHWH's cursing and blessing (17:5–8).
 3. The failure to choose properly is related to the deceitfulness of the human heart (17:9–13).
- I. Jeremiah's appeal for healing and vindication (17:14–18).
- J. Judah is warned to keep the Sabbath (17:19–27).
- K. Jeremiah uses a potter and pottery to teach about the judgment of Judah (18:1–20:18).
1. Jeremiah's visit to a potter is used to teach YHWH's sovereignty (18:1–12).
 2. The people have forgotten about YHWH's sovereignty and now face judgment (18:13–17).
 3. The people prove that they have forgotten YHWH by plotting against His prophet (18:18–23).
 4. Jeremiah smashes a clay jar at the valley of Ben Hinnom to illustrate the fact that YHWH will smash Judah for her idolatry (19:1–15).
 5. The priest and false prophet Pashur proves that he has forgotten YHWH

by mistreating YHWH's prophet and thus will be judged (20:1–6).

6. Jeremiah's mistreatment leads him to pray a lament (20:7–18).

L. Jeremiah prophesies to the kings, prophets, and priests (21:1–23:40).

1. Jeremiah prophesies against the Kings of Judah (21:1–22:30).

a. Jeremiah responds to Zedekiah's inquiry (21:1–10).

b. Jeremiah prophesies to kings of Judah (21:11–22:30).

| Kings of Judah (from Josiah to Zedekiah) | | | | |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|--|
| King | Date | Scripture | Good/ Bad | Comment |
| Josiah | 640–609 31 years | 2 Kgs 22:1– 23:30 | Good | Killed by Pharaoh Neco of Egypt near Megiddo |
| Jehoahaz | 609 3 months | 2 Kgs 23:31– 34 | Bad | Taken by Pharaoh Neco to Egypt |
| Jehoiakim | 609–598 11 years | 2 Kgs 23:35– 24:7 | Bad | Set on the throne by Pharaoh Neco of Egypt |
| Jehoiachin/ Jeconiah | 598–597 3 months | 2 Kgs 24:8– 17; 25:27–30 | Bad | Exiled to Babylon in 597 by Nebuchadnezzar; but later released Evil-merodach of Babylon in 562 |
| Zedekiah | 597–586 11 years | 2 Kgs 24:18– 20 | Bad | Zedekiah is Jehoiachin's uncle; Jerusalem and Judah fall to Babylon in 586 |

2. Jeremiah prophesies against the wicked shepherds (rulers) and announces the coming of a righteous King and return of the exiled people (23:1–8).

Note: Jeremiah 23:5

The rejection of the Davidic line of Jehoiachin in 22:30 did not mean the end of the Davidic line.

3. Jeremiah prophesies against the prophets and priests (23:9–40).

a. Jeremiah condemns the wicked prophets and priests of Samaria and Jerusalem (23:9–15).

b. The people are exhorted to reject the false prophets because they have not recognized the greatness of YHWH (23:16–24).

c. This rejection is deserved because they do not speak for YHWH who will ultimately judge them for their presumption (23:25–40).

- M. YHWH shows Jeremiah two baskets of figs as a way of illustrating about two groups of Judeans (24:1–10).
1. The two kinds of figs are described (24:1–3).
 2. The good figs were Judeans carried into exile (24:4–7).
 3. The bad figs were Zedekiah and others who remained (24:8–10).
- N. Jeremiah prophesies of YHWH's wrathful judgment against Judah and the nations (25:1–38).
1. Judah will experience YHWH's wrath because they did not listen to YHWH's prophets (25:1–7).
 2. YHWH's judgment will last seventy years (25:8–14).

Note: Jeremiah 25:11

2 Chr 36:20–21 attributes the 70 years to having violated 70 sabbatical years

3. YHWH's shows Jeremiah a cup of wine which represents His wrath which will be imbibed by Judah and the nations (25:15–38).

Note: Jeremiah 25:26

Sheshach is believed to be a coded form of "Babylon" (athbash a cryptogram formed by substituting the last letter of the alphabet for the first, and so on [z-y-x for a-b-c = ššk for bb])

III. Jeremiah's ministry and experiences as a prophet in Judah (26:1–29:32).

- A. Jeremiah's temple sermon leads to a conflict with the priests, prophets, and the people (26:1–24).

This sermon is usually linked with the temple sermon in 7:1–15. Huey suggests that "The emphasis of 7:1–15 was on the content of the sermon whereas chap. 26 focuses on the reaction of the people to the message" (F. B. Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, New American Commentary [Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993], 235).

1. Jeremiah prophesies against the temple (26:1–6).

Note: Jeremiah 26:5

Cf. 7:12. Shiloh was destroyed several times, but Jeremiah was probably referring to the destruction by the Philistines in the 11th century (1 Sam 4)

2. Jeremiah is arrested and tried but not found worthy of death for preaching against the temple (26:7–19).

3. But Uriah the prophet who preached a similar message was arrested and put to death (26:20–23).
4. Supported by Ahikam son of Shaphan, Jeremiah avoids death and is released (26:24).

Jeremiah apparently had a few supporters. According to 2 Kings 22:12, Ahikam as one of five men sent by Josiah to the prophetess Huldah about the Book of the Law rediscovered in the temple (622 BC). He may be the father of Gedaliah, who was appointed governor of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar (ca. 586 BC, see 39:14)

B. Jeremiah's wears a yoke to symbolize the need to submit to Nebuchadnezzar (27:1–22).

1. Yokes are sent to the nations to warn them to submit to Nebuchadnezzar (27:1–11).

Note: Jeremiah 27:9

Faulty Sources of Divine Revelation:

- [False] prophets
- Diviners: Those who interpret omens of various kinds
- Dreamers: Those who interpret dreams
- Mediums (soothsayers): Those who call up the dead
- Sorcerers : Controlling evil spirits for empowerment or foretelling

2. King Zedekiah is warned to submit to Nebuchadnezzar (27:12–15).
3. The priests and all the people are warned to reject the teachings of the false prophets and submit to Nebuchadnezzar (27:16–22).

C. Jeremiah condemns Hananiah's false prophecy concerning a short exile (28:1–17).

1. Hananiah falsely prophesies of a short captivity (28:1–4).
2. Jeremiah's rejects Hananiah's prophecy (28:5–9).
3. Hananiah removes Jeremiah's yoke and symbolically breaks it (28:10–11).
4. Jeremiah rebukes Hananiah and predicts his death which comes to pass (28:12–17).

D. Jeremiah sends a letter to the exiles in Babylon counseling them concerning their present circumstances and their future deliverance (29:1–32).

1. Jeremiah sends a letter to the exiles in Babylon (29:1–3).
2. The exiles are to settle down submit to the Babylonians until YHWH delivers them in seventy years (29:4–14).
3. The exiles are not to listen to prophetic agitators in Babylon (29:15–23).
4. Shemaiah is one such prophet condemned by Jeremiah (29:24–32).

IV. Jeremiah prophesies of the restoration of Israel and Judah (30:1–33:26).

Note: Jeremiah 30:1–33:26

- Often called “The Book of Consolation” or “The Book of Comfort”
- The first two chapters deal extensively with the Northern Kingdom
- Much of this section is eschatological

A. Israel and Judah will be restored along with Jerusalem (30:1–31:40).

1. Israel and Judah will be regathered to the land of promise (30:1–31:26).

Note: Jeremiah 31:15

Rachel symbolized the Israelite mothers weeping for their children who died because of the Assyrian invasion and captivity. Matthew sees this as a type for the sorrow of the mothers whose infants were killed by Herod (Matt 2:18)

2. Israel and Judah will be repopulated with numerous people (31:27–30).
3. Israel and Judah will be regenerated through the New Covenant (31:31–37).

Features of the New Covenant

- **Timing:** in the future (“a day is coming”)
- **Nature:** “new,” “not like the covenant I made with their forefathers”
- **Recipients:** “reunited house of Judah and house of Israel”
- **Reason Needed:** inability to keep the Old Covenant
- **Obligation:** God obligates only Himself (“I will,” therefore unconditional)
- **Internalization:** “in their minds” this is elsewhere spoken of as the pouring out or presence of the Holy Spirit (e.g., Joel 2, Isa 44:3; 59:21; Ezek 36)
- **Relationship:** “I will be their God and they will be my people”
- **Scope:** “from the least to the greatest”
- **Grounds for offering such a Covenant:** “for I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” Jesus’ death for sin would provide the basis for the New Covenant’s enactment (Luke 22:20; Matt 26:28)
- **Duration:** “everlasting” (Ezek 37:26; Isa 59:21)
- **Function:** To fulfill the promises of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants (Ezek 37:25-26; Isa 44:3)

4. Jerusalem will be rebuilt never to be destroyed again (31:38–40).
- B. The certainty of the restoration of Israel is demonstrated and affirmed (32:1–33:26).
1. The restoration of Israel is demonstrated through the purchase of a field in Anathoth (32:1–15).

Note: Jeremiah 33:13

Little is known of Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe. He was from a noble family, the grandson of Mahseiah (32:12) governor of Jerusalem during Josiah's reign (2 Chr 34:8), his brother, Seraiah, was an officer in Zedekiah's court (51:59).

2. The restoration of Israel is demonstrated through Jeremiah's prayer and YHWH's assuring response (32:16–44).
3. The restoration of Israel is affirmed in the promise of the restoration of Judah and the reestablishment of the righteous Branch of David (33:1–26).

V. Jeremiah's ministry and experiences as a prophet in Judah (34:1–45:5).

- A. Jeremiah warns Zedekiah and Judah concerning Jerusalem's destruction due in part to a covenant violation involving the mistreatment of slaves (34:1–22).

Note: Jeremiah 34:7 (Lacish 4: Military Reports [3.42C])

Salutation (lines 1)

May Yahweh give you good news at this time.

General Statement (lines 2–4)

And now, your servant has done everything my lord sent (me word to do). I have written down everything you sent me (word to do).

Report on Bet-HRPD (lines 4–6)

As regards what my lord said about Bet-HRPD, there is no one there.

The Semakyahu Situation (lines 6–12)

As for Semakyahu, Shemayahu has seized him and taken him up to the city. Your servant cannot send the witness there [today]; rather, it is during the morning tour that [he will come (to you)]. Then it will be known that we are watching the (fire)-signals of Lachish according to the code which my lord gave us, for we cannot see Azeqah.

- B. Jeremiah tests and commends the Rechabites who serve as a symbol of covenant faithfulness (35:1–19).

Chapters 35–36 (609–598 BC) are dischronologized, placed between chaps. 32–34 and 37–44, both of which are placed during and after 586.

- C. Jeremiah's suffering, persecution, and mistreatment are recounted (36:1–38:28).

1. Jehoiakim reacts to Jeremiah's written messages by destroying them (36:1–26).
2. Jeremiah is commanded to rewrite the messages and condemn Jehoiakim (36:27–32).
3. Jeremiah is arrested and imprisoned by Zedekiah (37:1–21).

Note: Jeremiah 37:5

When Babylon heard that the Egyptian army led by Pharaoh Hophra was moving eastward to Judah to support Zedekiah, the Babylonians temporarily lifted their siege of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 24:7; Ezek 17:11-21; cf. 34:8-11).

4. Jeremiah is placed in a cistern to die by some royal officials but he is rescued by Ebed-Melech (38:1–28).

- D. Jeremiah's experiences during the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians are recounted (39:1–18).

- One of four chapters that tell the story of the destruction of Jerusalem (see also Jer 52; 2 Kgs 25; 2 Chr 36)
- There is some debate as to whether chapters 39 and 40 contain two different versions of Jeremiah's release or that he was actually released twice
- It seems better to see Jeremiah being released twice

1. Jerusalem is captured (39:1–3).
2. Zedekiah tries to escape and is captured and blinded after witnessing the execution of his sons (39:4–7).
3. Jerusalem is destroyed and people are taken into exile (39:8–10).
4. Jeremiah is released and entrusted to Gedaliah's care (39:11–14).

Note: Jeremiah 39:14

This is not the same Gedaliah of 38:1. This Gedaliah would be appointed governor by the Babylonians (40:7)

5. Ebed-Melech is delivered for having trusted in YHWH (39:15–18).
- E. Jeremiah's experiences following the fall of Jerusalem are recounted (40:1–43:7).
1. Jeremiah is released by Nebuzaradan and chooses to stay (40:1–6).
 2. Gedaliah is appointed governor by Nebuchadnezzar but is assassinated by Ishmael (40:7–41:18).
 3. Jeremiah's counsel is rejected and he is taken to Egypt (42:1–43:7).
- F. Jeremiah prophesies that Egypt will be conquered by Nebuchadnezzar (43:8–44:30).
1. Jeremiah makes a symbolic act against the god's of Egypt (43:8–13).
 2. Jeremiah prophesies against idolatrous Jews in Egypt (44:14–30).
- G. Jeremiah offers a message of challenge and assurance to a discouraged Baruch (45:1–5).

Observations:

- This is the shortest chapter in the book.
- Another dischronologized section (605 BC). Chapter 45 belongs chronologically after 36:8 or 36:32.
- The placement here may be to show that Baruch would not experience the prophesied fate of the disobedient Judeans recorded in chapter 44.
- This is the last appearance of Jeremiah as part of the narrative in the book.

1. Baruch expresses his discouragement (45:1–3).
2. YHWH challenges and assures Baruch (45:4–5).

VI. Jeremiah prophesies against the nations (46:1–51:64).

| Prophecies Against Foreign Nations | | |
|---|------------|---|
| Prophecies against foreign nations appear in every prophetic book except Hosea, but the following books contain significant sections of these prophecies (over 630 vv). | | |
| Passage | Date | Nations |
| Amos 1:3–2:3 | c. 760–750 | Aram (Damascus), Philistia (Gaza), Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab |
| Isaiah 13–23 | c. 740–680 | Assyria, Babylon, Philistia, Moab, Damascus (Aram), Cush (Ethiopia), Egypt, Dumah (Edom), Arabia, Tyre |
| Ezekiel 25–32 | c. 593–571 | Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon (or Phoenicia), Egypt |
| Jeremiah 46–51 | c. 627–580 | Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Damascus (Aram), Kedar and Hazor (2 Arabian tribes), Elam, Babylon |
| Zephaniah 2:4–15 | c. 622 | Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia, Assyria |

Common Elements of the Oracles Against the Nations¹⁴

1. They express the universal rule of Yahweh.
2. They express the outworking in Israel of the Abrahamic Covenant: "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse" (Gen. 12:3).
3. They reflect the involvement of Israel's prophets in Holy War as the messengers of the Divine Warrior.

Other Common Elements:

1. The oracles often contain identification of specific sins and the announcement of specific judgments.
2. The oracles often evaluate the nations in relation to their treatment or mistreatment of Israel.
3. The oracles sometimes contain promises of salvation and restoration for, or, including the nations (e.g., Isa 16:4b-5; Jer 8:47; 49:6, 39).

Additional Observations:

1. Interpreters generally conclude that the oracles against the nations were written *about* the nations, not *to* the nations. But see C. H. Bullock, p. 30.
2. Gottwald has argued that the oracles against the nations might be one of the oldest prophetic forms.
3. The oracles demonstrate that retribution and judgment are necessary corollaries to redemption and restoration.
4. Nations addressed follow a generally geographical order moving from west to east.

- A. Jeremiah's prophecies are introduced (46:1).
- B. Jeremiah prophecies against Egypt (46:2-28).
- C. Jeremiah prophecies against Philistia (47:1-7).
- D. Jeremiah prophecies against Moab (48:1-47).

- This is the second longest oracle in this section (Babylon is the longest).
- It is very similar to Isaiah 15-16.
- There is a high preponderance of place names (25).

| Relationship to Israel | | |
|--|---|-------|
| Edom | Edom | Ammon |
| Edom originates in Esau, Jacob's brother (Gen 25:29) | Ammon and Moab originate in Abraham's nephew Lot's incestuous relationship (Gen 19:37-38) | |

- E. Jeremiah prophecies against Ammon (49:1-6).
- F. Jeremiah prophecies against Edom (49:7-22).

¹⁴ Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, rev. ed (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 440.

- G. Jeremiah prophesies against Damascus (49:23–27).

Note: Jeremiah 49:27

Damascus fell to Assyria in 732 (2 Kgs 16:9) and became a vassal of Babylon in 605 after Assyria's fall and joined Nebuchadnezzar in his attack on Judah in 598/597

- H. Jeremiah prophesies against Kedar and Hazor (49:28–33).

- I. Jeremiah prophesies against Elam (49:34–39).

- J. Jeremiah prophesies against Babylon (50:1–51:64).

- The most extensive prophecy in 46–51 (almost as long as all the others combined)
- May consist of a combination of several oracle
- Probably composed before 539, but the only dated oracle is found in 51:59–64 ("the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign," 593 BC)
- "The underlying theme of these two chapters is the imminent overthrow of Babylon and the restoration of the exiles to their homeland" (Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, 408).

VII. Jeremiah's ministry is vindicated and his message summarized in the judgment of Judah and the encouraging release of Jehoiachin (52:1–34).

- A. The sin and fall of Zedekiah and Judah are recounted (52:1–27).

Note: Jeremiah 51:1

Leb Kamai is an *athbash* (substituting the last letter for the first) for Babylon meaning *the heart of those who rise against me* (cf. 25:26)

- B. The three deportations to Babylon are recounted (52:28–30).

- C. Jehoiachin is released from prison (52:31–34).