

## Jeremiah Begins His Prophetic Ministry to Judah (629t BC)

### Jeremiah 1

#### Superscription

- 1 The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, among the priests who *were* in Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin,  
 2 to whom the word of Yahweh came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, the king of Judah, in the thirteenth year [*the 12<sup>th</sup> year in 2 Chr 34:3b*] of his reign.  
 3 It came also in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, the king of Judah, until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, the king of Judah, until the exile of Jerusalem in the fifth month.

#### Jeremiah's Call and Commission

- 4 And the word of Yahweh came to me, saying,  
 5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,  
 and before you came out from *the* womb I consecrated you;  
 I appointed you *as* a prophet to the nations."  
 6 Then I said, "Ah, Lord Yahweh! Look, I do not know *how* to speak, for I *am* a youth."  
 7 But Yahweh said to me, "You must not say, 'I *am* a youth,' for to whomever I send you, you will go, and whatever I command you, you will speak.  
 8 Do not be afraid of them, for I *am* with you to deliver you," declares Yahweh.  
 9 Then Yahweh stretched out his hand and he touched my mouth, and Yahweh said to me,  
 "Look, I have put my words in your mouth.  
 10 See, I appoint you this day over the nations  
 and over the kingdoms,  
 to pluck up and to pull down,  
 and to destroy and to tear down,  
 to build and to plant."

#### Vision of the Branch of an Almond Tree

- 11 And the word of Yahweh came to me, saying, "What *are* you seeing, Jeremiah?" And I said, "I *am* seeing a branch of an almond tree."  
 12 Then Yahweh said to me, "You did well to see, for I *am* watching over my word to perform it."

#### Vision of a Boiling Pot

- 13 And the word of Yahweh came to me a second *time*, saying, "What *are* you seeing?" And I said, "I *am* seeing a boiling pot, and its face *is* from *the* face of *the* north."  
 14 Then Yahweh said to me, "From *the* north disaster will be unleashed on all the inhabitants of the land.  
 15 For, look, I *am* calling to all *the* clans of *the* kingdoms of *the* north," declares Yahweh, "and they will come and set each one his throne *at* the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all its surrounding walls, and against all the cities of Judah.  
 16 And I will pass my judgments on them because of all their wickedness *in* that they have forsaken me, and they made sacrifices to other gods, and they bowed in worship to the works of their hands.

#### A Divine Challenge and Promise

- 17 But you, you must gird your loins, and stand, and speak to them all that I command you. Do not be afraid of them, or I will shatter you before them.  
 18 Now look, I have made you today as a fortified city and as an iron pillar and a bronze wall against all the land, against the kings of Judah, against its princes, against its priests, and against the people of the land.  
 19 And they will fight against you but they will not prevail against you, for I *am* with you," declares Yahweh, "to deliver you."

## Jeremiah's Prophecy to Judah—God's Case Against Israel (c. 629t BC)

### Jeremiah 2

#### God's Fond Memories of Israel's Youth

- 1 And the word of Yahweh came to me, saying,  
 2 "Go and proclaim in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says Yahweh,  
 "I remember *concerning* you the loyal love of your childhood,

the love of your betrothal-time,  
your going after me in the desert,  
in *the* land not sown.

- 3 Israel *was* holy to Yahweh,  
the first fruit of his produce.  
All *those who* ate it were held guilty;  
disaster came to them,” declares Yahweh.”

### Israel's Current Apostasy

4 Hear the word of Yahweh, *O* house of Jacob, and all the clans of the house of Israel.

5 Thus says Yahweh:

“What injustice did your ancestors find in me  
that they were far from me,  
and they went after the vanity,  
and they became vain?

- 6 And they did not say,  
‘Where *is* Yahweh,  
the one who brought us up from the land of Egypt,  
the one who led us in the desert,  
in a land of desert plains and gorges,  
in a land of dryness and deep darkness,  
in a land that no one passes through,  
and no human lives there?’
- 7 And I brought you to the land of the orchard,  
to eat its fruit, and its good things.  
But you entered and defiled my land,  
and my inheritance you made a detestable thing.
- 8 The priests did not say, ‘Where *is* Yahweh?’  
and those who handle the law did not know me,  
and the shepherds have rebelled against me,  
and the prophets prophesied by Baal,  
and they went after *things which* do not profit.
- 9 Therefore I again bring a lawsuit against you,” declares Yahweh,  
“and with your children I bring a lawsuit.
- 10 For go over *to* the coasts of Cyprus and look,  
and send *to* Kedar and consider very closely,  
and see if there has been *a thing* like this:
- 11 Has a nation exchanged gods? And they *are* not gods!  
But my people have exchanged their glory for that which does not profit.
- 12 Be appalled, *O* heavens, at this, and shudder;  
be utterly desolate,” declares Yahweh.
- 13 “For my people have committed two evils:  
they have forsaken me, *the* source of living water,  
to hew out for themselves cisterns, cracked cisterns that can hold no water.

### The Consequences of Israel's Apostasy

- 14 *Is* Israel a slave? Or a slave born in a house?  
Why has he become plunder?
- 15 *The* young lions have roared against him,  
they have raised their voices.  
And they have made his land as horror;  
his cities are destroyed, without an inhabitant.
- 16 Moreover, people of Memphis and Tahpanhes  
will shave your skull.
- 17 Did you not do this to yourself,  
*by* forsaking Yahweh, your God,  
at the time of your leading in the way?

- 18 And now why do you go the way of Egypt  
to drink the waters of the Shihor?  
And why do you go the way of Assyria  
to drink the waters of the Euphrates?
- 19 Your wickedness will chastise you,  
and your apostasies will reprove you.  
Therefore know and see that *it is* evil and bitter,  
your forsaking of Yahweh, your God,  
and fear of me *is* not in you,”  
declares the Lord, Yahweh of hosts.

#### The Strange Fascination With and Futility of Idolatry

- 20 “For from long ago you have broken your yoke,  
you tore to pieces your bonds.  
And you said, ‘I will not serve!’  
But on every high hill and under every leafy tree  
you *were* lying down *as* a prostitute.
- 21 Yet I planted you *as* a choice vine,  
all of it a seed of trustworthiness.  
How then have you altered before me  
*into something that is* degenerate, the foreign vine?
- 22 For if you wash with natron,  
and you use much soap,  
your guilt *is* sticking as a stain before me,”  
declares the Lord Yahweh.
- 23 “How can you say, ‘I have not defiled myself,  
I have not gone after the Baals?’  
Look at your way in the valley,  
know what you have done.  
*You are* a young she-camel,  
interweaving her ways.
- 24 A wild ass accustomed to *the* desert,  
in the desire of her soul.  
She gasps *for* wind *in* her rutting time.  
Who can quell her *lust*?  
All *those who* seek her will not grow weary,  
in her month they will find her.
- 25 Restrain your foot from *being* barefoot,  
and your throat from thirst.  
But you said, ‘*It is* hopeless.  
No! For I have loved strangers,  
and after them I will go.’
- 26 As *the* shame of a thief when he is caught in the act,  
so the house of Israel will be ashamed.  
They, their kings, their officials,  
and their priests, and their prophets.
- 27 *Those who* say to the tree, ‘*You are* my father,’  
and to the stone, ‘*You gave birth to me.*’  
For they have turned *their* backs to me, and not *their* faces.  
But in the time of their trouble they say, ‘Arise and save us.’
- 28 But where *are* your gods that you made for yourself?  
Let them arise if they can save you in the time of your trouble.  
For *according to* the number of your towns  
are your gods, O Judah.

#### Israel Deserves Judgment

- 29 Why do you complain to me?  
All of you have rebelled against me,” declares Yahweh.

- 30 “For in vain I have struck your children.  
They accepted no discipline.  
Your sword devoured your prophets,  
like a ravening lion.
- 31 O generation, you see the word of Yahweh.  
Have I been a desert to Israel? Or a land of great darkness?  
Why do my people say, ‘We roam about freely,  
we will not come again to you’?
- 32 Can a young woman forget her ornaments? Or a bride her sashes?  
Yet my people have forgotten me days without number.
- 33 How well you do *on* your way to seek love!  
Therefore even *to* the wicked *woman* you can teach your ways.
- 34 Also on your skirts is found  
*the* blood of *the* life of *the* innocent, *the* poor.  
You did not find them in the act of breaking into a house.  
But in spite of all these *things*,
- 35 yet you say, ‘But I am innocent,  
surely his anger has turned away from me.’  
Look, I *am* entering into judgment with you  
because of your saying, ‘I have not sinned.’
- 36 How you go about so much changing your way!  
Also by Egypt you will be put to shame,  
just as you were put to shame by Assyria.
- 37 Also from there you will come out  
with your hands on your head,  
for Yahweh has rejected those in whom you trust,  
and you will not prosper through them.

## Jeremiah’s Prophecy to Judah—An Appeal to Return to God (c. 629t BC)

Jeremiah 3:1–4:4

### A Faithless Wife

- 3:1 A saying: ‘Look, *if* a man divorces his wife,  
and she goes from him and she becomes another man’s wife,  
will he return to her again?’  
Will not that land be greatly defiled? [cf. [Deut 24:1–4](#)]  
And you have prostituted *yourself with* many lovers,  
*would* you now return to me?” declares Yahweh.
- 2 “Lift up your eyes at *the* barren heights,  
and see where you have not been ravished.  
Beside the roads you sat for them like an Arab in the desert,  
and you have defiled *the* land  
with your fornication  
and with your wickedness.
- 3 Therefore rain showers have been withheld,  
and the spring rain has not come.  
Yet you have *the* forehead of a woman prostitute,  
you refuse to be ashamed.
- 4 Have you not just now called to me,  
‘My father, you *are* the close friend of my youth?’
- 5 Will he be angry forever?  
Will he maintain *it* always’?  
Look, you have spoken,  
but you have done all the evil that you could.”

### Judah More Guilty Than Israel

6 Then Yahweh said to me in the days of Josiah, the king, “Have you seen what apostate Israel has done? She has gone on every high hill and under every leafy tree and she has prostituted *herself* there.

7 And I thought, 'After her doing all these *things* to me she will return,' but she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw *it*.

8 And I saw that for this very reason, that on account of apostate Israel committing adultery I divorced her and gave the letter of divorce to her. Yet her treacherous sister Judah was not afraid and she went and prostituted *herself* also.

9 And it was because of the frivolity of her fornication that she defiled the land and committed adultery with the stone and with the tree.

10 Yet even in all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to me with all her heart, but only in pretense," declares Yahweh.

11 Then Yahweh said to me, "Apostate Israel has proved herself more upright than treacherous Judah.

### A Call for Repentance

12 Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say,

'Return, apostate Israel,' declares Yahweh.

'I will not cause my anger to fall on you.

For I *am* loyal,' declares Yahweh.

'I will not be angry forever.

13 Only acknowledge your guilt,  
that against Yahweh your God you have rebelled,  
and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every leafy tree,  
and you have not obeyed my voice,' declares Yahweh."

14a "Return, apostate children," declares Yahweh. "For I am your master,

### Millennial Blessings

14b and I will take you one from a city and two from a clan, and I will bring you *to* Zion.

15 Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart and they will feed you knowledge and insight.

16 And it will be when you have multiplied and become fruitful in the land in those days," declares Yahweh, "they will no longer say, 'The ark of the covenant of Yahweh.' And it will not come to mind, nor will they remember it, nor will they miss *it*, nor will it be made again.

17 At that time they will call Jerusalem 'The Throne of Yahweh,' and all the nations will be gathered to it, to the name of Yahweh, to Jerusalem, and they will no longer go after the stubbornness of their evil heart.

18 In those days the house of Judah will walk along with the house of Israel and they will come together from *the* land of *the* north to the land that I gave as an inheritance *to* your ancestors.

### God Describes the True Repentance He Desires

19 Then I thought, 'How I would set you among the children,  
and I would give you a land of desire,  
an inheritance of *the* glory of *the* hosts of nations.'  
And I thought, 'You would call me, "My father,"  
and you would not turn back from behind me.'

20 However, as a wife departs treacherously from her lover,  
so you have dealt treacherously with me,  
*O* house of Israel," declares Yahweh.

21 "A voice *is* heard on *the* barren heights,  
the weeping of the pleas for mercy of the children of Israel,  
because they have perverted their way,  
they have forgotten Yahweh their God.

22 Return, *O* apostate children,  
I will heal your backsliding.  
'Look, we come to you,  
for you are Yahweh our God.

23 Surely, an illusion *comes* from *the* hills,  
*the* turmoil *on* the mountains.  
Surely, in Yahweh our God  
*is* the salvation of Israel.

24 But the shameful thing has devoured  
the labor of our ancestors from our youth,  
their flocks, and their cattle,

- their sons and their daughters.
- 25 Let us lie down in our shame,  
and let our disgrace cover us.  
For against Yahweh our God we have sinned,  
we and our ancestors,  
from our youth and until this day,  
and we have not obeyed the voice of Yahweh our God.’
- 4:1 If you return, *O Israel*,” declares Yahweh,  
“you return to me.  
And if you remove your abominations from my presence,  
and you do not wander,  
2 and you swear, ‘As Yahweh lives,’  
in truth, in justice, and in righteousness,  
then nations will be blessed by him,  
and in him they will boast.”
- 3 For thus says Yahweh  
to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem,  
“Break up for yourselves prepared virgin soil,  
and you must not sow among thornbushes.
- 4 Circumcise yourselves to Yahweh,  
and remove the foreskins of your hearts,  
men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem,  
lest my wrath goes forth like the fire and burns,  
and there is no *one who* extinguishes it,  
because of the evil of your deeds.”

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### Chronological Notes

#### 1) Jeremiah.

##### A) Josiah’s 13<sup>th</sup> Year.

- (1) In Jeremiah 25:3, the prophet counted 23 years from the 13<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah to the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoiakim, 606t. The cardinal number 23 is given without any preposition or modifier and must be taken in an absolute (accession) sense; this puts the 13<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah in 606t + 23 = 629t. By Jeremiah’s non-accession reckoning, Josiah’s beginning year can be calculated as 629t + 12 (acc.) = 641t. This date for the accession of Josiah provides the means of determining if the 31 years for his reign given in 2 Kings 22:1 is an accession or non-accession figure. The Babylonian Chronicles allow the date of his death to be calculated as the fourth month of 609 BC, which was in the year 610t. This was 31 years after the beginning of Josiah’s reign in 641t, so the reign length as given in 2 Kings 22:1 is by accession reckoning, showing, incidentally, that somewhere between 2 Kings 22:1 and 24:1 the counting system changed from accession to non-accession (\*Important: Josiah’s 13<sup>th</sup> year in Jer 1:2 = Josiah’s 12<sup>th</sup> year in 2 Chr 34:3).<sup>1</sup>

##### B) Chronological Arrangement of Jeremiah.

- (1) Jeremiah’s ministry spanned the reigns of Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah and the governorship of Gedaliah (cf. Jer 1:1–3; 40:7). The book of Jeremiah contains many chronological references which date the various events and prophecies:
- Jeremiah 1:1–3 — the 13<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah’s reign.
  - Jeremiah 3:6 — during Josiah’s reign.
  - Jeremiah 21:1 — during Nebuchadnezzar’s siege of Jerusalem in Zedekiah’s reign.
  - Jeremiah 22:10–13 — just after Josiah’s death, Jehoahaz’s (Shallum’s) exile and Jehoiakim’s accession.

<sup>1</sup> Rodger C. Young, “When Did Jerusalem Fall?” *JETS* 47.1 (Mar 2004): 35.

- Jeremiah 24:1 — after Nebuchadnezzar deported Jehoiachin to Babylon.
- Jeremiah 25:1 — the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoiakim's reign.
- Jeremiah 25:3 — marks 23 years of ministry between Josiah's 13<sup>th</sup> year and Jehoiakim's 4<sup>th</sup> year.
- Jeremiah 26:1 — the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign.
- Jeremiah 27:1 — early in Zedekiah's reign.
- Jeremiah 28:1 — the 5<sup>th</sup> month of the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Zedekiah's reign.
- Jeremiah 29:1–2 — after Nebuchadnezzar deported Jehoiachin to Babylon.
- Jeremiah 32:1 — the 10<sup>th</sup> year of Zedekiah's reign (Nebuchadnezzar's 18<sup>th</sup> year).
- Jeremiah 32:2, 8 — when Jeremiah was confined in the courtyard of the guardhouse during Zedekiah's reign.
- Jeremiah 33:1 — when Jeremiah was confined in the courtyard of the guardhouse during Zedekiah's reign.
- Jeremiah 34:1–10 — during Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem during Zedekiah's reign.
- Jeremiah 36:1–8 — the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoiakim's reign.
- Jeremiah 36:9–32 — the 9<sup>th</sup> month of the 5<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoiakim's reign
- Jeremiah 37:1–5 — the brief respite in Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem during Zedekiah's reign.
- Jeremiah 37:21 — Jeremiah is committed to the courtyard of the guardhouse during Zedekiah's reign.
- Jeremiah 39:1 — the 10<sup>th</sup> month of the 9<sup>th</sup> year of Zedekiah's reign.
- Jeremiah 39:15 — when Jeremiah was confined in the courtyard of the guardhouse during Zedekiah's reign.
- Jeremiah 41:1 — the 7<sup>th</sup> month of 587.
- Jeremiah 45:1 — the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoiakim's reign.
- Jeremiah 46:1 — the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoiakim's reign.
- Jeremiah 47:1 — before Pharaoh attacked Gaza.
- Jeremiah 49:34 — early in the reign of Zedekiah.
- Jeremiah 51:59 — the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Zedekiah's reign.

- (2) The chronological data above makes it clear that the canonical order of Jeremiah does not follow the historical order. This has given rise to various attempts to organize Jeremiah chronologically.<sup>2</sup> For the most part, I will be following the arrangement of J. Barton Payne.

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<sup>2</sup> Charles H. Dyer, "Jeremiah," *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, chart on p. 1126; J. Barton Payne, "The Arrangement of Jeremiah's Prophecies," *JETS* 7.4 (Fall 1964), chart on p. 125; Charles L. Feinberg, "Jeremiah," *EBC*, Vol. 6, 358.