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Religious and Theological Studies

Research guide for the study of religion and theology.

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This map is from <http://www.studylight.org/miscellaneous/bible-maps/browse.cgi?pn=16&> and is under Map 57.



Biography of Jeremiah

The following information is prominently drawn from *The Lion has Roared* by H.D.L Peels.

Jeremiah was born roughly around 650 BC, in a small village just North of Jerusalem known as Anathoth (Peels, 2012, p.96). His early life overlaps with the kingship of Josiah. (Peels, 2012, p.96). The son of a priest, Jeremiah had exposure to religious life from birth. According to tradition, his destiny as a prophet was determined by God before he was even conceived (Jer 1:15). This may explain why his journey as a prophet began at such a young age. His career is believed to have started when he was around 22 to 23 years old (Hyatt, 2012). He is known as 'the weeping prophet' because he often complained to God such as in chapter fifteen where he moans about the hatred he is subjected to in his prophetic life (Jer 15:10-21). Jeremiah was very much hated in his time by both high Jewish officials and commoners, neither of whom accepted his message. Moreover, he was never allowed to marry by God and therefore lived a very lonely life (Peels, 2012, p.96). He was subject to beatings by the false prophet Pashhur and was imprisoned by King Zedekiah—though he sought Jeremiah's guidance while he kept him prisoner (Jer 20:1-6). Jeremiah would continue to prophesize until shortly after the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in the year 587 BC (Peels, 2012, p.96). After the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah fled with a small group of Israelites, against his will, to Egypt. The Judeans were fleeing reprisal for the assassination of a Babylonian appointed governor (Hyatt, 2012). Jeremiah received prophetic messages from God saying He did not want the small group of Judeans to leave their homeland, but they abandoned it anyways taking Jeremiah with them (Jer 41-43). Jeremiah died in Egypt around 580 BC; it is traditionally believed that he was stoned to death by the group of Judeans he left for Egypt with (Hyatt, 2012).

Political Situation

Jeremiah delivered his prophesies during a politically unstable time in Judah. He saw the discovery of the book of Deuteronomy and subsequent reforms by Josiah. He also lived during the reigns of three different Kings of Judah all of which fell from the throne.



Key Themes

Finally, he witnessed the destruction Jerusalem by the Babylonians. The

1. God's Word: the words that god has spoken to Jeremiah and in turn reforms to the temple by Josiah included cleansing Judah of all idol

that Jeremiah has professed to the people of Judah.

worship and making the central location of sacrifice the temple in

a. "When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my Jerusalem (Dempsey, 2013, 1249). Judah was also experiencing a brief

heart's delight, for I bear your name" (Jer 15:16)

period of prosperity under Josiah. Once dominant power of the Middle

2. God's Unique Sovereignty. The kind of God Judah and Israel have. East, the Assyrian empire had fallen; this allowed the once Assyrian

God is powerful yet merciful, caring yet stern, is there all around and controlled Judah to expand its territories and re-establish its government,

yet is distant.

(Hyatt, 2012). Josiah was killed in 609BC in a brief skirmish with the

a. "He is indeed a God nearby, but at the same time a God Egyptian Pharaoh Neco; Josiah's son, Jehoiakim, would take his place

faraway" (Peels, 2012, p. 103)

(Peels, 2012, p.98). After the fall of the Assyrian Empire a new threat to

3. God's Judgment and Wrath. According to this theme, the judgment Judah had arisen, the Babylonians. The Babylonians attacked Judah and

of God shall come to pass because Israel will not abandon their left it as a vassal state. Jehoiakim made an alliance with the Egyptians

rebellion towards God. Too many people follow the words of lord who had fought against—though lost to—the Babylonians in 605 BC

for personal gain and do not try to understand and practice the

(Hyatt, 2012). This coalition would prove very beneficial to the Judeans as deeper meanings of God's teachings.

the Egyptians would stop an invasion of Judah by the Babylonians in 601

a. "I will smash them one against the other, fathers and sons BC, luring Jehoiakim into a false sense of security where he refused to

alike, declares the Lord. I will allow no pity or mercy of pay tribute to the Babylonians (Peels, 2012, p.98). The Babylonians

compassion to keep me from destroying them" (Jer 13:14). attacked Judah for this and Jehoiakim was killed during the siege. They

b. "The men who have violated my covenant and have not then captured Judah after its surrender and took the entire elite class,

fulfilled the term of the covenant they made before me, I will including the current king Jehoiachin, and sent them to Babylon.

treat them like the calf they cut in two and then walked

Jehoiachin' uncle, Zedekiah, was made king by the Babylonians. (2 Kings

between its pieces" (Jer 34:18).

24:18-19). Jeremiah visited King Zedekiah to deliver the Lord's message.

4. God's Complaint. The sound of complaint can be heard throughout The message was to surrender to Babylon, because their military was

the book. The people of Israel complain, the land complains, stronger than Judah. Unfortunately, King Zedekiah did not listen to

Jeremiah complains, and even God himself complains.

Jeremiah, and removed him from the King's sight. Jeremiah then visited

a. "My heart is broken within me; all my bones tremble. I am like the Temple and gave the warning to the people, and that G-d was on the

a drunken man, like a man overcome by wine, because of the Babylonians side and the people will face the consequences if they did

Lord and his holy words" (Jer 23:9). not surrender to the Babylon's. Jeremiah was kicked out from the temple,

b. "Oh, that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a for giving false warnings. Zedekiah attempted to rebel against the

fountain of tears! I would weep day and night for the slain of Babylonians as well but failed and was killed. (Dempsey, 2013, 1248).

my people" (Jer 9:1; 14:17). (Weeping Prophet) The Babylonians also destroyed the temple of Jerusalem and exiled all

c. "Is not Ephraim my dear son, the child in whom I delight? Judeans who had rebelled against them (Hyatt, 2012).

Though I often speak against him, I still remember him.

Therefore my heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him, declares the Lord" (Jer 31:20).



Timeline

5. God's Future. With the exile to Babylon, God begins to speak to the

The Book of Jeremiah

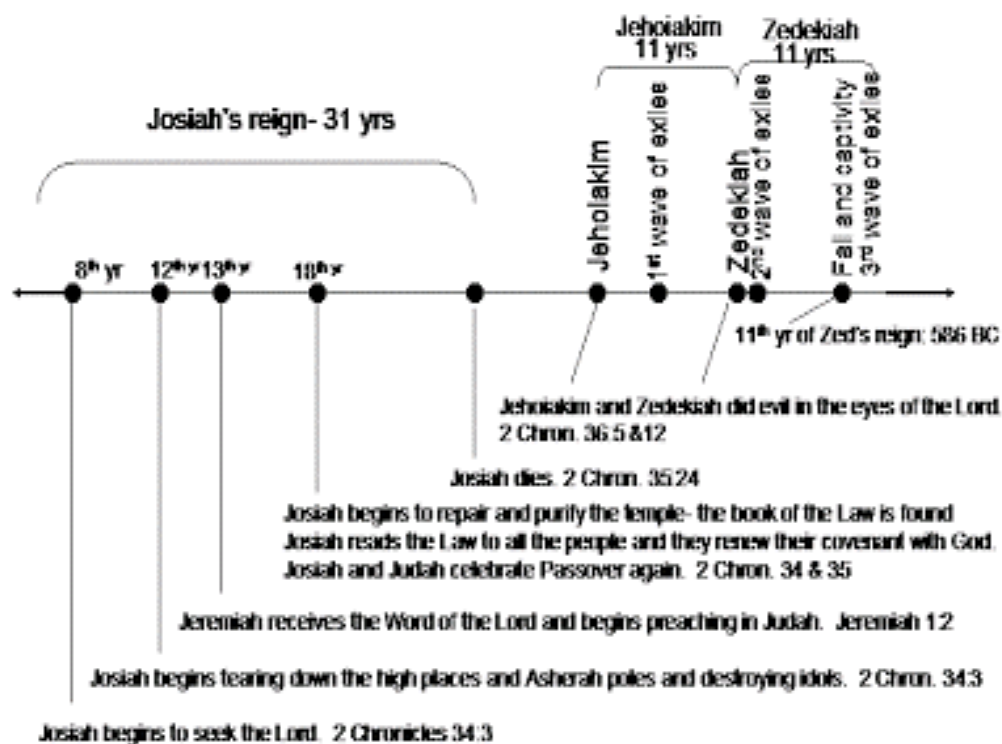
Focus	Jeremiah's Sermons							Jeremiah's Experiences																
Divisions	Judah in Jeopardy		Judah in Idolatry		Judah in Rebellion		Judah in the Potter's Hands		Judah in a Leadership Crisis		Judah in Opposition		Hope Amidst Judgment		Before the Fall		During the Fall		After the Fall		Gentiles in Judgment		Fall of Jerusalem	
	1	6	7	10	11	15	16	20	21	25	26	29	30	33	34	36	37	39	40	45	46	51	52	52
Topics	Judgment							Hope		Judgment														
	Preaching							Portrayal							Prophecy									
Place	Judah											Babylon												
Time	About 42 Years (627-585 B.C.)																							
Author	The Prophet Jeremiah																							

in one day again to bring prosper to the land and people of God.

This image is from <https://whatshotn.files.wordpress.com/2013/07/timeline-of-jeremiah-of-among-them-will-bring-him-near-and-he-will-come-close-to>



Timeline perspective for the book of Jeremiah- important events



Order of Jeremiah's Major Events

1: Jeremiah called as a prophet

2-25: *During the time of Josiah and Jehoiakim*

2-6: Call to repent to God and the announcement of the “enemy from the north”

7: Temple Sermon

8-20: Final warnings and transition to inevitable judgment; the so-called confessions of Jeremiah

21-25: Judgment is coming on kings, prophets, and nations

26-36: *During the time of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah*

26: Temple sermon and true prophecy

27-29: True and false prophecy

30-33: Jeremiah’s “Book of Comfort” and promises of salvation

34-36: Warnings, the burning of the scroll.

37-45: Jeremiah and Zedekiah; the fall of Jerusalem; the “postlude” under Gedaliah and the flight to Egypt

46-51: Oracles against the nations, culminating the great oracle against Babylon

52: Historical conclusion Jerusalem falls and the temple treasure are carried off; the release of Jehoiachin

Peels (2012), “Jeremiah Prophet of New Hope,” as cited in *The Lion has Roared*.



Structure of Writings

In the book of Jeremiah, one finds a variety of literary styles ranging from poetic, to prophesy, to prosaic narrative, and finally speeches. He uses a substantial amount of repetition and numerous quotations and allusions to passages from other books in the bible (Appleby, 1956, p.367-368). There is no visible chronological order within Jeremiah's writings and there are certain passages that even conflict with one another (Peels, 2012, p.99). While some scholars deem Jeremiah's book "unreadable" (Peels 2012, p.99), upon closer examination it can be noted that he directs his writings according to years and dates. G. Fischer, for instance, speaks of a "deliberate, intentional composition from beginning to end" (Fischer 2007, p.114). In spite of the disparity of the material, the book of Jeremiah can be divided into three collective parts that help determine its structure: 1) the prophetic activity during the reign of kings Josiah, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah; 2) the distinction between the words of and reports about Jeremiah, between poetry and prose; and 3) the content and themes of the passages (Peels, 2013, p.100).



Culture Aspects

In an article by Helen Spencer-Oatey, "What is Culture?" she brings up an idea about culture which is a little different. This idea is that culture is a very difficult concept to pin down to one explanation. She shares a quote of her own which says that, "Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioral conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behavior and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behavior." This quote shares the idea that there are many different explanations and they can mix and to become a cultural attitude and motive that is difficult to understand.

One of the first explanations talked about is that culture affects behavior and interpretations of behavior. This is a good explanation, things can mean many different things to different people which comes from the social norms of the area. Later on, the idea that culture is learned gets brought up. This idea is important and can be used together with the earlier concepts. Culture having an effect on interpretations of behavior and how it can be learned are very similar. Culture handed down to younger generations from older generations. How the younger generations react to discrepancies in a given situation can be a correlation to the culture they learned early in life. In the Old Testament, Prophets have trouble changing the way the people of Israel act because they have a certain culture of how to act. The prophets are attempting to change the culture of the people to one that is different than their own, which is a difficult task. This is conveyed in the book of Jeremiah. The way that the kingdom bounces from King to King in his time. The first King Josiah was a God fearing descendent and taught by the Word of the lord. Next was his son Johoiakim, who was against the word and would completely disregard the Torah. This is a complete contrast and would confuse the people of the kingdom as they didn't have a firm grasp on what to believe. After Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin was put forth to rule the Kingdom. Babylon took over during Jehoichins rule and exiled him as King. The Babylonians wanted to name their own King, which would be



Zedekiah. (Jer. 37:1) They did not want to accept him as their own King

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and regarded Jehoiachin as the legitimate King.

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Study Bible. Anselm Academic. Winona, Minnisota: Christian Brothers, symbolism, and the yoke presented. The article gave helpful information

Publications, 1247-1251.

of cultural background during Jeremiah's time. Especially, with religious

fisher that 2007 presented in the same period theologician and 163 the

Defendant. Was not traffic in the eyes of this date 2007. The idols, and filled my

heritage with their abominations." Jeremiah pointed out one of his.

Glass, Benjamin. 2015. "Judean Mindset Throughout the Babylonian

difficulties when presenting the Lord's message through the people. At

Exile: Literary Study of Jeremiah and Baruch in Historical Context."

some point, Jeremiah lashed out against the sins of idolizing other gods,

Jewish Bible Quarterly 43, no. 1: 35-46. Academic Search Complete,

which sometimes involved sacrificing their children to other gods. Despite

EBSCOhost (accessed May 8, 2017).

the wrong doings they were committing Jeremiah had love and hope for

Osiek C. (2013). Anselm academic study bible. Anselm Academic.

his people and prayed for them, which the Lord Himself told him not to.

Winona, Minnisota: Christian Brothers Publications. All references to this

That passage is found between Jeremiah 7:16 to 11:14. Overall,

edition. Jeremiah's issues for saving his people's rightful culture following G-d's

was a challenge. Jeremiah was called to live an unhappy task of

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Timeline

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