

INTRODUCTION TO JEREMIAH

The title of the book in the Vulgate Latin version is, “the Prophecy of Jeremiah”; in the Syriac and Arabic versions, “the Prophecy of the Prophet Jeremiah”. According to a tradition of the Jews^{f1}, this book stands the first of the Prophets, the order of which is, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the twelve. Kimchi makes mention of it in a preface to his comment on this book; and Dr. Lightfoot from hence concludes, that this is the reason why a passage in Zechariah is cited under the name of Jeremy, (~~470B~~ Matthew 27:9), because he standing first in the volume of the Prophets gave name to the whole; just as the book of Psalms, being the first of the Hagiographa, they are called the Psalms from it, (~~4244~~ Luke 24:44). The name of the writer of this book, Jeremiah, signifies, “the Lord shall exalt”, or “be exalted”; or, “exalting the Lord”; being composed of **μry**, “he shall exalt”, and **hy**, “Jehovah”, according to Hillerus^{f2}. Though others^{f3} take it to be a composition of **hy**, and **hmry**, “the Lord shall cast down”; as he did his enemies, and also himself, he being greatly afflicted; and which suits with the argument of his book, foretelling the casting away of the people of the Jews. His style of writing, according to the opinion of Jerom^{f4}, is more rustic than that of Isaiah and some other prophets, and which he attributes to his being born and brought up in a country village; and Abarbinel to his age, being a child when he began to prophesy. The duration of his prophesying was forty years and upwards. He began to prophesy in the thirteenth year of Josiah’s reign; in 3375 A.M. or before the era of Christ 629, according both to Bishop Usher^{f5} and Mr. Whiston^{f6}, and the Universal History^{f7}; and according to Mr. Bedford^{f8} 627. If any credit can be given to Epiphanius^{f9}, or to the writer that bears his name, he was stoned to death by the people at Taphnas in Egypt, and was buried where Pharaoh dwelt. Abulpharagius, an Arabic writer^{f10}, says, that he went to Egypt, where some of the Jews took him and put him into a well, and afterwards took him out and stoned him, so that he died, and he was buried in Egypt; and was from thence removed by Alexander, in his time, to Alexandria, and buried there. And both Tertullian^{f11} and Jerom^{f12} affirm that he was stoned by the people. This prophecy contains several discourses delivered to the people of the Jews; charging them with many sins they were guilty of; exhorting them to repentance; threatening them with the destruction of their city and temple, and with captivity in Babylon;

and comforting the saints, not only with a promise of deliverance from thence, but of spiritual redemption by the Messiah. And it also has in it several predictions of judgments upon other nations; and gives a particular account of the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the carrying of the Jews captive into Babylon; which he lived to see, as the fulfilment of his prophecies.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO JEREMIAH 1

This chapter contains the title or inscription of the book; the call of the prophet to his office, and the encouragement he had to enter upon it. In the inscription the prophet is described by his name, by his descent, by the place of his birth, and the time of his prophesying, (^{2400b}Jeremiah 1:1-3), the appointment and ordination of him to his office, which was very early, and the signification of it to him, are in (^{2400e}Jeremiah 1:4,5), his excuse, on account of his childhood and weakness, (^{2400b}Jeremiah 1:6), the encouragement given him, notwithstanding this, from the mission and command he had from the Lord, and the promise of his presence with him, (^{2400f}Jeremiah 1:7,8), and not only is he encouraged by words, but also by signs; by the Lord's touching his mouth with his hand, as a symbol of putting his words into his mouth, and setting him over nations and kingdoms, to publish in a prophetic way their destruction, (^{2400d}Jeremiah 1:9,10), and by a vision of an almond tree, signifying the quick and hasty performance of the word of the Lord by him, (^{2401b}Jeremiah 1:11,12), and by another vision of a seething pot northwards, intimating the coming of the Chaldeans from the north against Jerusalem, and their taking it, and carrying the Jews captive because of their wickedness, which was a principal part of the message he was sent with, (^{2401b}Jeremiah 1:13-16) and the chapter is concluded with an exhortation to him to take heart, and be of good courage, and not be dismayed; since he was made a defenced city, an iron pillar, and brasen wall, against the whole land of Judea, its kings, princes, priests, and people; who, though they should fight against him, should not prevail, because God was with him, (^{2401f}Jeremiah 1:17-19).

Ver. 1. *The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah*, etc.] This is the general title of the whole book, and includes all his discourses, sermons, and prophecies; and designs not his own words, but the words of the Lord, which were put into his mouth, and he delivered under divine inspiration. The Septuagint version renders it, "the word of God": and the Arabic version, "the word of the Lord": the Targum,

"the words of the prophecy of Jeremiah;"

who is described by his descent and parentage, “the son of Hilkiah”. The Arabic version calls him Selkiah. This was not Hilkiah the high priest, who in the days of Josiah found the book of the law, (^{<1221B>}2 Kings 22:8) as Kimchi’s father and Abarbinel think, and so Clemens of Alexandria^{f13}; since he is not said to be a high priest, or of the high priests, but

of the priests that were in Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin; though the Targum paraphrases the words to the other sense,

“of the heads of the ward of priests, of the amarcalin, or governors which were in Jerusalem, a man that took his inheritance in Anathoth, in the land of the tribe of Benjamin;”

nor is Jeremiah mentioned among the posterity of Hilkiah the high priest in (^{<136B>}1 Chronicles 6:13,14), besides, Hilkiah, a priest of Anathoth, must be of the family of Ithamar; the last of which family that was high priest was Abiathar, who had fields in Anathoth, (^{<102B>}1 Kings 2:26), and so could be no other than a common priest; for Hilkiah the high priest was of the family of Phinehas; for, from the times of that Abiathar to the Babylonish captivity, there was no high priest but of that family. The Jews say that Jeremiah descended by his mother’s side from Rahab the harlot^{f14}.

Anathoth was a city in the tribe of Benjamin, as is here said, and belonged to the priests, (^{<621B>}Joshua 21:18), it lay north of Jerusalem about three miles from it, according to Jerom^{f15} and others; but, according to Josephus^{f16}, it was but twenty furlongs from it, that is, two and a half miles.

Ver. 2. *To whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah*, etc.]

This was the beginning of the prophecy of Jeremiah, so that he prophesied long after Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, and Micah; for this king was

the son of Amon king of Judah, which Amon was the son of Manasseh; the Septuagint and Arabic versions wrongly call him Amos; and Jeremiah began to prophesy

in the thirteenth year of his reign: in the twenty first of Josiah’s age, for he began to reign when he was eight years old, and he reigned eighteen years after, for he reigned in all thirty one years; and it was five years after this that the book of the law was found by Hilkiah the high priest, (^{<1221B>}2 Kings 22:3).

Ver. 3. *And it came also in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah king of Judah*, etc.] In the beginning of his reign, and in the fourth year of his

reign; (see ^{<1251>}Jeremiah 25:1 26:1 27:1 35:1 36:1), no mention is made of Jehoahaz, who reigned between Josiah and Jehoiakim, because his reign was short, but three months, (^{<1233>}2 Kings 23:31), and perhaps no word of the Lord came to Jeremiah in his time, though it did before and after:

unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah; so that Jeremiah must prophesy in the land of Judea upwards of forty years; eighteen under Josiah, (^{<1221>}2 Kings 22:11), three months under Jehoahaz, (^{<1233>}2 Kings 23:31) eleven years under Jehoiakim, (^{<1236>}2 Kings 23:36), three months under Jeconiah, (^{<1248>}2 Kings 24:8), and eleven years under Zedekiah, when the city was besieged and taken, (^{<1281>}2 Kings 25:2,3). Josiah had three sons as kings of Judah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah, under all whom Jeremiah prophesied:

even unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month: the month Ab, which answers to part of July and part of August; and it was on the ninth or tenth day of this month that the city of Jerusalem was burnt, and the people carried captive, (^{<1238>}2 Kings 25:8,9 ^{<2672>}Jeremiah 52:12,13) the ninth of the said month is now kept by the Jews as a fast on that account.

Ver. 4. *Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying.*] Not in the days of Jehoiakim, but in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah, (^{<2401>}Jeremiah 1:2). The Septuagint and Vulgate Latin versions read, “unto him”.

Ver. 5. *Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee*, etc.] Not merely by his omniscience, so he knows all men before their conception and birth; but with such a knowledge as had special love and affection joined with it; in which sense the Lord knows them that are his, as he does not others, and predestinates them unto eternal life; and which is not only before their formation in the womb, but before the foundation of the world, even from all eternity. The forming of the human foetus is God’s act, and a curious piece of workmanship it is; (see ^{<4935>}Psalms 139:15,16).

And before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; not by infusing holiness into him, but by separating him in his eternal purposes and decrees to the office of a prophet before he was born, and even before the world began; just as the Apostle Paul was separated to the Gospel of God, (^{<6101>}Romans 1:1), for it follows,

and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations; not to the Israelites only, who Jarchi thinks are so called, because they now followed the usages and

customs of the nations; but to the Gentiles, against whom he was sent to prophesy, (^{<340>}Jeremiah 46:1) as Egyptians, Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, and Chaldeans. This ordination of him to be a prophet was not done in time, but in eternity, in the mind and thought of God; he was foreordained to this office before the foundation of the world, of which a declaration was made unto him when he was now called unto it; to which he makes answer.

Ver. 6. *Then said I, Ah, Lord God!* etc.] The word **hha**, “Ah”, or “Ahah”, is used in distress and grief, as Kimchi observes; and is expressive of mourning and complaint, as Jarchi notes; and shows that the prophet was troubled and uneasy at his call, and would gladly have been excused on the following account:

behold, I cannot speak; or, “I know not how to speak”^{f17}; properly and pertinently, politely and eloquently, especially before great personages, kings and princes, and the citizens of Jerusalem, being brought up in a rustic manner in the country. A like excuse Moses made, (^{<100>}Exodus 4:10). The Targum is, “I know not to prophesy: for I am a child”; meaning either in knowledge and understanding, or in years; not a mere child, but a “junior”, as the Septuagint version renders the word; or a “young man”, as the Arabic version; so Samuel and Zechariah were young men, when they first ministered in their office, (^{<000>}1 Samuel 3:1 ^{<300>}Zechariah 2:4). Abarbinel supposes that Jeremiah was now twelve or fifteen years of age; but it should seem rather that he was more, perhaps twenty years of age; since he seems to have prophesied to the men of Anathoth before he was sent to Jerusalem, (^{<240>}Jeremiah 11:21 12:5,6).

Ver. 7. *But the Lord said unto me, say not, I am a child*, etc.] This excuse will not be admitted:

for thou shall go to all that I shall send thee; either to “every place”, as the Targum paraphrases; or “to all persons to whom” he should be sent, as the Septuagint and Arabic versions render the words; or “to all things for which” he should send him, as the Syriac and Vulgate Latin versions. The sense is, that he should go everywhere, and to every person, and on every errand and message he should be sent unto and with:

and whatsoever I command thee, thou shall speak; out and openly, and keep back nothing through the fear of men; as follows:

Ver. 8. *Be not afraid of their faces*, etc.] Their stern looks, their frowning brows, and angry countenances, which would threaten him with destruction and death:

for I am with thee, to deliver thee, saith the Lord; out of their hands, when in the most imminent danger. The Targum paraphrases the words thus,

“my Word shall be thine help to deliver thee:”

which is true of Christ, the essential Word of God.

Ver. 9. *Then the Lord put forth his hand*, etc.] Who, according to Kimchi, was the Angel that appeared to the prophet, and spoke in the name of the Lord to him, and is called by his name; but rather it was the Son of God, the true Jehovah, who appeared in a human form he assumed for the present, and put forth his hand:

and touched my mouth; just as one of the seraphim touched the mouth and lips of the Prophet Isaiah with a live coal from the altar, (²³⁰⁶Isaiah 6:6,7), by this symbol the prophet was inducted into his office; and it was suggested to him that his mouth was now sanctified to the Lord’s use and service; and that what he should speak should not be his own words, but the words of the Lord; and so the Targum paraphrases it,

“and the Lord sent the words of his prophecy, and ordered them in my mouth;”

to which agrees what follows:

and the Lord said unto me, behold, I have put my words in thy mouth; which was signified by the preceding symbol; wherefore he might with great freedom and boldness deliver them out to others.

Ver. 10. *See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms*, etc.] Not as a prince, but as a prophet over them, to prophesy things concerning them, whether good or evil, which should certainly come to pass as he predicted:

to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down; that is, to foretell that such a kingdom and nation should be rooted out, as a tree or plant that is plucked up by the roots; and that such an one should be pulled, and thrown down, and destroyed, as a building is. The whole may be understood of the destruction of the Jews by Nebuchadnezzar, of their

temple, city, and nation; though the Targum and Jarchi interpret all this of the Gentiles only, and the following,

to build, and to plant, of the house of Israel; which may be applied to the building of the temple, and the planting of the Jews in their own land, after their return from captivity, which Jeremiah prophesied of. These last words are not in the Arabic version.

Ver. 11. *Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me*, etc.] At the same time as before:

saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? The Septuagint version leaves out the word “Jeremiah”:

and I said, I see a rod of an almond tree; a dry stick, without leaves or fruit upon it, and yet he knew it to be an almond tree stick; though some think it had leaves and fruit on it, by which it was known. The Targum is,

“and I said, a king hastening to do evil I see;”

meaning Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, hastening to bring destruction upon the Jews.

Ver. 12. *Then said the Lord unto me, thou hast well seen*, etc.] The thing seen is a very proper emblem of what I am about to do, and the quick dispatch that will be made therein:

for I will hasten my word to perform it; the words *yna dqç*, “shoked ani”, “I will hasten”, or “I am hastening”, are in allusion to *dqç*, “shoked”, the name of the almond tree in Hebrew; which is so called because it is quick and early, and, as it were, hastens to bring forth its flowers, leaves, and fruit; in like manner the Lord says he would hasten to perform what he had said or should say by him concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and the captivity of the people, and every thing else he should give him in commission to say. Jarchi and Abendana make mention of an ancient Midrash, or exposition, to this sense; that from the time of the almond tree’s putting forth, until its fruit is ripe, are one and twenty days, according to the number of days which were between the seventeenth of Tammuz, in which the city was broken up, and the ninth of Ab, in which the temple was burnt; but though the almond tree is the first of trees, and is very early in putting forth, yet there is a greater time than this between its

putting forth and its fruit being ripe; for Pliny^{f18} says, that the almond tree first of all flowers in January, and its fruit is ripe in March.

Ver. 13. *And the word of the Lord came unto me the second time*, etc.] In the same vision:

saying, what seest thou? besides the almond tree rod; which perhaps was now removed out of sight, and another object appears:

and I said, I see a seething pot; a pot with fire under it, boiling and bubbling up:

and the face thereof was towards the north; either the mouth of the pot where it boiled up, which might be turned to the north in the vision; or that side of the pot, as Kimchi thinks, on which the liquor was poured out; it may be that side of it on which the fire was put to cause it to boil; and so denotes from what quarter the fire came, and was put under it, and the wind that blew it up. The Targum paraphrases the words thus,

“and I said, I see a king boiling as a pot, and the banner of his army, which was brought and came from the north.”

The explanation follows:

Ver. 14. *Then the Lord said unto me*, etc.] Explaining the above vision:

out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land; that is, out of Babylon, which lay north, as Jarchi says, and so the Talmud^{f19}; or north east, as Kimchi and Ben Melech, to the land of Israel; from hence came Nebuchadnezzar and his army, which are meant by “the evil” that should break forth, or “be opened”,^{f20} and loosed, which before were bound and hindered by the providence of God; (see ^{<f194>}Revelation 9:14) and come upon all the inhabitants of the land of Israel; and who are signified by the boiling pot to the north; or, however, by the fire under it, which came from thence; for rather by the pot is meant Jerusalem; and, by the boiling of it, its destruction by the Chaldeans; (see ^{<f108>}Ezekiel 11:3,7 24:3).

Ver. 15. *For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the Lord*, etc.] Which belonged unto and were under the jurisdiction of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and the “call” of them, as Kimchi well observes, is no other than putting it into their hearts to come:

and they shall come; being influenced and directed by the providence of God, who had a principal concern in this matter:

and they shall set everyone his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem; meaning, not only that they should pitch their military tents, and encamp about Jerusalem, and place themselves at the entering of the gates, in order to get in; but that they should sit down there in great safety and security, and be very successful, victorious, and triumphant:

and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah; not only besiege Jerusalem, and take that, but also all the rest of the cities of the land.

Ver. 16. *And I will utter my judgments against them*, etc.] Not against the kingdoms of the north, but against the people of the Jews. The sense is, that God would enter into judgment with this people, and pass sentence upon them, and execute it:

touching all their wickedness; or on account of all their sins and transgressions hereafter mentioned:

who have forsaken me. The Targum is, “who have forsaken my worship”; for to forsake the public worship of God, attendance on his word and ordinances, or to forsake the assembling of themselves together for such a purpose, is to forsake the Lord himself, the fountain of living waters; and this is to forsake their own mercies:

and have burnt incense to other gods; to the idols of the Gentile, as the Targum explains it; to Baal, to the queen of heaven, and to others:

and worshipped the works of their own hands: idols of gold, silver, brass, and wood, which their own hands formed and carved, and which argued great stupidity and ignorance.

Ver. 17. *Thou therefore gird up thy loins*, etc.] The loins both of his mind and body. The allusion is to the custom of the eastern countries in wearing long garments, who, when they went about business, girt them about them for quicker dispatch; and here it designs haste and expedition in doing the Lord’s work, as well as courage and resolution of mind:

and arise; and go from Anathoth to Jerusalem:

and speak unto them all that I command thee; (See Gill on “²⁰⁰⁷Jeremiah 1:7”),

be not dismayed at their faces; (See Gill on “²⁰⁰⁸Jeremiah 1:8”),

lest I confound thee before them; show resentment at him in some way or another, which would make him ashamed before them. The Septuagint and Arabic versions add, “for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord”, as in (²⁰⁰⁸Jeremiah 1:8).

Ver. 18. *For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city,* etc.] Or, “as” one; so read the Targum, Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions; which is inexpungible, and cannot be taken:

and an iron pillar; which cannot be removed out of its place:

and brasen walls; which cannot be broken down. All these metaphors show the safety and security of the prophet, being surrounded by the power of God; his constancy, immovableness, and invincibleness in the work of the Lord, having such a spirit of power, fortitude, and of a sound mind, that nothing was able to move and shake him, or to deter him from the execution of his office; and that he should stand inflexible

against the whole land; of Judea, and all the inhabitants of it:

against the kings of Judah; in successive reigns, as Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, or Jechonias, and Zedekiah:

against the princes thereof; who desired he might be put to death, (²³⁰⁴Jeremiah 38:4):

against the priests thereof; who all of them dealt falsely, and were given to covetousness, (²⁴⁰⁰Jeremiah 8:10):

and against the people of the land; who were grievously addicted to idolatry, and all manner of wickedness.

Ver. 19. *And they shall fight against thee,* etc.] The Targum adds,

“that they may hide the words of thy prophecy;”

hinder him from prophesying, stop his mouth, and even take away his life:

but they shall not prevail against thee; as to do either:

for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee; as he did; he hid him when they sought for him, and delivered him out of the dungeon and bonds into which he was cast by them; (See Gill on “~~24008~~ Jeremiah 1:8”).