

Jeremiah

Chapter 1

Jeremiah lived in a village not far from Jerusalem.
Jeremiah's father was a priest.

God said to Jeremiah:

"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.
I have appointed you as prophet to the nations."

Jeremiah said to God:

"Lord, I do not know how to speak. I am so young."

God then touched Jeremiah's mouth and said:

"I now put my words into your mouth.
Go and tell the people everything I ask you to speak.

Do not be dismayed by anyone.

I am making you strong.

You must confront Judah's kings, priests and people.
They will oppose you, but will not overcome you,
for I am with you."

Lord, please give special courage to people
who speak your message for the world

Chapter 2

This is what God told Jeremiah
to shout out loud in Jerusalem:

"The Lord says:

I remember the love you used to have for me.
But now you have forgotten me.

Priests and prophets have no knowledge of me.
King and princes have rebelled against me.

Not only have you abandoned me,
you now follow false gods.

You have abandoned the fountain of living water
in exchange for muddy pools."

Lord, please don't let anyone else or anything else
ever replace you as number one in my life

Chapters 3 – 6

The country has no rain
because its people have forgotten the Lord.

The people refuse to repent and so the land has many sorrows.

Stop and think about the past:
which was the good way to live?

Follow that way now

and you will find peace for yourselves and the land.

Lord, please bless our land
- by helping us be better people

Chapter 7

At the gate of the Temple in Jerusalem,
Jeremiah proclaimed the word of the Lord:

"You people of Judah who come here to worship,
amend your behavior and actions,
and then I, the Lord, will meet you here in this Temple.

Do not exploit the stranger, the orphan and the widow.
Do not follow alien gods, do not break the Commandments.

If you don't care about bad behavior
and yet keep on coming to my Temple for worship,
your worship is useless
and you are turning this Temple into a robbers' den.

This nation refuses to listen to the Lord.
Sincerity has vanished
since worship and behavior are not related."

Lord, please help me "practise what I preach"

Chapters 8 – 11

Jeremiah said sorrowfully:
My people have forgotten God.
My people ignore God.
My people follow false gods.
My people have no time for the real God.

Lord, you know how weak we are.
Correct us gently, Lord.

Correct us gently, Lord, correct us gently

Chapters 12 – 14

Lord, you are in our midst,
we are called by your name.
Please give us help and strength in this time of trouble.

Wherever I go I see sadness and despair.
Our land has been invaded by the foreign soldier.

If I go into the countryside, I see men killed by the sword.

If I go into the city, I see people sick with hunger.

O God, you are our hope.
For your name's sake, please forgive us and help us.

Lord, please help people whose countries
are under occupation by foreign soldiers

Chapter 15

Alas, my mother, for you gave me birth
to be a man of strife and dissension for everyone.

I neither lend nor borrow, yet everyone curses me.
Lord, remember how I suffer insult for your sake.

When I heard your word, I devoured it.
Your word was my delight and the joy of my heart
for you called me to speak your word.

Lord, please increase my love for your word,
my love for the Bible

Chapters 16, 17

The Lord will bring back Israel's exiles,
back to the land he gave to our ancestors.

Lord, my strength, my stronghold,
all the nations will come to you
and acknowledge that you alone are God in all the earth.

Let all the peoples praise you, O God,
let all the peoples praise you

Chapter 18

The Lord told Jeremiah to go to the house of the potter.

At the potter's house, Jeremiah watched the potter working.
Sometimes a vessel he was making wasn't shaped properly.
So the potter would take the clay and start again
and shape the clay into a new vessel.

Then the Lord told Jeremiah:

"The House of Israel is clay, I am the potter.
I keep on trying to form Israel into a holy nation."

Lord, you are the potter, we are the clay
- the work of your hands.

Please mould us into what you want us to become

Chapters 18 – 20

Some officials decided to get rid of Jeremiah.
They did not want to listen to his message any more.
"Come on," they said, "let us make a case against him."

Jeremiah prayed to God:
"Lord, you know that people are plotting against me.
Please help me and keep me safe."

One of the Temple priests had Jeremiah beaten
and put in stocks for a day near the Temple.

Again Jeremiah prayed to God:
"You have seduced me, Lord.
You have told me to proclaim
a harsh message for the people.

This has made me a laughing-stock.
Being your messenger has caused me insult
all the day long.

At one stage I even thought of not speaking your message
any more. But then I felt a fire burning in my heart.

I could not stop thinking of you.
I just had to speak your message."

Lord, please increase my love for you.
Please give me more courage to speak your message
to my family, friends and people I meet

Chapters 21 – 23

Jerusalem was under siege by the Chaldeans.
The Lord told Jeremiah
to tell the leaders of Jerusalem to surrender.

But the leaders of Jerusalem did not obey Jeremiah's words.
So the Lord got Jeremiah to say these words:

"Woe to the shepherds who allow my sheep to be scattered
and killed. You have not taken care of my sheep.

Therefore I will raise up a leader who will be wise and just.
He will be a good shepherd of my people."

Lord, please help our leaders to be good shepherds

Chapters 24 – 29

For 23 years Jeremiah spoke the message of the Lord,
calling on people to do good and turn away from evil.

But the people, especially the leaders,
refused to listen to Jeremiah.

They eventually arrested Jeremiah and planned to kill him.

Jeremiah also sent a message to the exiles in Babylon.
But they too refused his message.

Lord, please give me some
of Jeremiah's courage and faith

Chapters 30 – 31

God told Jeremiah to tell the people these words:

"I will restore you to health. I will heal your wounds.

I have loved you with an everlasting love.

Strong and constant is my love for you.

I will bring back the exiles and save them.

I will change their sorrow into joy.

The days are coming

when I will make a new agreement with my people.

Deep within their hearts I will plant love of my Law.

I will be their God and they will be my people.

I will forgive all their sins."

Lord, please plant love of you deep within my heart

Chapter 32

Jerusalem was about to be captured by the Chaldeans.

But God promised that Jerusalem would recover its freedom.

As a sign that Jerusalem would be free again,

God told Jeremiah to buy a field.

People thought Jeremiah was crazy.

But through this action Jeremiah delivered God's message:

This city and this land are now a waste,

but soon people will again buy land and build homes

in freedom and safety.

Lord, when things get really bad,
please increase our trust in you
that you will turn things around in our lives

Chapters 33 – 35

Most of the people and their leaders ignored God's message delivered by Jeremiah.

But one group listened to Jeremiah and obeyed God's message:

That group was the nomad clan of Rechabites.

At God's command Jeremiah invited them to a meal near the Temple and invited them to drink wine.

But they replied that they had been told by God never to own property or build houses or be farmers or drink wine.

Jeremiah then spoke to the people watching the Rechabites: "See how this clan is obedient to the message of the Lord, unlike most of the people and its leaders who ignore God.

Because this clan has been faithful and obedient, therefore it will always be blessed by the Lord."

Lord, please help me be faithful to you,
like the Rechabites

Chapter 36

God told Jeremiah to write down
all the messages he had spoken for God.

So Jeremiah got Baruch to make a written record of all
his messages. Baruch wrote the messages on a scroll.

Some good officials took the scroll to the king to read.
The officials hoped the king would obey
the words of the scroll.

The king had the scroll read aloud for him.
As each section was read, the king used a knife to cut off
the section, and then threw the section into a fire.

Eventually the whole scroll was burnt.
The king then issued an order for Jeremiah to be arrested.

God protected Jeremiah
and did not allow him to be arrested for the time being.
God also told Jeremiah to have another scroll made.

Lord, please move world leaders' hearts
to be open to your message
of justice and peace and love

Chapters 37 – 45

Jeremiah was arrested and put into a muddy well to die.
But a good official persuaded the king to free Jeremiah.

When the Chaldeans captured Jerusalem,
they sent many people to Babylon as exiles.

Jeremiah was spared from exile
and he kept trying to get the people to accept defeat
as God had told them.

But most of the people would not listen to Jeremiah,
even though all his prophecies about defeat had come true.

God protected the good official who had helped Jeremiah.

Lord, please help government leaders be good,
like the good official who helped Jeremiah

Chapters 46 – 52

Jeremiah predicted that the powerful nations involved
in Israel's capture would all fall:

the Egyptians, the Philistines, the Moabites,
the Ammonites, the Babylonians and others.

Jeremiah also reminded Israel
to rely on the help of the Lord
more than the help of other nations:

"Our redeemer is strong. The Lord is his name.
He will bring peace to the world."

Lord, help us to rely on you more than on human help