

# Jeremiah 1

## Introduction: the Book of Jeremiah

“Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints should have a special interest in the life of Jeremiah because of the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon account begins in 600 B.C., when Lehi is called to warn the inhabitants of Jerusalem concerning its destruction (see 1 Nephi 1:18). It says there were many other prophets in that same year warning the people that unless they repented the city would be destroyed (see 1 Nephi 1:4). Jeremiah had been ministering to the Jewish people for about thirty years at that time and was certainly one of these many prophets. In fact, as the scriptures indicate, he was probably the chief prophet of this time period.” (Monte S. Nyman, *The Words of Jeremiah* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], 2)

Michelangelo immortalized Jeremiah on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican:



The image is a great place to start talking about the mission of Jeremiah. An amazing and relentless prophet, Michelangelo's Jeremiah seems depressed and sullen. More than any other prophet, his message is one of "doom and gloom" for Jerusalem. He was tireless in preaching the word, but his message was depressing, "Jerusalem will be destroyed by Babylon." Both he and his message were rejected but at what cost? The very Jewish nation was at stake; Jeremiah was prophesying the end of the king, the end of the city, the end of the temple, the end of the Jews as an independent nation.

Jeremiah is one of the big three Old Testament Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Isaiah's mission was to warn Israel of the coming of the Assyrians, Jeremiah's mission was to warn Jerusalem of the coming of the Babylonians, Ezekiel's mission was to preach to the Jews in Babylonian exile. While Jeremiah was not the only prophet of his day, he was the main prophet. When Babylon came knocking, king Zedekiah asked advice of Jeremiah (Jer

37:3). Contemporary prophets include Lehi, Ezekiel, Hulda the prophetess (2 Kgs. 22), Jeduthun the Seer (2 Chron. 35:15), Urijah (Jer. 26:20), and Daniel. Indeed, “there came many prophets, prophesying unto the people that they must repent, or the great city Jerusalem must be destroyed” (1 Ne. 1:4).

The book of Jeremiah is special for many reasons. It clearly teaches the doctrine of foreordination, “Before I formed thee in the belly... I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jer. 1:5). Also, Jeremiah asks us the question, “Is there no balm in Gilead?” (Jer. 8:22). The book of Jeremiah contains the first reference to the Lord as the “fountain of living waters” (Jer. 2:13). As with all prophets, Jeremiah taught of the Messiah, “the Branch of Righteousness” that would reign in the millennial day (Jer. 33:15). Lastly, he clearly saw our day when missionary work would be hastened, “I will send for many fishers... and... for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.” (Jer. 16:16). He spoke of the scattering and gathering of Israel. He promised a day when the destructions of Babylon would pale in comparison to the redemption of the Jewish nation (Jer. 30-31).

### **Biographical Sketch: the Prophet Jeremiah**

We know little of Jeremiah before his call in the 13<sup>th</sup> year of Josiah the king. Apparently, he was “the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin” (Jer. 1:1). This would mean he was of the tribe of Levi. The early days were the best for him. Josiah was a righteous king and so Jeremiah met resistance only from the unbelieving Jews. He was neither imprisoned, placed in the stocks, nor stuck in a miry dungeon—at least not in Josiah’s day. When Josiah died in a battle with the Egyptians, “Jeremiah lamented” his loss, “And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned.” (2 Chron. 35:25-26). After Josiah, Jeremiah’s job got progressively more difficult.

“In the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign, Jeremiah was taken before the princes of Judah and accused of being ‘worthy to die’ for having prophesied against Judah. But as he faced his accusers in the temple courtyard, Jeremiah fearlessly repeated his prophecy. His life was spared, however, because of the intervention of a high-ranking officer (see Jeremiah 26). It was probably during Jehoiakim's reign that Jeremiah was placed in stocks overnight for prophesying against Jerusalem and all Judah's cities (see Jeremiah 19-20). This was a punishment to bring public scorn and ridicule upon an offender. It was apparently effective in Jeremiah's case, because he said he would refuse to speak in the name of Jehovah (that is, to prophesy) anymore. However, the

Spirit acted so strongly upon him that he could not restrain himself. The actions of the people around him further precipitated his return to the Lord, as he realized that the Lord was with him and that his enemies would be confounded. Perhaps Jeremiah here recalled the teaching of his predecessor Isaiah that 'no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper' (Isaiah 54:17; see also D&C 71:9; 109:25). Nevertheless, Jeremiah still cursed the day he was born...

"At the beginning of Zedekiah's reign, Jeremiah went into the land of Benjamin to purchase some land. He was there arrested and accused of deserting to the Chaldeans. In spite of Jeremiah's denial, he was beaten and put in prison, where he remained for 'many days.' ...

"Zedekiah then sent for Jeremiah and asked if the Lord had any word for him (Zedekiah). Jeremiah took this opportunity to ask why he had been imprisoned, and he asked that the king not send him back to the dungeon where he had been kept. Zedekiah commanded that Jeremiah be placed in the court of the prison and given a daily ration of bread as long as there was bread in the city. This was a big concession in light of the treatment he had received in the past (see Jeremiah 37:11-21).

"While Jeremiah was given this freedom, he still continued to prophesy. Certain princes, therefore, went to the king and said that Jeremiah was weakening their soldiers' morale and should be put to death. The spineless Zedekiah relented to their wishes, and Jeremiah was lowered into a dungeon of mire, into which he sank. While there, he had no water. Again someone interceded for Jeremiah, and the king allowed him to be confined to the court of the prison until Jerusalem was taken. The deplorable conditions of the miry dungeon are shown by the number of men employed in pulling Jeremiah out of the prison and the method they used (see Jeremiah 38:4-13, 24-28).

"We cannot be certain how long Jeremiah was incarcerated, but it seems from the fragmentary account, that he spent nearly the entire eleven years of Zedekiah's reign in confinement in the court of the prison. This conclusion is drawn from the fact that Lehi left Jerusalem in the first year of the reign of Zedekiah; Jeremiah was already in prison when Nephi and his brothers returned to get the family of Ishmael, and he was not released until the city fell to Babylon in the eleventh year. At the time of Jerusalem's destruction, Nebuchadnezzar gave Jeremiah the opportunity to go wherever he wanted, and he chose to stay among the people in his own land (see Jeremiah 40). Following some internal problems, the people desired to go to Egypt, but

Jeremiah prophesied against that action. They disregarded Jeremiah's prophecy, and went into Egypt, taking the now aging prophet with them (see Jeremiah 41-43). It is not known how long they remained in their homeland before going to Egypt, or how long Jeremiah was in Egypt, because this episode concludes the record of the life of the prophet from Anathoth.

“There is no record of his personal afflictions or trials after he chose to remain in Judah with his people, but certainly his life was one of persecution and discouragement. However, the assurance that what he was doing and what he had done were commanded by the Lord must have been the consolation which kept him going and enabled him to endure to the end. Jeremiah was a major figure among the people of Judah and Benjamin. His role may be compared to that which Isaiah played before the ten tribes were taken captive. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied of the future restoration of Israel, and these prophecies are being fulfilled in this day. Jeremiah's prominence is also indicated in the Book of Mormon.” (Monte S. Nyman, *The Words of Jeremiah*[Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], 2-8)

### **Crazy Chronology**

Jeremiah's ministry can be divided into three main phases: 1) King Josiah's reign, 2) King Jehoiakim's reign, and 3) King Zedekiah's reign. The problem is that the chapters of Jeremiah are *not* arranged chronologically—not even close. Any attempt to rearrange the chapters is difficult. Many chapters can't be definitively placed in one of these three phases, and the chapters that *can* be placed chronologically are not arranged that way. One chapter might be speaking of the days of Zedekiah and the next might be in Josiah's day. It's as if the chapters were shuffled like a deck of cards. Reading them in the order presented in the Old Testament leaves the reader with a great sense for Jeremiah's message but a confusing perspective of the historical sequence. While we hear about what happens to Jeremiah, the events seem jumbled. In general, during Josiah's reign, Jeremiah was able to prophesy without resistance, but as the years went on, his message became less and less popular and his punishments more and more severe.

Accordingly, the order of chapters listed for Jeremiah in [gospeldoctrine.com](http://gospeldoctrine.com) represents the best chronology we could produce given the available evidence. It may seem strange to skip around in the book of Jeremiah, but it is the best way to get a historical understanding of his prophetic mission. The following order of chapters is recommended in conjunction with 2 Kings 22-25; and 2 Chronicles 34-36:

Jer. 1-3, 11, 7-8, 4-6, 9-10, 22-23, 12-13, 25-26, 35-36, 45-49, 15-20, 24, 21, 27-31, 37-38, 14, 32-34, 39, 52:1-30, 40-44, 50-51, 52:31-34.

**Jeremiah 1:1 Anathoth in the land of Benjamin**

“Anathoth, a little town in the land of Benjamin, lies three miles northeast of Jerusalem and may be viewed from Mount Scopus at the north end of the Mount of Olives. From this small town came one of the Lord's chosen servants, a man who was ‘ordained ... a prophet unto the nations’ even before his birth (Jeremiah 1:5). One important element in Jeremiah's prophecies is their graphic description of the destiny of the people of Judah and Benjamin, the two tribes who remained after the other Israelites were taken captive into the north by the Assyrians.” (Monte S. Nyman, *The Words of Jeremiah* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], iv - 2)

**Jeremiah 1:2-3 in the days of Josiah... unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah**

Jeremiah prophesied during the reigns of 5 kings of Judah, but two of them only reigned for 3 months and so are not mentioned in these verses.

1. Josiah (640-609 BC) Josiah reigned in righteousness. Jeremiah started prophesying in the 13<sup>th</sup> year of his reign, circa 627 BC.
2. Jehoahaz (609 BC) Jehoahaz reigned for 3 months.
3. Jehoiakim (609-598 BC) Jehoiakim reigned in wickedness.
4. Jehoiachin (598 BC) Jehoiachin reigned for 3 months.
5. Zedekiah (598-587 BC) Zezekiah reigned in wickedness until the final Babylonian captivity. (The Book of Mormon would place the beginning of Zedekiah’s reign 2-3 years earlier)

After Jeremiah 1:3, you can’t really trust the record to be chronologic. The following is a rendering of the chronology of these kings and Jeremiah’s prophecies. If you read about Jeremiah in the order presented, it will give you a completely new appreciation for his life and mission.

King Josiah (640-609 BC)	Book of 2 Kings	Jeremiah	Book of 2 Chron.	Jeremiah and 1 Nephi
	2 Kgs. 22:1-2		2 Chron. 34:1-7	
		Jer. 1-3	2 Chron. 34:8-	

			19	
	2 Kgs. 22:3-20	Jer. 11	2 Chron. 34:20-33	Jer. 7-8
	2 Kgs. 23:21-23		2 Chron. 35:1-19	Jer. 4-6
	2 Kgs. 23:24-28		2 Chron. 35:20-27	
	2 Kgs. 23:29-30	Jer. 9-10		
<b>King Jehoahaz or Shallum (3 mo.)</b>	2 Kgs. 23:31-35		2 Chron. 36:1-4	Jer. 22-23
<b>King Jehoiakim or Eliakim (609-598 BC)</b>	2 Kgs. 23:36-37	Jer. 12-13, 26, 25, 35-36, 45-49	2 Chron. 36:5-8	
	2 Kgs. 24:1-7	Jer. 15-20		
<b>King Jehoiachin or Coniah (3 mo.)</b>			2 Chron. 36:9-10	
	2 Kgs. 24:8-16	Jer. 24		
<b>King Zedekiah (598-587 BC)</b>	2 Kgs. 24:17-20		2 Chron. 36:11-13	1 Ne. 1, Jer. 21, 27-31, 37-38
	2 Kgs. 25:1-3	Jer. 14		
	2 Kgs. 25:4-21		2 Chron. 36:14-21	Jer. 32-34, 39, 52:1-30, 40
	2 Kgs. 25:22-26	Jer. 41-44, 50-51		
	2 Kgs. 25:27-30	Jer. 52:31-34		

(Jeremiah chapters 11, 14, and 50-51 are placed based on content rather than chronology in an effort to match current events with Jeremiah's prophecies. The prophecies may have been given earlier.)

“According to the superscription of the Book of Jeremiah (1:1-3), Jeremiah's ministry began in the thirteenth year of Josiah, king of Judah, and continued through the eleventh year of Zedekiah, king of Judah, at which time Jerusalem was destroyed and her captives carried away to Babylon. This passage also lists Jehoiakim as another king during whose reign Jeremiah received the

word of the Lord. Actually, Jeremiah prophesied during the reign of five kings of Judah; however, two of these reigned for only three months, which is probably why they were not listed in the superscription. If the recorded biblical chronology of this period is correct, the length of Jeremiah's ministry exceeded forty-one years." (Monte S. Nyman, *The Words of Jeremiah* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982], 2 - 3)

### **Jeremiah 1:3 the eleventh year of Zedekiah... unto the carrying away of Jerusalem**

Remember that Lehi started prophesying in the *first* year of Zedekiah's reign (1 Ne 1:4), but the destruction came in the *eleventh* year. Nephi leaves us with the impression that the family left Jerusalem soon after Lehi started prophesying, but the destruction would not come until Zedekiah's eleventh year. Nephi and Lehi wandered in the wilderness for 8 years and were already in the land of promise before Jerusalem was destroyed (2 Ne. 1:4).

### **Jeremiah 1:5 Before I formed thee in the belly... I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet**

No scripture in the entire Bible teaches the doctrine of foreordination better than Jer. 1:5. How much plainer can the doctrine be stated? The Lord, in his own words, declares Jeremiah was ordained before he was born-that is Foreordination-plain and simple.

Furthermore, most Bible and Torah readers across the world disregard the doctrine of a pre-mortal existence. Jeremiah's foreordination refutes that idea. How could he be sanctified? How could he be ordained before he was formed in the belly if he didn't exist before he was born? This single passage is key in teaching two major doctrines, Foreordination and Pre-mortal Existence, doctrines lost on most believers in Jehovah.

### **Pre-mortal Existence**

"I had just returned from my mission and was working for six weeks before returning to college. My last day on the job I worked with Ned, an older man I had not worked with before. We spent the day making deliveries around the city, and at the end of the day, very tired, we rode in silence back to the plant.



"Finally Ned looked over at me and said: 'I feel I should tell you something. I continue to have a feeling that I lived before I was born.' I smiled, and he continued: 'Now, there you go, laughing at me like everyone else.'

'I'm not laughing at you.'

'Well, you're smiling.'

'I am smiling because you are correct.'

"How do you know that?' Ned asked. 'I've told that to quite a number of clergymen, and they all tell me there is nothing to such a feeling.'

"When you go home, read the first chapter of Jeremiah,' I told him, recalling the words of the Lord to the Old Testament prophet: 'Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee' (Jer. 1:5).

"By this time we had arrived back at the plant, so we talked no further. I went home, had supper, and decided to go to a movie. I drove around town until I saw one I thought would be good and went in.

"During the intermission I went into the lobby to get some refreshments. There was Ned, with his wife. They came over to me, and he said, 'I want you to meet my wife, Belle.' Then he explained to her that I was the fellow he had been talking about. He looked at me and said, 'We want to go to church with you next Sunday. You do go to church, don't you?'

"I assured him I did, and he asked me which church I attended.

"The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints-the Mormon Church,' I replied." (Larry M. Arnoldsen, "I Have a Feeling That I Lived Before I Was Born," *Ensign*, Oct. 1998, 60)

"That the ancient prophets knew of the doctrine of man's premortal existence is clear. (See Abr. 3; Moses 3-4; Gen. 2:4-5; Jer. 1:5.) The doctrine also circulated among early Christians but was declared anathema in the fifth century A.D. 32 An early Christian poem known as 'The Pearl,' for example, begins: 'In my first primeval childhood ... I was nurtured in the royal house of my Father. ... Then my parents sent me forth from our home in the East (the

source of light), supplied with all necessities. ... They removed from me the garment of light ... and they made a Covenant with me, and wrote in my heart, lest I go astray.'

"Nevertheless, at the time of Joseph Smith, little trace of the doctrine had survived. No part of man was thought to have existed eternally, for God was said to have created all things out of nothing. Most Christian churches today do not teach that mortals existed as spirits prior to their mortal births. They generally acknowledge that Christ existed before his birth and that God created other beings who exist in the universe but who do not become mortal. The most common view is that God creates a person's spirit at the time of his or her mortal birth. This view interprets biblical passages that suggest premortal existence as referring to Christ or saying that all things existed only in the mind and plans of God before their actual creation.

"Joseph Smith, however, restored the doctrine of man's premortal existence. The doctrine can be both comforting and unsettling-comforting in that it tells us we are literally of the family of God with unlimited potential; unsettling because it tells us that we are responsible for what we are now and for what we will become." (Donald Q. Cannon, Larry E. Dahl, and John W. Welch, "The Restoration of Major Doctrines through Joseph Smith: The Godhead, Mankind, and the Creation," *Ensign*, Jan. 1989, 31)

### **Dallin H. Oaks**

The gospel teaches us that we are the spirit children of heavenly parents. Before our mortal birth we had "a pre-existent, spiritual personality, as the sons and daughters of the Eternal Father" (statement of the First Presidency, *Improvement Era*, Mar. 1912, p. 417; also see Jer. 1:5). We were placed here on earth to progress toward our destiny of eternal life. These truths give us a unique perspective and different values to guide our decisions from those who doubt the existence of God and believe that life is the result of random processes. ("The Great Plan of Happiness," *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 72)

## **Foreordination**

### **Joseph Smith**

Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of Heaven before this world was. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 365)

### **Howard W. Hunter**

God said to Jeremiah, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." (Jer. 1:5.) At another time God reminded Job that "all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7) before there was yet any man or woman on the earth God was creating. The Apostle Paul taught that God the Father chose us "before the foundation of the world." (Eph. 1:4.)

Where and when did all of this happen? Well, it happened long before man's mortal birth. It happened in a great premortal existence where we developed our identities and increased our spiritual capabilities by exercising our agency and making important choices. We developed our intelligence and learned to love the truth, and we prepared to come to earth to continue our progress. ("The Golden Thread of Choice," *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 17)

### **LeGrand Richards**

The Lord has his own way of calling prophets. He knew them before they were ever born here in mortality. We read in the Book of Abraham that the Lord stood in the midst of the spirits, and among them there were noble and great ones-and they couldn't be noble and great if they hadn't done something to make them noble and great. The Lord said of them: "These I will make my rulers; ... Abraham, thou art one of them; thou was chosen before thou wast born." (Abr. 3:22-23.) Isn't that a beautiful thought? The Lord stood in the midst of those spirits, and there were some there who became his prophets here in mortality.

We read about Jeremiah when he was called to be a prophet. He couldn't understand it, and the Lord said: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." (Jer. 1:5.) The Lord couldn't have ordained him if he didn't exist, and he wouldn't have ordained him before he was born if he hadn't done something in that spiritual life to prepare him to become one of the Lord's mouthpieces here upon this earth. The same thing is true with the Prophet Joseph. ("Call of the Prophets," *Ensign*, May 1981, 31)

### **Brigham Young**

It was decreed in the counsels of eternity, long before the foundations of the earth were laid, that he, Joseph Smith, should be the man, in the last dispensation of this world, to bring forth the word of God to the people, and receive the fulness of the keys and power of the Priesthood of the Son of God. The Lord had his eyes upon him, and upon his father, and upon his father's

father, and upon their progenitors clear back to Abraham, and from Abraham to the flood, from the flood to Enoch, and from Enoch to Adam. He has watched that family and that blood as it has circulated from its fountain to the birth of that man. He was fore-ordained in eternity to preside over this last dispensation. (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, selected and arranged by John A. Widtsoe [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1954], 108)

### **Bruce R. McConkie**

All those who receive the Melchizedek Priesthood in this life were, as Alma teaches, "called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God," because they were among the noble and great in that premortal sphere. (Alma 13:3.)

And Paul says that through this law of foreordination, which he calls the doctrine of election, there came to the whole house of Israel "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." (Rom. 9:4.) He says that the faithful members of the Church, those "that love God" and "are called according to his purpose," are foreordained "to be conformed to the image of his Son," to be "joint-heirs with Christ," and to have eternal life in our Father's kingdom. (Rom. 8:17, 28.)

He says also of members of the Church that God "hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love," and that we were foreordained to become the children of Jesus Christ by adoption, thus gaining a "forgiveness of sins" in this life and an inheritance of eternal glory in the life to come. (Eph. 1:7.)

Our revelations, ancient and modern, abound in pronouncements relative to the law of foreordination, both as it applies to specific individuals called according to the foreknowledge of God to special labors in mortality and as it applies to the blessings promised that host of valiant souls who are born in the lineage of Israel and who hear the voice of the Good Shepherd and come into his sheepfold on earth.

Christ himself is the great prototype of all foreordained prophets. He was chosen in the councils of eternity to be the Savior and Redeemer. Of him Peter said he was "a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet. 1:19-20), as the one who should come in the meridian of time to work out the infinite and eternal atonement. For 4,000 years all the prophets testified of his coming and

proclaimed his goodness and grace. ("God Foreordains His Prophets and His People," *Ensign*, May 1974, 72-73)

### **Jeremiah 1:6 I cannot speak: for I am a child**

#### **Jeffrey R. Holland**

A memorable account of the power of [inspired] teaching comes from the life of the prophet Jeremiah. This great man felt the way most teachers or speakers or Church officers feel when called—inexperienced, inadequate, frightened. "Ah, Lord," he cried, "behold, I cannot speak: for I am [but] a child."

But the Lord reassured him: "Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee. ... Therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them."

So speak unto them he did, but initially not with much success. Things went from bad to worse until finally he was imprisoned and made a laughingstock among the people. Angry that he had been so mistreated and maligned, Jeremiah vowed, in effect, never to teach another lesson, whether that be to an investigator, Primary child, new convert, or—heaven forbid—the 15-year-olds. "I will not make mention of [the Lord], nor speak any more in his name," the discouraged prophet said. But then came the turning point of Jeremiah's life. Something had been happening with every testimony he had borne, every scripture he had read, every truth he had taught. Something had been happening that he hadn't counted on. Even as he vowed to close his mouth and walk away from the Lord's work, he found that he could not. Why? Because "his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." (Jer. 20:7-9) ("A Teacher Come from God," *Ensign*, May 1998, 27)

#### **Thomas S. Monson**

Now, some of you may be shy by nature or consider yourselves inadequate to respond affirmatively to a calling. Remember that this work is not yours and mine alone. It is the Lord's work, and when we are on the Lord's errand, we are entitled to the Lord's help. Remember that whom the Lord calls, the Lord qualifies. ("Duty Calls," *Ensign*, May 1996, 44)

### **Jeremiah 1:8-9 Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee**

"Like Enoch, Moses, and Isaiah before him, Jeremiah expressed his inadequacy: 'Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child' (Jer. 1:6). To Enoch's reply that he was young, hated, and slow of speech, the Lord had

promised, 'Open thy mouth, and it shall be filled, and I will give thee utterance' (Moses 6:32; see also 6:33-36). To Moses' complaint that he too was 'slow of speech,' the Lord had promised that he would be with his mouth but finally promised in addition to provide for him a spokesman, his brother Aaron (Ex. 4:10-16). Isaiah felt unworthy to be in the presence of the Lord and answered, 'I am a man of unclean lips' —to which the Lord sent a seraph with a live coal from the altar to touch Isaiah's mouth and promise, 'thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged' (Isa. 6:5-7). Just as he had to Enoch, Moses, and Isaiah, the Lord responded to Jeremiah with a promise followed by a distinctive symbolic act. He said, 'Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord' (Jer. 1:7-8). With that admonition and promise, the Lord, in the words of Jeremiah, 'put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth' (Jer. 1:9). This gesture would serve Jeremiah throughout his mission as a sober reminder of the divine origin and urgency of the words that he would be asked to deliver and as a comfort that the Lord was with him to deliver him from his enemies. It also serves to remind us that the words in his book are of God." (Kent P. Jackson, ed., *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 4: 1 Kings to Malachi* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1993], 195)

### **Gordon B. Hinckley**

The problem with most of us is that we are afraid. We want to do the right thing, but we are troubled by fears and we sit back as the world drifts about us.

I confess to you that by nature I was a very timid boy. When I left to go on a mission my great father said, "I want to give you only one verse of scripture." I think this has become, perhaps, the greatest help of my life, these words of the Lord to the ruler of the synagogue whose daughter was reported dead. And the Lord turned to the ruler of the synagogue and said: "Be not afraid, only believe." (Mark 5:36.)

"Be not afraid, only believe." I commend to you these wonderful words of the Lord as you think of your responsibilities and opportunities. (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1997], 129)

**Jeremiah 1:10, 18 See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms**

Prophets have power over the nations. To the mortal eye, it may not appear to be so, but God will protect and empower his prophets. LeGrand Richards used to teach that a deacon in the Mormon Church has more authority and power in the kingdom of God than the President of the United States. Isn't that true? Jeremiah spent years in prison or under house arrest. He appeared to have no power at all. Yet, in the eyes of God, he had power "to root out," "to pull down," "to destroy, and to throw down."

"Jeremiah was called to be a prophet to the nations, and his mission was to proclaim destruction as well as restoration. Obviously the prophecies of doom would make Jeremiah unpopular and would lead to much persecution, even to the point of threatening his life. Yet the Lord promised that he would protect him: 'For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land' (Jer. 1:18). This imagery is ironic, for though Jeremiah would be protected as a mighty city, his people and the holy city they inhabited would not be. But protection from his enemies did not lessen the burden of suffering that Jeremiah would be called upon to bear. (Kent P. Jackson, ed., *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 4: 1 Kings to Malachi* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1993], 195)

### **Jeremiah 1:11-12 what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree**

"The almond tree has special significance for Tu B'Shevat (a Jewish Holiday). The word for 'almond' is *shakeid*, which comes from a root that means to 'watch' or 'wake.' The almond tree is among the first trees to 'awaken' from its winter sleep... We therefore eat almonds on Tu B'Shevat to celebrate the return of spring. In the Scriptures there is a play on words regarding the use of 'almond' and God's 'watchfulness' (i.e., faithfulness): 'And the word of the Lord came to me saying, 'Jeremiah, what do you see?' And I said, 'I see an *almond* branch.' Then the Lord said to me, 'You have seen well, for I am *watching* over my word to perform it' (Jer. 1:11-12)([http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Winter\\_Holidays/Tu\\_B\\_shevat/Almond\\_Tree/almond\\_tree.html](http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Winter_Holidays/Tu_B_shevat/Almond_Tree/almond_tree.html))

### **Jeremiah 1:14-16 they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem**

How humiliating! Babylonian princes mocking the establishment of Jerusalem! They set up their chairs like thrones because none was strong enough to oppose them. Who could remove the thrones of the princes? They

must be destroyed. Would Baal be able to do it? Where was the strength of Jerusalem?

All the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, even Nergal-sharezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim, Rab-saris, Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, with all the residue of the princes of the king of Babylon.

And it came to pass, that when Zedekiah the king of Judah saw them, and all the men of war, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night... (Jer. 39:3-4)

“Jeremiah lived in turbulent times. During his ministry he witnessed the solemn rededication to the covenant and the religious reforms of Josiah, the ensuing optimism and political independence shattered by Josiah's untimely death, the decline of the kings of Judah as vassals of Egypt and then Babylon, and ultimately rebellion, the destruction of the temple, and exile... Like Mormon, Jeremiah would address a hard-hearted people, and his message would fall on deaf ears. But at the end of forty years of alternately pleading and threatening, he would be an eyewitness to the truthfulness of his words and an eyewitness to the destruction of his people.” (Kent P. Jackson, ed., *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 4: 1 Kings to Malachi* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1993], 195-196)

### **Jeremiah 1:19 they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee**

“When the Babylonians finally came and surrounded the city, Jeremiah... counseled individuals that they could survive by surrendering to the Babylonians. Such advice weakened the hands of the defenders and made Jeremiah look as if he were a traitor. (Jer. 38:2–4.) Yet only God knew what was coming and could tell them how to survive.

“In the final days of the siege, Zedekiah desperately asked Jeremiah for advice. Jeremiah promised him his life and the city's salvation if he would give himself up to the Babylonians. Otherwise, the city would be destroyed. Yet Zedekiah kept the advice secret for fear of his own people, and Jeremiah's prophecy was fulfilled. (Jer. 38:17–27.)

“The widespread hostility to and rejection of divine messages made it a hard time to be an authentic prophet. Even the priestly men of Anathoth, Jeremiah's hometown, repeatedly made attempts on Jeremiah's life, saying, ‘Prophecy not in the name of the Lord, that thou die not by our hand.’ (Jer.



11:21.) The plotters even involved his brothers and the house of his father. (See Jer. 12:6.)

“Jeremiah was horrified at the variety of plots being made against him: ‘I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living.’ (Jer. 11:19.)

“Another time, when he had promised that the temple and city would fall, the priests and prophets brought him to trial before the princes and accused him of treason, demanding his death. But, like Abinadi, he replied,

I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you.  
But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears. (See Jer. 26:8–15.)

“Once again, the Lord delivered Jeremiah out of their hands, as he had promised...

“The constant harassment, mockery, and ridicule became at times a burden almost too heavy for Jeremiah to bear. He wondered aloud, ‘Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?’ (Jer. 20:18.) On the other hand, he empathized with the suffering his people were about to experience: ‘Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!’ (Jer. 9:1.)” (Keith H. Meservy, “Jerusalem at the Time of Lehi and Jeremiah,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1988, 25)

“Jeremiah’s efforts provided a timeless example for all people. Although Jeremiah did not bring Judah to repent, and he did not avert the destruction of Jerusalem, the beneficial consequences of his life have been incalculably great. Jeremiah’s unwavering dedication to the Lord and his own personal brilliance are obvious in his forceful and moving denunciations of sin. (see Jer. 2; Jer. 7; Jer. 13; Jer. 16–17; Jer. 19.) Consequently, while the worship of Baal is today only a historical curiosity, Jeremiah’s writings continue to be meaningful. Jeremiah’s message far transcends the evils against which it was directed and continues to influence us in situations that Jeremiah himself might not have fully expected. Can anyone question whether Jeremiah,

although persecuted and possibly martyred by the worshippers of Baal, achieved the final victory?

“In one sense, our problems today, like Jeremiah’s difficulties of twenty-five centuries ago, may have no immediate solution. Our challenge is to engage these problems with all the resources with which we have been blessed, with totally unwavering dedication to the Lord. We can be uncompromising in resisting evil. We can strengthen our families. We can seek to be led by righteous persons, and we can inform them of our views on current issues. We can extend to all people the opportunity to hear the truth and to unite in its support.” (K. Codell Carter, “Dark Clouds of Trouble,” *Ensign*, July 1980, 29)