

Justice and Righteousness

Jeremiah against King and People

David A. LeFevre

Jeremiah was a prophet, which in Hebrew is *nābi'*, a term that refers to people who were messengers and spokespeople for Israel's God.¹ They were to speak the words of Yahweh to the people that were needed for that time and place. Jeremiah was one of many who came at this time in history to the southern kingdom of Judah.² He was called by the Lord to "speak whatever I [the Lord] command you" (Jeremiah 1:7 NRSV), which included words intended

to pluck up and to pull down,
to destroy and to overthrow,
to build and to plant.³

Some of Jeremiah's words—such as plucked up, pulled down, destroyed, and overthrew—included his pronouncements against kings, leaders, and the people, condemning them for covenantal violations manifest in their treatment of those in greatest need in their society.

As explained in this paper, violating God's teachings about social justice—teachings that Jeremiah and other prophets defined as caring for the orphan, the widow, and the stranger (those on the margins of Jewish culture and economics)—led directly to the destruction about which he and other prophets forewarned. The key phrases in the charge against the people are presented early in Jeremiah's book:

If you return, O Israel, says the Lord,
if you return to me,
if you remove your abominations from my presence,
and do not waver,
and if you swear, "As the Lord lives!"
in truth, in *justice*, and in *uprightness*,
then nations shall be blessed by him,
and by him they shall boast. (Jeremiah 4:1–2; emphasis added)

Though the total charges of wickedness include worshipping false gods and turning away from Yahweh, the Lord,⁴ this paper focuses on the social justice issues raised in Jeremiah's condemnation that the people did not live with "justice" and "uprightness," both of which refer to how orphans, widows, and strangers (refugees) were treated by the king, his leaders, and his subjects.

A Brief History

Jeremiah 1:2 records that the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah in the days of Josiah, king of Judah (640–609 BC). But little, if any, of Jeremiah's recorded teachings take place in that period. The added note in 1:3 that the word of the Lord "came also in the days of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of King Zedekiah son of Josiah of Judah" accurately reflects the bulk of the material in Jeremiah's book. The writings of Jeremiah are not presented to us in chronological order—indeed, much of the book cannot be dated to any specific time, and what is tied to identifiable

events skips around through Jeremiah's life as the reader progresses through the chapters. There is a discernable thematic structure to the book, but even within its subsections the intent of the editor(s) is not always clear to us today.⁵ However, since Jeremiah's oracles are often directed at monarchs, having a basic understanding of the kings of his lifetime helps establish the context of individual pronouncements.

Josiah was eight years of age in 640 BC when he became king after his father, Amon, was killed in an apparent palace coup (2 Kings 21:23–24; 22:1). It is recorded that Josiah “did what was right in the sight of the Lord” (2 Kings 22:2). In 609 BC he led an army against Egypt and was killed in battle. His son Jehoahaz was put on the throne by the people in about June 609 BC (2 Kings 23:29–30). Jehoahaz's reign lasted only three months because the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho summoned Jehoahaz to Riblah and sent him in captivity to Egypt, where he died (2 Kings 23:33–34; see also Jeremiah 22:10–11, where Shallum is another name for Jehoahaz).⁶ Necho placed another son of Josiah, Jehoiakim (rendered Eliakim in 2 Kings 23:34), on the throne in his brother's place about September 609 BC and exacted a heavy tribute from the new vassal. Jehoiakim held his position on the throne for eleven years (2 Kings 23:33–36).

Jehoiakim did not follow the religious practices of his father but built himself a lavish palace at the expense of others (Jeremiah 22:13–19), allowed pagan practices to dominate religious life (Jeremiah 7:17–18; 11:9–13), and put to death prophets who spoke against him (Jeremiah 26:20–23). During his reign, the Babylonian army defeated Egypt and marched through Syria and Palestine. To avoid destruction, Jehoiakim pledged his allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon, but a short time later when Babylon suffered a defeat at the hands of Egypt, Jehoiakim determined to shift his allegiance back to Egypt (2 Kings 24:1). Accordingly, in December 598 BC, the Babylonians came to punish Jerusalem. As they approached, it appears that Jehoiakim was killed in an internal coup, likely in the hope that Nebuchadnezzar might not destroy the city, and Jehoiakim's eighteen-year-old-son, Jehoiachin, was put on the throne (Jeremiah

22:18–19; 36:30–31; 2 Kings 24:6, 8). When Nebuchadnezzar arrived, however, he deposed Jehoiachin and carried him away to Babylon to spend the rest of his life in captivity. Nebuchadnezzar then put another son of Josiah, Mattaniah, on the throne and changed his name to Zedekiah. The Babylonians ransacked the palace and temple and took many captives who were essential to the functioning of the city (2 Kings 24:11–18; 1 Nephi 1:4). Zedekiah’s reign came to an end when he, too, rebelled against Babylon. The Babylonian army returned to Jerusalem in July 587 BC, this time to destroy the city. Zedekiah was forced to watch the slaying of his sons, after which he was blinded and taken captive to Babylon. The Babylonians then deported even more people (2 Kings 25:1–21).⁷

During these tumultuous times Jeremiah preached and taught the critical need to care for the poor and the helpless and, at the same time, sought to save the city from destruction; however, he was consistently met with opposition from kings, city leaders, and many of the people. In this chapter, I will examine two events in Jeremiah’s ministry that best demonstrate his effort to preach and save—his call to action for the new king and his sermon at the temple, both of which occurred during Jehoiakim’s early reign.

Call to Action for the New King (Jeremiah 22:1–19)

Though the date is not certain, the events in these verses appear to have occurred early in the reign of Jehoiakim, likely in the late summer of 609 BC, shortly after he replaced his brother Jehoahaz as king. Several references in these verses seem to correspond to that time. For example, Jeremiah declares that “Shallum” will never return to Jerusalem but will die “in the place where they have carried him” (Jeremiah 22:12). As explained above, Shallum is Jehoahaz, the king just prior to Jehoiakim “who went away from this place” (22:11). The verses also mention “him who is dead” (22:10), a clear reference to Josiah’s death that had occurred just a few months earlier that year.

These verses in Jeremiah 22 divide readily into three sections: 1–9 are a call for the king and royal officials to do right; 10–12, a lamentation for Josiah and Jehoahaz; and 13–19, a declaration of woe directed at the king, Jehoiakim. Verse 1 begins as Jeremiah is commanded by Yahweh, “Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word” (22:1). The command to “go down” implies that Jeremiah was likely at the temple when the Lord spoke to him, since the temple was the highest place in Jerusalem.⁸ The first words from the Lord through Jeremiah to the king, his officials, and the other people going in and out of the king’s palace are *’āsû mišpāt ūšēdāqâ*, “act with justice and righteousness” (22:3). The two nouns in this phrase are the focal point of Jeremiah’s message to the king and court and are worth a close examination.

The first, *mišpāt*, is a rich term with many meanings related to litigation (“act,” “place,” “process,” “legal case,” and “legal decision”), laws and ordinances, and rights under the law.⁹ In the more than four hundred occurrences of this term in the KJV, this masculine noun is most often translated as “judgment,” but that word choice doesn’t reflect the depth of the word in our current vocabulary. No single term expresses it perfectly, but “justice” is probably the best fit.¹⁰ God can demand *mišpāt* of us because he is a God of *mišpāt* (Isaiah 30:18), he judges the whole earth with *mišpāt* (Genesis 18:25),¹¹ and he reflects in his own actions his just claims and expectations for our treatment one toward another. *Mišpāt* is the foundation of the Mosaic law (Deuteronomy 33:10), including its offerings (see Leviticus 5:10, where *mišpāt* is translated as “the manner” in the KJV). Even the breastplate worn by the high priest is called the breastplate of *mišpāt* (Exodus 28:15), signifying the need for the high priest to consider what is in his heart when rendering judgment.¹²

The second noun, *šēdāqâ*, is so linked to *mišpāt* that they lie together “at the very heart of a true understanding of the Biblical world-and-life view.”¹³ This feminine noun is often translated as “righteousness,” but like *mišpāt*, *šēdāqâ* can have several nuanced meanings, including “justice,” “being made right,” “deliverance,” and

“blameless behavior.”¹⁴ It represents “deeds not obligatory upon the doer.”¹⁵ The term *šēdāqâ* is tightly linked to the covenant: *šēdāqâ* is “the execution of covenant faithfulness and the covenant promises. God’s righteousness as His judicial reign means that in covenant faithfulness to His people He vindicates and saves them.”¹⁶

When Jeremiah challenges the people at the royal house to act with *mišpāṭ* and *šēdāqâ*, as detailed below, he is declaring that because of the Sinaitic covenant the Israelites made with God, they are to treat those around them according to what is right and just. In Jeremiah 22:9, envisioning the city’s future destruction, some ask why Yahweh would do this, and others answer, “Because they abandoned the covenant of the Lord their God.” To further associate this condemnation with Israel’s covenant, in verse 3 Jeremiah calls out four specific groups that need just and righteous attention from the leaders.

“Deliver from the hand of the oppressor anyone who has been robbed” (Jeremiah 22:3). The last verb, translated as “robbed,” is *gāzal*, meaning to “tear away,” “seize,” or “steal,” including with violence or force.¹⁷ Verses 13–19 explain that King Jehoiakim (specifically named in verse 17) is the oppressor alluded to in verse 3. He used conscripted labor early in his reign to build himself a fine palace, with cut windows and cedar paneling, and to paint it vermillion, a bright red. In fact, Jeremiah accuses the king of completing this lavish building effort by using negative forms of the same verbs: Jeremiah puts the negative particle *lō’* in front of both *mišpāṭ* and *šēdāqâ*, literally saying that Jehoiakim built the house with *not righteousness* and built his upper rooms with *not justice* (22:13–14). Jeremiah declares that just because Jehoiakim can force people to build his palace doesn’t make him a king: “Did not your father [Josiah] eat and drink and do justice (*mišpāṭ*) and righteousness (*šēdāqâ*)? Then it was well with him” (22:15). In other words, Josiah as king was supplied with needed daily sustenance, and at the same time he was just and fair toward the people. Jeremiah declares that Jehoiakim should be as Josiah was, rather than oppressing the people for personal benefit and comfort, which is a violation of Mosaic law.

“Do no wrong or violence to the alien” (Jeremiah 22:3). The two verbs are *yānâ*, meaning to “oppress,” “mistreat,” or “be violent,”¹⁸ and *hāmas*, to “treat violently” or to “wrong.”¹⁹ The term for “alien” is *gēr*, meaning a “sojourner,” “foreigner,” or “new arrival.”²⁰ Today we might say “refugee” because a *gēr* was someone who was driven from home by war, famine, or pestilence, one who sought shelter in another village or with a different tribe where his or her rights were likely curtailed.²¹ The Mosaic covenant requires fair treatment of people coming in from outside the Israelite culture (Leviticus 19:33), but Jeremiah proclaims that those in the palace (his audience as shown in verse 1) were treating people from outside their kingdom with oppression and violence.

“Do no wrong or violence to . . . the orphan, and the widow” (Jeremiah 22:3). Orphans and widows were also being treated with oppression and violence. Because wives with no husband and children with no father²² had few legal rights in their society, caring for widows and orphans required extra effort on the part of the people. Scripture made clear that caring for these individuals was an important part of the covenant and was expected of the people,²³ and Jeremiah continued to teach that consistently, whether directing his comments at palace officials or making other pronouncements throughout his ministry, as mentioned below.

Caring for the three groups mentioned—the stranger, the fatherless child, and the widow—is a critical part of the law and the Sinaitic covenant that had been in place since the days of Moses (Exodus 22:21–22). The concept of assuring justice for these marginalized individuals is especially strong in Deuteronomy,²⁴ and the likely text from the book was brought to the attention of both king and subjects in the days of Josiah (2 Kings 22:8–11).²⁵ Jeremiah strongly condemns their failure to care for the marginalized and calls upon the king and leaders to repent and live up to the Sinaitic and Deuteronomic covenants.

Jeremiah promises that acting in *mišpāt* and *šēdāqâ*—justice and righteousness—toward these marginalized members of society will

result in kings being able to enter in safety through the open gates of the royal palace (representing an extended time of peace and safety), while riding on horses and in splendid chariots, alongside their servants and the people (representing the continuation of Davidic rule over the people of Judah). However, Jeremiah warns that failing to act in justice and righteousness will result in “this house” becoming “a desolation” (22:4–5). The Hebrew word for “house” is *bayit*, which refers both to the physical palace-under-construction from which Jeremiah is delivering this message and to the posterity of the king, the house of David.²⁶ Both palace and posterity are threatened by the lack of justice and righteousness.

Jeremiah next declares Yahweh’s words against this lavish palace building project that Jehoiakim had undertaken, which Jeremiah compared to Gilead and Lebanon (both beautiful and prosperous places). He revealed that without repentance, Yahweh would make it an uninhabited desert by bringing destroyers against it who would cut up the fine cedar beams and burn them (22:6–7).

Jeremiah reveals the ultimate result of doing justice and righteousness and caring for the poor and the needy by asking a question: “Is not this to know me? says the Lord” (22:16). To “know” God is more than knowing about him or being acquainted with him. The term used, *da‘at*, refers to knowledge gained through personal experience.²⁷ This kind of knowledge is possessed by God himself (Psalm 139:1–18), but he shares it with humans (Psalm 94:10; Proverbs 2:6). It also appears in the name of the tree in the Garden of Eden (the tree of knowledge; Genesis 2:9, 17), by whose fruit Adam and Eve could know good and evil (Genesis 3:5). The prophet Hosea (roughly 150 years before Jeremiah) spoke of this knowledge thematically in his book because the knowledge of God was missing in Israel, and its absence was destroying the people (Hosea 4:1, 6).²⁸ Indeed, God prefers this knowledge of him among the people far more than burnt offerings in the temple (Hosea 6:6). Jeremiah’s point is that this intimate, personal knowledge of Yahweh comes through living in justice and righteousness and in how we perform acts of social

justice—especially toward those on the edges of society and with the fewest privileges, such as refugees, widows, and orphans. To care for the dispossessed is to know God.

However, Jeremiah prophesies that Jehoiakim will not know God in this way because he is focused on “dishonest gain,” “shedding innocent blood,” and “practicing oppression and violence” (Jeremiah 22:17). Therefore, no one shall lament Jehoiakim, but he shall be buried like a donkey—dragged out of the city and tossed out like trash outside the city gates (22:18–19). Unfortunately, the king did not humbly receive this call to repent but was angry at this and other pronouncements from Jeremiah. This discord was the beginning of great animosity between the two men. Later, when a scroll with Jeremiah’s words was read to him, Jehoiakim listened, but as each section was finished, he cut it from the scroll with a knife and burned it in the fire. At the end of the reading, he called for Jeremiah’s arrest, along with that of his scribe, Baruch (36:20–26).

The message of these verses in Jeremiah 22, then, is that the king especially, but also the other leaders, were not following the example of Josiah, Jehoiakim’s father. Rather, they were abusing their positions of power and privilege by putting burdens on the people for the leaders’ benefit and ignoring the care of those who were in greatest need. Such a violation of God’s law and covenant obligations will bring these leaders to destruction.

Sermon at the Temple (Jeremiah 7:1–15; 26:1–24)

Two chapters, Jeremiah 7 and 26, relate an account of Jeremiah preaching at the temple. Scholars generally agree that these chapters transmit two versions of the same event, with chapter 7 giving the longer version of the sermon and chapter 26 giving a fuller report of its aftermath.²⁹ The sermon occurs in “the beginning of the reign of King Jehoiakim” (26:1), meaning the period of time that began after his installment by Egypt’s pharaoh but before his first full regnal year, which started with the new year in the spring.³⁰ For maximum effect,

this sermon may have been delivered in the fall of 609 BC in conjunction with the Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths), which was held at the temple in late September or early October,³¹ when large crowds would be in attendance. Unlike the call to action to the king and his court in 22:1–19, this sermon is directed to “all you people of Judah” (7:1) gathered at the temple.

Jeremiah begins by announcing, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, and let me dwell with you in this place” (7:3). Since Jeremiah is standing in the gate of the temple (7:2), “this place” in verse 3 refers to the temple, emphasized by the repeated use of the word in verse 4. Verse 7 has a nearly identical phrase: “then I will let you dwell in this place” (NASB), though in verse 7, “this place” refers to the land, not the temple. This repetition of the verb “to dwell” serves to bracket and tie together the pronouncements in verses 4–7 but adds an important twist. Ancient Hebrew was written only with consonants, not vowels, with the vocalizations being added in written form hundreds of years later by Masorete scribes.³² Scholars have noted that the early Latin translation (predating the oldest Hebrew text with vowel markings) of verse 3 conjugated the verb as “I will dwell,” essentially quoting the promise of Exodus 25:8, “I will dwell among them” (NIV).³³ If correct, this emended reading reveals wordplay on Jeremiah’s part: the same verb *to dwell* is vocalized slightly differently in the two verses, offering a twofold promise to the people: If they repent and change, Yahweh will dwell with them in the temple *and* Yahweh will let them dwell in the land.

Jeremiah outlines the changes Yahweh expects from the people in verses 7:4–6. They are not to trust in the words of the false prophets, who say, “the temple of the Lord,” which Jeremiah repeats three times in emphasis (or perhaps in mockery of their misplaced confidence). This saying that Jeremiah denounces refers to the people’s traditional belief that having the temple of Yahweh in the city would protect them from their enemies, a belief perhaps based on Isaiah 37:33–35.³⁴ But Jeremiah declares these thrice repeated words are actually *šeqer*,

which can mean “deception,” “falsehood,” or even “disappointment.”³⁵ The Lord had indeed promised preservation and other great blessings (e.g., Deuteronomy 7:12–15), but only if the people were obedient to the ordinances and covenants he had given them. Later, perhaps unknowingly confirming Jeremiah’s words, Ezekiel symbolically described the departure of the Lord from his house: “Then the glory of the Lord went out from the threshold of the house and stopped above the cherubim. The cherubim lifted up their wings and rose up from the earth in my sight as they went out with the wheels beside them. They stopped at the entrance of the east gate³⁶ of the house of the Lord; and the glory of the God of Israel was above them. . . . And the glory of the Lord ascended from the middle of city” (Ezekiel 10:18–19; 11:23).

Jeremiah then describes the specific behaviors the Lord requires of the people of Judah for the city to be saved, and the prophet accomplishes this by going back to the language of verse 3 with increased emphasis to teach the people’s need to amend their ways and doings (verses 5–6).

“*Truly act justly one with another*” (Jeremiah 7:5). Here again he uses the word *mišpāt*, demanding that the people act with justice toward each other. As reflected in the translation to “truly act justly,” the Hebrew is emphatic with a doubling of the verb *‘āšô ta’āšû mišpāt*, literally “to make make justice.” This verb repetition in Hebrew is an intensification of the action, employed often in the Old Testament and twice in this verse alone.³⁷

“*Do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place*” (Jeremiah 7:6). While the word *šedāqâ* does not appear in this verse, this is a near quote from 22:3, which defines justice and righteousness in Jeremiah’s writings. As explained above, the social acts of caring for the refugee, the fatherless child, and the widow (representative of oppressed people in their society) are a critical part of the covenant between the Israelites and Yahweh. The reference to “innocent blood” is what is known as judicial murder—where someone is killed through abuse of the legal system³⁸—which

is a consistent charge of Jeremiah against the king, his leaders, and, now, the people in general.

“Do not go after other gods to your own hurt” (Jeremiah 7:6). Rejecting Israel’s God means rejecting the commandments and covenants that are core to that relationship. After the people rejected the second half of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:12–17) by mistreating others, Jeremiah implores them not to also reject the first half (Exodus 20:1–11), which relates to their relationship with Yahweh. To the crowd at the temple, Jeremiah exclaims that denying the covenant relationship they have with the Lord will truly result in their own ruin and destruction.

Jeremiah asks them how they could do all manner of evil and then come to worship Yahweh in his house and declare, “We are safe!” (7:9–10). Their activities mimic robbers who commit their crimes then flee to their cave (“den”) for safety (7:11).³⁹ To refute their false sense of safety, Jeremiah evokes the image of the house of the Lord at Shiloh, which was destroyed by Israel’s enemies (1 Samuel 4).⁴⁰ Evidently the destruction was still visible in some way in their day (“see what I did to it,” invites Yahweh in verse 12). Because they have not listened to him and his prophets, Yahweh will destroy the temple in Jerusalem and carry away the people, which is what had happened to the northern kingdom (7:13–15).

The result of Jeremiah’s sermon that called for justice and righteousness among the people was his arrest, leading to perhaps the best documented trial in the Old Testament. With the priests, (false) prophets, and people all against him, he was taken to the city gate for judgment and sat before the princes (Jeremiah 26:8–10). The priests and prophets acted as prosecutors, ironically declaring that Jeremiah “deserves the sentence of death” (26:11), which phrase uses the word *mišpāt*, meaning that, in their opinion, justice for Jeremiah was death. Jeremiah acknowledges speaking the words that they accused him of saying—words that were his call of repentance to the people—then declares, “I am in your hands” (26:14). He warns, however, that if they put him to death, they would be killing an innocent man and

bringing divine judgment upon themselves (26:15).⁴¹ Others next cited the conflicting precedents of Micah and Urijah. Micah prophesied against Jerusalem but was listened to by the king (26:17–19) and was thereby able to save the city, but Urijah, Jeremiah’s contemporary who declared a message similar to Micah’s, was killed by Jehoiakim in an act of judicial murder—a perfect example of what Jeremiah had previously condemned (26:20–23). Fortunately, Jeremiah had support from some people in the government (26:24), and in the end, the princes said they would not find Jeremiah at fault and reversed the charge of the priests and prophets by saying, “This man does *not* deserve the sentence (*mišpāt*) of death, for he has spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God” (26:16).

Additional Examples of Cries for Social Justice

Jeremiah continued to teach and call for the people to act with justice and righteousness throughout his ministry, and he recorded other instances in which the Lord affirmed the importance of such actions. At one time, Yahweh had a conversation with Jeremiah, expressed poetically, and invited him to find anyone acting correctly:

Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem,
look around and take note!
Search its squares and see if you can find one person
who acts justly [*mišpāt*]
and seeks truth—
so that I may pardon Jerusalem” (Jeremiah 5:1).

Jeremiah counters that the poor people don’t know the law (*mišpāt*) but hopes that if he can preach to the rich who do know the law (*mišpāt*), things will be better (5:4–5). But the Lord calls the rich “lusty stallions, each neighing for his neighbor’s wife,” and asks, “Shall I not punish them for these things?” (5:8–9), referring to the wealthy’s complete rejection of justice. On another occasion the Lord told Jeremiah that humans should not glory in their own wisdom,

might, or riches, but should boast in their knowledge of the Lord. “I act,” he declares, “with steadfast love, justice [*mišpāṭ*], and righteousness [*šēdāqâ*] in the earth, for in these things I delight, says the Lord” (9:23–24).

Jeremiah also hoped for a better future in which the principles of justice and righteousness would be fully observed under the direction of the Messiah of the house of David. “The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise for David a righteous [*šaddîq*, “rightful,” a term related to *šēdāqâ*] Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice [*mišpāṭ*] and righteousness [*šēdāqâ*] in the land” (Jeremiah 23:5). And again, “In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous [*šēdāqâ*] Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute judgment [*mišpāṭ*] and righteousness [*šēdāqâ*] in the land” (33:15). Later in his ministry, Jeremiah counseled those carried away to Babylon to have hope as well:

We tried to heal Babylon,
 but she could not be healed.
 Forsake her, and let each of us go
 to our own country;
 for her judgment [*mišpāṭ*] has reached up to heaven
 and has been lifted up even to the skies.
 The Lord has brought forth our vindication [*šēdāqâ*];
 come, let us declare in Zion
 the work of the Lord our God (51:9–10).

In Jeremiah’s teachings, establishing justice and righteousness meant caring for those in need (particularly refugees, widows, and orphans), being fair and just in dealing with others, and not abusing any positions of power or authority. This meaning is the essence of the law given through Moses and other prophets to the Israelites, the application of its best principles, and the pattern (of how we should interact with others) established for us by God himself. Today, we can only hope that our response to Jeremiah’s call for people who are marginalized to be treated with justice and righteousness is

radically different than how the residents of Jerusalem in Jeremiah's day treated them. We cannot do as those in Jerusalem did and ignore Jeremiah's voice without likewise suffering a tragic fate.

Notes

1. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 611–12 (hereafter *BDB*); William L. Holladay, ed., *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 225 (hereafter *CHALOT*).
2. Lehi was a contemporary prophet of Jeremiah (1 Nephi 1:4–6), as were Huldah the prophetess (2 Kings 22:14–20; 2 Chronicles 34:22–28) and Zephaniah (Zephaniah 1:1). Other contemporary prophets likely included Habakkuk, whose book has no date though his message about the Babylonians (Habakkuk 1:6) ties him to this period; Nahum, who writes about the fall of Assyria (Nahum 1:1), which happened in 612 BC; and Ezekiel and Daniel, who were contemporaries but both received their calls after being carried away into or near Babylon (Ezekiel 1:1–2; Daniel 1:1–6), so they did not minister in Jerusalem as Jeremiah and the others did.
3. Jeremiah 1:10 NRSV. Quotes from scripture in this chapter will be from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise specified. Many of these six verbs are repeated in prose format in other sections of Jeremiah, including 12:14–17; 18:7–9; 24:6; 31:28, 40; 33:4; 42:10; 45:4, and indicate how Jeremiah and the Lord incorporated Jeremiah's personal mission statement into his teachings to the people.
4. References to “the Lord” in the KJV and other translations generally refer to the Hebrew word *yhwh*, which is typically transliterated as *Yahweh* by most today but previously had been transliterated as *Jehovah*. The exact pronunciation is not known, but *yhwh* is the most common name for the Hebrew God of the Old Testament.
5. Scholars generally agree that the book of Jeremiah as we have it today was prepared by the hand of one or more editors, whether by Baruch,

- his scribe, or by other unnamed people. Notably large differences exist between the Hebrew version and the Greek version in the Septuagint. See J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 27–50. See also David Rolph Seely, “The Ministry of Jeremiah,” in *Studies in Scripture, Volume 4: First Kings to Malachi*, ed. Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1993), 196–98.
6. See 1 Chronicles 3:15; 2 Chronicles 21:17; Thompson, *Book of Jeremiah*, 476; Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, eds., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Jeremiah–Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 7:45. It was a common practice for kings to take a new name when they ascended to the throne; in Jeremiah’s lifetime, Shallum became Jehoahaz, Eliakim became Jehoiakim, and Mattaniah became Zedekiah. Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).
 7. For more details about the history of Judah during Jeremiah’s time, see Thompson, *Book of Jeremiah*, 9–27; Longman and Garland, *Jeremiah–Ezekiel*, 7:40–46; Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Message of Jeremiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 17–22; Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 102–20; William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1986), 1–10; Michael Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1984), 140–42, 152–57.
 8. Longman and Garland, *Jeremiah–Ezekiel*, 7:299. Also of note is another time when the civil leaders at the palace heard Jeremiah was causing an uproar at the temple, they “came up from the king’s house” to the temple gate to hold court and pass judgment (Jeremiah 26:10).
 9. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 948–49 (hereafter *TWOT*); *BDB*, 1048–49; *CHALOT*, 221.
 10. *TWOT*, 948, comments that the best English rendering “ought by all means to be the word ‘justice.’”
 11. Isaiah 42:4 says that the Lord will not “faint or be crushed until he has established justice (*mišpā*) in the earth.”

12. *TWOT*, 949.
13. *TWOT*, 949.
14. *TWOT*, 752–55; *CHALOT*, 303. One easily thinks of the king of Salem, *malki-šedeq*, “Melchizedek,” whose name means “my king is righteousness,” likely in reference not to himself but to the King of Kings, the Most High God (*ēl ʿelyôn*), whom he worshipped (Genesis 14:18–19).
15. Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 119.
16. *TWOT*, 755.
17. *BDB*, 159–160; *CHALOT*, 58.
18. *BDB*, 413; *CHALOT*, 136; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 580.
19. *BDB*, 329; *CHALOT*, 109.
20. *BDB*, 158; *CHALOT*, 63–64.
21. *CHALOT*, 64.
22. The Hebrew term *yātôm* means specifically a child with no father and does not require that both parents are deceased, which is the typical definition of orphan today. See *BDB*, 450; *TWOT*, 419; *CHALOT*, 148.
23. For example, see Exodus 22:22; Psalm 68:5; Isaiah 1:17, 23; 10:2.
24. See Deuteronomy 10:18; 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:17, 19–21; 26:12–13; 27:19.
25. Many believe Deuteronomy was the book that was found in the temple during the time of Josiah and Jeremiah, a book that strongly influenced Jeremiah’s writings; see Thompson, *Book of Jeremiah*, 44–50; Longman and Garland, *Jeremiah–Ezekiel*, 7:37–39.
26. In a parallel passage in chapter 21, the prophetic message is delivered to the “house of David,” the only time that phrase appears in Jeremiah and uses similar language to “execute justice” and deliver the oppressed and robbed or suffer the wrath of God “like fire” (21:12).
27. *TWOT*, 366–67; *CHALOT*, 73.
28. Isaiah similarly declared that the people would go into captivity because of a lack of such knowledge (Isaiah 5:13) but that one day this knowledge would fill the earth (11:9).
29. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 454; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 239–40.
30. Longman and Garland, *Jeremiah–Ezekiel*, 7:338; William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 103.

31. William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah: A Fresh Reading* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2012), 27.
32. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable & Relevant?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 43. The text the Masoretes created is called the Masoretic Text or MT.
33. The vocalization for the proposed qal verb in verse 3 is *šākanti*, “I will dwell,” rather than that presented in the current Masoretic text’s pī’el verb, *šakkēnā*: “I will cause [you] to dwell.” See Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 236–37; Longman and Garland, *Jeremiah–Ezekiel*, 7:159; Holladay, *Jeremiah: A Fresh Reading*, 27–28. Compare Exodus 29:45; 1 Kings 6:13; Ezekiel 43:9; Zechariah 2:14–15; 8:3, which all use the “I will dwell” verb form and Deuteronomy 12:11 and 14:23, where the Lord causes his name to dwell in the temple.
34. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 461.
35. *BDB*, 1055; *CHALOT*, 383.
36. Perhaps the very gate from which Jeremiah delivered this message. See Longman and Garland, *Jeremiah–Ezekiel*, 7:159; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 460.
37. The other occurrence is the phrase at the beginning of the verse: “truly amend” is *yatab* doubled, literally “do good, do good.” On repetition of verbs, see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 242–43.
38. Thompson, *Book of Jeremiah*, 278.
39. Jesus, of course, will quote this verse when he cleanses the temple in Jerusalem in his day (see Matthew 21:12; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46).
40. Though the destruction of the city is not documented in the Old Testament, except for a somewhat indirect reference in Psalm 78:59–64, Jeremiah’s hometown was the location of the house of priests that descended from Eli, the priest presiding over the tabernacle at Shiloh at the time of its destruction. The priestly family of Abiathar was sent to Anathoth by Solomon (1 Kings 2:26–27), making it likely that Jeremiah knew at least orally the story of the city’s fiery destruction, which has been well documented by archaeology. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 468–69; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 247–48.

41. Compare Mosiah 17:10, where Abinadi declares, “And if ye slay me ye will shed innocent blood, and this shall also stand as a testimony against you at the last day,” and Alma 60:13, where Moroni writes to Pahoran, “For the Lord suffereth the righteous to be slain that his justice and judgment may come upon the wicked.” Though we don’t know the words behind the translation in Alma, the phrase “justice and judgment” in Moroni’s letter aligns nicely with the meanings of *mišpāṭ* and *šēdāqā*.