



ASK HERZL

Lesson Plan:

Jeremiah – The Prophet of Doom and Gloom or a Zionist Prophet of Hope?



“Truth never dies, but lives a wretched life.”
--Yiddish Proverb

Name of Person:

Jeremiah

Region/Location:

The region what is today known as Ein Prat

Time Period(s) Covered:

650 BCE - 570 BCE

What age range this is for:

6th graders and up

Summary:

One of the greatest of the prophets of the Hebrew Bible was Jeremiah, or Yirmiyahu in Hebrew. When you look for him in the Tanach though, you find a 52-chapter-long epic, which is full of difficult, hard to understand language. Jeremiah is a tough read for many reasons, but when you unlock who he was and what he had to say, perhaps hidden within his many, many tragic words are some messages that are extremely important to our lives today.



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Jeremiah is introduced to us as the son of Hilkiah the Priest, from the town of Anathoth to the north of Jerusalem, in the territory of the tribe of Benjamin. Today, we can visit the natural environment in which he lived, in the beautiful nature reserve of Ein Prat.



Ein Prat

However, it is when Jeremiah lived rather than where he lived that is so critical. According to the introduction of his book, he started prophesying during the reign of King Josiah of Judah right through the destruction of Solomon's Temple by King Nebuchadnezzar on the 9th Av 586 BCE. This is such a critical time as it was witness to one of the great turning points in world history, the battle of Charchemish of 605 BCE.

In this battle the combined forces of the remains of the Assyrian Empire together with the Egyptian army were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar which heralded in the Babylonians as the new dominant empire in the known world.

This is significant for our prophet as after the death of the moral King of Judah, Josiah in the battle of Megiddo, and the ascension of the wicked King Jehoiachin who is exiled to Babylon, Jeremiah becomes probably the only voice in the Judean Kingdom predicting the destruction of Jerusalem. The new king in Jerusalem, Zedekiah, refuses to listen to the warnings of Jeremiah and insists on rebelling against his new masters in Babylon, refusing to pay their loyalty taxes. Jeremiah could not stand by and watch this tragedy unfold, and continues to warn both the king and people of Jerusalem. If they refuse to accept the political control of Babylon and repent their immoral ways, claimed the prophet, Jerusalem and the temple will be destroyed, and the people of Judah exiled. Jeremiah was ridiculed and thrown into a pit for what he preached.



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As such, he became one of the greatest lone voices of morality in Jewish history. During times of economic and political prosperity, Jeremiah predicted calamity. If the nation did not reform their morals and accept the rule of Babylon, the result would be destruction and exile.



Despite Jeremiah's tragic predictions becoming a reality with the destruction of the temple, our prophet does not cry out 'I told you so'. Instead Jeremiah transforms himself from the prophet of destruction to the prophet of hope. Just as destruction is imminent Jeremiah buys a plot of land in his ancestral territory, signifying his belief in return of the Jewish people to the land of Israel after exile. He declares: "Houses, fields, and vineyards shall again be purchased in this land" (32:15). And after the destruction Jeremiah gives this message of hope:

*Be not dismayed, Israel!
I will deliver you from far away,
Your people from their land of captivity.
And Jacob shall again have calm
And quiet with none to trouble him;
For I am with you! (30:10-11)*

Jeremiah, therefore, is a prophet that has this amazing ability to read the situation that the Jewish people face at any given moment and deliver the message that the people need at that very time. It may not be popular and may go against current feelings, but it is the moral truth that burns inside of him that must be delivered to the people.

So, what is the relevance of Jeremiah to us today, and what did David Ben-Gurion think about him? See the video below to find out.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-K6KCLluzYU>



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Jeremiah FAQs:

- What was Jeremiah's Hebrew name? Yirmiyahu ירמיהו
- When did Jeremiah live? c 650 BCE - 570 BCE
- Where was Jeremiah born? Anathoth, Benjamin
- Under which kings did Jeremiah prophesize? Yehoshiyahu, Yeohaz, Yehoyakim, Yehoyachin, Tzidikiyahu
- What was the most important event in Jeremiah's life? Destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians on Tisha Ba'av 586 BCE
- After the murder of Gedaliah where did Jeremiah move to? Egypt
- Who was Jeremiah's father? Hilkiyah the priest
- Was Jeremiah popular? No, he was hated for his prophesies and perceived as a traitor. He was even put in prison for sharing his beliefs.
- Do Christians believe in the prophesies of Jeremiah? Yes, they see many of his predictions as a foreshadow for the New Testament.
- Do Muslims believe in the prophesies of Jeremiah? Yes, although he is not mentioned explicitly in the Quran.

Discussion Questions:

Can we draw parallels between the times of Bible and today?

How can the message of Jeremiah affect our political outlook today?

How do Jeremiah's warnings together with his messages of hope have relevance to Israel and the Jewish world today?

Activity:

Meme Activity – please create a meme that best represents Jeremiah



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