

## Summary Handout

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# “I Have Made Thee This Day . . . an Iron Pillar”

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Lesson

41

Summary

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*Jeremiah 1; Jeremiah foreordained to be a prophet unto the nations—He is called, as a mortal, to declare the word of the Lord.*

*Jeremiah 2; The Jews forsook the Lord, the fountain of living waters—They changed their gods, worshiped idols, and rejected the prophets.*

*Jeremiah 15; The Jews shall suffer death and the sword and famine and captivity—They shall be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth—Jerusalem shall be destroyed.*

*Jeremiah 20; Jeremiah is smitten and put in the stocks—He prophesies that all Judah shall be taken captive by Babylon.*

*Jeremiah 26; Jeremiah prophesies the destruction of the people—For this he is arraigned and tried and then acquitted.*

*Jeremiah 36; Baruch writes the prophecies of Jeremiah and reads them in the house of the Lord—Jeboiakim the king burns the book, and judgment comes upon him—Jeremiah dictates the prophecies again and adds many more.*

*Jeremiah 37; Jeremiah prophesies that Egypt shall not save Judah from Babylon—He is cast into a dungeon—Zedekiah transfers him to the court of the prison.*

*Jeremiah 38; The princes cast Jeremiah into a miry dungeon—He is freed by Ebed-melech, an Ethiopian, and put in the court of the prison—He counsels Zedekiah concerning the war.*

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### Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

**Metaphor of Containing Things:** There are numerous metaphors used in the scriptures that denote materials that were made into vessels. Iron and clay are most notable. “Isaiah describes the smith's technique of working iron with the help of charcoal to produce a metal suitable for making vessels.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*) Jeremiah’s life showed how the Lord “formed” him to make him a vessel to represent the Lord. “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.”

(*Jeremiah 1:5*)

**Pre-existence Forgotten (or Rejected):** The concept of a pre-existence has long since disappeared from Judaism, yet inference of life before birth can be seen in Dead Sea Scroll writings and in the discussions of Jewish sages earlier than Maimonides eight hundred years ago. It seems that since his compilation of Jewish thought and the code of laws the concept of a pre-existence has been rejected or at least it has disappeared from Jewish thought.

**Rejected—Refused:** Another powerful metaphor of “rejection” or “refusal” can be seen in an old quarry just north of Jerusalem’s old city wall, between what today is known as the Damascus Gate and Herod’s Gate. That quarry was used to provide the stone for the temple buildings during Solomon’s time. In those days, the builders would carefully observe the cutting and quarrying procedures. Limestone that easily crumbled was rejected as too soft. Limestone that was very brittle was rejected as too hard. It was the judgment of the builders that accepted or refused the stone which was to build the temple. Jeremiah knew this quarry - and he knew what the Psalms taught: “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.” (*Psalms 118:22*)

**Prophet Rejected, Imprisoned in Rejected Quarry:** Later, in Herod’s time, the same quarry was used for his reconstruction of the temple buildings. One can see the cavities left as giant blocks were skillfully carved. Many of those blocks can still be seen in the Western (Wailing) Wall. However, one can also see that at the northern most limits of the quarry the rock became very crumbly. There are gaping holes in the quarry walls where cavities or caves were. Since the integrity of the rock failed - it had too many cracks and was too soft or crumbly - further work in the quarry was “refused” or “rejected.” One of the gaping holes even became a prison, a sort of pit, where escape was impossible. Nowadays, that pit is called Jeremiah’s grotto. It may be where the prophet was lowered,

sinking into mire, because he prophesied against the governmental system. Can you imagine the newspaper headline, “Jeremiah jailed – What do prophets know about politics anyway?”

**Broken Cistern:** Close by the grotto, in the rock wall that was “refused” or “forsaken” for further quarrying, are the remains of a cistern that existed before Jeremiah’s time. The side of the cistern closest to the quarry collapsed as builders who carved came too close. The other sides of it are cracked and unable to hold water. This may have been the very image that Jeremiah saw and used as he prophesied Israel’s future: “For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” (*Jeremiah 2:13*)

**Messiah Refused:** Each week when I go the Garden Tomb with my guests and view the “Place of a Skull,” we review how the Jewish priests “refused” to accept the Messiaship of the Lord. We look at the caves still gaping like eyes of a skull. We see the cistern that can hold no water. Close by we view an empty tomb and realize that neither the politics of two thousand years ago nor any governmental system could keep it closed.

**Vessels to Hold Living Water:** Jeremiah knew that the “Fountain of Living Waters” would come forth. He knew that the “Rock of Salvation” would be forsaken and he also knew that there would be some, shaped and molded by the potter’s hand, that would be vessels that would hold the “Living Waters.”

**Being Formed:** Jeremiah’s adversities became the teaching metaphors that would help shape and mold those who truly listened to the prophet’s voice. He allowed himself to be shaped and molded by the Lord. The image of clay in the potter’s hand is still visible just inside Jerusalem’s old city wall just beyond the Damascus Gate. An Arab shop sells pots, and the shopkeeper is Mr. Fahoury (Mr. “Potter” in Arabic) from Hebron (in his Hebron factory, he still posts the picture of Don Lind, the Mormon Astronaut who visited him years ago). Many times I have seen Mr. Fahoury’s son form a clay pot on the potter’s wheel. He would then make a spout, fill the pot and then pour the water out. We would cheer; he would then crush the clay and start over again.

**Being Strengthened:** Jeremiah must have felt crushed, yet he patiently and courageously continued to testify of the Lord. The grotto in the quarry, where he may have been imprisoned, is both where the Rock and the Water was rejected by some. Yet for others the same place becomes a strengthening witness of the Fountain of Living Waters and the Rock of Salvation.

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