October 19-25, 2026

Jeremiah 1–3; 7; 16–18; 20 66

"BEFORE I FORMED THEE IN THE BELLY I KNEW THEE"

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

Jeremiah 2. The people of Judah forsook the Lord, the fountain of living waters—They worshipped idols and rejected the prophets.

Jeremiah 3. Israel and Judah defiled and polluted the land through wickedness—In the last days, the Lord will gather the people of Israel, one from a city and two from a family, and bring them to Zion.

Jeremiah 7. If the people of Judah repent, they will be preserved—The temple has become a den of robbers—The Lord rejects that generation of the people of Judah for their idolatries—They offer their children as sacrifices.

Jeremiah .16. The utter ruin of Judah is foreseen—Israel is rejected and scattered for serving false gods—Fishers and hunters will gather Israel again, and the people will serve the Lord—The gospel is to be restored.

Jeremiah 17. The captivity of Judah comes because of sin and forsaking the Lord—Hallow the Sabbath day; doing so will save the people; otherwise they will be destroyed.

Jeremiah 18. Israel is as potter's clay in the hands of the Lord—If nations repent, the Lord withholds the evil decreed against them—The people of Judah will be scattered.

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

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What is missing from most religions today? There are numerous metaphors used in the scriptures that denote materials that were formed 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)** As mentioned previously, three truths concepts disappear when true religion apostatizes; The identity of God and the Godhead; the identity of Satan; and the concept of of a pre-and post-earthly life. These have 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, the concept of a pre-earth mortality has been rejected or at least has disappeared from Jewish thought.

How meaningful is a "stone rejected?" 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 carefully observed 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) 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. 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 to his waist into mire **(Jeremiah 38:6)**, because he prophesied against the governmental system. Can you imagine the 'newspaper headline:' "Jeremiah jailed—What do prophets know about politics anyway?"

How meaningful is a "broken cistern?"
Close by the grotto, in the rock wall that was refused 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)** Each week as 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 Messiahship 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. 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." 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 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 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. 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 were rejected by some. Yet for others, the same place becomes a strengthening witness of the Fountain of Living Waters and the Rock of Salvation.

How will the Temple become a "den of thieves?"
Jeremiah prophesizes: "And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen *it,* saith the LORD. **(Jeremiah 7:10-11)** The Lord fulfilled the prophecy: And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went . . . saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves. **(Mark 11: 15-17)** The parallel in reverse, is the salvation of Israel, it comes quietly.

How is salvation "soft and quiet" rather than "powerful and ostentatious?"
The first Passover was Israel's great deliverance from Egypt. The children of Israel may have wanted a powerful zealot "deliverer" to rise out of their ranks and redeem them from slavery. Instead, a soft-spoken once-Egyptian prince became their leader. It turned out that he really was one of them—Moses, a Levite, who escaped an annihilation order by being saved by an Egyptian princess. Ultimately, both the people and the Levite Moses were supposed to learn that the children of Israel were to be led by the Lord and his prophet. The entire massive exodus exercise was to be Israel's greatest lesson in recognizing the Lord's hand in their deliverance. Yet, when the Israelites complained about many things, including the lack of water,

they turned to Moses to fulfill their needs. “And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink.” **(Numbers 20:5)** “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?” **(Numbers 20:6-10)** Moses dramatically fulfilled their need! Yet, both he and the children of Israel became “blind sided” by the obvious outward appearance of this miracle. Moses and Aaron were saying “we” will fetch you water. The Israelites became very busy drinking and watering their flocks. They forgot or were unable to recognize the “Rock of Salvation” and the “Fountain of Living Waters.” Subsequently, every one of them, (except for Joshua and Caleb), were also unable to enter the promised land. Could it be that they set a pattern into motion wherein they preferred to follow Moses the man rather than Jehovah the Lord? Were they saying, “Moses, let God talk to you, and you’ll talk to us?” Again, unable to recognize that with higher responsibilities (statutes) they would receive higher rewards (judgments), they chose a lesser way, resulting in many written commandments, rules, and regulations. “And ye said, Behold, the LORD our God hath showed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth. Now therefore why should we die? For this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any more, then we shall die. For who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it, and do it. And the LORD heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me; and the LORD said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken. O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever! Go say to them, Get you into your tents again. But as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it.” **(Deuteronomy 5:24-33)**

How is being reliant on God’s hand better than doing it ourselves?

Instead of relying on the “Rock of Salvation,” the pattern of self-sufficiency became the millstone of Israel—each time they forgot the Lord, they were on their own. They turned down the higher statutes (commandments) and lost the highest judgments (rewards) God wanted to give them. “Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live; And I polluted them in their own gifts… that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I am the LORD.” **(Ezekiel 20:25-26)** The children of Israel wandered first for forty years. Later they wandered and became a scattered and desolate people throughout the world. Wandering from place to place, has been one of the major components of Jewish history, for since the time of the Patriarchs the “wandering Jew” has suffered from a lack of territory, government, and defense. Major Jewish migrations in search of favorable living conditions and in flight from harassment, persecution, and expulsion, include the Exodus from Egypt, the Babylonian exile, Jewish settlement outside Erez (land of) Israel during the Second Temple period, the dispersion under the Roman and Near Eastern empires after the destruction of the Second Temple. The scattering of Jews throughout the Christian and Islamic states, culminating in the expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula in 1492 and their settlement in the New World since the early stages of the European colonization, a process that greatly accelerated in the latter half of the 19th century. Throughout the period of the Diaspora, small numbers of Jews made their way back to Erez (land of) Israel, the land

promised them in covenant with their God." **(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)**

What evidence is there of a "gathering?"
The Diaspora Museum in Tel Aviv plots the far-flung dispersion of Jews throughout the world. It includes references to many people claiming to be of the House of Israel (including Mormons). The museum also chronicles the gathering of Israel, as more than five million have made their way back to the land of their inheritance. There must be a gathering going on because when I was born in 1941, there were a few hundred thousand Jews in what was to become the land of Israel. Since then in the last more than seventy years alone, almost a 8-million Jews have gathered. Many of them were Russian-speaking Jews from the north. There were months when over twenty thousand Russian immigrants were landing in Israel. Mobile homes were hastily bought and built to accommodate them. Many of those mobile homes were built under the direction of a Latter-day Saint, Fred Huckvale of California. (a "Joseph" was blessing "Judah!") During that peak arrival period, the brethren in a Jerusalem Branch priesthood meeting were discussing Jeremiah's prophecy: "Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The LORD liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers." **(Jeremiah 16:14-15)**

How are there "two" gatherings?
This exodus from the Diaspora, when viewed in its complete scope, will be greater than the exodus from Egypt. The State of Israel has special emissaries assigned throughout the world to assist the Jews in gathering to Israel. This is a frustrating thing to some religious Jews. They feel that the State of Israel should be established by the Lord through a Messiah. They have strong traditions (mentioned in previous lessons) of a latter-day "Messiah ben Joseph, a Joseph, son of Joseph, who would receive the keys of the gathering of Israel and restore Temple worship." A parallel gathering has taken place since the keys of the gathering of Israel were restored to the Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. during Passover week in 1846. Special emissaries are also assigned throughout the world to find and assist the "Blood of Israel" to gather to the Lord. The scope of this gathering is the greatest gathering the world has ever known. Calculating for a moment, we see that just before Prophet and President David O. McKay was leading the Lord's work there was one Member of the Church for every 100,000 people on the earth. Now, Prophet and President Russell B. Nelson is leading the Lord's work with one Member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for just about every 400 people on the earth! These eye-opening statistics are fruits of the Lord's work.

What is the benefit of the spiritual gathering?
On one hand, the Jews, without knowing the Lord, are making an exodus from the far- flung reaches of the world and are being gathered home. On the other hand, throughout the world, Latter-day Saints are making an exodus from not knowing the Lord and are being gathered to an eternal home. They are striving to follow the modern prophets who, like the ancient prophets, wanted them to know the Lord. Their response is in being worthy to know the law in their hearts, without having to be governed by many commandments, rules, and regulations. "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" **(Jeremiah 31:31-33)**

On whom does the "Gathering" center on?
"The time has at last arrived when the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has set his hand again the second time to recover the remnants of his people…and with them to bring

in the fulness of the Gentiles, and establish that covenant with them, which was promised when their sins should be taken away. See **Isaiah 6**: **Romans 6:25, 26** and **27**, and also **Jeremiah 31: 31, 32** and **33**. This covenant has never (before) been established with the house of Israel, nor with the house of Judah…" **(Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Section One 1830-34 Pg.14)** That covenant is made with the Holy One, who in mortality was saved from an annihilation order by fleeing to Egypt. In an eternal scope, He has become our great deliverer. We are in the midst of the "Last Passover," a greater deliverance and the restoration of the highest statutes and judgments. The first Passover, led by a prophet, gave us the "Lesser Laws," written in stone. The last Passover, again led by a prophet, is giving us the "Higher Law," written in our hearts. The old and new laws are again like a chiasmus, with the Savior's ministry and subsequent atonement as the center, the turning point, linking the lesser and higher laws. The following poem illustrates the point.

SERMONS ON THE MOUNTS

The law was given, the standard set. But, best was not accepted yet.

We compromised with Heaven's voice, Just ten commandments was our choice.

Tooth for tooth and eye for eye, retribution was the cry.

LESSER LAW:

1. No other God
2. Or image graven -
3. Not in vain, the name of Heaven
4. Remember Sabbath,
5. Father, Mother
6. Thou shalt not kill
7. Nor defile another -
8. Do not steal -
9. Or false word belabor -
10. Do not covet the wealth of neighbor -

But then was promised a covenant new; inwardly, God would speak to you.

With sins forgiven and God revealed, a higher law on us was sealed.

HIGHER LAW:

10. Bless your neighbor
9. Share a kindly word
8. Give to others -
7. And clean thoughts preferred
6. No need for anger to hide your smile
5. Parents, children, walk the second mile -
4. Use the Sabbath, blessings to bestow -
3. The name of God in your good deeds show
2. Your life will God's true image mirror,
1. As you and He become much nearer.

The secret of God's law is known—
when action by intent is shown.
In Heaven's highest throne to stay,
Use thought and reason to guide the way.
The highest law is now defined—
in thought, in spirit and in the mind.

As stated before, the two sets of law form a chiasmus around the ministry and atonement of Jesus–the lesser law that would lead to Him and the higher law to live like Him. Fifty days after the law given at Sinai is celebrated (Shavuot) was the precise day the Lord blessed the "Men of Galilee" on the Mount of Olives with the Gift of the Holy Ghost in the meridian of times. Fifty days after Jesus' crucifixion at Passover, the Holy Ghost came upon the congregation in Jerusalem.