



WEEK 2

# JEREMIAH

*cracked cisterns hold no water*

ENCOUNTER

## MONDAY - JEREMIAH 36:1-10

Jeremiah may give us more “behind the scenes” insight into the writing of Scripture than any other Bible book. At first, he spoke his messages. In today’s passage, we read that, at God’s direction, Jeremiah put his message in writing (Baruch, a skilled scribe, did the actual pen work). Baruch went beyond “scribing,” and read God’s word publicly in the Temple.

## TUESDAY - JEREMIAH 36:16-32

King Jehoiakim did not want to fast or repent. He contemptuously cut up Jeremiah’s prophetic scroll and burned it. Then he sent officers to arrest Jeremiah and Baruch. Notice how verse 19, where temple officials tell Jeremiah to hide, interacts with verse 26—“the LORD had hidden them.” We usually see God work through human instruments.

## WEDNESDAY - JEREMIAH 5:1-7, 26-31

When Jeremiah delivered stinging messages like this, people did not just say, “He’s a prophet—it must be true.” Verse 31 notes that there were many “prophets” in Jerusalem, and most of them said Jeremiah was wrong. This posed, and poses, an important question: how do we discern God’s authentic voice, and decide how to respond to it?

## THURSDAY - JEREMIAH 28:1-17

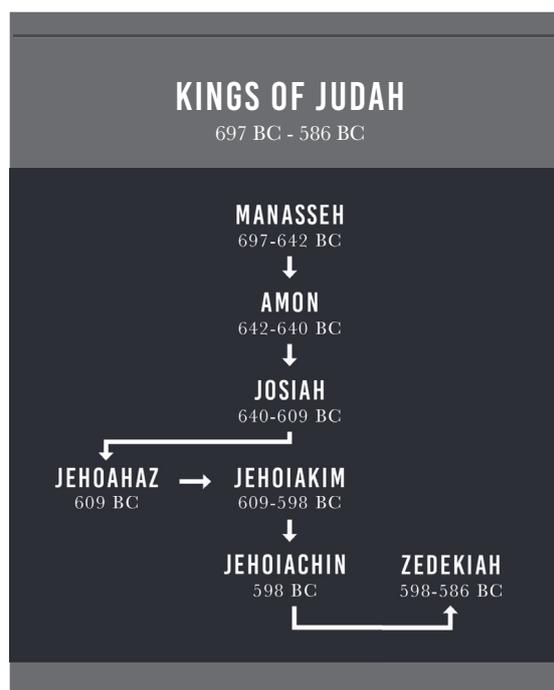
Hananiah, a rival “prophet,” swore that within two years Judah would be free from Babylon’s power. He mocked Jeremiah’s austere message. In this case, Jeremiah said the false prophet would die—and two months later, he did. Jeremiah did not give detail about how he would die, and we don’t know. The stark fact spoke for itself: Jeremiah, not Hananiah, was right.

## FRIDAY - JEREMIAH 20:1-2, 7-13

God told Jeremiah he would make him like an iron pillar (1:18). But unlike an iron pillar, the prophet was still human, and had all the emotions each of us has. He didn’t like being hated; he didn’t like prophesying destruction. But he couldn’t stop preaching God’s message (verse 9). So he trusted God to be with him as he steadfastly carried out his heart-breaking ministry.

## SATURDAY - JEREMIAH 23:1-8

Things were bad in Jeremiah’s Judah. The leaders were letting their people, and God, down. Jeremiah felt compelled to speak starkly about the wrongs he saw around him. But his vision did not get stuck solely on the flaws he saw in the present. God had a better future in store. Like all of the Biblical prophets, Jeremiah lived in the hope and trust that God would send a redeemer to set all things right (verse 6).



# QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. In Jeremiah 36:1-10, “a time of fasting before the LORD was proclaimed”. This was a time of repentance and prayer. Fasting can take many forms besides giving up food. Fasting can provide time and focus for prayer and drawing closer to God. What kinds of things might we be able give up in order to fast? Can our determination and self-discipline alone make our efforts to fast helpful? What would give us the strength to fast? Do you think God would notice? Jeremiah asked Baruch to help him by reading God’s message at the Temple. Do you find it easy or hard to ask for help from others? What can make this difficult?

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2. Read Jeremiah 36:16-32. God told Jeremiah to confront the King. How would you imagine Jeremiah felt about that? If you feel that God is with you, does that make it easier to do the things that you fear doing? Does it give you the strength to do them even if you are afraid? How would you feel after delivering the message? Baruch wrote down things that became part of our Bible. How do you think God worked through people to bring us the Bible we now know? What various kinds of people were involved in the last several thousand years to provide the Bible you now use?



ASHERAH

3. Read Jeremiah 5:1-7, 26-31. There were many so-called prophets In Jeremiah’s time. Most people, it seems, did not believe Jeremiah when he spoke. Many only recognized him as a true prophet after his dire messages came to pass. How do you determine whether you are hearing God’s voice through others? When you hear these messages, do you always believe/ accept them? The people didn’t want to hear what Jeremiah was preaching. Therefore, they rejected his words. Can you face it when you realize your values or actions are different than God’s will for your life? What causes you to veer into wrong thinking and acting? What can bring you back to God’s will?

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4. Read Jeremiah 28:1-17. Hananiah was wrong and Jeremiah was right. What did that say about Hananiah’s prophecies? Do we still have false prophets today? Which do you believe is the acting as the false prophet here? (Finding the difference seems easy in this example, because we know the Bible, however slightly. It’s true, though, that the closer we are to God, the easier it is to discern truth from lies, and false prophets from true prophets.) How can you come closer to God and stay that way? Stop and think who or what you allow to influence your thinking and acting. Who/what comes to mind?

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5. In Jeremiah 20:1-2, 7-13, we see how really painful it was for Jeremiah to be a prophet. Jesus never said being a disciple would be easy. Have you ever asked yourself how far you are willing to go to serve God? What if times change and being a Christian means real suffering for you, or your family. Would you be prepared to be derided? Beaten? Poor? Hungry? Have you ever asked God about this? Should you? If you face difficulties in serving God, can you face them squarely and talk about them with God? Who else could you share your troubles with?

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6. Read Jeremiah 23:1-8. Even in these toughest of times in Judah, God, through Jeremiah, held out hope for his people. It was not for every individual Hebrew, but for the Jews as a whole. When you go through the darkest of times, can you see any light at the end of the tunnel? Do you pray? Does God offer any solace or hope? What are the hardest things you are facing right now? What about people you know? How can you, as an individual or as a group, be hands of hope and solace for those who suffer?

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BA'EL OR BAAL

EMBRACE

**This week** ask yourself what are my idols and how do they affect my relationships with the people around me?

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ENGAGE

**Who are** some of the people or groups that set the trends, social norms and activities in the Netherlands today? Are these people you admire and respect? What spiritual strengths and challenges do you see in society right now?

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PRAY

Heavenly Father, help us to be, like Jeremiah, strong and faithful servants and proclaimers of your holy word. Help us to be the kind of people you would have us be, speaking and acting in ways that represent you well. Help us to open ourselves to the power and glory that is your very being. In Jesus' name, Amen.