

Handout 1: Jeremiah Lesson 2

*When your words came, I devoured them: Your word was my delight
and the joy of my heart; for I was called by your Name, Yahweh, God Sabaoth.*
Jeremiah 15:16

Jeremiah's preaching ministry probably began in 622 BC, in the thirteenth year King Josiah after the Book of the Law was discovered in the Temple (2 Kng 22:2, 8-10; 2 Chr 34:8, 14-21). He was probably about eighteen years old (see the quote above).

God's word has an ongoing and forward motion from call, to promise, to commission, to fulfillment:

- Yahweh's word comes to Jeremiah in the call (Jer 1:2, 4).
- Yahweh's word promises a fulfillment (Jer 1:11).
- Yahweh's promised word is fulfilled in Jeremiah's commissioning (Jer 1:13).
- Yahweh's word is fulfilled further as Jeremiah begins to preach (Jer 2:1).

Despite Jeremiah's incessant and bitter complaints concerning his nation's wickedness, he also preached:

1. If Judah will turn away from her sins and back to God, Yahweh will save His people from destruction.
2. When there was no hope of repentance, he preached submission to Babylon will preserve the nation.
3. He promised Yahweh will preserve a faithful remnant who will one day return.
4. When the people of God recover, they will one day dominate the world.
5. Babylon, the destroyer, shall herself be judged for her sins and destroyed, never to rise again as a regional power.

Jeremiah 2:1-4:4 addresses the double theme of apostasy and repentance—the focus of 2:1-3:13 is on apostasy, and the focus of 3:14-4:4 is on repentance and conversion.

Jeremiah's oracles follow the pattern of ancient Middle Eastern covenant lawsuits when packs or treaty alliances were broken between people or between nations:

1. In the first stage, the accused party and the witnesses are informed of the subject of the dispute.
2. Then the benefits enjoyed by the accused are listed with the admonishment that the offending party should have adhered to what he had agreed to in the pact or covenant.
3. This is followed by a list of charges—often these are couched in the form of questions.
4. Then at the end comes a demand for action to be taken to give the aggrieved party justice.
5. In covenant treaty lawsuits between nations, if no agreement is reached, a list of sanctions or a declaration of war inevitably followed.

Both secular and Biblical covenant lawsuits usually included the calling of witnesses against the offending party in the first stage. In pagan treaties or covenant lawsuits the false gods of both

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parties were called as witnesses. However, since there is only one true God who is Yahweh, the witnesses who are called are the created elements of heaven and earth (for example see Dt 30:19; 32:1; Is 1:2; Jer 2:12) that witnessed the original treaty formation and ratification when the Israelites swore an oath to obey all that God commanded at the covenant ratification ceremony at Mt. Sinai (Ex 24:3, 7). Yahweh's charges are brought in the form of a husband charging his wife with adultery; also see Hosea 2:4-5: *To court, take your mother to court! For she is no longer my wife nor am I her husband. She must either remove her whoring ways from her face and her adulteries from between her breasts, or I shall strip her and expose her naked as the day she was born...* (Hos 2:4/2:2-2:5/2:3).

Time references in the Book of Jeremiah.

- Time references in 1:2 and 3:6 refer to the reign of King Josiah (640-609 BC).
- King Jehoiakim's reign (609-598 BC): 22:18; 25:1; 26:1; 35:1 and 45:1.
- The reign of Judah's last Davidic king, King Zedekiah (598-587 BC): 21:1; 24:1, 8; 27:3, 12; 28:1; 29:3; 32:1; 34:2; 37:1; 39:1; 49:34; 51:59.
- In Egypt after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC: 43:7, 8; 44:1

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Handout 2: Jeremiah Lesson 2

Nine Comparisons Between Jeremiah's Prophetic Teaching in Chapter 2 and Moses' Last Homily in Deuteronomy Chapter 32	
Jeremiah	Moses
<p>1. <i>What did your ancestors find wrong in me for them to have deserted me so far as to follow Futility and become futile themselves?</i> Jer 2:5</p>	<p><i>He is the Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are equitable. A trustworthy God who does no wrong, he is the Honest, the Upright One!</i> Dt 32:4</p>
<p>2. <i>They never said, 'Where is Yahweh, who brought us out of Egypt and led us through the desert, through a land of plains and ravines, through a land of drought, of shadow dark as death, a land through which no one passes and where no human being lives?'</i> Jer 2:6</p>	<p><i>In the desert he finds him [Israel], in the howling expanses of the wastelands. He protects him, rears him, guards him as the pupil of his eye.</i> Dt 32:10</p>
<p>3. <i>I brought you to a country of plenty, to enjoy its produce and good things ...</i> Jer 2:7a</p>	<p><i>He gives him the heights of the land to ride, he feeds him on the yield of the mountains, he gives him honey from the rock to taste, and oil from the flinty crag; curds from the cattle, milk from the flock, and the richness of the pasture, rams of Bashan's breed, and goats, the richness of the wheat kernel; the fermented blood of the grape for drink.</i> Dt 32:13-14</p>
<p>4. <i>... but when you entered you defiled my country and made my heritage loathsome.</i> Jer 2:7b</p>	<p><i>... but Yahweh's portion was his people, Jacob was to be the measure of his inheritance.</i> Dt 32:9</p>
<p>5. <i>The priests [of Israel] never asked, 'Where is Yahweh?' Those skilled in the Law did not know me, the shepherds too rebelled against me and the prophets prophesied by Baal and followed the Useless Ones.</i> Jer 2:8</p>	<p><i>... He [Israel] has disowned the God who made him, and dishonored the Rock, his salvation, whose jealousy they aroused with foreigners—with things detestable they angered him. They sacrificed to demons who are not God, to gods hitherto unknown to them, to newcomers of yesterday whom their ancestors had never respected.</i> Dt 32:15b-17</p>
<p>6. <i>Does a nation change its gods?—and these are not gods at all!</i> Jer 2:11a</p>	<p><i>They have roused me to jealousy with a non-god, they have exasperated me with their idols.</i> Dt 32:21a</p>
<p>7. <i>You heavens, stand aghast at this, horrified, utterly appalled, Yahweh declares.</i> Jer 2:12</p>	<p><i>Listen heavens, while I speak; hear earth the words that I shall say!</i> Dt 32:1</p>

<p>8. ...who say to a piece of wood, "You are my father," and to a stone, "You gave birth to me." For they turn their backs, never their faces; yet when trouble comes they shout, "Get up! Save us!" [...] Does a girl forget her ornaments, a bride her sash? And yet my people have forgotten me, days beyond number. Jer 2:27, 32</p>	<p><i>You forgot the Rock who fathered you, the God who made you, you no longer remember.</i> Dt 32:18</p>
<p>9. Where are your gods you made for yourself? Let them get up if they can save you when trouble comes! For you have as many gods as you have towns, Judah! Jer 2:28</p>	<p><i>"Where are their gods then?" he will ask, "the rock they sought refuge, who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their libations?" Let these arise and help you, let these be the shelter above you!</i> Dt 32:37-38</p>

Jeremiah's references to Moses' warnings in Deuteronomy 32 continue from Jeremiah 2:5 through the succeeding chapters until Jeremiah 51:19 that is an echo of the warning in Deuteronomy 32:9. Michal E. Hunt Copyright © 2016