

***** it-2 pp. 30-32 Jeremiah *****

A prophet, the son of Hilkiah, a priest of Anathoth, a city of the priests located in Benjamin's territory less than 5 km (3 mi) NNE of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. (Jer 1:1; Jos 21:13, 17, 18) Jeremiah's father, Hilkiah, was not the high priest of that name, who was of the line of Eleazar. Jeremiah's father was very likely of the line of Ithamar and possibly descended from Abiathar, the priest whom King Solomon dismissed from priestly service.—1Ki 2:26, 27.

Commissioned as Prophet. Jeremiah was called to be a prophet when a young man, in 647 B.C.E., in the 13th year of the reign of King Josiah of Judah (659-629 B.C.E.). Jehovah told him: "Before I was forming you in the belly I knew you, and before you proceeded to come forth from the womb I sanctified you. Prophet to the nations I made you." (Jer 1:2-5) He was therefore one of the few men for whose birth Jehovah assumed responsibility—intervening by a miracle or by a guiding providence—that they might be his special servants. Among these men are Isaac, Samson, Samuel, John the Baptizer, and Jesus.—See FOREKNOWLEDGE, FOREORDINATION.

When Jehovah spoke to him, Jeremiah showed diffidence. He replied to God: "Alas, O Sovereign Lord Jehovah! Here I actually do not know how to speak, for I am but a boy." (Jer 1:6) From this remark of his, and comparing his boldness and firmness during his prophetic ministry, it can be seen that such unusual strength was not a thing inherent in Jeremiah, but actually came from full reliance on Jehovah. Truly Jehovah was with him "like a terrible mighty one," and it was Jehovah who made Jeremiah "a fortified city and an iron pillar and copper walls against all the land." (Jer 20:11; 1:18, 19) Jeremiah's reputation for courage and boldness was such that some during Jesus' earthly ministry took him to be Jeremiah returned to life.—Mt 16:13, 14.

Writings. Jeremiah was a researcher and a historian as well as a prophet. He wrote the book bearing his name and is also generally credited with writing the books of First and Second Kings, covering the history of both kingdoms (Judah and Israel) from the point where the books of Samuel left off (that is, in the latter part of David's reign over all Israel) down to the end of both kingdoms. His chronology of the period of the kings, using the method of comparison or collation of

the reigns of Israel's and Judah's kings, helps us to establish the dates of certain events with accuracy. After the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah wrote the book of Lamentations.

Strong Denunciatory Message. Jeremiah was no chronic complainer. Rather, he showed himself to be loving, considerate, and sympathetic. He exercised fine control and marvelous endurance and was moved to great sadness by the conduct of his people and the judgments they suffered.—Jer 8:21.

Actually, it was Jehovah who made the complaint against Judah, and justifiably so, and Jeremiah was under obligation to declare it unremittingly, which he did. Also, it must be borne in mind that Israel was God's nation, bound to him by covenant and under his law, which they were grossly violating. As basis and solid ground for Jeremiah's denunciations, Jehovah repeatedly pointed to the Law, calling attention to the responsibility of the princes and the people and recounting wherein they had broken the Law. Time and again Jehovah called attention to the things he, through his prophet Moses, had warned them would come upon them if they refused to listen to his words and broke his covenant.—Le 26; De 28.

Courage, Endurance, Love. Jeremiah's courage and endurance were matched by his love for his people. He had scathing denunciations and fearful judgments to proclaim, especially to the priests, prophets, and rulers and to those who took "the popular course" and had developed "an enduring unfaithfulness." (Jer 8:5, 6) Yet he appreciated that his commission was also "to build and to plant." (Jer 1:10) He wept over the calamity that was to come to Jerusalem. (Jer 8:21, 22; 9:1) The book of Lamentations is an evidence of his love and concern for Jehovah's name and people. In spite of cowardly, vacillating King Zedekiah's treacherousness toward him, Jeremiah pleaded with him to obey the voice of Jehovah and continue living. (Jer 38:4, 5, 19-23) Furthermore, Jeremiah had no self-righteous attitude but included himself when acknowledging the wickedness of the nation. (Jer 14:20, 21) After his release by Nebuzaradan, he hesitated to leave those being taken into Babylonian exile, perhaps feeling that he should share their lot or desiring to serve their spiritual interests further.—Jer 40:5.

At times in his long career Jeremiah became discouraged and required Jehovah's assurance, but even in adversity he did not forsake calling on Jehovah for help.—Jer 20.

Associations. Through all of his more than 40 years of prophetic service, Jeremiah was not abandoned. Jehovah was with him to deliver him from his enemies. (Jer 1:19) Jeremiah took delight in Jehovah's word. (Jer 15:16) He avoided association with those who had no consideration for God. (Jer 15:17) He found good associates among whom he could do 'building up' work (Jer 1:10), namely, the Rechabites, Ebed-melech, and Baruch. Through these friends he was assisted and delivered from death, and more than once Jehovah's power was manifested in protecting him.—Jer 26:7-24; 35:1-19; 36:19-26; 38:7-13; 39:11-14; 40:1-5.

Dramatic Illustrations. Jeremiah performed several small dramas as symbols to Jerusalem of her condition and the calamity to come to her. There was his visit to the house of the potter (Jer 18:1-11), and the incident of the ruined belt. (Jer 13:1-11) Jeremiah was commanded not to marry; this served as a warning of the "deaths from maladies" of the children who would be born during those last days of Jerusalem. (Jer 16:1-4) He broke a flask before the older men of Jerusalem as a symbol of the impending smashing of the city. (Jer 19:1, 2, 10, 11) He repurchased a field from his paternal uncle's son Hanamel as a figure of the restoration to come after the 70 years' exile, when fields would again be bought in Judah. (Jer 32:8-15, 44) Down in Tahpanhes, Egypt, he hid large stones in the terrace of bricks at the house of Pharaoh, prophesying that Nebuchadnezzar would set his throne over that very spot.—Jer 43:8-10.

A True Prophet. Jeremiah was acknowledged as God's true prophet by Daniel, who, by a study of Jeremiah's words concerning the 70 years' exile, was able to strengthen and encourage the Jews regarding the nearness of their release. (Da 9:1, 2; Jer 29:10) Ezra called attention to the fulfillment of his words. (Ezr 1:1; see also 2Ch 36:20, 21.) The apostle Matthew pointed to a fulfillment of one of Jeremiah's prophecies in the days of Jesus' young childhood. (Mt 2:17, 18; Jer 31:15) The apostle Paul spoke of the prophets, among whom was Jeremiah, from whose writings he quoted, at Hebrews 8:8-12. (Jer 31:31-34) Of these men, the same writer said, "the world

was not worthy of them,” and “they had witness borne to them through their faith.”—Heb 11:32, 38, 39.

***** w77 12/15 pp. 756-758 pars. 11-16 “They Will Be Certain to Fight Against You” *****

¹¹ Jeremiah’s youth did not matter with Jehovah. Godly devotion and willingness to serve under unpleasant circumstances were the qualities that counted with Jehovah. This is evident from the Bible record: “And the word of Jehovah began to occur to me, saying: ‘Before I was forming you in the belly I knew you, and before you proceeded to come forth from the womb I sanctified you. Prophet to the nations I made you.’ But I said: ‘Alas, O Sovereign Lord Jehovah! Here I actually do not know how to speak, for I am but a boy.’”—Jer. 1:4-6.

“BUT A BOY”

¹² However, was this son of Hilkiah the priest too young in 647 B.C.E. for Jehovah to select him as “prophet to the nations”? No, for even before Jeremiah was conceived in his mother’s womb, hence long before his birth, Jehovah saw that a son from Hilkiah would be suitable for this responsible office—just at the right time, too. Also, if Jehovah could sanctify such a son before Hilkiah begot him, certainly this Almighty God could introduce that son into the sacred office, say about 20 years after his birth, or, better still, 25 years after his birth, when he would be qualified to enter the first phases of priestly service at the temple in Jerusalem. So Jeremiah’s birth was well timed, for Jehovah wanted the desired prophet-priest to be a young man at the beginning of his career.

¹³ Jehovah purposed for Jeremiah to serve as prophet for a long time, for more than 40 years, or till old age. So it was not accidental that Jehovah’s prophetic word began to come to Jeremiah in the thirteenth year of the reign of King Josiah of Jerusalem. (Jer. 1:1, 2) But Jeremiah himself felt too young to undertake prophetic work that required speaking, publicly. Also, since this would involve speaking to the elders of the nation, men of advanced age, Jeremiah felt himself to be “but a boy.”

¹⁴ The kings, princes, priests and people of the land looked down upon Jeremiah’s youth, this reminding us of how the Christian apostle

Paul told his missionary companion Timothy not to let anyone look down upon his youth when he was carrying out Paul's orders to him. (1 Tim. 4:12) Jehovah did not do so. He did not speak to Jeremiah in a boyish way, and he did not inspire Jeremiah's first prophecy to be couched in boy's talk. It was addressed to adults and in their dignified language.

¹⁵ All along, Christendom's much older religious systems have looked upon Jehovah's Christian witnesses as "but a boy," in comparison with themselves. It is true that C. T. Russell was just 27 years old when he founded and started editing *Zion's Watch Tower*, but he kept on editing it for 37 years, till he died when 64 years old. He served as president of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society for almost 32 years (1884-1916). As that Society was incorporated in December of 1884, the work carried on in conjunction with it by those now organized as Jehovah's Christian witnesses has been for only about 100 years. Yes, youthful they were when stepping into the arena of modern religious controversy, yet they went out onto the field with courage. It was like the teenage shepherd boy David, when he challenged the heavily armed Philistine giant Goliath. (1 Sam. 17:23-54) Like David, they knew that they were going forth in Jehovah's name and that "to Jehovah belongs the battle."—1 Sam. 17:47.

¹⁶ Regardless of their age, Jehovah is able to qualify those whom he chooses for his service. The experience of Jeremiah as a pre-Christian witness of Jehovah proves that to be true, for our encouragement today. Jeremiah's own biography says: "And Jehovah went on to say to me: 'Do not say, "I am but a boy." But to all those to whom I shall send you, you should go; and everything that I shall command you, you should speak. Do not be afraid because of their faces, for "I am with you to deliver you," is the utterance of Jehovah.' At that Jehovah thrust his hand out and caused it to touch my mouth. Then Jehovah said to me: 'Here I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have commissioned you this day to be over the nations and over the kingdoms, in order to uproot and to pull down and to destroy and to tear down, to build and to plant.'"—Jer. 1:7-10.

***** w77 2/1 p. 93 Benefit from the Bible's 'Play on Words' *****
Benefit from the Bible's 'Play on Words'

The Bible contains plays on words, that is, in the original Hebrew similar-sounding words of different meaning are used to make a point. These are not easily recognized in translations but may be called attention to in footnotes or marginal references. Evidently such plays on words helped to impress the message deeply upon the minds of the hearers or readers. Our taking note of them can make the passages of Scripture where they appear more meaningful to us.

Take, for example, Jeremiah 1:11-13, where we read: “The word of Jehovah continued to occur to me, saying: ‘What are you seeing, Jeremiah?’ So I said: ‘An offshoot of an almond tree is what I am seeing.’ And Jehovah went on to say to me: ‘You have seen well, for I am keeping awake concerning my word in order to carry it out.’”

One may be inclined to ask, Just what relationship is there between an “almond tree” and “keeping awake”? In the original language a play on words is involved. The Hebrew name for the almond tree literally means “the waker.” This is an appropriate designation, since the almond is one of the first trees to bloom after the winter rest.

The foregoing is but one of many Biblical plays on words. So as not to miss them, check the footnotes or marginal references, if the Bible you are using has such. You may make some very interesting and helpful discoveries.

*** w77 12/15 p. 759 pars. 3-4 “They Will Not Prevail Against You”

³ “And the word of Jehovah continued to occur to me, saying: ‘What are you seeing, Jeremiah?’ So I said: ‘An offshoot of an almond tree [Hebrew, *shaqéd*] is what I am seeing.’ And Jehovah went on to say to me: ‘You have seen well, for I am keeping awake [*shoqéd*] concerning my word in order to carry it out.’”

⁴ Who, then, of us today, whether we belong to the anointed Jeremiah class or belong to those actively supporting that class, dares to discontinue his own personal wakefulness? We do the wise thing if we imitate Jehovah himself. To illustrate his own wakefulness he caused Jeremiah to see in vision the “offshoot of an almond tree.” Jeremiah knew that the word for “almond tree” (*shaqéd* in Hebrew) means “one awakening.” This tree is the first one to awake in the spring of the year by its blossoming. Jehovah was like the “offshoot of

an almond tree” in his own awakening to the season into which the nations and kingdoms were entering. His prophetic Word applies at a certain time, and at that time he will carry it out. His word will never fail owing to any inattentiveness on his part