

Twenty one communiques from outpost commanders to the regional headquarters at Lachish were found in a guardroom of that city, buried in the ash layers which had resulted from the Babylonian sack of Lachish. Letter IV says "... we are watching for the signals from Lachish..for we cannot see Azekah." It may be that Azekah had by that time fallen to the Babylonian army. The word used here for "signal" is the same as that used in Jeremiah 6:1. Letter VI complains that some of the nobles "weaken the hands" of the people (cf. Jer. 38:4!). The language and style of the letters is similar to that of Jeremiah, thus establishing a chronology for dating his writings.

Arrowheads, thought to have been fired by Babylonian attackers, have been found in a layer of ash in Jerusalem. An inscription found in a small village near Lachish has been translated, "I am Yahweh thy God; I will accept the cities of Judah and will redeem Jerusalem." Perhaps a refugee fleeing the Babylonian advance believed Jeremiah's prophecies of restoration (30-33) and carved this as a testimony to his faith.

Keys for a better understanding of Jeremiah are a fuller study of his call and God's introduction of him as spokesman. The threats against his life (26) and other biographical notes make him more personable than any of the other prophets. The new covenant (31:31-34) is the culmination of his theological development.

Aids for further study tips include the reading through Jeremiah as a unit but, if you need to break, stop after chapter 25. Read about the various kings, officials, etc., in a Bible dictionary or encyclopedia. For historical background read 2 Kings 22-25 and 2 Chronicles 34-36. Compare Hosea's treatment of the marriage them with that of Jeremiah. To understand better Jeremiah as a person, read the sections about his own thoughts and confessions: 8:18-9:2; 11:18-12:3; 15:10-21; 17:14-18; 18:18-23; 20:1-18.

In classical expression Jeremiah is portrayed as the mournful, brooding prophet by Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel...but otherwise he does not seem to have found a classical place in art and literature.

Further reading will be found in Harrison, R.K. JEREMIAH AND LAMENTATIONS (IVP), Thompson, J.A. JEREMIAH (Eerdmans)--but with lots of notes on the Hebrew text. See also Sire, J.W. JEREMIAH, MEET THE TWENTIETH CENTURY (IVP)...twelve individual or group studies on the life and ministry of the prophet. Young, E.J. MY SERVANTS THE PROPHETS and Schultz: THE PROPHETS SPEAK, constitute excellent introductory materials to the study of the prophets major and minor.

b. A study and discussion outline

- We will reflect on examples in the content of each of these sections
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