THE (HOMERIC) LITERARY STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

Dr David G Palmer, 13.11.2026

PROLOGUE plus INTRODUCTION — **Jeremiah: '<u>prophet to the nations</u>', under the LORD's protection**

P 1.1-3/4-19 — '**The words of Jeremiah…'; the Word of the LORD to the kings of Judah: Josiah, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, up to the exile; <u>the call</u> ('<u>What do you see, Jeremiah</u>?'); disaster is coming from the north** (1.13-15)

COMPLICATION — **<u>Judgements on Jerusalem, the Houses of Jacob and Israel</u>, also the nations; <u>but opportunities too for 'Israel'</u> – <u>to think again</u> and behave differently**

A 2.1-6.30 — **Israel has forsaken the LORD, is unfaithful; Jerusalem is under siege; disaster is coming from the north** (says the closing piece, 6.1)

Centre: Jeremiah questions the LORD (5.3-5)

1 'prophecies to the nations' – these feature in the final section

B 7.1-17.18 — **<u>Jeremiah is told to stand at the gate of the LORD's house</u> and proclaim: '<u>Reform</u> your ways… <u>Return</u>…'; the focus on sin and punishment, idols, a broken covenant**

Centre: Jeremiah questions the LORD (12.1-4)

2 the women make cakes for the Queen of Heaven (7.18)

B' 17.19-23.40 — **<u>Jeremiah is told to stand at the people's gate and other gates</u>: they are 'stiff-necked and will not listen'; '<u>Repent</u>' and <u>the Lord will relent</u>; a plot against Jeremiah follows; he is beaten/put in the stocks** for saying, **'Babylon will put Israel to the sword'; the LORD is against evil kings, shepherds and false prophets**

<u>a righteous branch (23.5)</u>

Centre: Jeremiah questions the LORD (20.7-18)

3 Jeremiah is beaten and put in stocks (20.2); Pashur (20.1, 21.1); 'sword, famine and plague' (21.9)

TURNING POINT — **<u>The Exile has begun</u>; '<u>What do you see, Jeremiah</u>?'** (24.3)… **good and bad figs; 'sword, famine and plague' await the people; captivity and restoration are to come; but Judah will serve Nebuchadnezzar 70 years - for saying this, Jeremiah is to die!**

A 24-26 — **Figs; Jeremiah tells the people - for twenty-three years they have not been listening to him; 'Turn' he says, 'and they could stay in the land…'**
'They will be my people and I will be their God' (24.7)

X C C 27-30 — **Jeremiah has to make a yoke for his neck; the yoke is broken for him and for Israel**

a	False prophet, Hananiah; not sent; preached rebellion against the LORD	(28.12-17)
c	**Jeremiah - the true prophet; his letter to the Exiles; '70 years', 'poor figs' references**	(29.1-23)
a'	False prophet, Shemaiah; not sent; preached rebellion against 'me'	(29.24-32)

A' 31-33 — **R**eleased from captivity, there is a new covenant with Israel and Judah; they will be restored - with the Law in their minds and hearts**
'I will be their God and they will be my people' (31.33, also 30.22); <u>a righteous branch (33.15)</u>

DÉNOUEMENT — **<u>All Babylon is attacking Jerusalem</u>; Jeremiah warns Zedekiah and the nations of what is going to happen; Zedekiah himself will see the King of Babylon**

A 34-39 — **Jeremiah's warning to Zedekiah; a new scroll, burned by the king who shows no fear, is written again; Jeremiah's imprisonment in cistern and courtyard; Jerusalem's fall**

Centre: Jeremiah's message is met with fear (36.15b-21)

3' Jeremiah is beaten, imprisoned (37.15), must die (38.4); Pashur (38.2,2); 'sword, plague and famine' (34.17)

B 40-45 — **Jeremiah is freed. The remnant is not to flee to Egypt but stay in Babylon, but they go to Egypt and worship other gods; there, they will be destroyed**

Centre: fleeing in fear - the remnant (41.16-18)

2' the women make cakes for the Queen of Heaven (44.17, 19)

B' 46.1-51.64b — **Jeremiah warns the nations of punishment for them; Babylon will fall to the Medes**
<u>a righteous branch – Cyrus? (51.11, 28)</u>

Centre: fleeing in fear - Edom, Damascus and Kedor (49.7-33)

1' 'prophecies to the nations'

EPILOGUE: — **Vindication for Jeremiah (and the LORD who had protected him throughout)**

E 51.64c-52.34 — **'The words of Jeremiah end here.' Jerusalem's Fall; the kings of Judah: Zedekiah and Jehoiachin; of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar; Judah's captivity and the exiled 4,600**