**Notes on Jeremiah and Ezekiel**

1. Jeremiah is written for the survivors of the 3 Babylonian attacks against Judah (the Southern Kingdom): 598, 587, 582 BCE.
2. The book portrays a world of trauma: the disastrous events of Judah’s final decades as a religious/national community – the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple; the end of political independence; the loss of land; the death and deportation of thousands
3. Jeremiah interprets them as “meaning-making events that signal the end of the nation’s social and symbolic worlds”; they “engulf the text in suffering…forming a tapestry of grief that envelops Jeremiah and Judah as well as the cosmos and its creator”
4. Jeremiah was the son of the priest, Hilkiah; his family may have descended from Abiathar (I Kings 2:26, 27); Jeremiah lives during the years spanning the reign of King Josiah (640-609 BCE), the fall and destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of part of the Judean population into captivity (597-586 BCE) at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon
5. Genres: poetic, prophetic oracles arranged in grouping (not necessarily chronological); prose – written in 3rd person, influenced by the language and theology of Deuteronomy; sermons, laments; prayers; songs;
6. Prose sermons assaulting Judah’s false worship; declaring that the ancient covenant curses rather than blesses when the people act falsely; subverts dynastic rights and sabotages ancient land claims
7. First half of the book, Chs. 1-25, includes accusations and indictments against Judah and Jerusalem; Second half of the book, Chs. 26-52 give more attention to survival and hope
8. Some biblical prophets – their oracles eclipse their personalities; for Jeremiah – stories about him, his experiences and his prayers are as important as his oracles; he engages God’s purposes and pathos in his own life; Jeremiah becomes God’s prophetic message
9. Jeremiah emerges as God’s suffering servant: faces enough hardship, scorn, abuse and humiliation; he suffers unjustly and in solidarity with the poor
10. Ch. 1: 4-10: the call of Jeremiah; vs.14-17 – God’s encouragement
11. Ch. 2: great chapter of what’s been done by the God/the good done for the people; details Israel’s apostasy – failures, syncretism; marriage imagery like that found in Hosea; water imagery vs.13-; vineyard vs 21;
12. Ch. 3: movement from poetry to prose and back; 3:15 image of true shepherds
13. Ch. 4: “If/Then” passages; 4:4 “circumcise the foreskin of your heart”
14. Ch. 5: vs. 1 reminiscent of Abraham arguing for Sodom; vs. 4-5 “knowing” the Lord; vs. 13 – false prophets; vs. 18 – “why?”;
15. Ch. 6: vs. 10 – ears are closed; they can’t listen; vs. 14 “peace, peace, where this is no peace”
16. Ch. 7: vs. 4 ff – the deceptive words about the temple; vs. 23ff – didn’t keep covenant
17. Ch. 8: vs. 1-3 – defilement of the dead; genre of lament vs. 18-22, vs. 22 “Is there no balm in Gilead?”
18. Ch. 9: vs. 6 – they refused to know me; vs. 13-14 – they refused to listen; vs. 24 “I act with steadfast love”
19. Ch. 10: vs.11 “to gods who did make the heavens…”
20. Ch. 11: vs. 3 “cursed by anyone…”
21. Ch. 12: opens with “trial language”
22. Ch. 13: the loincloth – symbolic object; the wine jar – symbolic object
23. Ch. 14: vs. 14 ff – false prophets
24. Ch. 15: opening line “Moses and Samuel stood before me…”
25. Ch. 18: the potter and the clay; vs 18 ff – plots against Jeremiah
26. Ch. 20: vs. 7ff – Jeremiah’s lament about being “seduced” as a prophet
27. Ch. 23: false shepherds
28. Ch. 26: condemnation of Jeremiah
29. Ch. 29: a few verses of hope – 29: 10-15
30. Ch. 38: Jeremiah thrown into the cistern to die

Ezekiel

1. Ezekiel – name means “God’s strength” – he needed this since he prophesied to a rebellious audience, stubborn and defiant – called “rebellious house”
2. Ezekiel – a literary character within his own prophecies; his shocking and mystifying actions have to be interpreted in a highly symbolic and theological manner
3. Ezekiel wrote in the 6th century BCE in Babylonia, during the exile of the Judeans (southern kingdom); Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar II defeated the Egyptians in 605 BCE; the Egyptians had allied with the Assyrians, who were destroyed by Babylonians between 614-609; while Judah did rebel, the Babylonians defeated and exiled them (Judeans) in 591and 586; in 581 the final deportation took place
4. Ezekiel was in the first group of exiles
5. Ezekiel’s character as a literary text is a complex book to read and interpret; “it probes behind or beyond observable things and events, using metaphors and mythic poetry to portray the underlying structure of existence or the transcendent realities beneath both plain sensory observation and historical records”
6. As the people, particularly the priests among the exiles, questioned how the God of the covenant could allow their demise, Ezekiel counters with cosmic, eschatological, and apocalyptic visions of a rebuilt Jerusalem – better than the earthly one
7. Language and laws of the priests and the traditions of the Temple influence Ezekiel
8. Ch. 1: imagery of the context of God’s call
9. Ch. 2: specifics of the call; “O Mortal” (sometimes “Son of Man”) – sending to a “rebellious people”; references to “eating the scroll”
10. Ch. 3: more references to “eating the scroll”; repetition of “hardness of heart”; “the Spirit lifted me up”; “the hand of the Lord was upon me”
11. Ch. 4: a brick – symbolic object
12. Ch. 5: the punishments for defiling the sanctuary
13. Ch. 6: there will be a remnant; vs. 8-10
14. Ch. 7: oracles of woe
15. Ch. 8: visions of the destruction
16. Ch. 9: actions of the “sword”
17. Ch. 10: more visions; language of apocalypse
18. Ch. 20: reviews the history of the covenant
19. Ch. 34: shepherds/sheep
20. Ch. 37: the “dry bones” imagery