



Session 3: Prophetic Imagination
Discontinuity and Possibility

14 March 2023

Overview

10 January

14 February

14 March

Jeremiah an overview

Prophetic Word

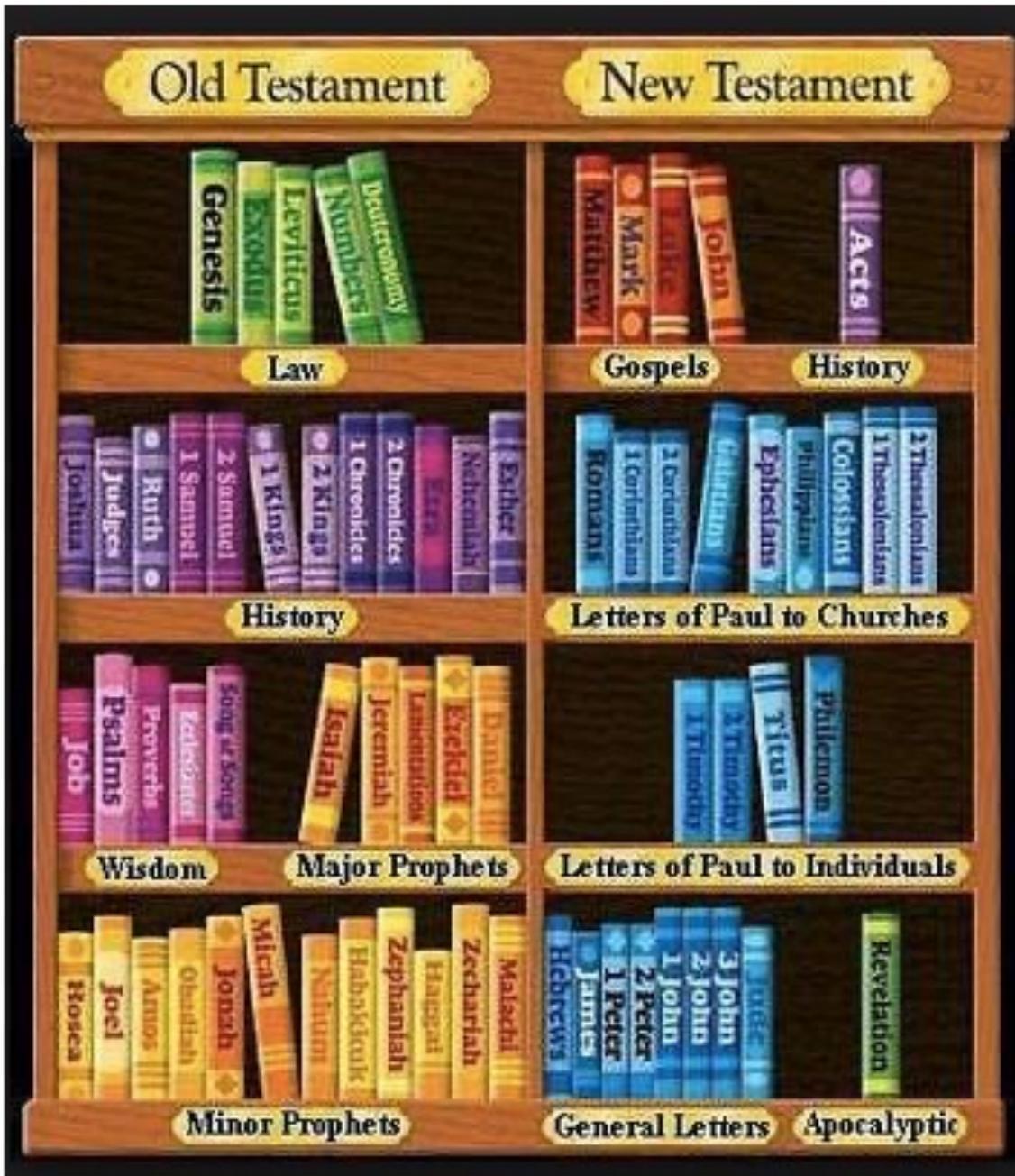
Prophetic Imagination

Discontinuity and Possibility



May - December

Employing prophetic Imagination
with the Book of the Twelve
Minor Prophets



Bible

A library of books

Different genre
and purposes

Not chronological

Authorship?



Who was Jeremiah?

The *Weeping Prophet*, prophesied during the great crisis in Israel's history, the downfall of Judah, the destruction of the Temple, and exile into Babylon.

<https://biblediscoverytv.com/spotlight/2020/the-weeping-prophet/>

Jeremiah, as depicted by Michelangelo from the Sistine Chapel ceiling.



Jeremiah, fact or fiction?

Historical critical
biblical studies.

Deuteronomistic history
– retelling the story as
theology.

The Jeremiah Call



Jeremiah 1.10 is constructed from six infinitives,
set out in pairs:

to pluck up (*lintosh*) and to pull down (*lintots*),

to destroy (*leha'abid*) and to overthrow (*laharos*),

to build (*libnot*) and to plant (*lintoa*).

The reader is invited '*to reckon with the reality of the discontinuity in the historical process, out of which God can work a powerful newness, utterly inexplicable*'.

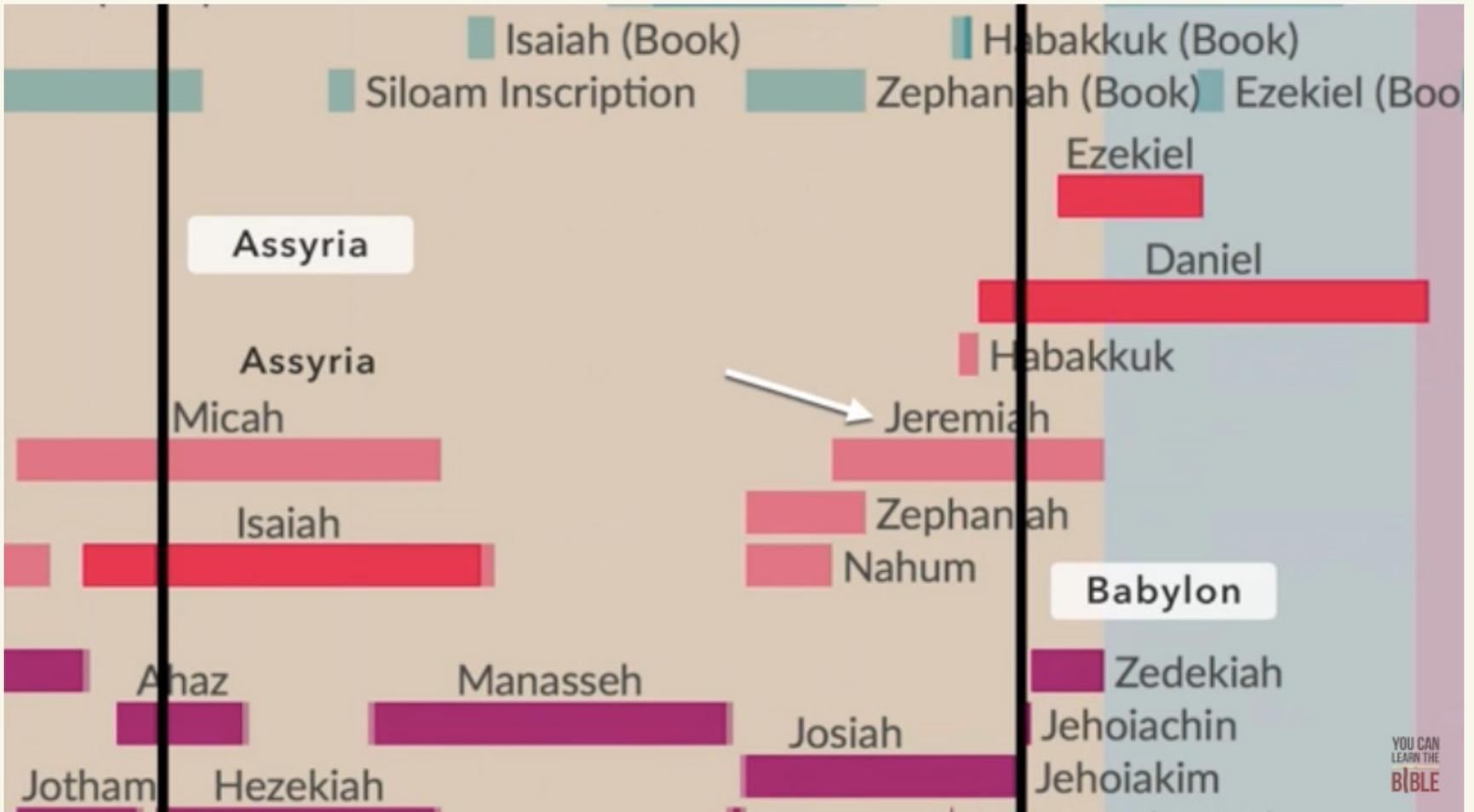
(Brueggemann, *Exile and Homecoming*, 1998, p. 26)



Session 2: Prophetic Word

The use of language and imagery to speak of God

- Context
- Structure
- Language and imagery types



Josiah's reign 641-609 BC

You can learn the Bible, The Context of Jeremiah

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxi6WAqgmQY>



NIV Study Bible, Map 1, Hodder & Stoughton,

Josiah

Reigns for 32 years, 643 - 609 BC

- Godly reform / Deutero Law
- Lull in dominance of Assyria and Babylon

Jehoahaz

- Reigns for 3 months

Jehoiakim

Reigns for 11 years as vassal King for Babylon

- 1st deportation (Daniel, Ezekiel, 10,000)
- Defies Nebuchadnezzar 2nd deportation.
- Dies in battle.

Jehoiachin

- Son of Jehoiakim, deported with large proportion of population in 2nd deportation.

Zedekiah

- Vassal King, Reigns 11 years, after 9 years defies Babylon and sides with Egypt. Leads to full destruction for Judah and Jerusalem.

Structure of Jeremiah



THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

Prophecies and Narratives

1	2	3	4
Ch 1-25	Ch 26-36	Ch 37-45	Ch 46-51
Prophecies	Narrative	Narrative	Prophecies
<i>Against Jerusalem</i>			<i>Against the Nations</i>

You can learn the Bible. The Structure of the Book of Jeremiah
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QxUjdaDdph8>

Structure of Jeremiah



THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

Prophecies and Narratives

1

Ch 1-25

Prophecies

*Against
Jerusalem*

Jeremiah's famous
"temple sermon"

7:1-29

The people's
reaction to it

26

2

Ch 26-36

Narrative

*Future
Hope*

BIBLE

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Language and Imagery

Baruch and the redactors

- words of Jeremiah
- edited by Baruch (e.g. ch 36.4)
- edited by redactors

‘The prose of hope does not cancel out the poetry of hurt’.

Brueggeman, *A Commentary on Jeremiah*, p.47

Language and Imagery



Legal case for divorce - a covenant broken

2. 4-13, 5.1-13, 8.8-10, 11.1-17, 17.1-4



Language and Imagery



Pathos of God
Poetry: sadness, grief,
unfaithfulness.

3. 12.7-13, 12.7-13, 14. 17-22

Language and Imagery



Prophecies of
judgment and terror
various verses
from 4.5-6.30
and 15. 1-9



Photo from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2023/feb/05/russia-ukraine-war-situation-in-the-east-very-difficult-ukraines-president-says>

Language and Imagery



Links to other texts

- Dismantling creation order
Jer 4.19-31 (Gen 1.2), Jer 10.1-16
- Deuteronomy
Jer 11.1-17/Deut 6.4
- Psalms & lamentations
11.18-12.6, 15.10- 21, 17.14-18,
18.18-23, 20.7-18

Language and Imagery



Weird prophetic acts

- Loin cloth 13.1-11

Buy

Israel should cling to Yahweh

Hide

Israel has hidden from Yahweh

Recovered

Israel is worthless,

but useless

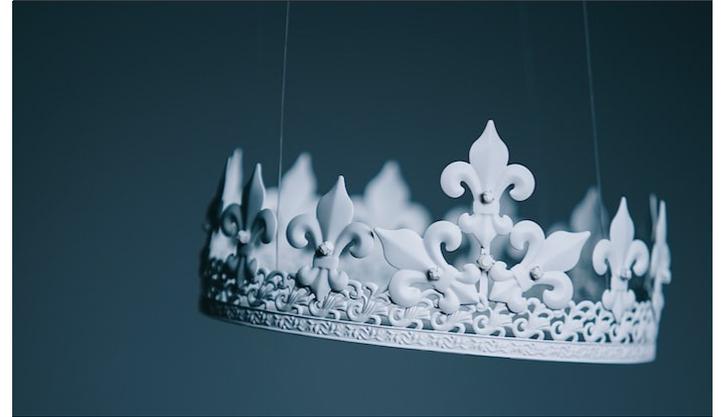
- Buy land

32.6-17 a sign of the promise to come

LOGOS
JEREMIAH



Imagery and
metaphor





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Three Approaches to the Text

Literal Approach

God is an active agent in the political drama and trauma of the exilic period.
Jeremiah as God's mouthpiece, one man prophesying across this whole period.
No inconsistencies in the text.

Historical critical Approach

Who is God here? How is God an active agent?
Inconsistencies in the text, later editors and redactors.
Compiled when the nation is being restored after exile with influence of
Deuteronomists and the warning/threat of the law to maintain the covenant.

Narrative / canonical Approach

The editing allows us to see how the community of God theologized about exile,
building a new life in Babylon, and the return to Jerusalem.

The message of the book speaks beyond the context and into other contexts.

In Jeremiah this can be summarized as the call

to pluck up and pull down, to build and to plant.

This allows us to ask what the message of the Jeremiah call might say to us today
(prophetic imagination).

The Jeremiah Call



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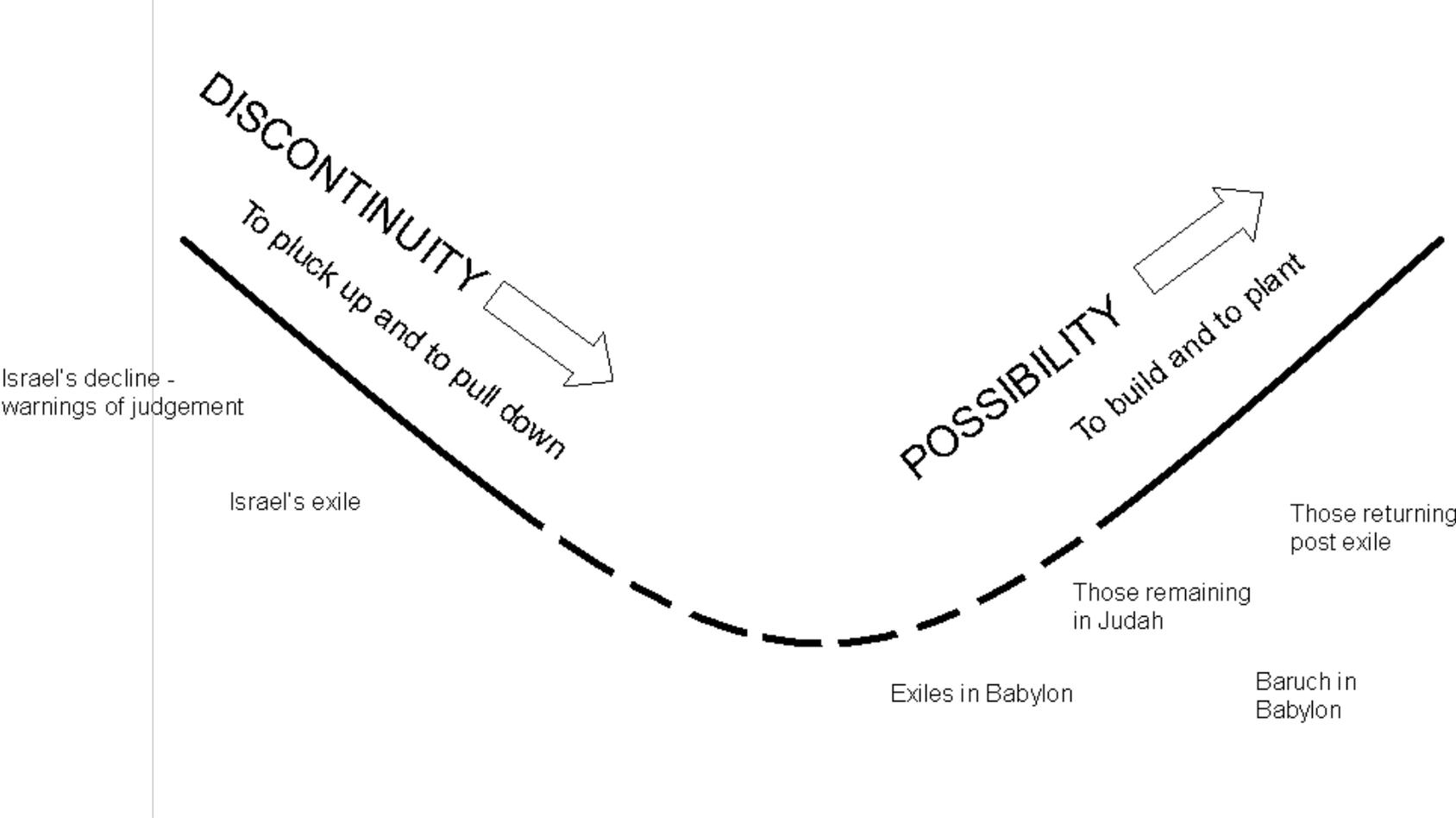
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Call	Discontinuity	Possibility	Continuity
12.14-17	Babylonians are God's instrument of judgement.	Future restoration for those in exile.	God's sovereignty.
18.7-10	Warnings of destruction can be averted.	Promises of restoration can be reconsidered.	God's sovereignty.
24.4-7	'Good figs' from Judah sent into exile.	'Good figs' will return.	God's presence with his people in exile.
31.27-28	God watched over the destruction and exile.	God will watch over the planting and building.	God's presence and sovereignty.
42.10-12		Future planting for those who stay in Judah.	God's presence and grief.
45.4-5	Disaster for all.		God's presence with Baruch, and sovereignty.

The irony of Jeremiah 29.10-14

¹⁰ For thus says the Lord: Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfil to you my promise and bring you back to this place. ¹¹ For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. ¹² Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. ¹³ When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, ¹⁴ I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

Canonical messages in Jeremiah

1. The Call: to pluck up and pull down to build and to plant
2. We are not safe from tragedy
3. We cannot mock God, we cannot assume God's blessing and covenant
4. God does not leave us in judgment
5. Blessing/growth can be found in exile (face it and grow)
6. Beyond exile there is hope for new possibilities
7. God is at work in the politics of our world
8. It is possible to theologize about God's actions and through that we may find meaning and strength.

Groupwork

1. How might you interpret the Jeremiah call (*to pluck up and pull down, to build and to plant*) for today?
2. Jeremiah points to the links between created order of the world and obedience to the covenant. In what ways is this helpful in theologizing about the climate crisis?
3. How do you understand God at work in our world?
How does theologizing about God as active in the world help or hinder us to be part of making the world a better place?



A
COMMENTARY
ON JEREMIAH
*Exile &
Homecoming*
WALTER
BRUEGGEMANN

Walter
Brueggemann
**HOPEFUL
IMAGINATION**
PROPHETIC
VOICES
IN EXILE

WALTER
BRUEGGEMANN

FROM
JUDGMENT
TO HOPE
A STUDY ON
THE PROPHETS

WALTER BRUEGGEMANN
VIRUS
as a SUMMONS
to Faith
Biblical Reflections
In a Time of Loss,
Grief, and Uncertainty
Foreword by Nahum Ward-Lev

