

LETTER OF JEREMIAH

CHAPTER 1

A copy of a letter which Jeremiah sent to those who were being led captive to Babel by the king of the Babelians, to carry a message back to them of what God had enjoined him:¹

Because of the sins you sinned before God, you are being led captive to Babel by Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Babelians. **2** Therefore, when you reach Babel, you will remain there for many years, even a period seven generations² long. But after this *time*, I will bring you back from there in peace. **3** But now in Babel you will see borne upon men's shoulders gods of silver and gold and stone³ and wood, which cast fear upon the nations. **4** Therefore, beware and do not imitate their foreign example and stand in fear of them, **5** when you see a crowd before them and behind worshipping them. But say in your mind, "You, O Master, are to be worshipped!"⁴ **6** For my messenger is with you, and he is a custodian of⁵ your souls.

7 For their tongues are smoothed by woodworkers; they are covered with both gold and silver—but they are frauds, and cannot utter a *thing*. **8** And *people* bring gold, as to a maiden in love with ornament, **9** and furnish crowns for the heads of their gods. But even sometimes the priests take *the* silver and gold from their gods and spend it on themselves, but even give part of it to the whores on the terrace. **10** They also adorn them in their garments⁶ like humans, these gods of silver and gold and wood. **11** But though they are wrapped in purple apparel, they are not safe from corrosion and insects.⁷ **12** Men wipe their faces dry of the house dust which is thick upon them. **13** And each has a scepter, like a human judge⁸ of a country; but none does away with those who sin against it. **14** But each has in its right *hand* a hand-knife or in his left⁹ an axe, but it cannot defend itself from war¹⁰ and brigands. This is how it is known they are not gods; therefore, do not fear them.

15 For as useless as a human's¹¹ broken tools are their gods, set up in their houses;¹² **16** their eyes are full of dust from the feet of those who enter. **17** And their courtyards are walled in¹³ like those of a man led off to death for acting unrighteously against a king;¹⁴ the priests reinforce their houses with both doors and bars and bolts, lest they be carried off by the brigands. **18** They light more lamps for them than for themselves,¹⁵ yet not one of these is able to see them. **19** Indeed, they are like any beam in the house; but it is said their hearts are eaten away. Though the insects out of the ground consume both them and their apparel, they do not sense it. **20** Their faces are blackened by the smoke of the house.¹⁶ **21** Bats and swallows alight on their bodies and on their heads; but so do the cats and the other¹⁷ birds.¹⁸ **22** This is how you know that they are not gods; therefore, do not fear them.

23 For despite the gold which covers them for beauty, unless someone wipes-dry the corrosion, they do¹⁹ not shine; for they did not feel anything when they were molded. **24** They are bought at any price, and there is not a spirit in them. **25** Having no feet, they are carried on *men's* shoulders, displaying their dishonor to the humans; and those who worship them are put to confusion, because, if they fall to the ground, the worshipers must raise them up. **26** They neither move of themselves if one sets them upright, nor come upright if they fall; instead, one puts gifts beside them as beside a corpse. **27** But their priests resell their sacrifices for their own advantage. But even their²⁰ women pickle parts of *the meat*, but do not share it with a destitute *man* nor an incapable²¹ *man*; the menstruous and women in childbed handle their sacrifices. **28** Therefore, knowing from this that they are not gods, do not fear them.

29 For how can they be called gods? Because women bring the offerings to these gods of silver and gold and wood; **30** and in their houses the priests squat with torn tunic and with shaven hair and beard, and with their heads uncovered.

[1:1] LXX(A), Arab "them"

[1:3] Syr "seventy years"

[1:4] OL, Vul, Syr adds

[1:6] LXX(A), Arab omits "But say...worshipped!"

[1:7] Syr "he will avenge"

⁶ literally "dresses"

[1:12] OL, Vul / LXX(A,V) "food" / LXX(L) "meat"

literally "a human, a judge"

[1:15] Syr adds

[1:15] LXX(V) / LXX(A), Arab "enemies"

[1:17] Syr "potter's"

[1:17] OL, Vul, Eth / LXX "temples" / LXX(A), Arab "gardens"

[1:18] LXX / one Greek, OL, Vul "And their gates are locked on all sides"

[1:18] LXX(A), OL, Vul, Arab "of a man who committed a crime against a king or a man who is executed."

[1:19] LXX(A) "light many lamps for them"

[1:21] LXX(A), Arab (incorrect) "by the lightning from the ground"

[1:22] LXX, others / SyrH adds

[1:22] Syr "temple. And on their heads bats and swallows and ravens sit together, and also weasels."

[1:24] LXX / OL, Syr "it will"

[1:28] LXX(A,L), SyrH / LXX "the"

²¹ literally "powerless"

31 But they shout, wailing before their gods as others do at a funeral banquet.²² **32** The priests take some of their clothing, putting it on their wives and their little-ones. **33** Whether they are treated bad or good by anyone, they cannot require it; nor can they set up a king nor remove him. **34** Similarly, they cannot give anyone riches or coppers;²³ if one does not fulfill a vow which he vowed to them, they cannot exact it of him. **35** They neither rescue a human from death, nor deliver a weak *man* from a strong *man*. **36** To no blind human do they restore his sight, nor do they deliver any human in an emergency. **37** They neither have mercy upon a widow nor benefit an orphan. **38** These gilded and silvered wooden statues are like stones from the mountains; but their worshipers will be put to shame. **39** Therefore, how can it be thought or claimed that they are gods?

40 But even the Chaldeans themselves dishonor them; *for* when they see a deaf mute, incapable of speech, they bring forward Bel before the gate²⁴ and ask the god to make noise, as though *the man* could understand; **41** and they are themselves unable to reflect and abandon these gods, for they have no sense. **42** But their women, girt with cords, sit by the roads, burning the chaff for incense; **43** but whenever one of them is drawn aside by some passer-by who lies with her,²⁵ she reproaches her neighbor for not being found as attractive as herself, and because her cord had not been broken. **44** All that takes place around these gods are frauds: how then can it be thought that they are gods, or claim them as gods?²⁶

45 They are furnished by artificers and goldsmiths, and they are nothing else than what these artificers wish them to be.²⁷ **46** Even those who furnish them are not long-lived; how then can what they have furnished be gods?²⁸ **47** For they have left frauds and a reproach to their successors. **48** For when a war or evils come upon them, the priests take counsel among themselves to where they can hide with them. **49** Therefore, how can one fail to see that these are not gods, but the work of men's hands,²⁹ which do not save themselves³⁰ either from a war³¹ or from evils? **50** For they are wooden, and gilded, and silvered, that will later be known for frauds. It will be evident³² to all nations, as well as to kings, that they are not gods, but instead works of human hands;³³ and that God's work is not in them. **51** Therefore, who does not know that they are not gods, but the handiwork of men, and that God's work is not in them?³⁴

52 For they may not raise-up a king over a country or deliver,³⁵ nor may they give humans a heavy-rain. **53** They also may neither rightfully-judge their own cause,³⁶ nor may they recover what is unrighteously taken,³⁷ for they are unable; for they are like crows between the heaven and the earth. **54** For even when *fire breaks out* in the house of these wooden or gilded or silvered gods, indeed the priests flee and are safe, but they themselves are completely-burnt up in the fire like beams. **55** But they cannot resist a king and foes. **56** Therefore, how can it be admitted or thought that they are gods?

They are safe from neither thieves nor brigands, these wooden and silvered and gilded gods; **57** those who seize them strip off the gold and the silver, and go away with the apparel which is placed-around them, and they are not strong enough to help themselves. **58** As a result, it is much better to be a king displaying his manliness, or a handy tool in a house, *being* the joy of its owner, than these false gods; or even a door of a house, which keeps safe those who are within, rather than these false gods; or a wooden pillar in a royal *palace*, rather than these false gods!

59 For indeed *the sun* and moon and stars are bright, and obedient in the service for which they are sent. **60** Likewise, even the lightning, when it flashes, is a goodly sight; but *the same* wind blows³⁸ over all *the* country. **61** And whenever clouds might be commanded by God to proceed over the whole inhabited *earth*, they are completing the task; both the fire, sent-out from-above to burn up mountains and hills³⁹ and forests, does what has been explicitly-ordered.

62 But these *false gods* are unequal to any one of⁴⁰ these, whether in their appearance or in their power; **63** so that it is unthinkable, nor can it be claimed, that they are gods. They can neither execute judgment, nor benefit humans. **64** Therefore, know that they are not gods, so do not fear them.

65 For they can neither curse kings nor bless *them*. **66** They cannot show the nations either signs in the heaven, nor are they brilliant like the sun, nor shining like *the moon*. **67** The beasts are better than they are, *for* they can help

literally "at a banquet for one who is dead"

[1:35] LXX / LXX(L), Syr "silver" / OL, Vul "evil" / Bohairic "favor"

[1:40] Syr adds

[1:43] LXX(A), Bohairic, Arab / LXX(L), SyrH, Vul, Syr "with him"

[1:44] DSS / LXX "thought or claimed that they are gods"

[1:45] LXX(A), Arab "what they intend."

[1:46] LXX(V) omits "be gods"

[1:49] LXX(L), OL, Syr adds

[1:49] LXX(A) "them"

[1:49] LXX(A), Arab "enemies"

[1:51] LXX(A), Arab "It is evident"

literally "works of hands of humans"

[1:52] Vul adds (repeating a phrase from above)

[1:53] LXX(L) adds "or deliver" / Syr instead adds "nor are they able to punish or reward"

[1:54] LXX(V) / LXX(A) "rightfully-judge their cause" / others "vindicate a cause"

[1:54] LXX(A) "recover one who is unrighteously taken"

literally "but a spirit spirits"

[1:63] LXX(L), OL, SyrH, Syr add

[1:63] LXX(V) omits "any one of"

themselves⁴¹ by fleeing to shelter. **68** Therefore, we have no evidence whatsoever that they are gods; so do not fear them.

69 For like a scarecrow in a cucumber-patch that is of no protection, so are their wooden, and gilded, and silvered gods. **70** Like a thornbush in a plantation on which perches every kind of bird, but also like a corpse hurled into darkness, so are their silvered and gilded and wooden gods. **71** From the rotting of the purple and the linen⁴² upon them, it can be known that they are not gods; they themselves will also in the end be consumed, and be a disgrace in the country. **72** Therefore, better is a righteous human who has no idols, for he shall be far from disgrace!⁴³

[1:68] LXX(A,V) "them"

[1:72] Emendation / LXX, all others "marble" / Syr "silk"

[1:72] Syr "righteous man who is far from reproach, and is looking for Yahweh God!"