



# Significance of the Source of Calling: Jeremiah Chapter 1

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## INTRODUCTION

In the book of Jeremiah 1:1–19 (NIV), the historical discourse highlights a journey on a wave of nationalism that swept through Judah during the last days of the Assyrian empire. According to Richards (1998), the fall of Judah and Jerusalem in 586 B.C. was a devastating blow to the Israelites (p. 68). Furthermore, after the death of Josiah, the godly king, in 609. B.C, the religious and political systems worsened. They declined so severely, and God declared that the land of Judah violated the Law

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Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6)

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Covenant and deemed the nation for apostasy and sentenced to become exiled from the promised land (Richards, 1998). To emphasize God's position on apostasy, Jeremiah 2:5 reflects how God felt, asking, "What fault did your ancestors find in me, that they strayed so far from me? (NIV)." Yahweh declares a sense of betrayal from His beloved people who were previously led out of bondage but failed to remain faithful or loyal to God and his covenant. Laniak (2006) reveals that Jeremiah blames the three types of leaders, priests, prophets, and shepherds, for failing to pastor the people in God's ways and thus caused Judah's unfaithfulness. The waywardness included mockery and a lack of commitment to the Law Covenant.

Furthermore, Jeremiah 2:5 states, "They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves" (NIV). God's leaders failed Him and His people. Jeremiah has been summoned to call the leaders out for the people's failure to keep their covenant with Yahweh. Moreover, as can be expected, this is a very unpopular message for Judah, so Jeremiah has quite an uphill battle on his hands.

*The Presence of a Voice or Clear Communication from a Divine Source (Jeremiah 1:4)*

Proverbs 15:3 confirms that "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, Watching the evil and the good" (NIV). As a result, God is a shepherd of men seeking (good) pastures for humanity (Laniak, 2006, p. 58). God's presence is consistently equated with divine provision (Laniak, 2006, p. 8). Importantly, this shows how God is at work implicitly, perhaps secretly, and paradoxically throughout time (Robbins, 1996b, p. 121). Unquestionably, God's divine approach can speak to prophets or may exist in the background or indirect position of action and speech in a text (Robbins, 1996b, p. 120). Hence, when God calls shepherds to lead, a sense of divine inspiration propels the leaders, including some prophets, to drive home the truth to everyone (Osborne, 2006). In both the Old Testament and the New Testament, there are numerous occurrences of

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the Lord's calling for a prophet's role to be "covenant enforcement mediators" (Anderson, 1998; Laniak, 2006; Osborne, 2006). However, our focus is on the "weeping prophet," Jeremiah, a child called directly by the LORD, just as Josiah, a child, was also called to be king when he was only eight years old (Jeremiah 2, NIV). This sacred event demonstrates how God's encounter provides Jeremiah with a vision and explanation to speak to the people and nations (Alexander & Alexander, 1999, p. 440).

Interestedly, Osborne (2006) mentions that when direct revelation occurs, they are linked to specific historical events (p. 267). By drawing on this concept of direct revelation, God appears and shows links to specific historical events. In addition, Fee and Stuart (2003) provide three reasons why prophets appear at a particular juncture in history:

1. Unprecedented upheavals in the political, military, economic, and social spheres led to a terrible crisis. Unprecedented upheavals in the political, military, economic, and social sphere led to a terrible crisis
2. Religious upheaval, divided kingdoms progressively turns from Yahweh and his covenant to serve pagan gods.
3. Population and national boundaries shift, leading to constant unsettled conditions (p. 191).

In sum, God is the episkopos, the Overseer of souls, the guardian of the theocracy, whereby the Lord influences prophetic role models. In this instance, Jeremiah has a new divine message of provision, protection, and guidance for the Israelites (Laniak, 2006; Osborne, 2006). In the same vein, Jeremiah 1:2 states the LORD's calling to both Josiah and Jeremiah, when they were children, reinforces how vital the LORD's calling is in our lives today (NIV). The prophets provide crucial interpretation for spiritual discussions because they were messengers specifically called to be filled with the Spirit of God (Osborne, 2006). However, since they were no longer operating under their divine calling, Jeremiah became God's newest mouthpiece with a message for the people of Israel.

### *Precognition of the Call (Jeremiah 1:5)*

Indeed, Jeremiah was chosen to carry out God's message, which designates him as the holy person in this sacred text. According to Robbins

(1996b), regularly, a sacred text features one or more people who have a particular relationship to God or possess divine powers (p. 121). Furthermore, the nature of the prophetic role of Jeremiah grew from God's call and his eventual role in society before he was born (Alexander & Alexander, 1999; Osborne, 2006). Similarly, as Jeremiah 1:3–4 mentions, “before you were born, you were called” (NIV) and chosen as a prophet. Jeremiah 1:1–5 continues to reinforce this pre-call from early in the womb that demonstrates how the LORD confirms to Jeremiah that he has a special calling, begun before he was even born (NIV). As mentioned earlier, the nature of the prophetic role, the prophet Jeremiah was a forth-teller before he was a foreteller which shows how the Lord filled Jeremiah with the Spirit of God to address the people and the situation of his day. In other words, Jeremiah was called by God before he was born to carry God's message foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem due to the people's failure to follow Yahweh and His covenant. Let us not forget, King David also declares God's providence over him prior to his birth:

For you created my inmost being, you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. Psalm 139:13–16 (NIV)

Therefore, we can see this pattern emerge from the LORD as to His calling upon individuals, knowing them even as they were becoming actual beings. Again, this was portrayed in Luke, Chapter 1 when the Holy Spirit overcame Mary in her conception of Jesus as well as her cousin Elizabeth who also conceived as an older woman, giving birth to John the Baptist.

Jeremiah no longer controls his destiny but ultimately belongs to Yahweh (Osborne, 2006, p. 260). Jeremiah's heritage was established as the son of a priest from the tribe of Benjamin (Jeremiah 1:1 NIV). Indeed, it is understood that the Lord had chosen Jeremiah, notwithstanding as Jeremiah 1:5 states, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you before you were born, I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations” (NIV). Alexander and Alexander (1999)

posit that when Jeremiah was growing up as a child, he could recall images and experiences or precognitions from his childhood (p. 441). In support of Jeremiah's precognition of the call, Alexander and Alexander (1999) depict how natural sights, such as watching the migration of birds, nesting habits of the partridge, the almond tree blossoming, and the farmer clearing his ground, were for Jeremiah, prophetic revelations of the mystery of God (p. 441). For example, watching the migration of birds could represent the movement of the Israelites, for a season, perhaps to avoid a deeper harshness, only to realize the journey is the only way that survival can be had. This can then also be yet a foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus himself, who had to endure the pain and suffering of the cross for humanity to obtain salvation. The nesting habits of the partridge, as observed by Jeremiah as a young boy, also may be viewed as the nurturing that God provides for his people. The almond blossom could perhaps represent the cultivating of a seed dying in the ground, only to become alive and rise from the ground to form a magnificent tree with its blossoms, sweet-smelling fragrant and beautiful to enjoy making way for the ultimate culmination: a fruit to nourish and be enjoyed by all! And finally, the farmer clearing his ground makes way for the new crop that is planted to provide a harvest later in the season. Everything God has created permits the fulfillment of His word which inevitably, points to Jesus.

### *Provision for the Call (Jeremiah 1:9–10)*

Robbins (1996b) states that many sacred texts presuppose the notion that divine powers direct historical processes and events toward certain results (p. 123). So, when we talk about salvation history, we can see how this provision plays out with Jeremiah and the Israelites. From the perspective of salvation history, God's plan for humans works itself out through a complicated, ongoing process that moves slowly toward God's goals (Robbins, 1996b, p. 124). God uses the historical events of Jeremiah's days to initiate this provision in the ultimate redemption of the Israelites after they are exiled for 70 years. God was putting in provisions to show the need for humankind to come back to Him, despite being turned away, which led to their exile in Babylon that Jeremiah tried so hard to warn the people. God states that "woe to shepherds destroying my flock," which reflects the rebellious leaders, whether priests, shepherds, or prophets, that led to the destruction of the flock of God's people. Since the leaders

rebelled and did not uphold the laws of the covenant, provisions were made to raise the shepherds to regather the flock back to God. In this case, human redemption is the focus based on the provisions for Jeremiah because the LORD utilizes Jeremiah as a vessel to transform human lives and take them into higher-level existence (Robbins, 1996b, p. 125). In other words, they were changing the mortal nature of humans that leads to death into an immortal nature, a state where they will no longer die (Robbins, 1996b, p. 126).

Another provision that the LORD states is that He “put his words in Jeremiah’s mouth” (Jeremiah 1:9, NIV). Prior to Jeremiah, Isaiah tells of the time he could not speak, yet the angel touched his lips with the burning coal, and he was atoned and therefore able to be sent by God (Is. 6:6–9). Lundbom (2012) also makes this connection to Isaiah when he says, “One recalls the inaugural vision of Isaiah, where one of the seraphs touched the prophet’s mouth with a burning coal from the altar” (p. 3). Similarly, we see the LORD touching Jeremiah’s mouth so he can then speak God’s words. After doing so, the LORD gave Jeremiah the appointment over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, destroy and overthrow, and build and plant. Jeremiah delivers another redemption for mankind, just like Noah, the prophets, and finally with Jesus.

What do you see, Jeremiah? The LORD seeks to find out where Jeremiah’s focus is directed. The almond tree is his reply. Hebrew word is also similar to watching. Jeremiah is watching. The almond tree is also like Aaron’s budding staff that was secured in the ark of the covenant. Another fulfillment of watching what the LORD will do for his people. The budding of the almond tree is new life, now hope. Jeremiah can focus on the vision the LORD is planting in Jeremiah’s to fulfill his leadership calling. Vision is what sets leaders apart. Jeremiah confirms he has received the vision, the right focus that the LORD seeks of him. The LORD declares that he is watching to see that his word is fulfilled.

The LORD again asks Jeremiah what he sees (Jer 1:13). Again, he wants to be sure that the vision and focus Jeremiah has is the right one. Now Jeremiah declares he sees a boiling pot tilting away from the north. The LORD identifies this vision as the invasion from the peoples to their north who will come to take his people captive. The boiling pot will spill out and flood the land. That implies the peoples of the north will overpower and capture Jeremiah’s people.

The LORD declares that the foreign kings will come and overtake Jerusalem, overtake all the society, and hold his people captive (Jer 1:14). This is a punishment for the people for not obeying the LORD and his commands, for falling away from their first love and leaving the ways they were taught to honor the LORD. The people compromised their lives and society, so now they will be overtaken by peoples who are even worse off with such unholy living. It's like God turns the people over to their own sinful desires to be ruled by like-minded sinful people. Only then can the people realize that the ways of the LORD are good, pure, and holy, and they will need to turn back to God and serve him alone.

### *Perseverance for the Call (Jeremiah 1:17–18)*

Prophets are no longer in control of their destinies but belong completely to God (Osborne, 2006, p. 260). This understanding of Jeremiah calling as God's free act denotes "a promise, a judgment, a claim on man by which God binds man to himself," telling the individual that he is not his own, but God's, which is linked to a nexus of revelation and faith. Important to realize, God calls humans to faith by the divine word, and those so-called by the word correspondingly stand in the faith, which shows the dyadic relationship of what God and the holy person Jeremiah do for humans is the human commitment to divine ways (Robbins, 1996b, p. 126). Furthermore, God commanded Jeremiah to get ready and say what God tells him to say by telling Jeremiah that he need not be fearful of the people but of God alone (Jer 1: 17, NIV). God further assured Jeremiah that he had protected Jeremiah like a bronze wall, an iron pillar that stands strong regardless of what comes against you; no one can overcome the LORD (Jer 1:18, NIV). Trusting God is the first step of divine commitment, which is the foundation and drive for Jeremiah to cultivate perseverance while experiencing the ups and downs, the good and bad times while delivering the divine message to the Israelites (Cook, 2016). In addition, Jeremiah was already labeled as a reluctant or weeping prophet because he did not want to assume the mission to pluck up and break down, destroy, and overthrow among the people he loved (Alexander & Alexander, 1999, p. 441). However, as Jeremiah Chapter 1: 18 states that through God's forceful address and charge, God begins a process of preparing the young prophet for what lies ahead of him by girding up his loins because the calling he has received will place him in the middle of conflict (Cook, 2016). Taken together, these findings,

Jeremiah's career calling of the "via Crucis," is an arduous course that requires perseverance not by human will but by God's will that leads him through suffering to ultimate vindication for the people of Israel.

At the heart of Jeremiah's actions, there must be an ethical commitment to the will of God that expresses itself in offering benefit to others even in circumstances that threaten one's reputation or even one's life (Robbins, 1996a, p. 130). In a context where no one else acts, Jeremiah certainly proved himself to be true to God even though his message continued to be uncomfortable and ill-received by his people. Furthermore, Lundbom (2012) supports that Yahweh promises Jeremiah that "I am with you," despite Jerusalem and Judah not being rescued, Jeremiah was indeed protected by God (p. 6). Jeremiah was set "against everyone" because God's judgment was against the whole land of Judah—it's the kings, princes, priests, and the people, all against Jeremiah. He is walking along; they will fight against you, the prophet was forewarned that he would be alone, however, Jeremiah, despite being alone here, continued to press on, believing God's provision, protection, and perseverance would sustain him. He chose to believe God over man. Jeremiah was able to find a deeper resource than human approval.

Finally, God declares to Jeremiah, "They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you, declares the LORD" (Jer1:19, NIV). Overall, (Alexander & Alexander, 1999) this was a path of pain for Jeremiah from which, though he might grumble, Jeremiah never flinched and continued to trust the LORD. His prophecies are moving and, at times, shocking, which he longs to end his mission, but the power of God would not release him. If he were to say "No," I would no longer mention him. Jeremiah did not want to be disowned by God himself and trusted Him completely, above all the human elements he experienced and knew. The Spirit was stronger than the flesh.

## RESULTS

The significance of the calling is the socialization process of the prophets. According to Robbins and Judge (2019), socialization has three primary goals: teaching impulse control and developing a conscience, preparing people to perform certain social roles, and cultivating shared sources of meaning and value.



## THE SOCIALIZATION MODELING PROCESS OF JEREMIAH

As mentioned earlier, the significance of the calling proposed to be a socialization modeling process of the prophets. Robbins and Judge (2019) highlight that individuals learn based on the three primary caveats, Prearrival, Encounter, and Metamorphosis, which show significance in prophets' transformation. Notably, Jeremiah's prophetic process shows how God gifted him with social, emotional, and cognitive skills to function in the society where he was asked to carry out God's teachings. As a result, the first stage of prearrival of socialization was his calling from before he was born. Secondly, his encounter was first experienced as a child. Thirdly, a metamorphosis occurred when Jeremiah underwent changes and adjustments to his journey as he persevered in fulfilling God's calling. Equally important, the prophetic socialization process links to outcomes that determine how the prophet thinks and behaves after the process. As a result, the outcomes of the process reveal Jeremiah's commitment, his overall spiritual well-being, and the eventual productivity of declaring God's word and the oncoming of Judah's captivity. The interrelatedness of this process illustrates that prophets have internalized and accepted God's will and their divine purpose. Their ultimate calling is to be God's mouthpiece to his people: a divine messenger. Jeremiah understood that this was not his journey but the LORD's doing, and he knew what was expected of him and the criteria that would ultimately be required to fulfill God's calling, commitment, and mission. The commitment to the will of God motivated Jeremiah to do the right thing, despite being danger-filled in doing so. The risk that Jeremiah managed was only fulfilled due to his complete trust and faith in God. This motivational force was the strength of God's word within Jeremiah, in his person-spirit. Furthermore, time and again, Jeremiah has been coined the "weeping" prophet or the "reluctant" prophet, primarily due to this danger-filled risk he endured, all with possible rejection from his people prior to their ultimate captivity. Investiture is a prophetic journey whereby Jeremiah was predestined by God, who utilizes him for his purposes. Jeremiah was given a vision from God. One would not receive a vision if God did not call one. This could not be explained to someone who did not already possess the skills to be God's mouthpiece, that is, communicate through God's ways. This initial encounter with God sets out the pattern of Jeremiah's entire life. Jeremiah grew up in a priestly family; he knew the laws and customs for all that were required by the priests who protected and relayed God's

word to the people. To assist with his journey for the LORD's doing, the LORD equipped Jeremiah with the necessary skills to carry out His mandate, which was to declare the oncoming captivity of Judah.

## DISCUSSION

As we discuss the implications based on our theoretical approach, a look at the outcomes directs us to view leadership as a total commitment to guiding human beings. Thus, the leader fulfills his/her prophetic calling. As an illustration, "committed leaders present significant behaviors that include inspirational appeals linking the task to the person's values and ideals, setting task goals that are specific and challenging, explaining how the leader performance will result in desirable rewards and benefits" (Yukl, 2013, p. 409). In other words, those committed to the calling of God for continual direction in completing the work at hand thus fulfill leadership and calling by their works. This is not to be confused with works overpowering faith, for we also know that "faith without works is dead." Concerning Jeremiah's spiritual journey, he demonstrates his commitment driven by the Holy Spirit, who was the vital principle driving all other prophets to strive for values and beliefs that transcend physical existence (Fry et al., 2017). In detail, the spirituality of Jeremiah presents two elements identified by Fry (2003, 2005) as (1) transcendence of self, meaning a manifestation in the sense of calling or destiny, or one being called (vocationally), and (2) fellowship meaning social connection in ways providing feelings of joy and wholeness integrated within communities such as social groups and extended to organizational levels of contemporary society. As aforementioned, both elements, transcendence of self and fellowship, coexist in this spiritual leadership paradigm (Fry, 2003, 2005), thus fulfilling the significance of Jeremiah's calling despite the appearance of his prophecies falling upon deaf ears. Furthermore, Jeremiah remained faithful to his calling, and all his prophecies came to pass during his appointed time. "To this, you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1Peter 2:21, NIV).

## IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

God's word is living. He still speaks to us today through the power of the Holy Spirit. So, how can we, as academics, capture the essence of God when He speaks to us today and then translates it into academic terms that are considered research-worthy while appealing to the academic community yet not taking away any of the wholesomeness of the glory and Deity of God? Other textual analyses, such as inner texture, intertexture, social and cultural texture, and ideological texture, may provide a fuller understanding of sacred texture's meanings and meaning effects (Robbins, 1996b, p. 130). Further research needs to explore other texture analyses and expand the totality or entire scope that sacred texture entails. The purpose is to build an environment for interpretation that provides interpreters with a basic overall view of life as we know it and language as we use it (Robbins, 1996b, p. 2). Similarly, Tatone (2019) does not embrace the "type of communication techniques being considered by God's response" (p. 9) as additional exploratory research implications. Therefore, continued sacred texture analysis employing exploratory research techniques may lead to inquisitive and thought-provoking scenarios to further define Jeremiah's calling and fulfillment of this calling.

## CONCLUSION

Today's world is full of sickness, devastation, earthquakes, natural disasters, and ills for humankind everywhere we turn in our political, economic, social, and market systems. However, "where sin abides, so much more does God love abide." God still makes provision for all His people today. From this experience of Jeremiah, we can see that God's calling, provision, and perseverance always align with the redemption of humankind, and we know that God's goal always points to salvation, which is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus. Jeremiah's calling exemplifies spiritual leadership, in which the Holy Spirit provides the vision. According to Winston and Patterson (2006), the leader presents the preferable future as the organization's vision and emphasizes how the future differs from the present to create a sense in the followers' minds of dissatisfaction with the present. Hence, spiritual leadership promotes the follower's commitment toward the realization of the vision (Winston & Patterson, 2006).

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