

Outside the Bible

Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture

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The Letter of Jeremiah

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The Letter (or Epistle) of Jeremiah belongs among the books of the Septuagint (LXX) that were not included in the canon of the Hebrew Bible, but are included in the canons of some Christian Bibles. In some ancient versions it either follows or is attached to (as chapter 6 of) **1 Baruch**, with which it has no direct literary connection, but shares a similar chronological and geographical setting. In other versions, it follows Lamentations, similarly ascribed to Jeremiah, preceding Ezekiel. Except for its superscription (v. 1), there is no reason to suppose that it is either a letter or that it was written by the prophet Jeremiah. It is so framed by the superscription, most likely under the influence of Jer. 29:1–23, which speaks of a letter from Jeremiah to the exiles in Babylonia. Whereas Jer. 29 speaks of a letter to those already in exile (following 597 BCE), the Letter is framed in v. 1 as anticipating that exile.

Its contents may be characterized as a homily admonishing its audience against the worship or veneration of idols in Babylonia. In particular, the Letter repeatedly mocks the idols and those who would worship them, since the idols are mundane objects that are constructed by humans and lack any power to provide benefits to their worshipers, or even to protect themselves against rot, theft, and toppling. The repeated message of the Letter is negative: the idols are not gods, and to worship them is foolish.

The work is composed of 10 stanzas of unequal length ranging from 4 to 10 verses each, with each stanza, except for the last, ending with a refrain, of which the following is typical: "From this you will know that they are not gods; so do not fear them" (v. 23). The 10 stanzas, while displaying somewhat different emphases, are mainly repetitive. Rather than progressing linearly, they recycle familiar ideas and images that are mainly drawn from other earlier Scriptures.¹ Thus, to the extent that the Letter coheres as a whole, it does so through repetition, the recurrence of key words and phrases, and rhetorical devices, especially the satirical use of similes, which link the otherwise autonomous individual stanzas to one another.

Authorship and History

While the Letter is universally acknowledged by scholars not to have been authored by the prophet Jeremiah, determining its actual author, date, and historical circumstances of composition is impossible based on internal criteria alone. Some scholars date it to the 2nd/1st century BCE, for two reasons: (1) The Letter may be referred to in 2 Macc. 2:1–3, a section commonly dated to the 2nd century BCE.² (2) A Greek fragment discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls, dated to the 1st century BCE, has been claimed to contain a small section of Ep. Jer. 43–44.³ More recently, D. Dimant has suggested that the Letter (like 2 Macc. 2:1–3 and 1 Baruch) may be related, whether directly or indirectly, to the

Apocryphon of Jeremiah C, discovered in fragmentary form among the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁴ This would suggest that our text is part of a larger corpus of texts, framed as letters attributed to Jeremiah, circulating in the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE.

How much earlier the Letter may have been composed is more difficult to judge. Some scholars, relying on v. 3, which warns of a long exile of "up to seven generations," take it to indicate a time of composition prior to 317 or 307/306 BCE, or shortly after Alexander the Great's conquest.⁵ However, given the unlikelihood that the "seven generations" of v. 3 is to be taken literally, and judging from other internal Hellenistic locutions, a date in the 3rd century BCE is more likely as a *terminus a quo*.⁶ Narrowing the date of composition further between 300 and 100 BCE is not possible.

There appears to be a consensus that the original language of the Letter was Hebrew (or possibly Aramaic), even though nothing of the Hebrew original has survived. This is based on what appear to be frequent mistakes or difficult expressions in the Greek that can be attributed to some combination of the following: (1) mistranslations of a Hebrew original; (2) Hebraisms (e.g., the infinitive absolute) that did not translate smoothly into Greek; and (3) instances in which the underlying biblical text is more likely to have been a Hebrew recension than the LXX.⁷

While the Letter seems clearly to address a Jewish audience, it is uncertain for which Jewish audience it was composed, that is, whether in Babylonia, as the narrative frame and the seeming familiarity with Babylonian forms of worship and cultic practice would suggest; or in Palestine, which a Hebrew original would seem to support; or in Egypt, where it is likely to have been translated into Greek. Scholars today favor Palestine for the original Hebrew composition, on the view that its familiarity with Babylonian idolatry could derive from scriptural antecedents or from vernacular familiarity with such worship through the ancient Near East, and that the message of the text, to refuse the allurements of pagan worship, would not have been lost on Palestinian Jews in an age of hellenization.⁸ The Babylonian setting is as much part of the literary fiction as is the attribution to Jeremiah at the time of the Babylonian exile. The favoring of a Palestinian provenance for the work is more recently strengthened by the discovery of the possibly related Hebrew *Apocryphon of Jeremiah* among the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁹

As already stated, scholars are unanimous in considering the Letter to be a pseudepigraph, fictitiously attributed to Jeremiah. Unlike 1 Baruch, to which it is sometimes attached, it appears to be the product of a single author, except perhaps for the superscription and the prologue (vv. 1-7), which could have been combined with a homily that was not originally framed as a letter. It is generally assumed that the author of the Hebrew original was a Palestinian Jew, living in the 3rd century BCE, but not someone of particular literary skill or creativity, as the text is highly repetitive and draws heavily on antecedent sources.

Significance

The Letter of Jeremiah is one of several examples of how Jewish communities in the Hellenistic age looked back to the figure of Jeremiah (or his scribal confidant Baruch) for

prophecies or homilies, beyond those contained within the book of Jeremiah itself, that would speak to their own condition of continued "exile," that is, subjugation to foreign powers and cultures. In the absence of a contemporary prophetic figure of Jeremiah's revelatory authority, they reworked received prophetic teachings that warned of the folly and uselessness of idolatry, so as to address anew the cultural threats posed by the surrounding non-Jewish cultures and to give renewed voice to their hopes for ultimate divine restoration to their native land and worship and of political sovereignty.

The Letter appears to have had very little impact on the subsequent history of Judaism, except perhaps as might be glimpsed in the Dead Sea Scrolls as part of a larger cycle of pseudepigraphs attributed to Jeremiah.¹⁰ Despite being translated from the LXX into several languages (Latin, Syriac, Arabic), for inclusion in Christian Bibles, it appears to have played no significant role within Christianity either, being rarely cited by church fathers.¹¹

GUIDE TO READING

The literary quality of the Letter has been frequently disparaged, its poor Greek perhaps being due to its translation from a Hebrew original that has not survived. Even so, its repetitive nature, saying much the same thing over and over again, has been criticized as being unappealing and rhetorically ineffective. These have been cited as explanations for the fact that it does not appear to have been taken seriously by either later Judaism or Christianity.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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TRANSLATION

¹A copy of a letter that Jeremiah sent to those who were to be taken to Babylon as exiles by the king of the Babylonians, to give them the message that God had commanded him.¹²

The People Face a Long Captivity

²Because of the sins that you have committed before God, you will be taken to Babylon as exiles by Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Babylonians. ³Therefore when you have come to Babylon you will remain there for many years, for a long time, up to seven generations; after that I will bring you away from there in peace. ⁴Now in Babylon you will see gods made of silver and gold and wood, which people carry on their shoulders, and which cause the heathen to fear. ⁵So beware of becoming at all like the foreigners or of letting fear for these gods¹³ possess you ⁶when you see the multitude before and behind them

COMMENTARY

1. *a copy of a letter* Modeled after Jer. 29:1–23, a letter from Jeremiah to the Babylonian exiles after the deportation of 597 BCE. (2 Kings 24:10–17). Compare 2 Macc. 2:1–3, which refers to a document in which Jeremiah instructs those about to be exiled not to be led astray by the sight of gold and silver statues with adornments. Notwithstanding the superscription, there is nothing in what follows that requires the present text to be a letter. God (first person) speaks to the people directly (second person) only in the prologue (vv. 3, 7).
3. *for many years, for a long time* Cf. Jer. 28:11; 32:14; Bar. 3:10 (with comment); 4:35.
- up to seven generations* Cf. Jer. 25:11–12; 29:10, where the prophet predicts that the exile will last 70 years. If “seven generations” is to be taken literally, and assuming that a biblical generation is 40 years, the exile is predicted to last up to 280 years, that is, until 317 BCE if calculated from the deportation of 597, or until 307/306 BCE, if calculated from the destruction of the Temple (2 Kings 25:8–12). Some scholars have used this calculation to establish the terminus ad quem for the composition of the Letter, on the assumption that it is looking forward to that date. However, like the number 70 in Jeremiah (and the three generations of Babylonian kings in Jer. 27:7), “seven generations” may be symbolic, prolonging the period of Jeremiah’s prediction, as does Dan. 9:24 (“70 weeks [of years]” = 490 years). Compare the *Damascus Document*’s designation of the exile as having lasted 390 years (1:5–6), deriving from Ezek. 4:5.
4. *now in Babylon you will see gods made of silver and gold and wood* See Ps. 115:4; 135:15; Deut. 4:28. The danger of being seduced by idolatry is understood to be particularly acute in the Babylonian exile, where the exiles may be drawn to imitate their Gentile neighbors. While the exile is a divine punishment for Israel’s sins (Ep. Jer. 2), it is also a place in which Israel’s fidelity to God will be tried.
- which people carry on their shoulders* See Isa. 46:7; Jer. 10:5.
5. *letting fear for these gods possess you* Cf. Deut. 12:30; Jer. 10:2–5.

Source of Translation: The translations are from the NRSV.

worshipping them. But say in your heart, "It is you, O LORD, whom we must worship."⁷ For my angel is with you, and he is watching over your lives.

The Helplessness of Idols

⁸Their tongues are smoothed by the carpenter, and they themselves are overlaid with gold and silver; but they are false and cannot speak. ⁹People¹⁴ take gold and make crowns for the heads of their gods, as they might for a girl who loves ornaments. ¹⁰Sometimes the priests secretly take gold and silver from their gods and spend it on themselves, ¹¹or even give some of it to the prostitutes on the terrace. They deck their gods¹⁵ out with garments like human beings—these gods of silver and gold and wood ¹²that cannot save themselves from rust and corrosion. When they have been dressed in purple robes, ¹³their faces are wiped because of the dust from the Temple, which is thick upon them. ¹⁴One of them holds a scepter, like a district judge, but is unable to destroy anyone who offends it. ¹⁵Another has a dagger in its right hand, and an ax, but cannot defend itself from war and robbers. ¹⁶From this it is evident that they are not gods; so do not fear them.

¹⁷For just as someone's dish is useless when it is broken, ¹⁸so are their gods when they have been set up in the temples. Their eyes are full of the dust raised by the feet of those who enter. And just as the gates are shut on every side against anyone who has offended a king, as though under sentence of death, so the priests make their temples secure with doors and locks and bars, in order that they may not be

7. for my angel is with you God has not abandoned the Israelites in their exile, but has sent his angel to accompany them. Cf. Ezek. 11:16.

and he is watching over your lives Literally, "seeks out your lives." The meaning of the Greek is somewhat uncertain, as it can carry both a benevolent and malevolent sense. The former meaning here is presumed by most commentators.

8. their tongues are smoothed by the carpenter The opening of the first (vv. 8–16) of 10 stanzas, in which the satiric mocking of idols and idolatry will be repeated in a variety of ways employing language drawn from Scripture. The idols are the fabrications of humans, their appearances being mere veneers; they are without any power, e.g., speech, of their own.³⁰

9. gold . . . crowns Whereas golden crowns might denote royalty and power, here they are mere ornaments that are taken by the priests, who are assigned to serving the idols, for perverse purposes. Since gold does not tarnish, the writer is heaping up in vv. 9–11 incompatible images for the helplessness and corruptibility of the idols.

12. dressed in purple robes Again, such indications of royal power, conferred on the idols by humans, are of no avail to the idols, which are lifeless and powerless against decay. Some understand this clause to go with what precedes it.

16. from this it is evident A similar conclusion to each stanza is repeated as a refrain in v. 23, 29, 40, 44, 52, 56, 65, 69.

17. someone's dish is useless when it is broken The second stanza (vv. 17–23) again stresses the uselessness and powerlessness of idols. They cannot even protect themselves. Note the emphasis on their inability to see, and v. 8 (with comment). For a broken dish as a symbol of uselessness, see Jer. 19:11; 22:28; Hosea 8:8; as well as Ep. Jer. 59.

18. the priests make their temples secure with doors and locks and bars The idols are prisoners in their very own temples.

plundered by robbers. ¹⁹They light more lamps for them than they light for themselves, though their gods¹⁶ can see none of them. ²⁰They are¹⁷ just like a beam of the temple, but their hearts, it is said, are eaten away when crawling creatures from the earth devour them and their robes. They do not notice ²¹when their faces have been blackened by the smoke of the temple. ²²Bats, swallows, and birds alight on their bodies and heads; and so do cats. ²³From this you will know that they are not gods; so do not fear them.

²⁴As for the gold that they wear for beauty—it¹⁸ will not shine unless someone wipes off the tarnish; for even when they were being cast, they did not feel it. ²⁵They are bought without regard to cost, but there is no breath in them. ²⁶Having no feet, they are carried on the shoulders of others, revealing to humankind their worthlessness. And those who serve them are put to shame ²⁷because, if any of these gods falls¹⁹ to the ground, they themselves must pick it up. If anyone sets it upright, it cannot move itself; and if it is tipped over, it cannot straighten itself. Gifts are placed before them just as before the dead. ²⁸The priests sell the sacrifices that are offered to these gods²⁰ and use the money themselves. Likewise their wives preserve some of the meat²¹ with salt, but give none to the poor or helpless. ²⁹Sacrifices to them may even be touched by women in their periods or at childbirth. Since you know by these things that they are not gods, do not fear them.

³⁰For how can they be called gods? Women serve meals for gods of silver and gold and wood; ³¹and in their temples the priests sit with their clothes torn, their heads and beards shaved, and their heads

20. their hearts, it is said, are eaten away This must be intended sarcastically since the idols, like the temple beams, lack hearts.

22. bats, swallows, and birds These regard the idols as lifeless places upon which to perch. See v. 71.

23. from this you will know The refrain. See comment on v. 16.

24. as for the gold The third stanza (vv. 24–29) emphasizes the inability of the idols to move themselves.

25. there is no breath in them See Jer. 10:14; Ps. 135:17.

26. they are carried on the shoulders of others See v. 4 (and comment).

27. if any of these gods falls See Wis. 13:16: “He takes thought for it, so that it may not fall, because he knows that it cannot help itself, for it is only an image and has need of help” (NRSV).

gifts are placed before them just as before the dead For the practice of placing gifts before the dead, see Tob. 4:17; Sir. 30:18–19.

28. use the money themselves The priests are corrupt with respect to the idols, but the idols are helpless to do anything about it. See v. 10.

29. women in their periods or at childbirth See Lev. 12:2–5; 15:19–30, 33.

since you know by these things The refrain. See comment on v. 16.

30. for how can they be called gods? The fourth stanza (vv. 30–40a) stresses the inability of the idols to perform the sorts of acts expected of God.

women serve meals for gods In the Israelite cult, there is no allowance for women priests, making the service described here all the more ludicrous. The serving of food to inanimate objects is being mocked.

31. clothes torn Typical acts of mourning, but prohibited to Israelite priests. See Lev. 21:1–6, 10–12; Jer. 16:6; Ezek. 44:25.

uncovered. ³²They howl and shout before their gods as some do at a funeral banquet. ³³The priests take some of the clothing of their gods²² to clothe their wives and children. ³⁴Whether one does evil to them or good, they will not be able to repay it. They cannot set up a king or depose one. ³⁵Likewise they are not able to give either wealth or money; if one makes a vow to them and does not keep it, they will not require it. ³⁶They cannot save anyone from death or rescue the weak from the strong. ³⁷They cannot restore sight to the blind; they cannot rescue one who is in distress. ³⁸They cannot take pity on a widow or do good to an orphan. ³⁹These things that are made of wood and overlaid with gold and silver are like stones from the mountain, and those who serve them will be put to shame. ^{40a}Why then must anyone think that they are gods, or call them gods?

The Foolishness of Worshiping Idols

^{40b}Besides, even the Chaldeans themselves dishonor them; for when they see someone who cannot speak, they bring Bel and pray that the mute may speak, as though Bel²³ were able to understand! ⁴¹Yet they themselves cannot perceive this and abandon them, for they have no sense. ⁴²And the women, with cords around them, sit along the passageways, burning bran for incense. ⁴³When one of them is led off by one of the passers-by and is taken to bed by him, she derides the woman next to her, because she was not as attractive as herself and her cord was not broken. ⁴⁴Whatever is done for these idols²⁴ is false. Why then must anyone think that they are gods, or call them gods?

32. *as some do at a funeral banquet* Idol worship is identified with mourning the dead. For the association of the idols with the dead, see v. 27 and v. 71. For funerary mourning rites as part of the worship of foreign gods, see Ezek. 8:14.

33. *the priests take some of the clothing of their gods* See vv. 10, 28.

34. *they will not be able to repay it* In contrast to the God of Israel: 1 Sam. 2:7; Jer. 16:18; Job 2:10.

35. *they will not require it* In contrast to Deut. 23:22: "When you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not put off fulfilling it, for the LORD your God will require it of you, and you will have incurred guilt."

36. *they cannot save anyone from death* Cf. Deut. 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:6; Ps. 49:16.

37. *they cannot restore sight to the blind* Note the closeness to Ps. 146:8-9.

39. *overlaid with gold and silver* Cf. Hab. 2:19.

40. *why then must anyone think* The refrain. See comment on v. 16.

besides, even the Chaldeans themselves dishonor them The fifth stanza (vv. 40b-44) stresses the foolishness of those who dishonor their idols in worship, giving two examples.

Chaldeans May refer either to Babylonians or to professional magicians or diviners, but here the latter is more likely.

as though Bel were able to understand! Bel, meaning "lord," is a title of Marduk, the chief of the Babylonian pantheon. See Isa. 46:1; Jer. 50:2; 51:44. The idol worshipers are mocked for thinking that Bel, who can neither speak nor understand, has the power to confer speech on the mute.

42. *and the women, with cords around them* Some sort of cultic prostitution is described. Similar, but not identical, Babylonian rites are described by Herodotus (5th century BCE) in his *History* 1.199. For the rejection of cultic prostitution in Israelite worship, see Deut. 23:18-19. See also Gen. 38:21; Hosea 4:14.

44. *why then must anyone think . . . or call them gods?* The refrain. See v. 30.

⁴⁵They are made by carpenters and goldsmiths; they can be nothing but what the artisans wish them to be. ⁴⁶Those who make them will certainly not live very long themselves; ⁴⁷how then can the things that are made by them be gods? They have left only lies and reproach for those who come after. ⁴⁸For when war or calamity comes upon them, the priests consult together as to where they can hide themselves and their gods. ⁴⁹How then can one fail to see that these are not gods, for they cannot save themselves from war or calamity? ⁵⁰Since they are made of wood and overlaid with gold and silver, it will afterward be known that they are false. ⁵¹It will be manifest to all the nations and kings that they are not gods but the work of human hands, and that there is no work of God in them. ⁵²Who then can fail to know that they are not gods?²⁶

⁵³For they cannot set up a king over a country or give rain to people. ⁵⁴They cannot judge their own cause or deliver one who is wronged, for they have no power; ⁵⁵they are like crows between heaven and earth. When fire breaks out in a temple of wooden gods overlaid with gold or silver, their priests will flee and escape, but the gods²⁷ will be burned up like timbers. ⁵⁶Besides, they can offer no resistance to king or enemy. Why then must anyone admit or think that they are gods?

⁵⁷Gods made of wood and overlaid with silver and gold are unable to save themselves from thieves

45. they are made by carpenters and goldsmiths The sixth stanza (vv. 45–52) continues to mock the human-made idols for being fraudulent, and their worshipers for failing to recognize the idols' powerlessness.

50. overlaid with gold and silver A recurring theme, indicating that the idols are not what they might appear to be from their exteriors. See vv. 39, 55, 57, 70, 71. See Jer. 10:9; Isa. 40:19.

52. who then can fail to know that they are not gods? The refrain. See comment on v. 16.

53. they cannot set up a king over a country The seventh stanza (vv. 53–56) reiterates the helplessness of the idols to do what their worshipers would seek from them. By contrast, Israel's God does establish kings. See 1 Kings 14:14; Dan. 2:44.

give rain to people Again, by contrast Israel's God provides rain. See Deut. 11:14 (recited daily as part of the second paragraph of the *Shema* prayer); Ps. 147:8; Jer. 10:13; 51:16. In later Jewish liturgy, God's power to provide rain at its appropriate time (in the Land of Israel) is invoked as part of the thrice-daily (four times on Sabbaths and Festivals) *Amidah* prayer.

55. crows Some suggest emending to "clouds," based on the Syriac ("ravens") and a proposed misreading of Hebrew *k'bym* (as clouds) as if it were *k'rbym* (as ravens). If so, the idols are as helpless as the clouds buffeted "between heaven and earth."

wooden gods overlaid with gold or silver See vv. 39, 50, 57, 70, 71.

56. they can offer no resistance to king or enemy Another expectation of gods is that they protect their cities/lands against capture and plunder, which the idols are unable to do. See v. 49.

why then must anyone admit The refrain. See comment on v. 16.

57. gods made of wood and overlaid with silver and gold The eighth stanza (vv. 57–65) stresses, once again, the powerlessness of the idols, especially when compared with mundane human-made objects and the bodies and forces of nature that fulfill their assigned purposes. For wood overlaid with silver and gold, see vv. 39, 50, 55, 70, 71.

thieves or robbers Note the recurring motif of the idols being prey to theft or misappropriation: vv. 10, 15, 18, 28, 33.

or robbers. ⁵⁸Anyone who can will strip them of their gold and silver and of the robes they wear, and go off with this booty, and they will not be able to help themselves. ⁵⁹So it is better to be a king who shows his courage, or a household utensil that serves its owner's need, than to be these false gods; better even the door of a house that protects its contents, than these false gods; better also a wooden pillar in a palace, than these false gods. ⁶⁰For sun and moon and stars are bright, and when sent to do a service, they are obedient. ⁶¹So also the lightning, when it flashes, is widely seen; and the wind likewise blows in every land. ⁶²When God commands the clouds to go over the whole world, they carry out his command. ⁶³And the fire sent from above to consume mountains and woods does what it is ordered. But these idols²⁸ are not to be compared with them in appearance or power. ⁶⁴Therefore one must not think that they are gods, nor call them gods, for they are not able either to decide a case or to do good to anyone. ⁶⁵Since you know then that they are not gods, do not fear them.

⁶⁶They can neither curse nor bless kings; ⁶⁷they cannot show signs in the heavens for the nations, or shine like the sun or give light like the moon. ⁶⁸The wild animals are better than they are, for they can flee to shelter and help themselves. ⁶⁹So we have no evidence whatever that they are gods; therefore do not fear them.

⁷⁰Like a scarecrow in a cucumber bed, which guards nothing, so are their gods of wood, overlaid with gold and silver. ⁷¹In the same way, their gods of wood, overlaid with gold and silver, are like a thornbush in a garden on which every bird perches; or like a corpse thrown out in the darkness. ⁷²From the purple and linen²⁹ that rot upon them you will know that they are not gods; and they will finally be consumed themselves, and be a reproach in the land. ⁷³Better, therefore, is someone upright who has no idols; such a person will be far above reproach.

59. a household utensil that serves its owner's need Contrast v. 17. Better to be a mundane object that fulfills its function than a false god that fulfills no function.

60. sun and moon and stars . . . when sent to do a service, they are obedient Nature serves God by obeying his commands.³¹

65. since you know then that they are not gods The refrain. See comment on v. 16.

66. they can neither curse nor bless kings The ninth stanza (vv. 66–69) once again stresses the impotency of idols. In Israelite religion, the blessing and cursing of kings is the provenance of divine prophets. See Num. 22:6; Jer. 10:5.

67. signs in the heavens See v. 60 (and comment). See Jer. 10:2.

69. so we have no evidence whatever that they are gods The familiar refrain. See comment on v. 16.

70. like a scarecrow in a cucumber bed The tenth and final stanza (vv. 70–73) includes by now familiar themes and images. The text bears a very close resemblance to Jer. 10:3–5.

71. on which every bird perches See v. 22.

like a corpse thrown out in the darkness Like the dead, the idols are helpless and will ultimately be discarded.³²

72. from the purple and linen that rot upon them See v. 12.

73. better, therefore, is someone upright who has no idols Concluding on a more positive note: honor derives from upright behavior and character, rather than from the worship of idols.

NOTES

1. Especially Jer. 10:2-16; 29; Isa. 40:18-20; 44:9-20; 46:1-13; Ps. 115:3-8; 135:15-18; Deut. 4:27-28.
2. Jonathan Goldstein, *II Maccabees*, Anchor Bible 41A (Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1983), 181-83. The text is as follows: "One finds in the records that the prophet Jeremiah . . . , after giving them the law, instructed those who were being deported not to forget the commandments of the LORD, or to be led astray in their thoughts on seeing the gold and silver statues and their adornment. And with other similar words he exhorted them that the law should not depart from their hearts" (NRSV).
3. 7Q2 (M. Baillet et al., *Les "petites grottes" de Qumran*, Discoveries in the Judean Desert 3 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962), 143. However, this identification has been challenged, since the fragment contains only two common Greek words. See Devorah Dimant, *Qumran Cave 4, XXI. Parabiblical Texts, Part 4: Pseudo-Prophetic Texts*, Discoveries in the Judean Desert 30 (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 107n28. Even less reliable is the claim that our text may have been used by the author of Wis. 13:10-15, 19.
4. Dimant, *Qumran Cave 4*, 107-8. See especially 4Q385a 18 I-II and 4Q389 1.
5. See Carey A. Moore, *Daniel, Esther, and Jeremiah: The Additions*, Anchor Bible 44 (Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1977), 328.
6. Goldstein, *II Maccabees*, 182.
7. For detailed examples, see Charles James Ball, "The Epistle of Jeremy," in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, ed. R. H. Charles (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 1,597-98; Moore, *Daniel, Esther, and Jeremiah*, 326-27.
8. Moore, *Daniel, Esther, and Jeremiah*, 328-29.
9. See n3.
10. See n3.
11. For specifics, see Moore, *Daniel, Esther, and Jeremiah*, 325.
12. The King James Version (like the Latin Vulgate) prints The Letter of Jeremiah as Chapter 6 of the book of Baruch, and the chapter and verse numbers are here retained. In the Septuagint, the Letter is separated from Baruch by the book of Lamentations.
13. Gk. *for them*
14. Gk. *They*
15. Gk. *them*
16. Gk. *they*
17. Gk. *It is*
18. Latin Syriac: Gk. *they*
19. Gk. *if they fall*
20. Gk. *to them*
21. Gk. *of them*
22. Gk. *some of their clothing*
23. Gk. *he*
24. Gk. *them*
25. Gk. *them*
26. Meaning of Greek uncertain
27. Gk. *they*
28. Gk. *these things*
29. Cf. Gk. *marble*, Syriac *silk*
30. See Jer. 10:3-4; Isa. 40:19; 41:7; 44:10-17; 46:6-7; Ps. 135:15-16; 115:4-5: "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see."
31. See Gen. 1:14-18; Ps. 135:6-7; 136:8-9; 148:6. See Ep. Jer. 53 (and comment).
32. See v. 32; Jer. 14:16; 22:19; Isa. 34:3; Bar. 2:25.