

# Jeremiah in Ireland



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## Proof from the Bible and the Irish Annals

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**O**NE OF THE MOST BELOVED STORIES OF TRADITIONAL LITERATURE written by those who support the modern identity of the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel is the story of the coming of the prophet Jeremiah to Ireland. According to this story shortly after c. 586 BC when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, conquered Jerusalem, Jeremiah the prophet, accompanied by his scribe Baruch, and the daughters of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, fled that country and for a short time resided in Egypt. From there they took ship to Ireland, where one of the daughters married Eochaidh the high king (heremon or ardri) of Ireland. A variation says that the marriage took place in Jerusalem. The royal couple governed the Emerald Isle from their capital at Tara in County Meath. Jeremiah, at that time an old man, was also reputed to have established a sort of ministerial training college at Tara. He became a revered figure in Irish legend.

Over the course of the centuries the royal line established at Tara was transferred from Ireland to Scotland to England where it survives today in the person of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. A wondrous stone, variously called the Stone of Destiny, Stone of Scone, or Coronation Stone, upon which Her Majesty and her predecessors on the thrones of the three kingdoms were crowned, thought to be the stone that the patriarch Jacob slept on at Bethel (Genesis 28:18-22) was also believed to have been brought to Ireland by Jeremiah.

It is claimed that the story of Jeremiah coming to Ireland can be found in the ancient annals, histories and other literature of the Irish, and indeed references to it abound in the works written by traditional Ten Tribes scholars, especially 19th-century writers. Yet rarely, if ever, do these writers point to any specific history in which this tale may be found, vague

references to “Irish annals” usually being made. A few examples will suffice:

One authority states that “Irish historians are unanimous that about 580 B.C. there arrived in Ulster a notable man [Jeremiah], a patriarch or saint, accompanied by an Eastern princess, and a lesser person by the name of Simon Brach or Barech”.(1) Further that, “Irish tradition tells us that Jeremiah married the princess Tamar Tephi to Eochaidh ... king of Ireland”.(2) However, the historians are not named, nor is any particular tradition cited.

Another writer says that “The ancient records of Ireland bear ample testimony to this [Jeremiah’s coming to Ireland] as an historic fact, not only recording the event itself, but also supplying confirmatory evidence by giving the actual date or period of their arrival correctly”.(3) Again, disappointingly, this author does not name the “ancient records” in which the Jeremiah story may be found; rather we read phrases such as, “[the records conclude ...”.(4) and “[t]he royal records state ...”.(5) He dates the coming of Jeremiah to Ireland at late in 583 BC or early 582 BC.

The closest that any writer comes to naming names is a contemporary author and archaeologist, E. Raymond Capt. In his book, *Jacob’s Pillar: A Biblical Historical Study*, Capt makes reference to *The Chronicles of Eri*, *The Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters*, *The Annals of Clonmacnoise*, and *The Chronicles of Scotland*. He quotes briefly from the latter and gives an extensive recounting of the entire Jeremiah legend in his notable book. However, like the learned writers cited above, Capt does not directly cite any passage in any ancient chronicle which explicitly mentions Jeremiah.(6)

This lack of corroboration of the Jeremiah legend has caused some to doubt the validity of the entire story.

But I will show in this article that Jeremiah is mentioned in the Irish annals and histories, albeit under another name. His Judahite ancestry and prophetic identity are clearly stated and even a brief physical description is given. His friend and amanuensis Baruch is also mentioned.

Furthermore, I will name names and give the reader of this article the references by which he may corroborate the story himself.

First, however, in order to understand the proper chronological context of Jeremiah's coming to Ireland, a brief review of Irish history prior to his arrival is necessary.

## **History of Ireland Prior to Jeremiah**

Admittedly, the history of this ancient land can at times be confusing. It is said that the Irish like nothing so much as a good story, and their willingness to romanticise and embellish has led to a certain confusion. On the other hand, it is not entirely their fault. Much of the blame can be laid at the feet of Catholic monks who altered the traditional Irish histories, or invented their own, in order to deliberately hide the Israelite ancestry of the Irish people. For instance, they attempted to portray the Irish as descendants of Magog, son of Japheth!

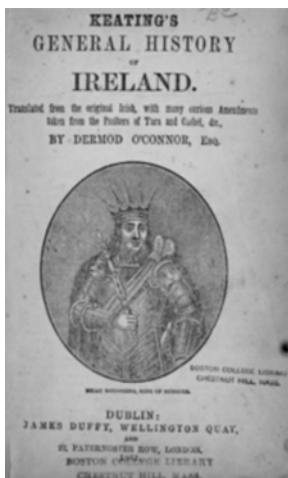
Irish history begins, as the history of every civilisation does, after the Flood of Noah's day. For three hundred years after that catastrophic event, Ireland was an uninhabited land. A claim to sovereignty over Ireland was made, according to historian Herman L. Hoeh who refers to Irish annals, by the Assyrian king Ninus, son of Bel, but the land was not colonised permanently.(7)

In c. 2069 BC, again according to Hoeh who uses Geoffrey Keating's *History of Ireland* as his source, a Hebrew named Parthalon with his followers settled the land and established a kingdom, the country being divided into four parts after his death. The date, however, is open to some question. If the P-r-t in the name Parthalon can be equated with the b-r-t of the Hebrew brit (covenant), then it is difficult to see how this would have referred to a descendant of Abraham, who had not yet even been born. Moreover, as one authority states, "[t]he Partholanian [Parthalonian] story is clearly a variant of that of the eponymous ancestor of the British, Brutus [Greek: Peirithoos] the Trojan, with which it has been confused".(8) Brutus arrived in Britain c. 1103 BC, according to one scholar.(9) Others claim an earlier date, c. 1149 BC. If this is so, then the

date of 2069 BC is impossible. The same source quoted above claims that Parthalon was a Milesian (see below).

In any event, the Parthalonians, whoever they may have been, ruled Ireland intermittently until 1709 BC, when a tragedy befell them at the hands of Phoenician Formorians. The island was then invaded by Nemedians from Scythia who lived in Ireland until 1492 BC, being ruled by the Formorians for much of this period. A portion of the Nemedians escaped during their sojourn in the land and returned in 1492 BC as the Fir-Bolgs.

In 1456 BC, a contingent of the famous Tuatha (pronounced “Too-ah”) de Danaan (“Tribe of Dan”) arrived in Ireland and ruled for 440 years until 1016 BC. A second contingent came in 1213 BC during the days of Deborah and Barak (Judges 5:17). Finally, in 1016 BC, toward the end of the reign of King David of Israel, another Hebrew people, the Milesians, descendants of Eber the Hebrew according to Hoeh, conquered the Danaan (Danites), forcing them to accept their rule. The kingdom of Ireland was then divided between the two sons of Milesius, Ebher and Ghede the Ereamhon (Heremon or Erimionn, or high king) and a capital was established at Tobrad, also known as Tea-mur, Tamhair, Teamhara, and now called Tara.



Throughout all these invasions the Irish have meticulously maintained the record of their kings. Lists of these kings can be found in Geoffrey Keating’s *History of Ireland*, O’Flaherty’s *Ogygia*, and A.-M.-H.-J. Stokvis’s *Manuel d’Histoire*, volume II, pages 234-235.

For our purposes here, however, the royal line that most concerns us is that of Nemedh, reputed ancestor of the Hebrew people who invaded Ireland c. 1709 BC. His royal descendants are listed in various sources, sometimes differently, yet they are important to our story, because it is in this genealogy, whether always precisely accurate or not, that we find Jeremiah in Irish history, though under another name.

## **Nemedians and Milesians**

Throughout this article, I have tried to pursue my objective, that of identifying Jeremiah in Irish history, in a manner that is easy for the reader to understand. The history of Ireland is confusing enough as it is without bringing in legends, fables, and tales of bravery and romance by the heroes of this “Holy Land” in the Atlantic. For this reason, I will confine myself to a discussion of Nemedh and his reputed descendants, one in particular whom I will identify with the Biblical Jeremiah.

Historian Geoffrey Keating, writing of the expedition of Nemedh to Ireland in “thirty-four ships, with a crew of thirty in each ship”(10) said that this party of colonisers was led by “Nemedh and his four sons, Starn, Iarbanel the Prophet, Anind and Fergus Leth-derg (Fergus of the Red Side)”.(11) In the Annals of Clonmacnoise, the same four sons are named, in a different order (the father is called Neuie McAgamemnon):

“with his foure sonnns [came] Into Ireland out of Greece, his sonnes names alsoe were Sdarne, Jaruanell [Iarbanel], the prophett, Fergus Leahderg, ... and Anynn [which] people Ruled Ireland 382 yeares”.(12)

Another historical source, the Leabhar Gabhala (Book of Conquests) agrees, adding that Iarbanel the Prophet was a Nemedian chief. (Though Iarbanel is called a “son” of Nemedh, this need not literally be true. It simply means he is a descendant of Nemedh.) The account reads: “Now as for Neimedh [Nemedh], he had four chiefs with him, Starn, Iarbanel the Prophet, Fergus Redside, and Ainnian. They were four sons of Neimedh”.(13)

Still another account names Nemedh the ancestor of the Danaans. Keating writes, “Some antiquarians say, that the nation, of whom we are now treating, were called Tuatha-De-Danaan, from Brian, Iuchar and Iucharba, the three sons of Dana, daughter of Delbaeth, son of Elathan, son of Niadh, son of Indae, son of Allae, son of Tath, son of Tabarn, son of Enda or Enna, son of Beothach, son of Ibaath, son of Bathach, son of Iarbanel, son of Nemedh”.(14)

We find an echo of this in the Leabhar Gabhala, naming the same names as above (except that Elathan is called the son of Delbaeth) and also that “Iarbanel the Prophet [is the], son of Neimedh [Nemedh], son of Agnoman”.(15) (Agnoman is an obvious reference to Agamemnon, king of the Greek Mycenae, who led an expedition against the Trojans to recover Helen, wife of Agamemnon’s brother Menelaus, king of Sparta. See also Neuie McAgamemnon, above.)

Two other figures from Irish history, Bres of the Danaan and Nuadh Silver-Arm claim descent from Nemedh.(16) Iarbanel is mentioned in both genealogies as a son of Nemedh. The Milesians also figure into this tale, but more on that later.

All this need not be as confusing as it looks, as there is a common thread running through all these genealogies. Whether we speak of Nemedians, Fir-Bolgs (a branch of the Nemedians), Danaans, or Milesians, all these peoples were Hebrews. As the Nemedians preceded the other peoples, it is clear that the Irish historians have attempted to trace the lineage of their kings to this island’s earliest Hebrew ancestors.

But still we have not identified Jeremiah in Irish history. Or have we? Actually, we have stumbled across his name several times already without recognising it. The next section will positively identify Jeremiah in the annals of ancient Ireland.

## **Who was Iarbanel?**

In all the genealogies of Nemedh’s descendants, one name is met with consistently: Iarbanel the Prophet. Who was he? Where did he come from? Do the annals have anything to say about him that might be germane to our argument? Astoundingly, the Irish histories have several important things to say about Iarbanel, enough to answer the above questions. They give us the land of his birth (not Ireland), a brief physical description, and a description of his character. Yet, outside of Irish history, nothing seems to be known about him. I will demonstrate, however, that once we have established the identity of Iarbanel, a great deal is known about him.

Iarbanel is clearly stated to be a descendant (“son of”) Nemedh, the Hebrew chieftain. This obviously makes Iarbanel also a Hebrew. Furthermore, Iarbanel is also unique in that he is called a prophet, the only one of Nemedh’s descendants so called.

Nor is Iarbanel the only name by which he is known in Irish history. He is also found in the Milesian story as well. Again, Keating, in his account of founders of a sort of school established by Fenius Farsa in Egypt after the Tower of Tahpanhes was abandoned. He writes, “The three sages that held the chief direction of this great school were Fenius Farsa from Scythia; Gaedal, son of Eثور, of the race of Gomer, from Greece; and Caei, the Eloquent (or the Just), from Judea, or Iar [Iarbanel], son of Nemha [Nemedh], as others call him ...”.(17)

Notice that Iarbanel, known here by the name Caei, is called an “eloquent” and a “just” man. Also note that he comes from Judea! As for the name Tahpanhes, this should be familiar to Bible students. The name is found in the book of Jeremiah: “So they [a party of rebellious Jews, with faithful Jeremiah, his secretary Baruch, and King Zedekiah’s daughters] came into the land of Egypt: for they [the Jews] obeyed not the voice of the Lord: thus they came even to Tahpanhes” (Jeremiah 43:7). The Jewish refugees lived in Tahpanhes temporarily, and, according to legend, Jeremiah, his scribe, and the king’s daughters left that place to continue their journey to Ireland.

But Irish historians have more to say about Iarbanel. Keating, quoting from the Leabhar Gabhala, gives us the following lines from a poem: “The Fair Iarbanel, a prophet true, / Was son of Nemedh, son of Ardnaman— / To this grey hero, mighty in spells / Was born Beothach of wild steeds”.(18)

Here Iarbanel is called “fair” (which may refer to lightness of skin or a mild and pacific temperament or a man of sympathy, deep feeling and justice), a “prophet true” (as opposed to a false prophet); a “grey hero”; and, “mighty of spells”, i.e., a miracle-worker. What have we learned about Iarbanel so far? Firstly, he was a Hebrew, a true prophet, who came from Judea, during the time of Jeremiah’s stay at Tahpanhes. He was an



eloquent and a just man, fair of skin and/or temperament, an old man, considered a hero and a worker of miracles.

What do we know about Jeremiah? Firstly, he was a Hebrew, a true prophet (Jeremiah 1:5) coming from a priestly family (Jeremiah 1:1); he came from Judea (Anathoth in Judah, a town northeast of Jerusalem—Jeremiah 1:1). He spoke the word of the Lord often and eloquently, rising early (Jeremiah 7:13, 25; 25:3; 35:14), speaking of justice (Jeremiah 22:15; 23:5; 31:23; 50:7). His eloquence, given to Jeremiah by God Himself (Jeremiah 1:7, 9) is revealed in his words and in this admission from the International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia that, “As far as the form of his poetic utterances is concerned, Jeremiah is of a poetical nature. ... He often speaks in the meter of an elegy”.(19) As for “fair” (in the temperamental sense) and just, the ISBE says that Jeremiah “was, by nature, gentle and tender in his feelings, and sympathetic”.(20)

At the time of his flight from Judea, Jeremiah would have been an old man. The ISBE says that “At that time [the time of Jeremiah’s stay at Tahpanhes] Jeremiah must have been from 70 to 80 years old”.(21) After a long life in the Lord’s service, enduring many trials, a “grey hero” indeed. The evidence brought forth from Irish history and the Bible favours the identification of Iarbanel with Jeremiah. But a nagging question remains: the name Iarbanel itself. What is its derivation and what does it mean?

At the beginning of this article I promised to actually name Jeremiah in the Irish annals. I will now do so. The name Jeremiah in Hebrew is Yirmeyahu, abbreviated to Yirmeyah. It means “the Lord establishes”. The beginning letters in the name are yod and resh. It is possible, in fact, on the basis of the evidence presented here, more than likely that the letters “Iar” in “Iarbanel” are simply an abbreviation for the name Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah), a transliteration into the Irish tongue of the yod and resh of the prophet’s name. But what does the rest of the name Iarbanel mean—“banel”? With an elementary knowledge of Hebrew, the meaning is easy to discover. “Ban” is simply the Hebrew ben, meaning “son of”; “el” is the Hebrew El, meaning “God”. Remembering that “Iar” is a short form of the name Jeremiah, one can easily see that Iarbanel, translated from Hebrew to English is Iar ben El, or “Jeremiah, the son of God”!

As a true prophet of God, who had God's Holy Spirit within him, Jeremiah could legitimately be called a son of God. The Lord Himself as much said so, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5). As a "sanctified one", i.e., one set apart for holy use and having the Spirit of God, Jeremiah certainly qualified as a saint.

Was Iarbanel also a saint? The Irish annals do not explicitly say so, but it can be assumed that for a "just" man who was a "prophet true" and "mighty of spells", and whose name meant "son of God", sainthood was at least a distinct possibility. It is interesting to note that the Irish word for saint is *namh* (pronounced "nav"), and that Iarbanel is said to be a son of Nemedh, also spelled Nemha. Is there a philological connection between Nemedh/Nemha and *namh*? More light on this question will be shed later, but for now let us note the opinion of Yair Davidy, a respected Israeli Ten Tribes researcher, who points out that, "Nemha [Nemedh] (i.e. in 'Iar son of Nemha' above) is from the same root as 'Nemedian' and means sanctified" (22) (emphasis mine). A sanctified person is a saint!

The evidence presented in this article leads to only one conclusion: that Iarbanel was Jeremiah. If one does not believe that Iarbanel was Jeremiah, then one is forced to believe that an amazing thing has happened. It has happened that a Hebrew prophet, a true prophet of the Lord in whom God's Holy Spirit dwelt and was thus a "son of God", who was a saint, who lived in Judea, who fled to Tahpanhes in Egypt with his secretary and friend Baruch and others, who was an eloquent speaker and a gentle man who preached justice, who was an old man and a worker of miracles, disappeared from the face of the earth.

At the same time in history there appeared in Ireland, a Hebrew prophet, whose name means "son of God", a true prophet, who was considered a saint, who lived in Judea, who fled to Tahpanhes in Egypt, who had a "son" named Brec, (23) who was an eloquent and a just man, who was an old man and "mighty in spells", appeared on the scene, fully formed, literally out of nowhere.

If one does not believe that Iarbabel was Jeremiah, one must believe that this is all a coincidence.

The coincidence is impossible. Iarbabel was Jeremiah. It is a fact of history.

## **An Honest Objection Examined**

Before leaving this subject however, it is only fair to mention that an alternative identity for Iarbabel has been proposed. In the third volume of his great trilogy on the identity of the Ten Tribes, Lost Israelite Identity, esteemed Israeli researcher Yair Davidy proposes that Iarbabel was Iar (or Yair) of Judah. He writes, “ ‘Iar’ or ‘Yair’ or ‘Jair’ is recorded in the Bible as a descendant of Judah who settled in the land of Gilead of Machir in Menasseh (sic)” (24) and furthermore that, “Yair in the Bible was linked to both Judah and to Gilead of Menasseh (sic) east of the Jordan one of whose sons was Peresh (‘Separated’ or ‘Sanctified’) which name is identical with that of ‘Nemha’ in Irish”. (25)

There is no doubt that Iar (or Yair) existed and that he was also a Hebrew, and that he came from Judah or Judea. This he shares in common with Iarbabel, but that is where the similarity ends. Iar-Yair could not have been Iarbabel for the following reasons: Yair is nowhere in the Bible called a prophet as is Iarbabel in the Irish annals or Jeremiah in Scripture; he was not a saint nor was he sanctified; there is no evidence that he was eloquent of speech or particularly just as were Iarbabel and Jeremiah; he did not leave Judah to come to Egypt; he did not work miracles; he did not have a secretary/“son” named Baruch or Brec; he was not venerated in history as were both Iarbabel and Jeremiah.

Some will argue, however, that Davidy’s point concerning Yair being “linked” to both Judah and Gilead of Manasseh one of whose sons had a name meaning “separated” or “sanctified”, indicates the identity of Iar-Yair-Jair with Iarbabel. But I will show that the true link exists, in both a physical and spiritual sense, not between Yair and Judah and/or Manasseh, but between Iarbabel-Jeremiah and Aaron, brother of Moses. Let us remember that anciently “son of” need not represent a direct father-son relationship, but only a descendency or even a spiritual

relationship of a student to his spiritual teacher. Jeremiah was the “son of [father-son relationship] of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin” (Jeremiah 1:1). Anathoth was a priestly town.

E. W. Bullinger in a note to Jeremiah 1:1 in his Companion Bible, in comparing the priestly lines of Eleazar and Ithamar says that “Anathoth belonged to that [line] of Ithamar”. This is not a common name in Scripture and only one man bears it. Ithamar is the fourth son of Aaron who founded a line of priests (**I Chronicles 24:3, 6**).

It is obvious that if Jeremiah’s father, Hilkiah, who lived in Anathoth, was of the line of Ithamar, son of Aaron, then this makes Jeremiah a descendant (“son of”) Aaron as well.

Is there any evidence from the Bible that Iarbabel-Jeremiah was the “son of” a “Nemha” (“sanctified one”) or a namh (saint)? Could such a description apply to Aaron? Certainly! The Bible confirms it. Aaron was consecrated as a priest of the Lord, separated, sanctified, and given the Holy Spirit of God. Speaking to Moses, God says that “[thou] shalt anoint them [Aaron and his sons], and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest’s office” (**Exodus 28:41**). See also **Exodus 40:13, Numbers 3:3; 29:29**.

Thus Iarbabel-Jeremiah was also a son of “Nemha”, namh, a “sanctified one”. Even more so, since the sanctification is a spiritual as well as a fleshly one; whereas in the case of Peresh (“separated”) only a tribal separation is implied. No spiritual or physical sanctification, both appropriate to a prophet, son of a priest, of a line of priests, can be inferred from the meaning of the name Peresh (who was not a priest in any case). Furthermore, namh has an applicability to Iarbabel-Jeremiah entirely lacking for Peresh.

## Conclusion

The evidence is in. The conclusion is obvious. Iarbabel was Jeremiah. Contrary to the doubting opinions of some, Jeremiah is mentioned in the Irish annals, under another name.

This of course is not the total answer to all the mystery surrounding Jeremiah in Ireland. The question of Ollam Fodhla, variously called a prophet and a king in Irish history, needs to be explored. There are also questions that need to be answered concerning King Zedekiah's daughters allegedly taken to Ireland by Jeremiah, the identity of Eochaidh the Heremon, the whereabouts of the wondrous stone, harp, and ark which were also carried to Ireland by Jeremiah according to legend. But that is for further research and/or revelation.

For now, it needs only to be said that Jeremiah came to Ireland, as proven from Irish and Biblical history. His coming was part of the purpose of God for his people of Israel, a purpose ironically revealed every day, yet seen by few. Let us pray that with further research and revelation that the few will one day become many.

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13. Leabhar Gabhala or the Book of the Conquests of Ireland. Michael O'Cleirigh (rec.). Dublin: University College, sec. 44.
14. Keating, *op. cit.*, p. 140.
15. Leabhar Gabhala, sec. 100.
16. Leabhar Gabhala, secs. 106, 107.
17. Keating, pp. 155, 166. The observant reader may object to my reference to the Tower of Tahpanhes in the story of Fenius Farsa, Gaedal, and Caei the Eloquent (or Caei the Just), as according to Keating the school was established after the Flood on the "plain of Shenaar". However, it is obvious that the Tower of Babel and the "Tower" of Tahpanhes have been confused in Keating's account. Neither Scythia nor Judea existed at the time of the Tower of Babel, nor was Caei-Iar yet even born. "Shenaar" may refer to the plain of Shinar mentioned in Genesis. Or could it be an echo of Goshen, the location of Tahpanhes
18. Keating, *op. cit.*, p. 138.
19. International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Volume III, p. 1590.

20. ISBE, III:1589.

21. ISBE, III:1588.

22. Davidy, Yair. *Lost Israelite Identity*. Jerusalem, Israel: Russell-Davis Publishers, n.d., p. 349-350.

23. Keating, op. cit., p. 126. In Keating's history, Simeon Brec is the son of Starn, son of Nemedh. In the *Leabhar Gabhala*, he is either the son of Erglan, son of Beoan, son of Starn, son of Neimedh [Nemedh] (sec. 67); or he is, significantly, son of Iarbanel, son of Neimedh [Nemedh] (sec. 53).

24. Davidy, op. cit., p. 350.

25. Davidy, *ibid.*, p. 350.



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