

**A NEW HEART TO KNOW THE LORD:  
RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF JEREMIAH 21-24**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of the present study is an application of rhetorical analysis to the interpretation of Jeremiah 21-24.

Chapter 1 reviews previous studies of the book of Jeremiah in modern scholarship. This thesis claims that there is a need for text-centered and holistic approaches to the interpretation of the book. Chapter 2 proposes that rhetorical analysis will be fruitful as a new hermeneutical method in Jeremiah research. It explains the application of classical rhetorical theory in modern biblical studies. The thesis claims that the application of rhetorical theory helps explain the structure of Jeremiah 21-24, and also the prophetic techniques of persuasion which are used. Chapters 3-7 are the heart of the thesis. Jeremiah 21-24 are divided according to the principle of rhetorical arrangement into five units: Prologue, Proposition, Confirmation, Refutation, and Epilogue. These divisions will be treated in turn in chapters 3-7, which conduct a detailed analysis of Jeremiah 21-24 through a close reading of the text.

The argument of Jeremiah 21-24 is that God's salvation plan requires the exile of Judah; the experience of exile will help the people's future understanding of the covenant. The thesis demonstrates that Jeremiah's rhetorical techniques of persuasion are an effective method of communication to address the argument to the audience of Jeremiah 21-24. The rhetorical techniques build up a persuasive argument that the traditional institutions of Israel (the Davidic dynasty, Jerusalem, the land) must be destroyed before there can be a new beginning. God's future plan is for a community that knows him because he has given them a heart to do so.

This thesis concludes that Jeremiah 21-24 is a coherent persuasive discourse, which aims to convince its audience that the experience of exile is a necessary condition for the renewed covenant.

The contribution of this thesis is in its application of rhetorical theory to Jeremiah 21-24. This theory applies both to the arrangement of the text as a whole, and to the language used in it.

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulation of The University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the College.

Signed

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All of this is possible by the grace of the Lord.  
"It is a work of God's grace – 'grace in the end'."

To my mother:

긴 외로운 기다림 속에서,  
타인을 위한 자기 희생이 우리 인생의 최고의 미덕인 것을  
삶을 통해서 몸소 보여준 나의 어머님께 이 논문을 바칩니다.  
인간 존엄성 그리고 자신감을 심어준 나의 누나에게 감사하며,  
불평 없이 많은 것을 참아준 나의 여동생에게 고개를 숙입니다.

## Abbreviation

AB	Anchor Bible
AION	<i>Annali dell'istituto orientale di Napoli.</i>
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament.</i> J. B. Prichard, ed. 3rd. ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.
AnOr	Analecta Orientalia
ASB	<i>Austin Seminary Bulletin</i>
ASTI	<i>Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute</i>
ASV	American Standard Version
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
ATR	Anglican Theological Review
AUSS	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BAR	<i>Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BDB	Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, <i>A Hebrew English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951).
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>Bib Int</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BibOr	Biblica et Orientalia
BK	Biblischer Kommentar
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBC	The Cambridge Bible Commentary
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
ConBOT	Coniectanea biblica, Old Testament
<i>ExpT</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
ET	English Translation.
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HKAT	Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IB</i>	<i>Interpreter's Bible</i>
ICC	The International Critical Commentary
<i>IDB</i>	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> , G. A. Buttrick, ed.

<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
ITC	International Theological Commentary
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of New Testament - Supplement Series
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of Old Testament - Supplement Series
<i>JSS</i>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KAT	Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament.
KJV	King James Version
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NAC	The New American Commentary
NCBC	The New Century Bible Commentary
NICOT	The New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology &amp; Exegesis. Willem A. VanGemeren. Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996.</i>
NIV	New International Version
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>OTE</i>	<i>Old Testament Essay</i>
OTL	The Old Testament Library
OTM	Old Testament Message
OTS	Old Testament Studies
<i>PhRh</i>	<i>Philosophy and Rhetoric</i>
<i>RA</i>	<i>Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
RTL	Revue Théologique de Louvain
SBLASP	The Society of Biblical Literature Abstracts and Seminar Papers
SBLDS	The Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	The Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLSP	The Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBLSS	The Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies
SBS	Stuttgarter Biblestudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SSN	Studia Semitica Neerlandica
<i>ST</i>	<i>Studia theologica</i>

TCS	Text from Cuneiform Sources
<i>TD</i>	<i>Theology Digest</i>
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds.
ThHAT	Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament
<i>TLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
<i>TR</i>	<i>Theologische Revue</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
TWAT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament, G. J. Boterweck and H. R. Ringgren, eds.
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>The Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

## **A Note on Translation**

All the Hebrew translations in this study are the author's except the ones in quotations.



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## Introduction

The present study is a rhetorical analysis of Jeremiah 21-24. Literary and historical questions have traditionally been the dominant concern in Jeremiah research. The interests of historical critical study of Jeremiah include such unsolved issues as the literary history, authorship, unity, and dating of the book of Jeremiah. Although we do not neglect the results of historical critical research, we will focus in this study on the literary features of the book as it stands in its present form, and apply rhetorical analysis to the interpretation of Jeremiah 21-24.

By rhetorical analysis we mean the type of interpretation used by modern rhetorical critics – e.g. George Kennedy, Dale Patrick and Allen Scult, and Yehoshua Gitay – modern applications of Aristotote's *Rhetoric*, that is, the study of texts as persuasive discourse. It is not the rhetorical analysis of the Muilenburg school (Jack R. Lundbom and Phyllis Tribble) with its emphasis on style. Thus in this study, we broaden the meaning of "rhetoric" beyond stylistic analysis to include logical persuasive argument intended by the author to achieve a particular effect. In rhetorical analysis, the "rhetorical situation" is a specific situation that gives rise to the existence of the extant text. Rhetorical analysis supposes that there is an issue between the speaker/author and the audience/reader that needs to be addressed. The speaker/author aims to win over the audience to his point of view. In Jeremiah 21-24 we see how Jeremiah deals with false perceptions among his hearers. We will see frequently how Jeremiah challenges what he regards as false opinions. For example, Jeremiah often presents the opposite of what the audience expects. We attempt to

discover the “exigency” of the “rhetorical unit” and show how the exigency is removed through the persuasion of the “audience” within the “constraints” of the “rhetorical situation.”

Prophecy in its nature is polemical. The prophet tries to persuade the audience to change their stance and agree with the prophet’s point of view on issues under dispute. Rhetorical means of persuasion are used for effective communication between the speaker/author and the audience/reader. When we speak of the “audience,” we really think of two audiences: Jeremiah’s own listeners and the audience of the unit Jeremiah 21-24 as it has been put together in its final form.<sup>1</sup> It is the general view of Jeremiah scholarship that the extant form of Jeremiah 21-24 is a compilation of earlier prophecies of the prophet Jeremiah (and perhaps others).<sup>2</sup> When independent materials were edited into their present form, they acquired new meanings. Therefore, the text acquires a new rhetorical impetus.

There is also the issue of terminology. In modern studies we are familiar with the terms “implied author” and “implied reader.” This applies also in rhetorical analysis. The “author” of Jeremiah 21-24 is a construct. We will sometimes use this term. However, our analysis does not systematically separate the levels of

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<sup>1</sup> We discuss this distinction more fully below in 2.5.2. Cf. Thomas Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 19-22; Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (2nd ed.; Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983).

<sup>2</sup> Depending on one’s view of the authorship of the book, the author (or the final editor) who is responsible for the present form of the book could be the prophet Jeremiah himself or a later (Deuteronomistic) editor(s). The former is our position in this study. However, source-critical and redaction-critical issues are beyond the scope of this study.

persuasion. In the detailed analysis, rhetorical features are often the same, whether one thinks of the “first” or “second” audiences. Therefore we have not rigorously pursued a single terminology. Sometimes we refer to “Jeremiah,” at other times “the speaker” or “the author.” These references are never meant to identify an exact person or group. The focus is always on the power of the speech or writing to persuade.

Thus rhetorical analysis assumes the presence of organizing principles in the present form of Jeremiah 21-24 and that the author or speaker has a certain intention. We argue that the principles of rhetoric help us understand the compilation of the literary materials in Jeremiah 21-24. In the rhetorical analysis of the text, we will look at rhetoric in the art of Hebrew literary composition through a “close reading” of the text by paying attention to the content, structure, and style of the text, in order to discover the persuasive force of the argument in the text. Thus in our analysis of the text, we will consider the whole of the text, instead of selecting some text, within the “rhetorical unit” Jeremiah 21-24.

As a rhetorical unit, Jeremiah 21-24 is a well-defined subsection of the book of Jeremiah as we shall see. Most Jeremiah scholars recognize Jeremiah 21-24 as a literary unit. The rhetorical unit is determined both thematically and structurally. The delimitation of the rhetorical unit is recognized by the presence of repeated themes, words, phrases in the text. The beginning of the unit 21:1-10 is balanced by an *inclusio* in chapter 24 at the end of the unit. Jeremiah 21-24 also proves to be an excellent subject for rhetorical analysis. The categories of classical rhetoric

illuminate the structure and flow of the text as a whole. The author could make use of the art of persuasion, convincing the audience in his favor using the medium of the text as an effective communication tool. He needs to present his argument as convincingly as possible. We recognize, in the rhetorical unit Jeremiah 21-24, the five-part structure of the literary arrangement as suggested by the theory of classical rhetoric: Prologue; Proposition; Confirmation; Refutation; Epilogue. In this study, we argue that the literary materials in Jeremiah 21-24 are structured coherently in the present location according to a rhetorical purpose. For the practical convenience of exegesis of the text, we divide sub-units into exegetically manageable smaller units by identifying basic prophetic judgment speech forms as suggested by Claus Westermann and H. Van Dyke Parunak.

The present study proceeds as follows.

1. In chapter 1, a survey of twentieth-century Jeremiah scholarship will show the need for a new approach to the interpretation of the book of Jeremiah to overcome the hermeneutical impasse brought in by historical criticism. We propose that rhetorical analysis – a text-centered, holistic approach – promises to be a helpful new approach.

2. In chapter 2, we present the methodology of the present study. We will describe the modern kind of rhetorical analysis, as used in Biblical studies, building on classical rhetoric, especially, Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. Through a survey of modern rhetorical critics, we adopt rhetorical analysis with emphasis on the persuasive aspect

of the text. We propose that Jeremiah 21-24 is structured according to the theory of rhetorical arrangement.

3. In chapters 3-7, we will analyze Jeremiah 21-24 according to the rhetorical categories of Prologue, Proposition, Confirmation, Refutation, and Epilogue, to show that Jeremiah 21-24 proceeds as a unified, complete argument. We will also analyze Jeremiah 21-24 in detail to show how Jeremiah the speaker uses the rhetorical means of persuasion throughout. In our analysis of text, we adopt a “close reading” of the text by analyzing line-by-line the whole of the text in the rhetorical unit.

## Chapter 1 Literature Survey of Jeremiah Study

### 1.1 Introduction to Literature Survey of Jeremiah Study

The literary characteristics of the book – an apparent lack of chronological arrangement of literary materials, the relationship of poetic and prosaic materials, the obvious textual differences between the MT and the LXX editions, and the alleged lack of any principle of literary arrangement – have led Jeremiah scholarship to speculate about the composition of the book and its literary history. We will survey various approaches to the interpretation of the book of Jeremiah. These approaches include the traditional view of the book of Jeremiah, the source-critical approach, the Deuteronomistic redaction-critical approach, and the modern literary approach. We will show how these approaches have been taken up by modern Jeremiah scholarship and their implications for the interpretation of the book of Jeremiah. From our survey – with our focus on their approaches and methodologies – of major commentaries, monographs, and articles on the book of Jeremiah, we notice that the majority of the twentieth century Jeremiah scholarship has been preoccupied with historical criticism as the only valid hermeneutical tool. This is well attested by the fact that most major commentaries on the book of Jeremiah, with a few exceptions, employ historical-critical methods with a variety of assumptions regarding the growth and the literary history of the book.<sup>1</sup> During the last three decades of the twentieth century, however,

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<sup>1</sup> Major Jeremiah scholarly works include the following commentaries: 1900s: B. Duhm (1901); 1910s: S. Mowinckel (1914); 1920s: P. Volz (1922); 1930s: F. Nötscher (1934); 1940s: W. Rudolph (1947); 1950s: J. P. Hyatt (1956); A. Weiser (vol. 1, 1951; vol. 2, 1955); 1960s: J. Bright (1965); 1970s: E. W. Nicholson (vol. 1,



the dominance of diachronic approaches of historical criticism as the hermeneutical tool in Jeremiah studies has been challenged by text-centered synchronic approaches. Modern literary criticism has been introduced to Jeremiah studies as an alternative approach to historical criticism. Finally, we would like to propose a new approach in this study to the interpretation of the book of Jeremiah: rhetorical analysis.

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1973; vol. 2, 1975); W. Thiel (vol. 1, 1973); 1980s: J. A. Thompson (1980); W. Thiel (vol. 2, 1981); R. P. Carroll (1986); E. A. Martens (1986); W. McKane (vol. 1, 1986); W. L. Holladay (vol. 1, 1986; vol. 2, 1989); R. E. Clements (1988); W. Brueggemann (vol. 1, 1988); 1990s: W. Brueggemann (vol. 2, 1991); P. C. Craigie *et al.* (WBC, vol. 1, 1991); D. R. Jones (1993); G. L. Keown *et al.* (WBC, vol. 2, 1995); W. McKane (vol. 2, 1996); J. R. Lundbom (1999).

## 1.2 Research Methods in Jeremiah Studies in the Twentieth Century

### 1.2.1 Source-Critical Approach<sup>2</sup>

Historical criticism has taken up the issue of the composition of the book of Jeremiah. Modern Jeremiah studies have often been initiated by the identification of the types of literary material in the book of Jeremiah, following the works of Bernhard Duhm and Sigmund Mowinckel. Bernhard Duhm (1901) distinguishes three types of literary material in the book of Jeremiah.<sup>3</sup> Duhm's categorization of literary material in the book of Jeremiah into three types marks the beginning of the application of historical-critical approaches to Jeremiah studies in the twentieth century. This source-critical argument brings into question the unity of the book of Jeremiah.

Sigmund Mowinckel's analysis (1914) of the sources of the book of Jeremiah is more thorough than Duhm's. He identifies the three types of literary material in Jeremiah and designates them as sources A, B, and C.<sup>4</sup> Source A consists of poetic

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<sup>2</sup> Some in Old Testament studies use the term "literary criticism" for what is otherwise called "source criticism" by others. In this study, we mean "literary criticism" for "modern literary criticism" utilizing the modern literary theory. In addition, we will use "rhetorical criticism" and "rhetorical analysis" interchangeably.

<sup>3</sup> Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jeremia* (KAT XI; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1901), xvi. Duhm attributes the poetic oracles, approximately 280 verses in the Masoretic text, to the prophet Jeremiah, and approximately 220 verses to Baruch's biography which is to be found in chapters 26-29 and 32-45. The other 850 verses are, according to Duhm, supplements expanded later by redactors of Jeremiah's poetry and Baruch's biography. This supplementary material was written in a sermonic prose style with the characteristics of stereotypical vocabularies and phrases.

<sup>4</sup> Sigmund Mowinckel, *Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia* (Kristiania [= Oslo]: Jacob Dybwad, 1914). In his later book (*Prophecy and Tradition: The Prophetic Books in the Light of the Study of the Growth and History of the Tradition*

oracles in chapters 1-25, which are generally regarded as authentic writings of the prophet Jeremiah. It includes a large block of poetic oracles and even some prose materials.<sup>5</sup> Source B is made up of a block of prose about the activities of the prophet and historical events of his time. Source C comprises mostly speeches that do not belong to sources A or B.<sup>6</sup> Mowinckel identifies prose sermons as source C material that shows strong affinities in style and content with Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic books.<sup>7</sup> Mowinckel designates chapters 30-31 as salvation material (Source D).<sup>8</sup> Mowinckel's work became influential in Jeremiah studies in the ensuing decades.<sup>9</sup> Following the directions of Duham and Mowinckel, modern Jeremiah scholarship has been preoccupied, to varying extents, with a source critical approach. Scholars tend to identify three literary sources and designate them to each stratum of A, B, C.

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[Avhandling utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps- Akademi i Oslo II, Hist.-Filos. Klasse 1946, no. 3; Oslo: Jacob Dybwad, 1946]), however, Mowinckel advocates tradition analysis over source criticism as a proper approach to the study of the book of Jeremiah. The development of the prophetic sayings, according to Mowinckel, is preferably understood in tradition history as "tradition complexes" instead of "sources."

<sup>5</sup> 1:11, 13-16; 14:11-16; 16:1-13; 17:1-4; 24:1-10.

<sup>6</sup> Source C includes 7:1-8:3; 11:1-5, 9-14; 18:1-12; 21:1-10; 25:1-11a; 32:1-2, 6-16, 24-44; 34:1-7, 8-22; 35:1-19; 44:1-14. The introductory formula, "The word which came to Jeremiah" and its variations are used in these passages in order to introduce divine words. Into source C, Mowinckel also includes 3:6-13; 22:1-5; 27:1-22; 29:1-23; 39:15-18 and 45:1-5.

<sup>7</sup> Mowinckel, *Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia*, 33-38.

<sup>8</sup> Mowinckel, *Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia*, 45-48.

<sup>9</sup> Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 39: "The work of Sigmund Mowinckel perhaps has been more influential in shaping Jeremiah studies because his analyses of the book (1914; 1946) have dictated the basic approach of many subsequent writers."

Paul Volz (1922) suggests that the book of Jeremiah includes many later additions to the prophet Jeremiah's original text dictated to Baruch and to Baruch's own independent work.<sup>10</sup> Those later additions were made for the purpose of reading and preaching at synagogue services.

Wilhelm Rudolph (1947) basically follows Mowinckel's source-critical approach to Jeremiah study.<sup>11</sup> However, Rudolph's attribution of literary materials to each source is different from Mowinckel's. Rudolph's sources A and B are more inclusive than Mowinckel's. Rudolph assigns to sources A and B, respectively, some passages which were assigned by Mowinckel to source C. Rudolph considers as authentic prophetic sayings of Jeremiah some passages with the messenger formula (כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה) which Mowinckel assigned to source C. Rudolph recognizes that a formal prophetic introduction or detailed description of the situation is lacking in these passages, and includes them in source A.<sup>12</sup> On thematic grounds, in the same way as Mowinckel, Rudolph thinks Jer 21:1-10 and 22:1-5 are Deuteronomistic and he assigns them to source C. Rudolph, unlike Mowinckel, recognizes in the background of the C material the presence of authentic sayings and themes of the prophet Jeremiah. Rudolph, however, is in agreement with Mowinckel that

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<sup>10</sup> Paul Volz, *Der Prophet Jeremia* (KAT 10; Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung D. Werner Scholl, 1922 [2nd ed.; 1928]).

<sup>11</sup> Wilhelm Rudolph, *Jeremia* (HAT I 12; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1947).

<sup>12</sup> For Rudolph, the number of source C passages is much smaller than that suggested by Mowinckel (Rudolph, *Jeremia*, xv-xvii). Rudolph includes in source C only the following passages: 7:1-8:3; 11:1-14; 16:1-13; 17:19-27; 21:1-10; 22:1-5; 25:1-14; 34: 8-22; 35:1ff. Cf. Mowinckel, *Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia*, 31. Source C, according to Mowinckel, includes 3:6-13; 7:1-8:3; 11:1-5, 9-14; 18:1-12; 21:1-10; 22:1-5; 25:1-11a; 27: 1-22; 29:1-23; 32:1-2, 6-16, 24-44; 34:1-7, 8-22; 35:1-19; 39:15-18; 44:1-14 and 45:1-5.

Deuteronomistic interpretation of the C materials to the present form brought changes in meaning from that which was originally intended by the prophet.<sup>13</sup> This is a significant move towards redaction criticism. There is, however, no general consensus among source-critics.

### 1.2.2 Deuteronomistic Redaction-Critical Approaches

Both Mowinckel and Rudolph acknowledge Deuteronomistic influence on the book of Jeremiah, but they restrict this influence to a limited number of passages in the source C material. However, J. P. Hyatt (1951, 1956) suggests that the scope of Deuteronomistic influence on the book of Jeremiah is much greater than that previously recognized by Mowinckel and Rudolph.<sup>14</sup> Hyatt develops a theory of Deuteronomistic edition of the whole of the book of Jeremiah, while Rudolph ascribed only source C to the work of Deuteronomistic editor(s). Hyatt contends that the book of Jeremiah is “not the product of one person, or of a small group of persons. It is the product of growth of a very long period of time, to which many contributed.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Rudolph, *Jeremia*, xvi.

<sup>14</sup> J. P. Hyatt, “The Deuteronomic Edition of Jeremiah,” in *A Prophet to the Nations: Essays in Jeremiah Studies* (Leo G. Perdue and Brian W. Kovacs, eds.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1984): 247-267. Originally published in *Vanderbilt Studies in the Humanities I* (R. C. Beatty, J. P. Hyatt and M. K. Spears, eds.; Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1951): 71-95; \_\_\_\_\_, “The Book of Jeremiah: Introduction and Exegesis,” in *The Interpreter’s Bible V* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956): 775-1142 [787-790].

<sup>15</sup> Hyatt, “The Book of Jeremiah,” 787.

According to Hyatt, the Deuteronomist incorporated existing collections of material unchanged, sometimes revised them to fit a new context and at other times added materials composed by himself.<sup>16</sup> Thus, Hyatt argues for the possibility that authentic material from the prophet Jeremiah is included in the prose material. Hyatt guides Jeremiah studies towards the Deuteronomistic redaction of the book. Hyatt suggests that the source material for Deuteronomistic editing includes collections of genuine oracles of the prophet Jeremiah and the Baruch materials, although it is impossible to reconstruct those source materials with complete confidence. The Deuteronomist used the central ideas of Deuteronomic theology as a guiding principle for editing.

Enno Janssen (1956) follows the view that there has been Deuteronomistic edition of the book of Jeremiah.<sup>17</sup> Janssen believes that prose sermons in the book of Jeremiah have their origin in a living preaching activity in the pre-exilic period. During the exilic period, Janssen argues, Deuteronomistic preachers took up the prophet's oracles and sayings and utilized them in their synagogue preaching in Palestine. Based on the stylistic and theological features of the prose sermons in the book of Jeremiah, Janssen argues that there is form-critical evidence, which is found also in some speeches of the Deuteronomistic literature.<sup>18</sup> Janssen believes that the

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<sup>16</sup> Hyatt, "The Book of Jeremiah," 789: "D sometimes preserves genuine prophecies of Jeremiah in the prophet's words; sometimes he gives the gist of Jeremiah's prophecies in his own words; and sometimes he composes freely and departs from Jeremiah's thoughts."

<sup>17</sup> Enno Janssen, *Juda in der Exilszeit: Ein Beitrag zur Frage der Entstehung des Judentums* (FRLANT NF 51; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1956).

<sup>18</sup> Janssen, *Juda in der Exilszeit*, 105-108. Janssen acknowledges the existence of form-critical criteria marking the prose sermons in the book of Jeremiah: 7:1-13f.,

Deuteronomists are mostly responsible for the prose sermons in the present form of the book of Jeremiah.

Hyatt's view of the Deuteronomistic edition of the book of Jeremiah is followed by Siegfried Herrmann (1965, 1986, 1990).<sup>19</sup> Herrmann also argues that the Deuteronomic or Deuteronomistic theology provided the framework for the editing of the book of Jeremiah.

Following the tradition of the source-critical approach of Duhm and Mowinckel, Ernest W. Nicholson (1970, 1973, 1975) distinguishes three types of literary material in the book of Jeremiah.<sup>20</sup> The poetic oracles are mostly from the prophet Jeremiah. But Nicholson thinks that the Deuteronomistic authors are primarily responsible for the composition of historical narratives, prose sayings and sermons in the book of Jeremiah.<sup>21</sup> Thus Nicholson's interpretation of the book of

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16ff.; 11:1-11, 17; 16:1-13ff.; 17:19-27; 18:1-12 (13-17); 21:1-10; 22:1-9a; 25:1-14; 34:8-22; 35:1-17ff. Those sermons are comprised of the following elements: Introduction; Yahweh's Commandments; Description of the Disobedience; Judgment and Threats.

<sup>19</sup> Siegfried Herrmann, *Die prophetischen Heilserwartungen im Ursprung und Gestaltwandel* (BWANT 85; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1965): 159-241; \_\_\_\_\_, *Jeremia* (BKAT 12, vol. 1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1986); \_\_\_\_\_, *Jeremia* (BKAT 12, vol. 2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990).

<sup>20</sup> Ernest W. Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles: A Study of the Prose Tradition in the Book of Jeremiah* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970); \_\_\_\_\_, *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah: Chapters 1-25* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); \_\_\_\_\_, *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah: Chapters 26-52* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

<sup>21</sup> Nicholson, *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah: Chapters 1-25*, 11: "... it is probable that the narratives in the book derive from the same Deuteronomic group from which the prose sayings and 'sermons' derive. Certainly in style and language they are very similar to the sort of narratives we find in the Deuteronomic literature,

Jeremiah is founded on source-critical and redaction-critical methods. The book of Jeremiah is a collection of sermons to the exiles composed by the Deuteronomistic authors who preached to the exiles in Babylon during the exilic period.

The theory of Deuteronomistic editing for the book of Jeremiah is further developed by Winfried Thiel (1973, 1981).<sup>22</sup> Jeremiah 1-45 is said to have gone through Deuteronomistic redaction during the exilic period. Thiel considers the main concerns of the Deuteronomistic edition as “shaping of the present and expectation for the future.”<sup>23</sup> First, the Deuteronomistic edition attempted to explain the present situation. The Deuteronomistic circle during the exilic period felt the need to interpret the meaning of the disaster of Judah and Jerusalem in 587/586 BC. Second, the redactor affirmed that future hope lies with the promise of salvation, which testifies to his confidence that the history of God with the Israelites was not finished but was rather being raised to a new and better foundation.

As we have seen above, during the first half of the twentieth century the source-critical approach was the dominant hermeneutical tool in the study of the book of Jeremiah (Duhm, 1901; Mowinckel, 1914; Volz, 1922; Rudolph, 1947). Replacing the source critical approach, Jeremiah studies in the second half of the twentieth century have used the Deuteronomistic redaction-critical approach (Hyatt,

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especially, say, in the books of Kings ... all the more likely that both the narratives and the sermons come from the same authors.”

<sup>22</sup> Winfried Thiel, *Die deuteronomische Redaktion von Jeremia 1-25* (WMANT 41; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973); \_\_\_\_\_, *Die deuteronomische Redaktion von Jeremia 26-52* (WMANT 52; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981).

<sup>23</sup> Thiel, *Jeremia 26-52*, 107-112 (107).



expressions of its own; it is by no means glibly to be classified as 'Deuteronomistic.' It is, moreover, not a late style, but a characteristic rhetorical prose of the seventh/sixth centuries."<sup>26</sup> Out of the 33 expressions that occur both in the prose of the book of Jeremiah and in the Deuteronomic literature, 29 (of which 11 do not occur in the Deuteronomic literature) expressions or their variants also are found in the poetic section of the book of Jeremiah. Bright claims that "the impression of a definite kinship between the prose sermons and the genuine Jeremiah is inescapable."<sup>27</sup> Thus Bright argues against the source-critical and Deuteronomistic redactional approaches.<sup>28</sup>

Helga Weippert (1973) identifies *Kunstprosa* ("formal" or "artistic" prose) in the prose of the book of Jeremiah.<sup>29</sup> Weippert catalogues some of the characteristics of *Kunstprosa* in the book of Jeremiah. *Kunstprosa* is characterized by the irregular parallelism of thought, word-groups of two to four members, word pairs, irregular or nonmetrical line versification and paranaetic style. Weippert argues that the prose sermons originated in poetry. Weippert contends that one can expect two stages of Jeremianic proclamation, firstly metrical sayings, then in an intermediate stage with a strengthened tendency to mixed meter and to the adoption of pure prosaic passages in

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<sup>26</sup> Bright, *Jeremiah*, lxxi.

<sup>27</sup> Bright, "The Date of the Prose Sermons of Jeremiah," 204.

<sup>28</sup> Bright, "The Date of the Prose Sermons of Jeremiah," 195: "In style and form, the prose sermons are one. Any attempt to separate 'genuine' Jeremianic words from 'non-genuine' accretions within this material will run head on into this stubborn fact. To search, therefore, here for *ipsissima verba* in the traditional manner is to plunge into a subjective discussion of what, in one's opinion, Jeremiah could or could not say."

<sup>29</sup> Helga Weippert, *Die Prosareden des Jeremiabuches* (BZAW 132; Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1973).

1951). Thiel's works (1973, 1981), then, mark the end stage of the Deuteronomistic redaction-critical approach to the study of Jeremiah. A wide scholarly consensus on the formation of the book of Jeremiah in the present form was established by that time, although the extent and nature of Deuteronomistic contribution was still under dispute. The book of Jeremiah is understood largely as a product of Deuteronomistic redaction during the exilic period.

### 1.2.3 Traditional Approaches

In opposition to the view of the Deuteronomistic edition of the prose sermons in the book, John Bright (1951, 1965) argues for a close connection between the prose sermons and the prophet Jeremiah.<sup>24</sup> Bright compares the prose sermons in the book of Jeremiah with the Deuteronomic literature (Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic history). There are many differences between the prose in the book of Jeremiah and the Deuteronomic literature, although there are similarities or even dependence both in style and ideas. Bright disputes the claim that the book of Jeremiah is to be spoken of as a Deuteronomic book. Thus Bright argues that it is risky to speak of the dependence of the Jeremiah prose on Deuteronomic literature.<sup>25</sup> "The style of these discourses, though indeed closely akin to that of the Deuteronomic literature, is a style in its own right with peculiarities and distinctive

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<sup>24</sup> John Bright, "The Date of the Prose Sermons of Jeremiah," in *A Prophet to the Nations: Essays in Jeremiah Studies* (Leo G. Perdue and Brian W. Kovacs, eds.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1984): 193-212. Originally published in *JBL* 70 (1951): 15-35; \_\_\_\_\_, *Jeremiah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 21; New York: Doubleday, 1965).

<sup>25</sup> Bright, "The Date of the Prose Sermons of Jeremiah," 203.

metrical contexts, and finally in the second stage the pure speech in the *Kunstprosa*.<sup>30</sup> Weippert suggests that the commonly known Deuteronomistic passages are closer to the authentic Jeremianic materials. These passages are employed and given possible new meanings in a fresh context in the book of Jeremiah. Weippert raises a question about the source-critical approach's different literary sources as suggested by Mowinckel and Rudolph. Weippert stands also against the view of the Deuteronomistic redaction of the book of Jeremiah advocated by Hyatt and Thiel. She argues that the prose sermons are not the product of Deuteronomistic redactors.<sup>31</sup>

Since Duhm source critics have categorized the book of Jeremiah into three categories: poetic oracles; biographical prose; sermonic prose discourse. James L. Kugel (1981) contends against the categorization of prophetic materials into "poetry" and "prose."<sup>32</sup> It is difficult to differentiate what is called biblical "poetry" and biblical "prose," in the prophetic books, especially with the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. It is difficult to distinguish typographically between "prose" and "poetry" in the sermonic prose discourses of the book of Jeremiah. Thus Kugel raises a question about source-criticism's categorization of the book of Jeremiah into three categories. Kugel examines parallelism in biblical poetry. Parallelism is a style which establishes a feeling of syntactical, morphological, and semantical correspondence between two clauses. Biblical parallelism is a stylistic feature characteristic of the "poetry" of the Bible. Some narrative passages, however, also show biblical

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<sup>30</sup> Weippert, *Die Prosareden des Jeremiabuches*, 81.

<sup>31</sup> Weippert, *Die Prosareden des Jeremiabuches*, 234.

<sup>32</sup> James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry. Parallelism and Its History* (New Heaven and London: Yale University Press, 1981).

parallelism.<sup>33</sup> Parallelism appears both in “poetic” parts and in narratives, laws, and also in genealogies, throughout the Bible.<sup>34</sup> Kugel argues that biblical style cannot readily be categorized into two polarized extremes of “poetry” and “prose.”<sup>35</sup>

Concerning the relationship between prose sermons and poetry in the book of Jeremiah, William L. Holladay (1986, 1989) contends that the existence of form-critical contrasts between the poetic oracles and the prose sermons in the book of Jeremiah does not imply the existence of different literary sources as claimed by the source-critics.<sup>36</sup> Vocabularies distinctive to Jeremiah are found across the different “sources,” both in the prose sermons and in the poetic oracles. Characteristics of

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<sup>33</sup> Comparing Exod 2:1-7 and Psalm 106:29-34, Kugel contends that structurally these two passages are identical. The former is known to be a narrative, while the latter appears in a traditionally known “poetic” book. It is difficult to distinguish on the basis of any objective criteria between the structural organization of these two passages (*The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 59-61). Poetry is also characterized by structural regularity such as strictly parallelistic lines. Kugel contends that prose passages (e.g. Num 5:12-15) also can exhibit a “poetic” regularity, or “lines”. There is no warrant to claim that “parallelistic pair” is equal to “poetic line” (*The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 64-66). Comparing Psalms 122 and 132:1-10, Kugel points out the structural difference between them, while both would be classified as “poetic.” Thus parallelistic characteristics and regularity are hardly essential features for biblical poetry (*The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 66-68). Those features are rather a manifestation of general features of Hebrew speech.

<sup>34</sup> Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 2-3.

<sup>35</sup> Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 69: “There is no word for ‘poetry’ in biblical Hebrew. There are a great number of genre classifications in the Bible – words for different types of psalms, hymns, songs and choral arrangements; proverbs, sayings, wordplays; curses, blessings, prayers; histories, tales, genealogies; laws, cultic procedures; speeches, exhortations of moral intent; oracles, predictions, orations of consolation or rebuke – but nowhere is any word used to group individual genres into larger blocs corresponding to ‘poetry’ or ‘prose’.”

<sup>36</sup> William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1-25 (Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986)*; \_\_\_\_\_, *Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 26-52 (Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989)*.

Jeremiah – what Holladay calls the “authentic voice” of Jeremiah – also are found in the prose sermons beyond the poetic oracles of Jeremiah. Holladay argues that the sermonic prose may preserve Jeremiah’s “voice” and that it is not to be taken as a literary source. Holladay disagrees with both the source-critical and Deuteronomistic redaction of the book of Jeremiah. He questions the source-critical assumption that there are different literary sources for the prophetic oracles and prose sermons in the book of Jeremiah, although he acknowledges the existence of obvious form-critical contrasts between them. Those contrasts are not striking enough to warrant ascribing them to different sources. Thus Holladay contends that the poetic oracles and prosaic sermons should not be taken as different literary sources.<sup>37</sup>

#### 1.2.4 Approaches of Editorial Complexity in Later Expansions

Leading up to the 1980s, we observe the prevailing disagreement among Jeremiah scholars on various issues concerning the literary history of the composition of the book of Jeremiah and consequent interpretation of the book. Thus

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<sup>37</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 15. He presents his argument on the basis of the widespread occurrence of vocabularies distinctive to the prophet Jeremiah across the “sources” in the book of Jeremiah. The usage of שׁוּב “(re)turn” (e.g. Jer 23:14, 22) and שֶׁקֶר “falsehood” (the false prophet in Jer 23:9-32), for example, is overwhelmingly distinctive of Jeremiah and they are found both in the poetic oracles and prosaic sermons. שׁוּב “(re)turn” occurs 28 times in Jeremiah’s prophetic oracles and 11 times in prose sermons; שֶׁקֶר “falsehood” is the theme of the passages about false prophets in Jer 6:13-15; 23:9-32; chapters 27-29. In addition to the evidence of distinctively Jeremianic vocabulary, the “authentic voice” of the prophet Jeremiah is observed across all the presumed “sources” in the book of Jeremiah: words with multiple meanings; conventional views reversed; characteristics including surprise, freshness, imagination, contrast, irony and ambiguity. The prose sermons contain the “voice” of the prophet Jeremiah.

various hypotheses have been suggested regarding the formation of the book in the present form. The 1980s saw the publication of major commentaries on Jeremiah by Holladay (vol. 1, 1986; vol. 2, 1989), Carroll (1986) and McKane (vol. 1, 1986). While the exact extent of authentic Jeremiah material is still disputed, different approaches to the prose material in the book of Jeremiah are suggested by McKane and Carroll.

William McKane (1981, 1986, 1996) proposes a theory, which he calls “a rolling *corpus*,” to explain how the book of Jeremiah reached its present form.<sup>38</sup> The book of Jeremiah expanded through commentary on or exegesis of texts which were attached to the pre-existing elements of the corpus. Thus the book of Jeremiah is understood as a commentary or commentaries built on pre-existing elements of the Jeremianic corpus.<sup>39</sup> The “rolling corpus” was still rolling in the post-exilic period. The present book of Jeremiah is the final product of multi-layers of editing. There is no governing design in assembling or editing the previously existing collections of

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<sup>38</sup> William McKane, “Relations between Poetry and Prose in the Book of Jeremiah with Special Reference to Jeremiah III 6-11 and XII 14-17,” in *Congress Volume: Vienna 1980* (J. A. Emerton, ed.; VTSup 32; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981): 220-237; \_\_\_\_\_, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah. Vol. I. Commentary on Jeremiah 1-25* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986); \_\_\_\_\_, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah. Vol. II. Commentary on Jeremiah 26-52* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1996).

<sup>39</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, lxxxiii: “What is meant by a rolling corpus is that small pieces of pre-existing text trigger exegesis or commentary. MT is to be understood as a commentary or commentaries built on pre-existing elements of the Jeremianic *corpus*. Where the argument is that poetry generates prose there is an assumption that the poetry which has generated prose comment is attributable, for the most part, to the prophet Jeremiah. Where the thesis is that prose generates prose, the kernel may not be regarded as giving access to the period of the prophet Jeremiah and preserving the sense of words which he spoke. In general, the theory is bound up with the persuasion that the rolling *corpus* ‘rolled’ over a long period of time and was still rolling in the post-exilic period.”

Jeremianic materials. Thus McKane disagrees with the interpretation of the book suggested by Weippert or Holladay. He also rejects the type of Deuteronomistic redaction suggested by Thiel. He doubts the existence in the text of any systematic principle which led the Deuteronomistic editor to put together the small units and the larger complexes.<sup>40</sup>

Robert Carroll (1986) disagrees with the idea of Deuteronomistic editing of the book of Jeremiah as advocated by Hyatt, Herrmann, and Thiel. The Deuteronomistic influence on the production of the book of Jeremiah has been exaggerated. Carroll claims the existence in the book of Jeremiah of allegedly post-Deuteronomistic material, which may have been influenced by Deuteronomistic ideas but not necessarily produced by the Deuteronomistic circle.<sup>41</sup> Carroll also doubts the analyses of Bright, Weippert and Holladay. He is rather inclined to McKane's interpretation which denies the presence of any organizing principle in the production of the book of Jeremiah. Carroll contends that "[t]he book of Jeremiah is at times a sprawling, untidy and exasperating collection of discrete and disparate units whose order and meaning baffle the exegete."<sup>42</sup> Carroll goes further even to question the generally accepted scholarly view that attributes to the prophet Jeremiah the poetic materials in chapters 1-25. The poetry in the book of Jeremiah, according to Carroll, was attributed to the prophet Jeremiah by the redactional framework. The

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<sup>40</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, xlix-1. McKane argues that "there is no comprehensive framework of literary arrangement or theological system within which the parts of [Jeremiah] 1-25 are fitted together, and that the prose does not supply such a scaffolding. There is more of accident, arbitrariness and fortuitous twists and turns than has been generally allowed for."

<sup>41</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 42.

<sup>42</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 46.

poetry in the book of Jeremiah, without identification by redaction, lacks any typical characteristics which can be associated with the prophet Jeremiah.<sup>43</sup>

Carroll acknowledges the Deuteronomistic contribution to the formation of the book. However, he points out that the extent of the Deuteronomistic influence is not agreed among scholars. The Deuteronomistic redaction may represent only one level of tradition among the multi-layered traditions demonstrated in the book of Jeremiah. The book of Jeremiah is a product of a long process of editing and accumulation.<sup>44</sup> Carroll suggests interpreting the texts from the perspective of their socio-religious setting. The book of Jeremiah is said to be a product of multiple redaction.<sup>45</sup> The different collections of material in the book reflect distinctive interests which may be identified with various social circles active in the exilic and post-exilic periods.<sup>46</sup> Biblical texts are untidy masses of disparate material. Thus Carroll rejects an attempt to interpret biblical texts as a coherent and consistent unit.

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<sup>43</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 47-48. Carroll contends that “we have no *reason* to believe the poems of 1-25 to be other than anonymous utterances from a variety of sources. The editors of the book have put them into the mouth of Jeremiah and we read them as his utterances. But the status of Jeremiah as a poet is no more secure than his status as the author of the prose traditions now constituting the rest of the book associated with his name. Thus the ‘historical’ Jeremiah disappears behind the activities of redactional circles and levels of tradition which have *created* the words and story of Jeremiah ben Hilkiyah of Anathoth!”

<sup>44</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 65-66.

<sup>45</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 70: “Each cycle or set of texts reveals certain religio-political factors at work and a diversity of influences shaping the editing of the book. No consistent, coherent pattern can be established which would unite all these diverse elements into one large body of work reflecting a unity of editing and background. They must be seen as the product of different groups within the Judean territory struggling for power and position over a long period after the fall of Jerusalem.”

<sup>46</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 81. Carroll argues that “[s]o many different interests are reflected in the many levels of tradition contained in the book of Jeremiah that only a multiple-explanations approach can deal with them adequately.”



Louis Stulman (1986) investigates distinctive phrases in the prose sermons in the book of Jeremiah.<sup>47</sup> The prose sermons are located throughout the book of Jeremiah, among poetic oracles in 1-25 and with biographical narratives in 26-45. Stulman studies the repeated phrases in the prose sermons in the book of Jeremiah in relation to those in the Deuteronomistic literature. The prose sermons are said to be closely related to the Deuteronomistic literature.

### 1.2.5 Text-Centered Approaches

Brevard S. Childs (1978, 1979, 1985, 1993)<sup>48</sup> contends that historical criticism's overriding concern with the relationship between the poetic and prose traditions in the book of Jeremiah has brought the present hermeneutical impasse in Jeremiah studies. Childs acknowledges both arguments for the Deuteronomistic editing of the book<sup>49</sup> and agrees that there is a close relationship between the prose

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<sup>47</sup> Louis Stulman, *The Prose Sermons of the Book of Jeremiah: A Redescription of the Correspondences with the Deuteronomistic Literature in the Light of Recent Text-critical Research* (SBLDS 83; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986).

<sup>48</sup> Brevard S. Childs, "The Canonical Shape of the Prophetic Literature," *Interpretation* 32 (1978): 46-55; \_\_\_\_\_, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979); \_\_\_\_\_, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); \_\_\_\_\_, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

<sup>49</sup> Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 344: "Those scholars who stress the sharp differences between the poetic and prose levels have correctly seen that a significant redactional process has been at work. The prose tradition now bears a shape which is so strikingly different from the poetry of the prophet and so remarkably similar to the prose of the Deuteronomist that the arguments for seeing the influence of a different hand at work in the prose far outweigh in probability all other explanations- whether literary, historical, or psychological- which would seek to derive all the various levels from the historical Jeremiah."

and the original Jeremiah materials.<sup>50</sup> Regarding the historical issues on the composition of the book of Jeremiah, Childs contends that the disputes on these issues are unlikely to reach a clear-cut historical resolution in the foreseeable future. He suggests that theological interpretation of the book occupy a higher priority than literary historical questions.<sup>51</sup> Childs proposes to shift our attention from the literary history of the text to the text itself in the present form. Childs's canonical approach stresses the literary and theological intention in shaping the final form of the Old Testament.<sup>52</sup> The canonical process involves the collecting, selecting, and ordering of the biblical traditions in such a way that the final form of the biblical text functions as the normative expression of God's will for all future generations of the community of faith.<sup>53</sup> The canonical approach is more concerned with the final form of the biblical text in terms of its relation to the community than with the reconstruction of the most original literary form of the text.

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<sup>50</sup> Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 344: "Elements of genuine literary and historical continuity cannot be denied. Efforts to establish a significant temporal distance between the life of Jeremiah and the prose redaction in order to account for the transformation within the tradition have broken down ... [T]he prose level must have developed shortly after the death of Jeremiah."

<sup>51</sup> Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 345.

<sup>52</sup> Childs prefers the term "canonical approach" to the term "canonical criticism" because "canonical criticism" implies that "the canonical approach is considered another historical critical technique which can take its place alongside of source criticism, form criticism, rhetorical criticism, and similar methods" (Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 82).

<sup>53</sup> Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 73: "Canonical analysis focuses its attention on the final form of the text itself. It seeks neither to use the text merely as a source for other information obtained by means of an oblique reading, nor to reconstruct a history of religious development. Rather, it treats the literature in its own integrity. Its concern is not to establish a history of Hebrew literature in general, but to study the features of this peculiar set of religious texts in relation to their usage within the historical community of ancient Israel."

Walter Brueggemann (1988, 1991, 1997) also acknowledges the problems of historical-critical approaches.<sup>54</sup> Brueggemann claims that “a historical mode of scholarship is at least problematic and inadequate.”<sup>55</sup> Among the new methodologies attempted during this period, Brueggemann proposes sociological analysis and rhetorical analysis as leading alternatives to the methods of historical criticism.<sup>56</sup> Brueggemann finds that both the new methodologies of sociological and rhetorical analysis challenge historical criticism’s dominance in the interpretation of Old Testament in the twentieth century. Sociological analysis rejects the idea of an objective reading of a text as claimed by the historical critical methods. Sociological analysis seeks to understand every biblical text in terms of vested interests, arrangements of power and issues of ideology in the community. According to historical criticism, the text refers to matters in the historical process behind the text. With rhetorical criticism, however, attention is focused on the intentionality of the text itself.<sup>57</sup> For Brueggemann the main focus of interpretation is not the literary history of the text, but the text itself in a synchronic sense.

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<sup>54</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up, To Tear Down. A Commentary on the Book of Jeremiah 1-25* (ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988); \_\_\_\_\_, *To Build, To Plant. A Commentary on Jeremiah 26-52* (ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991); \_\_\_\_\_, *Theology of the Old Testament. Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997).

<sup>55</sup> Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 49.

<sup>56</sup> Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 49: “It is already conventional to suggest two such methodologies that surely will be influential in the next phase of scholarly work, and that stand in varying degrees of continuity with older scholarship.”

<sup>57</sup> Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 56: “Rhetorical criticism enables the reader to stay close to the text itself and does not assume that something more important, either historical or theological, lies behind it ... [M]uch that is theological lies ‘in front of the text.’”

Brueggemann moves further toward a synchronic analysis of the text.

According to modern literary theory, the literary critic is more concerned with the world presented in the text, thus the intertextual world, than with the external historical world. With modern literary analysis, the interpretation of the book of Jeremiah is no longer excessively preoccupied with the historical-critical issues such as the authorship, date, and provenance of the composition of the book. In order to discover the intention of a text, the interpreter needs “a careful ‘close reading’ of the text in which one pays attention to the use, repetition, and arrangement of words, shifts in voices, deliberate verbal strategies that cause breaks, surprises, contrasts, comparisons, ambiguities, and open-ended wonderment in the text. The interpreter focuses on the action and voice of the text itself and is not led away from the actual work of the text by any external reference or hypothesis.”<sup>58</sup> Brueggemann emphatically stresses the importance of the text itself in the interpretation of a text.

J. G. McConville (1993) stresses the importance of theological themes in the interpretation of the book of Jeremiah.<sup>59</sup> Disagreeing with the theories of editorial complexity suggested by McKane and Carroll, McConville is not convinced by “the platform of all those who think the book has grown somewhat haphazardly and now contains the diverse views of different groups in exilic and postexilic Judah.”<sup>60</sup> With his challenge to the theory that the book of Jeremiah, being a haphazard compilation of disparate materials, contains diverse viewpoints of different groups in the exilic

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<sup>58</sup> Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up, To Tear Down, Jeremiah 1-25*, 15.

<sup>59</sup> J. G. McConville, *Judgment and Promise: An interpretation of the book of Jeremiah* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1993).

<sup>60</sup> McConville, *Judgment and Promise*, 24-26 [24].

and post-exilic periods, McConville attempts to show that the theology of judgment and hope provides a rationale to include so much allegedly disparate material in one corpus.<sup>61</sup>

While admitting the existence of diversity in the literary material in the book of Jeremiah, McConville argues that the supposedly disparate original units are structured with an overarching concept in the present form of the book as a whole according to the overarching purposes of the final redaction. The book of Jeremiah is a product of careful and sophisticated editing, substantially of one mind. McConville is in line with the characterization of the book as a “redaction” in the sense that “individual units, which arose presumably in a variety of original settings, have been brought into the positions which they now occupy in the book in accordance with an overarching concept which has shaped the whole.”<sup>62</sup> Thus, the book of Jeremiah is a redaction of earlier original sayings of the prophet Jeremiah given new meaning in the context of the present form. This illustrates the importance of theological themes in collecting and editing various sayings and records of the prophet’s actions into the present form of the book.<sup>63</sup> McConville suggests a holistic approach to the interpretation of the book of Jeremiah, interpreting it as a whole in its present form

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<sup>61</sup> McConville, *Judgment and Promise*, 24.

<sup>62</sup> McConville, *Judgment and Promise*, 173.

<sup>63</sup> T. M. Raitt, *A Theology of Exile: Judgment/Deliverance in Jeremiah and Ezekiel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977); J. Unterman, *From Repentance to Redemption: Jeremiah’s Thought in Transition* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987). McConville disagrees with T. M. Raitt and J. Untermann who believe that the themes in the book developed along with the ministry of the prophet Jeremiah, thus one theme replacing another in due course.

rather than taking historical critical interpretation's "piecemeal approach" to the text. The parts stand in relationship to the whole book of Jeremiah.<sup>64</sup>

Childs, Brueggemann, and McConville shift the focus from the literary historical issues of the book to the theological interpretation of the book in its present form. Louis Stulman (1998) acknowledges that modern Jeremiah research has experienced a "theoretical impasse" with methodological confusion in the interpretation of the book.<sup>65</sup> Stulman observes that some recent works on Jeremiah studies, towards the end of the twentieth century, have explored a variety of approaches and methods other than historical critical approaches. He contends that current Jeremiah scholarship, departing from the dominant paradigm of historical criticism, is heading toward new alternatives: literary and social analyses.<sup>66</sup> Stulman suggests searching for an alternative to historical criticism in order to break through the present methodological impasse in Jeremiah studies. He proposes a text-centered reading of the book of Jeremiah, sensitive to the book in its final form and at the

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<sup>64</sup> McConville, *Judgment and Promise*, 22-23.

<sup>65</sup> Louis Stulman, *Order amid Chaos. Jeremiah as Symbolic Tapestry* (The Biblical Seminar 57; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

<sup>66</sup> Stulman, *Order amid Chaos*, 16: "These current developments in Jeremiah scholarship reflect in microcosm the milieu of the postmodern moment and the shifting paradigms evident everywhere in biblical studies. It is now apparent that the well-established historical-critical approach to the Bible, which attempts to ascertain original sources and to trace the compositional history as a key to understanding the extant form of the book, is no longer theoretically adequate to address the problems it has helped us to see. This dilemma is nowhere more obvious than in the study of Jeremiah. Historical-critical research on the complex history of the composition of Jeremiah, for example, is not only deadlocked now, but will probably not be resolved given our present state of knowledge. The same could be said about almost every other historical question related to Jeremiah. We must not only concede our near ignorance regarding the growth of the book, but also admit our uncertainty concerning dating, authorship and the person of the prophet. This is in part an epistemological quandary."

same time with insights informed by historical criticism. Thus the text-centered reading of the book of Jeremiah will exemplify “a synchronic reading of Jeremiah that is informed by diachronic sensibilities.”<sup>67</sup> Concerning the prose and poetry materials in the book, Stulman contends that prose materials play a significant role in the text’s present structure and developing theology. The prose materials contribute “the structural and ideological grid to a composition executed with the intent to convey a final theological message.”<sup>68</sup>

The dominant opinion in Jeremiah scholarship views the book of Jeremiah as a haphazard collection of prophetic materials without any, theological or chronological, organizing principle or cohesiveness in the present form of the book. Disagreeing with Bright’s claim that the book of Jeremiah lacks logical progression and McKane’s claim about the book of Jeremiah’s random nature regarding the collection of literary material, Stulman argues that the book of Jeremiah in its present form is logical and has a literary structure designed with a certain purpose imposed by the final redaction. Therefore, “Jeremiah 1-25 is amenable to final form readings and does not reflect a random placement of materials.”<sup>69</sup> Stulman stresses the importance of theological intention in reading the book of Jeremiah in its final form.<sup>70</sup> Stulman contends that the book of Jeremiah is structured, having a coherent literary organization of macro-structural units which make up the architecture of the book in its present form.

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<sup>67</sup> Stulman, *Order amid Chaos*, 16-17.

<sup>68</sup> Stulman, *Order amid Chaos*, 18.

<sup>69</sup> Stulman, *Order amid Chaos*, 32.

<sup>70</sup> Stulman, *Order amid Chaos*, 17.

### 1.3 Summary and Conclusion to Literature Survey on Jeremiah Studies

Twentieth-century Jeremiah scholarship is largely marked by the dominance of historical criticism as a hermeneutical tool for the interpretation of the book of Jeremiah. Most disagreement among Jeremiah scholars has been about the nature and extent of the authorship of the poetry and the prose materials in the book in its present form. The source-critical approach was the dominant scholarly method of the day in Jeremiah studies during the first half of the twentieth century. However, its basic tenet that there are identifiable sources in the book was seriously challenged. Even source-critical scholars (Duhm, Mowinckel, Volz, Rudolph) themselves were not in agreement concerning the precise criteria for identifying the sources in the book and the nature of the process by which they were put into the book. Source-critical criteria are no longer certain. The contention that the book was the product of Deuteronomistic edition including the central ideas of Deuteronomistic theology was proposed by other scholars (Hyatt, Janssen, Herrmann, Nicholson, Thiel). In the middle of the twentieth century Deuteronomistic redaction criticism replaced source criticism as a major hermeneutical tool. The prophet Jeremiah disappears and Deuteronomistic ideology is put to the forefront of the book. The theory of the Deuteronomistic edition of the book became more or less a scholarly consensus by the end of the 1970s. But, the extent and nature of the Deuteronomistic contribution is still under dispute among the Deuteronomistic-redaction critics. There is no general consensus in explaining their differences. Certain historical questions still remain unresolved. Various theories were proposed, with differing evaluations of the nature and degree, of the Deuteronomic or Deuteronomistic influence on the book of



Jeremiah. Both the source-critical and Deuteronomistic redaction-critical approaches were challenged by some scholars (Bright, Weippert, Kugel, Holladay) who disputed historical criticism's basic assumptions of the distinction between poetry and prose. Other scholars (McKane, Carroll) focused more and more on the diversity of the book. They reached the extreme conclusion that the book had gone through many editorial expansions, without any planned theological design, and suggest it is now impossible to recognize Jeremianic or Deuteronomistic materials with any confidence. Thus they denied the possibility that the text was structured intentionally. They challenged the approaches previously taken by most modern Jeremiah studies.

We notice considerable methodological confusion in recent Jeremiah studies. Through our review of Jeremiah studies in the twentieth century, we observe that there are quite different trends in the interpretation of the book of Jeremiah. All the hermeneutical approaches acknowledge the diversity of the book. Historical-critical approaches are mainly concerned with ascertaining original sources and tracing the literary development of the book. Historical criticism's preoccupation with objective, scientific and positivistic assumptions led historical approaches to neglect the theological intention of the text. However, disputes about the major issues in Jeremiah studies remain yet to be resolved. It is generally agreed among Jeremiah scholars that those disputes will not be solved in the foreseeable future. At the same time this may open the door to a new alternative to historical criticism.

Thus some scholars (Childs, Brueggemann, McConville, Stulman) recognize a need for a new methodology in the interpretation of the book of Jeremiah. They

push for a text-centered approach to the book, although they acknowledge some degree of diversity in the book. Childs and Brueggemann stress the importance of the theological intention in the final form of the text. Childs contends that themes of the book are structured by the editorial process of the canonical text. Brueggemann emphatically stresses the importance of the text itself in the interpretation of a text. The interpreter, thus, needs a close reading of the text. He suggests that sociological analysis and rhetorical analysis are methodologies that surely will be influential in the next phase of scholarly work. Both Childs and Brueggemann shift their focus from the literary historical issues to the theological interpretation of the book in its present form. McConville suggests a “holistic approach” to the book in its present form, instead of historical-criticism’s “piecemeal approach” to the text.

Acknowledging a methodological impasse in Jeremiah studies, Stulman advocates a text-centered reading of Jeremiah. Stulman contends that the current Jeremiah scholarship, departing from the dominant paradigm of historical criticism, is heading toward new alternatives: literary and social analyses.

We may need to search for a new approach to the book in order to overcome the hermeneutical impasse brought about by historical criticism. Although Childs, Brueggemann, McConville, and Stulman are coming from different theological backgrounds, they all feel a need for an alternative approach to the historical-critical study of the book of Jeremiah. They are proposing a text-centered holistic approach to the study of the book of Jeremiah with an emphasis on the theological intention of the book. The trend for holistic interpretation has made progress, but more detailed work can be done. There are unresolved issues about the meaning of the text, thus we

need to look at hermeneutical tools. We suggest in this study that rhetorical analysis promises to be a helpful new approach to the book of Jeremiah.

Rhetorical analysis is a text-centered, holistic approach. Unlike historical criticism, it is not hostile to any theological interpretation of the book. What historical critical approaches cannot achieve can be considered using the rhetorical analysis proposed in this study. In this study, we discover through rhetorical analysis the theological intention of the final form of the text. We take rhetorical analysis as the method of interpretation in this study. Rhetorical analysis will try to show the “communicative intention” of Jeremiah 21-24, the passage under consideration in this study.

From our literature survey we recognize the following point for our study. Text-centered and holistic approaches (and even redactional approaches) encourage the reading of blocks of the book as coherent wholes. We can consider the message of any identifiable block, rather than studying the individual units within it as if they were isolated. We will also give equal significance to all parts of the block, so that, for example, we do not give precedence to poetry over prose. Indeed prose passages may well be crucial to understanding the wider context. Finally, we can also look at how the meaning of such a block relates to the meaning of the whole book.

## Chapter 2

### Jeremiah 21-24 in Rhetorical Perspective

In the previous chapter, we presented how modern Jeremiah scholarship has been preoccupied with historical-critical approaches. The establishment of a historical-critical reconstruction of the book of Jeremiah is viewed by historical criticism as the key to interpreting the book, while the literary features and theological intentionality of the text are, to a large extent, overlooked. Historical criticism's dominance as a hermeneutical tool in Jeremiah studies has, however, been challenged in recent years. In the view of many scholars, historical-critical approaches to Jeremiah have been faced with a "methodological impasse," lacking consensus among scholars concerning the major historical-critical issues in Jeremiah studies. The adequacy and appropriateness of historical-critical methods as the *only* method for the interpretation of the book have been disputed. Historical criticism is now considered to be one of many possible hermeneutical tools.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, we address the need for a new hermeneutical tool in order to overcome the methodological impasse brought about by an over-emphasis on historical-critical approaches in twentieth-century Jeremiah studies.

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<sup>1</sup> Stulman, *Order amid Chaos*, 15.

## 2.1 Rhetorical Analysis as a New Hermeneutical Method in Jeremiah Research

We notice that a new trend of Jeremiah scholarship has been departing from the dominant historical-referential and diachronic approaches of historical criticism and moving toward synchronic approaches of modern literary criticism. The diachronic approach of historical criticism is interested in the literary history of the text with its emphasis on historical reference of the text (authorship, provenance and dating of composition of a text). In its pursuit of the interpretation of a text, however, the synchronic approach of modern literary criticism is focused on the final form of a text. The current hermeneutical dilemma is clearly illustrated at both ends of the hermeneutical spectrum. Historical criticism, at one end of the spectrum, as a dominant methodological tool, pursues the discovery of the one true meaning of a text. One weakness of historical criticism lies with the difficulty in achieving objective verification of the historical-critical reconstruction. Even when the historical-critical reconstruction is justified, there still remains the difficulty for modern readers in understanding the text as an ancient Israelite would have understood it. At the other extreme, modern literary criticism's pluralistic reader-response criticism contends that a text has infinite meanings and readers are actively involved with the interpretation of a text by bringing meanings into the text. More modern literary critics, however, acknowledge the need for an investigation of the historical context of the text.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Adele Berlin, "The Role of the Text in the Reading Process," *Semeia* 62 (1993), 144: "(After all, if the context of the reader determines how he or she reads the text, then all contexts in which the text has been read take on significance in how the text has been understood.) Most scholars would admit that earlier contexts and meanings are no less important than current ones, and that the attempt to retrieve the 'original'

There arises a need for an alternative approach, replacing or complementing the historical-critical methods, to explore an avenue other than historical criticism. Moving away from both extremes of the hermeneutical spectrum, we would like to seek the meaning of a text by adopting the synchronic approach to the text with sensitivities to the results from diachronic historical criticism. We would like to pursue the theological and literary understanding of the book of Jeremiah. Historical criticism seeks the meaning of the critically reconstructed text through the importance in the text's history. Rhetorical criticism, however, focuses on the interpretation of the extant text, instead of the hypothetically reconstructed text. We suggest applying rhetorical analysis to the final form of the text with an emphasis on its theological intentionality. As an alternative to a historical-critical reading of the book of Jeremiah, rhetorical analysis is selected as a method of interpretation of the text under consideration in this study.

One may ask how rhetorical analysis is relevant to the study of the prophetic books, the book of Jeremiah in particular. Most Jeremiah scholars acknowledge the diversity of literary material in the book of Jeremiah. When originally independent materials were edited into their present form in their current location by the author (or the final editor), they acquire a new meaning in the present form. The extant book, therefore, acquires a rhetorical impetus in the way that it functions rhetorically in order to persuade its audience. Most prophetic addresses are polemical in their nature. Thus prophecy functions as a persuasive discourse. The author presents the

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meanings, or at least the original context, is valid, despite the dangers of the hermeneutic circle.”

case in such a way as to persuade the reader in favor of his point. Thus prophets try to persuade the reader to change his or her stance to agree with the prophet's point of view on issues under dispute. Rhetorical means of persuasion are used for effective communication between the author and the reader with the medium of the text. In the exegesis of the text, rhetorical critics use rhetoric as the art of literary composition by closely examining the text with interest in content, structure, and style, in order to discover the meaning which the author supposedly intended to deliver in the text.<sup>3</sup>

In the prophetic books, we notice that certain prophetic messages were often rejected by the people, kings, high officials, priests or other prophets. Jeremiah's case is no exception. The prophecy could have been easily dismissed unless the authority of the prophecy was accepted. The prophet or editor could make use of the art of persuasion to convince the audience in his favor. He could build his case based on the audience's knowledge of publicly known facts about the event under consideration. With this knowledge to his advantage, he could adopt rhetorical devices in order to strengthen his persuasive argument. Thus he could bring the audience to agree with his prophecy in agreement with the divine verdict. The same is the case in the dispute with the false prophets. His persuasive rhetorical argument is an essential aspect of what is communicated. Often in the book of Jeremiah, prose narratives were characterized by some scholars to be Deuteronomistic. Due to the lack of independent and extrabiblical evidence regarding those narratives, however, we can only judge the narrative's claim to be true on their "historical, psychological

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<sup>3</sup> Phyllis Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism: Context, Method and the Book of Jonah* (GBS; OTS; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 26-27.

and theological compellingness.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Dale Patrick and Allen Scult, *Rhetoric and Biblical Interpretation* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1990), 64-65.



## 2.2 The Methodological Concern

Rhetorical criticism in Old Testament exegesis was first proposed by James Muilenburg in 1968.<sup>5</sup> Muilenburg did not reject form criticism, but he objected to the generalizing nature of form criticism neglecting distinctive features of the text.<sup>6</sup> He proposed to take an interest in the articulation of the Hebrew literary composition in order to supplement form critical analysis. He was interested in the structural pattern which forms a literary unit, verbal sequences which progress in fixed structures, word formations ordered and arranged in specific ways, and various stylistic devices that make a unified whole. He described this effort as rhetoric and the methodology as rhetorical criticism.<sup>7</sup> Muilenburg's rhetorical criticism can be summed up as the delimitation task of the rhetorical unit and the identification task of the structure of the rhetorical unit.<sup>8</sup> The boundaries of the literary units and the structure of those literary units shall be decided according to the rules and practices of rhetorical analysis. The basic literary units and their structures are recognized by the presence of repeated words, phrases, and sentences in the text. Once literary units are determined, rhetorical critics try to detect the structure, to identify the characters, and to trace the plot in the text. The genre of the unit is recognized by the structure of the

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<sup>5</sup> Rhetorical criticism in the Old Testament exegesis is proposed by James Muilenburg in his Presidential Address to the Society of Biblical Literature in 1968. It was published later as "Form Criticism and Beyond," *JBL* 88 (1969): 1-18.

<sup>6</sup> Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," 5: "[F]orm criticism by its very nature is bound to generalize because it is concerned with what is common to all the representatives of a genre. ... Exclusive attention to the *Gattung* may actually obscure the thought and intention of the writer or speaker."

<sup>7</sup> Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," 8, 18.

<sup>8</sup> Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," 9-10.

unit. Rhetorical critics seek to identify the boundaries of the literary units and their structures by the presence of various rhetorical devices in the text in order to follow the development of the author's thought.

Jack R. Lundbom was the first person to apply rhetorical criticism to the book of Jeremiah in his Ph. D. dissertation (1973).<sup>9</sup> Following Muilenburg's emphasis on rhetoric in the art of literary composition, he stresses the need for further structural analysis of the text. First, rhetorical critics are to delimit the rhetorical units and to delineate the structure of the units. Lundbom suggests the significance of certain literary devices, *inclusio* and chiasm, in determining the literary form of the text.<sup>10</sup> The *inclusio* and the chiasm are tools used within the structure of the book of Jeremiah. The *inclusio* delimits the unit by tying the end together with the beginning. The chiasm, defined as an inverted normal word order, is a structure imposed on the material in the collection process of the book of Jeremiah. The structure plays a significant role in establishing the meaning and the interpretation of the book. By the structure of discourse, the prophet Jeremiah (or the editor) persuades the reader. In this way, the art of composition incorporates the art of persuasion. In his recent commentary (1999) Lundbom delimits the unit to two or three verses most of the

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<sup>9</sup> Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric* (SBLDS 18; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975). Quotations will be from *Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric* (2nd ed.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric*, 28. Lundbom proposes that "two known rhetorical figures, the *inclusio* and the *chiasmus*, are important controlling structures in Jeremiah. They control not only the prophetic speeches, but also larger complexes which make up the *book* of Jeremiah."

time and almost always less than five verses.<sup>11</sup> His method of rhetoric does not depart very much from structural analysis of the text. His literary unit is not the “rhetorical unit” in the sense of classical Rhetoric, but rather a structural unit.

Dale Patrick and Allen Scult (1990) shift the focus from the intention of the author to the audience of the text in such a way that a text establishes a relationship with its audience. Thus in this process, the sense of the text’s history is lost. Patrick and Scult suggest a hermeneutical principle: “Interpret a text as the best text (aesthetically, intellectually and affectively) the text can be.”<sup>12</sup> The rhetorical perspective attempts to locate the normative text which is a determinate communication and must be the norm for assessing the text’s own realization.<sup>13</sup> The rhetorical critic needs to decide what kind of text a text is, before he or she determines what the “best text” is. The identification of the text’s genre is necessary in understanding “the text as the best text it can be” in its particular context. However, the identification of genre must be complemented by the rhetorical interpretation of the text. This process forms “a hermeneutical circle.” Thus rhetorical analysis attempts to establish a relationship between the text and its audience in order to discover the particular effect which the author of the text intended. Patrick and Scult seek to construct a biblical rhetoric of persuasion in addition to stylistic analysis. The genre identification of a particular text serves as a

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<sup>11</sup> Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1999).

<sup>12</sup> Patrick and Scult, *Rhetoric and Biblical Interpretation*, 85. It is an expanded form from philosopher Ronald Dworkin’s dictum: “Interpret the text as the best text it can be” (Ronald Dworkin, *A Matter of Principle* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985], 149).

<sup>13</sup> Patrick and Scult, *Rhetoric and Biblical Interpretation*, 21.

frame for the interpretation, which in turn corrects the genre of the text in an attempt to make the text the best text it can be. Thus determination of “the best text” is “a rhetorical claim about the text’s appeal, and so must be argued rhetorically from the text itself, through its interpretive traditions to the interpreter’s audience.”<sup>14</sup> The rhetorically interpreted meaning of the text must meet the standard of knowledge and perspective embodied in the community’s tradition. The best text must have the power of rhetorical persuasion. Here Patrick and Scult are combining in rhetorical analysis the identification of the literary form of the text and the art of persuasion.

Yehoshua Gitay (1981, 1991, 1993) recognizes the art of composition and the art of persuasion as the key features in classical rhetoric. Style is just one aspect of rhetoric. He emphasizes the art of persuasion.<sup>15</sup> Thus he distinguishes his approach from the Muilenburg school (Muilenburg, Lundbom, Trible): “Muilenburg’s approach is an expression of stylistic-formalist awareness rather than a systematic study of Hebrew rhetoric, the biblical art of persuasion.”<sup>16</sup> Rhetorical criticism seeks to establish “the mutual relationship of the author(s), the text, and the audience.”<sup>17</sup> In his application of rhetoric to Isaiah 1-12, Gitay divided the text into thirteen rhetorical units in order to recognize Isaiah’s persuasive effort towards his

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<sup>14</sup> Patrick and Scult, *Rhetoric and Biblical Interpretation*, 22.

<sup>15</sup> Yehoshua Gitay, *Prophecy and Persuasion: A Study of Isaiah 40-48* (Bonn: Linguistica Biblica, 1981).

<sup>16</sup> Yehoshua Gitay, “Rhetorical Criticism,” in *To Each Its Own Meaning. An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application* (Stephen R. Haynes and Steven L. McKenzie, eds.; Louisville, KY: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1993): 135-152 [136].

<sup>17</sup> Gitay, “Rhetorical Criticism,” 136.

audience.<sup>18</sup> Gitay attempts to identify the rhetorical situation of the unit, the rhetorical arrangement of material within the unit, and various rhetorical devices which Isaiah used in order to appeal to his audience.

Thomas Renz (1999) explores the rhetorical function of the book of Ezekiel as an “act of communication” in a “reconstructed original setting.”<sup>19</sup> He investigates how a text functions within an act of communication by Ezekiel to the future generations of the exile. He distinguishes his approach to rhetorical criticism from the Muilenburg school’s emphasis on text-centered rhetorical criticism. Because Renz is mainly concerned with the effect of the act of communication in the book of Ezekiel on the original audience, he acknowledges historical criticism’s effort to reconstruct the original setting. Thus the historical context of the reconstructed setting of the book of Ezekiel plays an important role in his argument. He designates the original audience of the book of Ezekiel specifically as a late-exilic readership.<sup>20</sup> As the “methodological programme” for his analysis of the whole book of Ezekiel as a rhetorical unit, Renz follows the stages of rhetorical analysis suggested by George A. Kennedy. The contribution of Gitay (1991) and Renz to the rhetorical analysis of

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<sup>18</sup> Yehoshua Gitay, *Isaiah and his Audience: The Structure and Meaning of Isaiah 1-12* (SSN 30; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1991).

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

<sup>20</sup> Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel*, 10: “The book of Ezekiel is very much part of a communicative event with a specific concern for a specific audience.” Renz disagrees with Brevard S. Childs’ assessment concerning the dating and provenance of the book of Ezekiel. Childs suggests that with the book of Ezekiel it is difficult to specify “a definite geographical locality with a concrete group of hearers fixed in time” (“The Exegetical Significance of Canon for the Study of the Old Testament,” in *Congress Volume, Göttingen, 1977* [J. A. Emerton, ed.; VTSup 29; Leiden: Brill, 1978]: 66-80 [73]). See also Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 355-372.

prophetic books is their emphasis on the persuasive aspect in the narrower sense of rhetoric by moving away from the stylistic literary analysis of the text as practiced by the Muilenburg school.

The basic concepts of rhetorical analysis are mostly from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. Rhetoric is defined by Aristotle as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion.<sup>21</sup> Every speaker or author tries to instruct or persuade his hearers about his own particular subject-matter. The seminal work of George A. Kennedy's *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (1984) is well accepted as a methodological guide to rhetorical analysis in biblical studies.<sup>22</sup> Kennedy introduces the classical rhetoric of Aristotle and other ancient theorists to the New Testament studies.<sup>23</sup> Kennedy gives his definition of rhetoric as:

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<sup>21</sup> Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric* (English translation by W. Rhys Roberts; Modern Library College Editions; New York: Random House, 1984), I. 2. 1355b.

<sup>22</sup> George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

<sup>23</sup> Jeremiah and Aristotle are separated by many factors in temporal, spatial, and cultural terms. Most of all, the composition of the book of Jeremiah is at least two centuries prior to the composition of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. How can one justify an attempt to apply a Hellenistic literary or communicative method in order to interpret Hebraic Biblical books? Kennedy explains the relevance of rhetorical criticism, based on the precepts of classical rhetoric (Greek and Latin), to Old Testament studies as: "Though rhetoric is colored by the traditions and conventions of the society in which it is applied, it is also a universal phenomenon which is conditioned by basic workings of the human mind and heart and by the nature of all human society. Aristotle's objective in writing his *Rhetoric* was not to describe Greek rhetoric, but to describe this universal facet of human communication ... What is unique about Greek rhetoric, and what makes it useful for criticism, is the degree to which it was conceptualized. The Greeks gave names to rhetorical techniques, many of which are found all over the world. They organized these techniques into a system which could be taught and learned. What we mean by classical rhetorical theory is this structured system which describes the universal phenomenon of rhetoric in Greek terms ... Though the Jews of the pre-Christian era seem never to have conceptualized rhetoric to any significant degree, the importance of speech among

Rhetoric is that quality in discourse by which a speaker or writer seeks to accomplish his purposes. Choice and arrangement of words are one of techniques employed, but what is known in rhetorical theory as 'invention' – the treatment of the subject matter, the use of evidence, the argumentation, and the control of emotion – is often of greater importance and is central to rhetorical theory as understood by Greeks and Romans. The writers of the books of the New Testament had a message to convey and sought to persuade an audience to believe it or to believe it more profoundly. As such they are rhetorical, and their methods can be studied by the discipline of rhetoric.<sup>24</sup>

He proposes a five-stage method of rhetorical criticism. His proposal, thereafter, has often been quoted as a "method" of rhetorical criticism. His contribution is his attempt to apply the theory of classical rhetoric to Biblical studies.<sup>25</sup>

The mode of persuasion is constructed by means of the principles of classical rhetoric. As Aristotle defined rhetoric as "the available means of persuasion," the emphasis of rhetoric lies on proof. But for Quintilian, rhetoric, defined as the discipline of speaking well, stresses style in addition to proof.<sup>26</sup> Major categories of classical rhetoric include: 1) elements (speaker/author, audience/reader, and speech/text); 2) types (judicial, deliberative, epideictic); 3) purposes (justice,

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them is everywhere evident in the Old Testament ... In understanding how their rhetoric worked we have little choice but to employ the concepts and terms of the Greeks" (Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 10-11).

<sup>24</sup> Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 3.

<sup>25</sup> C. Clifton Black II, "Rhetorical Criticism and Biblical Interpretation," *ExpT* 100/7 (1989), 255: "Kennedy's primary contribution is methodological: the presentation of a distinctive manner of exegesis that is lucid and systematic, far more painstaking than Muilenburg's proposal, and insightfully undergirded by classical erudition."

<sup>26</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 2. 15. 38. Style is not just a decoration in rhetoric, but an essential part of the persuasive method, which the speaker employs to achieve his or her goal.

expediency, adulation); 4) forms of logical argument (inductive, deductive); 5) kinds of proof (external, artistic [ethos, pathos, logos]); 6) modes of persuasion (example, enthymeme); 7) parts (invention, disposition, elocution, memory, delivery).

Classical rhetoric consists of five parts: *invention*, *disposition*, *elocution*, *memory*, and *delivery*. The invention is concerned with discovering and elaborating the argument. It looks for the circumstances that caused this occasion to rise. The main point at issue is determined by the speaker. The speaker determines the starting point of an occasion. Then the speaker explores the available means of persuasion. The arrangement or structure (*disposition*) deals with ordering the argument in a whole from introduction to conclusion: 1) Prologue; 2) Narration; 3) Proposition; 4) Confirmation; 5) Refutation; 6) Digression; 7) Epilogue). The style (*elocution*) deals with the choice of words and with composition, the way in which words are put together to form phrases, clauses, or sentences. Figure, both figures of speech and figures of thought, is a term for any unusual configuration of words or phrases. Memory deals with devices to aid and improve the memory. Delivery deals with oral presentation of the subject. Memory and delivery are mainly related to oral presentation.

There are three types of rhetoric: judicial (forensic), deliberative (political), epideictic (ceremonial). With judicial rhetoric, the speaker is seeking to persuade the audience to make a judgment about events that occurred in the past. The speaker either attacks or defends somebody. With deliberative rhetoric, the speaker is seeking to persuade the audience to take some action in the future. The speaker advises either



for or against future action. With epideictic rhetoric, the speaker is seeking to move the audience to praise individuals, or to make some judgment, in the present.<sup>27</sup> These three types of rhetoric refer to three different kinds of time (past, future, present). Judicial rhetoric is concerned with the past, deliberative rhetoric with the future and epideictic rhetoric with the present.<sup>28</sup> And these two categories (type and time) are also related with three kinds of purpose (justice, expediency, adulation) in rhetoric. For the judicial rhetoric the argument is about truth or injustice in the past event. In deliberative rhetoric, the speaker is concerned with the interests and benefits of the future. The focus of epideictic rhetoric is about changing some point of view toward a certain person or object in the present.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I. 3. 1358a, 1358b: “Rhetoric falls into three divisions, determined by the three classes of listeners to speeches. For of the three elements in speech-making – speaker, subject, and person addressed – it is the last one, the hearer, that determines the speech's end and object. The hearer must be either a judge, with a decision to make about things past or future, or an observer. A member of the assembly decides about future events, a jurymen about past events: while those who merely decide on the orator's skill are observers. From this it follows that there are three divisions of oratory – (1) political, (2) forensic, and (3) the ceremonial oratory of display.”

<sup>28</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I. 3. 1358b: “These three kinds of rhetoric refer to three different kinds of time. The political orator is concerned with the future: it is about things to be done hereafter that he advises, for or against. The party in a case at law is concerned with the past; one man accuses the other, and the other defends himself, with reference to things already done. The ceremonial orator is, properly speaking, concerned with the present, since all men praise or blame in view of the state of things existing at the time, though they often find it useful also to recall the past and to make guesses at the future.”

<sup>29</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I. 3. 1358b: “Rhetoric has three distinct ends in view, one for each of its three kinds. The political orator aims at establishing the expediency or the harmfulness of a proposed course of action... Parties in a law-case aim at establishing the justice or injustice of some action... Those who praise or attack a man aim at proving him worthy of honour or the reverse.”

In our application of classical rhetorical theory to a text, it is a difficult task to categorize the text into one of these three types (judicial, deliberative, epideictic). Kennedy suggests searching for the persuasive genre of the text studied: "In a single discourse there is sometimes utilization of more than one species, and the definition of the species as a whole can become very difficult, but a discourse usually has one dominant species which reflects the author's major purpose in speaking and writing ... Determination of the species sometimes helps to bring out the emphases of a work and the intent of the author."<sup>30</sup> Identifying, however difficult it may be, the rhetorical genre of a text (speech) surely is helpful in establishing the main point at issue and the intention of the author (speaker).

Rhetoric is defined by Aristotle as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion." Means of persuasion include all three elements of rhetoric (speaker/author, audience/reader, and speech/text): speaker's character, hearer's emotion, and truthfulness of the speech itself. The speaker's power of evincing a personal character will make his speech credible (*ethos*). Thus this establishes the speaker's good character and hence credibility. The audience's emotion is the target as the speaker plays on their feelings. Thus the speaker puts the audience in an appropriate mood to evoke their emotional reactions (*pathos*). The logical argument is to be found in the speech itself. The speaker proves a truth, or an apparent truth, by means of persuasive arguments (*logos*).<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 19-20.

<sup>31</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I. 2. 1356a: "Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word there are three kinds. The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; the third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself."

Persuasion is achieved by means of proof. The speaker proves the logical argument either inductively by examples or deductively by enthymemes.<sup>32</sup>

Logical argument is of two forms, either inductive, which uses a series of examples to point to a general conclusion, or deductive, which enunciates premises probably acceptable to an audience and draws a deductive conclusion from the premises. The examples (*paradeigmata*) used in inductive argument are drawn from myth or from nature or other sources ... from Jewish history or from everyday life and nature... listing several examples from which a conclusion can be drawn, but rarely making the conclusion explicit before a general audience. Deductive proof in rhetoric is called the enthymeme. An enthymeme commonly takes the form of a statement and a supporting reason... The word “for” in English, *gar* or *hoti* in Greek, is commonly the indication of an enthymeme. Behind any enthymeme stands a logical syllogism.<sup>33</sup>

The speaker arranges his composition in a structured way to effect his argument most persuasively. Various theorists argue for different numbers of parts within an arrangement. According to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, a speech has two essential parts: proposition and confirmation. To these may be added prologue and epilogue.

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Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible ... Secondly, persuasion may come through the hearers, when the speech stirs their emotions ... Thirdly, persuasion is effected through the speech itself when we have proved a truth or an apparent truth by means of the persuasive arguments suitable to the case in question. There are, then, these three means of effecting persuasion. The man who is to be in command of them must, it is clear, be able (1) to reason logically, (2) to understand human character and goodness in their various forms, and (3) to understand the emotions—that is, to name them and describe them, to know their causes and the way in which they are excited.”

<sup>32</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I. 2. 1356b: “With regard to the persuasion achieved by proof or apparent proof: just as in dialectic there is induction on the one hand and syllogism or apparent syllogism on the other, so it is in rhetoric. The example is an induction, the enthymeme is a syllogism, and the apparent enthymeme is an apparent syllogism. I call the enthymeme a rhetorical syllogism, and the example a rhetorical induction. Every one who effects persuasion through proof does in fact use either enthymemes or examples: there is no other way.”

<sup>33</sup> Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 16.

Thus, a speech has a four-part structure: introduction; stating your argument; proving your argument; summing up your argument.<sup>34</sup> The norm of the arrangement (*dispositio*) of classical rhetoric includes:<sup>35</sup> 1) Prologue – it catches the attention of the audience and seeks to obtain goodwill or sympathy toward the speaker; 2) Narration – it sets forth facts or background information; 3) Proposition – it states the points the speaker wishes to prove; 4) Confirmation – it presents the speaker’s arguments that support his case; 5) Refutation – it refutes opposing arguments; 6) Digression – it incorporates a relevant examination of motivations or attendant circumstances. 7) Epilogue – it summarizes the argument and seeks to arouse the emotions of the audience to take action or make judgment.

From the overview of rhetorical analysis practices and the major precepts of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, we would like to describe here the logic of steps to be used in this study of Jeremiah 21-24. Kennedy proposes a five-stage procedures of rhetorical analysis:<sup>36</sup> 1) Determination of the rhetorical unit to be studied; 2) Definition of the

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<sup>34</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, III. 13. 1414b.

<sup>35</sup> Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 21-22.

<sup>36</sup> Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 33-38. Other modern rhetorical critics also suggest guidelines for rhetorical analysis. M. Greenberg and Adele Berlin deal with literary criticism in general. Phyllis Tribble and Roland Meynet, however, focus on the compositional aspect of rhetorical analysis. They mostly deal with the stylistic features of the text as a persuasive tool in rhetorical analysis. Thus we think Kennedy’s suggestion fits well the purpose of this study. M. Greenberg (1980) suggests a list of questions to be answered by the interpreter in his literary analysis of a text: “Is the unit which is delimited formally (by, say, opening and closing formulas) shown to be a unit through its structure (a recognized pattern?), its content, its figures or its verbal devices? How much interrelation and reference occurs among its parts? How much repetition (if with variations, are they significant?) How much irregularity occurs (in grammar, in length of lines, etc.), and how much regularity? In the event of non-sequentiality, is another ground of collocation evident (e.g., thematic, or verbal association)? Are

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effective elements present besides the plain sense of sentences, such as alliteration, punning, or chiasm? To what do they call attention? How much ambiguity is present? What are its causes and effects? Are elements which seem opaque illuminated by considering their placement (significance through juxtaposition)? To what extent are themes, peculiarities or difficulties recurrent elsewhere? In identical or variant form? If not in the Bible, then outside it? How far is one's perception of the main message of a unit corroborated by later readers (postbiblical literature, medieval commentaries)? If there is a difference, why?" ("The Vision of Jerusalem in Ezekiel 8-11: A Holistic Interpretation," in *The Divine Helmsman* [J. L. Crenshaw and S. Sandmel, eds.; New York: KTAV, 1980]: 143-164 [146]). Phyllis Tribble (1994) presents practical guidelines for rhetorical analysis. Her ten-step procedure is a helpful step-by-step approach (*Rhetorical Criticism*, 101-106): 1) Read carefully the text under consideration with various translations and the Hebrew; while reading, take notes of literary questions and write down ideas that come on your way; 2) Consult various scholarly references on the text; 3) Be equipped with background knowledge of the text; 4) Get familiar with rhetorical terms; 5) Pay attention to the features of the text; 6) Show structure by using the very words of the text in the order they occur; 7) Translate so as to retain not only the Hebrew syntax but also the original number of the words; 8) Devise a series of markers to indicate prominent features of the text; 9) Describe the structural diagrams and interpret them; 10) Correlate your discoveries: Relationship between structural units and plot development; Function of a particular unit in the narrative flow; Function of narrated introduction to direct discourse in character portrayals; Function of inclusio; various forms of repetition and their different meanings; Interrelationship of form-content and meaning. Roland Meynet (1998) views rhetorical analysis as "one of the operations of exegesis" and proposes a way of presenting the results of rhetorical analysis: Writing the text; Describing the text; Interpreting the text (*Rhetorical Analysis: An Introduction to Biblical Rhetoric* [JSOTSup 256; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998]: 309-316): 1) Writing (or 'rewriting') the Text: Visualize the rhetorical disposition of the text at different levels by an appropriate typographical disposition; Place all the words of the text without omission of a single word, in the proper meaning of the expression; 2) Describing the Text: Describe in your own words the "rewritten" text as a justification as well as a guide for explanation; the description should be limited to the formal characteristics of the text. 3) Interpreting the Text: The interpretation is the culmination of rhetorical analysis. Adele Berlin (1993) proposes the following steps to interpretation from analysis. Berlin points out the importance of hermeneutics to bring out meaning of the text ("The Role of the Text in the Reading Process," 144): 1) Find textual features on which to base a reading; It is a feature of the text, regardless of the context of the reader; 2) Select those features which will become important in your interpretation; the selection of textual features will serve as the basis for interpretation; 3) Decide what to do with the features you have selected; How do we make sense of them? How do we move from individual features to a well-formed interpretation of the whole discourse?

Rhetorical situation; 3) Identification of Rhetorical Arrangement of material in the text; 4) Identification of Rhetorical Style; 5) Evaluation of the Rhetorical Effectiveness.

1. **Determination of the Rhetorical Unit:** A rhetorical unit is a unit of text on which rhetorical criticism is used to understand the effect of the text. A rhetorical unit should have within itself a discernible beginning and ending, connected by an argument. The smaller rhetorical units may build up to a larger unit, and the larger units to the overall rhetoric of the book. We should seek signs of opening and closure (*inclusio*), of prologue and epilogue.

2. **Definition of the Rhetorical Situation:** The rhetorical situation is the particular situation which produces the speech. It presents an actual or potential exigency which can be completely or partially removed if the discourse brings about significant modification of the exigency. The critic needs to ask what the audience expects in the situation, and how the speaker or writer manipulates these expectations.

3. **Identification of Rhetorical Arrangement of material in the text:** Rhetorical invention produces the arrangement of the material in the text. The rhetorical critic needs to identify “what subdivisions it falls into, what the persuasive effect of these parts seems to be, and how they work together – or fail to do so – to some unified purpose in meeting the rhetorical situation. In order to do this he will need to engage in line-by-line analysis of the argument, including its assumptions, its topics, and its

formal features, such as Enthymemes, and of the *devices of style*, seeking to define their function in context. This process will reveal how the raw material has been worked out or rhetorically amplified both in context and in style.”<sup>37</sup>

4. Identification of Rhetorical Style: The arrangement of material entails the employment of rhetorical figures and stylistic devices to accomplish the rhetorical purpose.

5. Evaluation of the Rhetorical Effectiveness: It is time to review the entire unit, its success in meeting the rhetorical exigency, its implications for the speaker or audience. Is the detailed analysis consistent with the overall impact of the rhetorical unit? The primary objective of rhetorical criticism is to understand the effect of the text. Effective persuasion will resolve the tension in the rhetorical situation by following the inventional strategy of a given rhetorical unit.

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<sup>37</sup> Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 37.

## 2.3 The Rhetorical Unit: Jeremiah 21-24

### 2.3.1 The Overall Structure of Jeremiah 1-25

There is a need to address the grounds for limiting our current study to the text of Jeremiah 21-24. The first task of rhetorical analysis is the delimitation of the literary unit. The literary unit is determined thematically and structurally. The literary units and their structures are recognized by the presence of repeated themes, words, phrases, and sentences in the text. This is an important point because rhetorical analysis assumes and verifies the presence of an overall structure in the book of Jeremiah, especially in chapters 1-25. We will discuss the overall structure of the book of Jeremiah. Within the overall structure, we will identify theological motifs and their significance in Jeremiah 21-24.

The book of Jeremiah is divided into chapters 1-25 and 26-52 by most commentators who have written a two-volume commentary.<sup>38</sup> Chapter 25 is taken either as the conclusion of chapters 1-24,<sup>39</sup> or as an introduction to chapters 26-52.<sup>40</sup> Although there is a wide variety of views on the problem of the origin and composition of the literary materials in the book of Jeremiah, the general view

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<sup>38</sup> Brueggemann, Craigie *et al*, Holladay, McKane, Nicholson, Thiel, and Weiser. The LXX has a completely different arrangement of material. However, the present study is concerned with the MT.

<sup>39</sup> Bright, Carroll, Holladay, and Nicholson.

<sup>40</sup> Claus Rietzschel, *Das Problem der Urrolle: Ein Beitrag zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Jeremiabuchs* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1966). Rietzschel views chapter 25 as a prose introduction to the collection of oracles against the nation.



adopted by most Jeremiah scholars is that the book of Jeremiah is grouped into four major complexes: chapters 1-24(25); 26-36; 37-45; 46-51(52).<sup>41</sup>

T. R. Hobbs (1972) acknowledges the existence of four “tradition complexes” in the book of Jeremiah in its present form: chapters 1-24; 25 and 46-51; 26-35; 36-45.<sup>42</sup> It is argued that each section has certain homogeneous characteristics, which are distinct from those in the other units. These major units include also smaller units which appear to be grouped either by the occurrence of catchwords or by common themes in the text. It is argued by Hobbs that there is a unity in the present form of the book of Jeremiah. The book of Jeremiah, as it now stands, possesses a clear message, carefully thought out, with a clearly defined theologically oriented structure. Hobbs is of the opinion that such a structure in the present form of the

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<sup>41</sup> The first 25 chapters are commonly viewed as a collection of a number of smaller units of prophetic material in mostly poetic form, announcing judgment on the nation of Judah. The second half of the book is recognized to be comprised of large identifiable blocks of literary material: chapters 26-36 (26: An introduction to 26-45; 27-29: Oracles against the prophets; 30-33: Book of consolation; 34-36: Events under Zedekiah and Jehoiakim); 37-45 (37-44: The last years of Judah; 45: A message to Baruch); 46-51: Oracles against the nations; 52: A historical appendix.

<sup>42</sup> T. R. Hobbs, “Some Remarks on the Composition and Structure of the Book of Jeremiah,” *CBQ* 34 (1972): 257-275 (267-268). Chapters 1-24 are a collection of diverse kinds of material directed almost entirely against Jerusalem, in the form of oracles, sayings and sermons, with a few didactic narratives. Chapters 26-36 are a collection of mostly prose material (with the exception of poetry in chapters 31-32) where the main focus seems to be the various groups in the city of Jerusalem. The collection of chapters 37-45 is a narrative unit, written with the intention of retelling the fulfillment of prophetic word of Jeremiah through the fall of Jerusalem. Chapters 46-51 are mostly poetry. Chapters 46-51 and chapter 25 are a collection of oracles directed at foreign nations with a common ideological intention.

book must be the work of one final editor, who sought to interpret the meaning of the exile for those in exile.<sup>43</sup>

It is argued by Alexander Rofé (1989) that the editor(s) employed both thematic and symmetrical literary principles in the formation of collections in the book of Jeremiah.<sup>44</sup> Rofé agrees with the generally accepted view that the book consists of major collections: chapters 1-24; 25, 46-51; 26-36; 37-45. Rofé is not concerned with source-critical questions about the text. Rather he attempts to discern possible explanations for the grouping of the materials. As Hobbs observed, Rofé also notices the homogeneous thematic character of each major collection. The identification of a collection is confirmed by its inner symmetrical structure. As for chapters 1-24, it is argued that the visions in chapters 1 and 24 form the *inclusio* pattern and the framework of chapters 1-24 which include a collection of visions, prophecies of judgment and Jeremiah's confessions, mostly undated.

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<sup>43</sup> Hobbs, "Some Remarks on the Composition and Structure," 273. Hobbs contends that it is difficult to understand each major unit apart from the others, either in their present form, or in the process of compilation. The units chapters 26-36 and chapters 37-45 presuppose knowledge of at least some of the contents of chapters 1-24. The preaching of the prophet Jeremiah in chapters 1-24 provides the grounds for the reaction of the officials toward the prophet. Without some reference to the words and deeds of the prophet Jeremiah in chapters 1-20, it could be difficult to understand why Jeremiah was abused by the officials.

<sup>44</sup> Alexander Rofé, "The Arrangement of the Book of Jeremiah," ZAW 101 (1989): 391-398. The principles of "broad topical or formal homogeneity" and "the symmetrical inner construction of each collection" complement each other: "the identification of single collections on the basis of their homogeneity is confirmed by their symmetrical design, while the detection of symmetrical elements finds its corollary in the unity of the subject-matter" (391).

R. E. Clements (1993) argues against the source-critical assumption that the book of Jeremiah lacks a clear overall structure in collecting Jeremiah's prophecies in chapters 1-25. Clements suggests that the book of Jeremiah in its present form is "essentially an original book of Jeremiah's prophecies, edited by the Deuteronomistic circle."<sup>45</sup> Clements contends that Jeremiah 1-25 has a broad structural shape using the Deuteronomistic ideology. In his pursuit of evidence of Deuteronomistic ideology in the structural shape of chapters 1-25, Clements marks the structure of chapters 1-25 thematically as follows: 1; 2-6; 7-10; 11-20; 21-24; 25.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> R. E. Clements, "Jeremiah 1-25 and the Deuteronomistic History," in *Understanding Poets and Prophets: Essays in Honor of George Wishart Anderson* (A. Graeme Auld, ed.; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 110. Deuteronomistic redactors are responsible for the editing of Jeremiah's prophecies to the present form in chapters 1-25 as well as in chapters 26-52. Clements accepts the double-redaction theory of the Deuteronomistic History and the origin of the final form of the book of Jeremiah in Babylon, although he concedes the speculative nature of provenance of the final form of the book. It is argued that the original editorial composition of chapters 1-25 took place in Judah, most probably c. 550 BC, close to the time when the Deuteronomistic History was completed. Chapters 26-52 are an extensive addition to chapters 1-25 by Deuteronomistic redactors in order to account for major events that occurred in Judah after 550 BC. Concerning the provenance of the combined book, thus chapters 1-25 plus chapters 26-52, Clements believes that a Babylonian setting would seem to be most plausible although it is impossible to verify this with absolute certainty.

<sup>46</sup> Clements, "Jeremiah 1-25 and the Deuteronomistic History," 94-107. The structural shape of Jeremiah 1-25 is in accordance with the Deuteronomistic reflection upon the final collapse of the Northern Kingdom in 2 Kgs 17:7-23. Thus, Clements attempts to identify evidence of Deuteronomistic ideology as an organizing principle in shaping the structure of chapters 1-25. Clements also understands the shift from chapters 1-25 to chapters 26-52 within the framework of Deuteronomistic edition of the book of Jeremiah. Clements contends that there are clear signs of structural units within the book, especially within chapters 1-25, identifying the framework of chapter 1 as an introduction and 25:1-14 as a conclusion. Jeremiah 1-25 is structured as: Chapter 1, Introduction to chapters 1-25; Chapters 2-6, Accusation of Judah's failure to heed the warning from the downfall of the Northern Kingdom; Chapters 7-10, Demonstration of Judah's disobedience to God and its inevitable punishment; Chapters 11-20, Judah's rejection of the prophet Jeremiah as a mediator of the covenant and its irreversible consequence; Chapters 21-24, Prophecies concerning the fate of the Davidic kingship with political significance; Chapter 25, Conclusion to chapters 1-25.

Most Jeremiah scholars acknowledge the existence of blocks of literary material in the book of Jeremiah. It is argued, however, that the book lacks any organizing principles in its literary arrangement. Louis Stulman (1998)<sup>47</sup> sets out to refute the view held by some Jeremiah scholars that the book of Jeremiah does not have an organizing literary structure to hold together all the composite blocks of literary material.<sup>48</sup> It is Stulman's view that there are macro-structural units in the book of Jeremiah. Stulman agrees with the view of Clements that Jeremiah 1-25 is a Deuteronomistic edition with the editorial framework of chapters 1 and 25 as its *inclusio*. The overall structure of the book of Jeremiah is divided into four major sections by Clements. Stulman proposes a slightly modified division of the overall structural units in Jeremiah 1-25. Stulman suggests that Jeremiah 1-25 is structured with five macro-units (chapters 2-6; 7-10; 11-17; 18-20; 21-24) while chapters 1 and 25 serve as the introduction and the conclusion, respectively, to Jeremiah 1-25. It is argued that the "dismantling of Judah's symbolic universe" is the organizing principle that holds together these macro-units.<sup>49</sup> Stulman's structural divisions of "macro-units" in Jeremiah 1-25 are delimited by the occurrence of an introductory

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<sup>47</sup> Stulman, *Order amid Chaos*, 32.

<sup>48</sup> For example, Bright, Carroll, and McKane.

<sup>49</sup> Louis Stulman, *Order amid Chaos*, 31-32. Chapter 1: The Functional introduction - God's sovereign plan regarding Judah's newly defined place among the nations; Chapters 2-6: Judah's Departure From Yahweh - The basis for guilt and penalty of death; Chapters 7-10: Dismantling of temple ideology; Chapters 11-17: Dismantling of covenant ideology; Chapters 18-20: Dismantling of insider-outsider understandings; Chapters 21-24: Dismantling of royal ideology; Chapter 25: The Functional closure - The fulfillment of God's sovereign plan regarding Judah's newly defined place among the nations.

formula at the beginning of each new section: הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר-הָיָה אֶל-יִרְמְיָהוּ (7:1;

11:1; 18:1; 21:1; cf. 25:1); וַיְהִי דְבַר-יְהוָה אֵלַי (2:1).

As we have seen above, most Jeremiah scholars recognize Jeremiah 21-24 as a literary unit. It is not our purpose here to prove or disprove the Deuteronomistic redaction of the book of Jeremiah.<sup>50</sup> The main reasons are: chapters 1-20 are a unit (*inclusio* of chapters 1 and 20); chapters 21 and 24 form an *inclusio*; there is a unity of theme in chapters 21-24 – criticism of leaders and commands to surrender to Babylon. In this current study, however, we rather accept the view that the book of Jeremiah has an overall literary structure for the whole book, regardless of the extent to which the prophet Jeremiah (or the final editor) is responsible for the present form of the book. We attempt to detect any principle of literary organization employed by the author of the book of Jeremiah. We argue that the theory of rhetoric illuminates the literary structure of Jeremiah. We further seek to explain how this affects the interpretation of Jeremiah.

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<sup>50</sup> Stulman, also holding the view of the Deuteronomistic edition of the book of Jeremiah, agrees with the overall structure marked by Clements (*The Prose Sermons of the Book of Jeremiah*). J. Roy Porter questions the view that the existing form of many of prophetic writings is the product of an extensive Deuteronomistic redaction and warns of the danger of what has been called “pan-Deuteronomism” that has “the tendency to attribute almost all Israelite literary activity, from the period of Josiah to some time after the exile, to the Deuteronomistic school and thus to ignore the richness and variety of the religious expression in Judah during these years” (“The supposed Deuteronomistic redaction of the Prophets. Some Considerations,” in *Schöpfung und Befreiung. Für Claus Westermann zum 80 Geburtstag* [Albertz Rainer, Friedemann W. Golka, and Jürgen Kegler, eds.; Stuttgart : Calwer Verlag, 1989], 71).

### 2.3.2 The Rhetorical Unit: Jeremiah 21-24

The delimitation of Jeremiah 21-24 in this study as a rhetorical unit is in agreement with the consensus of Jeremiah scholarship, which considers chapters 21-24 as a collection of prophetic materials with thematic similarity. Scholars have attempted to explain in different ways the literary formation of this unit in the book of Jeremiah. Most of the scholars mentioned so far have offered source-critical or redaction-critical explanations for the present location of the collections in the text. It is generally acknowledged that Jeremiah 21-24 includes various originally independent collections. Jeremiah 21-24 consists of three large blocks of material, 21:1-23:8, 23:9-40 and 24:1-10. The various sub-units are thought to be collections of previously independent oracles and/or works of editorial creation, which were put together according to common themes within the large literary blocks. However, scholars disagree among themselves in identifying the different collections in the text. There is little consensus on determining the detailed sub-structure of the literary unit Jeremiah 21-24. Some have considered 21:1-23:8 as a literary unit.<sup>51</sup> Others have treated 21:1-23:8 as two units, 21:1-10 and 21:11-23:8.<sup>52</sup> It is also argued that Jeremiah 21-24 consists of chapter 21, 22:1-23:8, 23:9-40 and chapter 24.<sup>53</sup>

In this study we focus on a synchronic approach instead of a diachronic approach to the text, in order to apply the theory of rhetoric as a hermeneutical tool to Jeremiah 21-24. The literary unit Jeremiah 21-24 starts with a brief narrative

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<sup>51</sup> Nötscher and Hyatt.

<sup>52</sup> Holladay, Rudolph, and Weiser.

<sup>53</sup> Brueggemann.

introduction. This section is introduced by a prophetic introductory formula

הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר-הָיָה אֶל-יְרֵמְיָהוּ (21:1). This form of introduction starts a new section

as in other parts of the book of Jeremiah.<sup>54</sup> The messenger formula כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה

is one major device used in determining smaller units within the rhetorical unit

Jeremiah 21-24.<sup>55</sup> The content of the oracle is introduced with the messenger formula

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה at the beginning of prophetic speeches. Another messenger formula

נְאֻם-יְהוָה often appears within the speech with emphasis on the divine origin.<sup>56</sup>

The section 21:1-10 is balanced with 24:1-10. Common key words, phrases, and themes are repeated in 21:3-10 and 24:1-10.<sup>57</sup> At the beginning of the unit, an oracle from Jeremiah is requested by Zedekiah's officials concerning the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem. At the end of the unit, the *inclusio* in chapter 24 brings the audience (or the reader) to the point of beginning in 21:1-10. The oracle in chapter

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<sup>54</sup> Jer 7:1; 11:1; 18:1; 21:1; 25:1.

<sup>55</sup> Even a casual reading of the text allows us without difficulty to notice in the text the repetition of the messenger formula כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה. The messenger formula כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה occurs with an addition of כִּי, לָכֵן, אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, צְבָאוֹת, or its combinations: כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה (21:8, 12; 22:1, 3, 30); כִּי-כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה (22:6, 11); כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה לָכֵן (22:18); כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (21:4; 24:5); לָכֵן כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (23:2); כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת (23:16); לָכֵן כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת (23:15).

<sup>56</sup> Jer 2:2; 7:3; 11:3; 21:4.

<sup>57</sup> הַנְּשָׂאֲרִים בְּעִיר הַזֹּאת, (21:7), צְדָקָתָהּ מִלֶּךְ-יְהוּדָה (21:7), הַיֵּשֶׁב בְּעִיר הַזֹּאת, (21:9), מִן-הַדְּבָר מִן-הַחֶרֶב וּמִן-הַרְעָב (21:9); יָמוֹת בַּחֶרֶב וּבַרְעָב וּבַדְּבָר (24:8), צְדָקָתָהּ מִלֶּךְ-יְהוּדָה (24:8), הַנְּשָׂאֲרִים בְּאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת, (24:8), שְׂאֲרֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם (24:8), אֶת-הַחֶרֶב אֶת-הַרְעָב וְאֶת-הַדְּבָר, (24:10).

24 describes the deportation of king and his officials after the invasion of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Although these two events are separated by a decade anachronistically, they still form a rhetorical *inclusio*.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Contrast Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric*, 45-47 (46). Lundbom delimits the pericope with Jer 21:1-23:8. He takes 23:1-8 as an *inclusio* parallel to 21:1-10. Thus he considers **צִדְקָהּ יְהוָה צִדְקָנִי** as a deliberate reversal of **צִדְקָהּ יְהוָה** in Hebrew word play. This will be discussed further in the analysis of the text.



## 2.4 Prophetic Judgment Speech Forms

Prophetic speech is the major component of Jeremiah 21-24. Given the presupposition that Jeremiah 21-24 is viewed as a collection of previously existing prophetic oracles, one may attempt to identify these oracles, as the oracles preserve their individual identity within the integrated work of Jeremiah 21-24. Looking at the results of form critical analysis, we note that the major component of prophetic books in the Old Testament is prophetic speech. We understand that prophetic speeches are the words of God delivered by the prophet as a messenger of God.<sup>59</sup> Prophetic speeches are often embedded in the narrative account.<sup>60</sup> One of the literary features we notice in prophetic speeches is the frequent appearance of the messenger formula, “Thus says the Lord,” and its variations. We shall first investigate the general features of the structure of prophetic oracles by looking at the messenger’s speech.

Claus Westermann (1967) identifies the components of the speech form in oracles using the example of sending a messenger in a patriarchal narrative.<sup>61</sup> The text of a prophetic speech is a communication between a transmitter (speaker) and a

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<sup>59</sup> Revelation of God during the prophetic era comes in the speech of the messenger. God no longer speaks to the king directly, but God sends the prophets as messengers. There is not the directness of the patriarchal period when God spoke to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

<sup>60</sup> The prophetic books also include narrative accounts in the first person or third person. The prose narrative in the beginning of Jeremiah 21 introduces the prophet Jeremiah in a third-person account, while in the vision account in Jeremiah 24 the prophet, using the first-person, presents a dialogue with God.

<sup>61</sup> Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (ET by Hugh Clayton White; Louisville, KY: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1991), 101-102.

receiver (hearer). Westermann notes that the narrative concerning the sending of the messenger consists of three events: Commissioning, Transmission, and Delivery. The Commissioning, an introductory report, describes the sending of the messenger to the addressee and the designated place. The Transmission includes the commissioning of the messenger, the messenger formula and the messenger's speech. In the Delivery the messenger will repeat before the addressee the messenger's speech (i.e., transmission of the speech) at the place to which the messenger was sent. H. Van Dyke Parunak (1994) also proposes the existence of a structure of "relatively fixed schemas or literary forms" within prophetic oracles. An "ideal" oracle in the prophetic books usually records three communication events (each with a transmitter, content, and receiver): the committal, the delivery, and the report.<sup>62</sup> Van Dyke Parunak suggests that the introductory formulas (including the messenger formula "Thus says the Lord") help to delineate the structure of prophetic oracles by identifying the common components of the Committal, Delivery, and Report. There are four components (Incipit, Background, Dispatch, and Body) in a prophetic oracle which reflect the three communication events (Committal, Delivery, and Report).<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> H. Van Dyke Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions of Prophetic Quotation Formulas in Jeremiah," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics* (Robert D. Bergen, ed.; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994): 489-519. As mentioned above, Westermann labels the three events of a message as Commissioning, Transmission, and Delivery. In order to avoid confusion, we in this study will use the terms used by Van Dyke Parunak (Report, Committal, and Delivery).

<sup>63</sup> Van Dyke Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 495-498. The Body of a prophetic oracle is the main part of the prophecy. The Body usually begins with the messenger formula. The body contains the word of God intended for the addressee. However, the word of God is delivered through the prophet's speech to the addressee. Prophetic oracles contain the message-sending procedure. The Dispatch records the sending of the messenger. The Dispatch is related to the commissioning of the messenger. The sender explicitly commands the messenger to deliver the

Employing Westermann's and Van Dyke Parunak's arguments, we note the three communication events in the oracles of Jeremiah 21-24. A message is first committed by God (transmitter) to the prophet (receiver). The committal often includes instructions to pass the message on to the designated addressee ("And to this people, you shall say," 21:8). Sometimes, the committal takes the form of a dialogue between the Lord and the prophet (24:3). The prophet (transmitter) then delivers the message to the people (receiver). In some cases, the prophet delivers a message to the intermediary, to whom the message is not directed, but by whom the message is to be carried to the designated addressee ("Thus you [the king's officials] shall say to Zedekiah," 21:3). Finally, the compiler (the author or final editor) of the present form of the book reports the communication event to the reader of the book ("The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah from the Lord," 21:1; "Then Jeremiah said to them," 21:3). The message would have been spoken twice, first to the prophet by the Lord (Committal), and then by the prophet to the audience (Delivery). But, the compiler usually reports only one of these events – the Committal or Delivery – for later readers.

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message to the designated addressee. The Dispatch usually precedes the Body of the message. Sometimes the dispatch leads on to another a section. In Jeremiah 21-24 we identify the dispatches as follows: "Thus you shall say to Zedekiah (21:3b); "And to this people, you shall say (21:8a); "And to the house of the king of Judah (21:11a); "To the prophets," (23:9). In addition to these, Van Dyke Parunak's other components of the prophetic oracle are the Incipit and the Background. The Incipit provides information on the date, the place, and the circumstances of the event in which the message-sender commissions the messenger (21:1-2; 24:1-2). The Background is the component of an oracle that describes briefly the state of affairs that leads to the sending of the message. The Background provides an explanation of the reason for sending the message. The Background may be considered an extension of the Incipit.

From our study of the components of prophetic speech suggested by Van Dyke Parunak and Westermann, we assume the existence of a fixed form of prophetic oracle. Westermann suggests that Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah would have used the speech forms which were passed down and available to the prophets themselves.<sup>64</sup> Prophetic speeches have certain characteristics in common with the procedure for sending a messenger in the patriarchal narrative. The speech forms of prophetic oracles are recognizable although they are embedded in the narratives of the historical books and the prophetic books. Prophetic speech has certain forms that make it a messenger's speech.<sup>65</sup> The messenger formula identifies the speech that was spoken by the messenger as that of the one who sent him.

The messenger formula provides the framework of a message by giving it a fixed form. However, we understand that the situation of the speech influences the structure of the components of the oracle. Thus, not every oracle has exactly the same components.<sup>66</sup> For example, prophetic judgment speech to an individual person develops from a specific situation. Prophetic judgment speech to an individual person presupposes the existence of a specific individual event. It is directed at a particular person and concerns a specific occasion, rather than the general status of the individual person's circumstances. The prophetic judgment speeches in a

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<sup>64</sup> Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 129.

<sup>65</sup> Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 102. In the prophetic books "the prophets have designated themselves as messengers of God and were understood as such by those to whom they brought their messages. Prophecy must then be understood from the viewpoint of the message transmission procedure."

<sup>66</sup> Van Dyke Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 493. However, we must stress that "not every oracle will have every part or always have them in the same form. In fact, deviations from the ideal will be useful indications of the specific meaning and function of an individual oracle."

narrative context are judgment speeches directed at an individual, almost always kings.<sup>67</sup> We find examples of prophetic judgment speeches to an individual in Jeremiah 22 where the kings of Judah are denounced.

In the books of Kings and the prophetic books, a prophetic judgment speech to an individual person uses a messenger’s speech which is a well-defined speech form accommodating a detailed account of the accusation and reason for judgment. Westermann suggests the structural components of a very simple form of prophetic judgment speech on an individual person are:<sup>68</sup> 1) summons to hear; 2) accusation; 3) introduction to the announcement using the messenger formula (with “therefore”); 4) announcement of judgment (using a personal form of address).

A Prophetic Judgment Oracle to an Individual	
Introduction	
Commissioning of the messenger	
Summons to hear	
Accusation (Reason)	
The messenger formula	
The Announcement of Judgment	Intervention of God
	Results of the Intervention

The “introduction” of prophetic judgment speeches directed at an individual provides information concerning the sending of the messenger or the commissioning of the messenger. The introduction often includes a summons to hear (“Hear the Word of the Lord,” 21:11b-12a; 22:2b). Among the components of a prophetic

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<sup>67</sup> Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 138: “All the prophetic announcements of judgment in the books of Kings are, without exception, directed to an individual person and never to a group or a class, or whole nation or other nations! It is in the writing prophets that we first find the announcement of judgment to the nation. ... almost all the judgment speeches to individuals in the prophetic books are found in the narrative texts.”

<sup>68</sup> Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 129-136.

judgment-speech to an individual suggested by Westermann, “accusation” and “announcement” are the two main features of the oracle. The accusation comes before the messenger formula and provides the reason for the announcement of judgment. However, the structure of the accusation and announcement is not rigid in prophetic oracles. In some cases, judgment is announced without giving the accusation when the transgression of the addressee is obvious. In other cases, a lengthy accusation is followed by a short announcement of judgment. In our exegesis of 21:11-23:8 we recognize different types of accusation in prophetic oracles. Accusations are made against individual kings, using personal confrontation and evidence to support the accusation. The prophet establishes the facts of the case as in the regular judicial process.

Accusations followed by announcements of judgment use a personal form of address. The announcement is often introduced by the messenger formula  $\text{כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה}$  or its variations (with  $\text{כִּי}$  in 22:6, 11 or  $\text{לְכִין}$  in 22:18; 23:2 or merely itself 22:30).<sup>69</sup> The announcement gives the judgment based on the accusation. The announcement can take a simple one-part form, announcing the judgment to be applied to the addressee (21:11b-12).<sup>70</sup> We often notice in an announcement of a judgment that God speaks in the first person using the “I”-speech

<sup>69</sup> Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 149.

<sup>70</sup> We see an example of the one-part announcement of judgment in 21:11b-12.

Announcement	“He will never return. He will die in the place where they have taken him captive; he will never see this land again.” (22:11b-12)
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form in the first part of the announcement. The “intervention of God” is followed by the “result of the intervention of God” in the third person (“he”-speech) (21:7).<sup>71</sup>

The oracles in 21:11-22:30 are directed at the kings of Judah (לְבֵית מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה, 21:11). The section 23:9-40 is directed at the prophets (לְנָבִיאִים, 23:9). The addressees of the oracles in 22:1-30 are individual kings (an unnamed king, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin). However, the oracles in 23:9-40 are directed not at an individual, but to a group within the nation, the prophets. We observe a subtle change in form. The judgment speech against a group/ nation has a similar basic structure to the judgment speech directed at an individual except the “accusation” is divided into two parts: the basic Accusation and then the Development of the Accusation.<sup>72</sup> The basic structure of a prophetic judgment speech to a nation can be outlined as follows:

<sup>71</sup> We see an example of the two-part announcement of judgment in 21:7.

Intervention of God	“I will give Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants and, the people,[and those] who survive in this city from the plague, the sword, and the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their foes, and into the hand of those who seek their lives (21:7a)
Result of the Intervention of God	and he will smite them with the edge of the sword. He will not pity on them nor spare nor have compassion.” (21:7b)

<sup>72</sup> Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 170: “The accusation that is made against the nation or a group names the transgression at the outset in a general conceptual form, and then it is developed by making it more concrete, exemplifying it, or giving a citation.” In 23:13-14b, for example, the concept of a series of offences (the accusation) is outlined in brief and then the concept is made more concrete by giving more details (the development of the accusation).

Accusation	Among the prophets of Samaria I saw an offensive thing: They prophesied by Baal and led my people Israel astray. And among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: The committing of adultery and walking in falsehood; They strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one has turned back from his wickedness. (23:13-14a)
Development of the Accusation	All of them have become to me like Sodom, and her inhabitants like Gomorrah. (23:14b)

The Structure of a Judgment Speech to a Group/ Nation	
Introduction	
Reason	Accusation
	Development of the Accusation
Messenger formula	
Announcement	Intervention of God
	Results of the Intervention

We may conclude by quoting Westermann:

It is much more prudent to note that this framework of the prophetic judgment-speech is fundamental only to the *genre* and that the expression of an individual speech can deviate very far from it. Because of this greater freedom, the basic structure of the prophetic judgment-speech, which remained the same from Amos to Ezekiel, does not hinder the formulation of the speech in personal language, the assimilation of different traditions, or the adaptation of the speech to the ever-changing situations of the different prophets of the eighth and seventh centuries ... then it can now be said that we are able to recognize a *basic form* of the prophetic judgment-speech to the nation which is fundamental to the most comprehensive genre of prophetic speech.<sup>73</sup>

Jeremiah proclaimed oracles during his long years of prophetic ministry. Oracles were delivered by the prophet Jeremiah with a certain purpose in specific historical circumstances, thus, to specific audiences at certain times and places. We understand that Jeremiah 21-24 contains many individual oracles which were brought together into an integrated work, providing the extant form. The structural features of prophetic speech are marked by the frequent appearance of the messenger formula in Jeremiah 21-24. We thus attempt first to identify individual oracles in Jeremiah 21-24 according to the basic structure of prophetic oracle. The features of prophetic speech form can be used to delimit structural subunits of Jeremiah 21-24.

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<sup>73</sup> Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 171.



One may further wonder how the individual prophetic oracles were put together in the collection. Some observe the existence of thematic similarity among the prophetic oracles so that they develop the overall message of Jeremiah 21-24. Others notice the common structural features among the oracles in Jeremiah 21-23.<sup>74</sup> We argue that a sense of rhetorical effectiveness was the guiding principle used to put the individual oracles together into the rhetorical framework of Jeremiah 21-24. The author of Jeremiah 21-24 could not have known “the theory of rhetoric,” strictly speaking, since the theory is Greek. But he could have understood the principles that the Greeks described. We do not know for sure the precise historical situation of each individual oracle included in the collection. We may not be able to identify with complete certainty every individual oracle in the collection. We do not focus our attention on discerning the meaning of the individual oracles in their original setting. As rhetorical critics, we rather focus our attention on the interpretation of the text to discover the new meaning that emerges from the individual oracles as they are arranged in the extant form. Originally independent oracles, then, were arranged into a collection to bring out a new message. The new message is an overall message derived from all the individual oracles but it must encompass all the messages carried by the individual oracles. The collection of oracles together gives a new significance to the whole book of Jeremiah as it stands in its final form.

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<sup>74</sup> Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 95-96: “[T]he speeches to the leading people, the kings and the prophets, have been placed together – an indication that those who passed them down considered the person to whom the speeches were addressed as very important for the organization of the whole.”

## 2.5 The Historical Situation and Rhetorical Situation

Once the rhetorical unit is determined, the next important step is to appreciate the rhetorical situation of the rhetorical unit. Historical-critical approaches are, in their pursuit of interpretation of the text, concerned mainly with the compositional history of the text and the reconstruction of original historical circumstances in which a text is written and to which a text is a response. Any hermeneutical approach involves an attempt to reconstruct the situation in which the interpreter places himself or herself in order to understand the text properly.<sup>75</sup> Rhetorical critics, however, through a close reading of the text, attempt to discover “rhetoric” by which a certain relationship is established between the author, the text and the reader in order to communicate a message. Confusion regarding the concepts of the rhetorical situation and the historical situation of the text may exist. The “rhetorical situation” is sometimes used in rhetorical analysis interchangeably with the “historical situation” of the text.<sup>76</sup> This gives a rise to the need to clarify the historical situation and the rhetorical situation as used in the rhetorical analysis of Jeremiah 21-24.

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<sup>75</sup> Patrick and Scult, *Rhetoric and Biblical Interpretation*, 13.

<sup>76</sup> Dennis L. Stamps, “Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation: The Entextualization of the Situation in New Testament Epistles,” In *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* (Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht, eds.; JSNTSup 90; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 193-194. Stamps describes the state of confusion regarding the concepts of historical situation and rhetorical situation: “In recent years as rhetorical criticism has gained popularity, the historical situation or the epistolary occasion has been renamed or reclassified as the ‘rhetorical situation’... There is actually little in practice which separates the concept of the situation in recent rhetorical criticism from the situation as conceived in historical-criticism.”

### 2.5.1 The Historical Situation in Jeremiah 21-24

The historical situation of the text is set by the opening statement in 21:1-2. The section begins with a narrative describing a meeting between the prophet Jeremiah and representatives of King Zedekiah when Jerusalem was imminently faced with the threat of siege by the invading Babylonians (588-587 BC), which eventually led to the fall of Jerusalem (586 BC).<sup>77</sup> The section 21:1-10 describes the historical context in the milieu that led eventually to the fall of Jerusalem. We shall, in this study, assume the historicity of the events in 21:1-10.<sup>78</sup> Unlike narrative criticism, rhetorical criticism does not ignore the historical context of the text in which the author attempts to deliver his or her message to the immediate audience of the text. Rhetorical critics seek to obtain as much information as possible concerning the background of the immediate audience. In order to consider the historical background of the text, we turn our attention to the internal political relationships among the groups in Judean society and the international power structure in the Syro-Palestinian plains around 600 BC.

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<sup>77</sup> The event involving King Zedekiah and Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon in chapter 21 marks the first dated material in the book of Jeremiah. Here the text is not specific to the month or the year, lacking the date formula indicating the year of the king's reign (e.g. "in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah" in 25:1).

<sup>78</sup> The historicity of the events is generally accepted. Robert Carroll, who questions the historicity of the narratives in Jeremiah, is an exception. It is argued by Kathleen M. O'Connor that chapters 21-25 describe issues after the fall of Jerusalem, although chapter 21 predicts the threat of the fall of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. The fall of Jerusalem is treated as a *fait accompli* (*The Confessions of Jeremiah: Their Interpretation and Role in Chapters 1-25* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988], 146-147). R. E. Clements agrees that the narrative account in chapter 21 must have been written in retrospect in the wake of the events after the fall of Jerusalem. Clements rightly argues that this account must in its essentials closely represent the prophetic message during the crucial days of Jerusalem's siege (*Jeremiah*, 126).

Light will be shed on the historical situation of Jeremiah 21-24 by considering the political environment of Judah around 600 BC. The prophet Jeremiah was called to the prophetic ministry at the most difficult time of political and religious crisis in the history of Judah. During his prophetic ministry, Jeremiah had witnessed the collapse of the once-mighty Assyrian empire, the rise of the Babylonian empire “in the north,” and the resurgence and decline of the Egyptian dynasties in the southern border. Judah, sandwiched between international superpowers, had experienced a succession of political crises, interspersed with only the briefest periods of hope when national stability seemed a possibility. Judah’s fortune depended on the ebb and flow of military powers in the Syro-Palestinian plains, and the Davidic dynasty eventually came to an end with the collapse of Jerusalem in 586 BC.

Biblical narratives in the books of Kings and Chronicles provide ample occurrences of historical and political changes in Israel and Judah caused directly and indirectly by the rise and fall of surrounding empires in the Syro-Palestine plains. The most significant phenomenon during the period leading to the fall of Jerusalem is the Babylonian exile after 597 BC and 586 BC. The Babylonians adopted the Assyrian practice of population deportation from the conquered states.<sup>79</sup> This policy would change future Judaic history making it quite different from that of

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<sup>79</sup> The Babylonian policy was different in two aspects from the Assyrian practices. The Babylonians did not repopulate the depopulated area with people from other areas. Thus no other peoples were brought in Judah after the Judeans were deported. The Babylonians appointed a local governor instead of a Babylonian. See Bustenay Oded, “Judah and the Exile,” in *Israelite and Judaeon History* (J. H. Hayes and J. M. Miller, eds.; London: SCM Press, 1977), 475.

former years. And policy changes among competing parties (pro-/anti- Assyrians, Egyptians, or Babylonians) in the court of Israel were apparently interlocked with the outcome of the changing environment in the ancient Near East. Egypt and Babylonia were directly involved in the succession of the final kings in Judah.<sup>80</sup> Our focus of attention is on the situation in Judah for the last dozen years leading up to the fall of Jerusalem. This is the historical circumstance in which the prophet Jeremiah delivered some of his prophetic messages. Thus, it is important to have a firm grasp of the international situation during this period. The proper understanding of the historical events during this period may shed light on Jeremiah's message. This span of Judah's history is interwoven with the major international political machinations of Babylon and Egypt.

According to the Babylonian Chronicles, Nabopolassar king of Babylonia (626-605 BC) campaigned in 616 BC to the west along the Euphrates and defeated the Assyrians.<sup>81</sup> Nabopolassar's further campaign was met by the Assyrian army and the Egyptian army, which had already marched into Syria to the aid of Assyria.<sup>82</sup> Psammetichus I (664-610 BC) of Egypt had consistently kept friendly relationships with Assyria throughout his reign. With the Assyrian empire struggling for survival from Babylonian attack, the Egyptians were fighting for their right of inheritance of Assyria, rather than saving the Assyrian empire.<sup>83</sup> Psammetichus was trying to gain

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<sup>80</sup> 2 Kgs 23:34; 24:17.

<sup>81</sup> The Babylonian Chronicle starts with the tenth year (616 BC) of Nabopolassar (*ANET* 303) and seems to be missing prior to that year.

<sup>82</sup> *ANET* 304; D. J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of the Chaldean Kings (625-556 BC) in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1956), 55.

<sup>83</sup> Oded, "Judah and the Exile," 468.

control of Syria in addition to Palestine, which was already under the Egyptian influence. The city of Asshur fell in 614 BC. The fall of Nineveh followed in 612 BC. Haran was taken by the Babylonians in 610 BC. Neco II (610-595 BC), after succeeding his father Psammetichus, marched up through Palestine on his way to the Euphrates River to help the king of Assyria who was forced to retreat from Haran after defeat by the Babylonians in 610 BC. The once-mighty Assyrian empire was finished after the campaign of the Egyptians and Assyrians to retake Haran had been defeated by the Babylonians in 609 BC. Neco withdrew to the west at Riblah to consolidate his strength. Neco summoned to Riblah Jehoahaz (609 BC) who was put on the throne of Judah by “the people of the land” (2 Kgs 23:33) after Josiah was killed by the Egyptian army at Meggido. Neco deposed Jehoahaz and installed Eliakim son of Josiah as king and changed his name to Jehoiakim (609-598 BC). The Egyptians ruled over Palestine and Syria from 609 BC until 605 BC when Nebuchadrezzar defeated Neco at Carchemish. The battle of Carchemish (605 BC) marks the complete disappearance of the Assyrian empire as well as the end of the brief dominion of Egypt in the Syro-Palestinian plains. For the following years, Egypt played a drastically reduced role in the region. At the same time, the Babylonians became the imperial power in the Syro-Palestinian region.

Nebuchadrezzar (605-562 BC) marched out through Syro-Palestine down to the Philistine plain by the end of 604 BC. The ruling class of Ashkelon was deported to Babylon.<sup>84</sup> Nebuchadrezzar “invaded the land, and Jehoiakim became his vassal

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<sup>84</sup> Ashkelon was destroyed (Jer 47:5-7).

for three years” (2 Kgs 24:1).<sup>85</sup> Jehoiakim changed his allegiance to Babylon from Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt in 601 BC. The Babylonian army, however, was met by surprisingly strong resistance from the Egyptian army. Having suffered heavily, Nebuchadnezzar withdrew to Babylon. He spent the following year restrengthening his army. Taking advantage of the absence of the Babylonians, Neco moved into the southern Palestinian coast and took Gaza.<sup>86</sup> Jehoiakim made a fatal political decision, which eventually cost his life. He refused to pay tribute to Babylon and rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kgs 24:1). His shift of allegiance was obviously encouraged by the contemporary political situation of the Egyptian presence in the southern Palestine region. Nebuchadnezzar sent a Babylonian army unit and military units from the contingent vassal states of Moab, Ammon, and Edom against Judah in 599 BC. Nebuchadnezzar himself came back to the southern Palestine region and marched against Judah in December 598 BC. Jehoiakim died on this occasion and was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin (598-597 BC). The Babylonians put Zedekiah, another son of Josiah, on the throne replacing Jehoiachin after only three months on the throne. The expected help from Egypt did not arrive and Babylonian dominance extended over the whole Syro-Palestinian region (2 Kgs 24:7). Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin into captivity in Babylon (597 BC).

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<sup>85</sup> After the defeat of the Egyptian army at Carchemish in 605 BC, Judah became a vassal state to the Babylonians. The exact date is not clearly known, but it is most likely that Jehoiakim changed his allegiance to Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar’s campaign in southern Palestine in 604 BC. See T. R. Hobbs, *2 Kings* (WBC 13; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985), 349; For other possibilities, see A. Malamat, “The Twilight of Judah in the Egyptian-Mesopotamian Maelstrom,” in *Congress Volume, Edinburgh 1974* (G. W. Anderson *et al.*, eds.; VTSup 28; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 129-131.

<sup>86</sup> Jer 47:1; E. Lipinski, “The Egyptian-Babylonian War of the Winter 601-600 BCE,” *AION* 22 (1972), 235-241.

Nebuchadnezzar carried the upper classes to Babylon.<sup>87</sup> This occasion is mentioned in Jeremiah 21-24.

There was an uprising in Babylon during the winter of 595-594 BC.<sup>88</sup> Some Babylonian vassal states in the Syro-Palestine plains interpreted this event in Babylon as an opportunity to revolt against Babylon. Messengers from Tyre, Sidon, Ammon, Moab and Edom gathered in Jerusalem in 594 BC to conspire against Babylon (Jer 27:3). The conspiracy, however, did not materialize for unknown reasons. In Egypt, Hophra (589-570 BC) succeeded the throne after the death of his father Psammetichus II in 589 BC. Hophra resumed the traditional Egyptian policy of interference in Syro-Palestinian affairs. Zedekiah's allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar was wavering again (2 Kgs 24:20). Zedekiah followed Tyre and Ammon who broke the vassal oath with Nebuchadnezzar. Rebellion broke out in 589 BC. The Babylonians invaded Palestine in 589 BC immediately after the revolt (2 Kgs 25:1; Jer 52:4). The Babylonian army arrived at Jerusalem in January 588 BC and besieged Jerusalem and it is the siege of Jerusalem which provides the historical context of Jeremiah 21. The siege of Jerusalem lasted until the city's fall. The siege was temporarily removed from Jerusalem when the Egyptian army marched out of Egypt

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<sup>87</sup> Also deported were the king's mother, his wives, his officials and leading men of the land. The number of the deportees reached ten thousand. However, the numbers given in the biblical sources are not identical. No corroborating numbers are available from the Babylonian Chronicle. 2 Kgs 24:14 records that ten thousand persons were carried into exile. But figures given in v. 16 amount to eight thousand: the seven thousand fighting men and a thousand of craftsmen and artisans. These numbers differ from the figure given in Jer 52:28 of 3,023 for the first year of exile (597 BC). Probably the different numbers relate to different groupings of the deportees (Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 352).

<sup>88</sup> Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings*, 72; A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (TCS 5; Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1975), 102.



(Jer 37:4-11), but the Egyptian forces quickly withdrew and the Babylonians therefore resumed their siege of the city. Jerusalem fell on the fourth month of the eleventh year of Zedekiah<sup>89</sup> and Jerusalem was thoroughly destroyed. Nebuzaradan commander of the Babylonian army came to Jerusalem and set fire to the temple of the Lord, the royal palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 25:8-9). Judah was taken into Babylonian captivity.

The prose sections of Jeremiah provide us with the historical background to the international power arrangements in Palestine and the domestic political structure during the last years of Judah. We catch a glimpse of conflicts involving the rulers of

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<sup>89</sup> 2 Kgs 25:1-2, 8; Jer 39:1-2; 52:4-5, 12; Ezek 24:1-2. August 587 BC or August 586 BC? There is no consensus in dating the fall of Jerusalem because of the uncertainty regarding the chronological system of Judah during the time under consideration. Some date the fall of Jerusalem in the summer of 587 BC (Bright, *A History of Israel* [3rd ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981], 330; Ernst Kutsch, "Das Jahr der Katastrophe: 587 v. Chr. Kritische Erwägungen zu neueren chronologischen Versuchen," *Bib* 55 [1974], 520-545), while others in the summer of 586 BC (Abraham Malamat, "The Twilight of Judah in the Egyptian-Mesopotamian Maelstrom," 145; Edwin Richard Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings: A Reconstruction of the Chronology of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah* [rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1965], 169; H. Tadmor, "Chronology of the Last Kings of Judah," *JNES* 15 [1956], 226-230; John Gray, *I & II Kings* [2nd ed.; OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970], 699). Nebuchadrezzar assumed the throne in the fall of 605 BC. If the first year of the Nebuchadrezzar's formal accession counts from 604 BC, the Nineteenth year is 586 BC (2 Kgs 25:8; Jer 52:12). From the biblical data given in 2 Kgs 25:1-2 and Jer 39:1-2, the siege of Jerusalem started in the tenth month (December/January) of the ninth year of Zedekiah. That is January 588 BC, if we take the Nisan (March/April) as the first month. Thus, if Zedekiah was made king before Nisan (March/April) 597 BC, his first year is from March/April 597 BC to March/April 596 BC, according to the accession year system. Then, the ninth year of Zedekiah is from March/April 589 BC to March/April 588 BC. Then the eleventh year starts March/April 587 BC. The wall of Jerusalem was broken through on the fourth month (July/August) of the eleventh year of Zedekiah, that is July/August 587 BC. However, if the coronation of Zedekiah took place after Nisan 597 BC, his first year is from March/April 596 BC to March/April 595 BC, according to the accession year system. Then Jerusalem fell July/August 586 BC.

Judean society.<sup>90</sup> The narrative section of Jeremiah lists various ranks of political structure. The ruling class is made up of the king and his officials.<sup>91</sup> The religious offices of the priests and the prophets were included in the ruling class. Conflicts exist among these groups in the higher class of society.<sup>92</sup>

This aspect of the struggles among different interest groups in society has not often been considered when trying to understand the prophet's ministry. Such factors as the personal, social, political and international situation have been easily

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<sup>90</sup> The prophet Jeremiah is involved with "theological" conflicts with other false prophets (Jer 2:8; 4:9; 5:30-31; 6:13-15; 8:10-12; 14:13-15; 18:18-23; 23:9-40; 26:8, 11, 16; 27:14-18; 28; 29:24-32. cf. Isa 28:7-13; Ezek 13; Mic 3:5-12). The so-called "Confessions of Jeremiah" (11:18-23; 12:1-16; 15:10-21; 17:12-18; 18:18-23; 20:7-18) show his personal sorrow, which he experienced in his proclamation of the will of God. Jeremiah was often personally threatened with death by "the priests, the prophets and all the people" (26:8) and was put into prison by the officials of the king (Jeremiah 37 and 38).

<sup>91</sup> The Hebrew word שָׂר is translated as "officer," "noble," "leader" or "official." Thus the general term "officials" (הַשָּׂרִים) includes the group of civic and military officials of king. They include king's attendants (עֲבָדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ), the loyal advisors (אֲנָשִׁים מְרֵאֵי פְנֵי-הַמֶּלֶךְ), the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem (חֲרֵי יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַם), the secretary (הַסֵּפֶר), eunuch (סָרִיס), the door keepers (שְׁמָרֵי הַסֶּף), the chief officer in the temple of the Lord (בְּקִיד נְגִיד בְּבֵית יְהוָה), the captain of the guard (בַּעַל פְּקֻדָּת).

<sup>92</sup> Also included in this class are the land owners: the people of the land (עַם הָאָרֶץ), the elders of the land (זְקֵנֵי הָאָרֶץ) or the leading men of the land (אֲוֵלֵי הָאָרֶץ, 2 Kgs 24:15). For the meaning of the term עַמ־הָאָרֶץ during the monarchy, see S. Daiches, "The meaning of 'Am-Haaretz' in the Old Testament," *JTS* 30 (1929): 245-249; J. A. Soggin, "Der judäische 'am-ha'ares und das Königtum in Juda," *VT* 13 (1963): 187-195; R. de Vaux, "Les Sens de l'expression 'peuple du pays' dans l'Ancien Testament et le rôle politique du peuple en Israël," *RA* 58 (1964): 167-172; E. W. Nicholson, "The Meaning of the Expression 'Am-ha'ares' in the Old Testament," *JSS* 10 (1965): 59-66; S. Talmon, "The Judaeon 'am-ha'ares in Historical Perspective," *Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies* I (1967): 71-76; M. H. Pope, "'Am-ha'ares," *IDB* I (1962): 106-107; Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Independent landowners outside the capital," in *A History of Prophecy in Israel: From the Settlement in the Land to the Hellenistic Period* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 122.

overlooked due to the predominance of theological interpretation of the situation. The general view on the working mode of prophets in the Old Testament is a prophet working alone seeking the divine will from their time in private solitude. However, divine will is worked out through the agency of prophecy in social situations. The prophet's view of society is molded through the interaction of the various elements in society and the divine revelation which he received from God.<sup>93</sup> Thus, understanding conflicts among interest groups in the society is not incompatible with theological interpretation, but rather supplements it. In their efforts to reconstruct the socio-economic structure of ancient Israel, some scholars try to reduce Israelite history to mere struggles for power among interest groups in society.<sup>94</sup> Others argue that the divine message was delivered to the audience through the prophet and was “mechanically” dictated in a particular historical situation. This approach minimizes the role of the prophet and his audience in evaluating the current situation and in shaping the prophetic word to it. We cannot exclude the human factor of the prophet in a given circumstance of his prophetic activity, although the prophetic ministry is a divine activity. This does not deny divine sovereignty. It is because God works in history among the people. The prophet is involved in shaping the content of his

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<sup>93</sup> Paul D. Hanson, “The Origin and Nature of Prophetic Political Engagement in Ancient Israel,” *Drew Gateway* vol. 55, part 2-3 (Winter 1984-Spring 1985), 35: “The prophets – at least those whose words are preserved in the Bible – spoke out of a distinct tradition, drew upon a carefully developed worldview and defended a social system with well-defined values and warrants.”

<sup>94</sup> N. K. Gottwald views Israelite history as “a sociology of the religion of the liberated Israel” (*The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of the Liberated Israel, 1250-1050* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979]). Robert Carroll argues that different interests of various social circles were represented by the various traditions in the text (*Jeremiah, 69-70*). Morton Smith contends, “What we have in the various Old Testament is not the literature of a single party but the literature of a large number and long succession of parties” (*Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament* [London: SCM Press, 1987]).

prophetic message on the basis of the divine revelation he received and on the basis of his reflection on the current situation. However, the individual prophet plays a vital role in the dynamic of the prophetic process as seen in the case of “false prophets” in Jer 23, 28 and 29, which describe conflicting prophecies proclaimed in a given situation. The prophet is actively involved in the shaping of his message and in the tensions and conflicts which he experienced within himself and between himself and his audience.<sup>95</sup> In order to understand better the prophetic ministry of Jeremiah, it is helpful to investigate the historical background of Israelite society, especially the dynamics of the relationship among the groups in Israelite social and political structure. Our task includes the examination of the social relationships between the kings, the priests, and the prophets. A better understanding of the social and political dimensions of conflict helps us understand the full historical situation where the divine will is at work, and in turn gives a better understanding of the text.

The Davidic monarchy was maintained in Jerusalem until the fall of Judah. One can notice in the Books of Kings that prophets are not mentioned in the kingdom of Judah for nearly two centuries, after Nathan the prophet is mentioned for the last time (1 Kgs 1:28ff.), until the appearance of Isaiah in the second half of the eighth century.<sup>96</sup> It is unlikely that there were no prophets during that period in Judah. The

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<sup>95</sup> Thomas W. Overholt, “Jeremiah and the Nature of the Prophetic Process,” in *Structure in History & Theology: Essays in Honor of J. Coert Rylaarsdam* (Arthur L. Merrill and Thomas W. Overholt, eds.; Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1977), 136. See also James L. Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict: Its Effect Upon Israelite Religion* (BZAW 124; Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1971).

<sup>96</sup> Solomon was anointed by Zadok the priest, not by Nathan the prophet (1 Kgs 1:39). The priest Jehoida played a leading role in securing Joash from the massacre of Athaliah and in the following crown succession and also in the Joash’s reparation

emergence of prophet(s) is a particularly characteristic feature of the life of ancient Israel.<sup>97</sup> Prophets sometimes appeared as individuals and other times as companies of prophets.<sup>98</sup> Sometimes a group of prophets was contrasted with an individual prophet.<sup>99</sup> Further, prophets on occasion confronted each other. Micaiah is described as standing against a group of prophets by accusing them of being lying prophets.<sup>100</sup> Micaiah is also portrayed as confrontational towards the king; indeed, the major prophets were often critical of the kings and priests. They also frequently opposed other prophets. Jer 23 gives a glimpse of the existence of guilds of prophets at the time of Jeremiah.<sup>101</sup> Jeremiah's opponents were both other groups of prophets and other individual prophets (Jer 23; 28; 29). They confronted each other in Jerusalem, as in the case of Jeremiah, with prophetic statements totally contradicting each other.

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of the temple. There is no mention of any prophets. Also in Josiah's reform, it was the high priest Hilkiah who discovered the law book in the temple.

<sup>97</sup> The phenomenon of prophecy was not uniquely limited to ancient Israel. It was rather a common phenomenon in the ancient Near East.

<sup>98</sup> There was the collective phenomenon of "a company of prophets" (חֶבֶל נְבִיאִים, 1 Sam 10:5, 10). One of characteristics of these prophets was ecstasy, which was infectious: "The Spirit of Lord will come upon you in power, and you will prophesying with them, and you will be changed into a different person" (1 Sam 10:6, 10). However, an individual prophet such as Samuel was differentiated from the ecstatic prophets. His characteristic features include religious political action and speaking in the name of the Lord. He was not associated with any ecstatic behavior (1 Sam 3).

<sup>99</sup> Elijah in 1 Kgs 18:16-46; Micaiah son of Imlah in 1 Kgs 22:1-28.

<sup>100</sup> 1 Kgs 22:23.

<sup>101</sup> The "sons of the prophets" attest the existence of guilds of prophets. Cf. Amos 7:14, "I was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son." The office of the prophets is not hereditary among the individual prophets. A man is called to be a prophet. Unlike the priests, the prophets were made not by blood but by charisma.

In the Old Testament, individual prophets often appear in opposition to the kings, while groups of prophets are closely associated with political and religious institutions.<sup>102</sup> It can be said that the groups of prophets had some degree of political power. The prophets can be connected with sanctuaries,<sup>103</sup> and throughout the ancient Near East, it is normal to find prophets functioning at a sanctuary. They represented the religious and political establishment in Israel, with a tendency towards preserving cultic and social traditions.<sup>104</sup> It is unlikely that all the prophets belonged to the temple personnel. It is not likely that Isaiah was a court prophet. Certainly Jeremiah was not. However, kings also consulted individual prophets. Isaiah and Jeremiah were sought after by Hezekiah and Zedekiah, respectively.<sup>105</sup> Considering the historical background of Jeremiah 21-24, we conclude that there may have been tensions among classes and groups in Judah, going back some time.

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<sup>102</sup> Rolf Rendtorff, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 113. Thus we cannot posit a general rule concerning individual prophets and group of prophets or characterize their relationship to the religious and political institutions. Rendtorff contends that “detailed issues in connection with the question of an institutional development of prophetic ‘office’ remain unclear ... However, it is quite evident that Old Testament tradition principally reports situations of conflict between prophets and kings, and later between prophets and all Israel ... Still, it is evident that proclamation of salvation and disaster cannot be divided out between different kinds of prophets; both are to be found among the majority of Old Testament prophets.”

<sup>103</sup> The Old Testament does not attest clearly any evidence of cult prophets of Yahweh who engage in a regular cultic function. The prophets of Baal in 1 Kgs 18 were engaging in cultic acts. It is suggested by Aubrey R. Johnson that the prophets in 1 Sam 10 and 19 had their correspondents or their successors in the cult of the temple (*The Cultic Prophet in Ancient Israel* [2nd ed.; Cardiff: University Wales Press, 1962], 69-75).

<sup>104</sup> John L. McKenzie, *A Theology of the Old Testament* (New York: Geoffrey Chapman, 1974), 86.

<sup>105</sup> Elisha’s advice was sought by the king (2 Kgs 3:11f). Hezekiah sought advice from Isaiah (2 Kgs 19 [= Isa 37]) and Zedekiah from Jeremiah (Jer 21:1-2; 37:17-21; 38:14-26; cf. the officers and people in Jer 42).

## 2.5.2 The Rhetorical Situation in Jeremiah 21-24

One dispute regarding the historical situation and rhetorical situation is whether the context of the extant form of the book of Jeremiah represents the circumstances of the text in which the oracles were originally proclaimed by the prophet Jeremiah. The traditional view regards the “historical situation” described in the text as the context in which the oracles were actually delivered by the prophet. The prophet Jeremiah is credited with the production of the extant form of the text at the time when he delivered the oracles in chapters 21-24. However, the generally accepted view is that chapters 21-24 contain a number of originally independent prophetic materials which were brought together to form this collection.<sup>106</sup> Thus interpretation of the prophetic text inevitably leads the interpreter to inquire into the situation of the formation of the present text, regardless of whether the author (or the final editor) is the prophet Jeremiah himself or a Deuteronomistic editor(s). It demands investigation of the relationship of the extant form of the text to the context that generated the text. In rhetorical analysis, the rhetorical or argumentative situation is a specific situation that engenders the extant text. Thus the “internal literary” context is the rhetorical situation. In rhetorical analysis, thus, rhetorical critics must be able to identify the rhetorical problem, which gives rise to the existence of the text, from the text itself, instead of trying to bring the historical situation into the interpretation of text. In this sense, “a text must reveal its

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<sup>106</sup> Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 200. For example, Carroll views the present form of the book of Jeremiah as “the product of different groups within the Judean territory struggling for power and position over a long period after the fall of Jerusalem” (*Jeremiah*, 70).

context.”<sup>107</sup> The “rhetoric” in rhetorical analysis broadens its meaning beyond stylistic analysis to include the logical persuasive argument “in the text” intended by the author in order to achieve a particular effect. Rhetorical analysis, therefore, is distinguished from other literary critical approaches by the fact that in rhetorical criticism “the text” reveals its rhetorical situation, while literary criticism is concerned primarily with the style of the text, thus the artistry of textual disposition and textual structure.

Once the determination of the rhetorical unit is made, the next important step is to appreciate the rhetorical situation. It is the rhetorical situation, the persuasive demands of the audience and the occasion, that stands between the historical and cultural context and the literary or poetic strategies of the text. The rhetorical critic needs to find something “puzzling” in the text, in which arises a need for rhetorical strategy. This “puzzling” issue may include ambiguity, contrast, seeming incoherence, confrontation, and so on, between the audience and the speaker, or among the audience. The rhetorical critic’s aim is to discover “rhetorical tension” in the text. Lloyd F. Bitzer defined a rhetorical situation as “a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigency which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of

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<sup>107</sup> T. O. Sloan, “Rhetoric: Rhetoric in Literature,” in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* (15th ed., vol. 15; Chicago: The Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1975), 798-799. Quoted in Wilhelm Wuellner, “Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?” *CBQ* 49/3 (1987), 450.



the exigency.”<sup>108</sup> For the purpose of practical application, Bitzer’s view on rhetorical situations is a useful tool. The rhetorical critic may identify various aspects of the rhetorical situation – persons, events, objects, and relations involved – which have the power to influence the outcome of rhetorical discourse. The rhetorical critic may examine the source of constraints – beliefs, attitude, documents, facts, traditions, images, interests, motives and the like. Among the constituents of the rhetorical

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<sup>108</sup> Lloyd F. Bitzer, “The Rhetorical Situation,” in *Rhetoric: A Tradition in Transition in Honor of Donald C. Bryant* (W. R. Fisher, ed.; East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1974), 251-254. For every rhetorical situation there are three components: exigency, audience, and constraints. An exigency is “an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be.” The exigency is rhetorical if it can be modified with discourse. “An exigency is rhetorical when it is capable of positive modification and when positive modification requires discourse or can be assisted by discourse.” “In any rhetorical situation there will be at least one controlling exigency which functions as the organizing principle: it specifies the audience to be addressed and the change to be effected.” The rhetorical audience “consists only of those who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediator of change.” The audience should be more than just spectators or observers. They should be participants for change of the exigency. “The rhetorical audience must be of serving as mediator of the change which the discourse functions to produce.” The constraints of a rhetorical situation are “made up of persons, events, objects, and relations which are parts of the situation because they have the power to constrain decision and action needed to modify the exigency.” They derive from “beliefs, attitude, documents, facts, traditions, images, interests, motives and like.” Every rhetorical situation contains of a set of constraints, says Bitzer. Bitzer compares the constraints, “those originated or managed by the rhetor and his method” to what Aristotle called these “artistic proofs,” and “those other constraints, in the situation, which may be operative” to Aristotle’s “inartistic proofs.” These constituents (exigency, audience, constraints) of a rhetorical situation, Bitzer says, “comprise everything relevant in a rhetorical situation. When the orator, invited by the situation, enters it and creates and presents discourse, then both he and his speech are additional constituents.” For Bitzer at the center of rhetorical elements is the rhetorical situation (exigency, audience, constraints). “[A] particular discourse comes into existence because of some specific condition or situation which invites utterance... The situation controls the rhetorical response in the same sense that the question controls the answer and the problem controls the solution.” All page numbers in referential quotation are from this book; Originally published in *PhRh* 1 (1968): 1-14.

situation, the audience often plays the most important role.<sup>109</sup> In rhetorical criticism, the audience is defined by the rhetorical situation. It is the target group of the act of persuasion.

Rhetorical analysis presupposes the existence of a certain controversy which the author (or the final editor) felt a need to address in his or her attempt to remedy the controversy. The rhetorical situation – the persuasive demands of the audience and the occasion– stands between the historical and cultural context and the literary or poetic strategies of the text. The contrast of the two passages (Jer 20:1-6 and 21:1-2) in the treatment of the prophet Jeremiah by the officials provides a rhetorical or argumentative situation. It may cause the audience/reader to wonder about the specific situation that generated the text as we have it now. The exigency, the intentionality, shapes the text as an argument in order to persuade the audience and the reader.<sup>110</sup> What is there in the abrupt and sudden change in the text that attracts the audience's attention? The audience/reader may find this contrast puzzling. This is the rhetorical tension in the text, in which a need arises for rhetorical strategy.

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<sup>109</sup> Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 35. For further discussion about audience/reader/author, see Chaim Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1969), 1-62; Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

<sup>110</sup> Wuellner, "The Rhetorical Genre of Jesus' Sermon in Luke 12.1-13.9," in *Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy* (Duane F. Watson, ed.; JSNTSup 50; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 99-100.

In practice, however, the rhetorical situation is often thought to correspond roughly to the historical situation, thus, the *Sitz im Leben* of form criticism.<sup>111</sup>

Wilhelm Wuellner, however, differentiates the rhetorical situation from the *Sitz im Leben* of form criticism.<sup>112</sup>

The inquiry into the rhetorical or argumentative situation is to ask what specific condition or situation there *is* (not *was*, as an historical question) that generates the text as we now have it ... [T]he historical situation, both inside and outside of the narrative and its sermon, is categorically different from the argumentative situation, the exigency, the 'intentionality', that gives (not 'gave') rise and shape to the text as argument, that is, in its orientation toward convincing/ persuading the audience/ reader.<sup>113</sup>

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza proposes that "the concept of 'rhetorical situation' developed in rhetorical criticism might help us to gain access to the historical communication situation" of the author. Discourse is "a direct response to a specific historical-political situation and problem," she argues, and "rhetorical criticism must distinguish between the historical argumentative situation, the implied or inscribed rhetorical situation as well as the rhetorical situation of contemporary interpretations which works with the canonical collection."<sup>114</sup> She emphasizes that it

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<sup>111</sup> Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 34-36.

<sup>112</sup> Wuellner, "Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?" 450, 456. The rhetorical situation, the "context" of a text in rhetorical criticism, is "more than historical context or literary tradition or genre or the generic *Sitz im Leben* or broader societal/cultural situation" (450). "The rhetorical situation differs both from historical situation of a given author and reader and from the generic situation or conventions of the *Sitz im Leben* of forms or genres in one point: the rhetorical critic looks foremost for the premises of a text as appeal or argument" (456).

<sup>113</sup> Wilhelm Wuellner, "The Rhetorical Genre of Jesus' Sermon in Luke 12.1-13.9," 99-100.

<sup>114</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Rhetorical Situation and Historical Reconstruction in 1 Corinthians," *NTS* 33 (1987): 387-388.

is necessary to define the rhetorical situation in terms of exigency and the rhetorical problem articulated in the text.

Rhetorical criticism attempts to discover how a text achieves a particular effect on its reader.<sup>115</sup> Rhetorical critics need to identify the rhetorical situation of the rhetorical unit. The rhetorical situation is the circumstance from which the speaker attempts to persuade his audience to remove the rhetorical exigency. It is the rhetorical situation that controls the rhetorical response from the audience. In rhetorical criticism, thus, it is important to know as much as possible about the circumstances of the audience which the text intended to address. However, the idea of the “rhetorical situation” is complex in Jeremiah. It involves a transition from the oracles of the prophet Jeremiah to the collection of them into the present form of the book by the author/final editor. There are two quite different situations or horizons arising in the rhetorical critical study of Jeremiah 21-24.<sup>116</sup>

The first situation or horizon is that of the prophet Jeremiah during the last years of Judah as presented in Jeremiah 21-24. Actually there are shifts of scene within this horizon. It is generally accepted that Jeremiah 21-24 contains a number of

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<sup>115</sup> Historical-critical approaches attempt to reconstruct the *Sitz im Leben* (Form criticism) in order to discern the theologies and intentions of the final editor (Redaction criticism) with the sources that the author used in his or her composition of the book (Source criticism). Historical-critical methods are more interested in the historical circumstances behind the text and the compositional history of the text than the interpretation of the text itself. Literary criticism does not deny the observations made by historical approaches to the text. However, the main concern of literary criticism is focused on the interpretation of the text in its extant form.

<sup>116</sup> Renz, *The Rhetorical functions of the book of Ezekiel, 19-22*. Renz makes a very similar distinction.

originally independent prophetic oracles which were brought together in this collection with the general theme of judgment against the kings and prophets. Jeremiah 21-24 is set in the historical context between the aftermath of the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem in 597 BC (chapter 24) and the event of 588/587 BC (chapter 21). 21:3-10 are Jeremiah's oracles, given as an answer to the request for an oracle in vv. 1-2, to King Zedekiah and the people of Jerusalem in the events leading up to the fall of Jerusalem (587/586 BC). The oracles "to the house of king of Judah" (21:11-23:8) deal primarily with different kings during the last years of Judah, and secondarily with Jerusalem and the people of Judah. In 21:11-22:9, oracles are not addressed to a specific king, but rather they concern kings of the Davidic dynasty. The oracles in 22:10-30 are addressed to specific kings: Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Jehoiachin. The poetic material vv. 20-23 is undated and addressed to an unnamed city, supposedly Jerusalem. Jeremiah's assessment of the kings is completed by an announcement of promise for the future (23:1-8). 23:9-40 is a collection of oracles against false prophets. Chapter 24 describes events after the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem in 597 BC.

The originally independent oracles were proclaimed first to Jeremiah's hearers in different settings. That is, Jeremiah did not speak the words recorded here in the order in which we have them now. These are not just a random compilation of Jeremiah's miscellaneous prophetic oracles. It is important to realize that the earlier independent oracles of Jeremiah have been structured into this form by the author. They are intended to be read from beginning to end by the audience or reader, instead of being examined for their relative value as originally independent

individual oracles. We argue that Jeremiah 21-24 is structured as a continuous piece of rhetorical persuasion. Furthermore, the rhetorical situations of the originally independent oracles of Jeremiah may have varied with different hearers. The present form of Jeremiah 21-24 presents a new rhetorical situation. It is important to recognize these shifts of scene. However, in principle there is a unity to this horizon: these are words spoken by the prophet to the people in the world of the narrative (i.e. the people of Judah and Jerusalem).

The second situation or horizon is that of the author of the present form of Jeremiah 21-24. For the past century, Jeremiah scholarship has devoted an enormous amount of effort to historical-critical questions regarding the authorship, dating, provenance, and sources of the book of Jeremiah. Nevertheless, the cases in which a consensus has been reached are few. We do not know the precise dating and provenance of the composition of Jeremiah. We do not even know for sure whether the author of Jeremiah 21-24 is identical to the author of the whole book in its MT form. However, it appears that the text was shaped into its present form after the fall of Jerusalem. Admittedly, this is an inference. The author was writing from a perspective that looks back on events recorded from a certain distance. Certainly if he is the author of the whole book, then he obviously wrote from that perspective. This theory is also implied by 24:8, because the flight to Egypt seems to have happened after the fall of Jerusalem (Jer 42-43).<sup>117</sup> The author was collecting and shaping various earlier oracles of Jeremiah and records of the prophet's actions into

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<sup>117</sup> However, this is not certain. Chapter 24 is actually dated after the fall of Jehoiachin in 597 BC, and therefore the Egyptian exile could even be earlier than 21:1-10, which is in the final siege in 588/587 BC.

the literary form which we now possess. What we may take to have been earlier oracles of Jeremiah have been given new meanings in the new context of Jeremiah 21-24. New contexts produce new meanings for Jeremiah's original oracles.

Passages are read in the light of the total text in its present form without regard for the discernment of previous source strata or the stages of composition which produced the final form. The present form of the text reveals the context which prompted the author to speak about the issues to his audience. In a sense, the text serves as its own context. The author of the present form of the text was presenting the earlier oracles of Jeremiah to his audience in a different circumstance from that of Jeremiah's hearers. The immediate issues in each case are different. The rhetorical purpose of the discourse is different at each horizon, even though the prophetic words recorded have a function at each horizon. There is an in-principle difference between Jeremiah's hearers and the author's audience.

We have seen that the chapters 21-24 are in a certain sense an artificial (or artistic) composition made up of diverse earlier oracles of Jeremiah. Thus the author of chapters 21-24 has rather artificially constructed a rhetorical situation. He has done this using real situations. Since Jeremiah 21-24 is a unified piece of persuasion conforming to a rhetorical pattern, it follows that it presupposes a unified group of hearers. This means that he has in effect imagined a unified group that hears the whole force of Jeremiah's rhetorical argument from start to finish. The target group of the persuasion is the people addressed by Jeremiah. Thus, the people of the time in

question (in the narrated time, or in the world of the discourse) are his audience.<sup>118</sup>

Thus, Jeremiah 21-24 functions as a piece of rhetoric designed to persuade Jeremiah's hearers in the time before the fall of Jerusalem.<sup>119</sup> Each literary piece of the rhetorical unit can be treated from this perspective. It is essentially a recreation of that rhetorical situation by an author who has artificially introduced a unity into the rhetorical unit.

Our rhetorical analysis of Jeremiah 21-24 proceeds on these assumptions. The task then is to understand how the discourse will have an impact on Jeremiah's audience, i.e. the people of Jerusalem before its final collapse, considering their understanding of their own world (king, city, temple, covenant, the nature of the Lord, and etc.). After our analysis of Jeremiah 21-24, however, we will ask how the chapters serve the purpose of the author himself writing for the audience of his own day. One can only determine this with some caution, since we do not know his actual situation. The author's exigency could have been different from that of the prophet Jeremiah presented in Jeremiah 21-24. This is a quite separate question from that of

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<sup>118</sup> Jeremiah can be considered as the creative mind who brings them all together into a single persuasive discourse to his contemporaries. In this sense we regard Jeremiah as the author – the one who is speaking or writing the discourse. In narrative theory, thus, we think the prophet Jeremiah is the “implied author” of the chapters and his audience is the “implied audience.” This means that for the purposes of our rhetorical analysis of Jeremiah 21-24 we do not have to approach the text from the point of view of the “real author” whose world can be different from that of the discourse in Jeremiah 21-24.

<sup>119</sup> This is partly suggested by the first-person reference in 24:4.



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<sup>120</sup> The author's purpose may have been similar to that of the author of Kings, i.e. to show that the people failed to listen to the word of God from his prophet (in this case Jeremiah), and therefore he judged them. He has a further purpose, however, namely to offer them a future hope (cf. Jer 24:7 and the New Covenant in 31:31-34).

## 2.6 The Rhetorical Arrangement of Jeremiah 21-24

Most of the prophetic speeches are polemical in their nature. The prophet tries to persuade the audience to change their stand to agree with the prophet's point of view on issues under dispute. In the prophetic books, we notice that prophetic messages were often rejected by the people, kings, high officials, priests or other prophets. Jeremiah's prophecies were no exception. The prophecy could have been easily dismissed by the parties unless the authority of the prophecy had been accepted. Thus the prophet attempts to bring the audience to agree with his prophecy in agreement with the divine verdict. The same is true of the case of dispute among the rival prophets. The prophet presents the case in such a way as to persuade the audience in the way that he wants. The persuasive argument is an essential aspect of the communication.

Most Jeremiah scholars acknowledge the diversity of literary materials in the book of Jeremiah. When originally independent prophecies of Jeremiah were edited into the present form in their current location, they may have acquired a new meaning in the present form of the book. Whether the present form of the book of Jeremiah is a product of the prophet Jeremiah himself or a Deuteronomistic editor in the later times, there still exists a compelling need to present a persuasive argument concerning the dispute at stake in order to convince the immediate audience or the reader of the book. The extant book, therefore, acquires a rhetorical impetus in the way that it functions rhetorically in order to persuade its reader. Thus, the author of the book can make use of the art of persuasion to convince the audience in his or her

favor. He needs to present his case in the new context as convincingly as possible to the audience/reader.

Rhetorical means of persuasion are used as an effective mode of communication between the author and the reader with the medium of the text. Persuasive argument is at the core of rhetorical analysis. "Rhetorical study, in its strict sense, is concerned with the modes of persuasion."<sup>121</sup> Persuasion is clearly a sort of demonstration. Modes of persuasion are constructed by using the principles of classical rhetoric. The authors can build their case on the audience's knowledge of publicly known facts about the event under consideration. Using this knowledge to their advantage, they can adopt rhetorical devices in order to strengthen their persuasive argument.

As we have seen, the division of the rhetorical unit into sub-units of discourse is arranged according to the function of each part in the discourse. The basic six part structure of the literary arrangement in classical rhetoric is as follows:<sup>122</sup> 1) Prologue; 2) Narration; 3) Proposition; 4) Confirmation; 5) Refutation; 6) Epilogue.

Furthermore, rhetorical critics identify the genre of a rhetorical unit by its thematic characteristics and structural features. Classical rhetoric recognizes three types of rhetoric: judicial (forensic), deliberative (political), epideictic (ceremonial). Judicial

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<sup>121</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I. 1. 1354b

<sup>122</sup> Richard A. Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* (2nd ed.; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 171. Rhetorical theorists argue for various numbers of parts in a discourse, from two to seven. A discourse has two essential components: statement and argument. Some regard the four-part structure as the norm, others five or six.

speeches have the fullest conventional structure of rhetoric. Prophetic books attempt to present a persuasive argument in a situation of controversy to enable the reader to make a decision in the present or future. The prophetic books, therefore, may be deliberative or epideictic, depending on whether they require action (deliberative) or a change of way of thinking (epideictic). It can be hard to decide between these. In either case, however, there is, strictly speaking, no background information to be recited. Narration, thus, is not regarded as a necessary part of deliberative speech.<sup>123</sup> For deliberative speech, therefore, the ordering of argument is as follows: 1) Prologue; 2) Proposition; 3) Confirmation; 4) Refutation; 5) Epilogue.

Scholars also tend to agree that chapters 21-24 consist of oracles about the kings of Judah and prophets, although they divide chapters 21-24 into the smaller sub-units slightly differently. It is generally understood that 21:1-10 operates as an introduction to 21:11-23:40 (about the kings and the prophets). The section 21:11-23:8 is composed of oracles about the kings of Judah, וּלְבֵית מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה (21:11). The passage 23:9-40 is a self-enclosed block with the general theme of prophetic authority, לְנַבְאִים (23:9). 21:1-10 is a general statement of judgment, while 21:11-

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<sup>123</sup> “If there is narration at all, it will be of past events, the recollection of which is to help the hearers to make better plans for the future” (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, III. 16. 1417b). Nevertheless, even in deliberative and epideictic discourses, there often arise cases where the speaker feels a need to describe past events as a basis for decisions for the present and future. “Almost no rule about arrangement is inflexible. Anything ‘bends’ to the exigencies of the moment- to the demands, in order words, of the subject, or the kind of discourse, or the personality or ability of the writer, or the temper of the audience. Where so many adjustments may have to be made to the *ad hoc* situation, very few hard-and-fast precepts can be laid down” (Edward P. J. Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* [3rd ed.; New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990], 316-317).

23:8 is more specifically an indictment of the kings, and 23:9-40 is a specific judgment against the prophets.<sup>124</sup> In this study, we argue that chapters 21-24 are structured coherently in the present location according to a rhetorical purpose.

We propose that the literary unit of chapters 21-24 is structured according to the principle of the “rhetorical arrangement” of literary material. As rhetorical critics, we attempt to identify the intentional ordering of the material: Prologue (21:1-2); Proposition (21:3-10); Confirmation (21:11-23:8); Refutation (23:9-40); Epilogue (24:1-10). This rhetorical interpretation is different from previous methods of interpretation of Jeremiah 21-24. In chapter 21, the Prologue (21:1-2) informs the audience/reader about the subject of the discourse. The Prologue is followed by the Proposition (21:3-10) where a general statement of judgment is made. The assertion of judgment is made confidently and presented with a heightened authority of expression. The Proposition outlines the general statement that will be proved specifically in what follows. The general indictment in 21:3-10 is against the kings (21:3-7) and “the city” (21:8-10). The Confirmation (21:11-23:8) provides specific

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<sup>124</sup> Scholars have attempted to explain the underlying principle for the collection of oracles in chapters 21-24. Brueggemann contends that “[t]he material on kings and prophets are not in the first instant related to the general indictment of chapter 21,” however, “the theme is common enough to make sense out of the placement of the materials” (Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 181). Robert P. Carroll divides chapters 21-24 into 21:1-10 (Preface), 21:11-23:6 (Kings), 23: 7-8 (Restoration), 23:9-40 (Prophets), and 24:1-10 (Conclusion) (*Jeremiah: A Commentary* [OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986]). Carroll attempts to explain on thematic grounds the placement of the collections about the kings and the prophets in their present location of the book: “As a preface to the cycle addressed to the royal house (21.11-23.6) it may be designed to associate the royal leadership with the fall of Jerusalem in such a manner that responsibility for the disaster may be laid at the door of the royal house (cf. 23.2). A similar intention may lie behind the inclusion of the cycle against the prophets (23.9-40) in this block. Kings and prophets are the guilty men. They are the ones responsible for what befell city and people” (*Jeremiah*, 404).

proofs against the kings in contrast to the general indictments made in the Proposition (21:3-10). The confirmation section consists of a series of headings, treating various material topics. Specific evidence is presented against those who were kings in the last years of Judah (Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah). The section 23:9-40 comprises the refutation section of the rhetorical arrangement. After presenting his argument in the Proposition and the Confirmation with the prophecies of the prophet Jeremiah concerning the kings, the author challenges in the Refutation (23:9-40) the opposing views of the other prophets. In the proposition and confirmation sections, the author introduces briefly the prophecies of the prophet Jeremiah, which are critical toward the kings and the people. This is contrary to the popular view concerning the fate of the king and the nation in times of war in the history of Israel. The author feels the need to suppress the rival views of other prophets in order to reinforce his argument for the prophecies of the prophet Jeremiah. The author at this point addresses something about the (false) prophets who were prophesying contrary to Jeremiah. Thus, the author needs to justify his view by giving the prophecies of Jeremiah against the competing views of other prophets. We argue that 23:9-40, a self-contained unit of the “oracle against the prophets,” is intentionally placed in the present form of the book, as is the Refutation in the rhetorical arrangement of chapters 21-24, and it is not just there because its theme is similar to the theme of the “oracle against the kings” in 21:11-23:8, as some suggest. The refutation section 23:9-40 is not out of place far away from the narratives of the same theme “the oracles against the false prophets” in chapters 28 and 29. One result of our application of rhetorical theory to chapters 21-24 will be to explain why this passage occurs in this position. In the arrangement of

literary material in the rhetorical unit chapters 21-24, the author puts the refutation immediately before he concludes his argument in the epilogue. The author needs to consolidate his position as a qualified and authoritative prophet over other prophets. A radical judgment against Judah and Jerusalem is summarized in the epilogue. As a conclusion to his argument, the author presents in the Epilogue (24:1-10) that God is doing something radical concerning Judah and Jerusalem. The emotional appeal to the audience reaches its peak with Jeremiah's declaration about the fate of those who "remain in this land or live in Egypt" and "the exiles from Judah." Jeremiah is offering a promise to Judah through the Babylonian exiles, instead of through "the survivors from Jerusalem" as might have been expected.

## Chapter 3 Prologue (21:1-2)

### 3.1 The Rhetorical Strategy of the Prologue

It is argued that 21:1-10 was placed far away from the other narratives of the similar subjects about the king's consultation with Jeremiah and the consequences of the Babylonian invasion during the final years of Judah.<sup>1</sup> We argue that both the overall structure of Jeremiah 21-24 and the individual oracles are illuminated by the theory of rhetoric. Jeremiah 21:1-2 functions as the Prologue to the rhetorical unit Jeremiah 21-24. The Prologue (21:1-2) introduces the audience/reader to the historical situation of the discourse. The king's representatives are seeking Jeremiah's intercession with the Lord on behalf of the king. All the human strategy and policy apparently failed to protect Jerusalem from the advancing Babylonian

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<sup>1</sup> Various source-critical and redaction-critical attempts have been made to explain the seemingly unusual chronological order of literary materials in Jeremiah 21-24 as they now stand in the book of Jeremiah. Chapter 21, thus, does not appear to pose a chronological problem at first glance, considering that the material immediately prior to chapter 21 is not dated. However, the events in 21:1-10 apparently took place in 588 BC about a decade after the deportation of Jehoiachin in 597 BC as portrayed in the narrative in chapter 24. The present location of the section 21:1-10 is considered to be out of place. The arrangement of 21:1-10 is explained by its relation to the section, which it follows (thus, chapter 20) and which it precedes (thus, 21:11-23:8). First, it has been suggested that the passage 21:1-10 is placed here in the present location because of the name Pashhur in 20:1-6, although the two occurrences of the name Pashhur obviously refer to different men (Pashhur ben Immer in chapter 20; Pashhur ben Malkijah in chapter 21). The same name Pashhur is used as a keyword to connect two originally independent passages 21:1-10 and 20:1-6. Another approach is argued by Thiel who explains the position of 21:1-10 in its present location by connecting it to what follows it. The Deuteronomistic editor composed it as an introduction to the oracles to the kings and the prophets in chapters 21-24 (Thiel, *Jeremia 1-25*, 230-237).



army. Thus, the mythical “wonderful acts” are invoked as the last resort (21:2). This desperate situation of national crisis gives rise to the rhetorical situation of the unit.

First, according to the theory of rhetoric, the speaker in the prologue of the rhetorical unit presents his or her material to inform the audience of the subject of the discourse, instead of bringing the audience abruptly into the main body of the discourse. Guiding the audience’s attention toward his or her intention, the speaker is “seeking to convince the audience that the subject of our discourse is worthy of their attention. We can render our subject attractive to the audience by showing that it is important, or momentous, or relevant to the interests of the audience, or startling, or pleasant.”<sup>2</sup> The Prologue exists to show that the subject of discourse is important, curious, or interesting to the audience.

Secondly, the Prologue in classical rhetoric disposes the audience to be receptive to what the speaker is going to say. In the Prologue, the speaker may need to establish his authority by convincing the audience that he is qualified to speak on the subject. Thus the speaker is trying to charm the audience with an ethical appeal. Here the speaker also may counteract the audience’s prejudices, misconceptions or hostility either about the speaker or about the subject of the speaker’s discourse. Otherwise, the speaker may arouse hostility in the audience if the point of view commonly held by the audience is against that which the speaker is going to present in the discourse.<sup>3</sup> With the Prologue, the author prepares the audience/reader to

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<sup>2</sup> Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, 283.

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, III. 14. 1415a, “You may use any means you choose to make your hearer receptive; among others, giving him a good impression of your character,

accept his prophetic authority. A desperate situation forced the king to seek divine advice. Divine intention is known only through the prophet Jeremiah. "Yahweh's word to Zedekiah during the siege was of central importance to the community."<sup>4</sup> Here with prophetic authority, the prophet is laying the foundation for the prophetic messages, which follow in 21:3-10 (Proposition). Thus the prophet is claiming his own authority in the beginning of the discourse. What the prophet proclaims are indeed divine words ("The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord," 21:1a). This kind of case in 21:1-2 is often observed in the introduction section of a literary unit in prophetic books.

Jeremiah's prophetic authority is claimed against potential opposing views. In 21:1-2 the prophet is preempting any possible rejection by the audience/reader of his discourse. The prophet is suggesting the divine origin of the oracle. The audience is urged to accept his oracle as the word of the Lord. Thus here the prophet is establishing his credibility, invoking the divine origin of the discourse and the authority of the office of prophecy. It is important for the prophet to establish in the Prologue his authority by convincing the audience that he is a true prophet, because "the word from the Lord came to Jeremiah." By presenting the rulers, king and his officials, in submission to the prophet's authority, the author is urging the audience to submit themselves to this same authority. The audience is now prepared to be more receptive to the authority of the prophecy of Jeremiah. The audience has not

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which always helps to secure his attention. He will be ready to attend to anything that touches himself and to anything that is important, surprising, or agreeable; and you should accordingly convey to him the impression that what you have to say is of this nature."

<sup>4</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 570.

been informed of what the prophecy will be, but is eager to hear the following oracles because of this rhetorical technique.

### The Structure of 21:1-2

Messenger Speech Form	Jeremiah 21:1-2
The Report of the Sending	1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur the son of Malkijah, and Zephaniah the priest, the son of Maaseiah,
Introduction to the Commissioning	saying,
Messenger's Speech	2 "Inquire, please, of the Lord on behalf of us, for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon is fighting against us; perhaps the Lord will act for us according to all his wonderful acts, and will make him withdraw from us."

### 3.2 Detailed Analysis of 21:1-2

1 The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur the son of Malkijah, and Zephaniah the priest, the son of Maaseiah, saying,  
 2 "Inquire, please, of the Lord on behalf of us, for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon is fighting against us; perhaps the Lord will act for us according to all his wonderful acts, and will make him withdraw from us."

1 הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר-הָיָה אֶל-יִרְמְיָהוּ מֵאֵת יְהוָה בְּשִׁלְחַת אֵלָיו הַמֶּלֶךְ צִדְקִיָּהוּ  
 אֶת-פָּשְׁחוֹר בֶּן-מִלְכִּיָּה וְאֶת-צְפַנְיָה בֶּן-מַעֲשִׂיָּה הַכֹּהֵן לֵאמֹר:  
 2 דַּרְשׁ-נָא בְעַדְנוּ אֶת-יְהוָה כִּי נִבּוּכַדְרֶאצַּר מֶלֶךְ-בָּבֶל נִלְחָם עָלֵינוּ  
 אוֹלֵי יַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה אוֹתָנוּ כְּכָל-נִפְלְאוֹתָיו וַיַּעֲלֶה מֵעַלֵּינוּ: 8

The rhetorical unit Jeremiah 21-24 begins with an introductory formula *הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר-הָיָה אֶל-יִרְמְיָהוּ*<sup>5</sup>, and the introductory formula is followed by a temporal phrase with the closing infinitive *לֵאמֹר*. The opening statement using a form of the messenger-sending procedure in 21:1-2 describes the situation of the

<sup>5</sup> The division of the macro-structure of chapters 1-25 is marked by the presence of the introductory formulas *הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר-הָיָה אֶל-יִרְמְיָהוּ* (7:1; 11:1; 18:1; 21:1; 25:1) and *וַיְהִי דְבַר-יְהוָה אֵלַי* (2:1).

event. King Zedekiah sent his officials, including Zephaniah the priest, to Jeremiah to inquire of divine oracles.<sup>6</sup> 21:1-2 comprises the Prologue in the Rhetorical Arrangement of the speech. The Prologue (21:1-2) is presented as an inquiry by the king's officials to which the Proposition (21:3-10) is given as Jeremiah's reply.

Form-critically speaking, the introductory formula marks the beginning of the messenger-sending procedure. By identifying the sender of his message as the Lord, the prophet claims his prophecy to be a prophetic oracle, the word from the Lord. The association of the "word" (דְּבַר) with the activity of a prophet is one of the central features of the Old Testament. Thus discerning the will of God is chiefly linked to the prophetic office, while teaching the "law" (תּוֹרָה) is one of the major functions of the priestly office.<sup>7</sup> The word from the Lord is of importance to the king and the people during the siege.

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<sup>6</sup> Jer 21:1-7 is dealing with an event similar to that in Jer 37:3-10. Instead of Pashhur son of Malkijah and the priest Zephaniah as in 21:1, Zedekiah sent Jehucal son of Shelemiah and the priest Zephaniah to Jeremiah the prophet in 37:3 for prophetic intercession. The historicity of the event in 21:1-7 and its literary relationship with 37:3-10 has been under scholarly dispute. Based on source-critical and historiographical assumptions, it is often claimed that 21:1-7 is derived from 37:3-10, which is considered to belong to Source C (Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 116-117) or a Deuteronomistic composition (Thiel, *Jeremia 1-25*, 231). However, McKane points out the different foci of 21:1-7 and 37:3-10. The theme in 37:3-10 is focused on the fate of Zedekiah while the message in 21:1-7 is concentrated on the certain fate of Jerusalem that Jerusalem will be burned down and destroyed. Thus, "the case for the literary interdependence of 21:1-7 and 37:3-10 is weak" (McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 493).

<sup>7</sup> Jer 18; Deut 33:10; Mal 2:7; 2 Chr 15:3; Ezek 44:23; cf. also Hag 2:10-14. Walther Zimmerli (*Old Testament Theology in Outline* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978], 95-99) lists the work of the priesthood as: obtaining oracles from God through Thummim and Urim (Deut 33:8); instruction of Torah (Deut 33:10a; Ezek 44:23); offering sacrifice (Deut 33:10b); liturgical blessing (Num 6:22ff.); judicial function (Exod 22:7-8).

It is not uncommon for the king to seek advice from prophets when Israel is at war with foreign nations.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the king seeking guidance from Jeremiah the prophet when Jerusalem is under siege by the Babylonians is not unusual. We see, below, the irony of this when compared with chapter 20. The prophet Jeremiah is presented as an important person with whom the king and his officials are seeking a consultation during the crisis. Thus, the status of Jeremiah's authority is strengthened by the officials' visitation to the prophet Jeremiah. However, the change in Jeremiah's fortune is not explained at all in the text: neither why Jeremiah was beaten by the priest Pashhur in the first place (20:1-6) nor, later, why he was sought by the king's officials, including another Pashhur, for his intercession with the Lord at a time of national crisis which eventually led to the end of Judah (21:1-2). The unusual nature of this situation in the Prologue (21:1-2) is further accentuated by the unexpected answer in the response from the prophet Jeremiah in the Proposition (21:3-10). Something contrary to the conventional understanding of the historical situation will take place in the following section.

The person **בֶּן־מִלְכָּיָהוּ פִּשְׁחֹר** (21:1) appears to be different from the person **בֶּן־אִמֵּר הַכֹּהֵן פִּשְׁחֹר** (Jer 20:1). Nonetheless, the rhetorical effect of the

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<sup>8</sup> Alexander Rofé, *Introduction to the Prophetic Literature* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 75: "Consulting the prophet before going to war seems to have been customary for many generations. ... [C]onsulting the prophet was the alternative to seeking the Lord through a priest carrying the Ephod. Either means was a standard procedure before going out to battle. But conferring with prophets outlasted the use of Urim which was discontinued at the beginning of the monarchic period (a last mention is made in 2 Sam. 5). ... Before going to war, and occasionally even during the war, the king sought the advice of a prophet. King Hezekiah sent to Isaiah (2 Kgs 19.17)."

word play on the name פִּשְׁחוֹר is still intended.<sup>9</sup> In 20:1-6, Jeremiah then changed the name פִּשְׁחוֹר to מְנוֹר מְסָבִיב, which carries a negative meaning of “terror on every side” (20:3). Regardless of the real identity of בֶּן-מִלְכָּיָהּ (v. 1), the rhetorical effect intended here is obtained through the reversal of the meaning of the name itself, from “fruitful all around” to “terror in every side.” Regardless of the real identity of בֶּן-מִלְכָּיָהּ (v. 1), the impression produced by the name פִּשְׁחוֹר may be compared with the dreadful image of judgment in 24:9: “And I will make them a terror and an evil for all the kingdoms of the earth, as a reproach and a byword, a taunt and a curse in all places where I shall scatter them.”

It also presents an irony because Jeremiah was sought after for advice although Jeremiah was antagonistic toward the leaders of the political establishment: the king, priests, and other prophets.<sup>10</sup> The prophets in general have been perceived

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<sup>9</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 544. Holladay suggests that Jeremiah makes a pun with the first part of פִּשְׁחוֹר into the participle פִּשׁ of פִּישׁ “be fruitful” which is an Aramaic translation of the Hebrew word פָּרָה “bear fruit, be fruitful.” And the second part of the name is deformed into the Aramaic word סְחוֹר “surrounding.” If Holladay’s analysis is accepted, Jeremiah makes use of a play on words with the name פִּשְׁחוֹר turning into the Aramaic פִּשׁ-סְחוֹר “fruitful all around” in a positive sense of meaning. The rhetorical effect intended is the reversal of the meaning of the name itself, from “fruitful all around” to “terror in every side.” The name change is fully in accordance with other inversions of word order and reversals or contrasts of themes in the immediate context and the whole section of Jer 21-24.

<sup>10</sup> The irony is heightened by the location of the section 21:1-10 where it now stands in the book of Jeremiah. Rudolph noticed a contrast in 21:1-2 from the preceding chapter. There exists in 21:1-2 a sudden change in the attitude of the king’s officials toward Jeremiah. In 20:1-6 Jeremiah was abused and mistreated by the priest Pashhur on account of the divine words. Jeremiah in 21:1-2 is now sought after for consultation by the king and his officials, including Pashhur, for the sake of the divine words at the time of national crisis (Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 116). The book of

in the Old Testament to be critical of the kings<sup>11</sup> and the prophet Jeremiah was no exception. Pashhur in 21:1-2 is different from Pashhur in 20:1-6. But the same name may have a rhetorical effect. Agreeing with the argument developed by Rudolph for the present location of 21:1-10 in the book, McKane contends that 21:1 was “deliberately concocted” to secure this kind of effect.<sup>12</sup> The irony and contrast are striking enough to catch the attention of the reader. The reader is intrigued by the contrast between the persecuted prophet and the prophet whose advice is sought by the king.

The historical context is the encounter of the king’s officials with the prophet Jeremiah during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem in 588/7 BC. The historical context of the occasion is specified in reference to Zedekiah and Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon.<sup>13</sup> The expression **בְּעֵדְנוּ אֶת־יְהוָה** in v. 2 is a

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Jeremiah includes other narratives that describe the occasions of delegations, consultations and interviews between the royal house and Jeremiah (e.g. 34:1-7; 37:1-10; 38:14-23). Such a contrast is lost “in account in 38.1-6, where Pashhur ben Malchaiah is among the princes who have Jeremiah thrown in the cistern, but it may reflect 37.3 with the substitution of Pashhur (because of 20.1-6?) for Jehucal ben Shelemiah” (Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 407).

<sup>11</sup> Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 187, “The tradition of Jeremiah takes a critical view both toward specific kings and toward the foundational claims of the institution of monarchy.”

<sup>12</sup> William McKane, “The Construction of Jeremiah Chapter XXI,” *VT* 32 (1982), 59.

<sup>13</sup> The name **נְבוּכַדְרֶאֱצַר** occurs here, in 21:2, for the first time in the book of Jeremiah. Nebuchadrezzar (605-562 BC) is a son and successor of Nabopolassar (626-605 BC), the first king of the Neo-Babylonian Empire (626-539 BC). The spelling of Nebuchadrezzar **נְבוּכַדְרֶאֱצַר** is used throughout Jeremiah except in chaps. 27:1-29:3 where Nebuchadnezzar **נְבוּכַדְנֶאֱצַר** is used (27:6, 8, 20; 28:3, 11, 14; 29:1, 3). Ezekiel favors Nebuchadrezzar while Daniel regularly uses the form of Nebuchadnezzar. Both the spelling of **נְבוּכַדְנֶאֱצַר** and **יְרֵמְיָהוּ**, instead of **נְבוּכַדְרֶאֱצַר** and **יְרֵמְיָהוּ**, occur only in 27:1-29:3 of the book of Jeremiah.

conventional prophetic speech formula asking for a divine oracle. The king's officials plead with the prophet Jeremiah for special prophetic intercession.<sup>14</sup> The imperative **יִרְשָׁנָה** is more than just a directive to search for information regarding the circumstance. The inquiry expects an oracle of reassurance from the Lord with Jeremiah's intercession, which should result hopefully in the withdrawing of the Babylonians from the siege of Jerusalem. The Lord performed his "wonderful acts" during national crises in the history of Israel. The king's officials and the audience as well are expecting that the Lord is still faithful to his people in this crisis. Jeremiah needs to persuade them otherwise. This section shows the rhetorical exigency of the rhetorical unit.

The phrase **כְּכֹל-נִפְלְאוֹתָיו** "according to all his wonderful acts" in v. 2 may mean God's "marvelous acts" in the history of Israel.<sup>15</sup> Certain **נִפְלְאוֹת** in a similar historical situation of the past are presumed to be known to both the author and the audience. With "according to all his wonderful acts," the king's officials are probably referring to Isaiah's intercessory prayer and God's timely intervention for

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<sup>14</sup> Samuel E. Balentine, "The Prophet as Intercessor: A Reassessment," *JBL* 103 (1984): 161-173. Against the widely held belief of prophetic intercession as a major role of prophet, Samuel Balentine argues, the specific reference of the intercessory function of the prophetic office is limited to only a few occasions in the Old Testament and these mostly to the prophet Jeremiah.

<sup>15</sup> For further discussion of the OT outlook on the "marvelous acts" of God, see Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (ET; Vol. 2; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), 162-167. The term **נִפְלְאוֹת** is used predominantly in the Psalms.



Hezekiah and for Jerusalem with miraculous acts.<sup>16</sup> The audience/reader is expected to think particularly of the deliverance of Jerusalem on the verge of immediate collapse from the invasion of the Assyrian king Sennacherib in the event of 701 BC.<sup>17</sup> The situation is similar to the previous historical event and may be still remembered by the audience in the community. With כָּכָל־נִפְלְאָתָיו, thus, the audience's attention is brought to the outcome of the unnamed previous event. Thus the audience would think that the city could not fall. This illustrates that there really was something about which Jeremiah needed to persuade the audience.

The subject of the verb יַעֲלֶה in the last phrase (וַיַּעֲלֶה מֵעֲלֵינוּ) of v. 2 can be either the Lord or Nebuchadnezzar, depending on whether one takes it as Qal or Hiphil. In the first clause in v. 2, Zedekiah's officials are the subject of the imperative verb שִׁרְשֵׁר, while the subject of the causal clause with כִּי in v. 2 is Nebuchadnezzar. The Lord is the subject of the clause starting with the word אֱלֹהֵי. The verb יַעֲלֶה in the last phrase (וַיַּעֲלֶה מֵעֲלֵינוּ) of v. 2 can be grammatically either Qal or Hiphil. The verb עָלָה ("go up") with the proposition compound מֵעַל

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<sup>16</sup> 2 Kgs 19:35-36; Isa 37:36-37. Artur Weiser raises the possibility of another interpretation by pointing out the plural aspect of "all his wonderful acts": the great feats from the cultic tradition of salvation history. Thus he suggests that both the acts of 701 BC and the saving acts of the cult can be accepted for the meaning of "according to all his wonderful acts" (Artur Weiser, *Das Buch Jeremia, Kapitel 1-25,14* [8 Auflage; ATD 20; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1981], 178).

<sup>17</sup> 2 Kgs 18:17-20:19; Isaiah 36-37.

("from upon") often refers to "an army retiring from a country or raising a siege."<sup>18</sup>

Thus the clause **וַיַּעֲלֶה מֵעֲלֵינוּ** has a military connotation.

If the verb **יַעֲלֶה** is understood to be Qal, then the subject of the phrase (**וַיַּעֲלֶה מֵעֲלֵינוּ**) is Nebuchadnezzar. Thus, the phrase is translated as "and he [Nebuchadnezzar] may withdraw from us."<sup>19</sup> If the verb **יַעֲלֶה** is Hiphil, then it is translated as "cause to withdraw" with "the Lord" as subject. The Lord is the subject, just as in the phrase immediately precedes it: "and he [the Lord] will make him [Nebuchadnezzar] withdraw from us."<sup>20</sup> Holladay explores the translation of the verb **וַיַּעֲלֶה** as follows: "The verb **וַיַּעֲלֶה** as transmitted (simple **י** with full imperfect) attracts attention. One must understand the simple **י** to indicate that the action is identical with the previous verb, 'Yahweh will act.' The same sequence of forms in 26:3 suggests that 'perhaps' (**אולי**) attracts this syntax."<sup>21</sup> The sequence of action is that "perhaps" the Lord will "act for us" and the Lord will cause Nebuchadnezzar to "withdraw from us." By making "the Lord" the subject of the verb in the last phrase in v. 2, the author is able to emphasize the divine initiative. Thus, the audience can expect the same or similar outcome from the previous events. The Lord will make

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<sup>18</sup> BDB, 758. 2 Sam 10:14; 20:21, 22; 1 Kgs 15:19; 2 Kgs 3:27; 12:18; 18:14; Jer 21:2; 37:5, 11.

<sup>19</sup> NIV, NASV, Rudolph, Weiser, McKane, and Craigie *et al.*

<sup>20</sup> RSV, Holladay, Carroll, and Bright.

<sup>21</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 571.

Nebuchadrezzar withdraw from Jerusalem, as the Assyrians did at the time of Hezekiah.

Here is an irony. The “wonderful acts” of the past are invoked to overcome the current crisis. The Prologue in 21:1-2 presents the exigency – the rhetorical tension – concerning whether all his “wonderful acts” are still effective in this new historical situation. The question about the relevancy of all his “wonderful acts” to the current crisis is further enhanced by the ambiguity of the form of the verb in the last phrase (וַיַּעַלְהָ מֵעֵלֵינוּ) of v. 2. The word אֱלֹהֵי, however, undermines the potency of the “wonderful acts.” If the “wonderful acts” are linked, in the audience/reader’s thought, with the Exodus event, however, one can observe the contrast between the “wonderful acts” in the past, which have the image of the Exodus in view, and what would be later realized by the exile to Babylon.

### 3.3 Summary to 21:1-2

In the passage the historical situation is the imminent invasion of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. In addition to Bitzer’s definition of the rhetorical situation as “a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigency,” Kennedy proposes that “time and place” be included in the aspects of exigency in the rhetorical situation.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the parenthesis in vv. 1b-2 adds the historical dimension to the concept of rhetorical situation defined by Bitzer. The Prologue presents not only the historical background but also the background for the

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<sup>22</sup> Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 34-36.

rhetorical situation. The audience/reader is not directly ushered to the prophetic sayings. Rather the Prologue (21:1-2) prepares the reader for the oracle by providing the background information for the occasion. The rhetorical situation is the need for Jeremiah to persuade his audience of their false hopes. The Prologue keeps the audience (and the reader) curious about what is being proclaimed in the Proposition (21:3-10) which begins to address the exigency of the rhetorical unit Jeremiah 21-24.

## Chapter 4 Proposition (21:3-10)

### 4.1 The Rhetorical Strategy of the Proposition

The Prologue (21:1-2) specifies the occasion of inquiry by the officials of King Zedekiah. Verses 3-10 are Jeremiah's reply to the inquiry. The inquiry expects positive assurance from the prophet at the time of crisis with Jerusalem under siege by the Babylonian army. The underlying belief at the time could have been the reassurance of the promise with the Davidic covenant. The Davidic covenant means the city could not fall. The audience/reader is struck by the surprising prophetic proclamation in the Proposition (21:3-10). The optimistic expectation is challenged by Jeremiah's prophecy that the city will fall. The judgment oracles in the Proposition present the constraints of the rhetorical situation in the rhetorical unit chapters 21-24. At the heart of the exigency is the question of the continuity of the Davidic covenant promise at the time of national crisis with Jerusalem under siege by the Babylonians. The implication is clearly that Jeremiah regarded the popular trust in the Davidic covenant as misplaced. The audience is perhaps already against Jeremiah's prophecy and not disposed to listen to his prophecy. The Proposition presents a need for Jeremiah to persuade the audience by resolving the exigency.

In many rhetorical situations the speaker will be found to face one overriding *rhetorical problem*. His audience is perhaps already prejudiced against him and not disposed to listen to anything he may say; or the audience may not perceive him as having the authority to advance the claims he wishes to make; or what he wishes to say is very complicated and thus hard to follow, or so totally different from what the audience expects that they will not immediately entertain the possibility of its truth. This problem is often especially visible at the

beginning of a discourse and conditions the contents of the proem or the beginning of the proof.<sup>1</sup>

Jeremiah pronounces judgments with a heightened authority of expression against the king and the people. The Proposition does not explain the judgments in detail. It is characteristic of a proposition that it announces judgment briefly and confidently. Ethos and pathos are stronger in the Proposition than logos.

#### 4.2 Detailed Analysis of 21:3-10

		Jeremiah 21:3-7
Report of the Sending		3 Then Jeremiah said to them
Commissioning of the Messenger		Thus you shall say to Zedekiah
Messenger Formula		4 Thus says the Lord God of Israel
Announcement of Judgment	Intervention of God	Behold, I am going to turn back the weapons of war which are in your hands, with which you are fighting against the king of Babylon and against the Chaldeans who are besieging you, from the outside of the wall; and I shall gather them into the midst of this city. 5 And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and a strong arm, in anger and rage and great wrath. 6 And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast;
	Results of Intervention	They will die of a great plague.
	Intervention of God	7 "And afterwards," declares the Lord, "I will give Zedekiah king of Judah, his servants, and the people who survive in this city from the plague, the sword, and the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their foes, and into the hand of those who seek their lives
	Results of Intervention	and he will smite them with the edge of the sword. He will not pity on them nor spare nor have compassion."

3 Then Jeremiah said to them, "Thus you shall say to Zedekiah"

3 וַיֹּאמֶר יְרֵמְיָהוּ אֲלֵיהֶם כֹּה תֹאמְרֵן אֶל-צִדְקִיָּהוּ:

21:3-10 is Jeremiah's reply as a messenger of God to the inquiry of Zedekiah's officials on behalf of Zedekiah.<sup>2</sup> We recognize certain stylistic features of

<sup>1</sup> Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 36.

prophetic oracles in vv. 3-10.<sup>3</sup> Verse 3 consists of the report of the sending the messenger and the commissioning of the messenger.<sup>4</sup> The report of sending the messenger identifies who is speaking to whom. The messenger was commissioned by the transmitter (sender) of the message. In 21:3-10, the sending of the messenger is repeated at the beginning of each oracle vv. 3 and 8: **כֹּה תֹאמְרוּן אֶל-צִדְקִיָּהוּ** (v. 3) and **וְאֶל-הָעָם הַזֶּה תֹאמַר** (v. 8). The different parts of the message are recorded either in the delivery (vv. 3b-7) or the committal (vv. 8-10).<sup>5</sup> Presented with its own

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<sup>2</sup> There are some arguments about the literary cohesiveness of 21:1-10 and the historicity of its description of the event. Its literary relationship with 37:3-10 is also disputed. Some claim that there is a problem of coherence between 21:6 and 21:7 (McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 494), and between 21:1-7 and 21:8-10 (Bright, *Jeremiah*, 215-217; Thiel, *Jeremia 1-25*, 235; Weiser, *Das Buch Jeremia, Kapitel 1-25*, 14, 179).

<sup>3</sup> See the section 2.4 above.

<sup>4</sup> Van Dyke Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 494. The clause **וַיֹּאמֶר יְרֵמְיָהוּ אֲלֵיהֶם** indicates this is a report by the compiler. The compiler usually presents only either the committal of the message by God to the prophet or its delivery by the prophet to his audience, not both. The reader of the book, however, is expected to realize that both have taken place. See the commissioning of the messenger in the basic form of the messenger speech suggested by Westermann (*Basic Forms of Prophetic Speeches*, 101. For example, **כֹּה תֹאמְרוּן לְאֲדָנָי לְעֵשׂוֹ**, Gen 31:5b).

<sup>5</sup> The word "committal" means the revelation of the oracle by the Lord to the prophet, while the "delivery" means the proclamation of the oracle by the prophet to the recipient. The oracle regarding the king Zedekiah (vv. 3b-7) is recorded only when it is delivered by the prophet to the king's officials, and the oracle regarding the people (vv. 8-10) is only recorded when committed by God to the prophet Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 21:3-7, the delivery of the oracle only is recorded: **כֹּה תֹאמְרוּן אֶל-צִדְקִיָּהוּ** (v. 3b). The verb "תֹּאמְרוּן" has the Qal, imperfect, 2nd person, masculine, plural form. The subject of the verb is the king's officials who were sent to Jeremiah by Zedekiah (v. 1). The content of the oracle (vv. 4-7) is delivered, through the intermediate agent (the king's officials), to the final addressee (Zedekiah) of the oracle. The prophet is delivering the oracle to the king's officials. The king's officials are the recipients of Jeremiah's oracle, although the oracle is concerning Zedekiah (vv. 3b-7). In vv. 8-10, however, the oracle is the record of the committal of the message to the prophet Jeremiah: **וְאֶל-הָעָם הַזֶּה תֹאמַר** (v. 8a). The verb **תֹּאמַר** is Qal, imperfect, 2nd person, masculine, singular. The subject of

dispatch, the two different parts of the message reflects a different setting and audience. In vv. 3b-7, Jeremiah is the one who delivers the oracle. The messengers are Zedekiah's officials who deliver the oracle to the addressee of the oracle. In vv. 8-10, however, the Lord is revealing an oracle to Jeremiah concerning the people.

4 "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: "Behold, I am going to turn back the weapons of war which are in your hands, with which you are fighting against the king of Babylon and against the Chaldeans who are besieging you, from the outside of the wall; and I shall gather them into the midst of this city. 5 And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and a strong arm, in anger and rage and great wrath. 6 And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast;" they will die of a great plague. 7 "And afterwards," declares the Lord, "I will give Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants and, the people who survive in this city from the plague, the sword, and the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their foes, and into the hand of those who seek their lives; and he will smite them with the edge of the sword. He will not pity on them nor spare nor have compassion."

4 כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
הֲנִי מִסֵּב אֶת־כְּלֵי הַמִּלְחָמָה אֲשֶׁר בְּיַדְכֶם אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם נֹלְחָמִים בָּם  
אֶת־מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל וְאֶת־הַכַּשְׂדִּים הַצָּרִים עֲלֵיכֶם מִחוּץ לַחֹמָה  
וְאֶסְפְּתִי אוֹתָם אֶל־תּוֹךְ הָעִיר הַזֹּאת:  
5 וְנִלְחַמְתִּי אֲנִי אֶתְכֶם בְּיַד נְטוּיָה וּבְזֵרוּעַ חֲזָקָה וּבְאֶף וּבְחֵמָה וּבְקֶצֶף גָּדוֹל:  
6 וְהִכִּיתִי אֶת־יוֹשְׁבֵי הָעִיר הַזֹּאת וְאֶת־הָאָדָם וְאֶת־הַבְּהֵמָה בְּדָבָר גָּדוֹל יָמָתוֹ:  
7 וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן נֹאֵם־יְהוָה אֲתָן אֶת־צַדִּיקְיָהוּ מֶלֶךְ־יְהוּדָה וְאֶת־עַבְדָּיו וְאֶת־הָעָם  
וְאֶת־הַנְּשָׂאִים בְּעִיר הַזֹּאת מִן־הַדָּבָר מִן־הַחֶרֶב וּמִן־הָרָעַב  
בְּיַד גְּבוּכַדְרֶאצַּר מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל וּבְיַד אִיבֵיהֶם וּבְיַד מִבְקָשֵׁי נַפְשָׁם  
וְהָכָם לְפִי־חֶרֶב לֹא־יָחוּס עֲלֵיהֶם וְלֹא יַחְמַל וְלֹא יִרְחַם:

The messenger formula כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה helps to identify the individual oracles within the larger collection in the book. The messenger formula יְהוָה כֹּה־אָמַר marks the beginning of the content of each prophetic oracle (21:4, 8, 12). The

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the verb is the prophet Jeremiah. God is committing the message regarding the people to Jeremiah.



messenger formulas, כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה and נְאֻם־יְהוָה, are a characteristic of prophetic literature and prophetic narratives.<sup>6</sup> The messenger's speech follows immediately the messenger formula.<sup>7</sup> The messenger formula authorizes the message to be the word of the sender. The prophetic speech is the word of the prophet, but it claims to be God's word. Using the messenger formula, the prophet claims that the origin of the prophetic word is God's word.<sup>8</sup> Both the messenger formulas are considered as a part of the prophetic message.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> One of stylistic features in Jeremiah 21-24 is the frequent appearance of the messenger formulas. The speech of the messenger is authorized by the messenger formula, כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה and נְאֻם־יְהוָה. כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה appears 14 times. It appears merely as כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה (21:8, 12; 22:1, 3, 6, 11, 18, 30; 23:15, 16; 24:8); with כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (21:4a, 23:2, 24:5); and with כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת (23:15, 16). נְאֻם־יְהוָה occurs no less than 24 times in Jeremiah.

<sup>7</sup> Reading prophetic oracles introduced by the messenger formula, we often wonder who speaks, and to whom he speaks. The addressee is identified by the dispatch of the messenger speech form. However, it is difficult to distinguish the actual word of God from the prophet's own additional words. We cannot separate for sure the prophetic oracle into the word of God and the word of the prophet.

<sup>8</sup> Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 102: "In the process of sending a message, then, the messenger formula has a twofold place; it occurs two times: the sender first introduces his speech with it – that means that in the presence of the messenger who he sends he authorizes the speech that is introduced with this formula as *his* speech; then when the messenger has arrived, he introduces the message that has been entrusted to him with the formula, and in this way authorizes it as the speech of the person who had sent him."

<sup>9</sup> H. Wildberger, *Jahwewort und prophetische Rede bei Jeremia* (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1942), 48. Wildberger distinguishes the messenger formula כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה from the introductory formula הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר־הָיָה אֶל־יְרֵמְיָהוּ (21:1) in the prophetic oracles of Jeremiah. Wildberger argues that the introductory formula belongs to a later tradition, while the messenger formula is a structural element of prophetic oracles. The messenger formula כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה is itself already a component of the word of the Lord.

The messenger formula **יְהוָה אָמַר כֹּה** is directly followed by the messenger's speech with **הִנְנִי** (21:4, 8) and the verb in participle form.<sup>10</sup> The messenger's speech is a judgment oracle using the standard phrase **הִנְנִי**, "Behold I," plus the participle.<sup>11</sup> The "Behold" introduces the announcement of judgment with no connection to what went before. The grammatical connection between the reason and the announcement is missing. The reason for the judgment is understood from the inquiry. The announcement of judgment (21:4-7; 8-10) is a response to the inquiry (21:1-2).

The oracle 21:4-7 is a message regarding the fate of the king Zedekiah. The oracle first makes a general statement (21:4b-6) about the warriors fighting against the Babylonians on the occasion when the Babylonians besieged Jerusalem.<sup>12</sup> Contrary to the divine miraculous acts expected by Zedekiah and his officials, the Lord himself will fight against Israel. Contrary to the promise of Davidic covenant, "this city" will fall into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar.

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<sup>10</sup> There is sometimes a phrase, which identifies the addressee, between the messenger formula and the messenger's speech (22:6, 11, 18; 23:2, 15). For example, in 23:15 (**לְכֵן כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת עַל־הַנְּבִאִים הִנְנִי מֵאֲכִיל**), the addressee (**עַל־הַנְּבִאִים**) is identified after this phrase, then followed by the structure of "behold I" (**הִנְנִי**) plus the participle.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. 1:15; 6:21.

<sup>12</sup> The Neo-Babylonian (Chaldean) dynasty was founded in 626 BC by Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar. The Assyrian empire was brought down with the fall of Nineveh (612 BC) and Assur (610 BC) by the Chaldeans and Medes. The word "Chaldeans" (**הַכַּשְׁדִּים**) normally refers to the Babylonians in 2 Kgs 24-25 and in the book of Jeremiah.

The reference to the word “them” with the suffix in אֹתָם in the last clause of v. 4 is ambiguous. Some consider it to be in reference to הַכְּשָׁרִים.<sup>13</sup> Others view that כְּלֵי הַמִּלְחָמָה is what is meant by “them.”<sup>14</sup> The choice of reference for the word “them,” of course, results in different interpretations. If the Chaldeans are designated by “them,” then the Chaldeans would be brought into the city as the Lord will “gather them.” On the other hand, if the word “them” is referring to “the weapons of war,” then the Lord will turn back “the weapons of war” from the outside of the wall and gather “the weapons of war” into the center of this city.

The rhetorical device of metonymy is used for the phrase “the weapons of war” referring to the Judean soldiers.<sup>15</sup> The “weapons of war” are substituted for soldiers. This interpretation may explain the situation as follows: The Judean troops are fighting “from the outside of the wall” against the besieging Chaldeans. Then they will be forced to retreat from the outside of the wall “into the center of this city” as the Lord will gather them. Thus it is not the besieging Chaldeans that are being gathered “from the outside of the wall,” but “the weapons of war.” In v. 4 the use of the grammatical construction of synthetic parallelism, where the second phrase completes or supplements the first, means that it makes more sense when the reference to “them,” the suffix in אֹתָם, is interpreted as “the weapons of war.”

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<sup>13</sup> אֹתָם in v. 4 is not represented in the LXX. So there is no ambiguity. God’s action refers to the weapons. The LXX’s interpretation is adopted by Kimchi, Ehrlich, Volz and Nötscher.

<sup>14</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 498; Weiser, *Das Buch Jeremia Kapitel 1-25*, 14, 178; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 114.

<sup>15</sup> Bright, *Jeremiah*, 215; McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 498.

The image of war is in view in 21:1-10. The visual image of the scene in v. 4 is the reversal of the direction of the “weapons of war.” The “weapons of war” are directed outward towards the besieging invaders. The Judean soldiers are defending Jerusalem against the besieging Chaldeans. Now the “weapons of war” will be withdrawn into the city. It is the Lord who will turn the “weapons of war” inward. The Lord will fight against the Judean soldiers defending Jerusalem. The Lord’s own “weapons of war,” which are “an outstretched hand and a strong arm,” will strike down Jerusalem and its inhabitants. Thus the theme of this verse is connected with the following verses. The scene is a reversal of the concept of holy war. The concept of holy war is used against God’s own people.<sup>16</sup>

The imagery of the expression **בְּיָד נְטוּיָהּ וּבְזְרוּעַ חֲזָקָה** (v. 5) has in view the Exodus from Egypt by the deliverance act of the Lord. The Babylonians are invading Jerusalem. Contrary to the miraculous acts of the Lord as hoped for by Zedekiah and his officials, the Lord himself fights against Jerusalem and the people. The reversal of the role of the Lord as a divine warrior in holy war is consistent with the reversal action of the Lord in v. 4. The reversal of the holy war image is even enhanced by the inversion of the word order in the expression **בְּיָד נְטוּיָהּ וּבְזְרוּעַ חֲזָקָה** (v. 5). The theme of reversal is again here stressed rhetorically in the structure by the reversal of the attributes of arm and hand. Here one can notice a unique case of the reversal of the adjectives in arm and hand. The

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. 4:5-31.

expression **בְּיָד נְטוּיָה וּבְזָרוּעַ חֲזָקָה** usually occurs in the form of

**בְּיָד חֲזָקָה וּבְזָרוּעַ נְטוּיָה** in the Old Testament. When **יָד** and **זָרוּעַ** occur side by side together as a metaphor to indicate the power of the Lord, they normally take the form of **חֲזָקָה בְּיָד** and **זָרוּעַ נְטוּיָה**. Only in Jer 21:5 does the expression occur in the form of **יָד נְטוּיָה** and **זָרוּעַ חֲזָקָה**.<sup>17</sup> The image of reversal is a dominant theme in the rhetorical unit Jeremiah 21-24.

We can trace the reversal of the holy war theme, smoothly flowing throughout vv. 4-6. First in v. 4, the Lord is turning back the “weapons of war” from fighting against the invading Chaldeans and gathering the Judean soldiers into the center of the city. However, the walls around the city cannot protect Jerusalem from the Chaldeans. The dire situation under siege from the threatening invaders becomes worse. Against the customary expectation of the people, the Lord is fighting against Israel (v. 5). The emphasis and intensity of the holy war concept are introduced by the use of the metaphor (**בְּיָד נְטוּיָה וּבְזָרוּעַ חֲזָקָה**). The expression

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<sup>17</sup> Deut 4:34; 5:15; 26:8; Ps 136:12; Jer 32:21; Ezek 20:33, 34. There are four types of this formula appearing in the Old Testament: 1) **בְּיָד חֲזָקָה וּבְזָרוּעַ נְטוּיָה** (Deut 4:34; 5:15; 26:8; Ps 136:12; Jer 32:21; Ezek 20:33, 34); cf.

**אֶת־יָדוֹ הַחֲזָקָה וְזָרְעוֹ הַנְטוּיָה** (Deut 7:19); cf. **הַנְטוּיָה**.

(Deut 11:2); cf. **וַיִּדְדֶךָ הַחֲזָקָה וְזָרוּעֶךָ הַנְטוּיָה** (1 Kgs 8:42 and 2 Chr 6:32); 2)

**בְּזָרוּעַ נְטוּיָה וּבְשִׁפְטִים גְּדֹלִים** (Exod 6:6); 3) **בְּיָד נְטוּיָה וּבְזָרוּעַ חֲזָקָה** (Jer 21:5); 4) **בְּכַח גְּדוֹל וּבְזָרוּעַ נְטוּיָה** (2 Kgs 17:36); cf.

**בְּכַח הַגְּדוֹל וּבְזָרוּעֵי** (Deut 9:29; Jer 32:17); cf. **בְּכַח הַגְּדוֹל וּבְזָרוּעֶךָ הַנְטוּיָה** (Jer 27:5). Also see, Thiel, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 233; J. M. Berridge, *Prophet, People and Word of Yahweh. An Examination of Form and Content in the Proclamation of Prophet Jeremiah* (Basel Studies of Theology 4; Zürich, 1970), 117.

וְאֶת־הַבְּהֵמָה וְאֶת־הָאָדָם in v. 6 means everything and everyone in the city. The two elements represent totality. The prophet is bringing the audience to the highest intensity with hyperbolic exaggeration (וּבְאֵף וּבְחֵמָה וּבְקֶזֶף גָּדוֹל) and (וְאֶת־הַבְּהֵמָה וְאֶת־הָאָדָם) and thus is appealing to the emotions of his audience.

The intervention of the Lord is presented with “I”-speeches (with the Lord as subject) in vv. 4-6a.<sup>18</sup> Here, an adverse situation is building up momentum, heading for the climax. The intervention of the Lord leads to the final verdict. The result of the intervention of the Lord is given in a “they”-speech. The total destruction of the city is in view: בְּדָבָר גָּדוֹל יָמָתוּ “Of a great plague they will die” (v. 6b). The adverb phrase comes first before verb and subject. The inversion of the word order in בְּדָבָר גָּדוֹל יָמָתוּ stresses the unexpectedness and severity of the judgment.

Jeremiah’s answer to the inquiry regarding the incoming threat from the besieging Chaldeans reaches its climax with the dreadful prediction of the fate of the city and its inhabitants: “Of a great plague they will die.” Jeremiah’s prediction on the future of an upcoming event is dramatically contrasted with the opposite outcome of the miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem from the besieging Assyrian army. Devastation of the city with plague is contrasted with the miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem by the angel of the Lord from the besieging Assyrian army.<sup>19</sup> The plague was the “weapons of war” used for the destruction of the besieging Assyrian army in

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<sup>18</sup> Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 152.

<sup>19</sup> 2 Kgs 19:35; Isa 37:36. See Weiser, *Das Buch Jeremia, Kapitel 1-25*, 14, 179.

allowing the deliverance of Jerusalem in the previous siege. Here now the tables are turned. It is the plague that is to be used against the inhabitants of Jerusalem for their devastation, not for their deliverance. Jerusalem will now be delivered, not from, but into the hand of the Chaldeans (v. 7).

The subject of the three verbs **הָפָם**, **יַחַמֵּל** and **יִרְחֵם** in v. 7b is not clear at a first glance. The subject could be the Lord or Nebuchadnezzar or other unspecified enemies. There is a parallel description of v. 7b in 20:4b, where the subject of **וְהָפָם בְּחָרָב** is Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar is likely to be the subject of **וְהָפָם לְפִי-חָרָב** and following two clauses in v. 7b, although it is ambiguous.<sup>20</sup> In continuation from v. 6, the totality of death is stressed in v. 7.

The triadic structure is one of the most noticeable stylistic features in v. 7.<sup>21</sup>

There are four sets of threefold structure in v. 7:

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<sup>20</sup> Thiel, *Jeremia 1-25*, 207. In 20:4b it is clear that the subject of **וְהָפָם בְּחָרָב** is referring to the king of Babylon. If one follows this procedure we can draw the conclusion that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon is also the subject of the three verbs of in v. 7b: **לֹא-יָחוּס עֲלֵיהֶם וְלֹא יַחַמֵּל וְלֹא יִרְחֵם**.

<sup>21</sup> The triad structure of “sword,” “famine,” and “plague” occurs 17 times in the Old Testament. All these occurrences are in the prophetic books of Jeremiah (15 times) and Ezekiel (twice). They occur predominantly with the word order of “sword, famine, plague” (15 times: Jer 14:12; 21:9; 24:10; 27:8; 27:13; 29:17, 18; 32:24, 36; 38:2; 42:17; 42:22; 44:13; Ezek 6:11; 12:16) except in Jer 21:7 (“plague, sword, famine”) and Jer 34:17 (“sword, plague, famine”). This triad structure of “sword, famine, plague” is a unique feature of the book of Jeremiah. Binary structure using any two combination of the three elements occurs 14 times in the Old Testament. All but one in Exodus (Exod 5:3) occur in the prophetic books of Isaiah (once), Jeremiah (12 times), and Ezekiel (twice). The combination “sword” and “famine” occurs 11 times (9 times with the order of “sword and famine”: Jer 5:12; 14:13, 15 (twice); 16:4; 44:12 (twice), 18, 27; and twice with “famine and sword”: Isa 51:19; Jer

- (1) אֶת־צַדִּיקָהוּ מִלֶּךְ־יְהוּדָה וְאֶת־עֲבָדָיו וְאֶת־הָעָם  
 (2) מִן־הַדָּבָר מִן־הַחֶרֶב וּמִן־הַרְעָב  
 (3) בַּיּוֹם נְבוּכַדְרֶאֱצַר מִלֶּךְ־בָּבֶל וּבַיּוֹם אִיבִיָּהֶם וּבַיּוֹם מִבְּקָשֵׁי נַפְשָׁם  
 (4) לֹא־יָחוּס עֲלֵיהֶם וְלֹא יַחְמַל וְלֹא יִרְחַם

In each case, the same word is repeated at the beginning of successive phrases or clauses in conjunction with parallelism.<sup>22</sup> The member words are closely related with the similar meaning or theme. Three members are connected by the same verb or subject. The repetition produces a rhetorical effect of overwhelming inevitability.

In v. 7b, לֹא־יָחוּס עֲלֵיהֶם וְלֹא יַחְמַל וְלֹא יִרְחַם, the three different verbs (חָוַס “to have pity on”; חָמַל “to spare”; רָחַם “to have compassion”) have a similar meaning. The object עֲלֵיהֶם is stated only with the first verb and omitted in the second and the third clauses with the understanding that the omitted part of the first clause is to be read into the second clause. All three verbs are closely connected. The threefold structure enhances the image of severe destruction of the community.<sup>23</sup>

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14:16). In Ezek 7:15 the combination “famine” and “plague” occurs once in the order “famine” and “plague,” and once in reverse order. The only occurrence outside of the prophetic books of the binary structure of “plague” and “sword” is observed in Exod 5:3. All these occurrences of binary and triad structure of phrases are found in the prose sections except two occurrences (Jer 5:12 and Isa 51:19). In the binary and triad structures, “sword” and “famine” mostly occur side by side 27 times out of 31. They occur 25 times out of 27 in the order of “sword” and “famine.” The usage of binary and triad structures in the book of Jeremiah can be summarized as follows: In case of binary structure of these element, they are “sword” and “famine” and they occur in this order; With the triad structure, they mostly occur in the order of “sword,” “famine” and “plague.”

<sup>22</sup> The rhetorical device anaphora.

<sup>23</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 410: “In v. 7 the complete annihilation of everybody is again announced. This superfluous verse ... expressing in greater detail and by means of favoured triads of tradition (... 14.2; ... 13.14) the totality of death facing the



### The Structure of 21:8-10

		Jeremiah 21:8-10
Commissioning of the Messenger		8 And to this people, you shall say:
Messenger Formula		Thus says the Lord,
Announcement of Judgment	Intervention of God	Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death.
	Results of Intervention	9 He who dwells in this city will die by the sword and by famine and by plague; but he who goes out and surrenders to the Chaldeans who are besieging you will live, and he shall have his life as booty.
	Intervention of God	10 For I have set my face against this city for harm and not for good, <u>declares the Lord.</u>
	Results of Intervention	It will be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will burn it with fire."

8 "And to this people, you shall say, 'Thus says the Lord: "Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death. 9 He who dwells in this city will die by the sword and by famine and by plague; but he who goes out and surrenders to the Chaldeans who are besieging you will live, and he shall have his life as booty." 10 "For I have set my face against this city for harm and not for good, declares the Lord. It will be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will burn it with fire."

8 וְאֶל־הָעָם הַזֶּה תֹּאמַר כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה  
 הֲגִנִי נָתַן לְפָנֶיכֶם אֶת־דֶּרֶךְ הַחַיִּים וְאֶת־דֶּרֶךְ הַמָּוֶת  
 9 הַיֹּשֵׁב בְּעִיר הַזֹּאת יָמוּת בַּחֶרֶב וּבָרָעַב וּבַדָּבָר  
 וְהַיּוֹצֵא וְנָפַל עַל־הַכַּשְׂדִּים הַצָּרִים עֲלֵיכֶם יִחְיֶה וְהִיָּתְהָלּוּ נַפְשׁוֹ לְשָׁלָל  
 10 כִּי שָׂמַתִּי פָנַי בְּעִיר הַזֹּאת לְרָעָה וְלֹא לְטוֹבָה נְאֻם־יְהוָה  
 בְּיַד־מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל תִּנְתֵּן וּשְׂרָפָהּ בָּאֵשׁ:

The Lord addresses Jeremiah commanding him to deliver the divine message regarding the people (וְאֶל־הָעָם הַזֶּה תֹּאמַר, v. 8). It is the fate of "this city" that is central in 21:1-10, "this city" being an ironic reference to Jerusalem, suggesting it is not important or special to the Lord. The messenger formula כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה stresses the divine origin of Jeremiah's prophecy. The fate of

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community. It also brings together the two royal figures of vv. 1-2, Zedekiah and Nebuchadrezzar, and comments on those who have survived the skirmishes of v. 4 and the deprivations of the siege."

אֶת־צַדִּיקֵיהֶוּ מִלֶּךְ־יְהוּדָה וְאֶת־עַבְדָּיו וְאֶת־הָעָם

(v. 7). Use of the threefold structure shows that it is intended to be all-inclusive. Vv.

6-7 proclaim the complete annihilation of the population. Here the people are offered

by Jeremiah a choice between life and death. The phrase

אֶת־דֶּרֶךְ הַחַיִּים וְאֶת־דֶּרֶךְ הַמָּוֶת

Deuteronomy, the choice between life and death being set before the audience of this

oracle.<sup>24</sup>

Verse 9 explains in detail the issue of “life and death” set out in v. 8

(אֶת־דֶּרֶךְ הַחַיִּים וְאֶת־דֶּרֶךְ הַמָּוֶת). Jeremiah is presenting a practical way for the

audience to accept either life or death: “He who dwells in this city ... will die, but he

who goes out and falls upon the Chaldeans ... will live.” Here Jeremiah continues

with the same topic of “life and death,” introducing a new idea about the “the way of

life and the way of death.” The people of the city have already been fighting against

the besieging Chaldeans as described in vv. 4-7. Thus the prophet is holding out hope

for a practical way of keeping life by voluntarily surrendering to the Chaldeans.

This is a whole new idea introduced into the text as an alternative to fighting

against the Chaldeans. They should go out and surrender to the besieging

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<sup>24</sup> Similar passages to Jer 21:8 in the Old Testament occurs only in Jer 8:3a, Deut 30:15 and 30:19b. In the passages in Deuteronomy, the choice is set between the prosperity and adversity (30:15), blessing and curse (30:19b), in addition to the choice for life and death. In Jer 8:3a and Deut 30:19b, the action of choice is emphasized specifically by using the word “choose” (בָּחַר).

Chaldeans.<sup>25</sup> The irony is that by surrendering to the enemy they shall preserve their life as booty.<sup>26</sup> Here arises an ethical question between defending the city and surrendering to the besieging invaders. Those who abandon the city and surrender to the Chaldeans may save their lives as booty. However, Jeremiah's prophecy for the people is not to follow the ethical imperative, "defending the city." Those who flee "this city" (Jerusalem) and surrender to the enemy may acquire their own lives as booty. Survival is victory. The victory is to surrender to the Chaldeans, because the Lord has "set my face against this city for harm and not for good" (v. 10). It is contrary to the oracle delivered by Isaiah on the threshold of the Assyrian invasion of Jerusalem, "I will defend this city" (וַיִּגְנוֹתִי אֶל-הָעִיר הַזֹּאת).<sup>27</sup> Instead of the city being defended by the Lord, rather it is condemned to be burnt by the Chaldeans (v. 10). The choice for life is to abandon the city and to surrender to the Chaldeans.

The two parallel clauses in v. 9 end with verbs having opposite meanings (יָמוּתָהּ and יַחְיֶהָ [Q: וַחַיָּהּ]). These clearly intensify the difference between the alternatives Jeremiah is proposing. Here the consequences of the alternatives are vividly illustrated to create a mental picture in the minds of the audience rhetorically in style and vivid illustration.

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<sup>25</sup> And they should "fall upon the Chaldeans" (וַיִּנְפְּלוּ עַל-הַכַּשְׂדִּים). The construction **נָפַל עַל** means to "desert or fall away to, go over to": 2 Kgs 25:11=Jer 52:15; Jer 21:9; 37:14; 39:9; 1 Chr 12:20, 21 (twice); 2 Chr 15:9 (BDB, 657). We may note a textual problem with **וַיִּנְפְּלוּ** which is absent from the parallel text 38:2.

<sup>26</sup> The expression **וַהֲיִתָּה-לוֹ נַפְשׁוֹ לְשָׁלָל** and its variations occur only four times in the Old Testament, all of them in the book of Jeremiah (21:9; 38:2; 39:18; 45:5).

<sup>27</sup> 2 Kgs 19:34 = Isa 37:35; 2 Kgs 20:6 = Isa 38:6.

Jeremiah is further enforcing his argument by conjoining conflicting ideas:

לְרָעָה וְלֹא לְטוֹבָה “for harm and not for good” (cf. 24:6; 44:11). Here the

prediction of doom is in view. The final verdict on the fate of the city is given: The

city will be given into the hand of the king of Babylon and he will destroy it with fire

(בְּיַד־מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל תִּנְתֵּן וּשְׂרָפָהּ בְּאֵשׁ) (v. 10).<sup>28</sup>

### 4.3 Summary to 21:3-10

The king's officials came to the prophet Jeremiah for divine intervention at the time of the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by the invading Babylonians. At times of crisis, Israel was often rescued by the miraculous acts of the Lord. Israel was delivered from Egypt. Invading Assyrians were turned away by miraculous acts of the Lord. People must have remembered the previous miraculous acts of the Lord. Thus, Zedekiah is seeking divine intervention through the intercessory action of Jeremiah. The “expected” prophecy from a prophet in Israel in time of war would be a favorable one for the king and the people. The role of prophets in Israel's history in time of war had been expected to be nationalistic against foreign nations. Zedekiah hoped that Jeremiah would pray to God for the deliverance of the nation from the Babylonians, and encourage the king and his officials to fight against Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. Their “expectation” is founded on the promise of Davidic covenant: Jerusalem cannot fall.

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<sup>28</sup> “And he will burn it with fire” (וּשְׂרָפָהּ בְּאֵשׁ): the prophetic prediction of Jerusalem being burned with fire (Jer 11:16; 32:29; 34:2, 22; 37:8; 38:18, 23; Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12, 14; 2:2, 5).

Jeremiah, however, refuses to play the “expected” role of the prophetic office in Israel in the view of the people.<sup>29</sup> He rather declares the opposite of what would have been proclaimed by other prophets in this situation. The “expectation” of the “miraculous acts” is rejected by the Lord, and is shattered by the Lord’s turning back on “this city.” This presents the exigency of the rhetorical unit of Jeremiah 21-24. The Lord refuses to perform “miraculous acts” for the king and the city. The fact that “Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon is fighting against us” (v. 2) is paralleled with the fact that the Lord himself will be “fighting against you” (v. 4). All the favor the Lord has shown towards Israel is now working against her. Instead of delivering them from the crisis as hoped for by the people, the Lord himself is punishing the city. The Lord keeps the initiative in the whole of 21:3-10.

In vv. 3-7, the Lord himself is fighting against “the king, his officials and the inhabitants of this city.” Through a series of fighting processes, first fighting against the Chaldeans from the outside of the city, then from the city, then finally the Lord himself is fighting against Jerusalem, the momentum builds up. The Lord himself is involved. The result of the intervention is reached in v. 6: “Of a great plague they will die.” Destruction by plague is to fall on Jerusalem instead of the deliverance by the Lord’s miraculous acts. Another intervention of God is announced. The survivors of the “great plague” will be stricken down by the king of Babylon.

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Jeremiah has earlier been forbidden to intercede for the people (7:16; 11:14; 14:11).

The situation in vv. 8-10 is in contrast with the situation in vv. 3-7. In vv. 8-10, the Lord is presenting the alternatives for “life and death” to the survivors of the divine judgment in vv. 6b and 7b. The “way of life and the way of death” is illustrated using various rhetorical devices in order to strengthen their force and to allow the people to distinguish the consequence of their choice (v. 9). Hope is held out for the people. However, the alternative for life will be rejected. God will “set my face against this city for harm and not for good.” The rejection of the choice for life will result in the doom: the city will be burned with fire. Here now in vv. 8-10, the remnant of the city will reject the alternative for life. The city will be given to the king of Babylon and furthermore it will be burned (v. 10). The fate of the city in the siege, according to Jeremiah, is a foregone conclusion. We note that the offer of hope is not yet as developed as it will be in chapter 24. At this stage, the audience has not yet been prepared for that message.

The Proposition (21:3-10) does not explain the judgment in detail. But the Confirmation (21:11-23:8), which follows the Proposition, will provide reasons for the announcement of judgment in the Proposition. The text is structured in such a way that the use of rhetorical devices strengthens the persuasiveness of the speaker’s message.

## Chapter 5 Confirmation 21:11-23:8

### 5.1 The Rhetorical Strategy of the Confirmation

The historical situation presented in 21:1-10 is in reference to the events prior to the fall of Jerusalem. The situation is an imminent invasion of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. The king Zedekiah sent his officials to the prophet Jeremiah for the special prophetic intercession with the Lord (Prologue, 21:1-2). The purpose of their inquiry is to ask for the divine intervention with regard to the withdrawal of the Babylonians from Jerusalem. Zedekiah and his officials hoped to receive some words of divine assurance from Jeremiah. In the Proposition (21:3-10), Jeremiah proclaims a prophecy that is quite contrary to what was expected by his audience. Jeremiah's prophecy is a firm refusal to give any message of hope other than surrender to the Babylonians. It is rather a judgment against them. It uses the language of a complete reversal of the image of the Divine Warrior. The Lord himself will fight against Judah (v. 5). Judah should go out and surrender to the Babylonians to survive (v. 9). The difference between Jeremiah's prophecy and people's expectation produces a rhetorical exigency.

The Confirmation (21:11-23:8) is the main body of the rhetorical unit. Jeremiah in the Confirmation sets out to present his case in detail. Jeremiah attempts here to prove or confirm what he proposed briefly in the Proposition. The Proposition announces judgment against the king (21:3-7) and the people who dwell in "this city" (21:8-10). In the Proposition, Jeremiah made a bold and brief

proclamation of absolute judgment and an announcement for survival. However, he does not present any reason for the judgment. In the Confirmation, the prophet is presenting specific evidence that supports the announcement, which he made in the Proposition. The prophet presents the argumentative material for maximum effectiveness using the persuasive means of invention. He stresses his argument using rhetorical devices. We, as rhetorical critics, may recognize the strategy used by the prophet in presenting his argument.

The Confirmation consists of oracles to the kings during the last years of Judah and an unnamed city (“this city”), which is understood in the context to be Jerusalem. Its purpose is to prove wrong the king’s (and people’s) confidence in the inviolability of the Davidic dynasty and Jerusalem. Jeremiah presents as a reason for judgment the evil of the house of the king of Judah. Jeremiah often utilizes an image of the reversal of common concepts and a stylistic characteristic of inversion in his writing.

**Confirmation: Oracles concerning the kings and Jerusalem (21:11-23:8)**

- |             |                                  |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| 1) 21:11-14 | Introduction to the Confirmation |
| 2) 22: 1- 9 | An unnamed King                  |
| 3) 22:10-12 | Jehoahaz                         |
| 4) 22:13-19 | Jehoiakim                        |
| 5) 22:20-23 | An unnamed city (Jerusalem)      |
| 6) 22:24-30 | Jehoiachin                       |
| 7) 23: 1- 8 | Conclusion to the Confirmation   |

The section 21:11-23:8 is considered as a single unit by most commentators.

A series of judgment oracles in 21:11-23:8 is introduced by the transitional phrase

וּלְבַיִת מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה in 21:11. The collection of oracles (21:11-23:8) makes

statements about individual kings and comments on an unnamed city. The belief of



the inviolability of the sacred city (Jerusalem) and the king is subject to criticism in the collection of oracles in 21:11-23:8. The oracles relate to the theme of judgment against the various kings who ruled during Jeremiah's ministry.

The undated oracle in 21:11-14 functions as an introduction to the Confirmation (21:11-23:8). This oracle sets out a statement of principle concerning the covenantal obligation of the monarchy. It admonishes the house of the king of Judah and the inhabitants of "this city" (Jerusalem). First, in 22:1-9, the royal members (an unnamed king and the whole court) are exhorted in detail using a covenant speech form to administer justice. Then individual kings are addressed in individual oracles in chapter 22. The kings Shallum (Jehoahaz) (22:10-12), Jehoiakim (22:13-19), and Jehoiachin (22:24-30) are specified or alluded to in context as the subject of particular oracles. Judgment against Jerusalem is announced with an oracle to an unnamed city (22:20-23). The oracle against the shepherd (23:1-8) closes the section (21:11-23:8). The common theme of "administration of justice" in 21:11-14 and 23:1-8 forms an *inclusio* of the section.

## 5.2 Confirmation I: Introduction to the Confirmation (21:11-14)

### The Structure of Jeremiah 21:11-14

Judgment Speech to Individuals		Jeremiah 21:11-14
Commissioning of the Messenger		11 And to the house of the king of Judah
Summons to Hear		Hear the word of the Lord, 12 O house of David
Messenger Formula		Thus says the Lord,
Reason	Accusation	“Administer justice every morning; And deliver the robbed from the hand of the oppressor,
	Development	Lest my rage go forth like fire, And burn and with none to extinguish, Because of the evil of your deeds.
Announcement	Intervention of God	13 “Behold, I am against you, the one enthroned above the valley, above the rocky plateau,” declares the Lord, “Those who say, ‘Who shall come down against us? Or who shall enter into our habitations?’ 14 “But I will punish you according to the fruit of your deeds,” declares the Lord, “And I will kindle a fire in its forest,
	Result of Intervention	And it shall devour all its environs.”

### 5.2.1 Detailed Analysis of 21:11-14

11 And to the house of the king of Judah, Hear the word of the Lord, 12 O house of David, thus says the Lord: Administer justice every morning; and deliver the robbed from the hand of the oppressor, lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn and with none to extinguish, because of the evil of your deeds.

11 וּלְבַיִת מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה שְׁמַעוּ דְבַר־יְהוָה:  
 12 בַּיִת דָּוִד כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה דִּינוֹ לְבַקֵּר מִשְׁפָּט וְהִצִּילוּ גְזוּל מִיַּד עוֹשֵׂק  
 פֶּן־תֵּצֵא כָאֵשׁ חֲמָתִי וּבְעָרָה וְאִין מִכֶּבֶה מִפְּנֵי רַע מַעֲלָלֵיהֶם

The introductory phrase *וּלְבַיִת מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה* identifies that the collection of oracles (21:11-23:8) as concerning the royal house of Judah.<sup>1</sup> Functioning as the title

<sup>1</sup> The introductory phrase functions as commissioning of the messenger at the beginning of an oracle or a collection of oracles in Jeremiah (cf. 21:3, 8, 11; 22:1; 23:9). The commissioning of the messenger (*וּלְבַיִת מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה*) in v. 11 lacks a verb such as *תֵּאמְרוּן אֶל־צְדָקָהוּ* (תֵּאמְרוּן in v. 3) or *תֵּאמְרוּ וְאֶל־הָעָם הַזֶּה תֵּאמְרוּ* (in v. 8). Thus some have questioned whether the section 11ff. belong to the preceding section (21:1-10) or the following (21:11-23:8). See

of the collection of oracles in 21:11-23:8, this phrase has a parallel in לְנִבְאִים at 23:9, which also heads a collection of oracles concerning the prophets (23:9-40).<sup>2</sup>

The expression שְׁמַעוּ דְבַר-יְהוָה “Hear the word of the Lord” is a part of the body of the oracle.<sup>3</sup> This expression functions to stress the message as divine. The formula “Hear the word of the Lord” is immediately followed by the phrase בֵּית דָּוִד “the house of David.” It identifies that the collection of oracles are concerning the house of David, thus, the royal house of Judah. The address is formal and impersonal – “the house of David.”<sup>4</sup> This form of address recalls the obligations of the king under the Davidic covenant.

The oracle vv. 11-14 is not addressed to a specific king, or to any king in a specific context, but to the whole royal administration of Judah (v. 12, “the house of David”; cf. 22:2, “you and your servants and your people”). This short oracle in poetry appears to have neither particular reference to the enquiry of vv. 1-2, nor to a specific king, let alone to Zedekiah. The following message (v. 12) is a conventional admonition about the covenantal character of the dynasty and can be addressed to any king of Judah in any context.

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McKane, “The Construction of Jeremiah Chapter XXI,” 69-70 and *Jeremiah 1-25*, 506.

<sup>2</sup> Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 118. The presence of ו in בֵּית is explained as an effort to connect the oracles in 21:11-23:8 with the oracles in the preceding section (21:1-10).

<sup>3</sup> The phrase “Hear the word of the Lord” occurs three times in Jeremiah 21-24 (21:11; 22:2, 29). The phrase “Hear the word of the Lord, ... thus says the Lord” (21:11b-12a; 22:2-3a) is considered a part of the body of the oracle.

<sup>4</sup> The verb “שְׁמַעוּ” has the Qal, imperative, 2nd person, masculine, plural form. Cf. A similar address is used in Isa 7:13.

Verse 12 presents reasons for the judgment, which is announced in vv. 13-14.

First, the kings are admonished for the administration of justice with the covenant

obligation: **לְבִקֵּר מִשְׁפָּט וְהִצִּילוּ גְזוּל מִיַּד עוֹשֵׂק**. The word **לְבִקֵּר** can be

translated literally into “in the morning.” This translation brings out the sense of

“expeditiousness” or “promptness” in the practice of justice.<sup>5</sup> However, some

modern translations and commentaries take the sense of “daily.”<sup>6</sup> The modifier

**לְבִקֵּר** has no parallelism here. Ambiguity of this word **לְבִקֵּר** brings out both

meanings of “daily” and “promptly.”

The use of the words **גְזוּל** and **עוֹשֵׂק** appears to be used here in a general

sense to mean the violation of the law, not as technical terms.<sup>7</sup> The clause

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<sup>5</sup> The practice of justice in reference to “morning,” as Bright explains, may reflect a custom to dispute legal cases in the morning sessions in the city gate. Bright takes the position that “the sense here is ‘every morning,’ i.e., daily, regularly – and so promptly (cf. Amos iv 4; Psalm lix 17[16E], etc.)” (Bright, *Jeremiah*, 140). BHS, following Rudolph, suggests to read **לְבִקֵּר** as **לְבִקְרִים** (haplography on *mem*) (cf. **לְבִקְרִים** in Psalm 73:14). Rudolph, with this emendation, translates **לְבִקֵּר** into “*jederzeit*” (“any time, always”) (Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 116). The LXX takes **לְבִקֵּר** to mean “early in the day.” McKane follows this line of thought for **לְבִקֵּר** that the distribution of justice maybe a matter of being “without delay” or “expeditiousness” (McKane, *Jeremiah* 1-25, 508).

<sup>6</sup> “Every morning” (NIV; NASV; WBC); “each morning” (Holladay); “*jeden Morgen*” (Weiser). Amos 4:4 has **לְבִקֵּר** for the meaning of “daily”: “bring your sacrifices every morning” **וְהָבִיאוּ לְבִקֵּר זְבַחֵיכֶם**; See also **וְאָרְנוֹן לְבִקֵּר חֲסֵדְךָ** (Psalm 59:16 [MT17]).

<sup>7</sup> **גְזוּל** Qal, passive participle, “who is robbed”; **עוֹשֵׂק** Qal, active participle, “oppressor.” The verb **עָשַׂק** “oppress” suggests the meaning of extortion; cf. **עֹשֵׂק** in 22:3, noun, “oppressor” and **תַּעֲשִׂקוּ** in 7:6, Qal, Impf, 2mp). “There is no doubt

וְהִצִּילוּ גְזוּל מִיַּד עוֹשֵׂק is referring here to the restoration of social justice from the perversions of justice caused by violation. We observe an echo between the Lord's "outstretched hand and strong arm" in v. 5 and "the hand of the oppressor" in v. 12. The "hand" in each case is a metaphor for power. In the Lord's case the powerful hand is just; now an unfair power is meant. This is a kind of reversal, a common feature in the book of Jeremiah. The verb דָּיַן takes מִשְׁפָּט "justice" as the object only here in the Old Testament. An antithesis is formed in v. 12a by the word מִשְׁפָּט "justice" and the phrase גְּזוּל מִיַּד עוֹשֵׂק "robbed from the hand of the oppressor." The administration of justice is the concern, first in general terms, of v. 12. Then follows a more specific demand to deliver the robbed from the hand of the oppressor.

The three imperatives of vv. 11 and 12 (שְׁמַעוּ "hear"; דִּיִּנוּ "administer"; הִצִּילוּ "deliver") form a threefold structure which is a characteristic of Jeremiah's style. They form progressive parallelism (with the increasing intensity and specificity: hear the word of the Lord, administer justice, rescue the robbed). The first imperative calls the attention of the audience/reader. The later double imperatives articulate the message. First, admonition is presented, in a general sense,

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that in some passages גְּזוּל and עוֹשֵׂק (v. 12) refer to 'robbery' and 'oppression' in a plain sense and to infringements of the content of the law in these particular respects. This would seem to be the case in Deut 28.29, Lev 19.13, Ezek 18. 7, 12, 16, 18, and, probably, in Psalm 62.11. Certainly in the Deuteronomy and Ezekiel passages גְּזוּל and עוֹשֵׂק occur in a context of particular transgressions of the law and are most naturally understood as referring to particular offences, 'robbery' and 'oppressiveness'" (McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 508-509).

to follow the covenantal obligation of the monarchy. Then follows a more specific duty of the kingship – to assure justice to those on the margins of society.<sup>8</sup>

The admonition of the giving the covenant obligation of administering justice and delivering the robbed from the oppressor is then followed by the threat with “fire” for the failure of their covenant obligation. The double imperatives, “administer justice” and “deliver,” are followed by a transition word פֶּן “lest” in order to avoid the consequence.<sup>9</sup> The conjunctive וְפֶן implies always that some precaution has been demanded to advert the dreaded contingency. The conjunction provides a transition to the threat or judgment. There is still a divine “if” here: if the kings (the house of king of Judah) heed the warning, the catastrophe may be avoidable. The threat of this oracle is that the Lord’s wrath may go forth like a fire and burn with no extinguishing: פֶּן־תִּצַּא כְּאֵשׁ חֲמָתִי וּבְעָרָה וְאֵין מִכַּבֵּה. Verse 12 is a citation which functions rhetorically by recalling the covenant duty of the kings.

Though the word חֲמָה is often used of human anger,<sup>10</sup> it is often used in Jeremiah of God’s wrath.<sup>11</sup> The word חֲמָה is metaphorically used together with

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. 2 Sam 8:15; Psalm 72. Social concern for the marginalized in society is also dealt with by the prophets Amos and Isaiah (Amos 5:4, 14f.; Isa 1:16f.; 56:1). Isa 10:2 uses similar vocabulary in the same sense as this verse.

<sup>9</sup> See Deut 8:11-17 and Amos 5:6 for the same structure of multiple imperatives plus the transition “lest.”

<sup>10</sup> Gen 27:44; 2 Sam 11:20; 2 Kgs 5:12; Est 7:7, 10; Isa 51:13; Ezek 3:14.

<sup>11</sup> Jer 4:4, 6:11, 10:25, 18:20, 21:12, 23:19 = 30:23, 32:31, 42:18, 44:6.

verbs of motion (נָתַךְ, שָׁפַךְ, יָצָא).<sup>12</sup> God's anger can be experienced by the pouring out of God's wrath in judgment.<sup>13</sup> The wrath of the Lord can go out and burn like fire. The phrase וּבַעֲרָה וְאֵין מְכַבֶּה provides parallel with כִּי־אֵשׁ כֹּאֵשׁ.<sup>14</sup> The parallel phrase וּבַעֲרָה וְאֵין מְכַבֶּה marks a progression. The fire not only starts, but cannot be put out. This gives a heightened rhetorical effect. It also forms good parallelism with the judgment וְהִצַּתִּי אֵשׁ בְּיַעֲרָה "I will kindle a fire in its forest" (v. 14b). The oracle gives both a warning and a threat (v. 12b).

The motif of אֵשׁ "fire" appears throughout the book of Jeremiah, both in poetry and prose. "Fire" often symbolizes judgment in the Old Testament.<sup>15</sup> The

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<sup>12</sup> נָתַךְ "pour out" in 42:18 and 44:6; שָׁפַךְ "pour out" in 10:25; יָצָא "go out" in 4:4 = 21:12 and 23:19 = 30:23.

<sup>13</sup> *TWOT*, vol. 1, 374-375; B. E. Baloiian, *Anger in the Old Testament*, 1992; S. Erlandson, "The Wrath of YHWH," *TynBul* 23 (1973), 111-116. The noun חַמָּה "wrath" is derived from the verb חָמַךְ "be hot." חַמָּה is used in the Old Testament of "heat" within a person, i.e. his heart and mind. It conveys, as a rule, the concept of an inner, emotional heat. The word חַמָּה can be translated "anger, hot, displeasure, indignation, wrath, rage or fury" depending on the context. חַמָּה and אַף form progressive parallelism (Psalm 37:8, "refrain from anger אַף and turn from wrath חַמָּה") or hendiadys (Jer 42:18, "my anger אַף" and my wrath חַמָּתִי"; 44:6, "my wrath חַמָּתִי and my anger אַף").

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Shaul Esh, "Note on yts'," *VT* 4 (1954), 305-307.

<sup>15</sup> *TWOT*, vol. 1, 76-77; Hans Walter Wolff, *Joel and Amos : A Commentary on the Books of the Prophets Joel and Amos* (Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1977), 228, 240. The Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24). At the sin of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, fire came forth (אֵשׁ) from the Lord and devoured (אכל) the people (Num 16:35; 26:10). The Lord was full of wrath and "a fire was kindled against Jacob and anger went up against Israel" (Psalm 78:21). The Lord will come by fire and he will execute judgment by fire (Isa 66:15-16). The occurrence of

clause **רַע מֵעֲלֵיָהֶם** explains why the threat was being issued.<sup>16</sup> The word

**רַע מֵעֲלֵיָהֶם** “your deeds” occurs both in vv. 12 and 14.<sup>17</sup> The phrase

corresponds to **כַּפְּרֵי מֵעֲלֵיָכֶם** “according to the fruit of your deeds” in 21:14b

along with the word “fire” and the burning image.

13 “Behold, I am against you, the enthroned above the valley, above the rocky plateau,” declares the Lord,<sup>18</sup> “Those who say, ‘Who shall come down against us? Or who shall enter into our habitations?’ 14 “But I will punish you according to the fruit of your deeds,” declares the Lord, “And I will kindle a fire in its forest, And it shall devour all its environs.”

13 הַנְּנִי אֵלַיךְ יִשְׁבֶּת הָעֵמֶק צוּר הַמִּישֵׁר נְאֻם־יְהוָה  
הָאֹמְרִים מִי־יַחַת עָלֵינוּ וּמִי יָבֹוא בְּמַעוֹנוֹתֵינוּ:  
14 וּפְקַדְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם כַּפְּרֵי מֵעֲלֵיָכֶם נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְהִצַּתִּי אֵשׁ בְּיַעֲרָהּ  
וְאָכְלָהּ כָּל־סְבִיבֶיהָ

“fire” in the Old Testament is mostly in reference to God’s revelation to man or man’s approach to God in worship and sacrifice. Fire appeared as God’s signature to the covenant with Abraham (Gen 15:17). The Lord appeared to Moses in a burning fire (Exod 3:2), The people of God are led by the divine presence with the pillar of fire at night (Exod 13:22; 40:38; Deut 1:33; 5:22ff.). The Lord descended on Mt. Sinai in fire (Exod 19:8). The priest offered an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the Lord (Lev 1:17).

<sup>16</sup> This clause “has models in earlier prophetic material, though not with ‘from the presence of’ (**מִפְּנֵי**): Isa 1:16, ‘remove the evil of your doings’; Hos 9:15, ‘because of (**עַל**) the evil of your doings’” (Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 130).

<sup>17</sup> See 17:10 “according to the fruit of his deeds” **כַּפְּרֵי מֵעֲלָלָיו**; also 32:19 **כַּפְּרֵי מֵעֲלָלָיו**; Isa 3:10 “the fruit of their deeds” **מֵעֲלֵיָהֶם**; William L. Holladay, “Prototype and Copies: A New Approach to the Poetry-Prose Problem in the Book of Jeremiah,” *JBL* 79 (1960): 351-367 [355-356].

<sup>18</sup> Textual note on 21:14a: Verse 14a is not represented by the LXX.; Compare v. 14a with 23:2b (**הַנְּנִי פִקֵּד עֲלֵיכֶם אֶת־רַע מֵעֲלֵיָכֶם נְאֻם־יְהוָה**); “You” in v. 14a is also masculine plural.



Verses 13-14 make up the announcement of prophetic judgment speech. The structure of the announcement of the judgment consists of “I”-speeches (Intervention of God) and an “It”-speech (The Result of the God’s Intervention).<sup>19</sup> The announcement of the Lord’s judgment opens with the “formula of encounter”:

הִנְנִי אֵלֶיךָ “Behold, I am against you.”<sup>20</sup> One challenges another to fight: “Behold,

I am against you” הִנְנִי אֵלֶיךָ.<sup>21</sup> Here the Lord challenges the addressee.<sup>22</sup> It is

ambiguous about the identity of the addressee, an unnamed city. The oracle might even have been originally addressed to another (foreign?) city. If so, its application to Jerusalem would be highly effective – like the reversal of the holy war imagery.<sup>23</sup> In the context, it is clear that the unnamed city is Jerusalem, although the name Jerusalem appears only once (22:19) in the whole section 21:1-23:8. Although the identity of the addressee is ambiguous, the passage is clearly introducing the threat.

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<sup>19</sup> Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 152.

<sup>20</sup> Paul Humbert, “Die Herausforderungsformel ‘hinnenî êlékâ’,” *ZAW* 51 (1933): 101-108. Paul Humbert calls this phrase the “challenge formula” (*Herausforderungsformel*). The formula occurs elsewhere in Jer (23:30, 31, 32; 50:31; 51:25); Nahum, and Ezekiel. See further Walter Zimmerli, *Ezekiel: A Commentary on the Prophet Ezekiel* (vol I; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 26.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. David’s challenge to Goliath in 1 Sam 17:45, “I came against you” אָנֹכִי בָא־אֵלֶיךָ.

<sup>22</sup> The challenge, however, is against an unnamed object “you” אֵלֶיךָ “against you”. The suffix is second person feminine singular. The anticipatory pronoun refers to the feminine singular יֹשֶׁבֶת הָעֵמֶק (“inhabitant” of, or who is “enthroned”, above the valley) of the next phrase.

<sup>23</sup> Bright, *Jeremiah*, 140-141: “... since the passage ... is a mosaic of fragments, conventional language originally referring to some other place may here have been applied to Jerusalem (similar expressions are used of Moab in xlviii 8, 21, 28 f.)”; see Thiel, *Jeremia 1-25*, 238 n. 21: Thiel argues that 21:13f. are a post-Deuteronomistic addition to the present position. Style and vocabulary are reminiscent of passages containing oracles against foreign nations (48:8; 51:25 and especially 50:31f.); Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 415.

The language is the image of the Divine Warrior. The Lord is declaring that he himself will fight against his people. It is well in line with the holy war image in the oracle of 21:3-7.

The phrase **יֹשֶׁבֶת הָעֵמֶק** is literally the “inhabitant of the valley.”<sup>24</sup> The second person pronominal suffix in **אֵלַיָּךְ** refers to **יֹשֶׁבֶת** in **יֹשֶׁבֶת הָעֵמֶק צִוּר הַמַּיִשָּׁר**.<sup>25</sup> The feminine form of **יֹשֶׁבֶת** is in line with portrayals of cities as feminine.<sup>26</sup> However, the exact meaning of **יֹשֶׁבֶת** is ambiguous. English translations and commentators translate it “inhabitant” or “enthroned.”<sup>27</sup> The translation of the phrase **יֹשֶׁבֶת הָעֵמֶק** to “inhabitant of the valley,” however, does not fit a description of Jerusalem at all. Jerusalem is located on the plateau surrounded on three sides by deep valleys. Thus, the descriptions of the city in v. 13a appear to be inappropriate to apply to Jerusalem. Weiser suggests translating **יֹשֶׁבֶת הָעֵמֶק** “enthroned above the valley” in analogy to **יָשַׁב הַכְּרֻבִּים** “enthroned on/above the cherubim,”<sup>28</sup> which is said of God. The phrase **יֹשֶׁבֶת הָעֵמֶק** is best interpreted as “enthroned above the valley.” Jerusalem is in an elevated position

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. **יֹשְׁבֵי הָעֵמֶק** in Judg 1:19.

<sup>25</sup> The pronominal suffix of **אֵלַיָּךְ** is the second person singular feminine. The verb **יֹשֶׁבֶת** is Qal, participle, singular feminine.

<sup>26</sup> For Example, the “Daughter Zion” in Jer 4:31; 6:2, 23; Isa 1:8; 10:32; 16:1; 37:22; 52:2; 62:11; Lam 1:6; 2:1, 4, 8, 10, 13, 18; Micah 4:8, 10, 13.

<sup>27</sup> “Inhabitant” by Carroll, NIV, RSV, NASV, NKJV; “enthroned” by Bright, Craigie *et al.*, Weiser, Holladay, McKane.

<sup>28</sup> 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; Psalms 80:2; 99:1. See Weiser, *Das Buch Jeremia Kapitel 1-25, 14*, 182.

surrounded on three sides by valleys. Thus, the phrase “enthroned above the valley” would be appropriate for the city.

Here we see parallels in the terminology of יָשָׁב: The Lord sitting enthroned on the cherubim; the king sitting on his throne; Jerusalem sitting enthroned above the valley. Considering Jerusalem’s elevated position surrounded on three sides by valleys, Weiser’s view of יָשָׁב הַכְּרָבִים on the analogy of יִשְׁבֶּת הָעִמְקָה is envisaged as an exalted throne on which the city is rested. Ironically, of course, the city is about to be dethroned from its proud position.

The next phrase צוֹר הַמִּישֵׁר is a credible complementary description of Jerusalem’s location. Valleys are also a place of battle ground. Battles took place in valleys.<sup>29</sup> The image of a battle is well in line with the situation which the Prologue (vv. 1-2) presents. Although the word צוֹר is not used as a designation of Jerusalem in the Old Testament, it is understood that Jerusalem is the subject of vv. 13-14.<sup>30</sup> We find an ambiguity in the syntax of צוֹר הַמִּישֵׁר. The phrase צוֹר הַמִּישֵׁר can be translated as “(who are) a rock above the plateau” or “above the rock of the plateau.” The first interpretation suggests that צוֹר forms parallelism with יִשְׁבֶּת in

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<sup>29</sup> Josh 1:19; 17:16; 1 Sam 17:2, 19; 2 Sam 5:17ff.; 23:13; Isa 22:7. The word צוֹר literally means “(large) rock” or “boulder” and the word מִישֵׁר “plateau” or “plain”. צוֹר is often used as hiding places or refuge (Exod 33:22; Job 24:8; Isa 2:10ff.).

<sup>30</sup> G. H. Davies, “Psalm 95,” ZAW 85 (1973): 183-195 [189]. Davies has argued that “Rock” is a designation of the Lord in the Psalms. In at least several of these instances, “rock” might also refer to the temple mount.

יִשְׁבֹּת הָעֵמֶק צוֹר הַמִּישֵׁר – thus, “who are enthroned above the valley, a rock above the plateau.” Jerusalem has taken herself as a “rock.” The word צוֹר “rock” is used metaphorically in the Old Testament as a designation for the Lord.<sup>31</sup> This interpretation is in line with the complacency and pride shown in the rhetorical questions in v. 13b. In the second interpretation, the phrase צוֹר הַמִּישֵׁר is in parallel with הָעֵמֶק – thus “who are enthroned above the valley, above the rocky plateau.” Bright argues that the translation of “a rock above the plateau” does not fit Jerusalem.<sup>32</sup> Bright interprets this phrase as “above the rock of the plateau.” The reference of צוֹר הַמִּישֵׁר is “the rocky plateau” upon which Jerusalem stands.

The LXX reads צוֹר for the MT צוֹר. The personified city is thought to be Tyre. In this view the city is Tyre located in a valley (הָעֵמֶק) on level ground. The noun צוֹר הַמִּישֵׁר “plateau” in צוֹר הַמִּישֵׁר functions as an adjective and is an attributive of צוֹר.<sup>33</sup> The addressee of the oracle in v. 13 are the inhabitants of Tyre. They boast in v. 13b. Holladay observes that there is a strong tradition of the interpretation of the word צוֹר as Tyre. Tyre is described as הַיִּשְׁבֹּת עַל-מְבוֹאת יָם “enthroned at the entrances of the sea” (Ezek 27:3) and as taking to herself the role of deity (Ezek 28:2). Is Jeremiah suggesting that Jerusalem is a “Tyre over the plain” as the

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<sup>31</sup> Deut 32:4 “He is the Rock”, 15 “the Rock of his salvation”, 18, 30; Psalms 18:2 [MT 3]; 95:1 “the rock of our salvation.”

<sup>32</sup> Bright, *Jeremiah*, 141.

<sup>33</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1*, 511.

Phoenician city is a Tyre over the sea?<sup>34</sup> Some of elements in this oracle are also found in the oracles against Moab (cf. 48:8, 21, 28-29). Conventional terms for denunciation of a foreign city-state may have been used here in v. 13a to attack a proud and secure city. With this line of understanding, it becomes another example of the reversals in which Yahweh fights against rather than for his people.

The suffix of the participle **הָאֹמְרִים** in v. 13b is masculine plural, apparently referring to the inhabitants of this city. They are asking rhetorical questions (v. 13b): **מִי־יִחַת עָלֵינוּ וּמִי יָבוֹא בְּמַעוֹנוֹתֵינוּ**. The understanding of the verb **יִחַת** is ambiguous. The verb **יִחַת** can be translated “can come down or descend” (Qal, **יָחַת**) or “shall terrify or shall frighten” (Hiphil, **יַחַת**). The LXX takes the second reading. Most modern commentators follow the first interpretation. With the understanding of this city to be Jerusalem, one would expect to **יַעֲלֶה** “come up or ascend” instead of **יִחַת** “come down or descend” considering the geographical location of Jerusalem. However, against this expectation, the verb **יָחַת** need not mean, solely in physical sense, to “come down” from a higher elevation to the city.<sup>35</sup> The city has a strong advantage in defensibility, sitting above the valley and on the rocky plateau. The position of the city makes the inhabitants of the city feel so secure and invulnerable that they ask complacent rhetorical questions implying what amounts to a declaration that no one, even the Lord, can come down to invade them.

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<sup>34</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 578.

<sup>35</sup> Bright, *Jeremiah*, 141.

The verb **בוא** “to enter or go in” expresses physical movement towards a specific direction. One of common theological usages of this verb in the Old Testament is with reference to the Lord’s coming to fight for his people.<sup>36</sup> He will come as a mighty warrior bringing back his people to Jerusalem.<sup>37</sup> Similar usage of the rhetorical question **וְיָבֹא בְּמַעוֹנוֹתֵינוּ** (v. 13b) is found in the rhetorical question **מִי יָבֹא אֵלַי** in 49:4, suggesting the conviction of impregnability spoken by the Ammonites. The word **בוא** implies the invasion by enemies.<sup>38</sup> The irony of this boast is that this is exactly what is going to happen. This is in line with the image of the Lord’s fighting against, not for, his people as declared in 21:3-10.

The Lord is figuratively the refuge for his people from their enemies in times of distress.<sup>39</sup> The word **מַעוֹנוֹתֵינוּ** “our habitations” in v. 13b portrays a place well protected and secure from enemies.<sup>40</sup> The city is invulnerable. The inhabitants of this

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<sup>36</sup> See Psalm 68:17 [MT 18] “The chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands of thousands; the Lord has come from Sinai into his sanctuary”; also see Deut 33:2-5; Isa 30:27.

<sup>37</sup> Isa 40:9-11.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Lam 4:12, “that enemies and foes could enter (**יבא**) the gates of Jerusalem” (**בְּשַׁעְרֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם**).

<sup>39</sup> Deut 33:27; Psalms 71:3; 90:1; 91:9.

<sup>40</sup> The words **מַעוֹן** and **מַעֲנָה** (“dwelling place” or “habitation”) refer mostly to the dens of animals (especially jackals: **מַעוֹן** in Jer 9:10; 10:22; 49:33; 51:37). They frequently designate the Lord’s dwelling place, thus heaven (always qualified with the word **קִדְשׁ** as in Deut 26:15; Jer 25:30) and temple (1 Sam 2:29, 32; Psalms 26:8; 76:3). These words are used on occasion to portray a “refuge” in which people hide from their enemies.

city ask a rhetorical question **וְיָבֹא בְּמַעֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ**. The implication is that no one can. This is in line with the belief of the inviolability of the temple in Jerusalem.

Jeremiah's hearers would still remember that Jerusalem was delivered from the Assyrians under Sennacherib. This may lie behind the allusions in v. 13b. This is what Zedekiah hoped when Jerusalem was under siege by the Babylonians (21:1-2). As we have seen in vv. 3-10, the Lord will fight against the king and the city. Verse 14 makes it clear that the Lord will fight against the city and the city will be devastated by fire. It is another reversal of people's expectation. Jeremiah is playing with another of the cultic metaphors against the people. The Divine Warrior will fight against the people.

The meaning of the rhetorical questions (v. 13b) is somewhat ambiguous. The Lord's answer to the rhetorical questions, however, is direct and clear:

**וּפְקַדְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם כְּפָרִי מֵעֲלֵיכֶם**. The judgment is announced giving details of the intervention of God. It is the Lord who will intervene in the judgment for the reasons given (v. 12).<sup>41</sup> Then follows the result of the intervention of the Lord using a typical "It/he"-speech form of judgment prophetic oracles (v. 14b). The Lord utilizes a mediating agent. Here the agent is "fire." Fire will devour the city's environs to execute the judgment pronounced in vv. 13-14a.

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<sup>41</sup> Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 152. It is a typical "I"-speech form of judgment prophetic oracles.

The threefold structure of “I”-speeches in vv. 13-14 (“I am against you”; “I will punish you”; “I will kindle a fire”) is a stylistic feature of Jeremiah. We note that in these three “I”-speeches the announcement becomes more specific. The circumstances in vv. 13-14 have deteriorated to the point of hopelessness. First, the announcement is vague and broad (“I am against you”); then, it is more specific (“I will punish you”)<sup>42</sup>; finally, it becomes particular and definite (“I will set a fire in this city”).

The immediate indictment in this verse is “the fruit of your deeds” (v. 14a). In v. 14, it is not specifically declared which deeds warrant judgment. The judgment (vv. 13-14) is evoked by the deeds of the city and its inhabitants are warned in vv. 11-12. “Your deeds” will be further revealed in the oracles against the individual

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<sup>42</sup> *NIDOTTE*, vol. 3, 659-661. The verb פקד occurs 49 times in Jeremiah. Among other meanings, the verb פקד has the meaning of responding appropriately: “examine,” “attend to,” “take note of,” “care for” in a positive sense; or “punish” in a negative sense. When this meaning of the verb (mostly Qal) is used we find often that God is the subject: God “takes note of” or “cares for” or “punishes” someone or something and acts accordingly, whether to grant divine blessing or judgment. The negative meaning of פקד is often structured with prepositions על or ב, where the prepositions indicate the object of the divine pleasure or displeasure. With the preposition ב the object is the person (only in Jer 9:9 [MT 8]), while sin is the object with the preposition על. In most occurrences of the verb פקד with a negative meaning, the preposition על is used about the person (Jer 9:24; 11:22; 13:21; 21:14; 23:34; 25:12; 27:8; 29:32; 30:20; 36:31; 44:13, 29; 51:44). The verb פקד can occur with or without על with a negative meaning. The verb פקד is never constructed with על in a positive sense of meaning. The construct of פקד plus על has always negative connotations. The object of God’s favor is indicated by את in the positive meaning of “care for.” In Jer 23:2, the verb פקד is used in two opposite senses: ולא פקדתם אתם הנני פקד עליכם. The structure of the verb and the preposition in ופקדתי עליכם again stresses the firm negative judgment on the city and its inhabitants.



kings in the following oracles in 22:1-23:8. The gap, in that the deeds are not mentioned, creates an expectation in the audience, that leads them on into the next of the section.

There is an ambiguity of the meaning יַעֲרָה “forest” in  
וְהִצִּיתִי אֵשׁ בַּיַּעֲרָה וְאָכְלָהּ כָּל-סְבִיבֶיהָ (v. 14b). The “forest” referred to is  
Jerusalem’s great buildings of cedar (cf. 22:6-7) rather than literally Jerusalem’s  
adjacent “forest.”<sup>43</sup> The forest is explained figuratively in connection with fire. The  
word יַעֲרָה “forest” refers metaphorically to the coming doom. The image of the  
destruction of the forest is used for the Lord’s judgment.<sup>44</sup>

The motif of fire is taken up here once again. God’s intervention in the  
judgment will result in total destruction: fire will consume everything. The verb אָכַל  
“devour; eat; consume” has a metaphorical connotation for destruction. It is often

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<sup>43</sup> Bright, *Jeremiah*, 141; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 579. The reference to a fire devouring “its forest” and “its environs” is ambiguous. Reference to Jerusalem by a forest is somewhat unusual. However, it may be an allusion to the city’s wooden palaces if we take the royal imagery (“enthroned”) in v. 13a. Solomon’s palace was called “the house of the forest of Lebanon” because of being made of wood from great cedars of Lebanon (1 Kgs 7:2ff.; Isa 22:8; cf. Jer 22:6-7, 23). Thus such building may be the object of the burning which devastates the city. If this interpretation is taken, the “house of David” בֵּית דָּוִד (v. 12) plays on the ambivalence of “house” בֵּית. Verse 14 is directed against the house of the king of Judah and its members. If the word “its environs” is taken plainly to mean that “the wood around the city which will be destroyed by enemy action,” as McKane suggests (*Jeremiah 1-25*, 513), this interpretation is well in line with the situation of Jerusalem under siege by the Babylonians (vv. 1-2; 3-7).

<sup>44</sup> Isa 10:18; Psalm 83:14 [MT 15]; Jer 21:14; Ezek 21:2-3.

paired in Jeremiah with “sword”<sup>45</sup> or “fire.”<sup>46</sup> The destruction of a forest is closely linked with a forest fire. Once a forest is set on fire, there would be “none to extinguish.” The burning of a city with fire was a basic principle of ancient total warfare. The image of fire evokes images of total destruction. Verses 10, 12, 14 all speak about destruction by fire. We note **סְבִיבֵיהָ** in parallelism with **בִּיעֲרָהּ** in v. 14b. The city and its surrounding villages will be destroyed by enemy action. They will be destroyed as a forest is set afire. Jeremiah is appealing to his audience rhetorically with pathos. The notion of coming doom here is in line with the circumstances of Jerusalem under siege by the invading Babylonians (Prologue, 21:1-2).

### 5.2.2 Summary to 21:11-14

This section (21:11-23:8) provides a glimpse on Jeremiah’s view of the kingship of Judah. Various kings, who reigned during the period of his ministry, are addressed or alluded to in the oracles. The oracles in this section are concerning the “house of the king of Judah” as the title states in v. 11. However, Jeremiah’s oracles do not set out the grandiose image of the royal ideology which is common in the ancient Near East.<sup>47</sup> Rather, Jeremiah challenges the covenant belief of inviolability

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<sup>45</sup> Jer 12:12; 16:4; 46:10, 14.

<sup>46</sup> Jer 17:27; 21:14; 48:45; 49:27; 50:32.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Psalms 2; 45; 72; 110; 132; Isa 9:2-7; 11:11-19. For the royal ideology concerning the covenant, see K.-H. Bernhardt, *Das Problem der altorientalischen Königsideologie im alten Testament : unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Geschichte der Psalmenexegese dargestellt und kritisch gewürdigt* (VTSup 8; Leiden: Brill, 1961); Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel*; The role of the kingship in the administration of justice has been much discussed, see H. J. Boecker,

of the kingship and Jerusalem by admonitions about the covenantal obligation of the kingship.

The house of David has the obligation of upholding justice in the society and delivering the oppressed from oppressors. This is understood as one of the covenantal duties of the kingship.<sup>48</sup> The administration of justice in the society is duty of kingship (21:12). It is a covenant statement. God's wrath may in theory be "extinguished" by the king's obedience (vv. 11-12). But their failure in this respect is the measure of how much they deserve judgment.

The theme of the "administration of justice" (21:12) forms an *inclusio* of this collection concerning the new kingship (23:5-6). The oracle (21:11-14) acts as an introduction to the whole Confirmation section (21:11-23:8) and sets out the nature and duties of the kingship. Verse 13 carries ironic multiple meanings. The inhabitants of the city display complacency regarding the inviolability of Jerusalem. The rhetorical questions are a defiant answer to the threat issued in v. 12b. Although the oracle does not present what type of response the members of the house of David would take regarding the warning and threat in v. 12, the answer is already suggested by the description of Jerusalem's strong defensive position and the complacent rhetorical questions (v. 13).

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*Law and the Administration of Justice in the Old Testament and Ancient East* (London: SPCK, 1980), 40-49.

<sup>48</sup> Exod 22:21-24 [MT 20-23]; Psalm 72; 2 Sam 8:15.

Verse 12 gives the reason for the judgment. Using complacent rhetorical questions, verse 13 verifies the warning declared in v. 12 and makes the accusation. Thus, the refusal to listen to the warning (v. 12) causes the Lord himself to intervene. Verse 14 provides the answer to the rhetorical questions of v. 13. The triad structure of "I"-speeches forms progressive parallelism. The result is total destruction (v. 14). This judgment is well in line with the situation (the city under siege by the Babylonians) in the Prologue (21:1-2) and announcement of the oracles in the Proposition (21:3-10). The Lord himself will set fire to the city. The city is impregnable beyond reach of military attack. The proud city will be destroyed by an unquenchable fire.

This oracle (21:11-14) provides an answer to the enquiry made on the occasion of the Babylonian invasion (21:1-2) about the wonderful acts of the Lord (Prologue). Statements made against the city and its inhabitants in this oracle vv. 11-14 provide a suitable parallel to the proclamation of judgment made against the king, the city and its people in vv. 3-10 (Proposition). Jeremiah shows on what basis there might be hope for the kings. This oracle (21:11-14) is not dominated by the tone of absolute judgment as declared in 21:3-10 (Proposition). There is still in principle a chance for life drawn from the covenantal character of the monarchy. It calls for justice from the royal establishment to escape from judgment. From the oracles concerning the individual kings in chapter 22, however, we realize that Jeremiah's optimism here soon would be shattered. And this, of course, is the perspective of the composition in its present form. These oracles in 22:1-30 confirm what is proposed in 21:3-10. The house of the king of Judah failed to heed Jeremiah's call for justice.

Failure to do so would entail judgment. The new king (23:1-8) would carry out his obligation to administer justice and righteousness.<sup>49</sup>

We note frequent use of the rhetorical device of allusion in this oracle in poetry. The allusive method in poetry provides a tension creating ambiguous and multiple meanings of words and phrases in the oracle. The addressee is ambiguous. The city addressed is not named. However, the message of judgment is unmistakably clear. The fire imagery is common to both 11f. and 13f. The oracle in vv. 11-14 is associated with the oracles in vv. 3-10 by the reference to fire. The Lord's wrath is envisaged as a fire. "Wrath" and "fire" are frequent metaphors for judgment. Once the Lord's judgment is announced, no one can avoid it. Like "fire" his judgment will "burn" until everything is destroyed. The judgment with "sword, famine, and plague" will be supplemented by "fire," as we have seen in the Proposition (21:3-10).

Jeremiah is appealing to his audience by using pathos – strong emotional appeal with the image of burning. The audience/reader of the oracle is certainly reminded by the catchword "fire" of the destruction of the city in the recent past. The judgment against the kings, this city and its inhabitants in vv. 11-14 provides a suitable parallel to the declared attack on this city and its inhabitants in the Proposition (21: 3-10). Jeremiah attempts to persuade the audience that their belief in the inviolability of this city will be destroyed by the Lord himself. Because this oracle (21:11-14) and other ones like it (22:11-22:30) were not heeded, the judgment spoken in this oracle has come about as proposed in 21:3-10. The oracle of 21:11-14

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. Isaiah's concept of the future ideal Messiah, Isa 9:6-7; 11:1-4.

functions as an introduction to the Confirmation (21:11-23:8). Further proof and evidence for judgment will be provided in the Confirmation.

### 5.3 Confirmation II: An Unnamed King (22:1-9)

#### The Structure of 22:1-5

Judgment Speech to Individuals		Jeremiah 22:1-5
Commissioning of the Messenger		1 Thus says the Lord, "Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word,
Summons to Hear		2 and say, 'Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah, who sit on David's throne, you and your servants and your people who enter these gates.
Messenger Formula		3 Thus says the Lord,
Call to Repentance	Warning	"Do justice and righteousness, and deliver the one who has been robbed from the hand of the oppressor.
	Development	And do no wrong, do no violence to the alien, the fatherless, or the widow; and do not shed innocent blood in this place.
Conditional Announcement of Promise and Judgment	Positive Response	4 "For if you indeed do this thing, then kings, sitting on the throne of David, will enter the gates of this house, riding in chariots and on horses, he and his servants and his people.
	Negative Response	5 But if you do not heed these words, I swear by myself," declares the Lord, "that this house shall become a desolation."

#### The Structure of 22:6-9

Judgment Speech to Individuals		Jeremiah 22:6-9
Messenger Formula		6 'For thus says the Lord concerning the house of the king of Judah,
Announcement	Intervention of God	"You are like Gilead to me, like the summit of Lebanon, yet surely I will make you like a desert, like towns not inhabited. 7 And I will prepare destroyers against you, each man with his weapons,
	Result of the Intervention of God	and they will cut down your choicest cedars and throw them on the fire."
Reason	Accusation	8 "And many nations will pass by this city and they will say to one another, 'Why has the Lord done such a thing to this great city?'
	Development	9 And they will say, 'Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God, and have worshiped other gods and served them.'"

The Confirmation (21:11-23:8) is Jeremiah's prophetic critique of the kingship. 22:1-9 is Jeremiah's critique that applies to the dynasty as a whole and Jerusalem (thus, the people of Judah). 22:1-9 consists of undated oracles concerning the house of the king of Judah. 22:1-5 is a parallel text in prose to 21:11-14 in

poetry.<sup>50</sup> Some commentators deny the independent value of 22:1-5.<sup>51</sup> Others also observe the similarities in these two oracles, yet they reject the hypothesis of a prose expansion of 22:1-5 from 21:11-12.<sup>52</sup> The poetic unit (vv. 6-7) can be placed in various contexts. It lacks clues to the historical context. Vv. 6-7 might have been originally an oracle against Gilead or Lebanon, but here in the present context it is intended for Jerusalem.<sup>53</sup> The question-and-answer style of vv. 8-9 is a literary convention available in the ancient Near East.<sup>54</sup> Vv. 8-9 are a parallel with a record of a campaign against the Arabs in the Assyrian annals.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Both oracles have a similar structure with the occurrence of themes and phrases common in both oracles. Admonition for administering justice (21:12a; 22:3) is followed by judgment (21:12b-14), and by judgment and promise (22:4-5). Similarities and differences are as follows: “the house of the king of Judah” (21:11; 22:1); “hear the word of the Lord” (21:11; 22:2); “administer justice” (21:12) and “do justice and righteousness” (22:3); “deliver the one who is robbed from the hand of the oppressor” (21:12; 22:3); “house of David” (21:12) and “the David’s throne” (22:4); “the one enthroned above the valley” (21:13) and “kings, sitting on the David’s throne” (22:4).

<sup>51</sup> Rudolph understands 22:1-5 in connection with the “temple sermon” in 7:1-8:3 (*Jeremia*, 119). The present location of 22:1-5 is explained by the theme of oracles concerning the kings. Rudolph shows that 21:1-5 has an affinity in style with other Source C passages 7:1-7 and 17:19-27 (v. 2 with 7:2b and 17:20; v. 3 with 7:5b-6; v. 4 with 17:25; v. 5a with 17:27). Thiel holds a similar view to Rudolph but supposes that 21:1-5 is a Deuteronomistic expansion of 21:11-12 (*Jeremia 1-25*, 238).

<sup>52</sup> Weiser and Holladay suggest 22:1-5 is an authentic saying of Jeremiah. They search for an occasion for the historical context. Weiser finds the historical occasion at the enthronement festival when Jeremiah proclaimed the word of God to the Davidic king and people gathered at the gates. The perpetuity of Davidic dynasty was promised with the basic requirement of righteousness and justice. Jeremiah expanded the demand for social justice which he had made in 21.12 (Weiser, *Das Buch Jeremia Kapitel 1-25, 14*, 183-184). Holladay thinks the wording of 22:1-5 fits an address to Jehoiakim (cf. 36:30-31), although he concedes that there is no way to be precise about the historical context in which the oracle was delivered (Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 581).

<sup>53</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 419.

<sup>54</sup> Burke O. Long, “Two Question and Answer Schemata in the Prophets,” *JBL* 90 (1971): 130-134 [131].

<sup>55</sup> *ANET*, 300.



Although the unit 22:1-9 consists of the independent oracles that may have been proclaimed originally in different circumstances, its message in the present context as it stands has a unified theme. It reveals Jeremiah's general critical attitude toward Jerusalem and kings during the last years of Judah. The unit 22:1-9 is addressed to an unnamed "king of Judah" concerning the Davidic dynasty (vv. 1-5) and an unnamed city which in the context refers to Jerusalem (vv. 6-9). The unit 22:1-9 functions rhetorically in the present location to justify the judgment proclaimed against the king and the city (the people) in the Proposition (21:3-10). In 21:3-10, no justification for the judgment is provided. The Confirmation (21:11-23:8) will provide proof for the proclamation declared in the Proposition. The prophecy 22:1-9 provides the reason why the Lord declares that "I myself will fight against you" (21:5), "I have set my face against this city" and this city "will be given into the hand of the king of Babylon" to be burned with fire (21:10). The kings of the Davidic dynasty are exhorted to keep their covenant obligation in order to avoid becoming a desolation (22:4-5). Their disobedience will result in the devastation of the palace, thus the dynasty, and the city, that is Jerusalem. This judgment is explained as being the result of idolatry (22:8-9).

### 5.3.1 Detailed Analysis of 22:1-9

1 Thus says the Lord, "Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word, 2 and say," 'Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah, who sit on David's throne, you and your servants and your people who enter these gates.

1 כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה יֵרֵד בֵּית-מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה וְדַבַּרְתָּ שָׁם אֶת-הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה:  
 2 וְאָמַרְתָּ שְׁמַע דְּבַר-יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה הַיֹּשֵׁב עַל-כִּסֵּא דָוִד  
 אַתָּה וְעַבְדֶּיךָ וְעַמְּךָ הַבָּאִים בְּשַׁעְרֵי הָאֵלֶּה:

Verse 1 is commissioning Jeremiah as the messenger of the Lord. The messenger formula **יְהוָה אָמַר כֹּה** introduces mostly the messenger speech, the main body of the oracle.<sup>56</sup> However, it sometimes introduces the commissioning the messenger.<sup>57</sup> This phrase introduces the message as a word from the Lord rather than from the prophet. The prophet designates himself as the messenger of God and expects to be understood as such by his audience. The three types of artistic proof in rhetoric, ethos, pathos, and logos, are inherently related to the three elements of rhetoric: speaker, audience, and speech. The speaker's power of recommending his personal character makes his speech credible (*ethos*). The prophet attempts to enhance his authority by claiming to be the messenger of the Lord. The prophetic speech is seen in the formulation of the message-transmission procedure. The dispatch of the prophet is by the structure of double command: "Go down ... , and speak there this word." The act of bridging the distance ("Go ... and speak ...") functions as a reason for God to send the messenger. The prophet must bridge this distance with his prophetic speech.<sup>58</sup> The Lord (the sender) commands Jeremiah (the messenger) to go to "the house of the king of Judah" (v. 1) and to speak to the "king

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<sup>56</sup> The messenger formula occurs in the main body of the messenger speech 155 times in the book of Jeremiah. Van Dyke Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 507: The messenger formula **יְהוָה אָמַר כֹּה** sometimes "introduces a dispatch rather than appearing in the body. In all of these cases, the dispatch includes a command not just to speak, but to perform some nonverbal action, usually with obvious symbolic overtures. Even when the nonverbal command is simple 'go' or 'stand,' the intent may be to emphasize the physical presence of Jeremiah, since sometimes he delivered his messages through other intermediaries. These observations suggest that when the message is to be delivered not only by the prophet's words but also by the symbolism of his actions, these actions themselves need to be authenticated as divine revelation."

<sup>57</sup> Ten times in the book of Jeremiah: Jer 13:11; 17:19; 19:1; 22:1; 26:2; 27:2, 4; 30:2; 34:2; 35:13.

<sup>58</sup> Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 102-103.

of Judah” (v. 2). The emphasis is that Jeremiah the prophet is divinely authorized to deliver the word of God.

Jeremiah is understood to have received the word of the Lord at the temple. The command to “go down to the house of the king of Judah” (v. 1) suggests that the temple and the royal palace are the places from and to which Jeremiah is divinely commanded to go down.<sup>59</sup> The scene in v. 1 has links with 21:13 by the images of descent and throne. The image of descent (“go down” יָרַד) from the temple to the “house of the king of Judah” in 21:1 is linked with the similar image of descent (“come down” יֵרֵד) on “the one enthroned above the valley” in 21:13.

We observe the repetition of the different forms of דַּבַּר used as the verb (דַּבַּרְתָּ) and its object (הַדְּבָר) in וְדַבַּרְתָּ שָׁם אֶת-הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה (v. 1).<sup>60</sup> The rhetorical effect is the emphasis of the “word.” Thus, the audience’s attention is held by the prophet.

The Lord is commissioning Jeremiah to deliver an oracle concerning the house of the king of Judah (cf. 19:1, 14). The dispatch of the prophet is by the structure of double command: “Go down... and speak...” (v. 1). However, here Jeremiah is using the triad structure: “Go down ... and speak ... and say.” The Lord

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. עָלָה “go up, ascend” in 26:10, “and they came up from the king's house to the house of the Lord” יְהוָה בֵּית יְהוָה ; also cf. יָרַד “come or go down, descend” in 36:12, “they went down to the king’s house” בֵּית-הַמֶּלֶךְ.

<sup>60</sup> The rhetorical stylistic device polyptoton.

is speaking to Jeremiah to declare a summons to the king, his servants and his people (v. 2). Here, the present text records the oracle only in the committal process, thus from the Lord to Jeremiah. The repetition of the verb **אָמַר** at the beginning of vv. 1 and 2 is important, emphasizing the importance of the word of the Lord as given by the prophet. The implication is that the Lord is speaking through Jeremiah and the king must hear – just like the people in Deut 6:4.

We observe in **וְאָמַרְתָּ שְׁמַע דְּבַר־יְהוָה** (v. 2) that the *shewa* in the beginning of each word is followed by an “a”-sound vowel, *i.e. patah* or *qaˆmes* (assonance). The repetition of *shewa* and an “a”- sound five times in this clause keeps the attention of the audience and leads to the last word “the Lord”. The emphasis is on the divine origin of the prophecy.

Although the summons to hear the oracle is directed in an address to the king as an individual using the second person singular form **שְׁמַע** (v. 2), the address becomes plural in the admonitions that follow in vv. 3-5. In comparing v. 2 with 21:11f., we notice that the addressee, the “house of David” (**בֵּית דָּוִד**) (21:12), extends beyond the king to include the king’s servants and the people (**אַתָּה וְעַבְדֶּיךָ וְעַמֶּיךָ**) (v. 2). The concern of the oracle 21:11f. is the Davidic dynasty.<sup>61</sup> In the participle phrase in **מִלֶּךְ יְהוּדָה הַיֹּשֵׁב עַל־כִּסֵּא דָוִד** (v. 2),

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<sup>61</sup> In 21:11f., the imperative plural form **שְׁמַעוּ** is used to address the house of David (**שְׁמַעוּ דְּבַר־יְהוָה בֵּית דָּוִד**). But cf. **שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל** in Deut 6:4.

כִּסֵּא דָוִד signifies the Davidic dynasty. The rhetorical effect is to show that king's actions are on behalf of the Davidic dynasty, and to recall the privileges and responsibilities.<sup>62</sup>

The speech is addressed to the Davidic dynasty. The “king of Judah” represents the kingdom, which consists of the king, his servants, and the people (אַתָּה וְעַבְדֶּיךָ וְעַמֶּךָ) in v. 2b. This is another example of Jeremiah's typical triad structure. The rhetorical effect here has distributive force. The prophecy is addressed not only to the king, but also to his servants and the people of Judah.<sup>63</sup> It is unusual to use the imperative singular in an address to a group.<sup>64</sup> However, here it seems that the emphasis is still on the king rather than his officials and the people. Thiel reasons

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<sup>62</sup> The same analysis is applied to the phrase מְלָכִים יֹשְׁבִים לְדָוִד עַל-כִּסְאוֹ in v. 4b.

<sup>63</sup> The phrase אַתָּה וְעַבְדֶּיךָ וְעַמֶּךָ “you and your servants and your people” is repeated with change of person and number in v. 4. The same analysis applies to the phrase הוּא וְעַבְדּוֹ וְעַמּוֹ in v. 4. A similar phrase is also found in 37:2, “But neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land (הוּא וְעַבְדָּיו וְעַם הָאָרֶץ) listened to the words of the Lord which he spoke through Jeremiah the prophet.”

<sup>64</sup> The phrase הוּא וְעַבְדּוֹ וְעַמּוֹ “he and his servants and his people” in v. 4b has grammatical incongruity with מְלָכִים in the preceding clause (v. 4b) (K: וְעַבְדּוֹ; Q: וְעַבְדָּיו). Following מְלָכִים, the number ought to have been plural, thus הֵם וְעַבְדֵיהֶם וְעַמָּם instead of הוּא וְעַבְדּוֹ וְעַמּוֹ. Some understand this phrase to be an expansionist gloss from v. 2 (Volz, Rudolph, Janzen). Volz suggests the gloss was intended with the Messiah in mind (*Der Prophet Jeremia*). However, Holladay proposes that “the symmetry of the passage demands parity here with v 2; furthermore the phraseology matches that of 36:31 ... The shift of *M* [MT] to the singular was doubtless due to messianic concerns” (Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 580). However, the phrase with the singular number has “a distributive force, ‘each king with his officials and retinue’” (McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 514).

that the king's "servants and the people" were included with the king, because of the history of apostasy for which the people were also responsible.<sup>65</sup>

3 'Thus says the Lord, "Do justice and righteousness, and deliver the one who has been robbed from the hand of the oppressor. And do no wrong, do no violence to the alien, the fatherless, or the widow; and do not shed innocent blood in this place.

3 כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה עֲשׂוּ מִשְׁפָּט וְצְדָקָה וְהַצִּילוּ גְזוּל מִיַּד עֹשֵׂי עָוֹן  
וְגַר יִתּוֹם וְאַלְמָנָה אַל-תִּחַמְסוּ וְדָם נָקִי אַל-תִּשְׁפְּכוּ בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה:

The messenger formula again repeated here. The word of the Lord through the prophet is once again emphasized. Verses 3-5 are a messenger's speech which consist of two parts: 1) a call to repentance using positive imperatives (v. 3a) and negative commands (v. 3b); 2) a conditional promise (v. 4) and curse (v. 5).

Comparing 22:3 and 21:12a, we note that the oppressed in society are identified in v. 3b as the typical marginalized groups.<sup>66</sup> The wording of vv. 3-5 is a covenant speech form.<sup>67</sup> The present passage appears to be an admonition to the house of the king of Judah.

Verse 3 is a general statement of the covenantal obligation of the monarchy:

עֲשׂוּ מִשְׁפָּט וְצְדָקָה. "Righteousness" is used frequently by prophets in parallel with

"justice" to recall the king's covenantal responsibility. The phrase מִשְׁפָּט וְצְדָקָה

<sup>65</sup> Thiel, *Jeremia 1-25*, 239.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Deut 14:29.

<sup>67</sup> James Muilenburg, "The Form and Structure of the Covenantal Formulations," *VT* 9 (1959): 347-365 [355].

occurs with the verb עָשָׂה.<sup>68</sup> Especially, we note the use of this phrase for Jehoiakim when contrasted with Josiah who did justice and righteous (עָשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה) (22:15), and with the future king who will do justice and righteousness (עָשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה) (23:5). צִדְקָה is the quality and the action. Together מִשְׁפָּט and צִדְקָה portray just rule. It is the king's duty to maintain social well-being for all members of the society.<sup>69</sup>

In v. 3aβ, we find the specifications of doing “justice and righteousness”:

וְהִצִּילוּ גְזוּל מִיַּד עֹשֹׂק.<sup>70</sup> In the phrase יַד עֹשֹׂק “hand of the oppressor,” the word “hand” is used to express the instrument by which a thing is done. The stated instrument is the “hand” while the intended effect is the maneuver or exploitation (metonymy). The power lies not in the instrument (“hand”) but in the “oppressor” who uses it. The rhetorical effect intended is to emphasize the “power” of the oppressor. The power of the oppressor (יַד עֹשֹׂק) may once again be contrasted

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<sup>68</sup> The writer of the books of Samuel speaks of David: “So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered justice and righteousness for all his people” (2 Sam 8:15); Solomon was praised by the Queen of Sheba that God made Solomon king to “do justice and righteous” (1 Kgs 10:9). The phrase “do justice and righteousness” occurs often in Jeremiah and Ezekiel (cf. Jer 22:15; 23:5; 33:15; Ezek 18:19, 21, 27; 33:16, 19).

<sup>69</sup> Moshe Weinfeld, “Jeremiah and the Spiritual Metamorphosis of Israel,” ZAW 88 (1976): 17-56.

<sup>70</sup> The same phrase occurs in 21:11. See the difference: עֹשֶׂק: Qal, active participle; עֹשֹׂק: noun, masculine singular. See 6:6, 7:6, 22:17. “The verb ‘oppress’ (עָשָׂק) is found in the eighth-century prophets (Amos 4:1; Mic 2:2) and in Deuteronomy (Deut 24:14); it often suggests extortion (so the cognate noun עֹשֶׂק, 6:6)” (Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 243).

with the power of the Lord (בְּיַד נְטוּיָהּ וּבְזִרְוֵי חֲזָקָה) in 21:5). The king is exhorted to care for the socially weak and marginalized in society: the alien, fatherless, widow.<sup>71</sup>

The admonition of 21:12a is more fully developed in v. 3. 21:12a presents the covenantal obligation of the king to maintain social justice. However, v. 3 specifies social justice further in concrete demands for the marginal groups in the society: “the alien, the fatherless, or the widow.”<sup>72</sup> The parallelism of “fatherless” and “widow” is found often in the Old Testament. The triad of “alien, fatherless, and widow” is understood in connection with the covenant code in Exod 22:21-26 [MT 20-25].<sup>73</sup> These are people easily exploited or mistreated in Israelite society. The alien, fatherless, and widow stand for all similar kinds of afflicted people who are most vulnerable in the society. The asyndetic structure reinforces this. They typify the poor.<sup>74</sup> And once again it is a traditional expression, recalling covenantal obligation.

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<sup>71</sup> Commands to maintain social justice for the vulnerable are found throughout the Old Testament: Exod 21:22 [MT 21]; Deut 10:18; 24:17; 27:19; Isa 1:17, 23; Jer 7:6; Ezek 22:7. V. 3 is a close parallel to the prophetic summons of Jer 7:5-7.

<sup>72</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 515. McKane rightly states that the wider audience of the king, his servants, and his people (22:2, 4) “does not explain the additions in 22.3: simply because 21.12 and 22.3 are addressed to the king and, irrespective of the composition of the audience in 22.3, a mention of strangers, orphans and widows would be as appropriate in the one as in the other. The postulated larger audience of 22.3 does not explain why this verse refers to strangers, orphans and widows, while 21.12 does not.” Some versions (LXX, Syriac, Vulgate and some MSS.) read וַיִּתּוֹם  
“and the fatherless. The MT text – thus, without “and” – is in parallel with  
וַיִּתּוֹם וַיִּתְּוֶה לֹא תַעֲשֶׂקוּ (7:6).

<sup>73</sup> Deut 24:17, 19, 20, 21; 26:13; 27:19; Psalm 146:9; Zech 7:10. For further for “alien, fatherless, and widow”, see Thomas Krapf, “Traditionsgeschichtliches zum deuteronomischen Fremdling-Waise-Witwe-Gebot,” *VT* 34 (1984): 87-91.

<sup>74</sup> The rhetorical device synecdoche.



The repetition from 21:12a, and the expression of the exhortation there, has the rhetorical effect of focusing the demand more sharply.

The verb  $\text{יָנַף}$  is closely associated with  $\text{עֲשֶׂה$  in the Old Testament usage.<sup>75</sup>

The usage of  $\text{יָנַף}$  in this context expresses economic exploitation or extortion in the society. In the prophetic books, the usage of  $\text{חָמַס}$ , both in the verbal and nominal forms, expresses injustice in the political, economic, social, and judicial areas of society.<sup>76</sup> These verbs are used in association with the combination of “alien, fatherless, and widow.” The clauses  $\text{אֶל-תְּחַמְסוּ}$  and  $\text{אֶל-תִּנּוּ}$  are missing a connecting particle  $\text{ו}$  in the MT.<sup>77</sup> The lack of “and” gives the impression that the list is not yet complete. The audience is not asked to consider each statement in detail, but is hurried on with a rushing effect that gives urgency to the exhortation. A parallel statement follows: “Do not shed innocent blood in this place.” The rhetorical effect enriches the thought. The statements in v. 3b are exaggerated. The grammar and syntax are as one may expect. However, the objects are put first to draw attention to them. We notice synonymous parallelism between these statements which have similar structural arrangement and similar ideas in each sentences. The parallelism

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<sup>75</sup> The verb  $\text{יָנַף}$  (Qal “oppress, do wrong”; Hiphil “oppress, do wrong, exploit”).

<sup>76</sup> *NIDOTTE*, vol. 2, 179: Isa 59:6; 60:18; Jer 6:7; 22:3; Ezek 7:23; 22:26; 28:16; 45:9; Amos 3:10; 6:3; Micah 6:12. The verb  $\text{חָמַס}$  “do violence, treat violently” occurs 8 times in the Old Testament. Most usages are in the nominal form. Other occurrences in Jeremiah include:  $\text{נָחַמְסוּ}$  (Niphal, “suffer violence”) in 13:22 and the nominal use of  $\text{חָמַס}$  “violence” in Jer 6:7; 20:8; 51:35, 46.

<sup>77</sup> Many manuscripts have  $\text{ו}$  before  $\text{אֶל-תְּחַמְסוּ}$  to read “and do no violence.”

heightens the effect. Once again, care for the weak is shown to be a royal or covenantal obligation. The audience may be reminded of Manasseh's shedding so much innocent blood.<sup>78</sup> The rhetorical effect, however, is to imply that all the kings are guilty of failing to keep their covenantal obligations.

The phrase **בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה** “in this place” (v. 3) refers to either the palace or Jerusalem.<sup>79</sup> The blood signifies life, or the life of a person (Lev 17:11). The word blood is used in synecdoche. The part (blood) is associated with the human being's whole person, or life. Thus **דָּם יָקִים** is put for the “innocent man.”<sup>80</sup> The shedding of blood means murder, cruelty, or death. The phrase **דָּם יָקִים** is also an oxymoron. Blood is also meant for guilt (as **דָּם יָקִים** in Deut 21:9). The audience is reminded of the “guilty stain” by blood. Innocent people have suffered violent death. “Blood” and “innocence” appear to be contradictory, but they are joined together to bring out the outrage of the offence. Verse 3 warns the king to use his power responsibly and faithfully even among the vulnerable members of the society.

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<sup>78</sup> 2 Kgs 21:16.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. 7:6 (“shed innocent blood in this place”) where **בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה** alludes to either Jerusalem or the temple.

<sup>80</sup> The phrase **דָּם יָקִים** occurs often in Jeremiah. 7:6; 22:3; 26:15; compare **דָּם הַיָּקִים** “blood of the innocent” in 22:17; the variant **דָּם יָקִים** in 19:4.

4 “For if you indeed do this thing, then kings, sitting on the throne of David, will enter the gates of this house, riding in chariots and on horses, he and his servants and his people. 5 But if you do not heed these words, I swear by myself,” declares the Lord, “that this house shall become a desolation.”

4 כִּי אִם-עָשׂוּ תַעֲשׂוּ אֶת-הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה וּבָאוּ בַשַּׁעֲרֵי הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה  
מְלָכִים יֹשְׁבִים לְדָרוֹד עַל-כִּסְאוֹ רֹכְבִים בְּרֶכֶב וּבַסּוּסִים הוּא וְעַבְדּוֹ וְעַמּוֹ:  
5 וְאִם לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ אֶת-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה  
בִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי נְאֻם-יְהוָה כִּי-לְחָרְבָה יִהְיֶה הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה:

We note the repetition of the verb עָשָׂה from v. 3. In the phrase תַעֲשׂוּ תַעֲשׂוּ, the verb is used with its infinitive absolute to emphasize the need to obey. The repetition and the alliteration gives a rhythmic force to the phrase

אִם-עָשׂוּ תַעֲשׂוּ אֶת-הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה.

In vv. 1-5 we have encountered the frequent occurrence of “house” and “gate” motifs.<sup>81</sup> The word בַּיִת in v. 4 may refer to either “house, temple, or palace,” and the word “gates” may be used in reference to the city gates, temple gates, or palace gates. The interpretation of הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה determines whether the concern is about the future of the city, the palace, or the temple, depending on the response to the conditional promise or judgment by the king, his servants, and the people (vv. 4-5). In vv. 1-5 הַשַּׁעֲרִים הָאֵלֶּה refers not to the general city gates. It might be also inappropriate to enter the temple court by “riding in chariots and on horse” (v. 4). If

<sup>81</sup> בַּיִת-מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה in v. 1; בַּשַּׁעֲרִים הָאֵלֶּה in v. 2; בַּשַּׁעֲרֵי הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה in v. 4; הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה in v. 5; cf. בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה in v. 3. These motifs also occur in oracles 7:1-15 and 17:19-27, which have the similar themes and structure to vv. 1-5. The promise for observing the command and the judgment for the failure to obey it are similar in vv. 1-5 and 17:19-27.

בְּשַׁעְרֵי הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה is the royal palace, בְּשַׁעְרֵי הָאֵלֶּה (v. 2) and בְּשַׁעְרֵי הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה (v. 4) must also refer to the gates of the palace. The phrase בֵּית־מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה “the house of the king of Judah” is closely associated with the idea of “dynasty.”

The use of metonymy of the subject puts for the subject by the adjunct. “House” is put for “household.” It signifies the possessor (“dynasty”) for the thing possessed (the “royal palace”). Using analysis of the rhetorical stylistic device, we understand clearly what or who is intended to be addressed in this oracle. The oracle is concerning the “house of the king of Judah.” It could stand for the palace. Considering the use of Metonymy, however, we understand that this oracle is concerning the fate of the Davidic dynasty. The rhetorical device metonymy is noticed in the clause הַבָּאִים בְּשַׁעְרֵי הָאֵלֶּה. The sign is “entering these gates” but it signifies those who belong to the house. Rhetorical understanding helps to clarify the object of the oracle. In the oracle vv. 1-5, “this house” refers to the royal palace, which signifies the Davidic dynasty.<sup>82</sup> There could also be an echo of “house” as the temple in v. 5, compared with 7:10-11.

A verb and a cognate noun (רָכַבִּים בָּרֶכֶב) are used together for emphasis.

We observe metonymy in the phrase “riding in chariots and on horses”

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<sup>82</sup> The wordings of 22:4 and 17:25 in particular are similar. However, the difference is on the focus of attention. In 22:1-5, it is the Davidic dynasty that is warned by the covenantal obligation on social justice, while the future of Jerusalem in 17:19-27 by Sabbath observance.

וּבִסּוּסִים וּבְרֶכֶב וּבְכֹסֶם. The chariots and horses signify military strength and wealth.<sup>83</sup>

The oath formula בִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי “I swear by myself” in v. 5 occurs with God as subject five times in the Old Testament.<sup>84</sup> Similar formulas with noun substitutes occur seven times in the Old Testament.<sup>85</sup> In all these cases, God is appealing to his own authority using the oath formula בִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי as a persuasive means. נְאֻם־יְהוָה follows a clause that explicitly identifies the Lord (בִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי). Thus this focuses attention that the statement is from the Lord himself. The divine intention is emphasized through the prophetic speech by the combined expression of the messenger formula נְאֻם־יְהוָה and the oath formula בִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי.<sup>86</sup>

The phrase לְחַרְבָּה יְהִי הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה in v. 5 finds similar expression in Jeremiah.<sup>87</sup> The initial position of לְחַרְבָּה in כִּי־לְחַרְבָּה יְהִי הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה emphasizes the devastation.

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<sup>83</sup> Cf. Deut 17:16: horse, wives, and gold and silver. For רֶכֶב see W. Boyd Barrick, “The Meaning and Usage of RKB in Biblical Hebrew,” *JBL* 101 (1982): 481-503 [491-492, n. 65].

<sup>84</sup> Gen 22:16; Exod 32:13; Isa 45:23; and Jer 49:13.

<sup>85</sup> Psalm 89:36; Isa 62:8; Jer 44:26; 51:14; Amos 4:2; 6:8; 8:7.

<sup>86</sup> For the oath formula, see Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 205.

<sup>87</sup> 7:34; 25:11; 44:6, 22. The same word order is found in 7:34.

Conditional promise and judgment (vv. 4-5) are added to the imperative part (v. 3): “if (אם) ... then” (v. 4) and “if not (לא אם) ... then” (v. 5);

עָשׂוּ תַעֲשׂוּ אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה (v. 4) and תִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה (v. 5). The covenant formula of promise and judgment (vv. 4-5) makes clear the importance of the warning (v. 3). Verse 4 refers to the royal splendor which is envisaged as a feature of the Davidic dynasty. However, a physical manifestation of splendor and majesty will be reduced to a desolate ruin (חֲרָבָה) (v. 5). The promise is of the prosperity and the perpetuity of the dynasty, while the judgment involves the desolation for “this house.” The assurance of destruction is reinforced by an oath formula. The hypothetical particles (אם in v. 4a and לא אם in v. 5a) are placed at the beginning of the clauses; the similar phrases (אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה in v. 4a and אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה in v. 5a) are repeated at the end of the clauses. These features of a clause put the emphasis on both the beginning and the end. The audience is asked to pay attention to the conditional aspect (if or if not) of these statements while still remembering “these words” which are exhorted in v. 3.

The antithetical parallelism in vv. 4-5 helps to compare clearly the opposite options in the audience’s mind. Vv. 4a and 5a use the same structure with similar vocabulary. They are juxtaposed with the intention of providing a clear distinction. The contrast of prosperity (רִכְבִּים בָּרֶכֶב וּבַסּוּסִים) (v. 4) and desolation (חֲרָבָה) (v. 5) is intensified by this parallel structure. The antithesis of the ideas will linger in the audience’s mind.

Verses 1-5 are a proclamation of possibilities for the future. The administration of social justice is the divine command on which the future of the dynasty depends. The divine command in a covenant speech form (v. 3) is followed by the covenant condition in vv. 4-5. The messenger's speech (vv. 3-5) consists of the call to repentance (v. 3) and the conditional announcement of promise and judgment (vv. 4-5). A conditional announcement of judgment and promise has appeared in place of the unconditional accusation and judgment speech.<sup>88</sup> The "if ... then" structure of verses 4-5 consists of two parallel statements related to the warnings using the imperatives of v. 3. Verses 4-5 offer both positive and negative conditions.<sup>89</sup> Continued prosperity and dynastic perpetuity are promised in response to observance of the covenant (v 4) and the divine assurance of destruction is reinforced by the oath formula concerning disobedience (v 5). The positive and negative conditions of the covenant speech here (vv 4-5) make the future of the Davidic dynasty explicitly conditional. Looking at the options in vv. 4-5, the king appears to have still a choice. This may suggest that Jeremiah was still optimistic when he first uttered these words. But the positive choice is not taken. The oracle in vv. 6-9 denies the possibility which vv. 4-5 seemed to have offered.<sup>90</sup> Judgment for

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<sup>88</sup> Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 205-208. Westermann argues that subsequent to the exile the prophetic speech form of the judgment to Israel has a different form from that of preexilic period. The announcement of judgment is replaced by the call to repentance. The unconditional announcement of judgment is replaced by a conditional announcement of salvation.

<sup>89</sup> The present oracle 22:1-5 and the "temple sermon" (7:1-7) have similar wording and form. The temple sermon offers only the positive covenant condition. Cf. 4:1-2; 7:1-12; and 11:1-14.

<sup>90</sup> Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 188: Verses 4-5 by themselves suggest "a theoretical possibility of change but then the realistic conclusion is drawn that Judah

the king is announced, because the king has not and will not respond positively to the command. The implication of these words to the audience of Jeremiah 21-24 is that Jeremiah's words against the "house of David" came to pass. Now the audience too is confronted by these alternatives and feels the force of the command to obey.

6 'For thus says the Lord about the house of the king of Judah, "You are Gilead to me, the summit of Lebanon, surely I will make you a desert, towns not inhabited. 7 And I will prepare destroyers against you, each man with his weapons, and they will cut down your choicest cedars and throw them on the fire."

6 כִּי־כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה עַל־בֵּית מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה גִלְעָד אֶתָּה לִי רֹאשׁ הַלְבָנוֹן  
אִם־לֹא אֲשִׁיתְךָ מִדְבָר עָרִים לֹא נוֹשְׁבָה:  
7 וְקִבַּשְׁתִּי עָלֶיךָ מִשְׁחָתִים אִישׁ וְכַלְיוֹ וְכָרְתוּ מִבְּחַר אֲרָזֶיךָ וְהִפִּילוּ עַל־הָאֵשׁ:

In 21:3-10 (Proposition), Jeremiah commands the people to choose between "the way of life and the way of death" (21:8-9). But the announcement of judgment, which follows immediately in 21:10, suggests that the people rejected the choice.

22:1-9 are a unit providing proof for judgment that applies to the whole of the Davidic dynasty. Kings are warned to keep the covenantal obligation of the monarchy, the administration of justice (vv. 1-5). The conditional announcement in vv. 4-5 suggests the "house of the king of Judah" still has a chance for prosperity. It offers choices for promise or judgment (vv. 4-5). Avoidance of judgment appears to be still available if there is a positive response to the conditions set. But the positive choice is not taken. 22:6-7 deny the possibility which 22:4-5 seem to have offered.

Jeremiah characterizes and criticizes the kings as being disobedient. The disobedience and the failure of the kings will result in judgment against Jerusalem,

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is at the point of no return. The theoretical possibility is acknowledged, but is no longer available." See also A. Vanlier Hunter, *Seek the Lord!* (Baltimore: St. Mary's Seminary & University, 1982).



and thus the people of Judah. Judgment for the king is announced, because the king has not responded positively to the command. The Confirmation (21:11-23:8) is Jeremiah's prophetic critique of the kings. The judgment coming upon Jerusalem is also caused by the kings. Judgment against Jerusalem is an indication of a comprehensive social reality. Verses 8-9 point out idolatry as a reason for the judgment. The section vv. 1-9, as it stands in the present form, presents the reason for the unavoidability of judgment against the royal house of Judah and Jerusalem. 22:1-9 is a general critique applicable to the Davidic dynasty. Individual kings are treated in relation to specific items of conduct and policy (22:10-30).

The messenger formula **כִּי־כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה** (v. 6) introduces the oracle in poetry concerning the "house of the king of Judah." The messenger formula is introduced by a conjunctive particle **כִּי** "for" at the beginning of the oracle.<sup>91</sup>

Holladay understands the connective particle **כִּי** as a link between this oracle and an earlier passage. The link can hardly be with vv. 1-5, but with 21:13-14, since vv. 1-5 are an invitation to choose, while vv. 6-7 are a word of judgment.<sup>92</sup> Contrary to Holladay's argument, however, we understand that **כִּי** links this oracle with vv. 1-5 for the reason given above, namely that vv. 6-9 close the possibility that seems to be

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<sup>91</sup> The construction of the messenger formula **כִּי־כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה** often introduced by a conjunctive particle such as "for" **כִּי** (29 times) or "therefore" **לָכֵן** (27 times) in the book of Jeremiah. With **כִּי** (29 times): 4:3, 27; 6:6; 10:18; 16:3, 5, 9; 20:4; 22:6, 11; 24:8; 25:15; 27:19, 21; 28:14; 29:8, 10, 16; 30:5, 12; 31:7; 32:15, 42; 33:4, 17; 42:18; 48:40; 49:12; 51:33. With **לָכֵן** (27 times): 5:14; 6:21; 7:20; 9:7 [MT 6], 15 [MT 14]; 11:11, 21, 22; 14:15; 15:19; 18:13; 22:18; 23:2, 15, 38; 25:8; 28:16; 29:32; 32:28, 36; 34:17; 35:17, 19; 36:30; 44:11; 50:18; 51:36.

<sup>92</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 584.

offered in vv. 1-5. Although the conditional promise and judgment in vv. 1-5 provide an invitation to choose, judgment is already prevalent in the foreground of the text. Van Dyke Parunak calls it a “naive parsing” to understand always the construction of “Proposition 1 + ‘therefore’ + ‘thus says the Lord’ + Proposition 2 as Proposition 1 being the reason for the Lord’s speech, and Proposition 2 its contents.”<sup>93</sup> The conjunctive particle כִּי in v. 6 is best interpreted with the assertive sense, “surely, indeed.” The rhetorical effect of the messenger formula כִּי־כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה is to mark a departure in thought from the preceding oracle, and to stress again the divine origin of the message that follows.<sup>94</sup>

The land of Gilead גִּלְעָד held a prominent place in the history of Israel in Old Testament times.<sup>95</sup> The land of Gilead was good pasture land,<sup>96</sup> its hills covered

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<sup>93</sup> Van Dyke Parunak, “Some Discourse Functions,” 506: “Sometimes this parsing is reasonable. For example, when Proposition 1 describes the sin of the people and Proposition 2 describes Yahweh’s coming judgment, it is reasonable to see the decree of judgment, and not just the judgment itself, resulting from the sin. However, this parsing seems stilted for many passages ... 29:30-32 ... is a case in point.”

<sup>94</sup> Van Dyke Parunak, “Some Discourse Functions,” 506. We find a similar interpretation in 24:8-10, which has a similar structure to vv. 6-7. Van Dyke Parunak suggests that “we should analyze the discourse relations among propositions introduced by TSL [“thus says the Lord”] as though the formula were not there. The function of the formula is not to participate in the discourse structure marked by conjunctions such as ‘for’ and ‘therefore’ (or in other such relations among the associated propositions), but rather to mark significant breaks in the oracle and to call attention to the divine origin of the expressions that they introduce.”

<sup>95</sup> Gilead appears to be included to the wider dimensions of God’s promise to Israel (Deut 34:1-4). The southern part of Gilead was assigned to the tribes of Gad and Reuben. The northern part Gilead was given to the half-tribe of Manasseh (Num 32:39-40; Deut 3:12-17). Later Gilead became part of the territory of the northern Kingdom of Israel. The proper name “Gilead” in a general sense refers to the central Transjordanian area, especially the area surrounding the Jabbok river. It sometimes refers to the area between the Arnon and Jabbok rivers, and sometimes to that

by rich woodlands, particularly in the northern part.<sup>97</sup> The Old Testament considers the territory of Lebanon as a part of the Promised Land.<sup>98</sup> The word ראש is used spatially for the “top” or “summit” of a geographical feature such as a mountain or hill.<sup>99</sup> It is often used in the Old Testament with other terms in the sense of superlative, with the meaning of “best, finest, foremost, highest.”<sup>100</sup> The phrase ראש הַלְבָנוֹן “the summit of Lebanon” represents the best cedars out the mountains of Lebanon. The “cedars of Lebanon” אֲרֵזֵי הַלְבָנוֹן are thought to be the best quality timber available in those days. Lebanon’s mountains provided cedar wood for Israel’s building the temple and royal palace in Jerusalem.<sup>101</sup>

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between the Jabbok and Yarmuk rivers. It consists of a broken mountainous area overlooking the Jordan valley in the west and a narrow plateau bordering the desert in the east. Jacob met the angels of God (Gen 32:1-2) and wrestled with God himself along the Jabbok river (32:22-32). Jacob’s name was changed to “Israel” (32:28). The rulers of Gilead, Sihon, king of the Amorites and Og, king of Bashan, were defeated. Gideon defeated the Midianites and the Amalekites (Judg 6-7). Jephthah delivered Israel from the oppression of the Ammonites (Judg 11; 1 Sam 11). In the period of divided monarchy, Gilead experienced repeated periods of warfare with the Aramaeans (1 Kgs 20:23-43; 22:1-40) and the Assyrians (2 Kgs 10:32-33; 15:27-31). Gilead, together with Galilee, was finally annexed by Assyria (2 Kgs 15:29).

<sup>96</sup> Num 32:1, 26, 29.

<sup>97</sup> 2 Sam 18:6.

<sup>98</sup> Deut 1:7; 3:25; 11:24; Josh 1:4; 11:17; 13:6; 1 Kgs 9:19 = 2 Chr 8:6; Zech 10:10.

<sup>99</sup> Gen 8:5; Exod 19:20; Num 14:40; Isa 30:17. The primary meaning of ראש in the Old Testament is “head” as part of the body. Metaphorically, it is also used for “leader”; temporally for “beginning.”

<sup>100</sup> Exod 30:23, “finest spices” (בְּשָׂמִים רֵאשׁ); Deut 33:15, “the best of the ancient mountains” (מֵרֵאשׁ הַרְרֵי־קָדְם); Job 22:12, “the highest stars” (רֵאשׁ כּוֹכְבֵים); Psalm 137:6 “the highest joy” (רֵאשׁ שְׂמֵחָתִי); Ezek 27:22, “the best of all kinds of spices” (רֵאשׁ כָּל־בְּשָׂם).

<sup>101</sup> The phrase “the cedars of Lebanon” אֲרֵזֵי הַלְבָנוֹן and its variants occur in the Old Testament: Judg 9:15; Psalms 29:5; 92:12 [MT 13]; 104:16; Isa 2:13; 14:8; Ezek 27:5; 31:3. See also 1 Kgs 4:33 [MT 5:13]; 5:6, 9, 14 [MT 5:20, 23, 28]; 7:2; 10:17,

The clause גִּלְעָד אַתָּה לִי רֹאשׁ הַלְבָנוֹן is translated as a simile by most commentators and translations (“You are *like* Gilead to me, *like* the summit of Lebanon”). A simile gently states that one thing is “like” or resembles another, while a metaphor boldly declares that one thing “is” the other.<sup>102</sup> We translate גִּלְעָד אַתָּה לִי רֹאשׁ הַלְבָנוֹן as a metaphor instead of a simile: “You are Gilead to me, the summit of Lebanon.”<sup>103</sup> You (בֵּית מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה) are “Gilead” and “the summit of Lebanon” owing to your association with the greatness of their forests.<sup>104</sup> The pairing of “Gilead” and the “summit of Lebanon” indicates that the reference of Gilead in the context vv. 6-7 is its forests.<sup>105</sup> The metaphor in v. 6aβ relating גִּלְעָד and רֹאשׁ הַלְבָנוֹן to בֵּית מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה, is a powerful symbol of Judah’s grandeur and prosperity. This, however, is two-edged, because the grandeur of Lebanon’s cedars can be a symbol of pride, that leads to a great fall (Isa 2:13). The words “to me” in v. 6 could convey the Lord’s anger as much as his pleasure in Lebanon’s glory.

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21 [= 2 Chr 9:16, 20]; 2 Chr 2:8; Ezra 3:7. Solomon built part of the palace named “the House of the Forest of Lebanon” (1 Kgs 7:2-5).

<sup>102</sup> E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech used in the Bible* (Originally 1898; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1968): 727 and 735. Simile differs from metaphor in that it merely states resemblance, while metaphor boldly transfers the representation. Simile is usually marked by כּ in Hebrew and translated “as,” “like as,” or “like.”

<sup>103</sup> Also Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 584.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. “your choicest cedars” אֲרָזֶיךָ מִבְּחַר in v. 7.

<sup>105</sup> Gilead is also associated with balm (Gen 37:25; Jer 8:22; 46:11).

The clauses, גִּלְעָד אֶתָּה לִי רֹאשׁ הַלְּבָנוֹן (v. 6aβ) and אִם-לֹא אֲשִׁיתְךָ מִדְּבַר עָרִים לֹא נוֹשְׁבָה (v. 6b), are placed one after another without a coordinating or subordinating connective. The question is whether v. 6aβ is already implying the judgmental tone of vv. 6b-7. The clause v. 6aβ is not an accusation speech. But, if there were any ambiguity in v. 6aβ it is now dispelled; the clause v. 6b is unmistakably a judgment. The verb שִׁית “constitute, make something A (into) something B” takes two accusatives (אֲשִׁיתְךָ מִדְּבַר “I will make you a desert”).<sup>106</sup> The second object is sometimes introduced by the preposition לְ in a similar context.<sup>107</sup> The phrase here without לְ gives the expression greater directness.

The intervention of God with the “I”-speech form in vv. 6-7 (the Lord as subject) is strengthened by the oath formula. The particle אִם-לֹא occurs with an oath at the beginning of divine speeches.<sup>108</sup> In the context of an oath, either expressed or merely implied, the oath particle אִם-לֹא is an emphatic affirmative: “surely.” The rhetorical effect of the oath formula is to preempt any opportunity for

<sup>106</sup> The same structure occurs in the similar context (Isa 5:6; Psalms 84:6 [MT 7]; 88:8 [MT 9]; 110:1).

<sup>107</sup> Jer 2:15 וַיִּשְׁתוּ אֶרְצוֹ לְשָׂמָה עָרָיו; 13:16 לְעֶרְפֶּל; 50:3 הוּא-יִשִׁית אֶת-אֶרְצָהּ לְשָׂמָה; Psalm 45:16 [MT 17].

<sup>108</sup> Walter Baumgartner, *Jeremiah's Poems of Laments* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1988), 71. See Isa 5:9; 14:24; Jer 15:11; Ezek 5:11; 17:16,19; 20:33; 33:27; 34:8. In Ezekiel, it occurs with the oath formula, הִי-אֲנִי “As I live”. Cf. 22:5, where אִם-לֹא is followed by נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי “I swear.” The particle אִם-לֹא has the force of an oath. See Manfred R. Lehman, “Biblical Oath,” *ZAW* 81 (1969): 74-92.

refutation. Thus, it is best to translate אִם-לֹא אֲשִׁיתְךָ מְדָבָר עָרִים לֹא נֹשְׁבָה “surely I will make you a desert, towns not inhabited.”<sup>109</sup> Finally the metaphor is a better translation than simile here: “surely I will make you *like* a desert, *like* towns not inhabited.”<sup>110</sup>

As a geographical term מְדָבָר, “desert, wilderness,” represents the opposite of settled urban area.<sup>111</sup> The term מְדָבָר, along with שְׂמָמָה, “waste,” and חֲרָבָה, “desolation,” however, is frequently used in the prophetic books to announce the impending divine judgment which will turn Israel into a desert. Desert represents rhetorically and symbolically a place which is hostile to the settled life of the community.<sup>112</sup> The metaphor of מְדָבָר in v. 6 creates an image of desolation in relation to the fate of the “house of the king of Judah.” The word מְדָבָר is paired with the clause עָרִים לֹא נֹשְׁבָה.<sup>113</sup> Both מְדָבָר and עָרִים לֹא נֹשְׁבָה are metaphors to signify desolation and devastation in relation to the “house of the king of Judah.” The Lord will make the “house of the king of Judah” a desert, thus an

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<sup>109</sup> RSV, KJV, Carroll, Holladay.

<sup>110</sup> NIV, McKane.

<sup>111</sup> The term מְדָבָר is closely associated throughout the Old Testament with Israel’s sojourn in the wilderness.

<sup>112</sup> Jer 4:11; 5:6; 12:12; 13:24.

<sup>113</sup> There is a grammatical abnormality in the clause עָרִים לֹא נֹשְׁבָה in v. 6. Kethibh reads נֹשְׁבָה “(not) inhabited (city, town)” while Qere reads נֹשְׁבוּ “(un)inhabited (cities, towns).” Qere נֹשְׁבוּ is grammatically correct for the plural עָרִים. The MT, as well as all the versions, takes עָרִים.

inhospitable place to live; and he will also make towns not inhabited. Once again, the prophet pictures the judgment as a great reversal.

In v. 6, the impression of desolation envisaged by the desert is clearly contrasted with the sense of prosperity by the image of the forest. The general image of transformation in v. 6 is expanded by the detailed destructive image in v. 7 where the figure of destroyers, each armed with his weapons, will cut down the cedar beams and throw them into the fire. God himself will intervene with all these destructive activities. Verses 6b-7 make up an announcement of judgment (Intervention of God with “I”-speech, vv. 6b - 7a; the Result of the Intervention of God with “It/they”-speech, v. 7b). The Babylonians will bring in the devastation through the weapons and fire.

The verb **קדש** is used of the act of consecration.<sup>114</sup> The word **משחית** is translated “destroyer” in many contexts.<sup>115</sup> It normally occurs in the context of war. The clause **קדשתי עליך משחיתים איש וכליו** has holy war connotations.<sup>116</sup> Now the Lord is waging holy war against Judah in the same way in which he consecrated

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<sup>114</sup> The verb **קדש** (Piel) is literally translated “sanctify, consecrate, set apart as sacred.”

<sup>115</sup> Also in Jer 4:7; cf. “raider” in 1 Sam 13:17; 14:15; “trap” in Jer 5:26.

<sup>116</sup> J. Alberto Soggin suggests that the clause refers to holy war in the prophets (“The Prophets on Holy War as Judgment against Israel,” in *Old Testament and Oriental Studies* [BibOr 29; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1975], 69 = “Der prophetische Gedanke über den heiligen Krieg, als Gericht gegen Israel,” *VT* 10 [1960], 81).

Israel to wage holy war against her enemies and the Lord's.<sup>117</sup> It is another example of ironic reversal in Jeremiah's use of the holy war imagery against Judah.

The noun כְּלִי denotes the general meaning of "tool, container, vessel." The appropriate English translation for this word is determined by the context involved. Interpretation of כְּלִיו "his tools" depends on the interpretation of מְשַׁחֲתִים "destroyers." "His tools" is a reference to the tools of the "destroyers." The destroyers will cut down the "choicest cedars" מִבְּחַר אֲרָזֶיךָ for burning (v. 7b).<sup>118</sup> Thus, the tools of the destroyers can be "axes" as the Septuagint translates מְשַׁחֲתִים. The figure presented by the clause וְקִדַּשְׁתִּי עֲלֶיךָ מְשַׁחֲתִים אֵשׁ וְכִלְיוֹ in relation to "cutting up your choicest cedars" and "fire" in v. 7b is not a military image. However, the holy war imagery still continues. "His tools" (כְּלִיו) could just as well be "his weapons" (cf. הַמִּלְחָמָה כְּלִי in 21:4). The destroying image of an invading army can be coupled with the imagery of "fire."

The figure in v. 7 is interpreted in connection with cedars in v. 6aβ for which especially Lebanon was famous. The phrases מִבְּחַר אֲרָזֶיךָ "your choicest cedars" and הַלְבָנוֹן רֵאשׁ "the summit of Lebanon" in v. 6 form parallels. The imagery of

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<sup>117</sup> Cf. קִדְּשׁוּ מִלְחָמָה עָלֶיהָ "prepare war against her" in Jer 6:4; קִדְּשׁוּ מִלְחָמָה "prepare war" in Joel 3:9; קִדְּשׁוּ עָלָיו מִלְחָמָה "prepare war against him" in Mic 3:5.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. "fire in its forest" אֵשׁ בְּיַעֲרָהּ in 21:14.



“forest” in v. 6aβ is a metaphor for the “house of the king of Judah.” Here the “choicest cedars” refer to the cedar wood or beams used in the building of the palace,<sup>119</sup> but behind the image also lies the pride of Judah. The destructive imagery is followed with a reversal of the thoughts of v. 6aβ. The Lord threatens the “house of the king of Judah” (palace or dynasty) with complete destruction, even though Gilead and Lebanon are impressive for their forests. The imagery of vv. 6b-7 is a description of the scene of desolation. Vv. 6-7 is linked to 21:13-14 by the imagery of forest and fire: the catchwords “cedars” and “fire” in v. 7 and “fire in its forest” אֵשׁ בַּיַּעֲרָהּ in 21:14. While the figure in v. 7 is not explicitly a military one, the imagery in the context of vv. 6-9 is military. The palace is burned by the invading army. Thus, the interpretation of v. 7 with the reversal image of holy war is appropriate. It is an allusion to the Assyrian invasion: Gilead had been destroyed more than a century earlier by Tiglath-pileser.<sup>120</sup>

The oracles in vv. 1-9 are addressed with the introductory formula to the “house of king of Judah” (vv. 1, 6). The king is exhorted to maintain justice in the society (v. 3). The dynasty is threatened with judgment for the failure to observe the covenantal obligation and promised prosperity for keeping the obligations. The options given in vv. 4-5 are now completely nullified. There is no more chance to repent. The metaphor is that the house of the king of Judah is the fertile land of

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<sup>119</sup> The association of “palace” and “cedar” is evident from 2 Sam 7:2,7, where David describes his palace as “a house of cedar” (בֵּית אֲרָזִים); 1 Kgs 7:2-5, where a building in the palace of Solomon was named the “House of the Forest of Lebanon” (בֵּית יַעַר הַלְבָּנוֹן); Jer 22:14 (סָפֹן בְּאֲרָזִים “paneled with cedar”), where the palace and cedar are closely connected.

<sup>120</sup> 2 Kgs 15:29.

“Gilead” and the choicest cedars of the “summit of Lebanon.” Vv. 6b-7 consist of words of judgment in reference to destruction and desolation. The destructive imagery is expressed with the imagery of desert and uninhabited towns (v. 6b) and the imagery of fire (v. 7b). Verses 6-7 present the images of reversal: the forests will be turned into the desert (מִדְבָּר, cf. “desolation” חֲרָבָה, v. 5) where no one lives (v. 6b); the “house of the king of Judah” made of choicest cedars will be cut up and used for firewood (v. 7), instead of being used for the building purpose. The Lord himself commissions destroyers. It is the reversal of the holy war motif. The Lord is not any more acting against the enemies of Judah. The Lord’s denunciation is directed against Jerusalem in the context of a holy war setting. The judgment is not limited to the house of the king of Judah, but includes the city of Jerusalem. The symbols of promise are dismantled.

8 “And many nations will pass by this city and will say one another, ‘Why has the Lord done such a thing to this great city?’ 9 And they will say, ‘Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God, and have worshiped other gods and served them.’”

8 וְעָבְרוּ גוֹיִם רַבִּים עַל הָעִיר הַזֹּאת  
וְאָמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל-רֵעֵהוּ עַל-מָה עָשָׂה יְהוָה כֹּכָה לָעִיר הַגְּדוֹלָה הַזֹּאת:  
9 וְאָמְרוּ עַל אֲשֶׁר עָזְבוּ אֶת-בְּרִית יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם  
וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לֵאלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וַיַּעֲבְדוּם:

The people of “many nations” (גוֹיִם רַבִּים) will look at the desolation brought on “this city.” The devastation of this city has become the subject of conversation and enquiry not only by the people of Judah but also by the people of many nations passing by this city. There is an unusual characteristic in the presentation of vv. 8-9 in that people from many nations, rather than the people of

Judah, ask themselves questions and provide the answers.<sup>121</sup> They ask for explanations in the name of the Lord for what has happened to Judah: “Why has the Lord done such a thing to this great city?” They provide a theological answer. The irony here is also the kind of theological answer, which is not based on the religious faith of the people of many nations but on the type of faith of the people of Judah. The theological answer in v. 9 should be interpreted as a conventional form of expression, rather than that the foreigners were familiar with the theological terminology of the covenant. However, it is ironic that they should recognize what Israel should have seen itself. Verse 9 provides a justification for what has happened to “this city” (v. 8). It may reflect the view of the author (or the final editor). The rhetorical effect of usage of a conventional form of expression may validate the author’s view in the case of a specific disaster.<sup>122</sup> More importantly, this expression recalls the Deuteronomic curse (Deut 29). The curse has fallen!

The question-and-answer style contains three elements: a setting for the question, mentioning those who ask it; the question in a direct quotation; the answer in a direct quotation. It may have been a mode of announcing propaganda. This style finds parallels in the record of the campaign against the Arabs in the Assyrian annals of Ashurbanipal (668-633 BC).<sup>123</sup> The Arabs are made to confess that the reason

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<sup>121</sup> Cf. In Jer 5:19; 9:12-14 [MT11-13] and 16:10-13, it is the people who suffered the judgment. They ask for explanations for the catastrophe caused by the Lord. The answers are given in the form of prophetic oracles.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Nebuzaradan’s theological assessment of the fall of Jerusalem in 40:1-3.

<sup>123</sup> Rassam Cylinder column 9, lines 69-74: “Whenever the inhabitants of Arabia asked each other: ‘On account of what have these calamities befallen Arabia?’ (they answered themselves:) ‘Because we did not keep the solemn oaths (sworn by) Ashur,

their land lies in ruins is that they have broken a treaty with the Assyrian king. Long suggests that this is an instance of a literary convention available in the ancient Near East.<sup>124</sup>

The question and answer schema of vv. 8-9 is a response to the harsh judgment against the “house of the king of Judah” (vv. 6-7) where no explicit reason is specified. Verses 8-9 provide a reason with a simple “why ... because” structure of question and answer. The clause in v. 8 parallels the clause in v. 9, with waw-consecutives with all the verbs: “say” (אָמַר) in each verse; “why?” (עַל-מָה) (v. 8) matches “because” (עַל-אֲשֶׁר) (v. 9). As the question is raised by foreigners, so the answer is provided by them. The rhetorical effect is to justify and emphasize the universality of the judgment. Thus, the prophecy as declared in 21:3-10 (Proposition) against the kings and the people is a universally acceptable judgment.

The Lord’s doing “such a thing to this great city” (v. 8) is in reference to the Lord’s making “this house” become a desolation (v. 5) and the “choicest cedars” being set on fire (v. 7). The foreigners call Jerusalem “this great city,” while the Lord had called it simply “this city.” Its greatness is no more. The reason for the judgment is the breach of the covenant of the Lord and idolatry: “they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God” and “have worshiped other gods and served them”

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because we offended the friendliness of Ashurbanipal, the king, beloved by Ellil!” (ANET, 300).

<sup>124</sup> Long, “Two Question and Answer Schemata in the Prophets,” 130-134 [131]. This pattern occurs with minor variations in Deut 29:24 [MT 23] and 1 Kgs 9:8.

(v. 9).<sup>125</sup> God, the nation Israel, and individual human beings are often the subjects of the verb עָזַב “abandon or forsake.” When God is the subject of the verb,<sup>126</sup> the verb is negated – God will “not abandon” or “not forsake.” The verb עָזַב is used figuratively with man as the subject in a theological usage to mean “apostatize.”<sup>127</sup> It is used frequently to denote an act of abandonment of the Lord, his law or his covenant. Jeremiah uses this term to characterize the disruption of the relationship with the Lord and idolatry.<sup>128</sup> The people’s abandonment of the Lord is used as a justification of the Lord’s abandonment of the people and their punishment (Deut 29:25 [MT 24]; 31:16-17).<sup>129</sup> An ethical aspect of the covenant theme is stressed in Jer 21-24 (21:12; 22:3, 13-17; 23:5). Administration of justice in the society is a covenantal obligation demanded from the kings (v. 3). In Verses 8-9, however, the reason for judgment against the city is theological. Verse 9 explains such a catastrophe in reference to idolatry.

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<sup>125</sup> Moses Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 320-321. The phrase “worship other gods and serve them” is considered a typical Deuteronomistic phrase warning against worshipping foreign gods (also see Jer 1:16; 13:10; 16:11; 25:6).

<sup>126</sup> About forty times in the Old Testament.

<sup>127</sup> About sixty times in the Old Testament.

<sup>128</sup> Jer 1:16; 5:19; 16:11; 19:4; 22:9; cf. 2:13, 17, 19; 5:7; 9:13; 17:13.

<sup>129</sup> The phrase “abandon the covenant” (עָזַב בְּרִית) occurs only here in the book of Jeremiah. This phrase occurs also in Deut 29:25 [MT 24]. In the context of the covenant renewal in Deut 29:22-28 [MT 21-27], the community reflects on the harsh judgment which happened one or two generations earlier (Cf. 1 Kgs 9:8-9). The context of Jer 22:8-9 is often considered to be exilic due to its parallels to Deut 29:22-28 and 1 Kgs 9:8-9. Mayes and Gray understand both parallels in exilic contexts (Arthur D. H. Mayes, *Deuteronomy* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979], 359, 367; John Gray, *I & II Kings* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970], 236). Long suggests that the question and answer schema is imbedded in the literary style of the Deuteronomistic historian which may reflect the rhetorical teaching in exilic situations (“Question and Answer Schemata,” 131-132).

### 5.3.2 Summary to 22:1-9

22:1-9 as a unit in the Confirmation elaborate in detail Jeremiah's brief proclamation of judgment in 21:3-10 when Jerusalem is under siege by the invading Babylonians (21:1-2). The main point in 22:1-9 is that the monarchy must meet elemental requirements of social justice (v. 3) and theological obedience (v. 9) in order to survive. The maintenance of justice in the society is declared as a covenantal obligation for the king (v. 3). The conditional statements provide promise for observance and judgment for failure. The positive response to the covenantal obligation will bring out prosperity (v. 4), while the failure to observe the obligation will result in the judgment that the Lord will make the "house of the king of Judah" become a desolation (v. 5). The positive response is still an option (vv. 4-5). The possibility for a positive response although offered is denied.

The oracle (vv. 6-9) provides an unambiguous conclusion. Judgment is unavoidable. We may envisage cedar trees in the forests of Gilead and Lebanon being cut and used in their constructive use for building projects. However, it is in view of vv. 6-7 that the **מִשְׁחָתִים** would cut the choicest cedar beams of the palace to use them for firewood. In v. 7, judgment is announced against the "house of the king of Judah." The burning with fire would include palaces and the city as well. Vv. 6-7 might have been originally an oracle against Gilead or Lebanon, but here in the present context it is intended to Jerusalem. The poetic verses 6-7 rhetorically function to connect the sections (vv. 1-5 and vv. 8-9). Vv. 8-9 interprets vv. 6-7 in

relation to the unnamed city. Verse 6-9 present Jeremiah's judgment against Judah's kings and describe the fate of the city, Jerusalem. For this judgment, an explanation is offered in terms of apostasy. The royal palace and Jerusalem will be destroyed by the invading Babylonians. מְדַבֵּר and נוֹשְׁבָה לֹא עָרִים are symbols of desolation. An interpretation in terms of invading Babylonians is ultimately correct. Verses 8-9 explain the fall of Jerusalem.<sup>130</sup> Vv. 1-9 is well in line with the oracle 21:11-14, which we called an introduction to the Confirmation (21:11-23:8). In 21:12 "fire" is a figure for divine wrath while in 21:14 "fire" describes the fate of the unnamed city.

We notice the image of reversal in Judah's fortune from forest to desert (v. 6), from "choicest cedars" to firewood (v. 7), from "this great city" to "uninhabited towns" (vv. 6, 8). Judah's pride is cut down to size, in violent images. This is well in line with the reversal of the holy war image, which is prevalent in Jer 21-24. The prophecy in 22:1-9 shows Jeremiah's prophetic judgment against the kings. The fall of Jerusalem has become a warning to the "many nations" of what the Lord has done to "this great city" because his people had "forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God, and have worshiped other gods and served them." This warning was repeated to

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<sup>130</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 520-521: "A fundamental question is whether we are to explain the question-answer procedure which is found in the prose of the book of Jeremiah (5.19; 9.11-15; 16.10-13; 22.8f.) as a device for giving expression to the proleptic certainty of the historical prophet Jeremiah that judgement will fall on Jerusalem *in the future*, or whether we should rather conclude that the form of these passages is evidence that they arise after the fall of Jerusalem and Judah. The latter is certainly the *prima facie* indication of 5.19 (עֲשֵׂה) and 9.11 (עַל מֵה אֲבָדָה הָאָרֶץ), whereas the question of 16.10 relates to threats of judgement (עַל מֵה דָבַר יְהוָה עָלֵינוּ) rather than to judgement fulfilled. ... The Jewish community, whether in the exile or after the exile, is embracing the words of judgement spoken by the prophet Jeremiah against his own and preceding generations."

the people in exile. We will see in the further oracles (22:10-22:30) how particular kings forfeited their chance to make a positive choice.



## 5.4 Confirmation III : Jehoahaz (22:10-12)

### The Structure of 22:10-12

Judgment Speech to Individuals	Jeremiah 22:10-12
Announcement	10 “Do not weep for the dead nor mourn for him; but weep rather for him who goes away, because he will not return again nor see the land of his birth.”
Messenger Formula	11 For thus says the Lord concerning Shallum son of Josiah, who succeeded his father as king of Judah but has gone from this place:
Announcement	“He will not return there again. 12 In the place where they have taken him captive, there he shall die; he will never see this land again.”

The oracles beginning at 21:11 are addressed to the house of the king of Judah. Kings are exhorted to observe the covenant of the Lord (21:11-22:5). The Davidic monarchy has the covenantal obligation to administer justice and righteousness. Judgment is justified for the breaking of the covenant of the Lord (22:6-9). The oracle 22:10-12 marks a turning from general statements concerning all the kings of Davidic dynasty (21:11-22:9) to a series of oracles associated with individual kings, in chronological order beginning with Jehoahaz.<sup>131</sup> The oracle in 22:10-12 is the first reference in 22:10-30 to a specific king by name. The others are vv. 13-19 concerning Jehoiakim and vv. 24-30 Jehoiachin. Jeremiah’s prophetic assessment of the kings is based on how the kings responded to the authority of the Lord. The prophet speaks of the rule of the kings as being in tension with the divine authority which they represent. The prophetic oracles in the remainder of chapter 22 will confirm the tension raised by the specific kings during the years of Jeremiah’s ministry and the last days of Judah. These oracles rhetorically function to prove the bold declaration of judgment against the kings of Judah (Proposition, 21:3-10). As a

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<sup>131</sup> There is no saying addressed explicitly to Josiah, but he is alluded to in v. 10a and vv. 15b-16.

rhetorical argument, the prophet is employing a deductive method by enthymemes in the Confirmation (21:11-23:8). In 21:11-22:9, he set out the general content of the judgment against the Davidic dynasty. This oracle against Jehoahaz (22:10-12) is a specific example of the judgment against the monarchy.

#### 5.4.1 Detailed Analysis of 22:10-12

10 “Do not weep for the dead nor mourn for him; but weep rather for him who goes away, because he will not return again nor see the land of his birth.”

10 אֶל-תִּבְכוּ לְמֵת וְאֶל-תִּנְדְּרוּ לוֹ  
 בְּכוּ בְכוּ לְהֵלֵךְ כִּי לֹא יָשׁוּב עוֹד וְרָאָה אֶת-אֶרֶץ מוֹלְדוֹתוֹ:

As this brief poem (v. 10) stands independently, it does not refer to a specific individual. It laments that an unnamed person is going away never to see to his native land again. C. C. Roach suggests the original setting for v. 10 at a funeral.<sup>132</sup>

In this view, the verb הֵלֵךְ can mean “to die” rather than “to go,” as it does in

connection with the verb שׁוּב in 2 Sam 12:23 where David says of his dead son, “I shall go to him, but he will not return to me”

(אֲנִי הֵלֵךְ אֵלָיו וְהוּא לֹא-יָשׁוּב אֵלַי).

Thus, the sense in v. 10a is “Do not weep for the dead or mourn for him; but weep bitterly for one who is dying.” This

interpretation, however, loses its force for differentiating הֵלֵךְ (“for one who is

dead”) from מֵת (“one who is dying”) in v. 10a. Neither the dead nor the dying will

return; neither will see the land of his birth.

<sup>132</sup> Corwin C. Roach, “Notes and Comments,” *ATR* 23 (1941): 347-348.

It is ironic that David should fast and weep while his child was still alive and should stop weeping when it was dead.<sup>133</sup> The new irony is Jeremiah's remarks that weeping and mourning should be reserved for the alive, not for the dead. We understand הלך in v. 10a, with BDB, as "going" into exile rather than "dying" although the use of הלך with the meaning of "going into exile" is rare in Biblical Hebrew.<sup>134</sup> The participle הלך (v. 10) is explained as "one who is going into exile" by אשר יצא מן-המקום הזה (v. 11) and הגלו אתו (v. 12). The use of the participle הלך intensifies as an immediate future the poignancy of the prophecy.

The contrast is heightened by the contrastive parallelism between the negative and positive commands, אל-תבכו "do not weep"/ אל-תנדרו "do not mourn" and בכו בכו "weep rather." The function of the infinitive absolute after an imperative (בכו בכו) is emphasizing the contrast (thus, "rather") between the parallels ("do not weep nor mourn" and "weep rather") in v. 10, rather than stressing the intensity ("weep bitterly").<sup>135</sup> Most English versions include "but" or "rather" in their translation. The irony in v. 10 is the instruction to "not weep for the dead," as is naturally expected, but "weep rather" for the living. The emotion is heightened by

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<sup>133</sup> 2 Sam 12:21-23.

<sup>134</sup> The only other usage is in 1 Chr 6:15 [MT 5:41] where הלך is used with the sense "going into exile": ויהוצרך הלך בהגלות יהוה את-יהודה וירושלים.

<sup>135</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 588.

the repetition of words with a similar meaning, “weep” (בכה) and “mourn” (ניד), and the repetitive use of בכה in three different conjugations.

The phrases לא ישוב עוד and להליך form contrastive/ synonymous parallelism. The contrastive parallelism between למת and מולדתו serves as an *inclusio*. The rhetorical effect of parallelism between the למת and להליך (v. 10) is to drive home to the audience that the fate of one who is going away into exile is much worse than that of one who is dead. An implication is that the life in exile will be more cruel than an honorable death in accordance with the funeral rites in his own land. Thus, the command is to mourn for the exile because he will never return to his own land.

The contrast of the participles הליך and מת, in v. 10a, puts emphasis on the state or activity rather than the identity of the subjects.<sup>136</sup> V. 10 in itself does not refer to specific individuals. The anonymity of the subjects spoken in v. 10 is removed instantly by the utterance in the following pericope (vv. 11-12). Spoken on a specific social context, the juxtaposition of the poetic v. 10 and the prose vv. 11-12 identifies “one who is dead” (מת) with Josiah and “one who goes away” (הליך) with Shallum who is identified as “who succeeded Josiah his father” (v. 11a).

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<sup>136</sup> Cf. “he who dwells” (היִשֵּׁב) in 21:9; “he who builds” (בִּנֵּה) in 22:13); “he who says” (הֹאמֵר) in 22:14.

11 For thus says the Lord concerning Shallum son of Josiah, who succeeded his father as king of Judah but has gone from this place: "He will not return there again.  
 12 For in the place where they have taken him captive, there he shall die; he will never see this land again."

11 כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי שָׁלֹם  
 בֶּן־יֹאשִׁיָּהוּ מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה הַמֶּלֶךְ תַּחַת יֹאשִׁיָּהוּ אָבִיו אֲשֶׁר יָצָא מִן־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה  
 לֹא־יָשׁוּב שָׁם עוֹד:  
 12 כִּי בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־הִגְלוּ אֹתוֹ שָׁם יָמוּת וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לֹא־יִרְאֶה עוֹד:

The messenger formula *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה* is followed by the identity of the "one who is going" (*הַלֵּךְ*) into exile. Vv. 11-12 identify *מֶת* as Josiah and *הַלֵּךְ* as Shallum.<sup>137</sup> The contrast in v. 10 is between Josiah ("one who is dead") and Shallum ("one who is going" into exile). Josiah was killed at Megiddo in 609 BC opposing the Egyptian forces of Pharaoh Neco (cf. 2 Kgs 23:29).<sup>138</sup> At his death, his son Jehoahaz was placed on the throne by a popular movement by the "people of the land."<sup>139</sup> Shallum was this king's personal name, Jehoahaz his throne name.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>137</sup> The oracles are spoken through Jeremiah to the kings as well as concerning them. The expression (*אָמַר* + Proposition *אֵל*) usually means "say to" (Jer 1:7); it may also mean "say of or concerning" as in 22:11, 18). It is awkward for Jeremiah to speak "to Shallum" (*אֵל שָׁלֹם*) considering that he has already gone into exile: "From a historical perspective, there is no need to assume that communication between exiles in Egypt and Judah was lacking; we know communication existed with the Babylonian exiles just a few years later, and we know of communication between colonies in Egypt and Judah in the next century (the Elephantine materials). So such communication was quite possible, and an oracle delivered in Jerusalem might well have been sent to Egypt" (Craigie *et al*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 306).

<sup>138</sup> Malamat, "Twilight of Judah," 125.

<sup>139</sup> See 2 Kgs 23:30 where the dead Josiah is referred to as "who is dead" *מֶת* as in v. 10.

<sup>140</sup> A. M. Honeyman has argued that Jehoahaz was the regnal name and Shallum the given name of this individual ("The Evidence for Regnal Names among the Hebrews," *JBL* 67 [1948], 19-20). This position has been accepted by Rudolph, Bright, and most other commentaries. Hans Wildberger has since questioned it ("Die Thronnamen des Messias, Jes 9,6b," *TZ* 16 [1960], 320-21). A change of name is

The judgment spoken in v. 10 is that he is going (הֵלֵךְ participle) into exile, but here in v. 11 he has already gone (נָצַח perfect) “from this place.” He will not return again and he will never see this land again; he will die in exile (vv. 11b-12). The verb נָצַח in its majority of occurrences has the idea of physically going out or going forth to some location. When it is used theologically, it is used in reference to the Exodus of Israel from Egypt.<sup>141</sup> The irony is that the verb used in Israel’s departure from Egypt is used to describe Jehoahaz’s going in exile to Egypt.<sup>142</sup> The image of inversion is well in line with other examples of inversion (e.g., the inversion of the holy war imagery) in the oracles in Jeremiah 21-24.

Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for three months (2 Kgs 24:31). Although Jehoahaz was two years younger than his brother Jehoiakim (2 Kgs 23:31, 36), the “people of the land” managed to install Jehoahaz, instead of Jehoiakim, on the throne (2 Kgs 23:30).<sup>143</sup> The installation of Jehoahaz by the “people of the land” may have represented an

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associated with accession to the throne. Jehoiakim is the name given to Eliakim by Pharaoh Necho (2 Kgs 23:34), Mattaniah is renamed Zedekiah by Nebuchadrezzar (2 Kgs 24:17). It is supposed that Jehoahaz was the regnal name of Shallum. However, in 1 Chr 3:15 Shallum is listed alongside Jehoiakim and Zedekiah.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. The verb נָצַח is used to refer to a Babylonian exile in 29:16, “who did not go with you into exile” אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָצְאוּ אִתְּכֶם בְּגוֹלָהּ.

<sup>142</sup> Bruggemann, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 191: The king, Shallum, is mainly referred to elsewhere by his throne name, Jehoahaz. Cf. J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 402.

<sup>143</sup> See Marvin H. Pope, “Am Ha'arez,” *IDB* 1:106, and Malamat, “Twilight of Judah,” 126 n. 6.

anti-Egyptian mood. The action of the “people of the land” indicates that they favored Jehoahaz and deliberately passed over Jehoiakim, who was ahead of Jehoahaz in line for the throne. They wanted to continue the policies of Josiah. Jehoahaz reigned just three months before he was deposed by Pharaoh Neco and taken into exile in Egypt (2 Kgs 23:30-33).<sup>144</sup> Pharaoh Neco made his older brother Eliakim king, and changed his name to the throne name Jehoiakim (2 Kgs 23:34a, 35). Thus, there are two kings of Judah alive at the same time: Jehoahaz, the king in exile in Egypt, chosen by the “people of the land” and Jehoiakim, on the throne in Jerusalem, chosen by Pharaoh Neco. This situation evidently would have created divided loyalties in the community.<sup>145</sup>

The extent of the power struggle between the parties is not reflected in the relevant Biblical texts. However, we still can make some assumptions about the audience who must have been involved in the partisan conflict. Those who held to their hopes for Jehoahaz’s return must have been the first audience for the oracle. Now Jeremiah is suggesting that those who had supported Jehoahaz should not maintain a hope that he would return from Egypt to take the throne. Jeremiah’s prophecy is clearly against the people who went to exile in Egypt (cf. Jer 24:8). This oracle, therefore, anticipates the message of Jer 24:8-10.

Jehoahaz was condemned in the Books of Kings: “He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, just as his fathers had done” (2 Kgs 24:32). And he is not treated favorably

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<sup>144</sup> Jehoahaz died in Egypt (2 Kgs. 23:34b).

<sup>145</sup> Cf. 2 Kgs 11:17-20.

either in the book of Jeremiah. Yet in neither place is he accused of anything specific. The oracle vv. 10-12 provides no specific reason for the judgment nor mentions conditions. The reason for the absence of an accusation is that the announcement is an answer to an inquiry.<sup>146</sup> In 21:1-2 (Prologue), Zedekiah inquires of Jeremiah regarding the invading Babylonians. In 21:3-10 (Proposition), Jeremiah declares briefly that the Lord is fighting against Judah (the inversion of the holy war imagery) and that the people will be exiled to Babylon (21:7, 10). This oracle will be interpreted in connection with 21:1-10. Why is then the judgment against Jehoahaz so severe although he reigned just 3 months? The same is true with Jehoiachin who also ruled only 3 months.

However, the context of relevant biblical texts to Jehoahaz does suggest that Jehoahaz is condemned in the context of the judgment on the people. Their judgment is associated with their reliance on means other than the Lord. The audience is expected to know well the incident in 609 BC, described in 2 Kgs 23:30-34. The judgment on Jehoahaz is a judgment on the monarchy. The kings of Judah are “unable to cope either with internal threat or with the resolve of God. Monarchy is no barrier against God’s ultimate nullification of Jerusalem. Royal ideology and pretension are quickly dismissed. Grief for the king is in fact grief for Jerusalem, now under certain death sentence.”<sup>147</sup> This oracle (22:10-12) concerning Jehoahaz is

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<sup>146</sup> Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 161. Westermann calls the type of verses 10-12 a “judgment speech without a reason.” Other examples include the answers to Hezekiah’s inquiry (2 Kgs 20:1 = Isa 38:1) and to Zedekiah’s inquiry (Jer 37:17).

<sup>147</sup> Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 191-192.



confirming the judgment against Zedekiah and the Davidic dynasty, declared in 21:3-10 (Proposition).

The setting of v. 10 is understood to be related to the death of Josiah and the exile of Shallum. These verses are an announcement of judgment regarding Jehoahaz. Vv. 11-12 repeat the message of v. 10. The repetition of the theme of “never return” strengthens the linkage of v. 10 with vv. 11-12: **לֹא יָשׁוּב עוֹד** (v. 10) is parallel to **לֹא-יָשׁוּב שָׁם עוֹד** (v. 11); **לְהֵלֵךְ** (v. 10) to **וְרָאָה אֶת-אֶרֶץ מוֹלְדוֹתוֹ** (v. 10) to **וְאֶת-הָאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת לֹא-יִרְאֶה עוֹד** (v. 12). Its consequences culminate in the clause **שָׁם יָמוּת** (v. 12). He will go into exile “from this place” (**לְהֵלֵךְ** in v. 10 and **מִן-הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה** in v. 11), then “there he shall die” (**שָׁם יָמוּת**) in a foreign land (**בְּמָקוֹם**) (v. 12). We notice a difference in using the definite article in **הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה** (v. 10), Jerusalem, while an indefinite article in **בְּמָקוֹם** (v. 12), in a foreign land. The verb **הֵלֵךְ** is understood as captives taken from Jerusalem to go into exile in a foreign land. The parallel expressions **הֵלֵךְ** and **יָשׁוּב** are suggestive of Jehoahaz’s exile as death; Jehoahaz is as good as dead; he will never return to his native land. The force of the oracle is to affirm the permanence of Jehoahaz’s exile. He will not return one day to lead the anti-Egyptian elements in the land.

#### 5.4.2 Summary to 22:10-12

The oracle vv. 10-12 is the first reference of the oracles in 21:11-22:30 to a specific king. Verse 10 itself lacks specificity about its social and historical occasion. It does not identify the speaker or the addressee. The poem is a contrast between one who is dead and another who goes away. The poem could have been proclaimed previously in a different situation, likely to have been a funeral. However, in the new social context provided by the prose explanation of vv. 11-12, the anonymity of the poem is removed. Thus, v. 10 will be read in connection with the meaning provided by vv. 11-12. Verse 11 identifies the unnamed subjects in v. 10, one who is going into exile as Jehoahaz and one who is dead as his father Josiah. The messenger formula in v. 11 declares that the poem v. 10 is a word of God. Thus this formula provides the anonymous poem v. 10 with an oracular framework on a specific occasion. The audience is assumed to have known the event described in 2 Kgs 23:30-34. This oracle is directed specifically at Shallum (Jehoahaz), the king who has been taken into exile to Egypt. The audience of vv. 10-12 in the present text may have included the “people of the land” who were allied with Jehoahaz. They may have expected Jehoahaz to return from exile. Jeremiah commands that the weeping should be reserved for those facing the exile. The oracle asserts the finality of Jehoahaz’s exile. Jehoahaz will not return, but will die in exile in a foreign land. His fate is such that it warrants bitter weeping and mourning. The judgment on Jehoahaz is a judgment on the monarchy. In the Prologue (21:1-2), Zedekiah wished the Lord to make the invading Babylonians withdraw from Jerusalem. Jeremiah’s answer was that the Lord would rather fight against Judah and the king and the people will be

taken into exile by the Babylonians (21:3-10, Proposition). Here Jeremiah is presenting the oracle against Jehoahaz as a proof why he declared the judgment against Zedekiah.

## 5.5 Confirmation IV : Jehoiakim (22:13-19)

### The Structure of 22:13-19

Judgment Speech to Individuals	Jeremiah 22:13-19
Accusation	13 “Woe to him who builds his house without righteousness, and his upper rooms without justice; Who uses his neighbor for nothing, and does not give him his wages. 14 Who says, ‘I will build myself a roomy house, with spacious upper rooms; and cut out its windows, paneling with cedar and painting in red.’ 15 “Do you become a king because you are competing in cedar? Did not your father eat and drink, and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. 16 “He pled the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me?” declares the Lord. 17 “But your eyes and your heart are on nothing but your dishonest gain, and on shedding innocent blood, and on practicing oppression and violence.”
Messenger Formula	18 Therefore thus says the Lord concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah,
Announcement of Judgment	“They will not lament for him: ‘Alas, my brother!’ or, ‘Alas, sister!’ They will not lament for him: ‘Alas lord!’ or, ‘Alas his splendor!’ 19 “He will be buried with a donkey’s burial, dragged away and thrown out beyond the gates of Jerusalem.”

### 5.5.1 Detailed Analysis of 22:13-19

13 “Woe to him who builds his house without righteousness, and his upper rooms without justice; Who uses his neighbor for nothing, and does not give him his wages. 14 Who says, ‘I will build myself a roomy house, with spacious upper rooms; and cut out its windows, paneling with cedar and painting in red.’ 15 “Do you become a king because you are competing in cedar? Did not your father eat and drink, and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. 16 “He pled the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me?” declares the Lord. 17 “But your eyes and your heart are on nothing but your dishonest gain, and on shedding innocent blood, and on practicing oppression and violence.”

13 הוֹי בִּנְה בֵּיתוֹ בְּלֹא צְדָקָה וְעֲלִיּוֹתָיו בְּלֹא מִשְׁפָּט בְּרַעְהוּ יַעֲבֹד חָנָם וּפְעָלוֹ לֹא יִתֵּן-לוֹ: 14 הָאָמַר אֲבִנֶה-לִּי בַּיִת מְדוֹת וְעֲלִיּוֹת מְרוּחִים וְקָרַע לוֹ חֲלוֹנֵי וְסָפוֹן בְּאֶרֶז וּמִשׁוֹחַ בְּשִׁשֶׁר: 15 הֲתִמְלֹךְ כִּי אָתָּה מִתְחַרָּה בְּאֶרֶז אֲבִיךָ הֲלוֹא אָכַל וְשָׁתָה וְעָשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט וְצְדָקָה אִז טוֹב לוֹ: 16 הֲן דִּין-עָנִי וְאֲבִיוֹן אִז טוֹב הֲלוֹא-הִיא הַדַּעַת אֲתִי נְאֻם-יְהוָה: 17 כִּי אֵין עֵינֶיךָ וְלִבְךָ כִּי אִם-עַל-בְּצֻעַךָ וְעַל הַסִּתְנָקִי לְשִׁפוֹךְ וְעַל-הָעֶשֶׂק וְעַל-הַמְרוּצָה לַעֲשׂוֹת:

Verses 13-19 are the second judgment oracle on the individual kings of Judah specified by name in chronological order beginning with Jehoahaz (vv. 10-12). The judgment oracle of vv. 13-19 is on Jehoiakim.<sup>148</sup> Verses 13-17 form the accusation. In the accusation speech of vv. 13-17, a structure of three elements arises. First, in vv. 13-14 an unnamed person is accused of using the power irresponsibly. The main concern of vv. 13-14 is the “perversion” of justice and righteousness. Second, the social issue of justice and righteousness is taken up again in vv. 15-16. The reference is to an anonymous king and his father. The father is presented as a norm to the administration of justice and righteousness. He pleaded the cause of the poor and needy. Third, the previous accusation of vv. 13-14 is reiterated with increased intensity in v. 17. The yet unnamed king would practice “oppression and violence” and “shedding innocent blood” as well. The unrighteous actions of the king are contrasted with the just actions of his father. The accusation speech of vv. 13-17 lacks specificity about the identity of the one accused.

The messenger formula of v. 18a $\alpha$  is a transition to the announcement of judgment of vv. 18a $\beta$ -19. It names Jehoiakim as the subject of the accusation in vv. 13-17. Judgment on Jehoiakim is his death and an unsuitable burial for a king (vv. 18-19). The text does not provide any specific clues regarding the circumstance of the proclamation of this oracle.<sup>149</sup> In the announcement of judgment on Jehoiakim in

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<sup>148</sup> Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 129-163. This oracle is form-critically a prophetic judgment speech to an individual.

<sup>149</sup> Biblical records do not show that Jehoiakim had any special building project for his living quarters during his reign. According to the record of the book of Kings, Jehoiakim taxed the land and exacted the silver and gold from the “people of the land” to pay tributes to Pharaoh Neco (2 Kgs 23:35). This event may amount to the accusation of the perversion of justice and righteousness described in this oracle (v.

vv. 18-19, however, Jeremiah predicts a funeral unsuitable for a king. Josiah is said to have lived a good life: “Then it was well with him” (vv. 15-16). It is an irony that history tells us that Josiah faced a violent death.<sup>150</sup>

The oracle opens with a “woe” cry (הוֹי).<sup>151</sup> הוֹי functions mostly as an introduction to a “woe” cry (as in v. 13) or to a funeral lament (as in v. 18).<sup>152</sup> The interjection הוֹי is followed by participles בָּנָה (v. 13) and הָאָמַר (v. 14). These participles state the contents of the indictment. There is a disparity between what the anonymous person says and what is reported about the reality. One may expect that the denunciation has fallen upon the one who says one thing but does something else.

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17). The accusation of Jehoiakim on the shedding of innocent blood may fit the narrative report that Jehoiakim is said to have had the prophet Uriah murdered with a sword (26:23). Jehoiakim was opportunistic in his dealing with the superpowers of Egyptian and Babylonian empires. But, his luck ran out finally with the invasion of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in December 598 BC. He apparently did not experience the consequences of his policies which he brought upon the people and Jerusalem as is implied by 2 Kgs 24:6.

<sup>150</sup> At the event of 609 BC, Josiah was reportedly killed by the Pharaoh Neco at Megiddo and brought back to Jerusalem to be buried in his own tomb (2 Kgs 23:29-30).

<sup>151</sup> The interjection הוֹי occurs 51 times in the Old Testament (1 Kgs 13:30; Isa 1:4, 24; 5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22; 10:1, 5; 17:12; 18:1; 28:1; 29:1, 15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1; 45:9, 10; 55:1; Jer 22:13, 18 (x4); 23:1; 34:5; 47:6; 48:1; 50:27; Ezek 13:3, 18; 34:2; Amos 5:18; 6:1; Mic 2:1; Nah. 3:1; Hab 2:6, 9, 12, 15, 19; Zeph 2:5; 3:1; Zech 2:6 [MT 2:10] (x2), 7 [MT 11]; 11:17). The only use of הוֹי outside the prophets is at 1 Kgs 13:30. About 40 times it involves warnings as an introduction to a prophetic woe oracle (Jer 22:13, 23:1; in “woe” series in Isaiah 5 and Habakkuk 2; and others).

<sup>152</sup> Wolff, *Joel and Amos*, 242-245. Wolff provides a form critical investigation of the use of הוֹי in the prophets and in the Ancient Israel. Wolff suggests that the “woe” cry originated in funeral lamentation. See also R. E. Clements, “The Form and Character of Prophetic Woe Oracles,” *Semitics* 8 (1982): 17-29; R. J. Clifford, “The Use of *Hoy* in the Prophets,” *CBQ* 28 (1966): 458-464; Gunther Wanke, “הוֹי and הוֹי,” *ZAW* 78 (1966): 215-218.

Rhetorically, the interjection **הוֹי** may be followed, first, by the quotation “I will build myself a roomy house ... painting in red,” then, by the reality that he exploits his neighbor’s services without giving him his wages. Thus, the woe cry of vv. 13-14 would have the structure of, “Woe to him who says (**הָאָמַר**) ‘I will build myself a roomy house ... painting in red.’ However, who builds (**בִּנְהָה**) his house without righteousness ... does not give him his wages.” But the order is reversed in vv. 13-14. The indictment is set first (v. 13 “Woe to him who builds his house without righteousness... ”), and then detailed information of the indictment is provided by the following verse (v. 14 “Who says, ‘I will build myself a roomy house ...’”). This reversal emphasizes the vain pretension of the king, who has not the wisdom to see the true characters of his actions.

The interjection **הוֹי** catches the attention of the audience. Negative prophetic warning is expected to follow. Yet, this is an accusation on an anonymous person or group. **הוֹי** is used by prophets to introduce criticism of particular people, whose identity and activities are identified by nouns<sup>153</sup> and participles. When **הוֹי** is followed by a participle, the participle relates some specific action of the one addressed. Usually he is anonymous but his activities are denounced. The contents of a woe cry are determined by the activities being denounced.

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<sup>153</sup> For example, Jer 23:1 “Woe to the shepherds” (**הוֹי רֹעִים**); Jer 48:11 “Woe to Nebo” **הוֹי אֶל-נְבוֹ**; Isa 10:5 “Woe to Assyria” **הוֹי אַשּׁוּר**.

The anonymous person is accused of בְּלֹא-צֶדֶק בִּיתוֹ בָּנָה (v. 13a). The meaning of בִּית בָּנָה is ambiguous for a moment. Does it mean “to build a house” in a physical sense, or “to perpetuate and establish a family” in a figurative sense?<sup>154</sup> The following colon (וְעֲלִיּוֹתָיו בְּלֹא מִשְׁפָּט) removes this ambiguity. Perhaps this is ironic. A king should build his dynasty, of course, with justice.<sup>155</sup> But this king is only interested in a literal house. The mention of “his upper rooms” indicates that the image here is a building project. The primary concern of v. 13a is social justice. The builder is indicted, in general terms, of unjust (בְּלֹא-צֶדֶק) and unrighteous (בְּלֹא מִשְׁפָּט) practice for building his house. The specific indictment is announced immediately in the following cola. His practice of injustice and unrighteousness is the exploitation of his neighbor’s services without paying him his wage (v. 13b). There is still considerable ambiguity. No mention is yet made of the house he is building. The accusation of unjust and unrighteous practice is specified further in v. 14 by detailing the description of the building project.

He builds a roomy house with spacious rooms, made of cedar and painted in red (v. 14). The image of the house emerging from the description in v. 14 is not an ordinary house. The house is literally “a house of stature” (בֵּית מְדוּתָה), with

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<sup>154</sup> BDB, 124. The phrase בִּית בָּנָה “to build a house” means figuratively “to establish a family”: Rachel and Leah “built the house of Israel” (Ruth 4:11); “The man who does not build up his brother’s house” (Deut 25:9); God’s promise to David: “I will build him an enduring house” (1 Sam 2:35); “I will build you a house” (2 Sam 7:27); God’s promise to Solomon: “build you an enduring house” (1 Kgs 11:38).

<sup>155</sup> For the parallelism of מִשְׁפָּט and צֶדֶקָה in a judgment oracle, cf. Isa 5:7.



spacious rooms and windows. The phrase **וּמְשֹׁחַ בַּשֵּׁשׁר בְּאֶרֶז וְסָפוֹן** “paneling with cedar and painting in red” further adds to the image of grandeur. **וְסָפוֹן בְּאֶרֶז** is closely associated with the palace (1 Kgs 7:7, Solomon’s palace was “paneled with cedar” **וְסָפוֹן בְּאֶרֶז**).<sup>156</sup> The audience may be reminded of that Solomon too spent more time on his own house than on the temple.<sup>157</sup> They will know too that “cedar” is a symbol of pride (cf. 22:7; Isa 2:12-13). The builder is not named yet. One may imagine the builder who can afford to build a big house paneled with cedar and who is in a position to force his neighbors into service without paying them for their wages. This building project, thus, creates conflicts within the community by exploitation of other members. The audience may remember how Jehoiakim paid tribute to Neco in 609 BC.<sup>158</sup> The practice of injustice and unrighteousness in this building project may have been disruptive of social order. Then Jeremiah is indicating that the social injustice of the people in the society is contingent upon the action of the king. This warrants judgment on the king. The one accused in this oracle is still anonymous.

The question of “becoming king” (**יְהִי מֶלֶךְ**) in v. 15 indicates that a king is involved. The house is again characterized by “cedar” (**אֶרֶז**), which suggests it is a

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<sup>156</sup> Cf. Jer 22:7, “your choicest cedars” **מִבְּחַר אֶרְזֵיךָ**.

<sup>157</sup> 1 Kgs 6:38-7:1.

<sup>158</sup> 2 Kgs 23:35, “So Jehoiakim gave the silver and gold to Pharaoh, but he taxed the land in order to give the money at the command of Pharaoh. He exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land, each according to his valuation, to give it to Pharaoh Neco.”

palace.<sup>159</sup> The image of אֲרָץ in vv. 14 and 15 functions to connect vv. 13-14 and vv. 15-17 to form the accusation. In addition to this, the contrastive repetition of righteousness and justice in the two parts of the accusation provides the linkage of them. In the present context, however, vv. 13-15a, and vv. 10-12 as well, makes a statement about actions of a king and his father. The king is accused of forcing his subjects/ his neighbors to a royal building project without paying them.<sup>160</sup> The ambiguity is removed a little bit more. However, the builder's identity is still unknown.

There is a change in addressing from third person (vv. 13-14) to second person (vv. 15-17). At the same time, the emphasis of the oracle is shifted from the accusation of the builder's actions to a contrast between his and his father's actions. The contrast is stressed by "you" (אַתָּה) in the first colon and "your father" (אָבִיךָ) in the second colon of v. 15. The verbs "eat and drink" (אָכַל וְשָׁתָה) form a hendiadys meaning his father lived a routine life of eating and drinking while still

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<sup>159</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 427. Carroll suggests that the rhetorical question of v. 15a does not refer to a king and his building projects. Verse 15a closes the woe cry of vv. 13-14. Its original meaning may have not had a king in mind and his building projects, because "kings are not usually the recipients of woe sayings," but "social groups which are seen as violating the rights of others in the community and disrupting the wellbeing of the whole people." Kings may build a building of grandeur. One who does at his neighbors' expense and behaves like a king should be condemned. Thus, v.15a is a rhetorical question asking, "Do you think you are a king, because you compete in cedar?"

<sup>160</sup> Solomon also used forced labors in his building projects (1 Kgs 5:13-14 [MT 5:27-28]; 11:28). There might be a David-Solomon paradigm here, underlying Josiah-Jehoiakim.

keeping the covenant obligation of practicing justice and righteousness.<sup>161</sup> “Then it was well with him” (אָז טוֹב לוֹ) (v. 15). The rhetorical question here is not seeking for information. Rather it stresses that his father did “do justice and righteousness.” Some specifics of the practice of “justice and righteousness” are made in v. 16 by the reference to the judicial obligations which rest on the king. His father pleaded the cause of the poor and needy. The demand for מִשְׁפָּט and צְדָקָה is a covenant obligation of the king. It requires that “the poor and needy,” the most vulnerable members of the society, be safeguarded. “Then it was well” (אָז טוֹב) (v. 16). In comparison with the same expression in v. 15, the lack of לוֹ in v. 16 is perhaps an implication that what is indicated by טוֹב is not so much the virtue of his father as the good brought by his father as king from a state of affairs conducted by the justice and righteousness. Things went well not only for the king himself but also for the whole nation.<sup>162</sup> So it hints at real prosperity, not the imagined prosperity of this unjust son.

There may be a rhetorical effect in the very brief allusion to Josiah. If the audience knew the tradition of his reform, they must have been surprised that Jeremiah passes over and focuses instead on Jehoiakim’s wickedness. Even the phrases אָז טוֹב לוֹ says less than one might expect of a great king, like Josiah.

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<sup>161</sup> Duhm suggested that Josiah lived a simple life while concerned rather to keep the covenant (*Jeremia*, 175-176); Bright (also Carroll and Thompson) interpret that Josiah lived well and still managed to keep the covenant. Volz proposed that as eating and drinking are a daily routine, so was to his father the maintenance of the covenant. Holladay and McKane agree with Volz’s interpretation.

<sup>162</sup> Cf. Deut 6:24-25 where prosperity (לְטוֹב) and righteousness (צְדָקָה) are paired.

The rhetorical question, “Is not this to know me?” **הֲלוֹא־הִיא הַדַּעַת אֹתִי**, is expecting an affirmative answer. Yes, administering social justice righteously for the poor and needy constitutes the “knowledge of the Lord.”<sup>163</sup> To know the Lord is to have a relationship with him.<sup>164</sup> Verses 15b-16 indicate that keeping the covenant relationship with the Lord is to “do justice and righteousness” and to “plead the cause of the poor and needy.”<sup>165</sup> The oracle formula **נְאֻם־יְהוָה** comes at the end of v. 16. The use of **נְאֻם־יְהוָה** with rhetorical questions may be a way of reinforcing the claim on the audience’s attention.<sup>166</sup>

Verse 17 opens with the participle **כִּי** which has the adversative sense “but,” followed by **כִּי אֵינֶם** with a stronger adversative sense, “But your eyes and your heart are on nothing but ...” The phrase “eyes and heart” (**עֵינַיִךָ וְלִבְךָ**) forms a hendiadys expressing “desire.”<sup>167</sup> The son’s desire is focused on “dishonest gain, and on shedding innocent blood, and on practicing oppression and violence.” It is well in line with the logic of 21:12 and 22:3 where the house of the king of Judah is exhorted

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<sup>163</sup> Cf. **רַעַת־אֹתִי** in 9:6 [MT 5]; **יָדַע אֹתִי** in 9:24 [MT 23].

<sup>164</sup> The verb **יָדַע** “to know” implies relationship.

<sup>165</sup> To know the Lord is to know that “I am the Lord who does lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth” (9:24 [MT 23]).

<sup>166</sup> Van Dyke Parunak, “Some Discourse Functions,” 511. The oracle formula **נְאֻם־יְהוָה** frequently comes at the end of a paragraph because it is often associated with various sorts of concluding or explanatory clauses which fall at the end of a paragraph.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Psalm 19:8 [MT 9].

to administer social justice even to the most vulnerable of society.<sup>168</sup> In v. 17, however, he is accused of practice of oppression and violence and furthermore of serious criminal actions of shedding innocent blood. This is another linkage that connects the builder and his father in vv. 13-14 to the royal identification of a king and his father.

In contrast to the maintenance of social justice by protecting the rights of the poor and needy (v. 16) is the practice of oppression and extortion and of even shedding innocent blood (v. 17). The force of the rhetorical questions in vv. 15-16 in relation to the woe cry of vv. 13-14, and more specifically of the son's actions in v. 17, is a stark contrast between this builder and his father. The father has kept the covenant relationship with the Lord. Therefore, he has the knowledge of the Lord. As a result, he lived a good life and brought about good for his people. The builder, the yet unnamed king, has not kept the covenant obligation. Rather he does that which is exactly opposite to what is demanded from the house of the king of Judah in 21:12 and 22:3. What then might be the result of his failing to keep his covenant obligation? It is clear that the accusation in v. 17 anticipates some kind of judgment which may be the opposite of what is implied by "then it was well." The judgment may correspond to the same type of judgment as specified in v. 5, "that this house will become a desolation." The positive and negative conditions of the covenant oracle in 22:4-5 may give one an impression of optimism from the prophet.

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<sup>168</sup> The message of 21:11 calls for the administration of justice and the deliverance of the oppressed from oppression. 22:3 becomes more specific about practice of justice and righteousness. It warns against mistreating the most vulnerable of society (foreigners, the fatherless, and widows) and against shedding innocent blood. In the woe cry in vv. 13-14, the builder is accused on the ground of economical exploitation.

However, one is left in no doubt about the prophet's attitude in vv. 13-17. Verses 18-19 will show the consequences of the failure to keep covenant obligation.

18 Therefore thus says the Lord concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, "They will not lament for him: 'Alas, my brother!' or, 'Alas, sister!' They will not lament for him: 'Alas lord!' or, 'Alas his splendor!' 19 "He will be buried with a donkey's burial, dragged away and thrown out beyond the gates of Jerusalem."

18 לְכֵן כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֶל־יְהוֹיָקִים בֶּן־יֹאשִׁיָּהוּ מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה  
 לֹא־יִסְפְּדוּ לוֹ הוּי אָחִי וְהוּי אָחוֹת לֹא־יִסְפְּדוּ לוֹ הוּי אָדוֹן וְהוּי הַדָּהָ:  
 19 קְבוּרַת חֲמוֹר יִקָּבֵר סָחוּב וְהִשְׁלַךְ מִהַלְאָה לְשַׁעְרֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם:

The transition word לְכֵן justifies the judgment as the result of the preceding accusation. The judgment is introduced by the messenger formula. The messenger formula implies that the judgment is not from the messenger but from the one who has sent the messenger. In this oracle of vv. 13-19, however, the identity of the one who is accused has been kept unknown until now. The messenger formula identifies the one who is accused in the oracle as Jehoiakim the son of Josiah.<sup>169</sup> His identity has been withheld intentionally until now for rhetorical effect. Curiosity and ambiguity could have been built up by the list of severe accusations against an unnamed person (vv. 13-15a, 17). This may lead to a climax at the announcement of judgment. Harsh judgment befalls Jehoiakim.

The judgment is twofold: Jehoiakim will not be mourned at his death (v. 18) and his burial will be ignoble for a king (v. 19). The announcement of judgment in v.

<sup>169</sup> Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 100ff., 142. From a form-critical perspective, included at the beginning of the prophetic speech is the commissioning of the messenger which also names the one to whom the oracle is addressed (cf. 21:3, 8, 11; 22:1).

18 begins with the interjection הוֹי just as the accusation does in v. 13.<sup>170</sup> The use of the interjection הוֹי (“woe”) in v. 13 and הוֹי (“alas!”) in v. 18 links the accusation of vv. 13-17 with the announcement of judgment of vv. 18-19. In v. 18, the interjection הוֹי is used in the context of funeral mourning.<sup>171</sup> This is another category of הוֹי (“alas!”). In v. 18, we have two sets of lament: הוֹי אָחִי וְהוֹי אָחוֹת and הוֹי אָרוֹן וְהוֹי הַדָּהָה.<sup>172</sup> It occurs alongside with the verb סָפַד “to wail, lament” in

<sup>170</sup> Some versions read the judgment of v. 18 differently from the MT. The Septuagint adds οὐαὶ ἐπὶ τὸν ἄδρα τοῦτου, however lacks the phrases corresponding to הוֹי אָחוֹת and הוֹי הַדָּהָה. The Syriac translates as if the Hebrew read הוֹי אָרוֹן וְהוֹי אָחִי and הוֹי אָחוֹת וְהוֹי אָרוֹן. The Vulgate has four elements, but the second one is “his brothers” (*vae fratres*). Commentators also tried various emendations to the MT of v. 18. Rudolph, Weiser, and Bright follow the Septuagint and contend that the phrase הוֹי עַל-הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה has fallen out of MT through homoioteleuton. However, the use of הוֹי in this argument is awkward with the point of v. 18 that it is the absence of the traditional funeral הוֹי at Jehoiakim’s funeral. The MT reading offers הוֹי אָחוֹת in terms of the principle of *lectio difficilior*. Thus, we accept MT over other versions.

<sup>171</sup> Wolff suggests that the “woe” cry originated in funeral lamentation.

<sup>172</sup> It is difficult to determine whether the lament (הוֹי אָחִי וְהוֹי אָחוֹת) is a single expression, thus “Alas, my brother! Alas, sister!” (NIV, NJB) or two expressions connected by וְ, thus “Alas, my brother!” and/or “Alas, sister!” (KJV, NAS, RSV). One may assume the lament הוֹי אָחִי refers to the dead king as in 1 Kgs 13:30 and Jer 34:5. Then, however, the difficulty is הוֹי אָחוֹת “Alas, sister!” The utterance of lament, such as הוֹי אָחִי, is probably a conventional expression of funeral. Thus, in הוֹי אָחִי וְהוֹי אָחוֹת, “brother” and “sister” are referring to the mourners as they cry to one another (Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 597). Perhaps the possessive suffix on “brother” carries over to “sister” as well. The lament הוֹי אָחִי וְהוֹי אָחוֹת is followed by a different lament הוֹי אָרוֹן וְהוֹי הַדָּהָה. Some raise textual questions about the expression הוֹי אָרוֹן וְהוֹי אָחוֹת. Dahood attempts to emend הַדָּהָה as הַרְהָה (“one who conceives”) in הוֹי אָרוֹן וְהוֹי הַרְהָה in order to form a parallel “father and mother” (“Two Textual Notes on Jeremiah,” *CBQ* 23 [1961]: 462-464). However, Albright questions Dahood’s argument for connecting אָרוֹן with Ugaritic

each instance.<sup>173</sup> In v. 18, the interjection הוֹי “alas!” occurs with the clause לֹא יִסְפְּדוּ לּוֹ “They will not lament for him.” Lament will not be uttered at Jehoiakim’s death. The judgment of v. 18 presumes the death of Jehoiakim. The repetition of הוֹי appeals to the emotion of the audience. The point of v. 18 is that the general formulas associated with burial will not be repeated at Jehoiakim’s funeral.

The judgment in v. 19 is more severe because Jehoiakim is deprived of suitable burial for a king. Jehoiakim’s burial will be like that of an animal. The phrase “a donkey’s burial” is an oxymoron.<sup>174</sup> There will, in fact, be no burial.<sup>175</sup> A proper burial was a major concern,<sup>176</sup> the lack of suitable burial was a traditional curse for the Hebrews.<sup>177</sup> His body will be “dragged away and thrown out.”<sup>178</sup> The

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*’adn* “father” (W. F. Albright, *JAOS* 74 [1954], 228). McKane argues that Dahood’s emendation to “‘Alas father’ and ‘Alas mother’” compounds further the difficulty of “‘Alas brother’ and ‘Alas sister’” to have it applied to king (McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 533). It is preferable to take the MT הוֹי אָדוֹן וְהוֹי הָרָה in reference to the dead king.

<sup>173</sup> There are 6 occurrences of הוֹי in reference to mourning for the dead: Jer 22:18 (4 times); “and they will lament for you, ‘Alas, lord!’” (Jer 34:5); “they lamented over him, ‘Alas, my brother!’” (1 Kgs 13:30). In 1 Kgs 13:30, the reference is to the mourning for a man (הוֹי אָחִי) and in Jer 34:5 for a dead king (הוֹי אָדוֹן).

<sup>174</sup> Cf. W. G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques* (JSOTSup 26; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984): 312-313.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. He will “be buried with a donkey’s burial, dragged away and thrown out of the gates.” 7:33; 15:3; 16:4; 19:7; 34:2.

<sup>176</sup> William L. Reed, “Burial,” *IDB* 1:476.

<sup>177</sup> Delbert R. Hillers, *Treaty-Curse, Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (BibOr 16; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964), 68-69.



rhetorical effect is an ironic reversal of the fate of the king. We notice the contrast between the impression of luxury and pomp in the building project (v. 14) and the unceremonious burial (v. 19). The judgment of vv. 18-19 may “represent vengeance more than poetic justice” to the guilty party of vv. 13-15a.<sup>179</sup> Conventional sayings such as “woe” cries are a useful tool to give vent to feelings. They have powerful emotional effects on an the audience.

### 5.5.2 Summary to 22:13-19

We find parallels in oracles vv. 10-12 and vv. 13-19. Contrasts are made between a son and his father. In the judgment of oracle vv. 10-12, the son (Jehoahaz) will have his burial in a foreign land. The interjection **וְהִנֵּה** opens the oracle (v. 13). The one to whom this oracle is addressed is not specified at the beginning of the oracle. An anonymous person is accused of the exploitation of his neighbor in his building project without paying him his wages (vv. 13-14). The mention of “reign” and “cedar” in v. 15a indicates that a king is involved. Verses 15b-16 and v. 17 contrast the behavior of the builder and that of his father. The prophet may have used a convention of contrast between a son and his father to the effect of the detriment of the son. In the books of Kings, a king is often compared with his father and in turn with David, the ultimate model king. By now, the prophet has felt convinced that he has presented confidently his case to accuse the unnamed king. Yet the royal

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<sup>178</sup> According to Jer 36:30, Jeremiah again prophesies that the body of Jehoiakim will be unburied: “His dead body shall be cast out to the heat of the day and the frost of the night.”

<sup>179</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 431.

identities of the persons described are not revealed. Perhaps the prophet deliberately concealed them from the audience in order to heighten tension and focus on the climax.<sup>180</sup> The audience of the oracle would have been those who have been in a position of power in the community either to protect or exploit the people. The ambiguity and curiosity are built by the yet unnamed person and unannounced judgment.

Verses 6-7 are addressed to **בֵּית מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה**. There is a stark contrast between images of prosperity (Gilead, the summit of Lebanon, choicest cedars) and desolation (desert, uninhabited towns, destruction with fire by destroyers). This is the background, rhetorically, when the audience hears vv. 13-17. The unnamed king (Jehoiakim) built his grandiose “house” with “cedars (v. 13-15). So they would feel even more strongly the vain pretensions of the unnamed king. The audience knows where they will lead. The ground of the judgment is based on the injustice and unrighteousness named at the beginning of the oracle in vv. 13-17. The climax has been reached at the point of transition by **לָכֵן** “therefore” to announcement of judgment (vv. 18-19). The image of the judgment is an image of Jehoiakim’s funeral. It is not, in fact, a funeral, but a donkey’s burial. As the pompous house turned out to be desolation, so the powerful king who exploited his subjects unlawfully will face the ignominy of not having a proper funeral.

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<sup>180</sup> Cf. Nathan’s oracle to David in 2 Sam 12.

## 5.6 Confirmation V : An Unnamed City (Jerusalem) (22:20-23)

### The Structure of 22:20-23

Judgment Speech to Individuals	Jeremiah 22:20-23
Accusation	20 “Go up to Lebanon and cry out, And lift up your voice in Bashan; Cry out from Abarim, for all your lovers have been destroyed. 21 I spoke to you in your prosperity; but you said, ‘I will not listen!’ This has been your way from your youth, that you have not obeyed my voice.
Announcement of Judgment	22 The wind will shepherd all your shepherds, and your lovers will go into captivity; Then you will be ashamed and humiliated because of all your wickedness. 23 You who dwell in Lebanon, nestled in the cedars. How you will groan when pangs come upon you, pain like a woman in childbirth!”

#### 5.6.1 Detailed Analysis of 22:20-23

The oracle vv. 20-23 is placed between oracles directed to the kings of Judah, the former to Jehoiakim (vv. 13-19) and the latter to Jehoiachin (vv. 24-30). It is a judgment oracle to an unnamed city, which the context shows is Jerusalem. Verses 20-21 are the accusation while the announcement of judgment is given in vv. 22-23. It has the message in a poetic form, lacking conspicuously both an introductory formula and a messenger formula. Thus the addressee of the oracle is not specified explicitly within it. The announcement of judgment in vv. 22-23 is introduced without the usual transition word (“therefore”) or messenger formula (“thus says the Lord”). Verses 20-23 do not contain an explicit royal saying. But they are connected to the kings by such terms as “Lebanon” and “cedars.”

It is difficult to know for sure the historical setting of the oracle of vv. 20-23. The image brought out by this oracle is a consequence of a defeated alliance. Its leaders will be taken captive into exile. Located between the oracles on Jehoiakim

and Jehoiachin, this oracle may reflect a situation that led to the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem and subsequent exile of Jehoiachin to Babylon (598-597 BC) (cf. 24:1).<sup>181</sup> The situation became similar to that in the wake of the fall of Israel. Judah often organized a coalition with Egypt and the Philistine city-states against Assyria. All of the Syro-Palestinian region north of Judah and Philistia was under Assyrian territory. Isaiah warned against Ahaz's foreign policies and advocated that Ahaz should trust the Lord only. More than a century later toward the end of Jehoiakim's reign, now the whole region is under the control of Babylon. Egypt was defeated in the Syro-Palestine region and the Philistine city-states were destroyed. We still concede that it does not give any clear clue to pinpoint the event behind the oracle. Rhetorically speaking, however, we do not have to know the exact historical background of this oracle. It is enough that the audience of this oracle was aware of a certain historical circumstance similar to the image of this oracle. We suggest that the image of vv. 20-23 fits the situation toward the end of Jehoiakim's reign.

At first, the oracle of vv. 20-23 appears to be an intrusion. As a warning of coming judgment upon an unnamed city, it is different from the preceding and following oracles. Circumstances surrounding Jehoiakim's succession of Jehoahaz under the influence of the Pharaoh Neco would make Jehoiakim incline towards Egypt. Circumstances toward the end of Jehoiakim's reign led him to believe Judah's hope would lie with the alliance with Egypt against the Babylonians,<sup>182</sup> a belief that

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<sup>181</sup> Bright, *Jeremiah*, 145; Nicholson *1-25, Jeremiah*, 187-188; Thiel, *Jeremia 1-25*, 242; Weiser, *Das Buch Jeremia Kapitel 1-25*, 14, 192; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 123.

<sup>182</sup> Bright, *A History of Israel*, 327: "Jehoiakim, however, was not a willing vassal, Judah's hope seemed once more to lie with Egypt, as it had in the days of the

resulted in the end of his reign. The message of this oracle is an accusation about Jehoiakim's alliance with foreign powers, especially Egypt in this case. This is the function of this oracle, placed here between oracles on Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin.

20 "Go up to Lebanon and cry out, And lift up your voice in Bashan; Cry out from Abarim, for all your lovers have been destroyed. 21 I spoke to you in your prosperity; but you said, 'I will not listen!' This has been your way from your youth, that you have not obeyed my voice.

20 עָלֵי הַלְּבָנוֹן וְצִעֲקִי וּבְבָשָׁן תִּנִּי קוֹלְךָ וְצִעֲקִי מֵעֲבָרִים  
כִּי נִשְׁבְּרוּ כָל-מֵאֵהָבֶיךָ: 21 דִּבַּרְתִּי אֵלֶיךָ בְּשִׁלוֹתֶיךָ אָמַרְתָּ לֹא אֶשְׁמַע  
זֶה דְרָכְךָ מִנְעוּרֶיךָ כִּי לֹא-שָׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹלִי:

Three geographical regions are named in v. 20: Lebanon, Bashan, and Abarim. These three are all noted as mountainous regions associated with the boundaries of the Promised Land. Lebanon is considered as part or the northern boundary of the Promised Land.<sup>183</sup> At the time of Israel's entrance to the Promised Land, Og's kingdom in Bashan was completely destroyed (Deut 3:7). The Lord declares that he himself will drive the inhabitants out before the Israelites. Moses was told by the Lord to go up to the mountains of the Abarim to Mount Nebo to survey the Promised Land (Deut 3:27; 32:49).<sup>184</sup>

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Assyrian invasions, and that hope did not appear altogether vain. ... It was a fatal error."

<sup>183</sup> D. Kinet, "Libanon. I. Biblisch," *LThK* 6 (1997), 876-877. There are three different viewpoints of Lebanon in the Old Testament. Kinet makes a distinction among these viewpoints. First, the Old Testament considers the land of "Lebanon" as part of the Promised Land (Deut 1:7, 3:25, 11:24; Josh 1:4, 11:17, 13:6). Second, "Lebanon" is considered as the northern boundary of the Promised Land (Josh 1:4, 9:1f., 11:17, 12:7, 13:5; Judg 3:3). Finally, "Lebanon" is used to describe all the hill country in middle Syria (Josh 13:5; Song of Songs 4:8).

<sup>184</sup> The place name Abarim occurs five times in the Old Testament (Num 27:12, 33:47, 48; Deut 32:49; Jer 22:20). It is associated in all other four occurrences with the entrance to the Promised Land.

It is good news for the Israelites to enter the Promised Land. In the oracle of 22:20-23, however, the unidentified addressee is urged to “go up” (עלי) there, and “cry out” (צעקי) and “lift up your voice” (תני קולך) (v. 20). What is in view is a lamentation. What is the connection between the activity of lamentation and mountains of Lebanon, Bashan and Abarim? The unidentified addressee is called up to the mountains to be told of the sad news: “for all your allies have been destroyed” (v. 20). The irony is the contrast of lamentation and the good news associated with a group of neighboring mountain ranges (Lebanon, Bashan and Abarim) in terms of the Promised Land. The reason for the lamentation is that allies of the unidentified addressee are destroyed. The territory east of the Jordan associated with these three places (Lebanon, Bashan and Abarim) belonged to these two kings of the Amorites (Deut 3:8-10). All this territory was taken by the Israelites. The irony is that Babylon and its other vassals in this region (the Arameans, Moabites and Ammonites) attacked Judah in December of 598 BC (2 Kgs 24:2). The image here is a reverse of the image at the entrance of the Promised Land when the enemies of the Israelites were driven out before the Israelites and completely destroyed by the Lord. The three place names are associated with good news for the Israelites to enter the Promised Land. Ironically, here in this oracle, however, sad news of destruction of the allies was told in these three places.

The Promised Land was shown to Moses at Mount Nebo of the Abarim mountains. Moses pleaded with the Lord to allow him to enter the Promised Land (Deut 3:25). But he was not allowed to enter it, because he and his people “broke

faith” with the Lord at the waters of Meribah Kadesh in the Desert of Zin (Deut 32:51).<sup>185</sup> In Jer 22:21, the addressee says “I will not listen” and is accused by the Lord that “you have not obeyed my voice.” At the entrance to the Promised Land, its inhabitants were completely destroyed before the Israelites. Now, the leaders (“shepherds”) and their “allies” “will be ashamed and humiliated” (v. 22). They will be expelled from their land and “go into captivity” in exile (v. 22). What is in view is the reversal of the entering of the Promised Land. Joshua with the people of Israel was told by Moses: “Do not be afraid of them; the Lord your God himself will fight for you” (Deut 3:22). At being destroyed, now, pangs will come like a woman in childbirth. No help will relieve the pain (v. 23).

While verses 20-23 do not identify explicitly the one addressed, the imperatives in v. 20 are second person feminine singular. It is generally understood that personified Jerusalem is in view, though this need not include Judah in general.<sup>186</sup> The idea of **מֵאֲהָבִיךָ** fits with the female personification. The word **מֵאֲהָבִיךָ** is the Piel participle of **אָהַב** “to love.” In Jeremiah the participle occurs in vv. 20, 22 and 30:14. This term can refer to “lovers” or “allies.” In 30:14 the term **מֵאֲהָבִיךָ** is used in parallel with **אֹיֵב** “enemy,” referring to “allies.” **מֵאֲהָבִיךָ** are

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<sup>185</sup> We notice that the Septuagint translates **מַעַל** “break faith, act unfaithfully” in Deut 32:51 with the expression *ἠπειθήσατε τῷ ῥήματί μου* “you disobeyed my word.” In Num 20:1-13, the Lord spoke to Moses at Meribah Kadesh in the Desert of Zin. However, Moses did not listen and disobedient to the Lord (also see Num 27:12-14).

<sup>186</sup> The second person feminine singular has been often applied to Jerusalem or the people of Judah in the poetry book of Jeremiah: 2:1-3, 23f.; 3:1f.; 4:30f.; 6:23-26; 11:15f.; 13:20-22, 26f.; 21:13f.

the foreign nations with whom Judah allies herself.<sup>187</sup> Then who are the lovers/allies? In two occurrences of this term in Ezekiel they are in association with the foreign powers.<sup>188</sup> The divided kingdom of Judah and Israel are portrayed as sisters who are accused of prostitution with Egypt and Assyria. Ezekiel decries Judah's current political alignment with Egypt in the hope of removing the Babylonian yoke. Jeremiah also might have in mind a contemporary Judah that was aligning itself politically with Egypt. This is also well in line with the intent to decry Jehoiakim's political involvement with Egypt. If the oracles in this section 22:10-30 are chronologically ordered, this refers to the help Jehoiakim relied on when he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar by allying with Egypt in 600 BC. In this case, the allies refer to Egypt and the small city-states in the Syro-Palestine region. If the reference is to foreign allies, Jerusalem should cry out for help from the most effective points, directing her cries to her foreign allies. But it will be vain, because all of Jerusalem's allies (כָּל-מֵאֵהָבֶיהָ) have been destroyed.

Verse 21 reflects many passages earlier in the book of Jeremiah. The clause  $\text{דְּבַרְתִּי אֵלֶיךָ בְּשִׁלּוֹתֶיךָ}$  is understood as the Lord is speaking "to" or "against" the unnamed city. The judgmental tone of v. 21 is reminiscent of 21:13.  $\text{אֵלֶיךָ}$  of 21:13 is a variant of  $\text{דְּבַרְתִּי אֵלֶיךָ}$  in v. 21. "I spoke (דְּבַרְתִּי) to you," but you say, "I will not listen" (לֹא אֶשְׁמָע) and "you have not obeyed (לֹא-שָׁמַעְתָּ) my voice" (v. 21).

<sup>187</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 602. In vv. 20-23, the word also can be used in reference to foreign powers and/or their deities.

<sup>188</sup> Ezek 23:5,  $\text{מֵאֵהָבֶיהָ אֶל-אַשּׁוּר}$  "her lovers, the Assyrians"; see also Ezek 23:9.



Verse 21 is in reference to the sending of the prophets: “I sent to you all my servants, the prophets.”<sup>189</sup> However, the prophetic oracles have gone unheeded (לֹא אִשְׁמַע and לֹא-שָׁמַעַתָּה). The repeated שָׁמַע recalls the basic covenantal command: שָׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל (Deut 6:4). The repudiation of this ironically brings condemnation on the speaker.

The word שְׁלוֹמָה is understood as “prosperity” or “security.” Thus, the Lord’s speaking to the city (בְּשִׁלּוֹתֶיהָ) reminds the audience of the defiant questions of 21:13: “Who shall come down against us? Or who shall come into our habitations?” The people of the city felt secure in their city. The reference of מִנְעוּרֵינוּךְ is associated with the confession of apostasy and disobedience in accord with 2:2ff. and 3:24f. The Lord had warned against the city, Jerusalem in the times of security and prosperity, but she did not listen to the Lord “who brought us up out of Egypt ... brought into a fertile land” (2:6-7). This disobedience had been their way since their youth: “from our youth till this day we have not obeyed the Lord our God” (3:25). Now, judgment will be upon her. The very Lord who brought them up out of Egypt and into the Promised Land will take them into exile (v. 22). We notice again the reversal of the holy war image.

If our interpretation of v. 20 as a metaphor for political alliance is correct, v. 21 is well in line with Jeremiah’s proclamation to surrender to Babylonian

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<sup>189</sup> Jer 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; cf. 44:4.

(Proposition, 21:3-10). In the Proposition Jeremiah urged the king Zedekiah and the people of Israel to surrender to Babylon for life because “this city” will be given to the king of Babylon (21:9-10). In this short poem of vv. 20-23, Jeremiah is providing the reason, in this accusation, for the judgment falling upon Jerusalem and the people of Judah. Their political alliance with Egypt will not save Jerusalem and Judah, as Israel was not saved from the Assyrians by their alliance with Egypt more than a century earlier.

22 The wind will shepherd all your shepherds, and your lovers will go into captivity; Certainly then you will be ashamed and humiliated because of all your wickedness.  
 23 You who dwell in Lebanon, nestled in the cedars, How you will groan when pangs come upon you, pain like a woman in childbirth!”

22 כָּל-רֹעֵיךָ תִרְעֶה-רוּחַ וּמֵאֲהַבֶיךָ בְּשָׂבִי יֵלְכוּ  
 כִּי אֲזַ תִּבְשִׂי וְנִכְלַמְתָּ מִכָּל רָעָתְךָ:  
 23 יִשְׁבְּתִי בְּלִבְנוֹן מִקְנֹנְתִי בְּאֲרָזִים מֵהַיַּחֲנֹת בְּבֹא-לְךָ חֲבָלִים חֵיל כִּי לָדָה:

The clause כָּל-רֹעֵיךָ תִרְעֶה-רוּחַ forms a wordplay. The “shepherds”

(רֹעִים), who would shepherd flocks under their care, will themselves be

“shepherded” by the wind (רוּחַ). The underlying meaning of the verb רָעָה “to shepherd” is “to gather,” but it is used here to mean “to scatter.” Here we notice the image in view is the reversal of the traditional image of the act of shepherding.

The word רֹעִים “shepherds” “is used consistently of native kings and political leaders, not foreign allies and conquerors.”<sup>190</sup> The sense of “foreign allies” is attached to מֵאֲהַבֶיךָ as it is used in v. 20. The words רֹעֵיךָ and מֵאֲהַבֶיךָ form a

<sup>190</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 536. See 2 Sam 5:2; 7:7; Jer 3:15; Ezek 34:2, 8, 10, 23.

parallelism in v. 22. Bright and Weiser argue that this parallelism need not be synonymous.<sup>191</sup> They read רְעֵיךָ as Judah's leaders and מְאַהֲבֶיךָ as foreign allies. However, there is some difficulty with this explanation because the expression בְּשָׂבִי יֵלְכוּ is usually used as a threat directed against Israel or Judah.<sup>192</sup> Rudolph explains both רְעֵיךָ and מְאַהֲבֶיךָ as Judah's leaders. They, thus, form a synonymous parallelism.<sup>193</sup> Rudolph's interpretation also faces a difficulty, in that "there is no evidence that מְאַהֲבֶיךָ can be used of Judaeans leaders."<sup>194</sup> With these difficulties in mind, the referents of רְעֵיךָ and מְאַהֲבֶיךָ are suggested to be different, רְעֵיךָ "Judaeans leaders" and מְאַהֲבֶיךָ "foreign allies" in both v. 20 and v. 22.<sup>195</sup> The political leaders of Judah will be scattered like being swept away by the wind. Their foreign allies will go into exile. Divine judgment is Jerusalem's being put to shame and humiliation because of all their evil-doing (מִכָּל רָעָתְךָ). The hendiadys of וְנִכְלְמָהּ חַבְשִׁי וְנִכְלְמָהּ strengthens the degree of humiliation. The audience is being reminded of the experiences of Israel and Judah by Assyria and Egypt.<sup>196</sup> The word play of רוּחַ and רָעָה in v. 22 also intensifies the contrast. The word רוּחַ "wind" may carry the meaning of God's "spirit" as it is often used so in the Old

<sup>191</sup> Bright, *Jeremiah*, 142; Weiser, *Das Buch Jeremia Kapitel 1-25,14*, 192.

<sup>192</sup> Deut 28:41; Isa 46:2; Jer 20:6; 30:16; Lam 1:18; Ezek 12:11; 30:17, 18; Amos 9:4; Nah 3:10. See McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 538.

<sup>193</sup> Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 122.

<sup>194</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 538.

<sup>195</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 602-603; McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 538-539.

<sup>196</sup> Jer 2:36, "You shall be shamed by Egypt as you were shamed by Assyria."

Testament. Thus, the connotation is the divine origination of the judgment. It is God himself who sends the people of Judah into exile.

The MT **יִשְׁבְּתִי** Kethibh (Qere: **יִשְׁבֶּת**) in v. 23 has textual difficulties. BHS suggests **יִשְׁבְּתִי** for **יִשְׁבְּתִי**. We note an inversion of **יִשְׁבֶּת/יִשְׁבְּתִי** and **יִתְבַּשֵׁי** in v. 22b, suggesting the one addressed in v. 23 is already “ashamed.”

“Lebanon” and the “cedars” are juxtaposed

(**יִשְׁבְּתִי בְּלִבְנוֹן מִקְנֵנֹתַי בְּאֲרָזִים**). The royal houses are “nestled” or “paneled” with cedars from Lebanon. The metaphor for Lebanon in v. 23 is different from that in v. 20. In v. 20, Lebanon is for the land or mountain of Lebanon. However, Lebanon (**יִשְׁבְּתִי בְּלִבְנוֹן**) in v. 23 is used in association with **יִשְׁבֶּת הָעֵמֶק** in 21:13. The phraseology of “who dwell (are enthroned) in Lebanon, nestled in cedars” (22:23) is identical with that of 21:13: “You who live (are enthroned) above the valley, on the rocky plateau” (21:13). In context, therefore, the addressee is the same, Jerusalem. Here, “Lebanon” and the “cedars” are metaphors for beauty and grandeur. The clause **יִשְׁבְּתִי בְּלִבְנוֹן מִקְנֵנֹתַי בְּאֲרָזִים** is paralleled with the phrase **בְּשִׁלְוַתֶּיךָ** “in your prosperity” in v. 21. The “cedars of Lebanon” are praised by Isaiah as “the glory of Lebanon.”<sup>197</sup> Such expression is “to suggest the beauty and the wealth of the sanctuary or of the palace.”<sup>198</sup> This implies the prosperity or security which Jerusalem is presently enjoying. The suffering will be as painful as the pangs of a

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<sup>197</sup> Isa 60:13.

<sup>198</sup> E. Lipinski, “*Garden of Abundance, Image of Lebanon*,” ZAW 85/3 (1973), 358.

woman in her childbirth (cf. 4:31; 6:24).<sup>199</sup> However, they will experience the “pain like a woman in labor” (חֵיל כִּי־לֶדָה) of going into exile (v. 23).<sup>200</sup> The rhetorical question carries the force of the severity and inevitability of judgment.

### 5.6.2 Summary to 22:20-23

The oracle of vv. 20-23 is located between oracles on Jehoiakim (vv. 13-19) and Jehoiachin (vv. 24-30). Unlike the preceding and following oracles, the oracle is directed against Lebanon: “You who dwell on Lebanon, nestled in the cedars” (v. 23). Jerusalem is not named in the oracle of vv. 20-23. However, the reference to Lebanon and cedars links this oracle with other oracles in 21:11-23:8 that attack a city for its prosperity and grandeur using images of forests and cedars (21:13-14; 22:6-7; 22:14-15). Lebanon and cedars are a metaphor for the palace or the city (Jerusalem) in general. The oracle might have been originally used against other nations,<sup>201</sup> maybe against Lebanon or Moab.<sup>202</sup> In the current context, however, the images of this unnamed city can be transferred, in the mind of the audience of this oracle, to Jerusalem without difficulty. The location of the oracle in the present text may indicate that the oracle, in the mind of its audience of this oracle, reflects a

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<sup>199</sup> חֲבָלִים “pangs” (Isa 13:8; 26:17; Jer 13:21; 49:24).

<sup>200</sup> Jer 6:24, חֵיל כִּי־לֶדָה הִחַזְקָתָנוּ חֵיל צָרָה “Anguish has seized us, pain as of a woman in childbirth.”

<sup>201</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 435-436.

<sup>202</sup> Jer 22:23, “You who dwell on Lebanon, nestled in the cedars”; Jer 48:31, “for all Moab I cry out”; Jer 48:34, “from the outcry at Heshbon.”

historical setting toward the end of Jehoiakim's reign. Jerusalem is apparently secure in its grandeur, but destruction is to follow.

The three place names (Lebanon, Bashan, Abarim) may remind the audience of the Israelite's entrance to the Promised Land. The oracle presents several images of reversal. It begins with an image of laments (v. 20); it ends with an image of grandeur and luxury of the cedars of Lebanon (vv. 23). The image of destruction, thus death, and departure of "lovers" (vv. 20, 22) is contrasted with the image of childbirth (v. 23). However, the image of childbirth is not intended to suggest new life, but more likely death, with desperate pain for the last gasps before death. The addressee is urged to cry out on the mountains to let others know her pain (v. 20); The speaker challenges the addressee to dare not to groan even when she is gripped with pangs like a woman in childbirth (v. 23). Now, the "lovers" are destroyed and will go into exile (vv. 20, 22). The speaker speaks, while the addressee refuses to listen (v. 21). Children should be obedient; but they "have not obeyed my voice" (v. 21). The shepherds themselves are being shepherded (v. 22). The image of grandeur and security presented by Lebanon and cedars is transformed to the image of shame and humiliation (vv. 22-23). The entrance to the Promised Land is contrasted with the impending exile. The God as the holy warrior for the Israelite in the conquering the Promised Land, is turning on the people of Jerusalem, because they have not obeyed the word of the Lord, but allied themselves with the Egyptians instead. This accusation and judgment are well in line with the proclamation of judgment in the Proposition (21:3-10). This oracle also provides a reason for the judgment that was announced briefly against "this city" in 21:3-10.

## 5.7 Confirmation VI : Jehoiachin (22:24-30)

### The Structure of 22:24-27

Judgment Speech to Individuals		Jeremiah 22:24-27
Announcement	Intervention of God	24 As I live," declares the Lord, "Coniah son of Jehoiakim king of Judah shall no longer be a signet ring on my right hand, surely I will pull you off. 25 And I will give you over into the hand of those who seek your life, into the hand of those whom you dread, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans. 26 I shall hurl you and your mother who bore you into another country where you were not born, and there you shall die.
	Result of the Intervention	27 "But to the land where they desire to return, they shall not return."

### The Structure of 22:28-30

Judgment Speech to Individuals		Jeremiah 22:28-30
Accusation		28 Is this man Coniah a despised, shattered jar, or an undesirable vessel? Why have he and his descendants been hurled out and cast into a land that they had not known?
Summons to hear		29 O land, land, land, hear the word of the Lord!"
Messenger formula		30 'Thus says the Lord,
Announcement	Intervention of God	"Write this man down childless, a man who will not prosper in his days;
	Result of the Intervention	For no man of his descendants will prosper, sitting on the throne of David or ruling again in Judah."

#### 5.7.1 Detailed Analysis of 22:24-30

24 "As I live," declares the Lord, "Coniah son of Jehoiakim king of Judah shall no longer be a signet ring on my right hand, surely I would pull you off. 25 And I will give you over into the hand of those who seek your life, into the hand of those whom you dread, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans. 26 I shall hurl you and your mother who bore you into another land where you were not born, and there you shall die. 27 But to the land where they desire to return, they shall not return."

24 חִי־אֲנִי נְאֻם־יְהוָה כִּי אִם־יְהִיָּה כַּנִּיָּהוּ בֶן־יְהוֹיָכִים מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה  
 חוֹתֶם עַל־יַד יְמִינִי כִּי מָשָׁם אֶתְקַנְנֶךָ: 25 וְנִתַּחֲתִיק בְּיַד מְבַקְשֵׁי נַפְשֶׁךָ  
 וּבְיַד אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה יָגוּר מִפְּנֵיהֶם וּבְיַד נְבוּכַדְרֶאֱצַר מֶלֶךְ־בָּבֶל וּבְיַד הַכַּשְׂדִּים:  
 26 וְהִטַּלְתִּי אֹתְךָ וְאֶת־אִמְךָ אֲשֶׁר יִלְדְּתֶךָ עַל הָאָרֶץ אַחֲרֵת  
 אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִלְדֶתֶם שָׁם וְשָׁם תָּמוּתוּ:  
 27 וְעַל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־הֵם מְנַשְׂאִים אֶת־נַפְשָׁם לָשׁוּב שָׁם שָׁמָּה לֹא יָשׁוּבוּ:ס

Most commentators regard the passage 22:24-30 as structured with two sections of vv. 24-27 and vv. 28-30. The section vv. 24-27 opens with an oath phrase **יְהוָה אֱמַר** which is followed by the oracle formula **נְאֻם־יְהוָה**.<sup>203</sup> The oracle formula has an effect of highlighting a clause or phrase that calls for the audience's attention.<sup>204</sup> The association of the oath and the oracle formulas (**יְהוָה אֱמַר נְאֻם־יְהוָה**) stresses the Lord's faithfulness to his oath. It may mark the head of a discourse unit.<sup>205</sup>

The phrase "a signet ring on my right hand" **חֹתֶם עַל־יַד יְמִינִי** (v. 24) is a figure for that which is particularly valuable and precious to its owner.<sup>206</sup> McKane suggests that the signet ring implies authority vested by its owner.<sup>207</sup> Thus it is

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<sup>203</sup> The deity is represented as swearing an oath **יְהוָה אֱמַר**. Out of the twenty-one occurrences of the oath formula **יְהוָה אֱמַר** in the Old Testament, it is followed immediately sixteen times by the oracle formula **נְאֻם־יְהוָה**.

<sup>204</sup> K. Callow, *Discourse Considerations in Translating the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 52. Callow calls the oracle formula **נְאֻם־יְהוָה** a mark of "focus" as if the following clause or phrase were printed in italics or boldface type.

<sup>205</sup> Van Dyke Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 512.

<sup>206</sup> The word **חֹתֶם** refers to a "seal" used to authenticate a document. They could be a cylinder seal as used in Mesopotamia or a stamp seal more commonly used in Palestine (Olga Tufnell, "Seals and Scarabs," *IDB* 4:254-259; F. B. Huey, "Seal," in *Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. V. 319-324 [M. Tenney, ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975]). Cylinder seals would be carried around the neck on a string (Gen 38:18). Stamp seals would be carried or worn on a finger as part of a ring. Seals could have shown distinctive features of the owner. Thus the seal would be one's signature which represents one's identity. In Hag 2:23, the Lord will make Zerubbabel "like a signet ring" **כְּחֹתֶם**. Great hopes are bestowed in Zerubbabel when it is said so. The beloved desires to be "like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm" **כְּחֹתֶם עַל־לִבִּי כְּחֹתֶם עַל־זְרוּעֵי** (Song of Songs 8:6).

<sup>207</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 541.



jealously guarded by, and never removed from its owner. The ring, which symbolizes the Davidic king and the special relationship between him and the Lord, is on a finger of the Lord's right hand. Thus it might be thought that the Lord's covenant relationship with the Davidic dynasty is unbreakable. However, events will prove otherwise. The Lord "is utterly rejecting the kingship of Jehoiachin, and the oracle thereby offers no hope at all to those who continue to think of his kingship as the only legitimate one."<sup>208</sup> The image of the second half in v. 24 is an appalling one: "I will pull you off" מִשָּׁם אֶת־קִנְיֹךָ. The "signet ring on my right hand" will not be treated as a signet ring should be treated. The Lord says that Jehoiachin is no longer his precious possession.

There is another interesting reversal in v. 24. We notice that the occurrence of the personal name (Coniah/ Jeconiah) is primarily in the book of Jeremiah.<sup>209</sup> Jeremiah may have intended wordplay with the variations of the name. The elements of the name in Coniah/ Jeconiah are reversed.<sup>210</sup> The image is well in line with the

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<sup>208</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 606.

<sup>209</sup> Coniah (כְּנִיָּהוּ in 22:24, 28; 37:1) is a shortened form of the name of Jeconiah (יְכֻנְיָהוּ in 27:20; 28:4; 29:2; 1 Chr 3:16, 17; Est 2:6; יְכֻנְיָהוּ in 24:1). Jehoiachin (יְהוֹיָכִין / יְהוֹיָכִין in 2 Kgs 24:6, 8, 12, 15, 27; 2 Chr 36:8, 9; Jer 52:31) is the name elsewhere in the Bible for the same king. Coniah (Jeconiah) is the personal name, and Jehoiachin is the throne name (Bright, *Jeremiah*, 143; Hebert G. May, "Jehoiachin," *IDB* 2:811a). Honeyman suggests that it was custom to take a throne name ("The Evidence for Regnal Names among the Hebrews," 16).

<sup>210</sup> The two names, Jeconiah/Coniah (כְּנִיָּהוּ / יְכֻנְיָהוּ) and Jehoiachin יְהוֹיָכִין, have virtually the same meaning, with their elements being simply reversed. (Je)coniah means "the Lord is firm" and Jehoiachin means "the Lord has established." For further etymological analysis of the name Coniah/ Jehoiachin, see James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings* (ICC; New York: Scribner's, 1951), 557.

reversal of imagery in 21:4 where the Lord turns back the weapons “in your hands.” The reversal of imagery in v. 24 is further reinforced by the reversal of the holy war imagery in v. 25.

Commentators have observed the shift of the personal reference in vv. 24-27. The personal reference is third person in vv. 24a and 27, while second person in vv. 24b-26.<sup>211</sup> The intervention of God consists often with the typical “handing over formula” of the holy war “I give ... into your hand.”<sup>212</sup> Here in vv. 24-26, the intervention of God for his people in the holy war is reversed to the intervention of God against his people. Thus the shift of personal reference, from third person (v. 24a) to second person (vv. 24b-26) and back to third person (v. 27), may not be just “less than intentional” as Holladay observes.<sup>213</sup> The second-person references are direct discourse. Direct discourse produces a strong effect of relevancy to the audience.

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<sup>211</sup> McKane questions that “If vv. 25-27 constitute a composition, how are we to explain the circumstance that vv. 25f. are direct address, while v. 27 is formulated in the 3rd person plural?” (*Jeremiah 1-25*, 542). The first-person and third-person forms can be explained by the form-critical analysis of Westermann about the structure of prophetic speeches (*Basic Forms of Prophetic Speeches*, 149-153). In the part of the announcement in vv. 24-26, God speaks in the first person to tell of the “intervention of God” with the “I”-speech form. The effect of the intervention of God is given in the third person with the “they”-speech form in v. 27. Contrary to McKane’s argument, thus, the third person plural form in v. 27 is possible and perfectly coherent with the rest of the prophetic speech structure.

<sup>212</sup> Josh 8:8; Judg 4:7; 1 Sam 23:4; 1 Kgs 20:28; 1 Chr 14:1 and more.

<sup>213</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 604.

Verse 24 has an unusual grammatical structure.<sup>214</sup> Holladay and McKane suggest that **כִּי אִם** should be understood as the **אִם** of the oath form.<sup>215</sup> The oath form suggests that **אִם** means “that not” or “that never.”<sup>216</sup> The conjunction **כִּי אִם** here seems to function as the **אִם** in the oath form. Then the second **כִּי** marks the rhetorical shift from the third person to direct speech with second person at the end of verse.<sup>217</sup> The second **כִּי** can be translated as “surely.” Thus, we translate v. 24: “As I live,” declares the Lord, “Coniah son of Jehoiakim king of Judah shall no longer be a signet ring on my right hand, surely I will pull you off.” This line of analysis is also adopted by Holladay, McKane, Nicholson and NEB. With this grammatical foundation, the textual difficulty of **אֶת־קַיִן־ךָ** in v. 24b is solved.<sup>218</sup> The

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<sup>214</sup> The first clause begins with the conjunction **כִּי אִם**, and then comes another **כִּי** at the beginning of the second clause. The prevailing understanding of v. 24 is to take the first clause as a protasis and the second as an apodosis: “even though (**כִּי אִם**) Coniah son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were a signet ring on my right hand, yet (**כִּי**) I would pull you off.” This is the translation of Septuagint and Vulgate (with “pull ‘it’ or ‘him’ off” instead of “pull you off”) and of most English translations and commentaries. Holladay observes that out of twenty-one occurrences of the oath formula **אִם־יֵאָמֵר** in the Old Testament, there are no parallels for **אִם־יֵאָמֵר** is followed by protasis and apodosis (*Jeremiah 1, 605*).

<sup>215</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1, 605*; McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25, 541*.

<sup>216</sup> Such a use of **כִּי אִם** is attested in 1 Sam 25:34 and 2 Sam 3:35. The **אִם**, literally “if,” in the oath form is a strong negation. Thus it has the implication of “I swear I shall not taste bread or anything else...” in 2 Sam 3:35 “but David vowed, saying, ‘May God do so to me, and more also, if (**כִּי אִם**) I taste bread or anything else before the sun goes down’.”

<sup>217</sup> Thompson, *Jeremiah, 483*.

<sup>218</sup> To ease the textual difficulty caused by **אֶת־קַיִן־ךָ**, Vulgate emends it with the third person suffix, thus “I would pull ‘it’ (or ‘him’) off.” This adjustment is followed by Duhm, Rudolph and Weiser (Duhm, *Jeremia, 179*; Rudolph, *Jeremia, 122*; Weiser, *Das Buch Jeremia Kapitel 1-25, 14, 193*). It has been attempted to explain the second

change from third person to second person has a strong effect of focusing the threat on the hearer.

The holy war imagery is reinforced by Jeremiah's stylistic multi-member word structure of "into the hand of" (בִּיד) in v. 25.<sup>219</sup> The expression בִּיד + נתן, which belongs to holy war terminology,<sup>220</sup> occurs about thirty times in the book of Jeremiah. The occurrence of בִּיד + נתן along with נפש מבקשי is distinctive in the book of Jeremiah.<sup>221</sup> The expressions, מִבְּקֹשֵׁי נַפְשֶׁךָ and אֲשֶׁר-אֶתָּה יָגוּר מִפְּנֵיהֶם, in the first half of v. 25 refer to the same subject. The second expression provides a further description in detail. The second half of v. 25 is also a repetition of virtually synonymous expressions, וּבִיד הַכַּשְׂדִּים and וּבִיד נְבוּכַדְרֶאצַּר מֶלֶךְ-בָּבֶל.<sup>222</sup>

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person suffix in v. 24b as a textual corruption. Thiel explains that the second-person suffix was stylized by the influence of the form of direct speech in vv. 25-26 (*Jeremia 1-25*, 243). However, the MT אֶתְּקַנְךָ is retained by most English translations and commentaries (NIV, NASV, RSV, KJV, and NJB; Bright, Carroll, Craigie *et al.*, Holladay, McKane, Nicholson, and Thompson).

<sup>219</sup> A similar expression also occurs in 21:7. See the discussion in 21:7. Here in v. 25 the expression has four member words. 21:7 has the triad structure without the phrase וּבִיד הַכַּשְׂדִּים. In addition to this difference, the four-member structure of v. 25 has אֲשֶׁר-אֶתָּה יָגוּר מִפְּנֵיהֶם instead of אִיבֵיהֶם in 21:7.

<sup>220</sup> G. von Rad, *Der Heilige Krieg im alten Israel* (4th ed; Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 7-9.

<sup>221</sup> The expression of נפש + בקש occurs no less than 12 times in the book of Jeremiah (4:30; 11:21; 19:7, 9; 21:7; 22:25; 34:20, 21; 38:16; 44:30; 46:26; 49:37). And the occurrence of the expression בִּיד + נתן, according to Weippert, counts 179 times (*Die Prosareden des Jeremiabuches*, 182, n. 340). It is never attested in any book other than Jeremiah. Thus the Deuteronomic/Deuteronomistic source of this expression is denied by Weippert (182-183).

<sup>222</sup> Septuagint has a shorter text for v. 25 with only the two-member structure of "into the hands of ...": "and I will give you over into the hands of those who seek your

The rhetorical effect of parallelism and repetition in v. 25 is to emphasize the determination of the Lord to send Jehoiachin into exile.

The holy war terminology **נתן + ביד** “give ... into your hand” is reversed here to “give you into the hand of ...” The Lord is sending the people into exile in this context, instead of fighting for his people. The last word of v. 24 (**אֶתְקַנְנֶךָ**) and the first word of v. 25 (**וְנָתַתִּיךָ**) are similar in sound. The second person suffix in **אֶתְקַנְנֶךָ** may be also explained by its juxtaposition with **וְנָתַתִּיךָ**. It otherwise might have given rise to the suffix in the third person singular because of the verb **יָהִי** in the first clause of v. 24. This similarity in sound of these two verbs may reinforce the idea of exile. By the rhetorical device of anadiplosis the last word of one phrase, clause, or sentence is repeated at or near the beginning of the next. The effect will be the same in the case of closely similar words. It gives a sense of logical progression. The Lord will “pull you [Jehoiachin] off” (**אֶתְקַנְנֶךָ**) from his right hand and “give you [Jehoiachin]” (**וְנָתַתִּיךָ**) over to Jehoiachin’s enemy. The repetition of “into the hand of” (**בְּיַד**) at the beginning of successive phrase in v. 25 has a reinforcing effect.

The first two remarks are abstract: “into the hand of those who seek your life, into the hand of those whom you dread.” However, the last two are concrete references to

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life, before whom you dread, into the hands of the Chaldeans”

(καὶ παραδώσω σε εἰς χεῖρας τῶν ζητούντων τὴν ψυχὴν σου ὧν σὺ εὐλαβῆ ἀπὸ προσώπου αὐτῶν εἰς χεῖρας τῶν Χαλδαίων). Thus it omits the phrase “into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and” and the phrase “into the hand of” in “into the hand of those whom you dread.” Septuagint does not keep the triad structure at all in 21:7: “into the hands of their enemies, that seek their lives”

(εἰς χεῖρας ἐχθρῶν αὐτῶν τῶν ζητούντων τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν).

the military force of the time: “into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans.” The rhetorical effect is to bring it down to the immediate situation.

The verb טָוֵל “hurl, throw” occurs in the book of Jeremiah only in v. 16:13; 22:26, 28. The use of this verb involves a violent image.<sup>223</sup> Thus Holladay suggests that this verb is not a conventional term in the book of Jeremiah, but it appears to have a specific historical setting used of Jehoiachin and his mother, even though this is not apparent in 16:13.<sup>224</sup> In v. 26, in any case, it figuratively describes the Lord’s violent judgment to send Jehoiachin and his mother into exile. The exile is a violent event. People are displaced from their homeland and hurled into an unknown land as if one was taken away from a ship and thrown into the sea of violent storm.

The queen mother held a special position in the monarchy of Judah, and in the Books of Kings she is invariably mentioned by name along with the king.<sup>225</sup> Here

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<sup>223</sup> The verb טָוֵל “hurl, throw” occurs in the Old Testament about fifteen times mostly in either Hiphil or Hophal form. Saul hurled his spear to David (1 Sam 18:11; 20:33). In Jonah, a violent storm is at the center of the activities associated with this verb (Jonah 1:4, 5, 12, 15). Jonah was picked up and thrown into the sea.

<sup>224</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 474.

<sup>225</sup> Jay A. Wilcoxon proposes the origin of the queen-mothers in marriage arrangements as a possible scenario for political upsets in connection with succession to the throne during the last years of Judah (“The Political Background of Jeremiah’s Temple Sermon,” in *Scripture in History and Theology: Essays in Honor of J. Coert Rylaarsdam* [A. Merrill and Thomas W. Overholt, eds.; Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1977]: 151-166). For further detail of queen-mother (גַּבִּירָה), see the following literatures: Susan Ackerman, “The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel,” *JBL* 112/3 (1993): 385-401; Niel-Erik A. Andreasen, “The Role of the Queen Mother in Israelite Society,” *CBQ* 45 (1983): 179-94; Zafriira Ben-Barak, “The Status and Right of the GEBIRA,” *JBL* 110/1 (1991): 23-34; H. Donner, “Art und Herkunft

with the phrase “you and your mother who bore you” in v. 26, however, the intention is to draw attention to the images of birth and death. Jehoiachin’s mother gave Jehoiachin birth, but both shall die in exile. This contrast is stressed by the chiasmic structure of **לֹא-יִלְדֶתְם שָׁם וְשָׁם תָּמוּתוּ** (v. 26). The last word of the clause, **שָׁם**, is repeated at the beginning of the next.<sup>226</sup> The intended effect is the emphasis of **שָׁם**, thus exile. Another contrast is between “another land where you were not born” and, although it is not stated right here but can be assumed, “the land of his birth” as in v. 10. The effect of these contrasts is to bring out emphasis on exile as judgment and the fate of dying in a foreign land. Jehoiachin did indeed die in Babylon.<sup>227</sup>

All these announcements of judgment in vv. 24-26 are with the Lord as subject: “I will pull you off”; “I will give you over into the hand of ...”; “I will hurl you ...” The rhetorical force of the repetition of the first person verbs with the Lord as subject is to draw attention to the Lord’s sovereign intervention. The judgment is indeed divine judgment.

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des Amtes der Königinmutter in Alten Testament,” in *Festschrift Johannes Friedrich zum 65. Geburtstag am 27. August gewidmet* (105-45; R. von Kienle *et al.*, ed.; Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1959); Ihromi, “Die Königinmutter und der ‘Amm Ha’Arez im Reich Juda,” *VT* 24 (1974): 421-29; T. Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties in Ancient Israel* (BZAW 142; Berlin and NY: de Gruyter, 1977), 155-60; Abraham Malamat, “The Twilight of Judah in the Egyptian-Mesopotamian Maelstrom,” in *Congress Volume, Edinburgh 1974* (G. W. Anderson *et al.*, eds.; VTSup 28; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975): 123-145; G. Molin, “Die Stellung der Gebira im Staate Juda,” *TZ* 10 (1954): 161-75.

<sup>226</sup> The rhetorical device anadiplosis.

<sup>227</sup> Jer 52:34.

The announcement of judgment is “But to the land where they desire to return, they shall not return” (v. 27). An image of a foreign land (הָאָרֶץ אַחֶרֶת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יֵלְדֻתֶם שָׁם) in v. 26 is contrasted by an image of native land (הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־הֵם מִנְּשָׂאִים אֶת־נַפְשָׁם לָשׁוּב שָׁם) in v. 27. One may note the phoneme שָׁם in the word אֶת־נַפְשָׁם, also echoing the second שָׁם that follows. The chiasmic structure of לָשׁוּב שָׁם שָׁמָּה לֹא יָשׁוּבוּ emphasizes the contrast between “return” and “not return,” and also stresses “to there” (שָׁמָּה), helping to bring out the sense of longing.

The image of the movement from “pull you off (the right hand)” to “give you over into the hand” to “hurl you ... into another country” may be intentionally structured in vv. 24-26. We notice in vv. 25-26 also that the image of giving birth (“your mother who bore you”) is contrasted with that of killing (“seeking your life”). The action of God is described with strong metaphors in vv. 25-26 with the characteristic terminologies of the holy war in Israel: “I give into your hand ...” The image of the holy war is reversed into the form: “I will give you into the hand of ...” and “I will hurl you ... into another country” (vv. 25-26). So is in vv. 26-27 the image of the “land where you were not born” with that of the “land to which they desire to return.”

The idiom אֶת־נַפְשָׁם מִנְּשָׂאִים means “yearning, longing.” The same expression in 44:14 has a similar context. McKane notes that the Targum interprets



the idiom with a connotation of “false expectations” or “false hopes” and the Targum’s view was further developed by Kimchi with special reference to “false prophets.” McKane suggests that “[w]hat is indicated is not just a longing to return to Jerusalem, but false expectations of a return which will be contradicted by events.”<sup>228</sup>

Vv. 26 and 27 end the verses with similar expressions, וְשָׁם תִּמְוָתוֹ (v. 26) and וְשָׁמָּה לֹא יָשׁוּבוּ (v. 27), respectively. The severity of the judgment is expressed by the threat of death in exile with these expressions. The judgment is the banishment from their home land and never return to it in their life time.<sup>229</sup> The people might have expected Jehoiachin to return. Their “yearning” to return is a false hope. This oracle quashes all hope of a quick return from exile (cf. the false prophecy of Hananiah, Jer 28:4).

28 Is this man Coniah a despised, shattered jar, or an undesirable vessel? Why have he and his descendants been hurled out and cast into a land that they had not known? 29 O land, land, land, hear the word of the Lord!” 30 “Thus says the Lord, “Write this man down childless, a man who will not prosper in his days; For no man of his descendants will prosper, sitting on the throne of David or ruling again in Judah.”

28 הָעֵצָב נִבְזָה נְפוּץ הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה כְּנִיָּהוּ אִם־כְּלִי אֵין חֶפֶץ בּוֹ  
 מִדּוּעַ הוּטְלוּ הוּא וְזָרְעוֹ וְהִשְׁלָכוּ עַל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדְעוּ:  
 29 אָרֶץ אָרֶץ אָרֶץ שְׁמַעִי דְבַר־יְהוָה: ס  
 30 כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה כְּתֹבוּ אֶת־הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה עֲרִירִי גֵבֶר לֹא־יִצְלַח בְּיָמָיו  
 כִּי לֹא יִצְלַח מִזָּרְעוֹ אִישׁ יָשֵׁב עַל־כִּסֵּא דָוִד וּמִשָּׁל עוֹד בִּיהוּדָה:

<sup>228</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 545.

<sup>229</sup> Jer 52:31-34 and 2 Kgs 25:27-30 indicate that Jehoiachin was eventually released from prison in the days of Evil-merodach and lived in Babylon until his death.

There are some textual differences between the MT and the LXX of vv. 28-30.<sup>230</sup> Despite these textual differences, the general meaning is clear that Jehoiachin and his descendants are sent into a foreign land and no one will succeed to the Davidic throne.

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<sup>230</sup> Verse 28 in the LXX does not take the form of a question while the MT does. Following phrases of v. 28 in the MT are not represented in the LXX: **הָעֶצֶב**, **הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה**, **וְנָפוּץ הוּא וְזָרְעוֹ**, and **הוּא וְזָרְעוֹ**. The LXX takes singular forms for the verbs **הוּטְלוּ**, **הוּטְלוּ**, and **יָדְעוּ**. Thus the LXX reads v. 28 as “Jeconiah is dishonored as a useless vessel; for he is thrown out and cast into a land which he has not known.” In v. 29, the MT reads “land” three times, while the LXX reads it twice. In v. 30, the LXX lacks the messenger formula (**כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה**) and a clause “a man who will not prosper in his days” (**לֹא-יִצְלַח בְּיָמָיו**). Duhm suggests to accept the shorter the LXX text (*Jeremia*, 180). For a reason to follow the LXX of v. 28, Bright explains that the MT with a somewhat expanded text seems to obscure the meter (*Jeremiah*, 139, note j). Explaining the LXX’s short text as a result of haplography or deliberate omission of synonyms, however, Holladay argues that the MT offers in general a more authentic text, although some elements components are dislocated (*Jeremiah 1*, 608-609). First, Holladay thinks **כִּנְיָהוּ** in v. 28a is a gloss, instead of **הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה** as the LXX omits. The phrase **הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה** appears to in assonance with **נִבְזָה**. Second, he considers the two participles **נִבְזָה** and **נָפוּץ** in v. 28a are authentic, while the LXX omits **נָפוּץ**. **נָפוּץ** appears to be in assonance with **חָפֵץ** in the following clause. Holladay, thus, rearranges word orders of v. 28a in the MT with **נָפוּץ נִבְזָה** making up the second colon, while **הָעֶצֶב הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה** the first and **בּוֹ אֵין חָפֵץ** the third. The LXX omits **וְזָרְעוֹ הוּא** and emends the three verbs as singular in v. 28b. Holladay suggests that **וְזָרְעוֹ הוּא** is authentic, considering the presence of **הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה** and **מִזָּרְעוֹ** in v. 30, and of **וְהִטְלֵתִי אֶתְךָ וְאֶת-אִמְךָ** in v. 26. He rearranges v. 28b with three cola. He proposes that **וְהִטְלֵתִי** and **וְהִטְלֵתִי** form an inner parallelism in the first colon of v. 28b, while **וְזָרְעוֹ הוּא** making up the second colon. Third, Holladay views that the omission of **לֹא-יִצְלַח בְּיָמָיו** in v. 30 is due to haplography. The word **נָבֵר** is not found elsewhere in the poem. Thus it seems that **נָבֵר** is not a word that a glossator would produce.

BDB lists two different meanings for the word עֶצֶב as used in

הָעֶצֶב נִבְזָה נִפְוֶץ (v. 28).<sup>231</sup> The more common meaning is “pain, toil, hurt,” related to a verb עֶצַב “hurt, pain.” But the word עֶצֶב here is a *hapax legomenon*, a noun meaning “vessel,” related to a verb עָצַב “shape, fashion.” The implication is that the Lord is the subject also here. Thus, עֶצֶב could mean “a pottery vessel” based on the assumption of synonymous parallelism with כְּלִי, as some translations<sup>232</sup> and commentators do.<sup>233</sup> Some interpret the word to mean “idol” (image) in connection with a verb “shape.”<sup>234</sup> Others take “puppet” for the meaning of עֶצֶב as a word for a lifeless image.<sup>235</sup> Different translations and interpretations of עֶצֶב bring out two different literary images: a broken pot and a useless idol/puppet.

The participle נִפְוֶץ is taken by most translations and commentators to mean “shattered, smashed” (from נִפַץ) and not “scattered” (from פוּץ).<sup>236</sup> Thus it is appropriate for the image of a broken pottery. At the same time, however, it may still

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<sup>231</sup> BDB, 780-781.

<sup>232</sup> Vulgate, NIV, NAS, and RSV.

<sup>233</sup> Rudolph, Weiser, Bright, Thiel, and Carroll.

<sup>234</sup> This interpretation is taken by KJV and McKane, adopting the interpretation by medieval Jewish commentators (Rashi and Kimchi).

<sup>235</sup> NEB, Holladay, and Nicholson.

<sup>236</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 547. The word נִפְוֶץ in v. 28 is not represented by the LXX. The נִפְוֶץ in the MT is explained as a corrupt dittography by Rudolph (*Jeremia*, 122) or its authenticity is advocated by Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, 608).

bring out the image of “scattered” (from פּוּץ). It is still possible that an allusion to exile is intended. Both meanings may have been intended as a deliberate ambiguity. There still could be an echo of “idol,” here too, which maybe strengthened by the following הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה.

The noun חֶפֶץ in the colon אִם־כֶּלִי אֵין חֶפֶץ בּוֹ (v. 28) means “delight, pleasure, desire.” BDB translates the expression כֶּלִי אֵין חֶפֶץ בּוֹ as a “vessel wherein is no pleasure.” Some commentators bring out the sense of “unwanted, undesirable” from the expression,<sup>237</sup> while others prefer the sense of “useless, worthless.”<sup>238</sup> The expression כֶּלִי אֵין חֶפֶץ בּוֹ is applied to Israel by Hosea (8:8) and also to Moab by Jeremiah (48:38).<sup>239</sup> The expression has been recognized as a quotation by Jeremiah from Hosea 8:8.<sup>240</sup> Berridge suggests that Jeremiah applied in 22:28 “this terminology which once had reference to North Israel’s gradual, but certain, decline to the individual king Jehoiachin. His usage of this terminology here undoubtedly reflects his awareness of the significance which Jeremiah’s fate had for Judah’s own fate.”<sup>241</sup> The audience’s attention may be drawn by such imagery to

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<sup>237</sup> Duhm, Weiser, Bright, Carroll, and Holladay.

<sup>238</sup> Rudolph and McKane.

<sup>239</sup> The image of broken pot is applied to Moab in Jer 48:38 (כִּי־שִׁבְרֹתַי אֶת־מוֹאָב).

<sup>240</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 610; John M. Berridge, *Prophet, People, and the Word of Yahweh*, 180-181, n. 358. McKane, however, argues that such an expression might have been a common idiom of the time and its appearance only in Jeremiah and Hosea, and not elsewhere, “should be regarded as accidental and insignificant” (McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 549). In Hosea 8:8, the LXX portrays it “as a worthless vessel” (ὡς σκεῦος ἄχρηστον).

<sup>241</sup> Berridge, *Prophet, People, and the Word of Yahweh*, 180-181, n. 358.

what had happened to Israel. Jehoiachin and Judah may face the same fate as Israel.

The sense of “a worthless vessel” from the expression **בו חפץ אין כלי** may form a parallelism with “despised and broken vessel” **נפויץ נבזה עצב**. A chiasmic pattern arises from v. 28a, reinforced by alliteration throughout:

A	העצב נבזה נפויץ
B	האיש הזה כניהו
A'	אמ-כלי אין חפץ בו

We notice in v. 28 two rhetorical questions introduced by **ה** and **אם**.<sup>242</sup> The adverb **מדוע** “why, on what account?” occurs, in Jeremiah 16 times, often rhetorically after a double question introduced by **ה** and **אם**, expecting affected surprise.<sup>243</sup> A negative answer is normally expected from the double question,<sup>244</sup> while the answer “yes” is expected if there is a negative in the double question.<sup>245</sup> The implication in v. 28 is that both questions expect an empathetic “no.” No, Jehoiachin is neither a despised, shattered jar, nor a worthless vessel. However, the answer “no” to this double question is reversed to the answer “yes” in the larger context of the oracle. The rhetorical effect of a double question is to draw attention to the state of Jehoiachin and his descendants described by the question headed by **מדוע**: being hurled out and cast into a land that they had not known (v. 28b).

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<sup>242</sup> In the LXX v. 28 is the form of a statement, instead of a question.

<sup>243</sup> BDB, 398.

<sup>244</sup> Jer 2:14, 31; 14:19.

<sup>245</sup> Jer 8:4-5, 19, 22; 22:28; 49:1.

Jeremiah's use of **מִדְּרוּעַ** adds a reproachful tone to the double question.<sup>246</sup> Most commentators notice that no direct answer is given to the question of v. 28b. We understand that the rhetorical question in v. 28b, in fact, does not seek an answer. This is actually an implied indictment against Jehoiachin for having brought himself and his descendants to such a state. Verse 28 indeed makes up the prophetic accusation of the oracle of vv. 28-30. The answer probably was not expected from the question and thus would have been left out intentionally. The answer, if ever sought, is assumed to have been provided earlier to the audience, possibly in v. 9 (cf. also 16:10-11).

The inversion of the word order in v. 29 is striking and adds further emphasis to the summons to hear the word of the lord. The threefold repetition may be intended for further striking emphasis. The vocatives (**אֶרֶץ אֶרֶץ אֶרֶץ**) precede the imperative clause (**שְׁמַעִי דְּבַר־יְהוָה**). Land is personified with the threefold vocative and is the subject of a summons to pay attention. Double repetitions are common in the Old Testament.<sup>247</sup> However, the threefold structure occurs rarely in

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<sup>246</sup> Comparing questions with **מִדְּרוּעַ** and **לָמָּה**, Jepsen noted that the word **לָמָּה** in the Old Testament is almost always used to introduce a reproachful question while the word **מִדְּרוּעַ** seeks to obtain certain information (A. Jepsen, "Warum? Eine lexikalische und theologische Studie," *BZAW* 105 [1967]: 106-113.). Disagreeing with Jepsen (op. cit., 110-101), Berridge argues that "Jeremiah's use of **מִדְּרוּעַ** (derived from the root **יָדַע**) in connection with his own questioning of Yahweh's actions, would appear to lend his questions a reproachful tone" (Berridge, *Prophet, People, and the Word of Yahweh*, 162-163, n. 257).

<sup>247</sup> For example, **מִזְבֵּחַ מִזְבֵּחַ** in 1 Kgs 13:2; **יְחִי הַמֶּלֶךְ יְחִי הַמֶּלֶךְ** in 2 Sam 16:16; **בְּנֵי בְנֵי** in 2 Sam 18:33 [MT 19:1] and also in 2 Sam 19:4 [MT 19:5]. The LXX represents only two occurrences of **אֶרֶץ** in v. 29. The third occurrence of **אֶרֶץ**

the Old Testament.<sup>248</sup> The threefold structure is also attested in Babylonian incantations.<sup>249</sup> A threefold repetition may be ironic here, i.e., the opposite of an incantation. There is no magical formula that can secure the land. Only obedience to the word of the Lord can do that.

The judgment is introduced by the messenger formula **כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה** in v. 30 as the words of the Lord.<sup>250</sup> The judgment on Jehoiachin is to call him **עֲרִירִי**. The implication of the word **עֲרִירִי** in v. 30 raises a question, since Jehoiachin has descendants.<sup>251</sup> **עֲרִירִי** does not indicate that Jehoiachin would be “childless” in a plain sense (as in Gen 15:2; Lev 20:20, 21).<sup>252</sup> However, Jehoiachin is considered

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in v. 29 is considered as an addition. However, John G. Janzen explains the LXX’s omission of the third occurrence as a result of haplography (*Studies in the Text of Jeremiah* [HSM 6; Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1973], 117).

<sup>248</sup> **יְהוָה הֵיכַל יְהוָה הֵיכַל יְהוָה** in 7:4; **קָדוֹשׁ קָדוֹשׁ קָדוֹשׁ** in Isa 6:3 and **עָנָה עָנָה עָנָה** in Ezek 21:27 [MT32].

<sup>249</sup> The occurrence of the threefold expressions (for example, “*iršitum iršitum iršitum*”) in Babylonian incantations are observed J. Herrmann (“Jer 22,29; 7,4,” ZAW 62 [1949-50], 321-22).

<sup>250</sup> The LXX omits the messenger formula **כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה**. McKane views **כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה** in v. 30 as a intrusion. He claims that it is “the generally accepted view” to read **שָׁמְעִי דְבַר־יְהוָה** in v. 29 directly followed by **כִּתְבוּ אֶת־הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה עֲרִירִי** in v. 30 (McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 549. Also Bright, *Jeremiah*, 139; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 122; Weiser, *Das Buch Jeremia Kapitel 1-25,14*, 193; Janzen, *Studies in the Text of Jeremiah*, 85). Thus, he suggests that **כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה** should be deleted.

<sup>251</sup> The phrase **וְזָרְעוֹ הוּא** in v. 28 apparently includes Jehoiachin’s sons; Jehoiachin’s sons are listed in 1 Chr 3:17-18.

<sup>252</sup> As in Gen 15:2; Lev 20:20, 21.

“childless” because none of his descendants will be king.<sup>253</sup> The rhetorical force of the oracle is the irony that Jehoiachin will have no descendants who will succeed the throne of David, even though he has descendants. The sense of “childless” is to stress the reversal of Jehoiachin’s fortune. The clause **לֹא־יִצְלַח בְּיָמָיו** is a parallel not only to the **עָרִירִי** in the preceding clause, but also to the following **כִּי** clause.

There is a synonymous parallelism between **כָּתְבוּ אֶת־הָאִישׁ הַזֶּה עָרִירִי** and **לֹא־יִצְלַח בְּיָמָיו**. The word **גָּבַר** is a synonym of **אִישׁ** and **לֹא־יִצְלַח בְּיָמָיו** is an explanation of **עָרִירִי**. The **כִּי** clause makes concrete reference to the **עָרִירִי**. The word **עָרִירִי** is rarely used in the Old Testament (only here and otherwise in Gen 15:2 and Lev 20:20, 21). There may be a deliberate contrast with Abraham, whose childlessness was overcome. The clause “Write down this man childless” is perhaps an ironic reversal of writing a name in the “book of life” (**סֵפֶר חַיִּים**).<sup>254</sup>

The verb **צָלַח** in v. 30 is usually translated with the sense of “prosper, succeed, be profitable.” It occurs five times in Jeremiah.<sup>255</sup> In all occurrences except 12:1, it occurs with a negative **לֹא**. In 13:7 and 10, the phrase **לֹא־יִצְלַח** has the sense of “worthless, useless” in the context of a ruined waistband. In the context of v. 30, however, the meaning of **לֹא־יִצְלַח** will be better in the sense of “succession” to

<sup>253</sup> Bright, *Jeremiah*, 145; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 124; Weiser, *Das Buch Jeremia Kapitel 1-25*, 14, 195; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 611.

<sup>254</sup> Psalm 69:28 [MT 29].

<sup>255</sup> Jer 12:1; 13:7, 10; 22:30 [twice].



the throne. The phrase **לֹא יִצְלַח בְּיָמָיו לֹא יִצְלַח נְבִי** implies that he shall “not succeed” in having descendants to continue the Davidic dynasty. On the other hand, the phrase **לֹא יִצְלַח מִזְרְעוֹ אִישׁ לֹא יִצְלַח כִּי** implies that anyone of his descendants shall “not succeed” in ruling as king. The subject of the former clause is **נְבִי**, while that of the latter is **מִזְרְעוֹ אִישׁ**. Holladay notices that “since the two verbs are identical, the shift of subject is ironic.”<sup>256</sup> The participles **מֹשֵׁל** and **יָשֵׁב** in v. 30b are complementing the verb **צִלַּח**.<sup>257</sup>

### 5.7.2 Summary to 22:24-30

The judgment in vv. 24-30 is announced in terms of the duration of Jehoiachin’s exile and the people involved: it is a pathos-filled announcement that Jehoiachin will never return to his homeland (vv. 24-27) and his descendants will never succeed him upon the Davidic throne. There is a close parallel between the imagery of v. 24 and that of v. 28. In v. 24, Jehoiachin is a signet ring on the Lord’s right hand; however, the Lord declares that Jehoiachin shall no longer be the Lord’s signet ring that is particularly valuable and precious to its owner. In v. 26, Jehoiachin and his mother shall be “hurled” into a foreign land. In vv. 24-26, all the actions are initiated by the Lord. Here in v. 28, Jehoiachin has been destroyed (“shaped”) to “despised and broken” pot. Jehoiachin has become a “worthless” vessel. There is a pathos-filled irony. The once precious and valuable signet ring has become a broken

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<sup>256</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 611-2.

<sup>257</sup> Cf. **יָשֵׁב** in 21:13; 22:2, 4, 23.

and useless vessel. Jehoiachin is like a broken pot that is thrown away. Jehoiachin and his descendants shall be “hurled” into a foreign land (v. 28b). We understand that the rhetorical question in v. 28b, in fact, does not seek for an answer. This is actually an implied indictment against Jehoiachin for having brought himself and his descendants to such a state. Verse 28 indeed makes up the prophetic accusation of the oracle of vv. 28-30. The audience may wonder why God’s judgment on Jehoiachin is so severe that he should die in a foreign land and Davidic dynasty should come to end. The people might have expected Jehoiachin to return (vv. 24-27). The oracle of vv. 24-27 dispels this hope. He will never return to his home land. The rhetorical question of v. 28 functions to bring out the judgment of v. 30. The sins of Judah fall on the king, her royal representative. The Davidic covenant has been broken.

## 5.8 Confirmation VII : Conclusion to the Confirmation (23:1-8)

### The Structure of 23:1-8

Judgment Speech to Individuals	Jeremiah 23:1-8
Reason (Accusation)	1 “Woe to those who are shepherding, leading astray and scattering the sheep of my pasture!” declares the Lord.
Messenger Formula	2 Therefore Thus says the Lord God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending my people:
Reason (Development)	“You have scattered my sheep and driven them away, and have not attended to them;
Announcement	Behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,” declares the Lord. 3 Then I myself shall gather the remnant of my sheep out of all the countries where I have driven them and shall bring them back to their pasture; and they will be fruitful and multiply. 4 “I shall also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares the Lord.
	5 “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “When I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; And he will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land. 6 “In his days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is his name by which He will be called, ‘The Lord our righteousness.’
	7 “Therefore Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when they will no longer say, ‘As the Lord lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ 8 but, ‘As the Lord lives, who brought up and led back the descendants of the household of Israel from [the] north land and from all the countries where I had driven them.’ Then they will live on their own soil.”

The passage vv. 1-8 consists of three announcements. The announcement vv. 2b-4 begins with a judgment speech (v. 2b), and then switches to an announcement of promise for the remnant of the people (vv. 3-4). The announcement of the righteous future king is the theme of judgment vv. 5-6. The oracle vv. 7-8 emphasizes the return from exile to live in their own land.

### 5.8.1 Detailed Analysis of 23:1-8

1 “Woe to those who are shepherding, leading astray and scattering the sheep of my pasture!” declares the Lord. 2 Therefore Thus says the Lord God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending my people: “You have scattered my sheep and driven them away, and have not attended to them;

1 הוֹי רְעִים מְאַבְדִּים וּמְפָצִים אֶת־צֹאן מְרֵעֵתִי נְאֻם־יְהוָה:  
 2 לְכֵן כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל־הָרְעִים הָרְעִים אֶת־עַמִּי  
 אַתֶּם הִפַּצְתֶּם אֶת־צֹאנִי וַתִּדְחֹוּם וְלֹא פָקַדְתֶּם אֹתָם

The oracle is introduced by the accusation starting with הוֹי + participial sentences (v. 1).<sup>258</sup> הוֹי accompanies a reference to the one accused with a participial sentence (רָעִים).<sup>259</sup> The participial sentence (רָעִים) is followed by near-synonymous participial forms (מֵאַבְרָם וּמִפְּצִים). The accusation is continued from v. 1, or developed with a finite verb (הִפְצֵתֶם). The verbs and suffixes in v. 2aβ are referring to the shepherds. The messenger formula כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה in v. 2aα introduces the body of the oracle, which is a direct speech.<sup>260</sup> The shepherds are directly addressed (v. 2aβ). V. 2aβ is an explanatory sentence of the accusation.<sup>261</sup> Then follows the

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<sup>258</sup> The word הוֹי occurs 51 times in the Old Testament. 1 Kings (x1); Isaiah (x21); Jeremiah (x11); Ezekiel (x3); Amos (x2); Micah (x1); Nahum (x1); Habakkuk (x5); Zephaniah (x2); Zechariah (x4). Its occurrences are limited to the prophetic books with one exception (1 Kgs 13:30). Most of them belong to prophetic woe oracles.

<sup>259</sup> Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 190. The introductory הוֹי is connected mostly with a participial sentence that determines who is doing the evil (“who to those who is doing ...”).

<sup>260</sup> Van Dyke Parunak, “Some Discourse Functions,” 505-506. In most of 155 occurrences of כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה in Jeremiah, it is directly followed by the judgment speech. In v 2aα, כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה is introduced by an inferential conjunction “therefore” (לְכֵן). The messenger formula כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה is often introduced by כִּי “for” (29 times) or לְכֵן “therefore” (24 times) in Jeremiah.

<sup>261</sup> Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 169-181. The messenger formula is usually followed directly by the announcement of the judgment, which usually describes the resulting judgment of the Lord from the reason. Judgment oracles are often constructed with a structure which gives the reason for the judgment + the messenger formula + the announcement of the judgment. The announcement of the judgment is divided into two parts. The verdict is announced by the provocative formula “Behold I will ...” The Lord himself intervenes with “I”-speech form in the announcement. The intervention of God is followed by the result of the intervention of God with “it/he/they”-speech form. In the oracle vv. 1-4, we find that both the “I”-speech form (פָּקֵד in 2b; אָנִי אֶקְבֵּץ in 3; הִשְׁבַּתִּי in v. 3; הִקְמַתִּי in v. 4) and the “it/he/they”-speech form (וּפָרוּ וְרָבוּ in v. 3; רָעִים in v. 4; לֹא־יִירָאוּ עוֹד in v. 4) are used in the announcement of judgment in vv. 2b-4.

announcement of judgment starting with הִנְנִי in vv. 2b, 5, 7. The rhetorical effect of forceful directness is intended by using the second person emphatic pronoun (אַתָּם) in a direct speech (v. 2b).

Most translations bring out a sense of “destruction” from the word מְאַבְדִּים in v. 1. This interpretation does not appear to fit well into the picture of vv. 1-4. The figurative usage of אָבַד (Piel) is listed by BDB in the sense of “cause to stray, lead astray, lose.” It is used in synonymous parallelism with פָּוֶץ (Hiphil) “scatter” in v. 1 and in antithetical parallelism with בִּקֵּשׁ “seek” in Eccl 3:6.<sup>262</sup> This is the line of interpretation adopted in this study.<sup>263</sup>

Verse 1 consists of participial sentences. Most translations and commentators translate הוּי רְעִים מְאַבְדִּים וּמְפָצִים אֶת־צֹאן מִרְעִיתִי as “Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture.” These translations render the first participle (רְעִים) as modified by the next two participles

(מְאַבְדִּים וּמְפָצִים). In v. 1, however, we notice a threefold structure, one of

Jeremiah’s stylistic features, with three participles in רְעִים מְאַבְדִּים וּמְפָצִים. We

suggest that the three participles are in parallel and v. 1 be translated accordingly:

“Woe to those who are shepherding, leading astray and scattering the sheep of my

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<sup>262</sup> BDB, 2.

<sup>263</sup> It is also adopted by Bright, Rudolph, and McKane (Bright, *Jeremiah*, 139; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 125; McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 554).

pasture.” Without the connecting particle ׀ between the first and the second participles, the audience is hurried on with a rushing effect that gives urgency to the accusation.<sup>264</sup> What we see in these three participles is gradual diversion from the proper duty of shepherds: Shepherds are supposed to shepherd (רעה) the sheep; they first divert to lead them astray (אבד); then they further diverge from their duty and scatter (פויץ) them. The direct object (אֶת־צֹאן מְרֵעִיתִי) is applied to three participles (רעים מאבדים ומפציים). The rhetorical effect of this linkage is to show relationships between ideas and actions more clearly. V. 1 is the accusation that addresses the woe to the one who is doing the act of shepherding the sheep, but leading them astray and scattering them.

We notice again Jeremiah’s use of a triad structure of three finite verbs in v. 2aβ: 1) הפיץ “scatter”; 2) נדח “drive away”; 3) לא פקד “not attend to.” The shepherds who are shepherding my people (v. 2aα) are being accused of “scattering,” “driving away,” and “not attending to” the flock of the Lord (v. 2aβ).

The “shepherds” are responsible for “shepherding” the sheep (v. 2aα).<sup>265</sup> Shepherding (רעה) the sheep (v. 1) means to “attend to” (פקד) them (v. 2aβ). The reverse is shown in the accusation in vv. 1-2a. The shepherds are scattering the sheep

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<sup>264</sup> We see the similar structure in the phrase גַּר יְתוּם וְאַלְמָנָה (22:3).

<sup>265</sup> The double expression הָרְעִים הָרְעִים “shepherds who are shepherding”: Compare the similar expression in v. 25 (“prophets who prophesy” (הַנְּבִיאִים הַנְּבִיאִים)).

under their care. The reversed imagery is enhanced by the chiasmic structure. The chiasmic structure is strengthened by two sets of triadic structure in v. 1 (מִפְּצִים; מְאַבְדִים; רְעִים) and v. 2aβ (הִפְצַתְּם; תִּדְחוּם; לֹא פִקְדַתְּם). The objects of the verbs in vv. 1-2aβ (מְרַעִיתִי in v. 1; אֶת־עַמִּי in v. 2aα; אֶת־צֹאֲנִי in v. 2aβ) are in parallel. The vivid image of the accusation against the shepherds of vv. 1-2a is an image of dispersal. The accusation in vv. 1-2aβ has a chiasmic structure as follows:

A	רְעִים מְאַבְדִים וּמְפִצִים אֶת־צֹאֵן מְרַעִיתִי (v. 1)
B	עַל־הָרְעִים הָרְעִים אֶת־עַמִּי (v. 2aα)
A'	אַתֶּם הִפְצַתְּם אֶת־צֹאֲנִי וְתִדְחוּם וְלֹא פִקְדַתְּם אֶתֶם (v. 2aβ)

The emphasis of the chiasmic structure of vv. 1- 2aβ is the accusation that the shepherds have “not attended to” the sheep. The shepherds have failed to carry out their responsibility. They are accused of doing the opposite of what they are supposed to do (thus, they scatter and lead the sheep astray). They themselves have scattered the sheep and driven them away (v. 2aβ).

The word “shepherds” is used as a metaphor for the rulers (cf. 22:22) and the noun “sheep” is used for the people of the Lord. The rulers are shepherds of the people of the Lord. The term “shepherds” may refer specifically to the kings, considering the context of the following oracle vv. 5-6. The accusation in vv. 1-2aβ is intended to draw attention to the failure of the rulers to fulfill their duty.

2b Behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,” declares the Lord.  
 3 Then I myself shall gather the remnant of my sheep out of all the countries where I have driven them and I shall bring them back to their pasture; and they will be fruitful and multiply. 4 “I shall also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them; and they will not fear any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares the Lord.

2b הַנְּנִי פִקֹּד עֲלֵיכֶם אֶת־רַע מַעַלְלֵיכֶם נְאֻם־יְהוָה:  
 3 וְאֲנִי אֶקְבֹּץ אֶת־שְׂאֵרֵי צֹאן מִכָּל הָאֲרָצוֹת אֲשֶׁר־הִדְחֵתִי אֹתָם שָׁם  
 וְהִשְׁבֵּתִי אֹתָהֶן עַל־נוֹהֵן וּפְרוּ וְרָבוּ: 4 וְהִקְמַתִי עֲלֵיהֶם רְעִים וְרְעוּם  
 וְלֹא־יִירָאוּ עוֹד וְלֹא־יִחַתּוּ וְלֹא יִפְקְדוּ נְאֻם־יְהוָה:

The image of “dispersal” in vv. 1-2a is replaced with that of “gathering” in vv. 2b-4. The transition is marked by the exclamatory **הַנְּנִי** in v. 2b. This makes the shift from accusation to announcement. The contrast is made between the deeds of the shepherds and the Lord’s actions. The shepherds are addressed in direct speech using the emphatic second person pronoun **אַתָּם** and suffixes (v. 2aβ). The intervention of the Lord himself uses the emphatic first person pronoun **אֲנִי** and suffixes (“I”-speeches in vv. 2b-4: **הַנְּנִי פִקֹּד**; **וְאֲנִי אֶקְבֹּץ**; **וְהִשְׁבֵּתִי**; **וְהִקְמַתִי**). The shepherds have scattered the sheep. The Lord will gather together the sheep scattered by the shepherds. Judgment will fall upon the shepherds for the evil of their deeds (v. 2b). The announcement is not only of judgment (v. 2b), but is a prophecy of salvation as well (vv. 3-4). The prophecy of salvation is connected with judgment against the shepherds.<sup>266</sup> The judgment even appears as the precondition of the salvation. This may be an important part of the intended rhetorical effect.

<sup>266</sup> The announcement has two parts. The intervention of God is noted by: “I will attend to you ...”; “I myself will gather the remnants ...”; “I will return them ...”; “I will set shepherds ...” And the consequences are: “they will be fruitful and multiply”; “they will tend them ...” and “they will not fear any longer ...” In his study of the Mari Letters, Westermann observes that what is decidedly a salvation



Jeremiah's typical wordplay on the verb פקד involves a reversal. The verb פקד occurs in various contexts in the Old Testament. It occurs in this oracle with three different senses: "take care of" and "punish" in v. 2; "missing" in v. 4. The basic meaning of פקד is "attend, take care of, punish, appoint, assemble" in the Qal stem. There is wordplay on the different senses of פקד in v. 2. The shepherd failed to "take care of" the sheep properly in the positive sense (לֹא פָקְדָתֶם אֹתָם in v. 2aβ). Therefore, the Lord will "punish" the shepherds accordingly in the negative sense for the evil of their deeds (פָּקַד עֲלֵיכֶם אֶת־רָע מַעֲלֵיכֶם in v. 2b).<sup>267</sup>

The implication is that "the evil of their deeds" warrants due punishment. Thus the announcement of judgment is expected to follow v. 2b. Verses 3-4 are blessing statements. However, the series of conjunction ו in vv. 3-4 has elements of a temporal quality. The judgment is already implied by the use of the clause "from all the countries where I have driven them" (v. 3). Thus the promise in vv. 3-4 presupposes that the judgment has already been proclaimed, or already executed in the form of exile, although judgment is not announced explicitly. The use of the third person plural verbs and pronominal and prepositional suffixes in vv. 3-4 may refer to

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oracle is also connected with the prophetic accusation against the king (*Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 115-128). He finds a corresponding similarity in the Israelite prophetic oracles. Thus, he argues: "In any case, we can no longer say that the salvation prophets in Israel have only said what the king and the people wanted them to say. The conjecture of quite a few of the most recent investigators who have warned against placing the salvation and judgment prophets too sharply in opposition to one another receives a confirmation here in the Mari letters" (127).

<sup>267</sup> See the discussion of 21:12 for the phrase רַע מַעֲלֵיכֶם "the evil of your deeds" (v. 2) (also Jer 4:4; 44:22; Isa 1:16).

שְׂאֲרֵי־ת צֹאֲנֵי (v. 3), not to הִרְעִים (v. 2α), עָמִי (v. 2α), or צֹאֲנֵי (v. 2β). The image of the negligent shepherds and scattered sheep is shown again by the clause וְרָעוּם עֲלֵיהֶם רְעִים (v. 4).

The Lord has accused the shepherds of scattering the sheep and driving them away (v. 2α). In v. 3, however, the Lord claims that he himself drove the sheep away to other lands. These two statements appear to be contradictory at first glance.<sup>268</sup> But emphasis is put on the fact that it is the negligent shepherds who have caused the scattering of the sheep (exile).<sup>269</sup> At the same time, v. 3 may stress the Lord's active role in sending the sheep to "all the countries" and from there "gathering the remnant of the sheep" and "bringing them back to their pasture" (v. 3).<sup>270</sup> The Lord is gathering his dispersed people. It is the sovereignty of the Lord by which the sheep were driven away. It is also by the sovereignty of the Lord that the "remnant" of the sheep would be gathered from the various lands.<sup>271</sup> The messenger formula נֶאֱמַר יְהוָה in the end of v. 2b and v. 4b even enhances the sovereignty of the Lord by stressing the Lord as the subject of vv. 2-4. We find again a reversal of the holy war imagery in the Lord's statement of his driving the sheep to other lands.

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<sup>268</sup> The phrase מְכַל הָאֲרָצוֹת אֲשֶׁר-הִרְחַתִּי אֹתָם שָׁם is regarded as an insertion by Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, 615).

<sup>269</sup> See reference to The Targum's comment on this verse in McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 554. The Targum interprets the scattering of the sheep as a reference to exile.

<sup>270</sup> The verb קָבַץ "gather" (v. 3) is often used in a context of gathering scattered sheep (Isa 13;14; 60:7; Jer 23:3; Mic 2:12).

<sup>271</sup> The word "remnant" שְׂאֲרֵי־ת (v. 3) will be discussed in the study of Chapter 24.

Verse 3 is filled with images of the Creation and Exodus. The image of exodus is brought out by the image of gathering “the remnant of my sheep” from all the lands (v. 3a). The phrase וַפְּרוּ וַרְבוּ “be fruitful and multiply” (v. 3b) reminds the audience of the blessing in the Creation (Gen 1:22, 28) and the reaffirmation of the blessing after the Flood (Gen 9:1, 7).<sup>272</sup> This image is a promise of return from exile and good leadership in the future. The Lord will appoint over them “shepherds who will shepherd” properly (וַהֲקִמֹתִי עֲלֵיהֶם רֹעִים וְרָעוּם) (v. 4a). We notice a contrast between the waw-consecutive perfect וַרָעוּם in the expression רֹעִים וְרָעוּם in v. 4a and the participle הֹרְעִים in the expression הֹרְעִים הֹרְעִים in v. 2aα. This contrast may indicate the shift to appropriate shepherding. The Lord will raise shepherds over the remnants of the people (וַהֲקִמֹתִי עֲלֵיהֶם רֹעִים) (v. 4). Here we have another contrast in the oracle vv. 1-4 between the “old” and “new” shepherds. The “new” “shepherds who will shepherd them” (רֹעִים וְרָעוּם) (v. 4), unlike the “old” shepherds of vv. 1-2, will take care properly of “the remnant of my sheep.” The main emphasis of the description of vv. 3-4 is on returning the scattered sheep and the complete gathering without missing a single one.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Cf. Exod 1:7.

<sup>273</sup> The imagery of “gathering” and “returning” in vv. 3-4 has been interpreted differently by scholars. Weiser takes a Messianic interpretation with a reference to the Messianic promise in the Messianic age (*Das Buch Jeremia Kapitel 1-25, 14*, 198-199). On the other hand, Nicholson supposes that the gathering of the remnant is in the context of the Babylonian exile, in line with chapters 24 and 40-44. The future restoration of the nation is through and with the Babylonian exiles rather than through those who had remained in the land or those who had gone to Egypt (*Jeremiah 1-25*, 191). However, McKane proposes that the returning from “all the lands” מִכָּל הָאֲרָצוֹת in v. 3 does not fit with the picture of a return of the Jews from to Jerusalem from one place of exile. Thus, the gathering from all the lands has

We have another typical Jeremianic triad structure using the imperfect verb + **וְלֹא** in v. 4b: **וְלֹא-יִירָאוּ עוֹד וְלֹא-יִחַתּוּ וְלֹא יִפְקְדוּ**.<sup>274</sup> The verb **יִרָא** “fear” and **חַתּוּ** “be terrified/ dismayed” are synonymous. The formulas “do not fear” or “do not be terrified” occur in the context of holy war and salvation oracles. They are used to assure the people that the Lord will be with them. The double expressions “do not fear; do not be terrified” often occur together in the Old Testament.<sup>275</sup> The double prohibition is to emphasize the sure promise of God’s presence. In the context of holy war, the Lord himself is fighting for his people. Here a wordplay is intended with another sense of **פָּקַד**, “be missing.” None of the remnant of the sheep will “be missing,” because they will “be taken care of” by the “new” shepherds.

5 “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “When I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; And he will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land. 6 “In his days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is his name by which He will be called, ‘The Lord our righteousness.’”

5 הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים נֹאֲמֵי-יְהוָה וְהִקְמַתִּי לְדָוִד צֶמַח צְדִיק  
וּמֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ וְהִשְׁכִּיל וְעָשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה בְּאֶרֶץ:  
6 בְּיָמָיו תֹּשֶׁעַ יְהוּדָה וְיִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁכֹּן לְבֶטֶח וְזֶה-שְׁמוֹ אֲשֶׁר-יִקְרָאוּ יְהוָה צְדִקְנוּ

The prophetic accusation in vv. 1-2a condemns the “shepherds” (kings/rulers).

Vv. 2b-4 announces the promise for deliverance of the “remnant” of the “sheep” (the

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a universal significance demonstrating return from all corners of the world, without being restricted by specific historical circumstances (*Jeremiah 1-25, 558*).

<sup>274</sup> The expression **וְלֹא יִפְקְדוּ** is missing in the LXX.

<sup>275</sup> Deut 1:21; 31:8; Jos 8:1; 10:25; 1 Chr 22:13; 28:20; 2 Chr 20:15, 17; 32:7; Isa 51:7; Jer 23:4; 30:10; 46:27; Ezek 2:6; 3:9.

people) by the new shepherds who the Lord himself will appoint. Now the prophetic speech in vv. 5-6 turns to the announcement of a royal figure whom the Lord will raise up.<sup>276</sup> The prophetic speech vv. 5-6 has a typical prophetic judgment – here promise – speech form.<sup>277</sup> It is God himself who executes what is announced. V. 5a shows the intervention of God using a speech by God in the first person: “I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch” (v. 5a). Vv. 5b-6 show the result of this intervention. The announcement is spoken in the third person: he will reign as king; he will act wisely; he will do justice and righteousness in the land; Judah will be saved; Israel will dwell securely.

The introductory phrase “Behold, the days are coming” (הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים) (v. 5a) often opens oracles in the book of Jeremiah.<sup>278</sup> This phrase signals that there will be a reversal of the present condition in a new era.<sup>279</sup> There is a shift from the emphasis on the sheep (the people) being delivered to the emphasis on the future royal figure (צֶדִיק). The future and the rule of a future king is contrasted with the present. הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים indicates that a decisive departure from the historic Davidic dynasty will take place.

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<sup>276</sup> Verses 5-6 are treated as poetry by most translations and commentators. There is a prose parallel to this oracle in 33:15-16. This passage also has a close parallel in Isa 11:1-9. In both passages, a royal savior is announced.

<sup>277</sup> Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 169-181.

<sup>278</sup> It occurs 15 times in the book of Jeremiah out of twenty-one occurrences in the Old Testament: 7:32; 9:24; 16:14; 19:6; 23:5, 7; 30:3; 31:27, 31, 38; 33:14; 48:12; 49:2; 51:47, 52; 1 Sam 2:31; 2 Kgs 20:17 = Isa 39:6; Amos 4:2; 8:11; 9:13.

<sup>279</sup> Gerhard von Rad, “ἡμέρα,” TDNT 2:946.

The prophecy is about the ideal future king of the Davidic line

(לְדָוִד צֶמַח צְדִיק).<sup>280</sup> The root צדק is a key word in this oracle: צֶמַח צְדִיק (v.

5a); צְדָקָה (v. 5b); יְהוָה צְדָקָנוּ (v. 6b). The phrase צֶמַח צְדִיק can be translated

“legitimate or rightful branch”<sup>281</sup> or “righteous branch.”<sup>282</sup> Holladay argues that

Jeremiah is here using a general Northwest Semitic term צֶמַח צְדִיק<sup>283</sup> for the

legitimate king and the nuance of “rightful” or “legitimate” is central to the adjective

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<sup>280</sup> The word צֶמַח is used, beyond the doublet in 33:15-16, as a technical term meaning a Messianic figure in exilic times (Zech 3:8 and 6:12). In its usages in Zechariah, it refers specifically to a contemporary figure, Zerubabbel. The decisive reversal of the condition (“Behold, the days are coming”) which the future king will bring about is expected to be realized in the immediate future. However, the promise expressed in Jer 23:5 with צֶמַח appears to be in a future Davidic king dissociated from the immediate historical circumstances of the present, and be similar to the figure of Isa 11:1, although using different words. Yet, the force of the prophecy is disputed. This dispute is related to the understanding of the phrase צֶמַח צְדִיק in association with the name יְהוָה צְדָקָנוּ.

<sup>281</sup> Bright, Holladay and Rudolph.

<sup>282</sup> Carroll, McKane, Weiser and most English translations.

<sup>283</sup> A parallel to צֶמַח צְדִיק is found in a third century B.C. Phoenician inscription from Lapethos in Cyprus (H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*, vol. I [Text], 10, no. 43:11 [Second ed.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1966]; For an English translation, see Walter Beyerlin, *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978], 232-234). It is argued by G. A. Cooke that the phrase צֶמַח צְדִיק in the Phoenician inscription should mean “legitimate offspring” in reference to the legitimate king of the Ptolemaic dynasty (See reference to G. A. Cooke in McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 561 and G. A. Cooke, *A Text Book of the North Semitic Inscriptions* [Oxford, 1903], 86). In another Phoenician inscription dated *circa* 300 BC the phrase בן צדק in the context indicates “legitimate son” (H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*, vol. I (Text), 3, no. 16:1 (2nd ed.; Wiesbaden, 1966). In the Ugaritic Keret poem, the phrase 'a~ ַ / dqh must mean “lawful wife” (Ugaritic texts, 14.1.12 and J. C. L. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* [2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978], 82. See reference to Gibson in McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 561).

צַדִּיק, although the meaning of “righteous” is still present.<sup>284</sup> On the other hand, McKane suggests that the sense of “righteous” arises from the perception of an association between the key phrases צַדִּיק צָמַח (v. 5a), צְדָקָה (v. 5b) and צְדָקָנוּ יְהוָה (v. 6b) in this oracle.<sup>285</sup>

The use of words with multiple meanings (e.g., פֶּקֶד in vv. 2, 4) or the use of words with the same root (e.g., רָעָה in vv. 2, 4, מֶלֶךְ in v. 5 and צַדִּיק in vv. 5-6) is common in Jeremiah. The repetitive use of those words is used intentionally to catch the attention of the audience and to build up tension in the audience’s minds towards a climax. The climax of the oracle vv. 5-6 is reached at the announcement of the name of the future king: יְהוָה צְדָקָנוּ (v. 6b).<sup>286</sup> The use of both meanings “rightful” and “righteous” of צַדִּיק may have been intended as a deliberate ambiguity.

The usual meaning of the adjective צַדִּיק is “righteous.” In this sense, the future king יְהוָה צְדָקָנוּ will be righteous in contrast to the previous kings in the oracles 21:11-22:30: וּמֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ וְהִשְׁכִּיל וְעָשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט וְצָדָקָה בְּאֶרֶץ (v. 5b). We observe an example of Jeremiah’s typical threefold structure with three verbs (מֶלֶךְ; הִשְׁכִּיל; עָשָׂה) which characterizes the administration of the new king.

<sup>284</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 618.

<sup>285</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 561.

<sup>286</sup> The naming of this king is similar to the naming in Isa 9:6 [MT 9:5].

Jeremiah's repetitive use of the word with the same root in the phrase מֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ is seen as a device for emphasis. The king will reign as king.<sup>287</sup> He will rule effectively and successfully (וּמֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ וְהִשְׁפִּיל). The positive characterization of the new king's rule is supplemented by the next clause וַעֲשֵׂה מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה בְּאֶרֶץ.

Administration of מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדְקָה is a main feature of the covenant obligation demanded from the kings in 21:11-22:30 (21:12; 22:3, 13, 15). The promise of effective and successful administration from the Davidic future king (v. 5b) reflects the failures of the past and present Davidic kings of Judah. In this sense, this is another accusation to the kings of Judah. At the same time, the oracle vv. 5-6 brings out a stark contrast between them and gives the audience a strong impression on the future king and future hope.

The name צִדְקָנוּ יְהוָה is given to the future Davidic king (לְדָוִד צִמַּח צִדִּיק). A word play might be intended on the name of Zedekiah. The name of the future king צִדְקָנוּ יְהוָה might be a reversal of the elements of the name of Zedekiah צִדְקִיָּהוּ. Zedekiah's name is not mentioned explicitly in the oracle vv. 5-6. The reference is to a future king. Yet, we may assume the audience is intended to associate Zedekiah with the name צִדְקָנוּ יְהוָה, as Zedekiah serves as the foil. So there is a reversal in form as well as in fact.

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<sup>287</sup> Peshitta's rendering suggests that "he will exercise sovereignty." See the reference to Peshitta in McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 562.



The oracle vv. 5-6 presents a future Davidic king in positive terms. The future king is portrayed by words associated with the root צדק which is at the center of the oracle vv. 5-6. For the future Davidic king (לְדָוִד צֶמַח צְדִיק) (v. 5), the emphasis in the oracle is on the adjective צְדִיק rather than Davidic (לְדָוִד). As we discussed above, the adjective צְדִיק is more likely to be used in the sense of “legitimate” than in the sense of “righteousness” in the phrase צֶמַח צְדִיק. The legitimacy of the king as a qualification for the future king is emphasized. The emphasis on the legitimacy in the future king may reflect the opposite in the present king. Most commentators interpret the passage in association with Zedekiah.<sup>288</sup>

Judah experienced a tumultuous three months after the death of Jehoiakim in December 598 BC. Succeeding his father, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin had reigned in Jerusalem for just three months until he was deposed from the throne and deported to Babylon. Mattaniah, Jehoiachin’s uncle, was placed on the throne by Nebuchadrezzar who changed his name to Zedekiah (2 Kgs 24:8-17). The name change may reflect the political reality in Jerusalem at the time of his enthronement.

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<sup>288</sup> The dating and historical setting of vv. 5-6 is not agreed on by commentators. Some have taken the passage to be late, exilic or post-exilic material (Duhm, Volz, Nicholson, and Carroll). Others view the passage as authentic to Jeremiah (Bright, Rudolph, Hyatt, and Holladay). Bright suggests the date of the passage is early in the Zedekiah’s reign, probably at, or just prior to, the time of Zedekiah’s accession (*Jeremiah*, 143). Holladay suggests a time at the end of Zedekiah’s reign, probably toward the last few months of the kingdom of Judah just before the fall of Jerusalem (*Jeremiah* 1, 617). The historical question is not easy to solve. McKane rejects the portrayal of the future king צְדִיקְנוּ יְהוָה as a kind of antithesis or antitype to Zedekiah. He suggests that the name of future king should be interpreted in connection with his legal responsibilities (“justice and righteousness” in v. 5) (*Jeremiah* 1-25, 564-5).

The name Zedekiah (צֶדֶקְיָהוּ, “the Lord is righteousness”) can be understood descriptively designating the bearer of the name “Zedekiah” with legitimacy of the Lord.<sup>289</sup> We may reasonably assume the possibility of divided loyalties between the supporters of the exiled king Jehoiachin and those of the present king Zedekiah.<sup>290</sup>

Jeremiah rejects Jehoiachin. One of major points of the oracles against Jehoiachin (22:24-30) is the length of his exile. Jehoiachin will never return to his native land. He in fact never returned from exile<sup>291</sup> against the hope of some who thought the exile would be short.<sup>292</sup> There must have been a lingering question about the legitimacy of the king throughout the reign of Zedekiah. As we discussed above, we can reasonably argue that the possibility of the future king and Zedekiah were linked in the audience’s mind. The future king (יְהוָה צֶדֶקְנֹה) will be a legitimate/righteous king (צֶמַח צְדִיק) who will reign effectively and successfully as king with sovereignty (וּמֶלֶךְ מְלֶךְ וְהַשְׂכִּיל) (v. 6). If this is the case, is the oracle vv. 5-6 referring to Zedekiah as the future king, the legitimate/righteous king? Some think the oracle here legitimizes Zedekiah and indicates the pro-Babylonian nature of the oracle.<sup>293</sup> Zedekiah, by contrast, had been a puppet to Nebuchadrezzar.<sup>294</sup> The

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<sup>289</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 619.

<sup>290</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 437-443. Carroll interprets 22:24-30 in terms of party politics between the pro-Egyptian faction who supported the exiled king Jehoiachin and the pro-Babylonian faction (headed by Zedekiah). This line of reasoning against Jehoiachin is used in the exilic and post-exilic period as an anti-Zerubbabel oracle.

<sup>291</sup> 2 Kgs 25:27-30.

<sup>292</sup> Cf. Hananiah’s oracle in chapter 28.

<sup>293</sup> James Swetnam, “Some Observations on the Background of צְדִיק in Jeremias 23, 5a,” *Bib* 46 (1965): 29-40; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 446.

positive attitude of the oracle toward the future king is quite a contrast to the nature of the rule of Zedekiah. The oracle is apparently intended in the context of chapters 21-24 to give a reversal of Zedekiah's reign. It would not yet be clear to Jeremiah's hearer's how this oracle could be fulfilled.

7 "Therefore, behold, the days are coming,," declares the Lord, "when they will no longer say, 'As the Lord lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt,' 8 But, 'As the Lord lives, who brought up and led back the descendants of the house of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where I had driven them.' Then they will live on their own land."

7 לְכֵן הַנְּהַיִמִים בָּאִים נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְלֹא־יֹאמְרוּ עוֹד חַי־יְהוָה  
 אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱלָה אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: 8 כִּי אִם־חַי־יְהוָה  
 אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱלָה וְאֲשֶׁר הֵבִיא אֶת־זֶרַע בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ צְפוֹנָה  
 וּמְכֹל הָאָרְצוֹת אֲשֶׁר הִנְחִיתִים שָׁם וַיָּשְׁבוּ עַל־אֲדָמָתָם:

Verses 7-8 are the Lord's announcement introduced by the transition לְכֵן,

which stands in place of the messenger formula. Both הַנְּהַיִמִים בָּאִים and

לֹא־יֹאמְרוּ עוֹד indicate a change of situation. There in the future will be a decisive

break from the present. The prophetic claim is strengthened by the messenger

formula נְאֻם־יְהוָה and the oath formula חַי־יְהוָה. The Lord is the subject of the

change. The oath form חַי־יְהוָה is a fixed form of expression used to ensure that the

person is speaking the truth.<sup>295</sup> It usually occurs without a qualifying description.<sup>296</sup>

What is unusual here is the contrast juxtaposed by the two extended oath formulas

<sup>294</sup> Bright, *Jeremiah*, 144.

<sup>295</sup> It occurs 8 times in Jeremiah (4:2; 5:2; 12:16; 16:14, 15; 23:7, 8; 38:16) and 43 times in the Old Testament.

<sup>296</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 622.

with qualifying clauses starting with אֲשֶׁר (vv. 7b, 8). The rhetorical effect of using these unusual formation of the oath form in vv. 7-8 is to enhance the contrast between the Lord's old Exodus and the new exodus to come. The contrast is between the Lord's deliverance of Israel "from the land of Egypt" and the deliverance of Israel's descendants "from the land of the north and from all the lands" of exile.

Verses 3 and 8 have a common theme of exile and return. The theme of exile and return in v. 3 is further developed in v. 8. In vv. 7-8, the old Exodus is contrasted with a new exodus. There are several parallels in the extended oath formulas of vv. 7-8. In the old Exodus, it is the Lord who brought the sons of Israel from Egypt (v. 7). In the new exodus, it is the Lord who brought and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands (v. 8).

Old Exodus (v. 7)	New Exodus (v. 8)
1. תִּיְיָהוּה	1. אִם־תִּיְיָהוּה
2. אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱלָה	2. אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱלָה וְאֲשֶׁר הֵבִיא
3. אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל	3. אֶת־זֶרַע בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל
4. מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם	4. מֵאֶרֶץ צְפוֹנָה
	5. וּמִכָּל הָאֲרָצוֹת אֲשֶׁר הִדְחִיתִים שָׁם

The rhetorical effect of the expressions in the new exodus of v. 8 is to magnify the contrast with the old Exodus of v. 7. The parallel in vv. 7-8 is broken by the words וּמִכָּל הָאֲרָצוֹת אֲשֶׁר הִדְחִיתִים שָׁם in v. 8.<sup>297</sup> This phrase occurs also in

<sup>297</sup> The LXX puts this passage at the end of the chapter. Verses 7-8 are parallel to 16:14-15 with only minor variations. In this study, we are not going to investigate the history of the text. The authenticity of the passage has been challenged by most commentators (Duhm, Rudolph, Thiel [*Jeremia 1-25*, 201], Bright, Carroll, McKane, Holladay). However, Weiser (*Das Buch Jeremia Kapitel 1-25,14*, 200), Moshe

v. 3 with a minor variation in Hebrew. The verb נָדַח “banish, thrust” is used especially in the context of exile.<sup>298</sup> Using a double expression

(מִכָּל הָאָרְצוֹת and אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱלָה וְאֲשֶׁר הֵבִיא), the new exodus widens the concept of exile and return. The exiles will be not only from “the land of the north,” but also all the exiles of Israel and Judah (cf. Judah and Israel in v. 6) will return. The phrase “the land of the north” אֶרֶץ צְפוֹנָה (v. 8) is an expression often used in Jeremiah.<sup>299</sup> It is referring to Babylon. Exiles will return from Babylon and all other lands (מִמְּאֶרֶץ צְפוֹנָה וּמִכָּל הָאָרְצוֹת) (v. 8). This expression rhetorically describes a complete recovery from all over the lands of exile.<sup>300</sup>

The final promise of the oracle comes with the clause “Then they will live on their own land” וַיָּשְׁבוּ עַל-אֲדָמָתָם (v. 8). We take note of the use of אֲדָמָה here for “land.” The word אֲדָמָה usually means “ground, soil, earth.” In comparison with אֶרֶץ, the use of אֲדָמָה may bring out the image of the cultivated land inhabited by

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Weinfeld (“Jeremiah and the Spiritual Metamorphosis of Israel,” *ZAW* 88 [1976], 40-43), and Thompson (*Jeremiah*, 491-492) defend it.

<sup>298</sup> Jer 8:3; 23:3, 8; 27:10, 15; 29:14, 18; 32:37; 46:28; 50:17; 51:34.

<sup>299</sup> Jer 3:18; 6:22; 10:22; 16:15; 23:8; 31:8; 46:10; 50:9. The word “north” is used to describe enemy or disaster that comes from the north. However, its identity (in Jer 4:6; 6:1, 22; 10:22; 13:10; 15:12; 46:20, 24) has been the subject of dispute. It could mean the Babylonians, or the Scythians.

<sup>300</sup> Cf. v. 4, “they will not be any be missing” וְלֹא יִפְקְדוּ.

Israel, particularly the exiles.<sup>301</sup> The Lord will send Israel and Judah from the אֲדָמָה  
into exile<sup>302</sup> and will return them from exile to the land אֲדָמָה.<sup>303</sup>

### 5.8.2 Summary to 23:1-8

The judgment of the negligent shepherds and the appointment of proper shepherds are the key points of the oracle vv. 1-4. The “woe”-speech of v. 1 accuses the shepherds (rulers and kings) of being negligent of their responsibility as shepherds. The shepherds (rulers and kings) are accused of leading the sheep astray and scattering them. They neglected their responsibility for shepherding “my people” and taking care of “my sheep.” The Lord will punish the shepherds for the evil of their deeds. The shepherds-sheep metaphor continues throughout the oracle. The image of the neglected sheep (vv. 1-2) is contrasted by the image of the sheep properly taken care of by the new shepherds (v. 4). The vivid image of the accusation against the shepherds of vv. 1-2a is an image of dispersal. We have observed the reversal of the holy war imagery throughout the judgments in chapters 21-22. However, the image of “dispersal” is now replaced with that of “gathering” in vv. 2b-4. The initial accusation may call for judgment. The oracle declares a promise of deliverance when an announcement of judgment is expected. This may indicate a new beginning for Judah. The oracle vv. 5-6 does not condemn Zedekiah explicitly. However, the rhetorical effect is a clear rejection of Zedekiah by Jeremiah (cf. 21:3-

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<sup>301</sup> *NIDOTTE*, vol. 1, 271; Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel, 1-20* (AB 22; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 145.

<sup>302</sup> 2 Kgs 17:23; 25:21 = Jer 52:27.

<sup>303</sup> Isa 14:1, 2; Jer 16:15 = 23:8; Ezek 28:25; 34:13; 36:24; 37:21; 39:28.

7; 24:8). History confirms the judgment on Zedekiah, it is under the reign of Zedekiah when the fall of Jerusalem occurs in 587/586 BC. The future king will save Judah and give security to Israel (v. 6). He will bring salvation to the whole of Israel (cf. chapters 30 and 31). The theme of exile and return from exile in vv. 7-8 is presented by a contrast between the old Exodus and a new exodus. The rhetorical effect is that Jeremiah is holding out hope for the future to the persuaded, yet dismayed, audience. However, his hope is different from the expected hope of the audience and the prophecy of **שְׁלוֹם** by the other prophets. For Jeremiah, the judgment of exile is a necessary condition for the promise for the future. This promise of hope is part of the argument, paradoxically, that the historic dynasty must fall.

## Chapter 6 Refutation (23:9-40)

### 6.1 The Rhetorical Strategy of the Refutation

In the Confirmation (21:11-23:8), a series of prophetic judgment oracles are presented against the kings of Judah as a justification for Jeremiah's prophecy rejecting the inviolability of Jerusalem and Judah. In 21:11-22:9, Jeremiah is demanding a covenant obligation from the kings of Judah. Oracles in 22:10-22:30 show how specific kings during the last years of Judah failed to observe it. Thus judgment on the kings and Jerusalem is inevitable. Exile is a foregone conclusion in Jeremiah's argument in the Confirmation. The Confirmation ends with the promise of the future king who will rule with righteousness and justice (23:1-8). However, exile is still not avoidable. The future hope lies after the exile. Jeremiah's future promise is different from the hope expected by the people and other prophets.

Jeremiah's prophecy could be challenged by the rival prophecies of other prophets, which contradict Jeremiah's prophecies. Jeremiah's prophecy indicates the strong possibility of, or presupposes, exile (23:1-8). However, some prophets would prophesy the escape from the Babylonian siege. They would doubt if the exile ever would happen. Or had the exile already happened, they would expect it would not last long (cf. chapters 28-29). Jeremiah's audience would also hear prophecies by opposing prophets. Thus there would arise a need for Jeremiah to contend that what is being told by him is a true prophecy. Other rival prophets needs to be denounced



in the Refutation (23:9-40) in order to demonstrate Jeremiah's prophecy as true.<sup>1</sup>

Jeremiah denounces other prophets and priests for the deceitfulness in their practice.

Jeremiah accuses other prophets of falsehood for proclaiming **שְׁלוֹמִי** when there is no prospect for **שְׁלוֹמִי** in the land (v. 17).<sup>2</sup>

In the Confirmation, Jeremiah presented his case without having to present his argument against opposing views. But in the Refutation opposing arguments are to be proved false.<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah may also use the means of argumentation available to him through the invention of rhetoric, in order to refute opposing views. Thus he may present his argument by appealing to reason, by appealing to the audience's emotion, or by appealing ethically to the speaker's character. In a logical argument,

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<sup>1</sup> However, the oracles here do not present criteria for proving true or false prophets in the Old Testament. For conflicts among the prophets, see James L. Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict: Its Effect Upon Israelite Religion* (BZAW 124; Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1971): 91-112; Simon J. de Vries, *Prophet Against Prophet: The Role of the Micaiah Tradition (I Kings 22) in the Development of Early Prophetic Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978); Robert Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980): 249-251.

<sup>2</sup> See also 6:12-15 (it is repeated almost verbatim in 8:10-12). Jeremiah's accusation of other prophets and priests is further detailed in chapters 27-29.

<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah has to decide whether to present his own argument first then refute the opposition, or to refute the opposing view first then present his own argument. "If the opposing views have been well received by the audience, it is usually advisable that we refute those views before we attempt to present our own arguments. People who are favorably disposed to the opposite point will not readily open their minds to our arguments, however valid and cogent they may be. The ground must be cleared, as it were, before we can parade our support. Where the opposing arguments are relatively weak, we can afford to delay answering them until after we have established our own case. In such instances, the cogency of our arguments will further dispose the audience to recognize the weakness of the opposing arguments. And even when the opposing arguments are strong and are favorably received by the audience, it will sometimes be expedient to delay refuting them. When audience ... is inordinately hostile to our view, the wisest strategy may be to keep the opposing arguments out of sight as long as possible" (Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric*, 302).

he may try to prove the contradictory nature of the opposing views. He may also refute the opposing views by appealing to probabilities using enthymemes and examples. The ethical appeal is most effective in this section of discourse. The other prophets are condemned as false prophets and their prophecy denounced in 23:9-40. The Refutation consists of a series of oracles (vv. 9-12; 13-15; 16-22; 23-32; 33-40). The key point is that the oracles of false prophets are not from the Lord. These prophesied their false dreams. The Lord did not send or appoint them (23:32).

## 6.2 Refutation I (23:9-12)

### The Structure of 23:9-12

A Judgment Speech to Groups		Jeremiah 23:9-12
Commissioning of the Messenger		9 To the prophets:
Introduction		my heart is broken within me, all my bones tremble; I have become like a drunken man, and like a man overcome with wine, because of the Lord and because of his holy words.
Accusation		10 For the land is full of adulterers; for because of the curse, the land mourns; the pastures of the wilderness have dried up. Their course is evil, and their might is not right. 11 "For both prophet and priest are polluted; also in my house I have found their wickedness," declares the Lord.
Judgment	Result of the Intervention	12 Therefore their way will be like slippery paths to them, Into the darkness they will be driven away and fall down in it;
	Intervention of God	For I shall bring disaster upon them, the year of their punishment," declares the Lord.

### 6.2.1 Detailed Analysis of 23:9-12

9 To the prophets, my heart is broken within me, all my bones tremble; I have become like a drunken man, and like a man overcome with wine, because of the Lord and because of his holy words.

9 לְנִבְאִים נִשְׁבַּר לִבִּי בְקִרְבִּי רָחַפוּ כָּל-עַצְמוֹתַי  
הָיִיתִי כְּאִישׁ שָׁכֹר וּכְגֹבֵר עָבְרוּ יַיִן מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה וּמִפְּנֵי דְבַרִּי קָדְשׁוֹ:

A series of judgment oracles in 23:9-40 are introduced by the transitional phrase “to the prophets” (לְנִבְאִים) in 23:9.<sup>4</sup> The title indicates that the oracles are “concerning” the prophets or are dispatched “to” the prophets through the messenger. This may surprise the audience because a prophet proclaims a prophecy addressed to other prophets. The prophet’s lamentation in v. 9 is likely to be describing the impact on Jeremiah by the contents of the Lord’s judgment which was revealed to Jeremiah, rather than the divine revelation experience itself, through which the message came.<sup>5</sup> Verse 9 can be Jeremiah’s reaction either to the state of the contemporary Judah as described in the accusation (vv. 10-11) or to the very contents of the judgment (v. 12).<sup>6</sup> The body is used as a metaphor in v. 9a. The colon לְבִי בְקִרְבִי brings out the sense of “emotional trauma” instead of broken-heartedness.<sup>7</sup> Bright comments that “Jeremiah is not ‘heartbroken,’ but extremely disturbed in mind, upset, shocked.”<sup>8</sup> The image of כָּל-עֲצָמוֹתַי רָחַפוּ is that the whole body is shaking or “the physical frame is dissolving.”<sup>9</sup> Thus the first two cola in v. 9a point to

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<sup>4</sup> We notice a similar title in the collection of oracles “to the kings of Judah” לְבֵית מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה in 21:11-23:8.

<sup>5</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 625; Berridge, *Prophet, People, and the Word of Yahweh*, 182-183; also the LXX.

<sup>6</sup> The former is advocated by Duhm (*Jeremia*, 182) and Bright (*Jeremiah*, 154), while the later is taken up by Volz (*Der Prophet Jeremia*, 235) and Berridge (*Prophet, People, and the Word of Yahweh*, 182-183).

<sup>7</sup> The colon לְבִי בְקִרְבִי is translated “my heart is broken within me” in most English translations.

<sup>8</sup> Bright, *Jeremiah*, 151.

<sup>9</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 568. The verb רָחַפוּ is a *hapax legomenon*. The meaning of the verb רָחַף (Qal) can be either “tremble, shake” (adopted by most English translations) or “become weak” (adopted by Duhm, Bright, Holladay, McKane, and Thompson).

Jeremiah's physical and emotional distress in Jeremiah caused by the message from the Lord. Similes are used in the second bicolon of v. 9a. The prophet's state of emotional distress and physical incapacity is likened to the state of drunkenness (וּכְגֹבֵר עָבְרוּ יַיִן) with wine (הָיִיתִי כְּאִישׁ שֹׁכֵר).<sup>10</sup> This emotionally tormenting and physically paralyzing religious experience is induced by the Lord and the revealed words of the Lord: מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה וּמִפְּנֵי דְבָרֵי קָדְשׁוֹ (v. 9b). "His holy words" refer to the contents of the divine message vv. 10-12.<sup>11</sup>

The first four cola in v. 9a are pathos-filled words of Jeremiah. This appeals to the emotions of the audience. Jeremiah is extremely disturbed by the contents of the divine message. The introductory lamentation of v. 9 functions rhetorically to attract the audience's attention to the Lord's own words which follow.

**10** For the land is full of adulterers; for because of the curse, the land mourns; the pastures of the wilderness have dried up. Their course is evil, and their might is not right. **11** "For both prophet and priest are polluted; also in my house I have found their wickedness," declares the Lord.

10 כִּי מִנְאֻפִּים מְלֵאָה הָאָרֶץ כִּי־מִפְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲבֵלָה הָאָרֶץ יִבְשׁוּ נְאוֹת מִדְּבָר וַתְּהִי מְרוּצָתָם רָעָה וַיִּגְבוֹרְתָם לֹא־כֵן:  
 11 כִּי־גַם־נְבִיא גַם־כֹּהֵן חָנְפוּ גַם־בְּבֵיתִי מְצָאתִי רָעָתָם נֹאֲמֵי־יְהוָה:

Verses 10-12 are a prophetic judgment speech which has two parts: the "reason for the judgment" (vv. 10-11) and the "announcement of the judgment" (v. 12). The accusation consists of the three occurrences of כִּי clause in vv. 10-11. The

<sup>10</sup> וּכְגֹבֵר עָבְרוּ יַיִן is translated literally "like a man through whom wine passed."

<sup>11</sup> Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 128-129; Weiser, *Das Buch Jeremia Kapitel 1-25,14*, 202; Berridge, *Prophet, People, and the Word of Yahweh*, 182.

three occurrences of כִּי should be taken grammatically in the emphatic sense, as

McKane suggests.<sup>12</sup>

The agricultural metaphor for drought is used in the second כִּי clause in v.

10.<sup>13</sup> The verb אָבַל in the colon כִּי־מִפְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים אָבַלְתָּ הָאָרֶץ represents two homonymous verbs “mourn” and “wither.”<sup>14</sup> Considering the synonymous parallelism with the following colon יָבֵשׁוּ נְאוֹת מְדְבָר, the meaning of “wither” is clearly possible here.<sup>15</sup> What is implied in connection with the meaning of “mourn” and “wither” is the withdrawal of natural fertility. “‘Wilderness’ (מְדְבָר) does not necessarily denote the sandy desert but is often (as here) associated with pasturage.”<sup>16</sup> The cause of the curse is not stated explicitly. But it is implicated in the context of כִּן וּגְבוּרַתְּם לֹא־כִן (v. 10b). The noun מְרוּצָתְּם is translated “course” (from the verb רוּץ “run”) by most translations. However, its meaning is ambiguous. BDB lists its meaning as “course, style, mode of life.” The

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<sup>12</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 570. Rudolph suggests that the כִּי at the beginning can be simply a marker of the beginning of the Lord’s speech, and that the second כִּי in v. 10 should be deleted, and that the כִּי in v. 11 has the emphatic sense (*Jeremia*, 126). Weiser, on the other hand, supposes that the second כִּי in v. 10 functions as a conjunction (*denn*) (*Das Buch Jeremia Kapitel 1-25,14*, 200).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Jer 14.

<sup>14</sup> Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, vol. 1: 21-23 (ET; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 571. The Targum renders it with the use of “wither.”

<sup>16</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 304. Also 9:10 [MT 9].

implication is “the race of life which they run” as suggested by McKane.<sup>17</sup> Holladay explores that it means “‘course, running,’ with the implication both style of life and perhaps more specifically of the ‘running’ of the (false) prophets.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, he suggests it implies “behavior” (cf. דִּרְכָם “their way” in v. 12) in parallel to גְּבוּרָתָם “their might” in the next colon. There is a homonym with מְרוּצָה meaning “oppression, extortion” from the verb רָצַץ “crush, oppress” (22:17). Thus its implication is that because of their being ungodly as prophet and priest and also in their ways of oppression over others, the land was brought to the state of drought (v. 10a). The expression מִפְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים forms a parallel to the מִפְּנֵי clauses in v. 9b. As Jeremiah became physically powerless when overwhelmed with wine, the land became infertile because of drought brought by their evil behavior (וּגְבוּרָתָם לֹא־כֵן) and unrighteous exercise of power (וַתְּהִי מְרוּצָתָם רָעָה) (v. 10). רָעָה and לֹא־כֵן are a synonymous parallel. The community, as a whole including rulers of society, is accused in v. 10. Perhaps the prophets are responsible for the general adultery because they have failed to exercise a true prophetic ministry. Of course, they may also be adulterers themselves (cf. 29:22f.).

The emotional torment of the prophet (v. 9) can be due to the state of the land, the contemporary Judah, which is said to be full of מְנַאֲפִים. Alternatively, it

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<sup>17</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 571.

<sup>18</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 627.

can be due to the curse (אֱלֹהִים).<sup>19</sup> The word מְנַאֲפִים (נֹאֲף “commit adultery”) in v. 10 can mean the sexual immorality of “adulterers” in the plain sense. Without excluding this possibility, however, it is used rather metaphorically in reference to apostasy or idolatry, especially in the following verse addressing the “ungodliness” of the prophets and priests and their “wickedness” in the temple of the Lord (v. 11). The focus of attention shifts in v. 11 to the description of the behavior of religious leaders in particular. In v. 11, the accusation reaches its climax by linking “both prophet and priest” with the lamentation in v. 9 and the accusation in v. 10. The behavior of both prophet and priest is linked with the state of contemporary Judah. What is ironic is that both prophet and priest are accused of being ungodly (חֲנֻפִּים).<sup>20</sup> The verb חֲנַף is assonant with the verb נֹאֲף used in v. 10 (מְנַאֲפִים). The Lord finds in his house “their wickedness” רָעָתָם. The word רָעָה is the key word in this

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<sup>19</sup> Verse 10 is difficult as it stands in the text of MT. Some commentators emend the word אֱלֹהִים “curse” to אֵלֶּה “these.” Various commentators have attempted to emend v. 10 in the MT. Rudolph suggests that מְרַעִים וְ was dropped out in front of מְנַאֲפִים by haplography. Thus he reads v. 10:

כִּי מְרַעִים וּמְנַאֲפִים מִלְּאָה הָאָרֶץ וַתְּהִי מְרוּצָתָם רָעָה וַיִּגְבוּרָתָם לֹא־כֵן:  
*(Jeremiah, 126)*. Bright considers the second כִּי clause in v. 10a as an intrusion or transposition of lines which breaks the connection between מְרוּצָתָם רָעָה וַיִּגְבוּרָתָם לֹא־כֵן and כִּי מְנַאֲפִים מִלְּאָה הָאָרֶץ (*Jeremiah, 151*). Holladay, while adopting Rudolph’s suggestion, changes the order of the lines in v. 10. Thus he moves the emended line כִּי מְרַעִים וּמְנַאֲפִים מִלְּאָה הָאָרֶץ to the middle of v. 10 (*Jeremiah 1, 624*). However, McKane argues that these suggestions are not sufficiently justifiable for emendation of the text. Thus, MT should be followed with one exception of מִפְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים being taken instead of מִפְּנֵי אֵלֶּה (*Jeremiah 1-25, 569-570*).

<sup>20</sup> The Qal use of the verb חֲנַף has the meaning of “be defiled, polluted, godless, ungodly.”

passage (vv. 10b, 11b, 12b). The nature of the רַעְתָּם is not clear. It could be sexual immorality, apostasy or idolatry. All these meanings are still applicable to them. The very guardians of the temple of the Lord are identified with what is supposed to be the antithesis of their vocations: רעה and חנף.

Jeremiah's typical stylistic feature of a threefold structure is noticed in v. 11: גַּם־נְבִיא; גַּם־כֹּהֵן; גַּם־בְּבֵיתִי. The first double גַּם is given with the double subject (גַּם־נְבִיא גַּם־כֹּהֵן "both prophet and priest") preceding the verb.<sup>21</sup> The linking of two or more subjects with one verb has the effect of clearly showing the ideas and actions. Here, it emphasizes that "both prophet and priest" are ungodly. At the same time, the repetition of the same word at the beginning of successive sentences adds weight and emphasis to the statements by calling attention to them. The third גַּם in the second colon connects with the גַּם in the first colon. The accusation has reached its climax when the Lord discovers ungodly prophet and priest even at the heart of religious institution, the temple of the Lord. The accusation is enhanced by the inversion of the word order (גַּם־בְּבֵיתִי מִצְאָתִי רַעְתָּם נְאֻם־יְהוָה), the presence of the adverb גַּם at the beginning of the colon and the oracle formula נְאֻם־יְהוָה at the end. It strongly appeals to the emotion of the audience.

<sup>21</sup> The similar expression appears also in 14:18 ("Both prophet and priest have gone to a land they know not" כִּי־גַם־נְבִיא גַם־כֹּהֵן סָחְרוּ אֶל־אֶרֶץ וְלֹא יָדְעוּ).



The image in vv. 10-11 narrows down to the point of singling out of prophet and priest. The accusation first starts with the general state of the land (v. 10a). Then it moves to the rulers of society who are suggested by their description (v. 10b). Finally, the accusation reaches its climax at the description of prophet and priest (v. 11b). The first person reference to the Lord even strengthens the accusation. The accusation on those whose behavior has been denounced in vv. 10-11 is followed by prophetic judgment on them using the messenger formula.

12 Therefore their way will be like slippery paths to them, Into the darkness they will be driven away and fall down in it; For I shall bring disaster upon them, the year of their punishment," declares the Lord.

12 לְכֵן יִהְיֶה דְרָכָם לָהֶם כַּחֲלָקְלָקוֹת בְּאֶפְלָה יִבְחוּ וְנָפְלוּ בָּהּ  
כִּי־אֲבִיא עֲלֵיהֶם רָעָה שְׁנַת פְּקֻדָתָם נֹאֵם־יְהוָה:

The judgment usually begins with the messenger formula, כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה.

In v. 12, however, we have the abbreviated form, “therefore,” in the same place, after the accusation and before the announcement. In v. 12a judgment is announced in the third person (“they”-speech); v. 12b is a divine speech in the first person (“I”-speech). It is the Lord himself who brings out the judgment. The image of the judgment in v. 12a is that of walking and stumbling on a slippery path in the darkness. The word חֲלָקְלָקוֹת occurs also in Ps 35:6 in a similar sense.<sup>22</sup> Thus it appears that the use of metaphor in v. 12a reflects the use of metaphor in referring to the destruction of the wicked. The metaphor used in Prov 4:19 may also reinforce this image. The phrase “the year of their punishment” שְׁנַת פְּקֻדָתָם also occurs in

<sup>22</sup> See also בְּחֲלָקוֹת in Psalm 73:18.

11:23b. The intervention of God in 23:12b may reflect the crisis when Jeremiah was challenged by the other prophets.

The root רעה is repeated three times in vv. 10-12 using different semantic usages (cf. also noun “his wickedness” רעתו in v. 14 and noun “disaster” רעה in v. 17). It is used twice to refer to the “evil” of the prophets and priest in vv. 10 and 11 (adjective “evil” רע in v. 10b and as a noun “wickedness” רעתם in v. 11). It is used to show the consequences of the noun “disaster” רעה (v. 12) which the Lord will bring upon them. The audience may be reminded of the actions of the wicked and their effect on the righteous in conflict between the righteous and the wicked.<sup>23</sup> The implication is that both prophets and priests are the wicked who are accused in v. 11. Their wickedness will lead to a national disaster, which is not pronounced yet here but soon to be declared to mean exile.

### 6.2.2 Summary to 23:9-12

This oracle vv. 9-12 at the beginning of a series of oracles on prophets (23:9-40, Refutation) presents a context for a refutation of Jeremiah’s rival prophets. Verses 9-12 are Jeremiah’s lamentation against the state of the contemporary Judah. Various metaphors are used in vv. 9-12 to appeal to the audience’s emotions. The pathos-filled introductory words spoken by the prophet (v. 9) functions rhetorically to attract the audience’s attention and present an exigency. The accusation (vv. 10-

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<sup>23</sup> For example, Jeremiah’s complaints about the wicked in 12:1.

11) is made in a general conceptual form. The general state of the land is used as a reason for the judgment (v. 10). Then it is developed by making it more concrete. The accusation singles out both “prophet and priest” to be responsible for the state of the land because of their ungodliness and wickedness (v. 11). Then the oracle shifts to the judgment in v. 12. Exile will be the judgment on their wickedness.

### 6.3 Refutation II (23:13-15)

#### The Structure of 23:13-15

A Judgment Speech to Groups		Jeremiah 23:13-15
Reason	Accusation	13 In the prophets of Samaria I saw a repulsive thing: They prophesied by Baal and led my people Israel astray. 14 And in the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: They commit adultery and walk in falsehood; they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns back from his wickedness.
	Development of the Accusation	All of them have become to me like Sodom, and her inhabitants like Gomorrah.
Messenger Formula		15 Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets
Announcement		“Behold, I am going to feed them wormwood, and make them drink poisonous water, for from the prophets of Jerusalem, ungodliness has gone forth into all the land.”

#### 6.3.1 Detailed Analysis of 23:13-15

13 In the prophets of Samaria I saw a repulsive thing: They prophesied by Baal and led my people Israel astray. 14 And in the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: They commit adultery and walk in falsehood; they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one turns back from his wickedness. All of them have become to me like Sodom, and her inhabitants like Gomorrah.

13 וּבְנָבִיאֵי שְׁמֵרוֹן רָאִיתִי תְּפִלָּה הַנִּבְאָה בַּבַּעַל וַיִּתְּעוּ אֶת-עַמִּי אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
 14 וּבְנָבִיאֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם רָאִיתִי שְׁעֵרוּרָה נְאוּף וְהֶלֶךְ בַּשֶּׁקֶר וְחִזְקוּ יְדֵי מְרֵעִים  
 נְאוּף וְהֶלֶךְ בַּשֶּׁקֶר וְחִזְקוּ יְדֵי מְרֵעִים לְבִלְתִּי-שָׁבוּ אִישׁ מִרְעָתוֹ.  
 הַיּוֹלֵי כֻלָם כְּסֹדֶם וַיִּשְׁבִּיָה כְּעַמּוֹרָה:

The previous oracle (vv. 9-12) is a judgment oracle against the prophet and priest. The current oracle is closely connected with the previous oracle by the appearance of key words in both oracles: רעה; נאף; חנף.<sup>24</sup> The oracle vv. 13-15

<sup>24</sup> The root רעה appears in vv. 14a (מְרֵעִים) and 14b (מְרֵעָתוֹ); see also in vv. 10b, 11b, 12b. The root נאף appears in v. 14a (נְאוּף); see also in v. 10a). The root חנף appears in v. 15b (חִנְפָה); see also in v. 11a).

presents more details of both accusation and judgment. Verses 13-14 are the accusation against the (false) prophets of Jerusalem and v. 15 is the announcement of judgment.

The prophets of Jerusalem are contrasted with the prophets of Samaria. The meaning of the word תַּפְּלָה in v. 13 is not clear.<sup>25</sup> The sense of תַּפְּלָה may be “lack of intellectual discrimination,” as suggested in the Vulgate.<sup>26</sup> They themselves were duped into their own “prophecies.” The prophets of Samaria did lead Israel astray.<sup>27</sup> They encouraged apostasy by prophesying in the name Baal.<sup>28</sup> The image of the prophets leading the people astray reminds the audience of the image of shepherd scattering the sheep in 23:1-4. Those who are misleading the people are false prophets.

Verse 13 is parallel to v. 14a. The prophets of Samaria are mentioned just as a foil to bring out the ungodliness of the prophets of Jerusalem. The prophets of Jerusalem are characterized as horrible using the threefold structure (v. 14aβ): נְאֻף;

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<sup>25</sup> Various translations and commentators bring out different senses from the word: “unsavory” (Carroll, RSV), “offensive” (Bright, Thompson, NAS), “repulsive” (NIV), “senseless” (McKane), “fatuous” (Holladay), “folly” (KJV), “insanity” (NJB).

<sup>26</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 573-574.

<sup>27</sup> The verb תַּעֲהֶה (Hiphil, “lead astray, mislead”) in v. 13 is often used describing sheep going (Isa 53:6), or being led (Jer 23:32; 50:6), astray.

<sup>28</sup> See Hosea; 1 Kgs 18.

חֲזַקוּ יְדֵי מְרַעִים; הֵלֵךְ בַּשֶּׁקֶר.<sup>29</sup> The grammatical structure of v. 14aβ is striking.

The first two verbs (הֵלֵךְ and נָאֹף) are infinitive absolutes. These infinitive absolutes are connected grammatically with a finite verb (חֲזַקוּ).<sup>30</sup> The leading situation usually implies the condition for the subsequent situation. Committing adultery (נָאֹף) and walking in falsehood (הֵלֵךְ בַּשֶּׁקֶר) are leading to strengthen the hands of evildoers (חֲזַקוּ יְדֵי מְרַעִים). The number of words increases. The first phrase consists of one word (נָאֹף); the second, two words (הֵלֵךְ בַּשֶּׁקֶר); the third, three words (חֲזַקוּ יְדֵי מְרַעִים). The range of the influence is also expanding, from the prophets themselves to the whole land.

The verb נָאֹף in v. 14 can mean either the sexual sin of adultery or apostasy.<sup>31</sup> Either would have been considered gross sin. The phrase הֵלֵךְ בַּשֶּׁקֶר can have multiple meanings. It can simply mean lying. However, the structure הֵלֵךְ בְּ (‘‘walk’’ + in) is often used in Jeremiah. The phrase is used in the expression

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<sup>29</sup> The word שִׁעֲרוּרָה ‘‘horror, horrible thing’’ occurs only here and in 5:30. It has the sense of ‘‘shock and moral revulsion.’’

<sup>30</sup> Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 538. This construction represents ‘‘a situation consequent to that envisioned by the infinitive absolute... [T]he internal structure of the finite verb is unpacked in its progress even if it be presented as a single whole by the finite verb.’’

<sup>31</sup> In parallel to the practice of the prophets of Samaria (הִנְבְּאוּ בַבַּעַל) in v. 13b, נָאֹף can mean worshipping other gods (Craigie *et al.*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 340). On the other hand, in reference to Sodom and Gomorrah in v. 14b, נָאֹף can mean the sexual sin of adultery (Bright, *Jeremiah*, 151-152; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 631; McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 575).

“walk in the stubbornness of one’s evil heart,” which means “in opposition to the way of the Lord.”<sup>32</sup> With “falsehood” in place of “the stubbornness of one’s evil heart,” we may identify a similar meaning in the phrase **הָלַךְ בַּשֶּׁקֶר**. This brings out the sense of worshipping other gods. The phrase **הָלַךְ בַּשֶּׁקֶר** where the prophets are the subject may be used in the same sense as the phrase **נבא + בַּשֶּׁקֶר**.<sup>33</sup> In this sense, **הָלַךְ בַּשֶּׁקֶר** is parallel to **הַנְּבִאוֹ בַּבַּעַל** in v. 13. On the other hand, McKane brings out the possibility of its referring to the assurance of **שְׁלוֹם** which they give to the people. Being self-deceived, the prophets suppose that their **שְׁלוֹם** prophecy is authorized by the Lord.<sup>34</sup> Bright also identifies a similar sense and suggests that the phrase **הָלַךְ בַּשֶּׁקֶר** “refers to the lie of unconditional divine protection to which they are committed.”<sup>35</sup> This may be its thrust. All meanings point to the force of undercutting the authority of the (false) prophets. This point is further enhanced by the following phrase **חֲזַקוּ יְדֵי מְרַעִים**.

The metaphor **חֲזַק יְדֵי** “strengthen one’s hand” means lending encouragement. The prophets are strengthening the hand of evildoers (**מְרַעִים**). The root **רעה** is a key word in the oracle vv. 9-12, where the implication is that the

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<sup>32</sup> Jer 7:24; 11:8; 13:10; 23:17; also Deut 29:19 [MT 18]; 1 Kgs 8:23; 9:4; Psalms 8:12 [MT 13]; 86:11; 101:2; Isa 38:3.

<sup>33</sup> Jer 5:31 and 20:6.

<sup>34</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 575.

<sup>35</sup> Bright, *Jeremiah*, 152

prophets and the priests are wicked. Here in theme and wording, the phrase **חֲזִקוּ יְדֵי מְרִעִים** may reflect “a conspiracy between the prophets and other, unspecified, people” in the context of conflict between the righteous and wicked.<sup>36</sup> Contrary to their inherent duty as prophets of the Lord, the actions of the (false) prophets ironically end up assisting the evildoers.

To persuade the audience of his argument concerning the accusation against Jerusalem’s prophets, Jeremiah uses historical facts about Samaria (v. 13). He reminds the audience of the fate of Samaria and its people. Jeremiah presents the prophets of Samaria as apostates. Jeremiah is using for his argument historical facts which are acceptable to his audience without dispute. The audience must have known the fate of Samaria. Then he compares the prophets of Samaria with the prophets of Jerusalem. The intention of comparison is not to exonerate or diminish the sinfulness of the prophets of Samaria; but the prophets of Jerusalem are the target of the accusation. The comparison with the prophets of Samaria is only used to condemn Jerusalem’s prophets. It stresses that the prophets of Jerusalem are just like the prophets of Samaria. The implication is that the prophets of Jerusalem are worse than the prophets of Samaria.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 456. Carroll suggests 38:1-6 provides a setting for and explanation of the use of the metaphor **חֲזִק יָד**. In 38:4 Jeremiah is accused of “discouraging” or “weakening the hand” (**מְרַפֵּא אֶת־יָדַי**) of the soldiers in defense of Jerusalem against the Babylonians. “The two metaphors, strengthening/weakening the hands, describe support of or attack against either specific policies or people.”

<sup>37</sup> The setting is similar to that of 3:6-10, 11 where Judah is criticized in comparison with Israel (cf. 3:11, “Faithless Israel is more righteous than unfaithful Judah”).



In v. 14b, the accusation against the prophets of Jerusalem shifts to another level. The force of Jeremiah's denunciation of the prophets of Jerusalem is strengthened by his turning to the symbolic names, Sodom and Gomorrah. The accusation ends with the rhetorical device of simile in v. 14b: like Sodom; like Gomorrah. Jeremiah likens the prophets of Jerusalem to Sodom and Gomorrah. Sodom and Gomorrah are the symbols of sin and corruption (Gen 19). In Isa 1:10, the leaders and people of Judah and Jerusalem are compared to the "rulers of Sodom" (קִצִּינֵי סֹדֹם) and the "people of Gomorrah" (עַם עֲמֹרָה). When the prophets of Samaria led the people astray, Israel suffered the fate. When the prophets of Jerusalem are like Sodom and Gomorrah, then the rhetorical force of this accusation is that Judah and Jerusalem will surely suffer the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, which the Lord destroyed for their sin. The prophets of Jerusalem are leading the people to sin and destruction. Prophets who lead the people astray are false prophets.

15 Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets, "Behold, I am going to feed them with wormwood, and make them drink poisonous water, for from the prophets of Jerusalem; Ungodliness has gone forth into all the land."

15 לְכֵן כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת עַל־הַנְּבִאִים הַנְּנִי מֵאֲכִיל אוֹתָם לְעֵנָה וְהִשְׁקֵתִים מִי־רֹאשׁ כִּי מֵאֵת נְבִיאֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם יֵצֵא חֲנֻפָה לְכָל־הָאָרֶץ:

The messenger formula is followed by the announcement of judgment in v. 15. The messenger formula identifies the addressee of the oracle as the prophets. The image of a banquet is used for judgment. Wormwood and poisoned water, instead of food and wine, are served at the banquet.<sup>38</sup> The image is another example of

<sup>38</sup> Cf. 9:15 [MT 14]; also 8:14.

Jeremiah's use of reversals. The wordplay with assonance is involved among **מְרַעִים** “evildoers” (v. 14), **מֵרַעְתּוֹ** “his wickedness” (v. 14) and **מֵי־רֹאשׁ** “poisoned water” (v. 15). The Lord will feed “the evildoers” for their “wickedness” with “poisoned water.”

The word **חֲנֻפָּה** can mean “defilement, pollution” or “ungodliness.” The root **חנף** appears also in v. 11, where the prophet and priest are accused of being “polluted”/“ungodly” (cf. 3:1, 9). The prophets of Jerusalem are held accountable for the general state of **חֲנֻפָּה** over the entire land of Judah. The image of pollution/godliness spreading out over the land (**יֵצְאָה חֲנֻפָּה לְכָל־הָאָרֶץ**) may remind the audience of the image of burning sulphur raining down on Sodom and Gomorrah.<sup>39</sup>

### 6.3.2 Summary to 23:13-15

Verses 13-15 are about the (false) prophets of Jerusalem who are compared with those of Samaria. The prophets of Jerusalem are compared with the prophets of Samaria in vv. 13-14. The prophets of Jerusalem are accused of being even worse than the prophets of Samaria. They are like Sodom and Gomorrah (vv. 13-14). Then judgment follows the messenger formula. The audience is already aware of the fall of Samaria. The implication is that the prophets of Samaria are held responsible for the

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<sup>39</sup> Gen 19:23-24.

fall of Israel. Jeremiah is applying the historical facts about Samaria and the symbolic names of Sodom and Gomorrah in order to persuade the audience of his argument: The false prophets of Jerusalem are misleading the people of Judah, therefore Judah will meet the same fate.

Jeremiah was not the first to use Sodom and Gomorrah as an example of judgment for great sin (Isa 1:10). But he uses them in a progression from Samaria, through Jerusalem to Sodom and Gomorrah. The effect is an impression of progression in evil, and certain judgment. The continued existence of Judah after the fall of Israel does not demonstrate that the prophets of Judah are immune to the fate the prophets of Samaria faced. Because of their false prophecy, Judah will face the judgment in the same way as Sodom and Gomorrah faced judgment with burning sulphur.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ezekiel developed the analogy with Sodom further; Ezek 16:44-58.

## 6.4 Refutation III (23:16-22)

### The Structure of 23:16-22

Judgment Speech to Groups		Jeremiah 23:16-22
Reason	Accusation	16 Thus says the Lord Almighty, “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are filling you with false hopes; they speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the Lord. 17 “They keep saying to those who despise me, ‘The Lord has said, “You will have peace”’; and as for everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart, they say, ‘disaster will not come upon you.’”
	Development of the Accusation	18 “But who has stood in the council of the Lord, that he should see and hear his word? Who has given heed to His word and listened?
Announcement	Result of the Intervention of God	19 “Behold, the storm of the Lord has gone forth in wrath, even a whirling tempest; It will swirl down on the head of the wicked. 20 “The anger of the Lord will not turn back until he has performed and carried out the purposes of his heart; in the last days you will clearly understand it.
	Intervention of God	21 “I did not send the prophets, but they ran. I did not speak to them, but they prophesied. 22 “But if they had stood in my council, then they would have announced my words to my people, and would have turned them back from their evil way and from the evil of their deeds.

### 6.4.1 Detailed Analysis of 23:16-22

Verses 9-12 are a general indictment of religious leaders. Jeremiah laments the state of a land full of adulterers. Jeremiah is holding the religious leaders, both priests and prophets, responsible for the ungodliness state of the land. Because of their wickedness, the Lord will bring upon them disaster. Verses 13-15 become more specific, focusing on the prophets alone. The prophets of Jerusalem in particular are denounced for their false prophecy just like the prophets of Samaria and ungodliness just like Sodom and Gomorrah. Now in the oracle vv. 16-22, Jeremiah is presenting, in furthermore specific detail, the conflict over the truth-claims of the prophets. Jeremiah warns against listening to the words of the prophets who proclaim the prophecy of **שְׁלוֹם**. These prophets are false prophets who speak their own vision

and mind, not the Lord's (v. 16). Their **שְׁלוֹם** prophecy is not from the Lord, and

feeds false hopes (vv. 17, 21-22). The oracle vv. 16-22 has a symmetric structure:

A (v. 16)	: The false prophets speak a vision of their own mind
B (v. 17)	: The false assurance of peace
C (v. 18)	: The false prophets are not speaking the word of the Lord.
B' (vv. 19-20)	: The reality of disaster
A' (vv. 21-22)	: The Lord did not send the false prophets.

**16** Thus says the Lord Almighty, “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They are filling you with false hopes; They speak a vision of their own heart, Not from the mouth of the Lord. **17** “They keep saying to those who despise me, ‘The Lord has said, “You will have peace”’; And as for everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart, They say, ‘Disaster will not come upon you.’” **18** “But who has stood in the council of the Lord, That he should see and hear his word? Who has given heed to his word and listened?

**16** כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי־תְשֻׁמְעוּ עַל־דְּבָרֵי הַנְּבִאִים הַנְּבִאִים לָכֶם מִהַבְּלִים הַמָּה אֲתֶכֶם חֲזוֹן לִבָּם יִדְבְּרוּ לֹא מִפִּי יְהוָה:  
**17** אֹמְרִים אָמֹר לְמַנְאֲצֵי דְבַר יְהוָה שְׁלוֹם יְהוָה לָכֶם וְכָל הַלֵּךְ בַּשְׁרָרוֹת לִבּוֹ אָמְרוּ לֹא־תָבוֹא עֲלֵיכֶם רָעָה:  
**18** כִּי מִי עָמַד בְּסוּד יְהוָה וַיִּרְא וַיִּשְׁמַע אֶת־דְּבָרוֹ מִי־הַקְּשִׁיב דְּבָרֵי וַיִּשְׁמַע:

First, it is ironic that Jeremiah a prophet himself is telling the people not to listen to the words of “the prophets” (**עַל־דְּבָרֵי הַנְּבִאִים**). It is shocking enough to catch the audience’s attention. Then, he immediately qualifies “the prophets” (**הַנְּבִאִים**). The word **הַנְּבִאִים** “the prophets” implies “these prophets” in reference to the “prophets of Jerusalem” who are accused in the preceding oracle. These prophets are accused of their act of prophesying that fills the people with false hopes (**מִהַבְּלִים**); they speak “a vision of their heart” (**חֲזוֹן לִבָּם**) which is not from “the mouth of the Lord” (**פִּי יְהוָה**). They are “causing you to

become empty” (מֵהַבְּלִים הִמָּה אַחֲכֶם).<sup>41</sup> The people chase emptiness with false hopes brought to them by the words of these prophets. The word חֲזוֹן occurs in Jeremiah only here and in 14:14.<sup>42</sup> In both occurrences, the context speaks of the (false) prophets. The contrast between “their own mind” and “the mouth of the Lord” in the clause חֲזוֹן לְבָם יִדְבְּרוּ לֹא מִפִּי יְהוָה (v. 16b) is striking.

Verse 16 characterizes the words of these prophets as false prophecy. Their prophecy misrepresents the character of the Lord. In the Confirmation (21:11-23:8), the kings of Judah are continuously exhorted by the Lord to the administration of justice and righteousness. Miscarriage of justice and righteousness is threatened by punishment (21:11-12; 22:1-5; 22:13-19). The general state of the land deserves punishment, not commendation. These prophets misread the historical situation. If the prophecy is false, then the source of that prophecy must be false.

Verse 17 now deals specifically with the characteristics of the words of these prophets and provides some justification for the declaration of v. 16. Their prophecy is a proclamation of שְׁלוֹם even “to those who despise me” (לְמִנְאֲצִי), thus to those who reject the Lord. These prophets claim to have the authority of the Lord for their

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<sup>41</sup> The participle מֵהַבְּלִים, a *hapax legomenon* in the Old Testament, is from the verb הִבֵּל Hiphil which has the basic meaning of “cause to become vain, empty” (BDB).

<sup>42</sup> Jer 14:14 speaks of these prophets’ prophesying false prophecy (שִׁקְרָה הִנְבְּאִים נְבִאִים) and “false vision” (חֲזוֹן שִׁקְרָה) of “their mind” (לְבָם). Their prophecy was שְׁלוֹם (14:13).

prophecy (דְּבַר יְהוָה). The saying שְׁלוֹם יְהִי לְכֶם occurs in 4:10, where the reference is to the false prophetic assurance of peace when the situation is precarious.<sup>43</sup> To those who walk in the stubbornness of their own heart (וְכָל הַלֵּךְ בְּשָׂרָוֹת לְבוֹ), their prophetic message does not address the “evil/disaster” (רָעָה). The saying לֹא-תָבוֹא עָלֵיכֶם רָעָה occurs in 5:12, which also denounces the complacent prophecy of the optimistic prophets. The expression בְּשָׂרָוֹת לְבוֹ occurs often in Jeremiah.<sup>44</sup> In all these occurrences, the expression is explicitly or implicitly associated with idolatrous practices. The unconditional assurance of “no disaster” to those who practice idolatry demonstrates itself that the prophecy of these prophets is not coming from the Lord, because it is against the character of the Lord. The actual address is not to שְׁלוֹם prophets, but to those who listen to them. The rhetorical effect is that those who listen to the שְׁלוֹם prophets are rejecting the Lord.

Here in vv. 16-17, Jeremiah is using the rhetorical argumentation of enthymeme. He first declares boldly and categorically in v. 16 that the words of these prophets are false prophecy. How can it be known that the prophecy of Jeremiah is from the Lord and the prophecy of “the prophets” is not? He then challenges their authority by demonstrating the contradictions in their prophecy. In v. 17 he provides examples of their prophecy that rejects the Lord. Historical events will prove the falsehood of their prophecy. The people, those who are told in v.16 not to listen to

<sup>43</sup> A similar phrase occurs in Jer 14:13; cf. 6:14 = 8:11.

<sup>44</sup> Jer 3:17; 7:24; 9:13; 13:10; 16:12; 18:12; 23:17; cf. Deut 29:18.

the words of these prophets, will know the falseness of these prophets in “the last days” (v. 20). The judgment in vv. 19-20 rejects the assurance of שְׁלוֹם in v. 17. The שְׁלוֹם prophecy of these prophets is contrary to Jeremiah’s prophecy in 21:3-10 (Proposition), which proclaims the inevitability of the disaster coming to the people and the city.

The expression עָמַד בְּסוּד יְהוָה occurs in Jeremiah only in vv. 18, 22.<sup>45</sup>

The implication of the parallel between עָמַד בְּסוּד יְהוָה and

וַיִּשְׁמַע אֶת־דְּבָרוֹ is that the revelation of God in vision and audition is coming from standing in the council of the Lord.<sup>46</sup> A negative answer can be expected from the rhetorical questions in v. 18. Who has stood in the council of the Lord? It may demand the answer, emphatically “no one.” But v. 22 posits that prophets have access to such a council. We may interpret the expression in the metaphorical sense that the Lord reveals to prophets his hidden divine will.<sup>47</sup> The question is who knows the divine will and who does not. The questions in v. 18 are in reference to the

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<sup>45</sup> עָמַד בְּסוּדֵי in v. 22.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Isa 6; 1 Kgs 22:19-23.

<sup>47</sup> The term “the council of Lord” is interpreted in the Old Testament either in the mythological or metaphorical sense. For the use of mythological sense, see E. T. Mullen, Jr., *The Assembly of the Gods in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (HSM 24; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980) and for the use of the metaphorical sense, see E. C. Kingsbury, “The Prophets and the Council of Yahweh,” *JBL* 83 (1964): 279-286; Polley, M. E. “Hebrew Prophecy within the Council of Yahweh, Examined in its Ancient Near Eastern Setting,” in *Scripture in Context: Essays on the Comparative Method*. (C. D. Evans, W. W. Hallo, and J. B. White, eds.; Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series 34; Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1980); D. Fleming, *The Divine Council as Type Scene in the Hebrew Bible* (Ph. D. Diss.; Louisville, KY: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989).



prophets declared false in v. 17.<sup>48</sup> The force of the rhetorical questions in v. 18 is the contrast between the false prophets and true prophets. True prophets do heed the word of the Lord and listen to it. The implication of the negative answer is the accusation of the false prophets that they are not speaking the word of the Lord, but their own words. Bright suggests that “the question is not rhetorical at all, but has the sense: Who is it that has stood in Yahweh’s council? How can you tell him? So understood, vs. 18 leads directly into vss. 19-20, where it is implied that one who has been in Yahweh’s council would know that Yahweh’s word for the moment is one of judgment, not of peace.”<sup>49</sup>

19 “Behold, the storm of the Lord has gone forth in wrath, Even a whirling tempest; It will swirl down on the head of the wicked. 20 “The anger of the Lord will not turn back Until he has performed and carried out the purposes of his heart; In the last days you will clearly understand it.

19 הִנֵּה סַעֲרַת יְהוָה חֲמָה יִצְאָה וְסַעַר מִתְחוֹלָל עַל רֹאשׁ רְשָׁעִים יַחֲוֹל:  
 20 לֹא יָשׁוּב אֶף־יְהוָה עַד־עֲשֹׂתוֹ וְעַד־הַקִּיּוֹ מִזְמוֹת לְבוֹ  
 בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים תִּתְּבוֹנְנוּ בָּהּ בִּינָה:

Verses 19-22 are the announcement of judgment based on the accusation of the false prophets in vv. 16-18. The judgment will answer the question of how to tell the true prophets and false prophets. The actual substance of judgment in vv. 19-20 brings out the reality in contrast to the prophecy of v. 17. The proclamation of שְׁלוֹם and “no disaster” (לֹא־ ... רָעָה) in v. 17 is contrasted with the image of violence brought out by the image of storm in v. 19. The judgment of the Lord is like a

<sup>48</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 580. In reference to whom it is referred to in v. 18, Duhm (*Jeremia*, 186-187) has the view of universal application. But, Jerome interprets v. 18 with a limited application to the false prophets.

<sup>49</sup> Bright, *Jeremiah*, 152.

terrifying storm that punishes the wicked (v. 19). The violent image of storm is strengthened by the repeated use of the root word סער and the root word חול in v. 19. The root word סער, “storm, rage” (verb) and “tempest, violent wind” (noun), represents a metaphor of the anger of the Lord. The stylistic variations of the root word חול are used as Hithpolel participle (“whirling”) and as Qal Imperfect (“swirl”). The repetition of the synonymous verbs עשה “perform” and קום “carry out” are used here for emphasis. The similarly sounding words, ראש רשעים, are the assonance for the effect of emotional appealing. The false prophets speak the vision of their heart (חזון לבם, v. 16) and walk “in the stubbornness of their heart (בשררות לבו, v. 17). However, in a striking impressive contrast, the reality is represented by “the purpose of his [the Lord’s] heart” (מזמות לבו, v. 20). This contrast and the repetition of the same root words and same or similar sounds in the announcement of the judgment in vv. 19-20 are intended for maximum effect in appealing to the mind and emotions of the audience.

The phrase באחרית הימים “in the last days” in v. 20 indicates a future time in history when the Lord will bring out his full judgment on his people.<sup>50</sup> The context indicates that that time will come soon to prove the falsehood of the prophets.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. E. Lipiński, “באחרית הימים dans les textes preexiliques,” *VT* 20 (1970): 445-450.

<sup>51</sup> Bright, *Jeremiah*, 152: “But this is probably not here intended in an eschatological sense, but merely with the force of ‘afterward,’ ‘when it is over.’”

When that time comes, then “you will clearly understand it.” The addressee in **תְּחַבֹּנְנוּ בָּהּ בֵּינָהּ** is not the prophets but the people of Judah, the same people as are addressed in v. 16.<sup>52</sup> The implication is that the people are not able to distinguish the false prophets who speak **שְׁלוֹם** and true prophets who prophesy the word of the Lord. If they listen to the prophecy of **שְׁלוֹם** by the false prophets (vv. 16-17), then the time will come when they will know for themselves that the prophecy of these prophets is false.

21 “I did not send the prophets, But they ran. I did not speak to them, But they prophesied. 22 “But if they had stood in my council, Then they would have announced my words to my people, And would have turned them back from their evil way And from the evil of their deeds.

21 לֹא־שָׁלַחְתִּי אֶת־הַנְּבִיאִים וְהֵם רָצוּ לֹא־דִבַּרְתִּי אֲלֵיהֶם וְהֵם נָבְאוּ:  
 22 וְאִם־עָמְדוּ בְּסוּדַי וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ דְבָרֵי אֶת־עַמִּי  
 וַיִּשְׁבוּ מִמְּרָקָם הָרַע וּמֵרַע מֵעַלְלֵיהֶם:

In the judgment of vv. 19-22, form-critically speaking, vv. 19-20 are the result of the intervention of God in the third person, while vv. 21-22 are the intervention of God in the first-person speech form. The usual order of the announcement is reversed.

Jeremiah is using the rhetorical argumentation method of enthymeme again here as he uses in the accusation of vv. 16-17. He presents the conclusion first by announcing the judgment of the Lord against the false prophets (vv. 19-20). Verses 21-22 indeed “offer evidence for the falseness of the prophets and this may permit

<sup>52</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 583.

some justification for the unknowable claim that Yahweh did not speak to or send those prophets.”<sup>53</sup>

Jeremiah challenges the authenticity of the false prophets by appealing to the intervention of God in the first person speech form. The use of the first-person subject and the emphatic third-person subject pronoun (אֲנִי in the second and fourth cola of v. 21) is a striking contrast. The first half of v. 21 is a synonymous parallel to the second half. Various stylistic features are used in v. 21. Verse 21 is structured with four cola (2+2; 2+2). The same or similar vowel sounds are repeated in the parallel words (assonance). The parallel words are starting with the same or the similar consonants (alliteration).

The syntax, with its emphasis on the prophets’ action, effectively brings out their eagerness to prophesy – they were not sent, but they ran! There is humor in this biting irony. This first line of v. 21 effectively brings out how absurd it is to prophesy when one has not had a word from the Lord. The force of vv. 21-22 is a strong argument to refute the authenticity of the false prophets. Thus Jeremiah intends to bring down the prophecy of his rivals.

#### **6.4.2 Summary to 23:16-22**

Verses 16-22, thus, serve as a general statement against Jeremiah’s rival prophets who give assurance of שְׁלוֹם and declare that no disaster will come upon

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<sup>53</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 461.

Jerusalem. According to Jeremiah, the message of unconditional guarantee of **שְׁלוֹם** is false prophecy. Jeremiah emphasizes the illegitimacy of these prophets, and rejects their authority. This is a case of one prophet's prophecy against that of others. That is the rhetorical situation of chapters 21-24. Jeremiah is denouncing their **שְׁלוֹם** prophecy, which conflicts with Jeremiah's prophecy of judgment (21:3-10, Proposition). In the Refutation (23:9-40), Jeremiah attempts to undercut the credibility of rival prophecies. Here in vv. 16-22, Jeremiah presents specific actions that comprise the false prophecy. In the following passage vv. 23-32, the accusation is about these prophets speaking unwarrantedly in the name of the Lord. Depending on their false dreams, they claim their words to be the revelation from the Lord. Then the seriousness of dealing with the oracle of the Lord is given in vv. 33-40.

## 6.5 Refutation IV (23:23-32)

### The Structure of 23:23-32

Judgment Speech to Groups	Jeremiah 23:23-32	
Introduction	23 "Am I a God who is near," declares the Lord, "And not a God far off? 24 "Can a man hide himself in hiding places, So I do not see him?" declares the Lord. "Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" declares the Lord.	
Reason	Accusation	25 "I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy falsehood in my name, saying, 'I had a dream, I had a dream!' 26 "How long shall there be in the hearts of the prophets who prophesy falsehood, and who prophesy the deception of their own heart, 27 who intend to make my people forget my name by their dreams which they recount to one another, just as their fathers forgot my name for Baal?"
	Development of the Accusation	28 "The prophet who has a dream may recount a dream, but let him who has my word speak my word in truth. What does straw have to do with grain?" declares the Lord. 29 "Is not my word like fire?" declares the Lord, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock?"
Announcement	Intervention of God	30 "Therefore Behold, I am against the prophets," declares the Lord, "who steal my words from each other. 31 "Behold, I am against the prophets," declares the Lord, "who use their tongues and declare, '[The Lord] declares.' 32 "Behold, I am against those who have prophesied false dreams," declares the Lord, "and recounted them, and led my people astray by their falsehoods and reckless boasting; yet I did not send them or command them,
	Result of the Intervention	They do not benefit this people at all," declares the Lord.

### 6.5.1 Detailed Analysis of 23:23-32

23 "Am I a God who is near," declares the Lord, "And not a God far off? 24 "Can a man hide himself in hiding places, So I do not see him?" declares the Lord. "Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?" declares the Lord.

23 הַאֱלֹהִי מִקְרֵב אֲנִי נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְלֹא אֱלֹהִי מִרְחֹק:  
 24 אִם־יִסְתֵּר אִישׁ בַּמְסְתָּרִים וְאֲנִי לֹא־אֶרְאֶנּוּ נְאֻם־יְהוָה  
 הֲלוֹא אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲנִי מִלֵּא נְאֻם־יְהוָה:

The critique of the truth claims of the false prophets continues in the passage of vv. 23-32. Verses 23-24 address a dispute about the character of God, serving as

an introduction to the accusation of the false prophets in the passage vv. 23-32.<sup>54</sup> Here in vv. 23-24 are three rhetorical questions concerning the character of the Lord himself. In the rhetorical question of v. 23 a contrast with the nature of the Lord is made between “God who is near” and “God who is far off.” The tone of this question is ambiguous. The contrast between **מִקְרֹב** “nearby” and **מִרְחֹק** “far off” can be used either in spatial or temporal sense. In a temporal sense, “a God far off” means “an ancient God,” while “a God near” is “a new god that had come in lately.”<sup>55</sup> Are the false prophets in vv. 23-24 being accused of taking “a new god” to be “the Lord”? Although, when connected to v. 24, the sense is spatial rather than temporal, this interpretation is still possible in connection with Baal in v. 27.

The implied answer to the rhetorical question in this context is a negation. The positive questions demand a negative answer, while the negative questions expect a positive answer. Does the question mean “God is not a God who is near, but a God far off” or “God is not only a God who is near, but also a God far off”? If the question is converted to a statement such as “God is not only a God who is near, but also a God far off,” then both senses occur in the Old Testament.<sup>56</sup> Thus most

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<sup>54</sup> Some commentators regard the poetic unit vv. 23-24 as an independent unit between vv. 16-22 and vv. 25-33 (Carroll, Holladay, McKane). Others, and this study, take the view that vv. 23-32 constitute a unit (Bright, Nicholson, Rudolph, Thompson, Weiser). Yet, it is generally agreed that vv. 23-24 should be interpreted in the broader context of oracles against the false prophets.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. “gods they had not known” in Deut 32:17.

<sup>56</sup> Werner E. Lemke (“The Near and the Distant God: A Study of Jer 23:23-24 in its Biblical Theological Context,” *JBL* 100/4 [1981]: 541-555) investigates the semantic meaning of the terms **קָרוֹב** “near” and **רָחוֹק** “distant” in the Old Testament. The word **קָרוֹב** is used both in the literal and in the metaphorical senses. The term **קָרוֹב** has the meaning of cultic nearness to God, salvific nearness in the sense of personal

commentators bring out the immanence and transcendence of God from v. 23. God is “a God who is near” and also “a God far off” in that he knows those things which are distant. In this sense v. 23 can be seen as accusing the false prophets of perverting the fundamental theological truth of a “near God” which they absolutize and subject to religious abuse.<sup>57</sup>

The rhetorical question of v. 23 is generally taken as a denial that the Lord is מִקְרֵב and an assertion that the Lord is מֵרְחֹק. If the question is converted to a statement “God is not a God who is near, but a God far off,” then it links naturally with v. 24.<sup>58</sup> The Lord is transcendent in that he sees and no one can hide from him.<sup>59</sup> The Lord is aware of all the actions of the prophets. If this is the intention of vv. 23-24 in the broader context of an accusation against the false prophets, it may reflect the theology of the false prophets who believe in a “God who is near” and to whom they have access. God is “near” in cultic sense for people to bring sacrifices to him and inquire of the divine will, or for God to defend them from their enemies. The “God far off” is “a God whom they thought they could manipulate by means of self-induced dreams and visions, whose will could be easily equated with deceitful

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experience of God, and torah nearness in the sense of God’s presence. In general, Old Testament’s understanding of the nearness of God is in a positive sense. The רְחֹק has the meaning of distance as a consequence of sin, distance as the experience of the absence of God, and distance as divine transcendence. The רְחֹק in the Old Testament primarily denotes a negative experience.

<sup>57</sup> Lemke, “The Near and the Distant God,” 544.

<sup>58</sup> The LXX has it as a statement, instead of a question: “I am a God near at hand, and not a God afar off.” The sense of the LXX is the opposite of that of the MT.

<sup>59</sup> Bright understands that “The sense is, rather, that God is no small local deity from whom one might conceivably hide, but a God who is in heaven and therefore sees all” (Bright, *Jeremiah*, 152-153).



desires of their own hearts.”<sup>60</sup> However, the thrust of v. 23 is to counter the views of the false prophets. The “God far off” is a God whose word the false prophets cannot manipulate. Thus vv. 23-24 serve as an introduction to vv. 25-32 where the false prophets are accused of, and judged on, their manipulation of the prophetic role.

In the Old Testament, the term קָרֵב is interpreted in the sense that has to do with the salvation or deliverance which God brings to his people, while רָחֵק is used in the sense that people are separated from God when their relationship to God has been broken because of sin (cf. Jer 2:5).<sup>61</sup> These terms may be interpreted in reference to the divine activity of salvation. In this analysis, the “God who is near” is the one who saves. This aspect of the nature of the Lord is the one focused on by the false prophets. They proclaim וְשָׁלוֹם יְהִי לָכֶם and לֹא-תָבוֹא עָלֵיכֶם רָעָה (v. 17). Of these the prophets are accused. However, God is also רָחֵק. God will punish their sin. The judgment will be severe.<sup>62</sup> This interpretation is another reading of vv. 23-24 in the context of Jeremiah’s oracles of accusation against the false prophets by Jeremiah. Thus the thrust of vv. 23-24 is “a counter-claim to the salvation principle advocated by the prophets.”<sup>63</sup> The rhetoric operates, therefore, on several levels.

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<sup>60</sup> Lemke, “The Near and the Distant God,” 554.

<sup>61</sup> Lemke, “The Near and the Distant God,” 544, 547-548.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. the images of storm and tempest in v. 18; the images of fire and a hammer in v. 29.

<sup>63</sup> Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 467.

In the context of vv. 23-32, the rhetorical force of vv. 23-24 falls not on the contrast between God near and far in v. 23, but rather on the contrast between “hiding” and “seeing” (v. 24). The first question in v. 24 is focused on the contrast between man’s “hiding” and the Lord’s “seeing.” Even if people try to hide in their hiding places, the Lord can see them. The word **מִסְתָּרִים** “hiding places” is a cognate with the verb **סָתַר** “hide,” producing an effective repetition. No hiding place will succeed. The contrast is stressed by use of the emphatic subject pronoun **אֲנִי**. The initiative of the Lord is emphasized by both the subject pronoun **אֲנִי** and the messenger formula **נְאֻם־יְהוָה** in all three rhetorical questions. The repetition of **נְאֻם־יְהוָה** at the end of each clause is striking. This feature emphasizes the fact that the statement is indeed the word of the Lord.

The Lord himself filled the heaven and the earth (v. 24). The expression **אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ** is a metaphor for everything in the world. The emphasis for “everything” is strengthened by the inversion of the word order in the question of v. 24b. The Lord is aware of everything, and nothing can be hidden from the Lord. The prophets cannot be hidden from the omnipresence of the Lord. The Lord will expose the false dreams of the prophets and condemn their false prophecy and claims of truth (vv. 30-31). The implication of vv. 23-24 is the sovereignty of the Lord over any complacent convictions of the people or prophets.

25 "I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy falsehood in my name, saying, 'I had a dream, I had a dream!' 26 "How long shall there be in the hearts of the prophets who prophesy falsehood, and who prophesy the deception of their own heart, 27 who intend to make my people forget my name by their dreams which they recount to one another, just as their fathers forgot my name for Baal?"

25 שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת אֲשֶׁר-אָמְרוּ הַנְּבִאִים הַנְּבִאִים בְּשְׁמִי שֶׁקֶר לֵאמֹר  
חֲלַמְתִּי חֲלַמְתִּי:

26 עַד-מָתִי הִיָּשׁ בְּלֵב הַנְּבִאִים נְבִאֵי הַשֶּׁקֶר וְנְבִיאֵי תִרְמַת לִבָּם:

27 הַחֲשָׁבִים לְהַשְׁכִּיחַ אֶת-עַמִּי שְׁמִי בְּחִלּוּמָתָם אֲשֶׁר יִסְפְּרוּ אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ  
כְּאֲשֶׁר שָׁכְחוּ אֲבוֹתָם אֶת-שְׁמִי בְּבַעַל:

The passage vv. 25-32 is a continuation of the refutation of the false prophets from vv. 16-22. Form-critical study shows the structure of the passage with the accusation (vv. 25-27), the development of the accusation (vv. 28-29), then the announcement of judgment (vv. 30-32).<sup>64</sup> In vv. 23-24 Jeremiah establishes a foundation built on the character of the Lord for the judgment speech of vv. 25-32, where the dispute concerns the false and true prophets. The text shifts its attention to the accusation against the false prophets (vv. 25-27). The accusation in vv. 25-27 is a continuation to the accusation of vv. 16-17. There is a good deal of similarity between v. 16 and vv. 25-26.<sup>65</sup> Both in v. 16 and vv. 25-26 the prophets are accused of prophesying false visions (v. 16) and dreams (v. 25) out of their own heart, not

<sup>64</sup> Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, 169-176.

<sup>65</sup> Parallelism between vv. 25-26 with v. 16:

Vv. 25-26	V. 16
1. שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת	1. אֶל-הַשְּׁמַעוּ
2. אֲשֶׁר-אָמְרוּ	2. עַל-דִּבְרֵי
3. הַנְּבִאִים הַנְּבִאִים	3. הַנְּבִאִים הַנְּבִאִים לְכֶם
4. בְּשְׁמִי שֶׁקֶר	4. מִהַבְּלִים הַמָּה אֲתַכֶּם
5. לֵאמֹר חֲלַמְתִּי חֲלַמְתִּי	5. חֲזוֹן לִבָּם יִדְבְּרוּ
6. עַד-מָתִי הִיָּשׁ בְּלֵב הַנְּבִאִים נְבִאֵי הַשֶּׁקֶר וְנְבִיאֵי תִרְמַת לִבָּם	6. לֹא מִפִּי יְהוָה

from the mouth of the Lord. These prophets are accused of speaking falsely in the name of the Lord. In v. 16-17, the accusation of false prophecy is about these prophets' speaking **שְׁלוֹם** prophecy. The accusation in vv. 25-27 is even more serious than that in v. 16. It is apostasy. The prophets try to make the people forget the word of the Lord by false dreams and Baal (v. 27).

The accusation in v. 25 is that the prophets are prophesying falsely. The sentence structure of v. 25a attracts the attention of the audience. The Lord has heard what the prophets have said. The audience may wonder for a moment what the prophets have said. First, the prophets are characterized as prophesying falsehood in the name of the Lord (**הַנְּבִאִים הַנְּבִאִים בְּשֵׁם יְשׁוּעָה**). The repetition of **הַנְּבִאִים** is highly ironic, since Jeremiah believes they are not true prophets. Then the content of what the Lord has heard is made known by the next clause **חֶלְמִי חֶלְמִי**. The logical progression of the accusation continues throughout vv. 25-27.

The prophets said **חֶלְמִי חֶלְמִי** "I had a dream, I had a dream!" In this mocking repetition, a contrast is made between dreams and the word of the Lord (v. 25). In the verses following in the accusation (vv. 26-29), further distinctions are made between the dreams of the prophets and the word of the Lord. The accusation is that the prophecy of the prophets is announced in the name of the Lord (v. 25). Dreams are their mode of acquiring the prophecy. The cognate word **חֶלֶם** is a key word in the passage vv. 25-32. Dreams are legitimate means of divine revelation in

other parts of the Old Testament.<sup>66</sup> But prophecy acquired by dreams is condemned here with great contempt. However, it is not the mode of dream itself that is accused. The force of the argument is that these prophets are interpreting their own dreams falsely and attributing them to the word of the Lord (v. 25).

There is no parallel to the expression **לֵאמֹר חֲלֹמֹתַי חֲלֹמֹתַי** “saying, ‘I had a dream, I had a dream!’” in the prophetic books.<sup>67</sup> The audience is reminded of the **שְׁלוֹם** assurances of the false prophets accused in v. 17. The repeated phrase **חֲלֹמֹתַי חֲלֹמֹתַי** is explained by I. Meyer as an imitation of part of the ritual gesture of a cultic oracle.<sup>68</sup> The emptiness of the prophets’ claim is brought out by the mocking tone.

Then the accusation shifts to the rhetorical questions in vv. 26-27.<sup>69</sup> The expression **עַד־מַתַּי** “how long” is an interjection and often occurs in lament.<sup>70</sup> What

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<sup>66</sup> Gen 20:3; 28:12; 30:10; 37:5; 41:1; Num 12:6; Judg 7:13-15; 1 Kgs 3:15; Dan 2; 4; 7.

<sup>67</sup> It is comparable to the expression **לֵאמֹר שְׁלוֹם שְׁלוֹם** “saying, ‘peace, peace’” (Jer 6:14 = 8:11).

<sup>68</sup> Ivo Meyer, *Jeremia und die falschen Propheten* (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 13; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1977), 133.

<sup>69</sup> Because of grammatical difficulties with **עַד־מַתַּי** and **הִישׁ בְּלִב** at the beginning of v. 26, the versions and commentators attempt to emend them and offer various translations. The expression **עַד־מַתַּי** is emended to a third occurrence of **חֲלֹמֹתַי** at the end of v. 25 (Duhm). **הִישׁ בְּלִב** is emended to **הִישׁב לִב** as a verb and subject (Holladay). This does not completely solve textual and grammatical difficulties. But the intended meaning can be established sufficiently.

<sup>70</sup> It usually occurs with a clause attached, e.g., Jer 4:14, 21; 12:4; 31:22; 47:5; It occurs with a clause unattached in Isa 6:11; Hab 2:6; Psalms 6:4; 90:13.

is unusual here is that the Lord himself is lamenting. It is striking enough to attract the attention of the audience. The following rhetorical question intensifies the accusation. The prophets are prophesying falsehood in their hearts

(בְּלֵב הַנְּבִיאִים נְבִיאֵי הַשָּׁקֶר)

(וּנְבִיאֵי תַרְמַת לִבָּם).

The accusation of false prophecy is built up using the repetition of the phrase with the same meaning in synonymous parallelism. These prophets are accused of prophesying false prophecy in the name of the Lord (v. 25) and prophesying out of the deceit of their own heart (v. 26).

The accusation continues and builds up again in v. 27. The prophets intend to (חָשַׁב) make the people forget (שָׁכַח) the name of the Lord for Baal by their false dream (v. 27). The contrast between the name of the Lord and the dreams from the hearts of the prophets is noteworthy. So is the contrast of the name of the Lord with Baal. The assonance of the verbs חָשַׁב and the verb שָׁכַח is harsh. The deliberate nature of the activities of the false prophets intensifies the emotional impact of the accusation on the audience's mind. The prophets deliberately plan to make the people forget the name of the Lord. They recount their false dreams to each other repeatedly. The false prophets are doing to the people as the prophets did to their fathers with apostasy to Baal. The people and their fathers are paired in the parallelism of v. 27. So are the phrases "their dreams" (בְּחִלּוֹמָתָם) and Baal (בְּבַעַל). The association of the "fathers" with Baal (or "serving other goods") is a

familiar theme in Jeremiah.<sup>71</sup> The audience is reminded of their fathers' apostasy led by false prophets. This association strengthens the accusation against these prophets. It is a reversal of the role of proper prophets, those who are supposed to be the spokesmen of the Lord and preservers of the covenant of the Lord. How long shall these false prophets do this? The rhetorical question demands a negative answer. Not long. It will not be long before the judgment of the Lord will fall on these false prophets.

28 "The prophet who has a dream may recount a dream, but let him who has my word speak my word in truth. What does straw have to do with grain?" declares the Lord. 29 "Is not my word like fire?" declares the Lord, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock?"

28 הַנְּבִיא אֲשֶׁר-אֶתּוֹ חֵלֹם יִסְפֹּר חֵלֹם וְאֲשֶׁר דִּבְרֵי אֱתוֹ יְדַבֵּר דִּבְרֵי אֱמֶת  
 מֵה-לִּתְבֹן אֶת-הַבֶּר נְאֻם-יְהוָה:  
 29 הֲלוֹא כֹה דִבְרֵי כָאֵשׁ נְאֻם-יְהוָה וְכַפְּטִישׁ יַפְצִץ סֶלַע: ׀

Verses 28-29 bring out another criticism of the false prophets. Contrasts are made between the dream of the prophets and the word of the Lord.<sup>72</sup> The first half of v. 28 is antithetical parallelism. The accusation is made by contrasting חֵלֹם יִסְפֹּר and יְדַבֵּר דִּבְרֵי אֱמֶת. The force of the contrast is the subjective interpretation of their own dreams on the one hand, and "the truthful word of the Lord" or

<sup>71</sup> Jer 2:5-8; 9:14 [MT 13]; 16:11.

<sup>72</sup> See above the analysis of v. 25. Dreams as a mode of divine revelation are not attacked here. Dreams are a legitimate mode of revelation of the Lord in the Old Testament. However, in Jeremiah, dreams as a prophetic mode are used in negative connotation associated with false prophets (vv. 25-32; 27:9; 29:8; cf. also Deut 13:2, 4, 6 and Zech 10:2).

proclamation of “the word of the Lord truthfully” (דְּבַר־יְהוָה אֱמֶת) on the other hand.

This contrast is strengthened by the rhetorical questions that follow in vv. 28b-29.

The rhetorical question in v. 28b – “What does straw have to do with grain?” – reflects a proverb. Jeremiah is employing a proverb to present his argument persuasively because he knows the audience will agree with the sense of the proverb.<sup>73</sup> Straw and grain are contrasted in parallelism. The proverb equates metaphorically the dreams of the prophets with “straw” and the word of the Lord with “grain.” The answer to the rhetorical question is an emphatic “No.” Grain is food. Straw is trash. Straw should be thrown away. So should the false dreams of the prophets. The purpose of this proverb here is to make a clear distinction between the truthful word of the Lord and the false dreams of the prophets. The force of this argument is that the false dreams of the prophets are like straw that is useless and worthless. The false dreams do not bring any benefit to the people.<sup>74</sup>

In v. 29 the tone of the argument is further developed with another rhetorical question. The answer is an affirmative one. It speaks of the power of the word of the Lord. It amplifies the power of the Lord using similes: it is like fire and like a

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<sup>73</sup> Proverbs are also maxims. According to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, “One great advantage of Maxims to a speaker is due to the want of intelligence in his hearers, who love to hear him succeed in expressing as a universal truth the opinions which they hold themselves about particular cases. ... The maxim, as has been already said, is a general statement and people love to hear stated in general terms what they already believe in some particular connexion ... The orator has therefore to guess the subjects on which his hearers really hold views already, and what those views are, and then must express, as general truths, these same views on these same subjects. This is one advantage of using maxims” (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Book 2, 1395b).

<sup>74</sup> Cf. וְהוֹעִיל לֹא-יוֹעִילוּ לְעַם-הַזֶּה in v. 32b.



sledgehammer. The simile of the fire and hammer brings out an image of destruction. The implication of this rhetorical question is destructive judgment. Another image which comes from these verses is refining. Hammer breaks rocks into pieces. Fire refines ore to produce metal. The image is the separation of precious metal from rock. This image amplifies the separation of the word of the Lord from the false dreams. At the same time, the image of judgment and doom sets forth by the true word of the Lord is contrasted with the **שְׁלוֹם** prophecy of the false prophets.<sup>75</sup> The rhetorical questions in vv. 28-29 using metaphor and similes appeal to the mind and emotions of the audience and help them to understand the true word of the Lord and its power in the hour of judgment.

**30** Therefore Behold, I am against the prophets,” declares the Lord, “who steal my words from each other. **31** “Behold, I am against the prophets,” declares the Lord, “who use their tongues and declare, ‘[The Lord] declares.’ **32** “Behold, I am against those who have prophesied false dreams,” declares the Lord, “and recounted them, and led my people astray by their falsehoods and their recklessness; yet I did not send them or command them, They do not benefit this people at all,” declares the Lord.

30 לְכֵן הִנְנִי עַל־הַנְּבִיאִים נְאֻם־יְהוָה מִגְּנֹבֵי דְבָרַי אִישׁ מֵאֵת רֵעֵהוּ:  
 31 הִנְנִי עַל־הַנְּבִיאִים נְאֻם־יְהוָה הַלְקָחִים לְשׁוֹנָם וַיִּנְאֲמוּ נְאֻם:  
 32 הִנְנִי עַל־נְבִאֵי חֲלֻמוֹת שֶׁקֶר נְאֻם־יְהוָה וַיִּסְפְּרוּם וַיִּתְּעוּ אֶת־עַמִּי  
 בְּשִׁקְרֵיהֶם וּבַפְּחֻזוֹתָם וְאֲנֹכִי לֹא־שַׁלַּחְתִּים וְלֹא צִוִּיתִים  
 וְהוֹעִיל לֹא־יִוְעִילוּ לָעַם־הַזֶּה נְאֻם־יְהוָה:

The accusation in vv. 28-29 contrasts false prophecy and the true word of the Lord. The **לְכֵן** of v. 30, in place of the messenger formula **כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה**, introduces a series of judgments against the false prophets, all of which are

<sup>75</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 591-592: “In any case what is principally set forth is the destructive capacity of the word of God which is portrayed as a causal agent of judgment and doom.”

introduced by the challenge formula (הַנְּנִי עַל-) repeated at the beginning of vv. 30, 31, and 32.<sup>76</sup> The repetition of the same words at the beginning of successive clauses or sentences adds emphasis to the judgment by demanding special attention from the audience. The repetition of עַל-הַנְּנִי עַל-הַנְּנִי enhances the divine solemnity of the threats against the prophets. This rhetorical effect is even enhanced by the repetition of נְאֻם-יְהוָה at the end of each clause. This feature emphasizes the fact that the judgment is indeed the word of the Lord. The judgment, announced in the first-person with the Lord as subject, enhances the sovereignty and authority of the Lord.<sup>77</sup>

The judgment characterizes the false prophets using participial clauses in vv. 30-32. In contrast with v. 23, it is interesting to notice that the character of the Lord is declared in v. 23 as an introduction to the passage vv. 25-32. False prophets are characterized as those who “steal my words from each other”

מִגִּנְנֵי דְבָרֵי אִישׁ מֵאֵת רֵעֵהוּ (v. 30).<sup>78</sup> Distinctions are made between “their heart” and “my name,” between false dreams and “my word,” and between straw and

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<sup>76</sup> Cf. 21:13.

<sup>77</sup> From a form-critical standpoint, vv. 30-32 $\alpha$  are the intervention of God using “I”-speech in the first-person and vv. 32 $\beta$  the result of the intervention of God using “it/he/they”-speech in the third person.

<sup>78</sup> Much attention has been given to the phrase מִגִּנְנֵי דְבָרֵי “stealing my words.” The phrase is understood as meaning that the prophets claimed as their own the genuine oracles of other prophets (Aubrey R. Johnson, *The Cultic Prophet in Ancient Israel* [2nd ed.; Cardiff: Univ. of Wales Press, 1962], 47-49), or that they took “earlier genuine prophetic words to a situation which they were no longer valid” (Berridge, *Prophet, People, and the Word of Yahweh*, 32-33), or that they took the words of other false prophets or received oracles in night visions (R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, “Stealing the Word,” *VT* 6 [1956], 105-106).

grain. In the context of vv. 25-32, thus, the phrase **מִגְנֵבִי דְבָרַי** “stealing my words” is used in reference to another distinction between the true and false prophets. It is ironic that the “stealing” functions as a decisive demonstration that what they speak – sometimes stolen property – is certainly not Yahweh’s word.”<sup>79</sup> Another irony is that they are stealing “from each other” **אִישׁ מֵאֵת רֵעֵהוּ**, not from the Lord. Thus “my words” are in fact not the word of the Lord, but only what the prophets claim to be the word of the Lord. These words must be in quotation marks. Thus the expression should be “steal ‘my words’ from each other.” These words must come from the prophets’ own heart (vv. 16, 26). The thrust of this characterization of false prophets points to v. 32b: “I did not send them or command them.”

False prophets are characterized as those who “use their tongues and declare, ‘Thus says the Lord’” **הִלְקֹחִים לְשׁוֹנָם וַיִּנְאֲמוּ נְאֻם** (v. 31). Prophets are supposed to speak the word of the Lord which is put in their mouths (1:9; 5:14). The false prophets speak their own words rather than speaking the word of the Lord. The phrase **וַיִּנְאֲמוּ נְאֻם** “and declare, ‘[The Lord] declares.’” involves wordplay. The messenger formula **נְאֻם־יְהוָה** is a characteristic indication of prophetic oracle. **וַיִּנְאֲמוּ** is the verbal form of **נְאֻם** that occurs only at this point in the Old Testament. The origin of this verb is not clear, but it is possible that Jeremiah coined it for the

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<sup>79</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 593.

sake of irony.<sup>80</sup> The implication is that the false prophets claim to speak as the prophets of the Lord, but do not present the oracle of the Lord.<sup>81</sup> Again, the thrust of this characterization of false prophets points to v. 32b: “I did not send them or command them.”

False prophets are characterized as those who “have prophesied false dreams, recounted them, led my people astray by their falsehoods and their recklessness” (v. 32). The prophets are accused of prophesying the dreams of their minds and recounting them (vv. 25-27). Here their dreams are specified as *חֲלֻמוֹת שֶׁקֶר* “false dreams” (v. 32). False prophets are further characterized as leading the people astray by their false prophecy and their recklessness. The characterization of false prophets in vv. 30-32 reaches a climax with the declaration of the Lord:

*וְאֵינִי לֹא־שְׁלַחְתִּים וְלֹא צִוִּיתִים* “I did not send them or command them” (v. 32).

This declaration is emphasized by the adversative conjunction *וְ* and the emphatic first-person pronoun *אֲנִי*. The strongest denunciation of the false prophets is that the Lord has neither sent them nor commanded them. Therefore, their prophecy is false. Then the anticlimax is that these false prophets “do not benefit this people at all.” This understatement (litotes) is used here to address the prophets. This figure of speech intensifies the sentiment of the audience. The phrase “do not benefit this

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<sup>80</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 646. Jeremiah used an “ironic turn of phrase, whether he devised the verb ad hoc or not. The false prophets use the right formula but the word itself is unreal.”

<sup>81</sup> Bright, *Jeremiah*, 153. Bright summarizes it: “The sense is that the prophets’ message originates with them and is couched in their words; but they deliver it in the form of prophetic address and thus convey the impression that it is an oracle from Yahweh. It is their own word, but ‘they word it, “Yahweh’s word.””

people at all” is elsewhere applied to false gods (2:8, 11; 16:19). The structure of infinitive absolute + verb (הוֹעִיל לֹא-יוֹעִילוּ) further intensifies the assertion. A true prophecy is recognizable by its effects. Thus, the passage affirms again that their prophecy is false.

### 6.5.2 Summary to 23:23-32

Verses 23-24 address a dispute about the character of God, serving as an introduction to the critique of the truth claims of the false prophets continues in the passage of vv. 23-32. False prophets are accused of manipulating the concepts of “God near” and “God far off” for their convenience (vv. 23-24) by absolutizing one and subjecting to abuse. The Lord is omnipresent. Their falsehood cannot be hidden from the Lord. The false prophets will be judged on their manipulation of the prophetic role (vv. 25-32). They are attributing their own words to the word of the Lord. They call their own dreams as the revelation from the Lord. Their prophecies will be proved to be false, because they will not benefit the people. The force of the oracle vv. 23-32 is to emphasize that the שְׁלוֹם prophecy of the prophets is not the true word of the Lord.

## 6.6 Refutation V (23:33-40)

### The Structure of 23:33-40

Judgment Speech to Groups	Jeremiah 23:33-40
Introduction	33 “Now when this people or the prophet or a priest asks you, saying: ‘What is the oracle of the Lord?’ then you shall say to them, ‘What oracle? I shall abandon you,’ declares the Lord.” 34 “Then as for the prophet or the priest or the people who say, ‘The oracle of the Lord,’ I will punish that man and his household. 35 “Thus shall each of you say to his neighbor and to his brother, ‘What has the Lord answered?’ or, ‘What has the Lord spoken?’ 36 “But you shall not mention the oracle of the Lord any more, for the oracle shall be his own word, and you have perverted the words of the living God, the Lord of hosts, our God.” 37 “Thus you will say to the prophet, ‘What has the Lord answered you?’ and, ‘What has the Lord spoken?’”
Accusation	38 “but if you say, ‘The oracle of the Lord!’ Therefore thus says the Lord, ‘Because you said this word, “The oracle of the Lord!” I have also sent to you, saying, “You shall not say, ‘The oracle of the Lord!’”
Announcement of Judgment	39 Therefore “Behold, I will forget you finally and forsake you and the city which I gave you and your fathers, from my presence. 40 “And I will put an everlasting reproach on you and an everlasting humiliation which will not be forgotten.”

### 6.6.1 Detailed Analysis of 23:33-40

33 “Now when this people or the prophet or a priest asks you, saying: ‘What is the oracle of the Lord?’ then you shall say to them, ‘What oracle? I shall abandon you,’ declares the Lord. 34 “Then as for the prophet or the priest or the people who say, ‘The oracle of the Lord,’ I will punish that man and his household.

33 וְכִי־יִשְׁאַלְךָ הָעָם הַזֶּה אוֹ־הַנְּבִיא אוֹ־כֹהֵן לֵאמֹר מַה־מֵּשָׁא יְהוָה  
וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם אֶת־מַה־מֵּשָׁא וְנִטְשֵׁתִי אֶתְכֶם נְאֻם־יְהוָה:  
34 וְהַנְּבִיא וְהַכֹּהֵן וְהָעָם אֲשֶׁר יֹאמֵר מֵשָׁא יְהוָה  
וּפְקַדְתִּי עַל־הָאִישׁ הַהוּא וְעַל־בֵּיתוֹ:

The passage begins with a question and the answer to it.<sup>82</sup> Verse 33 is a speech directly addressed to the prophet by the Lord. The people request an oracle:

<sup>82</sup> Verse 33, an example of what Burke O. Long calls the question-and-answer schema Type B, consists of three elements: a future setting when people will ask (in a clause introduced by וְכִי) a question envisioned and formulated; an answer

מִה־מִשָּׂא יְהוָה. Prophets are often consulted by kings and officials. There is evidence that Zedekiah sought an oracle from Jeremiah.<sup>83</sup> Here, in v. 33, the word מִשָּׂא sets the question and answer in a context where people ask for and receive a divine message. The word מִשָּׂא in reference to prophetic speeches occurs in Jeremiah only here, in vv. 33-40. Thus it is not clear how the term מִשָּׂא may function in the context. The noun מִשָּׂא can mean “burden” (Jer 17:21, 22, 24, 27) or “oracle” as a technical term.<sup>84</sup> BDB suggests the noun מִשָּׂא derives from the root נָשָׂא “lift, carry, bear.” However, it is not clear how “burden” and “oracle” are derived from נָשָׂא. McKane suggests that מִשָּׂא “burden” and מִשָּׂא “oracle” are homonyms.<sup>85</sup>

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prescribed (introduced by וְאָמְרָתָּ) (Burke O. Long, “Two Questions and Answer Schemata in the Prophets,” *JBL* 90 [1971], 134-135).

V. 33	Elements
וְכִי־יִשְׁאַלְךָ הָעָם הַזֶּה אֹר־הַנְּבִיא אֹר־כִּהֵן לֵאמֹר	Setting
מִה־מִשָּׂא יְהוָה	Question
וְאָמְרָתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם אֶת־מַה־מִּשָּׂא וְנִטְשֵׁתִי אֲתָכֶם נְאֻם־יְהוָה	Answer

<sup>83</sup> 21:1-2; 37:3, 17; 42:1-6. Various expressions are used to seek an oracle: “inquire (רָשַׁע) of the Lord” in 21:2; “pray (פָּלַל) to the Lord” in 37:3 and in 42:2; in 37:17, “Is there any word from the Lord” (הֲיֵשׁ דְּבַר מֵאֵת יְהוָה); “tell (נָגַד) the Lord” in 42:3.

<sup>84</sup> The term serves as a title to oracles in Isaiah 13:1; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 21:1, 11, 13; 22:1; 23:1; 30:6; cf. 2 Kgs 9:25; 14:28.

<sup>85</sup> William McKane, “מִשָּׂא in Jeremiah 23:33-40,” in *Prophecy: Essays presented to Georg Fohrer on his sixty-fifth birthday 6 September 1980* (J. A. Emerton, ed.; BZAW 150; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980): 35-54.

A word play on the term **מִשָּׁא** is suggested as a basis for the understanding of the question **יְהוָה מִה־מִּשָּׂא** and the answer **אֶת־מִה־מִּשָּׂא וְנִטְשֶׁתִּי אֶתְכֶם** in v. 33. The word play on the word **מִשָּׁא** throughout vv. 33-40 is based on the double meaning of “burden” and “oracle.” Jerome supposes that the word **מִשָּׂא** is a technical term for a prophecy of doom and the intention of those who ask the question **יְהוָה מִה־מִּשָּׂא** is to taunt Jeremiah for his unfulfilled prophecies of doom. Adopting Jerome’s interpretation, McKane argues that v. 33 “turns on the ambivalence of **מִשָּׂא** (‘oracle’ and ‘burden’) and **מִה־מִּשָּׂא יְהוָה** is a satirical reference to the gloomy prophet Jeremiah whose utterances are always ‘heavy’ with doom: What is your latest doom-laden word from Yahweh?”<sup>86</sup>

The answer is snappish and harsh: **אֶת־מִה־מִּשָּׂא וְנִטְשֶׁתִּי אֶתְכֶם** “What oracle/burden? I shall abandon you.” The LXX, Vulgate, and almost all commentators emend **אֶת־מִה־מִּשָּׂא** to **אֶתְכֶם הַמִּשָּׂא**.<sup>87</sup> P. Wernberg-Møller proposes **אֶתְכֶם מִה־מִּשָּׂא** for **אֶת־מִה־מִּשָּׂא**.<sup>88</sup> The effect of the expression **אֶת־מִה־מִּשָּׂא** is clear with either the MT or the emendations. Those who deride Jeremiah by asking the question **יְהוָה מִה־מִּשָּׂא** will suffer. The Lord will forsake

<sup>86</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 599.

<sup>87</sup> Bright, Carroll, Duhm, Holladay, McKane, Rudolph, Thompson, Weiser.

<sup>88</sup> Preben Wernberg-Møller, “The Pronoun **אֶתְכֶם** and Jeremiah’s Pun,” *VT* 6 (1956): 315-316.



them. The verb נִטְשָׁתִי occurs both in v. 33 and v. 39. Verse 33 and vv. 39-40 form an inclusio. Those who say מִשָּׂא יְהוָה are threatened with exile. An image of impending exile is in view in vv. 39-40.

Verse 33 can be understood in the context of 21:1-2, when Jerusalem was under siege and Jeremiah was sought for an oracle of hope. The שְׁלוֹם prophets appealed to the people because they would think of the inviolability of Jerusalem by the Davidic covenant with the Lord. Jeremiah's message denied this (Proposition, 21:3-10). Adopting Jerome's interpretation, McKane argues that the conflict between שְׁלוֹם and doom prophecy is a key to the understanding of vv. 33-40.<sup>89</sup> Carroll is

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<sup>89</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 599. Holladay disagrees with McKane on the nature of the conflict. Robert R. Wilson has suggested that the term מִשָּׂא is "a particular type of oracle that may have been characteristically Jerusalemite." Jeremiah represents an Ephraimite tradition. Jeremiah favored the dialogic terminology ("What has the Lord answered you?" and "What has the Lord spoken?"). People will no longer come to the prophet or priest to ask for מִשָּׂא. Anyone who continues to use the term מִשָּׂא will be punished (*Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel*, [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980], 249). Adopting Wilson's view, Holladay understands the nature of the question and answer in v. 33 in terms of conflicts between "Ephraimite" and "Jerusalemite" prophetic traditions. Thus the term מִשָּׂא is not a term which the book of Jeremiah recorded as applying to either to speeches of Jeremiah or to those of his opponents. Thus, "it is hard to imagine anyone with any comprehension of Jrm's [Jeremiah's] point of view who would pose the question in these terms." Holladay concludes that "the diction of the question is not realistic: it is doubtful if many folk asked Jrm [Jeremiah] 'What is the "burden" of Yahweh?' using this technical term. Yahweh tells Jrm [Jeremiah] what he is to answer if and when anyone seeks the divine word from Jrm [Jeremiah] with the assumptions of the Jerusalemite establishment" (Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 650).

more cautious, noting that we cannot know the exact nature of the dispute,<sup>90</sup> but we get a strong sense of biting mockery in the words.

The phrase **יְהוָה מְשָׁא** appears repeatedly throughout the passage vv. 33-40. Its usage is centered around the word play on **מְשָׁא** and its relationship to the people, prophet, and priest (vv. 33, 34), specifically to the prophets (v. 37). Verse 34 continues the judgment announced in v. 33. The messenger formula **נְאֻם־יְהוָה** at the end of v. 33 has the effect of amplifying the announcement in v. 33. The implication is that the phrase **יְהוָה מְשָׁא** should be avoided, because of the derisory associations of **מְשָׁא**. The reference in v. 34 is masculine singular. The rhetorical force of the use of the singular, instead of the compound subject, is the effect of specification to “anyone” or “whoever.” That man and his house (**עַל־הָאִישׁ הַהוּא וְעַל־בֵּיתוֹ**) will be punished (a prophet or a priest or a “common people”). The implication of v. 34 is that the Lord will punish anyone who claims his own inventions to be the divine oracle by using the expression **יְהוָה מְשָׁא**. A false claim of divine prophecy is prohibited.

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<sup>90</sup> The charge of the perversion of the words of Lord “probably reflects some social dispute about the words of the living god. Lack of information prevents any more precise identification of the parties to the dispute” (Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 478). Yet, it may refer to the utterance of **שְׁלוֹם** prophets in the same polemical situation of v. 33 (McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 601).

35 “Thus shall each of you say to his neighbor and to his brother, ‘What has the Lord answered?’ or, ‘What has the Lord spoken?’ 36 “But you shall not mention the oracle of the Lord any more, for the oracle shall be his own word, and you have perverted the words of the living God, the Lord of hosts, our God.” 37 “Thus you will say to the prophet, ‘What has the Lord answered you?’ and, ‘What has the Lord spoken?’”

35 כֹּה תֹאמְרוּ אִישׁ עַל־רֵעֵהוּ וְאִישׁ אֶל־אָחִיו מִה־עֲנָה יְהוָה וּמִה־דְבַר יְהוָה:

36 וּמִשָּׂא יְהוָה לֹא תִזְכְּרוּ־עוֹד כִּי הַמִּשָּׂא יִהְיֶה לְאִישׁ דְּבָרוֹ

וְהִפַּכְתֶּם אֶת־דְּבָרֵי אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵינוּ:

37 כֹּה תֹאמַר אֶל־הַנְּבִיא מִה־עֲנָךְ יְהוָה וּמִה־דְבַר יְהוָה:

There is a rhetorical pattern of alternation between declaration and prohibition.<sup>91</sup> The rhetorical pattern both in vv. 35, 37 is a declaration. It is permitted to inquire of the oracle of the Lord. In v. 35 it declares the permitted way of questioning about the Lord’s word. The people are addressed in the second person plural. Two acceptable forms of inquiring about the Lord’s word are given to replace the banned formula. The acceptable forms are *יְהוָה יְהוָה* and *מִה־דְבַר יְהוָה*.

The expressions *אִישׁ אֶל־אָחִיו* and *אִישׁ עַל־רֵעֵהוּ* are synonymous. The intended rhetorical effect of the repetition of the same meaning is to emphasize that anyone is permitted to inquire about the Lord’s word without using the expression *יְהוָה יְהוָה*.

V. 37 is parallel to v. 35, where the addressee is second person plural in reference to the people. The addressee in v. 37, however, is the prophet in the second person singular. In v. 37 a divine oracle is sought from a prophet. The proper forms of inquiry are repeated here in v. 37.

V. 35	V. 37
1. כֹּה תֹאמְרוּ אִישׁ עַל־רֵעֵהוּ וְאִישׁ אֶל־אָחִיו	1. כֹּה תֹאמַר אֶל־הַנְּבִיא
2. מִה־עֲנָה יְהוָה וּמִה־דְבַר יְהוָה	2. מִה־עֲנָךְ יְהוָה וּמִה־דְבַר יְהוָה

<sup>91</sup> Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 208.

As the alternative to v. 35, v. 36 is a prohibition:

וּמִשָּׂא יְהוָה לֹא תִזְכְּרוּ-עוֹד. The inversion of the word order puts emphasis on the phrase מִשָּׂא יְהוָה. Various interpretations are suggested for the clause

כִּי הַמִּשָּׂא יְהִי לְאִישׁ דְּבָרוֹ.<sup>92</sup> It is difficult to decide whether הַמִּשָּׂא or דְּבָרוֹ is the subject of the clause. The meaning of הַמִּשָּׂא is ambiguous in this clause. A מִשָּׂא can mean a true word from the Lord revealed to the true prophet or a human word claimed to be a word from the Lord or “burden” as a punishment which falls upon those who falsely claim their words to be the word of the Lord.

McKane takes the view of הַמִּשָּׂא being the true word of God.<sup>93</sup> Holladay opts for הַמִּשָּׂא to be the subject of the clause and דְּבָרוֹ refers to a human word, not a divine word.<sup>94</sup> For Holladay, thus, כִּי הַמִּשָּׂא יְהִי לְאִישׁ דְּבָרוֹ is translated “For הַמִּשָּׂא shall belong to his own word” in contrast to the phrase מִשָּׂא יְהוָה in the preceding parallel clause. For McKane, הַמִּשָּׂא belongs to the one who speaks the word of the Lord and דְּבָרוֹ refers to a divine word. Jones and Thompson agree on this with McKane.<sup>95</sup> Yet, following A. B. Ehrlich’s emendation of הַמִּשָּׂא to הַמִּשָּׂא,

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<sup>92</sup> McKane, “מִשָּׂא in Jeremiah 23:33-40,” 46-49.

<sup>93</sup> McKane, “מִשָּׂא in Jeremiah 23:33-40,” 46-49; McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 600-601.

<sup>94</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 651-652.

<sup>95</sup> Douglas Rawlingson Jones, *Jeremiah* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 316; J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 505.

Rudolph and Bright propose “Is the word of the Lord a burden/oracle to anybody?”<sup>96</sup>

The difficulty of interpreting this clause is not resolved easily.

Words from God are referred to with the superfluous expression

אֶת־דְּבַרֵי אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵינוּ “the words of the living God, the

Lord of hosts, our God.” The unusual threefold expression of אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים,

אֱלֹהֵינוּ, and יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת puts emphasis on the divine nature of the word. If

anyone claims falsely his own words to be the words of the Lord by mentioning

מִשָּׁא יְהוָה again, he perverts (הִפְךָ) the true words of the Lord.

The warning of v. 36 is that people shall not mention מִשָּׁא יְהוָה any more.

Although the interpretation of כִּי הַמִּשָּׁא יִהְיֶה לְאִישׁ דְּבָרוֹ is difficult, the charge

is that the people have perverted the words of the Lord. The implication v. 36 is

parallel to the threat of the Lord to abandon and punish them in vv. 33-34.

38 “but if you say, ‘The oracle of the Lord!’ Therefore thus says the Lord, ‘Because you said this word, “The oracle of the Lord!” I have also sent to you, saying, “You shall not say, ‘The oracle of the Lord!’”

38 וְאִם־מִשָּׂא יְהוָה תֹּאמְרוּ לְכֵן כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה  
יַעַן אָמַרְכֶם אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה מִשָּׂא יְהוָה  
וְאִשְׁלַח אֵלֵיכֶם לֵאמֹר לֹא תֹאמְרוּ מִשָּׂא יְהוָה:

<sup>96</sup> A. B. Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur Hebräischen Bibel. Textkritisches, Sprachliches. IV Jesaia, Jeremia* (Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1912), 305.

The proper forms of inquiry of prophetic oracle are given in v. 35 and repeated in v. 37. The instructions given in vv. 35, 37 are not heeded. The rhetorical pattern of alternation between declaration and prohibition continues in v. 38. In v. 38, it again prohibits to say **יְהוָה מִשָּׂא**. The word play on **מִשָּׂא** continues. Verse 38 has syntactically a protasis-apodosis structure.<sup>97</sup> The clause (**וְאִם־מִשָּׂא יְהוָה תֹּאמְרוּ**) in v. 38 is protasis. The messenger formula (**לְכֵן כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה**) introduces the apodosis as if it were an announcement of judgment.

	Vv. 38-40
Protasis	38 <b>וְאִם־מִשָּׂא יְהוָה תֹּאמְרוּ</b>
Apodosis	<b>לְכֵן כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה יַעַן אָמַרְתֶּם אֶת־הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה מִשָּׂא יְהוָה</b> <b>וְאִשְׁלַח אֵלֵיכֶם לְאֹמֵר לֹא תֹאמְרוּ מִשָּׂא יְהוָה</b> <b>39 לְכֵן הִנְנִי וְנָשִׂיתִי אֶתְכֶם נָשָׂא</b> <b>וְנִטְשִׁיתִי אֶתְכֶם וְאֶת־הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לָכֶם וְלְאֲבוֹתֵיכֶם מֵעַל פָּנָי:</b> <b>40 וְנָתַתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם חֲרַפַּת עוֹלָם וּכְלָמוֹת עוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא תִשְׁכַּח:</b>

We notice an unusual structure in v. 38. The messenger formula **לְכֵן כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה** normally introduces a judgment speech. However, here it is placed after an “if” clause. The judgment speech is conditional upon the continued mention of the banned words **יְהוָה מִשָּׂא**. The accusation clause with **יַעַן** indicates that the Lord had sent word to the people to stop mentioning **יְהוָה מִשָּׂא**. Thus they have no excuse for their mentioning **יְהוָה מִשָּׂא**. The protasis-apodosis structure leads one to expect the announcement of judgment to be followed immediately. The judgment speech consists of the accusation (v. 38) and the announcement of the judgment (vv. 39-40).

<sup>97</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 649.

39 Therefore “Behold, I will forget you finally and forsake you and the city which I gave you and your fathers, from my presence. 40 “And I will put an everlasting reproach on you and an everlasting humiliation which will not be forgotten.”

39 לְכֵן הִנְנִי וְנָשִׁיתִי אֶתְכֶם נָשָׂא  
 וְנִטְשָׁתִי אֶתְכֶם וְאֶת־הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְכֶם וְלְאֲבוֹתֵיכֶם מֵעַל פָּנָי:  
 40 וְנָתַתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם חֲרַפַּת עוֹלָם וְכָל־מוֹת עוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר לֹא תִשְׁכַּח:

The word לְכֵן at the beginning of v. 39 introduces the announcement of judgment. Verses 39-40 serves better as apodosis to the protasis of v. 38a. There is a textual confusion in וְנָשִׁיתִי אֶתְכֶם נָשָׂא (v. 39). A question arises about the root for the finite verb form נָשִׁיתִי and the infinitive form נָשָׂא. Are they from the same root? If so, what verb? The verb נָשָׂה “forget” can be the root for the finite verb form נָשִׁיתִי and the infinitive absolute נָשָׂא. There is a word play between נָשָׂה and מָשָׂא. With this interpretation וְנָשִׁיתִי אֶתְכֶם נָשָׂא “I will forget you finally” forms an inclusio nicely with אֲשֶׁר לֹא תִשְׁכַּח “which will not be forgotten” in v. 40. The Lord will forget the people finally, their everlasting reproach and an everlasting humiliation will never be forgotten. However, versions and commentators emend נָשִׁיתִי and take the root נָשָׂא “lift, carry” for נָשִׁיתִי. The infinitive absolute נָשָׂא is also emended to take נָשָׂא “lift, carry” for the root. These textual emendations entertain another word play with נָשָׂה and מָשָׂא. The unexpected נָשָׂה is rhetorically more effective.

The announcement of judgment is structured form-critically with “I”-speech (the Lord in first person). The initiative and sovereignty of the Lord is emphasized with the threefold structure of the “I”-speeches (וְנָשִׁיתִי, וְנָטַשְׁתִּי, and וְנָתַתִּי). Further, the word וְנָתַתִּי is assonant with נָשִׁיתִי and נָטַשְׁתִּי. The association of words נָשִׁיתִי, נָשָׂא, נָטַשְׁתִּי, וְנָתַתִּי, and מָשָׂא by assonance involves the progression of their meanings.

The repetition of the same or similar words at the beginning of successive clauses or sentences adds emphasis to the argument by calling special attention to them in the conclusion. The progress of thoughts are closely connected with וְנָטַשְׁתִּי אֶתְכֶם “I will forsake you” and וְנָשִׁיתִי אֶתְכֶם “I will forget you,” and וְנָתַתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם “I give on you.” This itself makes a powerful contrast with נָתַתִּי just a few words earlier (v. 39), which refers to the Lord’s former gift of Jerusalem to the people. The Lord gave them the city (וְאֶת־הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לָכֶם). Now he gives them an everlasting humiliation (וְנָתַתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם חֲרַפַּת עוֹלָם). This language is in line with the reversal of the holy war image. The word וְנָטַשְׁתִּי (the verb נָטַשׁ “abandon, forsake”) forms an *inclusio* with וְנָטַשְׁתִּי in v. 33. It involves more than abandoning and forsaking. It means “casting out into exile” in v. 39 rather than simply “abandonment.”<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 601.



The Lord will forget/lift them. The Lord will forsake them/ send them away. All these are because they mention the forbidden words **מִשָּׂא יְהוָה**. The permanent shame will be the judgment: **חֲרִפַּת עוֹלָם וּכְלָמוֹת עוֹלָם** “an everlasting reproach on you and an everlasting humiliation.” The hyperbolic word **עוֹלָם** in the expression **חֲרִפַּת עוֹלָם וּכְלָמוֹת עוֹלָם** makes a devastating contrast with the promise to the Davidic dynasty “for ever” (**עַד-עוֹלָם**) (2 Sam 7:13, 16). The judgment is a clear reference to the coming catastrophe, that is exile.

#### 6.6.2 Summary to 23:33-40

The thrust of the passage vv. 33-40 is that only those who are entrusted with the word of the Lord are entitled to proclaim it. Vv. 33-40 ends with a word of judgment against those who claim their own words to be the word of the Lord. They will be punished with “an everlasting reproach on you and an everlasting humiliation” that is exile (vv. 39-40). 23:9-40 (Refutation) can be understood in the context of 21:1-2 (Prologue), when Jerusalem was under siege and Jeremiah was sought after for an oracle of hope. Jeremiah’s message was a prophecy of doom (Proposition, 21:3-10). The ending (vv. 39-40) fits well with the beginning (vv. 9-12) of a series of oracles in vv. 9-40. Jeremiah laments in vv. 9-12 the abominable state of the land. The Lord promises judgment, “For I shall bring disaster upon them, the year of their punishment” (v. 12). However, false prophets proclaimed **שְׁלוֹם** comforting the people with a false sense of security. Jeremiah’s message is that those

prophets are false prophets because the Lord “did not send or appoint them” (v. 32).

Vv. 33-40 may summarize the force of the refutation of the false prophets:

The supposition that there is nothing in vv. 33-40 but terminological fussiness or tedious word-chopping or incredible representation is mistaken. There is an attempt to recapture the significance of the conflict between **שְׁלוֹם** and doom prophecy in the time of Jeremiah, ... What is intended by vv. 33-40 is an acknowledgement that Jeremiah was vindicated by events: the post-exilic (?) Jewish community must confess that this prophet of doom spoke the word of God and identify themselves with him over against the prophets whose assurances of **שְׁלוֹם** were proved false by destruction, defeat and exile.<sup>99</sup>

The message is driven home with forceful wordplay and heavy irony.

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<sup>99</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 603-604.

## Chapter 7 Epilogue (24:1-10)

### 7.1 The Rhetorical Strategy of the Epilogue

Chapter 24 is the Epilogue to Jeremiah 21-24. The Epilogue sums up the argument and seeks to arouse the emotions of the audience to take action or make judgment. It often employs appeals through ethos and pathos.

Finally you have to review what you have already said. Here you may properly ... repeat your points frequently so as to make them easily understood. What you should do in your introduction is to state your subject, in order that the point to be judged may be quite plain; in the epilogue you should summarize the arguments by which your case has been proved. The first step in this reviewing process is to observe that you have done what you undertook to do. You must, then, state what you have said and why you have said it. Your method may be a comparison of your own case with that of your opponent; and you may compare either the ways you have both handled the same point or make your comparison less direct.<sup>1</sup>

Aristotle describes the main function of an Epilogue as recapitulation. As we shall see, in chapter 24 Jeremiah does more than simply recapitulate his former arguments. Recapitulation is only partly helpful as a way of describing the place of chapter 24 in the argument of chapters 21-24. This is because chapter 24 brings in important new ideas as part of the completion of Jeremiah's argument. The Proposition opened up

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, III. 19. 1419b. Aristotle suggests four parts that the speaker must include in the epilogue: (1) The speaker must make the audience well-disposed towards himself and ill-disposed towards his opponent; he must make himself out a good man and his opponent a bad one either in the speaker himself or in relation to the audience; (2) He must magnify or minimize the leading facts and their importance; (3) He must excite the required state of emotion in his audience; these emotions are pity, indignation, anger, hatred, envy, emulation, pugnacity; and (4) He must refresh their memories. Of the four things that Aristotle suggests, recapitulation is one most important aspect in the conclusion.

certain questions; the Epilogue will give answers which are quite new in the argument of chapters 21-24.

The main point in the Epilogue is that this is the end point of Jeremiah's argument in the rhetorical unit chapters 21-24. In the Proposition (21:3-10) Jeremiah argues that the city will fall. This opens up the question how the Davidic covenant might continue, if it can do so at all. This message must be very hard to accept for the people who wanted to resist the Babylonians, and who have thought God would act for them as the Divine Warrior. Probably many thought that the Davidic covenant meant that the city (Jerusalem) could not fall (Psalms 2, 46) and the Lord would always come to their rescue. They might remember how Jerusalem had been saved from the Assyrians (2 Kgs 18-20; Isaiah 36-37). The issue is the nature of the Davidic covenant. He presented his case in the Confirmation (21:11-23:8). Jeremiah argues that the Davidic covenant was broken because the kings failed to keep their covenant obligation of maintaining justice and righteousness in society. In the Refutation (23:9-40) Jeremiah rebuts the rival prophets as false prophets who prophesied **שְׁלוֹם**. Jeremiah argues that the false prophets had misinterpreted the Davidic covenant. Jeremiah has brought his audience to this point to accept his prophecy which he proclaimed in 21:3-10 (Proposition).

All this rhetorical preparation reaches a climax in chapter 24 (Epilogue). The point of chapter 24 will be the point of the whole argument. This is what Jeremiah as a rhetorician finally wants his audience to accept. The exigency is the need to understand how God's covenant with his people might continue after he punished

them according to the covenantal curse. The audience may have believed that there could be no future if judgment came. This is an exigency of the rhetorical situation. It is part of the obstacle to the speaker winning over his audience.

### The Structure of 24:1-10

<b>Jeremiah 24:1-10</b>	
The Vision	<b>1</b> The Lord showed me: Behold, two baskets of figs set before the temple of the Lord, after Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and the officials of Judah with the craftsmen and smiths from Jerusalem and had brought them to Babylon. <b>2</b> One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs; and the other basket had very bad figs, which could not be eaten due to rottenness.
The Lord's Question & the Prophet's Answer	<b>3</b> Then the Lord said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" And I said, "Figs, the good figs, very good; and the bad figs, very bad, which cannot be eaten due to rottenness."
The Lord's Oracle	<b>4</b> Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, <b>5</b> 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel: "Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the exiles of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place to the land of the Chaldeans. <b>6</b> 'And I will set my eyes on them for good, and I will bring them again to this land; and I will build them up and not overthrow them, and I will plant them and not uproot them. <b>7</b> 'And I will give them a heart to know me, for I am the Lord; and they will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with their whole heart.
The Lord's Oracle	<b>8</b> But like the bad figs which cannot be eaten due to rottenness," For thus says the Lord "so I will abandon Zedekiah king of Judah and his officials, and the remnant of Jerusalem who remain in this land, and the ones who dwell in the land of Egypt. <b>9</b> 'And I will make them a terror and an evil for all the kingdoms of the earth, as a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse in all places where I shall scatter them. <b>10</b> 'And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence upon them until they are destroyed from the land which I gave to them and their forefathers."

## 7.2 Detailed Analysis of 24:1-10

Jeremiah 24 recounts an oracle that came to Jeremiah through a vision. A divine proclamation is announced in the form of a vision report in autobiographical style.<sup>2</sup> The vision report begins with the announcement of the vision (הִרְאֵנִי יְהוָה)

<sup>2</sup> Burke O. Long, "Reports of Visions among the Prophets," *JBL* 95/3 (1976): 353-365. Long sets forth three basic elements for a vision report: 1) the announcement of the vision (הִרְאֵנִי יְהוָה in v. 1); 2) the transition (וְהִנֵּה in v. 1); 3) the vision-

in v. 1), which is connected to the vision proper by the transitional particle (וְהִנֵּה in v. 1). The rest of v. 1, except the historical background, and v. 2 describe the vision that came to Jeremiah. The vision is followed by a dialogue between the Lord and the prophet (v. 3).<sup>3</sup> The vision is interpreted by the oracle (vv. 4-10). The oracle falls into two halves. After the introduction (v. 4) the “good figs” are identified in the first half with the Babylon exiles (vv. 5-7) and the “bad figs” in the second half with the “remnant of Jerusalem” and the Egyptian exiles (vv. 8-10).

1 The Lord showed me: Behold two baskets of figs set before the temple of the Lord, after Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and the officials of Judah with the craftsmen and smiths from Jerusalem and had brought them to Babylon. 2 One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs; and the other basket had very bad figs, which could not be eaten due to rottenness.

1 הִרְאֵנִי יְהוָה וְהִנֵּה שְׁנֵי דוּדָאֵי תְאֵנִים מוּעָדִים לְפָנַי הֵיכַל יְהוָה  
אֲחֵרֵי הַגְּלוּת נְבוּכַדְרֶאֶצַּר מֶלֶךְ-בָּבֶל אֶת-יְכֹנְיָהוּ בֶן-יְהוֹיָקִים מֶלֶךְ-יְהוּדָה  
וְאֶת-שָׂרֵי יְהוּדָה וְאֶת-הַחֲרָשׁ וְאֶת-הַמְּסַגֵּר מִירוּשָׁלַם וַיָּבֵאֵם בָּבֶל:  
2 הַדּוּד אֶחָד תְּאֵנִים טְבוֹת מְאֹד כְּתֵאֵנֵי הַבְּכָרוֹת  
וְהַדּוּד אֶחָד תְּאֵנִים רָעוֹת מְאֹד אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תֹאכְלָנָה מֵרַע:

The vision reports two baskets of figs placed before the temple of the Lord (v.

1).<sup>4</sup> The phrase הִרְאֵנִי יְהוָה suggests a visionary experience.<sup>5</sup> It seems preferable to

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sequence – (a) the image (הִרְאֵנִי יְהוָה) in v. 1 and v. 2); (b) the question by the Lord and the prophet’s answer (v. 3); (c) the oracle of the Lord (vv. 4-10).

<sup>3</sup> Long, “Reports of Visions among the Prophets,” 356: “A number of reports are built upon a dialogue between God, or an angel, and the prophet. One group has God asking questions of the prophet (Amos 7:7-9; 8:1-3; Jer 1:11-14; 24:1-10; Zech 5:1-4); another group has the prophet asking questions of an angel (Zech 2:1-4; 4:4-10, 11-14; 5:5-11).”

<sup>4</sup> There is no way to determine for sure whether they were physical figs or the vision was only Jeremiah’s inner experience. Some assume it was visionary: John Calvin,

describe the image of the figs in Jer 24 as a vision although visions are not mentioned frequently in the book of Jeremiah.<sup>6</sup> This expression is used to indicate the divine origin of the vision.<sup>7</sup>

Verses 2-3 explain the significance of the two baskets of figs mentioned in v. 1: one basket has very good figs, the other has very bad ones. The good figs are “like the first-ripe figs” (כְּתֵאֲנֵי הַבְּכֻרוֹת).<sup>8</sup> The point of the simile in v. 2 is to make a statement about the quality by comparing them with the high quality, first figs of the harvest. The “very bad” figs (תֵּאֲנִים רְעוֹת מְאֹד) were inedible for some reason. Perhaps the vision is “symbolic of the fact that what was corrupt would be rejected.”<sup>9</sup>

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*Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah and the Lamentations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 220; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 135; F. B. Huey, Jr., *Jeremiah, Lamentations* (NAC; Vol. 16; Nashville: Broadman Press, 1993), 221; C. F. Keil, *The Prophecy of Jeremiah* (Vol. I; BCOT; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1880), 368. Others are convinced that the vision had a physical basis: J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1963), 140; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 194; Craigie *et al.*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 358; Walter Zimmerli, “Visionary Experience in Jeremiah,” in *Israel’s Prophetic Tradition: Essays in Honour of Peter Ackroyd* (R. Coggins, A. Phillips and M. Knibb, eds.; Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982), 114; Clements, *Jeremiah*, 145. For further reading on the phenomenology of visions, see Susan Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision in Biblical Tradition* (HSM 30; Chico, CA: Scholars, 1983).

<sup>5</sup> BHS suggests that the כָּה has been omitted by haplography with the word תִּשְׁכַּח at the end of 23:40. The opening formula יְהוָה יְהוָה has no parallel in Jeremiah. But, it introduces the visions of Amos 7:1, 4, 7; 8:1 where the phrase כָּה הָרְאֵנִי אֲרָאִי appears. Berridge assumes that v. 1 is modeled on Amos 7-8 (*Prophet, People, and the Word of Yahweh*, 65).

<sup>6</sup> Only in 1:10-16 and perhaps 25:15-29.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Exod 25:9; Zech 1:20, 3:1; Amos 7:1, 4, 7.

<sup>8</sup> BDB, 114. Closely related to בְּכוֹרָה “first-ripe fig” is בְּכוֹרִים “first-fruits,” which suggests the first of the harvest. Early figs were considered a special delicacy.

<sup>9</sup> Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 507.

The clause **לֹא־תֹאכְלֶנָּה מֵרַע אֲשֶׁר** in vv. 2, 3 may be interpreted in terms of covenant curse. The Lord will make the false prophets eat “wormwood” and drink “poisoned water,” because their ungodliness has spread throughout the land (23:15). Jeremiah laments the state of the land: “because of the curse the land lies parched and the pastures in the desert are withered” (23:10).<sup>10</sup> The vision in vv. 1-2 contains no hint of its substantive message. The figs do not have any deeper meaning. The image of the figs is merely an occasion for the oracle. The vision of vv. 1-2 is followed by the question of the Lord and answer by the prophet.<sup>11</sup>

**3** Then the Lord said to me, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” And I said, “Figs, the good figs, very good; and the bad figs, very bad, which cannot be eaten due to rottenness.”

**3 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי מָה־אַתָּה רֹאֶה יְרֵמְיָהוּ וַאֲמַר תְּאֵנִים  
הַתְּאֵנִים הַטְּבוֹת טְבוֹת מְאֹד וְהַרְעוֹת רְעוֹת מְאֹד אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תֹאכְלֶנָּה מֵרַע־ךָ**

The Lord’s question prompts Jeremiah to scrutinize the object of the vision. Jeremiah recounts in the first person what he has already observed. The consistency and frequency of this format shows that such repetition should not be understood as unnecessary. The implication of the Lord’s question to the prophet is not the

<sup>10</sup> In 2 Kgs 2:19, the “bad” (רַע) water and “unproductive” (שָׁכֵל) land are the results of the covenant curse. In Josh 6:26 a curse is pronounced on those who would rebuild Jericho. According to 1 Kgs 16:34, in Ahab’s time Jericho was rebuilt. The inhabitants of Jericho were experiencing the effects of the covenant curse (cf. Deut 28:15-18 with Exod 23:25-26; Lev 26:9; Deut 28:1-4). The Lord has healed this bad water to be “wholesome.”

<sup>11</sup> The question-and-answer motif is relatively common in the vision-report in the prophets (Amos 7, 8; Zech 5:1-4; Jer 1:11-14). Close parallels to Jer 24:2-3 are found in Amos 7:7-8 and 8:1-3. The Lord’s question is found in 1:11, 13; Amos 7:8; 8:2.



possibility of the prophet's seeing wrong.<sup>12</sup> It rather indicates that Jeremiah has seen the vision correctly.<sup>13</sup> The implication of the dialogue between the Lord and the prophet is that the Lord reveals himself through the medium of a vision and the prophet recounts the revelation. Its main point is given by the oracle of the Lord (vv. 5-10). The oracle does not interpret or explain the image, but proclaims the divine revelation. The important intent of the vision report is to announce a revelatory word.

4 Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 5 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel: "Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the exiles of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place to the land of the Chaldeans. 6 'And I will set my eyes on them for good, and I will bring them again to this land; and I will build them up and not tear them down, and I will plant them and not uproot them. 7 'And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord; and they will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with their whole heart.

4 וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר: 5 כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
כַּתְּאֲנִים הַטּוֹבוֹת הָאֵלֶּה כֵּן־אֶכִּיר אֶת־גְּלוֹת יְהוּדָה  
אֲשֶׁר שְׁלַחְתִּי מִן־הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה אֶרֶץ כַּשְׂדִּים לְטוֹבָה:  
6 וְשִׂמְתִּי עֵינַי עֲלֵיהֶם לְטוֹבָה וְהִשְׁבַּתִּים עַל־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת  
וּבְנִיתִים וְלֹא אֶהְרַס וְנִטְעַתִּים וְלֹא אֶתּוֹשׁ:  
7 וְנָתַתִּי לָהֶם לֵב לְדַעַת אֹתִי כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה  
וְהָיוּ־לִי לְעָם וְאֲנֹכִי אֶהְיֶה לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים כִּי־יָשׁוּבוּ אֵלַי בְּכָל־לִבָּם:

The introductory formula וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי (v. 4) serves as a transition from the vision to the oracle that interprets the vision.<sup>14</sup> The interpretation of the vision is also coming from the Lord. Jeremiah is dealing with the future of the people

<sup>12</sup> Keil, *The Prophecy of Jeremiah*, 368.

<sup>13</sup> Craigie *et al.*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 358: "It is comparable to the messenger correctly repeating the message entrusted to him. It further indicates that the source of interpretation is God, not the prophet – the interpretation is not evident from the vision."

<sup>14</sup> The introductory formula, וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי or וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה יְרֵמְיָהוּ, occurs twenty eight times in Jeremiah, marking the beginning of a report.

of Judah as it is revealed to him in the vision. Verses 5-10 contain the oracles that interpret the vision of vv. 1-2. The temporal clause in v. 1 provides the historical context of the vision.<sup>15</sup> The historical setting described in v. 1 may reflect the deportation of the leading members of Judah by Nebuchadrezzar to Babylon after the events in 597 BC.<sup>16</sup> After the exile of Jehoiachin and the leadership of Judah, those who remained in Jerusalem were headed by Zedekiah. There may have existed an apparent tension between these two groups over the interpretation of the events of 597 BC.<sup>17</sup> The vision oracle is directed toward these two groups of Israelites and provides a theological evaluation of both groups in terms of the Lord's action "for good" and "for bad." The positive aspect of the vision (vv. 5-7) is balanced by the negative one (vv. 8-10). The "exiles of Judah" יְהוּדָה גְּלוּת are regarded by the Lord as "good figs" (v. 5) while the "remnant of Jerusalem" שְׂאֵרֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם were the "bad figs" (v. 8) and their contrasting fates differentiate them.

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<sup>15</sup> The historical notation in v. 1 is syntactically a parenthesis. It interrupts the description of the image in the Hebrew text. Thus, it is regarded as an editorial insertion adopted from 2 Kgs 24:14-16 by Bright (*Jeremiah*, 193) and Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, 657).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. 22:24-30; 2 Kgs 24:10-16. The list of those who were taken into exile with Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) in 24:1 is shorter than the parallel list in 29:2 which includes "the queen mother" (וְהַגְּבִיָּרָה) and "the court officials" (וְהַסָּרִיסִים). Both agree with 2 Kgs 24:15-16. The historical notation is likely accurate: "there is no reason to question its correctness" (Bright, *Jeremiah*, 193-194). The name "Jeconiah" יְכֹנְיָהּ (28:4; 29:2; Esther 2:6; 1 Chr 3:16, 17; cf. יְכֹנְיָהּ in Jer 24:1 and יְכֹנְיָהּ in Jer 27:20) is another form of the name Jehoiachin יְהוֹיָכִן (Jer 52:31; 2 Kgs 24:6, 8, 12, 15; 25:27; 2 Chr 36:8, 9). Jeconiah is elsewhere called "Coniah" כְּנִיָּהּ elsewhere in the book (Jer 22:24, 28; 37:1).

<sup>17</sup> Christopher R. Seitz, "The Crisis of Interpretation over the Meaning and Purpose of the Exile: A Redactional Study of Jeremiah 21-43," *VT* 35/1 (1985): 78-97. Seitz analyzes the pro-exile view and pro-land view and then concludes that "the viewpoint propounded from the side of those who remained in the land: that they, and not the Babylonian exiles, are the true heirs of God's plan for the future Israel."

Some scholars view chapter 24 as propaganda.<sup>18</sup> They fail to address the rhetorical issue; they just see the text of chapter 24 in social terms. Holladay, however, rightly argues that the issue here is “not whether the present passage could become propaganda for the exiled segment of the community (it most assuredly did) but whether the original form of the passage could have offered to the community at a given time an unconventional prophetic view that cut across popular notions; it is clear that it could.”<sup>19</sup> The vision of chapter 24 contrasts these two groups of Israelites. Contrary to the conventional Deuteronomic understanding of the event regarding exile, chapter 24 presents an “alternative interpretation of God’s actions and the significance of these two Jewish communities.”<sup>20</sup> This is a way of describing the exigency of this rhetorical situation.

Form-critically speaking, vv. 5-7 are the announcement of judgment with “I”-speech form. The proclamation comprises a series of nine first person singular active

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<sup>18</sup> Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles*, 110: “[T]he composition of chapters xxiv and xxix was motivated by primarily by a specifically theological and polemical intention, for they seek to assert the claims of the Babylonian diaspora to be the true remnant of Israel through whom alone renewal and restoration would be wrought by Yahweh as against those who either remained or lived in Egypt during the exilic period.” Carroll suggests that the party with Jehoiachin is advocated in chapter 24 against the party with Zedekiah and pro-Egyptians. “A more realistic interpretation of the chapter is to be found in reading it as propaganda. It is a partisan account on behalf of the deportees presenting them as Yahweh’s special group and reassuring them of their claims to live in and control Jerusalem” (Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 484). Brueggemann suggests that “while this partisan struggle may be the life setting for chapter 24, the Bible no longer presents this text as a self-serving claim. The rereading of history in chapter 24 is presented as a verdict rendered by God” (Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 211-212).

<sup>19</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 656.

<sup>20</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 209; See also Brueggemann, “A Second Reading of Jeremiah after the Dismantling,” *Ex Auditu* 1 (1985): 156-168.

verbs and two additional singular personal pronouns.<sup>21</sup> In each case the Lord is the subject. It emphasizes the determination of the Lord's will and the sovereignty of the Lord's action. The Hiphil verb נָכַר "regard" in v. 5b sets the general tone of the oracle in terms of act and the subject of the act.<sup>22</sup> The Babylonian "exiles of Judah" are regarded as good (לְטוֹבָה) by the Lord (v. 5).<sup>23</sup> This identification is reinforced by the clause וְשִׁמְתִי עֵינַי עֲלֵיהֶם לְטוֹבָה in v. 6. Those taken to Babylon would be treated favorably by the Lord and eventually brought back to their land (v. 6). The expressions, "for good" לְטוֹבָה and "for evil" לְרָעָה,<sup>24</sup> are used with a variety of verbal phrases in Jeremiah concerning the destiny of the city and the people.<sup>25</sup> The

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<sup>21</sup> In v. 5 אָכִיר "regard" and שְׁלַחְתִּי "sent away"; in v. 6 שִׁמְתִי "set," הַשְׁבִּיתִים "bring back," בְּנִיתִים "build," לֹא אֶהְרַס "not tear down," נִטְעַתִים "plant," and לֹא אֶתּוֹשׁ "not uproot"; in v. 7 נָתַתִּי "give"; and in v. 7 the first person singular personal pronouns, both אֲנִי and אֲנֹכִי.

<sup>22</sup> Brueggemann, "A Second Reading of Jeremiah", 159: The verb אָכִיר "I regard" "suggests a decree that goes against the facts and against normal expectation. The term is used negatively to warn against partiality in judgment (Prov 24:23; Deut 1:17, 16:19). In our passage, the term suggests an intentional act of partiality by Yahweh. That is, this judge handles justice in a new way by issuing the verdict."

<sup>23</sup> The identification of "the exiles of Judah" is not clear from our passage. The current passage deals with events after 597 B.C. McKane says that Jehoiachin's group appears to constitute the entire exilic, Babylonian community, and the deportees of 586 BC are not considered as part of the exiles of Judah (*Jeremiah 1-25*, 608-609).

<sup>24</sup> These expressions are more common in Jeremiah than elsewhere. The term לְטוֹבָה occurs in Deut 28:11; 30:9; 2 Chr 18:7; Ezra 8:22; Neh 2:18; 5:19; 13:31; Ps 86:17; Jer 14:11; 21:10; 24:5, 6; 39:16; 44:27; Amos 9:4. The term לְרָעָה occurs in Gen 31:52; Deut 29:20; Judg 2:15; 2 Sam 18:32; 2 Chr 18:7; Prov 6:18; Jer 21:10; 24:9; 29:11; 38:4; 39:16; 44:11; 44:27; 44:29; Ezek 4:23; Amos 9:4; Zech 1:15.

<sup>25</sup> Christopher R. Seitz, "The Crisis of Interpretation over the Meaning and Purpose of the Exile," 83. Seitz differentiates the city from the people. He says that "the object of Yahweh's wrath is not the people, but the city itself."

equation of the “exiles of Judah” as “good figs” may suggest a moral judgment on the exiles of Judah. However, the emphasis is on the bestowal of the grace of God by divine sovereignty.

The vision contradicts the conventional understanding that would have been held by the audience: according to that understanding, the people remaining in Jerusalem are the favored ones, while the exiles are objects of God’s judgment. The “remnant of Jerusalem” presumably consider themselves to be God’s favorites as we see clearly in Ezekiel.<sup>26</sup> Yet the Lord regards the “exiles of Judah” as “good figs.” This is to meet the rhetorical exigency. This oracle proclaims the reversal of the fortune and says further that Judah’s future lies with the “exiles of Judah.” The exiles will be the objects of God’s favor. The reversal of fortune has been the significant rhetorical style Jeremiah has applied throughout chapters 21-24. In 21:3-10 the holy war image is reversed.

The equation of exiles as “good” is not because of their righteousness (Deut 9:6). Their goodness does not rest in themselves. The exiles did not merit God’s favor. It is the sovereign faithfulness of the Lord that declares them good. Jeremiah is concerned primarily with their fate and not their quality.<sup>27</sup> The judgment is not based

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Ezek 11:15; the Babylonian “exiles of Judah” were sent there fulfilling the covenantal curse for their disobedience to the Lord. The deportation is not accidental, but both the will of Yahweh (Jer 16:13; 22:25) and the consequence of “following the stubbornness of his evil heart instead of obeying me” (16:12).

<sup>27</sup> Henning Graf von Reventlow, *Liturgie und Prophetisches Ich bei Jeremia* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1963), 87-94. Reventlow correctly argues that “good” and “bad” figs do not indicate the character of the exiles and the remnant of Jerusalem respectively, but their fates. By the sovereign grace of the Lord, the exiles are regarded “for good” and the remnants of Jerusalem are

on the righteousness of the recipient.<sup>28</sup> The judgment in favor of the exiles is the grace of the Lord not induced by the merit of the exiles.<sup>29</sup> Jeremiah is not emphasizing “the moral qualities of exiles.”<sup>30</sup> The rhetorical force of the Epilogue (24:1-10) is the grace of the Lord that indeed creates the new historical possibility for the audience.<sup>31</sup> It is part of the persuasion that the way forward is through exile.

The people may understand that the exiles have been expelled as a consequence of the covenant curses of Deuteronomy. Thus, exile exemplifies the judgment of the Lord. According to Deuteronomy, the land plays the central role as the symbol of Lord’s promise and blessing. Apparently, some in the exile considered those remained in the land to be under the covenant blessing, while those who went

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proclaimed “for bad.” Israel’s new hope is placed on a new action of God to save Israel in his grace, apparently by means of the exiles rather than of the remnant of Jerusalem.

<sup>28</sup> Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 210: “The freedom of Yahweh in making such a dramatic assertion parallels that of Gen 15:6, in which Yahweh ‘reckons’ (*hashab*) Abraham to be righteous.” God graciously responds to a man’s faith by crediting righteousness to him, “Abraham believed the Lord, and he credited (וַיַּחְשְׁבֶהָ) it to him as righteousness” (Gen 15:6).

<sup>29</sup> Walter Brueggemann, “A Second Reading of Jeremiah,” 159. See G. von Rad, “Faith Reckoned as Righteousness,” in *The Problems of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966): 125-130.

<sup>30</sup> Jones, *Jeremiah*, 319. The vision is about the Lord’s plans for judgment and salvation. It is God who brings both about. The symbol recedes into the background, the prophet sees the people symbolized by the baskets placed in God’s court, “good figs” and “bad figs.”

<sup>31</sup> Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 210: “This is one of most stunning theological claims in Jeremiah. The community in exile is the wave of God’s future. Such a claim may indeed be self-serving propaganda, or it may simply be pastoral consolation for displaced people. It is nonetheless presented to us in the Bible as a theological verdict by this God who is now allied, by free choice, precisely with the community that the world thought had been rejected. It is indeed an act of free grace which creates a quite a new historical possibility. The text thus bears witness to the conviction that this God can and will create a new community from those rejected.”

to Babylon were under the curse. But in this alternative view, it is the turn of the exiles to be favored. The exiles are the ones who will be blessed through God's gracious intervention. The Lord will "bring them back to this land"

(וְהִשְׁבַּתִּים עַל-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת) (v. 6a). He takes the initiative to bring them back from exile and to allow them to live in the land. This is a dramatic turn from judgment to hope. But more importantly, it is a dramatic new interpretation of Judah's future.

The Lord will bring the exiles of Judah back to "this land" (v. 6a). There is here a further development of turning from judgment to hope:

וּבְנִיתִים וְלֹא אֶהְרַס וְנִטְעַתִּים וְלֹא אֶתּוֹשׁ (v. 6b). This is reminiscent of Jeremiah's call (1:10).<sup>32</sup> There is a change of thought with the reference to Jeremiah's initial call which has a mostly negative nature. 1:10 predicts the largely judgmental nature of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry. Tearing down and uprooting have already happened because they had broken the covenant. This destruction (exile) was a necessary judgment, but now the Lord will restore them solely by the free and saving grace.<sup>33</sup> This is a message of hope for the eschatological future.<sup>34</sup> God will "new-create" them.

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<sup>32</sup> This theme of destruction and construction is repeatedly mentioned in the book: 1:10; 12:14-17; 18:7-9; 31:27-28, 40; 42:10; 45:4.

<sup>33</sup> Brueggemann, "A Second Reading of Jeremiah," 160: "Restoration is only to exiles and that restoration is founded only in Yahweh's free assertion. The move from negatives to positives is not understood simply as a literary process of redaction, nor simply as historical sequencing. It is understood as the free action of reversal which Yahweh can do without explanation."

<sup>34</sup> Prescott Williams, "Living Toward the Acts of the Savior-Judge: Study of Eschatology in the Book of Jeremiah," *ASB* 94 (1978): 13-39.

The sovereign act of the Lord breaks the obvious expectation of the time. The restoration process – bringing the exiles back to this land, and building them and planting them – is joined by the promise of the “new heart” (v. 7) for the exiles by which they shall know the Lord and through which he will re-establish his covenant.<sup>35</sup> The expression וְנָתַתִּי לָהֶם לֵב לְדַעַת אֹתִי in v. 7 further implies that a person can know the Lord only when the Lord enables that person’s mind or will to do so.<sup>36</sup> He will create in them the seat and source of a new life that consists in the knowledge of their covenant God. “For Jeremiah the eschatological future was not focused on temple or king but on a new covenant by which God would establish a new individualized relationship with his people (31:31-34).”<sup>37</sup> This must have been a powerful point for the people who no longer had temple or land, thus those who were in exile or afterwards in Palestine.

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<sup>35</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology II* (New York: Harper, 1962), 211-212.

<sup>36</sup> Calvin, *Jeremiah*, vol. III, 229. The Lord is not called the helper, but the author of their knowledge. There is no exact parallel to the expression “I will give them a heart to know me” (וְנָתַתִּי לָהֶם לֵב לְדַעַת אֹתִי) in the Old Testament, but the expressions in Deut 30:6; Jer 31:33; 32:38-39; Ezek 11:19; 36:26 point toward the same idea. Cf. Deut 5:29; 1 Kgs 8:58. For further information on the language of knowing the Lord, see Walter Zimmerli, *I Am Yahweh* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982). The clause יְהוָה אֲנִי אֶנִּי appears otherwise in Jeremiah only in 9:23. The clause יְהוָה אֲנִי אֶנִּי may be translated “for I am the Lord” as a causal clause as Craigie *et al.* claimed that the causal clause emphasizes the active role of the Lord (Craigie *et al.*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 358). This expression is common in Ezekiel, where it is translated “that I am the Lord” as a result clause (Ezek 13:9; 23:49; 24:24; 28:24; 29:16). Here it should also be translated “that I am the Lord” as a result clause instead of as a causal. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel give hope for a new heart: Jer 31:33, “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts”; Jer 32:39, “I will give them singleness of heart and action”; Ezek 11:19, “I will give them an undivided heart”; Ezek 36:26, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you.”

<sup>37</sup> Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, 34.



The gift of a new heart is a free sovereign act of the Lord. This act of the Lord was necessary because of Judah's unwillingness and inability to repent. In 23:17 the false prophets are accused of prophesying **שָׁלוֹם** to "everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart."<sup>38</sup> Israel could not change its heart. A drastic action of the Lord was necessary, giving them a new heart.<sup>39</sup> This idea is classic Deuteronomy.<sup>40</sup> Even so, it comes with fresh force. Thus, the solution to the Israel's inability to obey the Lord is placed in the Lord himself.<sup>41</sup>

We have seen so far the progress of restoration of the exiles by the grace of the Lord. After the judgment of exile, the Lord regards the exiles of Judah as good. He will bring them from exile to their homeland to build them and plant them. He will change their heart. The "I"-speeches with the Lord as the subject in the continuous successive clauses in vv. 5-7 reaches a climax at **כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה**.

The knowledge of God is coupled with the covenant formula

**וְהָיוּ לִי לְעַם וְאֲנֹכִי אֶהְיֶה לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים**. Vv. 5-7 reach a climax in the

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<sup>38</sup> In Jeremiah references are made to "the stubbornness of their evil hearts," or their "stubborn and rebellious hearts" that brought judgment upon them (3:17; 5:23; 7:24; 9:14; 11:8; 13:10; 16:12; 18:12; 23:17).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Jer 4:14; 17:1.

<sup>40</sup> "The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants" (Deut 30:6; cf. Deut 10:16).

<sup>41</sup> J. G. McConville, *Grace in the End: A Study in Deuteronomistic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), 137: "He will somehow enable his people ultimately to do what they cannot do in their strength, namely, to obey him out of the conviction and devotion of their own hearts."

covenant relationship between God and Israel.<sup>42</sup> Jeremiah combines the concept of covenant with the idea that Israel's future is rooted in her past. Israel is now in covenant relationship with God. God and people are in an intimate relationship, "my people" and "their God." The remarkable thing is, again, is that the covenant will be with the exiles.

They will return to the Lord. The physical restoration – the return to the land, and the building and the planting of v. 6 – will be accompanied by spiritual regeneration of the people through returning to the Lord with their whole heart (כִּי-יָשׁוּבוּ אֵלַי בְּכָל-לִבָּם, v. 7).<sup>43</sup> Judgment was the beginning of the new beginning. Thus, the re-establishment of the relationship comes only after judgment. The series of events are initiated by the Lord: God would give them a new heart; they would return to the Lord with their whole heart; the covenant relationship would be re-established. The re-establishment of the Lord's covenant relationship with Judah by giving them a new heart is a positive message. It is a turning point in the composition of the whole book of Jeremiah, making a transition from the theology of

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<sup>42</sup> The covenant formula וְהָיוּ-לִי לְעָם וְאֲנֹכִי אֶהְיֶה לָהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים is found nowhere more often than in the book of Jeremiah. It occurs six more times in Jeremiah (7:23; 11:4; 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:38). It occurs in Exod 6:7; Lev 26:12; Deut 26:18; Ezek 11:20; 14:11; 36:28; Heb 8:10; Hos 2:23; cf. Hos 1:9-10, where the negative aspect is given.

<sup>43</sup> McKane, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 609. The phrase כִּי-יָשׁוּבוּ אֵלַי בְּכָל-לִבָּם is often taken as causal, "for they will return to me with their whole heart." McKane suggests that the meaning of כִּי-יָשׁוּבוּ אֵלַי בְּכָל-לִבָּם is "not that Yahweh's work of rehabilitation is conditional on the wholehearted repentance of his people, but rather that this wholehearted repentance is part and parcel of his work of restoration."

inevitable doom to the theology of hope.<sup>44</sup> God offers hope by a change of heart. The turn from judgment to hope is by the free, saving act of God.

8 But like the bad figs which cannot be eaten due to rottenness,” For Thus says the Lord, “so I will abandon Zedekiah king of Judah and his officials, and the remnant of Jerusalem who remain in this land, and the ones who dwell in the land of Egypt. 9 ‘And I will make them a terror and an evil for all the kingdoms of the earth, as a reproach and a byword, a taunt and a curse in all places where I shall scatter them. 10 ‘And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence upon them until they are destroyed from the land which I gave to them and their forefathers.”

8 וְכַתְּאֲנִים הָרְעוֹת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תֹאכְלָנָה מֵרַע כִּי כֹה־אָמַר יְהוָה  
כֵּן אֶתֶן אֶת־צַדִּיקֵיהֶוּ מֶלֶךְ־יְהוּדָה וְאֶת־שָׂרָיו וְאֵת שְׂאֲרֵית יְרוּשָׁלַם  
הַנִּשְׁאָרִים בְּאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת וְהַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם:  
9 וְנִתְּתִים לְזוּעָה לְרָעָה לְכֹל מַמְלָכוֹת הָאָרֶץ  
לְחֶרֶף וּלְמִשָּׁל לְשִׁנְיָה וּלְקַלְלָה בְּכָל־הַמְּקוֹמוֹת אֲשֶׁר־אֲדִיחֵם שָׁם:  
10 וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי בָם אֶת־הַחֶרֶב אֶת־הָרָעָב וְאֶת־הַדָּבָר  
עַד־תִּמָּם מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתִּי לָהֶם וּלְאֲבוֹתֵיהֶם: ׀

The conjunction ׀ at the beginning of v. 8 is an adversative conjunction, which serves as a marker in the contrastive parallelism with vv. 5-7. The second half of the oracle (vv. 8-10) is a negative counterpart to vv. 5-7. They are closely parallel and really symmetrical. Divine sovereignty is expressed prominently with the first-person verbs of נתן and שלח here, as in vv. 5-7.

The baskets of “good” and “bad” figs are paralleled to the Babylonian “exiles of Judah” and the “remnant of Jerusalem”/Egyptian exiles (vv. 4-7 and vv. 8-10). Contrary to the presumed understanding, the “bad figs” represent those who had remained behind in Judah under Zedekiah or fled to Egypt. Corresponding to the

<sup>44</sup> McConville, *Judgment and Promise*, 59.

evaluation of “good” and “bad” are their respective destinies.<sup>45</sup> Thus, Jeremiah sees no hope in the “remnant of Jerusalem” (v. 8) as the remnant of the covenant people of the Lord.<sup>46</sup>

Jeremiah commands the king and the people that they surrender to the Babylonians in 21:3-8 (Proposition). The only hope of the future depends on surrendering in order to save the city from destruction and avoid the loss of life.<sup>47</sup> But, the prophecy of Jeremiah was not heeded. Those who stayed in the land considered themselves blessed after the events of 597 BC. Jeremiah’s message is a simple one-dimensional statement: Those who remain in the land are “bad figs.” Although no explicit reason is offered for “bad” here in chapter 24, it is understood from the consistent message of Jeremiah that they are “bad” because of their disobedience to the Lord. It is simply asserted to be “bad.” Two communities are

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<sup>45</sup> Clements, *Jeremiah*, 145, “It is noteworthy that the negative assessment of the community that remained in Judah along with Zedekiah is further supported by Ezekiel 33:23-29, where the detailed list of the offenses committed by those in the land of Judah is given.”

<sup>46</sup> The word שְׂאֵר or שְׂאֵרִית, the usual words for the “remnant” in the Old Testament, is used for designating those who were left in Jerusalem (v. 8) (for the “remnant motif” in the Old Testament, see Gerhard F. Hasel, *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah* [Berrien Springs: Andrew University Press, 1972]). Jeremiah uses the collective abstract noun גְּלוּת “exiles” (1:3; 24:1, 5; 27:20; 28:4 29:22; 40:1; 43:3; 52:31) for the expression “the exiles of Judah” יְהוּדָה גְּלוּת (v. 5). About the possible reason for Jeremiah’s use of גְּלוּת instead of שְׂאֵר or שְׂאֵרִית, Yoshiaki Hattori suggests that Jeremiah “could not associate the general meaning of the term שְׂאֵר or שְׂאֵרִית (‘reside’ or even ‘remnant’) with the idea of future hope, when he saw the thoroughness of the destruction of Jerusalem, and he started to use the term גְּלוּת for the exiles, in whom he saw the future of restoration” (Yoshiaki Hattori, “The Prophet Ezekiel and His Idea of the Remnant,” [Th. D. dissertation; Philadelphia: Westminster Theological Seminary, 1968], 195-196).

<sup>47</sup> Jer 21:9-10; 32:3-4; 34:2-5; 38:2-3, 17-18.

equated with the “bad figs” in v. 8: שְׂאֵרֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם הַנְּשָׂאָרִים בְּאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת and וְהַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.<sup>48</sup> Whether they have remained in the land or have fled to Egypt, this remnant is a source of resistance to God’s purpose, which is for Israel to submit to Babylon. Thus, any attempt to avoid the exile to Babylon would result in judgment.<sup>49</sup> This is the crucial point. Many who stayed in the land, of course, had no choice in the matter, but were simply left behind by the Babylonians.

As we have seen above in the analysis of vv. 5-7, the equation of the exiles as good, is not based on their righteousness. The effect of the vision is only to say that those who did not go into exile should not feel superior.<sup>50</sup> This point suggests the rhetorical intention of chapter 24. The exile is necessary. Verse 8 implies that the flight to Egypt seems to have happened after the fall of Jerusalem (cf. chapters 40-42). In chapters 40-42 Jeremiah now preaches to those who are left in the land after

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<sup>48</sup> There are many different views on the date of “those who dwell in the land of Egypt.” Regardless when they went there “those who are living in the land of Egypt” were “bad figs.” Some identify the Egyptian exiles to be those who fled to Egypt after 586 BC or after the Assassination of Gedaliah (42:1-43:7). Thus Carroll and Nicholson believe that the entire passage is written after 586 BC (Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 482 and Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles*, 110). The mention of Zedekiah leads them to believe that Jerusalem had not yet fallen and Gedaliah had not become governor. Holladay and Niditch view the phrase “those who are living in the land of Egypt” as a later addition (Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 659; Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision in Biblical Tradition*, 61). However, Bright identifies them as pro-Egyptian Jews who had fled to Egypt when Jehoiakim became Nebuchadrezzar’s vassal (ca. 603 BC), or when Nebuchadrezzar invaded Judah in 598/597 BC. Some may even have gone with King Jehoahaz in 609 BC (2 Kgs 23:34). Thus, this phrase does not require a date 586 BC (Bright, *Jeremiah*, 193; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 207).

<sup>49</sup> Craigie *et al.*, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 360.

<sup>50</sup> Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 656. Holladay suggests that “the message of the present is not that the exiles are innocent and those who stay at home were guilty, but rather that Yahweh had positive plans for the exiles, and that those who stay at home should not feel superior; this is the crucial issue.”

the second wave of exiles have already been taken to Babylon after the fall of Jerusalem. However, this time Jeremiah is preaching to the people not to leave Jerusalem for Egypt. Jeremiah's message has changed with the new circumstances. The people must stay in Jerusalem and submit to the Babylonian rule. However the message is the same: submission to the Babylonian rule, either by going to exile in Babylon (chapter 24) or by staying in Jerusalem under the rule of Babylon (chapters 40-42). Jeremiah's message is still the same, that the Lord's purpose is being fulfilled by means of the Babylonian subjection of Judah. Thus the people must not resist God's plan by going to Egypt to avoid the Babylonian rule.

Jeremiah presents a dreadful consequence of the alternative to surrender. Judgment against the "bad figs" is announced in v. 9 using words as "object of terror" (זִוְעָה), "reproach" (חִרְפָּה), "byword" (מִשָּׁל), "taunt" (שְׂנִינָה), "curse" (קִלְלָה), "condemnation" (אָלָה), "desolation" (חִרְבָּה), "horror" (שִׁמָּה).<sup>51</sup> The repetition of similarly threatening words intensifies the severity of the judgment. It appeals strongly to the audience's emotions. Various combinations of these words appear frequently throughout the book of Jeremiah in the context of the humiliation of Judah.<sup>52</sup> The judged communities, "the remnant of Jerusalem" and the Egyptian exiles, will be humiliated in the eyes of the other nations. The threefold expression

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<sup>51</sup> The words "byword" (מִשָּׁל) and "taunt" (שְׂנִינָה) occur only here in Jeremiah.

<sup>52</sup> Jer 7:34; 15:4; 18:16; 19:8; 22:6; 25:9; 11, 18; 26:6; 29:18; 34:17; 42:18; 44:6, 8, 12, 22.

“the sword, the famine and the plague” is pervasive in Jeremiah.<sup>53</sup> This same expression is used in 21:7. The threefold structure refers to expressions either in positive or negative aspects.<sup>54</sup> Here in v. 9 it describes the totality of the destruction.<sup>55</sup> The threefold structure serves to magnify the full extent of the judgment.

In the verdict of vv. 8-10, the judgment is “the consequence of the evil, not the ground of it.”<sup>56</sup> The language of v. 9 is closely related to that of the covenant curses.<sup>57</sup> The highly stylized form indicates that the expression must have been

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<sup>53</sup> The threefold instruments of judgment, “the sword, the famine and the plague” אֶת־הַחֶרֶב אֶת־הָרָעָב וְאֶת־הַדָּבָר, are mentioned fifteen times in Jeremiah (14:12; 21:7, 9; 24:10; 27:8, 13; 29:17, 18; 32:34, 36; 34:17; 38:2; 42:17, 22; 44:13). Outside Jeremiah it occurs only in Ezekiel (5:12, 17; 6:11, 12; 7:15; 12:16; 14:21) and Chronicles (1 Chr 21:12; 2 Chr 20:9). On the other hand the dual elements from this threefold structure occur before Jeremiah: “sword, famine” (Isa 51:19); “sword, plague” (Exod 5:3; Lev 26:25; Amos 4:10); “famine, plague” (Deut 32:24; 2 Sam 24:13). Holladay attributes the repeated usage of these terms in Jeremiah and Ezekiel to a specific historical crisis (Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 435). For a detailed study of these terms, see Weippert, *Die Prosareden des Jeremiabuches*, 148-91. J. W. Miller suggests that these terms constituted a slogan which arose during this time, concerning the repeated use of the triad in Jeremiah and Ezekiel (*Das Verhältnis Jeremias und Hesekiels sprachlich und theologisch untersucht* [Assen: Van Gorcum, 1955], 86).

<sup>54</sup> The threefold structure these terms refers to the blessing with the lack of these terms while the curse when they are present (Exod 12:13; Num 8:19; Deut 7:12-16; 32:23-25). Various types of curse, biblical and non-biblical, are discussed by Delbert Hillers (*Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* [BibOr 16; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964]).

<sup>55</sup> 24:10, “until they are destroyed”; 11:23, “not even a remnant will be left to them”; 27:8, “until I destroy it”; 44:12, “from the least to the greatest, they will die.”

<sup>56</sup> Brueggemann, “A Second Reading of Jeremiah,” 161.

<sup>57</sup> Jones, *Jeremiah*, 318. The words used here in v. 9 include the curse formula of Deut 28:37 (cf. 1 Kgs 9:7 and 2 Chr 7:20) that negates Israel’s election. Although v. 9 has the same form and content as Deut 28:37, it is expressed with detailed variations. The word “horror” אָוֶעָה occurs (with spelling variations) in Deut 28:25 but also in Jer 15:4; 29:18; (34:17; “byword” מִשְׁלַּח in Deut 28:37; “curse” קִלְלָה in

available as a fixed form at the time of Jeremiah, and likely is not composed in the current context.<sup>58</sup> Thus the audience is familiar with these strongly pathos-filled words. Jeremiah is using the already available fixed curse formula to appeal to the emotion of the audience.

### 7.3 Summary to 24:1-10

Chapter 24 begins with a vision report by Jeremiah about two baskets of figs, good and bad. The temporal clause in v. 1 provides the historical context of the vision. The historical setting reflects the deportation of Judah after the events in 597 BC. The figs themselves do not have any deeper meaning. The vision of figs in vv. 1-2 is just a vehicle leading to the oracle of the Lord. The question from the Lord about the vision and answer by Jeremiah are followed by the explanation of the Lord. The vision oracle contrasts two groups of Israelites: the “exiles of Judah” on the one hand and the “remnant of Jerusalem” and Egyptian exiles on the other hand. This contrast develops into a theological evaluation of both groups in terms of the Lord’s unexpected actions “for good” and “for evil.” The “exiles of Judah” are regarded as “good figs” (v. 5) while the “remnant of Jerusalem” and Egyptian exiles as “bad figs” (v. 8).

We see God’s judgments through the historical process in this text. The Lord preserves his people for the future. There will be continuity through the remnant.

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Jer 25:18; 26:6; 42:18; 44:8, 12, 22; 49:13 but not in this sense in Deut.); “reproach” הַרְפָּיָה occurs in Jer 6:10; 20:8; 29:18; 42:18, 12; 49:13; 23:40, but not in Deut.

<sup>58</sup> Brueggemann, “A Second Reading of Jeremiah,” 162.



There is a future for Judah, but it is not through the “remnant of Jerusalem” or Egyptian exiles. The remnant of Jerusalem presumably considered themselves to be God’s favorites. Yet the “exiles of Judah” will be the objects of God’s favor. The “exiles of Judah,” those who were carried into exile to Babylon, bear Judah’s future. This is contrary to the conventional Deuteronomic understanding of the event regarding exile. God will bring about a future for Judah by means of those who were thought to have been without hope for a future. This is another case of reversal of fortune that has been the significant rhetorical style Jeremiah has applied throughout the rhetorical unit chapters 21-24. In the Proposition (21:3-10) the people were told to surrender to the Babylonians and they would be spared. There is certainly a hint that this is more than just survival in 21:8: “I set before you the way of life and the way of death.” This is covenantal, based on Deut-30:15, 19. However, in 21:8-9 it is not developed, and in the context it could be just an exaggerated use of the Deuteronomic formula. The meaning in 21:8-9 is, rhetorically speaking, open. The audience may wonder what it meant, but the dominant point in 21:3-10 is simply survival by surrendering to the Babylonians.

Some of what was proclaimed in 21:3-10 is no longer present in chapter 24. There is no more of the reversal of the Holy War image that the Lord will fight against Judah as the Holy Warrior. This part of the persuasion has now been left behind. Jeremiah perhaps believes that by now he has succeeded in persuading the audience to accept his argument in the Confirmation (21:11-23:8) and the Refutation (23:9-40). Covenant breach brings the covenant curse. The judgment of exile is inevitable. So the people may ask what is next for them. What has been left open in

21:3-10 is now fully spelled out in chapter 24. What is important is that chapter 24 brings in a new idea as part of the completion of Jeremiah's argument. The covenant can continue by means of the judgment of exile. This is why the covenant in future will be based on those who go through the exile. The rhetorical force of the Epilogue (Jeremiah 24) is the grace of the Lord that indeed creates the new historical possibility for the audience. The proclamation in vv. 5-7 comprises a series of nine first person singular active verbs and two first person singular personal pronouns. The emphasis is on granting the grace of the Lord by his divine sovereignty. The "exiles of Judah" are regarded as "good" (v. 5, 6). Judah's future lies with the "exiles of Judah." The destruction (exile) was a necessary judgment, but now the Lord will restore them by his grace (v. 6).

The equation of the "exiles of Judah" as good, and the "remnant of Jerusalem" and Egyptian exiles as bad is not based on the righteousness of the recipient. The rhetorical intention is to emphasize that the exile is necessary. Jeremiah's message in the Epilogue (Jeremiah 24) is that the Lord's purpose is being fulfilled by means of the Babylonian exile. Thus the people must not resist God's plan either by resisting the Babylonians or by going to Egypt to avoid the Babylonian rule. However, this message is not final, and should probably not be taken entirely at face value. This is clear from chapters 40-42. The message of Jeremiah 24 is not to distinguish who is and who is not to be included in the future plan of Judah. The purpose of God is not a matter of who happens to be taken and who happens to be left behind by the Babylonian army. The rhetorical impact of the Epilogue, as the final point of argument of the rhetorical unit Jeremiah 21-24, is to emphasize that the

endurance of the exile is essential to the future shape of the religion of the people of Judah. The judgment on Judah and the exile into Babylon are a part of God's redemptive purpose. The exiles must go through exile, in order that the exilic and post-exilic communities should know that the covenant does not depend on king, temple, and land. Beyond judgment lies salvation. The restoration process is joined by the promise of a "new heart." In the Epilogue, the climax is reached with the covenant language: "they will be my people, and I will be their God" (v. 7). The new covenant will be confirmed with a new heart: "I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord" (v. 7). God will make the exiles a faithful remnant with this renewed covenant. Thus, this verdict anticipates the new covenant of 31:31-34 (cf. 32:39). The experience of exile shows that covenant with the Lord is in reality a matter of the heart. This answers the question left open in 21:8-9 in the Proposition. By surrendering to the Babylonians they not only save their lives, but also open up a new way of living in covenant with the Lord. This solves the rhetorical exigency of the rhetorical unit Jeremiah 21-24.

## Conclusion

### 1. Brief review of the argument

We have been able to show that the rhetorical theory illuminates the structure, arrangement, and language of the literary materials in Jeremiah 21-24. The text can be analyzed according to the principle of rhetorical arrangement (Prologue; Proposition; Confirmation; Refutation; Epilogue) – with adjustments because the Epilogue was found to be not mere recapitulation. The argument of Jeremiah 21-24 is that God's salvation plan required the exile; the experience of exile would help form the people's future understanding of the covenant. The argument is addressed to an audience who might think that there could be no future if the judgment of exile came. This is an exigency of the rhetorical situation. It is part of the obstacle before Jeremiah to win over his audience.

### 2. How did the text achieve this goal?

We have shown how rhetorical techniques carried the argument that salvation is through the exile. Through our detailed analysis of the text, we demonstrated Jeremiah's rhetorical techniques of persuasion as a method of prophetic communication. We discovered that Jeremiah often used the method of enthymeme as his persuasive argument. As a rhetorical argumentation method, the prophet employs a deductive method by enthymeme in the Confirmation (21:11-23:8). First, he sets out the general content of the judgment against the Davidic dynasty (21:11-

14; 22:1-9) and then provides a specific example of judgment against the kings.

Jeremiah also uses the logic of providing the “reasons for the judgment” first and then presenting the judgment as a result of the reason in individual oracles.

Jeremiah’s frequent use of the messenger formulas has a rhetorical effect of establishing his authority as a true prophet speaking the word of the Lord. Jeremiah often uses for his argument historical facts, which are acceptable to his audience without dispute (e.g., the fate of Samaria; the Exodus or the deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrians), or well-known narratives (e.g., Sodom and Gomorrah). In applying them to his argument, however, he often uses them in ways opposite to people’s expectation. Reversal of an expectation is a key concept of the persuasive methods in Jeremiah 21-24. One example is the reversal of the Holy War imagery. Here it is reversed so that the Lord is fighting against Israel.

We also noted Jeremiah’s mastery of persuasive language. Jeremiah’s poetic argument includes ambiguity, contrast, apparent incoherence, irony, confrontation, and so on. He uses vocabularies in contrast with their usual usage (e.g., עוֹלָם, 23:40). Various images of reversal are enhanced by grammatical inversions or inversions of word order (e.g., “outstretched hand and strong arm”; “sword, famine, pestilence”). Jeremiah often uses metaphors of pathos-filled languages with hyperbolic expressions (e.g., “everlasting shame” and “everlasting humiliation”; “shattered jar”). Another feature of Jeremiah’s mastery of language is ambiguity (e.g., מִשְׁפָּח, 23:33-40; נִאֲנָה, 23:10, 14). He uses words with the same cognate repeatedly in different senses (e.g., פָּקַד 23:2, 4; רָעָה, 23:10-12, 14). He even

coined a word (e.g., **יְנֵאֻמָּוּ**, 23:31). The threefold structure is a most noticeable feature of Jeremiah's writing style.

### **3. How do these rhetorical means fit into the overall argument of the rhetorical unit Jeremiah 21-24?**

This involves the two audiences that we identified at the beginning (chapter 2, section 2.5.2). The audience of Jeremiah 21-24 is being shown that the judgment has to come. Jeremiah preached, but the people did not listen, so judgment must come. The people listened to the false prophets' **שְׁלוֹם** prophecy which misunderstood the Davidic covenant. The kings failed to observe the covenantal obligation of maintaining justice and righteousness in society. The breach of the covenant demands judgment. The exile is necessary. However, the judgment of exile is not the end of Jeremiah's message. The least likely ones, the exiles, are the objects of God's grace. It is the greatest reversal of that which is expected among the audience. The Lord is merciful in his grace and still holding out hope for the exiles in spite of their disobedience. This answers the question: What does the covenant promise mean now that the exile has happened, and how can the covenant continue? This question was a barrier which Jeremiah must overcome to the second audience of Jeremiah 21-24. The rhetorical techniques observed belong, first of all, in the prophet's own language and preaching; i.e. addressed to the first audience. But now they serve the purpose of the author of Jeremiah 21-24. They build a cumulative argument that the traditional institutions of Israel must be destroyed before there could be a new beginning.

We have demonstrated how the institutions are systematically dismantled. This must have been a powerful point for the “second” audience of Jeremiah 21-24 who no longer had the temple or the land. They do not need the temple, the land, or Jerusalem. What they need is a heart to know God, a genuine experience of God. For Jeremiah the future of Judah was not focused on temple or king but on a new covenant by which God would establish a new relationship with his people (31:31-34). To do this, Jeremiah uses rhetorical techniques, e.g., techniques of “reversal” and other forceful images (Jerusalem like Sodom and Gomorrah, 23:14; choose “life and death,” 21:8, as a surprising reapplication of Deut 30:19). Key elements in the beliefs of the people of Judah are challenged in this way:

1) The Davidic dynasty: The Davidic promise of everlasting monarch is contrasted with the image of no one sitting on the David’s throne (22:30). The everlasting glory of the Davidic dynasty is going to be terminated by “everlasting shame” and “everlasting humiliation”(23:40). In this way the covenant itself is brought into question.

2) The city: The image of complacent Jerusalem enthroned on the rock and the palace built with the choicest cedars is contrasted with the image of “fire” which burnt the city (21:13-14; 22:7).

3) The land: Jeremiah laments the devastated state of the land of Judah (23:9-10). The image of going into exile is contrasted with the image of entering the Promised Land (22:20-23).

#### **4. Summary of Jeremiah 21-24**

The brilliant use of language, imagery of the prophet and the adaptation of this by the author of Jeremiah 21-24 made Jeremiah 21-24 a powerful rhetorical composition. Our observations lead us to the following picture of Jeremiah 21-24 as a whole.

1) In the Prologue (21:1-2) a specific inquiry is made to Jeremiah concerning the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem in the reign of Zedekiah.

2) Zedekiah sought divine intervention through the prophet as a way of avoiding an impending catastrophe by invoking the miraculous acts of the Lord in the past. 21:3-10 (Proposition) is Jeremiah's message which is contrary to what Zedekiah wanted to hear. The Lord himself will fight against Judah, therefore the fall of Jerusalem and Judah is inevitable. Jeremiah's prophecy for a way to survive is to surrender to the invading Babylonian army. This message presents a rhetorical situation which the audience finds difficult to accept. The message is puzzling because it is against what the audience take for granted, that is, the inviolability of Jerusalem because of the royal theology and the Davidic covenantal promise.



3) In the Confirmation (21:11-23:8) Jeremiah presents his argument bringing out the covenantal obligation of the kings of Judah and thus undercutting the people's trust in the Davidic covenantal promise. The kings of Judah are bound by the observance of the covenantal obligation (21:11-22:9). However, the oracles against the kings of Judah (22:10-23:8) confirm that the kings of Judah failed to observe the covenantal obligation of maintaining justice and righteousness in society. The judgment is inevitable. In Jeremiah's prophecy, exile is a foregone conclusion.

4) The audience of Jeremiah would hear also the prophecy of other prophets. In the Refutation (23:9-40), Jeremiah denounces the **שְׁלוֹם** prophecy because these prophets are proclaiming **שְׁלוֹם** when there is no prospect of **שְׁלוֹם** in the land. Most of all, their prophecies are false because the Lord has not spoken to them and not sent them his word.

5) All this rhetorical preparation reaches a climax in the Epilogue (Jeremiah 24). The judgment after exile yet to come focuses on the fate of those who were taken into exile on the one hand, contrasted with those who remained in the city and those who fled to Egypt on the other hand. It is a climax because chapter 24 destroys the last hope of the "remnant of Jerusalem" who had clung to the Davidic covenant and the royal theology. At the same time, it presents hope to the "exiles of Judah." The Epilogue is Jeremiah's message of hope, looking beyond the judgment of exile to eventual renewal and restoration. The judgment of exile is not the end.

The future, however, will be on a new basis. The institutions are not central to it. Rather, they will receive a new start with a new heart to know the Lord and that the Lord is God. This message is developed further in the theme of the new covenant.

Against Carroll's interpretation of the text in terms of political propaganda, we present the rhetorical interpretation in this study that the message of Jeremiah 21-24 is not the struggle between the "exiles of Judah" and the "remnant of Jerusalem." It is not advocating one group over others. But, the message is that they all need a "new heart" to know the Lord as their God. To the restoration process is added the promise of a new heart, in a New Covenant. God's future plan is inclusive – it applies to both "the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (31:31). Whoever has a new heart to know the Lord as his God is included in God's future plan, regardless of whether they are the Babylonian exiles, the remnant of Jerusalem, or the Egyptian exiles.

## **5. Final Note**

We have argued the existence of an overall structure to Jeremiah 21-24 in a way that it functions rhetorically in order to persuade the audience. The perspective of Jeremiah 21-24 is close to the perspective of the whole book: 1) It shows that the exile is a precondition of salvation; 2) It foreshadows the New Covenant prophecy. The exile is not the end of the judgment. Theologically the assertion of judgment of exile and hope for Judah's future with a new heart hold together in Jeremiah 21-24. However, it does not yet include the punishment of Babylonians (as in chapters 25, 50-51). But it brings the book of Jeremiah to an important first climax.

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