# Part 2(c): Drought, Hunger, Sword (14:1 – 17:27)

After 13:23-27 made a plausible ending for a sequence of Jeremiah’s messages, the phrase *Yahweh’s word that came to Jeremiah* comprises a curator’s introduction to a further sequence – Jeremiah will include his own affirmation that Yahweh spoke *to me* in 14:11, 14; 15:1; 16:1; 17:19. The sequence unfolds as follows:

14:1 Introduction

14:2 – 15:21 Four more sets of protests and responses between Yahweh, Jeremiah, and Judah

16:1 – 17:11 A series of confrontations and warnings about this country and domain

17:12-27 Another exchange between Judah, Jeremiah, and Yahweh: three ironies

# Introduction (14:1)

1What came as Yahweh’s word[[1]](#footnote-1) to Jeremiah in the matter of the dearths.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The heading follows the pattern of the ones in 7:1; 11:1; 18:1; 21:1; 25:1, which mark transition points in the Jeremiah scroll. This example is distinctive in going on to state the subject, *in the matter of the dearths*.In this respect it corresponds more closely to 46:1; 47:1; 49:34, with which it also shares an idiomatic quirk.[[3]](#footnote-3) The rare word *dearths* covers the drought which is the subject of 14:2-9 but also the other deprivations that Jer 14 – 17 refers to; the word recurs in 17:8. As was the case in 13:18, the “lack of an external referent in the section is an important point in its interpretation.”[[4]](#footnote-4) Its comment about understanding dearths and dealing with them relates not just to one situation. It needs taking into account on other occasions when the people of God experience drought, attack, or epidemic.

# Four More Exchanges (Protests and Responses) (14:2 – 15:21)

Whereas the voices of Yahweh and of Jeremiah speaking for Yahweh dominated Jer 13, the initiating voice of Judah and of Jeremiah speaking for Judah dominates Jer 14 – 15. Decisive insights emerge through the dialogue between God and prophet.[[5]](#footnote-5) The chapters outline:

14:2-12 The dearths, the plea, and the response

Judah’s sufferings and protest, and Yahweh’s response (1)

14:2-6 Jeremiah’s description of a drought

14:7-9 Judah’s plea to Yahweh

14:10-12 Yahweh’s response to Jeremiah

14:13-18 The prophets

Jeremiah’s protest, and Yahweh’s response (1)

14:13 Jeremiah’s protest about the other prophets’ promises

14:14-16 Yahweh’s confrontational response

14:17-18 Yahweh’s grieved response

14:19 – 15:9 The wound and the threat

Judah’s sufferings and protest, and Yahweh’s response (2)

14:19 Judah’s protest about what Yahweh has done to it

14:20-22 Judah’s plea to Yahweh

15:1-9 Yahweh’s response to Jeremiah and to Judah

15:10-21 The persecutors

Jeremiah’s protest and Yahweh’s response (2)

15:10-18 Jeremiah’s protest about his persecutors

15:19-21 Yahweh’s response: challenge and promise

## The Dearths, the Plea, and the Response (14:2-12)

2Judah mourns,

her gateways – they fade away.a

People are in darkness on the ground,b

Jerusalem’s shout – it goes up.c

3Their lords – they send their kids for water;

they come to the ditches – they don’t find water.

They return, their containers empty –

they are shamed and humiliated, and they cover their head.d

4On account of the earth that’s broken up,e

because there has been no rain on the ground,

Farmhands are shamed –

they cover their head.

5Because even the hind in the open country – it gives birth,

but abandonsf because there’s no grass.

6The wild donkeys: they stand on the bare heights –

they pant after wind like jackals.g

Their eyes fail

because there’s no vegetation.

7If our wayward acts averh against us,

Yahweh, act, for the sake of your name,

Wheni our turnings are many –

in relation to you we have done wrong.

8Hope of Israel,

its deliverer in time of distress,

Why should you become like an alien in the country,

like a traveler turning aside to stay the night?

9Why should you become like someone at a loss,j

like a strong man who cannot deliver?

But given that you are among us, Yahweh,

and your name has been proclaimed over us, don’t drop us.k

10Yahweh has said of this people:

Truly, they like to drift,

in that they have not held back their feet.l

But Yahweh: he does not accept them –

he will now be mindful of their waywardness,

and will attend to their wrongdoing.m

11Yahweh said to me, Do not plead on account of this people, for good things.

12When they fast,

I won’t be listening to their chant by way of plea.

When they make a whole offering and a grain offering,

I will not be accepting them.

Because by sword and by hunger and by epidemic

I am going to make an end of them.n

LXX has “were emptied,” Syr “were dilapidated.” Both verbs are used of both inanimate and animate subjects (McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:316).

Literally, *they* [which might be the gates, though they stand for the people] are dark to the ground.”

The two lines work abb’a’, with Judah and Jerusalem in the first and last cola. In addition, each line works internally abb’a’ with the verbs on the outside and the nouns on the inside.

LXX lacks this colon.

An unmarked relative clause.

The infinitive absolute instead of a finite verb increases the force of a statement that is already strong (Volz, *Jeremia*, 161) and alsosuggests incoherence at the statement’s grimness.

LXX lacks “like jackals.”

*‘Ăwōnênû ‘ānû*: the paronomasia suggests they are fulfilling their proper role. While *‘ānâ* usually means “answer,” in many occurrences there is nothing for the speaker to be answering; it then denotes a solemn attesting.

In effect “although,” but it is doubtful whether *kî* should ever be translated thus. LXX, Vg have “because,” which is theologically profound (see the comment).

LXX implies *nirdām* “asleep” for MT’s hapax *nidhām* – on which see *HALOT*, *DCH*.

MT has a section marker here. The reverse word order and asyndeton suggests that the previous clauses are subordinate to this final verb.

The asyndeton and reverse word order again suggests that this colon is subordinate to the first. The word order tempts LXX and Vg to see “their feet” as the object of the first verb. It would then mean “let wander,” making good sense, but it would require hiphil not qal.

V. 10b is identical with Hos 8:13aγb; LXX lacks the last colon. MT has a marker here.

MT has a section marker here.

In the immediate context, 14:1 sets up some suspense, because there is no message from Yahweh in vv. 2-6, nor in vv. 7-9; strictly, it comes only in vv. 10-12. One might infer from the introduction that vv. 2-6 are a prophetic vision concerning something to come,[[6]](#footnote-6) or that *Yahweh’s word* is a holistic expression covering the totality of Yahweh’s communication, which interacts with what his people say (even the prayer that Yahweh rejects thus becomes part of his message).[[7]](#footnote-7) The pathos of the description in vv. 2-6 does suggest an empathy and sense of grief on Yahweh’s part, that people have to go through what he makes them go through.[[8]](#footnote-8) The subsection is “a poem of great compactness and intensity.”[[9]](#footnote-9) It’s not explicitly a prayer; not only is the speaker not specified, neither is any addressee, and Yahweh is not mentioned.[[10]](#footnote-10) The verbs are qatal (the qatals continue into v. 7 and v. 10), a quasi-stative usage describing “actions which are tantamount to states in that they occur in non-specific, i.e., typical or recurrent situations.”[[11]](#footnote-11) Whereas one might have expected such a poem to use a mournful rhythm (see 12:7-11a), actually its rhythm is quite uneven within the usual constraints (2-2, 2-3, 4-4, 3-4, 3-4, 2-2, 4-4, 3-3, 2-2). Perhaps that disorder itself gives expression to the disorder of the community’s experience.

Unannounced, the poem leads into the people’s explicit prayer (vv. 7-9), then into Yahweh’s response (vv. 10-12). The section thus begins by hinting at the form of a liturgy of the kind that people might have used during a fast such as the one referenced in 36:6 or in the context of hunger (44:18; 52:6). But then it turns it upside down. It turns out to be a kind of “counter-liturgy.”[[12]](#footnote-12) And thus Part 2(c) of the scroll begins like Parts Two (a) and (b), by raising a question about the relationship between Yahweh and Judah. They may think that prayer makes a difference. Yahweh says, “Not necessarily.”

The section thus outlines:

vv. 2-6 a description of people and animals dealing with the drought

four single bicola, two linked bicola, then three more single bicola

vv. 7-9 a prayer

two pairs of bicola linked by enjambment, then two self-contained bicola

vv. 10-12 Yahweh’s response

an introduction followed by a bicolon and a tricolon

then another introduction followed by three bicola

**2** We know about the prospect of the earth mourning (4:28) and perhaps about the actuality (12:11). But mourning is more obviously a human activity, and here *Judah mourns*. Why is it? We do not discover immediately; Jeremiah simply restates the point: *her gateways – they fade away*. The gates of a town or of a family’s homestead refer by synecdoche to the town or homestead itself (e.g., Deut 5:14), and in turn the town or homestead refers to the people who live there. It is they who are fading away. Why? The next line simply restates the point again: *people are in darkness on the ground*. Darkness suggests the gloom of mourning (4:28; 8:21), in their faces and (as a metaphor for actual bereavement) in their dress. Literally, they are dark “to the ground”; in their grief they sink down and sit on the ground as one does when mourning. And *Jerusalem’s shout goes up*, as it would in celebration on other occasions (Isa 42:11), but on this occasion it is an expression of grief (cf. Jer 46:12; Ps 144:14). But why?

**3** The answer comes with a leap from the undefined to a concrete picture that omits any generalization. If there’s a crisis in a community, the *lords*, the people with status and resources, will find ways to get by. But on this occasion theyhave to *send their kids for water*, which suggests that their cisterns (on which Jeremiah has not been complimentary: see 2:13), in addition to their wells, are empty. Even the important people are getting desperate. “The heads of great families have sent their servants to scour the countryside” in search of water.[[13]](#footnote-13) So the boys *come to the ditches*, perhaps the ditches dug to irrigate fields or terraces, and even there they *don’t find water* and *they return, their containers empty*. No wonder *they are shamed and humiliated* when they get home. They have failed in their basic and vital task. *They cover their head*,rather than baring them as Westerners traditionally would, as another sign of grief (2 Sam 15:30; Est 6:12: it’s almost the only way the verb *ḥāpâ* qal is used).

**4** Such is the problem in town or village.In the farmland, things are arguably more serious. If *the earth* is *broken up because there has been no rain on the ground,* they can’t plow or sow. There will therefore be no vegetation for the animals, the grain and barley won’t grow, and the fruit trees will wither. So *farmhands are shamed*, too, because they won’t be able to produce what their bosses expect or to provide for their families or to take produce into the town to provide for its needs.

**5-6** Once again the scene broadens *Even the hind in the open country* which is not where the hind would normally be *gives birth but* against all the instincts of motherhood *abandons* its offspring *because there’s no grass.* It can’t look after itself, let alone them*.* Similarly *the wild donkeys stand on the bare heights* wondering when there will be rain; *they pant after wind*, not searching for the whiff of a mate (2:24) but wondering if there is a hint of rain in the air, *like jackals* on the lookout for prey or panting like dogs – not what one expects of donkeys.[[14]](#footnote-14) But *their eyes fail*, Jeremiah declares in the hyperbole which also comes in the Psalms in connection with human beings looking for God to act (e.g., Ps 69:3 [4]) *There’s no vegetation* and they have worn out their sight in searching for it. No water (v. 3), because no rain (v. 4), and therefore no grass (v. 5), and no vegetation (v. 6).

**7** Readers are left to work out that what follows is the prayer that Jeremiah imagines Judah praying in such circumstances. As the prayer puts it, Judah is like someone standing before the elders at the town gateway. Someone has an accusation – or rather accusations – to bring. Actually it’s not a person, it’s the deeds themselves, the *wayward acts*, thedeliberate straying onto other paths (5:25; 11:10; 33:8), that will do the testifying against Judah. The offences are a matter of public record. There’s no argument to be had. Yet the prayer begins with more than one irony. First, Jeremiah would surely regard the *if* in *if our wayward acts aver against us* as laughable if it were not tragic. Second, as far as one can imagine from things we have read, Jeremiah has no conviction that people would be praying this prayer; they would be on their way to the shrine to talk to the Master about the situation. And third, if they did pray it, he would not be able to imagine that they meant it. Yet fourth, the prayer is based on sound theology: *Yahweh, act, for the sake of your name*, which can suggest for the sake of your reputation (and this argument is a good one)[[15]](#footnote-15) but also because of who you are (a more profound argument, and the one Jeremiah will shortly imply that people are using). Jeremiah goes on to have the people taking up one of his distinctive expressions: the *wayward acts* have been *our turnings* (2:19; 3:22), which indeed *are many*. It is a concrete indication that the prayer is one Jeremiah is devising for them, rather than one of theirs that he is quoting. He expands their supposed confession into a trinity by having them also say *we have done wrong in relation to you* (*ḥāṭā’*, the pseudo-acknowledgment in 3:25; 8:14 that will recur in 14:20, but contrast 2:35; 16:10). If vv. 2-6 is a quasi-protest psalm, then, v. 7 deconstructs its logic. In a protest psalm one pleads with Yahweh on the basis of not having acted in a way that makes it appropriate for Yahweh to bring calamity. This confession implies that it is quite appropriate.

**8** The people spell out the implications of *for the sake of your name*: it is indeed not because they are committed to him (as one claims in a protest psalm) but because Yahweh is the *hope of Israel* (*miqwēh*, another distinctive Jeremiah word: 17:13; 50:7). The *hope* may be subjective – he is the one in whom Israel hopes. But the parallelism suggests it is at least as much objective – he is the hope-worthy one, the one who fulfills hopes (LXX has “endurance”), in that he is Israel’s *deliverer in time of distress*. He has proved himself to be so in the past. So notwithstanding their waywardness, *why* now *should you become like an alien in the country, like a traveler turning aside to stay the night*, like a stranger who has no obligations to this country that he is just passing through and doesn’t care about?[[16]](#footnote-16)

**9** More pointedly, is there a problem about your capacity to act as well as your motivation? *Why should you become like someone at a loss*, helpless or distracted? Yahweh is of course *like a strong man* (a *gibbôr*: cf. 32:18). The word commonly denotes a warrior, so it is pointed to describe this warrior as one *who cannot deliver*, especially after the earlier reference to *deliverance*. Perhaps Jeremiah imagines Judah meaning in v. 8 not that Yahweh has been its deliverance in the past but only that it hoped he would be its deliverance. Anyway, he is not fulfilling that hope. But the prayer closes with a statement of faith and hope that denies such an implication. *You are in our midst, Yahweh* – you are not just a casual passerby or a foreigner with big eyes that cannot see.[[17]](#footnote-17) *Your name has been proclaimed over us*, we belong to you, like the temple (7:10, 11, 14, 30 – though the link with Yahweh’s comment about the temple might turn out to be unfortunate) or the city (25:29 – that parallel might also turn out to be unfortunate). So *don’t drop us* (*nûaḥ* hiphil). Don’t just puts us down and leave us there.

**10** How could Yahweh resist such a prayer, given that he is one who answers prayer? “God’s response introduced by the messenger formula does not correspond to expectations”: instead of a declaration of forgiveness there is a declaration of judgment.[[18]](#footnote-18) When Joel 2:12-17 has people praying this way, they get a positive response.[[19]](#footnote-19) Actually, Yahweh can resist it with ease. He can see through it. They said *you… you… you….* He says with the recurrent pejorative implication, *this people* (e.g., 5:23). The pejorative tone derives from the fact that *truly, they like to drift*. Whereas going astray suggests deliberately leaving the right path, drifting suggests wandering aimlessly and inconsistently. “In the sacred Scriptures, the feet of sinners are always moving.”[[20]](#footnote-20) The people have spoken with apparent purposeful intent, but Yahweh doesn’t believe them. They are not suddenly starting to become focused and disciplined. *They have not held back their feet*. Not only will he therefore not accept their sacrifices (v. 12): he *does not accept them*. It is the only clear example of Yahweh ever saying he does not accept his people.[[21]](#footnote-21) He is not going to forget their wayward acts, turnings, and wrongdoing (v. 7). On the contrary, *he will now* (that word is pretty worrying) *be mindful of their waywardness*. And as usual keeping something in mind means doing something about it: he will *attend to their wrongdoing*.

**11** He has something else to say to Jeremiah. It looks as if Jeremiah composed the prayer. Was he in some sense praying for the people? Anyway, Yahweh repeats the bidding *do not plead on behalf of this people* (7:16 and 11:14). “The covenantal situation is so deteriorated that serious conversation between Yahweh and Judah is not possible. Yahweh withdraws from the conversation, for there is nothing more to talk about.”[[22]](#footnote-22) Might Yahweh also imply that he needs Jeremiah not to pray because he may find it hard to resist him? The bidding here adds *for good things*, a worrying specification. The people’s wrongdoing is still withholding good things from them (5:25; 8:15). They are living in a time when prayer is impossible, a time of “unheil,”[[23]](#footnote-23) non-salvation, disaster. Has nothing changed since the apparent move within Amos 7:1 – 8:6 from when Amos feels free to pray and then does not?[[24]](#footnote-24) There is nowhere in the Bible that the imploring calling out to God is so resultless and falls on such deaf ears.[[25]](#footnote-25)

**12** There is a further “on the contrary.” As well as praying, people may *fast* and may *make a whole offering and a grain offering*. Both are costly actions – going without food, and offering to God the kind of sacrifices in which the entirety of the animal goes up to him, accompanied by the appropriate grain offering (see Lev 1 – 2); whole offeriings contrast with fellowship sacrifices, in which the offerer shares at a communion meal. But Yahweh *won’t be listening to their chant* with which they accompany their fast. He *will not be accepting them* – the people or the sacrifices. These heartfelt, sincere, and sacrificial actions count for nothing when they are unaccompanied by a change in other aspects of life – e.g., by giving up the inclination to hedge their bets by also seeking the Master’s help. While Jeremiah does not suggest there is anything insincere about the people’s turning to Yahweh, there is an unacceptable inconsistency or double-think about it. Far from accepting them, therefore, Yahweh has a threat in mind that makes more specific the threat in v. 10. To *sword* and *hunger* (5:12) he now adds *epidemic*; this unholy trinity will recur (e.g., 21:9; 27:8). They are the three great killers in war; it is entirely plausible that they would *make an end of* a people. Yahweh declares the intention to do so by means of them (cf. 9:16 [15]), though of course actually he will not, even though the people do not turn.

## The Prophets (14:13-18)

13I said, Oh, Lord Yahweh, there, the prophets are saying to them, You will not see sword, and hunger – it will not happen to you, because things being truly well is what I will give you in this place.a

14Yahweh said to me: Deceit is what the prophets are prophesying in my name – I did not send them, I did not order them, I did not speak to them. A deceitful vision, divination that is vacuity, duplicity from their mind is what they are prophesying away to you.b 15Therefore Yahweh has said this about the prophets who are prophesying in my name when I did not send them, and are saying, sword and hunger – they will not happen in this country: with sword and with hunger those prophets will come to an end. 16And the people that they are prophesying to will have been thrownc into the streets of Jerusalem in the face of the hunger and the sword, and there will be no one to bury those people – them, their wives, their sons, and their daughters. I will pour out their direness upon them.

17So you will speak this word to them:

May my eyes run down with tears,d

night and day, and may they not stop.

Because with a great shattering she has shattered,

the young girl,e my dear people,

with a very painful wound.f

18If I go out to the open country,

there, people run through by a sword.

If I come into the city,

there, people sick with hunger.g

Because both priest and prophet –

they have roamedh the country

but have not acknowledged it.i

MT has a section marker here.

The *you* is plural. MT has a section marker here.

Literally, “will be [there] having been thrown.”

LXX has Yahweh bidding Jeremiah exhort the people to cry, which is more predictable in the context; Aq corresponds to MT.

See the note on 18:13.

The tricolon follows an abb’a’ order, with the parallel descriptions of the catastrophe in the first and third cola forming a bracket around the whole and enveloping the parallel descriptions of *the young girl, my dear people* (literally, “the girl of the daughter of my people”).

There is much flexibility about the use of *qatal* and *yiqtol* verbs in if-clauses (see e.g., at length *TTH* 136-55; briefly, *IBHS* 30.5.4). Here the context suggests a hypothetical present (cf. LXX, Vg, in their way).

*Sāḥar* can mean “trade,” at least when it is in participial form (e.g., Gen 23:16; 37:28), and this pejorative connotation may hold here.

LXX, Vg take this colon as an unmarked relative clause, conforming it to (e.g.) 15:14, but the different expression here with the *but* suggests a different meaning (e.g., 2:19, 23). Tg nicely renders “they did not seek”: they did not ask any questions about what was going on or what God was doing.

A second exchange follows. Whereas the first led from Judah to Yahweh to Jeremiah, this one simply involves Jeremiah and Yahweh. Jeremiah complains about prophets promising the people that all will be well, and that they will not see sword and hunger – which makes for the link with vv. 2-12. Yahweh agrees with his complaint and gives him another message confirming that it won’t. The section outlines:

vv. 13-16 an exchange between Jeremiah and Yahweh

prose

vv. 17-18 a message from Yahweh for Jeremiah to deliver

a bicolon and a tricolon, then two more bicola and another tricolon

**13** So other prophets assure people that *sword* and *hunger* will not come; rather things will be *truly well* for Judah – they won’t even just be regularly well (4:10; 6:14; 8:11). Judah will enjoy *šәlôm ’ĕmet*, well-being that can be relied on to continue. *In this place* might denote the temple, but it denoted the country the last time it occurred and it will denote the country the next time (7:20; 16:2), and that meaning fits here. *I will give you* sounds like a quotation from the actual words that these prophets utter in Yahweh’s name. “The disputing of the *shalom* theology is a constant theme throughout the book of Jeremiah and a major issue of conflict between Jeremiah and other prophetic groups.”[[26]](#footnote-26) But is Jeremiah implying that Yahweh might be a little more sympathetic towards the people? It would be in keeping with the possible implication that his prohibition on Jeremiah’s praying presupposed that he might be tempted to answer his prayer.

**14** What the braggadocious[[27]](#footnote-27) prophets claim to be trustworthy, Yahweh declares to be *deceit*. It links with the fact that he did not *send… order… speak to them*. He describes the status of their message in three converse ways, doubling each expression and varying the ways they are formulated. Paradoxically, they bring a *vision* all right (he does not deny its reality), but it is a *deceitful* one, more literally a vision of deceit – a vision from deceit, from the Master? Second, it is (literally) *divination and vacuity*, a hendiadys suggesting empty divination. Divination involves inferring future events from the observation of the stars or of other natural phenomena, through which God was believed to be giving revelations. Maybe the double expression *divination and vacuity* involves a tautology, given that Jeremiah likely views divination as inherently empty; Deut 18:10 simply says it’s wrong. And third, their message is a matter of *falsehood* that simply comes *from their mind*. This phrase might also imply a tautology, presupposing the conviction that their alleged vision comes simply from their mind and is therefore false. It did not come from their overhearing things that were said in Yahweh’s cabinet (see further 23:9-40). At the end of the verse Yahweh moves from a niphal form (*prophesy*) to a hitpael form (*prophesy away*), which hints at pejorative implications.

**15-16** Given thatJeremiah’s protest specifically concerns these prophets, Yahweh’s response especially concerns them. *With sword and with hunger those prophets will come to an end.* But the people they deceive will share their fate. Yahweh reworks threats made before (see esp. 8:2). To *pour out their direness* neatly leaves ambiguous whether Yahweh refers to their dire behavior (which now receives its reward) or their dire fate (which rewards their behavior), and thus again invites reflection on the link between the two.

**17** The subsequent message for the people does not belong with what follows (“they will not pass for a constituent part of a communal lament”).[[28]](#footnote-28) Although they facilitate a transition to the further protest-plea-threat sequence that follows, they belong with what precedes, as MT’s section marker recognizes. The mention of prophets, along with priests, fits the appending to vv. 13-16, to spell out once more the threat in v. 16. Once more Jeremiah speaks of his tears, with the rhetorical significance of the reference particularly clear: as usual, the reason he talks about his tears is to encourage his hearers to take seriously the reason for his crying (otherwise, the introduction in v. 17aα would be inappropriate).[[29]](#footnote-29) On the other hand, it is Yahweh who commissions the tears, and *my people* much more often comes on Yahweh’s lips,[[30]](#footnote-30) so there is at least a hint that the grief they express is Yahweh’s grief as well as Jeremiah’s. The instruction is not simply that he should cry but that he should declare to his people, *may my eyes run down with tears, night and day, and may they not stop.* They need to understand that such prodigious crying will be the only adequate response to the reality he is about to see. The city whose people he is to address is about to fall to pieces, to collapse, to *shatter*, as he has said before (4:6, 20; 6:1, 14; 8:11, 21; 10:17). Some of these earlier references indicate that Jeremiah shatters as city and people shatter, and his talk of crying here makes the same point. He is not separate from their fate and the reaction to it. But the point about mentioning it is to bring home to them its devastating nature. The city is like a woman struck down by *a very painful wound*. The poignancy of the event is brought home by the description of her by means of the unparalleled elaborate expression *maiden daughter, my people* (Lam 2:13 is the nearest parallel). Yahweh as quasi-father wants Jeremiah as quasi-father to tell people how he feels about her, again so that they gain a sense of how terrible are the events that he threatens.

**18** Jeremiah goes on to describe things in more down-to-earth fashion, though no less piercingly, as he asks his hearers to accompany him in their imagination on a tour of the crushed and suffering country that is about to become reality. In *the open country*, *there*, he points and asks his hearers to look, there are *people run through by a sword* as a result of the enemy army’s rampaging. And in *the city*, *there*, he points again, are *people sick with hunger*, as happens when there is invasion and siege. Finally, to get back to the link with what preceded, the problem is that at present *both priest and prophet – they have roamed the country but have not acknowledged it*. “Something is happening here but you don’t know what it is, do you, Mr. Jones” (Bob Dylan). “The religious establishment is bankrupt.”[[31]](#footnote-31)

## The Wound and the Threat (14:19 – 15:9)

19Have you actually rejecteda Judah,

or Zion – has your spirit loathed her?b

Why have you struck us down

and we have no healing?

Hoping for things to be well, but no good,

and for a time of healing, but there, terror.c

20We acknowledge our faithlessness, Yahweh,

the waywardness of our ancestors.

Because we have done wrong in relation to you,

21don’t disown us, for the sake of your name.

Don’t humiliated your honored throne,

be mindful, don’t violatee your pact with us.

22Among the nations’ empty things are there ones who make it rain,

or do the heavens – do they give downpours?f

You’re the one, aren’t you, Yahweh our God,g

and we hope in you, because you – you made all these things.h

15:1But Yahweh said to me, If Moses and Samueli were to stand before me, my spirit would not be directed towards this peoplej – send them off from before my face, so that they go away. 2And when they say to you “Where shall we go away to,” you’re to say to them, Yahweh has said this:

People who are for death, to death,

people who are for sword, to sword,

People who are for hunger, to hunger,

people who are for captivity, to captivity.

3And I will appoint over them four kin-groups (Yahweh’s affirmation):

Sword to slay,

dogs to drag away,k

Birds of the heavens and animals of the earth

to eat and devastate.l

4I will make them into something horrifying to all earth’s kingdoms, on account of Manasseh ben Hezekiah, King of Judah, on account of what he did in Jerusalem.m

5Because who will pity you, Jerusalem,

who will bemoan you?

Who will turn aside to askn

about whether things are well for you?

6You yourself have deserted me (Yahweh’s affirmation) –

you go backwards.

So I’m extending my hand against you and devastating you –

I’ve got weary of relenting.o

7I’m winnowing them with a winnower

in the country’s gateways.

I’m making childless, I’m wiping out my people,

on account of their paths from which they have not turned.p

8Its widows are becoming more numerous for me

than the sand of the seas.

I’m bringing for them, upon a youth’s mother,q

a destroyer at midday.

I’m making fall upon them, suddenly,

shockr and terror.

9One who bore seven fades away,

she breathes out her life.

Her sun is setting while it’s still daytime –

she is shamed and dismayed.

And the remainder of them I will give to the sword

before their enemies (Yahweh’s affirmation).s

The infinitive precedes the finite verb, underlining the fact; the phrase recurs in the last line of Lamentations, Lam 5:22.

The line thus works abb’a’, with place names juxtaposed at the center and elaborate verbal expressions either side.

The line repeats from 8:15, with the addition of a *waw* at the beginning of the second colon; see the note and comment.

With BDB I construe *tәnabbēl* as piel from *nābēl* “be foolish,” but there are several roots *nbl* of which readers may be reminded: *DCH*’s other three roots denote wither/crumble, be sacrilegious, and act ignominiously.

See the note on 11:10.

On *rәbîbîm*, see the note on 3:3.

On this type of noun clause, see *IBHS* 16.3.3c; DG 1b., *TTH* 200; GK 141h.

MT has a unit marker here.

LXXA adds Aaron (see Ps 99:6).

For the meaning of *’el*, cf. BDB, 40a. *IBHS* 11.2.2 renders “I have no heart for this people.”

LXX, Vg “tear” are translating loosely.

There is nice poetic variation in the way the two lines work: it would have been easy to match the second to the first by saying “the birds of the heavens to eat and the animals of the earth to devastate.”

Tg’s explanation is that they did not repent like Manasseh (see 2 Chr 33:10-19).

The verses’ 3-2 rhythm links *lišә’ōl* with the first colon and could encourage people to understand this word to mean “to Sheol,” the place for which Jerusalem is bound.

LXX implies *hanniḥām* (hiphil from *nûaḥ*, “of leaving them alone, letting them lie”)for MT *hinnāḥēm*, which makes for a nice link with 14:9 (Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:421), though not a link that LXX makes with its translation.

An unmarked relative clause (Volz, *Jeremia*. 170).

After 587 readers might understand this colon to denote bringing upon a mother [Jerusalem] a youth [Nebuchadrezzar] (Blayney, *Jeremiah*, 71, 298).

Not the *‘îr* meaning town (Vg, Aq, Sym) but a homonym (LXX; BDB, 735); the two nouns are thus a hendiadys, “terrifyingshock”(Blayney, *Jeremiah*, 299).

MT has a section marker here.

This sequence parallels 14:2-18, “a more vehement rerun”[[32]](#footnote-32) in which the balance between the elements puts less emphasis on the people’s protest and plea, and more on Yahweh’s threat. It outlines:

14:19 Judah’s protest

three bicola, implicitly reacting to 14:17-18

14:20-22 Judah’s plea:

five bicola, a similar length and similar dynamic to 14:7-9

15:1-9 Yahweh’s threat

vv. 1-4 a prose framework around two linked pairs of bicola

vv. 5-9 twelve bicola; after the first, every line has a two-beat second colon, and one is tempted to re-hyphenate the first line to match

Before their incorporation into their section, 14:19-22 might already be one unit; 15:1-4 and 5-9 look like two originally separate ones.

Once again, Jeremiah invites people to imagine making a protest to Yahweh about his treatment of them, confessing their wrongdoing, and pleading with him to stay in relationship with them, then hearing him declare that he will not listen to their prayers and is set on bringing even more devastating calamity. Maybe that exercise in imagination will push them into a proper turning. After 587 the section would offer to help people to reflect on the reality that had partially fulfilled the threats and push them towards responding to forestall a more thoroughgoing fulfillment. In this connection, a feature of the section is the variety of assumptions concerning Judah’s responsibility for its policies and its destiny. It thus offers resources for reflection on the complex question concerning whether and how far we are responsible for the judgment that comes upon us and whether and how far we share in responsibility with past generations, even if (or perhaps precisely because) “laments cannot be pressed for their theological precision” (e.g., Ps 44:23 [24]).[[33]](#footnote-33) It may be able to do so as a result of its bringing together material of diverse origins,[[34]](#footnote-34) though that possibility encourages readers to think about the interrelationship of the insights rather than excusing them from that reflection. It is important reflection in connection with Britain’s attitude to its former empire and to Brits whose background lies in countries within that empire, and for attitudes in the U.S.A. to the position of native Americans and African Americans.

* Jeremiah portrays Judahites identifying with their ancestors in acknowledging waywardness (14:20). The nation is a corporate entity, a corporate reality. The present generation is entitled to be proud of the nation of which it is part, even though it played no part in making it what it is. Is there also a converse: “the corporate guilt of the nation accumulated through the generations”?[[35]](#footnote-35) The third and fourth generation benefit from the promises that were made to their ancestors and not to them (7:7, 14; 11:5; 16:15; 23:39; 24:20; 25:5; 30:3; 31:32; 32:22; 34:13. Does Yahweh also trouble the descendants for the wrongdoings of their ancestors, to the third and fourth generation?[[36]](#footnote-36)
* Specifically, Yahweh will bring calamity to Judah “on account of Manasseh ben Hezekiah, King of Judah, because of what he did in Jerusalem” (15:4). The nuance implied by this statement is that the people as a whole pays a price for the actions of its leaders. While Westerners can hardly complain about this reality because we elect our leaders, Judahites might have done so when they do not. But a people and its leaders are bound up together whether or not people choose their leaders. The enjoy blessings through this relationship and they experience troubles. The judgment that “the analyses of Jeremiah are altogether more profound” than those in 15:4[[37]](#footnote-37) risks surrendering the insights expressed in the latter.
* The implication need not be that Yahweh will punish the second, third, and fourth generations irrespective of their own lives. It is this gloomy way of excusing oneself from responsibility for one’s destiny that Jeremiah elsewhere outlaws (31:29). The confession Jeremiah puts on people’s lips (14:20) has them identify their own faithlessness and waywardness with that of their parents. And the “because” that may be an addition in 15:5 safeguards any claim that the statement in 15:4 is unfair. “You yourself” have deserted me; that is why “I’m extending my hand against you” (15:6).
* Conversely, Lev 26:40-42 envisages that “they will confess their waywardness and their ancestors’ waywardness in their trespass that they committed against me.” Then “if by chance their foreskinned mind bows down and then they make amends for their waywardness, I will be mindful of my pact with Jacob, and also my pact with Isaac, and also my pact with Abraham.” Neither Jeremiah nor other parts of the First Testament could imagine that Israel might engage in serious turning and Yahweh might still insist on punishing them for their ancestors’ wrongdoing.
* But an the implication of 14:20 is that the ancestors’ wrongdoings were so deeply ingrained that the children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren never managed to throw them off.[[38]](#footnote-38) And an implication of 15:4 is that the actions of one generation of leadership may be so far-reaching that subsequent generations of leadership may be unable to reverse them – as the Josiah story implies. “The boat was set to go over the falls a century earlier, and nothing that Israel, or its religious leaders (including Jeremiah) accomplished could finally do anything about such an eventuality.”[[39]](#footnote-39) But it’s never over until it’s over, and while this reality prompts reflection and understanding after 587, in the years leading up to that moment people are challenged to assume that their fate is not fixed, and to act accordingly.

**14:19** Jeremiah again articulates Judah’s protest, perhaps in light of events such as those of 597, and/or in light of the threats he has issued, and/or (in the context in which this protest now appears in the scroll) in light of the message in vv. 17-18. The question *have you actually rejected Judah* is language Jeremiah himself could use on Judah’s behalf, both because he often uses this verb (e.g., 6:30; 7:29) and because he often uses the idiom whereby one combines the infinitival and the finite form of a verb (e.g., 9:4 [3]; 13:17). The protest is Jeremiah’s formulation of what Judah might be imagined as saying. On the other hand, the question *has your spirit loathed Zion* takes up an expression that is otherwise confined to Lev 26, where it refers both to the possibility of Yahweh’s spirit loathing Israel and to the possibility of Israel’s spirit loathing Yahweh. It also makes clear that on both sides loathing does not imply only a feeling of disgust but an action that goes with it: loathing implies pushing away or throwing up. *Rejected* has the same implication: it means discarding, throwing away.[[40]](#footnote-40) The objects of the throwing up/throwing away worryingly cover both nation or people and its religious center. Jeremiah has several times referred to Yahweh’s striking Israel down, and made clear the answer to the question *why have you struck us down* (2:30; 5:1-6). The word *healing* perhaps then encouraged the repeating in v. 19b of the plaintive lament from 8:15; the word comes in Jeremiah only in these two places.

**20-21** Jeremiah again goes on to articulate the explicit prayer that Judah prays or needs to pray, in language that reads like his formulation even if the substance is Judah’s – and in that case, even though he knows they do not really understand the significance of their own words, so that the prayer is “a tragic exercise in futility.”[[41]](#footnote-41) One novelty is the plea *don’t disown us*. The appeal and the familiar argument *for the sake of your name* are developed in the next line. It is developed in the exhortation *don’t humiliate your honored throne.* Yahweh’s throne was Jerusalem in 3:17; here, that understanding fits the asking of a question about Zion in v. 19. Acting against the city means acting against his own kingly seat. The appeal is further developed in the positive exhortation *be mindful of your pact* *with us* and thus do not *violate* it. The references to throne and pact compare (in reverse order) with the references to Judah and Zion in v. 19. The verbs carry some irony. On one hand, the people have reason to be worried about Yahweh being mindful (v. 10); and on the other, in light of 11:10 it takes some hutzpah to appeal to Yahweh not to violate his pact with them. Reading this message in light of Jer 11 would suggest that Jeremiah is referring to the Moses pact. But he also believes in the David pact (33:19-22) and the parallelism with Jerusalem as Yahweh’s throne points in this direction. Maybe he would see them as different iterations of the same commitment.

**22** The confession Jeremiah puts on their lips has parallel implications. If only they did ask the question, *among the nations’ empty things* (8:19; 10:8) *are there ones who make it rain, or do the heavens – do they give downpours?* The alternative forms of the question suggestively juxtapose the roles and capacities of supernatural forces and of natural forces, as Jeremiah moves elsewhere between these two ways of articulating the forces that bring calamity to Judah. The heavens can note and respond to events (2:12), but they cannot do anything on their own. While Jeremiah might have in mind astral powers,[[42]](#footnote-42) he does not otherwise use the bare expression “heavens” to refer to them. But juxtaposing nations and heavens implies that the heavens can’t do anything on their own. “Doubtless there is some implanted power in the heavens” yet “the heavens do not of themselves give rain, but at the command of God.”[[43]](#footnote-43) Reference to Yahweh as the one who causes rain would be apposite in the context of references to drought, but war not drought is the background to this section, and Yahweh’s sovereignty in nature and the gift of rain is of general importance, every year.[[44]](#footnote-44) *You’re the one, aren’t you, Yahweh our God*. Thus *we hope in you, because you made all these things* – the rain and the downpours.

**15:1** Once more, how could Yahweh resist this appeal? A declaration of forgiveness and a promise of relief and restoration must surely follow. Yahweh again can resist with ease. In this context, his reference to *my spirit* suggests a link to what precedes (14:19), and might have suggested the unit’s incorporation here. *Moses and Samuel* could *stand before* Yahweh in meetings of his cabinet as participants and be successful as intercessors. Moses did so at Sinai (Exod 32 –33; see also Num 14). Samuel did so at Mizpah and committed himself to interceding on an ongoing basis (1 Sam 7:8-9; 12:7-25). The unit more specifically suggests the picture of the people gathering before Yahweh to present their plea, like subjects coming before the king, and of Jeremiah fulfilling his role as their representative, the mediator between people and King introducing them into his presence. But the King bids him*, send them off from before my face, so that they go away*. The verbs carry the irony of being exodus verbs.[[45]](#footnote-45) If Jeremiah is a prophet like Moses, his Moses-likeness takes an upside-down form. In addition, *send off* and *go away* are the verbs for divorce in Deut 24:1-3 (the first though not the second come in Jer 3:1).[[46]](#footnote-46)

**2-3** Where to? Yahweh’s formulation could suggest that different fates are set for different people, though maybe one should not press the point. *Death* is most people’s destiny. It might come by *sword* or by *hunger*, which often feature as a pair (e.g., 14:13, 15, 16, 18). To complete the two bicola one might then expect a reference to epidemic (cf. 14:12), but the good news is that some people will be merely taken into *captivity*. In gruesome imagery, Yahweh appends a further formulation. *I will appoint over them four families* of deathly experience; in case readers are inclined to doubt it, he offers his recurrent *Yahweh’s affirmation*. First there is again the *sword* whose role of course is *to slay*, but slaying is not the end of the fate that Judahites are invited to look forward to. The second is that in the city scavenger *dogs* will *drag* people’s bodies *away*; it might be preliminary to eating them, but dogs enjoy playing with things, and eating comes in the next line. The third and fourth families are ones that will attend to people who fall on the battle field, scavenger *birds of the heavens and animals of the earth* who will *eat and destroy*.

**4** When it happens, *all the kingdoms of the earth* will be around. The Babylonians will be able to stand for the kingdoms of the earth – they are the imperial power. But they will be accompanied by the Edomites, the Moabites, the Ammonites…. And, says Yahweh, *I will make* the Judahites *into something horrifying* to them all. The extra piece of explanation is that it will happen *on account of Manasseh ben Hezekiah, King of Judah, because of what he did in Jerusalem*. Jeremiah has already had the Judahites acknowledging *the waywardness of our ancestors*. Elsewhere, Manasseh is chief of the guilty. Only Jeremiah refers to *Manasseh* *ben Hezekiah*; perhaps Hezekiah’s positive reputation (cf. 26:18-19) heightens the disparaging of his son.[[47]](#footnote-47) While it is Jeremiah’s only mention of Manasseh, the comment fits the explanation for the fall of Jerusalem in 2 Kgs 23:26; 24:3. The last four kings of Judah are his grandchildren and great grandchildren.

**5** There follows another poetic unit that is presumably of separate origin. The *because* now makes a link, and the question *about whether things are well* makes for a troubling link with 14:19. We know that Yahweh will not pity the people so as to hold back from bringing calamity upon it (13:14); now he adds that there will be no one to *pity you, Jerusalem* after the calamity. There will be no one to *bemoan* *you*: the word refers to the physical expression of grief by shaking the head, nodding, and quivering (4:1). No one willcare enough to *turn aside* *to ask about* *you*. In other contexts, questions about who will do so would imply sympathy or protest. Here they are more like mockery.[[48]](#footnote-48) Yet they also hint at the “divine ambivalence.”[[49]](#footnote-49) We need to “understand the words said to Jerusalem with much foreboding,” like Jesus’s words in Matt 23:37-38.[[50]](#footnote-50)

**6** Yahweh goes on to issue another accusation implying an answer to a question that might be raised by v. 4. No, the present generation cannot blame their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents, even if they have been deeply influenced by them.[[51]](#footnote-51) *You yourself have deserted me*, Yahweh says to the city, again adding *Yahweh’s affirmation*. That act of desertion lay behind Yahweh’s act of desertion (7:29; 12:7). *You go backwards*, away from where I point (7:24). So that’s why *I am extending my hand* in your direction *and devastating you*. The verbs are qatal, and I take them to refer to what Yahweh certainly intends (Vg has future tense verbs; LXX has some past, some future; Tg has past) and translate them as present continuous;[[52]](#footnote-52) there will be other examples in the next three verses. But after 587 it would be natural to refer them to what Yahweh has now done. Yahweh’s extending his hand is often good news (e.g., Exod 6:6), but not this time.[[53]](#footnote-53) I have threatened to act in this way over the centuries and over recent decades and talked much of acting in wrath, but I have rarely done it. I have usually let you carry on kicking me in the teeth (it is the characteristic that makes Jesus an accurate incarnation of the God of Israel). I am now saying that enough is enough. *I’ve got weary of relenting*.[[54]](#footnote-54)

**7** Here are the frightening details. *Winnowing them with a winnower*, a pitchfork, ought to be a positive image; it’s designed to achieve something positive, in getting rid of chaff. To make a related point, Yahweh previously denied that he was merely winnowing (4:11-12). Here the stress lies on the flailing that the farmer does with his pitchfork. It’s going to happen *in the country’s gateways*, in each community and family. Thus *I’m making* my people *childless* (Hebrew has a verb with this meaning as English does not, correlative to a word for “orphan”). *I’m wiping out my people* (cf. 1:10, though here the verb is piel as in 12:17). Once again Yahweh provides his rationale: it will happen *on account of their paths from which they have not turned*. It’s Jeremiah’s standard accusation, which is also his standard implicit exhortation. Won’t you listen, Jerusalem? Yahweh doesn’t want to hear words of lament and confession, a turning that is a matter of words. He wants to see some turning that is a matter of paths.

**8** As far as death is concerned, it is the men who pay more of the price in war, but it is therefore the women and children who live on as bereaved. Instead of saying “I am making its widows numerous,” Jeremiah engages a circumlocution:[[55]](#footnote-55) the invasion will mean that *widows are becoming more numerous for me than the sand of the seas*. The circumlocution is accompanied by an image that is grievous in light of its usual context (e.g., Gen 22:17; Hos 1:10 [2:1]). It implies a reversal of the promise to Israel’s ancestors. So *I’m bringing for them*, *upon a youth’s mother, a destroyer at midday*. Midday may suggest the time when one least expects an attack; for the sons who are involved in the battle it means their life ends when it should be only half-over.[[56]](#footnote-56) For them the day ends at midday. Either way, it will be as if people are hit by a calamity that no one could have expected: *I’m making fall upon them, suddenly,* *shock and terror.*

**9** Suppose there is a mother with the great blessing of *seven* sons. She hears that all of them have been slain. It will not be surprising that she *fades away*. The recurrence of that word suggests the specific influence and reversal of the reference to seven sons and fading away in 1 Sam 2:5. Indeed, *she breathes out her life*. Here life is over, one way or another. For her, too, *her sun is setting while it’s still daytime*. Instead of the pride and honor of being the mother of such an impressive family, *she is shamed and dismayed*. And supposing some people somehow survive: *the remainder of them I will give to the sword* *before their enemies*. Yes, vv. 5-9 are about “the end of Jerusalem.”[[57]](#footnote-57) Yahweh speaks of the execution of judgment, but his words give Vv. 7b-9 “an overtone of lament.”[[58]](#footnote-58)

## The Persecutors (15:10-21)

10Alas for me, mother, that you gave birth to me,

a man involved in argument

and a man involved in contention with the entire country.

Though I have not lent and people have not lent to me,

everyonea is slighting me.b

11Yahweh has said:c

If I am not letting you loosed regarding good things,

if I am not making fall upon youe a time of dire things,f

a time of distress, with the enemy….g

12Does iron break,h

iron from the north, and bronze?

13Your resources and your stores I will make into plunder,

not for a price, buti for all your wrongdoings and for all your territory.

14And I will make them passj with your enemies

through a country you have not known.

Because a fire that has flared through my anger –

against youk it will burn.l

15You yourself acknowledged, Yahweh –

be mindful of me and attend to me,

and take redress for me from my pursuers.

Do not, through your being long-tempered, take me –

acknowledge my bearing of reviling because of you.

16Your words presented themselves, and I ate them;

your wordm became to me

a joy and the rejoicing of my mind.

Because your name was proclaimed over me,

Yahweh, the God of armies.n

17I have not sat in the company of revelers and made merry –

before your hand I sat alone,

because you filled me with condemnation.o

18Why has my pain become eternal,

my wound grave, refusing to heal?

You’ve actually becomep to me like a deceptive thing,

water that can’t be trusted.q

19Therefore Yahweh has said this:

If you turn and I turn you,

before me you will stand.r

If you give out what is valuable rather thans what is garbage

you will be my very mouth.

Those people will turn to you;

but you – you will not turn to them.

20I will make you to this people

a bronze wall, fortified.

They will do battle against you, but they will not win over you,

because I will be with you to deliver you, to snatch you awayt (Yahweh’s affirmation).

21I will snatch you away from the hand of the faithless,

release you from the clutch of the terrifying.u

Literally “all of it”: see the note at 6:13.

“Curse” (LXX) is too strong a translation of *qālal*; contrast *’ārûr* in 11:3. MT has a section marker here.

For MT *’āmar* (cf. Vg, Sym, Aq, Syr, Tg), LXX suggests *’āmēn* “truly,” but this reading cannot lead into anything like the MT text that follows, where LXX’s paraphrase may indicate that it was puzzled by the difficulties. One key question is the identity of *you*. Although vv. 11-12 could be understood to refer either to Jeremiah or to Judah, *you* must surely be Judah in vv. 13-14 (against e.g., Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:455-57), and the identity of *you* surely cannot change without announcement in vv. 13-14 (against e.g., Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:737); therefore *you* in vv. 11-12 is Judah (cf. H. G. Reventlow, *Liturgie und prophetisches Ich bei Jeremia* [Gütersloh : Mohn, 1963], 210-28; also R. M. Paterson, “Reinterpretation in the Book of Jeremiah,” *JSOT* 28[1984]: 37-46).The brief opening *Yahweh has said* also does not look like an expression to introduce Yahweh’s response to Jeremiah.

Q *šērîtikā* look like a form from *šārâ*, which otherwise comes only in Job 37:3 where it means “let loose” (of lightning); cf. BDB. Rashi (in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage) compares Aramaic *šārā’* in Daniel; while it can positively suggest “release,” it can also have a negative significance (Dan 5:6). K implies *šârôtikā* which looks like a form from *šārar*, perhaps a byform of *šārâ* (*HALOT*), perhaps *DCH*’s *šārar* III “treat with hostility/vex.” Vg, Aq, Tg imply *šē’ērîtikā* “your remainder,” which generates the possibility that the word comes from the root *šā’ar*, spelled defectively in MT, and it could make good sense (cf. Qimchi in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage), but more likely a form from the rare *šārâ*/*šārar* became assimilated to a form from *šā’ar* than vice versa. The assimilation does draw attention to the paronomasia with v. 9.

Tg implies “I will make them get you to pray for them,” which makes sense if the *you* is Jeremiah.

The two if-clauses without a protasis are a form of oath: see the comment.

While the grammatically more straightforward translation would be *making fall upon you at a time of dire things, at a time of trouble, the enemy*, this understanding leaves *’et-hā’ōyēb* high and dry at the end of the line. And *pāga‘* is used in a variety of ways with *bә* (see BDB); I have taken the *bә* on *bә‘ēt* each time to denote the object. For this usage in general, see *DCH* 2:86; *HALOT*, 105b). LXX, Vg take *’et* as the preposition rather than the object marker.

I take *yārōa‘* from *rā‘a‘* II as intransitive as in 11:16, not as transitive (BDB).

LXX lacks *not* and *but*: the loss is indeed a price the people pay – for their wrongdoings.

For MT *wәhă‘abartî* (cf. Vg, Sym) LXX, Tg imply *wәhă‘abadtî* “and I will make [you] serve your enemies” (cf. 17:4), which makes good sense.

The *you* becomes plural here.

MT has a section marker here. Vv. 13-14 reappear in a variant form at 17:3-4.

K repeats the plural from the previous colon.

MT has a section marker here.

MT has a section marker here.

The infinitive precedes the finite verb, underlining the fact.

MT has a section marker here.

Vg has “if you turn, I will turn you, and you will stand before me,” but this translation, shortening the protasis, ill fits the position of MT’s “and.” LXX “if you turn, and I turn you, and you stand before me, and if you give out…” adds an “and” and lengthens the protasis.

LXX, Vg translate *min* “from.”

LXX omits this second verb, eliminating the repetition.

MT has a marker here.

The fourth exchange within 14:1 – 15:21 pairs with the second, in moving between protests from Jeremiah to Yahweh and a response by Yahweh. But it does so in a more complex way that involves Judah, so that it also pairs with the first and third exchanges. It is “part of the dialogical or trialogical dispute which illustrates in highly dramatic fashion the triangular relationship between YHWH, his people and their officials, and YHWH’s prophet.”[[59]](#footnote-59) The section outlines:

vv. 10-18 Jeremiah’s protest: his persecution

v. 10 people’s attacks

one tricolon and one bicolon

vv. 11-14 Yahweh’s threat to them appealed to

an introduction, a tricolon, and four bicola

vv. 15-18 Jeremiah’s plea, his claim, and his accusation

v. 15 the plea: one tricolon and one bicolon

vv. 16-17 the claim: two tricola either side of one bicolon

v. 18 the accusation: two bicola

vv. 19-21 Yahweh’s response:

v. 19 Jeremiah needs to turn

an introduction and three bicola

vv. 20-21 Yahweh will protect

three bicola

Yahweh’s lines to Judah (vv. 11-14) and to Jeremiah (vv. 19-21) follow regular poetic form. Jeremiah’s lines (vv. 10, 15-18) come to a similar length but they are anarchic in a way that matches their content, comprising four tricola and five bicola. The effect is to underscore the tortuous nature of the exchange, with a contrast between Yahweh’s relative calmness and the overflowing of Jeremiah’s thinking and emotions. As a “prayerful conversation,”[[60]](#footnote-60) it is quite something; Jeremiah’s protest suggests “a wholly other world”[[61]](#footnote-61) compared with what preceded. It overlaps with protests in the Psalms, though the comparison also serves to show how they are distinctive, and compares with the cry of marginalized people in other contexts.[[62]](#footnote-62)

* It begins (v. 10) with no address to Yahweh, like the account of Judah in 14:2-6; it comprises only protest
* The quotation of Yahweh’s words (vv. 11-14) functions a little like the recollection that can buttress a protest – it could stand on its own, and the overlap between vv. 13-14 and 17:3-4 may mean that it combines two originally separate messages that have been inserted into vv. 10, 15-21, which work fine without them
* The plea (v. 15) eventually follows, with some suggestion of the three directions that protests and pleas may work, in relation to “you,” “me,” and ‘them”
* The explicit recollection (vv. 16-17) functions like a claim to commitment in a protest psalm, further buttressing the plea
* The closing question and accusation (v. 18) make for an unusual ending and contrast with statements of trust and hope in many psalms.
* Yahweh’s response (vv. 19-21) is not the affirmative one for which a protester hopes, and it thus compares with his responses in 14:10-12, 15-18; 15:1-9, but it is now a response to Jeremiah himself which is confrontational but also open.

**10** Rhetorically, Jeremiah addresses his *mother*, with sentiments that parallel those expressed at much greater length in Job 3.[[63]](#footnote-63) One could not quarrel with his self-description. Within a few lines of the beginning of Jer 2 he was talking about Yahweh’s *argument* with his people (2:9), and he has been presenting that argument through the scroll so far, though he will also point out that it is in their interests for him to do so (25:31; 50:34; 51:36). He is thus a man of *contention* (*mādôn*): the word mostly comes in Proverbs, and one can imagine people complaining about him as an angry young man who indeed stirs up contention (e.g., Prov 15:18; 29:22), and he did protest about the leadership’s failure to contend for people’s rights (*dîn*: 5:28; 21:12; 22:16). He is caught in the conflict between Yahweh and Judah,[[64]](#footnote-64) and he is arguing and contending with them, and they with him. “There is remarkable consistency between “the man” and “the message.” The prophetic image portrays someone who stands opposed to the mainstream of contemporary thought, a “man of conflict” (15:10), for on every level, whether political, societal, or religious—he is in conflict with the dominant opinions of his time.”[[65]](#footnote-65) He’s in conflict with everyone (priests, prophets, scribes, administration…). *The entire country* knew it and talked about it, Jeremiah declares, hyperbolically; it’s his reputation, and he doesn’t like it. If he had been engaged in dealings whereby he *lent* to people who were in economic trouble and would want his debt repaid or whereby *people lent* tohim because he was in economic trouble and they wanted him to repay, it might have led to conflict – but he hasn’t been so engaged. There’s no indication that he is talking about wrongful lending, maybe involving charging interest, or about forced foreclosure; but anyway, his claim makes for quite a contrast over against what he sees in the community (e.g., 5:1-5). Perhaps his comment about lending alludes to a proverbial saying,[[66]](#footnote-66) equivalent to Shakespeare’s “neither a borrower nor a lender be; for loan oft loses both itself and friend.”[[67]](#footnote-67) Yet *everyone*, the entire community*, is slighting me* (*qālal* piel): they are saying he is someone insignificant and irrelevant and/or they are wishing him to be so.

**11** Jeremiah provides the background to that image of him as a man of argument and contention. While this declaration by Yahweh might be one that Yahweh now makes in response to Jeremiah’s protest, in the context it looks more like an example of the kind of thing Yahweh has kept having Jeremiah say; the threat addresses Judah as “you.” Yahweh uses the form of oath whereby people express the wish that a terrible fate befall themselves if they fail to live up to what the if-clause refers to, but uses the variant on that oath whereby they leave the actual wish unstated and taken for granted, and just state the if-clause.[[68]](#footnote-68) If a human being were speaking, then he might say “may God do this to me and may he do more” (e.g., 2 Sam 3:35). The English sentence thus runs out in dots to represent the ellipse, which has some symbolic significance because there are questions about the verse’s meaning as a whole, particularly its two verbs.[[69]](#footnote-69) But the general point is clear. Yahweh is reiterating his repeated threat (whose delivery makes Jeremiah a man of contention) that he will bring about calamity on Judah, whose future is not going to be characterized by *good things* (cf. 14:11) but by *dire things* (cf. 11:11, 12, 14, 15, 17) and *distress* (cf. 4:31; 6:24).

**12** In what follows, there is little problem about the meaning of the words, though their reference is more allusive. But the words *iron* and *bronze* recall the commission when Yahweh promised to make Jeremiah *an iron pillar* and *bronze walls over against the entire country* (1:18) – that *entire country* to which Jeremiah referred in v. 10. So alongside the reaffirmation of Yahweh’s threat to Judah is a reminder that is formally addressed to Judah but is indirectly addressed to Jeremiah about some facts concerning Jeremiah that Yahweh has guaranteed. *Can iron break*, especially when it is *iron from the north*? Can *bronze* break? While the reference to the north will remind people of the invader from the north,[[70]](#footnote-70) *iron from the north* could suggest a notably strong metal: the iron-mines on the Black Sea were well-known in this connection.[[71]](#footnote-71) Yahweh’s point is that Judah is not to make the mistake of thinking that it can defeat Jeremiah or dispose of him. He will not break. Yahweh guarantees it.

**13-14** Yahweh backs up his threat to Judah with an anticipation of lines in 17:3-4. Perhaps their original setting was there and they have been brought back here by Yahweh or Jeremiah or Jeremiah’s curators to amplify Yahweh’s promise to Jeremiah.[[72]](#footnote-72) Talk of *your* (singular) *resources and your stores* suggests Yahweh is not addressing ordinary Judahites, prophets, or even priests, but the king. Jeremiah’s many other references to resources commonly refer to the army and the one to whom the resources belong is the king (e.g., 52:4, 8). Likewise *stores* would denote the nation’s assets overseen by him, which Yahweh also elsewhere warns will end up as *plunder* (20:5). The expression *not for a price* distinguishes this version of Yahweh’s words from 17:3-4; it suggests, “I didn’t get anything out of it, you know” (cf. Isa 52:3; Ps 44:12 [13]). It was purely action undertaken *for all your wrongdoings and for all your territory* – that is, for your wrongdoings throughout your territory, with the implication that the entire country was implicated in the king’s wrongdoing. He was its leader. Yahweh often focuses on Jerusalem, but the rest of the country should not think that he has not noticed what is happening elsewhere or that other parts of the country are safe. So Yahweh *will* *make* these resources and treasures *pass with your enemies* (MT) or *will make you serve your enemies* (LXX) *through* or *in a country you have not known*. Lying behind this threat is not the anger of Jeremiah but the fact that a *fire has flared through my anger*. The words recur from Deut 32:22, which suggests they are being fulfilled here. Thus *against you it will burn*.

**15** Jeremiah himself starts again, picking up the protest he began in v. 10. Once more his opening words take up from his commission:[[73]](#footnote-73) *you yourself acknowledged* (cf. 1:5), so you should *be mindful of me* and also *attend to me*, another verb that Yahweh used on that commissioning occasion, though with a different meaning (1:10). *Take redress* (cf. 11:20) would be the concrete expression of mindfulness and attentiveness. Pursuing (*rādap*) is a word of general meaning, but a context such as this one it suggests something like persecution, people attacking someone when they have no warrant except that they violently oppose the person’s convictions and public statements. Jeremiah’s persecutors might be the king and his administration or might be people like the Anathoth community. And God’s *being long-tempered* is a welcome characteristic when it works our way, but his being long-tempered with these people is a different matter. Jeremiah doesn’t want Yahweh to *take* him – as is the case in English, that verb can be used to signify letting someone die or causing them to die (e.g., Gen 5:24; Ezek 33:4). Jeremiah picks up the verb *acknowledge* again: he needs Yahweh to *acknowledge my bearing of reviling because of you*. Once more, to *acknowledge* means not merely recognizing something mentally, but taking action in light of what one knows. The same will be true of *reviling*. If reviling were merely words of insult, it might be harmless. But reviling is something that issues in action. While people can’t take action against Yahweh, they can take action against his representative, so he is worried.

**16** Yet again he takes Yahweh and thus takes his readers back to his commission. *I’m putting my words in your mouth*, Yahweh had said (1:9). Yes, *your words presented themselves, and I ate them;[[74]](#footnote-74) your word became a joy to me and the rejoicing of my mind.* It is the only occasion when he refers to joy in connection with being a prophet;[[75]](#footnote-75) indeed, all his references to joy and rejoicing relate to their being taken away (7:34; 16:9; 25:10), until 33:11. “How could the word of God be so sweet and pleasant to the Prophet, when yet it was so full of bitterness?” But he knew they were Yahweh’s words and Yahweh’s message.[[76]](#footnote-76) He was therefore okay about their negative implications, which were what led to the reviling. His acceptance of them also linked with the fact that *your name was proclaimed over me*, as it had been proclaimed over the temple and the people (7:10, 11, 14, 30; 14:9). It meant Yahweh owned him. Yahweh was his master. Therefore he identified with his master’s words. But also therefore Yahweh would protect him.

**17** His commission had implications for his way of life: *I have not sat in the company of revelers and made merry*. Reveling and merrymaking could suggest ordinary life occasions (cf. 16:2), or in this context festival celebrations. One day they will be appropriate again (30:19; 31:4), but not now. Jeremiah will not join in Thanksgiving or Christmas festivities: *because of your hand I sat alone, because you filled me with condemnation*.[[77]](#footnote-77) He could not be involved in such events and keep quiet about the clash between what they presupposed and what he knew. Yahweh’s hand can make prophets move or speak (1 Kgs 18:46; 2 Kgs 3:15) or hold them down (Isa 8:11), as happens to ordinary people (Pss 32:4; 39:10 [11]).[[78]](#footnote-78) Jeremiah was filled with both joy (v. 16) and fury. No wonder he was torn apart. He could look schizophrenic.[[79]](#footnote-79)

**18** And there is no ceasing, because he has to keep declaring the coming of a monumental calamity that never arrives (perhaps a plaint like this one must antedate 597). We know from his messages that the city’s fall is perpetually a present reality in his mind. He identifies with the city in this virtual-reality present suffering. He is stuck in this chronological limbo and feels now the *pain* that is *eternal* of a *wound* that is *refusing to heal* (6:7; 8:21-22; 14:17); *grave* is the word he will use later, of Judah’s wound (30:12, 15). The dynamics of this reality reflect the divine long-tempered-ness of which v. 15 spoke, that long-tempered-ness which is good news for Judah. But for Jeremiah who has to keep declaring the imminence of a catastrophe that never comes, it means that *you’ve actually become to me like a deceptive thing, water that cannot be trusted.* A spring like Gihon flows all year. It can be relied on. But from time to time a spring that people thought was reliable stops flowing. It deceives people into trusting its supply and lets them down. Such is Jeremiah’s image for Yahweh’s deceptive unreliability in relation to him. Job said his friends were like deceitful and unreliable in that way (Job 6:14-21). Jeremiah says God is.

**19** Now Yahweh responds. Once again Jeremiah indicates how the protest-response relationship of prayer cannot be assumed to involve a simply positive and reassuring comeback from Yahweh. Lament “does not provide a formula that guarantees God's favorable response.”[[80]](#footnote-80) The four occurrences of *turn* associate the response with Yahweh’s regular diction in Jeremiah, especially in 3:1 – 4:2. *If you turn* is exactly the expression Yahweh uses in addressing Israel in 4:2. The implication is that Jeremiah is in the same position as Israel. He has turned away from Yahweh and he needs to turn back. There is another parallel, perhaps even more uncomfortable. In 3:1 – 4:2 Yahweh opened up the question whether he would have Israel back, and never explicitly said that he would. Here, too, *I turn you* is the second part of the *if­-*clause. In both contexts Yahweh makes it impossible for the other partner (Israel or Jeremiah) to take anything for granted. The relationship between God and people or God and prophet is not contractual. Neither Israel nor Jeremiah can turn to Yahweh on the basis of simply knowing that they will be accepted. They have to turn because it is the right thing. The situation parallels that between two human beings, when someone who has done wrong acknowledges their wrongdoing to the other party and waits anxiously to see what the reaction will be. Of course there is a sense in which people can be sure they will be accepted by Yahweh, because he cannot avoid being the kind of God he is. There is a sense in which he is not free. He is not free to be other than himself. Yet in Jer 3 and 15, the rhetoric each time forbids people from taking Yahweh’s acceptance for granted. There is an “if” on Yahweh’s side as well as on theirs. On this occasion, the priority of Jeremiah’s move and the secondary nature of Yahweh’s contrasts with the situation in 1:8.[[81]](#footnote-81) But if Yahweh fulfills his *if* in response to Jeremiah’s fulfilling his, then *before me you will stand.* That expression takes us back to 15:1, with the implication that Jeremiah will be able to stand in Yahweh’s court and be Israel’s advocate. But in this context the other side to having that position has the emphasis. As well as articulating Israel’s words to Yahweh, he will be able to articulate Yahweh’s words to Israel – which the protest in vv. 15-18 has apparently imperiled. He will be free and under obligation to carry on preaching his uncompromising message, which is what is actually *valuable*. The Judahites would like him to preach *garbage*, about peace and good things. He has doubted whether Yahweh’s declarations of intent can be trusted; his threats have not come about and Jeremiah doesn’t think they are going to come about. He has thus fallen into taking the same view as his contemporaries. He needs to reaffirm his commitment to telling the truth. Then *you will be my very mouth*, if you go back to accepting the words put into your mouth by Yahweh (1:9) and uttering them. You will then have the possibility of being as Godlike as you could ever be and achieving “the peak of all virtue.”[[82]](#footnote-82) Finally in this verse Yahweh goes back to mine further the inexhaustible potential of that verb “turn*.*” *Those people will turn to you; you will not turn to them.* Later stories in the Jeremiah scroll will tell of people turning to Jeremiah, before and after 587 (Jer 37; 42). He is not to give into the temptation to becoming a false prophet.

**20-21** While the community might imperil Jeremiah by prevailing over him to give up on his message and come to look at things their way, it could also imperil his life in a more down-to-earth way (Jer 38). Once again Yahweh reverts to Jeremiah’s commission andrecycles words from 1:18-19,[[83]](#footnote-83) though adding an extra reassurance in the verb *deliver you*. He goes on to give further precision to the repeated promise: specifically, *I will snatch you away from the hand of the faithless*. The formulation is familiar words is then complemented by less familiar ones (though cf. Job 6:23) in a line manifesting a tight parallelism that brings closure to the tumultuous exchange:

and I will snatch you from the hand of the faithless

and I will release you from the clutch of the terrifying.

*Release* (*pādâ*: the conventional English translation “redeem” has different connotations) thus complements *snatch* with an expression that is less familiar in a Jeremianic context: indeed, only here and in 31:11 does Jeremiah use the verb, but both passages talk about being liberated from a kind of captivity. *Clutch* (*kap*) sharpens *hand*. And *terrifying* (*’āriṣ*)sharpens *faithless*: this word, too, occurs only once more in Jeremiah – applied to Yahweh (20:11). Whereas *faithless* suggests objective wrongdoing, *terrifying* suggests such people’s significance for those they threaten. Once more, Jeremiah gives an account of his agonizing not to let it all hang out for his own sake but thus to drive his hearers into looking at themselves. His protests are not ones that most readers should think to identify with (unless they are Dietrich Bonhoeffer or Martin Luther King). The point about the record of these protests is to confront the people who caused the trouble, “to confront readers with their own past and the profoundly negative effects their words and deeds have had on God’s own prophets (and leaders in every age!). Let readers not be too quick to make these laments their own! That appropriating move may be a subtle way of avoiding the indictment the prophet speaks.”[[84]](#footnote-84)

# Confrontations and Warnings: This Country and Domain (16:1 – 17:11)

Jer 16 – 17 “intensifies the overall theme of ‘plucking up and pulling down,’”[[85]](#footnote-85) though without neglecting building and planting.[[86]](#footnote-86) The questioning and response dynamic of Jer 14 – 15 disappears for a while; it will return in 17:12. Jer 16:1 – 17:11 is another sequence of units of separate origin. It would be an open question whether they have been juxtaposed unsystematically or assembled in a planned way. They do contain an above-average number of references to *this* *country* or *my country[[87]](#footnote-87)* or *this place* or the *domain* that belongs to Yahweh that he shares with Israel but from which he intends to throw Israel out; this motif thus loosely holds together the series of units.

16:1-13 four that have been provided with explicit links (*because* in vv. 5, 9; *all these things* in v. 10) and all relate to the suspension of celebration in the country in light of the grim events that are to come.

16:14-21 three that take the edge off that discouraging message by promising a more positive future and that would be a special encouragement after 587 when the grim events have happened.

17:1-11 four that have a background in the thinking and form of Proverbs, which now explicitly or implicitly relate to Judah’s situation in the monarchy’s last decades.

## Joy and Favor Suspended Here (16:1-13)

1Yahweh’s word came to me: 2You will not get yourself a wifea and you will not have sons and daughters in this place.b 3Because Yahweh has said this about the sons and about the daughters that are born in this place, and about their mothers who bear them and about their fathers who father them in this country:

4They will die deaths from sicknesses –c

they will not be lamented.

They will not be buried –

manure on the face of the ground they will become.d

By sword and by hunger they will come to an end,

and their corpse will be food,

For the bird in the heavens

and for the animal on the earth.e

5Because Yahweh has said this:

Don’t come into a house where there is a wake,

don’t go to lament and don’t bemoan them.

Because I have gathered up my well-being from this people (Yahweh’s affirmation),

commitment and compassion.f

6Big people and little people will die in this country –

they will not be buried.

People will not lament for them, they will not gash themselves,

and they will not clip themselves for them.

7They will not give a share to themg in mourning,h

to console someone for a death.

They will not give them a consolation chalice to drink

for his father or for his mother.

8And into a house of feasting you will not come

to sit with them to eat and drink.i

9Because Yahweh of Armies, Israel’s God, has said this:

Here am I, stopping from this place,

before your eyes and in your time,

The voice of joy and the voice of rejoicing,

the voice of groom and the voice of bride.

10Then, when you tell this people all these things and they say to you, Why has Yahweh spoken against us of all this great dire trouble, and what is our waywardness and what is our wrongdoing that we have done in relation to Yahweh our God, 11you will say to them, Because your ancestors abandoned me (Yahweh’s affirmation) and went after other gods, served them, and bowed down to them. Me they abandoned and my instruction they did not keep. 12And you yourselves have acted direly in acting worse than your ancestors, and there are you, going each one after the determination of his dire mind, so as not to listen to me. 13So I will hurl you from upon this country to a country that you have not known, you and your ancestors, and you will serve other gods there, day and night,j in that Ik will show you no favor.l

In vv. 1-2a LXX has “And you will not get a wife, the Lord, the God of Israel, says,” suggesting the independent shaping of MT and LXX as this message that became part of the scroll.

A has a section marker here.

The word order with the verb postponed, combined with the asyndeton, suggests that the first clause is subordinate to the second.

Here the second colon in the asyndeton manifests that word order. The line recurs from 8:2.

MT has a section marker here.

The *my* in the previous colon could carry over into this one. LXX lacks this colon and the next two.

Before or instead of *lāhem*, LXX, Vg may imply *leḥem* “bread” (cf. Isa 58:7), or bread may be the taken-for-granted object of the verb (cf. *pāraś* in Lam 4:4, though there *leḥem* came in the parallel colon).

For MT ‘*ēbel* Vg implies *’ābēl* “a mourner.”

MT has a marker here.

LXX lacks *day and night*.

LXX, Vg has “they”; Aq agrees with MT.

MT has a section marker here.

While the medieval chapter division corresponds to MT’s, Jeremiah continues to speak of Yahweh’s dealings with him, and the section develops the theme of staying alone and abstaining from revelry and merrymaking (15:17), though the element of exchange between Jeremiah and Yahweh disappears for a while. Units that look separate in origin but that overlap in their themes come together and reinforce each other.

vv. 1-4 Yahweh bids Jeremiah not marry or have children

v. 1 Jeremiah’s introduction

vv. 2-4 Yahweh’s message:

v. 2 The instruction

vv. 3-4 The rationale

While vv. 1-3 are prose, v. 4 comprises four bicola, the second pair linked by enjambment

vv. 5-8 Yahweh bids Jeremiah not join in people’s mourning

v. 5aα Jeremiah’s introduction

vv. 5aβ-8 Yahweh’s message

v. 5aβγ The instruction

vv. 5b-7 The rationale

v. 8 The instruction restated

Rationale and restatement comprise seven bicola

v. 9 Yahweh explains the rationale for the biddings

v. 9aα Jeremiah’s introduction

v. 9aβb Yahweh’s message: further rationale (a pair of bicola linked by enjambment making a link with vv. 1-4 as well as with vv. 5-8)

vv. 10-13 Yahweh instructs Jeremiah concerning what to say when people ask what lies behind that rationale, summarizing the message he has been commissioning Jeremiah to deliver over decades.

Jeremiah thus first relates how Yahweh commissioned another symbolic act, like the one in 13:1-12aα – or three symbolic acts,[[88]](#footnote-88) all of which go against natural inclinations.[[89]](#footnote-89) A difference is that Jeremiah does not relate his fulfilling the commission. But a related similarity is that again there is no record of people seeing Jeremiah fulfill them. While it is easy to imagine people being aware of his staying single and not taking part in mourning or in feasting and asking why he did so, it is significant that the scroll does not record their doing so. The account of Yahweh’s message coming to him is the thing that counts, as an exercise in communication not just for his immediate acquaintances but for people reading the scroll. It is a story about “the flesh made word…. Jeremiah, generally active as performer and/or interpreter, has on this occasion become a (passive) stage object,” turned into a sign. “Jeremiah's physicality (and in this narrative, his sexuality), must recede or be bracketed off in favour of textuality.”[[90]](#footnote-90) It illustrates how a symbolic act is an exercise in rhetoric at least as much as a stage in the implementing of something.[[91]](#footnote-91) The account of the message’s coming thus leads into explanations of its rationale rather than accounts of the fulfillment.

**1** This conventional-looking introduction came previously only in 1:4, 11, 13; 2:1; 13:3, 8, all relating to some visual or experiential event (except 2:1 which tests the rule, because there the phrase introduces 2:1 – 6:27 as a whole). The more literalistic translation “Yahweh’s word happened to Jeremiah[[92]](#footnote-92) might thus be apposite here.

**2** Yahweh requires the prophet’s marriage to serve his work as a prophet, as was the case with Hosea, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, and with someone who becomes a eunuch to serve God’s reign (Matt 19:12). “Hosea married a harlot to demonstrate the corruption of Israel’s relation to Yahweh, while [Jeremiah] married no one at all to demonstrate the end of Yahweh’s relation to Israel.”[[93]](#footnote-93) In a traditional society, people marry young, so maybe this instruction belongs to a time soon after Jeremiah’s commission, and before the Josianic reformation.[[94]](#footnote-94) And in a traditional society people do not deliberately stay single, so Yahweh’s instruction is counter-cultural. It calls his masculinity in question.[[95]](#footnote-95) Further, the Scriptures make a more integral link between marriage and having children than is usual in Western culture. The second part of Yahweh’s instruction is thus the more radical and counter-cultural, and is the element developed in vv. 3-4. Having children was integral to God’s purpose in creating the world – otherwise, the world was never going to be full or managed (Gen 1:26-28). Further, it was integral to God’s purpose in commissioning and blessing Abraham and to the future of the people he had chosen, so a refusal to have children imperils that future. Yahweh’s command to Jeremiah would seem unscriptural and theologically incomprehensible.

**3-4** Thus“in a move unparalleled in the Hebrew Bible, life is cut off before it begins;” while “those unlucky enough to be born already will die unmourned, and those who should by rights have been their mourners will not be comforted.”[[96]](#footnote-96) The rationale for the command in v. 2 lies in the fate that lies ahead of the children and of the parents themselves *in this place* (Judah or Jerusalem) or *in this country* (a motif that will recur through this section). “These were not ordinary times”; Paul’s advice about marriage presupposes the same conviction (1 Cor 7).[[97]](#footnote-97) As often happens, Yahweh then goes on to speak in more poetic form, with a broad parallelism between two descriptions of how people will die and what will happen to their bodies. Children and parents *will* *die deaths from sicknesses*; the subsequent appearance of *sword and hunger* suggests that *sicknesses* refers to epidemics, since epidemic, hunger, and war form a recurrent unholy trinity (14:12).[[98]](#footnote-98) But the emphasis lies on what happens afterwards – or rather, on what doesn’t happen. *They will not be lamented* and *they will not be buried* because there will be no one to undertake these loving responsibilities. Not to be lamented is not to be remembered or cared about, which (one could say) doesn’t matter when you are actually dead, but tends to matter when you are thinking about your death. And if they are not buried, *manure on the face of the ground* is what *they will become* (see 8:2; 9:22 [21]). Then there are the children and parents who *will come to an end by sword and by hunger* in the context of the invasion that is to happen. They too will lie unburied, so that *their corpses will be food, for the bird in the heavens and for the animal on the earth* (cf. 7:33; 15:3). When children and parents die, there will be no rest in Sheol, and quite some restoration work will be needed to get them ready for the resurrection day that Jeremiah doesn’t know about.

**5** Yahweh’s *because* makes for a loose link with vv. 1-4, introducing another formulation that now expands on his point in vv. 1-4, and introducing another symbolic action. The *wake* (*marzēaḥ*) to which Yahweh refers is an event combining a vigil for someone who has died (hence the etymology of the word *wake*) with a commemorative meal.[[99]](#footnote-99) The word comes otherwise only in Amos 6:7, where it refers more generally to a festive meal of a semi-religious kind, a little like an *agape* but perhaps more drunken. Here, indeed, Yahweh might initially seem to be referring to such a festive meal, but in the parallelism the second colon makes explicit what kind of meal it was, an occasion to *lament* and *mourn*. If such meals deserved disapproval because of their self-indulgence or religious deviance, that problem is not Jeremiah’s focus here, as it is not in v. 6b. If such occasions are important when someone dies in the community and one expresses one’s sympathy and love for the family by joining them, why is Jeremiah to stand apart? In a moment, Yahweh will explain that his not doing so will dramatize the way there will be no such events in respect of deaths that are imminent. But first he explains why those deaths are going to happen, and does so in terrifying words. *I have gathered up my well-being from this people*. Withdrawing *well-being*, so that things are “not well” in a way that contrasts with the promises of other prophets, is a familiar notion (e.g., 12:12; 14:19). To speak of gathering up this well-being is a sharp way to make the point, because gathering up (*’āsap*) often refers to death and burial (e.g., 8:2; 9:22 [21]). Yahweh announces a funeral for well-being. To work out the implications, he adds reference to *commitment and compassion*, two of the most important aspects of his nature and his relationship with his people. On *commitment*, see 2:3.[[100]](#footnote-100) *Compassion* (*raḥămîm*) is the plural of the word for a woman’s womb, a link that the First Testament sometimes alludes to. Compassion is the feeling a woman has for the offspring of her womb. For Yahweh to gather up for burial his compassion for Israel is to go against his motherly nature. The reference has the more solemnity in the context of vv. 3-4 and 7.

**6-7** Only after explaining the background and the implications of the deaths that are coming does Yahweh go on to refer to the deaths themselves. *Big people and little people will die in this country*; death will be no respecter on persons. Neither will the aftermath: *they will not be buried*, because there will be no one to do the burying. More concretely, there will be none of the observances that are part of mourning and a wake. *People will not lament for them and they will not gash themselves* or *clip themselves for them*. These two common mourning practices are known from many cultures and what they meant varied from culture to culture. Deut 14:1 forbids them, presumably because Israel’s neighbors engaged in them and it was an aspect of Israel distinguishing itself. Here Jeremiah is not concerned with the rights and wrongs of the practices but with the simple fact that people did engage in them as signs of mourning – and with the fact that death will be so omnipresent that no one will be left to undertake such rites. The same applies to non-controversial practices. People *will not give a share to them with mourning* *to console someone for a death.* The sharing (more literally, splitting, the breaking of bread) would be a gesture of fellowship and/or of generosity (cf. Isa 58:7); there will be none. Likewise *they will not give them a consolation chalice to drink for his father or for his mother*. Motherhood, which should suggest progeny and hope, again conveys bereavement and barrenness (cf. 15:7, 10).[[101]](#footnote-101)

**8** To draw attention to these coming realities, Jeremiah is to embody now the way things will be then. While Yahweh may now be issuing a general prohibition about going into a house of feastingfor some great celebratory occasion, the *house of feasting* may be simply another term for the *house where there is a wake* (which was literally, “the house of a wake”), where one would *sit with them to eat and drink*. Either way, scandalously, Jeremiah will stand apart from such occasions. “He is no longer able to weep with those who weep and to rejoice with those who rejoice” (Rom 12:15).[[102]](#footnote-102)

**9** Yahweh goes on to make more concrete the rationale for his instructions. Gathering up well-being, making things not be well, will find expression in what happens to *the voice of joy and the voice of rejoicing*, the joyful and rejoicing voice. “When the church sins, God makes all joy and gladness to cease from it.”[[103]](#footnote-103) The words are ones Jeremiah had associated with his commission in 15:16. But in combination with *the voice of groom and the voice of bride* the words recur from a similar threat in a similar connection in 7:34. There, already, Yahweh had formulated his intention in terms of *stopping* the exercise of that voice *from this place*. It’s going to happen *before your eyes and in your time*. The *your* is plural: the symbolic action is Jeremiah’s, but the message is Judah’s.

**10-13** “All these things” makes a link with what has preceded. Unless the entirety of vv. 1-13 does presuppose a time at the beginning of Jeremiah’s ministry,[[104]](#footnote-104) it might seem mysterious and/or infuriating (or “almost comical”)[[105]](#footnote-105) that people ask Jeremiah this question whose answer he has been proclaiming for decades, and it might seem mysterious that it finds inclusion in the Jeremiah scroll. The resolution to the latter mystery might lie in v. 13. Yahweh has not previously used the strong verb *hurl* (*ṭûl* hiphil), which will recur in 22:26, 28; it is most often used in connection with Jonah (see Jon 1:4, 5, 12, 15). And he speaks of hurling Judah *from upon this country*, a motif running through this section. Third, he matches the force of that verb with the chilling nature of his closing threat concerning how things will be in the country to which he projects people: *I will show you no favor.* Favor or grace is a key word that deserves setting alongside commitment and compassion; strikingly, however, it is a noun that Jeremiah does not otherwise use (except at 31:2), and even here he uses the hapax *ḥănînâ* rather than the regular word *ḥēn*.

Grant, Almighty God, that as we in various ways daily provoke thy wrath against us, and thou ceasest not to exhort us to repent, — O grant, that we may be pliant and obedient and not despise thy kind invitations, while thou settest before us the hope of thy mercy, nor make light of thy threatenings; but that we may so profit by thy word as to endeavor to anticipate thy judgments; and may we also, being allured by the sweetness of thy grace, consecrate ourselves wholly to thee, that thus thy wrath may be turned away from us, and that we may become receivers of that grace which thou offerest to all who truly and from the heart repent, and who desire to have thee propitious to them in Christ Jesus our Lord.[[106]](#footnote-106)

## Restoration, Cleansing, and Revelation Here (16:14-21)

14Therefore there, days are coming (Yahweh’s affirmation) when it will no longer be said, “Yahweh is alive,a who got the Israelites up from the country of Egypt.” 15Rather, “Yahweh is alive who got the Israelites up from the northern country and from all the countries where he drove them away.” I will return them to their land which I gave to their ancestors.b

16Here am I, sending for many fishers (Yahweh’s affirmation) and they will fish for them,

and afterwards I will send for many hunters and they will hunt for them,c

From upon every mountain and from upon every hill,

and from the clefts in the cliffs.

17Because, my eyes being on all their paths,

they have not hidden themselves from my presence,d

and their waywardness has not concealed itself from before my eyes.

18I will recompense them first,

double for their waywardness and their wrongdoing.

Because they have defilede my country with their detestable corpses,

with their offensive things they have filled my domain.f

19Yahweh, my force and my fort,

my escape on the day of distress:

To you nations will come

from the ends of the earth and say:

Only deceit did our ancestors have as their domain,

something empty with nothing that could be any use in them.

20Can a human being make himself gods? –

but they are not gods.

21Therefore, here am I, getting them to acknowledge it

on this occasion.

I will get them to acknowledge my hand and my strength,

and they will acknowledge that Yahweh is my name.g

See the note and comment on 4:2.

MT has a marker here. Vv. 14-15 reappear in a variant form as 23:7-8.

The line is an unusual 5-5.

LXX lacks this colon; Aq, Th have it.

*Ḥālal*, which has a homonym meaning “run through” (D. G. Garber, “A Vocabulary of Trauma in the Exilic Writings,” in B. E. Kelle et al. [eds.], *Interpreting Exile* [Leiden: Brill, 2012], 309-22), whose resonances would be significant here.

MT has a marker here. The subsection ends with a long, 5-4 line, working abb’a’.

MT has a section marker here.

Deuteronomy has four ways of thinking about the catastrophe that would threaten Israel because of its waywardness: total calamity within the country, transportation to another country, permanent confinement there, but also the possibility of return. There is some tension between them – they cannot all be true. In vv. 1-13 Jeremiah has emphasized the first but then spoken in terms of the second, perhaps with the implication that the third logically follows. Against all rhetorical expectations, he now speaks in terms of the fourth.[[107]](#footnote-107) Yet how could Yahweh say what he said in v. 13? Grace, along with compassion, commitment, and truthfulness, is an aspect of his nature (Exod 34:6); hence the fact that one who embodies the God of Israel is “full of grace and truthfulness” (John 1:14). Although Jeremiah makes little use of words such as grace, he has been presupposing andtalking about these aspects of Yahweh’s character when he has been urging Judah to turn back to him. He has been presupposing them even when he has been threatening Judah with Yahweh’s anger or temper notwithstanding his regretful reference to Yahweh’s being long-tempered (15:15). This chapter describes the most massive dissolution of the society so far in Jeremiah. Fortunately it also portrays grace in a more spectacular way.[[108]](#footnote-108)

There follow three short messages that reflect how Yahweh’s bark is worse than his bite, or worse than his bark elsewhere. While he will throw Judah out of his country, he does not actually want people to serve other gods in the country to which he expels them, and he will show them his favor there. The three messages outline:

vv. 14-15 Yahweh will restore Israel to its land

a promise by Yahweh in prose

vv. 16-18 Yahweh will hunt down the people who have defiled his country and domain

a threat by Yahweh followed by rationale, comprising two bicola linked by enjambment, then another threat followed by rationale, comprising a tricolon and another pair of bicola

vv. 19-21 Yahweh will get the nations to acknowledge him

two linked bicola comprising address to Yahweh and introduction to the content of a confession by the nations, two comprising their confession, and two comprising Yahweh’s response or comment

Differences in form and imagery suggest that these three messages which now form a “patchwork”[[109]](#footnote-109) were of separate origin. What happens when they are juxtaposed? Notwithstanding the *therefore*,vv. 14-15 constitutes a contrast with what precedes, as it promises the return of Israel after its banishment in many countries. It makes for a surprise, yet not a surprise in the context of the scroll’s broader assumptions about Yahweh’s relationship with Israel. Vv. 16-18 returns to the theme of reprisal for wrongdoing. Out of this context, one would assume that Israel is the object of the reprisal, but following on the first message such a threat would be odd, and the juxtaposition rather suggests that in this context it announces Yahweh’s act of reprisal against the nations that have exiled Israel.[[110]](#footnote-110) Again, while it is thus in one sense a surprise, it is not so in the broader context of the scroll’s assumptions about Yahweh’s activity in the world. Vv. 19-21 then then offers another surprise over against the second, but again one that also fits the broader context of the scroll’s assumptions. All three messages make sense in a post-disaster context as Yahweh’s encouragements to the community that survives when the threat of exile in v. 13 has been implemented.

**14-15** So the *therefore* following on the threat in v. 13 is in one sense illogical[[111]](#footnote-111) or may seem nonsensical.[[112]](#footnote-112) It does point to a deeper theologic, like the “therefores” in Amos 3:2 and Ps 130:4.[[113]](#footnote-113) The threat in vv. 10-13 cannot ultimately stand alone, as if it were Yahweh’s last word. More immediately, the *therefore* may relate anticipatorily to the suffering to which Jeremiah alludes when he goes on to refers to *the northern country* and *all the countries where he drove them away*;[[114]](#footnote-114) even in this message there is both threat and good news.[[115]](#footnote-115) One way or another, the declaration about no favor or grace leads into a declaration that new *days are coming*, a phrase that introduces good news about a day of deliverance here and in 31:27-30, 31-34.[[116]](#footnote-116) When they come, *it will no longer be said, “Yahweh is alive, who got the Israelites up from the country of Egypt*.” That long-ago action was the original expression of grace; Jeremiah will refer to the way Israel then “found grace in the wilderness” (31:2), in his one use of the regular word for favor or grace. But now Jeremiah relativizes the exodus.[[117]](#footnote-117) What will henceforth be said is that Yahweh *got the Israelites up from the northern country and from all the countries where he drove them away*. It will happen because *I will return them to their land which I gave to their ancestors*. And henceforth the promises that people make will appeal to the fact that *Yahweh is alive who* acted in that way. People who remain in Judah, Egypt, Babylon, or Ammon, Moab, or Edom, can be reassured that the community in Judah is not finished. Their relationship with their ancestors is not merely their downfall but their future. The relationship between Yahweh’s actions as threatened in v. 13 and as promised in vv. 14-15 overlaps with that implied by Hos 11. The two accounts are not exactly parallel, in that Hos 11 concerns whether Yahweh acts in wrath or in grace, as opposed to whether his acting in wrath can be succeeded by acting in grace. But the dilemma or tension that Yahweh has to handle is the same. Yahweh is the God of grace. He is also the God who must take wrongdoing seriously. Indeed, Yahweh makes explicit these two aspects to his character in his self-revelation in Exod 34:6-7 which we have noted. When his people do wrong, he is like a parent who has to keep deciding whether it is an occasion to be merciful or to be tough. Generally speaking, in the decades up to 587 he talks tough, but after 587 he can be free to talk merciful.

**16-17** The message of these two verses is familiar but the context makes one rethink its significance and its imagery is novel. While Isa 19:8; Ezek 47:10, refer to literal *fishers* and Eccl 9:12; Hab 1:14 use fish in a simile, elsewhere only Amos 4:2 uses fishing as a metaphor for hostile action against people.[[118]](#footnote-118) The two passages show that fishing is no fun for fish, notwithstanding Jesus’s playful reworking of the metaphor. Likewise the arrival of *hunters* is nothing for game animals to relax about. In the second line the fish are forgotten and Yahweh focuses on the way animals in the wild may find nowhere to hide from an insistent hunter – *mountain, hill, clefts in the cliffs…*. So it will be when Yahweh sends out his hunters. And the hunters are able to rely not merely on their own *eyes* but on Yahweh’s. The wild animals may know all the mountain *paths*, but Yahweh knows them, too. So they will not be able to have *hidden themselves from my presence.* The reason for Yahweh’s pursuit becomes explicit in the last colon: *their waywardness has not concealed itself from before me*, either. The reference to waywardness hints at the metaphorical as well as literal point about *paths.*

**18** Yahweh goes on to reformulate his commitment to action by means of another metaphor. The reprise of reference to *waywardness* along with the sharp change of metaphor might suggest that v. 18 was originally a separate threat from the one in vv. 16-17; the reprise has then led to their being juxtaposed. The new metaphor of *recompense* will recur in Jeremiah, usually in connection with Israel’s attackers (e.g., 25:14; 50:29). This link points to a resolution of the puzzle concerning vv. 16-19. While the language in vv. 16-17 would make one think of Yahweh pursuing Judah (cf. Isa 2:19, 21),[[119]](#footnote-119) vv. 16-17 then read oddly after vv. 14-15, as if they jump over vv. 14-15 to connect with vv. 12-13.[[120]](#footnote-120) But the *recompense* image suggests that Yahweh is talking about redress on the nations. A worker gets compensation at the end of the day, and Yahweh will *recompense* them *first*,in a negative sense,before restoring Judah (vv. 14-15) and/or before getting the nations to acknowledge him (vv. 19-21). He will recompense them *double*, maybe both *for their waywardness* andalso for *their wrongdoing*, or maybe simply “quite enough.” One might see the two expressions waywardness and wrongdoing spelled out in the reference to *detestable corpses* and *offensive things*, in a neatly parallel bicolon abcc’a’b’ or more broadly abb’a’:

they have defiled my country with their detestable corpses

with their offensive things they have filled my domain

*My country* picks up from vv. 4 and 13; adding *my domain* leads into vv. 19-21 and 17:1-4. Like waywardness and wrongdoing, *detestable corpses* and *offensive things* may refer to the same thing. They are the things with which the nations have *defiled my country* when they came there with their dead gods – death always defiles, so dead gods would be doubly defiling. They have *filled my domain* with them. But the doubling of the concrete description in terms of *detestable corpses* and *offensive things* may again correspond to or justify the doubling of recompense. Jeremiah had urged Yahweh to pour out his wrath on the nations (10:25); vv. 16-19 are Yahweh’s response.[[121]](#footnote-121)

**19** There follows another message that is of independent origin from what precedes, is at surface level in tension with it, yet reflects some theologic. Jeremiah first makes a confession and a statement of faith and hope. In general terms, the series of affirmations parallels the Psalms; indeed, it sounds like the beginning of a protest psalm.[[122]](#footnote-122) Etymologically, the words for *force* and *fort* (*‘ōz* and *mā‘ôz*) may be unrelated, but they look as if they are related (the *mā*- is simply part of a noun formation) and it can be hard to tell which of the two connotations (strength and refuge) attaches to each word. The ambiguity is useful: a fort where you can take refuge needs to be someone who can be forceful or your behalf. To follow the order, Yahweh is one with force at his disposal who can therefore be a fort in which one can take refuge. In combination the two words are a hendiadys: Yahweh is a strong refuge. While *force* is the more common word, an address to Yahweh as “my force” comes only here, though there are psalms that include the confession “Yahweh is my/our force” (Pss 28:7; 46:1 [3]; 118:14) or “You are my fort” (Ps 31:4 [5]). If there were any doubt whether the connotation “refuge” applies here, the parallel colon makes it more explicit; once a psalm says “You have been… an escape on the day of my distress” (Ps 59:16 [17]) and David says “you are my escape” (1 Sam 22:3). Jeremiah is acknowledging that *on the day of distress*, when he is under attack, Yahweh is the one who protects him. What is the point about the confession here? Does it reflect the way the Babylonians kept him safe in 587? And/or is he pointing to the confession the nations need to make, not least in light of the threat in vv. 16-18 concerning their coming recompense? Does it stand in contrast with 10:25? The expectation that *nations will come from the ends of the earth* to acknowledge Yahweh also parallels the Psalms: “all the ends of the earth will turn to Yahweh; all the kin-groups of the nations will bow down before him” (Ps 22:27 [28]). They thus come to acknowledge the truth of the psalm’s confession. But when the nations come to talk about *deceit* and *ancestors* and *domain* and *something* *empty* and *nothing that could be any use*, they use Jeremiah’s language. He is providing the script for the nations.

**20** The rhetorical question *can a human being make himself gods*,with the yes-and-no answer *but they are not gods* (or they are not God) corresponds to the declaration in 10:1-16, though the nations are also making the confession that Yahweh wishes Israel would make (2:5-11).[[123]](#footnote-123) Yahweh is dealing with the nations as he deals with Israel. In effect, he often sets before Judah alternatives from which they have to choose: Hos 11 (noted in connection with v. 15) is itself an example, especially if one reads the whole chapter instead of stopping at v. 9. Here Yahweh is setting alternatives before the nations. They choose vv. 16-18 or vv. 19-21. Of course they don’t know; it is Judah that will know. So he is setting before Judah the possibilities that lie open before the nations.

**21** Yahweh responds by making a commitment to ensure that Jeremiah’s statement of hope will come true. The sequence has an upside down logic – one might expect the subsequent declaration to lead into Jeremiah’s confession rather than respond to it. Again the language is Jeremiah’s, in that he expends a lot of energy *getting* people *to acknowledge* Yahweh, and he loves to talk about the acknowledgment of Yahweh and about Yahweh’s *hand* and *strength* and *name*. All four words came in 10:1-16, which closed with the declaration *Yahweh of Armies is his name*.

## Forfeit Here (17:1-11)

1Judah’s wrongdoing is written

with an iron stylus.

With a flint point it is engraved

on the tablet of their mind and in relation to your altars’ horns,

2As their children are mindful of their altars and their totem poles,

by verdant tree, by lofty hills.

3Mountain-dwellera in the open country,

your resources and your all stores I will make into plunder,

your shrines, through wrongdoing, in all your territory.

4You will drop them, and that through yourself,

from your domain that I gave you.

I will make you serve your enemies

in a country that you have not known.

Because a fire you have kindled –

by my anger it will blaze for all time.b

5Yahweh has said this:

Cursed is the man

who relies on a human being,

And makes flesh his arm,

and from Yahweh his mind turns aside.

6He will be like a shrubc in the steppe,

and he will not see when good things come.

He will dwell in scorched placesd in the wilderness,

a salt country, with no one living there.e

7Blessed is the man

who relies on Yahweh

and Yahweh will be his reliance.

8He will be like a tree transplanted by water,

and by a stream sending outf its roots.

It is not afraidg when heat comes,

and its foliage will be verdant.

In a year of drought it is not anxious,

and it does not cease producing fruit.

9The mind is more devioush than anything;

it’s gravei – who can know it?

10I Yahweh am probing the mind,

examining the heart,

And givingj to an individual in accordance with his paths,

in accordance with the fruit of his practices.k

11A partridgel that incubatedm but did not give birth –

someone who makes wealthn but not by exercising authority.

In the middle of his days it will abandon him,

and at his end he will become a fool.

*Hărārî* otherwise occurs only as a designation of one of the Thirty warriors (e.g., 2 Sam 23:33), where it might refer to an otherwise-unknown place called Harar or designate someone as a mountain-dweller(cf. Rashi in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage). Similar forms appear in Gen 14:6; Ps 30:8, which suggest the meaning “mountain.” Th (see *HUB*), Vg imply the easier plural *harărê*; this colon would then belong with the previous line.

MT has a section marker here. Vv. 3-4 are a variant on 15:13-14. LXX lacks vv. 1-4 and the introductory colon to v. 5 (see P.-M. Bogaert, “Jérémie 17,1-4 TM,” in Y. Goldman and C. Uehlinger [eds.], *La double transmission du text biblique* [A. Schenker Festschrift; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 2001], 59-74).

Cf. Tg; LXX, Vg have “tamarisk,” while BDB and *HALOT* have “juniper” (on the basis of a similar Arabic word), but tamarisk and juniper do okay in the desert, so they seem less likely. But much of the point lies in the paronomasia, *cursed* (*’ārûr*) is the *shrub* (*‘ar‘ār*) in the *steppe* *’ărābâ*): plant, location, and destiny belong together.

Although *ḥărērîm* is a hapax, its root is familiar; LXX’s “seaside” presumably refers to the Dead Sea (see the parallel colon; cf. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:390).

MT has a section marker here.

The line works abcdd’c’; the finite verb continues the participial construction.

Q has *yir’eh* “he will not see,” repeating v. 6; K more plausibly implies *yir’â* (cf. LXX, Vg)

Or “serpentine” (T. Novick, “*yqb hlb mkl w’nš hw’ my yd‘nw*,” *JBL* 123 (2004): 531-35 (535).

For MT *wә’ānuš*, LXX “and a man” implies *we’ĕnōš*. Vg “unfathomable” translates loosely in light of the parallelism.

LXX takes the infinitive to indicate purpose, but the *waw* suggests it continues the participial construction (cf. Vg).

MT has a section marker here.

Tg provides “like…,” but many proverbs work by involve simple juxtaposition (e.g., Prov 25:3, 11, 12, 14, 18, 19, 25, 26, 28).

LXX “gathered” presupposes the Aramaic verb *dāgar* (J. F. A. Sawyer, “A Note on the Brooding Partridge in Jeremiah xvii 11,” *VT* 28 [1978]: 324-29).

A paronomasia, *‘ōśēh ‘ōśer*.

Yahweh continues to speak, confronting Judah about the deep-seated nature of its wrongdoing and implying that Judah is not responding to him as 16:19-21 expected of the nations, but the medieval chapter division separating this section from what precedes reflects the way 16:19-21 constituted a dramatic close to a chapter. Further, 17:5-11 will reflect the thinking of Proverbs and its use of imagery,[[124]](#footnote-124) and the chapter division reflects the way 17:1-4 already does so.[[125]](#footnote-125) Thus vv. 1-11 forms a sequence of subsections of separate origin that have these characteristics in common. Yet they are not simply a series of units that have strayed from their proper home in Proverbs but material that becomes another way of communicating the Jeremianic message about Judah and about the king. The section outlines:

vv. 1-2 critique of Judah

three bicola: the first two parallel, the second two linked by enjambment

vv. 3-4 a threat of redress addressed to a mountain-dweller

a tricolon and three bicola

v. 5aα introduction

vv. 5aβ-8 Yahweh’s words

vv. 5aβ-6 a curse for the man who relies on humanity

four bicola

vv. 7-8 a blessing for the man who relies on Yahweh

a tricolon and three bicola

vv. 9-10 Yahweh’s insight into humanity deviousness, and his consequent action

three bicola, the latter two forming a pair.

v. 11 an aphorism about losing ill-gotten gain, followed by its interpretation

two bicola

**1** The text jumps straight in, with no indication of speaker or addressees, though what precedes and what eventually follows makes it explicit. This description of Judah’s deep-seated *wrongdoing* expresses the implications of what the scroll has said so far; it will continue to be justified by what happens up until 587 and afterwards. Exodus and Deuteronomy describe Yahweh’s commands being *written* on stone tablets, though they also indicate that ordinary writing would not work with this medium; they would need to be *engraved* (Exod 32:15-16). Prov 3:3 and 7:3 urge people to write them on the tablets of their mind. Yahweh here stretches the image still further. The problem is that it is Judah’s wrongdoing that is thus written or engraved *with an iron stylus*, indeed *with a flint point* which suggests the hardest possible engraving tool (the word might even mean diamond) – Yahweh combines the ideas of writing and engraving. If his commands are written on the mind, they shape the behavior; if it is Judah’s wrongdoing that is written there, it suggests that a commitment to wrongdoing has become ingrained there. “If this is so, where is the crazy old woman who claims that people can be without sin if they wish?”[[126]](#footnote-126) The formulation is an alternative to asking whether a Sudanese can change his skin or a leopard its spots (13:23).[[127]](#footnote-127) The problem is specifically a wrongdoing *in* *relation* *to* *your altars’ horns*: Judah was the subject in the first line, but it is regularly the addressee in Jeremiah, and the message switches to direct address to make sure people realize they are being confronted. Altars that people built to expiate wrongdoing were actually expressions of wrongdoing (Hos 8:11)[[128]](#footnote-128) (cf. 11:13). The link in particular with the altars’ *horns* might be that someone accused of a capital offence could seek refuge by grasping the incense altar’s horns (1 Kgs 1:50-51; 2:28); “don’t think you have that place of refuge.” Or it might be that blood from a sacrifice would be spattered on the incense altar’s horns, in particular on the Day of Atonement (Exod 30:10; Lev 4:7, 18, 25, 30, 34; 16:18), so the reference could underscore the way the altars have reduced the prospect of Judah’s finding expiation rather than increasing it.

**2** Jeremiah makes more specific the point about *their* *altars* by referring also to *their* *totem poles* (*’ăšērâ*), wooden columns taking the form of figurines, in particular of the goddess Asherah (cf. 2:27).[[129]](#footnote-129) They are *by verdant tree, by lofty hills* (e.g., 2:20; 3:6, 13), as they had been before Josiah’s reformation. According to 2 Kgs 23, Josiah eliminated them; but *their children*, the next generation *are mindful* of them and deeply attached to them.

**3-4** It becomes explicit that Yahweh is the speaker, and *mountain-dweller* (perhaps simply “mountain”) is apparently a way of addressing Jerusalem, set in the midst of *the open country* of Judah. The action Yahweh intends in light of what he has bemoaned is to remove much of what Judah possesses. He repeats in a variant form the threat in 15:13-14:[[130]](#footnote-130) their attackers will take their resources and stores, all their national assets, as profit from their invasions. Here Yahweh says Judah *will drop them* (*šāmaṭ*): ironically, he uses the term for forfeiting the repayment of a debt (*šәmiṭṭâ,* Deut 15:1-9; cf. Tg). The people will involuntarily and yet willfully (*through your own action*) forfeit their resources in the way they were supposed to forfeit them willingly and generously in the seventh year. The forfeit will include *your shrines through wrongdoing in all your territory*, which will thus appropriately fall away *from your domain that I gave you*, the domain that they had spoiled *with their detestable corpses, their offensive things* whose deceitfulness and emptiness even the nations are destined to recognize (16:19-20). Not only will *I make* your resources *pass* *with your enemies* (*‘ābar* hiphil; 15:14): *I will make you serve your enemies* (*‘ābad* hiphil here), in a return to the people’s status in Egypt (Exod 1:13; 6:5). And as a result of Yahweh’s blazing anger things will that way be *for all time*, Yahweh adds, in a final devastating variant on the formulationin 15:13-14. Fortunately, the translation “for ever” (e.g., Vg *usque ad aeternam*), suggesting something that will last for eternity, gives a misleading impression. Like the English word *permanently*, the Hebrew term *‘ad-‘ôlām* can have varying reference. The context often suggests how permanent “for all time” will be. The expression denotes not “an absolute, timeless future” but “all thinkable, foreseeable future.”[[131]](#footnote-131) Commonly it presupposes “until I have reason to change my mind,” which safeguards against false confidence (cf. 7:7; 17:25; 25:5; 31:40; 32:40) but also against false despair (cf. 3:5, 12; 18:16; 23:40; 25:9, 12).

**5** Jeremiah appends a further declaration that restates the point in more general terms, talking about humanity in general but applying in the context to Judah in particular. He makes explicit that it is a message from Yahweh, yet it is expressed as an insight formulated by Jeremiah as if he were the kind of teacher whose insights appear in Proverbs rather than as a message that Yahweh has uttered. Like Proverbs, it speaks of a process built into the way the world works rather than one whereby Yahweh takes deliberate action. While it might thus be an existent piece of human insight that Yahweh turns into a message, it also corresponds in form and content to Moses’s formulations in Deut 27 – 28. They describe as *cursed* anyone who commits certain acts (making an image being the first) and as *blessed* anyone who listen to Yahweh’s commands; Proverbs does not use the cursed/blessed language, and more likely Jeremiah formulates the lines this way. As is effectively the case in Deuteronomy, being cursed means losing a place in this *country* and ending up somewhere less hospitable. In form and imagery it also compares with Ps 1, whether the psalm is aware of Jeremiah or Jeremiah of the psalm or they are independent variants on a traditional formulation.[[132]](#footnote-132) Comparing them draws attention to the difference in order, which corresponds to a difference in function in their contexts; in Jeremiah the curse comes before the blessing (Ps 1 does not use “curse” language). It also draws attention to Jeremiah’s distinctive stress on reliance on Yahweh, a motif in Proverbs (e.g., 3:3:5; 16:20; 28:25; 29:25). In the Prophets, it is more an Isaianic motif than a Jeremianic one; Isa 31:1-3 brings together reliance, human beings, and flesh, and Isa 36 explores the motif of reliance on Yahweh. Yet in Jeremiah’s time the political context kept raising the question, through the period from Josiah’s reign to Zedekiah’s (and cf. 2:18). This difference in focus between Jeremiah and Ps 1 also draws attention to Jeremiah’s description of the man as a *geber*, a macho man; in Ps 1 he is simply an *’îš*, a person. The macho man who *relies on a human being* thereby *makes flesh his arm*, hismuscle. Such reliance is manifestly stupid because *flesh* (*bāśār*) is by definition weak – not a locus of sin, like flesh in Paul (*sarx*), but feeble (though vv. 1-2 in effect made the point that Paul will make by his use of *sarx*). In case you haven’t got it, a third colon makes the correlative point about someone who relies on feeble humanity: *from Yahweh his mind turns aside* (*sûr*). Elsewhere Jeremiah has implied defiance when he has used that verb (5:23; 6:28).

**6** The nature of the environment down in *the steppe* (*hā‘ărābâ*), the Arabah, the area around the Dead Sea, provides Jeremiah with simile and metaphor for describing the consequences of trusting humanity rather than Yahweh. Away from the Jordan swell (12:5), nothing grows there except a spindly *shrub*. When there is flourishing and fruitfulness up in the highland, someone stuck down in the Arabah *will not see when good things come*. There need be nothing wrong with regular living in the wilderness like Bedouin, but the man Jeremiah describes *will dwell in scorched places in the wilderness*, in the kind of area within the wilderness where there are not even little patches of grass that grow near a small water supply. It is *a salt country:* the Dead Sea in Hebrew is “the Salt Sea.” The pervasiveness of its chemical deposits mean nothing grows. No wonder there is *no one living there.* It so contrasts with the countryfrom which Judah will have been hurled, which they had defiled (16:3, 13, 18). The allegory’s implication is that disaster will follow if king and people think that their future lies in relying on a human being such as an Egyptian king.

**7-8** Conversely, *blessed is the man who relies on Yahweh* for whom *Yahweh will be his reliance*. The description of the blessing works with the same metaphorical framework as the description of the curse. The promise that this macho man *will be like a tree transplanted by water* corresponds to Ps 1:3 (except that it has “channels of water”); the cola about foliage and fruit also compare with Ps 1. In a neat abcc’b’a comparison, the man will be

like a tree transplanted by water

and by a stream sending out its roots.

In the parallelism the second colon makes more specific the key point about the location. It means the tree *is not afraid when heat comes*. With its paronomasia[[133]](#footnote-133) that comment combined with the earlier reference to what the man of false reliance *will not see* makes for a comparison withPs 40:3 [4], which talks about what people will see and be afraid of (the same two verbs). The psalm also goes on to speak of the macho man who relies Yahweh and has Yahweh as his reliance. It is testifying to the truth of what Jeremiah says, and/or Jeremiah is challenging Judah to live by what the psalm says. The location of the tree that symbolizes the man means that despite the heat, *its foliage will be verdant*. To restate the point about heat and not being afraid: *in a year of drought it is not anxious*. And the key benefit of its location is that *it does not cease producing fruit*. The allegory’s positive implication is that king and people need to rely on Yahweh for their fate; they will then have no need to be anxious about their political future. Jeremiah’s declaration or promise is not that the faithful have an easy life uncomplicated by challenges and problems. They have to face heat and drought.[[134]](#footnote-134) But they are able to do so.

**9** A further comment also has the form of a generalization that in broad terms compares with Proverbs. Eventually this further comment will come back to *fruit*, in a different connection from that in v. 8, but the verbal link might have encouraged the placing of this message here.Three lines make three interrelated points; each line is internally parallel. The first works abca’b’c’, the second abcdc’d’, the third abcc’d:

the mind is more devious than anything

it is grave – who can know it?

I Yahweh am probing the mind

examining the heart

and giving to an individual in accordance with his paths

in accordance with the fruit of his practices

First, then, there is a problem about the human mind’s deceptiveness. The description of the *mind* as *devious (*‘*āqōb*) takes us back to 9:4 [3], and in substance also to 12:2 (in a context with statements that stand in tension with vv. 5-8 here). What Judah says cannot be trusted. The parallel comment is that it’s *grave* (*’ānûš*), an unusual word of which most occurrences come in Jeremiah and which usually qualifies the description of a wound or a sorrow (15:18; 30:12, 15) but will just now describe the grim nature of the day of disaster that is coming (17:16). Here the word underscores the deviousness of which Jeremiah has spoken. Jeremiah’s point is more specific than Gen 8:21; he is referring in particular to the deep-seated nature of the human mind as deceptive and deceived. So *who can know it?* Even individuals who seek to be honest about themselves and their presuppositions may fail; we cannot even know our own minds.

**10a** But Yahweh can, the second line affirms. The problem is not a problem to Yahweh. While the First Testament often makes clear that Yahweh can have disappointments and surprises, Jeremiah’s point here is that he can know whatever he chooses to know. Even if he is not by nature omniscient, he can be omniscient if he chooses. When he chooses to know what is in people’s minds, he does so by looking – he finds things out, as human beings do. The difference is that there are no limits to what he can find out. He is thus one who is *probing* and *examining*, which takes us back to 6:27; 9:7 [6], but especially to 11:20. We are wise then to pray

Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy Name; through Christ our Lord.[[135]](#footnote-135)

**10b** The third line goes on to note that Yahweh can therefore deal with people in light of the truth they may try to conceal; the actual plea in that prayer links with this declaration. Either Yahweh cleanses and transforms, or his people must be the victims of some unpleasant *giving* on his part*. Paths* is a good Jeremiah word, and *practices* (*ma‘ălāl*)constitutes a further indication that these Proverbs-like verses are Jeremiah’s formulation, since nearly half its occurrences come in Jeremiah (e.g., 4:4, 18; 7:3, 5). A subtlety about Jeremiah’s chain of thought deserves noting. Christian spirituality sometimes affirms that God looks at the heart rather than the outward action or is interested in the inner attitude rather than the action. The Scriptures do not say so; God is interested in both, and not interested in attitudes that do not have corresponding actions – corresponding fruit, in fact. Jeremiah’s point here is that God is not taken in when people say they will do or are doing one thing but are secretly planning or doing another.

**11** The parable of the partridge involves two more internally parallel lines:

a partridge that incubated but did not give birth

someone making wealth but not by exercising authority

But the two lines also function in the way that the two halves of a single line sometimes do, by raising a question that then receives an answer. How is this person like the partridge?

in the middle of his days it will abandon him

and at his end he will become a fool

It is yet another Proverbs-like unit, in that Proverbs likes to make parallels between aspects of creation and nature and human beings.

The heavens regarding height, the earth regarding depth,

and the mind of kings – there’s no exploring.

Clouds and wind but no rain:

someone who takes pride in a false gift.

A bad tooth and a wobbly foot:

confidence in someone who breaks faith on a day of pressure. (25:3, 14, 19)

In each of these cases the things in question are simply juxtaposed; there is no “like.” They more resemble metaphors than similes. In this case, in effect Jeremiah says

Someone who makes wealth but not by exercising authority.

is a partridge that incubated but did not give birth.

One significance about the order of the cola in Jeremiah is that the last word is *exercising authority* (*mišpāṭ*), which puts us on the track of a theme that underlies this entire section. The aphorism becomes the means of commenting on Jeremiah’s expectations of a king,[[136]](#footnote-136) the person with particular responsibility for exercising authority in Judah. While government is the responsibility of the entire Davidic household (21:12; cf. 22:3),[[137]](#footnote-137) it is particularly the basis for Jeremiah’s critique of Jehoiakim. He looked after himself well as king by exercising authority in a way that benefited him, *bәlō’ mišpāṭ* (22:13); Jeremiah’s aphorism talks about doing well through not exercising authority in the proper fashion, *lō’ bәmišpāṭ*. The warning built-into the aphorism is that in the end it will not pay. He will be like a bird that *incubated* chicks *but did not give birth* in the sense of seeing them hatch; the partridge perhaps figures in the aphorism because male partridges share in the incubating and subsequent caring for their mates’ chicks.[[138]](#footnote-138) So with the illegitimate wealth that the king gains: *in the middle of his days it will abandon him*. And Jehoiakim died at 36, half way through what might have been the projected length of his life.[[139]](#footnote-139) So *at his end he will become a fool* (*nābāl*), which might make people think about being a corpse (*nәbālâ*)[[140]](#footnote-140) (cf. 16:18). As this aphorism with its pointer towards the king closes off vv. 1-11, it confirms hints that Judah under its kingly leadership has been in focus through the section’s Proverbs-like teaching. Perhaps it is the king who is the mountain-dweller, the macho man who declines to rely on Yahweh, the person who is incurably devious. “These innocent-looking affirmations hide the energy of prophecy.”[[141]](#footnote-141)

# Another Exchange: Three Ironies (17:12-27)

Jer 14 – 17 comes to an end with three sections linked by verbal motifs: references to a throne to sacredness, to abandoning, to shame.

While one regularly cannot know whether authors intend to incorporate suggestive juxtapositions into their work or whether the suggestiveness lies in the eye of the beholder, here the juxtaposition seems a big coincidence to be accidental. But anyway, it is present whether or not it issued from conscious intention.

12An honored throne is on high –

from the first is our sacred place.a

13Israel’s hope, Yahweh:

all who abandon you will be put to shame.

The people who turn aside from meb in the country will be written down,

because they have abandoned the fountain of living water – Yahweh.c

14Heal me, Yahweh, so I may heal;

deliver me, so I may find deliverance,

because you are my praise.

15There, those people are saying to me,

“Where is Yahweh’s word –

it should come, please.”

16But I – I did not seek to escape from grazingd after you,

but a gravee day I did not desire.

You yourself know what goes out from my lips –

it has been before your face.

17Don’t be a cause of breakdown to me –

you are my refuge on the day of dire trouble.

18My pursuers should be shamed, and I – may I not be shamed;

they should break down, and I – may I not break down.

Bring upon them the day of dire trouble,

and with a double shattering shatter them.f

19Yahweh said this to me: Gog and stand at the People’s Gateway by which the kings of Judah come in and by which they go out, and in all Jerusalem’s gateways, 20and say to them, Listen to Yahweh’s message, kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all you who live in Jerusalem who come in by these gateways.h

21Yahweh has said this: Take care, for your own sake,i and don’t carry a load on the Sabbath day or bring one through Jerusalem’s gateways. 22You will not take out a load from your houses on the Sabbath day and you will not do any work, but make the Sabbath day sacred, as I ordered your ancestors. 23But they did not listen, they did not bend their ear. They stiffened their neckj so as not to listenk and so as not to accept restraint. 24If you do listenl to me (Yahweh’s affirmation) so as not to bring a load by this city’s gateways on the Sabbath day, but to make the Sabbath day sacred so as not to do any work on it,m 25then kings and officials, sitting on David’s throne, riding on chariot and on horses, they and their officers will come by this city’s gateways, the individual in Judah and the people who live in Jerusalem. And this city will liven for all time. 26People will come from the towns of Judah, from around Jerusalem, from the region of Benjamin, from the foothills, from the highland, and from the Negeb, bringing whole offering, sacrifice, grain offering, and incense, and bringing a thanksgiving to Yahweh’s house. 27But if you do not listen to me so as to make the Sabbath day sacred and so as not to carry a load and come through Jerusalem’s gateways on the Sabbath day, I will light a fire in its gateways. It will consume Jerusalem’s citadels and it will not go out.o

In two asyndetic noun clauses arranged abb’a’, the construct phrases frame the adverbial expressions (Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:500-1), with the absolutes functioning adjectivally. The parallel with Ps 48:1-2 [2-3] supports an understanding of them as clauses rather than vocatives as in Vg and LXX, which reads more briefly “a throne of honor on high, our sanctuary” (cf. H. G. Reventlow, *Liturgie und prophetisches Ich bei Jeremia* [Gütersloh : Mohn, 1963], 229-40).

For Q *sûray*, K implies *yәsûray* “the people restrained by me” or construct *yәsûrê* “the people restrained” (cf. *yāsar* in 2:19; 6:8; and *mûsār* in v. 23). LXX, Vg, Sym imply construct *sûrê* “the people who turn aside”; this line then continues the confession begun in vv. 12-13a.

MT has a section marker here. *Yahweh* at the end of the line, with the object-marker *’et*, and turning the colon into one with five beats, gives it emphasis.

For the construction, cf. GK 119x. The participle *rō’eh* usually denotes a shepherd, but nowhere else is Jeremiah (or any other prophet) a shepherd, and the construction on the basis of this understanding is tortuous. In Vg’s understanding, Yahweh is the shepherd after whom Jeremiah is still going, which makes the construction more tortuous, and nowhere else in Jeremiah is Yahweh a shepherd. but the participle can refer to sheep grazing (e.g., Song 2:16; Isa 44:20); the meaning is then not so different; cf. LXX “I have not tired of following after you” (Jones, *Jeremiah*, 247). For MT *mērō‘eh* (from *rā‘â*) Aq, Sym imply *mērā‘â* (from *rā‘a‘*)“from dire trouble.”

For MT *’ānûš*, LXX, Vg imply *’ĕnôš* “a human being’s” (cf. v. 9).

MT has a section marker here.

The infinitive absolute is used imperativally (cf. 2:2 and the note).

L has a section marker here.

The preposition *bә* can denote the price to be paid for something, so *bәnapšôtêkem* is close to implying “as the price for your lives.”

LXX adds “more than their ancestors,” as in 7:26, but the expression is even more confusing here than there since it is more explicit here that it is the ancestors whom Yahweh is describing.

For Q *šәmôa’* K implies the participle *šômēa’* which is hard to make sense of and may just be a slip whereby letters were reversed (*šmw‘* became *šwm‘*).

The infinitive precedes the finite verb, underlining it.

For Q *bô*, K implies *bāh* “in it” – or the alternative spelling *bōh* (Drinkard, *Jeremiah* 1:238).

LXX, Vg have “be lived in,” which will be an implication (cf. BDB), but it is not what the active verb says (Blayney, *Jeremiah*, 435).

MT has a unit marker here.

The unit outlines:

vv. 12-13 a confession, incorporating the references to a throne, sacredness, abandoning, and shaming, followed by a response affirming the confession

two bicola, then another bicolon

vv. 12-13a the confession

v. 13b the response

vv. 14-18 a triple plea that incorporates reference to shaming and frames declarations about why Yahweh should respond.[[142]](#footnote-142)

two tricola and five bicola

v. 14 a plea for healing and deliverance, and a confession of praise

vv. 15-16 a protest, and a confession of commitment

v. 17 a plea for support, and a confession of praise

v. 18 a plea for the day of calamity to come

vv. 19-27 a prose commission to deliver a command about making the Sabbath sacred and about a throne

vv. 19-20 the commission

vv. 21-22 the command: keep the Sabbath sacred

v. 23 the ancestors’ failure to do so

vv. 24-26 the promise attached to obedience

v. 27 the threat attached to disobedience

**12-13a** Elsewhere,Yahweh’s *honored throne* and his *sacred place* could denote his palace in the heavens (e.g., Ps 11:4), but the words can as easily refer to their earthly equivalents in Israel, and here the *our* on *our sacred place* (the last syllable in the line) resolves any ambiguity. The confession enthuses over Yahweh’s presence among his people, and the *our* suggests that Jeremiah is voicing Judah’s faith. The confessionis indeed conceivable on Jeremiah’s lips, as is the declaration that *Yahweh* is *Israel’s hope* (29:11; 31:17). It is conceivable on the assumption that it refers to the temple, which Jeremiah does not disdain, but reference to the city is more likely: the city was Yahweh’s honored throne in 14:21; Jeremiah will refer to people coming and chanting *on Zion’s height* (*mārôm*, as here) in 31:11; and *this place* was the city in 7:20. To describe temple or city as the sacred place *from the first* will be a hyperbole, though an understandable one: either has always been Israel’s sacred place, ever since David’s day. But it is more characteristic of Jeremiah to be raising questions about people’s enthusiasm for or trust in temple or city (e.g., 7:1-15 – where *at the first* had another connotation), so it would be surprising to discover him expressing unqualified enthusiasm for it. And when he talks elsewhere about Yahweh being *on high*, he refers to his being on high in the heavens (25:30). So vv. 12-13a do not really sound like Jeremiah.[[143]](#footnote-143) And in 14:19-22 he recorded Judah pleading with Yahweh about *your honored throne* and affirming that they *hope in* Yahweh. So the confessions in vv. 12-13a are the people’s confessions. Whereas the first three cola pick up phrases that might more directly use their own words, the fourth speaks more directly in Jeremiah’s terms, and it is the declaration about people who *abandon* *you* that makes a link with the aphorism preceding this confession, in v. 11. There is some irony or paradox in putting the word *abandon* the people’s own lips (and see e.g., 16:11); the irony continues in the declaration that such people *will be put to shame* (e.g., 6:15; 8:12; 9:19 [18]; 15:9).

**13b** Yahweh responds and confirms their declaration – again in Jeremianic terms, first as he designates the people who will be put to shame as *the people who turn aside* *from* *me* *in the country* (cf. 5:23; 6:18; 17:5). They *will be written down* as such, like Jehoiachin who will be written down as childless (22:30). The coup de grâce in Yahweh’s words comes, not surprisingly, in the last colon of vv. 12-13. Yahweh picks up their reference to abandoning but also repeats the formulation articulated against them in 2:13: *they have abandoned the fountain of living water*. When people hear that declaration, they might re-run the opening colon of the verse and remember that there are two words *miqweh*; one means hope, but the othermeans reservoir (e.g., Exod 7:19). *Yahweh* is both.

**14** What follows involves a sudden leap; the scroll will not make a link with what precedes until v. 18. *Heal me, Yahweh, so I may heal* takes up from 15:18. Jeremiah continues to speak not about a personal illness or about wounds that have been inflicted on him by fellow-Judahites but about his anticipatory experience of Yahweh’s shattering of Judah. Notwithstanding Yahweh’s response to him in that earlier exchange, he is still devastated. Can Yahweh offer him no healing? Thus he goes on to plead for *deliverance* in keeping with the promise Yahweh gave him when he spoke of healing earlier (15:20). In his anticipatory imagination he continue to identify with the lament with which Judah will cry out, *we haven’t found deliverance* (8:20), and with its question, is Yahweh *the hope of Israel* (cf. v. 15) or is he *like a strong man who cannot deliver* (14:8-9)? Jeremiah’s affirmation that Yahweh is *my praise* pushes further that identification (cf. 13:11).

**15** Paradoxically, part of his problem is still that his experience of Judah’s shattering, which he has to keep embodying and talking about, continues to be anticipatory. The shattering never becomes a reality for Judah itself. And people continue to decline to take Yahweh’s threat seriously. *“Where is Yahweh’s word – it should come, please.”* The *please* is the special barb.

**16** Jeremiah could have been caught between two impossibilities. He could have sought to *escape from grazing after you*, but instead he became the sheep who followed Yahweh as shepherd. He might have said here that he had not rushed towardsthis relationship either, and indeed he initially tried to resist it, but he gave up the attempt pretty quickly. On the other hand, he could have been the kind of person who enthused about being a prophet who could bring a doom-laden message. But actually, *a grave day I did not desire*. When he described his own wound as grave (15:18), it was an aspect of his anticipation of the day of grave shattering (30:12, 15). He had not wanted that day to come. He had no delight in the idea of calamity coming on Judah. Is he fooling himself or thinking he can fool Yahweh? He has already characterized the human mind as grave in its deceptiveness and asked rhetorically who can know it, and has then recognized that Yahweh can see into it and look for the match between the inside of the person and the outward action (v. 9). Here he acknowledges that *you yourself know what goes out from my lips – it has been before your face*. Maybe he refers especially to the prayers he has prayed for the people, notwithstanding Yahweh’s instruction not to pray for them. They would be a particular indication that he had no desire for catastrophe to come to them.

**17** He can imagine a third (im)possibility. Way back at the beginning when Yahweh issued that commission, he had told Jeremiah he must not break down (1:17). But is Yahweh putting such pressure on him that *breakdown* is inevitable? Surely he cannot be doing so. *You are my refuge*. Jeremiah uses the noun only here; the confession recurs in the Psalms (e.g., Ps 142:5 [6]). Yahweh must continue to be his refuge *on the day of dire trouble*, the moment when Judah’s dire behavior meets its deserved redress. The day of Yahweh which is darkness not light (Amos 5:18) and which will be *a grave day* (v. 16) now becomes *a day of dire trouble*. Once again, in this plea the distinction between present and future collapses. The day of dire trouble is still to come, but it’s here now in Jeremiah’s anticipatory experience. Jeremiah thus adds a fourth aspect to the bases of his plea, the first and last complementing each other and the middle two complementing each other.

* Yahweh is his praise (v. 14b)
* People dismiss Jeremiah’s warnings (v. 15)
* Jeremiah has been faithful to his commission, and Yahweh knows it (v. 16)
* Yahweh is his refuge (v. 17b).

In a protest psalm, one may talk of what I am experiencing, what you (Yahweh) are doing or not doing, and what they (my troublers) are doing to me. Jeremiah has covered those three directions in the claims that back up his prayer: you are my praise and my refuge, they are scorning, I neither sought to evade my commission nor improperly rejoiced in it.

**18** At last there emerges the link with what preceded in this unit. The Judahites who have been declaring that people who abandon Yahweh will be put to shame and the Judahites whose identity Yahweh has made a note of in this connection (v. 13) are the people who deride Jeremiah. They are *my pursuers* and it is they who *should be shamed*, whereas *I – may I not be shamed*, which is what happens at present. Jeremiah makes the point with its contrasts in a neatly parallel long 4-4 abcda’b’c’d’ line:

my pursuers should be shamed and I may I not be shamed

they should break down and I may I not break down

They should have their falsity and their dire activity exposed to themselves and to the nations, while Jeremiah should be vindicated as the prophet who has been speaking the truth all along. *They should break down,* whereas *I – may I not break down*, in keeping with Yahweh’s words back at the beginning. Jeremiah has to play his part in standing firm, but he needs a strength from outside to buttress his standing firm. Yahweh should *bring upon them the day of dire trouble, and with a double*[[144]](#footnote-144) *shattering shatter them*. Jeremiah had originally had no desire for such a dire fate to come upon them, but he has come to identify with Yahweh’s way of looking at them and at what must happen to them He does now want to see their dire behavior in relation to Yahweh meeting dire trouble, as Yahweh has said it must. We know from things he has said already that he is grieved at the suffering he recognizes must come to them even while also accepting that it must come and being glad that he will thereby be vindicated; the Psalms and Paul make more explicit that they want to see their vindication in this way (e.g., Ps 35:26-27; 2 Tim 4:14).[[145]](#footnote-145) He is conflicted, with a sense of turmoil that reflects Yahweh’s.[[146]](#footnote-146) As there are four aspects to the bases of Jeremiah’s plea, so there are thus four aspects to the plea itself, with the first two and the last two being sides of a coin.

* Heal me, deliver me (v. 14a)
* Don’t let me breakdown (v. 17a)
* Shame my persecutors (v. 18a)
* Bring upon them the day of trouble (v. 18b).

Whereas Yahweh has the last word in the exchanges in 11:18 – 12:17 and 14:13 – 15:21, Jeremiah has the last word here and in the succeeding exchanges in 18:1 – 20:18. The sequence compares and contrasts with (or is a converse of) Amos 7:1-9; 8:1-3, where twice Amos responds to Yahweh’s revelation and twice lets Yahweh have the last word. Jeremiah continues to embody Judah’s experience, and in telling Judah about it continues to seek to communicate with the people and to get them to turn. “The hostility he faces from human agents is matched by the silence of God…. God’s silence to the poet corresponds to the absence of God announced to the whole people. God is no longer available either to Israel or even to the poet. The poet experiences the very absence that is the destiny of Israel.”[[147]](#footnote-147)

**19-20** What follows makes for another sudden leap, into a commission like the ones in 7:1-14 and 11:1-13. We don’t know which was *the People’s Gateway* but it was evidently one they shared with the royals when they came to the temple. Plural *kings* might be simply rhetorical,[[148]](#footnote-148) though Judah did have five kings between 609 and 597.[[149]](#footnote-149) But the plural hints that Yahweh is not simply concerned with one king at one moment but with the line of kings in Judah, who on an ongoing basis are the bearers of a promise attaching to David (v. 25) and are responsible for seeing that the city is run in a way that matches Yahweh’s expectations (as hinted by v. 11). And the Jeremiah scroll is concerned to address that entire line, not just one representative of it. But Yahweh wants the rest of the people to hear because they need to fall in with these expectations.

**21** Jer 7 and 11 have pressed the demands of Yahweh’s pact with Israel in general terms and in connection with many of the specifics in the Decalogue such as murder, adultery, theft, swearing to deception, and burning offerings to other deities; Yahweh now adds another (honoring father and mother is the one practical command that remains unmentioned). His concern lies with something they need to *take care* about *for their own sake*. It might not actually seem to be in their interests to abstain from the kind of activity that Yahweh here prohibits. The period (say) from 609 through 587 with its political upheavals, invasions, and experiences of drought and other dearth would be one of economic uncertainty; families might not be sure whether they would have enough to eat.[[150]](#footnote-150) But at the end of his message Yahweh will indicate a more cataclysmic way in which they will be imperiling their lives if they ignore what he says. What he requires is that they do *not carry a load on* *the* *Sabbath*. Neh 13:15-22 makes more explicit the kind of load Yahweh refers to.[[151]](#footnote-151) The plazas inside a town gateway were the location of pop-up markets where farmers could bring produce to sell, as they still are in Jerusalem.

**22** The people who brought loads from their houses would be people such as jewelers, potters, bakers, and/or people engaged in “garage sales, tag sales, or Sabbath flea markets.”[[152]](#footnote-152) They should *not* *do any work*: they should not be engaged in their crafts at home as well as not bringing their produces out to sell. They will thus *make the Sabbath day sacred*: here comes the link with vv. 12-13 with its reference to sacredness. The Scriptures provide a number of rationales for observing the Sabbath, such as its requiring heads of households to give their servants and their animals a break each week and its enabling people to enjoy rest and refreshment, but in referring to making it sacred, Yahweh’s command links with the description of his own act of creation. There (Gen 2:3) God made the seventh day sacred, without indicating the implication that humanity should also observe it. Here, Judahites are to observe it, and Yahweh implies it is not a novelty: *I ordered your ancestors* to make it sacred. As a command that appears in the Decalogue, it is one of the fundamental aspects of Israelite life. There is a link between God making something sacred and his people doing so, a link applying to other objects such the people and the temple. When God makes something sacred, he puts a special claim on it; when human beings make something sacred, they recognize that claim. In the case of the Sabbath, while every day belongs to God, the implication is that he has put a special claim on this day, so people are to keep off it, by not working. They thus imitate the pattern of his creation whereby he did a week’s work and then stopped working for a day. If Gen 1:1- 2:3 dates from the exile, the requirement here that Judahites observe the Sabbath and make it sacred would gain extra significance then, but there seems no particular reason to take this story vv. 19-27 as fictional. What Jeremiah does do is make the Sabbath command as given to Judah’s ancestors more specific, by applying it to trade in Jerusalem, in light of the needs of the urban context that he needs to address, though there as nothing very innovative about the move; Amos 8:5 has already presupposed the point.

**23** But Judah’s ancestors *didn’t listen, they didn’t bend their ear.* The plaint is the general one that Yahweh issued about the pact (11:8), of which the Sabbath was part. *They stiffened their neck*, the additional plaint Yahweh made in connection with people’s ignoring his priorities (7:26).They acted thus *so as not to listen* (16:12) *and so as not to accept restraint* (20:19-20, 30).[[153]](#footnote-153)

**24-27** At this point, as at others, the community needs to turn its back on its ancestors’ practice. If it does, then it will see the fulfillment of an idyllic picture of ongoing normal life; *the* *city* *will live for all time*. People will come from all over the country not just for trade but for worship. The Sabbath itself is not specially a worship day, and the specifying of the different parts of the country suggests the observance of the annual pilgrimage festivals. It implies the dimensions of Judah in Jeremiah’s day before, for instance, the Edomites occupied the Negeb. If the community takes no notice, *I will light a fire in its gateways*; the punishment would fit the crime since the gateways are the focus of the wrongdoing. But the fire will not stop there: *it will consume Jerusalem’s citadels, and it will not go out.* While Jeremiah regularly implies an invitation to people to recognize that they have to choose between two destinies, here he thus explicitly lays alternatives before them in a way that is unusual. Evidently observance of the Sabbath is of crucial importance. It will gain extra importance in the context of exile and it will become a decisive marker of being the people of Yahweh. Why should it matter? Jeremiah suggests two aspects of the significance of Sabbath observance – an economic one and a theological one. A willingness to set aside productive work and trade for one day each week suggests we repudiate the assumption confronted by Karl Marx that economics is everything,[[154]](#footnote-154) rather than an un-Jeremianic focus on “diligent prosecution of the cult.”[[155]](#footnote-155) In good times, it suggests a turning aside from coveting, the last of the commands in the Decalogue. In harder times, it suggests a willingness to trust God for what one eats, drinks, and wears (Matt 6:24-34). The economic significance of the Sabbath is thus its spiritual significance. Which links with its theological significance, that (paradoxically) observing the Sabbath signifies a recognition that every day belongs to God. It does not imply legalism.[[156]](#footnote-156) Giving tithes of one’s possessions and thus holding back from using them signifies a recognition that all one’s possessions come from God. It thus (again paradoxically) sanctifies them all. Keeping off of one day signifies a recognition that all one’s time comes from God. It thus sanctifies all one’s days. In both connections “this passage, like much else in Jeremiah, stakes everything on the centrality of God.”[[157]](#footnote-157)

# Part 2(d): Concerning Plans and Counsels (18:1 – 20:18)

Jeremiah’s curator again identifies a new compilation as *the message that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh*, the introduction that came at 7:1 and 11:1 and that resembles the introduction at 14:1. There will be another instance of the introduction at 21:1. It introduces Jer 18 – 20, which outlines:

18:1-23 The potter: when your decisions can make a difference

18:1-12 Jeremiah and the potter: Yahweh’s flexible plans

18:13-17 a verse postscript: Yahweh’s assessment of Judah

18:18-23 a protest responding to what has preceded: an ultimate prayer

19:1 – 20:18 The pot: when it’s too late

19:1-13 Jeremiah, the decanter, and Yahweh’s counsel

19:14 – 20:6 a story postscript: the reaction, and the identity of the invader

20:7-18 protests responding to what has preceded: two ultimate prayers

The compilation brings together two sets of stories about pots, of protests, and of comments about counsel. In the first set the future is still open (the pot can be remade); in the second set, it is closed (the pot is smashed). Before 587, the compilation would confront the community with the necessity to take note of the challenge implied by the first set before the closed future of the second set becomes a reality. After 587 it would summon the community to recognize the dynamic whereby things had worked out the way they had.

# The Potter: When Your Decisions Can Make Difference (18:1-23)

The motif of Yahweh’s plans or counsel thus runs through Jer 18:

vv. 1-12 Yahweh can have plans concerning a nation, but whether they find fulfillment will depend on the nation’s response; and it is to be expected that Judah will be determined to follow their own plans

vv. 13-17 What Israel has done and what Yahweh intends

vv. 18-23 The people who have their own plans for Jeremiah, related to questions about counsel; their counsel against Jeremiah and his response.

As usual, the chapter’s sections look as if they are of independent origin, but their theme links them in the scroll’s arrangement.

## Jeremiah and the Potter: Yahweh’s Flexible Plans (18:1-12)

1The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh: 2Set to and go down to a potter’s house. There I will get you to listen to my words. 3So I went down to a potter’s house, and there he was doing his work on the double stones. 4The object that he was making with the clay would go to ruina in the potter’s hand, and he would make it againb into another object, as it was right in the potter’s eyes to do.c

5Yahweh’s word came to me:

6Like this potter I can deal with you, can’t I,

household of Israel (Yahweh’s affirmation).

There, like clay in the potter’s hand,

so are you in my hand, household of Israel.d

7Momentarily,e I speak regarding a nation or regarding a kingdom

about pulling up and about pulling down and about wiping out.

8That nation turns from its faithlessness

regarding which I spoke against it,

And I relent regarding the dire trouble

that I planned to do to it.f

9And momentarily I speak regarding a nation or regarding a kingdom

about building and about planting.

10It does what is dire in my eyes

so as not to listen to my voice,

And I relent regarding the good

that I said to do to it.g

11So now say, please, to each individual in Judah and regarding the people who live in Jerusalem, Yahweh has said this: Here am I, shaping dire trouble regarding you, and formulating a plan regarding you. Turn, please, each individual from his dire path. Make your paths and your practices good. 12But they will say,h Futile, because it is after our own plans that we will go. Each individual, the determination of his dire mind we will act on.i

The clause introduced by a *weqatal* is in effect a conditional clause (DG 113, *TTH* 148, JM 167b); another follows in v. 8.

On the *wayyiqtol*, see the note on 6:17.

MT has a marker here.

MT has a section marker here.

Tg has has “at one time,” then “at another time” in v. 9, but there is no parallel for this meaning of *rega‘* (rather cf. 4:20, the only other occurrence in Jeremiah).

MT has a section marker here.

MT has a section marker here.

LXX, Vg have “they said” (cf. 13:11).

MT has a marker here.

Jeremiah tells another story about a symbolic action, which in its flow resembles the story in 13:1-12aα:[[158]](#footnote-158)

v. 1 an introduction to this story as well as to Jer 18 – 20 as a whole

v. 2 a command from Yahweh, to go

vv. 3-4 an act of obedience by Jeremiah

vv. 5-6 a word of interpretation from Yahweh,

an introduction and two bicola of prosaic verse

vv. 7-10 a further word of interpretation from Yahweh

two sequences of three bicola (each second and third linked) of prosaic verse

v. 11 a command from Yahweh, to speak

v. 12 a prediction, about what will follow

Like the action commissioned in 13:1-12aα, the action is one that Jeremiah does go on to undertake but that nobody witnesses. It works by becoming the subject of a story that people hear and are to imagine happening, not by being an event that they see. A distinctive feature is that Jeremiah is not the one who performs the symbolic action itself. It is the kind of symbolic action that sets in motion the event that it portrays, but the person who sets the event in motion is the anonymous potter who doesn’t realize what he is doing.

Potter and clay disappear after v. 6 (though “shaping,” the word for a potter, reappears in v. 11), and the story could stand on its own. And after 597 or after 587 it could bring an encouraging message. The fall of Jerusalem each time signified that the pot that Yahweh was shaping had gone to ruin – it was no good, and the potter was rolling up the clay into a ball and starting again. But at least he was starting again! So 597 or 587 needn’t be the end.

Conversely, Yahweh’s message in vv. 7-10 relates only tangentially to the story; the potter image doesn’t obviously link with the message and the message doesn’t obviously link with the image, and the message might be an addition made through the process whereby the scroll developed.[[159]](#footnote-159) In contrast to the story, the message suggests more explicitly that the final disaster hasn’t yet happened. It envisages a nation or kingdom still having the option of turning from its faithlessness and avoiding a dire fate – or needing to maintain its faithfulness if it is to experience a more positive future. It’s possible to assume that God’s will is firmly fixed, he is sovereign and all-knowing, in light of his omniscience he decides what to do in the future, and in light of his sovereignty he then makes it happen. Such convictions can be both a basis for comfort and for despair. Like other prophets, Jeremiah make different assumptions. He knows Yahweh is more flexible than this theology implies, and Part 2(d) of the scroll thus begins like other parts, by questioning an assumption that Judahites might make.

As we have the section, it fits well before or after 597, combining challenge and encouragement. This context also fits vv. 11-12 where the shaping image recurs, and that recurrence constitutes a reminder not to make too much of differences between the story and the message – in 13:1-12aα the message related somewhat indirectly to the story.

**1** In Jer 18 – 20,, the opening verse does double duty: the introduction to the story is also the introduction to the compilation (compare 7:1).

**2-4** The practical background to the story (it is common to quote Duhm’s description of it as “a very childish haggadah)[[160]](#footnote-160) is a feature of Jerusalem life that was presupposed by 17:19-27. City life generates or facilitates the emergence of specialist trades. No longer need every family bake its own bread; there are bakers where you can buy bread (37:21). Something similar applies to metalwork, and to pottery. As was the case in the West until a couple of centuries ago, a man and his family would undertake their trade from home; the separation of home and work has not yet happened. Initially, all that Jeremiah knows is that he has to *go down to a potter’s house*. In 22:1 *go down* presupposes that Jeremiah was in the temple area, and that implication may hold here (cf. also 36:12).[[161]](#footnote-161) The temple area was often where he preached and hung out (cf. 36:5) and it would also therefore be a natural place for him to receive a commission from Yahweh. As was the case in 13:1-12aα, an aspect of the dynamic of his work as a prophet is that he doesn’t know everything all at once. Initially, he just has to go to the area where you would find a potter living, apparently in the lower (older, noisier) part of the city, the area nearer the water supply derived from the Gihon spring and channeled along to the Siloam Pool, which a potter would need. The *double stones* were two pieces of shaped rock joined by a wooden shaft on which they could turn. With his feet the potter moved the bottom stone and thus moved the top one on which he would manipulate the clay, as described in Sir 38:29-30.[[162]](#footnote-162) Apparently a potter’s attempt to make something didn’t always work. The clay didn’t become a pot. It somehow *would go to ruin*. The verb is same as the one in 13:7. In neither context does it suggest that someone is doing the ruining; the verb is niphal rather than pual or hophal, the explicitly passive verb forms. The potter doesn’t cause the ruining; the shaping just doesn’t work out, for one reason or another. What the potter does is press the clay back into a ball and start again, *as it was right in the potter’s eyes to do*. He is not very troubled by what happens. It often happens. He just begins again.

**5-6** It is at this point that the next stage in Yahweh’s speaking happens. Yahweh is the potter. Israel is the pottery project that goes to ruin. The potter and clay image recurs elsewhere in the Scriptures, partly because it was a familiar feature of everyday life – the vast number of pottery fragments found in archaeological digs hints at how often people needed the potter’s skill. The image thus appears in different connections in e.g., Isa 29:15-16; 45:9; 64:8; Rom 9:20-21, and in Christian spirituality:

Have Thine own way Lord,  
Have Thine own way.  
Thou art the potter I am the clay.  
Mold me and make me after Thy will,  
While I am waiting yielded and still.[[163]](#footnote-163)

One then has to be wary of reading into a passage different possible implications of the image that do not apply in the passage in question. The notion of the clay having options is questionable, as Paul implies in Rom 9:20-21. “The subject strains the symbol as it focuses on human choice.”[[164]](#footnote-164) The clay cannot “help” how it turns out, as the land where the sower sows (Matt 13) cannot “help” what kind of soil it is. The point of these image lies not in the responsibility of clay or seed but in the potter’s freedom and persistence and the sower’s success. The potter does not throw away the clay he was working with and start again with a new ball of clay; he presses the clay back into a ball and reworks it. The theological implications of either understanding would be radically different.[[165]](#footnote-165) The good news for Judah is that Yahweh is not finished with it.

**7** Yahweh makes a knight’s move in what follows, as often happens in the interpretation of a dream or vision, which can take up some elements, ignore others, and introduce new motifs (see e.g., Dan 2).[[166]](#footnote-166) On its first occurrence in Jer 1:10, Yahweh’s talk of *pulling up*, *pulling down*, and *wiping* *out* related to nations and kingdoms generally, and Jonah assumes that the principle Yahweh here announces applies to a city such as Nineveh. But conversely, “God’s dealings with his chosen people are not different in kind, in their moral and spiritual dynamics, from his dealings with any and every people.”[[167]](#footnote-167) Here Yahweh speaks in the singular of *a* *nation* or *a kingdom*, and the context suggests that the terms refer to Israel or Ephraim or Judah. His point is that there is nothing final about his statements concerning the future. He speaks *momentarily*, for a moment.It is superficially a revolutionary statement, in that Yahweh’s threats in Jeremiah have always sounded as if they were declarations about what was definitely going to happen. But their presupposition has always been that everything depended on what response the threat received. It was indeed a threat or warning: the point about it was to provoke a response that made its implementation unnecessary. Yahweh’s relationship with his people is not like that of a judge in a Western law court, who pronounces a penalty that will be implemented no matter what the reaction of the guilty party. Yahweh’s relationship with people is more like that of a parent with his or her children. “God is depicted in Jeremiah 18 as sovereign, transcendent, *and* immanent.”[[168]](#footnote-168) He speaks first of a change of mind about bringing calamity. This “first divine repentance is His true and proper repentance… the repentance in which He promises to go back and does in fact go back on warnings and even judgments which have already fallen. It is the repentance on account of which He sends His prophets, so that His people too may turn and thus lay hold of this promise and these benefits and confirm and justify God's gracious repentance…. That God is of such a nature that ‘He repents of evil’ is included with His grace, mercy, forbearance and clemency as one of His divine attributes.”[[169]](#footnote-169)

**8** Everything depends on whether the nation in question *turns (šûb*) *from its faithlessness*. Yahweh may then *relent* (*nāḥam* niphal). Yahweh again juxtaposes the two Hebrew words that are sometimes translated “repent” (4:28 applies both to Yahweh; cf. Jon 3:9). The first is an action word; the nature of the turning that is required has been made clear enough in Jeremiah’s messages, which have spoken of faithlessness in religion, in politics, and in social life. The second is also a feelings word; it can mean find comfort or find relief. There is a suggestion that Yahweh breathes a sigh of relief when the nation’s turning means he will not have to do the thing that he didn’t really want to do. In theory, the principle he enunciates complicates the test of prophecy in Deut 18:15-22,[[170]](#footnote-170) though there are (alas) no examples in the First Testament of Israel turning like the Ninevites and of a prophet like Jonah getting into trouble because his warning does not come true; Jeremiah’s problem is that Yahweh’s warnings fail to come true because he cannot bring himself to implement them even though Judah fails to turn.

**9-10** But a second possibility corresponds more closely to what Jeremiah has seen in the potter’s house. In 1:10 it was natural to infer that pulling up/pulling down and building/planting were successive operations, as they will be for Judah. Here they are alternative operations. Judah chooses which is to happen to it. Relenting turns out not to have those nice emotional overtones, and one has to “note then the kindness and severity of God” (Rom 11:22).[[171]](#footnote-171)

**11** After 587, it would be odd for the message to be formulated in terms of alternatives. Jeremiah’s audience need to learn the lesson now, when the question is still open, and they need to learn it individually and corporately. Yahweh is *formulating a plan* against them – to use a regular way of making the point. But Jeremiah first uses a more distinctive expression, which fits the context and at last makes for an explicit link between the story in vv. 2-6 and Yahweh’s message in vv. 7-10. Yahweh is indeed *shaping* something, like a potter (*yôṣēr*), though again he shows how prophetic rhetoric can make knight’s moves. The thing he is shaping is now utterly different. What he is shaping is *dire trouble* that corresponds to the people’s *dire path*, which contrasts with making *your path* *and your practices good* so that they open up the way to the *good* of which v. 10 spoke. The good news is that it is specifically the bad-news shaping that can come to ruin in the potter’s hand, if the people turn. It is this side to the twin possibilities in vv. 7-10 that Judah and Jerusalem need to take account of. To return to the earlier way of utilizing the image, the good news is that the potter is still working the clay. It can still be re-formed. Once it has become a pot, it will be too late (see 19:1-13).[[172]](#footnote-172) But at the moment the pot has not been fired. Thus in the meantime, God says, “Do not despair.”[[173]](#footnote-173) The question is whether people will take action and disprove Jeremiah’s prediction. “The linking of absolute judgement with warning and exhortation to repentance is a common characteristic of much of the first part of the book [of Jeremiah]: apparently absolute statements, such as 18.1-11a, are alleviated by the warning and hortatory words of 18.11b.”[[174]](#footnote-174) The logical implication of the potter and clay analogy is that Israel is simply the clay in the potter’s hand, totally subject to his manipulation. But Yahweh’s challenge makes clear that this inference would be mistaken. The relationship between Yahweh and Israel is a personal one, like the relationship between a parent and a grownup son or daughter or a professor and a student, not that between a traffic cop and a driver or a judge and an accused. Both parties have responsibility and power, and the question is how they implement their responsibility and power. Yahweh is prepared to become traffic cop or judge in due course, and will do so. But the relationship has not reached that point yet, and he doesn’t want it to (and even then, the image of the potter reworking the clay suggests the implication would not be final abandonment). The *please* each time suggests an “emotional urgency”[[175]](#footnote-175)

**12** Some hopes. “The tragedy of Judah’s story is nowhere more poignantly set out than in the people’s response to these words,” whether they are defiant or despairing.[[176]](#footnote-176) The end of the story overlaps with the end of the story in 13:1-12aα, which incorporated a statement of fact: *but they haven’t listened*. This story closes with a prediction that characteristically puts onto Judah’s lips statements that they would never make in so many words but that are implied by the stance they will take. Either Yahweh or Jeremiah or both thus dares Judah to face the facts and own their own intentions – or prove him wrong. As an expression of Jeremiah’s and Yahweh’s lack of any expectation, the declaration also overlaps with 2:25: *futile, because it is after our own plans that we will go* compares with *futile, no, because I love foreigners, and it is after them that I will go*;the plans and the foreigners may refer to the same thing. “It’s all over.”[[177]](#footnote-177) The final words also correspond to a formulation in the confrontation about Yahweh’s pact: *each individual, the determination of his dire mind we will act on* in this passage compares with *they went, each one, by the determination of their dire mind* (11:8).But the story does imply that it’s still open to people to prove Yahweh and Jeremiah wrong. Once again, the words comprise a challenge when the future is still open, and after 587 they would comprise an explanation.

## A Verse Postscript: Yahweh’s assessment of Judah (18:13-17)

13Therefore, Yahweh has said this:

Ask, please, among the nations –

who has heard anything like these things?

Something horrific,a very much,b young girl Israelc has done.

14Does the Lebanon snow abandond

the crag in the open country?e

Or does the foreign water pull up –f

the cold streams?

15Because my people has put me out of mind –

to emptiness they burn sacrifices.g

Theyh have made them collapse on their paths,

age-long tracks,

So as to walk on byways,

a path not built up,

16So as to make their country a desolation,

age-long things to whistle at.i

Everyone who passes will be desolate at it,

and will shake his head.

17Like the east wind I will scatter them

before the enemy.

Back and not facej I will let them see,k

on their day of disaster.l

*Something horrific* (*ša‘ărurît*) issues from their exercise of their *determination* (*šәrirût*, v. 12).

While “something very horrific” makes good sense, *mĕ’ōd* rarely qualifies a noun and its separation from the noun makes this understanding even more difficult; LXX, Vg, Tg assume that *mĕ’ōd* qualifies the verb.

Hardly “the maiden of Israel,” that is, the city (so J. J. Schmitt, “The Virgin of Israel,” *CBQ* 53 [1991]: 365-87 [381-83]). Further, *bәtûlâ* does not mean “virgin” (see *DCH*). A *bәtûlâ* is usually someone still living at home and the charitable assumption would be that she is a virgin, but the word need not carry that connotation, and here as commonly elsewhere it rather suggests a girl as vulnerable and precious to her father. So there no semantic tension over maiden Israel’s actually being promiscuous.

Only here in the First Testament is *‘āzab* followed by *min* “from,” but *DCH* gives examples from Qumran.

LXX “breasts” implies a form from *šēd* for MT *śāday* (*HUB*). Aq implies *šadday*, suggesting “Shadday’s crag” (*CTAT* 2:621-22).

*Nātaš* makes for a catachresis (one might have expected *nāšat* “dry up”: see BDB): see the comment.

The asyndeton and the word order suggest that the second colon is subordinate to the first.

The plural apparently refers to the other deities to whom the singular *emptiness* refers.

*Šәrîqōt* might be intensive plural; K *šrwqt* is singular. The word seems onomatopoeic, comparing with English “shriek” (Drinkard, *Jeremiah* 1:247).

LXX lacks “back and not face”; omitting those words makes v. 17 a single 4-4 line.

*’er’ēm* looks more like a qal but LXX, Vg, Tg take it as hiphil.

MT has a section marker here.

Vv. 13-17 is the familiar kind of protest at Judah’s unfaithfulness, leading into a warning about the terrible consequences that will follow. In origin it will have formed an independent message; in this context its opening *therefore* marks it as illustrating the dire path and dire plan that vv. 2-12 have spoken of. The picking up from 2:25 of the word *futile* in v. 12 now meshes with its links with Jer 2:

v. 13 cf. 2:9-13 v. 14a cf. 2: 17, 19

v. 14b cf. 2:13 v. 15a cf. 2:32

v. 15b cf. 2:17-18, 33 v. 17 cf. 2:27

The lines in vv. 13b-17 have the short, two-stress second colon characteristic of grieving prayers (v. 15bγδ is the only exception, and a judiciously-placed hyphen could make it conform).[[178]](#footnote-178) The subsection outlines:

v. 13 Yahweh commissions Jeremiah to ask a rhetorical question

an introduction and two bicola

v. 14 Yahweh spells out the question

two bicola

vv. 15-16 Yahweh explains the question and points out the implications of the explanation

five bicola, the middle three being linked

v. 17 Yahweh asserts responsibility for those implications

two bicola

**13** The *therefore* indicates that the message that follows now functions to put flesh on the preceding general statements about Judah’s dire behavior and Yahweh’s dire plan. It starts from the assumption that the prediction in v. 12 will find fulfillment, and/or forms another invitation to imagine the future and therefore respond in such a way that it does not find fulfillment. Yahweh presupposes that there is something unparalleled and monstrous about the characteristic behavior of *young girl Israel*; at this point he does not explain in what way it is so, to raise suspense (v. 15 will explain) and/or because it needs no explanation. Either way, people can just *ask the nations* what they think.

**14** Yahweh focuses rather on finding adequate metaphors to describe Israel’s action. It is totally “unnatural.”[[179]](#footnote-179) To the far northeast from Ephraim (though not from Judah!) one could see Mount Hermon, a great *crag* surrounded by *open country*: “note that Lebanon is a great mountain and it is very broad in its summit; on it are fields and rocky caves where the sun's rays do not reach, so snow is constantly preserved there.”[[180]](#footnote-180) The snow thus lasts through the summer, doesn’t it? It doesn’t *abandon* its mountain; the verb is a telling one, because abandoning is what Judah specializes in, as the scroll has noted from the beginning (1:16). The *foreign water* in that region, beyond the bounds of Israel itself, continues to seep underground towards Israel, even in the height of summer doesn’t it? It doesn’t *pull up* in the sense of stopping flowing, does it? The verb is an odd one to use, but it is a telling one, familiar in the scroll from the beginning (1:10); it also came just now in v. 7. In nature, the foreign water continues to run as *cold streams*, doesn’t it? You’ve felt and drunk from those cold waters in the springs at Dan that form the beginning of the Jordan, haven’t you, or at least you’ve heard about them?

**15** Yes, it does continue to flow, and by comparison Israel’s behavior is therefore indeed *something* *horrific*, in that *my people has put me out of mind*. It is thus *to emptiness* that *they burn sacrifices.* There were *age-long tracks* that they were supposed walk on (6:16), but that expression has become ironical: the empty deities have mysteriously beguiled them and *made them collapse on their paths* and sidetracked them onto paths that are age-long in a bad sense, paths that they insist on walking forever. These deities thereby get them *to walk on byways* that lead nowhere, on a path that is insecure, *not built up* so that they can walk it safely without falling into a ravine.

**16** The gods of course did not see themselves as sidetracking people so that they walked on byways, and neither did they see themselves as acting *so as to make their country a desolation, age-long things to whistle at*. Yahweh implies an unfortunate comparison and link with the *age-long tracks* of v. 15: it will turn out that age-long tracks lead to age-long desolation. The horrified whistling will be heard because the real God will take action against them with the result that *everyone who passes will be desolate at it and will shake his head*.

**17** To get clearer how overwhelming it will be, think of a devastating hurricane from the east (see 4:11). Yahweh will bring such a hurricane. More literally, *I will scatter them* in that way *before the enemy*. Yahweh had promised to lift up his face and let it shine on Israel; on a day of threat and danger Israel would turn to Yahweh’s face and look for a sign that he will deliver them (e.g., Num 6:25-26; Ps 80:3, 7, 19 [4, 8, 20]). They will find he has turned the other way: *back and not face I will let them see on their day of disaster.* That will be the nature of the dire fate of which Yahweh spoke in v. 11, unless….

## A Protest Responding to What Has Preceded: An Ultimate Prayer (18:18-23)

18But they have said,

Come, let’s formulate plans against Jeremiah,

because instruction will not fail from priest,

Or counsel from expert,

or a word from prophet.

Come, let’s strike him down witha the tongue,

so that we may notb pay heed to any of his words.

19Pay heed to me, Yahweh,

listen to the sound of the people who argue against me.c

20Should what is dire be recompensed for what is good? –

because they have dug a pit for my life.

Be mindful of my standing before you

to speak what is good concerning them,

to turn your fury from them.

21Therefore give their children to hunger

and pour them out to the power of the sword.

Their women should become childless and widowed,

their men should become people slaughtered by death,

their young men struck down by the sword in battle.

22A cry should make itself heard from their houses,

because you get a horde to come against them suddenly.

Because they have dug a pitd to capture me,

traps they have laid for my feet.

23You yourself, Yahweh, acknowledge

their entire counsel against me, for death.

Do not expiate their waywardness;

their wrongdoing – do not blot it out from before you.

They should become people who have been made to collapse before you –

at the time of your anger, act against them.e

Or “on the tongue,” to silence him (Syr; cf. B. A. Foreman, “Strike the Tongue,” *VT* 59 [2009]: 653-57).

LXX lacks “not”; their point would then be that they will listen to him in order to have a basis for charging him (Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 441).

For MT *yәrîbāy* LXX, Tg imply *rîbî*, an easier reading whose meaning is little different (McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:438), though it is then possible to see v. 20a as the content of the *rîb* rather than as Jeremiah’s words (Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:527-31).

Here K implies not *šûḥâ* as in v. 20 but *šîḥâ*, for which LXX *logon* implies *śîḥâ* (Drinkwater, *Jeremiah* 1:251).

MT has a section marker here.

Jeremiah now reports other *plans* which compare and contrast with the one in v. 11 – the verbal link will have encouraged the juxtaposition of the originally separate messages. While the report in v. 18 is prosaic, it can be laid out as three bicola, which makes more obvious the continuity of vv. 13-17, 18, and 19-23. Either way, in the arrangement within the scroll vv. 13-17 provide the background to v. 18, and v. 18 provides the background to vv. 19-23 (MT has no break between vv. 18 and 19-23). In particular, v. 18 introduces the word *counsel*, which appears in vv. 18 and 23 for the first time in the scroll. The subsection outlines:

v. 18 Jeremiah reports the leaders’ plans against him

introduction and three bicola, the first two linked

v. 19-23 Jeremiah’s prayer

v. 19 an appeal to Yahweh to listen (one bicolon)

v. 20 a question expressing rationales for the plea (one bicolon, one tricolon)

vv. 21-22a a plea to Yahweh to see that they all die (bicola either side of a tricolon)

v. 22b-23aαβ statements expressing rationales for the plea (two bicola)

v. 23aγδ a plea to Yahweh not to forgive but to act against them (two bicola)

**18** How does Jeremiah know about these plots? Maybe Yahweh has told him, or maybe he has heard rumors, or maybe the background is the kind of events described in passages such as Jer 26 and 32. As usual, we have no way of knowing whether the historical background is the time of (say) Jehoiakim or that of Zedekiah, during both of whose reigns there were attempts to silence Jeremiah. Further, who are *they*? In the context, they are the *them* of v. 17, Judahites generally. Independently of the context, the verb might be virtually impersonal: there are people who have said what follows. In 20:6 there are *many* of them. But to *formulate* *plans* probably implies some vested interest and it requires some power; in the story of Jesus’s lynching, the people in general eventually take part, but the planning issues from the people with power and influence. Here, the people with power and influence would be *priest*, *expert*, and *prophet*, so they themselves may be the *they*. All were identified with the administration and the establishment; all have been subject to Jeremiah’s critique, explicitly in his references to them and implicitly in his critique of religious, social, economic, and political policies that they advocate or support. That point links with the activities associated with the three groups. The business of a priest is *instruction* (*tôrâ*) – while priests were responsible for leading worship in the temple every day, the focus here lies on the leadership they exercise by instructing people on what counts as proper worship, spirituality, and lifestyle (cf. Deut 17:8-11; 33:10). The business of an expert (*ḥākām*) is to give the king *counsel* about political decisions that need taking, though the same word has been used more generally for *smart* people (4:22; 8:8-9; 9:12, 17, 23 [11, 16, 22]). The business of a prophet is to bring a word from Yahweh that has a more direct origin in Yahweh than the instruction based in tradition handed down from Moses or the advice reflecting the best human insight. The declaration might be a kind of aphorism.[[181]](#footnote-181) In principle Jeremiah does not oppose any of the three, but in practice he opposes all three because of the way they fulfill their roles. In denouncing priests, politicians, and prophets, he is attacking all the guardians of public weal; it is not surprising that he gets into trouble.[[182]](#footnote-182) So they return the compliment. *Come, let’s strike him down with the tongue*. Their earlier reference to formulating plans indicates that they are not just going to throw insults at him but to make proposals about silencing him, action of the kind we will read in Jer 26 and 32. The last colon make clearest that Jeremiah is again not reporting people’s actual words but the implications of their words and actions.

**19** Jeremiah’s plea also implies the link between vv. 1-17 and vv. 19-23. His message concerns Yahweh’s challenge to Judah; he gets in trouble for being the messenger. In light of what he somehow knows, he turns to Yahweh. Like many a protest prayer, he first urges Yahweh to listen. One aspect of the rhetoric of reporting this appeal to Yahweh is that people would themselves be used to praying this way. They need to see that they have put him in the position that they take when they pray. The specific appeal *pay heed* makes for a link with v. 18: they will not pay heed, but please will Yahweh do so?

**20** Yahweh and Jeremiah’s human audience have to see the wrongness in the attacks he has spoken of. He has been concerned about *what is good* for his attackers. It was his concern when he was lambasting them. Here the second line implies that the good thing he was doing was praying for them, which was the means of seeking what was good for them. He was representing them in the meetings of the heavenly cabinet that he attended and took part in, as he was *standing before you* (cf. the sequence in Ps 35:12-13). His aim was then *to turn your fury from them*, notwithstanding Yahweh’s instructions not to do it. In light of such facts, how can *what is dire be recompensed for what is good*? Which is what they are doing insofar as *they have dug a pit for my life*. It is again the way the Psalms talk (including Ps 35:7).[[183]](#footnote-183) Here, at least, it is likely a metaphor for making plans against his life: see v. 23.

**21-22** Therefore Jeremiah pleads for redress. How does one know what to pray for people? Part of the answer is that one prays for the things that God has signified he is interested in and committed to. And God has said that his wrath is to be poured out on the people. Jeremiah had not wanted it to happen, but he had found that he could not contain the divine wrath with which God had filled him, and God had told him it was to be poured out on little children, young men, women and men, that it would bring battle, hunger, and sword, the loss of husbands and fathers and wives (e.g., 6:11-12; 9:20-21 [19-20]; 14:12; 15:2, 7-9).[[184]](#footnote-184) So Jeremiah is asking God to do what he has said he would do. His attackers themselves, their children, the women and the men and the young people in their families and community – they should all pay for the attackers’ wrongdoing, with their lives. The tricolon underlines the horrific comprehensiveness of the slaughter it portrays. As usual, the Scriptures work with the way families and communities are bound up together in their destiny; human beings are not simply separate individuals with separate destinies. Yahweh should *pour out* the children“like fruit or vegetables dumped from a basket onto a table under the watchful eye, and the knife, of the cook.”[[185]](#footnote-185) It would be as if the angel of death had taken over their houses as happened to the Egyptians, to generate a terrible *cry* (Exod 11:6), or as if death has indeed climbed through people’s windows. Jeremiah articulates his plea in abcdc’b’d’ parallelism in v. 22b:

Because they have dug a pit for my capture

traps they have laid for my feet

**23** Yahweh might be tempted to forgive them – the good thing that Jeremiah has previously been seeking for them. He now wants Yahweh to resist that temptation: *do not expiate their waywardness*. It is usually priests who expiate wrongdoing on people’s behalf (e.g., Lev 16; this verse is the only occasion Jeremiah uses this verb), but the provision for doing so comes from God, and in this connection he sets up the means of expiation. He makes arrangements whereby the community can *blot out* its wrongdoing *from before you.* Jeremiah leaps straight to that point, in a chilling parallelism, with the two verbs embracing the two nouns:

do not expiate their waywardness

their wrongdoing from before you do not blot out

God is not to make it happen. There should be no mercy. *They should become people who have been made to collapse before you*. “The picture thus conjured up is apparently that of a prisoner brought unceremoniously into the presence of one who is to determine his punishment and decide his fate.”[[186]](#footnote-186) Jeremiah is not presupposing that expiation and blotting out are impossible if the people turn from their faithlessness. He is presupposing that God is soft-hearted and tempted to forgive people independently of any change on their part, and he presses God not to do so. The inclusion of this horrifying prayer in the scriptures implies that it was fine for Jeremiah to pray that way. How could it be, given that it stands in such contrast with other aspects of First Testament spirituality and theology, not least the merciful stance of Joseph towards his brothers in being willing to forgive them for (more literally) digging a pit for his feet? There might be at least five considerations to take into account in answering that question.

1. We have noted that all Jeremiah is doing is asking Yahweh to do what he said he would do. Wrath was not his idea. It was Yahweh’s. His prayer parallels the equally-horrifying Ps 137, which asks Yahweh to do what he had said he would do in Isa 13.
2. It reflects the fact that people can say anything to Yahweh. There are no limits to the outrageous prayers that one can pray. The point is not that the prayer then makes someone feel better. It is that prayer means giving things over to Yahweh in such a way that he becomes responsible for deciding what to do with them. (In the event, he more or less decided to do as Jeremiah said; Jeremiah’s mixed feelings match Yahweh’s mixed feelings.)
3. It reflects the fact that prayer is “the last resort of the helpless”[[187]](#footnote-187) and the last resort of the powerless. People who possess power, wealth, or honor cannot pray this way. People under attack who have no way of defending themselves can do so. Prayer is an alternative to action, not least when action is impossible.
4. While the prayer is formally addressed to Yahweh, it is uttered and recorded for the overhearing of the people against whom Jeremiah is praying, as one of his devices for seeking to get them to turn to Yahweh. In his prayer he is still seeking what is good for them, seeking to turn Yahweh’s wrath from them by turning them away from being people who must be the victims of his wrath. It is encouraging for anyone to know that other people are praying for them. It is even more galvanizing to know that other people are praying against them.
5. It thereby parallels the horrifying way Jesus speaks of his Father’s punishment of his people, notwithstanding his prayer for his killers’ forgiveness (e.g., Matt 21:33-41; 22:1-14; 23:29-36; 24:45-51; 25:14-30). As Jesus was not the first person to talk of forgiving enemies, so he didn’t abolish within the scriptures the notion of looking forward to their judgment (2 Thess 1:6-10; Rev 6:9-10).[[188]](#footnote-188)

# The Pot: and When It’s Too Late

The motif of the potter reappears in Jer 19. But whereas Jer 18 emphasized that the future was open, this unit warns that it does stay open forever. Once more the unit brings together material of diverse origin in order to expound its point:

19:1-13 again the unit begins with a story that involves Jeremiah and something that is the work of a potter, and has points of connection with the “postscript” comprising 18:13-17 (burning sacrifices to other gods, desolation, whistle)

19:14 – 20:6 again there is a kind of postscript to the story, itself in the framework of a continuation of the story of Jeremiah and the pot, but focusing on a declaration of calamity to come

20:7-18 again the unit ends with prayers of protest, of an extreme and shocking sort

## Jeremiah, the Decanter, and Yahweh’s Counsel (19:1-13)

1Yahweh said this:a Go,b and acquire a decanter, made by a potter in earthenware,c withd some of the elders of the people and some of the elders of the priests. 2Go out to the Ben-Hinnom Ravine which is at the entrance to the Potsherde Gate, and proclaim there the words that I speak to you. 3Say: Listen to Yahweh’s word, kings of Judah and people who live in Jerusalem.f

Yahweh of Armies, Israel’s God, has said this: Here am I, causing dire trouble to come on this place such that everyone who hears of it, his ears will quiver, 4since they have abandoned me, and made this place alien, and burnt sacrifices in it to other gods that they had not acknowledged, they, their ancestors, and the kings of Judah, and filled this place with the blood of people who were free of guilt. 5They have kept building the Master’sg shrines to consume their children in fire as whole offerings to the Master, which I didn’t order and didn’t speak of; it didn’t arise into my mind.h

6Therefore, there, days are coming (Yahweh’s affirmation) when this place will no longer be called “the Shameful Fireplace” and “Ben-Hinnom Ravine,” but rather “the Slaughter Ravine.” 7I will decanti the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and make them fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hand of the people who seek their life. I will give their corpse as food to the bird in the heavens and to the animal on the earth. 8I will make this city into a desolation and a thing to whistle at – everyone who passes by it will be desolate and will whistle at all its wounds. 9I will have them eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and an individual will eat his fellow’s flesh in the blockade and in the siegej with which their enemies and the people who seek their life besiege them.

10Then you will break the decanter before the eyes of the people who go with you, 11and say to them, Yahweh of Armies has said this: In this way I will break this people and this city, as one breaks a potter’s object, which one cannot repair again. And in a shameful fireplace they will bury, because there is no room to bury.k 12So I will do to this place (Yahweh’s affirmation) and to the people who live in it, and I will makel this city like a shameful fireplace, 13and the houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah will become like the place of “the Shameful Fireplace,” unclean – to all the houses on whose roofs people have burned sacrifices for the entire heavenly army and poured libations to other gods.m

LXX adds “to me.”

The infinitive absolute is used imperativally (cf. 2:2 and the note).

*Ḥāreś* (in pause) makes for a paronomasia with *ḥarsît* (*potsherd*) in v. 2.

In effect, the elders are further subjects of the command to *go* (Rashi in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage).

For Q’s *haḥarsît* K implies *haḥarsût* or plural *haḥărāsôt*.

LXX adds “and people who enter through these gates.”

As usual LXX gives *Baal* a feminine article (see the note on 2:8).

MT has a unit marker here.

LXX has “slaughter.”

The paronomasia *bәmāṣôr bәmāṣôq* is also a hendiadys; and the subsequent *besiege* is the verb *ṣûq* from which that second noun comes, underlining the point further (I follow the NETS translation).

LXX lacks v. 11b.

The infinitive continues the finite verb; so again *poured* in the next verse (*TTH* 206; JM 124p).

MT has a unit marker here.

“One imagines the gossip in the potters’ quarter: ‘First he comes in here and just sits all day, watching me and asking dumb questions and scaring away the customers. Then he goes away without buying so much as an egg-cup. Then he comes back later and buys a huge wine jar, the biggest I’ve made – and takes it to the rubbish dump and smashes it to bits! Weird or what?’”[[189]](#footnote-189) The story has all the elements of a theatrical performance: a playwright/director (Yahweh), a stage, a performer, a prop, and an audience; and the audience are witnesses to the performance and are actually onstage for it.[[190]](#footnote-190) In this story there is thus more implicit emphasis on the rhetorical significance of the sign-act.[[191]](#footnote-191) Yet it is another variant on being not quite an account of a symbolic act (cf. 13:1-12aα; 18:1-12). There is again a divine commission to undertake an action, this time one that will be witnessed by some people and will involve an action that implements a divine decision, but there is no account of Jeremiah’s undertaking the action. The act itself is not so crucial to what it pictures.[[192]](#footnote-192) Maybe Jeremiah never did what it says. The focus lies on the message associated with the action of which Yahweh speaks. In the end the emphasis in the story is on its being a message to Judahites who hear it and are invited to imagine the event that is commissioned but (in the way the story is told) doesn’t happen, and to listen to the exhortation that is built on it. Either way, failing to report the act has the effect of enabling the audience listening to the story to see themselves as living between threat and fulfillment. It compromises the contrast between the story of a potter who can rework the clay and the story of a pot that has been baked and gets smashed. It’s still not too late, is the implication. But it’s the eleventh hour. You must stop now. Then, hearing the story after 587 would make one aware that Yahweh did decant the counsel.

As well as comparing with 13:1-12aα and 18:1-12, the story compares with 7:29-34 in its condemnation of observances in the Ben-Hinnom Ravine, and a number of the lines in 19:1-13 are more or less identical with lines there. This story is in effect an expanded version of 7:29-34, though some motifs there do not appear here, so it might be better to see the two passages as separate expansions of a common starting point. As is the case elsewhere when the scroll incorporates two versions of some verses, in the two contexts the material fulfills a different function and brings a different message. The first account of Yahweh’s message about the Ben-Hinnom Ravine formed part of the wide-ranging critique of Judah’s worship in 7:1 – 8:3, and there is some analogy between 26:1-19 providing a narrative equivalent and background to 7:1-15 and 19:1-13 providing a narrative equivalent and background to 7:29-34. Here, this second account forms part of the interwoven report comprising Part 2(d) of the scroll, concerning Jeremiah’s prophesying and the way he has to turn to Yahweh in the midst of it, which take potter and pot as a motif.[[193]](#footnote-193)

The story outlines:

vv. 1-3a Yahweh tells Jeremiah to go to the Ben-Hinnom Ravine and deliver a message

v. 1 Jeremiah is to get a decanter, which will symbolize Yahweh’s decanting Judah’s counsel, and to get some witnesses

vv.2-3a he is to go to the Potsherd Gate, which draws attention to the fact that one cannot mend a broken pot, and deliver a message

vv. 3b-5 the message in outline

v. 3b Yahweh’s intention to bring calamity

vv. 4-5 the rationale

vv. 6-9 the message concerning Yahweh’s intention in more frightening detail

vv. 10-13 Yahweh tells Jeremiah to smash the decanter before the witnesses

v. 10 he is to initiate the implementing of Yahweh’s intention

vv. 11-13 he is to explain again what it will signify

**1** In Jer 1 – 10, *Yahweh has* *said this* invariably introduced a message for the people to whom Jeremiah speaks, but here it introduces Yahweh’s instructions to Jeremiah himself (cf. 13:1; 15:19; 16:1, 9; 17:19); Jeremiah himself is more prominent in Jer 11 – 20. But there is no “to me” (contrast 13:1); by implication the story is told by someone else, rather than by Jeremiah (cf. 19:14 – 20:6). In the instruction to *go and acquire a decanter made by a potter in earthenware* (also cf. 13:1), the rare word *decanter* and the specifying of *earthenware* relate to the message’s delivery in v. 2 and to the symbolic action itself. Perhaps the taking up of phraseology from 13:1 explains the odd way whereby *some of the elders of the people and some of the elders of the priests* is attached rather loosely to the sentence, as simply further objects of the verb *acquire*. Elders of the people and of the priests are not common or technical terms; whereas one might wonder at Yahweh or the narrator imagining that senior leaders in the community or in the priesthood would enthuse about being dragged into an expedition into the Ben-Hinnom Ravine that would surely mean trouble or controversy, 21:1 and later stories make that idea more plausible.[[194]](#footnote-194) Anyway, as witnesses and people who would report back to the administration, the people, and the priesthood (vv. 10-13), Jeremiah needs only a few of the elders, and maybe the ones who would accompany him would be sympathizers (cf. 26:17).

**2** *The* *Potsherd Gate* to *the* *Ben-Hinnom Ravine*[[195]](#footnote-195) appears only here. Perhaps it was near the area where potters lived and was the gate that led to their dump. Neh 2:13 mentions the Ravine Gate and the Trash Gate (not to be confused with what is now called the Dung Gate in the medieval walls of the Old City of Jerusalem – the city extended much further south in Jeremiah’s day); either would suit this story. Perhaps Potsherd Gate was not the gate’s official or formal name,[[196]](#footnote-196) but referring to it by this name appropriates the similarity of the words for potsherd and for earthenware.[[197]](#footnote-197) The name is also suggestive in connection with the action Jeremiah is to undertake, since the Potsherd Gate will be where he makes potsherds of his decanter.[[198]](#footnote-198) While the apparently “unnatural” identification of the Ben-Hinnom Ravine by a gate[[199]](#footnote-199) might reflect a desire to identify the relevant part of the ravine,[[200]](#footnote-200) the similarity between the name and the symbolic act would be the more pressing point about referring to this particular gate.

**3-4** Jeremiah is to proclaim there a message for the *kings of Judah and people who live in Jerusalem*, notwithstanding their not being present (addressing plural kings compares with 17:20).[[201]](#footnote-201) Three implications follow. One is that Jeremiah’s action is a little like the declaring of a verdict on an accused who is not in court (e.g., because of being on the run). The delivering of the verdict is still valid and the accused had better be wary of it. A second is that the witnesses will have the task of passing on the message. A third is that the story presupposes that kings and people will hear this message through the fact that someone is writing the story. This incongruity over the message’s audience may link with some incongruity over the story’s references to *this place*. Elsewhere in the scroll *this place* can be the country, the city, or the temple. Here, in v. 6 at least it must be the Shameful Fireplace, but in v. 12 at least it must be the city. In vv. 3-4, either reference is possible. Either the Ben-Hinnom Ravine within the city’s environs, then, or the city as a whole, was part of Yahweh’s domain (the expression would apply to both). And Judahites have *made this place alien* by their worship, by invoking alien gods, their alienemptythings (5:19; 8:19), and by *shedding the blood of people who were free of guilt* (cf. 2:34)[[202]](#footnote-202) – which makes one think of Manasseh in the past and of Jehoiakim in the present (2 Kgs 21:16; 24:4; Jer 22:17). If *this place* is the city and not just the ravine, the slaying could include happenings within the city and in the temple as well as in the ravine and in shrines there, which would fit with the scroll’s references elsewhere to such shedding of blood (2:34; 7:6; 22:3, 17; 26:15).[[203]](#footnote-203) The consequence will be disaster such as will make *ears* *quiver* or ring, as they do when one hears something astonishing.

**5-7** The continuation of Yahweh’s declaration restates word from 7:31-33:[[204]](#footnote-204)

[see v. 30] [see v. 4]

731They have kept building shrines 195They have kept building the Master’s shrines

at the Shameful Fireplace,

which is in the Ben-Hinnom Ravine,

to consume their sons and their daughters in fire, to consume their children[[205]](#footnote-205) in fire

as whole offerings to the Master,

which I did not order; which I did not order and did not speak of;

it did not arise in my mind. it did not arise in my mind.

32Therefore, there, days are coming 6Therefore, there, days are coming

(Yahweh’s affirmation) (Yahweh’s affirmation)

when no more will be said when they will no longer call this place

“the Shameful Fireplace” “the Shameful Fireplace”

and “Ben-Hinnom Ravine” and “Ben-Hinnom Ravine”

but rather “the Slaughter Ravine.” but rather “the Slaughter Ravine.”

And they will bury in a shameful fireplace 11bAnd in a shameful fireplace they will bury

because there is no room. because there is no room to bury.

33This people’s corpse will be for food 7bI will give their corpse for food

for the bird in the heavens for the bird in the heavens

and for the animal on the earth, and for the animal on the earth.

with there being no one disturbing them.

[see further v. 34] [see further vv. 7a, 8-11a]

As is the case in 13:1-12aα (and, for instance, in visions in Daniel), Yahweh’s message is not an allegory in which there is a precise match between each element in the symbolic action and each element in the message (as there is with Jesus’s interpretation of the sower parable in Mark 4). But there is more than one facet to the symbolic action’s significance. A first facet emerges from Yahweh’s having bidden Jeremiah to acquire a *decanter* (*baqbaq*), which is not a regular word for a regular jug (see only 1 Kgs 14:3). Here, the decanter will match Yahweh’s intention to *decant* (*bāqaq*) *the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place*. He will pour the counsel out on the floor so that for practical purposes its contents no longer exist. Yahweh thus also picks up the word *counsel* from 18:18, 23. We know already that the Judahites have their plans and counsel and that these stand in tension with Yahweh’s. Here for the first time the two counsels go head to head as Yahweh declares the intention to frustrate the Judahites’ counsel. In further words that are part of the material in v. 7a that is distinctive to Jer 19 over against Jer 7, he declares that he will *make them fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hand of the people who seek their life*. In 18:18, *counsel* referred to the political policies that the king’s advisers proposed for its relationship with bigger powers such as Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt. This counsel will fail, with the result that the nation will experience defeat and decimation – as it did.

**8-9** So passers by will respond with horror to what they see. Actually they will do no such thing, because Jerusalem is not on a main road, which was at one level why it escaped destruction from Sennacherib in 701. The declaration that *everyone who passes by it will be desolate and will whistle at all its wounds* aims to drive Jerusalemites themselves to imagine the scene; whistling is not a sign of contempt but an expression of astonishment and horror. That people will *eat the flesh* of children and of fellow members of the community is an intentionally-horrifying description of the depths to which they will be driven *in the blockade and in the siege* that will come to Jerusalem, *with which* *their enemies and the people who seek their life besiege them*. People will be starving, and will not be able to hold themselves back from cooking and eating the flesh of people who have died. It is a standard threat (Lev 26:29; Deut 28:53; Ezek 5:10); Lam 2:20; 4:10 implies the fulfillment of it.[[206]](#footnote-206) Indeed, Josephus tells of a woman who killed her child in order to eat him.[[207]](#footnote-207) It is hard to know how literally to take such a report; there is no doubt that it is designed to horrify. In the present context, the idea is another piece of rhetoric designed to drive Judah to its senses.

**10-11** Yahweh moves from the proclamation Jeremiah must issue to the performative action he must undertake. People may have been aware of a practice known to us from Egypt a millennium or two earlier, whereby Egyptian rulers might inscribe a clay statue, vase, or bowl with their enemies’ names and then smash or otherwise spoil the object as a kind of enacted prayer that the enemies might be smashed.[[208]](#footnote-208) Yahweh commissions Jeremiah to break the decanter as an action that will similarly initiate Yahweh’s decanting the Judahites’ counsel. The breaking is to take place before the eyes of witnesses, so that it brings home to them and to people who receive their report the reality of what Yahweh intends to do. *In this way* (*kākâ*), a way that corresponds to the smashing you have just witnessed, *I will* *break this* *people* *and* *this city*.Yahweh’s words thus point to yet another facet to the significance of the symbolic action, and to the significance of mentioning the Potsherd Gate, the gate where you can find a mountain of pieces of broken pot. Because when *one breaks a potter’s object, one cannot repair* it. That’s the thing about pottery. The destruction of Jerusalem and of Judah will be definitive and final (of course it will not, actually). Yahweh’s words also point to a significant difference between this story and the potter story in 18:1-12. You can press clay back into a ball and start again. You can’t reshape a pot that’s been fired. All you can do is throw it away. And when it then breaks, you can’t put the pieces back together. The Jeremiah scroll is coming to describe the final, unalterable doom of the community.[[209]](#footnote-209)

**12-13** In theory *this place*, *this city*, and *the people who live in it* are very different from *the Shameful Fireplace*, but Yahweh speaks of them in a way that presupposes they have become confused. We don’t know how many Jerusalemites frequented the ShamefulFireplace, but however many it was, its existence compromises the nature of Jerusalem itself. And Yahweh’s action will so fill Jerusalem with death that it will become *like a shameful fireplace* – as unclean as death itself. Yahweh’s action will have this effect on *the houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah*. They will become *unclean*. Really they are unclean already, because they are *houses on whose roofs people have burned sacrifices for the entire heavenly army and poured libations to other gods.* The open roof area might be a natural place for any kind of household worship, including the pouring of drink offerings to which 7:18 referred.[[210]](#footnote-210) It would be an especially natural place for making offerings to the heavenly army, whose worship appears in close association with the worship in Ben-Hinnom in 7:29 – 8:3 (and cf. 32:29; 2 Kgs 23:12; Zeph 1:5).

## A Story Postscript: the Reaction, and the Identity of the Invader (19:14 – 20:6)

14Jeremiah came from the Shameful Fireplace where Yahweh had sent him to prophesy, stood in the courtyard of Yahweh’s house, and said to the entire people,a 15Yahweh of Armies, Israel’s God, has said this: Here am I, causing to come to this city and upon all its towns all the dire trouble that I have spoken of against it, because they have stiffened their neck so as not to listen to my words.

20:1Pashhur ben Immer the priest – he was appointee ruler in Yahweh’s house – heard Jeremiah prophesying these things. 2Pashhur struck Jeremiah the prophet down and put him in the cellb that was at the Upper Benjamin Gate, which was in Yahweh’s house. 3Next dayc Pashhur let Jeremiah out from the cell. Jeremiah said to him, Yahweh is naming youd not Pashhur but rather All-Around-Is-Terror.e 4Because Yahweh has said this: Here am I, giving you over to terror – you and all your friends. They will fall by the sword of their enemies, and your eyes will be looking. All Judah I will give into the hand of the king of Babylon. He will exile them to Babylon and strike them down with the sword. 5I will give over all this city’s wealth, all its acquisitions, and all its valuables, and all the stores of the kings of Judah I will give over to their enemies’ hand. They will plunder them, take them, and see that they come to Babylon. 6And you, Pashhur, and all the people who live in your house, you will go into captivity. To Babylon you will come, and there you will die, and there you will be buried, you and all your friends to whom you have prophesied by deception.f

MT has a section marker here.

*Mahpeket* otherwise comes only in 29:26; 2 Chr 16:10. LXX perhaps implies “dungeon,” Vg “fetter,” Tg “stocks,” Sym “torture” (see Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 120-21). The implication is of chaining him up rather than making a public spectacle of him.

LXX lacks *next day*.

The qatal is performative (Allen, *Jeremiah*, 224); see 1:5 and the note.

LXX “Migrant” (similarly migration in v 4) derives *māgôr* from *gûr* I rather than *gûr* III; Tg seems to derive it from *gûr* II “gather together against.” MT has a chapter marker here.

MT has a marker here. The references to *you and all your friends* form an “inclusion” around vv. 4-6 (J. R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric* [2nd ed., Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997], 62-63).

The medieval chapter division recognizes that the verses relating Jeremiah’s return to Jerusalem continue straight on from 19:1-13, but it then separates them off from the verses relating the aftermath of that return, the meetings with Pashhur. MT more plausibly makes 19:14 – 20:6 one unit. MT’s making 19:14 the beginning of a new unit is more controversial (given that 19:14 – 20:6 does continue the preceding story), but I have followed it, because 19:14 – 20:6 has its own distinctive importance. It makes the first announcement that Babylon and its king will be Judah’s conqueror and that Judah is destined to go into exile in Babylon. It also contains the first references to Jeremiah “prophesying” (the reference in 11:21 to his being told not to prophesy proves the rule) and the first to Jeremiah as a “prophet” since his commission. It is also the first reference to his delivering a message in the temple courtyard: in 7:1-2 he was bidden to stand in the temple gateway and he presumably did so, and 26:1-2 has Yahweh commissioning him to stand in the courtyard to deliver the message to which Jer 7 refers – when he turned out to be risking his life. So if we may connect some dots, this is the second such occasion and he must know he is taking a risk. Further, 19:14 – 20:6 links with what follows in 20:7-18 as well as with what precedes. So it is useful not to link 19:14 – 20:6 too exclusively to 19:1-13. The section outlines as follows:

19:14 Jeremiah returns from Ben-Hinnom

19:15 Jeremiah proclaims Yahweh’s message to the people

20:1-3a Pashhur sets about Jeremiah and confines him overnight

20:3b-6 Jeremiah proclaims Yahweh’s message to Pashhur:

vv. 3b-4a Yahweh is renaming Pashhur and acting in light of his new name

vv. 4b-5 Yahweh is giving over Judah and Jerusalem to the Babylonians

v. 6 Pashhur and his household and friends will die in Babylon.

**14-15** There is no reference to Jeremiah fulfilling his commission either to preach or to act, or to the witnesses now fulfilling theirs. Jeremiah returns from Ben-Hinnom where he had gone *to prophesy*. and appears *in the courtyard* *of Yahweh’s house* to deliver his customary message. In a sense the two verses don’t have any content of their own, but simply make a bridge between 19:1-13 and 20:1-6;[[211]](#footnote-211) so maybe the medieval chapter division wasn’t so undiscerning. The accusation that the Judahites *have stiffened their neck* makes a link with Jer 7 (see 7:26) though the words are even closer to being a repetition from 17:23. In the unfolding of the scroll, the two verses tighten the screw on the people and on the temple authorities, not because he says something new but because of where and how he says it.

**20:1** In First Testament times there seems always to have been someone we might call “the chief priest” but there was no fixed way of describing him. The lack of a fixed title may link with the position’s not having the power that the chief priest would have later, especially when there were no kings. Sometimes he is the head priest (e.g., 2 Chr 31:10; 34:9), sometimes the big priest (e.g., 2 Kgs 22:4; Neh 3:1), sometimes simply the priest (e.g., 2 Kgs 11:15; 2 Chr 34:14), sometimes the ruler of God’s house (*nāgîd*;1 Chr 9:11; 2 Chr 31:13; Neh 11:11). Pashhur is called by the compound expression *appointee ruler*, which comes only here; nowhere is the senior priest called appointee (*pāqîd*), and 2 Chr 24:11 has the construct phrase “the head priest’s appointee.” While the double expression might therefore be a unique description of the senior priest as *appointee* to which the later more familiar term *ruler* is added to clarify his position, more likely Pashhur was not senior priest; it’s hard to fit him into the sequence of senior priests, which in 1 Chr 5:39-41 goes in the time from Josiah to 587 from Hilkiah to Azariah to Seraiah to Jehozadak. More likely he was the senior priest’s representative with responsibility for seeing that order was kept in the temple (cf. Tg). Immer was also the name of one of the Davidic priestly divisions (1 Chr 24:14).

**2** Either way, in keeping with his position (29:26), Pashhur takes seriously his responsibility for ensuring that rogue prophets are not making a nuisance of themselves in the temple. He recalls Amaziah in Amos 7:10-17 but acts more forcefully. *Struck Jeremiah the prophet down* is a strong statement, as earlier occurrences of the verb (*nākâ* hiphil) indicate (e.g., 5:6). Yahweh is often the subject of this verb (e.g., 2:30; 5:3; 14:19; 21:6). Pashhur will see himself as doing God’s work. And while congregations in the West are nowadays not so used to violence in church, there is a reason why a beadle or verger carries a ceremonial version of a mace as he attends on the minister. But Pashhur opens himself to the threat of unfortunate consequences, like Amaziah. The comparability of the two stories hints that they are examples of the recurrent potential for conflict between a properly-commissioned minister with responsibility for good order and someone without that proper position who threatens to rock the boat.[[212]](#footnote-212) The word translated *cell* evidently indicated some form of confinement that could be imposed on a renegade for a night to teach him a lesson and get him to cool it.[[213]](#footnote-213) There was a Benjamin Gate in the city wall, so called because it led into Benjaminite territory (37:12-13), but this is a Benjamin Gate to the temple courtyard, again presumably so-called because it was on the Benjamin side of the city; being a gate that was part of the temple complex, it would be higher up than the city gate.

**3** Pashhur perhaps brings Jeremiah out for further trial.[[214]](#footnote-214) When he then appears before Pashhur, we might expect that the priests’ representative would give him some threat, an ultimatum.

As, then, their authority was founded on the Law and on God’s inviolable decree, Jeremiah might well have been much terrified; for this thought might have occurred to him, — “What can be the purpose of God? for he has set priests of the tribe of Levi over his Temple and over his whole people. Why, then, does he not rule them by his Spirit? Why does he not render them fit for their office? Why does he suffer his Temple, and the sacred office which he so highly commends to us in his Law, to be thus profaned? or why, at least, does he not stretch forth his hand to defend me, who am also a priest, and sincerely engaged in my calling?” For we know that God commands in his Law, as a proof that the priests had supreme power, that whosoever

disobeyed them should be put to death.[[215]](#footnote-215)

What actually happens is that “the voice of Pashhur is never heard again. Rather, Jeremiah speaks and is in obvious command of the situation even though he is under restraint.”[[216]](#footnote-216) And consequences do follow for the unfortunate Pashhur, who maybe thought he was just trying to do his job and was being rather lenient compared with what happened on the occasion reported in Jer 26. In effect, the consequence is another symbolic action, of a different kind. Names are important, especially when God determines them. *Nomen est omen*: a name is an announcement about the future, and in English at least, the word omen is ominous. Pashhur may be an Egyptian name, a compound incorporating the name of the god Horus,[[217]](#footnote-217) and Jeremiah might have had fun with that fact if he had known, but it’s a recurrent and quite respectable Israelite name (cf. 21:1) and Jeremiah makes nothing of it.There’s no need to look for some way in which the new name links with the old one.[[218]](#footnote-218) *All-Around-Is-Terror* takes up Jeremiah’s warning to Judah in 6:25 (cf. 20:10; 46:5; 49:29). It sums up his ominous vision of the future that threatens Judah. While Israelite names sometimes express the commitment or conviction of the one who bears the name, or rather of his or her parents (Jeremiah perhaps means “Yahweh founded”),[[219]](#footnote-219) specially-given names may rather refer to something external to the person for which they become a poster or a sign: for instance, *A-Remainder-Will-Return* (Isa 7:3) is not a statement about the personal significance of Isaiah’s son who bears that name but a declaration of something he is designed to remind people of.[[220]](#footnote-220) Further, giving someone a new name, as Jeremiah does, need not mean that literally Pashhur changes his name so that people actually address him as All-Around-Is-Terror, any more than is the case with the other sons mentioned in Isaiah, God-Is-with-Us (though that might be) and An-Extraordinary-Counselor-Is-the-Warrior-God, the-Everlasting-Father-Is-an-Official-for-Well-Being (!) (Isa 7:14; 9:6). Rather he becomes a poster for the facts about the imminent fate of Judah whose threat he has tried to suppress by arresting Jeremiah.

**4** But because he is the one who has taken this action, he and people identified with him will themselves experience this fate. By his *friends* Jeremiah perhaps denotes the fellow-priests who identify with his position – possibly as opposed to the priests who accompanied Jeremiah to the Ben-Hinnom Ravine.[[221]](#footnote-221) Perhaps *you and all your friends* carries a note of sarcasm, and/or *and your eyes will be looking* recognizes and underlines the pain of watching this happen and the necessity to acknowledge some responsibility for it, having taken a lead in discouraging the response to Jeremiah that might forestall the disaster. *Your eyes will be looking*. It is going to happen. You will see it with your own eyes. You will see it and grieve over it and have to recognize that you bear some responsibility for action that brings catastrophe not just to your friends but to *all Judah*. Yes, the name constitutes a warning not just to Pashhur but to the entire people, as it did in 6:25, who are also the people listening to this story. *All Judah I will give into the hand of the king of Babylon.* So far in the scroll, Jeremiah has frequently spoken of enemy invasion and of captivity and exile, but he has never named names. The monumentally new point here is the identifying of the king of Babylon as the great invader and of Babylon as the location of people’s exile (the king will not be named until 21:2). It is a turning point in the Jeremiah scroll. *He will exile them to Babylon and strike them down*: some will have the one fate, some the other. As Pashhur had struck down Jeremiah, so the Babylonian king will strike people down – but *with the sword.*

**5-6** The city’s resources will also go off to Babylon: *all… all… all… all.*[[222]](#footnote-222)So will Pashhur himself, his family, and his “friends” (*all…all*). They will never come back. To die and not be buried is one threat to live with, and one experience not to have. To die and be buried away from the promised land is another. (But it looks as if Yahweh’s bark is again worse than his bite, given that members of Pashhur’s family returned from Babylon in due course: see 1 Chr 9:10-13; maybe they turned to Yahweh in Babylon.) The final clause adds a dramatic closer. Pashhur’s “friends” are not just his peers. They are people *to whom you have prophesied by deception*. The story began with references to Jeremiah prophesying, the first references in the Jeremiah scroll; it closes with a reference to “false prophecy,” the only other occurrence of the verb in Jer 15 – 22. Maybe Pashhur was simply a priest who prophesied, as a number of priests likely did. Or maybe Jeremiah speaks metaphorically: by trying to silence and discredit Jeremiah and his message, Pashhur was doing the same thing as the prophets who promised that things were going to go well for Judah. Either way, he prophesies *by deception* – which implies by the Master, whether he realizes it or not (5:31).[[223]](#footnote-223) It implies trusting in deception (13:25, also *baššeqer*).[[224]](#footnote-224) And actually, because he now becomes a poster, his name will prophesy truly.[[225]](#footnote-225)

## Protests Responding to What Has Preceded: Two Ultimate Prayers (20:7-18)

7You inveigleda me, Yahweh; I got inveigledb –

you were strong towards me,c and you won.

I became something to laugh at all the timed –

everyonee is mocking me.

8Because as often asf I speak, I cry out –

violence and destruction I proclaim.

Because Yahweh’s word became to me an object of reviling,

and an object of derision all the time.

9I would say I will not be mindfulg of him,

I will not speak any more in his name.

But it would become in my mindh like a burning fire,

shut up in my bones.

I would be weary of holding it in–

I couldn’t win.

10Because I have heard the report of many people,

“All around is terror”: tell, let’s tell of him!

Each one who wishes me welli –

they are watching my step.j

“Perhaps he may be inveigled and we may win over him,

and get our redress from him.”

11But Yahweh – he is with me,

like a terrifying strong man.

As a result my pursuers – they will collapse;

they won’t win.

They will have been totally shamed, because they have not succeeded,k

with disgrace for all time, that will not be put out of mind.

12So Yahweh of Armies, one who examines the faithful,

one who sees heart and mind,

May I see your redress from them,

because to you I have rolled my argument.l

13Sing to Yahweh,

praise Yahweh!

Because he has snatched the life of a needy person

from the hand of people acting direly.m

14Cursed be the day

that I was born on.

The day that my mother gave birth to me,

may it not be blessed.n

15Cursed be the person

that brought the news to my father,

“There is born to you a male child” –

he made him so happy.o

16May that person become like the towns

that Yahweh overturnedp and did not relent,

May he hear a cry in the morning

and a blast at noon,

17The one who did not put me to death from the wombq

so that my mother became my grave

and her womb pregnant for all time.

18Why actually did I go out from the womb,

to see toil and sorrow

and my days would consume themselves in shame?r

LXX has “deceived, and Jerome glosses Vg “misled” as implying “deceived” (*Jeremiah*, 122);Aq has “charmed/enchanted.” D. J. A. Clines and D. M. Gunn argue for “tried to persuade” (“’You Tried to Persuade Me’ and ‘Violence! Outrage!’ in Jeremiah xx 7-8,” *VT* 28 [1978]: 20-27), but Yahweh did more than try.

The niphal suggests an intransitive or reflexive meaning.

Literally, “you were strong me” – the suffix is then more like a dative than an accusative.

Literally, “all the day”; so also in the next verse.

Literally, “all of it”; see the note at 6:13.

Literally, “out of the enoughness/sufficiency/plentifulness of” (cf. 31:20; 48:27).

Vg has “make mention”; strictly that meaning belongs to the hiphil rather than the qal, but BDB allows it for the qal here and at 23:36. LXX likewise has “I will not name the name,” which A. R. P. Diamond suggests is one of the indications that LXX’s version of the “confessions” is more communal and less prophetic (“Jeremiah’s Confessions in the LXX and MT,” *VT* 60 [1990]: 33-50 [36]).

LXX lacks “in my mind.”

*Kōl ’ĕnôš šәlômî*,“every person of my well-being” (cf. 38:22).

Vg, Aq, Sym, Th translate “side.”

*Hiśkîlû* from *śākal*, which resonates with *yikkāšәlû* from *kāšal* at the same position in the previous line: to collapse certainly means not to succeed.

MT has a section marker here.

MT has a section marker here.

The four cola in v. 14 work abb’a’. While the earlier cola could be understood to be declaring that the day *is* cursed rather than it *should be* cursed (T. E. Fretheim, “Caught in the Middle,” *WW* 22 [2002]: 351-60 [357]), the negative *’al* in this colon makes the jussive understanding more likely.

Again, the four cola in v. 15 work abb’a’.

LXX, Tg also has “in anger” (cf. Deut 29:22).

That is, “from [the time when I was still in] the womb.”

MT has a chapter marker here.

Jeremiah’s protest and confession in vv. 7-13 follow on from the story in 19:14 – 20:6, though this link does not imply that they were originally connected. As is appropriate at this climactic point in the scroll, at the end of Jer 1 – 20, in effect Jeremiah recalls his commission back in Jer 1 and reviews the nature of his entire ministry since he told of its beginning in 1:4-19. Whereas in 19:14 – 20:6 “Jeremiah stands wholly on the side of God, here he leans against him,”[[226]](#footnote-226) and he is realistic and outspoken about the negative side to his ministry. But he goes on to testify to Yahweh fulfilling the promises that he made way back then, to affirm his assurance that Yahweh will see that his persecutors get their comeuppance, to pray that he will see it happen, and to give praise for the kind of rescue that 19:14 – 20:6 recorded. The subsection thus complements 19:14 – 20:6.[[227]](#footnote-227) It is a psalm-like protest with a resolution, and both parts correspond to the story. Yahweh had responded to the first protests of Jeremiah but not to the third and he does not respond to this fourth protest, but the fourth has a distinctive dynamic that compares in some ways with the earlier dynamic. In effect, Jeremiah himself provides the response to his protest;[[228]](#footnote-228) further, this response corresponds to the way Yahweh has made his own response in action in 19:14 – 20:6. As far as his persecutors are concerned, “he fervently prays that God’s judgment be quickly forthcoming on the whole lot.”[[229]](#footnote-229) There is no sympathy for the people as a whole here; but a second stage will come in 20:14-18. Even though at one level vv. 7-13 simply expresses an aspect of Jeremiah’s personal relationship with Yahweh, it appears in the scroll as part of the account of his work as a prophet, and in connection with his fulfilling his public ministry. Like the rest of the scroll, it is designed to get people to heed his message.[[230]](#footnote-230)

The subsection has many features of a protest psalm:

v. 7 calling on Yahweh

protest at your action, Yahweh, at my position, and at people’s action (two bicola)

v. 8-9 protest at my position (five bicola)

v. 10 protest at other people’s action (three bicola)

v. 11 declaration of confidence in Yahweh (three bicola)

v. 12 plea (two linked bicola)

v. 13 act of praise (two bicola)

The protest suggest a particular comparison with two psalms. On a broad canvas, it compares with Ps 22. That psalm also begins in a distinctively abrupt and confrontational fashion (22:1-2 [3-4]) whose confrontation it then develops (22:3-21 [5-23]), but then in the last part it similarly reverses its stance to one of affirmation and praise (22:22-31 [24-33]). It is a particularly profound example of a protest psalm that juxtaposes radical trust and radical remonstration. In more detail, Jeremiah’s protest compares with Ps 31:

* the first line in Ps 31:13 [14] is identical with the first line in v. 10
* with “he snatched me from the hand of my enemies” (Ps 31:15 [16]), compare v. 13
* with “I have become an object of derision” (Ps 31:11 [12]), compare v. 8.

A comparison of Jeremiah’s protest with Ps 31 draws attention to the contrast whereby the psalm sets its complaint more systematically in the context of declarations of trust; Jeremiah is more forthright, though the two prayers end up in the same place. It is not possible to know whether Jeremiah was directly influenced by the psalm or the psalm by Jeremiah, but both comparisons indicate that on the one hand Jeremiah is relating to Yahweh in the way that any Israelite under pressure might do, even if he is taking the freedom, boldness, and trust of Israelite prayer to an extreme, and on the other hand that any Israelite under pressure might take Jeremiah as a model of prayer.

Jer 20:13 looks like a fine closure to a scroll. “This summons for praise would have been a perfect ending of the Pashhur‐episode. If verse 13 would have been the final line of Chapter 20, then this episode could easily have been labelled: ‘From prison to praise.’”[[231]](#footnote-231) After v. 13, the move to a curse therefore makes for a “stark contrast,”[[232]](#footnote-232) and people reading the Jeremiah scroll or hearing it read would surely then be bemused as well as shocked. Could Jeremiah still be speaking? Was his statement of praise ironic?[[233]](#footnote-233) If vv. 7-13 indicate how he held together protest and praise, and even more if they give expression to the way he could be imagined as talking to Yahweh while he was in the cell, how could vv. 14-18 relate to that dynamic? The tone is so different that it seems unlikely that it simply represents how Jeremiah himself felt on a bad day.[[234]](#footnote-234) It is not a psalm-like protest, as vv. 7-13 are. The anguish and conflict he has expressed on his own account in that protest would not have made one expect an expression of torment of the kind that appears in vv. 14-18.

So far in the scroll, Jeremiah has uttered two types of protest, both following the pattern of the Psalms. There have been protests he uttered in his own name, in light of people’s attacks on him in light of the challenges and threats he keeps issuing. And there have been protests he uttered on Judah’s behalf, expressing the way they were thinking, or the way they ought to be talking to Yahweh rather than the way they actually were (14:2-9, 19-22). In vv. 7-20 he brings both kinds of protest to a climax, his own in vv. 7-13 and Judah’s in vv. 14-18. The latter is “a cry of utter despair over the fate of people and city.”[[235]](#footnote-235) It represents how he feels as a Judahite and as a person who cares about his people and longs for them not to have to go through the fate he has been warning them of. By the end of Jer 11 – 20, “Jeremiah's fate and the fate of the nation converge symbolically so that what happens to him evokes and mimics the suffering of the people.”[[236]](#footnote-236) Thus in the last verse he speaks again of *sorrow* in connection with Judah’s coming suffering (8:18) and of the *shame* with which Judah is threatened (2:26; 3:24, 25; 7:19). He wishes he had not been born because he wishes he had not seen Judah’s destiny or been doomed to share it. He is torn apart by the hurt of Judah that he has experienced anticipatorily and vicariously. It is on Judah’s behalf that he prays in this way as the scroll reaches a climax. Judah is fatally doomed (unless it responds). Yet “prays” is perhaps the wrong word. There is no appeal to Yahweh, as is the case in 14:2-6. It’s more a lament about a situation that cannot be changed than a protest made to someone who might change it. In articulating this lament, once again Jeremiah seeks to pull Judah back from the brink as he invites it to look it its destiny this way. Perhaps after 587 people who recognized Jeremiah had been right would be declaring their own curse on themselves in these words.[[237]](#footnote-237)

Vv. 14-18 are more varied in their prosody than vv. 7-13. They comprise six bicola, of which only the first two stand alone syntactically, though in substance they belong together. The third runs into the fourth and the fifth runs into the sixth and into the tricolon that follows. The verses end dramatically with a double tricolon. There is almost no parallelism (only in v. 16b and in v. 17b within the tricolon); characteristically, the second colon in each line completes the first. There is parallelism between lines within v. 14, within v. 15, and within v. 16. The prosaic *that* (*’ăšer*) plays an unusual patterning role in vv. 14a, 14b, 15a, 16a. The section can be seen as outlining aa’bb’ or abb’a’:[[238]](#footnote-238)

v. 14 cursed be the day (two bicola)

vv. 15-16 cursed be the messenger (two pairs of linked bicola)

v. 17 the reason for the curse (a tricolon continuing the preceding bicolon)

v. 18 the reason for all the cursing (another, closing tricolon)

**7** Already the three directions of a protest psalm feature (you, I, they). Jeremiah’s opening verb (*pātâ*)has several connotations, which compound to increase its forcefulness. In 1 Kgs 22:20-22 and 2 Chr 18:19-21 it suggests a willful but well-intentioned deceiving of a prophet, and this understanding prompts Origen into a long discussion that includes the observation that it is better to be deceived by God than by the Serpent.[[239]](#footnote-239) But Yahweh hardly deceived Jeremiah. He was pretty open about how things would turn out for him[[240]](#footnote-240) – though Jerome suggests that Jeremiah refers to Yahweh’s commissioning him to be a prophet to the nations, not to proclaim captivity for Jerusalem.[[241]](#footnote-241) The verb can have sexual connotations, suggesting seduction (e.g., Hos 2:16 [14]); if anything like this understanding is right, they might seem “directly blasphemous words.”[[242]](#footnote-242) Another connotation of the verb is that of treating someone as a simpleton (*pәtî*), making a fool of them. Whichever connotation attaches to the verb, in commissioning him Yahweh indeed overpowered Jeremiah. “No words in the Classical Prophets show as plainly as these that the Prophets in their demeanor and in their speech stand under a divine compulsion.”[[243]](#footnote-243) When God comes on *strong*, who can stand firm? Yet Jeremiah’s second verb (*pātâ* niphal, not pual), almost “let myself be inveigled,” implies that he accepts some responsibility for allowing Yahweh to turn him into a prophet. In theory he could have continued to resist, but he yielded to Yahweh’s enticement. He let Yahweh overcome his resistance. Jeremiah’s language points to the mystery of the relationship between divine sovereignty or compulsion and human freedom or responsibility. The developing parallelism between the cola suggests some equivocality about that question:

you inveigled me Yahweh I got inveigled

you were strong towards me and you won

While Jeremiah’s second verb does hint at his recognizing some responsibility for accepting his commission, the two verbs in the parallel colon all but withdraw that hint. Then the trouble is that Yahweh ended up making Jeremiah something for people to *laugh at*, something that the community was continually *mocking*. Here the line works abcc’b’a’:

I became something to laugh at all the time

everyone is mocking me

If a person sendssomeone to undertake a task, then by definition they are not then with them. “This polar tension… will be seen to lie at the heart of Jeremiah's dilemma as voiced in his confessions.”[[244]](#footnote-244)

**8-9** Jeremiah’s reasoning involves some hyperbole, but it is perhaps what people said, and/or how it seemed to Jeremiah. Whenever he opened his mouth, it was to *cry out violence and destruction*. He is always protesting about what is going on in the community (6:7).[[245]](#footnote-245) He is so negative, so critical! And therefore *Yahweh’s word became to me an object of reviling* (cf. 6:10), a reason to despiseJeremiah, anda cause of *derision*. He is in a “no win” situation,[[246]](#footnote-246) and in more than one sense. Yahweh has compelled him to serve him, but he doesn’t lean on people to accept his message nor does he fulfill it. “The gap between prediction and fulfillment has opened this space for this vocational crisis,”[[247]](#footnote-247) a “prophet’s distress at being stuck between an insistent God and a resistant people.” His inability to resist is “not a clinical compulsion, but a theological and vocational one.” [[248]](#footnote-248) He can try to be silent, but the power of the message is too great. There’s quite a contrast with 15:16: “your word became to me a joy and the rejoicing of my mind.”[[249]](#footnote-249) The verse begins with *whenever* and ends with a repetition of *all the time* – the expression is a recurrent complaint in the Psalms (e.g., Pss 42:3, 10 [4, 11]; 44:15 [16]; 56:1, 2, 5 [2, 3, 6]).[[250]](#footnote-250) At least, blessed is a man like Jeremiah who has no other basis for being reviled than God’s message.[[251]](#footnote-251) The reviling made him determine to give up delivering this message, but he *was weary of holding it in* (cf. 6:11).[[252]](#footnote-252) He just couldn’t.

**10** The *because* takes us back to the *reviling* and *derision*. Jeremiah has *heard the report of many people* repeating with scorn the phrase that sums up his message with its threat of invasion, *“All around is terror”* (v. 3). Did they pick up the phrase from Ps 31:13 [14]? Did they give him that name and did he then transfer it to Pashhur? (cf. also 6:25; 46:5; 49:29). Anyway, they are encouraging one another (he thinks), *tell, let’s tell of him!* The talk may include his becoming a topic of amused conversation, but the lines that follow suggest there is more to their talk. The sense of being let down by people whom one trusted and who gave the impression of being trustworthy, *each one who wishes me well,* is another that recurs from the Psalms (Ps 41:9 [10]). For one’s friends to be *watching my step* ought not to mean they are hoping to see him fall over. Watching is usually a positive activity; your friends watch your back. But the Psalms also speak of a negative watching (Ps 56:6 [7]). These “friends” are expecting that he will get tripped up, and they are looking forward to it. They are hardly engaged in a conspiracy to inform on him; he was quite public in his proclamation, and in this sense there was no need for a plot to report him to the authorities. But Jeremiah does likely mean that they are actually planning to trip him up, not just looking forward to it happening. As Yahweh had *inveigled* him and been able to *win over him*, in some way his earthly opponents also want to do so. This language with its “intratextual loop”[[253]](#footnote-253) may simply indicate how he stands in a hall of mirrors:[[254]](#footnote-254) his friend Yahweh is his enemy, the message he wishes not to give he cannot help giving, his enemies pretend to be his friends, they are hoping to do what Yahweh has already done by inveigling him and defeating him, and they deserve to suffer redress but they want to see redress from him. A story such as Jer 26 indicates what winning and gaining redress might look like, though the scheme fails.

**11** Over against all that anguish, conflict, and fear, however, are some convictions. Again this contrast resembles the dynamic of the Psalms. The key fact is that *Yahweh – he is with me*, as he had promised back at the beginning (1:8, 19). Yahweh’s being with you does not mean an inner sense of Yahweh’s presence. Yahweh’s presence is an objective and active one, as Yahweh had said at the beginning – *I am with you to snatch you away* (1:8, 19). Here the declaration is, *he is with me, like a terrifying strong man*. He is not *like a strong man who cannot deliver* (14:9). He is *the great God, the strong man, whose name is Yahweh of Armies* (32:18). LXX and Vg translate the word for *strong man* (*gibbôr*) as “warrior,” which might seem worrying: do you want your God to be a warrior? Wouldn’t you rather have a prince of peace? But a prophet or a people under pressure cannot afford the luxury of a prince of peace. They need someone ready and willing to rescue them. They need someone terrifying (*‘ārîṣ*) whose fierceness matches that of their attackers (15:21). Jeremiah’s *persecutors* are looking for him to *collapse*, but he knows that it is they who will. Their hopes and aims will not be fulfilled: *they won’t win*. This fourth occurrence of the verb (*yākōl*) brings a telling sequence to a positive climax:

* “You won” (7): God’s overpowering of Jeremiah.
* “I can’t win” (9): Jeremiah’s inability to hold back the word of God, no matter what he suffers for speaking it.
* “We will win” (10): the nasty plans of Jeremiah’s former friends, plotting to turn him over to the authorities.
* “They won’t win” (11): Jeremiah’s stubborn confidence that God will defend him and frustrate the plans of his enemies.[[255]](#footnote-255)

Yahweh had succeeded in overcoming Jeremiah and Jeremiah has not succeeded in giving up his commission, but when his opponents hope to succeed in overcoming him, they will not succeed, precisely because Yahweh is with him.[[256]](#footnote-256) Instead, *they will be totally shamed*. He will be proved to have been in the right. And their *disgrace* will last. *It will not be put out of mind*.

**12** Jeremiah knows it is true; he needs Yahweh actually to implement it. His plea that Yahweh may do so restates an earlier confession and plea:

So Yahweh of Armies, one who exercises authority with faithfulness,

one who examines heart and mind:

May I see your redress from them,

because to you I have rolled my argument. (11:20)[[257]](#footnote-257)

**13** Imperatives such as *sing to Yahweh* and *praise Yahweh* are familiar from the beginning of a praise psalm and also from the beginning of a testimony psalm that gives thanks for Yahweh’s act of deliverance. Here that significance fits with the subsequent rationale, *because he has snatched the life of a needy person from the hand of people acting direly.* Could Jeremiah really have described himself as a needy person (*’ebyôn*)?[[258]](#footnote-258) The needy are another prominent feature in protest Psalms: they are the vulnerable, the endangered, exposed, the people at risk (Pss 12:5 [6]; 35:10; 140:12 [13]). It is surely not implausible for jeremiah to see himself thus. In the present context, a confession of the kind that comes in v. 13 would fit the story in 19:14 – 20:6. But in vv. 7-12 we have come some distance from that story. A more plausible link is with the kind of protest psalm that closes with a commitment to sing to Yahweh when he has performed the act of rescue for which the psalm pleads (Pss 57:7 [8]; 59:16 [17]). The summons to song and praise is an anticipatory one: “my salvation is: I do not believe my disbelief.”[[259]](#footnote-259) I know that while Yahweh is the overwhelmingly powerful God (v. 7), he also the personal and present God.[[260]](#footnote-260) “The highest form of praise was not just to say nice things to God or about God. Rather real praise meant to acknowledge the reality and presence of God in all situations and circumstances, no matter how fraught with contradiction.”[[261]](#footnote-261) Further, Jeremiah here makes not a first-person commitment to praise but an imperatival call to praise, which makes explicit the connection between Jeremiah’s anguish and his audience’s response.[[262]](#footnote-262) It also indicates an assumption on Jeremiah’s part that he has a community that will join in (cf. Ps 22:23 [24]).

**14** Jeremiah once said,

Alas for me, mother, that you gave birth to me,

a man involved in argument

and a man involved in contention with the entire country. (15:10)

*Cursed be the day that I was born on* goes further and is more shocking. One can imagine that people listening to the scroll do not know what he could be talking about, or why he could be expressing himself in this way. It will be v. 18 that comes nearest to making things more explicit, but Jeremiah’s rhetoric holds back this clarification while it focuses on expressing the torment. Meanwhile, it focuses on reminding readers (who don’t yet know that they are the ones with whom he shares this anguish) of the joyous wonder that accompanies the birth of a baby, yet contradicts it. People might be familiar with such a curse on one’s birth day. Within the First Testament, Job 3 comprises a systematic such curse. A much more ancient Old Babylonian lament recounts how among the gods a mother grieves over her son who has been killed

I am the mother who gave birth!

Woe to that day, that day!

Woe to that night!...

The day that dawned for my provider,

that dawned for the lad,

my Damu!

A day to be wiped out,

that I would I could forget.

You night [ . . . . .] that should [never]

have let it go forth,

when my gendarmes [military recruiters] shamelessly

made their way

into my [presence].[[263]](#footnote-263)

*May it not be blessed* is a litotes; v. 14 as a whole is the opposite of saying “happy birthday.”[[264]](#footnote-264)

**15** “No one loves the messenger who brings bad news,” says a messenger with some anxiety in Sophocles’s *Antigone.* Don’t shoot the messenger because you don’t like the message, says the modern version. Shooting the messenger is a kind of symbolic act, as if can kill the message by killing the messenger. So a curse on the messenger is a curse on the message. Jeremiah’s declaration is a figurative one; he is not cursing an actual messenger, and a sense of indignation at his curse[[265]](#footnote-265) misses the point, as is the case with curses in the Psalms.[[266]](#footnote-266) The figurative nature of the curse is reflected in the way Jeremiah speaks as if there was a male messenger who brought a father news of a birth. While it might occasionally be the case (e.g., if the father is the king), generally the father would be sitting outside while the women of the community attend on his wife, and eventually one of them brings him the news (a mother may not mind whether her baby is a boy or a girl; a father may be especially thrilled to have a son). There is no actual person who fulfils the role described here. Jeremiah is using a conventional image from the idea of a man bringing news after an event such as a battle (e.g., 1 Sam 4:12-17).

**16-17** Jeremiah makes his point in another strong way by wishing on this figurative person a fate like that of Sodom and Gomorrah. He does so with some irony because the *towns* that are going to be *overturned* are the ones in which the Judahites live (see 19:15), about whose destiny Yahweh is not going to *relent* and act differently (e.g., 4:28; 15:6). Jeremiah has prayed for a *cry* to be heard from his persecutors’ houses (18:22) and Yahweh has declared that he would not listen to them when they cry out (11:11-12). In his imagination Jeremiah has heard the *blast* of war (4:19) and he has heard attackers resolving to go up at *noon* (6:4). Jeremiah underlines the point further in the grotesque and gruesome imagery that follows in v. 17. The illogic of expecting the messenger to kill the baby in the mother’s womb further underscores the figurative nature of vv. 14-17.[[267]](#footnote-267)

**18** Jeremiah’s prospective mood, then, is an awareness of *toil and sorrow* (8:18) such as will come with 587 and the destruction of city and temple.[[268]](#footnote-268) *Shame* is Judah’s destiny (3:25; 7:19). While Jeremiah wants to see redress on his enemies, it gives him no pleasure to contemplate the devastation of Judah. He longs that it should share his present awareness of what lies ahead of it, so that it may turn and Yahweh may relent.

# Part 2(e): On Kings and Prophets (21:1 – 24:10)

The first half of Jeremiah draws even nearer to a close with a compilation of messages with a double distinctive focus, on Judah’s kings and prophets.[[269]](#footnote-269) “Jeremiah 21 – 24 is foremost a treatise on leadership.”[[270]](#footnote-270) If Jer 18 – 20 was a climax to the scroll so far, then Jer 21 – 24 might be seen as an appendix or sidebar before we come to Jer 25. But it follows the pattern within the scroll in raising questions about the objects of Judah’s trust, and in this sense simply continues the scroll’s sequence. And if the catastrophe seemed imminent in Jer 18 – 20, it is now even more imminent, or actually happening: in 21:1-10 the city is under siege. The chapters’ presupposition is that Jerusalem’s kings and its prophets might be the objects of its trust and hope, but if anything they are the cause of its imminent fall; “kings and prophets are the guilty men.”[[271]](#footnote-271) The material does also interweaves shorter messages about the city and its people. The juxtaposition signals that the way kings and prophets exercise leadership has implications for city and people and for their destiny. Conversely, it suggests that city and people cannot simply congratulate themselves on not being kings or prophets; they are under judgment, too. Further, it points to the fact that the addressees of Part 2(e) as a whole (as of the rest of the scroll) are not merely kings and prophets but the entire people, in relation to whom Jeremiah fulfills a ministry that subverts the authority of their leadership.

Jer 21 – 24 as a whole begins and ends with sections relating to the time of Zedekiah, Judah’s last king, with the threat of sword, hunger, and epidemic, and with a contrast between Yahweh planning a dire fate rather than a good one or a good one rather than a dire one.[[272]](#footnote-272) In between it incorporates messages spanning several reigns and thus a number of years, though as usual we cannot date them precisely. In the context of the reign of Zedekiah and specifically of the siege of Jerusalem, the chapters would offer king, prophets, and people a final challenge and choice. After 587, it would implicitly explain why a dire fate fell on the city, and in this context particular significance would attach to its promises for the future regarding kings (23:5-6) and regarding the people as a whole (23:7-8; 24:4-7). It falls into two major parts:

21:1 – 23:8 About kings (in order, except that Zedekiah comes first) and people

23:9 – 24:10 About prophets (naming no names, though Jer 27 – 29 associates tension among prophets with Zedekiah’s reign) and people

# About Kings (and Their People) (21:1 – 23:8)

Since the preface to the scroll (1:1-3), no contemporary kings have been named except Josiah in 3:6, but Part 2(e) now mentions a series of kings. Thus whereas it is impossible to date the messages in Jer 2 – 20 to the reigns of specific kings, the situation now changes. The kings do not come in a chronological sequence; the last Judahite king comes first. Further, even when naming names, the chapters speak five times about David’s throne, David’s household, and the Davidic tree (21:12; 22:2, 4, 30; 23:5); in Jer 2 – 30 there were just two references to David (13:13; 17:25). Jer 21 – 24 is concerned with the vocation and failure of the Davidic line, with its having turned the gift into a guarantee.[[273]](#footnote-273) “The Jeremiah tradition singles out the Davidic kings… as the primary architects of the national calamity of 587.”[[274]](#footnote-274) And the time of reckoning has come for the kings.[[275]](#footnote-275) The unit is thus concerned with the Davidic line’s danger, though also with its promise. Throughout the scroll, the messages have been more threats and promises than predictions, and this fact is even clearer in the threats and promises relating to the kings.

The treatment of the kings that begins with Zedekiah implicitly almost ends with him (23:5-6), operating in the manner of a movie that first tells the audience where the story is going, then backtracks to indicate how it got there. While many individual sections address the individual kings, their audience will have been the community as a whole, and it is more directly the audience of the compilation. The unit outlines:

21:1-10 about Zedekiah and about city and people

21:1-7 Zedekiah

21:8-10 city and people

21:11 – 22:9 about David’s household and about city and people

21:11 – 22:5 David’s household

22:6-9 city and people

22:10-30 about three kings and about city and people

22:10-12 Shallum/Jehoahaz

22:13-19 Jehoiakim

22:20-23 city and people

22:24-30 Jehoiachin

23:1-8 about a better future

23:1-4 shepherds

23:5-6 a branch for David

23:7-8 the people

## Zedekiah (and the City) (21:1-10)

1The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh, when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur ben Malkiah and Zephaniah ben Ma‘aseyah the priest, saying, 2Inquire on our behalf of Yahweh, please, because Nebuchadrezzara King of Babylon is doing battle against us. Perhaps Yahweh will act with usb in accordance with all his extraordinary deeds, and he will withdrawc from against us.d

3Jeremiah said to them, You will say this to Zedekiah.e 4Yahweh, the God of Israel,f has said this. Here am I , turning aside the instruments of battle that are in your hand,g with which you are doing battle with the king of Babylon andh with the Chaldeansi who are blockading you from outside the wall. And I will gather themj into the middle of this city. 5I myself will do battle with you with a hand stretched out and with a strong arm, and with angerk and with fury and with great rage. 6I will strike down the people who live in this city, both human being and animal – in a great epidemic they will die. 7And afterwards (Yahweh’s affirmation) I will give Zedekiah King of Judah and his servants and the people, those who remainl in this city from the epidemic, from the sword, and from the hunger, into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar King of Babylon,m into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of the people seeking their life. He will strike them down throughn the mouth of the sword – he will not spare them, he will not pity, and he will not have compassion.o

8And to this people you will say,p Yahweh has said this: Here am I, putting before you the path to life and the path to death. 9The person who stays in this city will die by sword, by hunger, and by epidemic.q But the person who goes out and falls away to the Chaldeans who are blockading you, he will live. His life will be his as loot.r 10Because I have set my face against this city for something dire, not for something good (Yahweh’s affirmation).s Into the hand of the king of Babylon it will be given and he will consume it with fire.t

LXX lacks the name. It is spelled in various ways in the OT (see BDB). While a form such as *Nәbukadne’ṣṣar* that appears in English as Nebuchadnezzar is the most familiar, a form such as *Nәbûkadre’ṣṣar*, which predominates in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, is closer to Akkadian *nabu-kudurru-uṣur* (with its own variants), a prayer or confession “Nabu protect(s) the eldest son”; cf. J. Goldingay, *Daniel* (revised ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), on Dan 1:1.

LXX lacks *with us*.

*Ya‘ăleh* could be parsed as hiphil with Yahweh as subject, “and make him withdraw,” which is anyway the implication.

L has a section marker here (A has it after v. 3).

LXX adds “king of Judah.”

LXX lacks *the God of Israel*.

LXX lacks *that are in your hand*.

LXX lacks *with the king of Babylon and*.

More precisely, the *Kaśdîm*; the switch from *ś* to *l* sometimes happens in Akkadian. *Kaśdîm* is the term both for the country and for the people; I take it to denote the people when it has the article, as here, but it is more ambiguous when it is anarthrous.

LXX lacks this verb.

LXX lacks *and with anger*.

The *waw* attached to the participleis explicative rather than meaning “and” – that is, the expression sums up the groups rather than adding the remainers as another group.

LXX lacks *into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar King of Babylon*.

LXX, Vg have “with,” but with this expression the usual but unexpected preposition is *lә*.

LXX has “they will strike them down” and then makes Yahweh the subject of the rest of the sentence; the notes indicate that there are many detailed difference between LXX and MT in this section (R. D. Wells comments on them in “Indications of Late Reinterpretation of the Jeremianic Tradition from the LXX of Jer 21 1—23 8,” *ZAW* 96 [1984]: 405-20 [407]).

This verb is singular: that is, this message is one to Jeremiah from Yahweh, perhaps originally separate from the one that precedes.

LXX lacks the reference to epidemic.

LXX adds “and he will live,” as in 38:2.

LXX lacks *(Yahweh’s affirmation).*

MT has a section marker here.

As MT’s section markers suggest, the story comprises three parts:

vv. 1-3 Zedekiah sends aides to consult Yahweh through Jeremiah

vv. 4-9 Jeremiah gives the aides an uncompromising threat of catastrophe

vv. 8-10 Jeremiah adds a promise to individuals if they abandon the city

**1** The introduction follows the pattern in 2:1; 7:1; 11:1; 14:1; 18:1, again combining a preface to this Part with an introduction to the particular story that follows. Once more an account of a message from Jeremiah may link with a report elsewhere in the scroll of the occasion when he gave it (e.g., 7:1-15 and 26:1-24), this passage and the stories in Jer 37 and 38 may relate to the same event.[[276]](#footnote-276) Each time the presupposition is that Zedekiah has rebelled against Nebuchadrezzar, presumably by defaulting on the payment of tribute and/or by entering into a treaty with the Egyptians, and Nebuchadrezzar has come to blockade the city to put him in his place (52:3b-4); Jer 32 – 34 and 37 – 38 then relate to various moments in the siege. While previous chapters have often portrayed attacks on Jerusalem as if they were actually happening, the “as if” is important; mostly or entirely, they portray what Jeremiah sees in his imagination and shares with people as a warning of what is coming. Here for the first time we are in the midst of actual events.[[277]](#footnote-277) It will turn out that this siege indeed leads to the city’s fall and destruction and to the death of Zedekiah, though no one knows it yet; the time is maybe late 589 or early 588 and there is still the possibility that Nebuchadrezzar may go away. The story brings not only the first mention of any contemporary king since 3:6 but also the mention of Judah’s very last king, with a kind of appropriateness at the beginning of the unit on kings.[[278]](#footnote-278) In addition, it opens with a mention of someone called *Pashhur*, which makes for a link with Pashhur the priest in the previous chapter[[279]](#footnote-279) (the name is common enough). The link contains some irony. There, Pashhur the priest was attempting to silence Jeremiah. Here, Pashhur and another priest are coming to consult him. But this Pashhur will turn out to be no improvement on the previous one (38:1-4). This Pashhur seems also to have been a priest (Neh 11:12), though it’s odd that here the noun is attached only to Zephaniah (this name also recurs in the First Testament). Perhaps it reflects Zephaniah’s senior status, suggested by the way he appears in 29:25, 29 (which chronologically preceded the present episode); he appears again in a similar connection in 37:3, and most solemnly in 52:24. Both Pashhur and Zephaniah function as the king’s aides, hinting at the extent to which the clergy would be identified with the administration. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that Zedekiah does not send to one of the other prophets, who are also identified with the administration (see Jer 27 – 28). Perhaps he already has his doubts about them; perhaps their messages have already been discredited; perhaps he is hedging his bets, like the kings in 1 Kgs 22; perhaps he is demonstrating the (understandable) vacillation that will recur in further stories about him in the Jeremiah scroll. But the section makes no negative comment on Zedekiah.[[280]](#footnote-280)

**2** *Inquire* is what a king would do of the different entities that are his resources (8:2; 10:21), especially in a war situation.[[281]](#footnote-281) The verb covers divination by its various means; Yahweh’s prophets are the means that Yahweh approves, but Israelites often looked elsewhere. The scroll here makes its first reference to Nebuchadrezzar;[[282]](#footnote-282) the lateness of this introduction puts him in his place, too. He had paid Jerusalem a visit in 601 and had besieged the city in 597, but a siege during Zedekiah’s reign will be the blockade that began in about 589 and issued in the city’s fall and destruction in 587. The implication here is that Zedekiah’s inquiry takes place at an early stage in the blockade. The question he raises and the precedents to which it appeals are fine ones. He makes the scroll’s only reference to Yahweh’s *extraordinary deeds* (*niplā’ōt*), though the verb lying behind that noun (*pālā’*) appears significantly in 32:17, 27. The exodus is the great instantiation of these extraordinary deeds (Exod 3:20), and the story may raise the question whether Jerusalem can “claim” the story in Exodus.[[283]](#footnote-283) But the Psalms often reminded king and people that these wonders were not confined to the distant past (e.g., Ps 107:8, 15, 21, 31). And everybody knew that Yahweh had delivered Jerusalem in an extraordinary way from Sennacherib a century previously (see Isa 37). Zedekiah thus follows the example of his great great grandfather Hezekiah. He commissioned his aides to ask the prophet to pray, and received a message – containing good news. Zedekiah’s appeal to such precedents implies the assumption that the covenant is still in force.[[284]](#footnote-284) It also indicates that he is not just asking Jeremiah to request information from Yahweh about what is going to happen. He is asking Jeremiah to pray for the city, as Tg makes explicit and as is explicit in 37:3. *Inquire* (*dāraš*) suggests “both oracle and intercession”;[[285]](#footnote-285) it has the double meaning attaching to the English verb “seek” which is often used to translate he Hebrew word.[[286]](#footnote-286) And *on our behalf* (*ba‘ădēnû*) often suggests intercession: Yahweh had used this preposition in bidding Jeramiah not to intercede for Judah (7:16; 11:14).

**3-4** Jeremiah can speak as if he knows what might happen and how it should be prevented, but also as if he knows what will happen.[[287]](#footnote-287) Here, the story makes no reference to Jeremiah inquiring of Yahweh. Its emphasis thus lies on the self-evident nature of Yahweh’s response. While it is in one sense a shocking moment in the scroll’s unfolding, especially in the concrete nature of the message at this point, it is keeping with everything we have read. Yahweh not merely declines to come to Judah’s support; he intends to work against Judah and take the side of *the Chaldeans*. They were a people from southern Babylonia to whom Nebuchadrezzar’s father Nabopolassar belonged and who were the ruling caste in Babylonia in the sixth century, but in the First Testament, *Chaldeans* is the regular word for the people of Babylonia in general.[[288]](#footnote-288) Yahweh will act as if he interfering to divert Judahite arrows so that they miss their targets. It will be as if the weapons have gained a life of their own. Perhaps it is the weapons that he intends thus to *gather into the middle of this city*, or perhaps it is the Babylonians that he intends so to gather. The verb is the one he used when he commissioned his aides to *go, gather every animal of the open country – bring them to devour* (12:9). The turning of the Judahites’ weapons is paralleled by the turning of the Babylonians from outside to inside.[[289]](#footnote-289)

**5** By means of the weapons and/or the Babylonians, not only will Yahweh frustrate the Judahites’ battling: *I myself will do battle with you*. Yahweh, too, recalls the exodus.[[290]](#footnote-290) He will again act *with hand stretched out and with a strong arm* (e.g., 32:21; Exod 6:6; Deut 4:34; 5:15: though Jeremiah here reverses the description of hand and arm). He had not been especially angry with Egypt at the exodus; but now he is expressing *anger* and *fury* and *rage*. In another context, the message could be read positively: Yahweh could be doing battle with Judah in the sense of being on Judah’s side and acting with anger against Nebuchadrezzar.[[291]](#footnote-291) But any ambiguity in his words disappears. The angry, fury, and rage are the ones Deut 29:27 warned of. Hand and arm are exercised against Judah, not on its behalf.

The Exodus tradition functions as the common denominator for both the King’s officials and the prophet…. However, in polar contrast to the officials’ request for hope and salvation, Jeremiah reuses the same historical tradition to crush the long-standing analogy portraying God as Savior. The prophet introduces a completely opposite notion in which God is the main foe of His people.[[292]](#footnote-292)

“If the proclamation of holy war gave heart to the fighters, the reversal of the motif would achieve the opposite.”[[293]](#footnote-293)

**6-7** The inbuilt perils of siege will be Jerusalem’s downfall, though Jeremiah lists the three great perils in unconventional fashion. First there will be *a great epidemic*,another reversal of the exodus (Exod 9:3, 15). It will affect animals as well as the human beings with whose fate the fate of animals is interwoven and who suffer through human guilt.[[294]](#footnote-294) “The Chaldeans will do battle with you from outside and I will do battle with you by a great epidemic.”[[295]](#footnote-295) Then later there will be *sword* and *hunger* until there is another reversal as the Judahites are given into the hand of their attackers – whereas Yahweh had once given nations such as the Canaanites into Israel’s hand.[[296]](#footnote-296) Their vanquishers, the people *seeking their life*, will not only be *the Chaldeans*; and we know from subsequent reports that Moab, Ammon, and Edom will be involved. Like Yahweh (13:14) and as Yahweh’s agent, Nebuchadrezzar *will not spare them, he will not pity, and he will not have compassion*. The triad of verbs is the last of a series of triads: anger/fury/great rage; king/servants/people; epidemic/sword/hunger; Nebuchadrezzar/enemies/ people seeing their life; spare/pity/have compassion.[[297]](#footnote-297) As usual, God will thus be at work, though through human agents. But “‘if God be against us….’ Nebuchadnezzar is the least of their problems.”[[298]](#footnote-298) In the event, in 587 things did not work out as one might have expected from this message, which is an indication that the message does not come from after the actual fall of the city,[[299]](#footnote-299) though that context might make the message more positive (at least Yahweh was in control).[[300]](#footnote-300) If anything, the circumstances of Zedekiah’s death will be worse. A literal fulfillment of Jeremiah’s warning would have been a mercy.

**8** As often happens, inquiring of Yahweh produces not only an answer to the plea and a response to the question (unwelcome ones in both cases on this occasion) but also a reframing of the question or a supplementary answer to an unasked supplementary question. Suppose you are people who are willing to dissociate themselves from Zedekiah and his policies. Maybe Pashhur and Zephaniah are such people, or are willing to become such people in light of what Yahweh has said. Is it inevitable that they are caught up in the imminent catastrophe? While we are unwise to read into Jeremiah modern Western preoccupation with theodicy, Jeremiah’s rider to his declaration about catastrophe relates to such questions. When people are told that disaster is coming, individuals have to see if they can take charge of their destiny, not just let themselves be swallowed by it if there is a way they can evade it. And Yahweh offers to enable them to do so: *Here am I, putting before you the path to life and the path to death.* Jeremiah is taking up words from Deut 30:15, 19: “See, I have put before you today life and what is good, death and what is dire…. Life and death I have put before you.” But typically, he is tweaking the words. One way he does so is by reworking the antithesis as *the path to life and the path to death*, in light of the importance of the motif of *path* in his own message (e.g., 2:36; 3:21; 6:16). His phraseology thus differs from Deuteronomy’s, though the idea of walking on Yahweh’s path is also important there (e.g., Deut 13:5 [6]; 31:29), and in between those two references to life and death Deut 30:16 speaks of walking on Yahweh’s paths. But Jeremiah is the only person in the Scriptures who explicitly speaks of “the path to life” and “the path to death.” He does so in a more specific sense than the phrase later gains.[[301]](#footnote-301) The antithesis became important as a way of summarizing a theme that does recur in the Scriptures: within New Testament times the *Didache* (late first century A.D.) begins, “There are two ways, one of life and one of death,” and it expounds these over its first six chapters, though without referring to Jeremiah.[[302]](#footnote-302)

**9** That link draws attention to other ways in which Jeremiah is tweaking Deuteronomy. He makes the words a challenge to individuals rather than to the people as a whole. Further, the path Deuteronomy is talking about is the path of commitment to Yahweh, which is indeed commonly the connotation of the word in Jeremiah, but here the person who walks the path to life is *the person who goes out and submits to the Chaldeans who are blockading you*. People who stay in the city will be looted by the Babylonians, but anyone who leaves will in effect deprive the Babylonians of their loot: *his life will be his as loot*. It has been called a sarcastic, proverbial saying (cf. 39:18; 45:5),[[303]](#footnote-303) and it may be proverbial, but there seems no reason to think that it undervalues the notion of being able to hold onto one’s life. Either way, the person who holds onto life stands in contrast with the person who walks the path to death, *the person who stays in this city* who *will die by sword, by hunger, and by epidemic*. It is a mind-boggling statement in its own right, but all the more when one sees it as Jeremiah’s revisionist reworking of Deuteronomy. “‘Choose exile and live!’ seems to be Jeremiah’s call to the people”; the exhortation could eventually be open to a negative ideological understanding in respect of the attitude it takes to the ordinary people left behind in 587.[[304]](#footnote-304) But in the context of Jeremiah’s exhortation it stands with these people, because dissociating oneself from Zedekiah and accepting Yahweh’s action against Jerusalem implies affirming the right path and repudiating the wrong path in that other sense on which Jeremiah and Deuteronomy agree. One might then perceive it as consistent both with Deuteronomy’s speech and with Jeremiah’ speech elsewhere.

**10** The frightening closing word *fire* will recur three times in the next section, in 21:12, 14; 22:7. Jeremiah’s stance would sound like a political position and also an act of treachery. And “it is hard, oh so hard, to resist the crowd in times of collective enthusiasm for ‘national defense.’”[[305]](#footnote-305) It is likely that there were or had been pro-Egyptian and pro-Babylonian parties in Jerusalem – Judahites who thought that the city’s political future lay either with Egypt or with Babylon. Jeremiah not pro-Babylonian as a political stance; his stance is a theological position.[[306]](#footnote-306) And elsewhere he declares Yahweh’s judgment on Babylon at great length. Nor does he say that the future lies with a community in Babylon rather than a community in Judah; his message is not one that the later community in Babylon could claim as supporting it rather than the “left-behind” community back in Judah.

## David’s Household (and the City) (21:11 – 22:9)

11And regardinga the household of the king of Judah.

Listen to Yahweh’s word, 12household of David. Yahweh has said this:

Make decisions in the morningb with authority,c

snatch away one who has been robbed from the hand of the fraud,

So that my fury does not go out like fire,

and burn with no one to put it out,

in the face of the dire nature of your practices.d

13Here am I, regarding you,e you who sit in the valley,

a cragf in the flatland (Yahweh’s affirmation),g

People who say, “Who will get downh against us,

who will come into our refuges?

14I will attend to you

in accordance with the fruit of your practices (Yahweh’s affirmation).i

I will set fire to its forest,

and it will consume everything around it.j

22:1Yahweh said this: Go down to the house of the king of Judah and speak there this word. 2Say, Listen to Yahweh’s word, king of Judah who sits on David’s throne, you, your servants, and your people who come through these gateways.k 3Yahweh has said this: Exercise faithful authority, snatch away one who has been robbed from the hand of the fraud; resident alien, fatherless, and widow – do not abuse; do not do violence; the blood of one who is free of guiltl – do not shed, in this place. 4Because if you do actmon this word, then kings sitting for David on his throne will come through the gateways of this house, riding on chariotry and on horses, he, his servants, and his people.n 5But if you do not listen to these words, by myself I am swearingo (Yahweh’s affirmation) that a ruin is what this house will become.p

6Because Yahweh has said this about the house of the king ofq Judah:

You are Gilead to me,

the head of Lebanon.

If I do not make you a wilderness,

towns that are not lived in….r

7I will sanctifys devastators against you,

an individual and his implements.

They will cut down your choice cedarst

and let them fall into the fire.

8Manyu nations will pass by this city and will say, one person to his fellow: On what account did Yahweh act in this way to this great city? 9And people will say: On account of the fact that they abandoned the pact of Yahweh their God and bowed down to other gods and served them.v

LXX lacks *and regarding*.

Perhaps implying “morning by morning,” but for that meaning one would expect not *labbōqer* but *labbәqārîm* or *labbōqer labbōqer* (BDB; cf. Zeph 3:5).

LXX and Vg translate this colon as if the expression were an established one such as *’āśâ* *mišpāṭ* (5:1; 7:5; 22:3, 15), *dibber mišpāṭ* (1:16; 4:12), or *šāpaṭ mišpāṭ* (1 Kgs 3:28; Ezek 16:38), meaning “exercise authority/give judgment,” but here the verb is uniquely *dîn*; further, *in the morning* comes between verb and noun. I infer that *mišpāṭ* is used adverbially (cf. Deut 16:18, as Vg recognizes).

K has “their practices.” LXX lacks this colon.

The second person pronoun and the participle that follows are now feminine singular.

For MT *ṣûr* LXX implies *ṣôr* “Tyre,” which could be some sort of insult, maybe suggesting self-confidence, or could mean LXX takes vv. 13-14 as a prophecy against a foreign nation (McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:511).

LXX lacks *(Yahweh’s affirmation)*.

LXX “terrify” (cf. Vg) derives *yēḥat* from *ḥātat* rather than *nāḥēt*.

LXX lacks this line.

L has a section marker here.

L has a section marker here.

See the note on 2:34.

The infinitive precedes the finite verb, underlining the expectation.

LXX has “they… their… their.”

The qatal is declarative/performative, a speech act (see 1:5 and the note).

MT has a marker here.

C lacks *the king of*.

K *nwšbh* is perhaps a feminine plural form (*CTAT* 2:636-37). On the if-clause, see the note on 15:11 and the comment on 22:6.

LXX interprets as “bring on”; cf. its interpretation at 6:4.

Literally, “the choicest of your cedars.”

LXX lacks *many*.

MT has a section marker here.

In the context these next subsections could be read as addressed to Zedekiah, and they would certainly be challenges Jeremiah could issue to him and to the city in his day.[[307]](#footnote-307) They would again indicate that It’s never too late for the administration to get its act together and forestall Yahweh’s judgment. But in themselves these subsections stand back from the preceding explicit focus on the last king and his fate, and it’s plausible to imagine that they originally addressed earlier kings. Yet the scroll omits any specific reference and lets them be statements, exhortations, threats, and promises relating to kings in general: Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah. King and people stand before two alternatives.[[308]](#footnote-308) And while there was no original link between vv. 1-10 and 11-14, the juxtaposition would apply to Zedekiah a point about royal priorities in general.[[309]](#footnote-309) After 587, the verses would offer implicit explanation for the city’s fall but also promise that the Davidic line might have a future.

After a preface, the section brings together five separate units:

21:11b-12 a challenge and warning to David’s household: a bicolon and a tricolon linked

21:13-14 a challenge and a warning to Jerusalem: four bicola, two linked

22:1-5 a challenge, a promise, and a warning to an unnamed king of Judah: prose

22:6-7 a warning about the palace of an unnamed king of Judah: four bicola

22:8-9 a warning about the fate of Jerusalem: prose

Jer 22:1-7 is in largely a part-prose and part-verse equivalent to 21:11-14:[[310]](#footnote-310)

21:11-14 22:2-7

listen to Yahweh’s word listen to Yahweh’s word

household of David king of Judah who sits on David’s throne…

Yahweh has said this Yahweh has said this

make decisions, in the morning, with authority exercise faithful authority

snatch away one who has been robbed snatch away one who has been robbed

from the hand of the fraud from the hand of the fraud…

if you do not listen to these words…

so that my fury does not go out like fire they will cut down your choice cedars

and burn with no one to put it out and let them fall into the fire

in the face of the dire nature of your practices

here am I, regarding you, you who sit in the valley, you are Gilead to me

a crag in the flatland (Yahweh’s affirmation)… the head of Lebanon…

I will set fire to its forest,

and it will consume everything around it. [the above four cola come a different order]

I assume that Yahweh gave different versions of the message to Jeremiah and/or his curators.

**11a** These word will be paralleled by the briefer preface to 23:9-40; they are a preface to 21:11 – 23:8 as a whole. *Household* (*bayit*) will occur with more than one of its senses in this section. Here *household of the king of Judah* suggests the Judahite line of kings, who in Jeremiah’s day are closely related: they comprise Josiah, three of his sons, and one of his grandsons.

**11b-12** The bidding to *listen* is plural, and in origin it might be a bidding to the current king and his administration (cf. 22:2), but in the broader context of this passage it suggests the line of kings. *Household of David* will then be this line. The reference to David draws attention to their right to reign as kings and to the promise attaching to David’s household (2 Sam 7). It might also draw attention to the obligation resting on this household. Judahites might think that Yahweh’s promise to David and his line had no obligations attached to it – that the promise was unconditional. But 2 Sam 7 did not say so; if anything, it pointed in the opposite direction, in that it warned of trouble for David’s offspring if he behaved in a wayward fashion. Pss 72 and 132:12[[311]](#footnote-311) suggest the same implication in positive form: being the Davidic king means implementing faithful authority for the people. It was the best thing David ever did, just after Yahweh gave him that promise (2 Sam 8:15).[[312]](#footnote-312) Do it (says Yahweh) “in the morning, before you occupy yourselves with eating and drinking and with the things that you need”[[313]](#footnote-313) (cf. 2 Sam 15:2), and certainly “before that by drinking and excess he had made himself unfit to judge aright.”[[314]](#footnote-314) Jeremiah has already talked about exercising *authority* (5:1; 7:5) and about the faithful exercise of *authority* (4:2),[[315]](#footnote-315) but it is these sections on the kings that include “the greatest concentration of the word *mišpāṭ*.”[[316]](#footnote-316)Here, once again typically, Jeremiah tweaks the formulation.[[317]](#footnote-317) In the parallel colon one might have expected reference to faithfulness but he replaces that general notion by the concrete obligation to *snatch away one who has been robbed from the hand of the fraud*, which gives specificity to the idea of exercising authority.[[318]](#footnote-318) The *fraud* is the kind of person who finds ways of robbing someone of their home or their land so that their life, along with that of their family, is in desperate danger. A primary obligation of government is to exercise authority in such a way as to *snatch* them *away* from that danger. “Among all the commandments that might have been cited in these oracles against the kings, repeatedly choosing those that have to do with the exercise of abusive power against the weak and needy is remarkable. We know all too well how easy it is for people in power (and those who evaluate them!) to focus on other concerns.”[[319]](#footnote-319) If the community does not operate on that basis, Yahweh will see that disaster follows. If it tolerates the kind of society in which the powerful can enrich themselves and the weak lose everything they have, then Yahweh will take action against the community. One might fear that the weak themselves will then suffer; but they have already lost everything and have nothing to lose.

**13-14** While there is no formal mark of an ending after vv. 11b-12 or of a new beginning here, the address in the feminine singular to the city, as usual, and the change in imagery and focus indicate that this subsection is another separate short message, which gives city as well as administration something to think about (like vv. 8-10 in relation to vv. 1-7). *Here am I regarding* [*’el*] *you* (cf. 50:31; 51:25) is a slightly less overtly aggressive expression than “here am I against [‘*al*] you” (28:30-32), but the phrase’s implications are still aggressive. In the threat, the key word is *crag*. It otherwise comes only in 18:14 to refer to Mount Hermon, which indicates that we are talking about a seriously impressive mountain, as the people who are addressed see it. In Jeremiah’s day Jerusalem was surrounded by a deep *valley*; it resembled a tell standing out from a plain, like Lachish or Hazor – though Jeremiah can also use similar language of Moab (48:8, 28-29). There on its mountain Jerusalem can *sit* enthroned like a queen.[[320]](#footnote-320) Its people could feel secure: *“Who will get down against us, who will come into our refuges*? Oddly, although Jerusalem is surrounded by valleys, it is also surrounded by higher mountains from which an attacker might come down. But the city had survived Sennacherib’s invasion, which would seem to justify the confidence. Perhaps that deliverance had made people believe in the “inviolability of Zion.”[[321]](#footnote-321) But such confidence will not survive Yahweh’s attentiveness. The reference to people’s *practices* makes for a link with vv. 11b-12, and underscores the possible reminder to the city as a whole that it must not infer from vv. 11b-12 that it can just blame the administration for what happens in it and to it. Another aspect of the city’s justified pride might be the forest around Jerusalem or the city’s forest-like building style (e.g., 1 Kgs 10:17, 21), but a forest is also vulnerable to fire. Fire is a fright (cf. v. 10), and forest fire a particular fright. The medieval chapter division makes a break at this point and might thus suggest that there were four answers to Zedekiah’s inquiry in 21:1-2 about whether there is any hope for the city, a question which “he probably wishes he had not asked”:[[322]](#footnote-322)

21:3-7 No

21:8-10 The wise will leave the city

21:11-12 Put things right in the city

21:13-14 No

**22:1-3** People also *go down* to the palace if they are in the temple, which is at the high point of the city and is where Jeremiah might naturally receive messages from Yahweh (cf. 18:2).[[323]](#footnote-323) While the implicit reference to the temple might make one infer that *these gateways* are those of the temple (cf. 7:2), v. 4 will make it more likely that they are the palace gateways. That understanding is already encouraged by the reference to the *king*, his *servants*,and his *people* – in other words, his staff.Whereas there had been no conditions that needed fulfillment in order for Israel to become Yahweh’s people or for David to receive the promise in 2 Sam 7, there are conditions to fulfill if people and king then want to come to worship.[[324]](#footnote-324) Here, the “condition” is the one restated from 21:12[[325]](#footnote-325) in a longer version that also compares with something Jeremiah enunciated earlier for the people in general (7:3-7).[[326]](#footnote-326) Much of the elaboration corresponds to regular Jeremianic concerns, though *abuse* (*yānâ* hiphil) comes only here in Jeremiah (the qal appears in 25:38; 46:16; 50:16). The verb expresses a particular disquiet about ill-treatment of resident aliens in (e.g.) Exod 22:21 [20]; Lev 19:33; Deut 23:16 [17].

**4** The big novelty now is that Yahweh attaches a further promise to the fulfillment of the conditions – or rather, reaffirms the original promise to David. There are or will be *kings sitting for David­ –* sittingas people who belong to David; in a sense they areDavid’s*.*[[327]](#footnote-327)Such *kings* *sitting* *on his throne will come through the gateways of this house, riding on chariotry and horses, he, his servants, and his people*. Jeremiah implies that it is not just the king who will rejoice in this fact. The rest of Judah will rejoice too, like British people celebrating a coronation or people in the United States rejoicing in the spending of a hundred million dollars on a presidential inaugural. But if there is no *mišpāṭ ûṣәdāqâ*, the palace will burn down.

**5** Human beings swear by someone or something other than themselves that acts as a guarantor of their oath; they are asking God, in particular, to note the oath and to act against them in case of default. Yahweh is saying, “It is as if I will punish myself if I fail to do as I say”; or “it will be as if I have stopped being me.”[[328]](#footnote-328) Yahweh’s oath once again presupposes that it’s still not over. The king still has chance to turn. But once again, there is no record of Jeremiah delivering this message, a reminder that it is recorded to remind people in general what Yahweh expects of the kings of Judah and their administration.

**6** Yahweh goes on to restate the threat concerning Jerusalem and the king’s house in particular that was expressed in 21:13-14 and 22:5. He is apparently addressing the palace (the *you* is second-person masculine singular). What Yahweh meant by *you are Gilead to me* would not be immediately obvious. Is it an insult, suggesting the impiety of the northern kingdom (e.g., Hos 6:8) that led to its invasion and devastation?[[329]](#footnote-329) Or is it a compliment (e.g., Cant 4:1)? The parallel reference to *the head of Lebanon* points in the second direction; Gilead(cf. 8:22)[[330]](#footnote-330) and Lebanonwere the locations of famous forests. So the logic is, I rejoice in you as I rejoice in Gilead and Lebanon, or you remind me of Gilead and Lebanon (cf. the reference to a forest in v. 14).[[331]](#footnote-331) For Yahweh, Jerusalem was their equal. Nevertheless, about Jerusalem so affirmed Yahweh is prepared to make another of those oaths whereby people wish a terrible fate on themselves if they fail to live up to what the if-clause refers to, but leave the actual wish unstated and taken for granted (cf. 15:11).[[332]](#footnote-332) So Yahweh’s *if I do not* is a very strong way of saying there is no doubt that I will *make you a wilderness, towns that are not lived in*: while Yahweh is rhetorically addressing thepalace in Jerusalem and the city itself, he is comparing it with a wilderness that has a number of towns in it. The devastation will happen notwithstanding his high esteem of Jerusalem and the palace in its magnificence.

**7** So *I* *will* *sanctify destroyers against you.* It is a doubly extraordinary resolve. He will not only send destroyers. He will sanctify them, as Jeremiah had imagined Yahweh or the shepherds urging the sanctifying of war against Jerusalem (6:4) and as Jeremiah had urged him to sanctify the wrongdoers (12:3).[[333]](#footnote-333) Once again the imagery of Yahweh commissioning a war is used against Judah.[[334]](#footnote-334) Its attackers will be like the foresters who felled the trees on Lebanon for the building of the “forest” which the temple sometimes seemed to be, and who thus gave majesty to the palace. They and their tools will now be dedicated to this destructive task. The *cedars* came; they will go. They will feed the *fire* that Yahweh will ignite (21:14). The “hall for the exercise of authority” (*’ulām hammišpāṭ*), magnificently paneled in cedar (1 Kgs 7:7), has in effect already been vacated, so it might as well be destroyed.[[335]](#footnote-335)

**8-9** Once more Jeremiah turns to say something about the city itself. The question and answer figure compares with one that appears in Ashurbanipal’s annals: “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, because we offended the friendliness of Ashurbanipal, the king beloved by Ellil!”[[336]](#footnote-336) As in that example, Jeremiah’s version speaks of the wrongdoing in the people’s stance in relation to their God, thus adding a further explanation for the threats that appeared in 21:11 – 22:7, at the end of this this section. While Jeremiah rhetorically pictures foreigners asking the question, it is really the question that Judah will need to ask, and needs to think about now so as not to have to ask it then; the rhetoric is similar to that in 18:16; 19:8. Here Jeremiah’s wording compares with a threat in Deuteronomy:

Jer 22:22:8-9 Deut 29:24-26 [23-25]

Many nations will pass by this city All the nations

and will say, one person to his fellow, will say,

On what account did Yahweh act in this way on what account did Yahweh act in this way

to this great city? to this country?

Why this great angry wrath?

And people will say, And people will say,

On account of the fact that they abandoned On account of the fact that they abandoned

the pact of Yahweh their God the pact of Yahweh, the God of their ancestors,

which he solemnized with them

when he got them out of the country of Egypt,

and went

and bowed down to other gods and served them. and served other gods and bowed down to them.

It’s the first reference to the pact committing the people to be loyal to Yahweh since 11:1-17. The major difference over against Deuteronomy version is the omission of reference to the exodus, though Deuteronomy also goes on to say more about Yahweh’s anger and about the exile that it envisages.

## Three Kings (22:10-30)

10Don’t cry about a dead man,a

don’t bemoan him.

Cry and cryb for the man who is going,

because he will not return any more

and see the country of his birth.c

11Because Yahweh has said this regarding Shallum ben Josiah, King of Judah, who was reigning in place of Josiah his father, who has gone out from this place: He will not return there any more, 12becaused in the place where they have exiled him, there he will die, and this country he will not see any more.e

13Oh, one who builds his house without faithfulness,

his lofts without the exercise of authority,

His fellow he makes servef for nothing –

his wages he does not give him,

14Who says, “I will build myself a house of some size,g

and enlargedh lofts,”

And cutsi for it a set of windows,j

both paneled with cedar and paintedk with vermillion:

15Will you reign because you are energeticl with cedar?m –

your father – he ate and drank, didn’t he.

He exercised faithful authority,

then things were good for him.

16He made decisions for powerless person and needy person,

then things were good;

that is acknowledging me, isn’t it (Yahweh’s affirmation).n

17Because you have no eyes or mind

except for what can be grabbed,

For the blood of someone free of guilt,o to shed,

for fraud and for crushing, to implement.p

18Therefore Yahweh said this regarding Jehoiakim ben Josiah, King of Judah:

They will not lament for him,

“Oh, my brother,” or “Oh, sister.”

They will not lament for him,

“Oh, lord,” or “Oh, his majesty.”q

19With a donkey’s burial he will be buried,

by being dragged and thrown outr

outside Jerusalem’s gateways.s

20Go upt to the Lebanon and cry out,

in the Bashan raise your voice.

Cry out from Abarim,u

because all your friends have shattered.

21I spoke to you when you were relaxedv –

you said, “ I will not listen.”

This has been your way from your youth,

because you have not listened to my voice.

22All your shepherds – wind will shepherd them,

and your friends – into captivity they will go.

Because then you will be shamed and disgraced,

on account of all your dire behavior.w

23You who sitx in the Lebanon,

nested among the cedars, how you have been favored,y

When contractions come to you,

writhing like a woman giving birth.

24I am alivez (Yahweh’s affirmation): if Coniahaa ben Jehoiakim King of Judah were a signet on my right hand – thatbb from there I would tear you off. 25I will give you into the hand of the people who are seeking your life, into the hand of the people before whom you are fearful, into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar King of Babylon, andcc into the hand of the Chaldeans. 26I will hurl you and your mother who bore you into another country where you were not born and where you will die.dd 27To the country where they are lifting up their spirit to return, they will not return.ee

28Is he a despicable shattered pot,ff

this man Coniah,

or a container that no one wants?

Why has he been hurled out, he and his offspring,gg

thrown out to a country that they did not know?

29Country, country, country, listen to Yahweh’s word.hh 30Yahweh has said this:

Write down this person as deprived,ii

a man who will not succeed in his days.

Because no individual from his offspring will succeed,

sitting on David’s throne,

and ruling again in Judah.jj

But for MT *lәmēt* LXX implies *lammēt* (Duhm, *Jeremia*, 174).

In this further example of an infinitive combining with a finite verb, the infinitive comes second.

MT has a section marker here.

For *kî*, C reads *kî ‘im* “rather” (cf. LXX, Vg).

MT has a section marker here.

*‘Ābad* *bә* regularly has quasi-hiphil meaning (see *DCH* 6:213b; cf. 25:14; 30:8; 34:9, 10). Cf. English “work them.”

Literally, “a house of measures/extents/sizes.”

Presumably *mәruwwāḥîm* comes from *rûaḥ* II, but it’s nice to picture Jeremiah imagining Jehoiakim also linking the word with *rûaḥ* I and thinking of its as airy (Qimchi in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage).

The qatal verb continues the participial construction.

*Ḥallûnāy* with its -*āy* ending would be a singular noun of the kind noted in GK 86i (Allen, *Jeremiah*, 248), but perhaps the *w* on the next word is really the ending of this word, which then means “its windows.”

The infinitive absolute *māšôaḥ* follows the participial significance of *sāpûn* in the previous colon (DG 103a).

On *mәtaḥăreh*, see the note on 12:5. Here, LXX assumes it has the usual meaning of *ḥārâ*, “be angry.”

For MT *bā’ārez* LXX has “with Ahaz”

In vv. 13-17 LXX has a further series of differences from MT that give the two versions a different cast (see Wells, “Indications of Late Reinterpretation,” 407-9).

See the note on 2:34.

MT has a section marker here.

LXX precedes the four cola with “Woe to this man” and then lacks *or “Oh, sister”* and *or “Oh, his majesty.”*

The two infinitive absolutes function like adverbs (*IBHS* 4.6.2b, 35.3c.2a; DG 102; GK 113h; but JM 123r compares with the continuing of a finite verb by an infinitive and describes the usage as defining circumstances).

MT has a section marker here.

The verbs in vv. 20-23 are second-person singular feminine.

Tg interprets the geography in light of v. 23 and assumes all three places refer to Jerusalem itself.

LXX “in your transgression” makes explicit that it was a careless sense of security.

With paronomasia, the verse begins *kol rō‘ayik* and ends *kōl-rā‘ātēk.* LXX “all who love you” generates a different paronomasia by deriving the latter not from *rā‘a‘* but from *rā‘â* II, as opposed to *rā‘â* I. In contrast, Aq, Sym derive the opening *rō‘ayik* from *rā‘â* II and translate “your companions.”

Q *yōšabt* looks like a mixed form, a cross between *yōšebet* and the archaic second-person *yāšabtî* implied by K (GK 90n). Compare and contrast 10:17, and the parallel Q and K variation in the next colon.

LXX, Vg have “you will groan,” deriving the unique form *nēḥant* from *’āḥan* rather than *ḥānan*.

See the note and comment on 4:2.

*Konyāhû*, or *yәkônyâ*, *yәkonyāhû*,or *yәkônyâ*, and also *yәhôyākîn*, *yәhôyākin*, or *yôyākîn*, are alternative forms of the king’s name, combining the short form of the name of Yahweh with a form of the verb *kûn* and meaning “Yahweh endures” or “Yahweh makes endure.” Qimchi (in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage) suggests that this short form is pejorative, though Duhm (*Jeremia*, 179)notes parallels such as Jeberechiah = Berechiah, and Carroll (*Jeremiah*, 437) wonders if it is affectionate.

The *kî* strengthens the apodosis after the if-clause (DG 121, remark 2).

LXX lacks *into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar King of Babylon, and*.

The verb is plural.

MT has a marker here.

*‘Eṣeb* means *pot* only here, but the parallelism supports this understanding, though Abravanʼel’s understanding that it means “hurt” (*pyrwš ‘al nby’ym ’ḥrwnym* on the passage, as paraphrased by Rosenberg, *Jeremiah* 1:184) at least points to a paronomasia.

LXX lacks the reference to the offspring, one of a number of ways in which LXX is again shorter and simpler than MT in vv. 28-30.

L has a section marker here.

Vg, Syr, Tg infer that *‘ărîrî* means “deprived of children,” which the context will go on to support, but initially the colon may raise a question (“deprived of what?”), which the following cola will go on to answer. LXX has “banished.”

A has a chapter marker here.

After the message about Zedekiah and about the Davidic household in general, the scroll adds messages relating to the three kings between Josiah and Zedekiah, also incorporating one further message to Jerusalem:

vv. 10-12 Shallum (Jehoahaz): a forewarning

a bicolon and a tricolon, then prose

vv. 13-19 an eventually named son of Josiah (Jehoiakim): a critique and a forewarning

six bicola and a tricolon: the first four bicola run together as an extended vocative and run into the fifth

then four bicola, with the opening two running into each other, and a tricolon

vv. 20-23 Jerusalem: an allusive forewarning, a critique, a straight forewarning

eight bicola, with the last two running into each other

vv. 24-30 Coniah (Jehoichin): a forewarning

prose, then a tricolon and two bicola, and a bicolon and a tricolon

Yahweh declares what is to happen to the three kings, and to the city. While there is sharp critique of Jehoiakim and of Jerusalem, the more consistent feature of the four units is simply the forewarning about what is to happen not any explanation in terms of the kings’ wrongdoing. Second Kings 23:31 – 24:17 does explain that wrongdoing, in a routine way: they have done what was dire in Yahweh’s eyes like their ancestors. But both Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin had had only three months to do something terrible. Having not critiqued Zedekiah in 21:1-10 and having named no names in 21:11 – 22:9, Jeremiah does not critique Jehoahaz or Jehoiachin and so explain their exile, and he expresses approval of Josiah. The entire critique lands on Jehoiakim’s head. The messages will presuppose bases on which Yahweh evaluates their kings and the people might do their own evaluating, and on which they might think about who they put on the throne when they have the chance (it was they who chose Jehoahaz and perhaps Jehoiachin: 2 Kgs 23:30; 24:6). But the focus lies on the tragedy that will fall on each king. The entire story of Judah’s last kings “evokes only weeping and sadness.”[[337]](#footnote-337) Thus what holds together vv. 10-30 is “not only disdain for Judah’s rulers but also the language of lamentation.”[[338]](#footnote-338) The people who listen to these declarations about their kings need to understand what the declarations say about their own future, which is also the direct topic of the Jerusalem unit.

**10-12** Jeremiah does not name the subject of v. 10, and the lines could be proverbial. *Going* is a vague verb that could in itself refer to being about to die, as opposed to being dead.[[339]](#footnote-339) It is vv. 11-12 – as the message are juxtaposed – that clarifies the point about v. 10 for people who could not work out that they relate to the time just after Josiah’s unexpected death in battle at the age of thirty-nine. The exhortation then not to grieve for the king would be scandalous in any context, though one should not take Jeremiah too literally as absolutely banning grief for Josiah – his exhortation is a little like Jesus’s saying that people must hate their parents if they are to follow him (and see 2 Chr 35:24-25, ironically with a reference to Jeremiah composing laments). Nevertheless the injunction would be shocking, if Josiah was people’s hero for asserting Judahite independence in relation to Assyria and/or for undertaking his religious reformation. Josiah’s successor was his second son, whose birth name was Shallum (1 Chr 3:15) but who was enthroned as Jehoahaz. He was then immediately deposed by the Egyptians – which perhaps indicates that he had supported his father’s anti-Egyptian policy and that this commitment had been the reason for people’s supporting his succeeding to the throne. Pharaoh Neco took Jehoahaz off to Egypt, which will be the destination of the *is going* in Jeremiah’s message and the destination of the *has gone out from this place*; it suggests some irony because this verb (*yāṣā’*) is one used so often for Israel going out *from* Egypt.[[340]](#footnote-340)People can be told not to grieve for Josiah because there is now something else to grieve. “Jeremiah reversed normal practice – usually it is the dead who are mourned, not those who are still alive. But Jeremiah bids them to weep for Jehoahaz, who will never return to his native land. He speaks of him as though he were already dead.”[[341]](#footnote-341) The expression *any more… any more… any more* tolls through the message. His irreversible deportation is his tragedy. He never did come back (2 Kgs 23:32-34). His destiny was repeated by Jehoiachin and Zedekiah; indeed, out of the immediate context one could take the banished king to be either of these two.[[342]](#footnote-342)

**13-14** In place of Jehoahaz the Egyptians put on the throne his older brother Eliakim, whom the Pharaoh renames Jehoiakim. The renaming is ironic as it is a more explicitly Yahwistic name for a king who was not very Yahwistic; renaming would be simply an expression of Pharaoh’s authority. “Jehoiakim was Jeremiah’s great foe; the statement about him is thus distinctively sharp and disdainful.”[[343]](#footnote-343) Again Jeremiah begins without indicating who he is talking about. *Oh* (*hôy*) announces that he is expressing horror, which would typically relate to someone’s death (actual or expected) to someone’s despicable behavior such as might presage or deserve death (cf. v. 18; 23:1; 30:7; 34:5; 48:1; 50:27).[[344]](#footnote-344) Here, neatly, both connotations are appropriate, in what precedes and in what follows. Jeremiah is expressing horror at *one who builds his house without faithfulness*, and he will do so through vv. 13-14 until we come to a *you* in v. 15. Whether or not he was supposed to deliver this message to Jehoiakim himself, vv. 10-12 suggests that the messages here are designed to address Judah in Jehoahaz’s day and now in Jehoiakim’s day and in any other king’s day about their kings’ destiny. The trouble with Jehoiakim is apparently that he decides it’s time to remodel the palace on a scale more appropriate (as he thinks) to the king of Judah, or to build a new palace.[[345]](#footnote-345) The *lofts* will be rooms on the roof, quite a regular feature for a Middle Eastern house. But he goes about the project at the expense of being fair to his subjects. Admittedly such dynamics always apply; they are an aspect of what Samuel warned people about kings (1 Sam 8), and the original Davidic and Solomonic palaces must have been built using resources that could have been shared among the people. Yet we have noted that people often don’t mind some resources being spent on their kings and presidents; they get some reflected glory from the expenditure. Maybe Jeremiah would not have objected to the remodeling project in itself. His problem is two ways in which the project stands in more marked tension with a commitment to *faithfulness* in the *exercise of authority*. One is that it involves the use of conscript unpaid Judahite labor. First Kings relates how Solomon used conscript labor (*mas*: “forced labor” may give a misleading impression) but it doesn’t indicate whether his workers got paid or just had to abandon their farms while they were engaged on the work. With Jehoiakim, the point is explicit. And Jeremiah points out that we are talking of people who are the king’s fellow-Israelites. It’s *his fellow* that *he makes serve for nothing*. The neatness of the poetry contrast with the out-of-order nature of the action:

Oh, one who builds his house without faithfulness

his lofts without the exercise of authority

The international political situation would add to the objectionable nature of the expense of the project, alongside the pressure of having to pay tribute to Egypt or Babylon as the political situation changed.[[346]](#footnote-346) In v. 14 Jeremiah goes on to express distaste for the extravagance of the project, in two more neatly parallel lines.

**15** After the four lines that were syntactically one long preamble, Jeremiah comes to a searching question in an unusually long, 5-4 line whose cola do not obviously interconnect. Jehoiakim assumes that imposing architecture, *being energetic with cedar*,is a sign of royal majesty that will stand him in good stead for the future. He will have an impressive palace from which enjoy a long reign.[[347]](#footnote-347) But his exercise of initiative contrasts with the way his father made his mark.[[348]](#footnote-348) Over against Jehoiakim’s assumptions, Jeremiah sets some facts about Josiah. Josiah did okay in life; eating and drinking sums up the necessities of a good life. He “lived well enough,” as they said of Jesus in contrast to John the Baptizer (Matt 11:19).[[349]](#footnote-349) But what was the basis of his enjoying those necessities? He attended to the true kingly priorities, and then found that things worked out well for him (until he took on Pharaoh Neco). The parallelism between cola and lines in v. 15 works in a complex and subtle way. *Will you reign as king* and *your father… didn’t he* constitute parallel beginnings of cola. But *you are energetic with cedar* then finds its complementary, contrasting statement in *he exercised faithful authority*; and *he ate and drank* finds its parallel in *then things were good for him*. Jehoiakim works for his own glory. He is engaged in “political idolatry.”[[350]](#footnote-350)

**16** More straightforward parallelism between lines as Jeremiah he now uses the less common verb for *made decisions* (*dîn*) then spells out its implicationsas he did in 21:12. It means making decisions for the *powerless* person(*‘ānî*, Jeremiah’s only reference to the powerless) andfor the *needy person* (*’ebyôn*, who did come earlier in 2:34; 5:28; also 20:13 as a self-description). Jehoiakim’s father accepted those royal obligations, and *then things were good* – as he said in v. 15. Then the unexpected third colon throws in a devastatingly important prophetic assumption. “Knowing me” (*hada‘at ’ōtî*) means *acknowledging me*. It is not a matter of an intimate person-to-person relationship or an insight into truths about God – though Jeremiah and Yahweh also believe in them. It’s about acknowledging in the sense of recognizing and accepting the authority of. Acknowledgment of Yahweh (cf. 2:8; 4:22; 9:3, 6, 24 [2, 5, 23]) lies in making decisions in the way vv. 15-16 describe. “Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of the heavens, but the person who does the will of my Father in the heavens” (Matt 7:21); Jeremiah here defines what that will is.[[351]](#footnote-351) “Piety leads men to all the duties of love.”[[352]](#footnote-352) The criterion for determining whether leaders acknowledge God is not whether they profess belief in God or go to worship but whether they see that decisions get made in the interests of the powerless and needy person; and once a nation is a democracy, the same criterion determines whether this nation counts as one that acknowledges God.[[353]](#footnote-353) Vv. 15-16 are “a stunning act of social criticism, the most poignant of it kind in the entire Bible.”[[354]](#footnote-354)

**17** There is worse to be said about Jehoiakim, a further nuancing of what Jeremiah has already said. Jehoiakim could improve his accommodation not only because he compelled people to do the work for nothing, and he failed to exercise faithful authority not only because he neglected his vocation to be the supreme court. Like the powerful people Jeremiah lambasts elsewhere, Jehoiakim used the legal system to defraud people of their land or houses, which he could then appropriate. And he did so by defrauding them of their lives, in the famous manner of Ahab (1 Kgs 21). With more impressive hyperbole, Jeremiah declares that it was the only thing that his *eyes or mind* focused on – the pathetic account of Ahab’s initial frustration with Naboth (1 Kgs 21:1-4) provides an illustration of that focus that would be funny if it did not have such terrible consequences. The only thing Ahab or Jehoiakim could see and the only thing they could think about was *what can be grabbed* (cf. 6:13).[[355]](#footnote-355)

**18-19** In the Prophets, *oh* (v. 13)[[356]](#footnote-356) often leads into *therefore* (cf. 23:1-2). As happens when one member of the community issues an accusation against another and when the elders gathered in the village square issue their judgment, a remonstration by Yahweh leads into a declaration of intent regarding the consequences. Elijah confronted Ahab with a grisly account of the death he would die for getting Naboth killed. Jeremiah jumps beyond Jehoiakim’s death to the aftermath which he invites Jehoiakim and the listeners to imagine. No one will be sorry when Jehoiakim dies. Perhaps the first line imagines people consoling his brothers (Jehoahaz and Zedekiah) and his sisters. It will turn out that he is only 36 when he dies in 598, so it would be quite possible for his mother still to be alive and to need consoling, too. But they *will not lament for him* as their *lord* and as *his majesty*. No doubt they will do so formally, but they won’t mean it, because they will resent the kind of life he has lived and the kind of rule he has exercised. There will be no state funeral for him. His death will be treated as more like the death of a donkey. Maybe you strip a dead donkey of its hide but then you just throw its carcass out; a donkey’s burial is a non-burial. As usual, Jeremiah is not predicting literal events but painting a vivid imaginary picture, and 2 Kgs 24:1-7 may imply that he died in quite the regular way – though it does not mention his burial (contrast 21:18, 26; 23:30). But his reign was marked by trouble from the Babylonians and from the Arameans, Moabites, and Ammonites, and he did die when he was only in his thirties.

**20** Once more Jeremiah tantalizes slightly by not making specific who he is addressing, though the feminine singular puts people on the track of identifying his target – it’s them. Jeremiah turns for a moment from the kings to address the city, as he did in 21:8-10 and 22:6-9. Once more the juxtaposition of the messages could make the audience think about the implications of the king for the city but also encourage it not to kid itself that it can simply blame the king for the state of the city. It has to accept some responsibility. Metaphorically speaking, Jerusalem is to go and climb a mountain from which it could cry out so that its cry could be heard. The places lie to the north and east and Jeremiah lists them in north-south order: *Lebanon* (which can denote Mount Hermon), *Bashan* (the Golan Heights – perhaps he imagines one of the hills that stand higher than the main plain), and *Abarim* (the highland opposite Jericho, from which Moses had his view of the promised land). The reason for the cry of pain that the city will need to utter, so that everyone hears, is that *all your friends have shattered*. The friends will be allies such as the ones with whom Judah joined in Jehoiakim’s day in the rebellion that prompted Nebuchadrezzar’s visit in about 601 (2 Kgs 24:1)– either they have been defeated or Jeremiah pictures them as defeated. Jerusalem is therefore in deep trouble. The association of Aram, Moab, and Ammon with that visit (2 Kgs 24:2) suggests a reason for Jeremiah’s naming Lebanon, Bashan, and Abarim: these peoples occupy those areas to the north and east.

**21** The rise of Babylon meant a reversal of the good times that people had been enjoying. There had been times in the recent past when Jerusalem was doing well, times of security and relaxation (*šalwâ*). Assyria’s decline had left Judah freer to control its own destiny and not having to pay tribute to a superpower. It would have been nice if in that time it had been faithful to Yahweh, as for a time in Josiah’s day it was. But prosperity and relaxation may work the opposite way. And Jerusalem had not been much inclined to *listen* to Yahweh. Like “knowing,” listening implies an attentiveness that issues in action – namely doing what Yahweh says. But the Jeremiah scroll has been full of critique of Judah for doing nothing of the sort. *Your youth* takes us back to 2:2 but also to 3:24-25, which makes clear that the commitment of 2:2 was short-lasting.

**22-23** So the community’s leaders will be blown away, like *shepherds* who are being herded instead of herding. A parallel fate will encompass its *friends*,those allies who have shattered. The parallelism perhaps implies that being taken into captivity is a more literal description of what it will mean to be blown away by the wind. It will be the final shaming and exposure of Judah’s leaders that Jeremiah has consistently threatened. It will prove that their religious, political, and social policies were misguided, as he has consistently said. At the moment Jerusalem sits *in Lebanon*, as it were, with the glory of the forest that surrounds it or of its forest-like cedar-paneled buildings (Lebanon is functioning as a metaphor in a different way from v. 20). Jerusalem is like a bird with its nest in the trees, quite secure.[[357]](#footnote-357) Yes, *how you have been favored*! But maybe there is a hint of worry in that observation (see 16:13).[[358]](#footnote-358) In light of the next colon, it is ironic.[[359]](#footnote-359) Maybe people would notice that the unusual verb form for *you have been favored* also looked worryingly like a word that could mean *you have groaned*.[[360]](#footnote-360)Certainly there is something to worry about in the threat that follows, as Jeremiah again compares the travail that will come to Ms. Jerusalem with the labor pains of *a woman giving birth* (6:24; 13:21).

**24** The scroll returns to kings, and turns finally and explicitly to *Coniah*, an alternative name for Jehoiachin,[[361]](#footnote-361) who figures in Jeremiah more often than any other named king.[[362]](#footnote-362) Although he was unmentioned in 1:1-3, he apparently became a focus of Judahite hopes with which 52:31-34 implies some sympathy. We know from 28:1-4 that there was at least one prophet in Jerusalem promising that Yahweh in his faithfulness to Jerusalem and to David’s line would bring Jehoiachin and the other exiles back. Meanwhile, the advantage of reigning for only three months (before being deposed and transported to Babylon) is that people have no chance to discover your weaknesses, in contrast to what happened with his successor, his uncle, the hapless Zedekiah, who had lots of opportunity to make mistakes and show his inadequacy. Here in connection with Jehoiachin Yahweh swears a solemn oath analogous to an Israelite oath beginning “Yahweh is alive.” On an Israelite’s lips it would imply “Yahweh is alive and he will take action if I am lying.”[[363]](#footnote-363) How frightening to have Yahweh himself taking such an oath! Jeremiah goes on to invite his hearers to think of Yahweh as having a *signet* ring, which is a most valuable possession. People seal documents with their signet ring. It’s like a holder containing a list of one’s passwords and personal information. Think of my signet ring (Yahweh goes on) as on *my right hand*, the hand that for most people is the more powerful and the one with which we shake hands. Now. If you, Coniah, were that ring (Jeremiah speaks now as if Yahweh is addressing the king himself), with the implication that I identify with you, I would *tear you off* and give you over, like someone giving over credit cards and passwords to a thief. It might seem that Jeremiah implies the question why Yahweh will act in this way to Jehoiachin. What has he done to deserve it? Jeremiah will raise the question in v. 28, though only rhetorically; he will not answer it, because the message isn’t really about the king and his destiny and his deserve. It’s about the people and its destiny and deserve.

**25-27** This message apparently presupposes that Jehoiakim has died and his teenage son has succeeded him. Within three months, Nebuchadrezzar is at the gates, Jehoiachin has surrendered, and Nebuchadrezzar has taken him off to Babylon with the rest of the Jerusalem leadership, and put Zedekiah in his place (2 Kgs 24:8-17). So this threat belongs in that three-month period. Whether or not 23:18 referred to the young king’s mother, who is no doubt a power behind the throne,[[364]](#footnote-364) Jeremiah here does refer to her. In due course Jehoiachin gets released from prison in Babylon (52:31-34), but as far as we know, he never returns to Judah.

**28** The poetic verses that follow presuppose his being deposed and taken to Babylon. They, too, particularly clearly exist to address his people in Jerusalem rather then the deposed king himself. The opening image recalls 19:1-13: Jehoiachin is like the pot that Jeremiah was once told to smash. It’s no use to anyone. Is that all there is to Jehoiachin? Either way, Jehoiachin is going into to exile. *Why*? Here is where Jeremiah asks this question, too, but again, there is no answer. And who are these offspring? The boy is only a teenager, so Jeremiah is perhaps talking about offspring he may have, preparing the way for vv. 29-30.

**29** The scroll makes one further addition to the message about Jehoiachin, now rhetorically addressing Judah as a whole. It’s important that the country listens. “The triplet signals by its insistent personification on the part of the prophet that place from which Jehoiachin’s presence and future is excluded.”[[365]](#footnote-365) Jehoiachin shares in his people’s waywardness, but he is no more though no less guilty than they are, and the declaration about his fate relates to their guilt and fate, not to his in isolation.[[366]](#footnote-366)

**30** The message relates to that mention of his offspring, and the listeners could infer that it condemns Jehoiachin to never having children. But it doesn’t actually say he will be childless but that he should be registered as childless, counted as childless.[[367]](#footnote-367) Yahweh is “imagining scribes at his side, ready to take dictation.”[[368]](#footnote-368) Any children Jehoiachin has will not be in the register, in the citizen list.[[369]](#footnote-369) And no one from Jehoiachin’s line ever did siton David’s throne and rule ever in Judah(the kings of Judah in the second and first century came from the clan of Levi). Babylonian records do refer to Jehoiachin’s having five sons, for whose provision they keep a record,[[370]](#footnote-370) while 1 Chr 3:17-18 lists seven, one of whom was an ancestor of Jesus (Matt 1:12). Only Hag 2:23 otherwise refers to Yahweh having a signet ring, and it can hardly be a coincidence that Yahweh there promises to make Jehoiachin’s grandson his signet ring. Evidently he does not intend to implement this threat;[[371]](#footnote-371) *b. Sanhedrin* 37b sees Jehoiachin’s having children as indicating that exile can making expiation for everything (cf. Isa 40:1-2). No, Yahweh is not done with the promise to David. Nevertheless, v. 30 is “a summons to write down for posterity the hard destiny of Jehoiachin, to place on permanent record that he was a luckless king, stripped of his kingship, deposed and banished, one whose fortunes would never be reversed, who would never taste success nor have the satisfaction of restoration.” There is thus a “wonder and terror” about his destiny.[[372]](#footnote-372) And no one should dream of attaching hopes to him. So it makes one inclined to pray,

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou didst formerly take such heavy vengeance on the impiety of thine ancient people, that thou didst not spare even kings,… O grant, that we at this day may continue in obedience to thy word, and not so kindle thy vengeance against us.”[[373]](#footnote-373)

## A Good Shepherd, a Faithful Shoot, a New Exodus (23:1-8)

1Oh,a shepherds wiping outb

and scattering the flock of myc shepherding (Yahweh’s affirmation)!d

2Therefore Yahweh, Israel’s God, has said this about the shepherds who shepherd my people:e

You are the ones who scattered my flock;

you drove them away and did not attend to them.

Here am I attending to you,

for the dire nature of your practices (Yahweh’s affirmation).f

3I myself will collect the remainder of my flock

from all the countries where I have driven them away.

I will return them to their habitat,

and they will be fruitful and increase.

4I will set up shepherds over them, and they will shepherd them;

they will not be afraid any more, they will not break down,

and they will not need to be attended to (Yahweh’s affirmation).g

5There, days are coming (Yahweh’s affirmation)

when I will set up for David a faithfulh shoot.i

He will reign as king and will show understanding;j

he will exercise faithful authority in the country.

6In his days Judah will find deliverance;

Israel – it will dwell in confidence.

And this is his name, by which one will call him:

Yahweh is our faithfulness.k

7Therefore, there, days are coming (Yahweh’s affirmation) when people will no longer say “Yahweh is alivel who got the Israelites up from the country of Egypt.” 8Rather, “Yahweh is alive who got up, who got the offspring of Israel’s household from the northern country and from all the countries to which I drove them away.” And they will live on their soil.m

See the comment on 22:13.

BDB takes *mә’abbәdîm* as a virtually unique occurrence of *’ābad* piel meaning “loose, cause to stray,” but Jeremiah often uses the verb with the more horrifying meaning (e.g., 12:7; 15:7).

LXX has “their.”

A has a section marker here.

I follow Volz (*Jeremia*, 231) in laying out vv. 2aβ-6 as verse.

Yahweh underlines the point with a double paronomasia. He repeats the paronomasia from 22:22: the shepherds (*rō‘îm*; words from this root come four times in vv. 1-2a) have done what is dire (*rōa*‘). Then he comments that they have not attended to the sheep, so he will attend to the shepherds: here he uses the same verb (*pāqad*) in two different connections; a third will follow in v. 4.

MT has a section marker here.

“Rightful” might be a plausible connotation of *ṣaddîq* (McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:561); the subsequent reference to *ṣәdāqâ* then reframes what it means to be *ṣaddîq*.

LXX *anatolē* can mean shoot but more often means “dawn,” a suggestive connotation here (on LXX’s interpretation, see J. Lust, “Messianism and the Greek Version of Jeremiah,” in C. E. Cox [ed.], *VII Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies* [Atlanta: Scholars, 1991], 87-122 [89-99]; G. R. Lanier, “The Curious Case of *ṣmḥ* and *anatolē*,” *JBL* 134 [2015]: 505-27). Tg has “an anointed one” (*mәšîaḥ*).

On *śākal*, see 10:21, with the note and comment.

MT has a marker here. Vv. 5-6 recur in a variant form in 33:14-16.

See the note and comment on 4:2.

MT has a marker here. In LXX vv. 7-8 come after v. 40; they recur in a variant form from 16:14-15. On the relationship of MT and LXX in Jer 23 more broadly, see R. D. Weis, “Jeremiah Amid Actual and Virtual Editions,” in A. Piquer Otero and P. A. Torijano Morales (eds.), *The Text of the Hebrew Bible and Its Editions* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 370-99.

The collection of messages focusing on kings comes to an end with a series of promises:

vv. 1-4 the good shepherd

vv. 1-2a: accusations (two bicola separated by a resumptive introduction)

v. 2b: declaration of intent to take punitive action (one bicolon)

vv. 3-4 declaration of intent to take restorative action (two bicola and a tricolon)

vv. 5-6 the faithful Davidide

four bicola

vv. 7-8 the new exodus

prose

In keeping with the challenges and threats in 21:1 – 22:30, these promises do not confine themselves to the subject of a king; indeed, only the middle one relates directly to that theme. The third concerns the people as a whole. The first has an ambiguous relationship with the theme. It’s about shepherding, but about shepherds (plural) and implicitly about Yahweh shepherding. Thus the promise section as a whole underplays any promise of a future king in a way that matches what precedes: no descendant of Jehoiachin will occupy David’s throne. Yahweh’s promise to David must stand, but when and how it may find fulfillment is not to be a preoccupation. Yahweh is focused on more broadly good shepherding and on gathering the exiles.

All three promises make sense between 597 and 587 or afterwards. All three saw some fulfillment in the later decades of that century, though the fulfillment is partial, as regularly happens with God’s threats and promises. It’s typical of both threats and promises not only to use picture language that cannot be pressed but also to portray things in ultimate terms rather than terms that will find fulfillment in the regular course of events within this age. But those later decades will see God making a return to Judah possible (in fulfillment of Jeremiah’s promises, 2 Chr 36:22 and Ezra 1:1 note). Leaders such as Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel Jeshua, Ezra, and Nehemiah, will shepherd the community. One of them will be a grandson of Jehoiachin whom Yahweh promises to make his signet ring (Hag 2:23) and whom he comes close to designating as the shoot (Zech 6:9-13), though both Christian and Jewish exegetes can oppose that understanding in association with their differing convictions about the Messiah[[374]](#footnote-374) (messianic would also be an unwise term to use to describe Jeremiah’s promises).[[375]](#footnote-375) The fact that the threats and promises find a degree of fulfillment warns and encourages the people of God to be sure that they will find ultimate fulfillment and to respond to them appropriately.

**1** WhileJudah’s *shepherds* would include its sequence of kings over the past fifteen years (Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah), so far in the scroll “shepherds” has often also included the rest of its leadership, including prophets, priests, and scribes (e.g., 2:8; 10:21).[[376]](#footnote-376) The horrible irony here is that Judah’s own shepherds have been behaving like the foreign shepherd/kings (6:3; 12:10). Leaders easily become misleaders: two days after Hitler’s installation, 26-year-old Dietrich Bonhoeffer gave a radio broadcast (strangely cut short by the broadcasting authorities) on “The Younger Generation’s Altered View of the Concept of Leader [*Führer*],” in which he spoke of the ease with which it happens.[[377]](#footnote-377) *Wiping out* and *scattering* seems an illogical sequence, like taking into captivity and killing (20:4); some of the flock would be wiped out, some would scatter. Jeremiah’s challenge with its parallelism is designed to pile up images. Elsewhere wiping out and scattering are Yahweh’s actions (e.g., 15:7; 18:17), but Yahweh’s freedom as Israel’s shepherd to act thus does not imply that his under-shepherds can – perhaps rather the opposite. It’s not, after all, the natural activity of a shepherd. Jeremiah underlines the scandalous nature of the shepherds’ action by describing the people as *the flock of my shepherding*: cf. Pss 74:1; 79:13; 100:3; also 95:7, “the people of his shepherding, the flock of his hand.” They are used to singing about the flock in this way.

**2** Instead of being *shepherds who shepherd*, they *scattered my flock*. To put it more forcefully in the parallelism, they *drove them away*, which sounds even more deliberate and hostile; it again corresponds to Yahweh’s declarations concerning his own action (8:3; 16:15). To say *you did not attend to them* is therefore an understatement, but it prepares the way for Yahweh’s correlative, also understated but frightening comment, *here am I attending to you for the dire nature of your deeds*.

**3** As is often the case in the First Testament, wrongdoing requires both redress on the wrongdoers and rescue and restoration for their victims. So the chief shepherd will also take this second action. If he is eventually going to reverse the action of his under-shepherds, why did he not attend to them earlier? The Scriptures have no answer to that question Paul’s answer in Rom 9, his comment that he is God and you are not, so shut up, though one might add that he is like a parent who always hesitates to intervene in his (adult) children’s lives because they need to run them for themselves. But in due course, he says, *I myself* *will* *collect the remainder of my flock*. He thus introduces a verb (*qābaṣ* piel) that will recur in this connection (29:14; 31:8, 10; 32:37) and at last gives more positive resonances to a noun (*šә’ērît*) that has been used only with negative ones (6:9; 8:3; 11:23; 15:9).[[378]](#footnote-378) Admittedly *remainder* is still not a very encouraging word; but Yahweh goes on to develop his promises. First, *I will return them to their habitat*: the sheep and shepherding image continues, and the word for habitat (*nāweh*)can imply pasture as well as a secure place to live. Second, *they will be fruitful and increase***.** It will be like a new beginning of creation (Gen 1)[[379]](#footnote-379) and/or a repeat of what God did for Israel’s ancestors (Exod 1:7).[[380]](#footnote-380)

**4** They will still need shepherds, but Yahweh will now see that the *shepherds* are people who *will shepherd* – properly, by implication, as the promise goes on: *they will not be afraid any more* or *break down*. They will not *need to be attended to*: Vg translates this verb (*pāqad* niphal) “be missing,” which can be its implication, but Yahweh uses the verb that earlier meant *attend to*, and thus completes a triple paronomasia.

**5** The second promise takes up Yahweh’s commitment to David. So far the Jeremiah scroll has taken a confrontational stance to the David of the day, though it has also envisaged the continuance of the Davidic monarchy if there is response to the confrontation (13:12-14; 21:11-12; 22:1-30). The positive nature of this promise has no precedent in the scroll, though it will recur (see esp. 33:17-26);[[381]](#footnote-381) beyond these two passages “there is not a great deal more about the ‘ideal king’ in Jeremiah, although there is plenty about actual kings.”[[382]](#footnote-382) To say that *days are coming* (cf. 7:32)[[383]](#footnote-383)gives people no assurance about the date and hardly even hints whether it will be very soon or some years away. It does give them the assurance that what it threatens or promises will definitely happen. Describing it as an eschatological promise[[384]](#footnote-384) might again not clarify things, but it does imply “a decisive break in the history of the Davidic monarchy” with “no connection in terms of historical probabilities between the present circumstances and the future hope.”[[385]](#footnote-385) David’s line is a tree that is about to be felled, or has been felled, if the promise comes from after 587. So as well as setting up new shepherds, Yahweh promises *I will set up for David a faithful shoot*. The hearers’ ears might prick up at that adjective (*ṣaddîq*), which is not one that Jeremiah uses often, as Isaiah, Psalms, and Proverbs do (only 12:1, of Yahweh; 20:12, of Jeremiah himself). In this sense the idea of a faithful king is a new one. Yet Jeremiah has often critiqued the administration as well as the people in general for a lack of faithfulness. And the last king of Judah was called Zedekiah, *ṣidqîyāhû*, Yahweh is my faithfulness. Yet faithfulness was not embodied in his reign. Yahweh’s promise invites people to smirk and to rejoice that this failure is not the end of the story. Zedekiah was not someone who would *show* *understanding*, either, in a variety of senses – political and religious. This Davidic shoot will do so. His understanding will express itself in the exerciseof *faithful authority in the country*, that recurrent expectation (e.g., 22:3). He will embody the awareness that leadership means not only going for a goal and caring for the people one leads, but the faithful exercise of authority.[[386]](#footnote-386) In other words, if Jeremiah might seem to be undermining his own assault on the monarchy, he makes sure he is not doing so by presupposing that any monarchy that Yahweh could shore up would be quite different from the one he has critiqued. And maybe the promise points not just to one king but to a new royal line that will fulfill that charge.[[387]](#footnote-387)

**6** Thus whereas in the time of Zedekiah and other kings in Jeremiah’s day Judah met with calamity, in this king’s day Judah will *find deliverance*. Otherwise put, *Israel will dwell in confidence*. *Judah* and *Israel* might here both refer to the people of God; vv. 7-8 will fit this understanding.[[388]](#footnote-388) But when they appear in parallelism, they usually refer to the southern and northern kingdoms. So here, Jeremiah raises his eyes and raises his people’s eyes to think not only about Judah but about Ephraim. In the parallelism, as the reference to Ephraim thus goes beyond the reference to Judah, *dwell in confidence* orwith a sense of security goes beyond *find deliverance*; the promise recurs in the Torah (Lev 25:18-19; 26:5; 33:12) and will recur in Jeremiah (32:37; 33:16). Finally, Yahweh says, this king’s name will be *Yahweh is our faithfulness*, *yhwh ṣidqēnû*; attentive hearers who know Zedekiah smirk again. The Septuagint encourages the smirk by making the name Iosedek, a more precise reversal of its Sedekia. Thus “the… last king of Judah *does* appear in the text, but then by way of not mentioning his name.” And the name of the new king is not “‘Yhwh *my* righteousness’, but ‘Yhwh *our* righteousness’…. The audience is being involved, it is their righteousness, their salvation, which is at stake”[[389]](#footnote-389) (there are no known actual Israelite names of this kind with a first person plural suffix;[[390]](#footnote-390) the name Immanuel tests the rule, but the suffix on *‘immānû* is not possessive and anyway it, too, is no one’s actual name).

**7-8** That aspect of the middle promise leads into the final one that explicitly concerns the people’s destiny, in accordance with the recurrent pattern in 21:1 – 23:8. Once again Yahweh declares that *days are coming*, and once again people in the Second Temple period could see something but not everything by way of fulfillment of his promise. People did not stop celebrating the exodus in favor of celebrating the return from exile, and that return was not as spectacular as the departure from Egypt and coming to Canaan – at least as the Torah tells that story. But Yahweh did make it possible for people to come back, and they did *live on their soil*, a new note in this version of the promise that came earlier in 16:14-15.

# About Prophets (and Their People) (23:9 – 24:10)

As the first compilation of messages in Part 2(e) focused on kings but also had messages for Judah, the second focuses on prophets but also has a message for Judah. But whereas the “kings” compilation interwove its messages, the “prophets” compilation focuses more on the prophets in 23:9-40, then focuses on Judah in 24:1-10.

## About Prophets (23:9-40)

9Regarding the prophets.a

My mind within me has shattered,

all my bones have trembled.b

I have become like someone drunk,c

like a man wine has overcome,

Ind the face of Yahweh,

and in the face of his sacred words.e

10Because adulterers –

the country is full.f

Because in the face of an oathg the country mourns,h

the wilderness pastures have dried up.

Their crushingi has become dire,

their strength not right.

11Because both prophet and priest – they are polluted;

even in my house I have found their dire action (Yahweh’s affirmation).

12Therefore their path will become for them

like slippery tracks in the dark.

They will be pushed down and they will fall on it,

because I will make dire trouble come on them,

the year of their being attended to (Yahweh’s affirmation).

13Yes,j in the prophets of Samaria

I saw something nasty.

They prophesied awayk by the Masterl

and led my people Israel astray.m

14And in the prophets of Jerusalem

I saw something horrific.

Committing adultery and going by deception,

and graspingn the hand of people who behave direly,o

so that they have not turned,p an individual from his dire behavior.

They have become to me, all of them, like Sodom,

the people who live in it, like Gomorrah.q

15Therefore Yahweh of Armies has said this about the prophets:

Here am I, making them eat wormwood

and drink poisoned water.

Because from the Jerusalem prophets

has gone out pollution to the entire country.r

16Yahweh of Armies has said this. Do not listen to the words of the prophets.

The people who are prophesying to you –

those people are filling you with emptiness.

A vision out of their mind they speak,

not from Yahweh’s mouth,

17Saying and sayings to people who disownt me,

“Yahweh has spoken:u

‘Things will be well for you.’”

And [to] everyone who walks by the determination of his mind,

they have said: “Dire fortune will not come to you.”

18Because who has stood in Yahweh’s cabinet,v

so he might see and listenw to his word –

who has paid heed to my wordx and listened?y

19Here is Yahweh’s storm –

fury has gone out.

A storm is whirlingz –

on the head of the faithless it will whirl.

20Yahweh’s anger will not turn,

until his acting on and until his implementing his mind’s intentions.

In the later days,

you will have true insight into it.aa

21I did not send the prophets,

but they themselves ran.

I did not speak to them,

but they themselves prophesied.

22If they had stood in my cabinet,

they would enable my people to listenbb to my words,

And they would get them to turn from their dire path,

from the dire nature of their practices.cc

23Am I a God nearby (Yahweh’s affirmation),

and not a God far away?dd

24If an individual hides in a hiding place,

do I myself not see him (Yahweh’s affirmation)?

The heavens and the earth –

I fill them, don’t I (Yahweh’s affirmation).

25I have listened to what the prophets who prophesy deception in my name have said: “I’ve had a dream, I’ve had a dream.” 26How long – will there be in the mind of the prophets prophesying deception and prophesying the duplicity of their mind, 27thinking to get my people to put my name out of mind with their dreams that they recount, an individual to his fellow, as their ancestors put my name out of mind through the Master….ee

28The prophet who has a dream with him

should recount a dream.

And the one who has my word with him

should speak my word in truth.

What does straw have with grain (Yahweh’s affirmation)?

29My word is like this, isn’t it: like fire (Yahweh’s affirmation),

and like a hammer that shatters a crag.ff

30Therefore here am I, against the prophets (Yahweh’s affirmation) who steal my words, an individual from his fellow. 31Here am I, against the prophets (Yahweh’s affirmation) who get their tongue and utter an affirmation.gg 32Here am I, against the prophets of deceptive dreams (Yahweh’s affirmation): they tell them, and lead my people astray with their deceptions and with their wild words, when I myself did not send them and did not command them, and they are no use to this people at allhh (Yahweh’s affirmation).

33So when this people, or the prophet or a priest, asks you, What is Yahweh’s burden, you will sayii to them, What is the burden?jj I will hurl you away (Yahweh’s affirmation). 34The prophet or the priest or the people that says “Yahweh’s burden” – I will attend to that individual and to his household. 35Thus you are to say, an individual to his fellow and an individual to his brother, “What has Yahweh averred”kk or “What has Yahweh spoken.” 36Yahweh’s burden you are not to be mindful ofll any more, because the burden – it will be for the person with hismm word. But you will pervert the words of the lively God, Yahweh of Armies, our God. 37You are to say this to the prophet, “What has Yahweh averred to you?” or “What has Yahweh spoken?” 38But if you say, “Yahweh’s burden,” therefore Yahweh has said this: Since you have said this thing, “Yahweh’s burden,” and I sent to you, “You will not say: Yahweh’s burden,” 39therefore here am I, I will forget, lifting you up,nn and I will hurl you away, and the city that I gave to you and to your ancestors, from before my face. 40I will put upon you reviling for all time and disgrace for all time, which will not be put out of mind.oo

For *lannәbi’îm* LXX “among the prophets” perhaps links the expression to the preceding verse (which is v. 6 in LXX). Vg “to the prophets” identifies it as a heading. Tg “because of the prophets” links it to what immediately follows. On LXX and MT in Jer 23, see the work noted at 23:8.

BDB and *DCH* take *rāḥәpû* as a hapax, distinguishing *rāḥap* I from *rāḥap* II which has just two First Testament occurrences. *HALOT* has only one root *rāḥap*, which encourages a comparison of this verb with the occurrence in Gen 1:2 (Calvin, *Jeremiah* 3:157-58).

For MT *šikkôr* LXX “broken” implies *šābûr*.

Literally, “from,” here and in the next colon.

LXX “in the face of splendor of his glory” suggests *mippәnê hădar kәbôdô*, perhaps under the influence of Isa 2:10, 19, 21 (Duhm, *Jeremia*, 182).

LXX lacks this line.

For MT *’ālâ* LXX implies *’ēlleh* “these things.” Tg takes *’ālâ* to refer to (false) oaths, like *šāba‘* (e.g., 5:7), which pairs neatly with the reference to adultery (Mayer, *Commentary*, 409).

See 12:4 and the note.

LXX, Vg takes *mәrûṣâ* to mean “course, race”: see the comment, and 8:6 and the note. Tg takes it to mean “desire,” from *rāṣâ*.

The initial *û* looks forward to the parallel, resumptive *û* in v. 14 (Duhm, *Jeremia*, 184).

See the comment on 14:14.

As usual LXX gives *Baal* a feminine article (see the note on 2:8); so also in v. 27.

L has a section marker here.

The finite verb continues from the infinitives (DG 76b).

Syr “their friends” derives *mәrē‘îm* from *rā‘â* rather than *rā‘a‘*; it thus nicely anticipates vv. 27, 30.

*Lәbiltî* is unusually followed by a qatal rather than an infinitive, as in 7:8 (LXX implies the usual construction), suggesting an aim that has been fulfilled (see further 27:18 and the note). The use of the expression thus corresponds to that of *lәma‘an* when it attributes aims to people that are the logical implications of their action even if not a conscious aim (e.g., 7:10, 18; 25:7; 27:10, 15).

MT has a marker here.

MT has a chapter marker here.

An infinitive combines with a participle, the infinitive coming second (compare and contrast 22:10).

*Commit adultery* (v. 14) is *nā’ap*; *disown* is *nā’aṣ*. In letters as in reference, the two are close to each other; the one implies the other.

For MT *limәna’ăṣay dibber yhwh* LXX implies *limәna’ăṣê dәbar yhwh* “who disown Yahweh’s word, “ which loses the parallelism between vv. 17a and 17b.

In a related context *sôd* means “plan” in Amos 3:7 – cf. Aq, Sym, Tg here (and LXX’s less transparent *hypostēma* and Th’s *hypostasis*); cf. Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 142. But in Jer 6:11; 15:17 *sôd* means an assembly, and the *stand* suggests that meaning here.

For MT’s *wәyēre’ wәyišma‘* (which might be jussive), Vg, Syr imply *wayyar’ wayyyišma‘* (“and has seen… listened”); so also LXX for the first verb – it lacks the second.

K implies *dәbārî* “my word,” the more difficult reading, for Q *dәbārô*.

MT has a section marker here. An intricate parallelism and enjambment run through vv. 16aβ-18. The opening colon in v. 16aβ is the heading for what follows. In v. 17 the two lines are parallel, with v. 17aα paralleled by v. 17bα and v. 17aβγ paralleled by v. 17bβ. A variant parallelism within another tricolon appears within v. 18, as v. 18a is paralleled by v. 18b.

Masculine *sa‘ar* complements feminine *sa‘ărâ* in the parallel line, while the hitpolel participle of *ḥûl* will be complemented by the qal in the parallel colon.

Vv. 19-20 reappear in a variant form as 30:23-24. Without them, vv. 16-18, 21-22 run more smoothly.

LXX implies a qal verb rather than a hiphil, and again implies a *waw­*-consecutive, as in v. 18.

MT has a section marker here.

The *min* on *miqqārōb/mērāḥōq* (“from near/from far”) has lost the idea of separation (BDB, 578b, 581b). LXX lacks the initial interrogative *ha* and translates this line as a statement, perhaps a more straightforwardly orthodox theological declaration, though it could imply a threatening message of a different kind (cf. Th; contrast Aq, Sym).

The sentence that began incoherently with the double interrogative runs out without coming to an end syntactically.

MT has a section marker here. LXX spreads the bicolon over three cola (see F. H. Polak, “Jer. 23:29 – An Expanded Colon in the LXX?” *Textus* 11 [1984]: 119-23).

LXX “slumber their slumber” derives verb and noun from *nûm*, not inappropriately in the context, and given that the verb *nā’am* (denominative from the frequent noun *nә’um*) comes only here – was it invented by Jeremiah? (Bright, *Jeremiah*, 153).

The infinitive of *yā‘al* (hiphil) precedes the finite verb, underlining the fact.

*You* is singular on the first two occasions in v. 33a, addressing Jeremiah; it is then plural, addressing the people, prophet, and priest mentioned in v. 33a, except for a further isolated singular in v. 37 that apparently addresses a notional individual among them, as one does in English using the word “you” to mean “one.”

For MT *’et mah maśśā’*, Vg has “why do you have a burden”; LXX implies *’attem hammaśśā’* “you are the burden,” which makes good sense.

On *‘ānâ* here and in v. 37, see the note on 14:7.

For MT *tizkәrû* LXX has “name”; see the note on 20:9.

Literally, “the person of his word.” Vg takes *his* to denote “his own,” but the sentence makes more sentence if it denotes Yahweh’s.

Once more an infinitive follows a finite verb. But given that the finite verb comes from *nāšâ*, the spelling of the infinitive *nāšō’* (rather than *nāšōh*)is anomalous. As a form from *nāšā’* it ought to mean lend (*nāšā’* I) or delude (*nāšā’* II). On the other hand, for the finite verb LXX, Vg, Aq, Sym presuppose forms from *nāśā’*, which is more what one might have expected in this unit with its focus on *maśśā’*. MT’s compound expression thus involves a mixed form as well as a paronomasia in the combination of finite verb and infinitive (for which cf. 8:13 and 48:9, and the notes). Further, the pronoun comes in between the two verbs, so that the phrase more literally means “forget you [in] carrying.”

Vv. 7-8 come here in LXX.

*Instruction will not fail from priest, or counsel from expert, or a word from prophet* (18:18). Jeremiah had some problems with priests and experts, but alongside the kings it was the prophets that he had most reason to talk about, and he needed to distance himself from the prophets, even though – or because – he was in some sense he was a prophet himself. The account of his altercations with Hananiah, for instance (28:1-17), suggests that he would have looked like a prophet. He used the forms of speech that they used (Hananiah, too, spoke like someone bringing messengers from the King: 28:2). He performed symbolic deeds, as they did. The expression “word of Yahweh” is not original to a prophet such as Jeremiah, and may be introduced into his words later.[[391]](#footnote-391) But once it is there, a theology of the word emerges from 23:9-40.[[392]](#footnote-392)

The word *prophet* (*nabî’*) is harder to define than the words priest or expert (or king), though it is easier to understand when set over against those other nouns. A priest’s role is to offer instruction (*tôrâ*), was based on a body of accepted instruction or teaching that priests received from previous generations (already put into writing and/or still as oral teaching) and issuing in an expanding body of instruction or teaching that came to be *the* Torah. Priests worked out what to say to people on the basis of what they had received. An expert (*ḥākām*, conventionally “wise”) also speaks on the basis of a body of accepted insight, and there need be no conflict between a prophet and the experts any more than between a prophet and the priests,[[393]](#footnote-393) but the background of their insight lies more overtly in ordinary worldly events and human experience rather than in the authority of a key figure such as Moses, though it could include empirical data that Western people find bizarre such as the phenomena that divination studies. A prophet may take into account both these bases, but overtly his message comes from a sense of having become aware of something received directly from God.[[394]](#footnote-394) But there could no doubt be conflict between priests and between experts about truth and about what should be done, and there was such conflict between prophets. In Israel, the problem of discerning between prophets who do and who do not speak truly is an issue more or less ever since prophecy came into being and up until the destruction of Jerusalem, and also later in Zech 13.[[395]](#footnote-395) It is a distinctive feature of prophecy in Israel, at least partly because the nature of Israelite faith excludes the idea that prophets might speak in the name of different gods.[[396]](#footnote-396) Jer 27 – 29 portrays it particularly as a problem between 597 and 587, in Jerusalem and in Babylon, when Judahites lived with the question whether Yahweh’s wrath had finally poured out and restoration could now be expected. The texts do not refer to its being a problem in the aftermath of 587; there were not now prophets disagreeing over whether disaster was coming. Perhaps 587 discredited prophecy and prophets were assumed by definition to be false for centuries.[[397]](#footnote-397) Thus it seems unlikely that this compilation issued from a post-587 context, though it would have been instructive for Judahites thinking through the implications of the catastrophe. More likely the compilations on kings and on prophets issued from the reign of Zedekiah, though dating the origin of the individual units is a different (and unanswerable) question.

Like the compilation of messages about kings, the compilation about prophets is interwoven with messages relating to the people as a whole, paralleling the combination in 21:1 – 23:8. As is the case with the messages about kings, the critique of prophets is important for the people as a whole; they are not invited just to feel superior because the prophets are being critiqued. The section outlines:

vv. 9-12 a testimony to being overwhelmed, an indictment of the country with the implication that prophets and priests are identified with it, and a warning of calamity

eight bicola (the second leading into the third) concluded by a tricolon

vv. 13-15 a parallel indictment working by the opposite logic, that prophets are misleading people into waywardness, and another warning of calamity

two linked bicola, then a bicolon leading into a tricolon, then a single bicolon, and a resumptive introduction followed by two bicola

vv. 16-18 an exhortation not to listen to the prophets, backed by a further indictment of them on the basis of the origin of their messages in their own minds

after the introduction, two bicola leading into a tricolon, then another bicolon leading into another tricolon[[398]](#footnote-398)

vv. 19-20 a warning of fiery action on Yahweh’s part, which in the context is the warning that follows up that indictment

four bicola

vv. 21-22 a resumptive declaration about the prophets, related to the indictment: they are self-propelled

three bicola

vv. 23-24 a resumptive declaration related to the warning: God can reach everywhere

three bicola

vv. 25-32 another resumptive indictment about the prophets being self-propelled (vv. 25-28a), followed by warnings (vv. 28b-32)

prose incorporating three bicola and a one-colon saying

vv. 33-40 a warning about Yahweh’s burden: twice Jeremiah describes a circumstance and issues the warning (vv. 33 and 34), then at greater length he issues an instruction (vv. 35-37) and follows it up with a warning in case of disobedience (vv. 38-40)

prose

**9aα** The introduction parallels 21:11, which led into comments on a sequence of kings in Jeremiah’s day; this introduction leads into comments on a sequence of prophets in Jeremiah’s day, though without naming them as it did the kings.

**9aβb** The first unit then opens in Jeremiah’s typically allusive way, though it begins to indicate the link with the introduction and with the units that will follow. The words recall lament psalm language,[[399]](#footnote-399) though it will emerge that Jeremiah is not protesting his treatment by Yahweh or by other people. Reading these lines in light of the introduction could suggest that Jeremiah is shattered by the prophets (Tg) or by the waywardness he speaks of, but before coming to the description of waywardness he indicates the actual reason for his dismay. It is not that he is in the midst of losing his youthful naivety,[[400]](#footnote-400) or shattered by the experience of being addressed by Yahweh; he not referring to an experience of being taken out of himself, of ecstasy,[[401]](#footnote-401) or of “intensity of inspiration.”[[402]](#footnote-402) It’s the content of Yahweh’s address that has this effect on him. He is once again testifying to the staggering effect of Yahweh’s message, which he calls Yahweh’s *sacred words*. It is perhaps surprising that this phrase does not recur in the First Testament (Ps 105:42 refers to “his sacred word,” alluding to Yahweh’s promise), given the awe-inspiring nature of the fact that God has spoken. God has spoken! The *sacred words* that “unman the prophet are the words of Yahweh in vv. 10-12.”[[403]](#footnote-403) He had talked about the affect of Yahweh’s message on his *mind* and *bones* in 20:9, and he picks up the theme again.[[404]](#footnote-404) Once again, Yahweh does not respond to his lament, but in any case, its function is to speak to the Judahites, and specifically to their prophets (and priests).

**10** Grievously, the matters on which Yahweh has spoken are on one hand wrongdoing (*because adulterers – the country is full*) and on the other an oath (*the country mourns, the wilderness pastures have dried up*). Jeremiah has referred to literal adultery, in the context of reference to other wrongdoing (7:9), but adultery is more often an image for religious unfaithfulness (e.g., 3:8-9), and that understanding makes sense here.[[405]](#footnote-405) There is therefore some irony or poetic justice if adultery issues in drought, because attentiveness to other deities was designed to ensure a good harvest rather than to prevent it. “Jeremiah’s polemic against Baal is founded on the idea that Yahweh is the creator who in his power and might can take away that which Baal supposedly can provide and is hailed for.” Further, “On the one hand he is the one who blesses creation, but on the other the one who curses it.”[[406]](#footnote-406) Jeremiah’s reference to his inner shattering suggests that drought and crop failure are at the moment visionary realities that are perceptible to his mind and imagination, rather than empirical realities visible to anyone. But the shattering presupposes that they will become empirical realities. The *oath* hangs over the country. And the reason (to put it another way) is the *crushing* of people, the exercise of oppressive *strength* against them. Once again Jeremiah associates religious faithlessness with faithlessness within the community in the action that strong people takes against weak people instead of on their behalf. The adulterers are also crushers.

**11** How is it possible? Prophet and priest collude with or encourage the people with power in their oppression, Jeremiah implies, as he has implied before. To restate the accusation of adultery as it applies to them in particular, *they* *are* *polluted* (*ḥānēp*), the term Jeremiah associated with whoring and adultery in 3:1-10.[[407]](#footnote-407) They don’t just engage in their wrongdoing out in the city. They exercise their ministry in the temple itself. Maybe Jeremiah refers simply to their teaching, or maybe to their facilitating acts of oppression such as child sacrifice. If the reference to adultery refers to literal marital unfaithfulness, it corresponds to way leaders in the church get involved in adultery and other forms of sexual immorality, like other leaders in society. One way or another, “‘the goodly fellowship of the prophets’ was not all that goodly.”[[408]](#footnote-408)

**12** They will therefore pay a price. They think they have a safe *path* to walk, but they will find it resembles *slippery tracks* along a mountain slope that are even more dangerous *in the dark*. And they won’t just fall. They will *be pushed down*. By Yahweh? Yes, they *will fall*, because *I will make dire trouble come on them* – again the dire action of which v. 11 spoke meets with dire consequences. Yahweh imagines Jeremiah praying the prayer in Ps 35:5-8 and declares that he will ensure that it is fulfilled. He will see to it personally: no divine aide here, as there is in that prayer.

**13** There follows an originally separate unit relating just to prophets, restating the same themes. One can see why the curator might have juxtaposed the two units, as this one also talks about adultery and about pollution. Once again there is a link with Jer 3, now in the comparing of Ephraim/Samaria and Judah/Jerusalem and their respective prophets. Jeremiah imagines faithful Judahites looking up north and seeing something *nasty* (*tәpillâ*) – literally, something unsavory or tasteless (Job 6:6). The “rather mild epithet”[[409]](#footnote-409) might seem an understatement as a way of describing prophets who *prophesied by the Master* and thus *led my people Israel astray*.

**14** What Jeremiah sees in Jerusalem is not just nasty but *horrific* (cf. 5:30). How is it worse? The answer again overlaps with the unfavorable correlation of Ephraim and Judah in Jer 3. There the point was that one might have thought Judah would learn something from what happened to Ephraim. Here Jeremiah applies that point to the prophets. They too are involved in *committing adultery and going by deception,* in unfaithfulness to Yahweh and an inclination to follow the Master of Deception. Jeremiah does not say they were overtly following the Master, as the Ephraimites prophets did. Perhaps they thought they were serving Yahweh. If so, Jeremiah again sees them as having such a perverted understanding of God they are in effect serving the Master. “Baal is not viewed as a single deity but as a whole stock of ideas leading away from Yahweh.”[[410]](#footnote-410) The prophets are religious leaders in the community whose vocation was to set people on the right path and draw them away from the wrong one, but instead they are involved in *grasping the hand of people* who are *behaving direly*. They are encouraging their unfaithfulness or failing to confront it, in such a way as to strengthen them and push them on or pull them on in their way of behaving. The result is that *people do not turn*. In Yahweh’s eyes Jerusalem is *like Sodom* or *like Gomorrah*. When Isaiah drew that analogy, he associated it with Judah’s being decimated like Sodom and Gomorrah (Isa 1:9-10). Jeremiah invites people to make the same association. But Sodom and Gomorrah is what the community has come to resemble *to me*, it had better assume that its future will have the same resemblance. With some irony, Zedekiah’s staff comment elsewhere that Jeremiah “weakens the hands” of the men who are seeking to defend the city (38:4): “the poet understands well the enormous power of religion to legitimate public policy. The religious leadership which opposes Jeremiah legitimates public policy uncritically, and in so doing it generates more wickedness.”[[411]](#footnote-411) And then “it is the very proximity of corruption to YHWH’s presence in the temple that makes YHWH into an agent of overthrow.”[[412]](#footnote-412) In competing with the prophets Jeremiah is engaged in “a life and death battle.”[[413]](#footnote-413)

**15** *Therefore Yahweh of Armies has said this* is“probably the most characteristic ‘form’ of prophetic utterance,"[[414]](#footnote-414) here used against the prophets who used it themselves (28:2). Yahweh has announced that, to be more explicit, and again with poetic justice, he is going to act like the “demonic host” at a banquet[[415]](#footnote-415) and give the wrongdoers the same food and water as their people; the threat repeats one that was previously made to the people and is here applied to *the prophets* (see 9:15 [14]).[[416]](#footnote-416) “Yahweh will provide a meal of poisonous herbs to be washed down with a poisonous draught”[[417]](#footnote-417) or with a drink from the undrinkable waters of the Dead Sea.[[418]](#footnote-418) And Jeremiah gives a reason that links to vv. 9-12: the prophets are the source of a *pollution* that affects *the entire country*.

**16** The third unit is indirectly a further indictment of the prophets but it is directly an exhortation not to listen to them. The indictment comes in the exposition of the reason and it works by referring to the origin of the prophets’ words. Their origin explains the problem about their content. The reason why people should *not listen to the words of the prophets* is that they *are filling you with emptiness*. The verb (*hābēl* hiphil) comes from the noun meaning emptiness, one of Jeremiah’s favorite words to describe other gods.[[419]](#footnote-419) How are people to determine whether the prophets’ *vision* comes *out of their minds* and *not from Yahweh’s mouth*? The antithesis suggests the link between a vision that someone sees because Yahweh reveals it and a message that someone shares because Yahweh speaks it into the prophet’s ear.

**17** It’s easy to tell the difference, Jeremiah implies. To put it in the terns of vv. 9-15, the criterion is, are they people who have colluded with or even encouraged religious adultery? To put it a different way, are they colluding with or encouraging *people who disown me*, with the person who is *walking by the determination of his mind* and who is thus praying to anyone he feels like, in any way that seems a good idea? Are they promising such people that *things will be well* and that *dire fortune* will not come to them?

**18** If they are, there is a contrast with someone such as Jeremiah *who has stood* in attendance on Yahweh *in Yahweh’s cabinet* and has thus *seen and listened to his word*; once again Jeremiah combines the visual and the oral. Such a prophet *has paid heed to his word and listened*, rather than paying attention to the Master and listening to him. The appropriate question to ask of a prophet, then, is “Who have you been listening to?” Yahweh’s cabinet (*sôd*)is the meeting of Yahweh and his staff that reviews events in the world, decides on action to take, and commissions envoys to undertake it (e.g., 1 Kgs 22:19-22; Ps 82:1; Isa 6:1-8). It is a very different gathering from the ones that Jeremiah mentions elsewhere (*sôd* recurs in 6:11; 15:17).[[420]](#footnote-420) The appeal to membership of Yahweh’s cabinet is perhaps a surprise given that he had portrayed his commission as a one-on-one event.[[421]](#footnote-421) It need be no more a “mythological” idea[[422]](#footnote-422) than the idea of God and the idea that God is not the only being in the supernatural realm. It is a model that helps one conceptualize the reality of God, of God’s working through other supernatural beings, and of human servants of God being involved in the processes whereby God decides on and implements decisions about the world. The motif of Jeremiah’s attending this cabinet presupposes that it is possible for human beings to be in one place bodily but in another place in their minds. It is a familiar experience to sense that someone is with us in body but that “really” they are “somewhere else,” and the potential for this separation has found new expression through the invention of the telephone and through the development of video-conferencing and the like. Yahweh can summon Jeremiah into a cabinet meeting in which Jeremiah takes part in his mind while still being physically in Jerusalem.[[423]](#footnote-423) It is likely not illuminating to refer to it as ecstatic experience and more illuminating to think of it as an experience in the imagination, as long as we do not infer that it is therefore imaginary. Through this invitation Jeremiah learns about the cabinet’s decisions and plans. And he is clear that the *šālôm*-prophets have not done so; otherwise they would not be speaking of the future in the way that they do. They may speak in good faith, but the criterion that determines whether they have spoken Yahweh’s word is not the subjective experience that they can speak of (any more than is the case with Jeremiah). It is how their words fit with the nature of the theological and moral relationship between Yahweh and Israel.[[424]](#footnote-424)

**19** Sothe community is the victim of prophetic misleading. It might then have inferred that it bears no responsibility for its wandering away from Yahweh. It just followed where it was led. This further vision implicitly urges it to see that Yahweh has closed off this avenue of excuse. To fill in the dots between vv. 16-18 and 19-20, Judah needs to see the calamity that is coming as a consequence of the people’s following the prophets’ leading. It is *a storm* that *is whirling on the head of the faithless* – that is, of people in general, not just their prophets.

**20** Jeremiah’s threat anticipates a parable of Jesus such as the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) that portrays the threatening purpose that his Father will implement for his people. Neither Jeremiah nor Jesus is talking about “the end of the days” (Tg), the ultimate End, but neither is talking simply about the future in a general sense. Jesus is referring to a time after the rich man’s death, and Jeremiah is talking about the time of Yahweh’s *acting on* and *implementing his mind’s intentions* and thus his bringing about the semi-ultimate catastrophe. He is then looking beyond it to “the aftermath of the judgment,”[[425]](#footnote-425) the time when “it’s over.”[[426]](#footnote-426) He is inviting people to picture the time *in the later days* when they will then *have true insight* into God’s basis of operation. “When the final moment of captivity arrives, the exulting conqueror prevails over you and he binds your hands with the rattling of chains, then ‘you will understand.”[[427]](#footnote-427) But like the Trojans who didn’t realize what the wooden horse concealed, they will then “become wise too late.”[[428]](#footnote-428) “There are two ways to learn, and the second is the hard way.”[[429]](#footnote-429) So they need to open themselves to the insight now.

**21** Jeremiah reverts to speaking directly of the prophets and restates his point in vv. 16-18, in a variant order; maybe vv. 21-22 were the original continuation of vv. 16-18. Jeremiah here starts from the presupposition that a prophet is an envoy sent by a king and running to fulfill a commission. These prophets run as if they had been sent, but they hadn’t. They speak in the manner of a prophet relaying a message from the king, “My lord has said this…,” but actually their King had not spoken to them. Yahweh makes the point in neat parallel lines (they are short 2-2 lines, so one could simply see them as two 4-4- cola making one line):

I did not send the prophets but they – they ran

I did not speak to them but they – they prophesied

First there was not divine sending, but there was running; then (when they got to the destination) there was not divine speaking, but there was prophesying.

**22** Yahweh picks up the earlier imagery but tightens the screw. He had spoken of the origin of the prophets’ words in their own minds, which issues in their promising people that Yahweh would be with them, and contrasts with what would have been the case if they had been in attendance at a cabinet meeting. Here he again presupposes the origin of their words in their own initiative, which links with their not having attended such a meeting, then adds the indictment that reference to they thus confirm people in their waywardness. Earlier, they told people that something dire was not their destiny; here, they fail to get people to turn from their dire path. “How could a prophet confuse his own word with God’s word? How could a prophet fail to speak condemnation to the sinful, covenant-breaking situation?”[[430]](#footnote-430) By struggling to give people hope in difficult times.[[431]](#footnote-431) By avoiding the idea that the service of God that he thought he was offering wasn’t service of God at all. By thinking that God was near his people and committed to them. By thinking that God was committed to carrying them and forgiving their waywardness. By believing that Yahweh’s covenantal relationship with his people was pure grace, an expression of unconditional love on God’s part.[[432]](#footnote-432) Because in this situation it’s easy to tell prophets who haven’t been sent or addressed, who haven’t *stood in my cabinet*. They are prophets who don’t urge people to *turn*. The juxtaposition of vv. 21-22 with vv. 19-20 makes a nice (or rather frightening) link in the use of that verb. You don’t turn; my anger doesn’t turn. The responsibility of the prophets is thus a terrifying one. In other words, Jeremiah’s logic is not “I have been in attendance at the cabinet, which is how you can know that my message about Yahweh’s wrath against the adulterous community is true”; the community could not evaluate such a claim.[[433]](#footnote-433) The logic is, “I have delivered a message about Yahweh’s wrath against the adulterous community, which is how you can know that I have been in attendance at Yahweh’s cabinet.” The First Testament assumes that telling true from false prophecy is not so difficult, because the criteria for the discernment are theological and moral.[[434]](#footnote-434) “If the prophets had had access to the council their message would have been different from the empty visions with which they encouraged the wicked.”[[435]](#footnote-435) The argument is not that listening in on the deliberations of the cabinet means a prophet is successful, as Jeremiah’s story shows. It is that listening in on those deliberations means a prophet is confrontational when confrontation is appropriate.[[436]](#footnote-436) “Failure to hear the word of the Lord [is] a moral and not a hermeneutical failure.”[[437]](#footnote-437) At the moment the test of prophecy in Deut 18:21-22 cannot vindicate Jeremiah or the other prophets, though they would say that “it is Jeremiah’s message of judgment that reveals him to be a false prophet.”[[438]](#footnote-438) He would claim that the test in Deut 13:1-5 [2-6] provides a test that works. But the fact that Jeremiah and not the other prophets gained a place in the Scriptures reflects the way events proved that he spoke the truth,[[439]](#footnote-439) and did fulfil the test in Deut 18:21-22.

**23** A further juxtaposition again has Yahweh speaking more generally and closing off excuses from the community as a whole. The First Testament rarely speaks of Yahweh being spatially *nearby* (*qārōb*). It does speak of Yahweh coming near when people need him to do so (Deut 4:7) and it speaks much of people being able to come near to Yahweh. The electrical holiness of Yahweh might make the idea of perpetual nearness implausible and/or scary (cf. Heb 12:29). At the same time the First Testament speaks frequently of Yahweh’s name or face being present with the people, which is a way of speaking about nearness that safeguards a little against that problem. Maybe here Yahweh talks about being nearby because the Judahites think in those terms, especially in connection with his real presence in the temple (cf. 7:1-15), but the point he wants to make is that even if he is spatially nearby, that presence does not confine him. He is also *a God far away*. “The ‘near God’ against whom the prophet inveighs here is the God of the false prophets.” As Christians can easily imply, people thought that God was constantly and easily available to them and that his will could be easily equated with their own desires. “By contrast, the ‘distant God’ was a God whose word could not be manipulated or horsetraded. It was a word which invaded human experience from beyond with overwhelming power.”[[440]](#footnote-440) “In the end, the different image of God separates Jeremiah from his opponents more than anything else.”[[441]](#footnote-441)

**24** Jeremiah specifically draws an inference that is similar to the point made in Ps 139 and Amos 9. There’s nowhere people can go that means they escape from his presence and attention, which can be good news or bad news. *If an individual hides in a hiding place, do I myself not see him*? Don’t think you can hide from Yahweh. Yahweh is omniscient, or at least capable of being omniscient. *The heavens and the earth – I fill them, don’t I.* Yahweh is omnipresent. It is “a remarkable affirmation against all trivializing of God.”[[442]](#footnote-442) There is nothing there that the prophets would have disputed. But they haven’t seen a frightening implication.

**25** Whereas the first half of the section *regarding the* *prophets* comprised a sequence of short units in verse that have been strung together, the second half comprises just two longer units that are mostly prose. They again restate Yahweh’s critique of the prophets as people who share their own thinking and claim that it represents Yahweh’s thinking when it does nothing of the sort. This first unit focuses on dreams, which have not been mentioned before. Elsewhere in the First Testament (especially in Genesis and Daniel) and in the New Testament, dreams are a means of God speaking, as they are among other peoples, though none of the prophets refer to dreams except Joel, who is positive (2:28 [3:1]), and Jeremiah, who is unfailingly negative (27:9; 29:8); in the New Testament, Jude 8 is also negative about dreams.[[443]](#footnote-443) His negative attitude gives us no answer to any question about his attitude in principle to dreams. We get simply his dismissal of the only dreams that matter in the context, as is the case if we ask what might be Jeremiah’s attitude in theory to temple worship, prayer, or sacrifice. In connection with dreams, in his time the rule laid down in Deut 13:1-5 [2-6] would again be significant, and suggests a background for his polemic. Yahweh’s first objection to the prophets’ dreams relates to *my name*. Reporting them with the claim that they report a message from Yahweh means they are “taking Yahweh’s name in vain,” attaching Yahweh’s name to something false, something phony (Exod 20:7). Dreams are the stock-in-trade of prophets who encourage people to follow *the Master*, to follow *deception* (*šeqer*).

**26-27** Yahweh asks in exasperation *how long* they will go on in this way – he speaks like Israelites protesting to him about things that affect them (e.g., Ps 13:1-2 [2-3]). As he implied in making the contrast in vv. 13-14, the Judahite prophets didn’t see themselves as *thinking to get my people to put my name out of mind*, but it is what they were doing because their understanding of Yahweh was so perverted that it no longer counted as an understanding of Yahweh. Jeremiah’s comment again implies the assumption that the criteria for distinguishing true prophets from false prophets are moral and theological. Whether or not they quite realize it, the other prophets serve a different god. They serve the Master. They serve deception.

**28-29** Yahweh’s second objection to their dreams is that in the present context, at least, there is an absolute contrast between having *a dream* and having *my word*.[[444]](#footnote-444) Admittedly “the divine word versus the dream factor is only on the surface of it and not the heart of the matter…. The conflict is between word and word…. These prophets proclaim *šālōm šālōm* (6:14; 8:11; 23:17; cf. 4:10), which is really *halōm halōm*, ‘dream dream.’”[[445]](#footnote-445) Only with *my word* can *truth* (*’ĕmet*) be associated: the observation refers as much to the truthfulness of the message as to the truthfulness of the messenger. Truthfulness is the opposite of the *deception* or *duplicity* to which v. 26 referred. The prophets’ dreams are *straw*, lacking in substance or value or protein; Yahweh’s word is wheat, substantial and valuable and upbuilding. The relationship between chaff and wheat parallels that between deception and truthfulness. They have nothing in common.[[446]](#footnote-446) To put it another way, *my word is like fire*, or *like a hammer that shatters a crag.* The images are frightening and worryingly unspecific in the way they affirm the destructive act that Yahweh intends to perform by speaking his message through Jeremiah, which contrasts with the well-being that the other prophets promise that God’s word will bring. God’s word is frighteningly sword-like (Heb 4:12). The implication is not that God’s word is always fiery and shattering, but in this context it has that nature and function.[[447]](#footnote-447)

**30-32** Three further verses form a conclusion to this subsection and also an interim conclusion to the material on the prophets as a whole, though they may again be of separate origin, in that they make two new points. In the arrangement of 23:9-40 they form a warning that issues from the indictment in vv. 25-29, while also adding extra indictment to back up the warning. They begin in a fashion that is again worryingly vague: the warning is simply, *here am I, against the prophets*. But what more worryingly comprehensive statement could Yahweh make? It contrasts with his encouragingly comprehensive “I am/will be with you” (1:8, 19; 15:20). There follows a critique of the prophets as people *who steal my words, an individual from his fellow*. Are they taking up positive promises uttered by Jeremiah and/or by other prophets whose authenticity Jeremiah would recognize, and quoting those positive promises outside of their more confrontational context? Or are they adapting them, for instance turning Jeremiah’s declaration that Yahweh will break Moab (48:38) into a declaration that he will break Nebuchadrezzar (28:2)?[[448]](#footnote-448) Or are they stealing them in order to hide them? Or is *my words* ironic – does their message consist of deceptive words that Yahweh plants on the lips of the prophets as an act of judgment? Or does it consist of words that are allegedly Yahweh’s? Or does *my words* simply mean that they attach their own words to the kind of introductory words that Yahweh and Jeremiah use?

**31-32** The second critique would then restate that last possibility: they *get their tongue*, they (as it were) take hold of their own tongue,and use it to *utter an affirmation* as if their words came from Yahweh – the expression *Yahweh’s affirmation* is one that Jeremiah often uses,. A third critique then restates points from vv. 21-29 but adds that the prophets’ deceptive words are *wild* (*paḥăzût*, a noun)like turbulent water (Gen 49:4) that could carry people away to destruction (see also Judg 9:4). To switch to a litotes,[[449]](#footnote-449) their words *are no use to this people at all*. It is Jeremiah’s recurrent critique of recourse to the Master and his accoutrements (cf. 2:8, 11; 7:8; 12:13; 16:19).

**33** The closing subsection is a tour de force centering on the word *burden* (*maśśā’*). It represents the “culmination of Yhwh’s frustration.”[[450]](#footnote-450) Yahweh expresses that frustration by taking up the form of speech where a person such as a priest discusses a question to which someone needs an answer (cf. Hag 2:10-14). There is thus an irony in the form of the message as well as in the way it works with that word *burden*. Perhaps we should see Jeremiah as working with two homonyms, one meaning an utterance (something one lifts up one’s voice to utter: cf. Isa 13 – 23), the other meaning a load that someone lifts up, but both come from the verb meaning lift up or carry (*nāśā’*).[[451]](#footnote-451) Jeremiah imagines someone asking him about Yahweh’s *burden* in the sense of his utterance or message (in v. 37, *you* –singular – will be any individual prophet, but initially the obvious assumption is that Yahweh is addressing Jeremiah himself).[[452]](#footnote-452) The implication is not that the message is burdensome in the sense of being bad news, and the person might be asking the question seriously or derisively, but either way it’s an act of imagination on Jeremiah’s part. There is no need to assume that people would actually ask Jeremiah of all people such a question, partly because they would know the kind of dusty answer they would likely get (though in desperation Zedekiah once does so, in Jer 37). Anyway, Jeremiah is instructed to pretend to misunderstand them or to twist their words so as to take them to refer to what is burdensome to Yahweh. The answer then is that they are the burden in that other sense, and that he intends to throw the burden off, to *hurl you away*.

**34-37** People are therefore forbidden to talk about Yahweh’s burden in the sense of Yahweh’s message. The ban is “not just terminological fussiness”[[453]](#footnote-453) but a kind of symbol of the fact that they are the burden. Instead they are to talk in terms of *what has Yahweh averred* or *spoken*. Fancy theological or “spiritual” terms are thus discouraged – or at least this one is. Don’t pretend to talk about Yahweh’s burden, because the way you talk shows that you don’t know what it is. You are not a *person with his word*. Only the person who really lifts up that burden – a person such as Jeremiah – is allowed to use this language.

**38-40** If people ignore this instruction, it will give further proof that they don’t know what they are talking about and further reason for Yahweh to *forget* *lifting you up*.The expression is convoluted and ambiguous.[[454]](#footnote-454) It makes use of the link between the noun for burden and the word for lift up or carry, and the image of lifting up or carrying Israel can have more than one meaning. It can suggest carrying Israel as one carries a child, or carrying Israel’s wrongdoing (i.e., forgiving). Either way, Yahweh’s threat that he will forget carrying them is frightening. It will mean he will throw off this burden, *hurl you away*: that verb repeats from v. 33, with which it thus forms a bracket around vv. 33-40. He will hurl them away *from before my face* so that he can no longer see them. And his action will issue in *reviling for all time* (cf. 20:8) and *disgrace for all time, which will not be put out of mind* (he virtually repeats the phrase from 20:11). It thus makes for a neat poetic justice, as v. 27 had reported that they had got his people to put his name out of mind like their ancestors.

## Two Lots of Figs (24:1-10)

1Yahweh got me to look: there, two receptacles of figs positioned in front of Yahweh’s palace (after Nebuchadrezzar King of Babylon took into exile Jeconiaha ben Jehoiakim King of Judah, the officials of Judah, craftworker,b and smith,c from Jerusalem, and made them come to Babylon),d 2one receptacle very good figs, like first-ripe figs, one receptacle very dire figs that couldn’t be eaten because of being dire.e 3Yahweh said to me, What are you looking at, Jeremiah? I said, Figs – the good figs very good figs, the dire ones very dire that couldn’t be eaten because of being dire.f

4Yahweh’s word came to me. 5Yahweh, the God of Israel, has said this: Like these good figs, so I will have regard to the Judahite exile group that I have sent off from this place to the country of Chaldea,g for good. 6I will set my eye on them for good and enable them to return to this country. I will build them up and not smash, I will plant them and not pull them up. 7I will give them a mind to acknowledge me, because I am Yahweh. They will be a people for me and I – I will be God for them, because they will turn to me with their entire mind.h

8But like the dire figs that couldn’t be eaten because of being dire (because Yahweh has said this), so I will make Zedekiah King of Judah and his officials and the remainder in Jerusalem, the people remaining in this country and the people who are living in the country of Egypt – 9I will makei them something horrifying,j something dire, to all the kingdoms of the earth, an object of reviling, an example, a taunt, and a formula of slighting in all the places where I will drive them away. 10I will send off against them sword, hunger, and epidemic until they come to an end from upon the land that I gave to them and to their ancestors.k

a. On this form of the name, see the note on 22:24.

b. *B. Sanhedrin* 38a and *Gittin* 88a derive *ḥārāš* from *ḥāraš* II instead of *ḥāraš* I: it then denotes people who are silent in listening to teachers of Torah, so important in Babylon.

c. Outside the context of reference to events in 597 (29:2; 2 Kgs 24:14, 16), *masgēr* means “prison,” which fits the meaning of the verb *sāgar* “shut”; cf. LXX “prisoners” which might plausibly imply “hostages” (Bright, *Jeremiah*, 193), Vg “imprisoners,” Tg “sentries” or “locksmiths.” Blayney (*Jeremiah*, 358) suggests “armorers,” craftsmen who make armor to enclose the body. *B. Sanhedrin* 38a and *Gittin* 88a (see previous note) take them to be teachers who can close off discussion. LXX has also “the wealthy,” which would be a fair inference from 2 Kgs 24:14-15.

d. The parenthesis interrupts the flow of the sentence and may be a clarifying elaboration based on 2 Kgs 24:15-16.

e. MT has a marker here.

f. MT has a chapter marker here.

g. See the note on 21:4.

h. MT has a section marker here.

i. The occurrence of *nātan* in v. 8 never reached its syntactical goal and this recurrence resumes it; the repeated use of the verb makes for paronomasia with the repeated word for fig, *tә’ēnâ* (J. H. Walton, “Vision Narrative Wordplay and Jeremiah xxiv,” *VT* 39 [1989]: 508-509).

j. LXX has “something scattering” and lacks “something dire.” V. 9a corresponds to 15:4a except for this extra element in MT, but LXX translates it more literally there; McKane sees the influence of the last phrase in v. 8 (*Jeremiah* 1:611).

k. MT has a chapter marker here. With vv. 8-10 cf. 29:17-19.

Is there particular significance in the fact that this chapter sits next to 23:9-40? In the immediate context, it adds force to the way Jer 21 – 24 combines attentiveness to Judah’s leaders (kings and then prophets) and to the community as a whole that is affected by them and cannot evade responsibility for its destiny by appealing to their guilt. Retrospectively, as well as closing off the sequence in Jer 21 – 24, this final episode in Part Two of the scroll pairs with the scroll’s introduction (1:4-19): this chapter, too, it is a prose testimony by Jeremiah in which he speaks of seeing something, in which Yahweh engages in a question and answer conversation with him about what he is looking at, and in which Yahweh speaks of building, smashing, planting, and pulling up. It links more broadly with Jeremiah’s message in preceding chapters of the scroll: the antithesis of the good and the dire, the description of the country as *this place*, the reference to *the remainder*, and the phrase *sword, hunger, and epidemic*. Prospectively, it links with the stories about Jeremiah and the other prophets in Jer 27 – 29, where vv. 8-10 indeed reappear in a variant form as 29:17-19; it illumines and is illumined by them. In Judah and in Babylon prophets such as the ones who are the subject of 23:6-40 encouraged their communities to believe that the tragedy in 597 was now a thing of the past, and that Yahweh was with them and would soon restore them. Jeremiah urged both communities to see that this promise involved whistling into the wind. There was worse calamity to come. Jer 24 encapsulates that fact.

One can imagine that on the basis of this message supporters of Jehoiachin rather than Zedekiah could claim Jeremiah was on their side.[[455]](#footnote-455) Or after 587 Judahites in Jerusalem and in Babylon could see that Jeremiah’s declarations had found fulfillment.[[456]](#footnote-456) Or the Babylonian community could later use this message against the Jerusalem community[[457]](#footnote-457) (though by then the good figs of the Babylonian community would have been joined by the bad figs of the post-597 Judahite community, which would complicate appeals to this chapter). Or people who returned from exile could use it against people who never went into exile[[458]](#footnote-458) (with the same complication). Or they could use it against the community in Egypt[[459]](#footnote-459) (whose presence there likely reflects the relationship with Egypt that successive Judahite administrations had cultivated and/or reflects Egypt’s role as a place of refuge). Ezra 1 – 6 reports tensions between the two communities over who counts as faithful and who do not; one can imagine that Jer 24 could be used as a bargaining chip in that context.[[460]](#footnote-460)

But in itself the chapter shares with the rest of the scroll so far the aim of getting Judah to turn to Yahweh and thus forestall the disaster that otherwise hangs over it – which vv. 8-10 describe with devastating clarity. In this sense it is hardly true that “the ideology of Jer 24 has no parallels in the book.”[[461]](#footnote-461) Actually the word ideology obscures rather than clarifies its point. Its message straightforwardly confronts the Jerusalem community among whom Jeremiah lives. Jeremiah indeed speaks here not of salvation or disaster for the entire community, but of salvation for one group and disaster for another;[[462]](#footnote-462) he does so because in origin, Jer 24 makes sense “as arising out of an *ad hoc* message, directed to a particular situation in which it was necessary to indicate that the exiles were not automatically to be regarded as condemned and the community in Jerusalem and Judah as vindicated.”[[463]](#footnote-463) Its stance coheres with that expressed in Ezek 11 at about the same time in the 590s. There, Ezekiel (one of the people taken off to Babylon in 597) describes the community in Judah as people convinced that the community in Babylon are people who have been abandoned by Yahweh, condemns their waywardness, declares that catastrophe is coming upon them, and promises that Yahweh will restore the exiles. Here, Jeremiah issues an equivalent message in Judah itself, expressing the same promise that they will have a new mind and that *they will be a people for me and I will be God for them*. Of both chapters one could say they point to three audiences for their message: Jeremiah, the Jerusalem community, and the exile community,[[464]](#footnote-464) but Ezekiel speaks to the people in Babylon, Jeremiah to the people in Judah.

The chapter outlines:

vv. 1-3 What Yahweh enabled Jeremiah to see

vv. 1-2 a vision (incorporating a note on the date)

v. 3 a question and answer

vv. 4-10 What Yahweh said to Jeremiah

vv. 4-7 a promise about the exile group

vv. 8-10 a threat about the Jerusalem community

**1a** While the chapter will fit with what has preceded, it introduces begins with a new image and has a distinctive focus. From Jeremiah’s opening words one would not be able to tell whether Yahweh draws his attention to something and then enables him to look at it in a new way, or whether he enables him to see something in his mind’s eye. Figs are an important food in Israel, a chief source of sweetness.[[465]](#footnote-465) Were they sitting in baskets for sale, having been brought in by a farmer? But their location *in front of Yahweh’s palace*, the temple,[[466]](#footnote-466) would then be odd. Were they in pans, ready for turning into syrup? (*dôd*, the word for *receptacle*, more oftenmeans a cooking pan). Had they been brought to the temple as an offering of first-fruits? Is that why Yahweh was looking at them and evaluating them?[[467]](#footnote-467)

**1b** A devastating moment has recently passed, the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem in 597 and the forced migration of all the leadership that the Babylonians could lay their hands on; 2 Kgs 24:10-16 gives a more extensive list, while Jer 27 – 29 and Ezekiel indicate that the group included priests and prophets, and we have noted that some verses from Jer23 reappear in Jer 29. The Jeremiah scroll does not talk about Nebuchadrezzar’s siege and capture of Jerusalem in 597, which led to the plundering of the temple, the deportation of its leadership and the replacement of Jehoachin by Zedekiah. They are described in 2 Kgs 24:10-17 and in the Babylonian Chronicle, the Babylonian administration’s official record of events:

11. The seventh year: In the month Kislev, the king of Akkad mustered his army and marched to Hattu.

12.He encamped against the city of Judah and on the second day of the month Adar he captured the city (and) seized its king.

13. A king of his own choice he appointed in the city, (and) taking the vast tribute he brought it into Babylon.[[468]](#footnote-468)

Texts that are thought to relate to King Esarhaddon’s Egyptian campaign some decades earlier includes lists of skilled workers transported to Assyria: they include physicians, diviners, goldsmiths, cabinet-makers, charioteers, drivers, bowmen, shield-bearers, veterinarians, singers, bakers, brewers, fishermen, cartwrights, shipwrights, and blacksmiths.[[469]](#footnote-469) One can see that an equivalent transportation from Jerusalem would have devastating implications for the life of the city. Here the Jeremiah scroll first mentions the *king* and his *officials*. Then there is *craftworker* and *smith*, the kind of people who could be useful in repairing the city after its siege and fitting it out for further acts of rebellion – so it was smart to remove them. The disaster was a fulfillment of warnings Jeremiah has continually issued, but hardly anyone has believed him. Many of the reactions expressed in Lamentations, presumably from a decade later, would already be reactions at this first fall of the city:

Listen, please, all you peoples,

see my pain.

My girls and my young men

went into captivity.

He brought right to the earth, made ordinary,

the kingdom and its officials.

The breath of our lungs, Yahweh’s anointed,

was captured in their traps,

The one of whom we had said, “In his shade

we will live among the nations.”[[470]](#footnote-470) (Lam 1:18; 2:2; 4:20)

**2-3** *First-ripe figs* are ones that come to fruition in spring and are thus a special, succulent delight after the dreariness of winter (Hos 9:10; Mic 7:1). So these figs are as good as them (Jeremiah compares them with first-ripe ones – he doesn’t say they *are* first-ripe ones). *Very dire figs that couldn’t be eaten* doesn’t mean they are rotten, but rather that they are sour or tough. They lie at the other end of the culinary spectrum from the good figs; no other book in the Bible contrasts *very good* and *very dire* as these verses do.[[471]](#footnote-471) The oddness of a receptacle full of bad figs in front of the temple encourages the impression that Jeremiah refers to a visionary seeing. As was the case with the watcher cane and the fanned pot (1:11, 13), it would not be obvious what the figs represented nor what was signified by the difference between the quality of the two lots of figs. The question and answer (v. 3) implicitly underlines that point by its unrevealing nature. One would initially assume that *good* and *dire* referred to their inherent quality, but the chapter will eventually suggest that “good” signifies “not their characteristics but their destiny.”[[472]](#footnote-472) It refers to a good fate as opposed to a dire fate.[[473]](#footnote-473)

**4** Jeremiah’s testimony, *Yahweh’s word came to me*, confirms that the significance of the figs was not self-evident to him; first he knew that Yahweh was drawing his attention to the figs or presenting the image of figs to his mind’s eye, then Yahweh needed to reveal what they signified. He also here implies that this revelation from Yahweh is not just for him: like everything else in the scroll, it is a message for the community.

**5-6** It turns out that the figs stand for the Jerusalem community and the exile community. The new focus in Jer 24 is the Judahites’ enforced division into the people who were taken off to Babylon in 597 and the people who were able to stay behind in Jerusalem. It is easy to imagine that those who were able to stay behind could assume that those who were taken off were not merely the unlucky ones but were also the ones who deserved exile. And they were the ones with no future; their fate was permanent. Applied to them, the image of bad figs could confirm that assessment. Without making any comment on the first possibility, typically Yahweh turns the second assumption upside down, while also reversing a threat like the one in Amos 9:4.[[474]](#footnote-474) Deut 28:11 promises that the community that lives in obedience to Yahweh will find that Yahweh singles it out forgood. Yahweh here makes the surprising declaration about the exiles that they will actually be treated like good figs: *I will set my eye on them for good*. He will make it possible for them to return to Judah, and fulfill for them the declaration that he made about the significance of Jeremiah’s work way back at his commissioning of Jeremiah (1:10). There has been smashing and pulling up, but “exile does not seal its victims’ fate.”[[475]](#footnote-475) *I will build them up and not smash, I will plant them and not pull up.* Neither his words at the time of that commission nor these words are set in relation to their deserve – to whether they are in themselves bad figs. They simply express his intention.

**7** Another surprise follows, except that it is not really a surprise. It would be remarkable if Yahweh had implied that the exiles were in themselves good guys. He has consistently inspired Jeremiah to castigate the entire community of which they were part. He still maintains that assessment. But, by implication, there is no point simply restoring them to Judah so that they can carry on living the way they did before. So Yahweh declares the intention to transform them in their relationship with him, a transformation that they need no more and no less than the Jerusalem community. He will treat them as nice figs, even though there is no indication that they are better than the nasty figs. It will be an expression of his setting his eye on them for good. Jeremiah has talked much about the community’s acknowledgment of Yahweh, but regularly in the negative (e.g., 2:8; 4:22; 9:3 [2]). He has talked much about their mind, again in negative terms (e.g., 3:10, 17; 5:21, 23). He has recalled how Yahweh set up an arrangement whereby he would become God for them and they would become a people for him, but it didn’t work (7:23; 11:4). He has urged his people to circumcise their minds (4:4) but also expressed doubt about their capacity to do good (13:23).[[476]](#footnote-476) So now he will do something about it. And they will *turn to me with their entire mind*. His declarations leave unclear the relationship between his action and their action, between his giving them a new mind and their turning with that mind. How does God go about changing the nature of someone’s mind in a way that will have this result? Is it like a neurosurgeon performing an operation on someone’s brain so that their behavior changes? If Jeremiah implies an answer to this question, it lies in the movement from v. 6 to v. 7. The fact that Yahweh sets his eye on the (undeserving) exiles for good, enables them to return to Judah, and builds them up and plants them, will be an astonishing expression of his generosity and commitment such as will bring about the acknowledgment and turning of which he speaks. Jer 31:31-34 has similar implications. In Deut 30:1-10, too, Moses speaks of Israel turning to Yahweh in exile, speaks of Yahweh taking them home, and speaks of Yahweh transforming their attitudes. The order thus contrasts with the order in Jeremiah, though Moses is no more unequivocal about the relationship between cause and effect or about the order of events than Jeremiah (English translations are inclined to help things along by including words such as “then”). Both Moses and Jeremiah speak of a transformation by Yahweh, a turning by Israel, and a return from exile, but between them they leave unexplained the mysterious relationship between these three.[[477]](#footnote-477) “The future belongs to the exilic community that refuses both *assimilation* into Babylonian definitions of reality and *despair* about the prospect of return.”[[478]](#footnote-478) Yahweh will need to take action to bring that about; so will they. In the context of Jeremiah’s confrontation of the community that remains in Jerusalem, it is a promise relating to the 597 exiles whom they despise; in due course it will become explicitly a promise for “all Israel’s clans,” even for Ephraim as well as Judah (30:22; 31:1, 33-34; 32:38-40).

**8** One can imagine another possible aspect to the Jerusalem community’s stance in relation to the exiles. Notwithstanding the horror of what happened in 597, they might be breathing a sigh of relief that Yahweh had implemented the wrathful threats that they had not believed. At least it was now over. Not so, say Jeremiah. Previous chapters of the scroll have talked about the *remainder* that would be left after the catastrophe that was going to come, and not necessarily in positive terms (6:9; 8:3; 15:9; but contrast 23:3). The beginning of Jer 21 – 24 warned specifically that Yahweh would give over to Nebuchadrezzar the people *remaining* after 597, including Zedekiah (21:7). *Remaining* and *remainder* or remnant (as it is traditionally translated) are not usually positive ideas in Jeremiah. The people *living in the country of Egypt* will be people who had moved to Egypt previously and/or who took refuge there in anticipation of the 597 siege. Jer 44:1 indicates that was quite a Judahite diaspora there before 587, and this comment provides background to the account in Jer 42 – 44 of more people taking refuge there (cf. also 26:21). But recourse to Egypt for help or refuge is always questionable.[[479]](#footnote-479) Politically, the background in this verse is the inclination to continue assertions of independence such that the scroll will later describe.[[480]](#footnote-480)

**9-10** Yahweh now applies particularly to the remaining community in Jerusalem his warnings about being turned into *something horrifying* (15:4) or *dire* (e.g., 1:14; 4:6; 6:1) or an object of *reviling* (23:40). The potential of those warnings has not been exhausted by the events of 597. To make it worse, Yahweh adds threats that appear in Deut 28:37: the community is destined to be an *example* of what can happen to a people, to be a *taunt* that might be used, a means of *slighting* a people (cf. Deut 28:45): “you look as bad as Jerusalem after it was destroyed!” People should not think that their compatriots have been driven off but they have escaped: Yahweh will bring about that fate *in all the places where I will drive them* (Deut 28:37 had spoken similarly of “all the peoples where Yahweh will propel them”)*.* They are to be the victims of the threats in Deuteronomy attached to people who ignore Yahweh’s standards. They are going to *come to an end*.[[481]](#footnote-481) To say that the community is an embodiment of slighting is virtually to curse it (cf. the references to curses in Deut 28). And if this curse were relayed to the Babylonian community, it could be an encouragement to it.[[482]](#footnote-482) But Jeremiah is in Jerusalem, and it is the Jerusalemites who will hear about the curse. Why, then, is there a promise of restoration for the exiles and not for them? Why are the bad figs a picture of their future while the good figs portray the exiles’ future? Why does Yahweh take sides? There is no basis for distinguishing between the deserve of the two communities.[[483]](#footnote-483) The point of the message is to get home to the Jerusalemites the inevitability of their paying the price for their wrongdoing if they continue in it, though also to hint at the basis for hope.[[484]](#footnote-484) It would be sensible to turn now, but the declarations about the Babylonian community will open up possibilities for the Jerusalemites after 587. They can ask whether such declarations apply to them, too.

1. K. Finsterbusch and N. Jacoby (“*’šr*-Zitateinletungssätze in Jeremia und 1QM,” *VT* 65 [2015]: 558-566) suggest that this jerky form of words (for which cf. 46:1; 47:1; 49:34) introduces a quotation. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. LXX, Vg have “drought,” for which the First Testament has more precise words such as *ḥōreb* (50:38) and *ṣiyyâ* (Job 24:19; Jer 2:6 used it to denote desert). Plural *baṣṣārôt* comes only here; etymology suggests shortage or diminution, and the singular noun has such a more general meaning (Pss 9:9 [10]; 10:1). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See the note. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 308. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Rudolph’s comment on 14:1 – 15:4 (*Jeremia*, 98). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. So Calvin, *Jeremiah* 2:212. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Cf. Weiser, *Jeremia*, 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 218. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:423. Y. Gitay (“Rhetorical Criticism and the Prophetic Discourse,” in D. F. Watson [ed.], *Persuasive Artistry* (G. A. Kennedy Festschrift; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 13-24, contrasts it with Joel’s more prosaic portrait of such a natural crisis. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. W. A. M. Beuken and H. W. M. van Grol, “Jeremiah 14,1 – 15:9,” in P.-M. Bogaert et al., *Le livre de Jérémie* (2nd ed. Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 297-342 (313-14). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. DG 57c. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:425. M. Boda suggests it marks a point in the transition from the lament form represented in the Psalter and the penitential prayer of the Second Temple period (“From Complaint to Contrition,” *ZAW* 113 [2001]: 186-97). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:317-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Cf. Rashi in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Cf. Qimchi in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. A saying in Côte d’Ivoire (Coulibaly, “Jeremiah,” 892). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Fischer, *Jeremia* 1:479. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 205. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Hos 8:13 may refer to them or may refer to their sacrifices. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Brueggemann*, Jeremiah 1 - 25,* 130. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Schmidt, *Jeremia* 1:266. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See A. Schart, “The Book of Jeremiah and the Visons of Amos,” *RevExp* 101 (2004): 267-86 (277); more broadly H. Lalleman-de Winkel, *Jeremiah in Prophetic Tradition* (Louvain: Peeters, 2000), 209-33. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Fischer, *Jeremia* 1:490. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. W. J. Wessels, “The Blame Game,” *OTE* 26 (2013): 864-81 (869, 876). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Mayer, *Commentary*,378. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:331 (though he actually treats them as part of what follows; contrast Bright, *Jeremiah*, 99). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Cf. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:329. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on v. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. M. Kessler, “From Drought to Exile,” in L. C. McGaughy (ed.), *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers 1972* (?Chico, CA: SBL, 1972) 2:505-25 (211), as quoted in Allen, *Jeremiah*, 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 225. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. So (e.g.) Duhm sees 14:19 – 15:4 as of later origin than the material on either side (*Jeremia*, 130-32). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 212-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 216. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. So Qimchi, in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on 14:20. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 228. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. B. A. Levine, “When the God of Israel ‘Acts-Out’ His Anger,” in J. Kaltner and L. Stulman (eds.), *Inspired Speech* (H. Huffmon Festschrift; London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 111-29. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 318. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 2:257; “except at your Word” (Tg). [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:332. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:439-40. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. J. Y. Jindo, *Biblical Metaphor Reconsidered* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 115-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 2:270-71. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:427. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 228. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Origen, *Jeremiah*, 130, 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Theodoret, *Ermeneia*, 596. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. See the introductory comment on 13:18-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Weiser, *Jeremia*, 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. On this word, see the comment on 4:28. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:728. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Weiser, *Jeremia*, 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Weiser, *Jeremia*, 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Beuken and van Grol. “Jeremiah 14,1 – 15:9,” 320. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. H. Bezzel, “The Suffering of the Elect,” in H. M. Barstad and R. G. Kratz (eds.). *Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 48-73 (53); he studies its possible development in this connection. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Pixley, *Jeremiah*, 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Weiser, *Jeremia*, 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. See e.g., K. Jesurathnam, “‘Before I Formed You in the Womb of Your Mother’: The Decentred World of Jeremiah and Dalits,” *Bangalore Theological Forum* 34/1 (2002): 1-40 (28-29); *Exploring Dalit Liberative Hermeneutics in India and the World* (New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. E. L. Greenstein sees “Jeremiah as an Inspiration to the Poet of Job,” in L. Stulman and J. Kaltner (eds.), *Inspired Speech* (H. B. Huffmon Festschrift; London: Clark, 2004), 98-110. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 220. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. J. Dubbink, “Getting Closer to Jeremiah,” in M. Kessler (ed.), *Reading the Book of Jeremiah* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 25-39 (26). [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Duhm, *Jeremia*, 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Polonius’s words in *Hamlet*, Act I, Scene III. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. DG 156; JM 165; GK 149; *IBHS* 40.2.2; and the comment on 22:6. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. See the notes. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Blayney, *Jeremiah*, 299-300, with his reference to Strabo, *Geography* XII, 3 (XII, 549). [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. G. V. Smith (“The Use of Quotations in Jeremiah xv 11-14,” *VT* 29 [1979]: 229-31) rather sees Jeremiah as quoting Yahweh in order to complain at his threat; cf. M. H. Floyd, “Prophetic Complaints about the Fulfillment of Oracles in Habakkuk 1:2-17 and Jeremiah 15:10-18,” *JBL* 110 (1991): 397-418. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. J. R. Lundbom, “Jeremiah 15,15–21 and the Call of Jeremiah,” *SJOT* 9 (1995): 143-155, draws some historical inferences from the link. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. W. L. Holladay suggests not only that Ezek 2:8 – 3:3 found its inspiration in these words but that Jeremiah uttered them to Ezekiel personally (“Had Ezekiel Known Jeremiah Personally?” *CBQ* 63 [2001]: 31-34). Elsewhere, Holladay wonders about Jeremiah’s relationship with other prophets: “**Jeremiah** in the Midst of Prophetic Words,” in F. Gruber et al. (eds.), *Geistes-Gegenwart* (Festschrift for P. Hofer et al.; Frankfurt: Lang, 2009), 67-80. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. J. Bright, “A Prophet’s Lament and Its Answer,” *Interpretation* 28 (1974): 59-74 (65); cf. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:743. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 2:298. C. Bultmann (“A Prophet in Desperation?” *OTS* 45 [2001]: 83-93) sees it as one indication that we should take more account of the fact that Jeremiah was a poet as much as a prophet. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. See the comment on 10:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 183. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. P. R. Davies, “Reading Jeremiah,” in R. Boer et al. (eds.), *The One Who Reads May Run* (E. W. Conrad Festschrift; New York: Clark, 2012), 3-9 (7). [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. P. J. Scalise, “The Logic of Covenant and the Logic of Lament in the Book of Jeremiah,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies*28 (2000-1): 395-401 (399). [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:464. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Chrysostom, "Baptismal Instructions” 6:19, as quoted in Wenthe, *Jeremiah*, 123 (with two other quotations of this line from Jeremiah. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Or, of course, provides the original formulation which is then reworked in the account of Jeremiah’s commission. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 243. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Brueggemann*, Jeremiah 1 - 25,* 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 188. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Volz, *Jeremia*, 180. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. W. D. Stacey, *Prophetic Drama in the Old Testament* (London: Epworth, 1990) 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. M. Brummitt, *Recovering Jeremiah* (Diss., Glasgow, 2006),209*,* 212, 213. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. See K. G. Friebel, *Jeremiah’s and Ezekiel’s Sign-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 82-99. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Cf. the comment on 1:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:469. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. See M. A. Zipor’s comments, “‘Scenes from a Marriage,” *JSOT* 65 (1995): 83-91 (85). [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. C. Carvalho, “Whose Gendered Language of God? *Currents in Theology and Mission* 43 (2016): 12-16 (14). [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. D. Lipton, "Food for the Birds of Heaven," in D. A. Baer and R. P. Gordon (eds.), *Leshon* Limmudim (A. A. Macintosh Festschrift; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 119–129 (127-28). [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:756. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. See King, *Jeremiah*, 140-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:368. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. See the comment on v. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Wright, *Jeremiah*, 187. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 2:335. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. D. Rom-Shiloni, “Deuteronomic Concepts of Exile Interpreted in Jeremiah and Ezekiel,” in C. Cohen et al. (eds.), *Birkat Shalom* (S. M. Paul Festschrift; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008) 1:101-23; she infers that a promise such as that in vv. 14-15 must come from someone in the Judahite community in Babylon. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Fischer, *Jeremia* 1:537. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:382. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Cf. Brueggemann*, Jeremiah 1 - 25,* 148-50. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Duhm comments about vv. 14-15, “how they got here, I don’t know” (*Jeremia*, 141). [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Wright, *Jeremiah*, 189. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Mayer, *Commentary*,388. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Weiser, *Jeremia*, 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. C. Levin, “‘Days Are Coming, When It Shall No Longer Be Said,’” in E. Ben Zvi and C. Levin (eds.), *Remembering and Forgetting in Early Second Temple Judah* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2012), 105-24. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Fischer, *Jeremia* 1:531. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. S. Y. Cho, “The Divine Title ‘Fisherman’ in Jer 16:16,” *JNSL* 35/1 [2009]: 97-105) suggests that the fishermen are Yahweh’s supernatural aides; but see T. R. Yoder, *Fishers of Fish and Fishers of Men* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 52-58. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 234. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 112. Volz (*Jeremia*, 182) simply omits them. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Weiser, *Jeremia*, 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 193. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 105; he is referring to Pelagius. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 2:356. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Thomas Aquinas, *In Jeremiam prophetam expositio* on the passage, as quoted in Schroeder, *Jeremiah*, 190. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. And see the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Brueggemann*, Jeremiah 1 - 25,* 214. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. See e.g., G. Fischer, “Jeremia und die Psalmen,” in E. Zenger (ed.), *The Composition of the Book of Psalms* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 469-78 (Fischer thinks the Psalms were influenced by Jeremiah, rather than vice versa); W. L. Holladay, “Indications of Jeremiah’s Psalter,” *JBL* 121 (2002): 245-61 (248-49); B. Gosse, “L’enracinement du livre de Jérémie dans le Psautier Teil 2,” *BN* 159 (2013): 27- 48 (39-40). [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. See the note. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Thomas Cranmer’s adaptation of a medieval Latin prayer; cf. Wright, *Jeremiah*, 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. K. Seybold, “Das '**Rebhuhn**' von Jeremia 17,11,” *Biblica* 78 (1987): 57-73. He notes that Duhm again wonders how it got here (*Jeremia*, 147). [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Mayer (*Commentary*,392) takes this passage to refer to Jehoiachin. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. See Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:790. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Weiser, *Jeremia*, 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Drinkard, *Jeremiah* 1:229. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 240. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Cf. Brueggemann*, Jeremiah 1 - 25,* 156. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. M. Metzger (“‘Thron der Herrlichkeit,’” in R. Liwak and S. Wagner [eds.], *Prophetie und geschichtliche Wirklichkeit im Alten Israel* [S. Herrmann Festschrift; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1991], 237-62) thus dates it as an affirmation of Zion that comes from a much later period than Jeremiah. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. See the comment on 16:18. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 206. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Cf. Wright, *Jeremiah*, 204. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Brueggemann*, Jeremiah 1 - 25,* 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 250. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. See the comment on 13:13. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. Contrast Carroll’s suggestion (*Jeremiah*, 368) that the passage suggests settled conditions. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. On the possible development of this passage and its relationship to Exodus/Deuteronomy and Neh 13, see M. A. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: OUP, 1984), 131-34; J. Briend, “Le sabbat en Jr 17,19-27’, in A. Caquot et al. (eds.), *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l’honneur de M. Mathias Delcor* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1985), 23-35;J. A. Gladson, “Jeremiah 17:19-27,” *CBQ* 62 (2000): 33-40; R. Achenbach,” The Sermon on the Sabbath in Jeremiah 17:19-27 and the Torah,” in G. C. Gertz et al. (eds.), *The Formation of the Pentateuch* (.Tübingen: Mohr, 2016), 873-90; D. Rom-Shiloni “Actualization of Pentateuchal Legal Traditions in Jeremiah,” *ZABR* 15 (2009): 254-81 (271-78). [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:806. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. See the note and comments. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Pixley, *Jeremiah*, 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 179. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Brueggemann*, Jeremiah 1 - 25,* 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 213. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. On the possible development of the story, see C. Brekelmans, “Jeremiah 18,1-12 and its Redaction,” in P.-M. Bogaert et al., *Le livre de Jérémie* (2nd ed. Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 343-50. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. Duhm, *Jeremia*,153; e.g., Weiser, *Jeremia* 1:158. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. Drinkard, *Jeremiah* 1:296. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. See R. H. Johnston, “The Biblical Potter,” *Biblical Archaeology* 37/4 (1974): 86-106 (picture on 100). [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. Wright, *Jeremiah*, 212. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 216. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. See the discussion in McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:420-23. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. Cf. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 255; and see in this connection P. R. Davies, “Potter, Prophet and People,” *HAR* 11 (1987): 23-33, and T. E. Fretheim, “The Repentance of God,” *HAR* 11 (1987): 81-92 on interrelationships within Jer 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. R. W. L. Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. J. Peckham, “The Passible Potter and the Contingent Clay,” *JATS* 18 (2007): 130-50 (136). [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Barth, *CD* II,1: 498. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. J. T. Hibbard, “True and False Prophecy,” *JSOT* 35 (2011): 339-58. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Origen, *Jeremiah*, 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. Chrysostom, *Instructions to Catechumens* (NPNF 1, 9), 1:4 (cf. Wenthe, *Jeremiah*, 147). [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Theodoret, *Ermeneia*, 608. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. P. R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration* (London: SCM, 1968), 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:516. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 2:428. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. Cf. Volz, *Jeremia*, 196, who notes that “not built up” is a single idea. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. Schmidt, *Jeremia* 1:318. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. Thomas Aquinas, *In Jeremiam prophetam expositio* on the passage, as quoted in Schroeder, *Jeremiah*, 199. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. Drinkwater, *Jeremiah* 1:253. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. Berrigan, *Jeremiah*, 82-83. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. W. L. Holladay argues that Jeremiah knew Ps 35 (“Indications of Jeremiah’s Psalter,” *JBL* 121 [2002]: 245-61 [255-56]). [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. Wright, *Jeremiah*, 218. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:441-42. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. O. Hallesby, *Prayer* (reprinted Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 220. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. Wright, *Jeremiah*, 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. M. Brummitt, *Recovering Jeremiah* (Diss., Glasgow, 2006),144, 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. See K. G. Friebel, *Jeremiah’s and Ezekiel’s Sign-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 115-24. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 284. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. On different views of the possible development of the passage, see R. Gilmour, “Reading Jeremiah 19:1-13,” *Journal of the Hebrew Scriptures* 17/5 (2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. Duhm, *Jeremia*, 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. See 2:23; 7:31; and the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. As Drinkard hints (*Jeremiah* 1:255). [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. See the note. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:536. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. Weiser, *Jeremia* 1:167-68. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. See the note and the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:451-52. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. *Bәnêhem*, the same word as is translated *their sons* in the parallel passage where it is accompanied by *their daughters*. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. Blayney, *Jeremiah*, 318. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. *Wars* VI, 3:4 [201-19]. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. There is an example in *ANET*, 328-29. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. Fischer, *Jeremia* 1:603. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:449. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. See the note. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 3:13. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 3:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. See *HALOT*. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. Weiser, *Jeremia* 1:172. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. See *HALOT*. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 270. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. Weiser, *Jeremia* 1:172. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 228. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. To be more precise, 13:25 and 20:6 have *baššāqer*,because the word is at the end of the sentence. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 270. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. Weiser, *Jeremia* 1:174. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. D. J. A. Clines and D. M. Gunn, “Form, Occasion and Redaction in Jeremiah 20,” *ZAW* 88 (1976): 390-409 (405). [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:854. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 289. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. Cf. J. L. Berquist, “Prophetic Legitimation in Jeremiah,” *VT* 39 (1989): 129-39 (135-37). [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. B. Becking, “Means of Revelation in the Book of Jeremiah,” in H. M. Barstad and R. G. Kratz (eds.), *Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 33-47 (45). [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. Schmidt, *Jeremia* 1:338. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. C. J. Sharp, “Wrestling the Word,” *Anglican Theological Review* 97 (2015) 5-18 (16). [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. J. Dubbink calls it “a critical expansion of 20.7-13” (“Jeremiah: Hero of Faith or Defeatist,” *JSOT* 86 [1999]: 67-84 [79]). [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 402. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. O’Connor, “Jeremiah,” 499. [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. M. C. Calloway, “Seduced by Method,” in E. K. Holt and C. J. Sharp (eds.), *Jeremiah Invented* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 16-33. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. Drinkard, *Jeremiah* 1:278. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. Origen, *Jeremiah*, 228. [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. Blayney, *Jeremiah*, 322. [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. *Jeremiah*, 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 130. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. Volz, *Jeremia*, 209. [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. J. G. Janzen, “Jeremiah 20:7-18,” *Interpretation* 37 (1983): 178-83 (180). [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. Brueggemann*, Jeremiah 1 - 25,* 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. Diamond, “Jeremiah,” 568. [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. T. E. Fretheim, “Caught in the Middle,” *WW* 22 (2002): 351-60 (351, 355). [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:856. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:553. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. Origen, *Jeremiah*, 237. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. M. Fishbane, “Jeremiah 20:7-12,” *Text and Texture* (New York: Schocken, 1979), 91-102 (98). [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:557. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. Wright, *Jeremiah*, 227. [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. S. D. Snyman "A Note on *pth* and *ykl* in Jeremiah xx 7-13," *VT* 48 (1998): 559-63. [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:481. [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. Berrigan, *Jeremiah*, 88. Berrigan attributes the words to Graham Greene; according to L. Durán (*Graham Greene* [(San Francisco) Harper, 1994], 97) the original words were, “The trouble is I don’t believe my unbelief.” [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. S. D. Snyman, “The Portrayal of Yahweh in Jeremiah 20:7-13,” *HTS* 55 (1999): 176-82. P. S. Johnston considers these two aspects to Yahweh in Jeremiah from the opposite angle in “‘Now You See Me, Now You Don’t,” in J. Day (ed.), *Prophecy and the Prophets in Ancient Israel* (New York: Clark, 2010), 290-308. [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. Wright, *Jeremiah*, 228. [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. E. Davis Lewin, “Arguing for Authority,” *JSOT* 32 (1985): 105-19 (115). [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. T. Jacobsen and K. Nielsen, “Cursing the Day,” *SJOT* 6 (1992): 187-204 (188); cf. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:870. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:486 [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. Duhm, *Jeremia*, 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
267. It also makes it unnecessary to ask whether maybe Yahweh is the subject in v. 17 (J. Lundbom, “The Double Curse in Jer 20:14-18,” *JBL* 104 ]1985]: 589-600 [597]). [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
268. Cf. Rashi in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
269. On Jer 21 – 24 as a whole and its possible development, see J. B. Job, *Jeremiah’s Kings* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), esp. 15-37; and on its rhetoric, S. J. Choi, *A New Heart to Know the Lord: Rhetorical Analysis of Jeremiah 21 – 24* (Diss., University of Gloucestershire, 2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
270. Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 221. [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
271. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 404. [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
272. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 237. [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
273. Achtemeier, *Jeremiah*, 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
274. A. Varughese, “The Royal Family in the Jeremiah Tradition,” in L. Stulman and J. Kaltner (eds.), *Inspired Speech* (H. B. Huffmon Festschrift; London: Clark, 2004), 319-28 (320). [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
275. Fischer, *Jeremia* 1:672. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
276. But M. Avioz (“The Historical Setting of Jeremiah 21:1-10,” *AUSS* 44 [2006]: 213-29) connects Jer 21 and 37 with earlier and later occasions in the city’s final siege. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
277. Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 205. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
278. On Zedekiah, see “Background” in the Introduction to this commentary. [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
279. See especially Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
280. On mixed assessment of Zedekiah, see e.g., J. B. Job, *Jeremiah’s Kings* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 99-119 [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
281. H. M. Barstad, “Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah and the Historical Prophet,” in A. G. Hunter and P. R. Davies (eds.), *Sense and Sensitivity* (R. P. Carroll Memorial; London: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 87-100 (90). [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
282. See the note. [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
283. D. Rom-Shiloni, “Facing Destruction and Exile,” *ZAW* 117 (2005): 189-2005 (192-94). [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
284. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 3:53. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
285. Volz, *Jeremia*, 217. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
286. See furtherR. Thelle,”*drš ’t-yhwh*,” *SJOT* 12 (1998): 249-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
287. M. J. de Jong, ”Rewriting the Past in Light of the Present, in B. Becking and H. M. Barstad (eds.), *Prophecy and Prophets in Stories* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 124-40. [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
288. Cf. Goldingay, *Daniel*, on Dan 1:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
289. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:569. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
290. Cf. Duhm, *Jeremia*, 169-70. [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
291. Drinkard, *Jeremiah* 1:286-87. [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
292. Rom-Shiloni, “Facing Destruction and Exile,” 194. [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
293. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 409. [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
294. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 3:59. [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
295. Qimchi in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
296. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
297. See the note. [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
298. Wright, *Jeremiah*, 233, 234. [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
299. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:494. [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
300. So C. M. Maier, “God’s Cruelty and Jeremiah’s Treason,” in C. M. Maier and C. J. Sharp (eds.), *Prophecy and Power* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 133-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
301. Volz, *Jeremia*, 219. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
302. But see Wenthe, *Jeremiah*, 160-61. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
303. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
304. M. Masenya, “Invisible Exiles?” *OTE* 20 (2007): 756-771 (764). [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
305. Pixley, *Jeremiah*, 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
306. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 311-12. [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
307. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 236. [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
308. Schmidt, *Jeremia* 2:11. [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
309. R. Irudaya, “A Prophetic Call against War,” *Info on Human Development* 29/1 (2003): 2-7 (6). [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
310. N. Mastnjak (*Deuteronomy and the Emergence of Textual Authority in Jeremiah* [Tübingen: Mohr, 2016], 21-26 [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
311. Brueggemann*, Jeremiah 1 - 25,* 197. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
312. Qimchi in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
313. Qimchi in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
314. Mayer, *Commentary*,402. [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
315. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
316. J. M. Bracke, “Justice in the Book of Jeremiah,” *WW* 22 (2002): 387-95 (387). [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
317. See the note. [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
318. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:510. [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
319. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 314. [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
320. Weiser, *Jeremia* 1:187, 188. [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
321. Drinkard, *Jeremiah* 1:293. [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
322. Brueggemann*, Jeremiah 1 - 25,* 186. [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
323. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
324. Cf. the comment at 7:13-14 on the condition Jesus attached to forgiveness. [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
325. See the comparison in the introduction to 21:11 – 22:9. [↑](#footnote-ref-325)
326. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
327. JM 130g. [↑](#footnote-ref-327)
328. Cf. J. Goldingay, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2020), on Gen 22:16. [↑](#footnote-ref-328)
329. Theodoret, *Ermeneia*, 620. [↑](#footnote-ref-329)
330. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-330)
331. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-331)
332. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-332)
333. See the comments. [↑](#footnote-ref-333)
334. H. Weippert, “Jahwekrieg und Bundesfluch in Jer 21 1-7,” *ZAW* 82 (1970): 396-409. [↑](#footnote-ref-334)
335. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-335)
336. *ANET*, 300. [↑](#footnote-ref-336)
337. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-337)
338. Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-338)
339. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:523-24. [↑](#footnote-ref-339)
340. Drinkard, *Jeremiah* 1:307. [↑](#footnote-ref-340)
341. W. Wessels, “Josiah the Idealised King in the Kingship Cycles in the Book of Jeremiah,” *OTE* 20 (2077): 860-76 (866). [↑](#footnote-ref-341)
342. So respectively Qimchi (in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage) and Jerome (*Jeremiah*, 131). [↑](#footnote-ref-342)
343. Volz, *Jeremia*, 224. [↑](#footnote-ref-343)
344. See H.-J. Zobel, *TDOT* 3:359-64. [↑](#footnote-ref-344)
345. See the comment on 6:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-345)
346. B. Katho, *To Know and Not to Know Yhwh* (Diss., Pietermaritzburg, 2003), 126. Katho goes on to compare the way modern monarchs and presidents like to multiply residences. [↑](#footnote-ref-346)
347. Cf. Rashi in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-347)
348. Qimchi (in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage) interestingly takes the father to be David, as Tg may imply in using the expression *malkā’ qadmā’â ’ăbûk*; the First Testament does say that David *implemented the faithful exercise of authority*, which it does not say of Josiah. [↑](#footnote-ref-348)
349. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-349)
350. B. Katho, “Jeremiah 22,” in M. Getui et al. (eds.), *Interpreting the Old Testament in Africa* (New York: Lang), 153-58 (157). [↑](#footnote-ref-350)
351. Theodoret, *Ermeneia*, 621. [↑](#footnote-ref-351)
352. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 3:107. [↑](#footnote-ref-352)
353. Pixley, *Jeremiah*, 71-72. [↑](#footnote-ref-353)
354. Brueggemann*, Jeremiah 1 - 25,* 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-354)
355. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-355)
356. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-356)
357. B. A. Foreman, *Animal Metaphors and the People of Israel in the Book of Jeremiah* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 2011), 241-44. [↑](#footnote-ref-357)
358. And see the comment on 16:13 and on 16:14-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-358)
359. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 2:152. [↑](#footnote-ref-359)
360. See the note. [↑](#footnote-ref-360)
361. See the note. [↑](#footnote-ref-361)
362. J. B. Job, *Jeremiah’s Kings*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006 (97). [↑](#footnote-ref-362)
363. See the note and comment on 4:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-363)
364. See the comment on 23:18. [↑](#footnote-ref-364)
365. D. J. Reimer, “On Triplets in a Trio of Prophets,” in I. Provan and M. J. Boda (eds.), *Let Us Go Up to Zion* (H. G. M. Williamson Festschrift; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 203-17 (209). [↑](#footnote-ref-365)
366. M. H. Patton, *Hope for a Tender Sprig* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 58-69 [↑](#footnote-ref-366)
367. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-367)
368. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 2:163. [↑](#footnote-ref-368)
369. W. J. Wessels, “Jeremiah 22,24-30,” *ZAW* 101 (1989): 232-49 (244). [↑](#footnote-ref-369)
370. See *ANET*, 308. [↑](#footnote-ref-370)
371. Qimchi in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-371)
372. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:551, 552. [↑](#footnote-ref-372)
373. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 3:142. [↑](#footnote-ref-373)
374. See e.g., Theodoret, *Ermeneia*, 628; Mayer (*Commentary*, 409) noting the address to the Twelve clans in James 1:1 which implies that the church is the fulfillment of the promise in vv. 1-4; Altschuler, “*Mesudat David,”* in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on vv. 5-6; also Abravan’el, *pyrwš ‘al nby’ym ’ḥrwnym*, on the passage). [↑](#footnote-ref-374)
375. B. Becking, “Messianic Expectations in the Book of Jeremiah?” in J. Lundbom et al. (eds.), *The Book of Jeremiah* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 93-112. [↑](#footnote-ref-375)
376. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-376)
377. *No Rusty Swords* (London: Collins, 1965), 202; cf. Berrigan, *Jeremiah*, 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-377)
378. See the comment esp. on 6:9. [↑](#footnote-ref-378)
379. K. D. Mulzac, “‘The Remnant of My Sheep,’” *JATS* 13 (2002): 134-48 (140). [↑](#footnote-ref-379)
380. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:615. [↑](#footnote-ref-380)
381. See further the comment there. [↑](#footnote-ref-381)
382. D. J. Reimer, “Redeeming Politics in Jeremiah,” in H. M. Barstad and R. G. Kratz (eds.), *Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 121-31 (128). [↑](#footnote-ref-382)
383. See the comment there. [↑](#footnote-ref-383)
384. Cf. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-384)
385. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:561. [↑](#footnote-ref-385)
386. W. J. Wessels, “Leader Responsibility in the Workplace,” *Koers* 79/2 (2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-386)
387. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-387)
388. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-388)
389. J. Dubbink, “Cedars Decay, a Sprout Will Blossom,” in J. W. Dyk et al. (eds.), *Unless Someone Guide Me….* (K. A. Deurloo Festschrift; Maastricht: Shaker, 2001), 157-65 (162, 164). [↑](#footnote-ref-389)
390. Cf. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:619. [↑](#footnote-ref-390)
391. C. Levin, “The ‘Word of Yahweh,’” in M. H. Floyd and R. D. Haak (eds.), *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism* (New York: Clark, 2006), 42-62. [↑](#footnote-ref-391)
392. Fischer, *Jeremia* 1:710. [↑](#footnote-ref-392)
393. M. Gilbert. “Jérémie en conflit avec les sages?” in P.-M. Bogaert et al., *Le livre de Jérémie* (2nd ed. Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 105-18, 427-28. [↑](#footnote-ref-393)
394. See the paragraphs on “Yahweh’s Message Came,” in the Introduction to this commentary. [↑](#footnote-ref-394)
395. With which A. Lange links the development of the debate documented in the Jeremiah scroll (*Vom prophetischen Wort zur prophetischen Tradition* [Tübingen: Mohr, 2002]), 278-306; cf. J. Hill, “The Book of Jeremiah MT and Early Second Temple Conflicts about Prophets and Prophecy,” *Australian Biblical Review* 50 (2002): 28-42. [↑](#footnote-ref-395)
396. See H. B. Huffmon, “The Exclusivity of Divine Communication in Ancient Israel,” in C. L. Crouch et al. (eds.), *Mediating between Heaven and Earth* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), 67-81. It has been a problem through church history and in First Testament interpretation: see S. B. Tarrer, *Reading with the Faithful* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-396)
397. A. Catastini, “Who Were the False Prophets?” *Henoch* 34 (2012: 330-66. [↑](#footnote-ref-397)
398. See the note on v. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-398)
399. Weiser, *Jeremia* 1:207. [↑](#footnote-ref-399)
400. Volz, *Jeremia*, 235. [↑](#footnote-ref-400)
401. See e.g., the discussion in Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 332. [↑](#footnote-ref-401)
402. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 304. [↑](#footnote-ref-402)
403. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:569. [↑](#footnote-ref-403)
404. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:624. [↑](#footnote-ref-404)
405. See W. J. Wessels, “Prophets at Loggerheads,” *AcT* 31 (2011): 346-62. [↑](#footnote-ref-405)
406. W. J. Wessels, “God the Creator,” *OTE* 23 (2010): 846-60 (855, 856). [↑](#footnote-ref-406)
407. See the comment on 3:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-407)
408. Achtemeier, *Jeremiah*, 75. The quotation comes from the fourth-century hymn, the “Te Deum”; contrast the comment at the end of the paragraphs on “Theology Embodied” in the Introduction to this commentary. [↑](#footnote-ref-408)
409. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 455. [↑](#footnote-ref-409)
410. J. Jeremias, “The Hosea Tradition and the Book of Jeremiah,” *OTE* 7 (1994): 21-38 (29). [↑](#footnote-ref-410)
411. Brueggemann*, Jeremiah 1 - 25,* 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-411)
412. R. W. L. Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-412)
413. Volz, *Jeremia*, 237. [↑](#footnote-ref-413)
414. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 307. [↑](#footnote-ref-414)
415. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-415)
416. See the comment and the note. [↑](#footnote-ref-416)
417. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:576. [↑](#footnote-ref-417)
418. Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 72 [↑](#footnote-ref-418)
419. See 2:5 with the note and the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-419)
420. Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 497. [↑](#footnote-ref-420)
421. K. M. Rochester, *Prophetic Ministry in Jeremiah and Ezekiel* (Diss., Durham, 2009), 245. [↑](#footnote-ref-421)
422. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 309. [↑](#footnote-ref-422)
423. P. Scalise sees this experience as the nearest to a vision that Jeremiah speaks of (“Vision beyond the Visions in Jeremiah,” in E. R. Hayes and L.-S. Tiemeyer [eds.], *“I Lifted My Eyes and Saw”* [London: Bloomsbury, 2014], 47-58). [↑](#footnote-ref-423)
424. Weiser, *Jeremia* 1:211. [↑](#footnote-ref-424)
425. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:583. [↑](#footnote-ref-425)
426. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-426)
427. Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-427)
428. Mayer, *Commentary*, 411; the proverb first appears in Cicero, *Letters to His Friends* VII, 16.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-428)
429. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 267. [↑](#footnote-ref-429)
430. Drinkard, *Jeremiah* 1:345. [↑](#footnote-ref-430)
431. Pixley, *Jeremiah*, 73. [↑](#footnote-ref-431)
432. R. E. Manahan, “A Theology of Pseudoprophets,” *Grace Theological Journal* 1 (1980: 77-96. [↑](#footnote-ref-432)
433. Cf. W. J. Wessels, “Prophet versus Prophet in the Book of Jeremiah,” *OTE* 22 (2009): 733-51 (746). [↑](#footnote-ref-433)
434. Cf. B. S. Childs, “True and False Prophets,” in *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 133-44 (141). [↑](#footnote-ref-434)
435. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 463. [↑](#footnote-ref-435)
436. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 337-38, contrasting the inference Carroll goes on to draw (*Jeremiah*, 463; earlier, R. P. Carroll, “A Non-Cogent Argument in Jeremiah’s Oracles against the Prophets,” *Studia Theologica* 30 [1976]: 43-51; also “Halfway through a Dark Wood,” in in A. R. P Diamond et al. [eds.], *Troubling Jeremiah* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], 73-86 [77-78]); see further Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 83-88. [↑](#footnote-ref-436)
437. S. E. Fowl and L. G. Jones, *Reading in Communion* (London: SPCK, 1991), 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-437)
438. Diamond, “Jeremiah,” 567. [↑](#footnote-ref-438)
439. Brueggemann*, Jeremiah 1 - 25,* 201. [↑](#footnote-ref-439)
440. W. E. Lemke, “The Near and the Distant God,” *JBL* 100 (1981): 541-55 (554). [↑](#footnote-ref-440)
441. J. Jeremias, “Remembering and Forgetting,” in E. Ben Zvi and C. Levin (eds.), *Remembering and Forgetting in Early Second Temple Judah* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2012), 45-54 (52). [↑](#footnote-ref-441)
442. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:640. [↑](#footnote-ref-442)
443. Cf. Jerome, *Jeramiah*, 177. [↑](#footnote-ref-443)
444. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 270-72. [↑](#footnote-ref-444)
445. Carroll, *Jeremiah* 1:470, 471. [↑](#footnote-ref-445)
446. Rashi in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-446)
447. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 339. [↑](#footnote-ref-447)
448. So Nicholas of Lyra on the passage, as quoted in Schroeder, *Jeremiah*, 220. [↑](#footnote-ref-448)
449. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:595. [↑](#footnote-ref-449)
450. W. J. Wessels, “I’ve Had it with You,” *OTE* 25 (2012): 761-76 (761). [↑](#footnote-ref-450)
451. So BDB. See further M. J. Boda, “Freeing the Burden of Prophecy,” *Biblica* 87 (2006): 338-57 (338-40). [↑](#footnote-ref-451)
452. See the note on v. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-452)
453. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:599. [↑](#footnote-ref-453)
454. See the note. [↑](#footnote-ref-454)
455. Cf. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 278. [↑](#footnote-ref-455)
456. Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-456)
457. E.g., C. J. Sharp, “Sites of Conflict,” in B. E. Kelle et al. (eds.), *Interpreting Exile* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 367-76 (369). [↑](#footnote-ref-457)
458. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 487. [↑](#footnote-ref-458)
459. E. W. Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970), 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-459)
460. See further the paragraphs on “A Fourth Horizon” in the Introduction to this commentary. [↑](#footnote-ref-460)
461. C. M. Maier, “The Nature of Deutero-Jeremianic Texts,” in H. Najman and K. Schmid (eds.), *Jeremiah’s Scriptures* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 103-23 (121); she then dates it in the Persian period. [↑](#footnote-ref-461)
462. Schmidt, *Jeremia* 2:59. [↑](#footnote-ref-462)
463. P. R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration* (London: SCM, 1968), 55.While it is possible that the chapter has been expanded (see the notes on vv. 1 and 9, and e.g., Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:654-55), possible expansions do not suggest specific links with any of those later contexts or significances. [↑](#footnote-ref-463)
464. Volz, *Jeremia*, 249. [↑](#footnote-ref-464)
465. See the note and comment on 11:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-465)
466. See the comment on 7:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-466)
467. Mayer, *Commentary*, 414. [↑](#footnote-ref-467)
468. A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (Locust Valley, NY: Augustin, 1975), 102; cf. *ANET*, 594. The Babylonians referred to their empire as Akkad (Gen 10:10) after the name of an ancient capital city. [↑](#footnote-ref-468)
469. See *ANET*, 293. [↑](#footnote-ref-469)
470. The language reflects convictions attached to Yahweh’s commitment to the line of David. In 597 their embodiment was Jeconiah/Jehoiachin; in 587 it will be Zedekiah. [↑](#footnote-ref-470)
471. Fischer, *Jeremia* 1:715. [↑](#footnote-ref-471)
472. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 158; cf. H. G. Reventlow, *Liturgie und prophetisches Ich bei Jeremia* [Gütersloh : Mohn, 1963], 87-94. [↑](#footnote-ref-472)
473. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 276. [↑](#footnote-ref-473)
474. A. Schart, “The Book of Jeremiah and the Visons of Amos,” *RevExp* 101 (2004): 267-86 (280). [↑](#footnote-ref-474)
475. Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 220. [↑](#footnote-ref-475)
476. Brueggemann*, Jeremiah 1 - 25,* 210. [↑](#footnote-ref-476)
477. Cf. G. E. Gerbrandt, *Deuteronomy* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald, 2015), 475-78. [↑](#footnote-ref-477)
478. W. Brueggemann, “A Second Reading of Jeremiah after the Dismantling,” *Ex auditu* 1(1985): 156-68 (164). [↑](#footnote-ref-478)
479. Cf. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 3:246. [↑](#footnote-ref-479)
480. B. Katho reads the chapter against the background of equivalent dynamics in the Congo (*To Know and Not to Know Yhwh* [Diss., Pietermaritzburg, 2003], 299-307). [↑](#footnote-ref-480)
481. If the prophetic scroll reflects the Torah rather than vice versa, and if Deut 28 reached its final form some time after 587, then Jer 24 did, too. But maybe Yahweh’s words come from the 590s in which this message is set, and reflect an earlier version of what appears in Deut 28. On these questions, see e.g., N. Mastnjak, *Deuteronomy and the Emergence of Textual Authority in Jeremiah* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2016), 93-133. [↑](#footnote-ref-481)
482. See J. S. Anderson, “The Metonymical Curse as Propaganda in the Book of Jeremiah,” *BBR* 8 (1998): 1-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-482)
483. R. J. R. Plant, *Good Figs, Bad Figs* (New York: Clark, 2008), 87-89. [↑](#footnote-ref-483)
484. W. J. Wessels “Jeremiah 24:1-10 as a Pronouncement of Hope,” *OTE* 4 (1991): 397-407. [↑](#footnote-ref-484)