# An Interim Conclusion (25:1-38 [LXX 25:1-13; 32:1-24])

Jeremiah 25 brings the first half of the Jeremiah scroll to an end. Each of its sections declares that calamity is coming for Jerusalem and for other peoples, but they do so in three different ways.

Vv. 1-14 a climactic warning in prose about coming disaster, in which Jeremiah makes a critical moment into the occasion to review his prophesying over twenty-three years; Judah has the main focus but other nations appear in the closing promise of reversal for Babylon

vv. 15-29 another prose expression of these declarations of intent to bring calamity on Jerusalem, Babylon, and on other nations in due course, using the image of a chalice; the opening *because* makes a link between two messages that were separate in origin

vv. 30-38 a compilation of four declarations in poetry, of separate origin, that again declare the intention to bring calamity, but now put more (perhaps exclusive) focus on the other nations rather than on Judah

The opening verse dates the chapter in 604, twenty-two years after Jeremiah’s commission. As the chapter marks the half-way point in the Jeremiah scroll, then, it also more or less marks the mid-point in Jeremiah’s activity, which extends from the mid 620s through to the mid-580s. Although there are seventeen years to pass until the final fall of Jerusalem, 604 marks the burning of Jeremiah’s first, cumulative scroll (Jer 36) and thus Judah’s reaching what will turn out to be the point of no return. In addition, Jer 25 marks the transition from chapters dominated by messages in poetry to chapters dominated by stories. The chapter is a “hinge” in the scroll,[[1]](#footnote-1) “the central axis around which the entire book revolves.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Further, so far the scroll has been dominated by messages warning of disaster, whereas from now on there will be more promises of restoration and renewal.[[3]](#footnote-3) The first half included only understated notes declaring that Yahweh will not bring a total end to Judah’s story (e.g., 4:27; 5:10, 18) and in due course some brief promises (16:14-15; 23:1-8; 24:4-7). Now a sequence of worrisome stories (Jer 26 – 29) will be followed by chapters of promises (Jer 30 – 33), and then another, longer sequence of worrisome stories (Jer 34 – 44) will be followed by a longer set of chapters that are better news for Judah (Jer 45 – 51), until the scroll closes with a final horrifying story but also a note of hope (Jer 52).

Jer 25 marks the most spectacular divergence between MT and LXX of Jeremiah. After vv. 1-14 in MT, there appear in LXX six chapters declaring how Yahweh will bring calamity on other nations – chapters which appear as Jer 46 – 51 in MT. In addition, differences between the detailed text of MT and LXX are especially noticeable in Jer 25 – usually by LXX’s lacking phrases that appear in MT. Possibly MT has expanded the text underlying LXX, or LXX has abbreviated MT’s text, or both are independent recensions of an earlier version of the chapter.[[4]](#footnote-4)

## A Climactic Warning (25:1-14)

1The word that came to Jeremiah about the entire people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim ben Josiah King of Judah (i.e., the first year of Nebuchadrezzar King of Babylon),a 2which Jeremiah the prophet spokeb to the entire people of Judah and towards all the people who lived in Jerusalem.

3Since the thirteenth year of Josiah ben Amon King of Judah, and until this day, yes, twenty-three years, Yahweh’s word has come to me. I’ve spoken to you, speaking assiduously,c but you haven’t listened. 4Yahwehd would send to you all his servants the prophets, sending assiduously,e and you haven’t listened, you haven’t bent your ear to listen: 5Please turn, each person, from his dire path, and from the dire nature of your practices, and you will livef on the land that Yahweh gave to you and to your ancestors, from all time and to all time. 6Do not go after other gods, to serve them and bow down to them, and don’t irk meg with the things your hands have made, and I will not act direly to you. 7But you haven’t listened to me (Yahweh’s affirmation), so that you’ve irked me with the things your hands have made, with dire results for you.h

8Therefore Yahweh of Armies has said this: Since you haven’t listened toi my words, 9here am I, sending and getting all the kin-groupsj from the north (Yahweh’s affirmation), and fork Nebuchadrezzar King of Babylon, my servant, and having them come against this country and against the people who live in it – and against all these nations around.

I will devotel them and make them into a desolation, a thing to whistle at, wastesm for all time. 10I will wipe out from them the sound of rejoicing and the sound of joy, the sound of groom and the sound of bride, the sound of millstonesn and the light of lamp.o 11This entire country will become a waste and desolation.

These nations will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years. 12But at the fulfilment of the seventy years, I will attend to the king of Babylon and to that nation (Yahweh’s affirmation) regarding their waywardness, and to the country of Chaldea,p and I will make it into a desolation for all time. 13I will cause to come on that country all the words that I have spoken against it, everything that’s written in this document, which Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations. 14Because they have put them into serfdom, those people,q too – many nations and big kings.r I will recompense them in accordance with their action and what their hands have made.s

LXX lacks the synchronism with Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon, along with the similar references in vv. 9, 11, 12; it also lacks *Jeremiah the prophet* in v. 2 and in v. 3 *Yahweh’s word has come to me* and *but you have not listened.*

On the *’ăšer* clause, see the note on 1:2.

See the note and comment on 7:13; the expression comes again in the next verse.

LXX has “I” verbs in vv. 4-5 (and “my” for “his”; it also lacks *to listen*), which leads more smoothly into v. 6.

For *’aškēm* C has the expected infinitive *haškēm*.

More literally, “turn… and live”; the paronomasia *šûbû…ûšәbû* (Volz, *Jeremia*, 253)suggests the link between the two verbs.

The yiqtol verb continues the imperative. The message makes an unannounced transition to Yahweh speaking; such transitions are not unusual in Jeremiah.

MT has a marker here. LXX lacks *(Yahweh’s affirmation)* and the rest of the verse.

LXX has “believed.”

LXX has “a kin-group.”

Taking *’el* here as the sign of the accusative would make the sentence smoother (M. Gruber, “*’el* = *’et*,” in S. Yona et al. [eds], *Marbeh Ḥokmah* [V. A. Hurowitz Memorial; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015], 269-81).

LXX, Vg, Tg have words suggesting “eliminate”; Aq, Sym *anathematizō* better corresponds to *ḥāram* (hiphil). But see the comment.

For *ûlәḥorbôt*, LXX “and for disgrace” implies *ûlәḥerpat*. MT’s plural (compare English “ruins”) is intensive, suggesting “total waste” (Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 2:248).

LXX “the fragrance of perfume” perhaps reflects confusion between Greek *murou* (perfume) and *mulou* (mill stone) (Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 492).

Repointing *’ôr nēr* as *’ûr nir* “tilled land” makes a link with what follows (D.Grossberg, “Pivotal Polysemy in Jeremiah xxv 10-11a,” *VT* 36 [1986]: 481-85).

See the note on 21:4.

*Hēmmâ* adds emphasis to the suffix on *bām* (GK 135g).

Vg, Aq, Th “they [have] served” gives *‘ābad* its usual meaning (cf. v. 11); the verb’s subject would then be the *many nations and big kings* and the object would be the Chaldeans. But Tg has “made them serve,” the regular meaning of *‘ābad bә* (see 22:13 and the note). The subject is then the Chaldeans, and *many nations and big kings* qualifies *those people.* Rashi (in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage) takes the qatal verb as an anticipatory qatal (see the introductory comment on 13:18-22) indicating that the nations will turn the Chaldeans into serfs. With the same result, Th has “will serve”: i.e., the Chaldeans will serve the many nations.

MT has a marker here. LXX lacks v. 14, a difference related to the deviation between MT and LXX over the location of the messages about different nations, which LXX includes here.

The section opens with an introduction marking it as a new beginning and then notes the significance of this year in terms of Judah’s history and of international politics. This moment is therefore one for Jeremiah to issue an urgent challenge to his people to think about how Yahweh has been speaking to them in the past and about their response, and to offer a chilling interpretation of current events. The new Babylonian king is Yahweh’s servant through whom he is going to fulfill his intention to take action against Judah (though he is *only* Yahweh’s servant, and his time will come). This climactic warning thus outlines:

vv. 1-2 introduction

vv. 3-7 the message (a) the indictment

v. 3 review:: Jeremiah’s prophesying, and people’s response

vv. 4-6 review: the prophets’ prophesying, and people’s response

v. 7 resumptive review: people’s response to Yahweh

vv. 8-11 a the message (b) the consequence

vv. 8-9a Yahweh’s summons to Nebuchadrezzar

vv. 9b-11a Yahweh’s action against Judah

vv. 11b-14 the message (c) the limitation – Babylon’s time will come

Much of the review recycles expressions that the scroll has made familiar: thus

vv. 4, 8 repeat from 7:13, 25-26;

v. 5 repeats from 18:11; 16:21; 7:7;

vv. 6-7 repeat from 13:10; 7:6, 19; 1:16

vv. 9 and 11 repeat from 16:16; 1:15; 18:16; 7:34

v. 10 repeats from 1:10; 7:34; 16:9

The summary sometimes repeats precise phrases, sometimes takes up words and formulates the statement slightly differently. Either way, the effect is indeed to recapitulate Jeremiah’s message over these decades in brief fashion.

**1-2** The opening, *the word that came to Jeremiah*,compares with the introductions in 7:1; 11:1; 14:1; 18:1; 21:1, and the continuation *about the entire people of Judah…* compares in particular with 21:1 in adapting the opening phrase so that it becomes a more dedicated introduction to Jer 25. The reference to *the entire people* (cf. 19:14) again indicates that everybody needs to listen to the message – not just people such as kings and prophets who were the direct focus in Jer 21 – 24. The reference to Judah expands on that point, though the addition of *all the people who lived in Jerusalem* is a reminder that they will bear the brunt of the calamity. More significant is the date, *the fourth year of Jehoiakim* as king of Judah, which is also *the first year of Nebuchadrezzar* as king of Babylon, the year 604. This significant date will recur in 36:1; 45:1; 46:2. “This seemingly innocuous date signals the arrival of Nebuchadrezzar’s reign of terror and the end of Judah’s preexilic world.”[[5]](#footnote-5) Dan 1:1 refers to Jehoiakim’s third year; differences between such dates are a nightmare to understand – they issue in part from differences in the way Judah and other peoples calculate years.[[6]](#footnote-6) In 605 Nebuchadrezzar had defeated the combined Assyrian and Egyptian forces at the Battle of Carchemish, which decisively established Babylon as the Middle Eastern superpower.[[7]](#footnote-7) On the subsequent abdication and death of his father Nabopolassar, Nebuchadrezzar became king. While the audience might not be expected to know about Carchemish, they would be able to work out the significance of this year marking the accession of the king who (politically and militarily speaking) will determine their fate. Whereas Assyria’s decline had left Judah in control of its own affairs, it will now again become a tribute-state. Politically, one could say that the interaction between Babylonian desire to control the Levant and Judahite desire to maintain its independence generates a clash of interests and a conflict that Judah can only lose. Theologically, one could say that Josiah’s reformation had not brought about a sufficiently profound change in Judah’s religious commitment and community life to forestall the necessity of Yahweh taking action against it, and Babylon proves to be Yahweh’s means of taking the action. Jer 20:4-6 had made that fact explicit for the first time, though we don’t know whether chronologically the Pashhur clash preceded or followed 604. Either way, here for the first time Babylon is named as the northern enemy mentioned but not identified in passages such as 1:14 and 13:20. So 605 and 604 are turning points; hence also the action described in Jer 36. In effect, the message related here summarizes the contents of the scroll to which Jer 36 refers. The relationship between Jer 25 and 36 (message and story) thus compares with the relationship between Jer 7 and 26. The link with Jer 36 also suggests another significance in the reference to *the entire people of Judah* and *the people who lived in Jerusalem*. According to Jer 36:5, Jeremiah cannot personally deliver the message and it is Baruch who does so. Jer 36 focuses on Baruch’s delivering it to the king and his staff but also and first describes his reading it to the entire people of Jerusalem and the people who have come from the Judahite towns on a fast day.

**3-7** The message will summarize Jeremiah’s preaching over more than two decades (see 1:2).[[8]](#footnote-8) The summary here is that it has been an exhortation to *please turn, each person, from his dire path.* There have not actually been a huge number of exhortations in the scroll (but see especially Jer 3). Prophets commonly presuppose that Yahweh’s message needs no explicit bidding to “turn” in order to indicate that Yahweh’s statements of intent are not merely information about the future but warnings to which people need to respond. There is thus no tension between “denouncing the corruption (moral, social, religious of the city and its people” and being “a preacher of repentance” who “announced the possibility of turning rather than the inevitability of destruction.”[[9]](#footnote-9) But people have not turned in response to the prophet. “His work had been useless.”[[10]](#footnote-10) Yahweh had been long-tempered for quite some years,[[11]](#footnote-11) and Jeremiah’s *speaking assiduously* had matched Yahweh’s *sending assiduously* (cf. 7:25). Only here is Jeremiah the subject of this expression. “Twenty-three years of truth-telling: nothing accomplished…. Still the ‘system’ remains intact.” But Jeremiah did not give up; and “what nobler life than one passed in heroic vindication of truth.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

**8-9a** Yahweh explicitly replaces Jeremiah as speaker, giving greater authority to what now follows.[[13]](#footnote-13) A revolutionary new statement comes in the description of *Nebuchadrezzar King of Babylon* (cf. 21:2; 22:25)as *my servant*; Yahweh’s speech “teems with robust and even shocking images.”[[14]](#footnote-14) “The devil and all the ungodly serve God.”[[15]](#footnote-15) The expression *my servant* is familiar enough. It can refer, among others, to Abraham, Moses, and Isaiah (e.g., Gen 26:24; Num 12:7; Isa 20:3), and especially to David (e.g., 2 Sam 3:18; 7:5, 8; 1 Kgs 11:13; 14:8; 2 Kgs 19:34; 20:6; Ps 88:4, 21 [3, 20]). But the current Davidic king has become rebel rather than servant, and Nebuchadrezzar’s becoming king and becoming Yahweh’s servant is when Davidides such as Jehoiakim cease to be king or Yahweh’s servant.[[16]](#footnote-16) The designation reflects more than Jehoiakim’s failure. The people as a whole have resisted one sending and will now be on the receiving end of another sending. They have resisted one set of servants; they will not be able to resist this servant.[[17]](#footnote-17) It is a reproach to them to call Nebuchadrezzar Yahweh’s servant; it reflects the way they have ignored God’s “real” servants.[[18]](#footnote-18) So the person who is serving Yahweh now, without being aware of it, is the imperial authority. In general terms the idea is not novel; Isa 10:7-32 spoke analogously about the Assyrian king, and Isa 44:24 – 45:7 will speak analogously about the Persian king who will bring some fulfillment of this chapter’s declarations concerning the fall of Babylon. But it is a new terminology. it does not imply a relationship that is “intimate” and not just “instrumental”;[[19]](#footnote-19) Yahweh does not talk to Nebuchadrezzar and Nebuchadrezzar does not talk to Yahweh. Yahweh is just using Nebuchadrezzar. But there are other implications in the description. It implies that Judah should not worry too much about Nebuchadrezzar. He is simply Yahweh’s servant.[[20]](#footnote-20) And Jeremiah will go on to affirm that his service has a limited duration. It is not the end of the story. Jacob is not to be afraid because it can still be called *my servant* (30:10; 46:27, 28) and Yahweh has not given up on the idea of David being *my servant*;[[21]](#footnote-21) will not break his pact with David *my servant* (33:21, 22, 26). Yet further, one might put the stress on the *my* in *my servant.* Nebuchadrezzar thought he was the servant of Nabu as the one who gave him “the just scepter to provide for all the inhabited world.”[[22]](#footnote-22) He doesn’t realize whose servant he really is. A further disturbing note is the observation that in this connection Judah’s waywardness will have negative implications for *all these nations around* – the *these* is anticipatory of the list to come later in the chapter.[[23]](#footnote-23) It is perhaps not surprising; it parallels the way Yahweh’s bringing trouble on Judah affects not only the leaders whom one might see as directly responsible for its waywardness but also the people as a whole, children as much as grown-ups. Yahweh’s action consistently involves collateral damage; it issues from humanity’s being bound up in the web of life together. While politically, the nations could seem just the unlucky victims of “the spillage of the invasion into adjacent states,”[[24]](#footnote-24) theologically the implication is that the failure of the people of God to respond to God can have implications for other people.

**9b** A further revolutionary statement comes in Yahweh’s declaration of intent to *devote* *them*. What follows indicates that *them* refers to *this country* and *the people who live in it*; Jeremiah will come back to the fate of the *nations* in v. 12. The verb (*ḥāram*) denotes giving something over to Yahweh (e.g., a piece of land) in unqualified and irreversible fashion (e.g., Lev 27:29). But it most commonly refers to a devoting that means killing; it applies especially to devoting the proceeds of war. Whether or not the verb’s sacral connotation gets lost in such contexts,[[25]](#footnote-25) Yahweh is turning on its head the instruction he once gave to Israel about its treatment of the Canaanites, portraying for Judah “a fantastic landscape of horror inspiring ruin and devastation.”[[26]](#footnote-26)

**10** Jeremiah includes a fourth telling and unprecedented phrase. *The sound of rejoicing and the sound of joy, the sound of groom and the sound of bride* (7:34; 16:9) are here complemented by *the sound of millstones and the light of lamp* (cf. Rev 18:22-23). The disaster will terminate not merely the occasional community rejoicing that accompanies a wedding but the entirety of community life. Milling flour is the first task of the day, and it is a noisy business; the lighting of a lamp marks the onset of evening. The cessation of both suggests gloom.[[27]](#footnote-27) If there is no milling and no light, there is no food, no eating, and no life.

**11b-12** *These nations* are then the *nations around* to whom v. 9a referred. Whereas their desolation may last forever (v. 9b, cf. 15:14; 17:4) – but one should allow for hyperbole – a limit is set to Babylon’s suzerainty. Its time will come. Yahweh’s promise relates directly not to the Judahites’ time in Babylon but the time of Babylon’s ruling the world. In due course, Yahweh will *attend* to it for its *waywardness*, and it too will become a *desolation*. The First Testament consistently treats nations such as Assyria and Babylon as both his agents and as destined to receive his attention for their waywardness. Thus theologically Jeremiah is both pro- and anti-Babylonian; Babylon is “both Yahweh’s servant (v. 9), and the one destined to drink last of all from the cup of wrath (v. 26).”[[28]](#footnote-28) *Seventy years* is not a term for a lifetime in the First Testament, even in Ps 90:10 which refers to seventy or eighty. Seventy suggests a full number (e.g., Exod 15:27; 24:1, 9; Judg 1:7; 8:30; 1 Sam 6:19; 2 Sam 24:15; 2 Kgs 10:1; Ezek 8:11), a substantial number but not an infinite one. Babylon will rule the nations for so long that hardly anyone alive will see the end of that rule, but its end will come. Seventy is not a number that suggests precision – seventy as opposed to sixty-nine or seventy-one. In an Assyrian inscription Marduk declared that Babylon would lie waste for seventy years, though he later changed his mind.[[29]](#footnote-29) Jeremiah’s point may include the conviction that Yahweh does not operate that way, at least not randomly – only in response to people’s turning (18:1-11). As it turned out, Babylonian hegemony did last for about seventy years, which naturally encouraged reflection on this figure. There are then various ways of determining the beginning and ending of the seventy years. And because the end of Babylonian hegemony meant the possibility of Judahites returning from exile and the possibility of the restoration of city and nation, seventy years becomes a term for Israel’s affliction (2 Chron 36:21; Zech 1:12; 7:5; Dan 9:2).[[30]](#footnote-30)

**13-14** Yahweh’s expectations of Babylon are evidently not unlike his expectations of Judah, and its fate will be the same. On one hand, Babylon is critiqued for its oppression. On the other, it is critiqued on account of *what their hands have made* (cf. vv. 6, 7). I take *this document* to be the Jeremiah scroll as a whole;[[31]](#footnote-31) the reference is like the allusions to “this commentary” that I occasionally make (see the next footnote). But LXX locates here the material about individual nations that comprises MT Jer 46 – 51 but LXX Jer 26 – 31,[[32]](#footnote-32) and *this document* could then refer to those chapters.

## (ii) The Chalice (25:15-29 [LXX 32:1-15])

15Because Yahweh, the God of Israel, has said this to me. Get this chalice of wine (fury)a from my hand and make them drink it,b all the nations that I am sending you to. 16They will drink and reelc and go crazy because of the sword that I am sending among them.

17So I got the chalice from Yahweh’s hand and made them drink it, all the nations that Yahweh sent me to: 18Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, its king and its officials, to make them a desolation and a ruin, a thing to whistle at and a formula of slighting, this very day;d 19Pharoah King of Egypt, his servants, his officials, his entire people, 20and the entire multi-ethnic group;e all the kings of the country of Uz,f all the kings of the country of the Philistines (Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and the remains of Ashdod), 21Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, 22all the kings of Tyre, all the kings of Sidon, the kings of the shores that are across the sea, 23Dedan, Tema, and Buz,g all the people who are clipped at the forehead, 24all the kings of Arabia, all the kings of the multi-ethnic grouph who dwell in the wilderness, 25all the kings of Zimri, all the kings of Elam, all the kings of Media, 26all the northern kings who are near or who are far in relation to each other – all the kingdoms of the earth that are on the face of the land. And the king of Sheshachi he will drink after them.

27You will say to them:j Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, has said this. Drink, get drunk, throw up, fall, and don’t get up again,k because of the sword that I am sending among you. 28When they refuse to get the chalice from your hand to drink, you will say to them, Yahweh of Armies has said this: you will definitely drink.l 29Because here am I: against the city over which my name is proclaimed, I am beginning to bring dire trouble, and you, you will really be free of guilt?m You will not be free of guilt, because a sword I am calling against all the people who live on earth (an affirmation of Yahweh of Armies).

In apposition to what precedes, *fury* looks like a word of explanation to ensure readers understand what the wine symbolizes.

The qatal verb continues from the imperative (DG 76a; JM 119l).

LXX renders *gā‘aš* “throw up” and *HALOT* notes other scatological possibilities, but *qāyā’* which definitely means “throw up” comes in v. 27; Vg, Aq, Sym, Tg assume something like “reel.”

LXX lacks *and a formula of slighting, this very day*; on the latter phrase, see the note on 11:5.

Literally, “mixture”; so also in v. 24.

LXX lacks *all the kings of the country of Uz*.

LXX has Ros for *Buz*.

LXX lacks *all the kings of Arabia* (*‘ărāb*),which is similar to *all the kings of the multi-ethnic group* (*hā‘ereb*), and also *all the kings of Zimri* in v. 25. J. G. Janzen suggests a conflate reading here (“Double Readings in the Text of Jeremiah,” *HTR* 60 [1967]: 433-47 [438]).

LXX lacks *and the king of Sheshach – he will drink after them.* Sheshach is a cryptic alternative name for Babylon (Tg; cf. 51:41): the second letter of the (consonantal) alphabet, *b*, is replaced by the second from the end, *š*, and the eleventh letter, *l*, is replaced by the eleventh from the end, *k*. R. C. Steiner revives the view that the alternative name was used to disguise the writer’s anti-Babylonian sentiments (“The Two Sons of Neriah and the Two Editions of Jeremiah in the Light of Two *Atbash* Code-Words for Babylon,” *VT* 46 [1996]: 74-84).

MT has a marker here, adding to the sense of drama about v. 27 (see the comment).

The yiqtol verb continues the imperative.

The infinitive precedes the finite verb, underlining its actuality; the usage recurs in the next verse.

*Nāqâ* niphal (see the note on the adjective *nāqî* at 2:34); there is no interrogative marker but the context indicates that the clause is a question (DG 152a; *TTH* 119γ; GK 150a; JM 161a).

Vv. 15-29 expands on vv. 12-14, detailing the nations to whom disaster is coming and doing so by means of the image of the chalice. The verses relate a visionary experience on Jeremiah’s part that compares with the visionary experience in 1:4-10. His getting hold of the chalice parallels that commission when Yahweh touched him in quasi-physical fashion. It’s quasi-physical in the sense that it’s not physical like the events related in Jer 13, 18, and 19. There other people could have seen the journeys with the shorts, the visit to the potter, and the breaking of the decanter (though the stories do not say that people did see them). Here, no one would have seen the action. But the effect is similar. On one hand, Yahweh and Jeremiah are doing something that puts Yahweh’s will into effect. And on the other, people get to know about it because Jeremiah tells the story. Thus it’s “not an acted sign, but an appeal to the imagination.”[[33]](#footnote-33) By telling the story, Jeremiah delivers the message to Judah. As far as we know, the nations would never know about it; it is designed for the Judahites and it is significant for them in various ways. While “God’s prophets today may well be similarly called to speak to the nations,”[[34]](#footnote-34) more certainly and more comparably, they will be called to speak about the nations to the people of God, like Jeremiah, and to remind it that God’s judgment begins with his family (1 Peter 4:17).

While vv. 15-29 links with what precedes, it moves in a different direction. In vv. 12-14, Babylon was in focus and the other nations were its victims. Here, the other nations are themselves the victims of Yahweh’s fury, presumably with the implication that they deserve dire trouble. The section thus makes for a further link with the account of Jeremiah’s commission. Here he is *the nations’ prophet* whom Yahweh is *sending* and who is appointed *over the nations, yes, over the kingdoms, to pull up and to pull down and to wipe out and to smash* (1:4-9). The two aspects of their destiny correspond Judah’s, both victim from whose attackers Yahweh will take redress and wrongdoer against whom Yahweh takes action.

The section outlines:

vv. 15-16 Jeremiah reports how Yahweh commissioned an action: what he is to do

vv. 17-26 Jeremiah reports how he did as he is told, giving a list of the nations affected

vv. 27-29 Jeremiah elaborates on the commission: what he is to say

The sequence (commission, action, interpretation) compares with that in 18:1-12.[[35]](#footnote-35)

**15-16** The *because* makes for a link between this section (which was originally independent) and what precedes, and makes clear that it elaborate on it. Drinking wine from a chalice as a symbol of receiving something from Yahweh is likely not a new image (e.g., Pss 16:5; 23:5; 116:13) and even the image of this chalice as toxic may not be new (e.g., Pss 11:6; 75:8 [9]; Hab 2:16; also Isa 19:14 without specific mention of a chalice). The image may have background in conventions associated with treaty-making between a big power and a subordinate power. In treaties the subordinate power often had to curse itself in specific ways if it should not keep its word, and many of the self-curses find parallels in the statements of doom in Jeremiah and elsewhere – statements of doom for Israel of the kind that appear here in v. 10, but especially statements of doom for other nations. They include the land being ravaged so that it becomes just a place where animals live and the devastation being so great that passing nations shudder in horror. A treaty between Esarhaddon and an underling includes their having poisonous water to drink, and one aspect of its oath-taking ceremony involved drinking from a common chalice.[[36]](#footnote-36) It wouldn’t be uprising if “the cup would be one of gladness as long as the vassal was faithful, but it would become a cup of reeling and staggering in the case of revolt.”[[37]](#footnote-37) Jeremiah extensively develops the negative chalice image (cf. e.g., Isa 51:17-23; Ezek 23:31-34; also Lam 4:21); it is perhaps also presupposed by the picture of pouring out wrath (e.g., 6:11; 10:25; 14:16; Hos 5:10; Pss 69:24 [25]; 79:6). Maybe the wine is spiked or maybe they are simply forced to drink too much; either way they *reel and go crazy* like a drunk. Yahweh had already commissioned Jeremiah to make the Judahites drunk, with devastating consequences (13:12-14), and the image of Yahweh as the “demonic host” at a banquet recurs from 23:15 (cf. 51:39). A good host will make sure that his guests are well-plied with wine. But it will turn out that this banquet resembles an occasion when plotters have been planning a coup and the guests are too drunk to be able to resist the sword when it comes. More literally, the pouring out of Yahweh’s fury means he is *sending* a *sword* among them. It will have a devastating affect. To say he is sending a sword (cf. 9:16 [15]; 24:10) is as shocking as describing Nebuchadrezzar as his servant. Only Ezekiel uses the word *sword* more often than Jeremiah (e.g., Jer 14:11-18; 15:1-9).

**17-18** Further aspects of the overlap but distinctiveness in relation to vv. 1-14 become clear in the list of Yahweh’s victims. First Judah itself appears; Jeremiah describes its fate in familiar terms (v. 9; also 18:16; 19:8; 22:5; 24:9). In Jeremiah’s vision, the disaster comes *this very day*; the implication need not be that in real time the year is 597 or 587 as opposed to 604, but it may be. Jeremiah perhaps depresses his listeners; they thought they were about to hear about trouble threatening their adversaries, for a change, but instead they get the same old same old. Putting Judah at the head of what was supposed to be a list of foreign nations compares with the casual insertion of Jerusalem in the list in Isa 13 – 23 (see Isa 22) or the placing of Judah and then Ephraim at the climax of Amos 1:3 – 2:16.

**19-26** There is not much encouragement, either, in the transition to talk of Egypt, because Judah viewed Egypt as its recurrent best hope; the *multi-ethnic group* will be foreigners living in Egypt who (e.g.) were there for trade or had taken refuge there as Judahites did.[[38]](#footnote-38) The subsequent list roughly corresponds to the peoples covered by Jer 46 – 49.

* *Uz*, however, does not feature in Jer 46 – 49; it might cover peoples to the southeast (it is associated with Esau/Edom in Gen 36:28; Lam 4:20; and cf. Job 1:1) or to the northeast (it is associated with Aram in Gen 10:23).
* *The country of the Philistines* (see Jer 47) covers peoples to the southwest. Ashdod had been besieged and eventually conquered by Psammeticus I, father of Neco, a few years previously;[[39]](#footnote-39) Gath, unmentioned, had been destroyed by the Assyrians a century previously.
* *Edom, Moab,* and *the Ammonites* (see Jer 27:3; 48 – 49) returns to the southeast and east, moving from south to north. Such peoples have been Judah’s allies,[[40]](#footnote-40) so there continues to be little encouragement here, though Moab and Ammon will in any case shortly join with Babylon in attacking Judah (2 Kgs 24:2).
* *Tyre* and *Sidon* (see 27:3; 47:4) and the other seacoast peoples moves to the north east, and talk of peoples *across the sea* looks across to Cyprus and Turkey and/or to Phoenician colonies further west such as Carthage.
* *Dedan, Tema,* and *Buz, all the people who are clipped at the forehead* (see 9:26 [25])*,* and *Arabia*, with *the multi-ethnic group* *who dwell in the wilderness* takes one across the desert to the east. The wilderness dwellers would also cover Kedar and “the encampments” in 49:28-33.
* *Elam* and *Media* and the unknown *Zimri* looks further in that direction.
* Almost finally, Jeremiah refers to the *northern* *kings*, which would cover Damascus (49:23-27) and the peoples listed in 51:27.

One way or another, Jeremiah has covered peoples in every direction, *all the kingdoms of the earth*, in a movement that broadly starts nearer home and gradually moves to nations on the edge of Judah’s world. Geographical logic and rhetorical force both take the passage finally to the nation that everyone would think of first as deserving Yahweh’s eventual attention. The unexpected substitute name *Sheshach[[41]](#footnote-41)* is hardly an attempt to conceal reference to Babylon, which is explicitly mentioned often enough. It is perhaps snide, adding to the sense of climax. No, Babylon’s king will not escape.

The text is a kind of Old Testament depiction of the universal judgment day, when the Lord will judge “all flesh.” Precisely because so many of the nations mentioned here seem remote from the biblical story or remote from the interests of the God of Israel, the text makes its particular claim about the lordship of Yahweh. The rule of the Lord of Israel is set within the affairs of nations and peoples, and there is no community outside of the sovereign activity of that God. We encounter here no narrow stream of holy history but a view of universal history that insists that the workings of divine justice are not confined to those who are called out and elected to God’s service. All human communities are called to account, and even the mightiest have no final autonomy. The political leaders who seem to be in charge of the affairs of the world stand under a higher power, whether they are aware of it or not…. In the interactions of nations, in the conflicts and upheavals, a transcendent governance is manifest.[[42]](#footnote-42)

But the message still concerns the present world; in this sense it’s not “apocalyptic.”[[43]](#footnote-43)

**27-29** Jeremiah’s elaboration on the commission belongs logically with vv. 15-16, but the order in which the report unfolds means that these verses bring the section to a climax. The commission indicated the significance of the visionary-symbolic action, though it did so only in general terms and it might seem to raise some questions – at least, Yahweh now answers some questions. As he fulfills his commission, what is Jeremiah to say to the nations about how long-lasting the drunkenness will be, about what happens if they refuse to drink, and about why it’s happening to them as well as to Judah, which is Yahweh’s and Jeremiah’s chief concern? In dealing with these matters, Jeremiah enhances the sense of climax with a double introduction: *you will say to them: Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, has said this*. The argument is now explicit, in *a fortiori* or *qal wahomer* form: if Yahweh is bringing dire trouble on his own city, how can he stop there when other peoples are just as deserving? His logic is not that they have ill-treated Judah. Most of them are far away peoples who have nothing to do with Judah. The passage is not about redress. It’s about Yahweh taking action against waywardness. In effect, Jeremiah is saying “all have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory” (Rom 3:23). None of them can say they are free of liability and guilt and therefore exempt from punishment. “The universal extent of the thinking about judgment to the entire world of peoples hangs together here with the extent and intensity of the concept of God.”[[44]](#footnote-44)

## (iii) The Prophecy (25:30-38 [LXX 32:16-24])

30So you – you will prophesy all these things to them. You will say to them:

Yahweh – from on high he roars,

from his sacred lair he gives voice,

he roars, yes roars,a against his habitat.

A shout like treaders he avers,b

to all the people who live on earth.

31A din has come to the end of the earth,

because Yahweh has an argument against the nations.

He is entering into the exercise of authority regarding all flesh;

the faithless – he has given them to the sword (Yahweh’s affirmation).c

32Yahweh of Armies has said this:

There, dire trouble is going out from nation to nation,

a big storm stirs from the furthest parts of the earth.d

33There will be people run through by Yahweh on that day,e

from the end of the earth to the end of the earth.

They will not be lamented

and they will not be gathered,f

They will not be buried –

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

34Howl, you shepherds, cry out,

grovel,h lords of the flock.

Because the days for your slaughtering have been fulfilled, and your scatterings,i

and you will fall like a valuable vessel.j

35Flight will fail from the shepherds,

escape from the lords of the flock.

36The sound of the shepherds’ cry,

the howl of the lords of the flock,

because Yahweh is destroying their pasture.

37The meadows where things were well have become still,

in the face of Yahweh’s angry blazing.

38He has abandoned his lair like a lion,

because their country has become a desolation,

In the face of the oppressor’s blazing,k

in the face of his angry blazing.l

The infinitive precedes the finite verb, underlining it.

See the note on 14:7.

MT has a section marker here.

This colon is a variant on 6:22b.

LXX has “Yahweh’s day,” which draws attention to the fact that MT speaks in terms of Yahweh doing something in ordinary time, within history, but offers a significant theological comment on such action within history.

LXX lacks this line.

V. 33b combines phrases from 8:2 and 16:4.

G. R. Driver’s translation, “Studies in the Vocabulary of the Old Testament I,” *JTS* 31 (1929-30): 275-84 (275-76); cf. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:681. See also *DCH*.

*Ûtәpûṣôtîkem* (lacking in LXX) looks like a mixed form, a cross between a verb and a noun, between “and your scatterings” and “and I will scatter you” (Allen, *Jeremiah*, 282).

For MT *kikәlî*,LXX implies *kә’ēlēh* “like rams,” which fits the context.

LXX has "the big sword” (partly assimilating to 46:16; 50:16), then lacks the final colon. Vg takes *hayyônâ* as the homonym “the dove.”

MT has a unit marker here.

A third time Yahweh makes his declaration about bringing calamity. Whereas the first section put most stress on disaster for Judah but also included the nations and the second included Judah but put more stress on the nations, here stress lies mainly on the nations; Judah is present, but its presence is understated. This final section brings together four poetic units:

vv. 30-31 a lion roars

a tricolon and three bicola

vv. 32-33 a big storm stirs

four bicola, the latter two running together.

vv. 34-35 shepherds are slaughtered and scattered

three bicola

vv. 36-38 a pasture is destroyed

a tricolon and three bicola, the last two involving enjambment.

**30-31** In Jer 4:7; 5:6, the northern invader was attacking Judah, but he was always the front man for Yahweh; now Yahweh is the lion that *roars*. The roar comes not from Zion, as in Amos 1:2; 3:8, but from the heavens, *from on high*. While his *sacred lair* (*mā‘ôn*) could simply denote his dwelling and could refer to the temple, the noun can denote an animal’s den, which makes sense in this context, and it more often denotes his heavenly abode, which also makes sense in the parallelism. In fact he roars *against* his earthly *habitat* (*nāweh*), which can also denote a fold or abode more broadly (e.g., 10:25; 31:23), but most occurrences refer to the abode of animals, especially sheep (e.g., 23:3; 33:12; 49:19, 20; 50:7, 19, 44, 45). Here. Jeremiah speaks a little quixotically, as if the habitat or fold belongs to the lion. The thing signified is affecting the formulation of the metaphor; Judah’s country does belong to Yahweh. His roaring *against his habitat* adds to the significance of the fact that the roar does not come *from* Zion.[[45]](#footnote-45) Arguably Amos is not so different, as there the roar from Zion also becomes a roar at Zion; Jeremiah reverses the sequence with Zion the object first and the other nations later*.* Either way, there is no escape from this message for Israel. Jeremiah does not maintain the lion image: Yahweh becomes a man shouting, as loudly as people treading grapes, which people do with loud enthusiasm (48:33; Isa 16:10), so again Jeremiah is being quixotic. This shout is a solemn, aggressive, forceful one, that goes to the entire earth. One might have thought that the nations were simply to be witnesses to Yahweh’s action against Judah. Actually it transpires that the *din* Yahweh causes with his loud voice is to reach the entire earth because he has an argument with it (here Jeremiah may be adapting Hos 4:1). He wishes to confront its people in court in order to enter into the exercise of authority in relation to them (cf. 2:35);[[46]](#footnote-46) they are not just witnesses or members of the court. The middle two lines of vv. 30-31 work abb’a’, the cola about averring and about an argument being parallel, as are the intervening two cola:

a shout like treaders he avers

to all the people who live on earth –

a din has come to the end of the earth

because Yahweh has an argument against the nations

He wants to meet up with them in court, but the case is already decided. In his mind he has already *given them to the sword* (the qatal is anticipatory).[[47]](#footnote-47) It is not because they are simply unlucky. They are *the faithless.* Yes, “all have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory” (Rom 3:23).[[48]](#footnote-48) So it is not just Judah that is the object of Yahweh’s attack. Once again Jeremiah obscures the line between the chosen people and the rest of the world. “Both Jews and Greeks, all are under sin” (Rom 3:9).

**32-33** The second unit restates the point. It begins again from the worldwide nature of what Yahweh intends, but moves to another image: *a big storm stirs from the furthest parts of the earth*. The worldwide reference contrasts with the Judah reference of 6:22b. No, it is not just Judah that will be the storm’s victim (23:19). *From the end of the earth to the end of the earth* makes the same point, as it repeats a phrase from 12:12 where it denoted “from the end of the land to the end of the land.” It’s worldwide, but once more not apocalyptic.[[49]](#footnote-49) Jeremiah again pictures people *run through* by the sword, and like Judahites, their suffering will not cease with their death (see 8:2; 16:4).

**34-35** Once again Jeremiah changes the imagery in what looks like a third originally-separate unit. As elsewhere, *shepherds* refers to leaders, the *lords of the flock* which comprises the people they are in charge of and are supposed to care for. In the context, they are the leaders of the nations, though given Judah’s inclusion in vv. 15-29, Judahite leaders might be unwise to assume that the warning does not apply to them. They are to *grovel* in anguish and degradation; the verb usually refers to rolling in dirt or ash (6:26). They will do so in light of their awareness that their days are numbered. Instead of their flock being slaughtered and/or scattered (10:21; 23:1-2), they will be slaughtered and/or scattered. The idea of the fall and shattering of a valuable vessel is a compressed image. One looks after a valuable pot because of its importance, to make sure it does not fall, and one looks after it more carefully than an everyday one. These leaders think they are valuable and important (Tg has them “coveted like valuable vessels”) but they will fall. There will be no escape. *Flight will fail from the shepherds* as “flight will fail from the swift” in Amos 2:14.

**36-38** The final unit also works with the shepherd imagery, but takes it in another direction. Now the shepherds are distraught not because of what is happening to them but because of what is happening to their pasture, as shepherds would be. Their pasture’s well-being is vital to their work. One is then to imagine the nations’ leaders lamenting what has happened to their country. They had been pasturing in *meadows where things were well* (meadows of *šālôm*) but Yahweh has burnt up these meadows with his wrath. There are no shouts of shepherds or bleatings of sheep now. It’s a shame they didn’t cry out to God before the dire trouble came, rather than leaving it until afterwards.[[50]](#footnote-50) The unit closes with a return to the image of Yahweh as the lion. Jeremiah knows that the lion has *abandoned* (in the sense of left, gone out from) his lair, because he can see the results in his mind’s eye: the *country has become a desolation* when it should be meadow. “Farms, gardens, businesses, the exercise of crafts, the exchange of contracts, weddings, meetings, festivals, enjoyments, and the like”:[[51]](#footnote-51) it’s all ceased. The unit and the section and the chapter and the first half of the Jeremiah scroll come to an end with a solemn and horrifying emphasis on Yahweh’s destructive wrath.[[52]](#footnote-52) Yes, “the text is a kind of Old Testament depiction of the universal judgment day.”[[53]](#footnote-53) One might compare teaching such as Jesus’s in Matt 24 – 25 or Paul’s in 2 Thess 1; Jeremiah’s emphasis here on Yahweh being active in the present and in history is a reminder that Jesus and Paul had a similar expectation, and they were not talking about a distant future end-of-the-world event.

# Part Three: The Die Cast and/or the Possibility of Restoration (26:1 – 36:32)

Jer 26 sees a sharp, unannounced transition from messages to stories, which will dominate the rest of the scroll – at least through Jer 26 – 45. They form two sequences. The first, Jer 26 – 36, is framed by stories about the time of Jehoiakim, but the bulk of them (Jer 27 – 29 and 32 – 34) concern the time of Zedekiah. The stories are mostly gloomy, but in the middle of this first sequence is a series of promises and stories about the restoration of Judah and Ephraim. Taking chronology into account, Part Three thus outlines:

26 Jehoiakim: how Jeremiah almost lost his life

27 – 29 Zedekiah: Jeremiah, the envoys, the prophets, and the exiles

30 – 31 Undated: turnarounds for Judah and Ephraim

32 – 33 Zedekiah: a gesture of confidence in a desperate context

34 Zedekiah: a threat and a promise, and a promise, a failure, and a threat

35 – 36 Jehoiakim: how the Rechabites kept their word, and how Jeremiah lost his scroll

“The oracles of doom in chapters, 2 – 24 [sic] practice against the dramatized Jerusalem community a withering hostility toward hope.”[[54]](#footnote-54) It is in this context that “the deferral of hope” which has characterized the first half of the scroll makes room for “the revival of hope.”[[55]](#footnote-55)

# Part 3(a): Stories about Prophets (26:1 – 29:32 [LXX 33:1 – 36:32)

Although Jer 26 marks a switch from messages to stories, the theme picks up from where Jer 1 – 25 almost ended, in that Part Three (a) speaks of prophets Yahweh sent, of prophets he did not send, and of the difference between them, and also goes on to spell out the implications of the *seventy years* declaration in 25:11-12. It comprises four stories.

Jer 26 Jeremiah almost loses his life after confronting the Judahites in the temple

Jer 27 He bids Judah submit to Babylon and not expect the temple artefacts’ speedy return

Jer 28 Hananiah loses his life after confronting Jeremiah in the temple

Jer 29 Jeremiah bids the exile community to settle down and not expect their speedy return

The four chapters thus follow an aba’b’ sequence, with the second element of each pair of chapters going beyond the first, in the manner of parallelism: the return of accoutrements and the return of people, then the threat of a prophet’s death and an actual prophet’s death. Chronologically Jer 26 is set at the beginning of Jehoiakim’s reign but Jer 27 – 29 in Zedekiah’s time, and these three chapters also have linguistic features in common that suggests they had a common origin before they became part of the Jeremiah scroll.[[56]](#footnote-56) They usually have the spelling Nebuchadnezzar rather than Jeremiah’s usual Nebuchadrezzar (but with some variation among manuscripts), they often spell names such as Jeremiah as ending in –*yah* instead of the more usual -*yahu*, they call Jeremiah *the prophet* more often than the Jeremiah scroll usually does. They are formulated “against the revolutionary movement in the year 594”[[57]](#footnote-57) and they reflect “conflicting theologies of hope.”[[58]](#footnote-58)

# How Jeremiah Almost Lost His Life (26:1 – 27:1a [LXX 33:1-24])

Jer 26 tells the story of what issued from Jeremiah’s delivering the message about the temple recorded in Jer 7.[[59]](#footnote-59) Its underlying question is, can a prophet really announce disaster (*Unheil*) against Jerusalem?[[60]](#footnote-60) The account of Jeremiah’s commission in 1:4-19 warned that he would be under attack but promised that Yahweh would protect him. Did he get attacked, and did he get protected? In this first story in Jer 26 – 29 Jeremiah gets into trouble that might lead to his death, but gets out of trouble and escapes the threat to his life. As the beginning of the second half of the Jeremiah scroll it is a narrative equivalent to 1:4-19, giving an alternative picture of Jeremiah’s danger and safety.[[61]](#footnote-61) But it also fits with the general nature of Jer 1 – 25, which has suggested that Jeremiah lived a risky life. He was against everyone – king, people in government, priests, prophets, ordinary people. This story is then interested in what happens to Jeremiah at the hands of his people for the same reason as the poetry in Jer 11 – 20. He brings Yahweh’s word by embodying what happens to it as well as by declaring it. Jer 26 tells a story about people’s response to Yahweh’s word. “The issue is not so much conflict among the prophets or between Jeremiah and his public as it is the fate of Jeremiah's message, seen now as the true word of God. Will the word be heeded or ignored?”[[62]](#footnote-62) The story’s implication is similar to that of the poetry. It indicates how Yahweh’s word was not silenced.

1At the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim ben Josiah King of Judah, this word camea from Yahweh.

2Yahweh has said this to me: Stand in the courtyard of Yahweh’s house and speak againstb all the towns ofc Judah, the people who are coming to bow down in Yahweh’s house, all the words that I’m ordering youd to speak to them – don’t cut out a word. 3Perhaps they will listen and turn each from his dire path, and I will relent concerning the dire thing that I am intending to do to them in the face of the dire nature of their practices. 4So you will say to them: Yahweh has said this. If you do not listen to me so as to walk by my instruction that I have put before you, 5listening to the words of my servants the prophets whom I am sending to you, sending them assiduouslye – but you haven’t listened – 6then I will make this house like Shiloh, and this city I will make into a formula of slighting for all the nations on earth.f

7The priests and the prophetsg and the entire people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in Yahweh’s house. 8Then, as Jeremiah finished speaking all that Yahweh had ordered him to speak to the entire people, the priests and the prophets and the entire people took hold of him, saying: You will definitely die.h 9Why have you prophesied in Yahweh’s name: like Shiloh – so will this house become, and this city – it will be a waste, without anyone living there? So the entire people congregated against Jeremiah in Yahweh’s house. 10The Judahite officials heard these things, went up from the king’s house to Yahweh’s house, and sat in the entrance of Yahweh’s gateway (the new one).i 11The priests and the prophets said to the officials and to the entire people: A death sentence for this man, because he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your ears.

12Jeremiah said to all the officials and to the entire people: Yahweh – he sent me to prophesy to this house and to this city all the words that you have heard. 13So now, make your paths and your practices good, and listen to the voice of Yahweh your God, so that Yahweh may relent regarding the dire thing that he has spoken against you. 14Me – here am I, in your hand. Do to me in accordance with what is good and in accordance with what is right in your eyes. 15Yet you will definitely acknowledge that if you are going to put me to death, that it is the blood of a man free of guilt that you are putting upon yourselves and against this city and against the people who live in it, because in truth Yahweh sent me to you to speak in your ears all these words.j

16So the officials and the entire people said to the priests and to the prophets: There is no death sentence for this man, because it is in the name of Yahweh our God that he has spoken to us.

17Some people from among the elders of the country got up and said to the entire assembly of the people, 18Micahk the Morashtite, he was prophesying in the days of Hezekiah King of Judah, and he said to the entire people of Judah:

Yahweh of Armies has said this:

Zion – as open country it will be plowed,

Jerusalem – ruins it will become,

the mountain of Yahweh’s house – shrinesl in a forest.

19Did Hezekiah King of Judah and all Judah actually put him to death?m He was in awe of Yahweh, wasn’t he, and he sought Yahweh’s goodwill,n and Yahweh relented of the dire thing that he had spoken of against them. But we are going to undertake a big dire action against ourselves.

20Also, a man was prophesying awayo in Yahweh’s name, Uriah ben Shemaiah from Kiriath-jearim. He prophesied against this city andp against this country in accordance with all Jeremiah’s words, 21and King Jehoiakim and all his strong menq and all his officials heard his words. The kingr sought to put him to death, but Uriah heard and was afraid.s He fled and came to Egypt. 22But King Jehoiakim sent men to Egypt, Elnathan ben Achbor and men with him, to Egypt.t 23They got Uriah out of Egypt and made him come to King Jehoiakim. He struck him down with the sword and threw his corpse into the graves of the ordinary people.u

24However, the hand of Ahikam ben Shaphan – it was with Jeremiah so that no one could give him into the hand of the people to put him to death,v 27:1at the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim ben Josiah King of Judah.w

Syr adds “to Jeremiah,” a more predictable reading.

The chapter alternates between *‘al* and *’el* with an “odd” fluidity (McKane, *Jeremiah* 2:661). I have taken *al* to mean *against* or *upon* except in vv. 5 and 15, but *’el* also to mean *against* or *concerning* in vv. 3, 5, 9, 11b, 12b, 15, 19.

LXX lacks “the towns of.”

The qatal verb is declarative/performative, denoting what Yahweh is doing at this moment (see 1:5 and the note).

See the note and comment on 7:13.

MT has a marker here.

To make explicit the contrast with *prophets* in v. 5, LXX calls them “false prophets,” as it did in 6:13 (see the comment on 6:13 and on 2:8); the translation recurs in 28:1; 29:1, 8.

The infinitive precedes the finite verb, underlining the fact. The idiom recurs in v. 15.

MT has a section marker here. Tg, Syr, and some mss of LXX and Vg have “the entrance of the new gateway of Yahweh’s house,” as in 36:10, a more predictable reading.

MT has a section marker here.

K has Micaiah (cf. 1 Kgs 22).

LXX has singular (cf. 7:31).

In a question, the infinitive absolute before the finite verb perhaps thus differs slightly in implication from the use in vv. 8 and 15 (DG 101a).

On *ḥālâ*,see the comment.

*Nābā’* hitpael as in 14:14; 23:13; 26:26-27, not niphal as in v. 11, 12, 20b and elsewhere. There can hardly be a pejorative implication for the narrator, though possibly he hints at the view of the people who will attack Uriah.

LXX lacks *against this city and*, which in MT underlines the parallel between Uriah and Jeremiah.

LXX lacks *and all his strong men*; they appear with Hezekiah’s officials in 2 Chr 32:3, so their mention here adds to the parallel (and contrast) with Hezekiah (Scalise, *Jeremiah* *26 –* 52, 4).

LXX has “they.”

LXX lacks these two verbs.

LXX omits v. 22b; the overlap within the verse may indicate that MT combines two readings (S. Talmon, “Double Readings in the Masoretic Text,” *Textus* 1 [1960]: 144-84 [180]).

LXX has “the grave of the children of his people” – his family tomb.

MT has a unit marker here.

MT makes *at the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim ben Josiah King of Judah* the beginning of Jer 27, but Jer 27 goes on to refer to an event in Zedekiah’s reign. Reading “Zedekiah” for “Jehoiakim” (so Syr and some medieval Hebrew mss [*BHS*])solves the problem, but it looks like simply a later correction (E. Ulrich, “Jeremiah 27:1-10,” in S. W. Crawford et al., “Sample Editions of the Hebrew Bible,” *VT* 58 [2008]: 352-66 [365]). I take it as a chronological footnote to Jer 26; it joins the occurrence in 26:1a in forming a bracket around the chapter (cf. A. C. Osuji, *Where is the Truth* [Leuven: Peeters, 2010], 121). Jerome (*Jeremiah*,166) takes the whole of 27:1 as a footnote to Jer 26, but the closing *lē’mōr* in 27:1b excludes this understanding.

While the account is intelligible as an account of how Jeremiah’s trial could actually have proceeded,[[63]](#footnote-63) “the art of storytelling is on display here.”[[64]](#footnote-64) The story unfolds:[[65]](#footnote-65)

Act One

How Jeremiah got into trouble that might lead to his death

vv. 1-6 Scene One

How Yahweh commissions Jeremiah to threaten disaster to temple and city.

In the context of the scroll, little that we don’t already know happens in this scene.

1. Yahweh gives Jeremiah a typical commission, to make the kind of critique that he has been making for decades.
2. His specific threat is the one he issued in 7:1-15, except that the city now features.

vv. 7-11 Scene Two

How priests and prophets and people determine to have Jeremiah put to death.

In a way nothing new happens here, too, in that the scroll has already reported threats on Jeremiah’s life. But this declaration of intent is more concerted.

1. It involves two of the main power groups, the priests and prophets, and also the people as a whole; the first part of the scene ends with the entire people gathered aggressively around Jeremiah.
2. It then involves the palace officials who are nearer to having the authority to decide on a death penalty, with the king hovering in the background; the second part of the scenes ends with another declaration that Jeremiah should be put to death, though the people have changed sides.

The plot thus builds tension though Act One

Act Two

How Jeremiah got out of trouble and escaped the threat to his life

vv. 12-15 Scene One

How Jeremiah urges the officials and the people not to put him to death.

In his commission Yahweh had told Jeremiah he must stand firm and say what Yahweh bids him say and here he does so. His argument is:

1. Yahweh sent him
2. They must turn, and Yahweh will relent of his threat
3. They can put him to death, but they will be shedding innocent blood
4. Yahweh sent him – really.

v. 16 Scene Two

How officials and people determine that he should not be put to death because he spoke in Yahweh’s name.

Three Postscripts or Codas[[66]](#footnote-66)

The tension in the story is thus resolved. The story has answered the question that underlies it: Jeremiah did get attacked, but he stood firm and he did escape. It could thus have ended with v. 16, but its answer has raised some further questions.

1. 17-19 Question One

What really made the assembly change its mind?

Another group of players, the elders, appear, with a reminder about Micah, who spoke in similar terms as Jeremiah, and about how Judah responded to him.

vv. 20-23 Question Two

Do prophets always get rescued in that way?

No: here is a story about how the king himself did put another prophet to death. This coda underscores the fact that Jeremiah was in real danger.

v. 24 – 27:1a Question Three

So was Yahweh fulfilling his side of the commission in 1:4-19?

Yes, but though it was Ahikam who did the work.

Those questions are thereby answered, though as usual such answers themselves raise more questions: e.g., who are these elders, and what was the king’s attitude to the attack on Jeremiah, and who is this Ahikam and what did he do?[[67]](#footnote-67)

Who would be interested in this story? Who would the curator want to listen to it? It vindicates both Jeremiah and Yahweh, relating how both parties were faithful to the terms of the relationship set up nearly twenty years previously. That implication would hold even if, perhaps especially if, it also implies that Yahweh is active via human agents such as the provincial elders and Ahikam. Set at the beginning of Jehoiakim’s reign and at the beginning of the second half of the scroll, it opens up how things will be in Jehoiakim’s reign, and in Zedekiah’s reign. It would provide a further basis for people to take Jeremiah’s message seriously, in the reign of Jehoiakim, where the story is set, or any time up to 587, or after 587 when the possibility of taking this message seriously had a new profile. It also suggests that the people as a whole, the officials of Judah, and the king (all of whom in different ways have an ambiguous position in the story) need to make up their mind what stance they will take to Jeremiah’s message. And people in positions of leadership or influence such as Ahikam and the elders need to accept responsibility to stand up and be counted. On the other hand, the community needs to be wary of priests and prophets, who have made up their mind about their stance; they were powerful groups in the time of Jehoiakim, and in the time of Zedekiah (even though many have now been taken off to Babylon). After 587, the prophets have been discredited, but Jeremiah has to continue to be courageous in speaking boldly and continues to be under pressure.

**1** Historically, Jehoiakim’s reign is a “watershed” moment,[[68]](#footnote-68) and the *beginning* of his reign in 609 is thus a telling moment. *Beginning* may be a quasi-technical expression, denoting the part-year that precedes the first full calendar year of his reign. The famous fourth year (25:1) has not yet arrived, but evidently any positive results from Josiah’s reformation have disappeared, possibly because it would be known and evident from the beginning that Jehoiakim was unsympathetic to his father’s reforms.[[69]](#footnote-69) According to 2 Kgs 23:31-37, the Egyptians made Jehoiakim king in place of his brother Jehoahaz, presumably on the assumption that he would toe the Egyptian line in a way that his father had not and in a way that the Egyptians plausibly assumed that Jehoahaz would not; Jehoahaz had been the people’s choice to follow Josiah. And Jehoiakim does pay tribute to Egypt and does make sure that the people shell out to make it possible. Given how Jehoiakim’s reign would turn out, this story lays out the stance Jeremiah will need to take to that reign, and constitutes an introduction to the dynamics of the next decade or two on which subsequent stories will expand.

**2** Jeremiah is to stand in the public space in front of the temple proper, and deliver a message to the crowd. The occasion is evidently some special one when people from all over Judah are present – a festival or a fast. Perhaps they would be put out that they come all this way for a festival and then get lambasted by a prophet.[[70]](#footnote-70) While Yahweh often tells Jeremiah to communicate all his words, only here does he add the apparently redundant gloss *do not withhold a word*, which reminds one of Moses (Deut 4:2; 12:32 [13:1]). Yahweh’s bidding hardly implies a worry that he might be tempted to do so; it rather underlines the importance of the mission and heightens the drama.

**3** As usual, Yahweh’s threats aim not merely to inform them of a fate that will follow come what may, but to get them to *turn* – though that aim is usually implicit rather than explicit, as is the case in Jonah’s preaching and in the exposition of the point in 18:1-12. The openness of Yahweh’s stance and the reality of Yahweh’s hopes is suggested by his *perhaps* (cf. Luke 20:13).[[71]](#footnote-71) On the other hand, while the possibility of relenting takes up 18:1-12, the *perhaps* recognizes that it cannot be taken for granted; Yahweh can get tired of relenting (15:6). The two elements of the message are different from the ones that characterize Jeremiah’s poetic messages, which classically comprise (a) an indictment (b) a threat, often introduced by a “therefore.” Here the elements are:

(a) you must listen and turn from your dire path

(b) then I will relent of my dire threat.

**4-6** Yahweh then spells out his message again more in keeping with that other pattern, at slightly greater length, though still briefly; “by radically abridging the sermon to three verses (26:4-6), the narrator himself ironically disregards Yahweh's warning not to trim a word. This procedure reveals, of course, that the sermon is not the point of interest here.”[[72]](#footnote-72) In light of the abbreviation, the reference to the city is noteworthy as an addition in relation to 7:1-15. The summary does not include the positive promises that attach to turning in 7:3-7, only the promise that Yahweh will cancel the threats expressed in 7:8-15.

1. if you don’t listen and walk by my instruction and listen to my prophets (as you have not)
2. then I will implement my intention to devastate temple and city.

Yahweh thus mentions two sources or vehicles of his speaking to his people, his instruction (see 2:8; 6:19; 8:8; 16:11) and the words of his prophets (mentioned in a positive connection in 7:25; 25:4). One walks by the instruction by listening to the prophets. Further, “people hear about walking in Yahweh’s law from the priests, but it is the prophets who call for a return to the law when the way has been lost.”[[73]](#footnote-73) A difference over against 7:25 and 25:4 is that there Yahweh spoke of having sent prophets in the past; here he speaks of an ongoing and thus present *sending*, which puts the people listening to the story into the position of needing to think about the way they are responding to prophets who are speaking to them now. It suggests the prayer:

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast been pleased not only to make known thy will once by the Law, but also to add more light by thy holy prophets… that we may not be deaf nor tardy to hear, but promptly submit ourselves to thee, and so suffer ourselves to be ruled by thy word, that through our whole life we may testify that thou art indeed our God, we being thy people.[[74]](#footnote-74)

**7** One would have expected a reference to Jeremiah delivering his message, but there is none. The chapter’s dynamics compare with those of 13:1-11 (where there is no reference to people seeing or hearing about Jeremiah’s symbolic act), 19:1-13 (where there is in addition no reference to his undertaking the act), or 25:15-29 (where there is no mention of an actual chalice or of anyone drinking). Part of the logic is that fact that all the stories are designed to speak to listeners. Further, although Jer is a story about Jeremiah, it is “less concerned with the prophet himself than with the forces surrounding him,” with “the society of Jerusalem in the twilight years of the Judean monarchy.”[[75]](#footnote-75)

**8** The mention of *the priests and the prophets* bears an ironic relationship to what has preceded, because Yahweh’s teaching was the business of the priests and Yahweh’s word was the business of the prophets (cf. 18:18), but these priests and prophets have not been encouraging people to walk by Yahweh’s teaching and have not been declaring words that actually came from Yahweh – hence their taking a lead in the hostility to Jeremiah. At this stage the people as a whole are also involved; they have been well-taught. Their words carry an irony, because the people who are liable to the death penalty are the people who go after other gods and encourage Israel to do so.

**9a** ButJeremiah “announces the violation of the inviolable.”[[76]](#footnote-76) It’s not surprising there is a reaction. How could Jeremiah claim that Yahweh was saying such a thing? Yahweh would surely not declare that temple and city were going to be destroyed; they are places he has made a commitment to: see e.g., Ps 132:13-14. Jeremiah’s words clash specifically with Ps 78:67-68 which speak of Yahweh replacing Shiloh by Zion. (Theories vary over whether those psalms would be earlier or later than this story, but the knowledge that Yahweh had made a commitment to city and temple would any case be realities in Jeremiah’s day; it had been vindicated a century previously in their deliverance from Sennacherib.) Jeremiah must be being insolent and presumptuous in making such a declaration in Yahweh’s name, and such speaking makes one liable to death (Deut 18:20).

**9b-10** The description of how the people *congregated* against Jeremiah sums up vv. 7-9a though it carries its own irony – they were supposedly gathered in the temple as a different kind of congregation. The royal palace is down the hill from the temple, so the royal officials go up to the temple from there. Tg calls this gateway the eastern gateway, which could refer to the one in 2 Kgs 15:35,[[77]](#footnote-77) the newest gateway as far as we know. It will feature again in 36:10; we don’t know whether it is the gateway mentioned in 20:2. One might wonder why the officials weren’t in the temple,[[78]](#footnote-78) but their late appearance heightens the drama. Temple security wasn’t their business and deciding blasphemy cases wasn’t the king’s business (cf. 1 Kgs 21).[[79]](#footnote-79) On the other hand, what follows is not a formal trial,[[80]](#footnote-80) and given that Jeremiah is in danger of lynching, it might not be unreasonable for the officials to come to investigate when they hear or hear of a disturbance.

**11** Jeremiah has spoken of what Yahweh will do and of what they must do. They leave out Yahweh and they leave out their own responsibility.[[81]](#footnote-81) “His opponents do not claim that his word is false, only that it is prohibited.”[[82]](#footnote-82) But “here religion stands against religion. Both parties believe they can claim the weight of the tradition for themselves.”[[83]](#footnote-83) The narrator does hint that the people as whole are less committed to getting Jeremiah put to death than the priests and prophets are, and v. 16 will confirm this hint.

**12-16** Jeremiah responds with a bold statement whose implication is that Yahweh’s having sent him means he has not committed a capital offense.[[84]](#footnote-84) On that basis he simply reaffirms his message, then declares that he speaks *in truth* about having been sent. So he has not spoken with presumption and does not fall foul of Deut 18:19-22.[[85]](#footnote-85) It’s not really a defense but an assertion. He speaks with authority (cf. Matt 7:29). But he affirms that they will deserve death is they put him to death. Whereas there might have seemed to be an impasse, puzzlingly the argument comes to a conclusion. The people as a whole and the officials are somehow persuaded; they do come out well from the story.

**17-18** Chronologically and logically the intervention of *the elders of the country* likely belongs before v. 16 and explains it;[[86]](#footnote-86) First Testament stories often work like movies in moving forwards and then backwards in time and giving people the result of events and then the events themselves by way of explanation. The elders who appear as additional participants in the drama will be senior figures in towns such as Bethlehem, Hebron, Morashah, and Lachish, members of the decision-making body there present because people from all over Judah are in Jerusalem for the feast or fast. Perhaps the implication is that leaders in the Judahite towns are less degenerate than Jerusalem leaders. It may be no coincidence that they appeal to what happened to Micah, from one of their towns. His warning comes in Mic 3:12. The only other occurrence of *ruins* (‘*iyyîm*) apart from Mic 1:6 comes in Ps 79:1 (perhaps it also refers back to Mic 3:12).

**19** *He sought Yahweh’s goodwill* is more literally “he got Yahweh’s face to be pleasant or sweet.” The verb (*ḥālâ* piel) often denotes the attempt to get someone to be favorable or merciful when one has surrendered any right to favor or mercy and deserves chastisement: on Sinai, Moses turns to Yahweh in this way, and it leads to Yahweh relenting (Exod 32:11-14). While this connotation fits here, there is no reference in Micah or in 2 Kings to Hezekiah’s seeking Yahweh’s goodwill, though in general terms it fits the story’s dynamics (see 2 Kgs 18:3-6; 19:14-19; 20:1-3). But anyway, the elders don’t quite say that turning to Yahweh was what led into Yahweh’s relenting. What they do imply is that their ancestors knew that Yahweh’s declaration of inescapable doom did not mean what it said.[[87]](#footnote-87) “The text assumes that repentance is the proper response to harsh words of destruction.”[[88]](#footnote-88) “Everything hinged on the way prophecy was received.”[[89]](#footnote-89) And in the years up to 587, the story would urge the administration to follow Hezekiah’s example.[[90]](#footnote-90)

**20-21.** There is no indication of the chronological relationship between what now follows and what preceded; the relationship is thematic. The chapter recognizes that not every prophet escapes as Jeremiah did. The vignette reminds people of what might have happened, and of an alternate possibility regarding the way the main plot line might have developed.[[91]](#footnote-91) It brings out what had been “the perilous, indeed deadly, gravity of Jeremiah’s situation.”[[92]](#footnote-92) Jer 26 now turns out to be “a story of three prophets.”[[93]](#footnote-93) Kiriath-jearim (“Forest Town,” modern Abu Ghosh) is ten miles west of Jerusalem; maybe it’s significant that Uriah is another person like Micah and the elders (and Jeremiah) who’s not a Jerusalemite. Jehoiakim’s attitude to Uriah stands in contrast with Hezekiah’s to Micah. It presumably has political implications. Uriah *prophesied… in accordance with all Jeremiah’s words,* and we know the kind of thing Jeremiah said about Jehoiakim (22:13-19). It’s therefore not surprising if the king declined to let Uriah et away with it.[[94]](#footnote-94) The king got no mention in vv. 10-19, which raises the question of what was his attitude to Jeremiah; this vignette points towards an answer Jeremiah needs to be wary of. But in the Jeremiah scroll, Jeremiah and Jehoiakim never meet – presence and absence are reversed in Jer 36.[[95]](#footnote-95)

**22-23** Elnathan appears again in 36:12, 25 urging Jehoiakim not to burn the 604 scroll. The contrast points to the tricky positon of a king’s staff in being under obligation to him and his policies but also being under obligation to take Yahweh seriously: see the references to the *officials* in (e.g.) 1:18; 2:26; 8:1; 24:8; 32:32; 36:11-19; 37:14-15; 38:1-4. Here his job is to get Uriah extradited.[[96]](#footnote-96) Perhaps taking refuge in the country whose leader had put Jehoiakim on the throne was not so wise.[[97]](#footnote-97) Uriah received a prophet’s “reward” (Matt 5:10-12).[[98]](#footnote-98) The graves of the ordinary people who had no family tomb were apparently in the Kidron Ravine (2 Kgs 23:6): Uriah “was not only persecuted whilst he lived, but his persecutors… denyed unto him the honour of a Prophets buriall.”[[99]](#footnote-99) Although Jer 26 implies a promise about Yahweh’s message, it acknowledges ambiguities in that connection. People’s response to Yahweh’s word varies. It may be negative (the priests and prophets) or positive (the elders, Ahikam) or hard to assess (the officials). The king is ambivalent; the people vacillate. Everything then depends on the way human beings respond to situations, and Yahweh’s word sometimes does get silenced. Yahweh is the subject of the sending and the speaking at the beginning of the story, and the subsequent story refers back to him in that connection. He also declares the intention to act in light of people’s response to his message, and the subsequent story refers back to that intention. But in between the giving of the commission and the implementing of the intention (outside the frame of the story) Yahweh is the subject of no verbs. Yahweh leaves things to the human beings, watching what goes on and hoping for the best (*perhaps*: v. 3); Jeremiah sees himself as in the people’s hands. Jeremiah escapes; Uriah doesn’t. Peter escapes; James doesn’t (Acts 12).[[100]](#footnote-100) The account of Jesus’s arrest and trial also has this story as its background.[[101]](#footnote-101) God does not rescue Jesus, as he does not rescue Uriah. But he does restore him to life, indeed he bestows on him resurrection life, so that it may be possible for both Jeremiah and Uriah to share it.

**24** This *hand* contrasts with the hand in v. 14. As vv. 17-19 do not follow v. 16 chronologically, and as vv. 20-23 do not follow either v. 16 or vv. 17-19, so v. 24 does not follow vv. 19-23, but it does link with v. 16 in the same way as vv. 17-19 do: it provides another bit of explanation for why v. 16 worked out he way it did. The First Testament’s first and instructive reference to Ahikam comes in the account of Josiah’s reformation (see 2 Kgs 22:12-14). For readers, mention of him also makes a connection with Jeremiah’s link with his son Gedaliah (39:14; 40:5-16). People listening to the story in different times might know about those links, and about Ahikam’s famous father, Shaphan. The family will be important through Parts Three and Four of the Jeremiah scroll:[[102]](#footnote-102)

Shaphan (cf. 2 Kgs 22:3-13)

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| | |

Ahikam 26:24 (cf. 2 Kgs 22:14-17) Gemariah 36:12, 25 Elasah 29:3

| |

Gedaliah 39:11-14; 40:1 – 41:3 Micaiah 36:11[[103]](#footnote-103)

One significance of Ahikam coming at the end of the story was perhaps that everyone knew him. The structure of the simple sentence is noteworthy: almost, “Guess who made sure Jeremiah was okay?” Other references to him would make one think that he would be one of the officials in vv. 10-16, and this verse suggests he had played a key role among them in rescuing Jeremiah. “There has been no repentance,” and thus “the larger issue [Jeremiah’s] preaching exposed has been sidestepped.”[[104]](#footnote-104) But “this simple, unelaborated statement provides an effective climax to the chapter”[[105]](#footnote-105) in giving the last word to Jeremiah’s rescue rather than Uriah’s death.

**27:1a** This closing expression pairs with 26:1a in forming a bracket around the story.

# Jeremiah Bids Judah Submit to the Babylonians (27:1b-22 [LXX 34:1-18])

The further account of Yahweh commissioning Jeremiah to perform a symbolic act, with no account of his doing so, is again an invitation to a Judahite audience to imagine the act and respond accordingly. The story is set more than a decade later than Jer 26, soon after Zedekiah’s accession to the throne in 597 (see 28:1). Nebuchadnezzar’s authority in Babylon and over the Levant has become a reality. Envoys from neighboring nations have come to Jerusalem, perhaps to persuade Judah to join in another assertion of independence from Babylon. The symbolic act represents submission to Nebuchadnezzar, which Jeremiah urges on them and on Judah. The object involved in the representation is an ox yoke comprising shafts or poles and ropes; the story in Jer 28 which follows has Jeremiah wearing a shaft and another prophet breaking it. Following on Nebuchadnezzar’s successful siege of the city, plundering of the temple, and exile of King Jehoiachin and officials, priests, prophets, craftworkers, and other important people in 597, Jer 27 and 28 focus on the fate of the accoutrements that he took off to Babylon rather than on the possible return of the people, which will feature Jer 29. Certainly the return of a king would cause complications, but maybe this focus would seem snide to readers. Jer 27 and 28 urge Judah to accept that they are not going to come back soon – contrary to the promises of other prophets. Thus Jer the chapters belong together, though each can stand on its own. In the aftermath of 597 or of 587, both stories about symbolic actions would have brought a message to their Judahite audience, as well as signifying and implementing the action that Yahweh was declared to be taking.[[106]](#footnote-106)

Why would Yahweh bother with the temple accoutrements? It matches the considerable attention that he gives to such matters in connection with the wilderness sanctuary (Exod 25 – 40). In any context (the 590s, the time after 587, or the Persian period), the focus of either the LXX or the MT version of this story on the plundering and return of things from the temple speaks to an important theme. Although the Jeremiah scroll has been able to face the loss of the covenant chest with equanimity (3:16), it apparently views the temple’s accoutrements as vital. They are symbols of Yahweh’s presence with his people and of his involvement with them, he has affirmed their significance in that connection, and they have fulfilled that function for centuries. While attitudes to the temple have gone wrong and imperiled it (7:1-15), this dynamic does not mean the temple loses significance. The city’s capture and destruction, the temple’s destruction, and the exile of many of the people could seem to introduce an unbridgeable caesura into Israel’s story. The temple accoutrements could contribute to the bridging of that caesura. They will stand for continuity between First Temple and Second Temple.[[107]](#footnote-107) The false promises of the other prophets illustrate how important these things were to Judah, and Yahweh’s promises take into account the longing and anxiety about continuity that his people would have. “What seems to stand on the margins, the cultic vessels from Yahweh’s house, is in the temple theology a sign for the work of the punishing, liberating, merciful, and powerful God.”[[108]](#footnote-108)

1bThis word came to Jeremiah from Yahweh.a 2Yahweh has said this to me. Make yourself restraints and shafts and put them on your neck. 3And send them offb to the king of Edom, to the king of Moab, to the king of the Ammonites, to the king of Tyre, and to the king of Sidon, by the hand of envoys, the ones who are comingc to Jerusalem to Zedekiah King of Judah. 4Give them this order for their lords. Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, has said this: You will say this to your lords. 5I am the one who made the earth and the human beings and the animals that are on the face of the earth,d with my great energy and with my bent arm, and I give it to whoever is right in my eyes.e 6So now I myselff am giving all these countries into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon, my servant.g Even the living things in the open country, I am giving them to him to serveh him. 7All the nations will serve him, his son, and his grandson, until the time for his country comes, him too, and many nations and big kingdoms put him into serfdom.i 8The nation and the kingdom that do not serve him (Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon),j the one that does not put its neck to the king of Babylon’s shaft: with sword and with hunger and with epidemic I will attend to that nation (Yahweh’s affirmation) until I have finished them off by his hand. 9And you: do not listen to your prophets, to your diviners, to your dreams, to your mediums, or to your augurs, who are saying to you, “You will not serve the king of Babylon.” 10Because it’s deception that they are prophesying to you, in order to remove you far from upon your country, and I drive you away and you perish.k 11But the nation that lets its neck come to the king of Babylon’s shaft and serves him – I will leave itl on its land (Yahweh’s affirmation) and it will serve itm and dwell on it.

12And to Zedekiah King of Judah I spoke in accordance with these words: Let your necks come to the king of Babylon’s yoke, serve him and his people,n and live! 13Why should you die, you and your people, by sword, by hunger, and by epidemic, as Yahweh has spoken regarding the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon? 14Don’t listen to the words of the prophets who are saying to you, “You will not serve the king of Babylon,” because it’s deception that they are prophesying to you. 15Because I did not send them (Yahweh’s affirmation) and they are prophesying in my name for deception, in order that I may drive you away and you perish, you and the prophets who are prophesying to you.

16And to the priests and to this entire people I spoke: Yahweh has said this. Don’t listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you, “There: the objects from Yahweh’s house are being returned from Babylon any day now.”o Because it’s deception that they are prophesying to you. 17Don’t listen to them – servep the king of Babylon, and live. Why should this city become a waste?q 18But if they’re prophets and if Yahweh’s word is with them, they should please press Yahweh of Armies so that the objects that remain in Yahweh’s house and the house of the king of Judah and in Jerusalem would not have comer to Babylon.s 19Because Yahweh of Armies has said this regarding the pillars and concerning the reservoirt and concerning the standsu and concerning the rest of the objects that remain in this city,v 20which Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon did not get when he took into exile Jeconiahw ben Jehoiakim King of Judah from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the gentryx from Judah and Jerusalem.y 21Because Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, has said this concerning the objects that remain at Yahweh’s house and the king of Judah’s house and Jerusalem: 22To Babylon they will be brought, and there they will be until the day I attend to them (Yahweh’s affirmation) and I have them go up and I return them to this place.z

V. 1a is the conclusion to Jer 26 (see the note). As an introduction to Jer 27, v. 1b compares with the introductions in 7:1; 11:1; 18:1; 21:1.

The Lucianic recension of the Septuagint lacks *them* and thus implies “send word,” but it is hard to parallel this usage of *šālaḥ* piel (cf. Duhm, *Jeremia*, 127-28)and the omission of the suffix perhaps reflects a sense that a literal sending of the restraints and shafts was implausible.

Vg has “who have come,” but the regular use of the participle to suggest something that is happening or is about to happen fits Jeremiah’s not proceeding to meet up with them. The noun is anarthrous, the participle has the article, but there are parallels for such inconcinnities; see DG 42, remark 2; 112, remark 1; GK 126w. LXX adds “to encounter them,” using a noun cognate with its verb in v. 18; it presumably refers to Jeremiah’s confronting the envoys, though it fits poorly into LXX’s sentence.

LXX lacks *and the human beings… on the earth*, perhaps by homoioteleuton.

Yahweh’s verbs *made* and *give* (*‘āśâ*, *nātan*)echo the ones he used to Jeremiah in v. 2 (there translated *make* and *put*): the prescription for Jeremiah’s action anticipated and corresponds to this account of Yahweh’s action (Allen, *Jeremiah*, 307).

LXX lacks *so now* and *myself*.

For *my servant*,LXX has “to serve him”: on the tricky questions raised by those expressions, see W. McKane, “Jeremiah 27,5-8,” in V. Fritz et al. (eds.), *Prophet und Prophetenbuch* (O. Kaiser Festschrift; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), 98-110; *Jeremiah* 2:688-89. J. Stökl suggests that the difference between MT and LXX text is an illustration of two different evaluations of Nebuchadnezzar that appear in different texts (“Nebuchadnezzar,” in D. V. Edelman and E. Ben Zvi (eds.), *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), 257-69 (265). See also B. Gosse, “Nabuchodonosor et les évolutions de la rédaction du livre de Jérémie,” *Science et Esprit* 47 (1995): 177-187; more generally on LXX in relation to MT in Jer 27 – 28/34 – 35, R. Wells, “Dislocations in Time and Ideology in the Reconceptions of Jeremiah’s Words,” in J. Goldingay (ed.), *Uprooting and Planting* (L. Allen Festschrift; London: Clark 2007), 322-50.

LXX translates “work for”; so also in vv. 9, 11, 12 (though contrast the previous note).

See the note on 25:14. LXX lacks v. 7.

LXX lacks *that do not serve him (Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon)*, perhaps by homoioteleuton.

LXX lacks *and I drive you out and you perish*.

*Wәhinnaḥtîw* is set over against *wәhiddaḥtî* (*I drive you out*) (Scalise, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 51-52).

That is, the nation will serve the land, as the genders of verb and nouns make clear; but LXX has the land serving the nation.

LXX lacks from *and his people* through to the end of v. 14a, perhaps by homoioteleuton.

Literally, “now, tomorrow.” LXX lacks these words.

The verbal sequence is thus asyndetic and more urgent than the sequence in v. 12

In place of v. 17, LXX simply has “and I did not send them.”

*Bō’û* is a mixed form, the consonants of a qatal and the pointing of a yiqtol; the unusual nature of a qatal here (see 23:14 and the note) makes it the more likely reading.

MT has a unit marker here. LXX lacks *so that… Babylon.*

Literally, “sea.”

LXX lacks the references to pillars, reservoir, and stands.

LXX lack *that remain in this city*.

On this form of the name, see the note on 22:24.

LXX lacks *Nebuchadnezzar* and *ben Jehoiakim King of Judah* and from *all the gentry* to the end of v. 21.

L has a section marker here.

MT has a unit marker here. LXX lacks *and there they will be* to the end.

After an introduction, the chapter comprises three main sections concerning three related messages:

vv. 2-11 one for the kings of neighboring peoples:

submit to Nebuchadnezzar until his time comes, and don’t listen to your advisers who say otherwise

vv. 12-15 one for Zedekiah:

submit to Nebuchadnezzar if you want to live, and don’t listen to your prophets who say otherwise

vv. 16-22 one for priests and people:

don’t listen to your prophets who say that the temple objects are coming home soon; everything else is going to go to Babylon until I attend to them.

Each section refers to serving the king of Babylon, to the good that will come from doing so and the trouble that will come from not doing so, and to falsehood. But the story also works in a narrative equivalent to staircase parallelism in poetry, by which the second colon in a line partly repeats the first but also takes things further, and a third colon may repeat the dynamic:

* The first message rhetorically addresses the neighboring powers and refers to their prophets, diviners, and augurs; it distinctively speaks of Yahweh’s lordship as creator over the entire world and his giving authority to Nebuchadnezzar for a limited time
* The second message repeats the exhortation about submission but directly addresses Zedekiah and applies it to Judah, and refers to its prophets
* The third message addresses priests and people, begins with a reference to Judah’s prophets who ought to be interceding for the city, and declares that more plundering is otherwise destined to happen before Yahweh makes it possible for things to return.

MT’s version is over one-third longer than LXX’s. As usual this may reflect accidental omissions in LXX and/or expansion in MT.[[109]](#footnote-109) Whereas LXX’s text makes no reference to the possibility that Yahweh may restore Judah, MT’s version affirms that Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon will not last forever and that there is a prospect of the temple objects eventually returning. The implication might be that LXX’s text reflects the message as Jeremiah gave it in the 590s whereas MT’s text reflects the way Jeremiah or his curator re-preached the message after 587; if one makes a comparison with the Gospels, LXX’s version is then more like Mark, MT more like Matthew.

**1b** It will become explicit in v. 3 that we are now in the reign of Zedekiah, and if 28:1 is a retrospective note to this chapter,[[110]](#footnote-110) then we are at the beginning of his reign and the chapter lays down the challenge for his reign as Jer 26 laid down the challenge for Jehoiakim’s.

**2** This prophetic sign is the fundamental motif on which Jer 27 – 28 is built. Yahweh commands Jeremiah to undertaken a symbolic action that overlaps with 13:1-11 (where Yahweh commissions him to undertake an action that he could and did literally undertake), with 19:1-13 (where Yahweh commissions him to undertake an action that he could literally take but where there is no direct report of his doing so), and with 25:15-29 (where Yahweh commissions him to undertake an action that could only be imaginary, and in imagination he does undertake it). Here, the action looks potentially realistic and this-worldly: the *restraints* or ropes and the wooden *shafts* are the two parts of an ox-yoke (see 2:19-20).[[111]](#footnote-111) While it would normally be an ox that wore a yoke that attached it to the plow, a human being might wear a yoke in order to carry a load in a balanced way, and conscript workers or slaves or prisoners might be compelled to wear one.[[112]](#footnote-112) The action is thus plausible, but it looks only semi-literal; it’s hard to imagine Jeremiah putting on multiple sets of restraints and shafts. Jer 28 does suggest that Jeremiah actually made one shaft and put it on, but the shaft evidently stayed in Jerusalem.

**3** Sending off shafts and ropes to other kings was then imaginary or was represented in some way before the envoys: does Jeremiah gatecrash their meeting?[[113]](#footnote-113) Perhaps this story indicates that sometimes a prophet did deliver a message to a foreign nation.[[114]](#footnote-114) But anyway, the chapter doesn’t refer to Jeremiah doing as Yahweh said. Whether or not he did so, the point as usual lies in the recounting of this message to Judahite listeners. Although it is formally addressed to the five kings, it is designed for Judahites to overhear. The first three nations are the peoples east of the Jordan; the other two are on the coast in the far northwest. The five appear together as in 25:21-22a. They would all be peoples in whom Nebuchadnezzar was interested, because a main route south to Arabia ran east of the Jordan, while Tyre and Sidon were gateways to Mediterranean trade. Jeremiah does not say why the envoys have come. It might be a “courtesy” visit at the beginning of Zedekiah’s reign, not long after he has been put on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar. Or it might reflect these peoples’ contemplating a declaration of independence from Babylon, which would fit with Yahweh’s bidding them to submit to Babylon in this chapter. That Zedekiah would contemplate rebellion might be surprising as he was put on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar,[[115]](#footnote-115) but he did rebel a few years later (52:3). Is Zedekiah hosting a meeting or have they come to lean on him (cf. Isa 7)?

**4-5** Yahweh’s assertion about his identity and power makes sense in the context of his sending a message to these foreign peoples, whether the sending is imaginary or actual. Even if Jeremiah’s message goes only to Judah, the plausibility of Jeremiah’s prophecy about Nebuchadnezzar depends on his assertion being true. Yahweh can arrange things so that Nebuchadnezzar acts in a way that fulfills Yahweh’s purpose, because he is both *the God of Israel* and the one who *made the earth and the human beings and the animals.* The creation context suggests animals in general (e.g., 16:4; 19:7), but the reference to animals of the wild in v. 6b may imply that the reference here is to farm animals (cf. 9:10 [9]; 21:6). Yahweh made the world *by my great energy* (*kōaḥ*, an inherent ability to do as one likes)*.* And he did so *by my bent arm* (a physical capacity to act as one wishes, like a man wielding a tool such as a hammer, but also frequently an arm that wields a symbol of power such as a scepter). The two expressions reappear in connection with creation in 32:17, but they first come together in connection with Yahweh’s getting Israel out of Egypt in Deut 9:29, and 2 Kgs 17:36 makes the same connection in explaining the fall of Samaria. So Yahweh’s energy and authority are one, expressed in creation and expressed in political events. He can act in events because he has the same qualities as he expressed in creation. And he can give the resources in the world he made to whomever he wishes. He decides who *is right in my eyes*. The expression does not imply the person who is upright in my eyes (as Nebuchadnezzar possibly was not) but the person who seems right to me in a particular context for a particular purpose: 18:4 is the verb’s one other occurrence in Jeremiah (cf. also the related adjective in 26:14; 40:4-5).

**6** And giving control of the Middle Eastern world to Nebuchadnezzar is what is right to Yahweh, what suits him, *now* (though from “now” one might infer that it need not be forever: this extra note in MT would constitute even better news for the Judahites after 587).[[116]](#footnote-116) Even the animals of the wild are to serve him. It is precisely because they serve him that they can be a lethal danger to Judah (12:9); they are the metaphorical and literal ravagers of the land, under Yahweh. So Nebuchadnezzar is *my servant*. That description in 25:9 has already nuanced the point: he is Yahweh’s servant in that he is the means of implementing the purpose of *the God of Israel* for Judah. Perhaps Judahites who were in Babylon or who later had come back from Babylon might therefore be able to claim that they stood in the context of Yahweh’s purpose.[[117]](#footnote-117) There is no implication that Nebuchadnezzar sees himself that way. The entirety of Yahweh’s message in vv. 2-11 relates to Yahweh’s purpose for Judah, which is the entity that the message addresses indirectly but primarily and perhaps exclusively. ”How unfortunate it is for Israel when in comparison with Israel Nebuchadnezzar is called “the servant of God!”[[118]](#footnote-118) What Nebuchadnezzar is going to do, he is going to do; Yahweh is prepared to use it. “God, in siding with Babylon, places a divine imprimatur on the imperialistic policies and campaigns of Nebuchadnezzar.”[[119]](#footnote-119) As the God who made the world, then, he can do as he wishes with the great empires and with little local powers. Jeremiah does not imply that he always does as he wishes with all those empires and powers, only that he can do it when he wishes. Whether and how he does so will depend on how he is prosecuting his purpose for Israel at a given moment. At the same time, outside of the framework of this message, by a feedback mechanism the way he is prosecuting his purpose for Israel relates to his purpose for empires and other powers. Perhaps that point follows from Nebuchadnezzar’s being Yahweh’s servant, in that a master has obligations to his servant – he cannot simply use him.

**7** The serfdom is not short-term. In the event, Nebuchadnezzar’s son and grandson did succeed him, though the succession was messy; his successors were his son Amel-Marduk, his son-in-law Nergal-sharezer, his grandson Labashi-Marduk, and then Nabonidus, who was unrelated to his dynasty. But Yahweh’s declaration concerns a time frame rather than a family sequence. It’s related to his declaration that the exile will last seventy years. The rule of Nebuchadnezzar’s line will be relatively long-lasting, it will extend to two or three generations, it will go beyond the time of people alive in the 590s, yet it will not last forever, only *until the time for his country comes* and he becomes serf rather than master. Yahweh does not quite say that the contemporary serf-master relationship will be reversed, and it will not be, in that the replacement of Babylon by Medo-Persia brought no greater freedom or power to the six peoples that feature in this message than they had under Nebuchadnezzar.

**8** While it is clear why Yahweh wants Judah to submit to Nebuchadnezzar, it’s not clear why he wants the other peoples to do so, unless their resistance to Nebuchadnezzar is in danger of leading Judah astray. We have to recall again that the real recipient of this message is Judah itself. Yahweh’s warning to the five peoples is really a warning to Judah not to sell its soul to them. The dynamic of Yahweh’s speaking though Jeremiah continues the dynamic of his speaking through in Isa 13 – 23, whose point was to get Judah neither to trust nor fear other peoples in its world. It fits that the formula to describe the trouble that will come to the five peoples (*with sword and with hunger and with epidemic*) is the same as the formula applying to Judah. But the inclusion of Tyre among the five illustrates how there are limits to the extent to which in practice Yahweh uses his power. Tyre successfully resists his intention that Nebuchadnezzar should conquer it (Ezek 26 – 29), as the fall of Babylon happens in a different way from Yahweh’s declarations in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isa 40 – 55.

**9** Kings such as these five have a range of resources to aid them in formulating policies. The string of terms suggests a tone anticipating the tone of the list of experts in Dan 2, which is perhaps both impressed and skeptical. Distinguishing between some of them is guesswork. *Prophets* were people who could bring the king messages from God that aided him in making decisions. *Diviners* (*qōsēm*) worked out what might be going to happen on the basis of omens such as unusual meteorological phenomena or other strange natural happenings. *Dreams* implies people who shared their own significant dreams or could interpret the king’s dreams. *Mediums* (*‘ōnēn*) communicated with dead people to discover what was going to happen. *Charmers* (*kaššāp*) were people skilled in incantations that could cause or prevent calamities. The kings are not to trust any of them when they counsel resistance to Babylon.

**10-11** Again Jeremiah makes the point in the way he would express things to Judah – which is what he is really doing; he’s not really interested in what happens to Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon. The nations’ prophets are *prophesying* *falsehood* (as Judahite prophets do: e.g., 5:31; 14:14; 23:25-26, 32). They are not consciously seeking to bring disaster, but insofar as they willfully ignore a message from Yahweh about rebelling against Nebuchadnezzar, then in effect they are trying to bring about the downfall of their people and to make Yahweh act against them. Yahweh neatly combines their responsibility and his sovereignty. *They* will be removing their people from their homeland; *he* will be driving them out. Both king and people will thus *perish*. But acting as Yahweh says will have opposite results. There are three. Instead of driving the nation out, *I will leave it on its land*. It will thus *dwell on it*. The most interesting verb is the middle one: it will *serve* the land, as Yahweh originally intended in shaping the first human being. A further implication of his words is that, as usual, “judgment is not a fate. Judah can live even now if only it will live under the judgment which has already come upon it, if only it will bring itself under that judgment instead of resisting it.”[[120]](#footnote-120)

**12-13** Jeremiah now reports how he did address the king of Judah whom the envoys had come to see. It is to Zedekiah that he actually speaks in light of Yahweh’s word to him in v. 1, the word relating to the symbolic act; he has reported no speaking to the envoys, because the real point about the chapter is his speaking to Judah. But his plural *your necks* and his plural verbs (all the second-person verbs in vv. 12-15 are plural), followed up by *you and your people*,make explicit that he is not just talking about or to the king. Did the Judahites want Zedekiah, the Babylonian nominee, on the throne, in place of Jehoiachin? If not, his confrontation might be “one of the most courageous and outrageous acts of Jeremiah’s ministry,” going far beyond the temple sermon. It might seem an act of subversion (cf. 38:4).[[121]](#footnote-121) He advocates a “policy of appeasement” in relation to Babylon.[[122]](#footnote-122) Conversely, if Zedekiah was inclined to rebel, Zedekiah would view him as undermining his position, not least by talking to the entire people in this way. And for them, that they have to *serve his people* is a solemn charge.[[123]](#footnote-123) On the other hand, whereas in the message formally designed for the envoys Yahweh talked about death and being finished off and perishing, now he also talks about being able to *live* (cf. 21:9; later, 38:2, 17, 20).

**14-15** To Zedekiah and Judahites, he speaks only of not listening to other *prophets.* He makes no reference to other possible resources – notwithstanding earlier negative references to divination and dreams (e.g., 14:14; 23:32; and cf. 7:30 – 8:3). In Jer 27 – 29 the problem he is facing is the phenomenon of prophets with different visions. With regard to them he repeats the critique of v. 10 then backs it up with the declaration from Yahweh that he didn’t send them (cf. 23:21, 32) and that they are both *prophesying* *deception* and *prophesying for deception.* Deception is not only the content of their message (it is a “fantasy”)[[124]](#footnote-124) but also its aim. To say they are prophesying *for* deception also recalls Jeremiah’s use of *deception* as virtually a surrogate for the Master (e.g., 5:3, 31).

**16** Jeremiah finally turns specifically to *priests* and *people* in order to focus on a concrete feature of the prophets’ promises, which also links with his message to the five kings. After the successful siege of the city and transporting of *objects from Yahweh’s house* in 597, one can imagine the temptation to think that maybe Jeremiah had been right after all in declaring that trouble was coming, but that the trouble had now come and surely Yahweh would now let the objects from the temple come back. But there is to be no return, Yahweh says, certainly not *any day now*. The talk of the temple objects would link with his addressing the priests, and the temple accoutrements would also be in the mind of the people gathered in the temple courtyard where Jeremiah would deliver his message. Jeremiah will also be intending that the people he mentions in the third person, *the* *prophets*, should overhear the message that is directly addressed to priests and people.

**17** Not least for the people’s sake, he incorporates reference to the city as well as the temple. And he goes on to his last reference in the chapter to service, a recurrent motif. The key theological notion in this connection is Nebuchadnezzar’s being Yahweh’s servant (v. 6). When someone is the servants of a king or a King, that gives them authority. So the animals of the wild are to serve Nebuchadnezzar (v. 6); they will thereby serve Yahweh. All the nations will serve him in the sense of accepting his authority (v. 7). To refuse to do so is to collude with a lie (v. 14), and people who do refuse will find themselves in trouble with the master whom Nebuchadnezzar serves (vv. 8, 9, 13). But if Judah, at least, does serve Nebuchadnezzar, it will be the key to life (vv. 12, 17). Thus there are paradoxes embedded in the motif of service. Another is that people who submit to serving Nebuchadnezzar will also therefore be privileged to serve their own land (v. 11). Nebuchadnezzar’s position as servant is not voluntary. Not only does he not know it is his position; by implication, he would have no interest in serving Yahweh. He is interested only in serving himself. Thus in due course he will be turned from servant with authority to servant or serf of the people over whom he has exercised authority (v. 7). Jeremiah’s language about Nebuchadnezzar overlaps with Paul’s in Rom 13:1-7: the authority of governments comes from God, and people should submit to it. The authority is “God’s servant for your good.” Paul’s comment relates to a different sort of context, and Jeremiah’s relates to his specific context. But they share the notion of the authority as servant in contexts where people would not be enthusiastic about the idea. And they share the assumption that precisely the notion of servanthood means that authorities to do not have carte blanche to do as they like, nor will God tolerate their doing so – because they are his servants.

**18** As far as the objects from the temple are concerned, Jeremiah adds that anyway the prophets ought to be concentrating on something else, on lobbying Yahweh on the community’s behalf (*pāga‘*).[[125]](#footnote-125) “These two things are united — teaching and praying. Then God would have him whom he has set a teacher in his Church, to be assiduous in prayer.”[[126]](#footnote-126) A prophet stands between God and people and mediates both ways. The link between prophecy and prayer is given paradoxical witness when Yahweh tells Jeremiah the prophet that he is not to pray (see 7:16; 11:14; 14:11-12; 15:1). Whether they pray for the people to whom they (allegedly) bring Yahweh’s message is a test of whether they are true prophets.[[127]](#footnote-127) While the *please* is as usual a little sarcastic, it need not signify that Jeremiah doesn’t mean his exhortation, which also supports the idea that one shouldn’t be literalistic in interpreting those reports of being bidden not to pray for Judah. A further sting in his comment comes near the end, in that there is some ambiguity over whether Jeremiah is talking about the way they should have prayed (in which case the community would not have lost the temple objects) or about the way they should pray (so that it doesn’t experience further losses). In the context of the 590s, both ideas are significant, and when Jeremiah’s words are read after 587, they will have telling new significance. Either way, people ought not to be thinking about the things that they say are coming back. They ought to be asking whether they bear any responsibility for the loss of them, and thinking about the prospect of the remaining temple accoutrements joining them. It will not just be these accoutrements. As v. 17 MT referred to city as well as temple, here MT refers also to things in *the house of the king of Judah and in Jerusalem*: so people reading this prophecy in its MT form after 587 may be reassured that their loss was somehow covered by Yahweh’s sovereignty – and v. 22 will then assure them that this sovereignty will also cover their return.

**19-20** There is more to add, in connection with the temple. Beyond the easily portable accoutrements, other objects of value will fall to Nebuchadnezzar in 587. There are the two *pillars* of bronze standing in front of the temple. There is the bronze *reservoir* for priestly ablutions standing in the middle of the temple’s inner courtyard. And there are the ten bronze *stands* that may also have related to ablutions. Jer 52:17-23 will relate how Nebuchadnezzar did have them broken up so that the bronze could be taken to Babylon and recycled, and give detail on how he also took there *the remainder of the objects that remain in this city*. In a superficial sense it is surprising that there are any such objects that Nebuchadnezzar did not take along with *Jeconiah ben Jehoiakim and all the gentry*; 2 Kgs 24:13-16 could give the impression that Nebuchadnezzar emptied the city in 597. But both 2 Kgs 24 – 25 and the Jeremiah narratives indicate that 2 Kgs 24 speaks hyperbolically – as indeed do 2 Kgs 25 and Jer 52 themselves in their account of what happened in 587.

**21-22** Do Yahweh’s words presuppose that the fall of Jerusalem is inevitable? If one locates Jeremiah and his listeners in the 590s, it is not inevitable – all talk about its inevitability carries the qualification “unless you turn.” If one locates Jeremiah and his listeners after 587, then it is inevitable – it has happened. And what went to Babylon in 597 and what will go in 587 will then be there for as long as Yahweh decides. But three more verbs then do add a note of promise: Yahweh will *attend*, will *have them go up* and leave Babylon, and will have them *return* to this place – this city or this temple. All three verbs come in Ezra 1:1-3; 2:1 in the account of the fulfillment of these promises. Jeremiah’s words thus illustrate how every prophetic scroll that talks about a coming, final calamity also talks about a promise for beyond calamity. One of my first Old Testament teachers, Alec Motyer, who died not long before I began this commentary, liked to say that a prophet who simply spoke of judgment would be a false prophet. No First Testament prophet is portrayed that way. So it would seem unwise to assume that Jeremiah did not envisage restoration after disaster, even in the 590s. The Jeremiah scroll’s account of the disagreement between Jeremiah and other prophets concerns not *whether* there will be restoration but *when* there will be restoration.

# How Hananiah Lost His Life (28:1-17 [LXX 35:1-17])

The story of a confrontation between Hananiah and Jeremiah parallels Jer 26. That story related how Jeremiah told people, priests, and prophets that Yahweh was going to bring about the wasting of the temple; as a consequence they declare he is to be put to death, but it doesn’t happen. This story relates how Hananiah tells Jeremiah, priests, and people that Yahweh is going to bring about a restoration of the temple; as a consequence Jeremiah declares that he is to be put to death, and it happens. In addition, the story follows on Jer 27. There, Yahweh told Jeremiah to model the submission of the city to Nebuchadnezzar’s authority and urged it to submit to that authority rather then perish. Here Hananiah tells the people that Yahweh is bringing about Nebuchadnezzar’s downfall and models that downfall, but as a result he does perish.

The account of a prophet’s death in Jer 28 thus stands over against the account of a prophet’s escape from death. Neither event is attributed to Yahweh, but Jeremiah’s escape is implicitly a fulfillment of Yahweh’s promise to protect him, and Hananiah’s death happens in fulfillment of a declaration that Jeremiah attributes to Yahweh. The Hananiah story thus provides another take on the relationship between prophecy and the danger of death, which has been a recurrent motif in the scroll but has featured particularly in Jer 26 – 27. On one hand, priests, prophets, and people have made death threats to Jeremiah (26:7-24). On the other, Jeremiah has made death threats to people who resist submission to Babylon on the basis of the promises of other prophets (27:8, 10, 13, 15). Here the link between prophecy and death finds a new expression. It is not the discouraging prophet who dies, but the encouraging one. There is than a link with the motif that is especially prominent in Jer 11 – 20. The community’s opposition to Jeremiah and Jeremiah’s experience of rejection is an embodiment of what is going on between the community and Yahweh. In this story, the death of Hananiah for contradicting Yahweh as he brings his encouraging message is an embodiment of the community’s destiny if it heeds that message.

This event and story bring a message home in the context in which it is set, the years when the fall of Jerusalem threatens the community. After 587 it would provide further evidence that Jeremiah was right and further grounds for taking Jeremiah’s message seriously now.[[128]](#footnote-128) As was the case in Jer 27, MT’s version is rather longer than LXX’s.

1So it happened that year, at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah King of Judah.a

In the fourth yearb in the fifth month, Hananiahc ben Azzur the prophet, who was from Gibeon, said to me in Yahweh’s house before the eyes of the priests and the entire people: 2Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, has said this. I am breakingd the yoke of the king of Babylon. 3In yet two years timee I am going to bring back to this place all the objects from Yahweh’s house that Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon got from this place and made come to Babylon.f 4And Jeconiahg ben Jehoiakim King of Judahh and the entire exile group from Judah who were coming to Babylon, I am going to bring back to this place (Yahweh’s affirmation),i because I will break the king of Babylon’s yoke.”

5Jeremiah the prophet said to Hananiah the prophet before the eyes of the priests and before the eyes of the entire peoplej who were standing in Yahweh’s house – 6Jeremiah the prophet said,k Yes, may Yahweh act in this way – may Yahweh implement your words which you have prophesied, by bringing back the objects from Yahweh’s house, and the entire exile community, from Babylon to this place. 7Yet listen, please, to this wordl that I am going to speak in your ears and in the ears of the entire people. 8The prophets who were before me and before you from of old: they prophesied regarding many countries and concerning big kingdoms, about battle and about dire fortune and about epidemic.m 9The prophet who prophesies of things being well – when the prophet’s word comes about, the prophet can be acknowledged as one whom Yahweh sent in truth.

10But Hananiah the prophet got the shaft from on the neck of Jeremiah the prophet, and broke it. 11And Hananiah said before the eyes of the entire people: Yahweh has said this. In this way I will break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon in yet two years timen from on the neck of all the nations.

Jeremiah the prophet went on his path.o 12The word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah after Hananiah the prophet had broken the shaft from on the neck of Jeremiah the prophet: 13Go,p and say to Hananiah, Yahweh has said this. Wooden shafts you broke, but you will makeq in their place iron shafts.r 14Because Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, has said this. It is an iron yoke that I am putting on the neck of all these nations, for serving Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon, and they will serve him. Even the living things of the open country I am giving to him.s

15And Jeremiah the prophet said to Hananiah the prophet, Listen, please, Hananiah: Yahweh didn’t send you and you – you have made this people rely on deception. 16Therefore Yahweh has said this. Here am I, sending you off from on the face of the land – this year you are going to die, because it is a liet that you spoke regarding Yahweh.u

17Hananiah the prophet died that year,v in the seventh month.w

The references to *the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah* and to *the fourth year* look as if they should refer to the same time, which is difficult. I take the first sentence to refer back to the story in Jer 27, as the opening clause in 27:1 refers back to the story in Jer 26; the next sentence then dates the story that now begins (cf. Qara in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage).

Q *šānâ* is absolute, K *šnt* construct (see GK 134p).

*Ananias* in LXX, anticipating the story of another deceitful Ananias in Acts 5 (Allen, *Jeremiah*, 315).

The qatal verb is declarative/performative, denoting what Yahweh has decided to do and is thus in effect doing at this moment; so also the verbs in v. 14 (see 1:5 and the note).

Literally, “two years days”: cf. v. 11; Gen 41:1; 2 Sam 13:23; 14:28. The contexts do not suggest “two full years,“ which would incidentally reduce the force of Hananiah’s point here. There is no difference in connotation between “two years days” and simple “two years,” as there is not in English between “two years” and “two years time.”

LXX lacks v. 3b.

On this form of the name, see the note on 22:24.

LXX lacks *ben Jehoiakim King of Judah*.

LXX lacks *I am going to bring back to this place (Yahweh’s affirmation).*

LXX has priests and people in the reverse order, which might then suggest reference to the priests standing in the temple in the course of their service and keeping an eye on what went on (J. Renkema, “A Note on Jeremiah xxviii 5,” *VT* 47 [1997]: 253-55).

The *waw-*consecutive is resumptive in relation to the incomplete sentence in v. 5 (Volz, *Jeremia*, 262).

LXX has “listen to the word of the Lord,” which thus designates this message as more than simply Jeremiah’s somewhat mocking comment.

LXX lacks *and about dire fortune and about epidemic*. MT’s unique sequence contrasts with “sword, hunger, and epidemic” in e.g., 27:8, 13; it is one of a number of variant but related phrases (see e.g., 5:12).

LXX lacks *Nebuchadnezzar* and *in two years time*.

MT has a unit marker here.

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

LXX has “I will make,” which makes sense in light of what follows.

The plurals in this verse take up the plurals in Jer 27 referring to yokes for the different nations (v. 14).

LXX lacks *Nebuchadnezzar*, also *and they will serve him. And also the living things of the open country I am giving to him*.

There are two or three homonyms *sārâ* linking with two or three roots but with related meanings: rebellion, falsehood, and apostasy (see *DCH*). In this context the parallelism with v. 15 suggests the middle meaning.

LXX lacks *because it is a lie that you spoke regarding Yahweh*.

LXX lacks *Hananiah the prophet* and *that year*

MT has a unit marker here.

Once again the art of storytelling is on display here as the narrative relates how a prophet with an encouraging message drops dead. It is a story characterized by unpredictable and shocking drama, all within seventeen verses. After the retrospective summary of what had happened at the beginning of Zedekiah’s reign (v. 1aα), it outlines:[[129]](#footnote-129)

Act One

Scene One How, three years later, Hananiah delivered an encouraging message (vv. 1aβ-4)

There is nothing surprising about this first scene, which gives concrete dramatic expression to generalizations about prophets that have featured in (e.g.) Jer 23 and 27. It does contradict what Jeremiah said in the previous chapter, so that dramatically the question it raises is, how will Jeremiah respond to this message?

Scene Two How Jeremiah expressed disbelief about Hananiah’s being sent by Yahweh (vv. 5-9)

Again, there is nothing surprising in Jeremiah’s response except perhaps in his positive assessment of the idea of Hananiah’s promise finding fulfillment, but the audience within the story and the audience listening to the story may well wonder what will happen now and/or may assume that nothing will now happen until time indicates which prophet was sent by Yahweh.

Scene Three How Hananiah broke Jeremiah’s symbolic yoke (vv. 10-11a)

The third scene contains a slight surprise and a dramatic development. The slight surprise is that Jeremiah is actually wearing a yoke of the kind to which 27:2 referred. Although v. 1 made a chronological link with Jer 27 and Hananiah has referred to a yoke in vv. 2-4, we might have forgotten that commission. The dramatic development is that Hananiah breaks Jeremiah’s yoke, which might indeed seem menacing. Hananiah is not merely opposing Jeremiah and contradicting what the audience know is Yahweh’s own word. He is acting in a way designed to thwart what Yahweh’s symbolic action portends and puts into effect. The audience’s mouth opens. What will happen now?

(Although dramatically this scene belongs here as the climax of Act One, it would make sense if chronologically it followed vv. 1-4.)

Act Two

Scene One How Jeremiah went home (v. 11b)

The immediate answer is “not much.” Jeremiah has no response in action or word to Hananiah. The audience within the story could think that Hananiah has won, and the audience of the story could continue to wonder what will happen now.

Scene Two How Yahweh gave Jeremiah a discouraging message (vv. 12-14)

The further answer is also “not much.” Yahweh gives Jeremiah a message that is devastating in its implications, yet simply a reaffirmation of what he and Jeremiah usually say. What will immediately happen now is presumably predictable: Jeremiah will deliver the message.

Act Three

Scene One How Jeremiah told Hananiah that Yahweh will put him to death (vv. 15-16)

The story now surprises and shocks. There is a dramatic jump in that Jeremiah does not do as he was told in vv. 12-14, though chapters in the scroll often omit how Jeremiah fulfills commissions he is given (27:1-11 was an example). The scroll moves easily between being prolix in the way it indulges in repetition and drives its point home, and being elliptical and fast-moving and thus leaving the audience to fill in the gaps. Here, as well as not relating how Jeremiah passed on the message announced in vv. 12-14, it goes on to relate how Jeremiah gives a dreadful message of which we have not been told. The audience within the story goes home talking about it. The audience of the story listens intensely

Scene Two How Hananiah dies (v. 17)

The narrative closes in a stark, understated denouement that leaves the audience to think about its implications and about all the things that remain unsaid.

**1a** Although the story that will now unfold is more-or-less self-contained, it connects with Jer 27, and the opening makes that link. *To me* indicates that Jeremiah continues to speak, though the first-person speech holds only for this opening verse. And the retrospective reference to *the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah* leads into a reference to *the fourth year* of his reign, about 594. We are thus on the way from the 597 disaster to the siege that led to the city’s final fall, though of course no one at the time knows when or even that the other shoe will eventually fall. For this period the Babylonian Chronicle reports rebellions against Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon:

21. The tenth [year: the king of Akk]ad stayed home. From the month Kislev until the month Tebet *there* [*was*] a rebellion in Akkad.

22. […] … he put his large [army] to the sword (and) conquered his foe.

23. [...] He marched [to] Hattu. The kings and … […] …

24. [*came*] and [*he* *received*] their vast booty. He returned to *B*[*abylon*].[[130]](#footnote-130)

We have noted that it wouldn’t be surprising if nations like the ones represented by the envoys in Jer 27 engaged in initiating such a rebellion and seeking to draw in Zedekiah, whose visit to Babylon this year (51:59-64) might then be part of the aftermath.

**1b** A Qumran document in Aramaic called “A List of False Prophets” (4Q339), which actually uses the expression *nby’y šqr’*, names Ahab, Zedekiah, Shemaiah, and Hananiah.[[131]](#footnote-131) But in Jer 28, Hananiah is simple a *prophet*, like Jeremiah; the story keeps adding this description to his name as it does to Jeremiah’s name. The generalizations about prophets we have read in the scroll so far could make us think of them as charlatans who were obviously deceivers. This story disabuses readers of that assumption. It would not have been immediately obvious that Hananiah was a fraud.[[132]](#footnote-132) In coming from Gibeon, Hananiah is almost a neighbor of Jeremiah, and for people listening, the two prophets were two Benjaminites who looked the same, acted the same, and spoke the same.The narrative does not suggest that there was a clear distinction between institutional and freelance prophets, or central and peripheral prophets,[[133]](#footnote-133) or nationalistic and independent prophets, or that either Hananiah or Jeremiah belongs to one such group rather than its opposite. Apparently Hananiah sets up the confrontation with Jeremiah, which was designed to be public: he brings his message to Jeremiah *before the priests and the entire* *people*. Once again the scene is the temple courtyard and once again the gathering may imply a communal event, perhaps a specially-called fast; there is no regular event in the fifth month. Or perhaps *the entire people* simply means “all the people who were there at the time” because it was a regular place to hang out or because they had gathered for a family event such as a sacrifice. While this narrative is the scroll’s first account of a confrontation between prophets, one may assume that it was not uncommon for there to be a number of prophets pronouncing messages in the temple courtyard and for their messages to be contradictory. They would be the prophets whom ordinary people might consult about something personal or familial, perhaps having recourse to ones they knew might give them the kind of answer they wanted. They would also be the prophets whom the administration might consult, partly on the same basis (27:9, 16; 37:3, 17) – in other words, prophets would not offer their messages only on their own initiative.

**2-4** Hananiah introduces his message the same way as Jeremiah: *Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, has said this.* There is no indication that he was insincere: “intentionality is no longer a criterion for discernment of distinction between Hananiah and Jeremiah, and thus between so-called false and true prophets generally.”[[134]](#footnote-134) He may well have been “conscious of a prophetic call.”[[135]](#footnote-135)So “we have no grounds for thinking that Hananiah was not really convinced that he spoke Yahweh’s word,”[[136]](#footnote-136) even though “surely these words ought to have been like a thunderbolt to him, laying prostrate his perverseness.”[[137]](#footnote-137) He uses the same performative form of speech as Jeremiah when he says in Yahweh’s name, *I am breaking…*, literally “I have broken.” His image, *I am breaking the yoke of the king of Babylon*, comes from Jer 27; he take it up in order to counter what Jeremiah had said about this yoke and what it symbolized. In effect Jeremiah had declared that Nebuchadnezzar and his successors would have peoples under his yoke for several generations, for seventy years, for the lifetime of anyone who was listening, and had said that people should submit to him like an ox submitting to its master’s yoke. Hananiah declares that there is a different word from Yahweh. His difference from Jeremiah is not over whether there is hope for Judah’s future. Both prophets know there is. But Hananiah declares there is to be restoration now. Within two years the temple accoutrements are to come back; their mention makes a further link with Jer 27. “Two years – or seventy years. Who is to be believed?”[[138]](#footnote-138) In addition, the other king and the exiles (unmentioned in Jer 27) are to come back. That declaration directly contradicts Jeremiah (see 22:26-27). It might constitute a mixed message to Zedekiah. The temple objects coming back would be good news, but the other king?[[139]](#footnote-139) You could call Hananiah anti-Babylonian (and risking his life with Zedekiah)[[140]](#footnote-140) and Jeremiah pro-Babylonian. Jeremiah deconstructs the distinction between insiders and outsiders if it means Judahites over against (e.g.) Babylonians, because some of the insiders are enemies and some of the outsiders are Yahweh’s servants.[[141]](#footnote-141)

**5-7** Everyone’s *eyes* are on Jeremiah *standing in Yahweh’s house* in the sense of standing in its courtyard. On the basis of what we have read in the Jeremiah scroll so far, we might guess that in general terms it would be no surprise that a prophet such as Hananiah would be bringing an encouraging message in this context, though its specificity might be new. And the crowd would likely know that Jeremiah saw things differently. Initially, then, they might be taken aback at Jeremiah’s reaction, but he soon makes clear that he had spoken ironically – even if in another sense wistfully (cf. 1 Kgs 22:15). “Jeremiah, the prophet of bad news, prays that his own hard truth is false and that Hananiah's pleasant word is the truth.”[[142]](#footnote-142) The confrontation between the two prophets continues to play out *before the eyes of the priests and before the eyes of the entire people*.

**8-9** Jeremiah’s historical observation involves more hyperbole. It most obviously doesn’t cover Isaiah, in whose tradition Hananiah could see himself to stand; he could claim that he was declaring the fulfillment of promises such as Isa 9:4 [3]; 10:27; 14:25.[[143]](#footnote-143) Thus “the curious thing is that considered apart from its historical context, there is nothing particularly ‘false’ about Hananiah's message.”[[144]](#footnote-144) Conversely, one could wonder if “the issue of true and false prophecy turns upon Jeremiah’s relationship to the older Isaiah tradition.”[[145]](#footnote-145) But Jeremiah’s generalization had been broadly true of prophets ever since the split between Judah and Ephraim, not least of the prophets whose messages came to be collected in scrolls such as those associated with Amos, Micah (quoted in 26:18), and Hosea (whose influence one can see in Jeremiah). Even if Hananiah identified with Isaiah he was being selective in his appeal. While these prophets did bring messages of trouble for *many countries* *and big kingdoms*, including the likes of Babylon, in the present context Jeremiah more likely refers to such nations as Yahweh’s agents in bringing *battle*, *dire fortune*, and *epidemic* to Israel (cf. LXX, Vg). So when someone such as Hananiah makes promises about things *being well*, don’t believe it until you see it.

**10-11a** Once again the crowd wonders what will happen next, and Hananiah provides them with another symbolic act. “Hananiah… is convinced, imaginative, and intransigent…. Unfortunately, it is far easier to break a symbolic yoke than it is to override Yahweh’s tough verdict.”[[146]](#footnote-146) We don’t know if Yahweh intended Jeremiah to make six literal yokes in 27:2; Jeremiah evidently has at least made one yoke and he is wearing it As a symbolic act, as usual it is not merely an image of something that should or will happen. Insofar as Yahweh commissioned it, the act is Yahweh’s means of implementing his intention that Nebuchadnezzar should rule over Judah. As a symbolic act, then, Hananiah’s breaking the yoke is also Yahweh’s (alleged) symbolic act. Hananiah’s message concerns not merely Judah but *all the nations*, the kind of nations whose representatives appeared in Jer 27*.* Such a symbolic act would usually precede or accompany the message related to it (cf. Jer 13; 19; 27).[[147]](#footnote-147) Here, the narrative holds back the account of Hananiah’s breaking of the yoke to bring Act One to a climax.

**11b** Yet again the crowd wonders, but Jeremiah simply goes away. Is he thrown into uncertainty by Hananiah’s certainty?[[148]](#footnote-148) Would it look like an admission of defeat? Or is he simply going home to wait to wait for Hananiah’s promise to be falsified? That intention would fit with the criterion in Deut 18:21-22. The meeting between Hananiah and Jeremiah is a classic embodiment of the clash between prophets, where two messages (and symbolic actions) simply confront one another. There is no formal way of telling who is the true prophet, though the criteria implicitly lie behind vv. 8-9 (they were also implicit in 23:9-40). If there is a clash between the theological and moral commitments of a people and the stance a prophet is taking to that people and its future, it shouldn’t be so hard to tell that the prophet speaks falsely, and time will tell. In the meantime Jeremiah has nothing else to say. Nor does Yahweh gives him something to say. Paradoxically, “Jeremiah's silence reinforces his credentials as a true prophet…. Jeremiah only speaks prophetically when a word of God has been put on his lips.” He will not speak until Yahweh gives him something to say.[[149]](#footnote-149)

**12-14** But later (who knows how much later?) Yahweh gives him something else to say, again as a message to him – there is no reference to another public confrontation, though the audience listening to the story is able to imagine it. Hananiah has broken one yoke; he is to make another to replace it. He must renounce his false message and become a convert to the message that Jeremiah has been delivering, and he must show he has done so by an action that reverses his previous action. Iron is a substance with connotations that are both positive (Yahweh has made Jeremiah an iron man: 1:18) and negative (Israel once suffered in an iron furnace: 11:4). An iron yoke would be more substantial than a wooden one, and impossible to break. It would be an even more certain expression of Yahweh’s intent and implementation of that intent. Yahweh presumably speaks figuratively in saying that Hananiah must make a yoke of this intractable material. As with Jeremiah’s symbolic acts, one should not be literalistic about Yahweh’s word. Indeed, the important thing is the metaphorical iron yoke that Yahweh is making, whose significance (*even the living things of the open country I am giving to him*) uses the same words as 27:6 to repeat its point.

**15-16** SoJeremiah speaks to Hananiah again, but says something quite different from the message that appears in vv. 13-14. While it is not unusual for the Jeremiah scroll to leave unstated the delivering of a message, it is unusual for it to report the delivering of a different message. Did Jeremiah devise this message and Yahweh then fulfill it (cf. Num 16)?[[150]](#footnote-150) More likely the audience is expected to infer that it was part of what Yahweh said to Jeremiah, so that the narrative again follows a sequence that has a dramatic effect. Hananiah’s association with *deception* carries with it a threat: *Yahweh did not send you* (but you behaved as if he had), so he is *sending you off from on the face of the land.* The warning would carry the connotation of being thrown out of the country (cf. 7:14; 20:6; 27:14-15), but the reference to land (*’ădāmâ*) rather than country (*’ereṣ*) carries an ambiguity. While *land* can refer to country (12:14; 24:10; 27:10-11), it also suggests the earthy land from which humanity was formed and on which people live and die. Jeremiah hints at that broader meaning so as to make his threat to Hananiah more frightening. After all, *deception* also links with death (e.g., 14:14-15; 20:6). Jeremiah also picks up the rare word for *lie* (*sārâ*)[[151]](#footnote-151)from Deut 13:5 [6], which makes death the sanction for a prophet who lies. Prophets who bring encouragement are people who turn the community away from Yahweh, and that dire action carries the same sanction: see also Deut 18:20.[[152]](#footnote-152) The implication may not be that a court should impose the death penalty; whereas Jeremiah’s opponents thought so (Jer 26), Jeremiah seems not to.[[153]](#footnote-153) There are many acts to which that sanction is attached, and the First Testament does not seem to envisage the human implementing of capital punishment for them. Rather the guilty person lays himself or herself open to being struck dead by Yahweh. That threat is usually expressed in general terms and it can easily be discounted. Here, the threat that *you are going to die* with *this year* attached to it,outdoes Hananiah’s two-year promise[[154]](#footnote-154) and also raises the stakes for Jeremiah, for Hananiah, and for Yahweh.

**17** Fulfillment comes not in two years or one year but in two months. “If Jeremiah is a shocker, Yahweh is nothing less.”[[155]](#footnote-155) “Hananiah’s death provides further proof of the falsehood of his oracles as well as the truthfulness of Jeremiah’s.”[[156]](#footnote-156) He had dishonored Jeremiah, but in the end it is he who is shamed.[[157]](#footnote-157) There is an irony in Hananiah’s name, which means “Yahweh is gracious.” And it’s not a designation just for a person but for a type of prophecy.[[158]](#footnote-158) But “the profound appeal of Hananiah’s message… continues to disturb confidence about the reader’s own present” given “the enduring temptation to claim the LORD’s promises” and to trust and hope independently of facing questions God raises about the reader’s life.[[159]](#footnote-159)

# Jeremiah Bids the Exile community to Settle Down (29:1-32 [LXX 36:1-32])

In the aba’b’ arrangement of Jer 26 – 29, this fourth chapter in the sequence corresponds to Jer 27. Whereas Jer 27 addressed people in Jerusalem but presupposed their interest in the question of the return of things from the temple that Nebuchadnezzar had taken to Babylon, Jer 29 addresses people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken to Babylon but presupposes their interest in the question of their own return to Jerusalem. Both messages would be significant for both communities even though they focus on one or the other. Like Jer 27, this chapter urges the community to accept that the situation is not going to change in the immediate future, though it promises that it will change in due course, and confronts prophets who are bringing a contrary message to Jeremiah’s. At the same time, it follows on from Jer 28, if not as tightly as Jer 28 followed on from Jer 27. Its encouragement to people to settle down suggests that the chronological context is the same as Jer 27 – 28, the early years after 597 when Nebuchadnezzar took off a substantial Judahite group to Babylon. Like Jer 28, the chapter takes up the theme of *šālôm* and closes with a reference to the *lie* (*sārâ*)that a prophet has spoken – this word comes only six other times in the First Testament.

“Despite the pivotal role given to the exile in biblical scholarship, only a few biblical texts directly address the experience of deportation and exile.” Perhaps “the lack of concentrated focus on the experience of deportation in the Bible suggests an inability to deal with this period or an intentional suppression of the experiences of deportation.” Jer 29 is thus a rare example of a text that deals with this issue, offering the exiles “strategies for constructing home away from the homeland. The prophet writes to a community displaced by imperial action while at the same time using the resources of the empire to transmit the message.” Key to these strategies is the notion of hybridity, “ a strategic disruption of dominant power that turns power back on itself through the appropriation of forms, expressions, and structures of that power…. Hybridity remains ambivalent, contradictory, and unpredictable.” But it thereby “poses threats to dominant power.”[[160]](#footnote-160)

1These are the words in the document that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the rest ofa the elders of the exile community, to the priests, to the prophets and to the entire people that Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon,b 2after Jeconiah the king, her ladyship, the overseersc (the officials of Judah and Jerusalem),d craftworker, and smith went from Jerusalem, 3by the hand of Elasah ben Shaphan and Gemariah ben Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah King of Judah sent to Nebuchadnezzare King of Babylon, to Babylon.f

4Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, has said this, to the entire exile community that I took into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. 5Build houses and settle. Plant orchards and eat their fruit. 6Get wives and father sons and daughters. Get wives for your sons. Your daughters – give them to husbands so that they may give birth to sons and daughters.g Become many there, do not become few. 7Inquire after the welfare of the townh where I have taken you into exile. Plead with Yahweh on its behalf, because in its welfare there will be welfare for you.i 8Because Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel,j has said this. Your prophets who are among you and your diviners should not delude you. Do not listen to your dreams that you are generating.k 9Because it is with deception that they are prophesying to you in my name – I did not send them (Yahweh’s affirmation).

10Because Yahweh has said this. At the behestl of the fulfillment of seventy years for Babylon, I will attend to you, and I will implement for you my good word, by bringing you back to this place. 11Because I myself – I acknowledge the plans that Im am making for you (Yahweh’s affirmation), plans about things being well and not for dire trouble, by giving you a future and a hope.n 12You will call me and you will go,o you will plead with me, and I will listen to you. 13You will have recourse to me and you will find, because you will inquire of me with your entire heart. 14I will let myself be foundp by you (Yahweh’s affirmation). So I will bring about your restorationq and collect you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you away (Yahweh’s affirmation) and bring you back to the place from where I exiled you.r

15Because you have said, “Yahweh has established prophets for us in Babylon….”s 16Because Yahweh has said this regarding the king who is sitting on David’s throne and regarding the entire people that is living in this city, your brothers who did not go out with you into exile. 17Yahweh of Armies has said this. Here am I, sending off against them sword, hunger, and epidemic. I will make them like nasty figs that are not eaten because they are dire. 18I will chase after them with sword, with hunger, and with epidemic, and make them into something horrific to all the kingdoms of the earth, an oath, a desolation, a thing to whistle at, and an object of reviling among all the nations to which I have driven them away, 19on account of the fact that they have not listened to my words (Yahweh’s affirmation) – people to whom I sent off my servants the prophets, sending them assiduously,t but you did not listen (Yahweh’s affirmation).

20So you, listen to Yahweh’s word, entire exile community that I sent off from Jerusalem to Babylon.u 21Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, has said this regarding Ahab ben Koliah and regarding Zedekiah ben Ma‘aseiah, who are prophesying deception to you in my name. Here am I, giving them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzarv King of Babylon. He will strike them down before your eyes. 22From them a formula of slighting will be obtained for the entire exile group from Judah that is in Babylon, saying “May Yahweh make you like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in fire” – 23since they acted with villainy in Israel and committed adultery with their neighbors’ wives and spoke a word in my name, deceptionw that I had not ordered them. I am the one who knows,x and a witness (Yahweh’s affirmation).y

24Regarding Shemaiah the Nehelamite youz are to say: 25Yahweh of Armies the God of Israel, has said this. Since you are the one who sent documents in your name to the entire people that is in Jerusalem,aa to Zephaniah ben Ma‘aseiah the priest, and to all the priests,bb saying 26”Yahweh himself has made you priest in succession to Jehoiada the priest, so that there should be appointees for Yahweh’s house apropos anyone who is crazy or is prophesying away, and so that you would put him into the cell,cc into restraint.dd 27So now, why have you not denounced Jeremiah the Anathothite who is prophesying away for you? 28Because consequently he has sent to us in Babylon to say “It will be a long time. Build houses and live there, plant orchards and eat their fruit….” (29Zephaniah the priestee read this document in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet.)ff

30So the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah: 31Send to the entire exile community, saying, Yahweh has said this regarding Shemaiah the Nehelemite. Since Shemaiah has prophesied to you but I myself did not send him, and he got you to rely on deception, 32therefore Yahweh has said this. Here am I, attending to Shemaiah the Nehelemite and to his offspring—he will not have anyone living among this people and he will not see the good things that I am going to do for this people (Yahweh’s affirmation), because it is a lie that he has spoken against Yahweh.gg

LXX lacks *the prophet* and *the rest of*. The background to the latter word may be that some have passed, or that some elders were still in Jerusalem.

LXX lacks *that Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon*.

LXX, Vg have “eunuchs” for *sārîsîm*, the meaning in (e.g.) Isa 56:3-4, but more commonly the word simply denotes officials (cf. Tg, Th); the phrase that follows (with no “and” preceding it) clarifies the point.

For *of Judah and Jerusalem*, LXX has “and every free person,” which suggests the *ḥōrîm*, the *gentry* mentioned in 27:20 MT (see *HALOT*).

LXX lacks *Nebuchadnezzar*.

L has a section marker here.

LXX lacks *so that they may give birth to sons and daughters*.

LXX has “country,” which might seem to make more sense (Duhm, *Jeremia*, 229).

L has a unit marker here.

LXX lacks *of Armies, the God of Israel*.

*Ḥālam* is here uniquely hiphil.

Literally, “at the mouth.”

LXX lacks *– I acknowledge the plans that I*, perhaps by homoioteleuton.

A hendiadys, “a hopeful future” (Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 184).LXX lacks *by giving you a future and a hope*.

LXX lacks *call me, you will go*. MT’s accents link these two verbs, suggesting a going back from exile (Allen, *Jeremiah*, 321).

LXX “I will appear” might imply *wәnir’ētî* for MT *wәnimṣē’tî*. Was MT influenced by Isa 55:5 (Duhm, *Jeremia*, 231)? But *HUB* sees LXX’s text as theological motivated. Tg has “I will be inquired of.”

For Q *wәšabtî ’et* *šәbûtkem*, K implies *wәšabtî ’et* *šәbîtkem*.Vg, Tg translate “bring back your exile”; LXX lacks the phrase, but translates similarly when it occurs at 30:3. there seems no way out of the assumption that in this expression the qal of *šûb* is transitive, as if it were hiphil; the usage is virtually confined to this compound phrase (see e.g., *HALOT*). The rendering in LXX, Vg, Tg links the noun with the verb *šābâ*, which fits most occurrences of the phrase, but not (e.g.) Job 42:10. More likely the noun derives its meaning from its similarity to *šûb*: the phrase is “a sonorous expression of *šûb* with a cognate accusative” (Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 2:355). It would include bringing back your exile, but it implies more. A. T. Morrow and J. F. Quant (“Yet Another New Covenant,” in J. R. Lundbom et al. [eds.], *The Book of Jeremiah* [Leiden: Brill, 2018], 170-90) argue that the phrase’s background lies in Deut 30:3.

LXX lacks from *(Yahweh’s affirmation)* to the end.

L has a section marker here.

See the note and comment on 7:13.

L has a section marker here. LXX lacks vv. 16-20.

LXX lacks *of Armies, the God of Israel* and *ben Koliah* and *ben Ma‘aseiah, who are prophesying deception to you in my name* and *Nebuchadrezzar* (spelled thus in MT only here in Jer 27 – 29).

LXX lacks *deception*.

For Q *hayyôdēa‘* K implies *hû yōdēa‘* (Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 187);the meaning is the same.

L has a section marker here (29:9b – 31:35a is missing from A).

*You* is singular.

For *Yahweh of Armies… to the entire people that is in Jerusalem* LXX has “I did not send you in my name.”

LXX lacks *and to all the priests*.

See the note on 20:2.

*Ṣînōq* comes only here; *HALOT*, *DCH* suggest a neck iron.

LXX lacks *the priest*.

LXX lacks *the prophet*. L has a unit marker here.

L has a section marker here. LXX lacks *(Yahweh’s affirmation), because it is a lie that he has spoken against Yahweh*.

In a broad sense Jer 29 comprises a letter or letters, though it does not use either of the Hebrew words for letter (*’iggeret* and *ništәwān*) which come in Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and it contains none of the salutations or closing phrases that characterize letters.[[161]](#footnote-161) It is “an embedded Hebrew letter.”[[162]](#footnote-162) It combines more than a single missive; v. 24 marks a new start and v. 30 another new start. Vv. 24-29 suggest that a prophet among the exiles has written back to Jerusalem in light of Jeremiah’s letter, and vv. 30-32 is Yahweh’s response to his message. The introduction simply calls it a document, the word that will recur in 30:2; LXX and Vg call it a book, Jerome calls it a booklet.[[163]](#footnote-163) Its contents correspond to those of one of Jeremiah’s oral messages; Jeremiah is now “prophesying by mail,”[[164]](#footnote-164) necessarily if he could not appear in person.[[165]](#footnote-165) One would not know that they were the contents of a written missive if the introduction had not said so, but prophecy by letter is a known phenomenon in the ancient Near East.[[166]](#footnote-166) The chapter outlines:

vv. 1-3 The curator’s introduction

vv. 4-23 Jeremiah’s first missive

vv. 4-14 Part one

v. 4 introduction

vv. 5-7 instruction: settle down

v. 8aα renewed introduction

vv. 8aβ-9 further instruction: beware the prophets

v. 10aα renewed introduction

vv. 10aβ-14 promises for the rather distant future

vv. 15-23 Part two

v. 15 introduction

vv. 16-17aα another introduction

vv. 17aβ-19 threat relating to prophets

vv. 20-21a renewed introduction following up v. 15

vv. 21b-23 threat relating to prophets

vv. 24-32 Jeremiah’s second missive

v. 24 introduction Yahweh’s message to Jeremiah

v. 25a introduction to the message for Shemaiah

vv. 25b-28 review of Shemaiah’s action and missive

(v. 29 the consequence of Shemaiah’s action)

v. 30 the curator’s resumptive introduction

v. 31a introduction to the message for the exiles

v. 31b reminder of the background

v. 32aα renewed introduction

v. 32aβb threat relating to Shemaiah

The chapter is not simply a chronological report of a round of correspondence. It is jerky and it doesn’t provide the listeners with the links they need to make straightforward sense of the correspondence; notably, between vv. 23 and 24 a response has evidently come from Babylon to Jerusalem. Really, only vv. 4-23 are a straightforward missive; vv. 24-32 as well as vv. 1-3 are a curator’s compilation of notes relating to a second round of communication.[[167]](#footnote-167) The absence of vv. 16-20 from LXX might suggest it is an addition; in the chapter as a whole, MT is one-third longer than LXX.[[168]](#footnote-168)

The chapter parallels Jer 26 – 28 in being jerky, leaving gaps, putting things in dramatic rather than chronological order. It thus requires listeners to work hard to understand the sequence of events, like a television drama jumping between scenes and times.[[169]](#footnote-169) Another reason for the jerkiness is the intention that the community in Jerusalem as well as in Babylon should see its significance. Jeremiah affirms neither the people left behind in Jerusalem nor the people taken off to Babylon. Both are equally inclined to listen to the wrong voices and to trust in Yahweh’s promises in misguided way. While the chapter would thus speak to both communities in the 590s, it would also speak to them after 587. After 539, when people were free to move back to their family’s former home in Judah, it would give neither community a basis for taking a superior stance in relation to the other.

**1-2** The preamble presupposes Nebuchadnezzar’s siege and capture of Jerusalem in 597 and the transportation of the city’s leadership and key resource people.[[170]](#footnote-170) As the rest of the chapter will show, there was evidently communication between Judahites in Jerusalem and in Babylon, though the distance was nearly a thousand miles, and the journey would thus take a couple of months. The message would be written on papyrus and rolled up so that it became a *mәgillâ*, a scroll, the word that recurs in Jer 36.[[171]](#footnote-171) Although in numbers the *exile community* was not so large (3,023 according to 52:28), the comprehensive list of the addressees of the *document* underscores what a significant group it was. *Elders*, *priests*, and *prophets* are people we hear about in Ezekiel. Even part from Ezekiel himself, who has not had his commission yet (see Ezek 1:1-3),[[172]](#footnote-172) the prophets there need not all be ones offering false hopes.[[173]](#footnote-173) The list works in a somewhat random fashion, continuing in v. 2 with a further catalog supplementing and overlapping with v. 1; the total compilation gives the listeners a comprehensive impression. The second catalog covers people we already know a little about: we are familiar with *Jeconiah* and with *craftworker and smith* from 24:1, and the *overseers* will the same people as the *officials* in that verse, while *her ladyship* will be the queen mother of 22:26.

**3** Communicating over that distance would be monumentally expensive and hardly practicable for a private individual, but the king would need to communicate with his boss in Babylon (cf. 51:59-64) and send taxes,[[174]](#footnote-174) and Jeremiah is able to slip something into a diplomatic pouch.[[175]](#footnote-175) He can do so because the *Shaphan* family is evidently sympathetic to Jeremiah; maybe its support helped to make up for the opposition of his own family.[[176]](#footnote-176) *Elasah* is apparently the brother of Ahikam (26:24); Shaphan and *Hilkiah* were both involved in the process that led to Josiah’s reformation (2 Kgs 22). Even if the two sons identified with the principles that were accepted by Zedekiah’s father but not by him, apparently it didn’t stop him using them. On the other hand, maybe Zedekiah would be only too glad to have Jeremiah tell Jehoiachin and company to stay in Babylon.[[177]](#footnote-177)

**4-5** Whereas v. 1 had the curator describing Nebuchadnezzar as taking the Judahites into exile, Jeremiah has Yahweh claiming to have done so. His further doubly key phrase in this initial instruction is the exhortation to *build* and *plant*, which compares and contrasts ironically with Yahweh’s undertaking to build and plant, beginning in 1:10. Is this building and planting their implementing of Yahweh’s undertaking? Was that undertaking less good news than it seemed – as it is to take place in Babylon? Or is their building and planting an interim foretaste of his doing so? Another comparison and contrast lies in the addition of the bidding to *build houses and settle* and to *plant orchards and eat their fruit*, whichwill recur in v. 28. Such actions indicate settling down for a while. It takes time for trees to grow and bear fruit. In the West, it’s like buying a house rather than renting. At the same time, the exhortation implies making a home in a way that resists simple assimilation to the empire.

**6** Here but not in v. 28 a series of further exhortations follow. Building, planting, marrying, having children, watching your children grow up and marry and have children: they are aspects of the full life Israelites would want to live. But not *here*. Yet the young men are not to postpone finding a wife until they get back to Jerusalem, and having married, they are not to wait to have children. If people have children who are growing up, they are to help them find wives and husbands so they can engage in the same process. It will thus be “Generation 1.5” who will really have to do it.[[178]](#footnote-178) Which takes you to a third generation, one that corresponds to the three generations of Nebuchadnezzar’s rule (27:7). They are to become many *there*.[[179]](#footnote-179) They may be captives, but they are free where they are; they are not imprisoned. Maybe Nebuchadnezzar sees them as hostages; maybe they were useful. Maybe ordinary Babylonians would not have welcomed these foreigners, these forced migrants.[[180]](#footnote-180) Does the exhortation imply a non-violent stance in relation to one’s foes?[[181]](#footnote-181) Does it imply intermarriage?[[182]](#footnote-182) The opponents of Ezra and Nehemiah might appeal to it in that connection. Or is “the emphasis on the founding of familial institutions in a new geopolitical context… a fitting point of order for a group that had been subject to the trauma of captivity and transplantation into an alien social world”?[[183]](#footnote-183) It is then another way to resist the empire and “create an ethnic enclave within the empire.” The family becomes “a symbol of resistance.”[[184]](#footnote-184) Either way, there’s quite some difference here from the negative connotations of the idea of exile in a heathen land (Amos 7:17; Hos 9:3).[[185]](#footnote-185) “Let Babylon become the place of *šālôm*! Let it become a new Judah!”[[186]](#footnote-186) The community is to grow, not shrink. Whereas people could think that the Abrahamic (and creation) promise and commission no longer apply, actually they do. Jeremiah has to fight on two fronts, against frivolous hope but also against despondency.[[187]](#footnote-187) His exhortation is both a constraint and an encouragement. The reason why people such as the Assyrians and Babylonians transported people such as the Judahites was that they needed agricultural and other workers – the need and the response anticipated the way the United States and Britain encouraged immigration from Mexico and from the Caribbean. It meant that Judahites who took Jeremiah’s advice were able to do well in Babylon, which also meant it was hard to persuade them to return to Judah when they had the chance.

**7** Refugees are thus to become residents, though not citizens.[[188]](#footnote-188) They are to commit themselves to the town where they live. Being concerned for its welfare might suggest participating in its economic life.[[189]](#footnote-189) They are to *inquire after the welfare of the town* – that is, to pray about it,[[190]](#footnote-190) to *plead with Yahweh on its behalf*. What has been three times forbidden to Jeremiah in connection with his own people is encouraged for the exiles in connection with the foreign state.[[191]](#footnote-191) The Babylonians didn’t believe in Yahweh, so that “if [the exiles] did act on the instruction to pray, it would be a sign of trust in Yahweh’s ability to have an effect on people who do not even worship Yahweh.”[[192]](#footnote-192) Praying for the imperial city on the basis of what one knows is the real truth about God and the world also incidentally destabilizes that city in reality and in one’s own thinking.[[193]](#footnote-193) If Jeremiah implies that the exiles are all in the vicinity of one town, then it is presumably Tel Aviv on the Kebar Canal (Ezek 3:15), southeast of Babylon itself. But surely they were not and Jeremiah doesn’t imply so. His instruction applies to whatever town they live in. Jeremiah’s exhortation will seem to clash with other things that people know Yahweh has said. The antinomies fit with Jeremiah’s picture of Nebuchadnezzar being Yahweh’s servant at the moment, instead of the Davidic king, with that picture yet not being Yahweh’s or Jeremiah’s final word (33:19-26). Likewise, Jeremiah’s exhortation contrasts with the promise in Ezek 28:25-26,[[194]](#footnote-194) and close parallels of language in Isa 65:18-23 suggest that the prophet whose voice lies behind that passage knew about this letter;[[195]](#footnote-195) that message hints that this message could also be reversed. Jerusalem has been the place where Yahweh was accessible, and people were used to praying for its welfare (Ps 122); Jeremiah is not contradicting that awareness. He knows that Yahweh intends to destroy Babylon, and people in Babylon will look forward to that event in their prayers (Ps 137).[[196]](#footnote-196) Yet paradoxically that assumption can coexist with the exhortation to pray for your enemies. It’s in your interests, Jeremiah says (cf. 1 Tim 2:12).[[197]](#footnote-197) Whereas the Psalms, then, associate the welfare of Israel with Jerusalem, Jeremiah tells the exiles (who are keen to get back there) that “the success of any future prophetic intercession on their [own] behalf is dependent upon a petition for the welfare of Babylon. The *šālôm* of the community in exile is bound up with the *šālôm* of their oppressors. Any reader of the literature of the period cannot fail to be astounded by the implications of this thought…. Jeremiah was saying, in effect, that Babylon had replaced Zion as the center of the order of creation.” It turns out that “the removal of *šālôm* from Jerusalem… did not call the notion of the order of creation itself into question. A restoration of *šālôm* was still possible, though under changed conditions. Jeremiah's exhortation of the exiles to build houses and plant gardens, to marry and bear children was in fact a call for their renewal.”[[198]](#footnote-198) It’s almost as if he is saying “Let’s not have too much singing Ps 137.” His language in these verses has come to be generalized in connection with Christians’ commitment to the town where they live; the particularities of the context in which Yahweh gives this instruction are important.

**8-9** The problem in the background of the exhortation is that there are people in Babylon as in Jerusalem who have a faith in Yahweh and a knowledge of his promises that makes them hopeful that they will not be in Babylon for long enough to make it worthwhile to do the things of which vv. 5-7 spoke. They would be saying the opposite to 5-7. But the *prophets*, *diviners*, and *dreams* (see 14:14; 23:25-32; 24:9)[[199]](#footnote-199) that speak of Yahweh soon fulfilling his promises to his people actually *delude* (*nāšā’*: see 4:10).[[200]](#footnote-200) To put it in Jeremiah’s regular terms, they are *deception* (*šeqer*). Yahweh *did not send them*: it is the “Cantus firmus of his performance.”[[201]](#footnote-201)

**10-11** As Jer 28 has implied, the difference between Jeremiah and other prophets is not over whether Yahweh will break Babylon and bring the exiles back, but about the time scale. Whereas the figure of seventy years underscored the direness of the community’s fate in 25:11, here “judgment and hope are held together in the figure of the seventy years” (again the length of Babylonian power not directly of Judahite exile). Neatly, Yahweh takes up the verb *attend to* in this connection, which can mean take action for or take action against (e.g., 21:14; 23:2, 12; 25:12). And neatly, Yahweh takes up the language of formulating plans, to which the same applies. He has talked about plans before*:* “here am I, shaping dire trouble regarding you, and formulating a plan regarding you” (18:11).[[202]](#footnote-202) But now, “against both illusionary expectation and despairing resignation, Jeremiah speaks of God’s powerful governance which both settles into exile and ends exile.”[[203]](#footnote-203) Jeremiah does not say that the timing is dependent on the Judahites (in Jerusalem or Babylon) turning to Yahweh. If they do turn now, one can imagine that Yahweh might restore them now. But Jeremiah is clear that Yahweh’s ultimate purpose is not dependent on their response. Yahweh has plans whose fulfillment will emerge from his long-range purpose not from his people’s deserve. His final intention is not to bring about *dire trouble* (*rā‘â*) but to *implement* a word that is *good* (*ṭôb*)*.* His *plans* thus relate to *a future and a hope*, a hopeful future: the phrase contrasts with previous occurrences of the word *future* (*’aḥărît*), which denoted an end with negative connotations (5:31; 12:4; 17:11; 23:20).[[204]](#footnote-204) “The first half of the letter [vv. 4-14] is about *shalom*: first the anticipated *shalom* of the Babylonian exiles (v 7); then the eventual *shalom* of Jerusalem (v 11).”[[205]](#footnote-205) Yahweh’s references to his action and their turning reflect a key tensions in Jeremiah and elsewhere in the Scriptures. Their seeking and Yahweh’s acting are interwoven, but not in a way that is open to any kind of cause-effect explanation.[[206]](#footnote-206)

**12-13** Is the possibility of prayer suspended until at the end of the seventy year-period?[[207]](#footnote-207) Fortunately, v. 7 has already made clear that prayer is possible even now. People will not find Yahweh inaccessible or hard to find.[[208]](#footnote-208) The exile offers the chance of a new life.[[209]](#footnote-209) But Jeremiah’s account of what future restoration will concretely look like focuses on the prayer relationship between Yahweh and Israel. He uses four terms to describe their side to this relationship. They will *call*, they will *go*, they *will plead*, they *will* *have recourse*, and they *will* *inquire*. Calling, the most general expression, covers worship, proclamation, and prayer (3:4, 19; 10:25; 11:14; 33:3), and denotes something that people can do anywhere. But *go,* and *plead* (*pālal* hitpael) suggests physically coming to the temple, the place where they know they can find Yahweh but to which they have no access at the moment; they will then approach Yahweh in the way one approaches any king, in order to bring a plea to the person in authority who has the power to grant it. The reference in v. 7 made clear that pleading is regularly something one does for other people, not for oneself. It went along with an exhortation to *inquire* (*dāraš*); *have recourse* (*bāqaš* piel) has similar meaning. Both imply coming to Yahweh to discover what his will is and to lay hold on the resources that he can make available. Yahweh closes his description of what turning to him will look like with a reference to *your entire heart* or mind or will, a similar phrase to the one Moses uses about turning to Yahweh in exile, in Deut 4:29.[[210]](#footnote-210) Yahweh then has just two verbs to describe his side of the relationship. The first is *listen*. Like other verbs such as know/acknowledge and remember/be mindful, *listen* does not denote something that simply happens inside a person’s head. When human beings listen, it means they respond and obey. Jeremiah uses the verb in this connection more than anyone (e.g., vv. 8, 19, 20). When Yahweh is the subject, too, it means responding, and in a context like this one, and it means doing what the suppliant asks. Given the scores of occurrences with human beings as subject, this rare occurrence with Yahweh as subject has all the more force. Yahweh’s other verb is not one of which he is subject in v. 13: it comes as a promise they people will *find* him.

**14** Here that verb *find* becomes one of which Yahweh is subject. He will be find-able (*māṣā’* niphal) to them.Yahweh continues in a way implying some fruitful ambiguity or openness. *I will bring about your restoration*. Understanding this restoration in light of vv. 12-13 could suggest that the prayer relationship there described is an aspect of the restoration. But understanding vv. 12-13 in light of the exposition of the restoration here could suggest that the prayer is directed towards that restoration. Yahweh may not respond to prayer for restoration now, but in two or three generations’ time he will do so. Bringing about restoration then means terminating and reversing judgment.[[211]](#footnote-211) Either way, in the context of the 590s or 580s, people in Judah or in Babylon could see this promise as something for their children to look forward to. In the later Babylonian period, it would more and more count as a promise to lay hold of. In the Persian period, people who had known the return from exile and the rebuilding of the temple would naturally focus on the first understanding. Yahweh spells out the restoring of fortunes in terms of the return of the exiles on a broader canvas than merely that of Babylon: *I will collect you from all the nations and from all the places where I have thrown you out* (the theme of collecting and returning appears in Ezekiel as well as in Jeremiah).[[212]](#footnote-212)Again, after 587 that promise will have clear resonance, and if a version of the Jeremiah scroll containing this chapter was available to Jeremiah’s community or its descendants in Egypt, then this version of Yahweh’s promise might be significant for them.

**15** “We are astonished (but not really) to learn that purveyors of false hope have sprung up among the exiles as well.”[[213]](#footnote-213) Are they claiming a fulfillment of Deut 18:15, 18? The *because* in v. 15 links not backwards but forwards, with vv. 20-32. But the continuity will be disturbed for a while by vv. 16-19, which jump in a different direction before coming back to the subject.

**16-19** Understanding the chapter thus becomes more complicated as it goes off at a tangent from which it will eventually return, like Paul in Romans. The message of vv. 16-19 corresponds to that of Jer 24. Is it designed to encourage the exiles, or to take the Jerusalemites down a peg or two, or both? It points to the possibility that this ”letter” is meant for the Jerusalemites to hear (as the *you* in the closing verb suggests). They have to choose between 29:16-19 and 27:12-15, and they choose by deciding which prophets to believe. Jeremiah’s comment on the Davidic king is devastatingly direct, and it would seem to support Jehoiachin over against Zedekiah. The same applies to its comment on the Jerusalemites over against the exiles, though Jeremiah is equally dismissive in relation to Jehoiachin and the exiles. Even more sleight of hand might be required to get a letter that included vv. 16-19 into Zedekiah’s diplomatic bag.[[214]](#footnote-214)

**20-22** As Jeremiah’s critique in vv. 16-19 ended with the Jerusalemites declining to listen to the prophets Yahweh has sent, it brought us back to the subject of v. 15 with its reference to prophets. It has also softened up the exiles before putting the boot in. There turn out to be some particular reasons for the letter occupying the first half of the chapter (further anticipating Paul’s letters) as Jeremiah now speaks of individuals concerning whom he has received information. The names are new, the critique is familiar, the threat corresponds to the situation. One can imagine that Nebuchadnezzar would be unenthusiastic about Judahite prophets making promises in Babylon along the lines of the promises Hananiah is making in Jerusalem, and if he executed these prophets, he might be unconsciously acting as Yahweh’s servant. But *roasted in fire* is not a natural way to describe burning someone to death, and burning to death is not a regular form of execution in Babylon. The language rather suggests roasting (*qālâ*) as an appropriate fate for a son of Koliah (*qôlāyâ*) – as is his becoming a formula for slighting (*qәlālâ*). So who knows what (if anything) Jeremiah has literally in mind, and what actually happened to these two men.

**23** The critique combines the innovative with the familiar. Only here does Jeremiah speak of villainy (*nәbālâ*), which suggests a willful rejection of the claims implied by one’s society’s ethical and religious principles. A number of the word’s occurrences denote gross sexual wrongdoing (Gen 34:7; Judg 19:23-24; 20:6, 10; 2 Sam 13:12-13), and these villains *committed* *adultery with their neighbors’ wives* and *spoke a word in my name, deception that I had not ordered them.* Their villainy found expression in their lives and in their ministry. In declaring that he is *the one who knows*, Yahweh might be signaling that he is aware of activities that by their nature the offenders wanted to keep secret. Yet Jeremiah’s other references to adultery (e.g., 7:9) may mean that the community was broad-minded and tolerant, and that they didn’t worry too much about secrecy. Yahweh’s declaration about knowing then confronts their failure to think about the implications of their behavior. Either way, Yahweh is in a position to act as *witness* in a court case about this waywardness. In a hearing at the city gate, the elders make decisions on the basis of what witnesses say, and the notion of witnesses includes what Western conventions might call an accuser. Before the heavenly court Yahweh will be in a position to give eye-witness testimony that is bound to mean a guilty verdict. “How many of our own flock, like Ahab and Zedekiah, prophesy falsehood in the name of the Lord, commit foolishness in Israel and commit adultery with the wives of their fellow citizens who were born of the very same city, the church!”[[215]](#footnote-215) Quite a few, to judge from what one hears.

**24** The missive now lurches in another direction; again the chapter’s sequence recalls the jumpiness of episodes in a television drama.[[216]](#footnote-216) The audience has to hold in its mind the reference to *Shemaiah* until we eventually discover why Yahweh has something to say about him, and associate what we discover there with what Jeremiah has just said in vv. 21-23 about Ahab and Zedekiah and with what he said in vv. 8-9 about the prophets among the exiles in general. Then we will understand the entire drama. The speaker might be Yahweh and the addressee Jeremiah, or the speaker might be Jeremiah and the addressee a messenger.

**25** As we try to work out what is going on, first we discover that Shemaiah is among the exiles and that like Jeremiah he has been taking advantage of that diplomatic bag. While the use of the plural *documents* might not mean anything (v. 29 will use the singular, and see Isa 39:1 for the plural), it’s a noteworthy difference over against v. 1, and the phrase *to the entire people that is in Jerusalem, to Zephaniah ben Ma‘aseiah the priest and to all the priests* may suggest that he copied his memo generously. He wanted everyone to know.

**26-28** In particular, he wants to lean on Zephaniah (see 21:1) as senior priest so that he gets a grip of Jeremiah, though the story in Jer 21 would make Zephaniah’s heart sink at the suggestion. Shemaiah reminds Zephaniah that he stands in the succession of Jehoiada, the tough-minded and tough-acting priest who got a grip of things in the reign of Athaliah and saw to her killing and that of the priest who served the Master (2 Kgs 11:15-20).[[217]](#footnote-217) It is the last clearly-approved slaying in Judah’s story up to 587. That link is one pointed reason for referring to him. In addition, he had set up the positions of appointee guards in the temple (*pәquddôt;* 2 Kgs 11:18).In Jeremiah’s day the priests are thus in the temple as *appointees* (*pәqiddîm*) to have oversight of affairs there, which is the description of Pashhur in 20:1. And one of their responsibilities is to exercise that oversight in connection with *anyone who is crazy or is prophesying away*, which (from Shemaiah’s perspective) includes Jeremiah. There’s no need to infer that Jeremiah went about speaking in tongues or behaving in odd ways; Shemaiah is simply being insulting. Jeremiah should be put in the cells again (cf. 20:2). At least he should be *denounced* (*gā‘ar*), which is no trivial matter: it somehow puts an end to things, like shaming. When Yahweh denounces the sea or the nations (e.g., Pss 9:10; 80:16; 104:7; 106:9), it stills or silences them.[[218]](#footnote-218) Zephaniah’s neglect of his responsibility has led to Jeremiah’s being free to send these scandalous messages to the exiles.

**29** The explanation that Zephaniah *read this document in the ears of Jeremiah* explains the background to Yahweh’s giving Jeremiah the message that vv. 25-26 began to introduce, so that chronologically the order of events is

* Zephaniah gives Jeremiah free rein
* Jeremiah writes to the exiles
* Shemaiah complains
* Zephaniah reports the complaint to Jeremiah
* Yahweh gives Jeremiah something to say in response.

Did Zephaniah’s reading the message count as a rebuke or was he rather sympathetic to him?

**30-32** In light of the non-chronological order of events in vv. 24-29, the curator provides a resumptive introduction to Yahweh’s message. The initial critique of Shemaiah is the usual one: *I myself did not send him* and *he got you to rely on deception*. The sanction that will follow also matches other sanctions: he and his family will lose their place in Yahweh’s people and (with poetic justice) they will not see the fulfillment of the promises whose timescale Shemaiah himself questions. Perhaps he will not have children or perhaps his children will not succeed him in his position of leadership. The *Yahweh’s affirmation* as an encouragement really to believe what the prophet says is the eighth in the chapter, above average even for Jeremiah. The closing critique is then the distinctive one from the end of Jer 28, a final indication that Shemaiah functions in the same way as Hananiah, as a “Jeremianic anti-type.”[[219]](#footnote-219)

# Part 3(b): At Last, A Focus on Hope (30:1 – 33:26)

Whereas Jer 1 – 24 (25) focused on challenge and threat, and Jer (25) 26 – 29 incorporated a little further indication that disaster will not be the end, Jer 30 – 33 adjusts the balance and concentrates more on the prospect of a positive future. Individual messages in Jer 30 – 31 reflect the themes, motifs, and images of the rest of the scroll; they also have substantial links with Hosea and Isa 40 – 55.[[220]](#footnote-220) Their distinctiveness lies in their focus on promise rather than threat. Yahweh’s moving in this direction in the messages he gives to Jeremiah fits his original declaration that Jeremiah was to be involved in building and planting as well as in pulling down and pulling up (1:10). The declaration reverberates in this document (31:28).

It does so in a slightly incongruous way, as Jer 30 – 33 follows chapters set in the context of a threatening time, the aftermath of 597 and the beginning of Zedekiah’s reign, and it does not suggest that the context is inherently more hopeful. Jer 30:1-3 now relates how Yahweh commissions Jeremiah to write down the messages that will follow in Jer 30 – 31, about Yahweh’s restoration of the people and the country, a “booklet of consolation” or “comfort.”[[221]](#footnote-221) Jer 36 gives us a general picture to enable us to imagine the writing of this document. The setting of the messages in the Jeremiah scroll invites readers to link them with the dark days of Zedekiah’s reign, to imagine Yahweh making his promises when the future is bleak. The scroll “repeatedly deals with the relationship between present suffering, further danger, and future salvation.”[[222]](#footnote-222) Jer 32 – 33 then relates events late in Zedekiah’s reign during the last months before the fall of Jerusalem, when the situation is at its most bleak and Yahweh bids Jeremiah engage in a symbolic act that is a sign of his commitment to the restoration of the people and the country. In Jer 30 – 33 as a whole the scroll has a “concern to pack all the hopeful elements into the siege period, so that even before the city had fallen its future rise should be announced.”[[223]](#footnote-223) Whereas we might have expected the vision of a new future to come at the end of the scroll, it actually comes as “a glowing centre, a hidden life, yet to emerge in historical specificity.”[[224]](#footnote-224)

The implication is not that the messages themselves necessarily come from this chronological context, or from any one chronological context. The scroll might include messages Yahweh had given Jeremiah over decades that he did not then generally share; they would surely compromise his threats. The focus on Ephraim in Jer 31 has raised the question whether much of its material has a context back in the beginning of his ministry, so that this document parallels the 604 scroll in collecting Jeremiah’s messages over several decades.[[225]](#footnote-225) The version in Jer 30 – 31 then parallels the version of Jeremiah’s other messages to which Jer 36 refers, and here, too, messages have been collected and updated as Yahweh’s message in this later context, and as with the 604 scroll it is questionable whether we can work our way back behind it to an earlier version.

When Yahweh commissioned Jeremiah to write the 604 scroll (36:1-7) he was unable to preach publicly, and this scroll might have issued from a time when he was in custody and unable to preach in person (cf. 32:1-2; 33:1). But 30:1-3 gives no date for the present commission. The document has the exiles especially in mind (30:3); maybe the time has now passed when Jeremiah had to discourage the 597 exiles from being immediately hopeful. Or its contents might suggest a time after the fall of Jerusalem, when Jeremiah would be in a position to start bringing a message about restoration in Judah. Jer 30 – 31 then comprises a message designed for people traumatized by the experience they have gone through.[[226]](#footnote-226) It would complement the story in 2 Kings with its more exclusive focus on the catastrophe itself and its relative lack of encouragement.[[227]](#footnote-227) And within the Jeremiah scroll, the transition to Jer 30 – 31 parallels Ezekiel’s move from the drift of Ezek 4 – 24 (in the time of Zedekiah) to the orientation of Ezek 33 – 48 (when news of the fall of Jerusalem has arrived).

The setting in which people prayed the prayers in Lamentations (whatever it was) might provide the context for the delivery of these messages, and it would fit their resonances with prayers in the Psalter. The account of Jeremiah’s own life after the city’s fall as he moves from Jerusalem to Mizpah to Egypt might also provide a setting for his delivering them. There is a striking echo of “to build and to plant” at Mizpah (42:10). And/or it is then easy to imagine the compiling of the document in Egypt and the sending of copies to Jerusalem and Babylon, and to imagine curators in any of these locations developing its contents as they may have developed the rest of the contents of the eventual scroll – though such questions involve guesswork. The document would continue to speak to people in Judah, in Babylon, and in Egypt over subsequent decades and centuries.

While the writing of documents mentioned in the Jeremiah scroll is partly practical, it is also a symbolic and performative act,[[228]](#footnote-228) a sign-act.[[229]](#footnote-229) The documents that eventuate (36:32; 51:59-64) are not given to anyone. The point lies more in the writing than in the existence of an immediate audience. The documents implement the events of which they speak. They are the guarantee that Yahweh’s word will find fulfillment. Recording their writing thus also assures readers that the events of which they speak will take place, and/or it establishes that events that followed, such as people’s freedom to return to Judah and rebuild the temple, the city, and the community, did fulfill Yahweh’s will and fulfill Jeremiah’s words (all of which also applies in 25:13 regarding the document it refers to). It is for such a future readership that this document is copied into the Jeremiah scroll as a whole. It is also significant for them in connection with aspects of it that remain to be fulfilled. And the incorporation of these documents in the wider Jeremiah scroll also means they are available to Israel on an ongoing basis.

Six times 30:1 – 31:22 says *Yahweh has said this*; these introductions divide it into six sections. While each section incorporates a message from Yahweh in the narrow sense, they also incorporate words of Jeremiah, of Ephraim, and of Rachel: they thus illustrate how the idea of a message being Yahweh’s word can have a broad meaning. As well as providing listeners with a signpost regarding the structure of the chapters, the introductions constitute a reminder to them that they are to treat the whole as a “divine word.”[[230]](#footnote-230) Another pattern in the document’s arrangement is that the gender of the addressees alternates:

30:5-11 masculine 30:12-17 feminine

30:18 – 31:1 masculine 31:2-6 feminine

31:7-14 masculine 31:15-17 feminine

31:18-20 masculine 31:21-22 feminine

Israel thus appears as clan head Jacob, comprising men who have lost their manliness (30:5-11), as Zion, abandoned by her lovers (30:12-17), as clan head Jacob, whose city will be rebuilt (30:18 – 31:1), as young girl Israel, still loved and destined to rejoice (31:2-6), as firstborn son Ephraim, still cared for by his Father (30:7-14), as weeping mother Rachel, promised she will see her offspring again (31:15-17), as prodigal son Ephraim, for whom his father still has compassion (31:18-20), and as young girl Israel, urged to stop wavering and embrace her destiny.

“Both Jews and Christians pervert this passage, for they apply it to the time of the Messiah; and when they hardly agree as to any other part of Scripture, they are wonderfully united here; but… they depart very far from the real meaning of the Prophet.”[[231]](#footnote-231) So for people who are not living in the traumatic circumstances of the early sixth century, these chapters

* invite us to enter into the life, suffering, and prospects of people living through those decades. As is the case with any exercise in empathetic historical imagination, it is impossible to predict what will be the fruit of doing so.
* invite us to think about the life of the people of God in the 530s and 520s and through the Second Temple period as they lived with these chapters and sometimes saw them fulfilled and rejoiced in what Yahweh was doing in fulfillment of his promises, while sometimes seeing them unfulfilled and continuing to live in hope.
* provide us with ways of looking at how God’s activity in Jesus brought the fulfillment of some of these promises and how the promises continue to indicate agenda to which God is committed.
* offer us resources for looking at the way God acts in relation to his people now.
* do present us with images for picturing what the final consummation of God’s purpose will look like.

# Introduction to the Document (30:1-4 [LXX 37:1-4])

1The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh.

2Yahweh, the God of Israel, has said this: write for yourself all the words that I have spokena to you, in a document. 3Because there, days are coming (Yahweh’s affirmation) when I will bring about the restorationb of my people Israel and Judah (Yahweh has said). I will bring them backc to the country that I gave their ancestors, so that they possess it.d

4So these are the words that Yahweh spoke regarding Israel and regarding Judah.

Qimchi (in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage) in effect implies that the qatal is anticipatory (see the introductory comment on 13:18-22): Yahweh is referring to the messages he is about to give.

See the note on 29:14 – here, however, Vg takes *šәbût* to mean “restoration.”

*Wahăšibōtîm* makes for a paronomasia with *wәšabtî* *šәbût*, notwithstanding the previous note on the meaning of that phrase.

L has a unit marker here.

**1-2** *The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh* is a common marker of a new section in the Jeremiah scroll; the next occurrences will come at 32:1; 34:1; 34:8. Here, it leads into a substantial introduction to Jer 30 – 31 marking the new stage in the Jeremiah scroll as a whole. As usual, “although Jeremiah is the one addressed…, the real recipient of the word-event is not the prophet but the people” (cf. v 4).[[232]](#footnote-232) The commission anticipates 36:2 though it also thereby highlights the question what is the *all*? V. 3 will give the answer.

**3** The document’s contents relate to *the restoration of my people Israel and Judah*, which will be the subject of Jer 30 – 31. *I will bring about the restoration* “states the theme” of the chapters,[[233]](#footnote-233) though it“lacks specificity”; *restoration* is initially spelled out in the promise to *bring them back to the country that I gave their ancestors*, which “makes concrete the programmatic theme of reversal” by embodying it in the promise of a return to the land. This promise is “the central, quintessential hope of the Jeremiah tradition” which “gives materiality to biblical faith; it concerns real life in the world” in that land is indispensable to human life, human identity, and human hope.[[234]](#footnote-234) Evidently the people have been thrown out of their land; in other words, the writing of the document belongs in a context some time after 597 or after 587. The people it refers to are exiles, perhaps in Babylon, in Egypt and elsewhere, rather than the people left behind in Jerusalem – though many of the messages that follow would be significant in Jerusalem, too. Jeremiah’s task is to encourage the devastated people with the reassurance that the catastrophe is not the end. *Days are coming* (7:32; 9:25 [24]; 16:14; 19:6; 23:5, 7; 31:27, 31, 38; 33:14; 48:12; 49:2) suggests certainty but gives no indication of time scale. And the identity of the subject for the chapters that follow is *my people*, which is spelled out as *Israel and Judah* (cf. 36:2). That phrase rules out the claiming of the promises by (for instance) any one group of exiles. And if (some of) the messages originally related to Ephraim in particular, then, they are now adapted to Judah. Reference to *Israel and Judah* began in Jer 3, where the association was an association in faithlessness, and so it has usually been (5:11; 11:10, 17; 13:11), but Jeremiah has also spoken of the restoration of both households (23:6). He will now develop that motif. Here he doubles the reference, in vv. 3 and 4, in case you were not sure you heard it right the first time. Israel and Judah will once again *possess* the country: the verb is one that characterizes Deuteronomy. It occurs in the promises in Deut 30:1-10, which presuppose the context of exile; indeed, “the whole of the Book of Consolation can be viewed as a prophetic expansion in full poetic colour of the expectation and promise expounded in Deuteronomy 30:1–10.”[[235]](#footnote-235)

# A Reversal for Zion (30:5 – 31:1 [LXX 37:5 – 38:1])

The first chapter of promise starts realistically with the toughness of the situation in Judah to which something new needs to be said, and sets the “new thing” over against the toughness. Each of its three sections has Yahweh acknowledging the trauma and hurt that he has brought about by the action he has taken in his wrath against his people in their waywardness. Each sets against that acknowledgment his promise that he is bringing renewal and well-being. The chapter outlines:

30:5-11 trembling and terror give way to relief and release

30:12-17 injury and pain give way to regeneration and healing

30:18 – 31:1 restoration and compassion displace fury and incomprehension

## Trembling Terminated (30:5-11)

5Because Yahweh has said this.

The voice of trembling we have heard,a

terror, and there is no well-being.

6Please ask and look

whether a male gives birth.

Why have I seen every man

his hands on his haunches like someone giving birth,

and [why] have all faces turned to greenness?

7Oh,b because that day is big,

so that there is none like it.

A time of distress it is for Jacob;c

and from it he will find deliverance?d

8On that day (an affirmation of Yahweh of Armies):

I will break his yoke from upon your neck,

your restraintse I will tear off,

and foreigners will not make him into a serff any more.

9They will serve Yahweh their God,

and David their king,

whom I will set up for them.g

10So you, don’t be afraid, my servant Jacob (Yahweh’s affirmation),

don’t panic, Israel.

Because here am I, delivering you from far away,

and your offspring from their country of captivity.

Jacob will return and be quiet,h

will relax, with no one making him tremble,

11because I will be with you (Yahweh’s affirmation) to deliver you.

Because I will make an end amongi all the nations

where I have scattered you.

Yet of you I will not make an end,

but restrain you through the exercise of authority,j

and certainly not treat you as free of guilt.k

LXX has “you will hear,” which matches v. 6 and makes the text easier.

For MT *hôy* (on which see the comment on 22:13) LXX implies *hāyû* “were” and attaches it to the previous line.

The first three cola in v. 7 are noun clauses; in the absence of verbs, one has to infer the time reference from the context. While v. 6 would suggest past, past ill fits the fourth colon and what follows in vv. 8-11.

LXX and Vg take this clause in the obvious way as a statement, but the transition within the line is then harsh. The word order perhaps supports the idea that it is an unmarked question (B. Becking, *Between Fear and Freedom* [Leiden: Brill, 2004], 139);see the notes on 3:1; 25:29. Either way, a positive affirmation about deliverance follows in vv. 8-11.

LXX has “their neck, their restraints”: see the comment.

See the note on 22:13.

L has a section marker here.

The subject separates *wәšāb* from *wәšāqat*, which makes it unlikely that the phrase means “he will again be quiet.”

As Vg (and LXX at 26:28 = MT 46:28) recognizes, v. 11a has *bә* but v. 11b has the object marker.

*Lammišpāṭ* usually means “for the exercise of authority,” for the making of a decision, which fits even Isa 28:26 with the verb *yāsar*,but here the meaning must be similar to *bәmišpāṭ* in 10:24 (see the note).

L has a unit marker here. LXX lacks vv. 10-11, though it has them at 46:27-28 (which came earlier in the LXX order, as 26:27-28). On *nāqâ* piel, see the note on the adjective *nāqî* at 2:34); the infinitive precedes the finite verb, underlining the (negative) fact. Tg takes *nāqâ* piel to mean “empty out” in accordance with its possible etymological meaning and with the niphal in Isa 3:26 (Blayney, *Jeremiah*, 366).

“Fearful dread is portrayed, as it is often pictured in Jeremiah.”[[236]](#footnote-236) While the portrayal of trembling and terror could match the aftermath of 597, Jer 27 – 29 have suggested how during the reign of Zedekiah Jeremiah combined promise and challenge/threat, whereas vv. 5-11 comprise a message offering promise without any warning of further catastrophe. Such a message more likely links with the final disaster in 587. The portrayal suggests that calamity is in the midst of happening, which could imply a setting in the siege that will lead to Jerusalem’s fall, but it promises that the end will not be the end. It goes on to offer “a study in contrasts.”[[237]](#footnote-237) The section outlines:

v. 5aα introduction

vv. 5aβb-7 A lament at Jacob’s situation in light of the disaster that hangs over him

four bicola plus a tricolon at the center

vv. 8-9 Yahweh’s promise of freedom for Jacob from one servitude, to accept another

an introduction followed by two tricola

vv. 10-11 Yahweh’s further encouragement

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

**5aα** The introduction parallels the introduction to 14:1-12. As happened there, Jeremiah will in fact go on to talk about what he has heard and seen; we get Yahweh’s actual message in relation to those facts in vv. 8-11. What Jeremiah has heard and seen thus constitutes background to that message, yet also part of it.

**5aβb** It might be misleading to speak in terms of what Jeremiah has seen and heard; what he describes is people’s reactions to things that one might have seen and heard. It compares with the Psalms in this respect. We discover that people are *trembling* and beset by *terror*, but not what has caused those reactions; we are not even told who is doing the trembling and panicking. Insofar as we learn anything objective of that kind, it is a negative: *there is no well-being*. Coincidentally, perhaps, but significantly, this comment follows on a sequence of references to well-being in 23:17; 25:37; 28:9; 29:7, 11. The prophets’ promises of well-being have indeed failed. Read in light of Jer 2 – 6, a description of this kind would denote something Jeremiah has seen in imagination, but here the context with the promises and encouragements that will come in vv. 8-11 suggests he is referring to what is now actually happening in fulfillment of those earlier visions that sought to forestall disaster. But following the pattern of those visions, he speaks not merely objectively (people are trembling and terrified…) but subjectively (*I have heard… seen…*). Thereby he conveys the empathy of the prophet and of Yahweh towards the people who are experiencing trembling and terror, and conveys the trembling and terror of the people themselves. He indicates that he and Yahweh know about the suffering of the people to whom he brings Yahweh’s message. “Even God is taken aback at the severity of the suffering of the people.”[[238]](#footnote-238) There is no “I told you so” here, though there will be some later. Nor is there an emphasis on waywardness or an urging of repentance; their time is before the catastrophe, when it can still be avoided.[[239]](#footnote-239) Jeremiah draws later audiences into that empathy, too, and into the awareness of Yahweh’s empathy. In the Antiochene crisis in the 160s, for instance, when we know people were reading Jeremiah (see Dan 9), Jeremiah draws them into a realization that Yahweh has heard and seen.

**6** While women have reason to feel fearful and anxious about giving birth, in the First Testament *trembling* and *terror* are not associated with giving birth but with battle. Thus v. 6 adds another image; Jeremiah takes up wording from Isa 19:16. It was supposed to be what happened to Israel’s foes (Deut 2:25), but it is happening to Israel (cf. the vision in 6:24-25). Jeremiah pictures men afraid and consumed by anxiety in light of the prospect of defeat, and the position they then adopt resembles that of a woman in the midst of giving birth. They are turned in on themselves, hunched up, themselves adopting a fetal position, the color drained from their faces. The word for *man* (*geber*) suggests someone who would normally be rather macho, but such valor has gone.The tricolon underlines the point.[[240]](#footnote-240)

**7** The terror-making crisis is visibly on its way, and the reaction of fear relates to the frightening reality of the day that is dawning. The word *day* almost deserves a capital D. Jeremiah is talking about a day of huge significance, a day of military and political catastrophe, a *time of distress*: see 14:8 (which goes on to talk about deliverance); 15:11. In 16:19, it is *a day of distress*, an embodiment of Yahweh’s day, a day *big* in importance because of its frightening nature (Joel 2:11, 31; Zeph 1:14; Mal 4:5). *Distress* is another expression associated with childbirth (4:31; 6:24; 49:24). Now such terror and trembling were supposed to be the destiny of Israel’s foes; Jeremiah uses the expression “Yahweh’s day” only in connection with the Egyptians (46:10). In this message about restoration we might have hoped that through vv. 5-7 he was describing their fate. Only now is *Jacob* identified as the person overwhelmed by terror. *And from it he will find deliverance?* Is there any prospect that Yahweh will prevent that day arriving?

**8** The imagery changes; vv. 8-9 with its new introduction could then originally have been a separate promise,[[241]](#footnote-241) though it fits the context. In the context, Yahweh’s first response picks up the phrase *that day* and neatly reworks it: that day becomes the day of liberation. The imagery picks up from Jer 27 – 28. Submit *your neck* to Nebuchadrezzar’s *yoke*, *serve* him and his people, Jeremiah had said; he had been commissioned to make *restraints* in this connection (27:2, 12). *Break his yoke from upon your neck*? That was Hananiah’s talk(28:2, 4, 11). *You served alien gods? – o*kay*, you will serve foreigners* (5:19). Yahweh is causing them to do so. But Jeremiah had also indicated that the submission and service were to be temporary. They might last some seventy years or two or three generations, but not forever. Yahweh will terminate that arrangement. “A hope against divine violence has been displaced by a hope *in divine violence****.*”**[[242]](#footnote-242)*On that day* and *his yoke from upon your neck* echoes Isa 10:27;[[243]](#footnote-243) it is now a promise relating to Babylon. *That day* is that day. There is something to look forward to. Jeremiah portrays “God’s wrath as salvation for Israel.”[[244]](#footnote-244)

**9** So Israel’s restraints are torn off. Domination by the empire is not the end of the story. But it would be misleading to say that Israel is simply set free. Neither Testament pictures people being liberated from bondage to do they like. They are taken out of one service to fulfill another, as happened at the exodus. Yahweh’s words in v. 8 have another resonance. He had complained, *long ago you broke your yoke; you tore off your restraints, and said, “I will not serve”* (2:20).[[245]](#footnote-245) Now, *they will serve Yahweh their God*, and serve *David their king,* *whom I will set up for them.* The 587 catastrophe will mean they have no king of their own, but Yahweh has promised that David will reign again (17:25; 22:4; 23:5, where Yahweh speaks in terms of “setting up”; 33:14-26). The people’s expectations need to be political as well as material.[[246]](#footnote-246) If it should seem that people simply are being delivered from one servitude to another, there is some reassurance in those promises that express Yahweh’s expectations of the Davidic king as himself Yahweh’s faithful servant (33:14-26).

**10a** A further promise, also perhaps originally independent of the present context, continues both from vv. 5-7 and from vv. 8-9. Instead of trembling and being terrified, *don’t be afraid*, *my servant Jacob, don’t panic*, *Israel.* V. 10a comprises neatly parallel bicola:

So you, don’t be afraid, my servant Jacob (Yahweh’s affirmation),

don’t panic, Israel.

Because here am I, delivering you from far away,

and your offspring from its country of captivity.

The encouragement as a whole outlines:

v. 10aαβ an exhortation not to be afraid

v. 10aγ an assurance that Yahweh is present

v. 10aγδ a promise that he is going to act

v. 10b a description of what will follow

v. 11a a rationale

Its promise of deliverance thus has the elements of a pattern that recurs elsewhere, especially in Isa 40 - 55 (see e.g., 41:8-13), though the phrases are also Jeremianic (1:8, 17; 15:20).[[247]](#footnote-247) Perhaps the prophet who speaks in Isa 40 – 55 picked up and developed phrases from Jeremiah, or perhaps these verses pick up phraseology from Isa 40 – 55 and constitute a later addition to the Jeremiah scroll, or perhaps both prophets work within a familiar tradition. The prophecy’s form goes back to that of a priest bringing reassurance and encouragement to an individual (which is the way the message speaks) [[248]](#footnote-248) and/or to that of an ancient Near Eastern prophetic oracle;[[249]](#footnote-249) it has been adopted adapted so as to bring the same warm encouragement to the community. We have heard about servant Nebuchadrezzar and we will shortly hear about servant David (25:9; 27:6; 33:21-26); here for the first time we hear about *servant Jacob*. On its first appearances in Isa 40 – 55 (41:8-9), *my servant* signifies the master’s commitment to his servant Israel, which is the context here. Yet the servant language also picks up from vv. 8-9, where it relates to the servant’s commitment to his master (cf. Isa 42:1-4). But if the community is going to *serve Yahweh*, then as Yahweh’s servant it has nothing to be afraid of. Masters look after their servants. They will be involved in *delivering* them, in fact: so the answer to the incredulous question about *deliverance* in v. 8 is “yes,” though the deliverance will come after the time of distress; it will not forestall it. Deliverance is another motif in Isa 40 – 55, as is *here am I* followed by a participle (43:19, though it’s also another expression that recurs in Jeremiah), and the return of the people’s *offspring* (Isa 43:5) from *far away* (43:6; 49:12) and from *captivity* (49:24-25).

**10b-11a** The promiseabout returning,beingquiet*,* and relaxing*, with no one making him tremble* is a more distinctive promise that picks up from v. 5. Yahweh looks beyond the return to the life Israel will live subsequently. The promise leads into a third colon, providing the undertakings with some backing: *because I will be with you (Yahweh’s affirmation) to deliver you*. Yahweh recycles phrases applied to Jeremiah himself in 1:19; 15:20. Presence and deliverance mean both that the bringing back will happen, and that the security back in the land will be a reality. If the reference to deliverance in v. 7bβ does not take Jacob “through night to the light,”[[250]](#footnote-250) then the section as a whole with this closing promise in v. 11a does so.

**11b** Yes, *I will make an end among all the nations*, *where I have scattered you.* Yahweh picks up the terms of 9:16 [15]. There, scattering meant making an end of them, and Yahweh is in the midst of fulfilling that threat. Yet he has also said that he would not make an end of them (4:27; 5:10). Here he squares the circle by talking about making an end *among* the nations; making an end *among* them doesn’t count as making an end *of* them there. Therefore deliverance will be possible; there will be something to deliver. Yahweh’s action against Jacob means to *restrain them*,correctthem, as Jeremiah imagined them asking him to (10:24; and cf. 6:8, and the noun in 2:30)[[251]](#footnote-251) and *certainly not treat you as free of guilt*. He is referring to the discipline and chastisement in which he is engaged at the moment. But he hasn’t annihilated them. Apart from this verse and the parallel 46:28, the only occurrences of the infinitive that comes here are Exod 34:7; Num 14:18; and Nah 1:3. Like the Nahum reference, Jeremiah is taking up that key statement about Yahweh from Sinai and from Kadesh. Yahweh’s self-description is what is evident in the calamity that has come to Judah. But it’s subordinate to compassion and commitment.

## You Deserve Your Injuries, but I Will Heal (30:12-17)

12Because Yahweh has said this.

Indeed,a yourb injury is grave,c

your striking down severe.

13There is no one making decisions for youd in connection with the soree –

means of healing, new growth, there is none for you.

14All your friends have put you out of mind;

you, they do not inquire after.

Because with a striking down by an enemy I have struck you down,

with correction by someone fierce,f

On account of the multiplicity of your waywardness –

your wrongdoings were numerous.g

15Why do you cry out because of your injury,

your pain grave?

On account of the multiplicity of your waywardness,

your wrongdoings were numerous,

I did these things to you.h

16Therefore, all the people who consume you – they will be consumed,

all your foes, all of them – they will go into captivity.i

Your plunderers will become plunder,

all your spoilers I will give as spoil.

17Because I will make regeneration grow up for you,

and your strikings down – I will heal you (Yahweh’s affirmation),

Because “Driven away” they have called you:

“It’s Zion,j which there is no one inquiring about.”k

Taking the *lә* as emphatic (F. Nötcher, “Zum emphatischen lamed,” *VT* 3 [1953]: 372-80 [380]).

*Your/you* is feminine singular through vv. 12-17.

For MT *’ānûš* LXX’s “I raised up” may suggest a form of or an interpretation in light of Hebrew *nāśā’*.

For *dān dînēk* cf. 5:28; 22:16.

On *māzôr*, see *DCH*.

LXX, Vg “fierce correction” implies *mûsār* for MT *mûsar*, but the construct fits the parallelism.

The qatal continues the infinitival construction (*TTH* 118).

LXX lacks v. 15.

LXX has “they will eat their own flesh”: *HUB* suggests a combination of a different reading or mis-reading and some consequent adaptation.

For MT *ṣiyyôn* LXX implies *ṣêd* “prey.”

L has a section marker here.

Like vv. 5-11, these verses start from the suffering and anguish of the community, and they constitute a concentrated expression of the theme of affliction that recurs in Jeremiah.[[252]](#footnote-252) In isolation, one might take them as the suffering and anguish of the city after the 587 catastrophe, but the sections on either side suggest a moment when the city’s fall is imminent but has not quite happened, so this section may issue from the same setting. In the midst of disaster, then, Yahweh seeks to get people to face facts, but also promises that the calamity will not be the end. When disaster strikes, people naturally ask why it has happened, and often there is no explanation. On this occasion, the answer lies in Zion’s waywardness. Crying out as if the calamity was undeserved is therefore out of order. “Jeremiah speaks not out of indignation but with firmness born out of exasperation.”[[253]](#footnote-253) Yet that robust response is not all Yahweh has to say. With apparent illogic, *therefore* he will put down Zion’s attackers and restore it. Thus “the major image of the poem” is “woundedness turned to healing.”[[254]](#footnote-254)

The section comprises:

v. 12aα introduction

vv. 12aβb-14a the community’s plaint

three bicola

vv. 14b-15 Yahweh’s response (a)

three bicola and a tricolon

vv. 16-17 Yahweh’s response (b)

four bicola

**12-13** The introduction again implies that Yahweh speaks, as in due course v 14b will confirm. But in the three lines he is reflecting back what the people themselves would be saying in their prayers or in their laments to one another. The addressee, too, is unnamed, but it is addressed as feminine singular, and the last colon in the section will at last name *Zion*. She is a woman who has been done *grave injury*, struck down in a *severe* way. It might have been an accident, nobody’s fault. But *there is no one making decisions in connection with the sore* implies an analogy with someone who has been injured without it being her fault, and she takes the view that somebody is to blame and ought to be accepting responsibility for seeing to her medical care (cf. Exod 21:18-19). But nobody is doing so. Thus there are no *means of healing*, no *growth* of new flesh and skin (cf. 8:22; the city also spoke like a woman in these terms in 10:19-20). “No court will take up Israel’s ‘lost cause.’”[[255]](#footnote-255)

**14a** Yahweh begins to hint at a transition to some different imagery. Never mind the person who made it happen. *All your friends have put you out of mind*, too. *You, they do not inquire after.* Nobody cares (cf. 15:5, 18). But *friends* (*’āhab* piel participle) has bad connotations: see 22:20, 22. Actually, it suggests Judah’s allies, who would be responsible for the wounding. It suggests the usual suspects – Moab, Edom, Ammon. So there’s an irony in saying they don’t care. Of course they don’t. Further, *friends* can also suggest lovers, and this woman is one who has often been accused of unfaithfulness and wrongful loving (2:25).

**14b-15** Yahweh gets more explicit, in several directions. A plaint like the one lying behind vv. 12-14a would often charge him with being the cause of the problem and/or being the one who ought to be doing something about it and isn’t. Its not doing so has thus raised a little suspense: who is the cause and why is he being neglectful? First, he himself now explicitly claims responsibility for the wounding. Indeed, it’s no slight wound. He *struck* *down* – the verb (*nākâ* hiphil), which lies behind the noun in v. 12, often implies killing. Like their so-called friends, he has behaved like an enemy. His action was designed to be corrective or disciplinary (cf. v. 11), but it was *correction by someone fierce*. It was exercised with an intensity that implied abandoning compassion(cf. 6:23). The parallelism works neatly, *abcdb’c’*, to clash with the harsh message:

because with a striking down by an enemy I have struck you down,

with correction by someone fierce

The Psalms commonly accuse Yahweh of being responsible for his people’s suffering and claim that there is no reason for it. Here Yahweh affirms responsibility but also asserts that there was good reason – as happens in Lamentations and in Isa 40 – 55. That factor behind the events of 597 and 587 is the one commonly denied by those Psalms. As happens in Isa 40 – 66, Yahweh answers back. His action responded to *the multiplicity of your waywardness* and the fact that *your wrongdoings were numerous*. When people have been attacked without cause (and thus have a basis for arguing that the elders should require their assailant to pay their medical expenses), they have reason to *cry out* (*zā‘aq*) like Israel in Egypt (Exod 2:23). But Zion cannot cry out in that way *because of your injury, because* of how *grave* is *your pain*. It brought its trouble on itself. The rationale is the same as the logic when Yahweh tells Jeremiah not to pray for the people (e.g., 15:1).[[256]](#footnote-256) The last colon sums up the middle line in v. 14 and thus completes a chiasm in vv. 14b-15, another piece of poetic neatness that clashes with the subject matter:

v. 14bαβ I struck you down

v. 14bγδ it happened because of your waywardness

v. 15a so why are you crying out because of your injury

v. 15bαβ it happened because of your waywardness

v. 15bγ I did these things to you

**16** Yahweh periodically goes in for a magnificently illogical *therefore*, and does so here (cf. 15:19; 16:14).[[257]](#footnote-257) Given that Zion can’t claim to deserve anything different from Yahweh, vv. 16-17 “are constructed to make a detailed and deliberate counterpoint to the preceding.”[[258]](#footnote-258) So what does the *therefore* imply? At the moment, “Yahweh’s motivation is obscure,”[[259]](#footnote-259) but one must be wary of smoothing out such incongruities[[260]](#footnote-260) and be prepared to wait for the answer to questions. Meanwhile, Yahweh simply asserts that the *people who consume you* were unwittingly Yahweh’s agents, but they were behaving fiercely for their own reasons, and *they will be consumed*. The *foes* who took Zion into captivity (in the person of her children) *will go into captivity*. The *plunderers will become plunder,* the *spoilers* will become *spoil.* As is commonly the case in the First Testament, the calamity is the mirror image of the wrongdoing, and here the parallelism underlines the point:

Therefore all the people who consume you they will be consumed

all your foes all of them they will go into captivity

your plunderers will become as plunder,

your spoilers I will give as spoil.

The first three cola thus also point to a natural process of justice built into how life works; it is not exactly a matter of the punishment fitting the crime, as there is no reference to crime or punishment. But the last colon then also affirms that Yahweh claims responsibility for the working of this process as he did for the wounding. Only here does the principle of an eye for an eye come in, and it Yahweh who implements the principle, not Zion.

**17** Is reparation what Zion wants? It wasn’t the implication of where we began in v. 12. Yahweh’s punishing the attackers will not deal with Zion’s cries. “The ‘wounds’ of Jerusalem (19.8) must be healed”[[261]](#footnote-261) – and they will be. Again Yahweh speaks in neat parallelism, without the clash we have noted, and with an abb’a’ sequence at the center (verb-noun-noun-verb) whose reversal mirrors the reversal in the action:

because I will make grow regeneration for you

and your strikings down I will heal (Yahweh’s affirmation)

The God who struck also bandages. He will make new flesh and new skin grow where the injury is. He will heal the wounds that issued from his striking down. There is to be miraculous healing of “a hopeless case.”[[262]](#footnote-262) Admittedly, the logical link in the first line, the *because*, isagain not especially logical, but perhaps the closing line with its further *because* meets the desire for logic and answers the question raised by the *therefore*, not least through making a link with the earlier reference to someone *inquiring about*.[[263]](#footnote-263) It relates to the passage’s “poetics of absence.”[[264]](#footnote-264) If people are calling Zion *driven away*, outcast, they can hardly be faulted; driving away is what Yahweh has often threatened (e.g., 27:10, 15; 29:14, 18). Here Yahweh faces the painful results of what he had to do to his people. He hears other people describing them that way, and it means he has to take restorative action. Even if Zion deserves there to be no one inquiring about her, Yahweh cannot tolerate it forever. The Jeremiah scroll has imagined people walking past the ruined city and expressing their horror and commenting on the reasons for it (18:16; 19:8; 22:8-9). It now imagines them needing to change their tune. The “name” *driven away* will indeed be reversed (Isa 62:12).[[265]](#footnote-265)

## A Restored City and Relationship (30:18 – 31:1)

18Yahweh has said this.

Here am I, bringing about the restoration of Jacob’s tents;

on his dwellingsa I will have compassion.

A city will be built up on its tell,

a citadelb – it will sit for the exercise of authority for him.c

19Thanksgiving will go out from them,

the voice of revelers.

I will make them many – they will not become few;

I will honor them – they will not be belittled.d

20His children will be as they were of old,

his assemblye – it will stand established before me.

I will attend to all his oppressors;

21his lord will come from him.

His ruler – he will go out from his midst,f

and I will bring him near and he will come up to me.

Because who will be the one who has pledged his heart

to come up to me (Yahweh’s affirmation)?g

22So you will be a people for me,

and I – I will be God for you.h

23Here is Yahweh’s storm –

fury has gone out.

A storm is raging –

on the head of the faithless it will whirl.

24Yahweh’s angry blazing will not turn

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

In the later days

you will have insight into it.i

31:1At that time (Yahweh’s affirmation)

I will be God for all Israel’s clansj

and they – they will be a people for me.k

LXX “his imprisonment” perhaps issues from understanding *šәbût* (*restoration*) to mean “captivity” (McKane, *Jeremiah* 2:774); LXX lacked *tents* in that first colon.

LXX, Vg, Tg have “temple,” but there are no other occurrences of this meaning for *’armôn*.

The nearest parallel to the unique *‘al mišpātô* *yēšēb* is Isa 28:6; I take the suffix to refer to Jacob.

LXX lacks this colon.

LXX “testimonies” suggests *wә‘ēdōtāw* (cf. 4QJerc; *HUB*) from *‘ēdâ* (or a form from *‘ēdût*)connected with *‘ûd* (cf. 44:23) rather *‘ēdâ* from *yā‘ad*.

Tg has “their king” and ‘their anointed.”

On the line’s syntax, see *TTH* 201; JM 144a.

L has a section marker here. LXX lacks v. 22.

Vv. 23-24 reappear in a variant form from 23:19-20.

LXX has “for the clan of Israel.”

L has a section marker here.

Like vv. 5-11 and vv. 12-17, this third section both faces catastrophe and promises restoration, but the elements come in reverse order, yet each comes to a climax with a promise of a restored relationship between the people and Yahweh. The section outlines:

30:18aα introduction

30:18aβ-21 promise of restoration of city and community

eight bicola

30:22 promise of restoration of the relationship between people and Yahweh

one bicolon

30:23-24 threat of Yahweh’s angry blazing

four bicola

31:1aα renewed introduction

31:1aβb promise of restoration of the relationship between people and Yahweh

one bicolon

The section illustrates in an extreme form the disagreement over attributing and dating messages in Jeremiah, especially in Jer 30 – 31: does it come from Jeremiah in the time of Josiah,[[266]](#footnote-266) or Jeremiah after 597,[[267]](#footnote-267) or Jeremiah after 587,[[268]](#footnote-268) or a curator in the Persian period,[[269]](#footnote-269) or a curator in the Maccabean period?[[270]](#footnote-270) My assumption is that set in the context of Jer 30 it is another message that we may see against the background of the suffering that preceded the city’s fall in 587. Whatever is the correct answer, “if in verses 5–11 we saw the panic of people who had no hope of being rescued, in verses 12–17 we hear the cries of people who had no hope of being healed,”[[271]](#footnote-271) and this last section presupposes a community that would not be able to imagine the rebuilding of its city or of itself or of its relationship with Yahweh.

**18** So this time the introduction leads straight into a promise of restoration, though it will turn out that the audience should not take too much for granted. Whereas vv. 12-17 also spoke of the material and physical restoration of Judah but did so metaphorically, this section speaks more literally. It begins with one of Jeremiah’s signature phrases, *bringing about restoration*; Yahweh’s withholding of *compassion* is now reversed. It applies the idea of restoration first to people’s homes, the *tents* or *dwellings* that have been devastated in the course of the attacks of Judah’s adversaries on the towns of Judah and on Jerusalem. *City* and *citadel* could both be collective[[272]](#footnote-272) (Jeremiah has often referred to cities), and speaking of restoring tents perhaps promises a return of the good old days. The promises presuppose destruction that reduces towns to ruins, but Israelites are used to the idea that towns get destroyed and then their people build up again on their ruins. It will happen, even though Deut 13:17 declared that an apostate town could never be built up again but would simply stay a tell; Yahweh revokes his own law.[[273]](#footnote-273) In addition to the rebuilding of people’s homes there will be a new *citadel* (6:5; 9:21 [20]; 17:27) from which the administration will exercise authority for the community again.

**19-20a** The transformation will be such as to inspire thanksgiving and reveling that will emerge from the new city’s homes. Merrymaking will make for quite a contrast with the present voices (vv. 5, 15), and Jeremiah’s own holding back from *revelers* (15:17) will no longer be necessary. When Yahweh forgives and restores his people, he thereby opens their lips for praise again (Ps 51:15 [17]).[[274]](#footnote-274) Not long before – if we may imagine this promise set just before the final catastrophe – Yahweh had bidden the 597 community in Babylon to become *many* and not *few* (29:6), implying a fulfillment of his promise to Abraham. Now he promises that he himself will ensure it happens in Jerusalem. As they increase, their belittlingor slighting (26:6; 28:8; 29:22) or shame will be replaced by *honor.*

**20a** There will thus be a return to the way things were *of old*. Jacob in v. 18a continues to be the *his* through vv. 18b-21a. *His* *children* have been struck down (2:30; cf. 10:20) – the reference is not to young people but to the people as a whole who are his descendants. Now they will flourish again. They had flourished *of old*, back at the beginning of Israel’s story, when there had been a fulfillment of that promise to Abraham. On the eve of the exodus the *children* of Jacob/Israel had become *many* (Exod 1:7; cf. Deut 26:5). Now there will be a fulfillment again. Thus Judah’s *assembly* will be in a position to meet and fulfill its responsibilities, as it was in “the time of Moses and David”:[[275]](#footnote-275) the term *assembly* (*‘ēdâ*)first appears in connection with the exodus story (Exod 12) and most of its occurrences come in the subsequent narrative of Israel’s journey from Egypt towards the promised land. It’s hard to distinguish clearly between the assembly as the decision-making body of Israel and the assembly as a worshiping congregation,[[276]](#footnote-276) though that difficulty may imply making a distinction that is alien to the First Testament. Here, the context with its references to the city and the citadel suggests the assembly, but *before* *me* suggests a congregation.

**20b-21** Notwithstanding theflourishing (in fact as a consequence of it) *oppressors* (*lāḥaṣ* participle) were also a problem *of old*: see Exod 3:9 (the related noun appears in Deut 26:7). It will not be surprising if they are a problem again; it is part of the pattern of Israel’s life. But it’s not something to worry about too much, because Yahweh will once more *attend* to the matter: again, see Exod 3:16 (also 13:19). He will see that Jacob’s people have its *lord*, Jeremiah’s alternative term for “shepherd” in 25:34-36. A Moses-like, shepherd-like figure will again emerge from among them to take the lead under Yahweh in dealing with the oppressors. Thus *his ruler will go out from his midst*. *Lord* and *ruler* might be ways of avoiding calling this leader the king,[[277]](#footnote-277) in keeping with the avoidance of that word in some other contexts; and *from his midst* might link with the principle in Deut 17:15. But both words often have more general reference, and they come together in the plural in 2 Chr 23:20 in connection with Jehoiada’s organizing the enthronement of Joash. So they might be a way of referring more generally to overlords and governors. The point that Yahweh does make is that he will give the ruler access to him: *I will bring him near and he will come up to me*. The first might make him more than Moses (Exod 3:5) and the priests and Levites whom Moses brought near to Yahweh at the beginning (e.g., Exod 40:12, 14). The priests, too, were people who could *come up* to Yahweh (Exod 19:22), though there was another sense in which only Moses could do so (Exod 24:2). But Yahweh’s invitation will make it possible for the ruler to be someone who *pledges his heart to come up to me*. Otherwise (to paraphrase Yahweh’s words), “who would gamble his life” to do so?[[278]](#footnote-278) So the emergence of this leader from their midst and Yahweh’s welcome of him into a close access is a further undergirding of the community’s safety.

**22** Thus the relationship between Yahweh and Israel will be restored, as 24:7 envisaged, and will again become what it was designed to be *of old*, back at the beginning (cf. 7:23; 11:4; and Exod 6:7). In the context, the implication is that Yahweh will indeed keep the commitment that he has just described – but also that they will need to keep theirs.

**23-24; 31:1** All that prospect is future. Meanwhile…. Jeremiah repeats 23:19-20 in a slightly variant form, a serious reminder about the need for Jacob’s people to keep their commitment. But whereas earlier the prospect functions “to terrify the constituency of Jeremiah's prophetic opponents,” here “it serves as an anchor for the message of restoration.”[[279]](#footnote-279) Finally Jeremiah repeats 30:22 in a slightly varied form with a reference to *all Israel’s clans*: which leads neatly into what now follows (repetitions in the Jeremiah scroll are not accidental or dumb repetitions).

# A Reversal for Ephraim (31:2-22 [LXX 38:2-22])

Whereas 30:5 – 31:1 made concrete references to Zion and thus implicitly to Judah in a way that was not surprising, 31:2-22 makes concrete references to Samaria and Ephraim in a way that is surprising. It mentions Zion twice, as the destiny of Ephraim’s pilgrimage, and names Ephraim four times, twice as many as in Jer 1 – 30 altogether (4:15; 7:15). As was the case in 30:5 – 31:1, declarations that *Yahweh has said this* function as introductions to its three sections, vv. 2-6, 7-14, and 15-22 (this last includes a resumptive extra occurrence of the wording). While 30:5 – 31:1 may incorporate material from an earlier stage in Jeremiah’s ministry when he spoke of Yahweh’s purpose for Ephraim, any such reference was well-disguised in its reworking for incorporation in this document. In 31:2-22 the reference to Ephraim is explicit, though again nothing points directly to the time of Josiah; the material is embedded in the document of promises relating to the eve or aftermath of 587.

It is not surprising that Jeremiah should have something to say about Ephraim in this context. While his own coming from Benjamin might make him inclined to wonder about Ephraim’s destiny, a vision for the future of Ephraim alongside that of Judah is a motif in the Jerusalemite Ezekiel. The rationale there is a conviction about Yahweh’s commitment to twelve-clan Israel, and that rationale would apply here. Again, there are links between Jeremiah and Hosea, and Hosea the Ephraimite expounds the conviction that Yahweh continued to be committed to Ephraim. While Judahites might be dismissive of the future of Ephraim, from a self-centered angle they might reflect on the importance of the principle that Yahweh stays committed to his people even when they are wayward. An implication of Paul’s argument in Rom 9 – 11 is that the community that believes in Jesus cannot think of God abandoning his ancient people without imperiling its own security (he could abandon it, too), and the same argument would apply to Judahites who did not continue to expect Yahweh to be faithful to Ephraim. So for a variety of reasons it is not unexpected that Jeremiah’s vision for the future in the 590s or 580s includes Yahweh building and planting for Ephraim as well as Judah. While 3:18 did envisage Judah and Ephraim together returning to their homeland, 31:2-22 heralds the way Jer 30 – 31 as a whole implies a vision of the deliverance and destiny of the two households as the people of God; 31:23-40 will take it further.[[280]](#footnote-280)

While rhetorically Jeremiah addresses Ephraim (e.g., in vv. 3-6), there is no Ephraimite assembly to which he can literally deliver his message, and the chapters speak of no community to whom he can send a letter. The message is intended for – well, Israel, the people of God as a whole. The first direct audience will actually be people in Judah, but among them are refugees from Ephraim who could rejoice at the encouragement and the promise. Beyond northern refugees in Jerusalem and people living just north of the city, the Ephraimites might include descendants of people who escaped deportation and/or descendants of forced migrants from other parts of the Assyrian empire (the Samarians of Ezra-Nehemiah), and/or descendants of the Ephraimite clans living in Mesopotamia (while vv. 2-6 makes no reference to such Ephraimites, vv. 7-22 speaks of people returning from there). Jeremiah has a vision and Yahweh has an intention for them.

Yahweh’s promises to Ephraim raise the question of whether and how his promises find fulfillment.

* The Jeremiah scroll (specifically Jer 18) has indicated that Yahweh does not always implement his declarations of intent because they are part of a relationship with his people. They are threats and promises whose fulfillment depends on the response they meet with.
* As with other promises and threats, these declarations of intent belong to Ephraim in Jeremiah’s day; fulfillment in the life of the “ten lost tribes” millennia later hardly counts as fulfillment of these promises.
* During the Second Temple period a flourishing community developed throughout the territory of the old northern Israel, a community that welcomed Jesus more enthusiastically than the territory of old Judah.
* If that community comprised descendants of forced migrants from Assyria as much as people of original Israelite ethnicity, one might see that development as an enhanced fulfillment of Yahweh’s promises rather than a failure of them.

## Building and Planting (31:2-6)

2Yahweh has said this.

It found favora in the wilderness –

the people ofb those who survived the sword.c

Israel, goingd to attain rest:e

3”From long agof Yahweh let himself be seen by me.”g

Yes, with age-long love I loved you;h

as a result I led you along with commitment.i

4Once again I will build you and you will build yourself up,

young girl Israel.j

Once again you will take up your hand-drums,k

and go out with the whirl ofl revelers.

5Once again you will plant vineyards

on the mountains of Samaria.

Planters will have planted and will begin to eat,m

6when there is a day.

Watchers will have called

on the highland of Ephraim:

Get up, let’s go up to Zion,

to Yahweh our God.n

LXX “I found warmth” (cf. the substance of 2:2) implies *ḥōm* for MT *ḥēn*.

LXX implies *‘im* for MT *‘am*.

The word order puts the subject at the end and thus puts emphasis on it; the next colon works the same way (*TTH* 208.4).

The infinitive functions as a finite verb (GK 113dd).

*Rāga‘* hiphil is inwardly transitive (see GK 53def) as in Deut 28:65; Isa 34:14; cf. Vg. LXX “to destroy” perhaps takes the verb as *raga‘* I and understands it in light of the previous colon (*HUB*).

Cf. Tg. LXX has “from far away,” but in the context the rarer time reference (see BDB; Diamond, “Jeremiah,” 590) works better. Vg is ambiguous, like the Hebrew.

For *lî*, LXX implies *lô*, “to him,” an easier reading. Tg assumes that the speaker is Jerusalem (cf. the feminine singular *you* in vv. 3b-6), Rashi (in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage) that Jeremiah speaks.

*You* is feminine singular through vv. 3-6.

The two nouns used adverbially, [*with*] *love* and [*with*] *commitment*, enclose the line as a whole

See the note on 18:13.

Not tambourines (with metal dangles), which had not been invented (Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 2:416-17).

LXX “the congregation of” implies *qәhal* for MT *mәḥôl*; there is a similar variation in v. 13. Aq, Vg imply MT.

*Ḥālal* piel in such contexts denotes treating something as ordinary rather than sacred, as it is for its first years (Lev 19:23-25). LXX “and praise” implies *wәhallēlû*.

L has a unit marker here.

So it will eventually emerge that Jeremiah here turns to Ephraim, but it will become clear only in vv. 5-6. At first, Judahites might take the message as a further encouragement to them, and might have mixed feelings when they eventually have to rethink vv. 2-4. The section outlines:

v. 2aα Introduction

vv. 2aβ-3 Yahweh recollects his commitment to Israel over the years

three bicola

vv. 4-6 Yahweh reaffirms his commitment in the present context of Ephraim’s need

six bicola, the last two being linked

**2** Once again the introduction invites the listeners to take the whole section as Yahweh’s word, even though it will be a while before Yahweh speaks.[[281]](#footnote-281) The subsequent opening words themselves takes us back to the beginning of the main part of the Jeremiah scroll in 2:1-3. There, Yahweh recalled how tough things were for Israel *in the wilderness* after Yahweh had got them out of Egypt. “Wilderness as a place… serves as an imaginative theater for conceptualizing God's consistency in bringing grace into future desolations.”[[282]](#footnote-282) They *survived the sword* there, too. It is an ironic expression, in that it usually denotes foreign people who did not survive Israel’s onslaught upon them (but Isa 1:9 uses it the other way). The sword was not the means whereby the Egyptians attempted to put Israel down, notwithstanding Exod 18:4, though perhaps there and here the sword is a metonymy. It does seem likely that swords were involved in Exod 17:8-13, as they were in Exod 32:27-29! That last link resonates with Yahweh’s recollection in Jer 2 and with Jer 30, though there is no reference to Israel’s waywardness in this section. *The sword* could also remind readers of the sword Jeremiah often threatens (e.g., 6:25; 9:16 [15]), and Ephraim has especially experienced.[[283]](#footnote-283)

**3** In Jer 2, Yahweh talked about *commitment* and *love*; here he talks initially about *favor* or graceand about *love* but then about *commitment*. There, however, it was Israel’s commitment and love. Here it is his own grace, love, and commitment; he is recalling his attitude to Israel, as opposed to Israel’s attitude to him. And there the point was to recall how short-lived Israel’s commitment and love were, here the point is to recall how consistent have been his grace, love, and commitment over the years. When Israel was on its way *to attain rest* in the promised land, then, and settle and relax there after escaping the vulnerability of its life in Egypt and its journey through the wilderness, Yahweh had *let himself be seen*, had appeared (*rā’â* niphal); I take Israel to be the *me*. His appearance (*mar’eh*)had accompanied Israel (Num 9:15-16) *from long ago*. It was not just an experience confined to that long-ago time. He has been doing so ever since those far off days at the beginning of Israel’s story, leading Israel along like a farmer with an ox, and with commitment not the harshness that could be characteristic of a less caring farmer. It has been *with an age-long love* that he has loved Israel, he confirms in responding to Israel’s words about his letting himself be seen. *Age-long* thus rephrases *from long ago*,[[284]](#footnote-284) though what follows indicates that Yahweh would be happy to accept the ambiguity of the expression that more literally suggests “love of eternity,” love that extends for all time forwards as well as backwards. The expression “love for all time” comes only here, though the more-or-less synonymous expression “commitment for all time” is frequent (classically, see Ps 136). Anyway, how can there be love that is not age-long in both directions, especially when predicated of God?[[285]](#footnote-285) Whereas on the edge of the promised land, a preacher’s job is to issue challenges about commitment and to discourage people from taking God’s love for granted, in the midst of disaster the preacher’s job is to issue reminders that there is a sense in which love can be taken for granted and that the story of God’s relationship with his people shows it to be so. Thus

whenever despair presents itself to our eyes, or whenever our miseries tempt us to despair, let the benefits of God come to our minds, not only those which we ourselves have experienced, but also those which he has in all ages conferred on his Church, according to what David also says, who had this one consolation in his grief, when pressed down with extreme evils and almost overwhelmed with despair, “I remember the days of old.” (Psalm 143:5) So that he not only called to mind the benefits of God which he himself had experienced, but also what he had heard of from his fathers, and what he had read of in the books of Moses. In the same manner the Prophet here reminds us of God’s benefits, when we seem to be forsaken by him; for this one thought is capable of alleviating and comforting us.

Those narratives about what God did in the past are not “obsolete,” because “‘whatsoever is written,’ says Paul, ‘has been written for our instruction, that through the patience and the consolation of the Scripture we might have hope.’ (Romans 15:4).”[[286]](#footnote-286)

**4** Yahweh includes no description of the people’s desperate situation and anxiety such as came in 30:5 – 31:1, but he presupposes it by virtue of the nature of these promises. If he is to *build* *once again* and they are to become *revelers* once again and to *plant once again*, there must have been some pulling up and pulling down (1:10). Yahweh now makes explicit that the *you* in v. 3 and the addressee in v. 2 was *maiden Israel*. He will build her up and she will build herself up: the double use of the verb implies the double agency involved. It will happen only because he makes it possible, but it will happen only because she does the work. Rebuilding will then mean rejoicing, music and reveling, as in 30:18-19.

**5-6** For a third time Yahweh says *once again*. But now comes the surprise: the planting will take place *on the mountains of Samaria*, on the terraces constructed on the sides of hills for the growing of vines and fruit trees. *Maiden Israel* is not a personification of the exodus people as a whole but of Ephraim, as Israel was in 30:3-4 and in Jer 3 (also e.g., 5:11; 11:10, 17; 13:11; 23:13). For Ephraim, too, Yahweh’s past love and commitment do not belong only to the past. Building and planting applies to Ephraim, too. *Samaria* usually denotes the city that was the long-time capital of Ephraim (cf. 41:5), standing on a hill but also surrounded by hills, to which theexpression *mountains of Samaria* might refer. But *Samaria* can designate the northern kingdom as a whole (e.g., 2 Kgs 17:24, 26; 23:19, in Josiah’s time); this reference makes sense here. On a wide front, the Samarian hill country will see *vineyards* flourishing and their owners free to eat from them. *The highland of Ephraim* will then mean more or less the same thing as *the mountains of Samaria*, but the point of the reference is different, and perhaps a surprise, or perhaps not. The mountains now become the vantage point on which lookouts can stand. Such lookouts are commonly defensive or aggressive (4:16), but here there is a peace dividend. Instead of warning people about invasion, they are urging them to worship. “The rebuilt community is one in which work and worship are integrated.”[[287]](#footnote-287) Henceforth it will not be merely stray Ephraimite refugees who come to Zion to in this connection. In Jeremiah’s imagination and in Yahweh’s intention, they have already begun to do so (the verbs translated future perfect in vv. 5-6 are qatal). Specifically, the link with planting and harvesting suggests that the lookouts are urging people to go up to Jerusalem for the pilgrimage festival. It is the practice that Jeroboam terminated by establishing the sanctuaries at Bethel and Dan as Ephraim’s festival locations. If these messages of Jeremiah’s do go back to Josiah’s time, then they cohere with his ambition to see Ephraim acknowledging Jerusalem. In the present context, the renewal of a relationship with Yahweh and of a fullness of life that Judah and Ephraim will share does not mean an acceptance of the religious views that Ephraim has been maintaining over recent centuries, even in a cleaned-up version that gives up the worship of the Master or gives up worship of Yahweh that is tainted by a theology associated with the Master. Ephraim will be accept recognizing Zion as the place Yahweh chose. But in Jeremiah’s picture it is not a burdensome duty but a joy. “Universalism” can combine with a view of “Zion as the centre of worship in the coming salvation.”[[288]](#footnote-288)

## Redeeming and Restoring (31:7-14)

7Because Yahweh has said this.

Chant for Jacob with joy,

shrill about the head of the nations.

Make it heard, praise, and say:

“Delivera your people, Yahweh,

the remainder of Israel.”

8Here am I, enabling them to come

from a northern country.

I will collect them from the furthest parts of the earth,

among them blind and lame.b

The pregnant and the one giving birth, altogether –

a great assembly, they will return here.

9With crying they will come,

and with prayers for gracec I will lead them.

I will enable them to go to wadis with water,

by a level path on which they will not tumble.

Because I have become a father to Israel,

and Ephraim is my firstborn.d

10Listen to Yahweh’s word, nations,

tell on shores far away.

Say, the one who dispersed Israel will collect him,

and guard like a shepherd his flock.

11Because Yahweh has redeemed Jacob,

restored hime from a hand too strong for him.

12They will come and chant on Zion’s height,

and shine atf Yahweh’s good things,

Because of new grain and because of new wine and because of fresh oil,

and because of the young of flock and cattle.

Their life will become like a watered garden,

and they will not ever again be faint.

13Then a girl will rejoice in dancing,

young men and old men altogether.g

I will change their mourning into joy,

comfort them and enable them to rejoice, away from their sorrow.

14I will drench the priests’ life with fatness,

and my people will be full of my good things (Yahweh’s affirmation).h

LXX implies “Yahweh has delivered,” and 4QJerc has *hwšy‘*. In the Babylonian period it would be an anticipatory qatal (see the introductory comment on 13:18-22); in the Persian period, it would rejoice in what Yahweh actually had done (to invert the comment in Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2:184).

For *bām ‘iwwēr ûpisēaḥ*, LXX “on the Passover festival” implies *bēmô‘ēd pesaḥ*, a nice reading, though it would be a shame to lose MT’s.

LXX “consolations” (cf. Aq, Sym) implies *tanḥûmîm* for MT *taḥnûnîm*.

L has a section marker here.

The verb is simple *waw* plus qatal, being a parallel description of the act in the first colon, not a description of a further act.

Vg has “flow to” (cf. LXX), Tg “delight themselves in”; see the comment.

For *yaḥdāw*, LXX repeats “will rejoice,” implying *yaḥdû*. Aq, Vg imply MT.

L has a section marker here.

As the section again begins talks of Jacob and Israel, we would now be hesitant to make assumptions about the referent of those names. In due course our hesitancy is rewarded: Yahweh is continuing to speak about Ephraim. Here the verses begin from Ephraim’s dispersion in a land far away and promises Yahweh’s deliverance. Their metaphorical or literal weakness or vulnerability will not hold him back. He will lead them safely on their journey and provide for them extravagantly on an ongoing basis when they get back home. Once more he pictures them flocking to Jerusalem for the festivals, to praise Yahweh for what he has done. The section outlines:

v. 7aα introduction

vv. 7aβb praise and plea to Yahweh to deliver Israel

a bicolon and a tricolon

vv. 8-9 Yahweh’s responsive promise: he will enable Israel to come back

six bicola

vv. 10-11 challenge to the nations to note Yahweh’s promise

three bicola

vv. 12-14 further exposition of the promise: the praise they will give for his blessing

six bicola, the first two being linked

The section has many points of connection with Isa 40 – 66. If Jer 30 – 31 comes in part from the Persian period, then the points of connection will indicate a knowledge of those chapters; if Jer 30 – 31 comes from the time just before or just after 587, the dependence will be the other way around.

**7** The section’s opening is doubly surprising: the commission from Yahweh is a commission to engage in addressing Yahweh, and the opening line makes one expect simply an act of praise, but the second line includes a prayer. The combination recalls the nature of praise and prayer in the Psalms, where praise often leads into prayer and prayer is hardly possible without praise. Joy and praise are the appropriate stance before Yahweh, but the tricolon recognizes that a plea needs to be uttered in connection with *the head of the nations*. While the parallelism in the first line would at first suggest that Jacob is the head of the nations, and Jeremiah will later call Babylon the last of them (50:12), at the moment Babylon is surely the head and Ephraim is merely the *remainder* of what it once was. It is therefore not at all surprising that a plea follows the praise. So the plea *deliver* links with the reference to *the head of the nations*, and the expression *the remainder of Israel* heightens the point. There is or there will not be much left of Judah (6:9; 8:3; 15:9; 23:3; 24:8), but it is much more obvious that there is not much left of Ephraim through its being defeated and exiled over a century ago.

**8** Yahweh looks that fact in the face and promises to deliver. The remaining Ephraimites are in *a northern country*, away in old Assyria. How could they come back? Yahweh will enable them to do so. They are scattered there. He will *collect* them, as he will collect the scattered remains of Judah; this same verb (*qābaṣ* piel) expressed Yahweh’s promise to Judah (23:3; 29:14), and behind that reference is the promise in Deut 30:3. It’s a very different arrival *from a northern country* and *from the furthest parts of the earth* than the one threatened in 6:22.[[289]](#footnote-289) That one spoke of death, this one speaks of life.[[290]](#footnote-290) What, he will collect all of them, the weak and the tired (“give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free”)? Yes, *the blind and the lame, the pregnant and the woman giving birth*. If Yahweh brings them all, indeed *a great assembly* (or congregation – a *qāhāl*) *will return here*.

**9** Why will there be *crying*? Perhaps it is a joyful weeping,[[291]](#footnote-291) because they cannot believe what is happening, having thought they would never have the chance. But the parallelism indicates that the crying will be accompanied by *prayers for grace* (the two expressions came as a construct phrase in 3:21); Jeremiah then makes a suggestive jump as Yahweh promises that he will *lead them* with these prayers for grace. The prayers will meet with his response and thus become interwoven with his leading. Suppose they set off and wonder if they will really be able to make it? Yahweh will ensure that they find wadis, with water in them, such as they will need in order to make such a journey, and that their paths are level so they don’t fall (he speaks metaphorically or metonymically); contrast the picture in 6:15, 21; 8:12. It’s the way a shepherd cares for his flock, but the reason he gives is that he has also *become a father to Israel* and that Ephraim (at last the naming) is actually his firstborn son. It is a climactic statement, after which L’s section marker encourages a pause for breath. The surprising nature of both statements points to their distinctive metaphorical nature. Yahweh has always been father to Israel as a whole, at least since the exodus (Hos 11); further, there are several candidates ahead of Ephraim for designation as firstborn within Israel. But Yahweh is making a new commitment to being Ephraim’s father and acting as such at this moment, and he will treat Ephraim as if he is his firstborn, without there being an implication that he neglects other sons (among whom people adopted into sonship through Jesus might be included).[[292]](#footnote-292)

**10** Yahweh goes on to address the *nations*. He did so in 6:18 to shame Judah over the catastrophe he was bringing as the penalty for its waywardness – though as a way of bringing the reality home to Judah itself. Here he does so to encourage Ephraim about the renewal he is bringing. If Yahweh draws the nations’ attention to it, it must be real, otherwise he will make a fool of himself! He restates the promises from v. 8 in case people haven’t heard them or believed them, and also once again affirms responsibility for bringing about the catastrophe and confirms the intention to bring about the restoration. Yahweh is the one God; there is no evil power bringing trouble and then benign power reversing it. He *dispersed* (*zārâ* piel), like a farmer winnowing grain so as to disperse the chaff (4:11; 15:7; 49:32, 36; 51:2). It’s ridiculous to think of collecting the husks that blew away. Yet Yahweh intends to *collect* what he scattered as useless: he repeats the verb from v. 8. Beyond that collecting, he will *guide them like a shepherd his flock*: he also restates promises from v. 9, again in case they are not sure they have heard right. They are indeed his *flock* and he is their *shepherd.*

**11** He backs up his promise further with two key verbs. In Deuteronomy, *redeemed* is an exodus word. Behind it is the idea of being in the power of someone from whom one cannot break away, of being in inescapable serfdom; redemption thus requires a strong hand (Deut 7:8; 9:26; 13:5 [6]; 15:15; 24:18). Jeremiah tweaks the image: the one from whom Yahweh redeems Israel is one whose *hand* is *too strong for him* (cf. Ps 35:10). Yahweh will have thereby *restored* them, another exodus word (Exod 6:6; 15:13), especially picked up in Isa 40 – 55 (e.g., 43:1; 44:22-23). Restoring again links with servitude: a restorer is a member of one’s family who has resources that he is willing to use to set relatives free from a bondage into which reversals have taken them. Redeeming and restoring speak both of Yahweh’s power and of his commitment. When Yahweh speaks in the past tense of redeeming and restoring, people could hear him as recalling what he indeed did at the exodus, which is a pattern for what he will do now,[[293]](#footnote-293) or as speaking of his future redeeming and restoring of Ephraim that is so definite it can be spoken of as actual; he is in the midst of doing it.[[294]](#footnote-294)

**12** What will follow parallels the close of vv. 2-6. Ephraim *will come and chant on Zion’s height*, as all Israel was supposed to do. People came on pilgrimage festivals in connection with the harvest as well as to the exodus, and so they will here. Jeremiah neatly uses a verb with two possible meanings, as he will in 51:44 (cf. Isa 2:2; Mic 4:1). *Nāhār* means a stream, and one might imagine people streaming to Zion (*nāhar* I). But a homonym (*nāhar* II) means *shine*, and the context suggests it is the primary idea here. Taking Ephraim back to its homeland will be only the beginning of its story, as when Yahweh took Israel to Canaan at the beginning. There will be *Yahweh’s good things* to beam over. They are spelled out in the rest of the verse. *New grain, new wine,* and *fresh oil* are the immediate fruits of the harvest. They would not be growing on Zion, but people would rejoice in them there as they represent a fulfillment of the promise in Deut 7:13. In slightly different words, that promise also refers to *the young of the flock and cattle*, which suggests the same point with regard to the animals: they, too, are an aspect of the fruitfulness that the imagery brings before people’s eyes. The third line makes explicit that the beginning will not be the end but only the start of something ongoing, *a life* that is *like a watered garden*, with no danger that people will *ever again be faint* because the harvest has failed.

**13-14** So there will be *dancing,* *joy,* and *comfort* to replace *mourning* (e.g., 12:4, 11; 14:2) and *sorrow* (e.g., 8:18; 20:18) because there is no more of the anxiety, sadness, and grief of a life where there is not enough to eat and people languish. Even *the* *priests* (about whom Jeremiah has had few good words to say)[[295]](#footnote-295) will enjoy the lusciousness of the offerings that people are now in a position to bring, as the people are *full of my good things*. The “idyllic images of a pastoral life” in these verses are “worthy of a Breughel.”[[296]](#footnote-296) Perhaps the lavishness of the priests’ share in the offerings is an indication of the abundance of the people’s blessing,[[297]](#footnote-297) but perhaps the priests are there because they are a integral and accepted aspect of Israel and of Yahweh’s relationship with Israel.[[298]](#footnote-298)

## Turning and Compassion (31:15-22)

15Yahweh has said this:

A voice is making itself heard on a height,a

wailing, most bitter crying.b

Rachel crying over her children,

refusing to take comfort over them,

because “There is no one.”c

16Yahweh has said this:

Restrain your voice from crying,

your eyes from tears.

Because there is payment for your work (Yahweh’s affirmation):

they will return from the enemy’s country.

17So there is hope for your future (Yahweh’s affirmation):

the children will return to their territory.d

18I have clearly hearde Ephraim bemoaning himself:f

“You have restrained me and I am under restraint,

like a calf not trained.

Turn me, so that I may turn,

because you are Yahweh, my God.

19Because after my turning,g I relented;

after my humbling myself,h I struck my thigh.

I am shamed, and yes, I am disgraced,

because I have carried reproach since my youth.”

20Ephraim is a precious son to me, isn’t he,

or a child that is delighted in.

Because as often asi I have spoken against him,

I would definitely be mindful of him still.

That’s why my insides have been in turmoil for him –

I would definitely have compassion for him (Yahweh’s affirmation).j

21Set up markers for yourself,k

put “bitterness”l for yourself.

Apply your mind to the highway,

the path that you walked.m

Turn, young girl Israel,n

turn to these, your towns.

22How long will you vacillate,

turning daughter?

Because Yahweh has created a new thing in the country:o

a female can turn her arms around a man.p

*Bәrāmâ* (cf. Vg). LXX “in Ramah” implies *bārāmâ*; the place name Ramah regularly has the article (Neh 11:33 is the one exception), like Los Angeles, and thus strictly means “The Height.” Neither Gen 35:19-20 nor 1 Sam 10:2 locate Rachel’s burial or tomb at Ramah, though the location of Zelzah is unknown and it might be near there.

See the note on 6:26.

L has a section marker here. The singular makes a link with the story of Jacob and Rachel and their family in Gen 37:30; 42:13, 32, 36; 44:26, 30, 34 – which is also the context in which there is much talk of *wages* (S. E. Brown-Gutoff, “The Voice of Rachel in Jeremiah 31,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 45 [1991]: 177-190 [184]); see the comment on v. 16.

L has a section marker here.

The infinitive precedes the finite verb, underlining the fact.

Cf. LXX; Vg “wander” assumes another aspect of the range of meanings of *nûd*; perhaps we are invited to hear both meanings (Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2:189).

LXX “my imprisonment” (cf. 30:18) implies *šibyî* for MT *šûbî*.

Vg takes the niphal infinitive *hiwwādә‘î* to mean “my being instructed,” as if it were hophal (cf. BDB), while LXX has “my knowing,” as if it were qal. I take the verb as *DCH*’s *yāda‘* II.

See the note on 20:8.

L has a section marker here. In v. 20aγδb two successive lines have a qatal verb followed by a yiqtol, and each time the yiqtol verb is preceded by its infinitive, underlining the fact to which it refers. I take both yiqtol verbs to refer to the past and as having past imperfect significance.

*Your/you* in vv. 21-22 is feminine singular.

*Tamrûrîm* recurs from v. 15; cf. Tg. Rashi (in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage) links the word rather with *tāmār* (palm tree) and takes it as another word for a marker or signpost, but this seems a stretch. LXX simply transliterates both nouns.

For Q *hālākt*, B. Becking reads K *hlhkty* as Yahweh’s first-person reference to his return to Canaan (“The Return of the Deity,” in Y. Amit et al. [eds.], *Essays on Ancient Israel in Its Near Eastern Context* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006], 53-62).

Cf. v. 4; and see the note on 18:13.

LXX “created salvation for new planting” perhaps suggests the influence of Isa 43:19; 61:11 (*HUB*).

L has a section marker here. Tg has “the people, the house of Israel, shall pursue the Law.”

Vv. 15-22 comprises three units, addressing Rachel as Ephraim’s mother (vv. 15-17), Ephraim as Yahweh’s son (vv. 18-20), and young Israel as Yahweh’s daughter (vv. 21-22). These differences may indicate that the three units are of separate origin, were brought together by the curator, and are signaled as belonging together by the common introduction in v. 15aα. All three address Ephraim directly or indirectly, they have overlapping concerns, and they use overlapping language. They offer comfort to a bereaved mother, reassurance to a guilty son, and encouragement to a wavering daughter.

The section outlines:

v. 15aα introduction to vv. 15-22

vv. 15aβ-17 a report about Rachel, an introduction to a message for her, and the message

a bicolon and a tricolon, then three bicola.

vv. 18-20 an introduction to a report about Ephraim, its reflection, and Yahweh’s comment

four bicola, then three more

vv. 21-22 a challenge to young girl Israel to turn

five bicola

**15** Once again *Yahweh has said this* marks the beginning a section that will eventually be a direct word from Yahweh but starts with the human words to which Yahweh will respond. A contrast with vv. 2-6 and 7-14 is that there Yahweh started from the positive, with the challenge involved in the idea of Ephraim’s restoration then being more prominent in vv. 7-14 than in vv. 2-6; this third section faces the challenge at the beginning. In addition, from the beginning Jeremiah signals that the subject is the northern clans. “Jerusalem has listened too long to its own immediate crisis. Now it is invited… to listen to a much older, much more pathos-filled voice.”[[299]](#footnote-299) Jeremiah invites the audience to imagine a voice of pain – *wailing, crying, great bitterness*. Who could it be? It is the voice of Rachel, mother of Joseph, grandmother of Ephraim and Manasseh, and mother of Benjamin. There was a place known as Rachel’s tomb in Benjamin (1 Sam 10:2). The question where Rachel was actually buried is complicated (see Gen 35:19-20) but for Jeremiah’s purposes it is unnecessary to resolve that question. The point is that at a place known as Rachel’s tomb she could be imagined *crying* as her *children* trudged off into exile after the fall of Samaria in 721. Indeed, Jeremiah does not explicitly refer to her tomb, and need not be implying that location. The vision reflects or imagines the mourning of people who had somehow escaped the 721 exile and were still bemoaning their exiled fellow-Ephraimites.[[300]](#footnote-300) Representing them, Rachel sits *on a height*[[301]](#footnote-301)grieving over their loss. They are all gone. “Cicero, when treating of the highest ornament of an oration, says, that nothing touches an audience so much as when the dead are raised up from below.”[[302]](#footnote-302)

**16-17** The word of Yahweh in the stricter sense now begins, addressing Rachel. She need neither cry out in pain nor let her tears flow. Genesis associates the word *payment* (*śeker*) with Jacob, the man who loved Rachel: Leah links Issachar’s name with this word, and Jacob and Laban use it in connection with Jacob’s serving Laban (Gen 30:18. 28, 32, 33, 31:8). Like Jacob, Rachel thinks she has earned nothing, for the work of mothering that cost her frustration, sadness, labor, and eventually death. But her mother’s *payment* lies in the life of her children; she will see the payment, because they will come back. *So there is hope for your future*. “Rachel had lost her own life in giving life to Benjamin, and through him to the people of Israel and Judah. Now she watched again as life and a future slipped away. She saw no hope. She accepted no comfort.”[[303]](#footnote-303) Yahweh declares that there is reason for hope. “The Lord’s answer to Mother Rachel’s prayer is a kind of resurrection.”[[304]](#footnote-304)

**18** After yet another introduction to what follows, “the lament of the mourning clan mother is followed by a lament of another kind.”[[305]](#footnote-305) It again expresses deep feelings, not those of a woman’s terrible maternal loss but of a man’s regret for a “disgraceful youthful past.”[[306]](#footnote-306) One would not immediately know whether the *I* was Yahweh or Jeremiah, but v. 20 will indicate it is Yahweh. Ephraim is not bemoaning someone else (as in 15:5; 16:5; 22:10) but himself; *bemoaning* (*nûd* hitpael) is a body-word, suggesting rocking or swaying or shaking the head. Yahweh has subjected him to tough discipline, as he has Judah (*yāsar*: 2:19-20),[[307]](#footnote-307) though arguably much more harshly. A calf would wear ropes as restraints to train it; so Yahweh has treated Ephraim. The move to the language of turning (*šûb*) almost makes the audience smirk: it is the language that runs through Jer 3 with its comparison and contrast between Ephraim and Judah in that connection. Jeremiah again works with the potential of this verb. Ephraim has recognized that he needed discipline, needed to turn, but as a not-yet-trained calf, he hasn’t done so. He recognizes that Yahweh is his God (quite a recognition for the Ephraim whom Jeremiah has described so far). But he needs Yahweh to turn him, to complete the training operation. Then Ephraim will turn. Jeremiah again presupposes that there is something Yahweh needs to do for people and something they have to do, the relationship between the two being mysterious. The Anglican collect for this week as I write runs:

Almighty God, who alone can bring order to the unruly wills and affections of sinful humanity: give your people grace so to love what you command and to desire what you promise, that, among the many changes of this world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found.

**19** Part of the background is Ephraim’s recognition that he had turned (away); but at least he has recognized it, and has *relented* (unlike Judah in 8:6, where “turning away” features either side of the reference to relenting). He has acknowledged his turning, and has *struck* his *thigh*. The two expressions spell out aspects of the nature of relenting. It means looking at things a different way (a traditional English translation is “change one’s mind”). It also implies a reaction in the realm of feelings, here suggested by a physical action; beating one’s chest might be a Western equivalent. Ephraim continues to spell out the nature of the change he claims when he recognizes the reality of shame and disgrace, and of the reproach that has been hurled at him without him taking any notice. He is not now just shrugging his shoulders at a narrow-minded prophet like Jeremiah. He knows that reproach goes back to the beginning of his story, as Jer 2 – 3 again suggests. *Reproach since my youth*, more literally “the reproach of my youth,” makes for an unhappy contrast with *your youthful commitment*, more literally“the commitment of your youth” (2:2).[[308]](#footnote-308) “Before I was afflicted I went astray…. It was good for me that I was afflicted” (Ps 119:67, 71).[[309]](#footnote-309) He has reached the point where he can say, “Father, I have sinned” (Luke 15:21).[[310]](#footnote-310)

**20** Initially, it might almost seem as if Yahweh has not listened to Ephraim’s disdaining of himself, though perhaps in a good way. He doesn’t even directly reply to Ephraim. Who is Yahweh addressing? Jeremiah? Judah? The nations? Of course it doesn’t matter, because within the rhetoric of the poem he is speaking for Ephraim to overhear (and in the next level of that rhetoric, for Judah to hear). Yahweh reminds the listeners that he is Ephraim’s father (v. 9); Ephraim is a son whom he treasures like a valuable possession. He wouldn’t be so stupid as to lose him or throw him away. Yahweh delights in him, like a vineyard owner delighting in the plants he tends in order to get them to grow fruitfully. Ephraim is an important investment for Yahweh. Yahweh is not just being fatherly. His words suggests that he has been listening. He cares about this calf. He has been training it for a purpose, as a father trains his son and disciplines him so the son will be useful on the farm and will be able to take it over when his father is past it. Yahweh’s speaking against Ephraim was not punitive. Even while speaking his disciplinary words, he was still being mindful of him. Yet it doesn’t mean Yahweh is a cool and calculating father. *My insides have been in turmoil for him*. The verb (*hāmâ*) can denote the groan of someone in distress (4:19; 48:36) or the roar of the sea (5:22; 6:23; 31:35; 50:42; 51:55); the only occasion when *my insides* is the subject, it refers to the anxiety of a lover in troubling circumstances (Cant 5:4). Here, the significance of the turmoil and inner rumbling is clarified by the parallelism: it is the bodily reflex of his compassion. The word for *insides* (*mē‘îm*) can refer to the womb (e.g., Isa 49:1) or to the origin of a child inside its father’s body (e.g., Gen 15:4), and the word for *compassion* (*rāḥam* piel) links with the more technical word for the womb (*reḥem*), which suggests that fatherly (and motherly) imagery continues. In a scene in the movie *Chariots of Fire* the runner’s tough trainer is listening alone to a radio broadcast of his protégé’s race and rejoicing ecstatically when he wins. Such is Yahweh’s involvement with his son.

**21** For a third time in vv. 15-22 there is a switch to a new addressee; this time it is unannounced, but signaled by the addressee’s now being feminine singular. Once more, her identity is held back until the third line. The lines hint at a systematic ambiguity: they are talking about a literal return to Canaan, and also about a moral and religious return to Yahweh. *Markers* (*ṣiyyûn*) come only here and in 2 Kgs 23:17; Ezek 39:15, where they indicate markers drawing attention to a tomb, to help people avoid going too close if they want to avoid defilement. Here, the parallelism suggests that *bitterness* is a warning about what defiles and what is death-dealing, perhaps an encouragement to grieving over it.[[311]](#footnote-311) Israel has not cared enough about such questions over the years; hence Jeremiah’s earlier comments on things being bitter, not least in their consequences (2:19; 4:18). That link makes one reflect on the etymological connection between *markers* and Yahweh giving orders (*ṣāwâ* piel). So Israel needs to think about its *highway*, the *path* it has walked in the past. *Young girl Israel* must *turn*: which takes us back to this motif in Jer 3. Then Yahweh adds a bidding to her to return to *her towns*, which indicates how systematically he is talking at two levels. Ephraim needs to think about the religious and moral path it was long walking and about the bitter journey into exile that issued from that walking, and to make sure it abjures that path as it also undertakes the journey back home on which Yahweh invites it.

**22** Yahweh underlines the point with the exhortation not to *vacillate* and with a double further recycling of the image of turning. The image has suggested returning to Yahweh, returning to the right path, and returning to the homeland, but the same verb can denote turning away from Yahweh and from the right path. In the final line Jeremiah outdoes himself in his capacity for the enigmatic with his declaration that *a female will turn her arms around a man*. Both the puzzling nature of the line and its lack of verbal link with the context raise the question whether it is an aphorism that Jeremiah has adopted.[[312]](#footnote-312) The Book of Proverbs illustrates how aphorisms can be elliptical, and baffling to someone outside the cultural context.[[313]](#footnote-313) The first colon is not so difficult: *Yahweh has created a new thing* uses language that recurs in Isa 40 – 55 in a similar connection to Jer 30 – 31.[[314]](#footnote-314) That context indicates how the focus in talk of creating in the First Testament (*bārā’*) lies on the extraordinary sovereign action of God, which achieves something that breaks bounds and shatters expectations. *New* then spells out the verb’s implications. In Isa 40 – 55 the two words relate to putting down Babylon, freeing Judahites to return to their homeland, and restorating Jerusalem – the same context as Jer 30 – 31. In isolation, the second colon expresses astonishment at the way a woman may surround a man (*sābab* polel): when it happens, one could call it a new thing that Yahweh has created. There might be many senses in which a woman might do so, in different contexts. Here, part of the aphorism’s attractiveness is its use of this verb meaning surround which makes for a paronomasia with *šûb*.[[315]](#footnote-315) In the context the female is presumably the turning girl, young girl Israel, who reappears from v. 4. The macho man (*geber*)[[316]](#footnote-316) reappears from 30:6, where the *female* also pairs with the *male*. In 30:5-6 the males are behaving like women. At the close of the double poetic sequence in 30:5 – 31:22 the woman is playing the man[[317]](#footnote-317) or is united with the man as a mark of the end of the disruption of exile.[[318]](#footnote-318) Miraculous indeed is the new thing of which this entire section speaks with its movement from grieving Rachel to new creation. “God’s power is greater than the power of sorrow-bringing forces.”[[319]](#footnote-319) The Holocaust means that “never merely peripheral for Jews, the weeping Rachel has moved into the center”;[[320]](#footnote-320) then Tg has for this last line, “behold, the Lord is creating a new thing upon the earth: the people, the house of Israel, will pursue the Torah.” Matt 2:16-18 uses v. 15 to throw light on the death of the babies of Bethlehem that resulted from Jesus being born there; then “Christians, almost with one consent” explain v. 22b of “the virgin carrying the infant Christ in her womb,” which is “deservedly laughed at by the Jews.”[[321]](#footnote-321) Yet this application of v. 22 is no more outrageous than Matthew’s application of v. 15. “Ignoring altogether the original context of the passage, he uses Rachel’s lament to suggest a correspondence between the suffering of the children of Israel in exile… and the suffering of the children of Israel under Herod.”[[322]](#footnote-322) In all these examples, believers find illumination from their texts and show how the inspired application of a text that has little to do with its original meaning can be fruitful.

# A Reversal for Israel and Judah (31:23-40 [LXX 38:23-40])

The final collection of promises in Jer 30 -31 is a compilation of seven short messages that were originally separate but now constitute a series of promises about Jerusalem (the first and last) and about Israel as a whole (the middle five). Their framework is prose though they incorporate some poetic lines, like 1:4-19, and I take introductory expressions such as *Yahweh has said this* or *there, days are coming* as the markers between sections. Whereas 30:5 – 31:22 could be imagined against the background of Judah’s context just before 587, this unit implies that the catastrophe has happened. And whereas Jeremiah has often projected himself and his people into that situation as a way of seeking to forestall the event itself by getting them to turn, these prosaic sections give the impression that the calamity has indeed taken place and imply a series of questions people might then worry about, though there is no way of knowing whether the questions and the answers belong to the period immediately after the city’s fall or come from a decade or two later, or whether they come from Jeremiah himself or one of his curators. The implicit questions are

* Will Judah ever see blessing again?
* Will Israel and Judah ever see building and planting?
* Will people continue to pay the price for the previous generation’s waywardness?
* Will Israel and Judah fall into the same waywardness as they did?
* Will Israel die out as a people?
* Will Israel be cast off for ever because of what it has done?
* Will Jerusalem ever be rebuilt?

The messages thus promise:

vv. 23-26 Yahweh will bless the city

vv. 27-28 Yahweh will build and plant

vv. 29-30 redress will issue from present not the wrongdoing of the past

vv. 31-34 Yahweh will solemnize a new pact

vv. 35-36 Israel will never cease as a nation

v. 37 Yahweh will never cast Israel off

vv. 38-40 The city will be rebuilt

Those recurrent introductory phrases buttress the reassurance Yahweh offers. *Yahweh has said this*;whether the promises come from Jeremiah or one of his curators, they come from Yahweh. *There, days are coming* (sometimes backed up by *Yahweh’s affirmation*): it does not promise that the restoration is imminent, but it does indicate that it is certain.

All but one of the “answers” to the implicit questions come in the first person from Yahweh, yet he speaks about the people in the third person,[[323]](#footnote-323) giving the impression that they had not been addressing him with their questions but just murmuring them to themselves or to each other. Are people too traumatized to address their questions to Yahweh? They are in a similar position to Israel in Egypt, who were groaning and crying out in a way that Yahweh heard whether or not their cry was addressed to him (Exod 2:23-25).

## The Renewal of Blessing (31:23-26)

23Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, has said this. People will again say this word in the country of Judah and in its towns when I have brought about their restoration:

Yahweh bless you, faithful habitat,a

sacred mountain!

24Judah and all its towns, altogether, will live in it, farmhands and [people who] travelb with the flock. 25Because

I am drenching the weary person,

and every person [that] is faint I am filling.c

26”At this I woke;

I saw, and my sleep was nice for me.”d

For *yәbārekәkā*, LXX “[be] blessed” implies the familiar *bārûk*; LXX also lacks *pasture*. Aq, Sym have “the Lord bless you who dwells in faithfulness.”

The elliptical unmarked relative clause resembles one in 2:8 (see the note); there is another unmarked relative clause in the next verse (Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 198).

The qatal verbs are anticipatory, denoting what Yahweh has as-good-as-done (see the introductory comment on 13:18-22). The two positive verbs enclose the line as a whole and thus disempower the two negative adjectives.

L has a section marker here. Metrically it is more natural to link *I saw* with the first colon (so MT), but the sequence (*I woke* and then *I saw*) is then odd.

**23** If Yahweh is to bring aboutthe *restoration* of Israel and Judah after the catastrophe of 587, one central necessity is the restoration of Zion. It would be vital to Ephraim as well as to Judah, but the beginning of this section of material from the context of Judah after 587 focuses on the importance of this restoration to *Judah* as a whole and thus to *its towns*. Rhetorically, Jeremiah jumps beyond the destruction (which makes the blessing impossible) and the current experience of it, and beyond the renewal to the way things will then be, and beyond the way things will then be to the way people will be able to respond to it. He thus invites his audience into a double leap of imagination. Zion is a key to blessing. Yahweh made a commitment to living there (even if he has abandoned his home there at the moment); people come to pray and praise there (even if there are severe limitations on the extent to which they can do so at the moment). Blessing is supposed to emanate from there. So the other side of restoration, people will again urge Yahweh to bless Zion in the sense of making it a source of blessing. Zion as a *faithful habitat* is a complex idea. A habitat (*nāweh*) is the abode of sheep and of shepherd; in this case, the people’s abode is thus Yahweh’s abode. The faithfulness that characterizes it would be Yahweh’s faithfulness (*ṣedeq*)[[324]](#footnote-324)which will have brought about the restoration, but it will also need to be the people’s faithfulness, if the dynamics of the relationship between God, place, and people are to work better than they have. Jeremiah’s phrase recalls the description of the renewed and purified Jerusalem as faithful city (Isa 1:26). Further, it is the *sacred mountain*, the place that especially belongs to Yahweh. Faithfulness as a personal, moral, and community commitment and sacredness as a metaphysical or ontological state complement each other. Yahweh is the distinctively faithful one; it is aspect of his being the sacred one. Yahweh is the distinctively sacred one; it find expression in his faithfulness. These dynamics find expression in his shepherdly home.

**24-25** The story in Ruth begins with the fact that the people of *Judah and all its towns* cannot always *live in it*, in Judah; sometimes the rains and the harvest fail and there is nothing for people or animals to eat. Having a Babylonian army foraging on everything in sight would have the same effect. Judah’s farmland and pasturage after 587 would be in a state of devastation. But the restoration will make life possible again both for farmers and for shepherds. The lowly expression *farmhands* suggests laborers rather than people who have their own land, and *people who travel with the flock* might then be mere shepherd-boys rather than the shepherds to whom the flock belongs.[[325]](#footnote-325) These two groups might therefore be the people who do the hard work and thus who most get *weary* and *faint* (people in exile got weary and faint, as Isa 40:28-31 notes,[[326]](#footnote-326) but there is no pointer to a reference to the exiles here). A fortiori, if they will be okay, anyone will be. Jeremiah has again conveyed the result before he describes the cause: people will be able to live and work in Judah because Yahweh is already in the midst of providing for them abundantly. Over against weary and faint (cf. v. 12) are set *drenching* (cf. v. 12) and *filling*.

**26** The first-person *I* has evidently changed.[[327]](#footnote-327) Tg paraphrases the speaker’s comment, “Because of this news about the days of consolation that are destined to come, I woke up, and saw; I went to sleep again, and my sleep was nice for me.” It adds that these are Jeremiah’s words, but they look more like a quotation from the weary and faint person, like the unannounced quotation in v. 3.[[328]](#footnote-328) When the restoration happens, such a person will react thus. It will be like dream becoming reality (cf. Ps 126).[[329]](#footnote-329) In the present context, the words suggest encouragement brought by the dream before it becomes reality, so that the dynamics parallel those regarding exiles in Isa 40:27-31.

## New Sowing (31:27-28)

27There, days are coming (Yahweh’s affirmation) when I will sow Israel’s household and Judah’s household with human seed and animal seed. 28As I have watched over them to pull up and to pull down, to smasha and to destroy and to do something dire, so I will watch over them to build up and to plant (Yahweh’s affirmation).

LXX lacks the first three verbs.

**27-28** A triple introduction undergirds this promise: *there* (can’t you see it?), *days are coming* (they are assured and they are on the way), *Yahweh’s affirmation* (you don’t just have to believe me). The promise constitutes an appropriate accompaniment to the preceding one. It reaffirms that Yahweh is not concerned only with Judah, in case vv. 23-26 gave us that impression. And it offers an assurance about the productiveness of both human beings and animals – neither of which could be taken for granted. In offering this assurance, Yahweh affirms that *to build up and to plant* will now replace *to pull up and to pull down*, *to smash and to destroy, and to do something dire*. The last phrase is an addition to the original instantiations of the threat (1:10), but it picks up a note that featured in the same context (1:14) and it became one of Jeremiah’s characteristic expressions. “The five negative verbs have all been fully enacted. There is no more threat in them.” God has watched over or “monitored” their fulfillment (1:12) until the warning of destruction has been “fully actualized.” That declaration is the backdrop for the positive promise that follows. Thud the message “places us between a death already wrought and a resurrection only anticipated.”[[330]](#footnote-330) Yahweh announces “the new creation of the people of God.”[[331]](#footnote-331) Yahweh’s wrath has poured out on humanity and animal (7:20; 21:6). Now Yahweh announces new life.

## Present Redress (31:29-30)

29In those days people will no more say

It’s the parents who atea unripe fruit,b

but it’s the children’s teeth that go numb.

30Rather, an individual, for his own waywardness, will die – any human being who eats the unripe fruit, his teeth will go numb.c

The qatal can be used in descriptions of recurrent situations and thus in aphorisms (*IBHS* 30.5.1c; *TTH* 12; *DG* 57c; JM 112d), so that the contrast with the yiqtol in Ezek 18:2 is not significant (contrast R. R. Hutton, “Slogans in the Midst of Crisis,” *WW* 10 [1990]: 229-36 [232]).

LXX has specifically “unripe grapes,” but see *HALOT*.

L has a section marker here.

**29** This saying recurs in Ezek 18:2, where Ezekiel’s response is dated about 592 (to judge from 8:1) and thus in the same period as the one in which the Jeremiah scroll sets Jer 30 – 31. But the conviction it expresses continues to be maintained after 587 (see Lam 5:7). Much fruit gains its sweetness through the last stage of its growth to maturity; there is a temptation to eat it early, but one may not find it as pleasant as one anticipated. It may leave a nasty taste in the mouth and it has an affect on tooth enamel.[[332]](#footnote-332) The backgrounds] of the aphorism’s implication is then the way children often do pay the price for their parents’ waywardness. Judahites experiencing pulling up, demolition, overthrow, destruction and dire experiences generally are interpreting them as the consequence not of their own wrongdoing but of the previous generation’s wrongdoing.

**30** One might expect Jeremiah simply to say it isn’t so and to draw attention to the teaching that runs through the Torah that people are responsible for their own lives. One person cannot be punished for another’s wrongdoing. Never did First Testament faith think of humanity as so corporate that individuals had no responsibility for their own decisions. And Jeremiah has made clear that the present generation are quite guilty. They are wayward. But he doesn’t point out those facts. The implication might be that the aphorism is half-right. Parents do influence their children, for good and for ill. If the present generation’s parents had not indulged in the kind of worship, politics, and community life that Jeremiah has critiqued, maybe their children would not have done so. It is true that “Yahweh attends to parents’ waywardness in connection with children” (Exod 20:5; 34:7). The message thus “introduces into the images of a great and prosperous future a chill note about the human condition”[[333]](#footnote-333) and Jeremiah does not deny the half-truth in the aphorism (15:4 has granted it). He does say things will be different in future. How will that be? He implies that there are two forms of corporate and individual relationship and responsibility, a vertical one and a horizontal one. The aphorism relates to the vertical one, about which at this point he says nothing because he focuses on the horizontal one. He implies that people are inclined to make excuses for themselves on the basis of the reality of corporate relationship and responsibility as well as on the basis of what the previous generation did, and challenges them to work with the fact that Yahweh treats individuals as individuals. Yet “it is not the case that theodicy will be henceforth be individualized; rather it is the new nation of Israel and Judah created by Yahweh which makes the great change possible”[[334]](#footnote-334) (which takes us to the vertical relationship). The next section will make that point, and will answer the question how things will work in a different way in the future.[[335]](#footnote-335)

## A New Pact (31:31-34)

31There, days are coming (Yahweh’s affirmation) when I will solemnize with Israel’s household and with Judah’s household a new pact, 32not like the pact that I solemnized with their ancestors at the time when I grasped hold of them by their hand to get them out of the country of Egypt, the pact that they violated, when I myself was husband to thema(Yahweh’s affirmation). 33Because this is the pact that I will solemnize with Israel’s household after those days (Yahweh’s affirmation).

I am puttingb my instruction inside them,

and on their mind I will write it.

And I will be God for them,

and they will be a people for me.

34And they will no more teach, an individual his neighbor and an individual his brother, “Acknowledge Yahweh,” because they will acknowledge me, all of them, from the littlest of them to the biggest of them (Yahweh’s affirmation).

Because I will pardon their waywardness

and of their wrongdoing I will no more be mindful.c

The verb is *bā‘al*, “be lord” (Vg); see the comment on 3:14a. Tg “I took pleasure I them” sees positive implications in the verb; LXX “I neglected them” is a pejorative version deriving from the context and suggesting neglect because they violated the pact (McKane, *Jeremiah* 2:819).

LXX has a future verb, while MT has a qatal, which I take as anticipatory (see the introductory comment on 13:18-22) rather than as referring back to the Sinai covenant (so A. Schenker, *Das Neue am neuen Bund und das Alte am alten* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 2006]; cf. G. Walser, “Jeremiah 38:31–34 [MT 31:31–34],” in M. K. H. Peters [ed.], *XIV Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Helsinki, 2010* [Atlanta: SBL, 2013], 369-380; earlier, H. Tita, “‘Ich hatte meine **Tora** in ihre Mitte gegeben,’” *VT* 52 [2002]: 551-56; contrast H.-J. Stipp, “Die **Perikope** vom ‘Neuen Bund' [Jer 31:31-34] im Masoretischen und Alexandrinischen Jeremiabuch,” *JNSL* 35 [2009]: 1-25).

L has a section marker here. Again the two verbs embrace and nullify the two nouns.

**31** A in v. 27, the triple introduction undergirds the implausible promise, one he might not fulfill in the next few months but certainly will fulfill sooner rather than later. To *solemnize* a pact is literally to cut it; Jer 34 will clarify the background to that expression. A *pact* is then a solemn commitment that one party makes to another or that two parties make to each other.[[336]](#footnote-336) Yahweh again makes explicit that he is talking about a relationship with Israel as a whole – Ephraim and Judah.

**32** He had *grasped them by their hand in getting them out of the country of Egypt*, which one might have thought would generate appreciation and a responsive commitment. But it hasn’t. The Jeremiah scroll has indicated clearly that the pact between Yahweh and Israel is not working; 11:1-17 has made the point, speaking in terms of the pact, but every chapter has made it evident without using that language. It was so notwithstanding the fact that Yahweh had married them, not in the egalitarian mutual relationship sense that appears in the Song of Songs but in the patriarchal marriage sense – which needn’t imply an oppressive relationship but does imply a hierarchical one. By marrying Israel’s household, Yahweh had come to have authority over them; he had become their master.[[337]](#footnote-337) He had earned the right to have expectations of them. But they have declined to fulfill his expectations. They have thereby *violated* the pact.[[338]](#footnote-338) Jeremiah makes no distinction between Ephraim and Judah or between Judahites in Babylon or Egypt or Jerusalem in this respect.

**33** So that pact didn’t work; Israel needs a new one. It’s an iconoclastic view, like many of Jeremiah’s views.[[339]](#footnote-339) Unfortunately for Yahweh, Israel’s unfaithfulness doesn’t release him from faithfulness to his side of the relationship; commitment(*ḥesed*) means continuing to be faithful.[[340]](#footnote-340) From the nature of who he is, then, emerges the necessity to solemnize a new, improved pact *after those days* and years of violation. The problem is not that there was something wrong with the instruction tied to the first pact; Israel did not need new instructions. The problem was that Yahweh and/or Moses had written them only on stone (Exod 32 – 34) and on a scroll (Deut 31:9-13). They addressed people from outside. They were not internalized. What Yahweh is now doing is *putting my instruction within them and writing it on their mind* – the *within* might apply to the people corporately or individually. Normally, a mother doesn’t need to be told to look after her baby. She is hard-wired to do so. Yahweh is now intending to hard-wire Ephraim and Judah with his instruction in this way. Perhaps there is a link with the idea that Israel will not miss the pact chest (3:16-17), which contained the tablets inscribed with Yahweh’s instruction; if the tablets are now inscribed on the people’s mind, perhaps they will not need the stone version.[[341]](#footnote-341) What is this instruction?[[342]](#footnote-342) There is no need to assume that *my instruction* refers specifically to the Ten Words or any specific instantiation of Yahweh’s expectations. The word *instruction*, *tôrâ*, never had fixed reference – it changed as circumstances and contexts required it to be formulated in new ways.[[343]](#footnote-343) It denoted whatever Yahweh’s instructions were. In the past, it is Israel’s wrongdoing that has been written on the tablet of its mind (17:1). Through Yahweh’s doing this new thing, matters will be different. Then, *I will be God for them and they will be a people for me*. In one sense there will be nothing new there; Yahweh is picking up the language of Sinai and the basis on which it already worked (7:23; 11:4; cf. 30:22; 31:1). But the relationship will now work properly. The new pact will not be “fragile.”[[344]](#footnote-344)

**34a** If Yahweh’s instruction is inscribed into Israel’s corporate mind, it will transform the way people relate to each other. At the moment, individual Israelites have to urge each other to do what is right, which they are not inclined to do. So far in Jeremiah, references to neighbors and brothers have been predominantly negative (e.g., 9:4-8 [3-7]): neighbors and brothers are people who cheat and deceive each other.[[345]](#footnote-345) Priests and prophets teach people, but their teaching cannot be relied on. Parents teach children (Deut 11:19), but in practice that tends to mean they teach them waywardness (vv. 29-30). People don’t teach each other to *acknowledge Yahweh*.[[346]](#footnote-346) As knowing or acknowledging Yahweh’s path (5:4-5) means people living in light of what they know, walking on this path, not merely being aware of where the path is, so knowing or acknowledging Yahweh means living in light of who people know, living in recognition of who Yahweh is and of what he expects, not merely being aware of who he is or having a warm personal relationship with him. Jeremiah said of Josiah:

He exercised faithful authority,

then things were good for him.

He made decisions for powerless person and needy person,

then things were good;

that is acknowledging me, isn’t it. (22:15-16)

All Israel and Judah will now live this way, little people and big people; it will be spectacular reversal of 5:1-5. There will be “no more blockheads with memories like sieves.”[[347]](#footnote-347) No doubt he speaks hyperbolically,[[348]](#footnote-348) like Paul in 1 Thess 4:9.[[349]](#footnote-349)

**34b** How will Yahweh do it? Perhaps the answer lies in this further undertaking. Once again 5:1-7 suggests background, because there Yahweh spoke about *pardon* and determined not to grant it. Here he determines to grant it. People no more deserve pardon than before, but Yahweh intends to relate to them in a different way. Perhaps the implication is that the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile will count as enough punishment for their waywardness (cf. Isa 40:1-2). Fulfilling his promises to bring Ephraim and Judah back to the land and enabling them to restore city and temple will be a sign of his willingness to pardon and not be *mindful* of the *wrongdoing* that has accumulated over the centuries. Maybe it will be the astonishing nature of that pardon and willful forgetting that reaches into the heart of Israel in a way that Yahweh has never gained access to it before, and causes his expectations to be written into people’s minds so that now they live up to them.

Although *days are coming* may imply that the fulfillment of Yahweh’s promise may not come immediately, it does imply that its fulfillment will come reasonably soon, as is the case with the occurrences of that expression in vv. 27 and 38. Otherwise these promises have little significance for Jeremiah’s audience. The assumption that it gives them something to look forward to coheres with what happened over subsequent decades. Some exiles did come back to Jerusalem and did rebuild the temple, and during the Second Temple period Israel did come closer to living by Yahweh’s instruction than it had done before. His first four basic requirements were to bow down to Yahweh alone, to foreswear images, to revere Yahweh’s name, and to keep the Sabbath. Israel now lived by those expectations as if they were written into their minds in a way they had not previously. The exodus led into the pact-making as an event that was unmerited and an act of grace. The restoration will lead into a new pact-making as an event that was positively undeserved and an act of more radical grace. “Forgiveness is more than a characteristic of the new covenant; it is the very basis of the astonishing workings of God. Divine forgiveness makes possible inner transformation, intimacy with God, and an inclusive community that delights in faithful living.”[[350]](#footnote-350) “It is in fact this forgiveness that will allow newness in the relationship.”[[351]](#footnote-351)

Yahweh’s relationship with Israel depends on Israel’s commitment in response to Yahweh’s commitment. Israel’s commitment was not forthcoming; hence his “breaking down and pulling up.” Inscribing his instruction into their minds will mean that this problem does not recur. Will Israel no longer need to give its attention to keeping its commitment? Is Yahweh replacing a relationship that was conditional on obedience by an unconditional relationship? Jeremiah does not use any “if” language, though talk of conditional/unconditional moves to a different metaphor from written on stone/written on the mind, and one has to be wary of an equivalent in reflection on metaphors to “totality transfer” in connection with the meaning of words.[[352]](#footnote-352) Nor is it the case that the relationship was supposed to reciprocal before but is now one-sided, just a matter of Yahweh acting and Israel having no reciprocal obligation. The covenant will continue to involve obedience to Yahweh’s instruction, but that obedience will now be “natural.”[[353]](#footnote-353)

The elements are exactly the same as in that covenant with Abraham, Moses and Joshua which is normative for the Old Testament as a whole. The formula "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people" is emphatically endorsed…. The relationship of God with Israel, which is the substance of the covenant, is not held up, that is to say, arrested, and set aside and destroyed…. [But] the form in which it was revealed and active in all the events from the exodus from Egypt to the destruction of Israel and Judah was such that in it the faithfulness and power of Yahweh seemed always to be matched and limited by the perpetually virulent and active disobedience and apostasy of the covenanted people…. The circle of the covenant which in its earlier form is open on man's side will in its new form be closed: not because men will be better, but because God will deal with the same men in a completely different way, laying His hand, as it were, upon them from behind, because He Himself will turn them to Himself. To His faithfulness – He himself will see to it – there will then correspond the complementary faithfulness of His people. The covenant – God Himself will make it so – will then be one which is mutually kept, and to that extent a *foedus dipleuron*.[[354]](#footnote-354)

Jer 31:31-34 does not open up the question of the relationship between active obedience and instruction inscribed on the mind. Jer 24:7 has come closer to doing so, though it remains a little ambiguous: “I 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” (cf. also 32:38-40). Formulations in other documents are similar. Deut 30:1-11 asserts that Israel must turn back to Yahweh and obey him with its entire mind, and that Yahweh will circumcise its mind so that it loves him and obeys him. In the context of its discussion of the saying about sour fruit, Ezek 18:31 urges the Israelites to get themselves a new mind, while Ezek 36:26-27 promises that Yahweh will give them a new mind and thus get them to follow his commands.[[355]](#footnote-355) The Qumran community spoke much of covenant and sometimes of the “new covenant” into which members of the community entered (e.g., Damascus Document 6:19; 8:21; 19:34; 20:12).[[356]](#footnote-356) The Qumran Community Rule sees its people as the new covenant people but also urges them to live in accordance with Yahweh’s commands. The Letter to the Hebrews sees its people as the new covenant people but also urges the importance of obedience and the danger of forgoing one’s salvation. None of these writings clarify how God will go about inscribing his expectations into his people’s mind in such a way as to make it “natural” to fulfill them; all imply that their readers have an active part to play to play in fulfilling them and that playing this active part is essential to their being the new covenant people. Jer 31:31-34 implies the same assumption rather than the implication that Ephraim and Judah can now do as they like without imperiling their position.

The assumption at Qumran and in the New Testament that the new covenant is a reality for their communities does not imply that they see the promise as having found complete fulfillment; indeed, the way they talk about new covenant implies the assumption that has not. It resembles other promises Yahweh makes through Jeremiah. Christians then need to note two further considerations. It is not clear that Christians are hard-wired with Yahweh’s instructions any more than Ephraim and Judah, even after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We still need to teach each other, and we still contravene basic commandments quite a lot. The new covenant is “an ideal which has not yet been realized” though “it at least serves as a standard by which we may measure ourselves, a goal which we may all strive to attain.”[[357]](#footnote-357) So we look forward to God’s completing the fulfillment of this promise, as of others.[[358]](#footnote-358)

Further it is not the case that “the use of this text in Heb. 8:8-13; 9:15-22; and 10:16-17 provides a basis for a Christian preemption of the promise,” as if it does not belong to the Jewish people.[[359]](#footnote-359) In quoting it, “Hebrews seems not to draw any negative conclusions regarding the relationship of the Jewish people to God.”[[360]](#footnote-360) Hebrews’ interpretation of vv. 31-34 is similar to Matthew’s interpretation of v. 15. Everything depends on whether you start from Jeremiah and ask what God was saying to Israel in the text, or whether you start from Jesus and move backwards.[[361]](#footnote-361)

## Israel’s Permanence (31:35-36)

35Yahweh has said this.a

One who gives the sun as a lightb by day

the decrees regardingc moon and stars as a light by night,

Who stillsd the sea when its waves roar –

Yahweh of armies his name:

36If these decrees can pass away from before me (Yahweh’s affirmation),

the offspring of Israel can cease also

from being a nation before me, for all the days.e

LXX has v. 37 before vv. 35-36.

Tg “to give light” here and in the next colon parses *lә’ôr* as a verb rather than a noun.

LXX lacks *the decrees regarding*.

Tg, Syr thus take the verb as *rāga‘* II as in v. 1, not *rāga‘* I “stir up” (so LXX, Vg). The subsequent *waw­* consecutive is then epexegetical (*TTH* 75-76; *IBHS* 33.2.2; *JM* 118j).

MT has a section marker here.

**35-36** Might one fear that Israel would go out of existence? One might have that anxiety in the aftermath of 587. Ephraim could seem all-but obliterated as a people, and the same fate could seem to threaten Judah. In responding to the question, Yahweh points to two aspects of his sovereignty. Both count as *statutes*: they are definitely fixed. First, there is the regular patterned movements of sun, moon, and stars. “The day continually dawns for man, and the sun, moon and stars which indicate the separation of day from night shine for him,” in order that he may know that he has time and place when “the Word of God is spoken to man, and judges him, and becomes his radically saving and preserving promise, and summons him to pray for the grace of God.”[[362]](#footnote-362) Second, there is the rising and falling of the sea. This second line is identical to Isa 51:15aβb. Jeremiah earlier shared a nightmare vision of Yahweh letting or causing creation to collapse; these verses are “an antithesis to 4:23-26.”[[363]](#footnote-363) When 4:23-26 is in the midst of finding fulfillment, the declaration that the apparently disorderly and chaotic rising and falling of the sea’s waves is under divine control might be a more obvious reassurance than pointing to the regularities of each day.[[364]](#footnote-364) It is an innovative, new way to ground Yahweh’s commitment, in a disturbingly new situation.[[365]](#footnote-365) As people look questioningly to the future, Yahweh affirms “the indissoluble nature of salvation.”[[366]](#footnote-366)

## Israel’s Security (31:37)

37Yahweh has said this.

If the heavens above can be measureda

and earth’s foundations can be fathomed below,

I also can reject all Israel’s offspring

because of all that they have done (Yahweh’s affirmation).b

LXX “raised” implies *yārumû* for MT *yimmaddû*, a plausible misreading in light of the parallel colon, all the more as LXX there translates *wәyēḥāqәrû* “be lowered.”

MT has a section marker here.

**37** Might Yahweh simply cast off Israel? Jeremiah has come close to giving the impression that he could, though he has safeguarded against the possibility with qualifications on his declarations about the end (4:27; 5:10, 18; and most recently 30:11). Again, the moment when Nebuchadrezzar is at the gates or has demolished them is one where reassurance would especially be needed.

## The City’s Rebuilding (31:38-40)

38There, days are cominga (Yahweh’s affirmation) when the city will be built up for Yahweh from the Hananel Tower to the Corner Gate. 39The measuring line will go out further, straight over Garob Hill, and it will turn to Goah. 40The entire vale – corpses and fatb – and all the fieldsc as far as the Kidron Wadi, as far as the Horses Gate corner on the east, will be sacred for Yahweh. It will not be pulled up and it will not be smashed again ever.d

Only Q, not K, has “[are] coming”

Vg “ash.”

For Q’s *šәdēmôt* K has *šrmwt*, a slip emerging from the similarity of d and r. Vg, Sym “open land of death” implies *śәdēh māwet*, “cemetery,” an appropriate description of the area (M. R. Lehmann, “A New Interpretation of the Term *šdmwt*” [*VT* 3 (1953): 361-71]); at least one can imagine readers noting a paronomasia.

MT has a marker here.

**38-40** One last time thepromise begins with that threefold reassurance, *there, days are coming (Yahweh’s affirmation*). Again one recalls that in the aftermath of 587 it might seem that Jerusalem is finished. The consolation document comes to a resounding if down-to-earth end with this promise. Yahweh has said *I will sow* and *I will solemnize* (vv. 23, 31), and one might have expected “I will build” (cf. v. 4). *The city will be built up for Yahweh* constitutes a different kind of assurance. People will have to do the work, but the fact that the city is rebuilt *for Yahweh* is an implicit guarantee that it will happen – not because every human project that claims to benefit Yahweh can make that assumption, but because Yahweh underwrites this one. It will be the work of Nehemiah that sees the fulfillment of the promise, though the particulars here link only slightly with the Nehemiah story, and the boundaries Jeremiah describes cover a wider area than Nehemiah’s city.[[367]](#footnote-367) Partly on the basis of that account, geographers and archeologists locate the *Hananel Tower* at the northeast corner of the city, north of the Temple Mount, in the area of the Sheep Gate (Neh 3:1; 12:39), and thus in the region of the later Antonia Fortress. It then makes sense to locate the *Corner Gate* at an equivalent northwest point of the city, in the area of the later David’s Tower (2 Chr 25:23; 26:9). To begin with these two points might make sense given the fact that the city’s northern limits were its especially vulnerable side; they were not protected by valleys, as the other sides were – though the other boundaries do not take that consideration into account. If the account of the city’s walls continues along the same anticlockwise direction, *Garob Hill* would be at its southwest corner and *Goah* on its southern boundary or southeast corner, though the places are otherwise unknown. The Horse Gate (Neh 3:28) was then on the eastern side of city and temple, perhaps just below the southeastern corner of the temple, so that it takes us back near the Hananel Tower and completes the circuit. Meanwhile, *vale* and *fields* refer to the Hinnom Valley to the south, stretching across to the Kidron Wadi on the east. The Kidron Valley fields makes one think of the terraces with olive trees, though it is also an area characterized by tombs and graves. *Corpses* fits in particular with 7:32-33; they would be the remains of Assyrian or Babylonian besiegers of the city (cf. Tg). It could also suggest victims of the human sacrifices in the Hinnom Valley to which 7:30-31 referred. *Fat* suggests the area where the fat-soaked ashes from the temple sacrifices were dumped (e.g., Lev 4:12). The promise combines the well-known, the unknown (to us), and also the extraordinary and scandalous in the way these areas come to be part of what is *sacred for Yahweh*. If we may see a kind of parallelism between vv. 38-40 and 23-26, then vv. 38-40 go beyond vv. 23-26. Not only is the mountain sacred; so are the surrounding lower vale and the open lands. If only it were the case that the city had not been pulled uporsmashedagainever!

# The Acquisition of Land (32:1-44)

Whereas Jer 27 – 29 invited readers to imagine the situation a few years after 597, and Jer 30 – 31 invited them to imagine a setting when (the readers would know) further catastrophe was imminent, Jer 32 begins with a specific reference to Zedekiah’s tenth year and to the siege of Jerusalem that will issue in its fall and destruction. It invites readers in this context to picture Yahweh drawing Jeremiah into a gesture of confidence in Yahweh’s underwriting of Judah’s future, and to believe in that future with him. It would issue the same invitation to Judahites in Judah, Babylon, or Egypt after 587. While Jer 30 – 31 had presupposed a more general situation of threat but invited the audience to lift its eyes and think in the context of a broad canvas covering Yahweh’s ultimate purpose for both Ephraim and Judah, in the context of the city’s imminent fall Jer 32 now focuses on the way that purpose will work out for Judah.

Arguably, Jeremiah’s action is not merely a statement of hope in Yahweh. “Home determines one’s identity, sense of self, and sense of place….. The report of Jeremiah’s purchase of property and the transmission of that symbolic action within the literary structure of the book of Jeremiah confront the reality of empire as it threatens the nation’s sense of place.” His purchase is “an act of nationalist resistance to the empire.”[[368]](#footnote-368) But the chapter that begins with Jeremiah’s acquisition of a parcel of land also becomes a subtle, complex, and dramatic exposition of key themes concerning Yahweh’s involvement with the land and Israel’s attitude to it, and concerning the necessity of Yahweh’s taking redress and of his engaging in restoration. “Chapter 32 contains a salvation promise for the Judahite land.”[[369]](#footnote-369) But “the perplexity of [vv. 16-25] is mirrored more broadly in the tension between two contrasting motifs that run through the unit, the handing over of Jerusalem to the enemy (vv. 3, 24-25, 28, 36, and 43) and the renewed purchase of land in Judah (vv. 15, 25, and 43-44)”; the two motifs are juxtaposed in v. 25 and again in vv. 43-44. While narratively the story of Jeremiah acquiring the land forms the chapter’s center of attention and MT has a unit marker after v. 15, “the length of the final section [vv. 26-44]] and its climactic position indicate that the unit’s focus lies here.”[[370]](#footnote-370) “The sermon is everything.”[[371]](#footnote-371) The chapter’s form thus compares with that of chapters in John’s Gospel that start from an event in Jesus’s life and make it the jumping off point for reflection on his significance that it presents as Jesus’s own teaching. In Jer 32, maybe Jeremiah recorded his prayer and the message he received from Yahweh in response to it, so that it all goes back to a time before the fall of the city. Or maybe Jeremiah cast his subsequent reflection into the form of a prayer and a message – so that Jeremiah acted as his own John. Or maybe his curators have done so in the manner of John; the chapter’s framework presents itself as coming from the curators, who speak about Jeremiah in the third person in vv. 1-5 and v. 26.[[372]](#footnote-372) Again in anticipation of chapters in John, Jer 32 unfurls with some subtlety and sometimes requires listeners to fill in gaps. And like (e.g.) Jer 26, one aspect of this subtlety is its unfurling in a way that is sometimes movie-like and dramatic rather than chronological: after the story of the land’s acquisition ends in v. 15, the chapter goes back to a point in between vv. 14 and 15 as Jeremiah raises a question to which v. 15 has presupposed an answer.[[373]](#footnote-373)

The unit unfolds:

vv. 1-5 the curator provides background to the story indicating how bleak things are in Jerusalem, and summarizes the chapter’s point (v. 5)

vv. 6-15 Jeremiah relates how he acquires the land, and summarizes the significance of his action (v. 15)

vv. 16-25 Jeremiah relates the prayer he had prayed when he didn’t know what the point of this action was

vv. 26-44 the curator reports Yahweh’s response to Jeremiah

vv. 26-35 why he is undertaking his dire action

vv. 36-41 how his dire action will be followed by good

vv. 42-44 how his good action will embody what Jeremiah’s symbolic action exemplifies.

In vv. 16-44 the lines are rhythmic and incorporate some parallelism, and I lay them out as poetic lines. At many points LXX’s text is shorter than MT’s. Whereas elsewhere this difference often indicates that MT has expanded an earlier version of the scroll, here LXX may have often accidentally abbreviated an earlier version.[[374]](#footnote-374)

While in a narrow sense vv. 1-15 are the chapter’s concrete story, Jer 32 as a whole also comprises a story, about an interaction between Yahweh and Jeremiah. If a story is then a narrative with a tension that needs resolving or a question that needs answering, then its implicit question is whether the coming catastrophe will simply mean the end of Judah, or whether Yahweh will really bring about Judah’s restoration after the catastrophe that looks inevitable. In handling that question, it focuses on a dialog between Jeremiah and Yahweh, and thus compares with the dialogs between Jeremiah and Yahweh in Jer 11 – 20, though it is less agonized than they are. The comparison extends to the way Jeremiah’s life forms part of the way Yahweh brings his message to Judah before 587 and of the way the record of his ministry speaks after the catastrophe. These features issue in the possibility of reading the chapter by focusing on its main character, Jeremiah, or on the teller of the story, the narrator, and on the nature of his story, or on the community listening to the text, the first audience and later audiences.[[375]](#footnote-375)

## The Background (32:1-5)

1The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh in the tenth year of Zedekiah King of Judah (it was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar). 2The king of Babylon’s force were then blockading Jerusalem, and Jeremiah the prophet was confined in the court of the guard, which was at the house of the king of Judah, 3where Zedekiah King of Judah had confined him, saying, “Why are you prophesying, Yahweh has said this: Here am I, giving this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will capture it, 4and Zedekiah King of Judah – he will not escape from the hand of the Chaldeans, because he will definitely be givena into the hand of the king of Babylon, his mouth will speak with his mouth and his eyes will see his eyes,b 5to Babylon he will make Zedekiah go, and there he will be until my attending to him (Yahweh’s affirmation) – when you people do battle with the Chaldeans, you will not succeed.”c

The infinitive precedes the finite verb, underlining the fact.

K implies *‘ênô* “his eye,” whichQ *‘ênāyw* perhaps corrects.

MT has a unit marker here. LXX lacks *until my attending… succeed.*

While the chapter opens with a promise of a word from God, and it will eventually provide one, it then moves sideways into a lengthy diversion on the message’s background, so that the first word it offers is from the king who has just confined Jeremiah in prison.[[376]](#footnote-376) Chronologically, the sequence of events is

* Babylonian forces are blockading Jerusalem (v. 2a)
* Yahweh gives Jeremiah a message about the fall of the city and Zedekiah’s exile to Babylon (vv. 3b-5)
* Jeremiah delivers this message, but Zedekiah has no idea of the reason for it (v. 3a)
* Zedekiah confines him to the court of the guard (v. 2b)
* Yahweh gives Jeremiah another message (v. 1)

This account indicates how bleak things are. But “the Prophet here declares, that though he was shut up in prison, the Word of God was not bound” (2 Tim 2:9).[[377]](#footnote-377)

**1-2** The setting, then, is the final siege of Jerusalem before it fell in 587. In itself, *blockading* (*ṣûr*)simply implies preventing resources getting into the city or people leaving it, and trying to wear it down. It needn’t signify active attempts to take the city; the Babylonians are just sitting there. V. 24 will indicate that something more forceful is on the way, but vv. 6-15 will show that within the city some semblance of normal life continues. To a degree it is even true for Jeremiah. Jer 37 (which relates an earlier incident) indicates that he had earned the hostility of powerful people in Jerusalem by continuing to deliver the message that is about to be related here, and v. 2 may imply that he is at least in part in protective custody, in an “open prison.”[[378]](#footnote-378)

**3-5** How rhetorical is Zedekiah’s why? On a number of occasions Jeremiah mediated Yahweh’s message to Zedekiah, sometimes because when he asked for it, sometimes when he did not (see Jer 21; 27; 34; 37; 38). And “every time Jeremiah gave him the same basic message – ‘this city is doomed, and so are you’ – until Zedekiah could repeat the prophet’s words from memory. But if he knew the words of Jeremiah by heart, he certainly did not take them to heart as the word of God.”[[379]](#footnote-379) For the audience’s sake, if not for Zedekiah’s sake, the answer to his “why” will feature in vv. 16-44. Grammatically, it’s ambiguous whose mouth and eyes will do the speaking and looking when the two kings meet, but there is no doubt that Nebuchadrezzar will be the active agent when he gives sentence for Zedekiah’s leading Judah in an attempt to declare independence. Nevertheless the references to mouth and eyes suggest privilege and intimacy. Yahweh spoke with Moses mouth to mouth (Num 12:8, the only other occurrence of the phrase except for 34:3); eye to eye comes only here and in 34:3, though face to face is an expression for such intimacy (e.g., Exod 33:11; Deut 34:10). Indeed, there is a grim irony about the reference to Zedekiah’s eyes (see 39:5-7). There is another ambiguity about the reference to Yahweh *attending* to Zedekiah there, traditionally “visiting” him.[[380]](#footnote-380) “Death is God’s final visitation on a person in this life.”[[381]](#footnote-381)

## Jeremiah Acquires Some Land (32:6-15)

6So Jeremiah said: Yahweh’s word came to me. 7Here is Hanamel ben Shallum, your uncle, coming to you to say, “Acquire for yourself my land which is in Anathoth, because you have authority regarding restoration, by acquiring it.” 8And Hanamel, my uncle’s son, came to me in accordance with Yahweh’s word,a to the court of the guard, and said to me, “Please acquire my land which is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin, because you have authority regarding the possession and the restoration – acquire it for yourself.”

So I acknowledged that it was Yahweh’s word, 9and acquired the land which was in Anathothb from Hanamel my uncle’s son. I weighed out the silver to him, seventeen sheqels of silver, 10wrote in a document, sealed it, charged witnesses, and weighed out the silver on scales. 11I got the acquisition document, both the sealed one (the rule and the decrees)c and the one left open, 12and gave the documentd (the acquisition) to Baruch ben Neriah son of Mahseiah before the eyes of Hanamel my relativee and before the eyes of the witnesses who had written in the acquisition document, before the eyes of all the Judahites who were sitting in the prison courtyard. 13I ordered Baruch, before their eyes: 14Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, has said this. Getf these documents, this acquisition document, both the sealed oneg and this left open one (a document),h and put them in an earthenware container so that they may last a long time.i 15Because Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, has said this: houses, lands, and vineyards will once again be acquired in this country.j

LXX lacks *in accordance with Yahweh’s word*.

LXX lacks *which was in Anathoth*.

LXX lacks *(the rule and the decrees)*, which fits uneasily in the sentence. It is a legal phrase similar to ones that recur in Deut 5:28; 6:1.

Here *hassēper* has the article so it can’t be construct, like simple *sēper* in the phrases on either side.

V. 9 had *ben dōdî* meaning *my uncle’s son*, but on its own here, *dôd* has to have this broader sense (LXX has “my uncle’s son” here).

The infinitive absolute functions as an emphatic imperative (see 2:2 and the note).

LXX lacks *both the sealed one*.

The text is thus jerky: whereas *sēper* had an article that it didn’t need in v. 12, here it is anarthrous where it needs an article.

L has a section marker here.

L has a unit marker here.

The section resumes from v. 1 after the digression. Jeremiah relates how he acquired a parcel of land that belonged by right to his family but had apparently become lost to it or was in danger of becoming lost to it. The story outlines how:

vv. 6-7 he received the message, about an appeal that will come from his cousin

v. 8a the appeal came

vv. 8b-14 he acceded to the appeal (Jeremiah describes the process in great detail)

v. 15 he received a message from Yahweh explaining the action.

Although vv. 6-15 are thus a self-contained and complete story, from v. 16 it will become clear that they are also just the beginning of the longer story occupying Jer 32 as a whole. They open up the question that the chapter as a whole has to answer, the tension it has to resolve. It will also transpire that v. 15 is an anticipatory summary of what will follow in the rest of the chapter. As a story that relates a symbolic or sign act, it also compares and contrasts with a number of earlier stories in the scroll.

* Yahweh commissions the act, as usually happens in such sign act story about Jeremiah (though not 51:59-64).
* The act symbolizes the message attached to it, like the depositing of the shorts in Jer 13, the shaping of the pot in Jer 18, and the breaking of the decanter in Jer 19.
* The act also exemplifies the event it anticipates, like Jeremiah’s holding back from marriage and from mourning in Jer 16.
* The act perhaps also initiates the event it represents, like the breaking of the decanter and the yoke in Jer 19 and 28
* The act takes place before other people, like the breaking of the decanter and the yoke, and unlike like the depositing of the shorts which functions as a symbolic act only for Jeremiah and for people who hear the story.
* The story records the implementing of the act, as happened with the depositing of the shorts and the shaping of the pot; contrast the breaking of the decanter, the imposition of the yoke in Jer 27, and the drinking of the wine in the vision in Jer 25.
* The story explains the significance of the act only after the act is over, as is the case with the depositing of the shorts; contrast the breaking of the decanter.

**6-8a** The introduction resumes from v. 1, after the digression giving the background that occupied vv. 2-5. While Jer 37 related an earlier attempted visit by Jeremiah to Anathoth during a break in the siege, there is no need to hypothesize that Hanamel somehow came from there to Jerusalem to see Jeremiah; many people might have taken refuge in the city as the Babylonians approached. The story implies a situation in Anathoth approximately like that envisaged in Lev 25 and paralleled in Ruth; Lev 25:34 and Num 35:1-8 relate more specifically to the situation of Levitical families. In Ruth (to read between the lines) a failure of the harvest has required Elimelech to take out a loan in order to feed his family, then to surrender his land when he couldn’t repay the loan. Perhaps the Babylonian invasion had put Jeremiah’s extended family into similar circumstances and/or the Babylonians had taken over some of its land. If Shallum were still alive, presumably it would be he as the head of the household who would have taken out a loan and been unable to repay; Hanamel then needs to try to do something about the situation. But his calling it *my land* may mean his father has died. Moreover it’s thirty-eight years since Yahweh’s commission of Jeremiah in 626, so Jeremiah must at least be in his late fifties, and it’s unlikely that either Hilkiah or Shallum are still alive. Perhaps Jeremiah is first in line to act as redeemer or restorer by paying off the debt, or there has been some other person like Mr. So-and-so in Ruth 4:1 who has refused or been unable to do so. The imminent fall of Jerusalem would surely make Jeremiah hesitate to part with his shekels to acquire land that neither he nor anyone else might ever be to be able to use (unlikelihood that ironically Jeremiah is more prepared than most people to treat as fact). The tension between Jeremiah and his extended family in Anathoth presupposed in Jer 11 – 12 would provide another potential disincentive to his acting as restorer. So it is just as well that Yahweh makes it hard for Jeremiah to say “No” and compels him to acknowledge that *it was Yahweh’s word.* Jeremiah agrees to do as the Torah expected. To speak of him “buying” the land might be misleading. In theory, Israelites cannot own land because it belongs to Yahweh; he lets them live on it and use it, but they cannot buy or sell it. The question is who controls the land.[[382]](#footnote-382) Yet once people have got used to the idea of acquiring or surrendering control of land in a way that involves money, this subtlety might not have been in the front of people’s minds. Nevertheless, Hanamel’s use of the terms *possession* and *restoration* indicates that he thinks within the Torah’s framework, and hopes that Jeremiah will do so. *Possession* (from the verb *yāraš*)is what Yahweh gave the Israelites when they arrived in Canaan. *Restoration* (from the verb *gā’al*) is what happens when the land comes back to the family to which it was allocated in the first place. And Jeremiah does agree to exercise his responsibilities and rights as the closest relation in terms of the restorer notion.[[383]](#footnote-383)

**8b-9a** The reference to Jeremiah’s acknowledgement and his consequent action make clear that Yahweh’s message (v. 6) had implications beyond the information that Hanamel was coming. The information did not mean Jeremiah had to say yes. It might simply have given him time to prepare to say no and deliver a stinging declaration about this being no time for such action, given that Yahweh was about to bring about disaster as a consequence of Judah’s wrongdoing. More likely the implication is that Jeremiah must say yes, because the Torah expects it. He must be like Boaz, not like Mr. So-and-so. Yahweh makes it difficult for Jeremiah to say no, notwithstanding the political situation and the family dynamics. Jeremiah’s later reference in v. 25 to what Yahweh had said to him confirms this implication. Yahweh expected him to agree to take the action that would keep the land in the family, in keeping with the Torah; perhaps the idea would be that he could then let Hanamel continue to farm it. So the picture is not of Jeremiah having the right to make an advantageous real-estate investment but of his having the right to do the correct thing by the family. Indeed, “when Jeremiah redeems the field, he is not just doing a favor for his cousin; he is taking possession of a piece of Israel’s inheritance from the LORD (vv. 22-23, 41).”[[384]](#footnote-384) Yet one also wonders “if Jeremiah expects the land to be lost just as the loincloth was ruined and the earthenware jug broken, a symbol of coming judgment.”[[385]](#footnote-385)

**9b** The shekel is a measure of weight; money as such has not been invented and the value of things would be calculated in terms of the value attached to a shekel’s weight (about half an ounce) of silver or gold. We don’t know whether seventeen shekels was a usual amount for whatever was the size of the plot of land. And we don’t know where Jeremiah got seventeen shekels of silver from: was his own immediate family better off than Hanamel’s? Or did he makes some money prophesying (1 Sam 9:7-8 might imply that it was only the price of sixty-eight prophecies)?

**10-12** Parallels with documents from Egypt suggest that the contract was written twice on the same piece of papyrus. One half was rolled up and sealed in wax with Jeremiah’s seal and the seals of the witnesses. The parenthetical expression *the rule and the decrees* suggests that it became the official copy, the legal copy, drawn up according to law. The other half was rolled up but left unsealed, so it could easily be consulted.[[386]](#footnote-386) While this reference is Baruch’s first appearance in the Jeremiah scroll, chronologically his appearance in Jer 36 happened two decades ago.[[387]](#footnote-387)

**13-15** *Ordered* is an eyebrow-raising verb; it makes Jeremiah sound a little like God.[[388]](#footnote-388) Presumably Jeremiah entrusts the document to Baruch for safe-keeping because he was himself confined to the palace courtyard. The point about an earthenware container is that it can be sealed tight so as to prevent air getting to the documents; it is the form of storage used for the Qumran documents, many of which could thus remain in reasonable condition for two millennia. But the expression *a long time* (literally, “many days”), which recalls 13:6, is of more than mere practical chronological significance. Like the expression “days are coming” (e.g., 31:27, 31, 38) it also implies a time that is certain to come but is not around the corner. It leads into the explicit interpretation of the symbolic act whose point at last emerges in v. 15. Jeremiah is doing the right thing by his family and by the Torah, but in doing so, he is also giving expression to something else relating to the information about the background to his action, in vv. 2-5. *Once again*, moreover, takes up *once again* in 31:4a, 4b, 5a, 23. And to speak of *houses, lands, and vineyards* is really to make an promise about every aspect of regular Judahite life. “The whole prophecy is contained in v. 15.”[[389]](#footnote-389) The presence of witnesses is also significant in this connection.In addition to the document being witnessed, and Baruch being present as a witness, so are the other Judahites in the palace courtyard. They are witnesses not merely to a real estate transaction but to this sign event and thus to Jeremiah having dramatized what Yahweh is going to do, as “the prophet puts his money where his mouth is.”[[390]](#footnote-390) It is also the first time we have heard Yahweh saying anything like the statement in v. 15, so it makes for a jaw-opening closure for the story, though it will also turn out to be a cliff-hanger for the chapter’s continuation. “Buy the field; declare yourself friend of creation (and of the Creator); indict the destroyers of an ecology blasted and degraded by war.”[[391]](#footnote-391) Such a comment provides another illustration of a question emerging from a different context finding further illumination in the text.[[392]](#footnote-392)

## Jeremiah Quizzes Yahweh (32:16-25)

16I pleaded with Yahweh after I had given the acquisition document to Baruch ben Neriah.

17Oh, Lord Yahweh, there:

You are the one who made the heavens and the earth,

by your great energy and by your extended arm.

Anything, it’s not too extraordinary for you,

18exercising commitment to thousands,

But repaying the waywardness of parents

into the lap of their children after them.

Great, strong God,

Yahweh of Armies his name,

19Great in counsel,

and plentiful in deed,

You whose eyes are appointed

over all the paths of human beings,

To give to an individual in accordance with his paths

and in accordance with the fruit of his practices!a

20You who set out signs and portents

in the country of Egypt until this day,

Both among Israel and among human beings

you made for yourself a name this very day.b

21You got your people Israel out

from the country of Egypt,

With signs, with portents, with a strong hand,

with an extended arm, and with great fear.c

22You gave them this country

which you promised to their ancestors to give them,

A country flowing with milk and syrup,d

23and they came and took possession of it.

But they didn’t listen to your voice

and by your instructione they didn’t walk.

All that you commanded them to do,

they didn’t do.

So you have made come upon them

all this dire trouble.

24There are the ramps,f

which have come to the city for capturing it.

The city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans,

who are battling against it,

in the face of sword and hunger and epidemic.

So what you spoke has happened,

and there are you, looking.g

25And you – you have said to me,

Lord Yahweh,

Acquire for yourself the land for silver

and charge witnesses –

and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans!h

LXX lacks this colon.

On this phrase, see the note on 11:5.

LXX, Syr, Sym, Tg imply *mar’eh* “sight” for MT *môrâ*: cf. Deut 4:34; 26:8 for the same confusion (*HUB*).

See the note and comment on 11:5.

K, LXX, have “instructions.”

Vg takes *sōlәlôt* to denote siege engines, but etymology supports *ramps* as at 6:6 (cf. LXX “the crowd,” climbing via the ramps?).

LXX lacks this colon.

A has a section marker here.

Here Jeremiah eventually comes to a question implied by vv. 1-14, to which he has already presupposed an answer in v. 15. If the chapter works chronologically, then, this section indicates some doubt about that answer; more likely, the chapter now gives us the background to the answer. Either way, the entirety of the rest of the chapter functions for the audience as explanation and reinforcement for the declaration, and (especially after 587) as an answer to questions it raised for them.

At one level, Jeremiah’s prayer follows a common First Testament pattern in that the bulk comprises praise of Yahweh; only in its closing lines does it come to its particular concern. After the introduction it comprises fifteen bicola (of which eleven are self-contained) and five tricola. It outlines:

v. 16 introduction

v. 17aα address

vv. 17aβγ-18a Yahweh the creator, involved with the generations in commitment and redress

three bicola, the second and third linked

vv. 18b-19 Yahweh of Armies, watching over the paths of human beings

four linked bicola

vv. 20-21 Yahweh the God who got Israel out of Egypt with great fear

two pairs of bicola

vv. 22-24a Yahweh who gave Israel its country but is now bringing dire trouble upon it

two linked bicola, four bicola, and a semi-closing tricolon

vv. 24b-25 Yahweh as the one who in this context has bidden Jeremiah acquire land!

two bicola and a closing tricolon

The dynamic of the praise manifests a distinctive profile. Sequences of cola alternate between giving straightforward acknowledgment of Yahweh for his power and generosity, and more ambivalent acknowledgment of his power and chastisement; the stress is increasingly on the punitive.[[393]](#footnote-393) The sequences acknowledging generosity and chastisement increase in length (six cola, then eight, then eight again, then eleven) until they reach the horror of the *dire trouble*, with the *ramps* that herald the city’s *capturing* and the people’s experience and expectation of *sword and hunger and epidemic*. There they are before Yahweh’s eyes, and it is in this context that Yahweh has bidden Jeremiah buy land. Vv. 17-24a thus constitute a huge raising of suspense before we come to vv. 24b-25. The expressions of praise for Yahweh’s generosity and faithfulness carry an irony; they are undermined by the lines that draw attention to Yahweh’s acts of redress. The acknowledgment they make thus bears an internal contradiction: “You can do what you like, but….” People sometimes question Yahweh’s allowing some catastrophe to fall on his people; Jeremiah’s question is almost the obverse. He has no problem with the catastrophe, but why then commission the crazy purchase? His asking the question shows how prayer is the way to raise theological questions, as doxology is the way to do theology. It is one reason why prayer is a hermeneutical key to understanding biblical books.[[394]](#footnote-394) And in portraying this dynamic in the relationship between Yahweh and Israel as the background for prayer, vv. 16-25 compare with the prayers in Neh 9 and Dan 9 where a leader prays for his people.[[395]](#footnote-395) At surface level Jeremiah is quizzing Yahweh about a question that concerns him individually, but he, too, is praying on his people’s behalf, as he undertakes his purchase not for his sake or merely for his family’s sake, but for his people’s sake. And of course it is another matter whether Jeremiah himself is agonizing over the question at all. He knows the answer to it. As usual, he is engaged in rhetoric, in communication, in seeking to enable Judah before or after 587 to understand Yahweh’s ways.

**16-18a** *Oh*, or Oh no! or *Alas!* Jeremiah begins, as he does when he is discombobulated (1:6; 4:10; 14:13). His prayer opens by acknowledging Yahweh as creator and as involved in people’s lives. He repeats his distinctive observation that Yahweh’s *great energy and extended arm* were key not only to Israel’s deliverance from Egypt but also to his making *the heavens and the earth* (cf. 10:13; 27:5)[[396]](#footnote-396) – which is obvious when one thinks about it, but which is nevertheless a distinctively Jeremianic point. In this context, the point about creation and power leads into a related comment about everyday life, which can be the context in which people experience things that are *extraordinary* (*pālā’* niphal) and that embody a *commitment* that extends *to thousands­* – presumably thousands of generations, as is the case in the commandment (Exod 20:5-6). The trouble is, the commandment also notes that Yahweh’s energy finds expression in *repaying the waywardness of parents into the lap of their children* (whatever 31:27-30 implies, the Jeremiah scroll does not take it to imply a disagreement with the commandment). Yes, Yahweh is merciful; but he also punishes.[[397]](#footnote-397)

**18b-19** The second sequence continues from the first in speaking of Yahweh’s involvement with humanity as a whole, but it suggests a move to speaking about Yahweh’s involvement in the affairs of the nations. He is *Yahweh of Armies*, a title that Jeremiah and other prophets love: he is the God who has all power at his disposal. It coheres with calling Yahweh *the strong God*, the warrior God who doesn’t loses his battles, who is thus the *great* God: not only great in strength, as he needs to be, but *great in counsel*, as he also needs to be. He can formulate plans, and implement them so as to be also *plentiful in deed*. Jeremiah once again moves towards the more solemn. His *eyes are appointed over all the paths of human beings*: he has his eye on you, which can be great news…. But the position of his eyes means hecan *give to an individual In accordance with his paths and with the fruit of his practices*. *Practices* always means bad practices in Jeremiah and he has referred elsewhere to this *fruit* (17:10; 21:14): the phrase suggests dire habits issuing in dire actions, and dire action receiving a dire reward.

**20-21** The prayer goes on to Yahweh’s getting Israel out of Egypt and into the promised land, which involved *signs and wonders* of the kind Deuteronomy rejoices in (e.g., Deut 6:22; 26:8). Jeremiah’s reference to the exodus emphasizes how it constituted a demonstration of who Yahweh was. He *set out* these signs and wonders in a way that everyone could see them, *both among Israel and among human beings* in general, in Egypt, and *until this day* they continue to give testimony to Yahweh. Thus *you made for yourself a name* that continues to be known *this very day*. Jeremiah goes on to restate what Yahweh did in words that take up Deut 26:8: “Yahweh got us out from Egypt with a strong hand and with an extended arm and with great fear and with signs and with wonders.” The signs and wonders thus reappear from v. 20 and the extended arm from v. 17 where it was associated with creation. But in this context the difference between Jeremiah’s words and Deuteronomy’s words is that *great fear* now brings the account of the exodus to its climax.[[398]](#footnote-398)

**22-24a** Jeremiah continues with his virtual quotation, from Deut 26:9 and 15: “he gave us this country… as you promised to our ancestors, a country flowing with milk and syrup.” Moses had spoken of “when you come into the country that Yahweh your God is giving you… and you take possession of it (Deut 26:1); Jeremiah can now turn those words into past tense. Whereas Moses, however, could look forward to people saying, “I have listened to the voice of Yahweh my God – I have done in accordance with all that you commanded me” (Deut 26:14), Jeremiah has to point out that it didn’t happen. To put it in his own characteristic terms, *by your instruction they did not walk*. Consequently Yahweh has *made come upon them all this dire trouble*. From that characteristic Jeremianic language, Jeremiah moves to being more concrete about how things thus worked out. *There are the ramps* for the attackers to climb up as they attack the city that is also weakened by injuryandhungerandillness. If the city has not yet actually fallen (as the context of Jeremiah’s prayer suggests), it has as good as fallen.

**24b-25** Yahweh can see it and he is looking at it, isn’t he. “Jeremiah’s effusive emphasis on God’s power and omniscience in the earlier verses of the prayer ironically renders God’s authority in the present moment fragile.”[[399]](#footnote-399)Yahweh has to keep alert until the end of his people’s prayers. Ps 89 builds up its praise for thirty-seven verses before it comes to the accusation that retrospectively undermines all that has preceded (Ps 89:38 [39]). Jeremiah’s act of praise is indeed a huge raising of suspense. At last we come to the point of the prayer – though there is no prayer in the narrow sense. Given that you can see what is going on, in proper redress for the city’s waywardness, what’s with your commissioning me to exchange the silver that might come in useful for some land that won’t? I know you can’t stop now, so what’s with the acquisition of the land?[[400]](#footnote-400) There is again a gap that the audience has to fill. Jeremiah has not recorded an actual commission to acquire land, only a promise that Yahweh attached to land. “Verse 25 converts the promise of v. 15 into an imperative. But the prayer appears to end in v. 25 with a puzzlement…. What can it mean?... Is it serious? Is it possible? Shall it be acted upon?”[[401]](#footnote-401) “Not even the prophet can easily believe his utopian visions.”[[402]](#footnote-402) But anyone can ask God whether he really means something, though it’s good if the questioner is also prepared to say, “Not as I wish, but as you do” (Matt 26:39).[[403]](#footnote-403)

## Yahweh Replies: First, the Bad News (32:26-35)

26Yahweh’s word came to Jeremiah.

27Here am I, Yahweh,

the God of all flesh –

for me, is there any deed too extraordinary?a

28Therefore Yahweh has said this.

Here am I, giving this cityb

into the hand of the Chaldeans

and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzarc King of Babylon, and he will take it.

29The Chaldeans will come,

the people who are battling against this city.

They will set this city on fire

and consume it, with the houses,

On whose roofs people offered sacrifices to the Master

and poured libations to other gods,

in order to irk me.

30Because the Israelites and the Judahites

have been doing onlyd what was dire in my eyes,

From their youth, because the Israelites

have been only irking me

with the things their hands have made (Yahweh’s affirmation).e

31Because directed towardsf my anger and my wrath –

so this city has been for me,

From the day that they built it,

until this day,

So as to remove it from before my face,

32for all the dire behavior of the Israelites and the Judahites,

Who acted to irk me,

they, their kings, their officials,

Their priests, their prophets,

the individuals in Judah and the people who live in Jerusalem.

33They turned the back of their neck to me,

not their face,

When I was teaching them, teaching assiduously,g

but there were none of them listening to accept restraint.

34They set out their detestable things in the house that is called by my name,

against it, to defile it.

35They built the Master’s shrines,

which are in the Ben-himmon Ravine,

To make their sons and their daughters pass through to the Shameful King.h

which I did not order them and did not arise in my mind,

To do this offensive thing,

in order to make Judah do wrong.i

The middle colon closes *kol-bāśār* (any and every flesh); the third colon closes *kol-dābār* (any and every deed).

For *here am I, giving this city* LXX has “this city will definitely be given over” (cf. 34:2).

LXX lacks *Chaldeans and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar*; Vg simply lacks *Nebuchadrezzar*.

With LXX I take *’ak* to mean *only* rather than “indeed” (though LXX suggestively links the *only* with the subject rather than the verb); so also in the next line – *only* fits the rest of the indictment.

LXX lacks *because the Israelites have only been irking… Yahweh’s affirmation*).

For this translation of *‘al*, see BDB, 757b.

See the note and comment on 7:13.

*Mōlek* (see the comment); LXX “to the king” implies *melek*.

MT has a section marker here.

Yahweh’s response begins where the prayer almost began, then leaps to where the prayer almost finished and focuses there:

v. 26 Introduction

v. 27 Yahweh’s self-introduction

one tricolon

v. 28a Resumptive introduction

vv. 28b-29 Yahweh confirms his intention to have the Babylonians destroy the city

an opening tricolon, a bicolon, and a bicolon linked to a semi-closing tricolon

vv. 30-35 Yahweh elaborates on the waywardness that brings this redress

vv. 30-32 they have acted to provoke me in the city

a bicolon linked to a tricolon, and five linked bicola

vv. 33-35 they have acted to cause offence in worship

two linked bicola, a bicolon, and three linked bicola

**26-27** The curator’s introduction to Yahweh’s reply picks up the phraseology of the introduction to the chapter, as none of the intervening introductions have done. Is this the real *word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh* of v. 1?[[404]](#footnote-404) Anyway, Yahweh starts by confirming Jeremiah’s early comment: “Yes, you’re right, there is no limit or constraint on what I can do.” He picks up the reference at the beginning of Jeremiah’s prayer to his creation of the entire world by affirming that he is *the God of all flesh*, and the God who is capable of all things. What is the implication? Does it makes for an inauspicious start to his response? Is giving Jerusalem into the Babylonians’ hand an example of the extraordinary things that Yahweh can do? How does Yahweh’s comment relate to the extraordinary things of which Zedekiah himself speaks in 21:2, in the context of the siege? Is Yahweh’s self-introduction a hint that defeat and loss might not be his last word? Or might there be things that God cannot do, ignoring the monstrous behavior of Judah being one of them?[[405]](#footnote-405) Jeremiah and the audience have listen on to discover the answer to these questions.

**28-29** In the first instance, the answer is gloomy. Rather than suggesting that defeat and loss might not be Yahweh’s last word, his response points in that opposite direction. Yes, he is giving the city into the hand of the Chaldeans. And there will be some poetic justice about the action he takes. The city’s destruction means the burning down of its houses, which are made of mud brick and wood. And it is these houses on whose roofs the Judahites have customarily *offered sacrifices to the Master and poured libations to other gods* (see 19:13), so it’s appropriate, isn’t it? It’s as if they were deliberately trying *to irk me*.

**30-32** They certainly succeeded. Twice more Yahweh picks up the word *irk* (*kā‘as* hiphil), a favorite verb in Jeremiah (7:18, 19; 8:19; 11:17; 25:6, 7; 44:3, 8) and in 1 and 2 Kings (e.g., 2 Kgs 17:11, 17; 22:17; 23:19). It suggests getting someone worked up; it is the opposite of being calm and unperturbed. It is what Peninnah did to Hannah by finding it too easy to have babies (1 Sam 1:6-7). It implies a concentration of negative emotion, not a polite annoyance but an overwhelming passion, a furious rage.[[406]](#footnote-406) What gets Yahweh thus worked up is the attention his people pay to gods other than him. It’s been characteristic of Israel all its life. The city’s life has been consistently *directed towards my anger and my wrath* since the day it was built, as if it was aiming to make Yahweh destroy it. The charge applies wherever you look and whoever you look at, as Jeremiah has often indicated – kings, officials, priests, prophets, ordinary individuals, in the city or in the rest of Judah. Yahweh twice throws in reference to *Israelites* in the sense of the northern kingdom to make sure he has covered all bases. Let no one say that he has no rationale for letting Nebuchadrezzar take the city. Has Jeremiah overstated Yahweh’s rage? Has Yahweh overstated it? There is certainly some hyperbole here. But maybe the even more concrete account of people killing their children and burning them as offerings, which will come in v. 35, deserves some over-the-top rage. And at least the wild nature of Yahweh’s fury in this first stage of his response to Jeremiah’s prayer will be accompanied by further wildness in the enthusiasm with which he will go on to speak of restoration. There is nothing moderate about Yahweh.

**33-35** His rage is in part a response to people’s refusal to respond to his reaching out to them. He offered them his teaching, and did so *assiduously*,but they gave him the back of their neck rather than their face. He tried to apply correction or discipline or restraint to them (cf. 2:19-20, 30)[[407]](#footnote-407) but they would have none of it. He had set his house in their midst and let his name be attached to it, with the implication that he in person is identified with it; and if one takes into account its originally being their idea, the point becomes more forceful. Their response was twofold. They filled it with means of worship that were disgusting because of what they implied about him. And they also built shrines for the Master in the Ben-hinnom Ravine. To what he said in 7:30-31 Yahweh adds that they *make their sons and their daughters pass through to Molech*. They make them pass through fire (Deut 18:10; 2 Kgs 16:3; 17:17; 21:6; Ezek 20:31), which might not be too bad if it means coming out the other side. But they are not passing through in order to come back home but in order to cross over to Molech; the expression is another term for what Jeremiah elsewhere calls incinerating their sons and daughters (7:31). Molech is a distinctively First Testament version of the name of the King of Sheol.[[408]](#footnote-408) He would be regularly known in Hebrew as *melek*,King,[[409]](#footnote-409) but the spelling Molech makes this name an example of the First Testament’s casting a judgment on something by respelling it: compare Tophet (7:31).[[410]](#footnote-410) He is the Shameful King, associated with the shamefulness of worship of the Master.

## Yahweh Replies: Second, the Good News of Reaffirmation (32:36-41)

36But now therefore Yahweh, the God of Israel, has said this, with regard toa this city of which you people are saying, “It’s given into the hand of the king of Babylon with sword, with hunger, and with epidemic”:

37Here am I, collecting them from all the countries,

where I have driven them,

In my anger and in my wrath,

and in great rage.

I will return them to this place,

and let them dwell in confidence.

38They will be a people for me

and I – I will be God for them.

39I will give them one mind

and one path,b

To be in awe of me for all the days,

and it will be good for them and for their descendants after them.

40I will solemnize for them a pact for all time

that I will not turn from them

in my doing what is good to them.c

Awe for me I will put in their mind

so that they do not turn away from me.

41I will rejoice over them in doing what is good to them,

and I will plant them in this country in truthfulness

with my entire mind and with my entire spirit.d

On *’el*, see BDB, 40, section 6; the distance from the verb and the fact that Yahweh does not address the city works against translating simply “to.”

In both cola for MT *’eḥād* LXX implies *’aḥēr* “another.”

LXX lacks this colon.

MT has a section marker here.

By this point in Jer 32, the audience is entitled to be bewildered, like Jeremiah himself. The chapter began with a reminder of how discouraging the situation was in Jerusalem (vv. 1-6), then related how Jeremiah was pushed into acquiring some land (vv. 7-15). Jeremiah described how confused he was by the clash between the deservedly discouraging situation and the command which he now explicitly associated with Yahweh (v. 16-25). Yahweh did not reduce Jeremiah’s confusion by confirming at some length that the city’s deliverance to Nebuchadrezzar was religiously inevitable, and the curators did not reduce the audience’s bewilderment by reporting Yahweh’s words (vv. 26-36). The first half of Yahweh’s response to Jeremiah has thus again raised suspense. Now at last there comes some good news and resolution.[[411]](#footnote-411) The section outlines:

v. 36 introduction to a sequence of promises

v. 37 the first: I will reestablish the people in the land

three bicola, the first two linked

vv. 38-39 the second: the relationship will be real; I will reshape their mind

three bicola, the second two linked

v. 40 the second promise reaffirmed

a tricolon and a bicolon

v. 41 the first promise reaffirmed

a tricolon

The promise thus works abb’a’, and in the manner of parallelism, the resumptive set of promises in vv. 40-41 go beyond the first.

**36** Jeremiah initially gives no hint that Yahweh is now moving from talk of catastrophe to talk of restoration. Beginning with *therefore* was something to worry about in v. 28, as it often is in Jeremiah (e.g., 5:14; 6:15, 18, 21; 7:20, 32; 8:10, 12; 12:8; 14:15; 18:21; 19:6; 22:18; 25:8; 28:16; 29:32). But there have been an occasional different, illogical-looking *therefore* (16:14; 30:16), and it will turn out that v. 36 is another. Yahweh “moves from the certainty of judgment to an uncertain future”[[412]](#footnote-412) in a positive sense, or from certainty of judgment to a certain positive future.

**37-38** Who are the *them*? In the immediate context, they would be the *you* of v. 36, which fits the focus on Judah in vv. 42-44 and the reference to returning to *this place* (cf. 27:21; 28:1-6). But grammatically *them* suggests a reference back to the Israelites and Judahites of vv. 30-35, which would fit the broader concern with both Ephraim and Judah in Jer 30 – 31 and the promise in v. 38 (cf. 31:31-34). Either way, the promise cannot be limited to (e.g.) the exiles of 597 or the people about to be exiled after the city’s fall. It goes on to refer to a driving off to *all the countries*, which indicates the broad perspective on the scattering that has featured earlier (e.g., 16:15; 23:3, 8; 29:10), and either has Ephraim as well as Judah in mind, and/or refers to or includes the broader driving off of Judah that will follow the city’s fall. One way or another, when they *dwell in confidence* back in the land, unthreatened by people like Nebuchadrezzar, and become *a people for me* who have Yahweh as *God for them*, they will prove “the good fortune of the people whose God is Yahweh” (Ps 144:15).[[413]](#footnote-413)

**39** In vv. 31-34 Yahweh has already implied that there is more he needs to do for the vision expressed in v. 38 to find fulfillment. Here he reformulates the promise in 31:31-34. In this context, *one mind and one path* could suggest the oneness of Ephraim and Judah as one people. The double expression suggests the necessary combination of right attitude, thinking, and emotion with right action – what Paul will call “willing and acting for what pleases him” (Phil 2:13).[[414]](#footnote-414) Actually, Jeremiah has made clear that the people have long had *one mind and one path*, but not in a good way, so LXX’s “another mind and another path” is what Israel also needs. But *one mind* also resonates with the prayer to “unify” my mind (*yāḥad* piel; Ps 86:11),[[415]](#footnote-415) *one path* resonates with the exhortation in Deut 5:29,[[416]](#footnote-416) and *one* also resonates with Deut 6:4: Jeremiah is pointing towards a oneness of mind and path in a commitment to the one Yahweh.

**40** Yahweh reaffirms this second promise by continuing the reformulation of 31:31-34 as he speaks now of the pact lasting *for all time*,[[417]](#footnote-417) which the Sinai pact has not. Like the earlier formulation, this phrase does not imply that the pact is unconditional in the sense that Yahweh is giving Israel permission to does it likes without having any fear of imperiling its relationship with Yahweh (a logic equivalent to the logic that Paul questions in Rom 6). Yahweh is giving Israel one mind and path, and it will result in Israel’s living in submissive awe, which Yahweh restates as an awe that will mean *they* *do not turn away from me*. It is an aspect of solemnizing with them a pact that will last, because of the way it is set up. He will not *turn* from them (*šûb*), revoking his commitment; they will not *turn away* from him(*sûr*), turning aside to other deities.

**41** Yahweh is a person of much enthusiasm who acts with great strength of feeling, and our being people of passion reflects our being made in his image. The passion in rejoicing over his people (cf. Deut 28:63; 30:9; Isa 62:5; 65:19; Zeph 3:17) parallels the passion of his furious anger with them in v. 37, but he doesn’t rejoice in bringing redress.[[418]](#footnote-418) Zedekiah’s questions in vv. 3-5 implied that acting in wrath might be one of the things that were impossible for Yahweh (see vv. 17, 27), but it’s not so.[[419]](#footnote-419) Yet anger doesn’t come from his heart (Lam 3:33), but from somewhere nearer the edge of his person. He will be relieved to be able to give up wrath and give in to rejoicing. He picks up again one of his characteristic verbs in Jeremiah: *I will plant them in this country* from which he will have cast them out. There are thus two sides to Yahweh’s promise: “Yahweh offers covenant and field.”[[420]](#footnote-420) And he will plant them *in truthfulness*. While their truthfulness will be needed, as v. 40 has implied, the last word is with his truthfulness, because he will act *with my entire mind and my entire spirit*. There is another resonance with Deuteronomy, of a profoundly imaginative kind. Yahweh expects his people to turn to him with its entire mind and spirit (Deut 30:10); it will be a response to his relating to them with his entire mind and spirit. Yahweh thereby hints at another means whereby Israel’s necessary transformation will happen as Yahweh’s instruction comes to be written into its mind (Jer 31:33-34).

## Yahweh Replies: Third, the Good News about Land (32:42-44)

42Because Yahweh has said this:

As I have caused to come to this people

all this great dire trouble,

So I am causing to come for them

all the good that I have spoken of for them.

43So the land in this country will be acquired,

of which you people are saying,

“It’s a desolation, without human being or animal –

it's given into the hand of the Chaldeans.”

44People will acquire fields for silver,

with writing in a document and sealing,

and charging witnesses,

In the country of Benjamin and in the areas around Jerusalem,

in the towns of Judah, in the towns in the highland,

In the towns in the foothills, and in the towns in the Negeb,

because I will bring about their restoration (Yahweh’s affirmation).a

1. MT has a unit marker here.

In general terms vv. 36-41 might have resolved the tension that has pervaded this chapter, though Jeremiah will hardly have forgotten the question he raised. What about his acquisition of the piece of land? These closing verses come back to this question. They outline as:

v. 42aα resumptive introduction to further promises

v. 42βgb a resumptive general promise: I will bring good things instead of dire things

two linked bicola

vv. 43-44 a specific promise: people will acquire land instead of writing it off

two linked bicola then a tricolon and two bicola, all linked.

**42** First Yahweh summarizes his undertaking in general terms (cf. 31:28). The *because* reflects how his promise of restoration is at least as much part of his message as his threat of desolation, so that in a paradoxical way the threat’s fulfillment is also a guarantee of the promise’s fulfillment. B. Makkot 24b records that Rabbi Akiva was quite happy to rejoice over the ruins of the temple, which had been destroyed in his day, because the fulfillment of the threat of its destruction had paved the way for the fulfillment of the promise of its rebuilding, and it could do so again.[[421]](#footnote-421)

**43** Yahweh goes on to take up Jeremiah’s question. Yahweh’s encouragement to Jeremiah to do his duty by the cousin who perhaps thought he was taking him for a ride linked with Yahweh’s commitment to ensuring that normal life would return to Judah. Yahweh starts with Benjamin and the region around Jerusalem, and thus the area of particular concern in vv. 1-15, but his undertaking with regard to this area applies to a return to normal life throughout the country. The good news incorporates visible signs.[[422]](#footnote-422) The analysis of its geography compares with 17:26; *the towns of Judah* are spelled out as comprising *the towns in the highland* south of Jerusalem such as Bethlehem and Hebron, *the towns in the foothills* to the west and southwest such as Lachish, and *the towns in the Negeb* such as Beersheba. The promise implicitly raises but does not clarify questions about the future of Ephraim, which is unmentioned here, about the relationship between the Jerusalem and the rest of Judah,[[423]](#footnote-423) about the relationship between the towns and the country,[[424]](#footnote-424) about the relationship between people who return from exile and people who never leave,[[425]](#footnote-425) and about the relationship between people thousands of years later with rival claims to this land.[[426]](#footnote-426) But Jer 32 has provided its answer to the particular question that was its concern. Its answer had in fact been presupposed by way back in v. 15; everything since has been examining the question that was raised by vv. 7-14. Given that v. 15 summarized the implications of vv. 16-44, chronologically its declaration now follows. People on the eve of the fall of Jerusalem have to accept their immediate fate, but they need not despair. And people hearing the curators’ story after 587 who cannot yet see a community characterized by one mind and one path or cannot yet see planting are invited to believe that they will see them.

# Some Vital Afterthoughts (33:1-26 [40:1-13 LXX])

Chapter 33 comprises a series of six separate promises from Yahweh that further supplement Jer 30 – 32. They again combine the somber and the positive, but increase further the emphasis on the latter:

vv. 1-9 I will bring healing to Jerusalem, and restoration to Judah and Ephraim

vv. 10-11 Rejoicing and praise will again resound in Jerusalem

vv. 12-13 Flocks will pasture again all over the country

vv. 14-18 I will see that David and Levi have successors ministering for Ephraim and Judah

vv. 19-22 Those promises will be as sure as my pact with day and night

vv. 23-26 I will show my compassion for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

The promises express Yahweh’s commitments regarding the “public, historical, sociopolitical future of the community, resolutely contradicting the people’s present condition “against all apparent limitations imposed by ‘realism.’”[[427]](#footnote-427) It’s a chapter full of blossoming, flourishing hope.[[428]](#footnote-428)

The six promises divide into two sets. The first three paint an even grimmer picture than previous chapters. The toughness of the situation in Jerusalem is especially clear in the first, the longest and the most concrete, which one would have thought came from after the city’s fall. But its introduction makes a link with the same context as Jer 32, suggesting the implication that the description that follows relates to the dark days before that final fall. The second and third promises work by taking up familiar themes and undertakings, but add distinctive references to the ruined state of the city which is their background. Here, too, however, the inference that the city has fallen may be false, if the messages simply presuppose the grimness of the situation even as the catastrophe still draws near.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth messages leave behind concrete portrayal and references to wasting, desolation, and ruin, to focus on the future of Yahweh’s promise to David and to the Levites. These promises, too, might come from before or after 587, and from Jeremiah or his curators. They form a distinctive set of messages that appear in MT but not LXX,[[429]](#footnote-429) which at least suggests that their incorporation into the scroll happened later than that of vv. 1-13, but they contain no pointer to a date beyond the Babylonian period. If MT and LXX represent separate recensions of an earlier version of the scroll, then their being only in MT no more indicates that their origin is later than is the case when Luke’s expansion of Mark’s story is longer than Matthew’s. Uncertainties about their origin are anyway countered by the scroll’s invitation to read them in the context of Jerusalem on the eve of the city’s fall.

## I Will Bring Healing and Purification to Judah and Ephraim (33:1-9)

1Yahweh’s word came to Jeremiah a second time; he was still confined in the court of the guard.

2Yahweh has said this, the one who is doing it,a

Yahweh who is shaping it to establish it –

Yahweh is his name.

3Call to me and I will answer you,

and I will tell you big things,

inaccessible things that you have not acknowledged.b

4Because Yahweh, the God of Israel, has said this about the houses in this city and about the houses of the kings of Judah that have been pulled down. Regarding the ramps and regarding the sword – 5people comingc to do battle with the Chaldeans and to fill them with the corpses of the human beings whom I have struck down in my anger and in my rage, and in that I have hidden my face from this city because of all their dire action:

6Here am I, making regeneration grow up for it and healing;

I will heal them and reveal to them

abundance of well-being withd truthfulness.

7I will bring about the restoration of Judah

and the restoration of Israel.

I will build them up as at the first,

8and purify them from all their waywardness with which they did wrong to me.

I will pardone all their acts of waywardness with which they did wrong to me,

and with which they rebelled against me.

9It will be for me a joyful name,

praise and splendor,

To all the nations of the earth

that hear all the good

that I am doing to them.

They will be in awe and they will tremble

because of all the good and because of all the well-being

that I am doing for it.f

LXX has “making earth,” perhaps assimilating to 10:12 (*HUB*), and changing the drift of the verse (cf. Amos 4:13; 5:8-9; 9:5-6). Vg has a future participle and Tg a past verb, while Syr has “made you… shaped you… established you,” also changing the drift of the verse.

MT has a marker here.

LXX lacks [*people*] *coming* (*bā’îm*), which makes the text easier. Sym, Th have “to the sword of the people coming.”

Literally “and”: I take the phrase as a hendiadys for “truthful well-being” (14:13).

LXX has “I will not remember.”

MT has a section marker here.

While the combination of verse and prose recurs in Jeremiah (e.g., vv. 14-18), this section is the first where lines of verse provide the opening “text” which the rest of the section expounds. The section as whole outlines:

v. 1 the curator’s introduction

vv. 2-3 Yahweh’s self-introduction, invitation, and promise about revelation

two tricola

v. 4abα Jeremiah’s introduction to the message that follows

vv. 4bβ-5 The background to the main message

vv. 6-9 The main message, spelling out the implications of the two tricola

vv. 6-8 Yahweh’s acts of restoration

a tricolon and three bicola

v. 9 The consequences in the response of the nations

a bicolon and two tricola

So the opening poetic lines promise extraordinary things that Yahweh will do if people call on him. The middle verses of prose explain the background, the destruction and slaughter in Jerusalem, which people know about or can envisage, so that the verses function to raise suspense. The closing verses spell out what the extraordinary things will be: a restoration that will bring healing, well-being that can be relied on, upbuilding, purification, and pardon, such that will make the world marvel.

**1** “What themes become important to a prisoner, punished as he is for the crime of truth-telling?... Imprisonment is the credential of Jeremiah” (cf. Phil 1:7, 13-14; 2 Tim 1:8; Rev 1:9).[[430]](#footnote-430) The opening verse introduces vv. 2-9 in particular, but drifts into becoming an introduction to the chapter as a whole.

**2** The two tricola are both allusive, but thought-provoking where they are clear. They do not identify *this* or *it*. But such a *this* (literally, “thus”) regularly refers to what follows, so here it will refer to v. 3 and/or to vv. 4-9 which spell out v. 3. And *it* will refer to these verses’ revelations about what is happening and is going to happen in the life of prophet and people. It is indeed something that Yahweh *is doing* and/or is going to do, something Yahweh *is shaping* (*yāṣar*)and/or is going to shape. Shaping suggests the work of a potter and it is usually a positive operation, though Jeremiah has spoken of shaping in a negative way (18:11). *To establish* (*kûn* hiphil) is also usually a positive operation; Jeremiah used this verb of creation (10:12). Is the catastrophe that is unfolding something Yahweh is doing, shaping, establishing? But the ease with which participles in Hebrew as in English can refer to what someone is going to do (Vg has all future participles in v. 2) means that Yahweh might be looking beyond the catastrophe. *Yahweh is his name*. Yes, it comes from him. Is that all he means?

**3** The second tricolon begins to spell out the implications of the first. Its own allusiveness stems from the identity of the *you*. Is it Jeremiah?[[431]](#footnote-431) But why would Yahweh be issuing such an invitation to him, especially at this point in time? And what would the *big* and *inaccessible things* be? We have read lots of big and formerly inaccessible things in the scroll so far, not least in chapters 30 – 32, and there are no new such revelations to follow here.[[432]](#footnote-432) There is nothing apocalyptic in Jer 33.[[433]](#footnote-433) But in the scroll so far, Jeremiah as prophet has sometimes stood for the people in some way, and calling and being answered is designed to be an aspect of the people’s relationship with Yahweh (e.g., Pss 4:1 [2]; 102:2 [3]; 120:1; 138:3). Jeremiah will later speak of Yahweh answering them when he prays for them, and of him telling them what Yahweh says (42:4). So here, *you* at least includes Judah. It is the people as an entity whom Yahweh will *tell big* and *inaccessible things that you have not acknowledged* (more likely than things they have not known, since arguably he has also given Judah all his good news already). Whoever is the *you*, the promise *I will answer you, I will tell you big things, inaccessible things* makes the audience think again about v. 2, where doing, shaping, and establishing are verbs that apply naturally to Yahweh’s constructive acts (it was from this verse that William Carey was preaching in 1792 when he formulated his trademark saying, “Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God,” and “brought modern Christian missions to birth).”[[434]](#footnote-434) Doing, shaping, and establishing are the encouraging big things that Yahweh will talk about here (cf. Isa 48:6). Those verbs recall how Yahweh both shapes light and creates darkness, makes well-being and dire fortune (Isa 45:7) – which for Judah are now going to come in the opposite order.

**4-5** So what are these things? Yahweh moves from the broad, general, nebulous, and possibly encouraging to the concrete, definite, tangible, and definitely agonizing realities of the community’s current experience, to which prose is perhaps appropriate. The focus is no longer the action Jeremiah took in Jer 32 and the destiny of land outside the city but the city’s own desperate state, which was also background concern in Jer 32. The implication may be that ordinary people have had to tear down their homes, perhaps because they were just inside the walls and stood in the way of defenders. And people living in palaces have perhaps had to surrender the stone of which the palaces were made, to shore up the walls (but plural *houses* might just imply one many-roomed palace). The stone and the mudbrick might also be materials to throw down on attackers. In vv. 4b-5 the syntax is incoherent, an appropriate mirror of the circumstances Jeremiah is describing; perhaps we shouldn’t try too hard to make sense of it.[[435]](#footnote-435) The implications are evident: people who have stood on the walls to defend the city have lost their lives in doing so, or are about to lose their lives if Yahweh speaks anticipatorily. It’s as if they came in order to lose their lives thus. Perhaps the corpses of other people who died were also laid here because it was impossible to leave the city to bury them in the proper places.[[436]](#footnote-436) And Yahweh asserts responsibility for what has been happening, in two ways. Actively, it was he who struck the defenders down, not the Chaldeans. And passively, the Chaldeans were able actually to do so because Yahweh had hidden his face from the city. Its well-being depended on Yahweh lifting his face over it and shone over it (Num 6:25-26), like a king smiling over someone and seeing that they do well. But if the king refuses to see a suppliant, turning his face away, the person’s security and protection disappear. “The hiding of the divine face is a metaphor of anger and destruction, of Yahweh’s withdrawal of his protection and favour” (cf. Isa 8:17; 54:8; 63:6).[[437]](#footnote-437) The efforts described in vv. 4b-5a are useless when v. 5b lies behind the problem.[[438]](#footnote-438)

**6-7a** Fortunately, however, vv. 4-5 were only the negative backcloth to what follows. While *it* and *this* in v. 2 perhaps referred immediately to the present/imminent calamity, they also overflowed in their reference to the *big, inaccessible* things that Yahweh would tell people about if they called, and is actually going to tell them about anyway. He first speaks in terms of the familiar image of the city as like an individual who has been mugged; Yahweh will be like a healer. He will bring *regeneration* to it, like the new flesh that needs to *grow* *up* where there is a wound; Hebrew can thus use the word regeneration (*’ărukâ*) figuratively like the English word, as Jeremiah does in 8:22; 30:17 (concretely in Neh 4:7 [1]). The same applies to *healing* (8:15; 14:19). Actually healers can’t do much; they can’t make healing happen. But as Yahweh has been the mugger, so *I will heal them:* again compare 30:17, whose wording reappears here and whose promises are summarized more briefly here. He can make healing happen. “I am Yahweh who heals you” (Exod 15:26) is “the divine Magna Carta in the matter of health and all related questions.”[[439]](#footnote-439) *Abundance of well-being with truthfulness*, well-being that can be relied on and that will last, adds to that promise, which is spelled out further in the familiar terms of v. 7a. Truthful well-being was what the other prophets had been promising (14:13), and now Jeremiah promises it. “The same God who in the catastrophe implements his unrelenting judgment… at the same moment reveals the implementing of salvation.”[[440]](#footnote-440) The other side of calamity, Jeremiah reclaims the beliefs that had led Judah astray, almost as if he vindicates his opponents.[[441]](#footnote-441) “How do we move from ‘there is no peace’ [no *šālôm*, nowell-being] to announcing ‘peace’ and ‘good news’?... Peace is not possible until there is a dismantling of the holy city and an embrace of exile as the place of God’s newness.”[[442]](#footnote-442)

**7b-8** Yahweh restates the point in terms of another familiar image, the rebuilding of the community. From the beginning Jeremiah knew that there was to be demolition but then building up (1:10). As individual wounded people will need literal healing, the city will need literal rebuilding, but in both cases Yahweh focuses on the metaphorical. The city’s restoration, the bringing into existence of a new Jerusalem, is “holistic”;[[443]](#footnote-443) it involves the physical and the spiritual. In connection with the rebuilding Yahweh will also need to *purify* and *pardon*, themselves two different images for Yahweh’s dealing with the consequences of the people’s dire lifestyle. Only here does Jeremiah refer to purifying (*ṭāhar* piel), which is arguably harder than pardon because it means removing the stain that the dire action has caused and that people continue to carry. The undertaking corresponds to the appeal elsewhere for Yahweh to expiate wrongdoing – which Jeremiah urges Yahweh not to do (18:23). They are like a person who has killed someone whose blood can be seen on the killer’s hands and body; indeed, they *are* such killers (e.g., 22:17; 26:20-23; 32:35). The Scriptures suggest several ways for dealing with stain, which are familiar from everyday life. Stains disappear with time (e.g., Lev 15); major stains take longer, part of the significance of the exile’s lasting seventy years. One may cover a stain so it is no longer visible (Pss 32:1; 85:2 [3]). One may cut out an offensive stain, an aspect of what Yahweh is doing in destroying Jerusalem. But evidently the punishment involved in the city’s fall will not have constituted redress such as makes cleansing unnecessary.[[444]](#footnote-444) Who could say what calamity could count as adequate purification? Would only the total destruction that Yahweh has often threatened be enough? But perhaps one may somehow zap away stain, in a magical kind of way (2 Kgs 5; Ps 51:1 [3]), as the offerings prescribed in Leviticus zap away minor stains; which is perhaps what Yahweh here declares he can do. In a sense both the concept and the action of pardoning is easier: a king or a president has the power to pardon crimes or acts of rebellion. Does pardon have that magical effect, rendering a person into someone who never did the act? Yahweh has three images for the dire acts that purification and pardon have to deal with: they are acts of waywardness (*‘āwôn*,leaving the right path), of rebellion (*peša‘*,defying the king’s authority), and of wrongdoing (*ḥāṭā*’; these acts are especially the ones that issue in a need for purification – a purification offering is a *ḥaṭṭā’t*).

**9** Marvelousconsequences will follow for Jerusalem (the verb is feminine, like the city). The implication of its restoration, purifying, and pardon, will be that Yahweh can look on it with pleasure as he cannot now. At the moment, the very name makes him angry (he doesn’t even utter it in this section, though he will in the next). But then *it will be for me a joyful name*, and also *praise and splendor*. Yahweh picks up the phraseology of 13:11 (and behind it Deut 26:19) and declares that it will come true for Jerusalem. He made no reference to *the nations* back there, but now he adds that they will acknowledge Yahweh’s act of restoration which will affect not only *it* (Jerusalem, v. 6) but *them* (Judah and Israel, v. 7, who also appeared in 13:11 alongside Jerusalem). The nations have been imagined asking horrified questions and making horrified comments about the city’s fall (18:16; 19:8; 22:8-9; 25:9; 30:17); now they are imagined being astounded at its restoration. Jerusalem is destined to be the city on a hill that cannot be hid and the means by which blind eyes are enabled to see (cf. 3:17). It does not have to turn itself into that city, any more than Jeremiah had to speak directly to the nations in order to be a prophet to the nations. God will bring it about.[[445]](#footnote-445)

## Rejoicing and Praise Will Again Resound in Jerusalem (33:10-11)

10Yahweh has said this. Once again there will make itself heard in this place (of which you are saying “It’s a waste, without human being, without animal”), in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate (without human being, without anyone living there, and without animal), 11the voice of joy and the voice of rejoicing, the voice of groom and the voice of bride, the voice of people saying,

Confess Yahweh of Armies,

because Yahweh is good,

because his commitment is for all time,

bringing a thank-offering to Yahweh’s house. Because I will bring about the restoration of the country as at the first, Yahweh has said.a

MT has a section marker here.

**10-11** More than vv. 2-13, this second message takes up familiar phrases and images and reworks them. Yahweh’s first word does so: *once again* (*‘ôd*)echoes 31:4a, 4b, 5a, 23; 32:15. That expression summarizes the reversal that Yahweh promises. Jeremiah had been not unfairly accused of saying that the city *will be a waste, without anyone living there* (26:9). *Without human being or animal* had been the people’s own phrase just now (32:43). Here five times Yahweh uses that word *without* (*’ên*) in describing the city’s deprivation. The *entire country has become desolate* (12:11), Yahweh has observed. I am putting an end to *the voice of joy and the voice of rejoicing, the voice of groom and the voice of bride*, he has declared (16:9; cf. 7:34; 25:10). People are used to chanting, “Confess him…, because Yahweh is good, his commitment is for all time” (Ps 100:4-5); they are hard words to utter at the moment. But Jeremiah has promised that people will again be *bringing a thank-offering to Yahweh’s house* (17:26). In light of vv. 4-9, it is noteworthy that Yahweh makes no mention of bringing purification offerings; they will now be people who acknowledge Yahweh rather than sinners.[[446]](#footnote-446) Finally, Yahweh has often promised that he will *bring about the restoration of the country*, and he will have done so. Yes, all the negatives will be reversed and the positives fulfilled. There is nothing that has been *inaccessible* here, but much that they have not *acknowledged* (v. 3). As healing and upbuilding would involve purification and pardon (vv. 6-8), here the rejoicing of ordinary life and of worship stand alongside each other. It is the combination that makes for the reestablishment of true human life in the city. “The resumption of social life is intimately linked to the resumption of life with God.”[[447]](#footnote-447)

## Flocks Will Pasture Again All Over the Country (33:12-13)

12Yahweh of Armies has said this. Once again there will be in this place, the ruin without human being or animal, and in all its towns, the habitat of shepherds resting a flock. 13In the towns in the highland, in the towns in the foothills, in the towns in the Negeb, in the country of Benjamin, in the area around Jerusalem, and in the towns of Judah, the flock will once again pass under the hands of the counter, Yahweh has said.a

MT has a section marker here.

**12-13** The same dynamic recurs. Yahweh again picks up the language of ruin without human beings or animals, but moves away from the city to the country and its towns, and speaks in a way that recalls Yahweh’s promise that people will again say, *Yahweh bless you, faithful habitat* (31:23), where they will again rest their flock. *Once again* (that word recurs twice more) Yahweh casts his eye over all the regions of Judah; listing them again suggests Judah in its entirety. In 17:26 the listing related to their bringing offerings, in 32:44 to their acquiring land; each time he reaffirms this promise in a different connection. Here it confronts and reverses the now sixfold *without* of vv. 10 and 12 (and the vision in 9:10 [9]).[[448]](#footnote-448) Yahweh imagines shepherds all over the country counting sheep and rejoicing in their increase, with no implication that shepherd or Yahweh will want or need to weed out the bad ones (Lev 27:32-33; Ezek 20:37-38). The “most impressive promise” of the prophets “is of a time when "the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride" will be in what is now a wilderness, and there will be pastures for shepherds causing their flocks to lie down.”[[449]](#footnote-449) Usually town being turned into pasturage is a negative image (e.g., 4:26; 22:6), but not here.[[450]](#footnote-450) Sheep will now “safely graze” as they have not been able to.[[451]](#footnote-451)

## David and the Levites Will Have Their Successors Ministering for Ephraim and Judah (33:14-18)

14There,a days are coming (Yahweh’s affirmation) when I will implement the good word that I spoke for the household of Israel and for the household of Judah.

15In those days and at that time:

I will make a faithful branch shoot for David,

and he will exercise faithful authority in the country.

16In those days Judah will find deliverance

and Jerusalem – it will dwell in confidence.

This is what one will call it:

Yahweh is our faithfulness.b

17Because Yahweh has said this:

There will not be cut off for David

an individual sitting on the throne of the household of Israel.

18And for the priests, the Levites, there will not be cut off

an individual before me making a whole offering rise,

Burning a grain offering,

and offering a sacrifice, for all the days.c

LXX lacks vv. 14-26.

MT has a section marker here.

MT has a marker here.

For the second set of promises in vv. 14-26 Jerusalem remains in focus but Jeremiah moves away from his attentiveness to its embattled or ruined and desolate state, and the promises now relate specifically to the fulfillment of Yahweh’s commitment to David and to Levi. The deposing of the Davidic king and the destruction of the temple in 587 would provide a natural background for these promises in the decades that followed, though it is also possible to imagine them as Yahweh’s message to Judah with the approach of the calamity which would predictably terminate priestly practice and dissolve the monarchy. Jeremiah had long been implicitly or explicitly threatening these developments, and had also implicitly or explicitly promised the restoration of the temple and its worship and the restoration of the Davidic monarchy. The section outlines:

v. 14 introduction

vv. 15-16 promises regarding David and regarding Judah and Jerusalem

a tricolon and two bicola

v. 17a a resumptive introduction

vv. 17b-18 promises regarding David and regarding the Levites

a bicolon and two linked bicola

**14-15** The first promise about David in vv. 14-16 reworks 23:5-6, with some abbreviation and suggestive modification:

23:5There, days are coming (Yahweh’s affirmation) 15In those days and at that time

when I will set up for David a faithful shoot I will make a faithful shoot grow for David

He will reign as king and will show understanding

and he will exercise faithful authority and he will exercise faithful exercise authority in the country. in the country.

6In his days Judah will find deliverance 16In his days Judah will find deliverance

and Israel – it will dwell in confidence. and Jerusalem – it will dwell in confidence.

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

Yahweh is our faithfulness. Yahweh is our faithfulness.

Once again Jeremiah presupposes that the Davidic tree is about to be felled, but that even a felled tree can see new growth. So Yahweh promises *I will make faithful branch shoot for David*. The idea parallels Isa 11:1,[[452]](#footnote-452) though the precise imagery is different: Isaiah speaks of a bough and a limb (*ḥōṭer* and *nēṣer*), Jeremiah of a branch or shoot (*ṣemaḥ*); the terms are roughly synonyms, but the words are different. A further modification to the earlier version is that v. 15 adds the verb *ṣāmaḥ* from which *ṣemaḥ* comes (more literally, I will make a shoot shoot out or I will make a branch branch out). The only other occurrence of *ṣemaḥ* in this connection is Zech 3:8; 6:11-12, where Zechariah seems to be picking up the image from Jeremiah and combining it with others. Zechariah also uses Jeremiah’s verb, and there is one other text where this verb recurs in this connection, Ps 132:17. Now 23:5-6 and 33:14-17 are more or less the only Davidic promises in Jeremiah. While their general points of connection are with Isaiah, they also link with the promise to David in 2 Sam 7 to which Kings (and Chronicles) recurrently refers back, and in Pss 89 and 132. In his own way, then, Jeremiah is assuming a connection with the promise to David that is presupposed in Samuel-Kings, in Isaiah, and in some Psalms. But as is the case in 23:5-6, if he might seem to be undermining his own assault on the monarchy, he makes sure he is not doing so by indicating that any monarchy that Yahweh could shore up would be different from the one he is putting down: David’s shoot *will exercise faithful authority.* Further, Yahweh now omits the declaration that *he will reign as king and will show understanding*, which along with the addition of the promise to the Levites reduces the significance of the Davidic figure.[[453]](#footnote-453) The double change suggests an interesting comparison and contrast with the situation in Judah at the beginning of the Persian period. There a Davidic shoot does rule in Judah, but doesn’t reign as king. And Zechariah sets the senior priest alongside the Davidic shoot, though he speaks more about him as an individual than about the priests in general. Nevertheless one might see this dual arrangement as a fulfillment of Jeremiah’s promise, or to infer that this promise comes from a time around the transition from Babylonian to Persian rule.

**16** Noteworthy further modifications of the earlier version of the promise are the replacement of Israel (i.e., Ephraim) by Jerusalem, though v. 14 has already affirmed that this *good word* which Yahweh will *implement* is one that has positive implications for *the household of Israel* as well as *the household of Judah*. The name *Yahweh is our faithfulness* is also applied to Jerusalem rather than to the shoot. It is a particularly clear indication of the way “this chapter celebrates Jerusalem as the key to Yahweh’s purpose for Israel,”[[454]](#footnote-454) not an idea that would seem very plausible just before or just after 587. The same applies to the idea that the city will be the locus of faithfulness. A human community will go by the name “Yahweh is our faithfulness” and will be characterized by trust and commitment![[455]](#footnote-455)

**17** Less systematically, the second promise about David also reflects phraseology that has occurred elsewhere. Jeremiah declared of Jehoiachin,

No individual from his offspring will succeed,

sitting on David’s throne,

and ruling again in Judah (22:30).

That threat if anything implies that Davidic rule will continue in Judah, not that the Davidic monarchy will cease. Here in v. 17 Yahweh’s promise makes explicit that the declaration about Jehoiachin does not mean that there will never again be a Davidic king. Yahweh picks up the wording of the promise as Solomon articulated it in 1 Kgs 8:25 (see also 2:4; 9:5).

**18** Yahweh goes on to make a matching promise about the Levites that takes up the formulation of the Davidic promise. Once again, *there will not be cut off*. Both promises relate to the Jerusalem focus introduced into the reworked promise in vv. 15-16 – that is, Jerusalem will know the rule of David and the ministry of the Levites. So Jeremiah is not only confirming the promise about David in 1 Kings; he is also providing the Levites with a matching promise. It is the first time in the First Testament that David and the Levites appear together; the collocation will be characteristic of Chronicles. Further, like the references to kings, previous references to priests and sacrifices in the Jeremiah scroll have been more or less uniformly negative, though 31:14 made a promise in this connection. So this promise is even more novel than vv. 14-17. Whereas the promise relating to David links with material in Samuel-Kings but not with Deuteronomy, the expression *the priests, the Levites* is characteristic of Deuteronomy (17:9, 18; 18:1; 24:8; 27:9); Chronicles (and usually Ezra and Nehemiah) refers to “the priests and the Levites.” An aspect of the distinctive nature of this promise in vv. 14-18, then, is to combine the interests of Deuteronomy, which speaks of *the priests, the Levites* and doesn’t refer to David or to a divine commitment to a king, and the interests of Samuel-Kings and Isaiah, which refer to Yahweh’s promise to David but not to *the priests, the Levites.* While a collocation of Davidic leadership/covenant and Levitical leadership/covenant comes to feature in Second Temple times, the collocation does not correspond to the one that features here: for instance, here there is no mention of Moses, Aaron, Phinehas, Zadok, or even Levi himself, only of the Levites as a group (contrast Sirach 45).[[456]](#footnote-456) And the responsibility of the Levites relates purely to worship; it is the descendant of David who will exercise political leadership. There is no vision for the leadership of a senior priest in the community, even of the kind of leadership exercised by Joshua alongside Zerubbabel (see e.g., Hag 1:1, 12, 14; as well as Zech 6:11-12).

## Those Promises Are as Sure as Yahweh’s Pact with Day and Night (33:19-22)

19Yahweh’s word came to Jeremiah. 20Yahweh has said this. If you people could annul my pact in connection with the day and my pact in connection with the night, so that daytime and night would not happen at their time, 21also my pact could be annulled with David my servant so that he would not have a son reigning on his throne, and with the Levites, the priests,a my ministers. 22That which cannot be counted, the army of the heavens, and cannot be weighed, the sand in the sea, so I will make many the offspring of David my servant and the Levites ministering to me.b

Only here does this form of the phrase occur (contrast v. 18); allusions to familiar phrases sometimes incorporate the inversion of words (see M. Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile in Jeremiah 26 – 45* [Cambridge: CUP, 2008], 78), which can bring readers up short and push them to pay attention (P. C. Beentjes, “Inverted Quotations in the Bible,” *Bib* 63 [1982]: 506-23 [523]).

MT has a section marker here.

**19-22** This message and that in vv. 23-26 are explicitly described as given to Jeremiah. If they actually come from one of his curators rather than from Jeremiah himself, then they compare with the way the Book of Daniel attributes visions to Daniel that were “inspired” by Daniel and his visions but had no direct link with Daniel himself.[[457]](#footnote-457) Here, Yahweh reaffirms and reformulates the promise regarding David and the priests, the Levites, and leaves himself with even less wiggle room. Only here does the First Testament refer to a pact in connection with day and night, though the image compares with Yahweh’s promises in Gen 8:21 – 9:17 which both refer to day and night and also to a pact, though they do not relate the two. But this pact is not simply an aspect of God’s creation of the world. After human waywardness skewed things in the world, time “is a different, a new time,” but there is now a new promise attaching to it.[[458]](#footnote-458) The possible link with Gen 8 – 9 also suggests a link with Jeremiah’s frightening vision in 4:23-25, which also recalls Gen 6 – 9. Judah’s sin led to a dissolution of creation like that in Genesis; Yahweh’s act of restoration presupposes a stability of creation.[[459]](#footnote-459) David now regains his position as *my servant* which had been transferred to Nebuchadrezzar,[[460]](#footnote-460) while only here and in 52:18 does Jeremiah refer to *ministers* or to people *ministering*. The word suggests the work of a priest in relation to offerings; it is again a term that comes in Deuteronomy (10:8; 17:12; 18:5, 7; 21:5). The further encouragement of the images in v. 20 works by taking up promises that elsewhere apply to the people as a whole (e.g., 31:37; Gen 15:5; Hos 1:10 [2:1]) and applying them to David and the Levites in a wild hyperbole – Israel would not find it beneficial to have that many descendants of David or Levi.

## Yahweh Will Keep His Commitment to the Offspring of Jacob and of David (33:23-26)

23Yahweh’s word came to Jeremiah. 24You have seen what this people has spoken, haven’t you: “The two kin-groups that Yahweh chose – he’s rejected them.” So my people they despise from still being a nation, for them.a 25Yahweh has said this. My pact in connection with daytime and night, the decrees regarding heavens and earth, if I have not set them up: 26also the offspring of Jacob and David my servant I could reject so as not to get rulers from his offspring for the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Because I will bring about their restoration and have compassion on them.b

Literally, “before them” The Lucianic recension of the Septuagint, Th, and Syr have “before me,” an easier reading assimilating to 31:36 (Allen, *Jeremiah*, 374). MT has a section marker here.

MT has a marker here.

**23-24** The final promise stands back and speaks more generally, though allusively. The dismissive words of *this* *people* would make sense projected onto the lips of the besieging Babylonian army, but there is no parallel for calling them *this people*. It must surely denote the community with which Jeremiah is involved and to which he speaks, which he commonly calls by this expression. But who are *the two kin-groups* *that Yahweh chose* but that *he has rejected*? The “choice” language is again Deuteronomy’s and not Jeremiah’s, but the “reject” language is Jeremiah’s (e.g., 6:30; 7:29; 14:19; 31:37), so he could hardly fault people who use “reject” language.

* Understood in light of the way Jeremiah talks earlier, the two kin-groups could be the households of Ephraim and Judah (e.g., 31:27, 31; 33:14) or Judah and Benjamin (cf. 32:44; 33:13);[[461]](#footnote-461) *this people* is then talking about itself in saying with understandable gloom (just before or after 587) that Yahweh has rejected them. In effect, Jeremiah would be quoting from the kind of prayers that appear in Lamentations, which people were praying in the aftermath of 587 and which articulated the conviction that Yahweh had or might have “actually rejected us” (Lam 5:22). But it does not seem likely that *my people they despise from still being a nation, for them* refers to their attitude to themselves.
* One might infer from v. 26 that the two kin-groups are Jacob and David, but they make for an odd pair; David’s kin-group is part of Jacob.
* In earlier prophets *Jacob* can refer to Ephraim (Hos 10:11; Amos 3:13; 6:8; 7:2, 5; 9:8; Mic 1:5); it would then be the line of David and the people of Ephraim that *this people*, Judah, is dismissing. This understanding would make sense, but the context offers no concrete pointer to this being a unique reference for Jacob in Jeremiah.
* Rather, understanding the reference in light of vv. 14-22 suggests that the two kin-groups are the descendants of David and Levi, which fits another expression of grief in Lamentations: “He has despised king and priest” (Lam 2:6). That verb *despise* (*nā’aṣ*)recurs here, as it came in one of Jeremiah’s strongest expressions concerning rejection (14:21). So Yahweh is reassuring Judah that David and the Levites still count as *my people* and as a *nation*, for him.

**25-26** So Yahweh repeats and reworks the analogy between *day and night* and *heavens* *and* *earth* so that he speaks again of his pact regarding the sequence of *day and night* but now of the cosmic laws that apply to *heavens* *and* *earth*, and then applies the analogy to themselves and their kings. Jacob is still part of *the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.* It is to state the obvious, but in a significant way. Yahweh declares himself still bound by his commitment to Israel’s ancestors.But in stating the obvious, Yahweh makes rather a collocation of his commitment to the ancestors, to David, and to the Levites.[[462]](#footnote-462) The descendants of Abraham Isaac, and Jacob will share again in the life of a people ruled by David. They will share in Yahweh’s act of *restoration* and in Yahweh’s *compassion*. Who could believe that “the principalities of death do not have the last word?”[[463]](#footnote-463)

The promises about the David and the Levites raise background questions: how and when did Jeremiah or his curators come to combine these themes and expressions? They also raise foreground questions. “Despite its strong words, the promise has not come true. A Davidic kingship never existed any more, and with the destruction of the Second Temple priesthood came to an end.”[[464]](#footnote-464) Yahweh let Nebuchadrezzar his servant terminate the Davidic monarchy, after fulfilling his original promise to David for about four hundred years; over the subsequent two and a half millennia he has not done so. For a short time in the second century, Jewish kings did sit on David’s throne, but they were not descendants of David.[[465]](#footnote-465) Two centuries later, in a metaphorical sense a descendant of David from Nazareth emerged as king of the Jews (see esp. Luke 1:32), but he never sat on David’s throne and he was not very fond of being designated as king.

In some contrast and comparison, within decades of Yahweh’s making this promise about *the priests, the Levites,* they were indeed again making these offerings in the restored temple, and they did so for six centuries, but then a further and final destruction of Jerusalem terminated these offerings and they have not been made for two millennia. It is again possible to say that the man from Nazareth functioned metaphorically as a priest, though his Judahite and Davidic lineage that enabled him to be metaphorically designated “the root” as well as “the offspring” of David (Rev 22:16) was also the reason why he could not be seen as the fulfillment of this promise concerning specifically Levitical priests. Hebrews presupposes this fact in its systematic exposition of his position as something more like a Melchizedek priest.

Alongside the Christian understanding that Jesus was king and priest, at least as promising an approach to considering the foreground of these promises emerges from the New Testament declarations that the community that belongs to Jesus is itself “a sacred priesthood” appointed “to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Anointed,” and is indeed “a royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:5, 9). The last phrase links with both sides to the promise in Jeremiah but takes its terminology from Exod 19:6, where Yahweh declares that Israel is “a kingdom of priests” or a “priestly kingdom” (*mamleket kōhәnîm*, which the Septuagint translates obversely as “a royal priesthood”). The Jesus community does not come to replace Israel as having that position, but it does come to share in that position with Israel. An implication of Exod 19:6 is that Israel *was* a priesthood and a kingdom before it *acquired* priests and kings; the First Testament makes no mention of priests among Yahweh’s people until after that declaration, and kings comes on the scene in Israel only rather later.

When the Jesus community becomes such a royal priesthood, can this event counts as a fulfillment of Jeremiah’s promise? The Jeremiah scroll has made two earlier promises about things that would last *for all the days* (31:36; 32:39), and it has much more often used the expression *for all time* (*lә‘ôlām* or simply *‘ôlām*). This expression is not always good news (e.g., 17:4; 18:16; 25:9). Fortunately, the small print associated with it qualifies it with expressions such as “depending on how you respond to this promise/threat” and thus “until I change my mind” (see 18:1-12). When it is good news, it might seem that such qualifications undo everything positive about an undertaking. But it does not have that effect because of who Yahweh is. He does not change his mind randomly. He does not lie and change his mind like a human being (Num 23:19). Because of who he is, he could change his mind in order to do something more generous than he said, but not something meaner. The fulfillment of these promises in Jer 33:14-18 is of that kind. The promises to David and to Levi are more than fulfilled as Yahweh implements through Jesus his original intention for Israel as a whole to be a royal priesthood.

Yahweh’s promises also have an interim implication. Critiquing institutions such as monarchy and priesthood is all very well, but societies need structures. Second Temple Judah needed Davidic governors like Zerubbabel, priestly governors like Ezra, and priestly kings like the Hasmoneans – it needed something. People who critique militarist and unjust institutions have to discuss peaceful and egalitarian ones, too.[[466]](#footnote-466)

# Part 3(c): Stories Implying a Reversion to Reality (34:1 – 36:32 [LXX 41:1 – 43:32])

Jer 34 begins with the expression *the word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh*, which can mark the beginning of major sections within the scroll. But the phrase is then qualified by words that give it a particular setting, and in this form it can appear at other points – such as v. 8 which follows, as well as 32:1 and 35:1. The setting indicated by the extra words specifies a background in the same period as Jer 32 – 33, in what will turn out to be the final crisis in the life of Jerusalem and the reign of Zedekiah, but the chapter soon indicates that it does not maintain the note of encouragement from Jer 30 – 33. We are “back to reality.”[[467]](#footnote-467) In its tone Jer 34 returns to Jer 27 – 29. Its two messages do imply a stage when the situation is not quite final, and Jer 35 – 36 then takes us back into the reign of Zedekiah’s brother, which had been the background to Jer 26. So Jer 34 – 36 as a whole “complete the concentric frame around Jeremiah’s book of hope by reversing the temporal setting from the tenth year of Zedekiah during the final siege of Jerusalem back to the fourth year of Jehoiakim.”[[468]](#footnote-468)

It comprises four sections:

34:1-7 A threat and a promise from the time of Zedekiah

34:8-22 A story about Zedekiah and a threat from his time

35:1-19 A threat and a promise from the time of Jehoiakim

36:1-32 A story about Jehoiakim and a threat from his time

# A Threat and a Promise from the Time of Zedekiah (34:1-7 [LXX 41:1-7]

The first, brief section is short and its message not very specific about the context it implicitly presupposes. Further, for the most part it repeats the content and even the words of 32:5.[[469]](#footnote-469) But this similarity puts us on the track of the way the rhetoric of Jer 34 as a whole parallels Jer 32, and in part thus proceeds dramatically rather than chronologically. The act of communication between Jeremiah/Yahweh and Zedekiah in this first section differs from others, where Zedekiah takes the initiative (21:1-7; 37:3-10, 17-21; 38:14-28). Here “the prophet is pictured as Yahweh’s envoy going fearlessly into the palace.”[[470]](#footnote-470) The section does then function as a lead into vv. 8-22, which begins and ends with Zedekiah, illustrates how he fails to *listen to the word of Yahweh*, and clarifies aspects of the ambiguity of vv. 1-7 and/or might explain why the promise in vv. 4-5 gets compromised.[[471]](#footnote-471) This section makes a link with what precedes that is not only chronological but substantial: it continues to moderate threat with promise and thus to offer some hope in dark days. But in light of subsequent events, it conveys some irony, or at least raises questions about fulfillment. What we will come to know about Zedekiah’s later experience will remind us that Yahweh’s warning and promise here function in the same way as other threats and promises. As well as being ambiguous, they are not statements about what will inevitably happen. They constitute a challenge to a response. Thus the section needs to be read at two levels. It reports a message Jeremiah gave to Zedekiah, which needs to be read in the context of the situation in in 589/588. But the curator is telling the story later about the giving and delivering of this message, and vv. 6-7 implies a context after the city’s fall, so that the section is itself a message to the community in that context, inviting people in that context to think about the message and its ambiguity.

The section outlines:

v. 1 The curator’s introduction

vv. 2-5 Yahweh’s message:

vv. 2-3 threat

vv. 4-5 promise

vv. 6-7 The curator’s report of Jeremiah’s delivery of the message

LXX’s version is shorter than MT, but in this chapter there are more instances where LXX may have accidentally or deliberately shortened MT.[[472]](#footnote-472)

1The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh, with Nebuchadrezzar King of Babylon and his entire force, and all the kingdoms of the earth, ruled bya his hand, and all the peoples,b battling against Jerusalem and against all its towns.

2Yahweh, the God of Israel, has said this. Go,c and say to Zedekiah King of Judah: say to him, Yahweh has said this. Here am I, giving this cityd into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will consume it with fire. 3You yourself will not escape from his hand because you will definitely be captured.e Into his hand you will be given. Your eyes – they will look at the eyes of the king of Babylon. His mouth – it will speak to your mouth.f To Babylon you will come. 4Yet listen to the word of Yahweh, Zedekiah King of Judah. Yahweh has said this about you. You will not die by the sword;g 5in peace you will die. Like the burnings for your ancestors, the previous kings that were before you, so people will burn for you.h “Oh,i lord,” they will lament for you. Because a word I myself have spoken (Yahweh’s affirmation).

6Jeremiah the prophet spoke to Zedekiah the king of Judah all these words in Jerusalem, 7with the king of Babylon’s force battling against Jerusalem and against all Judah’s towns that were leftk – at Lachish and at Azekah, because they were left among the towns of Judah as fortified towns.l

Literally, “the rule of.”

For *and all the kingdoms of the earth, ruled by his hand,* *and all the peoples*,LXX has simply “and all the earth ruled by him.”

The infinitive absolute is used imperativally (cf. 2:2 and the note), which would add useful emphasis in the context of the fact that Jeremiah does not usually go to see a king unsummoned.

For *here am I giving this city* LXX has “this city will definitely be given over” (cf. 32:28).

The infinitive precedes the finite verb, underlining the fact.

Some mss of LXX lack this sentence, perhaps by haplography (Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21 – 36*, 551).

LXX lacks this clause.

MT *yiśrәpü-lāk* hardly justifies Vg “burn you”; and Israel did not practice cremation.

See the comment on 22:13.

MT has a section marker here.

LXX has “and against Judah’s towns.”

MT has a unit marker here.

**1** Following on the introductory phrase that elsewhere marks the beginning of a new section in the scroll (*the word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh*), the note identifying the context of the message uses terms that are simultaneously less and more threatening than Jer 32 – 33. The Babylonian army is not yet besieging Jerusalem, and *all its towns* also suggests it is not even focused on Jerusalem yet (see further vv. 6-7). The time is thus earlier than that presupposed in vv. 8-22 (cf. 37:5). It more recalls the time presupposed by Jer 27, the other exception to the rule about Jeremiah going to see Zedekiah only when summoned. It was in Jer 27:6-7 that Yahweh declared, *I myself am giving all these countries into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar King of Babylon, my servant…. All the nations will serve him*. Here the introduction draws attention to the magnitude of the threat that consequently issues from *Nebuchadrezzar* *the king of Babylon*. He is indeed thus the man *with his hand ruling all the kingdoms of the earth and all the peoples*. He has come to Judah with *his entire force*. And he is *battling against Jerusalem and against all its towns*. Technically it would be these other peoples not the king of Babylon himself, as v. 21 implies; he stayed in his base at Riblah (38:17-18; 39:5).[[473]](#footnote-473) Nevertheless, if you are Zedekiah, you are entitled to be worried. The three occurrences of *all* would underscore the point, and the two more occurrences in vv. 6-7[[474]](#footnote-474) will emphasize it further.

**2** Yahweh has a message for him; three times vv. 1-2 affirm that what follows comes from Yahweh. First the bad news, restating the message in 32:3-5 (though chronologically, that passage looks back on this one). Your worst fears are going to be realized. Jerusalem is going to fall, because Yahweh is giving it away to Nebuchadrezzar. It will be set on fire, as often follows when cities are captured.

**3** Zedekiah himself *will not escape from his hand*: Yahweh keeps issuing this threat (32:4; 38:18, 23), in telling anticipation of how escaping is what he will vainly try to do when the city falls (39:4-5; 52:7-8). *You will definitely be captured*: and he was (52:9). *Your eyes – they will look at the eyes of the king of Babylon.* It is an “eerie anticipation” of his fate in Jer 39.[[475]](#footnote-475) *His mouth – it will speak to your mouth.* There will be irony in the fulfillment of that declaration (39:5-7; 52:9-11), which will involve events worse than his worst fears.

**4** There are ways in which events might be less awful than his worst fears. Four more times in vv. 4-5 Jeremiah affirms that what follows comes from Yahweh. First, *listen*! Why would he do so? That question links with one aspect of the allusiveness of vv. 4-5. Jeremiah consistently lays before people a way of death and of life and implicitly or explicitly urges them to choose the latter. Sometimes he will simply issue threats, sometimes simply promises. Neither have inevitability attached to them. The future is never fixed until it happens. Everything depends on how people respond, for good or ill. Here, at least there are ways in which the grimness of the coming events might be mitigated – if Zedekiah listens. You will not die in battle. Given the flexibility of Hebrew yiqtol verbs, perhaps Yahweh means “you need not die in battle”; similar possibilities attach to the verbs that follow.

**5** Yahweh continues to be allusive: in *šālôm* you will die. MT’s verse division suggests a new sentence with the implication that things will be good when you die. Babylon can be the place where there is well-being for Judahites (29:7). But in slightly different words, his father Josiah had been told he would die in *šālôm* (2 Kgs 22:20). What did Huldah mean, and did it happen? Could Zedekiah ever think things were well after he had presided over his city’s fall, watched his sons be executed, had his eyes seared out, then lived through the rest of his life in prison (52:9-11) unlike his nephew (52:31-34)? If we ignore MT’s verse division, however, then Yahweh is suggesting something less fulsome than “dying with things being well”: he is drawing a contrast between dying by the sword and thus in war, which will not happen, and dying in peace, which as far as we know did happen. *You will not die by the sword; in peace you will die* in then a “syntactical chiasm.”[[476]](#footnote-476) Yahweh does not promise that Zedekiah will rest with his ancestors, which will be strictly impossible in Babylon. But he will be properly buried. People will *lament* his death, sighing *Oh, Lord*,which was by no means what Jeremiah had promised his brother (22:13-19). Snidely, Yahweh takes up the verb *burn* from v. 2 in speaking of the *burnings* that will mark Zedekiah’s death. The story of Asa’s death (2 Chron 16:11-14) clarifies the nature of the burnings: while the funeral rite might include burning incense so that its smoke rises and suggests prayers ascending to God (Ps 141:2; Rev 8:3-4), these burnings will rather be funeral pyres. The message closes with a final reminder that it come from Yahweh. The *word* is “a promise, a pledge.”[[477]](#footnote-477) It’s up to Zedekiah to listen to it, and his response will determine how things turns out. *I will attend to him*, Yahweh had said, ambiguously (32:5). Vv. 3-5 spell out what his attentiveness might mean, without resolving the ambiguity. Zedekiah indeed looked in the eyes of the king of Babylon and listened to him speak, and he was taken off to Babylon. We don’t know how he died or how people mourned him.

**6-7** Did Jeremiah do as he was bidden? And how did Zedekiah react? This footnote records Jeremiah’s delivery of the message and also makes more explicit its context, before the city’s final siege. The king of Babylon has dealt with nearly all the easy targets. He is now focusing on two key towns in the foothills. Lachish is the most impressive fortified city after Jerusalem; Azekah is half way from Lachish to Jerusalem. We have a collection of ostraca from Lachish that apparently come from just before the fall of that city and of Jerusalem itself, so from 589/588.[[478]](#footnote-478) A number are letters from a subordinate to his superior officer in Lachish, and one mentions being unable to see fire signals from Azekah, which might mean that by then Azekah has fallen.[[479]](#footnote-479) The curator does not tell us Zedekiah’s response to Jeremiah’s delivering *all these words* to Zedekiah when he is still *in Jerusalem*. But an audience listening to the story in the aftermath of 587 hardly needs to be told; they know what has happened. They know what choices Zedekiah made, even though the outworking of other aspects of vv. 4-5 may not yet be clear. The story thus helps them understand why things worked out the way they did. In addition, the omission leaves audience and later readers in the same position as Zedekiah, with the two possibilities open, and it puts the choice before them, too.[[480]](#footnote-480)

# B. A Story about Zedekiah and a Threat from His Time (34:8-22 [LXX 41:8-22])

This second message emerges from a story with a socio-ethical background in an aspect of the way some ancient Near Eastern peoples provided a safety net for families in economic trouble. The head of such a household could secure a loan from another household. If unable to repay the loan, he could put junior members of the family and eventually himself into servitude to the other family. In Israel, the Torah presupposes that six years of such servitude would pay off the debt, but this story implies that in practice householders could hold onto their bondservants, who might have nowhere to go if they were released – hence the small print in the rules in Exod 21:2-6; and Deut 15:12-17. The fifty-year provision of Lev 25 also relates to the difficulty of seeing that householders observed these guidelines. Among other ancient Near Eastern peoples, occasional proclamations by kings, especially at the beginning of their reigns, have the same background. The provisions show that having good laws is one things; living by them rather than evading them is another. Anyone can agree that we should care for needy people; nobody wants to compromise their living standards in this connection. We’d like the government to do it. Which in a way might be what Zedekiah tries to do in this story.

The section outlines:

vv. 8-11 The curator’s introduction to Jeremiah’s message and its background

v. 12 The curator’s resumptive introduction to Jeremiah’s message

vv. 13-22 Jeremiah’s message:

vv. 13-16 Yahweh’s review of events:

vv. 13-14a How Yahweh made a pact with the ancestors

v. 14b How they failed to listen

v. 15 How the present generation turned

v. 16 How they then turned back

vv. 17-22 Yahweh’s consequent intentions:

vv. 17-18 He will grant a release and make them a horror

vv. 19-20 He will see to their slaughter

vv. 21-22 He will surrender Zedekiah to the Babylonians

The story’s dynamics have points of comparison with some other stories in the scroll. Like some other accounts of symbolic actions, it includes a commission to pass on Yahweh’s message; like some of these actions, it includes no account of his doing so. The curator again tells the story as a message to Judahites after 587 in a way that functions to explain the fall of Jerusalem; vv. 21-22 are its climax. And it parallels Jer 32 in telling its story in dramatic fashion more than in chronological order, raising questions and (sometimes) answering them later.[[481]](#footnote-481)

8The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh after King Zedekiah solemnized a pact with the entire people that was in Jerusalema to proclaim for themselvesb a release, 9to send off each individual his Hebrew servant and each individual his Hebrew maidservant, free, so that they wouldn’t make them serve as a Judahite, each individual his brother. 10All the officials and the entire people that came into the pact listened,c so as to send off, each individual his servant and each individual his maidservant, free, so that they didn’t make them serve any more. So they listened and sent them off,d 11but they turned back after this and turned the servants and the maidservants back that they had sent off free.e They forced them to be servants and maidservants.f

12Then Yahweh’s word came to Jeremiah from Yahweh. 13Yahweh, the God of Israel, has said this. I myself solemnized a pact with your ancestors on the day of my getting them out from the country of Egypt, from a household of servants: 14At the end of seveng years you will send off, each individual, his Hebrew brother who has sold himselfh to you and has served you six years – you will send him off free from being with you. Your ancestors didn’t listen to me. They didn’t bend their ear. 15But you yourselves turned today and did what was right in my eyes in proclaiming a release each individual to his neighbor. You solemnized a pact before me in the house over which my name is proclaimed. 16But you have turned back and defiled my name, and turned back, each individual his servant and each individual his maidservant, whom you had sent off free for themselves. You have forced them to become servants and maidservants for you.i

17Therefore Yahweh has said this. You yourselves have not listened to me in proclaiming a release each individual to his brother and each individual to his neighbor. Here am I, proclaiming a release to you (Yahweh’s affirmation) – to sword, to epidemic, and to hunger.j I will make you into something horrific to all the kingdoms of the earth. 18I will give the men who overstepped my pact, who didn’t implement the words of the pact that they solemnized before me,k the calfl that they cut into two and passed between the parts – 19the officials of Judah, the officials of Jerusalem,m the officers,n the priests, and the entire people of the countryo who passed between the parts of the calf: 20I will give them into the hand of their enemies, into the hand of the people who are seeking their life.p Their corpse will become food for the bird of the heavens and for the animal of the earth. 21Zedekiah King of Judah and his officials I will give into the hand of their enemies, into the hand of the people who are seeking their life, into the hand of the king of Babylon’s force who are withdrawing from against you. 22Here am I, issuing a command (Yahweh’s affirmation), and I will turn them back to this city. They will battle against it, take it, and consume it with fire, and the towns of Judah I will make into a desolation, with no one living there.q

LXX has simply “with the people.” Lundbom (*Jeremiah 21 – 36*, 558, 560) attributes this and other LXX shortfalls more to LXX haplography than MT expansion.

Dative of disadvantage (Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 220); but *lә* in connection with this action recurs through the story.

For *wayyišmә‘û* LXX nicely implies *wayyāšûbû* “turned.”

LXX lacks “free… off.”

LXX lacks this sentence.

MT has a marker here.

LXX has six: see the comment.

While *mākar* niphal can be passive (e.g., Ps 105:17), here reflexive applies: “Deuteronomy 15 does not take the needs of the owner as point of departure, but that of the predicament of the person who has sold himself,” and the same is true of Jer 34 (M. D. Terblanche, “Jeremiah 34:8-22,” *AcT* 36 [2016]: 148-161 [153]).

MT has a section marker here.

Tg has “from” rather than *to* each time.

For MT *lipnay* Aq implies *lipnê* “in front of the calf,” which generates a syntactically smoother reading.

One would initially translate “I will make the men [into or like] the calf,” quite a severe threat (e.g., Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 224); but the verb rendered *I will give* (*wәnātattî*) recurs at the beginning of v. 20 and looks resumptive there, so more likely the reference to the calf involves an anacoluthon (Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2:242).

LXX omits *the officials of Jerusalem*.

See the note on 29:2.

On *the people of the country*, see the note on 1:18.

LXX lacks *into the hand of the people who are seeking their life* here and in v. 21.

MT has a unit marker here.

**8** The mere fact that householders had bondservants does not imply that they were doing anything wrong. For the audience of the story, the information about the proclamation would raise the question of the nature of the proclamation and the reason for it, but not answer the question. Indeed, the information would point in one or two directions that are different from the answer that by implication Yahweh eventually provides. First, the story refers to the king solemnizing a pact and making a proclamation for which there is no provision of this kind in the Torah, though it recalls the action of Zedekiah’s father in 2 Kgs 23, and it parallels proclamations other Middle Eastern kings might make, especially at the beginning of their reigns.[[482]](#footnote-482) Second, Zedekiah leads the entire city in a pact *to proclaim a release* tobondservants– he did not solemnize it to them but along with them. *Release* (*dәrôr*) comes only in this chapter and in Lev 25:10 (which prescribes that every fifty years there should be a release or return of land that has been mortgaged because people were in economic trouble), Ezek 46:17 (which refers to that year), and Isa 61:1 (which uses it as a metaphor). Thus the passage is talking about something that is a cross between the freeing of servants after six years, the releasing of land after fifty years, and the proclamation of release by a king about which we know from other ancient Near Eastern sources. Zedekiah’s action does not correspond to any single formulation in the Torah.[[483]](#footnote-483)

**9** The implicit basis for this act of release is that a bondservant is a *brother*, a member of your extended family. Yahweh has no problem in principle with temporary servitude for debt; the question is whether people treat their servants as brothers (as Leviticus and Deuteronomy both urge) and thus (for instance) release them when the time comes. Here the curator initially refers to the bondservants as Hebrews, a designation that came to convey some irony. For Christians, Hebrews is a natural way to refer to Israelites or Jews, but within the First Testament its usage matches that of related words in other ancient Near Eastern languages that are not ethnic or religious terms but more like sociological ones. They suggest people who are outsiders, not regular members of the nation that is referring to them by this term.[[484]](#footnote-484) The reference to the pact incorporates a reminder that bondservants are not outsiders, which could be a way of thinking that householders could fall into when their bondservants are people who have lost possession of their land. They are Judahites. They are brothers and sisters.

**10** The chapter does not indicate why the city agreed to the pact. It might be a response to some challenge to take the Torah seriously, if people expected Yahweh to change his mind about surrendering the city to the Babylonians, a challenge like Jeremiah’s exhortation about the Sabbath (17:19-27). And/or it might be designed to free the servants to fight.[[485]](#footnote-485) And/or it might be designed to bolster their commitment to the city, rather than defecting to the Babylonians.[[486]](#footnote-486) And/or it might be a more cynical result of households being aware that they had no great use for servants when the city was under siege and they could not labor in the fields, so that that the cost of feeding them exceeded their usefulness. *For themselves* may hint hat the decision was selfish. “They had cast off their slaves when it was inconvenient to feed and provide for them.”[[487]](#footnote-487) Would they have taken account of the expectations in Deut 15:13-14? Could they have done so, during a siege?[[488]](#footnote-488) And where would the servants go? Would it be feasible to get back to their own lands and homesteads during a blockade?

**11** The story does not answer such questions; it is interested in the fact that for some reason the heads of households changed their minds. *They turned back after this* and *turned the servants and the maidservants back*: the curator repeats the verb *turn* with its wide range of meanings that Jer 3 made use of. Perhaps they missed them as workers; perhaps the servants were only too willing to return if they had lost their source of food and a roof over their heads. But the curator says that they *forced* them (*kābaš*), the word used in Gen 1:28; Esth 7:8,[[489]](#footnote-489) and in the similar context of Neh 5:5. Thus entire story would speak to the Neh 5 situation.[[490]](#footnote-490)

**12-13** The account of the pact and the reneging have been a long periphrasis through vv. 8b-11, with no mention of Yahweh or of Jeremiah. They have thus raised the question what Yahweh and Jeremiah will have to say in relation to the events they have described. The delay between the word’s announcement and its revealing parallels that in Jer 32. The pact was just something that was going on in which neither Yahweh nor Jeremiah were involved. Whatever was the background to the series of events that has been related, the reneging is the action that spurs Yahweh into involvement. Now the rhetoric goes into reverse, with the great stress on Yahweh’s speaking in vv. 12-13a. Initially it’s the involvement of a *pact* that draws him in. *I myself* sets up a contrast with v. 8. But instead of answering the questions that vv. 8-11 raise for the curious reader, he first sets the event in the context of the pact he himself solemnized in connection with getting the Israelites released from a household of servants.

**14** He goes on (secondly) to set the event in the context of one of the requirements of that pact, that they would let their own servants go after six years, further complicating the relationship of the story to the passages in the Torah that we have noted. Exod 21:2-6 presupposes that bondservants gain their freedom after six years, which will mean six years after they individually committed themselves to their servitude; the seventh year will not be the same for all bondservants. Deut 15 presupposes that every seven years there is a general remission of debts; the seventh year is the same for all bondservants. That difference may link with the quirk that Yahweh refers to release at *the end of seven years*, whereas Exod 21 and Deut 15 imply that the release comes after six years. Possibly Yahweh simply speaks idiomatically; *at the end of seven years* means “at the end of the seven-year period” which means “in the seventh year”; one might then compare the usage with the statement that God finished work on the seventh day (Gen 2:2), when more literally he finished on the sixth. But Yahweh’s wording may link with the reference to the end of the seventh year in Deut 31:10, the occasion of the septennial reading of the Torah; and it’s been suggested that 590 was the seventh year when the reading of the Torah would have been due.[[491]](#footnote-491) This consideration adds to the indications that the section is not working with one theory or process concerning the release of bondservants, or assuming that Zedekiah and his contemporaries would be doing so. Having introduced this reference to the seven-years rule, Yahweh then (thirdly) adds that the community’s action matches the way it has always behaved.

**15-16** To release these servants would have meant “to accept a loss that will not be recovered,”[[492]](#footnote-492) to deny that economic considerations, considerations of profit, have the final word. It’s hard to maintain that stance. Yahweh elaborates on the community’s waywardness in this connection. He has already confirmed the implied critique of it in the preamble in vv. 8-11, that its reneging took no account of the fact that a bondservant is a *brother*, a member of your extended family. He now adds (fourthly) that the servant who is your brother is also your *neighbor*, a fellow-member of the community. Here, it is the word *neighbor* that is set over against *Hebrew* (which has a prominent place in Deut 15:12). The implication here is that while Israelites over the years have not fulfilled the requirement to release their bondservants after six years, they had *turned today*.Chronologically it wasn’t *today*, butthe word suggests another resonance from the rules about remission, where it appears twice (Deut 15:5, 15): today is the day when one hears Yahweh’s word and does what it says. But within Jeremiah the word *turned* is significant, the word that recurred in Jer 3. The usage here again makes clear that turning or repentance does not mean (or does not merely mean) feeling sorry or saying you are sorry. It means turning around. The Judahites *did what was right in my eyes in proclaiming a release individually to his neighbor*. It was real turning;[[493]](#footnote-493) maybe they did give them means of support for their lives outside the provision of their “adopted” family. How amazed and how excited would Jeremiah have been – and Yahweh, too. There is joy in heaven over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:7, 10). The Judahites showed how serious they were by solemnizing their pact *before me in the house over which my name is proclaimed*, like Josiah (2 Kgs 23:3). But then they *turned* *back* again and *turned* the people *back* and *forced* *them* *to become servants and maidservants* again. As the solemnizing of the pact before Yahweh added to its force, so going back on their commitment meant (fifthly) that they *defiled my name* (*ḥālal* piel). Defiling the country was bad (16:18), but defiling or desecrating Yahweh’s name…. To invoke Yahweh’s name as you make a commitment to do something is to recognize the extraordinary, special nature of that name because it refers to the great God. To go back on that commitment is to treat Yahweh as ordinary, as nothing.

**17-20** The indictment invites the audience to stop asking the interesting questions raised by vv. 8-11 and instead to ask a more urgent one. What would Yahweh do in light of this indictment? It thus leads into a threat. Actually the audience know the answer to that question – they have been on the receiving end of Yahweh’s fulfilling the threat. In a strange way, the story brings them good news. There was a reason for the catastrophe that has come on the city, which Jeremiah had kept saying would come upon it. Yahweh continues to inspire Jeremiah with his wordsmithing. You have pulled back from *proclaiming a release*? Okay, *here am I, proclaiming a release to you*: the punishment will fit the crime.[[494]](#footnote-494) The declaration leads into a reference to Jeremiah’s favorite trio, *sword, epidemic,* and *hunger* and to one of his favorite fates, becoming *something horrific to all the kingdoms of the earth* (15:4; 24:9; 29:18). Then momentarily he returns to becoming more specific to this situation. They *overstepped my pact*? They *did not implement the words of the pact that they solemnized before me*? Then he adds a useful spelling out of what this solemnizing involved, a *calf* *that they cut into two and passed between the parts*. The one other passage in the First Testament that illumines their formal oath-taking procedure is Gen 15:7-20. It will have involved bringing a calf and dismembering it so that they could walk through the midst of the pieces of the calf, and meanwhile say, “May my fate be the same as this calf’s if I do not keep this pact that I am making”; hence the expression *solemnized a pact* is literally “cut a pact.” The entire people had prayed to be dismembered, and they will be. We have a treaty inscribed on rock, made with the king of Arpad and found near Aleppo, dating from the eighth century, which includes among its sanctions the prayer that that the king of Arpad and his courtiers should be cut up as “this calf is cut up” (the number and variety of the curses indicates that they are metaphors, but the calf seems literal).[[495]](#footnote-495) In another treaty with the Assyrians, the king of Arpad prays that he, his family, his officials, and his people may have their heads torn off in the same way as the lamb sacrificed in connection with the ceremony has its head torn off.[[496]](#footnote-496) The punishment will fit the crime symbolically. The pact said, “may we be cut up as this animal was cut up.” The consequence of contravening it is to be released to death as they released the servants to servitude.[[497]](#footnote-497) In this connection Yahweh returns to familiar Jeremianic lingo: they will loses their lives to their enemies, *their corpse will become food for the bird of the heavens and for the animal of the earth*.

**21** Finally Yahweh gives the audience a further snippet of information on the precise context of the episode. Nebuchadrezzar had relieved his initial blockade of Jerusalem in order to go and fight the Egyptians (37:5). Apparently this relief stimulated the householders of Jerusalem to go back on their release of the bondservants. Normality now could return. Did the relief of the siege mean people could return to their land holding and needed their servants again? Did they infer that Yahweh had responded to their turning? What was Zedekiah’s role in the reversal? Was he simply going along with it and manifesting the indecision that he shows in his relationship with Jeremiah for which he and his people pay a high price? Their turning back indicates some illogic. People have forgotten that “Torah obedience within covenantal fidelity is the canon of national security. Prophecy is its advocate, with responsiveness to the prophetic mission the sign of covenantal fidelity.”[[498]](#footnote-498)

**22** The forgetting drives Yahweh into issuing a command to the king of Babylon, who is (after all) his servant. The servant may not realize that he is responding to a command fulfilling Yahweh’s purpose, but he is again doing so. “The entire history of the world revolves around the Law and the people of the Law.”[[499]](#footnote-499) The empire is always selfish, but God sometimes harnesses its selfishness. There is therefore one more *turn* *back* to report, the turn that the audience have experienced. It maybe reminds them that they have some turning to do.

# A Reminder About the Rechabites and a Promise from Their Time (35:1-19 [LXX 42:1-19])

Part Three moves towards the completion of the chiasm comprising Jer 26 – 36 (see the introduction to Part Three) as it moves backwards from the reign of Zedekiah to the reign of Jehoiakim and the curator tells of another of Jeremiah’s symbolic acts with its associated message, a further example of how “people and events are transformed into signs and symbols” in the Jeremiah scroll.[[500]](#footnote-500) The event issues in a commission to go and speak to the people of Judah and Jerusalem and in a renewed promise for the Rechabites, but there is again no account of the message being passed on or of the story being told to the Judahites, though there were implicitly some witnesses for the event as there were for the smashing of the chalice in Jer 19. Within the framework of the storytelling the curator quotes Jeremiah’s account of events in vv. 3-11, or perhaps simply tells that section of the story in a more vivid way, as if Jeremiah were speaking.

In the unfolding of chapters 26 – 36, this story pairs with 34:8-22.[[501]](#footnote-501)

* It is a *word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh*, its background is pressure on the city from Nebuchadrezzar, and it is set in the reign one of Judah’s last two most notorious kings
* it works dramatically rather than chronologically, raises questions that it will answer only later if at all, and contains a message for Judah but no account of the message’s delivery
* It has a context in an event in the temple and it suggests a contrast between two groups – the Rechabites refusing wine in accordance with their ancestor’s word over against the householders failing to freeing servants in accordance with their own word and Yahweh’s
* It portrays the Rechabites as consistent and steadfast, the householders as fickle and unreliable
* It makes an *a fortiori* contrast between people who would live by their ancestor’s word and people who wouldn’t even live by their God’s word, setting a story about fidelity over against a story about a breach of fidelity.[[502]](#footnote-502)
* It incorporates an indictment (*then Yahweh’s word came to Jeremiah*) followed by a threat (*therefore Yahweh has said this*)
* It complements a message relating to what Yahweh said in the provisions of the covenant and the Torah and one relating to what Yahweh said through prophets
* It talks about listening and bending ears and turning and issues a promise to people who listened that contrasts with the threat to people who didn’t listen, and complements the threat involving parody with a promise involving parody
* The story’s implicit listeners are again the curator’s audience, after 587, for whom it explains why the calamity happened; they overhear the message Yahweh addresses to the Judahites of Jehoiakim’s day and in their imagination see the symbolic event.

The story outlines:

v. 1 the curator’s introduction to the word that came to Jeremiah

v. 2 the word itself

vv. 3-11 Jeremiah’s account of the action he then took:

vv. 3-5 how he took some Rechabites to a temple room and offered them wine

vv. 6-10 how and why they refused

v. 11 how they come to be in Jerusalem now

v. 12 the curator’s introduction to a word that then came to Jeremiah

vv. 13-17 the word for Judah and Jerusalem

v. 13aα the introduction

v. 13aβ a commission to go speak to the people

vv. 13b-16 a challenge and rebuke to them for their disobedience

v. 17 a threat of calamity to come as a consequence

v. 18a the curator’s introduction to Jeremiah’s word for the Rechabites

vv. 18b-19 the word to the Rechabites

v. 18b a commendation

v. 19 a promise of blessing to come as a consequence

Once again there are a number of differences between LXX and MT that may sometimes issue from haplography or just a desire for succinctness, as was the case in Jer 34.[[503]](#footnote-503)

1The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh in the days of Jehoiakim ben Josiah King of Judah. 2Goa to the Rechabites’ householdb and speak with them;c have them come to Yahweh’s house to one of the rooms and give them wine to drink.

3So I got Jaazaniah ben Jeremiah, the son of Habazzaniah, his brothers, all his sons, and the entire household of the Rechabites, 4and had them come to Yahweh’s house to the room of the sons of Hanan ben Igdaliah,d a man in touch with God,e which is next to the officials’ room, which is above the room of Maaseiah ben Shallum, a threshold guardian. 5Before the members of the Rechabites’ household I put pitchers full of wine and chalices, and said to them, “Drink some wine.” 6But they said, “We don’t drink wine, because Jonadab ben Rechab our ancestor ordered us: You will not drink wine, you or your descendants, for all time. 7And a house you will not build, seed you will not sow, a vineyard you will not plant. You will not have it. Because you will dwell in tents all your days, in order that you may live many days on the face of the land where you’re residing. 8We’ve listened to the voice of Jehonadabf ben Rechab our ancestor in all that he ordered us, so as not to drink wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, and our daughters, 9and so as not to build houses for us to dwell in, and not to have vineyard and field and seed. 10So we’ve dwelt in tents, and we’ve listened and acted in accordance with all that Jonadab our ancestor ordered us. 11But when Nebuchadrezzar King of Babylon advanced into the country, we said “Come on, let’s come to Jerusalem, from before the Chaldeans’ force and before Aram’sh force.” So we’ve dwelt in Jerusalem.i

12Then Yahweh’s word came to Jeremiah.j 13Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, has said this. Go and say to the individual in Judah and to the people living in Jerusalem: Won’t you receive restraint so as to listen to my words (Yahweh’s affirmation)? 14It was implemented, the words of Jehonadab ben Rechab,k in that he ordered his descendants not to drink wine. They haven’t drunk until this day, because they listened to their ancestor’s order.l But I – I spoke to you, speaking assiduously,m and you didn’t listen to me. 15I sent to you my servants the prophets, sending assiduously, to say “Please turn, each individual from his dire way. Make your practices good, don’t go after other gods and serve them, and dwelln on the land that I gave to you and to your ancestors.” But you didn’t bend your ear, you didn’t listen to me. 16Because the descendants of Jehonadab ben Rechab implemented their ancestor’s order that he gave them, but this people – they have not listened to me.o

17Therefore Yahweh, the God of Armies, the God of Israel, has said this. Here am I, causing to come to Judah and to all the people who live in Jerusalem all the dire trouble that I spoke against them, since I spoke to them and they didn’t listen, I called to them and they didn’t answer.

18But to the Rechabites’ household Jeremiah said: Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, has said this. Since you listened to the order of Jehonadab you ancestor and kept all his orders and acted in accordance with all that he ordered you,p 19therefore Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, has said this:q

There will not be cut off an individual for Jonadab ben Rechab

standingr before me, all the days.s

The infinitive absolute is used imperativally; so also in v. 13 (cf. 2:2 and the note).

Rather than their “house,” as they were presumably camped out in the city (Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 616), and *bayit* means *household* in vv. 3, 5.

LXX lacks *and speak with them*.

LXX has Gedaliah, a more familiar name.

Literally “man of God”: see the comment.

Contrast the spelling in v. 6; both spellings recur in the chapter in MT (LXX and Vg have only the short form). Cf. the alternating of (e.g.), Jehoram and Joram elsewhere.

Literally “and there will not be for us”; the finite verb (oddly singular, following the three nouns) continues the infinitival construction.

LXX has “the Assyrians’,” Syr “Edom’s.”

MT has a unit marker here.

LXX has “to me”; the whole of vv. 3-19 thus becomes Jeremiah’s words. L. J. de Regt sees this difference as an example of how MT and LXX can be more or less dramatic in their presentation of Jeremiah (“The Prophet in the Old and New Edition of Jeremiah,” in F. Postma et al. [ed.], *The New Things* [H. Leene Festschift; Maastricht: Shaker, 2002], 167-74 [173]).

*The words of Jehonadab ben Rechab* have the sign of the object as if the verb were “people implemented” (LXX translates the verb thus). See DG 95a; JM 128b.

LXX lacks *until this day because they listened to their ancestor’s order.*

See the note and comment on 7:13; the usage comes again in the next verse.

The further imperative expresses the consequences of the imperatives earlier in the sentence (GK 110i; JM 116f).

L has a section marker here.

L has a section marker here.

LXX has a different and much briefer version of vv. 17b-19a, which has vv. 17-19 continuing to address Judah rather than addressing the Rechabites.

Tg renders “ministering.”

MT has a unit marker here.

**1-2** The story again begins with an introduction raising as many questions as it answers. *In the days of Jehoiakim* is a bit vague. What are the Rechabites doing in Jerusalem, given that they foreswore living in the city? Do they live as one household, so are there not a huge number of them? Why is Jeremiah to tempt them with alcohol? And why is the temple the proposed venue for the experiment? Nor will the chapter explain everything and make everything obvious, even though (in MT) it is prolix in detail.[[504]](#footnote-504)

**3-4** The story segues into a report expressed in the form of Jeremiah’s own words, as happened in Jer 27 – 28. Jaazaniah and his brothers are apparently the senior figures in the Rechabite household, Jaazaniah being “the head of the brotherhood.”[[505]](#footnote-505) Like a church, the temple complex had a number of rooms, functioning as stores, vestries, meeting rooms, and offices (see Neh 13:4-5), and the entire family assembles in one of them – which confirms that they are not a big group. Hanan is *a man* *in touch with God*, literally“a man of God”; it would be nice to assume that he was a man of God in the English sense, but this connotation does not attach to the expression *’îš hā’ĕlōhîm* (for which see e.g., 2 Kgs 1 – 9). It may suggest he was a prophet (Tg), which could explain his having an office at the temple, where prophets exercised their ministry to people; his *sons* might be people he was training, like “the sons of the prophets” in 2 Kgs 1 – 9. His room’s location near those of a threshold guardian and of the officials marks it out as important, though the officials might not enthuse about Jeremiah’s commandeering a room in the temple, especially so that a collection of people comparable to “first-generation Quakers, Mennonites, Shakers,”[[506]](#footnote-506) a “scruffy bunch” of teetotal ‘alternative lifestyle’ folk, could be offered free drinks by God’s prophet, “and it’s all happening in church.”[[507]](#footnote-507) Perhaps Jeremiah had the event take place in a room visible to people in the temple area (cf. 36:10), for maximum publicity,[[508]](#footnote-508) or perhaps on the contrary staged the event in a side room for privacy even while making it one that happened in Yahweh’s presence. The guardian was presumably one of the three senior figures in the priestly body of threshold guardians (see 52:24), who appear in a number of passages in 2 Kings in connection with collecting offerings and looking after things in the temple (2 Kgs 12:9; 22:4; 23:4; 2 Chron 34:9).

**5-7** Perhaps Hanan and/or Maaseiah could produce wine from the temple store, too. One way or another, anyway, Jeremiah produces the wine, and not in small quantities. He is not testing the Rechabites, in the sense of seeking to discover whether they will stand by their principles.[[509]](#footnote-509) For the purposes of the message they will help him to convey, it is important that he can presuppose that they will stand firm. Their having come to live in the city might seem to make this a more hazardous assumption than it would once have been, but if they were living in tents in Jerusalem, maybe they could claim they had not been involved in compromise. Anyway, they duly refuse the wine and give some explanation for their stance. Presumably Jeremiah did not need the explanation, and maybe neither did the audience of this story. It is there to make explicit the background to what follows. Their ancestor Jonadab/Jehonadab (a different Jonadab from the one in 2 Sam 13) otherwise appears only in 2 Kgs 10:15-27, where he supports Jehu in cleaning out worship of the Master from Samaria. This locates him in the 840s and thus indicates that the Rechabites had been a group for over two centuries.[[510]](#footnote-510) Rechab belonged to the Kenites (1 Chr 2:55), the same group as Moses’ father-in-law, who were adopted into Israel and evidently became “a hard-core Yahwistic clan,”[[511]](#footnote-511) in Samaria rather than in Judah. They were Bedouin-like[[512]](#footnote-512) coppersmiths, metalworkers, and/or sheep herders, which links with the commitments that they describe to Jeremiah but would make them seem in various ways “exotic” in Jerusalem.[[513]](#footnote-513) Their “adoption” and their commitment to Yahweh did not mean that they had an allocation of land; they remained resident aliens.[[514]](#footnote-514) They were in a position like that of Abraham.[[515]](#footnote-515) But Jonadab had promised them that living as he prescribed would ensure that they could continue to live on the land where they dwelt as resident aliens (*gûr*): it is the first time Jeremiah has used the verb (though concern for the resident alien featured in 7:6; 14:8; 22:3), but it will recur when Jeremiah has to go off to live in Egypt in Jer 42 – 44. It’s not clear whether they were especially loyal to Yahweh, as Jonadab was, or whether they liked the simple life,[[516]](#footnote-516) but living as they did would mean they didn’t look as if they were trying to take over land. The comparison and contrast between Jonadab’s promise and the one attached to the fifth commandment is instructive: “in order that you may make long your days on the land that Yahweh your God is giving you” (Exod 20:12).

**8-11** Their claim is couched in terms that will suit Yahweh’s aims, though the story does not yet answer the question why Yahweh is engaged in this drama. The Rechabites do add a piece of information explaining their presence in Jerusalem. The invasion is perhaps the one in 2 Kgs 24:1-2, an episode in Nebuchadrezzar’s ongoing assertion of authority in the region that took place in about 600. It did not issue in a siege of Jerusalem and it might not have involved the presence of Nebuchadrezzar in person, any more than the city’s fall in 587 did. But in prospect it could seem a serious threat to a group of tent-dwellers, though one might see some irony in their moving to Jerusalem, “since Jerusalem has become the last place where safety is to be had.”[[517]](#footnote-517)

**12-17** Now the story comes to explain Yahweh’s commission to Jeremiah, beginning with another complex and repeated account of how it is Yahweh who speaks and issues the commission. For the last time Yahweh picks up another of Jeremiah’s favorite words, *restraint* (*mûsār*;cf. 2:19-20, 30).[[518]](#footnote-518) It suggests holding someone back from what you don’t want them to do, or chastising and correcting them when they do it. One wonders whether the Rechabites would be an object of curiosity or laughter in Jerusalem. Yahweh turns such attitudes upside down. They have something to teach. Yahweh goes on to reprove the people in terms characteristic of Jeremiah and Deuteronomy: *speaking assiduously*, *you didn’t listen, I sent to you my servants the prophets*, *turn* *from your dire way, make your practices good, don’t go after other gods and serve them, the land that I gave to you, you didn’t bend your ear,* and so on.[[519]](#footnote-519) The reference to other gods is especially noteworthy because with 32:29 it’s the only such reference between 25:6 and 44:3; and so is the reference to the spoken, prophetic word as opposed to the Torah. From the indictment, the regular consequences will follow, with further, sometimes ironic links to indictments and threats elsewhere (e.g., 7:13, 27; 11:11, 14. 33:3).

**18-19** In contrast to the threat, there is a promise for the Rechabites, who offer “a case study in fidelity” to set against the case study in infidelity in Jer 34.[[520]](#footnote-520) While “such clear-cut, unambiguous categories of ‘good guys’ and ‘bad guys’ are easy to fault,”[[521]](#footnote-521) pedagogically many people find them helpful and encouraging. Yahweh does not imply that the Rechabites’ lifestyle is preferable to the regular Judahite lifestyle, though their commitment to a simple and carefree life merits reflection: “everyone who keeps those laws should have the title ‘son of Jonadab ben Rechab.’”[[522]](#footnote-522) Yahweh’s point is rather that they did what they were bidden to do. If only Judah would do the same! Thus he gives them a “parody” of his promise to David and to the Levites (see 33:17-22).[[523]](#footnote-523) As if they were as important as them! They will not be reigning like David or offeringsacrifice like the Levites, but they will be *standing* *before me*, which is what servants do in their position of privilege and access as they attend on their master (7:10; 15:1, 19; 18:20; 40:10). For the Rechabites, this promise is a reward for faithfulness rather than one made in spite of failure.[[524]](#footnote-524) As is the case with those other promises, we have a hard time knowing what cash value they turned out to have. “There was *infinitely* more hope for this fringe group than for mainstream Judaism.”[[525]](#footnote-525) Yet we hear virtually nothing about them in Second Temple times except the paradoxical note in Neh 3:14, which raises the question what a Rechabite is doing building the walls of Jerusalem. *M.* *Taanit* 4:5 does report that the Rechabites had a place on the roster for bringing wood to the temple for the altar fire.

# A Story about Jehoiakim and a Threat from His Time (36:1-32 [LXX 43:1-32]

The final story in Part Three of the Jeremiah scroll completes the chiasm comprising Jer 26 – 36. It also relates to the same year as Jer 25 and pairs with it in its historical significance. The two chapters thus compare with Jer 7 and 26 as complementary reports of the same event. As well as pairing with Jer 25, the chapter forms a pair with Jer 45, which bears the same date. And like Jer 25, it faces both ways: as well as concluding its chiasm, it leads into Jer 37 – 44 by suggesting how decisions taken in Jehoiakim’s day bore their dire fruit over the next twenty years.

Jer 25 and 36 relate to a key year in Middle Eastern history, the year Nebuchadrezzar became king of Babylon and won significant military victories establishing his position and Babylon’s position.[[526]](#footnote-526) In that historical context, the opening of the chapter sets up the question that the story will need to answer. The achievements of Josiah’s reformation have not lasted, and Jehoiakim has encouraged a reversion to the traditional ways of Ephraimite and Judahite kings. Yahweh does not intend to put up with the situation forever. The question is, will the people of Judah see the error of their ways? The chapter explores the question by telling a story in five acts in “one of the great narratives, not only of the book of Jeremiah but also in the whole Bible.”[[527]](#footnote-527)

Act One Jeremiah has Baruch read to the people a collected version of Jeremiah’s messages (vv. 1-8)

Scene One Yahweh commissions Jeremiah to write down his messages

Scene Two Jeremiah dictates them to Baruch

Scene Three Jeremiah commissions Baruch to go read them out

Scene Four Baruch does so

Act Two The narrative gives more information on the reading, and continues to the consequences (vv. 9-14a)

Scene One Baruch reads the scroll in the people’s hearing

(we do not discover what the people thought)

Scene Two Micaiah goes to the palace with news of what Baruch has done

Scene Three Officials in the palace send for Baruch

Act Three Baruch reads the scroll to the officials (vv. 14b-19)

Scene One Baruch reads the scroll to them

Scene Two They panic and realize they must tell the king

Scene Three They quiz Baruch and tell him to go hide

Act Four The officials tell the king, who destroys the scroll (vv. 20-26)

Scene One They go tell the king about the scroll

Scene Two The king sends for it

Scene Three The king has it read and burns it piece by piece

Scene Four The officials fail to stop him

Scene Five The king tries to get Jeremiah and Baruch arrested, but fails

Act Five Jeremiah dictates a replacement, enlarged version of the scroll (vv. 27-32)

Scene One Yahweh commissions Jeremiah to rewrite the scroll

Scene Two Before he does so, Yahweh gives Jeremiah an extra message for Jehoiakim

Scene Three Jeremiah duly re-dictates the scroll, and adds to it.

Like Jer 32, the chapter thus unfurls with some subtlety. It sometimes requires listeners to fill in gaps, and sometimes unfurls in a dramatic rather than chronological order. Thus Act One raises a question and closes by summarizing the fulfillment of Jeremiah’s commission relating to that question, though without establishing the answer to the question. It has Yahweh telling Jeremiah to get a scroll and write, but Jeremiah assumes he can employ a scribe or secretary, and can get him to read out the scroll; and presumably some if not all of the explanation in Scene Three took place chronologically before the dictation in Scene Two. Act Two likewise then goes back to fill in the details of Baruch’s fulfillment of his commission before resuming the movement towards answering the original question. Within Act Three there is a dramatic delay between their realization that they must tell the king and their actually doing so, as they quiz Baruch (which chronologically perhaps came before their realization). Within Act Four there is another dramatic delay between their reporting to the king and his reading the scroll, because they don’t take the scroll with them. In contrast, things then proceed briskly and vividly; the officials’ failed attempt to stop the king is reported after it actually takes place. Act Five brings a conclusion, but leaves the audience with a series of questions, partly related to the question with which we started. Is the people’s fate sealed, even though they have had no opportunity to respond to Yahweh’s initial question? When did Jeremiah dictate additions to the scroll, and how could he do so without being commissioned? What were the additions, and how do they relate to any form of a Jeremiah scroll that the audience knows?

1In the fourth year of Jehoiakim ben Josiah King of Judah, this word came to Jeremiaha from Yahweh. 2”Get yourself a scroll document, and you will write in it all the words that I have spoken to you about Israelb and about Judah and about all the nations from the day I spoke to you, from the days of Josiahc and until this day. 3Perhaps the household of Judah may listen to the entire dire trouble that I am planning to do to them, in order that they may turn each one from his dire path and I may pardon their waywardness and their wrongdoing.”d

4So Jeremiah summoned Baruch ben Neriah and Baruch wrote from Jeremiah’s dictation all Yahweh’s words that he had spoken to him, on the scroll document. 5Jeremiah ordered Baruch: “I’m barrede – I can’t come to Yahweh’s house. 6So you are the one who will comef and read out Yahweh’s words in the scroll that you have written from my dictation, in the ears of the people in Yahweh’s house on a fast day. And also in the ears of all Judah that come from their towns you will read them out. 7Perhaps their prayer for grace will fallg before Yahweh and they will turn each one from his dire path. Because the anger and the fury is great, of which Yahweh has spoken concerning this people.” 8Baruch ben Neriah acted in accordance with all that Jeremiah the prophet ordered him, by reading out Yahweh’s words in the document, in Yahweh’s house.h

9So in the fifthi year of Jehoiakim ben Josiah King of Judah, in the fifth month, the entire people in Jerusalem and the entire people who came from the towns of Judah proclaimed a fast before Yahweh in Jerusalem.j 10And Baruch read out Jeremiah’s words in the document in Yahweh’s house, in the room of Gemariah ben Shaphan the scribe, in the upper court, at the entrance of the newk gateway of Yahweh’s house, in the entire people’s ears.

11Micaiah, the son of Gemariah ben Shaphan, listened to all the words of Yahweh from the document 12and went down to the king’s house to the scribe’s room. And there, all the officials were sitting there: Elishama the scribe, Delaiah ben Shemaiah, Elnathan ben Achbor,l Gemariah ben Shaphan, Zedekiah ben Hananiah, with all the officials. 13Micaiah told them all the words that he had listened to as Baruch read out in the document in the people’s ears. 14Then all the officials sent Jehudi ben Nethaniah, the son of Shelemaiah ben Cushi, to Baruch, to say, “The scroll in which you read out in the people’s ears – do get it in your hand, go.”

So Baruch ben Neriah got the scroll in his hand and came to them. 15They said to him, “Sit down,m please, and read it out in our ears.” 16Then, when they had listened to all these words they were fearfuln each one towards his neighbor, and they said to Baruch,o “We must definitely tellp the king all these words.” 17Baruch himself they asked, “Tell us, please, how you wrote all these words from his dictation.” 18Baruch said to them, “From his dictation he would read out all these words to me, with me writing on the document in ink.”q 19The officials said to Baruch, “Go hide, you and Jeremiah. No one is to know where you are.” 20And they came to the king in the courtyard, but the scroll they depositedr in the room of Elishama the scribe.

They recounted all these words in the king’s ears. 21So the king sent Jehudi to get the scroll, and he got it from the room of Elishama the scribe. Jehudi read it out in the king’s ears and in the ears of all the officials who were standing around the king, 22with the king sitting in the winter house, in the ninth month,s with a brazier before him ignited.t 23Then, as Jehudi read out three or four columns, heu would rip it with a scribe’s knife and throw itv into the fire that was in the brazier, until the entire scroll had come to an end in the fire that was in the brazier. 24The king and all his servants who were listening to all these words were not fearful and they did not rip their clothes. 25Moreover Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah – they interposed with the king notw to burn up the scroll, but he didn’t listen to them.x 26The king ordered Jerahmeel, the king’s son, Seraiah ben Azriel, and Shelemaiah ben Abdiely to get Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah, but Yahweh hid them.z

27Yahweh’s word came to Jeremiah after the king’s burning up the scroll with the words that Baruch had written from Jeremiah’s dictation: 28Again, get yourself another scroll and write on it all the earlier words that were on the earlier scroll that Jehoiakim King of Judah burned up. 29And about Jehoiakim King of Judah you are to say, Yahweh has said this: You are the one who burned up this scroll, saying Why have you written in it, “The king of Babylon will definitely come and devastate this country and make human being and animal cease from it.”aa 30Therefore Yahweh has said this about Jehoiakim King of Judah: He will not have someone sitting on David’s throne. His corpse, it will be: thrown out to the heat by day and to the cold by night. 31I will attend, for him and for his offspring and for his servants, to their waywardness.bb I will let come on them and on the people who live in Jerusalem and on the individual in Judah all the dire trouble of which I spoke to them, but they did not listen.cc

32So Jeremiahdd got another scroll and gave it to Baruch ben Neriah the scribe, and he wrote on it from Jeremiah’s dictation all the words in the document that Jehoiakim King of Judah had burned up in the fire. There was also added to them many words like them.ee

LXX has “to me.”

LXX has Jerusalem not Israel, perhaps because Ephraim would not be of interest to the presumed Egyptian setting of LXX’s text (Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2:255).

LXX has “Josiah King of Judah.”

MT has a section marker here.

Bright, *Jeremiah*, 176, 179; see the comment.

LXX omits *so you are the one who will come*.

LXX translates “mercy for them will fall”: see the comment.

MT has a marker here.

For MT *haḥămišît* LXX implies *hašәminît* “eighth.”

LXX also has “and the household of Judah.”

Tg has eastern, as it has at 26:10.

There are variants in LXX in connection with the names of Deliah and Elnathan.

For MT *šēb*, LXX and Tg imply *šub* “repeat.”

LXX “took counsel” may imply *pāḥәrû* (cf. *HUB*, and *DCH* 6:678 for the root).

LXX lacks *to Baruch*.

The infinitive precedes the finite verb, underlining the necessity.

LXX lacks *in ink* (*baddәyô*), a hapax in the First Testament but known from later Hebrew and Aramaic.MT has a marker here.

The *waw*-consecutive is technically anomalous, as the depositing preceded the coming to the king.

LXX lacks *in the ninth month*.

*Wә’et-hā’â… mәbō‘eret* has the object-marker before the passive verb: see the note on 35:14; *IBHS* 25.1b; DG 94 remark 6 (though GK117l thinks that a verb such as “he had” is presupposed); and J. Barton, “Traces of Ergativity in Biblical Hebrew,” in I. Provan and M. J. Boda (eds.), *Let Us Go Up to Zion* (H. G. M. Williamson Festschrift; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 33-44. LXX “with a fire in a brazier” makes for a more regular construction.

Jehudi or Jehoiakim? If it is Jehudi, he is acting on Jehoiakim’s behalf.

The infinitive absolute continues the finite verb construction.

LXX Vaticanus and Sinaiticus lack the *not* (Diamond, “Jeremiah,” 597)!

LXX lacks *but he didn’t listen to them*.

LXX lacks *and Shelemaiah ben Abdiel*.

LXX has “they were hidden,” aorist passive as in v. 19; Volz (*Jeremia*, 330) sees the MT reading as a dittograph of the subsequent *wayәhî.* MT has a marker here.

MT has a marker here.

LXX lacks *to their waywardness*.

L has a section marker here.

LXX has “Baruch” and then lacks *and gave it to Baruch ben Neriah the scribe*.

MT has a marker here.

The story is told about Baruch, so it is unlikely to be its author;[[528]](#footnote-528) indeed, there is no indication that he had any hand in the writing up of Jeremiah’s story and preaching beyond taking down dictation on this occasion and perhaps on others. Nor does the wealth of circumstantial detail in the story indicate that it must rest on eyewitness testimony. Writers of fiction may provide a wealth of circumstantial detail, and here the detailed information on people’s thinking and conversations suggests that the story is the imaginative creation of a skilled writer. This consideration does not establish whether it is a piece of imaginative fiction that dramatizes the theological significance of events in Jehoiakim’s day (a little like Gen 1 or Gen 2) or an account of a historical event that an author has recreated with the aid of imagination (a little like John 5 or John 6).[[529]](#footnote-529) But the wealth of plausible circumstantial detail may suggest that the storyteller lived close to the place and time of which it speaks (e.g., in Jerusalem, Mizpah, or Egypt in the Babylonian period).[[530]](#footnote-530) One can imagine the author writing up the story after 587, when it would function as another account and explanation of why the city fell.

There is a further feature of the story. People who knew the Josiah story in 2 Kings would see that Jer 36 is an upside down version:[[531]](#footnote-531)

2 Kgs 22 – 23 Jer 36

Yahweh had ordered the writing of a scroll Yahweh orders the writing of a scroll

The scroll comes to be known in the temple The scroll comes to be known in the temple

the head priest and Shaphan find the scroll Shaphan’s son hears the scroll read[[532]](#footnote-532)

(the first of three readings) (the first of three readings)

Shaphan tells the king The officials in the palace tell the king

Shaphan reads the scroll to the king Jehudi reads the scroll to the king

The king listens to the words of the scroll The king and his staff do not listen

The king rips up his clothes The king rips up the scroll

The king is aware of Yahweh’s great wrath Jeremiah is aware of Yahweh’s great wrath

Later, the king burns objects of false worship The king burns the scroll

The king consults a prophet about what to do The king orders the arrest of the prophet

Yahweh says that the king will not see disaster Yahweh says that the king will see disaster

and that the king will die in well-being and that the king will die in humiliation

Many features of Jer 36 lack an equivalent in the Josiah story or are distinctive to the Jehoiakim story. The Jehoiakim story concerns a prophetic scroll rather than a Torah scroll. This scroll concerns the nations as well as Israel. The event portrays the priests/secretaries/officials in more ambiguous light and portrays an implicit difference of stance between them and the king and his court. But the similarities suggest that one aspect of the Jehoiakim story is to represent him an anti-Josiah. He is not his father. This aspect of Jer 36 adds further nuance to the significance of the story after 587. It answers the question, how could things have gone so wrong when they seemed to be going so right a few decades ago? And the one-word answer is, Jehoiakim.[[533]](#footnote-533) In this context it might also take further the logic of 16:1-9, as Jeremiah himself is almost absent from the story and “interest turns from the personality of the prophet to *the* *book* *of* *Jeremiah*.”[[534]](#footnote-534) “The scroll has taken the place of the freely spoken prophetic word.”[[535]](#footnote-535) And in this connection, the story makes for a contrast or counterbalance to the comment in 8:8 about writing falsifying, about writing as deformation.[[536]](#footnote-536)

Some differences between LXX and MT may again result from haplography, some from LXX’s deliberate simplifying, some from MT’s elaborating the earlier text that lies behind both versions.

**1-2** In this key year, then, Yahweh issues a new commission to Jeremiah; the audience is perhaps expected to recall from 25:1 why this year is important, or to remember it from what they know. Baruch is to get not merely a regular *document*, which might be just a page (e.g., 3:8; 29:1; 30:2; 32:10), but a *scroll*, something long enough to need rolling up when it has been written (codices – that is, books of the kind that the Western world is familiar with – did not come into use until the Roman period). The documentation of Yahweh’s messages through Jeremiah over two decades will require much more than the equivalent of one page. At Mari on the Euphrates in the second millennium, prophecies were written down as they were uttered,[[537]](#footnote-537) and one can imagine it happening in Judah, but the First Testament makes no reference to such a practice, and there would have been less reason or context for writing down the subversive prophecies of someone like Jeremiah. There is reason to do so to provoke a crisis now. Yahweh could have Jeremiah go and repeat them orally, but writing them down and then reading them is another symbolic act and speech act.[[538]](#footnote-538) The text is initiated by God; it intends to evoke drastic change; it is wrought in and through human fidelity; and it is designed for public propagation (but it’s reception will be mixed).[[539]](#footnote-539) *All the words* is a hyperbole; Yahweh will be talking about a cross section of the entire message, which can be read out in one go (indeed, three times in one day), and is what Jer 2 – 6 comprises. It is to cover *Israel* and *Judah* and *all the nations*. That it should talk about Judah is natural. The reference to Ephraim is striking, but Ephraim is significant for Judah because Judah needed to learn from its story (Jer 3) and because it is still part of Israel as the people of Yahweh along with Judah, as Jer 31 has presupposed. The reference to the nations reflects the interacting of the destiny of Judah and Ephraim and the activity of the nations, both the big imperial power and the little peoples who are Judah’s neighbors. Jer 2 – 6 does not refer to nations with the specificity that Jer 46 – 51 will (and cf. Jer 25), but it does speak of Egypt and Assyria, of the unnamed northern invader, and of “the nations.”

**3** *Perhaps* is a natural word to find on human lips (v. 7; cf. 20:10; 21:2). Here it again comes on Yahweh’s lips, at a point and in a connection that matches 26:3. At one level Yahweh maybe knows the answer to the question he raises, but the verse indicates that the future really is open, interactions between Judah and Yahweh are real, Judah has real freedom to decide how it will respond to Yahweh, and the nature of its response will really make a difference to what happens. Yahweh is prepared to make another investigation to see “whether the Jews were healable” because he never gets “wearied” of asking the question; he never gives up hope.[[540]](#footnote-540) In a sense the final calamity is inevitable (36:31). But it’s never over until it’s over. And Yahweh will watch anxiously for the response to his reaching out to his people. He wants them to *turn* because he wants the chance to *pardon*. Sometimes he speaks as if pardon comes first and turning is a response; 31:31-34 might be an example. The risk with that way of operating is that it can seem to trivialize wrongdoing and undervalue human responsibility. So sometimes he operates the other way. You can’t predict which way he will work in any given context. You can’t assume pardon without turning, but neither can you exclude it. V. 7 will nuance the point further. So v. 3 opens up a question that will eventually receive a doubly troubling answer. No they won’t turn, but it is the king’s action rather than theirs that will express it – so that the *each one* [*’îš*]is especially disquieting. “Though the words are inked-in, need we assume that the ink is indelible? The narrative suggests not. The divine command, 'Take a roll of scroll and write on it,' (36.2) is supported by the divine justification: 'perhaps (*’wly*) the house of Judah will hear of all the evil (*hr‘h*) I am planning to do to them, in order that they will each turn away from their evil (*hr‘h*) ways so that I may forgive them for their iniquity and their sin' (36. 3). Yhwh's *perhaps* indicates, if not indecisiveness, a future that remains *undecidable,* open. Thus, for the present, the list of evils remains just that, a list, and one that can still be erased…. The *perhaps* evokes the *I would prefer not to* of which Derrida makes this comment: 'It evokes a future without either predicting or promising; it utters nothing fixed, determinable, positive, or negative.’… Paradoxically, the success of the scroll will effectively erase its content: the people's return from their evil ways will render its plans unfulfilled.”[[541]](#footnote-541)

**4** While Baruch played a mundane role in Jer 32, chronologically that incident took place about fifteen years later than this one; as far as we know, this commission is the first contact between Jeremiah and Baruch. In Jeremiah’s day people will have had enough basic literacy to write their names and so on, and in theory someone like Jeremiah could probably have written down his messages for himself, but it would be a long job and he would not be used to it, so it would be natural to employ a secretary or scribe (*sōpēr*), as authors in the United States used to get someone to type their manuscripts. But Jer 32 has suggested in effect that a secretary’s role overlapped with that of a lawyer, and a secretary’s status might compare with that of a lawyer in the Western world.[[542]](#footnote-542) A scribe’s expertise would also be a necessary though not a sufficient qualification for writing the kind of stories that appear in Jeremiah and in a work such as 1 and 2 Kings; in other words, the authors of those works would likely be scribes. While being a secretary or scribe might be a full-time occupation, there were people such as priests who were scribes. And while there will have been many scribes or secretaries in Jerusalem (three more are mentioned in Jer 36 – 37 and 52), they will have had varying religious commitments (see 8:8) and no doubt varying degrees of commitment even if they worshiped Yahweh alone. Jeremiah commissions someone who will need to be willing to do more than take down dictation (see vv. 5-19; also 45:1-5). Here in one sense his role is prosaic, as it is in Jer 32; he just has to take dictation and read a document out to people. But it is dangerous and he may end up guilty by association, as Jer 43 and 45 will imply.

**5-6** Yahweh has said nothing about it not being Jeremiah who will read out the scroll, any more than it not being Jeremiah who will write it, but here Jeremiah gives us an answer to the question that has not been raised, of why someone else needs to read out his messages. The story also raises the question why Jeremiah couldn’t go to the temple, and doesn’t answer it because it’s unnecessary to the story. The length of the delay before Baruch actually goes suggests Jeremiah was taboo for some long- term reason. Maybe he had been banned by the authorities. The story may hint that it would be dangerous for Jeremiah to undertake the task (see 26:20-23). While any corporate event would be fine if Jeremiah simply wanted an occasion when the maximum number would be present, a fast would be an occasion appropriate to his somber message.[[543]](#footnote-543)

**7** Jeremiah’s explanation restates the question in v. 3 and thus confirms that it is the question with which the story is concerned, though it also thereby underscores the doubly-troubling nature of the answer we will eventually discover (the expression *each one* recurs). This second *perhaps* in particular complements the one in v. 3. If a *prayer for grace* (*tәḥinnâ*) falls before someone, it involves both that people pray such a prayer and that God or a human beings accepts it (37:20; 38:26; 42:2, 9). Jeremiah here expresses first the hope that a prayer for grace may fall before Yahweh and only then the hope that *they will turn each one from his dire path*. The stress thus lies on their reaching out to Yahweh in these two ways, in their prayer and in their turning. “There are two things mentioned as necessary in order to obtain pardon, — prayer, and turning.” There must be both.[[544]](#footnote-544) Yahweh has wondered whether they will turn, and Jeremiah wonders whether they will turn. The story will get sidetracked and we will never discover whether they would, because the king will hijack the process and show how grievously effective the action of leaders can be.

**8** The narrative goes on to summarize Baruch’s action in what could seem like the end of a story, in a formal sense. But in substance it is only the end of the beginning. Yahweh had asked a question and uttered his *perhaps*, and vv. 4-8 have not answered it; in this sense, they could not stand on their own.

**9** The storyteller now begins to elaborates things. It’s the best part of a year before Baruch’s opportunity arrives. Like Western peoples, Israelites had more than one way of understanding the beginning of the year, and for some purposes it began in the fall, but Jeremiah here presupposes that it begins in the spring, in accordance with Exod 12:2. The ninth month is therefore around December. There is no set fast at that time, but *m. Taanit* 1.5-6 prescribes fasts for this month if the rains have not yet come.[[545]](#footnote-545) So maybe this fast relates to that need (see 3:2-5; 14:1-12). But the ninth month can also be known as Kislev (Zech 7:1), and the Babylonian Chronicle records:

15. The first year of Nebuchadnezzar (II): In the month Sivan he mustered his army and

16. marched to Hattu. Until the month Kislev he marched about victoriously in Hattu.

17. All the kings of Hattu came into his presence and he received their vast tribute.

18. He marched to Ashkelon and in the month Kislev he captured it,

19. seized its king, plundered, [and sac]ked it.

20. He turned the city into a ruin heap.[[546]](#footnote-546)

So the fast happens in the month the Babylonians sacked Ashkelon, forty miles away. But we don’t know if the audience could be expected to know about that collocation of dates, as they couldn’t know why Jeremiah couldn’t go to the temple. As far as the story is concerned, this month is just when the fast happened to be.

**10** The words were Yahweh’s words (vv. 2, 4, 6); they are also *Jeremiah’s words*. The story not only gives us clues about the origin of the Scriptures; it has already suggested the purpose of reading them out, which is to get the people of God to pray and to change (v. 7). TheShaphan priestly family plays an important role in events from the time of Josiah to 587 and afterwards, beginning with their support for Josiah’s reformation, so it might not be surprising if they were sympathetic to Jeremiah’s ministry and would be happy for Jeremiah’s aide to use one of their offices. Their stance draws our attention to the need not to be too sweeping in our interpretation of Jeremiah’s critique of “the priests.” It was common for priests also to be secretaries or scribes; they would need writing skills for their work, not least in putting rules into writing as part of the process involved in the development of the written Torah. Apparently some of the temple rooms faced out onto the courtyard where people would gather on a feast or a festival and where Jeremiah would have preached (cf. 35:4?), and Baruch uses one of these rooms as a pulpit.

**11-14a** If Yahweh and Jeremiah really wanted to reach the entire community, maybe it was a mistake for Baruch to make his base in one of those rooms; Jeremiah has regularly communicated with the people by standing in the courtyard. But maybe the aim of communicating with the entire crowd on a fast day made it necessary. And maybe Yahweh and Jeremiah spoke euphemistically of the household of Judah listening to the message: the king listening to it was the make or break factor. But anyway, Micaiah was in his father’s office while his father was in a meeting down in the palace. Were they discussing the potential political/military crisis just noted in connection with v. 9? In the story, their absence adds to the suspense and the drama. There is nothing new in what Jeremiah says via Baruch, but there will be an extra intensity about it. Micaiah, there on his own, would be unable to avoid listening to the entirety of Jeremiah’s message and then going down to the palace (lower down the slope of the city from the temple) to tell them what he has heard. One might guess that Micaiah is a priest in his twenties while his father is a middle-aged priest involved in leadership. If Elishama is *the scribe* and has an office in the palace, it suggests he is a senior figure in the administration, and the other people in the meeting are presumably also senior figures. The names Elishama, Gemaryahu ben Shaphan**,** Jerahmeel son of the King, and Berachyahu ben Neriyahu the scribe appear among many other on clay seals (“bullae”) that have emerged in excavations from Jerusalem in the period of the 587 destruction; these names seem to be the same as those of Elishama, Gemariah, Jerahmeel, and Baruch.[[547]](#footnote-547) Jehudi is more of an errand boy; his extraordinarily long name ends with the word that suggests someone of Sudanese origin, who has been adopted into Judah.[[548]](#footnote-548) There is further dramatic delay as they have to send for the Baruch and the scroll, because Micaiah hasn’t brought them with him. It means that Jeremiah can go by means of his scroll where he could not go in person, from his personal quarters to the temple complex to the offices in the palace to the king’s throne room, from private space to public space to otherwise inaccessible official space to the royal audience chamber and back to the personal space where he dictates a new copy of the scroll.[[549]](#footnote-549) It is thus a scroll, not a prophet or even a scribe (though “the proliferation of secretaries” is noteworthy),[[550]](#footnote-550) that Jehoiakim has dealings with. The scroll becomes a character in the story, independent and autonomous, able to speak across geographical and temporal distances as a prophet cannot.[[551]](#footnote-551)

**14b-16** The story continues to unfold dramatically. There was the scene in the temple, then the first scene in the scribe’s office, then a third scene there. Why were the officials fearful when the scroll simply said what Jeremiah had been saying for twenty years?[[552]](#footnote-552) Was it simply a fear about the scroll’s implications for the nation? Were they fearful because they could guess the king’s reaction? Would they be in trouble for giving Jeremiah a platform? Were they fearful for Baruch and Jeremiah? But the comment on their fearfulness communicates how objectively frightening Jeremiah’s message was. Might they hope it might push Jehoiakim into a change of policy?[[553]](#footnote-553) In relation to the question in v. 3, their reaction could suggest just the response one would have hoped for. It thus generates anticipation about how the king will react.

**17-20a** The story continues to unfold in dramatic rather than chronological order and to maintain suspense as it now has the officials asking Baruch about the scroll’s origin. Baruch’s testimony “spells out that written prophecy is not simply records of revelation but the very substance of revelation, containing the exact same divine Word that lives in the mouth of the prophet.”[[554]](#footnote-554) Their question would belong chronologically before their determining to go and tell the king. Perhaps they were then afraid that the scroll would get confiscated, or perhaps they simply deposited the scroll in the place where scrolls were kept, but again the point in the drama is that the outworking of events will be prolonged as the king has to send for the scroll. Their advice to Baruch implies that the constraints on Jeremiah wouldn’t stop him hiding, and it confirms their sympathy for Jeremiah. There are two levels at which a king might be concerned about a prophet. A king might think that a prophet is simply not the real thing; he might be more convinced by a prophet such as Hananiah. He might nevertheless then be aware that a prophet like Jeremiah is bad for morale; politically, he might seem to be taking the Babylonians’ side, like a traitor. And a king might not be clear in his own spirit which level he is working with, like Ahab in 1 Kgs 22. The Uriah story (26:20-23), perhaps from just a year or two previously, would make clear the wisdom of the officials’ advice to Baruch. But that precedent also draws attention to the ambivalence of their position as royal officials;[[555]](#footnote-555) it was Elnathan who had accepted Jehoiakim’s commission to extradite Uriah. These are people with official positions and people with minds that know Jeremiah to be right. They are caught between Jeremiah and Jehoiakim. If the original version of this story were told in such a context, it would serve to support Jeremiah.[[556]](#footnote-556)

**20b-23** The author continues to tell the story dramatically as he relates (unnecessarily) how the king sent for the scroll and how the officials are standing in the position of aides, while the king sits with his servants. “Each reading of the scroll effects a greater reaction.”[[557]](#footnote-557) The author goes on to paint a picture of the scene with the king keeping warm with the aid of his firebowl. It was almost the middle of winter and it would likely be cold (cf. Ezra 10:9); the temperature in Jerusalem gets down to freezing, and it snows every few years. Perhaps it is therefore unlikely that the king holds his meetings out of doors, though this practice might ensure that they were over quickly; if the courtyard is inside, perhaps the firebowl was one brought inside, rather than there being a fixed fireplace in the palace. A scribe’s knife would be a tool for sharpening a pen (hence the English word “penknife,” which KJV uses) or for scratching out a mistake. If the scroll was of skin rather than papyrus, then the king was using it cut the sutures between the pieces that made up the scroll.[[558]](#footnote-558) Either way, “if Jehoiakim had simply grabbed the whole scroll and thrown it in the fire, it could have gone down as an act of impulsive rage. But no…. Jehoiakim’s act was cold, systematic, repeated.”[[559]](#footnote-559) The king is aiming to cut Jeremiah and Yahweh down to size. Burning is a key activity of Jehoiakim as it had been of Josiah (2 Kgs 23:4, 6, 11, 15, 16, 20).[[560]](#footnote-560) Jehoiakim is indicating his rejection of and contempt for the message, and also seeking to ensure that it does not get implemented. If writing the scroll was another of Jeremiah’s symbolic acts, then Jehoiakim’s destruction of it is yet another, paralleling Hananiah’s symbolic act in Jer 28.[[561]](#footnote-561) Once there are curated collections of Jeremiah’s messages, the story would suggest a desire to destroy them.[[562]](#footnote-562) “There is tremendous risk involved in abandoning one’s writing.”[[563]](#footnote-563) Jehoiakim becomes “the first we read of that ever offered to burn the Bible,” though fortunately ‘for ever, O Lord, thy Word is stablished in heaven,’ saith David” (Ps 119:89).[[564]](#footnote-564) But “the Church and the Synagogue have always, Jehoiakim-like, cut out passages and consigned them to the brazier.”[[565]](#footnote-565)

**24-26** Part of the point in referring to the fearfulness of that group of officials now emerges: it contrasts with the lack of fearfulness on the part of the king and his *servants*, the palace staff who are identified with him as the priestly officials are not. The mixed reaction of the Judahite establishment parallels Jer 26.[[566]](#footnote-566) They were willing to collude with the ripping of the scroll, but not to rip their clothes.[[567]](#footnote-567) Ripping one’s clothes and thus making oneself look like someone to whom something terrible has happened is a sign of grief. The note about the officials’ advice again comes in dramatic rather than chronological order; it functions to underline the enormity of his action and it fits with the fear they had, which he lacks. Given that Jehoiakim is only about thirty (2 Kgs 23:36), Jerahmeel could hardly be his actual son. Possibly “king’s son” means a member of his staff; a number of seals[[568]](#footnote-568) give the title “son of the king” after the name. Seraiah and Shelemiah then along with Jerahmeel will be members of the palace staff who are identified with the king and his policies and who try to find Jeremiah and Baruch. The two men had presumably taken their own steps to hide (v. 19: the verb is the same), but they needed Yahweh’s protection, too, and *Yahweh hid them*. The statement carries enormous emphasis because such a narratival statement with Yahweh as the subject – except ones about Yahweh speaking – is so rare, even “quite unique in the book of Jeremiah.” [[569]](#footnote-569) Solemnly, the next one that is at all similar will be 52:3, but that chapter will go on to tell us how Yahweh did it. Here, the storyteller again piques our curiosity and declines to satisfy it. The statement’s laconic nature also compares with 28:17.[[570]](#footnote-570)

**27-28** Jehoiakim had indulged in a magnificent gesture, and it might have seemed a successful one if he had been able to arrest Jeremiah. Even then it would of course not stop Yahweh bringing about a fulfillment of the scroll’s words. But at least it would stop Jeremiah’s traitorous and morale-imperiling talk. We don’t know whether Jeremiah was inhibited from preaching in public henceforth. The story is more interested in the deeper aspect to the significance of Jehoiakim’s action. It could seem that Jehoiakim had forestalled the fulfillment of Yahweh’s threats. Not so. “Jeremiah rewrites the scroll, sealing Jehoiakim’s judgment.”[[571]](#footnote-571) Jeremiah has not lost his memory. “By the end of Part III the fate of Jerusalem and Judah is determined by the ashes of that scroll lying under the king’s brazier…. The king may burn the scroll, but he cannot prevent its contents becoming operative.”[[572]](#footnote-572) Indeed, it is his symbolic act that “releases the fatal word.”[[573]](#footnote-573)

**29-30** Jehoiakim will pay a price for his contempt of Yahweh’s message. Dramatically, only at this point does the story give us the gist of the scroll’s contents, its threat of a totally destructive invasion from Nebuchadrezzar. Jehoiakim’s contempt for this threat is the background to a double special extra threat addressed to him personally, which contains no surprises for anyone reading the Jeremiah scroll sequentially. As usual, one should not take the threats too literally. His son (see 22:24-30) did succeed him, though not for long. And the anticipatory account of his death differs from the previous one (22:18-19). The throwing out of his corpse is appropriately similar to the actual fate of Uriah (26:23), and also to the king’s action with the scroll (v. 23). The subsequent imagery links slyly with the fact that it is freezing cold at the time of the event (winter is *ḥōrep*, heat is *ḥōreb*). The account of his actual death in 2 Kgs 24:6 does not suggest that it corresponded to either of the imaginative threats of it. The chapter does not clarify whether the extra threat reached Jehoiakim: it is for the audience to hear, as is suggested by the transition to third-person formulation in v. 30. But “the king who would destroy scripture is herewith included in scripture.”[[574]](#footnote-574)

**31** Instead of preventing the fulfillment of Jeremiah’s threats, “by burning the original scroll, Jehoiakim… has ironically unleashed the threatened doom upon himself and the nation as their ineluctable fate.”[[575]](#footnote-575) The scroll’s burning is an ironic sign or cause of the city’s burning.[[576]](#footnote-576) “The violence done to the scroll in Jer 36 tears at the relationship between the king and people of Judah and their divine suzerain. Cutting the scroll uncuts the covenant; burning the scroll burns the palace, temple, and city.”[[577]](#footnote-577) The story thus comes to a “tragic conclusion.”[[578]](#footnote-578) Jer 36 “relates the tragedy” that Yahweh’s word “met with so little response.”[[579]](#footnote-579) The story has now answered the question that v. 3 opened up, though its answer would cause unease in cultures that like to think of people and leadership as having separate responsibilities and destinies. His servants can hardly complain that they are enveloped in his fate. Things may seem harder for the people in general, but the story reminds the audience again of the solemn way in which the fate of leaders and people are interwoven. “Within a brief period of four years, Jehoiakim’s regime nails the coffin shut on the Judean nation.”[[580]](#footnote-580) Perhaps people get the leader they deserve; there are no complaints in Lamentations that it wasn’t our fault but the king’s fault. Here, “ominously there is no reference to repentance (*šûb*) as there was in the initial scene.”[[581]](#footnote-581) The audience for the story after 587 can only do the turning of which Jer 34 spoke.

**32a** The new writing is a new symbolic action. “God will not leave the king scroll-less, even if the king wants no scroll.”[[582]](#footnote-582) Reciting the written text functions “to make it a legal ‘witness’ against those to whom it has been read out”; rewriting it functions “to produce a durable record of the oracles of YHWH as proof to be used, now and in the future, against the nation and the king.”[[583]](#footnote-583) The writing is thus “a theological/religious act.” Yahweh speaks, but in addition, Yahweh commissions the writing down.[[584]](#footnote-584) And it means “the word of YHWH… prevails against obstacles, even the king himself,”[[585]](#footnote-585) who brings its curse on himself.[[586]](#footnote-586) The writing also makes it possible for (for instance) people after 587 to receive the same message as people in 604, with its challenge but also its hope. Though the contents of the scroll are “muddy waters,”[[587]](#footnote-587) must it have existed when the story was told, otherwise the story would deconstruct?[[588]](#footnote-588) It’s commonly assumed that this story opens a window onto the process of the formation of the book of Jeremiah,[[589]](#footnote-589) though this assumption may simply reflect our desire for information on the subject. But Jer 2 – 6 would work as a coherent document that could be read three times in one day on this occasion. If it wasn’t Jer 2 – 6, we don’t know what it was.

**32b** The story closes with a further intriguing piece of information, and a surprise given the lack of any divine instruction to add anything (contrast vv. 1-2 and the warnings in e.g., Deut 4:2).[[590]](#footnote-590) “Even as [Jehoiakim] tries to reassert his own conception of his circumstances on the events, the words of the scroll mock his efforts.”[[591]](#footnote-591) As Hananiah will attempt to frustrate the message of judgment embodied in a yoke, by destroying the yoke, Jehoiakim attempts to destroy the message literally*,* in the fire. But in Jer 28*,* a yoke of iron is Yahweh's last word and the end of this scene introduces a new expanded scroll.[[592]](#footnote-592) If Jeremiah has already dictated all the messages Yahweh had given him, the extra messages must be ones he received later; one might then guess that they appear within Jer 7 – 24. Thus “this final notice about the reconstitution and expansion of the scroll has been the focal point of much speculation, carrying implications for the scribal craft as the vehicle for the divine word originally conveyed through prophecy.”[[593]](#footnote-593)

1. M. Kessler, "Jeremiah 25,1-19," *ZAW* 109 (1997), 44-70 (46); “The Function of Chapters 25 and 50 – 51 in the Book of Jeremiah,” in A. R. P Diamond et al. (eds.), *Troubling Jeremiah* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 64-72 (66). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. K. A. D. Smelik, “An Approach to the Book of Jeremiah,” in M. Kessler (ed.), *Reading the Book of Jeremiah* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 1-11 (9); cf. M. Kessler, “The Scaffolding of the Book of Jeremiah” in the same volume, 57-66; R. E. Clements, “Jeremiah’s Message of Hope,” in the same volume, 135-47 (145);.also R. D. Patterson, “Of Bookends, Hinges, and Hooks,” *WTJ* 51 (1989): 109-31. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Wright, *Jeremiah*, 271. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See e.g., L. Laberge, “Jérémie 25, 1-14,” *Science et Esprit* 36 (1984): 45-66; G. Fischer, “Jer 25 und die Fremdvolkersprüche,” *Biblica* 72 (1991): 474-99; J. W. Watts, "Text and Redaction in Jeremiah's Oracles Against the Nations," CBQ 54 (1991): 432-47; A. Aejmelaeus, “Jeremiah at the Turning-Point of History,” *VT* 52 (2002): 459-82; S. Gesundheit, “The Question of LXX Jeremiah as a Tool for Literary-Critical Analysis,” *VT* 62 (2012): 29-57; E. Silver, “Framing the Oracle of a Seventy-Year Servitude,” *CBQ* 78 (2016): 648-665. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 226. See further J. Hill, “The Construction of Time in Jeremiah 25 (MT),” in A. R. P Diamond et al. (eds.), *Troubling Jeremiah* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 146-60. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See e.g., Allen, *Jeremiah*, 284-85. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See e.g., O. Lipschitz, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 11-35. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See the references in the introduction to vv. 1-14, and the comment on those passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. As Carroll implies, *Jeremiah*, 491. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 3:257. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Theodoret, *Ermeneia*, 636. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Berrigan, *Jeremiah*, 103, 108. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. O’Connor, “Jeremiah,” 509. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 2:315. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 3:270. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. K. Schmid, “Nebukadnezars Antritt der Weltherrschaft und der Abbruch der Davidsdynastie, in in J. Schaper (ed.), *Der Textualisierung der Religion* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2009), 150-66; “Nebuchadnezzar and the End of the Davidic Dynasty,” *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* 36-37 (2013-14): 1-16; “Nebuchadnezzar, the End of Davidic Rule, and the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah,” in M. J. Boda et al. (eds.), *The Prophets Speak on Forced Migration* (Atlanta: SBL, 2015), 63-76; W. Brueggemann, "The Book of Jeremiah," *Interpretation* 37 (1983), 130-145 (141). If the description issued from a textual error (W. E. Lemke, "‘Nebuchadrezzar My Servant,’" *CBQ* 28 [1966], 45-50), it was an error of great moment. The designation comes only in MT; it might suggest a more positive attitude to Babylon among the 1.5 generation of Judahite exiles (J. Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migration* [Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010], 113). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Wright, *Jeremiah*, 264. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 3:266. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. So J. Hill, *Friend or Foe?* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 206. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. K. A. D. Smelik, “My Servant Nebuchadnezzar,” *VT* 64 (2014): 109-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. R. de Hoop, “Perspective after the Exile,” in B. Becking and D. Human (eds.), *Exile and Suffering* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 105-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. R. Da Riva, *The Twin Inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar at Brisa* (Vienna: Institut für Orientalistik, 2012), 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 286. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. See the note. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Diamond, “Jeremiah,” 578. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Blayney, *Jeremiah*, 339. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Diamond, “Jeremiah,” 578. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. D. D. Luckenbill, “The Black Stone of Esarhaddon,” *AJSL* 41 (1924-25): 165-73 (166-67)., M. Leuchter ("Jeremiah's 70-Year Prophecy and the Atbash Codes," *Biblica* 85 [2004], 503-22) suggests that Jeremiah is drawing people’s attention to this inscription. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. See e.g., J. Nogalski, “These Seventy Years,” in I. D. Wilson and D. Edelman (eds.), *History, Memory, Hebrew Scriptures* (E. Ben Zvi Festschrift; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 247-58 (248-50); J. Applegate, “Jeremiah and the Seventy Years in the Hebrew Bible,” in A. H. W. Curtis and T. Römer (eds.), *The Book of* ***Jeremiah*** *and Its Reception* (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 91-110. J. Hill sees the Jeremiah scroll itself as speaking of an “unended exile” (“‘Your Exile Will Be Long,’” in Kessler [ed.], *Reading the Book of Jeremiah*, 149-61 (149). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 2:251. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. See further the Introduction to Jer 46 – 51 in this commentary. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 329. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Pixley, *Jeremiah*, 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 2:256. M. DeRoche sees the passage as originally poetry (“Is Jeremiah 25;15-29 a Piece of Reworked Jeremianic Poetry?” *JSOT* 10 [1978]: 58-67). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. See *ANET*, 534-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. T. G. Smothers, “A Lawsuit against the Nations,” *RevExp* 85 (1988): 545-54 (550); he refers to D. Hillers, *Treaty Curses and the Old Testament Prophets* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1964), 41-79. Smothers notes other theories of the origin of the image (*Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 278-79). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Mayer, *Commentary*, 417. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Herodotus, *Histories* II, 157. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 3:266. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. See the note. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Contrast Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 503, where he uses that word four times. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Weiser, *Jeremia* 2:234. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Drinkard, *Jeremiah* 1:374. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. And see the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. See the introductory comment on 13:18-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. See the comment on v. 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Volz, *Jeremia*, 395. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Abravanʼel, *pyrwš ‘al nby’ym ’ḥrwnym*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Theodoret, *Ermeneia*, 641. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. E. K. Holt, “King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon,” in A. R. P. Diamond and L. Stulman (eds.), *Jeremiah (Dis)placed* (New York: Clark, 2011), 209-18 (217-18). [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. See the closing comment on vv. 19-26. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. A. R. P. Diamond, “Deceiving Hope,” *SJOT* 17 (2003): 34-48 (39). [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. J. G. McConville, *Judgment and Promise* (Leicester: Apollos, 1993), 43, 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. On their possible development, see F. L. Hossfeld and I. Meyer, *Prophet gegen Prophet* (Freiburg: KBW, 1973), 90-111; F. L. Hossfeld and I. Meyer, “Der Prophet vor dem Tribunal,” *ZAW* 86 (1974): 30-50; A. Lange *Vom prophetischen Wort zur prophetischen Tradition* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2002), 224-60; C. J. Sharp, *Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah* (London: Clark, 2003), 54-62, 103-24. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Volz, *Jeremia*, 255. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 243. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. On the relationship between the two chapters, see e.g., E. K. Holt, “Jeremiah’s Temple Sermon and the Deuteronomists,” *JSOT* 36 (1986): 73-87. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Fischer, *Jeremia* 2:23. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 236. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. B. O. Long, “Social Dimensions of Prophetic Conflict,” *Semeia* 21 (1981): 31-53 (41). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. R. Westbrook, “The Trial of Jeremiah,” in Westbrook, *Law From the Tigris to the Tiber* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009) 2:425-38. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. M. H. McIntire, “A Prophetic Chorus of Others,” *RevExp* 101 (2004): 301-11 (302). See further H. Brichto, *Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics* (New York: OUP, 1992), 226-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Osuji suggests an overlapping analysis in *Where is the Truth*, 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. It’s been suggested that these three units in the story are additions to the original version: see e.g., F.-L. Hossfeld and I. Meyer, “Der Prophet vor dem Tribunal,” *ZAW* 86 (1974): 30-50; I. Meyer, *Jeremia und die falschen Propheten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1977), 15-45; W. McKane, “Jeremiah and the Wise,” in J. Day et al. (eds.), *Wisdom in Ancient Israel* (J. A. Emerton Festschrift; Cambridge: CUP, 1995), 142-51 (143-46). [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. See further the comments. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. G. E. Yates, “Narrative Parallelism and the ‘Jehoiakim Frame,” *JETS* 48 (2005): 263-81 (275); cf. G. E. Yates, “‘The People Have Not Obeyed’” (Diss., Dallas Theological Seminary,1998 ), 138-39. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. J. A. Wilcoxen, “The Political Background of Jeremiah’s Temple Sermon,” in A. L. Merrill and T. W. Overholt (eds.), *Scripture in History and Theology* (J. C. Rylaarsdam Festschrift; Pittsburg: Pickwick, 1977), 151-66. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 3:329. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 162. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. K. M. O’Connor, “‘Do Not Trim a Word,’” *CBQ* 51 (1989): 617-30 (620). [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 2:288. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 3:337. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. M. Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile in Jeremiah 26 – 45* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Diamond, “Jeremiah,” 580. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. See further C. T. R. Hayward, *The Targum of Jeremiah* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1987), 121. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 3:343. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Volz, *Jeremia*, 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. See the discussion in McKane, *Jeremiah* 2:676-81. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Weiser, *Jeremia* 2:240. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Duhm, *Jeremia*, 213. Consideration of his guilt or otherwise does not correspond to prescriptions in Deut 18 (M. Malan and E. E. Meyer, “Jeremiah 26 – 29,” *OTE* 27 (2014): 913-29 (921-22); contrast C. F. Mariottini, “The Trial of Jeremiah and the Killing of Uriah the Prophet,” *JBQ* 42 ( 2014): 27-35. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Fischer, *Jeremia* 2:34. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Allen (*Jeremiah*, 294) thus translates “some of the country elders had stood up.” [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Diamond, “Jeremiah,” 581. Cf. D. N. Freedman and R. Frey, “False Prophecy is True,” in J. Kaltner and L. Stulman (eds.), *Inspired Speech* (H. Huffmon Festschrift; London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 82-87. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. W. L. Kelly, “Deutero-Jeremianic Language in the Temple Sermon,” in H. Najman and K. Schmid (eds.), *Jeremiah’s Scriptures* (Leiden: Brill, 2016.), 135-44 (143). [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. R. E. Clements, “Prophecy Interpreted,” in J. Goldingay (ed.), *Uprooting and Planting* (L. Allen Festschrift; London: Clark 2007), 32-44 (41). [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. C. Hardmeier, “Die Propheten *Micha und Jesaja* im Spiegel von Jer xxvi und 2 Regum xviii – xx,” in J. A. Emerton (ed.), *Congress Volume: Leuven 1989* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 172-89. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. H. S. Pyper, “‘Whose Prophecy Is It Anyway?” in D. Burns and J. W. Rogerson (eds.), *Far From Minimal* (P. R. Davies Festschrift; London: Clark, 2012), 365-77 (373). [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Schmidt, *Jeremia* 2:79. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. J. Dubbink, “A Story of Three Prophets,” in W. T. van Peursen and J. Dyk (eds.), *Tradition and Innovation* *in Biblical Interpretation* (E. Talstra Festschrift; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 13-30 (19). [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Cf. J. Kegler,"The Prophetic Discourse and Political Praxis of Jeremiah," in W. Schottroff and W. Stegemann (eds.), *God of the Lowly* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis), 47-56. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 514. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. J. Applegate, “Narrative Patterns for the Communication of Commissioned Speech in the Prophet,” in G. J. Brooke and J.-D. Kaestli (eds.), *Narrativity in Biblical and Related Texts* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 69-88 (86). [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Dearman, *Jeremiah*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Mayer, *Commentary*, 420. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. See the detailed comparisons in Scalise, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*,33-34; Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 2:300-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. See O. Lipschitz, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 84-88. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Cf. Boadt, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Pixley, *Jeremiah*, 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 345. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. K. G. Friebel, *Jeremiah’s and Ezekiel’s Sign-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 136-54. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 386; cf. P. R. Ackroyd, “The Temple Vessels,” in G. W. Anderson et al. (eds.), *Studies In the Religion of Ancient Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 166-81. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. J. Schreiner, “Tempeltheologie im Streit der Propheten,” *BZ* 31 (1987): 1-14 (14). [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. See the notes. E. Tov in “Exegetical Notes on the Hebrew Vorlage of the LXX of Jeremiah 27 (34),” *ZAW* 91 (1979): 73-93 includes a retroversion of the LXX text into Hebrew. But A. van der Kooij argues that LXX has abbreviated MT (“Jeremiah 27:5-15,” *JNSL* 20 [1994]: 59-78). [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. See the note on 28:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. See the note and comments. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. B. A. Foreman, *Animal Metaphors and the People of Israel in the Book of Jeremiah* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 2011), 193-94. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Wright, *Jeremiah*, 281. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. P. R. Raabe, “Why Prophetic Oracles against the Nations,” in A. B. Beck et al.(eds.), *Fortunate* *the Eyes That See* (D. N. Freedman Festschrift; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 236-57 (252). [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 530. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. See the note; and Allen, *Jeremiah*, 307. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 532. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 167. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 387. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Barth, *CD* IV,1: 470. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 347. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 3:393. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. See the comment on 7:16. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 3:406. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 536. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. See H.-J. Stipp’s comments (on the original version of the story) in “Zwei alte Jeremia-Erzählungen,” *Biblica* 96 (2015): 321-50 (321-32). [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. A. C. Osuji gives an overlapping analysis of the story in *Where is the Truth* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 198. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (Locust Valley, NY: Augustin, 1975), 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. *DSS* 2:708-9; cf. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 2:330. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 391. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 548; cf. R. R. Wilson, *Sociological Approaches to the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 67-80. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. J. A. Sanders, Hermeneutics in True and False Prophecy,” in G. W. Coats and B. O. Long (eds.), *Canon* *and Authority* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 21-41 (22), following G. Quell, *Wahre und falsche Propheten* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1952); see further J. A. Sanders, “Jeremiah and the Future of Theological Scholarship,” *Andover Newton Quarterly* 13 (1972): 133-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. T. W. Overholt, “Jeremiah 27 – 29,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 35 (1967): 241-49 (244); cf. Overholt, *The Threat of Falsehood* (London: SCM, 1970), 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 179. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 3:414. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Berrigan, *Jeremiah*, 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Boadt, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 542-43. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. L. Stulman, “Insiders and Outsiders in the Book of Jeremiah,” *JSOT* 66 (1995): 65-85. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. E. Searcy, “A People, a Name, a Praise, and a Glory," *WW* 22 (2002): 333-39 (337). [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Cf. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 2:333. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Overholt, “Jeremiah 27 – 29,” 244; cf. Overholt, *The Threat of Falsehood*, 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. M. A. Sweeney, “The Truth in True and False Prophecy,” in *Form and Intertextuality* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2005), 78-93 (92) [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Scalise, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Cf. M. Buber, “False Prophets (Jeremiah 28),” in *On the Bible* (reprinted [Syracuse, NY] Syracuse University, 2000), 166-71. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. P. Gallagher, “Discerning True and False Prophecy,” *Asia Journal of Theology* 28 (2014): 3-15 (9-10). [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. So Abravanel, *pyrwš ‘al nby’ym ’ḥrwnym*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. See the note. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. On links and contrasts with the material in Deuteronomy on false prophecy, see M. Malan and E. E. Meyer, “Jeremiah 26 – 29,” *OTE* 27 (2014): 913-29 (esp. 923-25). [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 203. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Diamond, “Jeremiah,” *585*. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Berrigan, *Jeremiah*, 118 (a comment on Jer 28). [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 248. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. M. W. Bartusch, “From Honor Challenge to False Prophecy,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 36 (2009): 455-63. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Fischer, *Jeremia* 2:79. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Scalise, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 58-59. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. S. V. Davidson, *Empire and Exile* (New York: Clark, 2011), 130, 152, 155, 156. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. See D. Pardee, *Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Letters* (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1982). [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. M. L. Miller, *Performances of Ancient Hebrew Letters* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 2015), 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. *In Jeremiam Prophetam*,857. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 323. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. K. van der Toorn, “From the Mouth of the Prophet,” in J. Kaltner and L. Stulman (eds.), *Inspired Speech* (H. Huffmon Festschrift; London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 191-202. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. M. Dijkstra. “Prophecy by Letter,” *VT* 33 (1983): 319-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. On the possible development of the chapter and of its place in Jeremiah, see e.g., McKane, *Jeremiah* 2:744-48; on the coherence of the chapter itself, G. Büsing, “Ein alternativer Ausgangspunkt zur Interpretation von Jer 29,” *ZAW* 104 (1992): 402-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. R. de Hoop includes a reversion of LXX into Hebrew in his study of the relationship of the two versions, “Textual, Literary, and Delimitation Criticism,” in R. de Hoop et al. (eds.), *The Impact of Unit Delimitation on Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 29-62. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Miller considers further the performance aspect to Jer 29 (*Performances of Ancient Hebrew Letters*, 160-86. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. See the comments on 24:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. On papyrus and other aspects of writing in connection with Jeremiah, see Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21 – 36*, 586-87, 602-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. Cf. Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 177. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 3:443. Tg calls them “scribes” and then has “prophets of deception” in v. 8, “teachers” in v. 15, and simply “prophets” in v. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. So Nicholas of Lyra on the passage: see the excerpt in Schroeder, *Jeremiah*, 228; also Mayer, *Commentary*, 423. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 545. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. See B. O. Long’s comments on a prophet’s family networks, “Social Dimensions of Prophetic Conflict,” *Semeia* 21 (1981): 31-53 (45-47). [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 3:446-47. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. J. J. Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migrations* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 107-58. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. Scalise, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. Cf. B. Katho, “Seek the Peace of the City,” *OTE* 26 (2013): 348-64 (349-50). [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. So D. L. Smith, “Jeremiah as Prophet of Nonviolent Resistance,” *JSOT* 43 (1989): 95-107; cf. D. L. Smith, *The Religion of the Landless* (Bloomington: Meyer Stone, 189), 127-38. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. See F. R. Ames, “The Cascading Effects of Exile,” in B. E. Kelle et al. (eds.), *Interpreting Exile* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 173-87 (183-84); H. Weippert, “Fern von Jerusalem,” in F. Hahn *et al*. (eds.), *Zion: Ort der Begegnung* (L. Klein Festschrift; Bodenheim: Hanstein, 1993), 127-39; W. E. March, “Guess Who Is Coming to Dinner!” inD. L. Ellens et al. (eds.), *God’s Word for our World* (S. J. DeVries Festschrift; London: Clark, 2004) 1:200-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. M. Leuchter, “Personal Missives and National History,” in M. J. Boda and L. M. W. Beal (eds.), *Prophets, Prophecy, and Ancient Israelite Historiography* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 275-93 (280). [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. Davidson, *Empire and Exile*, 163, 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 182-83. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. B. Katho, “Seek the Peace of the City,” *OTE* 26 (2013): 348-64 (363). [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. Weiser, *Jeremia*, 2:261. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. Wright, *Jeremiah*, 291. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. So E. Bons, “‘Work for the Good of the City to Which I Have Exiled You,” *Anales de Teología* 19 (2017): 7-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. On *dāraš*, see S. Wagner, *TDOT* 3:293-307. The reference to the town extends the overlap with Deut 20:5-10: A. Berlin, “Jeremiah 29:5-7,” *HAR* 8 (1984): 3-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. Fischer, *Jeremia* 2:95. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. W. J. Wessels, “Patience, Presence and Promise,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 37/1 (2016), 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. Cf. Davidson, *Empire and Exile*, 167-68. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. D. Rom-Shiloni, “Ezekiel and Jeremiah,” *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 1 (2012): 203-30 (223-27). [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. B. D. Sommer, “New Light on the Composition of Jeremiah,” *CBQ* 61 (1999): 646-66 (649-51) [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. Volz, *Jeremia*, 273. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. Theodoret, *Ermeneia*, 649. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. J. P. Sisson, “Jeremiah and the Jerusalem Conception of Peace,” *JBL* 105 (1986): 429-42 (440-41); cf. G. Fischer, “Is There *Shalom* or Not?” *OTE* 28 (2015): 351-70 (365-66); Ahn, *Exile as Forced Migration*, 127; H. Gossai, “Jeremiah’s Welfare Ethic,” in H. Gossai (ed.), *Postcolonial Commentary and the Old Testament* (London: Clark, 2019), 258-74. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. F. L. Hossfeld and I. Meyer, *Prophet gegen Prophet* (Freiburg: KBW, 1973), 112. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 364. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 2:347. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. K. A. D. Smelik, “Letters to the Exiles,” *SJOT* 10 (1996): 282-95 (288); he notes that Carroll (*Jeremiah*, 558-59) divides the two ideas between two sources. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. R. R. Wilson, “Resources of Jeremiah in Daniel 9,” in J. Baden et al. (eds.), *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls* (J. Collins Festschrift; Leiden: Brill, 2016), 1386-98 (1396-98). [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 405. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. Fischer, *Jeremia* 2:112. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. See G. Vanoni, “Anspielungen und Zitate innerhalb der hebräischen Bibel,” in W. Gross (ed.), *Jeremia und die “deuteronomistische Bewegung”* (Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1995), 383-95 (he also sees Deut 30:3 behind the passage). [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. J. M. Bracke, “*šûb šᵄbût*,” *ZAW* 97 (1985): 233-44. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. J. Lust, “‘Gathering and Return’ in Jeremiah and Ezekiel,” in P.-M. Bogaert (ed.), *Le livre de Jérémie* (2nd ed. Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 119-42, 428-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. Berrigan, *Jeremiah*, 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. See Volz, *Jeremia*, 269. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. Duhm calls it an “unparalleled muddle” (*Jeremia*, 234); but see C. Hardmeier, “Jer 29, 24-32—“eine geradezu unüberbietbare Konfusion”? in E. Blum et al. (eds.), *Die Hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte* (R. Rendtorff Festschrift; Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1990), 301-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. A. A. Macintosh, “A Consideration of Hebrew *g‘r*,” *VT* 19 (1969): 471-79. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. M. Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile in Jeremiah 26 – 45* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. Lundbom. *Jeremiah* 2:371-76. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. Duhm, *Jeremia*, 237. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. Scalise, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 634. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. O’Connor, “Jeremiah,” 512. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. See Volz, *Jeremia*, 277-302 (he calls the chapters “Prophecy of Salvation for the Northern Kingdom”);Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 188-89;Holladay (*Jeremiah* 2:155-71) systematically analyzes the material as having an origin in Jeremiah’s preaching to Ephraim in Josiah’s day, applied to Judah and updated by Jeremiah on the eve of 587, and then redacted later. See also (e.g.), J. Unterman, *From Repentance to Redemption* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1987), 38-53. M. A. Sweeney, “Jeremiah 30 – 31 and King Josiah’s Program of National Restoration and Religious Reform,” *ZAW* 108 (1996): 569-83; N. Lohfink, “Der junge Jeremia als Propagandist und Poet,” in P.-M. Bogaert (ed.), *Le livre de Jérémie* (2nd ed. Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 35-68; M. Leuchter, *Josiah’s Reform and Jeremiah’s Scroll* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2006), 70-86; for critique and alternative proposals, e.g., T. Odashima, *Heilsworte im Jeremiabuch* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1989); W. McKane, The Composiiton of Jeremiah 30 – 31,” in in M. V. Fox et al. (eds.), *Texts, Temples, and Traditions* (M. Haran Festschrift; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 187-94; M. A. Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 43-106. On the differences between MT and LXX in Jer 30 – 31, see B. Becking, “Jeremiah’s Book of Consolation,” *VT* 44 (1994): 145-69. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. See e.g., L. J. Claassens, “The Rhetorical Function of the Woman in Labor Metaphor in Jeremiah 30 – 31,” *JTSA* 150 (2014): 67-84. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. G. Galil, “The Message of the Book of Kings in Relation to Deuteronomy and Jeremiah,” *BSac* 158 (2001): 406-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 568-69. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. So Scalise, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 596. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 4:6; see e.g., Qimchi in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on 30:3-4 (though Rashi in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the chapter relates it to the exile); Nicholas of Lyra on 30:3 (see the excerpt in Schroeder, *Jeremiah*, 234). Calvin is referring to 30:4-6, though by the time we reach 30:9, the prophecy has become messianic (*Jeremiah* 4:13). [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. B. Bozak, *Life “Anew”* (Rome: PBI, 1991), 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. Volz, *Jeremia*, 289. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. Wright, *Jeremiah*, 301. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. Schmidt, *Jeremia* 2:111. [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. B. Bozak, *Life “Anew”* (Rome: PBI, 1991), 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 416. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. B. Lindars, “Rachel Weeping for Her Children,”*JSOT* 12 (1979): 47-62 (51-52). [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. For feminist reflection on this imagery, see C. J. Sharp, “Mapping Jeremiah as/in a Feminist Landscape,” in C. M. Maier and C. J. Sharp (eds.), *Prophecy and Power* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 38-56 (48-50), and L. J. Claassens, “‘Like a Women in Labor,’” in the same volume, 117-32. [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. A. Rofé, “David Their King (Whom God Will Raise),” in D. A. Baer and R. P. Gordon (eds.), *Leshon Lemuddim* (A. A. Macintosh Festschrift; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 130-35; contrast Becking, *Between Fear and Freedom*,135-64. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. A. R. P. Diamond, “Deceiving Hope,” *SJOT* 17 (2003): 34-48 (39-40). [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. *CTAT* 2:682. [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 424. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. See the note and comments on 2:19-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. J. M. Berridge, *Prophet, People, and the Word of Yahweh* (Zurich: EVZ, 1970), 184-98. [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 286. [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. Becking, *Between Fear and Freedom*, 155-61. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. Rudolph’s heading for vv. 5-7 (*Jeremia*, 189). [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. See the note and comments on 2:19-20, 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. J. Muilenberg, "The Terminology of Adversity in Jeremiah," in H. T. Frank and W.L. Reed (eds.), *Translating and Understanding the Old Testament* (H. G. May Festschrift; Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), 42-63 (47). [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. W. Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. Bozak, *Life “Anew”* 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 420. [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. W. Brueggemann, “The ‘Uncared For’ Now ‘Cared for’ (Jer 30:12-17,” *JBL* 104 (1985): 419-28 (423). [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. Diamond, “Jeremiah,” 590. [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. W. van Heerden, “Preliminary Thoughts on Creativity and Biblical Interpretation with Reference to Jeremiah 30:12-17,” *OTE* 6 (1993): 339-50 (348). [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. B. Gosse, “The Masoretic Redaction of Jeremiah,” *JSOT* 77 (1998): 75-80 (79). [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 2:401. [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. Brueggemann, “The ‘Uncared For’ Now ‘Cared for,’” 425; it is one of the indications that vv. 12-17 do integrally belong together (Becking, *Between Fear and Freedom*, 165-87). [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. Sharp (“Mapping Jeremiah as/in a Feminist Landscape,” 48); she notes how prominent is *’ên*, “there is no,” as a “marker of absence” in Jeremiah (cf. vv. 5, 10). [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 2:402, with his reference to B. Halpern, “The New Names of Isaiah 62:4,” *JBL* 117 (1998): 623-43 (639). [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. E.g., Volz, *Jeremia*, 290-91. [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
267. See Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 414. [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
268. E.g., Allen, 339. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
269. E.g., Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 584. [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
270. Duhm *Jeremia*, 241. [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
271. Wright, *Jeremiah*, 306. [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
272. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 193. [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
273. G. Fischer, “A New Understanding of the Book of Jeremiah,” in H. Najman and K. Schmid (eds.), *Jeremiah’s Scriptures* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 22-43 (38). The word *tell* otherwise occurs only in 49:2; Josh 8:28; 11:13. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
274. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 4:38. [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
275. Duhm, *Jeremia*, 242. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
276. See D. Levy, J. Milgrom, and H. Ringgren, in *TDOT* 10:468-80. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
277. Duhm, *Jeremia*, 242. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
278. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 280. [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
279. A. R. P. Diamond, “Deceiving Hope,” *SJOT* 17 (2003): 34-48 (34). [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
280. Weiser, *Jeremia* 2:275. [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
281. Weiser, *Jeremia* 2:283. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
282. A. T. Abernethy, "Theological Patterning in Jeremiah," *BBR* 24 (2014): 149-61 (155). [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
283. K. H. Wynn, “Jeremiah 31:1-6,” *Interpretation* 68 (2014): 184-86 (185). [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
284. Volz, *Jeremia*, 292. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
285. Barth, *CD* IV,2: 758. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
286. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 4:57, 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
287. Carroll, *Jeremiah,* 590. [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
288. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 396. [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
289. Weiser, *Jeremia* 2:285. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
290. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 591. [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
291. Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
292. Barth, *CD* II,2: 203. [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
293. G. Fischer [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
294. Cf. 28:2 and the note, ironically because there Hananiah is fooling himself. [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
295. “What the priests are doing here, no one knows” (Volz, *Jeremia*, 280). [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
296. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 588. [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
297. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 347-48. [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
298. See further L.-S. Tiemeyer, “The Priests and the Temple Cult in the Book of Jeremiah,” in H. M. Barstad and R. G. Kratz (eds.), *Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 233-64 (esp. 256). [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
299. Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
300. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 348. [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
301. See the note. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
302. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 4:92. See the treatise formerly attributed to Cicero, *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 53; and Cicero, *Orator ad M. Brutum* 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
303. F. A. Niedner, “Rachel’s Lament,” *WW* 22 (2002): 406-14 (409). [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
304. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
305. Weiser, *Jeremia* 2:288. [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
306. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 598. [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
307. See the note and comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
308. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 394. [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
309. Theodoret, *Ermeneia*, 664. [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
310. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 197. [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
311. See E. E. Kozlova, “Grave Marking and Wailing,” *SJOT* 31 (2017): 92-117. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
312. Duhm, *Jeremia*, 251; he adds “What it means, no one knows.” Rudolph (*Jeremia*, 198)notes that “in ancient times it gave occasion to whole monographs”; Carroll (*Jeremiah*, 601-5) lists possibilities. A. O. Bellis calls it “an intentionally ambiguous, multivalent riddle-text” (“Jeremiah 31:22b,” in J. Goldingay [ed.], *Uprooting and Planting* [L. Allen Festschrift; London: Clark 2007], 5-13). [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
313. See also the Latin American aphorisms in E. Tamez, *When Horizons Close* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000), 146-54, which Tamez is able to explain. [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
314. See the note. [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
315. Mayer, *Commentary*, 433. [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
316. B. W. Anderson, “‘The Lord Has Created Something New,’” *CBQ* 40 (1978), 463-78 (464-65). [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
317. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2:195. [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
318. B. Becking, *Between Fear and Freedom* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 221-25. See further among feminist studies P. Trible, “The Gift of a Poem,” *Andover Newton Quarterly* 17 (1977), 271-280; D. Sawyer, “Gender-play and Sacred Text,” *JSOT* 83 (1999): 99-111. [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
319. B. Becking, “ ‘A Voice Was Heard in Ramah,’” *BZ* 38 (1994): 229-42 (242). [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
320. E. L. Fackenheim, “The Lament of Rachel and the New Covenant,” *Cross Currents* 40 (1990): 341-49 (342). C. Ritter surveys the appropriation of vv. 15-17 in *Rachels Klage im antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum* (Leiden: Brill, 2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
321. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 4:116. Calvin would know Nicholas of Lyra’s comments along these lines (see the excerpt in Schroeder, *Jeremiah*, 249). Jerome (*Jeremiah*, 198) implies this understanding in an low-key way, though Theodoret (*Ermeneia*, 665), starting from LXX’s plural “people will go about in salvation,” applies it to the apostles. [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
322. M. Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew’s Gospel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
323. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 438. [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
324. See the comment on *ṣәdāqâ* at 4:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
325. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2:196. [↑](#footnote-ref-325)
326. Qimchi, in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
327. On different possibilities regarding who speaks, see H. Leene, "Jeremiah 31,23-26 and the Redaction of the Book of Comfort," *ZAW* 104 (1992): 349-63 (349-51). [↑](#footnote-ref-327)
328. Scalise, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*,128-29. [↑](#footnote-ref-328)
329. Duhm, *Jeremia*, 251. [↑](#footnote-ref-329)
330. Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 67-68. [↑](#footnote-ref-330)
331. Weiser, *Jeremia* 2:292. [↑](#footnote-ref-331)
332. B. Becking, “Sour Fruit and Blunt Teeth,” *SJOT* 17 (2003): 7-21 (8). [↑](#footnote-ref-332)
333. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 609. [↑](#footnote-ref-333)
334. McKane, *Jeremiah* 2:816. [↑](#footnote-ref-334)
335. M. Weinfeld, “Jeremiah and the Spiritual Metamorphosis of Israel,” *ZAW* 88 (1976): 17- 56 (40). [↑](#footnote-ref-335)
336. See the comment on 11:1-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-336)
337. See 2:2-3 and the comment, and 3:14a and the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-337)
338. See 11:10 and the note. [↑](#footnote-ref-338)
339. P. L. Redditt, “When Faith Demands Treason,” *RevExp* 101 (2004): 227-46 (236). [↑](#footnote-ref-339)
340. See 2:2 and the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-340)
341. Weinfeld, “Jeremiah and the Spiritual Metamorphosis of Israel,” 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-341)
342. See F. Adeyemi, *The New Covenant Torah in Jeremiah and the Law of Christ in Paul* (New York: Lang, 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-342)
343. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 443; further,T. E. Fretheim, “Law in the Service of Life,” in B. A. Strawn and N. R. Bowen (eds.), *A God So Near* (P. D. Miller Festschrift; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 183-200 (190-99). [↑](#footnote-ref-343)
344. R. P. Carroll, “Inscribing the Covenant,” in A. G. Auld (ed.), *Understanding Poets and Prophets* (G. W. Anderson Festschrift; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 61-76 (66). [↑](#footnote-ref-344)
345. B. Katho, *To Know and Not to Know Yhwh* (Diss., Pietermaritzburg, 2003), 343. [↑](#footnote-ref-345)
346. See 1:5 and the note. [↑](#footnote-ref-346)
347. McKane, *Jeremiah* 2:826, summarizing Duhm, *Jeremia*, 257. [↑](#footnote-ref-347)
348. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 4:139. [↑](#footnote-ref-348)
349. B. P. Robinson, “Jeremiah’s New Covenant,” *SJOT* 15 (2001): 181-204 (199). [↑](#footnote-ref-349)
350. Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 274. [↑](#footnote-ref-350)
351. B. Katho, “The New Covenant and the Challenge of Building a New and Transformed Community in DR Congo,”*OTE* 18 (2005): 109-23 (120); cf. J. Krašovec, “Vergebung und neuer Bund nach Jer 31,31-24,” *ZAW* 105 (1993): 428-44. [↑](#footnote-ref-351)
352. J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: OUP, 1961), 218. [↑](#footnote-ref-352)
353. J. N. Moon, *Jeremiah’s New Covenant* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-353)
354. Barth, *CD* IV/1: 33-34. Foedus dipleuron (two-sided covenant) is a term from Reformed controversy over the relationship of covenant, grace, and obedience. Barth goes on to note that the link between covenant and forgiveness did hold already in the First Testament times, but it will now be more visible and not obscured by human resistance to God’s grace. [↑](#footnote-ref-354)
355. On the possible influence of Ezekiel on Jer 31:31-34, see e.g., B. Gosse, “La nouvelle **alliance** de Jérémie 31,31-34,” *ZAW* 116 (2004): 568-80 (also Gosse, “La nouvelle alliance et les promesses d’avenir se référant à David dans les livres de Jérémie, Ezéchiel et Isaïe,” *VT* 41 [1991]: 419-28); H. Leene, “Ezekiel and Jeremiah,” *OTS* 44 (2000): 150-75. [↑](#footnote-ref-355)
356. *DSS*  1:558-61578-79; see e.g., B. Nitzan, “The Concept of Covenant in Qumran Literature,” in D. Goodblatt et al. (eds.), *Historical Perspectives: From the Hasmoneans to Bar Kokhba in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden: Brill 2018), 85-104; E. J. Christiansen, “The Consciousness of Belonging to God’s Covenant and What It Entails according to the Damascus Document and the Community Rule,” in F. H. Cryer and T. L. Thompson (eds.), *Qumran between the Old and New Testaments* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 69-97; S. E. Porter and J. C. R. de Roo (eds.),*The Concept of the Covenant in the Second Temple Period* (Leiden: Brill 2003); S. Hultgren, *From the Damascus Covenant to the Covenant of the Community* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); T. R. Blanton, *Constructing a New Covenant* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2007); J. J. Collins, *Beyond the Qumran Community* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010). On different opinions in Second Temple Judaism see also e.g., D. D. Swanson, “‘A Covenant Just Like Jacob’s,’” in G. J. Brooke with F. García Martínez (eds.), *New Qumran Texts and Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 273-86. [↑](#footnote-ref-356)
357. M. L. King, “The Significant Contributions of Jeremiah to Religious Thought,” in *The Papers of Martin Luther King Junior* (Berkeley: University of California, 1992)1:181-95 (194). [↑](#footnote-ref-357)
358. W. E. Lemke, “Jeremiah 31:31-34," *Interpretation* 37 (1983), 183-187. [↑](#footnote-ref-358)
359. Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 72-73; cf. R. Rendtorff, “What Is New in the New Covenant?” *Canon and Theology* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1994), 196-206. [↑](#footnote-ref-359)
360. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 449. [↑](#footnote-ref-360)
361. T. M. Willis, “‘I will Remember Their Sins No More,’” *Restoration Quarterly* 53 (2011): 1-15; W. Kraus, “Die Rezeption von Jer 38:31-34 (LXX) in Hebräer 8 – 10,” in J. Cook and H.-J. Stipp (eds.), *Text-Critical and Hermeneutical Studies in the Septuagint* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 447-62. C. Locatell also documents the use of this passage in debates over infant baptism (“Jeremiah 31:34, New Covenant Membership, and Baptism,” *Scriptura* 114 (2015): 1-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-361)
362. Barth, *CD* III,1: 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-362)
363. W. Brueggemann, “Jeremiah,”in W. P. Brown and S. D. McBride (eds.), *God Who Creates* (W. S. Towner Festschrift; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 152-70 (157). [↑](#footnote-ref-363)
364. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 4:146. [↑](#footnote-ref-364)
365. H. B. Huffmon, “The Impossible,” in S. L. Cook and S. C. Winter (eds.), *On the Way to Nineveh* (G. E. Landes Festschrift; Atlanta: Scholars, 1999), 172-86. [↑](#footnote-ref-365)
366. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 204. [↑](#footnote-ref-366)
367. For what follows, see J. Simons, *Jerusalem in the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1952), 231-33, who gives particular consideration to 31:38-40. More generally, see e.g., D. Bahat, *The Illustrated Atlas of Jerusalem* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 30-33; M. Ben-Dov, *Historical Atlas of Jerusalem* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 84-88. [↑](#footnote-ref-367)
368. S. V. Davidson, *Empire and Exile* (New York: Clark, 2011), 55, 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-368)
369. Weiser, *Jeremia* 2:300. [↑](#footnote-ref-369)
370. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 364-65. [↑](#footnote-ref-370)
371. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 405 [↑](#footnote-ref-371)
372. On the possible development of the chapter, see e.g. D. Rom-Shiloni, "The Prophecy for 'Everlasting Covenant' (Jeremiah xxxii 36-41)," *VT* 53 (2003): 201-23. [↑](#footnote-ref-372)
373. E. Di Pede notes that Jer 32 begins a series of narrative surprises running through Jer 32 – 45 (“Surprises et rebondissements en Jr 32 – 45 au service de l’intrigue et du message prophétique,” in G. van Oyen and A. Wénin [eds.], *La surprise dans la Bible* [C. Focant Festschrift; Leuven: Peeters, 2012], 77-88). [↑](#footnote-ref-373)
374. So A. G. Shead, *The Open Book and the Sealed Book* (London: Sheffield Academic, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-374)
375. E. Talstra and R. Oosting, “Jeremiah 32,” in G. O. West and H. De Wit (eds.), *African and European Readers of the Bible in Dialogue* (Leiden:Brill, 2008), 199–218 (208). [↑](#footnote-ref-375)
376. Pixley, *Jeremiah*, 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-376)
377. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 4:158, 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-377)
378. McKane, *Jeremiah* 2:837. [↑](#footnote-ref-378)
379. Wright, *Jeremiah*, 341. [↑](#footnote-ref-379)
380. C. Begg argues for a positive understanding (“Yahweh’s ‘Visitation’ of Zedekiah,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 63 [1987]: 113-16; see further J. Pakkala, “Zedekiah's Fate and the Dynastic Succession,” *JBL* 125 (2006): 443-52. J. Applegate “The Fate of Zedekiah,” *VT* 48 (1998): 137-60, 301-8 (155) emphasizes the intrinsic ambiguity of the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-380)
381. Denis the Carthusian, *Enarratio in Jeremiam*, 235; cf. Schroeder, *Jeremiah*, 261. [↑](#footnote-ref-381)
382. W. R. Domeris, “Jeremiah and the Poor,” in J. Goldingay (ed.), *Uprooting and Planting* (L. Allen Festschrift; London: Clark 2007), 45-58 (56-58). [↑](#footnote-ref-382)
383. W. R. Domeris, “”The Land Claim of Jeremiah,” in A. R. P. Diamond and L. Stulman (eds.), *Jeremiah (Dis)placed* (New York: Clark, 2011), 136-49 (149). [↑](#footnote-ref-383)
384. Scalise, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-384)
385. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-385)
386. See B. Porten, “Aramaic Papyri and Parchments,” *BA* 42 (1979): 74-104. [↑](#footnote-ref-386)
387. On Baruch, see the comments on Jer 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-387)
388. S. Macwilliam, “The Prophet and His Patsy,” in C. M. Maier and C. J. Sharp [eds.], *Prophecy and Power* [London: Bloomsbury, 2013], 173-88. [↑](#footnote-ref-388)
389. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 409. [↑](#footnote-ref-389)
390. D. Steele, “Jeremiah’s Little Book of Comfort,” *Theology Today* 42 (1985-86): 471-77 (476); cf. Lundbom, Jeremiah 2:525). [↑](#footnote-ref-390)
391. Berrigan, *Jeremiah*, 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-391)
392. See the comment on 31:22. [↑](#footnote-ref-392)
393. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 368. [↑](#footnote-ref-393)
394. G. Fischer, “Gebete als hermeneutischer Schlüssel zu biblischen Büchern,” in A. Lemaire (ed.), *Congress Volume Ljubljana 2007* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 219-237; cf. B. Rossi, *L'intercessione nel tempo della fine* (Rome: Gregorian, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-394)
395. Cf. M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-395)
396. See M. D. Terblanche, “Yahweh is the Creator of (Heaven and) Earth,” *OTE* 27 (2014): 637-50. [↑](#footnote-ref-396)
397. M. D. Terblanche, “Jeremiah 32:17-18a,” *OTE* 30 (2017): 151-64 (157). [↑](#footnote-ref-397)
398. Fischer, *Jeremia* 2:204. [↑](#footnote-ref-398)
399. C. J . Sharp, “Buying Land in the Text of Jeremiah,” in C. M. Maier and C. J. Sharp (eds.), *Prophecy and Power* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 150-72 (165-66). [↑](#footnote-ref-399)
400. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 460. [↑](#footnote-ref-400)
401. W. Brueggemann. "A ‘Characteristic’ Reflection on What Comes Next (Jeremiah 32.16-44)," in S. B. Reid (ed.), *Prophets and Paradigms* (G. M. Tucker Festschrift; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic), 16-32 (25). [↑](#footnote-ref-401)
402. Diamond, “Jeremiah,” 591. [↑](#footnote-ref-402)
403. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 461. [↑](#footnote-ref-403)
404. So Allen, *Jeremiah*, 365. [↑](#footnote-ref-404)
405. T. E. Fretheim, “Is Anything Too Hard for God?” *CBQ* 66 (2004): 231-36. [↑](#footnote-ref-405)
406. See F. Stolz, *TLOT* 2:622-24. [↑](#footnote-ref-406)
407. See the note and comments. [↑](#footnote-ref-407)
408. See J. Day, *Molech* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989). [↑](#footnote-ref-408)
409. See the note. [↑](#footnote-ref-409)
410. See the note there; also 3:24 and the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-410)
411. See further J. Applegate, “‘Peace, Peace, When There Is No Peace,’” in A. H. W. Curtis and T. Römer (eds.), *The Book of* ***Jeremiah*** *and Its Reception* (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 51-90. [↑](#footnote-ref-411)
412. Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 279. [↑](#footnote-ref-412)
413. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 4:215. [↑](#footnote-ref-413)
414. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 4:219. [↑](#footnote-ref-414)
415. P. M. Lasater, “Law for What Ails the Heart,” ZAW 127 (2015): 652-68. [↑](#footnote-ref-415)
416. Fischer, *Jeremia* 2:212. [↑](#footnote-ref-416)
417. See 17:4 and the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-417)
418. So Calvin, *Jeremiah* 4:226. [↑](#footnote-ref-418)
419. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 464. [↑](#footnote-ref-419)
420. Berrigan, *Jeremiah*, 140. [↑](#footnote-ref-420)
421. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 371. [↑](#footnote-ref-421)
422. Fischer, *Jeremia* 2:216. [↑](#footnote-ref-422)
423. Volz, *Jeremia*, 309-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-423)
424. See G. H. Wittenberg, “The Vision of Land in Jeremiah 32,” in N. C. Habel (ed.), *Earth Story in the Psalms and the Prophets* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 129-42. [↑](#footnote-ref-424)
425. See H. M. Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996); subsequent discussion inO Lipschits and J. Blenkinsopp (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-425)
426. See J. Stegeman, “‘Reading Jeremiah Makes Me Angry,” in W. T. van Peursen and J. Dyk (eds.), *Tradition and Innovation in Biblical Interpretation* (E. Talstra Festschrift; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 45-67; “Remembering the Land,” *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 26 (2013): 41-54. [↑](#footnote-ref-426)
427. Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-427)
428. Fischer, *Jeremia* 2:219, 223. [↑](#footnote-ref-428)
429. It is ironic, then, that D. Ortlund can suggest that the passage “provides such a unique cluster of pivotal biblical-theological themes that it forms a one-of-a-kind canonical intersection” through the entire Scriptures (“Is Jeremiah 33:14-26 a ‘Centre' to the Bible?” *EvQ* 84 (2012): 119-38 [120]). [↑](#footnote-ref-429)
430. Berrigan, *Jeremiah*, 141, 142, 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-430)
431. B. Rossi (*L'intercessione nel tempo della fine* [Rome: Gregorian, 2013], 331-34) sees Yahweh as now giving Jeremiah the permission to pray which he had long withheld. [↑](#footnote-ref-431)
432. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 215. [↑](#footnote-ref-432)
433. Weiser, *Jeremia* 2:311. [↑](#footnote-ref-433)
434. Scalise, *Jeremiah 36 – 52*, 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-434)
435. McKane, *Jeremiah* 2:855. [↑](#footnote-ref-435)
436. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2:225. [↑](#footnote-ref-436)
437. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 633. [↑](#footnote-ref-437)
438. Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 281. [↑](#footnote-ref-438)
439. Barth, *CD* III,4: 369. [↑](#footnote-ref-439)
440. Weiser, *Jeremia* 2:312. [↑](#footnote-ref-440)
441. Cf. Diamond, “Jeremiah,” 593. [↑](#footnote-ref-441)
442. W. Brueggemann, *Like Fire in the Bones* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 177. [↑](#footnote-ref-442)
443. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 474. [↑](#footnote-ref-443)
444. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 635. [↑](#footnote-ref-444)
445. Barth, *CD* IV,3: 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-445)
446. Qimchi, in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-446)
447. Brueggemann, *Jeremiah* 2:97. [↑](#footnote-ref-447)
448. Volz, *Jeremia*, 313. [↑](#footnote-ref-448)
449. Barth, *CD* III,1: 155. [↑](#footnote-ref-449)
450. Scalise, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 172: she infers that the shepherds and sheep are leaders and people. [↑](#footnote-ref-450)
451. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 634, contrasting with his comment noted in connection with 6:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-451)
452. On Jeremiah’s dependence on Isa 11:1-16, see M. A. Sweeney, “Jeremiah’s Reflection on the Isaian Royal Promise,” in J. Goldingay (ed.), *Uprooting and Planting* (L. Allen Festschrift; London: Clark 2007), 308-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-452)
453. See J. Erzberger, “Jeremiah 33:14-26,” *OTE* 26 (2013): 663-83. [↑](#footnote-ref-453)
454. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 374. [↑](#footnote-ref-454)
455. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-455)
456. See further L.-S. Tiemeyer, “The Priests and the Temple Cult in the Book of Jeremiah,” in H. Barstad and R. G. Kratz (eds.), *Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 233-64. [↑](#footnote-ref-456)
457. P.-M. Bogaert (“*Urtext*, text court et relecture,” in J. A. Emerton [ed.], *Congress Volume: Leuven 1989* [Leiden: Brill, 1991], 236-47) suggests that vv. 14-26 as a whole are a re-reading of earlier verses from Jeremiah; cf. M. Sjöberg, “Inner-Biblical Interpretation in the Redaction of Jeremiah 33:14–26,” in R. J. Bautsch and G. N. Knoppers (eds*.), Covenant in the Persian Period* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 175-193. [↑](#footnote-ref-457)
458. Barth, *CD* I,2: 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-458)
459. H. Lalleman, “Jeremiah, Judgement and Creation,” *TynB* 60 (2009): 15-24. [↑](#footnote-ref-459)
460. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 638. [↑](#footnote-ref-460)
461. Denis the Carthusian, *Enarratio in Jeremiam*, 244; cf. Schroeder, *Jeremiah*, 277. [↑](#footnote-ref-461)
462. C. Lombaard, “The Strange Case of the Patriarchs in Jeremiah 33:26,” *AcT* 35 (2015): 36-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-462)
463. Berrigan, *Jeremiah*, 145 [↑](#footnote-ref-463)
464. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 219. [↑](#footnote-ref-464)
465. This consideration alone makes it seem unlikely that the message would be designed to support the Hasmoneans (Duhm, *Jeremia*, 276). [↑](#footnote-ref-465)
466. Pixley, *Jeremiah*, 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-466)
467. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 483. [↑](#footnote-ref-467)
468. Diamond, “Jeremiah,” 593-94. [↑](#footnote-ref-468)
469. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 425. [↑](#footnote-ref-469)
470. Volz, *Jeremia*, *318.* [↑](#footnote-ref-470)
471. Scalise, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 178-79. [↑](#footnote-ref-471)
472. See e.g. the notes on vv. 3b and 8, and McKane’s survey of views on vv. 10-11 (*Jeremiah* 2:871). On the possible development of the section, see H.-J. Stipp, “‘In Frieden wirst du sterben,’” in S. J. Wimmer and G. Gafus (eds.), *"Vom Leben umfangen"* (M. Görg Memorial; Münster: Ugarit, 2014), 173-81. [↑](#footnote-ref-472)
473. Weiser, *Jeremia*, 317. [↑](#footnote-ref-473)
474. Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-474)
475. M. Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile in Jeremiah 26 – 45* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-475)
476. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* *21 – 36*, 551. [↑](#footnote-ref-476)
477. Duhm, *Jeremia*, 279. [↑](#footnote-ref-477)
478. See *ANET*, 321-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-478)
479. See Z B. Begin, “Does Lachish Letter 4 Contradict Jeremiah xxxiv 7?” *VT* 52 (2002): 166-74. [↑](#footnote-ref-479)
480. Berrigan, *Jeremiah*, 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-480)
481. Cf. K. A. D. Smelik, “The Inner Cohesion of Jeremiah 34:8-22,” in K. Spronk and H. Barstad (eds.), *Torah and Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 239-50. [↑](#footnote-ref-481)
482. From the previous millennium, see “The Edict of Ammisaduqa,” *ANET*, 526-28; J. J. Finkelstein, “Ammiṣaduqa’s Edict and the Babylonian ‘Law Codes,” *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 15 (1961): 91-104. [↑](#footnote-ref-482)
483. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on the passage; see M. Kessler, "The Law of Manumission in Jer 34," *BZ* 15 (1971): 105-8; J. Berman, “The Legal Blend in Biblical Narrative,” *JBL* 134 (2015): 105-25 (110-11); M. Leuchter, “The Manumission Laws in Leviticus and Deuteronomy: The Jeremiah Connection,” *JBL* 127 (2008): 635-53. [↑](#footnote-ref-483)
484. See e.g., D. E. Fleming in B. T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson (eds.), *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 386-90. [↑](#footnote-ref-484)
485. Blayney, *Jeremiah*, 382. [↑](#footnote-ref-485)
486. M. L. Wisser (“the Malbim”) in his “Commentary on Biblical Literature” (c. 1874), as quoted in Rosenberg, *Jeremiah* 2:280. [↑](#footnote-ref-486)
487. R. A. Jacobson, “A Freedom That Is No Freedom,” *WW* 22 (2002): 396-405 (404). [↑](#footnote-ref-487)
488. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 648. [↑](#footnote-ref-488)
489. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2:241. [↑](#footnote-ref-489)
490. S. Chavel, “‘Let My People Go,’” *JSOT* 76 (1997): 71-95 (93-95). [↑](#footnote-ref-490)
491. So Archbishop James Ussher, *The Annals of the World* (London: Crook and Bedell, 1658), 90 (cf. Blayney, *Jeremiah*, 382); for modern theories along these lines, see Scalise, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 186-87. L. S. Fried and D. N. Freedman argue that it was the jubilee year (“Was the Jubilee Year Observed in Preexilic Judah?” in J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23 – 27* [New York: Doubleday, 2001], 2257-70). [↑](#footnote-ref-491)
492. Pixley, *Jeremiah*, 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-492)
493. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 489. [↑](#footnote-ref-493)
494. P. D. Miller, “Sin and Judgment in Jeremiah 34:17-19," *JBL* 103 (1984): 611-613. [↑](#footnote-ref-494)
495. *ANET*, 660. A. S. Kapelrud ("The Interpretation of Jeremiah 34, 18ff," JSOT 22 [1982], 138-140) questions whether people would be familiar with an analogy between the fate of the animal and their prospective fate; therefore his introducing it would be the more frightening. [↑](#footnote-ref-495)
496. *ANET*, 532-33. [↑](#footnote-ref-496)
497. Wright, *Jeremiah*, 361-62. [↑](#footnote-ref-497)
498. Diamond, “Jeremiah,” 593. [↑](#footnote-ref-498)
499. Duhm, *Jeremia*, 284. [↑](#footnote-ref-499)
500. Diamond, “Jeremiah,” 595. C. H. Knights (“The Structure of Jeremiah 35,” *ExpT* 106 [1994-95]: 142-44) makes a particular comparison with 18:1-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-500)
501. See further E. A. Martens, "Narrative Parallelism and Message in Jeremiah 34--38," in C. A. Evans and W.F. Stinespring (eds.), *Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis* (W. H. Brownlee Memorial; Atlanta: Scholars, 1987), 33-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-501)
502. Weiser, *Jeremia*, 319, 323. [↑](#footnote-ref-502)
503. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21 – 36*, 571-80; contrast W. McKane, “Jeremiah and the Rechabites,” *ZAW* 100 Supplement (1988): 106-23. [↑](#footnote-ref-503)
504. McKane, *Jeremiah* 2:886. [↑](#footnote-ref-504)
505. Duhm, *Jeremia*, 285. [↑](#footnote-ref-505)
506. Berrigan, *Jeremiah*, 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-506)
507. Wright, *Jeremiah*, 363. [↑](#footnote-ref-507)
508. So Abravanel, *pyrwš ‘al nby’ym ’ḥrwnym*, on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-508)
509. So Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 227. [↑](#footnote-ref-509)
510. See further H. B. Huffmon, “The Rechabites in the Book of Jeremiah and Their Historical Roots in Israel,” in J. R. Lundbom et al. (eds.), *The Book of Jeremiah* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 191-210. [↑](#footnote-ref-510)
511. M. Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile in Jeremiah 26 – 45* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-511)
512. Volz, *Jeremia*, 325. [↑](#footnote-ref-512)
513. S. V. Davidson, “‘Exoticizing the Otter,’” in C. M. Maier and C. J. Sharp (eds.), *Prophecy and Power* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 189-207. [↑](#footnote-ref-513)
514. Rashi, in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-514)
515. Qimchi, in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-515)
516. Theodoret, *Ermeneia*, 681. [↑](#footnote-ref-516)
517. Diamond, “Jeremiah,” 585. [↑](#footnote-ref-517)
518. See the note and comments. [↑](#footnote-ref-518)
519. See Jones, *Jeremiah*, 434-35. [↑](#footnote-ref-519)
520. Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-520)
521. Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 293. [↑](#footnote-ref-521)
522. Theodoret, *Ermeneia*, 681. [↑](#footnote-ref-522)
523. Pixley, *Jeremiah*, 112-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-523)
524. Keown, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 194. [↑](#footnote-ref-524)
525. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 393. [↑](#footnote-ref-525)
526. See the comments on Jer 25 and in particular on 25:1-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-526)
527. R. P. Carroll, “Manuscripts Don’t Burn,” in M. Augustin and K.-D. Schunck (eds.), *“Dort ziehen Schiffe dahin….”* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1996), 31-42 (31). [↑](#footnote-ref-527)
528. See further Y. Hoffman, “Aetiology, Redaction and Historicity in Jeremiah xxxvi,” *VT* 46 (1996): 179-89 (181). [↑](#footnote-ref-528)
529. McKane (*Jeremiah* 2:910-12) notes the shortfall in scholarly discussion of how far literary artistry and historical concern. [↑](#footnote-ref-529)
530. See J. A. Dearman’s discussion of the implications of the names in Jer 36, “My Servants the Scribes,” *JBL* 109 (1990): 403-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-530)
531. C. D. Isbell, “2 Kings 22:3-23:24 and Jeremiah 36,” *JSOT* 8 (1978), 33-45; G. J. Venema, *Reading Scripture in the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 95-137. C. Minette de Tillesse (“Joaqim, repoussoir du ‘Pieux’ Josias,” *ZAW* 105 [1993]: 352-76) sees the development the other way around: the Josiah story was shaped in part as a contrast with the Jehoiakim story. [↑](#footnote-ref-531)
532. Dearman notes the detailed interplay with the scribes names, partly via 26:22, 24 (“My Servants the Scribes,” 410). [↑](#footnote-ref-532)
533. H. M. Wahl ("Die Entstehung der Schriftprophetie nach Jer 36," ZAW 110 [1998], 365-89) suggests how the Shaphan family continued to develop the story in Egypt; also C. Hardmeier, “Zur schriftgestützten Expertentätigkeit Jeremias im Milieu der Jerusalemer Führungseliten (Jeremia 36),” in J. Schaper (ed.), *Der Textualisierung der Religion* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2009), 105-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-533)
534. Brueggemann, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 129; cf. M. Brummitt, *Recovering Jeremiah* (Diss., Glasgow, 2006), 236. [↑](#footnote-ref-534)
535. T. Römer, “From Prophet to Scribe,” in P. R. Davies and T. Römer (eds.), *Writing the Bible* (Durham: Acumen, 2015), 86-96 (91). [↑](#footnote-ref-535)
536. Carroll, “Manuscripts Don’t Burn,” 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-536)
537. A. Schart, “Combining Prophetic Oracles in Mari Letters and Jeremiah 36,” *JANES* 23 (1995): 75-93; see *ANET*, 623-32. [↑](#footnote-ref-537)
538. M. Kessler, “The Significance of Jer 36,” *ZAW* 81 (1969): 381-83; J. G. McConville, “Divine Speech and the Book of Jeremiah,” in P. Helm and C.R. Trueman (eds.), *The Trustworthiness of God* (Leicester: Apollos, 2002), 18-38. [↑](#footnote-ref-538)
539. W. Brueggemann, “Haunting Book – Haunted People,” *WW* 11 (1991): 62-68. [↑](#footnote-ref-539)
540. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 4:345. [↑](#footnote-ref-540)
541. Brummitt, *Recovering Jeremiah*, 302-3, with a quotation from J. Derrida, *The Gift of Death* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995), 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-541)
542. See the Egyptian documents “In Praise of Learned Scribes” and “The Satire on the Trades” (other than that of the scribe!) in *ANET*, 431-34. [↑](#footnote-ref-542)
543. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 4:348. [↑](#footnote-ref-543)
544. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 4:351. [↑](#footnote-ref-544)
545. Volz, *Jeremia*, 331. [↑](#footnote-ref-545)
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555. J. Erzberger, “Jr 36,” *Transversalités* 129 (2014): 29-44 (38). [↑](#footnote-ref-555)
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557. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-557)
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561. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21 – 36*, 604. [↑](#footnote-ref-561)
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