# Part 2(a): Exhortations and Exchanges (7:1 – 10:25)

As Jer 2 – 6 began *Yahweh’s message came to me*, a similar phrase in the third-person now occurs in 7:1 and will recur in 11:1; 14:1; 18:1; 21:1. For readers of the scroll, these introductions provide useful divisions of the material through Jer 7 – 24, the whole of which I call Part Two of the scroll. Whereas the first-person form in 2:1 makes sense if Jer 2 – 6 is basically the 604 scroll, this use of the third-person form makes sense if what follows issues from the collating work of Jeremiah’s curators, presumably after 587. While Jer 7:1-15 links chronologically with the period just before 604 (see the comment), 10:1-25 suggests a time after 597.

This compilation outlines as follows:

7:1 – 8:3 Five exhortations, confrontations, and warnings about worship

8:4 – 9:26 [25] Three exchanges, between Yahweh, Judah, and Jeremiah

10:1-25 Another exhortation and another exchange

# Five Exhortations, Confrontations, and Warnings about Worship (7:1 – 8:3)

Within Jer 7 – 10 as a whole, 7:1 – 8:3 comprises a series of five originally independent messages in prose (with one two-line poetic component). The first, 7:1-15, is much longer than the others (one might see vv. 3-7, 8-11, and 12-15 as originally separate). All relate to worship,[[1]](#footnote-1) but within that topic they cover different subjects. While Part One had begun by raising questions concerning Judah’s attitude to the exodus, Part Two begins in 7:1-15 by raising questions concerning Judah’s attitude to the temple. All five sections concern unacceptable worship that earns Yahweh’s wrath and leads to banishment:

7:1-15 worship not accompanied by truthfulness in the community

7:16-20 worship of the Queen of the Heavens

7:21-28 worship not accompanied by a life in accordance with Yahweh’s bidding

7:29-34 worship involving the sacrifice of a son or daughter

8:1-3 worship of sun, moon, and stars.[[2]](#footnote-2)

While the specific subject changes for each section, only the first and third have introductions declaring that what follows is *what Yahweh of Armies, Israel’s God, has said*: the headings bind together the first two messages and then the last three, so that the whole divides into two approximately equal halves. Each half begins from worship of Yahweh that is accompanied by wayward attitudes and moves on to worship that is itself wayward in how or to whom it is offered.[[3]](#footnote-3) In content they overlap with Jer 2 – 6. Like those poetic sections, they challenge people with confrontations about their worship and their community life, exhortations to change, and warnings about the consequences of not changing. They gather together the implications of what has preceded in Jer 2 – 6.[[4]](#footnote-4)

## About the Temple (7:1-15)

1The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh.a

2Stand in a gateway of Yahweh’s house and proclaimb there this message. Say: Listen to Yahweh’s message, all Judah who come through these gateways to bow down to Yahweh.c

3Yahweh of Armies, Israel’s God, has said this: Make your paths and your practices good, so that I may have you dwelld in this place. 4Do not rely for yourselves on words of deception, “Thosee are Yahweh’s palace, Yahweh’s palace, Yahweh’s palace.” 5Because if you really make your paths and your practices good,f if you really exercise authority between an individual and his fellow, 6[if] resident alien, fatherless, and widow you do not defraud (and the blood of the person who is free of guiltg you are not to pour out in this place),h and after other gods you do not go, with dire results for you, 7then I will have you dwell in this place in the country that I gave to your ancestors, from all time and for all time.

8There, you are reliant for yourselves on words of deception that could not be any use. 9Is there theft – murder – and adultery – and swearing to deception – and burning offerings to the Masteri – and going after other gods that you had not acknowledged,j 10then you come and stand before me in this house over whichk my name has been proclaimed, and say, We have been rescued, in order to do all these offensive things.l 11A robbers’ cave – is that what this house over which my name has been proclaimed has become in your eyes? Yes, I – there, I have looked (Yahweh’s affirmation).m

12Because go, please, to my place that was at Shiloh, where I had my name dwelln at the first, and look at what I did to it in the face of my people Israel’s direness. 13So now, because of your doing all these things (Yahweh’s affirmation), and I have spokeno to you, speaking assiduously,p and you have not listened, and I have called to you and you have not answered, 14I will do to the house over which my name has been proclaimed and on which you are reliant, and to the place that I have given to you and to your ancestors, as I did to Shiloh. 15And I will throw you out from before my face as I threw out all your brothers, Ephraim’s entire offspring.q

LXX lacks v. 1 and has a briefer form of vv. 2-4. MT makes more explicit the link with the story in Jer 26.

The finite verb, and the next one, continue the imperative.

MT has a section marker here.

Vg, Aq “I will dwell with you”; cf. v. 7. *CTAT* 2:515 sees this reading as reflecting a theology of the Shekinah.

That is, the multiplex of temple buildings (cf. Ps 84:1 [2]; 2 Chr 8:11).

The infinitive preceding the finite verb underscores the requirement; so again in the next clause.

On *nāqî*, see the note on 2:34.

Taking the jussive clause as parenthetical (*TTH* 57).

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

In vv. 8-9 a sequence of bare infinitives articulate “indignant questions” (*IBHS* 35.52a).

Vg “in which,” here and later, makes an appropriate but different point.

MT’s accent implies “and say, ‘We have been rescued,’ in order to do all these offensive things” (Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:246). But Jeremiah quite likely implies the greater irony of making the people themselves say, “We have been rescued, in order to do all these offensive things” (Calvin, *Jeremiah* 1:398).

L has a section marker here.

For *šikkantî šәmî* Vg has “where my name dwelt”; cf. Vg at (e.g.) Deut 16:2, 6, 11.

The finite verbs through v. 13 continue the infinitival construction.

Literally, “spoken to you, being assiduous and speaking”: the finite verb is followed by two infinitives.

MT has a section marker here.

This first section within 7:1 – 8:3 outlines:

vv. 1-3a a multiple introduction

v. 3b an initial positive challenge and promise

vv. 4-7 a developed negative and positive challenge and promise

vv. 8-11 a confrontation

vv. 12-15 a warning

The message of vv. 1-15 more specifically matches that of Jer 2 – 6 in speaking of bowing down in worship, burning offerings, going after other gods and specifically the Master, offensive things, what is good and what is dire, paths to walk, deception, authoritative decisions, not cheating a person whose father has died, the blood of the person who is free of guilt, things on which Judah unwisely relies, and Ephraim’s fate being a warning to Judah. It is more distinctive in speaking of the Judahites dwelling in Yahweh’s place, reliance on Yahweh’s palace, its being the house over which Yahweh’s name was proclaimed or where his name dwells, resident alien and widow, pouring out blood, theft, murder, and adultery, Shiloh, Yahweh’s acting assiduously, his throwing the Judahites out of the country, and the Ephraimites as the Judahites’ brothers. The references to Yahweh having his name dwell in this place corresponds to the language of Deut 12; 14; 16, but in other respects the language has little by way of distinctive links with the rest of Jeremiah or with other material within the First Testament.[[5]](#footnote-5)

“Jeremiah – book and prophet – foregrounds ‘place’ as locus of encounter between God and people, and as the scene of living rightly with all that implies for the relationship of this people, this place, and this God.”[[6]](#footnote-6) But these verses make a link between Yahweh’s destruction of the Shiloh place and the threatened destruction of the Jerusalem place. Jer 26 relates how Jeremiah delivered such a message, or rather how people responded to it and what followed. Jer 7:2-15 is thus a report of the message. Jer 26 sets its story in “the beginning of the reign of king Jehoiakim,” about 609 or 608 and some four years before the writing of the 604 scroll. If Jer 2 – 6 does more or less comprise that scroll, either “all the things that I have spoken to you” (36:2) needs not to be taken too literally, or Jer 7 and 26 are more like imaginative creations by the curators than historical accounts. In the 609 context and of the next decades, the sermon would urge people towards a change of community life that would forestall the destruction of the temple, as 26:1-3 suggests. After 587 it would explain that event. After 516 its message about community life and not trusting in possession of the temple would again become important.[[7]](#footnote-7)

**1** The opening verse introduces 7:1 – 10:25, and specifically 7:1 – 8:3.

**2** The temple area had a number of *gateways*, so Jeremiah is simply to *stand* at one where lots of people would hear. Jer 26:2 has Yahweh bidding him stand in the temple courtyard; one might picture this gateway as the one between the outer and inner courtyard.[[8]](#footnote-8) It would be logical for Jeremiah to *proclaim there* *this message* on an occasion when as much of *Judah* as possible came to *Yahweh’s house*, an occasion such as a festival, and his doing so fits with the stir the message causes (see Jer 26).[[9]](#footnote-9) There people *bow down*, a standard First Testament term for worship, denoting the physical expression of giving honor; people are bowing before the King in his palace. It was the job of priests to make clear the qualifications people need in order to come to worship; they have to be clear of any impurity and to be in a proper moral state (see Pss 15; 24). The temple gateways might be the places where the priests did so.[[10]](#footnote-10) In effect, Jeremiah is about to intervene to tell people that actually they don’t meet the criteria.[[11]](#footnote-11) There are then some ironic implications in calling 7:1 – 8:3 “a gathering chapter”:[[12]](#footnote-12) some liturgical traditions begin worship with “a gathering prayer,” and Jeremiah is about to subvert such prayers. What will follow will make clear that people must not think “that with your coming here to prostrate yourselves your sins will be forgiven, for it is not so.”[[13]](#footnote-13)

**3** *Yahweh of Armies* is a familiar expression (see 2:20). *Israel’s God* is not. The two phrases point to two aspects of this God’s identity – his power in having all war-making capacities at his disposal, and his involvement with Israel in particular. The combination is good news and also challenge, as the message will indicate. *This place* (*māqôm*)can be a worship place, a site (so in vv. 12, 14), and to *make your paths and your practices good* is then necessary to gain access to the temple. But more often *this place* refers to the land of Judah or the city of Jerusalem (cf. vv. 6, 20), which fits here when Yahweh talks of having the people *dwell* there (*šākan*); a neighbor (*šākēn*) dwells with you or near you, and dwelling as opposed to living implies settled-ness and security, spelled out in 23:6; 33:16.[[14]](#footnote-14) The possible ambiguity of the reference to *this* *place* links with a difference between Jer 7 and 26. Whereas Jer 26 talks about city and temple, Jer 7 does not refer to the city, and the initial reference to a place prepares the way for the focus on the temple in vv. 2-15. Yet in the context of Josiah’s reformation “this place” denotes city as well as temple (2 Kgs 22:16-20), both being “the place” that Yahweh chose (e.g., Deut 12), and one aspect of Jeremiah’s message is that the “place” with which Yahweh is involved is the country as a whole.[[15]](#footnote-15) In Jer 7 the word *place* “carries the weight of ambivalence.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

**4** Jeremiah has already noted stupidities in what the people *rely on* (2:37; 5:17). There is a more subtle stupidity. After Josiah’s death and Jehoahaz’s deposing, a key question for Judah is what gives protection. People can always be tempted to make assumptions about where security lies. Here, their answer is, the temple.[[17]](#footnote-17) They can point and say, *those* are a splendid collection of buildings.They can go on and on about *Yahweh’s palace, Yahweh’s palace, Yahweh’s palace*. English translations have “temple,” but the word is *hêkāl*, equivalent to the word for a king’s residence. The “temple” is Yahweh’s house, the place where he dwells (vv. 2, 10, 11, 14), and it is his palace, his house fit for a king. *Palace* comes otherwise in Jeremiah only in 24:1; 50:29; 51:11, each time in connection with Nebuchadrezzar, his conquest of Jerusalem, his exiling of its people, and his destruction of the temple. “This is the house of the real King. The fact that the real King has his palace here means we do not have to fear (e.g.) the king of Babylon.” But the repetition almost sounds like a lucky charm phrase or an incantation.[[18]](#footnote-18) The people’s assumption about security is fallacious. Their words are *words of deception*, deceptive words. Whereas Jeremiah has previously associated deception with the Master, the great deceiver or the great vehicle whereby Judah engaged in self-deception, here the means of Judah’s self-deception lies elsewhere. Like much self-deception, their declaration is subtly and simultaneously a slight but monumental distance from the truth. There is nothing wrong with their conviction that the temple is Yahweh’s palace. He is the great King and he does live there. But they need to consider some implications of that fact, to see that you cannot come into his palace unless you *make your paths and your practices good*. Yahweh is prepared to let his palace be destroyed rather than have them think that in itself it guarantees their security.[[19]](#footnote-19)

“Jeremiah gives no details about the temple” and “gives no details here of the land and very little elsewhere. In fact, he shows little interest in the physical demarcation of space.” He thus contrasts with Ezekiel, who “pays great attention to space and its boundaries, especially the protection of sacred space, and later gives “careful descriptions of land division” (chs. 45, 48).[[20]](#footnote-20) That omission perhaps facilitates the adapting of his words to a Christian context:

Do not put your hopes in deceptive words that say, “Here is the temple of the Lord,” that imply you are his temple. They are only trying to assure that you will never be left by Godas though God would decideto preserve his blessed temple…. If you have not corrected what you are doing, then you are no temple of God, and God will not save you on account of the sacredness of his temple that is desecrated by you. His soul is disgusted by the multitude of your sacrifices that you offer in your wickedness.[[21]](#footnote-21)

**5-7** Like a preacher, Jeremiah now restates his opening point but expands and intensifies it, “raising the rhetorical level a notch or two”[[22]](#footnote-22) as he fulfills his vocation to “speak the truth in the place of untruth.”[[23]](#footnote-23) *Make your path and your practices good* firstly means *exercise authority between an individual and his fellow*:see 4:2; 5:1. It secondly means refusing to *defraud resident alien, fatherless, and widow*:see 5:25-28. Yahweh there mentioned the fatherless as one instance of “the needy.” Here he adds resident alien and widow. The resultant threefold reference matches Exod 22:21-22 [20-21] and Deut 24:17-22 (other passages such as Deut 16:11, 14 also include servants and Levites). All are people who one way or another do not have land and therefore a secure place to live and to grow something to eat. Widow goes along with fatherless as a person vulnerable to being swindled or tricked out of the family estate when the head of the household has passed (see Luke 18:1-8). Jeremiah is not talking about empathy for people who feel vulnerable or about weeping with those who weep but about the administration of the law, and he is being quite hard-headed. Further implications of making your path and your practices good are refusing to *pour out the blood of the person who is free of guilt* in the city or country (see 2:34) or to *go after other gods* (see e.g., 2:5). In effect vv. 5 and 6 are talking about fulfilling the two great commands, about loving one’s neighbor and loving Yahweh. And Jeremiah is functioning as a teacher of Torah.[[24]](#footnote-24) Ignoring such imperatives will mean that dire paths lead to *dire results* (see e.g., 1:14-16). Yahweh uses a distinctive expression (more literally, “to something dire for you” – otherwise only in Eccl 8:9) that suggests bringing trouble on themselves (cf. 25:7). Good paths and practices lead to good results: Yahweh repeats the promise from v. 3, adding the reminder that this is *the country that I gave to your ancestors* (see 3:18), *from of all time and for all time*, more literally, “from age to age” or “from ever to ever.” This “startling” phrase applies elsewhere to Yahweh and his commitment (Pss 90:2; 103:17),[[25]](#footnote-25) though giving the country as a domain (3:18) has the same implication. It has belonged to you since way back, and it is impossible to think of it ever not belonging to you. People do have a basis of security, but it doesn’t lie simply in the presence of the Great King’s palace; it lies in their commitment to walking his ways.

 **8-10.** There might have been nothing surprising about vv. 3-7, especially if (e.g.) priests declaimed such expectations in the gateways (see Pss 15; 24) and/or if the occasion was Sukkot and the Decalogue was proclaimed.[[26]](#footnote-26) But there is more for the community to face. There is a second facet to the *words of deception* on which *you* *are reliant for yourselves,* deceptive words that *could not be any use*. The problem does not lie in people’s confidence in the Great King’s dwelling among them in his palace. It lies in their assumption that they can maintain that confidence when they are engaged in practices that contrast with the expectations in vv. 5-6: *theft*, *murder, adultery, swearing to deception* (see 5:2)*, burning offerings to the Master*, *and going after other gods that you had not acknowledged* (see 1:16; 2:5, 23; 3:24). People behave in such ways and then *come and stand before me in this house over which my name has been proclaimed*. Proclaiming a name over something – of the people (14:9), of the prophet (15:16), of the city (25:29) – signifies ownership and mutual commitment. This house belongs to Yahweh as king, and bowing down before a king is an expression of submission and dependence, while standing before a king signifies adopting the position of a servant in attendance, ready to do as the king says. But people deny that commitment by ignoring the king’s expectations, even though they acknowledge that he has signified his ownership of and commitment to them. The concrete references to theft, murder, and adultery make v. 9 as a whole redolent of the Decalogue, though in the reverse order of its two main parts that focus on obligations to other people and to Yahweh. (Perhaps there was no more theft, murder, and adultery in seventh-century Jerusalem than in twenty-first century Jerusalem, Los Angeles, or Oxford, in which case Jeremiah’s confrontation shows that the incidence and the tolerance of such wrongdoing pollutes the whole community.) *They say* (in the course of their worship in this temple) *we have been rescued*. The verb (*nāṣal* niphal) can apply to the exodus (Exod 3:8; 18:8-11, hiphil) and to the deliverance from Sennacherib (2 Kgs 18:29-35; 19:11-12, niphal and hiphil), and reference to either rescue would be relevant here; their words might also be a statement of faith about what Yahweh is going to do. The trouble is their implicit perception of the aim of their rescue, however understood. “The long question, begun in v. 9” comes to a “provocative conclusion with the final clause,” *in order to do all these offensive things*.[[27]](#footnote-27)

**11** Their behavior therefore makes them no different from a band of robbers hiding up in a cave. But they are actually visible to Yahweh. “I’m not blind,”[[28]](#footnote-28) Yahweh reminds them. There is a sense of “outrage”[[29]](#footnote-29) in what he says about people coming to the temple who are dishonest and faithless in their everyday lives, like robbers, and are then trying to use the temple as a refuge. It won’t work. Jesus picks up Jeremiah’s words and takes them in a different direction (Mk 11:15-17);[[30]](#footnote-30) people are bringing trade into the temple. In the twenty-first century, the collocation of these two themes suggests questions about the dominance of the market in world economics in the context of globalization and about the way Christians in business relate to economic thinking and practice.

**12** Dire results will follow from people’s wayward attitude to Yahweh and their wayward community life. There was nothing wrong with their conviction that the temple was Yahweh’s dwelling place but there was something wrong with their assumptions about the implications. Yahweh has implied that he will not continue to have them dwelling in the country and/or that he will not continue to live in his palace there. Implication now becomes statement. *Go, please, to my place that was at Shiloh*. “Place” now has an explicit narrower reference, to the place where I live, my sanctuary. Shiloh, midway between Bethel and Shechem, had once been the location of Israel’s central sanctuary and of the pact chest (see e.g., 1 Sam 1 – 4) but it had been destroyed – we don’t know when or how. Yahweh here claims responsibility for the destruction as an act of retribution *in the face of my people Israel’s direness*. It had been *where I had my name dwell at the first*: Yahweh rings changes on the way he speaks about his name and about dwelling, now using a form of words used in Deut 12:11; 14:23; 16:2, 6, 11; 26:2. As well as being proclaimed over the sanctuary, his name was proclaimed within it. It meant he was really there, because the name embodies the person (see 3:17).[[31]](#footnote-31) Shiloh would have been the original place to which Deuteronomy’s words applied (they are otherwise used only in Neh 1:9).

**13-14** If Yahweh was prepared to act in that way to the place where he had previously had his name dwell, he will be prepared to take such action again. To forestall doing so, *I have spoken to you, speaking assiduously*: Jeremiah introduces another of his signature expressions to denote Yahweh’s going out of his way to act tirelessly (*šākam* hiphil)[[32]](#footnote-32) in doing something that shows his commitment to it (cf. v. 25), like Abraham when he gets up early to check out what has happened to Sodom or to send off Hagar or to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 19:27; 21:14; 22:3). But *you have not listened.* Further, *I have called to you*, as a master does to a servant, *and you have not answered*. Whereas in vv. 3-10 the basis for critique would be people’s ignoring the teaching of priests, based on established Torah, here the basis for critique would be people’s not listening to the message of prophets (cf. 6:19). So, says Yahweh, I am prepared to treat my Jerusalem palaceas I treated my place at Shiloh. Yahweh’s references to Shiloh and Jerusalem make for a suggestive and ironic contrast with Ps 78,[[33]](#footnote-33) which tells of Yahweh’s abandoning Shiloh and choosing Zion, where he built his sanctuary (and of Yahweh’s choice of David, who gets no reference here).[[34]](#footnote-34) That story could function as a “self-serving Jerusalem ideology.”[[35]](#footnote-35) Yahweh turns that possibility on its head. The logic will be taken up by Paul in Rom 9 – 11, which warns the church not to think that it has replaced Israel in God’s purpose. “As the destruction of Shiloh is an example of the destruction of Jerusalem or the temple, so the destruction of the temple is an example of the destruction of the church. Romans 11:21: ‘If God did not spare the natural branches, we should be afraid, lest God spare us even less.’”[[36]](#footnote-36) When Yahweh entered into a relationship with Israel, it was not because Israel satisfied certain conditions; they did not do so. His love for them was not conditioned or conditional. But once they belong to him, their relationship with him requires their living faithfully with him and with one another, and unfaithfulness imperils the relationship. Maybe one should therefore say that his originally unconditional relationship with them becomes conditional. To his disciples, Jesus indicates that God’s love for them: works in this way “If you forgive other people their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you; but if you do not forgive other people, neither will your Father forgive you” (Matt 6:14-15).[[37]](#footnote-37) Indeed, love without conditions may not be real love if it leaves people to be free to continue as they are.[[38]](#footnote-38)

**15** As well as destroying the temple*, I will throw you out from before my face* – not merely out of the temple but out of Canaan. And if they wonder whether he would do such a thing, remember theway *I threw out all your brothers, Ephraim’s entire offspring*, whose warning example featured prominently in Jer 2.

## About Whether It’s Possible to Pray (7:16-20)

16And you: do not plead on account of this people, do not lift up on their account a chant by way of plea,a do not press me, because I’m not going to listen to you. 17You see what they are doing in Judah’s towns and in Jerusalem’s streets, don’t you. 18The children are gathering pieces of wood, the fathers are kindling the fire, and the women are kneading dough to make loaves for the Queenb of the Heavens – and pouringc libations to other gods for the sake of irking me. 19Is it me that they are irking (Yahweh’s affirmation)? It’s themselves, isn’t it, for the sake of their visible shame.d 20Therefore the Lorde Yahweh has said this: there, my furious angerf is going to pourg on this place, onto the human being, onto the animal, onto the tree in the open country, and onto the fruit of the ground. It will burn and not go out.h

A hendiadys, literally “a chant and a plea.”

MT’s spelling *mәleket* rather than *malkat* suggests seeing the word as a variant on *mәle’ket*, the reading in some medieval manuscripts (cf. Syr), which compares withLXX “army,” and seeing people as worshiping the handiwork/army of the heavens (as in 8:2; Qimchi in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage) rather than the Queen of the Heavens (Aq, Sym, Theod, Vg). Tg has “the star of the heavens.” LXX has “Queen” at 44:17-25 (LXX 51:17-25). See BDB, *BHS*.

This last verb is an infinitive: see the note on vv. 8-9.

Literally, “the shame of their face.” L has a section marker here.

Not in LXX: see the comment.

Another hendiadys, literally “my anger and my fury” (the verb that follows is singular).

For *nātak* (niphal) Aq, Sym have “trickle” (*stazō*)instead of LXX’s “pour out” (*cheō*), which is beautiful (Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 52), but unfortunately is not what Yahweh says.

MT has a section marker here.

“Suddenly Jeremiah no longer stands in the temple court before ‘all Judah’ but somewhere else before Yahweh."[[39]](#footnote-39) Initially, one might nevertheless see this instruction to Jeremiah as continuing the first message, but what follows indicates that there are other reasons for it. In a further attempt to get Judah to see the peril of its situation and to respond to it, Jeremiah reports that Yahweh isn’t going to be listening to any prayers from him on their behalf because of the way they have compromised their loyalty to Yahweh. The section outlines:

v. 16a don’t pray for this people

 v. 16b the reason

 vv. 17-19 the rationale: what they are doing

 v. 20 the rationale: what Yahweh intends to do.

**16** The opening *and you* (with the pronoun expressed) signals a transition in the section’s form. While people may *plead* (*pālal* hitpalel) for themselves to Yahweh in connection with some need or desire, kings, prophets, and priests also do it for their people (e.g., 1 Kgs 8; 1 Sam 12:23; Ezra 10:1), and the Jeremiah scroll refers elsewhere to Jeremiah praying on the people’s behalf (18:20; 21:2; 37:3; 42:1-6). Behind the language may be the model of someone of status being able to intervene with another powerful person on one’s behalf; a prophet is in a particularly good position to do so through taking part in meetings of Yahweh’s cabinet. A plea for someone else is an act of intervention on their behalf. But the verb becomes simply a general word for prayer.[[40]](#footnote-40) *A chant by way of plea* would imply being prepared to make quite a noise in doing so. It is a sign that one really means the plea or knows that one needs to get the attention of the object of the plea, who doubtless has other things to think about. Yahweh reformulates the point when he talks of it as an act whereby one might *press* someone on another person’s behalf (*pāga‘*). The word commonly means “reach,” so intercession means reaching out to someone on another person’s behalf and making contact with them; it also commonly means “fall on” in a hostile fashion. It thus could suggest putting pressure on or “lobbying.”[[41]](#footnote-41) Interceding is to “elbow someone in the ribs.”[[42]](#footnote-42) It is a powerful activity, a form of symbolic action. It can be Yahweh’s way of making things happen. Not praying therefore means that things may not happen. While in principle “the prayers of the saints are able to check the anger of God,”[[43]](#footnote-43) there is such a thing as the sin against the Holy Spirit (Matt 12:31-32; 1 John 5:16).[[44]](#footnote-44) And at this moment such praying activity on Judah’s behalf is forbidden and pointless *because* *I am not going to listen to you.* Yet for all their sins, Jeremiah loves his people,[[45]](#footnote-45) and telling his people about this prohibition is actually an expression of his love, and of Yahweh’s love. Yahweh’s issuing it and Jeremiah’s reporting it are yet another attempt to get through to people. As usual, Jeremiah relates what is going on between himself and Yahweh because it contains a message for people. Declaring that he cannot fulfil his intercessory role as a prophet is a terrible threat. They need to imagine Yahweh implementing such a threat and to repent while they have the chance. If the prohibition and Jeremiah’s reporting of it are part of an attempt to get through to the people, then, there need be no implication that Jeremiah is being actually or permanently forbidden to pray. Jer 37 and 42 imply that he didn’t take the prohibition literally, or permanently; the subsequent repetition of the injunction (11:14; 14:11) perhaps implies that he never stopped praying.[[46]](#footnote-46) Indeed, perhaps the “dire command” that Jeremiah should not pray is “all the while implying its opposite…. Is not a plea implied in the command to cease and desist? In effect: Do not give up on this people!”[[47]](#footnote-47) But anyway, the reporting of the command is an element within Jeremiah’s preaching, and its repetition underlines how terrible a message was the reporting of this injunction to the people, and how powerfully it was thus hoped to move them.

**17-18** The reason for the prohibition lies not in what people are doing in the temple, which may be quite orthodox, nor in what they are doing in mutual relationships in the community (as in vv. 2-15), though it is a variant on going after other deities, to which that first message referred. It lies in *what they are doing in Judah’s towns and in Jerusalem’s streets*. Jeremiah is contrasting what happened in the temple in public worship and what happened elsewhere, and suggesting that the practices in question took place throughout city and country. *The children* and *the fathers* are involved in making the fire ready for baking*,* as *the women are kneading dough to make loaves for the Queen of the Heavens*, ready for a family celebration. “He mentions the various household members, the ‘children,’ the ‘fathers’ and the ‘mothers’ (or ‘wives’), in order to show that there was no age group that was dissenting from this impiety,”[[48]](#footnote-48) and that it involved people of both sexes. Understood positively, this worship was a homely, family affair that gave women a role that they didn’t have in temple worship. Is Yahweh being snide towards the men in implying that they’ve been sucked into involvement in family celebrations centered on women and children when they ought to be been exercising some authority as the heads of households?[[49]](#footnote-49) “Queen of the Heavens” is an all-purpose title like Lord; it could be applied to a chief goddess in a number of different religious systems.[[50]](#footnote-50) Jeremiah doesn’t indicate what name she would have had, though in the context of Josiah’s reformation 2 Kgs 23:13 mentions Ashtoreth.[[51]](#footnote-51) Either Josiah’s reformation didn’t reach family spirituality, or the message reflects the revival of practices that Josiah terminated. Certainly the Queen of the Heavens continued to figure in popular spirituality (44:15-25). An advantage of not giving her a name was that Jeremiah’s condemnation could cover any goddess who could be thought of in these terms.[[52]](#footnote-52) The loaves or cakes would incorporate a symbol of her (cf. 44:19)[[53]](#footnote-53) or might be figurines[[54]](#footnote-54) and/or would be presented to her in some way, as *pouring libations to other gods* was another aspect of this family worship. It’s as if people are deliberately engaged in these observances *for the sake of irking me*, to exasperate me, make me gnash my teeth (Ps 112:10), provoke me to anger, and drive me to take action in light of them.[[55]](#footnote-55)

**19-20** Yahweh oversimplifies when he asks, *is it me that they are irking* or is it really *themselves*; his point is that they are going to end up as exasperated as he is. It’s as if they are deliberately acting *for the sake of their visible shame*; they are going to end up shamed and ashamed when Yahweh responds (see 2:26). How much Yahweh has oversimplified becomes explicit when he describes how *my furious anger is going to pour on this place*, on *human being*, and also on *animal, tree, and fruit* – because humanity depends on them. “There is no talk here of sparing innocent civilians, women and children, animals, or the rest of Yahweh’s good creation.”[[56]](#footnote-56) Humanity and the animal world were created on the same day, they were given the same blessing; they are also burdened with the same curse (cf. 12:4), they share in the confusion of humanity’s existence, but they will also share in its deliverance from bondage into liberty.[[57]](#footnote-57) In the meantime, however, Yahweh’s wrath *will burn and not go out.* The people are storing up wrath for themselves on the day of wrath (Rom 2:5).[[58]](#footnote-58) It is *the Lord Yahweh* who says so, which aptly affirms the sovereign status of Yahweh over against the Queen of the Heavens as Isa 6:1 affirms Yahweh’s sovereign status over against the earthly king.[[59]](#footnote-59) The long declaration of Yahweh’s intent in v. 20, which occupies nearly one-third of the section, is a clue to the fact that the indirect audience of this message to Jeremiah is still the Judahite people. They need to know what Yahweh has said to him. It is a terrible threat to talk of lighting such an unquenchable fire, and they need to imagine Yahweh implementing such a threat and to repent whole they have the chance.

## About Yahweh’s Priorities (7:21-28)

21Yahweh of Armies, Israel’s God, has said this: Your whole offerings – add thema to your fellowship sacrifices and eat meat. 22Because I didn’t speak with your ancestors and I didn’t order them, at the time of my getting them outb of the country of Egypt, on matters of whole offering or fellowship sacrifice. 23Rather, this thing I ordered them: Listen to my voice, and I will become God for you and you will become a people for me; and go by the entire path that I order you, so that it may be good for you. 24But they didn’t listen, they didn’t bend their ear, but went by plans, by the determinationc of their dire thinking. They became backward not forward 25from the day when yourd ancestors got out of the country of Egypt until this day. I sent to you all my servants the prophets, by day,e sending assiduously.f 26But they didn’t listen to me, they didn’t bend their ear. They stiffened their neck – they acted more direly than their ancestors.

27You will speak to them all these things, but they won’t listen to you. You will call to them but they won’t answer you. 28And you will say to them:g This is the nation that didn’t listen to the voice of Yahweh its God and didn’t accept restraint – truthfulness has perished and cut itself off from their mouth.h

Cf. LXX, Vg, Tg, though *sәpû* is also the imperative from *sāpâ* “sweep away,” and Jeremiah might have no objection if his audience picked up this nuance.

Q *hôṣî’î*; K implies simply *hôṣî’*.

The combination of “by plans” and “by the determination of their thinking” corresponds to the parallelism in Ps 81:12 [13], but the combination may result from the text being conflate.

LXX, Vg, have “their.”

Vg has *per diem*,“day after day” or “day by day,” which makes good sense, but there are no other instances of *yôm* having this meaning (see *DCH* 4:182); Syr does imply *yôm yôm*.

See the note and comment on v. 13.

LXX has a much shorter version of vv. 26-28, lacking the whole of v. 27.

MT has a section marker here.

This time, a new introduction marks a new message. The people do offer proper worship, but Yahweh returns to the problem on which vv. 1-15 focused, that outside worship there is no discipline or truthfulness about their life. The argument here is that the very scriptural story shows that for God truthfulness is the first priority without which worship means nothing. The section outlines:

v. 21a introduction

 v. 21b Yahweh’s bidding to the people

 vv. 22-23 the rationale:

 vv. 22-23 what Yahweh did not and did say

 vv. 24-25a how people responded

 v. 25b what Yahweh further did

 v. 26 how they further responded

 v. 27 Yahweh’s double bidding to Jeremiah and the response they will give

 v. 28 Yahweh’s further bidding to Jeremiah – what he is to say to them

**21** Yahweh’s instructions recall the instructions a priest might give to potential worshipers, as in vv. 3-11, though here they are more like a “parody.”[[60]](#footnote-60) The one who speaks is again *Yahweh of Armies, Israel’s God* (see v. 3), with the implications of that double description, and he is again being dismissive of *whole offerings* and *fellowship sacrifices* (see 6:20), though here he neatly nuances the point. God and people share fellowship sacrifices, whereas people gave the entirety of their whole offerings to God. You can keep both of them, Yahweh says. *Eat meat*. It’s just a meal. Enjoy your steak, kiddo. There’s nothing religious or sacred about it. “Eat, then, and stuff your stomachs.”[[61]](#footnote-61) Yahweh can speak positively about whole offerings and fellowship sacrifices (17:26), about priests enjoying their share of the sacrifices (31:14), about the people bringing thanksgiving sacrifices in the rebuilt temple (33:11), and about there being priests there to oversee the presenting of whole offering and fellowship sacrifice (33:18). Even in this chapter his reference to his name being proclaimed in the temple, its dwelling in the sanctuary at Shiloh, and his outrage at the temple being turned into a robbers’ den indicate that he is not in principle dismissive of its worship.[[62]](#footnote-62) But those facts don’t hinder him from being scornful here, for the reasons that will follow.

**22-23** Neither do they hinder him from offering a selective account of his relationship with Israel. Whereas people evidently think that he views sacrifices as very important, history should remind them of the relatively low place they have in his interests. *I didn’t speak with your ancestors* about them, *and I didn’t order them, at the time of my getting them out of the country of Egypt*. Remind yourselves of the story, will you. Yahweh again speaks hyperbolically. The ordinances in Exod 20:22 – 23:33 begin with an altar for whole offerings and fellowship sacrifices, and maybe these ordinances shaped people’s thinking.[[63]](#footnote-63) Indeed, before the exodus Moses spoke about such offerings (Exod 10:25). But it was way earlier that Yahweh had said, “I shall take you for myself as a people and I shall become God for you” (Exod 6:7). Possibly here Yahweh is referring to individuals bringing whole offerings and fellowship sacrifices, which at Sinai he mentioned only later (e.g., Lev 1 – 3), rather than to the regular order of sanctuary worship.[[64]](#footnote-64) But anyway, the first thing Yahweh said to the Israelites at Sinai was, “If you really listen to my voice and keep my pact, you’ll be for me personal treasure from among all the peoples” (Exod 19:5), and his first requirements that Exodus reports, in the Decalogue, make no mention of offerings. *To go in the entire path that I order you* does not have its focus on sacrifices; what I want is that you should *listen*, he says. The synagogue lectionary nicely sets this Jeremiah passage alongside a reading from Leviticus about offering sacrifices; it would be a comfort once sacrifices became impossible after A.D. 70,[[65]](#footnote-65) and it might have already been a comfort after 587. Anyway, Yahweh’s hyperbole should not be taken simplistically, any more than when he said he didn’t make the pact with the exodus generation but with the next generation (Deut 5:3), and spoke more unequivocally than he meant (cf. Mark 9:37; John 12:44; Acts 5:4; 1 Cor 1:17).[[66]](#footnote-66)

**24** *But they didn’t listen*: he will repeat they didn’t listen (v. 26), they won’t listen (v. 27), they didn’t listen (v. 28). *They didn’t bend their ear*: more literally, they didn’t turn their ear (*nāṭâ* hiphil) in the right direction in order to hear what was being saying to them. It’s another distinctively Jeremianic expression (cf. v. 26), which otherwise comes mostly in the Psalms in appeals to Yahweh to turn his ear and in Proverbs in comments on the wisdom of turning one’s ear to good teaching. The Israelites weren’t prepared to pay God the compliment of doing to him as they asked him to do to them, and they were like the fool rather than the wise person in their openness to learning. It’s as if they didn’t have ears (5:21) or as if their ears have flaps over them (6:10). Instead of bending them, people made up their own minds about how to live. They *went by plans, by the determination of their dire thinking* (see 3:17). They went *backward* away from the direction Yahweh pointed (cf. Isa 1:4) *not forward* in the direction he did point – like oxen “which, when put to the yoke, pull back their necks, and will not draw as they are directed.”[[67]](#footnote-67)

**25-26** When Yahweh thinks back, less happily than he did in 2:2, to *the day when your ancestors got out of the country of Egypt*, he recalls that they were doing so from the beginning; the memory is here less rose-tinted.[[68]](#footnote-68) And they have been behaving that way *until this day*. He has been trying to get through to them all this time: *I sent to you* (here the present generation whom Jeremiah identifies with their ancestors poke through the rhetoric) *all my servants* (sending servants is what a king does) *the prophets*, *by day* (maybe implying “daily,” another hyperbole),[[69]](#footnote-69) *sending assiduously*. He thus reformulates the words in v. 13, making explicit that his prophets were his means of speaking (see 2:30; 5:13; 6:17). And he reformulates the image of turning their ears so as to listen: instead they stiffened their neck, so that their head wouldn’t turn and listen. To put back the rose-tinted glasses, they have been worse than their ancestors in this respect. *My servants the prophets* is a distinctively Jeremianic phrase (25:4; 26:5; 29:19; 35:15; 44:4) and consistently “characterizes the Israelites as stubbornly rebellious throughout their history,” though it is introduced to make different points in the different passages.[[70]](#footnote-70)

**27** So don’t expect people to listen, Yahweh bids Jeremiah. You will have the same experience as I have had (v. 13), says Yahweh encouragingly. Perhaps he gives Jeremiah this bidding so that he’s not surprised or put off by the results of his ministry, or inclined to blame himself as a failure. But the words are again meant for the Judahites to hear, to push Jeremiah’s audience to a reaction that disproves them. They would also function as a strange reassurance for people reading them the other side of 587. “The threat of God’s failure and the failure of prophecy is the great mythic terror haunting… [the book called] ‘Jeremiah.’”[[71]](#footnote-71) Yahweh’s words affirm that the people’s resistance didn’t catch Yahweh (or Jeremiah) out.

**28** These functions fit with the rhetorically strange nature of what follows. Perhaps this third-person description of themselves may encourage them to look at themselves from the outside, and encourage people living decades later to think of them this way, and to learn from their warning example. Calvin thus prays: “Grant, Almighty God, that since we have been abundantly taught by ancient examples how insane they are who bend not under thy threatenings, and repent not in due time while thou invitest them to repentance, — O grant, that we may wholly give up ourselves to be disciplined by thee.”[[72]](#footnote-72) But they *didn’t accept restraint*, constraint or discipline or instruction (see 2:19-20, 30; 5:3, 5; 6:8): they were an embodiment of stupidity. *Truthfulness* (see 5:1, 3) has disappeared from the community; it has *cut itself off from their mouth.* It’s just not the way the community temporarily operates (see 5:1-5 further). Truthfulness *perished*. It’s died.

The closing verses manifest rhythm and parallelism and one could read them as poetic lines:[[73]](#footnote-73)

I sent you all my servants the prophets,

 by day, sending assiduously.

But they didn’t listen to me,

 they didn’t bend their ear.

They stiffened their neck –

they acted more direly than their ancestors.

You will speak to them all these things,

 but they won’t listen to them.

You will call to them,

 but they won’t answer you.

You will say to them: this is the nation that

Didn’t listen to the voice of Yahweh its God

and didn’t accept restraint.

 Truthfulness has perished,

and cut itself off from their mouth.

A transition to poetry (albeit prosaic poetry) as Yahweh moves from speaking about Judah to addressing Jeremiah himself would correspond to this move at 1:17. And more certainly the verse that follows comprises two poetic lines.

## About an Ultimate Sacrifice (7:29-34)

29Shave your consecrationa and throw it away,

 raise a mourning song on the bare heights.

Because Yahweh has rejected,

 deserted the generation with which he is furious.b

30Because the Judahites have done what is dire in my eyes (Yahweh’s affirmation) – they have put their detestable things in the house over which my name has been proclaimed, to defile it. 31They have kept buildingc shrinesd at the Shameful Fireplace,e which is in the Ben-Hinnom Ravine, to consume their sons and their daughters with fire, which I did not order; it did not arise in my mind.f

32Therefore, there, days are coming (Yahweh’s affirmation) when “the Shameful Fireplace” and “Ben-Hinnom Ravine” will no more be said, but rather “Slaughter Ravine.” They will bury in “a shameful fireplace” because there is no room. 33This people’s corpseg will be for food for the bird in the heavens and for the animal in the earth, with there being no one disturbing them.h 34I will stop from Judah’s towns and from Jerusalem’s streets the voice of joy and the voice of rejoicing, the voice of bridegroom and the voice of bride, because the country will become a waste.

Sym appositely renders *nēzer* “the sacred hair of your Naziriteship.”

Literally, “the generation of his fury.”

The *wәqatal* perhaps refers to the building and then rebuilding after Josiah’s reformation, and/or links with the plural “shrines” which follows.

LXX, Tg have singular “a shrine.”

Etymologically, *tōpet* suggests a hearth (see *HALOT*), which fits the role it fulfills, but the spelling make a connection with the *bōšet*, “shame” (LXX has *tapheth).*

MT has a section marker here.

*Nәbēlâ* is both numerical singular and collective singular – here the latter; thus LXX, Tg have “corpses,” though Vg has singular.

Vv.30-31 appear in an alternative form as 32:34-35, and vv. 31-33 as 19:5-7.

In 7:29 – 8:3 Jeremiah brings this section’s accusations to a double horrifying climax. First, the people are involved in forms of worship to other deities that involve sacrificing their children. Death will follow. As Jer 26 gives the narrative context for 7:1-15, Jer 19:1-13 indicates the narrative context for 7:30-34 (see esp. 19:5-7). The message again suggests the revival of practices that Josiah terminated (see 2 Kgs 23:10),[[74]](#footnote-74) such as Ezekiel documents. The section outlines:

7:29 a summary declaration of punishment in two bicola

7:30-31 the background: a confrontation

7:32-34 the foreground: a series of warnings

**29** *You* is feminine singular, so Jeremiah reverts to addressing Jerusalem, with an isolated poetic declaration that will be explained by the horrors of vv. 30-34. As the object of *shave*, *your consecration* (*nēzer*) refers to the hair as a sign of the consecration involved in a nazirite vow (see Num 6). Jerusalem is like a woman who has undertaken such a vow of dedication to Yahweh. At the completion of the consecration period, one would cut one’s hair and make it part of an offering. Here Yahweh dismisses this offering as he dismissed people’s sacrifices when he told them to treat them as a steak dinner. Don’t think of offering your cut hair. Just *throw it away*. And *raise a mourning song on the bare heights* – not in the temple, and perhaps not even in some shrine on those heights: but see 3:2, 21; and Lamentations for such expressions of grief that could be offered in the ruins of the temple after the fall of Jerusalem. The relationship of dedication presupposed by the vow is over. “Life has taken a cruel turn; lamentation is the only adequate response.”[[75]](#footnote-75)*Because Yahweh has rejected* not just people like Egypt and Assyria on whom Judah relied (2:37)*,* but Judah itself (6:30).

**30** Why has he taken that drastic action? The readers know the answer, if they are reading the Jeremiah scroll sequentially, or even if they are reading the messages in this section sequentially. But Yahweh has more horrendous things to say that explain Yahweh’s walking out on *the* *Judahites* because they *have* *done what is dire in my eyes*. In 4:1 it wasn’t quite explicit whether they had *put their detestable things* (presumably divine images) *in the house over which my name has been proclaimed* or whether the images were just in other shrines or in people’s homes, but now it is explicit. On the other hand, Yahweh doesn’t quite say here that they have done so “in order to defile it” (contrast v. 10). But the effect of their action is *to defile it*, as their ancestors defiled the country (2:7). To say that the temple is defiled is a horrifying statement. The Day of Atonement cleansed it of defilement because the accumulation of defilement there would make it impossible for Yahweh to be present; one doesn’t want to go into one’s own house if someone has defiled it. The Judahites have turned the temple into a place that Yahweh is bound to abandon.

**31** By no means is that all. They have also defiled themselves by their activities in the *Ben-Hinnom Ravine* (2:23), where *they have kept building shrines at the Shameful Fireplace*. A shrine is a *bāmâ*, conventionally a “high place.” But this reference to shrines in a canyon indicates that there is no need for these places to be on high. They are simply worship places. The Shameful Fireplace appears only in 7:31-32; 19:1-15; 2 Kgs 23:10 (cf. also Isa 30:33). Second Kings 23:10 refers only to passing one’s children through fire: this expression (which comes in Jer 32:35 and elsewhere) may denote a dedication ceremony that does not involve their death; they would come out the other side of the fire after a rite that was perhaps something like an ordeal by fire. But here the rite was one that involved parents offering children in sacrifice. Yahweh’s words imply that they thought they were offering them to Yahweh, but 19:5 sees them as offered to the Master and 32:35 nuances the point by speaking of them as offered to Molek[[76]](#footnote-76) – whom 2 Kgs 23:10-13 mentions in the same context as Ashtoreth.[[77]](#footnote-77) Parents would first slaughter them, then *incinerate their sons and their daughters in the fire*, as happened with a sacrificial animal in the temple (cf. Ezek 16:21). Jeremiah uses a distinctively everyday word for burning (*šārap*), a term you would use for disposing of the remains of an offering, not the term for the proper burning of a sacrifice (*qāṭar* piel; 33:18), which Jeremiah uses even for the less horrifying offerings to other deities (v. 9).To sacrifice your child is an ultimate sacrifice and when parents were under pressure they were prepared to do it (see 2 Kgs 3:27).[[78]](#footnote-78) But while Yahweh did “claim” firstborn sons, whose parents bought them back by providing an animal as a substitute, actually sacrificing sons or daughters was something *which I did not order; it did not arise in my mind*. The comment (repeated in 19:5; 32:35) suggests that people thought he had done so, but Deut 12:31 makes explicit that people are not to make this kind of offering to Yahweh.

**32-33** Yahweh will definitely take action in relation to this practice in due course. *Days are coming* is another characteristically and distinctively Jeremianic phrase; it comes fifteen times in Jeremiah and only six times elsewhere.[[79]](#footnote-79)It refer to an event that will be of huge importance, will make a big difference, may be bad news or good news, is quite certain, but may not happen tomorrow (e.g., 23:5, 7). Yahweh will then take action as a result of which the names *“the Shameful Fireplace” and “Ben-Hinnom Ravine” will no more be said, but rather “Slaughter Ravine.”* In Yahweh’s assessment of the sacrifices people offer there, *slaughter ravine* is what it is already. It’s just a place where people kill their children. But the name will become appropriate for another reason. People *will bury in “a shameful fireplace” because there is no room* anywhere else in Jerusalem, when Yahweh lets loose his fury on the city. To tweak the image again, that event will mean the death of the city or the people itself, and it then will be as if*this people’s corpse will be for food for the bird in the heavens and for the animal on the earth*. There will be no one to stop these creatures enjoying their feast, *no one disturbing them*, as Deut 28:26 says. There will be no Rizpah guarding this corpse (2 Sam 21:10).

**34** Yahweh adds that he *will stop from Judah’s towns and from Jerusalem’s streets the voice of joy and the voice of rejoicing, the voice of bridegroom and the voice of bride*. Itis to add another image for the death of the city and the people.[[80]](#footnote-80) Logically, child sacrifice leads to an end to childbearing.[[81]](#footnote-81) More broadly, marrying and being willing to have children is a statement of hope for the future. In Jerusalem there will be no marriage, no children, and no future, *because the country will become a waste*, and will stay that way.[[82]](#footnote-82) “Instead of a wedding there will be a funeral, or rather a non-funeral. Since a funeral would be more than Israel deserves, according to God, her dead body will instead be left uncared for and unburied on the earth, exposed to the elements, food for birds of prey and wild animals.”[[83]](#footnote-83)

## About Looking to the Sun, the Moon, and the Stars (8:1-3)

1At that time (Yahweh’s affirmation) people will geta the bones of the kings of Judah, the bones of his officials, the bones of the priests, the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the people who live in Jerusalem, out of their graves. 2They will spread them out to the sun, to the moon, and to the entire heavenly army that they loved, that they served, that they went after, that they had inquired of and that they bowed down to – they will not be gathered and they will not be buried; manure on the face of the ground they will become. 3And death will be chosen rather than life by the entire remainder of the people who remain from this dire kin-group in all the places of the people who remain where I have driven them away (an affirmation of Yahweh of Armies).b

For Q *yôṣî’û* K implies *wәyōṣî’û* (simple *waw* plus yiqtol) following the extraposed phrases (*TTH* 125).

1. MT has a marker here.

The chapter division in printed Bibles is odd; MT continues without even a section break. But these three verses do move to a different offense, that of seeking the help of the gods that lie behind sun, moon, and stars. For this offense, too, there will be redress. The section outlines:

vv. 1-2 what will happen to Jerusalemites

v. 3 how the survivors will react

**8:1** There is thus another grisly scene to portray, though the gruesomeness lies in the punishment rather than in the offense. *That time* is apparently the time when the outpouring of Yahweh’s fury (7:29) has happened. People have come to recognize what earned it. In their anger and resentment, they *will get the bones of the kings of Judah… his officials… the priests… the prophets, and the people who live in Jerusalem, out of their graves*, a terrible act of redress. The list seems to cover everyone, in keeping with the way Jeremiah’s critique has covered everyone (e.g., 5:1-9); it would be literalistic to ask who is left to do the exhuming. When one’s loved ones die, one buries them carefully so that they are “at rest”; their body’s resting is the outward equivalent of their spirit’s resting in Sheol. But if their body is not thus at rest, their spirit cannot be, because they are the two aspects of the person. And will be impossible for the living to relate to them anymore, for instance by going to their tomb: “the living and the deceased individual [are] permanently estranged.”[[84]](#footnote-84)

**2** There will then be some poetic justice about what people do with these bones. They will *spread them out to the sun, to the moon, and to the entire heavenly army*. The observance of celestial phenomena was basic to Assyrian and Babylonian thinking, policy-making, and religion. It generated clever and sophisticated algorithms, and the Judahites had been accustomed to turn to the gods represented by the planets. The reference here is thus to a more public and officially-sponsored form of worship (cf. 2 Kgs 21:3; 23:5; Ezek 8:16) than the family worship of 7:29-34.[[85]](#footnote-85) “The judgment takes on an ironic twist”; it was Judah’s worship of these deities that had led to the judgment.[[86]](#footnote-86) A terrible list of the aspects of that worship follows. These are the deities *that they loved, served, went after, had inquired of, and bowed down to*. All but the fourth verb has come already in this scroll (the fourth will come in 10:21). They could sum up a relationship with Yahweh. But in these people’s spirituality they have other objects. So let them lie before these other entities that they once honored. And the spreading will be their final fate. While grave robbing is one reason for this kind of action,[[87]](#footnote-87) it’s also simply a dishonoring and disturbing and defiling (cf. 2 Kgs 23:16). *They will not be gathered and not buried; manure on the face of the ground they will become*. They will never have any rest.

**3** People who escape death in the city (perhaps they are the people who take the action just described) might congratulate themselves on being *the remainder… who remain… the people who remain*. The excessive repetition underlines the idea of their being the remnant, what Jer 24 will later call the good figs. But perhaps their being *in all the places… where I have driven them* (another Jeremianic phrase) should have given them a hint that they are not destined for much of a life there. “Shall they be called ‘the living’? They are no more alive… than stalking corpses.”[[88]](#footnote-88) They will end up wishing they hadn’t escaped death in Jerusalem. Their life will be so horrible that *death will be chosen rather than life* by them, if they had the choice. Fortunately, it’s not the last thing Yahweh has to say about them (see e.g., 23:1-8). Meanwhile, in view of the possibility of being reduced because of their dire behavior so that they remain as only a tiny number and are thrown out of the country that Yahweh is giving them, Deut 30:19-20 urges people to choose life rather than death, by loving Yahweh, listening to Yahweh, and holding onto Yahweh.

# Three Exchanges (8:4 – 9:26 [25])

Within 2(a) we move to a new compilation of messages in poetry running from 8:4 to 9:26 [25], after which 10:1 marks another new start; for convenience I will refer to this unit as Jer 8 – 9. It compares with Jer 2 – 6 in constituting a compilation of short poetic messages that interweave confrontation concerning the life of Judah, warning about trouble that will follow, and exhortation to turn back, and thus it might form part of the “many words like them” that were added to the original 604 scroll. But compared with Jer 2 – 6, it includes much more by way of comments and reactions by Jeremiah and by Judah. Indeed, its central, dominant, and distinctive feature is a series of spirited exchanges between Yahweh and Judah, Yahweh and Jeremiah, and Jeremiah and Judah. We hear the voice of Judah, the voice of Jeremiah himself, and the voice of Yahweh interacting with these two voices. It brings into focus the “polyphonic” nature of the Jeremiah scroll[[89]](#footnote-89) and suggests a move away from simply assertive discourse.[[90]](#footnote-90) It reflects the fact that the Jeremiah scroll reflects a situation of conflict.[[91]](#footnote-91) It thus constitutes the first of a number of passages in Jer 7 – 20 that represent “voices in dialogue,”[[92]](#footnote-92) though all three voices are as Jeremiah articulates them, and the voices are not so much in conversation as talking past each other or interrupting each other.[[93]](#footnote-93) “The interweaving of speakers gives the text a certain liturgical character, but it may be more accurate to say that we hear a *cacophony* of mourning at Israel’s destruction.”[[94]](#footnote-94) It commonly moves without announcement between words of Yahweh, words of Jeremiah, and words of Judah – sometimes in ways that are clear (e.g., at 8:14, 17, 19b, 20), sometimes in ways that are more ambiguous (e.g., at 8:18, 21, 22, 9:1, 2 [8:18, 21, 22, 23; 9:1]). The unannounced shifts suggest “the chaos… of traumatic contemplation.”[[95]](#footnote-95) The alternating is marked in MT by a much increased frequency of section markers. In the translation I have sometimes added quotation marks to make transitions in the exchanges more visible. The unit outlines:

8:4-7 An opening challenge about turning and acknowledging,

8:8-20 Exchanges between Yahweh and Judah

8:21 – 9:16 [15] Exchanges between Yahweh and Jeremiah

9:17-22 [16-22] Exchanges between Yahweh and Judah

9:23-26 [22-25] A concluding challenge about smartness and acknowledging

## The Opening Challenge, and Exchanges between Yahweh and Judah (8:4-20)

4And you will say to them:a

Yahweh has said this,

Do people fall and not get up,

 or does someone turn and not turn?

5Why is this people one that turns,b

Jerusalem a turner,c perpetually?d

They have grasped hold of duplicity –

they have refused to turn.

6I have paid heed and listenede –

they do not speak thus.f

There is no one relenting of his dire action,

 saying “What have I done?”

Everyoneg has turned, running,h

 like horsei flooding into the battle.

7Even a stork in the heavens –

she acknowledges her seasons.

Pigeon, swift,j and swallow –

they keep the time for their coming.

But my people – they do not acknowledge

 Yahweh’s authoritative decision.

8How can you say, “We are smart,

 and Yahweh’s instruction is with us”?

Actually, there, it is for deception

 that the scribes’ pen of deception acts.

9Smart people act shamefully –

 they break down,k and get caught.l

There, Yahweh’s message they reject;

 smartness in what do they have?m

10Therefore I will give their women to others,

 their fields to dispossessors.

Because from small to big,

 everyonen is grabbing what can be grabbed.

From prophet to priest,

 everyone is practicing deception.

11They have healed my dear people’so shattering lightly,

 saying “Things are perfectly well.”

But things are not well –

12they have acted shamefully, because it is something offensive that they have done.

Moreover they do not feel any shame at all,

 they do not know how to feel disgrace.

Therefore they will fall among the people who fall;

 at the time of their being attended to, they will collapse (Yahweh has said).p

13I will gather and finish them offq (Yahweh’s affirmation),

 no grapes on the vine,

no figs on the fig tree.

The foliage withers,

 and what I have given themr will pass away for them.s

14For what reason are we sitting? –

 gather, so we can come to the fortified town.

We can perish there,t

 because Yahweh our God has doomed us to perish.u

He has made us drink polluted water,v

 because we did wrong by Yahweh.

15Hopingw for things to be well, but no good,

 for a time of healing, but there, terror.

16From Dan has made itself heardx

 his horses’ snorting.

From the sound of his sturdy ones’ neighing

 the entire country has quaked.

They have come and consumed the country and what fills it,

 the city and the people who live in it.y

17”Because here am I,

sending off snakesz against you,

Adders for which there is no charming,

 and they will bite you (Yahweh’s affirmation).”aa

18My cheerfulnessbb in sorrow –

 in me my heart is sick.

19There, the sound of my dear people’s cry for help,

 from the country far off.

Isn’t Yahweh in Zion,

 or her King, isn’t he in her?

“Why have they irked me with their images,

 with alien empty things?”

20Harvest has passed, summer is gone,

 and we – we haven’t found deliverance.

1. LXX has a tighter link with what precedes: “because the Lord says these things.”
2. LXX, Vg take feminine *šôbәbâ* as a verb, but its subject “this people” is masculine. Taking itas a noun (Volz, *Jeremia*, 107) is less harsh; it then anticipates feminine “Jerusalem” (which LXX lacks).

LXX, Vg give *mәšubâ* its common abstract meaning “turning” (cf. 2:19; 3:22; 5:6; 14:7 – all plural) but the concrete meaning (cf. 3:6, 9, 11, 12 – all singular) fits here; it then stands in apposition to *šôbәbâ* as a variant way of saying the same thing.

Literally, “being perpetual” (niphal participle); at the end of the line it qualifies both *šôbәbâ* and *mәšubâ*.

LXX has imperatives (Aq, Sym have first person).

Cf. LXX for *kēn* meaning *thus* (BDB, 485-87) rather than “what is right” (Vg; BDB, 467).

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

Literally, “in their running” (cf. 23:10). A homonym *mәruṣâ* from *rāṣaṣ* means “crushing, oppression” (22:17) and Jeremiah’s hearers might pick up its overtones in this context (cf. 23:9 and the comment). Tg, Syr derive the word from r*āṣâ* “be pleased with/determined” rather than *rûṣ* “run,” and K’s plural *mәruṣôtām* for Q’s singular *mәruṣātām* might imply this understanding (cf. Syr).

Like other terms for animals, *sûs* can be collective (cf. 51:27; Volz, *Jeremia*, 107); a single horse cannot really flood (*šāṭap*).

K has *sûs*, a homonym for the word for “horse”; Q has *sîs*, perhaps to distinguish it from that other *sûs* (BDB). There is some uncertainty about the identity of this bird and the third, *‘āgûr*.

LXX and Vg imply a metaphorical meaning, Tg and Syr a literal shattering.

The verbs in vv. 8b-9 are qatal and wayyiqtol; LXX, Vg thus translate as past. But the two in this colon (at least) must refer to a future event; for consistency I have translated all the verbs in vv. 8b-9 by a “timeless” English present. See the introductory comment on 13:18-22.

L has a section marker here.

Cf. v. 6 and the note, and v. 10b.

Literally, “my daughter-people’s”; cf. vv. 21, 22; 9:1 [8:23]; 9:7 [6].

MT has a marker here. Vv. 10-12 are a variant on 6:12-15, where see the notes. LXX lacks vv. 10aγ-12.

Literally, “in gathering I will finish them off”: infinitive of *’āsap* and hiphil of *sûp*, as 5:23; 6:28 combined forms from *sûr* and *sārar* (23:39; 48:9 are further examples of paronomasia involving an infinitive and a finite verb; see DG 101, remark 1). Aq derives both verbs from *sûp*, which would be more common.

With the unmarked relative clause in this elliptical colon, compare 2:8; cf. Vg’s understanding of the second clause. McKane comments, “since [the words’] sense is so suspect, they should be deleted” (*Jeremiah* 1:189); LXX lacks the colon, perhaps because it didn’t understand it (*CTAT* 2:528).

Dative of disadvantage (Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:286).

A single-stress colon in MT, which hyphenates *wәnidmâ-šām*.

On this verb, see the note on 6:2. Vg, Aq, Sym, Syr take the verb each time as *DCH*’s *dāmam* I “be silent.” *DCH* itself links it with its *dāmam* II “weep.” On LXX “throw out,” see D. Weissert, “*APORRIPTEIN* ‘To Pass Over in Silence,’” *Textus* 22 (2005): 77-86.

See the comment on 9:15 [14].

The infinitive absolute takes the place of a finite verb and perhaps makes for some vividness (DG 103b; GK 113ff).

LXX parses *nišma‘* as first-person plural qal yiqtol (cf. 35:8, 10; 42:6, 14) rather than third-person singular niphal qatal (cf. 3:21; 9:19 [18]; 31:15; 38:27; 49:21; 50:46 – the context of the last two occurrences parallels the context here).

MT has a marker here.

Tg makes explicit that the snakes stand for armies.

MT’s section marker here corresponds with v. 18’s being the start of Jeremiah’s expressing his own anguish – but see the introductory comment on 8:21 – 9:16 [15].

*Mablîgîtî* is a hapax from the rare verb *bālag* (cf. Aq). Vg “my sorrow” might imply “my grimace” (Allen, *Jeremiah*, 107, 108). C’s accents imply a division of the word into two (cf. LXX), *mibbәlî* followed by a form from *gāhâ* such as *gēhâ* (*HALOT*, 542), suggesting “from want of curing.”

The opening section in 8:4-20 introduces and then records the first set of exchanges, between Yahweh and Judah, perhaps bringing together some originally separate units (e.g., vv. 4-7, 8-13, 14-17, and 18-20). It outlines:

vv. 4-7 the opening challenge about turning and acknowledging

 a double introduction, then nine bicola

vv. 8-13 Yahweh raises a question with Judah and declares an intent

 eleven bicola, then a tricolon, and a bicolon

vv. 14-16 Judah expresses a sense of panic

 seven bicola

v. 17 Yahweh comments on the panic

 two linked bicola

vv. 18-19a on Judah’s behalf, Jeremiah laments its situation

 three bicola

v. 19b Yahweh comments on the lament

 one bicolon

v. 20 Judah expresses its anguish

 one bicolon

**4aα** *And you will say* *to them* makes a link with what precedes, though not simply with what immediately precedes in 8:1-3 (contrast “and you will say” in 3:12; 5:19; 7:28) but rather with 7:2 – 8:3 as a whole. It thus rather picks up from 7:2 as the introduction to 7:2 – 8:3 as a unit within Jer 7 – 10 as a whole. *And you will say* *to them*, then, in a parallel way introduces 8:4 – 9:26 [25], the second unit within Jer 7 – 10. *Yahweh has said this* then introduces v. 4aβ-7 in particular.

**4aβ** The words that follow are an implicit exhortation to Judah to turn back to Yahweh. Admittedly everything in the Jeremiah scroll is an implicit exhortation of one kind or another. Here the description of vv. 4-7 as an implicit exhortation suggests a comparison and a contrast with the exhortation in 3:1 – 4:4. There Yahweh explicitly urged Judah to turn (e.g., 3:11, 14). Here he talks about turning, but it is only by implication that he urges Judah to turn. Yet in a strange way something left implicit can have a distinctive force if it succeeds in driving the audience to think, and vv. 4-7 has even been called “an emphatic call for repentance.”[[96]](#footnote-96) In form, it has some analogy with Amos 3:3-8 in starting from realities of everyday life and in appealing to aspects of nature,[[97]](#footnote-97) and in seeking to get people’s attention with a rhetorical question and a metaphor. If *people fall*, they *get up*, don’t they? They don’t just lie there, if they can help it. But people who fall often can’t get up again; 6:15 might be worrying background, but there is even more worrying background elsewhere (Amos 5:2; 8:14).[[98]](#footnote-98) Similarly, however, *does someone turn and not turn?* Jeremiah again works with the two sides to the idea of turning (*šûb*). If people turn off the right road, they eventually realize and turn back, don’t they? Well, let’s take the risk of saying yes. What’s your point, Jeremiah?

**5** In the context of the scroll, we know the answer, and people who had listened to Jeremiah before would know the answer. *Turn* and related words have been prominent, especially in Jer 3. Whatever was the right response to the questions in v. 4, there is a mystery about *this people* as *one that turns*, a mystery about *Jerusalem* as a *turner*. It has turned *perpetually.* With his talk of permanency Jeremiah nicely turns back on Judah its question in 3:5. The Judahites *have grasped hold of duplicity* (*tarmît*), too (he has also previously talked about grasping hold of weapons and being grasped by distress: 6:23-24). Duplicity is the quality that enables them to fill their houses with stuff(see 5:27; there *mirmâ*). So *they have* *refused to turn.*

**6** Either Jeremiah (cf. 5:1-7) or Yahweh (cf. 7:11) says, *I have paid heed and listened*. God and/or prophethave heard what *they speak*, and they don’t speak about turning. V. 6aγδ restates the point about refusing to turn: *there* *is no one relenting* and facing the question *“What have I done?”* *Relenting* has a hint of feeling regret but more focus on deciding to act differently.[[99]](#footnote-99) The people’s turning is all of the turningaway variety, though here Jeremiah nuances the accusation. They have *turned* all right, and they are *running* “at full speed,”[[100]](#footnote-100) *like horse flooding into the battle.* They manifest flooding water’s “powerful impetuousness.”[[101]](#footnote-101) In effect Jeremiah is talking about “the demonic power of sin” as Paul will analyze it in Rom 7.[[102]](#footnote-102)

**7** Yahweh offers another puzzled metaphor. The Jordan Valley is a major migration route for birds. Specifically, storks, pigeons, swifts, and swallows migrate from Europe and Asia to Africa in autumn via the Rift Valley and return in spring.[[103]](#footnote-103) A bird thus *acknowledges* the time for migrating, acknowledges the *seasons –* etymologically, the appointed times. The two lines are neatly parallel:

Even a stork in the heavens – she acknowledges her seasons

And pigeon, swift, and swallow – they keep the time for their coming

So why is it that *my people do not acknowledge Yahweh’s authoritative decision* about the course of their life? They don’t acknowledge the way Yahweh exercises authority, which they are supposed to follow (4:2; 5:1, 4, 5, 28; 7:5), or the decision about them that Yahweh has made (1:16; 4:12). It would be smart to let such acknowledgment drive them into turning back.Like Proverbs, Jeremiah appeals to common sense.[[104]](#footnote-104) But Judah lacks the smartness that ordinary creatures show: cf. Isa 1:3;[[105]](#footnote-105) Job 12:7-8.[[106]](#footnote-106) “Every creature is wiser than fickle Israel.”[[107]](#footnote-107) Like v. 5, this contrast with the animate creation suggests that there is something profoundly unnatural about Judah’s behavior. Regular human life and experience show it; the world of nature shows it.

**8a** The implicit exhortation and confrontation becomes explicit. The *you* Jeremiah now directly addresses are the people Yahweh was indirectly addressing in vv. 4-7. Despite what the Judahites *say*, their unwillingness to acknowledge Yahweh’s authoritative decision shows that being *smart* is not their strong suit – or as Jeremiah said earlier, they are smart only at doing dire things (4:22). Here, they associate their claim to smartness with their (purported) possession of *Yahweh’s instruction* (*tôrâ*). They perhaps base their claim on their possession of it. Within Jeremiah’s lifetime an instruction scroll turned up in the temple and was part of the basis for Josiah’s reformation (2 Kgs 22:8, 11; 23:24); the usual scholarly view has been that this scroll was some form of Deuteronomy. While Josiah had implemented some basic requirements of the scroll, the account of his reformation refers only to religious changes not to changes in community life, and both 2 Kings and Jeremiah make clear that even the religious changes were short-lived. Whereas Jer 7 focused more on religious issues, Jer 8 – 9 focuses as much on community issues. It’s always easy for the people of God to slip into thinking that their possessing something like an instruction scroll, a set of Scriptures, is a sign that they are people who acknowledge God, and this dynamic operates in Judah. In theory people acknowledge the authority of Yahweh’s instruction, but in practice they ignore it, or acknowledge it only selectively (cf. 6:19), which could be a reason for Jeremiah raising the question he does.

**8b** But his subsequent comment suggests he has another issue in mind. It was the priests’ business to teach about Yahweh’s instruction (2:8), and if any of that instruction needed to be put into writing, *scribes* were presumably the people who were responsible for that work; a priest could also be a scribe, as Ezra later was, and doubtless a prophet could be, too. But here, the scribes’ *pen* was a means of *deception*. It would have been scribes who put the instruction scroll itself into writing, but in his reference to a pen used deceptively, Jeremiah can hardly be talking about that scroll.[[108]](#footnote-108) His concern for exclusive faithfulness to Yahweh and faithful living in community corresponds to the concerns of Deuteronomy and of the rest of the Torah. Elsewhere he indicates that he is not negative about the Torah in itself (e.g., 2:8; 6:19; 9:13 [12]). But the scribes were presumably also the people who put into writing the words of prophets (as Baruch did for Jeremiah) as well as the teaching in Proverbs; they will have been teachers in the community as well as writers. They might also have put into writing the messages of prophets such as Hananiah, and/or priestly teaching that Jeremiah opposed, and/or more radical alternative instructions about worship – for instance, instructions about making offerings to the Master, to the Queen of the Heavens, to the gods to whom people sacrificed children, and to the sun, the moon, and the heavenly army. The double reference to deception (*šeqer*) supports these latter possibilities: see references to deception such as 3:23; 5:31; 7:9; 9:3 [2]. The situation is not one in which written Torah and spoken message stand in opposition; in their basic thrust the written Torah in Deuteronomy and the preaching of Jeremiah were similar (not least in their rejection of the sacrifice of children);[[109]](#footnote-109) conversely, the people whose instruction Jeremiah opposes would associate themselves with prophets whose message Jeremiah also opposes. While a conflict between Jeremiah and these scribes may link with broader questions concerning the relationship between written text and a spoken word (the period is one in which written text is coming to be significant),[[110]](#footnote-110) here Jeremiah refers to a conflict between rival groups, each with its own Torah[[111]](#footnote-111) and its own prophetic message. Jeremiah’s point is not that people are excessively or exclusively attached to something in writing that presents itself as Yahweh’s instruction. It’s that the thing they are attached to is not really Yahweh’s instruction at all. It’s a “lying Torah.”[[112]](#footnote-112) But exactly how it performs its deception is hard to be sure of. “In the end, such a slim verse resists exact historical placement.”[[113]](#footnote-113)

**9** Whatever this instruction scroll was, it encouraged these allegedly *smart people* actually to *act shamefully* (cf. 2:26). Here, in the parallel colon *they break down*, then *they get caught* (cf. Isa 8:15), which suggests reference not merely to the objective shame of their conduct but to the disgrace they will experience when the untruth of their work is exposed. The inevitability of that exposure lies in the simple fact that *they reject* *Yahweh’s message*: in propagating the teaching they have given or in following that teaching, they have gone against the message Yahweh gives through Jeremiah. So *smartness in what,* smartness of what kind, *do they have?* The references to *Yahweh’s message* and to *smartness* neatly close off vv. 8-9 as they pair (abb’a’) with the opening references to people claiming they are *smart* and to *Yahweh’s instruction*.[[114]](#footnote-114)

**10-12** *Therefore* indicates that the critique in vv. 8-9 is the rationale for the announcement that now follows, a reworking of 6:12-15. It applies to the people who compliment themselves on their smartness the warning that was there articulated more generally, and in this version Yahweh takes more responsibility for what will happens: *I will give their women to others*. Both the men and the women are wayward and both the men and the women will suffer; this comment starts from the angle of the men as Jeremiah’s immediate hearers (contrast Amos 4:1). This version also introduces the word *dispossessors* (*yāraš*), a telling verb that occurs mostly as a description of what Israel will do to the Canaanites – more than fifty times in Deuteronomy alone (this participial form comes in Deut 12:2; 18:14). The God who could dispossess Canaanites for their enormities can dispossess Israelites for theirs. Further, the extra prominence Jeremiah thus gives to *their* *fields* also hints more strongly at a link with the theme of accumulation of fields in Isa 5:8.[[115]](#footnote-115) Yet another aspect of the repetition’s significance is that Jeremiah incorporates two more references to *shame* (*bûš*). The audience might notice that the three references follow up the six references to turning (*šûb*) in vv. 4-7 and that the back-to-front form of the two words corresponds to their back-to-front meaning.[[116]](#footnote-116)

**13** Yahweh adds a further vivid image, familiar but distinctively expressed, to underscore the implications of the repeated lines. Lack of fruit can be a critique of Israel the vine (e.g., Isa 5:1-7), but it here results from Yahweh’s action. Harvesting is uncomfortable for grain and fruit. It can thus be a negative image (cf. 6:9): *I will gather and finish them off.* The declaration about *grapes* and *figs* is not all. If there is no fruit, well maybe next year it will be back. But if *the* *foliage withers*, it suggests the tree is dying.[[117]](#footnote-117) Nothing will be left of Judah when Yahweh is done. Yahweh again affirms that it will be his own action. The attackers will seize the things that can be eaten, but it is Yahweh who will wither the foliage, reverseing his usual involvement in making nature work.[[118]](#footnote-118) *The things that I have given them* – the fruit, the land, the people – will be taken back. They will *pass away for them.*

**14** Suddenly there is a more marked transition than the one between vv. 4-7 and vv. 8-13, though here this subsection with its exhortation to *gather* makes a link with the talk of gathering in v. 13. In Jeremiah’s imagination the situation has jumped forward and the calamity is actually unfolding. The invasion has begun. Residents of villages in Judah speak; we could think of them as responding to the bidding in 4:5. Their question *for what reason* *are we sitting* here? recalls the exhortation to *come to the fortified towns* in 4:6. But the despairing non-rationale for the exhortation, *so we can perish there, because Yahweh our God has doomed us to perish*, presupposes the perspective suggested by the further comment on fortifiedtowns in 5:17. Really, there’s nothing to be gained to taking refuge. The people are in an understandable state of panic, but the action they intend has no logic about it; we often react thus in a crisis. Yahweh *has made us drink polluted water*. In the context, the comment is likely a metaphor, though people would sometimes have this literal experience. The language recalls the image of a chalice that’s been spiked (e.g., Isa 51:17-22). As the invasion begins to happen, Judahites are having to drink that water. They recognize that it is *because we did wrong by Yahweh*. There is a poignancy or sadness about the acknowledgment. It implies either “we have somehow got the wrong side of Yahweh, but we don’t know how,” or “we have done wrong and there’s nothing that can be done about it.” It’s more like a continuation of the cry of despair than a proper confession or act of repentance. And of course either way, they are uttering it only in Jeremiah’s imagination.

**15** The continuing poignancy or sadness suggests the other side to the critique of Judah’s leadership that was just repeated in v. 11. People believed their priests and prophets, but now (in Jeremiah’s imagination) they recognize how they were betrayed. Jeremiah puts the point in two neatly parallel cola.

Hoping for things to be well but no good

 for a time of healing but there terror

**16** They continue to give their report, which is the other side to those biddings in Jer 4 (esp. 4:13, 15), as the invader from the north makes his way towards Judah. They haven’t actually heard the horses’ snorting from a hundred miles away, but they speak as people who know that the invasion has begun and can imagine it unfolding. Are *his horses* the invader’s horses? Or are they Yahweh’s, as Yahweh is the only antecedent for the *his*?[[119]](#footnote-119) Does the country quake because of the thundering of their hooves or because thundering happens when Yahweh advances? In Jeremiah’s imagination projected onto the Judahites’ imagination and exercised for the benefit of the Judahites to whom Jeremiah speaks, the invading horde has advanced in a flash across the hundred miles, has consumed (literally) everything in its path, and has already entered the city where a moment ago the villagers were thinking of taking refuge.

**17** Once more there is an unannounced but clear shift as Yahweh now speaks, in a tough response to the poignancy and apprehension of vv. 14-16. The response presupposes that the comment about having done wrong by Yahweh indeed fell short of a serious acknowledgment of waywardness and a seeking of restoration. It amounts to, “Too right! Indeed I did make you drink contaminated water. To tweak the metaphor, the attackers riding those horses and steeds: you may picture them as *snakes*, specifically as *adders* whose venom is especially lethal, and you may be sure that they are snakes *for which there is no charming*. They are not going to be stopped from biting. And *here am I*, I am indeed the one who is *sending* them *against you*.”

**18** Another unannounced shift follows. While it is a popular and important insight that God suffers with his people,[[120]](#footnote-120) the transition and contrast between wrath and sorrow suggests that here it is Jeremiah who grieves with his people as they are on the receiving end of that wrath – even though he also accepts that this wrath must be exercised. Imagining the catastrophe is therefore no encouragement to Jeremiah, who identifies with his people as well as with Yahweh. The enigmatic phrase *my cheerfulness in sorrow* perhaps suggests that Yahweh is supposed to be or frequently is the one who enables him to be in good spirits even in a context like the one he has been envisaging, as some psalms testify. But it doesn’t work in this situation: *in me my heart is sick ­*– more literally, “upon me my heart is sick.” The idiomatic use of the proposition in each colon functions “to give pathos to the expression of an emotion, by emphasizing the person who is its subject, and who, as it were, feels it acting *upon* him.”[[121]](#footnote-121)

**19a** In the background, then, lies *my* *dear people’s* anguish, its *cry for help* coming from all over *the country*, from the villages that have just been talking about taking refuge in the fortified towns (or perhaps from the people in a country that is itself far off, to which they have been exiled). Jeremiah grieves over their fear, but he also grieves about the lack of insight that it shows, which was implied by the idea that the fortified towns could be a safe refuge. There is only one safe refuge, and that refuge is a person. *Isn’t Yahweh in Zion, or her King, isn’t he in her?* It’s the affirmation that people make in their worship (e.g., Pss 46; 48; 99), and Jeremiah’s contemporary Zephaniah was fond of it (e.g., Zeph 3:15, 17), though Jeremiah isn’t, except in relation to other nations and their gods.[[122]](#footnote-122) And actually, the answer might be “No,” precisely because of lack of insight and unwillingness to acknowledge Yahweh or turn to him in a meaningful way.

**19b** Again Jeremiah hears Yahweh’s retort. “God is indeed present, but present in wrath.”[[123]](#footnote-123) Jeremiah “inverts the problem of theodicy. Instead of attempting to justify the ways of God to humans, Jeremiah poses the question in reverse order: how can you justify the ways of humans to God?”[[124]](#footnote-124) If they are asking questions about the crisis overwhelming them, how about answering this question*. Why have they irked me with their images,* which as such constitute a contravention of the basic terms of the relationship between Yahweh and Israel? What about the *alien* nature of these images (cf. 2:21; 5:19)? Even if it they are indigenous to Canaan, they are alien to what it means to be Israel. And what about the fact that they are *empty things*? (2:5). They are solid, but in a more profound sense they are hollow.

**20** Yet again there is an abrupt shift. The people, or Jeremiah speaking on their behalf, perhaps quote a saying.[[125]](#footnote-125) *Harvest* refers to the barley and grain maturing in April, May, and June. *Summer* then denotes the period when olives, grapes, and other fruits ripen and are gathered, through July, August, and September. Each year the entire period would be a time of anticipation and anxiety. The ripening of the produce over these months decides whether there will be something to eat (and seed to sow) over the next year. The second colon jumps from the metaphor of harvest to the literal reality. What if these seasons metaphorically pass and there is no *deliverance*? The people are portrayed as going through a political and military equivalent of a failure of the harvest, on which Jeremiah imagines them reflecting in anguish. If only the actual Judahites to whom he speaks would themselves imagine that experience and therefore turn back to forestall these horrors!

## Exchanges between Yahweh and Jeremiah (8:21 – 9:16 [15])

21By the shattering of my dear people I have been shattered –

 I am in darkness, desolation has grasped hold of me.

22Is there no ointment in Gilead,

 or is there no healer there?

Because why has it not gone up –

my dear people’s recovery?a

9:1I wish I hadb my head made of water,

 my eye a fountain of tears,

So I could cry day and night

 for those who have been run through from my dear people.c

2I wish I had in the wilderness

a travelers’ lodging,

So I could abandon my people,

 go from being with them.

Because all of them are adulterers,

 a convocation of false people.

3They have directedd their tongue, deception their bow;

 not for truthfulness have they been stronge in the country.

Because from dire action to dire action they have gone out,

 and me they have not acknowledged (Yahweh’s affirmation).f

4They should be wary, each individual of his fellow;

 on every brother do not rely.

Because every brother swindles, swindles,g

 and every fellow lives as a liar.

5They trick, an individual his fellow,

 and truth they do not speak.

They have taught their tongue to speak deception –

 they have got weary in going astray.h

6Your living is in the midst of duplicity;

 in duplicityi they have refused to acknowledge me (Yahweh’s affirmation).j

7Therefore Yahweh of Armies has said this:

Here am I, smelting them and examining them,

 because how can I actk in the face ofl my dear people?

8Their tongue is a hammeredm arrow,

which has spoken duplicity.

With his mouth someone speaks of peace with his fellow,

 but inside him he sets an ambush for him.

9For these thingsn I should attend to them, shouldn’t I (Yahweh’s affirmation),

 and on a nation that is like this

 my spirit should take redress, shouldn’t it?o

10Over the mountains I will lift upp crying and wailing,

 over the wilderness pastures a mourning song.

Because they are laid waste,q so that no one passes through,

 and people have not heard the sound of cattle.

From bird of the heavens to animal,

 they have fled and gone.

11I will make Jerusalem into heaps,

 a home for jackals.

The towns of Judah I will make a desolation

with no one living there.r

12Who is the person who is smart,s

 so he reflects ont this,

and to whom has Yahweh’s mouth spoken so that he can tell it?

For what reason has the country perished,

become wasteu like the wilderness,

with no one passing through?v

13Yahweh said:

Because of their abandoning my instruction,

which I put before them.

They didn’t listen to my voice

and they didn’t go by it.

14They went after the determination of their mind

 and after the Masters,

 which their ancestors taught them.w

15Therefore Yahweh of Armies, Israel’s God, has said this:

Here am I, making them, this people, eat wormwoodx

 and making them drink poisoned water.

16I will scatter them among the nations

 that they and their ancestors have not acknowledged.

And I will send off the sword after them,

 until I have made an end of them.y

A has a chapter marker here.

Literally, “Who will grant/make”: see e.g., *DCH* 5:800-1. The idiom recurs in the next verse.

A has a chapter marker here.

The obvious meaning of *dārak* is “show the way” (*derek*), but the subsequent reference to a bow adds a different nuance (see 46:9 and the note).

LXX “it has grown strong” implies *gābәrâ* for MT *gābәrû*.

 has a section marker here.

The infinitive preceding the finite verb underscores the reality of the action. LXX, Vg “trip up” correspond to the etymology of *‘āqab*.

The asyndeton combined with the reversal of the expected word order suggest that the second clause is subordinate to the first.

The second occurrence of *mirmâ* is preceded by a preposition; the repetition is another instance of anaphora (cf. 8:18) rather than denoting emphasis or indicating the superlative (contrast 6:14; 7:4).

MT has a section marker here.

Vg has “what else can I do?”

LXX, Tg add “the direness of.”

For Q *šāḥuṭ* (cf. Syr, Tg) K implies the active participle *šôḥēṭ* (cf. LXX, Vg).

The inclusion of “to them” (with *b*)later in the colon suggests “for these things” (with *‘al*)rather than “to these people” (contrast 5:9), which is confirmed by the parallel expression “on a nation” (*b* again).

MT has a section marker here.

For MT *’eśśā’* LXX implies *śә’û* “lift up,” which avoids the impression that Yahweh is lifting up the cry.

Vg derives *niṣṣәtû* from *yāṣat* “burn,” suggesting a “scorched earth policy” (McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:204); but see the note on 2:15.

MT has a section marker here.

1. Vv. 12-16 [11-15] are more pedestrian in expression and use some prose forms (the accusative marker, the relative conjunction), but they manifest rhythm and parallelism and their words and imagery are ones that have been characteristic of the poetry in Jer 1 – 6, so I treat them as prosaic verse.

LXX, Vg take the ambiguous *wәyābēn* as qal (cf. v. 17 [16]), but the parallelism with the next colon suggests hiphil (Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 66); maybe it needs to be taken both ways.

See the note on this verb in v. 10.

MT has a marker here.

MT has a marker here.

Vg has “absinth,” which Aq has in the second colon, but this translation is misleading in a modern Western context.

1. MT has a chapter marker here.

In 8: 18-20 Jeremiah began to interweave his talk about Judah’s anguish, and Yahweh’s exchanges in relation to Judah, with talk about his own anguish. “Jeremiah stays close to Yhwh in his articulation of pained, anguished, overwhelming despair.”[[126]](#footnote-126) In 8:21 – 9:16 [15] his laments and Yahweh’s responses to him come into focus.[[127]](#footnote-127) The section outlines:

8:21 – 9:1 [8:21-23] Jeremiah’s lament at the suffering of Judah

9:2-9 [1-8] Yahweh’s response, reminding Jeremiah of the need for his action

 a linked pair of bicola and eight self-contained bicola

then a resumptive introduction, three bicola, and a closing tricolon

9:10 [9] Jeremiah’s further lament at the suffering of Judah

 three bicola

9:11-16 [10-15] Yahweh’s further response, affirming the need for his action

 two bicola and two tricola

 then a resumptive introduction, two bicola, and a tricolon

 and another resumptive introduction and three bicola

Once again the exchange may bring together messages of separate origin: e.g., 9:2-9 and 11-16 [1-8 and 10-15] could have stood on their own, while the multiple introductions and tricola within 9:11-16 [10-15] may indicate that it is itself a compilation.

**21** For all his accepting the propriety of Yahweh’s action, Jeremiah is distraught about it. After all, they are *my dear people*. The connectedness of Jeremiah to his people is key to his ministry; the rhetoric conveys the prophet’s passion for the wounded and broken Judahite people.[[128]](#footnote-128) Once again Jeremiah speaks of the *shattering* that he knows is coming to them (4:6, 20; 6:1, 14; 8:11): it will be like the breaking of a leg or neck or back, for which there can be no healing. The prospect of their breaking already means *I have been shattered*. He cannot but be implicated in what happens. He shares in their fate, in more than one sense, if in Hebrew as in English the image of shattering can picture what happens to people’s spirits as well as to their bodies and their towns. When he speaks of being *in darkness* (*qādar*: the verb often links with mourning, as in 4:28; 14:2)and of *desolation*, he might then be rephrasing what he said in v. 18, but the parallelism may reflect his awareness that he will share in their experience of attack and conquest. When darkness overwhelms them, it falls for him. When desolation overwhelms them (2:15; 4:7, 27; 6:8; 9:11 [10]; 10:22), it falls on him as a member of the community. Being a prophet does not mean he is exempted from what happens, any more than being his scribe does (45:1-5).

**22** If Judah is injured, is there not at least some *ointment*, some balm, some dressing to put on the wound? We have no evidence that *Gilead*, the area east of the Jordan that had once belonged to Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, was known for a healing resin that its trees could produce (LXX and Vg have words for resin); more likely Gilead features because it is on the trade routes from which such useful foreign resources would arrive (cf. Gen 37:25)[[129]](#footnote-129) and therefore a natural direction for a *healer* to look for resources. So why has no one acted to encourage the *recovery* or repairing of the flesh *of my dear people*, so that the wound heals? Jeremiah’s question is rhetorical. He knows the answer, and he wishes they would work it out and turn to Yahweh so that something could be done about it, so the shattering need not happen. (Whereas the implication of the opening question is that there is indeed balm in Gilead but that it will be of no use to facilitate the healing Judah will need, the song “There’s a balm in Gilead” ironically takes the image in a positive direction; Edgar Allen Poe does something gloomier with it.)[[130]](#footnote-130)

**9:1 [8:23]** Jeremiah is living with a vision of what he knows is inevitable unless the Judahites turn. He can see the bodies of *those who have been run through from my dear people*, the victims of slaughter during invasion, siege, and conquest. No doubt he continues to speak of his actual distraught feelings, but the point about articulating them is to confront people with the facts the feelings respond to. Actually, a gargantuan amount of mourning will be required when the disaster comes. There will be so much need to *cry* that one would need to observe the rituals of mourning *day and night*. One would need one’s *head* to be *made of* *water* and one’s *eyes* to be *a fountain of tears* that kept refilling itself like a spring in order to do justice to the catastrophe. He speaks in the manner of a lament psalm or protest psalm;[[131]](#footnote-131) such psalms are designed not merely for someone to articulate on their own behalf but to articulate on behalf of people with whom they identify. It is in this connection that he wishes to be “the weeping prophet”; yet nobody actually weeps in this poem.[[132]](#footnote-132) It’s as if in the trauma they can only talk about weeping.

**2a [1a]** Given that the previous verse had continued his lament, the English Bibles’ chapter division is odd. Printed Hebrew Bibles in their version of the medieval chapter divisions more appropriately locate it here (MT itself has no section break in the vicinity). Whereas the English chapter division may imply the assumption that Jeremiah continues to speak, actually there is a move at this point from Jeremiah’s lament or protest to Yahweh’s lament or protest, which might be seen as a response to Jeremiah’s but also constitutes indirect confrontation of Judah.[[133]](#footnote-133) Jeremiah moves from speaking for himself to speaking for Yahweh. The English chapter division does draw attention to the parallel in the openings to the two verses. Jeremiah has said, *I wish I had….* Now Yahweh counters with his own *I wish I had….* Yahweh is also both like and unlike Elijah in 1 Kgs 19.[[134]](#footnote-134) There will be a parallel in Jesus’s story (see Mk 9:19).[[135]](#footnote-135) Jeremiah’s desire is a reaction to his people’s threatened calamity. Yahweh’s desire is a reaction to what makes the calamity necessary, his response to the questions in 8:19, 22.[[136]](#footnote-136) But the link is thus a “cosmetic hinge” underscoring the transition from sympathy to disgust.[[137]](#footnote-137) A little way from Jerusalem there are khans like the Inn of the Good Samaritan, conveniently located *in the wilderness* half way to Jericho. But Yahweh is not looking for company, in an inn; he will not be referring to a place where people offer hospitality (for a fee), but simply to a place on the road where a traveler might stop (cf. Gen 28:11).[[138]](#footnote-138) The only people in such a *travelers’ lodging* are people who stay for the night and then move on. There *I could abandon my people, go from being with them*. Both expressions are ones Jeremiah has used to describe Israel’s leaving Yahweh (e.g., 1:16; 3:1).

**2b [1b]** Whereas Jeremiah identifies with his people and shares in their pain, Yahweh wants to get away from them *because all of them are adulterers.* While Yahweh is not the lamenter in 9:1 [8:31], he does not view the situation in Judah “with a kind of detached objectivity.”[[139]](#footnote-139) In speaking of adultery, is he referring to their unfaithfulness to him*,* the theme expounded in Jer 3 (see also 4:7), which would make it not unreasonable that the cuckolded husband wishes to walk out of the family home. To put it another way, they are thus *a convocation of false people*: a convocation (*‘ăṣeret*, sometimes *‘ăṣārâ*)is a worship gathering (cf. the traditional translation “solemn assembly”). They gather for great worship occasions but they are a congregation of people who are *false*, the other word that recurred in Jer 3 (see also 5:11). Yahweh will go on in 9:3-6 [2-5] to other aspects of their community life, which may suggest that he is referring to adultery and falsehood within the community (cf. 7:9) as well as in relation to him.

**3 [2]** These two aspects to their waywardness may again feature: *they have directed their tongue* in their worship with *deception* and *not for truthfulness*. Deception featured alongside falsehood in 3:10. But truthfulness has so far referred to community relationships (5:1, 3; 7:28), and here Yahweh speaks about people directing their tongue in the way they direct *their bow*, with its arrows pointed at other people whom they cheat of their rights in the way Jeremiah has described elsewhere. Thus “speech is not a cement or a therapy; it does not promote understanding, tolerance and social health…. Mistrust has become part of the ordinary life of the community and… every social encounter has to be regarded as a possible trap.”[[140]](#footnote-140) Thus t*hey have been strong in the country* like warriors, in particular archers (see 5:20-31), as *from dire action to dire action they have gone out* to act in a way that pays them. The pressure of invasion might put even more pressure on community relationships:[[141]](#footnote-141) while danger and adversity can drive people together, they can drive them apart. Yahweh finally reverts to the way *they have not acknowledged* him – *me* opens the colon. The duplicity of their worship and the duplicity of the rest of their lives are two sides of a coin of non-acknowledgment.

**4 [3]** Some logical though sad advice follows. *Each individual* needs to *be wary of his fellow* and thus not to trust him. A fellow member of the community, your neighbor, is the person who most easily wrongs you. Here, he *lives as a liar* (cf. 6:28), which implies not harmless gossip but falsehood that is the means of robbing you. No wonder the exhortation not to live as a liar is the context in which the Torah tells people to love their neighbor (Lev 19:16-18); and no wonder that loving your enemy is another way to describe loving your neighbor (Matt 5:44). Yahweh’s warning applies regarding *every brother*, on whom you should also *not* *rely* as a speaker of truth. To Western ears this statement about brothers sound harsher than it is, because here brothers will mean other members of the community – they are the same people as your neighbors. The First Testament invites the community to see itself as the family writ large; your neighbors are part of your big extended family. Cheating members of the community is therefore an intra-family wrong. Yahweh underlines the point by his emphatic use of the verb *swindle* (*‘āqab*)which is linked with Jacob’s name and is used in Genesis in connection with his relationship with his brother, so perhaps Jeremiah implies that *brother* may need to be taken in the narrow sense. The only other sure occurrence of the verb outside Genesis comes in a reference to Jacob in Hos 12:3 [4] (though see also Jer 17:9). Jacob’s name suggests he was a crook; being a liar was a means of being a cheat. In a hyperbole like the ones in 5:1-9, Yahweh declares that everyone in Judah is a Jacob (*every… every… every*).

**5 [4]** Thus*an individual tricks his fellow*: Yahweh uses the verb that (ironically) Jacob himself used when accusing his uncle (who counted in that broad sense as his brother) of cheating him (Gen 31:7). *Truth* is not what people’s fellows *speak*; t*hey have taught their tongue to speak deception*. It is the way they *have directed their tongue,* with *deception* as *their bow* (v. 3 [2]). The move to talk of *going astray* (cf. 3:21, related “waywardness”in 2:22; 3:13; 5:25) indicates a transition back to talk about relationships with Yahweh as well as relationships in the community. Ironically, people have put so much effort into *going astray* that *they have got weary*, but the irony is itself ironic, because the weariness has not made them reach the point where they would stop. Will they please think about this irony?

**6 [5]** Presumably Yahweh is now speaking to Jeremiah (as an individual in Judah who is the exception to the rule) when he points out that *your living is in the midst of duplicity*, “as if he didn’t know.” [[142]](#footnote-142) Again it’s rhetoric: the people who hear this message from his scroll are the people characterized by such duplicity, from which Jeremiah longs to wean them. This noun(*mirmâ*) is also used to characterize Jacob (Gen 27:35). The reminder that Yahweh is talking about relationships with him as well as relationships within the community is underlined when he comes to an end in his indictment by repeating the verb from v. 3b: *in duplicity they have refused to acknowledge me*. So people should beware of their fellows/brothers. But they need to see this necessity as part of the explanation for Yahweh’s desire to get away from them, and for the inevitability of the catastrophe he intends to bring on them, unless….

**7 [6]** Such a *therefore* commonly heralds a transition to declaring the action that Yahweh will take; here it does so indirectly. Yahweh is *smelting them and examining them;* the pronouncement overlaps with 6:27-30 (and compare Pss 7:9 [10]; 26:2).[[143]](#footnote-143) While such participles often describe something Yahweh is about to do, here they describe what Yahweh is already engaged in through Jeremiah’s ministry. It was his means of testing Judah, of discovering what it was made of, a means of smelting it, because getting Jeremiah to declare Yahweh’s word was also Yahweh’s means of taking action; 6:27-30 did not quite put it that way but it more or less implied it. Here, there is a little ellipse between the pronouncement and the question. Yahweh’s point is, what is he to do with Judah in light of what he has affirmed in vv. 2-6 [1-5]? They are still *my dear people*.And his answer is, he needs to smelt and test them in order to reveal whether really there is any silver there – to clarify whether his earlier statements were hyperbole.

**8-9 [7-8]** The parallel with 6:27-30 suggests that Yahweh now describes the result of the smelting and testing, which confirms the judgment in vv. 2-6 [1-5]. Again Yahweh speaks about a *fellow*,a *tongue*, and *duplicity*. By implication he also speaks about a bow, in that he refers to an *arrow*, but the arrow is now *hammered* into a sharp and efficient profile, and so therefore is Yahweh’s point.[[144]](#footnote-144) Yahweh reformulates the comment by speaking about a *mouth* and about *peace* (*šālôm* here having its narrower meaning) and about the contrast with what is *inside* the plotter, in his thinking and intentions: *he sets an ambush*, planning to trap his fellow and cheat him, in a meeting of the elders (see 5:26-28). Yahweh’s language continues to parallel that of the Psalms (e.g., 11:2; 37:14; 64:2-5 [3-6]); it would encourage people praying such psalms for themselves or for other people that he listens to such prayers and does smelt and test, and it would continue to warn the duplicitous of that fact. The results of the smelting and testing determine what the action must be. Jeremiah slightly reworks 5:9; calling them a *nation* is inclined to be pejorative (cf. 5:29; 7:28).[[145]](#footnote-145)

**10 [9]** Once more Jeremiah responds to Yahweh’s protest with his own lament for “his ravaged land, the country where he has grown up and which he knows so well,”[[146]](#footnote-146)as he imagines Yahweh having begun to implement his threat.[[147]](#footnote-147) The terms for lament become more worryingly specific. *Crying* (*bәkî*)is what many people do in tough contexts. *Wailing* (*nehî*) is what they do in more desperate situations. *Mourning* (*qînâ*) implies that someone has died.[[148]](#footnote-148) In 8:14 the threat of invasion made people in the open country determine to take refuge in the fortified towns; in this lament the invasion has begun, in Jeremiah’s imagination. *The mountains* of Judah, which implies *the wilderness pastures* that are a key feature of them, *are laid waste* so that *no one passes through*. In 6:25 no one would be passing through because they are not taking any risks. Here it links with there being no *sound of cattle* to be heard:[[149]](#footnote-149) either they have been killed or captured by the invaders or their herdsmen have secreted them away somewhere. *Bird* and *animal* of the wild has disappeared (cf. 4:25). The world is eerily empty.

**11 [10]** And I am not finished, Yahweh responds as he takes up his side to the exchange. People think Jerusalem or the fortified towns are a place of refuge (4:5-6)? Think again (cf. 8:14). Each of the two lines has a short second colon, in keeping with a pattern that often applies to solemn lines in a prayer. Here each second colon parallels the first by giving a second description of the verbs’ object, and the two lines as wholes are thereby parallel, abcdb’a’c’d’:

I will make Jerusalem into heaps a home for jackals

the towns of Judah I will make a desolation with no one living there

*Heaps* was a description of Assyrian towns to be devastated in Isa 37:26, and the term will be reapplied to Babylon in Jer 51:37. There too it is nuanced with the image of a jackals’ denand an equivalent (in slightly varying words) to *a desolation with no one living there*. Here it is a declaration about Judah itself. Yahweh plans no mercy. Vv. 2-9 [1-8] has established that it is necessary.

**12a [11a]** The dialogue we have been reading has been designed to open people’s minds. “Have you got it yet?” You don’t have to be very intelligent. Jeremiah and Yahweh have been making it quite clear.[[150]](#footnote-150) But have people got it? Teachers often teach by asking questions; Proverbs operates this way. Teachers also ask questions as a way of discovering whether people have understood. There follow two tricola asking questions, and two tricola giving answers. Their rhetoric is more subtle than their simple structure.

v. 12 a question that incorporates another question and then another

vv. 13-14 an answer to the second question that leaves the first question hanging.

Jeremiah begins by asking a question about understanding. One could almost call it an epistemological question. It recalls Agur’s questions in Prov 30:1-4, or the questions in Ecclesiastes. *Who is* *the person who is smart* enough to *understand* and answer the question that the teacher is about to ask? The unexpected third colon in the verse suggests that the answer will not come from someone with ordinary human insight, or even extraordinary human insight. Yet this implicit confession is not reason for despair like that of Agur or Ecclesiastes, because the colon actually asks another question that opens the way towards an answer. Although the question *to whom has Yahweh’s mouth spoken, so that he can tell it* is articulated as another question, by its nature it hints that there is an answer to its question. Paul’s form of argument in Rom 9 – 11 will work like Jeremiah’s as it asks a question that looks like one to which the questioner does not have the answer (like Agur and Ecclesiastes, indeed), to which actually the questioner knows the answer.

**12b [11b]** That first tricolon raised a question, then, but did not tell us what the question is – it does not indicate what is *this*. As well as overtly asking a question (actually a double one) it indirectly raises another one, which the second tricolon answers. The question concerns *for what reason the country has perished?* The question thus turns out to be the one raised by vv. 10-11 [9-10]. But a look back at those verses (and at the entire scroll) would make clear that this question has been copiously answered; even someone listening to this little exchange in isolation from its present context would have heard the answer. To whom has Yahweh’s mouth spoken? To Jeremiah, of course, and he has been making clear *ad nauseam* what the answer is.

**13-14 [12-13]** It’s *because of their abandoning my instruction, which I put before them. They didn’t listen to my voice and didn’t go by it*. It’s not just Jeremiah’s speaking voice; it’s the Torah’s written instruction (or perhaps it’s Moses’s voice).[[151]](#footnote-151)The following tricolon still doesn’t explicitly answer that question about the person to whom has Yahweh’s mouth has spoken – it leaves it implicit. It’s more interested in the question within the questions, the question in v. 12b [11b]. In case you haven’t got it, here is the answer again: Yahweh once more sums up the message of the scroll so far. Everything he says he has said before, though the final phrase, *which their ancestors taught them*, articulates that point more explicitly. “Jeremiah’s Yahweh is a great one for uttering a shattering insight” as a kind of “afterthought,” here about the way “idolatry is passed on, parent to child, and on and on.” It is how original sin works. “No new start…. Practice makes perfect.”[[152]](#footnote-152) But there is a further aspect to v. 12a [11a] that Jeremiah has left hanging. The question “to whom has Yahweh’s mouth spoken” is “Jeremiah.” But the question “who is the person who is smart, so that he can understand this” is a broader one. Smartness is not confined to prophets, scribes, politicians, and priests. The assumption in 8:8 was that people in general could claim this quality. Indeed Jeremiah has sardonically commented, it is a quality shown by the people in general, though in a bad way (4:22). They should be smart in a good way, which means recognizing the truth in what vv. 13-14 [12-13] say. So the question in v. 12a [11a], *who is the person who is smart, so that he can understand this*, addresses people who should be smart and who claim to be smart, and challenges them to recognize the smartness in what vv. 13-14 [12-13] says and to respond accordingly. In speaking like Agur or Ecclesiastes, not surprisingly Jeremiah is as usual engaged in rhetoric or persuasion. Once more he seeks to draw his audience into imagining what the catastrophe will be like and to draw them into acknowledging at last what made it necessary, so that by seeing it now they may forestall it, because it is what they will do if they are smart. When they failed to do so, then after the catastrophe it could perhaps help to drive people who had survived it to see the point. But in the context of 604 he is saying, “Don’t wait till then. Be smart now.” This implicit exhortation reflects the importance of the emphasis on smartness or wisdom in Jer 7 – 10.[[153]](#footnote-153)

**15-16 [14-15]** Jeremiah has three images for the redress that Yahweh will otherwise take, images from earlier chapters that he now develops. In the first (cf. 8:14), *wormwood* is a plant with a strong smell and bitter taste that can be used medicinally but has a reputation for toxicity. The *water* in the parallel colon may have the same ambiguous implications, insofar as *poisoned* (*rō’š*) actually refers to an unidentified plant. LXX and Vg have words for gall or bile, implying bitterness. The two words for plants come together in 23:15; Deut 29:18; Lam 3:19. The second image is to *scatter them among the nations*. While Yahweh has spoken more about devastating Judah’s country, he has also threatened to throw Judah out from it (e.g., 5:19; 7:15). If the entities *that they and their ancestors have not acknowledged* were alien gods (7:8), they are now the nations themselves. Thirdly, the image of the *sword* picks up from 4:10; 5:12, 17; 6:25; *sending* *off* the sword is a more literal version of sending off snakes (8:17). When Jeremiah earlier noted that Yahweh had *made an end of them* (5:3), he was exaggerating. He looks as if he is not overtly exaggerating here, though in the event his bark will be worse than his bite, as usual (Ezek 12:15-16 makes the point explicit).[[154]](#footnote-154)

## Exchanges between Yahweh and Judah, and the Closing Challenge (9:17-26 [16-25])

17Yahweh of Armies has said this:

Reflect, and call for the mourning women so that they come,

 for the smart women, send off so that they come,a

18And so that they hurry and lift up a wailing over us,

 so that our eyes may run down with tears,

 and our eyelids, so they may flow with water.b

19Because the sound of wailing,

 it has made itself heard from Zion.

How we have been destroyed –

we have been deeply shamed.

Because we have abandoned the country,

 because they have thrown down our dwellings.c

20Because listen, women, to Yahweh’s word;

 your ear is to accept the word from his mouth.

Teach your daughters wailing,

one woman her neighbor mourning.

21Because death has gone up through our windows –

it has come into our citadels,

To cut off babies from the street,

 young men from the squares.

22Speak like this (Yahweh’s affirmation):

So the corpsed of humanity will fall

 like manure on the face of the open country,

Like a swath behind the harvester,

 with no one to gather.e

23Yahweh has said this:f

A smart person is not to exult in his smartness,

 a strong person is not to exult in his strength,

A wealthy person is not to exult in his wealth,

 24rather, in this someone who exults is to exult:

Understanding and acknowledging me,

 becauseg I am Yahweh,h

Acting with commitment,

with authority and faithfulnessi in the country,

 because in these I delight (Yahweh’s affirmation).j

25There, days are coming (Yahweh’s affirmation)

 when I will attend to everyone circumcised in the foreskin,

26To Egypt and to Judah and to Edom,

 to the Ammonites, to Moab,

To all the people who are clipped at the forehead,

who live in the wilderness.

Because all the nations are foreskinned,

 and the entire household of Israel is foreskinned in mind.k

By anaphora, the verb recurs at the end of successive cola, with different pointing because of the pausal position of the first occurrence, though Rudolph (*Jeremia*, 68) compares Ezek 16:55.

LXX has you/your/your, an easier reading (but *NETS* has us/our/our).

MT has a section marker here. Vg, taking the third plural as impersonal, translates with a passive; LXX has “we have thrown down.”

See the note on 7:33.

MT has a marker here.

1. Like vv. 12-16 [11-15], vv. 23-26 [22-25] are more pedestrian, but they manifest rhythm and parallelism and I treat them as prosaic verse.

LXX, having omitted *me*, implies “that.”

Cf. LXX, Vg. MT accents imply “I Yahweh act….”

A hendiadys; there is no “and” after “commitment’ but there is an “and” linking these two words (cf. 4:2).

MT has a marker here.

MT has a marker here.

MT starts a new unit as the scroll moves away again from recording an exchange between Yahweh and Jeremiah. V. 17 [16] makes one expect that Yahweh will be simply addressing Judah, but what ensues looks more like Judah’s self-exhortation voiced by Jeremiah. A similar dynamic recurs in vv. 20-21 [19-20] and perhaps in v. 22 [21]. Even more than before, then, these are “exchanges” in which the statements of the participants are more like soliloquies; the participants are not listening to each other or in real dialogue. Both parties speak about death; Yahweh speaks about proper exultation and true circumcision. The section outlines:

v. 17aα An introduction to Yahweh’s message

 vv. 17aβ-21 Jeremiah bids the summoning of mourners

 a bicolon linked to a tricolon at a pause point, then seven bicola

v. 22aα An introduction to Yahweh’s instruction to Jeremiah

 v. 22aβγb Jeremiah’s message about people dying

 two linked bicola

v. 23aα An introduction to Yahweh’s message

 vv. 23aβ-24 a message about exulting

 three linked bicola, linked to a closing tricolon

vv. 25-26 A message about circumcision

 four bicola, the first three being linked

The four subsections look as if they were of separate origin; the opening verb *reflect* (*bîn*)might have encouraged the placing of vv. 17-22 [16-21] after vv. 12-16 [11-15]).

**17 [16]** The new introduction need not imply a separate message, but the subsequent imagery confirms that the message is separate. It starts *in medias res*: who is to *reflect* on what and why? In light of what we have heard Jeremiah say before, it is not hard to guess, but it will be a while before he makes it explicit. In the meantime, he heightens suspense by spelling out the result of the reflection. “Death stalks the land, and the only appropriate response is to evoke the dirges that are regularly sung over the dead.”[[155]](#footnote-155) His addressees will need to *call for the mourning women*, the women who are expert at chanting funeral songs to aid mourners in their expression of grief.[[156]](#footnote-156) Like Western culture, Judah professionalized some aspects of dealing with death. While a family would do its own caring for the body of someone who had died, it would commission expert mourners, as Western mourners may value the support and assistance of the church choir and the organist. Whose death do people need to mourn? Jeremiah indeed raises suspense.

**18 [17]** He does so further when he goes on to insist that they must *hurry*. It’s urgent. When it’s time for *wailing*, you need to wail now. The movement within the verse indicates that the mourning women help people who need to cry to do their crying, and a lot of crying needs doing: *eyes* need to *run down with tears* and *eyelids* need to *flow with water*. In effect, Jeremiah has now repeated the three expressions from v. 10 [9], crying, wailing, and mourning, though in reverse order. There he spoke of the lamenting he was going to do. Here, it is the community’s lamenting that it needs help with. Of course when the catastrophe happens there will be no need to commission the mourners. Jeremiah is again using his imagination and appealing to that of his people. The passage assumes “the power of the call to lament as prophecy.”[[157]](#footnote-157) The surprising note here is the *us… our… our*, since we had the impression that Yahweh was speaking. Simply deleting v. 17aα [16aα] as a mistake[[158]](#footnote-158) seems too easy. Is Yahweh identifying with the community?[[159]](#footnote-159) It might work for this verse, but not for the next. Perhaps the introduction is an anticipation of the introduction in v. 20a [19a] or an introduction to the entire passage designating it as Yahweh’s message.[[160]](#footnote-160) Perhaps we need to assume an ellipse: the opening words introduce what follows as the instruction Jeremiah is to give to the women; the pronouns do suggest that “there is no distance possible when death and destruction descend."[[161]](#footnote-161) One way or another, however, Yahweh is bidding Judah to get ready to mourn.

**19 [18]** it would further be wooden to ask why Jeremiah wants women summoned to lead wailing if *wailing* is already sounding out. The picture of actual wailing complements the image of summoning the wailers. When Jeremiah goes on to articulate people’s own grief, the further significance of his words is that they answer the question raised by vv. 17-18 [16-17]. It is of course the devastation of Zion that the mourners need to bewail. Jeremiah again asks people to project themselves into the situation when Jerusalem has been taken. Again he speaks of the people being *destroyed* (cf. 4:13, 20, 30; 6:26). And *how* terrible is this destruction. It means we have been *shamed* (cf. 2:36), though maybe not yet in the sense Jeremiah wants (2:26; 3:25; 6:15; 7:19; 8:12). At the moment their shame relates to what has happened rather than to why it happened. Jeremiah imagines them describing the reason for their sense of shame in a neatly parallel line:

because we have abandoned [our] country

because they have thrown down our dwellings.

The third person verb complements the second-person verb, the plural *dwellings* complements the singular *country*,and the *our* can be applied respectively to that word *country*. The mourning presupposes both the destruction of the *dwellings* in the land and the need to *abandon* the land itself as people are forced into exile (cf. v. 16 [15]). But *abandon* and the word order (leaving then destruction) might also suggest the decision to flee as refugees before the invading army arrives to wreak death and destruction.

**20 [19]** Once more, Jeremiah’s words don’t follow logically from what precedes; they paint another parallel picture. He passes on an unusual instruction from Yahweh. Yahweh bids the Jerusalem women to teach *their daughters wailing* and each one to teach *her neighbor mourning*; mourning women who are experts in these skills are not part of the picture. Perhaps the implication is that more women need to learn this expertise because there is going to be a lot of need for it.[[162]](#footnote-162)

**21 [20]** The preceding verses never quite articulated why mourning was necessary. Now Jeremiah does so. Joel 2:9 describes the extraordinary ability of locusts that have *gone* *up* *through* *our windows* like a thief, or like the attackers of a town who have to scale its walls. *Death* assails the windows and thus the homes of Jerusalem like a thief or like locusts or like an invading army – in this context it is an invading army that brings death through the city’s literal and metaphorical windows.[[163]](#footnote-163) It *has come into our citadels*, where the palace is, where the toughest fortifications are. Jeremiah imagines the attackers having fulfilled the resolve of 6:5. If it thus invades ordinary people’s homes and the king’s palace, it willindeed *cut off babies from the street* and *young men from the squares*. There is no doubt of the truth in Yahweh’s advice that the women (these babies’ mothers and these young men’s sisters) will need to wail and mourn. “The expert mourning women were to become tradents of the prophetic word.”[[164]](#footnote-164) And they are to encourage the “remembrance” that “is crucial in the face of death.”[[165]](#footnote-165)

**22 [21]** In a more distinctive exchange Yahweh adds a further horrifying nuance to that picture of death invading. Initially one might think of a single human *corpse* that is to *fall* in the fields, *on the face of the open country*. But the comparison *like* *manure* makes clear that Jeremiah is thinking of something more like the army of corpses on the killing fields of the Civil War or the First World War. To complement that picture, then, is the image of a *swath* of grain, a cluster scattered over the field as the *harvester* cuts and gathers the grain but leaves the leftovers for the birds as there is *no one to gather*.

**23-24aα [22-23aα]** As the end of Jer 8 – 9 draws near, Jeremiah comes back to smartness and to acknowledging, which makes a link with where the section began (8:7-9). The scroll now presents a collocation of the possibility of being *smart*, being *strong*, and being *wealthy*. Eccl 2 covers smartness and wealth in this connection; though it doesn’t mention strength, its talk of achievements and of the king’s power is not so different. These things would come near the top of any list of what give people something to exult in (*hālal* hipael). But none is worth saying one’s ultimate hallelujah about.

**24aβγδb [23aβγδb**] When the second pair of lines begins to spells out the positive, they rather suggest that it was not by chance that this little message began with the smart person. One might see the smart people (as opposed to the prophets and priests) as Jeremiah’s problem in his own person.[[166]](#footnote-166) In effect this little message is simply about the nature of real smartness. It lies in *understanding and acknowledging me*. It is in the knowledge of Yahweh that “true glorification” lies.[[167]](#footnote-167) Thus “the person who exults should exult in the Lord” (1 Cor 1:31; 2 Cor 10:17; James 1:9-11 and Philo also reflect the influence of this saying).[[168]](#footnote-168) It is deceptively simple, but profoundly decisive when set against the alternatives. Judahites may think the Master and other deities matter; in reality they are empty, hollow nonentities, non-gods (see 8:19; 9:14 [13]). Set over against them, *I am Yahweh* is a compressed way of saying “I am Yahweh, and Yahweh is the only deity who really deserves to be called God, because he is substantial, not hollow and empty.”The facts about Yahweh are then what smart people recognize: his acting with *commitment* (see 2:2) and with *authority and faithfulness* (see 4:2).

When these two words are joined together, they denote perfect government; that is, that God defends his faithful people, aids the miserable, and delivers them when unjustly oppressed; and also that he restrains the wicked, and suffers them not to injure the innocent at their pleasure. These then are the things which the Scripture everywhere means by the two words, judgment and justice [the translation’s equivalent to *authority* and *faithfulness* as renderings of *mišpāṭ* and *ṣәdāqâ*]. The justice of God is not to be taken according to what is commonly understood by it; and they speak incorrectly who represent God’s justice as in opposition to his mercy: hence the common proverb, “I appeal from justice to mercy.” The Scripture speaks otherwise; for *justice* is to be taken for that faithful protection of God, by which he defends and preserves his own people; and *judgment,* for the rigor which he exercises against the transgressors of his law. But, as I have already said, judgment and justice, when found together, are to be taken for that legitimate government, by which God so regulates the affairs of the world, that there is nothing but what is just and right.[[169]](#footnote-169)

Two sets of triads stand in contrast to each other in vv. 23-24 [22-23],[[170]](#footnote-170) and “in these three graces the self-revelation of Yahweh is complete.”[[171]](#footnote-171) Jeremiah adds that these qualities are not simply random characteristics of Yahweh’s acting. Behind his acting in these ways is his *delight* in them. So don’t brag about those other things: “brag about the things that please the God of Israel.”[[172]](#footnote-172) Recognizing these facts and glorying in them matters because it “excludes the false trust in escape.”[[173]](#footnote-173) It means one resists the temptation to assume that might is right or money talks or scholarship matters. Conversely, it means that one lives in hope; the hopelessness that Jeremiah might have engendered and that the fall of Jerusalem might in due course engender does not have the last word. For Yahweh to claim to act with commitment is especially dangerous, as commitment (*ḥesed*) is a quality that a person continues to maintain when the other party has forfeited any right to it (cf. the appeal or reassurance in Lam 3:22, 32), though one can never expect to claim that Yahweh must show such qualities unless one is pledged to them in one’s own life. Recognizing these facts about Yahweh has to mean that one lives by them.

**25-26 [24-25]** These closing verses also concern smartness and acknowledging Yahweh, though the words do not feature. Once again Jeremiah takes his time about getting to his point; it is not at all clear where he is going from the beginning. *Days are coming* (see 7:32) when Yahweh is going to *attend to* the peoples who are circumcised (circumcision is not confined to Israel, though Yahweh gave it particular significance for Israel). Will his attending have negative implications (e.g., 5:9, 29; 6:15; 9:9) or have positive ones (e.g., 15:15; 27:22)? And why this list of circumcised nations? It comprises Judah and the surrounding peoples; the people *clipped at the forehead, who live in the wilderness* are the tribes in the desert east of Ammon and Moab. It thus overlaps with the list in Amos 1:3 – 2:5. Judah’s being randomly listed as number two out of six compares with the list of nations in Isa 13 – 23 where Jerusalem appears randomly between Dumah and Tyre. Why is Yahweh treating Judah as just one nation among others, as in Isa 22 he treats Jerusalem as just one people among others? The answer emerges in the last line, especially its very last word. Being physically circumcised doesn’t distinguish the nation of Judah, and in itself physical circumcision offers no protection from Yahweh’s (negative) attentiveness. Notwithstanding their physical circumcision, the nations are still *foreskinned*. Excuse me? In the last colon Yahweh explains what he means as he moves from speaking of *all the nations* including Judah to speaking of a *household*, namely *Israel*, which is *foreskinned in mind*. Smartness will mean seeking circumcision of mind so that one acknowledges Yahweh.[[174]](#footnote-174)

# Another Exhortation and Another Exchange (10:1-25)

Part 2(a) of the scroll (Jer 7 – 10) concludes with another exhortation and another exchange. The material suggests a time between 597 and 587.

10:1 Introduction to the unit

10:2-16 An exhortation about images and the deities they represent, for the 597 exiles

10:17-25 An exchange between Yahweh and Judah from the midst of the disaster

## An Exhortation about Images (10:1-16)

1Listen to the message that Yahweh has spoken overa you, household of Israel.

2Yahweh has said this:

In regard to the nations’ pathb – don’t learn;

 the heavens’ signs – don’t break down because of them.

Because the nations may break down because of those,

3because the peoples’ decrees are empty.

Because a tree from the forest – someone cuts it,

 the work of a craftsman’s hands, with a saw.

4With silver and with gold they beautify it,c

 with nails and with hammers they make them fast,

 so it can’t wobble.

5They’re like a metalworkd pillar,e

 so they can’t speak.

They are carried, carried,f

 because they can’t walk.

Don’t be in awe of them,

 because they can’t do anything dire;

 doing good, too – it’s not in them.g

6There is absolutely no oneh like you, Yahweh –

you are big and your name is big, with strength.

7Who would not be in awe of you, king of the nations,

because to you it’s fitting.

Because among all the nations’ smart people and in all their dominion

 there is absolutely no one like you.i

8As one, they are stupid, they are foolish –

the restraint that comes from empty things: it’s woodj –

9Beaten silver that’s brought from Tarshish

 and gold from Uphaz,k

The work of a craftsman

and the hands of a smith,

Blue and purple their clothing,

the work of smart people, all of them.

10But Yahweh is God who is truth,l

 he is the living God, the eternal king.

At his rage the earth quakes;

 the nations cannot endure his condemnation.m

11In accordance with this you are to say to them: n

The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth –

these will perisho from the earthp and from under the heavens.q

12Maker of earth by his energy,r

 establisher of the world by his smartness,

 whos by his insight stretched the heavens,

13Witht the sound of his givingu a roar of water in the heavens,

 and his causing billows to go upv from the end of thew earth,

Lightnings withx the rain he makes,

 and he causes wind to go out from his stores.y

14Every human being shows himself stupid through his knowledge,

 every goldsmith is put to shame through his image.

Because his model is deception;

 there is no spirit in them.

15They are empty, a work for mockery –

at the time of their being attended to, they will perish.

16Not like these is Jacob’s share,

 because he is the shaper of everything.

And Israel is the clan that is his domain:z

 Yahweh of Armies is his name.aa

Cf. Vg; LXX has “to,” but the preposition is *‘al*, not the usual *’el* or *lә* (see *DCH* 2:391-94).

The preposition *’el* instead of the accusative marker *’et* (contrast 12:16) is odd; maybe it issues from the prophet’s putting the object before the verb, as when conversely a feminine subject follows a masculine verb.

For MT *yәyappēhû* Tg implies *yәṣappēhû* “they cover it.”

As Vg, Sym, Aq, Tg recognize, in this context *miqšâ* is not a cucumber patch but the more common homonym denoting hammered work (LXX also lacks the cucumber patch). Contrast Isa 1:8, and see the Deuterocanonical *Letter of Jeremiah*,69, whence the cucumber patch has been superimposed on Jer 10:5 in modern translations (B. D. Thomas, “Reevaluating the Influence of Jeremiah 10 upon the Apocryphal Epistle of Jeremiah,” *ZAW* 120 [2008}: 547-62 [557]).

In its only other occurrence (Judg 4:5) *tōmer* is an alternative to *tāmār* as a word for a palm tree (Vg, Aq, Theod here), while a *tәmōrâ* is a decorative palm tree-like carving like a totem pole (cf. Sym, LXX, here). The implication is that Jeremiah refers to a palm tree-like pillar. *Letter of Jeremiah* 69 has *probaskanion*, which usually denotes an amulet (to ward off spirits or thieves from the cucumber patch), but this seems less relevant here; for *probaskanion* Vg has something like “scarecrow,” and the pillar here became a scarecrow in modern translations. “It is a splendid taunt”: the poet pictures people watching the great procession of images and “says to them, Look at the scarecrows! Aren’t they are horrible sight?” (Volz, *Jeremia*, 125); it is unfortunate that the interpretation is fanciful. See *HALOT*; also N. Mizrahi, *Witnessing a Prophetic Text in the Making* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), 54-56.

The (qal) infinitive preceding the finite verb underscores the verb.

MT has a marker here. LXX, 4QJerb lack vv. 6-8 and 10.

For this translation of *mē’ên* (recurring in v. 7), see *CTAT* 2:466. Theod implies *mē’ayin*, “whence is there anyone.”

The repeated noun clause forms a framework around the act of praise in vv. 6-7 (J. R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric* (2nd ed., Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 60-61.

 Distinguishing subject and object in a noun clause is tricky, and one could translate “wood is the restraint offered by empty things”; I here follow the principles enunciated in *IBHS* 8.4.2.

Syr, Tg have the more familiar Ophir.

The comparable expressions in the following parallel colon suggest that *’ĕmet* is in apposition to *’ĕlōhîm* rather than adverbial, “in truth” (JM 131c).

MT has a marker here.

V. 11 is in Aramaic.

LXX, Vg take *yē’badû* as jussive, but the context suggests yiqtol (cf. Tg). The paronomasia with the preceding word *‘ăbadû* underlines the link and contrast between “not make” and “perish.”

“Earth” is spelled *’arqā’* first time, *’ar‘ā’* second time, apparently just for variety; the two spelling coexisted (Allen, *Jeremiah*, 127).

MT has a section marker here.

Vv. 12-16 reappear in a slightly variant form as 51:15-19, appropriately as part of a message about Babylon, and vv. 12-13 in a Qumran psalm (11QPsa 26:13-15; *DSS* 2:1178-79).

Literally, “and he,” idiomatically continuing the participial sequence with a finite verb.

For *lә* meaning “(in connection) with,” cf. v. 13b and 11:16.

Cf. Rashi, in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage; not “his giving of voice” (cf. Vg); the suffix in *lәqôl tittî* is on the “wrong” word, and the rest of the colon is then stranded (LXX lacks the phrase).

The finite verb continues the infinitival construction (cf. the note on v. 12).

K lacks “the.”

The unusual use of *lә* (LXX, Vg have “into,” which makes poor sense) corresponds to that in v. 13a (see the note).

“In some poetic texts, celebrating the greatness of God, the use of tenses, of qatal especially, is very peculiar…. These qatals have not been satisfactorily explained” (JM 113l). The comment refers to Jer 10:12-13, though v. 12 doesn’t seem a problem because it refers to a past act; on the other hand, one could extend its reference to the wayyiqtols in v. 13. *IBHS* 33.3.5d sees that usage as gnomic (cf. DG 82a) but also notes that the troublesome verbs follow on the infinitive *titô* (“his giving”); and finite verbs picking up from infinitives and participles (see GK 111v and the note on v. 12) can seem a bit random in tense.

LXX “he is his [Jacob’s] inheritance” reverses the point, making it a restatement of the first colon; Tg conversely makes Jacob into God’s share in the first colon.

MT has a marker here.

After an introduction to the chapter in v. 1, vv. 2-16 constitute an exhortation to Judahites not to be impressed by – and thus follow – a religion that focuses on images. Four times it draws a contrast between images (and image-makers) and Yahweh. The passage is not unique in spelling out this contrast, but “it is unique in achieving this contrast by the technique of alternation.”[[175]](#footnote-175) It outlines:

v. 2aα introduction to vv. 2-16

vv. 2aβ-3a the exhortation and its basic rationale

 two bicola

(1) vv. 3b-5 how an image gets made, what the result is like, and the implications

 a bicolon and a tricolon before the pause

then two bicola and a tricolon to make a snide comment before the pause

vv. 6-7 Yahweh with his contrasting and unique person: an act of confession

 three bicola

 (2) vv. 8-9 how an image gets made: a restatement of the grounds for the exhortation

 four linked bicola in a substantial enjambment

v. 10 Yahweh as the true, living God: a restatement of the confession

 two bicola

 (3) v. 11 the limitations of other gods: a further elaboration of the grounds

 an introduction and a 5-5 bicolon

 vv. 12-13 Yahweh as the creator: a further restatement of the confession

 an opening tricolon and two bicola, with exposition and a further enjambment

 (4) vv. 14-15 the stupidity of image-makers, their images and the gods: a final dismissal

 three bicola

v. 16 who Yahweh is and who Israel is: a contrasting final declaration

 two bicola

In terms of form-criticism, it is an alternation between satire and hymn; and in terms of literary development, the hymnic elements have all been seen as added to the satirical.[[176]](#footnote-176) It is the first passage in the scroll where there are substantial differences between MT and LXX; the Qumran manuscript of the Hebrew text corresponds to LXX. Opinions differ as to which is older.

While there is no tidy structuring of the content of the theological observations, a profile does emerge from them. On one hand, the nations’ gods did not make the cosmos and there is no reason to be in awe of them, though the nations do then have reason to be afraid of what the heavens portend. Their gods are represented by things that are outwardly impressive (clothed in economics and aesthetics) but humanly-manufactured. They can’t speak, move, or act; there is no spirit in them. The nations’ religion is hollow, ineffective, and deserving of mockery. Their gods and their representatives are stupid, deceptive, and destined to be exposed as such and to perish. In contrast, Yahweh is impressive, strong, truthful, living, eternal, energetic, smart, insightful, and decisively wrathful. He created the cosmos and continues to make it work. He is Jacob’s share and Israel is his domain. There is thus reason to be in awe of Yahweh and no need to fear what the heavens may portend. While only vv. 6-7 are formally expressed as praise, all four confession passages are hymnic; both second-person address and third-person description parallel the Psalms. “The idols are mocked in a kind of doggerel poetry, laughed to scorn; Yahweh is addressed and hymned in the solemn language of liturgy.” If it comes from after 597, it is quite a message from and for “a defeated population lost among all the populations in the vast Babylonian Empire.”[[177]](#footnote-177)

Although Judah has a long history of involvement with the gods represented by the planets (see 8:1-3), the additional focus here on divine images of the kind that are attacked in Isa 40 – 48 does suggest a link with the forced migration of Judahites in the sixth century. 10:1-16 “projects an implicit audience ideologically besieged and demoralized as a result of its colonization by more powerful cultural forces."[[178]](#footnote-178) Tg sees v. 11 (in Aramaic, the international language) as part of a letter Jeremiah wrote to the 597 exiles, which suggests a context in which Jeremiah could be pictured focusing on Babylonian religion. This context would link with the overlap between vv. 1-16 and the polemic in Isa 40 – 48 against Babylonian religion and images. “Our author’s aim” is then “for his fellow-Judahites to overcome their fear of the gods.”[[179]](#footnote-179) If Jeremiah misunderstands divine images, as if people identified them with the gods they represented, it is a kind of willful misunderstanding related to the desire to affirm that Yahweh alone is God and that humanly-made images are “just that and no more.”[[180]](#footnote-180)

The passage reflects how “monotheism” is not a category that helps very well to articulate the scriptural understanding of the nature of God. On one hand, there are many gods, though not all deserve the title God (it is useful that English has the convention of capitalizing the first letter of some words, which enables us to make that point visually). On the other, the key truth about God is not merely that there is only one of him but that Yahweh is the one God. To adapt the point to a modern context, “the critical faith issue is not atheism but idolatry.”[[181]](#footnote-181) Not that modernity is actually atheistic: our gods are growth, democracy, trade, technology, security, diversity, sex, travel, power, conservation, independence, and education (among others), which (like Babylon’s gods) are not powerless nor are they evil except when we treat them as such. But they are not God. Another way of approaching the question of idolatry in the context of modernity would be to ask whether words have a place in European culture that is analogous to the place of manufactured images in Middle Eastern culture. “Whatever we have said about idols can also be applied to all teachings that are contrary to the truth.”[[182]](#footnote-182)

**1-2aα** Like 7:1 – 8:3 and 8:4 – 9:26 [25], the unit begins with an introduction to the chapter as a whole (v. 1) then goes on to its dedicated introduction to vv. 2-16 (*Yahweh has said this*), before we come to the substance.

**2aβ-3a** *The nations* have featured so far in the scroll as people about whom Jeremiah would bring a message (1:5, 10), as gathering to acknowledge Yahweh and as blessing themselves by him (3:17; 4:2), and as witnesses to Yahweh’s action against Judah (6:18), but also as the place of Judah’s scattering (9:16 [15]). *In regard to the nations’ path – don’t learn it* follows from that scattering. Judah’s vocation is to walk on Yahweh’s path, to follow the way of relating to him on which Yahweh directs his people, and which corresponds to who he is. It may include a community and ethical aspect, but it suggests especially the way of worship and truthfulness in calling on his name (e.g., 2:23, 33, 36; 3:21; 4:18; 5:4, 5). Here, what will follow will have similar implications as it speaks of the way the nations make their gods. There were many ways in which proper First Testament faith broadly corresponded with the nations’ forms of worship and prayer, but it was also characterized by some key theological differences. Yahweh’s instruction raises related issues for the church. Its forms of worship commonly follow the ways of the culture, which raises the question whether the theology of the church’s worship differs from that of the culture. After his opening exhortation, Jeremiah adds that people shouldn’t *break down* because of *the heavens’ signs*. While this reference to the heavens’ signs recalls Judahite attentiveness towards the sun, the moon, and the heavenly army to which 8:2 referred, this aspect of Babylonian religion and learning might seem newly impressive to Judahites taken off to Babylon. If celestial signs seemed to portend some disaster, they would tempt people to *break down*, to panic. Scriptures that relate to this context (Gen 1; Isa 40) therefore need to confront it. It isn’t so unreasonable that *the nations may break down because of those*; they have nowhere else to turn. When the heavens’ portents are sinister, *the peoples’ decrees*, the revelations and prescriptions of their religion (in effect *decrees* is another word for *path*), *are empty* (*hebel*), as empty as the gods who (allegedly) lay them down. The two lines in vv. 2aβ-3a thus finally work abb’a’:

in regard to the nations’ path – don’t learn

 the heavens’ signs – don’t break down because of them

because the nations may break down because of those

because the peoples’ decrees are empty

**3b-4** Ifvv. 3b-5 “are a *non sequitur*” after v. 2,[[183]](#footnote-183) it is because Jeremiah segues into disdaining the aspect of Babylonian religion on which he will focus, the aspect that for Judahites is more distinctive in the context of Babylon itself. You only have to consider the nature of the Babylonians’ gods – or at least that of their images – to be convinced that the nations’ religion is empty. Jeremiah’s straight but implicitly mocking description of the making of an image allows the description more or less to speak for itself, as happens in Isa 40 – 48. The image comes simply from *a tree from the forest*. A human being *cuts it* and *the work of a craftsman’s hands* constructs it. The process involves working with *a saw*. There does follow the sacrifice of *silver and gold* with which the craftworkers *beautify it* so that people end up with something truly splendid, and no one who rejoices in the glory of a medieval cathedral can simply despise such religious artefacts. But then the craftworkers have to bring in *nails and hammers* so as to *make them fast.* The first two cola in v. 4 are neatly parallel:

with silver and with gold they beautify

with nails and with hammers they make them fast

Why do they need to make the images fast? Structurally the extra colon that follows is all the more of a surprise after that neat bicolon, but the bicolon raises a question that needs answering and the extra short colon is the more forceful as it provides the answer. They have to secure the image *so it can’t wobble* (cf. Isa 41:7). It’s bad for morale if your god falls over or disintegrates.[[184]](#footnote-184) The last colon in the tricolon is the first almost-explicit note of scorn in this initial account.

**5** Jeremiah goes on to be more scathing. First, the images are *like a metalwork pillar[[185]](#footnote-185)* of a kind familiar to Judahites. The cherubim and candelabra in the wilderness sanctuary were of such metalwork (Exod 37:7, 17, 22) and the temple had decorated pillars and palm-tree-like carvings (e.g., 1 Kgs 6 – 7); they also resemble Assyrian sacred trees*.[[186]](#footnote-186)* Such pillars are a nice decorative adjunct to worship, and the comparison between Israelite ones and the objects critiqued here confirms that one should not absolutize the dismissal of the nations’ path and decrees.[[187]](#footnote-187) But images *can’t speak*, as any decent God (or rather the one decent God) can. And second, *they are carried*, actually *carried, because they can’t walk.* The great processions in which gods were carried about were an impressive feature of Babylonian worship, but the Babylonians seem not to have noticed the implications of the need to carry the images everywhere every year (cf. Isa 46:1-4). And thus third, they can’t actually *do* *anything* – anything *dire* or anything *good* (cf. Isa 41:23). *It’s not in them.* Israel derides gods that have all the right body parts but none of them work (e.g., Ps 115:4-7), and draws a contrast with Yahweh who has ears, eyes, a nose and so on that work – he can see, listen, and savor things. The gods “‘can do you no harm’…. What assurance! Yahweh speaks from an ample sense of who he is – and who the idols are not.”[[188]](#footnote-188) Therefore, *don’t be in awe of them*. In effect the exhortation with its rationale restates the initial exhortations in vv. 2-3a, with their rationales. In vv. 4-5a three successive lines ended with a short and brisk negative closing colon about the images; the tricolon comprising v. 5b is an enhanced instantiation of that pattern.

**6** Those negatives actually issue from some positives. It is Yahweh’s impressiveness that makes the images lose their grandeur. *There is absolutely no one like you, Yahweh*. Whereas vv. 2-5 had the form of a message from Yahweh, the prophet now forgets himself and finds himself speaking to Yahweh – but doing so in a way that the Judahites can overhear, so that he is still addressing them.What makes Yahweh distinctive is (as it were) size. Yahweh is a *big* guy, by analogy with the big guys and nations that Jeremiah has mentioned (5:5; 6:13, 22; 8:10). He is imposing and impressive. *And* *your name is big*, it is imposing and impressive, because the name speaks of the person, and when one thinks of the name *Yahweh* one is intimidated, in a good way. One is overwhelmed. That name is big *with strength*: it’s quite a statement about a deity whom the Babylonians would claim had suffered defeat by their god. Jeremiah knows that Yahweh is the sovereign who has been manipulating these very Babylonians with that strength.

**7** So whereas no awe is due to the Babylonian deities whose images accurately embody their incapacity to do anything, *who would not be in awe of you* (actually, most of the Judahites*,* which shows how stupid they are), *king of the nations* (yes, the Babylonians are his unwitting servants). Jeremiah doesn’t want his people to have a small and local view of God.[[189]](#footnote-189) To Yahweh, awe *is* *fitting*. Because among all the deities that are served *among all the nations’ smart people and among all their kings*, there is *absolutely no one like you.*

**8** Jeremiah gives up addressing Yahweh and restates both parts of his point so far – first the nature of images, then the nature of the real God. The supposedly-smart people who worship by means of the images actually *are stupid, they are foolish*, as is clear when one reflects on the nature of the images’ *restraint*, their discipline or instruction (*mûsār*: 2:30; 5:3; 7:28) – in effect, it is another term for *path* or *decrees*.[[190]](#footnote-190) The images are *empty things* (*hebel*, plural). Their basic constituent is – *wood.* It can’t direct you onto the right path or hold you back from the wrong one.

**9** That consideration is hardly palliated by adding an impressive coating for the wood: *beaten silver that’s brought from Tarshish* *and gold from Uphaz*. We can’t identify either place, though the usual candidates are west across the Mediterranean, maybe as far as Tartessus in Spain, and some way south in Arabia, modern Yemen. The two terms suggest how far the precious metals were brought. Again Jeremiah notes that the images are simply items of human manufacture, *the work of a craftsman and the hands of a smith* – someone who works in (etymologically, “smelts”) gold or silver*.* As well as the gold and silver plating, there are the images’ glorious *blue and purple clothing*, also fine human craftwork – *the work of smart people, all of them.* But there is some irony in calling these people *smart*. “How can smart people engage in an insane thing like this?”[[191]](#footnote-191) Craftworkers “‘deck it with silver and gold,…’ so that the simple may be deceived” – and not just the simple, but people who “are wise and at the same time foolish.”[[192]](#footnote-192)

**10** In contrast there is the nature of *Yahweh*, the real God. First, he is the *God who is truth* (*’ĕmet*), the real thing, as opposed to something false and empty, whose reality doesn’t correspond to its appearance. Second, he is *the living God*, not only living as opposed to dead but living as opposed to lifeless, comatose, and motionless, like the images. Third, he is *king*, sovereign in world events (cf. v. 7). Fourth, he is *eternal*, the king of eternity in the sense of the king of the age, the king from the beginning of the age until the end of the age. And fifthly, when he gets angry, you know about it: any temptation to see the noun phrases in v. 10a as static descriptions “is dispelled by the violent verbal clauses that follow.”[[193]](#footnote-193) As king he gets angry with things that offend him and go against his plans, and he doesn’t then sit by. After 597, Judah should be more convinced that it’s true, though all being well they won’t have to endure it again (but actually they will). On the other hand, the nations…. They come at the end of vv. 8-10, as they came at the end of vv. 2-3a and 3b-7. “The idol-gods can only shake the earth by falling over, but they are prevented from falling over by being nailed down. The earth, however, shakes at the wrath of the Lord, and the nations shake at his anger.”[[194]](#footnote-194) While *condemnation* (*za*‘*am*) suggests wrath, it relates to words for threat and curse; it suggests denunciation that issues in acts of judgment.[[195]](#footnote-195)

**11** Might this verse of Aramaic be a later addition to supplement Jeremiah’s point? But it is present in the shorter LXX text of this chapter and it is integral to the alternating structure of vv. 2-16. Like many people in the modern world outside of circles where English is people’s first language, many Judahites could switch easily between their first language and an international language, as happens with the longer Aramaic sections in Ezra and Daniel. Jeremiah himself might make that switch for rhetorical effect as he talks about Babylonian religion, especially if he speaks for the benefit of Judahites living in a Babylonian context;[[196]](#footnote-196) Tg sees *them* as the exiles. MT frames v. 11 as a separate section, of which the main part makes for a neat parallel line, juxtaposing the two verbs at the center and repeating the heavens and the earth in abcdd’c’b’a’ order:

the gods who the heavens and the earth did not make

will perish from the earth and from under the heavens these [gods]

No thoughtful Babylonians assumed that their images *were* gods. They simply represented the gods and gave worshipers something to focus on. In deriding images, a prophet like Jeremiah may be working with the assumption that this theology is a little sophisticated for some people. More profoundly, he knows that actually the idea that an image can represent any deity that deserves the name deconstructs. Either the image is totally misleading, or the deity is pathetic (cf. Deut 4). But so far he hasn’t talk about the gods themselves, only about the images. Now he speaks of the deities they represent, who are real, but do not match up to Yahweh. He makes two comments about them, which relate to the fact that Yahweh is God from the beginning of the age until the end of the age (v. 10). Retrospectively, they are *the gods who did not make the heavens and the earth*. Prospectively, *they will perish from the earth and from under the heavens.* Ps 82:6-7 makes the same point in connection with a critique of these gods for their failure to oversee the implementing of faithful exercise of authority in the world. The assumption here may be that they die for such a reason*,* though Jeremiah does not say so. His explicit point is rather that they are not eternal by nature, as Yahweh is. They do not have life in themselves any more than humanity did when created.

**12** The resumptive confession about Yahweh now expands on something that was presupposed by the Aramaic line, whose first colon was an anticipatory corollary of what now follows. Notwithstanding the participles, the acts here described are aspects of Yahweh’s original act of creation. The characteristics that enabled Yahweh to be the creator were *his* *energy* or power, *his* *smartness* or expertise, and his *insight* or discernment.[[197]](#footnote-197) They enabled him to be the *maker of earth* and (to take the point further in the parallelism) the *establisher of the* (habitable) *world*, so that it not only exists; it has some security. The extra third colon necessarily affirms that he also brought the heavens into being. The sky is a great tent over the earth, protecting it; creation was like Yahweh pitching this tent. Jeremiah thus makes the point by means of a vivid metaphor of which the First Testament is fond when it is describing creation (e.g., Ps 104:2). The affirmation in the first two cola also uses psalmic language: Yahweh is “establisher of the mountains by his energy” (Ps 65:7 [6]).

**13** As often happens in portraits of Yahweh as creator (outside Genesis), Jeremiah goes on to Yahweh’s continuing activity as sovereign in creation. He thereby completes a matching of the heavens – earth – earth – heavens sequence in v. 11 with an earth – heavens – heavens – earth sequence in vv. 12-13a. When there is “the sound of the roar of rain” approaching and bringing the end of a drought (1 Kgs 18:41), it is Yahweh who is causing the *sound* and *giving a roar of water in the heavens*. It is Yahweh who then generates the *billows* of cloud; etymologically, they are “things that rise” – the word comes only in the context of phrases like this one. He makes these clouds *go up from the end of the earth*, rising from the distant horizon to bring the rain (cf. 1 Kgs 18:44-45). Then there are the *lightnings* that he *makes* in connection with *the rain*, and the *wind* that *he causes to go out from his stores* (cf. 1 Kgs 18:45) to accompany the rain. So when things are still, it is because he is keeping shut the doors of his storehouses (which lie the other side of the sky dome?), and it is when he opens those doors that a gale blows and rain falls. (The last three cola in v. 13 appear in a slightly different form as Ps 135:7, in a psalm that derides images in terms similar to those in Jer 10 and in 5:21.)

**14a “**What, then, is man with his graven images?”[[198]](#footnote-198) Jeremiah moves back to the contrast with images – or rather, moves back first to the people who make images. He begins with a subtle neat parallelism in which the second colon systematically clarifies the first:

every human being shows himself stupid through [his] knowledge

every goldsmith is put to shame through [his] image

The eyebrow-raising declaration *every human being shows himself stupid* achieves its aim when it makes the audience listen up to find out what Jeremiah can possibly mean. The second colon then makes clear that the *every human being* we are talking about is *every goldsmith*. A further ambiguity in the first colon is the preposition (*min*) on the word *knowledge*: is it apart from, or without, or despite…? The second colon again clarifies the point. A goldsmith is someone who has considerable knowledge but who in another sense shows himself stupid *through* hisknowledge, because he uses his expertise to make images. And the verb in the second colon builds on the verb in the first. When his stupidity in this connection is exposed, he will find himself *put to shame* *through [his] image*. The reference to shame (cf. Gen 2:25) is the most specific indication that Jeremiah might be critiquing the pretension of the human craftworker to be creative like God.[[199]](#footnote-199)

**14b** His image (*pesel*, etymologically something cut into shape) is alternatively *his model* (etymologically, something poured out). Neither word is pejorative in ultimate background; both gain their negative associations through the way they are used. And actually the image/model *is deception*,that key word in Jeremiah (e.g., 5:31; 7:4; 8:8), which associates the figure with many false and lying realities or non-realities that are the opposite of anything to do with the real God. Jeremiah takes the point further with the extra comment, *there is no spirit in them*. His point is not merely that they have no breath, that they are not alive, though he would affirm that point. In this context, it is that they lack energy and dynamism. The word for spirit is the word for wind in v. 13 (*rûaḥ* – the only other place in Jeremiah where the word means something other than wind is 51:11).

**15** Thus the images *are empty* (*hebel*: see vv. 3, 8; 2:5; 8:19), which contrasts with being *rûaḥ*.[[200]](#footnote-200) All they are is breath, in its thinness and evanescence. There is no substance to them. Consequently, they are *a work for mockery*, “a joke”;[[201]](#footnote-201) Jeremiah expresses this conviction by putting it into practice. Whether or not he would ever believe that one should think and speak of other people’s faith with empathy and respect, this is not such a context. His fellow-Judahites need to be buttressed in their resistance to the attractiveness of images, and mockery is one way Jeremiah seeks to prop up their commitment. Yet the colon leaves open the question who will do the mocking, and the second colon may again clarify the first. There will come *the time of their being attended to,* “the Day of Yahweh,” when “idols will pass away – indeed, men will throw them away,” and “the host of heaven will also be punished” (Isa 2:18, 20; 24:21).[[202]](#footnote-202) The one who will attend to them and maybe mock them then is Yahweh, the God who laughs (Pss 2:4; 37:13; 59:8 [9]; Isa 37:22). Certainly then *they will perish*. This final verb draws attention to Jeremiah’s way of moving nonchalantly between speaking of the images, of the gods they represent, and of the people who make them, in that the entities that will perish are not the images but either of the latter parties.

**16** One final time Jeremiah returns to describing the real God whose being contrasts with those images and what they represent. A series of important theological observations spreads over two lines where the parallelism between the lines rather than parallelism between the cola is significant; the lines work aba’b’. The first observation is the novel one: Yahweh is *Jacob’s share* (*ḥēleq*), as an Israelite family possesses a share of land that signifies its provision, security, and future. Only here is Yahweh called his people’s share, though the metaphor is applied to individuals elsewhere (Pss 16:5; 73:26; 119:57; 142:6; Lam 3:24). Conversely, *Israel is the clan that is his domain* (*naḥălâ*: see 2:7; 3:19-20). It is a two-way relationship. While Jeremiah could also have said that Israel is Yahweh’s share (Deut 32:9), instead he thus takes up this other term for a family’s tract of land. Third, the one who is Jacob’s share is *not like these*, the images and the gods they allegedly represent, because he is *the shaper of everything* (see 1:5). He is not a deity who is shaped by his worshipers. Fourth, could Jeremiah say anything more impressive about him than that he is *Yahweh of Armies*? The name Yahweh has not been uttered since v. 10, for all the statements that have been made about him, so this colon brings vv. 1-16 to a resounding climax; the dynamic corresponds to that in the ascriptions of praise to Yahweh as creator and present lord in Amos 4:13; 5:8; 9:6. The implication is: Israel would itself be stupid to think about turning away from Yahweh.

## An Exchange between Yahweh and Judah (10:17-25)

17Gather up from the landa your bundle,b

 you who are livingc during the siege.d

18Because Yahweh has said this:

Here am I, shooting out the people living in the land,

on this occasion.

I will bind them up,e

in order that they hit it.f

19Alas for me, for my shattering,

 my wound is sick.g

I myself have said,

 “Yes, this is my sicknessh and I must carry it.”

20My tenti – it’s been destroyed,

and all my ropes – they’ve snapped;

My children – they’ve gone away from me, and there are none of them;

there is no one any more to stretch out my tent

 and put up my curtains.

21Because the shepherds – they have shown themselves stupid;

 Yahweh they have not inquired of.

As a result they have not shown understanding,j

 and their entire flockk has scattered.l

22The sound of a report, there, it’s coming,

 a great quaking from the northern country,

To make the towns of Judah a desolation,

a home for jackals.m

23I acknowledge, Yahweh,

that his path does not belong to an individual.

It does not belong to a person, as he goes

and determinesn his step.o

24Restrain me, Yahweh, yes, by exercise of authorityp –

 not in your anger, so that you don’t make me small.q

25Pour out your fury on the nations

 that have not acknowledged you,

And on the kin-groups

 that have not called on your name.

Because they have consumed Jacob,

consumed himr and made an end of him,s

 and his habitat they have laid desolate.t

LXX takes “the land” to denote the country outside the city (Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 69), which makes good sense of this colon but is hard to fit with the parallel colon.

For the hapax *kin‘â*, Sym, Tg have “merchandise,” linking the word with *kәna‘an* and related words meaning merchant. Vg, Syr have “humiliation”; the verb *kāna‘* means “be humble.” LXX has “dregs.”

For Q *yōšebet*,K implies *yōšabtî* (a variant participial pointing) or *yāšabtî* (the archaic second- person feminine qatal).

LXX implies *bәmibḥār* “in the choice/chosen one” for MT *bammāṣôr.* MT has a section marker here.

As ammunition in the sling: for this meaning of *ṣārar*, cf. *DCH* 7:166.

The target: see *CTAT* 2:547. LXX, Vg suggest *yimmāṣē’û* “be found” for MT *yimṣā’û*.Presupposing the usual meaning *māṣā’*, Syr has “inquire of me and find me,” suggesting a link with Deut 4:29, where Israel has been scattered for making images, reduced to serving humanly-made deities, and lives in distress (cf. the references in v. 21 to inquiring of and scattering). V. 18 is integral to Jeremiah’s poetic message in vv. 17-22, and notwithstanding its virtual lack of poetic features, it seems likely to be a pair of verse lines. MT has a section marker after v. 18.

LXX has this line addressing Jerusalem.

LXX, Vg, Tg, Syr, Aq, Sym “my sickness” suggest that *ḥŏlî* is a contraction for *ḥolyî* (GK 126y).

“My sickness” was *ḥŏlî*; “my tent” is *’āhŏlî* (Brueggemann*, Jeremiah 1 - 25,* 102).

*Śākal* hiphil can suggest both attentiveness/understanding and the resultant success; its “meanings [are] hard to classify” (BDB, 968). Here “succeed” would mediate well between “not inquired of” and “flock has scattered” (cf. BDB); but see the comment.

Literally, “pasturage.”

MT has a section marker here.

MT has a section marker here.

The infinitive continues the participial construction (cf. LXX, Vg).

The verse recurs in a variant form at Qumran in the Community Rule (1QS 11:10; *DSS* 1:98-99) and the Thanksgiving Psalms (1QHa 7:16; *DSS* 1:154-55).

Tg has “but with lenient judgment,” and Rudolph calls this occurrence of *mišpāṭ* the earliest example where the word suggests moderation (*Jeremia*, 77; he refers to H. W. Hertzberg, *Prophet und Gott* [Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1923], 175), but this understanding reflects a questionable inference from the parallelism. See further 30:11 and the note.

LXX has “us” for “me both times in v. 24, an appropriate “exegetical rendering” (Allen, *Jeremiah*, 131).

The simple *waw* plus qatal reflects the fact that the verb repeats the previous one; it does not denote a subsequent event.

The effect of the colon is enhanced through the anaphora (repeating forms of the verb *’ākal*) and the paronomasia (adding a form of the verb *kālâ*).

In the tricolon that closes the section and closes Part 2(b) of the scroll, the first two cola are parallel as the second takes further the verb in the first; the first and third cola are more systematically parallel, with verb and noun in abb’a’ order and the final noun-verb sequence adding to the sense of closure.

A link with events of 597 or 587 was implicit in vv. 1-16. Such a link now becomes more explicit. While the fall of Jerusalem has been in focus all through the scroll, here it becomes a vivid reality, in the midst of happening. One need not infer that in the real world things have moved on – they may have done so only in Jeremiah’s imagination and/or may do so only in his rhetoric. In light of his way of speaking in Jer 8 – 9, it makes sense to think of him as the speaker mediating between Yahweh and Jerusalem through vv. 17-25. The section outlines:

vv. 17-18 he speaks to Jerusalem

 three bicola, plus an intervening introductory phrase

vv. 19-20 he speaks for Jerusalem

three bicola and a closing tricolon

vv. 21-22 he speaks to Jerusalem

four bicola, the last two linked

vv. 23-25 he speaks for Jerusalem

three bicola, two linked bicola, and a closing tricolon

**17** After the hymn of praise to Yahweh’s greatness and glory and the celebration of Israel’s identity and security, what now follows is shocking and shattering.[[203]](#footnote-203) Once again we are *in medias res*. The verbs are second-person feminine, so Jerusalem is the addressee. In reality or in imagination, the city is *living during the* *siege*, as happened in 597 and in 587. It will be hoping to last out the siege. Jeremiah wants it to face the fact that it will not. In his imagination and in its, he bids, *gather up from the land your bundle*. While he addresses the city corporately, each family will need to get together the things it can carry off the land and get ready to take them with it out of the country – Jeremiah utilizes two aspects of the range of meanings of the word for land/country (*’ereṣ*). Passengers can take only hand luggage on this flight.

**18** In evaluating their prospects of lasting out a siege, people would be calculating the answers to practical questions (how much food and water do we have?), reflecting on theological questions, and praying for Yahweh to deliver them as he had before. Jeremiah’s message from Yahweh makes the first sort of calculation irrelevant, the second unnecessary, and the third impossible. *Here am I* is always a solemn beginning to underline a commitment to what follows. Yahweh is *shooting out the people living in the land* (he picks up the verb and the word for land from v. 17). Only here does the First Testament use the word *shoot* (*qāla*‘) in such a connection. Elsewhere it denotes the kind of action that David took with his sling (cf. Tg). Such will be the sharp, violent, and final action Yahweh will take. *On this occasion* there will be no relenting and rescuing, as there has been on other occasions when Yahweh has relented and rescued. Like David, *I will bind them up* in a sling and shoot them off, and ensure that they *hit* the target in Babylon that I intend.

**19** Jeremiah moves to expressing Jerusalem’s distress in light of vv. 17-18, taking up the way he has spoken of the city’s suffering in previous messages. Jerusalem again says *alas for me* (see 4:31). It laments its painful *breaking* (see 4:6, 20; 6:1, 14; 8:11, 21). Its *wound* (see 6:7) *is sick*. Picking up that last expression, Jerusalem acknowledges, *Yes, this is my sickness and I must carry it.* “There is no escape from this time of suffering and despair” so the city has to be committed to “a tragic acceptance of the inevitable.”[[204]](#footnote-204) Jeremiah speaks for Jerusalem, yet continues to speak to her, especially if the events he portrays still lie in the future. Articulating what she will be experiencing or how she should be thinking is a way of getting through to her. The declaration about Jerusalem corresponds to the one about Nineveh in Nah 3:19. The fate of Nineveh will be the fate of Jerusalem.[[205]](#footnote-205)

We must then bear in mind that the Prophet speaks not here according to the feeling which the people had, for they were so stupified that they felt nothing; but that he speaks of what they ought to have felt, as though he had said, — “Were there in them a particle of wisdom, they would all most surely bewail their approaching calamity, before God begins to make his judgment to fall on their heads; but no one is moved: I shall therefore weep alone, but it is on your account.” There is yet no doubt but he intended to try in every way whether God’s threatenings would penetrate into their hearts.[[206]](#footnote-206)

**20** On the city’s behalf, he takes up another image from earlier in the scroll, where it also accompanied the image of breaking. I’m like a woman whose *tent* has *been destroyed* by a hurricane (4:20). Further, *my children have gone away from me, and there are none of them*: it’s as if the city still exists even though its people have all gone into exile. Their departure means there’s no one to rebuild the city. The image of the tent is taken up in Lam 2:4 but the lament is nicely reversed in Isa 54:1-3.[[207]](#footnote-207)

**21** Whereas Jeremiah has been speaking on the city’s behalf, he can segue into answering a question from them that might be raised by v. 20. Why have the children gone? Because another way to describe them is as a *flock* that *has scattered* (see 9:16 [15]). So why have they scattered? Because their *shepherds* were incompetent: they *have shown themselves stupid* (see vv. 8, 14). How did they do so? The same way as the stupid makers of images: *they have not inquired of Yahweh.* We know who they have inquired of (8:2). Their foolishness means they are not shepherds who *have shown understanding*, a basic requirement of shepherding (3:15); which is why the flock has scattered. To speak more literally, Jeremiah reasserts his awareness that the leadership of Judah (prophets, priests, scribes, kings) has failed to have the good sense to lead the community in turning to Yahweh. This foolishness is why the city is about to fall. There is an urgent need for the leadership and the people to turn now if they don’t want to have to chant the lament Jeremiah has just been articulating.

**22** Jeremiah underscores that urgent need by again imagining the invading army near the city gates. The two lines systematically recycle expressions from 4:5-31. Jeremiah hears *the sound [qôl] of a report [šәmû‘â]* and hears about *a great* *quaking from the* *northern country*, the thundering of the hooves of the advancing cavalry or the ground reverberating because of the coming of Yahweh himself. He thus hears about events that will *make the towns of Judah a* *desolation*.His words directly recall the warnings in 4:5-31, about a voice [*qôl*] making news heard [*šāma*‘] from the north and about making the towns of Judah into a desolation and about mountains quaking. The only element that did not appear there is the picture of *a home for jackals*, the exact phrase that did come in 9:11 [10].

**23** One more time Jeremiah reverts to speaking for Jerusalem; in speaking of herself as an “I,” Ms. Jerusalem nevertheless speaks as a male “I” or speaks metaphorically as a male individual. Once again the words are the response to Yahweh that Jeremiah wishes Judah would make or the one he makes on Judah’s behalf rather than one it actually makes. If only Judah would indeed *acknowledge that his path does not belong to an individual*! Yahweh’s problem with Judah has been that he wanted to shape its path but it insisted on taking the path to Egypt and Assyria, the path into the Ravine, the path to seek love from other deities (2:17-18, 23, 36). It has long assumed that it could choose its path, follow whomever it wished, and wander all over the place – as just the comments about Judah’s path in Jer 2 have asserted. Irony continues as Jerusalem speaks of *a person* *as he goes and determines his step*. Yahweh has continually raised questions about Judah’s going (after other deities): just to recall Jer 2, again, it referred to Israel’s going after Yahweh in the wilderness and Yahweh’s enabling Israel to go through the wilderness and getting it to go on a certain path, but Judah’s going after the Masters, foreigners, and emptiness. Both cola in v. 23 recall statements in Proverbs (16:9; 20:24; 21:29 K) and in that context raise questions about divine sovereignty and human freewill,[[208]](#footnote-208) but Jeremiah is not talking about freedom in a metaphysical sense but about freedom in a moral or religious or spiritual sense. Is Judah metaphysically free to make its own decision about the path it treads? It has been exercising that freedom. Is it religiously and morally free? If only it acknowledged that it is Yahweh’s servant, and is in this sense not free!

**24** In Jeremiah’s imagination, then, Judah has recognized that it needs Yahweh to *restrain* or correct or instruct it (*yāsar* piel): again, if only (see 6:8; and the noun in 2:30; 5:3; 7:28; and the comment about images in v. 8). In Jeremiah’s imagination, Judah submits to Yahweh’s exercise of authority (contrast 8:7), in keeping with his declarations about its exercise (1:16; 4:12). It is as if it has recognized and yielded to Jeremiah’s message. It can submit to Yahweh’s exercise of authority with confidence in light of Yahweh’s being one who acts with commitment and with authority and faithfulness: in 9:24 [23], Yahweh’s talk of authority locates it in between those other qualities. So on Judah’s behalf Jeremiah could express the hope that that Yahweh will not exercise authority *in your anger*. It might seem a more-than-slightly far-fetched plea; Yahweh has spoken of anger in connection with exercising authority over Judah (2:35; see also 4:8, 26 – and then there are the references to fury and wrath…). Yet casting oneself on God’s mercy may open up the possibility of Yahweh abandoning his anger…. So Jeremiah can lay this possibility before Judah in this prayer that they can overhear him putting on their lips. And given Yahweh’s talk about not finishing them off (e.g., 4:27), Judah can add the aim that *you don’t make me small*. In effect, Jeremiah invites Jerusalem to believe in some theological statements that Ezekiel is making between 597 and 587 in Babylon (Ezek 18:23; 33:11).[[209]](#footnote-209)

**25** Furthermore, Jeremiah feels justified, or can imagine Judah feeling justified, in urging Yahweh to take action on the nations that are his agents in bringing catastrophe to Judah: *pour out your fury on the nations* and *kin-groups*. The idea that Jeremiah or Judah should pray that way is often unacceptable to Western Christians (wisely, because we are “the nations”) but it is in keeping with the Prophets, the Psalms, and the New Testament, and Yahweh in due course does as Jeremiah asks. This verse appears in an alternative form as Ps 79:6-7 as part of a much longer prayer that people might pray in the context of an event such as the fall of Jerusalem. While the preacher more often quotes the hymnbook than the hymnbook quotes the preacher, the language of the verse fits Jeremiah. Its background is the fact that the nations and kin-groups *have consumed Jacob, consumed him and made an end of him, and his habitat they have laid desolate*; there is a useful ambiguity about he word *habitat* (*nāweh*), which can refer both to a sheepfold and to a human homestead, so here it can directly denote the place where Israel lives, or metaphorically suggest the place where the Israelite flock dwells. Either way, these marauders were acting not because they were committed to being Yahweh’s servants but because they want to extend their power and wealth. In other words, they *have not acknowledged you* or *called on your name*. And one of the theological assumptions or implications in the plea is that being Yahweh’s agents does not mean the nations evade the consequences of actions that they undertake for their own benefit. But only a people that has itself turned from not acknowledging Yahweh (contrast e.g., 9:3 [2]) could pray this prayer (see e.g., 2 Thess 1:5-10; Rev 6:9-11). Otherwise, the plea would rebound on the people praying (see 6:11). Indirectly, then, as usual, in inviting people to pray this way, Jeremiah is seeking to draw Judah to turn back to Yahweh.

# Part 2(b): Jeremiah’s Arguments (11:1 – 13:22)

As 10:17-25 constituted a sobering but thus plausible close to Jer 7 – 10, so the phrase *the word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh* constitutes a plausible if low-key beginning to a new compilation. As happened in the previous compilations, first-person introductions along the lines of *Yahweh said to me* will recur (11:6, 9; 13:1, 3, 6), but the distinctive phrase with which Jer 11 – 13 opens suggests that it constitutes an introduction to the compilation of Jeremiah’s words that follows. The compilation outlines:

11:1-17 A confrontation and warning about Yahweh’s pact

11:18 – 12:17 Three exchanges between Yahweh and Jeremiah

13:1-27 Five more warnings to Judah

The exchanges between Yahweh and Jeremiah introduce the motif of protests by Jeremiah about the work Yahweh imposes on him (Jeremiah’s miscalled “confessions”) and Yahweh’s responses. These exchanges run through Jer 11 – 20, which as a whole “portrays the course of Jeremiah’s prophetic mission as a dialogue in which prophet, Yahweh, and nation are the participants.”[[210]](#footnote-210) In the twentieth century they came to be treated as key to an understanding of the Jeremiah scroll; “the lamenting prophet” comes to be understood in a way that appeals to “the modern self,”[[211]](#footnote-211) and the reading of Jeremiah in church lectionaries came to focus more on his life than on his message.[[212]](#footnote-212)

# Another Confrontation and Warning, about the Pact (11:1-17)

Part 2(b) opens with a prose account of Yahweh’s giving Jeremiah a message for Judah that compares with 7:1-20; it begins in the same way, and like the earlier message, it incorporates a snippet of verse. Like that passage as the opening to Part 2(a), in opening Part 2(b) it functions to undermine an aspect of the people’s assumptions about the nature of their relationship with Yahweh – here, their assumptions about Yahweh’s pact with them. It critiques the people for failure to act as Yahweh had instructed them, warns them of calamity to come, and instructs Jeremiah not to pray for them, but it contains no account of Jeremiah’s delivering the message – it simply comprises Yahweh’s giving him the message. A difference over against 7:1-20 is that the symbolic role of the temple is here taken by the symbolic role of the pact that Yahweh had imposed on the people.

1The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh: 2Listen to the words in this pact.

So you are to speaka them to the individuals in Judah, and over the people who live in Jerusalem, 3and say to them: Yahweh, the God of Israel has said this. Cursed is the individual who does not listen to the words in this pact 4which I ordered your ancestors at the time of my getting them out of the country of Egypt, out of the iron smelter, saying, Listen to my voice and act on them in accordance with everything that I order you, and so become a people for me, and I for my part will become God for you, 5in order to implement the promise that I swore to your ancestors to give them a country flowing with milk and syrupb this veryc day. I answered, Indeed, Yahweh.d

6Yahweh said to me, Proclaim all these words in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem: Listen to the words in this pact and act on them. 7Because I testified, testifiede against your ancestors at the time of my enabling them to go up from the country of Egypt, and until this time, testifying assiduously:f Listen to my voice. 8But they didn’t listen, they didn’t bend their ear. They went, each one, by the determination of their dire mind. So I have let come upon them all the words in this pact that I ordered them to act on but they didn’t act on.g

9Yahweh said to me, A conspiracy is present among the individuals in Judah and among the people who live in Jerusalem. 10They’ve turned to the wayward acts of their ancestors of old, who refused to listen to my words. So those people, they’ve gone after other gods, to serve them – the household of Israel and the household of Judah have violatedh my pact that I solemnizedi with their ancestors.j

11Therefore Yahweh has said this: Here am I, bringing upon them dire trouble that they will not be able to get out of. They will cry out to me but I will not listen to them. 12The towns of Judah and the people who live in Jerusalem will go and cry out to the gods that they are burning offerings to, but they will certainly not deliver them in the time of their dire trouble. 13Because the number of your towns – [so] your gods have become, Judah, and the number of [your] streets, Jerusalem – [so] you have set up altars for Shame,k altars for burning offerings to the Master.l

14And you, do not plead on account of this people. Do not lift up on their account a chant by way of plea, because I am not going to be listening at the time of their calling to me on account ofm their dire trouble.n

15What [place] is there for my dear oneo in my housep –

 her acting on an intention (so many people)?q

The sacred flesh – they will make it pass awayr from you,

 because your dire troubles – then you will exult!

16Flourishing olive,

beautiful for its lovely fruit,

Yahweh named you,t

with the sound of a big tumult.u

He has lit a fire on her,v

 and itsw branches will break.x

17Yahweh of Armies, who planted you –

he has spoken over you of dire trouble,y

On account of the dire action of Israel’s household

and Judah’s household,

Which they performed for themselves

to irk me by burning offerings to the Master.z

Whereas *listen* was plural and constituted the challenge Jeremiah is to give to the people,the *waw*-consecutive which continues the imperative is singular and is addressed just to Jeremiah; cf. the next *waw*-consecutive in v. 3. Vg has plural for *speak*, which is syntactically more logical but makes for poorer sense.

*Dәbaš* covers both bees’ honey and a syrup made from fruit such as dates and figs, the main source of sweetness in Israel; the latter will apply in this context (cf. Altschuler, *“Mesudat David*,” on 32:22).

LXX, Vg have “as at this day,” but in such expressions *kә* denotes exact point of time rather than suggesting a comparison: see J. Goldingay, “*kayyôm hazzeh* ‘On This Very Day,’" *VT* 43 (1993): 112-15.

MT has a marker here.

The infinitive precedes the finite verb, underlining the fact; the idiom recurs in v. 12.

See the note and comment on 7:13.

MT has a section marker here. LXX lacks vv. 7-8 except for the last clause.

*Pārar* suggests contravening and thus making ineffectual (cf. Vg, Sym); LXX “scatter” may imply BDB’s *pārar* II. Tg has “changed.”

Literally, “cut”: see 34:18-19; Gen 15:7-21.

MT has a section marker here.

LXX omits “altars for Shame,” perhaps simplifying the repetition, deliberately or accidentally, or perhaps indicating that MT is a conflate text.

LXX’s giving *Baal* a feminine article, as it does elsewhere (cf. v. 17), links with its identifying *Baal* as (feminine) *bōšet*, “shame” (cf. 3:24); see 2:8 and the note. MT has a section marker here.

For MT *bә‘ad* LXX, Vg, Syr, imply *bә‘ēt* “at the time of.”

MT has a section marker here.

The adjective is masculine, following on the masculine singular “this people,” but feminine for Jerusalem (or Judah) reappears in the parallel colon, and the two genders mix through vv. 14-17 – as do singular and plural; there is considerable jerkiness and ellipse in these lines.

LXX, Vg take “my dear one” as directly the subject of the verb in the next colon, but the difference in the gender of noun and verb works against that understanding.

Literally, “the many.” Vg, Aq take *mәzimmātâ* *hārabbîm* to denote “many wrongful purposes,” but *mәzimmātâ* is anarthrous feminine singular whereas *hārabbîm* is definite masculine plural. Rather *hārabbîm* is in apposition to the subject of the infinitive (Rashi in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage). LXX, Tg divide the line before *hārabbîm* and take it as (part of) the subject of the plural verb that follows, which is easier syntactically, but the colon becomes harder to make sense of. For *hārabbîm* LXX perhaps then implies [*hă*]*nәdārîm* “[would] vows” (but *HUB* sees the influence of Deut 12:6) while OL implies [*hă*]*ḥălābîm* or [*hă*]*bәriyyîm* “[would] fat things.”

MT’s *yē‘abәrû* looks like a qal form, but GK 53n sees it as hiphil; cf. LXX, Vg “make your dire behavior pass away” – though it implies seeing the subsequent *kî* (“because”) as dittog.

*Rā‘ātēkî* is an archaic form for *rā‘ātәkā* (GK 91e).

The suffix is again feminine singular, referring to Jerusalem.

MT’s accents link this colon with what follows and thus give *hămullâ* a negative connotation (cf. Tg), but in its only other occurrence (Ezek 1:24) the word is not negative (cf. Vg “utterance”); *HALOT* has “tumultuous crowd” andA. Baumann (*TDOT* 3:415) links the word with a “cultic assembly.”

That is, on Jerusalem.

The masculine suffix refers to the tree.

*Rā‘û* from *râ‘a‘* II.LXX derives it from *râ‘a‘* I “suffer dire trouble,” and at least a paronomasia with that root might occur to listeners in this context. Tg derives it from *râ‘â* “befriend” (referring to military allies). Vg “burn” implies *bā‘ărû*.

*Rā‘â* picks up from vv. 11, 15 but it is also is the more literal nature of *rā‘a‘* (v. 16).

1. MT has a marker here.

The passage is choppy, with a sequence of starts and restarts and switching over the addressees’ identities:

v. 1 an introduction to Yahweh’s words to Jeremiah

 v. 2a the challenge to listen that Jeremiah is to give the people

vv. 2b-3aα Yahweh’s bidding to Jeremiah to speak to them

 vv. 3aβ- 5a the content of the message: a reminder about Yahweh’s pact

v. 5b Jeremiah’s response to Yahweh

v. 6a Yahweh’s bidding to Jeremiah to proclaim the message to them

 vv. 6b-8 the challenge to listen to the pact that he is to give them

v. 9a an introduction to Yahweh’s words to Jeremiah

 vv. 9b-10 an accusation about them

v. 11aα a resumptive introduction to Yahweh’s words to Jeremiah

 vv. 11aβ-12 a declaration about calamity that will follow

 v. 13 a further accusation, addressed to them, about other gods

v. 14 an instruction to Jeremiah not to pray for them

vv. 15-17 eight lines of bicola without much parallelism, with two running together in v. 16abα and three running together in v. 17:

 v. 15a critique

 v. 15b warning

 v. 16abα background to the critique

 v. 16bβγ-17a warning

 v. 17b critique

In addition to being choppy, it doesn’t report Jeremiah’s delivery of the message and it includes his prohibition on praying for the people. These features reflect its nature as another passage constructed as a literary entity designed to persuade. It is composed to have an effect on people hearing the passage itself, as opposed to their simply hearing the message to which it refers when Jeremiah delivers that message. The substance of its confrontation is the same as in preceding ones; Yahweh challenges Judah about going after other gods. Much of the language is the same: e.g., reference to burning offerings to the Master, to dire behavior, and to dire trouble. The big difference lies in the focus on the *pact* that Yahweh imposed on Judah’s ancestors, which the people have contravened. This chapter is the first in the Jeremiah scroll to use the word *pact* except for the reference to the pact chest in 3:16.

*Pact* is the word *bәrît*. I avoid the traditional translation “covenant,” which carries deceptive freight.[[213]](#footnote-213) It has been an important theological term with a meaning of its own, and an important historical/cultural term in the United States. In both contexts the relational significance of the covenant idea has been important. It suggests mutual relationships between God and people and mutual relationships within the community. There are then several contrasts over against *bәrît*. First, *bәrît* parallels “covenant” in having a wide range of meanings, but it is a different range: for instance, *bәrît* covers treaties as well as covenants. Second, *bәrît* does not suggest mutuality. A *bәrît* is a solemnly made commitment; it can be made by two parties to one another, or made by one party to another, or required as an obligation by one party of another.[[214]](#footnote-214) The word is particularly common in Genesis (with a stress on Yahweh’s making commitments) and in Deuteronomy (with more stress on a commitment Yahweh requires), but the Hosea scroll’s five references to a *bәrît* are also noteworthy in light of Hosea’s brevity and the other indications of its influencing Jeremiah. Although “pact” does imply mutuality, it has the advantage of not being a theological technical term.

In this passage, the *bәrît* is a solemn commitment or obligation that Yahweh imposed on Israel as a consequence of his getting the people out of Egypt. He ordered it (v. 4). The *bәrît* is then part of a covenantal relationship, in that Israel’s living by this commitment will open up the possibility that Israel might become a people for Yahweh and he might become God for it. Elsewhere, Jeremiah rarely uses the word *bәrît* (it will recur in 14:21; 22:9; 50:5; and a number of times in 31:31 – 34:22). Yet the relationship between Yahweh and Israel that he has been describing is covenantal in the sense that it presupposes a solemnly committed mutual relationship between Yahweh and Israel. In that broad sense, he does think in terms of something like a marriage covenant or an adoption covenant.[[215]](#footnote-215)

Speaking in terms of a *bәrît* here, when Jeremiah does not usually do so, contributes to communicating with Judahites, because they were used to talking about a *bәrît*. They were familiar with Deuteronomy, which speaks of Yahweh solemnizing a *bәrît*, of Israel contravening a *bәrît*, and of the words in “this *bәrît*” (e.g., 4:23; 5:2, 3; 29:1 [28:69]; 31:16, 20). Deuteronomy also contains nearly half the First Testament occurrences of the word *cursed* and refers to Egypt as an *iron smelter* (see vv. 3-4 here). Second Kings 23:2-3 also describes the document that came to light in the temple as the “*bәrît* scroll,” refers to the words in the *bәrît* scroll, and relates how Josiah led the people in solemnizing the *bәrît* before Yahweh, which fits with other indications that the scroll was some form of Deuteronomy. It also fits the likelihood of there being a relationship between Assyria (and subsequently Babylon) and Judah in which the imperial power imposed a *bәrît* on Judah. For Deuteronomy, for 2 Kings 23, and for Jer 11:1-17, then, talk in terms of Yahweh’s *bәrît* could say to people, “You know Assyria laid a *bәrît* on us? Well, so did Yahweh. And you know how dangerous it would have been to ignore the Assyrian *bәrît*? How much more danger have we risked by ignoring Yahweh’s *bәrît*.” So Jeremiah thinks of the covenant relationship quite broadly, but will think of the *bәrît* relationship politically.

The fact that this message is in prose (like 7: 1 – 8:3) rather than poetry again has no necessary implications regarding who composed it. It has many phrases characteristic of Deuteronomy as opposed to Jeremiah and many characteristic of Jeremiah as opposed to Deuteronomy.[[216]](#footnote-216) Its distinctive formulation of Yahweh’s relationship with Israel in terms of a *bәrît* might be the work of Jeremiah, and one can imagine Jeremiah or his aide reading out this passage sometime in (say) Zedekiah’s day, perhaps when Jeremiah was under confinement. Its aim would be the usual one of getting the people to turn. And/or one can imagine a disciple of Jeremiah reading it out after the fall of Jerusalem; its aim might again be to get people to turn, or to reassure them that there was a logic behind the disaster. Alternatively the passage may parallel the way Jesus in John talks much about the life of the age to come (“eternal life”) whereas Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels hardly mentions it. As John reworks Jesus’s way of speaking in order to communicate with his audience, so might the composer of the message in Jer 11:1-17.

**1-3a** First, Jeremiah’s curator introduces what follows as Yahweh’s message that came to Jeremiah. The introduction implies an awareness that the message’s content came from Yahweh but it wouldn’t be surprising if the actual formulation is the prophet’s or curator’s creative articulation. The introduction goes on to summarize the message of vv. 1-17, that people are to *listen to the words in this pact.* What is the *pact* (*bәrît*)?[[217]](#footnote-217) In passages such as Deut 5:3; 29:9, 14 [8, 13]; 2 Kgs 23:3, *this pact* is the one expounded in Deuteronomy, or the related one made by Josiah. But in such passages, the previous verses have already alluded to the pact and the expression *this pact* is referring back to those allusions. Here, the phrase is the first of a number of intertextual links with Deuteronomy, but Jeremiah is typically giving the Deuteronomic expressions a new meaning. The *this* is designed to make the audience listen to what follows so as to discover what *this pact* is, as is the case when Jeremiah says *this* in a passage such as 7:2, referring to the message he is about to give. The description of Yahweh as “Israel’s God” is not to be missed:[[218]](#footnote-218) indeed, one could see “the entire unit of Jer. 11:1-17” as “a meditation on Deut. 6:4.”[[219]](#footnote-219)

**3b-4a** *Cursed* (*’ārûr*)is then a solemn beginning for the actual message. In Deuteronomy, curses come near the end of the scroll, but in Jeremiah’s context it is the motif that needs emphasis. The word opens each of the curses in Deut 27:15-26. Indeed, “a plethora of linguistic markers tie Jer 11:1-14, and specifically vv. 1-5, to Deuteronomy 27.”[[220]](#footnote-220) Indirectly Yahweh is indeed referring to the terms of the pact in Deuteronomy. Yet here the pact is linked to the exodus event; an *iron smelter* is an especially frightening image, since smelting involves heating ore to dissolve slag and thus produce pure metal, and iron requires a furnace to be heated to a high temperature. The message reminds the hearers of the exodus, and of the obligations Yahweh then imposed on Israel. This feature does not fit so well with the Deuteronomic pact, set in the context of Israel’s being on the edge of the promised land rather than at Sinai.

**4b** Jeremiah goes on to describe the significance of thepact. The aim of Yahweh’s laying his obligation on Israel at the beginning of its story, following on his getting Israel out of Egypt, was that there should be a relationship of mutual commitment between them and him. Here, being Yahweh’s people is not the basis for obedience, as it is in Deut 26:16-19, but the result of it.[[221]](#footnote-221) “God does not belong to Israel, and Israel to God, because of the privilege of race, the wound of circumcision, or the leisure of Sabbath”; rather the logic compares with the logic whereby “the Lord says to his disciples, ‘You are my friends if you do what I order you.”[[222]](#footnote-222) *Become a people for me, and I for my part will become God for you* perfectly expresses the nature of a covenant relationship in a theological sense, yet it does not define a *bәrît* between Yahweh and Israel. There are one or two other places where the word *bәrît* and that covenantal phrase come in close association, with an implication that they are linked, but in such contexts they come in association with other linked ideas such as the promise that Israel will enter the land and that the Torah will be inscribed into Israel’s thinking; the *bәrît* and the covenantal relationship are not identical (see Exod 6:4-7; Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:26-27). But *become a people for me, and I for my part will become God for you* does give expression to a special relationship between Yahweh and Israel. On Israel’s side, at least, it is an exclusive relationship, like that of a wife to a husband.[[223]](#footnote-223) It might be misleading to call it an exclusive relationship on Yahweh’s side, in that Yahweh has other commitments. One could rather compare it with the relationship of a father and his child. For a child, only this man is its father. For a father, this position means a total and unqualified commitment to this child, but it does not exclude being committed in the same way to other children. A father just has to solve the problem when commitments to more than one child stand in tension – as happens when Yahweh wants to give the land of Canaan to Abraham, but cannot do so because it would not be fair to the Canaanites (Gen 15:16).

**5a** Historically, then, the relationship between Yahweh and Israel involved four stages: (1) I got Israel out of Egypt. (2) I challenged Israel to make a commitment to me. (3) Supposing it does so (but Yahweh makes no reference to that stage), a mutual relationship comes into being. (4) I will then *implement my promise to your ancestors* to give them the country of Canaan. Jeremiah’s language again follows Deuteronomy: see especially Deut 8:18.[[224]](#footnote-224) That link means that the *ancestors* (v. 4, the Sinai/Moab generations) now become the ancestors whose story is told in Genesis. The description of Canaan as *a country flowing with milk and syrup* goes back to the exodus (see e.g., Exod 3:8, 17; 13:5; Lev 20:24; Num 13:27; Deut 6:3; 11:9; Josh 5:6). The country has good pasturage for the sheep who will produce milk, and it has flourishing fruit trees from which sweet syrup can be made. The description does not make for a contrast with Egypt (whose produce is if anything more spectacular) but it does make for a contrast with the desert. Yahweh made the promise on *this very day*, but that day is not limited to a moment in the past. More literalistically, the phrase says “as at this day,” and even if this translation is too literalistic, the phrase suggests an analogy between one day and another. Yahweh acted and spoke and promised back then; he has fulfilled his promise and the Judahites are still the beneficiaries of its fulfillment *this very day*, today.

**5b** The ambiguity in the passage’s connection with Deuteronomy suggests that the relationship is intertextual and that Jeremiah is making allusions but giving the language different significance from the one that obtains in Deuteronomy. The ambiguity continues in Jeremiah’s response to Yahweh. *Indeed, Yahweh* is the response Israel was to give to each of the curses in Deut 27; it turned a curse into a self-curse. Jeremiah’s use of the expression does not have that significance. It does mean he presents himself as giving Yahweh the kind of response for which Yahweh looks from the entire people.

**6** Yahweh goes on to a second formulation of the commission and the message. Is the author “totally and emphatically a preaching theologian and unable to approach history historically”?[[225]](#footnote-225) Rather, he is totally and emphatically a preaching theologian who approaches history rhetorically. The commission to Jeremiah no more suggests a preaching tour than (say) 25:30 suggests a trip to Babylon. *In the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem* is in any case a stereotypical expression (e.g., 33:10; 44:6).[[226]](#footnote-226) While Jeremiah could proclaim the message to the townspeople in Jerusalem for a festival,[[227]](#footnote-227) the idea of Jeremiah going off to preach is an image within the message; the message is what people will hear. They will picture Jeremiah going on a preaching tour; it suggests the idea that everyone in Jerusalem and Judah needs to pay heed to this message that reminds the hearers that the obligations of the pact rest on Judah now.

**7** Once again Jeremiah picks up an expression in Deuteronomy, though also elsewhere. After reaffirming the promise whose language reappeared in v. 5, to implement the pact he made to Israel’s ancestors, Yahweh had *testified* *against* them that on the other hand they would perish if they went after other gods (Deut 8:19). Once more, Jeremiah adapts the language: he again refers to the exodus rather than to the point when Israel is on the edge of Canaan, and the testifying is not merely something in which he engaged then but something in which he has been repeatedly engaged over the years. Etymologically, *testify* (*‘ûd* hiphil) suggests giving solemn testimony in court with an appeal to witnesses and a self-curse if you are lying, which tells us how seriously Yahweh is speaking.

**8** When did Yahweh *let come upon them all the words in this pact that I ordered them to act on but they didn’t act on*? The words recall Huldah’s warning (2 Kg 22:16).[[228]](#footnote-228) In isolation, one might take Jeremiah to be referring to the fall of Jerusalem; the message would then belong after 587.[[229]](#footnote-229) But in vv. 11-17, in what looks like the main point of the message, he will be threatening a disaster still to come, the threat that was surely fulfilled in 587. So this action is some earlier one. Yahweh acted in this way when he allowed Samaria to fall, and Jeremiah is indeed inclined to urge Judah to learn from Ephraim’s story. But that disaster was a century ago in another place in another time. More likely the reference indicates that the message belongs in the reign of Zedekiah, after the fall of Jerusalem and the exile of people in 597.

**9-10** Yahweh once more starts again. *Conspiracy* is a political image.[[230]](#footnote-230) It was a conspiracy by Hoshea that drove Shalmanezer to invade Ephraim, capture Samaria, and exile its people (2 Kgs 17:4-6), and this link might support the idea that v. 8 refers to the fall of Samaria. It was a similar action , though 2 Kgs 24 calls it an act of rebellion, that led to Nebuchadrezzar’s invasion in 597, and it would be another such rebellion that led to his invasion in 587. It had been a conspiracy that deposed Amon and put Josiah on the throne (2 Kgs 21:23-24). V. 10 will suggest that the conspiracy has a religious aspect, but it is the only First Testament passage where this meaning applies, and the political connotations likely apply here. Jeremiah will later also make clear that Judah is supposed to submit to Babylon as Yahweh’s servant, so that a conspiracy against Babylon is also a conspiracy against Yahweh. There are thus two aspects to Judah’s *wayward acts* and its conspiracy. The combined reference to *the household of Israel and the household of Judah* again suggests a link with the political and religious realities of the eighth century. The two peoples *have frustrated my pact that I solemnized with their ancestors.* Jerusalem and Judah are acting the same way as Ephraim and they have at least imperiled the *bәrît* imposed by Yahweh – and thus risked the sanctions attached to it, which fell on Ephraim. It is the “most massive indictment” of Ephraim and Judah’s covenant violation that comes on Yahweh’s lips in the First Testament.[[231]](#footnote-231)

**11-13** For a fourth time, Yahweh starts again, declaring that *dire trouble* will indeed follow; once more Jeremiah suggests a link between dire thinking, dire action, and dire trouble (cf. vv. 8, 11-15). Yahweh had got them out of Egypt, the iron smelter (v. 4), but he won’t get them out of this calamity because he is the one who is bringing it, and they themselves *will not be able to get out of* it. He will make sure of it. It will be no use when they *cry out* to him for deliverance, because he *will not listen to them*. It’s a hard saying, because it clashes with what Yahweh elsewhere says to his people:

They cry out, and Yahweh listens,

 and from all their troubles he rescues them (Ps 34:17 [18])

The psalm fits with the exodus story to which Yahweh has been referring in this message – *cry out* and the associated noun come more often there than anywhere (e.g., Exod 3:7, 9). But in the psalm the implied subject is “the faithful” (Ps 34:15 [6]), which is not the term that applies to the people Yahweh is addressing. They have not listened – and now he will not listen.[[232]](#footnote-232) in this situation he will become “the God of no answer.”[[233]](#footnote-233) Nor will it be any use their crying out to anyone else, though there are lots of entities to whom they might uselessly pray (cf. 2:28). And the fact that Yahweh envisages them envisaging this possibility suggests part of the background to his determination not to listen to them. They *are burning offerings* to these other deities. They cannot expect to combine turning to Yahweh with maintaining that allegiance. Of course if they do turn to Yahweh and abandon serving other deities, the situation will be different.

**14** By the same logic, Jeremiah is not to pray for their deliverance: Yahweh repeats the instruction from 7:16. No, *I am not going to be listening at the time of their calling to me on account of their dire trouble.*

Call me on the day of pressure,

 I’ll pull you out, then you will honor me. (Ps 50:15).[[234]](#footnote-234)

Not this time. There are contexts in which you can pray for your brother or sister, but contexts in which you cannot (1 John 5:16). There are limits. But maybe you don’t take any notice and pray anyway, as Paul does (Rom 9:1).[[235]](#footnote-235) Who knows whether God will be unable to resist the temptation to respond? Praying, after all, is a symbolic action.[[236]](#footnote-236)

**15a** The verses of poetry with which the section closes constitute another backing for vv. 11-14 and deal with the same issues. They parallel 7:29 within that earlier section, imply the same context(festival, temple), and pursue the same argument about the relationship between election and obedience, though in different terms.[[237]](#footnote-237)The move to reference to *my house* also parallels 7:1-16; it is an indication that the subtext of 11:1-17 is not so different from that of 7:1-16. Once again, Yahweh declares that the people of Judah have no business coming to the temple. In the parallelism, the first colon raises a question – why on earth should Yahweh be asking *what [place] is there for my dear one in my house* – to which the second colon provides an answer: *so many people* among them are *acting on an intention* – and not a legitimate one*.* They are guilty of conspiracy, you could say. The description of Ms. Jerusalem as *my dear one* (*yәdîdîdî*) compares with the affectionate Ms. Zion elsewhere (e.g., 4:31; 6:2), and like that expression, carries some irony.

**15b** Yahweh goes on to address the dear one. The city thinks it should be able to come to the temple and take part in the sacrifices, with *the sacral flesh*. But the result of its wrongful lifestyle will be that *they* (who are not identified – In the event it will be the Babylonians) *will make it pass away from you*. In due course (when the temple is destroyed) there will be no more offerings. At the moment the city can exult over the temple and the offerings (cf. 7:4, 10, 21). The arrival of the *dire trouble* that will issue from its going after other gods (cf. 7:6) makes *then you will exult* purely an irony.

**16** Only here is the *olive* a metaphor for Jerusalem; it is a simile in Hos 14:14:6 [7]) and Ps 52:8 [10],[[238]](#footnote-238) while Paul takes up the metaphor and runs with it in Rom 11. But the importance of the olive with the heightening reference in the parallel colon to *its* *lovely fruit* (you eat it, you spread its oil on your bread, you cook with it, you get light from it…) adds to the force of the metaphor. It was thus an honorable name for Yahweh to give to Jerusalem. In this connection the second colon again heightens the first as once more Jeremiah alludes to the presence of the Jerusalem community in the temple *with the sound of a big tumult* (cf. Ps 42:4 [5]) as it engages in worship. The trouble is that the lovely fruit of the olive contrasts with the actual “fruit” of the Jerusalem “olive.” Hence the horrifying nature of what Jeremiah does with the metaphor as he paints a picture in which Yahweh *has lit a fire on her* – on Jerusalem – which will mean that *its branches will break*. Rom 11:17 will invite us to picture such a breaking off as not meaning the total destruction of the tree, in keeping with Jeremiah’s promises about Yahweh not making an end of the people (4:27; 5:10).

**17** But one should not underestimate the magnitude of the disaster that Yahweh threatens. *Dire action* will indeed issue in *dire trouble*. And even if the two direnesses naturally interrelate, Yahweh is involved in the way one issues in the other. It issues from the way *Yahweh of Armies, who planted you* has also *spoken over you*. Once again Yahweh juxtaposes reference to *Israel’s household* and *Judah’s household*. It’s as if they were deliberately seeking *to irk me*, *by burning offerings to the Master*. Like 7:1-20 (and the continuation in 7:21 – 8:3) this message does not conclude with a challenge to turn back to Yahweh, though like that section it has incorporated such challenges near the beginning (see vv. 3, 6). But the absence of overt challenge or invitation would not mean that the time when Judah is being provoked to turn is over. Whether or not there is an explicit challenge or invitation, the point about the message is to push for one.

# Three Exchanges (Protests and Responses) (11:18 – 12:17)

Within 11:1 – 13:22, this second unit consists of a block of material that is nearly all verse, set between a message that’s nearly all prose (11:1-17) and a story in prose (13:1-12aα). It includes the first of what are commonly called Jeremiah’s confessions, but that title is inappropriate, even if it is intended to recall Augustine’s Confessions. In these passages Jeremiah does not do much confession of sin, nor much confession of Yahweh’s greatness, nor is he sharing his spiritual autobiography (a popular way of reading Augustine).[[239]](#footnote-239) The section continues to be material designed to reach out persuasively to Judah during the last decades of the Judahite monarchy and the decades that followed, and designed to draw Judah to turn back to Yahweh. The so-called confessions are “prophecy” or “proclamation.”[[240]](#footnote-240) They are part of his rhetoric.[[241]](#footnote-241) They “illustrate the people’s rejection of God’s word in the person of the prophet,” and after 587 they would “justify the Fall of the nation.”[[242]](#footnote-242) Before that final event, they would summon it to turn.

This significance of the section appears from the links it has with what precedes in Jeremiah’s ministry and in his message. Its language takes us back to the beginning of the scroll in Jer 1,[[243]](#footnote-243) to Anathoth, to Yahweh’s acknowledging and Jeremiah’s knowing, to Yahweh’s sanctifying, to the speaking out of authoritative decisions, to pulling up, pulling down, building, and planting, and to people doing battle with Jeremiah. But the situation has moved on. “It might be said that [Jeremiah’s] confessions to Yahweh are his response to Yahweh’s call in the light of his living out that call.”[[244]](#footnote-244)

This point also emerges from the way it takes up motifs from the intervening chapters, to Jer 1 – 10. While many expressions that recur (e.g., path, dire, faithless, wilderness, desolate) are too common to count as significant points of connection, other links are more distinctive: reference to people’s practices (4:4, 18; 7:3, 5), the word *’allûp* though with a different meaning (3:4), plans (4:14; 6:19), tree (esp. 5:14), devastate (5:10, of a tree), we will destroy (cohortative, 6:5), cut down (6:6; 9:21 [20]), examine (6:27; 9:7 [6]), redress (5:9, 29; 9:8 [7]), seeking someone’s life (4:30), sword and hunger (5:12), sons and daughters (3:24; 5:17; 7:31), remainder (6:9; 8:3), their being attended to (8:12; 10:15), I will argue (2:9), succeed (2:37), false (specifically, the participle: 3:8, 11), tear off (2:20; 5:5), slaughter (7:32), the country will mourn (4:28), end (5:28), weary (6:11; 9:5 [4]), things are well (4:10; 6:14; 8:11, 15; 9:8 [7]); reliant (5:17; 7:8, 14), abandon (9:2 [1]), my domain (2:7; 3:19), shepherds (6:3), share (10:16), desirable (3:19), bare heights (3:2, 21; 4:11; 7:29), destroyer (6:26), sow/thorns (4:3), be sick (10:19).

On the other hand, the section stands in some contrast with 11:1-17, which affirmed that Yahweh makes life work out in a religiously and morally intelligible way. Jeremiah’s protest now declares, “No he doesn’t.”[[245]](#footnote-245) The section brings together at least four subsections of separate origin (11:18-23; 12:1-6, 7-13, 14-17), with the opening verse (11:18) making a link with what precedes.[[246]](#footnote-246) In their assembled form the four subsections comprise a threefold pattern of protest and response:

11:18-20 protest 11:21-23 response

12:1-4 protest 12:5-6 response

12:7-13 protest 12:14-17 response

In form the section recalls the prayers of protest that are a dominant feature of the Psalms.[[247]](#footnote-247) Jeremiah uses their familiar form in order to talk about his experience as a prophet, to Yahweh and indirectly to his people.[[248]](#footnote-248) In a variety of ways the sequence in 11:19 – 12:17 compares and contrasts with the psalms.

* The protest feature is the clearest correspondence. It describes literally and figuratively the words and actions of the people who have acted wrongly toward Jeremiah and toward Yahweh. They are people who profess commitment to Yahweh but simultaneously deny that commitment, not least by their repudiating Jeremiah’s message. The language of the protests does not especially correspond to that of the Psalms, though the questions “why” and “until when” recur there.
* Each protest leads into a demand regarding what needs to happen in light of it the protest. What needs to happen focuses on Yahweh bringing redress for people’s wrongdoing towards Jeremiah as Yahweh’s representative and towards the community and its leadership because of their devastation of Yahweh’s own domain.
* The first two protests include a statement of trust in Yahweh. Most radically, the third protest is different because it is Yahweh’s own.
* The expectation of a response is integral to the protest psalms, though actual responses occur in them only occasionally, as is to be expected in a prayer text; a prayer composer can prescribe how people might pray but not prescribe Yahweh’s reply. These examples in Jeremiah illustrate the point as the divine response does not follow on the protest in a way one might have anticipated.

## A Lamb Led to Slaughtering/I Will Attend to Them (11:18-23)

18So Yahweh – he let me know, and I knew –a

 at that timeb you let me seec their practices.

19But I was like a lamb,

an oxd that is led to slaughtering.

I didn’t know that against me they formulated plans:

We will devastatee the treef through someone doing battle with him.g

We will cut him off from the country of the living people,

 and his name – it will not be kept in mind any more.h

20So Yahweh of Armies, one who exercises authority with faithfulness,

 one who examines heart and mind:i

May I seej your redress from them,

 because to you I have rolledk my argument.l

21Therefore Yahweh has said this over the people of Anathoth who are seeking your life, saying

You will not prophesy by Yahweh’s name,

then you will not die by our hand.m

22Therefore Yahweh of Armies has said this:n

Here am I, I am going to attend to them –

the young men, they will die by the sword.

Their sons and their daughters, they will die by hunger,

23and remainder, they will have none.

Because I will bring something dire to the people of Anathoth,

the year of their being attended to. o

LXX takes the first verb as imperative and for the second implies simple *waw* (“so I may know”) rather than *waw-*consecutive. Vg has “you let me know,” which leads more smoothly than MT into what follows.

 “Then” (LXX, Vg) could give the impression that the seeing is subsequent to the knowing, but the parallelism indicates that the second colon restates the first (see the comment): see *DCH* 1:167.

LXX’s “and I saw” is perhaps translating loosely.

For *’allûp* LXX has “innocent,” Vg, Aq, Th, Sym have “tame,” qualifying *lamb*,but there are no parallels for these meanings. Usually *’allûp* means something like “guide” (3:4), but for *ox* cf. Ps 144:14; Sirach 38:25. Using this form of the word rather than the more common *’elep* makes for a verbal link with 3:4.

For *naḥšîtâ* LXX, Vg imply a verb such as *nāšîtâ* “we will put.”

Tg has “poison,” also implied by LXX, Vg.

MT has *laḥmô* “his bread”; for the idea of destroying trees along with the food they produce, cf. Deut 20:19-20 (*CTAT* 2:569). But in the context it is hard to make sense of “his bread”; Holladay suggests *lōḥămô* (cf. Ps 35:1), which fits with 1:19.

The abb’a’ order of verbs and nouns contributes to signaling a sense of finality to their intention.

Literally/anatomically, kidneys (which can imply a wide range of emotions and inner workings: see D. Kellermann, *TDOT* 7:179-80) and heart (which most commonly implies thinking, forming attitudes, and making decisions).

*’Er’eh* will be cohortative.

LXX, Vg “revealed” derive *gillîtî* from *gālâ* but MT implies the verb *gālal* (see the comment).

MT has a section marker here.

MT has a marker here.

LXX lacks this resumptive clause.

MT has a marker here.

The first section of protest reveals gradually and dramatically that Jeremiah is under attack and that it is the people of his own torn who are making plans to get him unless he shuts up. He appeals for Yahweh to take redress from them, and Yahweh responds with a horrifying promise. The section outlines:

vv. 18-19 a protest at how people were thinking of ways to get rid of Jeremiah

four bicola

v. 20 a plea for Yahweh to take redress from them

two linked bicola

vv. 21-23 a response relating how Yahweh intends to do so

an introduction and one bicolon, with more background

then a further introduction and three bicola comprising the actual response

**18** Jeremiah speaks to Yahweh, though as usual the indirect audience will be the Judahites. What did *Yahweh let me know*, and what was it that consequently he *knew*? The section’s subsequent links with Jer 1 mean that this colon’s two references to knowing resonate with the two references there,[[249]](#footnote-249) where Yahweh knew/acknowledged Jeremiah and Jeremiah talked about what he didn’t know. Yahweh has got Jeremiah to acknowledge him and Jeremiah now recognizes that he does know how to speak. But the opening *so* (*waw*) indicates that this new section of verse continues from what precedes, and it begins to clarify what it is that *Yahweh let me know*. We have been made aware of what it was in 11:1-16 (not to say in Jer 1 – 10). The second colon confirms that implication: it parallels the first, with *you let me see* restating *he let me know* and with *their practices* providing *know/knew* with their object. Yes, Jeremiah is well aware of the Judahites’ *practices* (4:4, 18; 7:3, 5).

**19** But there were other things that *I didn’t know*. Perhaps it shouldn’t be surprising that the Judahites’ plans were similar to their practices. After all, Jeremiah has been implacably hostile to them. It they made plans that went against Yahweh (4:14; 6:19), it’s not surprising that they *formulated* *plans* *against* *me.* What plans? The parallel colon provides the answer. Jeremiah knows that they hadset up *a devastator* so as to *catch human beings* (5:26) and that in fact *they are all of them devastators* (6:28). So he might almost have expected them to be saying of him, *we will devastate the tree*. This image for cutting down a person appears only here, though the comparison of a person’s flourishing with a tree’s flourishing is familiar (Ps 1), and Jeremiah’s attackers are intent on proving that his version of that psalm’s promise (17:5-8) doesn’t work out. Nor is it surprising that Jeremiah should picture them resolving to do so *through someone doing battle with him*, because it’s what Yahweh had warned him of (1:19). If the language in the colon about the tree is a little allusive, the language in the next line is clear enough. Yes, they will cut the tree down – *cut him off from the country of the living people*. They will finish him off, now and for the future: *his name – it will not be kept in mind any more*. A person’s name stands for the person. The name on a gravestone or on a commemorative park bench is a reminder of them. The inscription on the gravestone being worn down and unreadable means that they are forgotten. Jeremiah’s name being put out of mind is a way of expressing emphatically how he is put out of the community’s mind. He no longer exists. Maybe he should have suspected that intention of theirs, but he hasn’t drawn the inference, and Yahweh hadn’t previously enabled him to do so. He thought he was serving them by confronting them, but they of course didn’t see it that way. So he has been *like a lamb* or for that matter *an ox….* What is the point of the comparison? The parallelism provides the answer: he has ben like such a creature *that is led to slaughtering*, not realizing where it is going. There’s nothing sacrificial about the language. The animal is simply about to be butchered.

**20a** The grievance expressed in v. 19 recalls the complaint of a protest psalm, and so does the plea that now follows. First there is the double basis for the plea. On one hand there is the character of Yahweh. He is, after all *Yahweh of Armies*, the God who has at his disposal all the forces in existence; and he is *one who exercises authority with faithfulness*, who implements his sovereign power in a way that does the right thing by people (see e.g., 4:2; 9:24 [23]). On the other, there is the character of the person who is praying, who needs to be able to recognize that Yahweh is *one who examines heart and mind*. Someone who is the agent of testing (6:27) needs to be able to submit to testing and emerge vindicated, not caught out. Further, one who pleads with Yahweh for action against wrongdoers needs to take into account that Yahweh can examine motives and intentions (heart and mind) as well as actions. Only if what we say about our heart and mind is true can we pray for redress? It is thus people like dead saints who can do so (Rev 6:9-11).

**20b** On that double basis it is possible to plead *may I see your redress from them*. As usual, a First Testament victim of attack does not expect to take redress but does expect God to do so, like those dead saints. Such prayers are one response to wrongful attack; Isa 53:8 is another.[[250]](#footnote-250) As usual, too, the Scriptures do not give people just one answer to a question (such as “how should I react to attack?”) but several answers to reflect on, while also implying the exclusion of some answers (in this case, taking redress oneself). Jeremiah asks God to act as he has said he would (5:9, 29; 9:9). His way of affirming that he will not take redress himself is to note that *to you I have rolled my argument*. He is not even entering into an argument with them; he is committing it to God (for the verb “roll” in this connection, cf. Pss 22:9 [8]; 37:5; Prov 16:3).[[251]](#footnote-251) “Curses are the last resort of the weak.”[[252]](#footnote-252) The prayer being part of Jeremiah’s personal relationship with Yahweh, why does he include it in this scroll? It expresses the conviction that God’s messenger and representative will be vindicated and his opponents put down, that justice does work out, and that God does act as judge. It is an encouragement to the weak and a warning to the strong.

**21** The introduction to Yahweh’s response tells us something Jeremiah hasn’t told us. The people of his own town are behind the threat to his life. Here the section links with 1:1. What might underlie the hostility? Are the priests and people of Anathoth the kind of people who would be particularly engaged in worship of the Masters at the shrine there, and/or are they particularly offended that one of their own number has turned against them? Anyway, they want to shut him up, like Amaziah in Amos 7:10-17: *You will not prophesy by Yahweh’s name*. Otherwise, they are the people who will take the action described in v. 19. They will treat him in light of Deut 13:1-5 [2-6].[[253]](#footnote-253) The neat abca’b’c’ parallelism makes the link between offense and consequences:

you will not prophesy by Yahweh’s name

and you will not die by our hand

They hardly mean he can prophesy in someone else’s name. They are forbidding the kind of prophesying in Yahweh’s name that Jeremiah engages in; they would not mind Hananiah’s kind of prophesying in Yahweh’s name (Jer 27 – 28). They don’t believe Jeremiah is a true prophet.

**22-23** The substance of Yahweh’s response takes fairly standard form; its language corresponds to terms that Jer 1 – 10 has made familiar. Structurally, it corresponds to the threat that Jeremiah reported in v. 19b: one cola by way of a general expression of determination in v. 22a, then three cola spelling out the implications in vv. 22b-23a. The punishment fits the crime. What is distinctive is that threats applying to the people as a whole in Jer 1 – 10, which there suggest the kind of destruction that came to Judah in 587, here apply specifically to the people of Anathoth. They do so because Jeremiah is not just an ordinary Judahite but one who brings Yahweh’s message; attacking him implies resisting Yahweh. In the event, Yahweh did not implement the threats to annihilate Judah that he sometimes seems to be making, and neither did he annihilate the people of Anathoth; 128 men from Anathoth returned from Babylon (Ezra 2:23). It might mean they turned back to Yahweh[[254]](#footnote-254) or it might mean they experienced the compassion of Yahweh that anticipates such turning, of which 12:15-16 will speak.

## Why Does the Path of Faithless People Succeed/How Will You Compete with Horses (12:1-6)

1You will be faithful, Yahweh,

 when I argue with you.

Indeed of authoritative decisions

I will speak out to you.a

Why does the path of faithless people succeed,

 [why] do they flourish, all the people who are so false?b

2You have planted them, yes, they have rooted,

 they progress,c yes, they have produced fruit.

You are near in their mouth,

 but far from their heart.d

3Now you, Yahweh, you have acknowledged me;

 you see and you examine my mind with you.

Tear them off like sheep for slaughtering,e

 sanctify them for the day of slaying!f

4Until when will the country mourn,g

 the grass in all the open country wither?h

Through the dire action of the people who live in it,i

 cattle and bird have come to a finish.

Because they say,

 “He will not see our end.”j

5When it is with people on foot that you have run and they have made you weary,

 then how will you chargek with horses?

And when it is in a country where things are well that you are reliant,l

 then how will you do in the Jordan swell?

6Because your brothers and your father’s household, too,

 they – they have been false to you, too,

they – they have called fullym after you, too.n

Don’t trust them,

 when they speak of good things to you.o

See the note on 1:16.

Literally, “people who are false in falsehood.” After the *why*, which applies to both cola, the line works abb’a’ with the verbs juxtaposed at the center – the opposite arrangement to the more usual abb’a’ one in v. 4.

LXX “they had children” suggests *yālәdû* for MT *yēlәkû*; Vg “they prosper” is perhaps a paraphrase. For the use of *hālak*, cf. Hos 14:6 [7].

Literally “kidneys,” as in 11:20.

LXX lacks this colon.

MT has a section marker here.

I assume there is one verb *’ābēl* meaning “mourn” (cf. BDB, *DCH*); but this line is one evidence that there is a second verb *’ābēl* meaning “wither” (*HALOT*).

The line works abb’a’, with the two words for the land at the center and the two verbs on either side.

This colon recurs in Ps 107:34.

For MT *’aḥărîtēnû* LXX implies *’orḥôtēnû* “our ways.”

Literally, “burn,” on the assumption that *tәtaḥăreh* comes from *ḥārâ*: see BDB, 354a; *HALOT*, 351b; *DCH* 3:314a; J. M. Hutton and S. Marzouk, “The Morphology of the tG Stem in Hebrew and Tirgaltî in Hos 11:3,” *JHS* 12/9 (2012).

*HALOT* derives the verb from its *bāṭaḥ* II “fall flat,” along with Prov 14:16, but *DCH* does not mention it.

*Mālē’* compares with the piel verb in 4:5. LXX, Vg assume the meaning “loudly,” but the expression is more subtle, and “loudly” does not fit the picture of deception. Rashi (in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage) takes it as a noun meaning a group of men.

A tricolon before the end of the section is unexpected, but the parallelism between the three cola makes the interrelationship clear.

MT has a marker here.

The transition to a new chapter in printed Bibles reflects the lack of any link between the exchange in 11:18-23 and the exchange that now follows, though this one will manifest a parallel dynamic:

vv. 1-2 Jeremiah’s protest in which he asks why Yahweh lets faithless people do well

five bicola

1. 3-4 Jeremiah’s plea for Yahweh to see to the death of the faithless

five bicola

vv. 5-6 Yahweh’s challenge to Jeremiah: things are going to get worse not better

two bicola, a tricolon, and a final bicolon)

“The text is not so much concerned with the problem of innocent suffering, nor the persecution of the prophet, but rather the miscarriage of divine justice in perpetuating the life and well-being of Israel in the land in view of her apostasy.” Yahweh’s response is to persevere with his commission. “The prophetic mission is to be a mirror of the conflict between Yahweh and Israel.”[[255]](#footnote-255) These prayers of Jeremiah evidence “that the vocation of the prophet is a *conflicted way to live*.” He is restless and homeless and in conflict with God as well as with his community.[[256]](#footnote-256)

**1abα** Jeremiah starts again, with a protest going over the same ground as 11:18-23, though without any reference to Anathoth. The opening pair of parallel lines take up the same motifs as 11:20. There is Yahweh’s faithfulness, though here alone does Jeremiah use the adjective *ṣaddîq* of Yahweh. There is Jeremiah’s intention to argue,though here he uses the verb *rîb* rather than the noun *rîb*: “I will speak with you like a person who argues with his friend,” says Jeremiah[[257]](#footnote-257) And there is the term for exercising authority, though here instead of the participle Jeremiah uses the noun *authoritative decisions*, in the plural as in 1:16; 4:12. In this last parallel, Jeremiah is thereby turning Yahweh’s own point back on him. “You said you would speak out your authoritative decisions in relation to them. What about the application of this principle to me?” Perhaps the pair of lines as a whole are somewhat ironic.

**1bβγ** Because the implementing of Yahweh’s authoritative decisions is not happening. The first half of Ps 1 closes with a declaration that the faithful person “makes all that he does succeed,” the second half closes with a converse declaration that “the path of faithless people perishes.” So why at the moment *does the path of faithless people succeed* and *all the people who are so false flourish*? The second colon heightens the first by using the rare synonymous verb *flourish* (*šālâ*), then by adding *all*, then by using the rarer root *be false* in a compound expression. At the same time, all the words in this line except *flourish* pick up from (e.g.) 5:4, 5, 11, 26, 28. Gerard Manley Hopkins makes v. 1 in the Vulgate the epigraph to the opening of a sonnet:

Thou art indeed just, Lord, if I contend

With thee; but, sir, so what I plead is just.

Why do sinners’ ways prosper? and why must

Disappointment all I endeavour end?[[258]](#footnote-258)

Like Jeremiah, Hopkins is respectful but direct, tortured but still pleading. He writes the sonnet just before his death when he is perhaps disappointed with his life and work, which suggests another parallel with Jeremiah. In both cases, their questions are personal ones. In a Western context, Jeremiah can seem to be raising the question of theodicy, but he is not starting from a general philosophical question but from a concrete practical one.[[259]](#footnote-259) He is concerned about his particular faithless community, the people of Anathoth.[[260]](#footnote-260) Nor is it the case that before Jeremiah’s day people had failed to notice that promises like the ones in Ps 1 did not always work out or that people in the Second Temple period stopped comforting themselves with the kind of reassurances that Ps 1 offers. As far as we can tell, comforting generalizations and urgent questioning have always coexisted, and they always will, because both make important points.

**2** Jeremiah continues to use the language of Ps 1 (plant, root, fruit) with some irony, and also again picks up language from the account of his commission. Future planting was where Yahweh ended in 1:10; here he begins with past planting, *you have planted them* (2:21; 11:17). And *they have rooted*, and *produced fruit* as he intended (2:7; 7:20; 11:16), though apparently in a rather ironic sense (see 6:19). To say they have produced fruit is another way of saying that they have flourished – but not in a good sense. The problem is that *you are near in their mouth,* in that they profess faithfulness to Yahweh, come to worship, make the right confessions, and sing the right hallelujahs. But you are *far from their heart*, from the inner seat of emotions. Jeremiah makes the point with neat parallelism that clashes with the contrast in what the line says:

near (*qārôb*) are you in their mouth

but far (*rāḥôb*) from their heart

The rhyme and assonance of the words for *near* and *far* enhance the comparison and contrast. Even if they say, “Yahweh lives,” then they swear to deception (5:2). “The people mouth proper confessional statements… but this God-language is full of pretense.”[[261]](#footnote-261) But the reference to the heart suggests that Jeremiah is not just making the conventional point about a mismatch between worship and life. Here he points rather to the idea that the distinction between faithful and faithless “exist[s] at a level *deeper* than orthodoxy; it exists at the level of *orthopathy*, rightly-ordered affections.” In thus emphasizing the affective, the passage “is making an important affective claim upon the listener.”[[262]](#footnote-262)

**3** Following the dynamic of 11:18-20, Jeremiah moves from his complaint to the further basis for a plea, and to the plea itself. Yet again he recalls his commission: *Yahweh, you have acknowledged me* (cf. 1:5). The implication is that I have a claim on you. Again he notes that you *examine my mind with you* (cf. 11:20). You check the inward attitude and the intention – it is the checking that he knows the faithless will not survive. Only on the basis of his being able to survive such a check can he then pray as he does. If we wonder whether “he blames his opponents and challenges Yahweh but does not seem to allow for the fact that he may not have gotten it completely right himself,”[[263]](#footnote-263) then he implies, “I am open to Yahweh putting me right.” His logic is the same as that in Ps 139,[[264]](#footnote-264) where the psalmist urges Yahweh to examine him in order to see that he can properly urge Yahweh to act against the faithless people. There are further retrospective links in Jeremiah’s language, though they are impish links. He had said that he was like a sheep on its way to slaughter. Now he wants them to be like *sheep for slaughtering*. He urges Yahweh to *sanctify them for the day of slaying*, as Yahweh had sanctified him for his task when acknowledging him (1:5), and as he had imagined Judah’s foes speak of sanctifying battle (6:4). On the same day in different ways, battle will be sanctified and he prays that the faithless will be sanctified. His use of *sanctify* underlines the irony of his not speaking of sheep (or a lamb: 11:19) for sacrifice but just for slaughter in order to be eaten.

**4** The question “why” is one regular feature in a protest prayer in the Psalms; the question “how long” is another regular feature. While the first kind of question naturally belongs in the actual protest, the second kind of question can be part of the plea; it is an aspect of urging Yahweh to take action (Pss 6:3 [4]; 80:4 [5]; 90:13; 94:3). So it is here in this question that continues the plea, and might even be its climax.[[265]](#footnote-265) Vv. 1-3 have indicated that there are people who are doing well and shouldn’t be, and Yahweh ought to do something about it. But there are other facts about the current situation that need to be faced and about which Yahweh ought to take action. When is he going to do so? *Until when will the country mourn, the grass in all the open country wither?* The following lines imply that it is doing so in fulfilment of Yahweh’s statement of intent and precisely because of the faithlessness and falsehood to which vv. 1-2 referred (see e.g., 4:28). But Jeremiah grieves over it. Jer 14 will explicate further the kind of situation he presupposes. It’s as if the land is mourning.[[266]](#footnote-266) Such statements can seem to involve a transferred epithet or catachresis: the land is not something alive that can mourn. But they recur in the First Testament (e.g., 4:28; 12:11; 23:10; Isa 24:4; 33:9; Hos 4:3; Joel 1:10; Amos 1:2), and they are accompanied by many correlate references to nature rejoicing, in happier contexts, so they rather suggest the recognition that nature is alive even if not conscious in the human way. It can give praise to God and it can mourn. Thus mourning is related to being devastated (*ḥārab/ḥārēb*; 2:12) which – like that English word – can suggest both being dried up and being confounded by that happening. Perhaps there is also an implication that In its withered state the land looks like something mourning.[[267]](#footnote-267) “For each of us then the *earth* either *mourns* or rejoices. For either it *mourns* from the *evil of those who inhabit it* or it rejoices from the virtue *of those who inhabit it*.”[[268]](#footnote-268) And “Jeremiah wants God to remove the faithless from the land not only for his sake” (actually he did not mention himself in vv. 1-3) “but also for the sake of the land.” Only thus “can the land be saved.”[[269]](#footnote-269) He restates the rationale for the land’s suffering in the two further lines. On one hand, it’s *through the dire action of the people who live in it,* which explains why *cattle and bird have come to a finish* (cf. 8:13). And on the other, it’s *because they say, “He will not see our end,”* the end of which 5:31 spoke. But it’s dangerous to work out what God will not do (e.g., 5:12). Their words recall Deut 32:20, where Yahweh declares the intention to see what their end will be when he hides his face from them. By implication, they do not believe this declaration of intent.[[270]](#footnote-270) That disbelief will undergird their continuing in their faithless lives. Jeremiah’s words are another example of his putting on people’s lips the implications of their attitude. They would not utter those words; v. 2 has pointed to their actual words. But it is the conviction they dare not articulate.

**5** When people pray the protest prayers in the Psalms, the Psalter usually doesn’t indicate the nature of Yahweh’s response (Pss 12 and 60 are the exceptions, and even they test the rule); it cannot predict or lay down that response as it can provide the words for the protest that people are free to pray. In Job and in Jeremiah, we get the response, in which Yahweh is usually confrontational one way or another and declines to answer the questions that have been put to him.[[271]](#footnote-271) Here his response is neither a simple yes nor a simple no, but an expression of his distinctive perspective on the content of the protest. First, he brings the discouraging news that things are going to get worse before they get better, so Jeremiah needs to brace himself. He offers two images; he is perhaps quoting proverbial sayings.[[272]](#footnote-272) First, whereas running to keep up with people on foot (e.g., infantry men) is not so demanding, Jeremiah is going to be like someone who has to *compete with horses* not just runners. In the parallel line, he is going to be like someone hiking through the *Jordan swell*,the thick bushes and trees that grow in abundance along the Jordan banks, nurtured by the swell when the Jordan rises high and providing cover for prowling lions (49:19; 50:44). It will not be like hiking through easy country like the mountain ridge where he lives. In this second line, literal reality pokes through. *A country where things are well*, a country of *šālôm*, is not the obvious way to describe country where walking is not hard work, but v. 4 has indicated that neither is it the obvious way to describe the situation in Judah at present. If it seems characterized by problems, conflict, and insecurity, things are going to get much worse, for Jeremiah and for the community as a whole. So being *reliant* (*bāṭaḥ* participle) in or on such a country looks a questionable stance. One could be falling into the same trap as the Judahites, who are reliant on their fortified towns, their words of deception, or the temple (5:17; 7:8, 14). There is only one appropriate object for this verb (e.g., 17:5-8). In Book One of G. K. Chesterton’s epic *Ballard Of the White Horse* (the Vale that starts a mile southwest of where I write) the Virgin Mary addresses King Alfred, about to do battle in the name of Christ:

I tell you naught for your comfort,
Yea, naught for your desire,
Save that the sky grows darker yet
And the sea rises higher.[[273]](#footnote-273)

The first line of that stanza provided Trevor Huddleston with the title for his book about South Africa, *Naught for Your Comfort*.[[274]](#footnote-274)

**6** The interpretation of the imagery follows. Jeremiah knows very well that there are people in Anathoth who are against him (see 11:21-23). Now the people in Anathoth in general might have been called *your brothers and your father’s household*. It would then have made sense if this revelation from Yahweh explained his plea in 11:18-23.[[275]](#footnote-275) But the order of the material in the scroll implies that this revelation followed on that prayer and thus that these terms do not simply refer to the Anathoth community. Within that community, he might have expected his own extended family to be on his side. This revelation from Yahweh warns him that the opposite is the case. Perhaps it reflects their being most affected by attacks on local shrines such as the one where the family priesthood had operated. People who *have been false* commonly aim to maintain secrecy; Jeremiah’s apparent ignorance of their falsehood suggests that his family have done so. The unexpected third colon in the line underlines the shocking point. *They have called fully after you* thus likely emphasizes the concerted nature of their plotting. If they *speak of good things to you*, promising their support, Jeremiah is not to *trust them*. He needs to keep in mind the advice he delivered in 9:4 [3].

## I Have Abandoned My House/I Will Again Have Compassion (12:7-17)

7I have abandoned my house,

 I have deserted my domain.

I have given my soul’s delight

 into her enemies’ fist.

8My domain became to me

 like a lion in the forest.

She gave her voice against me –

as a result I have repudiateda her.

9Is my domain a hyena’s lair,b

is bird of preyc all around, against her?

Go, gather every living thing in the open country –

bring them to devour.

10Many shepherds have devastated my vineyard –d

 they have trampled my share.

They have given over my desirable share

 to be a desolate wilderness.e

11He has made itf into a desolation – it has mourned,g

because of me desolate.h

The entire country has become desolate,

 because there is no one laying it to heart.i

12Upon all the bare heights in the wilderness destroyers have come,

 because Yahweh’s sword – it is consuming.

From one end of the country to the other end of the country,

for no flesh are things well.j

13They have sown wheat but thorns is what they have reaped –k

they got sickl [through things that] could not be any use.m

So be shamedn because of your harvests,

 because of Yahweh’s angry blazing.o

14Yahweh has said this about all myp dire neighbors who touch the domain that I gave to my people Israel:

Here am I, pulling them up from upon their soil,

 and the household of Judah I will pull up from among them.

15But after I have pulled them up,

 I will againq have compassion on them.

I will return them, each one to his domain,

 each one to his country.

16And if they really learn my people’s paths, so as to swear by my name, “Yahweh is alive,”r as they taught my people to swear by the Master,s they will build themselves up among my people. 17But if they do not listen, I will pull up that nation, pull it up and wipe it outt (Yahweh’s affirmation).u

LXX, Vg have “hated,” but *śānē’* is as much an action word as a feelings word (cf. Tg’s *rәḥêqәtāh*).

For *‘ayiṭ ṣәbûa‘* Vg implies “a colored bird of prey” (cf. BDB). But see *DCH* and J. A. Emerton, “Notes on Jeremiah 12 9,” *ZAW* 81 (1969): 182-91 (182-88), following G. R. Driver, “Birds in the Old Testament,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 87 (1955): 5-20, 129-40 (139). Driver in turn is following H. B. Tristram (*The Natural History of the Bible* [7th ed.; London: SPCK, 1883], 107-9).

By paronomasia *‘ayiṭ* now has its more usual meaning (cf. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:271-72).

The position of the subject before the verb and the asyndeton suggests that this clause is subordinate to the following one.

More idiomatically, *they have made my desirable share into a desolate wilderness*: but ascribing to *nātan* its common meaning *give* makes the link with the other occurrences of the verb in vv. 7 and 8.

LXX takes the verb as impersonal and translates “it was made”; Vg has a plural verb. The suffixed singular verb *śāmāh* follows on *šәmāmâ* (desolation) and leads into three related words, followed by *śām* (*laying*) – a substantial paronomasia (Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 358).

See the note on v. 4.

The reversal of prepositional phrase and adjective is a marker of this colon being the end of a sub-section comprising vv. 7-11a.

*Śâm* generates yet another paronomasia with the various forms of words for desolate/desolation.

MT has a section marker here.

An abb’a’ colon; LXX has imperative verbs.

LXX, Aq, Sym, Vg imply *nāḥălû* “[what] they had as a domain” for MT *neḥlû* and suggests another paronomasia: it is their domain that has become something that made them sick.

The unmarked relative clause recurs from 2:8; here there is no preposition, as in 8:13. LXX sees the first clause as the relative (see the note on 8:13).

What precedes in v. 13a would make it natural to take *bōšû* as third person qatal, but the object that follows in this colon, with its second-person suffix, suggests it is imperative.

LXX has “because of your boasting, because of your reproach before the Lord”; *HUB* suggests it is interpreting in light of Arabic. MT has a marker here.

LXX lacks the *my*.

LXX, Vg are aware of the use of *šûb* as a quasi-auxiliary verb denoting “do again,” but they do not treat this verse as an example, and BDB does not list it; the importance of *šûb* in Jeremiah and the verb’s recurrence in the next line suggest that at least the overtones of “I will return“ are present here.

See the note and comment on 4:2.

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

With this double infinitive construction, repeating the finite verb, cf. 7:13; 11:7; but in this example, the first infinitive is the repeating one and the construction suggests purpose (JM 123m; DG 102; *IBHS* 35.3.2d).

MT has a marker here.

In its context in 11:18 – 12:17, this third protest has a doubly subtle function. It is indeed another protest, and each line in vv. 7-11a has the short, two-stress second colon characteristic of mournful prayers. *My domain* (*naḥălātî*)comes three times in vv. 7-9; it is the “key word.”[[276]](#footnote-276) “Give” (*nātan*)*,* which overlaps with it in sound, also comes three times, but in vv. 10-11 it links with the term *desolate* which then tolls, “bell-like.”[[277]](#footnote-277) More shockingly, in vv. 7-11a the mourner is Yahweh. His words also function as a further response to Jeremiah’s own protest;[[278]](#footnote-278) in addition, they include an exhortation to the animals of the wild that one might see as the nearest thing to a plea. Vv. 11b-13 then give up the mournful rhythm and refer to Yahweh in the third person, with the implication that Jeremiah takes up the protest again; these verses close with their nearest thing to a plea, in v. 13b. After the protest comes a response in vv. 14-17, so that vv. 7-17 do in their way follow the pattern of the previous two sections, with the irony that Yahweh has to respond to his own protests and pleas and with an unheralded commitment to restoring his neighbors as well as Israel. Thus this section comprises:

vv. 7-11a Yahweh’s protest

nine bicola with short second cola

vv. 11b-13 Jeremiah’s echoing protest and exhortation to the people

five bicola

vv. 14-17 Yahweh’s response

three bicola, followed by two verses in prose

**7** After the exhortation and the revelation about Jeremiah’s family, there is a revelation about Yahweh himself. You protest, Yahweh says: how do you think I feel? Yahweh is as distressed at the state of things in Judah as Jeremiah. I had said I wanted to walk out on my people (9:2 [1]). But doing so would be as grievous as a wife walking out on a husband or a mother walking out on her children. And *I have abandoned my house, I have deserted my domain.* Yahweh’s domain was the country in 2:7 and the people in 10:16, and in principle *my house* could refer to either; v. 6 referred to Jeremiah’s family house(hold). But elsewhere in Jeremiah “Yahweh’s house” always refers to the temple, so here Yahweh is referring to abandoning it (Tg); and the following lines will suggest that *domain* refers to the people, as will *my soul’s delight* which *I have given into her enemies’ fist*. In an interim way he abandoned them in 597 when he let Nebuchadrezzar invade the country and pillage the temple (2 Kgs 24:10-16). Then he left temple and people in 587 in a way that could look final. So the past tense verbs might be wholly anticipatory or might come from between 597 and 587 (cf. v. 9) or might come from after 587 – which is anyway the context in which people read the scroll.

**8** His action was a response to his people’s hostility: *my domain became to me like a lion in the forest* (not the Judah lion of Gen 59:9).[[279]](#footnote-279) You think you are in trouble with people’s hostility, Jeremiah? “Yahweh has become the prey of Israel the lion”![[280]](#footnote-280) This accusation would puzzle the people; they didn’t think they were hostile to Yahweh. Once again Jeremiah is articulating the implications of their attitude. Only here and in 44:4 does Jeremiah talk about repudiating something (*śānē’*); the verb is the antonym of “love” (*’āhēb*). Both words refer to a commitment, of a negative or positive kind; so repudiation was expressed in the action described in v. 7. What would it mean for the church if God hated us and repudiated us, and why might God do so?[[281]](#footnote-281)

**9** In one of his elliptical lines, Jeremiah declares that the punishment fits the crime. The hyena is the animal equivalent of the vulture as a bird of prey; it both kills for food and feeds on carrion, and it would thus count as an unclean creature. So comparing *my domain* with *a hyena’s lair* might be a way of declaring how unclean Yahweh’s land has become. Or it might suggest that Yahweh’s land has become the victim of a hyena’s aggressiveness – the hyena would then be an alternative image to the lion of v. 8. It’s been said that the hyena “is more feared than the lion,” and one of the reasons for aversion towards it is “the hyena’s practice of stripping the bones of the fallen in battle.”[[282]](#footnote-282) That understanding would fit the reference to a *bird of prey* in the parallel colon. A *bird of prey* is later an image for Cyrus (Isa 46:11); the equivalent in the community’s experience will have been Nebuchadrezzar. But *all around* may suggest that *bird of prey* is a collective singular and refers to an army, or a collection of forces like the ones referred to in 2 Kgs 24:2. The questions lead into Yahweh’s exhortation to gather hyenas and all other carnivores to come and behave in relation to his domain the way hyena and bird of prey do, and have already been doing – which might again suggest that this section belongs between 597 and 587. If we ask whom Yahweh addresses, it will be his supernatural aides. It is another answer to Jeremiah’s protest, and a more direct answer to the question “how long.”

**10-11a** Forces like the ones described in 2 Kgs 24:2 are led by *many shepherds*, many kings such as Babylonian, Aramean, Moabite, and Ammonite (cf. 6:3). They *have devastated my vineyard*, another term for his people or his country, an image that Jeremiah uses only here and that is not common elsewhere. But Isaiah’s vineyard song (Isa 5:1-7) brings home the importance of one’s vineyard, as does the image of sitting in one’s vineyard under one’s vine (Mic 4:4). If a foreign army has devastated Yahweh’s vineyard (by his own action!), there is no grape harvest and no such place to sit. Yahweh then moves to another image: *they have trampled my share* (*ḥelqâ*); cf. 10:16, which juxtaposed domain and share (there *ḥēleq*). Yahweh underscores the point when he repeats the word: *they have given over my desirable share to be a desolate wilderness.* The country is my domain, my vineyard, my share, my desirable share – and look at what I have done to it! So *it has mourned*, and *because of me* it is *desolate,* Yahweh goes on. Like Jeremiah (v. 4), he laments the earth’s mourning. Mourning again presupposes the country’s physical desolation but also suggests that its desolation is emotional as well as physical. Yet what precedes and follows suggests there is limited value in this mourning. If people are grieving over what Yahweh has allowed to happen to them, they haven’t thought through where they need to go from there. Yahweh still speaks as “I,” so the *he* who has *made it into a desolation* is presumably not Yahweh; the obvious candidate is Nebuchadrezzar. Yet substantially the *he* is Yahweh (maybe we should imagine v. 11aα as the people’s words). The three occurrences of desolate/desolation in vv. 10-11a bring Yahweh’s lament to a bleak close.

**11b-12** The poetry now gives up the consistent mournful rhythm that characterized vv. 7-10a, and Yahweh is now “he” rather than “I,” so maybe Jeremiah takes up the protest. If so, he also takes up the motif of desolation: *the entire country has become desolate*.It is *because there is no one taking it to heart*. The people who might not care could be the attackers, the Babylonians, Arameans, Moabites, and Ammonites. In other contexts, the words might suggest the conviction that Yahweh doesn’t care, for all their mourning before him; they groan but their groan doesn’t come up to God (contrast Exod 2:23). More likely, Jeremiah’s point might be that the Judahites themselves are not taking to heart what is happening and what Yahweh is doing and why. It is this failure that lies behind their desolation. Jeremiah continues to describe the desolation, brought about both by *destroyers* like those neighboring and far-off peoples and by *Yahweh’s sword* which *is consuming*. While Yahweh’s sword may become an eschatological motif,[[283]](#footnote-283) it is also a recurrent way of seeing Yahweh at work in the reversals he brings (e.g., 47:6; Amos 7:9). Here, the whole country has lost its well-being (contrast the message in 6:14; 8:11). *For no flesh are things well*.

**13** To put it another way, *they have got sick*, and the cause is the recurrent one: they are committed to *things that could not be any use* (2:8, 11; 7:8). The evidence for this gloomy statement and the further background to v. 12 is the devastating experience of the failure of the harvest. The droughts to which Jeremiah periodically refers would mean that *they have sown wheat but thorns is what they have reaped* (it’s maybe a popular saying).[[284]](#footnote-284) It is therefore appropriate for them to *be shamed* – Jeremiah switches to direct address in the final line of the section in words as he articulates the exhortation that occupies the place of a plea. Paradoxically, the result of trusting in things that could not be of any use, in entities that were powerless, is to become the victims of one who has power that he will use to a painful end: the harvests fail *because of Yahweh’s angry blazing*.

**14** A protest deserves a response. If you are Yahweh, you have to provide your own response, though perhaps Jeremiah helps you. In his response, Yahweh has two further things to say about those enemies/animals/shepherds/destroyers, one less surprising than the other. The less surprising one is that, as usual, their being Yahweh’s agent in bringing calamity upon his people does not mean they get a free pass from the consequences of their own guilt for their aggression. The description of the attackers as *my* *neighbors* is doubly striking. On one hand there is the *my*; it’s his domain (the word is again a key one in these verses),[[285]](#footnote-285) so they are his neighbors. It is “a bold anthropomorphism.”[[286]](#footnote-286) Here, at least, Yahweh is likely referring to people such as Ammon, Edom, and Moab, not Babylon (which gets covered elsewhere). On the other, they are his *neighbors.* Neighbors are people who are supposed to care for each other, not attack each other and take advantage of each other’s weakness. The term is not the word for *neighbor* that comes in the commandments (it’s *šākēn* not *rēa‘*), but it still suggests someone who lives near you and in a sense shares life with you in the community (see 6:21). But these are neighbors who share Judah’s own *dire* behavior. They *touch the domain that I gave to my people Israel*, and not with a gentle *touch* (4:10, 18 are Jeremiah’s other uses of *nāga‘* qal). And therefore *here am I, pulling them up from upon their soil* as I will be pulling up Judah and taking Judah off into exile (cf. 1:10). On the other hand, *the household of Judah I will pull up from among them* when I bring Judah back to its land. Jeremiah can imagine Judahites fleeing to places such as Moab, Ammon, and Egypt (perhaps by the time of this message some had already done so). They will not be stuck there forever. They will not take root there. For people taken off to Babylon in 597 or 587, this promise gives hope against the background of the earlier talk of divine abandonment.

**15** In a way it is not so surprising that the response to the protest has another, more striking facet. We have noted that in principle Yahweh’s responses to protests are not predictable, as was the case with the one in vv. 5-6. In this response the more surprising declaration is that there is another parallel between Yahweh’s intention for Judah and for its predatory neighbors. *After I have pulled them up, I will again have compassion on them.* And the compassion will have the same fruit for them as for Judah: *I will return them, each one to his domain, each one to his country.* One could compare this commitment by Yahweh with his comment in Amos to the effect that as well as getting the Israelites up from Egypt, he got the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir (Amos 9:7). His sovereign and generous involvement with them in giving them their domain in the first place will be matched by a correlative sovereign and generous involvement with them in restoring them to their domain. In Amos and in Jeremiah Yahweh’s focus is on Israel, but in a sidebar and/or in connection with getting Israel to see things his way he makes sure that Israel realizes that he also has a positive purpose for other nations. Each of them, too, has its *domain*.

**16** Nor will they merely get their land back; indeed it is necessary that things should not stop there. Once again there is a parallel with Yahweh’s dealings in relation to Israel. It was necessary that Yahweh’s giving Israel its domain (which was also his domain) should lead into Israel’s living there in accordance with his expectations. The ex-predators, too, need to *learn my people’s paths*. The form of words makes for an irony. Every reference to Israel’s paths in Jeremiah is negative. Israel’s paths are paths that need to change (e.g., 7:3, 5). Of course what Yahweh has in mind is that the nations come to walk in “every path that he laid before Israel” (7:23), to “walk by all his paths” (Deut 10:12; 11:22). The idea of Yahweh’ paths is a familiar one in Deuteronomy, though outside this passage the idea of learning his paths comes only here (Ps 25:4 is the nearest parallel). The concrete expression of learning Israel’s (alleged) ways will be *to swear by my name, “Yahweh is alive*.” Again there is an irony, because Israel does swear thus, but only nominally; in reality Israelites swear *to deception* (5:2). But Jeremiah has already envisaged Israel swearing “Yahweh is alive” *with truthfulness*, and he has associated this idea with the nations praying for blessing by Yahweh (4:2), so Jeremiah is here taking these ideas further. The fact that their neighbors *taught my people to swear by the Master* (strictly, that would have to be the Canaanites, not those other neighbor nations) does not mean that Yahweh simply punishes these nations. It has the opposite implication, for their sake, but even more for his sake, for the sake of the truth. And they will thus *build themselves up*. It will be another aspect of the way in which Jeremiah is a prophet to the nations and is engaged in seeing to the fulfillment of 1:10. He becomes a prophet to the nations in a new sense.[[287]](#footnote-287) In effect these neighbor nations will come to share in the same covenantal relationship with Yahweh as Israel has, with the same expectation that they will conform to Yahweh’s expectations of their way of life and with the same sanction attached.[[288]](#footnote-288) The vision compares with the one in Isa 19:19-25, though that vision focuses on imperial powers rather than Israel’s immediate neighbors. So Jeremiah further illustrates the idea that Yahweh has a positive purpose for the nations. His revealing his ways to Israel did not imply that Israel alone was to live by those ways. The nations were destined to do so. This aspect of his purpose, too, is a subordinate motif in First Testament faith, in that Yahweh’s revelation to Israel focuses on what he is doing with Israel, but it is an integral aspect of First Testament faith.

**17** A further difference over against Isa 19:19-25 is that here “the future of the nations is conditioned by the torah.”[[289]](#footnote-289) This assumption does fit Isa 2:2-4, where nations come to Jerusalem for him to teach them his paths. For Israel’s neighbors as for Israel, walking by Yahweh’s paths will follow on the compassion and return; it is not a condition of it. But it must so follow, as it must for Israel. *If they do not listen* to the teaching that instructs them in Yahweh’s paths*, I will pull that nation up, pull it up and wipe it out*, as 1:10 also said.

# Five More Warnings (13:1-27)

Jer 13 begins afresh with a story conveying a warning; indeed, the chapter as whole comprises five sections of warning:

vv. 1-12aα about name, praise, and splendor

vv. 12aβ-14 about ruin or devastation

vv. 15-17 about exaltedness

vv. 18-22 about the flock

vv. 23-27 about exposure

At the different points in the monarchic period to which the warnings might belong, the five sections would function to push people towards changing; the middle of the five makes that aim explicit. After the fall of Jerusalem, they would offer some rationale for the disaster. The sections are separate in origin and varied in form, but they have verbal links. Vv. 1-12aα are about the *ruin* of the *exaltedness* of Judah and Jerusalem, which had been create for *splendor*. Vv. 12aβ-14 take up the theme of *ruin* and vv. 15-17 the theme of *exaltedness*. Vv. 15-17 speak of Yahweh’s *flock*, and in vv. 18-22 Yahweh’s *flock* and its *splendor* reappear. Vv. 18-22 close with the exposure of Jerusalem’s *skirts*, and vv. 23-27 take up that motif.

## About Name, Praise, and Splendor (13:1-12aα)

1Yahweh said this to me: Goa and get hold of linen shortsb for yourself and put them on your body,c but don’t let them come into water.d 2So I got hold of the shorts in accordance with Yahweh’s word and put them on my body.e

3Yahweh’s word came to me a second time: 4Get the shorts that you got hold of, which are on your body, and set to, go to Perat.f Hide them there in a crevice in the cliff. 5So I went and hid them in Perat as Yahweh ordered me. 6At the end of a long time, Yahweh said to me: Set to, go to Perat and get the shorts from there, which I ordered you to hide there. 7So I went to Perat and dug outg the shorts and got them from the place where I’d hidden them. And there, the shorts had gone to ruin – they would be no use for anything.h

8Yahweh’s word came to me. 9Yahweh said this: In this way I will ruin the exaltedness of Judah and the exaltedness of Jerusalem, which is great. 10This dire people who refuse to listen to my words, who walk by their mind’s determination and goi after other gods to serve them and bow down to them, it is to becomej like these shorts that would be no use for anything.k 11Because as the shorts stick to a person’s body, so I made the entire household of Israel and the entire household of Judah stick to me (Yahweh’s affirmation), to become my people, for name, for praise, and for splendor. But they haven’t listened. 12So you will say this word to them.l

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

Hebrew *’ēzôr* is singular, like English “undergarment,” and thus subsequent pronouns are singular; the word for linen is plural.

Literally “on your thighs,” here and subsequently.

*Into water* comes before the verb, conveying emphasis.

MT has a marker here.

LXX, Vg, Sym have “Euphrates”; Aq has “Pharan.”

Presumably not “dug up,” as if the shorts were buried in the ground; *ḥāpar* can denote searching things out more generally (e.g., Deut 1:22; Job 39:29).

MT has a chapter marker here.

The clause with a qatal verb continues the participial construction.

*Wîhî* follows the extraposed clause; LXX and Vg translate the verb as future, implying it is an example of the jussive used as if it were an ordinary yiqtol (on which see GK 109k; *TTH* 56-58; JM 114l).

A has a section marker here.

MT has a section marker here, associating v. 12aα with what precedes. LXX has a short version of this clause and the next one.

Yahweh commissions Jeremiah to take some action that would count as an acted parable if there were people watching, but people are only to hear the story; they do not see the event. In this sense Jeremiah’s original hearers are in the same position as people reading the scroll later. The story is thus a cross between Jer 7 (the text of the temple sermon) and Jer 26 (the account of its delivery). The action’s not having an audience reflects its being a performative act whereby Yahweh puts his intentions into effect; it implements the ruining that it portrays. As such, it needs no audience. But Jeremiah’s reporting it implies (in the context of the monarchic period) that the ruin it symbolizes is not inevitable but that it is unstoppably on its way if the people do not turn back to Yahweh. But after 587 it would explain how Yahweh’s sovereign power had indeed been inexorably unleashed. The story outlines:

vv. 1-2 Yahweh bids Jeremiah get a pair of shorts, and he does so

vv. 3-5 Yahweh bids him go and deposit the shorts, and he does so

vv. 6-7 Yahweh bids him go and collect them, he does so, and finds they have gone to ruin

vv. 8-11 Yahweh interprets the significance of the events

v. 12aα Yahweh bids Jeremiah give people the message expressed in what has happened.[[290]](#footnote-290)

**1-2** Possibly Jeremiah had to buy the *linen shorts*, but as far as we know there were no clothing stores in Jerusalem and the verb *got hold of* (*qānâ*) denotes acquisition more generally – like Eve’s acquiring of Cain (*qayin*) or Yahweh’s acquiring of Israel (e.g., Exod 15:16; Isa 11:11). It does not indicate how he got hold of them; to make explicit that an acquisition of land is a purchase, Jer 32 will specify that Jeremiah acquires the land for silver. Linen shorts would be especially appropriate to a priest (Ezek 44:17-18); maybe he got them from a priestly supply. The garment might actually be more like a short skirt than shorts.The word (*’ēzôr*, from a verb meaning “put around”) is not common; indeed, most occurrences come in this story. *Linen shorts* does not suggest a humble, ordinary person’s garment (Ezek 23:15)*.* As a material, linen would be more impressive than sack, less so than leather, and less liable to generate and be affected by sweat than wool, as Ezek 44:17-18 notes. Yahweh gives Jeremiah a related instruction to avoid letting the garment touch water (by way of a prewash or after wearing). It needs to be in pristine condition, unaffected by damp, for the experiment that follows, though to judge from the way Jeremiah tells the story, he doesn’t yet know about the experiment. It will transpires that unbeknown to himself, “the Prophet takes the place of God when the linen waistcloth is girded around his hips, as God is girded by the people. For I have caused to cling to myself, he said, this people. God speaks as if the waistcloth becomes the people of God.”[[291]](#footnote-291) It is “a picture of marvelous subtlety.”[[292]](#footnote-292)

**3-5** In 51:63 (in another report of an unwitnessed performative act) *Perat* denotes the Euphrates (cf. 46:2, 6, 10, which use the full expression *River Perat*), but Jeremiah doesn’t give the impression that he traveled that far (just one return journey would take the best part of a year), or that he did so in a vision, or that he enacted a symbolic representation of such a journey (like Ezekiel in Ezek 4).[[293]](#footnote-293) Possibly *Perat* is another version of the name *Parah*, a town three miles from Anathoth in the area of Benjamin, Jeremiah’s clan (Josh 18:23), which presumably took its name from or gave its name to the Wadi Farah (Parah) running down to the Jordan Valley. But the place is hardly a random one, and the similarity of names will be significant. While a journey to the Euphrates and back would constitute a plausible symbolic act in light of the Judahites’ imminent exile there, the point that vv. 1-12aα makes is different. Even elsewhere the Euphrates is not associated with talk of exile. It would more likely suggest the frightening power of imperial Mesopotamian forces (Isa 7:18-20; 8:7-8 – which also includes the only other First Testament reference to crevices in cliffs, apart from Jer 16:16). So the name would suggest “the threat of the Euphrates to inundate Judah…. Parah represents the Euphrates on Judah’s soil.” It evokes the northern enemy, to be mentioned in v. 20.[[294]](#footnote-294)

**6-7.** Yet the story makes no reference to a river. Indeed, Yahweh had told Jeremiah to keep the shorts dry, and the area is dry wilderness. There was no reason for the shorts to rot. So the discovery that they have gone to ruin is an inexplicable shock.

**8-10** The ruin of Judah and Jerusalem will likewise be a shock. In 11:19 and 12:10 the agents of ruin or devastation (*šāḥat*) were Jeremiah’s townspeople and foreign kings, but now it will be Yahweh himself who brings about the ruin that will come to Judah and Jerusalem, and it will come from the Euphrates. While *exaltedness* (*gā’ôn*) can have pejorative implications, it need not; it was neutral in significance in 12:5. Judah and Jerusalem could properly see themselves as important and impressive places in the context of Yahweh’s purpose. But seeing yourself that way is inclined to segue into haughtiness, and what follows here points in that direction. Being important generates a self-confidence that makes people *refuse to listen to my words* as spoken by Jeremiah, and instead to *walk by their mind’s determination*. They thus feel free to *walk after other gods to serve them and bow down to them*. The expressions are familiar from earlier chapters in Jeremiah; what is new is the explanation in terms of exaltedness (the Hebrew words for *ruin* and *exaltedness* recur from 12:5, 10)[[295]](#footnote-295) and the curious picture of the consequences that will follow. Judah *will become like these shorts which would be no use for anything*.

**11** The further explanation involves pushing the imagery in a direction that is also somewhat curious, though telling. *Stick* (*dābaq*)is what Adam did to Eve and what Ruth did to Sarah, though also what Israel was supposed to do to Yahweh (e.g., Deut 10:20; 11:22; 30:20). Jeremiah develops this image by noting that it was what Yahweh sought to make happen (only he uses the hiphil of the verb *dābaq* in this connection), and adds the extra note that it was *for name, for praise, and for splendor* (as in Deut 26:19, though in the order praise, name, splendor). It’s another way of referring to the people’s *exaltedness* and of spelling it out.[[296]](#footnote-296) No, there had originally been nothing wrong with the exaltedness. The shorts “represented the people of God, pure and untarnished at the time of their call” (2:2, 3).[[297]](#footnote-297) But Yahweh’s donning this garment didn’t work. There were three stages to the story of the shorts: Jeremiah put them on, he walked, and they went to ruin. There are three stages in the story of Israel: Yahweh put it on, Israel walked, and it went to ruin.[[298]](#footnote-298) The truth can only be told by a people characterized by “the accuracy of its careful listening,” so in order to be formed by Yahweh, “the waiting community must, necessarily, shut up so that it can hear (Deut 6:4-6).”[[299]](#footnote-299) But this community hasn’t done so.

**12aα** Accounts of a symbolic or performative action by Jeremiah usually include instructions on making it known, but there is variety about the nature of the instruction and when it comes. The next two such accounts have it at the end (16:10; 18:11), which supports the implication in MT’s section break (as opposed to its verse division) that this sentence constitutes such an instruction.

## About Ruin or Devastation (13:12aβ-14)

12aβYahweh, the God of Israel, has said this: Every pitcher – it will fill with wine. They will say to you, We know very wella that every pitcher will fill with wine, don’t we. 13And you will say to them, Yahweh has said this: Here am I, filling all the people who live in this country, both the kings who sit for David on his throne, and the priests, the prophets, and all the people who live in Jerusalem – with drunkenness. 14And I will smash them,b each against his brother, both the parents and the children altogether (Yahweh’s affirmation) – I will not pity, I will not spare, I will not have compassion, so as not to devastate.c

The infinitive precedes the finite verb, underlining the fact.

LXX “I will scatter them” derives the verb from *nāpaṣ* II.

L has a section marker here.

Yahweh commissions Jeremiah to deliver another enigmatic message that comes to its conclusion with another reference to ruin or devastation.

**12-13** This further enigmatic message will ultimately take up the one about ruin and devastation, but (like the story about the shorts) it does not announce this destination at the beginning. *Every pitcher – it will fill with wine* looks like a popular saying, perhaps a phrase you might repeat when you knew the grape harvest was going really well,[[300]](#footnote-300) or one signifying the great time people are going to have at a festival or a wedding (cf. John 2:1-11).[[301]](#footnote-301) Alternatively (to judge from v. 13), it might be the drinkers who are the metaphorical pitchers.[[302]](#footnote-302) Or has Jeremiah adapted a popular saying that “every fool [*nābāl* as opposed to *nēbel*]– he will fill with wine”?[[303]](#footnote-303) Even if people knew what the phrase meant, Jeremiah’s declaiming it (especially as a word from Yahweh) would be a puzzle, but it will fulfill its function as an attention-getter. *They will say to you, We know very well that every pitcher will fill with wine, don’t we.* What’s your point, Jeremiah? The answer is that they are going to be filled with drunkenness (*šikkārôn*, from the noun for liquor, *šēkār*, and theverb for getting drunk, *šākar*). Plural *priests* and *prophets* is to be expected; plural *kings* might seem odder as a nation normally has only one at a time, though between 609 and 597 Judah had five of them.

**14** Jeremiah does not suggest a reference to drink that has been spiked (as may be the case in 25:15-29). People are just going to be mysteriously intoxicated, so that they will collapse on each other in their drunken state. They will be smashed and they will get smashed.[[304]](#footnote-304) Their falling on each other perhaps suggests a collapse of the society, a different sort of ruin or devastation from the one in v. 8. But Yahweh is the one who will make it happen – even if (like a Babylonian invasion) it comes about by means that are explicable in human terms. So Yahweh’s threat ends with the familiar reference to devastation, but the frightening novelty in the closing sentence is the factor that will mean he does not hold back from it. *I will not pity, I will not spare, I will not have compassion*: Jeremiah piles up semi-synonyms to underscore the painful point. In 21:7 it will be Nebuchadrezzar’s sword that does not spare, pity, or have compassion for Zedekiah and his associates. Yes, Yahweh will work via human means, but he claims responsibility. He rules out any hope that there might be restraint in the act of judgment.[[305]](#footnote-305)

## About Exaltedness (13:15-17)

15Listen and give ear, do not be superior,

 because Yahweh has spoken.

16Give Yahweh your God honor,

 before he makes it dark,

Before your feet stumble

 on the twilight mountains,

And you hope for light but he makes it deathly darkness,a

 turns itb into pitch black.

17So if you will not listen, in the hidden places inside,c

myd whole being will cry in the face of your exaltedness.e

Itf will weep and weep,g

my eye will run down with weeping,

 because Yahweh’s flock has gone into captivity.h

See the note on 2:6.

K *yśyt* signifies “he turns,” Q *wәśît* “and turn” (infinitive absolute).

Rudolph (*Jeremia*, 92) thus links *bәmistārîm* with this colon (against MT), though he also emends the word; cf. also Aq as well as Vg, to judge from Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 84.

LXX has “your” here and in v. 17b.

The “your” is understood from the first colon.

My whole being, on the assumption that *napšî* is the antecedent, but my eye, if *‘ênî* is the delayed subject, as in 5:22.

The infinitive precedes the finite verb, underlining the fact.

LXX implies *nišbar* (shatter) rather than MT *nišbâ*.MT has a section marker here.

Jeremiah reverts to poetic form, and to addressing imperatives to Judah for the first time since 11:1-8 and the only time in 13:1-27. The opening reference to being superior (*gābaḥ*)hints at a link with the theme of exaltedness (*gā’ôn*) in vv. 1-12aα; the link becomes explicit in v. 17. There Jeremiah also refers to the people as Yahweh’s flock, a motif taken up in the next section. The section comprises five bicola (the first and last linked by the references to listening and the theme of superiority/exaltedness and the middle three linked by enjambment) then a closing tricolon.

**15** Typically, the apparent declaration of inescapable disaster leads into a bidding that implies disaster is escapable after all. It’s never over till it’s over. Indeed, vv. 15-16 have been seen as the inner center of Jer 13.[[306]](#footnote-306) The bidding to *listen* is the same as 11:1, *give ear* restates it by a verb that Jeremiah uses only here, but *do not be superior* then restates it in more innovative fashion. Like *exaltedness* in v. 9, being superior need not imply arrogance, but it is inclined to do so; it then commonly suggests having the confidence to rely on your on ideas about what to do, and ignoring Yahweh and his orders. So it is here.

**16** *Give Yahweh your God honor* thus implies the converse; the word order suggests giving honor to Yahweh rather than holding onto it for yourself or giving it to someone else (see v. 10). Jeremiah then expounds an image that is not new to him (see 2:6; 4:28; 8:21) but that he here develops over three lines. Yahweh had brought Israel through dark places at the beginning of their relationship (2:6) but if it stops giving him honor (2:11) it risks losing the light. Yahweh *makes it dark*. First, as you are trying to find your way along a mountain track and the light begins to fail, you find that *your feet stumble* *on the twilight mountains*. You may *hope for light* but there are no street lights and as time goes on *he makes it deathly darkness* and *turns it into pitch black*, into intense, thick gloom. The subsequent reference to a flock (v. 17) may suggest that the people finding their way on the mountains are shepherds.[[307]](#footnote-307)

**17** Jeremiah returns to the verb *listen*. He has commented previously on the disparity between their words and the reality within them (e.g., 12:3), and here he reformulates the importance of a link between what they say and the way they think, *in the hidden places inside* which no one can see. If they will not truly listen, they will end up in the darkness of which he has spoken. Jeremiah goes on to describe how it will also affect him; the point is to try another approach to bringing home the terrible consequences if they refuse to give ear. *My whole being* (my *nepeš*) *will cry*, he will be so grieved at people’s *exaltedness* (*gā’ôn* in v. 8, *gēwâ* here). Whereas exaltedness was previously Yahweh’s gift, it has become a self-confidence with which people make their own decisions about whom or how to worship. And the darkness to which exaltedness will lead is the darkness of *captivity*. It is the first reference to going into captivity (*šābâ* niphal). Such will be the destiny of *Yahweh’s flock*. A flock of sheep has no business making decisions about whether it will follow its shepherd.

## About the Flock (13:18-22)

18Saya to the king and to her ladyship,b

 Get down low, sit.

Because your headship positionsc are going down,d

your splendid diadem.

19The Negeb towns – they are being shut up,

 and there is no one to open them.

Judah is being exiled, all of it –

 it is being exiled, completely.e

20Lift up your eyes and lookf

 at the people coming from the north.

Where is the flock that was given to you,g

 your splendid sheep?

21What will you say when someoneh appoints over youi

 (and you yourself taught them) –

 over you guides, as head?

Contractions will take hold of you, won’t they,

 like a woman in giving birth.

22And when you say to yourself,

 “Why have these things happened to me?” –

Because of the profusion of your waywardness your skirtsj are exposing themselves,

 your heels are suffering violation.k

LXX has plural, assimilating to the more common usage in Jeremiah (e.g., 4:5).

LXX has “people in power.”

For this understanding of *mar’ăšôtêkem*, cf. Qimchi in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage.

I take the qatal verbs in vv. 18-19, 22b as referring to the certain and imminent future: see the comment.

MT has a section marker here. *Šәlômîm* is the plural noun “entire ones” used modally/adverbially (*HALOT*,1510b, *DCH* 8:369).

K’s feminine singular verbs address Jerusalem (LXX adds “Jerusalem”). Q’s plural verbs continue to address the king and queen.

Both K and Q now use the feminine singular.

Tg assumes this is Yahweh. LXX has a plural, implying the impersonal construction.

LXX, Vg understand *pāqad* to mean “attend to” in the sense of “punish” (e.g. 5:9, 29), which makes sense in this colon but makes the jerky subsequent two cola even harder to interpret, and requires *‘al* to have a different meaning there from here. For the meaning “appoint,” cf. 49:19; 50:44.

LXX has “your back parts” (cf. Vg) which sense; Jeremiah has another catachresis or transferred epithet (cf. 5:16).

LXX “were made an example of” (*NETS* “made a spectacle of”) perhaps suggests *DCH*’s *ḥāmas* III “make bare” (cf. J. A. Emerton, “The Meaning of the Verb *ḥāmas* in Jeremiah 13,22,” in V. Fritz et al. [eds.], *Prophet und Prophetenbuch* [O. Kaiser Festschrift; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989], 19-28).

Jeremiah’s poetry suddenly becomes more concrete as he is bidden to address a king and his mother, though they are not identified. While MT makes another section break after v. 19, Jeremiah continues a tight 3-2 rhythm through v. 20. In Q he also continues the plural address in v. 20a pending a transition in mid-verse to addressing Jerusalem and referring to its flock – which makes the section’s verbal link with vv. 15-17. The section comes to a close with the threat of woman Jerusalem being exposed. It comprises six bicola, then a tricolon, then three more bicola.

The section uses a sequence of qatal verbs, which would usually refer to a past event, but it would be odd (though possible) to urge the king and queen to come down from their thrones (v. 18) if they have already been deposed. The description of a total exile as having already happened (v. 19) also raises eyebrows. And then Jeremiah urges people to look at an invader coming (v. 20), which suggests that any attack is still future. Eventually he speaks even more explicitly (in yiqtol verbs) as if the disaster lies in the future (vv. 21-22a) before closing with more qatal verbs. The implication is that Jeremiah is speaking throughout about something that is going to happen, and in vv. 18-19, 22b he is using the qatal (“past tense”) as prophets sometimes do, to refer to events that he can describe as having happened because they are so certain as to be actual. Yahweh has decided on them and initiated the process whereby they will take place, and the prophet has seen them. We have had one or two possible examples of this usage earlier in the Jeremiah scroll (2:26; 5:6); this passage includes the first unequivocal ones.[[308]](#footnote-308) To put it linguistically rather than theologically, Jeremiah’s usage reflects the fact that the verbal system in Hebrew does not focus on a difference between tenses as much as European languages do (as when we speak of past, present, and future verbs). The qataldenotes an actual event, the yiqtol a theoretical or possible event. In using a qatal verb Jeremiah is indicating that he is talking about an actual event not just a possibility. I translate the qatal verbs in this passage that refer to such events by an English present progressive (present continuous): *are going down, are being shut up, is being exiled, are exposing themselves, are suffering violation.* An advantage of the Hebrew usage is that people reading Jeremiah’s scroll after the events to which his words could apply (especially after 587) could give them past reference: king and queen had been deposed, Negeb town had been blockaded, Judah had been taken into exile, Jerusalem had been exposed. They were no more actual, but they were now visibly and experientially actual.

**18** Presumably Yahweh is giving this commission to Jeremiah. The object of his bidding is then simply *a king* and *her ladyship*, which virtually invites us not to identify them.[[309]](#footnote-309) *Her ladyship* (*gәbîrâ*), more literally “the lady” (the feminine equivalent to “the lord”) is the queen mother, commonly a powerful figure in a Middle Eastern court, and the power behind the throne (1 Kgs 15:13). In bidding the two of them to *get down low, sit, because your headship positions are going down* Jeremiah would be announcing the imminent end of their rule (cf. 48:18; Isa 47:1; Ezek 26:16), announcing it to them and to the people of Jerusalem (perhaps more directly the latter, if it was actually a declaration in the temple courtyard). The king and queen might be Jehoahaz and his mother; Jehoahaz was deposed by the Egyptians in 609 (2 Kgs 23:31-35). They might be Jehoiakim and his mother; Jehoiakim submitted to Babylonian control in 600 (2 Kgs 23:36 – 24:2). They might be Jehoiachin and his mother (2 Kgs 24:8-12; Jer 29:2); Jehoiachin was deposed by the Babylonians in 597 and he and his mother were taken off to Babylon (29:2). They might be Zedekiah and his mother (2 Kgs 24:18); Zedekiah was taken off to Babylon in 587. The ambiguity of the possible chronological references in vv. 19-20 itself might warn against trying to decide between these possibilities. But anyway, the anonymity combined with the long list of possible candidates suggests that the text invites Judahites to see this declaration to a king and queen as a divine word that could apply more than once. If it had been fulfilled on one occasion, the fulfillment proved it was a word from Yahweh, and it encouraged one to expect that it would find fulfillment again.[[310]](#footnote-310)

**19** Similar possibilities arise in connection with Jeremiah’s picture of trouble arising to the south. *The Negeb towns* *are being shut up*: they have closed their gates as they are under pressure from hostile forces. And Jerusalem cannot come to their defense or break through to provision them: *there is no one to open them.* Among the scenarios that would fit, chronologically the first would be the aftermath of Josiah’s death. After Pharaoh Neco defeated and killed him, he intervened in Judah from the south to depose his successor, Jehoahaz, whose father Josiah might have married his mother Hamutal from Libnah precisely “to shore up is southwestern borders against Egyptian pressure.”[[311]](#footnote-311) A much later possibility is that v. 19a reflects Edomite incursions into Judah. Then there is the series of invasions by Nebuchadrezzar in the reigns of Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, which would fit the subsequent reference to exile. The word order with the subject before the verb might suggest that “even the Negeb towns” recognize that they are in trouble as the Babylonians advance from the north. In any context even an invader from the north might deal with the easier areas to the west and south before venturing into the mountains, as Sennacherib did (Isa 10:28-32 speaks metaphorically when he describes an invader approaching from the north, while Isa 36 – 37 implies a more literal account).[[312]](#footnote-312) And with the likely exception of the first, any variant on these possibilities could threaten that *Judah is being exiled*. Following the first reference to being taken captive (*šābâ*) in v. 17, it is the first reference to being exiled (*gālâ*) since 1:1-3. *All of it – it is being exiled, completely* involves a hyperbole, but a plausible one.

**20a** Jeremiah’s further familiar warning could also link with any time in Jeremiah’s ministry: there are *people coming from the north*. The fulfillment of the warning will be the arrival of Nebuchadrezzar and his forces to put pressure on or actually attack Jerusalem, and defeat Jehoiakim, or depose Jehoiachin and take the Judahite leadership off to Babylon, or depose Zedekiah, devastate Jerusalem, and take more people off to Babylon. As usual Jeremiah’s *lift up your eyes and look* need not imply they are actually at this moment marching through Ephraim, hence the possibility that nothing in vv. 18-20a refers to things that have happened on the ground yet. They have all simply happened in Jeremiah’s awareness of what the divine cabinet has determined.

**20b-21** This possibility receives support from what follows. The events that are unfolding or will unfold in this way raise the question *where is the flock given to you, your splendid sheep?* The *you* is feminine singular, which will refer as it often does to Jerusalem (eventually named in the chapter’s last line).[[313]](#footnote-313) The people are the flock for which Jerusalem has been a secure fold, but they will be going off into exile. Further, the deposing of the king and his mother will mean that *someone appoints* some other rulers *over you*, not someone you choose as you chose Josiah and Jehoahaz (and perhaps Jehoiachin). The rest of v. 21a is jerky, but it suggests the fact that Jerusalem had *taught* in the sense of welcomed or invited people such as Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt to act as its *guides*. It will now find that these people whom it had wanted to treat as allies and supports, even as equals, are imposing authority over it. Once again Jeremiah holds before it a familiar but frightening image applied elsewhere to Jerusalem: *contractions will take hold of you, won’t they, like a woman in giving birth.*

**22** Jeremiah has posed Jerusalem with a series of rhetorical questions in vv. 20-21. Here is a question she will ask: *why have these things happened to me*? As far as Jeremiah is concerned it is a rhetorical question, because he thinks she should know the answer, but he knows she needs to articulate it to herself. It is *because of the profusion of your waywardness*. Nothing surprising there. But the section draws to an end with another horrifying image, one with a background in Hos 2:10 [12] and one that Ezek 16 and 23 will develop ad nauseam. Invasion and siege commonly issue in violation and rape, which becomes an image for the fate of the city itself portrayed as a woman. Jeremiah perhaps takes a little of the edge off the horror of his language by using a double euphemism. It is not actually *her skirts that will have exposed themselves*, but the body parts that her skirts are designed to conceal; there is some irony in the fact that *exposed* *themselves* (*niglû*)comes from the verb that meant *exiled* (*hoglāt*) in v. 19. And it is not merely her *heels* that *will have* *suffered violation*. Only here are heels a euphemism for genitals, instead of the more usual “feet” (is she raped from behind?). It is disturbing that Jeremiah speaks of such violence against a city personified as a woman, and it is possible to think that the Bible should not talk about such things, but it is not clear the proper reason for being disturbed by it is the possibility that it has encouraged violence against women.[[314]](#footnote-314) Rather it is that sexual violence is a reality in war and in other contexts, whether or not Jeremiah talks about it, and Jeremiah makes it harder to avoid facing this reality that we would rather avoid thinking about. In vv. 18-27 as a whole Jeremiah employs “the rhetoric of the monstrous-feminine… to horrify his audience”[[315]](#footnote-315) and provoke a response from it.

## About Exposure (13:23-27)

23Can a Sudanesea change his skin,

 or a leopard its spots?

You also can do good,b

 having been taught to do what is dire.

24So I will scatter themc like stubbled passing on

 to the wilderness wind.

25This will be your lot,e

 your measured portion from me (Yahweh’s affirmation),

In that you put me out of mind,

 and relied on deception.

26So it is indeed I myself who am lifting your skirts over your face,f

 and your humiliation will become visible.

27Your acts of adultery, your neighings,

 your whorish deliberateness,g

On the hills, in the open country –

 I have seen your detestable deeds.

Alas for you, Jerusalem! –

 you will not be clean

 after how long, still?h

LXX, Vg “Ethiopian” is misleading.

The verb reverts to masculine plural. LXX has the interrogative carrying over from v. v.23a into v. 23b.

LXX “I scattered them” presupposes *waw*-consecutive instead of MTs simple *waw* (contrast Vg).

*Qaš* is something people might have to gather for some purposes (Exod 5:7, 12) and it is thus *stubble*, the bottom of the grain stalks, as opposed to chaff, which is the husks of the grain.

Jeremiah reverts to feminine singular for vv. 25-27.

LXX “I will reveal your behind to your face” (cf. Vg) dissolves the euphemism, as in v. 22.

Initially this series of noun phrases might seem to stand alone as exclamations, but the next line will suggest that they comprise anticipatory objects of the verb *I have seen*, in apposition to *your detestable deeds*.

MT has a marker here.

Yahweh begins again with a question to make people think; he will eventually return to the theme of exposure, which makes a link with vv. 18-22. The section comprises eight bicola with a closing tricolon. One pair of bicola run together in v. 25, another pair in v. 27a. The section unfolds in a sequence of expressions of offended indignation, sadness or puzzlement or hopelessness, and resolution to take action:

v. 23 puzzled sadness

vv. 24-25a determined resolve

v. 25b offended indignation

v. 26a determined resolve

v. 27a offended indignation

v. 27b puzzled sadness

**23-24** Jeremiah jumps in a new direction at the beginning of another message, with a new image and even a new thought. The question *can a Sudanese change his skin, or a leopard its spots* may be a popular saying, though there are a number of such pithy sayings in the scroll, which might suggest that Jeremiah was something of an epigrammatist.[[316]](#footnote-316) Sudan (*kûš*) south of Egypt is an area where dark skins come to predominate. There is of course nothing wrong with being a negro or a leopard.[[317]](#footnote-317) The point of comparison is that you are what you are. Frighteningly, Jeremiah suggests that morally the Judahites are in the same position. They cannot change. He is not implying a systematic theological point about whether people can change. He is as usual engaged in rhetoric,[[318]](#footnote-318) implying “Please prove me wrong!” The incentive to their changing is what will otherwise follow: *so I will scatter them like stubble passing on to the wilderness wind* (see 4:11)*.* But in any case, fortunately, “what is impossible for people is possible for God” (Matt 19:26),[[319]](#footnote-319) as the story of the Sudanese politician (Acts 8:26-39) shows.[[320]](#footnote-320)

**25** Jeremiah reverts to addressing Ms. Jerusalem, for reasons that will emerge in a moment. That scattering will be her *lot*, the future allocated to her. The word *lot* (*gôrāl*) commonly refers to a family’s stretch of land, which fits the parallel description of it as *your measured portion from me*. But a difference is that the family’s allocation of land was determined by lot and thus arbitrarily; what the family got was nothing to do with what it deserved. With this allocation it’s different. It’s not predetermined irrespective of your merit. It reflects that fact that Jeremiah has often noted, that *you put me out of mind, and relied on deception.* The antithesis between *me* and *deception* suggests that *deception* is virtually or actually a way of referring to the Master (e.g., 5:2, 31; 7:9; 20:6).

**26** To put the consequences another way, Jeremiah reverts to the language of exposure. Here the agent of the exposure is explicit, and it’s not the human conqueror. *So it is indeed I myself who am lifting your skirts over your face* so that *your humiliation* *will become visible.* The focus of the action here, then, is not the sexual violation but the shame of bodily exposure; *your humiliation* is another way of referring to parts of the body that one instinctively keeps covered. “Shaming works because it stimulates fear,” and thus horror.[[321]](#footnote-321)

**27a** Yet the background of the action is quasi-sexual: it’s the *whorish* activity and the *adultery* to which Jeremiah has often referred (e.g., 3:6-10), the frenzied *neighings* (5:8)*,* all undertaken not in a moment of unexpected temptation but with *deliberateness* (*zimmâ*): etymologically the word denotes simply something one thinks about doing and decides to do, but most of the occurrences come in Leviticus and Ezekiel to denote a willful decision to engage in wrongful sexual activity. One might guess that most of the Jerusalemites whom Jeremiah attacks are respectable people engaged in what they see as responsible religious and political behavior, men who are faithful to their wives who would not dream of sexual impropriety. Jeremiah somehow has to get them to see that their religious observances at the shrines *on the hills, in the open country* count as the kind of *detestable deeds* (4:1; 7:30) that they might condemn in people who lived less pure lives than they do. And Yahweh *has seen* them. The shamed naked female body at the end of Jer 13 contrasts with the respectable clothed male body at the beginning of the chapter. But “Jeremiah displays the naked female body to persuade his audience to restore their relationship with God. He incorporates obscene nudity into his prophecy in order to shock and shame Israel and to convince them once again to cleave to God’s body like a fine linen loincloth.”[[322]](#footnote-322)

**27b** Jeremiah closes the chapter with an incoherent combination of exclamation and question, a kind of chain of aposiopeses. *Alas for you, Jerusalem*! Jeremiah says *alas* (*’ôy*)much more often than anyone else, though usually on someone’s behalf (“alas for me/us”). Here he echoes Jerusalem’s own incoherent *alas for me* in 4:31. Thus *alas* is an expression of sadness at least as much as anger. Neither Yahweh nor Jeremiah can get Jerusalem to turn: the section ends where it began in v. 23. In light of the critique in v. 27a, what is needed is that Jerusalem should seek to *be clean*, which would mean giving up its sexual/religious whoring and adultery. It has been going on for so long: how much longer will Jerusalem insist on continuing it? The expression *after how long* comes only here, but *how long* is an expression that recurs in protest prayers – sometimes incoherent ones, involving aposiopesis, like this one (Pss 6:3 [4]; 90:13). So the question is an expression of protest, though on Yahweh’s lips it may not be simply an expression of helplessness. It may imply “How long can this be allowed to continue,” rather than simply “When will you seek cleansing?”[[323]](#footnote-323) And of course the answer turns out to be, until 587.

1. C. D. Isbell and M. Jackson, "Rhetorical Criticism and Jeremiah vii 1 – viii 3," VT 30 (1980): 20-26 (26). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. T. Seidl, “Jeremias Tempelrede,” in W. Gross (ed.), *Jeremia und die “deuteronomistische Bewegung”* (Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1995),141-79, though he sees the section as entirely Deuteronomistic; cf. J. P. Floss, “Methodologische Aspekte exegetischer Hypothesen am Beispiel von Theo **Seidls** Beitrag zur `Tempelrede,” in the same volume, 181-85. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Allen works out the comparison in detail (*Jeremiah*, 93, 94, 100-1). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Jones (*Jeremiah*, 143-46) surveys in detail how the thinking and language of 7:1-15 overlap with those of Deuteronomy and of Joshua – Kings but also compare with the messages in Jer 1 – 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. D. J. Reimer, “God and Place in Jeremiah,” in J. R. Lundbom et al. (eds.), *The Book of Jeremiah* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 476-97 (485). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. E. Scheffler, “The Holistic Historical Background Against Which Jeremiah 7:1-15 Makes Sense,” *OTE* 7 (1994): 381-95. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Weiser, *Jeremia* 1:67-68. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:159. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Abravanʼel, *pyrwš ‘al nby’ym ’ḥrwnym* on the passage, as paraphrased by Rosenberg (*Jeremiah* 1: 64). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See M. Görg, *TDOT* 14:691-702. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. M. Leuchter, “The Temple Sermon and the Term *mqwm* in the Jeremianic Corpus,” *JSOT* 30 (2005): 93-109; M. Leuchter, *Josiah’s Reform and Jeremiah’s Scroll* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2006), 111-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. S. V. Davidson, “Ambivalence and Temple Destruction,” in A. R. P. Diamond and L. Stulman (eds.), *Jeremiah (Dis)placed* (New York: Clark, 2011), 162-71 (165). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Volz, *Jeremia*, 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. See Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:462, who gives many examples of threefold repetitions, including Jeremiah’s own in 22:29; also D. J. Reimer, “On Triplets in a Trio of Prophets,” in I. Provan and M. Boda (eds.), *Let Us Go Up to Zion* (H. G. M. Williamson Festschrift; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 203-17 (211-13). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. E. K. Holt, “Jeremiah's Temple Sermon and the Deuteronomists,” *JSOT* 36 (1986): 73-87 (75). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. K. M. Rochester, *Prophetic Ministry in Jeremiah and Ezekiel* (Diss., Durham, 2009), 172. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. From Ephrem’s Commentary on Jeremiah on the passage, as quoted in Wenthe, *Jeremiah*, 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Berrigan, *Jeremiah*, 40 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See C. M. Maier, “Jeremiah as Teacher of Torah,” *Interpretation* 62 (2008): 22-32; see further Maier, *Jeremia als Lehrer der Tora* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 2002). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:243. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Craigie, *Jeremiah* 1:123. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Fischer, *Jeremia* 1:301. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Volz, *Jeremia*,92. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Carroll, *Jeremiah*,208. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. R. S. Snow, “Let the Reader Understand,” *BBR* 21 (2011) 467-77, sees Jer 7 also behind Mark 7:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. See the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. See R. Bartelmus, *TDOT* 14:681-88. Syr thus nicely paraphrases “early and late” though Vg has simply “getting up early.” Hugh of St. Cher opposes the inference that there should therefore be no preaching after breakfast (“Liber Jeremiae,” 197, as quoted in Schroeder, *Jeremiah*, 125). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. F. E. Deist, "The Implied Message of the Reference to Shiloh in Jeremiah 7:12," *Journal for Semitics* 5 (1993): 57-67. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. M. Avioz, “A Rhetorical Analysis of Jeremiah 7:1-15,” *TynB* 57 (2006): 173-89 (188). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Brueggemann*, Jeremiah 1 - 25,* 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Hugh of St. Cher, “Liber Jeremiae,” 197, as quoted in Schroeder, *Jeremiah*, 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. See further J. Goldingay, *Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 112-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. S. G. Post, “Conditional and Unconditional Love,” *Modern Theology* 7 (1991): 435-46. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Duhm, *Jeremia*, 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. J. F. A. Sawyer (*Types of Prayer in the Hebrew Bible* [Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2011], 281-87). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:169. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. P. Maiberger, *TDOT* 11:473. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Hugh of St. Cher, “Liber Jeremiae,” 197, as quoted in Schroeder, *Jeremiah*, 127-28. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Berrigan, *Jeremiah*, 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Volz, *Jeremia*, 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. See C. Houtman, “Queen of Heaven,” *DDD*,678-81. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. See N. Wyatt, “Astarte,” *DDD*,109-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. M. Leuchter, “Cult of Personality,” in L. L. Grabbe and M. Nissinen (eds.), *Constructs of Prophecy in the Former and* *Latter Prophets and Other Texts* (Atlanta: SBL, 2011), 95-115 (106). [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. See W. E. Rast, “Cakes for the Queen of Heaven,” in A. L. Merrill and T. W. Overholt (eds.), *Scripture in History and Theology* (J. C. Rylaarsdam Festschrift; Pittsburg: Pickwick, 1977), 167-80. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. K. J. H. Vriezen, “Cakes and Figurines,” in B. Becking and M. Dijkstra (eds.), *On Reading Prophetic Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 251-63. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. See S. Joo, *Provocation and Punishment* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 155-223, on the verb *kā‘as* hiphil in Jeremiah. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:479. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Barth, *CD* III,1: 180-81. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Hugh of St. Cher, “Liber Jeremiae,” 197, as quoted in Schroeder, *Jeremiah*, 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:259. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 1:419. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Carroll, *Jeremiah*,209. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:261. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. J. Milgrom, “Concerning Jeremiah’s Repudiation of Sacrifice,” *ZAW* 89 (1977): 273-75. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. M. A. Fishbane, *Haftarot* (The JPS Bible Commentary; Philadelphia: JPS, 2002), 161. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:488-89. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Blayney, *Jeremiah*, 261. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. See the note. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. C. J. Sharp, *Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah* (London: Clark, 2003), 43; she goes on to suggest how the chapter developed redactionally. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Diamond, “Jeremiah,” 549. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. *Jeremiah* 1:481. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. For v. 28, see Duhm, *Jeremia*, 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Cf. vv. 17-18 and the comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Berrigan, *Jeremiah*, 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. See the comment there. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. See the comment on v. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. For child sacrifice in the ancient world, see e.g., Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:496-97. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. M. Weinfeld, “Jeremiah and the Spiritual Metamorphosis of Israel,” *ZAW* 88 (1976): 17-56 (18). [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 1:446. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:500. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:180. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. D. Lipton, "Food for the Birds of Heaven," in D. A. Baer and R. P. Gordon (eds.), *Leshon* Limmudim (A. A. Macintosh Festschrift; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 119–129 (127). [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. F. Stavrakopoulou, *Land of Our Fathers* (New York: Clark, 2010), 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. P. Viviano makes broader comparisons between this section and 2 Kgs 21 in “Exhortation and Admonition in Deuteronomistic Terms,” *Biblical Research* 56 (2001): 35-54. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Craigie, *Jeremiah* 1:127. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Blayney, *Jeremiah*, 263. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Berrigan, *Jeremiah*, 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Cf. R. P. Carroll, “The Polyphonic Jeremiah,” in M. Kessler (ed.), *Reading the Book of Jeremiah* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 77-85. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. J. R. Lundbom, “Jeremiah and the Break-Away from Authority Preaching,” *Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok* 56 (1991): 7-28. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. C. R. Seitz, *Theology in Conflict* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. M. E. Biddle, *Polyphony and Symphony in Prophetic Literature* (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 1996), 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Cf. K. Finsterbusch, “Unterbrochene JHWH-Rede,” *BZ* 60 (2016): 1-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. E. K. Holt, “Daughter Zion,” in E.-M. Becker et al. (eds.), *Trauma and Traumatization in Individual and Collective Dimensions* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 2014), 162-76 (173). [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:515. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Weiser, *Jeremia* 1:76-77. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:278. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. See the comment on 4:28. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Blayney, *Jeremiah*, 264. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Weiser, *Jeremia* 1:77. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. See Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:510-13; B. A. Foreman, *Animal Metaphors and the People of Israel in the Book of Jeremiah* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 2011), 211-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 158-59. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Qimchi in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Hugh of St. Cher, “Liber Jeremiae,” 199, as quoted in Schroeder, *Jeremiah* 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Brueggemann*, Jeremiah 1 - 25,* 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Duhm, who in this connection calls vv. 8-13 “one of the most important [poems] in the Book of Jeremiah” (*Jeremia*, 88). [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Cf. B. Halpern, *From Gods to God* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2009), 132-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. See W. M. Schniedewind, “The Textualization of Torah in Jeremiah 8:8,” in L. Moretz and S. Schorch (eds.), *Was ist ein Text?* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 93-107; Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 114-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 229. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. C. L. Eggleston, *“See and Read All These Words”* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016), 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. *CHP*, 205. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:524. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:285; see further M. DeRoche, “Contra Creation, Covenant and Conquest,” *VT* 30 (1980): 280-90. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 1:477. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. For this understanding of Jeremiah, see e.g., J. J. M. Roberts, “The Motif of the Weeping God in Jeremiah and Its Background in the Lament Tradition of the Ancient Near East,” *OTE* 5 (1992): 361-74; A. C. Pilarski, “A Study of the References to *bt-‘my* in Jeremiah 8:18 – 9:2(3),” in L. S. Flesher et al. (eds.), *Why?... How Long?* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 20-35. While resistance to the idea that it is Yahweh who weeps in Jer 8 – 9 may have an ideological basis (e.g., K. M. O’Connor, “The Tears of God and Divine Character in Jeremiah 2 – 9,” in A. R. P. Diamond et al. [eds.], *Troubling Jeremiah* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999], 387-401 [400]), the same is true of advocacy of that idea; we like the idea of the suffering God. See further M. R. Schlimm, “Different Perspectives on Divine Pathos,” *CBQ* 69 (2007): 673-94. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. BDB, 753b. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. T. E. Fretheim, *What Kind of God* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 294-311 (298-99); he adds that if Yahweh behaved more like a king, he might have less of a problem. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*,152. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. R. J. Gench, “Jeremiah 8:18 – 9:3,” *Interpretation* 62 (2008): 74-76 (74). [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 306. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. W. Brueggemann, “‘Is There No Balm in Gilead?’” *Like Fire in the Bones*, 180-88 (184). [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. J. T. Willis includes 8:18-23 as one example of “Dialogue Between Prophet and Audience as a Rhetorical Device in the Book of Jeremiah,” *JSOT* 33 (1985): 63-82 (70-71). [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. W. J. Wessels, “Connected Leadership,” *Koers* 75 (2010): 483-501. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Smothers, *Jeremiah 26 – 52*, 292. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. R. P. Carroll, “The Discombobulations of Time and the Diversities of Text,” in R. P. Carroll (ed.), *Text as Pretext* (R. Davidson Festschrift; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 61-85 (78-80). [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. I like C. J. Sharp’s defining of “lament” as “sociopolitical protest that names woundedness and loss” (“Buying Land in the Text of Jeremiah,” in C. M. Maier and C. J. Sharp [eds.], *Prophecy and Power* [London: Bloomsbury, 2013], 150-72 [155]). [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. K. M. O’Connor, *Jeremiah: Pain and Promise* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. See J. M. Henderson, “Who Weeps in Jeremiah viii 23 [ix 1]?” *VT* 52 (2002): 191-206. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Weiser, *Jeremia* 1:85. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Schmidt, *Jeremia* 1:204. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Allen, *Jeremiah*, [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Blayney, *Genesis*, 268. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*,153. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:200. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*,158. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:545. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. B. Gosse, “Le prophète Jérémie selon le Psautier et selon le livre d’Ézéchiel,” *RB* 112 (2005): 511-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. But see the note: the equivalent comment on the basis of K would be that Yahweh’s point is going to hammer away. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 310. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:550. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. D. A. Bosworth sees v. 9 as a particularly clear case of Yahweh weeping, in “The Tears of God in the Book of Jeremiah,” *Biblica* 94 (2013): 24-46 (30-31); cf. M. S. Smith, “Jeremiah ix 9," *VT* 37 (1987): 97-99. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. See further G. Fleischer, *TDOT* 13:17-23. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Qimchi in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. *Brueggemann, Jeremiah 1 - 25,* 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. See H. Marlow, “Law and the Ruining of the Land,” *Political Theology* 14 (2013): 650-60 (655-56). [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Berrigan, *Jeremiah*, 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. L. C. Allen, “The Structural Role of Wisdom in Jeremiah,” in M. J. Boda et al. (eds.), *Riddles and Revelations* (London: Clark, 2018), 95-108. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. D. Rom-Shiloni, “Ezekiel and Jeremiah,” *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel* 1 (2012): 203-30 (221). [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Miller, “Jeremiah,” on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. See Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:559-60. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. E.g., Volz, *Jeremia*, 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*,162. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 245. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. A. Bauer, “Death, Grief, Agony, and a New Creation,” *WW* 22 (2002): 378-86 (382). [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. There may also be an allusion to the motif of Death coming in through the windows in Mesopotamian and/or Ugaritic myth: see M. Smith, “Death in Jeremiah, ix, 20,” *Ugarit-Forschungen* 19 (1987): 289-93. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. P. J. Scalise, “The Way of Weeping,” *WW* 22 (2002): 415-22 (417). [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. Bauer, “Death, Grief, Agony, and a New Creation,” 382. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. So M. S. Moore, “Jeremiah’s Progressive Paradox,” *RB* 93 (1986): 386-414. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. B. Katho, *To Know and Not to Know Yhwh* (Diss., Pietermaritzburg, 2003), 237-88. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. See G. O’Day, “Jeremiah 9:22-23 and 1 Corinthians 1:26-31,” *JBL* 109 (1990): 259-67; H. H. D. Williams III, “Of Rags and Riches,” *TynB* 53 (2002): 273-82. A. Kovelman, “Jeremiah 9:22-23 in Philo and Paul,” *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 10 (2007): 162-75. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 1:538. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. W. J. Wessels, “Social Implications of Knowing Yahweh,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 30/2 (2009): 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Berrigan, *Jeremiah*, 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. W. Brueggemann, “Bragging about the Right Stuff,” *Journal for Preachers* 26/4 (2003): 27-32 (31). [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Thomas Aquinas, *In Jeremiam prophetam expositio* on the passage, as quoted in Schroeder, *Jeremiah*, 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. Jeremiah may allude specifically to a less radical form of circumcision practiced by some other peoples, which made Judahites feel superior: see R. C. Steiner, “Incomplete Circumcision in Egypt and Edom,” *JBL* 118 (1999): 497-526. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:328. Cf. E. R. Clendenen, “Discourse Strategies In Jeremiah 10:1-16” (*JBL* 106 [1987]: 401-8). [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. See Mizrahi, *Witnessing a Prophetic Text.* For further possibilities regarding the text’s development, see e.g., P. M. Bogaert “Les mécanismes rédactionnels en Jr 10,1-16 (LXX et TM),” in P.-M. Bogaert et al., *Le livre de Jérémie* (2nd ed. Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 222-38, 433-34; J. Ben-Dov, "A Textual Problem and Its Form-Critical Solution," *Textus* 20 (2000): 97-128. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:336, 337. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. Diamond, “Jeremiah,” 563. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. Volz, *Jeremia*, 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. M. Lundberg, “The *Mis-Pi* Rituals and Incantations and Jeremiah 10:1-16,” in J. Goldingay (ed.), *Uprooting and Planting* (L. Allen Festschrift; London: Clark 2007), 211-27 (227). [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. Brueggemann*, Jeremiah 1 - 25,* 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:219. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. An alternative possible meaning for *yāpîq*: see *DCH* 6:669. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. See the note. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. See R. Eichler, “Jeremiah and the Assyrian Sacred Tree,” *VT* 17 (2017): 1-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. Pixley, *Jeremiah*, 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. Berrigan, *Jeremiah*, 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. Theodoret, *Ermeneia*,565. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. Duhm, *Jeremia*, 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. Altschuler, “*Mesudat David,”* in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 66, 67 (but the editor’s footnote suggests a slip of the pen in this neat remark). [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:334. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. Kelley, *Jeremiah 1 – 25*, 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. B. Wiklander, *TDOT* 4:106-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. See G. Reid, “‘Thus You Will Say to Them,’” *JSOT* 31 (2006): 221-38. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. On the link between creation and wisdom in this passage See K. J. Dell, "Jeremiah, Creation and Wisdom," in J. Jarick (ed.), *Perspectives on Israelite Wisdom* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 375–390. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. Barth, *CD* III,1: 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. See D. Rudman, “Creation and Fall in Jeremiah x 12-16,” *VT* 48 (1998): 63-73. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. Volz, *Jeremia*, 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:598-99. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:599. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. Wright, *Jeremiah*, 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:231. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. Fischer, *Jeremia* 1:391. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 2:46. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. B. D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1998), 38-39. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. Calvin, *Jeremiah* 2:57-59. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. Weiser, *Jeremia*, 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. Cf. A. R. [P.] Diamond, *The Confessions of Jeremiah in Context* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1987), 181-82. I am more hesitant over his view that theodicy is the controlling principle in the composition; cf. J. M. Henderson, *Jeremiah under the Shadow of Duhm* (London: Clark, 2019), 283-317. For approaches to the arrangement of Jer 11 – 20, see C. S. W. So, “Structure in the Confessions of Jeremiah,” in J. R. Lundbom et al. (eds.), *The Book of Jeremiah* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 126-48. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. M. C. Calloway, “The Lamenting Prophet and the Modern Self,” in J. Kaltner and L. Stulman (eds.), *Inspired Speech* (H. Huffmon Festschrift; London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 48-62. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. T. M. Raitt, “Jeremiah in the Lectionary,” *Interpretation* 37 (1983):160-73 (161). [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. See M. Kartveit, “Reconsidering the ‘New Covenant’ in Jeremiah 31:31-34,” in J. R. Lundbom et al. (eds.), *The Book of Jeremiah* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 149-69. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. See e.g., M. Weinfeld, *TDOT* 2:253-79. E. Kutsch especially stresses the element of obligation: see *TLOT* 1:256-66. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. See D. Rom-Shiloni, “The Covenant in the Book of Jeremiah,” in R. J. Bautsch and G. N. Knoppers (eds.), *Covenant in the Persian Period* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 153-74. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. See Kelley, *Jeremiah* 1:168-69; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:350-51. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. On the word *pact*, see the introduction to 11:1-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. *Brueggemann, Jeremiah 1 - 25,* 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. D. Rom-Shiloni, “‘On the Day I Took Them out of the Land of Egypt,’” *VT* 65 (2015): 621-47 (627). [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. D. Rom-Shiloni, “‘On the Day I Took Them out of the Land of Egypt,’” 631. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. Cf. J. T. Willis, ‘I Am Your God’ and ‘You Are My People’ In Hosea and Jeremiah,” *Restoration Quarterly* 36 (1994): 291-303. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. Duhm, *Jeremia*, 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. Duhm, *Jeremia*, 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. Fischer, *Jeremia* 1:413. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. Abravanʼel (*pyrwš ‘al nby’ym ’ḥrwnym*, on the passage) takes the qatal as anticipatory (see the introductory comment on 13:18-22): it refers to what Yahweh is about to do (cf. v. 11). [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. Wright, *Jeremiah*, 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. Fischer, *Jeremia* 1:405. [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. Pixley, *Jeremiah*, 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. Berrigan, *Jeremiah*, 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. Mayer, *Commentary*,367. [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. Volz, *Jeremia*, 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. See the comment on 11:16. [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. Weiser, *Jeremia* 1:104. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:349. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 144-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 188; Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 189. [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. M. J. Boda, “‘Uttering Precious Rather than Worthless Words,’” in C. J. Dempsey et al. (eds.), *Why?… How Long?* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014) 83–99. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. O’Connor, *Confessions*, 158. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. Thus G. Barbiero begins his study of Jeremiah’s “confessions” with a substantial study of Jer 1 (*“Tu mi hai sedotto, Signore,”* [Rome: Gregorian, 2013]15-61). [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:358. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. Cf. L. Stulman, “Jeremiah as a Polyphonic Response to Suffering,” in J. Kaltner and L. Stulman (eds.), *Inspired Speech* (H. Huffmon Festschrift; London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 302-18 (308) [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. For accounts of the possible process of development that generated the text as we have it, see e.g., J. Vermeylen, “Essai de *Redaktionsgeschichte* des ‘Confessions de Jérémie,’” in P.-M. Bogaert et al., *Le livre de Jérémie* (2nd ed. Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 239-70; D. H. Bak, *Klagender Gott—klagende Menschen* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990); J. Kiss, *Die Klage Gottes und des Propheten* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 2003); H. Bezzel, *Die Konfessionen Jeremias* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. Cf. W. Baumgartner, *Jeremiah’s Poems of Lament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1987 [German original 1917]). [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. Cf. K. M. O’Connor, *The Confessions of Jeremiah* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988). [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. Cf. J. S. Runck, *A Pentecostal “Hearing” Of The Confessions of Jeremiah* (Diss., University of South Africa, 2017), 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. On the link between Jeremiah and the servant of Isa 40 – 55, see B. D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1998), 64-67; K. J. Dell, “The Suffering Servant of Deutero-Isaiah: Jeremiah Revisited,” in Dell et al. (eds.), *Genesis, Isaiah, and Psalms* (J. A. Emerton Festschrift; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 119-34; U. Berges, “Servant and Suffering in Isaiah and Jeremiah,” *OTE* 25 (2012): 247-59; G. Fischer, “Riddles of Reference,” *OTE* 24 (2012): 277-91; G. Fischer, “Jeremiah, God’s Suffering Servant,” in E. M. Obara and G. P. D. Succu (eds.), *Uomini e profeti* (H. Simian-Yofre Festschrift; Rome: GBP, 2013), 75-101 (Jeremiah has made use of Isa 40 – 55); K. M. O’Connor, “Figuration in Jeremiah’s Confessions with Questions for Isaiah’s Servant,” in E. K. Holt and C. J. Sharp (eds.), *Jeremiah Invented* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 63-73. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. Duhm, *Jeremia*, 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. M. Avioz, “The Call for Revenge in Jeremiah's Complaints,” *VT* 55 (2005): 429-38 (436). [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. Wright, *Jeremiah*, 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. Qimchi in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. A. R. [P.] Diamond, *The Confessions of Jeremiah in Context* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1987), 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. W. Brueggemann, "The Book of Jeremiah," *Interpretation* 37 (1983), 130-145 (133, 134; see further 142-44). [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. Qimchi in *miqrā’ôt gәdôlôt* on the passage. [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. See P. S. Hawkins, “Singing a New Song,” in H. Attridge and M. E. Fassler (eds.), *Psalms in Community* (Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 381-94 (384-86). [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. Mayer, *Commentary*, 370. [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. Runck, *A Pentecostal “Hearing*,” 203, 207. [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. R. C. Culley, “The Confessions of Jeremiah and Traditional Discourse,” in S. M. Olyan and R. C. Culley (eds.), *“A Wise and Discerning Mind,”* (B. O. Long Festschrift; Providence, RI: Brown University, 2000), 69-81 (81). [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. Duhm, *Jeremia*, 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. T. E. Fretheim, “The Earth Story in Jeremiah 12,” in N. C. Habel (ed.), *Readings from the Perspective of Earth* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 96-110. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. See K. M. Hayes, *“The Earth Mourns*” (Atlanta: SBL, 2002), 94-97. [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
267. K. M. Hayes, “When None Repents, Earth Laments,” in M. J. Boda et al. (eds.), *Seeking the Favor of God Volume 1* (Atlanta: SBL, 2006), 119-43 (129). [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
268. Origen, *Jeremiah*, 99-100. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
269. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 193. [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
270. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:379. [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
271. Weiser, *Jeremia* 1:110. [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
272. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 190. See further T. R. Hobbs, “Some Proverbial Reflections in the Book of Jeremiah,” ZAW 91 (1979): 62-72 (69-70). [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
273. Cf. Berrigan, *Jeremiah*, 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
274. London: Collins, 1956. [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
275. Thus Volz (for instance) suggests that part of the revelation in 12:1-6 originally preceded 11:18-23 (*Jeremia*, 136). [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
276. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:651. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
277. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
278. Schmidt, *Jeremia* 1:243-44; cf. D. P. Melvin, “Why Does the Way of the Wicked Prosper?” *EvQ* 83 (2011): 99-106. [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
279. K. Seybold, “Der "Löwe" von Jeremia xii 8,” *VT* 36 (1986): 93-104 (though he then emends the reference to a lion). [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
280. B. A. Foreman, *Animal Metaphors and the People of Israel in the Book of Jeremiah* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 2011), 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
281. Achtemeier, *Jeremiah*, 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
282. A. Alon, *The Natural History of the Land of the Bible* (London: Hamlyn, 1969), 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
283. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
284. Duhm, *Jeremia*, 118. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
285. Volz, *Jeremia*, 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
286. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:661 (he also notes *pull up, among*, and *it will happen* as key expressions in vv. 14-17). [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
287. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 292. [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
288. Cf. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
289. *Brueggemann, Jeremiah 1 - 25,* 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
290. On the process whereby the section might have developed, see H.-J. Stipp, “‘But into the Water You Must Not Dip It,’” in E. Ben Zvi and C. Levin (eds.), *Thinking of Water in the Early Second Temple Period* *(*Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 167-195. [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
291. Origen, *Jeremiah*, 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
292. Volz, *Jeremia*, 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
293. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
294. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:398; C. H. Southwood, "The Spoiling of Jeremiah's Girdle," *VT* 29 (1979): 231-37. D. Bourguet also proposes that the Euphrates suggests the home of magic; Yahweh is the real “magician” (*Des Métaphores de Jérémie* [Paris: Gabalda, 1987], 240-58;“La métaphore de la ceinture,” *Etudes theologiques et religieuses* 62 [1987]: 165-84). [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
295. There I translated them *devastated* and *swell*. [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
296. K. A. D. Smelik, “The Girdle and the Cleft,” *SJOT* 28 (2014): 116-32 (127-29). [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
297. Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 365. [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
298. Cf. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
299. E. Searcy, “‘A People, a Name, a Praise, and a Glory,” *WW* 22 (2002): 333- 39 (337). [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
300. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 197. [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
301. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 1:673. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
302. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
303. Michaelis, *Observationes,* 116; cf. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1:402. [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
304. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 298-99. [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
305. Fischer, *Jeremia* 1:457. [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
306. Fischer, *Jeremia* 1:466. [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
307. Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 369. [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
308. See D. E. Carver, *A Reconsideration of the Prophetic Perfect in Biblical Hebrew* (Diss., Catholic University of America, 2017), 216-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
309. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 302. [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
310. Cf. P. R. Ackroyd, “The Vitality of the Word of God in the Old Testament,” in Ackroyd, *Studies in the Religious Tradition of the Old Testament* (London: SCM, 1987), 61-75; cf. B. S. Childs’s comments on Isaiah, e.g., *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (London: SCM, 1979), 325. [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
311. M. A. Sweeney, *I and II Kings* (Louisville: WJK, 2007), 451. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
312. Volz, *Jeremia*, 155. [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
313. Allen, *Jeremiah*, 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
314. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 214. [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
315. A. Kalmanofsky, “The Monstrous-Feminine in the Book of Jeremiah,” in A. R. P. Diamond and L. Stulman (eds.), *Jeremiah (Dis)placed* (New York: Clark, 2011), 190-208 (206). [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
316. C. Bultmann, “Jeremiah *epigrammatistes*,” in H. M. Barstad and R. G. Kratz (eds.), *Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 74-79. [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
317. But on the “of course,” see M. Masenya, “‘Can the Cushite Change is Skin…?’” in L. C. Jonker et al. (eds.), *Congress Volume: Stellenbosch 2016* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 285-301. [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
318. Fischer, *Jeremia* 1:467-68. [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
319. Jerome, *Jeremiah*, 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
320. As Jerome notes elsewhere (see the quotations in Wenthe, *Jeremiah*, 111). [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
321. A. Kalmanofsky, *Terror All Around* (New York: Clark, 2008), 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
322. A. Kalmanofsky, “Bare Naked,” in E. K. Holt and C. J. Sharp (eds.), *Jeremiah Invented* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 49-62 (62). [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
323. McKane, *Jeremiah* 1:313-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-323)