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# The Remnant Motif in the Context of Judgment and Salvation in the Book of Jeremiah

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**Andrews University**  
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**THE REMNANT MOTIF IN THE CONTEXT OF JUDGMENT AND  
SALVATION IN THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH**

**A Dissertation**  
**Presented in Partial Fulfillment**  
**of the Requirements for the Degree**  
**Doctor of Philosophy**

**by**  
**Kenneth Delinor Mulzac**

**May 1995**

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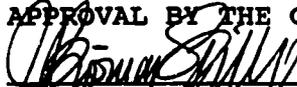
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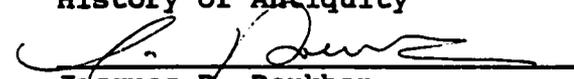
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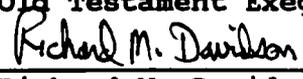
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**ABSTRACT**

**THE REMNANT MOTIF IN THE CONTEXT OF JUDGMENT AND  
SALVATION IN THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH**

by

**Kenneth Delinor Mulzac**

**Adviser: J. Bjørnar Storfjell**

**ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH**

**Dissertation**

**Andrews University**

**Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary**

**Title: THE REMNANT MOTIF IN THE CONTEXT OF JUDGMENT AND SALVATION IN THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH**

**Name of researcher: Kenneth Delinor Mulzac**

**Name and degree of faculty adviser: J. Bjørnar Storfjell, Ph.D.**

**Date completed: May 1995**

This dissertation attempts to fill a gap in studies on the remnant motif in the Old Testament by investigating this motif in the book of Jeremiah, a task not fully attempted previously. This study pursues the motif within the main theological framework of judgment and salvation in the book. Five technical terms designating remnant are considered: *šᵒr*, *plᵗ*, *mlᵗ*, *šrd*, and *ytr*.

Chapter 1 canvasses the literature on remnant research from 1903 to the present. It is divided into two sections. The first deals with publications on the remnant motif in materials outside the book of Jeremiah. It is not intended to be

critical since it is not dealing with the data in Jeremiah. The second utilizes an evaluative approach to works on the remnant motif that discuss the Jeremianic materials.

In chapter 2 it is discovered that Judah's judgment results from faithlessness and breach of the covenant. The Babylonians are the agents of destruction, but God is the One who executes punitive action against His people, rendering them an insignificant "historical remnant" which loses its privilege of election. Any hope of renewal is reserved for the exiles.

The language of war in chapter 3 denotes unrelenting judgment against the remnant amidst the oracles against foreign nations. From the onset both the inevitability and the universality of judgment are realized. The goal of judgment is the absolute sovereignty of Yahweh above all nations.

Chapter 4 demonstrates that God's final act is salvation and not judgment. The divine initiative manifests itself in the restoration of the remnant community. This is grounded in God's grace, forgiveness, elective love, and the establishment of the New Covenant in association with the faithfulness and repentance of the people. Under the auspices of the Messiah a new community with a New Covenant will be formed. This points in an eschatological direction. Salvation is here considered as a continuum of judgment. The remnant motif, therefore, functions to juxtapose the messages of judgment and salvation.

## DEDICATION

<b>To my Mom, Yvonne Mulzac-Norville</b>	<b>Who taught me to love excellence.</b>
<b>To my aunt Aurora Grant</b>	<b>Who taught me to love the Lord.</b>
<b>To my wife Belynda McClendon-Mulzac</b>	<b>Who taught me to be caring.</b>
<b>To my daughters Breanda and Karla</b>	<b>Who taught me to be patient.</b>
<b>To Dr. Gerhard F. Hasel</b>	<b>Who first led me to the study of the remnant.</b>
<b>To Ernest McClendon</b>	<b>Who taught me to love the Word.</b>
<b>To Wendell Ollivierre</b>	<b>Who taught me to love the Ministry.</b>

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS . . . . .	x
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . .	xv
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
Introduction and Statement of the Problem . . . . .	1
Justification of the Study . . . . .	3
Purpose and Scope of the Research . . . . .	7
Methodology . . . . .	8
Definition . . . . .	9
Limitations . . . . .	10
Plan of Study . . . . .	11
Chapter	
I. SURVEY OF LITERATURE . . . . .	12
Remnant Studies outside the Book of Jeremiah . . . . .	12
Summary . . . . .	34
Remnant Studies within the Book of Jeremiah . . . . .	34
Conclusions . . . . .	76
II. THE REMNANT MOTIF IN THE CONTEXT OF JUDGMENT: JUDAH . . . . .	77
Derivatives of $\text{רָמָנָה}$ . . . . .	77
Jer 6:9-15 . . . . .	79
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	79
Structure . . . . .	81
Historical Background . . . . .	82
Interpretation . . . . .	83
Jer 8:1-3 . . . . .	85
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	85
Structure . . . . .	86
Historical Background . . . . .	87
Interpretation . . . . .	87
Jer 11:18-23 . . . . .	89
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	89
Structure . . . . .	90
Historical Background . . . . .	92

Interpretation . . . . .	92
Jer 15:5-9 . . . . .	95
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	95
Structure . . . . .	97
Historical Background . . . . .	98
Interpretation . . . . .	98
Jer 21:1-10 . . . . .	102
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	102
Structure . . . . .	103
Historical Background . . . . .	104
Interpretation . . . . .	106
Jer 24:1-10 . . . . .	109
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	109
Structure . . . . .	110
Historical Background . . . . .	112
Interpretation . . . . .	112
Jer 37:1-10 . . . . .	115
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	115
Structure . . . . .	116
Historical Background . . . . .	116
Interpretation . . . . .	117
Jer 38:1-6 . . . . .	119
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	119
Structure . . . . .	119
Historical Background . . . . .	120
Interpretation . . . . .	122
Jer 38:14-28 . . . . .	123
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	123
Structure . . . . .	125
Historical Background . . . . .	126
Interpretation . . . . .	127
Jer 39:1-10 . . . . .	129
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	129
Structure . . . . .	130
Historical Background . . . . .	131
Interpretation . . . . .	132
Jer 40:1-6 . . . . .	135
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	135
Structure . . . . .	136
Historical Background . . . . .	137
Interpretation . . . . .	138
Jer 40:7-12 . . . . .	140
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	140
Structure . . . . .	141

Historical Background . . . . .	141
Interpretation . . . . .	141
Jer 40:13-16 . . . . .	143
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	143
Structure . . . . .	144
Historical Background . . . . .	145
Interpretation . . . . .	145
Jer 41:4-18 . . . . .	147
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	147
Structure . . . . .	149
Historical Background . . . . .	150
Interpretation . . . . .	151
Jer 42:1-6 . . . . .	154
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	154
Structure . . . . .	154
Historical Background . . . . .	155
Interpretation . . . . .	155
Jer 42:7-22 . . . . .	158
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	158
Structure . . . . .	160
Historical Background . . . . .	161
Interpretation . . . . .	162
Jer 43:1-7 . . . . .	166
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	166
Structure . . . . .	167
Historical Background . . . . .	168
Interpretation . . . . .	168
Jer 44:7-10 . . . . .	171
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	171
Structure . . . . .	172
Historical Background . . . . .	173
Interpretation . . . . .	174
Jer 44:11-14 . . . . .	178
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	178
Structure . . . . .	178
Historical Background . . . . .	179
Interpretation . . . . .	179
Jer 44:20-30 . . . . .	182
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	182
Structure . . . . .	184
Historical Background . . . . .	185
Interpretation . . . . .	185
Jer 52:12-16 . . . . .	187
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	187

Structure . . . . .	188
Historical Background . . . . .	190
Interpretation . . . . .	191
Derivatives of <i>mlt</i> . . . . .	192
Jer 32:1-5 . . . . .	193
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	193
Structure . . . . .	194
Historical Background . . . . .	195
Interpretation . . . . .	196
Jer 34:1-7 . . . . .	198
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	198
Structure . . . . .	200
Historical Background . . . . .	200
Interpretation . . . . .	202
Jer 34:18, 23 . . . . .	203
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	203
Structure . . . . .	204
Historical Background . . . . .	204
Interpretation . . . . .	204
Derivatives of <i>plh</i> and <i>šrd</i> . . . . .	205
Jer 42:17 . . . . .	207
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	207
Structure . . . . .	207
Historical Background . . . . .	207
Interpretation . . . . .	208
Jer 44:14 . . . . .	209
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	209
Structure . . . . .	209
Historical Background . . . . .	209
Interpretation . . . . .	210
Jer 44:28 . . . . .	211
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	211
Structure . . . . .	212
Historical Background . . . . .	212
Interpretation . . . . .	212
Derivatives of <i>ygr</i> . . . . .	213
Jer 39:9; 52:15 . . . . .	214
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	214
Structure . . . . .	215
Historical Background . . . . .	215
Interpretation . . . . .	215
Jer 44:7 . . . . .	216
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	216
Structure . . . . .	216

Historical Background . . . . .	216
Interpretation . . . . .	216
Conclusions . . . . .	217
III. THE REMNANT MOTIF IN THE CONTEXT OF JUDGMENT: FOREIGN NATIONS . . . . .	221
Derivatives of <i>š<sup>2</sup>r</i> . . . . .	222
Jer 25:15-29 . . . . .	222
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	222
Structure . . . . .	224
Historical Background . . . . .	225
Interpretation . . . . .	225
Jer 47:2-7 . . . . .	228
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	228
Structure . . . . .	230
Historical Background . . . . .	231
Interpretation . . . . .	232
Jer 49:7-11 . . . . .	237
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	237
Structure . . . . .	239
Historical Background . . . . .	240
Interpretation . . . . .	241
Jer 50:21-32 . . . . .	245
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	245
Structure . . . . .	248
Historical Background . . . . .	251
Interpretation . . . . .	252
Derivatives of <i>mlt</i> . . . . .	256
Jer 46:3-12 . . . . .	256
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	256
Structure . . . . .	259
Historical Background . . . . .	261
Interpretation . . . . .	261
Jer 48:6-9 . . . . .	267
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	267
Structure . . . . .	269
Historical Background . . . . .	271
Interpretation . . . . .	272
Jer 48:17-19 . . . . .	276
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	276
Structure . . . . .	276
Historical Background . . . . .	277
Interpretation . . . . .	277

Derivatives of <i>pl̄t</i> . . . . .	280
Jer 50:29 . . . . .	280
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	280
Structure . . . . .	280
Historical Background . . . . .	280
Interpretation . . . . .	281
Derivatives of <i>šrd̄</i> . . . . .	283
Jer 47:4 . . . . .	283
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	283
Structure . . . . .	283
Historical Background . . . . .	283
Interpretation . . . . .	284
Conclusions . . . . .	285

IV. THE REMNANT MOTIF IN THE CONTEXT OF SALVATION . . . . . 287

Derivatives of <i>š<sup>2</sup>r</i> . . . . .	288
Jer 23:1-8 . . . . .	288
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	288
Structure . . . . .	289
Historical Background . . . . .	292
Interpretation . . . . .	293
Jer 31:7-9 . . . . .	311
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	311
Structure . . . . .	312
Historical Background . . . . .	313
Interpretation . . . . .	315
Jer 50:4-20 . . . . .	321
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	321
Structure . . . . .	325
Historical Background . . . . .	327
Interpretation . . . . .	327
Derivatives of <i>ml̄t</i> . . . . .	339
Jer 39:15-18 . . . . .	339
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	339
Structure . . . . .	339
Historical Background . . . . .	340
Interpretation . . . . .	341
Derivatives of <i>pl̄t</i> . . . . .	343
Jer 50:28 . . . . .	343
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	343
Structure . . . . .	344
Historical Background . . . . .	344
Interpretation . . . . .	344

Jer 51:45-53 . . . . .	345
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	345
Structure . . . . .	347
Historical Background . . . . .	348
Interpretation . . . . .	349
Derivatives of <i>šrg</i> . . . . .	352
Jer 31:2-6 . . . . .	352
Translation and Textual Considerations . . . . .	352
Structure . . . . .	354
Historical Background . . . . .	355
Interpretation . . . . .	355
Conclusions . . . . .	363
 V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	 366
 BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	 379

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AASOR</i>	<i>Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>AB</i>	<i>Anchor Bible</i>
<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
<i>AJSL</i>	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature</i>
<i>ANET</i>	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</i> , J. Pritchard, ed.
<i>ASB</i>	<i>Austin Seminary Bulletin</i>
<i>ATD</i>	<i>Alte Testament Deutsch</i>
<i>AUSS</i>	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
<i>BA</i>	<i>Biblical Archeologist</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblica Archaeology Review</i>
<i>BASOR</i>	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
<i>BCPE</i>	<i>Bulletin du Centre Protestant d'Etudes</i>
<i>BDB</i>	Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, <i>The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>
<i>BHS</i>	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> , K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, eds.
<i>BLit</i>	<i>Bibel und Liturgie</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BV</i>	<i>Biblical Viewpoint</i>

<b>BWANT</b>	<b>Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament</b>
<b>BZ</b>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
<b>BZAW</b>	<b>Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</b>
<b>CBQ</b>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<b>CHAL</b>	<b>William L. Holladay, <i>A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i></b>
<b>CJ</b>	<i>Concordia Journal</i>
<b>ColT</b>	<i>Collectanea Theologica</i>
<b>CTM</b>	<i>Concordia Theological Monthly</i>
<b>CTR</b>	<i>Criswell Theological Review</i>
<b>CurTM</b>	<i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i>
<b>EstTeo</b>	<i>Estudos Teologicos</i>
<b>EvT</b>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
<b>ExpT</b>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<b>FRLANT</b>	<b>Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments</b>
<b>GTG</b>	<i>Grace Theological Journal</i>
<b>HAR</b>	<i>Hebrew Annual Review</i>
<b>HKAT</b>	<b>Handkommentar zum Alten Testament</b>
<b>HTS</b>	<i>Hervormde Teologiese Studies</i>
<b>HUCA</b>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<b>IB</b>	<i>Interpreter's Bible</i> , G. A. Buttrick, ed.
<b>ICC</b>	<b>International Critical Commentary</b>

<b>IDB</b>	<i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> , G. A. Buttrick, ed.
<b>IEJ</b>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
<b>Int</b>	<i>Interpretaton</i>
<b>ISBE</b>	<i>The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i> , G. W. Bromiley, ed.
<b>JB</b>	Jerusalem Bible
<b>JBC</b>	Jerome Bible Commentary
<b>JBL</b>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<b>JEA</b>	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
<b>JETS</b>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<b>JNES</b>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<b>JQR</b>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<b>JSOT</b>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<b>JSS</b>	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
<b>JTS</b>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<b>K</b>	Ketib
<b>KAT</b>	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
<b>LXX</b>	The Septuagint
<b>MSS</b>	Manuscripts
<b>MT</b>	Masoretic Text
<b>NASB</b>	New American Standard Bible
<b>NICOT</b>	New International Commentary of the Old Testament
<b>NIDNTT</b>	New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology

<b>NIV</b>	New International Version
<b>NKJV</b>	New King James Version
<b>NT</b>	New Testament
<b>OT</b>	Old Testament
<b>OTL</b>	Old Testament Library
<b>OTS</b>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
<b>PEQ</b>	<i>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</i>
<b>Q</b>	Qere
<b>RB</b>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<b>RelSRev</b>	<i>Religious Studies Review</i>
<b>Rev Exp</b>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
<b>RHPR</b>	<i>Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses</i>
<b>RQ</b>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
<b>RSPT</b>	<i>Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques</i>
<b>RSV</b>	Revised Standard Version
<b>SBL</b>	Society of Biblical Literature
<b>SBT</b>	Studies in Biblical Theology
<b>SEÅ</b>	<i>Svensk exegetisk årsbok</i>
<b>SEAJT</b>	<i>South East Asia Journal of Theology</i>
<b>SJT</b>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<b>StudBT</b>	<i>Studia Biblica et Theologica</i>
<b>Syr</b>	Syriac

<b>TBT</b>	<i>The Bible Today</i>
<b>TDNT</b>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds.
<b>TDOT</b>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> , G. Johannes Botterweck and H. Ringgren, eds.
<b>THAT</b>	<i>Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> , Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, eds.
<b>Tg</b>	Targum
<b>TLZ</b>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
<b>TWAT</b>	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> , G. Johannes Botterweck and H. Ringgren, eds.
<b>TWOT</b>	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i> , R. Laird Harris, ed.
<b>Vg</b>	Vulgate
<b>VT</b>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<b>VT Sup</b>	<i>Supplements to Vetus Testamentum</i>
<b>WMANT</b>	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
<b>WTJ</b>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<b>ZAW</b>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<b>ZNW</b>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<b>ZPED</b>	<i>Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible</i>
<b>ZTK</b>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

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## INTRODUCTION

### Introduction and Statement of the Problem

The study of the remnant motif in the Hebrew Bible has been going on unabated for several decades. Much effort has been devoted to the origin and development of this motif. Some studies have directed sustained attention to this concept in a particular book of the Old Testament. Several investigations have surveyed many Old Testament books or major blocks of writings. These often lack the depth of investigation needed for a comprehensive understanding of the remnant motif in a specific biblical book. Dictionary articles also survey the subject, often in a brief manner and understandably so.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jeremiah Unterman, "Remnant," *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (1985), 861; G. F. Hasel, "Remnant," *ISBE* (1988), 4:130-134; idem, "Remnant," *IDB Sup* (1976), 735-736; E. Jenni, "Remnant," *IDB* (1962), 4:32-33; Robert L. Cate, "Remnant," *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible* (1990), 753; G. Henton Davies, "Remnant," *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, ed. Alan Richardson (New York: MacMillan, 1959), 188-191; Heinrich Gross, "Remnant," *Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology* (1970), 2:741-743; W. Günther and H. Krienke, "leimma," *NIDNTT* (1986), 3:247-253; H. Wildberger, "שׂר ׀brig sein," *THAT* (1984), 2:844-855; Lester V. Meyers, "Remnant," *ABD* (1992), 5:669-671; *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (1986), s.v. "Remnant"; *Dictionary of the Bible* (1965), s.v. "Remnant"; *Dictionnaire Biblique Universel* (1984), s.v. "Remnant"; *Eerdmans Bible Encyclopedia* (1987), s.v. "Remnant."

While the remnant motif in the book of Isaiah has received the most attention,<sup>1</sup> such is not the case with the book of Jeremiah. Yet it has been noted long ago that "Jeremiah makes the most elaborate use of the theory"<sup>2</sup> of the remnant. This observation regarding Jeremiah is overlooked in many studies. This is surprising since the book contains sixty-eight explicit references to vocabulary associated with the remnant motif in terms of "definite historical entities."<sup>3</sup> At the present, there is no full-fledged study of the remnant motif in the book of Jeremiah, paying due

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<sup>1</sup>Several scholars regard the remnant motif as an integral part of Isaiah's theology: H. S. Gehman, "The Ruler of the Universe: The Theology of First Isaiah," *Int* 11 (1957): 277, "The remnant motif is Isaiah's favorite theme." T. W. Manson, *The Teachings of Jesus*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 176, "This doctrine of the remnant is one of the dominant thoughts of Isaiah." C. R. North, "Isaiah," *IDB* (1962), 2:734, "The remnant is a constituent part of Isaiah's theology." J. M. Ward, *Amos and Isaiah: Prophets of the Word of God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969), 270, "The prophecy of the remnant is . . . an essential ingredient of Isaiah's message from the outset."

<sup>2</sup>Emil G. Hirsch, "Remnant of Israel," *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (1905), 10:375.

<sup>3</sup>A "definite historical entity" refers to individuals, groups, or families which are the remnant that survive a disaster. See V. Hertrich, "*leimma ktl.*," *TDNT* (1967), 4:197; and G. F. Hasel, "The Origin and Early History of the Remnant Motif in Ancient Israel" (Ph.D dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1970), 145, 189. (Cited hereafter as "Origin and Early History.")

The vocabulary associated with these are: Forty uses of derivatives of  $\text{š}^{\text{r}}$ : seventeen verbal forms: Jer 8:3 (used twice); 21:7; 24:8; 37:10; 38:4, 22; 39:9 (used twice), 10; 40:6; 41:10; 42:2; 49:9; 50:20; 52:15, 16; twenty-three uses of the feminine noun  $\text{š}^{\text{r}}\text{ērîṭ}$ : 6:9; 8:3; 11:23; 15:9; 23:3; 24:8; 25:20; 31:7; 40:11, 15; 41:10, 16; 42:2, 15, 19; 43:5; 44:7, 12, 14, 28; 47:4, 5; 50:26; eight nominal derivatives of *plṭ*: 25:35; 42:17; 44:14 (used twice); 44:28; 50:28,29; 51:50; ten uses of derivatives of *mlt*: 32:4; 34:3; 38:18, 23; 39:18 (used twice); 46:6; 48:6, 8, 19; six uses of *yṭr*: 39:9 (used twice); 44:7; 52:15 (used twice); four uses of *sārîd*: 31:2; 42:17; 44:14; 47:4.



However, a few authors refute this position,<sup>1</sup> although only a limited consideration to the remnant motif is given. This fails to appreciate the full value of the subject within the scope of the book.

The tension described above demands that a fresh look be taken with regard to all passages that have remnant terminology (not just *š'ēḏ ērîṭ*) whether in a positive or a negative view. Instead of engaging in major redactional and tradition-historical studies, I treat the book of Jeremiah as a single unit and engage in a close reading of the text. In this way, some understanding may be gained of the meaning of the remnant motif in this book.

2. Since remnant terminology occurs mostly in the context of the judgment/salvation theme,<sup>2</sup> in oracles to both Judah and the foreign nations, it seems

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*Cognitive Dissonance in the Prophetic Traditions of the Old Testament* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 27, 28. See also Norbert Mendecki, "Einfluss des Buches Ezechiel auf Jer 23,3; 29,14; 32,37," *ColT* 55 (1985): 147-151; R. E. Clements, *Jeremiah*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 137, 138, 184; William McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah, I*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 556; Sigmund Mowinckel, *Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia* (Kristiania, Norway: J. Dybwad, 1914), 50.

<sup>1</sup>J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 488, 569; John Bright, *Jeremiah*, AB 21 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), 146. Both hold a moderate position of Jeremianic authorship with some editing.

<sup>2</sup>This is widely recognized as the overarching theme in the book of Jeremiah as may be gathered from the call of the prophet in chap 1 "to root out, to pull down, to destroy, and throw down" (judgment) and also "to build and to plant" (salvation). See Werner H. Schmidt, *Old Testament Introduction*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Crossroads, 1984), 237; Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, Proclamation Commentaries* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 73-88; S. K. Soderlund, "Jeremiah, Book of," *ISBE* (1982), 2:986-987; J. Muilenburg, "Jeremiah the Prophet," *IDB* (1962), 2:830.

plausible that the remnant motif be examined within this context.

It is well understood that the remnant motif is linked with the theme of judgment and salvation. G. F. Hasel writes on this connection in materials prior to Jeremiah, "It is a part of the emphasis on judgment and salvation. The final aim of God, however is salvation and not doom. This is apparent from the emphasis on the survival of a remnant."<sup>1</sup>

It is precisely at this point, however, where there is great debate and difference. Generally, there are two radically different views.

The first view insists on the dual measures of judgment and salvation through the remnant. V. Hertrich says that the thought of the remnant as a theological concept belongs to the context of salvation and judgment.<sup>2</sup> Henry Renckens states, "The connection between salvation and disaster was formulated most clearly in the concept of the Remnant."<sup>3</sup> Several scholars have endorsed this position.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hasel, "Origin and Early History," 458.

<sup>2</sup>Hertrich, "*leimma ktl.*," 4:197.

<sup>3</sup>Henry Renckens, *The Religion of Israel*, trans. N. B. Smith (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1966), 254.

<sup>4</sup>Jeremiah Unterman, *From Repentance to Redemption: Jeremiah's Thought in Transition* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 63; Christopher R. Seitz, "The Crisis of Interpretation over the Meaning and Purpose of the Exile: A Redactional Study of Jeremiah XXI-XLIII," *VT* 35 (1985): 78-97; P. R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century B.C.* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), 57; R. K. Harrison, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 40-42; Thompson, 110.

The second view sees only judgment, without any hint of future salvation, as this relates to the remnant motif. J. W. Miller remarks that Jeremiah renounced the remnant concept and "proclaimed the total annihilation of Judah."<sup>1</sup> In the 1973 revision of W. E. Müller's dissertation by H. D. Preuss, it is said that Jeremiah shows the totality of judgment by pointing to the lack of a remnant. Indeed, there can be no hopeful assessment in terms of a remnant.<sup>2</sup> Jenni insists that Jeremiah gave up any claim to the remnant concept in his proclamation of total judgment.<sup>3</sup> Several other scholars hold this position.<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, some scholars have a positive view of the remnant motif as the bridge between weal and woe while others maintain a negative position of judgment.

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<sup>1</sup>J. W. Miller, *Das Verhältnis Jeremias und Hesekiels sprachlich und theologisch untersucht* (Assen: Royal VanGorcum, 1955), 165.

<sup>2</sup>W. E. Müller and H. D. Preuss, *Die Vorstellung vom Rest im Alten Testament*, 2d ed. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973), 76-78. Interestingly, H. D. Preuss had earlier spoken of the remnant motif in the OT in terms of the tension between judgment and salvation. He sees the origin of the concept not in terms of eschatology but in terms of the future expectations of Israel as articulated by the prophets Amos and Isaiah. He speaks of it in a positive light, as the bridge between judgment and salvation, between weal and woe. See his *Jahweglaube und Zukunftserwartung*, BWANT 87 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1968), 179-188.

<sup>3</sup>Jenni, "Remnant," 33.

<sup>4</sup>Siegmond Böhmer, *Heimkehr und neuer Bund: Studien zur Jeremia 30-31* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 34; T. Seidl, *Texte und Einheiten in Jeremia 27-29*, *Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament*, 2 (St. Ottilien: Eos Verlag, 1977), 136; Georg Fohrer, *History of Israelite Religion*, trans. David E. Green (New York & Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 271; Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant*, 200; Wildberger, 844; J. P. Hyatt, "Introduction & Exegesis, Jeremiah," *IB* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), 5:1018, cited hereafter as "Jeremiah."

These positions clarify the academic chasm. But there are still unresolved issues:

1. On both sides of the argument, only those texts that have the feminine noun  $\text{שׁוֹבֵרֵי}$  are considered. Other remnant terms are ignored.
2. To place the remnant motif only within the context of judgment while ignoring those texts connecting the motif to the notion of restoration is contrary to the data in the book. To say that a later hand added them does not satisfy the question.

In dealing with these problems:

1. I have carefully exegeted each passage that has remnant terminology (not only  $\text{שׁוֹבֵרֵי}$ ).
2. I do not ignore any text whether or not it is within the context of judgment or salvation.

### **Purpose and Scope of the Research**

The purpose of this dissertation was to provide a detailed and comprehensive investigation of the remnant motif as it is presented in the book of Jeremiah. This was conducted within the context of the overarching theme of judgment and salvation.

Therefore, this dissertation is grounded in textual, linguistic, literary, and contextual studies of all the remnant terminology found in all passages that make explicit mention of the remnant.

## Methodology

In order to properly trace the remnant motif in the book of Jeremiah, I have adhered to the following method:

1. I critically acquaint us with that which has been written on the topic and related material.

2. I follow a close reading approach, taking the book as a single unit, and exegete all texts that have specific remnant terminology. This exegetical process incorporates four interrelated steps.

a. Translation and Textual Considerations: This analysis of the text attends to grammatical and syntactical relationships, textual difficulties, and variants with ancient versions (notably the Septuagint [LXX]), as denoted in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS)*. In each case, the entire pericope is translated with the text(s) having remnant terminology represented in italics.

b. Structure: This shows the elemental blocks and framework of the passage in which the remnant passages are found.

c. Historical Background: This examines the situation, circumstances, people, and social milieu surrounding the event in which direct reference is made to the remnant. It also seeks to provide an approximate date for the occurrence.

d. Interpretation: This is a commentary of the meaning of the passage as a whole, with focus placed on the remnant.

### Definition

The remnant motif is sometimes narrowly defined as those remaining after some catastrophe.<sup>1</sup> Emphasis is sometimes placed on the smallness of this surviving group.<sup>2</sup> Definitions are further confused by imposing a dichotomy between the "secular"<sup>3</sup> and the "holy" or "pious" remnant. Thompson gives a tripartite definition: escapees from some present danger; the restored Israelite community; and spiritual Israel.<sup>4</sup>

It seems better not to prejudge the use of remnant terminology and to make a definition along the lines of the six basic terms used in the OT to refer to the remnant motif. For purposes of this dissertation, I adhere to the following broad definition:

The designation "remnant motif" is used . . . in an unrestricted and not in a narrow sense. This means that the designation "remnant motif" is employed for both the negative and positive aspects of the remnant idea as well as for its non-eschatological or eschatological use. The term "remnant motif" can express the negative idea that there is total annihilation of human life without any survivors. It is used in connection with the negligible nature of a few survivors who are a meaningless remnant for the future of a family, clan, tribe, people or nation. Conversely it is employed when a remnant remains either large or small, that carries within itself the potentialities of renewal, life and continued existence. It is used for historical and eschatological entities. This unrestricted use of the term "remnant motif" has the quality of including in one designation the large

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<sup>1</sup>Wildberger, 847, 848; Müller and Preuss, 13, 36-38. This residue is often seen as survivors of political disaster, namely war.

<sup>2</sup>*Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (1987), s.v. "Remnant."

<sup>3</sup>Müller and Preuss, 75; Hertrich, 197.

<sup>4</sup>Thompson, 569.

variety of aspects and emphases which are expressed by the Hebrew and Semitic notion of the remnant.<sup>1</sup>

Using this broad definition, this study is able to incorporate the full range of remnant terminology used in the book of Jeremiah. It does not restrain or restrict this investigation from the outset, as is done in studies that limit the idea of the remnant to but a positive notion or the like. It refrains from superimposing any thematic, theological, linguistic, or ideological limitation on the text and thought patterns presented in the book of Jeremiah.

### **Limitations**

This study has several limitations:

1. I have limited this investigation to the book of Jeremiah. It is not necessary to investigate the entire Old Testament as a background since several studies have already done this.
2. I refrain from comparing what is found with other books in the Old Testament. This is because I am not attempting a development of the motif throughout the prophets.
3. I restricted this study to texts that have explicit remnant terminology.
4. I deal only with the Masoretic Text (MT).
5. I deal only with "definite historical entities."
6. I refrain from comparative Semitic discussion of Ancient Near East cognates for remnant terminology since this has already been done.

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<sup>1</sup>Hasel, "Origin and Early History," 46, 47.

7. I examine this motif only in passages where remnant terms are explicitly found. Passages which may contain the remnant idea but do not have remnant terms are not included in this investigation.

### **Plan of Study**

Chapter 1 provides a survey of literature that is divided in two sections. The first deals with publications on the remnant motif in materials outside the book of Jeremiah. It is not intended to be critical since I am not dealing directly with the text of Jeremiah. The second part deals with works on the remnant motif that include the Jeremianic materials in their discussions. It is critical in approach.

Chapter 2 follows the exegetical plan outlined above and examines the remnant motif in oracles against Judah within the context of judgment. Chapter 3 attends to the oracles against the foreign nations within the context of judgment.

Chapter 4 also follows the same exegetical plan, but investigates the motif in the context of salvation. Since there are no explicit references of remnant in terms of salvation with regard to the foreign nations, the concern here is only with references to Judah.

Chapter 5 provides the summary and conclusions of the study.

## CHAPTER I

### SURVEY OF LITERATURE

This survey is divided in two parts. The first provides a concise overview of scholarly opinion regarding the remnant motif in OT materials *outside* the book of Jeremiah. For this reason, it is not intended to be critical. The second part examines the discussion of the remnant motif *within* the book of Jeremiah. It is intended to be critical.

#### Remnant Studies outside the Book of Jeremiah

Johannes Meinhold's pioneering study linked the remnant motif to the rise of ethical monotheism.<sup>1</sup> He speaks of a "holy remnant"<sup>2</sup> or "pious remnant"<sup>3</sup> and always in a positive sense: those who survived a disaster because of their "holiness." This concept originated with Isaiah<sup>4</sup> who recognized that a remnant will be saved

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<sup>1</sup>Johannes Meinhold, *Studien zur israelitischen Religionsgeschichte. Band I: Der heilige Rest. Teil I: Elias Amos Hosea Jesaja* (Bonn: A. Marcus und E. Weber's Verlag, 1903), 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 3, 22.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 33, 63.

<sup>4</sup>While Meinhold dealt only with the prophetic realms of Elijah, Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah, his emphasis is largely on the last. In the Elijah tradition, the 7000 were faithful Israelites who were saved while the nation abandoned God. The

from Judah (not the whole nation) because of their faith in God.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, he formed a remnant community around himself.<sup>2</sup>

Hugo Gressmann's brief study linked the remnant motif with the eschatology of doom, which stresses absolute destruction.<sup>3</sup> However, in time, the remnant motif became the bridge, though inadequate, between the eschatology of doom and the eschatology of salvation, both of which derived from Babylonian mythology.<sup>4</sup> Contrary to Meinhold, Gressmann holds that the remnant motif originated long before Isaiah of Jerusalem, and even before the prophet Amos.<sup>5</sup>

Herbert Dittmann builds on Gressmann's idea when he states that the idea of the remnant is found everywhere in an eschatological sense.<sup>6</sup> He maintains, however, that this idea belongs to the eschatology of disaster and salvation at the

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remnant in Amos, i.e., Judah, fails to equate with the definition of the "holy remnant" and is therefore unimportant. Hosea does not have remnant terminology, nor does he delineate between the holy and the unholy.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 114.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 123-135.

<sup>3</sup>Hugo Gressmann, *Der Ursprung der israelitisch-jüdischen Eschatologie*, FRLANT 6 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1905), 229-238. He holds that wherever the remnant idea is found in the context of the eschatology of salvation, it is a "dogmatic-technical term."

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 237, 244-247

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 235-237. For an evaluation of Gressmann, see E. Sellin, *Der alttestamentliche Prophetismus* (Leipzig: A. Deichertische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1912), 119, 133, 154-156, who shows that the remnant motif belongs to both the eschatology of doom and the eschatology of salvation.

<sup>6</sup>Herbert Dittmann, "Der heilige Rest im Alten Testament," *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 87 (1914): 611.

same time.<sup>1</sup> The remnant is a dependable bridge between disaster and salvation. In the prophets, especially Amos,<sup>2</sup> the remnant are only the pious ones who subject themselves to the moral will of Yahweh. They are faithful to him and he will make them a cornerstone of a new building.<sup>3</sup> Dittmann emphasizes that the true remnant community was the exiled community. They have hope and a future. This saved remnant is the basis of God's new seed.<sup>4</sup>

Sigmund Mowinckel also linked the remnant motif to eschatology.<sup>5</sup> The remnant motif emerged from the Babylonian enthronement myth from which Israelite eschatology was developed. The "prophets of doom," Amos and Hosea, had no eschatological message. They announced the destruction of Israel and Judah unconditionally and without remorse.<sup>6</sup> Isaiah, however, sounds a new note: a remnant would be converted and saved.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 609.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 605, 606, 610. Dittmann argues that Isaiah did not create the remnant idea, for the term already existed as a dogmatic, technical one. Amos was the first to speak of a "holy remnant" comprised of converted Israelites.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 611-612.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 615-617.

<sup>5</sup>Sigmund Mowinckel, *Psalmenstudien II. Das Thronbesteigungsfest Jahwäs und der Ursprung der Eschatologie*, 2d reprint (Amsterdam: P. Schippers, 1966), 276-282. This is the 2d reprint of the Oslo Edition of 1921-1924.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 264-266.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 279-280. This is built on a presupposition of faith and repentance. Later, Mowinckel would say that this was election and covenant faith. This faith acquired a deeper insight: Yahweh could not abandon his own plan and goal. Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, trans. G. W. Anderson (Nashville: Abingdon Press,

In his examination of four Hebrew roots (*šʾr*, *plʿ*, *šrd*, and *ytr*) that express the idea of the remnant, Hertrich differentiates between a "secular remnant" (wood, trees, etc.) and a "definite historical remnant," namely, "people which survive a disaster."<sup>1</sup> Hertrich places the remnant as a theological concept within the context of salvation and judgment.<sup>2</sup>

While Hertrich agrees with both Gressmann and Mowinckel that "the use of the final theological concept of the remnant is very closely connected with the . . . origin of OT eschatology,"<sup>3</sup> he rejects their theories of a derivation from mythology.<sup>4</sup> For Hertrich, the motif has "its origin at the same point as eschatology generally, namely, in the coming of God into this world-time in which He reveals

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1954), 134, 135.

<sup>1</sup>Hertrich, 197.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 197, 198. J. Skinner, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah in the Revised Version*, reprint ed., The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, vol. 20 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), lxiii-lxiv, holds that by the time of Elijah's vision (1 Kgs 19:18), the remnant had "acquired a positive eschatological content." In the teaching of Isaiah, however, the doctrine of the remnant had two concepts: (1) a purely eschatological idea (e.g., 10:20-23) where the remnant is described as the "escaped" of Jacob in the final visitation; (2) a "practical principle" (e.g., 8:16-18) where the prophet consciously consolidated the remnant as "an inner circle of fellowship which should be the nucleus of the future people of God."

<sup>3</sup>Hertrich, 198.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 198-200.

Himself to men as the Holy One."<sup>1</sup> It is God who establishes the remnant by His own saving action.<sup>2</sup>

H. H. Rowley connects the remnant motif with Israel's election tradition. The remnant were "the heirs of the promises through all the ills that should befall the nation, and who should convey the heritage of the election and the tasks it entails to those who should follow."<sup>3</sup>

He sees a nexus between election and the remnant from Jacob to Elijah to the prophets.<sup>4</sup> The idea of the remnant is more closely tied to Isaiah than to any other prophet, claims Rowley, although he cannot be certain as to how early in that prophet's career the notion was cherished.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 201.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 200, 203-206, 208. Hertrich is adamant with this point. The faith or holiness of the remnant has nothing to do with their establishment. God establishes the remnant. It has its existence in God alone. Since some passages speak of total judgment and others speak of deliverance in terms related to the redemption of the people out of Egypt, then it means that the existence of the remnant rests on the divine act of deliverance.

<sup>3</sup>H. H. Rowley, *The Biblical Doctrine of Election* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1950), 70.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 71-73.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 73.

Rowley is certain that "the Remnant will not be spared by accident, but saved by God for His own purposes."<sup>1</sup> This is because they were not merely survivors of disaster, "but heirs of Israel's election."<sup>2</sup>

F. Dreyfus<sup>3</sup> divided his work in four main parts: (1) the vocation of the prophet; (2) remnant and faith; (3) the composition of the remnant; and (4) the remnant and Messiah. From his inaugural vision, Isaiah incorporated this message of the remnant as a dividing line between those who believe and those who do not. The remnant are the poor and the disciples of the prophet. The Messiah is the personification of the remnant.

Reiji Hoshizaki<sup>4</sup> divided his task into two parts: the first two chapters deal with general questions of introduction; the last two deal respectively with the "importance and place" and the "content and meaning" of the remnant idea. Throughout his career, Isaiah proclaimed the remnant idea,<sup>5</sup> but his hopes shifted from the whole nation, to survivors in Jerusalem after the Syro-Ephramite crisis, to a "spiritual kernel" separate from the nation.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 75.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 83.

<sup>3</sup>F. Dreyfus, "La doctrine du 'Reste d'Israël' chez les prophète Isaïe," *Revue de Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 39 (1955): 361-386.

<sup>4</sup>Reiji Hoshizaki, "Isaiah's Concept of the Remnant" (M.Th. thesis, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1955).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 40.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 86-88.

Sheldon H. Blank believes that while the "doctrine of the righteous remnant is well attested in the Bible," Isaiah is silent on the matter.<sup>1</sup> He reasons that three factors attest to this:

1. The name She'ar Yashub is one of ill-omen; there is absolutely no hope in it.

2. If Isaiah had any idea of promise in a remnant as the seed for a new Israel, then his silence on this point in parts of the book that may confidently be attributed to him is strange.

3. Righteousness is the antecedent for the remnant, and this all-important element is wholly absent from that generation.<sup>2</sup>

Blank continues that the name of Isaiah's son, which alludes to the remnant probably "referred to what was a stage only in a process, of which he knew total doom to be the end."<sup>3</sup> He concludes that the idea of a righteous remnant belongs to Jeremiah and not to Isaiah. Indeed, "Isaiah had no 'doctrine' of a 'remnant', 'righteous', 'saved', 'saving', or what you will."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Sheldon H. Blank, "Traces of Prophetic Agony in Isaiah," *HUCA* 27 (1956): 87, 88.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 86-89.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 89. In the inaugural vision, the tenth which remains (6:13a) is only a stage in the process of destruction. Isaiah may be echoing Amos 5:3 or 6:9 which point to the decimation of the population.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 90. He came to the same conclusion earlier. See Sheldon H. Blank, "The Current Misinterpretation of Isaiah's SHE'AR YASHUB," *JBL* 67 (1948): 211-215.

The basic question of Yoshiaki Hattori's work is: Who constitutes the true remnant in the book of Ezekiel, the deportees or those who were left behind in Judah?<sup>1</sup> Ezekiel sees the exiles and the fall of Jerusalem in terms of God's judgment. The remnant, who will be the core of Israel's future both in the post-exilic and the future Messianic ages, would come from among the exiles and not from among those left in Judah. In fact, this latter group will be destroyed because of a false optimism based on the mistaken idea of the inviolability of the city of Jerusalem.

Ursula Stegemann examined the remnant motif in two parts: the "secular-profane" and the "theological."<sup>2</sup> Regarding the first, she observes: (1) the remnant will be destroyed; (2) an insignificant remnant remains; and (3) a real remnant is left and this evokes a future hope. Concerning the "theological" section, she deals only with those texts that may be considered authentic: 6:9-13b; 28:16-17a; 8:16-18; 7:3. She concludes that these passages preclude any discussion of a theology of the remnant in the book of Isaiah.

In his dissertation, Hasel investigated the remnant motif in ancient Near Eastern literature and traced its development in the Hebrew Bible from its earliest appearance in Genesis to Isaiah of Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Yoshiaki Hattori, "The Prophet Ezekiel and His Idea of the Remnant" (Th.D dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1968).

<sup>2</sup>Ursula Stegemann, "Der Restgedanke bei Isaias," *BZ* 13 (1969): 161-186.

<sup>3</sup>Hasel, "Origin and Early History." This has been published as *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah*, 3d ed., Andrews University Monographs, vol. 5 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1980), cited hereafter as *The Remnant*. Except for the deletion of the third chapter, the dissertation is fully represented.

Hasel's critical review of literature reveals that there are opposing positions and dissimilar theories regarding the origin, history, and meaning of this motif.

There is no *communis opinio* on these issues.<sup>1</sup>

The ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian literary texts in a wide variety of genres are studied in chapter 2.<sup>2</sup> The remnant motif appears frequently in connection with various threats--natural, social, or political--which jeopardize human life. Therefore, it is inextricably linked to the threat and existential concern to secure life.<sup>3</sup> This remnant has the potentialities for renewal and continued existence.<sup>4</sup>

The third chapter contains the data of the remnant terminology in the Hebrew Bible covering approximately 580 usages of derivatives of five roots:  $\text{š}^{\text{r}}$ ,  $\text{pl}^{\text{t}}$ ,  $\text{ytr}$ ,  $\text{šrd}$ , and  $\text{hr}$ .<sup>5</sup> Each term contains aspects of both negative and positive

<sup>1</sup>Hasel, "Origin and Early History," 40. Three major positions are held regarding origin: (1) the rise of eschatology; (2) God's action in history; (3) the secular-political sphere of ancient Near-Eastern practice of warfare. With regard to the history of development it is generally viewed that there are interrelated layers of tradition which contained this motif, but that each biblical writer used the motif according to his own emphasis and historical circumstances. Regarding the meaning, much heated debate abounds.

Hasel also provides excellent evaluations of the contributions of Meinhold, Gressmann, Mowinckel, Hertrich, Dreyfus, Hoshizaki, and Stegemann.

<sup>2</sup>These include mythological, religious, historical, epical, didactic, and annalistic records. It thereby avoids the one-sided approach of being limited to only the annalistic records of a few nations.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 63, 64, 72, 100, 115, 116, 133. Hence, the motif is as old as these threats.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 133.

<sup>5</sup>The three-step procedure includes: (1) distribution in the Hebrew Bible; (2) usage in cognate languages; (3) usages in the Hebrew Bible.

features. However, each context, combination of terms, and usage contains a certain semantic value that is relevant within its context.

Chapter 4 provides an examination of the remnant motif in the Hebrew Bible prior to Isaiah of Jerusalem. The Flood story reveals the dual notions of doom and hope.<sup>1</sup> The Abraham-Lot tradition focuses on preserving life;<sup>2</sup> the Jacob-Esau tradition points to election and grace,<sup>3</sup> while the Joseph tradition is connected with election.<sup>4</sup> In the Elijah Cycle, Hasel notes a development. In the Mt. Carmel scene, there is a remnant left from a *past* calamity.<sup>5</sup> However, regarding the 7000 in 1 Kgs 19:18, "What we have here is the *locus classicus* of the prominent remnant in the sense that we meet in this passage for the first time in the history of Israel the promise of a *future remnant* that constitutes the kernel of a new Israel."<sup>6</sup>

Hasel then gives extensive development to the remnant in Amos, noting the duality between judgment and salvation.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 207. Therefore, the remnant motif, having its origin early in humankind's existence, is neither Israelite nor Babylonian. However, it is anchored in salvation history and links the past to the present with a view to the future.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 219.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 223. Hasel claims that the preservation of Jacob and his clan is a prototype of the preservation of Israel as a whole.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 227.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 233.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 241 (emphasis mine).

<sup>7</sup>The prophet attacks the popular notion that Israel as a whole will remain as the remnant when the 'Day of the Lord' brings divine judgment upon the nations. "Amos confronts this self-assurance with an emphatic NO." Nevertheless, Amos does

The final chapter deals with the remnant motif of Isaiah of Jerusalem.

Hasel divides Isaiah's oracles into three broad categories:

1. Early oracles (740-734 B.C.), which examine Isa 6:1-13; 1:24-26 and 4:2-3. (He notes that "the remnant motif is rooted in this dialectic of judgment and salvation"<sup>1</sup> from the very outset of Isaiah's prophetic ministry.<sup>2</sup> Further, the idea of the "holy seed" as the holy remnant makes it a main element in Isaiah's eschatology.)<sup>3</sup>

2. The Syro-Ephramitic War (734-733 B.C.) oracles (Isa 7-8). (The name *Shear-Jashub*, "A-Remnant-Shall-Return," is a threat to those who confide in political intrigue, but a promise to those who trust in God.<sup>4</sup> The Immanuel figure is

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have a view of hope/restoration for a remnant as "an entity of eschatological expectation." It is here that "we encounter for the first time a connection of the remnant motif with eschatology."

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 294, 295.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 316. Cf. Ward, 270. This takes to task those who hold that Isaiah was at first negative and it was only at a later stage that he became positive. See Johannes Fichtner, "Jahves Plan in der Botschaft des Jesajas," *ZAW* 63 (1951): 28-30; and to a lesser degree, G. E. Wright, *Isaiah*, Laymen's Bible Commentary (London: SCM Press, 1965), 36. For Hasel, both the negative/positive *and* the eschatological/non-eschatological aspects of the remnant motif were used by Isaiah from the outset of his ministry.

<sup>3</sup>Hasel, "Origin and Early History," 316, 317, 464. Here Isaiah stands in the tradition of Amos's usage of the remnant motif. Further, Isaiah is the first to speak of a "holy remnant."

Concerning the metaphor of Isa 1:21-26, Hasel, 326, claims: "This remnant serves as the link between the ideal *Urzeit* and the future *Heilszeit*; it is an eschatological entity from which the new community of the future springs forth."

Isa 4:1-3 is also seen as eschatological. Indeed, the prophet himself may be regarded as the proleptic representative of the future remnant.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 356.

identified as the ruler of the eschatological remnant.<sup>1</sup> Central to this discussion is the idea that faith becomes the *criterium distinctionis* between the surviving remnant and the perishing masses.)<sup>2</sup>

3. Oracles from Isaiah's later career (716/15--ca. 701 B.C.). Isa 28:5-6, 30:15-17, 1:4-9; 10:20-23; 37:30-32 and 11:10-16 are examined. Hasel maintains the dual polarity of weal and woe. He speaks of "historical" and "eschatological" categories to distinguish between a remnant that is present from a past event and one that will emerge from a future action of God.<sup>3</sup>

A final section studies the remnant in the foreign nations. Its uses demonstrate either total destruction (Babylon and Philistia) or reduction to an insignificant state without a future (Syria, Moab, and Kedar).

Hasel has returned to the subject several times with the same conclusion: the remnant is inextricably linked to the preservation and continuity of life in the face of mortal threats.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 337.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 356, 370.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 466.

<sup>4</sup>G. F. Hasel, "Linguistic Considerations Regarding the Translation of Isaiah's SHEAR-JASHUB: A Reassessment," *AUSS* 9 (1971): 36-46; idem, "Semantic Values of Derivatives of the Hebrew Root  $\text{š}^{\text{r}}$ ," *AUSS* 11 (1973): 152-169; idem, "The Identity of 'the Saints of the Most High' in Daniel 7," *Biblica* 56 (1975): 173-192; idem, "Remnant," *IDB*, 735-736; idem, "'Remnant' as a Meaning of  $\text{ʔacharith}$ ," in *The Archaeology of Jordan and Other Studies Presented to Siegfried H. Horn*, ed. L. T. Geraty and L. G. Herr (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1986), 511-524; idem, "*Pālat, mālat, pālīt, pālēt, p<sup>l</sup>lētāh, p<sup>l</sup>letāh, miplāt*," *TWAT* (1987) 6:589-606; idem, "Remnant," *ISBE* 4:130-134; idem, "The Alleged 'NO' of Amos and Amos' Eschatology," *AUSS* 29 (1991): 3-18.

G. W. Anderson associated only *šṽr* and its derivatives with the "remnant doctrine."<sup>1</sup> He claims: (1) *šṽr* points to a positive view of the remnant that justifies a "remnant doctrine," not merely a hope of restoration; (2) the doctrine is present in places where the terms do not appear; and (3) it is an integral part of OT theology.<sup>2</sup>

His examination of the prophets deals largely with Isaiah.<sup>3</sup> This prophet's disciples, those who responded to his message of faith, are the remnant. They are "the people within the people."<sup>4</sup>

In Genesis, the remnant is found in the Joseph, Abraham, and Flood stories, respectively. Anderson concludes that the doctrine of the remnant cannot be individualistic; rather, it is a community concept.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>G. W. Anderson, "Some Observations on the Old Testament Doctrine of the Remnant," *Glasgow University Oriental Society Transactions* 23 (1972): 1-10. He acknowledges *ytr*, *plt*, and *šrd* as bearing some relationship to the remnant idea, but regards them as being of subordinate interest to the study.

By "remnant doctrine" he means the destruction of the larger part of Israel while the remaining (smaller) part will repent and by their survival will express God's pledge to restore and bless His people. Further, he disregards those texts where the existence of survivors points to the magnitude of destruction rather than to the possibility of restoration (e.g., Isa 1:9).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 6. For Amos, the remnant becomes the obverse of the idea of judgment. In the face of inexorable doom, Amos exhorts that repentance may lead to renewal. For Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the remnant idea is embodied in the Babylonian *golah*. The post-exilic literature shows the remnant as those who returned from exile.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 10, "The doctrine of the Remnant . . . points to a religious community which is not identical with the political or national group, since faith is the basis of its life and its bond of unity."

In his investigation of the book of Zephaniah, Arvid S. Kapelrud says that "Zephaniah's idea of who the remnant would be is close to that of Amos: the poor and humble people."<sup>1</sup> The remnant will be visited (*pqd*) by God. This is positive as it restores the fortunes of Judah, in that it gives them opportunity to avenge their hated neighbors, Moab and Ammon.<sup>2</sup> However, the fact that there will be a "remnant of Judah" suggests that Yahweh will destroy Judah and "only a remnant of humble and lowly people would come through to a better future."<sup>3</sup>

The remnant were characterized by faithfulness to Yahweh, righteous living, and humility.<sup>4</sup> Yet these were not guarantees that a person or group would be part of the remnant that would be saved on the Day of the Lord. "It was all in the hand of Yahweh, he alone decided the fate."<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the future life of the remnant will be one of peaceful existence. Zephaniah placed himself in this picture and "through his exhortation to the joyous people of the future he encouraged his people in their present situation. He showed them that Yahweh was always the same, willing to help, when he was not despised and deceived."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Arvid S. Kapelrud, *The Message of the Prophet Zephaniah* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1975), 38.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 68. He adds that revenge on the enemy was a standing part of the hope of ancient Israel-Judah.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 77. As an oracle of promise, it had a rather bitter taste.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 79, 80.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 88.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 89.

Pat Graham believes that the prophet Isaiah used the remnant motif to announce both doom and hope.<sup>1</sup> This idea was already present in Amos.<sup>2</sup> Graham examines Isaiah's treatment of the remnant motif in five stages:

1. 742 B.C.: Isa 6:13 which suggests that "God's remnant endured in the tenth that remained"<sup>3</sup>

2. 735-734 B.C: Isa 7:3, 21, 22; 8:15-18 where during the Syro-Ephramite crisis, Isaiah used the remnant theology to combine three different messages--only a remnant of the invading forces will survive if Ahaz trusted God; with Ahaz's refusal, the devastation of Judah will leave only a remnant surviving in the land; Isaiah saw himself and other Judeans who trusted God as the faithful remnant<sup>4</sup>

3. 733-722 B.C.: Isa 28:5, 6 where Judah, as God's remnant recognizes him as her glory, in contrast to proud Samaria

4. 721-701 B.C.: Isa 10:19 which gives a "new twist" to the remnant idea for Assyria is described as such after being used by God to punish his people

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<sup>1</sup>Pat Graham, "The Remnant Motif in Isaiah," *RQ* 19 (1976): 217.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 218. The "Pre-Isaianic idea of a remnant" is found in the stories of the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot and Joseph in the book of Genesis; and in the Elijah cycle in 1 Kings. In all cases there is a "surviving remnant." The same is true of Amos.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 218, 219. G. W. Ahlström, "Isaiah 6:13," *JSS* 19 (1974): 169-172, believes that this text expresses the prophetic expectation of a new and better future that is to come. It is from this remnant that new life will abound. What seemed to have been absolutely destroyed becomes the "seed" for new growth.

<sup>4</sup>Graham, 220.

5. 701 B.C.: Isa 1:7, 8, 24-31; 4:2-6; 10:20-23; 11:10-16; 30:14, 17; 37:4, 31, 32; 39:6.

Graham holds that "though the nation as a whole deserted God, the remnant redeemed by judgment is assured of new life as God's instruments of salvation for others."<sup>1</sup>

Graham's conclusions of Isaiah's use of remnant theology are:

1. He used it to emphasize God's activity in the world.
2. The remnant constituted a new people who arose out of destruction and chaos.
3. The faith of the remnant, which renounced every national policy not authenticated by God, seemed to be foremost in his message.
4. The remnant stand in close relationship to God, and from this proceeds moral purity and covenant faithfulness.
5. He chose the idea from a secular situation in which a few people survived a military disaster, but he applied it to "spiritual" survivors.<sup>2</sup>

Gene Rice discussed the remnant motif within the context of the Syro-Ephramite crisis.<sup>3</sup> The "Day of YHWH," a time of judgment, was the time when

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 222.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 225-228.

<sup>3</sup>Gene Rice, "A Neglected Interpretation of the Immanuel Prophecy," *ZAW* 90 (1978): 220-227. J. J. M. Roberts, "Isaiah 2 and the Prophet's Message to the North," *JQR*, n.s., 75 (1985): 297, believes that the Syro-Ephramite conflict "is precisely the period from which one would expect to have an explanation of the name Shear-yashub." Hence, both names, Immanuel and Shear-yashub, implying remnant ideas, were precipitated by this war.

Judah must decide to be, or not to be, the remnant. As the remnant, Judah must confidently oppose her attackers and refuse seeking deliverance by submitting to Assyria.<sup>1</sup> Ahaz's refusal to "test" Yahweh means that the nation could not be the remnant; neither could God be their God. However, in this situation, the prophet's own faithfulness, and that of his disciples, qualifies them as the remnant. "They are the only ones in Israel on this occasion who can say, 'God is with us.'"<sup>2</sup> Hence, collectively the remnant constitute Immanuel, whose mother is Zion personified.<sup>3</sup> This corporate interpretation of Immanuel, says Rice, signals the "birth of the remnant."<sup>4</sup>

Rice concludes that Jesus initiated a movement based on the imminent inbreaking of the Kingdom of God: "This precipitated a breach in the Israel of his day, indeed, gave birth to a new remnant. In this sense Jesus is ultimately the fulfillment of the Immanuel prophecy."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Rice, 221.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 222.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 224. Rice thinks that Isaiah uses Immanuel not to express the idea of youth, innocence, purity, or even a miraculous birth. It is purely to express the remnant. This is the neglected interpretation that the title indicates.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 226. Paul D. Wegner, "A Re-examination of Isaiah 9:1-6," *VT* 42 (1992): 112, indicates that the child spoken of (who may very well be the Immanuel figure) was an expected deliverer who would fulfill the ideas expressed in this name. However, Wegner does not label this figure as Jesus.

John Day thinks that the name Shear-Jasub is used both positively and negatively in reference to the remnant.<sup>1</sup> Following R. E. Clements,<sup>2</sup> he argues that the name, which means "a remnant will return," applies to a remnant of the Syrian and Israelite armies that was besieging Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the name expresses a message of judgment for the enemy and deliverance for Judah.

This notion of the survival of a mere remnant of the enemy comes from such psalms as 46, 48, and 76. Their background is Zion theology with the inviolability of Zion. Isaiah makes a modification that this is not automatic but that faith is essential. The name Shear-Jashub should be seen in such a light against the background of Ps 76:11.<sup>4</sup>

Ronald Webster Pierce's examination of the book of Haggai is divided into three parts:

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<sup>1</sup>John Day, "SHEAR JASHUB (Isaiah VII 3) and 'The Remnant of Wrath' (Psalm LXXVI 11)," *VT* 31 (1981): 76-78.

<sup>2</sup>R. E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 83.

<sup>3</sup>É. Lipinski, "Le *š<sup>2</sup>r yšwb* d'Isaïe vii 3," *VT* 23 (1973): 245-246, had come to a similar position. He did this, however, by emending the text from *š<sup>2</sup>ar yāšūb* to *š<sup>2</sup>er yāšūb*, "le sang retombera," pointing to the bloody revenge that would come upon the invading Syrian and Israelite armies.

<sup>4</sup>Day, 77.

1. "The Historical-Theological" backdrop that surveys the period of Zerubbabel (He indicates that exilic hopes fueled the interests of the remnant in the temple and priesthood; kingship and kingdom; covenant; and the people of God.<sup>1</sup>

2. "The Literary-Critical" analysis of the structure of the book

3. "The Unresponsive Remnant," which attempts to demonstrate that the post-exilic remnant had a negative attitude toward the fulfillment of those exilic hopes. In short, they "were characterized by an *unresponsiveness* to the exhortations of Yahweh's messengers."<sup>2</sup>

Three sermon units in the book demonstrate this: (1) Hag 1:3-15a, where the remnant is reluctant to restore covenantal relationships,<sup>3</sup> (2) Hag 1:15b-2:9, where the remnant is unconvinced of restoration possibilities,<sup>4</sup> and (3) Hag 2:10-19, where the remnant is unfit to take part in the restoration process.<sup>5</sup>

Pierce concludes that the writer of Haggai provides the post-exilic remnant "with a confession of their *unresponsiveness* to renew covenant fellowship."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ronald Webster Pierce, "The Unresponsive Remnant: History, Structure and Theme in Haggai" (Ph.D dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1984), 60.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 138.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 145-155.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 155-175.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 179-183.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 199.

Omar Carena's study of the remnant motif has five principal sections.<sup>1</sup> The Introduction briefly canvasses the scholarly literature with emphasis on the contributions of W. E. Müller and Hasel.<sup>2</sup>

Chapter 1 presents the Akkadian words for "remnant" and how they are used in the El-Amarna tablets. Further, ninety-seven quotations from the Assyrian royal inscriptions where the word "remnant" (*sittu, rihtu*) occurs are given.<sup>3</sup>

Chapter 2 analyzes the content of the preceding chapter.<sup>4</sup> Carena contends that the "remnant" can be applied only to enemies and their possessions. This remnant is cowardly, incapable of self-defense, and fleeing in vain. While it represents a political, military, or demographic entity, it is mostly political. It is a negative category that expresses comprehensive defeat by the Assyrians.

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<sup>1</sup>Omar Carena, *Il resto di Israele: Studio storico-comparativo delle iscrizioni reali assire e dei testi profetici sul tema del resto*, Associazione Biblica Italiana, Supplementi alla Rivista Biblica 13 (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1985). This title may be somewhat misleading since the author does not really present the theme of the remnant as much as he gives a proposal for its origins.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 11-19. W. E. Müller, "Die Vorstellung vom Rest im Alten Testament," Inaugural dissertation; Theologische Fakultät, Universität Leipzig (Borsdorf-Leipzig: W. Hoppe, 1939), is praised for being the groundbreaker in developing the political origin of the remnant; Hasel, "Origin and Early History," is praised for being so diligent in his exegetical details of remnant passages in Isaiah.

<sup>3</sup>Carena, 21-44.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 45-55.

Chapter 3 considers the data in the following biblical passages: Amos 5:14-15; 9:7-10; Isa. 4:2-3; 10:20-23; 11:11-16; 28:1-6; 37:30-32; and Mic 5:6-8.<sup>1</sup>

Chapter 4 provides some psychological and sociological comments, while also giving some historical and linguistic parallels (present in other cultures) to the biblical development of the concept.<sup>2</sup> He recognizes, however, that these parallels may be artificial since they do not really fit the Israelite situation.<sup>3</sup>

Carena's conclusion insists that the concept of the remnant originated in a politico-military context. However, the Hebrew prophets took this denigrating term and invested it with a new and positive sense.<sup>4</sup>

Seock-Tae Sohn's 1986 dissertation links the remnant and the election motifs.<sup>5</sup> He maintains that since Yahweh will not permanently reject or utterly

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 55-77. He argues that these are all pre-exilic. Amos depicts the remnant as those who survived the fall of Samaria (which he probably witnessed) and who formed the basis of a new people. Isaiah deepens this idea although some of his passages use the remnant in the usual Assyrian way. Micah sees the fate of Jerusalem as sealed for destruction. But a remnant will survive that is able to defend itself and even defeat the enemy.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 79-86. Carena provides a similar treatment in a later work. See Omar Carena, "L'idea del 'resto' come rivendicazione morale nei confronti del potere conquistatore," in *La storiografia della Bibbia*, ed. G. L. Prato, J. A. Soggin, and R. Gelio (Bologna: Edizioni Dehoniane, 1986), 53-64.

<sup>3</sup>Carena, *Il resto di Israele*, 86.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 87, 88.

<sup>5</sup>Seock-Tae Sohn, "The Divine Election of Israel" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1986). Election is an exclusive relationship between God and Israel, best expressed in metaphors borrowed from the organic social and cultural context of the biblical community: family relationships (husband-wife; father-son), social and political institutions (warrior-army; master-servant), nomadic (shepherd-sheep), agricultural (farmer-vineyard), and industrial (potter-clay) settings in life.

destroy Israel, "there will be a Remnant through whom Restoration of Israel will occur."<sup>1</sup> Expressions like *šʔr*, *hml*, *pūs*, *klh*, *šārīd*, *ytr*, and *plt* indicate the remnant motif, but these are operative only in the context of war. Therefore, the remnant designates escapees of Yahweh's war against Israel.<sup>2</sup>

Depending largely on Isaiah, Sohn concludes that the imagery of the remnant is very limited but that it bridges "the gap between Rejection and Restoration."<sup>3</sup>

Following Mowinckel's and Hertrich's distinctions, Antii Laato says that Isaiah's remnant motif denotes a group of people left over after the execution of Yahweh's judgment.<sup>4</sup> Laato's conclusions are two-fold: (1) the remnant motif is earlier than Isaiah; and (2) this remnant emerges from Yahweh's judgments as a purified and faithful group that would give regeneration to the nation.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 276.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 279.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 282.

<sup>4</sup>Antii Laato, *Who Is Immanuel? The Rise and Foundering of Isaiah's Messianic Expectations* (Åbo: Åbo Academy Press, 1988). He identifies a three-step process: (1) the people transgress against God and anger Him; (2) He destroys the godless people; (3) God spares a remnant which is the beginning of a new future, a spark of joy and hope.

<sup>5</sup>Antii Laato, "Immanuel--Who Is with Us?--Hezekiah or Messiah?" in *Wünschet Jerusalem Frieden*, ed. M. Augustin and Klaus-Dietrich Schunk (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1988), 313-322.

### Summary

Several studies concentrated largely on the origin of the remnant motif, connecting it with the rise of ethical monotheism (Meinhold), eschatology (Gressmann, Dittmann, Hertrich), mythology (Mowinkel), election traditions (Rowley, Sohn), or politico-military actions (Carena). Indeed, there is no *communis opinio* among them. However, Hasel's monumental dissertation and later work convincingly demonstrate that the remnant motif antedated its appearance in the Hebrew Bible. It was concerned with the existential question of the preservation and continuity of life in the face of a variety of mortal threats. In the Hebrew Bible, however, the remnant motif is enveloped in the dual aspects of doom and hope, *unheil* and *heil*. Other studies have focused largely on individual books, with most attention devoted to the book of Isaiah (Dreyfus, Hoshizaki, Blank, Stegemann, Graham, Rice, and others).

### Remnant Studies within the Book of Jeremiah

Othmar Schilling's discussion of the remnant in the prophets of the OT is divided into linguistic, historical, and theological parts.<sup>1</sup> He holds that the remnant motif originated and developed from Israel's election tradition.

Schilling investigates the remnant motif in the book of Jeremiah according to the historical events embodied in five sections of the book. The first considers speeches about disaster coming from Babylon (chaps. 2-23). Jeremiah remonstrates

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<sup>1</sup>Othmar Schilling, "'Rest' in der Prophetie des Alten Testaments" (Inaugural dissertation, University of Münster, 1942).

against the people's idea of unconditional salvation because of the presence of the temple. He deliberately speaks of the remnant as an object of judgment, the residue of a disaster.<sup>1</sup> But Jeremiah was also familiar with the conditionality of Yahweh's threats; therefore, he spoke positively of a remnant that will be saved on the basis of their trust in Yahweh.<sup>2</sup> There is salvation, which means homecoming for the exiles, dependent on moral aspects. It is not a political entity.

The second section deals with texts related to the conquest of Jerusalem (chaps. 24-29; 34-39; 52). The existential question of the survivors considers which of the two groups is the promised remnant: That in Jerusalem or that in Babylon? Judging from the vision of the figs (chap. 24) and Jeremiah's letter (chap. 29), the exiles constitute the true remnant, the bearers of the promise. Those left in Jerusalem were seen as "a profane leftover" in the eyes of the prophet.<sup>3</sup>

The third division considers chaps. 40-44, where the "remnant" are those left over in the home country under Gedaliah's leadership. This again affirms that the promises were bound to the exiles. It was precisely to remove the promise from the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 96. Schilling says that since the people did not fear judgment, the idea of the remnant sounded as a promise to them, as to the people in Amos. Jeremiah had to dampen this sound. Therefore, he took over an old formula.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 97, 98.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 102. Schilling holds that the dichotomy of judgment/salvation in the vision of the figs shows that the prophet preserves the concept of election on the one hand, but disconnects it from the national existence as a people, on the other hand. Yet the rejection as a national community did not imply the rejection of their religious mission. Hence, the remnant has a religious and not a political meaning.

home country that the discipline of the disaster occurred.<sup>1</sup> Those left behind were "splinters of a nation." The remnant are not those left behind after an outward historical fact, but a religiously chosen community where Yahweh's thoughts are accomplished.<sup>2</sup>

In the fourth section, chaps. 30-33, Schilling deals with the idea of the remnant in future prospects. These chapters presuppose the exile and look into the distant future. They connect the "remnant," which is a large non-political unit, with the proclamation of the Day of the Lord, where the people of Jacob will be chastened. Thus, "the remnant is a fruit of this punishment and this ethical divorce."<sup>3</sup> The remnant is not the nation, yet it is characterized as such, because religious ideas have always been viewed from a community perspective. Therefore, the remnant became a community idea, which rests on an ethical basis and has a religious task.<sup>4</sup>

Schilling's final section deals with the remnant among the Gentiles in chaps. 46-51. He has little to say except that some nations are doomed, while for

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. Schilling observes that the idea of the remnant was very strong but flowed in two streams: one among the people, which held a positive notion that Israel as a whole would emerge from any disaster; the other from prophecy which takes up a negative notion. The element of Yahweh's election is common to both, but prophecy is different as far as requirements and concrete expectations are concerned.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 102, 103. Schilling realizes that the exiles were not a selection of pious people, but their salvation had a religious purpose and not a national one. Nonetheless, the stress in Jeremiah is that the exiles constitute the true remnant.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 104.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 105.

others there is a fortunate change. By this, Jeremiah has broken the national limits of future salvation.<sup>1</sup>

One is not totally satisfied with Schilling's work on several fronts:

1. He does not deal with the wide plethora of remnant terms in the book of Jeremiah.

2. In dealing with the duality of judgment and salvation, he presents an imbalanced view in that he emphasizes the former much more than the latter.

3. His treatment of the remnant among the foreign nations is superficial.

4. By connecting the remnant with election, he fails to see that this motif is older than Israel's election traditions; hence, his discussion is limited.

5. He claims that the remnant community has a religious task but does not describe this task.

Salvatore Garofalo's dissertation comes in two parts.<sup>2</sup> The first deals with the remnant motif in the prophets of the Northern (Elijah, Amos, and Hosea) and Southern (Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah, Obadiah, and Jonah) Kingdoms. The second deals with the theology of the "remnant of Israel." Like Schilling, it is asserted that the remnant motif originated in the Israelite election tradition.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Salvatore Garofalo, *La nozione profetica del 'Resto d'Israele': Contributo alla teologia del Vecchio Testamento* (Lateranum, N.S. An. viii N. 1-4 (Rome: Facultas Theologica Pontificii Athenaei Lateranensis, 1942).

Regarding the remnant motif in the book of Jeremiah,<sup>1</sup> Garofalo asserts that Jeremiah was an object of special election before he was born.<sup>2</sup> This allowed him to fearlessly face the people as he spoke scathing invectives of judgment against them because of their infidelity to Yahweh and their refusal to repent. They would be punished with "total destruction."<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, the vision of chap. 24 indicates that "the hope of the future is founded on the exiles."<sup>4</sup> The letter of chap. 29 strengthens this, for after seventy years whereby Yahweh will purify the people through the instrument of the exile, He will accomplish the project of peace through the act of restoration.<sup>5</sup> The small remnant in the exile will be multiplied by the divine benediction<sup>6</sup> and will have new pastors and a shepherd *par excellence*, the agent of this restoration, the Messiah.<sup>7</sup> This restoration would be so great that it would make the liberation of the people from Egypt look dim.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 117-139.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 117.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 121. The author says that Jeremiah underlined the severity of the destruction by the repetition of the idea of "total destruction" in Jer 4:27; 5:10, 18.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 126. The people who remained in Judah would not be healed and are described as "small, vulgar, and infested with the practices of idolatry."

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 128. Jeremiah gives a sign of this hope for future restoration by buying the field in Anathoth.

<sup>6</sup>This divine benediction is conceived in terms of the blessing of God in fruitfulness.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 134, 135.

Garofalo is firm that the restoration is a consequence of the election that God made of the descendants of Abraham.<sup>1</sup> As such, God will make a new covenant with the elect people that will not be written in stone as at Sinai, but will be written on the heart.<sup>2</sup> Beyond this, Jerusalem will have not only the glory of the new elected people, but also the coming of pagan people who will congregate with Israel and find salvation.<sup>3</sup>

Garofalo's discussion is hampered by the vast rehearsal of historical detail such that the remnant motif becomes hidden. Further, like Schilling, he appears not to pay adequate attention to the outstanding number of references to the remnant motif in the book of Jeremiah. Consideration is given to the derivatives of  $\text{š}^{\text{D}}r$ , while other terms are largely ignored. Finally, Garofalo regards the priestly function of the Messiah as central in the restoration of the people.<sup>4</sup> However, he makes this assertion without giving authoritative evidence. The same may be said of his link between the remnant and the new covenant.

Thomas Burton Roth's thesis intends "to set forth in a systematic manner the leading of the Old Testament relative to the remnant of Israel."<sup>5</sup> He employs a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 135.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 135-136. This institutes a new epoch, says Garofalo, which will be characterized by an intimate action of more intensive grace that will illuminate and purify the new faithful ones of God in spirit and truth, and Israel will be eternal.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 128, 129, 137.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 134.

<sup>5</sup>Thomas Burton Roth, "The Old Testament Doctrine of the Remnant of Israel" (M.Th. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1949), 6.

technical usage of the term "remnant" to designate "a smaller spiritual group as distinguished from a larger group."<sup>1</sup> He connects the remnant idea with the covenants, messianic hope, Israel's world-wide mission, and the character of God.

Roth first connects Jeremiah with the remnant by noting a definite link between the remnant idea and the New Covenant of Jer 31:31-34. He contends that the Abrahamic, Palestinian, and Davidic covenants guarantee the continued existence of Israel as a nation through the medium of the remnant. However, Israel will be established in the land only under the New Covenant, since all the other covenants failed in this respect.<sup>2</sup> The remnant is described as "faithful" and "unwavering" despite trying circumstances. These alone "through divine provision and preservation [will be] a spiritual group who maintains the continuity of the nation as a whole."<sup>3</sup>

Roth then describes the remnant as found in Jer 37-44. He indicates that both the deportees and those left in the land of Judah are the remnant, for both are the survivors of the destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup> He concentrates his attention on the latter group, describing them as evil in character as witnessed by their self-will, unbelief and idolatry.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 3. He comes to this definitive statement after a brief study of the Hebrew words used for the term "remnant." He adds that Scripture also speaks of a remnant within a remnant.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 20. However, both groups are not qualified spiritually either as good or bad.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 22.

In his fourth and lengthy chapter, "The Remnant of Prophecy," Roth connects statements from the book of Jeremiah with the restoration of Israel.<sup>1</sup> Although he merely identifies the passages, without any commentary, Roth later finds the foundation upon which restoration lies as the remnant in whom God has effected a change of heart and had given the New Covenant. Thus, "the remnant are the means used of God to perform His Word."<sup>2</sup>

Roth's work is not without its problems. First, his definition of "the technical use [of] remnant to describe a smaller spiritual group as distinguished from a larger group"<sup>3</sup> is too narrow. This does not recognize the threat to physical life and the possibility of personal, national, and political destruction. Second, he ignores the presence of the remnant within the context of judgment and salvation. He misses this for the OT at large and the book of Jeremiah in particular. Third, Roth is one-sided in that, while he considers both the exiles and those left in the land as the remnant, he speaks almost exclusively of the latter group without discussing the former.

E. W. Heaton examined the meaning of the root  $\text{š}^{\text{r}}$  in connection with the so-called "prophetic doctrine of the Remnant."<sup>4</sup> While he acknowledges other words

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 35-36. Passages include: Jer 32:37-40; 36:24-25; 31:7-9.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 63.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>4</sup>E. W. Heaton, "The Root  $\text{š}^{\text{r}}$  and the Doctrine of the Remnant," *JTS* 3 (1952): 27. Heaton protests against the use of the word "doctrine" because there was no real measure of the prophets deliberately teaching such a view.

that denote the remnant, Heaton is strong that if by "remnant" the prophet meant the hope for Israel's future, then only the root  $\text{š}^{\text{r}}$  is employed in this connection.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, "the basic meaning of the root  $\text{š}^{\text{r}}$  is to remain or be left over from a larger quantity which has in some way been disposed of."<sup>2</sup>

Heaton begins his review of this root in the prophetic tradition with the book of Jeremiah, "because it is he who makes the most extensive use of it."<sup>3</sup> By and large, derivatives of this root refer simply to the residue of people left in Jerusalem after the deportations of 597 B.C. and 586 B.C. Further, the deportees "who did raise the prophet's hopes and represent for him the true Israel of the future, is described in terms of *glh* and not of  $\text{š}^{\text{r}}$ ."<sup>4</sup>

Heaton expresses skepticism about the Jeremianic provenance of those passages where the root  $\text{š}^{\text{r}}$  functions in a context of hope.<sup>5</sup> He concludes that this root does not have a special, technical usage.<sup>6</sup>

Heaton's study is limited because of his claim that the prophets used only the root  $\text{š}^{\text{r}}$  to describe the remnant. In this regard, he has overlooked the significant

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 28, 29. For the most part, this residual portion is of less importance than the part from which it was taken. The root, therefore, directs attention, "not forwards to the residue, but backwards to the whole of which it had been a part and to the devastation and loss by which it had been brought into being."

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 30. These are Jer 23:3; 31:7; and 50:20.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 30.

number of other terms that the prophet Jeremiah employed to describe the remnant. Further, Heaton is too quick to dismiss as unauthentic those texts where the root has a positive function. He provides no reason for his rejection of these texts except that this is the opinion of some scholars.

D. M. Warne purposed "to investigate the place of the Remnant in the development of the Hebrew religion, with regard to both the secular and theological uses of the concept."<sup>1</sup> He believes that the origin of the remnant idea is closely connected with the origin of eschatology.<sup>2</sup>

In his extensive "development" of the motif, he considers the book of Jeremiah. He realizes "the alternating scheme of disaster and salvation"<sup>3</sup> (already found in prophets preceding Jeremiah) being evident from the very call of Jeremiah (1:10).<sup>4</sup> However, the idea of promise did not occupy a large part of the prophet's attention at the beginning of his public ministry. This is because he was so insistent on the urgent message of impending doom that he did not want "his message [to] be

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<sup>1</sup>D. M. Warne, "The Origin, Development and Significance of the Concept of the Remnant in the Old Testament" (Ph.D. dissertation, Faculty of Divinity, University of Edinburgh, 1958), i.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 44.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 109. He sees Jeremiah as using some of the strongest language for judgment among the OT prophets. However, salvation is most vivid where the keyword *šûbh* is used, seeking the people's repentance.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 110-112. Jeremiah realized that to be God's prophet, he had to proclaim both judgment and grace.

blunted by false hopes engendered by the term 'remnant,'"<sup>1</sup> a term that he uses sparingly.<sup>2</sup>

Warne maintains that both the exiles and those who were left in Judah constitute the remnant.<sup>3</sup> However, he pays more attention to the latter group, insisting that Jeremiah had to fight their concept of the inviolability of the temple and their ready access to God as can be seen in the temple address of chap. 7.

For Warne, chap. 24 best indicates the purpose of Jeremiah's prophecies and provides a contrast in the fate allotted to two sections of Judaism: the exiles and those remaining in the land.<sup>4</sup> In any case, God was at work, both in judgment<sup>5</sup> and in restoration.

Warne's study leads to several unresolved questions:

1. What is the meaning of the "secular" and "theological" remnant groups specifically in the context of Jeremiah? This distinction seems rather artificial and one is forced to wonder if the prophet did indeed make such claims.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 113. Cf. A. C. Welch, *Jeremiah: His Time and His Work*, reprint ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955), 216; John Bright, *The Kingdom of God* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953), 122; and W. Vischer, "The Vocation of the Prophet to the Nations," *Int* 9 (1955): 315.

<sup>2</sup>Warne, 113, 115, 118.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 116, 117.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 115, 116.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 116. The prophet came in order to strip the people of their false securities in the land and temple and call them to rely on the mercy of God. This had happened for the exiles who had their illusions shattered by being uprooted and sent into captivity. In reality, they came closer to God.

2. If both the exiles and those remaining in the land constitute the remnant, what marks or characteristics distinguish one from the other?

3. In light of the fact that Jeremiah uses remnant terms sixty-eight times, how can Warne justify his claim that the prophet uses the thought and concept of the remnant but is sparing in adopting the term?<sup>1</sup>

John C. Nevius sets out to study the remnant "in its historical and eschatological sense."<sup>2</sup> A brief introduction is followed by the body of the work divided into three parts: the early development of the remnant concept (Noah, Joseph, Elijah); further development of the concept (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Cyrus); and Paul and the remnant concept.

In considering Jeremiah, Nevius looks only at those who were left behind after the Babylonian invasion. They were not the ideal of a godly people. Indeed, they were impoverished, disobedient, and only a "pseudo-remnant."<sup>3</sup> The "authentic remnant" were those who came out of Babylonian captivity after seventy years (Jer 25:11).<sup>4</sup>

Nevius recognizes the judgment/salvation scheme (though he refuses to use the language this closely) and views "the return of the remnant . . . as an act of God

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 113. A clue may be found in that Warne sees the term "remnant" only in a positive light.

<sup>2</sup>John C. Nevius, "The Doctrine of the Remnant in the Scriptures" (M.Div. Thesis, Ashland Theological Seminary, 1970), 2.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 20, 23.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 23.

in the continuing history of Israel."<sup>1</sup> The key figure for this providential restoration was Cyrus, King of Persia. Nevius sees this restored remnant as characterized by: (1) obedience to God and his prophets; (2) trust in the Lord; and (3) a willingness to work for the Lord. However, he does not develop these factors.

This work is not without shortcomings:

1. Nevius refuses to define the word "remnant." Except for the idea of those "who have been left behind," as is intimated several times, we are not sure of how he intends for it to be understood.

2. He disregards the vocabulary of the remnant in the book of Jeremiah and for that matter in the entire OT.

3. While he determined to explore the idea in its "historical and eschatological sense," he does not even hint at these as he examines the material in the book of Jeremiah.

Roland de Vaux is clear that despite the vengeance of God on a guilty Israel, a remnant will be spared, who, "purified by trials and sanctified by a new covenant, will in the end be heir to the Messianic promises."<sup>2</sup> After examining

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 25.

<sup>2</sup>Roland de Vaux, "'The Remnant of Israel' According to the Prophets," in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, trans. Damian McHugh (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1971), 15.

remnant terminology,<sup>1</sup> deVaux concludes that "the Remnant is that part of the Chosen People which is spared after God's chastisement."<sup>2</sup>

Like the prophets before him (Amos, Micah, and Isaiah),<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah believed "that God will spare a Remnant."<sup>4</sup> However, Jeremiah displaced the popular sentiment that it was the survivors, those who remained in the land, boosted by the presence of the temple and false prophets advocating foreign alliances, who constituted the remnant. For Jeremiah, the true remnant were the exiles in Babylon whom God would lead back to the Promised Land.<sup>5</sup>

Although the remnant implies the idea of smallness, it holds the element of hope, assured of divine favor. This leads de Vaux to conclude: "From the beginning to the end, the Remnant is a bridge linking the threat of punishment with the promise of restoration."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Though his terminological studies are limited, de Vaux is to be credited as the first scholar to take etymological considerations of major roots connected with the remnant concept.

<sup>2</sup>de Vaux, "'The Remnant of Israel'," 17. This implies mercy and hope.

<sup>3</sup>While the genesis of the remnant notion occurred long before the prophets, de Vaux recognizes three stages in the prophetic development of the concept: (1) the pre-exilic period where the stress is on the minuscule nature of those left behind in Palestine; (2) the exilic period where the remnant consists of the deportees; (3) the post-exilic period with the returnees under Ezra's leadership.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 26, "This promised return meant that God had forgiven the Remnant of his people, that he had blotted out their sin and given them a heart to know him."

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 28.

Limited by space, de Vaux could not be comprehensive in his exploration of the remnant motif in Jeremiah, but two glaring omissions have hampered his decisions:

1. His definition of the remnant as merely those who were spared divine wrath seems to be too narrow and restrictive. It does not appreciate the wide scope of national and political disaster described in the book of Jeremiah in the context of the remnant motif.

2. He does not fully account for the widespread use of remnant terminology in the book of Jeremiah. Hence, the fullness of the motif is not underscored.

The 1973 revision of W. E. Müller's 1939 dissertation by H. D. Preuss is divided into two main sections.<sup>1</sup> The first considers "the political meaning of the remnant for a people" in the war annals of the Hittites, Egyptians, and Assyrians and in the OT.<sup>2</sup> The remnant, defined as the surviving stock of an assemblage of people, whether they are a family, tribe, city, people or army,<sup>3</sup> has a socio-political

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<sup>1</sup>In this edition: (1) the original text remained intact; (2) new literature is referred to in square brackets; (3) a survey of more recent literature is added (pp. 96-126); (4) an updated bibliography is added (pp. 127-134).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 13-46. Hasel, "Origin and Early History," 21, 22, has criticized this view as being too restricted and untenable in light of further research in a wider variety of genres of literature from the ANE. Recognizing this, Preuss, 114, says in his appendix, "In view of the amount and variety of (new) materials [from the ancient Near East] which Hasel has brought together and interpreted, the thesis of Müller of an original military-political filling of the remnant idea and the conclusions based on them will have to be anew and critically scrutinized."

<sup>3</sup>Müller/Preuss, 13.

description from the Assyrian strategy of total annihilation of the enemy in warfare.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the remnant represents the carrier of national existence, the symbol of continuing life, both for a nation and for the individual.<sup>2</sup>

The second part of the study examines the meaning of the remnant within the religious thought world of the OT.<sup>3</sup> The prophet Jeremiah is included in the section considering the further development and remolding of the remnant from the seventh century to the Exile.

Following the "secular-profane" and "theological" distinctions, Müller and Preuss hold that Jeremiah was familiar with the former (11:18ff). The question is with the theological usage. The attempted answer addresses the call for repentance by the people *in toto*, but the prophet realizes this to be impossible. Therefore, he proclaims a relentless judgment of complete destruction in light of Judah's sins and their refusal to repent.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, "there is no hopeful assessment in terms of a remnant."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 26, 35. Israel is familiar with the demand of total destruction, but carries this out only in regard to the Canaanites. The nascence of a remnant occurs, as with the Assyrians, as a breakdown of the principle of total destruction.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 41, 42.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 47-92. It is immediately indicated that: (1) the concept of the remnant is as old as that of total warfare, but its exact age cannot be determined; (2) the theological contents of the remnant concept are largely determined by political usage; (3) the remnant concept is an important theologumenon in the OT.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 76. Here Jeremiah supposedly follows Amos, Isaiah, and Zephaniah.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 78. Several punitive measures (sword, pestilence, etc.) point to complete destruction. Indeed, scattering implies a remnant, that is, those who are left over. But the sword will pursue them so relentlessly that this remnant will prefer

In discussing the vision of the two baskets of figs (chap. 24) the remnant in the homeland is seen as absolutely meaningless.<sup>1</sup> Those left after 597 B.C. would experience a second judgment. Those left after 587 B.C. were the "lower people" (*hā<sup>c</sup>am dāllīm*), a religiously unstable, morally decayed mass. But this does not mean that the exiles become the remnant. This position is held because Jeremiah never describes the *gōlāh* as *š<sup>ᶜ</sup>ērīt*, but puts it as *gālūt y<sup>f</sup>hūdāh*, in sharp contrast to the *š<sup>ᶜ</sup>ērīt y<sup>f</sup>rūsālam*. He thus drops the term remnant and the hope connected with it.<sup>2</sup> However, the *gālūt y<sup>f</sup>hūdāh* substitutes for the remnant. The remnant in Jerusalem-Judah can no longer be considered as a people. Thus the name Judah is passed on to the *gālūt*. At the same time Jeremiah seems to have consciously transferred all the expectations to the *gōlāh* that had been thus far attributed to the remnant as bearer and sustainer of the existence of the people. The *gōlāh* would acquire the knowledge of Yahweh and be His people; He will be their God. This is the real new message of Jeremiah.<sup>3</sup>

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death to life. In fact, Müller and Preuss see several passages as forthrightly rejecting the thought of a remnant. The remnant, therefore, is not the linking bridge between damnation and salvation.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 79. It is noted that there is truth in the emphasis of the importance of the Palestinian remnant in the formation of Judaism. But this cannot be based on Jer 24.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 80.

This study has some problems. Hasel has already addressed the difficulties with the "secular-profane" and "theological" distinctions.<sup>1</sup> Also, Müller and Preuss go too far in asserting that there is an abandonment of the remnant idea in favor of God's new formation of a people from a new germ cell. While it is true that the *gōlāh* are not described as the *šē'ērīt*, they become the bearers of the promise as Müller and Preuss acknowledge.<sup>2</sup> Hence, they are indeed the remnant. Further, consideration of the remnant concept is given only to the expression *šē'ērīt* while ignoring the wide plethora of remnant terms in the book. Finally, by dating all remnant passages to the exilic period,<sup>3</sup> Müller and Preuss have effectively placed the positive view of the remnant beyond the scope of the prophet Jeremiah.

Michael A. Braun defines the remnant as "a group remaining from a larger group."<sup>4</sup> He declares that "the remnant concept . . . furnishes a key to the problems of structure in Jeremiah."<sup>5</sup> Braun attempts to defend this by discussing the historical features of the book, which he divides into two sections: chaps. 1-24 and 25-52. He concludes that the first section presents the remnant theme as a mirror of hope in staying the judgment of God. However, it ends with the abandonment of all hope of

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<sup>1</sup>Hasel, "Origin and Early History," 21, 22.

<sup>2</sup>Müller and Preuss, 80.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 78, n. 196.

<sup>4</sup>Michael A. Braun, "The Doctrine of the Remnant Prior to the New Testament" (M.Th. thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1976), 3. As a technical expression in the OT, Braun says "that the remnant is strictly Jewish in composition."

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 48.

avoiding captivity. The second section reflects hope, in that, after the judgment, the remnant shall return to the land to enjoy a "New Covenant."<sup>1</sup>

Jeremiah proclaimed national judgment because of a violation of the Mosaic covenant, but salvation is promised on the basis of the New Covenant (Jer 31).<sup>2</sup> To be sure, a remnant would return on the basis of the Mosaic covenant.<sup>3</sup> This comprised those who returned in Ezra's time.<sup>4</sup> However, on the basis of Jer 3:14-18, 23:3-6, 24:6-7 and 32:37-41, Braun denotes that the prophet saw an eschatological remnant, grounded in the New Covenant, "who will enter the land of Palestine to await the Messiah and serve him in the latter days."<sup>5</sup>

Braun concludes that Jeremiah, like Isaiah, had three remnant categories: (1) a contemporary remnant, a righteous body of worshippers of Yahweh in a wicked day (Jeremiah himself is included here); (2) the exilic remnant, who entered captivity and returned with Ezra and Nehemiah; and (3) the eschatological remnant.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 53.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 54. Jeremiah is depicted as the prophet in transition between the Mosaic and the New covenants.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 55. Without outlining any criteria, Braun arbitrarily assigns the prophecies of Jer 4:27; 12:14-17; 16:13-15; 25:11-12 to the Mosaic covenant.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 56.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 61.

Besides showing his unfamiliarity with the scholarly material,<sup>1</sup> Braun has undertaken a task that is too large, investigating the motif in the entire OT *and* the Intertestamental literature, plus implications for NT thought. More directly related to Jeremiah, his division of the book into two sections is too simplistic and here again, he ignores the scholarly debate. His assignments are arbitrary and follow no recognizable criteria. Further, he fails to deal adequately with the exegeting of numerous passages that speak of the remnant in the book. He ignores the remnant terminology of the book. More significantly, Braun does not demonstrate his claim that the remnant theme serves as an answer to the problem of structure in the book of Jeremiah. While he attempts this marginally with his first section, he dismisses it altogether in the second and advises that all questions on this can be referred to his appended outline.<sup>2</sup> Finally, because he dictates the biblical data into the confines of dispensational theology, he is forced to place the eschatological remnant into a geo-political category.

Thomas M. Raitt enters the discussion of the remnant motif in his examination of judgment/deliverance in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Israel's theological reaction to the exile.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For example, while Hasel's book, *The Remnant*, is listed in the bibliography, it is surprising that Braun ignores insights and contributions especially in the sections dealing with the prophets Amos and Isaiah.

<sup>2</sup>Braun, 54.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas M. Raitt, *A Theology of Exile: Judgment/Deliverance in Jeremiah and Ezekiel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977).

Recognizing the doom/salvation tension in the book of Jeremiah,<sup>1</sup> Raitt's basic tenet is that the messages of doom and salvation carry distinct and totally different speech forms.

The Oracle of Judgment has a two-fold structure: the *Accusation*, which informs why a future action of God's judgment is imminent; and the *Proclamation*, which shows the consequence of that judgment. These two parts form an essential unity that is "rooted in the justice of God."<sup>2</sup> Within this context, there is a prophetic summons to repentance,<sup>3</sup> which, if refused, leads to rejection.<sup>4</sup>

The shift from doom to salvation has this sequence: prophetic threats of divine judgment; actual historical catastrophe interpreted as God's punishment; and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 3. He insists that Jeremiah and Ezekiel must be studied together in order to get the full dimension of the radical character of their judgment and deliverance preaching as the political and cultic life of Judah collapsed around them. Raitt opposes those scholars who take both doom and salvation preaching as motifs which belong together, as matched halves of one whole organism. See Hugo Gressmann, *Der Messias* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1929); Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 125-154; I. Engnell, *A Rigid Scrutiny: Critical Essays on the Old Testament*, trans. and ed. John T. Willis (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969), 123-179. For a criticism of these positions, see Johannes Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), 316-319. Others who have dealt with the issue of doom/salvation are T. C. Vriezen, *The Religion of Ancient Israel*, trans. H. Hoskins (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 247-248; Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 51-61.

<sup>2</sup>Raitt, 16.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 36, 37. Raitt says that the people could be judged for a failure to repent only if they were called to repentance earlier.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 62. This rejection deals with the temple, with David and the Mosaic covenant, traditions on which the hope of security existed. It also means personal rejection in the relationship between Yahweh and His people.

prophetic promises of God's merciful deliverance.<sup>1</sup> This sequence introduces the Oracle of Deliverance, which is characterized by God's intervention to deliver His people from Exile; God effecting a transformation; and God reinitiating a relationship with His people.<sup>2</sup>

It is within this tension of judgment and salvation that Raitt declares:

Allied with these motifs also is the gloomy depiction of the remnant hope in Jer 6:9; 8:3; 15:9; Ezek 5:10; 9:8; 11:13; 23:15. Although the significance of the remnant belief in Isaiah, as in all prophets, has been greatly exaggerated, it certainly underlines the shift . . . between Isaiah and Jeremiah-Ezekiel, that *the latter two either explicitly deny a remnant hope or put it in a context which effectively does the same thing.*<sup>3</sup>

Raitt is bold in summarily dismissing any hope of a remnant. He sees any idea of such hope as the work of a later editor. He further denies such remnant hope by indicating that judgment is qualified if it is promised that a remnant will be exempt from judgment or continue through judgment. But it is not qualified if, after the judgment when God begins His saving activity, it is said that He will save a remnant of His people.<sup>4</sup>

Raitt's work is not without problems. He has ignored the wide plethora of texts dealing with the remnant motif. He cites only three: Jer 6:9; 8:3; 15:9, and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 113. Raitt discusses six pivotal pericopes in Jeremiah that depict this shift: 24:7-9; 29:4-7, 10-14; 32:6-15, 42-44; 31:31-34; 32:36-41; 33:6-9.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 130-136; Thomas M. Raitt, "Jeremiah's Deliverance Message to Judah," in *Rhetorical Criticism: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg*, ed. J. J. Jackson and M. Kessler (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1974), 166-185.

<sup>3</sup>Raitt, *A Theology of Exile*, 50 (emphasis mine).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 243, n. 17.

comes to a radical conclusion that debases the significance of the remnant concept for the prophet. Further, by placing the deliverance motif into just six pericopes, Raitt is forced to ignore the wider corpus of texts that speak about the remnant directly. It is also strange that Raitt speaks about judgment but overlooks those passages that denote the remnant in the context of judgment. Finally, by merely accepting the conclusions of others who deny the authenticity of texts that speak of the remnant in a positive light of deliverance and restoration,<sup>1</sup> Raitt shows some irresponsibility.

Ralph W. Klein indicates that the Exile brought tremendous theological problems to the people of Judah: the destruction of the temple as a visible sign of the removal of their election status; the end of the Davidic dynasty; and the ravishing of the land as a sign of the culmination of their patriarchal traditions.<sup>2</sup> Klein attempts to answer the query: Which was the way out of or beyond the exile?<sup>3</sup>

Regarding Jeremiah, Klein acknowledges that the judgment of the exile was invoked by Yahweh because of the people's rebellion.<sup>4</sup> Those who were left behind

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. This is what he does with Jer 23:3 and 31:7, following Hyatt, 988; and Wilhelm Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 3d. ed., HKAT 12 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1968), xvii.

<sup>2</sup>Ralph W. Klein, *Israel in Exile: A Theological Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 3-5. He dates the Exile between 597 B.C. (with the first wave of deportees) and 539 B.C. (with the fall of Babylon).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 50, 59, 62. The people's perfidy was a violation of the covenant, thus meriting destruction.

in Judah he calls the "Palestinian remnant" or the "remnant in Jerusalem."<sup>1</sup> However, he never designates those in captivity as the "remnant."

Klein uses an approach of redaction criticism<sup>2</sup> that allows him to make distinctions between a Deuteronomistic redaction of Jeremiah (D) and the "historical Jeremiah."<sup>3</sup> As such, he allows for a hopeful future for those who remained in Judah by way of the prophet's attempt to purchase the field at Anathoth (32:15), his polemic against the flight to Egypt (42:17; 43:8-12), and his refusal to accept the offer of amnesty in Babylon (40:4-6).<sup>4</sup> However, Jeremiah rejected any hope of return for the exiles (29:4-7).<sup>5</sup> It was D who provided such a hope (23:1-8; 24:6-7; 29:10-14; 32:37-41), with the New Covenant given focal attention.<sup>6</sup>

Klein concludes that both Jeremiah and D said "YES" to the Exile in light of God's action. But both also said "NO."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 2, 3, 49, 59.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 44.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 63, 67. The person or persons who edited Jeremiah's words (D), operated some 30 years or more after the prophet was forced to go to Egypt. The assignment of these editors was to justify God's governance of Israel, in part, but also to lay out new options both for those in the land and especially for those in exile.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 62, 63.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 50.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 62-66.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 68. "Jeremiah's was a limited no, predicated on God's passing anger and clinging to the hope that there would yet be land to sell and a real king. D's was a fuller no to the Exile, with promises of a new exodus, a new taking of the land, a new covenant, and even a new hope for the nations."

Klein's work is flawed because he recognizes only a "Palestinian remnant." Further, by ignoring those texts which speak of the remnant in the context of destruction and the exile, he provides insufficient evidence of how the role of the remnant in exile provides a way out of or beyond the exile. Finally, by not defining the word "remnant," one is forced to understand Klein's use of the term in a rather narrow and restrictive sense as those who were left behind in Judah after the Babylonian invasion.

In his investigations of the remnant theme, R. E. Clements enjoins that the remnant demonstrates the salvific action and grace of God.<sup>1</sup> He considers two major factors: (1) the origin of the concept and (2) the lifting of the idea from an *ad hoc* interpretation of a unique historical situation to the status of a principle, or *theologoumenon*, of how God continually acts in the world.<sup>2</sup>

Clements proposes that, in some places, the book of Jeremiah indicates that the small, sixth-century community in Jerusalem regarded itself as a remnant.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>R. E. Clements, "A Remnant Chosen by Grace" (Rom. 11:5): The Old Testament Background and Origin of the Remnant Concept," in *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to Professor F. F. Bruce on His 70th Birthday*, ed. Donald A. Hagner and Murray J. Harris (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 106, 107. He believes that this concept is important theologically "because it serves to resolve very effectively the tension inherent in the belief in Israel's divine election with the vicissitudes and realities of Israel's history."

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 108. Concerning the first, he is confident that Isa 7:3 is the foundation text upon which the entire concept is built. Concerning the second, he claims that the transition from the concept of the exile (*gôlâh*) to that of a Diaspora, initiated the break-up of a clearly defined and definable "Israel" which then injected new life and meaning in the notion of a remnant.

<sup>3</sup>See Jer 40:11, 15; 42:2, 15; 43:5; 44:1, 14, 28.

However, the nature and identity of the remnant are given a different perspective elsewhere: the remnant constitutes both the scattered survivors of the Northern kingdom of Israel and the exiles from Judah.<sup>1</sup> Clements suggests that this "represents a fresh interpretation of the meaning of the name Shear-Jashub, "A-Remnant-Will-Return."<sup>2</sup> In his continuing discussion of the remnant,<sup>3</sup> Clements holds that Jeremiah's literary treatment of the idea is more important than Isaiah's<sup>4</sup> because it took place in a much shorter time period. Besides, there is a remarkable change from the originally negative connotations of the *Restgedanke* to a more positive character in the aftermath of the disaster of the sixth century. The author

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<sup>1</sup>Jer 23:3; 31:7.

<sup>2</sup>Clements, "A Remnant Chosen by Grace," 118.

<sup>3</sup>Clements, "šā<sup>ar</sup>," *TWAT* (1992), 7:933-950. He indicates that the verb designates that which is left over, or that which is physically surviving, or the rest of a group of people. Only when applied to the remnant of Israel or the people of Judah does the word receive theological value. Since faith is a condition for belonging to God, then the remnant is a faithful minority. The disasters of the 8th century forced a sense of urgency on the meaning and identity of the remnant. This idea developed over three centuries with the sixth century being the most important.

After perusing the OT literature, Clements concedes that the word "remnant" became a category of primarily religious importance. This is so especially in the prophets who spoke of both judgment and comfort.

At first, this word implied threat and the destruction of the community, but as time elapsed, it approximated the contrary meaning. It defined "survivors," thereby implying hope that the survivors would be the source of a restored nation. The term pointed to the "legitimate heirs" of the national and religious traditions of Israel.

Clements believes that the term was developed especially in Persian times with the expected restoration of the nation. Later, in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, the term "remnant" had an influence on the origin of sectarian forms of the Jewish faith.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 943. He holds that Isaiah offers the most complete elaboration of the remnant theme.

shows the strong language of judgment and destruction, but hope develops after the deportation. In fact, it is the deportees, and not those who remained in Jerusalem, who would form a faithful remnant that returns to Yahweh in repentance.<sup>1</sup>

Clements spends some time describing the "remnant of Judah" who remained in the land after the deportation of 587 B.C. Even these have a glimmer of hope, but would be destroyed if they fled to Egypt.

Clements regards only the exiles in Babylon as filling the role of the true remnant. He concludes that the redactors of the book of Jeremiah are to be credited for placing high significance on the "remnant" concept.<sup>2</sup>

While Clements does not look at the material comprehensively, in that he ignores the remnant motif before Isaiah, his is a good summary of the motif in the book of Jeremiah. However, his claim that the book of Jeremiah demonstrates a development from an originally negative fate to a positive hope of restoration for those who had been led into captivity to Babylon in 598 and 587 B.C. seems overstated. It seems more likely that instead of a "development," the tension between judgment and salvation are consistently held in balance throughout the book. Further, if there was indeed a "development" to restoration, what were the bases for such a restoration? Was it the merits of the exiles or their repentance? Was it God's grace and forgiveness? What is the place of the New Covenant and/or faith in this scheme? These are questions that Clements does not consider.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 944.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Robert William Huebsch sets out "to examine the Qumran covenanters' understanding of the remnant to test . . . [if they] considered themselves to be the eschatological remnant."<sup>1</sup>

Huebsch sees Jeremiah's message as containing "both a plea for God's people to return to faithful execution of their covenant promises and the assurance that the future world holds a new and even more rewarding relationship with the Lord."<sup>2</sup> However, this is accompanied by threats of severe judgment if the call to repentance is rejected. This is precisely what happened, for Israel pursued a course leading to perdition.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, there is hope for a remnant.

Huebsch allows for a twofold identity of the remnant: (1) those inhabiting Palestine and Egypt but who would be "small and insignificant"; and (2) those who were in the diaspora and who would be gathered back to the land.<sup>4</sup> This latter group possesses the promises of renewal and restoration. They have certain characteristics:

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<sup>1</sup>Robert William Huebsch, "The Understanding and Significance of the 'Remnant' in Qumran Literature: Including a Discussion of the Use of This Concept in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocrypha and Pseudipigrapha" (Ph.D. dissertation, McMaster University, 1981), iv.

Huebsch believes that a proper understanding of "remnant consciousness" may be gained only after a thorough investigation of the remnant concept in the Hebrew Bible. As such, he follows the traditional divisions: *Law*, *Prophets*, and the *Writings*. Within each division, he surveys those books where the remnant idea is portrayed. His concern is not with the origin or evolution of the remnant idea but with its meaning and significance.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 98, 99.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 100-103. Huebsch denotes that there is in Jeremiah the fundamental question whether or not human beings are able to return to God.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 108.

faithfulness; willingness to return; actions of truth, justice, and uprightness; covenant loyalty; righteousness. Despite these, however, restoration depends on the forgiveness of Yahweh.<sup>1</sup> The new basis of the relationship would be the New Covenant.<sup>2</sup>

Jeremiah did not consider himself as a member of an eschatological remnant, but like Isaiah, he was "a proleptic representation of the remnant."<sup>3</sup> This leads Huebsch to conclude that the "remnant will be Israelite but not Israel . . . . No remnant of Israel will exist, but a remnant *from* Israel will begin again."<sup>4</sup>

This attempt has its problems. First, while a passage-by-passage study is avoided because it is deemed too repetitious,<sup>5</sup> the author has missed the nuances in the different texts. Also, because Huebsch confined himself largely to those passages containing derivatives of *šׁr*, he has presented a rather one-sided study. Second, the study is weakened by the approach of merely quoting passages that have remnant terminology and providing no exegetical analysis of those passages. Third, to highlight the historical, while downplaying the eschatological remnant teaching of Jeremiah, seems to render an incomplete picture of this motif in the book.<sup>6</sup> Finally,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 111, 112.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 113, 114. Huebsch indicates that the New Covenant represents Israel's total and final return to God.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 113.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 115.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 110.

it is quite unclear why the author places his definition of the remnant in the conclusion rather than at the beginning.<sup>1</sup>

Mary Rose Shaughnessy recognizes the tension between judgment and salvation in the book of Jeremiah. She holds that "the purpose of Yahweh's chastisement was that Israel would *turn and return* to resume her old loving relationship with Yahweh."<sup>2</sup> This is best seen in Jer 31 where all these hopes for Israel are gathered under one symbol, the return of the remnant. Jer 31:1-22 describes this event by "reciting a scenario or dramatic script for a Festival of the Remnant."<sup>3</sup> This Festival is complete with a theophany, a great procession along the road back to Jerusalem, a tribute to Yahweh's saving power, music and dance, psalms, meals, and choral pageants. Its purpose is to witness to Yahweh's love and power.<sup>4</sup>

Representatives of all classes and types of people will be in this procession led by specially appointed ministers who chant the Cantic of the Remnant (31:6-7). After the procession reaches Zion, food and dances are offered, showing "the contrast between their past sufferings and present joys."<sup>5</sup> These are followed by two

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 115. "The remnant consists of those who have survived past or present catastrophes as well as those who will be saved from the coming and often times impending doom of the day of the Lord."

<sup>2</sup>Mary Rose Shaughnessy, "Festival of the Remnant," *The Bible Today* 19 (1981): 113.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 114.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 116.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 117.

pageants: the first reenacting the misery of captivity; the second dealing with the plea to be taken back. This meets a resounding YES! Shaughnessy concludes that "this annual Festival of the Remnant is a celebration of that inexplicable favoritism for Israel that extends even to this raggle-taggle remnant."<sup>1</sup>

Besides lacking in exegesis, this article suffers from a problem where the author's orientation in English Literature allows her to describe a play, scene by scene, full of detail from these scant verses in Jer 31. A modern external model is imposed on the text. Further, Shaughnessy's attempt is insufficient because she does not place this passage firmly within the broader context of chaps. 30-31 and other themes (eg. the New Covenant). Hence, only a limited picture is presented. Finally, while she sees it as an annual event, and therefore, historical, the author has failed to provide any historical details of such an event.

Amado Cruz Lozano attempted to understand the relationship between the remnant and the operation of the Abrahamic covenant.<sup>2</sup> He proposes "to trace the origin and development of the remnant motif in the Old Testament as particularly related to the Abrahamic covenant (promise)."<sup>3</sup> He examines this in the *Law*, the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 118.

<sup>2</sup>Amado Cruz Lozano, "The Present Outworking of the Abrahamic Covenant as Evidenced through the Concept of the Remnant" (M.A. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1982).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 6. He hopes to take this to form a basis for a NT study of the "remnant" and the relationship to the Abrahamic covenant.

*Writings* and the *Prophets*.<sup>1</sup> Lozano believes that Jeremiah, as well as Ezekiel, correctly identifies the deportees as the true remnant.<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah declared messages of judgment in an attempt to break the arrogant self-confidence of those who placed faith in the presence of the temple. This was true also for the exiles. But it was through them that "God would renew His promise by giving them new hearts (Jer 24:5-8) and blotting out their sins (Jer 50:20)."<sup>3</sup>

This study has two serious setbacks. First, the author's definition and understanding of the use of the term "remnant" is inadequate. There are no controls by which the term "remnant" is used. For example, the third chapter investigates the epistles from Hebrews to James to see how the writers treated the "remnant" within the sphere of the church and to see what kind of distinctions are made. However, in these epistles the word for "remnant" does not even appear, and it is not clear how the concept is even present within them.<sup>4</sup> Second, because of his dispensational presuppositions, Lozano makes unsupported assumptions. For example, he assumes from the outset that the Abrahamic covenant is eternal, unconditional, and certain in

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<sup>1</sup>With regards to the *Law*, he holds that the remnant idea is first noted in the story of the Flood. He then traces the notion through the Abraham-Lot and Jacob-Esau stories. In a brief section on the *Writings*, Lozano looks at the Elijah account and reconnects this with Abraham, saying that "the destruction excludes a guaranteed, faithful remnant based on God's promise to Abraham (1 Kgs 18-19)."

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>4</sup>The same could be said for his development in chap. 4 with emphasis on Gal 3 and Eph 2.

character.<sup>1</sup> Thus, he connects the Abrahamic covenant with the remnant in several instances where there is no connection. For example, he does this with the Elijah story, with Amos,<sup>2</sup> Isaiah, and the New Covenant in Jer 31.<sup>3</sup>

F. Dreyfus sees the remnant as the few people who are rescued or who remain alive after a catastrophe.<sup>4</sup> It is impossible to separate the human root and the religious dimension of the remnant idea.<sup>5</sup>

Jeremiah depicts the judgments that reduced Israel to a remnant. Even the destruction of this remnant is announced. But Jeremiah has an originality distinctive from his predecessors. For them, the remnant was a group of people who escaped deportation and continued living in the homeland. Jeremiah maintains this tradition; but the hope of the divine promises made to the remnant is to be found with the exiles

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>4</sup>F. Dreyfus, "Reste d'Israël," *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, Supplement X, ed. L. Pirot and A. Robert (Paris: Letonze & Ané, 1985), 418, 419. While Dreyfus recognizes the originality of thought in Hasel's work in showing the universal idea of the remnant concept, he accepts Müller's thesis of an origin in the complete destruction that the Assyrian Kings made of the people whom they subjugated. Idem, "Remnant," *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, trans. Joseph Cahill, ed. Xavier Leon-Dufour (New York: Desdee Co., 1967), 428.

<sup>5</sup>Dreyfus, "Reste d'Israël," 419, 426. The nearness of God effects repentance as expressed by faith in God. Only the faithful can escape the disaster. These are the remnant.

or deportees. Those are the heirs in whom the Messianic hopes are sustained.<sup>1</sup> It is not that they are holier than the others. But it is in them that the Lord will perform the inner or heart transformation that will produce the conversion.<sup>2</sup> This remnant is therefore dissociated from the temporal community, the Jewish state. They are part of the eschatological community.<sup>3</sup>

The principle shortcoming in Dreyfus's work is his presupposition of the origin of the remnant motif in the principle of total warfare. Owing to this he conceives of the remnant only as a small entity. This also limits his definition of the remnant in a restricted manner to just a few survivors who are rescued after a disaster.

Jutta Hausmann's discussion of the remnant motif in the book of Jeremiah sets out to disprove Müller's claim that Jeremiah lacks any thought of the remnant. In fact, it is common in Jeremiah, for twenty-seven occurrences of remnant show Jeremiah's concern. These references are both negative and positive, with the former being more abundant than the latter.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Dreyfus, "Remnant," 429. He continues that they are not called the remnant and are even contrasted with it. This is because Dreyfus doubts the authenticity of those texts where the exiles are called the remnant: Jer 23:3; 31:7; 50:20.

<sup>2</sup>Dreyfus, "Reste d'Israel," 428.

<sup>3</sup>Dreyfus, "Remnant," 428.

<sup>4</sup>Jutta Hausmann, *Israels Rest: Studien zum Selbstverständnis der nachexilischen Gemeinde*, BWANT 7 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1987), 95.

Hausmann holds that in Jeremiah the remnant exists in the tension of judgment and salvation.<sup>1</sup> Judgment, however, is placed in the forefront. It is based on the charge of having abandoned Yahweh. Therefore, punitive action is executed by God Himself, with a sense of finality. The people remaining in Judah (after the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of its people) are regarded as an entity with a future. However, the agenda is set, not by Yahweh, but by the King of Babylon.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, "remnant" is not used here as an honorific title, but as a sign of a bad, hopeless situation.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, salvation is initiated by God on the behalf of the *golah*, the exiled ones. They are never named the remnant<sup>4</sup> but in the setting of the covenant, the *golah* is the germ/kernel that makes a new community out of itself.<sup>5</sup>

Hausmann's conclusions are twofold:

1. Since the term "remnant" is never applied to the *Golah*, then a *golah-redaction* of the book of Jeremiah is not to be expected.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 112, 113.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 107

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 108.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 101. The *Golah* is not called the Remnant because the author understands remnant as negative; the remnant is given to destruction and has no kernel for new hope and new strength.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 99-101.

2. A theologically positive idea of the remnant has no place in the book of Jeremiah.<sup>1</sup>

This work is not without its difficulties. First, since the intent is to trace the remnant motif throughout the Old Testament, only limited space is given to a brief commentary of the text without fully exploring certain exegetical steps that will help to provide a better understanding of the passage. Second, since only twenty-seven references to the remnant are considered, it means that the remaining number of passages dealing with the remnant have been excluded. This even limits Hausmann in seeing only five texts as issuing a word of salvation regarding the remnant.<sup>2</sup> Finally, with the exception of reference to Babylon, Hausmann ignores the remnant in the oracles against foreign nations.

Christopher R. Seitz presents a broad-based study that examines history, sociology, and the biblical literature relevant to the exilic period.<sup>3</sup> His thesis is that "conflict over the theological evaluation of judgment and exile . . . gave rise to one distinct level of tradition in the present book of Jeremiah: the exilic or Golah-redaction."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 113.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. These are Jer 23:1-8; 31:2-6; 7-9, 50:19ff. and 51:50. Of these, says Hausmann, only 31:2-6 is authentically Jeremianic. The others are of a non-deuteronomistic redaction, most likely from the end of the exile or even in (early) post-exilic time.

<sup>3</sup>Christopher R. Seitz, *Theology in Conflict: Reactions to the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah* (New York: de Gruyter, 1989).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 5.

Seitz examines the remnant community<sup>1</sup> in the fourth chapter, "The Fall and the Remnant: A Scribal Chronicle (Jer 37-43)."<sup>2</sup> It is divided into several parts:

Section A<sup>3</sup> deals with the scholarly discussion regarding the redactional analysis and literary scope of the original narrative.

Section B considers the "Scope of the Original Chronicle," with emphasis placed on the fate of Zedekiah, key Jerusalemites, and the broader remnant community before and after 587 B.C. The key figure is the prophet, where his purchase of the land at Anathoth shows, among other things, his solidarity with the remnant community.<sup>4</sup>

Section C is an excursus, where the fate of the king and that of the city is one of "extreme judgment" and "thorough destruction" because of their disobedience to Yahweh.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Seitz believes that the book of Jeremiah displays a literary complexity because of many secondary redactions. This is especially so in light of the difficulty of explaining the Exile, where "Israel" now was comprised of an exiled community in Babylon and a remnant community in Judah.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 236-281. This Scribal Chronicle, which extends from chap. 37 to chap. 45, represents an intermediate position between the pre-597 oracles of Jeremiah and later redactional supplementation. Theologically, it describes the remnant community and its leadership, in Judah, in the post-597 and post-587 periods. It has been modified by extensive editorial reworking from the exilic redaction.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 236-241.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 244. A major feature here, says Seitz, is the report of the conflict between Jeremiah and various officials in Jerusalem.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 246, 247.

Both Sections D and E deal with the secondary development of passages in 34:1-7, 37:1-10 and chaps. 37-39.

Section F considers the fall of Jerusalem in chaps. 37-39. With this tragic event, "civil leadership as it had been exercised within Jerusalem in the lineage of David was brought to an end."<sup>1</sup> However, the remnant community was able to maintain, with Babylonian permission, some sense of religious continuity after the capture of the city.<sup>2</sup>

Section G deals with the post-587 B.C. remnant. Seitz claims that this remnant, while under Gedaliah's leadership, is never portrayed negatively. Indeed, by its submission to Babylonian authority (as Jeremiah had earlier counseled), "the remnant has the right to expect Yahweh's blessing (Jer 40:9-12)."<sup>3</sup> However, with Gedaliah's assassination by Johanan, "the theme of disobedience is developed in the remnant's decision to flee to Egypt."<sup>4</sup> Seitz concludes that this decision "signaled the final end to life in the land."<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the final word from the Exilic

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 270.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 271. Seitz is quick to add, however, that in 2 Kgs 25 and Jer 52, both civil leadership and religious life are depicted as coming to a complete end. This is because there is an exilic rather than a Judahite perspective.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 274.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 276.

Redactor<sup>1</sup> is the reality of potential life "beyond even the hyperbolic vision of judgment in Egypt."<sup>2</sup>

The most significant criticism of Seitz's work is that he expends so much energy to justify his approach of redaction criticism. At every turn he is dividing the text, inferring editorial reworking and the influence of different traditions, but without offering the criteria that govern such a methodology. One can only suspect that he makes assumptions that the fuller the report, (i.e., the more details that are given) the stronger an indication of a later interpolation.<sup>3</sup> Further, because of this orientation, he can see only a one-sided picture of the remnant community, namely, those people left in Judah after the Fall of Jerusalem. He does not develop the remnant concept among the exiles. This is appalling in light of the fact that he sees the tragedy as falling primarily on the deportees<sup>4</sup> and concluding that "throughout the book of Jeremiah, the Exilic Redaction makes clear that the restoration of Israel involves Yahweh's returning of a deported people."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 289. Seitz claims that the Exilic Redaction, under the influence of the Ezekiel traditions, made extensive editorial reworking to the Scribal Chronicle.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 288.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 268.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 272.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 291.

Obed Dube pursues the notion that since the book of Jeremiah deals widely with both remnant and covenant, there must be some connection between both.<sup>1</sup> This he explicates in the heart of his work, chapter 2, "The Remnant and the New Covenant in the Book of Jeremiah." He believes that this nexus is to be found in the election traditions of Israel, that is, remnant and covenant intersect in the election of Israel.<sup>2</sup> He claims, "Since the election leads to covenant . . . and the remnant are the heirs of the heritage of election . . . one may conclude that covenant and remnant presuppose each other."<sup>3</sup>

The call of Jeremiah serves as a microcosm of this nexus.<sup>4</sup> Dube maintains that this Remnant-New Covenant connection is highlighted by several contrasting elements: the command to destroy and construct in the call; the first and second exodus; migratory birds; political machinations; true and false prophets; and the example of the Rechabites.<sup>5</sup>

Dube insists that the relationship between covenant and remnant is depicted by legal promise of exoneration of the guilt of the people. This is achieved through the divine judgment, "the instrument by which a new start of God's covenanted

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<sup>1</sup>Obed Dube, "The Remnant and the New Covenant in the Book of Jeremiah" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of South Africa, 1992), 1-6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 34-48.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 48.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 49-54.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 55-75.

remnant is to be accomplished."<sup>1</sup> This is further seen through the metaphors of "my people" and the "father-son" relationship, both of which have pedagogical, social and religious connotations.<sup>2</sup>

Dube also attempts to establish the Remnant-New Covenant nexus in what he labels as "eschatological texts," namely, Jer 24; 31:31-34; and 23:3-6. In this regard, he concludes, "Thus salvation history becomes a microcosm corresponding to the eschatological history of salvation. So, there must be a universal application for both covenant and remnant."<sup>3</sup>

In his third chapter, Dube attempts to trace elements of the Remnant-New Covenant nexus in materials preceding the book of Jeremiah and how they were repeated in that book. The final chapter provides a summary and conclusions, with recommendations for further study.

This work is troubled with several problems. Dube admits, "Central to this study is the question of the book's utilisation of the concepts of the remnant and New Covenant without necessarily utilising the technical terms for remnant and covenant."<sup>4</sup> Methodologically, a work of this magnitude cannot afford this laxity, especially in light of the claims that covenant is more frequent in Jeremiah than the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 115.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 81-83, 116.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 118.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., i.

rest of the OT books.<sup>1</sup> Without attending to the technical language, he imposes external ideas on the text and therefore extrapolates conclusions that tend to be excessive. This seems to be the case in the claim that the migratory "birds are used to proleptically represent a saved and faithful remnant and to teach covenant loyalty."<sup>2</sup> Further, since the idea of election is neither explicitly stated,<sup>3</sup> nor anywhere mentioned in connection with the remnant or the New Covenant (either separately or together), how then does it function as the nexus between both themes? This is further complicated in that Dube does not provide a working definition of what he means by "election." Again, since the "New Covenant" is mentioned only once in Jeremiah and in a place whose immediate context has no remnant terminology, how is it that the "New Covenant" is made to fit so wide a category as materials preceding the book of Jeremiah? Hence, one wonders about the usefulness of chapter 3.

Finally, a central question regarding the nature of this study: Is it exegetical or theological? There seems to be no exegetical process, yet theological claims are made: The remnant and covenant mutually expect each other. Tersely stated, we may say: no remnant, no covenant, and vice versa.<sup>4</sup> That such is the case is especially surprising in light of Dube's own warning that "one should deal seriously

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1, 2. Even here Dube suffers a shortfall for he regards only  $\text{š}^{\text{r}}$  and its derivatives, completely ignoring the other remnant terms found in the book.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 112.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 107.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 115.

with the text without substituting one's presuppositions of what the text should have said."<sup>1</sup>

### Conclusions

This survey reveals that the study of the remnant motif in the book of Jeremiah, heretofore, is not comprehensive. In fact, there is no single work that investigates this theme. Generally speaking, publications that broadly address this motif in Jeremiah suffer several shortcomings:

1. They do not employ all the texts which contain remnant terminology in the book of Jeremiah since they are largely restricted to the use of *šׁerîṭ*.

2. Since the focus is placed on delineating the point of origin of the remnant motif (e.g., election, eschatology, etc.) and tracing this through the Hebrew Bible, an *a priori* position is already presumed, such that, Jeremiah's message concerning the remnant has to fit into this scheme.

3. For the most part, these studies are non-exegetical, providing only a superficial discussion of the claims of the book of Jeremiah.

4. Sometimes these works do not provide a proper working definition of the "remnant motif." Working from a narrow or restricted definition does not allow for the full picture to be grasped.

5. Finally, the remnant motif in the oracles against the foreign nations is largely ignored. This dissertation seeks to avoid these pitfalls.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 4, 5.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE REMNANT MOTIF IN THE CONTEXT OF JUDGMENT: JUDAH

The task of this chapter is to exegete all passages in the book of Jeremiah where remnant terms are used in the context of judgment. It is limited to passages found in oracles against Judah.

The remnant terms considered here are  $\text{š}^{\text{r}}$ , *mlt*, *plt*, *šrd*, and *ytr*. A brief explication of the meaning of each term in the Hebrew Bible precedes the discussion of those texts in which the specific term is found.

#### Derivatives of $\text{š}^{\text{r}}$

Verbal and nominal forms of the root  $\text{š}^{\text{r}}$  occur 223 times in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>1</sup> Many of these have a non-theological usage, referring to such inanimate objects as stones, wood, gleanings of a harvest, or cities. The root places emphasis on the residual part that remains from the larger whole without reference to the

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<sup>1</sup>For discussion on this root see Hasel, "Origin and Early History," 136-171; idem, "Semantic Values of Derivatives of the Hebrew Root  $\text{š}^{\text{r}}$ "; Wildberger, 844-855; Clements, " $\text{š}^{\text{r}}$  ar"; Gary C. Cohen, " $\text{š}^{\text{r}}$ ," *TWOT* (1980), 2:894-895.

disposal of the larger whole.<sup>1</sup> The "widest range of usage" of this term is in connection with survivors.<sup>2</sup> This is in the direction of Hertrich's designation of the remnant as a "definite historical entity."<sup>3</sup> Within this context, derivatives of this root embrace the survivors who have withstood threats to their existence.

It is not to be concluded, however, that a purely negative notion is at hand. Indeed, the term is used with the bipolarity of judgment and salvation. These dual modes are in close interaction, "forming different emphases but no absolute opposites."<sup>4</sup> On the one hand, the remnant stresses the totality of destruction or the meaninglessness of the remaining part, and on the other hand it highlights "the future potential inherent in the residual part."<sup>5</sup> Note Hasel's forceful conclusion: "The negative and positive aspects are also of great importance for the salvation-historical use of the remnant motif, because they make it possible to express through the same terms judgment and promise, doom and salvation."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hasel, "Origin and Early History," 169.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 145.

<sup>3</sup>Hertrich, 197. This refers to persons, groups, families, and/or nations who are a remnant having survived some catastrophe. For purposes of this dissertation I pursue the usage of this root only within this context since this is how the remnant is referred to in the book of Jeremiah. The only exception is Jer 34:7 in reference to the remaining cities of Judah.

<sup>4</sup>Hasel, "Origin and Early History," 171.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 169, 170.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 171.

In the book of Jeremiah, derivatives of the root  $\text{š}^{\text{c}}\text{r}$  occur forty times.

There are seventeen verbal forms<sup>1</sup> and twenty-three uses of the feminine noun

$\text{š}^{\text{c}}\text{ērīt}$ .<sup>2</sup> Thirty-seven of the forty occurrences are used in the context of judgment.

Of these, thirty-two are used in oracles against Judah. We will now focus on these.

### Jer 6:9-15

#### Translation and Textual Considerations

(9) *Thus says the Lord of Hosts:*

*"Like the vine, they shall thoroughly glean Israel's remnant [ $\text{š}^{\text{c}}\text{ērīt}$ ]."*<sup>3</sup>

Like a vintager, pass your hand over the tendrils."<sup>4</sup>

(10) "To whom shall I speak and give solemn warning that they may listen?

Indeed, their ear is uncircumcised,<sup>5</sup>

so that they are unable to pay attention.

Indeed, the word of the Lord has become a reproach

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<sup>1</sup>Jer. 8:3 (used twice); 21:7; 24:8; 37:10; 38:4, 22; 39:9 (used twice), 10; 40:6; 41:10; 42:2; 49:9; 50:20; and 52:15, 16.

<sup>2</sup>Jer. 6:9; 8:3; 11:23; 15:9; 23:3; 24:8; 25:20; 31:7; 40:11, 15; 41:10, 16; 42:2, 15, 19; 43:5; 44:7, 12, 14, 28; 47:4, 5; and 50:26.

<sup>3</sup>Several commentators, following LXX, emend MT  $\text{š}^{\text{c}}\text{ōlēl ye}^{\text{c}}\text{ōl}^{\text{c}}\text{lū}$ , "they shall thoroughly glean," to  $\text{š}^{\text{c}}\text{ōlēl } \text{š}^{\text{c}}\text{ōlēl}$  (infinitive and imperative), "glean, glean!" Bright, *Jeremiah*, 44; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 255; Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 194. Cf. *BHS*.

However, it is better to accept the MT, as explained by Peter C. Craigie, Page H. Kelley, and Joel F. Drinkard, Jr., *Jeremiah 1-25*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 26 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1991), 102, "The comparison, basic to the poetic structure, changes from an object ('the vine') to a person (the 'grape-cutter')"; hereafter cited as CKD.

<sup>4</sup>MT  $\text{salsillōt}$ , "tendrils," is a *hapax legomenon*, the sense being understood from the context.

<sup>5</sup>MT  $\text{š}^{\text{c}}\text{rēlāh } \text{š}^{\text{c}}\text{oznām}$ , lit. "their ears have a foreskin."

so<sup>1</sup> that they take no pleasure in.

(11) But I am filled with the wrath of the Lord;<sup>2</sup> I am weary of holding it in." "Pour (it) out<sup>3</sup> on the children in the streets and on the bands of young men together; for both husband along with wife<sup>4</sup> will be taken; the old with (those) filled with age.<sup>5</sup>

(12)<sup>6</sup> And their homes will be turned over to others, their fields and wives alike. For I will stretch out my hand against the inhabitants of the land," says the Lord.

(13) "For from the least to the greatest of them, all are greedy for gain; from the prophet to the priest, all practice falsehood.

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<sup>1</sup>Many MSS, Syr. and Vg. read *w'lo<sup>2</sup>* before the final phrase instead of MT *lo<sup>2</sup>*. MT suggests a relative clause, "in which they take no pleasure." The reading here allows for a parallel with the resulting clause above, "so that they are unable to pay attention."

<sup>2</sup>MT *w'<sup>2</sup>ē h<sup>a</sup>ma<sup>2</sup> dōnāy mālē<sup>2</sup>ī*, lit. "with the wrath of Yahweh, I (Jeremiah) am full." *BHS* proposes reading *wa<sup>2</sup>ni* (cf. Mic 3:8), "but as for me," instead of *w'<sup>2</sup>ē*. Following LXX, *ton thumon mou*, "my wrath" (which equals *h<sup>a</sup>māī*), Yahweh, and not Jeremiah is the speaker. It will then read, "But as for me, my wrath is full."

<sup>3</sup>MT *šepōk*, "pour out." LXX reads *ekcheō*, "I will pour it out," which equals *BHS*' proposed reading *šāpōk*.

<sup>4</sup>MT reads *gam-<sup>2</sup>iš-<sup>c</sup>im-<sup>2</sup>iššāh*, lit. "both husband with wife." It is possible to read *gam-<sup>2</sup>iš-gam-<sup>2</sup>iššāh*, "both man and wife."

<sup>5</sup>*BHS* proposes inserting *lo<sup>2</sup>* before "filled with aged" (haplography). A contrast is then made between the old and those *not* filled with age. As Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 194, comments, "This is unnecessary in view of the grouping 'man and wife . . . old and aged' ascending from children and youths."

<sup>6</sup>Vss. 12-15a are parallel to 8:10-12 with some slight variations and omissions. In vs. 12, houses, fields, and wives are given to others, and Yahweh stretches out His hand against the inhabitants of the land, while in 8:10 wives and fields are given away, nothing is said of houses or of Yahweh's opposition against the inhabitants of the land.

(14) They have healed the wound of my people<sup>1</sup> superficially, saying, 'Peace, Peace,' but there is no peace.<sup>2</sup>

(15) They should have been ashamed because they did detestable things; but they were not ashamed; they do not know how to be ashamed.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, they shall fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when (at the time) I punish them,"<sup>4</sup> says the Lord.

### Structure

The expression <sup>א</sup>mar <sup>א</sup>dōnāy, "says the Lord," forms an inclusio for the unit, vss. 9-15.<sup>5</sup> The same expression starts a new section in vs. 16.

The internal structure is that of a dialogue between the Lord and the prophet:

1. The Lord speaks of judgment (vs. 9)
2. Jeremiah responds with a question and a complaint (vss. 10-11a)

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<sup>1</sup>Many MSS read *ba-<sup>א</sup>ammî*, lit. "daughter of my people," meaning "poor people."

<sup>2</sup>MT *w<sup>א</sup>ên šālôm*, "but there is no peace," is read by LXX as *kai pou estin eirēnē*, "and where is peace?" which equals *w<sup>א</sup>ayēh* that BHS suggests inserting. The declarative statement of MT seems stronger than the interrogative.

<sup>3</sup>MT reads the hiphil inf. const. *halîm*. Cf. the preferable niph'al (passive) form in 8:12, *hikkālêm*.

<sup>4</sup>MT *p<sup>א</sup>qatîm*, "I punish them," is understood by the LXX as *episkopēs autôn*, "their visitation," which equals *p<sup>א</sup>quddāâm*, as in 8:12. This latter reading renders, "They will be brought down at the time of their visitation/reckoning."

<sup>5</sup>Leading commentators see this as a unit: Rudolph, 38-39; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 49-50; Albert Condamin, *Le Livre de Jérémie*, 3d ed., Etudes Biblique (Paris: Lecoffre, 1936), 54. Paul Volz, *Der Prophet Jeremia*, KAT 10 (Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1922), 73-79, sees a complicated unit: vss. 9-11a; 8:8-9; 6:11b-15 = 8:10b-12; idem, *Studien zum Text des Jeremia*, BWANT 25 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1920), 47-49.

3. The Lord answers, commenting on the nation's evil and impending judgment (vss. 11b-15).<sup>1</sup>

### **Historical Background**

Since there are no specific datelines for developing the historical milieu behind this passage, commentators have seized on certain "hints" in an attempt to establish the setting. The expressions of "gleaning" and "pass your hand once more" imply a prophecy of a two-stage judgment. W. L. Holladay suggests the fall of Samaria and the fall of Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> Bright tentatively suggests the death of Josiah in 609 B.C. or sometime after the deportation from Jerusalem in 597 B.C.<sup>3</sup>

Since Jer 9:6-15 is a segment of a larger block (Jer 4:5-6:30),<sup>4</sup> which predicts divine judgment against Jerusalem using the agent of the "foe from the

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<sup>1</sup>CKD, 102; W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 211.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid.*, 213. He dates the setting to December 601 or early in 602. Volz, *Der Prophet Jeremia*, 75 and Rudolph, 45, opt for the fall of Samaria and suggest 625-622 B.C.

<sup>3</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 51.

<sup>4</sup>For linkages between this and other parts of the block, fusing it as a single unit, see W. L. Holladay, *The Architecture of Jeremiah 1-20* (London: Associated University Press, 1976), 91, 92.

north," a designation for Babylon,<sup>1</sup> it appears that the setting here is one immediately preceding Babylonian actions in 597 B.C.

### Interpretation

The expression of divine judgment uses the image of a grape-picker or gleaner to indicate thorough-going punitive action against the people. Enemy hosts who have already been summoned as instruments of judgment (Jer 5:10; 6:1) are the gleaners.<sup>2</sup> As the remnant of the Israelite nation (that is, the combined kingdoms), Judah is likened to the vineyard and its forthcoming judgment is like the excision of the fruit from the vine. Even the remnant, that which is left over, will not escape the deserved punishment. There is no guarantee that it will remain and even faces the possibility of total destruction. Indeed, "the use of the word 'glean' and the reference to 'remnant' implies the totally comprehensive nature of the judgment."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>James H. Gailey, "The Sword and the Heart: Evil from the North and Within, An Exposition of Jeremiah 4:5-6:30," *Int* 9 (1955): 298; J. Bright, "The Book of Jeremiah: Its Structure, Its Problems, and Their Significance for the Interpreter," *Int* 9 (1955): 276; J. P. Hyatt, "The Peril from the North in Jeremiah," *JBL* 59 (1940): 509; Brevard S. Childs, "The Enemy from the North and the Chaos Tradition," *JBL* 78 (1959): 187-198.

<sup>2</sup>CKD, 103. Some exegetes assign the task of gleaning to Jeremiah, claiming that his "prophetic ministry, however fruitless it seemed, was a kind of grape harvesting, a gleaning of the vine of Israel." So Thompson, 257, and Hyatt, "Jeremiah: Introduction and Exegesis," 589; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 213.

<sup>3</sup>CKD, 103. B. Duhm; *Das Buch Jeremia*, KHAT 11 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1901), 67, sees the reference to the remnant as an eschatological gloss. He also relates the search for remaining grapes to Abraham's question regarding the fate of Sodom.

Although some exegetes insist that the idea of gleaning here is a positive image,<sup>1</sup> it is clear that the tone of the passage is wholly negative. The imagery of "harvest" elsewhere is negative.<sup>2</sup> Further, the action of passing the hand over the branches again (*hašēb yād<sup>h</sup>kā*, "return your hand") highlights a "mopping-up operation,"<sup>3</sup> where the harvesters/gleaners run their hands over the vine once again to pick any small clusters of remaining fruit. A note of finality is struck "because the harvesting of the grapes is the final stage of the summer's work when the late fruit and vintage are gathered. It is also the final act for what is here gleaned is what is left of Israel, *š<sup>r</sup>ērīt yiśrā<sup>h</sup>ēl*."<sup>4</sup>

The objective of the gleaning of the remnant is that nobody escapes the deserved punishment. Indeed, "the utter destruction of Israel is envisaged by the image of the thoroughly gleaned vine."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>John M. Berridge, *Prophet, People and the Hand of Yahweh: An Examination of Form and Content in the Proclamation of the Prophet Jeremiah*, Basel Studies of Theology, 4 (Zürich: EVZ Verlag, 1970), 79. He claims that Jeremiah is to search for a "possible point of connection for Yahweh's essential will of salvation for Judah." See also Josef Schreiner, *Jeremia 1-25, 14*, Die Neue Echter Bibel (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1981), 50.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Judg 20:45 and Isa 17:4-6 where the same verb (*ʿll*) is used as in Jer 6:9.

<sup>3</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 213. He believes that it is possible to see *š<sup>r</sup>ērīt*, "remnant" as the reversal of *rē<sup>h</sup>šīt*, "firstfruits" of Jer 2:3 where Israel was the firstfruits of Yahweh's harvest. This harvest is then related to the vineyard. "It would be a temptation then to translate 'remnant of Israel' here as 'firstfruits' of Israel."

<sup>4</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 195.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. This is the equivalent of the destruction rendered to the terraces and the stripping of the branches of the vineyard in Jer 5:10.

Jeremiah's rhetorical query (vs. 10a) concerns his listeners: To whom should he speak? The remnant of vs. 9? He protests that no one will listen to this word because their ears are uncircumcised. This may be a veiled way of speaking of the unfaithfulness of the people to the covenant, of which circumcision was the sign. Hence, uncircumcised ears may indicate bold refusal to listen to and obey Yahweh's word.

Jeremiah was so full of the Lord's wrath that he was about to explode. Yahweh's reply (vss. 11b-12) insists that Jeremiah must proclaim the word of judgment to all strata of society, for they were all equally guilty, clergy and people alike, of greed and unjust gain. Lulled into a sense of false security they had become morally blind (vss. 13-15). Hence, the divine oracle concludes, given the widespread nature of the nation's practice of evil, that all will fall in the impending day of judgment. Even the remnant will be ravaged in the judgment. It is a situation of hopelessness.

Jer 8:1-3

### **Translation and Textual Considerations**

(1) "At that time," says the Lord, "They shall bring forth the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of its princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem from their graves. (2) And they shall spread them out before the sun and the moon and the whole host of heaven whom they loved and served and followed and consulted and worshipped. They will not be gathered up or buried, but will be like dung on the face of the earth. (3) *And death will be preferred to life by all the*

*remnant [hašš<sup>2</sup> ērīt] which remain [hanniš<sup>2</sup> ārīm] from this evil family, in all the remaining [hanniš<sup>2</sup> ārīm]<sup>1</sup> places where I have driven them." says the Lord.*

### Structure

Jer 8:1-3 forms a unit, the expression *ne<sup>2</sup>um<sup>2</sup> dōnāy*, "says the Lord," forming an inclusio (vss. 1, 3). It is the concluding unit to a series of units extending from 7:1 to 8:3.<sup>2</sup> The entire section may be divided as follows:

1. God's command to Jeremiah to speak his word (7:1-2)
2. Jeremiah's response: The Temple Sermon (7:3-15)
3. God's command to Jeremiah not to pray for the people and His denunciation of their idolatry (7:16-20)
4. First oracle by Yahweh (7:21-28)
5. Second oracle by Yahweh (7:29-34)
6. Third oracle by Yahweh (8:1-3).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>BHS, following the LXX and Syr. suggest deleting *hanniš<sup>2</sup> ārīm*, "remaining," on dittographic grounds since two forms of the word are already present. But as CKD, 116, point out, "The duplicative style may be a further example of the prophet's prose style (cf. 7:4)."

<sup>2</sup>Holladay, *The Architecture of Jeremiah 1-20*, 102-105, regards Jer. 8:1-3 as a concluding appendix to the prose section 7:1-8:3. The key word *mākōm*, "place," is a literary thread linking the entire unit: 7:4, 6, 12, 14, 20, 32, and 8:3. CKD, 120, say that the conjunction of "place(s)" and "Lord of Hosts" (7:3; 8:3) may constitute an inclusio for the narrative as a whole.

<sup>3</sup>It has been suggested that 7:29-8:3 is one unit: Rudolph, 55; H. L. Ellison, "The Prophecy of Jeremiah, Part XIII: The Shame of Judah," *EQ* 34 (1962): 98. However, the inclusio in 8:1-3 is convincing enough to have separate units. Cf. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 58.

### Historical Background

It is generally agreed that the material of 7:1-8:3 has a unity of theme that deals with the inviolability of the temple<sup>1</sup> and the pursuit of heinous idolatrous practices such as child sacrifice and astral worship. These suggest a period shortly after 609 B.C. after Jehoiakim had assumed the throne and permitted such practices to return.<sup>2</sup>

### Interpretation

The entire block sounds an ominous note. Yahweh initially commands the prophet to stand in the temple gate and speak (vss. 1-2). In the Temple Sermon (vss. 3-15) Jeremiah attempts to persuade the people not to put their trust in the presence of the temple to protect them, and warns that Yahweh will destroy both temple and nation if they refuse to change their conduct. In vss. 16-20, Yahweh tells Jeremiah not to intercede on the behalf of the people and calls attention to their worship of the Queen of Heaven. Since this is a breach of covenant loyalty, it is not surprising that oracles of doom follow. The first oracle condemns the people for the attitude that the offering of sacrifice was a substitute for obedience. The second oracle condemns child sacrifice and other evils. The third oracle, which concerns us, is a condemnation of astral worship. While this oracle proclaims a future judgment ("at

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<sup>1</sup>For the treatment of this theme, see J. Bright, *Covenant and Promise* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 49-77, and R. E. Clements, *Abraham and David: Genesis 15 and Its Meaning for Israelite Tradition*, Studies in Biblical Theology, 2d series, 5 (Naperville, IN: Allenson, 1967), 76-80.

<sup>2</sup>Thompson, 274; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 58.

that time," vs. 1),<sup>1</sup> "the urgency of the prophet's message as a whole suggests the future is not too far distant."<sup>2</sup>

The horror of the judgment is seen in the disinternment of the bones of the dead.<sup>3</sup> This exhumation is comprehensive in scope: the bones of the nobility and religious leaders, as well as ordinary citizens, will have no guarantee against abuse.<sup>4</sup> Further, the irony of the scene is highlighted in that the astral deities to which Judah gave so much devotion would look upon the exposed bones without being able to help.

The judgment also has a role of finality and absoluteness. These exposed bones become like dung, useless and grotesque, with no possibility of reburial.<sup>5</sup> The force of the message now comes home in vs. 3, that despite the desecration of the dead, the remnant would prefer death to life. This shows the enormity of the coming

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<sup>1</sup>This has prompted some to see these verses as coming after the fall of Jerusalem. See Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 225. Holladay, *The Architecture of Jeremiah 1-20*, 271, regards it as an exotic insertion.

<sup>2</sup>CKD, 126.

<sup>3</sup>This desecration of graves was common in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, both in terms of robbery and in a ritual dishonoring. Ashurbanipal gives record of such action in his campaign against Susa, the capital of Elam. See Morton Cogan, "A Note on Disinterment in Jeremiah," in *Gratz College, Anniversary Volume*, ed. Isidore David Possaw and Samuel Tobias Lachs (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 30.

Harrison, 88, suggests that the disinternment may be incidental in the process of constructing a siege ramp for the assault on Jerusalem.

<sup>4</sup>See further B. Lorenz, "Bemerkungen zum Totenkult im Alten Testament," *VT* 32 (1982): 229-234.

<sup>5</sup>In 7:32 all of Topheth becomes one huge burial ground; in vs. 33 there is no burial; and now in 8:3 there is unburial.

judgment. The exile would be so difficult that the remnant from "this evil family,"<sup>1</sup> those who survived the catastrophe of the invasion, would deem death preferable to life. As Thompson sums it up, "The lot of the survivors would be even more miserable than the fate of those who perished."<sup>2</sup>

### Jer 11:18-23

#### Translation and Textual Considerations

(18) The Lord made it known to me, so I knew; then you caused me to see their evil deeds. (19) But I was like a trusting lamb led to slaughter. I had not known that they had devised plots against me: "Let us destroy the tree with its sap in it;<sup>3</sup> and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name be remembered no more." (20) O Lord of Hosts, who judges righteously, who tests the heart<sup>4</sup> and the mind,<sup>5</sup> let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you I have committed<sup>6</sup> my case/lawsuit. (21) Therefore, thus said the Lord concerning

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<sup>1</sup>Thompson, 296, n. 3, correctly says that the "evil family" points to Judah, who at this stage represented all that remained of the former Israel.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. Hausmann, 97, claims that the remnant here is positive. However, she fails to support her position.

<sup>3</sup>MT *našhîṭāh* <sup>c</sup>*z̄s b'lahmô*, "let us destroy the tree with its flesh." *BHS*; Thompson, 347; and *CKD*, 175, suggest *b'lēhō* for *b'lahmô* and read "in its sap." Cf. Deut 34:7. M. Dahood, "Ugaritic Studies and the Bible," *Gregorianum* 43 (1962): 66, agrees but treats the *mem* between the noun and the suffix as enclitic.

*LXX* reads *deute kai embalōmon xulon eis ton arton autou*, "come and let us put wood into his bread." The words "wood" and "bread" led early Christians, notably Justin Martyr, to see the cross and body of Christ as being in view here. See F. C. Burkitt, "Justin Martyr and Jeremiah xi 19," *JTS* 33 (1932): 371-373.

<sup>4</sup>MT *k'lāyōt*, lit. "kidneys."

<sup>5</sup>MT *lēb*, lit. "heart."

<sup>6</sup>MT *gillîṭî*, "I have revealed," is understood by *BHS* as *gallōṭî*, "I have rolled upon," that is, "entrusted" or "committed." Cf. Ps 22:9 (Eng. 8); 37:5. See also Thompson, 347; *CKD*, 175, and Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 275.

the men of Anathoth who seek my life<sup>1</sup> saying, "Do not prophecy in the name of the Lord that you do not die by our hand." (22) Therefore, thus says the Lord of Hosts, "Indeed, I will punish them; the young men shall die by the sword; their sons and their daughters shall die by famine. (23) *And there shall be no remnant [שׁוֹרְטָא] of them. For I will bring evil on the men of Anathoth, the year of their punishment.*

## Structure

Jer 11:18-12:6 is a dialogue between the prophet and Yahweh: (1)

Jeremiah's complaint (11:18-20); (2) Yahweh's answer (11:21-23); (3) Jeremiah's complaint (12:1-4); (4) Yahweh's answer (12:5-6).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>MT has "your life" but LXX has "my life" fitting the context more smoothly.

<sup>2</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 365, claims that originally 11:18-23 and 12:1-6 formed separate units and were only secondarily brought together. He is followed by CKD, 177, who give an outline of the components of the two units.

There is considerable debate regarding "assumed dislocations" in the text. Several rearrangements have been proposed: Bright, *Jeremiah*, 89-90: 12:1-6; 11:18-23; H. H. Rowley, "The Text and Interpretation of Jeremiah 11:18-12:6," *AJSL* 42 (1926): 217-227: 11:18; 12:6; 11:19-20; 12:1-3; 11:21-23; 12:4-5; W. Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremiah 1-25*, WMANT 41 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973), 159: 11:18, 12:6; 11:19-23; 12:1-4; 12:5. For further discussion see, Kathleen M. O'Connor, *The Confessions of Jeremiah: Their Interpretation and Role in Chapters 1-25*, SBL Dissertation Series, 94 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1984), 7-26.

The question of structure is complicated by attempting to determine which verses are poetry and which are prose. See Walter Theophilus Woldemar Cloete, *Versification and Syntax in Jeremiah 2-25: Syntactical Constraints in Hebrew Colometry*, SBL Dissertation Series, 117 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 166.

While scholars are divided on the form of the passage,<sup>1</sup> it may be construed as a lament, the basic components of which may be outlined as shown in Table 1.<sup>2</sup>

<i>Formal Lament</i>	<i>1st Lament</i>	<i>2nd Lament</i>
Invocation	11:18	12:1a
Complaint	11:19	2:1b, 2
Prayer	11:20	12:3-4
Divine Response	11:21-23	12:5-6

This discussion is restricted to the first lament, which deals specifically with the remnant motif.

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<sup>1</sup>The passage is generally seen as constituting one of the prophet's laments: O'Connor, 24, sees it as a creative adaptation of a psalm of individual lament that serves a particular theological purpose. Cf. Artur Weiser, *The Psalms*, OTL, trans. Herbert Hartwell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 69; Claus Westermann, *The Psalms: Structure, Content and Message* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980), 55-56. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 275-279, argues for a communal lament on the strength of the tree motif (11:19; 12:2) which was used in 11:16 for the destruction of the entire community, the nation. Henning Graf Reventlow, *Liturgie und prophetisches Ich bei Jeremia* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlaghaus, 1963), 253-254, argues that vss. 18-20 constitute a segment from a thanksgiving psalm. Others argue for a classification of a lawsuit based on the presence of legal language: Sheldon H. Blank, "The Confessions of Jeremiah and the Meaning of Prayer," *HUCA* 21 (1948): 332; Franz D. Hubmann, *Untersuchen zu den Konfession Jer. 11,18-12,6 und Jer. 15,10-21*, *Forschung zur Bibel* 30 (Stuttgart: Echter Verlag, 1978), 162-163. A. R. Pete Diamond, *The Confessions of Jeremiah in Context: Scenes of Prophetic Drama*, JSOT Supplement Series 45 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 23-24, regards it as a borderline case between lament and thanksgiving. G. von Rad, "The Confessions of Jeremiah," trans. Anne Winston and G. L. Johnson, in *A Prophet to the Nations: Essays in Jeremiah Studies*, eds Leo G. Perdue and Brian W. Kovacs (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns), 341, sees it as a riddle. The latter was originally published as "Die Konfessionen Jeremias," *ET* 3 (1936): 265-276.

<sup>2</sup>CKD, 177. These elements have also been outlined by S. Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 1: 229-239; 2:9-11.

### **Historical Background**

This lament is born out of a plot against Jeremiah's life instigated by his own relatives and fellow townspeople of Anathoth.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, we cannot determine with certainty when this occurred and what specific provocation is in view, although it has been guardedly suggested that the plot of Hananiah during the reign of Zedekiah (chap. 37) may be in the background. It appears, however, that the prophet was so disturbed that he fled to God in great despair and pain. Thompson aptly comments, "The village, which gave him his basic social and psychological security, turned against him; and he was alone, cut off from those with whom he grew up and unable to count on the support which was normally available to a villager."<sup>2</sup>

### **Interpretation**

Jeremiah begins the lament abruptly, invoking that it was Yahweh who had revealed the malicious plot. However, neither the nature of the revelation nor the

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<sup>1</sup>Rowley, "The Text and Interpretation of Jeremiah 11:18-12:6," 218, interprets "the men of Anathoth" as the local priesthood, members of the same priestly family as Jeremiah. They resented the Deuteronomistic reformation since it exalted the Jerusalem priesthood but marginalized the provincial priesthood. He adds that Josiah's reform exalted the House of Zadok while the House of Abiathar, to which the priests of Anathoth belonged, was degraded and displaced. Since Jeremiah supported the reform, he was considered a traitor.

E. W. Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 115, believes that the plot was perpetrated because Jeremiah was perceived as a traitor for his advocacy of surrender to Babylon, preaching that God had delivered the nation to the Chaldeans. The people of Anathoth would not harbor such a traitor.

<sup>2</sup>Thompson, 350.

intricacies of the plot are revealed. Perhaps the abruptness reflects his initial lack of awareness regarding the hideous cabal.<sup>1</sup>

In his complaint (vs. 19), Jeremiah compared himself to a sheep being led to slaughter; he is unaware of the threat of death. He is also described as a tree about to be cut down in the spring of life. His picture from an earlier proclamation of judgment against the people, that although they were like a tree of good foliage they will be destroyed (11:16), is mirrored here in that these same people are threatening to cut him down like a green tree. The prophet who had revealed to the people their fate and the hand of God (11:1-17) now has his fate at the hands of the people revealed to him by God. Hence, "the prophet's fate and the people's fate are intertwined."<sup>2</sup>

In the prayer section of the lament Jeremiah asks God to intervene. The enormity of the situation was so overwhelming that he cries out for divine vengeance (*n'qāmāh*) to settle his lawsuit (*rib*). The implication of the verse is that God, as righteous tester, will find Jeremiah innocent and his adversaries guilty and deserving of punishment.

The divine response provides for exactly such judgment. Yahweh reveals that it was Jeremiah's steadfast denunciations of evil in the name of Yahweh why the men of Anathoth desired the prophet's life (vs. 19), that is, the obliteration of his

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<sup>1</sup>CKD, 177.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 278.

name.<sup>1</sup> The motif of the "name" (*šēm*) is significant here. In vs. 19 the prophet's name is to be erased from memory, while in vs. 21 he is to be destroyed because of prophesying in Yahweh's name. "In effect, the obliteration of the prophet's name also means the obliteration of Yahweh's name from Israel."<sup>2</sup> Not so, says Yahweh. He declares unprecedented judgment against the antagonists: they will be overtaken by sword and famine until no one survives. Yahweh intends to destroy these adversaries so that they will have no one, no remnant, to carry on their posterity. Their evil plotting will be reversed so that their name will be forgotten and they will have no progeny to carry on their legacy.

Franz D. Hubmann has demonstrated the relationship between Jeremiah's speech (vss. 18-20) and God's response (vss. 21-23).<sup>3</sup> He shows how both sections have a tricolon at their midpoint that are parallel:

*Plotters: Let us destroy the tree with its fruit  
Let us cut him off from the land of the  
living  
Let his name be remembered no more (vs. 19b).*

*Yahweh: The young men shall die by the sword  
Their sons and daughters shall die by famine  
They shall have no remnant (vss. 22b-23a).*

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<sup>1</sup>Thompson, 350, explains: "Jeremiah's enemies intended to destroy him so that he had no one left, no remnant to carry on his name. His early death would ensure that there was no progeny like him being born. His name would be forgotten, a tragic end for a man of Israel, for whom descendants demonstrated the divine blessing on his life."

<sup>2</sup>O'Connor, 19.

<sup>3</sup>Hubmann, 79-81.

Further, the root *pqd*, "to deal with", "to punish" (vs. 22), answers Jeremiah's prayer for vengeance or recompense in vs. 20 (the root *nqm*). This pronouncement of judgment has a sense of finality. Collectively, the offspring, young men,<sup>1</sup> sons and daughters, will be annihilated. Therefore, no one, no remnant, will survive the catastrophe of famine and the sword.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the consequences for opposing Jeremiah's prophesying is destruction: *and a remnant shall not be left to them.*

This calamity comes "in the year of their punishment."<sup>3</sup> This phrase occurs elsewhere only in Jer 23:12 in an oracle against the prophets, and in Jer 48:44 in an oracle against Moab. In short, the impending judgment against the prophet's personal enemies is described in the same terms as used in the wider context of the nation and a foreign entity.

Jer 15:5-9

### Translation and Textual Considerations

(5) "For who will take pity on you, O Jerusalem?"

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<sup>1</sup>*BHS* suggests that *bahûrîm*, "young men," is dittographic and should be deleted. Whereas the expression does break the poetic pattern, it is better to see it as an alliteration with *hereb*, "sword."

<sup>2</sup>Famine, Sword and Pestilence are common in the book of Jeremiah. See 14:13, 15, 16; 15:2, 3; 21:7, 9; 24:10; 27:18, 13; 29; 17, 18. They refer to destruction due possibly to military invasion.

<sup>3</sup>As Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 375, explains, this phrase is in parallelism with *râ'āh*, "disaster," "evil," in the previous line. Therefore, "year" is a parallel object of "bring" in the previous line. Hence, there is balance.

And who will mourn for you?

And who will turn aside to ask about your welfare?

(6) You, you rejected me," says the Lord.

"You kept going backward

so I stretched out my hand against you and destroyed you;

I was weary of relenting.<sup>1</sup>

(7) And I have winnowed them with a winnowing fork  
in the gates of the land.

I made (them) childless; I destroyed my people;  
they did not turn from their ways.<sup>2</sup>

(8) I have made their widows<sup>3</sup> more numerous than the sands of the sea<sup>4</sup>

I have brought to them, upon the mother of the youth<sup>5</sup> a destroyer at noonday;

I let fall upon her suddenly, anguish and terror.

(9) *She wastes away who has borne seven  
she breathed out her life;<sup>6</sup>*

*her sun has gone down while yet day;*

*she was ashamed and humiliated;*

*and their remnant [š<sup>2</sup>ērītām] I shall give to the sword  
before their enemies," says the Lord.*

<sup>1</sup>LXX reads, *kai ouketi anēsō autous* which is the equivalent of BHS suggested reading, *ni<sup>2</sup> êt hannihām*, "and I will no longer spare them."

<sup>2</sup>LXX reads, *dia tas kakias autōn*, "because of their iniquities."

<sup>3</sup>Reading <sup>2</sup>*lm<sup>2</sup>nōtām* with BHS. Cf. LXX, Syr., and Tg. CKD, 199, indicate that the *mem* dropped out by haplography.

<sup>4</sup>BHS suggests placing this phrase at the end of the verse.

<sup>5</sup>This is the literal translation of MT. BHS proposes "a destroying people," in place of "upon the mothers of the young men." For further discussion on the problems here, see CKD, 199; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 322; G. R. Driver, "Linguistic and Textual Problems: Jeremiah," *JQR*, n.s., 28 (1937-38): 113.

<sup>6</sup>The root *nph* could mean "gasp" in this sense and be translated, "she gasped for life." So JB. See also, W. L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 241, hereafter cited as CHAL. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, reprint ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981), 656, maintain "breathe out her life" for Jer 15:8, hereafter cited as BDB. NEB and RSV say, "Her life has swooned away," describing a state of langour, or a partial or total loss of consciousness.

## Structure

Vs. 9 is the final statement of a lament<sup>1</sup> constituting 15:5-9.<sup>2</sup> It may be divided into two sections:

1. A brief word of lament by Jeremiah, introduced by the interrogative particle *mī*, "who?" (vs. 5).<sup>3</sup>
2. The divine oracle (vss. 6-9). The formulaic expression, "thus says the Lord," forms an inclusio. The first-person pronominal form dominates, being used eight times in reference to God.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>W. A. M. Beuken and H. W. M. van Grol, "Jeremiah 14, 1-15, 9: A Situation of Distress and Its Hermeneutics, Unity and Diversity of Form--Dramatic Development," in *Le Livre de Jérémie: le Prophète et son milieu, les oracles et leur transmission*, BETL 54, ed. P. -M. Bogaert (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1981), 314. Deep distress characterizes the person addressed and the subject matter.

<sup>2</sup>Many commentators regard this as part of the larger section 14:1-15:9: CKD, 195-200; Holladay, *The Architecture of Jeremiah 1-20*, 145, 146; Reventlow, 150-153; Condamin, 123-130.

Others like Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament, An Introduction*, trans. P. R. Ackroyd (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 355-356; Volz, *Der Prophet Jeremia*, 158-168 (who calls it, "The Great Drought"); and G. R. Castellino, "Some Observations on the Literary Structure of Some Passages in Jeremiah," *VT* 30 (1980): 407, assume a unity for 14:1-15:4.

Some, however, dispute this claim: John Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion: Studies in the Life of Jeremiah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), 128, calls it "a mixed collection of oracles." J. W. Miller, 51, regards any unity in this passage as being secondary.

<sup>3</sup>The *qinah* form is communicated throughout the section. It is quite pronounced in Jeremiah's three rhetorical questions of vs. 5: *Who will pity you, O Jerusalem? Who will mourn for you? Who will stop to ask about you?* In all cases, the answer is an implied negative. On this stylistic element, see Walter Brueggemann, "Jeremiah's Use of Rhetorical Questions," *JBL* 92 (1973): 358-374.

<sup>4</sup>C. F. Keil, *The Prophecies of Jeremiah*, vol. 1, trans. David Patrick (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1960), 256.

### Historical Background

The reference to Manasseh (vs. 4) seems to point to 2 Kgs 21:1-17 and the abominable acts of that king.<sup>1</sup> However, the imagery in Jer 15 points to the ravages of invasion and war. Scholarly opinion is divided with regard to the exact historical point.<sup>2</sup> I am inclined to agree with Hyatt that the details are not sufficiently clear for a definite decision to be made.<sup>3</sup>

### Interpretation

This poem describes the fate of Jerusalem. The theme of terrible judgment depicted in 15:1-4 is continued, for the particle *kî* in vs. 5 connects both sections. God denotes that even great intercessors like Moses and Samuel cannot deter the divine punishment that is coming on the people of Jerusalem (vs. 1).<sup>4</sup> The terrible measures of judgment in vss. 1-3 are now mirrored in the divine action in vss. 6-9.

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<sup>1</sup>Clements, 95, sees the mention of Manasseh as the deliberate cross-referencing of a scribe. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 427, dates it to November/December 601 B.C.

<sup>2</sup>Volz, *Der Prophet Jeremia*, 169, places it as the invasion of 602 B.C. as recorded in 2 Kgs 24:2. Rudolph, 89, assigns it to 598 B.C., while Thompson, 389, holds to the Babylonian invasion of 587 B.C. Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion*, 270, claims that the passage "depicts the desolation of Jerusalem as already accomplished, and in such terms that even if its language be only the language of prophetic anticipation, it must express the feelings with which he looked back on the history which had culminated in this immeasurable tragedy."

<sup>3</sup>Hyatt, "Jeremiah," 937.

<sup>4</sup>On this matter, see W. L. Holladay, "The Background of Jeremiah's Self-Understanding: Moses, Samuel and Psalms 22," *JBL* 83 (1964): 153-164; reprinted in *A Prophet to the Nations: Essays in Jeremiah Studies*, ed. Leo G. Perdue and Brian W. Kovacs (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1984), 313-337.

The questions of vs. 5 expect a resounding negative reply: no one will pity, console, or inquire of Jerusalem's *šālōm*.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, a loss of *šālōm* is implied. This signals a reversal of prosperity and well-being in the cultic community, and more importantly, the claim of Zion's inviolability.<sup>2</sup>

The judgments expressed in vss. 6-9 are also overwhelmingly negative. The repetition "you, you" places emphasis on the rebellious action of Jerusalem against God in vs. 6a. This is compounded by the expression <sup>3</sup>*āhōr tēlēkī*, "you keep going backwards," which is indicative of taking "the initiative to sever an existing relationship."<sup>3</sup> In short, this is a breach of covenant. Therefore, in vss. 6b-9 emphasis is placed on God's punitive actions against Jerusalem. This is well summarized: "Through the litany of judgment, the Lord described the horrible deeds forced upon him by the people's action. The people had rejected him for the last time; the time of judgment had come."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Beuken and van Grol, 316, indicate that such an inquiry marks the absence of every kind of help in situations of distress.

<sup>2</sup>Jonathan Paige Sisson, "Jeremiah and the Jerusalem Conception of Peace," *JBL* 105 (1986): 437, 438. He adds that the loss of peace meant the upstaging of Jerusalem as the center of the created order, the disruption of the natural and social spheres of life, the deterioration of the political situation and increased hostilities against the city. In short, it describes a state of disorder and desolation especially since the loss of *šālōm* from Jerusalem coincided with the abandonment of Zion as the divine residence.

<sup>3</sup>Beuken and van Grol, 318.

<sup>4</sup>CKD, 205.

The judgment is described in terms of destruction (vs. 6), winnowing,<sup>1</sup> and bereavement caused by childlessness (vs. 7), widowhood (v. 8),<sup>2</sup> and the shameful languishing and death of the remnant (vs. 9). This is inevitable since the people are charged with rejecting God to the point where the divine declaration is, "I am weary of relenting." The irony is biting for the Lord had grown "'weary' of relenting or leaving off his judgment on the people who had grown 'weary' of repenting (9:4)."<sup>3</sup>

The expression "mother of seven" is a proverbial description of the fulfilled or satisfied mother (cf. Ruth 4:15; 1 Sam 2:5). But here she is filled with dissatisfaction and dismay comparable to that of the nobles and farmers of Jer 14:3-4, who are suffering in the midst of drought. Therefore, Judah languishes or wastes away. Further, the expression, "her sun is set while it is yet day," is balanced by the reference to the devastator at noon in vs. 8. This reflects on the loss of young men in battle while still in their noonday, that is, their strength and vigor of manhood. This is a curse for she is left with no future heir.<sup>4</sup> Despite all this anguish and suffering, a word of finality is added: Yahweh will bring the enemies' sword against those who are remaining, the remnant, who survived the brutality of the invaders. Nothing less

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<sup>1</sup>The act of winnowing is one of separation and reduction. It implies the presence of a remnant as that which has been left behind.

<sup>2</sup>This is a negation or reversal of the promise given to Abraham that his offspring will be like the sands by the sea, too numerous to be counted (Gen 15:5; 22:17). Now the people are childless and their widows outnumber the sands.

<sup>3</sup>CKD, 204. Beuken and van Grol, 317, see this as an announcement of the inevitability of judgment for "God no longer regrets the execution of judgment."

<sup>4</sup>Thompson, 390.

than absolute annihilation is in view here. Even the remnant will eventually become fatalities. The end result of the judgment will be destruction of even the remnant. Jerusalem, the mother-city of Judah, has no positive future, no hope.<sup>1</sup> The totality of destruction, enveloping even the remnant, is forcefully emphasized by Beuken and van Grol:

No one is interested in Jerusalem's fate, because God made her childless (vs. 7b). There are only widows left, without any protection, because not only the mother who leans on a young son, but even the very prolific and therefore unimpeachable woman stands alone. And so the figures in which beaten Jerusalem appears, already show . . . the tragic effect of the judgment, which not only hits the leaders--the oracle does not mention them--but also those who need protection, the women and mothers, *on whom the progress of life rests*.<sup>2</sup>

Tragically, the distress of the city and the cutting off of its remnant, is that she brought this on herself. God stands there, grieved but powerless.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hausmann, 98. This comes as the conclusion to the several judgments in the entire pericope. This heightens the intensity: drought (14:2-6); lament of the people (vss. 7-9); God's judgments against them even prohibiting the prophet to pray on their behalf (vss. 10-16). Lament (vss. 17-18) follows lament (vss. 19-22). Again God prohibits intercession (15:1) and threatens powerful judgments (vss. 2-4). Without pity or compassion, more scathing judgments befall the people (vss. 5-9), until death becomes inevitable. See also Volz, *Der Prophet Jeremia*, 163.

<sup>2</sup>Beuken and van Grol, 320 (emphasis mine).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 324.

**Translation and Textual Considerations**

(1) The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord when king Zedekiah sent to him Pashur ben Malchiah and Zephaniah ben Maaseiah, the priest, saying, (2) "Please pray to the Lord on our behalf, because Nebuchadrezzar<sup>1</sup> king of Babylon is waging war against us. Perhaps the Lord will perform with us<sup>2</sup> according to his mighty acts and cause him to go up from us." (3) But Jeremiah said unto them, "Thus you shall say to Zedekiah:<sup>3</sup> (4) This is what the Lord, the God of Israel<sup>4</sup> says, "'Behold, I am about to turn back the weapons of warfare which are in your hands<sup>5</sup> with which you are fighting the king of Babylon and<sup>6</sup> the Chaldeans who are about to besiege you from outside the wall. And I will gather them<sup>7</sup> to the midst of this city. (5) And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and a strong arm in anger, wrath and great fury. (6) I will strike down those living in this city, both human and beast; in a great pestilence they will die.<sup>8</sup> (7) *And afterward,*" says the Lord, "I will give Zedekiah, king of Judah and his servants and the people in this city who have survived [*hanniš<sup>9</sup>rim*]<sup>9</sup> the plague, the sword,<sup>10</sup> and the famine, into the

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<sup>1</sup>This name is not in LXX.

<sup>2</sup>LXX does not have "with us."

<sup>3</sup>LXX adds, "The king of Judah."

<sup>4</sup>"The God of Israel" is not in LXX.

<sup>5</sup>The expression "which are in your hands" is missing in LXX.

<sup>6</sup>LXX lacks "the king of Babylon and."

<sup>7</sup>Lacking in LXX.

<sup>8</sup>LXX has *kai apothanountai* which equals *BHS*' suggested reading of *wāmēû*, "and they will die" (i.e. "I will strike down those living . . . in a great pestilence, and they will die").

<sup>9</sup>Following LXX, Syr. and Tg which delete the *w<sup>9</sup>et* which MT places between *hā<sup>c</sup>ām* and *hanniš<sup>9</sup>rim*.

<sup>10</sup>Several MSS and versions add the conjunction *û*; hence, "and from the sword."

*hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon<sup>1</sup> and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those who seek their lives. And he<sup>2</sup> shall strike them with the edge of the sword; he shall not pity them, nor spare<sup>3</sup> them, nor have compassion.<sup>4</sup>* (8) And you shall say to this people, "Thus says the Lord, 'Behold I am giving to you the way of life and the way of death. (9) Whoever stays in this city will die by the sword, by famine or by pestilence; but whoever goes out and falls down to the Chaldeans who are besieging you will live; his life will be his for the spoil of war. (10) Because I have my face against this city for evil and not for good," says the Lord. "It will be given into the hand of the king of Babylon and he will burn it with fire."

### Structure

Jer 21:1-10 is an oracle denouncing the city as a whole. This is differentiated from Jer 21:11-14, which is a denunciation of the monarchy. The unit may be divided into two broad sub-units:

#### 1. The king's deputation to the prophet (vss. 1-2)

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<sup>1</sup>The entire expression, "into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon," is lacking in LXX.

<sup>2</sup>LXX has the plural, *kai katakópsousin autous*, "and they will smite them." MT is obviously pointing back to Nebuchadnezzar, so the singular form is expected.

<sup>3</sup>LXX omits MT *w'lô<sup>2</sup> yahmól*, "and he shall not have pity."

<sup>4</sup>MT *lô<sup>2</sup> yāhūs . . . w'lô<sup>2</sup> y'rahēm*, "he will not pity . . . nor have compassion" is understood by LXX as *ou pheisomai . . . kai ou mē oiktirēsō*, "I will not spare . . . nor will I have compassion." Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, explains the LXX use of the singular form as the *lectio difficilior*.

Noting the shortness of the LXX in comparison to the MT, some commentators regard the MT as an expansionist text. See John Gerald Janzen, *Studies in the Text of Jeremiah*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 6 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 41, 69-72. Janzen sees a typical expansionist tendency in the name Nebuchadnezzar.

Janzen argues for the priority of LXX over the MT, a position that has influenced some later studies. A recent study, however, posits that there is sufficient evidence to establish the priority of the Hebrew text. See Georg Fischer, "Jer 25 und die Fremdvölkersprüche: Unterschiede zwischen hebräischen und griechischem." *Biblica* 72 (1991): 474-499.

2. The reply of the prophet who reports God's intended action (vss. 3-10).

This has two parts:

- a. vss. 4-7: Yahweh's declaration of war
- b. vss. 8-10: Yahweh's declaration of a choice.

These further divisions are based on the Introductory formula *kōh ʾāmar ʾādōnāy*, "thus says the Lord" (vss. 4, 8).

### Historical Background

The content of Jer 21:2 suggests a time before the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem had actually begun.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, several authorities generally date this event as being somewhere between 589 or early 588 B.C.<sup>2</sup> Others however combine chap. 21 with other passages, notably 34:1-7 and 37: 3-10, which have led to a different conclusion as summed up by Hyatt: "We may therefore consider 21:1-10 as the Deuteronomic editor's reviewing of the event of 37:3-10, without any independent historical value."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 217. O'Connor, 146, argues that while chap. 21 reiterates the prediction of the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon, "the fall is treated as a *fait accompli*."

<sup>2</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 216; CKD, 283; Holladay, *Jeremiah I*, 570.

<sup>3</sup>Hyatt, "Jeremia," 977. See also Rudolph, 116-117; B. Stade, "Bemerkungen zum Buch Jeremia," *ZAW* 12 (1892): 276-308; idem, "The Deuteronomic Edition of Jeremiah," in *Vanderbilt Studies in the Humanities I*, ed. R. C. Beatty, J. P. Hyatt, and M. K. Spears (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1951), 71-95. For a proper challenge and refutation of such a position, see Gunther Wanke, *Untersuchungen zur sogenannten Baruchschrift*, *BZAW* 122 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), 102; and Helga Weippert, *Die Prosareden des Jeremiabuches*, *BZAW* 132 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1973), 68-76.

However, a comparison of chap. 21 with these passages indicates that they all refer to the events regarding the final siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

Chap. 21 deals with the time *before* the siege occurred, whereas the other passages record incidents *after* the siege had started.<sup>1</sup> Thompson comments correctly:

The passage . . . relates to an incident which took place when Jerusalem came under Chaldean blockade in late 589 or early 588 B.C. After the disturbances of 594 B.C. (chs. 27, 28) nothing is recorded of Jeremiah's ministry till this incident. Then in 589 B.C., Zedekiah showed signs of rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar, encouraged by the promise of Egyptian help and urged on by his nobles. Nebuchadnezzar soon reacted, perhaps late in 589 B.C., and by January 588 (52:4) his armies were in Judah and had commenced operations against Jerusalem (2 Kgs 25) and against the cities of Judah. The campaign went on through the winter and spring of 588 B.C. By the end of that time the land was in desperate plight. In these circumstances, Zedekiah sought the advice of Jeremiah (cf. 37:3-10, 17-21; 38:14-28).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Volz, *Der Prophet Jeremia*, 213; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 216; F. Giesebrecht, *Das Buch Jeremia*, HKAT 3/2 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1907), 116, 117.

<sup>2</sup>Thompson, 466.

## Interpretation

The king's deputation<sup>1</sup> places a straightforward request to the prophet, asking him to inquire<sup>2</sup> of the Lord regarding the Babylonian siege. It is hoped that Yahweh will intercede mightily (vss. 1-2).<sup>3</sup> But Yahweh's reply destroys all hope. He will repel Judah's forces and declare war against them Himself, turning their own weapons against them (vs. 4)<sup>4</sup> and defeating them with His "outstretched hand and strong arm" (vs. 5). This expression was used for Yahweh's mighty deliverance of

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<sup>1</sup>Artur Weiser, *Das Buch Jeremia*, ATD 20/21 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 177, n. 1, has observed that there is a gap of about ten years between the events of chaps. 20 and 21. W. Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 1-25*, 231, thinks that Jer 21:1-10 is chronologically misplaced since reference to the final assault on Jerusalem is not to be expected here. How is 21:1-10 to be reconciled with chap. 20? Rudolph, 135, proposes that there is a connection by way of the name "Pashur" although the Pashur of 21:1 is different from that of 20:1-6. Rudolph explains the repetition of the name as an echo which highlights the contrast between Jeremiah as a prophet who was persecuted by the priest Pashur ben Immer in chap. 20, and the same Jeremiah whose advice was sought by the statesman Pashur ben Malchiah, accompanied by Zephaniah ben Maaseiah (who now holds the office of high priest vacated by Pashur ben Immer).

<sup>2</sup>*Dāraš*, "inquire," is used in the sense of the prophet acting as a mediator seeking to understand the mind of God with regard to the inquiry made. See further S. Wagner, "*Dāraš*," *TDOT* (1978), 3:293-307. Samuel E. Balentine, "The Prophet as Intercessor: A Reassessment," *JBL* 103 (1984): 163-164, observes that this role of the prophet is not used "frequently or consistently with any prophetic figure other than Jeremiah."

<sup>3</sup>Zedekiah is thinking of 701 B.C. when God delivered Jerusalem from Sennacherib and the Assyrians by a "mighty act" (2 Kgs 19:25-36; Isa 37:36-37).

<sup>4</sup>Helga Weippert, "Jahwekrieg und Bundesfluch in Jer 21:1-7," *ZAW* 82 (1970): 396-408, interprets vs. 4 against the background of parallels from several curses in ancient oriental treaties and shows that the weapons are gathered to do battle against the Judean ranks within the city and not the Chaldean forces outside the walls. Hence, Jer 21:1-7 represents a reversal of the ideology of the war of Yahweh.

His people from Egyptian bondage,<sup>1</sup> but here it is reversed: that same power will be employed to destroy Judah so that they will be enslaved again. With irresistible force and unrelenting fury, Yahweh will launch a final assault on the city as denoted in the three nouns: *ʿāp*, "anger"; *hēmāh*, "wrath"; and *qesef gādōl*, "great fury." Vs. 6 issues the death sentence, which is followed in vs. 7 with a grim picture of all-embracing destruction.<sup>2</sup>

Vs. 7 has four parts, each with three elements:

1. Zedekiah, officials, the remnant
2. Plague, sword, famine
3. Nebuchadrezzar, enemies, those who seek life
4. No pity, no sparing, no compassion.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Deut 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; etc. Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, trans. John McHugh (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961), 258-265, suggests that the picture here is one of "Holy War." See also G. H. Jones, "The Concept of Holy War," in *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological and Political Perspectives*, ed. R. E. Clements (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 227-250.

In Jer 21:5 the phrase switches from its general usage, "with a strong hand and outstretched arm," to "an outstretched hand and a strong arm." Berridge, 117, 118, believes that this is a deliberate switch to forcefully demonstrate Yahweh fighting against His own people.

<sup>2</sup>For the use of war traditions in the book of Jeremiah, see J. A. Soggin, "The Prophets on Holy War as Judgment Against Israel," in *Old Testament and Oriental Studies*, *Biblica et Orientalia* 29 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1975), 67-71; originally published as "Der prophetische Gedanke über den heiligen Krieg als Gericht gegen Israel," *VT* 10 (1960): 79-83.

This "piling up of judgments and enemies [is] for emphasis to indicate the gravity of the oracle."<sup>1</sup> First, the extent of the judgment is emphasized in that all the people are affected: nobility, courtiers, common people, and even the residue that is left behind. The judgment is all-inclusive. Second, the instruments of judgment are intensified: in vs. 6 only the plague is mentioned, in vs. 7 the sword and famine are added. Third, the human agents, namely, Nebuchadrezzar<sup>2</sup> and his forces, who are used by God to execute His judgment, are repeated. Finally, the comprehensiveness of the judgment is magnified: no sparing, no pity, no compassion. Vs. 7, therefore, functions to demonstrate that there is no sense in continued resistance to the opposing Chaldeans. This will lead only to the demise of the entire populace, including the remnant that had survived the terrors of the siege.

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<sup>1</sup>CKD, 288. Thompson, 468, says that this device "adds vividness and emphasis to the grim picture."

<sup>2</sup>On the meaning of this name see Thomas W. Overholt, "King Nebuchadnezzar in the Jeremiah Tradition," *CBQ* 30 (1968): 39-48; Adrian van Selms, "The Name Nebuchadnezzar," in *Travels in the World of the Old Testament: Studies Presented to Professor M. A. Beek on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, ed. M. S. H. G. Heerma van Voss, Ph. H. J. Houwink ten Cate, and N. A. van Uchelen, *Studia Semitica Neerlandica* (Assen: VanGorcum, 1974), 223-229. He claims that the name Nebuchadnezzar means "May (the god) Nabu protect the boundary stone," or "May Nabu protect the son/crown prince." The more regular form Nebuchadnezzar may be from a nickname which had negative connotations, "May Nabu protect the mule."

Nevertheless, Yahweh offers a choice: resistance will lead to death but surrender will lead to the preservation of life (vss. 8-10).<sup>1</sup> Basic to the appeal of vss. 8-10 is the fact that the city is doomed, for Yahweh has determined to destroy it.<sup>2</sup>

The pericope functions to show the Divine Warrior in action against His own people, a reversal from the history of the God who fought for His people. Unmitigating judgment will come against all people, even to the remnant holed up in the city and refusing to surrender to the Chaldeans.

Jer 24:1-10

### Translation and Textual Considerations

(1) The Lord showed me, and there, two baskets of figs set down<sup>3</sup> in front of the temple of the Lord (after Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had exiled Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, the artisans and the smiths,<sup>4</sup> from Jerusalem and had taken them to Babylon). (2)

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<sup>1</sup>Thiel, 235-236, holds that these verses were added by the deuteronomic editor of the book of Jeremiah. This choice between life and death was formulated in Deut 30:15.

<sup>2</sup>William McKane, "The Construction of Jeremiah Chapter XXI," *VT* 32 (1982): 61.

<sup>3</sup>The Hophal participle *mû<sup>c</sup>āim* (from *y<sup>c</sup>d*, "to set, place") occurs only here and in Ezek 21:16 (see *BDB*, 417). *BHS* suggested emendation to *ōm<sup>c</sup>im*, "standing"; *mo<sup>c</sup>māim*, "placed"; or even *mūdā<sup>c</sup>im*, "make known," is not necessary. D. W. Thomas, "A Note on *mû<sup>c</sup>āim* in Jeremiah 24:1," *JTS*, n.s., 3 (1952): 55, suggests a root *wd<sup>c</sup>* (Arabic *wada<sup>c</sup>a*) "to put, deposit, place."

<sup>4</sup>MT *w<sup>ṣ</sup> et-hammasgēr* is uncertain and most of the versions translate "smiths" implying "locksmiths" (*sgr*, "shut, close") or "goldsmiths" (*sāgur*, "a finely hammered gold plate"). LXX reads, *kai tous desmōtas*, "and the prisoners." Standing alongside "artisans" here it suggests a craftsman of some sort. Cf. Jer 29:2; 2 Kgs 24:14, 16; Thompson, 506. Driver, 116-118, suggests that the harem is here intended. LXX also adds, *kai tous plousious*, "and the rich." Hence, "and the prisoners and the rich."

The one basket had very good figs like first-ripe figs, and the other basket had very bad figs that could not be eaten for rottenness. (3) And the Lord said to me, "What do you see Jeremiah?" And I said, "Figs, the good figs are very good, but the bad are very bad which cannot be eaten for badness." (4) Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, (5) "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Like these good figs I will regard for good the exiles of Judah whom I sent from this place to the land of the Chaldeans. (6) I will put my eye upon them for good and I will cause them to return to this land. I will build them up and not break down, I will plant and not uproot. (7) And I will give them a heart to know me that I am the Lord. They will be my people and I will be their God because they will return to me with all their heart. (8) *But like the bad figs, which cannot be eaten for badness,*" indeed, thus says the Lord,<sup>1</sup> "So I will make Zedekiah, King of Judah, and his princes, and the remnant [*š<sup>e</sup> ērîṭ*] of Jerusalem, the ones remaining [*hanniš<sup>2</sup> ārîm*] in this land and the ones dwelling in the land of Egypt. (9) I will make them a terror for evil to all the kingdoms of the earth, for a reproach, a byword, for a taunt and a curse in all the places to which I have driven them there. (10) And I will send against them the sword, famine and pestilence until they are destroyed from the land that I gave to them and to their fathers.

## Structure

Burke O. Long identifies Jer 24 as an oracle-vision: a short report,

dominated by a question-and-answer dialogue, where the visionary image is simple and undimensional.<sup>2</sup> This yields the following structure:

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<sup>1</sup>The entire expression, "indeed, thus says the Lord," is labelled by *BHS* as an addition. This so-called "secondary expansion" is accepted by Holladay, *Jeremiah I*, 654; Rudolph, 134; Susan Niditch, *The Symbolic Vision in Biblical Tradition*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 30 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 59; and Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 481. However, as CKD, 360, indicate, if *Kî* is understood as an emphatic rather than a causal participle, then the MT makes good sense.

<sup>2</sup>Burke O. Long, "Reports of Visions among the Prophets, *JBL* 95 (1976), 357. John Bright, "The Prophetic Reminiscence: Its Place and Function in the Book of Jeremiah," in *Biblical Essays: Proceedings of the Ninth Meeting of Die Oud-Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suid-Afrika* (Potchefstroom: Herald Beperk, 1966), 21, describes chap. 24 as a reminiscence in which the prophet describes a vision through which a word from Yahweh had come to him.

1. Announcement of vision (24:1a)
2. Transition (24:1b, *hinneh*)
3. Vision sequence (24:1c-10)
  - a. the image (24:2--two baskets of figs)
  - b. question by YHWH (24:3a)
  - c. answer by prophet (24:3b)
  - d. Oracle by YHWH (24:4-10).

The Oracle by YHWH falls into two balanced halves:

1. The positive affirmation of the good figs (vss. 4-7);
2. The negative verdict against the bad figs (vss. 8-10). The two

contrasting sections may be schematized as follows:

Good figs (5a)	Bad figs (8a)
Exiles of Judah (5b)	Zedekiah, the rulers the remnant (8b)
Exiles sent to the land of the Chaldeans (5c)	Remnant of Jerusalem who remain in the land (8c)
God's actions of good to the exiles (6)	God's action of evil against the remnant (9)
God's action of covenant renewal and restoration (7)	God's agents of destruction (10)

## Historical Background

Jer 24:1 provides the historical dateline as being some time after Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) and many of the people had been taken into Babylonian exile. Since the temple is still standing, the deportation of 597 B.C. is evident. And since Zedekiah (597 B.C.-586 B.C.) is referred to, the setting lends itself to a date between 597 and 586 B.C.<sup>1</sup> I concur with Holladay: "A date for the passage must obviously fall within the reign of Zedekiah, but only indirect evidence suggests any greater precision."<sup>2</sup>

## Interpretation

Jer 24 discusses the remnant with the metaphor of rotten figs in the second of two baskets<sup>3</sup> which the prophet saw in a vision. These disgusting figs pointed to Zedekiah, his courtiers, and the remnant of Jerusalem who remained in the land.

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<sup>1</sup>While Niditch, 61, and Bright, *Jeremiah*, 193, accept this historical dateline (although adding that the chronological notation was added secondarily), they place the oracle much later. Herbert G. May, "Towards an Objective Approach to the Book Jeremiah: The Biographer," *JBL* 61 (1942), 148, 149, claims that the situations and attitudes in Ezra 4 form a more plausible background for chap. 24 than can be found in Jeremiah himself. Hyatt, "*Jeremiah*," 998, sees chap. 24 as entirely Deuteronomic, ca. 550 B.C., and as such, propagandistic. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 483, shares this view. On the other hand, Rudolph, 158, defends Jeremianic authenticity, claiming, "A prophecy after the fact is not an issue here."

<sup>2</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1, 657.

<sup>3</sup>Lindblom, 140, and Bright, *Jeremiah*, 194, both concede that the baskets were real, physical entities. Both Rudolph, 135, and Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1, 657, believe that there were not physical baskets; rather, the simplicity of the details suggests dream material.

As the structure indicates, the element of contrast is highlighted. The exiles will eventually be the recipients of salvation, whereas those who remained in the land will receive terrible judgments. The oracle is ironic because the exiles, who should be the recipients of judgment, are designated to receive blessings and restoration. The remnant, who may be considered as blessed because they remained in the land, with the temple in place, can look forward only to relentless judgment. Since the possession of the land is so crucial,<sup>1</sup> then remaining in the land should be good, while being taken from it should be bad. But the stunning verdict of vss. 8-10 reverses and contradicts this popular expectation. Brueggemann comments,

The people who remained in the land must have reckoned themselves as blessed. They had watched the sorry events of 598 and had noticed that they were untouched. Public life continued to function for them. To have this negative judgment announced in that context must have been remarkably polemical.<sup>2</sup>

The negative verdict against the remnant actually groups together two communities: the Judean remnant and those who decided to go to Egypt to live (vs. 8). Common to both is that they are not in Babylon. The "Babylonian orientation"<sup>3</sup> of the book of Jeremiah requires that they be critiqued as being irrelevant for the future.

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<sup>1</sup>See Peter Diepold, *Israel's Land*, BWANT 15 (Berlin: W. Kohlhammer, 1972); Walter Brueggemann, *The Land*, Overtures to Biblical Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977); idem, "Israel's Sense of Place in Jeremiah," in *Rhetorical Criticism: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg*, ed. Jared J. Jackson and Martin Kessler (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1974), 149-165.

<sup>2</sup>Walter Brueggemann, "A Second Reading of Jeremiah after the Dismantling," *Ex Auditu* 1 (1985): 161.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid.*

Further, the verdict against the remnant is supported by two formulae: the first in vs. 9 indicates that the judged communities will be reduced to humiliation in the eyes of the other nations; the second in vs. 10 explicates the sentence in the three-fold curse formula of sword, famine, and pestilence. These formulae have the double effect of signalling the "inversion of the election tradition" and the negation of the covenant. In short, "the community is under death sentence. The ones in the land and the ones in Egypt are bound to death . . . . The landed are for death, the exiles are for life and hope."<sup>1</sup>

Further, the message of chap. 24 indicates a paradox: God's future for His people would be through the exiles (those who appear to have no future), whereas the remnant (those who appear to have a future) are faced with destruction.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>The same fate is to be shared by those who live in Egypt (vs. 8c). These are identified variously as: (1) those who fled to Egypt from Judah after the assassination of Gedaliah (Jer 42:7-43:7); so Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 207; (2) Those of pro-Egyptian sympathies who may have settled there when Jehoahaz was taken captive in 609 B.C. (2 Kgs 23:34); or when Jehoiakim became Nebuchadnezzar's vassal (ca. 603 B.C.); or those who fled there when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt in 598/97 B.C. So Thompson, 508, 509. CKD, 360, agree with the last suggestion, forwarding the argument which is plausible, that in the latter years of Judah's independence prior to the exile, there was considerable vacillation between pro-Egyptian and pro-Babylonian factions. It is quite likely that some of the pro-Egyptian party fled to Egypt at the time of Jehoiakim's deportation in 598/97 B.C. The point, however, is transparent: only those exiled to Babylon constituted the good figs. Those left in the land, as well as those who had fled to Egypt, constituted the bad figs.

**Translation and Textual Considerations**

(1) King Zedekiah son of Josiah, whom Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had set on the throne in the land of Judah reigned instead of Coniah son of Jehoiakim. (2) But neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land listened to the words of the Lord which he spoke through Jeremiah the prophet. (3) King Zedekiah sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the priest, the son of Maaseiah, to Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "Please pray on our behalf to the Lord our God." (4) Jeremiah was still coming and going among the people<sup>1</sup> for they had not yet put him into prison. (5) The army of Pharaoh had come from Egypt; and when the Chaldeans who were beseiging Jerusalem<sup>2</sup> heard the news they withdrew from Jerusalem. (6) Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet saying, (7) "Thus says the Lord God of Israel, 'Thus you shall say to the king of Judah who has sent you to me to inquire of me: Behold, Pharaoh's army which came to help you shall return to its own land, Egypt. (8) And the Chaldeans shall return and fight against this city and they shall capture it and burn it with fire. (9) Thus says the Lord, "Do not deceive yourselves, saying, 'The Chaldeans shall surely go away<sup>3</sup> from us;' for they will not go. (10) *Even if<sup>4</sup> you should defeat the entire army of Chaldeans who are fighting against you and there remained [w'niš<sup>2</sup>ru] among them only wounded men, each man in his tent,<sup>5</sup> they would rise up and burn<sup>6</sup> this city with fire.*

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<sup>1</sup>LXX has "he came and went through the midst of the city."

<sup>2</sup>LXX lacks, "who were beseiging Jerusalem."

<sup>3</sup>The emphatic infinitive is used here *hālōk yēl'kū*.

<sup>4</sup>BHS, following LXX, suggests replacing *kī* with *w<sup>2</sup>im*, "and if." It is believed that *kī* should be read at the beginning of vs. 9. However, MT is to be favored by reading *kī* as an emphatic particle.

<sup>5</sup>MT *ʔiš b<sup>2</sup>oh<sup>2</sup>lō*, "each man in his tent," is rendered in the LXX by *en tō topō autou*, "each in his place."

<sup>6</sup>BHS suggests reading *lkd*, "capture" (in light of vs. 9), instead of "burn with fire."

## Structure

Jeremiah 37:1-10<sup>1</sup> may be divided into three sections:

1. Superscription (vss. 1-2)
2. The historical framework (vss. 3-5)
3. The divine word to Jeremiah to be delivered to the King's envoys (vss. 6-10).

## Historical Background

This incident occurred during the brief respite when the Babylonian army withdrew its siege of Jerusalem because of the approach of an Egyptian force (vs. 5). This was in the late spring or early summer of 588 B.C. During this time King Zedekiah had two consultations with Jeremiah, the first (37:1-10) prior to his incarceration, and the second (37:17-21) after his arrest.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The formulaic expression *w'hāyāh*, "and it happened" (vs. 11), signals the beginning of a new section.

<sup>2</sup>Thompson, 630; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 282; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 223.

## Interpretation

Vss. 1-2 provide a superscription for chaps. 37-45<sup>1</sup> and also make a transition from chap. 36, which deals with Jehoiakim's reign. Central to this superscription is the point that Zedekiah and all his courtiers, like his predecessors, deliberately ignored Yahweh's messages through the prophet Jeremiah.

Vss. 3-5 speak of the emissaries dispatched by the king to the prophet with the request, "Pray now to Yahweh for us." This occurred during the brief respite when the Chaldean army lifted the siege to meet the advancing Egyptian force. Bright comments, "One can readily imagine the wild joy and the profound relief that it evoked. It must have seemed to the people in Jerusalem that their God had once more, in the nick of time, intervened with his mighty acts to save them."<sup>2</sup>

Hence, Zedekiah's request for divine intervention, in light of Jeremiah's dim forecast of destruction in 34:1-7, may be a bid for hope that Yahweh will repeat the miracle of 701 B.C. when He had demolished the Assyrian forces seizing Jerusalem in the time of Hezekiah.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>These chaps. are generally seen as one block of material (Mowinckel's "Source B") written by Baruch. See Duhm, xvi; Volz, *Der Prophet Jeremia*, xlvi; Bright, *Jeremiah*, lxvii; Rudolph, xv-xvi; and H. Kremers, "Leidensgemeinschaft mit Gott im Alten Testament." *EvT* 13 (1953): 123.

Others have assigned it differently: May, 139-141, suggests an anonymous author. E. W. Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles: A Study of the Prose Tradition in the Book of Jeremiah* (Oxford & New York: Basil Blackwell, 1970), 18, proposes a "circle of traditionalists."

<sup>2</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 223.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. 2 Kgs 19:32-37.

But the divine word (vss. 6-10) smashes all hope: the Egyptians will be defeated and the Babylonians will return and sack the city (vss. 7-8). Further, says Yahweh, in a straightforward manner, "*Do not deceive yourselves<sup>1</sup> saying, 'The Chaldeans will surely go away<sup>2</sup> from us.'* *Indeed, they will not go away*" (vs. 9). Vs. 10 places the judgment in the spotlight: even if Zedekiah could defeat the Babylonians so soundly, leaving only a dilapidated remnant of wounded soldiers, even this wounded remnant will rise up from their tents and destroy the city. This irony magnifies the situation of hopelessness and brings contempt to the fore, in that, a few surviving remnant will destroy the masses. Hence, the false hopes raised by the appearance of the Egyptians on the horizon were dashed to pieces. The judgment is so strong that "such rhetorical exaggeration served to portray in stark fashion the inevitability of Jerusalem's fall and destruction."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This translates the Hebrew idiomatic expression, *ʔal-taššiʔû naphšôtēkem*, "do not cause your souls to lift up (rise up)."

<sup>2</sup>The people's foolish confidence is put forward in the use of the emphatic infinitive *hālôk yēl'kû*.

<sup>3</sup>Thompson, 632.

### Translation and Textual Considerations

(1) Now Shephethiah the son of Mattan, Gedaliah the son of Pashhur, Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur the son of Malchiah heard the words which Jeremiah was speaking to the people saying: (2) "Thus says the Lord, "Whoever stays in this city shall die by the sword, by famine and by pestilence; but whoever goes out to the Chaldeans shall live; he shall have his life as a booty for war, and live.'" (3) Thus says the Lord, "This city shall surely be given into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon and he will capture it.'" (4) *Then the princes<sup>1</sup> said to the king, "This man must be put to death,<sup>2</sup> for he is weakening<sup>3</sup> the hands of the men of war who are remaining [hanniš<sup>3</sup> ārîm] in this city, and the hands of all the people by speaking these words to them. For this man is not seeking the good of this people but their evil."* (5) Then king Zedekiah said, "Behold, he is in your hands; for the king is not one who can do anything against you."<sup>4</sup> (6) So they took Jeremiah and threw him into the cistern of Malchiah, the king's son, which was in the court of the guard, letting Jeremiah down by ropes. And there was no water in the cistern, only mud, and Jeremiah sank in the mud.

### Structure

Following Gunther Wanke, it is agreed that Jer 38:1-6 forms a unit<sup>5</sup> as is

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<sup>1</sup>*BHS* suggests inserting *hā<sup>3</sup> ʿlleh*, "these," after *sārîm*, "princes," claiming that it dropped out due to haplography.

<sup>2</sup>The emphatic particle *nā<sup>3</sup>* is used with the hophal imperfect *yûmat*, thus suggesting urgency. Thompson, 635, translates strongly, "This man *must* be put to death."

<sup>3</sup>*BHS* suggests the Piel participle of the root *rph*, "to demoralize, discourage" instead of the root *rp<sup>3</sup>*, "to heal." Contextually, *rph* fits better. Holladay, *CHAL*, 344, lists *rp<sup>3</sup>* as the piel participle of the root *rph*.

<sup>4</sup>*LXX* reads, *hoti ouk ēdunato ho basileus pros autous*. "for the king was not able to withstand them."

<sup>5</sup>Wanke, 94-95, divides Jer 37:1-43:7 (after the introductory 37:1-10) into 10 sections: 37:11-16; 37:17-21; 38:1-6; 38:7-13; 38:14-28a; 38:28b-40:6; 40:13-41:2; 41:4-9; 44:10-15; and 41:16-43:7. Wanke's analysis shows a distinct threefold structure: (1) an introduction, which names the people in the situation; (2) the main

observed in the shift from the officials' treatment of Jeremiah (38:1-6) to Ebed-Melech's treatment of Jeremiah (38:7-13). The unit yields the following structure:

1. Introduction, naming the persons in the situation (vs. 1)
2. Main body, consisting of conversations/addresses (vss. 2-5)
  - a. The address of Jeremiah to the people with the introductory formula, "Thus says the Lord"
  - b. The address of the princes to the king (vs. 4)
  - c. The king's address to the princes (vs. 5)
3. Closing observation (vs. 6).

### **Historical Background**

This text is found in the corpus, 37:1-43:3, which describes Jeremiah's final years in Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> Jer 37:1-2 provides a superscription to chaps. 37-45<sup>2</sup> and serves as a transition from chap. 36 which deals with Jehoiakim's reign.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, as far as a time frame is concerned, the events of chap. 37 occurred

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body, which usually consists of a conversation or an address; (3) a closing observation.

<sup>1</sup>Jer 43:4-44:30 describe Jeremiah's forced migration to Egypt. W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 283, considers this to be an appendix to 37:1-43:3.

<sup>2</sup>While some scholars include only chaps. 37-44, it may be noted that chap. 45 should be added to the unit as avowed by Klaus Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition: The Form Critical Method*, trans. S. M. Cupitt (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), 203.

<sup>3</sup>W. Eugene March, "Prophecy," *Old Testament Form Criticism*, ed. John H. Hayes (San Antonio: Trinity University, 1974), 174. Hence, the entire unit comprises chaps. 37-45.

during the brief respite when the Babylonian seige on Jerusalem was temporarily lifted with the advance of the Egyptian army. This may have taken place in the late spring or early summer of 588 B.C.

The events of chap. 38 show a remarkable relationship with those recorded in the previous chapter. In both narratives, the prophet is arrested, referred to state officials on a charge of treason (37:14,15; 38:1-4), brutalized and imprisoned (37:15, 16;38:6, 7, 9, 13).<sup>1</sup> Hence, the events of 38:1-13 may have occurred during the last stages of the seige of Jerusalem between the second (37:17-21) and third (38:13-24) consultations between the prophet and the king, when Jeremiah was impounded in the "court of the guard" (37:21).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>It has been proposed that chap. 38 is merely a duplicate of 37:11-21: Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion*, 258-260, and Bright, *Jeremiah*, 232-234. However, the significant details of Ebed-Melech's intervention on behalf of and rescue of Jeremiah (38:7-13) indicate that what we have here is similarity of detail and not a duplicate account. See Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Jeremiah*, Knox Preaching Guides (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), 100.

<sup>2</sup>Hyatt, "*Jeremia*," 1073, affirms that the material comes from Baruch's pen. This is the traditional view as upheld by Bright, *Jeremiah*, lxvii; Eissfeldt, 354; and Kremers, 123.

Other commentators, however, echo a dissonant tone: May, 139-141, 145, claims that the entire book was written by a biographer who lived at least a century after Jeremiah and who followed the predominant theme of the coming restoration of the Davidic kingdom. Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion*, 102, attributes it to the free editing of "the hands of the Deuteronomistic school." Both Wanke, 146, and Mowinckel, *Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia*, 30, reject Baruch's authorship.

Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 286, counters these charges by showing how the striking and realistic details of these incidents suggest "an eyewitness account, or at least access to Jeremiah's own testimony; in short, Baruch." He says that this is an example of excellence of prophetic biography.

R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2d ed. (New York & London: Harper & Brothers, 1941), 505, accepts Baruch's revising of Jeremiah's speeches in his own deuteronomistic style sometime after the prophet's death.

## Interpretation

The events are narrated in two cycles. In chap. 37, where the siege is temporarily lifted, Jeremiah attempts to go to Anathoth on business. But he is stopped, arrested on charges of desertion, beaten, and imprisoned in the house of Jonathan, which was converted into a prison (37:15, 16). Upon his subsequent release, he was rearrested and committed to the "court of the guards" (37:21). While there, some royal officials (38:1) heard his consistent message, upon divine authority, to surrender to the Babylonians in order to save lives, for Jerusalem will certainly be captured (38:2-3). This evoked a demand by the courtiers for the death penalty because Jeremiah was "weakening the hands" of the "remnant" of soldiers in the city (vs. 4).<sup>1</sup> This suggests that in the face of dire circumstances, and possibly with the temporary lifting of the seige, some soldiers had already defected to the Chaldeans so that only a small portion of the fighting force remained. This was cause for fear as seen in Zedekiah's expression of fearful treatment by such deserters if he had

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<sup>1</sup>The idiomatic expression, "weaken the hands." connotes "discouragement" and "demoralization." It was current in the military parlance of the time, being found in Lachish Ostraca VI where precisely the same charge is brought by a military commander against certain defeatist elements among the officials in Jerusalem. For further information on this letter, see Harry Torezyner, *Lachish I: The Lachish Letters* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), 104, 105, 117; W. F. Albright, "The Lachish Letters after Five Years," *BASOR* 82 (1941): 22; James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 2d ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 322; and John C. L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*, vol. I, *Hebrew and Moabite Inscriptions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 45, 46.

surrendered (38:19). With only a remnant of a fighting force, the frightened king surrenders Jeremiah into the power of the princes (vs. 5).<sup>1</sup>

The closing observation (vs. 6) shows Jeremiah's punishment is in being thrown into a miry cistern and coming close to death. Ironically, the prophet had requested of the king to spare his life and Zedekiah agreed (37:20-21); now the princes request that Jeremiah be killed and the king agrees (38:6). This shows the weakness and vacillation of Zedekiah. Duhm comments that the king, afraid and vacillating as he is, placed opposite the prophet who is disfigured by maltreatment, is much more bound than the prophet, who is his prisoner.<sup>2</sup>

With dwindled numbers, retaining merely a remnant of the fighting force, the fears of the king become pronounced. It is as though the impending judgment is a *fait accompli*.

Jer 38:14-28

### Translation and Textual Considerations

(14) King Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah the prophet and received him at the third entrance of the temple of the Lord. The king said, "I am about to ask you for an oracle;<sup>3</sup> hide nothing from me." (15) Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "If I tell you, wouldn't you be sure to put me to death? And if I give you counsel, you will not

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<sup>1</sup>MT reads *kī-ʔēn hammelek yūkal ʔetkem dābār*, "for the king can do nothing against you." LXX reads *hoti ouk ēdunato ho basileus pros autous*, "for the king was not able to withstand them." MT emphasizes the king's weakness, while LXX stresses the power of the princes.

<sup>2</sup>Duhm, 301.

<sup>3</sup>*Dābār* has the force of a prophetic word; hence, "oracle." Cf. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 231.

listen to me." (16) But king Zedekiah swore to Jeremiah secretly,<sup>1</sup> saying, "As the Lord lives who made for us this life, I will not put you to death and I will not give you into the hand of these men who are seeking your life."<sup>2</sup> (17) Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Hosts, the God of Israel,<sup>3</sup> 'If you will really go out to the princes of the king of Babylon, *then* you shall live and this city will not be burned in flames; and you and your house will live. (18) But *if* you do not go out to the princes of the king of Babylon, *then* this city will be given into the hand of the Chaldeans and they will burn it with fire and you yourself shall not escape from their hands.'<sup>4</sup> (19) King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "I am afraid of the Judeans who have deserted to the Chaldeans lest they should give me over to them and they abuse me." (20) Jeremiah said, "They will not give you up. Now obey the voice of the Lord in what I am saying to you that it may be well with you and you may live. (21) But if you refuse to go out, this is the thing which the Lord has shown me: (22) *Behold, all the women remaining [niš<sup>a</sup>rû] in the house of the king of Judah will be led out to the officials of the king of Babylon, saying: The men of your peace (your friends) have seduced and prevailed against you. Your feet<sup>5</sup> have sunk<sup>6</sup> in the mire and they have turned back.*<sup>7</sup> (23) All<sup>8</sup> your wives and your children shall be led out to the Chaldeans and you yourself will not escape from their hands<sup>9</sup> because you shall be seized by

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<sup>1</sup>MT *bassēter*, "in secret," is missing in LXX.

<sup>2</sup>LXX lacks "who are seeking your life."

<sup>3</sup>LXX lacks these last two appellations.

<sup>4</sup>LXX lacks "from their hands." Janzen, 53, says this is a gloss from 34:3.

<sup>5</sup>*BHS* suggests that the plural form, "feet," be used in place of MT singular form, "foot."

<sup>6</sup>LXX has, "they have your foot stuck," for MT, "your feet have sunk." The first emphasizes the power of the friends, while the second emphasizes the result of the king's action.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. Obad 7 for a similar poem.

<sup>8</sup>LXX lacks "all."

<sup>9</sup>LXX lacks "from their hands."

the king of Babylon and this city shall be burned with fire."<sup>1</sup> (24) Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "Do not let anyone know of these words and you will not be put to death. (25) And if the princes shall hear that I have spoken to you and they shall come to you and say, 'Tell us what you said to the king. Do not hide anything from us and we will not kill you. And what did the king say to you. (26) Then say to them, 'I made a petition to the king that he not return me to the house of Jonathan to die there.'" (27) Then all the princes came to Jeremiah and questioned him and he answered them exactly as the king had commanded. So they stopped inquiring for the thing had not been heard. (28) And Jeremiah stayed in the court of the guard until the day that Jerusalem was taken.

### Structure

The expression, "and Jeremiah remained in the court of the guards" (38:13 and 28a), forms an inclusio for Jer 38:14-28a. It is divided into three units:

1. Introduction, naming the participants in the conversation: Zedekiah and Jeremiah (vs. 14a)
2. Main body consisting of a dialogue between the participants (vss. 14b-23):
  - a. The king said to Jeremiah . . . (vs. 14b)
  - b. Jeremiah said to Zedekiah . . . (vs. 15)
  - c. Zedekiah swore to Jeremiah . . . (vs. 16)
  - d. Jeremiah said to Zedekiah . . . (vss. 17-18). (There is a double series of protasis/apodosis ("if/then") clauses in these verses.)
  - e. Zedekiah said to Jeremiah . . . (vs. 19)
  - f. Jeremiah answered . . . (vss. 20-23).

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<sup>1</sup>MT reads *tisrōp*, "you will burn," but a few MSS read *tisšārēp* (fem. to agree with "city"). Hence, "and the city will be burned."

### 3. Closing Observation (vss. 27-28a).

With regard to the structure of vss. 20-23 we observe what Raitt calls a "Summons to Repentance," consisting of four elements:<sup>1</sup>

1. Admonition: Obey the voice of the Lord (vs. 20b)
2. Promise: It will be well with you and you will be spared (vs. 20c)
3. Accusation: If you refuse to surrender (vs. 21a)<sup>2</sup>
4. Threat: All the remaining women will wail a dirge (vs. 22) and no one will survive (vs. 23).

### **Historical Background**

This is the record of the third encounter between king Zedekiah and the prophet. In the face of detrimental conditions, the king sought the prophet's advice (37:3-10; 17-21, 38:14-26). In all three cases, the conclusion is essentially the same: the inevitable destruction of Jerusalem and its people. In this final instance, however, the exchange is the longest and most informative.

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas M. Raitt, "The Prophetic Summons to Repentance," *ZAW* 83 (1971): 33. Hans Walter Wolff believes that the repentance motif is never an independent speech form, but occurs only as a subordinate element in an Oracle of Doom or an Oracle of Salvation. See his "Das Thema 'Umkehr' in der alttestamentlichen Prophetie," *ZTK* 48 (1951): 129-148.

<sup>2</sup>This as a negative protasis, which therefore equals an accusation.

## Interpretation

In this private encounter, the desperate king petitions the rejected prophet for advice, even swearing to protect his life (vss. 16-17). Jeremiah reiterates the divine word (vss. 17-18), "not as an announcement of the coming calamity of the city . . . but as a choice offered the king, an alternative scenario for both king and the city . . . , each couched in the form of protasis-apodosis ("if/then")."<sup>1</sup>

Surrender to the Babylonians guarantees life, whereas stubborn resistance guarantees death. The king then openly admits his fear of malediction at the hands of deserters (vs. 19).

Jeremiah again reiterates a word of assurance upon the condition of surrender. If this is not accepted, then the consequences will be disastrous.<sup>2</sup> Doom and salvation both hang in the balance. The alternatives set before the king demand a decision: *Obey and live or refuse and die*. Despite the Admonition and Promise, the refusal to surrender (Accusation) renders the "Summons to Repentance" ineffective. In this way, the threat becomes forthright. This threat is on the lips of the remnant, here exemplified in the women who are left in the king's house,<sup>3</sup> singing a short song

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<sup>1</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 284. He sees these contrastive elements as a variation of the presentation of the covenant formula. On the other hand, Koch, 215, sees it as a switch from a prophecy of salvation to one of disaster.

<sup>2</sup>Vs. 20 has an implied protasis and apodosis: *If you obey, then it shall be well with you*. The protasis is clear in vs. 21 but the apodosis is implied in vs. 22.

<sup>3</sup>These are seen either as female court members or as members of the harem. See Harrison, 56, and Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 284.

that is generally depicted as a lament/taunt song.<sup>1</sup> The irony of this dirge is that the women who would normally seek protection in the king's court are now lamenting their shame and humiliation. And all this as they are led out from the place of protection without anyone to protect them.

Further, the fact that there is only a remnant suggests desertion, so that perhaps even women, who are inclined to stay for protection, have deserted the king and city.

This song was appropriate to Jeremiah's own recent calamity: he was confined to the mire, but he was rescued. However, the king who was misled by his friends (lit. "men of your peace") will sink in the mire, but will have no rescue.<sup>2</sup> In the end, the king, his wives, and children will be led into captivity. Holladay well summarizes the lament of the 'remnant':

The king has dreaded the prospect of surrender since he fears mistreatment at the hands of deserters but according to the word from Yahweh this fear is an empty one; on the other hand, the alternative now looms before him of being taunted by his own women.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 284, mentions those on both sides of the issue but claims no side, preferring, correctly, to say that outwardly it is a lament but inwardly a taunt-song (cf. Isa 14:4b-21). Thompson, 642, claims that this may have been a brief traditional song about being betrayed by friends. E. W. Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26-52* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 123, 124, claims that this song has the appearance of having been a part of a psalm that portrayed the motif of betrayal by friends (Ps 41:9) and sinking in the pit to signify death (Pss 69:14; 28:1).

<sup>2</sup>Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 124, indicates that God delivered Jeremiah from the pit and from death, while by contrast the fate that might have been Jeremiah's is applied to Zedekiah in vs. 22.

<sup>3</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 290.

Finally, by placing the poem in the mouth of the women, who mock Zedekiah and sneer at his plight, the fate of the remnant is highlighted: rape, concubinage, abuse, and exploitation. This treatment is symbolic of the defeat of the kingdom.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the abuse and shame of the women connote the harrowing insignificance of the remnant. In fact, absolute defeat and destruction seem to be the impending fate as vs. 23 denotes, even this remnant is in danger of being destroyed. This signifies a cutting off of life, for it is the women, those who are physically capable of bearing children and maintaining the life of the community, whose dirge is mournfully sounded here. Hence, failure to repent destined for Zedekiah and the remnant a proclamation of unrestrained punishment.

Jer 39:1-10<sup>2</sup>

#### **Translation and Textual Considerations**

(1) In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem and besieged it. (2) In the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, on the ninth day of the month, the city was breached. (3) And all the princes of the king of Babylon came and they sat in the Middle Gate: Nergal-sharezer, Samgar-nebu, Sarsechim the Rabsaris, Nergalsharezer the Rabmag and all the rest of the princes of the king of Babylon. (4)<sup>3</sup> When Zedekiah king of Judah and all his

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<sup>1</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 687.

<sup>2</sup>The entire section, 39:4-10, is missing in the LXX.

<sup>3</sup>LXX omits vv. 4-13 perhaps due to homoioteleuton since the names in vss. 3 and 13 are similar. On the question on the names, see Thompson, 644, n. 1, for a succinct discussion.

soldiers saw this,<sup>1</sup> they fled, going out of the city by night by way of the king's garden, through the gate between the two walls; and they went toward the Arabah. (5) But the army of the Chaldeans pursued them and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. And when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, at Riblah, in the land of Hamath and he passed sentence upon him.<sup>2</sup> (6) And the king of Babylon executed the sons of Zedekiah at Riblah before his eyes; and the king of Babylon also executed all the nobles of Judah. (7) He put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in fetters to take him to Babylon. (8) The Chaldeans burned the house of the king and the people and broke the walls of Jerusalem. (9) *Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard deported to Babylon the remnant [yeṭer] of the people who remained [hanniš<sup>2</sup>ārîm] in the city and the deserters who deserted to him and the remnant [yeṭer] of the artisans<sup>3</sup> who remained [hanniš<sup>2</sup>ārîm].* (10) *But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left [hiš<sup>2</sup>îr] the poor people who had nothing, in the land of Judah and he gave them vineyards and fields<sup>4</sup> on that day.*

### Structure

Vss. 1-10 form a structural unit based on the movement of the action in the account:

1. The dates spanning the beginning and end of the siege of Jerusalem (vss. 1-2)

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<sup>1</sup>MT reads "saw them." It is proposed reading *rā<sup>2</sup>āh*, "saw it," i.e., the breach of the city. Cf. *BHS* and Volz, 342, 343. If "them" is intended, then it points to the Babylonians who stormed through the breached wall. It seems unlikely that it would be a reference to the Babylonian officers who came to set up a military council.

<sup>2</sup>MT *way<sup>c</sup>dabbēr<sup>c</sup> ṽittô mišpātîm*, lit. "and he spoke with him judgments."

<sup>3</sup>*BHS* suggests correctly that *hā<sup>c</sup>ām*, "the people," should be read as *hā<sup>2</sup>āmôn*, "the artisans," as found in the same rendering of the text in Jer 52:15.

<sup>4</sup>The word *y<sup>c</sup>gēbîm* is of uncertain meaning. "Fields" is used here following Syr. and Tg. Perhaps *l'ōr<sup>c</sup>mîm ûl'yog<sup>c</sup>bîm*, "to be vinedressers and field laborers," in 52:16, is instructive here. See Bright, *Jeremiah*, 242, 243.

2. The setting up of the military council (vs. 3)<sup>1</sup>
3. The fate of the nobility (vss. 4-7)
4. The fate of the city [physical plant] (vs. 8)
5. The fate of the remnant (vss. 9-10).

### Historical Background

Vss. 1-2 indicate that the occasion was the fall of Jerusalem. Scholarship is divided regarding the date of this event: July 587 B.C.<sup>2</sup> or July 586 B.C.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Some commentators see 39:3 as a variant of 39:13. They take 38:28b as a dittography which must be linked with 39:3 and then transported to 39:13, 14, to describe the first account of Jeremiah's release. See Thompson, 645; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 245; Rudolph, 225-237. The narrative would then read: (Vss. 3,13) *When Jerusalem was captured, all the officials of the king of Babylon came in and took their seats in the Middle Gate: Nergolsharezer, the Rabnag, Samgarnebo, Nebushazban the Rabsaris and all the other officers of the king of Babylon.* (Vs. 14) *They sent and brought Jeremiah from the court of the guard.*

<sup>2</sup>J. Barton Payne, "Jerusalem," *ZPEB* (1975), 3:472; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 244; idem, *A History of Israel*, 3d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 329-330; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 125; Robert Davidson, *Jeremiah*, vol. 2, *The Daily Study Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), 130; Harrison, 157; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 291; M. Burrows, "Jerusalem," *IDB* (1962), 2:852; F. B. Huey, Jr., *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, *The New American Commentary*, vol. 16 (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1993), 341.

<sup>3</sup>G. W. Ahlström, *The History of Ancient Palestine* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 786, 794-798; Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, 3d ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 168-171; W. S. LaSor, "Jerusalem," *ISBE* (1988), 2:1016; Phillip J. King, "Jerusalem," *ABD* (1992), 3:755-757; Julius A. Bewer, *The Prophets in the King James Version with Introduction and Critical Notes* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), 278.

Evidence of this destruction was widespread. See Yigal Shiloh, "The City of David Archaeological Project: The Third Season, 1980," *BA* 44 (1981): 161-170; idem, *Excavations at the City of David, I, 1978-1982*, *Qedem* 19 (Jerusalem: Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1984).

However, since Zedekiah was installed as a puppet king when the Babylonians captured Jerusalem in 597 B.C.<sup>1</sup> and he reigned for eleven years (2 Kgs 24:18; 2 Chr 36:11; Jer 52:1) until the destruction of Jerusalem, it seems that 586 B.C. is more plausible. A month later (cf. Jer 52:12 and 2 Kgs 25:8), Nebuzaradan, the commander of Nebuchadnezzar's bodyguard,<sup>2</sup> arrived in the city. He set up "a court or better, a military government,"<sup>3</sup> and systematically burned and looted the city and superintended the deportation of its people.

### Interpretation

With the fall of the city, the king and courtiers attempted to escape, only to be captured and brought to an ignoble demise.<sup>4</sup> The city was then destroyed by fire. After Nebuchadnezzar had dealt with the leadership, he turned to the non-nobility: those who are described as the remnant.<sup>5</sup> This is the first assessment of the historical

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<sup>1</sup>D. J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings (626-556 B.C.) in the British Museum* (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1956), 32-35, 73.

<sup>2</sup>The term *rab-tabbāhīm* literally means "the butcher," an ancient title which is retained after the functions of the holder had altered. Cf. Gen 40:2. See Thompson, 648, and Ralph H. Alexander, "Tabbah," *TWOT* (1980), 1:342.

For a discussion on the names of the Babylonian officials who accompanied the captain of the guard, see Hyatt, "Jeremiah," 1079, 1080; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 243; Rudolph, 224; Julius A. Bewer, "Nergalsharezer Samgar in Jeremiah 39:3." *AJSL* 42 (1925/26): 130.

<sup>3</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 243.

<sup>4</sup>The nobles were summarily executed, an act which Harrison, 158, sees as a just rather than a cruel fate, according to the canons of Near Eastern warfare. Zedekiah was blinded, bounded in chains, and deported to Babylon.

<sup>5</sup>Two roots are here used: *šʾr* and *ytr*. They appear together five times in these two verses.

remnant as a group of people who have survived an actual disaster.<sup>1</sup> Prior to this they were spoken of in a prophetic manner. From this point onward it is a historical reality.

Vs. 9 is ironic in that both the ones who remained in the city and those who deserted were deported, whereas the option of life was held out for the deserters, but only death for those who remained in the city (21:8,9; 38:2).<sup>2</sup>

The remaining skilled craftsmen or artisans is a reference to 2 Kgs 24 where eleven years earlier, after the fall of Jerusalem under Jehoiachin (597 B.C.), Nebuchadnezzar had exiled large numbers of people, including artisans, who had voluntarily given themselves up to the Chaldean king. At that time, all the artisans were taken. Within that eleven year period, more were probably contracted, and now rounded up.<sup>3</sup>

Only the poorest people (*dāllim*), probably peasants, were left and allotted holdings for survival. In all likelihood, they were the ones who would cause the

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<sup>1</sup>Hasel, "Remnant," *ISBE* (1988), 4:130, defines the "historical remnant" as the survivors of a catastrophe.

<sup>2</sup>The fact that this latter group still has life may be seen as an act of grace and may be a tacit way of speaking of salvation. Instead of death, they still have life and the opportunity for renewal.

<sup>3</sup>That only a residue of skilled craftsmen was left suggests mildly that, after the deportation (2 Kgs 24), those who came along were of inferior quality having no master craftsman to train them since these were all taken. Further, it may suggest that even some of these craftsmen had defected to the Babylonian camp.

Babylonians the least amount of trouble.<sup>1</sup> John Calvin comments that the irony of the landless man becoming a landowner must be noted. Further, the envy of the exiles must be aroused, for on the day of their demise, "they saw that they were more severely and cruelly tested than those lowest of men."<sup>2</sup>

Finally, while Jer 39:1-10 is substantially the same as Jer 52:4-16 and 2 Kgs 25:1-12, leading some scholars to conclude that it is a secondary insertion,<sup>3</sup> Nicholson has correctly shown that its position here is quite fitting: "The nation had rejected the word of God proclaimed to it by Jeremiah (chaps. 26-36), and had sought to destroy the prophet himself (chaps. 37, 38). The judgment declared against Judah and Jerusalem was now *violently realized*."<sup>4</sup> Judah had been reduced from a populous nation to a small surviving group of people which was poor, demoralized and lacking in any real military prowess, posing no apparent threat to the ruthless invaders. The judgment had rendered Judah a small insignificant historical remnant.

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<sup>1</sup>Charles L. Feinberg, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, The Expositors Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1986), 6:623, expresses that the Babylonians did this because they felt that gratitude would prevent the settlers from rebelling.

<sup>2</sup>John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Prophet Jeremiah and the Lamentations*, trans. and ed. John Owen (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1950), 4:32.

<sup>3</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 292; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 245; Hyatt, "Jeremiah," 1079, adds that this was the work of a deuteronomic editor.

<sup>4</sup>Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 125 (emphasis mine).

### Translation and Textual Considerations

(1) The word which came to Jeremiah after Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah when he took him and he was bound<sup>2</sup> in fetters along with all the captives of Jerusalem and Judah who were being exiled to Babylon. (2) The captain of the guard took Jeremiah<sup>3</sup> and said to him, "The Lord your God pronounced this evil against this place. (3) The Lord brought it about and did just as he said. Because you sinned against the Lord and did not obey his voice this thing has happened to you.<sup>4</sup> (4) Now, today, I am taking

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<sup>1</sup>*BHS*, followed by Rudolph, 247, suggests a rearrangement of the text based on the presence of the customary formulaic introduction of a divine oracle, though no oracle appears (40:1). This leads to the general claim that 40:1-6 is not in correct chronological order. Therefore, scholars attempt a reconstruction of the two accounts that describe Jeremiah's release into Gedaliah's care: 39:11-14 and 40:1-6. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 245, 246, illustrates the reconstruction. The first account begins in 38:28a, Jeremiah being in the court of the guard. It is continued in 39:3 with the setting up of the Babylonian military council, skips to 39:14, so that Jeremiah is released to Gedaliah by the council, and culminates in 39:11-12 where Nebuzaradan (who came a month after the fall of the city) issues a direct order to give Jeremiah special treatment.

The second account (40:1-6), which tells of Jeremiah being herded with the other captives and readied for deportation, but was found and released by Nebuzaradan, was abruptly broken off from 39:11-12 and should be replaced there. Hence, the passages, placed in chronological order will be 38:28b; 39:3, 14; 39:11-13 (even though vs. 13 is seen as an editorial attempt to harmonize both accounts), and 40:1b-6.

However, both accounts are not necessarily contradictory. It is possible that Jeremiah was first released by the military council immediately after the fall of the city. But in the confusion he was rearrested by the Babylonian soldiers who were rounding up the captives, and sent to Ramah to await deportation. But he was again released upon Nebuzaradan's orders. See Feinberg, 623.

<sup>2</sup>"And he was bound" is lacking in *LXX*.

<sup>3</sup>It is conceded that the use of *l'* instead of *ʔet* before the proper name "Jeremiah" is an Aramaic accusative marker. See Thompson, 650, n. 3, and Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 698.

<sup>4</sup>*LXX* is shorter, "The Lord has done it because you sinned against him and did not listen to his voice."

away the fetters from your hands. If it seems good to you to come with me to Babylon, then come, and I will look after you well;<sup>1</sup> but if it seems bad to you to come to Babylon with me, do not come. See, the whole land is before you. Go wherever is good and right in your eyes. (5) If you remain,<sup>2</sup> then return to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon has appointed governor of the cities<sup>3</sup> of Judah and live with him among the people; or go wherever is right in your eyes to go." Then the captain of the guard gave him provisions and a gift and sent him away. (6) *Then Jeremiah went to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam at Mizpah and lived with him among the people who remained [hanniš<sup>2</sup> ārim] in the land.*

### Structure

Jer 40:1-6 describes Jeremiah's release by the Babylonians. It may be schematized as follows:

1. Introduction, naming the persons in the situation: Jeremiah and

Nebuzaradan (vs. 1)

2. Body, Nebuzaradan's address (vss. 2-5)<sup>4</sup>
3. Closing observation, Jeremiah's action (vs. 6).

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<sup>1</sup>Lit. "I will put my eyes on you." *LXX* lacks the rest of the verse from this point on.

<sup>2</sup>MT *w<sup>c</sup>ôdennû lô<sup>2</sup>-yāšû w<sup>c</sup>šuaḥ*, lit. "but he was still not turning, and turning" which does not seem to make much sense here. Volz, 346, and Rudolph, 246, suggest taking *im tōb* ("if it is good") from vs. 4a and emending the first part of vs. 5 to *b<sup>c</sup>ēnekā lāšebet šubāh*, and read "if it is good in your eyes to return, return." Cf. *BHS*. *LXX* reads *ei de mē, apotreke kai anastrepson*, "but if not, go away and return."

<sup>3</sup>*LXX* has *en gē Iouda*, "in the land of Judah," which is equal to *b<sup>c</sup>eres*.

<sup>4</sup>W. Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 26-52*. WMANT 52 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 58-61, regards this corpus as deuteronomic in origin, especially vss. 2b-3.

### **Historical Background**

Chaps. 40-44 narrate events, which perhaps covered a period of several months, involving the remnant who were in the land of Judah shortly after Jerusalem had fallen. Chaps. 43-44 deal with the decisions and actions of the surviving remnant who seek refuge in Egypt. Nicholson believes correctly that these chapters are "concerned primarily with the question where and amongst which group of Israelites are God's promises of future deliverance and restoration for His people to be realized and fulfilled."<sup>1</sup>

While no definite time may be affixed, it seems logical that the event recorded in 40:1-6 occurred shortly after the fall of the city when Nebuzaradan was rounding up the captives to send them into Babylonian exile. Jeremiah was discovered among these captives who were amassed at Ramah, about five miles north of Jerusalem. Upon his release, he was offered the option of privileged treatment if he chose to go to Babylon or to go wherever he wanted. He selected to stay in the land of Judah. He was courteously dismissed and permitted to join Gedaliah, who

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<sup>1</sup>Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 130. See also Hausmann, 106.

was appointed governor over the land by the Babylonian king.<sup>1</sup> Mizpah replaced Jerusalem as the new administrative center.<sup>2</sup>

### Interpretation

Nebuzaradan uses strong language to identify Yahweh as the One who is responsible for this terrible disaster.<sup>3</sup> It is also indicated that it was the people's callous disregard for God that caused such a judgment to come upon them. While

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<sup>1</sup>Feinberg, 625-626, calls Gedaliah a "puppet governor." That he had some administrative experience in Zedekiah's cabinet is doubtful in light of Nebuchadnezzar's execution of the courtiers (39:9). Gedaliah did come from a family that features in the book of Jeremiah. For an extended view, see Thompson, 653, especially n. 12.

Further, a seal impression from the early sixth century B.C. bears the name "Gedaliah" who was "Over the House," an expression referring to a chief minister to the king or palace governor. See Roland de Vaux, "Le Sceau de Godolias, maitre de Palais," *Revue Biblique* 45 (1936): 96-102. This very well may be the Gedaliah of Jeremiah's time. For the seal, see Chester C. McCown, "Inscribed Material Including Coins," in *Tell En-Nasbeh Excavated under the Direction of the Late William Frederic Badè: I, Archaeological and Historical Results*, ed. Chester C. McCown (Berkeley, CA: Palestine Institute of the Pacific School of Religion and the American Schools of Oriental Research, 1947), 163, hereafter *Tell En-Nasbeh*.

<sup>2</sup>Three locations are identified for Mizpah: (1) Tell-en Nasbeh, about 8 miles north of Jerusalem; Nebî Samwil, 5 miles north of Jerusalem; and Tell el-Bîri. For further details see Rudolph, 246; James Muilenburg, "Mizpah," *IDB* (1962), 3:407-408; idem, "The Literary Sources Bearing on the Question of Identification," in *Tell En-Nasbeh*, 30-44.

<sup>3</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 699, says that it is absurd that Jeremiah the preacher is made the recipient of a sermon preached to him by a pagan military commander. Harrison, 159, explains that while the statement of disaster may sound curious coming from a pagan Mesopotamian soldier, the Chaldeans were aware to some extent of the metaphysical causes for Judah's collapse.

their specific sin is not detailed, one suspects that their disloyalty to the covenant may be the issue here.

In vss. 4-5, Jeremiah is given three choices: (1) go to Babylon;<sup>1</sup> (2) dwell among the people under Gedaliah's rulership; (3) go wherever he wanted.<sup>2</sup> Two contrasts are to be noted here: (1) the courteous and humane treatment from the nation's enemy toward Jeremiah as compared to what he received at the hands of his countrymen; (2) while others were unwillingly taken into captivity, Jeremiah is given complete freedom and he willingly chooses to join the ranks of the remnant, who are described as the poor (39:10). Carroll is correct in stating, "The presentation of Jeremiah as actively *choosing* to stay in Judah and associate himself with Gedaliah underwrites the legitimation of the community with its centre at Mizpah."<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, the remnant community is presented as a small, insignificant group, merely those who have been left behind after the catastrophe. Can they be expected to rebuild the once great nation of Judah? As Müller and Preuss put it, "The remnant in the homeland is absolutely meaningless."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>H. Winckler and E. Schrader, *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament* (Berlin: Verlag von Reuther und Reichard, 1903), 170, claim that the Babylonians took pains to take care of Jeremiah because he had been a Babylonian agent who had successfully demoralized the Jerusalem citizenry and must, therefore, be duly rewarded.

<sup>2</sup>Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 130, suggests that Jeremiah took this option because 41:17 and 42:1 imply that he moved to Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 700.

<sup>4</sup>Müller and Preuss, 79.

### Translation and Textual Considerations

(7) When all the captains of the troops in the open fields and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor of the land and had put him in charge of the men, women and children, those of the poorest of the land<sup>1</sup> who had not been exiled to Babylon, (8) they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah: Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, the sons of Ephai the Netophatite, Jezaniah<sup>2</sup> the son of the Maacathite with their men. (9) And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan swore to them and their men saying, "Do not be afraid to serve the Chaldeans. Live in the land and serve the king of Babylon and it will be well for you. (10) And I will stay<sup>3</sup> in Mizpah to represent you before the Chaldeans when they come to us. But you should gather in the wine, the summer fruits and oil and store them in your vessels, and live in your cities<sup>4</sup> that you have taken. (11) *And all the Jews who were in Moab and among the Ammonites and in Edom, and in other countries<sup>5</sup> heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant [š<sup>ᶜ</sup>ērīt] for Judah and that he had appointed over them Gedaliah son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan.* (12) Then all the Judeans returned from all the places where they were scattered and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah; and they gathered wine and summer fruit in great abundance.

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<sup>1</sup>LXX reads only *kai parekatethento autō andras kai gunaikas autōn*, "and they committed to him the men and their wives."

<sup>2</sup>Some MSS read "Jaazaniah." Cf. 2 Kgs 25:23

<sup>3</sup>MT *yōšēh*, "dwell, live, stay," is rendered in LXX as *kathēmai enantion humōn*, "dwell in your presence."

<sup>4</sup>LXX reads *en tais polesin*, "in the cities," which is the equivalent of BHS' suggested reading of *be<sup>c</sup>ārīm*.

<sup>5</sup>LXX reading *en pasē tē gē*, "in all the land," is singular. This is accepted by Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 271, and Janzen, 208. However, contextually, MT is preferred since other places are named. Hence, it would appear that the translation "other countries" is more suitable.

## Structure

The phrase *kōl šārê haḥayālīm ʿašer baššādeh*, "all the captives of the forces which were in the field" (vss. 7, 13), forms an inclusio for vss. 7-12.

Structurally we observe:

1. Introduction, naming the persons in the situation (vss. 7-8)
2. Body, the address of Gedaliah to the captains and their men (vss. 9-10)
3. Closing observation, the action of the Jews (vss. 11-12).

## Historical Background

It is likely that this account occurred shortly after the capture of Jerusalem, when Gedaliah was appointed governor of Judah, which had become a province of the Babylonian Empire.<sup>1</sup>

## Interpretation

The captains and their forces are introduced in vss. 7-8. They are generally identified as the Jewish resistance to the Babylonians.<sup>2</sup> Gedaliah's

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<sup>1</sup>Hyatt, "Jeremiah," 1084. However, Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 704, contends that since no dating is provided in the text, it is not possible to determine whether the events of chaps. 40-44 took place immediately after the fall of the city or some years later.

<sup>2</sup>Hyatt, "Jeremiah," 1084. Harrison, 160, sees them as guerillas against the Chaldean forces. Bewer, *The Prophets in the King James Version with Introduction and Critical Notes*, 280, describes a mixed group of guerillas and those who had fled with Zedekiah and managed to escape. Both Bright, *Jeremiah*, 253, and Thompson, 654, claim that the terrain of the Judean hills provided out-of-the-way havens for those isolated detachments that had escaped the Babylonian "mop-up" operations.

appointment as governor prompted these military officers to return.<sup>1</sup> They joined the remnant, who are here described as "the poorest of the land" (vs. 7). They comprised the same group described in 39:10. While the people mentioned here are not all to be absolutely classified as the poor,<sup>2</sup> "the bulk of those left were the economically underprivileged classes."<sup>3</sup> It is this bedraggled group that is specifically named as the remnant in vs. 11.

Gedaliah opens his address with an oath (vs. 9)<sup>4</sup> thereby attempting "to pacify the guerilla commanders and to gain their confidence by giving them the assurance that they need not fear the Babylonian officials. Their best course was to settle in the land and be subject to the king of Babylon."<sup>5</sup>

While this oath is not given verbatim, it appears that its purpose was two-fold: (1) Gedaliah would mediate between the Jews and Chaldeans regarding official affairs; (2) the officers would demobilize and move back to an agricultural economy.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Feinberg, 627, intimates that just as Nebuchadnezzar had confidence in Gedaliah, so did his countrymen.

<sup>2</sup>Ishmael was certainly a man of royal birth (41:1). There were even some royal princesses, as we learn from 43:6. For a discussion of the people and place names mentioned here, see Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 295.

<sup>3</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 253.

<sup>4</sup>Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, vol. 2, South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism 29 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 449-450, believes that the oath implies a covenant.

<sup>5</sup>Thompson, 655.

<sup>6</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 704-705, indicates that the fertility of the land hardly suggests a recent invasion and seige. He holds that the "scorched earth policy" of the Chaldeans would have devastated the land. On one hand, he suggests that this shows

The closing observation (vss. 11-12) points to Jews, perhaps civilians, who had sought sanctuary in Trans-Jordanian countries. Like the soldiers, they too joined with the poor of the land, who are specifically named as the remnant. Although disadvantaged, they seem to figure as an important group, because under Gedaliah's leadership, "a new age is beginning, one of stability and plenty. As presented in 40:7-12, there is an idyllic quality about the new community."<sup>1</sup> This remnant community seems to be the hope for the future. What would be the unfolding saga in the rest of the book concerning this remnant community, that is, those who survived the collapse of Judah?

#### Jer 40:13-16

#### Translation and Textual Considerations

(13) Then Johanan the son of Kareah and all the captains of the troops which were in the field came to Gedaliah at Mizpah (14) and said to him, "Surely you know that Baalis the King of the Ammonites has sent Ishmael son of Nethaniah to kill you?" But Gedaliah son of Ahikam would not believe them. (15) *Then Johanan the son of Kareah spoke to Gedaliah secretly in Mizpah, saying, "Please let me go, and I will strike down Ishmael the son of Nethaniah,"<sup>2</sup> and a man shall not know. Why should he strike your soul and all the Jews who are gathered to you be scattered, and the remnant [שִׁרְיָת] of Judah perish?"* (16)

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that considerable time had elapsed between the fall of the city and the event narrated here. On the other hand, he concedes that the produce listed did not need such constant supervision as that which the invasion and siege would have destroyed.

Feinberg, 627, holds that since Jerusalem fell in mid-summer, these were the products of late summer that the people gathered together for their first bleak winter. Bewer, 280, maintains that the presence of such bounties shows that the Chaldeans did not ravage the country during their occupation of it.

<sup>1</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 705.

<sup>2</sup>LXX lacks "son of Kareah" and "son of Nethaniah."

But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said to Johanan son of Kareah, "You shall not do this thing for it is a lie you are telling against Ishmael."

### Structure

Jer 40:13-16 forms an inclusio as framed by the name "Johanan, son of Kareah," in vss. 13 and 16. While there is a link between this section and vss. 7-12 (as indicated by the phrase "all the captains of the forces in the field, vss. 7 and 13), there is a descriptive shift in the narrative.

A two-part series to this passage may be schematized as follows:

#### Part 1:

1. Introduction, naming the people in the situation: Johanan, military leaders and Gedaliah (vs. 13)

2. Body, the address of Johanan (vs. 14a)

3. Closing observation (vs. 14b).

#### Part 2:

1. Introduction, naming the people in the situation: Johanan and Gedaliah (vs. 15a)

2. Body, the address of Johanan (vs. 15b)

3. Closing observation, Gedaliah's response to Johanan (vs. 16).

## Historical Background

The specific time is not given for this deputation of military officers, led by Johanan, to the governor alerting him of a plot to assassinate him.<sup>1</sup> What seems clear is that the conspiracy was instigated by Baalis the king of the Ammonites,<sup>2</sup> and executed by Ishmael as described in Jer 41:1-3.

## Interpretation

In the first part (vss. 13-14), Johanan, who appears as the spokesperson and leader of the military officers, unveils the plot of assassination.<sup>3</sup> Ishmael's reason for being involved in this conspiracy is not detailed although it is generally

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<sup>1</sup>Hyatt, "*Jeremiah*," 1084, espouses that Gedaliah may have governed for about five years before the plot and subsequent assassination occurred. He claims that the third deportation by the Babylonians in 582 B.C. (Jer.52:30) was in retaliation to the murder of Gedaliah.

Most commentators hold to a much shorter period. They claim that since the murder occurred in the "seventh month" (41:1), while the year itself is not given, the most natural conclusion is that it is the same year as the fall of Jerusalem. So Volz, *Der Prophet Jeremia*, 350; Rudolph, 214; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 253; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 296.

Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 707, and Thompson, 657, believe that too much happened (the return of those who fled and the ingathering of the harvest) to have this event occur in the same year. They opt for the next year or several years later.

<sup>2</sup>For a better understanding of this king, see Larry G. Herr, "The Servant of Baalis," *BA* 48 (1985): 169-172; idem, "Is the Spelling of 'Baalis' in Jeremiah 40:14a a Mutilation?" *AUSS* 23 (1985): 187-191.

The purposes for Baalis' actions here are not indicated, but Bright, *Jeremiah*, 253, suggests that it was merely an attempt to weaken Babylonian power since Ammon had been involved in unrest in 594 B.C. (Jer 27:3) and was probably implicated in the events leading up to 587 B.C. (cf. Eze. 21:23-37 [Eng. 18-32]).

<sup>3</sup>MT *h"yādōa<sup>c</sup> tēda<sup>c</sup>* allows for the expression to mean, "Surely you know"; or "Do you certainly know." The idea of assassination is given in the expression *l'hakko<sup>c</sup>kā napheš*, "to strike you mortally," i.e., "assassinate you" (vs. 14).

purported that as a member of the royal family he had hoped to seize power.<sup>1</sup>

Regardless of the purpose, Gedaliah refused to believe.<sup>2</sup>

In the second event, Johanan's insistence is emphasized since he approached Gedaliah again, this time secretly.<sup>3</sup> He enjoins to murder Ishmael and maintain absolute secrecy, "no man will know." His purpose is to protect the future of the community as preserved in the remnant. He places all the "Jews who are gathered together" in juxtaposition with the "remnant," so that they are one and the same. Hence, the remnant now consists of the combination of three distinct groups: (1) the economically underprivileged peasants who were not deported; (2) the soldiers who were not captured; (3) the returnees from Trans-Jordanian countries.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Davidson, 137; Thompson, 656. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 298, is hesitant to say that Ishmael may have been jealous that a non-Davidite was in authority and he was not. He adds that Ishmael may have been determined to carry on a resistance movement or was seeking revenge on a "traitor." Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 707, similarly agrees, adding that Gedaliah's acceptance of the role as a puppet governor under the Babylonians, especially after the royal family had been so brutally butchered, made him a traitor. In killing Gedaliah and his associates, Ishmael hoped to strike a blow against Babylonian domination in Judah. This shows the conflict between pro- and anti-Babylonian forces in Judean politics from the Babylonians' penetration of the land in 597 B.C.

<sup>2</sup>This is well expressed by *w'lo<sup>3</sup>-he<sup>2</sup>'min*, "he did not believe" (vs 14). Gedaliah regarded the message as being unreliable. Therefore, he refused to accept it. See Alfred Jepsen, "*āman*," *TDOT* (1974), 1:302. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 707, adds that Gedaliah "appears to be a good, eirenic leader who is not prepared to allow Judeans to slaughter each other on the strength of rumours."

<sup>3</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 706, claims that secrecy appears "to be a literary device in chapters 37-40 used to convey a dramatic sense of the conspiratorial nature of the meetings and interviews delineated."

<sup>4</sup>Davidson, 136, describes this as an uneasy coalition of people with different loyalties and hopes.

Johanan intends to save the community of the remnant of Judah. He is convinced that if Ishmael succeeds, the country would be thrown into a chaotic crisis. Therefore, he proposes the murder of the plotter. As Thompson puts it: "Clearly such a murderous act would prevent the establishment of a new nation founded upon the remnant of Judah left in the land. Better to slay Ishmael secretly than allow an evil train of events to be set in course."<sup>1</sup>

Again, Gedaliah forcefully rejects the request (vs. 16). His disregard of the warning heightens the dramatic effect since the fate of the remnant hangs in the balance.

#### Jer 41:4-18

#### Translation and Textual Considerations

(4) On the day after the murder of Gedaliah, before anyone knew of it (5) eighty men arrived from Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria with their beards shaved and their clothes torn, and their bodies gashed, bringing cereal offerings and incense to take to the house of the Lord. (6) And Ishmael the son of Nethaniah went out from Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he went.<sup>2</sup> And when he met them,<sup>3</sup> he said to them, "Come in to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam." (7) When they came into the city, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and the men who were with him<sup>4</sup> slaughtered them and threw<sup>5</sup> them into a cistern. (8) But there were ten men

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<sup>1</sup>Thompson, 657.

<sup>2</sup>LXX, *autoi eporeuonto kai ekleion*, "they were going along weeping," i.e., the pilgrims and not Ishmael.

<sup>3</sup>LXX lacks this phrase.

<sup>4</sup>LXX lacks "the men who were with him."

<sup>5</sup>The verb is absent in MT but is supplied by the Syriac equivalent of *wayyašlīēm*, "and he threw them." Cf. Thompson, 658, n. 1.

among them<sup>1</sup> who said to Ishamel, "Do not kill us for we have stores of wheat, barley, oil and honey in the fields." So he spared them and did not kill them with their companions. (9) Now the cistern into which Ishamel had thrown the corpses of the men who were slain by the hand of Ishmael<sup>2</sup> was a large cistern, one which king Asa had made for defence against Baasha, king of Israel. Ishmael son of Nathaniah filled it with the slain. (10) *Then Ishmael took captive<sup>3</sup> all the remnant [š<sup>ʔ</sup>ērīt] of the people who were in Mizpah, and<sup>4</sup> the king's daughters, and all the people who remained [hanniš<sup>ʔ</sup>ārīm] in Mizpah<sup>5</sup> whom Nebuzaradan<sup>6</sup> the captain of the guard had committed to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam. And<sup>7</sup> Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, took them captive<sup>8</sup> to go over to the sons of the Ammonites.* (11) When Johanan the son of Kareah and all the leaders of the troops which were with him heard of all the evil which Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done (12) they took all their men and went to fight against Ishmael the son of Nethaniah. They found him by the great pool which is at Gibeon. (13) When all the people who were with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah and all the leaders of the force who were with him, they rejoiced.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>LXX *ekei*, "there," which equals *šām*.

<sup>2</sup>LXX reads *phrear mega touto estin*, "this is the great cistern," in place of MT "by the hand of Ishmael."

<sup>3</sup>MT *wayyišbe*, "and he took captive," is understood in LXX as *kai apestrepsen*, the equivalent of *wayyāšeb*, "and he brought back," from the verb *šūbh*. However, the verb of the MT, the less common *šbh*, "to take captive," is better suited to the context.

<sup>4</sup>Many MSS and LXX have *wʿ*, "and," attached here.

<sup>5</sup>The entire expression, "all the people who had remained in Mizpah," has been deleted in LXX. Janzen, 17, sees it as a variant in a conflate text.

<sup>6</sup>This name is omitted in LXX. Janzen, 53, regards the name as an expansion.

<sup>7</sup>The entire expression, "And Ishmael, son of Nethaniah took captive," is omitted in LXX. Jansen, 53, sees the verb as a repetition from the first part of the text.

<sup>8</sup>A few MSS read *wayyaškem*, "and he rose early," for MT *wayyišbēm*, "and he took them captive." MT is better, given the context and the repetition of the same root *šbh*, "to take captive," in vs. 14

<sup>9</sup>LXX lacks "they rejoiced."

(14) And all the people whom Ishmael had taken captive from Mizpah turned about and returned and and went to Johanan the son of Kareah.<sup>1</sup> (15) But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men and went to the Ammonites. (16) *And Johanan, son of Kareah, and all of the officers of the army who were with him, took all the remnant [שֹׂרֵיִת] of the people whom Ishmael son of Nethaniah<sup>2</sup> had taken captive<sup>3</sup> from Mizpah, after he had killed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, men,<sup>4</sup> men of war, and women and children and eunuchs, whom he had brought back from Gibeon.<sup>5</sup>* (17) And they went and stayed in Geruth-Kimham,<sup>6</sup> near Bethlehem intending to go to Egypt (18) because of the Chaldeans; for they were afraid of them because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon had made governor of the land.

### Structure

The section, vss. 4-18, is one unit as indicated by the reference to the "murder of Gedaliah" in vss. 3 and 18. This section may be divided into two interconnected units:

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<sup>1</sup>LXX is much shorter than MT, reading *kai anestrepsan pros Iōanan*, "and they returned to Johanan."

<sup>2</sup>The phrases "son of Kareah" and "son of Nethaniah" are omitted in the LXX.

<sup>3</sup>MT reads, "whom he had rescued from Ishmael son of Nethaniah, from Mizpah." The present translation follows *BHS* recommended emendation of MT, *hēšīḥ mē<sup>2</sup>ēr*, "he had rescued from" to *šābāh<sup>2</sup> otām*, "he took them captive." The fact of the matter is that Johanan *did not* rescue the people "from Mizpah"; rather, he kidnapped them. See Janzen, 23-24.

<sup>4</sup>MT has *g<sup>2</sup>bārīm*, "men." It is suggested that this should be vocalized as *gibbōrīm*, "warriors." The expression in MT *g<sup>2</sup>bārīm<sup>2</sup> anšē hammilhāmāh*, "men, men of war," gives the understanding of warriors. The LXX reads *dunatous andras en polemō*, "men mighty in battle."

<sup>5</sup>*BHS* suggests *Giba<sup>c</sup>* instead of *Gib<sup>c</sup>ōn*.

<sup>6</sup>The hapax legomenon *gērū* may be a lodging place or inn or khan. See *BDB*, 158.

1. Vss. 4-10 which describe Ishmael's murder of seventy men and his attempt to flee with the remnant

2. Vss. 11-18 which describe the recapture of the remnant and their intention to flee to Egypt.

### **Historical Background**

The events of 41:4-9 occurred the day after the murder of Gedaliah (41:1-3).<sup>1</sup> The arrival at Mizpah of eighty men from the cultic centers of Northern Israel--Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria--indicate that they were en route to Jerusalem to worship, as is evident from the cereal offerings and the incense they carried. This is used to indicate a likely time frame as being the seventh month, the time of the great autumn feast and the cultic new year.<sup>2</sup> The hypocrisy and deceit of Ishmael are seen in the murder of seventy of the men. Ten were spared because of their bribery.

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<sup>1</sup>The assassination shows base treachery, for the fact that both men were sharing a meal suggests that they knew each other and that Gedaliah was making a gesture of friendship. As Thompson, 657, remarks, "Ishmael violated all the laws of Oriental hospitality by his shocking act of perfidy."

<sup>2</sup>Thompson, 659, 660; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 297, calls it the "Feast of Booths." This may indicate that some Northerners were still loyal to Josiah's 622 B.C. reforms. They were probably following the deuteronomic prescription for centralization of worship at Jerusalem (Deut 12 5, 6; 2 Kgs 23). Their dress indicates mourning and repentance, perhaps because of the destruction of the temple. Their presence has led to the assumption that cultic worship in some form continued in Jerusalem after its destruction.

The events of 41:10-18 may have occurred shortly after this ghastly mass murder,<sup>1</sup> perhaps even that day or a few days after.

### Interpretation

Having murdered the seventy men, Ishmael attempts to transport the remnant<sup>2</sup> from Mizpah to Ammon. The AB:BA chiastic pattern of vs. 10 emphasizes the remnant:

A Remnant ( $\text{שׂרִיט}^{\text{צ}}$ )

B The people ( $\text{הָאָמ}^{\text{צ}}$ )

B<sup>1</sup> The people ( $\text{הָאָמ}^{\text{צ}}$ )

A<sup>1</sup> Those who remained ( $\text{הַחֲנִיטִים}^{\text{צ}}$ )

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<sup>1</sup>Ishmael's motives for mass murder are not clear. Weiser, *Das Buch Jeremia*, 356, 357, suggests that he was angry that northerners would be a part of the Jerusalem cultus. Feinberg, 631, suggests that it may have been for plunder or to intimidate the remnant in Judah. Calvin, 465, 466, says the bloodbath was simply a sign of Ishmael's barbarity, for "he was inflamed with ferocious madness when he slew simple and innocent men." Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 711, calls him "a psychotic bandit."

<sup>2</sup>The king's daughters are numbered among the remnant. This raises a question for it is strange that the Babylonians did not kill or exile such politically important people. They are not mentioned in Jer 39:1-7 or 2 Kgs 24:1-7, which tell of the capture and fate of Zedekiah and his sons. On the strength of this, it may be fair to say that they simply escaped the dreadful fate of their male siblings. In the end, I have to agree with Thompson, 661-662, "We cannot be certain who they represent, whether Zedekiah's daughters or some other women of royal descent." It is surprising, however, given Jeremiah's description of the capture of the king's wives (38:22, 23), that princesses would be set free. Rudolph, 252, suggests that the eunuchs in vs. 16 are there to protect the princesses.

With the remnant community in his control, Ishmael would have a base for operation. His motives for fleeing may be threefold: (1) to escape punishment; (2) to find refuge with Baalis who had instigated the whole scenario (40:14); and (3) to sell the remnant as slaves to the Ammonites.<sup>1</sup>

However, Ishmael's plan failed for Johanan intercepted him at "the great pool which is in Gibeon (vs. 12).<sup>2</sup> This means that Ishmael did not get far.<sup>3</sup>

Johanan's arrival caused the kidnapped remnant to rejoice even as Ishmael and eight of his men fled<sup>4</sup> (two presumably falling in the fray) to Ammon.

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<sup>1</sup>Feinberg, 631. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 710, believes that because Ishmael's band of men was so small, yet had effectively carried out a plan of subterfuge and murder, and had marshalled all the remaining people together to march them into Transjordan, then this story is "quite unreal."

<sup>2</sup>Gibeon was the scene of the bloody and fatal incident recorded in 2 Sam 2:12-16. Excavations at el-Jib, 6 miles NW of Jerusalem, suggest that this is the cite of ancient Gibeon. See J. B. Pritchard, "The Water System at Gibeon," *BA* 19 (1956): 66-75; idem, "Gibeon's History," *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* 7 (1960): 1-12; idem, "Gibeon," *IDB* (1962), 2:391-393; idem, *Gibeon, Where the Sun Stood Still* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 64-70.

<sup>3</sup>If Mizpah is indeed Tell en-Nasbeh, then Gibeon was about 3 miles to the southwest and not east, which would have been in the direction of Ammon. Thompson, 661, and Feinberg, 632, both suggest that Ishmael must have taken a circuitous route to confuse his pursuers.

<sup>4</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 712, says that the absence and sudden reappearance of Johanan and his forces (like Jeremiah's absence throughout the crisis) is a mystery. Thompson, 661, answers guardedly that Ishmael was aware of Johanan's suspicions, and waited for his absence from Mizpah to execute his murderous acts.

Vs. 16 describes the regrouping of the remnant which include soldiers,<sup>1</sup> women, children,<sup>2</sup> and eunuchaps. Johanan and his forces and the "king's daughters" are also to be included. Realizing that this whole scenario may be interpreted as a revolt against the Babylonians, which could have serious repercussions, the remnant congregate near Bethlehem with the intention of going to Egypt, "the only neighboring country which was free from Babylonian dominion."<sup>3</sup>

It now becomes clear that the remnant community is losing hope and constitutes nothing more than those who had survived the catastrophe. Carroll is correct in stating, "Ishmael's contribution to 40:7-41:18 is *to have struck the death-blow of Gedaliah's community.*"<sup>4</sup> And again, "*Ishmael has effectively killed off any positive future in the homeland.*"<sup>5</sup>

The remnant community had become insignificant. Davidson's conclusion is appropriate: "The knife that plunged into Gedaliah destroyed in a moment the dreams that he, and no doubt others, had of a reviving and prospering community in Judah in the years immediately after the Babylonian sack of Jerusalem."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The mention of warriors as part of the captured remnant is indeed strange. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 713, calls it a "minor absurdity."

<sup>2</sup>Regarding "children," the LXX translates *kai ta loipa*, "and the residue." This may be an interpretation for where there are men and women, then those who are left are, naturally, children.

<sup>3</sup>Thompson, 661.

<sup>4</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 712 (emphasis mine).

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 713 (emphasis mine).

<sup>6</sup>Davidson, 137.

The hope that was previously held out for the revival of Judah through the remnant is cruelly crushed by this act of perfidy. The fate of the remnant is sealed for destruction.

Jer 42:1-6

**Translation and Textual Considerations**

(1) Then all the captains of the forces and Johanan son of Kareah and Jezaniah son of Hoshaiah, and all the people, from the least unto the greatest, came (2) and said to Jeremiah the prophet, "Please let our plea fall before you (let our petition come before you) and pray on our behalf (for us)<sup>1</sup> to the Lord your God, for all this remnant [*hašš<sup>2</sup> ērîṭ*], for we are left [*niš<sup>2</sup> arnû*] but a few from many as your eyes see us; (3) that the Lord your God<sup>2</sup> may show us the way we should go and the thing we should do." (4) Then Jeremiah the prophet said to them, "I have heard. Behold, I will pray to the Lord your God<sup>3</sup> as you request, and whatever the Lord answers you I will tell you. I will keep nothing back from you." (5) Then they said to Jeremiah, "May the Lord be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not do according to all the word which the Lord your God sends you to tell us. (6) If it is good or evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God to whom we are sending you, that it may be well with us. Indeed, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God."

**Structure**

Jer 42:1-6 is one unit since the expression, *way<sup>h</sup>î miqqēš<sup>2</sup> <sup>a</sup>šeret<sup>2</sup> yāmîm*, "and it happened, at the end of ten days," in vs. 7, suggests the beginning of a new section.

The unit is divided into two parts:

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<sup>1</sup>The expression, "on our behalf" is omitted in LXX.

<sup>2</sup>A few MSS. and Syr. read, "our God."

<sup>3</sup>LXX lacks "the prophet" and reads *theon hēmōn*, "our God" for MT "your God."

1. Introduction, naming the people in the situation: all the people, i.e., the remnant, and Jeremiah (vss. 1, 2a)

2. Body, consisting of conversation between the people and Jeremiah. This dialogue shows shifts in its pronominal forms:

- a. People: Pray to *your* God (2nd sg. vss. 2, 3)
- b. Jer: I will pray to *your* God (2nd plu. vs. 4)
- c. People: We will do what *your* God demands (2nd sg. vs. 5)
- d. People: We will do what *our* God demands (1st plu. vs. 6).

### **Historical Background**

After the refugees had regrouped at Geruth Chimham, near Bethlehem,<sup>1</sup> they intended to go to Egypt instead of staying in Judah and facing possible Babylonian reprisals (41:17-18). However, they approached Jeremiah to seek divine guidance on their behalf. Jer 42:1-6 describes this encounter.

### **Interpretation**

Jeremiah is called "the prophet" and asked to intercede on behalf of the people.<sup>2</sup> This is an interesting emergence as compared to chaps. 37-38 where Jeremiah is the humble supplicant before the king. Carroll is correct that this is "not

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<sup>1</sup>Scholars agree that the exact location of this place is unknown.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Gen 20:7 for the association of the prophet with intercession.

only a case of role reversal but also a contrast with the figure . . . who is forbidden to intercede on behalf of the people."<sup>1</sup>

The focal issue regarding the remnant in this passage is that they consider themselves to be small and insignificant. They confess that those who had survived the catastrophes of seige, fall of the city, murder of the governor, and subsequent kidnap constitute a miniscule band. Those who are left, the remnant, are *ṛṣ<sup>c</sup>at mēharbēh*, "a few of many." And this comprised *k<sup>o</sup>l-hā<sup>c</sup>ām miqqāṭōn w<sup>f</sup><sup>c</sup>ad-gādōl*, "all the people from the least even to the greatest" (42:1). This suggests a feeling of desperation. This is heightened by the idiom *tipp<sup>o</sup>l-nā<sup>ḏ</sup> ḥinnātēnū ḥpānēkā*, "Let our petition fall before you," which suggests a sense of urgency. In a state of distress regarding their next move, the panicked refugees hoped that the divine word would cut short their perplexity.

Further, the smallness of the remnant is again highlighted by the expression *ka<sup>ḏ</sup>ašer ḥēnēkā rō<sup>ḏ</sup>ōṭ<sup>ḏ</sup>ōtānū*, "just as your eyes see us" (vs. 2b). In short, those who stood before Jeremiah seeking a divine oracle constituted the remnant. As

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<sup>1</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 715. He probably goes too far in claiming that this shows that the remnant community has now become acceptable before God since the hostility of God toward Judah has dissipated with the fall of Jerusalem. Further, he makes too much of the fact that Jeremiah is called "the prophet." By this, he claims that a distinctively new strand of tradition appears, which is significantly different from that strand which claims that the divine pleasure lies exclusively with the exiles in Babylon (Jer 24:4-7; 29:4-7, 10-14). He is forceful that real hope for the future lies with the remnant in Judah and not with the exiles in Babylon.

Thompson indicates, "They seemed to be a mere handful of people out of the many who comprised the original nation."<sup>1</sup>

As the structure indicates in the shifting of pronouns, the remnant's desperation is heightened. Holladay sums it up well:

These shifts are not accidental; each side is making points. The group says in effect to Jrm, "Deal with Yahweh: that is your specialty." Jrm says to the group, "I shall deal with Yahweh, but it is you who are obligated by the transaction." The group senses that Jrm has made his point, so it says, in effect, "We accept our obligation."<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, the people's solemn response to obey Yahweh's word, whatever it may be (vss. 5-6), "alerts the reader to expect the subsequent conflict between the community and the prophet and their rejection of the word of God."<sup>3</sup> Their emphatic pledge brings a sense of suspicion that in their panic they are hoping that the divine word will agree with their plan. This serves to heighten their subsequent recalcitrance.<sup>4</sup> One observes that the surviving remnant is comparatively small and their actions are haunted by desperation.

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<sup>1</sup>Thompson, 663.

<sup>2</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 298.

<sup>3</sup>Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 142.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

**Translation and Textual Considerations**

(7) At the end of ten days the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah. (8) Then he called Johanan, son of Kareah and all the captains of the forces who were with him and all the people, from the least to the greatest (9) and said to them, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, to whom you sent me to present your petition before him:<sup>2</sup> (10) *If you will certainly stay*<sup>3</sup> in this land, *then* I will build you up and not pull you down, and I will plant you and not uproot you; for I repent of the evil which I have done to you. (11) Do not fear the king of Babylon, of whom you are afraid. Do not fear him," says the Lord. "For I am with you to save you and to deliver you from his hand. (12) I will give you mercy. And he will have mercy and will let you return to your own land.<sup>4</sup> (13) But *if* you say, 'We will not remain in this land,' disobeying the voice of the Lord your God (14) and saying, 'No!<sup>5</sup> We will go to the land of Egypt, where we will see no war, or hear the sound of the trumpet, or be hungry for bread, and we will live there.' (15) *Now therefore, hear the word of the Lord, O remnant [שׁרֵיט] of*

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<sup>1</sup>Many scholars contend that the text should be rearranged. They hold that 42:7-17 presents Jeremiah's initial report of the divine oracle. However, vss. 18-22 in the present order assume the officers' refusal of that initial report, whereas in 43:1-3 they outrightly refuse it. Therefore, to sharpen the force of the dialogue, they transpose the passages. Hence, 42:7-17; 43:1-3, 42:19-21; 42:18, 22. So Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 275, 276; Rudolph, 256; and Bright, *Jeremiah*, 251, 252. However, Thompson, 644, 655; Nicholson, *Jeremiah* 26-52, 143, 144; and Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 715-721, agree that Jer 42:7-22 is a logically coherent unit. It is pointed out that while 42:18-22 anticipate the people's refusal to listen to Jeremiah, and 43:1-3 actually spell it out, the reader is already introduced to the motif of going to Egypt in 41:17. This is expanded in 42:13-17. Hence, "42:18-22 is a further statement about the journey to Egypt which describes Egypt in terms . . . about the fate of Jerusalem." See Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 720.

<sup>2</sup>LXX says briefly, *kai eipen autois outōs eipe kurios*, "and he said to them. Thus says the Lord."

<sup>3</sup>The emphatic form *yāšō tēš'û*, "you will certainly stay," is used. MT omits the first y but this is restored with LXX.

<sup>4</sup>LXX reads *kai eleēsō humas*, "and I will have mercy on you;" *kai epistrepsō*, "and I will restore."

<sup>5</sup>LXX lacks "saying, No!"

*Judah, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel.<sup>1</sup> If you surely set your faces to go into Egypt and you go to sojourn there, (16) then the sword which you fear will overtake you in the land of Egypt, and the famine which you fear will follow you to Egypt, and there you will die. (17) And all the men<sup>2</sup> who set their faces to go Egypt to live there will die by the sword, famine and pestilence. There will be no survivor or escapee from the evil which I will bring upon them.'* (18) For thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, "Just as my anger and my wrath were poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so will my wrath be poured out on you when you go to Egypt. You will become an execration, a horror, a curse and a taunt. You will never see this place again." (19) *The Lord has spoken concerning you, O remnant [š<sup>2</sup> ērīt] of Judah, 'Do not go into Egypt'.<sup>3</sup> Surely, you know that I have warned you today<sup>4</sup> (20) that you have erred at the cost of your lives;<sup>5</sup> for you yourselves sent me to the Lord your God, saying, 'Pray for us to the Lord our God; tell us all that the Lord our God says<sup>6</sup> and we will do it.'* (21) And I have declared to you today, but you have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God in everything that he has sent me to tell you.<sup>7</sup> (22) Now therefore, know for certain<sup>8</sup> that you will die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence in the place where you desire to go to live."

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<sup>1</sup>The expressions "O remnant of Judah" and "of hosts, the God of Israel" are omitted in the LXX.

<sup>2</sup>LXX adds *kai pantes hoi allogeneis*, "and all the strangers" which is the equivalent of *w<sup>2</sup>kōl-hazzārīm*. Cf. *hazzēdīm*, "the insolent," in 43:2.

<sup>3</sup>The LXX has *kai nun*, "and now," before *yādo<sup>c</sup>a tēd<sup>c</sup>ū*, "surely you know."

<sup>4</sup>LXX lacks the phrase "that I have warned you today." Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 275 thinks that this omission is due to haplography, given the likeness of *kī-ha<sup>c</sup>idōtī*, "that I have warned") in vs. 19 to *kī hi<sup>c</sup>ētēm* ("for you used deceit") in vs. 20. So too Janzen, 118.

<sup>5</sup>MT *hi<sup>c</sup>ētēm b<sup>2</sup>napšōtēkem*, lit. "you have erred at the cost of your lives." LXX *eponēreusasthe en psuchais humōn*, "you have done wickedness in your souls," which is the equivalent of *h<sup>2</sup>rē<sup>c</sup>ōtēm* for *hi<sup>c</sup>ētēm*.

<sup>6</sup>LXX lacks "to the Lord your God"; "our God"; and "our God says to us."

<sup>7</sup>LXX omits "and I have declared to you this day"; "your God"; and "in everything."

<sup>8</sup>LXX lacks "know for a certain."

## Structure

This unit describes Jeremiah's response to the remnant's inquiry for divine guidance. Further, a unitary quality is observed in the use of the verb *šlh*, "to send": In 42:9, Jeremiah presents the word of the Lord, to whom the people had *sent him*; in 43:1, Jeremiah has presented the word of the Lord, who *sent him* back to the people.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the entire address of 42:9-22 belongs together.

One may schematize the passage into three parts:

1. Introduction, naming the people in the situation: Jeremiah and the remnant (vss. 7-8)<sup>2</sup>
2. Body, Jeremiah's report of the oracle from God (vss. 9-19a). This has three distinct sections as indicated by the formulaic expression, *kōh ʔāmār ʔā dōnāy*, "Thus says the Lord":
  - a. vss. 9-15a, Introductory formula, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Isreal." Note the specific pattern:
    - (i) vs. 10a, Protasis, "if"
    - (ii) vs. 10b, Apodosis, "then"

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<sup>1</sup>The "sending" motif weaves the whole section together: vss. 5, 6, 9, 20, 21; 43:1, 2.

<sup>2</sup>In vs. 7 *way'hî*, "and it happened," is doubled. This is unusual. Cf. Jer 1:4, 11, 13; 2:1; 16:1; 33:1; 35:12; 43:8 for the usual introductory formula where the verb is used only once. This doubling of the verb is so because the temporal phrase precedes the actual statement of time. This exact statement of time (10 days) is found only here. The closest expression of time compared to this is found in Jer 41:4. In Jer 28:12, the exact amount of time is not given; it says simply, "Sometime after . . ."

(iii) vs. 13, Protasis, "*If* you say . . ."

(iv) vs. 15a, Apodosis, "*Now therefore (then)*, hear the word of the Lord, O remnant of Judah."

b. vss. 15b-17, Introductory formula, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Isreal." Note the specific pattern:

(i) vs. 15b, Protasis, "*If* you surely set . . ."

(ii) vs. 16a, Apodosis, "*Then* it will be . . ." This apodosis extends to the end of vs. 17.

c. vss. 18-19a, Introductory formula, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Isreal." The expression, "The Lord has said to you, O Remnant of Judah" (vs. 19a), acts as the concluding statement to this main body.

3. Conclusion (vss. 19b-22), Jeremiah's personal admonition of the people.

Note the AB:BA chiastic structure here:

A Surely you know (19b)	B I have warned you (19c)
B <sup>1</sup> I have declared to you (21a)	A <sup>1</sup> Surely you know (22a)

### Historical Background

Jer 42:7-43:7 describes both the prophet's reply to the remnant's request for a divine oracle and their actions in light of that reply. It is specifically noted that ten days<sup>1</sup> had elapsed before the divine revelation came (42:7). The context conveys

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<sup>1</sup>Ten days are seen as the standard calculation for a period of waiting and testing (Dan 1:12-15). See Jacques Doukhan, *Daniel, The Vision of the End* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987), 46; A. Bentzen, *Daniel* (Tubingen:

the idea that immediately on receipt of the divine word, Jeremiah gathered the remnant together, described as "all the people, from the least to the greatest" (42:8; cf. 42:1), to give them the awaited answer.

### **Interpretation**

Upon receiving the divine word, Jeremiah calls the entire community together, along with its leaders.<sup>1</sup> They had sent him to the Lord (vs. 9) and now he provides the reply which is set out in vss. 10-17 in terms of alternatives. The protasis sets the condition, and the apodosis defines the result: *If* they choose to remain in the land, *then* the Lord will deal positively toward the community. He will create conditions for normal life: building, planting, and not pulling down or plucking up.<sup>2</sup> The condition for such rejuvenation was singular: the remnant, those who were left behind following the catastrophe, must remain in the land. This would demonstrate faithfulness in the word of the Lord that He is able to save His people and fulfill His promise to restore them to the land (vs. 12). Also, remaining in the land demonstrates dependence on and allegiance to God and not on a foreign government or to another god. Hence, salvation was tied to obedience and

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J. C. B. Mohr, 1952). Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion*, 336-337, indicates that this length of time gives an insight into the process by which a prophet seeks the will of the deity.

<sup>1</sup>This group is the remnant that is constituted of "the least to the greatest" in 42:1 and 8 (hence tying together both sections, 42:1-6 and 7-22). They are specifically named the "remnant" in 42:2, 15, and 19.

<sup>2</sup>This language is reminiscent of Jeremiah's call to the prophetic office in Jer 1:10.

faithfulness to God. Destruction was linked to disobedience and unfaithfulness.

Salvation and doom were held in tension. God was willing to do His best to ensure that these people could receive the blessings that He was so willing to give. Indeed,

This remnant, like the one in Babylon, was being offered the same promise of renewal and restoration. There was no unwillingness on Yahweh's part to allow any individual or group of individuals among his people to enjoy the blessings of the day of restoration.<sup>1</sup>

This offer of renewal toward the remnant community was due to the Lord's repentance or change of mind (*nḥm*).<sup>2</sup> Carroll observes: "It is the language of possibility and renewal, and when used of the deity indicates such changes in his attitude towards the community that its future becomes an open one. A good future is now possible for the people."<sup>3</sup>

The clauses of vs. 11-12 continue to indicate the protasis of vs. 10. Holladay indicates that the reassurance formula ("do not be afraid . . ."), the support formula ("for I am with you . . ."), and the statement of divine intervention ("to save you and deliver you") form an oracle of salvation (*Heilsorakel*).<sup>4</sup> For the remnant

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<sup>1</sup>Thompson, 665.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 666. Thompson thinks that the verb should be translated as "grieve for," instead of "repent." His claim is that the primary sense of the verb is "take a (deep) breath," which is the sense here, and the translation "grieve" (sigh sorrowfully) would better suit the context. For the semantic range of this root, see H. J. Stoebe, "*nḥm*," *THAT* (1984), 2:59-66.

<sup>3</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 718.

<sup>4</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 285. See further Berridge, 202-207; March, 163; Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 11-13.

community, the factors that mitigate against them, divine wrath and Babylonian reprisal,<sup>1</sup> are set at nought.

The protasis of vs. 13 is shaped in a negative form describing the anticipated reply of the determination of the remnant to flee to Egypt. The apodosis of vs. 15a repeats the introduction ("the word of the Lord"; cf. vs. 7) and specifically names the group as the remnant. The introductory formula is also renewed. This gets the attention that if the people give a negative response to God, then (*hear the word of God*) the word of God has a negative response. This is strengthened by the negative nature of the extended protasis (vs. 15b) and apodosis (vss. 16-17). If they are determined<sup>2</sup> to go to Egypt for safety, security, and food, then disaster will certainly overtake them. The very evils that they would attempt to avoid will be encountered. They would be destroyed by sword, famine, and pestilence.<sup>3</sup> The future is built on an *either-or* response: *either* they stay in Judah and live *or* go to Egypt and perish.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>MT allows for the king of Babylon to show peace toward the remnant. LXX reads the 1st person throughout and makes the Lord the advocate for peace, "*I will let you remain in your land.*" This may understand the verb forms *riham* and *hēšīh* as infinitive absolutes, which are also possible and make good sense. See Thompson, 666, n. 6.

<sup>2</sup>The expression *šôm ṯšimûn p'nēkem*, "set your faces," denotes determination. The verb is strengthened by the infinitive absolute.

<sup>3</sup>On the occurrence of this series of judgments in Jeremiah and in the OT, see John Bright, "The Date of the Prose Sermons of Jeremiah," *JBL* 70 (1951), 32.

<sup>4</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 719, is correct in his assessment that for this group "the positive future lies in the land of Judah or nowhere."

Vs. 18 repeats the introductory formula and likens the effect of the wrath of the Lord on Jerusalem to that on the remnant who go to Egypt. The lesson is transparent: as Jerusalem was destroyed by God, so too the remnant that survived will be destroyed by God if they go to Egypt. Devastation and death are inevitable with the wrong choice.

Jeremiah then brings to an end the direct word of the Lord in the vocative address and the forceful imperative: "O remnant of Judah, do not go to Egypt."<sup>1</sup>

The expression  $\text{š}^{\text{c}}\text{ērīt y}^{\text{c}}\text{hūdāh}$ , "remnant of Judah," forms an inclusio in vss. 15a and 19a. Therefore, the terrible consequences of going to Egypt are forcefully set to occur to the remnant. This remnant will become hopeless and will never see Judah again. Hence, the forceful admonition, "Do not go to Egypt." Carroll is correct in stating, "In going to Egypt the people would appear to be reversing the original divine act of redemption which brought the people out of Egypt."<sup>2</sup> The Lord's word to the remnant is clear: going to Egypt will only be fatal.

The concluding statement of vss. 19b-22 shows Jeremiah's warning. The section is demarcated by the words  $\text{yādō}^{\text{c}}\text{a tēd}^{\text{c}}\text{û}$ , "know for a certainty" (vss. 19b and 22). Jeremiah issues an emphatic statement that the remnant's own self-

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<sup>1</sup>There is a question regarding the statement "Do not go to Egypt." Is it to be construed as the Lord's word or Jeremiah's word? There is general unanimity that this is a citation of the Lord's word. Cf. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 252.

<sup>2</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 720.

deception<sup>1</sup> has led them to conceive a plan of fleeing into Egypt. They were so confident of winning the Lord's approval that they sent Jeremiah to pray for them and pledged themselves to do exactly what the Lord requested, as the prophet himself reiterates in vss. 20b and 21. Carroll comments correctly, "The emphasis by the people on their willingness to obey (vss. 5-6) can now be seen as a literary device whereby the enormity of the people's disobedience is underlined (vss. 13, 21)."<sup>2</sup>

The chiasmic structure of this last section further emphasizes that, with the certainty of the warning and its rejection, the certainty of judgment is also real. Like the Lord's word, Jeremiah's warning is also clear: going to Egypt would only be fatal. Indeed, "the remnant of Gedaliah's community is presented as tottering on the brink of annihilation. Will they be so foolhardy as to go to Egypt?"<sup>3</sup>

Jer 43:1-7

### Translation and Textual Considerations

(1) When Jeremiah had finished speaking to all the people all the words of the Lord their God which the Lord their God had sent him to them (2) Azariah the son of Hoshaiah and Johanan son of Kareah and all the insolent<sup>4</sup> men spoke,

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<sup>1</sup>The verb phrase *hitētēm b'napšōtēkem* means literally "you have caused yourselves to wander." See Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 301, who proposes that Jeremiah is addressing the leaders of the group, saying, "You have led astray the whole group at the cost of your lives."

<sup>2</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 720.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 720, 721.

<sup>4</sup>LXX lacks "insolent."

saying<sup>1</sup> to Jeremiah, "You are telling<sup>2</sup> a lie. The Lord our God did not send you to tell us, 'Do not go to Egypt to live there.' (3) But Baruch the son of Neriah has incited you against us in order to give us into the hand of the Chaldeans that they may kill us or exile us to Babylon." (4) So Johanan the son of Kareah and all the captains of the forces and all the people did not obey the voice of the Lord to remain in the land of Judah. (5) *But Johanan the son of Kareah<sup>3</sup> and all the captains of the army took all the remnant [שִׁׁרְיָת] of Judah who had returned from all the nations where they had been scattered<sup>4</sup> to sojourn in the land of Judah.*<sup>5</sup> (6) the men, the women, and children, the princesses, and every person whom Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan; also Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch the son of Neriah. (7) And they came to the land of Egypt, for they did not obey the voice of the Lord. And they arrived at Taphanhes.

### Structure

Jer 43:1-7 is a single unit as evidenced by two factors:

1. Jer 42:22 marks the culmination of "the word of the Lord (which) came to Jeremiah" in 42:7. The "word of the Lord came to Jeremiah" again in 43:8.

Hence, 43:1-7, sandwiched between 42:7-22 and 43:8ff forms one unit.

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<sup>1</sup>MT שִׁׁרְיָת is rendered by LXX, *hoi eipantes*, "the ones who say," the equivalent of *hāmnōrīm*.

<sup>2</sup>LXX lacks "You are telling."

<sup>3</sup>LXX omits "Son of Kareah."

<sup>4</sup>The expression "from all the nations where they had been scattered" is omitted in the LXX. It reads simply *en tē gē*, "in the land," for MT *בְּ־עֵרֶשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל*, "in the land of Judah."

<sup>5</sup>The Qumran fragment 4QJer<sup>b</sup> shows the *tsade* of *בְּ־עֵרֶשׁ* followed by a lacuna. The final mem of *misrayim* is visible. Therefore, it is surmised that 4QJer<sup>b</sup> reads, "land of Judah." Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 276, states that the verb *gūr* (used here) is always associated with Egypt (42:15, 17, 22; 43:2) while the verb *yšb* is associated with staying in Judah. Hence it seems best to stay with the indication of 4QJer<sup>b</sup>. See also Janzen, 182-184.

2. In 42:22, Egypt, though not named, is described as "the place where you desire to go." In 43:7 this place is specifically called Egypt. This name forms an inclusio.

The passage may be divided as follows:

1. Introduction, naming the people in the situation: the remnant,<sup>1</sup> their leaders and Jeremiah (vss. 1, 2a)
2. Body, a brief address of the leading figures to Jeremiah (vss. 2b-3)
3. Conclusion, describing the action of the leaders and the remnant community (vss. 4-7). The expression *lō<sup>ḏ</sup> šm<sup>ḥ</sup>. . . b<sup>ḥ</sup>kôl ḏ<sup>a</sup>dōnāy*, "and did not obey the voice of the Lord," in vss. 4 and 7, is a key phrase that frames the conclusion.

### Historical Background

The events of 43:1-4 occurred immediately after Jeremiah's address in 42:7-22. The happenings of vss. 5ff. may have taken place at the time of the people's response or shortly thereafter. The context seems to indicate that no appreciable length of time elapsed between the events of 43:4 and 43:5.

### Interpretation

The remnant community responded to Jeremiah's word by accusing him of lying and being a puppet of Baruch (vss. 2b-3). This is ironic for two reasons: (1)

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<sup>1</sup>The expression "all the people" is a precise form to identify the remnant which is similarly described as "all the people, from the smallest to the greatest," in 42:1, 7.

Jeremiah is the one who accuses other people of lying,<sup>1</sup> and (2) that Baruch was the one who incited Jeremiah to lie is strange in that, throughout the book, Jeremiah is presented as being quite capable of making his own decisions.<sup>2</sup>

The obstinacy of the group is indicated in that they stoutly claimed, "The Lord *our God* did not send you to say, 'Do not go to Egypt'." Their decision had already been made to the point that, regardless of their initial pledge to do whatever God said, they vehemently denounced any other alternative.<sup>3</sup>

Jer 43:4-7 forms an indictment against the remnant community grounded in their base and outright rejection of the word of God: they did not obey the voice of the Lord (vss. 4, 7). Such disobedience is the essence of covenant dishonor. Their rejection of the Lord's word to stay in the land is seen when the entire remnant community<sup>4</sup> journeys to Egypt. This is a blatant demonstration of covenant unfaithfulness.

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<sup>1</sup>See for example Jer 8:8; 9:4; 14:14; 23:25; 26; 32; 28:15; 29:21. For a detailed account of lying in the book of Jeremiah, see Thomas W. Overholt, *The Threat of Falsehood: A Study in the Theology of the Book of Jeremiah*, SBT, 2d series, 16 (Naperville, IL: SCM Press, 1970), 86-104.

<sup>2</sup>See Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 722. Further, in light of the contacts between Jeremiah and Baruch, such a conclusion is absurd. See Jer 32:12, 13, 16; 36:4, 5, 8, 10, 13-19, 26, 27, 32; 43:6; 45:1, 2.

<sup>3</sup>The "sending" motif is again present here. In 43:1 God *sent* Jeremiah to them, but they rejected this when they cried, "The Lord our God did not *send* you."

<sup>4</sup>It is hard to tell whether or not Jeremiah and Baruch went voluntarily or by force. If they had gone willingly then this may be seen as in defiance of the Lord's word. If forced to go, then one has to wonder why the refugees would take along one whom they regarded as being hostile to their program.

The extent of the remnant here is difficult to judge. Does it mean that every person in the land was shuttled off to Egypt as part of the remnant? This does not appear to be so in light of the fact that some 745 people were later taken into captivity in 582 B.C. (Jer 52:30). Therefore, the remnant here may be a reference to the particular group that had gathered around Gedaliah at Mizpah and who had fled as far as Bethlehem.<sup>1</sup> In any event, the composition of the group varied: those who had fled to Trans-Jordan in the course of the siege of Jerusalem but who had returned and gathered around Gedaliah (40:11-12); adults, children, princesses (cf. 41:10), and those whom Nebuzaradan had left in the care of Gedaliah.<sup>2</sup>

What is clear, however, is that this remnant did not have any hope for the future. All those who went to Taphenes in Egypt are condemned as disobeying the voice of the Lord. They have no future. Note the following cryptic conclusion regarding the result of the judgment on the remnant community:

With the descent of the people into Egypt, the story of Gedaliah's community comes to an end. The great hopes associated with Gedaliah are dead, and the possibility of a renewed people in the land of Judah is now in the past. Thus under disobedience and the awful power of the curses uttered by Jeremiah against going to Egypt Gedaliah's *community faced a future without hope after the shattering of their hopes for life in the land of Judah.*<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 723, regards the statement of the wholesale movement of the people to Egypt as an ideological rather than a literal one. He reasons that "if such an impression is intentional, then it must reflect the ideology of the editors, who wish to write off all the people left in Judah."

<sup>2</sup>Thompson, 669, thinks that "the writer of this account regarded the group as significant because it contained proven leaders and significant people like royal princesses, as well as Jeremiah and Baruch. There seemed little hope for the group left behind if one thought of future renewal."

<sup>3</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 724 (emphasis mine).

In terms of future renewal and rejuvenation, there seemed to be little hope. The verdict against them is wholly negative.

Jer 44:7-10

### Translation and Textual Considerations

(7) *And now, thus says the Lord, God of Hosts, the God of Israel,*<sup>1</sup> *"Why are you doing great evil against yourselves, to cut off from you man and woman, infant and child, from the midst of Judah not leaving to yourselves a remnant [š<sup>⌒</sup> ērit]?"* (8) *Why do you provoke me to anger with the works of your hands, sacrificing to other gods in the land of Egypt where you have come to live so that you cut yourselves off and become a curse and a taunt among all the nations of the earth?* (9) *Have you forgotten the evil of your fathers, the evil of the kings of Judah, the evil of their wives<sup>2</sup> and your own evil<sup>3</sup> and the evil of your wives which they committed in the land of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem?* (10) *They have not humbled themselves<sup>4</sup> even to this day, nor have they feared.<sup>5</sup> And they have not walked according to my law and my statutes<sup>6</sup> which I gave to you and your fathers.<sup>7</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup>LXX reads *kurios pantokrator*, "Lord Almighty," i.e., "Lord of Hosts."

<sup>2</sup>LXX reads *kai tōn kakōn tōn archontōn humōn*, "and the evil of your officials."

<sup>3</sup>LXX lacks "and your own evil."

<sup>4</sup>MT *lō<sup>⌒</sup> dukk'ū*, lit. "they were not crushed" (Pual of *dk<sup>⌒</sup>*). LXX, *kai ouk epausanto*, "and they have not ceased." As *BHS* observes, the versions render different readings.

<sup>5</sup>LXX lacks "nor have they feared."

<sup>6</sup>LXX reads only *tōn prostagmatōn mou*, "my ordinances," the equivalent of *b'ḥuqqōtāy*.

<sup>7</sup>LXX reads "their fathers" instead of MT "your fathers."

## Structure

Jer 44:7 is found in the second unit, vss. 7-10, of chap. 44.<sup>1</sup> There is an inclusio which is demarcated by several factors:

1. The Introductory formula, "Thus says the Lord of Hosts the God of Israel," is found in vss. 7 and 10.
2. The expression *yôm hazzeh*, "this day," is found at the end of vs. 6 and again in vs. 10.
3. While all three sections (vss. 2-6; 7-10, and 11-14) have almost the same introductory formula, the latter two have distinct markers that stand at the beginning: vs. 7- *w<sup>c</sup>attah*, "and now"; vs. 11- *lāken*, "therefore." Vs. 2 has no such marker.
4. There is a distinct change from the declaratory statements of unit 1 to the rhetorical question form of unit 2.

Vss. 7-10 may be schematized as follows:

1. Introductory formula, "Thus says the Lord," introduced by the marker, *w<sup>c</sup>attah*, "and now" (vs. 7a)
2. Body, consisting of three rhetorical questions: (vss. 7b, 8, 9)
3. Concluding statement (vs. 10), with the expression *yôm hazzeh*. "this day."

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<sup>1</sup>There are three distinct sections in 44:2-14: (1) vss. 2-6; (2) 7-10; (3) 11-14. See too K.-F. Pohlmann, *Studien zum Jeremiabuch: Ein Beitrag zur Frage nach der Entstehung des Jeremiabuches*, FRLANT 118 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1978), 168-172.

## Historical Background

Sometime after the remnant had sought refuge in Egypt, the divine oracle was given to Jeremiah (43:8-44:14). In fact, chap. 44 provides the account of the accusations of God (44:2-14) and Jeremiah (44:20-30) levelled against the refugees because of their practice and open defense of idolatry (44:15-19).<sup>1</sup>

Jeremiah's address concerned all the Jews living in Egypt: at Migdol,<sup>2</sup> Tahpanhes, Memphis,<sup>3</sup> and in the land of Patros.<sup>4</sup> This suggests that Jewish settlements were already existing in Egypt before the arrival of these refugees.

Since no indication is given as to how much time had elapsed since the word and action of 43:8-13, we may agree with Holladay that it is difficult to envisage the implications of chap. 44. On the one hand, it suggests a kind of general

<sup>1</sup>Such idolatrous practices were not new to the Lord's people. Jeremiah had earlier condemned such in his "Temple Sermon" (7:16-20). Davidson, 150, claims that as a tolerated minority in a foreign land, it appeared sensible to adapt as far as possible to local Egyptian customs.

<sup>2</sup>"Migdol" is a NW Semitic word which means "tower" or "fortress." It is known from the Tell el-Amarna letters (14th century B.C.) as Ma-ag-da-li. The exact site is unknown. Thomas O. Lambdin, "Migdol," *IDB* (1962), 3:377, identifies it as Tell el-Her. A more recent explanation claims a site labelled simply as T. 21, about 24 miles east-northeast of Taphanes. See Eliezer D. Oren, "Migdol: A New Fortress on the Edge of the Eastern Nile Delta," *BASOR* 256 (1984): 7-44.

<sup>3</sup>Memphis (Heb. *Noph*) was one of the main cities of Lower Egypt. It was located about 13 miles south of modern Cairo.

<sup>4</sup>The expression "Land of Pathros" suggests a region, perhaps in Upper Egypt. Thomas O. Lambdin, "Pathros," *IDB* (1962), 3:676, indicated that the Hebrew *Patrôs* is a rendering of the Egyptian *p<sup>3</sup>-t<sup>3</sup>-rsy*, "the Southern Land." It is also known that there was a Jewish community at Elephantine in the fifth century B.C. Their Aramaic documents tell much of their society. See A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923).

epistle to all the Jews living in Egypt; but, on the other hand, vss. 15, 19, and 20 suggest that this is an address to an assemblage, and it appears implausible to imagine that all the Jews living in Egypt would gather for such an occasion.<sup>1</sup>

### **Interpretation**

The first unit, 44:2-6, gives a review of Judah's *past* disobedience and her consequent destruction by the Lord.<sup>2</sup> This second unit, vss. 7-10, addresses the *present* situation of the Jews, accusing them of the same behavior as their fathers, and hence endangering their own lives to the extent of being cut off (*krt*) without a remnant (*š<sup>er</sup> ʿrîṭ*).

The people are indicted for committing great evil--this, in spite of the fulfillment of the terrible judgments against Jerusalem. The refugees had learned nothing. Hence, the language of condemnation is strong: there will be no survival for those who had fled to Egypt.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 303.

<sup>2</sup>The description of the cities of Judah as a waste or ruin (*horbāh*) without inhabitants favored the exiles in Babylon because it left the land vacant for their return. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 729.

<sup>3</sup>Some commentators point out that the similarity in language between chap. 44 and other prose passages in the book is an indication that the passage was freely compared by a deuteronomic editor who decided to expand the declaration of judgment in 43:8-13. So Nicholson, *Jeremiah* 26-52, 152 and Rudolph, 239, who regard only vss. 2, 7, 8 as the original words of Jeremiah, the remainder coming from the prophet's sermons. However, Thompson, 664, refutes this view claiming that even if some expansion took place, there is no reason to question the essential historicity of these incidents recorded in chap. 44.

"Evil" (*rā<sup>c</sup>āh*) is a key word that is woven throughout the first two units.<sup>1</sup> This motif of evil and desolation in operation against Judah and Jerusalem is found throughout the book.<sup>2</sup> It must be noted, however, that the Lord's evil, as expressed in 44:2, that is, his destruction of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, is different from the evil committed by the people that "refers to the moral injury that is self-inflicted through idolatry."<sup>3</sup>

Against this background of evil and judgment, Jeremiah now confronts the people with a series of rhetorical questions (introduced by *w<sup>c</sup>attāh*, "and now"<sup>4</sup>):

*Why do you commit great evil against yourselves? Why do you provoke me to anger by your doings? Have you forgotten both your forebears' and your own wickedness?*

Even though the interrogative form is used, the conclusion is already implied: persistence in pagan worship<sup>5</sup> is a flagrant dismissal of covenant faithfulness and can only result in a cutting off, that is, destruction<sup>6</sup> of the entire community:

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<sup>1</sup>See Jer 44:2, 3, 5, 7, and 9. In vs. 9 alone it appears five times.

<sup>2</sup>See Jer 25:11; 34:22; 35:17; 36:31; 40:2-3.

<sup>3</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 729. See too Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktian von Jeremia 26-45*, 72. The evil--particularly idol worship--committed by the people of Judah and Jerusalem should have cautioned these refugees to better behavior.

<sup>4</sup>This phrase is frequently used in the OT when a conclusion to an argument is to be drawn. Thompson, 676. Cf. Exod 19:5; Deut 4:1; Josh 24:14; 1 Sam 8:9.

<sup>5</sup>The question, *lāmāh ᵀattem ᵀōšīm rā<sup>c</sup>āh g<sup>c</sup>dōlāh*, "Why are you doing great evil?" (vs. 7) suggests, "Why do you continue to do great evil?"

<sup>6</sup>For a more detailed discussion, see G. F. Hasel, "Kārat," *TWAT* (1984), 4:355-367.

men, women, children, and toddlers. In short, there will be no progenitive factor in the community. This effect is described as having no one remaining, no remnant.

Indeed, the idea of "remnantlessness" is emphasized in that the Lord again threatens to cut off the people because of their idolatrous practices.<sup>1</sup> Instead of a remnant, they would degenerate into a universal curse and taunt (44:8).<sup>2</sup> Such a punishment is indicative of unfaithfulness to the covenant. Failure to heed to its precepts leads inevitably to being reduced to an object of cursing and shame. This implies the result of violating the covenant, just as blessing implies the result of obedience to the covenant.

Vs. 9, which more or less reflects the diction of vs. 2 (as vs. 8 does vs. 3), highlights the evil of the people and their failure, as well as their forefathers', to acknowledge their actions as wicked.

Finally, in the people's theological context there is no idea of repentance. This is brought out in the concluding statement (vs. 10). Feeling no contrition (*lō*<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Rudolph, 260, and *BHS* indicate that this repetition of being cut off is an addition from vs. 7. But it is precisely the repetition that serves as a stylistic device to call attention to the gravity of the situation.

<sup>2</sup>The curse *q'ālāh* comes from the idea of being treated lightly. To discredit someone or depreciate something was to make light of that person or thing. Hence, the idea of dishonor is considered as a curse. The curse is frequently used in combination with other demeaning ideas: curse and taunt (*herpāh*) in 42:18; 44:8,12; curse and horror (*šammāh*) in 42:18; 44:12, 22; curse and waste (*hōreb*) in 49:13; curse and object of whistling (*š'ēqāh*) in 25:18. One can say that here in Jer 44:8 the remnant is described as an object of ridicule and a reproach before all the nations.

*dukk<sup>u</sup>*, "they did not humble (themselves),"<sup>1</sup> they deliberately rejected the Lord's sovereignty.<sup>2</sup>

The remnant that fled Judah and resided in Egypt completely violated the covenant with God. They risk being cut off, annihilated without a trace. We glimpse a threat that there would not be a remnant of the remnant. Hence, we see the people of Judah being progressively reduced by calamity to a mere decimal of their former population until in the end, none survives. Already reduced to a fraction by successive blows, the Judeans constitute merely a "remnant" and even this is threatened.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The verb *dk<sup>u</sup>* appears only here in the book of Jeremiah. It is in the form of a plural and means "crushed with remorse," that is, the people failed to humble themselves before the Lord. However, LXX reads *kai ouk epausanto*, "and have not ceased." *BHS* is uncertain if this is equal to *nikl<sup>u</sup>* (Niphal of the root *kl<sup>u</sup>*, "to be restrained, held back"). Both *BHS* and Rudolph, 260 (cf. Dan 11:30), propose *nik<sup>u</sup>*, (Niphal of the root *k<sup>u</sup>h*, "to be disheartened"). MT seems best in light of the fact that the root *dk<sup>u</sup>*, "crushed," is also used in the sense of being humbled: Isa 19:10, *m<sup>u</sup>dukk<sup>u</sup>im* (pual part.), i.e., "crushed by remorse." Cf. Isa 3:5; Pss 34:19 (Eng. 18); 51:19 (Eng. 17). Further, linking it with disobedience to the Lord's laws suggests a lack of repentance. Hence, the idea here is that they have not humbled themselves. For more indepth study, see H. F. Fuhs, "*Dākh<sup>u</sup>*," *TDOT* (1978), 3:195-208.

<sup>2</sup>This is reflected in that they refused to reverence God or walk in His ways. For the motif of not walking in the Lord's *Tōrah*, see Jer 9:13; 26:4 and 32:23. The equivalent to this is seen in 2:8; 6:19; and to a lesser extent in 8:8 and 18:18. This rejection of the law and covenant statutes is recurrent in the book of Jeremiah: 7:23-26; 11:1-13; 17:19-27; 34:8-22.

<sup>3</sup>Blank, "Traces of Prophetic Agony in Isaiah," 90.

### Translation and Textual Considerations

(11) Therefore, thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, "Behold, I have set my face against you for evil and to cut off all Judah.<sup>1</sup> (12) *And I will take the remnant [š<sup>ʔ</sup>ērīt] of Judah who have set their faces to go into the land Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed; in the land of Egypt they shall fall; by sword,<sup>2</sup> by famine they shall be consumed; from the least to the greatest, by the sword and by the famine they shall die; and they shall become an execration, a horror, a curse and a taunt.<sup>3</sup> (13) I will punish those who live in the land of Egypt just as I punished Jerusalem: with sword, famine and pestilence. (14) *And there will be no escapee [pālīt] or survivor [sārīd] of the remnant [š<sup>ʔ</sup>ērīt] of Judah who have come to sojourn there in the land of Egypt and to return to the land of Judah to which they lift up their souls (they desire) to return to settle<sup>4</sup> there; for they shall not return, except as fugitives [p<sup>ʿ</sup>lētīm].<sup>5</sup>**

### Structure

Jer 44:11-14 constitutes a single unit as indicated by two factors:

1. The word *lākēn*, "therefore," introduces the section, just as *w<sup>ʔ</sup>attāh*, "and now," introduced vss. 7-10.
2. Vs. 11 starts with, "Thus says the Lord . . ." while vs. 15 starts a new section with *wayya<sup>c</sup>nū*, "and they answered."

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<sup>1</sup>LXX says only "Therefore, thus says the Lord, 'Behold I set my face.'"

<sup>2</sup>Many MSS have a conjunctive *waw*, "and," after the noun "sword."

<sup>3</sup>LXX has several omissions: the verb *w<sup>ʔ</sup>lākahtī*, "and I will take"; the phrase, "of Judah"; the entire section "have set . . . all be consumed"; "land of;" "by the sword and by the famine they shall die"; "curse."

<sup>4</sup>Both *šām*, "there," and *lāšebet*, "to settle," "to dwell," are omitted in the LXX.

<sup>5</sup>The expression *kī<sup>ʔ</sup>īm-p<sup>ʿ</sup>lētīm*, "except as fugitives," is suggested as a gloss in light of vs. 14a. However, the expression is found in both the MT and the LXX and is likely to be intentional.

The unit is arranged chiastically:

- A Remnant of Judah who determine to go to Egypt to live  
 B They shall all be consumed  
 C Sword and famine shall consume them  
 D From the least to the greatest  
 C<sup>1</sup> Sword and famine shall kill them  
 B<sup>1</sup> God will punish them until they are consumed  
 A<sup>1</sup> No survivor or escapee of the remnant of Judah who have gone to live in Egypt.

### Historical Background

This has already been covered on pp. 173, 174 above.

### Interpretation

This section (vss. 11-14) is a "Prediction of Disaster"<sup>1</sup> toward the remnant and the extent of that punitive action. The word play of the divine "setting of the face" (vs. 11), against those who "set their faces" to go to Egypt (vs. 12), immediately sets the stage of confrontation. This "idiom of determination"<sup>2</sup> (*šîm*

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<sup>1</sup>March, 160, indicates that *lākēn*, together with the formula *kōh ʔāmar ʔādōnāy*, "Thus says the Lord," is a "Prediction of Disaster." It underlines the future aspect of the announcement and its disastrous effect or nature. Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, repr. ed., trans. Hugh Clayton White (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), 65-67, calls this an "Announcement of Judgment" or an "Announcement of Ill."

<sup>2</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 730. See also Jer 21:10 for the notion of setting the face against the city, as an act of judgment.

*pānīm*, "set the face") highlights the fact that the same behavior is carried out by both the Lord and the remnant, and only one party will eventually stand (cf. vs. 28).

The judgment against the entire remnant is described in terms of consummation: *tmm*. Combined with the idea of "falling" (*npl*),<sup>1</sup> this spells absolute destruction and death.<sup>2</sup> The agents of this terrible disaster are the sword and famine.<sup>3</sup> These respect no one, regardless of rank or status, wreaking havoc "from the least to the greatest," i.e., the remnant, who are similarly described in 42:2, 8.

The repetition of the agents of disaster emphasizes the fact that the very things that the refugees hoped to escape by going to Egypt are the very things that would bring about their ultimate demise.<sup>4</sup> Escape shall be cut off for the remnant shall degenerate to *l'ᵀālāh*, "execration,"<sup>5</sup> *l'šammāh*, "horror," *liklālāh*, "curse," and *l'herpāh*, "taunt." The remnant has deteriorated to an object of derision and

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<sup>1</sup>*Npl* means more than the common physical act of "falling." It is often associated with something violent or accidental. The root often designates damage, death, and destruction. See M. C. Fisher, "*Nāpal*," *TWOT* (1980), 2:587; *BDB*, 656, 657.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. vss. 18, 27 for the consummation (*tmm*) idea.

<sup>3</sup>The alliteration *baḥere bārā<sup>c</sup>ā*, "by sword, by famine," catches the readers'/hearers' attention and alerts one to the gravity of the situation. Hence, there is no need to insert a connecting conjunction.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Jer 44:16, 22 where death by these same means is threatened for going into Egypt.

<sup>5</sup>Here *ᵀālāh* has a metonymic use to describe people on whom curses come, having a calamitous effect. The person under consideration is placed in such a deliterious situation that if someone wanted to curse his fellow, he would refer to the fate of that person. See Josef Scharbert, "*ᵀālāh*," *TDOT* (1974), 1:264-265.

ridicule.<sup>1</sup> The reality of being reduced to an object of curse suggests the violation of the covenant, for curse is as much a part of broken covenant as blessing is of the unbroken covenant.

The person behind the agents of the destruction is now clearly identified (vs. 13). The remnant shall be consumed because the Lord shall execute the judgment. In fact, the Lord will deal with the remnant in Egypt as He has dealt with Jerusalem. The equation is complete: the destruction of Jerusalem equals the destruction of the remnant in Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

The extent of the judgment is described in vs. 14: there will be no escapee (*palîl*) or survivor (*šārîd*) of the remnant of Judah. This points to a state of absolute devastation. It now becomes clearer that even the "remnant of the remnant" is in jeopardy of annihilation. The remnant who set their faces to live in Egypt shall have no redress. Hausmann's summary is quite appropriate, "There could now be no hope for revival either in Judah or amongst the community in Egypt."<sup>3</sup>

Further, the emphasis on "land" may be noted. The "remnant of Judah" are disobedient in that they refuse the Lord's protection when they refuse to remain in the "land of promise." Instead they return to Egypt, the land of former bondage. Hence, the remnant abandoned the Lord who in turn disinherited and displaced them.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Jer 42:18 where the same fourfold designation is used of the remnant.

<sup>2</sup>Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 26-45*, 73, indicates that this equation between Jerusalem and the remnant in Egypt marks the conclusion of Jeremiah's sermon.

<sup>3</sup>Hausmann, 110.

Their inescapable destiny was death and loss of the "Promised Land."<sup>1</sup> Jer 44:14 highlights this fact.

Therefore, the decimation of the people and their landlessness point to the insignificance of the remnant. A people without roots, destined to destruction, signals their rejection as the elected people of God.

Jer 44:20-30

### Translation and Textual Considerations

(20) Then Jeremiah spoke to all the people: men, women, that is, all the people who had answered him. He said: (21) "Concerning the sacrifices that you sacrificed in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, you and your fathers, your kings and your princes, and the people of the land, didn't the Lord remember them?<sup>2</sup> And it came upon his heart. (22) And the Lord could no longer bear your evil doings and the abominations which you did. Therefore, your land has become a desolation, a waste, and a curse, with no inhabitant,<sup>3</sup> as it is today. (23) It is because you offered sacrifices and sinned against the Lord and did not obey the voice of the Lord and you did not walk in his law, his statutes, and his testimonies, that this evil has come upon you, as it is now."<sup>4</sup> (24) Then Jeremiah said to all the people and to all the women, "Hear the word of the Lord all<sup>5</sup> you of Judah who are in Egypt. (25) Thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, 'You and your wives<sup>6</sup> have spoken with your mouths

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<sup>1</sup>For land as a theological theme in the prophets, see H. Wildberger, "Israel und sein Land," *EvT* 16 (1956): 404-422; F. Dreyfus, "Le thème de l'héritage dans l'AT," *RSPT* 42 (1958): 3-49.

<sup>2</sup>*BHS* suggests reading  $\supset\text{ōtāh}$ , "it," for MT, "them." *LXX* lacks "them."

<sup>3</sup>*LXX* lacks "with no inhabitant."

<sup>4</sup>*LXX* lacks this last phrase.

<sup>5</sup>*LXX* lacks from this point to the end of the verse.

<sup>6</sup>*LXX* *humeis gunaikes*, "your women," which equals  $\supset\text{attēnāh hannāšīm}$ , suggested by *BHS*.

and with your hands you have fulfilled (your promise)<sup>1</sup> saying, We will surely perform the vows that we have made to offer sacrifices to the Queen of Heaven and to pour out libations to her. Then confirm<sup>2</sup> your vows and really perform your vows.<sup>3</sup> (26) Therefore, hear the word of the Lord, all you of Judah who live in Egypt, 'Behold, I have sworn by my great name,' says the Lord, 'that my name shall no more be invoked by the mouth of any man in all the land of Egypt, saying 'As the Lord lives.' (27) Behold, I am watching over them for evil and not for good. All the men of Judah who are in the land of Egypt will die by the sword and by famine until they are totally destroyed. (28) *And the escapees [p'litē] of the sword shall return from the land of Egypt<sup>4</sup> to the land of Judah, men of a number.<sup>5</sup> And all<sup>6</sup> the remnant [š<sup>2</sup>ērīt] of Judah who came to the land of Egypt to sojourn there<sup>7</sup> shall know whose word shall stand: mine or theirs.<sup>8</sup>* (29) This shall be a sign to you,' says the Lord, 'that I will punish you in this place so that you will know that my words will surely stand against you for evil.'<sup>9</sup> (30) Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will give Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt into the hand of those who seek his life, just as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, his enemy, and who sought his life.'

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<sup>1</sup>This object is implied, hence added in translation.

<sup>2</sup>MT *tāqîmnāh*, "confirm," is seen as "wholly abnormal . . . probably an erroneous transposition of *ym* (for *ʿqimeynāh*) unless it originates from an incorrect spelling *tāqêṁnāh* or *ʿqîmenāh*." See Gesenius' *Hebrew Grammar*, 72K.

<sup>3</sup>MT *w<sup>c</sup>āsōh ta<sup>a</sup>śenāh ʔe-nidrêkem*, "and really perform your vows," is read in a few MSS as *niskêkem*, "your libations." BHS suggests *dibrêkem*, "and make your words (good)." LXX lacks the word.

<sup>4</sup>The expression "from the land of Egypt" is omitted in LXX.

<sup>5</sup>This entire expression "and the escapees . . . men of a number," though found in both the MT and LXX, is regarded as an expansion by some scholars. See Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 280.

<sup>6</sup>*Kol*, "all," is absent in LXX.

<sup>7</sup>BHS treats "the ones who came to the land of Egypt to sojourn there" as a false addition.

<sup>8</sup>The expression *mimmennî ûmêhem*, "mine or theirs," is lacking in LXX.

<sup>9</sup>LXX has an abbreviated reading, "And this (is) the sign to you that I will visit you for evil."

## Structure

Jer 44:28 is part of the final condemnation of the people by the prophet as found in 44:20-30. It is in response to the people's queries in 44:15-19.<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah's response falls into two parts: 44:20-23 and 24-30, as demarcated by the expression "then Jeremiah said to all the people" (vss. 20, 24).

The second part, vss. 24-30, may be further divided into two sections: vss. 24-25 and vss. 26-30, as marked by the expression "Hear the word of the Lord all you of Judah who are in the land of Egypt" (vss. 24, 26). Further, the final section, vss. 26-30, is introduced by *lāken*, "therefore."

Hence, I may present the following:

1. Jer 44:15-19: Response of the people to Jeremiah's denunciation in vss. 2-14
2. Jer 44:20-30: Response of Jeremiah to the people, divided in two parts:
  - a. vss. 20-23, Jeremiah addresses the people regarding their *past actions*.
  - b. vss. 24-30, Jeremiah addresses the people regarding their *present actions* and *God's future actions* against them. It has two parts:
    - (i) vss. 24-25, Jeremiah's sarcasm regarding their *present ways*

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<sup>1</sup>In vss. 15-19 the people are responding to Jeremiah's pronouncement of judgment in 44:1-14: the response of the men is found in vss. 16-18, while vs. 19 tells that of the women.

(ii) vss. 26-30, The Lord's "Prediction of Disaster" introduced by *lāken*, "therefore."<sup>1</sup> This occupies our attention below.

### Historical Background

This has already been covered on pp. 173, 174 above.

### Interpretation

The "Prediction of Disaster" is an announcement of judgment, addressed to all those living in Egypt, presumably another way of addressing the remnant. The Lord's word of judgment to the remnant is emphatic according to His oath that His name would no longer be invoked by the Jews now living in Egypt (vs. 26).

Holladay correctly decides that herein

lies Yahweh's reversal of Israel's *Heilsgeschichte*: he had revealed to Israel his name in Egypt (Exo 3:14), and in the theology of Deuteronomy Yahweh's name is virtually a hypostasis of his saving presence. The Jews in Egypt have reversed *Heilsgeschichte* by moving from Canaan back into Egypt again: so Yahweh erases his name from the lips of his people.<sup>2</sup>

Further, God is watching<sup>3</sup> over them with the intent of destruction (vs. 27) for evil and not for good.<sup>4</sup> Total annihilation is in view here: consummation by

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<sup>1</sup>March, 160.

<sup>2</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 304. See also G. von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy*, SBT 9 (Naperville, IL: Allenson, 1953), 37-44.

<sup>3</sup>The motif of watching (*šqd*) is found in 1:12 and 31:28. In the latter, it is favorable, but here it is utterly pessimistic.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Jer 21:9 (Eng. vs. 10) and Jer 39:16 where God is determined to destroy the city of Jerusalem. Hence, the same force of judgment is applied in the context of chap. 44.

sword and famine until a complete end is accomplished. This should be no surprise since their obdurate apostasy is observed in their stiff-necked intention to worship false gods. They were in violation of covenant law and deliberately so.

Nevertheless, vs. 28 depicts a strange reality: a miniscule few<sup>1</sup> would return from Egypt to Judah.<sup>2</sup> While this does not seem to be consistent with the picture of total annihilation in vs. 27, it is important to note the intentionality of the statement here. In the tension created by the remnant's stubborn determination to have their way and the Lord's determination to have His way, only one party can win. Further, just as the remnant community still living in Judah knew (*yd*<sup>2</sup>) in Jer 42:19, 22 of the certainty of destruction, the remnant community in Egypt knows (*yd*<sup>2</sup>) that the Lord is the winning party: His word stands, that is, His word of judgment is certain (vss. 28b, 29). His word of calamity is certain while the word of escape and surety on the lips of the remnant<sup>3</sup> will fail. Therefore, "some survivors are needed in order to act as witnesses to the confirmation (*qûm*) of Yahweh's word."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The expression *m'tē mispār*, literally "men of a number," suggests a small number, a few, that which is able to be counted. Hence, only "a few" shall return.

<sup>2</sup>This is often seen as an expansion, especially in light of those texts that vehemently attack the remnant (Jer 42:15,19; 44:12,14). See L. Alonso Schökel, "Jeremías como anti-Moisés," *De la Tôrah au Messie, Mélanges Henri Cazelles*, ed. M. Carrez, J. Doré, and P. Grelot (Paris: Desclee, 1981), 250.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Jer 42:14-19.

<sup>4</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 741. Cf. Jer 44:14b where a few fugitives survive the judgment against the remnant.

The surety of the Lord's word is that Pharaoh Hophra will be given into the hands of his enemies just as Zedekiah was (vs. 30). The protector of the pro-Egyptian remnant will be eliminated. Therefore, the fate of the remnant will be similar to that of Jerusalem when Zedekiah was given into the hand of his enemy, Nebuchadnezzar. The "Prediction of Disaster" ensures that the divine word will be confirmed against the remnant.

Jer 52:12-16

### Translation and Textual Considerations

(12) In the fifth month, in the tenth day<sup>1</sup> of the month, that is, in the nineteenth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon,<sup>2</sup> Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard who served the king of Babylon (came) to Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup>

(13) And he burned the house of the Lord and the king's house and all the houses of Jerusalem and every great house he burned with fire. (14) And the Chaldean army which was with the captain of the guard demolished the entire wall surrounding Jerusalem. (15) *Then Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, exiled some of the poor of<sup>4</sup> the people<sup>5</sup> and the rest (ytr) of the people who*

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<sup>1</sup>2 Kgs 25:8 has the seventh day.

<sup>2</sup>LXX lacks "in the nineteenth year of the reign of king Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon."

<sup>3</sup>MT *ʿamad liḡnē melek-bābel bīrūšālāim* reads literally, "he stood before the king of Babylon in Jerusalem." It means that Nebuzaradan was a high official who was acting on the king's authority. This is especially so with the revocalization of *ʿāma* to *ʿōmēd*, "he who stands." 2 Kgs 25:8 makes him the king's servant. Hence, Nebuzaradan came to Jerusalem on the king's authority.

<sup>4</sup>The phrase "and some of the poor of" is expressed in both vss. 15 and 16 by *ūmiddallôt*. In 2 Kgs 25:11-12, *ūmiddallôt* is read. The noun *dallāh* is generally understood as a collective, "poor people," so the presence of the plural here is strange.

remained [hanniš<sup>2</sup> ārīm] in the city and those who had deserted<sup>1</sup> to the king of Babylon and the rest (yṯr) of the artisans.<sup>2</sup> (16) But some of the poor of the land,<sup>3</sup> Nebuzaradan,<sup>4</sup> captain of the guard left, [hiš<sup>2</sup> īr] vinedressers and plowmen.<sup>5</sup>

## Structure

Jer 52<sup>6</sup> may be divided into four sections:

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<sup>1</sup>This phrase, "some of the people," is lacking in the MT of Jer 39:9 and 2 Kgs 25:11, which are parallel accounts of the same event. Hence, the inclusion of the phrase here in the MT is difficult to account for. It has been suggested, and reasonably so, that the phrase is partially dittographic from vs. 16. The LXX offers no help since vs. 15 is lacking. This may be due to haplography since both vss. 15 and 16 begin with *ūmiddallôt*, "and some of the poor." See Janzen, 20-21.

<sup>1</sup>MT has literally, "the falling ones who had fallen (away) to the king of Babylon."

<sup>2</sup>MT *hā<sup>2</sup>āmôn* means "architect" or "builder." This is different from the other parallel accounts: 2 Kgs 25:11, *hehāmôn*, "the crowd"; Jer 39:9, *hā<sup>2</sup>ām*, "the people," hardly suits the context which points more toward skilled craftsmen. Some exegetes propose revocalization of the MT to read *hā<sup>2</sup>ommān*, (cf. Akkd. *ummānu*), "skilled artisans," "craftsmen." Bright, *Jeremiah*, 364. As Thompson, 773, n. 11, indicates, "The point need not be pressed since the Chaldeans would have been as much interested in architects and builders as in craftsmen. In either case, the noun is singular grammatically, although the sense may be collective."

<sup>3</sup>LXX replaces the phrase "some of the poor of the land," with *kai tous Kataloipous tou laou*, "and the remnant of the people."

<sup>4</sup>Both the LXX and 2 Kgs 25:12 lack this name.

<sup>5</sup>The meaning of the Hebrew *ū<sup>2</sup>yōg<sup>2</sup>hīm* is uncertain. It may mean "plowmen," or "field laborers." The LXX understands it this way for it translates *kai eis geōrgous*, "and to be laborers, tillers of the ground."

<sup>6</sup>This chapter forms an appendix to the book of Jeremiah, as may be deduced from the final words of chap. 51, "Thus far are the words of Jeremiah." This appendix describes the fall of the city in identical terms, a few minor variations excepted, to that of 2 Kgs 24:18-25:30. However, while 2 Kgs 25:22-26 gives a brief description of the assassination of Gedaliah and the escape of the group to Egypt, Jer 52 does not. But this is hardly a problem since chaps. 41-44 describe

1. The fall of the city and capture of Zedekiah (vss. 1-16)
2. The sacking of the temple (vss. 17-23)
- 3 The numbers deported to Babylon (vss. 31-34)
4. The release of Jehoiachin from prison (vss. 31-34).

The first section may be further sub-divided:

- a. Introduction to Zedekiah's reign (vss. 1-3), as demarcated by a specific time line, namely, Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king
- b. The seige of the city (vss. 4-5) as demarcated by a specific time line, namely, the " 9th year of his reign, in the 10th month, on the 10th day"
- c. The fall of the city and the fate of its king (vss. 6-11) as demarcated by a specific time line, namely, "the fourth month, the ninth day of the month"
- d. The fate of the property and the people in Jerusalem (vss. 12-16) as demarcated by a specific time line, namely, "in the fifth month, on the tenth day of the month."

The last section, vss. 12-16, now occupies my attention.

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these details. Further, Jer 52:28-30 adds a register of the totals of the deportees to Babylon, which is lacking in the account in 2 Kings.

### Historical Background<sup>1</sup>

Jer 52:3 makes one detail clear that is absent in the account in chap. 39: it was Zedekiah's rebellion against the Babylonian king that provoked the seige and consequently led to the fall of Jerusalem.

Further, it must be added that both 2 Kgs 25:8 and Jer 52:12 specifically indicate that it was approximately one month *after* the fall of Jerusalem that Nebuchadnezzar commanded the destruction of the city by fire.<sup>2</sup> The question of the elapsed time is hard to answer. Two suggestions are: (1) the Babylonian troops waited for their commander to arrive;<sup>3</sup> (2) they waited to see who else would venture forth through the breach and be slaughtered.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See above, 131, 132. Jer 52:15, 16 with minor variation is a near duplication of 39:9, 10. Indeed, Jer 52:7-16 is a near duplicate of Jer 39:4-10. In fact, chap. 52 (except for vss. 28-30) has very small variations from 2 Kgs 24:18-25:30. Therefore, the historical details are the same in all three accounts.

<sup>2</sup>It has been argued that the occurrence of this destruction in the 19th year of king Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 52:12) must be a mistake since the 18th year is given in 52:29. But as Feinberg, 689, shows, there is no contradiction between vs. 12 and vs. 29. In the first text, the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar has been included. In the second, it has been excluded.

<sup>3</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 367.

<sup>4</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 863. He claims that these possibilities may have "derived from the story teller's presentation of the breach as something made by the besieged rather than by the beseigers."

## Interpretation

Nebuzaradan came a month after the breach in the walls to supervise the destruction of the city. The exact date is not known for certain since 2 Kgs 25:8 gives the seventh day, but Jer 52:12 gives the tenth day.

After the burning of the temple, the palace, and other important buildings (vs. 13) came the task of the dismantling of the city wall. The verb *נָטַף*, "pull down," is a key word, occurring several times throughout the book: Jeremiah is appointed to "pull down" kingdoms (1:10); the Lord Himself is involved in "pulling down" (18:7; 31:28). So the idea of judgment and destruction is at the fore here.<sup>1</sup>

After the destruction of physical properties, the Chaldeans turned their attention to the people (vss. 15, 16). These constituted the historical remnant, those who survived the onslaught of the Babylonians. They included: poor people, those left in the city, deserters, and artisans. It is a mixture of people who are deported to Babylon.

However, vs. 16 denotes that from the remnant who survived the catastrophe, Nebuzaradan left a remnant to carry on agricultural pursuits.<sup>2</sup> They are the "poorest of the land." This idea of leaving only the dregs of Judean society behind after the sacking of Jerusalem and the deportation of its people suggests "the

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<sup>1</sup>For the motif of "pulling down" see also Jer 33:4 and 39:8.

<sup>2</sup>For a better understanding of this, see J. N. Graham, "'Vinedressers and Plowmen', 2 Kings 25:12 and Jeremiah 52:16," *BA* 47 (1984): 55-58.

view that only the exiles were good figs (chap. 24). Those left behind were 'bad figs', the poorest people."<sup>1</sup>

John Bright offers a fitting conclusion in this context:

Perhaps the editor felt that on account of the fall of Jerusalem, the event that brought vindication to Jeremiah's lifelong announcement of divine judgment, would furnish a fitting conclusion to the book because it would allow history itself to give its silent witness to the truth of the prophetic word.<sup>2</sup>

In the appendix, the conclusive idea concerning the remnant of Judah is that it is meaningless. The final account of the remnant in the book of Jeremiah is that they constitute the scornful dregs of a once prosperous Judean society. In their condition, even the Babylonian overlords are not interested in them. The effect of the judgment is that Judea has been reduced to an insignificant and wanton remnant.

#### Derivatives of *mlt*

The stem *mlt* appears eighty-nine times in the OT with verbal derivatives that point to the remnant. The verbal forms mean "escape," "make for safety" (niph'al); or "deliver," "save," "let escape" (piel). These refer to finding safety by escaping a mortal threat.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thompson, 777.

<sup>2</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 370.

<sup>3</sup>Hasel, "Remnant," *ISBE* (1988), 4:131. Hasel also indicates that *mlt* was developed from *plt*. For further discussion of this root see, idem, "*Pālat*," 589-606; idem, "Origin and Early History," 171-179; G. Lloyd Carr, "*Mālat*," *TWOT* (1980), 1:507.

The most prominent facet of the meaning of *mlt* is deliverance or escape from some mortal threat.<sup>1</sup> Hence, it implies a positive view. But it also has a negative side in that deliverance or escape may be impossible.

Derivatives of *mlt* are used thirteen times in the book of Jeremiah: 32:4; 34:3; 38:18, 23; 39:18 (used twice); 41:15; 46:6; 48:6, 8, 19; and 51:6, 45.<sup>2</sup>

However, with regard to the remnant within the context of judgment against Judah, this root is used in only four instances: 32:4; 34:3; 38:18, 23 and only in connection with king Zedekiah.

#### Jer 32:1-5

#### Translation and Textual Considerations

(1) The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar. (2) At that time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem and Jeremiah the prophet<sup>3</sup> was shut up in the court of the guard which was in the palace of the king of Judah (3) where Zedekiah the king of Judah had imprisoned him, saying,

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<sup>1</sup>Carr, 507.

<sup>2</sup>All the major concordances agree on this: Gerhard Lisowsky, *Konkordanz zum hebräischen Alten Testament*, 2d ed. (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1958), 804; Abraham Even-Shoshan, ed., *A New Concordance of the Bible* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher Publishing House, 1982), 663, 664; *The Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, 4th ed. (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1875), 709, 710.

A further breakdown of the distribution of the derivatives shows that the root *mlt* is used only in the niph'al (eight times) and piel (5 times) forms.

The Niph'al perfect is used once in 41:15; the imperfect is used six times: 32:4; 34:3; 38:18, 23; 46:6; 48:8; the participle is found in 48:19.

The combination of piel infinitive and imperfect is found in 39:18, while the plural imperative is found three times in 48:6; 51:6, 45.

<sup>3</sup>LXX lacks "the prophet."

"Why have you prophesied, saying: 'Behold, I am giving this city into the hand of the king of Babylon and he will take it; (4) *and Zedekiah king of Judah<sup>1</sup> shall not escape [yimmālēt] from the hand of the Chaldeans but he shall certainly be given into the hand of the king of Babylon. And he shall speak to him face to face and see him with his own eyes,<sup>2</sup>* (5) and he will take Zedekiah to Babylon and he will remain there<sup>3</sup> until I visit him,' says the Lord. 'Though you fight against the Chaldeans you shall not succeed.'"

### Structure<sup>4</sup>

This unit is demarcated by the revelation of the divine word to the prophet. This word is introduced in vs. 1a (followed by a historical dateline in vss. 1b-2), but is not actually given until vs. 6, where it is introduced by the expression "The word of the Lord came to me." Therefore, vss. 3-5 function as a parenthesis declaring the reason for the prophet's imprisonment.

Further, in vss. 3b and 5b, the expression, "says the Lord," frames an inclusio of the king's monologue.<sup>5</sup> Also, based on the characters named, this inclusio lends itself to a chiasmic structure. We note the following schema:

1. Introduction, (vss. 1-2) providing the historical time line

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<sup>1</sup>The phrase "King of Judah" is omitted in the LXX.

<sup>2</sup>The Hebrew idioms "and his mouth will speak with his mouth," "and his eyes will see his eyes" express the idea of a direct physical encounter. Thus the translation above.

<sup>3</sup>LXX ends at *kai ekei kathieitai*, "and remain there." The rest of the verse is missing. *G<sup>AC</sup>*, *apothaneitai*, "and die."

<sup>4</sup>The entire chapter may be divided into two large segments: (1) vss. 1-15 describing Jeremiah's purchase of a field in Anathoth; (2) vss. 16-44, which provide a lengthy dialogue between God and the prophet.

<sup>5</sup>In vs. 3b, the verb is  $\text{ׁ}mr$ , while in vs. 5b the phrase  $n^{\text{ׁ}}um \text{ׁ}^a d\text{ō}n\bar{a}y$  is used.

2. Body, (vss. 3-5), consisting of a monologue by king Zedekiah.

introduced by, "Thus says the Lord," and chiasmically structured:

A *God* will give Jerusalem to the king of Babylon (vs. 3c)

B The *king of Babylon* will take Jerusalem (vs. 3d)

C *Zedekiah* will not escape (vs. 4)

B<sup>1</sup> The *king of Babylon* will take Zedekiah (vs. 5a)

A<sup>1</sup> *God* will visit Zedekiah (vs. 5b).

3. Concluding remark (vs. 5d).

### **Historical Background**

Jer 32:1 provides an exact time line: the tenth year of Zedekiah's kingship. This extended from March/April 588 to March/April 587 and was contiguous with Nebuchadnezzar's eighteenth year, when that monarch's rule is counted from his accession year in 605 B.C.<sup>1</sup> However, if Nebuchadnezzar's reign was counted from his first regnal year (604/3 B.C.), then 588/7 B.C. would have been his seventeenth year.<sup>2</sup>

Further, vs. 2 denotes that this was the time when Babylon had Jerusalem under seige. However, couched in the context of Jeremiah's purchase of a field in Anathoth (vss. 6-15) and compared to chap. 37, it is suggested that a more closely

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Jer 25:1; 52:12; 2 Kgs 25:8.

<sup>2</sup>This is the case in Jer 52:29. It is generally understood that in Judah where the first accession year was recognized, the reign of non-Judean rulers was calculated in the same way. See further Thiele, 16-38.

related historical time would be the temporary lifting of the seige caused by the approach of the Egyptian army (37:4-12). This would bring a ray of hope to the beseiged residents of the city.

During this temporary reprieve, Jeremiah's attempt to visit the purchased property was curtailed by his arrest and imprisonment on charges of desertion to the enemy (Jer 37:11, 16). He remained in a dungeon until ordered to the presence of king Zedekiah. At that time, Jeremiah pleaded not to be returned to the dungeon and was moved to the courtyard of the guard, the part of the palace area set aside for prisoners and the quartering of the palace guards, where he was confined until the city fell (38:13, 28; 39:14).<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, strictly speaking, this incident belongs to the period of the temporary lifting of the Babylonian seige where Jeremiah was finally confined to the court of the guard.<sup>2</sup>

### **Interpretation**

The words on the lips of the king himself, reflecting the prophecy of the prophet, give shape to a situation of judgment and doom. The prophet is confined

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<sup>1</sup>In chap. 38, Jeremiah was removed from the court of the guard and placed in a pit. However, he was subsequently rescued by Ebed-melech and returned to the court of the guard.

<sup>2</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 234-237, places this story (32:1-15) after chaps. 37-38 in an attempt to point out the chronological sequence of events. Most scholars agree with this indicating that Jer 32:2-5 constitutes an editorial parenthesis explaining the circumstances of Jeremiah's imprisonment.

due to his "seditious" remarks.<sup>1</sup> Yet, his confinement is set in contrast to his expression of freedom and hope for the future as seen in the purchase of the field in Anathoth (vss. 8-15). He looks beyond the present calamity to a positive future.

But it is precisely within the context of hope that Zedekiah's monologue expresses doom. He is placed at the center of a woeful prophecy where the enemy, directed by God, allows the king no escape (*mlt*). In the face of mortal threat, he has no opportunity for deliverance or escape. Defeat seems inevitable. There is no positive assessment of the remnant here. In fact, the certainty of this is ensured in the key expression *hinnāṭōn yinnāṭēn*, "he will surely be given" into the power of the Babylonians. The idea of being given into the hand of the enemy is a key idea here, being mentioned three times in vss. 3 and 4. The idea evokes subjection and subjugation, for the enemy is now in a position of power and authority over the conquered. Further, the Hebrew idiom "and his eyes will see his eyes" describes an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation.

This underscores the Lord's punishment of Zedekiah. This too is given emphasis in that the king will be exiled in Babylon until the Lord visits (*pqd*) him. Here the verb *pqd* has an ominous sense, connoting a negative outcome to an already dangerous situation.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thompson, 92-94, 587.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 588. For further discussion on the verb, see Josef Scharbert, "Das Verbum PQD in der Theologie des Alten Testaments," *BZ* 4 (1960): 209-226; W. Schottroff, "*Pqd*, *heimsuchen*," *THAT* (1984), 2:466-486; Victor P. Hamilton, "*Pāqad*," *TWOT* (1980), 2:731-732.

The expression of doom is sealed in the closing statement, "though you fight against the Chaldean you will have no success." This is a blunt expression of the totality of judgment.

Therefore, this text of defeat and lack of escape, within the larger context of hope, expresses the idea of the lack of the remnant quality in Zedekiah, in that the fate of the nation is linked to the fate of its king. As the fate of this king is unequivocally clear, so too is the fate of his subjects: no escape. Hence, the notion of complete judgment and the ultimate demise of the remnant is perceived.

Jer 34:1-7

### Translation and Textual Considerations

(1) The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and all his army and all the kingdoms of the earth ruled by his hand<sup>1</sup> and all the people were fighting against Jerusalem and all her cities.<sup>2</sup> (2) Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, "Go and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah and say to him: "Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I am giving<sup>3</sup> this city into the hand of the king of Babylon<sup>4</sup> and he will burn it with fire. (3) *And you, you shall surely not escape [timmālēt] from his hand for you shall certainly be captured and given into his hand; and your eyes will see the eyes of the king of Babylon*

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<sup>1</sup>MT *wkol-maml'kôt* <sup>2</sup>*eres memšelet yādō wkol-hā<sup>c</sup>ammīm* is awkward and may best be rendered as "together with the kingdoms and peoples of all the earth under his rule/subject to his dominion." LXX lacks "all the kingdoms and peoples" and reads *kai pasa hē gē archēs autou*, "and all the country of his dominion."

<sup>2</sup>LXX, *kai epi pasas tas poleis Iouda*, "and against all the cities of Judah."

<sup>3</sup>LXX *paradosei paradothēsetai*, "shall certainly be delivered," is more vehement than MT *hin'ni nōtēn*, "Behold, I am giving."

<sup>4</sup>LXX adds *kai sullēmpsetai autēn*, "and he shall take it," which is equal to the insertion of BHS' *ūl'kādāh*.

*and his mouth will speak with your mouth;*<sup>1</sup> *and you shall go to Babylon.*"<sup>2</sup> (4) Yet, hear the word of the Lord, O Zedekiah king of Judah. Thus says the Lord concernig you: "You shall not die by the sword.<sup>3</sup> You shall die in peace.<sup>4</sup> And as they burned fires<sup>5</sup> for your fathers, the former kings who were before you, thus they will burn for you. They will lament for you, 'Ah, Lord!' For I myself have spoken the word," says the Lord. (6) And Jeremiah the prophet<sup>6</sup> spoke all these words to Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem (7) when the army of the king of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah which were left,<sup>7</sup> namely, Lachish and Azekah; for these were the only fortified cities of Judah that remained.

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<sup>1</sup>The phrase "and his mouth will speak with your mouth," is lacking in LXX. Janzen, 50, suggests that this is secondary in the MT. However, a similar expression is located in 32:4 and is present in both the MT and LXX. So it seems likely that the MT is to be accepted.

<sup>2</sup>*BHS* cautions that this is an addition. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 232, says that this phrase should be omitted as a *vaticinium ex eventu*. His basis for this is a reconstruction of vs. 5-6 where he claims that the phrase "in Jerusalem" dropped out in vs. 5 and was wrongly reinstated at the end of vs. 6. When replaced in vs. 5, the text would read "you shall die in peace in Jerusalem." Hence, the king's going to Babylon contradicts the idea of dying in peace in Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup>This clause is omitted in LXX.

<sup>4</sup>*Bîrûšālāim*, "in Jerusalem," at the end of vs. 6 is transposed here in place of *b'šālôm*, "in peace." The promise to Zedekiah then becomes death in his own city rather than in Babylon. See Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 640, 641.

<sup>5</sup>LXX *eklausan . . . klausontai*, "they wept . . . they shall weep," is a free translation of mourning rites. *Ibid.*, 641.

<sup>6</sup>"The prophet" is omitted in LXX.

<sup>7</sup>LXX lacks "which were left."

## Structure

Jer 34:1-7 comprises a single unit, where the divine word is given through Jeremiah to Zedekiah.<sup>1</sup> Vs. 8 is in parallel with vs. 1, in that the same introductory formula is used *haddābār ʾāšer hāyāh ʾel yirmʾyāhû mēʾēt ʾadōnāy*, "The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord."

The passage may be divided into three sections:

1. The historical dateline (vs. 1)
2. The Lord's command to Jeremiah to deliver the divine word to the king as expressed in *hālōk wʾāmartā*, "go and speak" (vss. 2-5) (It is framed by the inclusio, *kōh ʾāmar ʾadōnāy*, "Thus says the Lord," [vs. 2] and *ʾanī-dibbartî nʾum ʾadōnāy*, "I, I have spoken, says the Lord" [vs. 5].)
3. The accomplishment of that command (vss. 6-7), *waydabbēr yirmʾyāhû . . . kʾl haddʾbārīm hāʾēlleh*, "Then Jeremiah . . . spoke all these words."

## Historical Background

Jer 34:1, 6, 7 provide a historical time frame for the setting of this text, the seige of Jerusalem and the systematic decimation of the Judean cities. The Babylonian military campaign was in an advanced stage,<sup>2</sup> where only two towns,

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<sup>1</sup>While this section is written in prose, it has been proposed that the sense of rhythm suggests an underlying poetic structure. Thompson, 606-607, excises a number of phrases to accomplish this. See also E. Lipinski, "Prose ou Poésie en Jer xxxiv: 1-7?" *VT* 24 (1974): 112-113.

<sup>2</sup>Jer 34:1 depicts the Babylonians as using troop platoons from vassal states, as expressed in the statement, "*The entire Babylonian army, together with the kingdoms and peoples of the earth subject to their rule, were attacking Jerusalem and*

Lachish<sup>1</sup> and Azekah,<sup>2</sup> were left. Located in the Shephelah, between the Judean mountains and the Philistine Plain, we get a useful glimpse into the contemporary situation in these towns from the Lachish Letters.<sup>3</sup> Letter 4 concludes:

*And let my Lord know that we are watching for the signals of Lachish according to all the indications which my lord has given, for we cannot see Azekah.*<sup>4</sup>

While it is possible that Azekah was obscured, it is suggested that the town had fallen.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, it appears that

the fate of Jerusalem was virtually sealed. Once those towns were taken the Babylonians could devote their whole attention to breaching Jerusalem and then confront king Zedekiah with the consequences of his breach of vassalage to

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*all her towns.*" Treaty terms stipulated that vassals provided troops to assist the suzerain in a campaign against his enemies. See James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3d ed. with Supplement (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 204, hereafter cited as *ANET*.

<sup>1</sup>Lachish is Tell ed-Duweir, some 23 miles SW of Jerusalem. See V. R. Gold and K. N. Schoville, "Lachish," *ISBE* (1986), 3:55-58; and Richard V. Hamilton, "Lachish," *IDB* (1962), 3:53-57.

<sup>2</sup>Azekah is Tell ez-Zakariyah, some 11 miles N of Lachish and 18 miles WSW of Jerusalem. See V. R. Gold, "Azekah," *IDB* (1962), 1:326; and F. E. Young, "Azekah," *ISBE* (1979), 1:375.

<sup>3</sup>Twenty-one letters, written on broken pieces of pottery (sherds), were discovered in a room that obviously burned. These letters contain urgent messages from the outlying military installations to the commander of the garrison at Lachish. See David Ussishkin, "Answers at Lachish," *BAR* 5 (1979): 16-38; and *ANET*, 321, 322.

<sup>4</sup>*ANET*, 322.

<sup>5</sup>Bright, *A History of Israel*, 308-310.

Nebuchadnezzar . . . Hence the urgency of Jeremiah's commission to speak to Zedekiah. Time was short and the king's fate hung in the balance.<sup>1</sup>

### Interpretation

Jeremiah's commission concerned both the city (vs. 2) and the king (vss. 3-5). The two are linked by the fact that they will be given into the "hand" of the enemy, the Babylonian king. This type of threat was already made in Jer 21:4-7 and 32:1-5. The expectation here is of severe punishment. God is the agent behind the Babylonian king who is responsible for the decimation of the city by fire (vs. 2).

Vs. 3 expresses a dismal fate of no escape for Zedekiah, *w<sup>ʔ</sup>attāh lō<sup>ʔ</sup> timmālēt*, "and you shall not escape." There is no chance of surviving the catastrophe of the fall of the city unscathed. In a face-to-face encounter with the invading monarch, Zedekiah will be exiled to Babylon. Again, as in Jer 32:4, as the fate of the king is linked to that of the nation, so too the end of his subjects is similar to his end: no escape. There will be no safety or survival of this mortal threat. Without the possibility of escape the opportunity to carry on the life of the community is curtailed. Hence, another glimpse is given of the notion of complete judgment and the lack of a remnant.

However, it is held that the word of judgment (vss. 2-3) is tempered by "a contingent prophecy of (moderate) salvation (*Heilsweissagung*)."<sup>2</sup> It is forwarded that the particle *ʔak*, before *š<sup>ʔ</sup>ma<sup>ʕ</sup> d<sup>ʔ</sup>ḥar ʔ<sup>a</sup>dōnāy*, (vs. 4) means "Heed the word of

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<sup>1</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 643.

<sup>2</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 233. Cf. March, 162.

the Lord," rather than "Hear the word of the Lord." This would then render an "implied protasis" and vs. 4b-5 would be an "implied apodosis." Therefore, if the king heeds the word (vs. 4a), then there is an implied promise that he will die peacefully (vs. 4b-5).<sup>1</sup> This notion of conditionality is plausible for it is also implied in Jer 21:8-9 and made explicit in Jer 38:17-18. Hence, we see two sides of the same coin: judgment and salvation. The absolute word of judgment is issued but there is a contingent possibility of survival.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, if the king refuses the offer of salvation by disobeying the word of the Lord, then the inevitability of being captured and the threat of being cut off becomes more outstanding.

Jer 38:18, 23

### Translation and Textual Considerations<sup>3</sup>

*(18) But if you do not go out to the princes of the king of Babylon, then this city will be given into the hand of the Chaldeans and they will burn it with fire and you yourself shall not escape [timmālēt] from their hands.<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 233-234; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 216; Rudolph, 220.

<sup>2</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 641; Thompson, 607. If the king surrendered, then he could spare his life and that of the city and secure a measure of peace (vs. 5). Like his forefathers, he would be given the proper funerary rites. The funeral fires (vs. 5) do not refer to cremation, but to the burning of spices, which was customary at royal burials (2 Chr 16:14; 21:19). The cry of lament was also customary in mourning for a king (Jer 22:18).

<sup>3</sup>For the translation of the entire pericope, see above 123-125.

<sup>4</sup>*LXX* lacks "from their hands." Janzen, 53, says this is a gloss from 34:3.

*(23) All your wives and your children shall be led out to the Chaldeans and you yourself will not escape [timmālēt] from their hands<sup>1</sup> because you shall be seized by the hand of the king of Babylon and this city shall be burned with fire."<sup>2</sup>*

### **Structure**

This has already been covered on pp. 125, 126 above.

### **Historical Background**

This has already been covered on p. 126 above.

### **Interpretation**

Vs. 18, like vs. 17, contains protasis and apodosis clauses. These verses illustrate the motif of choice, which is already present in vs. 2. But with the Babylonians pressing the seige, the pro-Egyptian princes determined to defend Jerusalem, and Jeremiah advocating surrender to the Babylonians as a means of escape, Zedekiah vacillates regarding the best path to follow. He cannot resolve his problems because regardless of where he turns, he faces disaster. This disaster is explicit in vs. 18 with the expression of absolute judgment: no escape. Without the possibility of escape, life is cut off and the future becomes non-existent. Vs. 23, following the lament of the remnant group of women (vs. 22), expresses the same

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<sup>1</sup>LXX lacks "all" and "from their hands."

<sup>2</sup>MT reads *tīsrōp*, "you will burn," but a few MSS read *tīśārēp* (feminine to agree with "city"). Hence, "and the city will be burned." LXX lacks "with fire."

dreadful fate: no escape from this mortal threat and the possibility of securing a future.<sup>1</sup>

The only hope for the king was surrender, according to the prophet. However, his refusal to accept the possibilities of surrender "not only sealed his own fate, but also guaranteed the destruction of the city (vs. 18)."<sup>2</sup> In short, responsibility for the destruction and spoilage of the city is placed squarely upon king Zedekiah. Once again, the idea of a lack of escape publishes the absolute decimation of the remnant. Without the possibility of escape, no hope exists for the remnant.

#### **Derivatives of *pl̄t* and *śrd***

The root *pl̄t* appears eighty times in the Old Testament, twenty-one times as a verb and fifty-nine times as nominal derivatives.<sup>3</sup> The root is widespread in both East and West Semitic languages, being long recognized as belonging to the remnant terminology, and is extensively used in this manner throughout the Hebrew Bible.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Note the emphatic use of the pronouns (*w<sup>c</sup>attāh lo timmālēt*, "you yourself will not escape"). This is also found in vs. 17.

<sup>2</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 687.

<sup>3</sup>Hasel, "Origin and Early History," 171-172. See further on this root: idem, "*Pālat*", 589-606; Victor P. Hamilton, "*Pālat*," *TWOT* (1980), 2:724-725; E. Ruprecht, "*Pl̄t retten*," *TWAT* (1984), 2:420-427; Georg Fohrer, "*sōzō*," *TDNT* (1964), 7:971-973; 979-980.

<sup>4</sup>Hasel, "Origin and Early History," 173-180.

When applied to "definite historical entities," it denotes an "escaped remnant," although the root is commonly found in the context of warfare. These two facts lead me to agree with Hasel:

This is another unmistakable hint that the terminology for "remnant" does not designate merely decimation and loss, but instead the positive idea of survival and salvation comes to expression much more than appears at first sight in the verbal and nominal derivatives of *pl̄t*.<sup>1</sup>

Derivatives of *pl̄t* are used eight times, and all nominally, in the book of Jeremiah: 25:35; 42:17; 44:14 (used twice); 44:28; 50:28, 29; 51:50. However, only four of these are significant with regard to the remnant of Judah within the context of judgment: 42:17; the two usages in 44:14, and 44:28.

The root *śr̄d* appears twenty-nine times in the OT. Twenty-eight of these occurrences are the masculine noun *śārīd̄*, "survivor." This word is used largely with "definite historical entities"<sup>2</sup> and mostly with a negative emphasis since it belongs to the language of warfare.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, there is a semantic bipolarity in the use of the noun: to express complete decimation of survivors and to express survival with clear implication for future existence and renewal.<sup>4</sup> I agree with Hasel's conclusion, "The *quantitative* size of *śārīd̄* becomes therefore immaterial, because the *qualitative* possibilities for the future of the people are secured in the *śārīd̄*."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 180.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 194, 195.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 196.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 199.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid (emphasis mine).

This noun is used four times in the book of Jeremiah: 31:2; 42:17; 44:14 and 47:4. Only two of these are important to the study of the remnant of Judah in the context of judgment: 42:17 and 44:14.

Since derivatives of *pl̄t* and *śrd̄* are combined in Jer 42:17 and 44:14, the only texts where they are pertinent to the remnant motif in the context of judgment, they are treated together. Jer 44:28 dealing with *pl̄t* is treated separately, however.

#### Jer 42:17

#### Translation and Textual Considerations<sup>1</sup>

*And it shall be<sup>2</sup> that all the men<sup>3</sup> who have set their faces to go to Egypt to live there will die there by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence. And there will be to them no survivor [śārīd̄] or escapee [pālīt̄] from the evil which I am bringing on them.*

#### Structure

This has already been covered on pp. 160, 161 above.

#### Historical Background

This has already been covered on pp. 161, 162 above.

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<sup>1</sup>For the translation of the entire pericope, vss. 7-22, see above, 158, 159.

<sup>2</sup>The suggestion of *BHS w'hāyāh*, "and it shall be," seems more fitting than MT *w'yihū*, "and they . . ."

<sup>3</sup>The LXX adds *kai pantes hoi allogeneis*, "and all the strangers," after *kol hā<sup>2</sup>nāšīm*, "all the men," which is equal to *w'kol-hazzārīm*, as suggested by *BHS*. (Cf. *hazzēdīm*, "the insolent," in 43:2.)

## Interpretation

Vs. 17 is located in the extended apodosis that denotes the terrible fate of destruction.<sup>1</sup> It is a description of the intent of absolute judgment to be executed against the remnant group that is determined to go to Egypt. This group is clearly a decimated group, constituting "but a few of many" (42:2) after the Babylonians had overrun the country. Fearing Babylonian reprisals in light of the assassination of Gedaliah and the Babylonian garrison, this already small group determines to go to Egypt in an attempt to establish a positive future.

Jeremiah's hardline position is that doing this would result only in a disastrous future. The very evils they are attempting to avoid would overtake them. This would be directed by the Lord. The extent of the Lord's judgment would be so complete that of this already small remnant, there will be no survivor (*šāriḏ*) or escapee (*pālīt*).

The effect of having no survivors or escapees highlights the drama of choice: *either* the people be obedient to the Lord, stay in Judah and live; *or* disobey the Lord, ignore covenant loyalty, go to Egypt, and perish completely. The second option highlights the overwhelming negative value of the judgment. The combination of the nouns *šāriḏ* and *pālīt*, together with the force of the negation, serve the point well.

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<sup>1</sup>Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 26-52*, regards this verse as a deuteronomistic element.

As Carroll so aptly states, "The positive future lies in the land of Judah or nowhere. The Lord's repentance only holds good for life in Judah; elsewhere his intention is evil (v.17)."<sup>1</sup> Failure to follow the Lord's injunction will bring incorrigible destruction which renders a state of "remnantlessness."

Jer 44:14

### Translation and Textual Considerations<sup>2</sup>

(14) *And there will be no escapee [pālît] or survivor [šārîd] of the remnant of Judah who have come to sojourn there<sup>3</sup> in the land of Egypt and to return to the land of Judah to which they lift up their souls (they desire) to return to settle<sup>4</sup> there; for they shall not return, except as fugitives.<sup>5</sup>*

### Structure

This has already been covered on pp. 178, 179 above.

### Historical Background

This has already been covered on pp. 173-174 above.

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<sup>1</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 719. Cf. Thompson, 667, who declares, "As though to contrast their experiences after the fall of Jerusalem and the murderous acts of Ishmael with what could now happen, the threat was that there could be no *survivor* (*šārîd*), and no *escapee* (*pālît*)."

<sup>2</sup>For the translation of the entire pericope, vss. 11-14, see above, 178.

<sup>3</sup>*šām*, "there," is omitted in the LXX.

<sup>4</sup>MT *lāšebet*, "to settle," "to dwell," is omitted in the LXX.

<sup>5</sup>The expression *ki ʔim-p'letîm*, "except as fugitives," is suggested as a gloss by some scholars in light of vs. 14a. However, the expression is found in both the MT and the LXX and is likely to be intentional.

## Interpretation

Jer 44:14 tells of the divine punishment that will be executed upon the disobedient remnant. Rank and social standing have no credibility here because the judgment will be all-encompassing, "from the least to the greatest," of those who have determined to go to Egypt to live. Their very attempt to escape the things that will bring destruction is ironic, for those same things will bring about their destruction.<sup>1</sup>

The totality of divine retribution is highlighted in the headline: *w'lo<sup>2</sup> yihy'h pālīt w'sārīd liš<sup>2</sup> ērīt y'hūdāh*, "and there will be no escapee or survivor of the remnant of Judah." Three remnant terms are combined. The effect of this is that it denotes a state of absolute devastation: even the "remnant of the remnant" is in jeopardy of annihilation.

In fact, even their desire to return to Judah will be truncated.<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah is clear that he is not speaking of "permanent Jewish settlers in Egypt (vs. 14) but only to the remnant who had sought refuge there with the hope of returning to the land of Judah at the earliest opportunity."<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the point is being made that the future

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<sup>1</sup>For the motif of the familiar triad of destruction: sword, famine, pestilence, see Jer 14:12; 21:7, 9; 24:10; 27:8, 13; 29:17, 18; 32:24, 36; 34:17; 38:2; 42:22; 44:13.

<sup>2</sup>The phrase *2ašer-hēmmāh m'našš<sup>2</sup>im 2et-napšām lāšūb* ("to which they lift up their souls to return") expresses desire, intention or yearning. However, the negative injunction *lō<sup>2</sup>-yāšūbū*, "they shall not return," is very strong. Cf. Jer 22:27.

<sup>3</sup>Feinberg, 642.

did not lie with those who determined to go to Egypt, even if they intended to return to their homeland later.

The last phrase of vs. 14, *kī lō<sup>3</sup>-yāšūbū kī <sup>2</sup>im-p<sup>e</sup>lētīm*, "they shall not return except fugitives," seems to contradict vs. 14a where no such allowance is made. For this reason, it is often treated as a gloss by commentators.<sup>1</sup> However, this may be a stylistic device designed to deliberately denote the effect of the judgment. As Thompson affirms, "If a very few return to the homeland it will be so few as merely to emphasize the extent of the judgment on the community in Egypt."<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, the total effect of the picture presented here is one of unrelenting judgment on the remnant: "Only *casual fugitives* will survive. For the remnant the picture is one of unrelieved gloom."<sup>3</sup>

Jer 44:28

#### Translation and Textual Considerations<sup>4</sup>

(28) *And the escapees [p<sup>e</sup>lītē] of the sword shall return from the land of Egypt<sup>5</sup> to the land of Judah men of a number.<sup>6</sup> And all<sup>7</sup> the remnant [š<sup>e</sup> ērīt] of*

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<sup>1</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 264; Hyatt, "Jeremiah," 1098; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 304.

<sup>2</sup>Thompson, 678.

<sup>3</sup>Feinberg, 642 (emphasis mine).

<sup>4</sup>For the translation of the entire pericope, vss. 20-30, see above, 182, 183.

<sup>5</sup>The expression "from the land of Egypt" is omitted in LXX.

<sup>6</sup>This entire expression, "and the escapees . . . men of a number," though found in both the MT and LXX, is regarded as an expansion by some scholars. See Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 280.

*Judah the ones who came to the land of Egypt to sojourn there<sup>1</sup> shall know whose word shall stand: mine or theirs.<sup>2</sup>*

### **Structure**

This has already been covered on pg. 184, 185 above.

### **Historical Background**

This has already been covered on pp. 173-174 above.

### **Interpretation**

Jer 44:28 summarizes God's judgment upon the remnant community and declares that He has the final word. His declaration of punishment on the remnant who determine to go to Egypt will be executed while their desired peace and renewal in going there will be thwarted. There is no misunderstanding this, for "all the remnant of Judah" (*kol-š<sup>ׁ</sup>ׁrîṭ yehūdāh*) will know this.

This central focus of the Lord's finality in the execution of judgment is underlined by adding that a few escapees will return to Judah from Egypt. The effect of this is not to offer a connotation of renewal or salvation, but precisely the fact of judgment as implied in 44:14b where a few fugitives survive. The point is being subtly renewed that the return of a mere few places the spotlight on the extent and

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<sup>1</sup>*Kol*, "all," is absent in the LXX.

<sup>1</sup>*BHS* treats "the ones who came to the land of Egypt to sojourn there" as a false addition.

<sup>2</sup>The expression *mimmennî ûmêhem*, "mine or theirs," is lacking in the LXX.

gravity of the judgment on the community in Egypt. The decimation of the remnant in Egypt becomes more graven. As Bright says, "A few may get back, but no number worth mentioning."<sup>1</sup>

### Derivatives of *ytr*

The root *ytr* is Common Semitic and is widespread in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>2</sup> It refers to the rest or remainder of an entity, expressing either the insignificance of that which has remained or its extraordinary surplus and abundance.<sup>3</sup>

In light of the differences of opinion among scholars, Hasel has called for a more cautious approach that examines "the individual semantic value of the various forms of *ytr* in their particular word-combination and sentence contexts."<sup>4</sup> It is with this note that the root *ytr* is examined in the context of judgment as related to the remnant of Judah in the book of Jeremiah: 39:9 and 52:15;<sup>5</sup> and 44:7.

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<sup>1</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 264.

<sup>2</sup>See Hasel, "Origin and Early History," 182-194; T. Kronholm, "*Ytr*," *TDOT* (1974), 6:483-491; John E. Hartley, "*Ytr*," *TWOT* (1980), 1:421-422.

<sup>3</sup>Hasel, "Origin and Early History," 185, 187.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>5</sup>Jer 39:9 and 52:15 are combined because they say basically the same thing and share the same historical context. The only difference is that 52:15 adds the phrase "and some of the poor people."

**Translation and Textual Considerations<sup>1</sup>**

(39:9) *Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard deported to Babylon the remnant (yeṭer) of the people who remained [hanniš<sup>2</sup>ārīm] in the city and the deserters who deserted to him and the remnant (yeṭer) of the artisans<sup>2</sup> who remained [hanniš<sup>2</sup>ārīm].*

(52:15) *Then Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, exiled some of the poor<sup>4</sup> of the people<sup>4</sup> and the rest (yeṭer) of the people who remained [hanniš<sup>2</sup>ārīm] in the city and those who had deserted<sup>5</sup> to the king of Babylon and the rest (yeṭer) of the artisans.<sup>6</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup>For translation of the entire pericopes of these texts, 39:1-10 and 52:12-16, see above, 129, 130; 187, 188.

<sup>2</sup>BHS suggests correctly that *hā<sup>c</sup>ām*, "the people," should be read as *hā<sup>2</sup>āmôn*, "the artisans," as found in the same rendering of the text in Jer 52:15.

<sup>3</sup>The phrase "and some of the poor of" is expressed in vss. 15-16 by *ūmiddallôt*. In 2 Kgs 25:11-12, *ūmiddallôt* is read. The noun *dallāh* is generally understood as a collective, "poor people," so the presence of the plural here is strange. See Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 437.

<sup>4</sup>This phrase, "some of the people," is lacking in the MT for Jer 39:9 and 2 Kgs 25:11, which are parallel accounts of the same event. Hence, the inclusion of the phrase here in the MT is difficult to account for. It has been suggested, and reasonably so, that the phrase is partially dittographic from vs. 16. The LXX offers no help since vs. 15 is lacking. This may be due to haplography since both vss. 15 and 16 begin with *ūmiddallôt*, "and some of the poor." See Janzen, 20-21.

<sup>5</sup>MT has literally "the falling ones who had fallen (away) to the king of Babylon."

<sup>6</sup>MT *hā<sup>2</sup>āmôn* means "architect," or "builder." This is different from the other parallel accounts: 2 Kgs 25:11, *hehāmôn*, "the crowd"; Jer 39:9, *hā<sup>2</sup>ām*, "the people," which hardly suits the context here which points more toward skilled craftsmen. Some exegetes propose revocalization of the MT to read *hā<sup>2</sup>ommān* (cf. Akkd. *ummānu*), "skilled artisans," "craftsmen." Bright, *Jeremiah*, 364. As Thompson, 773, n. 11, indicates, "The point need not be pressed since the Chaldeans would have been as much interested in architects and builders as in craftsmen. In either case, the noun is singular grammatically, although the sense may be collective."

### Structure

This has already been covered on pp. 130, 131; 188, 189 above.

### Historical Background

This has already been covered on pp. 131, 132; 190 above.

### Interpretation

In both of these passages, the noun *yeṭer* II,<sup>1</sup> combined with *hā<sup>c</sup>ām* (*yeṭer hā<sup>c</sup>ām*), describes the fall of Jerusalem. They are found, therefore, within the context of judgment and devastation. In both cases, the *yeṭer hā<sup>c</sup>ām* designates the defeated Jerusalemites who were spared from captivity. This becomes more explicit with the addition in both cases of the phrase *hanniš<sup>ḏ</sup>ārîm bā<sup>c</sup>îr*, "the remnant in the city." One can agree with Hasel that the investigation of the phrase *yeṭer hā<sup>c</sup>ām* specifically means the "remnant" that remained in Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup>

Of special importance in these two passages is the obvious insignificance of the remnant, the rest or remainder of the Jerusalemites. The country has been overrun; cities have been ravaged; the capital, Jerusalem, has been decimated; the citizens have been deported to Babylon. Only this insignificant *yeṭer hā<sup>c</sup>ām* remains.

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<sup>1</sup>The noun *yeṭer I* is found only 5 times in the OT (Judg 16:7, 8, 9; Ps 11:2; Job 30:11) and means "bowstring" or "sinew." *Yeṭer II* is found 96 times and is important to the remnant language and motif.

<sup>2</sup>Hasel, "Origin and Early History," 190. He adds correctly that these two phrases "are in turn designated with the synonymous phrase *š<sup>ḏ</sup>ērîṭ hā<sup>ḏ</sup>ām*, 'the remnant of the people,' in Jer 41:10, 16. Therefore, it is safe to say that *yeṭer* is used synonymously and interchangeably with *š<sup>ḏ</sup>ērîṭ* as in Jer 39:9 and 41:10, 16."

The point is being subtly made that these do not constitute the carriers of the divine election promises. As a remnant community they are insignificant.

Jer 44:7

### Translation and Textual Considerations<sup>1</sup>

*(7) And now, thus says the Lord, God of Hosts, the God of Israel,<sup>2</sup> "Why are you doing great evil against yourselves, to cut off from you man and woman, infant and child, from the midst of Judah leaving [hōtîr] for yourselves no remnant [š<sup>ׁ</sup> ʿrîl]?"*

### Structure

This has already been covered on p. 172 above. .

### Historical Background

This has already been covered on pp. 173, 174 above.

### Interpretation

The hiphil infinitive, *hōtîr*, is here connected with *š<sup>ׁ</sup> ʿrîl*. Connected with the preposition of negation (*l<sup>ׁ</sup>hiltî*), the expression *l<sup>ׁ</sup>hiltî hōtîr lākem š<sup>ׁ</sup> ʿrîl* may best be rendered, "leaving for yourself no remnant."

The core of this is that the people's willful disobedience to God's law will bring about drastic repercussions. The remnant, those who had survived the fall of Jerusalem and had fled to Egypt against God's command, had disregarded or ignored

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<sup>1</sup>For translation of the entire pericope, vss. 7-10, see above, 171.

<sup>2</sup>LXX reads *kurios pantokrator*, "Lord Almighty," i.e. "Lord of Hosts."

the results of their evil (44:1-6). Such covenant disloyalty becomes the typical representation of the remnant. Now they follow the same practices of idolatry (here called "the great evil") which led to the "cutting off" of Jerusalem. Therefore, the same fate awaits them.

Two factors are important here: (1) the people were responsible for the predicted judgment; (2) the judgment is all-encompassing: man, woman, infant, and toddler will experience it. Therefore, the expression "leaving (*hōtîr*) to yourself no remnant (*š<sup>c</sup>ērîṭ*)" is like placing the period at the end of the final chapter of the dramatic prophecy of destruction and catastrophe.

### **Conclusions**

It seems plausible that with regard to the remnant of Judah, a booming note of judgment and destruction is struck. From the first injunction issuing a "mopping up operation" (6:9) to the epilogue describing the remnant as the "poorest people" (52:15, 16), an ominous tone is sounded. The threat of devastation was so terrible that the remnant would prefer death to life (8:3).

Afraid of his pro-Egyptian nobles, the vacillating Zedekiah desperately needed assurance. On several occasions he consulted with the prophet Jeremiah asking for a word from God, hoping for a similar reply as Isaiah had given to Hezekiah (Isa 37:33-35), that God would intervene miraculously and force the withdrawal of the Chaldeans. But on the contrary, Jeremiah assured him that God Himself was behind the attack (21:7) and that He had chosen, in His infinite wisdom, to give the earth into the power of Nebuchadnezzar. Hence, any resistance of the

Chaldean potentate was, in reality, resistance against the Lord. Yet king, nobles, clergy, and the common people refused to accept the prophet's word, attempting instead to kill him (38:1-6). At one time a plot even implicated his own townspeople (11:21-23). But despite their staunch patriotism, Jeremiah's gloomy predictions were strikingly true, for the Babylonians showed no pity, no sparing and no compassion (21:7). Indeed, the chances of survival for the Judeans were so cheap that even a remnant of the Chaldean army, consisting of wounded men, would be enough to destroy the city (37:1-10). Only a pithy few were left behind. This veritably rejected the view that the deportation of 597 B.C. had taken away the wicked but had left the righteous, the remnant who had survived the judgment and who may somehow be poised to rebuild the nation and rejuvenate the land. Such ideas may have been rooted in the theology of the inviolability of Zion, that although God may have chastened His people, He would never permit the destruction of the temple and the Davidic dynasty. To this Jeremiah shouted NO! Indeed, the prime fruit of the nation, those with whom the future lay, had been exiled, leaving a remnant of worthless figs, too rotten and evil for consumption (chap. 24).

The fate of the remnant community in Judah is frightening: while it appears that they are the object of special providential care, since they are left in the homeland, the opposite is actually true. They constitute the poor and rejected. And just when it seems that they may have the opportunity to rebuild (chap. 40), the murderous act of a villain cuts off their hopes (chap. 41). In fear of Babylonian reprisals they fled to Egypt, despite the strong warnings of the prophet Jeremiah.

What is even more alarming is that this remnant was stiff-necked in that, even after their solemn pledge to do according to all which the Lord commanded, they defied His word to stay in the land (42:1-22). Clearly, their deliberate refusal to accept the Lord's injunction not to go to Egypt demonstrates their callous disobedience and, more so, their lack of faith. Such obdurate apostasy amounted to a flagrant breach of covenant faithfulness. The Lord's word was that they stay in the land and even though they had been reduced to a small number and seemingly insignificant remnant, He was willing to rebuild them (42:7-12). Since they refused to exercise the faith necessary to remain under the Lord's covenant protection, they were reduced to an object of curse (42:18; 44:12). For just as blessing is the result of covenant faithfulness, likewise is a curse the result of unfaithfulness to the covenant. Instead of trusting God, they sought protection from a political power, Egypt, the traditional enemies of God's people. They preferred to return to the slave masters than to trust God. They were not a remnant of faith.

But alas, there too hope is excised, for the very things they fled in order to regain confidence, comfort, and hope are the very things which will eventually annihilate them. And this to the point where there will be no escapees or survivors in the face of judgment executed by the Lord. The stark reality is that those who, by their disobedience, determined to go to Egypt will be so demolished that even if a few escaped back to Judah, they cannot hope to effectively repossess the land and bring about large-scale renewal. Indeed, it is true that only the Lord's word will stand (44:28).

The examination of these passages provides discernment not only in terms of historical narrative and reality. It also demonstrates the development of the theological reality that faithlessness and disobedience lead inevitably to judgment. While the Babylonians were the agents of this judgment, God was the one behind the execution of punitive action. His actions were so complete that the remnant was effectively excluded from future participation in the restoration and rebuilding of the nation and the land. They had effectively lost the land, the same land promised to their forefathers. Hence, it appears that the demolition of Jerusalem and the forfeiture of faith by the remnant community signalled the loss of the people as the elected people of God. The effect of the Lord's judgment on this disobedient remnant was complete. The work of rebuilding now belonged to the exiled community.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE REMNANT MOTIF IN THE CONTEXT OF JUDGMENT FOREIGN NATIONS

The task of this chapter is to exegete those passages that contain remnant terminology in the oracles against foreign nations within the context of judgment. While scholarship has devoted much time and considerable energy to the debate surrounding these oracles--their geographical and political arrangement; the differences in both the length and the listings between the LXX and the MT; their authorship and time of writing--such is not my concern with regard to the remnant motif here. The focus of this examination of the remnant motif is to determine what role it plays in view of the judgment statements in these oracles against the foreign nations.

Derivatives of š<sup>3</sup>rJer 25:15-29<sup>1</sup>

## Translation and Textual Considerations

(15) For<sup>2</sup> thus says the Lord God of Israel to me,<sup>3</sup> "Take this cup of raging (wrathful) wine<sup>4</sup> from my hand and make all the nations to whom I am sending you drink it. (16) And they shall drink and stagger (reel)<sup>5</sup> and be crazed because of the sword which I am sending among them."<sup>6</sup>

(17) Then I took the cup from the hand of the Lord and I made all the nations to whom the Lord sent me drink: (18)<sup>7</sup> Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, her kings and<sup>8</sup> her princes, to make them a desolation, a horror, a hissing and a

<sup>1</sup>In LXX the section is introduced by the title in Jer 25:13b, *hos ephrōphēteusen Jeremias epi panta ta ethnā*, "which Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations." MT 25:15-29 = LXX 32:1-24.

<sup>2</sup>*Kî*, "for," connects the passage to vss. 1-14. It is lacking in LXX.

<sup>3</sup>*ēlay*, "to me," is absent in LXX, Syr. and one Tg. MS.

<sup>4</sup>LXX reads *tou oinou tou akratou*, "of unmixed wine," which is the equivalent of *yên hahemer*, according to BHS. Cf. Ps 75:9. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 158, suggests reading the construct *yên* for *hayyayin* and thus translating, "this cup of the wine of wrath." He adds that it is possible that "this cup of wine/this cup of wrath" are variants. Holladay, *Jeremiah I*, 670, says that this represents "a conflated text." G. R. Driver, 119, reads *hayyain hahōmeh*, "strong wine."

<sup>5</sup>MT *w<sup>c</sup>šātū w<sup>c</sup>hitgō<sup>c</sup>šū*, "and they shall drink and stagger," is rendered by LXX as *kai piontai kai exemountai*, "and they shall drink and vomit." This imagery is accepted by William McKane, "Poison, Trial by Ordeal and the Cup of Wrath," *VT* 30 (1980): 491.

<sup>6</sup>BHS suggests that this last part of the verse is an addition from vs. 27b.

<sup>7</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 499, and Bright, *Jeremiah*, 161, both contend that since the bulk of the material is against foreign nations, then vs. 18 should be deleted as an addition derived from vss. 1-14.

<sup>8</sup>Following BHS inserting the conjunction "and" with many MSS and versions.

curse as at this day.<sup>1</sup> (19) Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and his servants, and his officials, and all his people; (20) *and all the mixed company;*<sup>2</sup> *and all the kings of the land of Uz;*<sup>3</sup> *and all the kings of the Philistines: Ashkelon, and Gaza, and Ekron, and the remnant [שִׂרְיָ] of Ashdod;* (21) Edom and Moab and the Ammonites; (22) all the kings of Tyre, all the kings of Sidon, and the kings of the coasts which are beyond the sea;<sup>4</sup> (23) and Dedan, and Temah and Buz<sup>5</sup> and all those who cut the corners (of hair); (24) and all the kings of Arabia,<sup>6</sup> and all the kings of the mixed company,<sup>7</sup> the ones living in the desert; (25) and all the kings of Zimri,<sup>8</sup> all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of Media; (26) all the kings of the north, those near and far, each one after the other; and all

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<sup>1</sup>LXX lacks "and a curse, as at this day." Janzen, 45, sees it as a redactional expansion.

<sup>2</sup>MT *w'ēṭ kol-hā<sup>c</sup>ereb*, "and all the mixed company," is rendered by LXX as *kai pantas tous summeiktous autou*, "and all his mixed company." BHS suggests joining the phrase with vs. 19. CKD, 369, explains that *<sup>c</sup>ereb* "refers to a mixed company, probably ones of various ethnic backgrounds living among, but not fully assimilated into, the majority population." The same word is used to describe the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt with the escaping Israelites. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 158, translates, "the whole hodgepodge of races there."

<sup>3</sup>Lacking in LXX.

<sup>4</sup>LXX reads *basileis tous en tō peran tes thalassēs*, "kings in (the region) beyond the sea." MT *malḳê hā<sup>ṣ</sup>î*, "kings of the coasts/islands."

<sup>5</sup>LXX reads "Ros" for Buz.

<sup>6</sup>Lacking in LXX.

<sup>7</sup>BHS suggests deleting this phrase as a dittography.

<sup>8</sup>Lacking in LXX. BHS reads it as "Zimki," an athbash--a cryptographic device whereby letters in the alphabet are reversed to substitute for those in the correct order ( <sup>ṣ</sup> for *t*, *b* to *š*, etc.). Hence, *zmk* for *<sup>c</sup>lm*. See Felix Perles, "A Miscellany of Lexical and Textual Notes on the Bible," *JQR*, n.s., 2 (1911): 103, 104.

the kingdoms of the world<sup>1</sup> which are on the face of the earth. And the king of Sheshak will drink after them.<sup>2</sup>

(27) And you shall say to them, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Drink and get drunk and vomit,<sup>3</sup> and fall, and you shall not rise because of the sword which I am sending in your midst. (28) And it will be, if they refuse to take the cup to drink, then you will say to them, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: you shall surely drink. (29) For behold, I begin to work evil against the city which is called by my name and shall you go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished for I am calling a sword against all the inhabitants of the land,'" says the Lord of hosts.<sup>4</sup>

### Structure

The use of the divine appellations ("the Lord God of Israel" and "the Lord of Hosts," vss. 15, 29) are delimitation margins for the passage. The unit may be outlined as follows:<sup>5</sup>

1. Yahweh's word: commanding an action (vs. 15)
2. Yahweh's word: announcing judgment (vs. 16)
3. Prophet's action: fulfilling the command (vss. 17-26)
4. Yahweh's word: commanding an action (vs. 27a)
5. Yahweh's word: announcing judgment (vs. 27b)

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<sup>1</sup>LXX lacks "of the world." *BHS* suggests deleting.

<sup>2</sup>LXX lacks this sentence. Tg. interprets "Sheshak" as Babylon. It is generally accepted that *šēšak* is an athbash for Babylon. Hence, *ššk* = *bbl*. See Perles, 104; B. J. Roberts, "Athbash," *IDB* (1962), 1:306-307; R. K. Harrison, "Athbash," *ISBE* (1979), 1:350.

<sup>3</sup>MT reads *ûq'yyû*; however, the K of some MSS read *wqww*. *BHS* reads *w'q'yyû* (= *w'q'û*) from the stem *qy*<sup>2</sup>, "vomit, spew up."

<sup>4</sup>LXX omits "says the Lord of hosts."

<sup>5</sup>CKD, 370.

6. Yahweh's word: restating the command for action (vs. 28)

7. Yahweh's word: announcing judgment again (vs. 29).

### Historical Background

Vs. 18 provides a description of the horrible desolation of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah. The last part of the verse, "as at this day," suggests that such a judgment had already befallen these cities.<sup>1</sup> This may be a veiled hint that a date sometime after 586 B.C. would be an appropriate setting for the description of destruction in this verse.<sup>2</sup>

### Interpretation

While commentators disagree as to the authorship<sup>3</sup> and form<sup>4</sup> of the

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<sup>1</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 158, translates, "Jerusalem and the cities of Judah . . . (are) a desolation, a horrible and shocking sight, and a curse, *as they now in fact are* (emphasis mine).

<sup>2</sup>CKD, 371, point to 597 B.C. However, the magnitude of the description seems to better fit the context of 586 B.C. with the complete collapse of Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup>Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 213, denies Jeremianic authenticity. Others like Thompson, 516, and Bright, *Jeremiah*, 164, argue that since Jeremiah was commissioned as "a prophet to the nations" (1:5), then one should expect some of his sayings to be about foreign nations.

<sup>4</sup>Lindblom, 131, argues for "a vision of a markedly dramatic character." CKD, 370, favor "a report of a symbolic action against the nations." Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant: Use of Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah*, 133, sees it as a possible, though unlikely, dramatic performance with different people playing the parts of the kings and nations mentioned. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 673, says that it is the report of a vision or dream.

It is also suggested that the passage is poetic. See Michael DeRoache, "Is Jeremiah 25:15-19 a Piece of Reworked Jeremianic Poetry?" *JSOT* 10 (1978): 58-67. However, the majority of scholars argue for prose: Hyatt, "Jeremiah," 1001; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 163, 164; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 213; and Thompson, 515.

pericope, they agree that the cup of raging wine<sup>1</sup> is a metaphor which "symbolizes Yahweh's resolve to consummate his judgment against them" (the nations).<sup>2</sup>

The manner in which the prophet is to execute the divinely-issued command is not known (vs. 15) but the effects of drinking are clear (vs. 16). The cup of judgment is the sword that Yahweh will employ to effect the fate of the victims.

The nature of the task is seen in the comprehensive list of nations to whom the prophet must fulfill his command (vss. 17-26). Probably, Jerusalem and Judah are mentioned first because of the unique covenant they had with God. The description as an object of curse reminds one of the covenant context, for "curse is part of broken covenant as surely as blessing is a part of obeyed covenant."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This "cup" may have had its origin in the ordeal procedure whereby a portion was imbibed so as to test the innocence of a person (cf. Num 5:11-31). It may have been derived from a banquet setting where poison substituted for wine. See Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 502.

The cup is understood variously as a cup of poison that all the nations must drink and are ineluctably destined to death. See H. A. Brongers, "Der Zornesbrecher," *OTS* 15 (1969): 177-192. Hugo Gressmann, "'H koinōnia tōn daimoniōn," *ZNW* 20 (1921): 224-230, posits an anti-banquet situation where the festivities associated with a cultic meal are reversed. H. Ringgren, "Vredens Kalk," *SEA* 17 (1952): 19-30, concentrates on intoxication as a "Chaos Motif" that is connected to the New Year Festival. The "cup" indicates a nexus between intoxication and the judgment of the enemies.

<sup>2</sup>McKane, "Poison, Trial by Ordeal and the Cup of Wrath," 490. Cf. Duhm, 91. The image of the drinking of a cup to indicate judgment is found elsewhere in the OT: Pss 11:6; 75:9; Isa 51:17, 22; Jer 49:12; 51:7; Lam 4:21; Ezek 23:31-33; Obad 16; Hab 2:15, 16; Zech 12:2.

<sup>3</sup>CKD, 371.

The listing of rulers and nations includes  $\text{š}^{\text{r}}\text{ēriṭ} \text{ } ^{\text{r}}\text{āšdôd}$ , "the remnant of Ashdod" (vs. 20). This may be a reference to the inhabitants left of this city after its destruction by Pharaoh Psamtik I (Psammetichus, 663-610 B.C.) at the conclusion of a twenty-nine-year-long siege.<sup>1</sup>

The concern here is not to pinpoint the geographical location of each nation but to note two significant factors: (1) *the universality of the judgment* and (2) *the inevitability of the judgment*. None is exempt. Not even Jerusalem can claim "most favored nation" status. The striking issue in the listing of the nations is not the geographical movement, (i.e., starting with Egypt to the southwest of Judah and moving northward; or moving from neighboring to more distant nations), but that all are included. Further, it demonstrates that the mighty enemies of Judah will also perish: from Egypt, the first tyrant, to the present antagonist, Shishak/Babylon. This is reinforced by *the inevitability of the judgment*, as emphasized in vss. 27-29. *All must drink*. If the work of evil begins with Jerusalem, the elect city of God, how could the foreign nations be exempt? All must suffer a similar fate, the mighty enemies of Judah as well as tribes with whom Judah had no contact. This universality and inevitability of judgment are subtly highlighted, in that even those already reduced to insignificance, "the remnant of Ashdod," will suffer the divine wrath.

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<sup>1</sup>This is according to Herodotus, *Hist. II*, 2. 157. See also H. Porter and D. N. Freedman, "Ashdod," *ISBE* (1979), 1:314; Moshe Dothan, "Ashdod," *ABD* (1992), 1:478.

This passage affirms that there is no safety in the multitude of nations. All will fall, even those that seem impregnable like Egypt and Babylon. Finally, only Yahweh will remain. His sovereignty is ultimate.

Jer 47:2-7

### Translation and Textual Considerations

- (2) Thus says the Lord,  
 "Behold, waters are rising from the north  
 And they will be like an overflowing river;  
 And they shall overflow the land and all that is in it,  
 The city and all who dwells in it.  
 Men shall cry out.  
 And all who dwell<sup>1</sup> in the land shall wail.
- (3) At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his stallions,  
 at the rushing of his chariots and the rumbling of their wheels.  
 Fathers do not turn back for their children  
 Because their hands are feeble.<sup>2</sup>
- (4) *Because that day<sup>3</sup> is coming to destroy all the Philistines  
 To cut off for Tyre and Sidon every survivor, [šārīd] helper<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup>Many MSS and Vrs read *yōšbē*, "inhabitants of."

<sup>2</sup>MT *mēripyōn yādāyim*, lit. "because of sinking of hands."

<sup>3</sup>Duane L. Christensen, *Transformation of the War Oracle in Old Testament Prophecy: Studies in the Oracles Against the Nations*, Harvard Dissertations in Religion, 3 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 212, reads *al-hayyōm*, "on that day" at the end of vs. 3. Rudolph, 272, connects vs. 3b to vs. 4.

<sup>4</sup>MT *ʾhkrīt ʾšōr ūšidōn kōl šārīd ʿōzēr*, "to cause to cut off for Tyre and Sidon every survivor, helper" is rendered by LXX as *kai aphanizō tēn Turon kai tēn Sidōna kai pantas tous kataloipous tēs boētheias auton*, "and I will destroy Tyre and Sidon and all the rest of their allies."

Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 334, following the Vulgate revocalizes from a hiphil infinitive construct, *ʾhkrīt* to a niphil infinitive *ʾhikkʾrēt*, and construes the preposition *ʾ* before Tyre and Sidon as introducing the agents. The phrase is then rendered: "(to be cut off) by Tyre and Sidon . . ." (emphasis mine).

For Yahweh will destroy the Philistines<sup>1</sup>  
 The remnant [š<sup>2</sup>ērîṭ] of the island<sup>2</sup> of Caphtor.  
 (5) Baldness has come to Gaza  
 Ashkelon has been silenced<sup>3</sup>  
 O Remnant [š<sup>2</sup>ērîṭ] of their strength<sup>4</sup>  
 How long will you gash yourselves?  
 (6) Ah,<sup>5</sup> sword of the Lord,  
 When will you rest (be quiet)?  
 Return to your scabbard,  
 Rest and be still.  
 (7) How can you rest,<sup>6</sup>  
 When the Lord has given it an order?

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<sup>1</sup>LXX lacks "The Philistines." Janzen, 59, sees it as a gloss from vs. 4a.

<sup>2</sup>MT ʔî kaptôr, "the isle of Caphtor," is translated in LXX as *tôn nēsôn*, "the islands," which is equivalent to *hā<sup>c</sup>īyyīm*. Both Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 334, and Janzen, 59, 74, accept the emendation but translate "the coasts."

<sup>3</sup>MT *nidm<sup>t</sup>ah* "destroyed" (if the root is *dmm*) or "silenced" (if the root is *dmh*). Commentators favor the latter. So Bright, *Jeremiah*, 309; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 776; Thompson, 695. LXX *aperriphē*, "cast away," seems to point to the first. The ambiguity of the root strengthens the sense of punitive damage: Ashkelon has perished, that is, been rendered silent.

<sup>4</sup>MT š<sup>2</sup>ērîṭ <sup>c</sup>*imqām*, "the remnant of their valley," seems awkward. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 310, suggests that <sup>c</sup>*mq* has the force of "strength" as attested in Ugaritic, rendering the translation, "O you last of their strength." So too Christensen, 212. Both follow the lead of G. R. Driver, "Difficult Words in the Hebrew Prophets," in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy Presented to Professor Theodore H. Robinson*, ed. H. H. Rowley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1950), 61.

Both Rudolph, 272, and Condamin, 309, say that it is plausible that a city name has dropped out. Since Gaza and Ashkelon have already been mentioned, then Ashdod appears favorable. Hence, "Ashdod, the remnant." However, textual evidence is completely lacking.

LXX has *kai hoi kataloipoi Enakim*, "and the remnant of the Anakim," the race of giants who inhabited Canaan before Israel settled there (Num 13:22; Deut 1:28). According to Josh 11:22, remnants of these people were found in the Philistine cities of Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod.

<sup>5</sup>LXX lacks *hōy*.

<sup>6</sup>MT, ʔēk tišqōṭī, "how can you rest?" Some versions read *tišqōt*, "how can it rest?"

Against Ashkelon and the seashore he has appointed it.

### Structure

It is generally agreed that this oracle divides into two sections:

1. Vss. 2-5: A war oracle of doom against Philistia
2. Vss. 6-7: A song of Yahweh's sword (the agent of Philistia's destruction).<sup>1</sup>

This strophic division is based on the fact that in the first section pairs of short cola are given, while in the second section there is an unusual metrical pattern.<sup>2</sup> Further, the second section is introduced by the vocative *hōy*.

Both sections are linked by certain key concepts: "Yahweh" (vss. 4, 6, 7); "isle" (vs. 4) and "shore" (vs. 7); the questions <sup>◌</sup>*ad-māṭay*, "how long?" (vs. 5) and <sup>◌</sup>*ad-ānāh*, "how long?" (vs. 6) and <sup>◌</sup>*ēk*, "how?" (vs. 7).<sup>3</sup>

The entire passage is generally accorded to Jeremiah, without any literary dependence on the other oracles against Philistia contained in the prophets (Isa 14:29-32; Ezek 25:15-17; Amos 1:6-8; Zeph 2:4-7).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Christensen, 213.

<sup>2</sup>See conveniently, Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 335, for the divisions by cola.

<sup>3</sup>Note the relation between *dmh* and *dmm*: Ashkelon has been "silenced" (from the effects of war [*dmh* niph], vs. 5) and "(O sword), be silent (that is, stop killing" [*dmm* qal], vs. 6). So *dmm* is intended to be heard in assonance with *dmh*.

<sup>4</sup>Andrew W. Blackwood, Jr., *Commentary on Jeremiah* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1977), 292.

## Historical Background

Jer 47:2 says that this oracle against the Philistines came before Pharaoh attacked Gaza. Several positions have been put forward regarding this occasion:

1. Some connect it with the activity of Pharaoh Necho in Philistia subsequent to his victory over Josiah in 609 B.C. This theory is based on the statements of Herodotus, which claim that after the battle of Megiddo, Necho destroyed the city of Kadytis, usually identified with Gaza, in 609 B.C.<sup>1</sup>
2. Gaza's defeat points to the Babylonian conquests in Palestine after the defeat of Egypt in 605 B.C.<sup>2</sup>
3. In late 601 B.C. Pharaoh Necho defeated Nebuchadnezzar and in an attempt to reassert his authority in Palestine, he destroyed Gaza in 600 B.C.<sup>3</sup>
4. H. Tadmor looks at fragments of the poem which he thinks point to a rebellion of Ashkelon against the Assyrian emperor Esarhaddon.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Herodotus *Hist.* II, 159; A. Malamat, "The Historical Setting of Two Biblical Prophecies on the Nations," *IEJ* 1 (1950): 154, 155, 158; Oded Borowski, "Judah and the Exile," in *Israelite and Judean History*, OTL, ed. J. H. Hayes and J. M. Miller (London: SCM Press, 1977), 468.

<sup>2</sup>Wiseman, 68-73.

<sup>3</sup>H. J. Katzenstein, "'Before Pharaoh Conquered Gaza' (Jeremiah 47:1)," *VT* 33 (1983): 250. He dates the actual giving of the oracle to the fourth year of Jehoiakim or the year 605/604 B.C.

<sup>4</sup>H. Tadmor, "Philistia under Assyrian Rule," *BA* 29/3 (1966): 100, n. 52.

5. Perhaps Pharaoh Psamtik I, after his capture of Ashdod, also captured the more southerly cities of Ashkelon and Gaza. This may have happened toward the end of his reign (d. 610 B.C.).<sup>1</sup>

6. Bright thinks that the "most plausible cause" is to connect chap. 47 with the events of the year immediately following 605 B.C. when the Babylonians marched into Palestine and destroyed certain Philistine cities. For example, the Babylonian Chronicle shows that Ashkelon was ravaged in December, 604 B.C.<sup>2</sup>

Despite all these choices, I have to admit with Bright that in regard to the exactness or the circumstances surrounding the time 'before Pharaoh smote Gaza,' "we cannot be sure."<sup>3</sup>

### Interpretation

The first strophe vividly portrays the terror of battle. The pairs of short cola heighten the emotional content.<sup>4</sup> The overflowing flood of vs. 2 is used as a metaphor of destruction by an invading foe. While the foe is unnamed (it comes only

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<sup>1</sup>Ernst Vogt, "Die neubabylonische Chronik über die Schlacht bei Karkemisch und die Einnahme von Jerusalem," in *Volume du Congrès, Strasbourg, 1956: VT Sup. 4*, ed. G. W. Anderson, et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1957), 77. Vogt's deduction is based on the statements of Herodotus, *Hist.* 2, 157.

<sup>2</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 312.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Christensen, 213.

from the north),<sup>1</sup> its devastating effect is underscored both in lamentation: *the inhabitants of that land shall howl*" (vs. 2b); and paralysis: *the fathers shall not look back for their children because of enfeebled hands*" (vs. 3b). This is "a paralysis so overwhelming as to inhibit the basic instinct of parent to protect child."<sup>2</sup>

In vs. 4 the poem becomes specific for the first time:<sup>3</sup> "The day has come" (*hayyôm habbā*<sup>2</sup>) for the destruction of the Philistines. This day is synonymous with the "Day of the Lord,"<sup>4</sup> which is synonymous with judgment and defeat. Specificity

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<sup>1</sup>That opposition comes from the north has led some exegetes to comment that it could not be the Egyptians (who would be from the south) but the Babylonians. So Bright, *Jeremiah*, 312; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 337; Thompson, 697. On this basis, it has been forwarded that vs. 1 is merely an erroneous interpretation by a later editor. The LXX (which says only, "Concerning the Philistines," in vs. 1) is of little help.

Malamat, 155, thinks that the "foe from the north" refers to the Scythians. They were so intrigued to destroy Egypt that while the Babylonian army returned home, they pursued Pharaoh Psamtik I to the borders of Egypt. He was able, by means of gifts and entreaties, to persuade them not to invade Egypt. On their retreat, they invaded the coast of Palestine in the spring of 609 B.C., partially devastating Philistia on the way. The echo of their invasion is heard in Jer 47:2-3. After Psamtik died (610 B.C.), Necho assumed the throne, and on his way home after the indecisive siege of Harran (Elul/September 609 B.C.), he demolished Gaza.

However, this proposal of a Scythian invasion of Palestine has been refuted. See Richard P. Vaggione, "Over All Asia? The Extent of the Scythian Domination in Herodotus," *JBL* 92 (1973): 523-530.

<sup>2</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 336.

<sup>3</sup>Prior to this, there was a certain ambiguity since neither the speaker nor the audience was named; the king who inflicts the wounds was unnamed; even the land to be punished was not mentioned. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 336, says, "This non-specific tone communicates distance and a kind of cosmic totality."

<sup>4</sup>Jeremiah never speaks of the "Day of the Lord," *yôm YHWH*. However, he uses expressions like *yāmîm bā*<sup>2</sup>*îm*, "the days come" (7:32; 9:24; 23:5, 7; 31:27, 31); *bayyāmîm hāhēm*, "in those days" (3:16, 18; 31:29; 50:4, 24); *ba*<sup>c</sup>*ēt hāhî*, "at that time" (3:17; 4:11; 8:1; 31:1); *hayyôm hahû*, "that day" (46:10; and slight variations in 50:27, 30, 31); and *hayyôm habbā*<sup>2</sup>, "the day has come" (47:4), with

is advanced by pointing to Tyre and Sidon. Whether or not there was an alliance between these Phoenician cities and the Philistines, "the story of the past showed that the great powers all attacked the persistently rebellious (cf. 27:3) Phoenician seaport towns first of all before descending on Philistia."<sup>1</sup>

The agent of this terrifying disaster is also specified: Yahweh. He will destroy the Philistines, "the remnant (עֲרִיט *ērīt*) of Caphtor."<sup>2</sup> The noun עֲרִיט *ērīt*

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essentially the same meaning as *yôm YHWH* in the other prophets. See G. von Rad, "'Day' in the OT," *TDNT* (1964), 2:946. <sup>1</sup>

See further on the "Day of the Lord" in the OT: M. Weiss, "The Origin of the 'Day of the Lord'--Reconsidered," *HUCA* 37 (1966): 29-60; F. J. Helewa, "L'origine du concept prophétique du 'Jour de Yahve'," *Ephemerides Carmeliticae* 15 (1964): 3-36; F. C. Fensham, "A Possible Origin of the Concept of the Day of the Lord," *Biblical Essays* (1967): 90-97; Klaus-Dietrich Schunck, "Strukturlinien in der Entwicklung der Vorstellung vom Tag Yahwes," *VT* 14 (1964): 319-330; C. van Leewen, "The Prophecy of YOM YHWH in Amos 5:18-20," *OTS* 19 (1974): 113-134; J. Gray, "The Day of Yahweh," *SEA* 39 (1974): 5-37; Y. Hoffman, "The Day of the Lord as a Concept and a Term in the Prophetic Literature," *ZAW* 93 (1981): 37-50; Ralph W. Klein, "The Day of the Lord," *CTM* 39 (1968): 517-525; J. Bourke, "Le Jour de Yahve dans Joel," *RB* 66 (1959): 22-28; D. Stuart, "The Sovereign Day of Conquest," *BASOR* 221 (1976): 159-164.

<sup>1</sup>Thompson, 697. Relying on *ANET*, 287-288, he shows how Sennacherib did precisely this in his first campaign.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Amos 9:7. Caphtor is generally identified with Crete (but may be extended to include the Aegean Islands), possibly the original home of the Philistines. While there is still uncertainty regarding the identity and place of origin of these people, it is generally conceded that they were fierce and warlike and were enemies of Israel. Generally described as "Sea Peoples" they assaulted the Mediterranean in the 12th and 11th centuries. They were halted at the frontier of Egypt by Ramses III about 1190 B.C., who settled them, mostly as Egyptian mercenaries, in coastal towns of Palestine (which name itself reflects the Philistine presence). There they developed the famed Philistine Pentapolis, a confederation of Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ashdod, together with two towns in the Shephelah, Ekron and Gath.

For more on the Philistines, see conveniently: Neal Bierling, *Giving Goliath His Due: New Archaeological Light on the Philistines* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1992); J. C. Greenfield, "Philistines," *IDB* (1962), 3:791-795; W. L. LaSor,

expresses a negative intent here, in that even the "remnant" will be destroyed.<sup>1</sup> This is strengthened by the emphatic *kî* clause introducing Yahweh and repeating the verb *šdd*, "destroy." Hence, the notion of destruction broods in this text. This too is magnified by the parallelism of the text: *Because that day is coming to destroy all Philistines parallels For Yahweh will destroy the Philistines. Further, To cut off . . . every survivor, helper parallels the remnant of the isle of Caphtor.*

What is in view here is nothing short of the notion of the wiping out of the group so that not even a remnant is left.<sup>2</sup> This is confirmed in the emphasis placed on destruction, especially as this is expressed in the use of the verb *krt*.

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"Philistines," *ISBE* (1986), 3:841-846; Moshe Dothan and Trude Dothan, *People of the Sea: The Search for the Philistines* (New York: Macmillan, 1992); Trude Dothan, *The Philistines and Their Material Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); H. J. Katzenstein and Trude Dothan, "Philistines," *ABD* (1992), 5:326-333; R. A. S. MacAlister, *Philistines: Their History and Civilization* (Chicago: Argonaut, 1965); Kenneth A. Kitchen, "The Philistines," in *Peoples of Old Testament Times*, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 53-78; W. F. Albright, "Syria, the Philistines, and Phoenicia," in *Cambridge Ancient History* 3d ed., vol. 2, Part 2: *History of the Middle East and the Aegean Region c. 1380-1000 B.C.*, ed. I. E. S. Edwards, C. J. Gadd, N. G. L. Hammond, and E. Solberger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 507-516.

<sup>1</sup>Hasel, "Origin and Early History," 163.

<sup>2</sup>Juilan Morgenstern, "The Rest of the Nations," *JSS* 2 (1957): 225-231, argues that this refers to a calamity that removed a considerable portion of the citizenry and rendered the nation numerically but a remnant of its former self. This historic event he traces to Xerxes' fouled foray into Greece in 481 B.C. By 479 B.C. the remnants of the Persian army were expelled from Greece. Since nations like Philistia and Edom, which assisted Xerxes, were depleted of population, especially of men who died in battle or who refused to return home for one reason or another, they were called *š<sup>ׁ</sup>ērîṭ hagōyîm* (Ezek 36:3-5).

Vs. 5 confirms the terror of judgment by pointing out the responses of the Philistine citizens to the destruction. Three of the common signs of mourning were the funeral rites of shaving the head, silence, and self-laceration.<sup>1</sup> This designated the ruin of Gaza and Ashkelon, "*the last remnant of their strength*, i.e., of the Philistines. Long known as historic strongholds of Philistine resistance, Gaza<sup>2</sup> and Ashkelon<sup>3</sup>--the remnant of Philistine strength--plummet to destruction.

In the second strophe (vss. 6-7), introduced by a vocative, Yahweh's sword is personified as the "Destroyer." Christensen remarks, "The imagery is that of holy war with the Divine Warrior marching in battle against Philistia."<sup>4</sup>

The name "Yahweh" connects this strophe with the first. The question, "*How long/ Until when will you be silent (rest)?*" has the same purpose. As Holladay detected, Ashkelon has been "silenced" (from the effects of war), so now, the sword

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<sup>1</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 777; Thompson, 697.

<sup>2</sup>A city of long history, Gaza was the land gateway between Egypt and Asia for caravan and military traffic. It appears that it was not initially conquered by the Israelites, (cf. Josh 13:2-3; Judg 3:1-3). Judg 1:18 in LXX says, "Judah did *not* capture Gaza."

Ancient reliefs show Gaza to be extremely well fortified. See H. J. Katzenstein, "Gaza," *ABD* (1992), 2:912-915; W. F. Stinespring, "Gaza," *IDB* (1962), 2:357-358; A. F. Rainey, "Gaza," *ISBE* (1982), 2:415-418.

<sup>3</sup>Ashkelon, a city with a long and eventful history, is first mentioned in the Execration Texts of the Middle Kingdom in Egypt (ca. 1850 B.C.) where it is vilified as a rebellious element and enemy of Egypt. Seemingly, it was not conquered by the Israelites. See Douglas L. Esse, "Ashkelon," *ABD* (1992), 1:487-490; W. F. Stinespring, "Ashkelon," *IDB* (1962), 1:252-254; J. F. Prewitt, "Ashkelon," *ISBE* (1979), 1:318-319.

<sup>4</sup>Christensen, 215.

is asked to be "silent," that is, to stop the killing.<sup>1</sup> But as the further question of vs. 7 indicates,<sup>2</sup> any attempt to restrain the sword of Yahweh before its work of destruction is complete will be futile. Hence, the ambiguity of the "foe from the north" is clarified. While the identity of the invading force is not given, Yahweh is the holy warrior who marches from the north, wielding His sword to cut off the Philistines. Regardless of the identity of the actual army (i.e., the stallions and chariots of vs. 3a) it "is but the means he uses to vent his spleen."<sup>3</sup> The fury of the judgment is so great against the Philistine towns and seacoast<sup>4</sup> that there is no survivor or remnant.

Jer 49:7-11

### Translation and Textual Considerations

(7) Concerning Edom, Thus says the Lord of Hosts  
 "Is there no longer wisdom in Teman?  
 Has wisdom perished from the understanding?"

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<sup>1</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 335.

<sup>2</sup>Note how the verb *škr*, "to be quiet, to rest," in vs. 7 echoes the same verb in vs. 6. Hence, <sup>c</sup>*ad-<sup>2</sup>ānāh lō<sup>2</sup> tiškōtī*, "Until when will you be quiet (rest)?" (vs. 6); <sup>2</sup>*ēk tiškōtī*, "How can you be quiet (rest)?" (vs 7).

Note also the parallelism between the second and fourth cola: *When Yahweh has given it orders parallels He has given it an appointment.*

<sup>3</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 777.

<sup>4</sup>Thompson, 698, believes that the prophecy against Ashkelon and the coast in vs. 7 was fulfilled in 604/3 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar overran it. A clue to this is found in a letter found at Saqqara, written in Aramaic, where Adon, king of Ashkelon, seeks help from Pharaoh Necho because the Babylonian troops had advanced to Aphek. See H. L. Ginsberg, "An Aramaic Contemporary of the Lachish Letters," *BASOR* 111 (1948): 24-27; John Bright, "A New Letter in Aramaic Written to a Pharaoh in Egypt," *BA* 12 (1949): 46-52.

Has their wisdom become spoiled?<sup>1</sup>  
 (8) Flee! Turn back!<sup>2</sup>  
 Dwell in the depths  
 O inhabitants of Dedan;  
 For the calamity of Esau<sup>3</sup> I will bring upon him;  
 The time when I punish him.  
 (9) *If grape-gatherers came to you*  
*would they not leave [yaš<sup>2</sup>irû] gleanings?*  
*If thieves (came)<sup>4</sup> by night*  
*would they not destroy only enough for themselves?<sup>5</sup>*  
 (10) But I myself have stripped Esau bare;<sup>6</sup>  
 I have uncovered his hiding places  
 and he is not able to conceal himself<sup>7</sup>  
 His seed is destroyed, and his brothers,<sup>8</sup> and his neighbors  
 No one is left (to say):<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>LXX renders a declarative statement instead of MT interrogative. LXX reads *ouk estin eti*, "There is no longer."

<sup>2</sup>MT reads the Hophal imperative *hopnû*, "be turned back." BHS suggests the Hiphil vocalization *hapnû*.

<sup>3</sup>LXX *duskola epoiësen*, "he has done badly."

<sup>4</sup>This word is not in MT or LXX but it is generally used to achieve symmetry with the first colon.

<sup>5</sup>MT *hišhîtû dayyām* means "they would destroy their sufficiency"; i.e., they would take only what they want; no more than what they needed themselves. LXX reads *epithēsousi cheri autōn*, "they shall lay their hands on," which equals BHS' suggested *yāšîtû yādam*.

<sup>6</sup>MT *hāsapî*, "I have stripped bare," is replaced in BHS with *hippāstî*, "I have searched out" (i.e., exposed). Cf. Obad 6, *n<sup>h</sup>hp<sup>s</sup>û*.

<sup>7</sup>LXX and Vulgate, followed by some exegetes like Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 370, vocalize MT *w<sup>h</sup>nehbāh*, as *w<sup>h</sup>nahbōh* which equals BHS' suggested reading of *w<sup>h</sup>nahbō<sup>2</sup>*, niphil infinitive absolute of *hb<sup>2</sup>*, reading, "to hide (themselves)."

<sup>8</sup>BHS suggests deleting "and his brothers" and transposing *w<sup>h</sup>ēnennû*, "and he is no more," to follow "his seed is destroyed."

<sup>9</sup>MT *w<sup>h</sup>ēnennû*, "and they are not," is strengthened when Symmachus and Lucian are taken seriously, *ouk estin hos erei*, "there is none who speaks," thus

(11) "Leave your fatherless children, I will keep them alive;  
and let your widows trust in me."<sup>1</sup>

### Structure

The expression "Thus says the Lord" (vss. 7, 12) forms an inclusio for the so-called "original oracle against Edom" (vss. 7-11).<sup>2</sup> Christensen rightly divides the unit into two strophes:

1. Summons to flight (vss. 7-9) framed by questions which form an inclusio: "Is wisdom no more in Teman?" (vs. 7); "If grape-gatherers come would they not leave gleanings?" (vs. 9)

2. Oracle of Doom (vss. 10, 11) where Yahweh declares there is no hiding place for Edom (10a) since he has no allies (10b).<sup>3</sup>

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prompting the emendation  $w^{\text{ע}} \text{ֶּן } \text{ׁ} \text{ֹמֶר}$ , "and no one says." Bright, *Jeremiah*, 328, justifies this when he says, "The direct discourse of the next verse requires some introduction." Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 371, thinks that the reading of Symmachus functions as an explanatory insertion. Cf. Thompson, 718.

<sup>1</sup>MT, *tibtāhū*, "let them trust," is masc. ending for fem. which equals *BHS'* *tibtāhnāh*. Cf. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 801.

<sup>2</sup>Christensen, 233. This title is used because many commentators believe that the oracle against Edom (vss. 7-22) was probably composed earlier by an anonymous author during Josiah's time, but was subsequently expanded by the addition of materials. These additions include: (1) vss. 9, 14-16 (which relate closely to Obad 1-5); (2) vss. 12, 13, 17 (which are variations of Jer 25:15-19); and (3) vss. 18-21 (which are almost identical to Jer 50:40, 44-46). They were added either by Jeremiah or more likely by his disciples during the exilic period.

For more details on this complicated question of authenticity, see Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 372-374; Rudolph, 267-269; Clements, *Jeremiah*, 255-256; Nicholson, *Jeremiah* 26-52, 194; Cornill, 479-480.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Christensen, 233. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 373, commenting on the entire oracle, says, "There is no evident patterning of structure within the oracle."

### Historical Background

The historical setting around this oracle is difficult to secure, as admitted by leading scholars.<sup>1</sup> Biblical data indicate, however, a long history of alliance and hostility between Judah and Edom extending from the Exodus to the fall of Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup> These earlier clashes may be in the background of this oracle, but it is generally agreed that the situation nearer at hand which occasioned such a blistering denunciation was when Edom collaborated with the Babylonians in the campaign against Judah in 589-587 B.C.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 375, "There is no way to find a secure setting for this little poem."

<sup>2</sup>See Num 20:14-21; Judg 11:17. Edom refused the Israelites passage on their trek from Egypt to Canaan. Yet Israelite civil law prohibited ill treatment of their brothers, the Edomites. David controlled Edom (2 Sam 8:13-14) but Solomon had trouble with Hadad who eventually fled to Egypt (1 Kgs 11:14-22). In Joram's time, Edom revolted (2 Kgs 8:20-22). Amaziah later defeated them (2 Kgs 14:7; 2 Chr 25:14), while Uzziah took some Edomite territory. Edom won back much of the territory in the time of Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:6). They later plotted with Judah (and other nations) to revolt against Babylon ca. 594 B.C. (Jer 7:1-11).

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Lam 4:21-22; Ps 137:7; Ezek 25:12-14. See also Christensen, 233; Nicholson, *Jeremiah* 26-52, 194; Thompson, 720; Graham S. Ogden, "Prophetic Oracles against Foreign Nations and Psalms of Communal Lament: The Relationship of Psalm 137 to Jeremiah 49:7-22 and Obadiah," *JSOT* 24 (1982): 89-97; and to a lesser extent, J. H. Hayes, "The Usage of Oracles against Foreign Nations in Ancient Israel," *JBL* 87 (1968): 81-92.

## Interpretation

The summons of flight (vss. 7-9) begins with a series of three questions regarding "wisdom" and "counsel": *Is wisdom no more in Teman?*<sup>1</sup> *Has counsel perished from the prudent?* *Has their wisdom perished?* Traditionally famed for its wisdom,<sup>2</sup> the oracle now declares a reversal by way of the interrogatives, which anticipate a reply in the affirmative: sound counsel (<sup>ע</sup>*ēšāh*) and wisdom (*hokmāh*) had departed from Teman.

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<sup>1</sup>"Teman" is a geographical designation from the root *ymn* with t-prefix. Generally, it signifies "south." Roland de Vaux, "Téman, ville ou région d'Édom?" *RB* 76 (1969): 379-385, shows that it is the *northern* region of Edom in which Bozrah is found. Cf. Amos 1:12 where Yahweh's fire hurled on Teman will consume the palaces of Bozrah. See also Ernst Axel Knauf, "Teman," *ABD* (1992), 6:347-348.

<sup>2</sup>Denis Baly, *The Geography of the Bible* (New York: Harper, 1974), 237, says that the wisdom of the Edomites is attributed to their trading experience with caravans from Arabia and other far-flung parts of the world. Edom has been credited as the setting, and an Edomite, the hero of the Book of Job. See James L. Crenshaw, "Job, Book of," *ABD* (1992), 3:858; R. H. Pfeiffer, "Edomitic Wisdom," *ZAW* 44 (1926): 13-25; idem, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 680-681. A more cautious approach has been taken by Marvin H. Pope, *Job*, AB, vol. 15 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1973), xlvi-l; idem, "Job, Book of," *IDB* (1962), 2:912. For a survey of Edomite wisdom, see Otto Plöger, *Sprüche Salomos (Proverbia)* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984), xxvii-xxix.

Vs. 8a issues a summons for the people of Dedan to flee. Dedan was to the southeast and was part of Edomite territory.<sup>1</sup> Hence, all of Edomite territory from Teman in the north to Dedan in the south, is under threat.<sup>2</sup>

Vs. 8b provides the reason to flee, introduced by *kî*, where Yahweh speaks in the first person announcing the judgment that is imminent, namely, the calamity<sup>3</sup> of Esau,<sup>4</sup> here a poetic name for the Edomites. They were all "well advised to find some inaccessible place of refuge so as to escape divine judgment."<sup>5</sup> As Carroll puts it, "If the people of Edom still possess understanding and insight they will flee from the calamity of Esau."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For evidence of this see David F. Graf, "Dedan," *ABD* (1992), 2:121-123. Dedan is identified with the ruins of Khuraybah just north of the modern village of *el-Ulâ*. It was prominent in the sixth century. See further, W. F. Albright, "Dedan," *Geschichte und Altes Testament*, ed. W. F. Albright (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1953), 1-12; Philip J. King, *Jeremiah: An Archaeological Companion* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 67.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Ezek 25:13, which threatens the Edomites "from Teman to Dedan." See also Ernst Axel Knauf, "Alter und Herkunft der edomitischen Königsliste Gen 39, 31-39," *ZAW* 97 (1985): 250.

<sup>3</sup>The word <sup>צ</sup>*ēḏ* occurs 22 times in the Hebrew Bible and has only the understanding of evil. It means "calamity," "destruction," "ruin," "disaster," "distress," "vengeance," "trouble," "misfortune," "doom," "terror," "downfall," or "peril." See R. L. Alden, "<sup>צ</sup>*ēḏ*," *TWOT* (1980), 1:17.

<sup>4</sup>Esau, the twin brother of Jacob (Israel) (Gen 25:25; 35:28), was the ancestor of Edom (Gen 36).

<sup>5</sup>Harrison, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, 180.

<sup>6</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 802.

The ferocity of this calamity is now described in vs. 9<sup>1</sup> (which concludes the summons to flight), using a vivid metaphor: the grape-gatherer leaves a remnant behind; the thief who raids the crop only takes that which will satisfy himself, leaving a remnant behind. The image, drawn from agriculture, reminds the reader of Jer 6:9 where Israel is excised like fruit from the vine. The imagery sufficiently portrays the fact that what is left behind is merely a fraction of the original whole. Nevertheless, some fruit, a remnant, remains. The idea is continued in the next line for a thief raiding crops will take only what satisfies himself. His plunder is not so great as to render the crop totally decimated. It is precisely this that places the Oracle of Doom into bold relief.

Enunciated in vs. 10, the Oracle of Doom denotes the idea of a lack of remnant in the face of judgment in that Esau/Edom will be stripped bare,<sup>2</sup> destroying his offspring,<sup>3</sup> kinsmen and neighbors. While harvesters leave a remnant and the thief

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<sup>1</sup>Since Obad 5 has the same content as this verse, but in reverse order, and is considered as having been written first, both Rudolph, 268, and Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 370, omit it. However, opinion is divided regarding the similarity of vss. 9, 14-16 with Obad 1-5. There are three positions: (1) Obadiah is original, Jeremiah is secondary; (2) Jeremiah is original, and Obadiah is secondary; (3) both are dependent on an older third text. See Hans Walter Wolff, *Obadja und Jona*, BKAT 14/3 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1977), 20-22. He accepts the third position.

<sup>2</sup>The judgment of vs. 8b is continued in vs. 10, both of which are linked by certain factors: (1) *Kī* at the beginning of vs. 10 seems to parallel that at the beginning of vs. 8b; (2) "depths" (vs. 8); "hiding places" (vs. 10); (3) "Esau" in both verses.

<sup>3</sup>Christensen, 230, reads *zʿrōʿa*, "arm" (for MT *zrʿ*, "offspring. seed"), with the idea of "strength" and translates the line as follows, "The strength of his allies is shattered." LXX reads *epicheira adelphou autou*, "forearm of his brother."

satisfies himself, the judgment against Edom leaves nothing. The idea of being stripped bare suggests that the bark of the tree is removed, thus offering no protection. Death becomes inevitable. As such, the portrait depicted here is one where Edom's population is left totally decimated. Carroll's comment is appropriate, "Nothing is left (the deity being less kind and more thorough than humans). No hiding places, no people nor neighbors: nothing remains to protect Edom or to afford the nation help."<sup>1</sup>

This is especially astonishing given the location of Edom encompassing the rugged terrain between the Wadi Zered to the north, the Gulf of Aqaba to the south, the desert on the east, and the deep Arabah depression to the west.<sup>2</sup> Yohanan Aharoni describes the terrain as follows:

It is a difficult area, not easily accessible, and its many crevices and natural strongholds provide excellent places of refuge for the population in time of emergency. A chain of fortresses on the fringe of the desert gave added protection.<sup>3</sup>

Despite all this, the action of Yahweh is so complete against Edom, "flushing its people out of hiding places which others might have overlooked,"<sup>4</sup> such that there is no possibility of a remnant.

Vs. 10b, which continues the oracle of doom, offers a difficulty. MT  $w^{\prime} \bar{e}nenn\bar{u}$ , "and he is not," seems to make better sense if one LXX manuscript (G<sup>L</sup>)

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<sup>1</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 802.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas J. Finley, *Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), 357.

<sup>3</sup>Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography*, 2d ed., trans. A. F. Rainey (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), 40.

<sup>4</sup>Harrison, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, 180.

and the Symmachus version are read: *ouk estin hos erei* (which is equal to *BHS*' proposed  $w^{\text{c}}\text{ēn } \text{c}^{\text{c}}\text{ōmēr}$ ), "there is none who says" (followed by vs. 11). Hence, "There is none who says, 'Leave your fatherless children, I will keep them alive; and let your widows trust in me.'"<sup>1</sup>

Clearly, this part of the oracle against Edom indicates the contrast between what might happen if only human beings are involved and what will happen when Yahweh is involved.<sup>2</sup> The idea of the gleaners and thieves is that something is left, even if that remnant is suitable only for the underprivileged classes. But with Yahweh's action, even the hope of a remnant is unqualifiably denied.

Jer 50:21-32

### Translation and Textual Considerations

(21) "Go up<sup>3</sup> against the land of Marathaim

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<sup>1</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 328; Thompson, 718. Commentators have not agreed on the meaning of this verse. Giesebrecht, 240; Feinburg, 667, propose that this is Yahweh's promise to take care of the widows and orphans since the men have been killed. Rudolph, 268, and Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 372, allow for "the hypothetical reassuring words of the non-existent neighbor." Volz, *Studien zum Text des Jeremiah*, 318, 319, regards the text as a gloss. Thompson, 721, regards the verse as "words spoken by a kindly survivor promising to help widows and orphans." Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 803, recognizes the strangeness of the verse but adds that those who are prepared to trust Yahweh will come under His protection.

<sup>2</sup>Finley, 360.

<sup>3</sup>MT reads simply, "against the land of Marathaim." A verb such as  $\text{c}^{\text{c}}\text{ālēh}$ , "go up," seems to be required. This could have dropped out due to haplography. Or we may read, "against the land of Marathaim, go up against her" for MT,  $\text{c}^{\text{c}}\text{al-hā}^{\text{c}}\text{āres m}^{\text{c}}\text{raṭāyim } \text{c}^{\text{c}}\text{ālēh } \text{c}^{\text{c}}\text{āleyhā}$ . Cf. Thompson, 738, n. 1.

and against the inhabitants of Pekod<sup>1</sup>  
Slay<sup>2</sup> and destroy after them,"<sup>3</sup> says the Lord,  
"and do all that I have commanded you.

(22) The noise of battle is in the land  
and great destruction.<sup>4</sup>

(23) How the hammer of the whole earth  
is broken and shattered in pieces!  
How Babylon has become  
a horror among the nations.

(24) I have set a snare<sup>5</sup> for you and you were captured,  
O Babylon, and you did not know it  
You were found and seized  
For against Yahweh you fought.<sup>6</sup>

(25) The Lord has opened his armory  
and brought forth the weapons of his wrath  
For the Lord God of Hosts has a work  
in the land of the Chaldeans.

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<sup>1</sup>*BHS* and Kudolph, 302, read *redôp*, "pursue," after Pekod and transpose <sup>2</sup>*ah<sup>h</sup>rêhem*, "after them," to follow it, thus reading, "and against the inhabitants of Pekod pursue after them."

<sup>2</sup>The verb *hrb* normally means "be dry." But in this context one would expect a verb like "kill." Thompson, 738, n. 2. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 827, suggests that MT *h<sup>h</sup>rôb*, lit. "put to the sword," is a denominative verb from *herêb*, "sword." Cf. vs. 27. LXX *machaira*, "sword," reads *pqd* with *hrb* and translates, "Avenge, O sword."

<sup>3</sup>LXX lacks "after them." Tg. reads the equivalent of <sup>2</sup>*ah<sup>h</sup>rîtam*, "the last of them." Bright, 342, thinks that there was an original text of the imperative followed by the infinitive absolute, *he<sup>h</sup>rîm hah<sup>h</sup>rêm*, "devote them to utter destruction."

<sup>4</sup>LXX reads, "The sound of battle, a great crash, in the land of the Chaldeans."

<sup>5</sup>LXX lacks this line. MT *yâqôštî* is understood by some exegetes to really be an archaic second-person feminine form and should be vocalized as *yâqôštîy*, especially since the other verbs are second-person singular feminine forms. Cf. Jer 2:33. The translation will then be, "You set a trap (for yourself)." See Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 393; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 827. However, MT is possible and fits the context by placing the emphasis on God's actions.

<sup>6</sup>MT *hitgârîl*, means to engage in a contest or strife of some sort. The idea is that Babylon *challenged* Yahweh.

(26) *Come against her from all sides*<sup>1</sup>  
*Break open her granaries*  
*Pile her up like heaps (of grain)*<sup>2</sup>  
*And destroy her utterly*  
*Do not let there be a remnant [š<sup>2</sup> ērīt] to her/ leave her no remnant [š<sup>2</sup> ērīt].*  
(27) Slay all her bulls<sup>3</sup>  
Let them go down to slaughter.  
Woe to them, for their day has come  
the time of their punishment.  
(28) Listen! Fugitives and escapees from the land of Babylon  
To declare in Zion the vengeance of the Lord our God  
Vengeance for his temple.<sup>4</sup>  
(29) Summon archers<sup>5</sup> against Babylon  
All those who bend the bow  
Encamp all around her  
Do not let there be<sup>6</sup> any escape/ Let no one escape.  
Repay her according to her deeds, do to her according to all she has done

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<sup>1</sup>MT *bō<sup>2</sup>ū-lāh miqqēs*, "Come against her without end." The sense of *miqqēs* is uncertain and some commentators like Bright, *Jeremiah*, 345, suggest following Jer 51:31 *miqqāseh*, "from every side." The same is suggested by Symmachus' *sumpantes*. LXX reads *hoi kairoi autēs*, "her times." See also Christiansen, 252, 256.

<sup>2</sup>MT reads *k<sup>2</sup>mō-<sup>c</sup>a<sup>2</sup>rēmim*, "like heaps," i.e., heaps of grain. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 828, says that this may be extended to heaps of rubbish or ruins. He suggests that since Jer 50:16a has a harvesting motif, then "heaps of grain" may be appropriate here. Christensen, 252, 256, has a "conjectural emendation" to "a swath of grain." LXX reads *hōs spēlaion*, "as a cave," which is equal to *k<sup>2</sup>mō-m<sup>c</sup>ārāh*. Aquila reads *hōsper sōreountes*, "like those heaping up," which is equivalent to *BHS k<sup>2</sup>am<sup>c</sup>amm<sup>2</sup>rīm*.

<sup>3</sup>Lit. "Put to the sword all her bulls." See above, vs. 21. LXX reads, *anaxēranate pantas tous karpous autēs*, "dry up all her fruits."

<sup>4</sup>LXX lacks this final clause.

<sup>5</sup>MT *rabbim*, "host, crowd." LXX *pollois* understands it similarly. Some exegetes like Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 828, and Thompson, 739, revocalize the word to *rōbim* "archers" (a participle of *rbh* II). In view of the following line, "all those who bend the bow," then "archers" seems to be fitting.

<sup>6</sup>*K<sup>2</sup> al-y<sup>2</sup>hī; Q<sup>2</sup> al-y<sup>2</sup>hī-lāh*, "let there not be to her" (cf. vs. 26b). LXX *mē estō autēs*. See also Christensen, 252, 256.

Because she has acted insolently against Yahweh  
The Holy One of Israel.

(30) Therefore, her young men shall fall in her squares  
And all her soldiers shall be destroyed in that day,<sup>1</sup> says the Lord.

(31) "Behold, I am against you, Sir Arrogance,"<sup>2</sup>  
says the Lord God of Hosts.

"For your day has come, the time when I punish you."<sup>3</sup>

(32) Sir Arrogance will stumble and fall  
With no one to raise him up  
And I will set fire in his cities<sup>4</sup>  
And it will devour everything around it."

### Structure

The material of chaps. 50-51 is generally seen as a conglomerate of recurring themes lacking rhyme or reason and without any specific order.<sup>5</sup> However,

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<sup>1</sup>LXX lacks "in that day."

<sup>2</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 394. MT *zādôn*, "O Insolence." LXX reads *tên hubristian*, "the overbearing one."

<sup>3</sup>A few MSS read *p<sup>h</sup>quddātekā*, "your punishments."

<sup>4</sup>LXX, *en tō drumō autēs*, "in his forest" which is the equivalent to *b<sup>h</sup>ya<sup>c</sup>rō*.

<sup>5</sup>So Hyatt, "*Jeremiah*," 1124; Rudolph, 297; Duhm, 360; Karl Budde, "Über die Kapitel L und LI des Buches Jeremia," *Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie* 23 (1878): 456-459; Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 507, describes it as "a prolix, disjointed, vacuous exercise."

Scholarship is divided regarding the divisions in these chapters: T. H. Robinson, "The Structure of Jeremiah 50, 51," *JTS* 19 (1918): 251-265, maintains that chaps. 50-51 contain scores of oracles or fragments of oracles. Volz, *Der Prophet Jeremia*, 422-442, sees basically five poems with numerous additions: 50:2-16; 21-32; 35-38; 51:1-26; 27-58. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 411-414, measures out 10 units: 50:2-13; 14-24; 25-32; 33-38; 51:1-6; 7-14; 20-26; 27-33; 34-44; 49-58. Condamin, 329-352, sees four poems: 50:2-20; 21-46; 51:1-37; 38-58.

The so-called jangling of themes has led some scholars to follow an outline developed for the sake of "convenience." See Bright, *Jeremiah*, 359; Thompson, 731; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 201.

Kenneth T. Aitken has presented a foundational study that demonstrates that there is a well-ordered complex of structurally related elements that provide a comprehensive understanding of the material.<sup>1</sup>

Jer 50:26, 29 are couched in a section that extends from vs. 21 to vs. 32.<sup>2</sup>

Each begins with a call or summons to battle, followed by data that expand on judgment against Babylon.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth T. Aitken, "The Oracles against Babylon in Jeremiah 50-51: Structures and Perspectives," *Tyndale Bulletin* 35 (1984): 25-63. He divides these chapters into six "movements": 50:4-20; 50:21-32; 50:33-46; 51:1-33; 51:34-44; and 51:45-53. Each of these has a unified and relatively independent structural pattern which informs its own particular and distinctive perspective on the general topic of the composition. However, these movements are brought together in such a way as to inform the composition as a whole. These movements are embraced by an introductory (50:2-3), interlocutory (50:46), and concluding (51:54-58) framework, which serves a twofold purpose: (1) to foreshadow, and (2) to reflect on the major theme of the fall of Babylon.

<sup>2</sup>Jer 50:4-20 is the first unit of the chapter as indicated by the inclusio that is demarcated by the expression "In those days, at the time" (vss. 4, 20). Vss. 33-46 constitute another unit as the formulaic expression, "This is what the Lord says," forms the boundaries. Hence, 50:21-32 forms a unit.

<sup>3</sup>Aitken, 36.

Aitken correctly outlines the structure of the unit as follows:<sup>1</sup>

Section 1     A Summons of the foe and Babylon's judgment (vss. 21-24a, 25).  
                  *INTERVENTION.*

                  B Indictment: Babylon's offense against  
                  Yahweh (vs. 24b). *SITUATION.*

Section 2     A<sup>1</sup> Summons of the foe and Babylon's judgment  
                  (vss. 26, 27). *INTERVENTION.*

                  C Israel's flight to Zion (vs. 28)  
                  *OUTCOME*

Section 3     A<sup>2</sup> Summons of the foe and Babylon's judgment (vss. 29a, 30-32).  
                  *INTERVENTION.*

                  B<sup>1</sup> Indictment: Babylon's offense against  
                  Yahweh (vs. 29b). *SITUATION.*

Three series of repetitions serve to link the section together:<sup>2</sup>

1. The summonses are linked through the repetition of key ideas in step-like progression:

A vs. 21: *h<sup>a</sup>rōb w<sup>a</sup>hah<sup>a</sup>rēm*, "Slay and utterly destroy"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 37. In B and B<sup>i</sup> this writer has added the term "Indictment" to indicate the charge of wrong brought against Babylon. Aitken, 28, makes three designations: "Situation," "Intervention," and "Outcome" as "ground-elements." The "Situation" centers on Babylon's past actions against Israel, Yahweh, or the nations/the whole earth, and the present conditions resulting from such actions. Less frequently, the "Situation" also focuses on Israel's past actions against Yahweh. The "Intervention" focuses on Yahweh's judgment of, and the fall of, Babylon. The "Outcome" draws attention to the consequences of Babylon's fall as it concerns either Israel or the nations/the whole earth.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>The first verb *h<sup>a</sup>rōb* is a denominative verb from *hereb*, "sword." LXX has *machaira*, "sword." (Cf. vs. 27 for a similar phenomenon.) MT follows the second verb with *ah<sup>a</sup>rītām*, "the last of them." Bright, *Jeremiah*, 342, proposes

A<sup>1</sup> vs. 26: *w'hah<sup>a</sup>rimûhâ* <sup>ʔ</sup>*al t'hi-lâh š<sup>e</sup>ʔ<sup>ʔ</sup>erit*, "and destroy her utterly, leave her no remnant; vs. 27a: *hirbû*, "slay"

A<sup>2</sup> vs. 29: <sup>ʔ</sup>*al-y<sup>e</sup>hi-lâh p<sup>e</sup>lētah*, "do not let there be any escapee."

2. Each of the summonses that begin sections two and three is linked by the repetition of a key word with the end of the preceding section:

*Pithû*, "open" (vs. 26, section 2), is linked to *pātah*, "has opened" (vs. 25, section 1); *P<sup>e</sup>lētah*, "escapee" (vs. 29, section 3) is linked to *p<sup>e</sup>lētîm*, "escapees" (vs. 28, section 2).

3. The Indictments against Babylon (vss. 24b and 29b) echo each other. Hence, *kî ba<sup>ʔ</sup>a<sup>ʔ</sup>dōnāy hitgārît*, "for she has opposed Yahweh" (vs. 24b) is echoed in *kî ʔ<sup>e</sup>l-ʔ<sup>a</sup>dōnāy zādāh*, "for she has acted insolently against Yahweh" (vs. 29b).

### Historical Background

Since there is no dateline, it seems impossible to specifically date the material of Jer 50-51. The MT designates, in the superscription (50:1) that governs the material, that chaps. 50-51 constitute a divine message given to Jeremiah.<sup>1</sup> These

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*heh<sup>e</sup>rim hah<sup>a</sup>rēm*, the verb plus the infinitive absolute, "devote them to utter destruction." See also Thompson, 738, n. 2, 3.

<sup>1</sup>In LXX, the reference to Jeremiah has been excised, and the abbreviated verse reads, "The word of Yahweh which he spoke concerning Babylon." Owing to this, some scholars have questioned the authenticity of the material. Rudolph, 279-298; Volz, *Der Prophet Jeremia*, 418, 419; idem, *Studien zum Text des Jeremia*, 324; Carroll, *Jeremia*, 815, 816; Giesebrecht, 243, 244, all reject authenticity. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 359, is more cautious, saying that "the majority of the poems are probably anonymous, and represent the sort of oracles that were uttered in prophetic circles during the Exilic period." Thompson, 731, continues in a similar vein, interjecting that it is impossible to decide what were the original poems, what is genuinely

messages deal mostly with Babylon. Jeremiah himself vehemently delivered oracles against Babylon and certainly expected its downfall.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, this becomes a dominant theme of the poems of chaps. 50-51.

### **Interpretation**

This section expresses the "great reversal"<sup>2</sup> of the fortunes of Babylon. In each section the Intervention, Yahweh's judgment of and the fall of Babylon, is introduced by a summons to battle. Yahweh commands the invading forces to destroy Babylon. Yet it is clear that while these are the agents of destruction, Yahweh Himself is behind this punitive action.<sup>3</sup>

The first intervention (vs. 21) is particularly caustic in its description of the unleashing of unrelenting judgment:

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Jeremianic and what is editorial comment, and what comprises anonymous oracles uttered in prophetic circles during the exilic period.

As such, it is generally agreed that the material was composed prior to the fall of Babylon to the Persians in 539 B.C. and may have actually come from a period earlier than 550 B.C. See Bright, *Jeremiah*, 360; Thompson, 732. Thompson adds that if the references to Nebuchadnezzar in 50:17 and 51:34 indicate that he was still alive, then Jer 50-51 are to be dated before 562 B.C., the date of Nebuchadnezzar's death.

<sup>1</sup>Jer 27:7, 29:10; 51:54-64.

<sup>2</sup>Christensen, 260, n. 109. He borrowed this phrase from Martin Kessler in a paper (presented in November 1969 at the Society of Biblical Literature) entitled, "Oracles Against the Nations: Jeremiah 50 and 51."

<sup>3</sup>Note the following texts:

*"I set a trap for you, O Babylon, and you were caught before you knew it"* (vs. 24a).  
*"The Lord has opened his arsenal and brought out the weapons of his wrath, for the Sovereign Lord Almighty has work to do in the land of the Chaldeans"* (vs. 25).

*Attack the land of Merathaim  
And those living in Pekod  
Slay and utterly destroy, says the Lord  
And do everything I command you.*

There is more than geographical location in the names Merathaim and Pekod.<sup>1</sup> There is a scorching wordplay. As Thompson shows, "The root *mrh* means 'to rebel', and the form of the word is a dual, meaning '(land of) double rebellion' or 'two-fold rebel', that is, 'rebel of rebels.'"<sup>2</sup> The root *pqd*, "to punish," points to Pekod, that is, the "land of doom."<sup>3</sup> Hence, the names correspond to what Babylon will experience when God's wrath is vented on her as her enemies attack her. Further, the call for complete destruction is nothing less than the ban, the talionic principle.<sup>4</sup>

The second Intervention (vss. 26-27) continues the stinging threat of judgment. In brilliant images, the poet declares Yahweh's open arsenal, the invading

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<sup>1</sup>Merathaim was likely the area/district of Mat Marratim at the head of the Persian Gulf at the confluence of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. It was called *nār marratu*, "bitter river." See W. S. LaSor, "Merathaim," *ISBE* (1986), 3:321.

Pekod refers to the Akkadian *Puqūdu* in Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian texts. It refers to one of the larger Aramean tribes that led a nomadic life but settled in Southeastern Babylonia between the lower Tigris and Elam by the 8th century B.C. See M. J. Horsnell, "Pekod," *ISBE* (1986), 3:736.

For both places consult further, J. Simons, *The Geographical and Topographical Texts of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E. J. Brill 1959), 451.

<sup>2</sup>Thompson, 741.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 354.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Deut 2:32; Josh 8:28; Judg 1:7. See also Christensen, 261, who describes it as devoting "Babylon to the sacred ban of Israel's most ancient holy war traditions." Cf. Patrick D. Miller, *Sin and Judgment in the Prophets: A Stylistic and Theological Analysis* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 94.

forces, tearing apart the enemy and laying waste the land. The metaphors are taken from the harvesting process, in that granaries bursting with produce are to be torn open and the precious grain spilled out in heaps. Her "bulls" (vs. 27), a metaphor for the Babylonian soldiers, the strong ones of the nation,<sup>1</sup> are to be slaughtered. The destruction is absolutely complete, such that there is no thread of anything left. No remnant (שׂרֵיט *ēriṭ*) will survive the disaster, so terrible it will be. Carroll comments correctly, "Such a reversal of the harvest is the *death* of a culture . . . . Yet how well the images of destroyed granaries convey the idea of a powerful and politically sated empire such as Babylon being overrun and devastated by invaders!"<sup>2</sup>

Babylon's destruction is seen as complete decimation. Not even a tiny fraction of the former whole must be left. Babylon must be totally and comprehensively overthrown so that the possibility of rejuvenation and rebuilding is eradicated. Such is the verdict of the final Intervention.<sup>3</sup>

Babylon's actions as a tyrannical imperium are made the grounds for her own defeat: *Repay her according to her deeds, do to her according to all she has done* (cf. vs. 15). The same mighty Babylon, who in her zenith of power as "the hammer of the whole earth" (vs. 23) had smashed the nations into subjugation, will suffer similar defeat. The completion of judgment is evident in that those expected to

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<sup>1</sup>Thompson, 742. The LXX varies the image *anaxērante pantas tous Karpous autēs*, "dry up all her fruits." This continues the harvesting metaphor of destroying the agricultural products of vs. 26.

<sup>2</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 830 (emphasis mine).

<sup>3</sup>For discussion of this, see below, 278-280, dealing with *pl*

277-281

be most resilient, young men and soldiers, will be destroyed (vss. 30-31). Indeed, the lack of survivors or escapees is highlighted in that the consuming fire of Yahweh's wrath will destroy "all who are around her" (vs. 32).

This absolute lack of a remnant is highlighted in that the Interventions share a "common emphasis on the totality of Babylon's destruction: it must be utterly destroyed (vs. 21), utterly destroyed without remainder (vs. 26), and with none escaping (vs. 29)."<sup>1</sup>

One may note that the reason for Yahweh's judgment, the Intervention, is solely because of Babylon's hubris described in the Situation--Babylon's past action against Yahweh--in vss. 24b and 29b. Both instances function as indictments and are introduced by the particle *kî*, "because." In her bid for world domination, Babylon "engaged in a contest"<sup>2</sup> (vs. 24b) with Yahweh and acted in proud defiance of His authority (vs. 29b).<sup>3</sup> In fact, the force of Babylon's absolute reprehensible blasphemy of arrogantly disregarding God is captured in the noun *zādôn* in vss. 31, 32. Here, "Babylon is apostrophized as 'insolence' personified."<sup>4</sup> "Insolence" is

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<sup>1</sup>Aitken, 38.

<sup>2</sup>MT *hitgārit*, "engage in a contest," "oppose," "challenge." This is the only appearance of the root *grh* in the book of Jeremiah.

<sup>3</sup>This is the only occurrence in Jeremiah of the verb *zûd*. Its only other occurrence is the qal stem in an obscure text in Exod 18:11. So Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 419. Hence, its precise connotation here is difficult to determine. The noun derivative, however, is found in Jer 49:16 and 50:31-32. The verb carries the idea of "insolence," "arrogance," "presumption," "hubris."

<sup>4</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 355. He translates *zādôn* as "Sir Pride." Josef Scharbert, "zûdh," *TDOT* (1980), 4:46-51, indicates that the word points to a foreign power that arrogates to itself rights over Israel or Yahweh as Israel's protector to

therefore to be cauterized with no hope of being rejuvenated. Because of her overweening pride, Yahweh's judgment renders Babylon to be destroyed without leaving a trace of life, even a remnant.

Aitken's summary is acceptable:<sup>1</sup>

Intervention	-	Situation
The advent of the foe and destruction of the remnant	-	is motivated by Babylon's rebellion against God in proud defiance of his authority in its bid for world dominion.

### Derivatives of *mlt*

Jer 46:3-12

#### Translation and Textual Considerations

- (3) Prepare buckler and shield!  
advance to battle!  
(4) Harness the horses!  
mount the stallions!<sup>2</sup>  
Stand firm with helmets!  
Polish the spears/lances!<sup>3</sup>  
Put on armor/coats of mail!

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which it is not entitled.

<sup>1</sup>Aitken, 39. The issue of the "Outcome" in vs. 28 is considered in the following chapter dealing with "The Remnant Motif in the Context of Salvation."

<sup>2</sup>*Pārāš* means "horse" as well as "horseman." LXX lacks "and" (which is present in MT) and this provides a stronger staccato effect to the commands of the Egyptian officers. See too Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 762.

<sup>3</sup>MT, *mirqû hār māhîm*, "polish the lances," is read by LXX, *probalet ta dorata*, "advance the spears." Rudolph, 266, following Arnold B. Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel: textkritisches, sprachliches und sachliches. IV Jesaja, Jeremia* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1912), 352, 353, reads *hērîqû*, "empty." BHS followed by Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 315, suggest reading *hārîqû*, "uncover, draw, unsheath" your lances.

(5) What do I see?<sup>1</sup>

They are terrified; they shrink back.

Their warriors are beaten down; they flee pell-mell<sup>2</sup>

They do not look back

Terror on every side,

says the Lord.

(6) *Let not the swift run away/ The swift cannot flee.*<sup>3</sup>

*Let not the swift escape [yimmālēt]/ The warrior cannot escape [yimmālēt]*

*In the north by the river<sup>4</sup> Euphrates*

*They have stumbled and fallen.*

(7) Who is this that rises like the Nile?

like rivers whose waters surge?

(8) Egypt rises like the Nile;

like rivers whose waters surge.<sup>5</sup>

He said, "I will rise. I will cover the earth.

I will destroy city and its inhabitants.

(9) Charge, you horses! Run, as if mad, you chariots!

Go forward, O warrior!<sup>6</sup>

Cush and Put,<sup>7</sup> bearers of a shield

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<sup>1</sup>This is absent in LXX. Janzen, 109, explains it as a "simple scribal lapse."

<sup>2</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 301. MT *ûmânôs nāsû*, lit. "and the fleeing, they flee." Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to Its Techniques*, JSOT Supplement Series 26 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 380, n. 57, reads this with an enclitic *mem*, followed by infinitive absolute with finite verb. Hence, *nôs nāsû*, "really fleeing." Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 320, following *BDB*, 631, interprets the noun as a cognate accusative, thus, "they have fled a fleeing."

<sup>3</sup>The use of the jussive <sup>3</sup>*al-yânûs* expresses the conviction that something cannot happen. Hence, "the swift cannot flee." E. Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 2d English ed., revised in accordance with the 28th German ed. (1909) by A. E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 107 p. (Hereafter cited as CK.)

<sup>4</sup>LXX omits "river." *BHS* deletes it. Janzen, 58, sees it as an addition.

<sup>5</sup>*BHS* suggests that this is an addition. LXX lacks part of the line and also "city" in the next line.

<sup>6</sup>LXX reads *exelthate*, "go forth."

<sup>7</sup>LXX *Libues*, "Libyans."

Lud, bearers of, benders of, a bow.<sup>1</sup>

(10) That day belongs to the Lord God of Hosts<sup>2</sup>

A day of vengeance, to avenge himself of his foes.

The sword<sup>3</sup> shall devour and be sated,

And drink its fill of their blood.

For the Lord God of Hosts holds a sacrifice in the north land by the Euphrates river.

(11) Go up to Gilead and take balm, O virgin daughter, Egypt

In vain you have multiplied remedies

There is no healing for you.

(12) The nations have heard of your shame<sup>4</sup>

And the earth is filled with your wails

For warrior has stumbled against warrior;

They have both fallen together.

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<sup>1</sup>MT reads *tōpsē dōrkē qāšet*, lit. "handlers of, benders of the bow." The first word occurs in the preceding line (*tōpsē māgēn*, "handlers of the shield"), and may very well be repeated for emphasis here. Most commentators see it as redundant and delete it. Cf. *BHS*. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 302, offers a dynamic translation, "good shots with the bow."

<sup>2</sup>LXX lacks "of hosts."

<sup>3</sup>MT reads *hereb*, but *BHS* suggests reading *harbō*, "his sword." LXX reads *hē machaira kuriou*, "the sword of the Lord."

<sup>4</sup>LXX *phōnēn sou*, "your voice," which is the equivalent of *BHS*' suggested *qōlēk*. This is so because it appears not to match with *w'siwhātēk*, "your outcry" in the following line. Some exegetes suggest that there was a noun *qālōn*, which developed from *qōl*, "voice," with affirmative (*ā*)n. In late medieval and modern Hebrew *qōlān* means, "a crier, one who makes a loud noise." See Watson, 382; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 302.

## Structure

This poem of 46:3-12<sup>1</sup> is sandwiched between two prose sections, vss. 1-2 and vs. 13, which indicate its limits.<sup>2</sup>

The unit may be divided into three sections:<sup>3</sup>

1. Vss. 3-4 with seven masculine plural imperatives:

- a. 3a <sup>c</sup>*irkû māgēn wʿšinnāh*, "Prepare buckler and shield"
- b. 3b <sup>u</sup>*gšû lammilhāmāh*, "Advance to battle"
- c. 4a <sup>ʔ</sup>*isrû hassûsim*, "Harness the horses"
- d. 4b *wa*<sup>c</sup>*alû happārāšim*, "Mount the stallions"
- e. 4c *wʿhityasš*<sup>c</sup>*bû bʿkôbā*<sup>c</sup>*im*, "Stand firm with helmets"

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<sup>1</sup>Commentators generally agree that this poem was composed by Jeremiah. Hyatt, "*Jeremiah*," 1105 remarks, "This oracle has greater claim to authenticity than any other in the collection." Bright, *Jeremiah*, 308, claims, "The poem seems unquestionably to come from Jeremiah himself and is, for vividness and poetic quality, unexcelled by anything in the book."

<sup>2</sup>Watson, 379.

<sup>3</sup>Other exegetes have proposed different structures. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 316, 317, says that the poem falls into two halves: vss. 3-8 (addressed to the Babylonians) and vss. 9-12 (addressed to the Egyptians). He ignores certain details and it is not convincing that the addresses are to be divided. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 764, suggests a threefold division: (1) vss. 3-6: summary of the battle; (2) vss. 7-9: further description of the battle; (3) vss. 10-12: an explanation of the battle. He gives no clues from the text itself for those conclusions. Watson, 379-383, analyzes each colon (having counted 45), organizing them into seven stanzas. He pays so much attention to detail that he falls prey to what John G. Snaith describes as concentrating "too much on detailed interpretation of words and phrases without taking a step back to view the structure of the poem as a whole." See John G. Snaith, "Literary Criticism and Historical Investigation in Jeremiah Chapter XLVI," *JSS* 16 (1971): 15. Snaith, 23, also proposes a tripartite structure: vss. 3-6; 7-10; 11-12. He bases this on the echo of words in vss. 6, 10, and 12.

f. 4d *mirqû hār<sup>f</sup>māhîm*, "Polish the spears"

g. 4e *libšû hassiryônôt*, "Put on armor"

(Further, "the *-t* ending of the last word (*hassiryônôt*) breaks the succession of *-im* terminations, providing a surprising effect, perhaps to mark a minor structural deviation."<sup>1</sup>)

2. Vss. 5-8 which are characterized by a double Question/Answer sequence:

a. Question (vs. 5a): *maddû<sup>c</sup>a rā<sup>ᶜ</sup>îîf*, "What do I see?"

b. Answer (vss. 5b-6)

c. Question (vs. 7) *mî-zeh . . . ?* "Who is this?"

d. Answer (vs. 8)

3. Vss. 9-12, characterized by the resumption of the imperatives followed by a statement. This may be divided into two parts based on the key word *<sup>c</sup>lh*, "to go up, rise":

a. Vs. 9, Introduced by *<sup>c</sup>alû* (masc plu impv): "Advance/Charge."

Vs. 10: Statement concerning the Lord's action

b. Vs. 11, Introduced by *<sup>c</sup>alî* (fem sg impv): "Go up."

Vs. 12: Statement concerning the plight of Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Watson, 380.

<sup>2</sup>The entire poem is unified by the repetition of several keywords. The most frequent is based on the root *<sup>c</sup>lh*, "to go up": "mount" (vs. 4), "rising" (vs. 7, 8a), "I will rise" (vs. 8b), "advance/charge" (vs. 9), "go up" (vs. 11a), "healing" (vs. 11b). Other keywords that have the same unifying function are *gibbôr*, "warrior" (vss. 5, 6, 9, 12) and *<sup>ᶜ</sup>eres*, "earth" (vss. 8, 10, 12). Cf. Watson, 383.

## Historical Background

Jer 46:2 gives a precise time line for the setting of this oracle:

*About Egypt: Concerning the army of Pharaoh Necho, King of Egypt, which was at Carchemish on the river Euphrates when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon defeated (it) in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah.*

This points to the late spring or early summer of 605 B.C. when the Babylonians crushed the Egyptian forces and effectively curtailed Egyptian control of Palestine. Babylon became the established power.<sup>1</sup>

## Interpretation

This entire oracle is characterized as a taunt song, mocking Egypt, whose army is destroyed.<sup>2</sup> In the first section (vss. 3-4), the Egyptian officers are barking orders, readying the troops for battle.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Bright, *A History of Israel*, 324-326; Ronald Youngblood, "Carchemish," *ISBE* (1979), 1:616-617; Cyrus H. Gordon, "Carchemish," *IDB* (1962), 1:536; Kenneth A. Kitchen, "Neco," *ISBE* (1986), 3:510; John A. Wilson, "Neco," *IDB* (1962), 3:530-532; Wiseman, 66-69.

It is also claimed that Nebuchadnezzar never came as far north as Carchemish in 605 B.C. See Artur Weiser, *Das Buch des Propheten Jeremia* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955), 390.

<sup>2</sup>A. Joseph Everson, "The Days of Yahweh," *JBL* 93 (1974): 334. See also Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 317, who claims that the mockery is achieved by: sudden transitions; ambiguity in vss. 4 and 9 in which commands shift from a summons to battle (vss. 3-4) to what may be a summons to battle but which can equally be a summons to flight (vs. 9), to a summons to seek medical help (vs. 11); by ironic questions (vss. 5, 7); by contrast between Egypt's boast (vs. 8) and her wailing (vs. 11); and the emphatic "in vain" in vs. 11.

<sup>3</sup>In vs. 3ab the repeated final *-āh* sound (*w<sup>c</sup>sinnāh*, "shield" [3a] and *lammilhāmāh*, "to battle" [3b]) creates end-rhyme, according to Watson, 380. This is one of the many poetic features that has led Thompson, 688, to exclaim, "The poetry is among the most vivid in all the OT and is certainly unsurpassed in the book of

The sharpness of the commands has a high intensity, particularly in vs. 4 where the charioteers and infantry are readied:

*Harness horses! Riders mount! Fall in with helmets! Whet lances! Put on full armor!*<sup>1</sup>

The sharp staccato, two-beat, which continues to the end of vs. 6, evokes the rhythm of war, a call to battle.<sup>2</sup>

The second section (vss. 5-8) is introduced by the dramatic interrogative, "What do I see?" This is a "sudden transition"<sup>3</sup> because the poet breaks off from his use of imperatives to describe the defeat of the Egyptian army with considerable astonishment. The first sequence (vss. 5-6) depicts a scene of abject terror as demoralized troops flee in disarray and confusion. MT substantive *ûmānôs nāsû*, "and the fleeing they flee," suggests that they are looking for a place of refuge, for escape.<sup>4</sup> But there is no safety:

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Jeremiah."

<sup>1</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 301, offers this colorful reading, noting poetic devices like synonymous parallelism in vs. 4a and triple parallelism in vs. 4 cde. Cf. Watson, 380.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Bach, *Die Aufforderungen zur Flucht und zum Kampf im alttestamentlichen Prophetenspruch*, WMANT 9 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1962), 51, 63.

<sup>3</sup>Snaith, 22. Owing to this phenomenon some exegetes have rearranged the order of the verses. See Condamin, 296-301; idem, "Transpositions Accidentelles (1): Jérémie 46, 3-12," *RB* 12 (1903): 419-412; Johann Konrad Zenner, "Ein Beispiel 'Kolumnenweiser Verschreibung,'" *BZ* 3 (1905): 122-127; H. Bardtke, "Jeremia der Fremdvölkerprophet," *ZAW* 53 (1935): 230.

<sup>4</sup>CK, 117q indicates that the substantive is grammatically possible. The noun *mānôs* is used elsewhere as a "place of refuge." Cf. Jer 25:35; Amos 2:14; 1 Sam 22:3; Job 11:20; Pss 59:17; 142:5.

*They are dismayed and have turned backward  
Their warriors are beaten down and have fled hastily (for refuge).<sup>1</sup>*

The sequence of events describe: *fear--retreat--defeat--flight.*<sup>2</sup>

Vs. 6ab is a couplet in perfect parallelism:

*The swift cannot flee! The warrior cannot escape.*<sup>3</sup>

The other two couplets are in vertical parallelism:<sup>4</sup>

*Up north, by Euphrates river  
They have stumbled and fallen.*

These poetic devices indicate the absoluteness of the judgment on Egypt. Those who are expected to be the most likely to escape, the swift and the warrior, are not able to do so. In fact, there is no escapee, no survivor, no remnant. The lines in vertical parallelism strengthen this, and the inevitable end is that they stumble and fall in defeat.

Vs. 6 also shows a striking contrast with vs. 5. Whereas in vs. 5 they are searching for a place of safety, in vs. 6 this is made completely impossible. Hence, the absoluteness of the judgment described in the sequence of events in vs. 5, *fear--*

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<sup>1</sup>These two lines in vs. 5 are parallel. Note also the assonance: the repeated *ā-ō* sequence <sup>2</sup>*āḥôr, mănôs, māgôr*; the sequence of doubled consonants *hemmāh, ḥattīm, gibborēhem, yukkattû*; the sequence *n-s* : *n<sup>c</sup>sōgīm, mănôs nāsû*.

<sup>2</sup>Watson, 380 (emphasis mine).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 381.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. By "vertical parallelism," Watson, 158, means that "the correspondence between components is up and down rather than across as is the norm." Schematically, the two lines may be set out as follows:

a - up north	b - by Euphrates river
a <sup>1</sup> - they have stumbled	b <sup>1</sup> - they have fallen.

*retreat--defeat--flight*, is compounded by a sense of finality in the sequence of events in vs. 6: *no flight--no escape--stumbling--falling*. Therefore, life is cut off and hope for the future becomes nonexistent.

The second sequence, vss. 7-8, the metaphor of the surging Nile, is used to describe Egypt's hubristic pursuit of conquest and world domination.<sup>1</sup> The metaphor also hints at a sense of tension by leaving something unsaid: if the Nile rises, then it also falls.

In the third section (vss. 9-12), introduced by the imperative <sup>Calû</sup>, "advance/ charge," the two-beat "battle" rhythm returns. Mercenary troops, experts in warfare, from Cush, Put, and Lud<sup>2</sup> are ordered to the front lines to wage war

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<sup>1</sup>Some commentators claim that behind the surging waters is an allusion to the waters of chaos, which was a familiar notion to many nations in the ancient Near East. So Bright, *Jeremiah*, 306; Christiansen, 218. Herbert G. May, "Some Cosmic Connotations of MAYIM RABBIM, 'many waters,'" *JBL* 74 (1955): 16, 19. He says, "Although the imagery of the inundation of the Nile is present, the "rivers" (*nehârôth*) suggest the insurgent waters and the figure becomes that of creation completely engulfed by the waters, as in the flood of Noah."

<sup>2</sup>Cush refers to the region of the Nile south of Egypt proper, generally associated with Nubia or Sudan. It is called Ethiopia. See W. L. LaSor, "Cush," *ISBE* (1979), 1:838-839; S. Cohen, "Cush," *IDB* (1962), 1:751.

Put was widely held to be "Punt" in Somaliland. This has been dropped in light of the fact that the LXX regularly translates Hebrew *Pûr* with *Libues*, "Libyans." The exact location of the place is still not confirmed. See Thomas O. Lambdin, "Put," *IDB* (1962), 3: 971; W. L. LaSor, "Put," *ISBE* (1986), 3:1059.

Lud is understood in two ways: (1) Lydia in Asia Minor, since Lydian mercenaries were present in Egypt ever since Psamtik I (633-609 B.C.) was assisted by King Gyges of Lybia to resist Ashurbauipal's domination. So W. L. LaSor, "Lud," *ISBE* (1986), 3:178. (2) Thompson, 689 suggests that if *Lûdîm* is emended to *Lûbîm* then we may read "Lybians" as in Nah 3:9 where Put and the Libyans are allied with Cush and Egypt. See also David W. Baker, "Lud," *ABD* (1992), 4:397.

Despite the difficulty in exactly pinpointing these nations, they are described in the prophets as warrior nations. Cf. Isa 66:19; Ezek 27:10; Nah 3:9.

against Egypt.<sup>1</sup> Defeat is certain, for Yahweh Himself is the real enemy (vs. 10). In this statement of Yahweh's action, He confronts Egypt on "that day" (*hayyôm hahû*<sup>2</sup>), the equivalent to the "Day of the Lord,"<sup>2</sup> which is synonymous with judgment and defeat. This is strengthened by the further expression *yôm n'kāmāh l'hinnākēm miššārāyw*<sup>3</sup> "a Day of Vengeance to avenge himself on his foes." Hence, the Babylonian defeat of the Egyptians at Carchemish is seen as Yahweh's triumph over His adversaries. Thus the confident march of the Egyptian army becomes a scene of ritual slaughter, where Yahweh's sword is sated. There is no hope for the Egyptians. In describing the defeat at Carchemish in the north,<sup>4</sup> as the day of the Lord/day of vengeance, "the poem domesticates international affairs in terms of Judean religious matters."<sup>5</sup>

Vss. 11-12 give the stunning climax. Again, the imperatives return (vs. 11), this time in the feminine singular form. In vs. 11, two poetic devices indicate the usefulness of this phenomenon: (1) the rootplay between <sup>c</sup>*lî*, "go up", and

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<sup>1</sup>Watson, 382, notes that the repeated *-u-* sound as in <sup>c</sup>*lû*, *hassûsim*, *w'hithôlû* is intentional assonance.

<sup>2</sup>von Rad, "'Day' in the OT," 946.

<sup>3</sup>There is an element of wordplay on *miššārāyw*, "on his foes." in this oracle about *mišrāyim*, "Egypt," though Egypt is not mentioned. See Watson, 382.

<sup>4</sup>This notion of the "North" is often interpreted in a symbolic or mythical way. See Childs, 187-198. However, as the river Euphrates is specifically mentioned, and it is certainly geographically north whether the poem was written in Palestine or Egypt, it seems better to consider the "north" in its literal, geographical sense. Cf. Snaith, 24, 25.

<sup>5</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 764. Cf. Isa 34:4-5, Ezek 39:17-20, and Zeph 1:7 for similar motifs.

*gil<sup>c</sup>ād*, "Gilead," followed by (2) the pun *š<sup>r</sup>ri*, "balmsams," and *misrayîm*, "Egypt." Both instances are for the purpose of mockery.<sup>1</sup> Gilead was renowned for its healing medicines, and Egyptian skill in medicine was wellknown in the ancient world,<sup>2</sup> "but Egypt's afflictions cannot be cured by medicine, however precious the medicine and however skillfully it be used."<sup>3</sup> This ironic imagery of healing is reinforced by the play on the root <sup>c</sup>*lh* in the expression *l<sup>c</sup>ālāh ᵑēn lāk*, "no healing for you" (vs. 11b), in that the noun *l<sup>c</sup>ālāh* is used of the fresh skin or healthy tissue that grows over a wound when it heals.<sup>4</sup> But there is nothing fresh to cover the wounds here. They remain open and putrified, and the foul stench of death hangs in the air.

The statement of vs. 12 gives the final crunching effect of Yahweh's action. Egypt's personification as a wailing virgin now stands in bold relief to her boastful personification as a conquering king (vs. 8). The last two lines of the poem are reminiscent of vs. 6 where the imagery of total defeat and lack of a remnant comes to the fore:

*warrior stumbled (kšl) over warrior;  
together the two of them fell (npl).*<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Watson, 382, 383.

<sup>2</sup>Snaith, 17, citing *Herodotus II. 84; III. 129* and Homer, *Odyssey IV, 112-232*.

<sup>3</sup>Snaith, 17.

<sup>4</sup>*CHAL*, 393; *BDB*, 752.

<sup>5</sup>Snaith, 23, shows how the following expressions echo each other: *sāpônāh ᵑal: yad n<sup>r</sup>har-p<sup>r</sup>rāt kāš<sup>r</sup>lū w<sup>r</sup>nāpālū*, "in the north by the river Euphrates they stumbled and fell" (vs. 6); *b<sup>r</sup>ᵑeres sāpôn ᵑel-n<sup>r</sup>har-p<sup>r</sup>rāt*, "in the land of the north, by the river Euphrates" (vs. 10); *kāšālū yahdāyw nāp<sup>r</sup>lū š<sup>r</sup>nēhem*, "they stumbled

This poem depicts the carnage of Egypt's defeat. The first section (vss. 3-4) concerns military preparations of the Egyptian fighting forces. The second (vss. 5-8) is characterized by a "sudden transition" from preparation to defeat. The rout is so complete that there is no survivor or escapee, only stumbling and falling in defeat. In the final section (vss. 9-12), there is discussed behind the battle a top-level contest between Yahweh and Pharaoh, which leads to Yahweh's triumph expressed in the imagery of the "Day of the Lord." Egypt's defeat is described in mocking images of a lack of healing, a wailing virgin, and the stumbling/falling of its warriors. The effect is the same as that of section two: no survivor, escapee, or remnant.<sup>1</sup>

#### Jer 48:6-9

#### Translation and Textual Considerations

(6) *Flee! Escape [māl'ṭû] for your lives!  
And you will be like Aroer in the desert.*<sup>2</sup>

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together, the two of them fell" (vs. 12).

<sup>1</sup>In this passage no hope is held out for Egypt. However, this does not mean that judgment against this nation is absolutely final since vs. 26 allows for a hint of hope as expressed in the statement, "And afterward it (Egypt) shall be inhabited, as in days of old," says the Lord.

<sup>2</sup>MT *w'ṭihyeynāh*, "and you will be," feminine plural (*hyh*) is odd since the noun *naphš'kem*, "your life," is a singular noun with a masculine plural possessor. It is used here, however, as a singular collective ("your lives"). But if the verb is understood as a second masculine plural with the energetic ending, then it makes sense. So Bright, *Jeremiah*, 314.

Rudolph, 254, and *BHS* read the verb as *w'ṭah'nû*, "and encamp" (in the desert). But <sup>c</sup>*rō'ēr* remains questionable. Some of the options include: (1) In Isa 15:5b, a text almost identical to Jer 48:5, the verb *y'<sup>c</sup>ō<sup>c</sup>ērû*, "they raise a cry," is present. Hence, it is believed that some corrupted variant of *y'<sup>c</sup>ō<sup>c</sup>ērû* is present in Jer 48:6. (2) LXX reads *hōsper onos agrios*, "like a wild ass," which is equal to

- (7) For because of your trust in your works and in your treasures<sup>1</sup>  
 You too will be captured  
 And Chemosh will go into exile  
 His priests and his princes together.  
 (8) *And a destroyer shall come upon every city  
 and no city<sup>2</sup> shall escape [timmālēt].  
 The valley shall perish  
 the plain shall be destroyed  
 as<sup>3</sup> Yahweh has said.*  
 (9) Provide salt<sup>4</sup> for Moab  
 She shall surely collapse in ruins<sup>5</sup>  
 And her cities shall become waste places  
 With no one dwelling in them.

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*BHS*' suggested reading of <sup>c</sup>ārōd, "wild ass." (3) Others like Duhm, 346, and Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 341, read <sup>c</sup>ar<sup>c</sup>ār, some kind of a desert shrub or a juniper. (4) Christensen, 234, 238, and Rudolph, 254, delete the word.

<sup>1</sup>LXX reads *en ochurōmasin sou*, "in your strongholds." For variants see Janzen, 19, 20, who thinks that, while odd, *ma<sup>c</sup>āsayik* is likely if "it is a very general term for what one makes to defend oneself ('works')." "

<sup>2</sup>LXX lacks this second occurrence of "city."

<sup>3</sup>*BHS* and Rudolph, 254, suggest that <sup>a</sup>šer, "as," is a dittography and should be deleted.

<sup>4</sup>LXX reads *sēmeia*, "signs," for MT *šš*, which suggests *šiyūn*, "grave-marker" according to *BHS*, citing 2 Kgs 23:17. However, William L. Moran, "Ugaritic *ššūma* and Hebrew *šš* (Eccles 43,19; Jer. 48,9)," *Biblica* 39 (1958): 69-71, has argued convincingly on the basis of Ugaritic glosses in Akkadian texts for the meaning of "salt."

<sup>5</sup>MT *nāsō<sup>2</sup> tēsē<sup>2</sup>* may be a wordplay where two verbs, *nsh*, "collapse in ruins" and *ys<sup>2</sup>*, "go out," are combined. There are two possibilities here: (1) read *yāsō<sup>2</sup> tēsē<sup>2</sup>* (root *ys<sup>2</sup>*)--where the infinitive absolute precedes the imperfect verb and translate, "she will surely surrender." The verb *ys<sup>2</sup>* is used in this way in 1 Sam 11:3 and Isa 36:6. Cf. *yāsō<sup>2</sup> tēsē<sup>2</sup>* in Jer 38:17. See also Moran, 71; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 342. (2) Sometimes a final *yodh* and final *he* are interchangeable, so that *nāsō<sup>2</sup> tēsē<sup>2</sup>* may be another way of writing *nāsōh tisseh* (from *nsh*, "to fall in ruins"), and translate as has been done, "she shall surely fall in ruins." See *BHS*, Rudolph, 275, and Thompson, 700, n. 10; Bright, *Jeremiah*. 314. LXX reads *haphē anaphthēsetai*, "kindling she shall be kindled," following the root *yst*.

## Structure

This oracle of judgment against Moab is second only to that against Babylon (chaps. 50-51) in length.<sup>1</sup> It is generally seen as a single literary unit consisting of a series of poems (interspersed with prose comments)<sup>2</sup> characterized by "distinct forms of prophetic speech, including summons to flight, summons to mourn, prophetic laments, announcements of judgment, and oracles of doom."<sup>3</sup> The chapter is divided into two large segments: (1) vss. 1-28, consisting of material found only here; and (2) vss. 29-47, dealing with materials concerning Moab found elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cornill, 462, refers to its unusual length as "monstrous." It takes up more space than the oracles to all the other small nations combined (Philistines, Ammonites, Edom, Syria, Kedar and Elam). Even Egypt is not so heavily considered. Why this is so is anyone's guess. Since so little is known of Moab and its history, Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 781, is correct in his evaluation that "it is but speculation to suppose a special relationship existed between Judah and Moab which might have yielded so much material."

<sup>2</sup>These prose sections are: vss. 10, 13, 21-24, and 26-27.

<sup>3</sup>Christensen, 242.

<sup>4</sup>See especially Isa 15-16; 24:17-18 and Num 24-17; 21-28-29. A. S. Peake, *Jeremiah*, The New-Century Bible (New York: Henry Frowde, 1911), 235, comments, "(Jeremiah 48:29-38) is almost entirely derived from Isaiah XV, XVI, and is not an improvement on the original." But Bright, *Jeremiah*, 322, explains that this does not mean that vss. 29-47 are dependent on Isaiah but indicate that these were anonymous sayings which the followers of both prophets treasured, and were therefore included in both books. For an analysis of the literary history of the chapter see Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 346-349. Christensen, 242, concludes on this matter that "this chapter is a collection of these various anti-Moab traditions, editorially arranged in a manner that defies specific historical analysis in matters of detail."

There is no scholarly consensus regarding the actual number of individual poems or the neat divisions between the poems.<sup>1</sup>

For the purposes here, this summons to flee from and destroy Moab, vss. 6-9, is a single poem bracketed by second-person plural imperatives: *nusû*, "flee"; *malʿû*, "escape/save yourselves" (vs. 6); and *ʿnû*, "give" (vs. 9). The unit may be divided as follows:

1. Summons to flee (introduced by the imperatives- vs. 6)
2. Reason for the summons to flee, introduced by *kî* (vss. 7-8)
3. Summons to destroy Moab, introduced by the imperative, followed by *kî* (vs. 9).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 313-319, has five divisions: vss. 1-10; 11-17; 18-28; 29-39; 40-47; Thompson, 699-713, follows this pattern. Rudolph, 257-262, has six sections: vss. 1-10; 11-17; 18-28; 29-39; 40-42 and 43-46; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 349-351, has eight sections: vss. 1-4; 6-9; 11-12; 14-17; 18-20, 25; 28 & 38b; 39-40a, 41a, 42; 43-44a & 45a & 44b. (He does not include the prose sections.) H. Bardtke, "Jeremia der Fremdvölkerprophet, 2" *ZAW* 54 (1936): 240-249, has three sections: vss. 1-13; 14-27, and 28-47. Christensen, 240-241, has nine sections: vss. 1-5; 6-8; 9-10; 11-16; 17-19; 20-27; 28; 29-36, and 37-44. With minor variations, I am closer to this last position.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Christensen, 240, 244; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 350, 351. The word *kî* binds the latter two sections. Note also that the prose section (vs. 10 which, according to Christensen, 242, may reflect an underlying poetic original) cuts off the use of the imperatives, and therefore stands alone.

## Historical Background

Scholarship agrees that the precise historical setting for this prophecy is difficult.<sup>1</sup> This is further compounded since relatively little is known of Moab and its history.<sup>2</sup>

There are two occasions during Jeremiah's career when the affairs of Moab and Judah met and may have occasioned an oracle against Moab. The first was when Moab (like Judah) submitted to the Babylonians when Nebuchadnezzar marched into Palestine after defeating the Egyptians at the Battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C. However, when Jehoiakim led Judah in revolt (ca. 600-598 B.C.), Moab remained loyal to Babylon and even sent mercenaries to assist the Babylonians against Judah.<sup>3</sup> The second was when Moab, along with other nations, was represented at a conference in Jerusalem (ca. 594 B.C.) called by Zedekiah, to form a league to rebel against Babylon.<sup>4</sup> Nothing came of this plot.

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<sup>1</sup>Christensen, 242; Thompson, 701; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 322. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 781, comments correctly, "The poems of 48 reflect much of the history of Moab without being specific to the point of describing actual events." He adds later, 785, that the shadow of 589 B.C. hangs over the poem, and in fact, all the oracles against the nations.

<sup>2</sup>For surveys see A. H. van Zyl, *The Moabites* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960); Patrick D. Miller, "Moab," *ISBE* (1986), 3:389-398; J. Maxwell Miller, "Moab," *ABD* (1992), 4:882-893; E. D. Grohman, "Moab," *IDB* (1962), 3:409-419; James R. Kautz, "Tracking the Ancient Moabites," *BA* 44 (1981): 27-35; James A. Sauer, "Transjordan in the Bronze and Iron Ages: A Critique of Glueck's Synthesis," *BASOR* 263 (1986): 1-26.

<sup>3</sup>See 2 Kgs 24:2.

<sup>4</sup>Jer 27:1-11. Bardtke, "Jeremia der Fremdvölkerprophet, 2," 242, says that the historical background of Jer 48 (and 49:1-6) was the period of political expansion of Judah from 622 to ca. 617 B.C. under Josiah's rule (ca. 628-609 B.C.).

Despite the difficulty in pinpointing the exact setting, the oracle of judgment against Moab portends dire catastrophe. Indeed:

The end of Moab as an independent nation seems to have come in 582 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar . . . marched against Moab and Ammon. In the same year a third deportation from Judah took place (52:30). . . . We should probably view this prophecy in Jeremiah 48 as having relevance to these years.<sup>1</sup>

### Interpretation

Following the lament over Moab (vss. 1-5), a summons to flight is announced (vs. 6). The opening imperatives (flee! escape!) mark the urgency of the matter. If there is to be any preservation of life, any hope for a future, in short, a remnant, then this action must be taken.<sup>2</sup> The point here is that the remnant motif comes to the fore in the face of threat to life. It is a matter of life and death.

MT seems to have a reference to *Aroer*, an ancient fortified settlement perched on the norther rim of Wadi el-Mujib, or the river Arnon.<sup>3</sup> The physical,

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<sup>1</sup>Thompson, 701, relying of Josephus *Antiquities* X. 9. 7. This is counter to W. F. Albright who has put forward that the "Moabite dirge" of Isa 15-16 and Jer 48 took place around 650 B.C. when Arab hordes flooded eastern Syria and Palestine, effecting the decimation of the Moabite state. See his review of R. H. Pfeiffer's, *Introduction to the Old Testament* in *JBL* 61 (1942): 119. He adds that the poem of Jer 48 was composed after the death of Josiah and before the birth of Jeremiah.

<sup>2</sup>Hasel, "*Pālat*," 595, has noted the parallel use of *nūs*, "to flee," and *mlt* in denoting the remnant motif.

<sup>3</sup>Deut 2:36 speaks of "Aroer which is on the edge of the valley Arnon." Aroer is linked to a small Arab village named <sup>c</sup>Ara<sup>c</sup>ir, located about three miles SE of Dhiban (biblical Dibon). Excavations showed occupation from ca. 2250 B.C. until the 3rd century A.D., although the site was not occupied continuously throughout this period. For example, there is an occupational gap during the Middle Bronze Age, but evidence shows up for the Late Bronze and Iron Ages. The most important find was a fortress whose construction is attributed to King Mesha, and occupied an area of 50 square meters. See E. Olávarri, "Sondages Aroer sur l' Arnon," *RB* 72 (1965): 77-

geographical reference seems to be intended here (and not a metaphysical use), given such use of the wide collection of place names found in the oracle,<sup>1</sup> and of Aroer in particular in vs. 19. It means, therefore, "that only a place that stood isolated in the wilderness could hope to survive."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the chance for survival appeared quite dismal.

Vss. 7-8 give the reasons for the summons to flee: hubristic trust in its wealth and devotion to false deity (vs. 7) and imminent destruction (vs. 8). The shift in the address from the second-person plural (vs. 6) to the second-person singular feminine is deliberate, denoting that Moab as a whole is in view here.

Moab trusted in her works and her wealth,<sup>3</sup> but these offered no protection against her enemies. The extent of this is that the whole religious system will break

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94; idem, "Fouilles à 'Arô'er sur L'Arnon," *RB* 76 (1969): 230-259; idem, "Aroer," in *The Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, ed. Michael Avi-Yonah (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1975), 99-100; Emilio Olívarri-Goicoechea, "Aroer (in Moab)," *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, ed. Ephraim Stern (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 1:92-93; Gerald L. Mattingly, "Aroer," *ABD* (1992), 1:399-400; William G. Dever, "Aroer," *IDB Sup* (1976), 55; Ram Gophna, "The Intermediate Bronze Age," in *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, ed. Ammon Ben-Tor, trans. R. Greenberg (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 137.

<sup>1</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 781, says that a remarkable feature of this oracle is the number of place names "which make it almost an atlas of Moabite territory."

<sup>2</sup>Thompson, 703. This seems to be the most reasonable understanding. If the emendation of Duhm and Holladay is accepted, then the news is equally grim: the juniper survives in the desert only as a low shrub. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 357, says, "For the lives of refugees to be so stunted is hardly to be living at all." LXX, "like a wild ass" does not appear to make much sense here.

<sup>3</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 357, feels that this includes all kinds of supplies, not only gold and silver, but weapons as well.

down: Chemosh,<sup>1</sup> the national god of the Moabites, and his priests and officials will prove powerless and inefficient to help or protect in this time of peril.

Vs. 8 announces the complete destruction of Moabite territory. This depiction of Moab's ruin is significant in that it contradicts the summons to flee in that "no city shall escape." This reversal of events signals the death blow in that the chance for survival, for a remnant, is now cut off. The extent of this is seen in that Moab, a place of valleys (*ēmeq*) and plateaus (*mīšōr*), will be totally decimated.<sup>2</sup> It is as though the "destroyer" (vs. 8a) pounces on every inhabitable niche and renders destruction such that even isolated strongholds as Aroer are destroyed. The judgment is so heavy that the chance for survival is bleak. Even the hope of a remnant seems to be obliterated.

The final expression of vs. 8, "as the Lord has spoken," indicates that Moab's experience of destruction is the divine activity of Yahweh. This is significant in light of the mention of Chemosh. The Mesha Inscription (Moabite Stone) recounts the deliverance of Moab from Israelite control, a feat accorded to the favor of Chemosh.<sup>3</sup> Hence, it would appear that the national deity of Moab had defeated

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<sup>1</sup>Num 21:29 labels the Moabites as the "people of Chemosh." Solomon had built a "high place for Chemosh" (1 Kgs 11:7) for Moabite women in his harem. The Moabite stone has a compound reference to Ashtar-Kemosh (Ashtar being the god of Venus), so that Chemosh may have been associated with astral deities. See van Zyl, 195-203.

<sup>2</sup>Both Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 357, and Thompson, 704, extend the boundaries of the *valley* to the Jordan rift valley north of the Dead Sea and the plateau of the Trans-Jordan highland from Arnon to as far north as Heshbon.

<sup>3</sup>Gerald L. Mattingly, "Chemosh," *ABD* (1992), 1:895-897; J. Andrew Dearmand and Gerald L. Mattingly, "Mesha Stele," *ABD* (1992), 4:708-709.

Yahweh. However, the tide has turned, and now Yahweh invokes absolute destruction defeating Chemosh, sending him into exile. This is accomplished by the word of Yahweh. The collapse of the seemingly sound religious system of the Moabites is indicative of total defeat and loss. In the face of such judgment, hope for a remnant is ominous.

Finally, vs. 9 pronounces the summons for the ruination of Moab, introduced by the imperative. The call is made to sow Moab with salt,<sup>1</sup> "a figure symbolizing the utter annihilation of a city by sowing its ruins with salt."<sup>2</sup> This ruination is expressed in the second colon: *she shall surely collapse in ruins*. The final two cola underscore the totality of this calamity: *her cities shall become waste places, with no one dwelling in them*.

The extent of this judgment against Moab is total destruction. In this context there is no hope for survival or for a remnant.

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<sup>1</sup>See Moran, 69-71. It is adapted by Bright, 314; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 357; and Thompson, 700, 704. The noun *sîs* generally means "blossom," "flower," or "ornament" and only in later Hebrew did it come to mean "wing." This is why some English versions (*RSV, ASV, NKJV*) translate, "Give wings to Moab."

<sup>2</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 780. Cf. Judg 9:45. For the practice of sowing cities with salt, see S. Gervitz, "Jericho and Shechem: A Religio-Literary Aspect of City Destruction," *VT* 13 (1963): 52-62. F. C. Fensham, "Salt as a Curse in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East," *BA* 25 (1962): 48-50, regards salt as effecting infertility, a catastrophic reality for a Near Easterner. Sowing a city with salt is therefore a ritual act to bring a curse of barrenness and desolation.

**Translation and Textual Considerations**

(17) Mourn for him, all who are round about him  
and all who know his name.  
Say, "How the mighty sceptre is broken,  
The glorious staff!"  
(18) Come down from your glory  
and sit<sup>1</sup> on arid ground<sup>2</sup>  
You that live in Dibon<sup>3</sup>  
For the Devastator of Moab has come up against her  
He has destroyed your strongholds.  
(19) *Stand by the road and watch*  
*O inhabitant<sup>4</sup> of Aroer*  
*Ask him who flees and her who escapes [nimlātāh].<sup>5</sup>*  
Say, 'What has happened?'

**Structure**

Vss. 17-19 form a poetic unit demarcated by the imperitival use of the same root ( <sup>2</sup>*mr*, "say") in vss. 17b and 19b, forming an inclusio. Further, within

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<sup>1</sup>Read *Q* with Syr., many MSS and Vrs *ūš<sup>c</sup>bī*, "and sit." in place of *K yšby*.

<sup>2</sup>MT reads strangely *baššāmā<sup>2</sup>*, "in thirst," which may be revocalized as *baššāmē<sup>2</sup>*, "on arid ground." Both "thirst" and "arid/dry ground" are related. Cf. Isa 43:4. Further, the symbolism of mighty rulers being cast down to sit in dust is already found in Isa 47:1 (where "daughter-Babylon" is made to do so). Syr., *BHS*, Rudolph, 256, 259, and Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 342, favor *baššō<sup>2</sup>āh*, "in the filth (vomit or excrement)." LXX reads *en hugrasia*, "in a damp place."

<sup>3</sup>MT, *yōšēbet bat-dibôn*, lit. "inhabitress, daughter Dibon." LXX lacks "daughter" and *BHS* questions if *bat* is not a dittography from *yōše(bet)*.

<sup>4</sup>This is the feminine participle *yōšēbet*, "inhabitress." Cf. vs. 18 and 21:13 for a similar use.

<sup>5</sup>MT has a gender shift: *nās*, "him who flees" to *nimlātāh*, "her who escapes." The versions interpret both participles as masculine, hence "the fleeing fugitives."

this unit there are eight imperatives, a characteristic not found in the sections preceding or following.

This unit<sup>1</sup> may be divided as follows:

1. Vs. 17: Grief for Moab whose glory is gone (two imperatives: *nudû*, "mourn"; and <sup>2</sup>*imrû*, "say")
2. Vs. 18: The coming of the Destroyer (two imperatives: *ʿdî*, "come down"; and *ûšʿbî*, "sit")
3. Vs. 19: Inquiry of the refugees<sup>2</sup> (four imperatives: <sup>c</sup>*imdf*, "stand"; *šappî*, "watch"; *šaʿalî*, "ask"; and <sup>2</sup>*imrî*, "say.")

### Historical Background

This has already been covered on pp. 271, 272 above.

### Interpretation

Moab's "undisturbed tranquility" and "unmolested security" are set forth in vs. 11 by use of metaphors drawn from viticulture. However, this is violently shattered by the destruction of Moab's religion, warriors, fortifications, and reputation (vss. 12-16).

The imperatives of vs. 17 now introduce the summons to lament or mourn in light of this savagery. As Moab collapses, the call goes out for everyone who was

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<sup>1</sup>Christensen, 241, labels this unit a "Summons to Mourn." While the divisions of Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 350, are different, he sees vs. 17 as issuing "a call to lamentation."

<sup>2</sup>Christensen, 241.

familiar with Moab's hubris<sup>1</sup> to shake their heads in expression of "scornful rejection."<sup>2</sup> It is not a call for the community to lament over its own ruin (cf. Jer 4:8), but for all the surrounding nations to lament over Moab. In short, Moab had become a universal spectacle of defeat. Further, the mourn is heightened by the taunt, "Say, 'How the mighty sceptre<sup>3</sup> is broken, the glorious staff.'" These instruments refer back to the time when Moab exercised a degree of power in the region.<sup>4</sup> Moab's powerful status and past days of splendor have now been reversed.

The imperatives of vs. 18 invoke humiliation upon Dibon,<sup>5</sup> the place where the Moabite Stone was found in 1868 bearing the inscriptions of King Mesha,<sup>6</sup> and which was in all likelihood his capital. The inhabitants<sup>7</sup> are humiliated: from a

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. vss. 29-30.

<sup>2</sup>Leonard J. Coppes, "Nûd," *TWOT* (1980), 2:561. Cf. Jer 15:5; 16:5; 18:16; and 22:10 for similar use of this root.

<sup>3</sup>It has been suggested that *matteh-<sup>c</sup>ôz* be understood as "victorious sceptre." See W. F. Albright, "A Catalogue of Early Hebrew Lyric Poems (Psalm LXVIIII)," *HUCA* 23 Part 1 (1950/51): 31, who comments on the word <sup>c</sup>ôz in Ps 68:29.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Jer 27:3; 2 Kgs 1:1; 3:4, 5; 24:2.

<sup>5</sup>Dibon is the modern Dhiban located about 3.5 miles north of the Arnon and about 13 miles east of the Dead Sea. For excavation reports see Fred V. Winnet and William L. Reed, *The Excavations at Dibon (Dhibân) in Moab, 1950-51 and 1952*, AASOR, vols. 36-37 (New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1964). For a succinct overview consult A. D. Tushingham, "Dibon," *ABD* (1992), 2:194-196.

<sup>6</sup>*ANET*, 320-321. There is specific mention of Dibon in lines 1, 21, and 28.

<sup>7</sup>In light of vs. 19 where the same *yôsebet*, followed by a place name, is used, it seems reasonable for this to mean simply, "you that live in Dibon." Further, a similar expression, "inhabitant daughter-Egypt" (46:19), is a poetic personification for the people of Egypt.

place of honor and royal prerogative to languishing in dust. Her former glory is sharply contrasted with the present state. The reason for this humiliation, introduced by *kî*, is that the "Destroyer of Moab" (*šōdēd mō<sup>3</sup>āb*), already identified as the Lord (the King in vs. 15),<sup>1</sup> has declared war against her (*alāh bāk*, "has come up against you"), destroying her strongholds.<sup>2</sup> Chaos erupts with the falling of the capital as attested by the questioning of those who flee (vs. 19).

The imperatives of vs. 19 are issued as battle orders to a scout or messenger:<sup>3</sup> stand, watch, ask, say. The staccato effect suggests urgency. Interestingly, only the dwellers of a place as remote as Aroer that had any hope of survival (vs. 6) are now ordered to inquire of the fleeing refugees. Holladay describes it thus, "But these orders are in the context of defeat: 'Ask the refugee what has happened.'"<sup>4</sup>

MT shift in gender ("*him* who flees, *her* who escapes") may be a deliberate "expression of the *totality of the fleeing population*."<sup>5</sup> Hurrying in an attempt to escape in order to save their lives in the face of mortal threat, the fleeing remnant is faced with this bewildering question. The answer is implied that they do not know

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<sup>1</sup>This is a recurring motif in Jer 8:19; 10:7, 10; 46:18; 51:57, and the OT in general: Num 23:21; Deut 3:5; Pss 5:2; 10:16; 24:7-10; Isa 6:5; 33:22; 44:6; Zech 14:9; and Mal 1:14.

<sup>2</sup>Winnet and Reed, Part 1, 14-16, attest to the fortifications of Dibon.

<sup>3</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 351.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 786 (emphasis mine).

the answer. Hence, the judgment renders the remnant ineffective and presents a grim picture for the continuity of the life of the community.<sup>1</sup>

### Derivatives of *pl̄*

Jer 50:29

#### Translation and Textual Considerations<sup>2</sup>

(29) *Summon archers<sup>3</sup> against Babylon*  
*All those who bend the bow*  
*Encamp all around her*  
*Do not let there be<sup>4</sup> any escapee [p<sup>ʿ</sup>lētāh]/ Let no one escape [p<sup>ʿ</sup>lētāh].*  
*Repay her according to her deeds, do to her according to all she has done*  
*Because she has acted insolently against Yahweh*  
*The Holy One of Israel.*

#### Structure

This has already been covered on pp. 248-251 above.

#### Historical Background

This has already been covered on pp. 251, 252 above.

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<sup>1</sup>While the situation of judgment is indeed grim, a glimmer of hope is held out for Moab "in the latter days," when the Lord will "restore their fortunes" (48:47).

<sup>2</sup>For the translation and discussion on the entire pericope, 50:21-32, see above, 245-248.

<sup>3</sup>MT *rabbīm*, "host, crowd." LXX *pollois* understands it similarly. Some exegetes like Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 828, and Thompson, 739, revocalize the word to *rōbīm* "archers" (a participle of *rbh* II). In view of the following line, "all those who bend the bow," then "archers" seems to be fitting.

<sup>4</sup>K <sup>ʿ</sup>*al-y<sup>ʿ</sup>hi*; Q <sup>ʿ</sup>*al-y<sup>ʿ</sup>hi-lāh*, "let there not be to her" (cf. vs. 26b). LXX *mē estō autēs*.

## Interpretation

The entire pericope denotes the calamity of the judgment against Babylon. Yahweh Himself is declared as the warrior who lays the once-great nation to waste.

The announcement is already made that the effect and extent of the judgment will be such that no remnant (*שׁוֹרֵיט*) will be left (vs. 26). Hence, all future hope is obliterated. This same negative verdict comes to the fore in the final section of the pericope (vss. 29-32). The foe is summoned against Babylon. Expert marksmen are positioned and the siege is laid.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this is to effect total annihilation: let no one escape (*פִּלְטָהּ*, vs. 29).

The use of this word is placed in sharp contrast to its root in vs. 28. Indeed *פִּלְטָהּ* echoes *פִּלְטִים* (vs. 28). Presumably, the *פִּלְטִים* were exiles in Babylon but who had escaped to proclaim the news of Yahweh's deliverance. But in vs. 29 the *פִּלְטָהּ* is an ominous note of no escape for Babylon. Therefore, there is a reversal: the captured have escaped and the conquerors now cannot escape. There is only the stark reality of judgment and defeat.

A necessary observation here is the triumph of Yahweh and His people over Babylon. In fact, this victory of Yahweh is precisely so because Babylon had defied Yahweh, here described as "the Holy One of Israel." Again, contrast is used to show the confrontation between Yahweh and Babylon. He is the "Holy One,"

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<sup>1</sup>Warfare launched against Babylon is described with a clear eye, prompting Thompson, 743, to comment, "The author of these lines was well aware of the methods of siege warfare. Jeremiah himself had passed through the experience twice in his lifetime."

while Babylon is described as *zādôn* (vss. 31, 32)--the one that arrogates to itself rights over Israel or Yahweh as Israel's protector to which it is not entitled.<sup>1</sup> But Yahweh declares that His victory is assured since Babylon's young men, whose strength guarantees success, and her soldiers, whose prowess guarantees defense, will be destroyed (vs. 30). Finally, the Arrogant One will fall without anyone to help her and she will be totally consumed (vss. 31, 32).

Babylon's retribution is to be carried out according to what she has done (vs. 29b). In her bid for world domination Babylon had overrun, plundered, and ravished other nations. Now the same is to be done to her. Here again is the situation of reversal.

It must be noted that when Babylon caused the collapse of Jerusalem, and Judah as a whole, a remnant was left. In contrast, however, with the application of the ban, the talionic principle,<sup>2</sup> no trace is left of survivors of Babylon. She will be left neither *š'ērit* nor *p'letāh*. The extent and effect of Yahweh's judgment against arrogant Babylon is complete and total annihilation.

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<sup>1</sup>Scharbert, "Zudh," 47. The contrast is highlighted in vs. 31, "I am against you, O Arrogant One," declares the *Lord God of Hosts*.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Miller, *Sin and Judgment in the Prophets: A Stylistic and Theological Analysis*, 94.

Derivatives of *śrd*

Jer 47:4

Translation and Textual Considerations<sup>1</sup>

(4) *Because that day<sup>2</sup> is coming to destroy all the Philistines  
To cut off for Tyre and Sidon every survivor [śārīd], helper<sup>3</sup>  
For Yahweh will destroy the Philistines<sup>4</sup>  
The remnant [š<sup>2</sup>ērīt] of the island<sup>5</sup> of Caphtor.*

## Structure

This has already been covered on pg. 230 above.

## Historical Background

This has already been covered on pp. 231, 232 above.

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<sup>1</sup>For translation and discussion on the entire pericope, 47:2-7, see above, 228-230.

<sup>2</sup>Christensen, 212, reads <sup>c</sup>*al-hayyôm*, "on that day" at the end of vs 3. Rudolph, 272, connects vs. 3b to vs. 4.

<sup>3</sup>MT *l'ḥakrīt l'šōr ūl'šidōn kōl śārīd* <sup>c</sup>*ōzēr*, "to cause to cut off for Tyre and Sidon every survivor, helper" is rendered by LXX as *kai aphanizō tēn Turon kai tēn Sidōna kai pantas tous kataloipous tēs boētheias auton*, "and I will destroy Tyre and Sidon and all the rest of their allies."

Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 334, following the Vg. revocalizes from a hiphil infinitive construct, *l'ḥakrīt* to a niphal infinitive *l'hikk'rēt*, and construes the preposition *l'* before Tyre and Sidon as introducing the agents. The phrase is then rendered: "(to be cut off) by Tyre and Sidon" (emphasis mine).

<sup>4</sup>LXX lacks "The Philistines." Janzen, 59, sees it as a gloss from vs. 4a.

<sup>5</sup>MT <sup>2</sup>*ī kaptōr*, "the isle of Caphtor," is translated in LXX as *tōn nēsōn*, "the islands," which is equivalent to *hā<sup>c</sup>iyyim*, as suggested by BHS. Both Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 334, and Janzen, 59, 74, accept the emendation but translate "the coasts."

### Interpretation

The war oracle of doom (47:2-5) announces forthcoming devastation upon Philistia, the effect of which is lamentation--"*the inhabitants of that land shall howl* (vs. 2b), and paralysis--"*the fathers will not turn back for their children because of enfeebled hands* (vs. 3b). The fury of the judgment is enunciated in the completeness of its effect: no survivor (*šārîd*).

This word belongs to the language of warfare,<sup>1</sup> and it is precisely Yahweh's war declared against the Philistines that renders havoc to the point that no survivor is left. This is highlighted in that *šārîd* is used in conjunction with *š<sup>c</sup>ērîl* and both in a negative context. The intent is transparent--complete destruction for Philistia so that there will be no survivor (*šārîd*) and no helper (*š<sup>c</sup>ōzēr*).<sup>2</sup> The noun *šārîd* points exclusively to destruction. Used in a negative way, it "leads to the inescapable conclusion that the reality of total loss is emphasized."<sup>3</sup> This is strengthened by the parallel infinitives: *to destroy all the Philistines* parallels *to cut off for Tyre and Sidon every survivor, helper*.

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<sup>1</sup>Hasel, "Origin and Early History," 196.

<sup>2</sup>The two nouns are juxtaposed giving the notion of an alliance. While there is no historical evidence of such an alliance, Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 338, makes a case from the first chap. of Amos, where an oracle against Tyre (vss. 9-10) parallels an oracle against Philistia (vss. 6-8) on the basis that similar accusations are made. (Cf. Ps 83:3 which pairs Philistia and the inhabitants of Tyre. Holladay concludes that an alliance is not unlikely.)

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 198.

This poem elucidates the effect of Yahweh wielding His bloodthirsty sword against Philistia. He marches from the north and His insatiable sword cuts down Philistia until there is no survivor (*sāriḏ*).

### Conclusions

The oracles of judgment against the foreign nations speak of furious and unrelenting actions that have the effect of total annihilation such that no remnant is left. Often set in the language of war, the oracles detail Yahweh's march against the nations, wielding His sword so that escape is impossible.

From the very outset of these oracles, both the *universality* and the *inevitability* of the judgment are set forth. That Judah is included is not surprising, especially in light of the fact that she had enjoyed a unique covenant with Yahweh, but owing to her unfaithfulness, she was degraded to an object of cursing. Judah's punishment, despite her once-favored position, is similar to that of the other nations.

Commentators have been baffled as to the seeming disorganization of the oracles inasmuch as they do not follow a strict geographical or political arrangement. What is clear is that the oracles are of the nature of ravishing judgment against the nations and none more so than those that speak of total loss or the absolute lack of a remnant. The point to be recognized is not the disarrangement of the oracles but the fact that the traditional enemies of God's people are likewise targeted for destruction: from Egypt as the first enemy, which had enslaved God's people, to Babylon, as the last enemy (in Jeremiah's time) to have exiled Judean citizens. Even though these nations had no covenant with God, such lack did not exempt them from punishment.

The emphasis of the writer is not arrangement but the fact that God had triumphed and destroyed all the nations that had opposed Him and His people. His sovereignty alone is absolute and supreme.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE REMNANT MOTIF IN THE CONTEXT OF SALVATION

This chapter is concerned with the remnant motif in the context of salvation. Seven passages are examined with this focus: Jer 23:1-8; 31:7-9; 50:4-20, dealing with the root *š<sup>2</sup>r*; 39:15-18, dealing with the root *mlt*; 50:28 and 45-53, dealing with the root *plt*; and 31:2-6, dealing with the root *šrd*.

The same exegetical procedure is used as in previous chapters. However, I discuss theological themes that are related to the remnant motif but only as they appear in the pericopes under investigation. Such related themes include: exodus, election, covenant renewal (new covenant), forgiveness, repentance, faith and grace.

Again, since no explicit reference is made to the remnant motif in the oracles against the foreign nations, this discussion is restricted to passages dealing with Judah.

Derivatives of š<sup>2</sup>r

Jer 23:1-8

## Translation and Textual Considerations

(1) "Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture,"<sup>1</sup> says the Lord. (2) Therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel against the shepherds who are shepherding my people, "You yourselves have scattered my flock and have driven them away and you have not taken care of them. Behold, I will take care of you for the evil of your deeds," says the Lord.<sup>2</sup>  
 (3)<sup>3</sup> "Furthermore, I myself will gather together the remnant [š<sup>2</sup>ērīt] of my sheep from all the places<sup>4</sup> where I have driven them there; and I will cause them to return to their fold and they shall be fruitful and multiply. (4) Furthermore, I will appoint shepherds over them who will shepherd them. And they will not be afraid anymore, nor be dismayed; neither shall any be missing,"<sup>5</sup> says the Lord. (5) "Behold, days are coming," says the Lord, "When I will raise up for David a Righteous Branch.<sup>6</sup> And He shall rule as King and deal wisely; and He shall do justice and righteousness in the land. (6) In his days, Judah will be saved and

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<sup>1</sup>MT reads *mar<sup>c</sup>īṭī*, "my pasture." LXX reads *nomēs autōn*, "their pasture."

<sup>2</sup>The expression *n<sup>e</sup>um ḏōnāy* is lacking in LXX in both vss. 2 and 3.

<sup>3</sup>BHS suggests that this verse may be a gloss. Rudolph, 125, says it is a post-exilic gloss.

<sup>4</sup>The LXX has the singular *apo pasēs tēs gēs*, "from every land" or ("from all the earth"). So also Rudolph, 124.

<sup>5</sup>LXX lacks this last phrase. Giesebrecht, 126, 127, reads *phd*, "be in dread, fear," instead of *pqd*, "be lacking, missing."

<sup>6</sup>MT *šemah saddīq*, "a righteous branch" or "legitimate growth," points to a true or genuine shoot from a tree. See Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 446. LXX reads *anatolēn dikaian*, "righteous rising," where *anatolēn* has both the idea of "growing" and "rising" (a figure used of heavenly bodies or the rising of the sun).

Israel<sup>1</sup> will dwell securely. And this is his name by which he will be called:<sup>2</sup>  
The Lord is our righteousness."<sup>3</sup>

(7)<sup>4</sup> "Therefore, days are coming," says the Lord, "When they will no longer say, 'As the Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel<sup>5</sup> out of the land of Egypt;' (8) instead 'As the Lord lives who brought up and who<sup>6</sup> brought back the seed<sup>7</sup> of the house<sup>8</sup> of Israel from the north country and from all the lands where I had driven them.'<sup>9</sup> Then they shall dwell<sup>10</sup> in their own land.

## Structure

There is much discussion regarding the extent of this passage. Some exegetes agree that vss. 1-4 comprise a complete unit.<sup>11</sup> Cornill claims that it

<sup>1</sup>LXX<sup>S</sup> reads "Jerusalem."

<sup>2</sup>MT *yiqr<sup>o</sup>ô*, "he will call him," is quite unusual. A few MSS read *yiqr<sup>o</sup>û*, "they will call." Syr., Tg. and Vg. all have *yiqrâûhû*. "they will call him."

<sup>3</sup>LXX transliterates the name as *Iōsedek*, preceded by *kurios*. Hence, "The Lord will call his name *Iōsedek* (i.e. Yahweh is righteous)."

<sup>4</sup>In LXX vss. 7-8 are located after 23:40.

<sup>5</sup>Instead of "children of Israel," LXX reads *ton oikon Israēl*, "the house of Israel."

<sup>6</sup>LXX lacks "brought up and who."

<sup>7</sup>LXX reads *hapan to sperma*, "the whole seed," which is equivalent to <sup>o</sup>*et-kôl zera<sup>c</sup>*, although MT lacks *kôl*. In any case, "seed," "descendants," is lacking in Syr. and some Tg. editions.

<sup>8</sup>Lacking in LXX. The Syr. of Walton's Polyglot and one Tg. edition has *b'nē*, "children."

<sup>9</sup>MT reads *hiddahîm*, "I have driven them"; but LXX *exōsen autous* and the parallel passage in Jer 16:15, *hiddîhām*, both read "he had driven them."

<sup>10</sup>LXX reads *kai apekatestēsen autous*, "and he has restored them." MT in 16:15 reads *wah<sup>o</sup>šihōtîm*, "I will bring them back."

<sup>11</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 145-146; Holladay, *Jeremiah I*, 613; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 443; CKD, 324.

envelopes vss. 1-6.<sup>1</sup> Others contend that the pericope extends from vs. 1 to vs. 8.<sup>2</sup>

Several factors recommend this position:

1. Vs. 9 introduces a new section with the sub-heading *lann'bi'îm*, "Concerning the prophets."
2. The entire unit is linked by the divine formula *rt'um 'adōnāy*, "says the Lord" (vss. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7).
3. Echoes, such as *lākēn*, "therefore" (vss. 2 and 7) and the hiphil form of the verb *ndh*, "to drive," in vss. 2, 3 and 8 also demarcate the unit.
4. The woe oracle of the introduction and the salvation oracle of the conclusion illustrate a contrast that forms an inclusio of sorts. This is highlighted, in that the introduction deals with "scattering" while the conclusion denotes "regathering."
5. Finally, the motif of restoration is like a thread that binds the entire section together.

It may be best to consider Jer 23:1-8 as the conclusion to the complex of sayings extending from 21:11 to 23:8 where the message of judgment in chaps. 21-22 turns to one of hope. This conclusion consists of three brief oracles<sup>3</sup> dealing with the future of the remnant:

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<sup>1</sup>Cornill, 262.

<sup>2</sup>Thompson, 485-486; Rudolph, 125; Feinberg, 517-519; Hyatt, "Jeremiah," 987-989; F. Nötscher, *Das Buch Jeremias* (Bonn: Hanstein, 1934), 174.

<sup>3</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 145; Clements, *Jeremiah*, 137, 138.

1. Vss. 1-4 as introduced by the Woe Oracle, *hōy*

2. Vss. 5-6 as introduced by the phrase *hinnēh yāmîm bā<sup>2</sup>îm n<sup>2</sup>ûm*

<sup>2</sup>*dōnāy*, "behold, days are coming, says the Lord"

3. Vss. 7-8 as introduced by the phrase *lākēn hinnēh yāmîm bā<sup>2</sup>îm n<sup>2</sup>ûm*

<sup>2</sup>*dōnāy*, "behold, days are coming, says the Lord."

The first oracle is chiastically arranged:<sup>1</sup>

A Woe to shepherds destroying the flock (vs. 1).

B You yourselves scattered, thrust out, have not taken care of my flock (vs. 2a).

C Behold I will take care of you (vs. 2b).

B<sup>1</sup> I myself will gather, bring back my flock (vs. 3).

A<sup>1</sup> I will raise up shepherds who will shepherd (vs. 4).

The second oracle is similarly arranged:<sup>2</sup>

A God will raise up a legitimate/righteous ruler (vs. 5a-c)

B This king will reign prudently/have success (vs. 5d)

C He will bring justice and righteousness (vs. 5e-f)

B<sup>1</sup> Judah/Israel will be delivered and be secure (vs. 6a-b)

A<sup>1</sup> God will name him "Yahweh our Righteousness" (vs. 6c-d).

The final oracle may be divided into two parts:<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>CKD, 325.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 329.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *ibid.*, 332.

1. An old oath: Yahweh brought up from Egypt (vs. 7)
2. A new oath: Yahweh brought back from exile (vs. 8).

### Historical Background

Some commentators insist that the motif of the ingathering of "the remnant of my flock" (עֵֿרֵי־שׂוֹ־נִי *ērîṯ šōṽnî*) points to Ezek 34 and deuteronomic authors.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it presupposes the exile. However, as Holladay has expressed, the deliberate play on the nuances of *pqd* in vss. 2 (used twice) and 4, and the precise repetition *hārōṽim hārōṽim*, "shepherds who shepherd," suggest the mind of Jeremiah.<sup>2</sup> It is then proposed that the tone of hope in this passage suggests a period shortly after Jeremiah's purchase of the field at Anathoth, "in the summer of 588,"<sup>3</sup> late in Zedekiah's reign.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 445; Nicholson, *Jer 1-25*, 191; Hyatt, "Jeremiah," 988; Thiel, *Die Deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremiah 1-25*, 246-248; Seigfried Herrmann, *Die prophetischen Heilserwartungen im Alten Testament: Ursprung und Gestaltwandel*, BWANT 85 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer 1965), 207, 208, 212; J. Lust, "'Gathering and Return' in Jeremiah and Ezekiel," in *Le Livre de Jérémie: Le prophète et son milieu les oracles et leur transmission*, ed. P. M. Bogaert (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1981), 134-135, n. 70. Mowinckel, *Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremiah*, 50, accepts the literary integrity of the passage but adds that it is an exilic interpolation based on Ezek 34.

<sup>2</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 614.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 145, 146. Cf. Thompson, 487.

## Interpretation

This passage, written in prose,<sup>1</sup> begins with a woe oracle.<sup>2</sup> Introduced by *hōy*, the woe oracle functions as a threat, pronouncing not only the "forecaste of the catastrophe but consciously endorsing and promoting it."<sup>3</sup> The oracle introduces a pattern of speech described by W. Janzen as the "reversal pattern," which in its most pointed form is as follows: You have done X; therefore, X will be done to you.<sup>4</sup> This points to the idea of *lex talionis*. Therefore, the woe oracle provides a climactic, emotional content to the judgment at hand.

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<sup>1</sup>Most commentators have urged that this is a prose passage. See Bright, *Jeremiah*, 145; Feinberg, 517; CKD, 324; Rudolph, 124. Others see vss. 2, 4 as poetry while vs. 3 is secondary. So Norbert Mendecki, "Die Sammlung und die Hineinführung in das Land in Jer. 23,3," *Kairos* 25 (1983): 99-103. Thompson, 485, 486 regards the first two sections as mostly poetic segments with vss. 7-8 comprised of prose. W. L. Holladay, "The Recovery of Poetic Passages of Jeremiah," *JBL* 85 (1966): 420-424, considered the entire passage to be poetic. He has since changed his position to "a carefully crafted sequence of structured prose (*Kunstprosa*)." See his *Jeremiah* 1, 613.

<sup>2</sup>The woe oracle begins with the cry *hōy*, "woe," followed by a participial clause which describes the offense and announces the judgment. It has three parts: (1) Opening, "Woe to the shepherds" (vs. 1a); (2) Accusation, "You destroy and scatter my sheep" (vs. 1b); (3) Judgment Speech or Prediction of Disaster (vs. 2).

<sup>3</sup>Erhard Gerstenberger, "The Woe Oracles of the Prophets," *JBL* 81 (1962): 251. Richard J. Clifford, "The Use of *Hōy* in the Prophets," *CBQ* 28 (1966): 463, 464, has shown that the woe oracle has an increased bitterness in Jeremiah and Habbakuk. As to the role of *hōy* in the prophets, he adjudges that it is an automatic reaction of the prophets upon hearing the word of God's judgment. "To the prophet, God's word is as good as the deed it announced. Promise of destruction was the destruction."

<sup>4</sup>W. Janzen, *Mourning Cry and Woe Oracle*, BZAW 125 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972), 82. This woe oracle also provides a link with 22:13 where it is employed in a similar manner: *Woe to the one who builds his house in unrighteousness.*

This woe oracle indicts the shepherds<sup>1</sup> for destroying and scattering Yahweh's sheep.<sup>2</sup> Holladay comments, "The implication here is that neglect leaves the sheep as dead as if they have been deliberately killed; 'scatter' has a similar implication."<sup>3</sup> The duty of the shepherds was to protect the sheep and keep them safe from the attacks of wild animals that would destroy and scatter the flock. Hence, the shepherds are like wild animals, destroying and scattering that which they were supposed to protect.

Further, a bit of irony is exposed here. Since both verbs ("destroy" and "scatter") are usually used with Yahweh as subject (cf. 15:7; 18:17), "he may have occasion to punish his people, but it is illegitimate for the kings and officials of the people to do so."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Shepherd" is a time-hallowed title for kings in the ancient Near East. See Ralph W. Klein, "Jeremiah 23:1-8," *Int* 34 (1980), 168. The reference in Jer 22:22 to the shepherds, speaks of Judah's leaders, especially her kings. Since chap. 22, dealt with Judah's kings, some named and others unnamed, it seems safe to infer that the shepherd imagery in chap. 23 has the same meaning. While no kings are specified here, they are lumped together. As Klein, *ibid.*, 167-168, says, "their misdeeds are summarized as those of malpracticing shepherds."

Elsewhere the sheep-shepherd imagery is to be found in Pss 74:1; 79:13; 95:7; 100:3; Isa 40:10-11; Ezek 34. Since Ezek 34 contains the expression "my sheep" eleven times, this has prompted Norbert Mendecki, "Einfluss des Buches Ezechiel auf Jer 23,3; 29,14; 32,37," 147-151, to claim that Jer 23 depends on the language of Ezekiel.

<sup>2</sup>Both *m<sup>c</sup>abb<sup>c</sup>dim*, "destroying," and *m<sup>c</sup>pitim*, "scattering," are participles, suggesting a continued practice.

<sup>3</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 614.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

The accusation of the "woe" oracle is followed by a typical judgment speech in vs. 2: the transition word *lākēn*, "therefore"; the messenger formula *kōh ʔāmar ʔādōnāy*, "thus says the Lord";<sup>1</sup> the people accused (*the shepherds shepherding my flock*);<sup>2</sup> the accusation ("you yourselves have scattered my flock "); and a divine speech issued in the first person ("*Behold, I am about to take care of you*").<sup>3</sup>

The emphatic pronoun *ʔattem*, ("you yourselves") stands at the head of the judgment oracle. This oracle, issued in direct speech, picks up the terminology of the first accusation and extends it: *You yourselves have scattered my sheep and caused this dispersion/scattering.* The judgment is then voiced by the play on the key word *pqd* since it is this same verb that expresses both the shepherds' sins and Yahweh's punishment of them. The shepherds have failed to "take care of" (*pqd*) the flock in a positive sense; therefore, God will "take care of" (*pqd*) the shepherds, in a negative sense. This is a case of reversal. Yahweh will visit upon the shepherds the evil of their actions; He will turn their own deeds back upon them. This pun goes beyond irony. It becomes "clear that the shepherds are only the *cause*, but Yahweh Himself

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<sup>1</sup>CKD, 325, show that both the transition word and the messenger formula are stylistic features that link the oracles of 22:18 and 23:2.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 614, claims that this "precise duplication *hārōʿīm hārōʿīm*, is witty for it is clear that the assumed syntax is an agent noun followed by a participle with verbal force . . . analogous to 'prophets who prophesy' (*hanneḥiʔīm hannibbʔīm*) in vs. 25."

<sup>3</sup>See CKD, 325; Koch, 210-220; Willem A. VanGemeren, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 404, 405.

is the *agent* of judgment on the kings.<sup>1</sup> The judgment oracle then ends abruptly with the repetition of the messenger formula, "thus says the Lord."

Vs. 3 now expresses a reversal from judgment to salvation.<sup>2</sup> Further, the emphatic "*I myself*," is contrasted to that of vs. 2, "*you yourselves*." This emphasis introduces another shift in the passage. Whereas in vs. 2 the shepherds were accused of the dispersion, in vs. 3 Yahweh claims responsibility for the dispersion.<sup>3</sup> But there is no contradiction. Yahweh had exiled the people on account of their sins and those of the leaders. This truth may be expressed either as Yahweh as the active agent of the exile, or by saying that the people's sins caused their exile.

However, vs. 3 presents a striking contrast with vs. 2 in terms of the actions and results of the shepherds and Yahweh. The shepherds' actions resulted in the flock being cast out, but Yahweh's actions result in the ingathering of the remnant.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Klein, "Jeremiah 23:1-8," 168.

<sup>2</sup>The conjunction *waw* connects both verses. It appears that this conjunction is not completely adversative ("but") or temporal ("then"). As CKD, 326, point out, it seems to have "both a temporal quality, marking a shift between what the shepherds *had been doing* and what Yahweh *could do* (past, present and future), and a contrast between the shepherds and Yahweh. 'Furthermore' seems to be the best word to capture both elements."

<sup>3</sup>This is seen by some scholars as being contradictory and hence they see the phrase "from all the lands where I have driven them" as an insertion which disrupts the flow of images in vss. 1-2, 4. However, such a claim for divine prerogative is widespread in the book of Jeremiah: 8:3; 16:15; 23:8; 24:9; 27:10, 15; 32:37.

<sup>4</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 139, translates  $\text{š}^{\text{c}}\text{ērîṭ} \text{šō}^{\text{c}}\text{nî}$  with "what is left of my flock." Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 615, accounts for the use of the term "remnant" as another suggestion of the kings' neglect.

This may be expressed in terms of contrastive parallelism:<sup>1</sup>

A You (shepherds) scattered my flock

B and you thrust them out

C and did not take care of them

C<sup>1</sup> I (Yahweh) will take care of you

A<sup>1</sup> I will gather the remnant of my flock

B<sup>1</sup> I will cause them to return.

Yahweh's ingathering and return of the remnant is in direct contrast to the shepherd's actions of scattering and thrusting out the flock. In fact, the verb "gather" is a precise resolution of "scatter" in vss. 1-2a.<sup>2</sup> This act of salvation on behalf of the remnant speaks of Yahweh's sovereign role. It is further highlighted in that the remnant will be returned to their own pasture. In Jer 6:2 the "fold" metaphor functions in an oracle of judgment where foreign shepherds will dominate Judah. But in Jer 23:3 the sheep will be returned to their rightful pasturage.<sup>3</sup>

The restoration of the remnant is further emphasized by the last two verbs in vs. 3: *ûpârû w'râbû*, "and they shall be fruitful and they shall multiply." These

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<sup>1</sup>CKD, 326, 327.

<sup>2</sup>Walter Brueggemann, *A Commentary on the Book of Jeremiah 1-25: To Pluck Up, To Tear Down*, International Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 199.

<sup>3</sup>The pasture (*nāwah*) may be used in reference to a place of security, refreshment, and contentment. This "fold" metaphor has both a positive (31:23; 33:12; 50:19) and negative (10:25; 25:30; 49:19, 20; 50:7, 44, 45) value in the book of Jeremiah.

reflect on Genesis and creation terminology.<sup>1</sup> These are the same words pronounced both on the sea creatures and birds (Gen 1:22) and to humankind (Gen 1:28). They were reaffirmed to the remnant who survived the flood (Gen 9:1). Therefore, this ingathering signals a new beginning as did creation and as did the post-flood time. Further, the book of Exodus opens with the same motif: *the Hebrews were fruitful and multiplied, so that the land was full of them* (Exod 1:7). Similarly, the restoration of the remnant is a new exodus, a new return. Indeed, "Exodus and creation terminology intermingle, and this new exodus/return will use both types of language."<sup>2</sup>

Also, this phrase reminds one of covenantal promises and blessings. Jeremiah had earlier mentioned such a promise in 3:16. It functions here to remind "the people that God will not forget his covenant with them. Political and national changes will take place. The continuance of Yahweh's covenant, however, is assured."<sup>3</sup>

The salvation of Yahweh on behalf of the remnant is furthered in vs. 4: Yahweh will replace the bad shepherds with good shepherds, who will really

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Jacques Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story: Its Literary Structure*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, vol. 5 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1982), 110-114.

<sup>2</sup>CKD, 327.

<sup>3</sup>Gerard Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990), 703.

shepherd.<sup>1</sup> It is now noted how Yahweh's actions completely reverse the situation of judgment to that of salvation: the verbs "scatter," "drive away," and "not taken care of" (vs. 2) are now replaced with "gather," "bring back," and "shepherd."<sup>2</sup> The effect will be that there will be no more fear or dismay. The combination "not fearing" and "not being dismayed" is a "typical promise of deliverance based on Yahweh's presence."<sup>3</sup>

The last phrase now returns to the play on the verb *pqd*. In the expression *w'lō<sup>3</sup> yippāqēdū*, the niph'al form here may be understood as "none will be lacking/missing." As such, the idea is denoted that none of the flock will be missing. Yahweh's work is perfect: when He gathers the remnant and returns them to safety, with new leaders, there would be no need for apprehension. Yahweh will not miss a single one of His remnant flock.

In this pericope, judgment and salvation stand side by side. Just as Yahweh had executed punitive action against his people, He could return the exiled,

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<sup>1</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 615, comments with great insight that the shift from the participle in vs. 2 to the waw-consecutive perfect *w'rā<sup>c</sup>ūm* ("and they will shepherd them") signals a movement: they will really shepherd.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Klein, "Jeremiah 23:1-8," 169. See also Geo Widengren, "Yahweh's Gathering of the Dispersed," in *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G. W. Ahlström*, ed. W. Boyd Barrick and John R. Spencer, JSOT Supplement Series 31 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 227-234. He believes that Mesopotamia was the point of origin for this motif of the gathering of the dispersed but that the formality of this theme is most remarkable when dealing with the Israelite-Judean people especially as witnessed in the phenomenon of such verbs used in apposition.

<sup>3</sup>CKD, 327.

here described as the remnant. Otherwise, the people's fate would have been permanent loss.<sup>1</sup> Holladay concludes, "The fact that the passage is both a judgment oracle and a salvation oracle indicates that it stands at the beginning of a new age."<sup>2</sup>

The restoration of the remnant and the installation of the new age requires that proper leadership is also restored to the community. Jer 23:5-6 now introduces the leader, *par excellence*, a royal figure whom Yahweh will raise up (*qûm*). This verb provides the link between both sections since it is used in both vss. 4 and 5. Hence, the new Davidide is the concrete manifestation of God's promise to "set up" or raise shepherd kings over the restored remnant community.<sup>3</sup>

Whereas vss. 1-4 placed emphasis on the deliverance of the remnant, vss. 5-6 focus on this figure who will lead the restored remnant community.<sup>4</sup> This is borne out by the structure: Yahweh is the subject of A/A<sup>1</sup> while the royal figure is the subject of B/B<sup>1</sup> and C. He is characterized as a righteous ruler. As the structure indicates, there is a strong interest in *šdq*, "righteous(ness)." The root *šdq* forms an inclusio in vss. 5c and 6d. It is also at the center of the chiasm dealing with this king's rule of righteousness (vs. 5f.).

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<sup>1</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 445.

<sup>2</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 615.

<sup>3</sup>Klein, "Jeremiah 23:1-8," 170.

<sup>4</sup>CKD, 329, point to the similarity with the figure in Isa 11:1-9.

This ruler will come from the Davidic tree (i.e., dynasty) which is cut off but not dead.<sup>1</sup> Jer 21:11-22:30 showers judgment upon the representatives of the Davidic dynasty during Jeremiah's time because they failed to demonstrate the true qualities of kingship.<sup>2</sup> Further, J. Swetnam has demonstrated that with the appointment of Zedekiah as a Babylonian puppet king replacing Jehoiachim who was exiled, tension broke out in Judah regarding legitimacy.<sup>3</sup> Against this background Jeremiah delivered his message of the *šemah šaddiq*, the "Righteous Shoot" or "True Shoot" or "Legitimate/Righteous/True/Scion."<sup>4</sup> In short, the only legitimate leader of the reconstituted community is the *šemah šaddiq*. Kingship and therefore

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<sup>1</sup>Thompson, 489.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>J. Swetnam, "Some Observations on the Background of *šaddiq* in Jeremiah 23:5a," *Bib* 46 (1965): 29-40. He holds that the oracle legitimizes a pro-Babylonian ruler instead of the captured Jehoiachim. E. Lipinski, "Études sur des textes "messianiques" de l'Ancien Testament," *Semitica* 20 (1970): 41-59 believes that this passage was delivered in 597 B.C. as an official proclamation of the new name of the new king, Zedekiah.

<sup>4</sup>This expression is seen as a *terminus technicus* for the Messiah in the book of Jeremiah. See M. Rehm, *Der Königliche Messias im Licht der Immanuel-Weissagung des Buches Jesaja*, Eichstatter-Studien, 1 (Kevelaer: Butzon und Bercker, 1968), 254-256. Cf. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 144. This is the best rendering of the same expression in a third-century B.C. Phoenician inscription from the northern coast of Syria and from Ugaritic texts. See Swetnam, 29-33; J. C. L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions*, vol. 3: *Phoenician Inscriptions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 134-141. See also G. A. Cooke, *A Textbook of North Semitic Inscriptions: Moabite, Hebrew, Phoenician, Aramaic, Nabataean, Palmyrene, Jewish* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), 86; A. M. Honeyman, "A Phoenician Inscription of Ptolemaic Date," *JEA* 26 (1940): 64; Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 161. However, H. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 166, says that in Jeremiah the term has not yet become a Messianic title, but simply refers to "those who come after."

leadership had failed. The leaders were in no position to save the scattered people. With the harsh denouncements in Jer 22:24-23:2, Jeremiah meant to stifle any hope that leadership at that point was the solution. A new form of leadership was needed.<sup>1</sup> Joyce G. Baldwin has made a case that this refers to a figure who incorporates the offices of both priest and king.<sup>2</sup> Such a figure is identified as the Messianic King.<sup>3</sup> This is the direction of the Tg. which has "an Anointed One/Messiah of Righteousness." The shoot is that which springs from the fallen tree and thus bears in itself and sustains new life. This is precisely the task of the Messianic figure whose rule is described as establishing an able rule characterized by prudence (*škl*): MT *ûmālak melek w'hiškil*, lit. "And a king will rule and act wisely." The point is made that this ideal king will exercise real sovereignty over the remnant community, unlike Zedekiah who was merely a puppet king.<sup>4</sup> This is so because he will "deal or act wisely" with prudence (*hiškil*). He will be an able leader<sup>5</sup> who will

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<sup>1</sup>W. J. Wessels, "The Fallability of Leadership According to Jeremiah 23:1-4," *Old Testament Essays* 6 (1993): 334.

<sup>2</sup>Joyce G. Baldwin, "Semah as a Technical Term in the Prophets," *VT* 14 (1964): 93-97.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Isa 11:1; Jer 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12. See also Keil, 350-352; J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy: The Complete Guide to Scriptural Predictions and Their Fulfillment* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 338; J. Becker, *Messianic Expectations in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980); Van Groningen, 704; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 143; Huey, 211; H. Freedman, *Jeremiah*, Soncino Books (London & Bournemouth: Soncino Press, 1949), 153; Hertrich, 207.

<sup>4</sup>Thompson, 490.

<sup>5</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 140, "As king he shall reign—and ably."

have insight and act circumspectly. This results in success.<sup>1</sup> Jer 10:21 describes the judgment invoked upon the shepherd-leaders who were regarded as stupid since they did not seek the Lord. As a result they would not prosper (*škl*) and their flocks were scattered. Now the leadership and success of the ideal king are brought into bold relief, for as leader *par excellence*, all of his fold will be accounted for; none will be missing (Jer 23:4).

The reason for such success is that central to his rule he will execute justice (*mišpāt*) and righteousness (*š<sup>c</sup>dāqāh*). This is a summation of the function of the ideal king. McKane comments that the king's responsibilities point to

the demands made on Davidic kings and the criticism of their performance found in 21.12 (22.3) and 22.13-19. It recalls passages in the books of Samuel where the king's supreme responsibility in these matters is assumed and his incorruptibility expected (2 Sam. 12.1-7), where neglect of them is represented as a grave dereliction of duty and a reason for withdrawing loyalty (2 Sam. 15.1-6), and where his profound legal acumen is portrayed (2 Sam. 14.1-24; cf. 1 Kgs. 3.16-28).<sup>2</sup>

Viewed against the prevailing social milieu of Jeremiah's time, the just and righteous rule of this new figure is highlighted. The king was commissioned to "do justice and righteousness" (*š<sup>c</sup>šū mišpāt ūš<sup>c</sup>dāqāh*). Instead, Jehoiakim was guilty of covetousness, oppression, violence, murder, and foolish building projects in time of siege. Because of this, he deserved the burial of an ass (Jer 22:13-19). Zedekiah was weak, vacillating, and indecisive, and disobedient to the divine will (Jer 37:2; 16-

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<sup>1</sup>Louis Goldberg, "*šakal*," *TWOT* (1980), 2:877; M. Saebo, "*škl hi. einsichtigsein*," *THAT* (1984), 2:824-828.

<sup>2</sup>McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, I, 562.

21; 38:1-5) and he broke the covenant with the manumission of the slaves (chap. 34). Hence, he failed to rule with justice and righteousness. In direct contrast to such evil, the coming king will reign with justice and righteousness, effecting what Mowinckel calls a "*moral revival*."<sup>1</sup> In short, this king will bring the covenant conditions to the people: righteousness and justice.<sup>2</sup>

The result of such rule is found in vs. 6ab: Judah "*will be delivered and Israel<sup>3</sup> will dwell securely (in safety)*." This is an expression of confidence where the restored remnant community will live under Yahweh's protection.<sup>4</sup>

Mowinckel comments correctly that this salvation (yš<sup>c</sup>) "includes not only deliverance, preservation, and victory in war, but also every kind of well being, good fortune, and ideal conditions."<sup>5</sup>

This rejuvenation is directed toward Judah *and* Israel. While it has been put forward that "Judah" and "Israel" are being used synonymously,<sup>6</sup> I suggest that

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<sup>1</sup>Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 179.

<sup>2</sup>CKD, 331. Cf. Thompson, 491, who rightly ties the realization of blessing in the land with kingship exercised in the context of faithfulness to covenant stipulations.

<sup>3</sup>LXX reads "Jerusalem" instead of Israel. Cf. Jer 33:16.

<sup>4</sup>Jepsen, "אָמָן," 1:292-322. This expression is found repeatedly in the OT: Lev 25:18, 19; 26:5; Deut 12:10; 33:12, 28; Isa 32:17; Jer 33:16; 32:37; Ezek 28:26; 34:25, 27, 28; 38:8, 14; 39:26; Zech 14:11.

<sup>5</sup>Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 177. This is an approximation of *šālôm*, which points to "safety and security, good order and morality in the nation, fellowship ('wholeness') and brotherhood, in short whatever may be described as material well-being and sound social and moral conditions."

<sup>6</sup>CKD, 330.

such usage points in an eschatological direction; i.e., it points to faith in the future,<sup>1</sup> "the new and the entirely other (occurring) after a break with what has gone before,"<sup>2</sup> the inauguration of a new era.<sup>3</sup> When the prophet speaks of the salvation of the remnant community, the idea of the glorious days of the united kingdom under the united monarchy comes to view. This is especially highlighted in view of the successful rulership of the *ṣemah ṣaddîq*, the Messiah. Mowinckel says convincingly, "The Messiah is the future, eschatological realization of the ideal of Kingship."<sup>4</sup> He is raised up by God not by accident of history. He is the One through whom the redemptive, salvific activity of God, on behalf of the (eschatological) remnant, will be effected.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robert P. Carroll, "Eschatological Delay in the Prophetic Tradition?" *ZAW* 94 (1982): 48.

<sup>2</sup>Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 11.

<sup>3</sup>Raitt, *A Theology of Exile*, 215-217. See also W. J. Wessels, "Jeremiah 33:15-16 as a Reinterpretation of Jeremiah 23:5-6," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 47 (1991): 327.

<sup>4</sup>Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 156. Cf. H. L. Ellison, *The Centrality of the Messianic Idea for the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale Press, 1953), 12, who claims, "The Messiah is an eschatological figure."

<sup>5</sup>Contra to E. Jenni, "Eschatology in the Old Testament," *IDB* (1962), 2:130, who sees the Messianic hope as being invalid in the book of Jeremiah. Hausmann, 208, says that the remnant thought is encountered in combination with Messianism but is not fundamentally connected to or an integral part of it.

Further, this is the intent of the expression *hinnēh yāmim bāʾim*, "behold, days are coming." This is an eschatological formula as attested by Walter C. Kaiser.<sup>1</sup> This points to a distant rather than an immediate future and is indicative of a decisive break in the history of the Davidic monarchy and the Judean state. It is not merely the introduction of a prediction of the replacement of one Judean ruler "with another within the framework of a continuing historical institution of monarchy. It involves rather, as does vs. 1-4, an acceptance of the inevitability of political collapse and disintegration."<sup>2</sup>

Finally, the name of the king is given: *YHWH ṣidqēnū*, "Yahweh is our Righteousness." This is a biting play on king Zedekiah for this name is practically Zedekiah written backwards, *ṣidqī-yāhū*. This means "Yahweh is righteousness/my righteousness" but the king himself was far from such. Like his predecessors Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin, Zedekiah had "little interest in the establishment of God's righteous kingdom . . . [He had] perpetuated the policy of *Realpolitik* and opposed Jeremiah's prophetic message."<sup>3</sup> But this new king *par excellence* is already characterized as righteous. Hence, the intent is a reversal of all the aspects of Zedekiah's (and previous rulers') reign and fate: whereas Zedekiah sought a

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<sup>1</sup>Walter C. Kaiser, "The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31-34," *JETS* 15 (1972): 19. See also von Rad, "'Day' in the OT," 946.

<sup>2</sup>McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah, I*, 560. Cf. Rudolph, 202; Keil, *The Prophecies of Jeremiah*, 2, 38; and M. Sekine, "Davidsbund und Sinaibund bei Jeremia," *VT* 9 (1959): 55, who maintains that the phrase *ʿaḥarē hayyāmim hāhēm* is a technical term which points to the eschaton.

<sup>3</sup>VanGemeren, 312.

miraculous intervention but only the pronouncement of judgment was given (21:1-10; chap. 34) and the scattering of the people, this new king will succeed in the deliverance and regathering of the remnant; whereas Zedekiah failed to live up to his name, this king will not fail.

The final oracle (vss. 7-8)<sup>1</sup> of this pericope continues the message of hope already present in the previous two oracles. The expression *lākēn hinnēh-yāmīn ba<sup>2</sup>im*, "therefore, days are coming,"<sup>2</sup> effectively links this with the previous oracle, with the divine formula, *ʾum ʾadōnāy*, "says the Lord," connecting all three units.

Structurally, it is based on the replacement of an old oath with a new one. What is recounted is the Exodus from Egypt, which is used in the first oath formula, "*As Yahweh lives who brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt.*" The new oath<sup>3</sup> now invokes a new Exodus that surpasses in grandeur the original Exodus from Egypt. This new Exodus has a wider scope than the first, regathering the people from the north and from all the lands where they were driven. This scope suggests an eschatological proportion. Klein points in this direction when he says that

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<sup>1</sup>These verses occur with minor variations in Jer 16:14-15.

<sup>2</sup>M. Weinfeld, "Jeremiah and the Spiritual Metamorphosis of Israel," *ZAW* 88 (1976): 18, has demonstrated that this and similar expressions are particularly Jeremianic, occurring numerous times within the book of Jeremiah and only four times outside: 1 Sam 2:31; 2 Kgs 20:17 = Isa 39:6; Amos 8:11; 9:13. He shows also that the introductory formulae are associated mainly with the return of the captivity, the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the shoot of David, as well as with vengeance executed on the enemies of Israel.

<sup>3</sup>Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 238, calls this a new *confessio fidei* that summarizes "the account of what Yahweh had done in the great decisive moment of the Exodus."

Yahweh's faithfulness is expressed in this new act of salvation, the antitype of the old: "He is not merely a deliverer in the past tense. Rather, he will deliver in the future from the north country *and from all the countries* where he had driven the people. His new action surpasses the old."<sup>1</sup>

The idea here is that as in the first Exodus there was a single unified nation, so now with the restoration of the remnant in terms of a new Exodus there is the reunification of the people and the name Israel returns. Stephen D. Hicks, in commenting on the motif of restoration and renewal, points to an eschatological fulfillment when he adds that "nothing past or present conforms to this vision. Its realization belongs to a 'redeemed people' . . . in the messianic age."<sup>2</sup>

This new Exodus of the regathered or the remnant community is tacitly connected to the New Covenant of Jer 31:31-34. Inasmuch as the Exodus from Egypt was ratified by the establishment of the covenant at Sinai, so now the new Exodus is to be ratified by a New Covenant. In both cases God took the initiative, but just as the new Exodus replaces the old one as the decisive saving event,<sup>3</sup> so too must the New Covenant replace the former. Hasel focused on this in his description of the

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<sup>1</sup>Klein, "Jeremiah 23:1-8," 171.

<sup>2</sup>Stephen D. Hicks, "The Prophetic Literality of Tribal Reconstruction," in *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison*, ed. Avraham Gileadi (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), 280. Cf. R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1969), 853.

<sup>3</sup>McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah, I*, 566.

eschatological remnant community as "a remnant comprising those with a 'new heart' who live on the basis of the 'new covenant' (Jer. 31:31-34)."<sup>1</sup>

The "new heart" also provides a connection between the remnant and the New Covenant in that it embodies the ideal of interiority.<sup>2</sup> It is this "internalization that assures the success of the new community."<sup>3</sup> Holladay has noted the nexus between this restored remnant community and the New Covenant: "If Israel is to swear by a God of the new exodus, then that new exodus will have to overshadow the old, just as the new covenant (31:31-34) will overshadow the old."<sup>4</sup>

The fundamental quality of the first Exodus and covenant was to establish the people. So too, the new Exodus and the New Covenant are to reestablish the people, that is, the remnant community. Both share the reality embodied in Yahweh's

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<sup>1</sup>Hasel, "Remnant," *ISBE* 4:133; idem, *The Remnant*, 395-399, has much to say about the eschatological remnant in the book of Isaiah. See also Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, 188, 189, 367; Dreyfus, "Remnant," 429.

<sup>2</sup>H. D. Potter, "The New Covenant in Jeremiah XXXI 31-34," *VT* 33 (1983): 350; Jenni, "Eschatology in the OT," 130; Weinfeld, 28-30; J. Swetnam, "Why Was Jeremiah's New Covenant New?" in *Studies on Prophecy: A Collection of Twelve Papers*, VT Supplement, vol. 26, ed. G. W. Anderson (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 111-113.

<sup>3</sup>Kaiser, 12.

<sup>4</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 623.

*Bundesformel* (Covenant Formula):<sup>1</sup> *I will be your God and you will be my people* (Jer 31:33; Deut 29:12, 13).<sup>2</sup>

Jeremiah had criticized the people and the leadership for breaking and abandoning the covenant.<sup>3</sup> In its place they had adhered to institutions such as the temple which had degenerated to mere human structure maintained and protected by mere human effort and ingenuity.<sup>4</sup> But Jeremiah now vigorously declares that Yahweh will inaugurate a new era with the renewed remnant community ruled under the auspices of the New Covenant with a new king.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>R. Smend, *Die Bundesformel*, Theologische Studien 68 (Zurich: EVZ, 1963), 6.

<sup>2</sup>G. F. Hasel, *Covenant in Blood* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1982), 101, 102; Steven M. Fettke, *Messages to a Nation in Crisis: An Introduction to the Prophecy of Jeremiah* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982), 49; Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles*, 82-83; B. W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1986), 394.

Kaiser, 12, insists that "promise is actually God's single *all* encompassing declaration" and that this formula epitomizes the content of promise. In his assessment of this promise, VanGemenen, 314, says, "The hope of the new community remains the same covenantal promise." He adds, 502, n. 90, that this reflects the eschatological era.

<sup>3</sup>For a thoroughgoing study of how Jeremiah was a critic of society and how he used social criticism to illustrate the people's failure of realizing the covenantal ideal, see Laurent Wisser, *Jérémie, critique de la vie sociale: justice sociale et connaissance de Dieu dans le livre de Jérémie* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1982).

<sup>4</sup>VanGemenen, 312; William J. Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning: Revelation 21-22 and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), 83-86.

<sup>5</sup>See G. Pattison, "The Moment of the Void: A Meditation on the Book of Jeremiah," *ExpT* 97 (1985-86): 132-136. He claims for Jeremiah an ultimate horizon, a place for meeting and listening to God who in turn is attentive to human needs and well being.

### Translation and Textual Considerations

(7) *For thus says the Lord*  
*"Shout for joy<sup>1</sup> for Jacob*  
*and raise shouts for the first of the nations;<sup>2</sup>*  
*proclaim, give praise, and say,*  
*'The Lord has saved his<sup>3</sup> people<sup>4</sup>*  
*The remnant [š<sup>2</sup>ērîṭ] of Israel.'<sup>5</sup>*

(8) Behold, I will cause them to come from the north country  
 and I will gather them from the farthest ends of the earth;  
 among them the blind and the lame,<sup>6</sup>  
 the woman with child and she who is in travail, together  
 a great company they shall return.

(9) Behold,<sup>7</sup> with weeping they shall come,<sup>8</sup>  
 and with consolation/solace<sup>9</sup> I will bring them back.

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<sup>1</sup>The LXX lacks *šimhah*, "joy," "gladness."

<sup>2</sup>BHS suggests *hārîm*, "mountains," for *gôyîm*, "nations."

<sup>3</sup>LXX and Tg. both have "his," which seems to fit better in place of MT "your."

<sup>4</sup>MT *hōša<sup>c</sup> ʔa<sup>a</sup>dōnāy ʔet-<sup>c</sup>amm<sup>e</sup>kā*, "Save, O Lord, your people." LXX renders it *esōsen kurios ton laon autou*, "The Lord has saved his people." Cf. BHS, *hōši<sup>c</sup>a ʔa<sup>a</sup>dōnāy ʔet-<sup>c</sup>ammō*. While MT is possible, it fits less smoothly. See Bright, *Jeremiah*, 273.

<sup>5</sup>This phrase *ʔet š<sup>2</sup>ērîṭ yisrā<sup>2</sup>ēl*, "the remnant of Israel," is seen by BHS as a gloss.

<sup>6</sup>MT *bām<sup>c</sup> iwwēr ūpissēah*, "among them the blind and the lame," is rendered by LXX as *en heortē phasek*, "in the feast of the passover" (which equals BHS' *b<sup>e</sup>mō<sup>c</sup> ēḏ pesah*).

<sup>7</sup>MT *hēnnāh*, "here," at the end of vs. 8 is understood by BHS as *hinnēh*, "behold," and is taken as the first word in vs. 9.

<sup>8</sup>LXX has *exēlthon*, "they went forth," which equals BHS' *yās<sup>2</sup>ū*.

<sup>9</sup>MT *ūb<sup>e</sup>taḥ<sup>e</sup>nūnîm*, "and with supplication for favor," is understood by LXX as *kai en paraklēsei*, "and with consolation/solace," which suggests *ūb<sup>e</sup>tanhūmîm*.

I will make them walk by brooks of water,  
 in a straight path in which they will not stumble.  
 For I am a father to Israel,  
 and Ephraim is my first-born.

### Structure

The messenger formula *kôh* <sup>ᵔ</sup>*amar* <sup>ᵔ</sup>*dônây*, "Thus says the Lord" (vs. 7), introduces this section which extends through vs. 9. The unit, tied together by an inclusio that uses "Israel's alternate names of endearment (Jacob in vs. 7 and Ephraim in vs. 9), follows the structure of the prophecy of salvation."<sup>1</sup> There are three sections:

1. The Indication of the Situation (vs. 7) ( This is an exhortation accompanied by five imperatives. There is a short victory song [vs. 7a] and an account of Yahweh's deeds [vs. 7b].)

2. The Message of Salvation (vss. 8-9b) (This is introduced by the typical participial clause beginning with *hinnî*, "behold, I," in vs. 8. The message of salvation has two parts as indicated by the repetition of *hinnêh*, "behold" and *bô*<sup>ᵔ</sup> "come" at the beginning of vss. 8 and 9 respectively.)

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according to *BHS*. Cf. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 591; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 274; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 185.

<sup>1</sup>James Oliver Edlin, "Literary Design in Jeremiah 30-33" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985), 78. Cf. Koch, 213, 214; March, 162; VanGemenen, 407; Antoon Schoors, *I Am God Your Savior: A Form-Critical Study of the Main Genres in Is. XL-LV*, SVT 24 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), 32-46.

3. The Concluding Characterization (vs. 9c) where Yahweh's self-description is as a father to Israel.<sup>1</sup>

### **Historical Background**

Since no dateline is provided, it is difficult, if not impossible, to assign a historical setting for this poem, or even the series of poems contained in chap. 31. It has been advanced that the repeated use of the term "Ephraim" (31:6, 9, 18, 20) indicates a time early in Jeremiah's career, when he made a series of addresses to Northern Israel. This points to Josiah's program of reunion between North and South.<sup>2</sup> Carroll has rejected this view, claiming that "the deeply emotional and idyllic images of pastoral life" point to someone other than Jeremiah and to a time far removed from him.<sup>3</sup>

John Bright is willing to say that Jer 31:2-6 and 15-22 are genuinely Jeremianic and derive from his early preaching to Northern Israel. Other poems, vss. 7-9 and 10-14, "seem to represent an adaptation and application of Jeremiah prophecies to the situation of the exiles."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Edlin, 78, 79.

<sup>2</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 158. He sees this passage as being part of what is labelled as "The Early Recession to the North." Although he claims, "There is no way to specify more narrowly a period of time for this material," he proposes a span of 615-609 B. C. as the historical setting. He says further that while the material was initially directed to the North, that Jeremiah reshaped it for Judah at the end of his career in light of the fall of Jerusalem and the consequent exile.

<sup>3</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 588.

<sup>4</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 286. The other poem, 31:12-17, was composed by Jeremiah, just after the fall of Jerusalem.

G. P. Couturier holds that Jer 31:1-22 is derived from early in the prophet's preaching, before any exiles left Judah in 597 B.C. However, references to "Judah" (30:3-4), "Zion" (30:17; 31:6), and "all the families of the earth" (31:1) indicate later additions to the poems which were originally directed to Northern Israel. These additions now make the entire pericope applicable to all the people.<sup>1</sup>

Hyatt informs the reader that the general tone of hope and cheerfulness in these poems seem to be more appropriately concerned with the time of Gedaliah, where essential Jeremianic themes are recollected "by the ever-deepening gyre of suffering, now turning from the vortex of pity and fear to the rising exit of eternal promises."<sup>2</sup>

Despite the varying opinions regarding the historical setting, one can agree with the observation of several scholars that throughout the series of poems in chap. 31 there is "a fixed expectation of a return of exiled Israelites."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>G. P. Couturier, *Jeremiah*, The Jerome Bible Commentary (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 326. Both Nicholson, *Jer 26-52*, 60, and Thompson, 564, agree that the term "Israel" may refer to all Israel and not merely the northern kingdom.

For a critical survey of the textual questions of this passage, see Böhmer, 11-20; Norbert Lohfink, "Der junge Jeremia als Propagandist und Poet. Zum Grundstock von Jer 30-31," in *Le Livre de Jérémie: Le prophète et son milieu, les oracles et leur transmission*, ed. P. -M. Bogaert (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1981), 352-354.

## Interpretation

Yahweh's great act of ingathering is described in terms of joy and jubilation. This is in light of the triumphal homecoming described in Jer 31:2-6. The Indication of the Situation begins with a call to sing (vs. 7a)<sup>1</sup> in joyful celebration because Jacob, "'fewest of all peoples' (Deut 7:7) should become the chief of the nations in Yahweh's great action to come."<sup>2</sup> Norbert Mendecki calls this an "eschatological praise."<sup>3</sup> The tumble of imperatives--"sing," "shout," "proclaim," "give praise," "say" suggest a sense of eagerness as "breathlessly the hearers are to shout the news of Yahweh's deliverance of his people."<sup>4</sup>

The reason for this joyous proclamation is given in vs. 7b where the account of Yahweh's deed is given: He has saved His people, the  $\text{š}^{\text{r}}\text{ērîṭ yisrā}^{\text{ʔ}}\text{ēl}$ , "remnant of Israel."<sup>5</sup> Yahweh takes the initiative to save His people even though it

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<sup>1</sup>Edlin, 79. The expression of singing (*shl*) points to a kind of shrill neighing in public performances. Other authorities agree: *BDB*, 843; Ludwig Kohler and Walter Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958), 796. Both translate "neigh," "cry shrilly."

<sup>2</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 184. Hyatt, "Jeremiah," 1029, thinks that "head of the nations" should be emended to "top of the mountains." This is not necessary since Israel is similarly described elsewhere (Deut 26:19; Amos 6:1).

<sup>3</sup>Norbert Mendecki, "Jer 31:7-9: Berührungen mit der Botschaft Deutero-Jesajas?" in *Wünschet Jerusalem Frieden*, ed. M. Augustin and Klaus-Dietrich Schunck (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1988), 323.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* Shouts for joy are common in the book of Isa: 12:6; 14:7; 36:10; 44:23; 48:23; 48:20; 44:23; 49:13; 51:11; 54:1; 55:12. This leads to the suggestion of some that Jeremiah is dependent on Isaiah.

<sup>5</sup>Thompson, 569, says hesitantly that this remnant may refer to a small number of people who escaped the catastrophe of 721 B. C. "and were purified by the exile to reconstitute the new Israel that would be faithful to Yahweh." This would be

appears that the remnant is insignificant. He has elected to effect a work of salvation on their behalf. This is in the direction of Hertrich who speaks of the structure of prophetic preaching relative to the rise of the concept of the remnant. The prophet preaches of: (1) the destruction of the people through the judgment of God; (2) the salvation of the people granted to them by God; and (3) the opportunity of the people to seek God.<sup>1</sup> Destruction is already evident and the act of salvation is now played out in these verses. The last factor is already stated in Jer 31:6b, "*Come, let us go up to Zion, to the Lord our God.*" Renewal of the remnant is not effected by anything that recommends them to Yahweh. Hertrich's comment is certainly favorable,

The remnant has its origin, not in the quality of those saved, but in the saving action of God. . . . The prophet does not have the task of creating or gathering the remnant. God creates it. . . . Nor does this pitiful remnant derive its existence from itself. . . . The remnant has its existence in Yahweh alone.<sup>2</sup>

The Message of Salvation (vss. 8-9b) describes the restorative actions of Yahweh on behalf of the remnant. Vs. 8a sets out in parallel clauses the places from which the remnant will be gathered in:

*Behold, I will cause them to come from the land of the north.*

*I will gather them from the farthest ends of the earth.*

Here Yahweh takes the initiative to bring about the restoration. He is the causative agent for executing this freedom. The northern land is indicative of exile.

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comparable to the good figs of chap. 24.

<sup>1</sup>Hertrich, 198.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 203.

The foe from the north (Jer 1:14; 4:5-6; 6:1, 22; 10:22) is eventually identified as the Babylonians (25:9). The phrase "ends of the earth" seems to be wider, although no specific geographical location seems likely.<sup>1</sup> In any event, these designations indicate where the enemy lived; but now they are the locations from which the exiled people will return. In view here is a *reversal of the fate* of the nation. As they were scattered to the farthest parts of the earth, so now will be their renewal.

Vs. 8b now describes those who will constitute the  $\text{עִרְוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל}$ : the blind, the lame, pregnant women, as well as those in labor. No one will be excluded. Carroll astutely notes how this affects the happy reversal of the fate of the nation:

The mighty army which came down from the north and destroyed Judah-Jerusalem was an appallingly fierce and vicious force (4:13; 5:15-17; 6:22-26) whereas the army of people which now returns to its own land includes the blind and the lame, as well as the pregnant and those who have given birth recently. One is a very human procession of the weak and those who carry the promise of new life for the nation; the other an almost superhuman force of mighty warriors whose weaponry was like an open grave (5:16). The first brought death with it and left behind it a dead kingdom. The second brings with it life and the remaking of the land into a place full of joy and prosperity (cf. vss. 12-14).<sup>2</sup>

Vs. 8c describes the *quantitative value* of the remnant:  $\text{קָהָל גָּדוֹל}$ , "a great company/assembly." Hertrich had already pointed to this by his indication that since the remnant is preserved by God's action, then it cannot solely be a quantitative

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<sup>1</sup>Thompson, 569.

<sup>2</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 591. He adds that the feminine images here are appropriate for this restoration theme, since the poems which deal with the destruction of the city and the nation use the feminine as an image of the raped and violated nation, the victim. "The great reversal transforms the feminine back into its active state of that which gives life and sustains it."

one in the sense that the remnant has to be small. Even though the judgment has been great it does not necessarily follow that the remnant must be small.<sup>1</sup> However, a strange picture is painted of this "great assembly" in that it is comprised of the weak, the physically disabled, and those not in a position to help themselves (vs. 8b). They are not fit to fight or bring terror to their enemies, the *gôy gādôl*, "great nation," their enemy from the north in Jer 6:22. Yet these are the very ones whom Yahweh will bring home. This is further evidence of the miraculous nature of the event.<sup>2</sup>

Vs. 9a continues the Message of Salvation with the repetition of "behold" and "come." This colon tells *how* the remnant shall return: with weeping. This weeping is understood as tears of repentance that issue in salvation and the joy of restoration, which is undeserved.<sup>3</sup>

Yahweh's actions on behalf of the returning remnant are announced: He will lead them with consolations. Yahweh acts on the initiative, already hinted to in vs. 8a, of effecting this triumphal march by leading them by brooks of water. This "metaphor of refreshment"<sup>4</sup> is not unique to the book of Jeremiah.<sup>5</sup> The procession,

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<sup>1</sup>Herntrich, 204.

<sup>2</sup>Thompson, 570.

<sup>3</sup>Keil, *Jeremiah*, 2:21; Feinberg, 568.

<sup>4</sup>Feinberg, 568.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Deut 8:7; 10:7; Ps 23:2; Isa 41:18; 43:20; 49:10. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 185, thinks that since this idea is used in Deut 10:7 to give an idealistic picture of the land of Canaan, then it may be that Jeremiah is using this metaphor as a kind of shorthand for the lovely land to which they would return.

led by God, will be along the *dereḳ yāšār*, "straight path" which is reminiscent of *dereḳ yēšārāh*, "straight path" in Ps 107:7, along which Yahweh led His people to safety in the Exodus. The use of a similar phrase here suggests that the Exodus is again in view, this time a new Exodus.<sup>1</sup> Bright describes this restoration of the remnant similarly. It is "the picture of Yahweh gathering his people from all parts of the earth and leading them on a 'new Exodus' march, along a highway through a desert where streams gush forth."<sup>2</sup>

This new Exodus implies election<sup>3</sup> because in biblical thought the remnant is composed not merely "of those who survive disaster, but the heirs of Israel's election."<sup>4</sup> Connected to this idea of the remnant and election is the idea of the eschatological deliverance of the remnant, which is connected with the deliverance out of Egypt.<sup>5</sup> The theme of the new Exodus envelops the election motif from the first exodus but on a scale of greater grandeur that recommends itself to a possible eschatological level.

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<sup>1</sup>Theodore M. Ludwig, "The Shape of Hope: Jeremiah's Book of Consolation," *CTM* 39 (1968): 537. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 185, claims that since the first seven verses of Ps 107 match the word of Jer 31:7-9, then Jeremiah must have made use of wording from Ps 107 (and Deut) to set forth the "new Exodus."

<sup>2</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 281, n. 6. There is a strong connection between this and the latter chapters of Isaiah, both in style and in thought. Cf. Isa 35:5-10; 40:3-5; 10-11; 41:18-20; 42:16; 43:1-7; 18-21; 44:3-5; 46:3-4; 48:20-21; 49:9-13.

<sup>3</sup>Klein, "Jeremiah 23:1-8," 172, indicates that exodus is a sign of election.

<sup>4</sup>Rowley, *The Biblical Doctrine of Election*, 83.

<sup>5</sup>Herntrich, 201, n. 25.

The concluding characterization of this prophecy of salvation is given in vs. 9c: Yahweh is the father of the nation and Ephraim is His firstborn son. As Thompson indicates, the term "father" is not a frequent designation for God in the OT. It is used in Exod 4:22 to describe God's fatherhood of Israel in Egypt, and in Deut 32:6 to describe the close bond between God and Israel. Hosea (11:1-6) employs the same father/son picture as a symbol of Yahweh's favor toward Israel during the Exodus. Jeremiah's use of the figure lies in this context.<sup>1</sup> This father/son image depicts the special favor that is expressed in Israel's elective covenantal relationship to God.<sup>2</sup>

The name of the son, Ephraim, goes back to the record of the blessing of Jacob's two sons (Ephraim and Manasseh) in Gen 48:8-20. Although Ephraim was undeserving of the blessing, he received it instead of his older brother, Manasseh. So by virtue of the blessing, Ephraim indeed became the firstborn. Jeremiah employs this imagery to show that "the nation which suffered the humiliation and devastation of defeat and scattering to the ends of the earth is brought back in triumph as *Yahweh's heir to the land*. The nation's fecundity and good fortune are due to Yahweh being its father."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thompson, 570.

<sup>2</sup>Gerald Cooke, "The Israelite King as Son of God," *ZAW* 73 (1961): 217.

<sup>3</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 592 (emphasis mine).

This signifies a reversal of the situation from judgment to salvation.

Further, the father/son imagery favors the election motif.<sup>1</sup> By extension, election implies special privileges such as sonship, bearing the name of Yahweh; and the inheritance of the land. The exile brought rejection of sonship and dispossession of the land. Therefore, the salvation of the remnant in a new Exodus means the restoration of the sonship and the repossession of the inheritance.<sup>2</sup> At the center of this stands God's paternal, elective love, which forms the basis of the realization of the renewal of the whole people.<sup>3</sup>

Jer 50:4-20

#### Translation and Textual Considerations

(4) "In those days and in that time," says the Lord,<sup>4</sup> "the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together,<sup>5</sup> walking and weeping they shall go; and they shall seek the Lord their God. (5) They shall ask the way to Zion, with faces turned toward it, saying, 'Come,<sup>6</sup> let us join ourselves<sup>7</sup> to the Lord

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<sup>1</sup>This image is frequent in the OT: Exod 4:22; 2 Sam 7:14; 1 Chr 17:13; 22:10; Ps 89:26, 27; Jer 3:19; Hos 11:1.

<sup>2</sup>Sohn, 80-89.

<sup>3</sup>Ludwig, 530.

<sup>4</sup>LXX omits "says the Lord" in vss. 1, 10, and 20.

<sup>5</sup>BHS takes the expression "they and the children of Judah together" as a gloss or addition because it is claimed that "Israel" includes both Israel *and* Judah. Cf. Rudolph, 298; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 391.

<sup>6</sup>MT *bō<sup>3</sup>û*, "come," is imperative. LXX reads *kai hēxousi*, "and they shall come," which equals *ûbā<sup>3</sup>û*; i.e. the perfect with waw consecutive. Some MSS like Tg. and Vg. understand the imperfect *yābō<sup>3</sup>û*.

in an everlasting covenant which will never be forgotten.' (6) My people have been lost sheep;<sup>1</sup> their shepherds have led them astray; they turned them away<sup>2</sup> on the mountains; from mountain to hill they have gone, they have forgotten their fold. (7) All who found them have devoured them, and their enemies have said, 'We are not guilty,<sup>3</sup> for they have sinned against the Lord, their true habitation, the hope of their fathers, the Lord.'<sup>4</sup>

(8) Flee from the midst of Babylon, and from the land of the Chaldeans go out;<sup>5</sup> and be as he-goats<sup>6</sup> before the flock. (9) For behold, I am stirring up and bringing up<sup>7</sup> against Babylon a company of great nations, from the north

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<sup>1</sup>Some exegetes read MT *w'nilwû*, as *w'nillāweh*, "and let us cleave/join ourselves," if the imperative of MT is retained. Others read *ûbā<sup>2</sup>û w'nilwû*, "and they shall come and they shall cleave." LXX reads *kai hēxousi kai katapheuxontai*, "and they shall come and flee for refuge." Cf. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 340, who allows for both options.

<sup>2</sup>K uses sg. *hāyāh*; Q uses plu. *hāyû*. K treats *°ammî*, "my people," as a collective requiring a sg. verb. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 391, agrees that "given the sg. *šō<sup>2</sup>n* (collective) and the sg. *°ammî* and the plu. adjective *°ōb<sup>2</sup>dōt* either (K or Q) will do."

<sup>3</sup>Reading Q *šōb<sup>2</sup>bûm* (*šōb*, polel). K *šōbēbîm*, is an adjective modifying *hārîm* and would read "(to) faithless mountains." Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 821, attests that the expression means ("on the) mountains they wander (apostasize)." BHS proposes *mōrēhem*, "their leaders," in place of *hārîm*, the *m* lost by haplography.

<sup>4</sup>MT *lō<sup>2</sup> ne<sup>2</sup>šām*, "we are not guilty," is understood by LXX as *mē anōmen autous*, "let us not leave them alone," which is equal to BHS *lō<sup>2</sup> niššā<sup>2</sup>ēm*.

<sup>5</sup>MT has *°adōnāy*, "Lord" at the end of vs. 7. Some, following LXX omit it here, but read it as *hōy* at the beginning of vs. 8. Cf. Zech 2:10-11 where *hōy hōy* is prefixed to a command to flee. See also Bright, *Jeremiah*, 340.

<sup>6</sup>K reads *yās<sup>2</sup>û* (perf), "they have gone out;" or *yēs<sup>2</sup>û* (impf), "they will go out." Q reads *šē<sup>2</sup>û* (impv) which is followed by Syr. and Tg. LXX reads *ûsē<sup>2</sup>û*. MT places the *athnah* here. Some exegetes transpose it to "the Chaldeans."

<sup>7</sup>MT *k<sup>c</sup>attûdîm*, "like he-goats" (i.e., the sheep that lead the flock), is read by LXX as *hōsper drakontes*, "like dragons, serpents," perhaps a corruption of *archontes*, "rulers."

<sup>8</sup>LXX lacks *ûma<sup>c</sup>leh*, "and bringing up," and *g<sup>c</sup>dōlîm*, "great (nations)," both words tentatively suggested by BHS as dittographies.

country; and they shall array themselves<sup>1</sup> against her, from there she shall be taken. Their arrows are like a skilled warrior<sup>2</sup> who does not return empty-handed. (10) Chaldea shall be plundered; all who plunder her shall be sated, says the Lord.

(11)<sup>3</sup> Though you rejoice, though you exult,  
O plunderers of my heritage, though you frisk like a threshing heifer,<sup>4</sup>  
and neigh like stallions, (12) your mother shall be utterly shamed,  
and she who bore you shall be disgraced.<sup>5</sup> Behold, she shall be the last of the  
nations, a wilderness, dry (land) and desert,<sup>6</sup> (13) Because of the wrath of the  
Lord she shall not be inhabited, but shall be an utter desolation; every one who  
passes by Babylon shall be appalled, and hiss because of all her wounds. (14)  
Set yourselves in array against Babylon round about, all you that bend the bow;  
shoot<sup>7</sup> at her, spare no arrows, for she has sinned against the Lord.<sup>8</sup>  
(15) Raise a shout against her round about,<sup>9</sup> she has surrendered;<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>BHS suggests reading the impf *ya<sup>c</sup>arkû* (in place of MT *w<sup>c</sup>arkû*) in order to match the next impf *tillākēd*, "she shall be taken."

<sup>2</sup>MT reads *k<sup>c</sup>gibbôr maškîl*, "like a bereaving warrior." However, it appears that the reading of Tg. and Vg. is more fitting, *maškîl*, "successful;" i.e., a skillful warrior.

<sup>3</sup>All four verbs: "rejoice," "exult," "thresh," and "neigh," have a K in feminine singular and a Q in masculine plural. The plural, "plunderers of" indicates that Q is more likely. See Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 392.

<sup>4</sup>MT *k<sup>c</sup>eglāh dāšāh*, "like a threshing heifer," is read by LXX as *hōs boidia en botanē*, "like calves in grass," which is equal to BHS *k<sup>c</sup>eglē baddeše<sup>2</sup>*.

<sup>5</sup>MT *hāp<sup>r</sup>rāh yôlad<sup>r</sup>kem*, "she who bore you shall be ashamed," is read by LXX as *mētēr ep' agatha*, "mother for good," i.e., the mother who bore you for good.

<sup>6</sup>LXX relaces MT three synonyms with only one word, *erēmos*, "desert."

<sup>7</sup>MT *y<sup>c</sup>dû*; a few MSS read *y<sup>r</sup>rû*. Both have the same meaning, "shoot."

<sup>8</sup>This line is omitted in the LXX.

<sup>9</sup>"Round about" is omitted in the LXX.

<sup>10</sup>MT *nā<sup>r</sup>nāh yādāh*, lit. "She has given her hand," is read by LXX as *paraluthēsan hai cheires autēs*, "her hands are weakened." Cf. Tg. which is equal to BHS' *nitt<sup>r</sup>nah b<sup>y</sup>yādām*, "she is given into their hand."

her bulwarks<sup>1</sup> have fallen, her walls are thrown down  
 For this is the vengeance of the Lord: Take vengeance on her,  
 do to her as she has done. (16) Cut off<sup>2</sup> from Babylon the sower,<sup>3</sup>  
 and the one who handles the sickle in time of harvest; because of the sword of  
 the oppressor,<sup>4</sup> everyone shall turn to his own people, and everyone shall flee to  
 his own land.<sup>5</sup> (17) Israel is a hunted sheep driven away by lions.<sup>6</sup> First the  
 king of Assyria devoured him, and now at last Nebuchadrezzar<sup>7</sup> king of  
 Babylon has gnawed his bones. (18) Therefore, thus says the Lord of host, the  
 God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing punishment on the king of Assyria. (19) I  
 will restore Israel to his pasture, and he shall feed on Carmel and in Bashan,<sup>8</sup>  
 and his desire shall be satisfied on the hills of Ephraim and in Gilead. (20) *'In  
 those days and in that time,' says the Lord, 'Iniquity shall be sought in Israel,  
 and there shall be none; and sin in Judah, and none shall be found; for I will  
 pardon those whom I leave as a remnant [ʔāšʔīr].'*"

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<sup>1</sup>ʔāšyōteyhā, "her bulwarks," is a hapax legomenon. LXX reads *hai epalxeis autēs*, "her battlements."

<sup>2</sup>BHS suggests reading hiphil *hakritū*, in place of Qal *kirtū*, "cut off." LXX offers *exolethreusate*, "completely cut off."

<sup>3</sup>MT *zōrē<sup>c</sup>a*, "sower," is read by LXX as *sperma*, "seed," the equivalent of BHS' *zera<sup>c</sup>*.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Jer 46:16 where the same expression is used, *mipp<sup>c</sup>nē hereb hayyōnāh*, "because of the sword of the oppressor."

<sup>5</sup>A few MSS have ʔel-ʔaršō, instead of MT ʔ<sup>ʔ</sup>aršō. The meaning is unaffected.

<sup>6</sup>A suffix seems to be required for MT ʔ<sup>a</sup>rāyōt hiddîhû, "lions have driven away," perhaps BHS' suggested *hiddîhûhû*, "have driven *him* away." LXX reads *leontes exōsan auton*, "lions have driven *him* out."

<sup>7</sup>LXX lacks this name.

<sup>8</sup>LXX lacks "Bashan."

**Structure**

Jer 50:20 is the closing verse of a pericope which extends from vs. 4 as demarcated by the expression *bayyāmīm hāhēmāmāh ūbā<sup>c</sup> ēl<sup>t</sup> hahī<sup>ṣ</sup> n<sup>ṣ</sup>um ṣ<sup>a</sup>dōnāy*, "in those days and in that time, says the Lord" (vss. 4, 20). It may be divided into five sections, which are structured chiastically: vss. 4-7; 8-10; 11-13; 14-16; and 17-20.<sup>1</sup>

Sec 1	A	Israel's return (vss. 4-5) [Outcome]
	B	Israel's past fate (vss. 6-7) [Situation]
Sec 2	C	Flight from Babylon (vs. 8) [Outcome]
	D	The foe against Babylon (vss. 9-10) [Intervention]
Sec 3	E	The plunderers meet their doom (vss. 11-13) [Situation-Intervention]
Sec 4	D <sup>1</sup>	The foe against Babylon (vss. 14-16a) [Intervention]
	C <sup>1</sup>	Flight from Babylon (vs. 16b) [Outcome]
Sec 5	B <sup>1</sup>	Israel's past fate (vs. 17) [Situation]
	F	Babylon's Punishment (vs. 18) [Intervention]

A<sup>1</sup> Israel's return (vss. 19-20) [Outcome].

The balance AA<sup>1</sup> is reinforced by several repetitions: (1) the phrase "in those days and in that time" (vss. 4, 20);<sup>2</sup> (2) the name "Israel" in parallelism with

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<sup>1</sup>Aitken, 31-33. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 823, reckons six units: vss. 4-5; 6-7; 8-10; 11-13; 14-16; 17-20.

<sup>2</sup>According to Wessels, "Jeremiah 33:15-16 as a Reinterpretation of Jeremiah 23:5-6," 238, this phrase is mostly used eschatologically for salvation.

the name "Judah" (vss. 4, 20); (3) the verb *bks̄*, "seek" (vss. 4, 20). The balance BB<sup>1</sup> is reinforced by: (1) the echo between the phrases *šō<sup>c</sup>n ᵀōb<sup>c</sup>dōt̄ hāyāh<sup>c</sup> ammī*, "a flock straying was my people" (vs. 6) and *šeh p<sup>c</sup>zūrāh yiśrā<sup>ᵀ</sup>ēl*, "a flock scattered is Israel," (vs. 17); (2) the repetition of the verb *ᵀkl*, "to devour" (vss. 7, 17). The balance CC<sup>1</sup> is reinforced by the echo between the verbs *nūd/nus*, "flee" (vss. 8, 16). The balance DD<sup>1</sup> is reinforced by: (1) the echo between the phrases *hiššāw k<sup>c</sup>gibbōr maškīl*, "their arrows are like a skilled warrior" (vs. 9), and *dōr<sup>c</sup>kē kešet . . . ᵀal-tahm<sup>c</sup>lū ᵀel hēs*, "who bend the bow . . . spare no arrows" (vs. 14); and (2) the repetition of the verb *<sup>c</sup>rk*, "draw up battle positions" (vss. 9, 14).<sup>1</sup>

The ground elements of Outcome, Situation, and Intervention are brought together in three pairings: (1) Outcome-Situation in sections 1 and 5--AB and B<sup>1</sup>A<sup>1</sup> (vss. 4-5, 6-7; 17, 19-20); (2) Outcome-Intervention in sections 2 and 4--CD and D<sup>1</sup>C<sup>1</sup> (vss. 8, 9-10; 14-16a, 16b); (3) Situation-Intervention in section 3--E (vss. 14-16a),<sup>2</sup> and in B<sup>1</sup> and F.

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<sup>1</sup>Aitken, 31, 32.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 33.

### Historical Background

Jer 50:17-20 provides a hint of the historical milieu of this pericope. The references to the punitive actions of the king of Assyria<sup>1</sup> and more specifically, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (vs. 17), against Israel point to this. The mention of Nebuchadnezzar and the metaphor of "gnawing the bones" seem to refer to the fall of Jerusalem and the subsequent exiling of its people to Babylonian captivity. Therefore, it seems that plausible historical parameters for this passage would be a time shortly after this catastrophe.<sup>2</sup>

### Interpretation

The first pairing "Outcome-Situation"--AB:B<sup>1</sup>A<sup>1</sup> (vss. 4-7; 19-20) forms the starting point and the climax of the unit.<sup>3</sup> In A (vss. 4-5) the restoration of the people is described in a picture that depicts totality--"the people of Israel and the people of Judah shall come together." This restoration of the people involves three factors: (1) unity of the people; (2) repentance, that is, seeking the Lord;<sup>4</sup> and (3) the

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<sup>1</sup>Assyria devoured Israel when she invaded and annihilated the Northern Kingdom in 722 B. C.

<sup>2</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 403, hovers between 588 and 587 B.C. He thinks that 51:3 resembles 23:3 (which is dated to 588 B.C.) and the clause "I will forgive" in vs. 20 is reminiscent of 31:34 (which is dated to 587 B.C.).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>This expression, "seek the Lord" is well understood to invoke the idea of repentance. While this is the only occasion of the expression in the book of Jeremiah, it is found within the context of repentance or lack thereof in Hos 3:5; 5:6; Zeph 1:6; 2:3. See also Thompson, 733; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 415.

renewal of the covenant which will not be violated (cf. 31:31-33; 32:40). The Outcome describes restoration.

The Situation, B (vss. 6-7), uses pastoral imagery to indicate that the Lord's people were poorly served by their leaders (cf. 23:1-2), which led to lostness in the highlands. This is reminiscent of the historical fact that the religious leaders, as poor shepherds, led the people astray in apostasy and the worship of Baal on every high hill (cf. Jer 2:20; 3:2) so that they forgot their own fold, that is, the place and the way in which Yahweh, the true shepherd, had nurtured them. Such a breach of covenant is set in contrast to the renewal of the covenant in vs. 5.<sup>1</sup> As sheep wandering aimlessly across the mountains, Yahweh's people were savaged by the enemies who hide behind the excuse that they are not guilty since the people had sinned against Yahweh.

There are strong connections between both sections. They are linked by the repetition of key words *hllk*, "go, come," and *škh*, "forget." These show

the contrast between Israel's future return seeking Yahweh ("weeping as they come") and the permanency of the covenant relationship into which they will enter ("which will not be forgotten")--between that and Israel's past desertion of Yahweh when they 'went' from mountain to hill as sheep who had 'forgotten' their fold. A contrast is drawn, then between Israel's past and future relationship to Yahweh.<sup>2</sup>

There is a connection between B and B<sup>1</sup> by the use of the keyword *ʔkl*, "devour" (vss. 7, 17). Israel is devoured by her enemies. In each situation,

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<sup>1</sup>Thompson, 733.

<sup>2</sup>Aitken, 34.

however, the content offers its own peculiar emphasis. In vss. 6-7 the emphasis is on Israel's apostasy, which led to them being an easy prey; but in vs. 17 the emphasis lies entirely on the fate Israel suffered at the hands of her enemies.<sup>1</sup> In vs. 17, the emphasis points to the historical data when Assyria invaded and destroyed Northern Israel in 722 B.C. and took many captives (cf. 2 Kgs 17:1-6). More recently, 586 B.C., Babylon "gnawed the bones" of Judah (this maintains the motif of sheep being attacked) and took them into captivity (2 Kgs 24).

There are also substantial ties between B and A<sup>1</sup> (vss. 6-7; 19-20). The shepherds (*rō<sup>c</sup>ēhem*) turned them away (*šōb<sup>h</sup>hīm*) on the mountains (*hārīm*), and their sin (*hāt<sup>h</sup>ū*) led to them being found (*mōš<sup>h</sup>ēhem*) by their enemies (vss. 6-7). However, Yahweh Himself will restore them (*šōb<sup>h</sup>abtī*) to graze (*rā<sup>h</sup>āh*) as sheep in the security of the mountain (*har*), for sin (*hāt<sup>h</sup>ō<sup>t</sup>*) will no longer be found (*timmāse<sup>h</sup>ynāh*) in Israel (vss. 19-20).<sup>2</sup>

There is a strong linkage between A and A<sup>1</sup> in the expression, "In those days and in that time, says the Lord." While the first speaks of Israel's repentance, return to Zion, and reestablishment of the covenant, the last speaks in terms of the remnant's rehabilitation in the land and Yahweh's bestowal of repentance. As in the first instance where the reunion of Israel and Judah depicts totality, so too in the latter. In this, the climax of the unit, Yahweh is depicted as a shepherd (vs. 19) who will bring back the scattered sheep to their pasture (*nāwēh*): a place of refuge and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

safety. The flock will again graze (*rā<sup>2</sup>āh*) with satisfaction (*šb<sup>c</sup>*) on the rich, verdant pastures of Carmel and Bashan, and on the hills of Ephraim and Gilead. These areas were famous for the lush pastures.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, there will be spiritual renewal, which is described in vs. 20 in terms of forgiveness. The remnant are assured of forgiveness, which is nobly expressed in that their guilt (*ʔ<sup>a</sup>wōn*) and their sins (*hattō<sup>2</sup>ʔ*) will be completely obliterated--they shall be no more.<sup>2</sup> Just as the people's sin had caused their annihilation (44:7, 14) so now the Lord's forgiveness allows for the rejuvenation of the remnant.

Aitken's summation of this first pairing "Outcome-Situation" (AB:B<sup>1</sup>A<sup>1</sup>) is quite appropriate. "At all points, therefore, Israel's future will be a commensurate reversal of its past: the outcome will reverse the situation."<sup>3</sup>

The second pairing "Outcome-Intervention" (CD:D<sup>1</sup>C<sup>1</sup> vss. 8-10; 14-16) also brings reason for the remnant to rejoice. In C (vs. 8) the summons to flee from Babylon is cast in a pastoral framework. Once the gates were opened, the male goats were the first to rush from the sheepfold. This is how God's captive people would be in breaking loose from Babylon to return home. In C<sup>1</sup> (vs. 16b) the flight of the remnant is joined by other people's fleeing to their own homelands. Thus the Outcome is given intentionality through the motif of flight from the oppressor.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Mic 7:14.

<sup>2</sup>Other OT passages are aware of the motif of the complete obliteration of sin: Ps 103:12; Ezek 33:10-20; 36:26-29; Mic 7:18-19.

<sup>3</sup>Aitken, 34.

The Intervention comes through Yahweh's active agents against Babylon. In D (vss. 9-10), Yahweh announces His intention of bringing a foe from the north to destroy Babylon. They will do so to their satisfaction. In D<sup>1</sup> (vss. 14-16a) fulfillment of Yahweh's intention is achieved, for the foe is now summoned. The tumble of imperatives--"set yourselves" (*ʿirkū*); "shoot" (*yēdū*); "raise a shout" (*hārīʿū*)--expresses a sense of eager anticipation for this destruction. The vengeance of the Lord demands that Babylon's punishment equates the evil she has done (*lex talionis*). Therefore, she is to be "cut off" (*krt*), i.e., rooted out, eliminated, or destroyed by a violent act.<sup>1</sup> This is a great reversal. Babylon had once destroyed cities and peoples; now she throws up her hands in surrender: *nāt̄nāh yādāh*, "she has given her hand."<sup>2</sup>

Aitken is again correct in his evaluation:

The intervention is introduced in vss. 9-10 by way of motive for flight, and in vss. 14-16a it results in flight. It is thus through the advent of the foe that the way becomes open for Israel to return: the outcome is enabled by the intervention.<sup>3</sup>

The final pairing is the "Situation-Intervention" (E, B<sup>1</sup> F; vss. 11-13; 17-18). In vss. 6-7, the Situation brought two aspects of Israel's fate to the fore: (1) Israel's guilt and (2) her enemies' claim of guiltlessness in devouring a guilty Israel.

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<sup>1</sup>E. Kutsch, "krt, abschneiden," *THAT* (1984), 1:857-860.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. 1 Chr 29:24; 2 Chr 30:8. The same expression *nātan yād*, "to give a hand," is used in Chronicles and here as a sign of surrender.

<sup>3</sup>Aitken, 35.

While Israel's guilt is resolved through the integration of Situation and Outcome, the enemies' claim of innocence is now given attention.

Babylon's claim of being blameless was based on the assumption that since Israel was guilty, then God had washed His hands of them. But NO! Vss. 11-12 indicate that such is not the case. Vs. 11 is the protasis (*ki*, "though") of a conditional sentence which has its apodosis in vss. 12-13.<sup>1</sup> Babylon had plundered Yahweh's *nah<sup>a</sup>lah*, "hereditary possession,"<sup>2</sup> rejoicing and exulting in this deed. The pastoral images of young heifers running free and of neighing stallions highlight Babylon's delight in her devastation of Yahweh's people.

The apodosis points out that Babylon, personified as mother, will be reduced to a minor status, the least of nations. This too is a great reversal. In former times Babylon had reduced cities to uninhabitable wasteland so that passersby would whistle in appallment as they went by. In this day of Yahweh's wrath, the same expressions would be used of Babylon. Hence, Babylon stands indicted. "The situation thus motivates the intervention."<sup>3</sup>

Situation and Intervention are combined again in vss. 17-18. The pastoral image is again used, this time with negative consequences, namely, destruction by

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<sup>1</sup>Thompson, 734.

<sup>2</sup>CHAL, 234. Thompson, 735, calls this "patrimony." He adds that the land of Israel is here pictured as Yahweh's patrimony. The term is used by Jeremiah in a variety of ways as Israel's patrimony (3:18-19; 12:14, 15); as Yahweh's patrimony (2:7; 16:18; 50:11); Yahweh himself is Israel's patrimony (10:16; 51:19); and Israel is Yahweh's patrimony (12:7-9).

<sup>3</sup>Aitken, 35.

Assyria and Babylon. The Situation of vs. 17 now serves as an explicit indictment that motivates the Intervention of vs. 18. The factual historical reality of Assyria's fall is the assurance of Babylon's own destruction.<sup>1</sup>

One can conclude that as the climax of the unit, the remnant motif depicts Yahweh's restoration of His people who will be requited of all sin. The remnant's restoration at the same time signals the defeat of her oppressor, Babylon. Babylon's ascendancy will be reversed and the remnant's fate will also be reversed: from judgment and exile to salvation and restoration.

Aitken's summary is quite appropriate here:<sup>2</sup>

I.	OUTCOME		SITUATION
	Israel's repentant return to Zion and renewal of covenant relation; Yahweh's rehabilitation of Israel in the land divinely forgiven	reverses	Israel's sinful desertion of Yahweh devoured by their enemies and driven from their land.
			INTERVENTION
II.	OUTCOME		
	Flight from Babylon	enabled by	The advent of the foe

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<sup>1</sup>Assyria suffered defeat with the destruction of its capital, Nineveh, consequent of its seize by the combined forces of the Medes and Babylonians in 612 B.C. Though some Assyrian remnants were able to hold out for a short time, Assyria as a political unit ceased to exist in 609 B.C. From this point on it formed part of the Persian, Selucid, and Parthian empires. See D. J. Wiseman, "Assyria," *ISBE* (1979) 1:338.

<sup>2</sup>Aitken, 36.

## INTERVENTION

## III. SITUATION

Babylon plundered Yahweh's heritage; devoured Israel and drove them from their land

motivates

Babylon's punishment and doom.

Thus the past with its iniquity and apostasy, and the present with its cruel oppression, will be reversed in the future when the remnant is restored by Yahweh.

The remnant motif in this pericope is linked to two other interrelated theological themes in the Book of Jeremiah: covenant and forgiveness. The weeping procession (vs. 4) depicts the homecoming "in liturgical terms as a pilgrimage back to Jerusalem and to Yahweh (cf. 3:21-23)."<sup>1</sup> Significant to this is the joining of the people to the Lord in *b'rit c'olam*, "an everlasting covenant," which is synonymous to the New Covenant motif in Jer 31:31-33.<sup>2</sup> This is the initiation of the divine-human relationship, understood by Jeremiah as a dynamic relationship, based on God's acts of salvation in the history of the people. As such, "Yahweh was understood by the prophet not only as *the Lord of the Covenant* but also as *the Creator of the new relationship*."<sup>3</sup> This also implies election.<sup>4</sup> This is the "God-people, people-God relationship,"<sup>5</sup> which has been called the "center of the Old Testament."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 823.

<sup>2</sup>Raitt, *A Theology of Exile*, 203, 204.

<sup>3</sup>Martin Cheng-Chang Wang, "Jeremiah and the Covenant Traditions," *SEAJT* 14 (1972): 11.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Richard Deutsch, "The Biblical Concept of the 'People of God'," *SEAJT* 13 (1972): 10.

This covenant motif connects the view of Judah-Israel in chaps. 50-51 with chaps. 30-33. In both instances restoration of the people, notably the remnant community, speaks of renewal of relationship with Yahweh on a permanent basis. The difference is one of emphasis: in chaps. 30-33 the attention is placed solely on Judah-Israel, whereas in chaps. 50-51, the focus is on the defeat of Babylon, the enemy, and the restoration of the remnant people as a result of this defeat.<sup>1</sup>

Fundamental to the renewal of the remnant community is forgiveness of Yahweh. This too is connected to covenant theology. In fact, both passages (Jer 31:31-34 and 50:4-20) are framed by an inclusio of the new/everlasting covenant and complete forgiveness.

Garnett Reid is correct that forgiveness by Yahweh is foundational for internal transformation and the establishment of a dynamic relationship between God and His people.<sup>2</sup> Forgiveness is of a radical, complete nature in both cases:

*"I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (31:34);*

*"Iniquity shall be sought in Israel, and there shall be none; and sin in Judah, and none shall be found; for I will forgive those whom I leave as a remnant" (50:20).*

Forgiveness here is a divine prerogative. This points in the direction of Hertrich who denotes that the establishment and preservation of the remnant are

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<sup>6</sup>R. Smend, *Die Mitte des Alten Testaments*, Theologische Studien 101 (Zürich: EVZ Verlag, 1970).

<sup>1</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 823.

<sup>2</sup>Garrett Reid, "The Heart of Jeremiah's Covenantal Message," *BV* 25 (1991): 95.

based, among other factors, on the forgiveness of God.<sup>1</sup> This is grounded in the divine initiative. Hasel comments, "This divine initiative aims at the culminating action of total forgiveness and God's total forgetfulness when it comes to human sins."<sup>2</sup>

One may also note that this forgiveness is complete and comprehensive; neither is there any uncertainty that God will forgive. This is embodied in the technical term, *sālah*, which is used exclusively of God's offer of forgiveness. It is never employed to refer to people forgiving each other. It thereby suggests that only by divine innovation could such a sin problem be effectively resolved.<sup>3</sup>

This forgiveness is satiated with what J. J. Stamm denotes as "external attestations"<sup>4</sup> which include: deliverance from exile, election following punitive judgment, renewal of the covenant, closer fellowship with God than ever before, and transformation of the human being.<sup>5</sup> As such, "*Forgiveness becomes an integral part*

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<sup>1</sup>Hertrich, 204.

<sup>2</sup>Hasel, *Covenant in Blood*, 104, 105. Cf. Prescott H. Williams, Jr., "Living Towards the Acts of the Savior-Judge: A Study of Eschatology in the Book of Jeremiah," *ASB* 44 (1978): 28; Raitt, *A Theology of Exile*, 190, says, "The forgiveness, therefore, is purely an act of God's intervention, an exercise of his divine prerogative, an assertion of his freedom, a way he takes to get for himself and his people an open-ended future."

<sup>3</sup>Other OT terms for forgiveness include: *nāśa*<sup>2</sup>, "lifting up or bearing up of sin"; *māhah*, "blotting out of the memory of sin"; *kāśah*, "covering or concealing the record of sin"; <sup>c</sup>*ābar*, "passing by of sin"; *kāpar*, "pardoning on the basis of a substitute." See Walter C. Kaiser, "*Sālah*," *TWOT* (1980), 2:626.

<sup>4</sup>J. J. Stamm, *Erlösen und Vergeben im Alten Testament: Eine Begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Bern: A. Francke A. —G, 1940), 142, 147.

<sup>5</sup>Raitt, *A Theology of Exile*, 186.

*of a whole new era of salvation. . . . It is an act which liberates . . . and makes new things possible.*"<sup>1</sup>

Such forgiveness, connected as it is to the New/Everlasting Covenant, points to the eschatological reality of God's actions.<sup>2</sup> As the climax of the whole oracle, forgiveness becomes the essential or vital component of the new era. Rudolph comments, "This word stands at the conclusion not as a chance addition, but as the operative basis of the whole promise: under all that is operating hitherto, a line is drawn, a new life with God commences."<sup>3</sup>

Forgiveness is here related to repentance as enveloped in the expression of "seeking the Lord," *we<sup>2</sup> et-<sup>2</sup>a<sup>2</sup>dōnāy <sup>2</sup>lōhēhen y<sup>e</sup>baqqēšû*, "and they shall seek the Lord their God." The root *bqš*, "to seek," is used with the understanding of "a conscious act with a specific goal in mind."<sup>4</sup> In Jer 50:4 it is used as a description

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., (emphasis his).

<sup>2</sup>Hyatt, "Jeremiah," 786, 1038; Rudolph, 185; Weiser *Das Buch Jeremia*, 288; Hasel, *Covenant in Blood*, 100; J. Bright, "An Exercise in Hermeneutics: Jeremiah 31:31-34," *Int* 20 (1966):194; Rudolf Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, trans. James C. G. Greig (New York: MacMillan Co., 1955), 194. He interprets the death of Christ as an *inaugurating event* for the establishment of the new covenant community. "But this community is not a people as an historical entity with the world."

<sup>3</sup>Rudolph, 185. Cf. Weiser, *Das Buch Jeremia*, 288, "The history of salvation in the past and future rests on God's willingness to forgive sins as the fundamental part of God's covenant."

<sup>4</sup>S. Wagner, "*Biqqēš, baqqāšāh*," *TDOT* (1974), 2:230. Used over 220 times *bqš* means literally "to seek," but may also be extended to mean "request," "desire," "wish," or "entreaty." It may be used in a literal or figurative sense and also as a legal term.

Wagner contends that this root involves an activity that is determined to find an object that really exists, but which is not close at hand to the subject, but is

of repentance<sup>1</sup> and expresses concomittantly an intensification of the relationship between God and His people.<sup>2</sup>

This act of repentance is linked to forgiveness, in that the repentant action of the people is favored by the deliberate action of God who forgives, such that, when guilt is searched for (*bqš*), none will be found. This repentance<sup>3</sup> and subsequent forgiveness points to the reestablishment of a broken relationship, that is, the renewal of the covenant.<sup>4</sup>

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earnestly desired. "Seeking" attempts to satisfy that desire.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 237. Cf. Deut 4:29; 2 Chr 7:14; 15:4; Jer 29:13; Hos 3:5; 5:15; 7:10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 238.

<sup>3</sup>Contra to Raitt, *A Theology of Exile*, 188, who claims that there are no prerequisites, including repentance, to forgiveness. Repentance is only a product and not the precondition of forgiveness. On the other hand, Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, trans. J. A. Baker, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 465-473, insists that forgiveness requires repentance. Bright, "An Exercise in Hermeneutics," 197, says, "The nation has no hope except in repentance--and repentance from the heart."

<sup>4</sup>David Ellis Donnell, "An Examination of the Concept of Repentance in the Book of Jeremiah" (Th.D. dissertation, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1988), 185-187.

Derivatives of *mlt*

Jer 39:15-18

## Translation and Textual Considerations

(15) The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah while he was shut<sup>1</sup> up in the court of the guard, saying: (16) Go and say to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold I am about to bring<sup>2</sup> my words upon this city for evil and not for good. And they shall be (fulfilled) before you on that day.<sup>3</sup> (17) But I will save you on that day," says the Lord. "And you shall not be given into the hand of the men of whom you are afraid. (18) *Because I will certainly rescue [mallēt <sup>2a</sup>malletkā] you, and you shall not fall by the sword; and your life shall be a prize of war to you, because you trusted in me," says the Lord.*

## Structure

The passage<sup>4</sup> is generally regarded as being problematic. It may be

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<sup>1</sup>LXX lacks "while he was shut up." The point is well taken in light of the command of vs. 16, "Go."

<sup>2</sup>K has omitted an aleph (hence, *mēḥī*) because of the aleph that follows in the next word <sup>2</sup>*eṭ*. Read *Q mēḥī<sup>2</sup>*.

<sup>3</sup>LXX omits this sentence possibly due to dittography in vs. 17 where the same expression *bayyôm hahū<sup>2</sup>* is found.

<sup>4</sup>These verses that point to a period in Jeremiah's imprisonment, seem to be chronologically out of order since they follow the details of the actual capitulation of the city and the prophet being freed by the Babylonians (39:1-14). How could Jeremiah be free and imprisoned at the same time? This has led commentators to relocate the passage to its "natural position." Thompson, 649, and Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 696 replace it after 38:7-14 where Ebed-melech rescued Jeremiah from the pit. Others like Harrison, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, 158, 159, place it after 38:28 when Jeremiah was returned to prison following his private audience with king Zedekiah. However, Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 268, following Wanke, 111, contends that the emphatic *w<sup>c</sup>el-yirm'yāhū*, "but to Jeremiah," suggests that "the clause immediately preceding 39:15-18 (in its original position) has another subject than Jeremiah." He therefore opts for a position after 38:27 believing that the play on *dāḥār* between 38:27 and 39:15 recommends this.

divided as follows:

1. Historical dateline (vs. 15)
2. A word of judgment to be fulfilled *bayyôm hahû<sup>2</sup>*, "on that day" (vs. 16)
3. A word of salvation to be fulfilled *bayyôm hahû<sup>2</sup>*, "on that day" (vss. 17-18).

Attention is also due to the AB:B<sup>1</sup>A<sup>1</sup> structure of vs. 18:

A	B
Because I will certainly save you	You will not fall
B <sup>1</sup>	A <sup>1</sup>
Your life will be a prize	Because in me you trusted

### Historical Background

The divine instruction was given to Jeremiah during his incarceration sometime shortly after being rescued by Ebed-melech ("servant of the king"). It was to be delivered to the Ethiopian who served in the king's court.

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The first option seems most plausible for two reasons: (1) Since Ebed-melech risked his life to confront the king regarding the evil perpetrated against Jeremiah, it seems reasonable that a word of assurance be given in light of possible reprisals directed against him by those who executed such evil against the prophet and may want to do the same against his sympathizers. (2) In 38:13 Jeremiah was returned to the court of the prison and from here he was directed to contact Ebed-melech. When the material is thus conjoined all of the passages dealing with Ebed-melech are thus brought together in one place. Such is not the case with the other positions.

## Interpretation

Located as it is in the MT, the pericope serves to link together the fate of both Jeremiah and Ebed-melech. Its significance is that both men were survivors of the fall of Jerusalem precisely because of their faith. Jeremiah's purchase of a field in Anathoth in the face of impending judgment (32:1-15) demonstrated his strong confidence that Yahweh will effect a rejuvenation. Indeed, "houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in the land" (32:15). As such, he functions as a proleptic representative of the remnant who will be revived because of their faithfulness.

The message for Ebed-melech is that God will fulfill His purposes to destroy Jerusalem. The expression *bayyôm hahû*<sup>2</sup>, "on that day," functions to show that at the time of the delivery of the message, its fulfillment was yet future. Nevertheless, the location of the pericope in the MT functions to show that the message was indeed fulfilled: judgment had come upon Jerusalem.

The promise of salvation, also fulfilled *bayyôm hahû*<sup>2</sup>, "on that day," provides for Ebed-melech's protection on both sides: (1) from the hands of the men he fears, most likely the courtiers who may have intended his demise since he dared to rescue the prophet who proclaimed disaster, and (2) from the sword, that is, the Babylonian invaders.

Vs. 18 forcefully demonstrates the divine intervention to ensure Ebed-melech's safety. This is expressed by the emphatic *kî mallêt*<sup>2a</sup> *mallerkâ*, "because I will certainly rescue you." This promise is assured *kî bātahtā bî*, "because you

trusted in me." Ebed-melech will be a survivor of the imminent judgment because of his trust in Yahweh. Carroll rightly comments:

No direct connection is made between the rescue of Jeremiah and Ebed-melech's own escape from danger. . . . *Not his attitude towards Jeremiah but his trust in Yahweh underwrites Ebed-melech's fate.* In the fall of Jerusalem the Ethiopian will survive (i.e. have his life as a spoil of war) because of his trust. Thus is the man who trusts in Yahweh blessed (17:7), and Ebed-melech becomes an example of the pious whose survival in whatever circumstances depends only upon their trust in Yahweh. Gone is the option of 38:2, and now only trust in Yahweh is required.<sup>1</sup>

Safety is secured only because of trust in Yahweh. The verb *bth* is used here to strongly recommend security that is based on reliance on God alone. Used in this sense, the verb denotes that in times of distress the only way to secure survival and safety is to take refuge in God and place confidence in Him. Such was the nature of Ebed-melech's faith.

The example of this non-Judean is placed here in stark contrast to the lack of faith, and hence the hopeless fate of the "elect people." They trusted in fortified cities and walls (5:17); in human beings (17:5); in foreign political entities (2:17); and especially in the temple, which the false prophets deemed inviolable (7:4, 8). Hence, they trusted in empty lies (13:25; 28:15; 29:31). They adhered to a false security, which resulted in their disappointment and ultimate destruction.

On the other hand, Ebed-melech's faith demonstrated that "being secure in God is the only certain support for human life."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, "blessed is the person who

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<sup>1</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 697 (emphasis mine).

<sup>2</sup>Alfred Jepsen, "*Bātah*," *TDOT* (1974), 2:93.

trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord."<sup>1</sup> As such, his faith became the *criterium distinctionis* between destruction and the hope of survival.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, he may well be regarded as the proleptic representative of the remnant whose faith becomes an active factor in salvation.

This pericope demonstrates the dual polarity of doom and salvation. The threat of judgment is directed to those who do not trust in Yahweh. However, there is a promise of survival for trusting in Yahweh.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, although the oracle seems to be out of place, its present position "emphasizes the fulfillment of the divine word and the relation between deliverance and trust in Yahweh."<sup>4</sup>

### Derivatives of *pl̄t*

Jer 50:28

#### Translation and Textual Considerations<sup>5</sup>

*Listen! Fugitives and escapees [p̄l̄tīm] from the land of Babylon  
To declare in Zion the vengeance of the Lord our God*

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<sup>1</sup>Jer 17:7. This is in direct contrast to the curse exacted on the person who trusts in mankind (Jer 17:5).

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Hasel, *The Remnant*, 396, "Faith, as a matter of fact, is the *criterium distinctionis* between the masses that will perish and the remnant that will survive."

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Blank, "Traces of Prophetic Agony in Isaiah," 90, who indicates that in a few special and personal words, Jeremiah promised survival to a faithful few: to the Rechabites for their constancy (chap. 35); to Baruch who shared his lot (chap. 45); and to Ebed-melech who rescued him from the pit.

<sup>4</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 696.

<sup>5</sup>See above, 245-248, for translation of the full pericope, Jer 50:21-32.

*Vengeance for his temple.*<sup>1</sup>

### **Structure**

This has already been covered on pp. 248-251 above.

### **Historical Background**

This has already been covered on pp. 251, 252, above.

### **Interpretation**

The central motif of Jer 50:21-32 is the defeat and utter destruction of Babylon. This tyrannical imperium that had hammered the world into subjugation (vs. 21) is now to experience what she had imposed on others. The sweeping hand of the destroying enemy, directed by Yahweh, "the implacable opponent,"<sup>2</sup> is devoted to destruction such that neither remnant (vss. 26-27) nor escapee (vs. 29) will survive. But sandwiched precisely between these metaphors of destruction is a proclamation of salvation (vs. 28). Carroll says:

As a *dramatic counterpoint* of this picture of the reversal of the fortunes of Babylon, vs. 28 depicts refugees fleeing from the fallen city and defeated land to announce in Zion the unfolding of Yahweh's vengeance.<sup>3</sup>

This places the escaping remnant in bold relief such that they become the heralds of Babylon's judgment.<sup>4</sup> It also gives the prophecy a forceful forward-

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<sup>1</sup>LXX lacks this last phrase.

<sup>2</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 831.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 830, 831 (emphasis mine).

<sup>4</sup>Aitken, 39.

looking perspective, in that, concomitant with the destruction of the powerful and the established, God causes salvation to come to those who were not powerful so that they can become re-established. As such, their very escape becomes the medium for proclaiming the vengeance of the Lord.

The escaping remnant announce Yahweh's "vengeance for his temple." Though lacking in LXX, this expression should not be taken as secondary. The temple was the central place of worship, the divinely appointed place where Yahweh's presence tabernacled, and its desecration by the Babylonians was a blasphemous and perfidious act. Though her crimes were many, Babylon's "destruction of the temple is singled out here in order to define Yahweh's vengeance."<sup>1</sup> It is this news that the escaping remnant can now proclaim: those responsible for the destruction of the temple were now to receive divine retribution. It also subtly implies that this remnant can set about to the task of rebuilding the temple, their religion, and their communities and restart life as they knew it.

Jer 51:45-53<sup>2</sup>

#### Translation and Textual Considerations

- (45) Go out of the midst of her, my people  
 Let every man save his life  
 from the fierce anger of the Lord  
 (46) Let not your heart faint, and be not fearful

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<sup>1</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 831.

<sup>2</sup>Vss. 44b-49a are lacking in LXX. Most commentators agree that this was due to haplography, the translator's eye moving from the first *gam* (vs. 44b) to the third *gam* (vs. 49b).

at the report heard in the land,  
 when a report comes<sup>1</sup> in one year  
 and afterward a report in another year:  
 Violence in the land;  
 ruler against ruler.<sup>2</sup>

(47) Therefore, behold, the days are coming  
 when I will punish the images of Babylon;  
 her whole land shall be put to shame,  
 and all her slain shall fall in the midst of her.

(48) Then the heavens and the earth,  
 and all that is in them,  
 shall sing for joy over Babylon;  
 for the destroyers shall come<sup>3</sup> against her out of the north, says the Lord.

(49) Babylon must fall for<sup>4</sup> the slain of Israel,  
 as for Babylon have fallen the slain of all the earth.

(50) *Escapees [p<sup>l</sup>lētīm] from her sword,  
 Go!<sup>5</sup> Do not stand still*

*Remember the Lord from afar  
 and let Jerusalem come into your mind.*

(51) "We are put to shame, for we have heard reproach;  
 dishonor has covered our face,

<sup>1</sup>The masc form of the verb in MT (*ûbā<sup>2</sup>*) does not fit the feminine subject *šmû<sup>c</sup> āh*, "report," "rumor." *BHS* tentatively forwards the use of the infinitive *ûb<sup>e</sup>bō<sup>2</sup>*.

<sup>2</sup>MT reads *ûmōšēl<sup>c</sup> al mōšēl*, "ruler against ruler." *BHS* suggests removing the conjunctive *waw* to allow harmony between both nouns.

<sup>3</sup>MT singular verb *yābō<sup>2</sup>*, "he shall come," does not agree with the plu. subject *šōd<sup>e</sup>dīm*, "destroyers." *BHS* correctly suggests a change to the plural verb *yābō<sup>2</sup>û*, "they shall come."

<sup>4</sup>MT *hallē* needs to be supplied with the prefix *l<sup>e</sup>* (having dropped out through haplography) to read *l<sup>e</sup>hallē yiśra<sup>2</sup>ēl*, "for the slain of Israel." Cf. *BHS*.

<sup>5</sup>MT *mēhereb<sup>h</sup> hilkû*, "from the sword, go." This is an unusual form of the imperative. The usual plural imperitival form of *hik*, "go," is *l<sup>e</sup>kû* (and not *hilkû* as here). If the consonants are redivided (by placing the *h* of the imperative with the preceding word), it yields *mēharbāh l<sup>e</sup>kû*. Hence, the entire expression will read *p<sup>l</sup>lētīm mēharbāh l<sup>e</sup>kû*, "Escapees from her sword, Go!"

LXX reads *ek gēs, poreuesthe*, "from the land, you who escape," which equals *BHS*' suggestion of *mēharbāh l<sup>e</sup>kû*, "from the dry land, go."

for aliens have come into the sanctuary<sup>1</sup> of the Lord's house."  
 (52) "Therefore, behold, the days are coming," says the Lord,  
 when I will execute judgment upon her images,  
 and through all her land  
 the wounded shall groan.<sup>2</sup>  
 (53) Though Babylon should mount up to heaven,  
 and though she should fortify her strong height,  
 yet destroyers would come from me upon her,"  
 says the Lord.

### Structure

Jer 51:45-53 is the final of six units found in chaps. 50-51.<sup>3</sup> It is comprised of five sections: vss. 45-46; 47-48; 49; 50-51; and 52-53.<sup>4</sup> These may be delineated as follows:<sup>5</sup>

- Sec 1      A    Summons to flight and exhortation not to fear (vss. 45-46) [Outcome]
- Sec 2                      B    Babylon's judgment (vss. 47-48) [Intervention]
- Sec 3                                      C    Babylon falls for the slain of Israel (vs. 49) [Intervention-Situation]

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<sup>1</sup>MT reads *al-miqdāšê bêt yhw*, "to the sanctuaries of the house of YHWH." LXX reads *eis ta hagia hēmōn*, "into our sanctuary," which is equal to BHS' suggested reading *miqdāšēnū*, "our sanctuary" (since the "plural form of MT is unusual for referring to the temple)." So Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 850.

Another possibility is to read *mqdšy* as *mqdš y(hwh)*, "the sanctuary of Yahweh," where *y* is an abbreviation of *YHWH*. Accordingly, the final two words of the line, *bêt YHWH*, "house of Yahweh," would be a doublet. See Thompson, 766, n. 3; Bright, *Jeremiah*, 352.

<sup>2</sup>MT *ye<sup>2</sup>nōq*, "shall groan," is rendered by LXX as *pesountai*, "shall fall." (Cf. vss. 4, 49.)

<sup>3</sup>These units are: 50:4-20; 21-32; 33-46; 51:1-33; 34-44; and 45-53.

<sup>4</sup>Aitken, 53.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 54.

Sec 4 A<sup>1</sup> Summons to flight and exhortation to remember Yahweh and Jerusalem (vss. 50-51) [Outcome]

Sec 5 B<sup>1</sup> Babylon's judgment (vss. 52-53) [Intervention].

The sections AB:A<sup>1</sup>B<sup>1</sup> are balanced by the same basic pattern of a summons to flight, an exhortation, and the proclamation of judgment. Strong linkage exists between them. The summonses are connected by the echo between *mall<sup>c</sup>tû*, "save" (vs. 45), and *p<sup>c</sup>lētîm*, "escapees" (vs. 50). The exhortations are linked by the repetition of *leḥabkem*, "your hearts" (vss. 46, 50), and the root *šm<sup>c</sup>*, "hear" (vss. 46, 51). The proclamations of judgment are linked by several repetitions: *lākēn hinnēh yāmîm bā<sup>c</sup>îm*, "therefore, behold days are coming" (vss. 47, 52); *paqadî<sup>c</sup> al-p<sup>c</sup>silē bābel*, "I will punish the images of Babel" (vss. 47, 52); *kôl-<sup>c</sup>aršāh*, "its whole land" (vss. 47, 52); *hll*, "slain, wounded" (vss. 47, 52); *šāmayim*, "hearers" (vss. 48, 53); and *yābō<sup>c</sup>-lāh haššōd<sup>c</sup> dîm*, "destroyers will come against her" (vss. 48, 53).

Section C is the pivot between the other matching sections and is linked with the judgment speeches through its double repetitions of *hll*, "slain."<sup>1</sup>

### Historical Background

This has already been covered on pp. 251, 252 above.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 53-54.

## Interpretation

### *I. Outcome-Intervention (AB:A'B<sup>1</sup>--vss. 45-48; 50-53).*

The Outcome in both cases (A:A<sup>1</sup>) constitutes a summons to flight immediately followed by an exhortation. The summonses (vss. 45, 50a) are addressed to those who have survived mortal threat. In vs. 50 they are specified as the remnant, the *p<sup>l</sup>lētīm*, "escapees." They are the escapees from the sword. Hence, this surviving remnant is summoned to hastily flee Babylonian confines. Thompson comments that this "appeal is made to the exiles of Israel to flee the city, not merely to escape from the burning anger of Yahweh, but to bring to fulfillment the promise that Israel would be restored (cf. 50:8; 51:6)."<sup>1</sup>

The exhortations call the remnant not to be faint-hearted or fearful (vs. 46). In each case, the exhortation is designed to counteract despair and despondency based on what has been "heard" (*šm<sup>c</sup>*). In vs. 46 the seemingly endless confusion of rumors is heard regarding disturbances in the land as potentates and powers vied for control. These were calculated to incite feelings of hopelessness and uncertainty about the future.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thompson, 765.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. Thompson shows how the Babylonian Empire was never absolutely free of plots and disturbances. In fact, the book of Jeremiah points to plots where subject peoples hoped to extricate themselves from Babylonian domination (27:1-7; 29:20-23; 29-32). Both attacks on Jerusalem were in response to local rebellion. In court circles, there were deadly feuds: Nebuchadnezzar's son Amel-Marduk (Evil-merodach) was assassinated in 560 B.C. by his brother-in-law Neriglissar (560-556 B.C.). His heir, Labashi-Marduk, reigned for just a few months before being overthrown by Nabonindus (556-539 B.C.).

In vs. 50b two exhortations are enjoined upon the remnant: (1) remember Yahweh from afar; and (2) let Jerusalem come to mind. The ver *zkr*, "remember" is generally not used in the sense of mere mental recall but "involves an active identification of one's whole being with the object of remembering. . . . In the present context the people are urged to *remember Yahweh*, that is, to put their trust in him and become personally involved in his purposes."<sup>1</sup> Attached to the expression, "from afar," which may be a reference to time (like "from the days long past"), there may be a hint to the Exodus. Thus, to remember Yahweh from afar suggests that the remnant now become personally involved in the faith experience of the Exodus and cooperate with Yahweh so that as He had done He will do once again. Thus, a new exodus is in view here,<sup>2</sup> incorporating all the basic elements associated with it: election, forgiveness, and covenant renewal.

The remnant was also to keep Jerusalem in mind. Jerusalem was not finished altogether. There was yet a future for her. And it was in the hands of the remnant to participate in her rebuilding. This was good exhortation in light of the shame they had suffered, the reproach and dishonor endured in light of the desecration of the sanctuary by alien powers (vs. 51).

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 767. See also H. Eising, "*zākhār*," *TDOT* (1980), 4:66, who indicates that quite often *zākhār* implies an action or appears in combination with verbs of action.

<sup>2</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 850, states that "remembering Yahweh from afar indicates the exilic context of the refugees (cf. 30:10) and the Zion orientation of the exhortation."

The judgment speeches (B:B<sup>1</sup>--vss. 47-48; 52-53) show Yahweh's intervention on behalf of the remnant because Babylon the archenemy will fall. Her religion will be overturned because her images, the gods she worshipped, will be destroyed; shame will overrun her; the slain will be widespread for the agents of destruction were on the move. Babylon, which seemed to have always been able to deal with its rebels, will be destroyed. This is forcefully brought out in the next section.

*II. Intervention-Situation (C--vs. 49).*

By way of judgment, Yahweh intervenes in the situation, that is, Babylon's past actions against Israel. The certainty of Babylon's fall is guaranteed. This will happen as a compensation for Israel's slain, the result of Babylon's tyrannical actions against her. Further, Babylon's judgment is equivalent to her treatment of other peoples (vs. 49b). As she had been thorough in ravaging nations, so also will she be treated. The repercussions of her evil will be equal to that which she had perpetrated against others. Nothing short of *lex talionis* is approximated here.

One may summarize as follows:<sup>1</sup>

I. OUTCOME	enabled by	SITUATION
The flight of the remnant from Babylon		Yahweh's punishment of Babylon at the hands of his agents
provide grounds for		

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<sup>1</sup>See Aitken, 56. This is a near adaptation of his summary.

**EXHORTATION**  
which provides the  
remnant with faith  
in Yahweh for the  
future

**II. INTERVENTION**

The certainty of  
Babylon's fall

is motivated by

**SITUATION**

The slain of Israel who  
have fallen to Babylon

**Derivatives of *šrd***

Jer 31:2-6

**Translation and Textual Considerations**

(2) *Thus says the Lord,*  
*The people who survived [*š'rdē*] the sword*  
*found<sup>1</sup> grace<sup>2</sup> in<sup>3</sup> the wilderness<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup>The LXX and Symm. read the first singular form "I found." However, MT has a singular verb to suit the sg. collective noun "people." See Thompson, 565, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Some commentators like Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 180, and Volz, *Studien zum Text des Jeremia*, 228, emend *hēn*, "grace," to the participle *hōneh*, "encamped." Holladay goes further by emending *hereb*, "sword," to *hōrēb*, "Horeb." The emendation provides the translation, "He found (him) encamped in the wilderness, a people remnant (from Horeb)."

<sup>3</sup>MT reads *bammidbār*, "in the wilderness," whereas BHS, followed by Rudolph, 192, suggests *kammidbār*, "as in the wilderness." This offers the idea of not being in the wilderness as such, but of finding a survivor from battle in the wilderness.

<sup>4</sup>MT reads *māšā<sup>3</sup> hēn bammidbār ʿam š'rdē hāreb*, lit. "he found grace in the wilderness the people survivors of the sword." LXX reads *euron thermon en eremō meta olōlotōn*, "I found him warm in the desert with them that were slain by the sword." This indicates that LXX did not read *hēn*, "grace" but *hōm*, "warmth," "heat."

when Israel sought for rest<sup>1</sup>

(3) the Lord appeared to him<sup>2</sup> from afar.

I have loved you with an everlasting love;  
therefore, I drew you (with) unfailing love.<sup>3</sup>

(4) Again I will build you, and you shall be built,  
O virgin Israel!

Again you shall adore yourself with timbrels,  
and shall go forth in the dance of the merry-makers.<sup>4</sup>

(5) Again you shall plant vineyards  
upon the mountains of Samaria;  
the planters shall plant,  
and shall enjoy the fruit.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>MT reads *hālôk l'hargî<sup>c</sup>ô yisrâ<sup>2</sup>êl*, lit., "going to find him rest Israel." BHS, following A and Symm., emend to *hôlek l'margô<sup>c</sup>ô*, "going for his rest." Volz, *Studien zum Text des Jeremia*, 228, 229, accepts the revocalization to *hôlek* to match the participle *hônêh*, "encamped." Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 181, rejects this, supplying the hiphil participle *hōlik* for the qal infinitive absolute *hālôk*.

<sup>2</sup>MT *ṣ<sup>a</sup>dōnāy nir<sup>2</sup>āh lî*, "the Lord has appeared to me." The first word of the next line reads *w<sup>2</sup>ah<sup>a</sup>baṣ*. It is suggested that the *waw* was attached to the *l* making it *lô* (Heb. *lw*). LXX reads *autō*, "to him." BHS suggests removing the *waw* from the first verse of the next line.

<sup>3</sup>MT *m<sup>3</sup>šaktîk ḥāsed*, lit. "I drew you (with) unfailing love." LXX adds *eis*, "in." Hence, "I drew you in unfailing love." Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 587, comments that the force of *māšak*, "drew," is strengthened by the reference to "from afar." Hence, we observe the magnetic pull of love even from afar. Cf. Hos 11:4.

<sup>4</sup>MT *bimḥôl m<sup>4</sup>šah<sup>a</sup>qîm*, "in the dance of the merry-makers," is understood by LXX as *meta sunagōgēs paizontōn*, "with the company of those who play." BHS interprets this to have the same meaning as *biqhal*, "in the convocation/assembly."

<sup>5</sup>MT *naṣ<sup>c</sup>û nōt<sup>c</sup>îm w<sup>5</sup>hillêlû*, lit. "the planters who planted shall profane." The verb *hll* (Piel), "Profane," is used in the special sense of "put to common use." We may therefore understand the phrase as meaning, "the planters shall plant and shall enjoy the fruit," since it will be used for common purpose. Cf. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 273, 281.

BHS treats the entire phrase as an addition from Deut 28:30b and suggests an alternative phrase *nōt<sup>c</sup>ē n<sup>tā</sup><sup>c</sup>îm y<sup>5</sup>hallêlû*, "the planters of plants will profane," i.e. those who have done the planting will enjoy the harvest themselves rather than others. Cf. Rudolph, 194.

LXX reads *phuteusate kai ainesate*, "plant and praise," where *hll* is replaced with *hll*. For an extended discussion of the textual difficulties, see Holladay,

(6) For there shall be a day when watchmen will call<sup>1</sup>  
 in the hill country of Ephraim:  
 "Arise, and let us go up to Zion,  
 to the Lord our God."

### Structure

Vss. 2-6 form a poetic pericope as indicated by the messenger formula *kōh* <sup>אָמַר</sup> <sup>אָמַר</sup> *dōnāy*, "thus says the Lord." The same formula introduces the next section in vs. 7. This oracle may be divided into three sections that envelop a "Prophecy of Salvation":<sup>2</sup>

1. The Situation in which the people find themselves (vss. 2-3) ( The similarity between *māšā* <sup>אָמַר</sup> *hēn*, "found grace," and *m'šaktik* *hāseḏ*, "I have extended mercy to you," forms an inclusio which sets off the section.<sup>3</sup>)

2. The Prediction/Promise/Message of Salvation (vss. 4-5) ( This is built upon the repetition of the key word *ōd*, "again," found at the beginning of vss. 4a, 4b, and 5a. This forms a parallelism in the three lines of these verses.<sup>4</sup>)

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*Jeremiah 2, 183, 184.*

<sup>1</sup>MT *qār* <sup>אָמַר</sup> *ū nōsrīm*, "watchmen called out," is rendered by LXX as *klēseōs apologoumenōn*, "those who make apologies."

<sup>2</sup>Koch, 213-214; March, 162.

<sup>3</sup>Edlin, 77.

<sup>4</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 159, correctly points out that vss. 4-5 form the central core of the unit. This key word had already been noted by Jack R. Lundblom, *Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric*, SBL Dissertation Series, 18 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 36.

3. The Conclusion (vs. 6), which affirms the Lord's ability to accomplish his promise, typically introduced by *kî*, "for." Edlin shows how the two lines of vs. 6 correspond rhythmically (3+2/3+2). They are linked to vss. 4-5 by the time clause *yeš-yôm*, "there will come a day," which balances the term "again."

A link is also seen by the phrases "upon the mountains of Samaria" (vs. 5) and "the mountain of Ephraim" (vs. 6).<sup>1</sup>

### Historical Background

This has already been covered on pp. 313, 314 above.

### Interpretation

The passage begins by denoting the Situation as one of hope: a remnant has survived judgment. This is one of the five occurrences in the Hebrew Bible where the noun *šarîd* has a positive emphasis.<sup>2</sup> Associated as it is with the "sword," the term belongs to the language of warfare, but points "to the immense potential of future existence and renewal that is inherent in the survivors." It is not the quantitative size, but the qualitative possibilities that are here ensured.<sup>3</sup>

The Situation as outlined in vss. 2-3 is generally seen as reflecting on the Exodus and particularly the deliverance at the Red Sea and Yahweh's gracious

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<sup>1</sup>Edlin, 77.

<sup>2</sup>Hasel, "Origin and Early History," 196, indicates that of the twenty-nine usages of the noun five are a positive. Besides Jer 31:2, the others are Judg 5:13; Josh 10:20; Isa 1:9 and Joel 3:5 (2:32 Eng.).

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 198, 199.

provision during the sojourn in the wilderness.<sup>1</sup> However, since the verb *māsā*<sup>2</sup> is used as a *perfectum propheticum*,<sup>2</sup> it is suggested that here a "new Exodus"<sup>3</sup> is in view. As in the Exodus event, the people "found favor" (*māsā*<sup>2</sup> *hēn*),<sup>4</sup> so too, God's gracious design will be extended in the "new Exodus."<sup>5</sup> As Holladay contends, the verb *mās*<sup>2</sup> is to be seen as a verb of election.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the notions of election and favor are brought to the fore. The surviving remnant is described in hopeful terms.

Vs. 2b shows that after the escape from Egypt, Israel sought for the promised land. The sense seems to be that Israel's captivity is "here described as a new wandering in the wilderness."<sup>7</sup> But just as Yahweh had contracted the covenant at Sinai, so now another such activity is proclaimed, as introduced by vs. 3. This fits the present context where two important covenant words are used: "love" (*ʿhb*) and "faithfulness" (*hesed*). As Thompson has shown, the latter is used 245 times in the OT mostly in a covenant or treaty context, and has a wide range of meaning.

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<sup>1</sup>Thompson, 566; Nicholson, *Jeremiah 26-52*, 60; Davidson, 78-79.

<sup>2</sup>Hausmann, 104; H. Freedman, 203.

<sup>3</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 280 says, "One may see here a precursor of the 'new Exodus' theme of Second Isaiah."

<sup>4</sup>This phrase occurs five times in Exod 33:12-17 concerning the desert wandering. See too W. F. Lofthouse, "Hen and Hesed in the OT," *ZAW* 51 (1933), 29-35.

<sup>5</sup>This passage contains imagery drawn from the Exodus: "Found favor in the wilderness" reminisces of Moses' intercession in Exod 33:12-17; the parallelism of "timbrels" and "dance" calls to mind Miriam's song in Exod 15:20.

<sup>6</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 181.

<sup>7</sup>Thompson, 566. See too Bright, *Jeremiah*, 280.

including: "loyalty," "devotion," "steadfast love," "kindness," with the adjective "unfailing" prefixed to these capturing an even better sense.<sup>1</sup> The declaration of love in vs. 3 is another image of the husband/wife relationship so important in the context of election and covenant.<sup>2</sup>

Hence, the essence of the Situation (vss. 2-3) is that God's election and grace are bestowed, in view of a renewal of covenant, upon the surviving remnant. Here is an image of "miraculous escape from destruction"<sup>3</sup> and the hope of restoration. VanGemerer's comment is appropriate:

Jeremiah looked forward to a new community inaugurated by Yahweh's sovereign renewal of covenant, sustained by God's involvement in his people, and enlarged by a greater number of people submissive to God. The goal of the new covenant is rest, a goal that is ever so much more possible because of Yahweh's greater commitment (31:2; see 6:16).<sup>4</sup>

The images of vss. 4-5 describe this restoration. As the center of the unit, the Message of Salvation has "a striking rhetorical effect" by the thrice-repeated  $\text{ʔ} \hat{o} \underline{d}$ , "again:"<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thompson, 566-567. Cf. Nelson Glueck, *Hesed in the Bible*, trans. Alfred Gottschalk (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1967), 102, who concludes that the significance of *hesed* can be rendered by "loyalty," "mutual aid," or "reciprocal love."

<sup>2</sup>Sohn, 10-52, especially 49, 50.

<sup>3</sup>Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 589. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 181, claims that these verses "summarize the *Heilsgeschichte* from the wilderness into Canaan."

<sup>4</sup>VanGemerer, 315. Cf. Henry J. Flanders, Robert Wilson Crapps, and David Anthony Smith, *People of the Covenant: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1963), 343.

<sup>5</sup>Ludwig, 529, claims that this repetition demonstrates that Jeremiah's "eschatological" hope is very concrete.

"Once again, I will build you so that you are built, O virgin Israel" (vs. 4a). The play on the word *bnh*, "build," is reminiscent of Jeremiah's call (1:10). This verb also points to Yahweh's election and rebuilding of the nation.<sup>1</sup> Hence, the remnant, as the nucleus of the new community, become the carriers of the election promises.<sup>2</sup> As Sohn says, "Since Yahweh is viewed as a builder of Israel in Election, He is portrayed as a rebuilders of her in the context of Restoration."<sup>3</sup> This is strengthened by the use of *ʿôd*, "again." There is a sense of security implied. The address to "virgin Israel" suggests that Yahweh sees the nation in an unsullied state and just as appealing as when she had first departed from Egypt.<sup>4</sup>

"Once again, snatching up timbrels<sup>5</sup> you shall go forth in the dance of the merry-makers." This captures the idea of joy. Holladay correctly points out that two associations are here linked: (1) the traditional celebration by women of the victory of their warriors (Judg 11:34; 1 Sam 18:6); (2) the Exodus from Egypt (Exod 15:20). Therefore, "if Yahweh could bring Israel out of Egypt, then he will do a similar action for his people once more."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Sohn, 112, 113.

<sup>2</sup>Hasel, *The Remnant*, 146, 179, 247, 250, 266, 328.

<sup>3</sup>Sohn, 302.

<sup>4</sup>Feinberg, 566.

<sup>5</sup>Bright, *Jeremiah*, 281. Literally, MT translates "you shall adorn yourself with timbrels."

<sup>6</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 183.

*"Once again you will plant vineyards."* This points to agricultural prosperity. This, "like building houses, is an occupation that presumes a stable future under the blessing of Yahweh."<sup>1</sup> It indicates a renewal of social and economic life. Sohn has also shown that in the prophetic literature, *נָטַע*, "plant," is used as an election term in the context of restoration.<sup>2</sup> The point is that God is the owner of the land. When Israel failed to bear good fruit, in effect, she rejected God and had to suffer expulsion, i.e., being uprooted or plucked out. With the election of the remnant, a new nucleus of people is planted, and God restores His people. This motif is emphasized in the restored community being involved in replanting, an activity indicative of a sense of return to a state of normalcy and stability.<sup>3</sup>

The motif of restoration for the remnant is here amplified by the picture of the hills of Samaria being filled with vineyards. The hills were ideal for vineyards and the rejuvenation of viticulture points to a time of peace. Further, those who plant will enjoy the fruit. Therefore, this reference to agricultural renewal "implies that Israel will be settled in her land and enjoying it under normal conditions."<sup>4</sup> The quality of life for the surviving remnant is one of restored joy.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. For the motif of rebuilding, see Jer 29:5; 30:18; 31:38.

<sup>2</sup>Sohn, 99.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 101, 298-300.

<sup>4</sup>Feinberg, 566.

Vs. 6, which forms the Conclusion to the oracle of salvation, posits a rejuvenation of worship in Zion, the legitimate place of worship to Yahweh.<sup>1</sup> This demonstrates that God is able to accomplish His purposes, because where worship was not possible, it now is. The watchmen (*nōšrīm*) are of interest here because of their duty performed. Watchmen were often posted at vantage points during war in order to warn of the approaching enemy (cf. Jer 6:17); but here their duty is for a nobler purpose, worship of Yahweh: "*Come, let us go up to Zion to the Lord our God.*"

Finally, one must understand, as does Holladay, that this poem deals with time. Several words and expressions concern future time: everlastingness (vs. 3); "once again" (vss. 4-5); "there shall be a day" (vs. 6). Nevertheless, the time element in vs. 6 expresses surety in that "the participle of existence *yeš* and the perfect verb that follows suggests that the future event is an *accomplished certainty* (the prophetic perfect)."<sup>2</sup>

A fundamental theological concept brought to the fore in this passage is the realization that the salvation of the remnant is based on divine favor/grace, *hēn*.<sup>3</sup> The term *hēn* is a positive one and generally means "favor," that is, to show one's face in an attitude of being "favorably disposed toward a person."<sup>4</sup> Since it is a gift

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<sup>1</sup>This is in light of rival sanctuaries at Bethel and Dan (1 Kgs 12:25-33).

<sup>2</sup>Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 184 (emphasis mine).

<sup>3</sup>Herntrich, 204.

<sup>4</sup>D. N. Freedman, H. -J. Fabry, and J. R. Lundblom, "Hānan," *TDOT* (1986), 5:24.

freely given, and cannot be grasped by force,<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah is proclaiming Yahweh's voluntary expression of acceptance toward the remnant. As Hertrich asserts, "The establishment of the remnant has its basis in the gracious action of God."<sup>2</sup>

This voluntary, unsolicited favor toward the remnant finds expression in Yahweh's reversal of His judgment interfaced with the promise of return (new Exodus)<sup>3</sup> and the repossession of the land, Yahweh's *šûb š'ḥûṭ*, "restore the fortunes,"<sup>4</sup> which is a "technical term indicating restoration to an earlier time of well-being--*restitutio in integrum*."<sup>5</sup> Yahweh's judgment against the people is expressed precisely in exile and the loss of the land. As it were, the "exile ended

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>2</sup>Hertrich, 206. Cf. Rowley, *The Biblical Doctrine of Election*, 81, whose claim is that the remnant is spared not so much by its loyalty as by divine grace.

<sup>3</sup>According to Bright, "An Exercise in Hermeneutics," 196, the historical event which provided the root and ground of Jeremiah's preaching was the recollection of Yahweh's gracious favor in the Exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land.

<sup>4</sup>See Jer 29:14; 30:3, 18; 31:23; 32:44; 33:7, 11. Although not used here, it provides a good expression of Yahweh's intention for the remnant community. Connected as it is with the repossession of the land, it is therefore linked with the remnant whose repossession of the land is similarly discussed in Jer 31:2-6, 8, 10-14, 16, and 21.

<sup>5</sup>John M. Bracke, "*šûb š'ḥûṭ*: A Reappraisal," *ZAW* 97 (1985): 244. For earlier studies on this question, see E. Freuschen, "Die Bedeutung von *šûb š'ḥûṭ* im Alten Testament," *ZAW* 15 (1895): 1-74; E. L. Dietrich, *šwb šbwt: Die Endzeitliche Wiederherstellung bei den Propheten*, BZAW 40 (Giessen: Töpelmann, 1925); E. Bauman, "*šwb šbwt*: Eine exegetische Untersuchung," *ZAW* 47 (1929): 17-44. See also W. L. Holladay, *The Root šûbh in the Old Testament with Particular Reference to Its Usage in Covenantal Contexts* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958), 110-115.

history because the two are antithetical."<sup>1</sup> But Yahweh brings in vogue the beginning of a new history with the proclamation of His "reliable *hesed* . . . when all seemed voided,"<sup>2</sup> extended to the remnant (31:2-6), that they will return to the land. Just as the exile was seen as a "tragic reversal,"<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah now announces that this reversal will be reversed.<sup>4</sup> This is the essence of Yahweh's planned restoration of His remnant people, the carriers of the election promises.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the depiction here is the restoration of God's people as realized by the reversal of His judgments.

Once again, stress is placed on the divine initiative since, "Redemption is accomplished by God's free and sovereign grace."<sup>6</sup> The new era expresses God's

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<sup>1</sup>Brueggemann, *The Land*, 126.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 134.

<sup>3</sup>Norman Gottwald, *Studies in the Book of Lamentations*, SBT 14 (Chicago: Alec R. Allenson, 1954), 56.

<sup>4</sup>Brueggemann, *The Land*, 133-134. He calls this reversal "the good news, that God transforms those who are displaced and makes them a home, gives to them secure turf. And the good news is precisely to exile and precisely when no prospect for land is anywhere visible."

<sup>5</sup>The land and the return to the land is a prominent theme in the book of Jeremiah. See further, Peter Diepold, *Israels Land*, BWANT 5 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1972), 187, the land is "*Konstitutiv für Israels Existenz*." Elmer A. Martens, "Motivations for the Promise of Israel's Restoration to the Land in Jeremiah and Ezekiel" (Ph.D. dissertation, Claremont Graduate School, 1972). He thinks that land is not only a territorial designation but has theological significance. An important conclusion is that land as an arena for judgment and salvation functions as a medium of revelation for the knowledge of Yahweh. In another volume, *God's Design: A Focus on Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981), Martens contends that the land is seen as one of the four fundamental categories of "God's design."

<sup>6</sup>Willem VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), 301.

grace, His *hesed*, "covenant loyalty." Therefore, He affirms His covenantal love in such a way that the time of judgment and wrath will seem inconspicuous in comparison to future blessing.<sup>1</sup> This divine act of salvation on behalf of the remnant, therefore, embodies all the blessings of the new covenant: the law written on the heart, a new relationship with God, and forgiveness. This is because the magnificence of the restoration motif in Jer 31:2-6 makes it "a good poetic analogue to the new covenant passage."<sup>2</sup>

### Conclusions

In this chapter it has been discovered that God takes the initiative in the restoration of His people. Despite the actions of the leaders or shepherds, in leading the people astray, God determined to perform an act of salvation: the regathering of the remnant. It is not that they possessed some special quality that recommended them to God and resulted in their rejuvenation. The divine initiative is not to be overlooked.

Contrary to the actions of the leaders, God will set up a new leader *par excellence*--the Righteous Branch/Shoot, identified as the Messiah. In contradistinction to the leaders, His rule will be characterized by wisdom, justice, and righteousness. In fact, a central interest of Jer 23:1-8 is righteousness (*sdq*). Even the name of the new king is "The Lord our Righteousness." In the face of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 302.

<sup>2</sup>Holladay, "The Background of Jeremiah's Self-Understanding," 323.

controversy regarding legitimate leadership, Jeremiah shouts that no confidence is to be placed in the leadership, only in the *ṣemah ṣaddīq*. As His name denotes, only He can effect salvation.

God's regathering of the remnant is described in terms of a "New Exodus." The scope and magnitude of this event places it in the direction of eschatology. Further, the regathering of the remnant in terms of the new Exodus provides a tacit connection with the new covenant concept, in that, inasmuch as the first Exodus was ratified by the covenant at Sinai, so now must this new Exodus be ratified by the new covenant.

The focal point voiced by the prophet is that God will inaugurate a new era with the renewed covenant community under the articles of a new covenant with a new king.

The "Prophecy of Salvation" (Jer 31:7-9) breathes with the excitement of restoration with shouts of joy, proclamation, and praise. God's salvific work effects a reversal of the fate of the nation. Here again the Exodus motif comes to the fore. The participants of this new Exodus constitute a "great assembly" of those who lack the physical prowess to be a threat to any enemy. But this is precisely the miracle of the restoration, because despite the people's incapacity, their strength lies in the fact that God will lead them. Attached to this is that the restored remnant is such only because of God's elective love. Yahweh is still the father of the nation.

The remnant's renewal comes with Yahweh's destruction of the people's archenemy: Babylon. There is a spiritual renewal that is based on the forgiveness of

Yahweh toward His people (Jer 50:4-20). There is a close affinity here with the new covenant of Jer 31:31-34. Both are framed by covenant and forgiveness. The essential factor is that Yahweh is the Lord of the covenant and the creator of the new relationship. Nonetheless, attached to this forgiveness is the repentance of the people, i.e., "seeking the Lord."

An essential factor in the restoration of the remnant is faith. This was enunciated before the fall of Jerusalem occurred. God's promise of salvation to Ebed-Melech was based on His faith/trust in Yahweh (Jer 39:15-18). Hence, faith became the *criterium distinctionis* between the perishing masses and those who would be saved.

In both Jer 50:28 and 45-53 the destruction of Babylon is made the focal point of the escape and restoration of the people. Again, the influence of the new Exodus and the various elements associated with it are implied: election, forgiveness, and covenant renewal.

Finally, the salvation of the remnant is predicated on God's grace (Jer 31:2-6). Once again the motifs of election and Exodus are in view. God's program of "rebuilding" and "replanting" sound the essence of restoration. In short, judgment had been reversed. It cannot be overstated that this was the result primarily of divine action on the behalf of the people. They had nothing to recommend them to divine favor. The reversal of their fortunes was wholly dependent on God's initiative in performing His acts of salvation.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation has examined the remnant motif in the context of judgment and salvation within the book of Jeremiah. It fills a gap since no other single study has attempted this before. As such, the study investigates sixty-eight explicit references to vocabulary associated with the remnant motif in terms of "definite historical entities." These terms are  $\text{š}^{\text{ׁ}}r$ , (which is used in the majority of cases), *mlt*, *plt*, *yṯr* and *šārīd*. This allows for a comprehensive treatment of the subject since it is not restricted to  $\text{š}^{\text{ׁ}}\text{ērīṯ}$  as is the case with some studies. Further, this study recognizes the dual polarity of judgment and salvation as an overarching theme in the book of Jeremiah and examines the motif within this sphere.

The first chapter provides a survey of literature. Divided in two parts, it examines studies on the remnant motif both outside and within the book of Jeremiah. The first part indicates that remnant studies were developed largely along lines of investigation concentrating on the origin of the motif. Such points of origin include the rise of ethical monotheism (Meinhold), eschatology (Gressmann, Dittmann, Mowinckel and Hertrich), election traditions (Rowley and Sohn) and the politico-military framework (Carena). It was Hasel's impressive 1970 dissertation, and later

work, which determined that the remnant motif originated out of the concern for the preservation and continuity of life in the face of mortal threats. Therefore, as an existential question, the motif antedates its appearance in the Hebrew Bible.

However, in the Old Testament, the data indicates that the motif is used within the context of the dual aspects of doom and salvation.

The second part of the literature review demonstrates that there is no *communis opinio* regarding studies on the remnant within the book of Jeremiah. Such is the case largely because these studies fail to provide a detailed examination of the motif within Jeremiah. They are usually broad-based, the book of Jeremiah being included as an investigation of the theme in the Old Testament. These suffer from several difficulties:

1. Since they concentrate largely on the word  $\text{יְרֵדִי}$  they virtually ignore the use of other remnant terminology.

2. An *a priori* position is taken because such studies are intent on proving the specific point of origin of the remnant motif in the Old Testament. Hence, if the point of origin is determined to be election (Schilling; Garofalo), eschatology (Warne), or socio-political concerns (Muller/Preuss) then the discussion of the question in the book of Jeremiah is presumed to be the same.

3. For the most part, these studies do not employ any strict exegetical procedure but usually come to a broad-based conclusion without demonstrating the criteria by which such claims may be made.

4. Some of these studies do not provide a working definition of the "remnant motif."

5. Finally, the remnant motif in the oracles against the foreign nations is virtually ignored.

In Chapter Two the remnant motif in oracles directed against Judah is examined. Thirty-one passages are examined all denoting the sound of judgment against the nation of Judah. It is determined that from the first injunction declaring a "mopping up operation" (6:9) to the last declaration in the epilogue (52:15, 16), the ominous tone of imminent devastation is sounded. This indicates that from the outset, the remnant motif in the book of Jeremiah is developed out of an existential concern, that is, the need to preserve and continue life in the face of mortal threats. This is in agreement with Hasel and in contradistinction to the views of other scholars regarding the origin of the motif.

Despite malicious attempts to assassinate the prophet (11:21-23; 38:1-6), as God's spokesperson, Jeremiah steadfastly pronounced God's intent to eliminate His people. This consistent announcement of judgment, placed in the forefront of Jeremiah's theology,<sup>1</sup> was the result of the people's rebellion against God. Their moral degeneracy, idolatrous practices, their blunt refusal to acknowledge God's guidance, boosted by the lies of false prophets and the belief in the inviolability of the temple, resulted in portentous judgment.

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<sup>1</sup>Hausmann, 111-113.

For Jeremiah the coming of judgment is not the only important factor but also the agent of judgment. Jeremiah's announcement that judgment will come from the North serves as a metaphor of destruction. Echoed in several passages (3:18; 4:6; 6:1, 22; 8:1), it carries an ominous, fearful, foreboding, and imminent tone. This is because the identity of the foe from the north is not given at first. One does not know who will execute judgment, only that it is coming. In time, however, it is discovered that the Chaldean forces were the enemies perpetrating the attack against Judah. But in reality, the One operating behind the scenes was God Himself. He is the real agent of judgment. Even when the vacillating Zedekiah desperately needed assurance, consulting with Jeremiah for a hopeful word from the Lord, Jeremiah's constant reply was that God himself was behind the attack (21:7) choosing, in his infinite wisdom, to give the dominion of the earth into the hands of the Babylonian potentate, Nebuchadnezzar. In fact, survival for the Judeans was regarded as being nil, because even if the Chaldean army had been reduced to only a remnant of wounded men, then this would have been sufficient to overrun the Judeans. The ravages inflicted by the invading forces, leaving only an insignificant remnant, had divine backing.

This remnant which survived the indecencies of the siege and capitulation of the capital city, and were left behind after the deportation of the people, was described as the "poorest people" (52:15, 16) and as rotten figs which were not fit for consumption (24:1-10). These are what Schilling calls the residue of disaster, a

"profane leftover" or the "splinters of a nation."<sup>1</sup> This demonstrated that the theology of the inviolability of Zion, together with its corollary of ready access to God, was faulty. The remnant in Judah was not the prime fruit of the nation, those with whom the future lay.

In fact, the fate of the remnant community in Judah is less than appealing. While it would appear that they were the objects of God's special care, since they were left in the homeland, the opposite actually obtained. They constituted only a "historical remnant," those who had survived the catastrophe.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless a glimmer of hope remained for the remnant seemed to have the opportunity to rebuild under the leadership of Gedaliah. But these hopes were cut off with the assassination of the governor. In fear of Babylonian reprisals, the remnant fled to Egypt despite Jeremiah's warnings not to do so. This action is even more appalling because the people had pledged to do whatever God had commanded them to do through the prophet Jeremiah: "*Whatever the Lord your God sends you to tell us, whether favorable or unfavorable, we will obey the Lord our God*" (42:5, 6).

Their callous disregard for God also demonstrates a lack of faith. This evidence of obdurate apostasy may be considered as a breach of covenant faithfulness. God's clear word was that the remnant should remain in the land. Even though they

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<sup>1</sup>Schilling, 96, 102.

<sup>2</sup>Hasel, "Remnant," *ISBE* (1988), 4:130, 133. Hausmann, 107-108, intimates that the agenda of this remnant is set by the king of Babylon and not by God. Hence, the term "remnant" is not used here as a title of honor but one which infers hopelessness.

were small in number, he was willing to rebuild them (42:7-12). Their future depended on their choice: *obey* God by remaining in the land, and *live*; or *disobey* God by going to Egypt, and *die*. They deliberately refused to accept God's word, preferring to trust in the political prowess of Egypt, their traditional enemy who also opposed God. Hence, this remnant's own demise resulted from (1) their lying, and (2) their lack of covenant faithfulness.

However, their hopes were dashed to pieces in Egypt because the very evils they hoped to escape in order to regain confidence and comfort were the very things that would eliminate them. In the very place where they sought escape from famine, sword, and pestilence, these things would overtake them. And this to the point where there will be neither escapees nor survivors. This means that this remnant lost all hope for repossession of the land in order to effect largescale renewal. By their refusal to exercise the faith necessary to remain under Yahweh's covenant protection, they were reduced to an object of curse (42:18; 44:12). For just as blessing is the result of covenant faithfulness, so the curse is the result of unfaithfulness to the covenant. In the final analysis, only Yahweh's word will stand (44:28). Hence, the demolition of Jerusalem and the loss of the land due to the forfeiture of faith, signalled the loss of the people as the elected people of God.

Therefore, classified merely as a "historical remnant," an entity which had survived the Babylonian onslaught, even if they had retained their national identity as Judeans, this was unimportant since the remnant community had been decimated to such insignificance. National identity did not recommend them as the elect people of

God especially in light of their defiant attitude exemplified in the breach of faith in going to Egypt.

The focus of Chapter Three is the judgment statements directed toward the remnant in the oracles against foreign nations. The language of war dominates the nine passages discussed. Yahweh marches against the nations wielding his insatiable sword such that escape becomes impossible and the inevitable effect is total annihilation so that no remnant is left.

Two main conclusions may be forwarded regarding these oracles:

1. The *universality* of the judgment. All of the nations are included, even Judah. That she is included is not surprising in light of her callous disregard for the covenant with Yahweh. Her former position as a "favored nation" does not exempt her from punishment.

2. The *inevitability* of judgment. If Judah, as the recipient of divine favor is punished, the other nations cannot expect to be exempted. They too will be reduced to ashes.

Another factor brought to the fore in these oracles is the fact that Yahweh's sovereignty alone is absolute and supreme. Inasmuch as it appears that these oracles are disorganized and do not follow a strict geographical or political arrangement, any orderly arrangement is not the intent of the writer. The point, rather, is that all the enemies of God (and his people) must come under his supreme hand: from Egypt as the first enemy which enslaved God's people, to Babylon, the present invaders and occupiers of the land. The emphasis of the writer is not arrangement but that God

had triumphed and destroyed all opposing nations. Even Babylon who had hammered the rest of the world into subjugation will be subverted to God's unmitigated sovereignty.

Seven passages are studied in Chapter Four dealing with the remnant motif in the context of salvation. From the outset it is recognized that God takes the initiative to gather the remnant, who were dispersed by judgment, from the farthest reaches of the earth. Hence, the remnant motif functions as the bridge between disaster and salvation.<sup>1</sup> It is a constituent element in the emphasis on judgment and salvation. However, because of the attention of the divine initiative in saving the remnant, the focus is placed on salvation and not on doom. Salvation is the final aim of God, not punitive judgment.<sup>2</sup> This is observed especially with regard to the emphasis placed on the reversal motif. Jer 23:1-8 highlights this factor. Whereas scattering denotes judgment (vss. 1-2), gathering designates salvation. The effect of unrighteous leadership is reversed by the inauguration of righteous leadership in the person of the Messiah. The result of degradation and death through the judgment of the exile is reversed by the promise of recreation given to the regathered people. Whereas the people were "scattered," "driven away," and "not taken care of," they will be "regathered," "brought back," and "shepherded." Further, the reduction of Babylon from the hammer of the nations to the "last of the nations" (50:12) also

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Hertrich, 197; Dittmann, 605; de Vaux, "'The Remnant of Israel' According to the Prophets," 28.

<sup>2</sup>Hasel, "Origin and Early History," 458.

signifies a reversal. Babylon no longer inflicts judgment but those who flee her find salvation. Once again, God's grace is expressed in the promise of return, the new Exodus that reverses the judgment of the exile (31:2). This is the *šûb š'bûl*, the restoration of fortunes. Hence, the emphasis on judgment is balanced by that on salvation. Jeremiah was not a pure preacher of doom such that he could not entertain hope for the future. He does allow for hope, for a positive view of the remnant, contrary to the opinions of some scholars.<sup>1</sup>

This hope is observed in God's plan to replace the faulty leaders with a new leader, the *šemah šaddîq*, the "righteous shoot." He is identified as the Messiah and characterized by righteousness and wise rulership. He is the ruler *par excellence*.

Yahweh's regathering is described in terms of a "New Exodus," the scope and magnitude of which points in an eschatological direction. Further, this new Exodus of the remnant places it in connection with the New Covenant. Since the first Exodus was ratified by the covenant at Sinai so too must the new Exodus be ratified by the New Covenant. Therefore, God is establishing a new community comprised of the regathered remnant, placed under new leadership and the principles of the New Covenant.<sup>2</sup>

The climate of restoration is one of joy, proclamation and praise. Even though the renewed remnant community lacks the physical prowess to be antagonistic

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<sup>1</sup>Müller and Preuss, 76-78; Raitt, *A Theology of Exile*, 50.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Hasel, "Remnant," *ISBE* (1988), 4:133.

to any group, their strength lies in the reality of God's leadership. This is because of his elective love. He is still Father of the remnant.

With renewal also comes forgiveness which is further related to the New Covenant since both are framed by covenant and forgiveness. Yahweh is the Creator and Lord of the New Covenant and the new relationship. The remnant, therefore, are the recipients of the New Covenant and the new relationship.

However, while forgiveness is initiated by God, the repentance of the people is still necessary. They must "seek the Lord" in order to enjoy the fruit of forgiveness.

Restoration is also predicated on the value of faith. This is enveloped in the promise given to Ebed-Melech: he was saved because he trusted in Yahweh. Since faith is a condition for belonging to God, then the remnant is a faithful minority.<sup>1</sup> Hence, faith becomes the *criterium distinctionis* between those who would be saved and those who would be destroyed. Like Jeremiah, Ebed-Melech becomes a proleptic representative of the remnant who will be saved by faith.

Finally, the renewal of the remnant is based on God's grace, not their holiness. The "holiness" or "piety" of the restored remnant is never an issue in the book of Jeremiah. It is God's gracious design which provides the initiative for the rejuvenation of the remnant community. It is by his grace that the remnant are re-elected and participate in the new Exodus. He is the one who initiates the program of

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<sup>1</sup>Clements, "šā<sup>3</sup>ar," 943.

"rebuilding" and "replanting."<sup>1</sup> Thus, restoration comes not merely as a consequence of election (Garofalo, Sohn) or the covenant traditions (Roth, Braun, Lozano, Dube), but out of the holistic nature of God's character: His initiative, grace, forgiveness and elective love. Attached to this is the people's willingness to repent and their faith venture to join God in close relationship in the New Covenant: "I will be their God and they will be My people."

The beneficiary of such divine action is not the historical remnant group. Rather, attention is switched to the exiles.<sup>2</sup> Judging from the vision of the figs in chap. 24 and the letter to the exiles in chap. 29, the hopes for national reaffirmation were reserved for the deportees. Although never called the *šā'ar*, there seems to have been a transference to them of all the expectations attributed to the remnant as bearer and sustainer of the existence of the people.<sup>3</sup> This is Jeremiah's originality that is distinctive from his predecessors. For them, the remnant constituted those who remained in the homeland. Jeremiah adds that the hope of restoration is to be found in the exiles. They are the heirs in whom the Messianic hopes are sustained.<sup>4</sup>

But Jeremiah exceeds the boundaries for salvation only on a national or tribal level. This is indicated precisely because he deliberately refused to label the

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<sup>1</sup>Renckens, 257, 258.

<sup>2</sup>This is well understood by several commentators: Schilling, 102; Garofalo, 126-135; Huebsch, 113-115; Nevius, 23; de Vaux, "The Remnant of Israel," 26; Clements, *šā'ar*, 944.

<sup>3</sup>Müller/Preuss, 80.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Dreyfus, "Remnant," 429. Hausmann, 99-101, adds that the *gôlâh* is the kernel from which a new community will emerge.

*gôlah* as the "remnant." By this he intends that something more than a geo-political entity is in view. Given the wide scope of the salvation motif, it appears that the remnant may not be identified only as Judeans who returned from exile to form a political unit. The citizens of the restored remnant community are characterized as those who receive the New Covenant under the rulership of the Messiah. As such, value is placed not on nationalistic groupings of tribal or religio-political entities, but rather on a spiritual entity--those who are faithful to God's covenant and are in a binding relationship fostered on his grace and forgiveness, and their faith and repentant attitude. As "heirs of the promises,"<sup>1</sup> the renewed remnant community constitutes not merely survivors of disaster, but a "spiritual kernel" separate from the nation of Judah,<sup>2</sup> a future entity that represents "the kernel of a new Israel."<sup>3</sup> The magnitude of this renewal especially in view of the Messiah's leadership, casts a shadow on the exiles as the only ones fulfilling the fullness of the promise of hope extended to the remnant. Hence, as Hasel has remarked regarding the remnant in the book of Isaiah, the same may be said of the remnant in the book of Jeremiah: "This remnant serves as the link between the ideal *Urzeit* and the future *Heilszeit*; it is an eschatological entity from which the new community of the future springs forth."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Rowley, *The Biblical Doctrine of Election*, 70.

<sup>2</sup>Hoshizaki, 86.

<sup>3</sup>Hasel, "Origin and Early History," 241.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 326.

The Messiah is the ruler of this eschatological remnant community,<sup>1</sup> which emerges from the future action of God. This identity is in the direction of what Thompson labels as a "spiritual Israel."<sup>2</sup> It is the evaluation of the present writer that the restored remnant community in the book of Jeremiah points to a religious entity that extends beyond a political or national group,<sup>3</sup> and is to be identified with an eschatological group where God's salvific activity forms the foundation of the community's life and faith is the bond of unity. This remnant is an entity of eschatological expectation.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, the book of Jeremiah indicates that punitive judgment rendered Judah a small, insignificant remnant and totally decimated the foreign nations. But the disobedience of this historical remnant, their lack of faith and breach of covenant, led to their ultimate demise. Their trust in a political power, rather than in God, effected their annihilation and the loss of their elected position. But God's gracious designs, established on principles of repentance, forgiveness, faith, election and covenant renewal, will initiate a new Exodus that will establish a renewed remnant community. Salvation is a consummation of judgment. Hence, the messages of judgment and salvation are juxtaposed in the remnant motif.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 337. He adds, *ibid.*, 466, that the eschatological remnant is largely an entity of religious rather than of national destination.

<sup>2</sup>Thompson, 569.

<sup>3</sup>Anderson, "Some Observations on the Old Testament Doctrine of the Remnant," 10.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Dreyfus, "Reste," 909; Jenni, "Remnant," *IDB* (1962), 2:128.

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