ABSTRACT

"THE PEOPLE HAVE NOT OBEYED": A LITERARY AND RHETORICAL STUDY OF JEREMIAH 26-45

By

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The goal of this study is to provide a holistic reading of the largely narrative material in Jeremiah 26-45 that is informed by the disciplines of literary and rhetorical criticism. This study seeks to contribute to the growing trend of reading the book of Jeremiah as a literary entity that possesses an editorial unity in spite of the complex compositional history that appears to stand behind the book.

This study will focus primarily on the overarching plot and structure that emerge from the reading of Jeremiah 26-45. The thesis is that this section of the book of Jeremiah consists of two panels of material, chapters 26-35 and 36-45 that are roughly symmetrical to one another. These two panels of material share four basic features in common with each other: an introduction that details national rejection of the prophetic word at the Jerusalem temple (chs. 26 and 36); narratives dealing with prophetic conflict over the issue of submission to Babylon (27-29 and 37-39); sections dealing with the fate of Israel in the aftermath of exile that contrast the immediate and distant futures (30-33 and 40-43); and a concluding section that focuses on
the issue of Judah's covenant infidelity (34-35 and 44-45). The plot of Jeremiah 26-45 revolves around the concept that national destiny is determined by response to the prophetic word, and the central tension in the narrative is created by the contrast between the immediate aftermath of the exile where Judah perpetuates the sins of the past and the promised restoration of the distant future.

The study has six chapters. The first chapter summarizes how the conclusions of modern critical scholarship have impacted reading the book of Jeremiah as a literary entity. The second chapter explores the problems involved in searching for an overarching structure for the book of Jeremiah in general and this section in particular. Chapters three through five are the heart of this study and explore the major parallels that exist between the two panels found in chapters 26-35 and 36-45. The sixth chapter concludes the study by providing a brief summary of the major themes and patterns that emerge from a holistic reading of chapters 26-45.
"THE PEOPLE HAVE NOT OBEYED": A LITERARY AND RHETORICAL STUDY OF JEREMIAH 26-45

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of
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In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
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Grade A

Examining Committee

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB  Anchor Bible
ABD  Anchor Bible Dictionary
AnBib  Analecta biblica
ANET  J. B. Pritchard (ed.), Ancient Near Eastern Texts
ASTI  Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute
ATANT  Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
ATD  Das Alte Testament Deutsch
AUSS  Andrews University Seminary Studies
BASOR  Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BBET  Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie
BETL  Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
Bib  Biblica
BibOr  Biblica et orientalia
BZAW  Beiheft Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ  Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CTM  Concordia Theological Monthly
EvT  Evangelische Theologie
FRLANT  Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HAR  Hebrew Annual Review
HDR  Harvard Dissertations in Religion
HKAT  Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
HSM  Harvard Semitic Monographs
HUCM  Monographs of the Hebrew Union College
ICC  International Critical Commentary
IEJ  Israel Exploration Journal
Int  Interpretation
JAAR  Journal of the American Academy of Religion
JAOS  Journal of the American Oriental Society
JBL  Journal of Biblical Literature
JETS  Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JJS  Journal of Jewish Studies
JNES  Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JNSL  Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages
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<td>Journal for the Study of the New Testament—Supplement Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>JSOT</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>JSOTSup</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament—Supplement Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>NICOT</td>
<td>New International Commentary on the Old Testament</td>
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<td>NIV</td>
<td>New International Version</td>
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<tr>
<td>ÖBS</td>
<td>Österreichische biblische Studien</td>
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<td>OBT</td>
<td>Overtures to Biblical Theology</td>
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<td>OTL</td>
<td>Old Testament Library</td>
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<td>OTSWA</td>
<td>Old Testament Workshop of South Africa</td>
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<td>RevExp</td>
<td>Review and Expositor</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBLDS</td>
<td>SBL Dissertation Series</td>
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<td>SBLMS</td>
<td>SBL Monograph Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBLSBS</td>
<td>SBL Sources for Biblical Study</td>
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<td>SBT</td>
<td>Studies in Biblical Theology</td>
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<td>SSN</td>
<td>Studia semitica neerlandica</td>
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<td>TBü</td>
<td>Theologische Bücherei</td>
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<td>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</td>
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<td>VT</td>
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<td>VTSup</td>
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<td>WMANT</td>
<td>Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>WTJ</td>
<td>Westminster Theological Journal</td>
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<td>ZAW</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: CRITICAL SCHOLARSHIP AND THE LITERARY UNITY OF JEREMIAH 26-45

The Nature of This Study

Along with the prophetic oracles in chapters 1-25 and the oracles against foreign nations in chapters 46-51, the narratives of Jeremiah 26-45 constitute one of the three major sections of the MT edition of the book of Jeremiah.¹ The inclusion of extensive narrative accounts of the life and min-

¹This is the generally accepted structural breakdown of the book of Jeremiah. The isolation of chs. 26-45 as a unit is due to the predominant use of prose style (narratives and sermons) (except chs. 30-31) in this section. While the terminus of chs. 26-45 is certain because of the introduction of the oracles against the nations in ch. 46, there is debate regarding its starting point. The most common alternative to the one presented in this study is to recognize chs. 1-20 and 21-45 as the first two major blocks of material in the book. A major structural argument in favor of this view would be the inclusio formed by the "you came out from the womb" in 1:5 and "I came forth from the womb" in 20:18. See Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 28-30, and William L. Holladay, *The Architecture of Jeremiah 1-20* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1976), 20. The parallels in style, form, and content between the materials in chs. 21-25 and that which follows in chs. 26 ff provide another argument in favor of this arrangement, which include: the extensive use of narrative, the use of introductory historical superscriptions like those in chs. 26-45 (cf. 21:1-2; 24:1-2; 25:1-2), and the focus on the failures of Israel's civil and religious leaders in chs. 21-29 (kings and prophets especially). See Elmer Martens, *Jeremiah*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1986, 141-81 (for treatment of chs. 21-25 with what follows in chs. 26 ff).

These arguments are offset by the parallels between chs. 1 and 24-25, which indicate the presence of an inclusio framing the first section of the book. The parallels between chs. 1 and 24 include: references to visions (1:11-14; 24:1-3), the use of the question, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" (1:11; 24:3), and the use of the key verbs (בָּנָשׁ) "build up," (גָּנַה) "tear down," (צָרָה) "plant," and (חָסְרָה) "uproot" (1:9; 24:6). These parallels are noted in Mike Butterworth, *Structure and the Book of Zechariah*, JSOTSup 130 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 44. The parallels between chs. 1 and 25 include: reference to the beginning of Jeremiah's ministry in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign (1:2; 25:3), focus on Jeremiah as "a prophet to the nations" (1:5; cf. 25:18-26, 31-32), mention of the armies/families from the "north" (1:14-15; 25:8), and references to the commissioning of Jeremiah (1:7; 25:4, 9). See Peter C. Craigie, Page H. Kelley, and Joel F. Drinkard, Jr., *Jeremiah 1-25*, WBC 26 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1991), 363-64.
istory of Jeremiah is a unique feature of this book among the Old Testament prophetic literature, and the mixture of poetic oracles and prose narratives and discourses has spawned a number of critical issues and problems that have dominated modern study of the book of Jeremiah to such a degree that literary, rhetorical, and even theological features of the texts have only recently begun to receive proper attention. This dissertation attempts to contribute to the growing literary study of the book of Jeremiah by applying the tools of narrative and rhetorical criticism to demonstrate that the anthology of narratives in Jeremiah 26-45 is a literary unity with an overarching struc-


Within ch. 25, vv. 1-14 and 15-38 are clearly distinct from one another. Verses 15-38 deal with the theme of the "cup of God's wrath" and Yahweh's judgment against the nations. In the LXX, vv. 15-38 are attached to the series of oracles against the nations that appear in chs. 46-51 of the MT of Jeremiah (forming 25:14-31:44 in the LXX). The association of 25:15-29 (MT) with the oracles against the nations (that specify the nations to partake of God's wrath) would seem to be the more original arrangement, but whether this connection between 25:15-29 (MT) was original or came later, it suggests a break or division between the contents of ch. 25 and the material found in chs. 26-45 (MT--or 32:1-51:5 in the LXX).

Another important argument in favor of viewing chs. 26-45 as a unit is that ch. 26 appears to introduce the major themes which are prominent in the narratives of chs. 27-45. See Kathleen M. O'Connor, "'Do not Trim a Word': The Contributions of Chapter 26 to the Book of Jeremiah," CBQ 51 (1989): 628-29. O'Connor writes, "Chap. 26 presents the Jeremianic messages of chaps. 27-45 in a preliminary and parabolic manner" (p. 629). The major themes introduced in ch. 26 include: royal and national rejection of the prophetic word, the perils and suffering of the prophet, the deliverance of the prophet from life-threatening danger, Judah's precarious existence and the absence of effective leadership to deal with this national crisis, and the response of a small but faithful remnant who support, protect, and follow the prophet (cf. ch. 26--Ahikam; ch. 29--Elasah; ch. 35--the Rechabites; ch. 36--Baruch and the royal officials who protect Jeremiah and encourage the king not to burn the scroll; ch. 38--the foreigner Ebed-Melech; ch. 45--Baruch).
ture and a cohesive message. This study will also focus on how the theological message of the Jeremiah narratives and the book as a whole is reflected in the structural, rhetorical, and literary features of Jeremiah 26-45.

**Literary Approaches to the Old Testament**

**The Concerns of Literary Criticism**

Within the past quarter-century, literary criticism has become a dominant concern in Old Testament studies, partly as a result of the impasses created by the application of traditional methods of historical criticism to the biblical text. House comments:

Many thinkers concluded that historical criticism . . . had almost run its course. Old issues could either be reworked or new paths could be charted. Too, numerous scholars began to recognize that some of the established approaches divide and atomize texts. These methodologies obscure the unity of large and small texts alike. Efforts to date, categorize, and scrutinize even short passages had produced reorganized texts not all could appreciate. An overemphasis on historical detail cost readers a proper understanding of plot, theme, and character. Pre-textual matters subsumed textual issues. The achievements of historical criticism were appreciated, but new ways to illuminate the Bible were desired.2

The practitioners of literary criticism have generally not advocated the abandonment of traditional forms of biblical criticism (source, tradition-history, form, redaction) but have attempted to add a fresh perspective to the field of biblical studies that addresses issues and concerns beyond the scope of historical criticism. Literary critics have stressed the individuality of biblical texts, have focused on the text as it stands in its final form, and have at-

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tempted to unfold the poetics and ideology reflected through the reading of the text.

The Individuality of Biblical Texts

First, literary criticism is able to demonstrate the unique literary features of individual texts. In the 1969 address to the Society of Biblical Literature that helped bring about the paradigmatic shift toward a more literary approach to Old Testament texts, James Muilenburg called for a move "beyond form criticism" because of the "proclivity among scholars... to lay such stress upon the typical and representative that the individual, personal, and unique features of the particular pericope are all but lost to view." Muilenburg advocated a "rhetorical criticism" that gave attention to the stylistic and aesthetic features of individual passages, and this emphasis upon the text as a work of art bestows a particular identity upon each individual passage.

The Text as Focal Point

Second, literary criticism focuses upon the text itself. House explains that literary criticism stresses that, "Interpretation now lies in the text, rather than in what lies behind the text. Passages must no longer serve simply as avenues back into history." Similarly, Powell observes, "Literary criticism views the text as an end in itself. The immediate goal of literary study is to understand the narrative." Drawing a parallel from the field of secular literature, Gros Louis states that the "world of the text" is the focus of

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the biblical literary critic in the same way that "the world of the play" is the chief concern of the Shakespearean scholar.6

Clines observes that this concern with the text itself provides a corrective for the two major defects of historical criticism—atomism and geneticism.7 Historical criticism has been characterized by an atomism which divides and fragments biblical texts, while literary criticism has attempted to offer a holistic approach that stresses the unity and cohesion of texts. Literary criticism is based upon the premise that a significant portion of the Old Testament is "a work of art" which "yields its significance to the observer as a whole and through the articulation of its parts in its present form."8 The modern reader encounters the dilemma that texts dismantled by various forms of biblical criticism were considered readable by the ancient writer/editor(s) responsible for their composition and final form. The ancient writer/editor(s) took these texts as they stand as a form of literary expression and communication, and the modern reader must therefore adopt an approach which facilitates reading these texts as literary entities.9

Focus upon the text as it stands is also a reaction against the "geneticism" of historical criticism that concerns itself with the origin and development of the biblical text in its pre-literary stages. These reconstructions of the pre-history of biblical texts are hypothetical in nature, and the

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8Ibid, 9.

proliferation of such hypotheses regarding the sources and/or redactional layers behind individual passages and books as a whole raises questions regarding the objectivity and verifiability of historical-critical methodology. Gunn comments on the dangers of an approach that is dominated by the concerns of historicism:

A too rigid historicism may lie like a dead hand on our texts. It may too easily focus the bulk of attention on minutiae, not in the realistic expectation of arriving at results which will significantly help the reader to explore and appropriate any existential meaning in the texts, but in the interests of creating a complex and usually speculative hypothesis about the historical development of the text or of ancient Israelite "thought" in general.10

Literary approaches to the Old Testament have redirected attention back to a methodology that enables the reader to understand the message of the biblical text itself.

The Poetics and Ideology of the Text

Literary criticism of biblical texts focuses on the "poetics" of the material, that is, "the basic components of literature and the rules governing their use."11 In other words, literary critics are searching "not only for what the text says, but also how it says it."12 The study of narrative poetics examines the conventions and techniques of biblical narrative and their use and function within particular texts. Narrative criticism focuses on concerns such as compositional units, structure, plot, character and characterization, point of

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11Berlin, Poetics and Interpretation, 15.

view, narrative techniques, ideology, tone and mood, imagery, direct and indirect discourse, and the varied uses of language and syntax within the story.\textsuperscript{13}

The narrative critic approaches the text as a story, a work of art, or even a piece of entertainment, but the artistic and stylistic features of the text are not the exclusive concern or focus. Literary critics such as Alter and Sternberg have particularly emphasized the ideological orientation of Old Testament narrative. Sternberg writes that biblical narratives are “regulated by a set of three grand teleologies that one may call aesthetics/ history/ ideology.”\textsuperscript{14} These three features of the text “cooperate to direct the maneuvers between the truth and the whole truth,” with the result that “it becomes impossible to divide . . . the pleasures of reading a multigap tale or device from the sense of mysterious reality under God and the value scheme brought home in the process.”\textsuperscript{15} Likewise, Alter’s approach to biblical narrative insists “on a complete interfusion of literary art with theological, moral, or historiographical vision, the fullest perception of the latter dependent on the fullest grasp of the former.”\textsuperscript{16} Alter also states, “Close attention to the literary strategies through which that truth was expressed may actually help us to


\textsuperscript{15}Ibid. Cf. also Sternberg, The Poetics of Biblical Narrative, 45-47.

\textsuperscript{16}Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative, 19.
understand it better, enable us to see the minute elements of complicating design."\(^{17}\) Competence in narrative poetics ultimately leads to a better and fuller understanding of the ideological and theological message of a particular narrative or set of narratives.\(^ {18}\)

The Literary Approach in This Study

*The Search for Authorial Meaning*

While this dissertation applies the techniques of narrative criticism to Jeremiah 26-45, this study is ultimately oriented to a form of literary and rhetorical study that places emphasis upon the message of the original author/editor(s) and the rhetorical devices of narrative poetics through which this message is conveyed, the particular historical situation being addressed, and the historical circumstances facing the original audience for whom this text was intended. In contrast, a purely literary study attempts to adopt a formalistic approach which stresses that the text has a life of its own separated from its original historical setting and views the text from the perspective of an idealized reader constituted by the text.\(^ {19}\)

\(^{17}\)Ibid, 21.

\(^{18}\)See J. Daryl Charles, *Literary Strategy in the Epistle of Jude* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 1993), 173, n. 7. Charles writes, "There is something far more basic (and productive) to acquiring insights through a 'literary' approach to the Bible than faddish literary-critical 'models' which ride the crest of cultural winds. Because the Bible is a distinctly sacred book, literary features of the New Testament . . . cannot be separated from its religious meaning." This study adopts the same perspective in its approach to the Old Testament and the book of Jeremiah.

\(^{19}\)For this distinction between narrative and rhetorical criticisms, cf. Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 14-15. Cf. also Yehoshua Gitay, "Rhetorical Criticism," in *To Each its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and their Application*, ed. S. L. McKenzie and S. R. Haynes (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 143-46. Gitay observes that rhetorical criticism is concerned with "the mutual relationship between author, text, and audience" (143). This study attempts to consider the rhetorical impact of Jer. 26-45 upon its original audience as well as the modern reader (as much as is possible) in contrast to other literary and rhetorical studies that adopt a purely formalistic approach.
This dissertation rejects a purely formalistic approach that pejoratively labels the search for the mind of the biblical writer as the “intentionalist fallacy.” This type of formalism advocates a text-dominated method of exegesis, and the message of the text is completely severed from the meaning originally intended by the biblical writer responsible for this material. This text-dominated methodology adopts an ahistorical or even antihistorical approach to the biblical literature. Edgar Conrad’s *Reading Isaiah* represents this type of text-oriented study of an Old Testament prophetic book. Conrad attempts to locate the meaning of the text “in the process of reading (i.e. with the reception of the text)” and not in the discovery of “the intentions of the authors of biblical books” or reading these books “against their historical backgrounds.”

This purely formalistic approach to the biblical literature is unduly skeptical of the ability of language to convey the thought and ideas of the biblical writer. Sternberg writes, “Communication presupposes a speaker who resorts to certain linguistic and structural tools in order to produce certain effects on the addressee; the discourse accordingly supplies a network of clues to the speaker’s intention.” The logical consequence of a view which rejects the ability of written language to convey such communication is a form of epistemological nihilism. Focus on the intentionalist fallacy has provided a corrective against dependence upon external matters in the interpretation of a text (e.g., the writer’s psychological state, personal life experiences), but such

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21Ibid, 1-4.
caution does not necessitate rejection of the idea of "intention" as "a shorthand for the structure of meaning and effect supported by the conventions that the text appeals to or devises." The biblical writer is ultimately responsible for these conventions and employs them for the purpose of communicating a specific message.

A purely formalistic approach is also unduly skeptical of the modern understanding of the historical situation behind the narratives of Jeremiah 26-45. A specific historical situation (the Babylonian assault against Judah) behind the text is clearly identifiable from the Jeremiah narratives and from other biblical and extra-biblical evidence. The writer(s)/editor(s) behind the Jeremiah narratives in chapters 26-45 reflect a consistent and coherent religious ideology (Judah's experience of foreign domination as a result of covenant infidelity toward Yahweh) and advocate a singular political philosophy (the need for immediate submission to Babylonian hegemony). The message of Jeremiah 26-45 loses its razor sharpness if removed from the real world of personalities such as Hananiah, Nebuchadnezzar, and Zedekiah and events such as the siege of Jerusalem or the assassination of Gedaliah and located in the ahistorical realm of the idealized reader. Despite the antiquity of the biblical records, the modern reader can approach the Jeremiah narratives with a sufficient degree of confidence in reconstructing basic historical backgrounds behind the text.

23Ibid. 8-9. The primary objection to purely formalistic or text-dominated readings of biblical texts is the subjectivity underlying such an approach. Ultimate meaning and authority reside with the reader and not the text itself. If final authority does rest with the reader, one is essentially free to manipulate or force the text to mean whatever one wishes. For criticism of this modern hermeneutic, cf. D. A. Carson, "Christian Witness in an Age of Pluralism," in God and Culture: Essays in Honor of Carl F. H. Henry, ed. D. A. Carson and J. D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), 54-55. For a fuller response defending the search for authorial intention, see E. D. Hirsch, Validity in Interpretation (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967).
The Search for Theological Understanding

The ability of narrative poetics and rhetoric to provide insight into the ideological and theological message of the biblical narrator renders these approaches particularly significant for the study of Jeremiah 26-45. Earlier study of the Jeremiah narratives stressed the "biographical" character of these accounts, but more recent scholarship has generally agreed that the primary orientation of these stories is "theological" in nature. For example, Nicholson describes this portion of Jeremiah as a "history of Yahweh's word proclaimed by Jeremiah . . . and the rejection of that Word by Judah." The oft repeated accusation that Judah has not "listened to/obeyed" (הسمع) the word of Yahweh (26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 34:14, 17; 35:14, 15, 16, 17; 36:31; 37:14; 40:3; 42:13, 21; 43:7; 44:16, 23) demonstrates that Nicholson has highlighted the primary theme of this section.

Nevertheless, literary and rhetorical analysis leads to an even more refined and developed understanding of the ideology underlying the Jeremiah narratives. This anthology of narratives is indeed a history of Judah's

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24 For example, cf. John Berridge, Prophet, People, and the Word of Yahweh: An Examination of Form and Content in the Proclamation of the Prophet Jeremiah, Basel Studies in Theology 4 (Zurich: EVZ Verlag, 1970), and Sheldon Blank, Jeremiah, Man and Prophet (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1961). In these works, the prophet Jeremiah is presented as a great religious and spiritual figure along the interpretive lines of classical religious liberalism. More recent studies have recognized that "biography" in the modern sense of the term is an improper designation for the stories in Jer. 26-45. Unlike the focus of modern biography upon the personality and inner life of the individual, these stories tend to view Jeremiah as a typical or representative figure who performs the stereotypical roles of a true prophet. The focus of Jer. 26-45 is not "the life and times" of the prophet Jeremiah but rather Jeremiah's ministry as a prophet of God and the response of Judah to his authoritative message. Cf. Klaus Baltzer, Die Biographie der Propheten (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1975). Baltzer explains that Old Testament "biographical" passages dealing with the prophets tend to focus on their public roles and functions carried out in connection with their office (cf. pp. 19-38 for his thesis in general, and pp. 113-28 for specific discussion of the Jeremiah narratives).

rejection of the word of Yahweh, but it is much more than that. These narratives present a complex statement regarding the past, present, and future in regard to Israel’s response to the prophetic word. P. D. James, in her novel *Children of Men*, describes history as that “which interprets the past to understand the present and confront the future.” This statement could also serve as a summation of Jeremiah 26-45. These narratives offer a record of Judah’s past disobedience to the word of Yahweh, and this rejection of the prophetic word provides the rationale for the judgment of exile executed by Yahweh against Judah. However, the narrator also demonstrates that this rejection of the prophetic word continues on into the exile. Through the literary techniques of narrative analogy and parallelism, the narrator indicates that Judah has failed to learn from the exile and continues to repeat the sin of disobedience that characterized pre-exilic Judah.

The arrangement and structure of the Jeremiah narratives highlight the contrast between portraits of a bleak present (chs. 40-44) and of an ideal future age of salvation and restoration (chs. 30-33). The distinction between the two eras centers around Judah’s response to the word of Yahweh. Judah persists in an existence of disobedience/judgment until the time in which Yahweh intervenes to secure the fidelity of the nation. The rhetoric of this section demonstrates that Israel’s destiny must always be understood in light of its response to the word of Yahweh. Israel will never experience the full blessing of the salvation of Yahweh until they respond in obedience to the word of Yahweh. This dissertation will attempt to demonstrate how this complex understanding of Israel’s past, present, and future is woven together within a unified literary entity.

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Background for This Study: Reading Jeremiah in the Light of Historical-Critical Concerns

Among the historical-critical problems raised by the presence of a substantial prose tradition within the book of Jeremiah are the relationship between the prophetic message of Jeremiah and the prose tradition, the possibility of "Deuteronomic" influence behind the prose tradition, the historicity of the prose accounts, the unity of the prose tradition, and the processes of composition, compilation, and redaction giving rise to the present form of the book of Jeremiah. The overarching issue behind all of these problems is the question of whether there is "continuity" or "discontinuity" between the Jeremianic poetic and narrative traditions.27

The Issue of Continuity between Poetry and Prose in Jeremiah

The works of Duhm and Mowinckel in the early part of this century have provided the foundation for modern study of the book of Jeremiah. In 1901, Duhm isolated three types of material in the book of Jeremiah: the poetic oracles of Jeremiah, the biographical narratives about Jeremiah, and supplementary editorial comments, a large portion of which reflect a sermonic style.28 In 1914, Mowinckel further refined Duhm's approach to the book of Jeremiah and designated the four primary sources behind the book as A (primarily the poetic oracles of Jeremiah located in chs. 1-25), B (the biographical prose narratives in chs. 26-45), C (the sermonic prose discourses


found throughout the book), and D (the poetic message of hope and salvation in chs. 30-31).29

Subsequent study of the book of Jeremiah in this century has reflected the persistent influence of the conclusions of Duhm and Mowinckel, particularly their use of stylistic differences between poetry and prose as a means of determining different points of origin for the materials within the book. The general consensus of modern scholarship is that the poetic oracle was the primary form of proclamation employed by the prophets in their public preaching and that the prose materials are a later development of Jeremiah's message.30 Thus, the stylistic distinction between poetry and prose in the book has often served as a means of isolating authentic oracles of the prophet from later non-authentic supplements to the prophetic message.31

On the basis of statements within the book itself regarding the literary activity of Baruch the scribe (cf. 36:4-8, 28-32; 45:1), scholarship has traditionally assigned an important place to Baruch's role in the composition of the book of Jeremiah, and Baruch is commonly referred to as the "biographer" of the prophet Jeremiah.32 However, a number of interpreters have

29S. Mowinckel, Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia (Kristiania: Dybwad, 1914).


31For the recent movement away from this tendency, see William L. Holladay, "A Fresh Look At 'Source B' and 'Source C' in Jeremiah," VT 25 (1975): 394-412.

expressed skepticism regarding Baruch's actual participation in the composition of the book, and the prose tradition is generally recognized as a product later than either the prophet Jeremiah or his scribe Baruch.  

Early critical study of Jeremiah tended to view the A, B, and C materials as reflective of different literary sources behind the book, and the C (narrative discourse) material was commonly attributed to Deuteronomic circles. This source-critical view eventually gave way to a tradition-history approach, which has tended to understand the whole of the prose materials in Jeremiah as a later adaptation and reinterpretation of the message of Jeremiah by a group of Deuteronomic tradents seeking to make application of the Jeremiah tradition for their community and situation. Scholars such as Hyatt and Thiel have argued for an even more pervasive Deuteronomic

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34See Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles*.


influence in positing a Deuteronomic redaction for the entire book of Jeremiah.

The grounds for attributing the Jeremianic prose materials to Deuteronomistic circles are both external and internal. The external evidence consists of supposed indications of widespread activity of the Deuteronomic school throughout the Old Testament, including the book of Deuteronomy, the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua-2 Kings), and editorial additions and reworking of material within certain prophetic books (including Hosea and Amos).37 Internally, the evidence includes parallels between the generally recognized Deuteronomic corpus and the book of Jeremiah. These parallels are found in the areas of phraseology,38 diction and style,39 form,40 and


For specific discussion of the influence of the Deuteronomic tradition upon the OT prophetic literature, cf. especially Robert R. Wilson, Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 156-252. Wilson views the Deuteronomists as providing “the most detailed statement of Ephraimite views on prophecy” (p. 156). Wilson contrasts the northern Ephraimite and southern Judean perspectives on prophecy. In regard to theology, the Ephraimite tradition stresses the conditional aspects of the Sinaitic Covenant, while the Judean tradition stresses Israel’s election traditions (particularly the election of David and Zion). Sociologically, the Ephraimite prophets tended to serve as critics operating on the periphery of society, while the Judean prophets operated within the central structure of the state and cult and sought to support and preserve these institutions. Wilson acknowledges that extensive mixing of Deuteronomic and Judean traditions occurred in the post-exilic period (p. 295), and the fact that these “traditions” stand together within the Former and Latter Prophets raises reservations concerning the sharp distinctions reflected in Wilson’s study.


39Cf. Nicholson, Preaching to the Exiles, 7. Nicholson explains that this Deuteronomic sermonic style “exhibits a verbose and repetitious nature which points for its origin not to the pen of an author—as a literary style it would have to be judged among the poorest in the
theology. Nevertheless, not all interpreters of Jeremiah have found these parallels convincing, and these scholars have presented arguments in favor of tracing the Jeremianic prose tradition back to Jeremiah himself, his scribe Baruch, or a school of disciples closely associated with the prophet. These arguments have focused on the continuity of the Jeremiah tradition and its distinctiveness vis-à-vis the Deuteronomic corpus both in regard to lan-

Old Testament—but to the lips of a preacher or teacher who was vitally concerned with impressing the urgency of his message upon the minds and consciences of those who listened.”

40Ibid, 32-34, 51-57. Nicholson (pp. 32-34) calls attention to a covenant form based upon the ancient vassal treaty that is reflected in the Deuteronomic literature and in Jeremiah. In the Deuteronomic literature, the basic components of this form are: 1) introduction; 2) historical retrospect and/or hortatory prologue; 3) Yahweh’s command; call to obedience; warning against apostasy or description of apostasy; and 4) blessings/cursings. In Jeremiah, the main elements are: 1) introduction; 2) command/call to obedience; 3) description of apostasy and disobedience; and 4) judgment announced. Nicholson detects this form in Jer. 7; 11; 17:19-27; 25:1-11; 34:8-22; 35. Cf. also Enno Janssen, Juda in der Exilszeit: Ein Beitrag zur Frage der Entstehung des Judentums (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1956), 105-8. Nicholson’s work builds upon Janssen’s earlier findings. Nicholson (pp. 51-57) also calls attention to a sermonic form that summarizes the message of the prophet and Judah’s response, which contains the following elements: 1) Yahweh’s word comes to Israel by the prophets; 2) Israel’s rejection of the words of the prophets; and 3) announcement of judgment. Nicholson detects this form in Jer. 7:25-26, 32-34; 25:4-11; 26:4-6; 35:17; 36:29-31; 44:4-6.

41Cf. Stulman, The Prose Sermons of Jeremiah, 45-48, for a summary of the theological parallels between Deuteronomy and Jeremiah. The primary areas of correspondence include: 1) the conception of the prophetic office (the prophets from Moses onward represent a succession of preachers of the Law whose primary function is to warn Israel of the consequences of disobedience to the Law); 2) the explanation of the causes behind the judgment of exile in 586 B.C. (Judah is guilty of persistent idolatry and rebellion, and the judgment of 586 B.C. is God’s righteous response to Judah’s covenant unfaithfulness); and 3) the common view of history, which places emphasis upon the doctrine of retribution (Yahweh brings the covenant curses against his disobedient people but there is hope for the future because of covenant promises to David and the potential for Israel’s repentance). Cf. also Thiel, Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 26-45, 107-12.

guage and theology. Regardless of the final solution to this problem, there is little doubt that persistent debate of this issue has obscured analysis of the book of Jeremiah itself as a literary and theological entity.

43 Cf. Bright, “The Date of the Prose Sermons,” 15-35. Bright provides a statistical analysis of 56 characteristic phrases within the Jeremianic prose sermons. Of these 56 phrases, 23 do not occur within the Deuteronomic corpus at all. Of the remaining 33, 13 occur not over twice in Dtr., most are instanced in other earlier literature (e.g., of the 15 phrases that appear in Dtr. more than 5 times, all but 7 are found in contemporary or earlier literature), and the usage of these phrases within the Jeremiah prose tradition far outweighs their usage in the Deuteronomic literature. In light of such evidence Bright argues that “what we have is a prose tradition of Jeremiah which grew up on the basis of his words” (p. 27). While not denying that Jeremiah’s disciples may have stood within the Deuteronomic school of thought, Bright argues that the Jeremiah prose tradition reflects an independence from the Dtr. literature.

44 McConville (Judgment and Promise, 19-22, 155-71) argues that the book of Jeremiah and the Deuteronomistic History express hope for Israel’s future in different ways. The Deuteronomistic History is characterized by a call for the apostate nation to repent of its sinful ways and turn to Yahweh. Jeremiah’s message goes beyond a call for the people to repent and
One major result of the tendency to view the prose materials as later developments of the Jeremiah tradition is skepticism regarding the historicity of the Jeremiah narratives and the accuracy of the prose discourses as a theological expression of the message of the prophet Jeremiah. The Jeremiah narratives in chapters 26-45 are a critically important source for scholars seeking to reconstruct the life and ministry of Jeremiah. As a result of both stresses that “hope for the future reposes in the readiness of YHWH himself to take a new initiative in forging a satisfactory covenantal relationship with the people” (p. 20). The Deuteronomistic History also omits reference to return to the land in connection with the renewed relationship between Yahweh and Israel (cf. 1 Kgs. 8:46-53), but this hope is central to the “Book of Consolation” in Jer. 30-33. McConville argues that Jeremiah’s view of the future stands more in line with that reflected in Deut. 30:1-10 and the book of Hosea than with the Deuteronomistic History. Jeremiah stands within the Israelite prophetic tradition as reflected in Hosea, and this tradition is shaped by the theologizing found within the book of Deuteronomy. Thus, Jeremiah has links with the theology of Deuteronomy but reflects differences from the Deuteronomistic corpus as a whole. Further distancing of the Deuteronomistic and Jeremianic traditions is evidenced by the absence of explicit statements in the book of Jeremiah regarding the prophet’s support for the Josianic reforms and of any mention of Jeremiah within the Deuteronomistic History. Cf. also Breckelmanns, “Some Considerations on the Prose Sermons,” 209-11. Brekelmans states that the clarity of the “expectations of future salvation” in Jeremiah reflects an important distinction between the Jeremianic and Deuteronomistic traditions.


For the question of how issues of historicity effect the reading of the Jeremiah narratives, see A. R. Diamond, “Portraying Prophecy: Of Doubtlets, Variants and Analogies in the Representation of Jeremiah's Oracles--Reconstructing the Hermeneutics of Prophecy,” ISOT 57 (1993): 99-119. Diamond argues that these texts are filled with “numerous inconsistencies” regarding the message of the prophet, historical and chronological setting of episodes, spatial location of the action, and the orientation of the main characters toward the issues and concerns raised in the narratives. These inconsistencies raise the question of “why the ancient editor(s) would have expected the narrative to be readable . . . in its present form” (pp. 100-1).
historical controversy and biographical interest surrounding the figure of Jeremiah, the Jeremiah narratives have often been viewed as historical documents first and as literary and theological texts only in a secondary sense. In fact, the use of the Jeremiah narratives for the purpose of historical reconstruction has often served to obfuscate the literary and theological message which arises from a holistic reading of these passages in their present form and arrangement within the book of Jeremiah.

The approaches to the Jeremiah narratives taken by scholars such as Bright and Migsch reflect how concern with historical reconstruction is often at cross purposes with literary and theological readings of the book of Jeremiah. Historical concerns clearly dominate Bright's treatment of the Jeremiah narratives. In the Jeremiah volume of the *Anchor Bible*, Bright rearranges the episodes of Jeremiah 26-45 and attempts to present them in chronological order. The primary contribution of Bright's treatment of the text is to facilitate biographical reading of the narrative accounts as a life and times of the prophet Jeremiah.

Migsch reflects a similar concern with historical reconstruction. In his monograph *Gottes Wort über das Ende Jerusalems*, Migsch attempts to demonstrate that Jeremiah 34:1-5; 45:6-7; 32:2-5; 37:3-38:28a once existed as an independent narrative. The goal of these narratives was to provide a hist-

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torical overview of events which demonstrate that Zedekiah could have prevented the destruction of Jerusalem but failed to do so because of his disobedience to the prophetic word. Migsch then uses this reconstructed text in connection with the Lachish ostraca to reconstruct a chronology of Judah’s final days.48

Bright and Migsch provide valuable analysis of the historical data within the Jeremiah narratives. Nevertheless, in spite of the historical significance of the Jeremiah narratives, historical reconstructions derived from these texts should not take the place of interpretation of the book of Jeremiah itself, and such interpretations must deal with the narrative material as it is presented within the book. The book of Jeremiah is a literary entity, and study of the book must offer explanation of the relationships which exist between the individual passages and between the individual passages and the totality of the book. The studies of Bright and Migsch ultimately serve to remove individual texts and episodes from their proper literary environment.

Migsch’s approach is unable to explain how the narrative materials received their present shape and arrangement within the book of Jeremiah, and Bright disregards this arrangement as insignificant. The use of narrative texts for historical reconstruction should serve a secondary role to interpretation of the text, because the book of Jeremiah is first and foremost a theological statement regarding the message and ministry of Jeremiah. Literary and rhetorical methodologies provide important tools for unfolding the message of the book of Jeremiah, and once this message is set forth, reconstruction based upon historical-critical methodology serves the complementary

48Ibid, 253-54.
role of supplementing understanding of the book's background. The point here is that the book of Jeremiah must be allowed to fulfill its primary function as Scripture before serving as a source for historical study. Modern study of the book of Jeremiah has often reversed these priorities.

Compositional Issues and the Reading of Jeremiah

The Search for Redactional Layers

Because of the complexity and intensity of the debate surrounding the formation and composition of the book of Jeremiah, critical study has continued to devote major attention to editorial and redactional issues surrounding the book. Such studies attempt to establish an original text which has served as the foundation for redactional and editorial activity in the form of expansion or rearrangement of material.

Although recent scholarship has questioned the rigid separation between B and C narrative materials in the book of Jeremiah, interpreters are by no means in agreement regarding the unity of the prose tradition. A number of studies have detected different redactional levels within the prose materials. Pohlmann's *Studien zum Jeremiabuch* and Seitz's *Theology in Conflict* represent redactional studies of Jeremiah which arrive at similar conclusions in that both posit an extensive exilic redaction of the book.

49 For example, see Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles*, 37: "From a literary point of view, therefore, there is no compelling reason in favour of the view that the prose sermons in the book of Jeremiah had a different origin and authorship from the prose narratives." Nicholson attributes both prose sermons and narratives to the Deuteronomists.


Pohlmann specifically deals with the redaction of the narrative material in Jeremiah 37-44. The starting point of Pohlmann's study is his view that the message of the unconditional rejection of Zedekiah and those remaining in the land found in Jeremiah 21:1-10 and 24 did not originate with the prophet Jeremiah but rather with an exilic redactor. The prophet Jeremiah himself offered Zedekiah an opportunity to deliver himself and Jerusalem from further judgment and even offered hope to the Judeans remaining in the land after the exile of 587 B.C. However, exilic editors working in the fourth century B.C. re-worked the narratives of chapter 37-44 to portray Jeremiah as preaching absolute judgment against Zedekiah and the survivors of exile who remain in the land of Judah. In Jeremiah 37-44 as a whole, Pohlmann attributes 59 verses or parts thereof to the original core of the story, 94 to the exilic redaction, and 13 verses are viewed as additions to this redaction.

In his analysis of the Jeremiah tradition, Seitz also detects two primary levels of tradition. The first level of tradition is provided by the Scribal Chronicle. The basic perspective of this chronicle, which was probably written by a member of the post-597 community that survived and remained in Judah is that there remains the possibility of a "legitimate existence for a remnant community and king, in the land, after the events of 597 and 587." This view reflects the viewpoint of the prophet Jeremiah and is expressed in the oracles and messages originating with the prophet. In contrast, the Exilic Redaction of the book of Jeremiah rules out the possibility of any such con-

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33Ibid, 190-91.
tinued existence in the land and focuses on "the finality of judgment over remnant and king." Seitz argues that this exilic perspective reflects the influence of the developing Ezekiel traditions and the final form of the Deuteronomistic history.

The Scribal Chronicle and the Exilic Redaction also have differing perspectives on the person of King Zedekiah. The Scribal Chronicle adopts a sympathetic perspective toward the figure of Zedekiah. In contrast, the final form of the text (under the influence of the Exilic Redaction) flattens out the complexity of the presentation of the king by anticipating his ultimately negative response to the word of God (37:1-2; 38:21-23). During the time of the reign of Zedekiah, the Scribal Chronicle presents the possibility of continued life in the land and that the people can be spared from further judgment through submission to the Babylonians (cf. 38:17-20). In contrast, the Exilic redactors present the judgment and destruction of the nation and land as an inevitable and unavoidable event.

Redaction critics such as Pohlmann and Seitz exhibit great confidence in their ability to unravel the redactional layers making up the book of Jeremiah, but it appears unlikely that one can make such precise redactional divisions of these biblical materials. The goal of a skillful redactor is to blend earlier materials with his own interpolations and leave behind little traces of his fingerprints. Search for redactional activity within a book also appears to often have the negative effect of impairing literary sensitivity. A particular

56 Ibid.
57 Ibid, 245-73.
problem with the studies of Pohlmann and Seitz is their argument that cer­
tain viewpoints offer incontrovertible evidence of different levels of tradition
without giving sufficient consideration to the possibility of such viewpoints
existing as tensions in the individual minds of Jeremiah himself and/or later
editors responsible for putting this book together.

One such example is the tension created by the teaching of the book
on the fate of the Judeans who remain in the land of Judah after the exile of
586 B.C. The ultimate hope for Israel lies with the exiles in Babylon, but a
comparison of Jeremiah 30-33 and 40-43 at a later point in this study will seek
to demonstrate that the people in Judah after the exile have the potential for
enjoying the blessings of the future restoration in at least an incipient form.
The fact that such blessings are not realized or that the text seems to hold
forth little hope of a positive response does not necessitate the view that a
later redactor has emended the original message of the prophet into a mes­
sage of absolute doom. Such tensions are necessarily present when the word
of God calls for a human response.

The studies of Pohlmann and Seitz also seem to fail to consider the
possibility that tensions and apparently conflicting viewpoints may appear
because of overriding literary or rhetorical goals within particular sections of
the book. The presentation of the figure of King Zedekiah in the book of
Jeremiah may provide one such example of this phenomenon. The oracles
against the king and certain editorial statements within the Jeremiah narra­
tives contain harsh and emphatic denunciations of the king's unbelief (cf.
21:3-7; 24:8-10), but the narratives also refer to Jeremiah offering hope to the
king and portray the king as enjoying somewhat friendly relations with the
prophet (cf. chs. 34:1-7; 37-38).
The narrator may wish to portray Zedekiah in a somewhat more favorable light at certain points in order to stress the inner struggle leading up to the king’s ultimate rejection of the prophetic word. In this way, perhaps the king becomes a more realistic figure for the reader of the book. The exilic recipients of the book would have been able to identify more readily with the sympathetic Zedekiah who eventually refuses to obey because of fear and doubt. It is clear from the Jeremiah narratives that King Zedekiah was a complex figure who had deep feelings of ambivalence toward the prophet Jeremiah, at one moment anxious to hear the message of the prophet and at another, ready to acquiesce to the royal officials who are strongly opposed to Jeremiah. If the Jeremiah narratives can depict a character in such a manner, then one should be willing for the composers of such narratives to be just as human as the characters they portray and to have reciprocal feelings of ambivalence toward Zedekiah.

Once again, the intent here is not to become involved in debate over the arguments employed by Pohlmann and Seitz to defend their thesis but rather to raise questions concerning their methodology. Pohlmann and Seitz presume the likelihood of redactional layers within the book of Jeremiah and then seek precisely and exactly to set forth the various editorial influences behind the present book of Jeremiah. This study will seek to provide a more literary approach that begins with the book of Jeremiah as it stands and then attempt to explain how the individual parts fit within the literary whole. This writer is not attempting to deny redactional activity but is seeking to move beyond such issues out of literary concern for the book of Jeremiah as a whole. This study is calling for the book of Jeremiah itself to be given precedence and prominence over hypothetically reconstructed documents or editors behind the text.
Tradition-history and the Formation of Jeremiah

Tradition-history approaches have dominated contemporary study of the book of Jeremiah and have become the primary critical tool for explaining the composition and formation of the book. In one sense, tradition-criticism has contributed to an approach to the book of Jeremiah that is generally more concerned with the message of the book as a whole than earlier source-critical theories. Tradition-critical study does not share the source-critical concern with the distinction between "original" and "secondary" texts but rather analyzes a book as the final product of a growing and developing tradition. The development of the tradition is as important to the tradition critic as the original sayings of the biblical prophet. Waldow explains concerning the perspective of tradition critics on the prophetic literature, "It should be kept in mind that the prophetic tradition does not intend to preserve the original message of the prophet; instead, the prophetic books contain the tradition of a certain prophet who was believed to have started it."

Tradition-history criticism seeks to explain how the message of a prophet was modified, reinterpreted, and reapplied by successive generations. The prophetic book itself becomes the means of unfolding the growth and development of the tradition, and thus, the message of the book as a whole assumes a place of central importance in the exegetical process. Waldow further explains, "The foremost task of biblical exegesis should always be to respect the intention of this tradition and to interpret the texts in their transmitted form."

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60Ibid.
Theories of formation for the Book of Jeremiah

Despite its emphasis upon the totality of the tradition behind the book of Jeremiah, tradition-criticism has also served to perpetuate an approach to the book that stresses the concerns of historicism over exegesis. Tradition-critical studies often focus on the diachronic process of growth and development in the composition of the book at the expense of synchronic theological interpretations and literary readings of the book as a whole.

Tradition critics have offered reconstructions of the formation and growth of the book of Jeremiah that are suggestive of the ways in which this complex book came together. In general, tradition critics attempt to locate the individual complexes behind the book of Jeremiah. After isolating these complexes, tradition-critical studies attempt to reconstruct the growth of each of these units and the processes by which these complexes were ultimately united within the book of Jeremiah. The formation of tradition complexes is viewed as moving from the stages of individual passage (including oracles, confessions, prose discourses, and narrative accounts), to small collections (in oral, written, or both stages), and then to larger editorial units. The process is generally understood not as an erratic "scissors and paste" method of stringing together individual texts but rather as "nucleus and deposit" development in which various loosely related texts accumulate around a core of material. The linkage of these texts, which is often rather loose, is primarily based upon themes or key words.

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Holladay's explanation of the formation of Jeremiah 26-36 is typical of tradition-critical explanations of the growth of the book as a whole. According to Holladay, Jeremiah 26-36 originally developed from a small scroll of messages of hope found in chapters 30-33.63 The first additions to the scroll of hope included Jeremiah 29:1-23, 24-32, and 35:1-19.64 The oracles of Jeremiah 29 fit with chapters 30-33 because of their focus on Israel's "restoration of fortunes" (29:14), and the references to "building houses" and "planting vineyards" in chapters 29 and 35 (cf. 29:5, 28; 35:7) demonstrate a symmetry between the two chapters which suggests their inclusion within the corpus at the same time.

The next supplement involved the additions of chapters 27, 28, and 34.65 Chapters 27-28 fit nicely with chapter 29 in that they deal with the issue of "false" hope (e.g., the use of תָּשׂוּעַ "falsehood," in 27:10, 14, 16; 28:15; 29:9, 31) regarding the duration of the Babylonian exile. The separate oracles of 34:1-7 and 8-22 find linkage with each other and with chapter 33 because of their shared chronological setting in the final days of the reign of Zedekiah and the siege of Jerusalem. This section of the book of Jeremiah is completed with the addition of the narratives of chapter 26 and 36.66 The parallels between these two chapters suggest that they were drafted together but were given their present location in the book of Jeremiah to provide an envelope around chapters 27-35.

63 Holladay, Jeremiah 2, 22.
64 Ibid, 22-23.
65 Ibid, 23.
66 Ibid.
Limitations of tradition-history approaches

Despite the insightfulness of such hypotheses regarding the formation of the book of Jeremiah, these reconstructions often become highly conjectural, particularly when attempting to explain how the book as a whole ultimately came together. Bright has mapped out a rather intricate seven-stage history of development for the book that grows out of an original scroll of Jeremiah's prophecies. Holladay's reconstruction is even more conjectural in his attempt to isolate the original contents of the two scrolls of Jeremiah referred to in Jeremiah 36 and to describe how the remainder of the contents of the final form of Jeremiah grew out of this original core. There is little concrete evidence to validate or invalidate such reconstructions.

The major problem is that the tradition-critical focus upon the growth and development of the Jeremianic corpus ultimately has limited exegetical significance and provides little assistance in the process of reading and interpreting the book of Jeremiah. The chronological relationship between the individual passages that make up the Jeremiah corpus was rarely a major concern for the preservers of the Jeremiah tradition. In the absence of textual evidence, it seems somewhat presumptuous for modern scholars to reconstruct the contents of the early Jeremianic scrolls or to trace with any degree of certainty the growth and development of the book of Jeremiah. The focus of the book is the message and ministry of the prophet Jeremiah as a whole, not the historical sequencing and development of that message. Even if the interpreter can precisely determine when a passage became part of the

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67 Bright, Jeremiah: Introduction, Notes, and Translation, lv-lxxxv.

68 Holladay, Jeremiah 2, 15-24.
Jeremiah corpus, that knowledge ultimately has little effect on how to interpret the passage within its present context in the book of Jeremiah. The concerns with attempting to reconstruct the growth and development of the book of Jeremiah in the process of transmission offer further demonstration of how historical interests have tended to overshadow or obscure reading and interpretation of the book itself.

Concern with the processes of historical development and growth often leads to neglect of the unity and cohesion of the finished product. Tradition-critical studies have frequently failed to give proper attention to how the individual tradition complexes within the book of Jeremiah relate to one another. In the reconstructions of Bright and Holladay, tradition complexes are attached to one another rather loosely without regard for the structure or message of the book as a whole. The book of Jeremiah becomes a collection of loosely connected tradition complexes joined together in a rather disoriented fashion, not unlike a house to which additional rooms are added without consideration of overall design.

The Search for Literary Unity in Jeremiah

The critical consensus that Jeremiah is the product of a long and complicated process of transmission has left its impression upon the reading and interpretation of the book. This view has led some interpreters to read and interpret the book as an amalgamation of disparate materials that bear little sense of literary continuity or coherence with one another. This perspective is reflected in McKane's explanation of the book of Jeremiah as a "rolling corpus." McKane attempts to explain the connection between the

poetic and prose materials in the book of Jeremiah and argues that there is “a relation of adjacency or contiguity” between the two in that the prose represents a form of an expansionistic “exegesis or commentary” on the poetic core of the tradition.\(^7^0\) According to this “rolling corpus” concept, the book of Jeremiah as it stands in the Hebrew Bible is the final product of a long process of composition in which there were gradual expansions and additions to successive editions of the book.\(^7^1\) The expansions were not merely supplementary materials but rather were actually “triggered” or “generated” by the earlier texts.\(^7^2\)

In some instances, as in Jeremiah 3:1-13, a poetic oracle has given rise to a prose text.\(^7^3\) The original message of the prophet Jeremiah is contained in the poetic oracles of 3:1-5 and 3:12-13, and these prose oracles have spurred the prose message of 3:6-11, which is the product of the “exilic climate of theological pondering.”\(^7^4\) The prose sermon found in verses 6-11 represents a later interpretation, or rather misinterpretation, of the two poetic oracles in that it has taken the message of divorce originally intended for the southern kingdom of Judah and applied it rather to the apostasy and potential restoration of the northern kingdom.\(^7^5\)


\(^7^1\) McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, 1, lx-i-xii. For McKane, the expansions of the MT vis-à-vis the shorter LXX provide textual evidence for this process of growth.

\(^7^2\) Ibid, lxii.

\(^7^3\) McKane, “Relations Between Poetry and Prose,” 229-33.

\(^7^4\) McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, 1, lxii. See pp. lxii-lxx for further examples of poetry “generating” or giving rise to prose materials.

\(^7^5\) McKane, “Relations Between Poetry and Prose,” 232-33.
In other instances, such as in the larger prose texts, prose passages have given rise to additional prose supplements and expansions. In his analysis of Jeremiah 7:1-15, McKane isolates the original core of the prophetic message in verses 4, 9, 10-12, and 14. The later expansions to the sermon found in this chapter were added in order to soften the force of the prophet’s message of unconditional judgment against the city of Jerusalem and its temple.\(^{76}\)

The problem is that such analysis provides little or no assistance for the modern reader attempting to read the book of Jeremiah as a literary entity or authoritative Scripture. It is particularly ironic that McKane, who recognizes the need “to concentrate more on the internal relations of the material in the *corpus* constituted by the book of Jeremiah,”\(^{77}\) adopts an approach which severely fragments the text and robs the book of any sense of inner coherence. Individual passages are dissected and viewed as containing a variety of conflicting perspectives. The individual texts of the book of Jeremiah “are not explicable in terms of literary continuity,” and these texts should not be accorded “a degree of planning and thoughtfulness which they do not possess.”\(^{78}\) One is left to wonder if McKane’s approach leaves anything of significance to any reader other than the highly skilled critic who is able to unpick the various layers of the text or piece together the growth and expansion of the texts that make up the book of Jeremiah.

\(^{76}\)McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, 1, lxx.

\(^{77}\)McKane, “Relations Between Poetry and Prose in the Book of Jeremiah,” 227.

\(^{78}\)McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, 1, lxi-lxii.
The central question is whether the contents of the book of Jeremiah necessitate a fragmented approach that essentially leaves the book unreadable as a literary entity. Perhaps this collection of prophetic fragments is so far removed from the modern concept of what constitutes a book that the reader is left with no choice but to abandon any hope of approaching Jeremiah as a literary unity. This question goes beyond the historical issue of continuity/discontinuity in the Jeremiah tradition and seeks to discover if the book of Jeremiah reflects a sense of literary and theological unity. The recognition of such unity does not require that all material within the book be directly attributed to the prophet Jeremiah or involve a denial of editorial activity or a complicated process of growth and development for the book. The search for unity in the book of Jeremiah is merely based upon the premise that at least those individuals or groups responsible for the final stages of composition and editing were concerned to produce a book possessing literary and theological coherence. The complexity of the book’s transmission history does not preclude the possibility that the final product is a carefully edited work which reflects an inner unity. This chapter will now consider certain features of the book of Jeremiah as a whole which serve to validate this premise.

The Connection between Poetry and Prose

In spite of the problems associated with a holistic reading of the book of Jeremiah, there is a growing concern to demonstrate the unity of the book and to focus upon the book of Jeremiah as a whole. The distinction between poetic and prose materials has been a major point of division within the Jeremiah tradition, but interpreters reflect growing awareness of the vital connection and correlation between the two types of material. Holladay has
argued that the poetic oracles of Jeremiah provided "prototypes" for the tradiens responsible for the prose materials. In the composition of the prose passages, the tradents borrow and reshape phrases original to the poetry of Jeremiah or employed in an original manner by the Jeremianic poetic tradition. For example, the phrase "turn each one from his evil (way)" (ויהי ליבר ירמי) and similar variations occur six times in the prose of Jeremiah (18:11; 25:6; 35:15; 36:3, 7) and twice in the poetry (23:14, 22), while appearing elsewhere in the Old Testament only once. For Holladay, such correspondences provide a sense of continuity for the Jeremiah tradition as a whole.

Evidence of Editorial Unity

Earlier critical approaches focused almost exclusively upon source divisions of the material and the separation of "authentic" and "secondary" sayings, but contemporary study of the book is reversing this tendency. Tradition-critical approaches continue to dominate theories regarding the composition of the book of Jeremiah, but there is also a growing tendency to understand the final form of Jeremiah to be the work of an individual editor at the end of the long and complex history of compilation behind the book. For example, Kessler argues that holistic reading and interpretation of the book of Jeremiah is "historically sound" because of "the obvious fact that the

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80 Ibid, 355. For further examples of such corresponding phrases in the prose and poetry of Jeremiah, cf. pp. 354-56. Holladay not only provides examples of such precise matching of phraseology but also looks at examples in which the prose copy has altered the prototype in some manner (p. 356), employed a compound prototype from the poetic tradition (pp. 356-57), employed a compound prototype in which at least one element has come from outside of the Jeremiah tradition (p. 357), or made more extensive alteration of an earlier poetic prototype (pp. 357-61).
Jeremiah as we know him has, after all, come to us through courtesy of a 'final redactor'.\textsuperscript{81} This trend in Jeremiah studies is reflective of a larger tendency in Old Testament studies to understand the prophetic books as possessing an editorial unity.\textsuperscript{82}

**Structural Design in Jeremiah**

In discussing the composition of Jeremiah, Hobbs has argued for the influence of a final editor or writer in bringing together and arranging the present book of Jeremiah into a coherent whole.\textsuperscript{83} In defense of this argument, Hobbs presents two primary pieces of evidence. The first such evidence is that the book as a whole reflects a unified structure. Hobbs states that “it is possible to trace a clearly defined theologically oriented structure to the Book of Jeremiah as it now stands,” and this structure is reflective of the book’s editorial unity.\textsuperscript{84}

Hobbs suggests that the call narrative in the opening chapter of Jeremiah provides a programmatic introduction to the book’s major themes, and this introduction serves to control the book’s structure.\textsuperscript{85} The major the-


\textsuperscript{84}Ibid, 271.

ological themes introduced in the first chapter include: the prophet and the word, the prophet and the nations, and the prophet and the nation. The particular features of the ministry of Jeremiah are previewed in the opening call narrative—the extension of his ministry to the nations, the inclusion of a program of reconciliation to Israel after the accomplishment of judgment, and the experience of opposition from the leadership of Judah and Jerusalem. In the remainder of the book, the content of the prophetic word in chapters 1-24 is an extension of the message given to the prophet in 1:14-16; the biographical narratives in chapters 26-45 detail the prophet's relationship to the nation alluded to in 1:17-19; and the oracles against the nations in chapters 46-51 record the messages of the prophet in the context of his mission to foreign nations referred to in 1:10. The prose narrative of chapter 52 offers a conclusion to the book and demonstrates the confirmation of Jeremiah's prophetic word in the outworking of Judah's history.

Cohesion between Editorial Complexes

The second evidence for the editorial unity of the book of Jeremiah presented by Hobbs is the cohesion between what appears to have been originally separate complexes of tradition. The tradition complexes did not reach their final stages in isolation to one another, but rather the contents of the individual complexes have influenced the other blocks of material within the book. For example, Hobbs has demonstrated that the Jeremiah narratives in chapters 26-36 provide evidence of some degree of familiarity with the contents of chapters 1-24. Hobbs notes that the narrator(s) in this section often give only the briefest summaries of the content of Jeremiah's messages (cf.

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26:6; 36:29b), and the brevity of such statements “presupposes a wider knowledge of the preaching of the prophet,” such as that contained in the prophetic oracles of Jeremiah 1-24.87

Concerning Jeremiah 37-45, Hobbs states, “So much is left unsaid that this whole complex would make little sense on its own without some detailed reference to the words and deeds of the prophet as recorded, for example, in chs. 1-24.”88 The preaching of the prophet in this section is also often summed up in brief allusions to a larger body of prophetic material (cf. 37:7ff; 38:2ff). The narrator presumes the reader’s understanding of historical events and figures and of the reasons behind the fear of the king to obey the prophet and the conflict between Jeremiah and the royal officials.

On the basis of this evidence, Hobbs draws two important conclusions. First, the circles of tradents among whom these complexes grew and circulated were closely related to one another, if not in fact the same groups.89 Second, the relationships which exist between the complexes indicate the overall unity of the present form of the book.90 Hobbs rejects the idea of a group of loosely related and free-floating tradition complexes being attached together in piecemeal fashion. In spite of the likelihood that the book of Jeremiah reached its final form in the MT through a process of literary development, the book as a whole and its individual components reflect evidence of literary and theological cohesion.

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87 Ibid. 269.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
90 Ibid.
Evidences of Theological Unity

The final form of the book of Jeremiah reflects a theological, as well as an editorial unity. Perhaps the most influential call for a theologically holistic approach to the books of the Old Testament has come from Brevard Childs. From the perspective of canonical criticism, Childs defends the holistic reading of biblical texts as theologically sound because it "does not seek to play off the various levels of tradition against each other, but rather follows the leads within the composite as to how the parts relate theologically." \(^9^1\) Though Childs' explanation of what constitutes the "canonical" meaning of a biblical text often lacks clarity and precision, \(^9^2\) his approach to the Old Testament prophetic literature makes an important contribution because of its attempt to explicate the theological forces at work in bringing together the diverse material of a prophetic book into a cohesive whole.

Brueggemann also adopts a canonical approach in arguing for a strong sense of theological unity for the book of Jeremiah. Brueggemann understands the book of Jeremiah to be the product of the blending of Jeremiah's pre-exilic message of judgment and the Deuteronomists' post-exilic message of hope declaring God's intention to do a new work. The significant point is not the separate points of origin for these two messages, but rather the fact of their union within the canonical form of the book:

\(^9^1\) Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 353.

\(^9^2\) For example, Childs is unclear in explaining how the "canonical" meaning of a text differs from the "redactional" meaning and seems to imply an intentionality that goes beyond the biblical writers or redactors but yet stops short of attributing this canonical meaning to the divine author. Cf. James Barr, "Childs' Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture," *JSOT* 16 (1980): 12-23. Barr particularly critiques Childs for imprecision in his use of terms such as "canon," "canonical integrity," and "canonical intentionality" (pp. 13-14). Barr argues that Childs "lumps together all sorts of processes under the vague heading of canon" (p. 17).
We must presume that this literature has integrity and the two parts are in important ways related to each other. While we cannot be clear about the literary and historical conventions, we can assume that theologically the assertions of judgment and hope hold together because they are the work of the same God addressed to the same community, albeit in different circumstances.93

In his two-volume commentary on Jeremiah, Brueggemann also contributes to the discussion of the theological unity of Jeremiah by isolating three traditional tenets that are constitutive of the covenantal theology of the book of Jeremiah: Israel's covenant with Yahweh as reflected in the Sinai traditions, a notion of covenant violation and subsequent covenant curse, and the royal-temple ideology of Jerusalem, which emphasizes Yahweh's promises to the king and temple, his permanent residence in Jerusalem, and his role as the patron and protector of Jerusalem.94

McConville's treatment of the themes of repentance and salvation in the book of Jeremiah also reflects an attempt to reckon with the book as a theological unity.95 The book is not merely a collection of disjointed sayings and sermons which bear little or no relation to one another but rather a mature piece of reflective theology that "forms a part of the Old Testament's evaluation of the experience of exile."96

McConville's synchronic analysis of the themes of repentance and salvation contrasts to the earlier diachronic treatments of Raitt and Unter-
mann. In contrast to Raitt and Untermann, McConville argues that a chronology of the prophet's life and message is not the focus of the book of Jeremiah and that individual texts within the book must be read in light of the teaching of the entire book. While not denying any such chronological development in the preaching of Jeremiah, particularly in light of changing events and circumstances that characterized the prophet's ministry, McConville stresses that individual oracles are oriented to the overall message of the book. Thus, each individual passage dealing with the subject of repentance "incorporates the whole trajectory of thinking about repentance in the book." The totality of these passages forms a unified "theology of repentance."

The prophetic call to repentance is prominent in several of the key "repentance" texts in the book of Jeremiah (cf. 3:1-4:4; 7:1-15; 26:2-6). The potential for repentance and the avoidance of judgment expressed in these texts appears to be in tension with passages such as 4:5-8, which provide an

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97 Cf. Thomas M. Raitt, *A Theology of Exile: Judgment/Deliverance in Jeremiah and Ezekiel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), and Jeremiah Untermann, *From Repentance to Redemption: Jeremiah's Thought in Transition*, JSOTSup 54 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987). Raitt and Untermann both attempt to trace a chronological development of Jeremiah's preaching on repentance and to determine from which time period individual passages relevant to this subject belong. According to Raitt, Jeremiah's preaching divides into three periods: 1) an early period in which the prophet calls for repentance so that Judah might avert judgment (pp. 37-40); 2) an intermediate stage in which the prophet warns of inevitable judgment (pp. 40-44, 60-66); and 3) a later stage in which the prophet proclaims ultimate salvation on the basis of God's New Covenant with Israel (pp. 110-27).

Untermann differs from Raitt in his contention that salvation is always the focus of Jeremiah's preaching but is like Raitt in that he proposes a three-stage chronological development of Jeremiah's preaching on repentance. The earliest stage proclaimed a redemption based upon repentance (pp. 23-53). However, as time progressed, the call for repentance receded, and the prophet stressed God's sovereign act of redemption as the basis of Israel's future hope (pp. 55-87). In its latest stages, the preaching of Jeremiah placed exclusive emphasis upon God's redemptive act (pp. 89-116).


99 Ibid.
unqualified statement of doom, and 29:10-14, which declares that exile must precede Israel’s salvation. Nevertheless, McConville insists that the calls for repentance do not represent a stage of the preaching of Jeremiah that was set aside or invalidated. While these texts may reflect a call to repentance that was more prominent in the earlier stages of Jeremiah’s preaching, McConville argues that these passages also reflect interaction with the overall Jeremianic perspective on the subject of repentance. For example, Jeremiah 3:1-4:4 contains repeated calls for repentance (cf. 3:12, 14, 22; 4:1), but also stresses the unwillingness and inability of Israel to turn to God and thus aligns with the passages in Jeremiah which stress the inevitability of judgment.\(^{100}\)

In his approach to the book of Jeremiah, McConville reacts against a methodology which sets individual messages of the prophet against one another as representative of rival and conflicting theologies and which isolates individual texts from their larger context and presents them “to represent points on a spectrum of views about a topic.”\(^{101}\) McConville argues that such an approach is unable to account for “the book as a whole,” in that it presents these individual texts as originating with Jeremiah but yet expressing ideas which the prophet himself ultimately rejected.\(^{102}\)

Just as McConville detects unity in the book’s theology of repentance, Overholt\(^ {103}\) has focused on the idea of “falsehood” (רין) as a unifying

\(^{100}\)Ibid.

\(^{101}\)Ibid, 91.

\(^{102}\)Ibid, 94-95.

theological concept in the book of Jeremiah. Overholt provides further support for a holistic approach to Jeremiah by demonstrating that there is remarkable continuity within the Jeremiah tradition regarding the concept of "falsehood," and this continuity also cuts across the customary "sources" or "traditions" within the book.

Overholt observes that throughout the book of Jeremiah, the term הָיִט consistently appears within three specific contexts: 1) in the warnings against Judah’s false sense of security (cf. 7:1-15); 2) in polemics against Jeremiah’s prophetic opponents (cf. 6:13-15; 23:9-40; 27-29); and 3) in the attacks against Judah’s idolatrous religious practices (cf. 10:1-16; 2:26-28; 3:23; 14:22). The term הָיִט is not only consistently used in this manner throughout the book, but these various uses also appear in the A (poetic), B (biographical prose), and C (sermonic prose) materials. The theological concept of הָיִט thus appears to be a unifying feature which draws together diverse texts that have often been viewed as indicating diverse sources or points of origin for the material in the book of Jeremiah.

Evidences of Literary Unity

Literary Features of the Book as a Whole

Numerous articles and studies relating to the book of Jeremiah are reflecting greater sensitivity to the literary features of the book. Discussion of such works must begin with Lundbom’s Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric, the most thorough rhetorical-critical study of the book of Jeremiah as a whole. Lundbom argues that two primary rhetorical devices in

\[104\] Lundbom, Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric.
the book of Jeremiah are chiasmus and inclusio. In addition to providing examples of these devices, Lundbom also offers suggestions regarding their structural significance for the book as a whole.\(^{105}\) For example, the phrase רבדי ידועיה ("words of Jeremiah"), which appears in 1:1 and 51:64, provides an inclusio for the book as a whole. The phrases זכתה madre ха ("you came out from the womb") in 1:5 and זכתה madre מ ("I came forth from the womb") in 20:18 provide a further framing inclusio for chapters 1-20. Holladay's *The Architecture of Jeremiah* criticizes atomistic approaches to the poetry of Jeremiah 1-20 and demonstrates how rhetorical tags such as theme words, chiasmus, and inclusio mark off major cycles of material, such as the "harlotry cycle" in chapters 2-3 and the "foe from the north cycle" of chapters 4-6.\(^{106}\) Seminal studies on the structure of Jeremiah should lead to further and more detailed study of the arrangement of material in the book.\(^{107}\)

*Literary Features in Jeremiah 26-45*

There is also growing awareness of the literary dynamics at work within the Jeremiah narratives. Lundbom has attempted to explain the struc-

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\(^{105}\)Ibid, 28-30.

\(^{106}\)Holladay, *The Architecture of Jeremiah*, 30-54. For example, the harlotry cycle is introduced in 2:2, which contains the phrases "remember," "youth," "bride," "your following after me (חרב וידעה) in the wilderness," and "in a land not." These words and phrases appear in a generally reverse order in 2:5-3:24, which results in a type of chiastic structure for the section as a whole—note "you went after (חרב וידעה) worthlessness" (2:5), "in the wilderness" and "in a land not" (2:6), "forget" (opposite of "remember" from 2:2) and "bride" (2:32), "youth" (3:4), "forget" (3:21), "youth" (3:24). However, Holladay resorts to circular reasoning when removing passages such as 3:6-12a, 14b, 15-18 as late insertions that disrupt his proposed structure for this cycle of material. There is also not complete regularity and consistency in this pattern presented by Holladay. In other places, Holladay removes texts that do not fit within the structural patterns he attempts to demonstrate.

ture of the Jehoiakim and Zedekiah narratives as a chiastic arrangement. Martens observes that the narratives of Jeremiah 34-38 are arranged in a parallel format and argues that this form of “narrative parallelism” may serve as “one of the keys to understanding the present arrangement of material in the book of Jeremiah.” Callaway focuses on the structural significance of the three-fold cycle of king-prophet interviews in Jeremiah 37-38 (cf. 37:1-10; 37:17-21; 38:14-28) and compares these stories to other Old Testament accounts of confrontations between prophets and kings.

Other studies have specifically concentrated on the continuous chronological narrative of Jeremiah 37-43 as a literary unit. Wanke calls attention to the inclusio formed by the references to the prophet Jeremiah’s intercession on Judah’s behalf in 37:3 and 42:3. In addition, Wanke has also divided this section into ten narratives each containing an introduction with background information, a main body consisting of conversation and consequences, and a concluding summary statement. In turn, these ten narratives are arranged in five pairs with each pair of narratives bearing a close relationship to one another (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; 41:10-15/41:16-43:7). Unfortunately, this supposed symme-


109 Elmer Martens, “Narrative Parallelism and Message in Jeremiah 34-38,” in Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis: Studies in Memory of William Hugh Brownlee, ed. C. Evans and W. F. Stinespring (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 33-49. For example, Martens views the narratives of 34:8-22 and 35:1-19 as parallel because of a common structure and a common thematic emphasis upon the issue of covenant fidelity. The narratives of 36:1-32 and 37:1-38:28a are parallel in that both are structured around a three-fold proclamation of the word of God by Jeremiah.


111 Wanke, Untersuchungen zur sogenannten Baruchschrift, 98.

112 Ibid, 91-95.
try is interrupted by several lengthy insertions or combinations of originally separate narratives, which obscure the structure suggested by Wanke.

Abrego, in his dissertation *Jeremías 36-45: El Final del Reino*, has also devoted attention to structural features in the second half of the Jeremiah narratives. For example, Abrego presents the following chiastic structure for Jeremiah 37-39:

A. Introduction (37:1-2)
B. Relief of Jerusalem/imprisonment of prophet (37:3-16)
C. Dialogue of Zedekiah-Jeremiah (37:17-21)
D. Accusation of the prophet (38:1-13)
E. (=C') Dialogue of Jeremiah-Zedekiah (38:14-28a)
F. (=B') Fall of Jerusalem/liberation of prophet (38:28b-39:14)
G. (=A') Conclusion (39:15-19)

Each section within the introduction and conclusion is marked off by the concluding phrase, “and Jeremiah remained” (יָשָׁר יְהוָה), and references to Jeremiah’s return to “the midst of the people” (יחל ערים) in 37:4 and 39:14 form an inclusio for this section of material. Abrego also demonstrates the correspondence between events which occur within this section. The imprisonment of Jeremiah in 37:12-16 foreshadows the capture of Zedekiah in (39:4-7). In 38:1-13, the story is built around two acts of “hearing” -- in verses 1-7, Shephatiah and the officials of Judah “hear” (שמע) the message of Jeremiah and seek to put the prophet to death; in verses 8-13, Ebed-Melech “hears” (שמע) the report of the actions of the officials and seeks to deliver Jeremiah.

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114] Ibid, 65-87

115] Ibid, 85-86
from imprisonment. Abrego offers similar evidence of literary design throughout Jeremiah 36-45.

The studies above are a sample of observations on the literary features of Jeremiah 26-45. In many cases, these findings form the foundation for observations and conclusions set forth within this dissertation. These studies also provide incentive to search for further signs of literary unity and design within the Jeremiah narratives of chapters 26-45 as a whole. This dissertation deals with one section of the book of Jeremiah, but the hope is that recognition of the literary features of chapters 26-45 will promote further holistic study of the entire book.

The Approach of This Study

This dissertation will seek to demonstrate that chapters 26-45 reflect an overarching literary structure. This arrangement consists of a two-paneled structure (chs. 26-35 and 36-45) built around a framework of narratives detailing events from the reign of Jehoiakim. These two panels are designed and constructed to parallel one another and to be read in light of each other. Chapter two of this dissertation will provide an overview of this structure in connection with the issues surrounding the overall structure of the book of Jeremiah in general. Chapter three will examine the "framework" chapters of Jeremiah 26/34-35 and 36/44-45 that introduce and conclude each of the two major panels. Chapter four will discuss the parallelism between chapters 27-29 in panel one and chapters 37-39 in panel two and the manner in which these two sections are built around the theme of prophetic conflict. Chapter five will provide a treatment of the contrasting correspondence between

chapters 30-33 in panel one and chapters 40-43 in panel two. These two sections offer contrasting pictures of life for Israel in the aftermath of exile. Chapter six will offer a concluding summary of the literary message and key themes for the whole of Jeremiah 26-45.
Chapter 2

AN OVERVIEW OF THE STRUCTURE OF JEREMIAH 26-45

Introduction

The use of chronological notations and introductory formulae indicates that Jeremiah 26-45 consists of fifteen independent units: 26:1-24; 27:1-22; 28:1-17; 29:1-32; 30:1-31:40; 32:1-44; 33:1-26; 34:1-7; 34:8-22; 35:1-19; 36:1-32; 37:1-39:18; 40:1-43:13; 44:1-30; 45:1-5. This study will attempt to examine how these various components are related to one another and how they function together as a literary unity. The placement and arrangement of these materials may seem strange to the modern reader, but careful study seems to indicate that these units are not simply patched together in a random fashion. Bar-Efrat comments on this type of holistic study of narratives that are joined together in the biblical text:

In the Bible narratives which are more or less complete in themselves link up with one another so as to create larger literary units. In other words, narratives which on the one hand can be considered as self-contained units may be regarded on the other hand as parts of larger wholes.¹

In order to determine how groups of narratives function together as a unit, literary approaches have stressed the importance of setting forth the literary arrangement or structure of biblical texts. Fishbane and Talmon comment:

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In order to fully appreciate the uniqueness of a given literary unit in its present form, we are required to pay heed to the intricacies of its structure, and to the peculiarities of the process of structuring the basic components, which often are of a general, common character into the specific form in which they are now found. It is this process which makes for the individuality and the uniqueness of the final product.²

Bar-Efrat defines structure as “the network of relations among the parts of an object or a unit.”³ House stresses that structure is a key element in the biblical text in that it reflects both the unity and plot of the text.⁴ House explains that the structure of a literary work “unites its various themes, images, ideas, characters, plots, points of view, and time sequences.”⁵ Structure functions as “the glue that holds an artistic piece together.”⁶ Structure also serves to reveal plot, that is, the way in which “a selected sequence of logically caused events . . . present a conflict and its resolution.”⁷ Unfolding the structure of a


⁵Ibid, 71.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid, 115. The proper focus of rhetorical analysis of structure is literary in nature. For an attempt to use structural features of the text as a means for resolving historical-critical issues surrounding the book of Jeremiah, see the treatment of selected narrative material in Jer. 24-36 in Jack R. Lundbom, Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press), 125-30. Lundbom attempts to employ analysis of structure in an effort to reconstruct the written pre-history of the book of Jeremiah. Lundbom argues that the third edition of the book of Jeremiah involved the addition of a “Jehoiakim cluster” (chs. 25, 26, 35, 36) of narratives to the existing corpus. The fourth edition of the book resulted in the inclusion of additional narratives, the “Zedekiah cluster” (chs. 24, 27, 28, 29). According to Lundbom, the original independence of these narratives is indicated by the fact that each cluster reflects a chiastic structure. For the Jehoiakim cluster, the original structure is: A (“the fourth year of Jehoiakim,” ch. 25); B (“the reign of Jehoiakim,” ch. 26); B’ (“the days of Jehoiakim,” ch. 35); and A’ (“the fourth year of Jehoiakim,” ch. 36). Similarly, the Zedekiah cluster reflected an arrangement of: A (after the exile of Jeconiah, ch. 24); B (“the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah,” ch. 27); B’ (“the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah,” ch. 28); A’ (after the exile of Jeconiah, ch. 29).
work is essential to understanding the way in which a text moves from its beginning to end.

*The Problem of Arrangement in Jeremiah*

The Problem of the Principle of Arrangement

The major problem in reading the book of Jeremiah holistically and seeking to unfold its literary structure is the difficulty of determining the principle(s) of organization that governed the arrangement of materials that make up the book. The book of Jeremiah appears to have been patched and pieced together in a manner that defies logical explanation by the modern reader. Patterson observes, “The reason for the present arrangement of the book of Jeremiah has long baffled Jeremiah’s interpreters.”

Patterson further comments on the complexity of this problem:

As for the order of these portions, since they are manifestly out of strict chronological sequence, other bases of organization and compilation need to be considered. It seems highly unlikely that purely literary or stylistic considerations alone can suffice either. For although the book does show evidence of some basic groupings, nevertheless the material is not arranged consistently in accordance with such conventions. Nor can theme/subject matter be the sole determining factor, for similar themes and items of subject matter (e.g. national sin, divine discipline, and judgment) cut across all portions of the book. Therefore, some

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Rather than focusing upon the literary features of the text of Jeremiah as it stands, Lundbom has employed rhetorical analysis of structure to hypothetically posit the existence of literary documents that gave rise to the present form of the book. For criticism of this blending of rhetorical analysis with historical-critical reconstruction, see Leo G. Perdue, “Jeremiah in Modern Research: Approaches and Issues,” in *A Prophet to the Nations: Essays in Jeremiah Studies*, ed. L. G. Perdue and B. W. Kovacs (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1984), 29. Perdue argues that rhetorical criticism “may not be convincingly used to address historical questions, but rather should be limited to such literary tasks as the demarcation of compositional units, their texture, and ultimately their meaning.”

combination of principles must lie behind the book's compilation and final arrangement.  

Seitz forthrightly states that the final form of the book of Jeremiah has taken "a peculiar shape" which "seems to aggressively defy description."  

As with the book of Jeremiah as a whole, commentators often specifically call attention to the apparent disorder and absence of coherent arrangement in the narrative section of chapters 26-45. Bright states that the narratives and messages in this section appear in "pell mell order." In a similar vein, Carroll calls attention to the absence of inner unity within chapters 26-45:

The second half of the book of Jeremiah poses serious problems of division and classification. The long stretch of chapters from 26 to 45 is broken into smaller collections and discrete narratives... No central organizing theme can be detected in the twenty chapters which would allow them to be treated as a unity or give them a unifying title. ... If the word of judgment dominates 2.5-25.11 as an overarching concept (with only a few fragments of salvation material), there is no equivalent organizing principle for 26-45. 

Bright states that the arrangement of the book of Jeremiah is generally based upon "common theme, common occasion, or even catchword." Bright provides no further elaboration because "apparent lack of arrangement" is a characteristic of the prophetic books in general and the book of Jeremiah in particular. When reading the prophetic books, the modern

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9 Ibid, 113.


13 Bright, Jeremiah: Introduction, Translation, Notes, lxxiii.

14 Ibid, lvi.
reader is left with an impression of “hopeless disarray” which leads to the conclusion that the book itself is “a hopeless hodgepodge thrown together without any discernible principle of arrangement at all.”

This apparent lack of arrangement or structure is primarily due to the anthological nature of the book of Jeremiah. Craigie explains:

What we are dealing with, then, in reading the Book of Jeremiah is a work that is essentially an anthology, or more precisely an anthology of anthologies. And the collection of anthologies brings together a number of sayings and writings that were associated with the prophet, bringing them together in a single volume. But whereas a modern anthology provides guidance to its writers by the extensive use of titles, notes, and headings, only a few such aides have survived in Jeremiah. Furthermore, the logic by which this collection of anthologies was compiled can be only partially reconstructed, so that the reader cannot always determine the reason for the sequence and arrangement of the materials that comprise the whole.

The Significance of Structure for Prophetic Books

In spite of the growing number of studies focusing on the literary structure of Old Testament prophetic books and attempting to provide a holistic study of these texts as “books” from a literary perspective, the anthological nature of the prophetic books has led some interpreters to question even the validity of this search for structure. The attempt to determine literary structure may be valid for narratives that progress logically and/or sequentially from beginning to end but not for a collection of sayings or speeches that make up a prophetic book. In a sense, the material of Jeremiah 26-45 exists in a form of literary limbo. The material is generally in the form

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15Ibid.

of prose narrative, but these narratives do not tell a story in a chronological or sequential fashion. Instead, these narratives are more like an anthology or collection of apparently isolated incidents, and these episodes in Jeremiah 26-45 often seem to serve as nothing more than a framework for prose sermons or speeches of the prophet. Thus, the questions raised about the arrangement and structure of material in the prophetic books in general also applies to the arrangement of the anthology of narratives in Jeremiah 26-45. The narratives appear to be arranged in a manner similar to the way that poetic oracles are arranged in the prophetic books.

Some scholars contend that the placement of an individual oracle or account within the collection may offer little or no assistance to the exegete in determining the meaning or significance of that particular passage. Commenting on the books of the pre-exilic prophets in general, Bright argues, “To seek for a unity of structure in them, and to interpret them as if such were present, is an error in method.”

According to Bright, a prophetic book possesses a sense of unity in that “it stems from the mind of a single man,” but not in that it has “unity of structure.” The arrangement of materials in the prophetic books reflects secondary editorial concerns that have no bearing on the meaning of the prophet’s original statements. Roberts offers a similar

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17 John Bright, “The Book of Jeremiah: Its Structure, Its Problems, and their Significance for the Interpreter,” Int 9 (1955): 278. It should be noted that Bright’s objection to the search for structure is perhaps as much governed by historical concerns as literary sensitivity to the nature of the prophetic books. Bright states that focus on literary structure in a book devotes too much attention to the thought of the disciples and editors who collected the sayings of the prophet at the expense of the thought of the prophet himself (p. 278). This dissertation is promoting a literary approach that does not seek to distinguish between “original” sayings of the prophets and “secondary” additions to those sayings by later redactors. All materials in the Jeremiah tradition are viewed as forming a literary entity which is viewed as sacred Scripture.

18 Ibid, 277.

19 Ibid.
criticism of the emphasis upon arrangement of material and the search for literary structure:

The claim is sometimes made that the sheer juxtaposition of literary units affects their meaning, whether or not such placement was intended; but this is a dubious claim. If a reader recognizes two literary units to be discrete, self-contained units, like two sermons in a book of sermons, two stories in a book of short stories, or an article and an advertisement in a magazine, the fact that these two units are contiguous will have little bearing on the reader’s reading of either unit. A competent reader will seldom confuse the two.²⁰

Roberts even warns that “too much attention to the book as a whole may lead to misinterpretation of a particular sermon.”²¹ Operating from a similar perspective on the prophetic literature, McKane reflects skepticism regarding the attempt to find literary structure and design in the book of Jeremiah when stating, “There is a tendency to underestimate the untidy and desultory character in the aggregation of material which comprises the book of Jeremiah and to invest it with architectonic properties which it does not possess.”²²

Search for literary structure is often dismissed as too speculative or subjective in nature. For example, Roberts characterizes attempts to discover the rationale behind the arrangement of materials within a prophetic book as “artificial, contrived, and obvious only to the critic proposing the analysis.”²³ From this perspective, the setting forth of literary arrangement and structure is a form of eisegesis imposed upon the text rather than a means for unfold-


²¹Ibid, 9.


²³Roberts, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, 11, n. 1.
ing or confirming its meaning. Literary critics attempting to unfold the structure of a work must particularly guard against forcing the text to fit a contrived architectural pattern or of presenting structural patterns that have only occurred accidentally apart from the intention of the biblical writer. 24

In spite of the healthy caution regarding the dangers of subjectivity in the search for structure, individual studies of literary structure for all types of biblical genres and texts deserve to be judged on their individual merits. Biblical exegesis as a whole is often more art than precise science, and subjectivity enters into every area of biblical study. The numerous works demonstrating the presence of structural patterns present in Hebrew narrative 25 and prophetic 26 literature provide the interpreter with sufficient

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24 Note the statement in Bar-Efrat, “Analysis of Structure,” 169-70: “Even when dealing with phenomena that are objectively present in the narrative text a certain amount of subjectivity is involved when pointing out structures. This is due to the necessity to single out among a multitude of diverse phenomena those elements with which a significant structure can be realized. The subjective factor increases considerably when the ingredients of the structure are themselves the product of the rather subjective process of interpretation. So in order to steer clear of undue arbitrariness themes and ideas should be borne out by the facts of the narrative as clearly and unambiguously as possible. Also, vague and general formulations should be avoided.”

See also Mike Butterworth, Structure and the Book of Zechariah, JSOTSup 130 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 53-61, for cautions regarding the subjectivity in the search for the structure of biblical texts. In order to demonstrate that structures often arise accidentally, Butterworth selects twenty random verses from the book of Isaiah and presents a chiastic structure for these verses as a whole (with an additional chiasm at the center of the larger chiastic structure).

certainty regarding the validity of attempting to reconstruct the structure of the Jeremiah narratives in chapters 26-45. The reader may ultimately determine that no such structure exists, but the presence of observable structural patterns in Hebrew narratives at large provides validation for this form of inquiry.

The Structure of Jeremiah 26-45

Common Views of Structure in Jeremiah 26-45

At one level, Patterson has demonstrated that the individual narrative units in Jeremiah 26-45 are linked together on the basis of linkwords/themes (or "hooks"). The question is whether any larger overall structural


27Patterson, "Of Bookends, Hinges, and Hooks," 122-23. 26:1-24 is linked to 27:1-22 via the hook "early in the reign" (26:1; 27:1; cf. 28:1); 27:1-22 is linked to 28:1-17 via the hook "yoke" (27:2, 8, 12; 28:2, 10, 13, 14); 28:1-17 is linked to 29:1-32 via the hook of references to
patterns can be recognized for this section as a whole. The three most common views regarding the structure of Jeremiah 26-45 are to understand the major divisions of this section as consisting of: 1) 26-29, 30-33, and 34-45 (or 34-39 and 40-45); 2) 26-36 and 37-45; or 3) 26-35 and 36-45.

"false prophesying" and the "iron yoke" in 28:13-14 with "neck irons" in 29:26; 29:1-32 is linked to 30:1-31:40 via the hook of references to "restoration from captivity" (cf. "to bring back" in 29:10; 30:3); 30:1-31:40 is linked to 32:1-44 via the hook "to restore the fortunes" (30:18; 32:44) and the idea of "a new/everlasting covenant" (31:31-34; 32:36-44); 32:1-44 is linked to 33:1-28 via the hook "to restore fortunes/the return from captivity" (32:36-44; 33:7, 11, 26) and "covenant" (32:36-44; 33:21, 25); 33:1-28 is linked to 34:8-22 (to which 34:1-7 has been attached) via the hook "covenantant" (33:21, 25; 34:8); 34:8-22 is linked to 35:1-10 via the hook "never fail to have a man" vs. "will have no one" (35:19; 36:30) and references to the "reign of Jehoiakim" (35:1; 36:1); 36:1-32 is linked to 37:1-39:18 via the link "king of Judah" (36:1, 32; 37:1) and "son of Josiah" (36:1; 37:1); 37:1-39:18 is linked to 40:1-43:13 via the hook of "Jeremiah's imprisonment vs. release" and the "fall of Jerusalem vs. after the fall" (37:21; 38:6-10, 13, 28; 39:15; 40:1-2); 40:1-43:13 is linked to 44:1-30 via the hook "Egypt" (43:7-13; 44:1f); and 44:1-30 is linked to 45:1-5 via the hook "disaster" (44:7, 11, 23; 45:5) and "escape" (44:28; 45:5). For the concept of literary "hooks" and other devices by which individual texts are joined together, see H. Van Dyke Parunak, "Transitional Techniques in the Bible," *JBL* 102 (1983): 525-48.


The threefold breakdown of Jeremiah 26-45 (26-29, 30-33, 34-45, or fourfold if 34-39 and 40-45 are viewed as individual units) has two major strengths. First, this alignment properly recognizes chapters 26-29 as a unit which is built around the theme of Jeremiah’s conflict with the prophets of peace who oppose his message of judgment (cf. ch. 26, with the prophets at the Jerusalem temple who call for the death penalty against Jeremiah; chs. 27-28, with Hananiah; and ch. 29, with the prophets in Babylon).

Second, this structural breakdown of this section has the advantage of dividing the section into a schema of (A) judgment (26-29), (B) salvation (30-33), and (A’) judgment (34-45). The alternation of oracles of doom/judgment and promise/salvation is a common feature of books within the Old Testament prophetic literature. Welch also calls attention to the use of the A-B-A’ chiasm in the literature of the ancient Near East and explains that such an arrangement produces a “well balanced framing effect” that is “achieved by positioning the central concept of a literary work at the midpoint of its physical configuration.”


This structure is also
The use of the recurring phrase “to restore the fortunes” ( Heb:  תָּשׁוּב) (30:3, 18; 31:23; 32:44; 33:7, 26) in chapters 30-33 highlights the fact that the thematic focus of this section is the future reversal of the conditions of death and judgment that characterize Judah’s final days as a nation, and the alternation of judgment-salvation-judgment that unfolds when chapters 30-33 are compared with what precedes and follows gives rhetorical emphasis to this concept of reversal. Jeremiah’s message of hope and salvation is centralized in order to give this word a place of prominence. Jeremiah’s true message of hope is elevated over the false message of hope presented by his prophetic opponents. The ultimate destiny of the nation of Israel is oriented toward a future restoration and renewal, and the message of salvation is given a place of importance to especially emphasize that Judah’s subjugation to Babylon does not mean that God has abandoned his people.

Nevertheless, it appears that chapters 30-33 do not appear at the center of chapters 26-45 as a whole but rather at the center of the first block of narratives in chapters 26-35 (or 36). The statement in 30:8 at the front end of this section that Yahweh “will break the yoke” of Babylon from off the neck of Israel marks a reversal of Jeremiah’s call in chapter 27 for Judah to submit to the “yoke” of Babylon (cf. 27:11-12, 16) and a reversal of the whole of chapters 27-29 with its emphasis upon the necessity of submission to Babylon. Jer-

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apparently reflected in the biblical books of Daniel (on the basis of language: A 1:1-2:4a [Hebrew], B 2:4b-7:28 [Aramaic], and A’ chs. 8-12 [Hebrew]) and Job (on the basis of style: A chs. 1-2 [Prose], B 3:1-42:6 [Poetry], and A’ 42:7-17 [Prose]) (see Welch, p. 427). The latter is particularly significant in regard to Jer. 26-45 in that the chiasm is formed by the alternation between prose and poetry. Welch (p. 426) also calls attention to this A-B-A’ chiasm in other ancient Near Eastern literature, including the Law Codes of Lipit-Ishtar and Hammurapi (both evidencing a structure of: A Prologue; B Laws; A’ Epilogue) and the Ugaritic “The Birth of Dawn and Dusk” (the women refer to El as: A his wives; B his daughters; A’ his wives). The A-B-A’ structure of the Law Code of Hammurapi is also built around an alternation between poetry and prose.
miah's opposition to the hopeful message of the false prophets could have led to the mistaken notion that the prophet had no word of salvation for Israel, but just the opposite is true. In fact, Jeremiah ultimately proclaims exactly the same message as that of Hananiah (cf. 28:2, 10-11), but the error of Hananiah and the other prophets of peace was their failure to recognize the severity of the Babylonian crisis and the duration of Judean subjugation to Babylon. Hananiah's message of the breaking of the yoke "within two years" is offset by Jeremiah's promise of the breaking of the yoke at a more distant time (cf. 29:10, "seventy years").

Just as chapters 30-33 open with a word that reverses the message of judgment in chapters 26-29, this section also contains messages that are specifically designed to contrast with what immediately follows in chapters 34-35. The theological basis for Israel's future hope is Yahweh's promise to establish a new and abiding covenant with Israel (cf. 31:31-37; 32:37-41; 33:19-26). These passages stress the impossibility of Yahweh failing to maintain covenant fidelity toward his people. This word concerning Yahweh's covenant faithfulness (particularly the final oracles in 33:14-26) stands in contrast to the thematic emphasis upon Judah's covenant infidelity in the judgment sections of chapters 34-35 that follow (cf. 34:8-22; 35:14b-15).33

The structural pattern of A-B-A governs the first section of the book of Jeremiah, but the message of hope in chapters 30-33 is not at the center of chapters 26-45 as a whole. This study will later seek to demonstrate that the word of hope regarding life in the aftermath of exile in chapters 30-33 is set in

contrast to a word of judgment regarding life in the aftermath of exile in chapters 40-43.

Another problem with the configuration of 26-29/30-33/34-45 is that this structure fails to recognize the strategic importance and placement of the narrative of chapter 36. This account bears a striking similarity to the narrative of chapter 26 in that both passages recount a rejection of the prophetic word by King Jehoiakim at the Jerusalem temple. In that chapter 26 opens the narrative section of the book, it seems most likely that the narrative of chapter 36 provides either the climactic conclusion to the first block of material or a dramatic opening to the second section that parallels the introduction to the first block of material.

Jeremiah 26-36/37-45

Commentators who support a structural breakdown of 26-36 and 37-45 for the Jeremiah narratives often call attention to the discontinuity between these two sections. Chapters 26-36 and 37-44 (45) are often viewed as representing separate tradition complexes which arose and developed in isolation to one another and then were simply stitched together. The thematic arrangement of chapters 26-36 versus the predominantly chronological arrangement of chapters 37-45 is the primary rationale for this twofold division. Jones explains concerning the loosely thematic arrangement of chapters 26-36:

Chapters 26-35 (36) is an example ... of how thematic considerations determine the character of a traditional complex. Like previous collections it contains both poetry and prose, it lacks both chronological and

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34 A fuller comparison of Jer. 26 and 36 is found in ch. 3 of this dissertation, pp. 81-110.
thematic cohesion when considered as a whole, and yet it is possible to see how it has been built up step by step.35

In contrast, chapters 37-44 (45) represent a continuous and progressive narrative:

Chapters 37-44 (45) . . . tell the story of the fall of Jerusalem and of Jeremiah's experience during the event. It is a work of sustained narrative skill, designed to show the consequences of the calling of a prophet in that situation. The chapters are arranged on strict chronological lines and are similar to the prophetic narrative in Isa. 36-39 (2 Kgs. 18-20).36

According to Jones, the two tradition complexes of chapters 26-36 and 37-45 were separately deposited to supplement the material found in Jeremiah 1-25.37 Similarly, Holladay views chapters 37-44 as "a sustained narrative of events at the end of the prophet's life, from a time during the second siege . . . until he and Baruch were forced to migrate with other refugees to Egypt."38 These chapters provide "an example par excellence of prophetic biography."39 Holladay views chapters 37-44 as a distinct unit that Baruch added as an extension to the earlier scroll of chapters 26-36.40

The differing principles of arrangement in Jeremiah 26-36 and 37-44 (45) are perhaps indicative of the presence of a literary seam where originally independent materials have been joined together. Nevertheless, the possibility that these sections once existed independently does not provide grounds

35Jones, Jeremiah, 35-37, 336-37.

36Ibid.

37Ibid. See also McConville, Judgment and Promise, 111-12, who states that "Jeremiah 37-45 unmistakably form a distinct section of the book."

38Holladay, Jeremiah 2, 282.

39Ibid.

for denying their literary unity and cohesion within the final form of Jer­
miah. An ancient narrator or compiler fusing this material together would not necessarily share the concern of a modern editor to erase or even to smooth out all of the differences between two complexes when joining them together.

Rofé views Jeremiah 26-45 as providing "a unified, authentic por­trait of the prophet" despite the fact that this section never attained the form of a continuously progressive narrative. Rofé argues that "an early trend toward canonization" prevented the composition of a homogeneous and chronological narrative of the prophet's life and ministry. The narrator of chapters 37-43 is viewed as bringing together Jeremiah 26-36 and 37-44 to pro­vide a portrait of Jeremiah, but reverence for the existing material in chapters 26-36 prevents the narrator from recasting or rearranging the material in this section as a progressive narrative or story. While Rofé understands Jeremiah 26-45 to consist of two separate tradition complexes, he has demonstrated an overarching thematic concern that unites these two sections as a literary unit. Rofé's hypothesis demonstrates how two individual tradition complexes can cohere and complement one another without losing all of their original fea­tures. At the same time, it must be remembered that the idea that chapters 26-36 and 37-45 actually existed separate from one another is purely hypo­thetical and lacking in textual support. The unifying features in this section as a whole are far more impressive than the evidence of their original separa­tion. The formal differences between the two sets of narrative are not as


42Ibid.
significant as the overlapping themes, motifs, type-scenes, and literary form (i.e., narrative) that unite these two sections. The predominantly prose form of chapters 26-45 serves to isolate this section from what precedes in chapters 1-25 and what follows in chapters 46-51.

While some interpreters have rejected the unity of Jeremiah 26-45 on the basis of the arrangement of the material, Wanke argues against the unity of this section on the basis of its contents. Wanke has detected two major cycles of narratives in this material. The first cycle, consisting of 19:1-20:6; 26-29; and 36, portrays Jeremiah as a powerful and heroic prophet who is vindicated in the face of opposition to his message. The second major cycle is the chronological narrative of chapters 37-44, and this story forms a passion narrative depicting the prophet Jeremiah as one who encounters continual rejection and suffering.

Wanke’s proposal that narratives separated from one another in the present form of the book of Jeremiah once existed as a cohesive and unified cycle is highly subjective. In addition, a more fundamental literary problem behind Wanke’s approach is that these two supposed “cycles” do not present absolutely conflicting portraits of the prophet Jeremiah. The dual themes of vindication and rejection surfaced by Wanke do not serve to isolate separate cycles of stories but rather complement one another, and both themes are characteristic of the Jeremiah narratives as a whole. The motifs of rejection and vindication are mingled throughout these accounts.


44Ibid, 91-133. Wanke also detects a third cycle in Jer. 45 and 51:59-64, but this section seems entirely too small to be given consideration as a separate “cycle.”
In the narratives of chapters 26-36, the validation and vindication of Jeremiah's ministry occur within a context of open hostility and opposition to his message. In the midst of Jeremiah's warning regarding the impending destruction of Jerusalem, leading religious officials call for the prophet to be put to death (26:8-11). Jeremiah barely escapes the murderous intentions of Jehoiakim and the Judean populace because of the intervention of a particular royal official named Ahikam (26:20-24). In the conflicts with the false prophets, Jeremiah is subjected to public humiliation (28:10-12) and charges that he is a madman (29:26). At the reading of the scroll of Jeremiah's prophecies, King Jehoiakim destroys the scroll and seeks to incarcerate Jeremiah and his scribe Baruch (36:23-26). The idea that Jeremiah carries out his ministry at great peril to his own life and freedom is no less evident here than in the narrative accounts to follow.

Similarly, rejection and vindication are shared motifs in the continuous narratives of chapters 37-43. In chapters 37-38, Jeremiah experiences persecution in the form of imprisonment, but the tables are turned in chapter 39, as Jeremiah's enemies become the captives of Babylon at the very time that Jeremiah is released from his confinement. The fall of Jerusalem itself serves as historical vindication of Jeremiah's message of judgment for the nation of Judah. Jeremiah receives vindication from a Babylonian general who is able to recognize the veracity of the prophet's message in a way that the leaders and people of Judah do not (cf. 40:3-6). As the narrative concludes, Jeremiah's message of judgment against those who reject the word of Yahweh maintains its vigor and efficacy.

Vindication is a more dominant message in the first section of material and rejection in the second, but this distinction is one of degree and hardly justifies Wanke's use of these themes as an argument for two separate
points of origin and perspective for these narrative materials. The respective
dominance of these themes in the two sections of narrative can also be ex-
plained as due to the literary and rhetorical goals of the Jeremiah narrative as
a whole. The first section of narrative material in chapters 26-36 attempts to
establish Jeremiah as a true spokesman of God and to demonstrate that
Israel's destiny hinges upon its response to Jeremiah's message of judgment.
As the second section moves to the historical fulfillment of Jeremiah's mes-
sage of judgment, it is only natural that the narrative focuses more intensely
on the hardship endured by the prophet Jeremiah. As a true "suffering ser-
vant," Jeremiah identifies with his people and shares in the fate resulting
from rejection of the prophetic word.

Wanke's work is reflective of studies which begin from the perspec-
tive of the complexity of the book of Jeremiah and view the book as an
amalgamation of conflicting theologies and diverse presentations of the fig-
ure of Jeremiah. The problem is that such a perspective often relieves the
interpreter of any sense of necessity to resolve tensions within the text and
leads to the explanation of all forms of diversity as reflective of absolutely
conflicting points of view. Despite the complexity that is indeed present
within the canonical book of Jeremiah, this dissertation makes a more serious
attempt to harmonize potentially conflicting points of view within the book
and seeks to demonstrate how such viewpoints are complementary to one
another within a single literary work. Wanke has not presented a convincing
argument against the unity of the Jeremiah narratives in chapters 26-45.

In arguing for a structure of 26-36 and 37-45, Carroll suggests that the
first section begins with a reference to King Jehoiakim (26:1) and the second
with reference to King Zedekiah (37:1). The rhetorical effect is to demonstrate that even a change of kingship does not alter the nation’s fate or change its posture toward the prophetic word proclaimed by Jeremiah. The new king and the nation under him persist in disobedience and judgment must follow. This argument would perhaps have more weight if references to the two kings were not mingled throughout the Jeremiah narratives.

A more significant argument for the arrangement of 26-36/37-45 is that the parallel accounts in chapters 26 and 36 serve as a frame or inclusio for the first section of material. Carroll explains that “36 functions in relation to 26-35 in the same way as 25:1-11 relates to 2-20: it summarizes and acts as a closure of the section.” Carroll adds that “26 and 36 act as preface and conclusion; 26 raises the question of turning, but 36 demonstrates the rejection of that possibility.”

Jeremiah 26-35/36-45

Inclusio and the Jehoiakim framework

This study argues for a structure of chapters 26-35 and 36-45 on the basis of two structural features that provide balance, symmetry, and correspondence for the Jeremiah narratives as a whole. The first such technique


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...
is that of inclusio. Lundbom describes inclusio as "a straightforward device by which one returns at the end to the point at which he began." Rofé explains this form of literary arrangement as symmetry at the "ends of a literary work."

In Jeremiah 26-45, the structure of a two-fold inclusio provides a framework for the two major panels of this section, chapters 26-35 and 36-45. This framework is marked off by four texts recalling events or messages from the period of the reign of Jehoiakim (cf. 26:1; 35:1; 36:1; 45:1). These chapters are the only ones in this entire section making reference to this period. The phrase "early in the reign of Jehoiakim" and the reference to "the days of Jehoiakim" appear to mark off the first major complex of material in chapters 26-35. Likewise, reference to "the fourth year of Jehoiakim" indicates the beginning and end of the second major section of material. The narratives in 26-45 are arranged for the most part without regard to the concern of chronological sequencing, but the "Jehoiakim" chapters appear to

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52Though arguing for a structure of chs. 25-36 and 37-45, Rofé (ibid, 393-94) has noted the framing effect of the Jehoiakim narratives (ch. 25/26 and 35/36) around the Zedekiah narratives (chs. 27, 28, 29, 32, 34), and the framing effect of the references to Jehoiakim in chs. 25 and 45.

53The reference to "in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim" in the MT of 27:1 is an obvious textual error (cf. references to "Zedekiah" in 27:3, 12). A few Hebrew manuscripts and the Syriac read "in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah," but this reading is also problematic, because the continuation of this story in 28:1ff indicates that these events occur in Zedekiah's fourth year. The absence of v. 1 in the LXX version of this account leads Holladay (Jeremiah 2, 115) to the plausible suggestion that the introduction to this account was lost in the original transmission (as indicated by the LXX) and was later restored (incorrectly) in the form reflected in the Hebrew tradition.
have been strategically placed as a narrative framework for chapters 26-35 and 35-45.

The references to Jehoiakim are not the only feature marking the introduction and conclusion to these two sections of narrative material. At the beginning and end of the first section, Jeremiah indicts the nation of Judah for failure to "listen to/obey" (מָשָׁמַר) the prophets in spite of the fact that Yahweh has "sent" (נָשָׁל) the prophets to Israel "again and again" (נָשָׁל, lit. "to send early" when used with the infin. abs. נָשָׁל) (26:4-5; 35:14b-15). This charge is repeated with the same terminology near the end of the second section of narrative material in the final message of judgment in chapters 26-45 (cf. 44:4-5). The indictment that the nation has rejected the prophets that Yahweh has repeatedly sent to them appears at the beginning and end of the first section of narratives (26-35) and in the final message of judgment in the second block of material (36-44). The placement of these statements highlights Judah’s persistent rejection of the prophetic word as the primary covenant infidelity that warrants God’s response of judgment toward the nation. The two major sections of narrative material in Jeremiah 26-45 are framed

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54 This specific statement regarding the repeated sending of the prophets appears at two other places in the book of Jeremiah (7:25-26 and 25:4-5), and both references represent important turning points in the structure of the book. The first reference in the context of Jeremiah’s temple sermon (a text that parallels ch. 26) follows a series of calls to repentance in chs. 2-6, including the call of this particular sermon "to reform your ways" (cf. 7:3, 5). Following the specific charge that Israel/Judah has refused to "listen to/obey" the prophetic word, the calls to repentance become virtually non-existent. Judah has become too entrenched in its covenant infidelity for there to be any real hope of repentance (note also the references to God speaking directly to the people “again and again” in 7:13 and 11:25 that highlight the theme of persistent infidelity). The reference in 25:3-4 provides a sense of closure for chs. 1-25 and highlights the rebellious response of the nation to Jeremiah’s message of judgment found in this section.

55 This specific statement regarding the repeated sending of the prophets does not appear in the first narrative (ch. 36) or final oracle (ch. 45) of the second panel. However, both the opening narrative in ch. 36 and the closing oracle in ch. 45 both make reference to the “calamity” (נַפְלָה) that Yahweh will send against Jerusalem, and this calamity is specifically associated with failure to obey the prophets in 25:4-7; 26:3-5; and 35:15.
not only by references to the period of King Jehoiakim but also by charges that Judah has repeatedly failed to obey God’s covenant messengers, the prophets.\textsuperscript{56} This theme of failure to obey the word of Yahweh sets the tone for all that follows in both panels of material.

Correspondence of panels in 26-35/36-45

Another structural pattern of symmetry and balance in the Hebrew Bible is that of alternation or panels. This structure involves “internal repetition of a pattern,” and panels of corresponding material are placed as parallel to one another.\textsuperscript{57} The two major panels of 26-35 and 36-45 are built up with material that shares four major correspondences, thus reflecting an ABCD/ABCD pattern:

\textit{Chapters 26-35}
A. Jehoiakim’s response of hostile unbelief to the prophetic word (26)
B. The false prophets and the issue of submission to Babylon during the reign of Zedekiah (27-29)
C. The aftermath of exile: a word of hope for the Babylonian exiles. (30-33)
D. The issue of covenant faithfulness: national judgment and a word of hope for the Rechabites (34-35).

\textit{Chapters 36-45}
A’ Jehoiakim’s response of hostile unbelief to the prophetic word (36).
B’ The royal officials and the issue of submission to Babylon during the reign of Zedekiah (37-39).
C’ The aftermath of exile: a word of judgment for the Judean survivors of the exile who go down to Egypt (40-43).
D’ The issue of covenant faithfulness: judgment and a word of hope for Baruch (44-45).

\textsuperscript{56}For further discussion of this Jehoiakim framework and evidence supporting chs. 26/36 as introductory and 34-35/44-45 as concluding sections for the two major panels in chs. 26-45, see chapter 3 of this dissertation. pp. 79-144.

\textsuperscript{57}Parunak, “Some Axioms for Literary Architecture,” 9.
Structure and Rhetoric in Jeremiah 26-45

*The Pervasiveness of National Unbelief*

It is necessary to consider the rhetorical function and purpose of Jeremiah 26-45 and the influence of the architectural structure of this section upon its message. This section of narrative material first of all brings together events from three distinct stages of the ministry of the prophet Jeremiah: 1) the period of the reign of Jehoiakim (605-597 B.C.); 2) the period of the reign of Zedekiah (597-586 B.C.); and 3) the period subsequent to the 586 B.C. exile. Chronological sequence is not of major concern in chapters 26-45 because the goal of the Jeremiah narratives is not to provide a historical account of the life and times of Jeremiah but rather to offer a theological appraisal of the response of the nation of Judah to the message of the prophet Jeremiah.

The structure of 26-45 serves to reflect the temporal pervasiveness of Judah’s unbelief that spans the totality of Jeremiah’s ministry. The concluding chapters in the two major panels of 26-45 focus on the issue of covenant fidelity, and the two panels contain one example of covenant unfaithfulness and disobedience to the prophetic word from each of the three major periods of the ministry of Jeremiah (cf. 34:8-22, from the period of Zedekiah; 35:1-19 [esp. vv. 12-17], from the period of Jehoiakim; and 44:1-30, from the period subsequent to the exile). The chronological progression of events fades into the background as the narrator focuses his efforts on presenting each of the three stages of the ministry of Jeremiah as a time of unbelief and covenant infidelity.

The first section of the book of Jeremiah (chs. 1-25) is filled with Jeremiah’s warnings of impending judgment against the rebellious nation of Judah. The prophet specifically warns of the full-scale defeat and destruction of Judah via the invasion of a powerful enemy army (cf. 1:13-16; 4:5-9, 13, 15-
In the course of historical events, this judgment actually falls out in three distinct stages: 1) the initial subjugation to Babylon in 605 B.C.; 2) the invasion and deportation of 597 B.C.; and 3) the fall of Judah and the exile of 586 B.C. The Jeremiah narratives offer a theological rationale for why the judgment of Judah occurs in this manner. After each stage of judgment, Judah is given the option of responding positively to the word of Yahweh and submitting to Babylonian hegemony in order to avoid further and more severe judgment. However, judgment only intensifies in Jeremiah 26-45 as the nation persists in its rebellious unbelief.

Pre-exilic events from the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah are joined together to demonstrate that Judah deserves each stage of the judgment leading up to the exile. The deportation of 597 B.C. is necessitated by the rebellious unbelief of Jehoiakim and the people of Judah (cf. chs. 26, 36); the judgment of the destruction of Judah in 586 B.C. is attributed to the continued unbelief of the king, prophets, and people during the reign of Zedekiah (cf. chs. 27-28, 37-38). Seitz comments that the interweaving of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah traditions demonstrates that “the pre-597 judgment proclamation of the prophet . . . has application without modification to the pre- and post-597 communities” and that “there are no sub-groups within Jeremiah’s generation to be given special treatment--at least until they are exiled.”

Both communities are equally guilty of failure to obey the word of Yahweh. Judah persists in unbelief and rebellion and must ultimately face the judgment of exile.

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Nevertheless, the material of Jeremiah 26-45 is not merely a history lesson aimed at providing a rationale for past judgment. The material is ultimately directed at the exilic community to warn that continued rebellion against Yahweh will bring even further judgment. Judah has already experienced two major phases of judgment and is about to experience a third. For this reason, specific events from the period after the exile are included within 26-45 and are interlocked with episodes of disobedience from the periods of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah in order to demonstrate that Judah continues in its sinful ways and is deserving of even further judgment from the hand of Yahweh.

One of the primary rhetorical aims of the Jeremiah narratives is to convince the Judean survivors of the exile that another stage of judgment is about to occur. The Judean survivors of the exile have failed to learn from their nation’s recent experiences and are doomed to repeat the bitter experience of judgment. Thus the Jeremiah narratives conclude (cf. ch. 44) with the warning that Yahweh will bring future judgment against those Judeans who remained in the land after the exile but who persisted in their disobedience by choosing to go down to Egypt against the counsel of the prophet Jeremiah.

In the correspondence between 26-35 and 36-45, the narrator is making a comparison between the recent past and the present. The episodes of 26-35 transpire in the aftermath of the Babylonian invasion of Judah in 597 B.C., and the narratives of 27-29 raise the tension of whether or not Judah will experience further judgment at the hands of the Babylonians. The covenant unfaithfulness of Judah detailed in 34-35 confirms that Judah will indeed experience further judgment.

In Jeremiah 36-45, the judgment anticipated in 26-35 becomes a reality (cf. 39:1-10). Nevertheless, this section is ultimately aimed at the survivors
of the exile and warns that continued rebellion against Yahweh will bring extended judgment. The episodes contained in 40-43 occur in the aftermath of the 586 B.C. fall of Judah and Jerusalem and raise once again the tension of whether Judah will experience even more judgment. Unfortunately, the disobedience of the survivors of the exile in 42-43 and Jeremiah’s response to that disobedience in the prophetic speech of 44 indicates that Judah has chosen a course that necessitates continued judgment.

Prophecy and Fulfillment in 26-35/36-45

While 26-35 and 36-45 are parallel and complementary, there is also evidence of progression and development of thought in the move from the first block of material to the second. The first section (26-35) serves to establish Jeremiah as a true spokesman of Yahweh, to demonstrate that the basis for judgment is Judah’s covenant unfaithfulness and disregard for the word of Yahweh, and to explain via the message of hope in 30-33 that Yahweh has not abandoned his covenant people. In other words, this first section serves to provide a theological context for understanding Yahweh’s dealings with the nation of Judah. The reality of judgment pervades the whole of 26-35, but Jeremiah’s message of submission to Babylon provides a course of action that offers Judah the opportunity to avoid further judgment. The question of whether Judah will follow this advice is left unresolved until the second section of the narratives.

In this regard, Jeremiah 36-45 functions as a fulfillment of the dreadful predictions of judgment contained in the first block of narratives. This second section describes in a more chronologically oriented fashion the unfolding of Yahweh’s judgment against Judah and the impact of that judgment upon the nation and the ministry of the prophet Jeremiah. The
historical events described in this section offer confirmation and validation for Jeremiah's message of judgment. There is thus a prediction/fulfillment relationship between 26-35 and 36-45. The judgment predicted in the first panel becomes a reality in the second.

Hope and Judgment in the Aftermath of Exile

The correspondence between anticipated and fulfilled judgment in 26-35 and 36-45 makes even more dramatic the contrast between the message of hope in 30-33 and the events which transpire subsequent to the exile in 40-43. The predicted restoration and renewal anticipated in 30-33 does not become a reality in the aftermath of the exile. This contrast is actually built into the structural relationship between 26-35 and 36-45 in that 30-33 and 40-43 both correspond and contrast to one another. The two sections correspond to one another in the sense that both focus on the future of Israel in the aftermath of exile, but the two provide a stark contrast to one another in their contrasting use of exodus imagery.

The message of hope in 30-33 makes a positive application of exodus typology to speak of a future return and restoration from exile; the narratives of 40-43 employ the exodus traditions in a negative manner in order to present a reversal of the exodus as the Judean survivors of the exile flee from the promised land and take up residence in the land of Egypt.

This contrasting parallelism of 30-33 and 40-43 highlights and reinforces the prophet's message that Israel's future hope lay with the exiles in Babylon and not with the Jewish survivors who remain in the land (cf. 24:4-7; 29:4-14). Clements explains the reason for the attachment of hopes to the community of exiles in Babylon in the book of Jeremiah:
There is evident concern to show why neither the community that had survived the disasters of 598 and 587 in the land of Judah nor those who sought political refuge in Egypt could play any effective role in preparing for the restoration of Israel. From this time on, restoration means a prior act of return, and this must first come from those who had been taken into Babylonian exile. They are henceforth looked upon as the spearhead of the new Israel that is to come into being.59

The prophet opposes the false presumption that the people of Judah who are fortunate enough to avoid deportation to Babylon constitute the “remnant” that will be the recipients of the blessings of restoration and renewal such as those depicted in 30-33. The individuals who remained in the land no doubt viewed themselves as the true “remnant” in that they had been personally spared from death or exile at the hands of a foreign army, but the message of judgment directed against this segment of Judah in 40-43 specifically counters this false hope and demonstrates that this community will not be the recipients of the promise of restoration and renewal set forth in chapters 30-33.

Conclusion

One of the safeguards against subjectivity in the setting forth of structure is to attempt to demonstrate how the structure of a biblical text corresponds to the explicit message of the biblical narrator(s).60 The structure of Jeremiah 26-45 is clearly reflective of the message of this material. Two domi-
nant ideas present in the Jeremiah narratives are that Judah experiences judgment because of persistent disobedience and that the future hope for a reunited Israel lies with the exiles in Babylon and not with those Judeans who remain in the land after the exile. The structure of the Jeremiah narratives serves to buttress these two major concepts. The literary structure of these narratives blends together and compares Judah's disobedience from three distinct periods in the ministry of Jeremiah to demonstrate the persistent nature of Judah's rebellion. The literary structure also directly contrasts the fate of the exiles in Babylon (chs. 29-33) with that of the Judean living in the homeland after the exile of 586 B.C. The setting forth of the narrative structure has great importance, because this structure implicitly serves to highlight and emphasize the explicit message of the biblical text.
Chapter 3
THE JEHOIAKIM FRAMEWORK (26/35 AND 36/45)

Introduction

In analyzing Old Testament narrative, literary critics have noted the use of narrative “frames” or “framing repetitions.”¹ These frameworks often mark off material peripheral to the story itself or provide background information that informs the reading of the episode. Long explains that narrators frequently employed such “framing repetitions” as a device that enabled them to achieve “freedom from the constraints of temporality within a story.”² The material within these narrative frames often “supplies information after the fact (analepsis), evokes in advance an event that will take place later (prolepsis) or narrates simultaneous events.”³ The narrative frames interrupt chronological flow so that the narrator might achieve literary aims and designs through the manipulation of time and the alteration of “structural relationships associated with tense, mood, and voice.”⁴


³Ibid.

⁴Ibid, 390.
The narratives of Jeremiah 26-45 (with the exception of chs. 37-44) as a whole demonstrate a lack of concern with chronological order and relationships. Nevertheless, the narratives in this section dealing with events from the reign of Jehoiakim (chs. 26, 35, 36, 45) are strategically placed in order to provide a framework for chapters 26-45 as a whole and for the two major blocks or panels of material (chs. 26-35/36-45) within this section. Unlike the framing repetitions that appear within the Old Testament historical narratives, this framework does not appear within the story or serve to mark off non-sequential material. This framework envelops the Jeremiah narratives in their entirety, but this framework is clearly more than mere ornamental dressing. The framework stands around the Jeremiah narratives because these accounts inform the reading of all of Jeremiah 26-45.

This chapter will examine the function of this "Jehoiakim framework" within Jeremiah 26-45. This framework marks off the two major blocks of material in this section (26-35/36-45), and this chapter will seek to demonstrate how the introductory chapter in panel one (ch. 26) parallels the introductory chapter in panel two (ch. 36). Likewise, the closing chapters in panel one (chs. 34-35) correspond to the concluding chapters in panel two (chs. 44-45). These corresponding introductory and concluding chapters set forth the major themes that control the reading of this entire section, which include: the alternating potential of the prophetic word to bring salvation or judgment depending upon the response to the message, response to the prophetic word involving pervasive national rejection with limited instances of

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5Chapters 35 and 45 are properly the concluding Jehoiakim chapters in the framework, but this chapter will seek to demonstrate an attraction of ch. 34 to 35 and 44 to 45 in order to provide a summation for the two major panels in chs. 26-45. This attraction is based upon common theme and a judgment/salvation alternation that is present in both chs. 34-35 and 44-45.
personal faith and obedience, the transfer from potential repentance to inevitable judgment as the consequence of this national unbelief, and the demonstration of Judah's covenant infidelity throughout the course of Jeremiah's public ministry (before the exile during the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah and carrying over into the exile as Judah persists in its rebellion against Yahweh).  

Corresponding Introductions: Jeremiah 26 and 36

Jeremiah scholarship has noted the parallels between the narratives in chapters 26 and 36. This section will call attention to four major correspondences between these two texts. The central parallel between the two chapters is that both accounts are structured and developed around the concept of proclamation and response to the prophetic word. In each account, Yahweh commissions the prophet to deliver a message at the Jerusalem temple, and the target audience of these messages is "all the people of Judah" who have assembled for worship (26:2-7; 36:2-8). In chapter 26, the act of proclamation involves Jeremiah "speaking" (נָא, נָא) the word of Yahweh; in 36, the declaration of the prophetic word takes the form of the scribe Baruch "reading" (נָלָלָל) the scroll of Jeremiah’s prophecies. The major focus in

6See chart in Appendix 1, p. 276.


8O’Connor, "'Do Not Trim a Word,'" 626.

9There is a diversity and repetition of terms of proclamation and communication in chs. 26 and 36. In ch. 26, the words נָא and נָא refer to both the proclamations of Yahweh and the prophets to the people (God: נָא, vv. 2, 4, 18; נָא, vv. 13, 19; Jeremiah: נָא, vv. 4, 9, 12[2]; נָא, vv. 2, 7, 8[2], 15, 16; Micah: נָא, v. 18[2]). The root נָא ("to prophesy/prophet") is used with reference to the activities of Jeremiah (vv. 9, 11, 12), Micah (v. 18), and Uriah (v.
these accounts is how Judah "hears" (שמע) the prophetic word, and the narrator devotes the bulk of attention to the response of various segments of the Judean population to the prophetic word.10

The Issue of Response and Royal Reaction

The key point of tension in 26 is how Judah will respond to the preaching of Jeremiah. It is generally recognized that Jeremiah 7 and 26 pro-

20[2]). The noun (דברים) is repeatedly used to refer to the words or content of the prophetic message (vv. 1, 2, 5, 7, 10, 12, 15, 20). The rhetoric of this chapter emphasizes that the words of the prophet are the words of Yahweh. The prophet “declares” (דבר) to the people because there is a “word” (דבר) from God (vv. 1-2). The message the prophet “speaks” (דבר) to the people is precisely the one that God has “spoken” (דבר) to him (vv. 4, 18). The prophets’ message of judgment is nothing less than “the calamity that God has ‘pronounced’” (vv. 13, 19). Yahweh is the one who has “sent” (שלח) the true prophets to speak (vv. 12, 15), and these prophets speak “in the name of Yahweh” (vv. 16, 20).

In ch. 36, the key word נביא appears with reference to prophetic proclamation or reading in vv. 4, 6[2], 8, 10, 13, 14, 15[2], 18, 21, 23. Because of the written form of the prophetic word in ch. 36, other frequently repeated communication terms include: the verb כותב “to write” (vv. 2, 4, 6, 17, 18, 27, 28[2], 29, 32); words for “scroll:” המידות, מידות, מילים מילות (vv. 2, 4, 6, 10, 11, 13, 14, 18, 20, 21, 23, 25, 27, 28, 29, 32[2]); and רב (lit., “at the mouth of,” or “at the dictation of”) (vv. 4, 6, 17, 27, 32). The root לאב is again repeatedly used to refer to the act of proclamation (verb, vv. 2[2], 4, 31) or the content of the message (noun, vv. 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 16[2], 17, 18, 20, 24, 27, 28, 32[2]). These repetitions stress that the ultimate source of the prophet’s message is Yahweh. The words of the scroll are both the words of Jeremiah and of Yahweh (note references to the words of God and the act of God speaking, vv. 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 29, 31). There is a special connection between the “words of Yahweh” and the “words of Jeremiah” in 36:8, 10 and also the connection between דברי יחזקאל (“words of Yahweh”) and דברי יחזקאל (“at the dictation of Jeremiah”) in vv. 4, 6.

10In both 26 and 36, there is frequent repetition of the verb “to hear” (שמע) (26:3, 4, 5[2], 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 21[2]; 36:3, 11, 13, 14, 16, 24, 32) and the metonymical use of the noun “ears” (apore, “in your hearing,” 26:15; 36:6[2], 10, 13, 15[2], 20, 21[2], 25). This “hearing” terminology highlights the emphasis upon response to the prophetic word. The narrator in these two accounts also employs the same (or similar) communication terms to describe the response of various members of the audience that are used to describe the proclamation of the prophet. For example, there is the use of דברי in ch. 26 with reference to priests, prophets, and people (v. 8), the priests and prophets (v. 11), the officials and all the people (v. 16), and the elders of the land (v. 17). In ch. 36, Micaiah “reports” (רמז) the contents of the scroll (v. 13), the officials “speak” (דברים) to Baruch and instruct him to read (v. 15) and then go to “report” (דברים) about the scroll to the king (vv. 16, 20), and Jehoiakim angrily “instructs” (Containing) that Jeremiah and Baruch are to be placed under arrest (v. 26). The repetitious use of communication terms to convey proclamation and response demonstrates the debate and discussion engendered by the prophetic word, and at times, the outright rejection of that message by certain audience members.
vide variant accounts of the same message,\textsuperscript{11} Jeremiah's "Temple Sermon," and the condensation of the prophet's message to three verses in chapter 26 (vv. 4-6) demonstrates that the focus of this particular account is upon audience response to the prophetic word.\textsuperscript{12} The issue of how Judah "hears" (יְנַהֲרֹת) the word of Yahweh is raised in the commissioning of the prophet in verses 1-6. The motivation behind Yahweh's sending of the prophet is the possibility that Judah "will listen" (יְנַהֲרֹת) so as to avert judgment (v. 2), and the main focus of the message summary itself is the consequences of Judah's failure to "obey" (יְנַהֲרֹת) the prophetic word (vv. 4-5).

Following the commissioning of the prophet and the summary of his message in verses 1-6, the text contains four separate responses to the prophetic speech. Each response contains the reported speech of some segment of the population in the audience at the time of Jeremiah's sermon:

\textit{Response} # 1: The priests, prophets, and the people "say" (יְנַהֲרֹת) to Jeremiah, "You must die" (26:7-9).
\textit{Response} # 2: The priests and prophets "say" (יְנַהֲרֹת), "This man should be sentenced to death" (26:10-11)
\textit{Response} # 3: The officials and all the people "say" (יְנַהֲרֹת), "This man should not be put to death" (26:16).
\textit{Response} # 4: The elders of the land "say" (יְנַהֲרֹת), "Did anyone in Judah put him to death?" (26:17-19).

At the center of these four responses is Jeremiah's own defense of his prophetic message in verses 12-15 in which the prophet "speaks" (יְנַהֲרֹת) to "all the officials and the people."


The narrator employs irony in the depiction of the response to the message of Jeremiah in that segments of the audience do indeed “hear” (לְאָרֵץ) the sermon, but their reaction is exactly the opposite of what it should be. The response to the prophet in this narrative is centered around the issue of whether or not the prophet should be put to death for preaching against Jerusalem and the central sanctuary. The first two recorded responses to the prophet’s message call for Jeremiah’s execution (vv. 8, 11). In the apology of the prophet at the center of this response section, the prophet faces head-on the call for his execution and declares that such action will bring guilt upon Judah because he has merely spoken as Yahweh’s messenger (vv. 12-15). The prophet defends himself by equating his message with the words of Yahweh.

The apology of Jeremiah has its desired effect, and the two audience responses to the prophet that follow counter and offset the two previous responses calling for the prophet’s death. The officials and the people recognize

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13This call for the prophet’s death is in accordance with the provisions of Deut. 13:5 and 18:20. The opponents of Jeremiah presume him to be a false prophet because he has spoken against the central sanctuary. For the motif of execution against an apostate prophet in ch. 26, see F. L. Hossfeld and I. Meyer, “Der Prophet vor dem Tribunal: Neuer Auslegungssuch von Jer. 26,” ZAW 86 (1974): 30-50. This article suggests that ch. 26 points to the occurrence of a formal courtroom procedure designed to establish Jeremiah’s innocence of the capital charge leveled against him by his opponents (cf. Deut. 18:20). Hossfeld and Meyer argue that 26:11-16 represent the actual speeches delivered in a court of justice, containing the elements of: accusation and grounds with judgment recommendation (v. 11); speech for the defense of the accused (vv. 12-15); and the formal verdict of acquittal (v. 16). For a similar understanding of the passage, cf. Herbert Chanan Brichto, Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics: Tales of the Prophets (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 226-30. Brichto develops Jer. 26 as the tale of a prophet who “is tried for treason.”

14This point is stressed throughout ch. 26. The rhetoric of the chapter argues that the words of the prophet are the word of Yahweh. The prophet “declares” (לְאָרֵץ) to the people because there is a “word” (לְאָרֵץ) from Yahweh (vv. 1-2). The words that the prophet “speaks” (לְאָרֵץ) to the people is the message that God has first “spoken” (לְאָרֵץ) to him (vv. 4, 18). The prophet’s message of judgment is nothing less than “the calamity that God has pronounced (לְאָרֵץ)” (vv. 13, 19). Yahweh is the one who has “sent” (לְאָרֵץ) the true prophet to speak (vv. 12, 15), and Jeremiah speaks “in the name of Yahweh” (vv. 16, 20). Likewise in ch. 36, the scroll which contains “the words of Jeremiah” (v. 10) is also equated with the “words of Yahweh” (vv. 6, 8; cf. v. 1).
nize the divine origin of Jeremiah's message and assert that the prophet should not be put to death (v. 16). The elders of the land recall Micah's earlier messages of judgment against Jerusalem and raise a rhetorical question designed to lead the audience to recognize the foolishness of putting Jeremiah to death (v. 19).

The narrative particularly focuses on the change of attitude on the part of the people of Judah, and the reaction of the people is an important feature of the structure of 26 and contributes to the overall rhetoric of response that is central to this chapter. In verses 7-9, the people assume a hostile posture toward Jeremiah and join the priests and prophets in calling for the death of the prophet. As the officials of Judah come upon the scene, the people take a more neutral position, and it is the prophets and priests alone who continue the call for the prophet's execution (vv. 10-11). Following the prophet's response to his opponents, the people actually become supporters of the prophet and assert with the officials that Jeremiah has not committed a capital offense (v. 16).

The recognition of Jeremiah as a true prophet raises the possibility of a positive conclusion to this narrative and a realization of the avoidance of judgment envisioned at the beginning of this chapter, but the appended narrative in verses 20-24 concludes with the people again taking a hostile position toward Jeremiah.  

In connection with Jehoiakim's execution of the

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15 There is debate and discussion regarding how vv. 1-19 and 20-24 are related to one another. See William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 26-52*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 102. Holladay notes that the hostile posture of the people in v. 24 which contrasts to their acceptance and defense of the prophet in v. 16 is evidence of a literary seam which indicates that two separate accounts have been joined together. For the treatment of 26:1-24 as a single event, see Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 245-47. Fishbane views the whole of vv. 7-24 as relating a trial scene which centers around the issue of Jeremiah's prophetic authority. The story in vv. 20-24 is viewed as a final piece of evidence in the trial--the execution of a prophet named Uriah who proclaimed a message of judgment like
prophet Uriah, the people of Judah conspire to have Jeremiah put to death as well, and only the intervention of a certain official named Ahikam frustrates the designs of the people (v. 24). The people's recognition of Jeremiah as a true prophet in verses 1-19 only serves to intensify their culpability in rejecting his message and seeking to put him to death in verse 24. The narrator again resorts to irony by using the people's own words to indict their unbelief in that they seek the execution of Jeremiah after acknowledging that the prophet should not be put to death for speaking the words of Yahweh (v. 16). The suddenness of the transformation of the people from supporters to opponents of the prophet Jeremiah also highlights their instability and the irrationality of their unbelief.

The climax of the narrative in 26 is Jehoiakim's outright rejection of the prophetic message of Jeremiah in the appended episode in verses 20-24. There is no direct contact or confrontation between Jeremiah and Jehoiakim, but Jehoiakim directs his hostility toward a prophet named Uriah who preaches a message of judgment like that of Jeremiah (v. 20). The narrator once again makes the ironic observation that the king "hears" (נהן) the prophetic word but responds in a totally inappropriate manner (v. 21). The king that of Jeremiah demands that Jeremiah receive similar punishment for preaching against Jerusalem and the temple. This point turns the dispute in favor of Jeremiah's opponents, and the people of Judah join those who are convinced that Jeremiah must be put to death. However, the fact that the text does not identify the specific group entering this evidence into the discussion (as in vv. 7, 11, 16, 17) suggests that the recounting of the execution of Uriah was not part of the debate at the temple reflected in vv. 7-17. The narrator has joined together two separate events.

The question of whether vv. 20-24 had an independent literary existence is ultimately of little significance. The major interpretive and rhetorical issue is why the narrator has joined these two incidents together. The primary motive behind this fusion appears to draw a parallel in terms of message and mission between the prophetic activities of Jeremiah, Micah, and Uriah. These prophets parallel one another as three outstanding examples of prophets of judgment who fearlessly warned of impending doom against Judah and Jerusalem. Cf. Holladay, Jeremiah 2, 102, who writes, "It would appear that Micah is a parallel to Jrm in a previous generation, and that Uriah is a parallel to Jrm in his own generation."
conspires against Uriah and ultimately succeeds in having him put to death (vv. 21-23). The narrative has built to the point in which the king rejects God's spokesman.

Likewise, the narrative of Jeremiah 36 also focuses on the response to the prophetic word and climaxes with Jehoiakim's angry rejection of the prophetic word. Dearman appears to have unlocked the structure of this chapter by calling attention to the preterite "יָדָן as the key divider marking off the beginning of each of the five major sections in the chapter (vv. 1, 9, 16, 23, 27). This structural marker is particularly significant in that it serves as an "emphatic device" that calls attention to the multiple readings of the scroll and the varied responses to each reading. The two separate commissions of Baruch to record the prophecies of Jeremiah (vv. 1-8, 27-31) form an inclusio for this narrative, and the three episodes in the middle of this narrative focus on the responses to the message of the prophetic scroll.

The episodes detailing the responses to the message of the scroll build in stair-like progression up to the climactic reaction of King Jehoiakim:

1. Baruch with (A) Micaiah and (B) the officials (36:9-15).
2. Baruch with (B) the officials and (C) the king (36:16-22).
3. Jehudi with (C) the king and his attendants (36:23-26).19

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17 Ibid, 404.

18 Ibid, 404-8.

19 This progression resembles the terrace pattern of staircase parallelism found in Hebrew poetry. See Wilfred G. E. Watson, Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques, JSOTSup 26 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 150-56, 208-12. Watson explains that in poetry, this terrace pattern serves "to increase the listeners' tension by delaying the denouement" of the final line (p. 211). This structure has a similar function in the narrative of ch. 36 as it serves to build the tension regarding how the king will respond to the negative word of judgment contained within the prophetic scroll.
The first two episodes in verses 9-15 and 16-22 mirror one another in that they follow a specific sequence of events: 1) Baruch reads the scroll to a recipient who “hears” (ןִּסְתָּן) the message; 2) the recipient “reports” (רָאָה) the contents of the scroll to a second party; 3) the second party makes inquiry regarding the contents of the scroll; and 4) the second party receives a first-hand reading of the scroll itself. In verses 9-15, Baruch reads the scroll in the hearing of Micaiah, who reports its contents to a group of royal officials, who then send for the scroll and have Baruch read its contents. In verses 16-22, the officials respond to the reading of the scroll by reporting its contents to the king, who then makes inquiry regarding the scroll and receives a reading of the scroll from Jehudi.

Because of the correspondence in the first two episodes of response, the contrast in the third episode is all the more significant. The narrator

The narratives in chs. 26 and 36 involve the growing expansion of a number of people in the discussion and debate concerning the prophetic message. T. R. Hobbs (2 Kings, WBC 13 [Waco: Word Books, 1985], 149, 320) notes a similar narrative layout in certain accounts of national reform found in the books of Kings. For example, Hobbs (p. 149) calls attention to several stages of development in the story of the reforms of Joash in 2 Kgs. 11:21-12:3. The king allocates moneys for temple repairs, calls in the priests and involves them in the revision of the system of collecting funds, and then distributes funds to workmen so that they might carry out the repairs. A similar type of story development appears in the account of the reforms of Josiah in 2 Kgs. 22-23 (p. 320). Josiah first sends Shaphan to the temple and then Shaphan returns to the king with the scroll of the law code given to him by Hilkiah. By the midpoint of the story, a number of actors have taken a significant role in the work of reform—Shaphan, Hilkiah, Ahikam, Achbor, and Asayah. Hobbs comments, “This step-by-step enlargement of the actors in the drama gives to the narrative an increasing sense of business, and therefore urgency” (p. 320). This same type of enlargement and expansion in Jer. 26/36 reflects the national significance of the events which transpire in these chapters.

20 Gerhard Wanke, (Untersuchungen zur sogenannten Baruchschrift, BZAW 122 [Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1973], 71), calls attention to the repetition of this verb in vv. 13, 20.

21 Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative, (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 90. Alter notes that the structuring of stories according to a schema of: 1) incident, 2) repetition, and 3) second repetition with variation or reversal is a common narrative device. A further biblical example is found in an Elijah narrative in 2 Kgs. 1. In the first two incidents, fire descends from heaven and consumes the delegation from the king that has come for the prophet. In the third incident, the captain appeals to Elijah for mercy and is granted his request. Alter also notes that this story form appears in children’s fairy tales such as Goldilocks and the Three Bears,
interrupts the repetition of the story and employs a variety of wordplays to highlight the royal rejection of the message. The Judean officials have sensed the importance of the Jeremianic scroll and have felt compelled to pass along its contents; in contrast, Jehoiakim rejects the scroll with outright contempt (cf. 36:23-26). The “cutting up” (נָעַל) (v. 23) of the scroll demonstrates disregard for the message that has just been “read” (אָשְׁרֵה). The “casting” (נָפָל) (v. 23) of the scroll into the fire is exactly the opposite response of the concerned officials who “sent” (נֵלָחַם) to inquire of its contents. The king, unlike the officials, shows no “fear” (מָרָב, v. 24; cf. v. 16) over the dire predictions of the prophet.

The king “hears” (הָלַשׁ) the words of the scroll (as do Micaiah and the officials in vv. 11, 16), but the words have no effect or impact upon him. The king refuses to “tear” (נָעַל, in contrast to his “cutting up” [נָעַל] of the scroll) his garments as a sign of remorse and repentance (v. 24). The unresponsiveness of the king is particularly significant in light of the fact that the reading of the scroll has occurred in the context of national fasting in an appeal for Yahweh to intervene on behalf of the nation’s precarious political situation (v. 9). The nation performs rituals and ceremonies of fasting in an attempt to appease Yahweh, but the leader of the covenant people is unable to

Rumpelstiltskin, and the Three Little Pigs.

This threefold structuring of narratives appears elsewhere in chs. 26-45. In 27:16-22, the third call for submission to Babylon is expanded in order to focus on the response of “the priests and people” to whom this oracle is addressed and to counter their false sense of confidence in the security provided by the Jerusalem temple. In 38:14-28, the third interview between Jeremiah and Zedekiah (cf. 37:3-10; 37:17-21) is expanded to highlight the issue of Jeremiah’s safety (perhaps because the unbelief of the king has already settled the issue of the fate of Jerusalem). In ch. 39, a third scene of confinement (cf. 37:11-16; 38:1-13) introduces a significant change. In the first two scenes of confinement, Jeremiah suffers imprisonment at the hands of his own countrymen. Now, the leaders of Judah who have mistreated Jeremiah suffer confinement. Although Jeremiah experiences deliverance from his incarceration, there is to be no such deliverance for the Judeans taken into captivity by the Babylonians.
bring himself to repentance in spite of a direct warning of judgment from God’s spokesman.

In the first two episodes of response, the verb לֹא (לֹא) refers to the “taking up” of the scroll in order to pass along its contents (cf. vv. 14, 21a). However, in the final episode, Jehoiakim demands the “seizure” (לֹא) of Jeremiah and Baruch (v. 26). In the first two instances, the verb has referred to an action that denotes concern for the contents and message of the scroll, but in the final incident, the verb reflects Jehoiakim’s attitude of hostility toward God’s messenger (v. 26a). Jehoiakim’s angry demand that Jeremiah and Baruch be placed under arrest also provides a direct contrast to the attitude of the royal officials who act to protect these spokesmen of God, and the repetition of בָּרָכָה ("to hide") in verses 19 and 26 stresses that God uses these officials as his instrument in frustrating the plans and intentions of the rebellious king.

The narrative of chapter 36 ultimately demonstrates the futility of King Jehoiakim’s opposition to the word of Yahweh. The inclusio provided by the two recordings of the prophetic message in verses 1-8 and 27-32 stresses the fact that Jehoiakim’s burning of the scroll actually accomplishes nothing because Yahweh simply commissions the prophet Jeremiah to make another scroll.

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22 Ibid, 71. Wanke notes the variation of הָלַף (ו. 14), הָלַף (ו. 21a), and הָלַף לַה (ו. 26a). This variation is another feature which serves to highlight the contrast between the response of the king and that which is expected in light of the earlier responses.

23 Dearman, “My Servants, the Scribes,” 403. The repetition of “the words of the first scroll” in v. 28 and “the words of the scroll that Jehoiakim... burned” in v. 32 further highlights this connection between the first and second scroll and the immutability of Yahweh’s decree of judgment.
King Jehoakim also becomes the personal focus of the prophetic message of judgment because of this rebellious act. The king will have no family successors to sit upon the throne of Judah (36:30). The oracle of judgment particularly stresses that Yahweh brings judgment against Jehoiakim that corresponds to the king’s rejection of the prophetic word. Because the king sat in the warm comfort of his winter apartment and destroyed the prophetic scroll, Yahweh decrees that in death Jehoiakim’s body will not receive a proper burial so that it might be exposed to the elements of heat and cold (36:30).24 The “casting out” (נִלָּשׁ) of Jehoiakim’s body is fitting punishment for the one who killed the faithful prophet Uriah and “threw” (נִלָּשׁ) his body into the common grave of the people (cf. 26:23) and the one who cut up the scroll of Jeremiah’s prophecies and “threw” (נִלָּשׁ) it into the fire.25

The king’s rejection of the word of Yahweh is given a place of prominence in the two introductory chapters within the Jeremiah narratives in order to stress that the king’s rebellion brings guilt upon the entire nation. As a representative of the nation before Yahweh, the king’s personal response to the word of God has national implications and consequences.26 The Jere-

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25Holladay, Jeremiah 2, 110. This judgment falls into the category of judgment referred to as “talionic justice,” a common motif in the OT prophets where the punishment specifically fits the crime. For fuller discussion of this motif in the prophets at large, see Patrick Miller, Sin and Judgment in the Prophets: A Stylistic and Theological Analysis, SBLMS 27 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982).

26Avraham Gileadi, “The Davidic Covenant: A Theological Basis for Corporate Protection,” in Israel’s Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison, ed. A. Gileadi (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 157-63. Gileadi explains: “In Davidic covenant theology the fate and welfare of the nation hinged on the king’s loyalty to YHWH” (p. 159). When reconfirming the Davidic covenant with Solomon, Yahweh promises to dwell among the people of Israel if the king keeps the commandments (1 Kgs. 6:12-13) but warns that Israel will be “cut off” if the king does not remain faithful (1 Kgs. 9:4, 6-7). This same perspective informs the writer behind the Jeremiah narratives and helps to explain the emphasis upon the responses of the king in chs. 26-45.
miah narratives as a whole focus on the unbelief of both Jehoiakim (26/36) and Zedekiah (37-38). At the same time, the nation at large is implicated for its own rebellion and unbelief in the narratives of chapters 26 and 36. In 26:24, the people ultimately turn against Jeremiah and seek the prophet's life. The unbelief of the people in the episode of chapter 36 is subtly implied by their silence. Baruch delivers the message of the scroll to "all the people of Judah and Jerusalem" (vv. 9-10). However, the people as a collective group make no response and are apparently unwilling to recognize or accept the seriousness of the prophetic word. Among this crowd of people assembled in Jerusalem, Micaiah alone is signaled out for making a response that commiserates with the gravity and severity of the prophetic word.

Contrast of Jehoiakim and Earlier Godly Kings

The narratives of Jeremiah 26 and 36 not only record King Jehoiakim's rejection of the message of Jeremiah but also contrast Jehoiakim's negative response to the prophetic word with the positive responses of earlier Judean kings, particularly Hezekiah and Josiah who are both commended in the Deuteronomic historical literature for their reforming labors and fidelity to Yahweh. 27 Jeremiah 26 contains an explicit contrast between Jehoiakim

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Discussion of the issues associated with the composition of the Dtr. History is beyond the scope of this dissertation. From a literary perspective, a more important concern is
and Hezekiah; the narrative of chapter 36 reflects an implicit contrast between Jehoiakim and Josiah. King Jehoiakim brings judgment upon the nation of

the importance of the figures Hezekiah and Josiah in the development of the theme of reform in the books of Kings. See Hans-Detlef Hoffman, Reform und Reformen: Untersuchungen zu einem Grundthema der deuteronomistischen Geschichtsschreibung, ATANT 66 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1980) and J. G. McConville, “Narrative and Meaning in the Books of Kings,” Bib 70 (1989): 31-49. Hoffman demonstrates how the theme of reform contributes to the overall unity of Kings in that eight examples of kings who accomplished positive cultic reforms (Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joram, Jehu, Jehoiada/Joash, Jotham, Hezekiah, and Josiah) are set against eight negative examples (Solomon, Jeroboam, Rehoboam, Ahab, Ahaziah, Jehoash, Ahaz, and Manasseh). Among these “reformers,” Hezekiah and Josiah stand as the most prominent. Josiah’s accomplishments provide a sense of completion and closure for the reform efforts in the books of Kings. The prophecy of Josiah’s destruction of the shrine of Jeroboam in 1 Kgs. 13 and the accomplishment of that act in 2 Kgs. 22 frame the history of the divided kingdom. In 2 Kgs. 23:25, Josiah destroys the “high places” of Solomon in Jerusalem, thus finishing the task begun by Hezekiah and reversing the act of Solomon in 1 Kgs. 11 that brings the divine judgment of schism in the Israelite kingdom.

In spite of the positive accomplishments of the godly kings, the stories of reform in Kings are tinged with statements regarding the ultimate failure of such efforts to stem the tide of judgment (and such mixture of statements regarding the positive and negative effects of these reforms throughout the books of Kings raises doubts regarding the dependence of theories of double and triple redactions of the Dtr. History upon positive and negative assessments of the reforms as evidence of an optimistic pre-exilic edition of the Dtr. History versus a pessimistic exilic edition). In 2 Kgs. 12, Joash effects significant reforms but is also forced to sell off certain temple treasures in order to appease Hazael the king of Aram (2 Kgs. 12:17-18). Hezekiah makes a monumental misjudgment in showing off the treasures of the palace and temple to the Babylonian envoys (2 Kgs. 20:12-19). Josiah’s reforms culminate with his premature death in an attempt to stop superior Egyptian forces under Necho at Megiddo (2 Kgs. 23:29-30). McConville (“Narrative and Meaning,” 31-49) views this focus on failure as a key literary device in the books of Kings that serves to highlight the inability of the monarchy to attain perpetual blessing and salvation for Israel.

The narratives of Jer. 26-45 highlight the failure of the monarchy but in a slightly different manner. The narrator in chs. 26 and 36 views Hezekiah and Josiah in an idealistic manner and calls attention to how Jehoiakim brings about the final fall of the nation by failure to maintain the faith and fidelity that characterized these reforming kings. In the 1988 U. S. Vice-Presidential debates, Democratic candidate Bentsen chided Republican nominee Quayle for being “no John Kennedy,” and in effect, the narrator in Jer. 26 and 36 finds Jehoiakim to be “no Hezekiah or Josiah.” In chs. 37-38, the narrator also appears to stress the point that Jehoiakim’s successor, Zedekiah, is also no Hezekiah. Despite the shortcomings of both Hezekiah and Josiah (particularly the inability of the latter to fully reverse the state of apostasy created by Manasseh, cf. 2 Kgs. 23:26-27), these two kings responded obediently to Yahweh at times of national crisis and helped to postpone the destruction of Judah. There will be no such positive responses from Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, and national judgment can no longer be forestalled.

28The examination of relationships between biblical texts is referred to in literary critical studies as “intertextuality.” For this methodology and its impact on biblical studies, see the series of essays in Danna N. Fewell (ed.), Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible, Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster/John
Judah by his failure to positively respond to the prophetic word in the manner of Hezekiah and Josiah.

Jeremiah 26: Jehoiakim and Hezekiah

In Jeremiah 26:17-23, the hostility of Jehoiakim to the message of the prophet Uriah concerning the impending destruction of Jerusalem is explicitly contrasted to Hezekiah’s repentant response to a similar message proclaimed by the prophet Micah. The narrator employs a series of wordplays to further develop this contrast between Jehoiakim and Hezekiah. Hezekiah did not attempt to put the prophet Micah to “death” for proclaiming a message of judgment (v. 19, hiphil of נושא), but Jehoiakim does seek to “kill” (v. 21, hiphil of נושא) Uriah for proclaiming a message of judgment that is essentially the same.29 When Micah warned of imminent judgment, Hezekiah responded with “fear” toward Yahweh (v. 19, נמוך). However, Jehoiakim has no such reverence toward Yahweh when he “hears” (v. 21, נשון) the word of doom, and it is instead the prophet Uriah who “hears” (נשון) and responds with “fear” (נמוך) when he learns of Jehoiakim’s plot to have him killed (v. 21).30 Hezekiah hears a message of doom and “seeks” (לזיו) the favor of Yahweh (v. 19), but Jeohiakim hears a message of doom and “seeks” (לזיו) to

Knox Press, 1992). Fewell writes in the introduction to these essays that intertextual study is a legitimate literary approach in that, “All texts are embedded in a larger web of related texts, bounded only by human culture and language itself” (p. 17). In contemporary literary criticism, intertextuality is essentially a “reader-oriented enterprise” as the reader perceives textual relationships and offers “novel juxtapositions” or reexamines “long-recognized connections” (pp. 17-18). This dissertation will give attention to intertextual connections between the Jeremiah accounts in chs. 26-45 and other biblical narratives but will focus primarily on when these intertextual connections are developed as literary allusions in the Jeremiah narratives. Some degree of reader subjectivity is involved in any literary analysis of this type.

29 Holladay, Jeremiah 2, 109.

30 Ibid.
put Uriah to death. The two kings are at opposite ends of the spectrum when it comes to their response to the prophetic word.

**Jeremiah 36: Jehoiakim and Josiah**

In Jeremiah 36, the writer draws a more implicit contrast between Jehoiakim and Josiah. The narrator does not call specific attention to this contrast, and the name of King Josiah or reference to any events that occurred during his reign do not even appear in the text. Nevertheless, a comparison of Jeremiah 36 with the narrative of 2 Kings 22 indicates that the writer intends to contrast Jehoiakim’s act of cutting up and burning the scroll of Jeremiah with Josiah’s obedient and faithful response at the time of the discovery of the book of the law in 622 B.C.

Isbell and Wanke have called attention to the major parallels (both similarities and differences) which exist between Jeremiah 36 and 2 Kings 22 that serve to establish this intertextual contrast between Jehoiakim and Josiah. The primary similarity between the two narratives is that both stories center around response to a previously unknown scroll (the book of the law/the scroll of Jeremiah’s prophecies) that claims to be the word of God and warns of coming judgment and wrath.

The two accounts also share similar words that are used with different effects or results to contrast the faithfulness of Josiah and the disobedience of Jehoiakim. Josiah “tore” (םנהפי) his garment as a sign of contrition (2 Kgs.

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22:11, 19), but Jehoiakim and his officials do not “tear” (רָיעוּ) their garments in repentance (Jer. 36:24). Instead, King Jehoiakim “cuts up” (קָצָה) the scroll of Jeremiah in anger (Jer. 36:23). 2 Kings 22 employs the verb “to burn” (פָּרָה) five times to refer to Josiah’s destruction of cultic objects associated with idolatrous worship (vv. 4, 11, 15, 16, 20), but this same verb is used five times in Jeremiah 36 to describe Jehoiakim’s burning of the scroll (vv. 25, 27, 28, 29, 32). The two accounts also contain contrasts to signify the distinction between Josiah and Jehoiakim. 2 Kings 22 specifically states that Josiah “hears” (שָׁמֵא) the word of Yahweh (v. 11, 18, 19) and responds with concrete steps of obedience, but Jehoiakim “hears” (שָׁמֵא) the word of Yahweh as the scroll of Jeremiah is read in his presence and immediately dismisses its message and significance (Jer. 36:24-26). The “fear” (שֵרֶד) of Josiah (2 Kgs. 22:11) contrasts with Jehoiakim’s absence of “fear” (שֵרֶד) (Jer. 36:24). Because of the contrasting royal responses, there is also a difference in the divine response to the two kings. God “hears” (שָׁמֵא) Josiah because the king has listened to God (2 Kgs. 22:19). The “calamity” (רָעָה) that God was determined to bring becomes “peace” (שֶׁלֶם) (2 Kgs. 22:20). God grants to Josiah the personal assurance that the king “will be gathered” to his ancestors (2 Kgs. 22:20). In contrast, Yahweh reaffirms his intention to bring “calamity” (רָעָה) against Judah because of Jehoiakim’s rebellious response (Jer. 36:30-31). 

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36 Ibid, 38-41.
38 Wanke, Untersuchungen, 67.
will also have a personal share in this tragedy. Instead of being gathered to his fathers like Josiah, his corpse will be thrown out into the street (Jer. 36:30; cf. 22:19).

The Hope of Repentance and Avoidance of Judgment

The narratives of Jeremiah 26 and 36 describing events dating from the reign of Jehoiakim also parallel one another in that they both hold forth the hope of a positive response by the nation of Judah to the preaching of Jeremiah so that Yahweh will not have to bring the terrible judgment planned for Judah and Jerusalem. This hope is presented in both chapters by conditional statements introduced by the particle "if" which raise the possibility that Judah might "turn" (יָדַע) from its evil ways in order to enjoy a favorable divine response (26:3; 36:3, 7).

While this aspect of hope is present at the beginning of the two major sections (chs. 26, 36), the summations of the two panels (chs. 34-35, 44-45) mirror the language of the introductions in order to demonstrate and confirm Judah's rejection of the divine offer of mercy. The introductory accounts raise the possibility of Judah "turning" (יָדַע) from its "evil" (רֶשֶׁת) so as to avoid the judgment of divine "disaster" (נְעָמָה). Judah stands in need of repentance because of its failure to "obey" (שָׁתַם) the prophets that Yahweh has

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"repeatedly (אֲבָאָרָא, lit., ‘early’) sent" (cf. 26:3-6; 36:3-7). At the close of both panels, the prophet announces the certain coming of divine “disaster” (הֵרָעָל) because the nation has acted in character and once again refused to “obey” (שָמַע) the prophets that Yahweh has “repeatedly (אֲבָאָרָא) sent” (cf. 35:14-15, 17; 44:4-6, 23).

The introductory and concluding sections in Jeremiah 26-45 deal with the issue of “obeying” (שָמַע) Yahweh, and this obedience is described in terms of “turning from one’s evil way” (שָׁקַע אֶל שָׂם מַרְדָּךְ וַדִּבְרָה) (26:3; 36:3, 7). The judgment to come upon Judah is primarily described in terms of divine “disaster” (הֵרָעָל). References to divine “disaster” (הֵרָעָל) frame the beginning and ending of both major panels in chapters 26-45 (cf. 26:3; 35:17; 36:3, 7, 31; 45:5). The underlying theological principle that controls the reading of Jeremiah 26-45 is that Judah’s refusal to “obey” (שָמַע) and resultant persistence in the practice of “evil” (רַעָה) leads to the divine judgment of “disaster” (הֵרָעָל). Judah’s primary problem in this section is not the Babylonian invasion. References to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians are minimal in the introductory and concluding episodes in chapters 26-45 because the principal issue is Judah’s refusal to “obey” (שָמַע) Yahweh. Judah must reckon with the Babylonian crisis, but this issue is subordinate to the underlying problem of the nation’s refusal to properly relate to Yahweh.

In the introductory chapters of 26 and 36, Judah faces the choice of “turning” (שָׁקַע) from “evil” (רַעָה) or experiencing “calamity” (רַעָל), but the choice facing the nation in the chapters that follows is of a much different nature. The nation of Judah is no longer given the option of repenting of its sin so that it might avoid the terrible judgment of Yahweh. In chapters 26 and 36, the prophet warns of a judgment that is about to come. In the narratives that follow, judgment has become an inevitability, and the nature of
this particular judgment comes into clear focus. The divine “disaster” (הָעַר) takes the specific form of the Babylonian assault and siege.

The issue of “hearing/obeying” (מָשָּׁה) in the chapters within the framework also takes on a different focus and orientation. The central issue in “obeying” Yahweh is no longer “turning from evil” in accordance with the pronouncements of the law and the prophets but rather heeding the prophetic counsel to surrender and submit to the Babylonians. In the episodes from the reign of Zedekiah (chs. 27-29, 37-39), the people of Judah must choose between remaining in the land and facing certain death in continued resistance to the Babylonians or surrendering to the Babylonians in order to be transported to a foreign land (cf. 27:12-15, 16-19; 38:2-3, 17-23). In the narratives that relate to events after the exile (chs. 40-43), the Judean survivors must choose between remaining in the land as submissive vassals of Babylon or fleeing to Egypt in a futile attempt to escape Babylonian hegemony (cf. 40:9; 42:10-18).

Following the reign of Jehoiakim, Judah faces decisions involving judgment and calamity (i.e., foreign domination and/or exile) regardless of the course of action that is taken. As Holt explains, even life in the midst of surrender is punishment because “it is precisely within their surrender that their punishment lies--deportation to a foreign land from which Jeremiah sees no possible return.”

Holt further explains that this change in the message of Jeremiah reflects that, “In his later years, the prophet had not counted on repentance on the part of the people; rather, he considered their punishment as unavoidable.” Because of national rejection of the message of Jeremiah after its two dramatic readings at the Jerusalem temple (chs. 26 and

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41Holt, “Jeremiah’s Temple Sermon and the Deuteronomists,” 86, n. 11.

42Ibid.
Yahweh’s judgment against Judah has become inevitable and unavoidable.

The Supporters of Jeremiah

A fourth point of comparison between Jeremiah 26 and 36 is that both narratives reveal that supporters of Jeremiah play a vital role in protecting the prophet in the face of grave danger and royal opposition. The narratives in Jeremiah 26-45 highlight and give special attention to the supporters of Jeremiah who respond positively and obediently to the prophetic word, a contrast to the preceding material in chapters 1-25 which offer no evidence of positive response to the preaching of Jeremiah. The supporters of the prophet Jeremiah who respond positively and obediently to his message include, at various places and times, the people of Judah, a number of Judean officials and elders (especially certain members of the family of Shaphan), the scribe Baruch, and the Cushite Ebed-Melech. The significance of these characters is reflected in their prominence within the framework chapters of 26, 25, 36, and 45.43

43The narrative detail given to describe these positive responses of obedience also highlights their importance. Narrative time in these otherwise brief and elliptical accounts appears to slow down when recounting these obedient responses to the prophetic word. The skeletal episodes begin to flesh out and become laden with details. The almost monotonous repetition involved in 36:4-10 in the commissioning of Baruch to record and read the scroll and the carrying out of the commission stresses Baruch’s adherence to the prophet’s instructions. In chapter 36, the listing of patronyms and office titles for the supporters of Jeremiah among the royal officials (e.g. 36:10-12: Gemariah son of Shaphan the secretary; Micaiah son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan; Elishima the secretary; Delaiah son of Shemaiah; Elathan son of Acbor; and Zedekiah son of Hananiah) and the location of their offices within the temple complex (e.g. 36:10, “room of Gemariah . . . which was in the upper courtyard at the entrance to the new gate;” and 36:12, “the secretary’s room in the upper palace”) reflects the prominence of these patrons and supporters of Jeremiah. A similar narrative slowing is evident elsewhere in the Jeremiah narratives. In 38:7-13, the narrator describes in precise detail the exact procedures behind Ebed-Melech’s rescue of Jeremiah from the cistern. In 40:1-6, the explanation of the reasons behind the fall of Jerusalem by the Babylonian commander Nebuzaradan adds nothing to the explanation repeatedly offered by Jeremiah, but the agreement of a foreign commander with Jeremiah is a point of major significance, particularly in light of the con-
In chapter 26, the people, officials, and elders of Judah acknowledge Jeremiah as a true spokesman of Yahweh. A word of commendation is directed toward the Rechabites for their covenant loyalty in chapter 35. The introduction to the second panel in chapter 36 highlights Baruch as the loyal and faithful scribe, and the faction of the royal scribes led by members of the family of Shaphan have a Josiah-like response to the warnings contained in the scroll of Jeremiah's prophecies.

Members of the family of Shaphan play a particularly prominent role in both narratives in protecting Jeremiah from capture and death. Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, preserves and protects Jeremiah from the evil designs of an angry mob (26:24). In Jeremiah 36, Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, provides his office area in the temple precinct as the place for Baruch's proclamation of the scroll of Jeremiah (36:10). Gemariah's son, Micaiah, is deeply concerned over the contents of the scroll and feels the need to alert a larger circle of officials to the scroll's existence and its warnings of judgment (36:11-14). Micaiah, Gemariah, and Elnathan the son of Acbor are three members of the inner circle of officials who are privy to Jeremiah's message of judgment. The officials take the precaution of hiding Baruch and Jeremiah in anticipation of the royal backlash against the prophecies of Jeremiah (36:19). Elnathan and Gemariah take even further steps in their support of Jeremiah by courageously pleading with the rebellious Jehoiakim not to destroy the prophetic scroll (36:25).

For other references to the family of Shaphan in Jer. 26-45, cf. Jer. 29:3 (Elasah, the brother of Ahikam, carries a letter to the exiles in Babylon) and 40:5 (Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, is appointed the governor of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar but is later assassinated by fellow countrymen, 41:1-3). For the relationship between Jeremiah and the family of Shaphan, see Dearman, "My Servants the Scribes," 408-14; Jurgen Kegler, "The Prophetic Discourse and
The concluding oracle in chapter 45 offers a promise of life to the faithful Baruch. These supporters of the prophet are particularly highlighted in the framework chapters in order to set forth their significance as paradigms of faith and obedience for the reader. O'Connor writes, "The stories in chaps. 26-45 function symbolically. The supporters of Jeremiah in these chapters portray those among the exiles who have heard the prophetic message."45 The narrative depiction of these characters serves to emphasize with flesh-and-blood examples that "the future of the community . . . does not lie with the leadership . . . but with the many faithful people who listen to the true prophet, heed the message, and defend it."46

The particular alignment of Jeremiah and the officials from the family of Shaphan versus King Jehoiakim sets the stage for what is to follow and is reflective of the ideological struggle that is central to the narratives of chapters 26-45. Throughout the Jeremiah narratives in 26-45, two competing religio-political factions wage a war for the heart and mind of the nation of Judah at a time of grave national crisis. In the accounts of 26 and 36, the two factions employ their political powers to promote their cause and viewpoint. Jehoiakim has Uriah executed in 26 and seeks to incarcerate Jeremiah and Baruch in 36 in a bald and ruthless attempt to silence the voice of dissent.47

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45 O'Connor, "'Do Not Trim a Word,'" 630.
46 Ibid.
chapter 26, Ahikam employs his political influence to protect Jeremiah from
danger. In chapter 36, the officials supportive of Jeremiah recognize their
responsibility to report the message of the prophet to the king but also act
conspiratorially against Jehoiakim in protecting a spokesman for a cause that
has their approval but that is bitterly opposed by the king.\(^{48}\)

The political and theological conflict revolves around the issue of
Judean response to the Babylonian crisis, and the two parties involved in this
conflict are the "pro-Egyptian" and "pro-Babylonian" factions.\(^{49}\) King Je­
hoiakim represents the "pro-Egyptian" party advocating resistance to the
Babylonian advances against Judah (cf. 2 Kgs. 24:1), and is therefore antagonis­
tic to Jeremiah's (and Uriah's) message of judgment that dooms to failure his
opposition to Babylonian subjugation.\(^{50}\) This party is pro-Egypt in the sense

\(^{48}\)Ibid, 51-53.

\(^{49}\)For historical overviews of the events and political climate of Judah's last days
as a nation, see John A Bright, A History of Israel, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press,
137-56; \textit{ibid}, "The Last Years of the Kingdom of Judah," in WHFP, vol. 4, part 1, ed. A. Mala­
mat (Jerusalem: Masada Press, 1979), 205-21; \textit{ibid}, "The Twilight of Judah in the Egyptian-
al.} (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 123-43; Eugene H. Merrill, 
\textit{Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel} (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House,
1987), 446-75; J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, \textit{A History of Ancient Israel and Judah}, OTL

\(^{50}\)The political division between pro-Babylon and pro-Egypt factions appears to be
reflective of a rift that exists even among the royal family in Judah's final days. See Wil­
to have advocated a foreign policy that involved some form of cooperation with Babylon.
Alliance with Babylon was a natural outcome of Josiah's attempts to gain Judean independence
from Assyria (cf. the actions of Hezekiah in 2 Kgs. 20:12-13). Josiah's desire for independence
from Assyria is reflected in his fatal encounter with Necho II at Megiddo. Josiah engaged the
Egyptian king in battle in an attempt to prevent Egypt from lending support to the Assyrians
against the Babylonians (cf. 2 Kgs. 23:29). The desire for independence from Assyria is related
to Josiah's religious reforms, because Assyrian influence had contributed to the syncretistic
practices that characterized the reign of Manasseh.
The division in the royal family after the death of Josiah first appears in the
events surrounding the reigns of Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim. The younger brother, Jehoahaz, is
the choice of "the people of the land" to be Josiah's successor (2 Kgs. 23:30-31). However, Necho
that it promotes alliance with Egypt as part of an overall plan of military resistance to the armies of Babylon.51

On the other hand, Jeremiah and the party of officials led by the family of Shaphan represent the “pro-Babylonian” party. This group is not “pro-Babylonian” in the sense that it consists of secretive or traitorous sup-

51Jehoiakim’s eventual rebellion against Babylon (cf. 2 Kgs. 24:1-2) appears to have been inspired by the Egyptian defeat of Babylon that occurred during the Babylonian invasion of Egypt during the fourth year of Nebuchadnezzar (601-600 B.C.). The Lachish ostraca appear to provide contemporary documentation of the Judean appeal to Egypt for aid against Babylon. For translation and discussion of the Lachish letters, see Dennis Pardee, Handbook of Ancient Hebrew Letters: A Study Edition, SBLSBS 15, ed. B. O. Long (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982). Lachish 3:15-18 makes mention of the mission of an official named Konyahu to Egypt perhaps in an attempt to gain military assistance (Pardee, Handbook, 881. Lachish 6:5-15 refers to Judean officials who “discourage” (יָכַלְס, תָּבָע), an idiom that also appears in Jer. 38:4) the people, perhaps in the sense of giving a negative assessment of the prospects of help from Egypt or success in resistance against Babylon (Pardee, Handbook, 100-1). The extant letter of Adon also appears to attest that other Palestinian states appealed to Egypt for military assistance against Babylon during this period. For translation and discussion of this letter, see William H. Shea, “Adon’s Letter and the Babylonian Chronicle,” BASOR 223 (1976): 61-64.

Within Jer. 26-45, explicit repudiation of trust in Egypt appears in two instances. The success of Pharaoh Hophra in lifting the Babylonian siege against Jerusalem inspired greater hopes of an even more permanent elimination of the Babylonian problem, but Jeremiah warns that such confidence is unwarranted (cf. 37:5-10). After the exile has occurred, Jeremiah also warns his countrymen who remain in the land of Judah that flight to Egypt will not bring protection against Babylonian reprisals for the assassination of Gedaliah (42:13-22; 43:8-13; 44:26-30). In warning against trust in Egypt as a military ally or source of security, Jeremiah stands within a common prophetic tradition (cf. Hos. 10:13-15; 14:4; Isa. 30:1-5; 31:1-3; Ezek. 17:13-21). For discussion of this prophetic opposition to alliance with Egypt, see James K. Hoffmeier, “Egypt As an Arm of Flesh: A Prophetic Response,” in Israel’s Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison, ed. Avraham Gileadi (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 79-97; and Ben C. Ollenburger, Zion the City of the Great King: A Theological Symbol of the Jerusalem Cult, JSOTSup 41 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 81-144.
porters of Nebuchadnezzar against their own people but in the sense that they recognize the validity of the Babylonian claims to sovereignty over Judah. This recognition is founded upon the two-fold conviction that Babylon is the God-appointed instrument of judgment against the sinful nation of Judah and that surrender to Babylonian hegemony is the only course of action that will enable Judah to avoid total annihilation. Jeremiah and his supporters should be viewed as "pro-Babylonian" only in the sense that he is "pro-Yahweh" and recognizes that God is using the Babylonian domination of Judah to accomplish the divine purpose. The family of Shaphan and the circle of officials to which they belong offer their patronage to Jeremiah because of this message. Kegler explains:

To the group at court that more or less openly pursued a pro-Babylonian policy, Jeremiah was a figure of key importance. Supported by the authority of his prophetic office, he dared to bring the criticism of Jehoiakim and his policies out into the open. This same group at court was able by its secret protection to ward off from Jeremiah the danger he was incurring of being liquidated by the king. From a political standpoint Jeremiah's public function was to show that Jehoiakim's pursuit of autonomy was a rebellion against God's will and, in the last analysis, a deadly danger to the state, and to create an understanding of the need of accepting Babylonian supremacy. Objectively speaking, Jeremiah was the public spokesman of a faction opposed to the king. 52

Prior to the exile, Jeremiah argues against resistance to Babylon and advises that Judah must submit to Judah in order to have any chance for survival (cf. 27:4-11, 12-15, 16-17; 37:7-10; 38:14-28). After the exile, the prophet continues to advocate submission and loyalty to Babylon as the means of national survival and prosperity for Judah (42:11-12; cf. the advice of Gedaliah in 40:9-10). The opponents of Jeremiah misunderstood the motivation behind his message of submission to Babylon. The prophet is accused of and

punished for treason in the period before the exile (37:11-16; 38:4-6) and is called a liar who treacherously intends to hand over his fellow countrymen to the Babylonians after the exile has begun (43:2-3).53

The conflict between Jeremiah and the family of Shaphan versus Jehoiakim introduces the major tension that will emerge in Jeremiah 26-45. The rhetoric of chapters 26-45 is designed to demonstrate that Judah has not "obeyed/listened to" the prophetic word, and the specific form of disobedience is failure to submit to Babylonian sovereignty. The unfolding of this conflict in the Jeremiah narratives will reflect both the pervasiveness of unbelief throughout the course of Jeremiah's ministry and the intensification of unbelief as the ministry of Jeremiah progresses. Both before and after the exile, the leaders of Judah will reject the option of submitting to Babylonian hegemony in an effort to spare Judah further suffering and humiliation. The leaders of Judah after the exile will even repeat the pre-exilic miscalculation that Egypt will provide protection against Babylonian domination and flee to Egypt in an attempt to escape reprisals from Nebuchadnezzar for the assassination of Gedaliah (cf. 43:4-7).

Opposition to Jeremiah's counsel also intensifies in the course of the prophet's ministry. Unfortunately, the unfolding of the narratives in chapters 26-45 reveals that the supporters of the prophet Jeremiah remain a rather small minority. The arrangement of the materials in chapters 26-45 serves to emphasize Judah's descent into national unbelief. In the introduc-

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53The response of the Babylonians themselves to Jeremiah and his supporters is exactly the opposite. The Babylonians recognize the support of this faction of the Judean population after the capture of Jerusalem. In Jeremiah 39:11-14, the Babylonians release Jeremiah from confinement and give him the option of living wherever he chooses in Babylon or Judah. In Jeremiah 40:10, the Babylonians reward the family of Shaphan by appointing Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, to be the governor of Judah.
tory episode to panel one (ch. 26), Jeremiah receives support during the reign of Jehoiakim from the officials and all the people (temporarily), the elders of the land, and Ahikam. In the episodes from the reign of Zedekiah in chapters 27-29 that follow, this threefold support is offset by opposition from Hananiah, Ahab and Zedekiah, and Shemaiah. In the introduction to panel two (ch. 36), Jeremiah receives support in the Jehoiakim period from his scribe Baruch and from a contingent of royal officials, including Micaiah, Elishama, Delaiah, Elnathan, Gemariah, and Zedekiah. In the narratives that follow, this support for Jeremiah is countered by intense opposition to Jeremiah on the part of Judean officialdom. In chapters 37-38 from the period of Zedekiah, the opposition is led by Irijah, Shephatiah, Gedaliah, Jehucal, and Pashhur. During the reign of Zedekiah, these pro-Egyptian officials clearly have become more dominant than the pro-Babylonian party that appears to have the upper hand during the reign of Jehoiakim.

After the exile, chapters 40-43 detail the opposition presented to Jeremiah by officials such as Ishmael, Johanan, Jezniah, and Azariah. Even “all the people” join in the refusal to accept Jeremiah’s message (42:19-22; 44:16-19). The progression and plot development that occurs in these two panels is the trickle-down effect of the unbelief of a wicked king to the extent that unbelief becomes characteristic of the nation as a whole. The introductory chapters of 26 and 36 focus primarily upon the hostile opposition of King Jehoiakim to the prophetic word. An influential group of royal officials who

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54Note also the narrowing or diminishment of support for the prophet in the movement from panel one to panel two. In the opening to the first panel in ch. 26, Jeremiah enjoys the support of the officials and all the people. In the opening to the second panel here in ch. 36, the support for the prophet comes only from selected officials. The people are silent. Chronologically, both chs. 26 and 36 fall in the reign of Jehoiakim, but from the literary perspective of the Jeremiah narratives, there is a progressive development of unbelief that corresponds to the chronological decrease in support for the prophet.
are supportive of Jeremiah serve as a buffer between the prophet and the unbelieving king. In the chapters that follow, there appears to be a swelling tide of unbelief. The buffer is no longer present. In chapters 26 and 36, Judah's royal officials appear primarily as loyal supporters and protectors of the prophet Jeremiah, but in chapters 37-38 and 40-43, the royal officials are among Jeremiah's most ardent enemies. A political power shift has occurred in the transition between Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, and as time progresses, the unbelief of Jehoiakim becomes more pervasive in the royal bureaucracy. Events culminate in chapter 44 with a significant portion of the people of Judah declaring, "We will not obey Yahweh" (44:16).

Despite the political ramifications of the conflict between Jehoiakim and the family of Shaphan, the political nature of this dispute is not the primary concern of the narratives in Jeremiah 26-45. Significant political, historical, or military details regarding events that occur in Judah's final days where Jeremiah is not directly involved are rarely included within this section of the book.\footnote{Exceptions to this general rule are references to: 1) the meeting between Zedekiah and the envoys of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Sidon (regarding the formation of a coalition against Babylon) (27:3); 2) the Babylonian siege against Jerusalem (32:2; 34:1-2); 3) the covenant of King Zedekiah and the inhabitants of Judah to release their Hebrew slaves and the later repudiation of this promise (34:8-11); 4) the movement of the Rechabite clan to Jerusalem because of the Babylonian invasion of Judah (35:10-11); 5) Jehoiakim's proclamation of a day of fasting in the fourth year of his reign (36:9); 6) Nebuchadnezzar's act of replacing Jehoiachin with Zedekiah as king over Judah (37:1); 7) the fall of Jerusalem, the capture and execution of the royal sons and the Judean nobles, the blinding of Zedekiah, and the exile of the people of Judah (39:1-8); 8) the extension of kindness to Jeremiah on the part of the Babylonians and the release of the prophet from prison (39:11-14; 40:4-6); 9) Nebuchadnezzar's appointment of Gedaliah as governor (40:7); 10) the assassination of Gedaliah and the subsequent flight of Judean refugees to Egypt (41:1-43:7). However, these events often merely form a framework for the prophetic message, and significant description or elaboration concerning these events is generally omitted.}
brief and matter-of-fact manner.\textsuperscript{56} The most significant detail regarding the Babylonians in chapters 26-45 is not their military prowess but rather that Yahweh has granted Babylon sovereignty over the nations and has decreed the Babylonian conquest of Judah.\textsuperscript{57} The decree of Yahweh and the pronouncement of that decree in the prophetic word determine the fate of Judah and not the political or military maneuvering of either Judah or Babylon. The central conflict in the Jeremiah narratives is not Judah versus Babylon but rather Judah versus Yahweh.

In the portrayal and development of characters in the narratives of Jeremiah 26-45, the narrator devotes little attention to biographical detail or inner psychological conflict because response to the prophetic word is generally the exclusive issue in the presentation of characters. With brevity and succinctness, the narrator focuses on the words or actions of the participants in these accounts that are reflective of the character’s attitude toward the message of Jeremiah.

The use of speech or acts designed to protect the life of Jeremiah are the primary means of reflecting allegiance toward the prophet, and conversely, actions designed to bring harm or injury to the prophet are reflective of an attitude of hostility. From the perspective of literary criticism, the char-

\textsuperscript{56}Cf. 32:1-2; 34:1-2, 7; 37:1-2; 39:1-8. Conventional and stylistic language is used to describe the military actions of the Babylonians. The Babylonians will $\text{נֶבֶךְ}$ (“fight”) (Jer. 34:1, 7; 37:8; 43:11-12), $\text{נֶבֶךְ}$ (“capture”) (32:28; 34:22; 37:8; 38:3, 23; 39:5), $\text{נֶבֶךְ}$ (“burn”) (32:29; 34:3; 37:8, 10; 38:23; 39:8; 44:12-13), and $\text{נֶבֶךְ}$ (“besiege”) (39:1). The triad “sword, plague, and famine” is a common description of the judgment against Judah. These conventional descriptions contrast with the graphic and terrifying descriptions of the Babylonian armies and the devastation they bring that appear within the poetic oracles of chs. 1-25 (e.g. 1:13-15; 4:5-7, 13-17, 23-29; 6:22-23; 7:32-34; 8:16-17; 15:7-9; 16:5-7).

\textsuperscript{57}The first mention of Babylon in chs. 26-45 appears in the context of Yahweh’s decree to bestow control over the nations to Nebuchadnezzar (27:3-7; cf. 28:14). The prophet Jeremiah repeatedly warns of Yahweh’s intention to “hand over” (נֶבֶךְ + הָנֹּב) the city of Jerusalem (32:3, 28; 34:2; 38:3, 18) and King Zedekiah (32:4; 34:3, 21; 37:17).
acters in the Jeremiah narratives are generally "flat" as opposed to "round" figures. Berlin explains, "Flat characters, or types, are built around a single quality or trait."58 The characters surrounding Jeremiah in chapters 26-45 are individualized through the external details that characterize their personal reactions to the prophet, but these figures appear in almost monochromatic tones and function primarily in the role of an audience for the messages of the prophet. Quite simply, these characters are either for the prophet or against him, and, in the reading of this material, the characters around Jeremiah serve a typological function in setting forth the paradigmatic responses of obedience or disobedience to the word of Yahweh.59

**Corresponding Conclusions: Jeremiah 34/35 and 44/45**

Just as Jeremiah 26 and 36 parallel one another as introductory chapters to the two major blocks of material in 26-45, chapters 34-35 and 44-45 closely resemble one another and appear to function as corresponding conclu-


59 This same feature is true of the portrayal of characters in the New Testament Gospels in that characterization often centers around the response of the individual to the person and work of Jesus Christ. Cf. R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 145. Regarding the characters in the Gospel of John, Culpepper comments, "The functions of the characters are primarily two: (1) to draw out various aspects of Jesus' character successively by providing a series of diverse individuals with whom Jesus can interact, and (2) to represent alternative responses to Jesus so that the reader can see their attendant misunderstandings and consequences." Culpepper (pp. 146-48) observes several "types of responses" within the Gospel, including: 1) rejection; 2) acceptance without open commitment; 3) acceptance of Jesus as a worker of signs and wonders; 4) belief in Jesus' words; 5) commitment in spite of misunderstandings; 6) paradigmatic discipleship; and 7) defection. This focus on response is central to the plot of the Gospel of John. Culpepper (p. 148) explains, "The affective power of the plot pushes the reader toward a response to Jesus. The characters, who illustrate a variety of responses, allow the reader to examine the alternatives." The narrator in Jeremiah 26-45 is similarly pushing the reader to a response concerning the person and message of the prophet Jeremiah.
sions to the two panels of material. Jeremiah 35 and 45 are "Jehoiakim" chapters that complete the framework and provide closure for the two sections. The two major correspondences between 34-35 and 44-45 are the thematic focus upon the issue of Judah's covenant unfaithfulness and the promise of deliverance and salvation to a group (35:1-11, 18-19, the Rechabites) or an individual (the faithful scribe Baruch, 45:1-5) who has demonstrated covenant faithfulness in spite of pervasive national unbelief.

**Judgment and the Issue of Covenant Infidelity**

**Covenant Fidelity in Jeremiah 34-35**

The parallelism between Jeremiah 34:8-22 and 35:1-19 that centers around the issue of covenant fidelity is one of contrast. The negative exam-

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60The personal oracle directed to Zedekiah in 34:1-7 links to 34:8-22 on the basis of the references to the king in 34:2, 4, 6, 8, 21. The references to the "handing over" of the king in 34:3 and 21 form an approximate inclusio for the units in 34:1-7 and 34:8-22. The warning to the king in 34:1-7 within the summation of panel one also links to the references of the "handing over" of Zedekiah as paradigmatic of the "handing over" of Hophra of Egypt in 44:30. The connection of a Davidic king with an Egyptian ruler is rather scandalous but indicative of how far the Davidic line has fallen.

References to the fate of King Zedekiah also form an important link or hinge between panels one and two. Elmer Martens ("Narrative Parallelism in Jeremiah 34-38," in Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis: Studies in Memory of William Hugh Brownlee, ed. C. A. Evans and W. F. Stinespring [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987], 38-39) calls attention to a contrasting inclusio between 34:1-7 and 38:14-23. The contrast is between the people honoring Zedekiah in death in 34:5 and the taunting of the captured king (if he refuses to surrender to the Babylonians) in 38:21-23. The hinge chs. in Jer. 34-38 particularly focus on the Babylonian assault and siege of Jerusalem (cf. 34:1, 7, 21-22; 35:11; 37:5-11, 17, 19, 38:2-3, 17-23). This focus on the Babylonian assault culminates with the capture of Jerusalem and Zedekiah in ch. 39. The only words of hope/salvation found in this section are the promise to the Rechabites in 35:18-19 and the minimal promises to Zedekiah in 34:4-5 and 38:17-23. These hinge chapters enjoy a prominent position at the center of chs. 26-45, and the narrator appears to employ this particular positioning to highlight the judgment of Judah at the hands of Babylon. The narratives in chs. 26-38 build to the capture of Jerusalem, and chs. 40-44 deal with the aftermath of this event. The experience of the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile becomes a defining moment for the nation of Judah, and the question of whether Judah will respond differently to Yahweh in light of their experience of judgment serves as a major tension in chs. 26-45 as a whole.

The variations in the individual oracles to Zedekiah in chs. 27-38 create a difficult tension within the Jeremiah narratives. See A. R. Diamond, "Portraying Prophecy: Of Doublets, Variants and Analogies in the Narrative Representation of Jeremiah's Oracles--Reconstructing the Hermeneutics of Prophecy," *JSOT* 57 (1993): 99-119. Jer. 27-29 raises the possibility of continued existence for Judah if the king and nation are submissive to Babylonian
ple of covenant unfaithfulness found in 34:8-22 as the inhabitants of Jerusalem renege on their covenant promise to release their Hebrew slaves in accordance with Deuteronomy 15:2 contrasts with the positive example of the covenant fidelity of the Rechabites in 35:1-19 who are commended for remaining loyal to their family customs. The two passages coalesce in the sense that the demonstration of the covenant fidelity of the Rechabites becomes a device for the prophet Jeremiah to further condemn the covenant unfaithfulness of Judah as a whole (cf. 35:13-15, 17). The faithfulness of the clan accentuates the unfaithfulness of the nation.

hegemony, but 29:15-20 contains a warning of categorical destruction (cf. 21:1-10; 24:1-10). The oracles of the prophet during the final siege of Jerusalem generally contain absolute warnings of judgment (cf. 32:1-5; 34:1-7; 37:38), but there are also messages of varying degrees of hope for the king and city in 37:4-5 and 38:17-23. Christopher R. Seitz (Theology in Conflict: Reactions to the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah, BZAW 176 [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989], 48-69) employs such tensions as a means of isolating various redactional levels within the text, but such an approach would appear to be forcing both the text and the prophetic message into a literary straight-jacket. The treatment of the earlier unequivocal message of Micah 3:12 in Jer. 26:18 offers concrete proof within this very section of the book of Jeremiah that absolute messages of doom were not always the last word that closed the door once and for all on the possibility of repentance and the avoidance of judgment.

The tension reflected in the various oracles to Zedekiah highlights the rhetoric of response that is central to the whole of chs. 26-45. The fate of the king and the nation hinges upon response to the prophetic word, and Zedekiah ultimately experiences judgment because he is categorized as an "unbeliever." Diamond ("Portraying Prophecy," 118) explains that a hermeneutic of "moral contingency" is at the center of the understanding of the prophetic word in the Jeremiah narratives. Diamond writes, "The existence in the tradition of alternative oracular possibilities besides disaster is rationalized in a framework of moral contingencies." This hermeneutic serves to "preserve Jeremiah's prophetic authority and . . . the moral responsibility of the community for their destruction" (pp. 118-19).

61The parallelism between Jeremiah 34:8-22 and 35:1-19 extends beyond the general thematic emphasis upon covenant fidelity to the structure of the passages. Martens ("Narrative Parallelism and Message in Jeremiah 34-38," 40) observes that 34:8-22 and 35:1-19 share the following elements: 1) prophetic revelation formula (34:8; 35:1); 2) description of incident (34:8b-11, rescinding of liberty to slaves; 35:2-13, offer of wine to the Rechabites); 3) the prophetic messenger formula (34:12a; 35:12a-13a); 4) the divine retelling of the incident with an accusation (34:12b-16; 35:13b-16); 5) the general announcement of judgment (34:17-20; 35:17); and 6) a particularized announcement (34:21-22, to Zedekiah; 35:18-19, to the Rechabites). This structural correspondence serves to strengthen the parallelism between the two passages and to heighten the contrast between the infidelity of the Judeans and the faithfulness of the Rechabites.
Taken together, the prophetic indictment of Judah in chapter 34 from the period of Zedekiah and in chapter 35 from the period of Jehoiakim indicate that Judah's final days as a whole are a time of national covenant unfaithfulness. The covenant unfaithfulness during the reign of Jehoiakim ultimately leads to the first deportation to Babylon in 597 B.C. Nevertheless, the nation fails to learn from this experience and continues its unfaithful ways into the reign of Zedekiah and must therefore experience the exile of 586 B.C.

Jeremiah 34:8-22 and 35:1-19 both exhibit a number of features that are related to the concept of "covenant." In 34:8-22, the word "covenant" (יהוה) is prominent (34:8, 10, 13, 15, 18[2]). The repetition of "covenant" (יהוה) in the accusation (vv. 8, 10, 13, 15) and announcement (v. 18[2]) of this judgment speech demonstrates that Yahweh's punishment fits the crime and is the appropriate response to Judah's covenant unfaithfulness. The announcement section of this judgment speech (34:17-20) also employs the

62 The repeated use of the term יְהֹウェָ in Jeremiah (cf. 3:16; 11:2ff; 31:30ff; 33:20ff) and Ezekiel (cf. 16:59ff; 17:13ff; 34:25ff; 37:26) contrasts with the relative absence of the term in the earlier prophets (among the eighth century prophets, the term appears only in Hos. 6:7; 8:1). Some scholars view the concept of covenant as a late development in the theology of Israel. Cf. R. E. Clements, Prophecy and Tradition (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), Ernest W. Nicholson, God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), and Lothar Perlitt, Bundestheologie im Alten Testament, WMANT 36 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969). However, even Nicholson (God and His People, 188) admits that the "matter-of-fact almost incidental usage" of the term in the Hosea passages indicates that the prophet employs a concept that he and his audience are familiar with.

For a response to the argument that covenant is a late development, see Kenneth A. Kitchen, "The Fall and Rise of Covenant, Law, and Treaty," TynBul 40 (1989): 118-35. Kitchen (p. 123) notes that the religious concept of covenant dates back to the third millennium B.C. in the ancient Near East and thus was likely known to Israel from its earliest times (particularly in light of the correspondence between the earliest covenant texts in the OT and the ANE treaty texts of the fourteenth/thirteenth century B.C.). The absence of the term יְהֹウェָ in the early prophets is perhaps due, not to unfamiliarity with the concept, but rather to the false conception of the term in the popular theology of the time that had come to stress blessing apart from obligation and responsibility.
imagery of the covenant-making ceremony to make its point. The ceremony behind the confirmation of a covenant involved the parties cutting an animal in two and then walking between the two halves of the dead carcass, and the breaking of this covenant will bring appropriate judgment in that the violators will suffer the same fate as the dead animals that were part of the solemn covenant making ceremony. Because of its infidelity, Judah must experience the covenant curses of “sword, plague, and famine” (34:17) and

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63 For the attestation of this custom, see *ANET* (“Treaty Between Ashurnirari V of Assyria and Mati’ilu of Arpad”), 532-33. This treaty warns, “If Mati’ilu sins against (this) treaty . . . just as this spring lamb, brought from its fold, will not return to its fold . . . , alas Mati’ilu . . . and the people of his land [will be ousted] from his country.” The treaty adds, “This head is not the head of a lamb, it is the head of Mati’ilu . . . If Mati’ilu sins against this treaty, so may, just as the head of this spring lamb is torn off, and its knuckle placed in its mouth [. . .], the head of Mati’ilu be torn off.” See also Klaus Baltzer, *The Covenant Formulary in Old Testament, Jewish, and Early Christian Writings*, trans. D. E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 15, n 43. A similar concept is perhaps also reflected in the covenant ratification ritual of Exod. 24:5-8. The sacrifice of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood upon the altar and upon the people entering into the covenant perhaps suggests an identification of the people with the animal, so that the fate of the animal becomes the anticipated fate of the people if they violate their covenant obligations. See George E. Mendenhall and Gary A. Herion, s.v. “Covenant,” *ABD*, ed. D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1992), 1:1185. Genesis 15:9-10, 17 also describes a ceremony of passing through animal parts as part of a covenant ratification, but G. F. Hasel (“The Meaning of the Animal Rite in Genesis 15,” *JSOT* 19 (1981): 61-78, and G. J. Wenham (“The Symbolism of the Animal Rite in Genesis 15: A Response to G. F. Hasel,” *JSOT* 19 (1981) 61-78, *JSOT* 22 (1982): 134-37) have persuasively argued against a connection between this rite in Gen. 15 and the form of self-imprecation described in Jer. 34:18-19.


For a contrasting view regarding the relationship between ANE treaty curses and prophetic threats, see Clements (Prophecy and Tradition, 19) who argues that “there is nothingdistinctively covenantal about the appearance of curse material” because this material “is too
of having their corpses handed over to the “birds of the air and the beasts of the field” (34:20).67

The word “commandment” (תְּמַנְת) in the sense of covenant stipulation or condition is the key word in Jeremiah 35:1-19. The verbal form of the word (תְּמַנְנָה) appears in 35:6, 8, 9, 14, 18, and the nominal form (תְּמַנְנֶה) in 35:14(2), 16, 18(2). The Rechabites have been faithful to the “command” of their forefather Jonadab to abstain from the drinking of wine, engaging in agricultural and viticultural activities, and living in permanent structures (35:5-6). In contrast, Judah has not been faithful to the “commands” that Yahweh has communicated to the nation through the preaching of the prophets (35:14, 15, 16, 17).

66 In the curse lists of Lev. 26 and Deut 28., cf. the use of the specific terminology of בְּלָד (“sword”) (Lev. 26:25, 33, 36); בְּרָד (“plague”) (Lev. 26: 25; Deut. 28: 21) and בְּרָד (“famine”) (Deut. 28:42). In addition, the concepts of “sword” (metonymy for military defeat), “plague,” and “famine” are dominant in the description of the maledictions in both of these lists. The conceptual use of this triad is found in Lev. 26:23-26 and Deut. 28:21-25. Description of the “plagues” that Yahweh will inflict upon Israel are found in Lev. 26:16ab, 25 and Deut. 28:21-22a, 27-28, 35, 59-61. The portrayal of the conditions of “famine” appear in Lev. 26:19-20, 26, 29-33 and Deut. 28:22b-24, 38-42. These OT curse lists deal most extensively with the conditions of military defeat. These conditions include subjugation to enemies (Lev. 26:17, 25; Deut. 28:25, 48-50), widespread death (Lev. 26:30; Deut. 28:26), loss of possessions and sons and daughters (Deut. 28:30-33, 51), siege-related famine and cannibalism (Lev. 26:26; Deut. 28:53-57), destruction of cities and desolation of land (Lev. 26:31-32; Deut. 28:52), and exile into a foreign land (Lev. 26:33a, 36-39; Deut. 28:32, 36-37, 41, 64-68).

In light of the judgment that Judah is to experience at the hands of the Babyloni­ans, the warning of בְּלָד and בְּרָד (“sword and famine” or “famine and sword”) (cf. Jer. 5:12; 11:22; 14:13, 15, 16, 18; 15:2; 16:4; 18:22; 43:10-11; 44:12(2), 16, 18, 27) and of בְּרָד, בְּרָד, and בְּרָד (“sword, plague, and famine”) (cf. Jer. 14:12; 21:7, 9; 24:10; 27:8, 13, 29:17-18; 32: 34; 34:17; 38:2; 42:17, 22) is a common malediction in the preaching of the prophet Jeremiah.

67 Cf. Deut. 28:26; Jer. 7:33; 16:4; Ezek. 39:17-20. See also Hillers, Treaty-Curses and the Old Testament Prophets, 68, for parallel curses from ancient Near Eastern treaties. This curse is a particular form of the “no burial” curse that is prominent in the book of Jeremiah as a whole (cf. p. 97, n. 39 above).
The concept of covenant blessings and cursings is also prominent in the narrative of Jeremiah 35. The Rechabites and the people of Judah have been given the offer of life in the land as the reward for covenant fidelity (35:7, 15), but only the Rechabites will continue to experience the reality of this blessing. Because of national disobedience, Judah is about to experience the "calamity" of the covenant curses that Yahweh has pronounced against them (35:15). In contrast, Yahweh announces a covenant of grant which bestows a permanent posterity upon the Rechabite clan as a reward for its past faithfulness (35:18-19). This small clan will possess the permanent posterity that could have belonged to an obedient nation.

Covenant Fidelity in Jeremiah 44

Jeremiah 34:8-22 and 35:1-19 are paralleled in the conclusion to the second section of narrative material by the lengthy prophetic indictment in chapter 44 against the Judean survivors of the Babylonian exile who have fled to Egypt in the wake of the assassination of Gedaliah. As in the concluding chapters of the first panel, covenantal features are central to the prophetic message of 44:1-30 that closes the second panel of chapters 36-45 and provides part of the overall conclusion to chapters 26-45 as a whole.

The prophetic judgment speech in 44:1-30 centers around the key covenantal issue of exclusive loyalty and devotion to Yahweh. The fore-

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68 The promise of possession of the land of Canaan and long life as a reward for faithful obedience is central to the covenant theology of the Book of Deuteronomy (cf. Deut. 4:40; 5:16, 29, 33; 6:2-3; 11:9, 21; 28:3-14).


70 For loyalty and devotion as a covenantal issue, cf. Exod. 20:3-6; 34:14-17; Deut. 4:23-26; 6:5; 11:16-17; 2 Kgs. 23:3, 5. There are also frequent prohibitions against worship of
most sin of the people of Judah that comes under prophetic indictment is that of "burning incense to other gods" (44:3, 5, 8, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 25). The people of Judah have given their loyalties to the "Queen of Heaven" (44:17, 25). Orthodox Yahwism stressed that Yahweh alone was to be the exclusive object of Israel's worship and trust (cf. Exod. 20:3-6; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 32:16; Josh. 24:19). The people of Judah have remained persistent and obstinate in their rebellion against Yahweh. The prophet Jeremiah charges that Israel has not "obeyed" (שׁלך) the covenant messengers (the prophets, 44:4-5) or the covenant stipulations (44:10, 23, "law" [תורת], "decrees" [תקנות], and "commands" [法令]), and the people openly state their refusal to "obey" (שׁלך) Yahweh (44:16-17). The covenant infidelity of Judah has reached a point of climax with this statement of outright defiance on the part of the people. The narratives of Jeremiah 26-45 are filled with the charge that Judah has not "obeyed" the law and the prophets, and now the people willingly indict themselves with their own words and openly express their intention not "to obey." 

"other gods" in Deut. (Deut. 5:7; 6:4; 7:4; 8:9; 11:16, 28; 13:3, 7, 14; 17:3; 18:20; 28:14, 36, 64; 29:25; 30:17; 31:18, 20). The issue of exclusive loyalty is also a prominent feature of the Book of Jeremiah as a whole (cf. 3:6-10; 7:16-18, 30f; 16:10-11; 19:3-6; 25:5-7; 32:29, 34f; 35:15). See also F. C. Fensham, "Clauses of Protection in Hittite vassal-treaties and the Old Testament," VT 13 (1963): 133-43. Fensham notes that in the Hittite treaties, the great king promises protection to his vassals but also requires aid from these vassals when his own country is attacked by enemies. Fensham draws an analogy to the relationship between Yahweh and Israel, in which Yahweh promises protection to the nation but also demands a loyalty and obedience which includes "the utter obliteration of any vestige of idolatry" (p. 134).


72 For discussion of the various views regarding the identity of the Queen of Heaven, see King, Jeremiah: An Archaeological Companion, 106-7. The primary alternatives are that the Queen of Heaven is to be identified with Astarte, Ishtar, Anat, or Asherah.

73 Two alternative views are that such examples of reported speech are fictitious creations of the prophet designed to provide a pejorative caricature of his opponents (particularly in an example like 44:16-17 where a segment of the Judean population expresses a blatant
The judgment speech of chapter 44 is specifically designed to warn that the consequence of this open rebellion will be the experience of the covenant curses to the fullest extent. The prophet stresses that these curses are Yahweh's just and appropriate response to the disobedience of the people.

The Judean refugees experience "calamity" (יָמָלָה) because they practice "evil" (רִשְׁע) (cf. 44:2-3). The specific covenant curses referred to in this passage include: the desolation of the land of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem and the other towns of Judah (44:6, 22), the cutting off of the men, women, children, and infants of Judah (44:7), the people of Judah becoming an object of horror and derision among the nations (44:8, 12, 22), and the death of the

intention to disobey Yahweh) or that these quotations are generally representative of the actual words or viewpoints of the prophetic opponents. For the former viewpoint, see Hans Walter Wolff, "Das Zitat im Prophetenspruch. Eine Studie zur prophetischen Verkündigungweise," in Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament, Tüb 22 (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1964), 36-129. Wolff argues that the prophet frequently creates such quotations as a means of casting his opponents in a pejorative light. For a study more representative of the view that these quotations are generally realistic and authentic, see Adrian Graffy (A Prophet Confronts His People: The Disputation Speech in the Prophets, AnBib 104 [Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1984]. Graffy has analyzed the use of such quotations of an opponent within the specific context of prophetic disputation speeches and defends their credibility. For example, commenting on Isa. 28:15 and the quotation, "We have made a covenant with death," Graffy writes, "There is no way of knowing with certainty whether the quotations were actually pronounced by the people, but they are always credible and true to life. Even the quotation given in Isa 28, 15 is to be seen not as a caricature of the leaders' words, but as a true to life expression of their attitude. It is an arrogant affirmation of absolute trust in their political prowess and ability to forge agreements which will save them from all danger" (p. 119). He further adds that these quotations of the prophet's opponents "provide a genuine source of information regarding the ministry of the prophets, describing the problems they had to deal with at this time, and the attitudes that they had to face."

Walter Brueggemann (To Build Up, To Plant: A Commentary on Jeremiah 26-52, International Theological Commentary [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991], 117) calls attention to how the chiastic structure of 44:2-6 emphasizes this point: a) God does "evil" (רִשְׁע) (v. 2); b) Israel disobeys (does "evil" - רִשְׁע) (v. 3); c) God sends the prophets to rescue (v. 4); b') Israel refuses and does "evil" (רִשְׁע) (v. 5); a') God works disaster (רִשְׁע) (v. 6).

Cf. Lev. 26:31-32; Deut. 28:52.

Judean refugees in Egypt by the "sword, plague, and famine" (44:12-14, 27-28).

The prophet draws a correlation between Judah's past experience of covenant curses in their homeland and his warning of future curses to come in the land of Judah. As Brueggemann explains, the prophet engages in a form of "then-now there-here" form of argumentation. At three separate points in this prophetic judgment speech, the past experience of covenant curses for acts of disobedience in the land of Judah (44:2-6, 21-23, 30) becomes the guarantee of judgments to come in the land of Judah (cf. vv. 2-6 w/ 7-10; vv. 21-23 w/ 24-28; and v. 30).

The Jewish refugees in Egypt who are the target of this judgment speech not only express their intention to persist in rebellion against Yahweh (vv. 16-17a) but also repudiate the prophet's covenantal understanding of their past calamities (vv. 17b-19). The people argue that the disasters that have befallen them are due to their failure to give proper homage to the "Queen of Heaven." The audience reaction quotations in 44:16-19 demonstrate that this segment of the population of Judah has totally renounced its covenant ties to Yahweh, and Yahweh responds accordingly to their rebellion. Since these Judeans have rejected Yahweh, Yahweh rejects them and

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77For exile and death in a foreign land, cf. Lev. 26:36-38; Deut. 28:32, 36, 63-68. Jer. 43-44 particularly demonstrate the realization of the warning of return to Egypt (Deut. 28:69) as a covenant curse.

78See p. 115, n. 66 above.

79Brueggemann, To Build, To Plant, 192-204.

80This explanation of the fall of Judah is diametrically opposed to the explanation presented in Jeremiah and the "Deuteronomistic History," which views Israel's disobedience to the law and the prophets as the basis of judgment. This tenet is a major feature of the "Deuteronomic" theology of retribution. See Gerhard von Rad, Studies in Deuteronomy, SBT 9, trans. D. Stalker (London: SCM Press, 1963), 74-91. Von Rad states, "The Deuteronomist's conception
revokes their covenant right and privilege “to call upon the name” of Yahweh (v. 26).

The parallels between 34:8-22/35:1-19 and 44:1-30 extend beyond the general emphasis upon Judah’s covenant infidelity. Both 34:8-22 and 44:1-30 revolve around the issue of keeping a vow. The prophetic speech in 34:8-22 indicts the audience for the breaking of a vow to do good, the promise of the citizens of Jerusalem to release their Hebrew slaves. With a twist of irony, the prophetic speech of chapter 44 indicates that the survivors of the fall of Jerusalem have kept their vow, but their faithfulness is to a vow to persist in idolatrous behavior (cf. 44:17-18, 25-26). In 34:16, the inhabitants “repent” or “turn from” (~iiZ) their decision to do what is right, but in 44:5, the Jewish survivors refuse to “repent” or “turn from” (~iZ) their decision to do wrong.81

There are two other points of correspondence between 34:8-22 and 44:1-30. Both passages make reference to the presence of Israel/Judah in the

81The concept of “repenting” or “turning” (~iZ) appears at key points in chs. 26-45. The introduction to this section begins by raising the possibility of repentance so that Judah might avert judgment (26:3, 13). In the conclusion to the first block of narrative material (26-35), an actual “turning” (~iZ) occurs in 34:15-16, but the “turning” is exactly the opposite of that called for by the prophet. The second block of material (36-45) opens with another statement regarding the possibility of repentance (36:3, 7) but closes with an emphatic refusal on the part of the people to turn to God. The statement “we will not listen” in 44:16 provides a final answer to the “perhaps they will listen” in 26:3 and serves to draw this section of the book of Jeremiah to a point of conclusion. An ironic use of the word “to turn” (~iZ) like that found in 34:15-16 also occurs in 11:10 where this term refers to Israel’s rejection of Yahweh and the refusal of the nation to amend its sinful practices. See Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., “A Theology of Jeremiah and Lamentations,” in A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament, ed. R. B. Zuck (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 347, n. 9. For the importance of the concept of repentance in the book of Jer. as a whole, see William L. Holladay, The Root סיב in the Old Testament With Particular Reference to its Usage in Covenantal Contexts (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958), 128-39. Holladay notes that there are 48 instances of covenantal ~iZ in the Book of Jeremiah.
land of Egypt. Jeremiah 34:13 recalls Yahweh bringing Israel out of Egypt as a motivation for the citizens of Jerusalem to carry through on their promise to do good. In contrast, 44:12-14 refers to death in Egypt as an impending punishment for disobedience. The prophet warns the Judean survivors of the folly of flight to Egypt for the purpose of seeking refuge from Babylonian reprisals for the assassination of Gedaliah.

Judah has already experienced the judgment of exile, but the prophet informs the disobedient remnant that their persistence in rebellion against God is about to result in the full and complete reversal of Israel’s salvation history. The Judeans in Egypt experience judgment in the land where Israel experienced the deliverance that formed the nation into the people of God. Yahweh also swears to reduce these Jews in Egypt to “few in number” (v. 28), the state in which Israel existed in Egypt before Yahweh formed the people into a great nation (cf. Deut. 10:22; 26:5). The reversal of salvation history for the time being clearly indicates that Yahweh is severing any covenantal ties with these Judean refugees who have fled to Egypt.

These two passages also contain concluding messages of judgment that parallel one another in wording. In 34:21-22, Yahweh warns through the prophet, “I will hand over Zedekiah king of Judah and his officials to their enemies who seek their lives.” In 44:30, Yahweh declares, “I am going to hand over Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt to his enemies, just as I handed over Zedekiah to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.” In this second reference, the writer not only repeats the “I will hand over (דָּבָר + הָוָה) PN” formula but also explicitly connects the capture of Hophra with that of Zedekiah.82 The

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82 This “handing over” of Hophra is the “sign” that Yahweh is going to inflict judgment on his people (44:29).
Judean refugees are under the mistaken notion that their future security is dependent upon geographical location rather than spiritual condition. The prophet repudiates their misguided trust in the security of Egypt, which has resulted from a failure to perceive the extent of Yahweh's sovereignty. Yahweh has granted dominion to Nebuchadnezzar, and Egypt is neither outside the boundaries of Yahweh's control nor powerful enough to overturn the divine edict.

The Judean refugees who seek asylum in Egypt are about to undergo judgment like that experienced by the victims of the Babylonian assault against Jerusalem in 586 B.C. These refugees are not special or privileged because they have so far avoided death or exile at the hands of Babylon. In fact, these refugees face imminent destruction at the hands of the Babylonians because they repeat the covenant infidelity that necessitated the judgment of the Babylonian domination of Judah in the first place. Through the parallelism which exists between Jeremiah 34:8-22 and 44:1-30, the biblical narrator is highlighting the failure of the Judean survivors of the exile to learn from the bitter lessons of the recent past.\(^83\)

\(^83\)The categorization of the Judean survivors of the exile as covenant-breakers like the Judean community prior to the exile is also established by the similarities of ch. 44 with ch. 7, the narrative account of Jeremiah's temple sermon that indicts Judah for its covenant infidelity. These parallels include: 1) references to the Queen of Heaven (7:18; 44:17-19, 25); 2) statements regarding the persistence of Israel/Judah's refusal to "obey" (בָּרָאשׁ) (7:13, 25-26; 44:4-5, 9-10); 3) references to "the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem" (7:17, 34; 44:6, 17, 21); 4) statements of Yahweh's absolute rejection (7:29; 44:26-28); 5) focus on Judah's idolatrous practices (7:6, 17-19, 30-31; 44:3, 5, 8, 15-19, 21, 23, 25); and 6) a sarcastic call for the people to persist in worthless sacrifices or idolatrous practices (7:21; 44:25).

In addition, chs. 7 and 44 employ a similar form of argumentation. In ch. 7, the previous judgment of Shiloh becomes a warning of the impending destruction of Jerusalem (cf. 7:12-14). In ch. 44, the judgment of Judah and Jerusalem serves as a guarantee of the judgment of the Judean contingent in Egypt (cf. 44:2-6, 13, 21-23, 30-31). In the progression of the Book of Jeremiah as a whole, this particular correspondence between chs. 7 and 44 reflects both the obstinacy and desperation of Judah's persistent unbelief. The men and women in Egypt in ch. 44 cling to the hope that they will not experience judgment from Yahweh in spite of what has happened to both Shiloh and Jerusalem in the past. The confidence of the people in ch. 7 that they will not undergo judgment because of "the temple of Yahweh" (7:3) at least has some basis.
As already noted, the issue of covenant faithfulness carries over into Jeremiah 35:1-19, and this passage offers a positive example of obedience that contrasts to the indictments of covenant infidelity in both 34:8-22 and 44:1-30. The specific thematic correspondences between 35:1-19 and 44:1-30 include: the contrast between the Rechabites’ abstinence from the drinking of wine (35:6, 9, 14) and the Judean refugees offering drink offerings to their false gods (44:19, 25); the contrast between the Rechabites acting like their fathers in remaining faithful to their family vow (35:6, 8, 10) and the Judean survivors of the exile carrying on their family tradition of practicing idolatry (44:3, 9-10, 17, 21); and the contrast between the men of the Rechabite clan maintaining the fidelity of their family by protecting their wives and children from idolatry (35:9) and the men of Judah bringing calamity upon their wives and children because of their sinful deeds (44:7). These two passages both contain the charge that the nation of Judah has not responded obediently to the prophets that Yahweh has repeatedly sent their way (35:15; 44:4).

In both 35:1-19 and 44:1-30 the issue of covenant fidelity has a family focus. The Rechabites are a clan with a long history of staunch observance of rigid family traditions. The Judean refugees in Jeremiah 44 also perpetuate a long family tradition of disobedience and idolatry (44:3-5). These refugees repeat the sinful practices that have characterized the nations of Israel/Judah throughout their history. The prophetic indictment of chapter 44 also stresses that the acts of rebellion and idolatry that characterize the Judean survivors of the exile are practices in which the whole family gets in on the act. After
Jeremiah's stinging indictment of the Judean refugees in 44:2-14, the men who belong to this group respond with their refusal to obey the prophetic word or to set aside their idolatrous practices, and then the women among the refugees speak up to attest to their loyalties to the Queen of Heaven (44:19-20). This hostile response necessitates Jeremiah's further denunciation in 44:20-30, and the narrator specifically calls attention to the fact that the prophet's message is directed against both the men and women among the Judean refugees (vv. 20, 24). The Rechabites represent a family clan that has maintained fidelity toward Yahweh; the Judean survivors of the exile consist of families who have thoroughly compromised their covenant loyalties.

The concluding sections of the two panels of narrative material provide examples of Judah's covenant unfaithfulness both before and during the exile, but perhaps by design, there is no example or model of covenant fidelity from the period during the exile. Prior to the exile, the Rechabites, although representing only a small and somewhat unusual segment of the Judean population, at least constituted a faithful remnant. The people of Judah who were spared from a personal experience of judgment at the hands of the Babylonians in 586 B.C. would no doubt have been tempted to think that they represented a remnant who were the special objects of Yahweh's favor. However, the correspondences between 35:1-19 and 44:1-30 contrast the survivors of the exile with the Rechabites in order to demonstrate the fidelity that is to characterize a true remnant and to warn the Judean refugees that they are about to experience further judgment from God because of their disobedience in perpetuating the past sins of covenant infidelity.

By failing to provide a positive example of obedience from the time subsequent to the exile, the narrator is perhaps attempting to suggest that covenant infidelity is even more pervasive among the Judean remnant in
the aftermath of the exile. There was at least a small segment of the population living in Judah prior to the fall of Jerusalem that demonstrated some form of covenant fidelity, but no such example of faithful behavior can be found among the Jewish refugees during the exile.84

Concluding Messages of Hope and Deliverance

The Judgment/Salvation Alternation in the Framework of 26-45

The concluding sections of the two blocks of narrative material in 26-45 also correspond to one another in that each closes with a message of hope or deliverance. The final word of the first section is the promise of the perpetual survival of the Rechabite clan (35:18-19), and the conclusion to the second section is a personal oracle of deliverance to Jeremiah’s scribe, Baruch (45:1-5).85 Within the Jeremiah narratives, these concluding words of hope provide two important structural contrasts for the framework of chapters 26-45. First, these closing words of hope offer a stark contrast to the accounts

84Henry Van Dyke Parunak (“Structural Studies in Ezekiel” [Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1978], 46) makes the point that an author “may heighten the dramatic value of a point” by some type of alteration in the structure of a work. By having a balanced conclusion in panel one with an instance of infidelity versus an instance of fidelity, the reader is led to expect the same in panel two and is thus all the more impressed by the omission of any example of fidelity in the period of the exile itself.

85Just as the two major sections of 26-35 and 36-45 conclude with these oracles relating to the fate of groups or individuals, so also the smaller blocks of narrative material close with similar oracles regarding the destiny of individuals or of the nation of Israel as a whole. The section on false prophecy in chapters 27-29 concludes with oracles of doom concerning certain prophets (cf. 29:21-23, 32). At the end of the message of hope in Jeremiah 30-33 is a covenant promise concerning the future of Israel as a nation (33:19-26). The material in chapters 37-39 dealing with the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem closes with a promise of deliverance to Ebed-Melech (39:15-18). Finally, the closing message of judgment against the Judean refugees in Egypt contains the warning that this “remnant” which has fled to Egypt will experience widespread death and will be greatly reduced in number. Through the structural positioning of these oracles of doom or salvation at strategic points of conclusion, the narrator is highlighting the idea that Judah’s fate is determined by its response to the prophetic word and that obedience to God is a life and death matter.
which open the two sections of narrative material in chapters 26 and 36. These oracles of hope from the time of Jehoiakim also provide a specific contrast to the scenes of disobedience and judgment from the reign of this same king that appear in chapters 26 and 36.86

The concluding oracles of hope in 35:18-19 and 45:1-5 also provide a contrast to the warnings of judgment that immediately precede them in 34:8-22 and 44:1-30. These hopeful messages are connected to the judgment passages in order to form a judgment/salvation alternation in the conclusion or summation of the two blocks of narrative material. Thus, both the introduction/conclusion (26/35 and 36/45) and the conclusion (34/35 and 44/45) to the two main panels in Jeremiah 26-45 reflect this judgment/salvation alternation.87

In the first panel, the covenant fidelity of the Rechabites (35:1-11) is contrasted to the covenant infidelity of the populace of Judah at large in the matter of the refusal to release their Hebrew slaves (34:8-22). The connection between the two passages is made explicit in the announcement section of 35:12-19 in which the judgment of the nation of Judah is contrasted to the preservation of the Rechabites.88

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86For the judgment/salvation alternation in chs. 36/45 see also W. Thiel, Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 26-45, WMANT 41 (Heukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973), 89.

87See the chart in Appendix 2, p. 277. For the judgment/salvation alternation in chs. 44-45, see also A. Weiser, “Das Gotteswort für Baruch: Jer. 45 und die sogenannte Baruch-biographie,” in Glaube und Geschichte im Alten Testament (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1961), 327-29.

88Brueggemann, (To Build, To Plant, 117), calls attention to how the chiastic structure of 35:14-19 highlights this contrast between Judah at large and the Rechabites: A) the Rechabites “listen” (שָׁמַעְתָּ) (v. 14a); B) Israel has not “listened” (שָׁמַעְתָּ) (vv. 14b-15); B’) Israel will suffer punishment involving the loss of their land (v. 17); A’) the Rechabites will enjoy the blessing of continuity (vv. 18-19). See also Holladay, Jeremiah 2, 246.
The deliverance of Baruch in chapter 45 is also in contrast to the word of judgment against the Jews living in Egypt that is recorded in the immediately preceding section (44:1-30). Yahweh promises deliverance to Baruch “wherever” he goes (45:5). This statement provides a hint of the fate of exile that ultimately awaits Baruch. Both Baruch and Jeremiah are eventually led away to Egypt as hostages by a group of Jewish refugees fleeing in fear of retribution from Nebuchadnezzar (cf. 43:6-7). These refugees in Egypt are the target group of the prophetic judgment speech in chapter 44, and judgment specifically falls upon this group because of its decision to abandon the promised land and to enter Egypt (cf. 42:13-22; 43:10-13). The location of the Jewish refugees in Egypt becomes a guarantee of their judgment and doom (cf. 44:11-14, 26-38), but Baruch is given exemption from death regardless of geographical location. Baruch’s life will be spared in spite of the fact that he lives among the population of Judah that is specifically targeted for death in the final judgment speech of this portion of the book. As the faithful scribe, Baruch is promised deliverance that specifically contrasts to the judgment of the unfaithful nation.

89For discussion concerning the significance of the location of the Baruch oracle, see Marion Ann Taylor, “Jeremiah 45: The Problem of Placement,” JSOT 37 (1987): 79-88. This study follows Taylor in her argument that the placement of Jer. 45 has literary and theological significance and that this placement serves to highlight judgment themes that extend throughout chs. 36-45. The idea that the placement of Jer. 45 has canonical significance contrasts to the viewpoint of some interpreters (e.g., Bright, Jeremiah, 184-85, and Rietzchel, Urrolle, 128) who argue that the placement is essentially fortuitous or accidental. Other commentators have suggested that the placement of the chapter is to highlight Baruch’s role in the composition of Jer. 26-45 (e.g., Nicholson, Preaching to the Exiles, 111). This option seems unlikely for two main reasons: 1) the proposal assumes a role for Baruch in the composition of Jeremiah that goes beyond actual statements within the book describing Baruch’s activities as Jeremiah’s amanuensis; and 2) Baruch assumes a relatively low profile throughout chs. 36-45 in spite of the special relationship that he enjoys with Jeremiah.

90Holladay, Jeremiah 2, 310.
The Minimal Nature of the Promises of Deliverance

The prominent position of these words of hope at the conclusion to the two major sections of material in 26-45 is somewhat surprising in a body of material that is dominated by the themes of disobedience and judgment, but these positive conclusions in no way diminish the severity or harshness of the message of judgment that reverberates throughout the Jeremiah narratives. In fact, the reader is struck by the minimal nature of the prophet's words of hope.91

The message of hope in 35:18-19 is a significant promise of perpetual existence couched in the form of a covenant grant, but this magnanimous promise is restricted to a small and rather insignificant clan within the nation of Judah. The selection of the tiny Rechabite clan as a model of covenant fidelity and as the recipient of a significant covenant promise reflects masterful use of irony for several reasons. The very fact that the prophet must turn to this small and peculiar group as an example of covenant faithfulness says something about the pervasiveness of corruption and infidelity in the mainstream of society. The selection of the Rechabites suggests that the prophet has had to search long and hard for an exemplary subject.

The use of the Rechabites also serves to shatter the false confidence of the citizens of Jerusalem regarding the inviolability of their city. Throughout the book of Jeremiah, the prophet opposes the notion popularized by his prophetic opponents that the city of Jerusalem enjoys special protection as the

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91These promises are given in the context of Yahweh's warning to bring "disaster" (הַרְֹעָה) upon Judah/Jerusalem (35:17) and upon the nations (45:5). The reference to "all peoples" in 45:5 demonstrates how ch. 45 serves as a "hinge" between 26-44 and 46-51. The judgment against Judah/Jerusalem in 26-44 expands into judgment against the nations in 46-51. See Richard D. Patterson, “Of Bookends, Hinges, and Hooks: Literary Clues to the Arrangement of Jeremiah's Prophecies,” WJT 51 (1989): 118-19.
place of God's dwelling that will prevent capture or destruction of the city by the Babylonians. Jeremiah overturns the presumptuous confidence of the inhabitants of Jerusalem by promising protection and preservation in the midst of the Babylonian crisis to a group that has religiously avoided dwelling within Jerusalem and takes up residence in the city only as a final desperate measure to avoid capture by the Babylonians (35:10-11).

It is not without significance that the encounter between Jeremiah and the Rechabites occurs at the Jerusalem Temple. In a test that takes place within the confines of the temple, the Rechabites remain faithful to the command of their forefather. In contrast, the citizens of Jerusalem who place such great stock in the temple and the protection which Yahweh's presence affords feel no sense of guilt or conviction over their covenant unfaithfulness when they assemble to worship Yahweh at Jerusalem. The two central acts of covenant infidelity detailed in chapters 26 and 36 that seal the fate of Judah occur within the very same confines of the Jerusalem temple.

The prophet also employs irony and surprise in the verbal explanation (35:11-19) that follows the exchange with the Rechabites. The prophet actually commends this group after its refusal to follow his explicit instructions to drink wine (35:5-6, 14, 16). The Rechabites are actually commended for failing to "obey" the word of the prophet, the very sin that Judah is repeatedly denounced for throughout chapters 26-45. The Rechabites remain faithful to their family traditions in spite of specific prophetic permission and exhortation to violate this code of conduct, while the nation of Judah has

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failed to obey the exhortations of the prophets to remain faithful to their
covenant obligations toward Yahweh.\textsuperscript{93}

The citizens of Judah who witness the unusual encounter between
Jeremiah and the Rechabites are no doubt surprised to hear that the condem-
nation in the prophetic speech that follows falls upon the nation of Judah as a
whole and not upon the Rechabites (35:14b-15, 17). The prophet has piqued
the crowd’s curiosity by calling attention to the peculiar customs of the semi-
nomadic Rechabites, but then after capturing the crowd’s attention, Jeremiah
turns the message against them and against the people of Judah at large. The
citizens of Jerusalem perhaps expect to hear a word of denunciation against
the failure of the Rechabites to follow the prophetic counsel to partake of
wine, but no such condemnation follows. Instead, the prophet employs the
stubborn loyalty of the Rechabites as an object lesson to denounce the rebel-
liousness of the people of Judah toward Yahweh.\textsuperscript{94}

In the contrast between the Rechabites and the inhabitants of Judah
at large, the prophet employs a form of \textit{a fortiori} (lesser to greater) argumenta-
tion to heighten the severity of Judah’s covenant infidelity.\textsuperscript{95} First, there is
comparison of faithfulness to a human decree versus disloyalty to the com-
mands of Yahweh. The Rechabites remain faithful to a human standard of

\textsuperscript{93}Kelvin G. Friebel, “Jeremiah’s and Ezekiel’s Sign Acts: Their Meaning and Func-
tion as Nonverbal Communication and Rhetoric” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin–
Madison, 1989), 363-64. Friebel comments that the prophet Jeremiah functions in the role of a
“tempter” in this episode, attempting to provoke the Rechabites into breaking their family
vow and draws a contrast between this scene and Amos’ condemnation of the people of Israel for
causing the Nazirites to break their vows concerning the drinking of wine (cf. Amos 2:11-12).

\textsuperscript{94}Ibid, 364. Friebel explains: “If the audience felt repulsed by the Rechabites not
obeying a divine command, how much more should they feel condemnation toward themselves
because of their own disregard for divine injunctions?”

\textsuperscript{95}Ibid, 362-63.
behavior set forth by their ancestor Jonadab, but Judah violates the stipulations of a divinely established covenant. Second, there is a contrast between a covenant spoken of once and one that has been spoken of many times. Jonadab instituted the customs of the Rechabites by a once spoken decree long ago, but the prophets have repeatedly spoken to Israel and Judah regarding their covenant responsibilities toward Yahweh (34:14-15). The guilt of Judah’s covenant unfaithfulness is intensified in view of the divine origin of the covenant and the repeated reminders from the prophets regarding the content and importance of the covenant stipulations.

The promise to the Rechabites parallels an earlier oracle in the first panel of the Jeremiah narratives concerning the houses of David and Levi near the end of the “Book of Consolation” in 33:17-18. The covenant promises to the Levites and Davidides have great bearing upon the destiny of Israel as a nation, but the concluding word of promise in 35:18-19 is given to a tiny and esoteric clan that is out of the mainstream and plays no significant role in carrying forward Israel’s existence as a nation. The promise of preservation

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96 Ibid. Jeremiah is not commending the particulars of the life-style of the Rechabites per se. Thus the earlier notion that Jeremiah is setting forth a “nomadic ideal” is not valid. For discussion of this issue, see Frank S. Frick, “The Rechabites Reconsidered,” JBL 90 (1971): 279-87.

97 Friebel, “Jeremiah’s and Ezekiel’s Sign Acts,” 363.

98 Levenson, “On the Promise of the Rechabites,” 510-11. The parallel includes the use of the phrase “shall not lack a man ... before me” (לא י honda ויאנה), and reference to the perpetuity of this condition.

99 The promise to the Rechabites of “not lacking a man” is surprising not only in contrast to what is read in Jer. 33:17-18 but also in light of the usage of this particular phrase throughout the OT. Levenson (ibid, 510) notes that this expression is primarily used in connection with the covenant promises to the house of David (cf. 1 Kgs. 2:4; 8:25; 9:5; 2 Chron. 6:16; 7:18). The narrator no doubt surprises his readers by applying a well-known national promise to a small clan. This transfer of a promise to David to the Rechabites is particularly fitting in the context of Jer. 26-45 because of the sustained focus on the unbelief and rebellion of members of the house of David in this section of material.
belongs only to a small and isolated segment of the population of Judah. There is a sense of sadness concerning what might have been had the nation as a whole been responsive and obedient to the prophetic word. The promise to the Rechabites also has a minimizing effect in that the group promised a continued existence espouses a lifestyle that will not even allow for a full enjoyment of the blessings of the promised land. McConville explains:

In short, the future held out to the Rechabites is one without the fullness which faithfulness to YHWH (rather than an inventive patriarch) could bring. The Rechabite example operates, in fact, on more than one level. On the one hand it is a straightforward paradigm of fidelity; on the other it compares something that is limited, even negligible, in its capacity to give Judah a future, with something that could be much greater, namely a society more generally faithful to YHWH.100

The parallel between the covenant of grant promises in 33:17-18 and 35:18-19 appears to carry important rhetorical weight in the movement or development of the first panel of material in chapters 26-35. The promise of perpetual existence and permanent relationship with God in 33:17-18 relates to the families of David and Levi and focuses on the future restoration and renewal of Israel as a nation; in 35:18-19, the scope of an identically stated promise is severely scaled back and delivered to only one small clan.

The parallel between 33:17-18 and 35:18-19 serves to emphasize the exclusion of the generation contemporaneous to Jeremiah from the enjoyment of national covenant blessing because of wide-scale and persistent disobedience. The Rechabites alone are signaled out as the recipients of the kind of covenant blessing that should have belonged to the nation as a

100 J. G. McConville, Judgment and Promise: An Interpretation of the Book of Jeremiah (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 107. Their code of conduct suppresses the very things that are promised as Israel's blessings for covenant fidelity while living in the promised land (cf. Deut. 7:13; 8:12-13; 31:12; 32:43-44; 33:10-11; Jer. 29:5).
whole.\textsuperscript{101} Jeremiah 30-33 reaffirms Yahweh’s commitment to Israel and confirms the eventual fulfillment of the covenant promises to the nation, but the material that follows in chapters 34-35 explains why Jeremiah’s generation will not have a share in any of these blessings.\textsuperscript{102}

The restrictive nature of the promise that closes the first section of narrative material is obvious, but the promise at the close of the second section in 45:1-5 is even more limited in scope. This guarantee of deliverance is given to one lone individual. The promise is not expressed in the form of a covenantal grant but rather is the divine response to the complaint of a deeply distressed individual. The word of hope to Baruch in 45:5 is nothing as far-reaching as the guarantee of perpetual posterity given to the Rechabites but rather is merely the assurance that Baruch will escape with his life from the midst of dangerous and difficult circumstances.\textsuperscript{103}

Just as the promise to the Rechabites in 35:18-19 is paralleled by the oracle to David/Levi in 33:17-18 within the first block of material in chapters

\textsuperscript{101} In fact, the promise of posterity given to the Rechabites in 35:18-19 is something even less than the posterity plus prosperity and possession of the land that would have belonged to an obedient nation. The minimal blessing of the Rechabite clan highlights even more the nation’s tragic loss.

\textsuperscript{102} This section illustrates the tension between the conditional (for each generation) and unconditional (in terms of ultimate fulfillment) covenant promises within the OT. For discussion of this tension, see Bruce K. Waltke, “The Phenomenon of Conditionality within Unconditional Covenants,” in \textit{Israel’s Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison}, ed. A. Gileadi (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 123-55.

\textsuperscript{103} The hypocatastic figure of “life as booty” (\textsuperscript{לְשׁוֹן} לְגָּזֶה) in 45:5 is one of irony. The figure of booty conjures images of a soldier laden down with the spoils of war, but Baruch is portrayed as an individual who escapes with nothing but his life. The expression “life as booty” appears elsewhere in the OT only in Jer. 21:9; 38:2; 39:18, and each of these passages fall within contexts that speak of battle, siege, or death at the hands of an enemy. William L. Holladay (\textit{Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1-25}, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986], 574) explains this figure as “an ironic soldier’s joke” that conveys the notion that “when a soldier is defeated and escapes, having barely saved his life, he has at least that as booty.”
26-35, so also the oracle of deliverance to Baruch in 45:1-5 corresponds to an earlier assurance to an individual named Ebed-Melech (39:15-18) within chapters 36-45. Ebed-Melech is also promised that he will escape with his life as "booty." In chapters 26-35, the movement from the promise to David/Levi to the promise to the Rechabites represents a significant scaling back and a reminder of how the covenant infidelity of Jeremiah's generation leads to the loss of national blessing. In chapters 36-45, the closing promise presents an even more severe downscaling of Yahweh's promises to Israel. In chapters 36-45, the only significant word of promise is that two individuals, Ebed-Melech and Baruch, will barely escape with their lives.

This scaling down or minimizing of the word of promise in 45:1-5 marks even a contrast between section one (26-35) and section two (36-45) within the Jeremiah narratives. The apparent reason behind this contrast is that the final fall of Judah and Jerusalem anticipated in the judgment sections of chapters 26-35 becomes a reality in chapters 36-45. There is thus a prophecy-fulfillment relationship between the two panels. The framing references to "the fourth year of Jehoiakim" in 36:1 and 45:1 are themselves indicative of the even greater concentration upon judgment in chapters 36-45 as a whole. This "fourth year of Jehoiakim" (605 B.C) marked the time of Babylon's assertion of hegemony over Palestine as a consequence of Nebuchadnezzar's defeat of the coalition of Egypt/Assyria at Carchemish. At this point in history,


105Ibid, 87-88.

106This battle at Carchemish is mentioned in Jer. 46:2-12, Josephus' Antiquities (X, vi, 1; xi, 1) and in the Babylonian Chronicles (B. M. 21946). See Donald J. Wiseman, Chronicles of Chaldean Kings (626-556 B.C.) in the British Museum (London: Trustees of the British Museum), 66-69. See also E. Vogt, "Die neubabylonische Chronik über die Schlacht bei Karke­mish und die Einnahme von Jerusalem," Congress Volume, Strasbourg, VTSup 4 (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1957), 85-89.
Judah’s judgment at the hands of the Babylonians becomes an inevitable certainty. Taylor explains that reference to “the fourth year of Jehoiakim” serves as a “code word” that “redounds with the clamours of destruction, horror, and judgment.” This “code word” appears at the beginning and end of chapters 36-45 to indicate the pervasiveness of judgment in this section that details the fall of Jerusalem and the persistent disobedience of Judah in the aftermath of exile.

Throughout the book of Jeremiah, the verbs “to build” (בָנוּ), “to plant” (садינו), “to uproot” (לוֹכַד), and “to overthrow” (טָבּא) found in Jeremiah 45:4 are employed to describe Yahweh’s dual work of salvation and judgment. The closing oracle highlights God’s work of judgment in that the salvific acts (תָבּא,садינו), for the only time in the book, are placed in the past tense. Taylor comments, “Clearly the emphasis in ch. 45 is on an unequivocal judgment. No hope for restoration is intimated here.” This feature of the closing oracle in chapter 45 again highlights the overall emphasis upon judgment in chapters 36-45.

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108 In developing the rhetorical structure(s) that exist between literary panels, the devices of “balance” and “sequentiality” often appear together. See William L. Holladay, “The Recovery of Poetic Passages of Jeremiah,” JBL 85 (1966): 411, and Parunak, “Structural Studies in Ezekiel,” 71-76. This dissertation is attempting to demonstrate the ABCD/ABCD balance between chs. 26-35 and 36-45 but also recognizes the sequentiality in the sense of prophecy/fulfillment and intensification of the judgment motif between chs. 26-35 and 36-45.

109 The verbs “to uproot” (לוכד), “to tear down” (סָדַּה), “to destroy” (טָבּא), “to overthrow” (טָבּא), “to build” (בָנוּ), and “to plant” (садינו) appear together in 1:10 and 31:28. These verbs also appear in 12:14-17 (בָנוּ,סָדַּה,טָבּא); 18:7-9 (סָדַּה,טָבּא,סָדַּה,בָנוּ,טָבּא); 24:6 (טָבּא,סָדַּה,בָנוּ); 31:4-5 (סָדַּה); 31:40 (סָדַּה,טָבּא), 32:41 (טָבּא); 33:7 (טָבּא); and 42:10 (טָבּא,סָדַּה,בָנוּ). See also 8:17, 32:7, 34:1, 35:1, 38:21, 41:8.


111 Ibid, 93.
It is necessary to consider how this section of “unequivocal judgment” in chapters 36-45 relates to the overall design of chapters 26-45 as a whole. The first block of material in chapters 26-35 contains an extensive message of hope (chs. 30-33) that serves to offset the prophetic message of judgment and doom in the remainder of the section. If there is some sense of balance between judgment/salvation in chapters 26-35, it seems rather unusual that concern for balance is sacrificed in that there is no corresponding section of hope in chapters 36-45. Most likely, the absence of hope (with the exception of the personal oracles to Ebed-Melech and Baruch) in 36-45 serves to emphasize that the Jewish community (the Jews who survive the exile, remain in the promised land, and then flee to Egypt) to whom Jeremiah ministers in the aftermath of exile has no part in the promises of restoration found in chapters 30-33.

As will be developed later, the potential for this community to enjoy the blessings of restoration in incipient form is a real possibility, but their persistent disobedience results in the loss of even this potential blessing. As a member of this community, Baruch shares in the effect of their disobedience (exile in Egypt) even though he is given the limited blessing of assurance of personal preservation. In the divine response to Baruch’s lament, Yahweh counsels the faithful scribe “to not seek great things” for himself (45:4). This word is not a rebuke of personal selfishness but appears to be a reminder that it is not Baruch’s lot to share personally in the experience of the national salvation portrayed in chapters 30-33. The reference to “great things” (גָּדֹלִים) provides an interesting contrast to the reference to “great and mysterious things” (נְאוֹלָהָו יִבְנָאוֹת) in Jeremiah 33:3. 112 The “great and mysterious
things" of 33:3 have reference to Yahweh's mighty acts of salvation in connection with the national restoration and renewal of Israel.113 Thus, in 45:1-5, Yahweh promises to preserve Baruch's life, but the scribe, like Jeremiah, becomes a righteous sufferer who shares the fate of the sinful people to whom he ministers.114 Baruch himself will not personally see or experience God's "great" work of ultimate salvation on Israel's behalf.

In conclusion, the closing words of both 26-35 and 36-45 contain muted messages of hope. Both of these restricted messages are connected in some way to the full-scale message of hope found in Jeremiah 30-33. The movement from the covenant promise to David/Levi in 33:17-18 to a more limited word for the Rechabite clan in 35:18-19 signifies the loss of national blessing that ultimately leads to exile. The national experience of covenant blessing is limited to the ideal future envisioned in the "book of consolation." In the oracle of promise to Baruch in 45:1-5, the denial of "great things" to Baruch signifies that the experience of "great and mysterious things" associated with Yahweh's work of national redemption in Jeremiah 33:3 will not immediately and automatically follow in the aftermath of the exile. As is explicitly stated in Jeremiah 24 and 29, these special blessings are restricted to

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113 For "great things" (אֲבָנָה יָדִים) as God's "mighty deeds," cf. Deut. 10:21; 1 Sam. 12:24; Ps. 71:19; 126:2

114 This connection is emphasized in that Baruch engages in the speech form of complaint in ch. 45 that characterizes the prophet Jeremiah in chs. 11-20.
the community of Jewish exiles taken away to Babylon. The Jehoiakim framework and the concluding messages of hope found in 35:18-19 and 45:4-5 serve to provide further confirmation of the exclusivity of the promises of national redemption to the community of exiles in Babylon. This message will become even more pronounced in chapters 26-45 as the contrasting pictures of life after exile found in section one (30-33) and section two (40-43) of the Jeremiah narratives are read in light of one another. This judgment is necessitated by Judah’s repeated and continual refusal to comply to the prophetic word. Judah persists in disobedience in spite of the ongoing national disaster.

Jehoiakim’s Reign As A “Watershed” Moment

From Potential Repentance to Inevitable Doom in Jeremiah 1-25

The Jehoiakim episodes in chapters 26-45 are strategically placed to form a narrative framework for this section of the book of Jeremiah. This framing device is not merely a structuring technique but actually serves to underscore the narrator’s view that the reign of Jehoiakim marked a watershed moment in Judah’s history when the nation passed from potential judgment to unavoidable judgment. Through the literary structure of this section, the narrator stresses that Judah as a nation crossed a point of no return during the reign of Jehoiakim.115 Because of national rejection of the

115The idea that the reign of Jehoiakim marks a time of irreversible decline is evidenced by the focus on Jehoiakim and his successor, Zedekiah in the narratives of chs. 26-45 and by the intensive and sustained critique against these rulers in the condemnation of Judah’s leaders found in chs. 21-24. This section begins and ends with messages of judgment against Zedekiah (ch. 21, the prophet rejects Zedekiah’s request for intercession and states that Yahweh will wage holy war against Judah; ch. 24, the prophet warns of curses and death for Zedekiah, vv. 8-10). The judgment speech in 22:13-19 specifically condemns Jehoiakim for his practice of injustice in making extravagant additions and improvements to the royal palace. This focused critique implicates Jehoiakim and Zedekiah as greatly responsible for the judg-
message of Jeremiah, embodied in the response of Jehoiakim the representative leader of the covenant people after its two dramatic proclamations at the Jerusalem temple (chs. 26, 36), Yahweh's judgment against Judah becomes unavoidable.\(^{116}\)

The use of the chronological notation of “the fourth year of Jehoiakim” (605 B.C.) as an inclusio for the second panel of narratives in Jeremiah 36-45 (cf. 36:1; 45:1) demonstrates the importance that the narrator attaches to this time as a watershed moment in Judah’s history. The “fourth year of Jehoiakim” assumes a place of major importance because the Babylonian rise to a position of military dominance was the ominous sign that Yahweh would carry out his work of judgment against the nation of Judah. The references to “the fourth year of Jehoiakim” at the beginning (36:1) and end (45:1) of panel two specify the particular moment in the reign of Jehoiakim when judgment becomes an inevitable certainty.

The writing down of Jeremiah’s prophecies of judgment in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (ch. 36) also seems to be an act which connotes a sense of finality. The prophecies of Jeremiah are recorded for their preservation after the period of judgment so that they might serve as a continuing witness against the disobedient nation of Judah. Kessler comments: “Jr 36

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\(^{116}\)The narrative of ch. 36 reflects this movement from potential to certain judgment. Holladay (Jeremiah 2, 261) notes that the concluding message of v. 31 demonstrates the reality that “Yahweh is now going to bring to bear upon the whole nation the destruction that had up to then been voiced only as a warning (vv 3, 7).”
reports a last attempt to move Israel to repentance. There is something final about the reading of these oracles and even the absence of the master [Jeremiah] may have added to the drama as did undoubtedly the fact that the scroll was read three times.  

The judgment/salvation alternation that appears when comparing the introduction and conclusion to both panels in chapters 26-45 is further reminder of the choice of national destiny that occurred during the reign of Jehoiakim. The nation possesses a real choice between two courses of action—obedience to the prophetic word leading to the avoidance of judgment or continued disobedience leading to judgment and destruction. The introductory judgment episodes in chapters 26 and 36 document the national rejection of the offer of divine mercy, and the minimal nature of the promises of individual deliverance in chapters 35 and 45 are a poignant reminder of what might have been if Judah had responded with repentance and obedience at this critical point in their history.

Movement to Inevitable Doom in Jeremiah 1-25

The movement from potential repentance to inevitable judgment conveyed in the structure and arrangement of chapters 26-45 is also reflected in the progression and development of Jeremiah 1-25. O'Connor notes the gradual diminishment of the calls to repentance in the opening section of the

117Kessler, “A Prophetic Biography,” p. 244. A parallel in the prophetic literature is found in Isa. 8:16-17. The prophet Isaiah is commanded to “bind up” and “seal up” his prophecies to serve as a written record of judgment against those who have refused to accept his counsel (cf. Isa. 29:11-12; 30:8). As Edgar Conrad (Reading Isaiah, Overtures to Biblical Theology [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991], 134) observes, the acts of writing and sealing “connote authority and permanence.” In the same way, the scroll of Jeremiah’s prophecies serves as a concrete record that confirms the continuing force of the message of judgment against the rebellious nation of Judah.
book of Jeremiah. The call to repentance is a characteristic feature of the prophetic word in chapters 2-10. However, similar calls are found only three times in chapters 11-20 (cf. 13:15-17; 17:19-27; 18:12) and are completely non-existent in chapters 21-25. O’Connor identifies the call to repent in 18:1-12 as Judah’s point of no return:

As recounted in chaps. 1-25, the call to repent in 18:1-12 marks the turning point of the story of Israel’s fate. There the people categorically refuse to change their hearts, and henceforward the fate of the nation is sealed. Chaps. 18-20 merely enact the series of events which propel the nation ineluctably toward destruction. In chaps. 21-25, Israel’s captivity is a fait accompli. Discussion in these chapters turns from ways to avoid the disaster to instructions for surviving (chaps. 21, 24) and explaining the disaster (chaps. 22-23). In chaps. 21-25 repentance is not sought because it is too late to be of any avail.

The differences reflected in the accounts of Jeremiah’s two visits to the potter in chapters 18 and 19 appear to validate O’Connor’s contention that the refusal of Judah to repent in chapter 18 seals Judah’s doom and destruction. The two visits to the potter indicate a change in Yahweh’s attitude and disposition toward Judah’s national fate. During the first visit (ch. 18), the prophet observes the potter making, destroying, and then reshaping a clay vessel. The pliability of the clay makes it possible for the vessel to be remade according to the potter’s specifications. By way of analogy, the relationship between potter and clay signifies the possibility of reform on Judah’s part and the aversion of judgment from Yahweh (cf. 18:8-10). In the second visit (ch. 19), the prophet performs a second sign act by purchasing and then purposely

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120 Ibid.
121 Ibid.
destroying a clay jar purchased from the potter. The clay can no longer be reshaped but only destroyed. In the same way, Yahweh is planning "disaster" (19:3, 15) and there is no longer a call for repentance or reformation. The prophetic sign is accompanied by the verbal proclamation that Yahweh is about to destroy Judah and Jerusalem. In the first visit to the potter, the imagery stresses the conditionality of Yahweh's judgment; in the second visit, the actions and message of the prophet convey the certainty of Judah's coming destruction.122

While chapters 18-19 represent the final dismissal of the possibility of repentance in Jeremiah 1-25, the prose account of Jeremiah's temple sermon in chapter 7 also marks an important transition point in this decline toward unalterable judgment. The accusation of Judah's refusal to "obey" (הָיַשְׁרָה) the prophets that Yahweh has "repeatedly (נָשָׁפַトップ) sent" (יְשָׁפַトップ) that is found in the framework of chapters 26-45 appears for the first time in this sermon. In the setting of this sermon, Yahweh issues the first divine prohibition of Jeremiah's prophetic intercession on behalf of Judah (7:16; cf. 11:14; 15:1). The placement of the three prohibitions against intercession corresponds to the point in the book in which there is a decline in the calls for Judah to repent.123

The temple sermon contains explicit statements concerning Yahweh's rejection of Judah. In 7:15, Yahweh declares, "I will cast you from my presence," and the prophet announces in 7:29 that "Yahweh has rejected this generation that is under his wrath." The characterization of Judah as "stiff-

122McConville, Judgment and Promise, 52-53, discusses the two potter visits in connection with the idea of the closing down of the hope of repentance in chs. 1-25.

123Ibid, 50-51.
necked" (7:26, lit. "they have hardened their neck," לֹא הֵרִיתָם) is also the label attached to the nation in 19:15 at the close of the message of judgment in connection with the second visit to the potter.

The Jehoiakim framework of chapters 26-45 pinpoints the reign of Jehoiakim as the time in Judah’s history when judgment becomes a certainty. The function of the account of the temple sermon in chapter 7 (parallel to ch. 26) in the progression of chapters 1-25 from potential repentance to certain judgment serves to corroborate this idea. The formal rejection of the word of Yahweh at the Jerusalem temple during the reign of Jehoiakim serves as a catalyst for a formal statement of divine rejection and a divine prohibition against prophetic intercession as a means of sparing Judah from imminent national destruction.

**Conclusion**

The “Jehoiakim framework” is a key structural marker for the narrative material in Jeremiah 26-45. The introductory and concluding chapters in the framework isolate the two major panels of material in Jeremiah 26-45 (chs. 26-35 and 36-45). In addition, the framework highlights an important theological perspective concerning the reign of King Jehoiakim. The rebellious response of Jehoiakim to the prophetic word seals the fate of the nation in the direction of judgment. In the introductory chapters of the framework, the king and the nation have the choice of repentance or judgment. Inside the framework, the only choices offered to the king and the nation at a subsequent time are total subjugation or total destruction.

The rebellious response of Jehoiakim to the word of Yahweh in chapters 26 and 36 is paradigmatic of the national response to the message in the Jeremiah narratives and sets the stage for what is to follow in the subsequent
chapters. The concluding chapters of the Jeremiah narratives (34-35 and 44-45) pronounce a sentence of national judgment for this pervasive unbelief. The minor exceptions to this categorical pronouncement of judgment are the promises of deliverance to those few individuals who have responded positively and obediently to the prophetic message. Like all of the material in Jeremiah 26-45, the framework chapters emphasize that response to the prophetic word determines both personal and national destiny.
Chapter 4

INSIDE THE FRAMEWORK (1): PROPHETIC CONFLICT AND CREDIBILITY

(JER. 27-29/ 37-39)

Introduction

The previous chapter has demonstrated that the predominantly narrative material in Jeremiah 26-45 is framed by an introductory and concluding narrative in Jeremiah 26 and 45. In addition, this large block of material is broken down into two smaller panels (chs. 26-35 and 36-45) that are roughly symmetrical to each other. The parallels that occur in the introductions (chs. 26/35) and the conclusions (34-35/44-45) are the first literary clues of the symmetry that exists between these two panels. Further clues appear inside the Jehoiakim framework as well (chs. 27-33 and chs. 37-43). In one sense, the narrative material in chapters 27-33 and 37-43 could be read independently of each other. The material in chapters 27-33 effectively contrasts the false hope promoted by the prophetic opponents of Jeremiah in chapters 27-29 with the true hope presented in the oracles of Jeremiah himself in chapters 30-33. The narrative material in chapters 37-43 provides a roughly chronological account of events in the nation of Israel related to the prophetic ministry of Jeremiah immediately before and after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

Nevertheless, the overall framing of chapters 26-45 indicates that this material is to be read together, and the symmetry that emerges in chap-
ters 27-33 and 37-43 suggests that reading these two panels both in light of and against one another is an effective reading strategy for unlocking the rhetorical drama unfolded in Jeremiah 26-45 as a cohesive whole. This chapter will focus on the first evidences of parallelism inside the Jehoiakim framework, the narrative parallelism of chapters 27-29 in panel one and chapters 37-39 in panel two.

Inside the Framework

When the reader moves inside the Jehoiakim framework in Jeremiah 26-45, the focus of the text has shifted in two significant ways. First, King Jehoiakim disappears from the scene and is no longer a factor. The time focus of the text has shifted forward. In panel one, the narratives in chapters 27-29 relate events which occur during the reign of King Zedekiah between the first and second deportations to Babylon in 597 and 586 B.C. Chapters 30-33 look forward to a time of restoration and renewal beyond the Babylonian exile, though the narratives in 32-33 also relate events and oracles that originate during the reign of Zedekiah in the final days before the exile.

The same forward shift in time also appears in panel two. Following the Jehoiakim narrative in chapter 36, chapters 37-39 also relate events from the reign of Zedekiah in the days between 597 and 586 B.C. As with chapters 30-33 in the first panel, chapters 40-43 move beyond the fall of Jerusalem to look at what transpires after this catastrophic event in the life of the nation. Granted, 40-43 is historical in that it recounts what has happened in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem and the exile to Babylon, while chapters 30-33 are more "eschatological" in character and look forward to the time when the full restoration of Israel has become a reality, but the
two sections are thematically related in that they are both attempting to explore what the future holds for Israel in light of the fall of the nation.

The second shift inside the Jehoiakim framework is that the choices facing Judah have changed significantly. Conditions have deteriorated to the point that Judah no longer has the option of judgment or no judgment based on a response of repentance that is offered to Jehoiakim (cf. 26:3-6; 36:3, 7). Judgment has already taken place in the form of the deportation to Babylon in 597 B.C., and now the issue is whether Judah will submit to Babylon and be spared further judgment or refuse to submit and experience total annihilation. This issue is paramount in the narrative material found in Jeremiah 27-29 and 37-39.

The Literary Coherence of Jeremiah 27-29 and 37-39

Chapters 27-29

Although the narrative material in Jeremiah 27-29 is sometimes read as an expanded text made up of diverse sources and levels of redaction, there is a general consensus regarding the unity of this section as it stands in the MT. The first argument for the unity of 27-29 is the thematic focus on

1For example, see the discussion of T. Seidl, Texte und Einheiten in Jeremia 27-29, Literaturwissenschaftliche Studien 2. Teil (Munich: Eox, 1978), 59-61, 85-87; and Christopher R. Seitz, Theology in Conflict: Reactions to the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah, BZAW 176 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), 209-10. Seidl calls attention to the formal differences between chs. 27 and 28: 1) ch. 27 is a first person account, while ch. 28:2-17 is told from the third person; 2) separate introductions are provided in 27:1 and 28:1; and 3) different characters interact with Jeremiah in the two chapters. Seitz identifies 27:1-18; 28; 29:1-9, 15, 20-32 as the “core” of this section and argues that “chs. 27-29 have received extensive editorial overlay, whose purpose is to focus more specifically on the fate of the exiles, as well as to condemn the post-597 community in Judah.”

false prophecy that runs throughout this section and that connects 27-29 to the introductory narrative in chapter 26 as well.\textsuperscript{3} Certain linguistic peculiarities shared by these chapters also suggest the unity of this section and may even indicate that this material had an independent literary circulation before inclusion in the book of Jeremiah as a whole.\textsuperscript{4}

Because of the focus of this dissertation on unlocking a strategy for reading the book of Jeremiah, the key piece of evidence for viewing 27-29 as a unit is that chapters 27-28 reflect a coherent story plot and that chapters 27-29 as a whole reflect an unifying and overarching literary structure.\textsuperscript{5} The narrative in 27-28 is built around the story of the yoke and the conflict between Jeremiah and Hananiah. There is a key sign act performed with the

\textsuperscript{3}Keown \textit{et al.} (Jeremiah 26-52, 36) state, "These three chapters make sense as a collection because they share common themes and a historical setting during the reign of Zedekiah."

\textsuperscript{4}Rudolph (Jeremiah, 157-58) was the first to call attention to these unique features, which are: 1) the spelling of “Nebuchadnezzar” with an “n” (\textit{n}) as opposed to the spelling “Nebuchadrezzar” with an “r” (\textit{r}) that appears in the rest of the book; 2) a shortened form of the name Jeremiah (with the theophoric ending of \textit{iij}- as opposed to \textit{iij}-); and 3) the greater tendency to use the title “prophet” following the name of Jeremiah in chs. 28-29 (cf. 28:5, 6, 11, 15; 29:1, 29; cf. also “Hananiah the prophet” in 28:1, 5, 10, 12, 17).

\textsuperscript{5}Reading the text in light of these larger structures does not require a peeling away of editorial layers. The purpose of such studies is to get back to an original document; the purpose of this study is to interact with the text as it now stands.
yoke in each chapter (27:2-3; 28:10), and, with the exception of brief narrative notes in 28:10,11, and 17, the story is related strictly through the use of nine different prophetic speeches. The rhetorical effect of this presentation of the material is a rapid volley of prophetic messages that heightens the conflict and combativeness of this section.

In addition to this cohesion in chapters 27-28, Overholt has demonstrated that the overall structure of this section reveals a parallelism between chapters 27-28 (the “yoke” chapters) and chapter 29. The structure of these two sections is built around the common theme of prophetic conflict. Chapters 27-28 reflect a structure of: 1) message of submission to Babylonian rule (27); 2) a negative response to that message in the form of Hananiah’s speech and sign act (28:1-12); and 3) the resolution of the conflict through the curse on Hananiah (28:13-17). A similar sequence unfolds in the narrative of chapter 29: 1) Jeremiah’s message of submission to Babylon focusing on the duration of the exile (29:1-14); 2) a negative response to this message on the part of prophetic opponents (29:15, 21-23, and 26-28); and 3) the resolution of this conflict through the curse on Ahab and Zedekiah (29:21-23) and Shemaiah (29:30-32). The narrative in 27-28 portrays prophetic opposition to Jeremiah’s message in the land of Judah, while the account in 29 details opposition to Jeremiah’s message among the post-597 B.C. exiles in Babylon.

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6 Keown et al., Jeremiah 26-52, 44. A further unifying feature between these two chapters is that eight of these nine speeches are introduced with a messenger formula.


8 Ibid, 29.

9 Ibid, 30.

Chapters 37-39

Chapters 37-39 are part of the larger narrative in Jeremiah 37-45 that is generally regarded as a distinct unit, though redactional and historical issues have complicated the picture. With regard to Jeremiah 37-39, Seitz has isolated four major problems with the cohesiveness of this section.

There is some debate about the relationship of chs. 44-45 to the preceding material in chs. 37-43, but for the overall unity of this section, see Brueggermann, To Build, To Plant, 138-208 (who titles this section "The Baruch Document"); Carroll, Jeremiah, 670-750; Holladay, Jeremiah 2, 280; Keown et al., Jeremiah 26-52, 209-11; Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 631. Jones (Jeremiah, 447) comments on chs. 37-45: "These chapters, perhaps more than any other single block in the book of Jeremiah, need to be read consecutively and as a whole. The narrator has stamped them with a single, powerful theme. That is not to say that he wrote them in the manner of a modern author. There are clear signs of the already existing materials he had to hand. But he wrote this material into a homogeneous narrative."

The seminal article by H. Kremers ("Leidengemeinschaft mit Gott im Alten Testament," EvT 13 [1953], 122-40) has significantly influenced subsequent study of this book. Kremers isolated ten passages in this section that form a unit (37:11-16; 37:17-21; 38:1-6; 38:7-13; 38:14-28a; 38:28b-406; 40:13-41:2; 41:4-9; 41:10-15; 41:16-43:7. Kremers identifies these passages as the original core of this section on the basis of terminating phrases found in 37:16b, 21b; 38:6b, 12b, 28; 39:14b; 41:2, 15b; 43:7. Kremers has most significantly influenced Gerhard Wanke’s study (Untersuchungen zur sogenannten Baruchschrift, BZAW 122 [New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1971]), who has arranged these ten units into five pairs. The basic flaw of Kremers’ approach is a methodological inflexibility that assumes each original unit in this section followed a rigid form-critical pattern. Literary sensitivity to the text requires the recognition that narrators varied the style and pace of their story for many different reasons.

Redactional analysis and historical reconstruction often result in a rearrangement of chs. 37-44, with a frequent combination of these chapters with narrative accounts from elsewhere in the book of Jeremiah. Seitz (Theology in Conflict, 236-91) combines portions of chs. 27-29, 37-43, 32, and 34 into a "Scribal Chronicle" (see discussion below for how this methodology specifically effects chs. 37-39). Bright (Jeremiah: Introduction, Translation, and Notes) and Herbert Misch (Gottes Wort über das Ende Jerusalems: Eine literar-, stil- und gattungskritische Untersuchung des Berichtes Jeremia 34, 1-7; 32, 2-5; 37, 3-38, 28, ÖBS 2 [Klosterneuburg: Verlag Österreichisches Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1981]) offer similar reconstructions of this section (see pp. 20-22 in ch. 1 of this dissertation for discussion of these works).

Despite the necessity and validity of such types of reconstruction, Sean McEvenue, ("The Composition of Jeremiah 37.1 to 44:30," in Studies in Wisdom Literature, ed. W.C. van Wyk, Old Testament Studies, OTWSA 15 & 16 [Pretoria: Society for the Study of the OT, 1972], 61) offers the following cogent observation: "I consider it a more pressing and neglected task to search for the clues and the structural elements which were evident to the editor of the tradition which is now in the Masoretic text. We must have a book which we can read. And we must understand the book in the way in which the editor understood it. That same concern drives this study and is the primary reason why historical and redactional reconstructions are most often dealt with as briefly as possible.

Seitz, Theology in Conflict, 236-39.
First, there is the problem of narrative sequence. Individual units in the section do not always flow together smoothly, and passages presuppose information that is conveyed in subsequent passages. Second, the prophetic oracles concerning the future of Zedekiah and Jerusalem reveal inconsistencies in that some texts hold out hope of preservation (cf. 37:17), while others present devastating judgment as an inevitability (38:15-23). Third, the repetitions in this section appear to reflect conflation and expansion of an original text. The fourth problem is the vacillating statements concerning the relationship between Jeremiah and Zedekiah. Zedekiah appears to be both friend and foe of the prophet in this section.

The narrative material in chapters 37-39 clearly is not a seamless, linear account of Judah’s final days. However, the cyclical, repetitious nature of this material actually serves to provide both literary cohesiveness and an overarching literary structure for this section. The first unifying feature is the repeated scenes of interview between king and prophet (cf. 37:3-11; 37:17-21; 38:14-28). Callaway comments, “The organizing principle of Jer 37-38 is not chronology or plot, but it may be the repeated use of a well-known story.

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14Ibid, 236. For example, Seitz argues that 37:3-10 assumes information given at 37:11ff because it is a secondary addition designed to make a point of clarification.

15Ibid, 238-39. For example, Seitz (p. 239) observes: “Jer 38:17 is completely consistent with Jeremiah’s stance in Chs. 27-29; yet even as it forcefully holds out the possibility of life in Judah, 38:23 pronounces an irreversible judgment.”

16Ibid, 239. For example, there are several interviews between king and prophet and Jeremiah is in and out of several different prisons. Seitz comments: “In the space of two chapters, word is given to Zedekiah regarding the fate of the city on three separate occasions (37:6-10; 37:17; 38:15ff.). . . . Jeremiah is in and out of a makeshift prison (37:15), dungeon cells (37:16), house arrest (37:21), and a cistern (38:7), so often as to bewilder the reader.”

17Ibid, 239. Seitz writes: “It is not clear if Zedekiah is on the prophet’s side (37:21; 38:20, 25), or in league with the princes (37:21; 38:5). Does he (37:18; 38:15, 24) or do the princes (37:15, 20; 38:4, 16, 25-26) represent the primary threat to Jeremiah?”

She adds, "To hear Zedekiah's story is to be reminded of a dozen other stories of kings and prophets before him. Our narrator suggests that this stock of stories forms part of the context in which his narrative is heard."\textsuperscript{19}

The second unifying theme is the motif of imprisonment and confinement. Callaway states that "prisons form the localized setting" for chapters 37-39 and that "the setting portrays concentric circles of prisons--cisterns within the court of the guard within the surrounded city."\textsuperscript{20} Even the city of Jerusalem has become a form of prison, because the powerful Babylonian armies have trapped the inhabitants of the city inside its walls.\textsuperscript{21} The figurative "yokes" and "stocks" in chapters 27-29 of panel one have become concrete realities in chapters 37-39 of panel two.

These twin themes of interview and imprisonment come together to provide the literary structure for 37-39. The narratives of this section reflect an ABABAB panel structure that alternates from scenes of interview between king and prophet to scenes of imprisonment and confinement:

A. Interview 1: Jeremiah and Zedekiah (37:1-10)
B. Imprisonment 1: Confinement of Jeremiah (37:11-16)
A. Interview 2: Jeremiah and Zedekiah (37:17-21)
B. Imprisonment 2: Confinement of Jeremiah (38:1-13)
A. Interview 3: Jeremiah and Zedekiah (38:14-28)
B. Imprisonment 3: Confinement of Judah (39)

A further unifying feature within this coherent structure is the inclusion that frames the entire section. This section opens and closes with a notation that

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, p. 258

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid, p. 258-59. Callaway comments: "The princes turned the holy city into a prison in which they would die."
Jeremiah was free to move about “among the people (םְדֹּעַ הַדְּמָנָה)” (cf. 37:4; 39:14). The prophet retains a measure of his freedom at both the beginning and the end of this section. The same is not true for the city of Jerusalem. Like Jeremiah, the city and its inhabitants have some degree of freedom at the beginning (cf. 37:5), but the city is destroyed and its inhabitants are prisoners at the end of the section (ch. 39). This contrast between the freedom of Jeremiah and the confinement of the city is the key to unlocking this portion of the Jeremiah narratives.

Jeremiah in Conflict with His Opponents

Opposition to Jeremiah’s Message

A major parallel between chapters 27-29 and 37-39 is that both sections deal with events dating from the reign of Zedekiah in Judah’s final days as a nation. The narrative tension in both sections is how Judah will respond to its last opportunity to submit to Babylonian sovereignty before experiencing total defeat at the hands of the Babylonians. Conflict arises over Jeremiah’s counsel that Judah should cease its resistance and surrender to the Babylonian military machine. In both 27-29 and 37-39, the specific catalyst for

22There are problems with the date formulas for 27:1 and 28:1 in the MT. 27:1 reads: “in the first year of Jehoiakim,” and the date formula is missing entirely in the LXX. The MT is clearly in error because the remainder of the chapter identifies Zedekiah as the king in view (vv. 3, 12, 20), and this errant reading perhaps arose through the influence of 26:1. The Syriac and a few Hebrew manuscripts read “Zedekiah” at 27:1, but Holladay, (Jeremiah 2, 115) and J. G. Janzen (Studies in the Text of Jeremiah, [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 45) suggest that the original introduction has been lost.

There is a related problem with the MT introduction to 28:1, which reads: “in that year, in the first year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year.” The statement is a contradiction and most likely represents a conflated reading due to the influence of the secondary addition to 27:1 (Janzen, Studies, 15). Janzen suggests following the more simplified “in the fourth year of Zedekiah” found in the LXX and probably confirmed by the historical data. The events of chs. 27-28 do occur at roughly the same time because Jeremiah continues to wear the yoke as he preaches his message of judgment.
conflict is the prophet Jeremiah's threefold call for submission to Babylonian hegemony and/or a warning of destruction from failure to submit and surrender to the Babylonian king and his armies. In the narrative account of chapter 27, the prophet addresses the calls for submission to three separate audiences: 1) the envoys of the foreign kings who have come to Jerusalem to confer with Zedekiah (vv. 3-11); 2) King Zedekiah of Judah (vv. 12-15); and 3) the priests and all the people of Judah (vv. 16-22). In the second panel of material, the threefold statement of the need for surrender to Babylon appears in the context of the three separate interviews between Jeremiah and Zedekiah (interview one: 37:3-11, interview two: 37:17-21; and interview three: 38:14-28). In chapters 27-29, the conflict follows the threefold prophetic pronouncement; in chapters 37-39, the scenes of conflict are interspersed with the calls to surrender to Babylon. For the prophet, the question of Babylonian control over Judah is a settled issue in that Yahweh has “handed over” Judah and Jerusalem to the Babylonian king, but Zedekiah is called to surrender to

23Thomas Overholt (“Jeremiah 27-29: The Question of False Prophecy,” JAAR [1967]: 234) observes that these three episodes each contain two basic elements: 1) a warning of, “Do not listen to the prophets promising deliverance” and 2) an exhortation of, “But do serve the king of Babylon.” The first oracle also contains an explicit statement of what Yahweh has done in handing the nations over to Babylon and what Yahweh will do in the form of punishment to those nations who fail to submit to Babylon.

The variation of the third oracle in content and length is the most striking rhetorical feature of these three speeches. This text follows the pattern of threefold repetition with significant variation and/or expansion in the third episode. The third section is longer than the two preceding speeches and focuses more specifically on the return of the temple vessels that Nebuchadnezzar has already taken from Jerusalem (in 594 B.C.). This variation signifies that the priests and people who receive this oracle are the primary focus of this passage. The prophet bypasses the obstinate king in an attempt to gain popular consensus for his counsel. The prophet makes a similar appeal to “all the people” in the second panel at 38:2. In addition, the focus of the speech on the articles from the temple reflects the importance of popular theological conceptions regarding the security afforded by the Jerusalem temple and the traditions surrounding Zion. The prophet must counter these beliefs surrounding the absolute security and inviolability of Zion to convince his audience of the need for surrender to Babylon. See Kelvin G. Fiebel, “Jeremiah’s and Ezekiel’s Sign Acts: Their Meaning and Function as Nonverbal Communication and Rhetoric” (Ph.D. diss., The University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1989), 392-96.
the Babylonian forces in order to avoid total destruction of the city of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah’s message of judgment results in direct challenges to his prophetic authority. In chapters 27-29, the prophets spearhead the opposition to Jeremiah’s message. In the “yoke” controversy in 27-28, Hananiah challenges Jeremiah’s prophetic authority by offering a counter-message that seeks to reverse Jeremiah’s unfavorable oracle. In chapter 29, the prophet Jeremiah engages in a battle of letters with the prophet Shemaiah in Babylon because of Shemaiah’s opposition to Jeremiah’s message concerning the duration of the Babylonian exile.

In panel two, the narratives in chapters 37-38 present the royal officials of Judah as leading the opposition to Jeremiah’s message. In 37:11-16, the officials view Jeremiah’s attempted departure from Jerusalem as evidence of his intention to defect over to the Babylonians. In 38:1-16, the officials claim that Jeremiah is weakening the war effort by discouraging the soldiers and citizens of Jerusalem who continue to hold out against the Babylonians.

The first panel (26-29) focuses on charges by Judah’s religious leaders that Jeremiah is a blasphemer and a false prophet. The second panel (37-39) contains charges by the political leaders that Jeremiah is a traitor. The seriousness of the charges against Jeremiah is evidenced in that each panel contains a call for the prophet to be put to death (cf. 26:8-11; 38:2-4). It is fitting that Jeremiah’s conflict should first arise with the prophets in 27-29 and then with the royal officials in 37-39. In ancient Israel, there was no such thing as a

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24 These scenes of conflict between prophets connect chs. 27-29 to what precedes in ch. 26. In ch. 26, the prophets (and priests) lead the opposition to Jeremiah and call for his death (cf. 26:7-9). Thus, ch. 26 not only introduces chs. 26-35 as a whole but also provides a more immediate introduction to the theme of prophetic conflict that dominates the section immediately following in chs. 27-29.
purely political issue, and kings found themselves in constant need of prophetic support for their policies (cf. 1 Kgs. 22:4-23). The opposition of the "peace" prophets to Jeremiah in 27-29 provides the theological rationale for the military policy of continued resistance to Babylon advocated by Judah's royal officials in 37-39.

The Issue of Fulfillment

In light of the shared emphasis on prophetic conflict in Jeremiah 27-29 and 37-39, the issue of fulfillment becomes paramount in both sections. The issue of fulfillment validates either the viewpoint of Jeremiah or his opponents and settles the issue of who is telling the truth. One can appreciate the dilemma faced by the audiences of Jeremiah and Hananiah as they try to sort out which of these prophets who speak "in the name of the Yahweh" they are to follow. Bright writes that this portion of the book of Jeremiah is instructive because of "the light it casts upon a problem which must have perplexed the people of the day profoundly: How could one tell a true prophet from a false one?" The narrative in 27-28 portrays the two prophets as actively and passionately attempting to capture the heart and will of their audience. The narrator helps the reader to understand the inner conflict of

25Callaway ("Telling the Truth and Telling Stories," 263-64) calls attention to five significant parallels between the interview of Jeremiah and Zedekiah in chs. 37-38 and the interview of Micaiah and Ahab in 1 Kgs. 22: 1) the king calls the prophet for a word from the Lord on the military situation; 2) the prophet at first withholds the word from the king; 3) the king responds to the prophetic act of withholding the word; 4) the prophet delivers a vision of doom to the king that focuses on the fate of those dependent on the king after the king is gone; and 5) the story ends with the prophet in prison, awaiting the fulfillment of his word, which is provided in both cases by the next chapter.

26Bright, Jeremiah: Introduction, Translation, Notes, 202.

27Friebel ("Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign Acts," 392-96) demonstrates that the arrangement of Jeremiah's sign act and subsequent speeches in ch. 27 reflects purposeful design. First, the harsh message of the prophet is preceded by the sign act of the wearing of a yoke as a non-verbal means of capturing the audience's attention prior to the delivery of a message that
the audience created by the verbal jousting of the competing prophets, but this issue is already resolved from the time perspective of the narrative. The narrator simply portrays the subsequent conquest of Judah and destruction of Jerusalem as the confirmation and validation for Jeremiah’s message that judgment will last for seventy years rather than two years.

Thus, the fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecies becomes a central element in the rhetoric of 27-29 and 37-39. There is clearly a prophecy-fulfillment schema that exists between panel one (27-29) and panel two (37-39) that reflects both correspondence and intensification. The message of chapters 27-29, delivered in the aftermath of the Babylonian military action against Jerusalem in 597 B.C., calls for an end to any further resistance to Babylonian domination. The message of chapters 37-38, culminating in the capture of Jerusalem in chapter 39, echoes the earlier call for acceptance of Babylonian will encounter resistance. Second, the prophet addresses the nations and their leaders before turning to Zedekiah and the nation of Judah. The prophet asserts the hegemony of Babylon over the foreign nations prior to asserting the need for Zedekiah and Judah to submit to Babylon. This arrangement of the material serves to soften the blow and makes it possible for the prophet to gain a somewhat sympathetic hearing prior to delivery of the controversial message that Judah itself has fallen under Babylonian control. Third, the last and longest speech is reserved for the “priests and all the people.” The chapter builds and lingers the longest at this point, because this audience is the one that Jeremiah most desires to persuade. Perhaps popular consensus, more than prophetic exhortation, will move King Zedekiah to the proper course of action.

Hananiah is just as earnest in his attempt to convince his audience of the correctness of his position, as is evidenced by the counter-sign act of breaking Jeremiah’s yoke. Prophetic sign acts were more than arresting visual aids to capture the attention of an audience. The fact that such acts were often performed without an audience being present (cf. 2 Kgs. 2:12; Ezek. 2:8-3:3; 5:1-4; Jer. 13) indicates that the act itself was viewed as having in some sense a dynamic or effective power to bring about the event being dramatized. Hananiah’s act of breaking the yoke would have had a significant impact on his audience because it would appear to abort or annul the prophetic word of Jeremiah, much in the same sense that Jehoiakim’s burning of Jeremiah’s scroll in Jer. 36 would seem to abrogate the coming predictions of judgment and doom. For fuller discussion of the significance of these acts, see W. David Stacey, *Prophetic Drama in the Old Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 1990), especially 260-82. Stacey (p. 266) has this insightful comment on the Jeremiah/Hananiah conflict over the “yoke”: “The purpose of the contest is to establish which prophet is speaking the truth. In no case is there any doubt about the content of the message; the doubt concerns its reliability. So it is not enough for Hananiah to deny Jeremiah’s contention or to make him go away; the yoke had to be broken.”
hegemony and demonstrates the actual outcome of Judah’s refusal to obey Jeremiah’s counsel. The first panel (27-29) warns of the disastrous consequences of failure to submit to Babylonian sovereignty, and the second section depicts Judah’s experience of calamity and disaster because of their refusal to heed the prophetic warning.

The relationship between chapters 27-29 and 37-39 also demonstrates how the narrator heightens Judah’s culpability for coming down on the wrong side of the prophetic debate. The chronological location of 27-29 and 37-39 after the first deportation to Babylon in 597 B.C. but prior to the final capture of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. effectively demonstrates that the course of events is clearly heading toward a fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecies and that Jeremiah’s opponents are grasping at straws in their belief that Judah will soon experience relief and deliverance from the Babylonian assault. Even before Nebuchadnezzar strikes the final blow against Jerusalem, the flow of events is clearly and inevitably heading in that direction. In both panels, the prophet Jeremiah pokes holes in the logic of his opponents. Using a lesser to greater form of argumentation, Jeremiah suggests that the prophets who proclaim the imminent return of the temple vessels should at least be able to prevent Nebuchadnezzar’s further looting of the temple treasuries (27:18). If Zedekiah the king is interested in discerning the divine will, he should at least have some reservations about following the advice of prophets who have previously offered assurances that the Babylonians would never even come to besiege the land of Judah (37:19). Even before the final fulfillment of the destruction of Jerusalem, the smaller fulfillments and the course of events have indicated that Jeremiah’s assessment of the situation is the cor-
Thus, the people should have recognized who was the true prophet. Circumstances have lent no credibility to the counsel of Jeremiah’s prophetic opponents, but these prophets gain a following because their message of peace is what the king and the people want to hear.

Jeremiah’s Vindication: Turning the Tables on His Opponents

The parallelism between 27-29 and 37-39 is much more exact than simply two related incidents of prophetic conflict and the ultimate validation of Jeremiah’s prophecy of judgment. These two blocks of material more precisely parallel one another in that the fulfillment of Jeremiah’s message takes exactly the same form in each section. The narrative plot for both 27-29 and 37-39 is that the prophetic word of Jeremiah specifically reverses and brings upon his opponents the punishment or affliction that they have intended or designed for Jeremiah himself. The design of both 27-28 and 29 is to demonstrate the efficacy of Jeremiah’s prophetic word over against that of his opponents. The word of Jeremiah specifically overturns the counsel of his prophetic counterparts by bringing upon these false prophets the same calamity that they have desired to inflict upon Jeremiah.

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Chs. 27-29: “Mirroring” and the Death of Jeremiah’s Opponents

Several acts of prophetic “mirroring” are central to the unfolding of the narrative in 27-29. The false prophets attempt to “mirror” or mimic the actions of the prophet Jeremiah. Hananiah is an especially effective mimic, and his prophecy in chapter 28 mirrors Jeremiah’s act of prophecy in chapter 27 in four key ways. First, the title of “prophet” is attached to both Jeremiah and Hananiah throughout the narrative in chapter 28. Second, both prophets use similar introductory formulae to assert the divine source of their message. Third, both prophets employ similar language and terminology. For Jeremiah, these common terms represent the objects of Yahweh’s judgment, but for Hananiah, these same objects function as symbols of continuity concerning Yahweh’s protection and defense of Jerusalem. Fourth, Hananiah “mirrors” Jeremiah’s sign act of using the yoke for visual effect, but again Hananiah’s act has the opposite intent as that of Jeremiah. Jeremiah wears the yoke as a sign of Judah’s continued subjugation to Babylon; Hananiah breaks the yoke as a demonstration of Judah’s imminent deliverance from Babylonian domination. This “mirroring” form of repetition represents

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29 This “mirroring” again highlights the difficulty in discerning the true prophet from the false prophet. Jeremiah “the prophet” and Hananiah “the prophet” are not distinguishable in terms of externals and the ways in which they deliver their messages.

30 This feature of the MT account distinguishes it from the LXX reading of this same chapter. An interesting feature of the LXX at this point is that it translates “prophet” as “pseudoprophet” here in 28:1 and also in Jer. 6:13; 26:7, 8, 11, 16; 27:9; 29:1, 8).


32 For example, there is the repeated use of “yoke,” “Lord’s house,” “articles,” “Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim king of Judah,” “this place,” and “Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.”
Hananiah's direct attempt to overturn the proclamation of Jeremiah. The literary effect of this "mirroring" repetition is that the message of Hananiah in chapter 28 has erased and replaced the word of Jeremiah in chapter 27.

This "mirroring" technique on the part of Hananiah is quite effective and even temporarily silences Jeremiah himself (28:5ff). Nevertheless, Jeremiah finally vindicates himself by engaging in a form of "one-upmanship" in this deadly serious game of "mirroring." It is Jeremiah, not Hananiah, who has the last word in this dispute. The threefold "Thus says Yahweh of Hosts, the God of Israel/ says Yahweh/ thus says Yahweh" in the speech of Hananiah is overturned by the threefold "Thus says Yahweh/ thus says Yahweh of Hosts, the God of Israel/ thus says Yahweh" in the response of Jeremiah in 28:13-16. Hananiah has broken Jeremiah's yoke, but Yahweh replaces the breakable wooden yoke with a yoke of iron that will not be broken (28:14). The death of Hananiah in 28:17 (as fulfillment of 28:16) demonstrates the efficacy of the prophetic word spoken through Jeremiah, and the execution of the death sentence against Hananiah within "two months," in response to Hananiah's message of imminent deliverance within "two years," represents the final "mirroring" of this episode. Hananiah is silenced in death and will have no further opportunity to

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33 Hananiah has scored a direct hit, because the sarcasm, derision, and strong language that Jeremiah normally reserves for his prophetic opponents (cf. 5:12-13, 30-31; 8:10-12; 14: 14-16; 23:9-15, 16-24, 25-32, 33-39; 27:14-15) is absent at this point.

34 Thomas Jemielity, *Satire and the Hebrew Prophets*, Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 133. Jemielity comments that it is "as if Yahweh dares the prophet to repeat with this yoke the self-assured violence with which he destroyed the earlier."

35 Ibid. Hananiah prophesies in the "fifth month" (28:1) and dies in the "seventh month" (28:7).
overturn Jeremiah's proclamation. There is clear evidence of who is a true prophet of Yahweh.

The act of "mirroring" is also predominant in the conflict between Jeremiah and Shemaiah described in chapter 29. Lundbom structures this account around the content of three significant letters: 1) the initial letter of Jeremiah exhorting submission to Babylon on the part of the Jewish exiles (vv.1-23); 2) a fragment of a letter written from Shemaiah in Babylon to the high priest Zephaniah calling for the censure and punishment of Jeremiah (vv. 24-28); and 3) the final written response of Jeremiah in the form of an oracle of doom against Shemaiah (vv. 31-32). The prophetic conflict in this passage takes the form of dueling pens. As in the Hananiah incident, Jeremiah's opponent not only seeks to overturn Jeremiah's message but seeks to overturn it by engaging in precisely the same activity that Jeremiah has performed while discharging his prophetic duties. Shemaiah seeks to foil the design of Jeremiah's letter by writing a letter of his own, but Shemaiah is no more successful in his opposition to Jeremiah than was Hananiah. Ironically, Shemaiah actually signs his own death warrant by sending the letter

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37There are further links between the Hananiah and Shemaiah episodes. In both accounts, controversy particularly surrounds the duration of the exile (cf. Hananiah's "within two years" with the complaint of Shemaiah against Jeremiah in 29:28). In addition, Shemaiah calls for Jeremiah to be put in the "stocks and collar" in 29:28, recalling the "yoke" imagery of the preceding chapter. The "mirroring" schemes of the false prophets continue. Jeremiah had prophesied an iron yoke for Hananiah, but Shemaiah seeks to inflict incarceration upon Jeremiah. The imagery of "yokes" and "stocks" also carries over into chs. 37-39, which focus on the imprisonment of Jeremiah and the captivity of the nation of Judah. Both sections are built to some degree around the tension point of whether it is Jeremiah or those who oppose his message that will experience capture and confinement. A further unifying feature for chs. 28-29 is that Jeremiah characterizes the preaching of all three sets of false prophets (Hananiah, Ahab and Zedekiah, and Shemaiah) as "false" (פָּדוּ) (cf. 28:15; 29:23; 29:31), which is cause for the death sentence that is pronounced against all three (cf. 28:16f; 29:21, 32). See Overholt, "Jeremiah 27-29: The Question of False Prophecy," 247.
against Jeremiah. The "false" prophet has once again "mirrored" the activity of Jeremiah, but Jeremiah has the final word with his own act of "mirroring." Jeremiah counters the letter of Shemaiah with a letter of his own that pronounces a personal oracle of doom against Shemaiah and his descendants that will as certainly be carried out as the earlier death sentence against Hananiah.

The pattern of Jeremiah's vindication over his prophetic opponents is not just reflected in the separate episodes of conflict with Hananiah in 28 and Shemiah in 29 but also in the overall presentation of Jeremiah's conflict with the false prophets in chapters 26-29 as a whole. This section may be read as a dramatic showdown between three prophets of "judgment" (Jeremiah, Micah [26:18-19], and Uriah [26:20-23]) versus three prophets of "salvation" (Hananiah, Ahab and Zedekiah, and Shemaiah). The account begins badly for the prophets of judgment as there is call for Jeremiah's execution and the carrying out of the execution of the prophet Uriah. The prophets of doom appear to be under a personal edict of judgment themselves. However, the narrative turns in favor of the prophets of judgment in the oracles of Jeremiah. The sentence of death intended for Jeremiah is ultimately turned against the prophets of peace, and the oracles of Jeremiah specifically focus on the demise of his prophetic opponents.38

The preservation and vindication of Jeremiah vis-à-vis the prophets of peace serves to make an important point for the reader. The people of

38Bright (Jeremiah: Introduction, Translation, and Notes, 203) captures this aspect of the story in his comments on the death of Hananiah in ch. 28: "Hananiah (ch. 28) is sentenced to death. This accords perfectly with the thought expressed in Deut. xviii 20 that to prophesy falsely in the name of Yahweh, as Hananiah had done, was to commit a capital crime. We recall that Jeremiah's enemies had tried to execute him because they believed that he had prophesied falsely."
Judah will share the fate of the prophets they choose to follow. The inability of the prophets of peace to reverse their own sentences of death demonstrates their impotence to overturn Yahweh's edict of doom against the nation of Judah.

This section as a whole makes the ironic point that the prophets of doom and judgment pronounce a message that leads to "life" in the sense of national preservation, while the prophets of peace and salvation pronounce a message that will eventually bring doom and destruction upon the nation. The preservation of Jeremiah points to the fact that his message offers a way of preservation for the people of Judah through the Babylonian crisis, and the tangible sentence of death against Hananiah, Ahab and Zedekiah, and Shemaiah more effectively demonstrates the ultimate consequence of their message than any amount of verbal refutation on the part of the prophet Jeremiah.

In chapters 27-29, the false prophets attempt to mirror the prophetic activity of Jeremiah in a futile effort to legitimate their message. It is Jeremiah, however, who is ultimately successful in "mirroring" his opponents by bringing upon these false prophets the very same judgment of death that they have designed for him. The preservation of Jeremiah in the midst of danger and opposition is a recurring feature in the narratives of chapters 26-45, and Yahweh's protection of Jeremiah is validation of the divine commission that stands behind Jeremiah's message.

Chs. 37-39: The Confinement of Jeremiah's Opponents

This turning of the tables governs the narrative flow of Jeremiah 26-29, and this same sort of plot development unfolds in the narrative materials of 37-39 as the prophet reverses the sentence of imprisonment against
himself and proclaims the word of judgment that effects the confinement and captivity of the political leaders of Judah who oppose his message and seek to do him harm. The ABABAB juxtaposition of interview and incarceration scenes in 37-39 allows for the unfolding of the conflict between Jeremiah and the political/military officials of Judah who oppose his message that is central to this section. In the interview scenes (37:1-10; 37:17-21; 38:14-28), Jeremiah pronounces a sentence of confinement upon Judah and Jerusalem. In the first two imprisonment scenes (37:11-16 and 38:1-13), the royal officials in Jerusalem impose a sentence of confinement upon the prophet Jeremiah. The prophet predicts the incarceration of Judah, with the effect that the royal officials of Judah incarcerate the prophet himself. The resolution of this conflict and the vindication of the prophet Jeremiah occur in the final scene of confinement recorded in chapter 39, in which the leaders of Judah are taken away in the deportation to Babylon.

In the unfolding of chapters 37-39, the fate of Jeremiah the prophet and Jerusalem the city are vitally linked together. Brief historical notations that introduce this section in 37:4-5 comment on the continued freedom of Jeremiah to move about from place to place and the withdrawal of Babylonian troops from Jerusalem as a result of pressure from the Egyptian army. These introductory remarks not only provide a chronological point of reference for the narratives that follow but also introduce the twin themes of the freedom/imprisonment of Jeremiah and the freedom/captivity of the city of Jerusalem. These opening verses ominously hint that both the prophet and the city enjoy only a temporary freedom that will soon be involuntarily relinquished.\(^{39}\) The linkage of the fate of the prophet and the city is also

\(^{39}\)Callaway, “Telling the Truth and Telling Stories,” 258.
reflected in the interviews between King Zedekiah and Jeremiah. The king inquires concerning the fate of the city, but the prophet also uses these dialogues to remind the king of the unfairness of his incarceration and to secure promises of royal protection (cf. 37:18-21; 38:15-16).

At one level, the prophet and city share a common fate. The imprisonment of the prophet Jeremiah in 37:11-16 and 38:1-6 prefigures the impending capture of Jerusalem. The nation of Judah is about to go into captivity, and Jeremiah as a righteous sufferer shares a fate like that of the people he ministers to. More important, however, is the contrast in 37-39 between the fate of Jeremiah the prophet and that of the city of Jerusalem and its leaders. The first two interview scenes are immediately followed by confrontations between Jeremiah and the royal officials that result in the incarceration of the prophet. A recurring summary statement following the first imprisonment, the second interview, and the second imprisonment is that “Jeremiah remained” (בָּאֹר) in some place of incarceration (37:16, 21; 38:13). The third interview scene also closes with the statement that “Jeremiah remained (בָּאֹר) in the court of the guardhouse” (38:28), but the qualifying “until the day that Jerusalem was captured” suggests that the story is about to take a dramatic turn. The third interview is also followed by a scene of capture and confinement in chapter 39, but ironically, the leaders of Judah and the people of the land are now the ones who experience captivity. The development of the story in chapters 37-39 is undergirded by a theme of talionistic justice that stresses the appropriateness of the captivity of the persons responsible for the confinement of the prophet.

\[40\] Ibid.
Jeremiah's confinement is a constant feature of the story from the time of the first imprisonment until the capture of Jerusalem, but the prophet finds relief from his incarceration that will not be available to the royal leaders of Judah at the time of their confinement. In each episode of imprisonment, Jeremiah experiences some form of release. In 37:11-16, Zedekiah removes Jeremiah from a dungeon cell for a more favorable location at the courtyard of the guard. In 38:7-13, Ebed-Melech rescues Jeremiah from certain death by petitioning the king to have Jeremiah removed from an abandoned cistern. These small acts of rescue serve to frustrate the designs of the royal officials who seek to silence Jeremiah and point toward the fuller vindication of Jeremiah that occurs at the time of the fall of Jerusalem.

The tables are turned in the final scene of imprisonment in chapter 39. The royal leaders responsible for the incarceration of Jeremiah now experience their own form of confinement from which there will be no immediate release or respite. The narrator more sharply draws the contrast by the statement concerning the release of the prophet in 39:11-14. Jeremiah experiences deliverance and release at the very time Jerusalem and its political leaders experience capture. The statement "and he [Jeremiah] remained

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41 The primary object of judgment in ch. 39 is King Zedekiah and his family (cf. 39:4-7) rather than the royal officials who are directly responsible for imprisoning Jeremiah and imperiling the prophet's life. However, the reference to the Babylonian "officials" taking their seats in places of authority in Jerusalem in 39:3 is perhaps a suggestion that the Judean officials have gotten what they deserve for their treatment of the prophet. Zedekiah does take several measures in chs. 37-38 to protect and help the prophet Jeremiah (cf. 37:21; 38:10, 16, 24-27). However, 38:18-20 indicates that the prophet views Zedekiah as guilty of compliance by his non-action. Zedekiah's own statement in 38:5 that "the king can do nothing to oppose you" is indication of the pathetic leadership that Zedekiah offers in attempting to resolve the conflict between Jeremiah and the royal officials. The ultimate sin of Zedekiah is his fearful failure to obey the word of Yahweh spoken by Jeremiah (37:1-2). As representative of the royal leadership and the nation at large, he stands at the head of the list of those disobedient to the prophetic word and, it is thus fitting that the conclusion to this section in ch. 39 should focus on his personal punishment at the hands of the Babylonians.
among the people” (יְשָׁמֵר בַּהֲרוֹן עַל הָעַם) in 39:14 represents a reversal of the recurring statements that “Jeremiah remained” (נָשָׁת) in a place of incarceration throughout this section. This statement also forms an inclusio with the “and Jeremiah was free to come and go among the people” (רָמַע בְּאָה יְשָׁמֵר בַּהֲרוֹן עַל הָעַם) in 37:4 that is of significance in contrasting the fate of the prophet and the unbelieving nation. Jeremiah begins and ends this section with some measure of freedom. In contrast, Jerusalem has a degree of freedom at the beginning of chapter 37 but is a captive at the conclusion of chapter 39.42

In contrasting the futility of the royal leadership to incarcerate and silence Jeremiah with the efficacy of Jeremiah’s prophetic word to bring confinement against these officials who reject his message, the narrator subtly mocks the impotence of the king and the royal officials in their conflict with Jeremiah. The king is absolutely correct in his assessment in 38:5 that he “can do nothing,” but is absolutely wrong in his assertion in that same verse that Jeremiah is “in the hands of” the officials. The only effective “handing over” that matters in this section is that Yahweh has handed over the city of Jerusalem to the Babylonians (cf. 37:17; 38:3, 18, 23).

Jeremiah in Conflict with Israel’s Traditions

In a sense, the question of historical fulfillment is the simpler issue in establishing the prophetic credibility of Jeremiah in chapters 27-29 and 37-39. The narrative must also resolve a much more complex issue that clouds

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42Jer. 39:14-17 also states that Ebed-Melech shares in the freedom granted to Jeremiah as a reward for his favorable treatment of the prophet in 38.7-13. This obedient servant will experience deliverance at the same time the nation experiences catastrophe. Ironically, the promise to Ebed-Melech of “escape with his life” is also offered to the nation at large in 38:2. Thus, the protection of Ebed-Melech represents what could have been for Zedekiah and the people at large if they had responded with obedience to the word of Yahweh spoken by Jeremiah.
the picture. The more difficult question is how Jeremiah can preach the message that he preaches and still be an accredited prophet of Yahweh even if historical events have fallen out in the way that he predicted. The text must wrestle with the dissonance created by Jeremiah's prophecies of doom for the Davidic king and the city of Jerusalem in light of the imposing Israelite traditions concerning the dual election of David and Zion. The prophet must have proper justification for attacking these twin symbols of Judah's unconditional election and security as the people of God. In other words, the narrative must not only validate the prophet's message by pointing to its historical fulfillment; the text must also validate the validation by demonstrating its theological coherence in light of the existing traditions that provide the parameters for Israel's Yahwistic faith.

The remainder of this chapter will focus on how this concern has informed the shape of the narratives in chapters 27-29 and 37-39. The reader is unable to fully appreciate the ironies in the unfolding of the plot and the depth of character development in this section apart from recognizing that Jeremiah's conflict with the Davidic and Zion traditions is a central point of tension.

Yahweh's Judgment of Jerusalem and the Davidic King

In his messages of judgment, the prophet Jeremiah makes a relentless assault on the David/Zion traditions that is evidenced in the narratives of 27-29 and 37-39. In Jeremiah 26-29 and 37-39, the prophet specifically identifies Jerusalem and the Davidic king as the primary targets of the judgment that Yahweh brings against the nation of Judah as a whole. Yahweh especially focuses his judgment on the two greatest symbols of continuity and security in the Israelite tradition. In the introductory chapter 26, Jeremiah
warns that Jerusalem will become a ruin like Shiloh.\(^4\) In chapter 27, the prophet calls for Zedekiah’s personal submission to the Babylonian king (vv. 12-15) and warns that false hope in a speedy return of the temple objects as part of an imminent release from Babylonian subjugation will only result in Jerusalem becoming a ruin (vv. 16-22, esp. v. 17). In chapter 29, the prophet goes so far as to say that the Jewish exiles in Babylon are in a more favorable location than the inhabitants of Jerusalem in that Jerusalem remains the target of Yahweh’s judgment (cf. 29:16-19). The narrative material in chapters 37-39 specifically depicts the capture of Jerusalem and the Davidic king as the culminating act of Yahweh’s judgment. The oracles in this section focus on the “handing over” of Jerusalem and the Davidic king to the Babylonians.\(^4\) The

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\(^{4}\)The repetition of statements of judgment specifically against Jerusalem is prominent in the narrative of ch. 26: v. 6, “this house like Shiloh;” “this city a curse;” v. 11, “against this city;” v. 12, “against this house and this city;” v. 15, “blood . . . upon this city and its inhabitants;” v. 18, a recollection of Micah’s prophecies specifically against Zion (“Zion will be plowed like a field/ Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble”); and v. 20, “against this city” (in the judgment speech of Uriah).

\(^{4}\)For warnings against Jerusalem, cf. 37:8, 10; 38:2-3; for a specific warning against Zedekiah, cf. 37:17; and for warnings against both Jerusalem and Zedekiah, cf. 38:18, 22-23. For similar warnings from this period of final siege, cf. also 32:3-5, 24-25; 33:4-5; 34:1-7.

One of the problems in reading this section is that there appears to be some inconsistencies in the oracles that Jeremiah delivers regarding the fate of the city and the king. In the first two interviews between prophet and king, the “handing over” of Jerusalem and Zedekiah is stated in absolute terms, and the king is given no options. However, the third oracle in 38:17-23 does present the king with a way out. The Babylonians will take control of Jerusalem, but Zedekiah’s surrender will prevent the total destruction that could come from continued resistance. The variations in the prophet’s message concerning the fate of Jerusalem and Zedekiah might be viewed as evidence of editorial conflation, but in this instance, there appears to be literary and rhetorical design behind the arrangement and content of these oracles concerning the king and city. The narrator once again appears to use the technique of threefold repetition with variation in the third episode to make an important point. First, the variation in the third episode perhaps stresses the divine grace and forbearance extended to Zedekiah. The king has refused to heed the implications of Jeremiah’s warning that Jerusalem would be “handed over” to the Babylonians, but God still extends the offer of the diminishment of the effects of judgment if the king will comply with Jeremiah’s instructions. Second, the arrangement of these oracles stresses the weakness of Zedekiah and the degree of his fearful unbelief. For this point, see A. R. Diamond, “Portraying Prophecy: Of Doublets, Variants, and Analogies in the Narrative Representation of Jeremiah’s Oracles--Reconstructing the Hermeneutics of Prophecy,” \textit{JSOT} 57 (1993): 109-10, n. 24. The king has persistently sought a favorable oracle
narrative of Judah's final defeat in chapter 39:1-10 briefly describes the capture of Jerusalem (vv. 1-2, 10) and gives special attention to the flight and arrest of King Zedekiah (vv. 4-9). The reversal of the David and Zion traditions in the preaching of Jeremiah falls under the rubric of the larger reversal of the Israelite holy war imagery, in which Yahweh becomes the leader of the enemy armies fighting against Israel. Christensen comments, "Jeremiah understood himself primarily as the herald of the Divine Warrior, proclaiming holy war against Judah and Jerusalem." The warning of an approaching enemy "from the north" (1:13, 15; 4:6; 5:15; 6:1, 22-23; 10:22) and of Yahweh fighting on behalf of this army against Judah (4:5-8; 6:1-5; 8:14-17; 15:5-9, 29; 18:13-17; 21:1-10) are two of the most prominent features of the prophet Jeremiah's message of judgment.

from the prophet and now receives it but is still unable to trust in the prophetic word. It should also be stressed that even the absolute statements in the first two interviews are designed to bring the king to repentance (cf. the interpretation of the absolute oracles of Mic. 3 in Jer. 26 as an example) and recognition that surrender to inevitable Babylonian control will lessen the destructive impact of Babylonian domination of Judah.

The focus on Zedekiah fits with the prominence of the king in the series of interviews that precede in chs. 37-38. See Seitz, Theology in Crisis, 266-67. The focus on Zedekiah is especially prominent in the MT version, because 39:4-13 is omitted in the LXX.


For discussion of this motif, see Brevard S. Childs, "The Enemy From the North and the Chaos Tradition," JBL 78 (1959): 187-98.

Christensen, Transformations of the War Oracle, 183-207. Yahweh specifically brings holy war against Jerusalem in 8:14-17; 15:5-9; 18:13-17. In perhaps the most dramatic example of Yahweh fighting against his people, there is a rapid succession of first-person statements in 21:4-10 to express Yahweh's personal involvement in the Babylonian campaign against Judah: "I am about to turn against you the weapons of war;" "I will gather them [the Babylonians] inside this city;" "I myself will fight against you;" "I will strike down those who live in this city;" "I will hand over Zedekiah king of Judah, his officials and the people in this city;" and "I have determined to do this city harm and not good."
The family of David and the city of Zion are the objects of judgment because they have forfeited their favored status with Yahweh. The shocking point that particularly emerges in Jeremiah 27-29 and 37-39 (and the theology of the book of Jeremiah as a whole) is that David and Zion have been replaced by foreign entities. Nebuchadnezzar has taken the position of God's favored ruler over David, and Babylon has replaced Zion as God's favored city. A divine decree from Yahweh that gives control of the nations over to Nebuchadrezzar frames the "yoke" incident in chapters 27-28 (cf. 27:6-7; 28:13-14). Instead of dominion over the nations belonging to the Davidic scion as Yahweh's vice-regent (cf. Pss. 2:7-9; 89:20-25; 110), that privilege now belongs to Nebuchadnezzar, who is identified as Yahweh's "servant" (Jer. 25:9; 26:10; 43:10). Stulman explains the implication of this new status accorded the Babylonian king, "As Yahweh's servant or vassal, Nebuchadrezzar cannot be opposed. Non-compliance to his decrees is denounced as false and viewed as direct insubordination."

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50 There is the repetition of the verb "to serve" (םלך) and of the statement that Nebuchadnezzar's control extends even to the "wild animals" (בהמה ב) in 27:6-7 and 28:13-14.

51 For this term, see W. Lemke, "Nebuchadrezzar My Servant," *CBQ* 28 (1966): 45-50; T. W. Overholt, "King Nebuchadrezzar in the Jeremiah Tradition," *CBQ* 30 (1968): 39-48; and Ziony Zevit, "The Use of נמל as a Diplomatic Term in Jeremiah," *JBL* 88 (1969): 74-77. The term נמל does not appear in the LXX in connection with Nebuchadnezzar in these references, which leads Lemke to conclude that the designation of Nebuchadnezzar as Yahweh's "servant" did not originate with the prophet Jeremiah himself. Zevit counters by showing that the term נמל was in use as a diplomatic term for "vassal" in Jeremiah's lifetime (cf. 1 Sam. 27:12; 2 Kgs. 16:7) and that this concept is reflected in the preaching of Jeremiah in Jer. 27:6. Zevit makes the likely suggestion that the designation was omitted from the LXX because the translators did not understand the technical import of the term. This misunderstanding could have arisen even if the LXX does represent an earlier recension of the book of Jeremiah.

52 Stulman, "Insiders and Outsiders," 73-74. This arrangement with Nebuchadnezzar is only temporary (cf. 25:11; 27:7; chs. 50-51). Nebuchadnezzar retains this status only as long as he is the instrument of Yahweh's wrath (cf. 21:2, 4, 7; 25:9, 11, 12; 27:6, 8, 12).
Just as Nebuchadnezzar has replaced David as the servant of Yahweh, so also Babylon has replaced Jerusalem as the locale of peace and security for the people of God. Zion theology celebrated the bestowal of the conditions of “peace/prosperity” (שלום) upon the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants, and the opponents of Jeremiah confidently asserted that Jerusalem would continue to enjoy these blessings of “peace” (שלום) (6:14; 8:11; 23:17). Jeremiah warns that for Jerusalem and Judah there will be “no peace” (לא שלום) (6:14; 8:11).

While steadfastly refusing to extend “peace” (שלום) to Jerusalem, the prophet Jeremiah then encourages the Judean exiles in Babylon to pray for the “peace” (שלום) of Babylon (29:7). Jeremiah opposes the prophets who proclaim an unconditional “peace” (שלום) for Jerusalem (cf. 4:9-10; 6:14; 8:11) and asserts instead that Babylon has replaced Jerusalem as the place of blessing and security for the people of Israel. Jeremiah vigorously combats the prophets who promise “peace” (שלום) for Jerusalem, and the royal officials charge that Jeremiah does not seek the “welfare” (שלאון) of Jerusalem (38:4). However, this same prophet turns around and exhorts the exiles to

53The foundational tenets of the Zion tradition are that Yahweh is the great king who has chosen Jerusalem: for his dwelling place and that Yahweh’s presence brings security to the city and its inhabitants. Other key tenets of the Zion tradition are that: 1) Zion is the peak of Zaphon, the highest mountain of all (Ps. 48:3-4); 2) the river of paradise flows out from Zion (Ps. 46:5); 3) Zion is the locale of Yahweh’s triumph over the waters of chaos (Ps. 46:3); and 4) Zion is the locale of Yahweh’s triumph over the kings and the nations of the earth (Ps. 76:4). See John H. Hayes, “The Tradition of Zion’s Inviolability,” JBL 82 (1963): 419-26, and J. J. M. Roberts, “Zion in the Theology of the Davidic-Solomonic Empire,” in Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and Other Essays, ed. T. Ishida (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1982), 93-108.

54Cf. also 38:4, where the royal officials accuse Jeremiah of not seeking the “welfare” (שלאון) of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

55Micah has a similar confrontation with certain שלאון prophets whose preaching is rooted in the Zion tradition (cf. Mic. 3:5-11).
seek the “welfare” (שָׂלֹם) of Babylon (29:7a) because in its “welfare is your welfare” (יְהֹוָה שָׂלֹם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל) (29:7b). Sisson comments on the significance of this language: “In demanding that the exiles pray for the land of their captivity and seek שָׂלֹם oracles in its name, Jeremiah was saying, in effect, that Babylon had replaced Zion as the center of the order of creation.”56 Following the subjugation of Judah to Babylon in 597 B.C., the prophet Jeremiah asserts that the exiles in Babylon actually enjoy a position superior to the citizens and king who remain in Jerusalem. The promise for a new Israel is connected to the return of the Babylonian exiles after seventy years (29:10-14). In contrast, the inhabitants of Jerusalem remain the object and target of Yahweh’s decree of judgment (29:16-18).

The prophet Jeremiah understands the Babylonian crisis in completely theopolitical terms. The prophet is not merely prognosticating that Judah will inevitably succumb to the superior military strength of the Babylonians; Yahweh has decreed the rise and dominance of the Babylonians in response to Judah’s covenant infidelity. Bruggemann explains this aspect of Jeremiah’s preaching:

It is important to observe that Jeremiah takes this [Pro-Babylonian] stand on other than political grounds. The newspapers did not indicate such a judgment. Rather, Jeremiah’s decisive political judgment is made on clear theological grounds. He is able to submit his political judgment to this theological discernment that God works in the historical process in free, radical, and surprising ways. Jeremiah as a model does not suggest being an expert in a secular discipline like political science, but he knows especially about the scandalous ways of Yahweh. So he announces not only that Babylon will triumph but, astonishingly, that Yahweh wills the triumph of Babylon. “Pax-

56Jonathan Paige Sisson, “Jeremiah and the Jerusalem Conception of Peace,” JBL 105 (1986): 440. Sisson employs cosmological language because the “peace” (שָׂלֹם) of Babylon contrasts with the chaos-threatening calamity that is about to fall on Judah and Jerusalem (cf. 4:23-26).
"Babylonia" is the plan of Yahweh. The statement rings like a refrain in the prose literature.\textsuperscript{57}

Resistance to Babylon is futile because Yahweh has temporarily decreed the replacement of Zion by Babylon and the replacement of David by Nebuchadnezzar. This aspect of Jeremiah's preaching constitutes a major obstacle for those steeped in the traditions of Yahweh's election of Zion and the house of David.

**Jeremiah/Zedekiah and Isaiah/Hezekiah:**
Typology Turned Upside-Down

The conflicting interpretations over Israel's religious traditions once again bring the issue of prophetic credibility to the forefront. In this debate over prophetic credibility, the narrative creates tension by resorting to the technique of "mirroring" used by Jeremiah's opponents to raise questions and doubts about the validity of Jeremiah's message and method. Hananiah and Shemaiah have mirrored Jeremiah's message and methods, but now the prophet faces an even more serious challenge from the narrator himself.

The introductory narratives to the two panels in chapters 26 and 36 (to which chs. 27-29 and 37-39 are juxtaposed) parallel one another in that both focus on the failure of King Jehoiakim to live up to the faith and piety of two of the righteous kings in Judah who reigned before him, Hezekiah and Josiah. The blunt rhetorical message of this section is that Jehoiakim is "no

Hezekiah” and “no Josiah.” Now, the narratives in 27-29 and 37-39 “mirror” this technique from 26 and 36, not in order to point out the faults of Jeremiah’s opponents but rather to point out the apparent inadequacies of Jeremiah himself as a prophet. The conflicts between Jeremiah and Jehoiakim in chapters 26 and 36 demonstrate that Jehoiakim is no Hezekiah and no Josiah; the confrontations between Jeremiah and the prophets in 27-29 and Jeremiah and Zedekiah in 37-39 raise the suggestion that Jeremiah does not match up to one of the great prophets of the past—the prophet Isaiah who just a century before had promised that Zion would not fall to its enemies and had delivered an oracle at just the right moment securing the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib and the Assyrians.

Jeremiah as an “Anti-Isaiah” Figure

In this battle over conflicting interpretations of Israel’s theological traditions, the prophet Jeremiah is engaged in battle with an even larger persona than that of Hananiah and the false prophets or Zedekiah and the royal officials who resist his counsel. The more imposing figure standing behind Hananiah is the prophet Isaiah himself. When Jerusalem was surrounded by the foreign army of Sennacherib and the Assyrians in the days of Isaiah, the prophet Isaiah had appealed to the Zion tradition to encourage Judah to trust that Yahweh would not allow Jerusalem to fall to its enemies (cf. 2 Kgs. 18-19; Isa. 36-37). The miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib at the eleventh hour, in connection with the already existing Zion tradition, appears to have given rise to a fixed and certain belief in the inviolability of Zion. As the words of Jeremiah’s opponents reflect, the prophet constantly
had to contest and combat the popular notion that calamity would not befall Jerusalem.\footnote{58}

When Hananiah promises imminent relief from the Babylonian crisis, his message appears to fall in line with Isaiah’s earlier message of impending deliverance from the Assyrian crisis. Overholt states that the message of Hananiah “stood firmly within the tradition of the prophet Isaiah, who was convinced that Zion would never fall (cf. Isa. 1:7f; 31:4f; 33:17-22).”\footnote{59}

\footnote{58}Cf. Jer. 4:10: “You will have peace;” 5:12: “He will do nothing/ No harm will come to us/ We will never see sword or famine;” 6:14; 8:11: “Peace, peace;” 7:4: “The temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh;” 8:19: “Is the Lord not in Zion? Is her king no longer there?” This belief in the inviolability of Zion is also reflected in the quotations of the opponents of the prophet Micah. See A. S. van der Woude, “Micah in Dispute With the Pseudo-Prophets,” VT 19 (1969): 244-60. Responding to Micah’s pronouncements of judgment against Zion, these prophets exclaim, “Do not prophesy” and “do not prophesy about these things” (Mic 2:6). The prophets of peace comfort the people by reminding them of God’s presence in Zion: “Is the Lord not among us? No disaster will come upon us” (Mic. 3:11). Van der Woude also views the alternating statements of weal and woe in Mic. 4:9-14 as a dispute between Micah, who pronounces judgment, and the pseudo-prophets, who promise unconditional blessing. To combat Micah’s words of judgment, these prophets ask, “Do you have no king? Has your counselor perished”? The prophets promise Zion deliverance from its enemies (Mic. 4:10) and they call upon the “Daughter of Zion” to rise up and trample its enemies (Mic. 4:13-14) in a manner recalling the defeat of the nations motif that is highlighted in the Zion psalms (cf. Pss. 46:6-9; 48:4-7; 76:1-10).

A secondary issue is the question of how accurately these quotations in Jeremiah reflect the viewpoint of Jeremiah’s opponents. At times, these quotations are no doubt laced with irony, sarcasm, and exaggeration. For this issue, see Burke O. Long, “Social Dimensions of Prophetic Conflict,” Semeia 21: Anthropological Perspectives on Old Testament Prophecy (1981): 31-53, and H. W. Wolff, Das Zitat im Prophetenspruch (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1973), 38-51. The result is that some of the nuances of the original conflict between the prophet and his opponents are lost and the perspectives of the opponents are presented in rather flat and one-dimensional tones (not unlike the presentation of the “legalism” of the Pharisees in the New Testament Gospels). However, Long appears to have overstated the case when he argues that “we really have very little basis on which to reconstruct an opposing ideological position.” The conclusion of Crenshaw (Prophetic Conflict, 34) seems more on target: “Most of the quotations have a ring of authenticity that justifies their acceptance as a genuine popular response to prophetic faith.” With regard to debate over the inviolability of Zion, the quotations of the prophetic opponents may actually reflect more of how the message was received by the populace at large as an absolute assertion of the security of Jerusalem. In any case, it is quite clear from a literary perspective that the biblical narratives present the issue at stake as a debate over whether the security of Zion is conditional or unconditional.

\footnote{59}Overholt, “Jeremiah 27-29: The Question of False Prophecy,” 245. Similarly, Brueggemann, (“The Book of Jeremiah, Portrait of the Prophet,” 140) explains: “Jeremiah’s contemporaries were not so far removed from Isaiah that they could not remember his council to quiet faith and sure confidence in Yahweh (Isa. 7:9; 30:15). Indeed it is likely that Hananiah,
Jeremiah himself makes no attempt to counter the implied claim that he is "no Isaiah" and even explicitly states that he places himself in the camp of the prophets of judgment rather than the prophets of "peace" (28:8-9).

The narrator in chapters 37-38 turns more directly to the issue of the unfavorable comparison of Jeremiah to Isaiah by drawing a typological comparison between the dialogue of Jeremiah and Zedekiah that leads to the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and the earlier conferences of Isaiah and Hezekiah that led to the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib and the Assyrians in 701 B.C. Jeremiah 21:1-10, a passage that is most likely a doublet for 37:3-10 describing the same interview between Jeremiah and Zedekiah, makes explicit reference to the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib when Zedekiah requests Jeremiah's intercession so that Yahweh might perhaps "perform wonders for us as in times past so that he [the Babylonian king] will withdraw from us" (21:4). In drawing the correlation between the deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrians in 701 B.C. and the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., the type-scene of the prophet proclaiming an oracle to the king assumes a place of major importance in the narrative. In the events of 701 B.C., Isaiah's oracle of salvation to Hezekiah had guaranteed the deliverance of Jerusalem. In Jeremiah 27-29 and 37-39, the repetition of Jeremiah's oracles of judgment to Zedekiah specifically (27:12-15; 37:3-10, 17-21; 38:14ff; cf. 21:1-10; 34:1-7) serves to highlight the frantic attempts of Zedekiah to manipulate a favorable oracle of salvation like that offered to

an alternative prophet (not to say false), stood in the line of Isaiah." Sanders ("Hermeneutics in True and False Prophecy," 26) also argues that Hananiah is "parroting Isaiah" in his positive message of impending deliverance for Judah.

60See Diamond, "Portraying Prophecy," 112, n. 29, for a long list of interpreters who have recognized this connection between Jer. 21 and the earlier events surrounding Isaiah/Hezekiah.
Hezekiah and the steadfast unwillingness of Jeremiah to offer any such promises of deliverance.

This story form not only recalls these king-prophet stories in general, but specifically hearkens back to the Isaiah-Hezekiah dialogue for the purpose of contrast. The analogy between the two events is not surprising in that both situations share a common background: a threat to Jerusalem from a foreign enemy. The 701 B.C. deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib is also the one event that could have fostered the desperate hope against all odds reflected by Zedekiah and the royal officials of Judah in their continued resistance against the Babylonians.

The narrator of the Jeremiah accounts clearly emphasizes the total distancing of the Jeremiah/Zedekiah event from the Isaiah/Hezekiah episode. Jeremiah has accused Jehoiakim of not living up to the ideal of Hezekiah and Josiah. Now, the narrator is going to accuse Jeremiah of not living up to the standards of the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah specifically prophesied that the Assyrian king would not enter the gates of Jerusalem (Isa. 37:33); Jeremiah warns that Jerusalem will be captured and burned (Jer. 37:8-10, 17; 38:3, 18, 21-23). The deliverance of Jerusalem in Isaiah’s day involved the miraculous destruction of the Assyrian army (Isa. 37:36-38), but there is no such hope for deliverance from the Babylonian armies. Jeremiah warns that even a major defeat or setback for the Babylonians army will not prevent their capture of Jerusalem and defeat of Judah (Jer. 37:6-10).61

The analogy between Jeremiah/Zedekiah and Isaiah/Hezekiah is a dangerous form of rhetoric when dealing with the issue of prophetic credibility because it appears to only widen the gap between Jeremiah and Isaiah.

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61Ibid, 113.
This event above all others confirms that Jeremiah is no Isaiah, and the manner in which the narrator employs the Isaiah/Hezekiah typology makes the analogy even more arresting and ironic. The narrator goes to an extreme length to present Jeremiah as an anti-Isaiah figure by using the Isaiah/Hezekiah analogy to compare Jeremiah to a blasphemous foreigner. The person that Jeremiah most closely resembles from the Isaiah/Hezekiah story is not the prophet Isaiah but rather the Assyrian Rab-Shakeh who blasphemes Yahweh and warns that Jerusalem will not withstand the foreign assault. In the Isaiah/Hezekiah typology, Jeremiah takes the place of the foreign blasphemer who proclaims that there will be "no deliverance" for Jerusalem (cf. 2 Kgs. 18:29; 19:10; Jer. 37:9).62 Diamond comments that such a comparison "risks undermining Jeremiah's authority, for on the surface it enables the reader to view Jeremiah as an agent of the enemy king and a blasphemer."63 This Rab-Shakeh/Jeremiah analogy enables the reader to view Jeremiah precisely as his opponents see him—an apostate and a traitor (cf. 38:4). The comparison of Jeremiah to a foreign enemy is particularly appropriate in light of the prophet's assertion that Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon have taken over the favored position with Yahweh belonging to David and Jerusalem.64

62Ibid, 113-14. Diamond sets forth several more specific parallels between the characters of the Rab-Shakeh and Jeremiah, which include: 1) both crush hope in relief from the Egyptian army (2 Kgs. 18:21; Jer. 37:7); 2) both turn from the leadership to the populace at large to make their appeal for Judah to surrender for their own good (2 Kgs. 18:31-32; Jer. 38:2); and 3) the Rab-Shakeh views as false the idea that Jerusalem will not be given "into the hand" of the king of Assyria (2 Kgs. 18:30; 19:10), while Jeremiah constantly warns that the city will be given "into the hand" of the king of Babylon (Jer. 37:17; 38:3, 18).

63Ibid, 114.

64In the Isaiah/Hezekiah narratives, Jerusalem is saved for the sake of Yahweh's "servant" Hezekiah (cf. 2 Kgs. 19:34; 20:6), but in the Jeremiah/Zedekiah scenes, Jerusalem falls to the foreign army because Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon has become the "servant" of Yahweh (Jer. 25:9; 27:6). The figure of the Rab-Shakeh also indicates a contrast between the presentation of the Assyrians and the Babylonians in the two respective stories. In the Isaiah/
The comparison of Jeremiah to the Rab-Shakeh would appear to sabotage the narrative design of vindicating and validating Jeremiah's prophetic message and ministry. There is nothing favorable in comparing a prophet of Yahweh to a pagan military officer who blasphemes the name of Yahweh. The process of "mirroring" has taken place. The narrator has portrayed Jehoiakim as being "no Hezekiah" and "no Josiah" in chapters 26 and 36, but now the narrative portrays Jeremiah as being a prophet who is "no Isaiah."\(^6^5\) The narrative is portraying Jeremiah in the same light as the opponents who reject the word of Yahweh. However, the narrator is still on Jeremiah's side and will ultimately do with this textual "mirroring" what Jeremiah did to the "mirroring" of Hananiah and Shemaiah. The final word will belong to Jeremiah and will provide vindication and validation of his ministry.

Hezekiah story, the Rab-Shakeh and the other Assyrian messengers constantly hurl curses and taunts toward Yahweh and the people of Judah (cf. 2 Kgs. 18:22, 30, 32-35; 19:10-13, 21-28). In the Jeremiah narratives, the Babylonians have a much more deferential and respectful attitude toward Yahweh. In Jer. 39:11-14, the Babylonian commander Nebuzaradan carries out Nebuchadnezzar's order to take care of Jeremiah and to do whatever he asks. The Babylonians show greater respect for this prophet of Yahweh than do the people of Judah themselves. In contrast to the Rab-Shakeh's theologically incorrect assertion that disaster has come to Judah because of Hezekiah's removal of the high places (2 Kgs. 18:22), Nebuzaradan sounds like a good "Deuteronomist" when he correctly concludes that disaster has come to Judah because of their refusal to obey Yahweh (Jer. 40:3). This commander recognizes what the people of Judah have not, and he also releases Jeremiah from the imprisonment brought about by the leaders of Judah themselves (40:4-6). The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah are in agreement that Sennacherib and Nebuchadrezzar respectively function as the "instrument" of Yahweh's judgment and wrath (cf. Isa. 10:5ff; Jer. 21:1-10; 25:7-9; 27:6-8), but the theopolitical orientation of the message of Jeremiah is much more radical in terms of its pro-Babylon rhetoric.

\(^{6^5}\) In addition to the Rab-Shakeh analogy, this point is made even more specific by the way that the wording of Jeremiah's speeches directly contrasts to the wording of the speeches of Isaiah to Hezekiah. Isaiah promises that the Assyrians will "return" (כָּלְנִי) to their homeland (Isa. 37:34), and Sennacherib eventually withdraws from Jerusalem (Isa. 37:37). In contrast, the Babylonians withdraw from Jerusalem, but Jeremiah warns that they will "return" (כָּלְנִי) to attack the city of Jerusalem (Jer. 37:8). In this incident, it is the Egyptians who "return" (כָּלְנִי) to their homeland after offering brief but futile assistance to the people of Judah against the Babylonian armies (Jer. 37:7). See Diamond, "Portraying Prophecy," 114.
The Unbelief of Jeremiah's Opponents

The narrative material in Jeremiah 27-29 and 37-39 concedes the point that Jeremiah is no Isaiah and even encourages a radical conception of this idea by stressing that Jeremiah more closely resembles the Assyrian Rab-Shakeh rather than the prophet of Yahweh from the previous story. Nevertheless, the ultimate purpose of the Jeremiah/Isaiah typology is not to demean the prophetic ministry of Jeremiah but rather to demonstrate that ultimate blame for the disaster that befalls Judah belongs with Jeremiah's opponents who have rejected the word of Yahweh spoken by the prophet.

The narrator accepts the premise of Jeremiah's opponents that the prophet is no Isaiah in order to destroy the theological underpinnings that led to their rejection of Jeremiah's message. The rhetorical purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate that the ultimate blame for the disaster that befalls Judah is not Jeremiah's shortcomings as a prophet but rather the failure of Jeremiah's opponents to fully apply the message of the prophet Isaiah to their own historical situation. The major issue is not that Jeremiah has failed to replicate the ministry of Isaiah, but instead that Isaiah's self-proclaimed successors have failed to live up to the teachings of their storied mentor.

Despite the recurring promises in the preaching of Isaiah that Yahweh would indeed deliver Jerusalem from its enemies, it is also clear that Isaiah attached certain conditions to the security of Zion. Ollenburger explains that one of the major conditions was a response of complete and absolute trust in Yahweh's promises to protect and defend Zion from its enemies. Ollenburger writes: "Zion's inviolability is applicable to the leadership of Judah only upon condition of faithfulness to Yahweh's word."
of human effort to make Zion safe and secure (i.e., military preparations, reinforcement of fortifications, use of armaments, political alliances with foreign nations) and must "rest" in Yahweh's promises to protect and deliver (cf. Isa. 28:12; 20:1-5, 15; 31:1-3). Ollenburger further elaborates:

While Yahweh makes unconditional promises regarding his intention to defend Zion, these promises can be turned precisely against the leaders of Judah, who, if they act faithlessly and turn to Assyria or Egypt for deliverance, become the enemies of Yahweh and are thus the objects of his saving action on behalf of Zion. Thus, Yahweh, who characteristically battles the hostile forces gathered against Zion, can himself become the leader of those forces brought against the city to purge from its midst those who have become its true enemy [cf. Isa. 29:1-5].

The prophet Isaiah affirms that Yahweh will fight on behalf of Zion (cf. Isa. 8:9-10; 17:12-14) but prohibits Judah's leaders from infringing on Yahweh's "exclusive prerogative" through the use of human military or political efforts. King Hezekiah helps to secure the deliverance of Jerusalem because of his radical "Yahweh-alone" faith when he goes to the Jerusalem temple and lays before Yahweh the threatening letter of the Rab-Shakeh (cf. Isa. 37:14-20).

The narratives in chapters 27-29 and 37-39 anticipate and then destroy the objection that Jeremiah is no Isaiah by specifically highlighting that Judah has failed to meet this condition of complete and absolute trust in Yahweh. The leaders of Judah in Jeremiah's day look for and anticipate a deliverance like that promised for Judah by Isaiah but have ignored this specific condition attached to the deliverance by Isaiah himself. Jeremiah's contemporaries are not as much disciples of Isaiah as they imagine them-

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67Ibid, 120.

68Ibid.
selves to be. The nation of Judah experiences exile and destruction because King Zedekiah fails to exercise faith in the prophetic word in the manner of Hezekiah.

A key parallel between Jeremiah 27-29 and 37-39 is that both sections place Jeremiah’s call for submission to Babylon within the context of international resistance to Babylonian hegemony. In fact, this intrigue and resistance against Babylonian domination appears at the beginning of each section and colors everything that follows. In chapter 27, the call for submission to Babylon occurs in connection with a convocation of envoys from the various city-states in the Levant assembled to persuade Zedekiah to join their anti-Babylonian coalition that took place in 594 B.C.\(^{69}\) At the beginning of chapter 37, the Egyptian military assistance that brings temporary relief from the Babylonian siege serves as the point of entrance for the series of interviews between Jeremiah and Zedekiah. Zedekiah and the military officials of Judah are hopeful that military alliances and continued resistance will break the Babylonian will to subjugate Jerusalem.

Through these efforts of military alliance and resistance, the king and nation of Judah are violating an important tenet of Isaianic theology.

\(^{69}\)For discussion of the historical setting of this meeting in Jerusalem, see A. Malamat, “The Twilight of Judah: In the Egyptian-Babylonian Maelstrom,” in Congress Volume, Edinburgh, 1974, VTSup 28, ed. G. W. Anderson et al., (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 135-38. Malamat writes, “We know little of the particular circumstances leading to the convening of the conference, of the consequences thereof, or even of its precise date.” Malamat catalogues the various proposals for the date and setting of this meeting, ranging from the beginning year to the seventh year of Hezekiah’s reign. The 594 date is generally accepted because of the fact that the notation for the year 595/594 B.C. in the Babylonian Chronicles refers to a revolt in the land of Babylon itself. In addition, Nebuchadnezzar was forced to repel a march against Babylon from the King of Elam. These events may have led the kings of the Levant to feel that the time was ripe for throwing off Babylonian dominion. The text of the Babylonian Chronicle mentions a campaign to the west in the year 594, but the text breaks off before providing any details. For the text of the Babylonian Chronicle, see Donald J. Wiseman, Chronicles of the Chaldean Kings (626-536 B.C.) in the British Museum, (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1956), 72-73.
Isaiah had proclaimed that Judah and Jerusalem would experience deliverance only through a radical trust in Yahweh alone that renounced all reliance in human might and military strength as a source of security. The leaders of Jeremiah's day are precisely the people to whom Isaiah offers no hope of deliverance or rescue. The inability of Zedekiah to respond in faith is the specific point of contrast with Hezekiah (cf. 37:1-2). The promise of Jeremiah to Zedekiah is minimal when compared to that of Isaiah to Hezekiah (a call to surrender in order to preserve his life and to avoid total destruction versus a promise of complete deliverance for the city of Jerusalem), and this comparison might suggest a diminishing of the prophetic office as embodied in the person and work of Jeremiah. However, the narrative purposely focuses away from any deficiency in the prophet himself and places the blame and responsibility for Judah's calamity on the unbelief of the king. The prophet has merely carried out his mission of proclaiming the message given by Yahweh.

The prophet Jeremiah once again emerges as the victor in the game of "mirroring." In Jeremiah 26 and 36, the narrative presents Jehoiakim as an "anti-Hezekiah" and "anti-Josiah" figure. The narratives in chapters 27-29 and 37-39 then "mirror" this technique by portraying Jeremiah as an "anti-Isaiah" prophet who holds forth no promise of deliverance for Jerusalem. However, the final act of mirroring vindicates Jeremiah and demonstrates that he is not to blame for the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians. The real problem is that Zedekiah is just like Jehoiakim in that he is an "anti-Hezekiah" ruler because of his refusal to trust in Yahweh. The narrator has effectively turned the tables on Jeremiah's opponents in the same way that Jeremiah himself turned the tables on the false prophets and the royal officials.
The intertextual contrast between Zedekiah and Hezekiah is strengthened by the intratextual parallelism that exists between Zedekiah and Jehoiakim in the Jeremiah narratives. The linkage between Jehoiakim and Zedekiah in panel one in chapters 26-29 and in panel two in chapters 36-39 demonstrates that the narrator is bringing these two figures together as royal representatives of Judah’s unbelief. The framework chapters of 26 and 36 depict Jehoiakim as a negative image of the reforming kings Hezekiah and Josiah, because of his refusal to “listen to/obey” the prophetic word. The non-chronological placement of the narrative of chapter 36 from the period of Jehoiakim with the narratives of chapters 37-38 from the period of Zedekiah serves to highlight that Zedekiah is like Jehoiakim in that he refuses to “listen to/obey” the prophetic word (37:2). The response of both Jehoiakim and Zedekiah to the word of Yahweh presents a strong contrast to the faithful and pious obedience of Hezekiah and Josiah.

At first glance, the Jeremiah narratives would appear to stress the dissimilarity of the characters of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah. The two kings are different in terms of the their treatment of the prophet Jeremiah. King Jehoiakim seeks to have Jeremiah incarcerated and even put to death for his negative message of judgment. In contrast, Zedekiah generally functions in the role of protector of the prophet, delivering Jeremiah from unfavorable

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70Diamond ("Portraying Prophecy," 114-15) comments, "By prefacing Jeremiah 36 to the story of the siege, the narrator can effect a link between Zedekiah and Jehoiakim. The association of Zedekiah with the impiety of Jehoiakim ... firmly underlies the contrast with the circumstances of Hezekiah’s reign." Martens ("Narrative Parallelism and Message in Jeremiah 34-38," 43-45) demonstrates that the parallelism between ch. 36 (Jehoiakim) and chs. 37-38 (Zedekiah) extends to the inner sequencing of the two passages. In both accounts, there is a threefold reading or proclamation of the prophetic word (ch. 36: 1) vv. 5-10; 2) vv. 11-19; 3) vv. 20-26; chs. 37-38: 1) 37:3-10; 2) 37:17-21; 3) 38:14-28). Both accounts present attempts to destroy the word of God. In ch. 36, the king cuts up the prophetic scroll. In chs. 37-38, the royal officials cast Jeremiah in a cistern to die (38:1-6). Both passages are also centered around a threatening word delivered to the king.
places of confinement and even taking measures to guarantee the security of
the prophet in spite of the plots of certain royal officials against Jeremiah.
Jehoiakim contemptuously cuts up the scroll of Jeremiah, while Zedekiah
persistently seeks an oracle from the prophet, a demonstration of Zedekiah’s
regard for Jeremiah’s office and authority even if the king is unable to rise to
the challenge of following his counsel.

The relationship between Jeremiah and Jehoiakim is so charged
with hostility that the two figures never appear together at the same location.
It is not safe for Jeremiah to even be in the presence of the rebellious king.
After putting Uriah to the sword, Jehoiakim does the same to the scroll of
Jeremiah’s prophecies as perhaps a form of vicarious wish that he could do
the same to the person of Jeremiah himself if he could only get his hands on
the prophet. In contrast, Jeremiah is in constant contact and dialogue with
Zedekiah. Though often appearing in the narrative as combatants sparring in
the ring, the relationship between Jeremiah and Zedekiah is at least amicable
enough to allow face-to-face dialogue without an overriding fear of reprisal
against the prophet.

While the unbelief of Jehoiakim is violent and vocal, it is the
silence of Zedekiah that speaks volumes concerning his unwillingness to fol-
low Jeremiah’s counsel. The repeated occurrence of the king earnestly
beseeching the prophet for an oracle but then making little or no response to
the counsel that is offered is reflective of Zedekiah’s attempts to manipulate a
more favorable message from the prophet. The only real response of Zede-
kiah to the news that Jerusalem will be handed over does not appear until the
third interview when the king briefly expresses fear concerning the treatment
he will receive at the hands of the Jews who have defected to the Babylonians
(cf. 38:19). There is otherwise no specific response on the king’s part to the
repeated call for surrender to Babylon. The silence indicates an attempted evasion of the consequences of Jeremiah’s message.

The narrative moves from the final dialogue between Jeremiah and Zedekiah in chapter 38 to the capture of Jerusalem and the king in chapter 39 and completely passes over any mention of the final decision and response of Zedekiah. The narrator portrays Zedekiah vacillating between fear and faith until the time for avoiding calamity by surrendering to the Babylonians has passed. Unlike Jehoiakim, who breathes out fiery invectives against the prophet Jeremiah, Zedekiah is too weak to even come to a definitive point of rejection and defaults on the decision that decides the fate of the nation. The differences between Jehoiakim and Zedekiah in terms of personality and response to the figure of Jeremiah are striking, but these differences fade in the light of the more significant similarity that neither of these kings “listened to/obeyed” the prophetic word.

The juxtaposition of the characters of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah has the literary effect of setting forth the full-orbed nature of unbelief. Zedekiah’s silent unbelief has national consequences for Judah that are just as severe as the angry and hostile rejection of his predecessor. The presentation of Zedekiah in the narrative material of Jeremiah 26-45 is somewhat different than that of this king elsewhere in the book of Jeremiah (cf. 21:1-14; 23:1-8; 24:8-10) in that it suggests a more amicable relationship between Jeremiah and Zedekiah. This different slant on the figure of Zedekiah may actually contribute to the narrative design of this section of the book of Jeremiah. In this section of the book highlighting the issue of obedience, the narrator(s) stresses fidelity to the prophetic word for the Jewish community in the aftermath of exile. The more sympathetic portrait of Zedekiah in Jeremiah 26-45 suggests that he functions in the role of an “everyman” responding to the word of Yahweh.
The story form of king-prophet interview often results in an angry confrontation with the king attempting to use his royal powers to silence or punish the prophet. The response of Jehoiakim represents such a response to the preaching of Jeremiah. However, the response of Zedekiah is not that of an angry tyrant but rather of a vacillating inquirer. The typical reader would be more disposed to identify with the tentativeness of Zedekiah than with the raging hostility of Jehoiakim.

The characterization of Zedekiah in this section as fearful creates a bond between this king and the Judean survivors of the exile who also hesitate to follow the counsel of Jeremiah because of fear. By projecting the emotion of fear so prominently in the characterization of Zedekiah, the narrative enables the reader to see and understand the disastrous consequences of such fear. The characterization of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah in juxtaposition to one another offers a comprehensive portrayal of the dual nature of unbelief.

**Conclusion**

Jeremiah 27-29 and 37-39 highlight the theme of prophetic conflict in a most dramatic way. The prophet Jeremiah is engaged in a life and death struggle with his prophetic opponents. These enemies seek to imprison and kill Jeremiah, but Jeremiah is able to turn the tables on his opponents because Yahweh is with him. In this conflict, much more is at stake than the individual life of Jeremiah himself. The life of the nation of Judah is ultimately at stake.

Jeremiah exhorts the nation to adopt a response to the Babylonian crisis that is diametrically opposed to the course advocated by his enemies. Jeremiah counsels submission to Babylon because Yahweh has decreed the
hegemony of Babylon as punishment for Judah's sin. Submission to Babylon is the only path to survival for the nation. The unfolding of the prophetic conflict in chapters 27-29 and 37-39 reveals that Jeremiah offers a way of life, while his opponents promote a course of action that leads to death. The narratives also confirm Judah's choice of the latter over the former, particularly in the response of the fearful and vacillating Zedekiah. These two portions of narrative contribute to the overall theme of Jeremiah 26-45 that Judah's fate rests on its response to the word of Yahweh spoken through the prophet Jeremiah.
Chapter 5

INSIDE THE FRAMEWORK (2): ISRAEL IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE EXILE

(JER. 30-33 AND 40-43)

Introduction

The final correspondence between the panels of material in Jeremiah 26-35 and 36-45 is the parallelism of chapters 30-33 and 40-43. The Jehoiakim framework in chapters 26/34-35 and 36/44-45 envelops the overall structure and provides an introduction for the two individual panels and for Jeremiah 26-45 as a whole. The narratives in chapters 27-29 and 37-39 deal with events and messages dating from the reign of Zedekiah and culminate with the fall of Judah and Jerusalem to the Babylonian armies. The theme of prophetic conflict is prominent in these two sections.

In one sense, the historical narrative in Jeremiah 39 provides some form of closure to what is introduced in chapter 26. In 26:6, Jeremiah warns that the temple will become “like Shiloh” and that Jerusalem will be “an object of cursing among all the nations,” and the narrative summary of the fall of Jerusalem in chapter 39 documents the fulfillment of this prophecy of judgment and doom.

Nevertheless, the focus of Jeremiah 26-45 extends beyond the historical fulfillment of the prophet’s warnings of judgment and presents the prophet Jeremiah’s vision of the future of Israel in the aftermath of exile. The key parallelism between the material in Jeremiah 30-33 and 40-43 is that...
both sections carry the story beyond the fall of Jerusalem and the subjugation of Judah to Babylon. The continuation of the narrative beyond Judah's national demise demonstrates that the events of 586 B.C. are not the final chapter in the history of Israel as the people of God. The narrative tension in Jeremiah 26-45 is not merely whether or not Judah will fall to the Babylonians but also what the Babylonian exile means for the future of Israel.

In light of the correspondence of similarity evident in the Jehoiakim framework (26/35-36 and 36/44-45) and the Zedekiah narratives (27-29 and 37-39), the reader of Jeremiah 26-45 is prepared for the same type of correspondence between the materials in chapters 30-33 and 40-43. The prophetic books frequently reflect a judgment/salvation schema, and the reader anticipates a similar arrangement for the prophecies of Jeremiah. The prophecies of doom have been fulfilled with the fall of Judah and Jerusalem, and the expectation is that salvation prophecies for the future will balance the judgment messages of the present.

However, the message of Jeremiah regarding the future is presented in a much more nuanced and ambiguous manner that raises a tension surrounding the unfolding of Israel's future. The parallelism between chapters 30-33 in panel one of the Jeremiah narratives and chapters 40-43 in panel two is not one of similarity but rather of contrast and dissimilarity. Jeremiah 30-33 contains the expected promises of future salvation to offset the terrible judgment that Judah experiences at the hand of Babylonians, but the narratives in 40-43 portray Judah's continued experience of judgment from Yahweh, a judgment that must reach its climax before the future blessings of salvation can ever be experienced.

The contrast between chapters 30-33 and 40-43 arising out of the symmetry between the two panels (chs. 26-35 and 36-45) in the Jeremiah nar-
ratives highlights one of the key aspects of Jeremiah's message concerning the future of Israel: the contrast between the life of Judah in the immediate aftermath of exile and the future blessing of Israel at the time of the eschatological restoration and renewal. The narrative material in chapters 40-43 documents that the immediate aftermath of exile in Judah is a time of further disobedience and judgment like that experienced before the exile. The people have not learned their lesson with the fall of Jerusalem and will continue to experience further judgment from Yahweh. In contrast, the material in chapters 30-33 portrays an undetermined time in the future when things will finally be right between Yahweh and Israel. Yahweh will establish a new covenant that will enable Israel to offer to Yahweh the kind of obedience that will result in permanent blessing and prosperity.

The contrast between the hope of Jeremiah 30-33 and the continued experience of judgment in Jeremiah 40-43 serves as the rhetorical focal point for all of Jeremiah 26-45. The promises of restoration and renewal in chapters 30-33 of panel one portray a glorious future for Israel. The narrator in Jeremiah 40-43 begins this section with several hopeful signs which seem to indicate that the fall of Jerusalem in chapter 39 marks the end of Yahweh's devastating judgment against Judah. A new era is about to begin in chapter 40 when the prophet Jeremiah returns to the land of Judah. The reader anticipates this coming time of salvation only to watch it slip away as Judah persists in its disobedience and rebellion against Yahweh. The reader feels the hope that the aftermath of exile is going to be a time like that portrayed in Jeremiah 30-33 only to feel more intensely the bitter disappointment that the aftermath of exile offers only more judgment as Judah continues to rebel against the word of Yahweh.
The Jeremiah narratives deal with three historical periods in the ministry of the prophet: 1) the time of Jehoiakim prior to the initial subjugation of Judah to Babylon in 597 B.C.; 2) the time of Zedekiah from 597 to 586 B.C. when Judah has the opportunity to avoid total destruction; and 3) the time in the immediate aftermath of exile when the survivors in the land of Judah continue to reject Yahweh's counsel of submission to Babylon. The rhetorical design between the contrast of Jeremiah 30-33 and 40-43 is to demonstrate that the events portrayed in the narratives of 40-43 belong to the period of judgment that precedes rather than to the era of salvation that will ultimately come. The time of renewal portrayed in 30-33 stands against the three major historical epochs in the life and ministry of Jeremiah.

The Placement and Unity of Jeremiah 30-33

Before exploring the relationship of Jeremiah 30-33 and 40-43, it is necessary to give some attention to the placement and function of chapters 30-33 within the whole of Jeremiah 26-45. The previous chapter has demonstrated that chapters 40-43 are part of a largely chronological section of narrative extending from 37:1-43:13. The fall of Jerusalem is the watershed event within this chronological narrative. Chapters 37-39 portray events leading up to and including the fall of Judah and Jerusalem and raise the tension of whether or not Judah will fall to the enemy. Chapters 40-43 depict events in the aftermath of the fall of Judah and raise the tension of what Judah will experience in the midst of its subjugation to Babylon. It is easy for the reader to integrate chapters 40-43 into the Jeremiah narratives in chapters

1 Certain poetic passages in chs. 30-31 most likely originated during the period of Josiah because of references to exiles from the northern kingdom ("Jacob" and "Ephraim"—cf. 30:7, 10, 18; 31:4-11, 18-22), but the narratives in chs. 26-45 do not depict events from this period.
26-45 as a whole, because these accounts so closely resemble much of the other material in this section of the book of Jeremiah. These narratives depict various responses to the preaching of Jeremiah, particularly responses of unbelief to Jeremiah's counsel urging submission to Babylon as Yahweh's plan.

The integration of chapters 30-33 (also known as the Book of Consolation) into an overall reading of Jeremiah 26-45 is somewhat more complicated. The inclusion of significant portions of poetic material (in chs. 30-31) in this section raises questions about the unity of 30-33 itself and also about how these materials are to be holistically and cohesively read within the largely narrative section of the book of Jeremiah. The hopeful tone of much of this material and the promises of restoration and renewal also appear to blunt the force of the message of judgment that is dominant in the majority of narrative accounts in chapters 26-45. Hobbs writes, "The reason for the present context of 30-33 still remains something of a mystery."² Similarly, Rofé argues that the structure of Jeremiah 25-36 is "disturbed" by the inclusion of the material in chapters 30, 31, and 33.³ The appearance to the modern reader is that various types of material somehow related to the prophet Jeremiah have been pieced together in a rather careless and haphazard manner and that finding any sort of cohesive message or integrated reading strategy for Jeremiah 26-45 as a whole is a largely futile endeavor.

The discussion of Jeremiah 30-33 that follows will explore three major issues: 1) the impact of poetic materials in chapters 30-31 on a holistic reading of Jeremiah 26-45; 2) the features demonstrating the unity of chapters


30-33 as a distinct literary unit; and 3) the major rhetorical contribution of the Book of Consolation to the overall theological message of the Jeremiah narratives in chapters 26-45.

The Use of Poetry in Jeremiah 30-31

One of the obstacles to reading Jeremiah 26-45 holistically is the inclusion of the poetic material found in chapters 30-31. This poetic material appears to be an intrusion into the recounting of various incidents from the life of Jeremiah. Nevertheless, it is not necessary to view the poetry in 30-31 as interrupting the flow of the Jeremiah narratives. The blending of prose and poetry is not only a common feature of Hebrew literature, but poetic sections often play vital rhetorical roles in narrative contexts. In his monograph, *Psalm and Story*, Watts comments concerning hymnic poetry, "The use of psalms in narrative contexts is a literary device used to achieve compositional (narrative) goals." Watts further explains:

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4James W. Watts, *Psalm and Story: Inset Hymns in Hebrew Narrative*, JSOTSUp 139 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 186. Watts notes how psalms are often placed at the end of narrative blocks: in single episodes (Judg. 5; 1 Chron. 16) or whole books (Deut. 32-33; 2 Sam. 22-23) to provide a sense of closure (pp. 186-87). For example, the pessimistic Song of Moses in Deut. 32:1-43 and the optimistic Blessing of Moses in Deut. 33:2-29 at the end of the book of Deuteronomy provide a climactic conclusion that highlights the theme of blessing and cursing that is also reflected in the prose cycles found in Deut. 27-28 and 29-30 (pp. 169-70).

Edgar Conrad (*Reading Isaiah*, OBT [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991], 34-51) has demonstrated the opposite phenomenon of narrative playing a strategic role within a large section of poetry. In the book of Isaiah, the prose narratives of chs. 7 and 36-39 stand out within a book of poetry. These narrative sections parallel one another and appear to have strategic importance for the book's structure. In the Ahaz narrative of ch. 7, the Assyrians pose a future threat, but in the Hezekiah narratives of chs. 36-39, the Assyrian crisis is brought to an end. In this way, chs. 36-39 provide a sense of closure for the first half of Isaiah in that the Assyrian threat that predominates in chs. 1-35 is resolved. Chapters 36-39 also prepare the way for the second half of the book (Isa. 40-66) and its focus on the Babylonian threat. The deliverance of Israel from Sennacherib described in the narratives in 36-39 provides the "persuasive basis" for the contention in Isaiah 40-66 that Yahweh will once again intervene in order to deliver Israel from Babylon.

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The inclusion of poetry within narrative expanded the latter's representational scope and, especially, its affective impact on readers and hearers. Descriptions of Hebrew narrative genres must therefore take into account not only the contrast with poetry, but also narrative's ability to incorporate poetic genres and thus combine their literary potential with its own.\(^5\)

The two primary ways in which poems are used within narrative to achieve compositional goals are "by their positions in the narrative and by their thematic contents."\(^6\)

Poetic material often appears at or near the end of narrative sections in order to provide a dramatic ending or a sense of closure. The poetic material in Jeremiah 30-31 also appears to enjoy a strategic location within the Jeremiah narratives. First, the message of hope in chapters 30-33 provides a stark contrast to the message of false hope proclaimed by Jeremiah's prophetic opponents in chapters 27-29. The placement of chapters 30-33 also provides an alternating schema of judgment (chs. 26-29)--salvation (chs. 30-33)--judgment (chs. 34-45) for Jeremiah 26-45 as a whole, and the placement of the message of salvation in the middle of such an arrangement seems to give this section an exalted place of importance.\(^7\) The fact that the salvation passage appears between a section which predicts coming judgment (chs. 26-28) and a section which details the fulfillment of the warnings of judgment (cf. especially chs. 37-39) also seems to stress the ultimate certainty of this promised restoration and salvation in that the salvation is promised even before the sentence of judgment is fully executed.


\(^6\)Ibid, 186.

\(^7\)See the comment of Welch on pp. 59-60, n. 32, of this dissertation for the alternation between prose and poetry as a structuring device and for the place of primacy given to the center element in this type of A-B'-A structure.
At the same time, the location of the poetic material and promise of salvation in chapters 30-33 also raises a literary tension regarding the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promises, and this tension impacts the material which follows. The tension even surfaces within 30-33 itself. The lofty language of poetry provides a glorious portrayal of Israel’s future age of salvation, but this idealistic picture of the future is joined to real-life narratives describing events from the time of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem in 32-33. This blending of poetry and narrative creates a form of contradiction and raises the question of whether or not hope can ever emerge from the desperate situation faced by Judah during its final days. Just as Jeremiah’s faith is tested when he must purchase the family property at Anathoth at the very time when Judah is about to forfeit possession of the land (ch. 32), so also the reader is forced to wrestle with the conflict between the reality of Judah’s defeat at the hands of Babylon and Yahweh’s promises regarding Israel’s glorious future.

This tension between the poetic ideal and the prose reality also contributes to the contrast that will develop between Jeremiah 30-33 and 40-43. The narratives in 40-43 portray the physical and spiritual conditions of the Judeans living in the land after the fall of the nation as diametrically opposed to the conditions of blessing and prosperity described in the exalted poetry in 30-31. This contrast between (predominantly) poetry and prose furthers the rhetorical aims of the narrator. Through this contrast, the narrator confirms his point that Israel’s future hope lies with the exiles in Babylon and not with those who remain in the land following the exile. The exiles possess the promises that are depicted in poetic language in 30-33, while the survivors in the land after the exile experience the grim reality that is narrated in 40-43. The Jeremiah narratives conclude in chapter 45 without the realization of the
promises of the Book of Consolation, and thus, the tension between promise and fulfillment is left unresolved. The reader is called to exercise faith that Yahweh will ultimately fulfill the promises to his covenant people. The alternation between poetry and prose within the Jeremiah narratives intensifies the rhetorical force of this tension between promise and fulfillment.

The Literary Unity of Jeremiah 30-33

Having considered the role of the poetic material in Jeremiah 30-31, a second concern is the issue of the literary unity of Jeremiah 30-33 as it stands by itself. In light of previous studies that have extensively dealt with this issue, this section of the dissertation will simply summarize both the debate over the unity of 30-33 and the evidence in support of viewing 30-33 as a distinct literary unit as it now stands within Jeremiah 26-45.

Previous Debate over Unity of 30-33

The consensus of modern scholarship is that Jeremiah 30-33 is the product of a complex literary process. Debate surrounding the historical background/setting and the "authenticity" of individual oracles that has generally characterized treatment of the book of Jeremiah as a whole has been particularly intense in the discussion of the contents of chapters 30-33. Thompson observes, "Few portions of the book of Jeremiah have provoked so much discussion and disagreement among scholars in regard to date, authorship, and interpretation."8

The prevailing view is that the poetic materials in chapters 30-31 represent authentic oracles of the prophet that have undergone editorial ex-

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pansion. Following the lead of Volz, scholars have called attention to references to the northern kingdom in this section (cf. “Jacob” in 30:10[2]; 31:7, 11; “Ephraim” in 31:6, 9, 18, 20; “Samaria” in 31:5; and “Rachel” in 31:15) and have tended to view these oracles as messages of hope delivered to the northern kingdom in the early stages of the prophet Jeremiah’s ministry. The prophet originally delivered these oracles in the context of Josiah’s reforms and his attempts to reunify the northern and southern kingdoms, but these messages of restoration were given an all-Israel orientation in light of the Babylonian exile of Judah.

The prose narratives and sermons in Jeremiah 30-33 form the “second half” of the Book of Consolation and were attracted to the poetic materials in 30-31 because of a common thematic emphasis on hope and res-


11 Holladay, Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 26-52, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 156-62. Holladay views Jeremiah (and Baruch) as responsible for this later southern recension of the poetic oracles. For a contrasting viewpoint, see Robert P. Carroll, Jeremiah: A Commentary, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 569. As with the rest of the book of Jeremiah, Carroll adopts a radically critical view of the authenticity of this section as a reflection of the thought and message of the historical Jeremiah. Concerning the hopeful message in 30-31, Carroll writes, “Since he had proclaimed the complete destruction of the city, land, and people without residue it is difficult to see how Jeremiah could perform such a volte-face as is entailed in attributing 30-31 to him.” Carroll detects the influence of Hosea, 2 Isaiah, and Ezekiel and attributes this material to “the anonymous circles during and after the exile which cherished expectations of restoration.” See also 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, BETL 54 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1981), 119-42. Lust (p. 127) writes, “It is far from certain that . . . he [Jeremiah] ever used the arcane term süb in an announcement of the ‘Return’ from the Babylonian exile. This theme was most probably introduced by later writers.”

toration. There are again widely divergent views on the “authenticity” of these chapters as they relate to the historical personage of Jeremiah. Carroll argues that the sign act of Jeremiah purchasing family property at Anathoth in chapter 32 is not a “historical event” but rather a “paradigmatic account of how the future was secured by Jeremiah the prophet,” and that the remainder of this chapter reflects significant Deuteronomistic editorial influence.13 The prose material in chapter 33 is an even later “post-Deuteronomistic postscript to the cycle of salvation expectations in 30-31.”14 In contrast, Holladay argues that the purchase of the field was the actual historical event that served as the “catalyst that brought the prophet to proclaim a future hope.”15

Commentators offer varying perspectives on the editorial history of the prose material in chapters 32-33 as well. For example, regarding 32:36-44, Lust views this passage as an expansion based upon 32:15,16 Nicholson17 and Thiel18 isolate Deuteronomistic elements within these verses, and Raitt19 defends the section as genuinely Jeremianic. The mediating view of Bright is that editorial activity has occurred but that the passage reflects nothing “that

13Carroll, Jeremiah, 621.
14Ibid, 634.
15Holladay, Jeremiah 2, 156.
is foreign to Jeremiah's thought.” Varying perspectives of this sort appear in treatments of passages throughout chapters 30-33.

The attempts to provide a diachronic development of the Jeremianic message of hope reflect these varying perspectives on the editorial history of chapters 30-33. The general tendency is to give greater weight to the poetic passages over the prose passages in setting forth the teaching of the historical Jeremiah. In contrast, Raitt discounts the authenticity of much of the poetic material (with the exception of 30:18-22 and 31:2-6) but places the oracles of 31:31-34; 32:36-41; and 33:6-9 among the six prose passages that “represent the mind of Jeremiah as concerns Judah’s future after it has gone into exile.” The work of Untermann tends to give more equal weight to both poetic and prose texts in reconstructing the message of the prophet Jeremiah and the development of that message within the context of Jeremiah’s public ministry.

Several promissory passages from the MT version of the book of Jeremiah reflect conflation when compared to the LXX or are absent entirely from the LXX, evidence which seems to indicate that some expansion of the

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21The variety of proposals also reflects the high degree of subjectivity involved in this kind of reconstruction of the text.


24For example, Jer. 33:14-26 in the MT is completely missing in the LXX version of Jeremiah. The MT of Jer. 31:15 also appears to reflect a conflated reading when compared to its LXX counterpart. The conflation is based on two traditions of Rachel weeping. The MT reads, “Rachel is weeping for her sons and refuses to be comforted for her sons because they are no more.” LXXB reads with the MT but omits the phrase, “Rachel is weeping for her sons” (רחל ממכסה בעל בנייה). The majority of LXX MSS read with the MT but omit “she refuses to be comforted for her sons” (מענית לא חוסמת על בנייה). See J. Gerald Janzen, *Studies in the Text of Jerem-
original Jeremianic message of hope did take place at some point in the history of the book's development. Nevertheless, without denying the presence of editorial activity and expansion at certain points, there appears to be no compelling reason for rejecting the contents of chapters 30-33 as reflective of the message of the prophet Jeremiah apart from preconceptions regarding the historicity of the book as a whole or the potential for the Old Testament prophets to preach both salvation and judgment. Clements appears to have provided a balanced perspective on this issue:

Much of 30-33, it must be realized, is not Jeremiah's exact words, yet it can in no way be regarded as inauthentic on this account. Once the fundamental reality of the God-given message of Israel's renewal had been revealed through the prophet, it has necessarily called forth a fuller amplification of what this renewal meant in terms of the foreseeable political future of Israel. . . . The elaboration of Jeremiah's words has become an important feature in the process of giving clarity and direction to the prophet's message as the situation of Judah and the exiles continued to unfold.25

Perhaps the strongest argument against viewing the hopeful material in chapters 30-31 as a late development in the Jeremiah tradition is that the experience of judgment and devastation is still fresh in the mind of the writer (cf. 30:4-7, 1, 12-17, 23-24; 31:15-20). As Jones writes, "There is no suggestion that the judgment is in the past."26 In addition, the narrative in 32:1-15 regarding Jeremiah's purchase of the field at Anathoth in the midst of the Babylonian siege provides a logical explanation of the circumstances leading


to the prophet’s increased awareness and understanding of God’s future plans for Israel. Clements describes this event as “the moment when Jeremiah discovered the certainty and basis of this divinely given word of hope.” In light of the presence of words of hope through the whole of the Jeremiah tradition (cf. 3:14-18; 12:14-17; 16:14-15; 17:24-26; 22:2-4; 23:5-6, 7-8; 24:4-7), it appears unduly skeptical to hold to the position that Jeremiah held forth no hope for the future of Israel, and the most likely explanation for the rise of chapters 30-33 is that this section is reflective of the teaching of the prophet himself.

Several more recent studies have attempted to move beyond the historical-critical concerns to provide a more holistic focus on chapters 30-33 as a unit. Childs perceives canonical design and intention behind the placement and arrangement of this section within the book of Jeremiah:

The major section of promises have been collected in chs. 30-33 and precede the account of Jerusalem’s fall (39:1ff). The effect of this ordering of the material re-emphasizes the belief that promise was a part of the divine plan from the outset. It did not arise from a last-minute feeling of compassion to salvage something from the debacle. Moreover, pursuant to the redactor’s pattern Jeremiah’s poetic oracles of salvation (chs. 30f and 33) have been combined with a prose account in which Jeremiah himself experienced the promise (ch. 32). There seems to have been a deliberate redactional concern to anchor the promise, not only in the tradition, but in the self-understanding of the prophet himself.

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27Clements, Jeremiah, 176.


Literary studies by Bozak\textsuperscript{30} and Edlin\textsuperscript{31} have demonstrated literary and rhetorical features that unify chapters 30-31 and 30-33 respectively. Bracke\textsuperscript{32} has concentrated on the thematic and theological unity of chapters 30-31 but has also given some attention to unifying literary features. These studies demonstrate that holistic study of Jeremiah 30-33 is not an arbitrary decision but rather is called for in light of the literary and thematic unity of the section itself.

**Evidences of Unity in 30-33**

Jeremiah 30-33 is primarily unified by its hopeful tone and concentrated focus on Yahweh's future work of restoration and renewal for the nation of Israel. Carroll comments, "The overwhelming impression made by the four chapters is that of positive rebuilding of community, city, and land."\textsuperscript{33} The unifying and recurring summary phrase for Yahweh's work of restoration is "to restore the fortunes" (יִתְחַדֵּשׁ חֶדְשָׁי) (cf. 30:3, 18; 31:23; 32:44; 33:7, 11, 26).

Structural features complement this thematic unity in marking off 30-33 as a distinct unit in the book of Jeremiah. The major blocks of material within chapters 30-33 are clearly indicated by introductory formulae. The same expression ("the word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh") (נִשְׂמָא אֲלִיָּהוּ הַיָּדִ֥ים וְלָ֖שׁוֹן הַנּוֹקֵֽדָהּ


\textsuperscript{31}James Oliver Edlin, "Literary Design in Jeremiah 30-33" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985).

\textsuperscript{32}John Martin Bracke, "The Coherence and Theology of Jeremiah 30-31" (Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1983).

The introductory formulae in 32:1 and 33:1 are also parallel to one another in that both contain a 1) statement concerning the coming of a word from Yahweh to Jeremiah and 2) a time clause. The references to Jeremiah's confinement in both verses and the reference to the prophetic word coming a "second time" in 33:1 demonstrates the structural parallelism between 32:1-44 and 33:1-13. The prose oracle in 33:14-26 effectively summarizes all that precedes in 30:1-33:13. The independence of this unit is evident from its omission as a whole from the LXX edition of Jeremiah, the largest such omission in the LXX version. The first half of the closing oracle (33:14-18) focuses on the themes of the rebuilding and establishment of Jerusalem that is predominant in 32:1-33:13, and the second part of this conclusion (33:19-26) centers around the more general themes of renewal and restoration that are prominent in chapters 30-31.

In demonstrating the structural unity of Jeremiah 30-33, it is important to recognize first the unity of the smaller unit of chapters 30-31. The presence of predominantly poetic material in chapters 30-31 and predominantly prose material in chapters 32-33 divides the message of hope into two halves. In surveying the scholarship on chapters 30-31, Bozak comments, "Jer. 30-31 is almost universally held to be a distinct and homogeneous unit." Several key features serve to unify the material in 30-31. The use of

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34 Bozak, Life "Anew," p. 18, also notes that this phrase functions as an introduction at the beginning of major text divisions in Jer. 7:1; 11:1; 18:1; 21:1; 27:1; 30:1; 32:1; 34:1; 35:1; and 40:1.

35 Edlin, "Literary Design in Jeremiah 30-33," 143.

36 In addition, the name "Jacob" found repeatedly in 30-31 (cf. 30:7, 10ab, 18; 31:7, 11) appears in 33:26 for the first time within the prose material of 32-33.

inclusio serves to unify the prose introductions and conclusions (30:1-4 and 31:23-40) and also the first and last poems (30:5-11 and 31:15-22) within this section. The indicators of inclusio between 30:1-4 and 31:23-30 are: 1) the use of prose in contrast to the predominant use of poetry in the intervening material found in 30:5-31:22; 2) the repetition of the phrase “to restore the fortunes” (שָׁבוּעַ) in 30:3 and 31:23 (only in 30:18 elsewhere in this section); and 3) the repetition of the phrase “behold days are coming” (יָמִים הַאֲרָוִים) in 30:3 and 31:27, 31, and 38 (with no intervening uses). The inclusio between the beginning and closing poetic material (30:5-11 and 31:15-22) in this section is provided by 1) the recurring use of “birth” imagery in 30:6 and 31:22 and the imagery of “weeping” (note כְּלֵי in 30:5 and 31:15); and the repetition of the term “man/warrior” (נַפְלֵי in 30:6 (in connection with “male” נְכָר) and 31:22 (in connection with “female” נִקְבּ בֵּר). The inclusio stresses the reversal from the distress of 30:5-7 to the joy of 31:15-22 in connection with the restoration and rebirth of Israel.

Within the poetic material in chapters 30-31, the interchange between male and female imagery and forms of address serves to unify this section. In Bozak’s reconstruction of this section, three poems are addressed to a male and three to a female:

- 30:5-11: to Jacob/Israel
- 30:12-17: to a female audience
- 30:18-31:1: to a male audience
- 31:2-6: to the Virgin Israel (בְּזֵזָה בְּשֵׁרְאֵל)
- 31:7-14: to a male audience

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31:15-22: (vv. 15-17--to female Rachel) (vv. 18-20--to male Ephraim) (vv. 21-22--to Virgin Israel)

Thematically, the repeated use of the lexical term "to return" (בָּאֵה) (30:3[2], 10, 18, 24; 31:8, 16, 17, 18[2], 19, 21[2], 22, 23) highlights the promise of return to the land that is central to this section (cf. 30:10, 18, 20; 31:5-6, 8, 10, 16, 21).

In addition to the unity of chapters 30-31, the independent prose sections in 32:1-44 and 33:1-13 bear a strikingly close relationship to one another. These passages are both set within the context of Jeremiah’s incarceration and the Babylonian siege against Jerusalem (cf. 32:1-2; 33:1). Edlin has isolated further parallels between these two passages:

1. references to Yahweh as creator (32:17; 33:2)
2. references to the “name” of Yahweh (32:18; 33:2)
3. oracle of disaster/description of disaster for Jerusalem (32:28-35; 33:4-5)
4. references to “my anger and my wrath” (32:31; 33:5)
5. oracles of salvation (32:36-41 and 33:6-9)
6. references to “restoring of fortunes” (32:37; 33:7)
7. concluding oracles of salvation (32:42-44; 33:10-13).41

These two sections each focus on Jerusalem (“the city” or “this city” in 32:3, 24-25, 28, 29, 31, 36; 33:4-5; “Jerusalem” in 32:2, 20, 32, 44; 33:13; “this place” in 32:37; 33:10, 12; and “the house of Yahweh” in 33:11), the future peace and security of Israel (32:37, 41; 33:6), and the “prosperity” (בָּאֵה--32:39, 40, 41, 42; 33:9ab, 11) that Israel will experience in the future age of salvation.42

Structural features also demonstrate the overall unity of chapters 30-33. As with chapters 30-31, inclusio is a key structural device for marking off 30-33 as a literary unit. The repetition of the phrases “I will restore the for-

42 Ibid, 146-47.
tunes" (םות אביו) and "my people" (יהום) in 30:2-3 and 33:23-26 serve to form a frame around this section. The mention of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in 33:26 also recalls "their fathers" in 30:3 and contributes to this structure of inclusion.

The unity of 30-33 is further demonstrated by the structural emphasis placed upon the issue of covenant and Yahweh’s perpetual covenant fidelity toward Israel. The conclusions to 30:1-31:40 (31:35-37), to 32:1-44 (32:37-41), and to 30-33 as a whole (33:19-26) focus upon the issue of covenant fidelity. Edlin has noted five key parallels between 31:35-37 (at the close of the poetic material in 30-31) and 33:19-26 (at the close of the prose material in 32-33), which include references to:

1. the inviolability of natural laws as support for Yahweh’s trustworthiness (31:35-36a; 33:20-21, 25)
2. the measuring or counting of the heavens (31:37; 33:22)
3. Yahweh’s creation of day/night (31:35; 33:25a)
4. laws of heaven being established (31:35-36; 33:20, 25b)
5. the rejection of the sons of Israel (31:36b, 37b; 33:26a)

In addition, 31:31-34 and 32:37-39a offer the promise of the establishment of a "new covenant" and an "eternal covenant" and Yahweh’s work of grace that will enable Israel to remain faithful to the covenant conditions so that a severing of the relationship between Yahweh and his people like that experienced in the Babylonian exile will never occur again. The new covenant will remedy the problem of Israel’s perpetual disobedience.

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43ibid, 162.
44ibid.
45ibid, 157.
46ibid.
47ibid.
The Rhetoric of Reversal in Jeremiah 30-33

Jeremiah 30-33 is clearly a distinct literary unit within the larger section of Jeremiah 26-45, and this "Book of Consolation" also has a distinct literary function within the larger setting of the Jeremiah narratives. The primary function of the material in 30-33 is to portray specifically Israel's future restoration and renewal as the direct reversal of Yahweh's work of judgment that is narrated in the remainder of Jeremiah 26-45. This rhetoric of reversal is prominent first of all in the external relationship of 30-33 to what precedes in 26-29 and to what follows in 34-45. The rhetoric of reversal is also central to the internal structure and development of the material within 30-33 itself.

The Rhetoric of Reversal in the Literary Environment of 30-33

At the front end of chapters 30-33, specific features of the text connect the message of hope to what precedes in chapters 26-29. Jeremiah's message of hope for Israel's future is briefly introduced in the word of promise to the exiles in Babylon found in 29:10-14. The phrase "restore the fortunes" (וְאֵחְזַה בְּשָׁם) provides the linkage between 29:10-14 and 30:3 (and the whole of chs. 30-33) and indicates that the hopeful message of this section is an elaboration upon the initial promise to the exiles. In chapter 29, Jeremiah communicates this message of hope through the act of writing a letter to the exiles in Babylon (29:1-3), and 30:1-4 introduces a second act of writing (forming a book) that expands the message of hope.

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The linkage of 30-33 with what precedes in 26-29 also serves the specific function of highlighting the promised restoration as a reversal of Yahweh's earlier work of judgment in delivering Judah over to the Babylonians. In 30:8-9, Yahweh announces through the prophet that he will "break (שָׁבַר) the yoke (עֵיל)" from off of Israel so that they will no longer have to "serve" (עָבַד) foreign oppressors. Instead, Israel will be free once again to "serve" (עָבַד) Yahweh. This message serves as a direct reversal of the prophet Jeremiah's sign act of wearing a wooden yoke to represent subjugation to Babylon (27:2; 28:10, 14; cf. "neck irons" in 29:26) and his call for the nations in general and Judah in particular to submit to the Babylonian "yoke" (עֵיל) (27:11, 12; 28:14) and to "serve" (עָבַד) the king of Babylon (27:7-9, 12-14, 17; 28:14).50

As in the incipient message of salvation found in 29:10-14, the message of the prophet Jeremiah in 30-33 also mirrors the message of his prophetic opponents in chapters 28-29. The prophet Hananiah had also promised that Yahweh would "break the yoke" (שָׁבַר + עֵיל) of Babylon (cf. 28:2-4, 10-11), but as in chapter 29, the issue between Jeremiah and the false prophets is not the promise of ultimate deliverance and restoration but rather the timing of this act of divine salvation. Hananiah had confidently proclaimed that the deliverance would occur "within two years" (28:3, 11), but Jeremiah places this work of rescue in the more distant and indeterminate future ("in that day"—30:8; cf. 30:3, 24; 31:1, 27, 29, 31, 38; 33:14, 15, 16).

The back end of chapters 30-33 also provides a direct connection to what follows in the immediate context. The setting of chapters 32-33 within the context of the time of Zedekiah and the Babylonian assault against Je-

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50Patterson, "Of Bookends, Hinges, and Hooks," 122.
rusalem provides a chronological connection to 34:1-7 and 8-22. By way of contrast, the promises of chapters 32-33 point to the ultimate deliverance from Babylon and foreign oppression, while 34:8-22 depicts a temporary respite that will not last. Just as the opening in chapter 30 introduces a message of true hope that contrasts to the empty hope propagated by the false prophets, so also chapter 33 presents the true hope of the future that contrasts with the false hope raised by contemporary events in chapter 34. The rhetorical point is to counter any hope that Israel can have deliverance apart from experiencing the full force and brunt of Yahweh’s work of judgment.

The concept of “covenant” also provides a key contrast between the contents of chapters 33 and 34. The five-fold use of the term “covenant” (ָֽלָּלָלָל) in 33:19-26 (33:20[2], 21[2], 25) in a context focusing on Yahweh’s covenant fidelity contrasts to the five-fold use of ֽ֯לָּלָלָל in 34:8-22 (34:8, 10, 13, 18[2]) in a passage documenting Judah’s covenant unfaithfulness toward Yahweh. The past experience of judgment is the result of human failure to fulfill the terms of the covenant relationship, but the basis for Israel’s hope is Yahweh’s faithfulness to fulfill the covenant promises. The words of the earlier “scroll” (ָֽלָּלָל) of hope now found in the context of chapters 30-33 offers a contrasting message of reversal to the “scroll” (ָֽלָּל) of judgment recorded by Baruch in chapter 36 (cf. 36:2, 4, 32).

31Ibid, 123.

32All five uses of ֽ֯לָּלָל in 33:19-26 have the attached 1CS suffix with reference to Yahweh. In contrast, three of the four uses of ֽ֯לָּלָל in 34:8-22 refer to the people of Judah entering into covenant (v. 8, “Zedekiah made a covenant;” v. 10, “all the officials and people who entered into this covenant;” and v. 18, “the men . . . have not fulfilled the terms of the covenant they made before me”). 33:19-26 emphasizes the divine fulfillment of the covenant, while 34:8-22 stresses the human responsibility demanded by the covenant. These themes further highlight the contrast between divine fidelity and human infidelity in regard to the covenant relationship.
Inside the literary unit of Jeremiah 30-33, the structure of the oracles and narratives themselves highlights this same theme of the reversal of Israel's fortunes. In 30:5-11, the first stanza (vv. 5-7) portrays the sights and sounds of Israel's "day of distress," but the second half of the poem (vv. 8-11) focuses upon conditions in the future "day of restoration." In the poem that follows (30:12-17), the first half (vv. 12-15) graphically describes Israel's incurable wound, but the second half (vv. 16-17) offers a promise of healing. Israel's situation at first appears irreversible in that the nation has suffered a "wound" beyond remedy and a "sore with no 'healing'" (v. 13). Nevertheless, Yahweh promises in verse 17, "I will 'heal' you of your 'wounds'" (root repetition of and אָכַל).

In 30:18-31:1, the judgment/salvation pattern of the first two poems is altered to one of salvation (30:18-22)/judgment (30:23-31:1). In a sense, this alternation marks a reversal within a reversal. The first two poems in this section have begun with oppression and judgment and then moved to hope and salvation. This poem marks a transition stage within the material of chapters 30-31 in that hope for the future now becomes an even more

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55Ibid, 68. Bracke ("The Coherence and Theology of Jeremiah 30-31," 40-41) also notes several aspects of the salvation oracle in 30:18-22 that reverse the effects of the preceding description of judgment in 30:12-15: 1) the contrast of "songs of thanksgiving" (30:19) and "weeping" (30:15); 2) the "multiplying" (30:19) of Jacob (30:19) and the punishment of Zion because its sins and guilt are "great" (30:15-16); and 3) Yahweh punishing those who harm Israel (30:19) and Yahweh himself punishing Israel (30:14).
dominant theme. From this point onward, the remainder of the poetic material in this section focuses almost exclusively upon Israel's hope for the future. The suffering and oppression of the exile is gradually passing out of focus, and the judgment section in 30:23-31:1 does not appear to deal with Israel's past suffering for its sins but rather with Yahweh's purging judgment of the wicked in connection with the future time of salvation.

In 31:2-6, the poet moves from the past (vv. 2-3) to the future (vv. 4-6) to carry forward the theme of reversal. However, the function of the reference to the past is not to provide an extended description of Israel's punishment and oppression but rather to highlight the change and reversal to occur at the time of Israel's restoration. The mention of the past in this oracle is to demonstrate Israel's survival of the sword and the fact that Yahweh was present with Israel even in the midst of its national disaster. The promise for the future in verses 4-6 is the rebuilding of Israel so that it might enjoy fellowship with Yahweh. The idea of physical suffering and affliction is muted so that the hope for the future may take center stage, but the concept of change or reversal is still present. Israel moves from the "wilderness" (v. 2) in stanza one to the promised land in stanza two (vv. 5-6--"hills of Samaria," "hills of Ephraim," and "Zion").

In 31:7-14, the two halves of the poem (vv. 7-9 and 10-14) are marked by an opening series of commands culminating with the imperatival form of the verb "to speak" (בָּאָשׁ) (vv. 7, 10). The two stanzas are a joyous call to celebrate Yahweh's salvation on behalf of Israel. Within this call for praise, an extended description of Israel's suffering is out of place, but the movement

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from the first to second stanzas again provides a reminder of the change or reversal accomplished by Yahweh's act of salvation. The first stanza focuses primarily on deliverance from a foreign land (cf. v. 8--"from the land of the north" and "from the ends of the earth") and the journey or pilgrimage back to the promised land (cf. v. 9--"beside streams of waters" and "on a level path"). In contrast, the second stanza portrays Israel as enjoying the prosperity of Yahweh's blessing in the land (cf. v. 12--"the bounty of Yahweh" and "like a well-watered garden"; v. 14--"satisfy priests with abundance" and "my people will be filled with my bounty"). This contrast is highlighted by the statements, "they will come with weeping . . . as I bring them back" in stanza one (v. 9) and "they will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion" in stanza two (v. 12).

The concluding poem of this section (31:15-22) appropriately closes this section with a tri-stanza structure in which each section portrays the movement from judgment to salvation. The individual stanzas of this poem each focus on a different personification for the nation of Israel (vv. 15-17, Rachel; vv. 18-20, Ephraim; vv. 21-22, Virgin Israel). The repetition of the verb "to return" (הָקָב) is the key unifying feature between these three separate stanzas. In verses 15-17, Rachel weeps for her lost children but is commanded to refrain from weeping any longer because of the promise of the return of these children. In verses 18-20, Ephraim suffers discipline from Yahweh but is given the promise that he will ultimately experience Yahweh's

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58Ibid, 47. Bracke observes that the "change of Jacob's circumstances or condition" highlights the theme of reversal.


60Ibid.
compassion leading to restoration. In verses 21-22, Virgin Israel is called to "return" to her towns and to cease from her faithless wandering.61

This same type of inner-reversal is reflected in the structure of the prose materials in chapters 32-33. In chapter 32, the narrative of Jeremiah's purchase of the field at Anathoth is structured around the reported speech of three key individuals—Zedekiah (vv. 3-5), Jeremiah (vv. 6-25), and Yahweh (vv. 26-44).62 Each of these characters makes reference to the "handing over" of Jerusalem to the Babylonians (vv. 3-5, 24-25, 28, 36), and the impending capture of Jerusalem looms large in this account. At first glance, the presence of Zedekiah in this account seems almost superfluous. Zedekiah offers no personal perspective on the coming disaster and serves as a mere functionary to rehearse the message of Jeremiah. The narrator does not simply provide a direct narration of Jeremiah's purchase of the field but rather recounts this act

61 J. Lundbom (ABD, s.v. "Jeremiah, Book of," ed. D. N. Freedman [New York: Doubleday and Co., 1992]: 3:714-15) has also isolated a chiastic structure in Jer. 30-31 that reflects a structural emphasis on the theme of reversal for this material as a whole:

a Judgment/Hope (30:5-7/30:10-11)
   b Judgment/Hope (30:12-15/30:16-17)
      Hope (30:18-21)
      Covenant Formula (30:22)
   c Judgment (30:23)
      Covenant Formula (31:1)
      Hope (31:2-14)
   b Lament/Promise (31:15/31:16-17)
   a Lament/Promise (31:18-19/31:20-22)

62 The speech of Jeremiah is divided into the recounting of the sign act in 32:6-15 and Jeremiah's response to the sign act in the form of his prayer in 32:16-25. Kelvin G. Friel ("Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign Acts: Their Meaning and Function as Nonverbal Communication and Rhetoric" [Ph.D. diss., The University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1989], 769) notes that Jeremiah's response to the sign act breaks down into two major sections—1) the statement of confidence in God's power to act (vv. 17-23) and a question of the appropriateness of buying the field (vv. 24-25). The response of Yahweh to Jeremiah in 32:26-44 contains three major sections: 1) expressed intent to destroy Jerusalem (vv. 27-35); 2) the promise of a new relationship between Yahweh and Israel (vv. 36-41); and 3) the announcement of a future restoration (vv. 42-44).
in the form of a speech from Jeremiah to Zedekiah the king. The narrator has to make an effort to include Zedekiah in the story.

The recounting of the purchase of the field in the form of a conversation between Jeremiah and Zedekiah is not without significance. The presence of Zedekiah introduces the theme of the fate of the king that is prominent in the accounts surrounding the final siege of Jerusalem in chapters 34 and 37-39. The dialogue between Zedekiah and Jeremiah also prepares the reader for the series of interviews between king and prophet in chapters 37-38.

Within the internal structure of chapter 32, the most important function of the dialogue between Zedekiah and Jeremiah is that this conversation between the king and prophet sets the stage for the more important dialogue between prophet and God. The presence of Zedekiah at the beginning of this narrative creates a linkage between the king and the prophet Jeremiah. Just as Zedekiah raises a question regarding the word of Yahweh spoken through Jeremiah (32:3-5), Jeremiah's response to the king expresses an implied question concerning a subsequent word of Yahweh communicated to the prophet. At the close of his prayer to Yahweh (32:24-25), the prophet calls attention to the incongruity between the circumstances of the day, which indicate imminent Babylonian takeover of the land, and the instruction of Yahweh to purchase a field within the land. The implied question is, "Why purchase property in a land about to be forfeited to a foreign army?"

Through the parallel between the explicit question of Zedekiah in verse 3 and the implied question of the prophet, the narrator almost goes so far as to portray Jeremiah as an "unbeliever" like Zedekiah who questions the
revelation of God. The narratives of 26-45 generally present Jeremiah in a rather one-dimensional way as the mouthpiece of God and then focus on the responses of various other individuals to the divine word. However, at this point, there is now a mood of ambiguity surrounding the character of Jeremiah as he becomes one who hears and responds to the word of Yahweh. Though without the intensity of emotion, the response of Jeremiah recalls the struggles between Yahweh and the prophet reflected in the “confessions” of Jeremiah found in chapters 11-20. The ambiguity behind Jeremiah’s response is intensified by the linkage between Zedekiah and Jeremiah and the fact that the prophet must respond to the question of Zedekiah with a question of his own.

The primary intent behind the linkage of Zedekiah and Jeremiah appears to be theological rather than biographical. The narrator is not attempting to provide the reader with a more “human” portrait of Jeremiah or to suggest that the prophet has lapsed into unbelief. The incredulity of the prophet merely seems to stress the incredible nature of the reversal that Yahweh will bring about in the future restoration and renewal of Israel. The reversal is so magnificent that even Jeremiah, in spite of his confession of Yahweh’s unlimited power, has difficulty fathoming its outcome.

Just as the speech of Jeremiah is linked to the preceding words of Zedekiah, so also the speech of Yahweh in 32:36-44 reflects verbal connections with the preceding prayer of Jeremiah. In addition to the statements concern-

63 However, note the prophet’s statement of confidence in Yahweh’s sovereign power expressed in 32:16-24.

ing the “handing over” of Jerusalem to the Babylonians (32:24-25; 32:28, 36), both the prophet and Yahweh acknowledge that “nothing is too hard for God” (32:17, 27), both make reference to Judah’s disobedience and sinfulness (32:23, 29b-35), and both highlight the promise that “fields will again be bought” in the promised land (32:15; 32:44).

The promise of reversal is the most prominent feature in the speech of Yahweh in verses 36-44. Jeremiah’s question in 32:24-25 reflects the almost incredulous nature of Yahweh’s future reversal. The speech of Yahweh provides assurance of the certainty of this reversal no matter how unbelievable it may seem at the time of the Babylonian siege. A rapid succession of twelve verbal forms to describe the first-person work of Yahweh on Israel’s behalf in the future set against two verbs to describe Yahweh’s work of judgment affirms the certainty of the future restoration. It is this direct and positive work of Yahweh that will bring about the transformation from desolation to productivity (vv. 42-43) that provides the rationale for Yahweh’s command for Jeremiah to purchase family property in a land about to be “handed over” to a foreign king. The preponderance of verbs focusing on the positive aspects of Yahweh’s future work of salvation also indicates that this future reversal will far outweigh in duration and magnitude the negative effects of the present work of judgment.

The tension surrounding the narrative in Jeremiah 32 is the question of a future hope for the nation of Israel. Zedekiah raises the question as

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65These verbs in vv. 37-44 are: 1) “Behold, I will gather them” (יָנֵהוּ מִמֶּגֶּבֶּה); 2) “I will bring them back” (יָנֵהוּ מִמֶּגֶּבֶּה); 3) “I will let them live (יָנֵהוּ מִמֶּגֶּבֶּה) in safety;” 4) “I will be (יָנֵהוּ מִמֶּגֶּבֶּה) their God;” 5) “I will give them (יָנֵהוּ מִמֶּגֶּבֶּה) singleness of heart;” 6) “I will make (יָנֵהוּ מִמֶּגֶּבֶּה) an everlasting covenant;” 7) “I will never stop (יָנֵהוּ מִמֶּגֶּבֶּה) doing good;” 8) “I will put (יָנֵהוּ מִמֶּגֶּבֶּה) the fear of me;” 9) “I will rejoice (יָנֵהוּ מִמֶּגֶּבֶּה) over them;” 10) “I will plant (יָנֵהוּ מִמֶּגֶּבֶּה) them;” 11) “I am bringing them (יָנֵהוּ מִמֶּגֶּבֶּה) prosperity;” and 12) “I will restore (יָנֵהוּ מִמֶּגֶּבֶּה) their fortunes.”
to why Jeremiah preaches doom because it suggests no hope for the future. Jeremiah raises the question as to why he should purchase family property at a time when a foreign power is about to conquer the land, an event that further signals an absence of hope. The resolution to this problem comes with Yahweh's promise of reversal.

The idea of reversal is also a controlling factor in the structuring of the salvation oracle in 33:1-12. The four main portions of this oracle are indicated by the introductory “this is what Yahweh [...] says” (הִears אִמְרָה יְהֹואeh) in verses 2, 4, 10, and 12. The first section (vv. 2-3) of this oracle links to the preceding material in chapter 32 by focusing on the power of Yahweh, as reflected in the work of creation, to perform great and miraculous deeds. These verses encourage the exiles to pray in accordance with Yahweh’s attributes, as Jeremiah has done in the preceding chapter. Jeremiah’s prayer in chapter 32 arises as a question regarding the rationale behind the divine command to purchase property in the land of Judah, and Yahweh responded with a promise of the future restoration of the land. In 33:2-3, the people as a whole are exhorted to pray so that Yahweh may declare a miraculous promise of the restoration of the land like that given to the prophet in 32:26-44.

The remaining three sections of this oracle are separate promises of salvation which stress that Yahweh’s future work on behalf of Israel will involve a reversal of the devastation inflicted by the Babylonians. These three promises of salvation follow the pattern of an opening description of the present desolation of the land that moves to a portrayal of the future reversal and restoration. At the beginning of each individual section, someone speaks (v. 4--Yahweh, v. 10--the people, v. 12--Yahweh) about the present ruin of Jerusalem (v. 4--“the houses in this city and the royal palaces,” vv. 10, 12--“this place”). In verses 4-9, destruction, death, and divine wrath are replaced...
by restoration, divine forgiveness, and prosperity. In verses 10-11, the emptied city of Jerusalem becomes filled with inhabitants enjoying life's ultimate joys. In verses 12-13, a land without man or animal once again becomes a center of pastoral activity.\(^6^6\)

The movement and progression of the salvation oracle in 33:1-13 almost enables the reader to visualize the work of reversal taking place. As the oracle progresses, there is a broadening of the scope of reversal that extends from the city and houses of Jerusalem (33:4), to the people of Judah and Israel (33:7), and then to all of the land itself (33:11-13).\(^6^7\) There is also a gradual diminishment of judgment to the point that the future reversal becomes the sole focus. The first salvation promise in verses 4-9 is the most lengthy portion of this oracle and contains an almost balanced description of judgment (2 verses) and portrayal of salvation (3 verses). In the second promise (vv. 10-11), a one sentence statement regarding present ruin is followed by a more extended portrayal of the future. In the final promise (vv. 12-13), the desolation is passed over with a six-word phrase (תָּחַת הבשׂלכָה—“desolate and without any man or animals”) that is found within an extended portrayal of the land filled with shepherds and flocks.

The primary rhetorical function of the Book of Consolation within the Jeremiah narratives in 26-45 is to highlight the reversal of judgment to be accomplished by Yahweh's future work of salvation. This theme of reversal is highlighted in three major ways. First, the promise/salvation section in 30-

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\(^6^7\)Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 226.
stands between two judgment sections (chs. 26-29 and 34-45) within the Jeremiah narratives. Second, the genuine promises of restoration and renewal in 30-33 stand in contrast to the false hopes presented and depicted in the immediately preceding (chs. 27-29) and following (chs. 34-35) sections. Third, the oracles and narratives in 30-33 reflect a thematic and structural focus on Yahweh’s work of salvation as an act of reversing the effects of Judah’s judgment at the hands of the Babylonians.

The Contrasting Correspondence between Jeremiah 30-33 and 40-43

Having discussed the issues surrounding the placement and unity of chapters 30-33, it is now possible to consider the relationship that exists between Jeremiah 30-33 and 40-43. The literary tension behind both sections centers around the question of what will transpire in the life of Judah/Israel in light of the Babylonian exile. The strategy of reading chapters 30-33 and 40-43 as complementary to each other highlights the contrast between the prophetic warning of what is to happen to Judah in the immediate aftermath of the exile and the prophetic promise of the glorious fate that awaits a reunited Israel in the distant future. The theological perspective arising out of this contrast is essentially the same as the one that gives rise to the “good figs/bad figs” speech in Jeremiah 24 and the exclusive promise to the exiles in Baby-

The “good figs” are the exiles “sent away from this place to the land of the Babylonians” (24:5); the bad figs are the “remnant” or the “survivors” from Jerusalem “who remain in this land or live in Egypt” (24:8). The repeated use of the term “remnant” or “survivors” (גֵּaysia) for those remaining in the land after the fall of Jerusalem (40:11, 15; 41:10, 16; 42:2, 15, 19: 44:12, 14, 28) is tinged with irony. These people are a “remnant” but they are not “the remnant” that will experience Yahweh’s salvation.

Ion in Jeremiah 29 (cf. 29:10-14). The survivors who remained in the land of Judah after both the 597 and 586 B.C. deportations, and who consequently viewed themselves as favored by Yahweh, are excluded from the blessings of restoration and renewal that Israel will ultimately experience. Yahweh’s salvation will arise out of Babylon at a time when the present generation occupying the land of Judah has passed from the scene.

The strategy of reading Jeremiah 40-43 in light of what precedes in chapters 30-33, however, unfolds much more than this stark contrast between the immediate and distant futures. Literary sensitivity to the relationship between the two sections reveals something more subtle and conflicting in the message of the prophet Jeremiah. The unfolding of events in Jeremiah 40-43, read in light of 30-33, reflects the perspective that the survivors living in the land of Judah during the time of the exile have missed out on the opportunity to experience to some degree the restoration and renewal envisioned in the salvation portrayals in 30-33, and the survivors have nothing to blame for this missed opportunity other than their own stubborn refusal to obey the word of Yahweh. This segment of Judah’s population is not excluded from Yahweh’s blessing simply because of an immutable and inflexible decree that salvation will originate with the exiles in Babylon. This group experiences judgment instead of blessing because they perpetuate the rebellion against the prophetic word that necessitated the judgment in the first place.

The rhetorical impact of the narratives in 40-43 is far more intense when read in light of all that precedes in 26-39 in general and in contrast to prophetic predecessors is that the true “remnant” consists of those who are outside the land of promise (pp. 239-40). R. P. Carroll (“Jeremiah, Intertextuality and Ideologiekritik,” JNSL 22 [1996], 30-31) notes this same characteristic in the preaching of Jeremiah: “For Jeremiah the land belongs to the fugitives from outside the land. It does not belong to the people who occupy it.” Jeremiah has thus added a new twist to what Carroll views as “the central narrative of the Bible,” namely the story of “land acquired, land lost, land reacquired.”
what precedes in 30-33 in particular. The reader is informed by the material in the first panel of the Jeremiah narratives (chs. 26-35) that there is going to be judgment and then salvation for Yahweh's people. The narratives in chapters 37-39 have depicted this judgment to a point of climax in the destruction of Jerusalem and the demise of the Davidic dynasty. Because the salvation oracles in 30-33 have promised a reversal of Yahweh's judgment, the reader begins the narrative in chapter 40 with the anticipation of a hopeful turn of events because of the finality of the judgment that is portrayed in the narrative in chapter 39.

The narrator in 40-43 plays upon these hopes by suggesting that the people in Judah are experiencing in some incipient manner the blessings promised in 30-33. The devastation of the fall of Jerusalem and the exile is beginning to be reversed. The narrator builds up the hope of the reader but then dashes them by portraying those blessings as slipping away and turning into a repeated experience of cursing and judgment. The rhetorical effect is that the reader viscerally and emotionally feels the loss of blessing that is forfeited because of continued disobedience to the prophetic word. The reader is caught up in the anticipation of eschatological blessing and then plunged into despair as the prophet Jeremiah and the small remnant from Judah go down into Egypt, the land of bondage and oppression.

The Contrasting Use of "Return" Language

*The Prophetic Portrayal of Israel's Return from Exile*

Several key elements provide the specific contrast between promised salvation in 30-33 and continued judgment in 40-43. The first key element is the contrasting use of stereotypical "return" imagery in the two sections of material. The return theology of the Old Testament prophets is
dominated by two primary strands of tradition—the exodus tradition of deliverance from a foreign oppressor and the Zion tradition of procession and pilgrimage to the holy city of Jerusalem.

The portrayal of Israel’s deliverance from exile as a “second exodus” is found throughout the Old Testament prophets (cf. Amos 9:7-9; Hosea 2:14-23; Mic. 7:14-17; Ezek. 20:33-39) but is most prominent in the book of Isaiah, particularly the section of the book known as “Deutero-Isaiah” (cf. Isa. 40:3-5; 41:17-20; 42:14-16; 43:1-3, 14-21; 48:20-21; 49:8-12; 51:9-10; 52:11-12; 55:12-13; and also Isa. 11:11-16).69 Israel will once again pass through the waters (Isa. 43:2) as Yahweh will dry up the sea in order to redeem his people (Isa. 51:9-10). Two key eschatological concepts in Isaiah 40-55 are the “former/new things” of Yahweh’s works (41:22; 42:9; 43:9, 18; 46:9; 48:3) and the role of the “servant of Yahweh” in the restoration of Israel. The second exodus motif is closely connected to both of these concepts. The “former things” refer to the redemptive acts of the past, of which the exodus is the deliverance par excellence (cf. 43:18), and the “new things” which Yahweh promises to accomplish on Israel’s behalf include the new exodus (43:19; 48:20-21).70 A key function of the

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“servant of Yahweh” is to deliver the prisoners (42:7) and to lead the return to the land (43:8; 49:6-9).71

The use of exodus typology in connection with the restoration from exile serves to elevate the importance of the deliverance from Babylonian exile. Fishbane explains:

Typologies serve . . . as the means whereby the deeper dimensions perceived to be latent in historical events are rendered manifest and explicit to the cultural imagination. For this reason, the fact that a particular event is not rendered solely in its own terms, but is rather reimagined in terms of another—a prototype—is not due to its paucity of religious significance but rather to its abundance. By means of retroactive typologies, events are removed from the natural cascade of historical occurrences and embellished as modalities of foundational moments in Israelite history.72

The fall of Judah and Jerusalem to Babylon is not merely one episode in a long chain of historical events but rather a national calamity and disaster, and the subsequent flight into Egypt of the Judean survivors of the exile brings to an end a significant period of God’s dealings with the people of Israel in their promised land. Nevertheless, these events are not cause for total despair in that Yahweh promises to bring about a new Israel through a new exodus.

The Babylonian exile brings an end to one era of salvation history, but Yahweh promises to begin anew by establishing a new era of salvation that will be even greater in scope than the first. This typological connection between exodus and exile is based upon a particular view of history that

71 There is also the covenant mediating role of the “servant” (Isa. 42:6; 49:8) and the connection between “second exodus” and “new covenant” (cf. Jer. 31:31-34) to be developed below.

stresses the continuity of God's dealings with the covenant people of Israel. Wolff explains:

The future is brought into relation to the historical beginning. The continuity of history is fully understood only when we see that in the prophetic eschatology an analogy to the beginnings of Israel's history occupies the foreground. The historical end defined by the prophets leads to a new beginning that corresponds to the historical beginning.73

Similarly, von Rad states, "The Old Testament . . . is dominated by an essentially different form of typological thinking, namely that of the eschatological correspondence between beginning and end (Urzeit und Endzeit)."74

In addition to the exodus imagery, the return theology of the prophets reflects the influence of the Zion tradition. As stated in the previous chapter, the foundational tenets of the Zion tradition are that Yahweh is the great king who has chosen Jerusalem for his dwelling place and that Yahweh's presence brings security to the city and its inhabitants.75 Donaldson isolates the key motifs that emerge out of the presentation of Zion theology from the "eschatological perspective" of the prophets, which include: 1) the gathering of scattered Israel; 2) the pilgrimage of the nations; 3) eschatological blessing of Zion and its inhabitants; and 4) the new giving of the law.76 Merrill explains that the motif of procession to Zion serves to fill out the picture of all that Yahweh will accomplish for Israel in the future:

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73 Wolff, "The Understanding of History," 343.
75 See ch. 4, p. 173, n. 53, of this dissertation.
Although the exodus typology is evident in Isaiah and in other prophetic speech, it is by no means adequate to account for all the prophetic imagery. Such elements as gathering from throughout the earth... and the emphasis on Zion and the temple argue for another complex of themes and motifs—namely, those of pilgrimage and procession. The exodus... by itself is obviously inadequate to provide a satisfying hermeneutic by which to understand the full dimension of Israel's return. The picture is not only that of a people redeemed and miraculously transported to the land of promise but also that of a redeemed people celebrating their redemption and covenant status by undertaking a pilgrimage to Zion, the city of YHWH.77

The exodus and pilgrimage/procession motifs are especially compatible to one another in that the ultimate goal of both the first and second exodus is the occupation of the promised land.78 Yahweh's work begins with redemption from the land of bondage, but the salvation of Israel is not complete until the people have taken possession of the land. Having taken possession of the

77Eugene H. Merrill, "Pilgrimage and Procession: Motifs of Israel's Return," in Israel's Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison, ed. A. Gileadi (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1988), 262. Merrill (p. 271, n. 21) summarizes the major elements of the pilgrimage/procession motifs: 1) the goal of the pilgrimage is Zion/Jerusalem (temple); 2) the purpose of the pilgrimage is the payment of offerings/vows/tributes; 3) the universal and scattered origins of the pilgrimage; 4) the path of the pilgrimage (the building of the highway, the irrigation of the desert, the drying of the river, and the upward ascent); and 5) the mode of pilgrimage (as a stream, with divine protection, and with song and rejoicing). Merrill (pp. 264-65) points to the particular importance of the Hallel Psalms (Ps. 113-118) and the Psalms of Ascent (Ps. 120-144) for the surfacing and tracing of these motifs. Key passages in the prophetic literature which reflect this processional motif include Mic. 4:1-8; Zeph. 3:19-20; Jer. 3:14, 17-18; 16:14-15; 23:7-8; 31:6, 8-9, 10, 14; Ezek. 20:40-44; Hag. 2:6-9; Zech. 2:8-13; 8:1-8, 19).

For this procession motif, see also Baruch Halpern, "Zion and Jerusalem as Religious and Political Capital: Ideology and Utopia," in The Poet and the Historian: Essays in Literary and Historical Biblical Criticism, ed. R. E. Friedman (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 75-115. Around the concept of the "temple as the center of the world," Halpern (pp. 104-14) isolates the following motifs surrounding the idea of procession to the religious capital: 1) peoples accept the sovereignty of the god who is in the sanctuary of the capital; 2) peoples bring tribute to the god in the capital; 3) nations come to worship the god who is in the sanctuary of the capital; 4) foreigners bring trees for the construction of the sanctuary; 5) the city is shrouded in glory, splendor, and majesty; 6) the temple city is the city of righteousness and justice; and 7) from the temple city goes forth the judgment that brings redemption and salvation to the peoples. Halpern compares the temple/capital city ideology of the Old Testament with that found in other ancient Near Eastern literature.

78In fact, the exodus itself is viewed as a pilgrimage (cf. Exod. 5:1) and a victory procession (cf. Ps. 68) at various places in the O.T. See Arthur L. Merrill, "Pilgrimage in the Old Testament: A Study in Cult and Tradition," Theological Markings 4 (1974): 12-13.
land, the people then ascend in a glorious procession to Zion in order to offer worship and homage to Yahweh their king. The picture begins with a new exodus and is completed with a new pilgrimage to Zion.

"New Exodus" and Pilgrimage in Jeremiah 30-31

Within the book of comfort in 30-33, the motifs of a second exodus, a processional return to the land, and of Jeremiah as a new Moses who proclaims the coming of a "new covenant" between Yahweh and Israel are central to the prophetic message of restoration and renewal. Exodus phraseology and allusions are particularly prominent in three specific passages in chapters 30-33. In 30:1-4, the restoration and return from exile are specifically linked to the land promise associated with the exodus and the conquest (v. 3). The fact that 30:1-4 serves as the prose introduction to the poetic section in chapters 30-31 (and to the message of promise in 30-33 as a whole) signifies the orientation of this entire section toward a presentation of the return from exile as a second exodus.

The oracle of salvation in 31:2-6 is stocked with phrases and imagery associated with the exodus. Verse 2 provides a summary of the key events in Israel's early salvation history--1) the exodus ("the people who escaped the sword"); 2) the preservation in the wilderness ("found grace in the wilder-

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79 The phrase יְהֹוָה נֶפֶשׁ ("the land ... I gave ... to possess") appears throughout the book of Deuteronomy in anticipation of the coming conquest (cf. Deut. 3:18; 5:31; 9:6; 15:4; 16:20; 17:14; 19:2, 14; 25:19; 26:1).


81 Cf. Exod. 5:21; 15:9; 18:4. This expression recalls the exodus as deliverance from death at the hands of Pharaoh and the Egyptian army. See Bozak, Life "Anew," 72.
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83 In 31:2, נַעֲרָהָ֣יִתְּךָ נָפָ֥לָהּ מָֽעַןְךָ = “rest.” Note the use of the synonymous נִעְרָהָ֣יִתְּךָ נָפָ֥לָהּ מָֽעַןְךָ with reference to the exodus-conquest (Exod. 33:14; Deut. 12:9, 10; 25:19). This “rest” has reference to Yahweh’s guiding and sustaining presence (Exod. 33:14; cf. Isa. 63:11-14) and ultimately to a life of blessing and security in Yahweh’s presence within the promised land (Deut. 12:9, 10; 25:19). For a fuller discussion of this concept of “rest,” see Walter A. Brueggemann, “Weariness, Exile and Chaos: A Motif in Royal Theology,” CBQ 34 (1972): 19-38, esp. 23-30.


85 Jeremiah himself recognizes the incongruity of God’s command in 32:24-25.

86 At other places in the Old Testament, these two themes are brought together under the motif of Yahweh defeating the waters of chaos (cf. Ps. 74:12-17; Isa. 51:9-11). See further discussion in B. W. Anderson, Creation Versus Chaos: The Reinterpretation of Mythical Symbolism in the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 107-9, and in John Day, God’s Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament (London: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 96-100. Day’s work as a whole discusses both the “historicization” and “eschatologization” of the Chauskampf motif. This motif is central to the
prophet's hope that Yahweh will again perform a miraculous deliverance on a par with the exodus in restoring Israel to the promised land (32:20-22). The remainder of the material in Jeremiah 30-33 fills out this picture of the deliverance from exile as a second exodus. The restoration from exile will provide further demonstration of Yahweh's salvific power within the life and history of the people of Israel (30:7, 10, 11; 31:7, 11). Yahweh intervenes to save because Israel is his "firstborn" son (31:9; cf. Exod. 4:22). Like the exodus, the restoration is deliverance from foreign bondage (30:8, 20) and rescue out of a foreign land with the goal of bringing Israel (back) to the promised land (30:10; 31:8-9, 10-11, 16-17, 21: 33:37-39; and especially the specific reference to the exodus in 31:32). The cry of Israel because of its establishment of Yahweh's sovereignty in the Old Testament. Yahweh demonstrates his sovereignty in subjecting chaos at creation; he demonstrates his sovereignty in history by defeating the enemy nations that represent the forces of chaos; and he will ultimately establish his sovereignty through his eschatological victory over chaos. Thus, Jeremiah's reflection upon Yahweh as creator and deliverer is ultimately an assertion of his sovereignty to accomplish his purposes.

87It is Yahweh's act of redemption in the exodus on behalf of his "people" (32:21) that serves as motivation for Jeremiah to act as a "redeemer" (חַדֵּר) on behalf of his relative, Hanamel (32:8).

88Jer. 30-33 employs salvific terms used with reference to the exodus to describe the coming restoration—e.g. חַרְצֵן, "to save/rescue" (30:7, 10, 11; 31:11; cf. Exod. 14:30; nominal form in Exod. 14:13; 15:2); חַנֵנֶה, "to ransom/deliver" (31:11; cf. Deut. 7:8; 9:26; 13:6; 15:15; Ps. 78:42; Mic. 6:4); and חַדֵר, "to redeem/deliver" (31:11; cf. Exod. 6:6; 15:13; Ps. 74:2; 77:16; 78:35).

89This figure of speech has particular reference to Israel's special position before God but in the Exodus context perhaps also suggests a contrast between the fate of Israel and the "firstborn" sons of Egypt in Exod. 11-12.

90Note the connection of terms of oppression with the exodus tradition. For the verb "to serve/enslave" (חָרְסֵנָה) in 30:8, cf. the use of the root in verbal (Exod. 1:14; 5:18; 6:5) and nominal (Exod. 1:14; 2:23) form. Note also in Jer. 30:8-9 the transfer from "service" to foreign oppressor to "service" to Yahweh. The Exodus tradition stresses that the outcome of release from Egyptian bondage will be "service" to Yahweh (cf. Exod. 3:12; 4:23; 7:16, 26; 8:1; 9:1, 13 etc.). For the verb "to oppress" (חָרְסֵנָה) in Jer. 30:20; cf. Exod. 3:9; Deut. 26:7 (nominal form). Also, note the prohibition of "oppression" against "aliens" because Israel was once an "alien" in Egypt (cf. Exod. 22:20; 23:9).
oppression will turn to rejoicing (31:9, 12).⁹¹ In the deliverance from exile, the people of Israel will plunder their enemies in the same way that their fore­fathers plundered the Egyptians (30:16; cf. Exod. 12:36), and their foreign oppressors will be destroyed just as the armies of Egypt were defeated at the Sea of Reeds (30:11, 16-17). Yahweh will bring fame and renown to himself and to Israel (30:19; 33:8-9).⁹² Yahweh will lead his people back to the promised land and will provide water for their journey as in the wilderness (31:9; cf. Exod. 17:1-7; Num. 20:1-13).⁹³ The result of this new exodus is the proces­sional call, “Come, let us go up to Zion” (31:6) and the joyful streaming of the people of Israel to Zion from the “ends of the earth” (31:8-12).

Filling out this picture of the new exodus is the portrayal of Jeremiah as a new Moses.⁹⁴ Like Moses at Sinai, Jeremiah functions as a

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⁹¹Note the motif of Israel weeping or crying in 30:4, 15; 31:9, 13, 15-16. In the exodus tradition, the deliverance of Israel is the result of Yahweh’s response to the “cry” of his people (cf. Exod. 2:23; 3:7, 9; 14:10, 15). The root “to cry out” (הָעַ֖ר) that appears in these exodus passages also appears in Jer. 30:15. The reason for Israel’s deliverance is that Yahweh “hears” (יָשָׁמ) the cry of his people and acts on their behalf (Exod. 3:7; cf. Jer. 31:18).

⁹²Concern for the divine reputation of Yahweh served as an important motivation for the original deliverance of Israel (cf. Exod. 15:14-16; Num. 14:13-17).

⁹³The description of the return home in Jer. 31:8-9 reflects the superiority of the second exodus to the first in that: 1) Israel is gathered from many lands rather than from just Egypt (30:8), 2) Israel travels home through a safe land filled with streams of water rather than through a barren wilderness. This heightening of the second exodus is a common feature of the exodus typology of the prophets. In Isa. 52:11-12, the fact that Israel will not have to travel in haste reflects the superiority of the second exodus to the first when haste was necessary because of concern for safety (cf. Exod. 12:11). The Isaiah tradition also highlights the transformation of the desert for Israel’s journey home (cf. Isa. 40:3-4; 41:18-20; 43:20-21).

covenant mediator. Jeremiah proclaims that the former covenant made under Moses has been broken and that Yahweh will establish a new covenant with Israel (31:31-34; cf. 32: 38-41). Holladay explains this presentation of the figure of Jeremiah as a new Moses:

Jeremiah taught that the old covenant which God had made at the time of the exodus from Egypt had been broken so completely by the people that God had no choice but to draw up a new covenant without the loopholes of the old. May it not be that it was Jeremiah's understanding of himself as the prophet like Moses which led him to the formulation of the new covenant idea? Moses had led the Israelites to God's first covenant, and thereby obedience to him and his gift to them of the land became correlated. But now in the eyes of Jeremiah the people had disobeyed, and the land was no longer theirs; and so, as the new Moses in the face of the new wilderness into which the people had been sent, Jeremiah dared to look forward to the time when God would draw up a new covenant, thereby to fulfill his ultimate purposes for his people.95

1) correspondence between the call passages for Moses (Exod. 3) and Jeremiah (Jer. 1); 2) similarities in language between the Song of Moses (Deut. 32) and the Jeremianic material; and 3) the focus on the prophetic role of intercession (7:16; 11:14; 14:11; 15:1; 21:1-2; 37:1-3; for the contrast with Moses, cf. Exod. 32; Num. 14). Seitz (p. 12) comments, "Those who shaped the Book of Jeremiah saw him as the last Mosaic prophet. The laments testify to the unique anguish of a prophet who was forbidden to intercede that God might judge all Israel and begin anew."


This proclamation of a “new covenant” between Yahweh and Israel stresses both the continuity and discontinuity between the first and second exodus and the first and second Moses.96 As in the first exodus, the deliverance from exile will be accompanied by the establishment of a covenant between Yahweh and Israel, but this “new” covenant will be qualitatively different from the Sinaitic covenant in that it will guarantee Israel’s perpetual fidelity and obedience to its stipulations (cf. 31:31-34; 32:39-41).97 The future will be radically different in that there will be no need for Israel to ever again experience national judgment. The exodus is the central event of Old Testament history, but this new deliverance will be an even greater act of salvation. This future act of salvation will secure the relationship between Yahweh and Israel intended but never fully realized by the first exodus.98


97 This point is central to the Jeremianic concept of the new covenant. See Rolf Rendtorff, “What is New in the New Covenant?” in Canon and Theology: Overtures to an Old Testament Theology, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 196-206. Rendtorff writes that “it is an important discovery to understand that Jeremiah does not envisage a new covenant without Torah, . . . but that what he has in mind is a covenant in which the Torah is even more firmly anchored, and in which the observation of the Torah is guaranteed by God himself.” See also Bernhard W. Anderson, “The New Covenant and the Old,” in The Old Testament and Christian Faith: A Theological Discussion, ed. B. W. Anderson (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 232-35. This internal fidelity to Yahweh’s law was the design and intent of Yahweh’s original covenant with Israel (cf. Deut. 30:14).

98 The recurring use of the “my people/their God” formula (30:32; 31:1, 33; 32:38) highlights the covenant theme in this section. For this relationship as the original goal or intent of the first exodus, cf. Jer. 7:23; 11:4; 13:11 (cf. also Exod. 6:7; Lev. 26:12; Deut. 27:9; 29:12 for the influence of the earlier exodus traditions). This phrase has a similar usage elsewhere in the prophets (cf. Ezek. 11:20; 14:11; 36:28; 37:23, 27; Zech. 8:8). This type of declaration of relationship is a central feature of ancient covenant formularies in the Old Testament and the ancient Near East at large. For examples of vassal making declaration to suzerain, cf. Ps. 116:16 (“I am your servant”) and Isa. 63:16; 64:8 (“You are our father”). For examples of the suzerain making the declaration to the vassal, cf. 2 Sam. 7:14 (“I shall be his father, and he shall be my son”) and Ps. 2:7 (“You are my son”). For the various types of covenant declarations, see Klaus Baltzer, The Covenant Formulary in Old Testament, Jewish, and Early Christian Writings, trans. D. E. Green (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971) and Paul Kalluveettil, Declaration and
Jeremiah 40-43: Realization of the Promises of "Return?"

At the beginning of chapters 40-43, it appears as if the new exodus and new pilgrimage envisioned in 30-33 is about to become a reality. Seitz comments, "In the final chapters after the Fall of the city and the 'tearing down' for which the prophet was commissioned (1, 10), it appears briefly as though the time of 'building up' has begun--not with the exiles and a new generation, but with the remnant of Judah under Gedaliah's leadership (ch. 40)." The terminology and imagery employed with regard to the restoration and renewal in 30-33 are repeated in the depiction of certain events in the aftermath of exile.

The first positive sign that the fall of Jerusalem in 39 may indeed be the culmination of Yahweh's judgment against Judah is the release of Jeremiah from prison to live among the Judeans who remain in the land (40:1-7). Clements connects Jeremiah's decision to return to the land of Judah with the promises that have been delivered in the Book of Consolation. The central message of Jeremiah's hope (cf. 32:15) had been:

"Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in the land." Jeremiah cherished "the land" God had given the nation's ancestors, and he attached great importance to it. Furthermore, Jeremiah's action in choosing to stay must demonstrate that initially he had expected the renewed Israel to arise through a reawakening of spiritual life and loyalty in Judah. In light of how the incarceration of Jeremiah (cf. 37:4, 16-18; 38:6ff) prior to the exile is a preview of the ominous fate awaiting the city of Jerusalem in chap-

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100 Clements, Jeremiah, 229.
ter 39, the release and "return" (בִּרְיָס) of the prophet appears to provide a foretaste of a national "return" to the land (40:5). The freedom of the prophet signifies the freedom of the people to live peaceably in the land. The removal of chains from the wrists of Jeremiah (40:4) points to the ultimate breaking of Israel's yoke of national bondage (cf. 30:8). The "Book of Consolation" envisions the complete deliverance of Israel from foreign servitude, but 40:1-7 presents the possibility of an experience of these blessings in an incipient form even while the nation remains in submission to Babylon. The positive response (including a theologically correct explanation of the exile) of the Babylonian commander, Nebuzaradan, to the prophet Jeremiah (40:2-4) offers a sharp contrast to the negative response of the Judean royal officials prior to the exile and suggests that Judah is better off in Babylonian hands than when ruled by their own wicked and rebellious leaders. 102

101 בִּרְיָס is a key salvation term in Jer. 30-33. The national significance of Jeremiah's return is perhaps also suggested by the manner in which the scene in 40:1-7 seems to recall the entrance of Abraham and Lot into the promised land in Genesis 13. "The whole country lies before" (כל־אדמתו נפתח) Jeremiah, just as with Abraham and Lot (Jer. 40:4; Gen. 13:9). In contrast to Lot, who chooses the personally beneficial option of settling in the plain of the Jordan (Gen. 13:11-12), Jeremiah makes the personally sacrificial choice of residing with the poor refugees in the land of Judah. Thus, Jeremiah appears as an Abraham-like figure in his return to the land of promise.

102 The two accounts of Jeremiah's release from confinement in 39:11-14 and 40:1-5 are joined together somewhat awkwardly in this section of the Jeremiah narratives, which Carroll (Jeremiah, 699-700) and others have attributed to editorial conflation. Carroll writes: "In the present state of the text MT presents an absurd picture of the preacher going into exile and being made the recipient of a sermon preached to him by the pagan military commander Nebuzaradan." Thompson (The Book of Jeremiah, 651-52) attempts to harmonize the two accounts with the plausible suggestion that Nebuchadnezzar had ordered Jeremiah released but that there had been a mistake that resulted in Jeremiah being transported with other captives to Ramah. Nebuzaradan immediately released Jeremiah upon discovering that the prophet was still in chains.

Whatever the historical situation behind the text, the picture of Nebuzaradan speaking a "word from Yahweh" to the prophet in 40:1-5 is somewhat shocking. Gerald L. Keown, Pamela J. Scalise, and Thomas G. Smothers (Jeremiah 26-52, WBC 27 [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1995], 35-37) have recognized the literary significance of the placement of this oracle in the mouth of Nebuzaradan: "The inability or refusal to hear the word from the Lord on the part of Judah and her leaders is underscored by the ludicrous picture of the pagan soldier speak-
The second hopeful sign in chapters 40ff is the positive imagery and terminology used to describe conditions in the land of Judah under the governorship of Gedaliah. The renewed harvesting of crops described in 40:10 foreshadows the agricultural blessing promised to Israel in 31:5, 12-13. The individual “return” (בָּא) of Jeremiah in 40:5 expands into a “return” (בָּא) of Jews from various points of exile (40:11-12). Yahweh promises to “build up” (ב֤וֹן) and “not tear down” (לֹא תָּשָׁרָה) and “plant” (נָתַן) and “not uproot” (לֹא יָשָׁרֶנָּה) (42:10-14) this community.

A third positive feature in the aftermath of exile that reflects the potential for the reversal of judgment is the favorable presentation of the character of Gedaliah who is appointed governor of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar. Gedaliah is a member of the family of Shaphan that appears throughout Jeremiah 26-45 as supportive of Jeremiah at critical and strategic moments. The speech of Gedaliah, the Babylonian-appointed governor of Judah, in 40:9-10 offers the hope of stability and prosperity. The recurring references to

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103 Cf. Jer. 31:8-10 and the promise of return from “the ends of the earth.”

104 These four verbs are key verbs for describing the dual nature of God’s work of judgment-salvation in the book of Jeremiah. Note that in 24:6 this same promise is given to the Jewish community living in exile, and that in 33:7 Yahweh’s work of “rebuilding” (בּוֹן) Israel and Judah is associated with the ultimate restoration from exile. The point is that God is willing to perform a similar gracious act on behalf of the Judeans living in their land immediately after the exile (cf. 32:41).

105 See pp. 100ff (esp. p. 100, n. 43) of this dissertation.

106 Keown et al. (Jeremiah 26-52, 237) call attention to the exaggerated claims of this speech but observe that this exaggeration “may be intentionally misleading” in order to “set the stage for the darker themes of tragedy to return in force.” This unrestrained optimism
Nebuchadnezzar's appointment of Gedaliah (40:5, 7, 11; 41:2, 18) stress the divine approval behind the choice of Gedaliah, in that Nebuchadnezzar has become Yahweh's "servant" (cf. 25:9; 27:6; 43:10) and has been granted the right to rule over the nations. The narrator again seems to encourage submission to Babylonian authority by stressing that the Babylonians will take better care of the Judeans than their own leaders (and particularly the house of David) have. Gedaliah himself expresses concern for the welfare of the people under his charge. Gedaliah's exhortation to submit to Babylon so that it might go "well" (בָּרֵךְ) for the people of Judah recalls the numerous promises of "prosperity" (בָּרֵךְ) in connection with agricultural and pastoral activity in the Book of Consolation (cf. 32:40-44; 33:9). The exhortation to "settle" (נָּתיָה--from נָתַן) also suggests the potential enjoyment of stability and security previously envisioned in connection with the restoration and renewal.107

The words of Gedaliah also reflect an alignment and harmony of purpose between the leader of Judah and the prophet Jeremiah that did not exist in the period prior to the exile. The prophet Jeremiah even casts his lots with Gedaliah by returning to remain with the governor and the remnant left in the land.108 Before the exile, the leaders of Judah reject the prophetic coun-

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107For this same verb (בָּרֵךְ), cf. 31:24; 32:37; for the conceptual idea, cf. 30:10; 31:40; 33:16.

108This act is particularly noteworthy in light of the message of the prophet Jeremiah that the ultimate hope of restoration and renewal lies with the exiles in Babylon (ch. 24/29). Christopher R. Seitz (Theology in Conflict: Reactions to the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah, BZAW 176 [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989]) attempts to resolve this issue by isolating various redactional levels. One level of redaction holds forth the hope of blessing for Gedaliah and the remnant in Judah, while a later redactional level rejects this viewpoint and
sei and lead the nation into disaster because of their refusal to submit to the
word of Yahweh. Now, the leader of Judah joins Jeremiah in calling for
submission to Babylon, and this acceptance of the divine will opens the door
for Judah to experience blessing. For the only time in chapters 26-45, the
prophet Jeremiah is conspicuously absent from the scene in 40:7-41:18, and
from a rhetorical perspective, this absence would seem to stress that Gedaliah
functions in the place of Jeremiah as the spokesman of God. Whereas Jerem­
iah experienced constant opposition from the leadership prior to the exile,
Gedaliah stands in the role of prophet and proclaims a message that closely
parallels the words of the prophet himself in 42:9-12. Just as the prophet
experiences opposition and persecution on account of his call for submission
to Babylon, Gedaliah also becomes a victim of violence at the hands of
Ishmael, a member of the house of David. The alliance between Gedaliah
and Jeremiah at least temporarily signifies hope and a new beginning for the
people of Judah remaining in the land.

A fourth positive sign in the early events after exile is the reversal
of the divine prohibition against Jeremiah’s intercession on behalf of Judah.
The willingness of Jeremiah to intercede on behalf of the Judean survivors in
42:2-4 (contrast with 37:3-10 prior to the exile) clearly demonstrates that Judah

places all hope of renewal in the future. As stated elsewhere in this dissertation, Seitz’s
approach appears to be an oversimplified attempt to resolve the tension of human response
that is at the heart of this narrative material. There appears to be potential for blessing to
varying degrees for the different communities in the aftermath of exile (with the ultimate
restoration coming for a generation yet to arise in Babylon), but the actual enjoyment of this
blessing is conditioned upon human response. If the goal of later redactors was to gloss over this
offer of hope, then they appear to have done their job very poorly.

109 Jones (Jeremiah, 469) refers to Gedaliah as “the alter ego of Jeremiah.” This role
of Gedaliah as Yahweh’s spokesman in the place of Jeremiah fits well in a passage where the
words of the prophet have already been placed in the mouth of the pagan commander, Nebu-
zaradan (cf. 40:2-3).
The role of prophet as intercessor is an important part of the Moses typology behind the presentation of the person of Jeremiah,\(^{110}\) and the restoration of Jeremiah's right of intercession signals a new epoch for Israel and suggests the possibility of at least a partial enjoyment of the "new covenant" blessings proclaimed by this new Moses. The "if/then" sermon of Jeremiah that follows his intercession for Israel (42:9-17) recalls the paranetic style of the "life/death" sermons of Moses in the exposition of the first covenant prior to Israel's entrance into the promised land (Deut. 28-30).\(^{111}\) The prophet Jeremiah echoes the message of Moses in calling for the people to choose between courses of life and death that hinge upon the issue of obedience to the revealed will of Yahweh. The issue then becomes how the people will respond to this new Moses' offer of "life."

\*The Loss of "Return" Blessings and Reversal of the New Exodus*

Two key actions indicate that Judah will not respond positively to the ministry of this second Moses and that the people will not experience the incipient blessings of the restoration and renewal set forth in chapters 30-33. First, Ishmael's murder of Gedaliah (41:1-3) constitutes a rejection of Gedaliah's offer of peace and security in 40:9-10. The house of David once again takes the lead in opposing the word of Yahweh. Second, the flight of Johanan and the Jews into Egypt (43:1-7) represents rejection of Jeremiah's counsel in

\(^{110}\) Holladay, "The Background of Jeremiah's Self-Understanding," 153-64.

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42:9-17. Thus, Jeremiah 40-43 reflects a dual structure: A) offer of life (by Gedaliah) and rejection (murder of Gedaliah) (40:1-41:18), and B) offer of life (by Jeremiah) and rejection (descent into Egypt with Jeremiah taken against his will) (42:1-43:13). The judgment of the Judean survivors who remain in the land only becomes a necessity because of their negative response to the prophetic word.

The positive tone and language at the beginning of chapter 40 quickly turns negative. The conditions that exist in the land of Judah soon become exactly the opposite of those envisioned in connection with the new exodus and the new pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the Book of Consolation. Ishmael, a member of the house of David, carries out the assassination of Gedaliah (41:1-3), and the murder of Gedaliah sets in motion a series of events that leads to exit and exile from the promised land for the remnant in the land of Judah. Even before the onset of violence, the Judean official Johanan correctly perceived that the assassination of Gedaliah would result in a negation of the incipient blessings of "return" (חזרה) (40:12) and "gathering" (גathering) (40:15).

Instead of experiencing restoration and renewal like that envisioned in 30-33, the people of Judah are experiencing another form of captivity. Ishmael takes captives from among the people of Judah and then removes them from the land of promise (41:10) in the same way that the Babylonians have done (cf. 30:8-9). Panel one (chs. 26-35) of the Jeremiah

\[\text{112 Note the repetition of the root (נָּשָׁב, "to take captive") in 30:16 and 41:10(2), 14, which indicates that Ishmael carries out an act against his own people that God has designed for Israel's enemies in the future time of salvation. The reference to the taking of the king's daughters in 41:10 provides an even stronger connection between the actions of Ishmael and those of Nebuchadnezzar (cf. 38:23, and the description of Nebuchadnezzar's cruel treatment of Zedekiah's sons in 39:4-7).}\]
narratives contains a prediction of exile and a promise of restoration. The second panel (chs. 36-45) provides a narrative account of the fulfillment of the judgment of exile (chs. 37-39) and then appears to portray the early stages of the promised "return" (בָּשָׂר) (ch. 40). However, the story takes an unsuspected twist when the very segment of the population of Judah that had avoided removal from the land of promise by the Babylonians is taken captive by Ishmael, a member of the house of David (ch. 41). The Jeremiah narratives have depicted the captivity of Judah at the hands of Babylon, a partial return, and then a second "captivity" at the hands of Ishmael.

In spite of this negative turn of events, the door of hope in the aftermath of exile is not closed with the assassination of Gedaliah. The confrontation between Ishmael and Johanan in 41:11-16 leads to the escape of the prisoners of Ishmael as these captives "turn" (בָּשָׂר) and go over to Johanan (41:15). These prisoners of Ishmael are "joyful" (נֶפֶשׁ) over their deliverance (41:13; cf. 31:12). Nevertheless, as with the "return" in 40:12, the positive effects are short-lived because of the remnant's refusal to follow Jeremiah's counsel (cf. 42:9-18 and 43:1-7). Just as the act of Ishmael brought about the reversal of the return of 40:12, so also Johanan's act of "taking away" (נִשְׁנָה) 114

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113 The significance of this choice is highlighted in Jer. 41-42 by the technique of narrative delay. In 41:17-18, Johanan and the remnant are "on their way to Egypt" but stop before making the fateful decision to leave the boundaries of the promised land. In 42:2-4, the group consults with the prophet Jeremiah. There is a further delay of ten days in 42:7 as the remnant waits with Jeremiah for a word from Yahweh. After a lengthy dispute between Jeremiah and the leaders of the remnant that extends from 42:9-43:3, the choice is finally made in 43:4 to ignore Jeremiah's prophetic counsel and to flee for Egypt. The technique of slowing down the narrative draws the reader into the decision-making process and reflects the seriousness of the fateful decision to enter Egypt in disobedience to the word of Yahweh.

114 Johanan further resembles Ishmael in that he repeats the oppressive acts of Nebuchadnezzar against his own people. Johanan "takes" (נִשְׁנָה) away the Jewish remnant in the same way that Nebuchadnezzar "captures" (נִשְׁנָה) Zedekiah (39:5). Johanan also leads away the "king's daughters" (cf. 38:23; 43:6).
the Jewish remnant to Egypt results in a further negation of the “return” (יִשְׂרָאֵל) to the land (43:5).

The remnant’s descent into Egypt in Jeremiah 43 resumes the Moses imagery and represents a full reversal of the original exodus.115 Israel’s salvation history has come full circle, and the ultimate covenant curse of return to Egypt has come into effect.116 The resumption of Jeremiah’s intercession (42:3ff) raises the possibility that this second Moses will lead Israel to a life of blessing in the promised land unlike the first Moses, but Jeremiah ultimately fails just like Moses. Seitz comments on what has transpired in Jeremiah 43:

Reversing the first prophet’s ascent out of Egypt, Jeremiah is taken back down into Egypt (43:1-7) against his will and in disobedience to the command of Deut. 18:16 . . . . With this action the curses of Deuteronomy are invoked and prophecy is brought to an end. It appears as though the whole generation, without exception, will perish . . . .117 As in the ministry of Moses, blessing is denied the present generation and transferred to a coming generation.118 Also like Moses, Jeremiah identifies so

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115 The numerous repetitions of “Egypt” (יִשְׂרָאֵל) in Jer. 40-43 demonstrate its rhetorical significance in this section—41:18; 42:14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19; 43:2, 7, 11, 12(2), 13(2). This emphasis carries over into ch. 44; cf. vv. 1, 8, 12(2), 13, 14, 15, 24, 26(2), 27, 28(2), 30.


117 Seitz, “The Prophet Moses and the Canonical Shape of Jeremiah,” 15. Carroll (“Jeremiah, Intertextuality and Ideologiekritik,” 28) understands this motif of exodus reversal, and in fact, the reversal of all of Israel’s salvation history to be at work throughout the book of Jeremiah. Carroll describes Jer. 2-44 as “a variation on the story in Exodus to 2 Kings.” In addition, Jer. 4:23-26 reverses the creation story of Genesis 1-3. Carroll comments: “Creation and exodus are thus unravelled and written off in the book of Jeremiah.”

118 Ibid. Note Jeremiah’s prophecies concerning the 70 years in 29:10-14. Seitz carries the Moses typology so far as to suggest that Baruch and Ebed-Melech constitute Jeremiah’s Joshua and Caleb (i.e. the only two persons of the contemporary generation to enjoy God’s blessing for obedience).
closely with his people in his role as prophet that he too must experience exclusion from the promised land because of the sins of the nation (43:6; cf. Deut. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21).¹¹⁹

In attempting to explain the exodus reversal and the failure of the Judean survivors of the exile remaining in the land to experience the blessings of renewal and restoration, the narrator appears to stress that such blessing is impossible in that the "old" covenant conditions remain in effect. The new covenant promise in 31:34 is that there will no longer be a need for one man to teach another because all men will know Yahweh "from the least of them to the greatest" (לַמֵּקִיסָה נַרְבּוֹלָּה), but in the immediate aftermath of exile, the people "from the least of them to the great" (מַקִּיסָה נַרְבּוֹלָּה) stand in need of having the word of Yahweh mediated through the prophet Jeremiah (42:1-3).

The fact that old covenant conditions persist is evident in that the encounter between prophet and people in chapter 42 resembles another Mount Sinai. Like Moses, Jeremiah "declares" (נָשָׁה) to Israel the word of

¹¹⁹Seitz's comment is suggestive of how the events in Jer. 42-44 can be viewed in light of Num. 14 and the unbelief of Israel at the time of the sending out of the spies. In Num. 14, the people declare, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt" (v. 4); in Jer. 43:1-7, Johanan and the Judeans do go back to Egypt. In both passages, God's spokesman encourages the people to "not be afraid" (לֹא יִפְרָצֶר) (Num. 14:9[2]; Jer. 42:11), because it is "fear" of an enemy army that causes Israel's failure to take possession of the land (Num. 14:3, 9) and Judah's failure to remain in the land (Jer. 42:11). The sad irony is that these people who take the apparently safe course will experience the very death that they fear from engaging the enemy in combat (Num. 14:36-37; Jer. 42:13-16). In Num. 14, the children for whom the Israelites are afraid will be the ones to take possession of the land that they have refused (v. 31). Both accounts contain references to "sword" (Num. 14:3, 43) and "plague" (Num. 14:12, 37). The disobedience brings about the death of a generation (Num. 14:32-35; Jer. 42:17-18; 44:12-14, 27-28) and the warning that the unbelievers will "not see the land" (לֹא יִאֶרֶץ ל) (Num. 14:22-23[2]; Jer. 42:18). Yahweh swears a personal oath to carry out destruction upon these unbelievers (Num. 14:21-22, 28; Jer. 44:26-28). The issue of Israel becoming a reproach among the nations is raised in both passages (in Num. 14:13-16 as a reason for Yahweh not to abandon Israel; in Jer. 42:18 and 44:8 as a consequence of the divine judgment inflicted upon Israel).

¹¹⁹Ibid.
Yahweh (cf. Jer. 42:3-4; Exod. 19:3; Deut. 5:5). The pledge of obedience to the prophetic word on the part of Johanan and the Judean contingent who seek guidance from the prophet Jeremiah (42:2-6) recalls the ineffectual promise of the people of Israel to obey the terms of Yahweh’s covenant at Mount Sinai as Moses prepares to go up the mountain to receive the law of God (Exod. 19:8; 24:3, 7; cf. Deut. 5:27).120 The people of Israel offer similar pledges of fidelity at other times of covenant renewal in the nation’s history (cf. Josh. 24:21, 24; 1 Sam. 7:4, 6, 8; 12:19).121 The almost immediate rejection of following a course of fidelity to Yahweh (43:2-7) is reminiscent of Israel’s defection at Sinai in worshipping the golden calf before Moses had even returned with the tablets of the law (cf. Exod. 32).122 This short-lived commitment to Yahweh demonstrates that the hearts of the people of Israel are still not disposed to obey Yahweh (cf. Deut. 5:29) and provides the strongest possible contrast to the permanently internalized fidelity to the law of God that will characterize the true remnant in the future age of salvation (cf. 31:33-34; 32:39-40).

The conditions as a whole which exist in the land of Judah immediately after the Babylonian exile are exactly the opposite of those envisioned for the time of restoration in chapters 30-33. Rather than the multiplication of the nation’s population (30:19), this small “remnant” will be reduced even further in number because of its desire to go down to Egypt (42:7, 13-18; cf. 44:28).123 The differing conditions in chapters 30-33 and 40-43 are perhaps

120Brueggemann, *To Build, To Plant*, 175-76.

121Ibid, 176.

122As a matter of fact, the defection of these people after ten days (Jer. 42:7) perhaps stresses that Jeremiah’s audience has even less resolve than did the contemporaries of Moses who defected after Moses’ forty days (cf. Exod. 24:18).

123Brueggemann, *To Build, To Plant*, 199. The refugees are returning to the same condition that Israel had prior to the original exodus from Egypt (cf. Deut. 10:22; 26:5).
most clearly set forth in the contrasting use of the imagery of cursing and blessing in the two sections. The ultimate contrast is between a life of blessing and security in the promised land (31:23-25; 33:16) versus cursing and death in a foreign land (42:16; 43:11). Jeremiah 30-33 employs stereotypical blessing imagery to portray Israel's glorious future in the restoration. The subjugation of Judah to Babylon is a time when God's rebellious people experience the covenant curses of "sword, plague, and famine," but Jeremiah 30-33 envisions a future reversal of these curses. Yahweh promises to heal the incurable wounds and sicknesses inflicted upon his people (30:12-17; 33:6). The "sword, plague, and famine" is the real condition behind the narrated events in chapters 32-33 (cf. 32:24, 36; 33:10), but the future age of salvation will be a time of joy, prosperity, health, peace, and security in the land of promise (30:10; 31:5-6, 12-14, 23-25; 32:42-44; 33:6-9, 12-13, 15-16).

In contrast to this portrayal of blessing, the narrative material in Jeremiah 40-43 is filled with the stereotypical language of cursing. The prophet Jeremiah warns of further experience of the "sword, plague, and famine" if the people fail to respond in obedience to the word of Yahweh (42:16-18, 21-22; 43:11). Rather than experiencing release from the grip of terror (cf. 30:4-11), the remnant choosing to go down to Egypt will be consumed by fear (42:16). As the remnant abandons the promised land in disregard of Jeremiah's counsel, the locale of judgment changes but the experience of the covenant curses continues. Egypt becomes like Jerusalem in that Yahweh hands this locale over to Nebuchadnezzar to inflict the covenant curse of the "sword" upon his disobedient people (cf. 32:24, 26 with 42:17-18, 22; 43:8-13). Jeremiah's message of hope holds forth the promise of a decree of forgiveness that will bring an end to the period of cursing and judgment (31:34; 33:8), while the narratives of chapters 40-43 conclude with an act of disobedience (cf. 43:7) that brings
about an extension of God’s judgment against Judah. The Book of Consolation emphasizes the positive features of the exodus tradition, while chapters 40-43 present the Judean survivors of the exile as imitating and repeating the sins of their forefathers who lived at the time of Israel’s inception.

The Contrasting Portrayal of National Leadership

The Promise of a "New" David in 30-33

A second specific point of contrast between Jeremiah 30-33 and 40-43 is the portrayal of national leadership in the two sections of material. The positive message in 30-33 is the promise of a future Davidic ruler who will reverse the failures of the historical kings in the Davidic dynasty. The future Davidic ruler will distinguish himself from the contemporaries of Jeremiah representing the house of David by his character and his conduct. This future king is described as a "righteous branch" who will do what is "just and right" (33:15).124 In contrast the narratives in Jeremiah 26-45 highlight the disobedience of the contemporary Davidic rulers. Jehoiakim is violently opposed to the prophetic message and messenger (chs. 26 and 36), and Zedekiah is also censured for his refusal to "obey" the prophetic word (37:2; cf. 21:1-23:7).

Yahweh’s response of blessing to this ideal Davidic ruler of the future also contrasts to the divine response of judgment against the contemporary house of David. Yahweh responds to Jehoiakim’s destruction of the prophetic scroll with the cutting off of Jehoiakim’s descendants (36:30). The narrative of the capture of Jerusalem in chapter 39 describes the gruesome

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124 The title in both 33:15 and 23:5 is perhaps a play on the name “Zedekiah,” a king who possesses none of the character qualities implied by his name.
execution of the sons of Zedekiah (39:5-6), the consequence of Zedekiah's silent refusal to follow the prophetic counsel offered to him by Jeremiah on three separate occasions. The end result of the disobedience of these two kings is the annihilation of their descendants. The hope for Israel's future must spring from a new source within the family of David.

In contrast to the demise of the lines of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, the future Davidic ruler in 30-33 is given the promise that his descendants will rule over Israel in perpetuity (33:17). This righteous ruler will enjoy a special relationship with Yahweh. The Davidic king will “arise” (נָבָא) in order to “be near” Yahweh (30:21). In contrast, the historical Zedekiah, as the object of divine judgment, “arises” (נָבָא) (39:4) in order to flee from Jerusalem and is later taken as a prisoner to Babylon, thus permanently removing him from his residence within the city of Yahweh (39:4-7). The essence of the prophetic message of hope is that a “new David” will reign over Israel (30:8-9; cf. Ezek. 34:23-24). The rhetoric of reversal is once again the dominant feature in the message of the Book of Consolation in Jeremiah 30-33. The future time of salvation will bring about a complete reversal of the conditions of the past that have necessitated the judgment of Israel and Judah.

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Clements states that the prophecy concerning the election of the house of David in 2 Sam. 7:1-17 is the “seed bed” of Old Testament messianic hope and has had a major impact on the eschatological promises in the OT prophets (cf. Isa. 7:10-17; 9:2-7; Jer. 33:14-26; Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24-28). The promise of a new David is grounded in this election theme. Block explains that this promise has “no thought of the resurrection of the historical king (like a David redi­ vivus),” but rather a figure like David who will establish the permanence of the Davidic dynasty through his fidelity to Yahweh. As Jenson (p. 208) explains, this figure provides the strongest possible contrast to historic Davidic kings like Jehoiakim and Zedekiah. The Davidic dynasty has become so corrupt that the only solution “is to go back to the very start and to find a new David from the royal line of Judah.”
The Failures of Leadership in 40-43

In contrast to the positive promises in 30-33, the narratives in 40-43 reflect the negative image that the house of David is every bit as flawed after the fall of Jerusalem as it was before. The lone Davidic figure in the narratives of 40-43 is a pathetic and despicable character named Ishmael. Ishmael has no throne to rule from or nation to rule over but he perpetuates the sinful rebellion of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah that necessitated the fall of Judah and Jerusalem in the first place. The promise of 30-33 is a Davidic ruler who will provide righteous leadership for Israel in the time of future restoration and renewal. The reality of 40-43 is that the house of David provides only more of the same kind of rebellion against Yahweh that has led to national calamity and collapse.

From a rhetorical perspective, the specific point of contrast on the subject of national leadership in Jeremiah 30-33 and 40-43 is that the former presents an ultimate reaffirmation of the Davidic covenant, while the latter portrays a temporary reversal and setting aside of the royal grant that Yahweh has conferred on the house of David. The Book of Consolation in 30-33 promises that a new David will arise because of Yahweh’s faithfulness to his covenant promises (cf. 33:19-26). In contrast, the narratives in 40-43 depict the unfolding of events in the aftermath of exile as a reversal of the Davidic covenant. As a member of the house of David, Ishmael is no longer Yahweh’s anointed but rather a conspirator against the divinely appointed Gedaliah. The last glimpse of any historical figure related to the house of David in the Jeremiah narratives is Ishmael the fugitive fleeing for his life to the Ammonites (41:15).

The portrayal of Judah’s leadership is central to the rhetoric and plot development of the narratives in Jeremiah 40-43. The Judeans in the land
during the exile experience judgment because of the failure of their leaders to live up to the kind of ideals attached to the future Davidic ruler in Jeremiah 30-33. At the beginning of the narrative in Jeremiah 40, the family of David no longer exercises leadership over Judah. The Judean officer Ishmael is of “royal blood” (41:2) and is the most significant Davidic figure in this portion of the Jeremiah narratives, but his position is subordinate to that of Gedaliah who serves as the governor of Judah under the aegis of the Babylonians. The theological perspective of Jeremiah 26-45 as a whole is that the divinely bestowed right to rule as the servant of Yahweh has been transferred from the house of David to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians (27:6; 28:14; 43:10; cf. 25:5-7, 9, 12, 17). Yahweh has taken Judah and Jerusalem from the Davidic ruler and placed them “into the hand” of the king of Babylon (32:28, 36; 34:2-3, 21-22; 37:17; 38:3, 18: cf. 21:7-10). In light of the transfer of power from David to Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar’s appointment of Gedaliah as governor provides divine sanction for Gedaliah’s position of leadership over the land in the place of the house of David.126

The conflict between Ishmael and Gedaliah dominates the action in Jeremiah 40-41. A dynastic change of sorts has taken place in Judah, and Gedaliah serves as a representative of the new order under the hegemony of Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians. Throughout the history of Judah, the stability of the Davidic dynasty was an ongoing reality, and the Davidic forfeiture of the throne was no doubt a shock for loyal Yahwists who tenaciously clung to the tenets of the Zion tradition. The fate of the house of David is also a surprise element in the unfolding plot of Jeremiah 26-45. The salva-

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126 See pp. 237-38 above.
tion oracles in 30-33 have promised a restoration of the Davidic line; the narratives in 40-41 are narrating the collapse of the dynasty.

Intertextual sensitivity on the part of the reader helps to accentuate the element of shock and surprise, because the narratives in 40-41 appear to subtly introduce certain elements from the earlier Saul/David narratives at the time of the establishment of the Davidic dynasty to present what transpires between Ishmael and Gedaliah as a reversal of the Saul-David conflict. The demise of the Davidic dynasty is depicted in the actions of Ishmael through the reversal of events surrounding David's original rise to power. The narratives in 40-41 seem to portray Ishmael in his conflict with Gedaliah as a Saul-like figure, thus legitimizing Yahweh's temporary rejection of the Davidic dynasty. In light of the earlier comparisons of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah to previous rulers in Israel's history, it is not surprising that the narrator once again alludes to earlier historical events as a frame of reference for the actions of Ishmael as a representative of the house of David.

The Deuteronomistic History asserts that Yahweh finally and absolutely rejected the house of Saul (cf. 1 Sam. 13:13-14; 15:11, 23, 26; 28:17) and guarantees that such a rejection would never occur for the house of David (2 Sam. 7:15). The loss of the throne by the house of David during the Babylonian exile is an occurrence so strange that it is as if Yahweh has reversed and revoked his earlier promise to David. In the events transpiring immediately after the exile, Ishmael is a member of the house of David acting like King Saul in his desperate attempt to hold on to power that Yahweh has stripped away. The conflict between Ishmael and Gedaliah represents the futile and last gasp effort of the old order (Ishmael) to thwart and subvert the inevitable and divinely established sovereignty of the new order (Nebuchadnezzar-Gedaliah). The struggle is like that of the Saul-David conflict, but now the
“shoe is on the other foot,” and the house of David is on the outside looking in.

Gedaliah is appointed to rule over Judah at Mizpah (40:7-10), which also served as the locale for Saul’s anointing as Israel’s first king (cf. 1 Sam. 10:17-27). The foreign ruler who inspires Ishmael’s conspiracy against Gedaliah is Baalis, the king of the Ammonites (41:14), and Ishmael eventually flees to the land of Ammon when recognizing that further resistance is a lost cause (41:15). David himself had close ties with Ammon during the early part of his reign. In addition, Saul’s defeat of the Ammonites was his first important military victory (cf. 1 Sam. 11:1-11). The alliance of Ishmael and Baalis against Gedaliah recalls the original alliance of David and the king of Ammon against the house of Saul.

Events are lining up in the same manner as in the original power struggle between Saul and David. However, in the conflict of Jeremiah 40-41, the David figure, Ishmael, embraces the very forms of violence as a means of gaining power that David eschewed in his original conflict with the house of Saul. Ishmael kills Gedaliah in an especially treacherous manner. The officer gains Gedaliah’s confidence by eating a meal with him and then slaughters Gedaliah in a serious breach of ancient Near Eastern rules of hospitality (41:1-3).

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127 Sam. 10:1 mentions “the kindness of the Ammonites to David.” P. K. McCarter (2 Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary, AB 9 [Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1984], 270) interprets this phrase as referring to Nahash of Ammon offering support to David during the time of his long power struggle with Saul.

128 In this case, however, it is the Saul figure (Gedaliah) who is gaining subjects from the territories that originally fell under David’s control. Jews return from Moab, Ammon, and Edom to place themselves under Gedaliah’s authority (40:11-12), the very places that David had in expanding Israel’s territories (cf. 2 Sam. 8-10).

129 Keown et al. (Jeremiah 26-52, 243) write: “The choice of setting adds to the sense of treachery. It is hard to imagine a more horrid breach of proper conduct than this blood-
David's officer, Joab, in the murder of Abner. Joab murdered Abner after pretending to desire a private conference with him (cf. 2 Sam. 3:22-27). David separated himself from this murder and called for vengeance against Joab (cf. 2 Sam. 3:28-30). In the original conflict between Saul and David, an especially bloody and futile conflict occurred when Abner and Joab agreed to have twelve supporters of David engage in hand-to-hand conflict with twelve men of Saul, and all twenty-four of the men were killed at the pool of Gibeon (cf. 2 Sam. 2:8-16). In Jeremiah 41, the confrontation between the forces of Johanan and Ishmael takes place at this same location (41:11-15).

In Jeremiah 40-41, the Saul figure (Gedaliah) is given precedence over the David figure (Ishmael) in part because this particular member of the family of David has become as violent as the original Saul in his relentless pursuit against David. Ishmael's outrageous act of murdering the seventy Israelite pilgrims coming up to Jerusalem for worship (41:4-9) recalls Saul's impious behavior in slaughtering the 85 priests of Yahweh at Nob (cf. 2 Sam. 22:17-23). Ishmael also demonstrates himself like Saul and unlike David in his presumptuous willingness to perform violence against God's appointed ruler.130 Ironically, Ishmael, unlike Saul, succeeds in killing Yahweh's anointed but is ultimately unable to reverse Yahweh's decree of the subjugation of the house of David.

Even after Ishmael flees to the Ammonites in 41:15, certain place names in the narrative call attention to the collapse of the Davidic dynasty. A

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130For Saul's relentless desire to kill David because of his recognition that God was with David, cf. 1 Sam. 18:11-12; 19:9-16; 20:30-31. For the contrasting attitude of David toward Yahweh's "anointed," cf. 1 Sam. 24:1-13; 26:5-12.
final connection with the original period of David appears in the reference to
the geographical place names of Geruth Kimham and Bethlehem in 41:17.
The exact location of Geruth Kimham is unknown, but the name Kimham
appears in the narrative recounting David's return to Israel to assume the
throne after the rebellion of Absalom (cf. 2 Sam. 19:37-40). The town Geruth
Kimham most likely belonged to the portion of land given to Kimham as a
reward for the loyalty of his father toward David. In the 2 Samuel passage,
the name Kimham refers to a time of restoration for David, a time when
David returns to Jerusalem after the rise of a pretender to the throne. The
loyalty of men like Kimham enables the kingdom of David to remain intact
in spite of the threat presented by the rebellion of Absalom.

In the Jeremiah narrative, the name Kimham no longer has a posi­
tive connotation for the David figure in this story. Instead of the name being
associated with the return of David to rule over Israel, the name now be­
comes the final stopping point for a contingent of Judeans about to leave the
promised land as a direct result of Ishmael's failed attempt to reassert Davidic
control over Judah. The Davidic dynasty had its start in the region surround­
ing Bethlehem; the people of Judah are now reaching an ending point at the
same locale.

The legitimacy of Davidic rule over Israel is established not only by
the election of David over Saul but also the election of the house of David
over the apostate kings of the northern kingdom of Israel (cf. 1 Kgs. 14:8-16;
the demise of the Davidic dynasty, the narrator in Jeremiah 40-41 not only
employs the imagery of the Saul-David conflict to portray the struggle be­

131 Huey, Jeremiah, Lamentations, 356.
between Gedaliah-Ishamel but also develops the character of Ishmael in a manner that resembles a number of the violent usurpers who ruled over the northern kingdom of Israel rather than a righteous member of the house of David. The permanence of the Davidic dynasty in Judah enabled the southern kingdom to avoid the bloody violence that surrounded dynastic changes in the northern kingdom of Israel. The general pattern in Israel was for dynasties to begin and end with assassination plots that often included the extermination of entire families. This pattern is now becoming a reality in the southern kingdom as control over Judah slips away from the family of David, and the Davidic figure Ishmael responds to the dynastic change in a manner that characterizes the usurpers of the northern kingdom.

Of all the leaders of the northern kingdom, perhaps the one figure emerging as the bloodiest of all is Jehu, who carries out a ruthless and overzealous extermination of the house of Ahab. The narrative in Jeremiah 40-41 allows for the drawing of several correspondences between the violent acts of Ishmael and the ruthless behavior of Jehu. Jehu kills 42 Judean princes at the “well” (בֵית אֵקִד) of Beth Eked (2 Kgs. 10:14), while Ishmael employs a “well” (בֵית אֵקִד) as a receptacle for the corpses left behind by one of his killing sprees (41:7-9). In addition, Jehu slaughters 70 royal princes of Israel in one particu-

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132 For example, Baasha assassimates Nadab and then kills off the rest of Jeroboam’s family (1 Kgs. 15:27-30); Zimri kills Elah and then the rest of the family of Baasha (1 Kgs. 16:11-13); and Jehu kills off the family of Ahab and the dynasty of Omri in a particularly bloody fashion (2 Kgs. 9-10).

133 The fact that Ishmael resorts to murder also indicates that the end is near for Judah in that intrigue and assassination were a reflection of Israel’s instability in its closing hour as well (cf. 2 Kgs. 15:10-11, 14, 25, 30).

134 Jones (Jeremiah, 471-72) also calls attention to the similarities between Ishmael and Jehu as a narrative device for emphasizing the ruthlessness of Ishmael’s character and actions: “Ishmael is ... shown to act in the spirit of Jehu and to carry the same judgment.”
larly bloody scene (cf. 2 Kgs. 10:6-9), just as Ishmael murders 70 pilgrims from Israel in a specific incident of violence (41:4-8). In a sense, Ishmael is an even more ruthless figure than Jehu. Jehu was anointed by Yahweh and given the task of eliminating Baal worshippers in Israel (cf. 2 Kgs. 10:18-27), but Ishmael’s killing involves the murder of individuals who appear to have come to Jerusalem to offer legitimate worship to Yahweh (41:4-8). In becoming like the wicked rulers of Israel in the north, Ishmael demonstrates that the house of David is no longer worthy of reigning as Yahweh’s servant in the north.

The materials in Jeremiah 30-33 and 40-43 have developed the theme of kingship in completely opposite directions. The promissory message of chapters 30-33 is that a new David will arise; the negative implication of the development of the character of Ishmael in Jeremiah 40-41 is that the old problems of rebellion and disobedience persist. The time of Ishmael in the aftermath of exile has more in common with the time of judgment connected with Jehoiakim and Zedekiah before the exile than it does with the time of salvation and blessing portrayed in Jeremiah 30-33.

The Contrasting Prophetic Sign Acts

A third point of direct contrast between Jeremiah 30-33 and 40-43 is the corresponding sign acts appearing in the two sections in 32:1-15 and 43:9-13. These two sign acts are similar to one another in that they both involve an act of burying, but the significance of these two acts visually reflects the intended contrast between 30-33 as a message of hope and 40-43 as a section of judgment. The act of burial in chapters 32 connotes a promise concerning Israel’s future possession of its homeland, while the burial in chapter 43 serves as a confirmation of Jeremiah’s message of judgment and doom against the Judean refugees in Egypt.
The Purchase of Family Property
(Jeremiah 32)

In 32:1-15, Jeremiah purchases family property at Anathoth and then concludes the transaction by burying the title deed in the presence of witnesses. This action is accompanied by the promise from Yahweh that houses and property will once again be purchased in the land (32:15). Jeremiah's act becomes "a representation in simile-form of what would happen on a larger scale":

Since the fields and vineyards were the means of economic livelihood, since the field was purchased in the socially and legally accepted manner, and since as purchaser, Jeremiah functioned as "redeemer" which was considered a family, as well as covenantal, responsibility, Jeremiah's action was a metonymic expression for the resumption of normal economic, societal, familial, and covenantal activities in the land. This was a total reversal of the prophecies of the dispossession of the land (cf. Jer. 6:12), the decimation and scattering of the community, and destruction of the covenantal bond.135

The future hope and blessing of Israel is explicitly linked to Israel's possession of the promised land, and the burial of the title deed in a pottery jar is an expression of hope that the property at Anatoth will revert to the family of Jeremiah after the disaster of the Babylonian exile.

The Burial of the Stones
(Jeremiah 43)

In Jeremiah 32, the prophet Jeremiah's act of burying an object signifies hope and promise regarding the future of Israel in the promised land, but the burial of an object in 43:8-13 has an entirely different connotation and signifies a warning that the land of Egypt will become a place of death and destruction for the Jews living there. Jeremiah's burial of several large stones

at a government office in Taphanes signifies Nebuchadnezzar's future conquest of Egypt. The act of burial marks out Egypt as a country where the victorious Nebuchadnezzar will set up his throne (43:10-11). The prophet Jeremiah's verbal explanation of the sign act that follows does not contain a direct word of judgment against the Judean refugees but rather focuses exclusively upon Egypt as the locale of judgment. This rhetorical focus on Egypt itself in this oracle (and in the prophetic speech in Jeremiah 44) accents the utter foolishness of the course of action adopted by the leaders who oppose Jeremiah's counsel. In the course of Jeremiah's ministry, the leaders and people of Judah have seen the disintegration of their confidence in the inviolability of Zion through the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Now, a remnant of Judah's population is grasping at the last straw of trusting in the inviolability of Egypt. The people of Judah have gone to great lengths to avoid acceptance of Jeremiah's call to submit to Babylon, now even trusting in the land of bondage and oppression as a place of security and protection. The refugees will soon recognize the foolishness of their trust in the inviolability of Egypt as a place of refuge and security (cf. 42:14). Yahweh has deeded the nations to

136For the background and explanation of how the event in 43:8-13 took place, see Friebel, 809-32. Friebel addresses the arguments against Jeremiah performing this act in the presence of Egyptian soldiers and officials around the government building and argues that "Jeremiah's action probably would not have attracted the attention of, or caused any difficulty for, any Egyptian officials or soldiers which might have been present" (p. 818). The area around this government building was no doubt filled with other people and activities, and the soldiers and officials were not likely to have been within earshot or concerned enough to hear the interpretation of Jeremiah's action.

137Friebel (p. 821) argues that the buried stones represent a marker of the exact place where the described event will take place. The Babylonian king will set up his throne on this exact spot. Similarly, Thompson (The Book of Jeremiah, 670) suggests that the stones represent the "pedestal" for the throne that Nebuchadnezzar will set up after his conquest of Egypt.

his servant Nebuchadnezzar (cf. 27:6-7), and Egypt is not a place outside the boundaries of Yahweh’s sovereignty that will remain off limits to Nebuchadnezzar. The sign acts of 32:1-15 and 43:8-13 draw the starkest possible contrast between the glorious destiny of those who will participate in the new exodus that will bring restoration to the promised land and the horrible fate awaiting the Jewish refugees who have fled to Egypt in a reversal of God’s original act of deliverance for the nation of Israel.\(^{139}\)

The acts of burial in Jeremiah 32 and 43 are alike in that both of these sign acts indicate that the land where the burial occurs will not remain in the hands of the power currently in control. In Jeremiah 32, Yahweh is about to hand the land of Judah over to the Babylonians, but the burial of the deed of purchase signifies that the land will once again revert to Israel (cf. 32:14-15). In Jeremiah 43, the burial of the stones at Taphanes symbolizes the coming transfer of control of Egypt from the Pharaoh to the king of Babylon (43:10-13). The similarity between the sign acts in Jeremiah 32 and 43 provide further confirmation of the literary correspondence between the materials in 30-33 and 40-43.

The Parallelism of Events before and after the Fall of Jerusalem (Why Jeremiah 40-43 Belongs to the Time of Judgment)

The literary tension in 40-43 is whether the people living in Judah during the time of the exile will experience continued judgment or a new beginning leading to salvation and national restoration. If the events depicted in 40-43 attract to the Jehoiakim and Zedekiah narratives prior to the exile, then the text is pointing in the direction of an ongoing experience of

\(^{139}\)For the prophetic repudiation of Israel/Judah’s confidence in Egypt as a potential ally or friend, see ch. 3, p. 104, n. 51 above.
judgment. If the events depicted in 40-43 attract to the salvation portrayals in 30-33, then the text is informing the reader that Yahweh is about to bring blessing and deliverance.

In spite of the hopeful beginning in chapter 40, the attraction is clearly to the judgment side. The refusal to obey the word of Yahweh carries over into 40-43. The major focus of the contrasting parallelism that exists between Jeremiah 30-33 and 40-43 is to demonstrate that what transpires in Judah in the immediate aftermath of the exile has far more in common with the period of judgment culminating with the fall of Judah and Jerusalem than with the promised era of salvation portrayed in 30-33.

As if needing further confirmation of this point, the narratives in 40-43 reflect another prominent rhetorical feature that highlights essentially the same idea. The events in Jeremiah 40-43 are depicted in a manner that reflects a striking number of parallels to events occurring before the fall of Jerusalem elsewhere in the Jeremiah narratives in 26-45. The narrator not only draws parallels between the events in Jeremiah's ministry with earlier episodes in Israel's history but also between incidents from before and after the fall of Jerusalem during the time of Jeremiah's ministry. These parallels are discussed at this point in the dissertation because they are complementary to the contrasting correspondence between Jeremiah 30-33 and 40-43. Both of these rhetorical features are stressing the fact that the future era of salvation portrayed in Jeremiah 30-33 stands in stark contrast to the historical events reported in the Jeremiah narratives both before and after the fall of Jerusalem.

The narrator appears to draw comparisons between acts of disobedience occurring before the fall of Jerusalem and those which continue to take place in 40-43 during the time of the exile in order to emphasize that the survivors of the exile living in Judah carry on the unbelieving response to the
word of Yahweh that necessitated the fall of Judah in the first place. In fact, the narrator seems to delight in placing the unbelief and disobedience of the survivors of the exile in a worse light than that which occurred prior to the exile. The survivors who remained in the land no doubt perceived themselves as favored or blessed by Yahweh because they had avoided death or deportation to Babylon. However, this community has no right to feel comfortable when comparing themselves to their fellow countrymen who suffered the horrors of death and exile because they are essentially no different in terms of their response to Yahweh and his messenger.

The Choice of Submission to Babylon

The major similarity or parallelism between events before and after 586 B.C. in the Jeremiah narratives is that Judah must continue to wrestle with Jeremiah’s call for submission to Babylon. The Babylonian armies have subjugated Judah, but Ishmael’s assassination of Gedaliah demonstrates that even the small remnant left in the land after the fall of Jerusalem is not ready to acquiesce quietly to Babylonian authority. Jones observes that the test of submission to Babylon takes three forms in the Jeremiah narratives:

The first form of this message, appropriate to the moment, was: Submit to the Babylonian invader. King and people would not do this and suffered the consequences. The second form was: Seek the peace of the land under Gedaliah. The people were disposed to accept this counsel, but thrown by foreign interference. The third form, after the death of Gedaliah was: Stay in Judah; do not flee to Egypt.140

Jehoiakim and Zedekiah failed the first form of the test and brought about the fall of Jerusalem. Ishmael brings about the failure to the second form of this test of obedience by the assassination of Gedaliah in 40:1-41:15. Johanan spear-

140Jones, Jeremiah, 474.
heads the final opposition to the prophetic counsel by leading the remnant into Egypt in 41:16-43:13. In the Jeremiah narratives before and after the fall of Jerusalem, Judah refuses to obey the word of Yahweh in regard to the same overriding issue—failure to submit to Babylonian authority.

Repeated Failures and Disobedience

In spite of the positive characterization of the figure Gedaliah in chapter 40, the promise of stability and prosperity offered by his leadership (cf. 40:10) is unrealized in part because Gedaliah shares some of the same deficiencies that characterized Judah's leaders before the fall of Jerusalem. Gedaliah refuses to act upon Johanan's warnings of Ishmael's conspiracy (40:13-16) in the same way that Zedekiah failed to act on Jeremiah's warnings that continued resistance to Babylon was doomed policy (chs. 37-38). Gedaliah naively assumes that all is well in the same way that Zedekiah foolishly calculated that Judah was somehow strong enough to resist the Babylonian military machine. The leadership in Judah falls woefully short of the ideal Davidic ruler promised in 30-33.

The leadership given to Judah by the Davidic figure Ishmael is even worse. The acts of Ishmael after the fall of Jerusalem (41:1-15) bear resemblance to the disobedient acts of King Jehoiakim prior to the exile (cf. chs. 26 and 36). Both Jehoiakim and Ishmael are guilty of rejecting Yahweh's appointed servants. In Jeremiah 26, Jehoiakim demonstrates his rejection of the word of Yahweh by having the prophet Uriah killed by the sword (26:20-23). In chapter 36, Jehoiakim reflects his displeasure to the message of Jeremiah by destroying the prophetic scroll with a knife. Ishmael's murder of Gedaliah

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141 Keown et al. (Jeremiah 26-52, 237-38, 240-41) call attention to the similarities between the indecisiveness of Zedekiah and Gedaliah.
with the sword (41:2) repeats the violence of Jehoiakim against Uriah and constitutes rejection of a divinely appointed servant.142

In this comparison of Ishmael and Jehoiakim, there is even a heightening or intensification of the violence in the Ishmael narratives so that it is Ishmael who appears in the worse light. Ishmael does not stop with the murder of Gedaliah but also slaughters a number of Jews and Babylonians at Mizpah and then a group of worshippers at Jerusalem (41:4-10). Ishmael’s act of dumping the bodies of his victims into a cistern ( Heb ) (41:7) further recalls the episode of the Judean officials casting Jeremiah into a “cistern” ( Heb ) prior to the fall of Jerusalem (38:6-7). In the pre-exilic event, Zedekiah ultimately has regard for Jeremiah and has the prophet removed from the pit (38:9-10), but Ishmael has no such sympathy for his victims. The cistern is nothing more than a dumping place for Ishmael’s bloody carnage. The graphic violence in the Ishmael narratives contributes to the rhetorical message that Ishmael’s disobedience after the fall of Jerusalem is just as or even more severe than that which occurred before the fall of Judah to the Babylonians.143

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142See pp. 237-38 above. Gedaliah is repeatedly referred to as “the one whom the king of Babylon appointed.” This implies divine sanction in that Nebuchadnezzar is designated as Yahweh’s “servant” (25:7; 27:6; 43:10).

143It also appears that Ishmael is unfavorably compared to earlier godly kings in the Davidic dynasty in the same way that Jehoiakim and Zedekiah are, thus providing a further linkage between Ishmael and the two final kings of Judah responsible for the downfall of the nation. In 41:9, a lengthy historical notation in an otherwise elliptical account serves to highlight a contrast between the conduct of Ishmael and the earlier action of the godly Asa. The cistern in which Ishmael dumps the bodies of his murder victims was originally constructed by Asa as part of his defenses against Israel (cf. 1 Kgs. 15:22). Asa constructed this well to protect his subjects; Ishmael uses the well to carry out his murderous schemes.

An implicit contrast between Ishmael and Hezekiah/Josiah is that Ishmael seeks to unravel the bond of religious unity between the north and the south that was at least partially restored by the centralizing reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah. The Old Testament historical tradition attests to the efforts of both Hezekiah and Josiah to extend their cultic reforms beyond the boundaries of Judah proper (cf. 2 Kgs. 23:15-20; 2 Chron. 30:1-11; 34:6-9). In contrast, Ishmael’s brutal murder of 70 pilgrims from the north on their way to worship at Jeru-
Another comparison to the events before the fall of Jerusalem associated with the figure of Ishmael is that Ishmael inflicts suffering on his own countrymen like that inflicted upon Judah by the Babylonians in their siege against Jerusalem. Ishmael kills and makes captives of his fellow Judeans (41:2-3, 4-10) just as Nebuchadnezzar killed and captured Judeans when taking the city of Jerusalem (cf. 39:5-6). This parallel serves a twofold purpose. First, it demonstrates that the conditions of judgment persist in Judah even after the climactic fall of Jerusalem. Second, it serves to legitimate Nebuchadnezzar’s replacement of the house of David as Yahweh’s “servant.” Babylonian hegemony brings stability to the land of Judah in the aftermath of exile (cf. 40:9-12), but the Davidide Ishmael only inflicts suffering and death. Ishmael ultimately gets his just deserts because he is portrayed fleeing for his life (41:15) just like Zedekiah and his sons in 39:4-5. The one who inflicts suffering on Judah like that experienced before the fall of Jerusalem ultimately experiences personal judgment like that inflicted on Judah during Jerusalem’s final siege.

Interesting parallels also exist between the actions of the Judean royal official Johanan after the fall of Jerusalem and King Zedekiah before the fall. Both Zedekiah and Johanan request that Jeremiah exercise his ministry of intercession by praying for the people of Judah (37:2-10; 42:2-4). In 37:3ff, the prophet responds negatively to Zedekiah’s request, and instead of praying for Judah, informs the king that there will be no escape from the Babylonians. In contrast, Jeremiah has a positive response to the request of Johanan and

salem perpetuates the status quo hostilities that have characterized the history of Israel and Judah for so long.

Holladay (Jeremiah 2, 285) notes the connection between these two passages and argues that they form an inclusio for this section of narrative.
agrees to intercede on Judah’s behalf (42:2-4). The attitude of Johanan and his associates in making this request is a key factor behind the positive response of Jeremiah. Johanan and the people are not merely seeking deliverance from dangerous and difficult circumstances but are expressing a desire to know the will of Yahweh.

At first glance, the survivors of the exile appear in a more favorable light than Zedekiah and the people before the exile. The immutable decree of judgment has been removed so that Jeremiah can intercede for the blessing of Yahweh. However, the prophet’s positive response to Johanan’s request for intercession ultimately serves as a stronger condemnation of the Judean survivors of the exile. The hypocrisy of this group is highlighted by their refusal to carry through on their stated intention to obey Yahweh. The disobedience of the Judeans after the collapse of the nation is once again even more treacherous than that of the community who fell to the Babylonians. The survivors of the exile promise to obey Yahweh (42:6) but then refuse (42:20-22). In addition, Johanan and his compatriots reject an offer of divine blessing that was not available to Zedekiah prior to the Babylonian capture of Jerusalem. Johanan and his group are in a sense more guilty because they continue to disobey in spite of the prophetic intercession on their behalf.

The prophet Jeremiah also condemns both Zedekiah and Johanan for looking to Egypt for security and protection against the Babylonians. Zedekiah is hopeful that the Babylonian withdrawal from Jerusalem as a result of the movements of the Egyptian army is the prelude to lasting peace (37:2-4), but Jeremiah warns of the illusory nature of such hopes and declares

\[\text{145Note the total repudiation of any intention to obey Yahweh on the part of the people in 44:16.}\]
that the Babylonians will return and capture Jerusalem regardless of whatever military losses they might experience (37:8-10). In the period of exile, Johanan is fearful of Babylonian retaliation for Ishmael's assassination of Gedaliah and flees to Egypt because of the misguided belief that escape to Egypt will put him outside of the reach of Nebuchadnezzar (43:4-7). Jeremiah warns of the futility of flight to Egypt and states that Egypt will become the locale of Yahweh's judgment in the same way that the land of Judah has been (42:18). Zedekiah and Johanan are both confronted with the choice of trusting in either Yahweh or Egypt for security, and both are ultimately guilty of making the wrong choice.¹⁴⁶

The associates of Zedekiah and Johanan are also alike in that they accuse the prophet Jeremiah of treason against the nation of Judah. In 37:13-14, Irijah charges that Jeremiah is causing the people of Judah to defect to the Babylonians. In 38:2-4, the officials of Judah seek to put Jeremiah to death.

¹⁴⁶The oracles to Zedekiah in 38:17-23 and Johanan in 42:9-12 closely resemble one another and emphasize the choice facing these two leaders. Both passages are preceded by a request for a word from the prophet concerning the proper course of action (38:14; 42:1-3) and an assurance from the recipients concerning their response to the message (38:16; 42:5-6). The structure of the two oracles is also remarkably similar. Both are introduced by the statement, "This is what the Lord . . . says" (הִנֵּה מַהׇם אָמַר). The choices facing the recipients of the oracles are expressed by a positive statement (an infinitive absolute followed by an imperfect form of the same verb—ask הִנֵּה הָלַךְ in 38:17 and הָלַךְ in 42:10) and a negative statement (זָרַע + the imperfect of the same verb used in the positive statement). In addition, the consequences of each action are explicitly stated in order to provide motivation to perform the right action. In 38:17-23, both halves of the oracle (vv. 17-18 and 20-23) contain a positive exhortation with motivation and a negative exhortation with motivation. In 42:9-18, the first section of the oracle is a positive exhortation with motivation (42:10-12), and the second section is a negative warning with motivation (42:13-18). Each of these passages concludes with an extensive warning section so that the negative aspect of judgment predominates.

Each of these oracles also addresses the issue of "fear." In 38:19, Zedekiah expresses fear concerning the treatment he may receive at the hands of the Jews who have defected to the Babylonians. In 42:11, the prophet exhorts the people not to fear the king of Babylon. In both passages, the prophet responds to this fear by giving a promising statement about Yahweh's preservation and protection of his people (38:20; 42:11). The rather precise parallels in these two particular passages help to demonstrate the general tendency of the narrator to draw comparisons between events before and after the fall of Jerusalem.
because he is “weakening the hands” of the Judean citizenry and military
force holding out against the Babylonians. After the exile, Johanan and his
men ignore the word of Jeremiah and level the charge that Jeremiah is a tra­i­
tor who only wants them to remain in the land so that he can hand them
over to the Babylonians (43:2-3).147 The officials of Judah are so blindly
committed to their national cause that they are unable to understand the
motivation of a prophet who is committed only to the cause of Yahweh.

A further point of comparison is that the prophet Jeremiah experi­
ences confinement both before and after the fall of Jerusalem. Before the
exile, Jeremiah is arrested and imprisoned at the house of Jonathan (37:13-14)
and then is later thrown into the cistern of Malkijah (38:6). Shortly after the
assassination of Gedaliah, Jeremiah is led away to Egypt against his will by
Johanan and his fellow officers (43:4-7). Even after the exile and the valida­
tion of Jeremiah as a prophet of judgment, the prophet continues to receive
harsh treatment from his fellow countrymen.

The disrespect shown to Jeremiah by his fellow Judeans contrasts to
the respect and honor accorded to Jeremiah as a spokesman of Yahweh by for­
eigners before and after the fall of Judah. In 38:7, a Cushite by the name of
Ebed-Melech is the one who convinces Zedekiah to rescue Jeremiah from the

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147When the officials accuse Jeremiah of speaking “falsehood” (נשפז) and claim
that Yahweh has not “sent” (נשלח) Jeremiah to speak to them (43:2), they are bringing the
same charge against him that Jeremiah made against his prophetic opponents before the fall
of Jerusalem (cf. 14:14; 23:21, 25, 32; 27:10). Another significant part of this accusation is that
the officials view Baruch as the main culprit who prompted Jeremiah to deliver this negative
JBL [1994]: 405-20), postulates (on the basis of Jeremiah’s poetic oracles) that the prophet
Jeremiah’s message was one “almost completely lacking in specific sociopolitical influences,”
and suggests that it was Baruch who was the “political operative” who specifically applied
Jeremiah’s messages in support of “pro-Babylonian” policy. Brueggemann has at least pre­
sented a hypothesis that may shed some light on the reasons behind the presence of both poetic
and prose traditions in the book of Jeremiah. The prophet Jeremiah spoke primarily with re­
gard to “metapolitical” issues, while Baruch and others associated with the prophet may
have made more specific connections of the prophetic message to the Realpolitik of the day.
cistern. In 40:1-7, the Babylonian officer Nebuzaradan releases Jeremiah from prison. This foreigner also recognizes the truthfulness of Jeremiah's message and acknowledges that Yahweh has brought about the capture of Jerusalem because of Judah's sin (40:2-4). The treatment which Jeremiah receives at the hands of foreigners serves as a rebuke to the leaders of Judah for their refusal to obey the message of Yahweh's servant.

The numerous parallels between events before and after 586 B.C. indict the remnant in the land of Judah after the fall of Jerusalem for their continued refusal to obey the word of Yahweh given through the prophet Jeremiah. The material in Jeremiah 26-45 is not merely a history lesson aimed at providing a rationale for past judgment. This material is ultimately directed at the exilic community to warn that continued rebellion against Yahweh will bring further judgment. Judah has already experienced two phases of judgment under Jeohiakim and Zedekiah and is about to experience a third. For this reason, specific events from the period after the exile has occurred are interlocked with episodes of disobedience from the periods of Jeohiakim and Zedekiah in order to demonstrate that Judah continues its sinful ways and is deserving of even more judgment from the hand of Yahweh. In fact, the survivors of the exile seem even more obstinate in their refusal to hear the word of Yahweh. The Judean survivors have failed to learn from their nation's recent history and, thus, are doomed to repeat the bitter experience of judgment.

Conclusion

The contrasting parallelism between Jeremiah 30-33 and 40-43 is of central importance to the rhetoric of Jeremiah 26-45 as a whole. The future salvation portrayed in poetic images in 30-33 will bring about a complete re-
versal of the conditions of judgment experienced by Judah during the life and ministry of the prophet Jeremiah. Both Jeremiah 30-33 and 40-43 deal with what will happen to Israel in light of the reality of exile, but 40-43 reveal that conditions in the immediate aftermath of exile are much different from what Yahweh has promised for the distant future. This time immediately after the fall of Jerusalem has more in common with the periods of judgment leading up to the disaster of 586 B.C. than with the glorious future promised and anticipated for Israel.

The irony of the situation is that this extension of judgment beyond the fall of Jerusalem is unnecessary from the perspective of the Jeremiah narratives. Although the book of Jeremiah attaches the hope for Israel’s future to the exiles in Babylon, the narratives in chapters 40-43 also reflect the idea that the Judean survivors who remain in the land after exile could have avoided calamity and enjoyed the blessing of life in the land if they had only responded positively to Jeremiah’s counsel. Even though ultimate salvation belongs to the future and is promised to the exiles, the Judeans who live in the promised land in the transition period between judgment and salvation have the potential for enjoying life and blessing if they will act in accordance with the prophetic word. These individuals living in the land immediately after the exile have the opportunity to experience in incipient form the blessings of restoration and renewal promised in the Book of Consolation. The contrast between Jeremiah 30-33 and 40-43 demonstrates a recurring theme of the Jeremiah narratives--the costly consequences of refusal to hear and obey the prophetic word of Yahweh.
The recurring charge in the Jeremiah narratives is that Judah has not "listened to/obeyed" (לומד) the word of Yahweh spoken by the prophet Jeremiah (26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 34:14, 17; 35:14, 15, 16, 17; 36:31; 37:14; 40:3; 42:13, 21; 43:7; 44:16, 23). This dissertation has examined how the rhetorical and literary features of the MT version of Jeremiah 26-45 have uniquely and persuasively conveyed the story of national disobedience under the ministry of the prophet Jeremiah. The narratives in Jeremiah 26-45 are obviously not a chronological account or a linear biography, and thus the dissertation has also attempted to provide an overall reading strategy for the Jeremiah narratives. This dissertation has argued for a two-paneled parallel structure (chs. 26-35 and 36-45) as the key to unlocking the literary design of this section of the book of Jeremiah. These two panels parallel one another in three significant ways in that each: 1) begins and concludes with narratives from the time of Jehoiakim (chs. 26/35 and 36/45; 2) contains accounts of Jeremiah in conflict with his opponents in which the prophet turns the tables on his enemies (chs. 27-29 and 37-39); 3) reflects on life in the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem (chs. 30-33 and 40-43).

Rather than having a linear and chronological orientation, the plot of the narrative centers around the unfolding of certain key patterns. The first key pattern is the recurring type-scene of proclamation and rejection of the prophetic word. Audience reaction is as prominent as the actual content of the prophetic message because the narratives are attempting to document national rejection of the word of Yahweh. This recurring story type demon-
strates that Judah's disobedience is pervasive in that it is reflected in all strata of society—kings, royal officials, prophets, priests, and people, and this disobedience on a national scale validates Jeremiah's message of national judgment.

A second key pattern is the parallelism between events before and after the fall of Jerusalem. The Jeremiah narratives blend together events from three key periods in the ministry of Jeremiah—1) the reign of Jehoiakim from 605-597 B.C.; 2) the reign of Zedekiah from 597-586 B.C.; and 3) the period immediately following the fall of Jerusalem up to the point where Jeremiah is taken hostage into Egypt. The striking feature of the narratives is that the events and characters in the period immediately after the fall of Jerusalem bear a strong resemblance to the events and characters who appear in the narratives prior to Jerusalem's destruction.

This pattern demonstrates the persistence of Judah's disobedience. Both before and after the exile, Judah refuses to obey the word of Yahweh in regard to the same specific issue, the issue of submission to Babylonian hegemony. The rhetoric of drawing parallels between events before and after the fall of Jerusalem also serves to heighten the culpability of the people and leaders who fail to learn from the devastating judgment that God inflicts upon the nation of Judah.

The two-paneled structure in Jeremiah 26-45 also heightens this parallelism of events before and after the fall of Jerusalem. The first panel in chapters 26-35 warns of the fall of Jerusalem but promises a glorious future subsequent to the time of the exile. The second panel in chapters 36-45 narrates the fall of Jerusalem but then recounts recurring acts of disobedience in the aftermath of exile rather than a turning toward the glorious future envisioned in the hopeful promises of the first panel (chs. 30-33).
The contrast between what is anticipated in the aftermath of exile in panel one (chs. 30-33) and what is actually experienced in the aftermath of exile in panel two (chs. 40-43) is the key to the unfolding of the plot in the Jeremiah narratives. The parallelism between events before and after the fall of Jerusalem is a "surprise" element that the narrator employs with dramatic effect. Panel one presents the promise of a glorious future, and the opening sections of chapter 40 in panel two even raise the possibility that Judah will experience these future blessings in incipient form. The recurrence of disobedience and judgment rather than obedience and blessing in chapters 40-43 dashes these hopes and puts Judah back under an edict of judgment. The fact that Judah is no different after the fall of Jerusalem than it was before is central to the rhetorical design of this section of the book of Jeremiah.

A third key pattern is that events that have transpired during the ministry of Jeremiah parallel events from Israel's earlier history. Typology is a key feature of both the narrating of events and the portrayal of key figures. Jeremiah is a new Moses. The prophet Jeremiah reverses the ministry of Moses through the dismal return to Egypt narrated in chapter 43 but also transcends the ministry of Moses with the promise of a new covenant that will produce the national fidelity to Yahweh unattainable under the Mosaic covenant. The actions of kings like Jehoiakim and Zedekiah are implicitly and explicitly compared to the actions of earlier kings in the Davidic line.

Typology in the Jeremiah narratives elevates the actions of even relatively minor players to the level of great national importance. The conflict between Gedaliah and Ishmael recalls the struggle between Saul and David that helped to form an empire. The band of refugees who go down to Egypt in Jeremiah 43 are not numerically significant, but the narrative portrays them as reversing the Exodus and the whole of Israel's salvation history.
Typology gives weight and significance to persons and events that these persons and events might not bear in and of themselves.

A fourth and, perhaps, the key pattern emerging out of the Jeremiah narratives is the fact that national and individual destiny is determined by response to the prophetic word. Response to the prophetic word is the key to the unfolding of the drama in this narrative section of the book of Jeremiah. Structurally, the positive oracles to the Rechabites (ch. 35) and to Baruch (ch. 45) at the close of the two major panels highlight the salvation that comes to those obedient to Yahweh, in contrast to the nation at large that stands under judgment for its persistent and pervasive disobedience. Personal and national oracles of judgment stand at key points throughout the Jeremiah narratives to highlight this theme of the destiny shaping response to the prophetic word.

The overall rhetoric of the individual narratives and oracles is shaped by a strong sense of talionic justice. Individuals, groups, and nations receive what they deserve in accordance with how they respond to the prophetic word. In the opening account of this section in chapter 26, Jeremiah declares that Judah must repent of its "evil" (בַּל) so that Yahweh will not bring "calamity" (בָּא) against Judah (26:3). Much of the remainder of the Jeremiah narratives detail how Judah experiences בָּא for practicing בַּל. The false prophets in chapter 26-29 who attempt to bring a death sentence against Jeremiah for false prophecy ultimately have a death sentence brought against them. In chapters 37-39, the royal officials who seek to imprison Jeremiah are ultimately confined themselves and taken away in captivity to Babylon. In Jeremiah 36, King Jehoiakim is warned that his body will not be given proper burial but will be exposed to the elements of heat and cold (36:30), a fitting judgment for the king who sat in the warm comfort of his winter apartment.
and destroyed the scroll of Jeremiah's prophecies (36:21-26). The remnant disobediently goes down to Egypt in order to avoid war and famine (42:14), but "war, famine, and plague" will follow them even into Egypt (42:15-17). These patterns of talionic justice emerge again and again in the narratives of Jeremiah 26-45 and contribute to the overall rhetorical focus on the issue of life-giving obedience versus death-producing disobedience to the prophetic word.

Even the contrast between the promise of glorious blessing in the future and the ongoing experience of judgment that characterized the life and times of the prophet Jeremiah has its roots in the dominant concept that destiny is shaped by response to the prophetic word. Jeremiah portrays a glorious future in chapters 30-33, but this future will not be one of blessing devoid of responsibility. Israel will finally become all that Yahweh has designed her to be because fidelity to the divine law will be internalized and permanently maintained (31:31-34). Even in this time of future blessing, response to the word of Yahweh will be the determining factor for Israel's national experience.

This dissertation has provided a strategy for reading the MT version of Jeremiah 26-45, a significant portion of the book. The two-paneled structure of chapters 26-35 and 36-45 is not a structure that is imposed on this section, but something that emerges through careful observation of parallels and contrasts found within the text itself. This study has focused on rhetorical and literary features in a way that attempts to unlock the original meaning of the Jeremiah narratives, not simply to provide a reader-focused perspective on the text. This study has not focused on the historical-critical concerns that have generally dominated study of the text of Jeremiah, primarily the issues of source-division and the textual differences between the LXX and MT ver-
sions. The writer has wanted to call attention to the literary cohesiveness of this particular section of the book of Jeremiah in a way that leads to further appreciation of the literary cohesiveness of the book as a whole.
# APPENDIX I

## THREE KEY TIME PERIODS IN THE JEREMIAH NARRATIVES

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
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<th>Chapters</th>
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<td>Chs. 26, 35, 45</td>
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<td>The Reign of Zedekiah</td>
<td>597-586 BC</td>
<td>Chs. 26, 35, 45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aftermath of Exile</td>
<td>after 586 BC</td>
<td>Chs. 40-44</td>
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### APPENDIX 2

THE JEHOIAKIM FRAMEWORK AND THE JUDGMENT-SALVATION ALTERNATION

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<td>34:1 during the reign of Jehoiakim</td>
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<td>Covenant Fidelity Rechab</td>
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### 36

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<tr>
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