



YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE

JEREMIAH

BOB UTLEY
PROFESSOR OF HERMENEUTICS
(BIBLE INTERPRETATION)

STUDY GUIDE COMMENTARY SERIES
OLD TESTAMENT, VOL. 13A

BIBLE LESSONS INTERNATIONAL
MARSHALL, TEXAS
2012

www.BibleLessonsIntl.com
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Bible Lessons International
P. O. Box 1289
Marshall, TX 75671-1289
1-800-785-1005

ISBN 978-1-892691-45-3

The primary biblical text used in this commentary is:
New American Standard Bible (Update, 1995)
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P. O. Box 2279
La Habra, CA 90632-2279

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The New American Standard Bible Update — 1995

Easier to read:

- ▣ Passages with Old English “thee’s” and “thou’s” etc. have been updated to modern English.
- ▣ Words and phrases that could be misunderstood due to changes in their meaning during the past 20 years have been updated to current English.
- ▣ Sentences beginning with “And” have often been retranslated for better English, in recognition of differences in style between the ancient languages and modern English. The original Greek and Hebrew did not have punctuation as is found in English, and in many cases modern English punctuation serves as a substitute for “and” in the original. In some other cases, “and” is translated by a different word such as “then” or “but” as called for by the context, when the word in the original language allows such translation.

More accurate than ever:

- ▣ Recent research on the oldest and best Greek manuscripts of the New Testament has been reviewed, and some passages have been updated for even greater fidelity to the original manuscripts.
- ▣ Parallel passages have been compared and reviewed.
- ▣ Verbs that have a wide range of meaning have been retranslated in some passages to better account for their use in the context.

And still the NASB:

- ▣ The NASB update is not a change-for-the-sake-of-change translation. The original NASB stands the test of time, and change has been kept to a minimum in recognition of the standard that has been set by the New American Standard Bible.
- ▣ The NASB update continues the NASB’s tradition of literal translation of the original Greek and Hebrew without compromise. Changes in the text have been kept within the strict parameters set forth by the Lockman Foundation’s Fourfold Aim.
- ▣ The translators and consultants who have contributed to the NASB update are conservative Bible scholars who have doctorates in Biblical languages, theology, or other advanced degrees. They represent a variety of denominational backgrounds.

Continuing a tradition:

The original NASB has earned the reputation of being the most accurate English Bible translation. Other translations in recent years have sometimes made a claim to both accuracy and ease of reading, but any reader with an eye for detail eventually discovers that these translations are consistently inconsistent. While sometimes literal, they frequently resort to paraphrase of the original, often gaining little in readability and sacrificing much in terms of fidelity. Paraphrasing is not by nature a bad thing; it can and should clarify the meaning of a passage as the translators understand and interpret. In the end, however, a paraphrase is as much a commentary on the Bible as it is a translation. The NASB update carries on the NASB tradition of being a true Bible translation, revealing what the original manuscripts actually say—not merely what the translator believes they mean.

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BRIEF EXPLANATIONS OF THE TECHNICAL RESOURCES USED IN THIS OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARY SERIES

I. Lexical

There are several excellent lexicons available for ancient Hebrew.

- A. *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. It is based on the German lexicon by William Gesenius. It is known by the abbreviation BDB.
- B. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, translated by M. E. J. Richardson. It is known by the abbreviation KB.
- C. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by William L. Holladay and is based on the above German lexicon.
- D. A new five volume theological word study entitled *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, edited by Willem A. Van Gemeren. It is known by the abbreviation NIDOTTE.

Where there is significant lexical variety, I have shown several English translations (NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB) from both “word-for-word” and “dynamic equivalent” translations (cf. Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 28-44).

II. Grammatical

The grammatical identification is usually based on John Joseph Owens’ *Analytical Key to the Old Testament* in four volumes. This is cross checked with Benjamin Davidson’s *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament*.

Another helpful resource for grammatical and syntactical features which is used in most of the OT volumes of “You Can Understand the Bible” Series is “The Helps for Translators Series” from the United Bible Societies. They are entitled “A Handbook on _____.”

III. Textual

I am committed to the inspiration of the consonantal Hebrew text (not the Masoretic vowel points and comments). As in all hand-copied, ancient texts, there are some questionable passages. This is usually because of the following:

- A. *hapax legomenon* (words used only once in the Hebrew OT)
- B. idiomatic terms (words and phrases whose literal meanings have been lost)
- C. historical uncertainties (our lack of information about the ancient world)
- D. the poly-semitic semantic field of Hebrew’s limited vocabulary
- E. problems associated with later scribes hand-copying ancient Hebrew texts
- F. Hebrew scribes trained in Egypt who felt free to update the texts they copied to make them complete and understandable to their day (NIDOTTE vol. 1, pp. 52-54).

There are several sources of Hebrew words and texts outside the Masoretic textual tradition.

- A. The Samaritan Pentateuch
- B. The Dead Sea Scrolls
- C. Some later coins, letters, and ostraca (broken pieces of unfired pottery used for writing)

But for the most part, there are no manuscript families in the OT like those in the Greek NT manuscripts. For a good brief article on the textual reliability of the Masoretic Text (A.D. 900's) see “The Reliability of the Old Testament Text” by Bruce K. Waltke in the NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 51-67.

The Hebrew text used is *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* from the German Bible Society, 1997, which is based on the Leningrad Codex (A.D. 1009). Occasionally, the ancient versions (Greek Septuagint, Aramaic Targums, Syriac Peshitta, and Latin Vulgate) are consulted if the Hebrew is ambiguous or obviously confused.

BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF HEBREW VERBAL FORMS WHICH IMPACT EXEGESIS

I. Brief Historical Development of Hebrew

Hebrew is part of the Shemitic (Semitic) family of southwest Asian language. The name (given by modern scholars) comes from Noah's son, Shem (cf. Gen. 5:32; 6:10). Shem's descendants are listed in Gen. 10:21-31 as Arabs, Hebrews, Syrians, Arameans, and Assyrians. In reality some Semitic languages are used by nations listed in Ham's line (cf. Gen. 10:6-14), Canaan, Phoenicia, and Ethiopia.

Hebrew is part of the northwest group of these Semitic languages. Modern scholars have samples of this ancient language group from:

- A. Amorite (*Mari Tablets* from 18th century B.C. in Akkadian)
- B. Canaanite (*Ras Shamra Tablets* from 15th century in Ugaritic)
- C. Canaanite (*Amarna Letters* from 14th century in Canaanite Akkadian)
- D. Phoenician (Hebrew uses Phoenician alphabet)
- E. Moabite (Mesha stone, 840 B.C.)
- F. Aramaic (official language of the Persian Empire used in Gen. 31:47 [2 words]; Jer. 10:11; Dan. 2:4-6; 7:28; Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26 and spoken by Jews in the first century in Palestine)

The Hebrew language is called "the lip of Canaan" in Isa. 19:18. It was first called "Hebrew" in the prologue of Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Ben Sirach) about 180 B.C. (and some other early places, cf. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, pp. 205ff). It is most closely related to Moabite and the language used at Ugarit. Examples of ancient Hebrew found outside the Bible are:

1. the Gezer calendar, 925 B.C. (a school boy's writing)
2. the Siloam Inscription, 705 B.C. (tunnel writings)
3. Samaritan Ostraca, 770 B.C. (tax records on broken pottery)
4. Lachish letters, 587 B.C. (war communications)
5. Maccabean coins and seals
6. some Dead Sea Scroll texts
7. numerous inscriptions (cf. "Languages [Hebrew]," ABD 4:203ff)

It, like all Semitic languages, is characterized by words made up of three consonants (tri-consonantal root). It is an inflexed language. The three-root consonants carry the basic word meaning, while prefixed, suffixed, or internal additions show the syntactical function (later vowels, cf. Sue Green, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*, pp. 46-49).

Hebrew vocabulary demonstrates a difference between prose and poetry. Word meanings are connected to folk etymologies (not linguistic origins). Word plays and sound plays are very common (*paronomasia*).

II. Aspects of Predication

A. VERBS

The normal expected word order is VERB, PRONOUN, SUBJECT (with modifiers), OBJECT (with modifiers). The basic non-flagged VERB is the *Qal*, PERFECT, MASCULINE, SINGULAR form. It is how Hebrew and Aramaic lexicons are arranged.

VERBS are inflected to show

1. number—SINGULAR, PLURAL, DUAL
2. gender—MASCULINE AND FEMININE (no NEUTER)
3. mood—INDICATIVE, SUBJUNCTIVE, IMPERATIVE (relation of the action to reality)
4. tense (aspect)

- A. PERFECT, which denotes completion, in the sense of the beginning, continuing, and concluding of an action. Usually this form was used of past action, the thing has occurred. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, says

“The single whole described by a perfect is also considered as certain. An imperfect may picture a state as possible or desired or expected, but a perfect sees it as actual, real, and sure” (p. 36).

S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew*, describes it as,

“The perfect is employed to indicate actions the accomplishment of which lies indeed in the future, but is regarded as dependant upon such an unalterable determination of the will that it may be spoken of as having actually taken place: thus a resolution, promise, or decree, especially of Divine one, is frequently announced in the perfect tense” (p. 17, e.g., the prophetic perfect).

Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. *From Exegesis to Exposition*, defines this verbal form as:

“. . . views a situation from the outside, as a whole. As such it expresses a simple fact, whether it be an action or state (including state of being or mind). When used of actions, it often views the action as complete from the rhetorical standpoint of the speaker or narrator (whether it is or is not complete in fact or reality is not the point). The perfect can pertain to an action/state in the past, present or future. As noted above, time frame, which influences how one translates the perfect into a tense-oriented language like English, must be determined from the context” (p. 86).

- b. IMPERFECT, which denotes an action in progress (incomplete, repetitive, continual, or contingent), often movement toward a goal. Usually this form was used of Present and Future action.

J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, says:

“All IMPERFECTS represent incomplete states. They are either repeated or developing or contingent. In other words, or partially developed, or partially assured. In all cases they are partial in some sense, i.e., incomplete” (p. 55).

Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. *From Exegesis to Exposition*, says:

“It is difficult to reduce the essence of the imperfect to a single concept, for it encompasses both aspect and mood. Sometimes the imperfect is used in an indicative manner and makes an objective statement. At other times it views an action more subjectively, as hypothetical, contingent, possible, and so on” (p. 89).

- c. The added *waw*, which links the VERB to the action of the previous VERB(s).

- d. IMPERATIVE, which is based on the volition of the speaker and potential action by the hearer.
 - e. In ancient Hebrew only the larger context can determine the authorial-intended time orientations.
- B. The seven major inflected forms and their basic meaning. In reality these forms work in conjunction with each other in a context and must not be isolated.
1. *Qal (Kal)*, the most common and basic of all the forms. It denotes simple action or a state of being. There is no causation or specification implied.
 2. *Niphal*, the second most common form. It is usually PASSIVE, but this form also functions as reciprocal and reflexive. It also has no causation or specification implied.
 3. *Piel*, this form is active and expresses the bringing about of an action into a state of being. The basic meaning of the *Qal* stem is developed or extended into a state of being.
 4. *Pual*, this is the PASSIVE counterpart to the *Piel*. It is often expressed by a PARTICIPLE.
 5. *Hithpael*, which is the reflexive or reciprocal stem. It expresses iterative or durative action to the *Piel* stem. The rare PASSIVE form is called *Hothpael*.
 6. *Hiphil*, the active form of the causative stem in contrast to *Piel*. It can have a permissive aspect, but usually refers to the cause of an event. Ernst Jenni, a German Hebrew grammarian, believed that the *Piel* denoted something coming into a state of being, while *Hiphil* showed how it happened.
 7. *Hophal*, the PASSIVE counterpart to the *Hiphil*. These last two stems are the least used of the seven stems.

Much of this information comes from *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, by Bruce K. Walke and M. O'Connor, pp. 343-452.

Agency and causation chart. One key in understanding the Hebrew VERB system is to see it as a pattern of VOICE relationships. Some stems are in contrast to other stems (i.e., *Qal - Niphal*; *Piel - Hiphil*)

The chart below tries to visualize the basic function of the VERB stems as to causation.

Voice or Subject	No Secondary Agency	An Active Secondary Agency	A Passive Secondary Agency
ACTIVE	<i>Qal</i>	<i>Hiphil</i>	<i>Piel</i>
MIDDLE PASSIVE	<i>Niphal</i>	<i>Hophal</i>	<i>Pual</i>
REFLEXIVE/ RECIPROCAL	<i>Niphal</i>	<i>Hiphil</i>	<i>Hithpael</i>

This chart is taken from the excellent discussion of the VERBAL system in light of new Akkadian research (cf. Bruce K. Waltke, M. O'Conner, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, pp. 354-359).

R. H. Kennett, *A Short Account of the Hebrew Tenses*, has provided a needed warning:

“I have commonly found in teaching, that a student’s chief difficulty in the Hebrew verbs is to grasp the meaning which they conveyed to the minds of the Hebrews themselves; that is to say, there is a tendency to assign as equivalents to each of the Hebrew Tenses a certain number of Latin or English forms by which that particular Tense may commonly be translated. The result is a failure to perceive many

of these fine shades of meaning, which give such life and vigor to the language of the Old Testament.

The difficulty in the use of the Hebrew verbs lies solely in the point of view, so absolutely different from our own, from which the Hebrews regarded an action; the *time*, which with us is the first consideration, as the very word, ‘tense’ shows, being to them a matter of secondary importance. It is, therefore, essential that a student should clearly grasp, not so much the Latin or English forms which may be used in translating each of the Hebrew Tenses, but rather the aspect of each action, as it presented itself to a Hebrew’s mind.

The name ‘tenses’ as applied to Hebrew verbs is misleading. The so-called Hebrew ‘tenses’ do not express the *time* but merely the *state* of an action. Indeed were it not for the confusion that would arise through the application of the term ‘state’ to both nouns and verbs, ‘states’ would be a far better designation than ‘tenses.’ It must always be borne in mind that it is impossible to translate a Hebrew verb into English without employing a limitation (of time), which is entirely absent in the Hebrew. The ancient Hebrews never thought of an action as past, present, or future, but simply as *perfect*, i.e., complete, or *imperfect*, i.e., as in course of development. When we say that a certain Hebrew tense corresponds to a Perfect, Pluperfect, or Future in English, we do not mean that the Hebrews thought of it as Perfect, Pluperfect, or Future, but merely that it must be so translated in English. The *time* of an action the Hebrews did not attempt to express by any verbal form” (preface and p. 1).

For a second good warning, Sue Groom, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*, reminds us,

“There is no way of knowing whether modern scholars’ reconstruction of semantic fields and sense relations in an ancient dead language are merely a reflection of their own intuition, or their own native language, or whether those fields existed in Classical Hebrew” (p. 128).

C. MOODS (MODES)

1. It happened, is happening (INDICATIVE), usually uses PERFECT tense or PARTICIPLES (all PARTICIPLES are INDICATIVE).
2. It will happen, could happen (SUBJUNCTIVE)
 - a. uses a marked IMPERFECT tense
 - (1) COHORTATIVE (added h), FIRST PERSON IMPERFECT form which normally expresses a wish, a request, or self-encouragement (i.e., actions willed by the speaker)
 - (2) JUSSIVE (internal changes), THIRD PERSON IMPERFECT (can be second person in negated sentences) which normally expresses a request, a permission, an admonition, or advice
 - b. uses a PERFECT tense with *lu* or *lule*
These constructions are similar to SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences in Koine Greek. A false statement (protasis) results in a false conclusion (apodosis).
 - c. uses an IMPERFECT tense and *lu*
Context and *lu*, as well as a future orientation, mark this SUBJUNCTIVE usage. Some examples from J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament* are Gen. 13:16; Deut. 1:12; I Kgs. 13:8; Ps. 24:3; Isa. 1:18 (cf. Pp. 76-77).

- D. *Waw* – Conversive/consecutive/relative. This uniquely Hebrew (Canaanite) syntactical feature has caused great confusion through the years. It is used in a variety of ways often based on genre. The reason for the confusion is that early scholars were European and tried to interpret in light of

their own native languages. When this proved difficult they blamed the problem on Hebrew being a “supposed” ancient, archaic language. European languages are TENSE (time) based VERBS. Some of the variety and grammatical implications were specified by the letter WAW being added to the PERFECT or IMPERFECT VERB stems. This altered the way the action was viewed.

1. In historical narrative the VERBS are linked together in a chain with a standard pattern.
2. The *waw* prefix showed a specific relationship with the previous VERB(s).
3. The larger context is always the key to understanding the VERB chain. Semitic VERBS cannot be analyzed in isolation.

J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, notes the distinctive of Hebrew in its use of the *waw* before PERFECTS and IMPERFECTS (pp. 52-53). As the basic idea of the PERFECT is past, the addition of *waw* often projects it into a future time aspect. This is also true of the IMPERFECT whose basic idea is present or future; the addition of *waw* places it into the past. It is this unusual time shift which explains the *waw*'s addition, not a change in the basic meaning of the tense itself. The *waw* PERFECTS work well with prophecy, while the *waw* IMPERFECTS work well with narratives (pp. 54, 68).

Watts continues his definition

“As a fundamental distinction between *waw* conjunctive and *waw* consecutive, the following interpretations are offered:

1. *Waw* conjunctive appears always to indicate a parallel.
2. *Waw* consecutive appears always to indicate a sequence. It is the only form of *waw* used with consecutive imperfects. The relation between the imperfects linked by it may be temporal sequence, logical consequence, logical cause, or logical contrast. In all cases there is a sequence” (p. 103).

E. INFINITIVE – There are two kinds of INFINITIVES

1. INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES, which are “strong, independent, striking expressions used for dramatic effect. . . as a subject, it often has no written verb, the verb ‘to be’ being understood, of course, but the word standing dramatically alone” J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*” (p. 92).

2. INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, which are “related grammatically to the sentence by prepositions, possessive pronouns, and the construct relationship” (p. 91).

J. Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*, describes the construct state as:

“When two (or more) words are so closely united that together they constitute one compound idea, the dependent word (or words) is (are) said to be in the construct state” (p. 44).

F. INTERROGATIVES

1. They always appear first in the sentence.
2. Interpretive significance
 - a. *ha* - does not expect a response
 - b. *halo*’ - the author expects a “yes” answer

NEGATIVES

1. They always appear before the words they negate.
2. Most common negation is *lo*’.
3. The term *’al* has a contingent connotation and is used with COHORTATIVES and JUSSIVES.
4. The term *lebhilit*, meaning “in order that. . .not,” is used with INFINITIVES.
5. The term *’en* is used with PARTICIPLES.

G. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

1. There are four kinds of CONDITIONAL SENTENCES which basically are paralleled in Koine Greek.
 - a. something assumed to be happening or thought of as fulfilled (FIRST CLASS in Greek)
 - b. something contrary to fact whose fulfillment is impossible (SECOND CLASS)
 - c. something which is possible or ever probable (THIRD CLASS)
 - d. something which is less probable, therefore, the fulfillment is dubious (FOURTH CLASS)
2. GRAMMATICAL MARKERS
 - a. the assumed to be true or real condition always uses an INDICATIVE PERFECT or PARTICIPLE and usually the protasis is introduced by:
 - (1) *'im*
 - (2) *ki* (or *'asher*)
 - (3) *hin* or *hinneh*
 - b. the contrary to fact condition always uses a PERFECT aspect VERB or a PARTICIPLE with the introductory PARTICIPLE *lu* or *lule*
 - c. the more probably condition always used IMPERFECT VERB or PARTICIPLES in the protasis, usually *'im* or *ki* are used as introductory PARTICLES
 - d. the less probable condition uses IMPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVES in the protasis and always uses *'im* as an introductory PARTICLE

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS COMMENTARY

AB	Anchor Bible Commentaries, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary (6 vols.), ed. David Noel Freedman
AKOT	Analytical Key to the Old Testament by John Joseph Owens
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts, James B. Pritchard
BDB	A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament by F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, GBS, 1997
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
IDB	The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (4 vols.), ed. George A. Buttrick
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. James Orr
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JPSOA	The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation (The Jewish Publication Society of America)
KB	The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner
LAM	The Holy Bible From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts (the Peshitta) by George M. Lamsa
LXX	Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
MOF	A New Translation of the Bible by James Moffatt
MT	Masoretic Hebrew Text
NAB	New American Bible Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NET	NET Bible: New English Translation, Second Beta Edition
NIDOTTE	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (5 vols.), ed. Willem A. VanGemeren

NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NRSV	New Revised Standard Bible
OTPG	Old Testament Parsing Guide by Todd S. Beall, William A. Banks and Colin Smith
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SEPT	The Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
TEV	Today's English Version from United Bible Societies
YLT	Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible by Robert Young
ZPBE	Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. Merrill C. Tenney

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR: HOW CAN THIS COMMENTARY HELP YOU?

Biblical interpretation is a rational and spiritual process that attempts to understand an ancient inspired writer in such a way that the message from God may be understood and applied in our day.

The spiritual process is crucial but difficult to define. It does involve a yieldedness and openness to God. There must be a hunger (1) for Him, (2) to know Him, and (3) to serve Him. This process involves prayer, confession, and the willingness for lifestyle change. The Spirit is crucial in the interpretive process, but why sincere, godly Christians understand the Bible differently is a mystery.

The rational process is easier to describe. We must be consistent and fair to the text and not be influenced by our personal, cultural, or denominational biases. We are all historically conditioned. None of us are objective, neutral interpreters. This commentary offers a careful rational process containing three interpretive principles structured to help us attempt to overcome our biases.

First Principle

The first principle is to note the historical setting in which a biblical book was written and the particular historical occasion for its authorship (or when it was edited). The original author had a purpose and a message to communicate. The text cannot mean something to us that it never meant to the original, ancient, inspired author. His intent—not our historical, emotional, cultural, personal, or denominational need—is the key. Application is an integral partner to interpretation, but proper interpretation must always precede application. It must be reiterated that every biblical text has one and only one meaning. This meaning is what the original biblical author intended through the Spirit's leadership to communicate to his day. This one meaning may have many possible applications to different cultures and situations. These applications must be linked to the central truth of the original author. For this reason, this study guide commentary is designed to provide a brief introduction to each book of the Bible.

Second Principle

The second principle is to identify the literary units. Every biblical book is a unified document. Interpreters have no right to isolate one aspect of truth by excluding others. Therefore, we must strive to understand the purpose of the whole biblical book before we interpret the individual literary units. The individual parts—chapters, paragraphs, or verses—cannot mean what the whole unit does not mean. Interpretation must move from a deductive approach of the whole to an inductive approach to the parts. Therefore, this study guide commentary is designed to help the student analyze the structure of each literary unit by paragraphs. Paragraph and chapter divisions are not inspired, but they do aid us in identifying thought units.

Interpreting at a paragraph level—not sentence, clause, phrase, or word level—is the key in following the biblical author's intended meaning. Paragraphs are based on a unified topic, often called the theme or topical sentence. Every word, phrase, clause, and sentence in the paragraph relates somehow to this unified theme. They limit it, expand it, explain it, and/or question it. A real key to proper interpretation is to follow the original author's thought on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis through the individual literary units that make up the biblical book. This study guide commentary is designed to help the student do that by comparing the paragraphing of modern English translations. These translations have been selected because they employ different translation theories:

- A. The New King James Version (NKJV) is a word-for-word literal translation based on the Greek manuscript tradition known as the Textus Receptus. Its paragraph divisions are longer than the other translations. These longer units help the student to see the unified topics.
- B. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is a modified word-for-word translation. It forms a midpoint between the following two modern versions. Its paragraph divisions are quite helpful in identifying subjects.
- C. The Today's English Version (TEV) is a dynamic equivalent translation published by the United Bible Society. It attempts to translate the Bible in such a way that a modern English reader or speaker can understand the meaning of the original text.
- D. The Jerusalem Bible (JB) is a dynamic equivalent translation based on a French Catholic translation. It is very helpful in comparing the paragraphing from a European perspective.
- E. The printed text is the 1995 Updated New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word for word translation. The verse by verse comments follow this paragraphing.

Third Principle

The third principle is to read the Bible in different translations in order to grasp the widest possible range of meaning (semantic field) that biblical words or phrases may have. Often a phrase or word can be understood in several ways. These different translations bring out these options and help to identify and explain the manuscript variations. These do not affect doctrine, but they do help us to try to get back to the original text penned by an inspired ancient writer.

Fourth Principle

The fourth principle is to note the literary genre. Original inspired authors chose to record their messages in different forms (e.g., historical narrative, historical drama, poetry, prophecy, gospel [parable], letter, apocalyptic). These different forms have special keys to interpretation (see Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., *Cracking Old Testament Codes*, or Robert Stein, *Playing by the Rules*).

This commentary offers a quick way for the student to check his interpretations. It is not meant to be definitive, but rather informative and thought-provoking. Often, other possible interpretations help us not be so parochial, dogmatic, and denominational. Interpreters need to have a larger range of interpretive options to recognize how ambiguous the ancient text can be. It is shocking how little agreement there is among Christians who claim the Bible as their source of truth.

These principles have helped me to overcome much of my historical conditioning by forcing me to struggle with the ancient text. My hope is that it will be a blessing to you as well.

Bob Utley
East Texas Baptist University
June 27, 1996

A GUIDE TO GOOD BIBLE READING: A PERSONAL SEARCH FOR VERIFIABLE TRUTH

Can we know truth? Where is it found? Can we logically verify it? Is there an ultimate authority? Are there absolutes which can guide our lives, our world? Is there meaning to life? Why are we here? Where are we going? These questions—questions that all rational people contemplate—have haunted the human intellect since the beginning of time (Eccl. 1:13-18; 3:9-11). I can remember my personal search for an integrating center for my life. I became a believer in Christ at a young age, based primarily on the witness of significant others in my family. As I grew to adulthood, questions about myself and my world also grew. Simple cultural and religious clichés did not bring meaning to the experiences I read about or encountered. It was a time of confusion, searching, longing, and often a feeling of hopelessness in the face of the insensitive, hard world in which I lived.

Many claimed to have answers to these ultimate questions, but after research and reflection I found that their answers were based upon (1) personal philosophies, (2) ancient myths, (3) personal experiences, or (4) psychological projections. I needed some degree of verification, some evidence, some rationality on which to base my world-view, my integrating center, my reason to live.

I found these in my study of the Bible. I began to search for evidence of its trustworthiness, which I found in (1) the historical reliability of the Bible as confirmed by archaeology, (2) the accuracy of the prophecies of the Old Testament, (3) the unity of the Bible message over the sixteen hundred years of its production, and (4) the personal testimonies of people whose lives had been permanently changed by contact with the Bible. Christianity, as a unified system of faith and belief, has the ability to deal with complex questions of human life. Not only did this provide a rational framework, but the experiential aspect of biblical faith brought me emotional joy and stability.

I thought that I had found the integrating center for my life—Christ, as understood through the Scriptures. It was a heady experience, an emotional release. However, I can still remember the shock and pain when it began to dawn on me how many different interpretations of this book were advocated, sometimes even within the same churches and schools of thought. Affirming the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible was not the end, but only the beginning. How do I verify or reject the varied and conflicting interpretations of the many difficult passages in Scripture by those who were claiming its authority and trustworthiness?

This task became my life's goal and pilgrimage of faith. I knew that my faith in Christ had (1) brought me great peace and joy. My mind longed for some absolutes in the midst of the relativity of my culture (post-modernity); (2) the dogmatism of conflicting religious systems (world religions); and (3) denominational arrogance. In my search for valid approaches to the interpretation of ancient literature, I was surprised to discover my own historical, cultural, denominational and experiential biases. I had often read the Bible simply to reinforce my own views. I used it as a source of dogma to attack others while reaffirming my own insecurities and inadequacies. How painful this realization was to me!

Although I can never be totally objective, I can become a better reader of the Bible. I can limit my biases by identifying them and acknowledging their presence. I am not yet free of them, but I have confronted my own weaknesses. The interpreter is often the worst enemy of good Bible reading!

Let me list some of the presuppositions I bring to my study of the Bible so that you, the reader, may examine them along with me.

I. Presuppositions

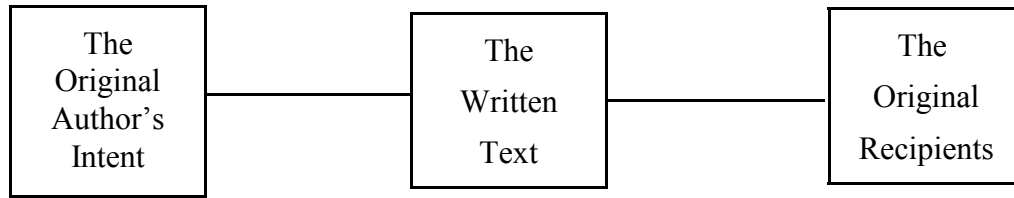
- A. I believe the Bible is the sole inspired self-revelation of the one true God. Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of the intent of the original divine author (the Spirit) through a human writer in a specific historical setting.
- B. I believe the Bible was written for the common person—for all people! God accommodated Himself to speak to us clearly within a historical and cultural context. God does not hide truth—He wants us to understand! Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of its day, not ours. The Bible should not mean to us what it never meant to those who first read or heard it. It is understandable by the average human mind and uses normal human communication forms and techniques.
- C. I believe the Bible has a unified message and purpose. It does not contradict itself, though it does contain difficult and paradoxical passages. Thus, the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself.
- D. I believe that every passage (excluding prophecies) has one and only one meaning based on the intent of the original, inspired author. Although we can never be absolutely certain we know the original author's intent, many indicators point in its direction:
 - 1. the genre (literary type) chosen to express the message
 - 2. the historical setting and/or specific occasion that elicited the writing
 - 3. the literary context of the entire book as well as each literary unit
 - 4. the textual design (outline) of the literary units as they relate to the whole message
 - 5. the specific grammatical features employed to communicate the message
 - 6. the words chosen to present the message
 - 7. parallel passages

The study of each of these areas becomes the object of our study of a passage. Before I explain my methodology for good Bible reading, let me delineate some of the inappropriate methods being used today that have caused so much diversity of interpretation, and that consequently should be avoided:

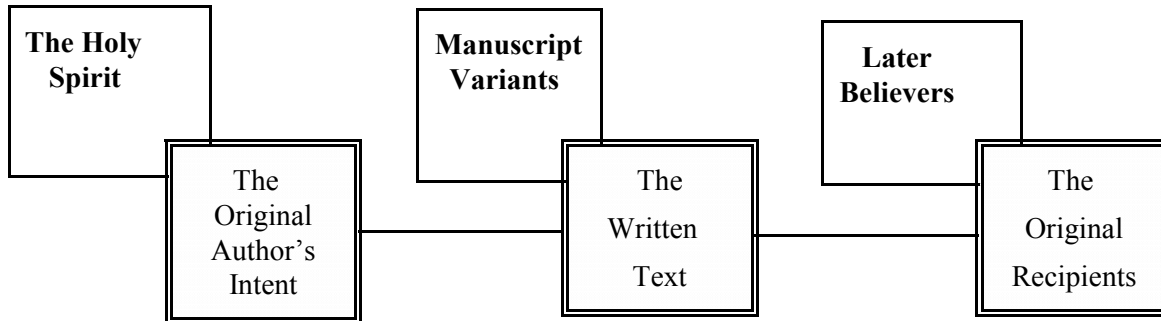
II. Inappropriate Methods

- A. Ignoring the literary context of the books of the Bible and using every sentence, clause, or even individual words as statements of truth unrelated to the author's intent or the larger context. This is often called "proof-texting."
- B. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by substituting a supposed historical setting that has little or no support from the text itself.
- C. Ignoring the historical setting of the books and reading it as the morning hometown newspaper written primarily to modern individual Christians.
- D. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by allegorizing the text into a philosophical/theological message totally unrelated to the first hearers and the original author's intent.
- E. Ignoring the original message by substituting one's own system of theology, pet doctrine, or contemporary issue unrelated to the original author's purpose and stated message. This phenomenon often follows the initial reading of the Bible as a means of establishing a speaker's authority. This is often referred to as "reader response" ("what-the-text-means-to-me" interpretation).

At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:



In the past, different reading techniques have focused on one of the three components, but to truly affirm the unique inspiration of the Bible, a modified diagram is more appropriate:



In truth all three components must be included in the interpretive process. For the purpose of verification, my interpretation focuses on the first two components: the original author and the text. I am probably reacting to the abuses I have observed (1) allegorizing or spiritualizing texts and (2) “reader response” interpretation (what-it-means-to-me). Abuse may occur at each stage. We must always check our motives, biases, techniques, and applications, but how do we check them if there are no boundaries to interpretations, no limits, no criteria? This is where authorial intent and textual structure provide me with some criteria for limiting the scope of possible valid interpretations.

In light of these inappropriate reading techniques, what are some possible approaches to good Bible reading and interpretation which offer a degree of verification and consistency?

III. Possible Approaches to Good Bible Reading

At this point I am not discussing the unique techniques of interpreting specific genres but general hermeneutical principles valid for all types of biblical texts. A good book for genre-specific approaches is *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, published by Zondervan and *Cracking Old Testament Codes* by D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., published by Broadman and Holman.

My methodology focuses initially on the reader allowing the Holy Spirit to illumine the Bible through four personal reading cycles. This makes the Spirit, the text, and the reader primary, not secondary. This also protects the reader from being unduly influenced by commentators. I have heard it said: “The Bible throws a lot of light on commentaries.” This is not meant to be a depreciating comment about study aids, but rather a plea for an appropriate timing for their use.

We must be able to support our interpretations from the text itself. Three areas provide at least limited verification:

1. the original author's
 - a. historical setting
 - b. literary context

2. the original author's choice of
 - a. grammatical structures (syntax)
 - b. contemporary word usage
 - c. genre
3. our understanding of appropriate
 - a. relevant parallel passages
 - b. relationship between doctrines (paradox)

We need to be able to provide the reasons and logic behind our interpretations. The Bible is our only source for faith and practice. Sadly, Christians often disagree about what it teaches or affirms. It is self-defeating to claim inspiration for the Bible and then for believers not to be able to agree on what it teaches and requires!

The four reading cycles are designed to provide the following interpretive insights.

A. The first reading cycle

1. Read the book in a single sitting. Read it again in a different translation, hopefully from a different translation theory
 - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
 - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
2. Look for the central purpose of the entire writing. Identify its theme.
3. Isolate (if possible) a literary unit, a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence which clearly expresses this central purpose or theme.
4. Identify the predominant literary genre
 - a. Old Testament
 - (1) Hebrew narrative
 - (2) Hebrew poetry (wisdom literature, psalm)
 - (3) Hebrew prophecy (prose, poetry)
 - (4) Law codes
 - b. New Testament
 - (1) Narratives (Gospels, Acts)
 - (2) Parables (Gospels)
 - (3) Letters/epistles
 - (4) Apocalyptic literature

B. The second reading cycle

1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify major topics or subjects.
2. Outline the major topics and briefly state their contents in a simple statement.
3. Check your purpose statement and broad outline with study aids.

C. The third reading cycle

1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify the historical setting and specific occasion for the writing from the Bible book itself.
2. List the historical items that are mentioned in the Bible book
 - a. the author
 - b. the date
 - c. the recipients
 - d. the specific reason for writing
 - e. aspects of the cultural setting that relate to the purpose of the writing
 - f. references to historical people and events

3. Expand your outline to paragraph level for that part of the biblical book you are interpreting. Always identify and outline the literary unit. This may be several chapters or paragraphs. This enables you to follow the original author's logic and textual design.
4. Check your historical setting by using study aids.

D. The fourth reading cycle

1. Read the specific literary unit again in several translations
 - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
 - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
2. Look for literary or grammatical structures
 - a. repeated phrases, Eph. 1:6,12,13
 - b. repeated grammatical structures, Rom. 8:31
 - c. contrasting concepts
3. List the following items
 - a. significant terms
 - b. unusual terms
 - c. important grammatical structures
 - d. particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences
4. Look for relevant parallel passages
 - a. look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using
 - (1) "systematic theology" books
 - (2) reference Bibles
 - (3) concordances
 - b. Look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural balance to our interpretation.
 - c. Look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter because it has one author, the Spirit.
5. Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion
 - a. study Bibles
 - b. Bible encyclopedias, handbooks and dictionaries
 - c. Bible introductions
 - d. Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid and correct your personal study.)

IV. Application of Bible interpretation

At this point we turn to application. You have taken the time to understand the text in its original setting; now you must apply it to your life, your culture. I define biblical authority as "understanding what the original biblical author was saying to his day and applying that truth to our day."

Application must follow interpretation of the original author's intent both in time and logic. We cannot apply a Bible passage to our own day until we know what it was saying to its day! A Bible passage should not mean what it never meant!

Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at paragraph level, not word level. Words have meaning only in context; clauses have meaning only in context; sentences have meaning only in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow his lead by the illumination of the

Holy Spirit. But illumination is not inspiration. To say “thus saith the Lord,” we must abide by the original author’s intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development.

Do not let the issues of our day interpret the Bible; let the Bible speak! This may require us to draw principles from the text. This is valid if the text supports a principle. Unfortunately, many times our principles are just that, “our” principles—not the text’s principles.

In applying the Bible, it is important to remember that (except in prophecy) one and only one meaning is valid for a particular Bible text. That meaning is related to the intent of the original author as he addressed a crisis or need in his day. Many possible applications may be derived from this one meaning. The application will be based on the recipients’ needs but must be related to the original author’s meaning.

V. The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation

So far I have discussed the logical and textual process involved in interpretation and application. Now let me discuss briefly the spiritual aspect of interpretation. The following checklist has been helpful for me.

- A. Pray for the Spirit’s help (cf. I Cor. 1:26-2:16).
- B. Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. I John 1:9).
- C. Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff.; 119:1ff).
- D. Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
- E. Remain humble and teachable.

It is so hard to keep the balance between the logical process and the spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit. The following quotes have helped me balance the two:

- A. from James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting*, pp. 17-18:

“The illumination comes to the minds of God’s people—not just to the spiritual elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority even to those to whom God has given special abilities. To summarize, the assumption I am making throughout the entire book is that the Bible is God’s true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks, that it is not a total mystery but can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture.”

- B. on Kierkegaard, found in Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 75:

According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. “To read the Bible *as God’s word* one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God’s Word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the Word of God.”

- C. H. H. Rowley in *The Relevance of the Bible*, p. 19:

“No merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this

book if it is to be complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more than intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study unto the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books.”

VI. This Commentary’s Method

The *Study Guide Commentary* is designed to aid your interpretive procedures in the following ways:

A. A brief historical outline introduces each book. After you have done “reading cycle #3” check this information.

B. Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.

C. At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:

1. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)
2. The New King James Version (NKJV)
3. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
4. Today’s English Version (TEV)
5. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)

Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are able to analyze the supposed structure of the original author’s thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called “the topic sentence” or “the central idea of the text.” This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.

D. Bob’s notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author’s thought. The notes provide information from several areas:

1. literary context
2. historical, cultural insights
3. grammatical information
4. word studies
5. relevant parallel passages

E. At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions:

1. The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the “Textus Receptus.”
2. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
3. The Today’s English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.

4. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.
- F. For those who do not read the original languages, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text:
1. manuscript variations
 2. alternate word meanings
 3. grammatically difficult texts and structure
 4. ambiguous texts
- Although the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.
- G. At the close of each chapter relevant discussion questions are provided which attempt to target the major interpretive issues of that chapter.

INTRODUCTION TO JEREMIAH

I. NAME OF THE BOOK

- A. It was named after the prophet.
- B. The meaning of his name is difficult to ascertain
 - 1. “YHWH founded” (KB 440)
 - 2. “YHWH loosens from the womb” (BDB 941)
 - 3. “YHWH raises up” or “exalts” (BDB 926)
 - 4. “YHWH hurls” (BDB 941 I, cf. Exod. 15:1)

II. CANONIZATION

- A. It was part of the “prophet” section of the Hebrew canon.
- B. The Torah or Law — Genesis-Deuteronomy
- C. The Prophets:
 - 1. Former Prophets — Joshua-Kings (except Ruth)
 - 2. Latter Prophets — Isaiah-Malachi (except Daniel and Lamentations)
- D. The Writings:
 - 1. The Megilloth (5 scrolls):
 - a. Song of Songs
 - b. Ecclesiastes
 - c. Ruth
 - d. Lamentations
 - e. Esther
 - 2. Daniel
 - 3. Wisdom Literature:
 - a. Job
 - b. Psalms
 - c. Proverbs
 - 4. I & II Chronicles
- E. In rabbinical literature Jeremiah was often considered the first of the prophets (*Baba Bathra* 14b, cf. Matt. 27:9)

III. GENRE

- A. This book is made up of several genres:
 - 1. classical Hebrew poetry (Jeremiah’s oracles)
 - 2. Hebrew prose (written by Baruch in the third person)
 - 3. summaries of Jeremiah’s sermons often in prose (also from Baruch)
 - 4. autobiographical complaints to God in poetic form (Confessions of Jeremiah, cf. 15:10-18; 17:9-18; 18:18-23; 20:7-18)

- B. The book of Jeremiah includes both oral and written prophecies. Also from chapter 36 we learn that some had to be redictated/recopied. Also, chapter 52 is a historical addition related to II Kgs. 224:18-25:21.
- C. Jeremiah's poetry is not of the same quality as Isaiah and Hosea, but his theology is wonderful. This is a comment by Jerome in his introduction to Jeremiah.
 - “Jeremiah the prophet. . .is seen to be more rustic in language than Isaiah and Hosea and certain other prophets among the Hebrew, but equal in thought” (quoted from ABD, vol. 3, p. 690).

IV. AUTHORSHIP

- A. Jeremiah did not write chapter 52 because vv. 31-34 record events which occurred in Babylon. Jeremiah was taken forcibly to Egypt by renegade Jewish military units after the assassination of Gedeliah, the Jewish governor, appointed by Nebuchandezzar.
- B. Possible authors/editors:
 - 1. Jeremiah (*Baba Bathra* 14b)
 - 2. Baruch, his scribe
 - 3. compilers
 - 4. later editor (possibly Ezra or the men of the Great Synagogue)
- C. We know more about Jeremiah than any other prophet.
 - 1. from the priestly (exiled) line of Abiathar, I Kgs. 2:26-27)
 - 2. grew up close to Jerusalem in Anathoth (a Levitical city in the tribal allocation of Benjamin, cf. Josh. 21:17-19)
 - 3. called by God as a young man, 1:2; 25:3 (627 B.C.)
 - 4. influenced by the previous writings, Hosea and Deuteronomy
 - 5. contemporary with
 - a. Daniel
 - b. Ezekiel
 - c. Habakkuk
 - d. Zephaniah
 - e. Nahum
 - 6. five years after his call “the Law Book” was found in the Temple during Josiah's reform. It is surprising that their relationship is never mentioned in Scripture. When the Law Book was found the King consulted a prophetess named Huldah (II Kgs. 22:14-20), not Jeremiah.
 - 7. his feelings can be clearly seen in his confessions or complaints
 - a. 11:18-12:6
 - b. 15:10-12
 - c. 17:14-18
 - d. 18:18-23
 - e. 20:7-18
 - 8. he was taken by force to Egypt where he was killed by Jewish refugees, 43:6

V. DATE

- A. Jeremiah was born in Anathoth between 655-640 B.C. (exact date uncertain).

- B. The book of Jeremiah is dated in 1:2 and covers the time from the thirteenth year of Josiah (his call) to the time of Gedaliah, 627 B.C. (cf. 1:1; 25:3) - 582 B.C. How long Jeremiah lived in Egypt with the refugees is uncertain.
- C. An ostraca found at Lachnash describes its siege in 587 B.C. The form of its Hebrew text is comparable with Jeremiah.
- D. Jeremiah's messages focus on the events from the fall of Samaria (722 B.C.) to the fall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.).

VI. HISTORICAL SETTING

- A. 686 B.C. – Manasseh (686-641 B.C.)
- B. 664 B.C. – the Egyptian Empire gains strength under Psammetichus (664-610 B.C.)
- C. 648 B.C. – the birth of Josiah
- D. 642 B.C. – Amon, king of Judah was killed by his servants (II Kgs. 21:19-26)
- E. 640 B.C. – the last effective Assyrian ruler, Ashurbanipal, dies
- F. 640 B.C. – Josiah becomes a king at 8 years of age (II Kgs. 22:1)
- G. 628 B.C. – Josiah initiates reform (II Chr. 34:3ff; II Kings 23)
- H. 626 B.C. – the call of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:2)
- I. 626 B.C. – Nabopolassar (626-605 B.C.) becomes king of neo-Babylon
- J. 621 B.C. – the Book of the Law was found by workmen who were remodeling the Temple (II Chr. 34:8ff; II Kings 22)
- K. 614 B.C. – the regional capital of Assyria, Ashur, fell to neo-Babylon
- L. 612 B.C. – Nineveh, Assyria's primary capital was destroyed by neo-Babylon and Media
- M. 609 B.C. – Josiah was killed at Meggido opposing Pharaoh Necho II (610-594 B.C.) who was attempting to help the fleeing remnant of the Assyrian army (II Chr. 35:20-24; II Kgs. 23:28-30)
- N. 605 B.C. – neo-Babylon defeats the Egyptians and remainder of the Assyrian armies at Carchemish
- O. 605 B.C. – Nebuchadbezzar II moves through Palestine demanding tribute payments (taking Daniel and the first deportation). There were four invasions affecting Judah and Jerusalem, 605, 597, 586, and 582 B.C.
- P. 601 B.C. – Nebuchadnezzar II lost the battle for control of Egypt (a stalemate)

VII. LITERARY UNITS

- A. The book's structure is topical or thematic, not chronological. It is probably a collection of several different scrolls/messages by Jeremiah, 1-25,30-33, and 46-51.
The UBS' *A Handbook of Jeremiah* makes the comment,
“In fact, Jeremiah is not really a ‘book’ in the sense that most readers today would normally describe a book—it has neither an overall orderly arrangement nor clearly defined contextual settings for interpreting many of its individual parts” (p. 1).
- B. The LXX and the MT differ greatly. Almost 3000 words of the MT are missing in the LXX. Also, the order of the nations in chapters 46-51 is different, as well as their placement after

chapter 25. Both MSS traditions were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, which implies they are both translations of an early Hebrew text.

- C. Tentative outline (basically follows R. K Harrison and E. J. Young)
1. chapter 1 – Jeremiah’s call and provision
 2. chapters 2-25 – Judah’s sin from the early years of Jeremiah’s ministry
 3. chapters 26-29, 34-35 – the personal life of the prophet
 - a. YHWH’s message to Zedekiah and Hananiah’s reaction, 26-29
 - b. the Rechabites, 34-35
 - c. historical events from the reign of Jehoiakim – Zedekiah and Gedaliah and to Egypt, 36-45
 4. chapters 30-33 – the promise of the restoration of God’s people
 - a. physically
 - b. spiritually
 5. chapters 46-51 – prophecies against surrounding nations (also 25:12-38)
 - a. Egypt – 46 (Isaiah 19; Ezekiel 29-32)
 - b. Philistia – 47 (Amos 1:6-8; Isa. 14:29-32; Ezek. 25;15-17)
 - c. Moab – 48 (Amos 2:1-3; Isaiah 15-16; Ezek. 25:8-11)
 - d. Ammon – 49:1-6 (Amos 1:13-15; Ezek. 25:1-7)
 - e. Edom – 49:7-22 (Amos 1:11-12; Isa. 21:11-12; Ezek. 25:12-14; Obadiah)
 - f. Syria – 49:23-27 (Amos 1:3-5; Isa. 17:1-3)
 - g. Arabia – 49:28-33
 - h. Elam – 49:34-38
 - i. Babylon – 50-51 (Isa. 13:1-14; Hab. 2:6-17)
 6. chapter 52 – the Fall of Jerusalem (cf. II Kgs. 24:18-25:30)
- D. The UBS’ *A Handbook of Jeremiah* makes the comment:
1. “As is well known, the book of Jeremiah is not put together according to a chronological arrangement, and it is only with difficulty that we can uncover even a topical arrangement of the sayings and deeds recorded in it. However, a recent commentary by Dorsey demonstrates that there are seven fairly well-defined larger units along with an appendix. Each has its own cohesive internal organization. The outline below is based on his analysis:
 - a. God will punish Judah (1.1-12.17)
 - b. The LORD reveals his plans for the fall of Judah (13.1-20.18)
 - c. God will judge and punish Judah and Jerusalem (21.1-29.32)
 - d. God will bring his people back to their land (30.1-33.26)
 - e. Jeremiah delivers messages to Zedekiah and the Rechabites (34.1-35.19)
 - f. Jeremiah suffers because he delivers the LORD’S message (36.1-45.5)
 - g. God will punish the nations (46.1-51.64)
 - h. An appendix on the fall of Jerusalem (52.1-34)” (p. 1)
 2. “The seven divisions of the book are therefore arranged in a symmetrical pattern. The first and seventh have related themes, as do the second and sixth, and the third and fifth. The fourth, the central division, delivers the central message, that of hope. This is quite different from many of the other prophetic books where the central message is a call to repentance. Further, the book makes clear that God did not fail to protect Judah. Rather, it was he who decreed that Judah should be punished because they

failed to obey him. The LORD is above the nations and powers; he is able to punish, but he alone can be trusted to restore the people” (p. 2).

E. It is interesting to note that in chapters 1-25 Jeremiah’s messages are introduced with the phrase “the word of YHWH came to me,” while in chapters 26-51 they are introduced with “the word of YHWH came to Jeremiah.”

F. Chart of Jeremiah’s prophecies by the reigning king:

E. J. Young	R. K. Harrison
1. under Josiah (640 B.C.) 1:1-19; 2:1-3:5; 3:6-6:30; 7:1-10:25 11:1-13:27; 14:1-15:21; 16:1-17:27 18:1-20:18	1:1-19; 2:1-3:5; 3:6-6:30; 7:1-10:25; 18:1-20:18
2. under Jehoahaz (609 B.C.)	
3. under Jehoiakim (609 B.C.) 25; 26; 27; 35; 36; 45	11:1-13:14; 14:1-15:21; 16:1-17:27; 22; 23; 25; 26; 35; 36; 45; 46-48
4. under Jehoiachin (598-596 B.C.)	31:15-27
5. Zedekiah (597 B.C.) 21:1-22:30; 23; 24; 27; 28; 29; 30-31; 32; 34; 37; 38; 39	21:1-22:30; 24:1-10; 27; 28; 29; 30-31 32; 33; 34; 37; 38; 39; 49; 50:1-51:64
6. under Gedaliah 40; 41; 42; 43-44:30; 50-52	40:1-42; 43:1-44:30
7.	Historical Appendix 52:1-34

VIII. MAIN THEME

- A. The time of judgment is imminent because Judah would not repent! Jeremiah emphasizes sin, judgment, then restoration; 1:4-10.
- B. Liturgical or ritual religion without personal lifestyle faith in God is a disaster! (chapter 7; Isa. 29:13).
- C. Judah had hopelessly lost her way in ritual, idolatry, and sin! She had broken God’s covenant, symbolized as a marriage contract (cf. 2:1-3:5).
- D. Personal repentance and faith are the basis of God’s new covenant (31:31-34), not family faith (31:29; Ezekiel 18).
- E. The New Covenant is permanent (31:35-37) because it is not conditioned on human performance but on God’s grace and power (Ezek. 36:22-38).

JEREMIAH 1

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jeremiah's Call and Commission		Superscription		Title
1:1-3	1:1-3	1:1-3	1:1-3	1:1-3
	The Prophet Is Called	Jeremiah's Call and Related Visions	The Call of Jeremiah	The Call of Jeremiah
1:4-10 (4-8)	1:4-8 (5)	1:4-10 (5)	1:4-5	1:4-5 (5)
	(6)		1:6	1:6
	(7-8)	(7-8)	1:7-8	1:7-8 (7-8)
(9b-10)	1:9 (9b)		1:9-10	1:9-10 (9b-10)
	1:10 (10)	(10)	The Two Visions	
1:11-12	1:11-12	1:11-13	1:11	1:11-12
			1:12	
1:13-19	1:13-16		1:13	1:13-16
	(14-16)	1:14-19	1:14-19	(14-16)
	1:17-19 (17-19)			1:17-19 (17-19)

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

*Although not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraph divisions as they understand them. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own way. As you read the text, which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions?

In every chapter you must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs). Then compare your understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation at the paragraph level, can one truly understand the Bible. Only the original author was inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility to apply the inspired truth to their day and lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two and Three.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1-3

¹The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, ²to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. ³It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, until the exile of Jerusalem in the fifth month.

1:1 “The words” This Hebrew word (BDB 182) has a wide semantical field and can mean “deeds,” “matters,” “affairs,” or “sayings.”

▣ **“Jeremiah”** This is a very common Hebrew name, but its etymology is uncertain (see Intro. I., B); of all the prophetic books, this one mentions the author more than any other. The book reveals its author’s words, thoughts, feelings, and actions more than any other OT book.

▣ **“the son of Hilkiah”** This name (BDB 324) means “YHWH *is my* portion.” Jeremiah was a Levite, but apparently he was not an active priest because Solomon had exiled his family to Anathoth (cf. I Kgs. 2:26-27). There are two men in Jeremiah’s day by the same name. His father is not the high priest mentioned in II Kgs. 22:4 or II Chr. 34:9. The high priest was apparently of the lineage of Zadok, while Jeremiah’s father was from the lineage of Abiathar, both descendants of Eli.

▣ **“Anathoth”** This name (BDB 779) comes from the Amorite goddess, Anath, who is the sister or consort of *Ba’al*. She was the most active warrior goddess (i.e., *Anath*, *Asherah*, *Astarte*, and *Astoreth*) called the Queen of heaven in the Ras Shamra poetry texts (found in the city of Ugarit, north of Israel. A city by this name, Beth-anath, is mentioned in Josh. 15:59; 19:38; Jdgs. 1:33).

▣ **“in the land of Benjamin”** This was the location of Abiathar’s excommunication (cf. I Kgs. 2:26-27). It is about three miles from Jerusalem, but its exact location is uncertain.

1:2-3 The repeated phrase “in the days of. . .” is a way to date the prophetic messages. The opening verses serve to introduce the entire book.

1. from whom
2. to whom (cf. v. 7)
3. when
4. why

1:2 “the word of the LORD came” The OT prophets repeatedly affirm that their message was from YHWH. This literary formula makes that very clear.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAMES FOR DEITY

A. *El* (BDB 42, KB 48)

1. The original meaning of the generic ancient term for deity is uncertain, though many scholars believe it comes from the Akkadian root, “to be strong” or “to be powerful” (cf. Gen. 17:1; Num. 23:19; Deut. 7:21; Ps. 50:1).
2. In the Canaanite pantheon the high god is *El* (Ras Shamra texts).
3. In the Bible *El* is often compounded with other terms. These combinations became a way to characterize God.
 - a. *El-Elyon* (“God Most High,” BDB 42 & 751 II), Gen. 14:18-22; Deut. 32:8; Isa. 14:14
 - b. *El-Roi* (“God who sees” or “God who reveals Himself,” BDB 42 & 909), Gen. 16:13
 - c. *El-Shaddai* (“God Almighty” or “God of all compassion” or “God of the mountain,” BDB 42 & 994), Gen. 17:1; 35:11; 43:14; 49:25; Exod. 6:3
 - d. *El-Olam* (“the Everlasting God,” BDB 42 & 761), Gen. 21:33. This term is theologically linked to God’s promise to David, II Sam. 7:13,16
 - e. *El-Berit* (“God of the Covenant,” BDB 42 & 136), Jdgs. 9:46
4. *El* is equated with
 - a. YHWH in Ps. 85:8; Isa. 42:5
 - b. *Elohim* in Gen. 46:3; Job 5:8, “I am *El*, the *Elohim* of your father”
 - c. *Shaddai* in Gen. 49:25
 - d. “jealousy” in Exod. 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15
 - e. “mercy” in Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:31;
 - f. “great and awesome” in Deut. 7:21; 10:17; Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Dan. 9:4
 - g. “knowledge” in I Sam. 2:3
 - h. “my strong refuge” in II Sam. 22:33
 - i. “my avenger” in II Sam. 22:48
 - j. “holy one” in Isa. 5:16
 - k. “might” in Isa. 10:21
 - l. “my salvation” in Isa. 12:2
 - m. “great and powerful” in Jer. 32:18
 - n. “retribution” in Jer. 51:56
5. A combination of all the major OT names for God is found in Joshua 22:22 (*El, Elohim, YHWH*, repeated).

B. *Elyon* (BDB 751, KB 832)

1. Its basic meaning is “high,” “exalted,” or “lifted up” (cf. Gen. 40:17; I Kgs. 9:8; II Kgs. 18:17; Neh. 3:25; Jer. 20:2; 36:10; Ps. 18:13).
2. It is used in a parallel sense to several other names/titles of God.
 - a. *Elohim* – Ps. 47:1-2; 73:11; 107:11
 - b. *YHWH* – Gen. 14:22; II Sam. 22:14
 - c. *El-Shaddai* – Ps. 91:1,9
 - d. *El* – Num. 24:16

- e. *Elah* – used often in Daniel 2-6 and Ezra 4-7, linked with *illair* (Aramaic for “High God”) in Dan. 3:26; 4:2; 5:18,21
3. It is often used by non-Israelites.
 - a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
 - b. Balaam, Num. 24:16
 - c. Moses, speaking of the nations in Deut. 32:8
 - d. Luke’s Gospel in the NT, writing to Gentiles, also uses the Greek equivalent *Hupsistos* (cf. 1:32,35,76; 6:35; 8:28; Acts 7:48; 16:17)
- C. *Elohim* (PLURAL), *Eloah* (SINGULAR), used primarily in poetry (BDB 43, KB 52)
1. This term is not found outside the Old Testament.
 2. This word can designate the God of Israel or the gods of the nations (cf. Exod. 3:6; 20:3). Abraham’s family were polytheistic (cf. Josh. 24:2).
 3. It can refer to Israeli judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; Ps. 82:6).
 4. The term *elohim* is also used of other spiritual beings (angels, the demonic) as in Deut. 32:8 (LXX); Ps. 8:5; Job 1:6; 38:7.
 5. In the Bible it is the first title/name for Deity (cf. Gen. 1:1). It is used exclusively until Gen. 2:4, where it is combined with YHWH. It basically (theologically) refers to God as creator, sustainer, and provider of all life on this planet (cf. Psalm 104).

It is synonymous with *El* (cf. Deut. 32:15-19). It can also parallel YHWH as Psalm 14 (*Elohim*, vv. 1,2,5; YHWH, vv. 2,6; even *Adon*, v. 4).
 6. Although PLURAL and used of other gods, this term often designates the God of Israel, but usually it has the SINGULAR VERB to denote the monotheistic usage.
 7. It is strange that a common name for the monotheistic God of Israel is PLURAL! Although there is no certainty, here are the theories.
 - a. Hebrew has many PLURALS, often used for emphasis. Closely related to this is the later Hebrew grammatical feature called “the plural of majesty,” where the PLURAL is used to magnify a concept.
 - b. This may refer to the angelic council, with whom God meets in heaven and who does His bidding (cf. I Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 1:6; Ps. 82:1; 89:5,7).
 - c. It is even possible this reflects the NT revelation of the one God in three persons. In Gen. 1:1 God creates; Gen. 1:2 the Spirit broods, and from the NT Jesus is God the Father’s agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; Rom. 11:36; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:2; 2:10).
- D. YHWH (BDB 217, KB 394)
1. This is the name which reflects deity as the covenant-making God; God as savior, redeemer! Humans break covenants, but God is loyal to His word, promise, covenant (cf. Psalm 103).

This name is first mentioned in combination with *Elohim* in Gen. 2:4. There are not two creation accounts in Genesis 1-2, but two emphases: (1) God as the creator of the universe (the physical) and (2) God as the special creator of humanity. Genesis 2:4-3:24 begins the special revelation about the privileged position and purpose of mankind, as well as the problem of sin and rebellion associated with the unique position.
 2. In Gen. 4:26 it is said “*men* began to call upon the name of the LORD” (YHWH). However, Exod. 6:3 implies that early covenant people (the Patriarchs and their families) knew God

only as *El-Shaddai*. The name YHWH is explained only one time in Exod. 3:13-16, esp. v. 14. However, the writings of Moses often interpret words by popular word plays, not etymologies (cf. Gen. 17:5; 27:36; 29:13-35). There have been several theories as to the meaning of this name (taken from IDB, vol. 2, pp. 409-11).

- a. from an Arabic root, “to show fervent love”
 - b. from an Arabic root “to blow” (YHWH as storm God)
 - c. from a Ugartic (Canaanite) root “to speak”
 - d. following a Phoenician inscription, a CAUSATIVE PARTICIPLE meaning “the One who sustains,” or “the One who establishes”
 - e. from the Hebrew *Qal* form “the One who is,” or “the One who is present” (in future sense, “the One who will be”)
 - f. from the Hebrew *Hiphil* form “the One who causes to be”
 - g. from the Hebrew root “to live” (e.g., Gen. 3:21), meaning “the ever-living, only-living One”
 - h. from the context of Exod. 3:13-16 a play on the IMPERFECT form used in a PERFECT sense, “I shall continue to be what I used to be” or “I shall continue to be what I have always been” (cf. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Old Testament*, p. 67). The full name YHWH is often expressed in abbreviation or possibly an original form.
 - (1) *Yah* (e.g., Hallelu - yah, BDB 219, cf. Exod. 15:2; 17:16; Ps. 89:8; 104:35)
 - (2) *Yahu* (“iah” ending of names, e.g., Isaiah)
 - (3) *Yo* (“Jo” beginning of names, e.g., Joshua or Joel)
3. In later Judaism this covenant name became so holy (the tetragrammaton) that Jews were afraid to say it lest they break the command of Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11; 6:13. So they substituted the Hebrew term for “owner,” “master,” “husband,” “lord”—*adon* or *adonai* (my lord). When they came to YHWH in their reading of OT texts they pronounced “lord.” This is why YHWH is written LORD in English translations.
4. As with *El*, YHWH is often combined with other terms to emphasize certain characteristics of the Covenant God of Israel. While there are many possible combination terms, here are some.
- a. *YHWH – Yireh* (YHWH will provide, BDB 217 & 906), Gen. 22:14
 - b. *YHWH – Rophekha* (YHWH is your healer, BDB 217 & 950, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), Exod. 15:26
 - c. *YHWH – Nissi* (YHWH is my banner, BDB 217 & 651), Exod. 17:15
 - d. *YHWH – Meqaddishkem* (YHWH the One who sanctifies you, BDB 217 & 872, *Piel* PARTICIPLE), Exod. 31:13
 - e. *YHWH – Shalom* (YHWH is Peace, BDB 217 & 1022), Jdgs. 6:24
 - f. *YHWH – Sabbaoth* (YHWH of hosts, BDB 217 & 878), I Sam. 1:3,11; 4:4; 15:2; often in the Prophets
 - g. *YHWH – Ro ‘I* (YHWH is my shepherd, BDB 217 & 944, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), Ps. 23:1
 - h. *YHWH – Sidqenu* (YHWH is our righteousness, BDB 217 & 841), Jer. 23:6
 - i. *YHWH – Shammah* (YHWH is there, BDB 217 & 1027), Ezek. 48:35

1:2,3 “in the days of Josiah. . .in the days of Jehoiakim” This forms the beginning and ending dates of Jeremiah’s ministry, which is about 627 B.C. to after 586 B.C. See Appendix Four, chart #3.

▣ **“Josiah”** This means “YHWH supports” (BDB 78) or “YHWH heals” (BDB 382). He was a godly king who began reigning in 640 B.C. at eight years of age (640-609 B.C.). He started a spiritual reform and the remodeling of the Temple. This was when the “Law of the Lord” was found (621 B.C., cf. II Kings 22-23).

▣ **“in the thirteenth year of the reign”** This would be five years after the Book of the Law was found in the Temple and when Josiah began his reform. It is unusual that there is no textual connection between Josiah and Jeremiah recorded in the Bible. Even when the Book of the Law was found, it was taken to the prophetess Huldah to interpret (cf. II Kgs. 22:14-20).

1:3 “Jehoiakim” This was another son of Josiah (Eliakim, cf. II Kgs. 23:34) who replaced Jehoahaz (i.e., Shallum, cf. 22:11) as the ruler of Judah by Pharaoh Necho (cf. II Kgs. 23:31-34; II Chr. 36:4).

Notice that there are two sons of Josiah who reigned briefly for three months who are not named in this passage.

1. Jehoahaz (Shallum) who was exiled to Egypt by Pharaoh Necho II (cf. II Kings 23)
2. Jehoiachin who was exiled to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar II (cf. II Kings 24; II Chronicles 36)

▣ **“Zedekiah”** Zedekiah replaced Jehoiakim on the throne of Judah as a vassal of Nebuchadnezzar II (i.e., 609 B.C., cf. II Kgs. 24:17; II Chr. 36:10-13).

▣ **“the exile of Jerusalem in the fifth month”** There were four deportations by Nebuchadnezzar II of the population of Judah to Babylon (i.e., 605, 597, 586, 582 B.C.). By far the most destructive was in 586 B.C., when Jerusalem itself fell and the Temple was completely destroyed (cf. II Kings 25; II Chr. 36:9-21; Jeremiah 39 and 52).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:4-10

⁴Now the word of the LORD came to me saying,

⁵“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
And before you were born I consecrated you;
I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

⁶Then I said, “Alas, Lord GOD!
Behold, I do not know how to speak,
Because I am a youth.”

⁷But the LORD said to me,
“Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’
Because everywhere I send you, you shall go,
And all that I command you, you shall speak.

⁸“Do not be afraid of them,
For I am with you to deliver you,” declares the LORD.

⁹Then the LORD stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me,
“Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.

¹⁰See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms,
To pluck up and to break down, To destroy and to overthrow,

1:4 Verses 4 through 10 are the divine call of Jeremiah to prophetic ministry.

SPECIAL TOPIC: OT PROPHECY

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Opening Statements

1. The believing community does not agree on how to interpret prophecy. Other truths have been established as to an orthodox position throughout the centuries, but not this one.
2. There are several well defined stages of OT prophecy
 - a. premonarchial
 - (1) individuals called prophets
 - (a) Abraham – Gen. 20:7
 - (b) Moses – Num. 12:6-8; Deut. 18:15; 34:10
 - (c) Aaron – Exod. 7:1 (spokesman for Moses)
 - (d) Miriam – Exod. 15:20
 - (e) Medad and Eldad – Num. 11:24-30
 - (f) Deborah – Jdgs. 4:4
 - (g) unnamed – Jdgs. 6:7-10
 - (h) Samuel – I Sam. 3:20
 - (2) references to prophets as a group – Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20-22
 - (3) prophetic group or guild – I Sam. 10:5-13; 19:20; I Kgs. 20:35,41; 22:6,10-13; II Kgs. 2:3,7; 4:1,38; 5:22; 6:1, etc.
 - (4) Messiah called prophet – Deut. 18:15-18
 - b. non-writing monarchial (they address the king):
 - (1) Gad – I Sam. 22:5; II Sam. 24:11; I Chr. 29:29
 - (2) Nathan – II Sam. 7:2; 12:25; I Kgs. 1:22
 - (3) Ahijah – I Kgs. 11:29
 - (4) Jehu – I Kgs. 16:1,7,12
 - (5) unnamed – I Kgs. 18:4,13; 20:13,22
 - (6) Elijah – I Kings 18 - II Kings 2
 - (7) Milcaiah – I Kings 22
 - (8) Elisha – II Kgs. 2:8,13
 - c. classical writing prophets (they address the nation as well as the king): Isaiah-Malachi (except Daniel)

B. Biblical Terms

1. *Ro'eh* = “seer,” I Sam. 9:9. This reference itself shows the transition to the term *nabi*. *Ro'eh* is from the general term “to see.” This person understood God’s ways and plans and was consulted to ascertain God’s will in a matter.

2. *Hozeh* = “seer,” II Sam. 24:11. It is basically a synonym of *Ro’eh*. It is from a rarer term “to see.” The PARTICIPLED form is used most often to refer to prophets (i.e., “to behold”).
3. *Nabi’* = “prophet,” cognate of Akkadian VERB *Nabu* = “to call” and Arabic *Naba’a* = “to announce.” This is the most common term in the Old Testament to designate a prophet. It is used over 300 times. The exact etymology is uncertain but “to call” at present seems the best option. Possibly the best understanding comes from YHWH’s description of Moses’ relationship to Pharaoh through Aaron (cf. Exod. 4:10-16; 7:1; Deut. 5:5. A prophet is someone who speaks for God to His people (Amos 3:8; Jer. 1:7,17; Ezek. 3:4.)
4. All three terms are used of the prophet’s office in I Chr. 29:29; Samuel – *Ro’eh*; Nathan – *Nabi’* and Gad – *Hozeh*.
5. The phrase, *ish ha - ’elohim*, “Man of God,” is also a broader designation for a speaker for God. It is used some 76 times in the OT in the sense of “prophet.”
6. The term “prophet” is Greek in origin. It comes from: (1) *pro* = “before” or “for” and (2) *phemi* = “to speak.”

II. DEFINITION OF PROPHECY

- A. The term “prophecy” had a wider semantic field in Hebrew than in English. The history books of Joshua through Kings (except Ruth) are labeled by the Jews as “the former prophets.” Both Abraham (Gen. 20:7; Ps. 105:15) and Moses (Deut. 18:18) are designated as prophets (also Miriam, Exod. 15:20). Therefore, beware of an assumed English definition!
- B. “Propheticism may legitimately be defined as that understanding of history which accepts meaning only in terms of divine concern, divine purpose, divine participation,” *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3, p. 896.
- C. “The prophet is neither a philosopher nor a systematic theologian, but a covenant mediator who delivers the word of God to His people in order to shape their future by reforming their present, “Prophets and Prophecy,” *Encyclopedia Judaica* vol. 13 p. 1152.

III. PURPOSE OF PROPHECY

- A. Prophecy is a way for God to speak to His people, providing guidance in their current setting and hope in His control of their lives and world events. Their message was basically corporate. It is meant to rebuke, encourage, engender faith and repentance, and inform God’s people about Himself and His plans. They hold God’s people to fidelity to God’s covenants. To this must be added that often it is used to clearly reveal God’s choice of a spokesman (Deut. 13:1-3; 18:20-22). This, taken ultimately, would refer to the Messiah.
- B. Often, the prophet took a historical or theological crisis of his day and projected this into an eschatological setting. This end-time view of history is unique in Israel and its sense of divine election and covenant promises.
- C. The office of prophet seems to balance (Jer. 18:18) and usurp the office of High Priest as a way to know God’s will. The Urim and Thummim transcend into a verbal message from God’s spokesman. The office of prophet seems to also have passed away in Israel after Malachi. It does not reappear until 400 years later with John the Baptist. It is uncertain how the New Testament gift of “prophecy” relates to the Old Testament. New Testament prophets (Acts 11:27-28; 13:1; 15:32; I Cor. 12:10,28-29; II Cor. 14:29,32,37; Eph. 4:11) are not revealers of new revelation or Scripture, but forth-tellers and foretellers of God’s will in covenant situations.

- D. Prophecy is not exclusively or primarily predictive in nature. Prediction is one way to confirm his office and his message, but it must be noted “less than 2% of OT prophecy is Messianic. Less than 5% specifically describes the New Covenant Age. Less than 1% concerns events yet to come.” (Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 166)
- E. Prophets represent God to the people, while Priests represent the people to God. This is a general statement. There are exceptions like Habakkuk, who addresses questions to God.
- F. One reason it is difficult to understand the prophets is because we do not know how their books were structured. They are not chronological. They seem to be thematic but not always the way one would expect. Often there is no obvious historical setting, time frame or clear division between oracles. These books are difficult (1) to read through in one sitting; (2) to outline by topic; and (3) to ascertain the central truth or authorial intent in each oracle.

IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPHECY

- A. In the Old Testament there seems to be a development of the concept of “prophet” and “prophecy.” In early Israel there developed a fellowship of prophets, led by a strong charismatic leader such as Elijah or Elisha. Sometimes the phrase, “the sons of the prophets,” was used to designate this group (II Kings 2). The prophets were characterized by forms of ecstasy (I Sam. 10:10-13; 19:18-24).
- B. However, this period passed rapidly into individuals prophets. There were those prophets (both true and false) who identified with the King, and lived at the palace (Gad, Nathan). Also, there were those who were independent, sometimes totally unconnected with the status quo of Israeli society (Amos). They are both male and female (II Kgs. 22:14.)
- C. The prophet was often a revealer of the future, conditioned on man’s immediate response. Often the prophet’s task was an unfolding of God’s universal plan for His creation which is not affected by human response. This universal eschatological plan is unique among the prophets of the Ancient Near East. Prediction and Covenant fidelity are twin foci of the prophetic messages (cf. Fee and Stuart, p. 150). This implies that the prophets are primarily corporate in focus. They usually, but not exclusively, address the nation.
- D. Most prophetic material was orally presented. It was later combined by means of theme, chronology or other patterns of Near Eastern Literature which are lost to us. Because it was oral it is not as structured as written prose. This makes the books difficult to read straight through and difficult to understand without a specific historical setting.
- E. The prophets use several patterns to convey their messages.
 1. Court Scene – God takes His people to court, often it is a divorce case where YHWH rejects his wife (Israel) for her unfaithfulness (Hosea 4; Micah 6).
 2. Funeral dirge – the special meter of this type of message and its characteristic “woe” sets it apart as a special form (Isaiah 5; Habakkuk 2).
 3. Covenant Blessing Pronouncement – the conditional nature of the Covenant is emphasized and the consequences, both positively and negatively, are spelled out for the future (Deuteronomy 27-28).

V. HELPFUL GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETING PROPHECY

- A. Find the intent of the original prophet (editor) by noting the historical setting and the literary context of each oracle. Usually it will involve Israel breaking the Mosaic Covenant in some way.

- B. Read and interpret the whole oracle, not just a part; outline it as to content. See how it relates to surrounding oracles. Try to outline the whole book.
- C. Assume a literal interpretation of the passage until something in the text itself points you to figurative usage; then put the figurative language into prose.
- D. Analyze symbolic action in light of historical setting and parallel passages. Be sure to remember this Ancient Near Eastern literature is not western or modern literature.
- E. Treat prediction with care.
 - 1. Are they exclusively for the author's day?
 - 2. Were they subsequently fulfilled in Israel's history?
 - 3. Are they yet future events?
 - 4. Do they have a contemporary fulfillment and yet a future fulfillment?
 - 5. Allow the authors of the Bible, not modern authors, to guide your answers.
- F. Special concerns
 - 1. Is the prediction qualified by conditional response?
 - 2. Is it certain to whom the prophecy is addressed (and why)?
 - 3. Is there a possibility both biblically and/or historically for multiple fulfillment?
 - 4. The NT authors under inspiration were able to see the Messiah in many places in the OT that are not obvious to us. They seem to use typology or word play. Since we are not inspired we best leave this approach to them.

VI. HELPFUL BOOKS

- A. *A Guide to Biblical Prophecy* by Carl E. Amending and W. Ward Basque
- B. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart
- C. *My Servants the Prophets* by Edward J. Young
- D. *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic* by D. Brent Sandy
- E. *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 4, pp. 1067-1078

1:5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you” This speaks of God's sovereign power over the lives of His human creation (cf. 43:7; 44:2,24; 49:5). The term “formed” (*Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 427, KB 428) is the exact term used in Gen. 2:7,8. God has a plan and a purpose for every human person (cf. Ps. 139:13-16; Isa. 43:7; 49:5; Gal. 1:15).

God had a plan and purpose for this person even before he was born. I wonder how many “prophets” and servants of God America has killed in the name of expediency and the individual freedom of their selfish parents. Personal convenience and expedience give a social license to choices that depreciate human worth and dignity!

For a good brief discussion of the Bible texts on the unborn see Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed., pp. 570-572.

- ☐ God selects four VERBS to describe His personal activity in Jeremiah's life.
 - 1. I formed – *Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 427, KB 428
 - 2. I knew – *Qal* PERFECT, BDB 393, KB 390 (see Special Topic below)

3. I consecrated – *Hiphil* PERFECT, BDB 872, KB 1073
4. I appointed – *Qal* PERFECT, BDB 678, KB 733

SPECIAL TOPIC: KNOW (using mostly Deuteronomy as a paradigm)

The Hebrew word “know” (BDB 393) has several senses (semantic fields) in the *Qal*.

1. to understand good and evil – Gen. 3:22; Deut. 1:39; Isa. 7:14-15; Jonah 4:11
2. to know by understanding – Deut. 9:2,3,6; 18:21
3. to know by experience – Deut. 3:19; 4:35; 8:2,3,5; 11:2; 20:20; 31:13; Josh. 23:14
4. to consider – Deut. 4:39; 11:2; 29:16
5. to know personally
 - a. a person – Gen. 29:5; Exod. 1:8; Deut. 22:2; 33:9
 - b. a god – Deut. 11:28; 13:2,6,13; 28:64; 29:26; 32:17
 - c. YHWH – Deut. 4:35,39; 7:9; 29:6; Isa. 1:3; 56:10-11
 - d. sexual – Gen. 4:1,17,25; 24:16; 38:26
6. a learned skill or knowledge – Isa. 29:11,12; Amos 5:16
7. be wise – Deut. 29:4; Pro. 1:2; 4:1; Isa. 29:24
8. God’s knowledge
 - a. of Moses – Deut. 34:10
 - b. of Israel – Deut. 31:21,27,29

▣ **“to the nations”** Jeremiah was not just called to Judah, but was to proclaim God’s sovereignty over all nations (cf. v. 10a; 25:15-29,46-51). This is the theological implication of monotheism.

SPECIAL TOPIC: MONOTHEISM

The concept of “monotheism” (one and only one God), not just the “high god” of polytheism or the good god of Iranian dualism (Zoroastrianism), is unique to Israel (Abraham, 2000 B.C.). Only one rare exception briefly in Egypt (Amenhotep IV, also known as Akhenaten, 1367-1350 or 1386-1361 B.C.).

This concept is expressed in several phrases in the OT.

1. “no one like YHWH our *Elohim*,” Exod. 8:10; 9:14; Deut. 33:26; I Kgs. 8:23
2. “no other besides Him,” Deut. 4:35,39; 32:39; I Sam. 2:2; II Sam. 22:32; Isa. 45:21; 44:6,8; 45:6,21
3. “YHWH is one,” Deut. 6:4; Rom. 3:30; I Cor. 8:4,6; I Tim. 2:5; James 2:19
4. “none like thee,” II Sam. 7:22; Jer. 10:6
5. “Thou alone are God,” Ps. 86:10; Isa. 37:16
6. “Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me,” Isa. 43:10
7. “there is no other; besides Me. . .there is no other,” Isa. 45:5,6,22
8. “there is none else, no other God,” Isa. 45:14,18
9. “there is none except Me,” Isa. 45:21
10. “there is no other;. . .there is no one like Me,” Isa. 46:9

It must be admitted that this crucial doctrine has been revealed in progressive ways. The early statements could be understood as “henotheism” or practical monotheism (there are other gods, but only one

God for us, cf. Exod. 15:11; 20:2-5; Deut. 3:28; 5:7; 6:4,14; 10:17; 32:12; I Kgs. 8:23; Ps. 83:18; 86:8; 136:1-2).

The first texts that begin to denote a singularity (philosophical monotheism) are early (cf. Exod. 8:10; 9:14; Deut. 4:35,39; 33:26). The full and complete claims are found in Isaiah 43-46 (cf. 43:11; 44:6,8; 45:7,14,18,22; 46:5,9).

The NT alludes to Deut. 6:4 in Rom. 3:30; I Cor. 8:4,6; Eph. 4:6; I Tim. 2:5; and James 2:19. Jesus quotes it as the first commandment in Matt. 22:36-37; Mark 12:29-30; Luke 10:27. The OT, as well as the NT, asserts the reality of other spiritual beings (demons, angels), but only one creator/redeemer God (YHWH, Gen. 1:1).

Biblical monotheism is characterized by

1. God is one and unique (ontology is assumed, not specified)
2. God is personal (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 3:8)
3. God is ethical (cf. Exod. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8-10)
4. God created humans in His image (Gen. 1:26-27) for fellowship (i.e., #2). He is a jealous God (cf. Exod. 20:2-3)

From the NT

1. God has three eternal, personal manifestations (see Special Topic: The Trinity at 8:11)
2. God is perfectly and completely revealed in Jesus (cf. John 1:1-14; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 1:2-3)
3. God's eternal plan for fallen humanity's redemption is the sacrificial offering of His only Son (Isaiah 53; Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21; Phil. 2:6-11; Hebrews)

SPECIAL TOPIC: BOB'S EVANGELICAL BIASES

I must admit to you the reader that I am biased at this point. My systematic theology is not Calvinism or Dispensationalism, but it is Great Commission evangelicalism (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8). I believe God had an eternal plan for the redemption of all mankind (e.g., Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 18; 36:22-39; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; Rom. 3:9-18,19-20,21-31), all those created in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). The covenants are united in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:28-29; Col. 3:11). Jesus is the mystery of God, hidden but now revealed (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13)! The NT gospel, not Israel, is the key to Scripture.

This pre-understanding colors all my interpretations of Scripture. I read all texts through it! It is surely a bias (all interpreters have them!), but it is a Scripturally-informed presupposition.

1:6 “Alas” In this first chapter there are several INTERJECTIONS.

1. “alas” – אַה־, BDB 13, KB 18, cf. Jdgs. 11:35; II Kgs. 3:10; 6:5,15; Joel 1:15; Jer. 1:6; 4:10; 14:13; 32:17. It is translated “ah” in Jeremiah and denotes alarm.
2. “behold” – הִנֵּה, BDB 243, KB 252, cf. vv. 6,9,18; 49:2; Isa. 6:7. This is a way to call attention to a statement.
3. “behold” – הִנֵּה, BDB 243, v. 15; 31:8. The UBS Handbook calls it “an emphatic transitional marker” (p. 38).
4. “see” – in v. 10 (*Qal* IMPERATIVE), also functions as an INTERJECTION

▣ **“Lord GOD”** The Hebrew titles are “*Adonai*” and “YHWH.” Since both of these terms are translated “Lord” in English, most English translations use the title “Lord God” (cf. 4:10; 32:17; Josh. 7:7; Jdgs. 6:22). See Special Topic: Names For Deity at 1:2.

▣ **“I do not know how to speak”** This was the same excuse that Moses used in Exod. 4:10, however, the term used here means “to speak publicly.” Moses was claiming to be a stutterer (BDB 546), but Jeremiah was claiming not to be a public speaker (BDB 180).

▣ **“because I am a youth”** His exact age is uncertain, because in Exod. 33:11 Joshua is called a youth and he was 45 years old. Young people in Hebrew culture did not have the status that they do in modern American culture. Jeremiah was afraid that because of his age and because he was unmarried he would not have a strong social or religious platform from which to speak to Judeans.

God regularly uses young people. Here are just a sample.

1. the spies of Jericho, Josh. 6:23
2. Samuel
3. David and Jonathan
4. Daniel and his three friends
5. Josiah
6. Joel 2:28

It is not the age but the heart that is crucial!

1:7 Notice how YHWH answered Jeremiah’s reluctance.

1. do not say, “I am a youth” (*Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense)
2. everywhere I send you, you shall go
3. all that I command you, you shall speak

▣ **“because everywhere I send you, you will go”** God never sends anyone out alone. His greatest provision is His personal presence (cf. vv. 8b,19). He goes along to help (i.e., Matt. 28:20) and to equip for the task assigned (i.e., Eph. 4:12).

1:8 “Do not be afraid of them” This is a *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense. Jeremiah had a hard word to speak to his own people (i.e., exile is coming). They would attack Jeremiah both verbally and physically, but YHWH says “Fear not!” This was a frequent message to YHWH’s servants.

1. Abraham, Gen. 15:1
2. Isaac, Gen. 26:24
3. Moses, Num. 21:34; Deut. 3:2,22
4. Joshua, Josh. 1:5-9; 8:1; 10:8
5. Gideon, Jdgs. 6:8-10
6. Solomon, I Chr. 28:20
7. Isaiah, Isa. 8:12-15
8. national Israel, Isa. 41:10,13,14; 43:1,5; 44:2; 54:4
9. Daniel, Dan. 10:12,19
10. Mary, Luke 1:30
11. Simon, Luke 5:16
12. Paul, Acts 27:24
13. John, Rev. 1:17

1:9 “the LORD stretched out His hand and touched my mouth” Jeremiah becomes YHWH’s mouthpiece (cf. 15:19; Deut. 18:18). Apparently Jeremiah had a vision of God similar to Isaiah’s (cf. Isa. 6:6-7). The vision is not elaborated in Jeremiah’s call as it is in Isaiah’s call (cf. Isaiah 6) or Ezekiel’s call (cf. Ezekiel 1).

This is a very anthropomorphic phrase. God is described in human terms.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD DESCRIBED AS A HUMAN (ANTHROPOMORPHIC LANGUAGE)

- I. This type of language is very common in the OT (some examples)
 - A. Physical body parts
 1. eyes – Gen. 1:4,31; 6:8; Exod. 33:17; Num. 14:14; Deut. 11:12; Zech. 4:10
 2. hands – Exod. 15:17; Num. 11:23; Deut. 2:15
 3. arm – Exod. 6:6; 15:16; Num. 11:23; Deut. 4:34; 5:15
 4. ears – Num. 11:18; I Sam. 8:21; II Kgs. 19:16; Ps. 5:1; 10:17; 18:6
 5. face – Exod. 32:30; 33:11; Num. 6:25; Deut. 34:10; Ps. 114:7
 6. finger – Exod. 8:19; 31:18; Deut. 9:10; Ps. 8:3
 7. voice – Gen. 3:8,10; Exod. 15:26; 19:19; Deut. 26:17; 27:10
 8. feet – Exod. 24:10; Ezek. 43:7
 9. human form – Exod. 24:9-11; Ps. 47; Isa. 6:1; Ezek. 1:26
 10. the angel of the Lord – Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16; Exod. 3:4,13-21; 14:19; Jdgs. 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22
 - B. Physical actions
 1. speaking as the mechanism of creation – Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26
 2. walking (i.e., sound of) in Eden – Gen. 3:8; 18:33; Hab. 3:15
 3. closing the door of Noah’s ark – Gen. 7:16
 4. smelling sacrifices – Gen. 8:21; Lev. 26:31; Amos 5:21
 5. coming down – Gen. 11:5; 18:21; Exod. 3:8; 19:11,18,20
 6. burying Moses – Deut. 34:6
 - C. Human emotions (some examples)
 1. regret/repent – Gen. 6:6,7; Exod. 32:14; Jdgs. 2:18; I Sam. 15:29,35; Amos 7:3,6
 2. anger – Exod. 4:14; 15:7; Num. 11:10; 12:9; 22:22; 25:3,4; 32:10,13,14; Deut. 6:5; 7:4; 29:20
 3. jealousy – Exod. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; 32:16,21; Josh. 24:19
 4. loathe/abhor – Lev. 20:23; 26:30; Deut. 32:19
 - D. Family terms (some examples)
 1. father
 - a. of Israel – Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; Isa. 1:2; 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 31:9; Hos. 11:1
 - b. of the king – II Sam. 7:11-16; Ps. 2:7
 - c. metaphors of fatherly action – Deut. 1:31; 8:5; 32:6-14; Ps. 27:10; Pro. 3:12; Jer. 3:4,22; 31:20; Hosea 11:1-4; Mal. 3:17
 2. parent – Hosea 11:1-4
 3. mother – Ps. 27:10; Isa. 49:15; 66:9-13 (analogy to nursing mother)

4. young faithful lover – Hosea 1-3

II. Reasons for the use of this type of language

- A. It is a necessity for God to reveal Himself to human beings. The very pervasive concept of God as male is an anthropomorphism because God is spirit!
- B. God takes the most meaningful aspects of human life and uses them to reveal Himself to fallen humanity (father, mother, parent, lover)
- C. Though necessary at times (i.e., Gen. 3:8), God does not want to be limited to any physical form (cf. Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5)
- D. The ultimate anthropomorphism is the incarnation of Jesus! God became physical, touchable (cf. I John 1:1-3). The message of God became the Word of God (cf. John 1:1-18).

SPECIAL TOPIC: HAND (ILLUSTRATED FROM EZEKIEL)

The word “hand” (BDB 388) has several connotations and usages.

- 1. literal (i.e., hand of a human)
 - a. symbol of the entire person, 3:18; 18:8,17; 33:6,8
 - b. symbol of human weakness, 7:17,27; 21:7; 22:14
 - c. symbol of foreign enemies, 7:21; 11:9; 16:39; 21:31; 23:9,28; 28:10; 30:12; 34:27; 38:12; 39:23
 - d. literal hand, 8:11; 12:7; 16:11; 37:17,19,20
 - e. symbol of false leaders’ power, 13:21,22,23; 34:10
 - f. symbol of a nation, 23:31,37,42,45; 25:14; 27:15; 28:9; 30:10,22,24,25; 31:11; 39:3
- 2. anthropomorphic of deity
 - a. reception of revelation, 1:3; 3:14,22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1 (2:9 is another metaphor – scroll on a hand)
 - b. YHWH’s power in judgment, 6:14; 13:9; 14:9,13; 16:27; 20:33; 25:7,13,16; 35:3; 39:21
 - c. YHWH Himself (His personal Presence), 20:22
 - d. YHWH’s power to deliver, 20:34 (possibly key usage from Exodus, cf. 3:20; 4:17; 6:1; 7:19; 13:3)
- 3. anthropomorphic of *Cherubim*, 1:8; 8:3; 10:7,8,12,21
- 4. anthropomorphic of destroying angels, 9:1-2; 21:11
- 5. symbol of a pledge or oath, 17:18; 20:5(twice),6,15,23,28; 36:7; 44:12; 47:14
- 6. symbol of joy, 25:6
- 7. anthropomorphic of an angel, 40:3,5; 47:3

▣ **“Behold I put my words in your mouth”** It must be remembered that this was not Jeremiah’s message or thoughts, but God’s (cf. v. 2; Deut. 18:18).

1:10 There is a series of six INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS.

- 1. to pluck up – *Qal*, BDB 684, KB 737, cf. 31:28
- 2. to break down – *Qal*, BDB 683, KB 736, cf. 31:28
- 3. to destroy – *Hiphil*, BDB 1, KB 2, cf. 31:28

4. to overthrow – *Qal*, BDB 248, KB 256
5. to build – *Qal*, BDB 124, KB 139, cf. 24:6; 31:4,28; 33:7; 42:10
6. to plant – *Qal*, BDB 642, KB 694, cf. 24:6; 31:28; 32:41; 42:10

The first four speak of judgment, but the last two of renewal and restoration (cf. 18:7-10; 31:40). It is interesting that Jeremiah repeats this phrasing in 31:28, where he switches to an emphasis on restoration and deliverance. This phrase then becomes a literary marker for the two opposite prophecies Jeremiah is to speak to “the nations,” because YHWH is the true “King” of all nations (cf. I Sam. 8:4-9).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:11-12

¹¹The word of the LORD came to me saying, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” And I said, “I see a rod of an almond tree.” ¹²Then the LORD said to me, “You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it.”

1:11 “What do you see” There are two visions (vv. 11-12 and vv. 13-19). The time element is uncertain, but they are placed close to Jeremiah’s call.

▣ **“I see a rod of an almond tree”** The term “almond,” *shaqed* (BDB 1052), is related to the VERB “watching” in v. 12, *shoqed* (BDB 1052). In this culture the almond tree was called “the watching tree.” Apparently this vision was a way to emphasize the surety of God’s word through Jeremiah (i.e., “watching over” and “to perform it”).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:13-19

¹³The word of the LORD came to me a second time saying, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see a boiling pot, facing away from the north.” ¹⁴Then the LORD said to me, “Out of the north the evil will break forth on all the inhabitants of the land. ¹⁵For, behold, I am calling all the families of the kingdoms of the north,” declares the LORD; “and they will come and they will set each one his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all its walls round about and against all the cities of Judah. ¹⁶I will pronounce My judgments on them concerning all their wickedness, whereby they have forsaken Me and have offered sacrifices to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands. ¹⁷Now, gird up your loins and arise, and speak to them all which I command you. Do not be dismayed before them, or I will dismay you before them. ¹⁸Now behold, I have made you today as a fortified city and as a pillar of iron and as walls of bronze against the whole land, to the kings of Judah, to its princes, to its priests and to the people of the land. ¹⁹They will fight against you, but they will not overcome you, for I am with you to deliver you,” declares the LORD.

1:13 “a boiling pot, facing away from the north” Because of v. 14 it is obvious that this is referring to an invasion from the north. The term “north” became a proverb for “evil” and “invasion” (cf. 4:6; 6:1,22; 10:22; 25:9) because it was the only land route into Palestine from Mesopotamia because of the desert east of Palestine. The boiling pot pours south (i.e., the advancing Babylonian army).

There are three words in close proximity that may be sound plays.

1. נפוח – boiling pot
2. ופניו – facing away from
3. צפונה – the north

These kinds of sound plays are a characteristic of Hebrew poetry (see Appendix One)

1:15 This verse is describing the armies of Neo-Babylon, made up of many conscripts and mercenaries. They will come and lay siege to the walled cities of Palestine.

1:16 Judah’s fall came not because of the weakness of YHWH, their God, but their idolatry.

1. they have forsaken Me – *Qal* PERFECT, BDB 736 I, KB 806
2. they have offered (lit. “burned incense”) to other gods – *Piel* IMPERFECT, BDB 882, KB 1094
3. they have worshiped the work of their own hands – *Hishtaphel* IMPERFECT, BDB 1005, KB 295

1:17 “gird up your loins” This is a Hebrew idiom for “get ready for action” (cf. I Kgs. 18:46; II Kgs. 4:29; 9:1; Eph. 6:14; I Pet. 1:13), which would be similar to our “roll up your sleeves.”

Girding up his loins meant to pull one’s robe through the legs in front and tuck it into the sash, thereby forming tight-fitting shorts, ready for action. This is not the only preparatory action the prophet is told to do.

1. arise – *Qal* PERFECT, BDB 877, KB 1086
2. speak – *Piel* PERFECT, BDB 180, KB 210
3. do not be dismayed – *Qal* IMPERFECT negated (BDB 369, KB 365) used in a JUSSIVE sense

▣ **“and speak to them all which I command you”** This shows the purpose of the visions for Jeremiah in vv. 11-16. It was a divine revelatory communication.

▣ **“Do not be dismayed before them, or I will dismay you before them”** God’s service is a double-edged sword, privilege brings responsibility.

1:18 “I have made you today” God’s provision and protection are emphasized to the prophet.

1. as a fortified city
2. as a pillar of iron
3. as walls of bronze

We must not let the reception of our message affect its proclamation, once we know it is from God! Jeremiah was going to speak to the powerful and elite of his day.

1. to the kings of Judah
2. to its princes
3. to its priests
4. to the people of the land (wealthy land owners)

1:19 “They will fight against you” Judah will reject God’s message. God’s people have always rejected His message.

▣ **“I am . . . the LORD”** These are both from the same Hebrew VERB, “to be” (BDB 217, cf. Exod. 3:12-14). Their basic thrust is that God is the ever-living, only-living God. See Special Topic at 1:2. That great God is with Jeremiah (cf. v. 8).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How long did Jeremiah preach?
2. What does v. 5 have to say to the abortion issue of our day?
3. Why did Jeremiah try to excuse himself from God's will?
4. Explain the two visions and their purposes in vv. 11-16.

JEREMIAH 2

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Judah's Apostasy	God's Case Against Israel	The Apostasy of Israel	God's Care for Israel	The Earliest Preaching of Jeremiah: the Infidelity of Israel
2:1-3 (2b-3)	2:1-3 (2b-3)	2:1-3	2:1-3 (2b-3)	2:1-13 (2b-13)
			The Sin of Israel's Ancestors	
2:4-8 (5-8)	2:4-8 (5-8)	2:4-8 (5-8)	2:4-8 (5-8)	
			The LORD's Case Against His People	
2:9-13 (9-13)	2:9-13 (9-13)	2:9-13 (9-13)	2:9-13 (9-13)	
			The Results of Israel's Unfaithfulness	
2:14-19 (14-19)	2:14-19 (14-19)	2:14-19 (14-19)	2:14-19 (14-19)	2:14-19 (14-19)
			Israel Refuses to Worship the LORD	
2:20-25 (20-25)	2:20-22 (20-22)	2:20-25 (20-25)	2:20-25 (20-25)	2:20-25 (20-25)
	2:23-25 (23-25)		Israel Deserves To Be Punished	
2:26-28 (26-28)	2:26-28 (26-28)	2:26-28 (26-28)	2:26-27	2:26-32 (26-32)
			2:28-34a	
2:29-37 (29-37)	2:29-32 (29-32)	2:29-32 (29-32)		
	2:33-37 (33-37)	2:33-37 (33-37)		2:33-35 (33-35)
			2:34b-37	
				2:36-37 (36-37)

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BACKGROUND

- A. Chapters 2:1 through 6:30 possibly occur during the reign of Josiah (see Chart at Appendix Four #3).
- B. Chapter 2 is a classic example of Hebrew prophecy (see Appendix Two).
- C. The change in the PRONOUNS has caused some to assert that there are several sermons combined, but it seems that Jeremiah switches from speaking to the nation, to individuals and then back to the nation.
- D. Chapter 2 is structured in the imagery of a lawsuit (cf. vv. 4-8,9,12,29; Isa. 1:2,18; 3:13-15; Hos. 4:1; 12:20; Micah 6:2).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:1-3

**¹Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, ²“Go and proclaim in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD,
“I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth,
The love of your betrothals,
Your following after Me in the wilderness,
Through a land not sown.
³Israel was holy to the LORD,
The first of His harvest.
All who ate of it became guilty;
Evil came upon them,” declares the LORD.”**

2:1 This is a literary phrase in the prophets to designate YHWH's message. These were His words not Jeremiah's! It was a very specific revelation. The question is how much of the

1. genre (poetry)
2. vocabulary
3. imagery

is YHWH's and how much is Jeremiah's mind, education, and culture. We simply do not know, but by faith all believers assert it is God's self-revelation (i.e., "Thus says the LORD," v. 2). See Special Topic: Inspiration at 23:21-22.

▣ **"Go and proclaim"** One would think these are IMPERATIVES but they are not.

- go, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE
- proclaim, *Qal* PERFECT

▣ **"in the ears of Jerusalem"** Poetry condenses for emphasis. This phrase is addressing the people of Jerusalem, not a personification of the city. Also the message was for all Judeans not just the capital city.

Does this imply that Jeremiah is speaking only to Judah and that Israel has already been exiled (i.e., 722 B.C.)? It is hard/impossible to date the individual poems of Jeremiah. The word "Jerusalem" is missing in the LXX.

▣ In v. 2 YHWH speaks of the time of the beginning of Israel as a nation (i.e., the exodus and wilderness wandering period of 38 years).

1. "I remember" (anthropomorphic metaphor, see Special Topic at 1:9)
 - a. the devotion (*hesed*) of your youth (see Special Topic below)
 - b. the love of your betrothal
 - c. your following after Me in the wilderness

The rabbis called this period "the honeymoon" period between YHWH (husband) and Israel (wife). He provided their every need. See Special Topic below.

1. food (manna and quail)
2. water
3. clothing
4. shade
5. His personal guidance

In a sense this strophe is like Rev. 2:4, which describes how the OT people of God, like the church at Ephesus, had "left her first love" (i.e., beginning devotion and commitment).

SPECIAL TOPIC: LOVINGKINDNESS (*HESED*)

This term has a wide semantic field. The BDB characterizes it this way (338-339).

A. Used in connection to human beings

1. kindness to fellow men (e.g., I Sam. 20:14; II Chr. 24:22)
2. kindness toward the poor and needy (e.g., Micah 6:8)
3. affection (cf. Jer. 2:2; Hos. 6:4)
4. appearance (cf. Isa. 40:6)

B. Used in connection to God

1. covenant loyalty and love
 - a. "in redemption from enemies and troubles" (e.g., Jer. 31:3; Ezra 7:28; 9:9)
 - b. "in preservation of life from death" (e.g., Job 10:12; Ps. 86:13)
 - c. "in quickening of spiritual life" (e.g., Ps. 119:41,76,88,124,149,159)
 - d. "in redemption from sin" (cf. Ps. 25:7; 51:1)
 - e. "in keeping the covenants" (e.g., II Chr. 6:14; Neh. 1:5; 9:32)

2. describes a divine attribute (e.g., Exod. 34:6; Micah 7:20)
3. kindness of God
 - a. “abundant” (e.g., Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8)
 - b. “great in extent” (e.g., Exod. 20:6; Deut. 5:10; 7:9)
 - c. “everlasting” (e.g., I Chr. 16:34,41; II Chr. 5:13; 7:3,6; 20:21; Ezra 3:11)
4. deeds of kindness (e.g., II Chr. 6:42; Ps. 89:2; Isa. 55:3; 63:7; Lam. 3:22)

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE WILDERNESSES OF THE EXODUS

1. Wilderness of Shur – in northeast Egypt (e.g., Exod. 15:22)
2. Wilderness of Paran – central Sinai Peninsula (e.g., Gen. 21:21; Num. 10:12; 12:16; 13:3,26)
3. Wilderness of Sin – southern Sinai Peninsula (e.g., Exod. 16:1; 17:1; Num. 33:11,12, also called “wilderness of Sinai,” e.g., Exod. 19:1,2; Num. 1:1,19; 3:4; 9:1,5)
4. Wilderness of Zin – southern Canaan (e.g., Num. 13:21; 20:1; 27:14; 33:36; 34:3; Deut. 32:51)

2:3 “Israel” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ISRAEL (the name)

- I. The Name’s meaning is uncertain (BDB 975).
 - A. *El* Persists
 - B. Let *El* Persist (JUSSIVE)
 - C. *El* Preserves
 - D. Let *El* Contend
 - E. *El* Strives
 - F. He who strives with God (Gen. 32:28)
- II. Usages in the OT
 - A. Jacob’s name (supplanter, heel grabber, BDB 784, cf. Gen. 25:26) is changed after wrestling with the spiritual personage at the river Jabbok (cf. Gen. 32:22-32; Exod. 32:13). Often the meanings of Hebrew names are sound plays, not etymologies (cf. 32:28). Israel becomes his name (e.g., Gen. 35:10).
 - B. It came to be used as a collective name for all of his twelve sons (e.g., Gen. 32:32; 49:16; Exod. 1:7; 4:22; 28:11; Deut. 3:18; 10:6).
 - C. It came to designate the nation formed by the twelve tribes before the exodus (cf. Gen. 47:27; Exod. 4:22; 5:2) and after (cf. Deut. 1:1; 18:6; 33:10).
 - D. After the united monarchy of Saul, David, and Solomon the tribes split under Rehoboam (cf. I Kings 12).
 1. the distinction starts even before the official split (e.g., II Sam. 3:10; 5:5; 20:1; 24:9; I Kgs. 1:35; 4:20)
 2. designates the northern tribes until the fall of Samaria to Assyria in 722 B.C. (cf. II Kings 17).
 - E. Used of Judah in a few places (e.g., Isaiah 1; Micah 1:15-16).

- F. After the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles it became again the collective name for all of Jacob's descendants (e.g., Isa. 17:7,9; Jer. 2:4; 50:17,19).
- G. Used of laity in contradistinction from priests (cf. I Chr. 9:2; Ezra 10:25; Neh. 11:3).

▣ **“holy to the LORD”** For “holy” see Special Topic below. For YHWH (Lord) see Special Topic at 1:2.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HOLY

- I. The Old Testament
 - A. The etymology of the term *kadosh* (BDB 872) is uncertain, possibly Canaanite. It is possible that part of the root (i.e., *kd*) means “to divide.” This is the source of the popular definition “separated (from Canaanite culture, cf. Deut. 7:6; 14:2,21; 26:19) for God’s use.”
 - B. It relates to God’s presence in things, places, times, and persons. It is not used in Genesis, but becomes common in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.
 - C. In the Prophetic literature (esp. Isaiah and Hosea) the personal element previously present, but not emphasized comes to the fore. It becomes a way of designating the essence of God (cf. Isa. 6:3). God is holy. His name representing His character is Holy. His people who are to reveal His character to a needy world are holy (if they obey the covenant in faith).
 - D. God’s mercy and love are inseparable from the theological concepts of covenants, justice, and essential character. Herein is the tension in God toward an unholy, fallen, rebellious humanity. There is a very interesting article on the relationship between God as “merciful” and God as “holy” in Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 112-113.
- II. The New Testament
 - A. The writers of the NT (except Luke) are Hebrew thinkers, but are influenced by Koine Greek (i.e., the Septuagint). It is the Greek translation of the OT, not Classical Greek literature, thought, or religion that controls their vocabulary.
 - B. Jesus is holy because He is of God and like God (cf. Luke 1:35; 4:34; Acts 3:14; 4:27,30). He is the Holy and Righteous One (cf. Acts 3:14; 22:14). Jesus is holy because He is sinless (cf. John 8:46; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; I Pet. 1:19; 2:22; I John 3:5).
 - C. Because God is holy, His children are to be holy (cf. Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7,26; Matt. 5:48; I Pet. 1:16). Because Jesus is holy, His followers are to be holy (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; II Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; I Thess. 3:13; 4:3; I Pet. 1:15). Christians are saved to serve in Christlikeness (holiness).

▣ **“The first of His harvest”** This imagery is an allusion to the offering of the first fruits which symbolized YHWH’s ownership of the whole crop (cf. Lev. 23:10-11; I Cor. 15:20; James 1:18). Here the imagery turns negative. The nations attacked and rejected YHWH by rejecting His chosen vessel of revelation, Israel.

▣ **“ate”** This term (*Qal* PARTICIPLE, BDB 37, KB 46) was used in Akkadian for an “illegal invasion,” but here it denotes the nations of Palestine’s rejection and attack on Israel. This phrase shows Israel’s specialness (cf. Gen. 12:3; 27:29). She was created and called for a larger purpose (see Special Topic at 1:5).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:4-8

⁴Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel.

⁵Thus says the LORD,

“What injustice did your fathers find in Me,

That they went far from Me

And walked after emptiness and became empty?

⁶They did not say, ‘Where is the LORD

Who brought us up out of the land of Egypt,

Who led us through the wilderness,

Through a land of deserts and of pits,

Through a land of drought and of deep darkness,

Through a land that no one crossed

And where no man dwelt?’

⁷I brought you into the fruitful land

To eat its fruit and its good things.

But you came and defiled My land,

And My inheritance you made an abomination.

⁸The priests did not say, ‘Where is the LORD?’

And those who handle the law did not know Me;

The rulers also transgressed against Me,

And the prophets prophesied by Baal

And walked after things that did not profit.”

2:4 “Hear” This is the theologically significant VERB *Shema* (*Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 1033, KB 1570). Its basic meaning is “to hear, so as to do.” It has great importance in Deut. 4:1; 5:1; 6:3,4. Jeremiah was deeply influenced by Deuteronomy.

▣ **“O house of Jacob. . .families of the house of Israel”** These are parallel phrases used of all the seed of Abraham, after the split of the United Monarchy (Saul, David, Solomon) in 922 B.C. The northern ten tribes are called Israel, Ephraim, or Samaria. This has caused great confusion in the use of the term “Israel” (see Special Topic at 2:3).

2:5 “What injustice did your fathers find in Me” This is the literary imagery of a court scene (cf. vv. 4-8). YHWH’s true nature is expressed in Deut. 32:4. YHWH asked this same question in Micah 6:3. He was not the problem, they were!

▣ **“they went far from Me”** The VERB (*Qal* PERFECT, BDB 934, KB 1221) is in direct contradiction to “follow after Me” in v. 2.

Also notice the personal element. Not just follow my laws but follow “Me”! Biblical faith is a personal faith, in a personal God, on a daily moment-by-moment basis. It is a faith relationship, but it is personal (i.e., prayer, daily trust, and obedience to the known will of God).

▣ **“walked”** This (BDB 229, KB 246) is a biblical metaphor of lifestyle choices and actions.

▣ “emptiness and became empty” The NOUN (BDB 210 I) and VERB (*Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 211, KB 236) are put together for emphasis. This refers to idolatry (cf. 8:19; 10:3-5,8-10,14-15; 16:19-20; 51:17-18).

2:6-7 These verses refer to the exodus and wilderness wandering period.

Notice the things YHWH did for them as He fulfilled His promise/prophecy to Abraham (cf. Gen. 15:12-21).

1. brought us up out of the land of Egypt
2. led us through the wilderness
 - a. a land of deserts and pits (natural holes or steep ravines)
 - b. a land no one crossed (hyperbole)
 - c. a land of drought and deep darkness (i.e., “shadow of death,” cf. 13:16; Ps. 23:4)
 - d. a land where no one dwelt (symbol of a curse)
3. brought you into the fruitful land (i.e., Palestine/Canaan)

The exact date, route, and number of the Exodus is uncertain.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DATE OF THE EXODUS

There have been two scholarly opinions on the date of the Exodus.

- A. from I Kings 6:1, which says, “480 years from the Exodus to the building of Solomon’s Temple”
 1. Solomon began to reign in 970 B.C. This is figured by using the battle of *Qarqar* (853 B.C.) As a certain starting date.
 2. The Temple was built in his fourth year (965 B.C.), and the Exodus occurred about 1445/6 B.C.
 3. This would make it occur in the 18th Egyptian Dynasty.
 - a. The Pharaoh of the oppression would be Thutmose III (1490-1436 B.C.).
 - b. The Pharaoh of the Exodus would be Amenhotep II (1436-1407 B.C.).
 - (1) Some believe evidence from Jericho based on the fact that no diplomatic correspondence occurred between Jericho and Egypt during the reign of Amenhotep III (1413-1377 B.C.).
 - (2) The *Amarna* texts record diplomatic correspondence written on ostraca about the *Habiru* overrunning the land of Canaan in the reign of Amenhotep III. Therefore, the Exodus occurred in the reign of Amenhotep II.
 - (3) The period of the Judges is not long enough if the 13th century is the date of the Exodus.
 4. The possible problems with these dates.
 - a. The Septuagint (LXX) has 440 years, not 480.
 - b. It is possible that 480 years is representative of twelve generations of forty years each, therefore, a figurative number.
 - c. There are twelve generations of priests from Aaron to Solomon (cf. I Chr. 6), then twelve from Solomon to the Second Temple. The Jews, like the Greeks, reckoned a generation as forty years. So, there is a 480 year period back and forward (symbolic use of numbers, cf. Bimson’s *Redating the Exodus and Conquest*).
 5. There are three other texts that mention dates.
 - a. Genesis 15:13,16 (cf. Acts 7:6), 400 years of bondage
 - b. Exodus 12:40-41 (cf. Gal. 3:17)
 - (1) MT - 430 years of sojourn in Egypt

- (2) LXX - 215 years of sojourn in Egypt
- c. Judges 11:26 - 300 years between Jephthah's day and the conquest (supports 1445 date)
- d. Acts 13:19 - exodus, wanderings, and conquest - 450 years
- 6. The author of Kings used specific historical references and did not round numbers (Edwin Thiele, *A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings*, pp. 83-85).
- B. The tentative evidence from archaeology seems to point toward a date of 1290 B.C. or the nineteenth Egyptian Dynasty.
 - 1. Joseph was able to visit his father and Pharaoh in this same day. The first native Pharaoh who began to move the capital of Egypt from Thebes back to the Nile Delta, to a place called Avaris/Zoan/Tanis, which was the old Hyksos capital, was Seti I (1309-1290 B.C.). He would be the Pharaoh of the oppression.
 - a. This seems to fit two pieces of information about the Hyksos reign of Egypt.
 - (1) a stele has been found from the time of Ramesis II that commemorates the founding of Avaris four hundred years earlier (1700's B.C. by the Hyksos)
 - (2) The prophecy of Gen. 15:13 speaks of a 400 year oppression.
 - b. This implies that Joseph's rise to power was under a Hyksos (Semitic) Pharaoh. The new Egyptian dynasty is referred to in Exod. 1:8.
 - 2. The Hyksos, an Egyptian word meaning "rulers of foreign lands," who were a group of non-Egyptian Semitic rulers, controlled Egypt during the 15th and 16th Dynasties (1720-1570 B.C.). Some want to relate them to Joseph's rise to power. If we subtract the 430 years of Exod. 12:40 from 1720 B.C., we get a date of about 1290 B.C.
 - 3. Seti I's son was Rameses II (1290-1224 B.C.). This name is mentioned as one of the store cities built by the Hebrew slaves, Exod. 1:11. Also this same district in Egypt near Goshen is called Ramesis, Gen. 47:11. Avaris/Zoan/Tanis was known as "House of Rameses" from 1300-1100 B.C.
 - 4. Thutmose III was known as a great builder, as was Rameses II.
 - 5. Rameses II had forty-seven daughters living in separate palaces.
 - 6. Archaeology has shown that most of the large walled cities of Canaan (Hazor, Debir, Lachish) were destroyed and rapidly rebuilt around 1250 B.C. In allowing for a thirty-eight year wilderness wandering period, this fits a date of 1290 B.C. Archaeology has found a reference to the Israelites being in southern Canaan on a memorial stele of Rameses' successor, Merneptah (1224-1214 B.C., cf. The Stele of Merneptah, dated 1220 B.C.).
 - 7. Edom and Moab seem to have attained strong national identity in the late 1300's B.C. These countries were not organized in the fifteenth century (Glueck).
 - 9. The book, *Redating the Exodus and Conquest* by John J. Bimson, published by the University of Sheffield, 1978, argues against all of the archaeological evidence for an early date.

2:7 Palestine of this period was a very fertile place (cf. Num. 13:23-24,27; Deut. 8:1-9; 11:10-12).

▣ **"defiled My land"** The VERB (*Piel* IMPERFECT, BDB 379, KB 375) is used of

- 1. sexual defilement – Ezek. 18:6,11,15
- 2. murder – Num. 35:29-34; Deut. 21:22-23

3. idolatry – Lev. 20:3; Ezek. 23:38; 36:17,18
4. ceremonial uncleanness – Lev. 15:31; Num. 19:13,20

Notice this is God’s land and He will not tolerate those who live inappropriately (cf. Lev. 18:24-30). As He removed the Canaanites (cf. Gen. 15:16) He will remove Abraham’s seed if they reject Him (cf. 6a, 8a).

▣ **“abomination”** This term (BDB 1072) appears often in Jeremiah (cf. 2:7; 6:15; 7:10; 8:12; 16:18; 32:35; 44:4,22). See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ABOMINATION

“Abominations” (BDB 1072) can refer to several things:

1. things related to Egyptians:
 - a. they loathe eating with Hebrews, Gen. 43:32
 - b. they loathe shepherds, Gen. 46:34
 - c. they loathe Hebrew sacrifices, Exod. 8:26
2. things related to YHWH’s feelings toward Israel’s actions:
 - a. unclean food, Deut. 14:2
 - b. idols, Deut. 7:25; 18:9,12; 27:15
 - c. pagan spiritists, Deut. 18:9,12
 - d. burning children to *Molech*, Lev. 18:21-22; 20:2-5; Deut. 12:31; 18:9,12; II Kgs. 16:3; 17:17-18; 21:6; Jer. 32:35
 - e. Canaanite idolatry, Deut. 13:14; 17:4; 20:17-18; 32:16; Isa. 44:19; Jer. 16:18; Ezek. 5:11; 6:9; 11:18,21; 14:6; 16:50; 18:12
 - f. sacrificing blemished animals, Deut. 17:1 (cf. 15:19-23; Mal. 1:12-13)
 - g. sacrificing to idols, Jer. 44:4-5
 - h. remarrying a woman who you have previously divorced, Deut. 24:2
 - i. women wearing man’s clothes (possibly Canaanite worship), Deut. 22:5
 - j. money from cultic prostitution (Canaanite worship), Deut. 23:18
 - k. Israel’s idolatry, Jer. 2:7
 - l. homosexuality (possibly Canaanite worship), Lev. 18:22; 20:13
 - m. use of false weights, Deut. 25:16; Pro. 11:1; 20:23
 - n. food laws violated (possibly Canaanite worship), Deut. 14:3
3. Examples in Wisdom Literature:
 - a. Proverbs 3:32; 6:16-19; 11:1,20; 12:22; 15:8,9,26; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10,23; 21:27; 28:9
 - b. Psalms 88:8
 - c. Job 30:10
4. There is a recurrent eschatological phrase “abomination of desolation,” which is used in Daniel (cf. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). It seems to refer to three different occasions (multiple fulfillment prophecy):
 - a. Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the interbiblical Maccabean period (cf. I Macc. 1:54,59; II Macc. 6:1-2)
 - b. the Roman general (later Emperor), Titus, who sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in A.D. 70 (cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20)

- c. an end-time world leader called “the man of lawlessness” (cf. II Thess. 2:3-4) or “the Antichrist” (cf. I John 2:18; 4:3; Revelation 13)

2:8 What a terrible condemnation of the leadership of God’s covenant people.

1. priests (BDB 463) – those who administrate the temple and sacrificial system
2. those who handle the law – this would refer to Levites who taught and interpreted the law of Moses to the people (i.e., Nehemiah 9, later “scribes,” cf. 8:8)
3. the rulers (lit. “shepherds,” BDB 944 I) – this refers to leadership, civil or religious (cf. Num. 27:17; I Kgs. 22:17; Isa. 44:28; 56:11; Jer. 3:15; 23:4; Ezekiel 34)
4. the prophets

Notice their sins.

1. questioned the presence of YHWH with them (lit. “where is the YHWH,” cf. v. 6a)
2. did not have a personal faith relationship with YHWH (lit. “did not know Me,” see Special Topic at 1:5)
3. they transgressed His law
4. prophesied by *Ba’al* (i.e., fertility worship, cf. v. 20; 23:13)
5. walked after things that did not profit (i.e., adultery, cf. 16:19; Hab. 2:18)

▣ **“things that did not profit”** In Hebrew poetry one looks for several markers.

1. Hebrew parallelism
2. Hebrew imagery
3. Hebrew sound plays
4. parallel passage from Israel’s history/wisdom literature, or other prophets

It is surely possible that an intended sound play is here (v. 8).

1. profitless – יעל
2. *Ba’al* – בעל

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:9-13

⁹“Therefore I will yet contend with you,” declares the LORD,

“And with your sons’ sons I will contend.

¹⁰For cross to the coastlands of Kittim and see,

And send to Kedar and observe closely

And see if there has been such *a thing* as this!

¹¹Has a nation changed gods

When they were not gods?

But My people have changed their glory

For that which does not profit.

¹²Be appalled, O heavens, at this,

And shudder, be very desolate,” declares the LORD.

¹³“For My people have committed two evils:

They have forsaken Me,

The fountain of living waters,

To hew for themselves cisterns,

Broken cisterns

That can hold no water.”

2:9 “contend” This VERB repeated twice (*Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 936, KB 1224, cf. v. 29) refers to a legal lawsuit (cf. v. 35). This literary structure is one of three used by Prophets to communicate their message (lament, legal case, promise oracle).

▣ **“with your sons’ sons I will contend”** This shows that lifestyle priorities are passed on to our children with the result of blessing or cursing (cf. Exod. 34:7; Deut. 5:9). Just an additional thought, I so rejoice in Deut. 7:9, where God’s love and mercy extends to the “thousand generations” of those who love and trust Him.

2:10 Notice the series of IMPERATIVES.

1. cross – *Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 716, KB 778
2. see – *Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 906, KB 1157
3. send – *Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 1018, KB 1511
4. observe closely – *Hithpolel* IMPERATIVE, BDB 106, KB 122
5. see – same as #2

▣ **“Kittim”** This refers to the original Phoenician settlement on Cyprus, but came to refer to all of the islands to the west of Palestine.

▣ **“Kedar”** This was an Arab tribe to the east. This entire phrase is used metaphorically for “from east to west.” The whole point of the verse is “Ask anyone!” Let anyone be a witness about the things of vv. 11-13.

2:11 What a powerful question. Israel had abandoned the only true God and went after the false, vain, non-existent idols of the surrounding pagan nations (cf. v. 13).

▣ **“their glory”** The NKJV and NRSV capitalize “glory” (BDB 458), thereby showing it is a characteristic title for God (cf. Rom. 1:23). He was Israel’s glory! When they reject Him they have no glory (cf. Hos. 4:7).

▣ **“For that which does not profit”** If v. 8, lines 3 and 4, are parallel, then this may refer to *Ba’al* worship (see Special Topic at 2:20).

2:12 Notice that YHWH directs the oldest witness (O heavens, usually paired with O earth) to

1. be appalled – *Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 1030, KB 1563, cf. 4:9; 18:16; 19:8; 49:17; 50:13; Ezek. 27:35; 32:10
2. shudder – *Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 972, KB 1343, cf. Ezek. 27:35; 32:10
3. be very desolate, – *Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 351 II, KB 349 plus “utterly,” BDB 547, cf. Isa. 60:12; literally “dry up,” cf. Isa. 44:27

▣ **“O heavens”** The heavens are often used as witnesses in God’s lawsuit (cf. Deut. 4:26; 30:19; 32:1). Notice that YHWH directs the oldest witness (O heavens, usually paired with O earth) to

1. be appalled – *Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 1030, KB 1563, cf. 4:9; 18:16; 19:8; 49:17; 50:13; Ezek. 27:35; 32:10
2. shudder – *Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 972, KB 1343, cf. Ezek. 27:35; 32:10

3. be very desolate, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 351 II, KB 349 plus “utterly,” BDB 547, cf. Isa. 60:12; literally “dry up,” cf. Isa. 44:27

2:13 “fountain of living waters” This is another descriptive title for God (cf. 17:13; Ps. 36:9; John 4:10-14; 7:38-39; Rev. 21:6).

▣ **“To hew for themselves”** This is the problem of fallen humanity, even covenant humanity. They try to run their own lives (cf. vv. 17,19). Their failure will open the door for YHWH’s mercy and grace in the “new covenant” of Jer. 31:31-34 (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:14-19

¹⁴**“Is Israel a slave? Or is he a homeborn servant?**

Why has he become a prey?

¹⁵**The young lions have roared at him,**

They have roared loudly.

And they have made his land a waste;

His cities have been destroyed, without inhabitant.

¹⁶**Also the men of Memphis and Tahpanhes**

Have shaved the crown of your head.

¹⁷**Have you not done this to yourself**

By your forsaking the LORD your God

When He led you in the way?

¹⁸**But now what are you doing on the road to Egypt,**

To drink the waters of the Nile?

Or what are you doing on the road to Assyria,

To drink the waters of the Euphrates?

¹⁹**Your own wickedness will correct you,**

And your apostasies will reprove you;

Know therefore and see that it is evil and bitter

For you to forsake the LORD your God,

And the dread of Me is not in you,” declares the LORD God of hosts.

2:14 Another question starts a new strophe. This question is answered by another rhetorical question in v. 17. Israel is reaping what she sowed (cf. 17:10; 32:19). She is no longer what she was when she was formed (i.e., vv. 2-3, devoted, loving, holy to the Lord, the first of His harvest). Now she is a slave who has become a prey (i.e., of other nations and their false gods).

2:15 “young lions” This is a metaphor of power and strength used of the nations. Young lions were well known top predators. Here it symbolized Israel’s invading enemies. Without her God, she was vulnerable and weak! The false gods who could not see or hear, could not help!



NASB “destroyed”

NKJV, NRSV “burned”

TEV, NJB “in ruins”
JPSOA “desolate”
REB “razed to the ground”

The MT has “burned” (נצתה, *Niphal* PERFECT, BDB 428, KB 429, but the Masoretic scholars suggested נצתו), which would be translated “are in ruins.” Both options fit the context (see above line which is in synonymous parallelism).

2:16 “Memphis and Tahpanhes” These were ancient capitals of Egypt (cf. 44:1). Each city in Egypt had its own patron deity.



NASB, NRSV “shaved”
NKJV, NJB “broken”
TEV, NET “cracked”
JPSOA “lay bare”
REB “will break”

The VERB “break,” ירעיק, BDB 949, KB 1270, is from root רעע II. The other option, “shave,” וערוך, from רעה, BDB 944, KB 1258, meaning “to graze” (cf. 47:5; 48:37; Isa. 7:20), would denote a sign of slavery. The UBS Text Project gives option #1 a B rating (p. 176).

2:17 See note at v. 13d. Line 3 of the MT is printed in the NASB. The Septuagint has a totally different line. It is not a textual corruption, but a separate tradition. The DSS have Hebrew copies of both the MT form of Jeremiah and the radically shorter LXX version.

Here is the LXX:

“Has not your abandoning of Me brought about these things for you?” says the Lord GOD.”

2:18 “on the road to Egypt. . . Assyria” Israel tried to find security themselves by political alliances against Babylon instead of with faith in YHWH. These alliances included involvement (ceremonies) with their national idols!

▣ **“To drink the water”** This repeated VERBAL (*Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, BDB 1059, KB 1667) is a metaphor used as voluntary service of another. In a sense this was “self-imposed” exile!

2:19 Like vv. 13d and 17, this verse emphasizes the terrible results of Israel’s choices (cf. 4:18)! Notice how “wickedness” (BDB 948) and “apostasies” (BDB 1000, cf. 3:6,8,11,14) will reprove and correct.

YHWH responds with two *Qal* IMPERATIVES (i.e., “know” and “see”). They will realize the consequences of their choices.

1. left YHWH
2. embraced idolatry

SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY (*APHISTĒMI*)

This Greek term *aphistēmi* has a wide semantic field. However, the English term “apostasy” is derived from this term and prejudices its usage to modern readers. Context, as always, is the key, not a preset definition.

This is a compound term from the preposition *apo*, which means “from” or “away from” and *histēmi*, “to sit,” “to stand,” or “to fix.” Notice the following (non-theological) usages:

1. to remove physically
 - a. from the Temple, Luke 2:37
 - b. from a house, Mark 13:34
 - c. from a person, Mark 12:12; 14:50; Acts 5:38
 - d. from all things, Matt. 19:27,29
2. to remove politically, Acts 5:37
3. to remove relationally, Acts 5:38; 15:38; 19:9; 22:29
4. to remove legally (divorce), Deut. 24:1,3 (LXX) and NT, Matt. 5:31; 19:7; Mark 10:4; I Cor. 7:11
5. to remove a debt, Matt. 18:24
6. to show unconcern by leaving, Matt. 4:20; 22:27; John 4:28; 16:32
7. to show concern by not leaving, John 8:29; 14:18
8. to allow or permit, Matt. 13:30; 19:14; Mark 14:6; Luke 13:8

In a theological sense the VERB also has a wide usage:

1. to cancel, pardon, remit the guilt of sin, Exod.32:32 (LXX); Num. 14:19; Job 42:10 and NT, Matt. 6:12,14-15; Mark 11:25-26
2. to refrain from sin, II Tim. 2:19
3. to neglect by moving away from
 - a. the Law, Matt. 23:23; Acts 21:21
 - b. the faith, Ezek. 20:8 (LXX); Luke 8:13; II Thess. 2:3; I Tim. 4:1; Heb. 2:13

Modern believers ask many theological questions that the NT writers would have never thought about. One of these would relate to the modern tendency to separate faith from faithfulness.

There are persons in the Bible who are involved in the people of God and something happens.

I. Old Testament

- A. Those who heard the twelve (ten) spies' report, Numbers 14 (cf. Heb. 3:16-19)
- B. Korah, Numbers 16
- C. Eli's sons, I Samuel 2, 4
- D. Saul, I Samuel 11-31
- E. False prophets (examples)
 1. Deut. 13:1-5 18:19-22 (ways to know a false prophet)
 2. Jeremiah 28
 3. Ezekiel 13:1-7
- F. False prophetesses
 1. Ezekiel 13:17
 2. Nehemiah 6:14
- G. Evil leaders of Israel (examples)
 1. Jeremiah 5:30-31; 8:1-2; 23:1-4
 2. Ezekiel 22:23-31
 3. Micah 3:5-12

II. New Testament

A. This Greek term is literally *apostasize*. The Old and New Testaments both confirm an intensification of evil and false teaching before the Second Coming (cf. Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22; Acts 20:29,30; II Thess. 2:9-12; II Tim. 4:4). This Greek term may reflect Jesus' words in the Parable of the Soils found in Matthew 13; Mark 4; and Luke 8. These false teachers are obviously not Christians, but they came from within (cf. Acts 20:29-30; I John 2:19); however, they are able to seduce and capture immature believers (cf. Heb. 3:12).

The theological question is were the false teachers ever believers? This is difficult to answer because there were false teachers in the local churches (cf. I John 2:18-19). Often our theological or denominational traditions answer this question without reference to specific Bible texts (except the proof-text method of quoting a verse out of context to supposedly prove one's bias).

B. Apparent faith

1. Judas, John 17:12
2. Simon Magnus, Acts 8
3. Those spoken of in Matt. 7:13-23
4. Those spoken of in Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 8
5. The Jews of John 8:31-59
6. Alexander and Hymenaeus, I Tim. 1:19-20
7. Those of I Tim. 6:21
8. Hymenaeus and Philetus, II Tim. 2:16-18
9. Demas, II Tim. 4:10
10. False teachers, II Peter 2:19-22; Jude vv. 12-19
11. antichrists, I John 2:18-19

C. Fruitless faith

1. I Corinthians 3:10-15
2. II Peter 1:8-11

We rarely think about these texts because our systematic theology (Calvinism, Arminianism, etc.) dictates the mandated response. Please do not pre-judge me because I bring up this subject. My concern is proper hermeneutical procedure. We must let the Bible speak to us and not try to mold it into a preset theology. This is often painful and shocking because much of our theology is denominational, cultural or relational (parent, friend, pastor), not biblical. Some who are in the People of God turn out to not be in the People of God (e.g., Rom. 9:6).

▣ “God of hosts” See Special Topic at 1:2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:20-25

²⁰“For long ago I broke your yoke
And tore off your bonds;
But you said, ‘I will not serve!’
For on every high hill
And under every green tree
You have lain down as a harlot.

**²¹Yet I planted you a choice vine,
A completely faithful seed.
How then have you turned yourself before Me
Into the degenerate shoots of a foreign vine?**

**²²Although you wash yourself with lye
And use much soap,
The stain of your iniquity is before Me,” declares the Lord GOD.**

**²³“How can you say, ‘I am not defiled, I have not gone after the Baals’?
Look at your way in the valley!
Know what you have done!**

**You are a swift young camel entangling her ways,
²⁴A wild donkey accustomed to the wilderness,
That sniffs the wind in her passion.
In *the time of* her heat who can turn her away?
All who seek her will not become weary;
In her month they will find her.**

**²⁵Keep your feet from being unshod
And your throat from thirst;
But you said, ‘It is hopeless!
No! For I have loved strangers,
And after them I will walk.’”**

2:20-25 The UBS *Handbook on Jeremiah* lists the metaphors used to describe Israel’s apostasy (p. 69).

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. a rebellious animal, v. 20a | 5. a wild camel in heat, vv. 23-24 |
| 2. a prostitute, v. 20b | 6. a fool bent on self-destruction, v. 25 |
| 3. a worthless vine from good stock, v. 21 | 7. a thief, v. 26 |
| 4. a guilty person who cannot be washed, v. 22 | |

2:20 The first two parallel lines speak of the Exodus, where God formed Israel into a nation (cf. “planted” in v. 21) as He promised in Gen. 15:13-16. There are several other texts that use slavery imagery (cf. Lev. 26:13; Isa. 52:2-3; Jer. 30:8; Ezek. 34:27).

Israel traded the slavery of Egypt for the slavery of Mesopotamia!

▣ Lines 4-6 refer to the pervasiveness of the fertility cult of *Ba’al* and *Asherah* (cf. 3:2,6; 17:2; Deut. 16:21; Hos. 4:11-14).

SPECIAL TOPIC: FERTILITY WORSHIP OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

- I. Reasons For
 - A. Ancient humans began as hunters-gatherers, but as nomadic life became settled, the need for crops and herds developed.
 - B. AN E inhabitants were vulnerable to the forces of nature. As civilizations developed around the major bodies of fresh water they became dependant on the regular order of the seasons.

C. The forces of nature became gods who needed to be supplicated and controlled.

II. Where and Why

A. Fertility religions developed in

1. Egypt (Nile)
2. Mesopotamia (Tigris and Euphrates)
3. Canaan (Jordan)

B. There is a basic commonality among the fertility cults of the Ancient Near East.

C. The changing and unpredictable seasons and weather conditions caused the development of myths using human/divine analogies as the basis of life in the spiritual realm and on earth.

III. Who and How

A. Who (the gods and goddesses)

1. Egypt
 - a. Isis (female)
 - b. Osiris (male)
2. Mesopotamia
 - a. Ishtar/Inanna (female)
 - b. Tammuz/Dumuzi (male)
3. Canaan
 - a. Ba'al (male)
 - b. Asherah, Astarte, Anath (female)

B. Each of these pairs were mythologized in similar ways

1. one dies
2. the other restores
3. the pattern of dying and rising gods mimic the annual cycles of nature

C. Imitation magic saw human sexual unions (i.e., marriage of the gods) as a way of insuring fertility of crops, herds, and people

IV. The Israelites

A. YHWH's people were warned (i.e., Leviticus and Deuteronomy) to avoid the fertility cults (especially of Canaan).

B. These cults were very popular because of the superstition of human beings and the added incentive of sexual activity.

C. Idolatry involves the blessing of life to be sought in cultic or ritual ways instead of a personal faith and trust in YHWH.

V. Suggested Reading

A. W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*

B. J. H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*

C. James G. Frazer

1. *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*
2. *Folklore in the Old Testament*
3. *The Worship of Nature*

D. C. H. Gordon, *Before the Bible*

E. S. N. Kramer, *Mythologies of the Ancient World*

2:21 “choice vine” This is *sorek* (BDB 977 I), which means “red grape.” This was one of the best varieties of grapes (cf. Isa. 5:1-7). But Israel became idolatrous and “turned yourself” (*Niphal* PERFECT, BDB 245, KB 253) “into the degenerate shoots of a foreign vine.”

2:22 God’s people needed a spiritual cleaning (cf. 4:14; 13:27).

1. lye (BDB 684) refers to a mineral alkali

2. soap (BDB 141) refers to an alkali potash soap (cf. Mal. 3:2)

This, of course, is figurative language for “repentance.”

SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

This concept is crucial but difficult to define. Most of us have a definition which comes from our denominational affiliation. However, usually a “set” theological definition is imposed on several Hebrew (and Greek) words which do not specifically imply this “set” definition. It must be remembered that NT authors (except Luke) were Hebrew thinkers using Koine Greek terms, so the place to start is the Hebrew terms themselves, of which there are primarily two.

1. *nhm* (BDB 636, KB 688)

2. *swb* (BDB 996, KB 1427)

The first, *nhm*, which originally seems to have meant to draw a deep breath, is used in several senses.

a. “rest” or “comfort” (e.g., Gen. 5:29; 24:67; 27:42; 37:35; 38:12; 50:2; often used in names, cf. II Kgs. 15:14; I Chr. 4:19; Neh. 1:1; 7:7; Nahum 1:1)

b. “grieved” (e.g., Gen. 6:6,7)

c. “changed mind” (e.g., Exod. 13:17; 32:12,14; Num. 23:19)

d. “compassion” (e.g., Deut. 32:36)

Notice that all of these involve deep emotion! Here is the key: deep feelings that lead to action. This change of action is often directed at other persons, but also toward God. It is this change of attitude and action toward God that infuses this term with such theological significance. But here care must be exercised. God is said to “repent” (cf. Gen. 6:6,7; Exod. 32:14; Jdgs. 2:18; I Sam. 15:11,35; Ps. 106:45), but this does not result from sorrow over sin or error, but a literary way of showing God’s compassion and care (cf. Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29; Ps. 110:4; Jer. 4:27-28; Ezek.24:14). Due punishment for sin and rebellion is forgiven if the sinner truly turns away from his/her/their sin and turns to God.

This term has a wide semantical field. Context is crucial in determining its intended meaning.

The second term, *swb*, means “to turn” (turn from, turn back, turn to). If it is true that the two covenant requirements are “repentance” and “faith” (e.g., Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:4,15; 2:17; Luke 3:3,8; 5:32; 13:3,5; 15:7; 17:3), then *nhm* refers to the intense feelings of recognizing one’s sin and turning from it, while *swb* would refer to the turning from sin to the turning to God (one example of these two spiritual actions is Amos 4:6-11, “you have not returned to Me” [five times] and Amos 5:4,6,14, “seek Me. . .seek the Lord. . .seek good and not evil”).

The first great example of the power of repentance is David's sin with Bathsheba (cf. II Samuel 12; Psalm 32,51). There were continuing consequences for David, his family, and Israel, but David was restored to fellowship with God! Even wicked Manasseh can repent and be forgiven (cf. II Chr. 33:12-13).

Both of these terms are used in parallel in Ps. 90:13. There must be a recognition of sin and a purposeful, personal turning from it, as well as a desire to seek God and His righteousness (cf. Isa. 1:16-20). Repentance has a cognitive aspect, a personal aspect, and a moral aspect. All three are required, both to start a new relationship with God and to maintain the new relationship. The deep emotion of regret turns into an abiding devotion to God and for God!

▣ **“Lord GOD”** This is the common title for Deity using *Adon* and YHWH in combination. See Special Topic at 1:2.

2:23 “How can you say, ‘I am not defiled’” Here is the real problem (cf. v. 35). They thought

1. they were religious
2. they were worshiping YHWH

Self-deception is the worst possible blindness (cf. Pro. 16:2; 30:12; Luke 16:15; 18:9-14).

▣ **“the Baals”** This was the male fertility god of Canaan. See Special Topic at 2:20.

▣ **“the valley”** This is possibly a reference to *Ben Hinnom* (cf. 7:31-32; 19:2-6; 32:35; II Chr. 28:3; 33:6). It was where *Molech*, the fertility fire god, was worshiped by child sacrifice (cf. Lev. 18:21).

SPECIAL TOPIC: MOLECH

This YHWH prohibits the worship of *Molech* (BDB 574), the Canaanite (Ammon) fire god worshiped by sacrificing the first born child of every family in the community to insure fertility. His name (as used by Israelites) is a Hebrew pun on the consonants for “king” and the vowels for “shame.” Israel is warned about this god early and often (cf. Lev. 18:21; 20:2,3,4,5; I Kgs. 11:7; II Kgs. 23:10; Jer. 32:35; Micah 6:7). This worship was often characterized by the phrase, “passing through the fire” (cf. 12:31; 18:10; II Kgs. 16:3; 17:17,31; 21:6; Ps. 106:37; Jer. 7:31; 19:5).

2:22-23 “a swift young camel” This is a sexual, animal metaphor for Israel's desire for political alliances.

2:25 “feet from being unshod. . .throat from thirst” This refers either to a metaphor for

1. running after foreign gods (i.e., political alliances)
2. imagery of slavery
3. as Rashi believes, it is literal for captivity or exile

I think #1 fits the context best (cf. v. 18).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:26-28

²⁶“As the thief is shamed when he is discovered,
So the house of Israel is shamed;
They, their kings, their princes
And their priests and their prophets,

²⁷Who say to a tree, ‘You are my father,’
 And to a stone, ‘You gave me birth.’
 For they have turned *their* back to Me,
 And not *their* face;
 But in the time of their trouble they will say,
 ‘Arise and save us.’
²⁸But where are your gods
 Which you made for yourself?
 Let them arise, if they can save you
 In the time of your trouble;
 For *according to* the number of your cities
 Are your gods, O Judah.”

2:26 These are the same leaders mentioned in v. 8.

1. kings
2. princes
3. priests
4. prophets

▣ **“is shamed”** This VERB (*Hiphil* PERFECT, BDB 101, KB 116) is also found in 6:15; 46:24; 48:1,20; 50:2, also notice 8:9,12! Fear of shame was a powerful motivation for eastern people (i.e., 15:9; 31:19; 48:13,39; Isa. 1:29; 19:9; 20:5; 23:4; 37:27; 45:16).

2:27 “tree, ‘You are my father’. . .stone, ‘You gave me birth” This is a play on the symbols of the Canaanite fertility gods. *Ba’al* was symbolized by an uplifted stone (i.e., phallus) and *Asherah* by a carved stake or live tree (i.e., the tree of life).

▣ **“You gave me birth”** The MT has the SINGULAR VERB (*Qal* PERFECT, BDB 408, KB 411); the Masoretic scholars suggested it be changed to the PLURAL.

▣ **“they have turned *their* back to Me”** This parallels 32:33. In response YHWH turns His back to them (cf. 18:17).

▣ There are two IMPERATIVES used to mock what idol worshipers said to their non-existent idols (cf. v. 28).

1. arise – *Qal* IMPERATIVE, BDB 877, KB 1086
2. save us – *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, BDB 446, KB 448

Superstition is a sad and powerful reality in our fallen world (cf. Isa. 44:17; 45:20; 46:6-7).

▣ **“save us”** In the OT this refers to physical deliverance.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SALVATION

This term (BDB 447) has several connotations.

1. welfare, prosperity, Job 30:15
2. divine salvation which encompasses both physical and spiritual aspects

- a. Gen. 49:18
 - b. Deut. 32:15
 - c. Ps. 3:2,8; 22:1; 35:3; 62:2; 69:29; 70:5; 78:22; 80:3; 89:26; 91:16; 106:4; 140:7
 - d. Isa. 12:2; 33:2; 51:6,8; 52:7,10; 56:1; 59:11; 60:18; 62:1
3. the idea of physical and spiritual deliverance is clearly present in Jonah 2:9-10
4. often “rejoicing” is related to YHWH’s salvation, I Sam. 2:1; Isa. 25:9; 26:1; Ps. 9:14; 13:5; 35:9

Salvation involves the implementation of YHWH’s original intended fellowship and society with His human creatures. It involves individual and societal wholeness!

2:28 “according to the number of your cities

Are your gods, O Judah” This refers either to the local *Ba’als* (cf. 11:13) or as we learn from Ugaritic literature, the Canaanite pantheon, which had 250 gods.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:29-37

²⁹**“Why do you contend with Me?**

You have all transgressed against Me,” declares the LORD.

³⁰**“In vain I have struck your sons;**

They accepted no chastening.

Your sword has devoured your prophets

Like a destroying lion.

³¹**O generation, heed the word of the LORD.**

Have I been a wilderness to Israel,

Or a land of thick darkness?

Why do My people say, ‘We are free to roam;

We will no longer come to You’?

³²**Can a virgin forget her ornaments,**

Or a bride her attire?

Yet My people have forgotten Me

Days without number.

³³**How well you prepare your way**

To seek love!

Therefore even the wicked women

You have taught your ways.

³⁴**Also on your skirts is found**

The lifeblood of the innocent poor;

You did not find them breaking in.

But in spite of all these things,

³⁵**Yet you said, ‘I am innocent;**

Surely His anger is turned away from me.’

Behold, I will enter into judgment with you

Because you say, ‘I have not sinned.’

³⁶Why do you go around so much

Changing your way?

Also, you will be put to shame by Egypt

As you were put to shame by Assyria.

³⁷From this *place* also you will go out

With your hands on your head;

For the LORD has rejected those in whom you trust,

And you will not prosper with them.”

2:29 See note at v. 9.

☐ **“You have all transgressed against Me”** Sin is personal and it is a rebellion against YHWH. The VERB is a *Qal* PERFECT (BDB 833, KB 981) denoting a settled attitude of rebellion and disobedience (cf. 2:8,29; 3:13; 33:8; Isa. 43:27; 49:13; 66:24; Ezek. 2:3; 20:38; Hos. 7:13).

Notice the word “all,” which could refer to

1. everyone in that generation (cf. v. 31; 5:1; 6:13)
2. their ancestors as well

The rebellion of all Israel, and all humans, is clearly seen in Paul’s litany of OT verses in Rom. 3:9-18 and the summary statement in Rom. 3:23!

2:30-31 YHWH disciplined Israel (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28-29) so that she would return to Him, but she would not. She had forgotten His gracious presence, provision, and protection during her formation (i.e., exodus and wilderness wanderings).

Israel’s rejection of their God was surprising and unnatural! They wanted their freedom (i.e., the results of the Fall, cf. Genesis 3)! The VERB in v. 31, line 4, is a *Qal* PERFECT, BDB 923, KB 1194.

2:31

NASB **“We are free to roam”**

NKJV **“We are lords”**

NRSV **“We are our own masters”**

NJB **“We are free”**

JPSOA **“We have broken loose”**

LXX **“We will not be ruled”**

The VERB ָרָר (*Qal* PERFECT, BDB 923, KB 1194, cf. Hos. 12:1) is rare. KB translates the *Qal* PERFECT as “to roam about freely.”

The UBS *Handbook* (p. 85) suggests it means “go here and there” and links back to the female camel of v. 23.

2:32 “attire” This (BDB 905) was a sash that shows marital status of women (as does “ornaments,” BDB 725). Israel had broken YHWH’s covenant symbolized by the marriage contract. This chapter is YHWH’s divorce proceedings.

☐ **“My people have forgotten Me”** This VERB (*Qal* PERFECT, BDB 1013, KB 1489) is a shocking comment about Israel’s relationship to her Deity (the only true Deity). This tragedy continues (cf. 3:21; 13:25; Ps. 106:21-22).

Here the forgetfulness is a choice not an accident! Israel deliberately chose to leave YHWH, even after all He had done for her.

2:33 “You have taught your ways” Israel was so evil that she taught prostitutes a thing or two about evil. This is an allusion to

1. fertility worship
2. foreign alliances

2:34 “lifeblood of the innocent poor” The wealthy and powerful were taking advantage of the poor and powerless, see 7:6; 22:3,17; and the book of Amos.

▣ **“You did not find them breaking in”** The word translated “breaking in” is a NOUN (BDB 369, KB 573) found only here and in Exod. 22:2, where it refers to the killing of a burglar.

▣ **“But in spite of all these things”** The Hebrew phrase is very uncertain. The AB, vol. 21, simply puts it in brackets!

The UBS Text Project has two options.

1. in spite of all these things (RSV)
2. on every oak (LXX, NEB)

It gives #1 a C rating (considerable doubt). The UBS *Handbook* also prefers #1 as “the least problematic” (p. 88).

The NASB, NRSV, NJB, and NIV connect the last line of v. 34 with v. 35.

2:35 This shows the depth of their sin and self-deception as they rationalize their conduct. Possibly their prosperity blinded their eyes as they claimed promises from Deuteronomy 28-29, but forgot the conditional nature of YHWH’s covenant!

2:36-37 These verses clearly threaten an exile by Babylon. The political alliances (i.e., Egypt and the remnant of the Assyrian army, cf. v. 18) cannot save Israel from Nebuchadnezzar.

2:36

NASB “go around so much”

NKJV “gad about so much”

NRSV “how frivolously. . .”

NJB “how lightly you gad about”

JPSOA “how you cheapen yourselves”

REB “why do you so lightly. . .”

LXX “whatever did you greatly despise”

The root of the VERB is uncertain and the ADVERB, “lightly” (BDB 547), seems to fit well with option #2. Here are the options for the VERB.

1. גָּזַל – BDB 23, KB 27 – “go”
2. לָלַל – KB 272 – “to treat lightly”

2:37 “hands on your head” This is a sign of captivity or mourning.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GRIEVING RITES

The Israelites expressed sorrow for the death of a loved one and for personal repentance, as well as corporate crimes, in several ways:

1. tear outer robe, Gen. 37:29,34; 44:13; Jdgs. 11:35; II Sam. 1:11; 3:31; I Kgs. 21:27; Job 1:20
2. put on sackcloth, Gen. 37:34; II Sam. 3:31; I Kgs. 21:27; Jer. 48:37
3. take off shoes, II Sam. 15:30; Isa. 20:3
4. put hands on head, II Sam. 13:19; Jer. 2:37
5. put dust on head, Josh. 7:6; I Sam. 4:12; Neh. 9:1
6. sit on the ground, Lam. 2:10; Ezek. 26:16 (lie on the ground, II Sam. 12:16); Isa. 47:1
7. beat the breast, I Sam. 25:1; II Sam. 11:26; Nah. 2:7 (not meaning of “mourned,” BDB 704)
8. cut the body, Deut. 14:1; Jer. 16:6; 48:37
9. fast, II Sam. 12:21-23; I Kgs. 21:27; I Chr. 10:12; Neh. 1:4
10. chant a lament, II Sam. 1:17; 3:31; II Chr. 35:25
11. baldness (hair pulled out or shaved), Jer. 48:37
12. cut beards short, Jer. 48:37
13. cover head or face, II Sam. 15:30; 19:4

JEREMIAH 3

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS (The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Polluted Land	Israel Is Shameless	Exhortations To Repent (3:1-4:4)	Unfaithful Israel	Conversion
3:1-5 (1-5)	3:1 3:2-5 (2-5)	3:1-5 (1-5)	3:1-3 3:4-5	3:1 3:2-3a (2-3a) 3:3b-5 (3b-5)
Faithless Israel	A Call To Repentance		Israel and Judah Must Repent	The Northern Kingdom Urged To Repent
3:6-10 (6-10)	3:6-10	3:6-10	3:6-10	3:6-10
God Invites Repentance				
3:11-14 (12-14)	3:11-13 (12b-13)	3:11-14 (12b-14)	3:11-13	3:11-13 (12b-13)
	3:14-18		3:14-18	Zion In the Messianic Age 3:14-17
3:15-18		3:15-18		3:18
			The Idolatry of God's People	Continuation of the Poem On Conversion
3:19-20 (19-20)	3:19-20 (19-20)	3:19-20 (19-20)	3:19-20 (19-20)	3:19-20 (19-20)
3:21-23 (21-23)	3:21-25 (21) (22-25)	3:21-22a (21-22a) 3:22b-24 (22b-23)	3:21-22a (21-22a) 3:22b-25	3:21-25 (21-25)
3:24-25				

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BACKGROUND

- A. Jeremiah 2:1- 4:4 forms a literary unit.
- B. Chapter 3 is a word play on the word *shub* (שׁוּב, BDB 996, KB 1427, see Special topic at 2:22), which means “to turn,” either to something or to someone (cf. 3:1,7,10,14,19,22).
- C. The broken covenant is expressed as a broken marriage resulting in a legal divorce. However, YHWH's grace is so powerful that the Deut. 24:1-4 requirements are annulled (i.e., faithless, idolatrous Israel can return to her first husband, YHWH)! A new day, a new covenant is possible!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:1-5

- ¹God says, “If a husband divorces his wife
And she goes from him
And belongs to another man,
Will he still return to her?
Will not that land be completely polluted?
But you are a harlot *with* many lovers;
Yet you turn to Me,” declares the LORD.
- ²“Lift up your eyes to the bare heights and see;
Where have you not been violated?
By the roads you have sat for them
Like an Arab in the desert,
And you have polluted a land
With your harlotry and with your wickedness.
- ³Therefore the showers have been withheld,
And there has been no spring rain.
Yet you had a harlot's forehead;
You refused to be ashamed.
- ⁴Have you not just now called to Me,

‘My Father, You are the friend of my youth?
⁵Will He be angry forever?
 Will He be indignant to the end?’
 Behold, you have spoken
 And have done evil things,
 And you have had your way.”

3:1

NASB “God says”

NKJV “they say”

LXX, NRSV,
 NJB, REB — Omit —

TEV “the Lord says”

JPSOA “[the word of the LORD came to me] as follows”

The MT simply has the *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (BDB 55, KB 65) “saying.” The UBS Text Project suggests (p. 180)

1. it introduces a principal, a proverb, or judicial statement
2. it relates to 2:37

▣ **“If a husband divorces his wife”** This reflects Moses’ statement in Deut. 24:3-4. YHWH uses divorce as a metaphor of His peoples’ “spiritual adultery” of idolatry. Israelites could not take back a wife after another man had married her (cf. Deut. 24:4), but YHWH’s great love will remarry Israel even after her idolatry (cf. 4:1; Hosea 1-3).

YHWH was stating what had occurred years ago (cf. 2:20-25).

▣ **“Will he still return to her”** This was not allowed (cf. Deut. 24:1-4). Their return was for political reasons, not for spiritual reasons.

▣ **“land be completely polluted”** The VERB and INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE of the same root (BDB 337, KB 335) are used to intensify the sense of the idolatrous pollution. This very thing is discussed in Lev. 18:24-28; 19:29; Deut. 24:4.

The LXX has “woman,” הַאִשָּׁה, but the MT has “land,” הָאָרֶץ. The UBS Text Project rates “land” as B (some doubt); both fit the context.

▣ **“you are a harlot *with* many lovers”** YHWH is depicted as a husband, possibly based on Deut. 10:20; 11:22; 13:14 (i.e., “cling to Him”). This is one of several anthropomorphic metaphors used of God and His relationship to His faith children (see Special Topic at 1:9).

▣

NASB “Yet you turn to Me”

NKJV “yet return to Me”

TEV “now you want to return to Me?”

LXX, NJB “would you return to me?”

JPSOA “can you return to Me?”

This is the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE of a VERB (*Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 996, KB 1427) used earlier in the verse (and throughout this chapter). It can be

1. turned into an IMPERATIVE (NKJV)
2. turned into a VERB (NASB)
3. turned into a question (TEV, NJB, JPSOA following the LXX)

3:2 “Lift up your eyes. . .see” These are both *Qal* IMPERATIVES.

1. lift up – BDB 669, KB 724
2. see – BDB 906, KB 1157, cf. 1:10; 2:10 (twice), 19,23,31

▣ **“bare heights”** This was the place of the worship of *Ba’al* (cf. 3:21; 4:11; 7:29; 12:12; 14:6; Hos. 4:11-14).

▣

NASB “violated”
 NKJV “lain with men”
 NRSV “offered your sex!”
 TEV “acted like a prostitute?”
 NJB, JPSOA,
 REB “lain with”
 LXX “contaminated” or “utterly defiled”

The MT has “be ravished” (שָׁנַל, BDB 993, KB 1415, cf. NASB), but the Masoretic scholars suggest “be lain with” (שָׁכַב, BDB 1011, KB 1486).

The covenant people were not raped. They voluntarily committed “spiritual adultery” with foreign idols.

▣ **“By the roads you have sat”** This is an historical/cultural reference to what the prostitutes did (cf. Gen. 38:14; Pro. 7:12ff; Ezek. 16:25).

▣

NASB, NRSV,
 TEV, REB “Arab”
 NKJV “Arabian”
 NJB “nomad”
 JPSOA “bandit”

The MT has “steppe-dweller” (עֲרָבִי, BDB 787 IV, cf. Isa. 13:20), but the Septuagint has “raven” (עֲרָב, BDB 788 VI).

The JPSOA interprets the word as a robber (see *UBS Handbook*, p. 94). The LXX’s “raven” could be parallel to “polluted land,” as the raven was an unclean scavenger, but it could also mean a supposed helper, cf. I Kgs. 17:4.

▣ **“harlotry”** See Special Topic at 2:20.

3:3 The first two lines are parallel. God tried to use the cycles of nature to open the eyes of His people (cf. Lev. 26:14-20; Deut. 28:15-68), but they would not see. There are two rainy seasons in Palestine (cf. Deut. 11:14), one at planting time and the other as the plants mature. Most moisture came from daily dew.

- ▣ **“harlot’s forehead”** This is a reference either to
 1. characteristic ornamentation (cf. Rev. 17:5)
 2. a metaphor for stubbornness and lack of shame (cf. Ezek. 3:7-8)

3:4 “My Father” This is another family metaphor for God (see Special Topic at 1:9).

SPECIAL TOPIC: FATHERHOOD OF GOD

I. Old Testament

A. There is a sense that God is father by means of creation.

1. Gen. 1:26-27
2. Mal. 2:10
3. Acts 17:28

B. Father is an analogy used in several senses.

1. father of Israel (by election)
 - a. “Son” – Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; 39:5; Isa. 1:2; 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:19; 31:20; Hosea 1:10; 11:1; Mal. 1:6
 - b. “firstborn” – Exod. 4:22; Jer. 31:9
2. father of the king of Israel (Messianic)
 - a. II Sam. 7:11-16
 - b. Ps. 2:7; Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5
 - c. Hosea 11:1; Matt. 2:15
3. analogy of loving parent
 - a. father (metaphor)
 - (1) carries his son – Deut. 1:31
 - (2) disciplines – Deut. 8:5; Pro. 3:12
 - (3) provision (i.e., Exodus) – Deut. 32:1
 - (4) will never forsake – Ps. 27:10
 - (5) loves – Ps. 103:13
 - (6) friend/guide – Jer. 3:4
 - (7) healer/forgiver – Jer. 3:22
 - (8) mercy giver – Jer. 31:20
 - (9) trainer – Hosea 11:1-4
 - (10) special son – Mal. 3:17
 - b. mother (metaphor)
 - (1) will never forsake – Ps. 27:10
 - (2) love of a nursing mother – Isa. 49:15; 66:9-13 and Hosea 11:4 (with the proposed textual emendation of “yoke” to “infant”)

II. New Testament

A. The Trinity (texts where all three are mentioned)

1. Gospels
 - a. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19

- b. John 14:26
- 2. Paul
 - a. Rom. 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4,8-10
 - b. I Cor. 2:8-10; 12:4-6
 - c. II Cor. 1:21; 13:14
 - d. Gal. 4:4-6
 - e. Eph. 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-
 - f. I Thess. 1:2-5
 - g. II Thess. 2:13
 - h. Titus 3:4-6
- 3. Peter – I Pet. 1:2
- 4. Jude – vv. 20-21
- B. Jesus
 - 1. Jesus as “only begotten” – John 1:18; 3:16,18; I John 4:9
 - 2. Jesus as “Son of God” – Matt. 4:3; 14:33; 16:16; Luke 1:32,35; John 1:34,49; 6:69; 11:27
 - 3. Jesus as Beloved Son – Matt. 3:17; 17:5
 - 4. Jesus’ use of *Abba* for God – Mark 14:36
 - 5. Jesus’ use of PRONOUNS to show both His and our relationship to God
 - a. “My Father,” e.g., John 5:18; 10:30,33; 19:7; 20:17
 - b. “your Father,” e.g., Matt. 17:24-27
 - c. “our Father,” e.g., Matt. 6:9,14,26
- C. One of many family metaphors to describe the intimate relationship between God and humankind:
 - 1. God as Father
 - 2. Believers as
 - a. sons of God
 - b. children
 - c. born of God
 - d. born again
 - e. adopted
 - f. brought forth
 - g. family of God

3:5 “Will he be angry forever” They were trying to take advantage of God’s mercy. This same concept is discussed in Ps. 103:8-14. God’s mercy was not the issue, but their willful and repeated idolatry (cf. vv. 12-14).

▣ **“spoken. . .done evil”** Their lips said one thing, but their actions showed another (cf. Isa. 29:13).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:6-10

“Then the LORD said to me in the days of Josiah the king, “Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there. ⁷I thought, ‘After she has done all these things she will return to Me’; but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. ⁸And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also. ⁹Because of the lightness of her harlotry, she polluted the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. ¹⁰Yet in spite of all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather in deception,” declares the LORD.

3:6 “Then the LORD said to me in the days of Josiah the king” This surely dates the poem and by implication the surrounding strophes.

For the reign of King Josiah see Appendix Four, #3.

▣ **“Israel”** These are the northern ten tribes (see Special Topic at 2:3). Verses 7-8,10,11 show that in light of Israel’s sin, Judah should have learned, but she did not, and even copied her sister’s sins (cf. Ezek. 16:44-52; chapter 23).

▣ **“on every high hill and under every green tree”** This was the site for *Ba’al* worship (see Special Topic at 2:20).

3:7 “Judah” These are the southern three tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin. Most of the Levites and priests also stayed with the southern tribes.

▣ **“she will return to Me”** The word “return” (BDB 996, KB 1427) is the Hebrew concept of repentance (see Special Topic at 2:22). It is used several times in this chapter (cf. vv. 1 [twice], 7 [twice], 10, 12,14, 19,22). The OT, as the NT, is a conditional covenant as it relates to human choices, but an unconditional covenant as to YHWH’s plan to redeem those individuals who will turn to Him by repentance and faith (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21).

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

The OT term *berith* (BDB 136), covenant, is not easy to define. There is no matching VERB in Hebrew. All attempts to derive an etymological definition have proved unconvincing. However, the obvious centrality of the concept has forced scholars to examine the word usage to attempt to determine its functional meaning.

Covenant is the means by which the one true God deals with His human creation. The concept of covenant, treaty, or agreement is crucial in understanding the biblical revelation. The tension between God’s sovereignty and human free-will are clearly seen in the concept of covenant. Some covenants are based exclusively on God’s character and actions.

1. creation itself (cf. Genesis 1-2)
2. the call of Abraham (cf. Genesis 12)
3. the covenant with Abraham (cf. Genesis 15)
4. the preservation and promise to Noah (cf. Genesis 6-9)

However, the very nature of covenant demands a response.

1. by faith Adam must obey God and not eat of the tree in the midst of Eden

2. by faith Abraham must leave his family, follow God, and believe in future descendants
3. by faith Noah must build a huge boat far from water and gather the animals
4. by faith Moses brought the Israelites out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai and received specific guidelines for religious and social life with promises of blessings and cursings (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28)

This same tension involving God’s relationship to humanity is addressed in the “new covenant.” The tension can be clearly seen in comparing Ezekiel 18 with Ezek. 36:27-38 (YHWH’s action). Is the covenant based on God’s gracious actions or mandated human response? This is the burning issue of the Old Covenant and the New. The goals of both are the same: (1) the restoration of fellowship with YHWH lost in Genesis 3 and (2) the establishment of a righteous people who reflect God’s character.

The new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34 solves the tension by removing human performance as the means of attaining acceptance. God’s law becomes an internal desire instead of an external law code. The goal of a godly, righteous people remains the same, but the methodology changes. Fallen mankind proved themselves inadequate to be God’s reflected image. The problem was not God’s covenant, but human sinfulness and weakness (cf. Romans 7; Galatians 3).

The same tension between OT unconditional and conditional covenants remains in the NT. Salvation is absolutely free in the finished work of Jesus Christ, but it requires repentance and faith (both initially and continually). It is both a legal pronouncement and a call to Christlikeness, an indicative statement of acceptance and an imperative to holiness! Believers are not saved by their performance, but unto obedience (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Godly living becomes the evidence of salvation, not the means of salvation. However, eternal life has observable characteristics! This tension is clearly seen in Hebrews.

3:8

NASB, NKJV	“I saw. . .”
TEV	“Judah also saw. . .”
NRSV	“She also saw. . .”
NJB, REB	“She saw”
JPSOA	“I noted:”

The MT has “and I saw” (וִּיֵרָא), but the DSS and the Syriac versions have “she saw” (וּתְרָא). The UBS Text Project gives the MT a B rating (some doubt).

The next line of the verse describes YHWH’s actions in light of Israel’s response.

▣ **“I had sent her away”** This seems to be linking the Assyrian exile (i.e., 722 B.C.) with the metaphor of divorce (“send away,” BDB 1018, KB 1511, cf. Deut. 22:19,29; 24:1,3; Jer. 3:1).

▣ **“writ of divorce”** This was a legal document first discussed in Deut. 24:1-4.

1. involved some legal procedures which took some time so that the couple could work out their differences if possible
2. another person had to be involved (i.e., a Levite)
3. involved the restitution of the dowry to the wife or her family
4. allowed the vulnerable woman to remarry and be a functioning member of that society

3:9

NASB	“the lightness of her harlotry”
NKJV	“her casual harlotry”
NRSV	“her shameless whoring”

TEV “was not at all ashamed”
 NJB “she took her whoredom so lightly”
 JPSOA “her casual immorality”
 REB “her casual prostitution”
 LXX “her whoredom came to nothing”

The key word is “so light” (לָקַט, BDB 887, KB 1101 I), found only here. BDB suggests “lightness” or “frivolity.”

▣ “stones and trees” This is a reference to the male Canaanite deity, *Ba'al*, and the female Canaanite deity, *Asherah* (cf. 2:27, see Special Topic at 2:20).

3:10 “Judah did not return to Me with all her heart” This may be a reference to the reforms of Hezekiah or Josiah. The reforms of these godly kings were only superficially accepted by the populous.

For “returned” see the Special Topic at 2:22. For “heart” see the Special Topic at 4:19.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:11-14

¹¹And the LORD said to me, “Faithless Israel has proved herself more righteous than treacherous Judah.

¹²Go and proclaim these words toward the north and say,

‘Return, faithless Israel,’ declares the LORD;

‘I will not look upon you in anger.

For I am gracious,’ declares the LORD;

‘I will not be angry forever.

¹³Only acknowledge your iniquity,

That you have transgressed against the LORD your God

And have scattered your favors to the strangers under every green tree,

And you have not obeyed My voice,’ declares the LORD.

¹⁴‘Return, O faithless sons,’ declares the LORD;

‘For I am a master to you,

And I will take you one from a city and two from a family,

And I will bring you to Zion.’”

3:11 This is a shocking statement. Judah had more spiritual light and opportunities than did the northern tribes, but she did not learn from YHWH’s judgment on them (cf. Ezekiel 23; Luke 12:48).

Israel is “faithless” (BDB 1000, cf. 3:6,8,12; also note 2:19; 3:22; 5:6; 8:5; 14:7) but Judah is “treacherous” (BDB 93, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. 3:8,20; 5:11; 12:6; Isa. 21:2; 24:16; 33:1).

3:12-14 The NASB, NKJV, NRSV, NJB all show these verses in poetic form (like vv. 1-5 and 19-20).

1. God tells the prophet to
 - a. go (*Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE)
 - b. proclaim (*Qal* PERFECT)
2. God tells the northern tribes to
 - a. return (*Qal* IMPERATIVE, see note at v. 1)
 - b. acknowledge (lit. “know,” *Qal* IMPERATIVE)
 - (1) your iniquity

- (2) that you have transgressed (*Qal* PERFECT)
- (3) that you scattered your favors (BDB 202) to strangers (i.e., idols)
- (4) that you have not obeyed (*Qal* PERFECT)
- 3. If they will obey, God will
 - a. not look upon you in anger
 - b. not be angry forever

This literary form is called “a summons to repentance” in *Cracking OT Codes* by Sandy and Giese (p. 164). It includes a divine promise, an accusation of sin, and a divine threat of judgment (cf. Isa. 1:19-20; 55:6-7; Jer. 3:12-13; 4:1-4; Joel 2:12-13; Amos 5:4-7,14-15).

3:12 “For I am gracious” This is one of the primary presuppositions of the character of Deity. Often in other world religions, deity is capricious, detached, but not so the God of the Bible. Note His repeated characteristics.

- 1. compassionate (BDB 933), cf. Exod. 34:6; Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13
- 2. gracious (BDB 337), cf. Exod. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13
- 3. slow to anger (BDB 74 CONSTRUCT BDB 60), cf. Exod. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13
- 4. abounding in lovingkindness (*hesed*, BDB 338, see Special Topic at 2:2), cf. Exod. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13
- 5. abounding in truth (“faithfulness,” *amen*, BDB 54), cf. Exod. 34:6; Ps. 86:15
- 6. forgiving iniquity and transgression, cf. Num. 14:18
- 7. will not (cf. Deut. 4:31)
 - a. fail you
 - b. destroy you
 - c. forget the covenant with your fathers
- 8. abundant forgiveness (BDB 699), cf. Neh. 9:17
- 9. did not forsake them (BDB 736 I), cf. Neh. 9:17
- 10. will not keep His anger forever, cf. Ps. 103:9
- 11. relenting of evil, cf. Joel 2:13

Wow! What a wonderful God we trust, serve, and emulate!

SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN

I. OLD TESTAMENT

- A. The term “Amen” is from a Hebrew word for
 - 1. “truth” (*emeth*, BDB 49)
 - 2. “truthfulness” (*emun*, *emunah*, BDB 53)
 - 3. “faith” or “faithfulness”
 - 4. “trust” (*dmn*, BDB 52)
- B. Its etymology is from a person’s stable physical stance. The opposite would be one who is unstable, slipping (cf. Psalm 40:2; 73:18; Jeremiah 23:12) or stumbling (cf. Ps. 73:2). From this literal usage developed the metaphorical extension of faithful, trustworthy, loyal, and dependable (cf. Gen. 15:16; Hab. 2:4).
- C. Special usages
 - 1. a pillar, II Kgs. 18:16 (I Tim. 3:15)

2. assurance, Exod. 17:12
3. steadiness, Exod. 17:12
4. stability, Isa. 33:6
5. true, I Kgs. 10:6; 17:24; 22:16; Pro. 12:22
6. firm, II Chr. 20:20; Isa. 7:9
7. reliable (Torah), Ps. 119:43,142,151,160

D. In the OT two other Hebrew terms are used for active faith.

1. *bathach* (BDB 105), trust
2. *yra* (BDB 431), fear, respect, worship (cf. Gen. 22:12)

E. From the sense of trust or trustworthiness developed a liturgical usage which was used to affirm a true or trustworthy statement of another (cf. Deut. 27:15-26; Neh. 8:6; Ps. 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48).

F. The theological key to this term is not mankind's faithfulness, but YHWH's (cf. Exod. 34:6; Deut. 32:4; Ps. 108:4; 115:1; 117:2; 138:2). Fallen humanity's only hope is the merciful faithful covenant loyalty of YHWH and His promises. Those who know YHWH are to be like Him (cf. Hab. 2:4). The Bible is a history and a record of God restoring His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) in mankind. Salvation restores mankind's ability to have intimate fellowship with God. This is why we were created.

II. NEW TESTAMENT

A. The use of the word "amen" as a concluding liturgical affirmation of a statement's trustworthiness of a statement is common in the NT (cf. I Cor. 14:16; II Cor. 1:20; Rev. 1:7; 5:14; 7:12).

B. The use of the term as a close to a prayer is common in the NT (cf. Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27; Gal. 1:5; 6:18; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20; II Thess. 3:18; I Tim. 1:17; 6:16; II Tim. 4:18).

C. Jesus is the only one who used the term (often doubled in John) to introduce significant statements (cf. Luke 4:24; 12:37; 18:17,29; 21:32; 23:43)

D. It is used as a title for Jesus in Rev. 3:14 (possibly a title of YHWH from Isa. 65:16).

E. The concept of faithfulness or faith, trustworthiness, or trust is expressed in the Greek term *pistos* or *pistis*, which is translated into English as "trust," "faith," "believe."

3:13-14 God's people must acknowledge their sin and turn back to faith and faithfulness in YHWH!

3:14 "I am a master to you" This is a play on the word *Ba'al* (BDB 127), which means husband. This continues the family metaphors.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3: 15-18

¹⁵"Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding. ¹⁶It shall be in those days when you are multiplied and increased in the land," declares the LORD, "they will no longer say, 'The ark of the covenant of the LORD.' And it will not come to mind, nor will they remember it, nor will they miss it, nor will it be made again. ¹⁷At that time they will call Jerusalem 'The Throne of the LORD,' and all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of the LORD; nor will they walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil

heart. ¹⁸In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance.”

3:15 God’s leaders (i.e., “shepherds,” BDB 944), both civil and religious, will

1. be after YHWH’s own heart (BDB 524)
2. feed the people with knowledge (BDB 395, only here in Jeremiah)
3. feed the people with understanding (BDB 968, cf. 9:24; 20:11)

Numbers 2 and 3 could refer to the shepherds themselves or what they give the people.

3:16 “in those days” This refers to the New Covenant period (cf. vv. 16-18; 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38) or the Messianic age.

▣ **“ark of the covenant”** Whether it was actually missing at this point in time is uncertain; this passage points to internal worship (cf. John 4:23). There will be no need for a physical object representing YHWH. He Himself will be among His people!

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

I. Its purpose

- A. the place where YHWH dwelt (i.e., His footstool, cf. I Chr. 28:2; Ps. 132:7; Isa. 66:1) with His people, between the wings of the *cherubim*
- B. the place of forgiveness of sin, for all peoples (cf. Israel, Leviticus 16 and I Kgs. 8:27-30; foreigners, 8:41,43,60)

II. Its contents

- A. rabbinical tradition
 1. the two tablets of stone on which YHWH wrote the decalog (cf. Exod. 31:18; 32:15-16)
 2. the two silver columns which hold the tablets (no biblical references)
 3. the fragments of the original two tablets which were broken by Moses because of Israel’s (Aaron) making and worshipping the golden calf (cf. Exod. 32:19; Deut. 9:17; 10:2)
 4. a copy of the entire Torah (cf. Exod. 25:16)
 5. the names of God (cf. I Kgs. 8:29) developed in *Kabalah*, Jewish mysticism
- B. biblical references as to the contents (it is uncertain if these refer to things inside the ark or beside it)
 1. a jar of manna (cf. Exod. 16:31-36)
 2. Aaron’s rod that budded (cf. Num. 17:4,10; Heb. 9:4)
 3. the guilt offerings of the Philistines (5 golden mice and golden hemorrhoids, cf. I Sam. 6:3-4,8)
 4. a copy of the Decalog (cf. Deut. 10:4-5; 31:26)
- C. at the dedication of Solomon’s Temple in I Kings 8 the Ark is said to have only contained the two tablets of stone (i.e., the Ten Words, cf. I Kgs. 8:9)

III. Its possible location

- A. historical options
 1. taken to Egypt by Shishak (935-914 B.C.) when he invaded Judah in the fifth year (926 B.C.) of Rehoboam’s (son of Solomon) reign (cf. I Kgs. 14:25-26; II Chr. 12:9)

2. taken to Egypt (Zaan, Tanis, Avaris—different names for the delta capital of Seti I) by Pharaoh Necho II, who also exiled the Davidic seed Jehoahaz (Josiah’s son) in 597 B.C. (cf. II Kgs. 23:31-35; II Chr. 36:1-4)
3. taken to Babylon to the temple of Marduk by Nebuchadnezzar II when Zedekiah was exiled (586 B.C.) and the Temple burned (cf. II Kgs. 25:9,13-17; II Chr. 36:18)

B. Jewish traditions

1. hidden on Mt. Nebo/Pisgah by Jeremiah before the fall of Jerusalem
2. the apocryphal book of II Baruch says an angel hid it
3. hidden by unknown means, but will be returned by Elijah just before the Messiah comes (cf. Mal. 4:5)
4. hidden on Mt. Gerizim (Shechem) where the Samaritans built their temple to YHWH

3:17 “Jerusalem” I think this refers to the New Jerusalem (i.e., the new people of God, cf. Rev. 21:1-4).

▣ **“all nations will be gathered to it”** Notice the universal element (cf. 4:2; 12:15,16; 16:19; Isa. 2:2-4; 11:12; 56:6-8; Ezek. 37:16-28; Hos. 3:5; Micah 2:12). This would have shocked and offended these Judean readers/hearers, just as Isaiah’s inclusion of the nations shocked the readers/hearers of his day!

▣ **“nor will they walk any more after the stubbornness of their evil heart”** This had been the problem since Genesis 3 (cf. 11:8)! But the new day will reverse this self-centeredness. Compare Ezek. 18:31 with Ezek. 36:26-27. The new covenant (31:31-34) will be based on God’s acts, not human acts!

The real question is to whom does “they” refer?

1. the faithful remnant of Abraham’s seed
2. all of Abraham’s seed alive in that day
3. the Gentiles gathered to Jerusalem

For me, I have been deeply influenced by Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 3:7-9,28; 6:16; Eph. 3:11-4:13; I Pet. 3:6. Abraham is the father of those who believe, not a racial/ethnic group.

3:18 “the land of the north” This is not a reference to a country to the north, but to the route of return (cf. 31:8).

▣ **“to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance”** See Gen. 12:1-3; 22:16-18; Amos 9:15. YHWH acted toward this generation, and every generation of Abraham’s seed, because of His love and promises to the Patriarchs!

God has an eternal redemptive plan that involves Israel and the Messiah. His plan is for all humanity. His plan will not be defeated, delayed, or destroyed! See Special Topic at 1:5!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3: 19-20

¹⁹“Then I said,

‘How I would set you among My sons

And give you a pleasant land,

The most beautiful inheritance of the nations!’

And I said, ‘You shall call Me, My Father,

And not turn away from following Me.’

²⁰Surely, as a woman treacherously departs from her lover,

So you have dealt treacherously with Me,

O house of Israel,” declares the LORD.

3:19 This verse begins a new strophe (i.e., vv. 19-20). It could refer to

1. the natural seed of Abraham (i.e., Israel as the firstborn son)
2. the faith seed of Abraham (cf. Isa. 63:16; Rom. 2:28-29)

Verse 20 implies option #1, while v. 19 implies option #2. Remember vv. 16-18 are describing the new age, the new covenant period.

The last two VERBS in v. 19 are PLURAL in the MT, but the Masoretic scholars suggest a change to the SINGULAR.

The NET Bible (p. 1295) suggests (because of the gender of the VERBS) that “Israel appears to be addressed here contextually as the Lord’s wife” and “the imagery here appears to be that of (1) treating the wife as an equal heir with the sons and (2) giving her the best piece of property.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3: 21-23

²¹“A voice is heard on the bare heights,

The weeping *and* the supplications of the sons of Israel;

Because they have perverted their way,

They have forgotten the LORD their God.

²²Return, O faithless sons,

I will heal your faithlessness.

Behold we come to You;

For You are the LORD our God.

²³Surely, the hills are a deception,

A tumult on the mountains.

Surely in the LORD our God

Is the salvation of Israel.”

3:21 “A voice” This would be the loud lament of Israel’s repentance.

1. weeping (BDB 113)
2. supplications (BDB 337)

They are repenting of

1. perverting their way – *Hiphil* PERFECT, BDB 730, KB 796
2. forgetting YHWH – *Qal* PERFECT, BDB 1013, KB 1489, cf. 2:32; 13:25

▣ **“bare heights”** This has been used sarcastically of the place of *Ba’al* worship, but here it reflects a place of mourning (cf. Jdgs. 11:37).

3:22-23 This verse has words from

1. YHWH
 - a. return – *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - b. I will hear – *Qal* IMPERFECT

2. the faithless sons
 - a. we come to You – *Qal* PERFECT
 - b. for You are the LORD our God
 - c. the hills (i.e., a place of fertility worship) are a deception
 - d. salvation is only in YHWH

Verse 25 continues the words of “the faithless sons” (i.e., their repentance)

- e. let us lie down in our shame – *Qal* COHORTATIVE
- f. let our humiliation cover us – *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
- g. we have sinned against the LORD our God – *Qal* PERFECT
- h. we and our fathers have sinned since our youth even to this day
- i. We have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God

3:22 The UBS *Handbook* notes that the words

1. return (BDB 996, KB 1427)
2. faithless (BDB 1000)
3. faithlessness (BDB 1000)

all are based on the same Hebrew consonants, שׁוּב (p. 113).

3:23 “surely” The ADVERB (BDB 38) occurs twice and gives the words of the people a solemnity!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3: 24-25

²⁴“But the shameful thing has consumed the labor of our fathers since our youth, their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. ²⁵Let us lie down in our shame, and let our humiliation cover us; for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even to this day. And we have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.”

3:24 “shameful thing” This is used sarcastically of *Ba'al* (cf. 11:13; Hos. 9:10) or because of the mention of “sons and daughters,” it may refer to the worship of *Molech* (see Special Topic at 2:23).

3:25 “from our youth even to this day” This rebellion was no new or passing thing. It went back to the wilderness wandering period (i.e., Exodus 32).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. To what is Jeremiah comparing God’s people?
2. What two metaphors does he use of God?
3. Did His people truly repent? Why or why not?
4. Do verses 19-25 reflect the future or post-exilic time?

JEREMIAH 4

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS (The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Judah Threatened With Invasion			A Call To Repentance	
4:1-2 (1-2)	4:1-2 (1-2)	4:1-4 (1-4)	4:1-2	4:1-2 (1-2)
4:3-4 (3-4)	4:3-4 (3b-4)		4:3-4	4:3-4 (3-4)
	An Imminent Invasion	The Foe From the North	Judah Is Threatened With Invasion	Invasion From the North
4:5-9 (5-8)	4:5-6 (5b-6)	4:5-8 (5-8)	4:5-8 (5-8)	4:5-8 (5-8)
	4:7-8 (7-8)			
	4:9 (9)	4:9-10	4:9	4:9-12 (9-12)
4:10	4:10 (10)		4:10	
4:11-13 (13)	4:11-18 (11-12)	4:11-18	4:11-12	
			Judah Is Surrounded by Enemies	
	(13)	(13-17)	4:13	4:13-18 (13-18)
4:14-18 (14-18)	(14-18)		4:14	
			4:15-17	
		(18)	4:18	
Lament Over Judah's Devastation	Sorrow For the Doomed Nation		Jeremiah's Sorrow For His People	
4:19-22 (19-22)	4:19-22 (19-21)	4:19-22 (19-22)	4:19-22 (19-22)	4:19-21 (19-21)
	(22)		Jeremiah's Vision of the Coming Destruction	4:22-28 (22-28)
4:23-26 (23-26)	4:23-26 (23-26)	4:23-28 (23-28)	4:23-31 (23-26)	
4:27-31 (27-31)	4:27-31 (27b-29)		(28-31)	
	(30)			
	(31)			
		4:29-31 (29-31)		4:29-31 (29-31)

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BACKGROUND

- A. This chapter is a series of poems on different subjects. Verses 5-31 are several independent poems about Judah's invasion.
- B. Verses 1-2 describe repentance and relate to chapter 3, vv. 21-25.
- C. The theme of Judah's rebellion and YHWH's judgment by foreign invasion runs through chapter 6.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:1-2

¹**"If you will return, O Israel," declares the LORD,
"Then you should return to Me.
And if you will put away your detested things from My presence,
And will not waver,
²And you will swear, 'As the LORD lives,'
In truth, in justice and in righteousness;
Then the nations will bless themselves in Him,
And in Him they will glory."**

4:1 "If" Grammatically there seem to be four "ifs" or conditions in vv. 1-2. This shows the conditional nature of the covenant (i.e., "if. . .then. . .," cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-28).

▣ **“return. . .return to Me”** The Hebrew root, שׁוּב (BDB 996-1000), is used in several words, in several lines in chapters 3:1-4:2.

1. שׁוּב – “return,” 3:1 (twice), 7 (twice), 10,12,14,19,22; 4:1 (twice)
– “turn away,” 4:8
– “turn back,” 4:28
2. שׁוֹבֵב (BDB 1000) – “faithless,” 3:14,29
3. מְשׁוֹבֵה (BDB 1000) – “faithless,” 3:6,8,11,12
– “backsliding,” 3:22

Notice the personal emphasis (cf. 3:1,4,7,10,19,20). Sin is more than a violation of a law code. It is a personal affront to a personal God!

▣ **“Israel”** See Special Topic at 2:3. This title (BDB 975) can mean

1. a new name given to Jacob
2. a collective term for all the children of Jacob
3. the northern ten tribes after the split of the United monarchy in 922 B.C. They were later taken captive by Assyria at the fall of the capital, Samaria in 722 B.C.

Context must determine which meaning. This is especially hard in Jeremiah when #2 and #3 are used in isolated poems without their historical setting specified.

▣ **“detested things”** This is literally “abominations” (BDB 1055) and refers to idols. See Special Topic at 2:7.

▣ **“and will not waver”** This VERB (BDB 626, KB 678, *Qal* IMPERFECT, lit. “wander,” cf. Gen. 4:12,14) refers to wholehearted daily activities (i.e., lifestyle).

4:2 “you will swear” This VERB (BDB 989, KB 1396, *Niphal* PERFECT) refers to a verbal act of worship, much like our modern liturgies (cf. 12:16; Deut. 6:13; 10:20; Isa. 65:16). Idolaters swear by *Ba'al* but YHWH’s people swear allegiance only to Him! This is theologically parallel to Rom. 10:9-13, which is a quote from Joel 2:32 (cf. Acts 2:21).

▣ **“In truth, in justice and in righteousness”** This is the content of “swear.” It refers to a lifestyle response, not ritual or periodic emotional experiences. This would describe true repentance. Each of these three words carries theological meaning.

1. in truth (BDB 54, see Special Topic at 3:12)
2. in justice (BDB 1048, see Special Topic below)
3. in righteousness (BDB 842, see Special Topic below)

SPECIAL TOPIC: JUDGE, JUDGMENT, AND JUSTICE (שָׁפַט) IN ISAIAH

This is a widely used term (BDB 1047) in the OT. NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 214, has characterized its distribution and significance.

1. Pentateuch, 13%, human judges
2. History books, 34%, human leaders
3. Wisdom Literature, 22%, divine activity
4. Prophets, 31%, mostly divine activity

Note the following chart.

YHWH as Judge	Messiah as Judge	Israel's Ideal Judges	Israel's Actual Judges
2:4	9:7	1:17,21,23	3:2
3:14	11:3,4	26:8	5:7
4:4	16:5	56:1	10:2
5:16	32:1	58:2,8	59:4,9,11,14,15
28:6,17,26	40:14		
30:18	42:1,3,4		
33:5,22	51:4,5		
61:8	53:8		
66:16			

Israel was to reflect YHWH's character to the nations. She failed, so YHWH raised one "ideal" Israelite to fulfill His personal revelation to the world (i.e., the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, cf. Isa. 52:11-53:12)!

SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS

"Righteousness" is such a crucial topic that a Bible student must make a personal extensive study of the concept.

In the OT God's character is described as "just" or "righteous" (BDB 841). The Mesopotamian term itself comes from a river reed which was used as a construction tool to judge the horizontal straightness of walls and fences. God chose the term to be used metaphorically of His own nature. He is the straight edge (ruler) by which all things are evaluated. This concept asserts God's righteousness as well as His right to judge.

Man was created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1,3; 9:6). Mankind was created for fellowship with God. All of creation is a stage or backdrop for God and mankind's interaction. God wanted His highest creation, mankind, to know Him, love Him, serve Him, and be like Him! Mankind's loyalty was tested (cf. Genesis 3) and the original couple failed the test. This resulted in a disruption of the relationship between God and humanity (cf. Genesis 3; Rom. 5:12-21).

God promised to repair and restore the fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:15). He does this through His own will and His own Son. Humans were incapable of restoring the breach (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:20).

After the Fall, God's first step toward restoration was the concept of covenant based on His invitation and mankind's repentant, faithful, obedient response. Because of the Fall, humans were incapable of appropriate action (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; Galatians 3). God Himself had to take the initiative to restore covenant-breaking humans. He did this by

1. declaring mankind righteous through the work of Christ (i.e., forensic righteousness).
2. freely giving mankind righteousness through the work of Christ (i.e., imputed righteousness).
3. providing the indwelling Spirit who produces righteousness (i.e., Christlikeness, the restoration of the image of God) in mankind.
4. providing the fellowship of the Garden of Eden

However, God requires a covenantal response. God decrees (i.e., freely gives) and provides, but humans must respond and continue to respond in

1. repentance
2. faith
3. lifestyle obedience
4. perseverance

Righteousness, therefore, is a covenantal, reciprocal action between God and His highest creation. Based on the character of God, the work of Christ, and the enabling of the Spirit, to which each individual must personally and continually respond appropriately. The concept is called “justification by faith.” The concept is revealed in the Gospels, but not in these terms. It is primarily defined by Paul, who uses the Greek term “righteousness” in its various forms over 100 times.

Paul, being a trained rabbi, uses the term *dikaio sunē* in its Hebrew sense of the term *SDQ* used in the Septuagint, not from Greek literature. In Greek writings the term is connected to someone who conformed to the expectations of Deity and society. In the Hebrew sense it is always structured in covenantal terms. YHWH is a just, ethical, moral God. He wants His people to reflect His character. Redeemed mankind becomes a new creature. This newness results in a new lifestyle of godliness (Roman Catholic focus of justification). Since Israel was a theocracy there was no clear delineation between the secular (society’s norms) and the sacred (God’s will). This distinction is expressed in the Hebrew and Greek terms being translated into English as “justice” (relating to society) and “righteousness” (relating to religion).

The gospel (good news) of Jesus is that fallen mankind has been restored to fellowship with God. This has been accomplished through the Father’s love, mercy, and grace; the Son’s life, death, and resurrection; and the Spirit’s wooing and drawing to the gospel. Justification is a free act of God, but it must issue in godliness (Augustine’s position, which reflects both the Reformation emphasis on the freeness of the gospel and Roman Catholic emphasis on a changed life of love and faithfulness). For Reformers the term “the righteousness of God” is an OBJECTIVE GENITIVE (i.e., the act of making sinful mankind acceptable to God [positional sanctification], while for the Catholic it is a SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE, which is the process of becoming more like God [experiential progressive sanctification]. In reality it is surely both!!)

In my view all of the Bible from Genesis 4 - Revelation 20 is a record of God’s restoring the fellowship of Eden. The Bible starts with God and mankind in fellowship in an earthly setting (cf. Genesis 1-2) and the Bible ends with the same setting (cf. Revelation 21-22). God’s image and purpose will be restored!

To document the above discussions note the following selected NT passages illustrating the Greek word group.

1. God is righteous (often connected to God as Judge)
 - a. Romans 3:26
 - b. II Thessalonians 1:5-6
 - c. II Timothy 4:8
 - d. Revelation 16:5
2. Jesus is righteous
 - a. Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14 (title of Messiah)
 - b. Matthew 27:19
 - c. I John 2:1,29; 3:7

3. God's will for His creation is righteousness
 - a. Leviticus 19:2
 - b. Matthew 5:48 (cf. 5:17-20)
4. God's means of providing and producing righteousness
 - a. Romans 3:21-31
 - b. Romans 4
 - c. Romans 5:6-11
 - d. Galatians 3:6-14
 - e. Given by God
 - 1) Romans 3:24; 6:23
 - 2) I Corinthians 1:30
 - 3) Ephesians 2:8-9
 - f. Received by faith
 - 1) Romans 1:17; 3:22,26; 4:3,5,13; 9:30; 10:4,6,10
 - 2) II Corinthians 5:21
 - g. Through acts of the Son
 - 1) Romans 5:21
 - 2) II Corinthians 5:21
 - 3) Philippians 2:6-11
5. God's will is that His followers be righteous
 - a. Matthew 5:3-48; 7:24-27
 - b. Romans 2:13; 5:1-5; 6:1-23
 - c. Ephesians 1:4; 2:10
 - d. I Timothy 6:11
 - e. II Timothy 2:22; 3:16
 - f. I John 3:7
 - g. I Peter 2:24
6. God will judge the world by righteousness
 - a. Acts 17:31
 - b. II Timothy 4:8

Righteousness is a characteristic of God, freely given to sinful mankind through Christ. It is

1. a decree of God
2. a gift of God
3. an act of Christ
4. a life to be lived

But it is also a process of becoming righteous that must be vigorously and steadfastly pursued, which will one day be consummated at the Second Coming. Fellowship with God is restored at salvation but progresses throughout life to become a face-to-face encounter at death or the *Parousia!*

Here is a good quote to conclude this discussion. It is taken from *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* from IVP.

“Calvin, more so than Luther, emphasizes the relational aspect of the righteousness of God. Luther’s view of the righteousness of God seems to contain the aspect of acquittal. Calvin emphasizes the marvelous nature of the communication or imparting of God’s righteousness to us” (p. 834).

For me the believer’s relationship to God has three aspects.

1. the gospel is a person (the Eastern Church and Calvin’s emphasis)
2. the gospel is truth (Augustine’s and Luther’s emphases)
3. the gospel is a changed life (Catholic emphasis)

They are all true and must be held together for a healthy, sound, biblical Christianity. If any one is over emphasized or depreciated, problems occur.

We must welcome Jesus!

We must believe the gospel!

We must pursue Christlikeness!

▣ **“the nations will bless themselves in Him”** This is a recurrent theme in Genesis (BDB 138, KB 159, *Hithpael* PERFECT, cf. Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:41; 28:14). God’s promises to the Patriarchs show Israel’s purpose as an instrument of reaching the whole world (cf. Exod. 19:5-6; Isa. 42:6; 49:6, see Special Topic at 1:5).

This is such an important theological concept that I have included my notes from Gen. 12:3.

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, Peshitta “and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”

NRSV footnote,

JPSOA “by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves”

TEV

“and through you I will bless all the nations”

TEV footnote

“All the nations will ask me to bless them as I have blessed you”

NJB

“and all clans on earth will bless themselves by you”

LXX

“and in you shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed”

REB

“All the peoples on earth will wish to be blessed as you are blessed”

REB footnote

“All the peoples on earth will be blessed because of you”

The *Niphal* PERFECT (BDB 138, KB 159) stem is usually PASSIVE (LXX, NASB, “shall be blessed,” cf. 18:18; 28:14), but in 22:18 and 26:4 the *Hithpael* PERFECT stem is used, which is REFLEXIVE (“bless themselves”). It is possible that the *Hithpael* denotes a continuing action through time. It is significant that God includes all nations in His promise to Abram in light of the universal rebellion of chapter 11. God chose Abraham to choose all humans made in His image (cf. Ps. 22:27; 66:4; 86:9; Isa. 66:23; 49:6; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8)! Also see note at 22:18.

This is really an important passage. It shows clearly God’s purpose of using Abram to reach all the world. The universal promise of Gen. 3:15 is being implemented, even amidst the purposeful rebellion of Noah’s children (i.e., Genesis 10 and 11). It is not only to those who show favor to Abram, but to those who will show favor to Abram’s seed (i.e., the Messiah). There was/is a universal purpose in YHWH’s choice of “one” to bring prophesied redemption through the special “One” of his descendants. In the big picture, this is not a text about an attitude toward Jews, but a faith response to the Jewish “promised One.”

▣ **“in Him they will glory”** The VERB (BDB 237, KB 248) is *Hithpael* IMPERFECT, denoting ongoing action. Followers of YHWH glory/boast in knowing Him and Him alone (cf. 9:23-24). Notice the wonderful, universal implications of Isa. 45:20-25, especially v. 25b! Biblical faith is a personal relationship with the one true God!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:3-4

³For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem,

“Break up your fallow ground,

And do not sow among thorns.

⁴Circumcise yourselves to the LORD

And remove the foreskins of your heart,

Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem,

Or else My wrath will go forth like fire

And burn with none to quench it,

Because of the evil of your deeds.”

4:3-8 This strophe is a warning and call for repentance. Notice the commands.

1. v. 3, “break up” – BDB 644, KB 697, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (metaphor for prepare your heart, cf. Hos. 10:12)
2. v. 3, “sow” – BDB 281, KB 282, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (negated, “among the thorns” metaphor for established idolatry)
3. v. 4, “circumcise yourselves” – BDB 557, KB 555, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE (a metaphor for the heart, cf. 9:25-26)
4. v. 4, “removed” – BDB 693, KB 747, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (the literary parallel to “circumcise”)

In light of YHWH’s warning of judgment (vv. 4c-f), He calls for the proclamation of invasion and action (vv. 5-8).

1. v. 5, “declare” – BDB 610, KB 665, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (first of six IMPERATIVES about communication)
2. v. 5, “proclaim” – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. v. 5, “say” – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. v. 5, “blow” – BDB 1075, KB 1785, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
5. v. 5, “cry” – BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
6. v. 5, “aloud” – BDB 569, KB 583, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
7. v. 5, “say” – same as #3

The content of their commandment is, act now, judgment is coming (cf. 6c-7)

8. v. 5, “assemble” – BDB 62, KB 74, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 8:14
9. v. 5, “let us go” – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* COHORTATIVE, cf. 8:14
10. v. 5, “lift up a standard” – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (i.e., a military signal)
11. v. 6, “seek refuge” – BDB 731, KB 797, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
12. v. 6, “do not stand *still*” – BDB 763, KB 840, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (i.e., do not wait!)

Finally, in light of the coming judgment, they are called on to grieve.

13. v. 8, “put on sackcloth” – BDB 291, KB 291, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (see Special Topic at 2:37)
14. v. 8, “lament” – BDB 704, KB 763, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
15. v. 8, “wail” – BDB 410, KB 413, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

Why? “The fierce anger of the Lord” is coming (cf. 4:26; 12:13; 25:37,38; 30:24; 49:37; 51:45) and He will not change His mind (cf. v. 28).

4:3 “to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem” This shows the collective call to individual repentance, which characterizes Jeremiah and Ezekiel (i.e., Ezekiel 18). Biblical faith is corporate but it is entered into by individual choice.

▣ **“Break up your fallow ground”** Verse 3 relates to the agricultural practice of preparing ground for seed. The rabbis use the illustration that our minds are like a plowed field, ready for seed and what one lets in through the eyes and ears falls on that prepared ground. What we think and then dwell on becomes who we are!

Repentance is plowed, good ground, ready for fellowship and obedience in a daily walk with God.

4:4 “Circumcise yourselves to the LORD. . .remove the foreskin of your heart” This shows that ritual alone was/is never effective, but a daily, internal faith attitude is essential (cf. Deut. 10:12; 30:6). Other examples of this metaphor are:

1. ears, Jer. 6:10
2. lips, Exod. 6:12,30
3. heart, Deut. 10:16
4. flesh, Gen. 17:14

▣ **“My wrath go forth like fire”** This is a recurrent metaphor (cf. 17:4; 21:12).

SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRE

Fire has both positive and negative connotations in Scripture.

A. Positive

1. warms (cf. Isa. 44:15; John 18:18)
2. lights (cf. Isa. 50:11; Matt. 25:1-13)
3. cooks (cf. Exod. 12:8; Isa. 44:15-16; John 21:9)
4. purifies (cf. Num. 31:22-23; Prov. 17:3; Isa. 1:25; 6:6-8; Jer. 6:29; Mal. 3:2-3)
5. holiness (cf. Gen. 15:17; Exod. 3:2; 19:18; Ezek. 1:27; Heb. 12:29)
6. God’s leadership (cf. Exod. 13:21; Num. 14:14; I Kgs. 18:24)
7. God’s empowering (cf. Acts 2:3)

B. Negative

1. burns (cf. Josh. 6:24; 8:8; 11:11; Matt. 22:7)
2. destroys (cf. Gen. 19:24; Lev. 10:1-2)
3. anger (cf. Num. 21:28; Isa. 10:16; Zech. 12:6)
4. punishment (cf. Gen. 38:24; Lev. 20:14; 21:9; Josh. 7:15)
5. false eschatological sign (cf. Rev. 13:13)

C. God’s anger against sin is expressed in fire metaphors

1. His anger burns (cf. Hos. 8:5; Zeph. 3:8)
2. He pours out fire (cf. Nah. 1:6)
3. eternal fire (cf. Jer. 15:14; 17:4)

4. eschatological judgment (cf. Matt. 3:10; 13:40; John 15:6; II Thess. 1:7; II Pet. 3:7-10; Rev. 8:7; 16:8)
- D. Like so many metaphors in the Bible (i.e., leaven, lion) fire can be a blessing or a curse, depending on the context.

▣ **“with none to quench it”** See Isa. 1:31; 66:24; Amos 5:6; Matt. 3:12; Mark 9:43,48.
See the word study *gehenna* in the following Special Topic.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

I. Old Testament

- A. All humans go to *Sheol* (etymology uncertain, BDB 1066), which is a way of referring to death or the grave, mostly in Wisdom Literature and Isaiah. In the OT it was a shadowy, conscious, but joyless existence (cf. Job 10:21-22; 38:17; Ps. 107:10,14).
- B. *Sheol* characterized
 1. associated with God’s judgment (fire), Deut. 32:22
 2. associated with punishment even before Judgment Day, Ps. 18:4-5
 3. associated with *abaddon* (destruction), also open to God, Job 26:6; Ps. 139:8; Amos 9:2
 4. associated with “the Pit” (grave), Ps.16:10; Isa. 14:15; Ezek. 31:15-17
 5. wicked descend alive into *Sheol*, Num. 16:30,33; Ps. 55:15
 6. personified often as an animal with a large mouth, Num. 16:30; Isa. 5:14; 14:9; Hab. 2:5
 7. people there called *Repha'im* (i.e., “spirits of the dead”), Isa. 14:9-11)

II. New Testament

- A. The Hebrew *Sheol* is translated by the Greek *Hades* (the unseen world)
- B. *Hades* characterized
 1. refers to death, Matt. 16:18
 2. linked to death, Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14
 3. often analogous to the place of permanent punishment (*Gehenna*), Matt. 11:23 (OT quote); Luke 10:15; 16:23-24
 4. often analogous to the grave, Luke 16:23
- C. Possibly divided (rabbis)
 1. righteous part called paradise (really another name for heaven, cf. II Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7), Luke 23:43
 2. wicked part called *Tartarus*, II Peter 2:4, where it is a holding place for evil angels (cf. Genesis 6; I Enoch)
- D. *Gehenna*
 1. Reflects the OT phrase, “the valley of the sons of Hinnom,” (south of Jerusalem). It was the place where the Phoenician fire god, *Molech* (BDB 574), was worshiped by child sacrifice (cf. II Kgs. 16:3; 21:6; II Chr. 28:3; 33:6), which was forbidden in Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5.

2. Jeremiah changed it from a place of pagan worship into a site of YHWH's judgment (cf. Jer. 7:32; 19:6-7). It became the place of fiery, eternal judgment in I Enoch 90:26-27 and Sib. 1:103.
3. The Jews of Jesus' day were so appalled by their ancestors' participation in pagan worship by child sacrifice, that they turned this area into the garbage dump for Jerusalem. Many of Jesus' metaphors for eternal judgment came from this landfill (fire, smoke, worms, stench, cf. Mark 9:44,46). The term *Gehenna* is used only by Jesus (except in James 3:6).
4. Jesus' usage of *Gehenna*
 - a. fire, Matt. 5:22; 18:9; Mark 9:43
 - b. permanent, Mark 9:48 (Matt. 25:46)
 - c. place of destruction (both soul and body), Matt. 10:28
 - d. paralleled to *Sheol*, Matt. 5:29-30; 18:9
 - e. characterizes the wicked as "son of hell," Matt. 23:15
 - f. result of judicial sentence, Matt. 23:33; Luke 12:5
 - g. the concept of *Gehenna* is parallel to the second death (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14) or the lake of fire (cf. Matt. 13:42,50; Rev. 19:20; 20:10,14-15; 21:8). It is possible the lake of fire becomes the permanent dwelling place of humans (from *Sheol*) and evil angels (from *Tartarus*, II Pet. 2:4; Jude v. 6 or the abyss, cf. Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:1-11; 20:1,3).
 - h. it was not designed for humans, but for Satan and his angels, Matt. 25:41
- E. It is possible, because of the overlap of *Sheol*, *Hades*, and *Gehenna* that
 1. originally all humans went to *Sheol/Hades*
 2. their experience there (good/bad) is exacerbated after Judgment Day, but the place of the wicked remains the same (this is why the KJV translated *hades* (grave) as *gehenna* (hell)).
 3. the only NT text to mention torment before Judgment is the parable of Luke 16:19-31 (Lazarus and the Rich Man). *Sheol* is also described as a place of punishment now (cf. Deut. 32:22; Ps. 18:1-5). However, one cannot establish a doctrine on a parable.

III. Intermediate state between death and resurrection

- A. The NT does not teach the "immortality of the soul," which is one of several ancient views of the after life.
 1. human souls exist before their physical life
 2. human souls are eternal before and after physical death
 3. often the physical body is seen as a prison and death as release back to pre-existent state
- B. The NT hints at a disembodied state between death and resurrection
 1. Jesus speaks of a division between body and soul, Matt. 10:28
 2. Abraham may have a body now, Mark 12:26-27; Luke 16:23
 3. Moses and Elijah have a physical body at the transfiguration, Matthew 17
 4. Paul asserts that at the Second Coming the souls with Christ will get their new bodies first, I Thess. 4:13-18
 5. Paul asserts that believers get their new spiritual bodies on Resurrection Day, I Cor. 15:23,52
 6. Paul asserts that believers do not go to *Hades*, but at death are with Jesus, II Cor. 5:6,8; Phil. 1:23. Jesus overcame death and took the righteous to heaven with Him, I Pet. 3:18-22.

IV. Heaven

A. This term is used in three senses in the Bible.

1. the atmosphere above the earth, Gen. 1:1,8; Isa. 42:5; 45:18
2. the starry heavens, Gen. 1:14; Deut. 10:14; Ps. 148:4; Heb. 4:14; 7:26
3. the place of God's throne, Deut. 10:14; I Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 148:4; Eph. 4:10; Heb. 9:24 (third heaven, II Cor. 12:2)

B. The Bible does not reveal much about the afterlife, probably because fallen humans have no way or capacity to understand (cf. I Cor. 2:9).

C. Heaven is both a place (cf. John 14:2-3) and a person (cf. II Cor. 5:6,8). Heaven may be a restored Garden of Eden (Genesis 1-2; Revelation 21-22). The earth will be cleansed and restored (cf. Acts 3:21; Rom. 8:21; II Pet. 3:10). The image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) is restored in Christ. Now the intimate fellowship of the Garden of Eden is possible again.

However, this may be metaphorical (heaven as a huge, cubed city of Rev. 21:9-27) and not literal. I Corinthians 15 describes the difference between the physical body and the spiritual body as the seed to the mature plant. Again, I Cor. 2:9 (a quote from Isa. 64:4 and 65:17) is a great promise and hope! I know that when we see Him we will be like Him (cf. I John 3:2).

V. Helpful resources

- A. William Hendriksen, *The Bible On the Life Hereafter*
- B. Maurice Rawlings, *Beyond Death's Door*

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:5-9

⁵Declare in Judah and proclaim in Jerusalem, and say,

“Blow the trumpet in the land;

Cry aloud and say,

‘Assemble yourselves, and let us go

Into the fortified cities.’

⁶Lift up a standard toward Zion!

Seek refuge, do not stand *still*,

For I am bringing evil from the north,

And great destruction.

⁷A lion has gone up from his thicket,

And a destroyer of nations has set out;

He has gone out from his place

To make your land a waste.

Your cities will be ruins

Without inhabitant.

⁸For this, put on sackcloth,

Lament and wail;

For the fierce anger of the LORD

Has not turned back from us.

⁹It shall come about in that day,” declares the LORD, “that the heart of the king and the heart of the princes will fail; and the priests will be appalled and the prophets will be astounded.”

4:5 “Blow the trumpet” This is the word *shophar*. It was used as a call to war or for religious observances. Verses 5-9 form a poem of a watchman.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HORNS USED BY ISRAEL

There are four words in Hebrew associated with horns/trumpets:

1. “the ram’s horn” (BDB 901) – turned into an instrument of sound, cf. Josh. 6:5. This same word is used for the ram caught by his horns which Abraham will substitute for Isaac in Gen. 22:13.
2. “trumpet” (BDB 1051) – from Assyrian term for wild sheep (ibex). This is the horn that was used in Exod 19:16,19 at Mt. Sinai/Horeb. #1 and #2 are parallel in Josh. 6:5. It was used to communicate times to worship and time to fight (i.e., Jericho was both, cf. Josh. 6:4).
3. “ram’s horn” (BDB 385) – from Phoenician word for Ram (cf. Josh. 6:4,6,8,13). It also stands for the Year of Jubilee (cf. Lev. 25:13,28,40,50,52,54; 27:17,18,23,24).

(All of these first three seem interchangeable with no distinction intended. The Mishnah (RH 3.2) allowed any animal horn—sheep, goat, or antelope, but not from a cow.)

4. “trumpets” (BDB 348) – possibly from the VERB “stretch out,” implying a straight bone (not curved as the animal horns). These were made of silver (after the shape and form of Egypt). These are used:
 - a. with worship rites (cf. Num. 10:2,8,10; Ezra 3:10; Neh. 12:35,41)
 - b. for military purposes (cf. Num. 10:9; 31:6; Hosea 5:8)
 - c. for royal purposes (cf. II Kgs. 11:14)

One of these metal horns is depicted on the Arch of Titus in Rome; also Josephus describes them in *Antiq.* 3.12.6.

4:6 “evil from the north” This was a symbol of evil because it was the route of invasion for the Mesopotamian powers (i.e., Assyria, Babylon, Persia, cf. 1:14,15; 6:1,22; 10:22; 50:3; Isa. 41:25).

4:7 “a destroyer of nations has set out” This is literally “struck his tents.” It refers to Nebuchadnezzar II of Neo-Babylon, who took Judah into exile in 605, 597, 586, 582 B.C., as Assyria did Israel in 722 B.C.

4:9 “in that day” This phrase was a way of referring to the special future day of YHWH’s visitation (cf. v. 11a). It can be for blessing or judgment, here judgment.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THAT DAY

This phrase, “in that day” or “on that day,” is a way for the eighth century prophets to speak of God’s visitation (presence), both for judgment and restoration.

Hosea		Amos		Micah	
<u>positive</u>	<u>negative</u>	<u>positive</u>	<u>negative</u>	<u>positive</u>	<u>negative</u>
1:11	1:5		1:14(2)		2:4
	2:3		2:16		3:6
2:15			3:14	4:6	
2:16			6:3		5:10
2:21	3:18(2)		8:3		7:4

5:9		8:9(2)	7:11(2)
7:5		8:10	7:12
9:5	9:11	8:13	
10:14			

This pattern is typical of the prophets. God is going to act against sin in time, but He also offers a day of repentance and forgiveness to those who change their hearts and actions! God’s purpose of redemption and restoration will be accomplished! He will have a people who reflect His character. The purpose of creation (fellowship between God and humanity) will be fulfilled!

☐ **“the king. . .the princes. . .the priests. . .the prophets”** This refers to those leaders who rejected Jeremiah’s message (cf. 1:18; 2:8,26; 5:31; 6:13; 8:1,10; 13:13; 14:18; 23:33-34). Judah had no godly leaders!

☐ Notice the parallel VERBS.

1. fail – BDB 1, KB 2, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. appalled – BDB 1030, KB 1563, *Niphal* PERFECT (related form “waste” in v. 7)
3. astounded – BDB 1069, KB 1744, *Qal* IMPERFECT (found only here in Jeremiah)

The leadership (civil and religious) will utterly fail and not know what to do in light of the invasion. Their eyes have been blinded by idolatry and false prophets (cf. v. 10); they cannot find YHWH! As the leaders go, so go the people!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:10

¹⁰**Then I said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Surely You have utterly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, ‘You will have peace’; whereas a sword touches the throat.”**

4:10 “Surely You have utterly deceived this people” Verse 10 is a comment from Jeremiah to YHWH about the message of the false prophets. Jeremiah speaks bluntly and honestly to God (cf. 12:1; 15:17-18; 20:7-9). This false message of hope and deliverance from invasion was what the false prophets were preaching in God’s name (cf. 6:14; 8:11; 14:13; 23:16-17; 28:1ff). God let this occur but the speaker and hearer are responsible!

One more possibility in understanding this difficult phrase is that the people were clinging to Isaiah’s prophecies about the invulnerability of Jerusalem (cf. Isaiah 36-39). Jeremiah would have to remind them that Isaiah’s promises were also based on a conditional covenant model (i.e., “if. . .then. . .,” cf. vv. 1-2). Judah did not obey the covenant, therefore, its curses, not its promises, were what they would reap (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28-29).

☐ **“throat”** This is the word *nepshesh* (BDB 659, cf. Gen. 2:7 [of man] and 2:19 [of animals]). It basically means the life on this planet that breathes (related to the Hebrew word for “breath”).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:11-13

¹¹**In that time it will be said to this people and to Jerusalem, “A scorching wind from the bare heights in the wilderness in the direction of the daughter of My people—not to winnow and not to**

cleanse,¹² a wind too strong for this—will come at My command; now I will also pronounce judgments against them.

¹³Behold, he goes up like clouds,
And his chariots like the whirlwind;
His horses are swifter than eagles.
Woe to us, for we are ruined!”

4:11 “A scorching wind” This refers to the sirocco desert winds, often used in the OT as a metaphor for judgment (i.e., “not to winnow, and not to cleanse,” cf. v. 12).

▣ **“from the bare heights”** This was the physical locality of *Ba'al* worship (cf. 2:20; 3:2,6; 4:11; 7:29; 14:6; 17:2; Isa. 57:7; Deut. 12:2).

▣ **“not to winnow”** The wind will be too strong and too hot for harvesting grain. The last item, “cleanse,” probably refers to the process of separating the husk from the grain.

4:12 “at My command” God sent these judgments; they were carried out by Mesopotamian pagan nations! There are consequences to covenant disobedience (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28-29)!

4:13 This is a metaphorical description of God’s judgment (i.e., lines a-c) and the results.

1. woe to us (BDB 17, cf. v. 31; 6:4; 10:19; 13:27)
2. we are ruined (BDB 994, KB 1418, *Pual* PERFECT, same VERB found in 4:20; 9:19; 10:20; 48:1,15,20; 49:3,10)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:14-18

¹⁴“Wash your heart from evil, O Jerusalem,
That you may be saved.
How long will your wicked thoughts
Lodge within you?”

¹⁵For a voice declares from Dan,
And proclaims wickedness from Mount Ephraim.

¹⁶Report *it* to the nations, now!
Proclaim over Jerusalem,
‘Besiegers come from a far country,
And lift their voices against the cities of Judah.

¹⁷Like watchmen of a field they are against her round about,
Because she has rebelled against Me,’ declares the LORD.

¹⁸“Your ways and your deeds
Have brought these things to you.
This is your evil. How bitter!
How it has touched your heart!”

4:14 “Wash your heart” This VERB (BDB 460, KB 459, *Piel* IMPERATIVE) is an allusion to washing a soiled garment, which is a metaphor for repentance and cleansing (cf. Ps. 51:2,7; Isa. 1:16). It is a call, like Ezekiel 18, for an individual to turn back to YHWH and change his ways (cf. vv. 3-4).

▣ **“That you may be saved”** The Hebrew VERB (BDB 446, KB 448) has two connotations.

1. physical deliverance
2. spiritual forgiveness

Both are needed for Judah to avert YHWH’s coming judgment!

SPECIAL TOPIC: SALVATION (OT Term)

This term (BDB 447) has several connotations.

1. welfare, prosperity, Job 30:15
2. divine salvation which encompasses both physical and spiritual aspects
 - a. Gen. 49:18
 - b. Deut. 32:15
 - c. Ps. 3:2,8; 22:1; 35:3; 62:2; 69:29; 70:5; 78:22; 80:3; 89:26; 91:16; 106:4; 140:7
 - d. Isa. 12:2; 33:2; 51:6,8; 52:7,10; 56:1; 59:11; 60:18; 62:1
3. the idea of physical and spiritual deliverance is clearly present in Jonah 2:9-10
4. often “rejoicing” is related to YHWH’s salvation, I Sam. 2:1; Isa. 25:9; 26:1; Ps. 9:14; 13:5; 35:9

Salvation involves the implementation of YHWH’s original intended fellowship and society with His human creatures. It involves individual and societal wholeness!

▣ **“wicked thoughts”** Maybe this is best illustrated by 13:27.

4:15 “voice. . .from Dan” This was the farthest northern tribe in Palestine. The tribe of Dan, in unbelief, moved from its tribal allocation in the south (cf. Josh. 19:40-48) to the north (cf. Judges 18). The phrase “from Dan to Beersheba” became a way to denote the whole Promised Land (cf. Jdgs. 20:1; I Sam. 3:20; II Sam. 3:10; 17:11; 24:2; II Chr. 30:5; Amos 8:14).

▣ **“Mount Ephraim”** This refers to the central mountainous (i.e., hill country) region of Palestine, which was the tribal allocation of Ephraim (cf. Josh. 17:15; 19:50; 20:7). The mountains of Ebal and Gerizim (i.e., Samaria) were in this region.

Dan and Ephraim fell to the Assyrians in 722 B.C. Now that destruction would come to Judah and Jerusalem (cf. vv. 16-17) and the northern invaders were close!

4:16 This verse starts with two commands to make known YHWH’s coming judgment to Judah.

1. report – BDB 269, KB 269, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (this could refer to the mercenary invaders, v. 16c)
2. proclaim – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

The voice from Dan (v. 15) (1) tells the invaders (or the surrounding nations to Judah) they are close to Jerusalem and (2) tells Jerusalem that the invaders are close to them!

▣ **“Besiegers come from a far country”** The VERBAL (BDB 665, KB 718, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) in this context has the meaning of “besiege” (BDB 666, #5, cf. Isa. 1:8; Ezek. 6:12). It usually is translated “enemies.” The UBS *Handbook* (p. 133) suggests advanced scouts of the Babylonian army.

4:17 “Like watchmen of a field” I must admit that I do not understand this phrase in this context. TEV takes it to mean watchmen that surround a field ready to harvest. But here they guard against any persons escaping the besieged city.

The UBS *Handbook* (p. 134) suggests that the imagery is connected to the “tents” (booths) of the agricultural watchmen with the army tents of the invaders.

▣ **“Because she has rebelled against Me”** Notice the personal affront that YHWH feels! It is not just the violation of His covenant, but the rebellion against Him, Him as husband, Him as King, Him as the only God! Possibly 5:20-29 describes the attitude best.

The VERB “rebelled” (BDB 598, KB 632, *Qal* PERFECT) is also found in 5:23; Lam. 1:18,20 (twice); and 3:42. However a SYNONYM (BDB 833, KB 981) is used in 2:8,29; 3:13; 33:8; Lam. 3:42.

4:18 The invasion, destruction, and exile of the covenant people from the covenant land and city was their own fault. YHWH only gave them what they had sown (cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Pro. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; I Cor. 3:8; II Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7-10; II Tim. 4:14; I Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12).

▣ **“How bitter”** This is the result of their rebellion (cf. 2:19; Amos 8:10). Note Job 20:11-16; sin tastes good initially but becomes poison and brings death!

Their idolatry had spread into their very being (i.e., heart). They were sinful through and through!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:19-22

¹⁹**“My soul, my soul! I am in anguish! Oh, my heart!**

My heart is pounding in me;

I cannot be silent,

Because you have heard, O my soul,

The sound of the trumpet,

The alarm of war.

²⁰**Disaster on disaster is proclaimed,**

For the whole land is devastated;

Suddenly my tents are devastated,

My curtains in an instant.

²¹**How long must I see the standard**

And hear the sound of the trumpet?

²²**For My people are foolish,**

They know Me not;

They are stupid children

And have no understanding.

They are shrewd to do evil,

But to do good they do not know.”

4:19-22 This shows the way God truly feels (v. 22) about bringing judgment to Judah (cf. Hos. 11:8-9).

▣ **“soul”** The term “soul” means “bowels” (BDB 588). The ancient Hebrew thought the seat of the emotions was in the lower viscera (BDB 589 #5).

The terms “soul” and “heart” are repeated for intensity.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART

The Greek term *kardia* is used in the Septuagint and NT to reflect the Hebrew term *lēb* (BDB 523). It is used in several ways (cf. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, pp. 403-404).

1. the center of physical life, a metaphor for the person (cf. Acts 14:17; II Cor. 3:2-3; James 5:5)
2. the center of spiritual life (i.e., moral)
 - a. God knows the heart (cf. Luke 16:15; Rom. 8:27; I Cor. 14:25; I Thess. 2:4; Rev. 2:23)
 - b. used of mankind’s spiritual life (cf. Matt. 15:18-19; 18:35; Rom. 6:17; I Tim. 1:5; II Tim. 2:22; I Pet. 1:22)
3. the center of the thought life (i.e., intellect, cf. Matt. 13:15; 24:48; Acts 7:23; 16:14; 28:27; Rom. 1:21; 10:6; 16:18; II Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:18; 4:18; James 1:26; II Pet. 1:19; Rev. 18:7; heart is synonymous with mind in II Cor. 3:14-15 and Phil. 4:7)
4. the center of the volition (i.e., will, cf. Acts 5:4; 11:23; I Cor. 4:5; 7:37; II Cor. 9:7)
5. the center of the emotions (cf. Matt. 5:28; Acts 2:26,37; 7:54; 21:13; Rom. 1:24; II Cor. 2:4; 7:3; Eph. 6:22; Phil. 1:7)
6. unique place of the Spirit’s activity (cf. Rom. 5:5; II Cor. 1:22; Gal. 4:6 [i.e., Christ in our hearts, Eph. 3:17])
7. The heart is a metaphorical way of referring to the entire person (cf. Matt. 22:37, quoting Deut. 6:5). The thoughts, motives, and actions attributed to the heart fully reveal the type of individual. The OT has some striking usages of the terms
 - a. Gen. 6:6; 8:21, “God was grieved to His heart,” also notice Hosea 11:8-9
 - b. Deut. 4:29; 6:5, “with all your heart and all your soul”
 - c. Deut. 10:16, “uncircumcised heart” and Rom. 2:29
 - d. Ezek. 18:31-32, “a new heart”
 - e. Ezek. 36:26, “a new heart” vs. “a heart of stone”

4:19

NASB “I am in anguish”
NKJV “I am pained in my heart”
NRSV “how great my agony”
TEV “I can’t bear the pain”
NJB “I writhe in pain”
JPSOA “How I writhe”

The VERB could come from

1. הוּל – BDB 296, KB 297, *Qal* COHORTATIVE, “writhe”
2. יָהַל – BDB 403 KB 407, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE, “wait”

This information is from *OT Parsing Guide* (revised) by Beall, Banks, and Smith, p. 546. The UBS Text Project and AB do not even mention the option.

▣ **“The sound of the trumpet”** The JPSOA notes that the MT has “you, O my being, hear,” but by a change of vocalization, yields, “I hear the blare of horns” (p. 931).

4:20 “tents. . .curtains” The phrase “in an instant” (עגל, BDB 921), with revocalization, can be translated “torn to shreds” (cf. LXX, NEB). This would fit the parallelism better.

The NET Bible (p. 1298) makes the comment that this verse could refer to

1. the weakness of Judah’s defenses
2. the destruction of a person’s home (using an ancient cultural metaphor)

The UBS *Handbook* (p. 137) suggests that “tents” and “curtain” could be a reference to the temple in Jerusalem.

4:21 The “standard” and “the trumpet” are military signaling devices, here of the invaders (cf. v. 19).

The two VERBS of this verse are

1. see – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
2. hear – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* COHORTATIVE

4:22 This verse shows God’s disappointment in His covenant people in strong metaphors of irony.

1. they are foolish (BDB 17)
2. they do not know Me
3. they are stupid (BDB 698) children
4. they have no understanding
5. they are shrewd to do evil
6. they do not know how to do good

Notice how they are described in 5:21.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:23-26

²³I looked on the earth, and behold, it was formless and void;

And to the heavens, and they had no light.

²⁴I looked on the mountains, and behold, they were quaking,

And all the hills moved to and fro.

²⁵I looked, and behold, there was no man,

And all the birds of the heavens had fled.

²⁶I looked, and behold, the fruitful land was a wilderness,

And all its cities were pulled down

Before the LORD, before His fierce anger.

4:23-26 This strophe uses original creation in its chaotic state (i.e., formless and void, cf. Gen. 1:2; “the heavens, and they had no light” before Gen. 1:3) with the destruction caused by foreign (Mesopotamian) invasion.

As creation was originally without human habitation, so now the Promised Land is without human habitation. This is not to be taken literally; there were always some Israelites and Judeans not taken captive, but the land looked/seemed empty! (cf. v. 27).

Also notice the literary structure of “I looked. . .” (BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* PERFECT) used four times.

4:25 “all the birds of the heavens had fled” This may refer to the fact that even the carnivorous birds have left because there is no more food (i.e., those killed in battle or invasion).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:27-31

²⁷For thus says the LORD,

**“The whole land shall be a desolation,
Yet I will not execute a complete destruction.**

²⁸For this the earth shall mourn

**And the heavens above be dark,
Because I have spoken, I have purposed,
And I will not change My mind, nor will I turn from it.”**

²⁹At the sound of the horseman and bowman every city flees;

**They go into the thickets and climb among the rocks;
Every city is forsaken,
And no man dwells in them.**

³⁰And you, O desolate one, what will you do?

**Although you dress in scarlet,
Although you decorate *yourself* with ornaments of gold,
Although you enlarge your eyes with paint,
In vain you make yourself beautiful.
Your lovers despise you;
They seek your life.**

³¹For I heard a cry as of a woman in labor,

**The anguish as of one giving birth to her first child,
The cry of the daughter of Zion gasping for breath,
Stretching out her hands, *saying*,
“Ah, woe is me, for I faint before murderers.”**

4:27 “Yet I will not execute a complete destruction” This refers to hope amidst judgment (cf. 5:10,18; 30:11; 46:28)!

4:28 This verse speaks of the determined judgment of God (cf. 23:20; 30:24; Num. 23:19). There is a greater purpose in the discipline of His covenant people (see Special Topic at 1:5). His discipline, in reality, was a sign of His love. He would not let them continue in their waywardness (i.e., Heb. 12:5-13).

Verse 28 personifies YHWH’s creation (i.e., earth and heaven). The first two created things mourn over the coming judgment of Palestine, and especially of Jerusalem and the temple (possibly v. 20c and d).

4:29 This verse describes what happened when an invading army swept across the land, and smaller unwallled cities were defenseless and had to abandon their homes and shops. They tried to hide or seek the shelter of a walled city.

4:30 This is an allusion to Judah as a harlot. Her lovers are the foreign powers with whom she makes political alliances.

4:31 This allusion switches to birth pains. But not to bring forth life, but death! Judah’s idolatry and covenant breaking have resulted in destruction, death, and exile!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List the four conditions God demanded to show repentance (vv. 1-2).
2. How many separate poems are there in chapter 4?
3. Briefly express in your own words the central idea that chapter 4 is trying to convey.

JEREMIAH 5

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jerusalem's Godlessness	The Justice of God's Judgment	The Corruptions For Which Judgment Is Coming (5:1-6:30)	The Sin of Jerusalem	Reasons For the Invasion
5:1-3 (1-3)	5:1-2 (1-2)	5:1-3 (1-3)	5:1-11 (1-11)	5:1-6
	5:3 (3)			
5:4-6 (4-6)	5:4-9 (4-5a) (5b-6)	5:4-5 (4-5)		
		5:6 (6)		
5:7-9 (7-9)	(7-9)	5:7-9 (7-9)		5:7-11
5:10-13 (10-13)	5:10-13 (10-11) (12-13)	5:10-13 (10-13)	The Lord Rejects Israel	
Judgment Proclaimed			5:12-14	5:12-17
5:14-17 (14-17)	5:14-17 (14-17)	5:14-17 (14-17)		
			5:15-17	Lessons To Be Drawn From the Punishment
5:18-19	5:18-19	5:18-19	5:18-19	5:18-19
			God Warns His People	In A Time of Famine (?)
5:20-29 (20-29)	5:20-29 (20-25)	5:20-31 (20-29)	5:20-25	5:20-25
	(26-29)			Resumption of the Theme of the Invasion
			5:26-28	5:26-31
			5:29-31	
5:30-31 (30-31)	5:30-31 (30-31)	(30-31)		

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BACKGROUND

- A. Chapter 2 speaks of the religious problems of Judah, while chapter 5 speaks of the civic problems.
- B. Chapters 4-6 are unified by their subject (i.e., Judah is sinful and will be invaded, destroyed, and exiled).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:1-3

¹**“Roam to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem,
And look now and take note.
And seek in her open squares,
If you can find a man,
If there is one who does justice, who seeks truth,
Then I will pardon her.**

²**And although they say, ‘As the LORD lives,’
Surely they swear falsely.”**

³**O LORD, do not Your eyes look for truth?
You have smitten them,
But they did not weaken;
You have consumed them,
But they refused to take correction.
They have made their faces harder than rock;
They have refused to repent.**

5:1 Notice the commands in verse 1 as Jeremiah is instructed to search for one righteous person (obviously, besides himself).

1. “roam to and fro” – BDB 1001, KB 1439, *Polel* IMPERATIVE
2. “look” – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. “take note” – BDB 393, KB 390, IMPERATIVE
4. “seek” – BDB 134, KB 152, *Piel* IMPERATIVE

This theme of “no righteous person” among the covenant people is repeated several times in the OT (cf. Isa. 59:16; 63:5; Ezek. 22:30). How shocking!

Remember this is poetry, not historical narrative. It is figurative, hyperbolic language to describe the prevalent sin of Judah! There were faithful individuals (i.e., Josiah, his advisers, Jeremiah, Baruch, etc.).

▣ **“who does justice; who seeks truth”** This is the kind of faithful follower mentioned in 4:1-2. The “if. . .then. . .” of both passages is a literary way to heighten the lack of such a person, who should not have been the exception but the rule for Israel/Judah, who had the benefits of

1. the Patriarchs
2. the promises
3. the covenant
4. the leaders (Moses, Joshua, David, Hezekiah, Josiah, etc.)
5. the prophets
6. YHWH’s revelation of Himself and His will

▣ **“Then I will pardon her”** This VERB (BDB 699, KB 757) is a *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense.

Notice one righteous person brings pardon to the whole (i.e., city or nation). This is surely hyperbole (cf. Gen. 18:26,32), but it does show

1. the sin of Judah
2. the heart of YHWH

The LXX adds, “says the LORD,” which clarifies who the speaker is. It is often difficult to know who is speaking to whom.

This Hebrew concept of corporality can also be seen in Joshua 7 and II Chr. 7:14. One can affect the whole for the better or worse! Jesus affected the whole positively (cf. Rom. 5:12-21), as Adam did negatively (cf. Genesis 3).

5:2 “As the LORD lives” Judeans used God’s name flippantly (in violation of Exod. 20:7; Lev. 19:12), but denied His lordship by their lives (cf. Isa. 29:13). This phrase is a play on YHWH, which is from the Hebrew VERB “to be” (cf. Exod. 3:14). See Special Topic: Names For Deity at 1:2.

5:3 Because YHWH could not find a faithful person, this verse, in a series of parallel lines, describes what He will do (all PERFECTS).

1. You have smitten them but they refused to be sickened
2. You consumed them but they refused to take correction
3. You made their faces harder than rock but they refused to repent (cf. v. 5e,f)

Since repentance (see Special Topic at 2:22) was no longer a real option, only judgment remained!

Just a note about the second VERB in #1 above. It could have two possible roots.

1. הלה – BDB 317, KB 316, “to be weak” or “to be sick”
2. הול – BDB 296, KB 297, “to feel anguish”

▣ **“truth”** This Hebrew term denotes “faithfulness” (BDB 53, cf. v. 1e; Hab. 2:4). See Special Topic at 3:12. Truth is more than accurate facts. It is a godly, faithful lifestyle.

▣ **“their faces harder than rock”** “Harder” (*Piel* PERFECT, BDB 304, KB 302) is often used metaphorically of people hardening their hearts (cf. Exod. 8:15; Ezek. 3:7-9). The context confirms this play on word meaning. The Judeans refused (*Piel* PERFECT, BDB 549, KB 540) to repent (*Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, BDB 996, KB 1427).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:4-6

**⁴Then I said, “They are only the poor,
They are foolish;**

**For they do not know the way of the LORD
Or the ordinance of their God.**

⁵I will go to the great

**And will speak to them,
For they know the way of the LORD
And the ordinance of their God.”**

**But they too, with one accord, have broken the yoke
And burst the bonds.**

⁶Therefore a lion from the forest will slay them,

**A wolf of the deserts will destroy them,
A leopard is watching their cities.**

**Everyone who goes out of them will be torn in pieces,
Because their transgressions are many,
Their apostasies are numerous.**

5:4-6 It seems that the prophet acknowledges Judah’s rebellion, but asks permission to address them again in hopes of diverting YHWH’s judgment.

1. Judah’s spiritual condition
 - a. they are poor (BDB 195, the opposite of “great,” BDB 152, v. 5)
 - b. they are foolish
 - c. they do not know the way of the LORD (i.e., willful ignorance and violations)
2. Jeremiah’s proposal
 - a. I will go and speak (both COHORTATIVES) to the great (i.e., leadership, cf. v. 31)
 - b. I will remind them of their knowledge of YHWH’s covenant
 - c. I will inform them of their corporate sin
 - (1) with one accord
 - (2) broken the yoke
 - (3) burst the bonds

5:4 “the way. . . ordinance” These two words (BDB 202 and 1048) are two of several terms used to describe God’s revelation.

The point of vv. 4-5 is that those who are uneducated and spend all their time just surviving, might not know God’s revelation, but the socially elite do have education and instruction in God’s revelation.

SPECIAL TOPIC: TERMS FOR GOD’S REVELATION (USING DEUTERONOMY AND PSALMS)

- I. “Statutes,” BDB 349, “an enactment, decree, or ordinance”
 - A. Masculine, קָּן – Deut. 4:1,5,6,8,14,40,45; 5:1; 6:1,24; 7:11; 11:32; 16:12; 17:19; 26:17; 27:10; Ps. 2:7; 50:16; 81:4; 99:7; 105:10,45; 148:6
 - B. Feminine, קָּקָן – Deut. 6:2; 8:11; 10:13; 11:1; 28:15,45; 30:10,16; Ps. 89:31; 119:5,8,12,16, 23,26,33,48,54,64,68,71,80,83,112,124,135,145,155,171

- II. “Law” BDB 435, “instruction”
- Deut. 1:5; 4:44; 17:11,18,19; 27:3,8,26; 28:58,61; 29:21,29; 30:10; 31:9; Ps. 1:2; 19:7; 78:10; 94:12; 105:45; 119:1,18,29,34,44,51,53, 55,61,70, 72,77,85,92,97,109,113,126,136,142,150,153,163,165,174
- III. “Testimonies” BDB 730, “divine laws”
- A. PLURAL, עדה – Deut. 4:45; 6:17,20; Ps. 25:10; 78:56; 93:5; 99:7; 119:22,24,46,59, 79,95, 119,125,138,146,152,167,168
 - B. עדות or עדת – Ps. 19:7; 78:5; 81:5; 119:2,14,31,36,88,99,111,129,144,157
- IV. “Precepts” BDB 824, “a charge”
- Ps. 19:8; 103:18; 111:7; 119:4,15,27,40,45,56,63,69,78,87,93, 94,100, 104,110, 128,134,141,159,168,173
- V. “Commandments” BDB 846
- Deut. 4:2,40; 5:29; 6:1,2,17,25; 8:1,2,11; 10:13; 11:13; 15:5; 26:13,17; 30:11,16; Ps. 19:8; 119:6,10,19,21,32, 35,47,48,60,66,73,86,96,98,115, 127,131,143,151, 166,176
- VI. “Judgments/ordinances” BDB 1048, “rulings” or “justice”
- Deut. 1:17; 4:1,5,8,14,45; 7:12; 16:18; 30:16; 33:10,21; Ps. 10:5; 18:22; 19:19; 48:11; 89:30; 97:8; 105:5,7; 119:7,13,20,30,39,43,52, 62, 75,84,102,106,120,137,149,156,160,164; 147:19; 149:9
- VII. “His ways” BDB 202, YHWH’s guidelines for His people’s lifestyle
- Deut. 8:6; 10:12; 11:22,28; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16; 32:4; Ps. 119:3, 5,37,59
- VIII. “His words”
- A. BDB 202 – Deut. 4:10,12,36; 9:10; 10:4; Ps. 119:9,16,17,25,28,42,43, 49,57,65, 74,81,89,101,105,107,114,130,139,147,160,161,169
 - B. BDB 57
 1. “word” – Deut. 17:19; 18:19; 33:9; Ps. 119:11,67,103,162,170,172
 2. “promise” – Ps. 119:38,41,50,58,76,82,116,133,140,148,154
 3. “command” – Ps. 119:158

☐ **“the yoke”** This word (BDB 760) was used by the rabbis to refer to the regulations of the law (cf. Matt. 11:29).

☐ **“burst the bonds”** These were the cords which held the yoke in place. It is another metaphor of known rebellion and covenant violation.

5:6 This verse describes YHWH’s judgment in metaphors of predators (a metaphor for invaders, cf. 2:15; 4:7).

1. a lion

2. a wolf
3. a leopard

The reason for the attacks was Judah's open-eyed rebellion.

1. many transgressions (BDB 833)
2. numerous apostasies (see Special Topic at 2:19)

Notice here the parallelism in the first three lines and the last two lines of v. 6.

▣ “**apostasies**” See special Topic at 2:19.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:7-9

⁷“**Why should I pardon you?**

Your sons have forsaken Me

And sworn by those who are not gods.

When I had fed them to the full,

They committed adultery

And trooped to the harlot's house.

⁸**They were well-fed lusty horses,**

Each one neighing after his neighbor's wife.

⁹**Shall I not punish these *people*,” declares the LORD,**

“and on a nation such as this

Shall I not avenge Myself?”

5:5-7 YHWH speaks to Judah and outlines their sins and His appropriate response.

1. their sin
 - a. your sons have forsaken Me (cf. 1:16)
 - b. they have sworn by false gods (opposite of 4:2 and 5:2) who are not real (cf. 2:11)
 - c. they committed adultery (i.e., idolatry)
 - d. they were involved in fertility worship with all the women of the community (cf. 3:8-9)
2. YHWH's response
 - a. He will not pardon them (opposite of v. 1)
 - b. He fed them to the full (revelation and blessing)
 - c. they deserve judgment (v. 9)

5:7 “sworn by those who are not gods” This is a denial of the existence of the Canaanite gods. See Special Topic: Monotheism at 1:5.

▣ “**sworn. . . fed them to the full**” There is a word play between

1. שבע – swear (BDB 989)
2. שבע – fed to the full (BDB 959)

It is even possible that “swear” should be in both lines, thereby denoting false allegiances to fertility gods.

▣ “**trooped to the harlot's house**” The MT has a word (BDB 151, KB 177) in *Hithpoel* that has two distinct meanings.

1. gash/cut – an aspect of pagan worship (cf. Deut. 14:1; I Kgs. 18:28; Jer. 16:6; 41:5; 47:5; possibly Hos. 7:14)

2. assemble in troops or bands (cf. Hosea 7:14; Micah 5:1) with the implication of spending much time there)

The LXX has “lodged” and the Peshitta has “fought one another.” Obviously there is some confusion in meaning in the ancient versions.

5:8 Again the animal world is used to describe human activity. Humans, made in God’s image, should act differently than animals in heat!

The first two VERBS are uncertain in this context.

1. “well fed” – BDB 402, KB 404, *Pual* PARTICIPLE, occurs only here. BDB suggests it possibly parallels an Arabic root, “to weigh,” hence a metaphor for “testicles.” KB suggests “to be in heat,” from another Arabic root.
2. “lusty” – BDB 1013, KB 1488, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE, which occurs only here. KB suggests it also means “possessing testicles” (גִּשְׁחָ = testicle, cf. Lev. 21:20)

The LXX has “they were lusty stallions, each neighing for his fellow’s wife.” Remember for interpreting poetry, look to

1. context (i.e., the strophe)
2. parallelism
3. general sense of the book’s larger context
4. similar Hebrew roots
5. cognate language roots
6. common sense

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:10-13

- ¹⁰ **“Go up through her vine rows and destroy,
But do not execute a complete destruction;
Strip away her branches,
For they are not the LORD’S.**
- ¹¹ **For the house of Israel and the house of Judah
Have dealt very treacherously with Me,” declares the LORD.**
- ¹² **They have lied about the LORD
And said, “Not He;
Misfortune will not come on us,
And we will not see sword or famine.**
- ¹³ **The prophets are as wind,
And the word is not in them.
Thus it will be done to them!”**

5:10-13 This strophe is very similar to vv. 7-9. These were probably independent judgment poems collected and edited.

Notice the IMPERATIVES of v. 10.

1. “go up” – BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. “destroy” – BDB 1007, KB 1469, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
3. “do not execute a complete destruction” – BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERFECT negated, used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. 4:27c; 5:18; 30:11; 46:28
4. “strip away” – BDB 693, KB 747, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

Also notice the intensified form in v. 11, “have dealt very treacherously with Me.” This is a *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and an IMPERFECT VERB of the same root (BDB 93, KB 108).

In light of this, v. 10b is a startling statement of hope (cf. 4:27; 5:10,18; 30:11; 46:28)! A faithful remnant will be spared.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE REMNANT, THREE SENSES

The OT concept of “a faithful remnant” is a recurrent theme of the Prophets (mostly in the eighth century prophets and Jeremiah). It is used in three senses:

1. those who survived the Exile (e.g., Isa. 10:20-23; 17:4-6; 37:31-32; Jer. 42:15,19; 44:12,14,28; Amos 1:8)
2. those who remain faithful to YHWH (e.g., Isa. 4:1-5; 11:11,16; 28:5; Joel 2:32; Amos 5:14-15; Micah 2:12-13; 4:6-7; 5:7-9; 7:18-20)
3. those who are a part of the eschatological renewal and recreation (e.g., Amos 9:11-15)

In this context God chooses only some (those with a faithful zeal) of the remnant (survivors of the Exile) to return to Judah. As we have seen before in this chapter, themes from Israel’s past recur (v. 6). God is reducing the numbers so that He can show His power, provision, and care (e.g., Gideon, Judges 6-7).

5:10 “For they are not the LORD’s” This is referring to the “vines.” These Judeans saw their agricultural abundance as a sign of *Ba’al’s* favor! This will change (cf. v. 12; Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-29).

5:11 “house of Israel. . .house of Judah” All the sons of Abraham had rebelled (cf. 3:6-10).

5:12 The VERB “lied about the LORD” (BDB 471, KB 469, *Piel* PERFECT) may be a word play. Its basic meaning is “lean,” the exact opposite of the leaders of vv. 7-8. It denotes people who seem to acknowledge one thing, but in reality acknowledge someone else (cf. Josh. 24:27; Job 8:15; Isa. 59:13). This is an example of Isa. 29:13! They say one thing (“As the LORD lives,” v. 2); they do mean it but they practice fertility rites and swear by *Ba’al*.



NASB	“Not He”
NKJV	“It is not He”
NRSV	“He is nothing”
TEV	“He won’t really do anything”
TEV (footnote)	“We don’t want anything to do with Him
NJB	“He will do nothing”
JPSOA	“It is not so!”
REB	“He does not matter”

This is irony. The only true God (i.e., Deut. 32:39; Isa. 43:13) is said to be irrelevant (i.e., will not act, cf. Ezek. 8:12; 9:9; Zeph. 1:12) and the false fertility gods are praised and trusted!

It is possible that this brief phrase means “YHWH would never bring judgment on Jerusalem” (AB, p. 40), which was the prophecy of Isaiah (cf. Isaiah 5-12; 36-37) and the message of the false prophets in Jeremiah’s day. Isaiah’s statement would be true if His people were faithful, but they were not and the consequences of covenant infidelity (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-29) will come to pass!

5:13 Those who were called and charged to speak for YHWH did not have His “spirit,” “wind” (BDB 924, i.e., they do not have YHWH’s word, v. 13b). False prophets are a recurrent theme in Jeremiah (i.e., 5:31; 14:13-15; 23 and typified by Hananiah in chapter 28). Often people hear what they want to hear! The heart controls the ear!

But there are true prophets who do speak for God; Jeremiah was one of them. Verse 13 could be

1. the people’s comment about God’s prophets, as v. 12 is their comment about God
2. this is God’s comment about the false prophets who are speaking “peace,” “safety”!

The last line of v. 12 favors #2. But it is hard to know “who” is speaking to “whom” in the poems of Jeremiah. The interpretation depends on the identity of the speaker and the recipients. Dogmatism is certainly inappropriate. It is best to ascertain the central truth of the strophe (or series of strophes) and not push the details!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:14-17

¹⁴Therefore, thus says the LORD, the God of hosts,

“Because you have spoken this word,

Behold, I am making My words in your mouth fire

And this people wood, and it will consume them.

¹⁵Behold, I am bringing a nation against you from afar,

O house of Israel,” declares the LORD.

“It is an enduring nation,

It is an ancient nation,

A nation whose language you do not know,

Nor can you understand what they say.

¹⁶Their quiver is like an open grave,

All of them are mighty men.

¹⁷They will devour your harvest and your food;

They will devour your sons and your daughters;

They will devour your flocks and your herds;

They will devour your vines and your fig trees;

They will demolish with the sword your fortified cities in which you trust.

5:14-17 YHWH (“the LORD, the God of hosts,” see Special Topic at 1:2) discloses what He will do in response to His people’s rebellion and specifically because of their words in v. 12.

God is bringing a foreign pagan nation to judge His people (cf. Isa. 5:26-30). Apparently v. 14 is YHWH speaking to Jeremiah (UBS *Handbook*, p. 163). Notice the description of this nation.

1. from afar
2. an enduring nation (or “strong,” cf. v. 16)
3. an ancient nation
4. a nation with a different language (cf. Isa. 28:11)
5. a nation with a mighty army
 - a. devour your current harvest
 - b. devour your children
 - c. devour your herds
 - d. devour your fields
 - e. demolish your walled cities and forts

5:16 The MT has שִׁפְתּוֹ (BDB 80), which means “quiver.” However, the previous line in v. 15 speaks of a language; שֵׁפֶתוֹ, which means “his lip” (cf. NEB, REB). The UBS Text Project gives option #1 a B rating, which is followed by most English translations.

The LXX of this verse has only “all are strong” for v. 16.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:18-19

¹⁸“Yet even in those days,” declares the LORD, “I will not make you a complete destruction. ¹⁹It shall come about when they say, ‘Why has the LORD our God done all these things to us?’ then you shall say to them, ‘As you have forsaken Me and served foreign gods in your land, so you will serve strangers in a land that is not yours.’”

5:18-19 This is a statement of hope, forgiveness, and restoration to

1. the faithful remnant
2. all of the seed of Abraham who will repent of their idolatry

The phrase “I will not make a complete destruction” (cf. 4:27; 5:10) implies #1.

YHWH is addressing His prophet (v. 19) about how to respond to the obvious question, “Why has God allowed this destruction and exile?” (cf. 16:10-13; Deut. 29:24-28; I Kgs. 9:8-9). It is theologically crucial in an ANE setting that the reason for the exile is not YHWH’s weakness, but His people’s idolatry!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:20-29

²⁰“Declare this in the house of Jacob

And proclaim it in Judah, saying,

²¹“Now hear this, O foolish and senseless people,

Who have eyes but do not see;

Who have ears but do not hear.

²²Do you not fear Me?” declares the LORD.

‘Do you not tremble in My presence?

For I have placed the sand as a boundary for the sea,

An eternal decree, so it cannot cross over it.

Though the waves toss, yet they cannot prevail;

Though they roar, yet they cannot cross over it.

²³But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart;

They have turned aside and departed.

²⁴They do not say in their heart,

“Let us now fear the LORD our God,

Who gives rain in its season,

Both the autumn rain and the spring rain,

Who keeps for us

The appointed weeks of the harvest.”

²⁵Your iniquities have turned these away,

And your sins have withheld good from you.

²⁶For wicked men are found among My people,

They watch like fowlers lying in wait;

They set a trap,

They catch men.

²⁷**Like a cage full of birds,
So their houses are full of deceit;
Therefore they have become great and rich.**

²⁸**They are fat, they are sleek,
They also excel in deeds of wickedness;
They do not plead the cause,
The cause of the orphan, that they may prosper;
And they do not defend the rights of the poor.**

²⁹**Shall I not punish these *people*?’ declares the LORD,
‘On a nation such as this
Shall I not avenge Myself?’”**

5:20-29 This is yet another strophe/poem about YHWH’s people’s (both Israel and Judah) sin (v. 20). It has imagery from Isa. 6:9-10.

It starts off like 4:5, with several IMPERATIVES related to “hear and respond.”

1. “declare” – BDB 616, KB 665, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. “proclaim – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. “hear” – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

Notice how the covenant people are characterized (vv. 21-23).

1. foolish – BDB 698, cf. 4:22
2. senseless (lit. “without heart”)
3. eyes but cannot see
4. ears but cannot hear
5. do not fear – BDB 431, KB 432, cf. 1:8; 3:8
6. do not tremble – BDB 296, KB 297, cf. v. 3; 4:19,31; 51:29
7. stubborn heart – BDB 710, KB 770, cf. 6:28; Deut. 21:18
8. rebellious heart – BDB 598, KB 632, cf. 4:17; Deut. 21:18
9. turn aside – BDB 693, KB 747, cf. 6:28; 15:5; 17:5; 32:40
10. departed – BDB 229, KB 246

Notice the emphasized personal element (“Me” and “My presence”) of #5 and #6.

5:22c-f In these lines of poetry and v. 24 c-f, God describes Himself as the creator and sustainer of the planet. It is He, not the false, non-existent fertility gods, who controls nature.

The specific parallel passages that describe YHWH setting bounds on the waters are Job 38:8-11 and Ps. 104:5-9.

Verse 23 describes rebellious covenant people as breaking through the set boundaries of God! The results of the self-assertion and self-directedness of the Fall (cf. Genesis 3) are obvious and pervasive!

5:24 “Let us now fear the LORD” This is the often repeated admonition of Exod. 20:20; Deut. 4:10; Ps. 34:11; Pro. 1:7; 9:10; Eccl. 12:15; Isa. 11:2-3. However, these hearers would not respond to Him! They did not fear the Lord (cf. 2:19).

5:25 “Your iniquities have turned these away” The nation’s sins caused these calamities (cf. 2:17; 4:18).

5:26-29 These verses describe the wealthy, powerful leaders.

1. lie in wait
 - a. watch like fowlers
 - b. set a trap
 - c. catch men
2. become great and wealthy by evil means
 - a. fat (cf. Deut. 32:15)
 - b. sleek (BDB 799, found only here)
 - c. excel in deeds of wickedness (i.e., could mean [1] “overlook evil,” cf. Pro. 19:11; Mic. 7:18 or [2] “go beyond” as it is used in v. 22, BDB 716, KB 778)
 - d. do not plead the case of the orphan and poor (LXX, “the widow”)

Judgment is coming (v. 29)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:30-31

³⁰“An appalling and horrible thing
Has happened in the land:
³¹The prophets prophesy falsely,
And the priests rule on their *own* authority;
And My people love it so!
But what will you do at the end of it?”

5:30-31 This short strophe is the conclusion of the description of the apostasy of Abraham’s seed. The leaders are corrupt (cf. 2:8,26; 4:9; 5:13; 6:13; 8:10; 13:13; 14:14-16,18; 18:18) and the people not only tolerate it but revel (cf. Mic. 2:11) in their wickedness and, by implication, participate in it, or would like to! What has happened to covenant faith and faithfulness?

5:31

NASB, NKJV “the priests rule on their *own* authority”

NRSV “the priests exploit the people”

NJB, TEV,

JPSOA “the priests rule as the prophets direct”

REB “the priests are in league with them”

This question is, from what root does the VERB come?

1. הָרַד – BDB 921, KB 1190, *Qal* IMPERFECT, “to rule” (NASB, NKJV)
2. יָרַד – BDB 432, KB 434, “to go down” in the sense of joining hands or cooperation (cf. NJB, TEV, JPSOA, REB)

▣ **“But what will you do at the end of it”** This may refer to the false promises and hopes of the false prophets. What will they do when the invader comes? They will lose all credibility (cf. Deut. 18:20-22).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Where else does the concept of v. 1 appear? How is this passage related to that text?
2. How are chapters 2 and 5 related?
3. Does Jeremiah have a good relationship to other prophets of his day?
4. Why does Judah not listen to Jeremiah's message?

JEREMIAH 6

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Destruction of Jerusalem Impending	Impending Destruction From the North	The Corruptions for Which Judgment Is Coming (5:1-6:30)	Jerusalem Is Surrounded By Enemies	More About Invasion
6:1-8 (1-8)	6:1-3 (1-3)	6:1-9 (1-9)	6:1-5	6:1-15 (1-15)
	6:4-5 (4-5)		6:6-8	
	6:6-8 (6-8)		Rebellious Israel	
6:9-15 (9-15)	6:9 (9)		6:9-11a	
	6:10-15 (10-15)	6:10-11a (10-11a)		
		6:11b-12 (11b-12)	6:11b-15 (11b-15)	
		6:13-21 (13-21)	Israel Rejects God's Way	
6:16-21 (16-21)	6:16-21 (16-20)		6:16a	6:16-21 (16-21)
			6:16b-17	
			6:18-21	
The Enemy From the North	(21)		Invasion From the North	
6:22-26 (22-26)	6:22-23 (22-23)	6:22-23 (22-23)	6:22-23	6:22-26 (22-26)
	6:24-26 (24-26)	6:24-25 (24-25)	6:24-25	
		6:26-30 (26-30)	6:26-30	
6:27-30 (27-30)	6:27-30 (27-30)			6:27-30 (27-30)

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BACKGROUND

- A. This continues the condemnation of Judah's sins. She had a witness in
 1. Scripture
 2. the prophets
 3. the fall of Israel
 but she would not repent.

- B. This chapter has many commands.
 1. vv. 1-8 – YHWH sends an invader from the north
 - a. flee for safety, v. 1 – BDB 731, KB 797, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
 - b. blow a trumpet, v. 1 – BDB 1075, KB 1785, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - c. raise a signal, v. 1 – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - d. prepare war (lit. “sanctify”), v. 4 – BDB 872, KB 1073, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
 - e. arise, v. 4 – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - f. let us attack, v. 4 – BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
 - g. arise, v. 5 – same as e
 - h. let us attack, v. 5 – same as f
 - i. destroy, v. 5 – BDB 1007, KB 1469, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE
 - j. cut down, v. 6 – BDB 503, KB 500, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - k. cast up (lit. “pour out,”), v. 6 – BDB 1049, KB 1629, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - l. be warned, v. 8 – BDB 415, KB 418, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE
 2. vv. 9-15 – YHWH's wrath burst forth
 - a. pass your hand, v. 9 – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
 - b. speak, v. 10 – BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* COHORTATIVE
 - c. give warning, v. 10 – BDB 729, KB 795, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE
 - d. hear, v. 10 – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - e. pour, v. 11 – BDB 1049, KB 1629, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 3. vv. 16-21 – possibly one of Jeremiah's sermons
 - a. stand by, v. 16 – BDB 763, KB 840, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - b. see, v. 16 – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - c. ask, v. 16 – BDB 981, KB 1371, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - d. walk, v. 16 – BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - e. find, v. 16 – BDB 592, KB 619, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - f. listen, v. 17 – BDB 904, KB 1151, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
 - g. hear, v. 18 – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

- h. know, v. 18 – BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - i. hear, v. 18 – same as g
 - 4. vv. 22-26 – The invader comes!
 - a. go out (negated), v. 25 – BDB 422, KB 425, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - b. walk (negated), v. 25 – BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - c. put on, v. 26 – BDB 291, KB 291, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - d. roll, v. 26 – BDB 814, KB 935, *Hithpael* IMPERATIVE
 - e. mourn, v. 26 – BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - 5. vv. 27-30 – YHWH’s message to Jeremiah (much like 1:18) has no IMPERATIVES
- C. Notice the different titles for the covenant people (esp. Jerusalem).
- 1. “sons of Benjamin,” v. 1
 - 2. “the daughter of Zion,” vv. 2,23
 - 3. “Jerusalem” vv. 6,8
 - 4. “the remnant of Israel,” v. 9
 - 5. “My people,” vv. 14,27
 - 6. “O daughter of my people,” v. 26
- D. Notice the names for YHWH.
- 1. “the LORD of hosts,” vv. 6,9
 - 2. “the LORD,” vv. 10,11,12,15,16,21,22,30
- See Special Topic: The Names For Deity at 1:2.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:1-8

- ¹Flee for safety, O sons of Benjamin,
 From the midst of Jerusalem!
 Now blow a trumpet in Tekoa
 And raise a signal over Beth-haccerem;
 For evil looks down from the north,
 And a great destruction.
- ²The comely and dainty one, the daughter of Zion, I will cut off.
- ³Shepherds and their flocks will come to her,
 They will pitch *their* tents around her,
 They will pasture each in his place.
- ⁴Prepare war against her;
 Arise, and let us attack at noon.
 Woe to us, for the day declines,
 For the shadows of the evening lengthen!
- ⁵Arise, and let us attack by night
 And destroy her palaces!”
- ⁶For thus says the LORD of hosts,
 “Cut down her trees
 And cast up a siege against Jerusalem.

**This is the city to be punished,
 In whose midst there is only oppression.
⁷As a well keeps its waters fresh,
 So she keeps fresh her wickedness.
 Violence and destruction are heard in her;
 Sickness and wounds are ever before Me.
⁸Be warned, O Jerusalem,
 Or I shall be alienated from you,
 And make you a desolation,
 A land not inhabited.”**

6:1 “Flee for safety” Usually the ancients fled to their fortified cities for protection (cf. 4:6, same VERB, same form). But here they are told to flee the walled city of Jerusalem.

▣ **“sons of Benjamin”** This was Jeremiah’s tribe. Jerusalem was very close to the territory of Benjamin, or in it (cf. Josh. 15:8,63; 18:16; Jdgs. 1:21). Therefore, this is a literary way of addressing all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

▣ **“blow. . . Tekoa”** This is a play on the Hebrew words (blow, – תקעו, cf. 4:5; Tekoa – תקוע) which have the same consonants (also note תקע, “alienated” is from the same root). Tekoa was a city south of Jerusalem.

▣ **“raise a signal”** This refers to a fire signal (cf. Lachish Ostraca, cf. Jdgs. 20:38,40), as the line above refers to an audible signal.

▣ **“Beth-haccerem”** This means “house of a vineyard” (BDB 108 CONSTRUCT 501, cf. Neh. 3:14). This city was southwest of Jerusalem.

▣ **“evil looks down from the north”** Invaders from Mesopotamia had to follow the Euphrates to its head waters and then go south because of the desert east of Palestine. Here the invading army is personified as “evil looks.”

6:2

NASB	“The comely and dainty one, the daughter of Zion, I will cut off”
NKJV	“I have likened the daughter of Zion to a lovely and delicate woman”
NRSV	“Beautiful, delicate as she is, I shall destroy the daughter of Zion”
NJB	“I have likened the daughter of Zion to the loveliest pasture”
LXX	“Your loftiness, O daughter of Zion, shall be removed”
JPSOA	“Fair Zion, the lovely and delicate, I will destroy”

There are three descriptive terms.

1. comely – BDB 610
 - a. ADJECTIVE – Song of Songs 1:5; 2:14; 6:4
 - b. VERB (*Piel*) – Isa. 52:7; Song of Songs 1:10
2. delicately bred – BDB 772, KB 851, *Pual* PARTICIPLE (only here)
3. daughter of Zion – common descriptive family phrase

See a good note on this difficult phrase in UBS *Handbook*, p. 180. The Tyndale commentary by R. K. Harrison takes the phrase as a question, “Have I compared you to a pleasant pasture?” (p. 80), like NJB.

6:2 “Shepherds” This is a title used of God (i.e., Psalm 23) and the leaders of God’s people (cf. 2:8; 3:15). Here it is a metaphor of the invaders who

1. surround the city
2. take over the surrounding lands

6:4-5 These are

1. the words of the invaders! They will attack again and again because of the command of YHWH (cf. v. 6).
2. the words of the leaders of Jerusalem and Judah (which does not fit v. 5, line 2).

6:4 “Woe to us, for the day declines” This expresses the desire of the invaders to attack by daylight, but even if it is night, they will continue the attack!

▣ **“at noon. . .at night”** The enemy is so fierce that they attack even at unusual times.

6:5 “palaces” This is “fortified towers” or “citadels” (BDB 74, cf. 17:27; 49:27).

6:6 “cut down her trees” In Deut. 20:19-20, trees were used to build siege instruments, ramps, firewood, etc., for invading armies. Also the destruction of all of the fruit trees is an idiom of total, complete desolation!

▣ **“This is the city to be punished”** The UBS Text Project suggests a meaning to this Hebrew phrase, “this is the city which has been investigated” (p. 191). The VERB פָּקַד (BDB 823) in *Hophal* (BDB 824, #1) means “to visit” for either blessing or cursing. Here it is visitation by YHWH for the just destruction of an evil, idolatrous, unrepentant capital city (i.e., Jerusalem).

▣ **“In whose midst there is only oppression”** See 22:17.

6:7 Jerusalem is compared to a constantly flowing well. As UBS *Handbook* points out, the interpretive issue is, “Does the VERB of line 1:

1. fresh – (lit. “cold,” cf NET Bible) reflect a moral indifference?
2. gushing/bubbling (JPSOA, “flows”) fit the context best (NIV)?

Number 2 fits the context best. Jerusalem is constantly evil!

▣ **“Violence and destruction are heard in her”** Her violence (BDB 949) and destruction (BDB 994) were constant! YHWH knew this! He describes their sin as “sickness and wounds” (cf. 30:12-13; Isa. 1:5-6).

As sickness is used as a metaphor of sin, so healing is used as a metaphor for forgiveness. Notice the poetic parallelism of Ps. 103:3.

▣ **“Sickness and wounds”** This could refer to

1. the sin of Jerusalem (i.e., NIV, cf. Isa. 1:4-5)
2. the evil of the leaders against the poor and powerless (cf. v. 13)

▣ **“are ever before Me”** YHWH knows what is happening, especially with the covenant people who are His instrument of revelation and salvation to a lost, ignorant world (see Special Topic at 1:5). If they do not live out the covenant revelation of YHWH, then the world does not know Him! The same is now true for the Church.

6:8 “Be warned” This is literally “accept for yourself discipline” (BDB 415, KB 418, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE).

▣ **“Or I shall be alienated from you”** This is literally “torn away” (BDB 429, KB 431, *Qal* IMPERFECT). It is the worst possible happening. This possibility may be alluded to in v. 4, line 1, “sanctify,” which was a “Holy War” term. It was used to address the invaders in v. 6, but here Judah hopes YHWH will be on her side!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:9-15

⁹Thus says the LORD of hosts,

“They will thoroughly glean as the vine the remnant of Israel;
Pass your hand again like a grape gatherer
Over the branches.”

¹⁰To whom shall I speak and give warning
That they may hear?

Behold, their ears are closed
And they cannot listen.

Behold, the word of the LORD has become a reproach to them;
They have no delight in it.

¹¹But I am full of the wrath of the LORD;
I am weary with holding *it* in.

“Pour *it* out on the children in the street
And on the gathering of young men together;
For both husband and wife shall be taken,
The aged and the very old.

¹²Their houses shall be turned over to others,
Their fields and their wives together;
For I will stretch out My hand
Against the inhabitants of the land,” declares the LORD.

¹³“For from the least of them even to the greatest of them,
Everyone is greedy for gain,
And from the prophet even to the priest
Everyone deals falsely.

¹⁴They have healed the brokenness of My people superficially,
Saying, ‘Peace, peace,’
But there is no peace.

¹⁵Were they ashamed because of the abomination they have done?
They were not even ashamed at all;
They did not even know how to blush.
Therefore they shall fall among those who fall;
At the time that I punish them,
They shall be cast down,” says the LORD.

6:9 YHWH calls on the invaders to “thoroughly glean” (BDB 760, KB 834; this is the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Poel* IMPERFECT VERB of the same root, used for intensity). Nothing will be left, everyone will be exiled or killed. This may be hyperbolic because of 4:27; 5:10,18; 30:11; 46:28.

The TEV takes this phrase to refer to Jeremiah reaching as many as possible with YHWH’s message of repentance (i.e., the remnant).

▣ **“the remnant of Israel”** For the theological concept of “remnant” see the Special Topic at 5:10-13.

For “Israel” (see Special Topic at 2:3) one wonders if it means

1. the northern ten tribes (exiled in 722 B.C.)
2. the collective name for Abraham’s seed from Jacob

6:10 “their ears are closed” In v. 10 Jeremiah responds to YHWH’s charge to keep proclaiming his message. Israel’s ears are “uncircumcised” (BDB 790, cf. 4:4; 9:25-26). They will not/cannot respond (i.e., “listen,” BDB 904, KB 1151, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT).

▣ **“They have no delight in it”** God’s word (Scripture or the prophetic word or both) was meant to be a joyous thing (cf. Ps. 19:7-10). They have made it a “reproach” (BDB 357).

6:11 Notice how YHWH is described.

1. full of wrath
2. weary with holding it in (cf. 15:6)
3. will pour it out (cf. 7:20) on
 - a. children
 - b. young men
 - c. husband and wife
 - d. the very old

This means YHWH’s judgment has arrived and it will affect the whole of society (cf. vv. 13,21).

6:12 This verse (vv. 12-15 are repeated in 8:10-12) describes the consequences of resisting both the Assyrian and Babylonian armies’ exile. They moved conquered people hundreds of miles and relocated others in their homes and on their fields (i.e., Deut. 28:30,38-40; Amos 5:11; Micah 6:15).

Notice also that it is not the power of the gods of the invaders/exilers, but the judgment of YHWH on His own people for their sin and idolatry.

For “I will stretch out My hand” see Special Topic: Hand at 1:9.

6:13 Every segment of society is sinful (cf. 8:10; 16:6; 31:34; 42:1). All are sinful, all will be judged (cf. v. 11).

▣ **“greedy for gain”** This phrase is from the NOUN and VERB of the same root (BDB130, KB 147, cf. 8:10; 22:17).

▣ **“from the prophet even to the priest”** All of Judah’s leadership are corrupt. They lie (BDB 1055). There was no one to trust!

6:14 “They have healed the brokenness of My people superficially” The false prophets (cf. 8:10-11; 14:14; 23:10-22) and priests denied the problem and tried to cover up the consequences of invasion and exile (cf. 8:11; Ezek. 13:10; Micah 3:5).

▣ **“Peace”** This is the Hebrew *Shalom* (BDB 1022, KB 1532), which means the absence of bad and the presence of good. However, it was a false message!

SPECIAL TOPIC: PEACE (*SHALOM*)

The Hebrew term (BDB 1022, KB 1532) is common in Semitic cognates.

- A. Akkadian
 - 1. to be unharmed
 - 2. stay well
 - 3. to be in good condition
- B. Ugaritic (Canaanite)
 - 1. to be unharmed
 - 2. healthy
- C. Arabic
 - 1. to be healthy
 - 2. to be in a happy situation
- D. Aramaic
 - 1. to be complete
 - 2. to come to an end/completion
 - 3. conclude a peace
 - 4. stay unharmed
- E. Hebrew connotations
 - 1. completeness
 - 2. soundness
 - 3. welfare
 - 4. peace

Today the term *shalom* is a Hebrew greeting and farewell statement. It still denotes the absence of evil and the presence of good (i.e., contentment with life). It denotes a mental state of security and satisfaction.

6:15 God’s people were not ashamed (BDB 101, KB 116, cf. 3:3; 8:12). They will be!

▣ **“they shall fall among those who fall”** There is a word play on

- 1. *Qal* IMPERFECT (BDB 656, KB 709)
- 2. *Qal* PARTICIPLE (BDB 656, KB 709)

What happened to other rebels will happen to them. This is possibly an allusion to the previous fall of Israel by Assyria in 722 B.C.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:16-21

¹⁶Thus says the LORD,

“Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths,

Where the good way is, and walk in it;
 And you will find rest for your souls.
 But they said, ‘We will not walk *in it*.’
¹⁷And I set watchmen over you, *saying*,
 ‘Listen to the sound of the trumpet!’
 But they said, ‘We will not listen.’
¹⁸Therefore hear, O nations,
 And know, O congregation, what is among them.
¹⁹Hear, O earth: behold, I am bringing disaster on this people,
 The fruit of their plans,
 Because they have not listened to My words,
 And as for My law, they have rejected it also.
²⁰For what purpose does frankincense come to Me from Sheba
 And the sweet cane from a distant land?
 Your burnt offerings are not acceptable
 And your sacrifices are not pleasing to Me.”
²¹Therefore, thus says the LORD,
 “Behold, I am laying stumbling blocks before this people.
 And they will stumble against them,
 Fathers and sons together;
 Neighbor and friend will perish.”

6:16 YHWH uses five IMPERATIVES to call His people back to His covenant with them but they refused. God’s truths and will were pictured as a clearly marked path (cf. 18:15; 31:21; Psalm 119; 105; 139:24; Pro. 6:23). This godly path brought rest and peace but they would not! Lifestyle faith is characterized by the VERB ‘walk’ (cf. Eph. 2:10; 4:1,17; 5:2,15).

▣ “**you will find rest for your souls**” Jesus quotes this in Matt. 11:29. His teachings fulfill the “ancient paths” (i.e., Moses, cf. 18:15) and surpasses them (cf. Matt. 5:17-19,21-48; the book of Hebrews).

6:17 “watchmen” This refers to the prophets (cf. Ezek. 3:16-21; 33:7).

6:18-19 There is a parallelism between

1. O nations (BDB 156)
2. O congregation (BDB 417 II). This line of v. 18 is left untranslated by AB because of its difficulty and uncertainty, the UBS *Handbook* suggests that “O congregation” be revocalized to an INFINITIVE of “know,” thereby intensifying the VERB “know” (BDB 393, KB 390), p. 196
3. O earth (BDB 75)

These seem to be metaphorical of witnesses to court testimony and judgment. Each is matched with an IMPERATIVE.

For “earth” see Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: LAND, COUNTRY, EARTH (ארץ)

Like all Hebrew roots, context is crucial in determining their intended meaning. The limited number of Hebrew roots (i.e., an ancient Semitic language) causes each of them to function with different meanings and connotations. This root (BDB 75, KB 90) can mean

1. the whole planet (although the ancients did not realize its size and shape. Usually it is used of the “known world”)
 - a. Genesis 1-2; 6-9; 10:32; 11:1,4,8,9; 14:19; 18:18,25; 22:18, etc.
 - b. Exodus 9:29; 19:5
 - c. Psalm 8:1,9; 24:1; 47:2,7; Jer. 25:26,29,30
 - d. Proverbs 8:31
 - e. Isaiah 2:19,21; 6:3; 11:4,9,12; 12:5
2. earth in contrast to heaven
 - a. Genesis 1:2
 - b. Exodus 20:4
 - c. Deuteronomy 5:8; 30:19
 - d. Isaiah 37:16
3. metaphor for the human inhabitants of the planet
 - a. Genesis 6:11; 11:1
 - b. I Kings 2:2; 10:24
 - c. Job 37:12
 - d. Psalm 33:8; 66:4
4. country or territory
 - a. Genesis 10:10,11; 11:28,31
 - b. esp. Israel (a gift from YHWH, He owns it)
5. soil, cf. Joshua 7:21
6. underworld (KB 91)
 - a. Exodus 15:12
 - b. Psalm 22:29; 71:20; Jer. 17:13; Jonah 2:6
7. new world
 - a. Isaiah 9:1-7; 65:17; 66:22
 - b. see NT, Rom. 8:19-22; Gal. 6:15; II Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1,5

Remember, context, context, context is crucial. Often cognate roots can help, but not always.

6:19 “The fruit of their plans” They are reaping what they sowed.

☐ **“My words. . . My law”** God’s people were His in name only! They rejected both the Torah/Law of Moses (i.e., the ancient paths), as well as the word of the true prophets (cf. Isa. 1:10; 5:24). Their lack of spiritual discernment is exemplified by their devotion to

1. idolatry
2. false prophets (cf. Isa. 29:13)
3. greed and exploitation of the poor

6:20 This is sacrificial terminology.

1. frankincense, BDB 526 I, cf. Exod. 30:34-38, this was used for temple incense
2. sweet cane, BDB 373 II and 889, this was holy anointing oil, possibly from India
3. burnt offerings, BDB 750, these were wholly burnt offerings symbolizing total dedication
4. sacrifices, BDB 257, cf. Lev. 7:15-18; 19:5-8, the offerer retained part for a fellowship meal to eat with friends and YHWH

▣ **“your sacrifices are not pleasing to Me”** This is a shocking phrase (cf. Isa. 1:11-14; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21-23; Micah 6:6-8; and esp. Jer. 7:21-23). It was not the sacrificial system (which God instigated) but the attitude of the worshipers that He rejected!

6:21 The imagery of this verse refers to the “ancient paths” of v. 16. As walking on the path of God (i.e., Scripture, or the prophetic word) was a source of life, peace, and joy, anything that blocked that path (cf. Isa. 8:14-15) caused pain, trouble, and confusion. The path God’s people were on was not His path! They refused to listen and repent, so there were societal and individual consequences! YHWH disciplines His people for their ultimate good!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:22-26

²²Thus says the LORD,

“Behold, a people is coming from the north land,

And a great nation will be aroused from the remote parts of the earth.

²³They seize bow and spear;

They are cruel and have no mercy;

Their voice roars like the sea,

And they ride on horses,

Arrayed as a man for the battle

Against you, O daughter of Zion!”

²⁴We have heard the report of it;

Our hands are limp.

Anguish has seized us,

Pain as of a woman in childbirth.

²⁵Do not go out into the field

And do not walk on the road,

For the enemy has a sword,

Terror is on every side.

²⁶O daughter of my people, put on sackcloth

And roll in ashes;

Mourn as for an only son,

A lamentation most bitter.

For suddenly the destroyer

Will come upon us.

6:22-26 This strophe describes the Mesopotamian invaders (cf. 50:41-43).

1. they come from the north

2. they are a great nation
3. they are aroused by God
4. they seize bow and spear (BDB 475 I, “javelin” in I Sam. 17:6 or “sword” in DSS)
5. they are cruel and have no mercy (cf. Isa. 13:18)
6. their voices roar (cf. Isa. 5:30; 17:12)
7. they ride horses (cf. 4:13,19)

It also describes Zion’s response.

1. they have heard the report
2. their hands are limp (from fear, cf. Isa. 13:7; Zeph. 3:16)
3. anguish seizes them (like childbirth)
4. they (*Qere*) are afraid to travel
5. they grieve (see Special Topic at 2:37)
 - a. put on sackcloth
 - b. roll in ashes (cf. 25:34)
 - c. mourn as for a son
 - d. lament bitterly

The destroyer will come suddenly!

6:25 “Terror is on every side” This is a recurrent phrase in Jeremiah (cf. 20:3,10; 46:5; 49:29).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:27-30

²⁷**“I have made you an assayer and a tester among My people,
That you may know and assay their way.”**

²⁸**All of them are stubbornly rebellious,
Going about as a talebearer.**

***They are* bronze and iron;
They, all of them, are corrupt.**

²⁹**The bellows blow fiercely,
The lead is consumed by the fire;
In vain the refining goes on,
But the wicked are not separated.**

³⁰**They call them rejected silver,
Because the LORD has rejected them.**

6:27-30 This strophe is directed towards Jeremiah (cf. 1:18). YHWH has made him

1. an assayer (BDB 103)
2. a tester (NASB, LXX, REB)
3. a fortification (BDB 131, NKJV)
4. a refiner (NJB, JPSOA)

These are rare usages of these roots, which usually denote towers and fortifications, but the context of vv. 20-30 demands it.

The strophe continues by YHWH’s description of His people.

1. stubborn (BDB 711)
2. rebellious (BDB 710, KB 779, *Qal* PARTICIPLE)
3. talebearers (BDB 940)

4. bronze and iron (cf. Ezek. 22:18)
5. corrupt (BDB 1007, KB 1469, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE)

YHWH tries to purify them as silver but they would not, therefore, He has “rejected them” (BDB 549, KB 540, *Qal* PERFECT).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Is there any hope?
2. Why is God so upset with Judah?

JEREMIAH 7

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS (The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Message At the Temple Gate	Trusting in Lying Words	The Temple Sermon	Jeremiah Preaches In the Temple	Against The Temple
7:1-7	7:1-7	7:1-4 7:5-7	7:1-4 7:5-7	7:1-11
7:8-11	7:8-11	7:8-15	7:8-15	
7:12-15	7:12-15			7:12-15
		Abuses in Worship	The People's Disobedience	Alien Gods
7:16-20	7:16-20	7:16-20	7:16-20	7:16-20 Worship Without Sincerity
7:21-26	7:21-27	7:21-26	7:21-26	7:21-28
7:27-31	Judgment on Obscene Religion 7:28-31	7:27-29 (29)	7:27-28	
			Sinful Deeds In Hinnom Valley 7:29 (29)	More About Idolatrous Worship: A Threat of Exile 7:29 (29)
		7:30-34	7:30-34	7:30-8:3
7:32-34	7:32-34			

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BRIEF HISTORY

- A. Judah alone is left as God's covenant people. The Northern Ten Tribes have been in exile since 722 B.C. (i.e., Fall of Samaria to Assyria).
- B. Assyrian power has been completely broken by Babylon (605 B.C.; the battle of Carchemish). The remnant of the Assyrian army attempted to join forces with the Egyptian army. Josiah, Judah's godly king, tried to intervene and was killed by Egypt's army at Meggido. His son, Jehoahaz, reigned only three months before Pharaoh Necho II of Egypt placed his brother, Jehoiakim (609-597 B.C.), on the throne of Judah as his vassal.
- C. Chapters 7:1-15 and 26 ("in the beginning of Jehoiakim's" reign) recount the same sermon and its effect.
- D. This is one of the most powerful sermons in the OT. Jeremiah attacks faithless ritual and liturgy (cf. v. 16; 8:3; Isa. 29:13). Religion without personal faith in YHWH is a disaster!
- E. The NASB Study Bible (p. 1065) asserts that 7:1-10:25 is a series of temple sermons over several years.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:1-7

¹The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, ²"Stand in the gate of the LORD's house and proclaim there this word and say, 'Hear the word of the LORD, all you of Judah, who enter by these gates to worship the LORD!'" ³Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. ⁴Do not trust in deceptive words, saying, 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.' ⁵For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly practice justice between a man and his neighbor, ⁶if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, nor walk after other gods to your own ruin, ⁷then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever."

7:1 Notice the titles for God (see Special Topic at 1:2).

1. "the LORD" (YHWH), vv. 1,2,13,19,29,30
2. "the LORD of hosts," vv. 3,21
3. "the God (*Elohim*) of Israel," vv. 3,21 (LXX, v. 1)
4. "the LORD (*Adon*) God (YHWH)," v. 20
5. "I will be your God (*Elohim*), v. 23 (note the covenant language)
6. "the LORD their God," v. 28

The tragedy of this sermon is that it is directed to the covenant people who had YHWH's revelation (promises, covenants, cultus, prophets, cf. Rom. 9:4-5), but were not loyal to Him.

Notice how specific YHWH's message is to Jeremiah. These are not Jeremiah's thoughts and opinions. These are God's words, directed to His people, about their cavalier treatment of His name and worship!

7:2 "Stand in the gate. . . gates" This is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 763, KB 840). Kimchi (Jewish commentator of the Middle Ages) says Jeremiah preached this sermon seven times (SINGULAR vs. PLURAL),

once at each gate of the temple. The gates were the focal point of temple traffic. The temple itself was the place of the people's legalistic, liturgical, sacramental religion.

▣ **“Hear the word of the LORD”** This is another *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 1033, KB 1570), which means “to hear so as to do” (cf. Deut. 4:1; 5:1; 6:3,4; 9:1; 20:3; 27:10; 33:7).

▣ **“all you of Judah”** Every male above the age of thirteen assembled regularly at the Temple.

7:3 “LORD of hosts” This refers to (1) the captain of the army of heaven or (2) the leader of the heavenly council (see Special Topic at 1:2).

7:3,5,6 “Amend” The VERB “amend” (BDB 405, KB 408, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) is normally translated “do good” (cf. 10:5). In this context it denotes changing from evil to good (cf. v. 5), another literary way to call for repentance (cf. 4:1). This VERB in the *Hiphil* denotes ethical behavior in Gen. 4:7; Lev. 5:4; Isa. 1:17; Jer. 4:22; 13:22. The covenant is both conditional (“if,” vv. 5,6) and unconditional (YHWH's character and promises) to every generation.

▣ **“let you dwell in this place”** The VERB (BDB 1014, KB 1490) is a *Piel* COHORTATIVE. The Vulgate and Aquilla's version have “I will dwell with you” (cf. I Kgs. 6:12-13; NJB). This involves only a revocalization of the Masoretic Text (cf. v. 7). The UBS Text Project gives the first option a C rating (considerable doubt). The second option is theologically attractive because biblical faith is a trusting relationship with YHWH before it is a land promise! The greatest blessing is YHWH's personal presence (i.e., Immanuel).

7:4 “Do not trust in deceptive words” The VERB “trust” (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) is an important theological concept, repeated in v. 8 (*Qal* PARTICIPLE). See Special Topic at 3:12. The words of the priests and prophets (cf. v. 13) who served in Jerusalem in the temple were false (cf. 6:14; 8:11). They probably used II Sam. 7:11-14; I Kgs. 8:13; and Isaiah's message (i.e., Isaiah 36-39) as proof texts to back up their false optimism. They had forgotten the conditional nature of the covenant (cf. v. 5).

▣ **“This is the temple of the LORD”** This phrase possibly refers to a chorus the temple choir regularly sang. In Hebrew a three form repetition expresses a superlative degree (cf. Isa. 6:3, e.g., Holy, Holy, Holy = the most holy). They were trusting in the place of worship not the person to be worshiped! Form without faith (cf. Isa. 29:13; II Tim. 3:5)!

7:5 “if” The “if” (conditional element) of this context is crucial (note the four “if” clauses).

7:6 Notice the observable conditional activities which reveal a true faith lifestyle.

1. practice justice between a man and his neighbor, v. 5
2. do not oppress, v. 6
 - a. the alien (foreigner living in Judah)
 - b. the orphan
 - c. the widow
3. do not shed innocent blood in this place, v. 6
4. do not walk after other gods to your own sin, v. 6

▣ **“alien, the orphan, or the widow”** God loves and protects the helpless and weak. This is a recurrent theme of Deuteronomy (cf. 10:18; 14:29; 16:11,14; 24:17,19,20,21; 26:12,13; 27:19).

▣ **“walk after other gods”** This is a Hebraic expression of lifestyle idolatry (cf. 13:10; Deut. 6:14-15; 8:19; 11:28; I Kgs. 8:25).

7:7 “forever and ever” This Hebrew phrase must be interpreted in the context of the conditional and unconditional covenant. To proof-text this phrase as a promise to depend on is a false message!

SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREVER (*‘OLAM*)

The etymology of the Hebrew term *‘olam*, עולם (BDB 761) is uncertain (NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 345). It is used in several senses (usually determined by context). The following are only selected examples.

1. ancient things
 - a. peoples, Gen. 6:4; I Sam. 27:8; Jer. 5:15; 28:8
 - b. places, Isa. 58:12; 61:4
 - c. God, Ps. 93:2; Pro. 8:23; Isa. 63:16
 - d. things, Gen. 49:26; Job 22:15; Ps. 24:7,9; Isa. 46:9
 - e. time, Deut. 32:7; Isa. 51:9; 63:9,11
2. future time
 - a. one’s life, Exod. 21:6; Deut. 15:17; I Sam. 1:22; 27:12
 - b. hyperbole for king, I Kgs. 1:31; Ps. 61:7; Neh. 2:3
 - c. continuous existence
 - (1) earth, Ps. 78:69; 104:5; Eccl. 1:4
 - (2) heavens, Ps. 148:6
 - d. existence of God
 - (1) Gen. 21:33
 - (2) Exod. 15:18
 - (3) Deut. 32:40
 - (4) Ps. 93:2
 - (5) Isa. 40:28
 - (6) Jer. 10:10
 - (7) Dan. 12:7
 - e. the covenant
 - (1) Gen. 9:12,16; 17:7,13,19
 - (2) Exod. 31:16
 - (3) Lev. 24:8
 - (4) Num. 18:19
 - (5) II Sam. 23:5
 - (6) Ps. 105:10
 - (7) Isa. 24:5; 55:3; 61:8
 - (8) Jer. 32:40; 50:5

- f. special covenant with David
 - (1) II Sam. 7:13,16,25,29; 22:51; 23:5
 - (2) I Kgs. 2:33,45; 9:5
 - (3) II Chr. 13:5
 - (4) Ps. 18:50; 89:4,28,36,37
 - (5) Isa. 9:7; 16:5; 37:35; 55:3
- g. God's Messiah
 - (1) Ps. 45:2; 72:17; 89:35-36; 110:4
 - (2) Isa. 9:6
- h. God's laws
 - (1) Exod. 29:28; 30:21
 - (2) Lev. 6:18,22; 7:34; 10:15; 24:9
 - (3) Num. 18:8,11,19
 - (4) Ps. 119:89,160
 - (5) Isa. 59:21
- i. God's promises
 - (1) II Sam. 7:13,16,25; 22:51
 - (2) I Kgs. 9:5
 - (3) Ps. 18:50
 - (4) Isa. 40:8
- j. Abraham's descendants and the Promised Land
 - (1) Gen. 13:15; 17:19; 48:4
 - (2) Exod. 32:13
 - (3) I Chr. 16:17
- k. covenantal feasts
 - (1) Exod. 12:14,17,24
 - (2) Lev. 23:14,21,41
 - (3) Num. 10:8
- l. eternity everlasting
 - (1) I Kgs. 8:13
 - (2) Ps. 61:7-8; 77:8; 90:2; 103:17; 145:13
 - (3) Isa. 26:4; 45:17
 - (4) Dan. 9:24
- m. what the Psalms say believers will do forever
 - (1) give thanks, Ps. 30:12; 79:13
 - (2) abide in His presence, Ps. 41:12; 61:4,7
 - (3) trust in His mercy, Ps. 52:8
 - (4) praise the LORD, Ps. 52:9
 - (5) sing praises, Ps. 61:8; 89:1
 - (6) declare His justice, Ps. 75:9

- (7) glorify His name, Ps. 86:12; 145:2
- (8) bless His name, Ps. 145:1
- 3. both backward and forward in time (“from everlasting to everlasting”)
 - a. Ps. 41:13 (praise to God)
 - b. Ps. 90:2 (God Himself)
 - c. Ps. 103:17 (the lovingkindness of the LORD)

Remember, context determines the extent of the term’s meaning. The everlasting covenants and promises are conditional (i.e., Jeremiah 7). Be careful of reading your modern view of time or your NT systematic theology into every OT usage of this very fluid word. The NT universalized OT promises.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:8-11

⁸“Behold, you are trusting in deceptive words to no avail. ⁹Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery and swear falsely, and offer sacrifices to Baal and walk after other gods that you have not known, ¹⁰then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, ‘We are delivered!’—that you may do all these abominations? ¹¹Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your sight? Behold, I, even I, have seen *it*,” declares the LORD.

7:8 See note at 7:4.

7:9 This is a summary of the Sinai revelation (i.e., Ten Commandments)

- 1. steal – BDB 170, KB 198, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE
- 2. murder – BDB 953, KB 1283, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE
- 3. commit adultery – BDB 610, KB 658, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE
- 4. swear falsely – BDB 989, KB 1396, *Niphal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE
- 5. offer sacrifices to *Ba’al* – BDB 882, KB 1094, *Piel* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE
- 6. walk after other gods – BDB 229, IB 246, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE

SPECIAL TOPIC: NOTES ON EXODUS 20

EXODUS 20:13, MURDER

I. CONTEXT

- A. It needs to be remembered that even the commands that seem to be of a social nature are really religious. God’s sovereignty over creation and redemption are shadowed in these commands. The command not to murder is, in proper focus, a word about the image of God in every human being and God’s care and concern for human life.
- B. It needs to be remembered that each command reflects the community of faith. The prohibition on taking a life in an illegal manner is primarily and originally focused with the believing community. Its implications are as wide as humanity!

II. WORD STUDY OF SIGNIFICANT TERMS

- A. “Murder”

1. This is a rare term (*rasah*) for taking a life, used only 46 times in the OT. There are several other overlapping Hebrew terms used hundreds of times.
2. The term (*Rasah*) seems to have an original limited meaning and an expanded meaning.
 - a. Originally it related to taking the life of a covenant partner in a legal, premeditated way, often associated with “the kinsman redeemer” or “*go’el*.” This usage involved premeditation but in a sense of legal revenge (cf. Num. 35:30-34; Lev. 24:13-23). In reality the Lex Talionis, “eye for eye,” (cf. Gen. 9:5-6) was a way to limit revenge. Later, the cities of refuge (Deut. 4:41; Josh. 20:3) were established so that a covenant member who accidentally or passionately killed another member of the community could flee the wrath of the victim’s family.
 - b. Later the term came to refer to the motive or attitude behind the taking of a life. The concept of “intentionality” becomes uppermost! (cf. Exod. 21:12-14; Num. 35:11,22; Deut. 28:24).
 - c. This distinction becomes very significant in this command. It seems in context to refer only to others within the covenant community. It is related to the kinsman redeemer, or blood revenge. However, the term is used in later passages which reflect the Decalogue, Hosea 4:2 and Jeremiah 7:9, to refer to a murderer. This word relates not only to the law but to the motive. It expands from neighbor to fellow human being.
3. This term certainly does not relate to our modern ethical issue of capital punishment or war. The Jews never had a problem with community execution or holy war (or, for that matter, unholy war!).
4. The best translation for our modern culture would be “premeditated murder.”

III. CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The sixth, seventh, and eighth commands are made up of only two Hebrew words. They are very short and to the point.
- B. Life, like all of life, is related to God. How we treat others reflects our thoughts about God

IV. NEW TESTAMENT PARALLELS

- A. Jesus
 1. His expansion of this commandment (cf. Matt. 5:21-26) gives us the proper orientation for our modern discussion about how to apply this text to our day.
 2. Jesus obviously moved the Decalogue from the realm of actions into the realm of motives. We are what we think! “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” The thought life is much more relevant and significant than we normally give it credit.
- B. John
 1. I John. 3:15, this same concept of hate being considered murder is stated.
 2. The Greek terms used in Matthew 5:21ff and I John 3:15 are different but the meaning is essentially the same.
 3. Note the positive aspect in I John 4:19-21.

V. APPLICATION TRUTHS

- A. Even though an unintentional murderer can escape the blood avenger by fleeing to a city of refuge (cf. Num. 35; Josh. 20), he has to pay the penalty of confinement in that city until the death of the High Priest. The consequences of his act still remain!
- B. Although this verse does not directly relate to suicide, as the ancients probably never thought of this event, the text still gives a spiritual principle concerning the sanctity of human life and God's sovereignty and purpose for human life made in His image. This text speaks a strong word to our day in this area!
- C. This text does not, however, speak a decisive word to the modern question of (1) capital punishment or (2) war. For Israel, these were not evil things in themselves. The Israelites were involved in both of these acts. Still, the principle of the significance of life made in God's image and under His control is an important truth in this area.
- D. This text does speak a needed word about the dignity and sanctity of human life! We in the believing community are stewards, not only of our own actions, but of our society. The gift of life is both individual and corporate.

We are responsible for the physical, social, and psychological abuse of our own bodies as we are the physical, social, and psychological abuse of others in our community. This is especially true in a culture like ours where we are allowed to speak to and, thereby, change the system. We are our brothers' keeper!

EXODUS 20:14, ADULTERY

I. CONTEXT

- A. It is obvious that the commandment is related to one's respect for God which is seen in respect for one's neighbor's life, wife, and property (cf. Jer. 5:8). This is verified by the different order of these commands in the Septuagint.
- B. The Deuteronomic parallel shows the appropriateness of adopting this ancient truth to our culture.
- C. As respect for parents was seen as a key to a stable society, so too, is this command.
- D. This command also implies God's ownership and control of our sexual and family lives.
- E. This command seems to have been based on Genesis 2:24 as command number 4 was based on Genesis 2:1-3.

II. WORD STUDY

- A. The major term in this text is "adultery." It is crucial that one understands this term in light of ancient Hebrew culture.
 - 1. This term is distinct in an OT context from "fornication." Adultery relates to at least one party in the sexual relationship being married. The term "fornication" implies both parties are not married (cf. Pro. 29:3; 31:3). The distinction is lost in the NT Greek terms.
 - 2. This possibility explains the reason for the emphasis on marital status because it relates to the importance of inheritance rights which were involved in God's promise of "the land." Every 50 years (Jubilee) all land was to revert to the original tribal owners.
 - 3. Adultery was culturally condemned before the Mosaic legislation (cf. Gen. 12:10ff; 26:7ff; 39:9).
 - 4. Adultery was seen as a sin against:
 - a. Neighbor – Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18
 - b. Marriage – Leviticus 18:20

- c. God – Genesis 20:1-13; 26:7-11
- 5. It was punishable by death for both parties:
 - a. Leviticus 20:10
 - b. Deuteronomy 22:22-24
 - c. Ezekiel 16:40 (metaphor)
 - d. Strict warnings are found in Proverbs 1-9

III. RELATION TO NT

- A. Jesus used Leviticus 19:18 as a summary of the Old Revelation (cf. Luke 10:27). This confirms that the Ten Commandments are related to our treatment of others.
- B. Jesus intensifies the commands in Matthew 5:28. He places the emphasis on motive rather than action. The Jews saw the mind as the seed-bed of the soul. What one thought was what one really was (Pro. 23:7). This makes the Ten Words almost impossible to keep—that is the purpose! (cf. Gal. 2:15-3:29).

IV. MODERN APPLICATION

- A. Marriage is possibly the best modern analogy of a lifelong faith commitment in God's name. It is our best chance to understand the realities of OT covenant concepts (Mal. 2:14). Our respect for our mate in all aspects, including human sexuality, helps us comprehend the thrust of this verse.
- B. Marriage stability and loyalty, like respect for parents, is a major pillar of societal strength and longevity.
- C. It needs to be emphasized that human sexuality is a gift from God. It was His idea and will for man. The guidelines are not meant to thwart man's freedom or joy but to give some godly guidelines for fallen man. The bounds are revealed for our long-term benefit and happiness. Although man has abused sexuality, as he has all of God's gifts, it is still a powerful drive within humankind which must be under God's control and guidance.
- D. Sex must be guarded so that the sacredness of the human person (female or male) is respected because they are made in God's image. Our fallen focus on "me" is all too obvious in this area.

EXODUS 20:15, STEAL

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

- A. Like all other regulation in the Decalog, our faith, love, and respect for God must be seen in the sacred and secular aspects of our daily lives. It is an abomination to God to claim to know Him and then exploit our covenant partner (cf. I John 4:20-21; 2:7-11).
- B. This command is meant to help maintain the fellowship of the covenant community. The quality of this spiritual fellowship will attract a confused and seeking world to our God which is the purpose of Scripture.
- C. As other commandments have focused on God's ownership of all of life, so too, this one! We are stewards, not owners. Our fallen drive toward possessions, without cost, is behind this prohibition (cf. Ps. 50:10-12).

II. WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

- A. This is the third command in the second half of the Decalog which is made up of only two words in Hebrew.
- B. The object of the prohibition is absent. This is usually supported by:
 - 1. The context of the two previous commands relating to capital offenses.
 - 2. The presence of applicable parallel passages both immediate (Exod. 21:16) and remote (Deut. 24:7). Also see Genesis 37.
- C. However, the short form is also defensible
 - 1. It is recorded for us by inspiration
 - 2. It widens the scope of the injunction
 - 3. There is also a parallel passage in the immediate context which relates to theft—Exodus 22:1ff.
 - 4. Jesus apparently quotes this passage in reference to stealing (cf. Matt. 19:18).
- D. Theft is also dealt with in the other ancient Law Codes but usually the penalty is death, mutilation, or 30 times restitution.
- E. There are some significant parallel passages which define and explain this truth:
 - 1. Leviticus 19:1-18—“You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy”
 - a. Our lifestyle must reflect the family characteristics of our Father and our God (cf. v. 18).
 - b. Our faith must impact our lives daily, both in positive actions and negative prohibition, both informed by proper motives (cf. v. 17).
 - c. Compassion for the ostracized and needy, vv. 9-10, 13, is as significant as refusal to rip off our neighbors, v. 11.
 - 2. Amos 8:4-7—God hates exploitations!
 - 3. Micah 6:6-8—God wants proper motives in all of our actions. Why we don’t steal is the issue!
 - 4. Exodus 22:1ff—Often the missing truth in our modern discussion of robbery is restitution! Sin always costs!

III. APPLICATION TRUTHS

- A. Joy Davidman, C. S. Lewis’ wife, has written a delightful book on the Decalog. She translates this command “Thou shalt not try to get something for nothing.” This assuredly widens the scope beyond possessions. She also says that “property is neither sin nor inalienable right, but a loan, a trust from God.”
- B. Theft, like all other sins of the fallen heart, are dealt with by a new heart, Eph. 4:28. It is amazing how the old nature of “take” turns into the new nature of “share!”
- C. Our respect for God is clearly seen in our respect for other covenant partners! This truth overshadows the Decalog.
- D. Modern man steals in many ways!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. How does modern man practice stealing?
- 2. How is restitution related to repentance?
- 3. How does this verse relate to capitalism’s view of property?

EXODUS 20:17, COVET

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. It is possible to see the relationship between the last five commandments as follows:
 - 1. Number 6, 7, and 8 prohibit the injury of a covenant partner in an overt action.
 - 2. Number 9 prohibits the injury of a covenant partner in speech.
 - 3. Number 10 prohibits the injury of a covenant partner in thought.
- B. It is true that the act of coveting disrupts the person who is coveting, not the object, the neighbor. However, it is possible that this commandment expects that the thoughts will proceed to actions.
- C. Many see this commandment as a unique concept found only in the ancient Law code of Israel and which is absent in the other Law codes of the Ancient Near East. This new concept would be the prohibition of thought. It is true that Israel perceived the thought life to be the origin of evil deeds (cf. Pro. 23:7; James 1:14-15). Yet, this verse seems to relate to thoughts which issue in actions. Several passages use the term “covet” in connection with a resulting action (cf. Deut. 7:25; Josh. 7:21; Micah 2:2).
- D. If it is true that emphasis is placed on that which is listed first and last, the true significance of this command is seen. Exclusive worship of God is first, but our attitudes and motives toward the things of this world affect our true devotion to God. This twin emphasis is also seen in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 6:33—“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things (cf. vv. 19-32) shall be added to you.”

II. WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

- A. Exodus 20:17 and Deuteronomy 5:21, although basically the same, have several significant differences:
 - 1. The wife is included in the larger concept of “house” or a man’s property in Exodus 20, while she is placed in a separate, seemingly priority, category in Deuteronomy 5.
 - 2. The passage in Exodus 20 has the Hebrew term “covet” which means “desire to acquire,” but Deuteronomy 5 has a second term, “desire” as well as “covet.” “Covet” speaks of desire which is connected to an action to acquire the object of the desire but “desire” seems to focus on the attitude alone.
 - 3. Also, Exodus 20, written to the children of Israel during their wilderness wandering period, has no mention of “field” in the list of possessions, while Deuteronomy 5 is restating the same commands for a settled society in the Promised Land.
- B. The term “covet” is a neutral term. It can refer to desiring good things (cf. Ps. 19:10; I Cor. 12:31).
- C. Improper desire is the root cause of the fall of Satan, Adam and Eve, and all of us. Paul stressed his personal struggle with coveting in Romans 7:7-8. Coveting is basically a discontentment and lack of trust in God’s care and provision.
- D. Several NT passages relate to coveting:
 - 1. Man’s problem is discontentment and greed (cf. Luke 12:15; I Tim. 6:8-10).
 - 2. Coveting is included in Jesus’ list of defiling sins (cf. Mark 7:17-23; I Cor. 5:10; Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5).

III. APPLICATION TRUTHS

- A. The answer to lustful greed and discontentment is:
 - 1. Love – Rom. 13:8-10

2. Contentment – Heb. 13:5; Phil. 4:11-13 (and sharing, Phil. 4:14)
- B. The command says “stop” but only Christ gave us the means to stop! In Him we can control our thought life to some degree.
- C. God knows our hearts and minds
 1. I Chronicles 28:9
 2. Proverbs 20:27
 3. Psalm 139:1,23
 4. Jeremiah 17:10
 5. Romans 8:27
 6. Revelation 2:23
- D. Things are not evil, but when they become priority they become sin. Things are not ultimate or eternal; people made in God’s image are! Coveting affects the Covenant Community in insidious and destructive ways!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is coveting?
2. How does modern man covet?
3. Are our thoughts sin?
4. Why are thoughts so significant in the Christian life?
5. Why is the commandment in Exodus 20:17 somewhat different from the one in Deuteronomy 5:21?

7:10 “then come and stand before Me in this house” Both VERBS are *Qal* PERFECTS (settled condition). This shows the hypocrisy of formal religion apart from personal lifestyle faith and obedience (cf. I Kgs. 8:23; Ezek. 23:36-45; Luke 6:46).

▣ **“in this house, which is called by My name”** This is a recurrent title for Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem (cf. I Kgs. 8:43; II Chr. 6:33; 20:9; Jer. 7:10,11,14,30; 25:29; 32:34; 34:15). It is thus titled because YHWH, symbolically dwells there between the wings of the *Cherubim* over the Ark of the Covenant.

▣ **“We are delivered”** This is a *Niphal* PERFECT (BDB 664, KB 717). They thought that religious acts in a religious place would bring deliverance (i.e., no defeat and exile by Babylon, cf. 39:17).

▣ **“that you may do all these abominations”** The covenant people turned their faith into a license to sin! Ritual replaced lifestyle faithfulness! Our life reveals our true self (cf. Matthew 7).

7:11 “den of robbers” What a shocking phrase to describe Solomon’s temple in light of I Kings 8. Jesus uses this same phrase in Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46 to describe the temple procedures of His day.

▣
 NASB, NKJV **“I, even I, have seen *it*”**
 NRSV **“I, at any rate, can see straight”**
 TEV **“I have seen what you are doing”**

NJB “You know, I too am watching”
 LXX “And I, behold, I have seen it”
 JPSOA “As for Me, I have been watching”
 REB “I warn you, I myself have seen all this”

The Hebrew is ambiguous but the sense is clear.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:12-15

¹²“But go now to My place which was in Shiloh, where I made My name dwell at the first, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of My people Israel. ¹³And now, because you have done all these things,” declares the LORD, “and I spoke to you, rising up early and speaking, but you did not hear, and I called you but you did not answer, ¹⁴therefore, I will do to the house which is called by My name, in which you trust, and to the place which I gave you and your fathers, as I did to Shiloh. ¹⁵I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brothers, all the offspring of Ephraim.

7:12 “Shiloh” “Go” (BDB 229, KB 246) and “see” (BDB 906, KB 1157) are both *Qal* IMPERATIVES. Shiloh was the first sanctuary in the Promised Land where the tabernacle and the Ark dwelt. It was destroyed by the Philistines and the Ark captured in 1050 B.C. (the event is not recorded in the OT but alluded to in 26:6; Ps. 78:60). This should have shown the covenant people their theology of God’s protection without conditions was not correct.

7:13 “I spoke to you” This refers to the prophets (cf. v. 25).

▣ **“rising up early”** This is a metaphor for the often and repeated attempts by YHWH to address His people through the prophets (cf. v. 25; 11:7; 25:3-4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14-15; 44:4)!

7:14 “the house. . .in which you trust” There are no special places or things to those who truly know God (cf. 26:6; John 4:23-24). All places, things, and especially people are holy and sacred because of God’s presence and creation. They turned faith into a place and ritual instead of a daily, godly faith relationship (cf. I Kgs. 6:12-13). This is also true of the church building and Sunday services in modern western countries!

7:15 “all the offspring of Ephraim” This is a reference to the exile of the Northern Ten Tribes in 722 B.C. by Assyria. What happened to them should have been a warning to Judah but it was not (cf. 3:11; Ezek. 16:51-52; 23:11). Judah also will be “cast out” (two *Hiphil* PERFECTS, BDB 1020, KB 1527).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:16-20

¹⁶“As for you, do not pray for this people, and do not lift up cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with Me; for I do not hear you. ¹⁷Do you not see what they are doing in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? ¹⁸The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead dough to make cakes for the queen of heaven; and *they* pour out drink offerings to other gods in order to spite Me. ¹⁹Do they spite Me?” declares the LORD. “Is it not themselves *they* spite, to their own shame?” ²⁰Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, My anger and My wrath will be poured out on this place, on man and on beast and on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground; and it will burn and not be quenched.”

7:16 Because of Judah's reluctance to repent, YHWH tells Jeremiah not to

1. pray for them – BDB 813, KB 933, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. lift up cry or prayer for them – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. intercede – BDB 803, KB 910, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

This is repeated in 11:14! He will not hear (cf. 11:11; Ps. 66:18; Pro. 1:28; Isa. 1:15; Hos. 5:6). There are consequences to repeated, hardened unrepentant people!

SPECIAL TOPIC: INTERCESSORY PRAYER

I. Introduction

A. Prayer is significant because of Jesus' example

1. personal prayer, Mark 1:35; Luke 3:21; 6:12; 9:29; 22:29-46
2. cleansing of the Temple, Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46
3. Model Prayer, Matt. 6:5-13; Luke 11:2-4

B. Prayer is putting into tangible action our belief in a personal, caring God who is present, willing, and able to act on our behalf and others, through our prayers.

C. God has personally limited Himself to act on the prayers of His children in many areas (cf. James 4:2)

D. The major purpose of prayer is our fellowship and time with the Triune God.

E. The scope of prayer is anything or anyone that concerns believers. We may pray once, believing, or over and over again as the thought or concern returns.

F. Prayer can involve several elements

1. praise and adoration of the Triune God
2. thanksgiving to God for His presence, fellowship, and provisions
3. confession of our sinfulness, both past and present
4. petition of our sensed needs or desires
5. intercession where we hold the needs of others before the Father

G. Intercessory prayer is a mystery. God loves those for whom we pray much more than we do, yet our prayers often effect a change, response, or need, not only in ourselves, but in them.

II. Biblical Material

1. Old Testament

A. Some examples of intercessory prayer:

- a. Abraham pleading for Sodom, Gen. 18:22ff
- b. Moses' prayers for Israel
 - (1) Exodus 5:22-23
 - (2) Exodus 32:31ff
 - (3) Deuteronomy 5:5
 - (4) Deuteronomy 9:18,25ff
- c. Samuel prays for Israel:
 - (1) I Samuel 7:5-6,8-9
 - (2) I Samuel 12:16-23
 - (3) I Samuel 15:11
- d. David for his child, II Samuel 12:16-18

2. God is looking for intercessors, Isaiah 59:16
 3. Known, unconfessed sin or an unrepentant attitude affects our prayers
 - a. Psalm 66:18
 - b. Proverbs 28:9
 - c. Isaiah 59:1-2; 64:7
- B. New Testament
1. The Son and Spirit's intercessory ministry
 - a. Jesus
 - (1) Romans 8:34
 - (2) Hebrews 7:25
 - (3) I John 2:1
 - b. Holy Spirit, Romans 8:26-27
 2. Paul's intercessory ministry
 - a. Prays for the Jews
 - (1) Romans 9:1ff
 - (2) Romans 10:1
 - b. Prays for the churches
 - (1) Romans 1:9
 - (2) Ephesians 1:16
 - (3) Philippians 1:3-4,9
 - (4) Colossians 1:3,9
 - (5) I Thessalonians 1:2-3
 - (6) II Thessalonians 1:11
 - (7) II Timothy 1:3
 - (8) Philemon, v. 4
 - c. Paul asked the churches to pray for him
 - (1) Romans 15:30
 - (2) II Corinthians 1:11
 - (3) Ephesians 6:19
 - (4) Colossians 4:3
 - (5) I Thessalonians 5:25
 - (6) II Thessalonians 3:1
 3. The church's intercessory ministry
 - a. Pray for one another
 - (1) Ephesians 6:18
 - (2) I Timothy 2:1
 - (3) James 5:16
 - b. Prayer requested for special groups
 - (1) our enemies, Matt. 5:44
 - (2) Christian workers, Hebrews 13:18

- (3) rulers, I Timothy 2:2
- (4) the sick, James 5:13-16
- (5) backsliders, I John 5:16

III. Conditions for answered prayer

A. Our relationship to Christ and the Spirit

- 1. Abide in Him, John 15:7
- 2. In His name, John 14:13,14; 15:16; 16:23-24
- 3. In the Spirit, Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20
- 4. According to God's will, Matthew 6:10; I John 3:22; 5:14-15

B. Motives

- 1. Not wavering, Matthew 21:22; James 1:6-7
- 2. Humility and repentance, Luke 18:9-14
- 3. Asking amiss, James 4:3
- 4. Selfishness, James 4:2-3

C. Other aspects

- 1. Perseverance
 - a. Luke 18:1-8
 - b. Colossians 4:2
- 2. Kept on asking
 - a. Matthew 7:7-8
 - b. Luke 11:5-13
 - c. James 1:5
- 3. Discord at home, I Peter 3:7
- 4. Free from known sin
 - a. Psalm 66:18
 - b. Proverbs 28:9
 - c. Isaiah 59:1-2
 - d. Isaiah 64:7

IV. Theological Conclusion

- A. What a privilege. What an opportunity. What a duty and responsibility.
- B. Jesus is our example. The Spirit is our guide. The Father is eagerly waiting.
- C. It could change you, your family, your friends, and the world.

7:18 The entire family was caught up in and taught idolatry, but especially the wife. Parents do influence and stamp their children with their own lifestyles and priorities (cf. Exod. 20:5-6).

▣ **“cakes”** This refers to the sacrificial raisin cakes made in *Astarte's* image. This was family worship, but of idols (cf. 44:19; Hos. 3:1).

▣ **“queen of heaven”** This was possibly the fertility goddess of Babylon, *Ishtar* (who is called “the Queen of heaven” and whose worship involved “sweet cakes,” cf. 44:19). Other examples of idol worship are

19:13; 32:29; 44:17-19; II Kgs. 23:4-14. The LXX has “host of heaven,” which would make it Babylonian astrology. However, it is possible that this was an Assyrian goddess which came into Judah through political alliance ceremonies or even *Asherah*, the Canaanite goddess.

▣ **“they pour out drink offerings to other gods”** This was part of the worship (cf. 19:13; 44:18; Ezek. 20:28).

▣ **“in order to spite Me”** The VERB (BDB 494, KB 491, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, cf. Deut. 31:29) is repeated in v. 19 (*Hiphil* PARTICIPLE). YHWH is a jealous God! He wants faithful worship. Idolatry is an affront to Him (cf. 11:17; 32:29; Deut. 32:16,21; I Kgs. 14:9; 16:2; Ezek. 8:7).

7:20 YHWH’s anger (BDB 60 I) and wrath (BDB 404) “will be poured out” (BDB 677, KB 732, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE), which is a different word from “poured out” in v. 18 (BDB 659, KB 703). The one in v. 18 is used of a sacrifice, but this one is used of poured out wrath.

▣ Notice how God’s judgment affects God’s Promised Land. The curses of Deuteronomy 28 are coming to reality.

1. on man
2. on beast
3. on trees of the field (cf. 8:13)
4. on the fruit of the ground

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:21-26

²¹Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices and eat flesh. ²²For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. ²³But this is what I commanded them, saying, ‘Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people; and you will walk in all the way which I command you, that it may be well with you.’ ²⁴Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in *their own* counsels *and* in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward. ²⁵Since the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have sent you all My servants the prophets, daily rising early and sending *them*. ²⁶Yet they did not listen to Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck; they did more evil than their fathers.”

7:21 The rejection of sacrifices by YHWH is a recurrent theme (see full note at 6:20 and note 14:12; Isa. 1:11; Amos 5:21). That which was designed to bring sinful mankind back to YHWH (i.e., Leviticus 1-7) had been completely perverted into ritual and liturgy only!

▣ **“burnt offerings”** These were sacrifices that were totally consumed on the altar (BDB 750).

▣ **“sacrifices and eat flesh”** In some sacrifices only part was burnt and the rest was eaten by priests or the offerer (BDB 257). The Jews did not eat meat regularly. They were offering sacrifices to God just so they could have the meat to eat!

7:22 “For I did not speak. . .concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices” This is not a total rejection of ritual sacrifices, but an emphasis on the motive behind the sacrifice and the offerer’s faith relationship with YHWH (cf. I Sam. 15:22; Ps. 51:16-17; Isa. 1:11-14; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8).

It is surprising that in Exodus 9-20, which describes God's teachings revealed at Sinai, no mention of the sacrificial cultus is made.

7:23 “**this is what I commanded them**” Exodus 19:20 shows that the covenant was primarily ethical living, not ritual acts of devotion. Obedience is crucial (cf. Exod. 19:5-6; Deut. 6:3; Isa. 1:19), but so is attitude (cf. Deut. 30:15-20)!

▣ **“I will be your God, and you will be My people”** This is covenant language (cf. 11:4; Exod. 6:7; Lev. 26:12; Deut. 26:17-18). Notice the conditional connotation (i.e., obedience [lit. “hear” *Qal* IMPERATIVE] to the covenant). For the concept of “covenant” see Special Topic at 3:7.

▣ **“that it may be well with you”** God wants to give us joy and abundance (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28), but it is conditional (cf. 26:13; 38:20; 42:6).

7:24 This verse expressed the reality of His covenant people's condition (cf. Ezek. 20:8,13,16,21), as v. 23 expresses the hope.

1. they did not obey
2. they did not incline their ear
3. they walked in *their own* counsels (or by revocalization, “their disobedience”)
4. they walked in the stubbornness of their evil heart
5. they went backward and not forward

7:25-26 These verses express the rebellious acts of YHWH's people. From the very beginning they were repeatedly unresponsive to Him (cf. Neh. 9:16-19). He tried and tried (cf. 7:13; 25:3-4; 29:19; 35:14-15; 44:4) to communicate with them, but they would not hear and respond (cf. 17:23; 19:15).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:27-31

²⁷“You shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you; and you shall call to them, but they will not answer you. ²⁸You shall say to them, ‘This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the LORD their God or accept correction; truth has perished and has been cut off from their mouth.

²⁹‘Cut off your hair and cast *it* away,
And take up a lamentation on the bare heights;
For the LORD has rejected and forsaken
The generation of His wrath.’

³⁰For the sons of Judah have done that which is evil in My sight,” declares the LORD, “they have set their detestable things in the house which is called by My name, to defile it. ³¹They have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, and it did not come into My mind.

7:27 This verse is theologically parallel to Isa. 6:9-10! However, Jeremiah must speak YHWH's message (cf. 26:2; Ezek. 2:7).

The message is vv. 28-34.

7:28 Notice again (cf. v. 24) how YHWH characterizes His people.

1. they did not obey
2. they did not accept correction
3. they allowed truth to
 - a. perish
 - b. be cut off from their mouth

7:29 Verse 29 is a poem amidst prose. It has three IMPERATIVES.

1. cut off your hair – BDB 159, KB 186, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. cast it away – BDB 1020, KB 1527, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. take up lamentation – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

These acts are grieving rites (cf. 41:5; Isa. 22:12). See Special Topic at 2:37.

The reason for the grieving is that YHWH has

1. rejected – BDB 549, KB 540, *Qal* PERFECT
2. forsaken – BDB 643, KB 695, *Qal* IMPERFECT (with *waw*)

Because of 16:6; 48:37 (Isa. 15:2) it could refer to idolatrous rites (cf. Lev. 21:5; Deut. 14:1).

▣ **“lamentation on the bare heights”** This possibly refers to the very high places of idolatrous worship.

7:30 This refers to idols in YHWH’s temple (cf. 32:34; II Kgs. 21:4-5,7; 23:4-14; II Chr. 33:4,5,7; Ezekiel 8). What a shocking sin. They were probably related to political alliances and Canaanite fertility cults.

7:31 “Topheth” The root of this term (BDB 1075, KB 1781 II) is either from Aramaic, “hearth” or Hebrew, “to speak.” This is a reference to the worship of *Molech* (cf. Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5; see Special Topic at 2:23), the Phoenician fire god to whom children were sacrificed (cf. 19:6,11-12; II Kgs. 21:5; 23:10). This type of worship possibly developed from a misunderstanding of Exod. 13:2.

▣ **“the valley of the son of Hinnom”** See *Gehenna* in the Special Topics at 4:4.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:32-34

³²“Therefore, behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when it will no longer be called Topheth, or the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of the Slaughter; for they will bury in Topheth because there is no *other* place. ³³The dead bodies of this people will be food for the birds of the sky and for the beasts of the earth; and no one will frighten *them away*. ³⁴Then I will make to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride; for the land will become a ruin.

7:32 See Jeremiah 19:6-7! A Terrible judgment is coming!

7:33 “food for the birds of the sky” This is a common metaphor of “the last days” (cf. 12:9; Isa. 18:4; Ezek. 29:5; 32:4; 39:4). This is one of the specific judgments of Deuteronomy 28 (cf. Deut. 28:26).

7:34 YHWH wanted to give peace and joy (cf. v. 13), but because of their idolatrous rebellion He will give judgment (cf. 16:9; 25:10).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How does this sermon relate to our day?
2. Is ritual or form bad? Can it become evil? What is the difference?
3. Was Jeremiah condemning the sacrificial system?
4. What was Judah's major sin?

JEREMIAH 8

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS (The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
	7:32-8:3	7:30-8:3	7:30-8:3	7:30-8:3
The Sin and Treachery of Judah				
8:1-3	The Peril of False Teaching	Miscellaneous Oracles	Sin and Punishment	Threats, Laments, Advice, Israel's Perversity
8:4-7 (4b-7)	8:4-7 (4b-6) (7)	8:4-7 (4-7)	8:4-12	8:4-7 (4-7)
				The Law As Administered By the Priests
8:8-12 (8-12)	8:8-12 (8-12)	8:8-13 (8-13)		8:8-9 (8-9)
				Repetition of An Earlier Threat
				8:10-12 (10-12)
				Threats Against Judah the Vine
8:13-17 (13-17)	8:13-17 (13) (14) (15-16) (17)		8:13	8:13-17 (13-17)
		8:14-15 (14-15)	8:14-16	
		8:16-17 (16-17)		
			8:17	
	The Prophet Mourns For the People		Jeremiah's Sorrow For His People	A Lament Of the Prophet During A Famine
8:18-22 (18-22)	8:18-22 (18-19a) (19b) (20-22)	8:18-21 (18-21)	8:18-22 (18-20) (21-22)	8:18-23 (18-23) [v. 23 is 9:1]
		8:22 (22)		

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BACKGROUND

- A. Chapters 7-10 seem to form a literary unit describing the idolatry of the people of Judah in Jeremiah's day.
 1. Chapter 7 is Jeremiah's famous temple sermon where he confronts the idolatrous people of God at the center of the worship of YHWH. Some believe this sermon extends through 8:3.
 2. Chapters 8 and 9 form a series of warnings to the people of Jerusalem and Judah which is connected to their abrogation of YHWH's covenant.
 3. Chapter 10 is similar to the sarcastic descriptions of idolatry found in Isaiah 2:20; 31:7; 40:18-20; 41:7; 44:9-20; 45:16; 46:5-7.
- B. As in all of Jeremiah's writings there is a strong Deuteronomic flavor. This can probably be explained by the fact that the prophets went to the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants as a basis for the covenant relationship with YHWH. To this legal and ritual format they emphasized the personal motive and attitude aspect.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:1-3

¹“At that time,” declares the LORD, “they will bring out the bones of the kings of Judah and the bones of its princes, and the bones of the priests and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem from their graves. ²They will spread them out to the sun, the moon and to all the host of heaven, which they have loved and which they have served, and which they have gone after and which they have sought, and which they have worshiped. They will not be gathered or buried; they will be as dung on the face of the ground. ³And death will be chosen rather than life by all the remnant that remains of this evil family, that remains in all the places to which I have driven them,” declares the LORD of hosts.

8:1 “they will bring out the bones” Notice how the entire population is mentioned by a series of different groups.

1. kings of Judah
2. its princes
3. priests
4. the prophets
5. the inhabitants of Jerusalem

This act of bringing out the bones of buried Judeans has the following symbolic meaning:

1. the invaders were looking for buried valuables
2. it is connected with the astral worship of Babylon (cf. v. 2)
3. it was a cultural act of hatred and contempt for conquered Judah (cf. Amos 2:1)

8:2 “They will spread them out to the sun, the moon and to all the host of heaven” Verse 2 shows how involved the Judeans were in astral worship. The VERBS (series of *Qal* PERFECTS) tell the whole story.

1. loved
2. served
3. gone after
4. sought
5. worshiped

The term “host of heaven” (BDB 838 CONSTRUCT 1029) is used for the worship of the stars, planets, moon, and sun (cf. Deut. 4:19; 17:2-50; II Kgs. 23:4,5,11; Zeph. 1:5; Jer. 19:13; 32:29).

▣ **“They will not be gathered or buried; they will be as dung on the face of the ground”** This obviously refers to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. This is one reason why many see the context as running from 7:1 through 8:3. It was a horror to the Jews to remain unburied. They somehow thought that their afterlife was affected by a proper burial (see IVP *Bible Background Commentary*, p. 649). The metaphor “they will be as dung on the face of the ground” is a very striking allusion to their bodies becoming (1) fertilizer or (2) food for animals.

8:3 “And death will be chosen rather than life by all the remnant that remains of this evil family” Something of the pain of exile can be seen in this hyperbole and in Psalm 137.

For the term “remnant” see Special Topic at 5:10-13.

▣ **“all the places to which I have driven them”** YHWH is the one who allowed, even instigated, Judah’s exile!

▣ **“the LORD of hosts”** This is probably a play on the phrase the “host of heaven,” found in v. 2. It was YHWH, not the planets and stars, who was the creator, sustainer, and guider of the universe (cf. Ps. 19:1-6; Neh. 9:6). See Special Topic: Names For Deity at 1:2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:4-7

⁴“You shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD,

“Do *men* fall and not get up again?

Does one turn away and not repent?

⁵“Why then has this people, Jerusalem,

Turned away in continual apostasy?”

**They hold fast to deceit,
They refuse to return.**

**6“I have listened and heard,
They have spoken what is not right;
No man repented of his wickedness,
Saying, ‘What have I done?’
Everyone turned to his course,
Like a horse charging into the battle.**

**7“Even the stork in the sky
Knows her seasons;
And the turtledove and the swift and the thrush
Observe the time of their migration;
But My people do not know
The ordinance of the LORD.”**

8:4 “Does one turn away and not repent” There is a play on the phrase “turn back” (BDB 996, KB 1427), found in vv. 4-6 (four times). The exact wording of v. 4 is somewhat in dispute.

1. Kimchi translates it as “if a man turns from evil, will not YHWH turn from judgment”
2. Moore translates it as “if a man repents, He will not repent” (cf. Isa. 55:6)

This seems to be the first allusion to the major theme of chapters 7-10, which is a call to the people of God to turn back to Him. However, Jeremiah knows that at this time their character has already been set and that it is rebellion.

8:5-7 YHWH describes the refusal of His people to repent.

1. they turned away and did not repent, v. 4
2. they turned away in continued apostasy, v. 5
3. they held fast to deceit, v. 5
4. they refused to return, v. 5
5. they heard the truth but spoke what was not right, v. 6
6. no man repented of his wickedness, v. 6
7. they refused to take any responsibility, v. 6
8. every one turned to his course, v. 6
9. they did not “know” YHWH or His ordinance, v. 7

8:5 “apostasy” For the term see Special Topic at 2:19.

▣ **“They hold fast to deceit”** “Hold fast” is the Hebrew phrase, “to cling” (BDB 304, KB 302, *Hiphil* PERFECT) and is used in Gen. 2:24 for the marriage relationship. The allusion to marriage is often used for the relationship between YHWH and His people. This imagery becomes “awhoring after other gods” when used of the fertility cults. See Special Topic at 2:20.

▣ **“They refuse to return”** The main VERB “refuse” (BDB 549, KB 540) is a *Piel* PERFECT which denotes a settled attitude!

8:6 “I have listened and heard” The Septuagint (LXX) translates this phrase as two IMPERATIVES. The NASB implies that it is God speaking through the prophet, while the Septuagint implies it is God speaking to the people.

▣ **“No man repented of his wickedness”** This is a different Hebrew word (BDB 636, KB 688) from the word for repent and turn away, which is used four times in vv. 4-6 (BDB 996, KB 1427). However, it is a synonym which also refers to repentance but through the metaphor of grief.

▣ **“What have I done”** This is the big problem! Judah does not even recognize the problem. She is so blind, yet she thinks she sees clearly! One cannot repent of that which they refuse to see or acknowledge.

▣ **“Like a horse charging into the battle”** War horses were trained to charge and fulfill their training. The people of God were trained to love YHWH, but they had totally reverted from their training and were now running with the same intensity toward non-existent idols.

8:7 “Even the stork. . .turtledove. . .swift. . .thrush” Birds have a natural instinct to migrate at certain times to certain places. This is similar to the animal imagery in Isa. 1:13. However, the people of God had gone totally away from that which was natural and had gone after the fertility gods.

▣ **“But My people do not know”** There is a play on the word “know” throughout Jeremiah. We learn from Gen. 4:1 that the word “know” can refer to intimate personal relationships such as that between a husband and wife. Again, here is the metaphor of God as husband and Israel as wife. However, they had metaphorically lost their intimate relationship. Although the temples may have been full with religious activity, there was no personal relationship with YHWH. They were worshiping the fertility gods of Canaan in YHWH’s name!

▣ **“ordinance”** See Special Topic at 5:4.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:8-12

**8“How can you say, ‘We are wise,
And the law of the LORD is with us’?
But behold, the lying pen of the scribes
Has made *it* into a lie.**

**9The wise men are put to shame,
They are dismayed and caught;
Behold, they have rejected the word of the LORD,
And what kind of wisdom do they have?**

**10Therefore I will give their wives to others,
Their fields to new owners;
Because from the least even to the greatest
Everyone is greedy for gain;
From the prophet even to the priest
Everyone practices deceit.**

**11They heal the brokenness of the daughter of My people superficially,
Saying, ‘Peace, peace,’
But there is no peace.**

**12Were they ashamed because of the abomination they had done?
They certainly were not ashamed,
And they did not know how to blush;
Therefore they shall fall among those who fall;**

**At the time of their punishment they shall be brought down,”
Says the LORD .**

8:8-12 This is a literary unit which describes the religious leaders. This is the first extended mention of a group known as the “scribes” (BDB 707). We learn from I Chr. 2:55 that scribes developed into families. They do not serve a major function in Israel’s faith until after the exile. They seem to have been developed by Ezra into the synagogue system and rabbinical Judaism. They were basically interpreters of the Mosaic law to local people for specific questions regarding the Torah.

If the leaders are blind, how dark is the darkness? They think they are “wise” and that they “know” the Law of the LORD (cf. v. 9).



NASB, NRSV	“the lying pen of the scribes”
NKJV, NJB	“the false pen of the scribes”
TEV	“the laws have been changed by dishonest scribes”
LXX	“a false pen has become of no use to scribes”
JPSOA	“assuredly, for naught has the pen labored”
REB	“when scribes with their lying pens have falsified it”

This issue is who is being condemned?

1. the scribes (i.e., equal to “wise men” of v. 9)
2. the people (v. 10)
3. other religious leaders (v. 9)

The problem is not the scribes’ work (i.e., copying the Law and/or explaining it), but the people’s rejecting both the prophetic word and the covenant obligations.

▣ **“Has made it into a lie”** There is a Hebrew word play between “lying pen” (BDB 1055) and “lie” (BDB 1055). There is often an allusion to *Ba’al* worship as being “the lie.” There may be an allusion here.

8:9 “they have rejected the word of the LORD” They did this at the very time they thought they were upholding the word of the Lord. It would be good to remember Phil. 2:12.

8:10-12 These verses are omitted in the Septuagint (LXX) because of their striking resemblance to Jer. 6:12-15. It seems that the book of Jeremiah is a composite book which was edited according to themes, either by Jeremiah, Baruch, or someone later in history. Therefore, there is considerable repetition in the book.

8:10 “I will give their wives to others

Their fields to new owners” This refers to the experience of invasion and exile. Notice that wives were listed with a man’s property, which was characteristic of ANE patriarchal society.

8:11 “They heal the brokenness of the daughter of My people superficially” The religious leaders seem to bring that which will give life, but in reality their message of false hope brings death (i.e., Lam. 2:14). The major truth in this verse is found in the latter part in the false prophets’ words, “All is well, all is well” (cf. 6:14; 14:13,14). The problem was that there was no peace, but impending invasion. Many commentators believe that these false prophets were quoting Isaiah 36-39, referring to God’s promises to Hezekiah and the safety of the city of Jerusalem against the invasion of Sennacherib. But, Jeremiah is emphasizing the truth that the covenant has two aspects: God’s promises and His covenant people’s faith response. Judah had totally abrogated the covenant!

8:12 The question of line 1 is answered in an intensified way (i.e., the *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Qal* IMPERFECT VERB of the same root, BDB 101, KB 116) in line 2.

▣ **“they shall fall among those who fall”** This may be another reference to the previous exile of the northern tribes.

▣ **“the time of their punishment”** The Neo-Babylonian army took captives from Judah in 605, 597, 586, and 582 B.C. The major deportation was 586 B.C. when the temple and Jerusalem were destroyed.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:13-17

¹³**“I will surely snatch them away,” declares the LORD;**

“There will be no grapes on the vine

And no figs on the fig tree,

And the leaf will wither;

And what I have given them will pass away.”

¹⁴**Why are we sitting still?**

Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the fortified cities

And let us perish there,

Because the LORD our God has doomed us

And given us poisoned water to drink,

For we have sinned against the LORD.

¹⁵**We waited for peace, but no good came;**

For a time of healing, but behold, terror!

¹⁶**From Dan is heard the snorting of his horses;**

At the sound of the neighing of his stallions

The whole land quakes;

For they come and devour the land and its fullness,

The city and its inhabitants.

¹⁷**For behold, I am sending serpents against you,**

Adders, for which there is no charm,

And they will bite you,” declares the LORD.

8:13 “I will surely snatch them away,” declares the LORD

“There will be no grapes on the vine” Verse 13, by means of two agricultural metaphors, one referring to grapes and the other to figs, implies that no one will be left in the Promised Land and that all will be taken into captivity. Not even a remnant will be left according to this shockingly hyperbolic passage. Palestine was YHWH’s special garden but there was no spiritual fruit (cf. Isaiah 5). This is basically the fulfillment of the curses of Deuteronomy 27 and 28.

The first line of the MT can be understood in several ways.

NKJV, Peshitta, “I will surely consume them”

TEV, “I wanted to gather my people, as a farmer gathers a harvest”

JPSOA, “I will make an end of them”

NET Bible, “I will take away their harvest”

LXX, “they will gather their produce” (i.e., the invaders)

Remember, this is highly emotional poetry! This line can be (1) positive (i.e., YHWH wants to gather His people to Himself, i.e., repentance) or (2) negative (others will reap their harvest, cf. v. 12).



NASB “And what I have given them will pass away”
NRSV “I have found them people to trample on them”
TEV “therefore, I have allowed outsiders to take over the land”
LXX, REB —omitted—
JPSOA “Whatever I have given them is gone”

The UBS Text Project (p. 200) interprets this ambiguous Hebrew phrase in two ways.

1. “and I gave them (things which) escape them (i.e., fruits of the earth)”
2. “and I gave them (precepts which) they have trespassed”

The first option is based on v. 13, lines 1-4. The second option is related to v. 8 and refers to the Law (i.e., that which was found in the temple under Josiah’s reform and remodeling, cf. II Kgs. 22:8).

8:14 “Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the fortified cities” In the ancient world, in times of crisis or invasion, the people of the surrounding areas fled into the walled cities. However, the overcrowding exacerbated the problems of food, water, and sanitation. We learn from later history that the siege experience of the people of Judah was so bad that even after the exile they had to cast lots to see who would live in the reconstructed Jerusalem (cf. Neh. 11:1).

YHWH’s message of judgment is expressed in three commands.

1. “assemble yourselves” – BDB 62, KB 74, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE
2. “let us go into the fortified cities” – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
2. “let us perish” – BDB 198, KB 226, *Qal* COHORTATIVE

There is a sound play between “gather/harvest” in v. 13, קטף, and “gather together” in v. 14, אסף. Both gatherings bring judgment!

▣ “Because the LORD our God has doomed us. . .

For we have sinned against the LORD” This is the key to understanding God’s actions against His own people. God chose them to be a kingdom of priests so that all the world would know Him, Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5,6 (see Special Topic at 1:5), but the light coming from God’s people was anything but complimentary to God! The covenant made with Abraham, and further elaborated at Sinai, was based on the assumption that Israel’s life and worship would reveal YHWH to the world. The only way to correct their false message was radical surgery (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38).

▣ “poisoned water” This (BDB 912 II) is an allusion to “wormwood” or “gall.” Many times in the OT “gall” or “wormwood” is mentioned (cf. Jer. 9:15; 23:15; Deut. 29:18; Ps. 69:21; Lam. 3:19; and Matt. 27:34 in the NT)

8:15 This verse, like vv. 6d,8,11, shows that Judah expected “peace” and was surprised at invasion and exile. This phrase is repeated in 14:19 and is similar to Job 30:26.

8:16 “From Dan is heard the snorting of his horses” We learn that the tribe of Dan moved from its tribal allocation by Joshua in the south to the north (cf. Judges 18). Its capital city became the metaphor for describing the upper limits of the Promised Land (cf. 4:15). Invading Mesopotamian armies came from the north, therefore, when Dan heard the snorting horses it meant the troops from Babylon were entering Palestine.

8:17 “I am sending serpents against you” This may be (1) an allusion to Numbers 21 when God sent serpents to judge His people or (2) simply another kind of poison as in v. 14. Whichever is true, both metaphors (i.e., poison, snakes) combine to show that there is no hope for the people of God. Here “snakes” refers to the Babylonian army!

The first line of v. 18 may go with v. 17 and be understood as an idiom that the snake bites were fatal (lit. “beyond recovery”). The LXX translated it as “incurable.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:18-22

¹⁸**My sorrow is beyond healing,
My heart is faint *within me!***

¹⁹**Behold, listen! The cry of the daughter of my people from a distant land:**

“Is the LORD not in Zion? Is her King not within her?”

“Why have they provoked Me with their graven images, with foreign idols?”

²⁰**“Harvest is past, summer is ended,
And we are not saved.”**

²¹**For the brokenness of the daughter of my people I am broken;
I mourn, dismay has taken hold of me.**

²²**Is there no balm in Gilead?**

Is there no physician there?

Why then has not the health of the daughter of my people been restored?

8:18-22 There has been much discussion among commentators as to who is speaking here. Some say that it is the prophet grieving over his people, but it seems, in context, to be God grieving over His people. It is true that God speaks through His prophet throughout this book and it is sometimes difficult to differentiate. However, because of Hos. 11:8,9 and because of the specific references found in 9:3,6,9,10,11, it seems to me that this is a very significant passage on the heart of God (i.e., v. 21). Though God was forced to judge His people, it broke His heart to do so. A good way to compare the love and anger of God is by comparing Deut. 5:9 with Deut. 7:9.

8:19-20 All of the VERBS are PERFECTS, reflecting settled conditions.

8:19 By means of a series of questions, the tragedy of Judah’s invasion, destruction, and exile are highlighted. Idolatry and rebellion have consequences. This is still true (cf. 17:10; Gal. 6:7).

The TEV expressed the thought of the verse best.

1. the people cry out
 - a. “Is the LORD not in Zion?”
 - b. “Is her King not within her?”
2. YHWH answers in line 3 (cf. 7:30-34)

The NASB, “from a distant land,” is an incorrect translation. The MT has “from the length and breadth of the land” (cf. NRSV). The people of Judah are speaking; those who remain from the Assyrian exile also. The question, “Where is YHWH?” rang out as the Babylonian army approached (cf. v. 16).

8:20 “Harvest is past, summer is ended

And we are not saved” This is a reference to the seasons when crops and fruit ripened. When the harvest has passed, there is nothing left!

8:22 “Is there no balm in Gilead” Gilead was famous for its healing ointment (cf. Gen. 37:25), but as there was no way to stop the poisoning of v. 14, no way to heal the serpent’s bite of v. 17, no cessation of the hunger of v. 20, there was no doctor’s help in v. 22. The people of God stand judged even though it had not yet happened historically (i.e., Babylonian invasions).

JEREMIAH 9

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS (The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Lament Over Zion				The Moral Corruption of Judah
9:1-6 (1-6)	9:1-6 (1-2) (3-6)	9:1-3 (1-3)	9:1-3a (1-3a) 9:3b-6a (3b-6a)	9:1-8 (1-8)
		9:4-6 (4-6)	9:6b-9	
9:7-9 (7-9)	9:7-11 (7-9)	9:7-9 (7-9)		Sorrow In Zion
9:10-11 (10-11)	(10) (11)	9:10-11 (10-11)	9:10 (10)	9:9-10 (10)
			9:11 (11)	9:11 (11)
9:12-16	9:12-16	9:12-16	9:12 9:13-16	9:12-15 9:16-21 (16-21)
	The People Mourn in Jerusalem		The People of Jerusalem City Cry Out For Help	
9:17-22 (17-22)	9:17-22 (17-19)	9:17-19 (17-19)	9:17 (17) 9:18 (18) 9:19 (19)	
	(20-21) (22)	9:20-22 (20-22)	9:20-22 (20-22)	True Wisdom
9:23-24	9:23-24 (23-24)	9:23-24	9:23-24 (23-24)	9:22-23 (22-23)
				Circumcision, A False Guarantee
				9:24-25
9:25-26	9:25-26	9:25-26	9:25-26	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:1-6

¹Oh that my head were waters
And my eyes a fountain of tears,
That I might weep day and night
For the slain of the daughter of my people!

²Oh that I had in the desert
A wayfarers' lodging place;
That I might leave my people
And go from them!
For all of them are adulterers,
An assembly of treacherous men.

³"They bend their tongue *like* their bow;
Lies and not truth prevail in the land;
For they proceed from evil to evil,
And they do not know Me," declares the LORD.

⁴"Let everyone be on guard against his neighbor,
And do not trust any brother;
Because every brother deals craftily,
And every neighbor goes about as a slanderer.

⁵Everyone deceives his neighbor
And does not speak the truth,
They have taught their tongue to speak lies;
They weary themselves committing iniquity.

⁶Your dwelling is in the midst of deceit;
Through deceit they refuse to know Me," declares the LORD

9:1 The prophet is using emotional figurative language to express his pain over YHWH's necessary judgment of His covenant people (cf. Heb. 12:5-11). In reality it is YHWH's pain that the prophet is revealing (cf. Hosea 11:8-9). This same emotion is seen in 8:18; 13:17; Isa. 22:4; Lam. 2:18. See Special Topic: God Described As Human (anthropomorphism) at 1:9.

This verse is one of the sources of Jeremiah being known as "the weeping prophet." He was such because YHWH was the weeping God (cf. Hos. 11:8-9).

9:2-4 Notice how the prophet/YHWH describes the covenant people.

1. adulteress, v. 2
2. treacherous men, v. 2
3. lie, v. 3
4. evil to evil, v. 3
5. do not know YHWH, v. 3
6. untrustworthy, v. 4
7. crafty, v. 4
8. slanderer, v. 4
9. deceiver, v. 5
10. do not speak truth, v. 5
11. liars, v. 5
12. commit iniquity, v. 5
13. deceitful, v. 6
14. refuse to know YHWH, v. 6

And those are the people of God. He must do something lest His purpose for this planet is lost (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38).

9:2 "A wayfarers' lodging place" This was a lean-to or an uninhabited wooden shelter used by travelers in desert areas. What a shocking metaphor that God's prophet wanted to run away from (i.e., two *Qal* COHORTATIVES, "leave" and "go") the covenant people and hide in the desert.

▣ **"For all of them are adulterers**

An assembly of treacherous men" There is an obvious comparison and play on these two phrases as a title for the people of God. Their lifestyle and attitude reflected both physical and spiritual adultery.

9:3 "They bend their tongue like their bow" Their speech showed who and what they really were (cf. v. 8). This metaphor seems to refer to one of three things.

1. their tongues were bent which reflected the words for sin, a deviation from the standard
2. they were ready to shoot their words at anyone (cf. Ps. 64:3-4)
3. it refers to the pain that their lies caused both to God and their fellow Israelites (cf. Lev. 19:15-16)

▣ **"And they do not know Me"** This is the tragedy—the pain that God felt (cf. Hos. 4:1,6; 5:4; 8:2; 11:8-9) after He had given so much to this people and they had knowingly, willfully turned their backs on Him. There is a word to the church today in these verses.

9:4 Even among the covenant people, there is no trust. They not only lie, cheat, and steal from others, but from each other. The terrible results of the Fall are obvious.

1. let everyone be on guard against his neighbor – BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE
2. do not trust any brother – BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

- craftily – this is an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and an IMPERFECT VERB from the same root (BDB 784, KB 872), which shows intensity

The people of God were more like Jacob (supplanter, BDB 784) than Israel (see Special Topic at 2:3).

9:5 “They weary themselves committing iniquity” What a horrible description of God’s people as they go headlong into rebellion and idolatry (BDB 521, KB 512, *Niphal* PERFECT).

9:6 “Your dwelling is in the midst of deceit” This describes metaphorically this people’s worldview and daily lifestyle!

▣ **“they refuse to know Me”** The VERB (BDB 549, KB 540, *Piel* PERFECT) denotes a settled condition. They are not duped but willful rejecters of truth.

For “know” see Special Topic at 1:5.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:7-9

**⁷Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts,
“Behold, I will refine them and assay them;
For what *else* can I do, because of the daughter of My people?
⁸Their tongue is a deadly arrow;
It speaks deceit;
With his mouth one speaks peace to his neighbor,
But inwardly he sets an ambush for him.
⁹Shall I not punish them for these things?” declares the LORD.
“On a nation such as this
Shall I not avenge Myself?”**

9:7-9 This is another strophe of Judah’s sins.

- liars
- ambush neighbors

YHWH must act!

- He will refine and assay them (cf. 6:27)
- He will punish them (cf. 5:9,29)
- He will avenge Himself (cf. Isa. 1:24)

YHWH wants to use the covenant people to reach all other nations. He has an eternal redemptive plan (see Special Topic at 1:5). However, His people have not revealed Him, but rather their own weaknesses and failures (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38).

9:9 “On a nation such as this” This is a play on the word *goy* (BDB 156), which the Jews used in derision for the Gentiles. Here it is used to describe Israel herself.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:10-11

**¹⁰“For the mountains I will take up a weeping and wailing,
And for the pastures of the wilderness a dirge,
Because they are laid waste so that no one passes through,
And the lowing of the cattle is not heard;
Both the birds of the sky and the beasts have fled; they are gone.**

**¹¹I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins,
A haunt of jackals;
And I will make the cities of Judah a desolation, without inhabitant.”**

9:10-11 Again the question arises as to who is speaking in these two verses. The NIV translates v. 10 as the prophet speaking and v. 11 as God speaking. But the NASV and RSV translate them as God speaking in both verses. It is basically an extended metaphor that the land is being affected by mankind’s sin (cf. Deuteronomy 27 and 28; Rom. 8:18-22).

9:11 “A haunt of jackals” This is a metaphor for ruin and destruction (cf. 10:22; 49:33; 51:37; Isa. 34:13) and possibly even the presence of the demonic.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:12-16

¹²Who is the wise man that may understand this? And *who is* he to whom the mouth of the LORD has spoken, that he may declare it? Why is the land ruined, laid waste like a desert, so that no one passes through? ¹³The LORD said, “Because they have forsaken My law which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice nor walked according to it, ¹⁴but have walked after the stubbornness of their heart and after the Baals, as their fathers taught them,” ¹⁵therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “behold, I will feed them, this people, with wormwood and give them poisoned water to drink. ¹⁶I will scatter them among the nations, whom neither they nor their fathers have known; and I will send the sword after them until I have annihilated them.”

9:12-16 These verses are a strong statement by God (introduced by three questions in v. 12) on the results of Judah’s rebellion. In verses 13 and 14 the reasons for the exile are enumerated.

1. they have forsaken My law (written revelation, cf. Exodus 19-20; Deut. 4:8; 5)
2. they have not obeyed My voice (oral prophetic revelation)
3. they have not walked according to My voice
4. they walked after the stubbornness of their heart (cf. 7:24; 11:8)
5. they walked after the *Ba’als* (cf. 2:8,23; 23:27)

Revelation should result in godly lifestyle (cf. Hos. 14:9)!

9:14 “walked after the stubbornness of their heart” This is a characteristic of the Jewish people delineated in the book of Deuteronomy. God’s mercy is seen against the backdrop of their natural rebellion (cf. Deut. 9:6,13; 10:16; 31:27). It also says that they walked away open-eyed; they were not tricked nor did they do it in ignorance!

▣ **“and after the Baals”** This refers to the fertility worship of Canaan. Originally *El* and *Ashtorah* were the chief deities of the Canaanite pantheon (Ras Shamra texts from Ugarit). *Ba’al* was their son. The myth involved the rising and dying of the agricultural deity every year. By the means of imitation magic, including the sex act, fertility was assured each spring. There was a *Ba’al* for every different locality. See Special Topic at 2:20.

▣ **“as their fathers taught them”** This may be an historical allusion to Exodus 32 and Numbers 25. This shows the potential corruption from one generation to the next (cf. Deut. 5:19; Isa. 29:13). Family faith can be a blessing or a curse depending on the content (cf. 7:18)!

9:15 “wormwood. . .poisoned water” The false family faith of 9:14b reflects the curse of Deut. 29:18. This was specifically mentioned in 8:14e. Notice it is YHWH, Himself, who gives it! Sin has consequences, especially for those who know better (cf. Luke 12:48; Rom. 9:4-5).

9:16 “I will scatter them among the nations” This is either an allusion to the exile of the northern tribes in 722 B.C. by Assyria or it is a prophecy of the exile of the southern tribes by Babylon in 605, 597, or 586 B.C. Exile was one of the consequences of covenant disobedience in Lev. 26:33; Deut. 28:64.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:17-22

¹⁷Thus says the LORD of hosts,

“Consider and call for the mourning women, that they may come;
And send for the wailing women, that they may come!

¹⁸Let them make haste and take up a wailing for us,
That our eyes may shed tears
And our eyelids flow with water.

¹⁹For a voice of wailing is heard from Zion,
‘How are we ruined!
We are put to great shame,
For we have left the land,
Because they have cast down our dwellings.’”

²⁰Now hear the word of the LORD, O you women,
And let your ear receive the word of His mouth;
Teach your daughters wailing,
And everyone her neighbor a dirge.

²¹For death has come up through our windows;
It has entered our palaces
To cut off the children from the streets,
The young men from the town squares.

²²Speak, “Thus says the LORD,
‘The corpses of men will fall like dung on the open field,
And like the sheaf after the reaper,
But no one will gather *them*.’”

9:17-22 This is a funeral dirge (cf. v. 20), personifying death. Notice the two terms for professional mourners.

1. “the mourning women” – BDB 884, KB 1096, *Polel* PARTICIPLE
2. “the wailing women” – BDB 314, KB 314

Notice the number of commands.

1. Verse 17

- a. “consider” – BDB 106, KB 122, *Hithpolel* IMPERATIVE
- b. “call” – BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- c. “come” – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
- d. “send” – BDB 1018, KB 1511, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- e. “come” – same as c

2. Verse 18

- a. “let them make haste” – BDB 554, KB 553, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

- b. “let them take up a wailing for us” – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - c. “let our eyes shed tears” – BDB 432, KB 434, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (NRSV)
 - d. “let our eyelids flow with water” – BDB 633, KB 683, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (NRSV)
3. Verse 20
- a. “hear the word of the LORD” – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - b. “let your ear receive the word of His mouth” – BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - c. “teach. . .” – BDB 540, KB 531, *Piel* IMPERFECT
4. Verse 22 – “speak” – BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* IMPERATIVE

9:17 “the wailing women” In the Ancient Near East (ANE) professional mourners were used at funerals (cf. Amos 5:16). Here it is a literary way to highlight the fact that death is coming.

In v. 20 the daughters are going to be taught how to wail. This is either an allusion to the fact that the mothers passed on their idolatry to their daughters or that there will be so many dead people that more and more wailers will be needed.

9:19 This verse expresses the content of their lamentations.

- 1. we are ruined (cf. 4:13; Deut. 28:29)
- 2. we are put to great shame
- 3. we have left the land (cf. 7:15)
- 4. our homes are destroyed

9:20 This verse is addressed to the professional mourners of v. 17. See note at v. 17.

9:21 “For death has come up through our windows” This personification of death (cf. personification of *Sheol* and death in Hab. 2:5) as coming through the windows is very similar to (1) the Canaanite myth of *Ba’al* being killed by the god of the underworld, *Mot*, in the Ugaritic literature found at Ras-Shamra or (2) the Mesopotamian myth of a demon who climbs through the windows to kill. This may be an allusion by the prophet to the type of mythology (Canaanite fertility worship, see Special Topic at 2:20) to which the people of God were listening.

▣ **“To cut off the children. . .The young men”** The last two lines of v. 21 are a way of saying (1) that death is no respecter of persons or (2) that death will cut off the next generation.

9:22 “The corpses of men will fall like dung on the open field” This is a common metaphor of death in Jeremiah (cf. 7:33; 8:2; 16:4; 26:33; Deut. 28:26).

▣ **“And like the sheaf after the reaper”** This is possibly the origin of the modern metaphor of death as the grim reaper, but please note that God, not the evil one, is in control of death (i.e., the death angel of Exodus 12).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:23-24

²³Thus says the LORD, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; ²⁴but let him who boasts boast of this, that he

understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the LORD.

9:23-24 This is a beautiful description of true wisdom in contrast with the false wisdom of the scribes mentioned earlier in 8:8-12. Note the fivefold repetition of “glory.”

1. four *Hithpael* IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. one *Hithpael* PARTICIPLE in v. 24

9:23 “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom” The wise person will know that it is not in human might or riches but in YHWH that one’s strength lies (cf. Zech. 4:6).

9:24 “but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD”

Notice all the things that humans tend to boast in

1. wisdom
2. strength
3. wealth

are not what should be gloried in, but

1. that he/she understands Me – BDB 968, KB 1328, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE
2. that he/she knows Me – BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE

These INFINITIVES speak of human reception of divine revelation. They have heard and responded to the law of YHWH, the voice of YHWH (cf. v. 13) and the Person of YHWH (i.e., “Me,” v. 24; Hos. 4:1,6; 5:4; 8:2)! This is the opposite of vv. 3d and 6.

Characteristics of YHWH are delineated in this verse. The mandate that believers boast in God is a common biblical theme (cf. 4:2; Ps. 44:8; Isa. 41:16; I Cor. 1:31; II Cor. 10:17; Gal. 6:14).

The characteristics of God in v. 24 can also be seen beautifully expressed in Exod. 34:6,7 and Neh. 9:17.

1. lovingkindness (see Special Topic at 2:2)
2. justice (see Special Topic at 4:2)
3. righteousness (see Special Topic at 4:2).

SPECIAL TOPIC: BOASTING

These Greek terms *kauchaomai*, *kauchēma*, and *kauchēsis* are used about thirty-five times by Paul and only twice in the rest of the NT (both in James). Its predominate use is in I and II Corinthians.

There are two main truths connected to boasting.

1. No flesh shall glory/boast before God (cf. I Cor. 1:29; Eph. 2:9).
2. Believers should glory in the Lord (cf. I Cor. 1:31; II Cor. 10:17, an allusion to Jer. 9:23-24).

Therefore, there is appropriate and inappropriate boasting/glorying (i.e., pride).

1. appropriate
 - a. in the hope of glory (cf. Rom. 4:2)
 - b. in God through the Lord Jesus (cf. Rom. 5:11)
 - c. in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ (i.e., Paul’s main theme, cf. I Cor. 1:17-18; Gal. 6:14)
 - d. Paul boasts in
 - (1) his ministry without compensation (cf. I Cor. 9:15,16; II Cor. 10:12)

- (2) his authority from Christ (cf. II Cor. 10:8,12)
 - (3) his not boasting in other men's labor (as some at Corinth were, cf. II Cor. 10:15)
 - (4) his racial heritage (as others were doing at Corinth, cf. II Cor. 11:17; 12:1,5,6)
 - (5) his churches
 - (a) Corinth (II Cor. 7:4,14; 8:24; 9:2; 11:10)
 - (b) Thessalonica (cf. II Thess. 1:4)
 - (6) his confidence in God's comfort and deliverance (cf. II Cor. 1:12)
2. inappropriate
- a. in relation to Jewish heritage (cf. Rom. 2:17,23; 3:27; Gal. 6:13)
 - b. some in the Corinthian church were boasting
 - (1) in men (cf. I Cor. 3:21)
 - (2) in wisdom (cf. I Cor. 4:7)
 - (3) in freedom (cf. I Cor. 5:6)
 - c. false teachers tried to boast in the church at Corinth (cf. II Cor. 11:12)

▣ **“for I delight in these things”** If YHWH “delights” (BDB 342, KB 339, *Qal* PERFECT), then we should take special notice of it and emulate it (cf. Isa. 58:2; opposite of 11:10; 13:10).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:25-26

²⁵“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “that I will punish all who are circumcised and yet uncircumcised—²⁶Egypt and Judah, and Edom and the sons of Ammon, and Moab and all those inhabiting the desert who clip the hair on their temples; for all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised of heart.”

9:25-26 This is a theological contrast between physical circumcision and spiritual circumcision. Circumcision was an outward sign of the covenant between YHWH and Abraham (cf. Gen. 17:10). All of the surrounding nations practiced circumcision, but not for the same spiritual purposes as Israel. The only uncircumcised people in the Ancient Near East that we know of were the Philistines, a group of mercenaries from Aegean Islands who invaded Palestine around the middle of the twelfth century B.C. But, although circumcision was meant to be a sign of the covenant, what God really wanted was an inner attitude of love for Him, as well as the outward covenant stipulations. This is why the Bible repeatedly speaks of different parts of the body being circumcised: (1) the ears, Jer. 6:10; (2) the lips, Exod. 6:12,30; and (3) the heart, Lev. 26:41; Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; Ezek. 44:7,9. This same radical truth is reflected in the NT in Rom. 2:28,29! As temple ritual and liturgy without faith offered no hope, so too, family liturgy and ritual without faith offered no hope (i.e., chapter 7)!

9:26 “who clip the hair on their temples” There have been two basic interpretations of this Hebrew phrase. The NASB, REV, and NJB interpret this as an idolatrous act reflected in Lev. 19:27; Jer. 25:33; 49:32. It may relate to mourning for the dead (cf. Deut. 14:1) or a part of the idolatrous worship of the foreign gods (cf. Herodotus 111,8).

The other interpretation is found in the NKJV, NIV, and REB, which translate this as a metaphor for the universal judgment of God (i.e., NKJV, “and all who are in the farthest corners, who dwell in the wilderness”).

JEREMIAH 10

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Satire On Idolatry	Idols and the True God		Idolatry and True Worship	Idols and the True God
10:1-5 (1-5)	10:1-5 (1-5)	10:1-5 (2-5)	10:1-5 (2-5)	10:1-5 (2-5)
10:6-10 (6-10)	10:6-10 (6-10)	10:6-10 (6-10)	10:6-10 (6-10)	10:6-10 (6-10)
10:11	10:11	10:11	10:11	10:11
			A Hymn of Praise to God	
10:12-16 (12-16)	10:12-16 (12-13) (14-16)	10:12-16 (12-16)	10:12-16 (12-16)	10:12-16 (12-16)
	The Coming Captivity of Judah		The Coming Exile	Panic in the Country
10:17-18 (17-18)	10:17-18 (17-18)	10:17-21 (17-21)	10:17-20 (19-20)	10:17-24 (17-24)
10:19-22 (19-22)	10:19-20 (19-20)			
	10:21-22 (21-22)		10:21-22 (21-22)	
		10:22 (22)		
10:23-25 (23-25)	10:23-25 (23-25)	10:23-24 (23-24)	10:23-25 (23-25)	
		10:25 (25)		10:25 (25)

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. There is a literary unit from chapters 7 through 10 which deals with Judah's sin and YHWH's judgment.
- B. The poems of Jeremiah are arranged, not by date, but by
 1. word plays
 2. themes
- C. This chapter has many similarities with both Deuteronomy and Isaiah. Two examples:
 1. the rare word (BDB 903 I), "cucumber field," v. 5 (cf. Isa. 1:8)
 2. the phrase, "none is like You," v. 6 reflects Deut. 33:26 (see Special Topic at 1:5)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:1-5

¹Hear the word which the LORD speaks to you, O house of Israel.

²Thus says the LORD,

**"Do not learn the way of the nations,
And do not be terrified by the signs of the heavens
Although the nations are terrified by them;**

³For the customs of the peoples are delusion;
Because it is wood cut from the forest,
The work of the hands of a craftsman with a cutting tool.

⁴They decorate *it* with silver and with gold;
They fasten it with nails and with hammers
So that it will not totter.

⁵Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field are they,
And they cannot speak;
They must be carried,
Because they cannot walk!
Do not fear them,
For they can do no harm,
Nor can they do any good."

10:1 "Hear the word" this is the Hebrew word *Shema* (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE), which means "to hear so as to do." It is a recurrent demand in Jeremiah (cf. 2:4; 5:21; 6:19; 7:2,23; 10:1; 11:2,4,6; 13:15; 17:20; 19:3; 21:11; 22:2; 31:10; 38:20; 42:15; 44:24,26; 49:20; 50:45). YHWH is communicating; His people are not listening and obeying!

▣ **"house of Israel"** The title "Israel" in Jeremiah is so confusing because it is used in several senses. See Special Topic at 2:3.

10:2 “Do not learn the way of the nations” Chapter 10 addresses the folly of idolatry. It reflects the metaphors and sarcasm of Isaiah (cf. Isa. 2:20; 31:7; 40:18-20; 41:7; 44:9-20; 45:16; 46:5-7). God had given them the way in which they should walk (cf. Lev. 18:3; Deut. 12:30), but they chose the way (i.e., lifestyle) of idolatry. This is even reflected in v. 2 by a seeming allusion to the Babylonian astral deities (i.e., “signs of the heavens,” cf. Isa. 47:13).

There are two *Qal* IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense (negated).

1. learn – BDB 540, KB 531
2. be terrified – BDB 369, KB 365

The pagan nations, without a knowledge of YHWH, were terrified (BDB 369, KB 365, *Qal* IMPERFECT) by the astrologers (cf. Isa. 47:12-14). Superstitions are powerful instruments in the hand of Satan to frighten, intimidate, and control humans!

10:3 “delusion” This is the term “nothingness” or “vanity” (BDB 210, KB 236, cf. 2:5; 14:22; II Kgs. 17:15). It is quite often used to describe the idols (cf. Deut. 32:21), which were nonentities made by human hands. They had no power to act, in contradistinction to YHWH who acts for His people! Idols cannot hear, see, or act, but they are used by Satan to trick humans from knowing and following the only true God and His Messiah (cf. Eph. 6:10-18).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SATAN

This is a very difficult subject for several reasons.

1. The OT reveals not an archenemy of good, but a servant of YHWH, who offers mankind an alternative and also accuses mankind of unrighteousness. There is only one God (monotheism), one power, one cause in the OT—YHWH.
2. The concept of a personal archenemy of God developed in the interbiblical (non-canonical) literature under the influence of Persian dualistic religions (*Zoroastrianism*). This, in turn, greatly influenced rabbinical Judaism and the Essene community (i.e., Dead Sea Scrolls).
3. The NT develops the OT themes in surprisingly stark, but selective, categories.

If one approaches the study of evil from the perspective of biblical theology (each book or author or genre studied and outlined separately), then very different views of evil are revealed.

If, however, one approaches the study of evil from a non-biblical or extra-biblical approach of world religions or eastern religions, then much of the NT development is foreshadowed in Persian dualism and Greco-Roman spiritism.

If one is presuppositionally committed to the divine authority of Scripture, then the NT development must be seen as progressive revelation. Christians must guard against allowing Jewish folklore or western literature (Dante, Milton) to further influence the concept. There is certainly mystery and ambiguity in this area of revelation. God has chosen not to reveal all aspects of evil, its origin, its development, its purpose, but He has revealed its defeat!

In the OT the term “satan” or “accuser” (BDB 966) can relate to three separate groups.

1. human accusers (cf. I Sam. 29:4; II Sam. 19:22; I Kgs. 11:14,20,29; Ps. 109:6)
2. angelic accusers (cf. Num. 22:22-23; Job 1-2; Zech. 3:1)
3. demonic accusers (cf. I Chr. 21:1; I Kgs. 22:21; Zech. 13:2)

Only later in the intertestamental period is the serpent of Genesis 3 identified with Satan (cf. *Book of Wisdom* 2.23-24; *II Enoch* 31:3), and even later does this become a rabbinical option (cf. *Sot* 9b and *Sanh.* 29a). The “sons of God” of Genesis 6 become angels in I Enoch 54:6. I mention this, not to

assert its theological accuracy, but to show its development. In the NT these OT activities are attributed to angelic, personified evil (cf. II Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9).

The origin of personified evil is difficult or impossible (depending on your point of view) to determine from the OT. One reason for this is Israel 7:14; Isa. 45:7; Amos 3:6). All causality was attributed to YHWH to demonstrate His uniqueness and primacy (cf. Isa. 43:11; 44:6,8,24; 45:5-6,14,18,21,22).

Sources of possible information are (1) Job 1-2, where Satan is one of the “sons of God” (i.e., angels) or (2) Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, where prideful near-eastern kings (Babylon and Tyre) are possibly used to illustrate the pride of Satan (cf. I Tim. 3:6). I have mixed emotions about this approach. Ezekiel uses Garden of Eden metaphors, not only for the king of Tyre as Satan (cf. Ezek. 28:12-16), but also for the king of Egypt as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Ezekiel 31). However, Isaiah 14, particularly vv. 12-14, seems to describe an angelic revolt through pride. If God wanted to reveal to us the specific nature and origin of Satan, this is a very oblique way and place to do it. We must guard against the trend of systematic theology of taking small, ambiguous parts of different testaments, authors, books, and genres and combining them as pieces of one divine puzzle.

I agree with Alfred Edersheim (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, appendices XIII [pp. 748-763] and XVI [pp.770-776]) that rabbinical Judaism has been overly influenced by Persian dualism and demonic speculation. The rabbis are not a good source for truth in this area. Jesus radically diverges from the teachings of the Synagogue in this area. I think that the concept of an archangelic enemy of YHWH developed from the two high gods of Iranian dualism, *Ahkiman* and *Ormaza*, and were then developed by the rabbis into a biblical dualism of YHWH and Satan.

There is surely progressive revelation in the NT as to the personification of evil, but not as elaborate as the rabbis. A good example of this difference is the “war in heaven.” The fall of Satan is a logical necessity, but the specifics are not given. Even what is given is veiled in apocalyptic genre (cf. Rev. 12:4,7,12-13). Although Satan is defeated in Jesus and exiled to earth, he still functions as a servant of YHWH (cf. Matt. 4:1; Luke 22:31-32; I Cor. 5:5; I Tim. 1:20).

We must curb our curiosity in this area. There is a personal force of temptation and evil, but there is still only one God and we are still responsible for our choices. There is a spiritual battle, both before and after salvation. Victory can only come and remain in and through the Triune God. Evil has been defeated and will be removed!

10:5 “Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field” This is an allusion to idols described as scarecrows. Some translate this as “upright as a palm tree” (NKJV, Peshitta). The LXX omits it.

▣ **“They must be carried”** This is an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and an IMPERFECT VERB from the same root (BDB 669, KB 724) used for intensity.

▣ **“Do not fear them”** This is a *Qal* IMPERFECT (BDB 431, KB 432) used in a JUSSIVE sense. Fear can be paralyzing!

Notice those who know YHWH should not fear because the idols

1. cannot harm you
2. cannot do you good

They are non-existent (cf. Isa. 41:23-24). Fear YHWH (cf. v. 7)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:6-10

**⁶There is none like You, O LORD;
You are great, and great is Your name in might.
⁷Who would not fear You, O King of the nations?
Indeed it is Your due!
For among all the wise men of the nations
And in all their kingdoms,
There is none like You.
⁸But they are altogether stupid and foolish
In their discipline of delusion—their idol is wood!
⁹Beaten silver is brought from Tarshish,
And gold from Uphaz,
The work of a craftsman and of the hands of a goldsmith;
Violet and purple are their clothing;
They are all the work of skilled men.
¹⁰But the LORD is the true God;
He is the living God and the everlasting King.
At His wrath the earth quakes,
And the nations cannot endure His indignation.**

10:6 “There is none like You” This is an emphasis on the uniqueness of YHWH. It is an affirmation of monotheism (see Special Topic at 1:5). There was only one God (cf. v. 10). The Septuagint omits vv. 6-8 and 10. This omission is also in the Dead Sea Scroll manuscripts.

▣ **“You are great, and great is Your name”** “Great” (BDB 162) is used often in Deuteronomy of YHWH (cf. Deut. 3:24; 5:24; 9:26; 11:2; 32:3). Jeremiah often uses the phrasing and terminology of Deuteronomy.

10:7 “King of the nations” YHWH is not just the God of Abraham’s seed but the God of creation (see Special Topic at 1:5)! He is the only true God (cf. v. 10)!

This emphasis on YHWH as the only true God is difficult to communicate to a post-modern worldview which depreciates absolutes. Yet, this is the question! It is true or it is false. The biblical worldview rests on this basic affirmation.

10:8 This verse is very difficult to translate, but it seems that the Hebrew is referring to the fact that the Israelites were getting their information and knowledge from a dead stump.

10:9 “Tarshish” This was a city in the far west, possibly Spain or Sardinia. Some say it is just a mythological place to describe something far, far away (cf. the book of Jonah and Ezek. 27:12).

▣ **“And gold from Uphaz”** “Uphaz” (מֵאוּפַז, BDB 20) is found only here and in Dan. 10:5 as a place name. From I Kgs. 9:28 a place called “Ophir” (פֹּאֲפִיר, BDB 20, cf. Isa. 13:12) has “gold” (cf. Targums, Peshitta, REB). It possibly means “pure” or “fine” gold, thereby functioning as an ADJECTIVE.

▣ **“Violet and purple are their clothing”** These were very expensive dyes in the ancient world, originally coming from Phoenicia. It is simply a way of asserting that no matter how richly or royally they robed their idols, they were still just human-made, inanimate objects!

- ▣ **“They are all the work of skilled men”** The NET Bible (p. 1316, #17) points out the contrast between
1. the wise men of the nations
 2. the skilled craftsmen

Both use the same root (BDB 314). These idol makers are skillful craftsmen, but they are not wise. True wisdom cannot worship a man-made idol!

10:10 “the LORD is the true God” The Hebrew word (BDB 54) for truth emphasizes trustworthiness and dependability. See Special Topic at 3:12.

▣ **“the living God”** This seems to reflect the covenant name for God, YHWH, which is from the Hebrew VERB “to be” (cf. Exod. 3:14). See Special Topic: The Names For Deity at 1:2.

▣ Notice the ways YHWH is characterized.

1. there is none like You, vv. 6,7
2. You are great, v. 6
3. King of the nations, v. 7
4. the true God, v. 10
5. the living God, v. 10
6. the everlasting King, v. 10 (cf. #3)
7. the creator, vv. 12-13
8. the Maker of all is He, v. 16
9. the captain of the armies of heaven (i.e., Lord of hosts), v. 16

YHWH is the God who creates, hears, sees, and acts. The idols are non-existent. They cannot move, hear, see, or act. They will be destroyed! YHWH is the true, real, live, eternal One! (see Special Topic: Monotheism at 1:5).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:11

¹¹Thus you shall say to them, “The gods that did not make the heavens and the earth will perish from the earth and from under the heavens.”

10:11 This verse is in Aramaic. It is the only verse in Jeremiah in Aramaic (also note Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26; Dan. 2:4-7:28). Why one Aramaic verse should appear in the midst of a Hebrew book is uncertain. Some of the theories are:

1. The rabbis say that it was part of a letter sent to King Jehoiachin in captivity in Babylon.
2. It was an anti-polytheistic proverb.
3. It was an exorcism formula.
4. It was a marginal note, later inserted into the text (TEV, NEB).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:12-16

**¹²It is He who made the earth by His power,
Who established the world by His wisdom;
And by His understanding He has stretched out the heavens.
¹³When He utters His voice, *there is* a tumult of waters in the heavens,
And He causes the clouds to ascend from the end of the earth;
He makes lightning for the rain,**

And brings out the wind from His storehouses.

¹⁴Every man is stupid, devoid of knowledge;

Every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols;

For his molten images are deceitful,

And there is no breath in them.

¹⁵They are worthless, a work of mockery;

In the time of their punishment they will perish.

¹⁶The portion of Jacob is not like these;

For the Maker of all is He,

And Israel is the tribe of His inheritance;

The LORD of hosts is His name.

10:12-16 This is a passage about God as creator. In this passage it is He who gives and controls water, which was a very important theological issue in the agricultural Ancient Near East. Water was part of the Babylonian creation myth and the Canaanite creation myth. The Canaanite god, *Ba'al*, was supposedly the storm god that provided water (i.e., life). Contrary to both of these myths, YHWH is the creator, sustainer, and provider of rain and water.

10:12 “It is He who made the earth by His power,

Who established the world by His wisdom” This is an emphasis on God as creator (cf. v. 16).

Verses 12-16 are repeated in Jer. 51:15-19. The theological assertion that YHWH established the world by “wisdom” comes from Pro. 8:22-31. This is the OT background for John 1:1-14.

10:14-15 These verses continue the ridicule of idols (cf. vv. 3-5). The term “breath” is a play on the term for spirit (cf. Ezekiel 37).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRIT IN THE BIBLE

I. The Greek terms

A. *pneō*, to blow

B. *pnoē*, wind, breath

C. *pneuma*, spirit, wind

D. *pneumatikos*, pertaining to the spirit

E. *pneumatikōs*, spiritually

II. Greek philosophical background (*pneuma*)

A. Aristotle used the term as the life force that develops from birth until self-discipline

B. The Stoics used the term as synonymous to *psuchē*, (soul) even *nous* (mind) in the sense of the five physical senses and the human intellect

C. Greek thought – the term became equivalent to divine action (i.e., divination, magic, occult, prophecy, etc.)

III. Old Testament (*ruah*)

A. The actions of the monotheistic God (i.e., Spirit, used about 90 times in the OT)

1. positive, Genesis 1:2

2. negative, I Sam. 16:14-16,23; I Kgs. 22:21-22; Isa. 29:10

- B. The God-given life force in humanity (i.e., God's breath, cf. Gen. 2:7)
- C. The Septuagint translates *ruah* by *pneuma* (used about 100 times in the LXX)
- D. In later rabbinical writings, apocalyptic writing and the Dead Sea Scrolls, influenced by Zoroastrianism, *pneuma* is used of angels and demons

IV. New Testament (*pneuma*)

- A. God's special presence, power, and equipping
- B. The Spirit is connected to God's activity in the church
 - 1. prophecy
 - 2. miracles
 - 3. boldness to proclaim the gospel
 - 4. wisdom (i.e., the gospel)
 - 5. joy
 - 6. bring in the new age
 - 7. conversion (i.e., wooing and indwelling)
 - 8. Christlikeness
 - 9. special gifts of ministry
 - 10. prays for believers

The Spirit awakens mankind's desire for fellowship with God, for which they were created. This fellowship is possible because of the person and work of Jesus, God's Messiah. The new spiritual awakening leads to Christlike living, serving, and trusting.

- C. Best understood as a spiritual continuum with the Holy Spirit on one end and mankind as a physical creature of this planet, but also a spiritual creature in God's image, at the other end.
- D. Paul is the NT author who develops a theology of the Spirit/spirit.
 - 1. Paul uses Spirit to contrast flesh (i.e., sin nature)
 - 2. Paul uses spirit to contrast the physical
 - 3. Paul uses Spirit/spirit to contrast human thinking, knowing, and being
- E. Some examples from I Corinthians
 - 1. the Holy Spirit, 12:3
 - 2. the power and wisdom of God conveyed through the Holy Spirit, 2:4-5
 - 3. God's actions in the believer
 - a. new mind-set, 2:12; 14:14,32
 - b. new temple, 3:16; 6:19-20
 - c. new life (i.e., morality), 6:9-11
 - d. new life symbolized in baptism, 12:13
 - e. one with God (i.e., conversion), 6:17
 - f. God's wisdom, not the world's wisdom, 2:12-15; 14:14,32,37
 - g. spiritual giftedness of every believer for ministry, chapters 12 and 14
 - 4. the spiritual in contrast to the physical, 9:11; 10:3; 15:44
 - 5. spiritual realm in contrast to physical realm, 2:11; 5:5; 7:34; 15:45; 16:18
 - 6. a way of referring to a human's spiritual/inner life as distinct from one's physical body, 7:34

F. Humans live in two realms by creation (i.e., the physical and the spiritual). Mankind fell from intimacy with God (Genesis 3). Through Christ’s life, teachings, death, resurrection, and promised return, the Spirit woos fallen humans to exercise faith in the gospel, at which point they are restored to fellowship with God. The Spirit is that personal part of the Trinity which characterizes the New Age of righteousness. The Spirit is God the Father’s agent and the Son’s Advocate in this “age.” A problem exists because the new age has occurred in time, while the old age of sinful rebellion still exists. The Spirit transforms the old into the new, even while they both exist.

10:16 “The portion of Jacob is not like these” This refers to the God of Jacob (cf. Ps. 73:26). Jacob’s name was changed to Israel (cf. Gen. 32:28).

▣ **“Israel is the tribe of His inheritance”** The KJV has “the rod of His inheritance.” This refers to the rod as a means of measurement or a standard. However, most English translations follow NASB.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:17-18

**¹⁷Pick up your bundle from the ground,
You who dwell under siege!**
**¹⁸For thus says the LORD,
“Behold, I am slinging out the inhabitants of the land
At this time,
And will cause them distress,
That they may be found.”**

10:17-18 This strophe starts with an IMPERATIVE, “pick up your bundle” (BDB 62, KB 72, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) which denotes the imminence of the Babylonian exile. It shows that the Israeli people would go into exile with only that which they could carry; that God is the One who pronounced this judgment because of their sin, not because *Marduk* was a greater and stronger deity!

10:18 The last line has several translation options.

1. **NASB** – “that they may be found”
2. **MT, NKJV** – “that they may find *it so*” (from מצא, BDB 592)
3. **NRSV, Peshitta** – “that they may find me!”
4. **TEV** – “until not one is left”
5. **NJB, JPSOA, NET Bible** – “that they shall feel it”
6. **LXX** – “that your plague may be discovered”
7. **REB, NEB** – “squeeze them dry” (from מצה, BDB 594)
8. **NIV** – “that they may be captured”

Apparently the line refers to the fact that none shall escape capture and exile. Context and word root are the two most helpful ways to determine meaning in poetry.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:19-22

**¹⁹Woe is me, because of my injury!
My wound is incurable.**

**But I said, “Truly this is a sickness,
And I must bear it.”**

**²⁰My tent is destroyed,
And all my ropes are broken;
My sons have gone from me and are no more.
There is no one to stretch out my tent again
Or to set up my curtains.**

**²¹For the shepherds have become stupid
And have not sought the LORD;
Therefore they have not prospered,
And all their flock is scattered.**

**²²The sound of a report! Behold, it comes—
A great commotion out of the land of the north—
To make the cities of Judah
A desolation, a haunt of jackals.**

10:19-22 This strophe of lament is similar to Jer. 8:18-22. It seems to reflect the heart of God through the words of Jeremiah. However, the nation is personified. The land suffers from mankind’s sin (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28; Rom. 8:18-22). There is a series of nomadic metaphors here, particularly related to the “tent” and “flocks.”

10:19 Jeremiah uses sickness or wounds as a metaphor for sin (cf. 30:17), as does Isaiah 1:5-6; 53:5; Ps. 103:3 (note the synonymous parallelism). These verses cannot be used as a promise of physical healing.

SPECIAL TOPIC: IS HEALING GOD’S PLAN FOR EVERY AGE?

1. Healing was a significant aspect of the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles.
2. It was intended primarily to confirm the radically new message about God and His kingdom.
3. It shows the heart of God for hurting people.
4. God has not changed (Mal. 3:6) and He still acts in love in healing.
5. There are examples where healing did not take place.
 - a. Paul, II Cor. 12:7-10
 - b. Trophimus, II Tim. 4:20
6. Sin and sickness were associated in the rabbis and James (cf. John. 9:2; James 5:13-18).
7. Healing is not a guarantee of the New Covenant. It is not part of the atonement described in Isaiah 53 and Psalm 103.
8. There is true mystery about why some are healed and some are not.
9. It is possible that although healing is present in every age, there was a significant increase during Jesus’ lifetime; this increase will occur again just before His return.

▣ The last line of v. 19 can have several translation options (i.e., different vowels).

1. **NASB, NKJV, NJV, JPSOA** – “I must bear it”
2. **NRSV** – “If this is the worst, I can bear it”
3. **TEV** – “we thought this was something we could endure!”

Number 1 is the people’s resignation of Divine judgment. Number 2 is a belittling of the judgment. I think #1 fits the context best.

10:21 “shepherds” This (BDB 944 I) refers to spiritual leaders (cf. 2:8,16; 3:15; 6:3; 12:10; 22:22; 23:1,2,4; 25:34-36; 50:6; 51:23; Ezek. 34:3).

10:22 “A great commotion out of the land of the north” This refers to the coming exile. The north was an idiom for invasion since this was the only route that invaders from the Fertile Crescent (i.e., Mesopotamia) could take because of the desert directly to the east of Palestine.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:23-25

**²³I know, O LORD, that a man’s way is not in himself,
Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.
²⁴Correct me, O LORD, but with justice;
Not with Your anger, or You will bring me to nothing.
²⁵Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You
And on the families that do not call Your name;
For they have devoured Jacob;
They have devoured him and consumed him
And have laid waste his habitation.**

10:23-25 This is a closing prayer for mercy as the prophet speaks on behalf of the people. See Special Topic at 7:16.

10:23 “a man’s way is not in himself;

Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps” This is an affirmation of the truth that God is in control of all things. Humans must trust in Him (cf. Pro. 3:5,6; Ps. 37:23; 66:8,9).

10:24 “Correct me, O LORD” This is a *Piel* IMPERATIVE (BDB 415, KB 418, cf. 2:19). It is the emphasis on God as parent (cf. Pro. 3:12; Ps. 103:6-14; Heb. 12:5-13). God is a disciplining parent; He disciplines for the purpose of maturity in righteousness.

10:25 The prophet’s prayer to God continues and pleads that He will judge (lit. “pour out,” BDB 1049, KB 1629, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) the nations which He used to judge His people (cf. Ps. 79:6-7). The ultimate goal of creation is to know YHWH and have a world that reflects His character.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What metaphor or analogy does Jeremiah use in chapter 8 to describe Judah's reluctance to repent?
2. Why are the graves opened in chapter 8?
3. Who are the scribes in chapter 8?
4. Who is speaking in 8:18-9:16?
5. List the judgments that God will send on Judah in chapter 9.
6. Describe Jeremiah's understanding of circumcision and its purpose.
7. List the reasons for the futility of idolatry found in chapter 10.
8. List the attributes of YHWH in chapter 10.
9. Why did God allow His people to be exiled!

JEREMIAH 11

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS (The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Broken Covenant	The Broken Covenant	Jeremiah and Observance of the Covenant	Jeremiah and the Covenant	Jeremiah and the Covenant
11:1-8	11:1-5 11:6-8	11:1-8	11:1-5 11:6-8	11:1-5 11:6-8
11:9-13	11:9-10 11:11-13	11:9-12 11:13 (13)	11:9-14	11:9-13
11:14-17 (15-16)	11:14-17 (15-16)	11:14 Rebuke to the Frequenters of the Temple 11:15-16 (15-16) 11:17	11:15-16 11:17	11:14-17
Plots Against Jeremiah	Jeremiah's Life Threatened	Jeremiah Persecuted at Anathoth	A Plot Against Jeremiah's Life	Jeremiah's First Personal Lament. A Plot Against the Life of Jeremiah (11:18-12:6)
11:18-20 (18-20)	11:18-20 (20)	11:18-19 11:20 (20)	11:18-19 11:20	11:18-20 (18-20)
11:21-23	11:21-23	11:21-23	11:21-23	11:21-23

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapters 11-13 are about the Mosaic covenant (see Special Topic at 3:7), which Josiah took seriously, as did the prophets (see Special Topic at 1:4), but the people did not (cf. vv. 7-8)!
- B. This discussion of “the covenant” has words and phrasing taken from Deuteronomy.
- C. The first of several very frank discussions between YHWH and Jeremiah, called “Jeremiah’s Confessions,” occurs in this literary unit (cf. 11:18-12:6; 15:10-21; 17:14-18; 18:18-23; 20:7-18). Jeremiah felt comfortable being transparent in his conversations with YHWH.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:1-5

¹The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, ²“Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; ³and say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, “Cursed is the man who does not heed the words of this covenant ⁴which I commanded your forefathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, ‘Listen to My voice, and do according to all which I command you; so you shall be My people, and I will be your God,’ ⁵in order to confirm the oath which I swore to your forefathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as *it is this day.*”” Then I said, “Amen, O LORD.”

11:2 “Hear the words” This is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE which so often introduces a new poem/thought in Jeremiah (see note at 10:1).

▣ **“of this covenant”** Chapters 11-13 are unified by the term covenant (BDB 260, see Special Topic at 3:7). This covenant, in context, seems to relate to God’s revelation to Moses on Mt. Sinai (cf. Exodus 19-24; Deuteronomy 5). God approached several of the early personages with promises and stipulations (i.e., Noah, Gen. 6:18; Abraham, Genesis 12,15,18). These covenants basically involve stipulations with benefits and warnings/cursings for non-performance (i.e., Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-29). They exactly follow the Hittite Suzerian Treaty formulas of the second millennium B.C.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HITTITE (SUZERIAN) TREATIES

- A. Verses 1-13 are a summary of YHWH’s activity toward the man Abraham and his seed.
- B. The Hittite treaties of the second millennium B.C. offer us an ancient, historically contemporary parallel to the structure of Deuteronomy (as well as Exodus – Leviticus and Joshua 24). This treaty pattern changed by the first millennium B.C. This gives us evidence for the historicity of the Pentateuch and Joshua. For further reading in this area, see G. E. Mendenhall’s *Law and Covenants in Israel and the Ancient Near East* and John Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context*, pp. 95-107.

- C. The Hittite treaty of the second millennium B.C. and its parallels in Deuteronomy
 - 1. preamble (Deut. 1:1-5, introduction of speaker, YHWH)
 - 2. review of the past acts of the King (Deut. 1:6-4:49, God's past acts for Israel)
 - 3. treaty terms (Deuteronomy 5-26)
 - a. general (Deuteronomy 5-11)
 - b. specific (Deuteronomy 12-26)
 - 4. results of treaty (Deuteronomy 27-29)
 - a. benefits (Deuteronomy 28)
 - b. curses/consequences (Deuteronomy 27)
 - 5. witness of deity (Deut. 30:19; 31:19, also 32, Moses' son functions as a witness)
 - a. a copy in the temple of the deity
 - b. a copy with the vassal to be read annually
 - c. the uniqueness of the Hittite treaties from the later Assyrian and Syrian treaties were:
 - 1) the historical review of the past acts of the king
 - 2) the cursing section was last pronounced
- D. The Hittite treaty pattern of the second millennium and its parallels in Joshua:
 - 1. identification of the King (24:2)
 - 2. narrative of the King's great acts (24:2-13)
 - 3. covenant obligations (24:14,23)
 - 4. instructions for depositing the treaty in the sanctuary (24:25-26)
 - 5. the deities of the parties involved invoked as witnesses (24:22)
 - 6. blessing of fidelity; curses for violation (24:20)

11:3 “cursed” In Deuteronomy 27 and 28 Moses lays out the benefits and judgments connected with following God. When Joshua entered the Promised Land, he confirmed this covenant with the people (cf. Josh. 8:30-35). There are consequences to disobedience (i.e., Deut. 27:15-26; 28:15-19).

11:4 “the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt” It needs to be remembered that God dealt with the Israelites in grace (cf. Gen. 6:1-22; 15:12-21) before He dealt with them in law (cf. Exodus 19-24). The Law was YHWH's way to assure a people who reflected His character to a fallen world!

▣ **“from the iron furnace”** This (BDB 468 CONSTRUCT 137) is from the mining industry, a phrase that speaks of processing metal. It is used metaphorically for “hard labor” (cf. Isa. 48:10; Deut. 4:20).

▣ **“Listen”** See note at v. 2. It is important to remember that God's covenant is both conditional and unconditional. It is conditional on mankind's faith response (cf. 31:32), but unconditional on God's promise (cf. 24:4-7). It is important not only to hear (*Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. v. 2) the Word of God (Exod. 24:3-8), but to act on the Word of God (cf. James 2:14-20).

▣ **“so you shall be My people, and I will be your God”** This is covenant language. Notice that it is based on Israel's obedience; no obedience — no covenant!

This is why a New Covenant (31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38) was needed. Fallen mankind, even covenant mankind, could not keep God's laws (cf. Galatians 3).

11:5 “the oath which I swore to your forefathers” This seems to refer to YHWH's call to Abram in Gen. 12:1-3.

▣ **“a land flowing with milk and honey”** This phrase was a technical name for the land of Palestine in Canaanite, Egyptian, Assyrian, and Babylonian documents (cf. Exod. 3:8,17; Deut. 6:3; 11:9; 26:9,15; 27:3; 31:20).

▣ **“as it is this day”** This is a combination of BDB 398 and 260, which is used often especially in Deuteronomy (cf. 2:30; 4:20,38; 5:24; 10:8; 11:4; 27:9; 29:27), but is also found several times in

1. Joshua – 7:25,26; 14:14; 23:8
2. Judges – 9:19; 10:15; 12:3; 15:19
3. I Samuel – 14:45; 22:8,13; 24:19; 25:32; 26:21; 27:6; 28:18; 29:3,6,8
4. II Samuel – 16:12; 18:20
5. I Kings – 2:26; 3:2; 8:8,24

Jeremiah, who had access to previous OT books, did not get it uniquely from Deuteronomy, which many modern scholars assume was written in Josiah's day.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PENTATEUCH SOURCE CRITICISM (J,E,D,P)

(taken from Introduction to Genesis 1-11, IV)

A. Modern Scholarship

1. There have obviously been some editorial additions to the Torah (seemingly, to make the ancient work more understandable to contemporary readers, which was a characteristic of Egyptian scribes):
 - a. Genesis 12:6; 13:7; 14:14; 21:34; 32:32; 36:31; 47:11
 - b. Exodus 11:3; 16:36
 - c. Numbers 12:3; 13:22; 15:22-23; 21:14-15; 32:33ff
 - d. Deuteronomy 3:14; 34:6
 - e. Ancient scribes were highly trained and educated. Their techniques, however, differed from country to country:
 - (1) In Mesopotamia, they were careful not to change anything, and even checked their works for accuracy. Here is an ancient Sumerian scribal footnote: “the work is complete from beginning to end, has been copied, revised, compared, and verified sign by sign,” from about 1400 B.C.
 - (2) In Egypt they freely revised ancient texts to update them for contemporary readers. The scribes at Qumran (i.e., Dead Sea Scrolls) followed this approach.
2. Scholars of the 19th century theorized that the Torah is a composite document from many sources over an extended period of time (Graff-Wellhausen). This theory was based on:
 - a. the different names for God
 - b. apparent doublets in the text
 - c. the literary form of the accounts

- d. the theology of the accounts
- 3. Supposed sources and dates:
 - a. J source (use of YHWH from southern Israel) – 950 B.C.
 - b. E source (use of *Elohim* from northern Israel) – 850 B.C.
 - c. JE combined – 750 B.C.
 - d. D source (“The Book of the Law,” II Kgs. 22:8, discovered during Josiah’s reform while remodeling the Temple was supposedly the book of Deuteronomy, written by an unknown priest of Josiah’s time to support his reform.) – 621 B.C.
 - e. P source (priestly rewrite of OT, especially ritual and procedure) – 400 B.C.
 - f. There have obviously been editorial additions to the Torah. The Jews assert it was
 - (1) The High Priest (or another of his family) at the time of the writing
 - (2) Jeremiah the Prophet
 - (3) Ezra the Scribe – IV Esdras says he rewrote it because the originals were destroyed in the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.
 - g. However, the J. E. D. P. theory says more about our modern literary theories and categories than evidence from the Torah. R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 495-541 and *Tyndale’s Commentaries*, “Leviticus” pp. 15-25.
 - h. Characteristics of Hebrew Literature
 - (1) Doublets, like Genesis 1 & 2, are common in Hebrew. Usually a general description is given, followed by a specific account (i.e., the Ten Commandments and the Holiness Code). This may have been a way to accent truths or help oral memory.
 - (2) The ancient rabbis said the two most common names for God have theological significance:
 - (a) YHWH – the Covenant name for deity as He relates to Israel as Savior and Redeemer (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 103).
 - (b) *Elohim* – deity as Creator, Provider, and Sustainer of all life on earth (cf. Ps. 19:1-6; 104).
 - (c) Other Ancient Near Eastern texts use several names to describe their high god (cf. *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* by Gleason L. Archer, p. 68).
 - (3) It is common in non-biblical near eastern literature for a variety of styles and vocabulary to occur in unified literary works (cf. *Introduction to the Old Testament*, R. K. Harrison, pp. 522-526).
- B. The evidence from ANE literature implies that Moses used written cuneiform documents or Mesopotamian style (patriarchal) oral traditions to write Genesis. This in no way means to imply a lessening of inspiration but is an attempt to explain the literary phenomenon of the book of Genesis (cf. P. J. Wiseman’s *New Discoveries in Babylonia about Genesis*). Beginning in Genesis 37, a marked Egyptian influence of style, form and vocabulary seems to indicate Moses used either literary productions or oral traditions from the Israelites’ days in both Egypt and Mesopotamia. Moses’ formal education was entirely Egyptian! The exact literary formation of the Pentateuch is uncertain. I believe that Moses is the compiler and author of the vast majority of the Pentateuch, though he may have used scribes and/or written and oral (patriarchal) traditions.

His writings have been updated by later scribes. The historicity and trustworthiness of these first few books of the OT have been illustrated by modern archaeology.

- C. There is an emerging theory that there were scribes (in different parts of Israel) working on different parts of the Pentateuch at the same time under the direction of Samuel (cf. I Sam. 10:25). This theory was first proposed by E. Robertson's *The Old Testament Problem*.

▣ **“Amen”** This is the Hebrew term for “faith” (cf. Hab. 2:4 and Special Topic at 3:12). It comes from the root “to be firm” or “to be sure.” Its basic affirmation is “faithfulness” or “trustworthiness.” Here and in 28:6 it is used in the sense of a verbal agreement, as we use today.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:6-8

⁶And the LORD said to me, “Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Hear the words of this covenant and do them. ⁷For I solemnly warned your fathers in the day that I brought them up from the land of Egypt, even to this day, warning persistently, saying, “Listen to My voice.” ⁸Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked, each one, in the stubbornness of his evil heart; therefore I brought on them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded *them* to do, but they did not.”

11:6 This verse may imply an itinerant ministry. There is much about the lives of OT characters that is unknown. The VERB “proclaim” is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 894, KB 1128, cf. 2:2; 3:12; 7:2; 19:2, same VERB but *Qal* PERFECT).

11:7-8 These verses are omitted in the LXX (except for “And they did not obey,” v. 8). They are theologically similar to 7:24-26. Basically they are Judah’s response to YHWH’s message through Jeremiah.

11:7 “I solemnly warned. . .warning persistently” This first phrase is an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and a PERFECT VERB of the same root (BDB 729, KB 795), which was a grammatical way to show intensity. The second phrase is literally “rising early and warning,” both *Hiphil* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES.

YHWH repeatedly warned His covenant people by revelations through Moses during the exodus and wilderness wandering period. YHWH manifested His personal presence then by

1. the *Shekinah* cloud
2. providing water
3. providing food
4. clothes
 - a. did not wear out
 - b. grew with the children
5. revelations at the tabernacle to Moses

▣ **“Listen to My voice”** See note at v. 2. “Voice” would be metaphorical for all of YHWH’s revelations (see above).

11:8 This verse describes the covenant people's response to YHWH's revelation.

1. they did not obey – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* PERFECT (cf. 7:24; 9:13)
2. they did not incline their ear – BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* PERFECT (cf. 35:15)
3. they walked, every one, in the stubbornness of their evil heart (cf. 3:17; 7:24; 9:14; 13:10; 16:12; 18:12; 23:17)

YHWH's response was

1. to bring the stated curses among them (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-29)
2. even the curses did not affect their behavior

It must be remembered that biblical faith is not simply cognitive or a crisis experience, but a daily relationship with God through faith and repentance!

▣ **“in the stubbornness of their evil heart”** God possibly chose Israel because of their rebellious tendencies (cf. Deut. 9:6,7,13,24; 10:16; 31:27) so that the truth of His gracious and patient character (cf. Exod. 34:6-7; Num. 14:18; Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; 103:8-18; 145:8-13) might shine all the brighter!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:9-13

⁹Then the LORD said to me, “A conspiracy has been found among the men of Judah and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ¹⁰They have turned back to the iniquities of their ancestors who refused to hear My words, and they have gone after other gods to serve them; the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken My covenant which I made with their fathers.” ¹¹Therefore thus says the LORD, “Behold I am bringing disaster on them which they will not be able to escape; though they will cry to Me, yet I will not listen to them. ¹²Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry to the gods to whom they burn incense, but they surely will not save them in the time of their disaster. ¹³For your gods are as many as your cities, O Judah; and as many as the streets of Jerusalem are the altars you have set up to the shameful thing, altars to burn incense to Baal.

11:9

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, NJB “A conspiracy”

TEV “plotting against”

LXX “a bond of union”

NET Bible “plotted rebellion”

The Hebrew VERB (BDB 905) denotes a “planning together” or “binding” of men to do harm (used often in Kings and Chronicles). It is found only here in Jeremiah. What is shocking is that it was the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem against YHWH.

11:10 “They have turned back to the iniquities of their ancestors” The current generation refused to acknowledge the sin and rebellion of their ancestors. They themselves became covenant breakers and idolaters just as their ancestors had (cf. Exod. 20:5). Consequences of sin move through time!

▣ **“the house of Israel and the house of Judah”** The Jewish united monarchy (Saul, David, Solomon) split in 922 B.C. over the issue of taxation and forced labor between Solomon's son Rehoboam and the Ephraimite leader Jeroboam. From this point on the Northern Ten Tribes are known as Israel (collective term), Ephraim (the largest tribe), or Samaria (the capital city).

▣ **“have broken My covenant”** The VERB is a *Hiphil* PERFECT (BDB 830 I, KB 974), which denotes an intensified, settled condition!

What a shocking phrase. The covenants with the Patriarchs were conditional. Successive generations violated it (the PERFECT denotes a settled condition). It had stated consequences (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-29). YHWH abrogated the covenant and Jeremiah states clearly in 31:31-34 that a “new” covenant was necessary, one not based on human performance which, because of the Fall (Genesis 3), was impossible. Therefore, God Himself would act redemptively on their behalf (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). The “new covenant” of Jeremiah is the gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; Galatians 3; and the book of Hebrews).

11:11 The covenant curses come to fruition (cf. 6:19).

▣ **“though they will cry to Me, yet I will not listen to them”** What a shocking phrase! God pleaded again and again with them and they would not listen. Even now, their cry to Him is from the fear of consequences, not true repentance! The covenant is broken! YHWH will not respond (cf. v. 11; 7:16).

11:12 **“will go and cry to the gods to whom they burn incense”** The lifeless idols cannot hear, see, or save!

▣ **“they surely will not save them”** This is an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and an IMPERFECT VERB from the same root (BDB 446, KB 448), which shows intensity. There is no possible deliverance from “non-existent” gods made with human hands!

11:13 **“For your gods are as many as your cities, O Judah”** Every city had their own *Ba'al/Asherah* worship site (cf. 2:28, see Special Topic at 2:20).

▣ **“the shameful thing”** The Hebrews often took the vowels from the Hebrew word “shame” and combined them with the names of foreign deities (i.e., *Ishbosheth* = “man of shame,” cf. II Sam. 2:8, instead of *Eshbaal*, I Chr. 8:33). This was done to ridicule the idols. The term “shame” (BDB 102) became a word for the fertility worship of *Ba'al* and *Asherah* of the Canaanite pantheon (see W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:14-17

¹⁴**“Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I will not listen when they call to Me because of their disaster.**

¹⁵**“What right has My beloved in My house**

When she has done many vile deeds?

Can the sacrificial flesh take away from you your disaster,

So that you can rejoice?”

¹⁶**The LORD called your name,**

“A green olive tree, beautiful in fruit and form”;

With the noise of a great tumult

He has kindled fire on it,

And its branches are worthless.

¹⁷The LORD of hosts, who planted you, has pronounced evil against you because of the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done to provoke Me by offering up sacrifices to Baal.

11:14 “do not pray for this people” The first two VERBS are IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense. The time for intercession had passed (cf. v. 11; 7:16; 14:11). God had set his mind on judgment (cf. Exod. 32:10). It was an act of parental love (cf. Heb. 12:5-11). His people were so sick with sin only radical surgery could help!

A book that has helped me interpret prophecy in light of the original author’s intent is by D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*. This is especially true of chapter 4, “How does the Language of Destruction and Blessing Work?” (pp. 73-102). Moderns do not understand ancient eastern ways of imagery. We tend to make everything literal, which is a disaster when interpreting prophetic poetry.

11:15-16 These two verses are poetry. God’s people are spoken of in the metaphor of an unfaithful wife, as in the book of Hosea (chapters 1-3). This shows the intimate interpersonal family relationship that was desired between God and His people (cf. 2:2).

11:15 “Can the sacrificial flesh take away from you your disaster” The LXX’s understanding of this difficult Hebrew text is that Judah was depending on the ritual of her sacrificial cultus instead of a personal relationship with God. Most modern English translations follow the LXX and see it as relating to Jeremiah’s temple sermon in chapter 7.

The MT seems to imply that the people were (1) taking the sacrificial meat home to eat or (2) eating it at the temple but planning their evil deeds of *Ba’al* worship activities. In Moses’ writings this was the privilege of the priests only, except for the peace offering. This showed the people’s total disregard for YHWH and His word!

The Expositors Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 455, offers a list of the textual problems.

1. a MASCULINE PLURAL ADJECTIVE modifying a FEMININE NOUN
2. a SINGULAR NOUN CONSTRUCT followed by a PLURAL VERB
3. MT punctuation that does not make sense
4. an archaic ending to one of the NOUNS
5. an ADVERB before the last VERB with an unusual meaning

SPECIAL TOPIC: SACRIFICES IN MESOPOTAMIA AND ISRAEL AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

- I. Ritual laws in Mesopotamia
 - A. Sacrifice was primarily a meal offered to a god. The altar was the table of the god where the meal was placed. Beside the altar was the incense brazier which was to attract the god’s attention. There was no ritual implication in the blood. The sword bearer cut the throat of the animal. The food was shared between the gods, the priest-king and the attendants. The offerer received nothing.
 - B. There was no expiatory sacrifice.
 - C. Sickness or pain was punishment from the gods. An animal was brought and destroyed; this acted as a substitute for the offerer.
 - D. Israel’s ritual was different and distinct. It seems to have originated in a person giving back to God part of his labor for necessary food (cf. Gen. 4:1-4; 8:20-22).

- II. Ritual laws in Canaan (similar to Israel's)
 - A. Sources
 - 1. biblical accounts
 - 2. Phoenician literature
 - 3. *Ras Shamra Tablets* from Ugarit concerning Canaanite deities and mythology from about 1400 B.C.
 - B. Israel's and Canaan's sacrifices are very much alike. However, there is no emphasis placed on the blood of the victim in Canaan sacrifices.
- III. Ritual Laws in Egypt
 - A. Sacrifices were offered but not emphasized
 - B. The sacrifice was not important but the attitude of the sacrificer was
 - C. Sacrifices were made to stop the wrath of the gods
 - D. The offerer hoped for deliverance or forgiveness
- IV. Israel's Sacrificial System – Israel's sacrifices were closer to Canaan's although not necessarily related to them at all.
 - A. Descriptive Phrases
 - 1. Sacrifice was a spontaneous expression of mankind's need for God.
 - 2. The OT laws which regulate sacrifice cannot be said to initiate sacrifice (cf. Gen. 7:8; 8:20).
 - 3. Sacrifice was an offering (animal or grain).
 - 4. Must be an offering that was wholly or partially destroyed upon an altar in homage to God.
 - 5. The altar was the place of sacrifice and symbolized the Divine presence.
 - 6. Sacrifice was an act of external worship (a prayer which was acted out).
 - 7. The definition of sacrifice is "acted prayers" or "ritualized prayers." The significance of ritual and our cultural bias against it is revealed in Gordon J. Wenham (*Tyndale Commentary Series*, "Numbers," p. 25-39). Leviticus and Numbers both contain large amounts of this type of material which shows its importance to Moses and Israel.
 - B. Sacrifice involved
 - 1. Gifts to God
 - a. involve acknowledgment that all of the earth is the Lord's
 - b. all that a person has, he owes to God
 - c. therefore, it is right that people bring tribute to God
 - d. it was a special kind of tribute or gift. It was something that the man needed to sustain his own existence. It was more than just giving something, it was something he needed. It was giving a part of himself to God.
 - e. by destroying the gift it cannot be reclaimed
 - f. a burnt offering becomes invisible and goes up to God's realm
 - g. earlier altars were erected in places where God appeared. The altar came to be looked upon as a holy place, therefore, the offering was brought there.
 - 2. Expressing consecration of one's entire life to God
 - a. The burnt offering was one of three voluntary sacrifices.
 - b. The entire animal was burnt to express to God deep-felt homage.
 - c. This was a very expressive gift to God.

3. Fellowship with God
 - a. communion aspect of sacrifice
 - b. an example would be the peace offering which symbolized God and man in fellowship
 - c. sacrifice was made to obtain or regain this fellowship
4. Expiation of sin
 - a. when man sinned he had to ask God to restore the relationship (covenant) which man had broken
 - b. there was no communal meal with the sin offering because of the broken relationship
 - c. the significance of blood
 - (1) placed on altar for man
 - (2) placed on veil for priest
 - (3) placed on mercy seat for High Priest and the nation (Lev. 16)
 - d. there were two types of sin offerings. The second is called the guilt offering or trespass offering. In it the offender was to restore to his fellow Israelite that which was taken or damaged along with the animal sacrifice.
 - e. there was no sacrifice for premeditated or intentional sin, 4:1, 22, 27; 5:15-18; 22:14

11:16 “A green olive tree” There are two major agricultural symbols used for the nation from Abraham’s seed in the OT: (1) an olive tree (cf. Ps. 52:8; Hosea 14:6; Rom. 11:17-24) and (2) a grapevine (i.e., Isaiah 5).



NASB, LXX	“its branches are worthless”
NKJV, NRSV,	
JPSOA	“it branches are broken”
TEV	“break its branches”
NJB, REB	“its branches will be consumed”

There are three possible VERBS.

1. רעע – BDB 949, KB 1270, meaning “to break,” cf. 15:12 (alternate form הָעַר, KB 1264)
2. רעה – BDB 94, KB 1262, meaning “that which is harmful or useless” (LXX, see Benjamin Davidson, *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, p. DCLXXXVI, IV)
3. בער – BDB 128, KB 145, meaning “to kindle”

The judgment of YHWH (i.e., fire, BDB 77, or possibly lightning) has destroyed the fruitful olive tree (i.e., Judah).

11:17 “The LORD of hosts, who planted you” Here again the people are described in agricultural terms as an olive tree or vineyard (cf. 2:21; Exod. 15:17; Ps. 44:2; 80:8; Isa. 5:2). YHWH is their source and life.

▣ **“to provoke Me”** This VERBAL (BDB 494, KB 491, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is used often in connection with idolatry (cf. 25:6,7; 32:30; 44:3,8; Deut. 4:25; 9:18; 31:29; 32:16; I Kgs. 16:7; II Kgs. 17:15-17; 21:6).

▣ **“by offering up sacrifices to Baal”** See 7:9; 11:13; and 32:29; also see Special Topic: Fertility Worship of the ANE at 2:20.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:18-20

**¹⁸Moreover, the LORD made it known to me and I knew it;
Then You showed me their deeds.
¹⁹But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter;
And I did not know that they had devised plots against me, *saying*,
“Let us destroy the tree with its fruit,
And let us cut him off from the land of the living,
That his name be remembered no more.”
²⁰But, O LORD of hosts, who judges righteously,
Who tries the feelings and the heart,
Let me see Your vengeance on them,
For to You have I committed my cause.**

11:18-12:4 This is the first of several intimate conversations between YHWH and Jeremiah known as “Jeremiah’s Confessions” (cf. 11:18-12:6; 15:10-21; 17:14-18; 18:18-23; 20:7-18). Verses 18-20 and 12:1-4 are poems. This first one deals with the plot from Jeremiah’s own kindred in Anathoth to take his life.

11:19 Jeremiah expresses his surprise at the divine information he received (v. 18). He was shocked at the intensity of the plot, because he was innocent (i.e., line 1, cf. Isa. 53:7).

Lines 3 and 4 are COHORTATIVES.

1. let us destroy the tree with its fruit – BDB 1007, KB 1469, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE
2. let us cut him off from the land of the living – BDB 503, KB 500, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense

In v. 20, line 3, Jeremiah uses a COHORTATIVE directed at those who plotted his death – “let me see Your vengeance on them,” BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense.

Just an added note about “with its fruit” (#1 above). This word (בלהמו, BDB 536) usually means “bread” or possibly “food.” REB translated it as “sap,” which is a revocalization. TEV has “while it is still healthy,” and NRSV has “in its strength” (בלחו). The UBS Text Project, p. 211, gives “bread/fruit” an A rating.

▣ The last two lines of v. 19 are parallel. The same thought is expressed in two images.

1. “cut off” – BDB 503, KB 500, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense; this VERB is used in two ways
 - a. cut down a tree
 - b. cut off a piece of something, here, “the land of the living,” cf. Ps. 52:5; Isa. 53:8
2. “name be remembered no more” – BDB 269, KB 269, *Niphal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 41:5; 83:4; 109:13

Both of these were metaphors for death.

11:20 “O LORD of hosts, who judges righteously” This section deals with the age-old question of why the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper (see John W. Wenham, *The Goodness of God* and *The Enigma of Evil: Can We Believe in the Goodness of God*). Jeremiah picks up on God as a righteous judge and in 12:1 he wants to plead his circumstances before Him. This is reminiscent of the book of Job, also note Ps. 37:73 and Hab. 1:2-4. It is always difficult to face and accept the unfairness of this fallen reality! But the problem is not YHWH but human rebellion (i.e., Genesis 3). This is not the world YHWH intended it to be!

▣ **“Who tries the feelings and the heart”** God does judge (VERB, BDB 103, cf. 6:27) on the basis, not only of actions, but also motives (cf. 17:10; 20:12; Ps. 7:9; 17:3; 26:2; 66:10; 139:23).

The word “feelings” (lit. “reins”) in the English text is basically the Hebrew word (BDB 480) for the lower viscera. The ancients believed that this was the area where the emotions and motives dwelt (cf. 12:2).

For “heart” see Special Topic at 4:19.

▣ **“For to You have I committed my cause”** The MT has the VERB “uncovered” (BDB 162, cf. LXX), but most translations have “committed” (lit. “rolled upon,” cf. Ps. 22:8), which is spelled very similarly.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:21-23

²¹Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the men of Anathoth, who seek your life, saying, “Do not prophesy in the name of the LORD, so that you will not die at our hand”; ²²therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts, “Behold, I am about to punish them! The young men will die by the sword, their sons and daughters will die by famine; ²³and a remnant will not be left to them, for I will bring disaster on the men of Anathoth—the year of their punishment.”

11:21-23 This is YHWH’s response to Jeremiah’s prayer of v. 20. Anathoth was Jeremiah’s hometown (cf. 1:1). There has been much discussion in the commentaries if these threats were based on the ancient rivalry between the two priestly families of Zadok and Abiathar. This connection is not certain in the text, but was obviously an undercurrent. Zadok was the current ruling high priestly family and Abiathar had been exiled to Anathoth by Solomon (cf. I Kgs. 2:26-27).

11:22 “the sword. . .famine” In the ANE there was a triad of terms used by Jeremiah to describe coming disaster (cf. 14:12; 21:7,9; 24:10; 27:8,13; 29:17-18; 32:24,36; 34:17; 38:2; 42:17,22; 44:13).

1. the sword – invasion
2. famine – drought or siege
3. pestilence – insects, sickness, or siege

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is a covenant?
2. Define the Hebrew word “Amen” in v. 5.
3. Who is *Ba'al* and how was he worshiped?
4. How is v. 15 related to the book of Hosea?
5. Why were the men of Anathoth trying to kill Jeremiah?

JEREMIAH 12

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jeremiah's Prayer	Jeremiah's Question	The Prosperity of the Wicked	Jeremiah Questions the LORD	Jeremiah's First Personal Lament (11:18-12:6)
12:1-4 (1-4)	12:1-2 (1-2) 12:3-4 (3-4)	12:1-3 (1-3) 12:4a	12:1-4 (1-4)	12:1-4 (1-4)
12:5-6 (5-6)	12:5-6 (5-6)	The LORD Answers Jeremiah 12:4b-5 (4b-5)	12:5-6 (5-6)	12:5-6 (5-6)
God's Answer		12:6		
12:7-13 (7-13)	12:7-9 (7-9)	Yahweh Laments His Ravaged Inheritance 12:7-13 (7-13)	The LORD's Sorrow Because of His People 12:7-13 (7-13)	God's Lament 12:7-13 (7-13)
	12:10-13 (10-13)	The Neighboring Peoples: Their Judgment and Salvation	The LORD's Promise to Israel's Neighbors	Judah's Neighbors
12:14-17	12:14-17	12:14-17	12:14-17	12:14-17

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:1-4

¹**Righteous are You, O LORD, that I would plead *my* case with You;
Indeed I would discuss matters of justice with You:
Why has the way of the wicked prospered?
Why are all those who deal in treachery at ease?**
²**You have planted them, they have also taken root;
They grow, they have even produced fruit.
You are near to their lips
But far from their mind.**
³**But You know me, O LORD;
You see me;
And You examine my heart's *attitude* toward You.
Drag them off like sheep for the slaughter
And set them apart for a day of carnage!**
⁴**How long is the land to mourn
And the vegetation of the countryside to wither?
For the wickedness of those who dwell in it,
Animals and birds have been snatched away,
Because *men* have said, "He will not see our latter ending."**

12:1 "Righteous" See Special Topic at 4:2.

▣ "are You" YHWH is righteous which denotes His justice (see Special Topic at 4:2). This is one aspect of His character.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHARACTERISTICS OF ISRAEL'S GOD

1. Compassionate (BDB 933) – Exod. 34:6; Deut. 4:31; II Chr. 30:9; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; Neh. 9:17,31; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2
2. Gracious (BDB 337) – Exod. 34:6; II Chr. 30:9; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; Neh. 9:17,31; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2
3. Slow to anger (BDB74 CONSTRUCT BDB 60)
– Exod. 34:6; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; Neh. 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2
4. Abounding in steadfast love (BDB 912 I CONSTRUCT BDB 338)
– Exod. 34:6-7; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; Neh. 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2
5. Faithful (BDB 54) – Exod. 34:6; Ps. 86:15
6. Abundant forgiveness (BDB 699) – Neh. 9:17
7. Did not forsake them (BDB 736 I) – Neh. 9:17,31
8. Repents of evil (BDB 636, KB 688, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE + BDB 948) – Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2
9. The great God (BDB 42, 152) – Neh. 1:5; 9:32
10. Great and terrible (BDB 152, 431) – Neh. 1:5; 4:14; 9:32
11. Keeps covenant (BDB 1036, 136) – Neh. 1:5; 9:32
12. Steadfast love (BDB 338) – Neh. 1:5; 9:32

▣ **“I would plead *my* case with You”** This chapter has three poetic strophes. The first two (vv. 1-4; 5-6) are part of Jeremiah’s first confession starting in 11:18. It is presented as a court case (as is chapter 2).

Jeremiah almost seems to border on blasphemy in his dialog with God, therefore, the two Jewish exegetists in the Middle Ages, Rashi and Kimchi, try to explain away Jeremiah’s hard words. Rashi says that he asked God to know God’s ways, while Kimchi says he asked because the prophet was confused. To me the depth of Jeremiah’s emotions directed toward God are a sign of their deep interpersonal relationship. I believe God prefers our heartfelt thoughts to false piety!

▣ **“Why has the way of the wicked prospered?”**

Why are all those who deal in treachery at ease” These are in a Hebrew synonymous parallel relationship (see Appendix One: Hebrew Poetry). This is a major theological question because it seems to be exactly opposite to the Mosaic Law and Psalm 1. Humans have always struggled with the unfairness of life (cf. Job. Psalm 73; Habakkuk; Mal. 3:13-15). Psalm 37:7-9 is a good summary of the Bible’s advice in this area.

12:2 “You have planted them” YHWH created a nation out of the seed of Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:1-3; 15:12-21). He created/planted (cf. 11:17) them to be a light to the world, but they became evil and reflected the character of the fallen world instead of YHWH (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38).

▣ **“You are near to their lips**

But far from their mind” They had religion but not relationship (cf. Isa. 29:13; Ezek. 33:30-33; Rom. 2:17-29; II Tim. 3:5).

12:4 “You know me, O LORD” The Hebrew word “to know” (see Special Topic at 1:5) emphasizes intimate personal relationship (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5). Jeremiah was confident that God knew his motives and his heart (cf. Ps. 139:1,23).

▣ **“Drag them off”** The last two lines of v. 2 have two parallel IMPERATIVES.

1. “drag them off” – BDB 683, KB 736, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. “set them apart” (lit. “sanctify”) – BDB 872, KB 1073, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (see Special Topic at 2:3)

Both call on God (IMPERATIVES OF REQUEST) to actively judge the wickedness of His own people (cf. Amos 3:2; I Pet. 4:17).

Jeremiah is much like David (i.e., some Psalms); he is very forceful in his request for vengeance.

▣ **“How long is the land to mourn”** Judah’s wickedness causes the curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-28 to fall on Palestine (cf. Hosea 4:1-3). The land of milk and honey has no produce nor flocks! This is exactly the opposite of what YHWH wanted to do!

The same question, “how long,” was also asked by Isaiah in Isa. 6:11-13! Judgment is coming on God’s covenant people.

The sin of Adam and Eve brought about the disruption of the normal cycles of nature (cf. Rom. 5:12-21; 8:18-25). This is not the world God intended it to be (see John W. Wenham, *The Goodness of God* and *The Enigma of Evil: Can We Believe in the Goodness of God*).

▣ **“Because *men* have said, ‘He will not see our latter ending’”** This line can have two meanings.

1. the prophets are giving a false message of peace and prosperity (cf. 5:31)
2. the Judean people do not believe YHWH will act against them because of

- a. Abrahamic covenant
- b. the presence of the temple (cf. chapter 7)

There are two textual issues.

1. who does “he” refer to
 - a. Jeremiah – “he” (ambiguous)
 - b. God – LXX, NRSV, TEV, NJB, REB
2. how to translate the last words
 - a. our ways (אֲרֻחֹתַי) – LXX, NJB, REB
 - b. our latter end (אֲחֵרֵיתִי) – MT, NASB, NKJV, JPSOA
3. our fate – NRSV (possibly #2)

The NET Bible (p. 1323) adds an interesting thought that this line may relate to Deut. 32:20.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:5-6

**⁵“If you have run with footmen and they have tired you out,
Then how can you compete with horses?
If you fall down in a land of peace,
How will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?
⁶For even your brothers and the household of your father,
Even they have dealt treacherously with you,
Even they have cried aloud after you.
Do not believe them, although they may say nice things to you.”**

12:5-6 God is telling Jeremiah (cf. TEV, JPSOA footnote), if you cannot handle the pressure from your hometown, how are you going to handle the pressure from Jerusalem? In reality, God is saying, Jeremiah, are you too impatient or too sensitive? If you think this is bad now, you have seen nothing yet! Problems cause us to depend on God—trials are for training (cf. Heb. 5:8)!

12:6

NASB “Even they have cried aloud after you”
NKJV “yes, they have called a multitude after you”
NRSV “they will pursue you in full cry”
TEV “they join in the attacks against you”
LXX “they too shouted; they were gathered behind you”
JPSOA “they cry after you as a mob”

The MT is ambiguous. The context suggests that after he preached, they (his hometown tribal friends and relatives) chased after him condemning him loudly.

▣ **“Do not believe them”** The VERB (BDB 52, KB 63, see Special Topic at 3:12) is a *Hiphil* JUSSIVE. Be careful of the flattery of wicked people (cf. 9:8; Ps. 28:3; Pro. 26:23,25). Kind words often hide an agenda (cf. Ps. 12:6-8)! The self centeredness of the Fall is a perennial flower.

It seems that v. 6, lines 1-3, relates to negative things said and done against Jeremiah by his hometown. However, the last line deals with their flattery!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:7-13

**⁷“I have forsaken My house,
I have abandoned My inheritance;
I have given the beloved of My soul
Into the hand of her enemies.**

**⁸My inheritance has become to Me
Like a lion in the forest;
She has roared against Me;
Therefore I have come to hate her.**

**⁹Is My inheritance like a speckled bird of prey to Me?
Are the birds of prey against her on every side?
Go, gather all the beasts of the field,
Bring them to devour!**

**¹⁰Many shepherds have ruined My vineyard,
They have trampled down My field;
They have made My pleasant field
A desolate wilderness.**

**¹¹It has been made a desolation,
Desolate, it mourns before Me;
The whole land has been made desolate,
Because no man lays it to heart.**

**¹²On all the bare heights in the wilderness
Destroyers have come,
For a sword of the LORD is devouring
From one end of the land even to the other;
There is no peace for anyone.**

**¹³They have sown wheat and have reaped thorns,
They have strained themselves to no profit.
But be ashamed of your harvest
Because of the fierce anger of the LORD.”**

12:7-13 This is written in a characteristic poetic form which has three beats followed by two beats, denoting a funeral dirge or lament. The VERBS, all mostly PERFECTS, denote a completed action. YHWH’s attitude is set on judgment because Judah’s attitude is set on sin! In this section God is described as a broken-hearted husband (i.e., “I have come to hate her,” v. 8). This is very similar to 8:18-9:16 and Hos. 11:8,9.

One wonders if vv. 7-8 are theologically related to vv. 5-6. As Jeremiah was painfully and loudly rejected by his own hometown, YHWH is rejected by His own. As Jeremiah’s hometown “cries” against him, YHWH’s people “roar” against Him. It is possible that v. 6, line 3, is a hunting metaphor, if so, then the animals searching prey in v. 9 are a literary parallel.

Notice the series of covenant terms used by God to describe Judah:

1. “My house” (cf. 11:15; Hosea 8:1; 9:15)
2. “My inheritance” (cf. vv. 7,8,9; 2:7; 50:11)
3. “Beloved of My soul” (cf. 11:15)
4. “My vineyard” (cf. Isaiah 5)
5. “My pleasant field” (cf. 3:19)

12:7 Notice the parallelism of v. 7. YHWH has

1. forsaken – BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* PERFECT
2. abandoned – BDB 643, KB 695, *Qal* PERFECT
3. given – BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* PERFECT

His people into the hand (see Special Topic at 1:9) of foreign invaders!

12:8-9 YHWH has rejected them because

1. they became as a lion to Him, v. 8
2. they became as a bird of prey, v. 9

The result is that YHWH's love, mercy, and care have changed to "hate" (cf. Hos. 9:5; Amos 6:8; see Special Topic at 1:9).

12:9 "My inheritance like a speckled bird of prey to Me" The interpretive question is about the word "speckled" (BDB 840, KB 997), which is found only here. It can denote colored (BDB 840, cf. Jdgs. 5:30), therefore,

1. hyena
2. speckled bird of prey (NRSV, NKJV)

JPSOA translates the phrase as "like a bird of prey [or] hyena" (cf. NJB). The LXX translates it as "a hyena's cave." The UBS Text Project gives "speckled" an A Rating, but suggests translating it as ("is my heritage to me) a hyena's lair (with birds of prey [hovering] all about it," p. 214). This is how REB translates it.

The enemies described here seem to refer to the surrounding nations which were a part of the mercenary army of Neo-Babylon (cf. II Kgs. 24:2).

▣ The last two lines of v. 9 have three IMPERATIVES which are the consequences of covenant violations (cf. Deut. 28:64). The birds and beasts shall eat the flesh of the fallen of Judah (cf. 7:33; 15:3; 16:4; 19:7; 34:20; Ps. 79:2; Isa. 18:6; 56:9).

1. go – BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. gather – BDB 62, KB 74, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. bring – BDB 87, KB 102, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

12:10 "Many shepherds have ruined My vineyard" "Shepherds" refers to the spiritual leaders of Judah (cf. Jer. 2:8; 10:21; Ezek. 34:1-10). But, because of the context, it could refer to foreign alliances (cf. 6:3).

12:11 "it mourns before Me"

The whole land has been made desolate" There is a repetition of the root שׁמם (BDB 1031, cf. v. 10, line 4).

1. a FEMININE SINGULAR NOUN – BDB 1031
2. a FEMININE SINGULAR ADJECTIVE – BDB 1031
3. a *Niphal* PERFECT VERB – BDB 1030, KB 1563)

The NASB Study Bible (p. 1075, footnote) mentions that in v. 11 there are seven "s" sound words and seven "n" sound words. See Appendix One: Hebrew Poetry.

▣ Here again (cf. v. 4) is the theological emphasis on the land (personified) being affected by human sin (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-28; Rom. 5:12-21; 8:18-22).

▣ **“Because no man lays it to heart”** This line can have one of two orientations.

1. Judah sinned and did not repent so the land suffered (cf. Isa. 42:25).
2. There was no righteous person to intercede on Judah’s behalf (cf. 5:1; Isa. 59:16; Ezek. 22:30).

12:12 “On all the bare heights in the wilderness” This could refer to

1. judgment coming from the desert winds, cf. 4:11-13
2. the place of *Ba’al* worship, cf. 2:20; 3:2,6; 17:2; Deut. 12:2-3
3. invaders capturing the “caravan trails” (see NASB, NJB footnote) or passes (heights, BDB 1046, cf. 14:6) through the Judean highlands

▣ **“a sword of the LORD is devouring”** Remember, this was not the power of the foreign invaders or their gods, but the punishing power of YHWH (cf. 51:15-23; Isa. 10:5).

▣ **“There is no peace for anyone”** This may be a play on the message of the false prophets who said “Peace, peace” (cf. 8:11). The term “anyone” is literally “all flesh” and could refer to animals and humans. All were suffering because of Judah’s idolatry.

12:13 “They have sown wheat and have reaped thorns” There have been three ways to understand this.

1. The farmers sowed but because of the invasion there was no one to work the fields so weeds and thorns flourished (cf. Lev. 26:16; Deut. 28:38).
2. There was a series of drought seasons (cf. v. 4; 14:2-4).
3. Human effort without God will come to naught (cf. Ps. 108:12; 127:1-2).

▣ **“But be ashamed of your harvest”** This is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 101, KB 116) which refers to their idolatry. They were reaping the results of willful, continual covenant violations (cf. 11:20; 17:10).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:14-17

¹⁴Thus says the LORD concerning all My wicked neighbors who strike at the inheritance with which I have endowed My people Israel, “Behold I am about to uproot them from their land and will uproot the house of Judah from among them. ¹⁵And it will come about that after I have uprooted them, I will again have compassion on them; and I will bring them back, each one to his inheritance and each one to his land. ¹⁶Then if they will really learn the ways of My people, to swear by My name, ‘As the LORD lives,’ even as they taught My people to swear by Baal, they will be built up in the midst of My people. ¹⁷But if they will not listen, then I will uproot that nation, uproot and destroy it,” declares the LORD.

12:14-17 This is an extremely important section which deals not only with the judgment on the surrounding nations which have participated in or benefitted from the Babylonian invasion of Judah, but also the hope of their incorporation one day into the people of God. This is a wonderful passage which shows clearly that God desires all humans to be a part of His covenant people. See Special Topic at 1:5!

There is a repeated use of “uprooted” (BDB 684, KB 737), the opposite of “planted” (see 1:10).

1. surrounding nations will be uprooted, v. 14
2. Judah will be uprooted, v. 14
3. after uprooting them YHWH will have compassion (BDB 933, KB 1216, *Piel* PERFECT), v. 15
4. if they will not listen then He will uproot
 - a. that nation, v. 17
 - b. uproot and destroy it, v. 17

12:14 “all My wicked neighbors who strike at the inheritance” We know from history that nations like Edom and probably some of the other surrounding nations (i.e., Ammon, 49:1; Moab, Zech. 2:8-11) became mercenaries in the Babylonian army, and even participated in the siege of Jerusalem and its plunder.

▣ **“Behold I am about to uproot them”** This is a metaphor used quite often in the book of Jeremiah to describe the work of the prophet (cf. 1:10; 18:7).

12:15 “I will again have compassion on them; and I will bring them back” This is a tremendous statement of hope of restoration, not only for Judah, but for Gentiles as well. This universal theme is found several times in the book of Jeremiah, 3:17,19; 4:2; 16:19; 48:47; 49:6,39. This reflects the recurrent universal theme of the prophet Isaiah (cf. 2:2-4; 12:4-5; 19:16-25; 25:6-9; 42:6-12; 45:22-23; 49:5-6; 51:4-5; 56:6-8; 60:11-14). See Special Topic: Bob’s Evangelical Biases at 1:5.

12:16 “they will really learn the ways of My people, to swear by My name” The use of YHWH’s name was part of the regular worship liturgy of the temple (cf. 4:2; Deut. 6:13; 10:20; Isa. 65:16; Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21; Rom. 10:9-13).

Notice that the Lord’s compassion (v. 15) is conditional on “if they will really learn the ways of My people.”

1. “really learn” – this is the intensified form of an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and an IMPERFECT VERB from the same root (BDB 540, KB 531, cf. Isa. 42:6; 49:6)
2. notice Judah’s faith was meant to be a light and learning for the nations (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38)

▣ **“As the Lord lives”** This reflects the covenant name for God, YHWH, from the Hebrew VERB “to be,” Exod. 3:14. See Special Topic: Names For Deity at 1:2.

▣ **“to swear by Baal”** See Special Topic at 2:20.

▣ **“they will be built up in the midst of My people”** The VERB “build” (BDB 124, KB 139, *Niphal* PERFECT) is used several times to describe Jeremiah’s ministry (cf. 1:10; 18:9; 24:6; 30:18; 31:4,28; 32:31; 33:7; 42:10; 45:4). It can be used in a positive or negative way.

12:17 The conditional nature of biblical covenants is repeated (i.e., Deut. 30:1-10).

JEREMIAH 13

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Ruined Waist Band 13:1-7	Symbol of the Linen Sash 13:1-7	The Useless Waist Cloth 13:1-11	The Linen Shorts 13:1-5 13:6-7	The Story of the Loincloth 13:1-7
13:8-11	13:8-11		13:9-11	13:8-11
Captivity Threatened 13:12-14	Symbol of the Wine Bottles 13:12-14	The Wine Jugs Smashed Together 13:12-14	The Wine Jar 13:12-14	The Allegory of the Wine Jar 13:12-14
	Pride Precedes Captivity	A Vision of Exile	Jeremiah Warns Against Pride	The Last Opportunity
13:15-19 (15-19)	13:15-17 (15-17)	13:15-17 (15-17)	13:15-17 (15-17)	13:15-17 (15-17)
		Jehoiachin Threatened		
	13:18-19 (18-19)	13:18-19 (18-19)	13:18-19	13:18-19 (18-19)
		An Admonition to Impenitent Jerusalem		
13:20-27 (20-27)	13:20-23 (20-23)	13:20-27 (20-27)	13:20-27	13:20-27 (20-27)
	13:24-27 (24-27)			

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Verses 1-14 are a prose passage with two symbolic acts (also note I Kings 22; Isaiah 20; Ezekiel 4,5)
 - 1. a ruined linen waistcloth, vv. 1-11
 - 2. a full clay jar of wine, vv. 12-14
- B. The UBS *Handbook For Translators* divides the poetic section (vv. 15-27) into three strophes by content (p. 334).
 - 1. a final urgent warning, vv. 15-17
 - 2. a word to King Jehoiachin, vv. 18-19
 - 3. Jerusalem depicted as a “shameless woman,” vv. 20-27

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:1-7

¹Thus the LORD said to me, “Go and buy yourself a linen waistband and put it around your waist, but do not put it in water.” ²So I bought the waistband in accordance with the word of the LORD and put it around my waist. ³Then the word of the LORD came to me a second time, saying, ⁴“Take the waistband that you have bought, which is around your waist, and arise, go to the Euphrates and hide it there in a crevice of the rock.” ⁵So I went and hid it by the Euphrates, as the LORD had commanded me. ⁶After many days the LORD said to me, “Arise, go to the Euphrates and take from there the waistband which I commanded you to hide there.” ⁷Then I went to the Euphrates and dug, and I took the waistband from the place where I had hidden it; and lo, the waistband was ruined, it was totally worthless.

13:1-7 This is a prophetic, symbolic act involving an intimate piece of clothing. Similar illustrative acts are common in Ezekiel (i.e., chapters 4,5). We would call them “visual aids” (cf. 19:1ff; 27:2ff).

13:1 “the LORD said to me” This is a prophetic formula for receiving direct revelation. Notice how often the message from YHWH is noted in this chapter.

- 1. “Thus the LORD said to me,” v. 1
- 2. “the word of the LORD came to me a second time, saying,” v. 3
- 3. “the LORD said to me,” v. 6
- 4. “the word of the LORD came to me, saying,” v. 8
- 5. “thus says the LORD,” v. 9
- 6. “thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, v. 12
- 7. “thus says the LORD,” v. 13

This was not Jeremiah’s message!

▣ **“Go and buy. . .and put it around. . .but do not put. . .”** These VERBALS are translated as IMPERATIVES (cf. vv. 4,6) in English, but in Hebrew they are:

- 1. “go” – BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE
- 2. “buy” – BDB 888, KB 1111, *Qal* PERFECT (with WAW)
- 3. “put” – BDB 962, KB 1221, *Qal* PERFECT (with WAW)
- 4. “put” (negated) – BDB 97, KB 112, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT



NASB “linen waistband”
NKJV “linen sash”
NRSV “linen waistcloth”
TEV “linen shorts”
LXX, NJB,
JPSOA, REB “linen loincloth”

This refers to a thigh-length undershort (BDB 25 CONSTRUCT 833; the depictions of this type of undergarment [Canaan and Egypt] seem more like a short shirt than short pants). The exact meaning of the symbol is uncertain (cf. II Kgs. 1:8; Job 12:18; Isa. 5:5,27; Ezek. 23:15). Some have said it was used because of its close contact to the body, thereby symbolizing intimacy (cf. v. 11). Others say that because it was made of linen it refers to what the priest wore (cf. Lev. 16:4). It is obvious that God is trying to symbolize Himself and His relationship with Judah by means of this intimate, and possibly priestly, material.

▣ **“but do not put it in water”** This means “do not wash it.” Therefore, it will become soiled and smelly. This is what happened to idolatrous, rebellious, stubborn Israel/Judah. She is unclean (cf. v. 27) and will not allow YHWH to clean her.

13:4 There is a series of IMPERATIVES in vv. 4 and 6 that relates to v. 1 (cf. v. 5).

1. take the waistband – BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. arise – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. go – BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. hide – BDB 380, KB 377, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

Also in v. 6

1. arise – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. go – BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. take – BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

▣ **“go to the Euphrates”** This is the Hebrew word פרת, BDB 832. It is used throughout the OT to refer to the Euphrates River (cf. Gen. 2:14; 15:18; Deut. 1:7; 11:24; Jer. 46:2; 51:63). However, because this would involve a trip of over 350 miles each way, and the context probably refers to two different trips, it seems impossible that this could be the meaning of the term here.

Some have asserted

1. This was possibly symbolic of the battle of Carchemish (at a place on the Euphrates where there were rocks), which occurred in 605 B.C. whereby Babylon completely defeated the armies of Egypt and the remaining army of Assyria; the enemy from the north comes!
2. This was possibly a wadi, פרת, which flowed from the village of פרה, about five miles northeast of Jerusalem (cf. Josh. 18:23). It provided water for Jerusalem (IDB, vol. 4, p. 656).
3. It is a play on the sound of the word “linen” (פשתה, BDB 833m cf. v. 1).

13:7 “the waistband was ruined, it was totally worthless” The first VERB “ruined” (BDB 1007, KB 1469, *Niphal* PERFECT) denotes that which cannot be used for its intended purpose! This same VERB is used of the clay pot in 18:4. Israel/Judah’s intended purpose was to inform the world about YHWH and help draw them to Him (cf. TEV of v. 11; see Special Topic at 1:5). Their unrepentant (cf. v. 10), consistent idolatry thwarted that purpose (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38).

It is also possible that this text refers to a literal 700 mile trip twice to the headwaters of the Euphrates. It might symbolize:

1. the invasion, exile, and (i.e., “after many days”) dominance of Babylon. Judah was “ruined” in a physical sense during this period. If so, then the “ruined waistcloth” (cf. Lev. 26:39) symbolizes Judah’s temporal destruction.
2. the spiritual corruption of the Mesopotamian powers through political alliances which involved Judah and introduced their gods to Palestine

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:8-11

⁸Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁹“Thus says the LORD, ‘Just so will I destroy the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem. ¹⁰This wicked people, who refuse to listen to My words, who walk in the stubbornness of their hearts and have gone after other gods to serve them and to bow down to them, let them be just like this waistband which is totally worthless. ¹¹For as the waistband clings to the waist of a man, so I made the whole household of Israel and the whole household of Judah cling to Me,’ declares the LORD, ‘that they might be for Me a people, for renown, for praise and for glory; but they did not listen.’

13:9 This “pride” is also addressed in Leviticus 26 (cf. Lev. 26:19; also note Isaiah 28).

13:10 YHWH characterizes His covenant people as

1. wicked people
2. refusing to listen to My words
3. walking in stubbornness
4. going after other gods
 - a. to serve them (*Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
 - b. to bow down to them (*Histaphel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)

▣ **“let them be just like this waistband”** This is a *Qal* JUSSIVE (BDB 224, KB 243). Invasion from

1. the enemy from the north is coming
2. the surrounding nations who will take advantage of the situation as well

13:11 God explains the symbolic actions of vv. 1-7. Verse 10 describes Judah in her rebellion, while v. 11 describes the purpose that God wanted for them (cf. Deut. 26:19). Israel and Judah were meant to be a light to the nations (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5,6), but they had become totally corrupt. They would not listen and respond to God’s word or prophets (cf. Jer. 7:13,24,26; Ps. 81:11).

▣ **“clings. . .cling”** This VERB (BDB 179, KB 209) is used of

1. husband and wife in Gen. 2:24 and physical attraction in Gen. 34:3
2. the tribes holding on to their land allocations in Num. 36:7,9
3. clinging to the Lord and not the nations in Deut. 10:20; 11:22; 13:4; Josh. 23:8,12

God’s people should have clung to Him, should have been close to Him, but they were not! They even went after the gods of Mesopotamia and Canaan.

▣ Notice how YHWH expresses His purpose in calling the seed of Abraham.

1. a people for Himself
2. a people of renown (lit. “name,” cf. Dan. 9:15; Neh. 9:10)
3. a people for praise (cf. 33:9)

4. a people for glory (cf. 33:9)

They were to bring honor to YHWH (cf. Isa. 63:12,14) and make Him a “name” (cf. 32:20)! But they would not “listen” (cf. 7:13,24,26).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:12-14

¹²“Therefore you are to speak this word to them, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, “Every jug is to be filled with wine.”’ And when they say to you, ‘Do we not very well know that every jug is to be filled with wine?’ ¹³then say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Behold I am about to fill all the inhabitants of this land—the kings that sit for David on his throne, the priests, the prophets and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem—with drunkenness! ¹⁴I will dash them against each other, both the fathers and the sons together,” declares the LORD. “I will not show pity nor be sorry nor have compassion so as not to destroy them.”’”

13:12-14 This is another symbolic act in the form of a proverb (Luke 21:29). The proverb is given in v. 12 and God’s reaction to it in vv. 13 and 15.

13:12 “jug” This is the Hebrew term *nebel* (BDB 614 I), which speaks of (1) a wineskin or (2) the largest earthen container (cf. Isa. 30:14) for liquids, about ten gallons (see Special Topic below). The phrase “every jug is to be filled with wine” may be (1) a truism or (2) the hope of drunken revelers. Wine jugs are meant to be filled with wine. So too, should God’s people reflect God, however, the opposite was true. This is the thrust of this passage. God will make them drunk (cf. 25:15-17,27-28; 51:57; Ps. 75:8; Isa. 51:17-20; Ezek. 23:32-34), which was a symbol of judgment.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN WEIGHTS AND VOLUMES (METROLOGY)

The weights and measurements used in commerce were crucial in ancient agricultural economy. The Bible urges the Jews to be fair in their dealings with one another (cf. Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13-16; Prov. 11:1; 16:11; 20:10). The real problem was not only honesty, but the non-standardized terms and systems used in Palestine. It seems that there were two sets of weights; a “light” and a “heavy” of each amount (see *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 4, p. 831). Also the decimal system (base of 10) of Egypt had been combined with the sexagesimal (base of 6) of Mesopotamia.

Many of the “sizes” and “amounts” used were based on human body parts, animal loads, and farmer’s containers, none of which were standardized. Therefore, the charts are only estimations and are tentative. The easiest way to show weights and measures is on a relational chart.

I. Volume terms used most often

A. Dry measures

1. Homer (BDB 330, possibly a “donkey-load,” BDB 331), e.g., Lev. 27:16; Hosea 3:2
2. Letekh (or letech, BDB 547, possibly alluded to in Hosea 3:2)
3. Ephah (BDB 35), e.g., Exod. 16:36; Lev. 19:36; Ezek. 45:10-11,13,24
4. Se’ah (BDB 684), e.g., Gen. 18:6; I Sam. 25:18; I Kgs. 18:32; II Kgs. 7:1,16,18
5. Omer (BDB 771 II, possibly “a sheaf” [a row of fallen grain], BDB 771 I), e.g., Exod. 16:16,22,36; Lev. 23:10-15
6. ‘Issaron (BDB 798, “a tenth part” of ephah), e.g., Exod. 29:40; Lev. 14:21; Num. 15:4; 28:5,13

7. Qav (or Kab, BDB 866), cf. II Kgs. 6:25

B. Liquid Measures

1. Kor (BDB 499), e.g., Ezek. 45:14 (can be dry measure, cf. II Chr. 2:10; 27:5)
2. Bath (BDB 144 II), e.g., I Kgs. 7:26,38; II Chr. 2:10; 4:5; Isa. 5:10; Ezek. 45:10-11,14
3. Hin (BDB 228), e.g., Exod. 29:40; Lev. 19:36; Ezek. 45:24
4. Log (BDB 528), cf. Lev. 14:10,12,15,21,24

C. Chart (taken from Roland deVaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, p. 201 and *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 16, p. 379)

homer (dry) = kor (liquid or dry)	1						
ephah (dry) = bath (liquid)	10	1					
se'ah (dry)	30	3	1				
hin (liquid)	60	6	2	1			
omer/issaron (dry)	100	10	-	-	1		
qav/kab (dry)	180	18	6	3	-	1	
log (liquid)	720	72	24	12	-	4	1

II. Weight terms used most often

A. The three most common weights are the talent, the shekel, and the gerah.

1. The largest weight in the OT is the talent. From Exod. 38:25-26 we learn that one talent equals 3,000 shekels (i.e., “round weight,” BDB 503).
2. The term shekel (BDB 1053, “weight”) is used so often that it is assumed, but not stated in the text. There are several values of shekel mentioned in the OT.
 - a. “commercial standard” (NASB of Gen. 23:16)
 - b. “the shekel of the sanctuary” (NASB of Exod. 30:13)
 - c. “by the king’s weight” (NASB of II Sam. 14:26), also called “royal weight” in the Elephantine papyri.
3. The gerah (BDB 176 II) is valued at 20 per shekel (cf. Exod. 30:13; Lev. 27:25; Num. 3:47; 18:16; Ezek. 45:12). These ratios vary from Mesopotamia to Egypt. Israel followed the evaluation most common in Canaan (Ugarit)
4. The mina (BDB 584) is valued at either 50 or 60 shekels. This term is found mostly in later OT books (i.e., Ezek. 45:12; Ezra 2:69; Neh. 7:71-72). Ezekiel used the 60 to 1 ratio, while Canaan used the 50 to 1 ratio.
5. The beka (BDB 132, “half a shekel,” cf. Gen. 24:22) is used only twice in the OT (cf. Gen. 24:22; Exod. 38:26) and is valued at one-half a shekel. Its name means “to divide.”

B. Chart

1. Based on Pentateuch

talent	1				
mina	60	1			
shekel	3,000	50	1		
beka	6,000	100	2	1	
gerah,	60,000	1,000	20	10	

2.	Based on Ezekiel					
	talent	1				
	mina	60	1			
	shekel	3,600	60	1		
	beka	7,200	120	2	1	
	gerah	72,000	1,200	20	10	1

13:12 “Do we not very well know. . .” The forms *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Qal* IMPERFECT of the same root (BDB , KB) intensify the sarcastic response.

They claim to know but, in reality, they know nothing!

13:13 “inhabitants. . .sit” These are from the same root (BDB 442, KB 444) and are used three times.

1. *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, “to dwell” (i.e., inhabit, used twice)
2. *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, “to sit,” metaphor for the place of power (i.e., throne of the king)

Notice the groups affected.

1. the Davidic kings (cf. 17:25; 22:2,4,30; 29:16; 33:21; 36:30)
2. the priests
3. the prophets
4. the inhabitants of Jerusalem

13:14 “clash” This VERB (BDB 658, KB 711, *Piel* PERFECT) was used of the killing of babies by the invaders (i.e., Assyria, Babylon, cf. II Kgs. 8:12; Ps. 137:0; Isa. 13:16,18; Hos. 13:16; Nahum 3:10). The VERB here is a word play on the shattered wine jug of v. 13 (cf. 51:20-23).

▣ **“father and sons together”** Sin, like faith, moves through families.

1. sin – Deut. 5:9; Jer. 7:18
2. faith – Deut. 5:10; 7:9

For the balancing truth that each person is responsible only for their own sin, see Ezekiel 18.

▣ **“I will not show pity nor be sorry nor have compassion that I should not destroy them”** Notice the things YHWH will not do.

1. show pity – BDB 328, KB 338, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. 15:5; 21:7; Ezek. 5:11
2. be sorry – BDB 299, KB 298, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. 21:7; Ezek. 5:11
3. show compassion – BDB 933, KB 1216, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. 21:7

This same truth is stated in 16:5 (also note 21:7 about King Zedekiah). There are consequences to the repeated rejection of God’s word and will (cf. Lam. 2:17-22; Ezek. 8:18; 9:10; 24:14). But, the OT ends on a promise of YHWH “sparing” in Mal. 3:17!

Remember these are hyperbolic, anthropomorphic, poetic metaphors.

1. see Special Topic at 1:9
2. see D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:15-19

¹⁵**Listen and give heed, do not be haughty,
For the LORD has spoken.**

¹⁶**Give glory to the LORD your God,
Before He brings darkness
And before your feet stumble
On the dusky mountains,
And while you are hoping for light
He makes it into deep darkness,
And turns it into gloom.**

¹⁷**But if you will not listen to it,
My soul will sob in secret for *such* pride;
And my eyes will bitterly weep
And flow down with tears,
Because the flock of the LORD has been taken captive.**

¹⁸**Say to the king and the queen mother,
“Take a lowly seat,
For your beautiful crown
Has come down from your head.”**

¹⁹**The cities of the Negev have been locked up,
And there is no one to open *them*;
All Judah has been carried into exile,
Wholly carried into exile.**

13:15-27 Verses 1-14 are prose but vv. 15-27 form two or three poetic strophes. The first strophe is the hopeless call of the prophet for repentance on the part of God’s people and vv. 20-27 are a warning of what will happen if they do not repent. There is a real paradox between the “hear and do” (cf. v. 15) and the inability to change of v. 23. It is the tension between

1. God’s sovereignty and human free will
2. the unconditional and conditional nature of OT covenants

13:15 “Listen and give heed” These are two Hebrew words for “hear.” They are synonymous and both plead for Judah’s positive repentant response (cf. 10:1).

1. BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (see note at 2:4)
2. BDB 24, KB 27, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Deut. 32:1; Isa. 1:2

▣ **“do not be haughty”** The VERB (BDB 146, KB 170) is a *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (negated). The concept of haughtiness and pride are the theme of this particular section (cf. v. 17). Israel had become so haughty and proud that she would not respond in the appropriate way to God. This word is used of

1. kings
 - a. Uzziah – II Chr. 26:15
 - b. Hezekiah – II Chr. 32:25
 - c. king of Tyre – Ezek. 28:2,5,17
2. God’s people
 - a. Isa. 3:16
 - b. Ezek. 16:50

c. Zeph. 3:11

Haughtiness, pride, and self-directed living are the results of the Fall (cf. Genesis 3; 6:5, 11-12). Apparently even the covenant people could not escape its influence. Therefore, a new creation, a new covenant is mandatory (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38; Rom. 3:21-31; 4-5; Galatians 3; the book of Hebrews).

▣ **“Give glory to the LORD your God”** Because of the use of this phrase in Josh. 7:19, many believe this is a call for confession of sin or at least an oath of truthfulness (cf. John 9:24). The grammatical form is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 670, KB 733).

▣ **“deep darkness”** This is the Hebrew word *salmawet* (BDB 853), which is translated in the KJV in Ps. 23:4 as “the valley of the shadow of death.” It really means a valley of deep darkness which may describe any and all of life’s crises.

The NET Bible has a good note about this word at Jer. 2:6 (p. 1290, #6). It is used in poetic texts of

1. the darkness of prison, Ps. 107:10,14
2. the darkness of invasion, Isa. 9:1
3. the darkness of a mine, Job 28:3
4. the darkness of a ravine, Ps. 23:4
5. the darkness of a wasteland and ravines of the Sinai desert, Jer. 2:6
6. life’s tragedies or confusions, Job 3:5; 12:22; 24:17; 28:3; 34:22; Ps. 44:19
7. the darkness of death, Job 10:21-22; 38:17

Notice the contrast between YHWH’s word/truth as light, but sin as darkness (BDB 364, KB 361, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, cf. Isa. 8:22-9:2), deep darkness (BDB 853), and gloom (BDB 791). This darkness metaphor is characterized by “stumbling” (BDB 619, KB 669, *Hithpael* IMPERATIVE). A life of faith is pictured as a person walking on a clearly marked path in light. If one

1. deviates from the path
2. stumbles on the path
3. rejects God’s ways (path)
4. walks in darkness in difficult terrain

judgment is the result.

13:17 “if you will not listen to it” Jeremiah was commanded by God to preach this message of repentance, but he knew the people (i.e., YHWH’s flock) would not respond (cf. Isa. 6:9-10). Humans have a choice but their choice has consequences (cf. line 5).

Jeremiah (the weeping prophet) describes his feelings (which mimic YHWH’s feelings) about Judah’s stubborn, unrepentant, sinful idolatry and its consequences.

1. my soul will sob in secret
2. my eyes will bitterly weep (*Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Qal* IMPERFECT from the same root)
3. my eyes will flow down with tears

13:18 “Say to the king and the queen mother” Verses 18 and 19 are either a historical allusion to

1. what happened in the second of Nebuchadnezzar’s attacks on Jerusalem in 597 B.C. (cf. 22:24-26; 29:2), where Jehoiachin and his mother (see similar phrase used of the king of Babylon in Isa. 47:1), Nashushta, are taken into captivity (cf. II Kgs. 24:8-17)
2. a prophecy about the terrible fall of Jerusalem and burning of the temple in 586 B.C. by Babylon.

Remember, Nebuchadnezzar’s army had several deportations, 605, 597, 586, 582 B.C. Whatever the allusion the king, representing God (cf. I Samuel 8), is now humiliated and taken away into captivity and the southern cities (i.e., the Negev) are under siege (cf. v. 19).



NASB, NJB “For your beautiful crown
Has come down from your heads”
NKJV “For your rule shall collapse the crown of your glory”
NRSV “Since your glorious crown has fallen from your head”
JPSOA “For your diadems are abased,
Your glorious crowns”

The LXX reads, “because your crown of glory has been removed from your head.” The MT reads, “for your crown has come down, the crown of your splendor.”

Most modern translations follow the LXX and other ancient versions.

13:19 “have been locked up” This VERB (BDB 688, KB 742, *Pual* PERFECT) refers to a siege of a walled city (or fortress in the Negev). The result of these sieges was “exile” (BDB 162, KB 191, *Hophal* PERFECT, used twice in this verse).

▣ **“there is no one to open them”** The foreign alliances, in this case Egypt, cannot stop the Babylonian invasion of Palestine. It was YHWH’s will!

▣ **“Wholly carried into exile”** This is hyperbolic; some of Judah’s citizens escaped exile.

The problem with much modern interpretation of Wisdom Literature and Prophetic Literature is western literalism! Prophecy is a hyperbolic genre! See D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:20-27

²⁰“Lift up your eyes and see
Those coming from the north.
Where is the flock that was given you,
Your beautiful sheep?
²¹What will you say when He appoints over you—
And you yourself had taught them—
Former companions to be head over you?
Will not pangs take hold of you
Like a woman in childbirth?
²²If you say in your heart,
‘Why have these things happened to me?’
Because of the magnitude of your iniquity
Your skirts have been removed
And your heels have been exposed.
²³Can the Ethiopian change his skin
Or the leopard his spots?
Then you also can do good
Who are accustomed to doing evil.
²⁴Therefore I will scatter them like drifting straw
To the desert wind.
²⁵This is your lot, the portion measured to you
From Me,” declares the LORD,
“Because you have forgotten Me
And trusted in falsehood.

²⁶So I Myself have also stripped your skirts off over your face,
That your shame may be seen.

²⁷As for your adulteries and your *lustful* neighings,
The lewdness of your prostitution
On the hills in the field,
I have seen your abominations.
Woe to you, O Jerusalem!
How long will you remain unclean?"

13:20-27 This is the final strophe of chapter 13. Remember, try to identify the main truth of each strophe and let this guide your interpretation of the details.

13:20 “Lift up your eyes and see” These VERBS are both FEMININE SINGULAR IMPERATIVES (*kethiv*), which refer to the city of Jerusalem. The Septuagint translates this “Jerusalem.” The Masoretic scholars put the *Qal* MASCULINE PLURAL IMPERATIVES in the margin (*Qere*). These reflect different Hebrew manuscripts which they consulted.

▣ “from the north” This refers to the imminent invasion of Babylon. The north was an idiom of evil (cf. 1:13-15; 4:6; 6:1,22) because it was the invasion route for the empires (both Assyria, Babylon) of the Tigris-Euphrates River Valley into the land of Palestine.

13:21 “Former companions to be head over you” The Hebrew of lines 1-3 is uncertain. This seems to refer to Judah’s foreign alliance (cf. 2:18). “Companion” is the Hebrew “chieftain” (BDB 910). Israel/Judah had many allies but now they have become their masters!

▣ “Will not pangs take hold of you,

Like a woman in childbirth” Labor pains are often used in the Bible as a symbol of judgment (cf. Jer. 4:31; 6:24).

13:22 The Judeans were questioning the bad things (invasion and exile) which were about to happen to them, and wondering why! They were God’s people! They had the Patriarchal promises; they had the Promised Land; they had the prophets; they had the temple (cf. Rom. 9:4-5). Their (1) continuing idolatry; (2) unwillingness to listen to God’s word or prophet; and (3) unwillingness to repent caused the curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-28 to become a reality.

▣ “Your skirts have been removed” This is a metaphor in the OT for a violent sexual assault (cf. Lev. 18:6-19; 20:17; Deut. 22:30; 27:20; Isa. 47:3; Hosea 2:3,10). Her lovers (foreign alliances, cf. 2:17-19) had now become her rapists (TEV).

▣ “And your heels have been exposed” This is a cultural metaphor for the act of public exposure, which was considered to be a great shame (cf. v. 26; Lam. 1:8; Isa. 47:2,3). Sometimes the feet, and here the heels, were used as a euphemism for the human sex organs (cf. Deut. 28:57; Jdgs. 3:24; I Sam. 24:6; Isa. 6:2).

13:23 There are two questions in this proverbial statement which obviously expect “no” answers. This reflects the idea that the Judeans could not change, although God calls to them (cf. NRSV, REB), for they are morally unable to respond. This may be an incipient clue to the need for a new covenant which is based not on the performance of fallen mankind, but on the grace of God (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38).

13:24 Invasion and exile are coming, but it is YHWH who initiates and allows it (cf. 9:16; Lev. 26:33; Deut. 28:64). Notice v. 25, line 2.

13:25 “This is your lot, the portion measured to you” Originally Abraham’s descendants were considered the “portion of the LORD,” but now because of their rebellion, they had become the portion of foreigners (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-28).

- ▣ Two reasons are given why YHWH took His protection from them and energized the invading army.
1. They forgot YHWH (BDB 1013, KB 1489, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 2:32; 3:21).
 2. They continued to trust in falsehood (BDB 1055, i.e., *Ba’al* worship and other idols, cf. 3:23; 5:31; 10:14; 16:19; BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* IMPERFECT).

13:26 “So I Myself have also stripped your skirts off over your face, That your shame may be seen” This was the public punishment of a harlot or faithless wife (cf. Hos. 2:3,10; Isa. 47:2,3). The New English Bible translates v. 22 with the very same metaphor.

13:27 “As for your adulteries and your lustful neighings” This last term means “rutting noises” (BDB 843, cf. 8;16). The people of God are described in their fertility worship (cf. 2:20) as mating animals (cf. 2:24; 14:6).

▣ **“On the hills in the field”** We learn of the magnitude and grossness of the covenant people’s sex sins as they worship *Ba’al* from Hos. 4:13,14 (see Special Topic at 2:20).

- ▣ **“How long will you remain unclean”** The VERB (BDB 372, KB 369, *Qal* IMPERFECT) can be used of
1. freed from leprosy (cf. II Kings 5)
 2. ceremonially clean (cf. Leviticus)
 3. freed from idolatry (cf. here and Ezek. 24:13[twice]; 36:25)
- This last line is confusing in Hebrew. The LXX translates it as “Because you were not cleaned after me, how long it yet be?”

The very last phrase can be viewed in two ways.

1. a literary way of asserting it will not happen (if there will be no cleansing)
2. an attempt to show there is still hope for repentance (but seems to violate v. 23)

JEREMIAH 14

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Drought and A Prayer for Mercy	Sword, Famine and Pestilence	The Great Drought (14:1-15:4)	The Terrible Drought	Lament Over Catastrophic Drought and the Coming Military Defeat of Jerusalem (14:1-15:9)
14:1	14:1	14:1-6 (1-6)	14:1-9 (1-9)	14:1-6 (1-6)
14:2-9 (2-9)	14:2-6 (2-6)			
	14:7-9 (7-9)	14:7-9 (7-9)		14:7-9 (7-9)
14:10-12	14:10 (10)	14:10	14:10	14:10 (10)
False Prophets	14:11-16	14:11-12	14:11-12	14:11-12
14:13-18		14:13	14:13	14:13-16
		14:14-16	14:14-16	
(17-18)	14:17-18 (17-18)	14:17-18 (17-18)	14:17-18 (17-18)	14:17-18 (17-18)
	The People Plead For Mercy		The People Plead with the LORD	
14:19-22 (19-22)	14:19-22 (19-22)	14:19-22 (19-22)	14:19-22 (19-22)	14:19-15:9 (19-22)

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapters 14 and 15 are a literary unit concerning a drought that is coming to the land of Israel/Judah.
- B. Verse 1 may be an introduction to the entire literary unit.
- C. Again the method of arrangement of the strophe and prose sections seems to be sound plays. Jeremiah, like Isaiah, is an anthology and is not structured chronologically.
- D. The UBS *Handbook For Translators* outlines the unit as follows (pp. 344-345).
 - 1. 14:2-6 – Jeremiah bemoans the drought
 - 2. 14:7-9 – the people of Judah confess their sin and ask for help
 - 3. 14:10-12 – YHWH replies with a threat instead of mercy
 - 4. 14:13 – Jeremiah blames the situation on the false prophets
 - 5. 14:14-16 – YHWH will judge both the fake prophets and those who hear and believe them
 - 6. 14:17-18 – Jeremiah’s vision of the coming destruction
 - 7. 14:19-22 – the people pray as they did in vv. 7-9 but with more intensity
 - 8. 15:1-9 – YHWH responds to their prayer. No intercessor can remove the guilt which began with King Manasseh. Slaughter will come.
 - 9. 15:10-21 – Jeremiah honestly speaks to YHWH about his life
 - a. Jeremiah, vv. 10-12
 - b. YHWH, vv. 13-14
 - c. Jeremiah, vv. 15-18
 - d. YHWH, vv. 19-21

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:1

¹**That which came as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah in regard to the drought:**

14:1 “That which came as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah” This is a rather unusual phrase found in 46:1; 47:1; 49:34. It is an assertion of revelation.

▣ **“drought”** This is literally “droughts” (cf. NKJV, JPSOA). We learn from Lev. 26:19-20; Deut. 11:17; 28:23-24 (the opposite of 28:12) that drought was one of the covenant curses if the people of God did not fulfill their obligations. Throughout the OT drought is used as a way to force the people of God to depend on Him. The problem here was they thought *Ba’al* worship was insuring the rains (cf. 5:24).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:2-9

²**“Judah mourns**

And her gates languish;

They sit on the ground in mourning,

And the cry of Jerusalem has ascended.

³**Their nobles have sent their servants for water;**

They have come to the cisterns and found no water.

They have returned with their vessels empty;
They have been put to shame and humiliated,
And they cover their heads.

⁴Because the ground is cracked,
For there has been no rain on the land;
The farmers have been put to shame,
They have covered their heads.

⁵For even the doe in the field has given birth only to abandon *her young*,
Because there is no grass.

⁶The wild donkeys stand on the bare heights;
They pant for air like jackals,
Their eyes fail
For there is no vegetation.

⁷Although our iniquities testify against us,
O LORD, act for Your name's sake!
Truly our apostasies have been many,
We have sinned against You.

⁸O Hope of Israel,
Its Savior in time of distress,
Why are You like a stranger in the land
Or like a traveler who has pitched his *tent* for the night?

⁹Why are You like a man dismayed,
Like a mighty man who cannot save?
Yet You are in our midst, O LORD,
And we are called by Your name;
Do not forsake us!"

14:2 This verse contains a series of mourning VERBS.

1. Judah mourns – BDB 5, KB 6, *Qal* PERFECT
2. her gates languish – BDB 51, KB 63 *Pulal* PERFECT, cf. 15:9)
3. they sit on the ground in mourning (lit. “in black”) – BDB 871, KB 1072, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 8:21; Job 5:11; 30:28
4. the cry of Jerusalem has ascended – BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* PERFECT

The drought has caused the Judeans to pray (cf. vv. 7-9). See Special Topic: Grieving Rites at 2:37.

▣ **“her gates”** This is the place where the life of the city was centralized. It was a place of social and civic justice (i.e., Deut. 16:18; Ruth 4).

▣ **“the cry of Jerusalem has ascended”** The prayers of these unrepentant idolaters will not be heard (cf. 11:11).

14:3 This verse describes the wealthy seeking water.

1. sent their servants (lit. “little ones,” cf. 48:4)
2. came to the cisterns (cf. 2:13)
3. returned with vessels empty

Therefore, the wealthy

1. have been put to shame (BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* PERFECT)

2. have been humiliated (BDB 483, KB 480, *Hophal* PERFECT)
3. cover their heads (BDB 341, KB 339, *Qal* PERFECT)

▣ As v. 3 describes the wealthy, v. 4 describes the farmer's problem (i.e., no water).

1. the ground is cracked
2. there has been no rain

Therefore, the farmers

1. have been put to shame (BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* PERFECT)
2. have covered their heads (BDB 341, KB 339, *Qal* PERFECT)

14:5-6 The results of the drought on the wildlife is described.

1. v. 5, the doe abandons her young
2. v. 6, the donkeys pant for air like jackals (i.e., stress caused by high temperatures)

All creation is affected by human sin (cf. Genesis 3; Rom. 8:18-23), note Jer. 12:4,11! YHWH's covenant was targeted to agricultural blessings of the ANE. Its violation resulted in agricultural failures (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-28).

14:7 Verse 7 should begin a new paragraph (cf. NKJV, NRSV, NJB). Notice the thrust of the verse is a corporate intercession ("our," "we"). Jeremiah basically confesses the following sins of the people.

1. our iniquities
2. our apostasies have been many
3. we have sinned against You

Here Jeremiah collectively confesses the sins of Israel, like Abraham, Moses (see note at 15:1), the high priest (i.e., Leviticus 16), or like the father of a family (i.e., Job). See Special Topic at 7:16.

It is also possible that vv. 7-9 were temple liturgy, said on specific feast or fast days.

▣ **"O LORD, act for Your name's sake"** Jeremiah does not plead for God's forgiveness based on the people's worthiness, but on God's character (cf. 20:9,14,22,24; Ezek. 36:22,23). He is the God who acts (BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERATIVE). The hope of Israel is in the character of God. See Special Topic at 12:1.

▣ Notice how Judah is described.

1. apostasies have been many (cf. 5:6; 7:24; 8:5)
2. we have sinned against You (all sin is against YHWH)

14:8 YHWH (specified in the LXX of v. 8) is described by two covenant titles.

1. O Hope of Israel – this refers to YHWH as the God of the Patriarchs (cf. 17:13; 50:7)
2. Savior – this is a common characterization or title in Isaiah (cf. 19:20; 43:3,11; 45:15,21; 49:26; 60:16; 63:8)

▣ **"Why are You like a stranger in the land**

Or like a traveler who has pitched his tent for the night" This is very similar to 9:2. Verses 8c-9e are the people's response to Jeremiah's message. They suggest a shocking picture of YHWH as someone who is incapable and doesn't care, when in reality, He cared deeply as we have seen in 8:18-9:16. It was not YHWH's weakness but the people's sin that forced Him to act. The problem was not YHWH but idolatry (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-28).

14:9	
NASB	“dismayed”
NKJV	“astonished”
NRSV	“bemused”
TEV	“taken by surprise”
NJB	“confused”
JPSOA	“who is stunned”
REB	“suddenly overcome”
LXX	“asleep”
NET Bible	“helpless”

This is the only time this word appears in the OT. The Hebrew term (BDB 187, KB 214, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE), according to BDB, means “astonish,” but KB alludes to a seventh century inscription where it contextually means “helpless.” Hapax Legomenon (words used only once) are so hard to translate. The proper procedure is to look at

1. the basic meaning of root
2. the root in cognate languages
3. the context (strophe)
4. the parallelism (lines)
5. possible parallel passages in Scripture
6. usage outside Scripture

The LXX’s meaning comes from a one consonant change in the MT.

14:9c-3e This is theologically similar to v. 7b. It magnifies YHWH.

1. You are in our midst – this could refer to
 - a. the temple (cf. 8:19)
 - b. the promise of His personal presence with His people (i.e., the Cloud, the Ark)
2. we are called by Your name (cf. 15:16; Isa. 63:19)

Because of these two truths, these lines ask YHWH not to forsake them (BDB 628, KB 679, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a *JUSSIVE* sense). This is an unusual meaning for this VERB. It is found only here and Ps. 119:121, in the sense of “abandon.” Its basic meaning is “rest,” but it is used in the sense of “remain” in 27:11.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:10-12

¹⁰Thus says the LORD to this people, “Even so they have loved to wander; they have not kept their feet in check. Therefore the LORD does not accept them; now He will remember their iniquity and call their sins to account.” ¹¹So the LORD said to me, “Do not pray for the welfare of this people. ¹²When they fast, I am not going to listen to their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and grain offering, I am not going to accept them. Rather I am going to make an end of them by the sword, famine and pestilence.”

14:10-12 This is God’s response to Jeremiah’s intercessory prayer. It is shocking in its harsh statements. He characterizes Judah.

1. they have loved to wander
2. they have not stayed on the clearly marked path of His word

Therefore, YHWH will

1. not accept them
2. remember their iniquity (#2 and #3 are prophetic idioms, cf. Hos. 8:13; 9:9)

3. call their sins to account
4. instructed Jeremiah:
 - a. not pray for them (BDB 813, KB 933, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. 7:16; 11:14)
 - b. not listen to their cry (cf. 6:20)
 - (1) when they fast
 - (2) when they sacrifice
5. not accept them (cf. v. 10)
6. make an end of them (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-28)
 - a. sword
 - b. famine
 - c. pestilence (cf. 21:7,9; 24:10; 27:8,13; 28:8; 29:17-18; 32:24,36; 34:17; 38:2; 42:17,22; 44:13)

14:12 “burnt offering and grain offering” These are two of the types of offerings discussed in Leviticus 1-7 (burnt – BDB 750; grain – BDB 585). See Special Topic at 11:15.

▣ **“sword, famine and pestilence”** These three form the triad of the terrible results of invasion (cf. 5:12; 14:15; 27:8; 29:18).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:13-18

¹³But, “Ah, Lord GOD!” I said, “Look, the prophets are telling them, ‘You will not see the sword nor will you have famine, but I will give you lasting peace in this place.’” ¹⁴Then the LORD said to me, “The prophets are prophesying falsehood in My name. I have neither sent them nor commanded them nor spoken to them; they are prophesying to you a false vision, divination, futility and the deception of their own minds. ¹⁵Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who are prophesying in My name, although it was not I who sent them—yet they keep saying, ‘There will be no sword or famine in this land’—by sword and famine those prophets shall meet their end! ¹⁶The people also to whom they are prophesying will be thrown out into the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; and there will be no one to bury them—*neither* them, *nor* their wives, *nor* their sons, *nor* their daughters—for I will pour out their *own* wickedness on them.

¹⁷You will say this word to them,

‘Let my eyes flow down with tears night and day,

And let them not cease;

For the virgin daughter of my people has been crushed with a mighty blow,

With a sorely infected wound.

¹⁸‘If I go out to the country,

Behold, those slain with the sword!

Or if I enter the city,

Behold, diseases of famine!

For both prophet and priest

Have gone roving about in the land that they do not know.’”

14:13 This is the prophet’s attempt to blame the people’s religious apostasy on the religious leaders. Although there is some truth to this, the leaders were certainly far from God, the people were still responsible for their own acts (cf. Ezekiel 18). They should have recognized a false teacher (cf. Deut. 13:1-5; 18:22).

▣ **“but I will give you lasting peace in this place”** This was the promise of YHWH that the false prophets kept alluding to. It was surely a covenant promise. Isaiah uses it in encouraging Hezekiah not to surrender to the Assyrians (cf. Isaiah 36-37). But Jeremiah makes it very plain that this promise had conditions; covenant conditions that Judah had hopelessly violated! Invasion and exile were coming!

See D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*, pp. 44-47, “Conditional or Unconditional.”

14:14-18 This is God’s response to the prophet’s prayer to forgive the people because of the false teachers (cf. 23; 28; Deut. 18:9-22). YHWH admits that the leaders had been idolatrous, but also that the people are responsible. The prophets will bear the burden of their sin as will the people (cf. Ezekiel 18).

Notice how YHWH characterizes the false prophets (cf. Deut. 13:1-5; 18:9-22).

1. prophesying falsehood in My name (cf. 5:31; 23:25)
 - a. I did not send them
 - b. I did not command them
 - c. I did not speak to them
2. their message comes from
 - a. a false vision (cf. 23:25,28,32)
 - b. divination (cf. 27:9; 29:8)
 - c. futility (cf. 23:16)
 - d. the deception of their own minds (cf. 23:26)
3. all of these false prophets will die (cf. v. 15; 28:17; Deut. 13:1-2; 18:20)
4. those who have heard and believed them will also die in the invasion and siege (cf. v. 16)

14:17-18 In this poetic strophe we again see, not only the grief of the prophet, but the grief of YHWH (cf. 8:18-9:9). It is such an important truth that God does not rejoice in judgment but rejoices in blessing. Fallen humans force Him to discipline them because of their flagrant, continuing rebellion and willful idolatry.

14:17d-e These last two poetic lines describe the covenant people (i.e., the virgin daughter, cf. 8:21; 18:13; 31:4,21; 46:11).

1. has been crushed with a mighty blow (BDB 990, KB 1402, *Niphal* PERFECT)
2. has a sorely infected wound (BDB 317, KB 316, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE)

14:18

NASB	“have gone roving about in the land that they do not know”
NKJV	“go about. . .”
NRSV	“roam the country at their wit’s end”
TEV (footnote)	“have been dragged away to a land they know nothing about”
NJB	“ply their trade throughout the land, and have no knowledge”
JPSOA	“roam the land, they know not where”
REB	“wander without rest in the land”

The NJB is closest to the MT. The NASB, NKJV, JPSOA follow the LXX. The options are

1. these leaders do not know how to handle the results of the invasion
2. these leaders are exiled (NRSV, TEV footnote; this has no Hebrew or Greek or versional support)
3. the leaders wander about looking for work (i.e., a livelihood) because the temple is destroyed

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:19-22

**¹⁹Have You completely rejected Judah?
Or have You loathed Zion?**

Why have You stricken us so that we are beyond healing?

We waited for peace, but nothing good came;

And for a time of healing, but behold, terror!

²⁰We know our wickedness, O LORD,

The iniquity of our fathers, for we have sinned against You.

²¹Do not despise *us*, for Your own name's sake;

Do not disgrace the throne of Your glory;

Remember *and* do not annul Your covenant with us.

²²Are there any among the idols of the nations who give rain?

Or can the heavens grant showers?

Is it not You, O LORD our God?

Therefore we hope in You,

For You are the one who has done all these things.

14:19-22 These verses contain the prophet's questions and prayers for God's mercy. One wonders if these may also be liturgical pieces quoted regularly at the temple (cf. vv. 7-9).

14:19 There are three questions here which are emphatic in the Hebrew.

1. "Have You completely rejected Judah?" (emphatic by grammatical feature – the use of the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and a VERB of the same root (BDB 549, KB 540))
2. "Have You loathed Zion?" (emphatic by word choice [BDB 171, KB 199, *Qal* PERFECT] cf. Lev. 26:30,43)
3. "Why have You stricken us so that we are beyond healing?"

This third question is the central issue – Has the conditional covenant with Abraham been totally abrogated by Israel and Judah's continual disobedience? Well, yes and no!

1. yes – and this sets the stage for the "new covenant" of 31:31-34 (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; Galatians 3)
2. no – see Lev. 26:43, YHWH still has a purpose for His OT people (cf. Romans 9-11, see Special Topic at 1:5)

14:20-22 The prophet attempts a corporate prayer again.

1. we know our wickedness (cf. 3:25)
2. we know the iniquity of our fathers (cf. 2:5-6; 7:25-26)
3. we know we have sinned against You

In light of these confessions Jeremiah pleads for YHWH to act because of His own character and purposes (cf. v. 7; Ezek. 36:22-38).

1. do not despise (BDB 610, KB 658, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) for Your own name's sake
2. do not disgrace (BDB 614, KB 663, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) the throne of Your glory (i.e., the Ark of the Covenant in the holy of holies, cf. 3:17; 17:12)
- 3-4. remember (BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) and do not annul (BDB 830, KB 974, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) Your covenant with us
5. we know You are the only giver of rain (not *Ba'al* cf. 5:24)
6. therefore, we hope in You

14:20 All three Hebrew words for sin are found in this verse, which shows the waywardness of the people of God.

1. wickedness (BDB 957, cf. 5:26; 12:1; 23:19; 25:31; 30:23)
2. iniquity (BDB 730, cf. 2:22; 3:13; 5:25; 11:10; 13:22; 14:7,10,20; 16:10,17,18; 18:23, etc.)
3. sin (BDB 306, cf. 3:25; 5:25; 14:10; 15:13; 16:10,18; 17:1,3; 18:23, etc.)

JEREMIAH 15

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS (The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
				(14:1-15:9)
Judgment Must Come	The LORD Will Not Relent		Doom For the People of Judah	
15:1-4 (2b)	15:1-2 (2b)	15:1-2 (2b)	15:1-4 (2b)	15:1-4 (2b)
	15:3-4	15:3-4		
		The Horrors of War		Jerusalem's End
15:5-9 (5-9)	15:5-8 (5-8)	15:5-9 (5-9)	15:5-9 (5-9)	15:5-9 (5-9)
	15:9 (9)			
	Jeremiah's Dejection	The Call of Jeremiah Renewed	Jeremiah Complains to the LORD	Jeremiah's Second Personal Lament
15:10-11 (10-11)	15:10-14 (10-14)	15:10-11 (10-11)	15:10-12	15:10-12
15:12-14 (12-14)		15:12-14 (12-14)		
Jeremiah's Prayer and God's Answer			15:13-14	15:13-18 (15-18)
15:15-18 (15-19)	15:15-18 (15-18)	15:15-18 (15-18)	15:15-18	
	The LORD Reassures Jeremiah			
15:19-21 (19-21)	15:19-21 (19-21)	15:19-21 (19-21)	15:19-21	15:19-21 (19-21)

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This chapter seems to be made up of disjointed poems.
 1. vv. 1-4 (or possibly vv. 1-9) go with chapter 14
 2. vv. 5-9 are YHWH's lament over Judah's destruction (using the imagery of widows and mothers)
 3. vv. 10-11 are another poem involving birth and a mother (the MT of v. 11 is very difficult)
 4. vv. 12-14 are a seemingly unrelated poem of destruction, possibly related to 1:18-19 and 15:20
 5. vv. 15-18 are the second (or third) of Jeremiah's laments (i.e., confessions)
 6. vv. 19-21 have YHWH's response to Jeremiah's prayer. In a sense this is like a second call to prophetic service.
- B. The time for repentance has passed, even intercession by great leaders cannot stop the coming invasion from the north (cf. vv. 12-14).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:1-4

¹Then the LORD said to me, "Even though Moses and Samuel were to stand before Me, My heart would not be with this people; send them away from My presence and let them go! ²And it shall be that when they say to you, 'Where should we go?' then you are to tell them, 'Thus says the LORD:

"Those *destined* for death, to death;
 And those *destined* for the sword, to the sword;
 And those *destined* for famine, to famine;
 And those *destined* for captivity, to captivity."

³I will appoint over them four kinds of doom," declares the LORD: "the sword to slay, the dogs to drag off, and the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy. ⁴I will make them an object of horror among all the kingdoms of the earth because of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, the king of Judah, for what he did in Jerusalem.

15:1 YHWH answers Jeremiah's intercession. The few spiritual leaders in Israel/Judah's history cannot avert the unbelief and rebellion of the current generation (cf. Ezekiel 18). Corporate prayers are effective only if the people share the faith and repentant attitude of the intercessor!

For the intercessory ministry (cf. Ps. 99:6-8) of

1. Moses – see Exod. 32:11-14,30-32; Num. 14:13-25; Deut. 9:18-20,25-29
2. Samuel – see I Sam. 7:9; 12:23

Notice YHWH's directives about Judah.

1. My heart (lit. *nephesh*, BDB 659, KB 711; see note at Gen. 2:7 at www.freebiblecommentary.org online) would not be with this people
2. send them away from My presence – BDB 1018, KB 1511, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
3. let them go – BDB 422, KB 425, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

Judah had rejected YHWH (“Me,” “My,” “My,” cf. v. 6). They were no longer in a covenant relationship with Him (see Special Topic: Apostasy at 2:19)!

15:2 The people respond to YHWH’s message through Jeremiah. They are not searching knowledge but flippantly responding! Therefore, YHWH tells them exactly where they will go (cf. 14:12).

1. some to death by the sword (warfare)
2. some to famine (siege)
3. some to captivity (exile)

The normal triad of judgment is the sword, famine, and pestilence (cf. Ezke. 14:21; 33:27), but here “captivity” or exile is used.

15:3 “I shall appoint” The VERB (BDB 823, KB 955, *Qal* PERFECT) can mean

1. visit upon
 - a. in punishment – Isa. 10:12; Jer. 9:25; 11:22; 13:21; 21:14
 - b. in mercy – Gen. 21:1; 50:24,25; Isa. 23:17; Jer. 15:15; 27:22; 29:10; 32:5
2. appoint to, cf. Num. 27:16; Jer. 15:3; 49:15; 50:44; 51:27

▣ **“four kinds of doom”** There are four *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS.

1. the sword to slay
2. the dogs to drag off (i.e., the horror of improper burial)
3. the birds of the sky to devour and destroy (cf. Deut. 28:26; Jer. 7:33; 16:4; 19:7; 34:20)
4. the beasts of the earth to devour and destroy (cf. Deut. 28:26; Jer. 7:33; 16:4; 19:7; 34:20)

15:4 “I will make them an object of horror among all the kingdoms of the earth” This Hebrew idiom is explained in 24:9; 29:18 (cf. Deut. 28:25). Israel was meant to reveal YHWH’s loving character to the nations, but they did not see the mercy of YHWH because only His judgment was manifested in the life of Israel (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38).

▣ **“because of Manasseh”** YHWH gives the specific origin of Judah’s idolatry—King Manasseh. He was Hezekiah’s son who reigned longer than any other Judean king. He was by far the most evil king in Judah’s history (cf. II Kgs. 21:1-18; 23:26-27; 24:3-4; II Chr. 33:1-17). He was saved and forgiven at the very end of his life, but the consequences of his idolatry were permanent to the people of Judah.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:5-9

⁵**“Indeed, who will have pity on you, O Jerusalem,
Or who will mourn for you,
Or who will turn aside to ask about your welfare?
“You who have forsaken Me,” declares the LORD,
“You keep going backward.
So I will stretch out My hand against you and destroy you;
I am tired of relenting!
⁷I will winnow them with a winnowing fork
At the gates of the land;
I will bereave *them* of children, I will destroy My people;
They did not repent of their ways.
⁸Their widows will be more numerous before Me
Than the sand of the seas;**

**I will bring against them, against the mother of a young man,
 A destroyer at noonday;
 I will suddenly bring down on her
 Anguish and dismay.
⁹She who bore seven *sons* pines away;
 Her breathing is labored.
 Her sun has set while it was yet day;
 She has been shamed and humiliated.
 So I will give over their survivors to the sword
 Before their enemies,” declares the LORD.**

15:5-9 Verses 5-9 are YHWH’s lament! This poetic strophe (characterized by PERFECT VERBS) describes the coming judgment of Judah’s intransigent rebellion and idolatry.

Verse 5 is a series of questions.

1. who will have pity on you
2. who will mourn you
3. who will turn aside to ask about your welfare

The theological implication is that without YHWH’s help, there is no one else who cares, protects, and provides for them. But they have rejected Him.

1. you have forsaken Me
2. you keep going backward

Because of this YHWH will act as judge. He is tired of relenting (cf. 6:11; 7:6).

1. stretch out His hand against them
2. destroy them (cf. v. 8)
3. winnow them (cf. 51:2)
4. bereave them of children
5. give them numerous widows
6. bring the destroyer at noonday
7. anguish and dismay
8. bring shame (BDB 101, KB 116) and humiliation (BDB 344, KB 340)
9. give the survivors to the sword

Wow! Idolatry has consequences! Lack of repentance (cf. v. 7, line 3) has consequences! If this were true then, why not now?

I do like the NET Bible’s understanding of an outline of this poem based on who is speaking to whom (p. 1333).

1. vv. 1-4 – YHWH addresses Jeremiah
2. vv. 5-6 – YHWH addresses Jerusalem
3. vv. 7-9 – YHWH addresses Jeremiah

15:6 “I will stretch out My hand against you and destroy you” This is an idiom from the exodus (cf. Exod. 7:5; Isa. 31:3) of YHWH’s power in judgment (cf. Jer. 6:12). In Exod. 7:5 it is against the Egyptians on behalf of His covenant people, but now YHWH acts against His own people (cf. Isa. 5:25; 10:4; 14:27).



NASB, JPSOA “You keep going backward”
NKJV, NJB,
Peshitta “You have gone backwards”

NRSV, TEV,
REB, NET “You have turned your back to me”
LXX “you will go backward”
NIV “you keep on backsliding”

Hebrew VERBS do not have a time element; that must be determined from context. Notice how the translations of v. 6 differ.

The best parallel use of “backward” (BDB 229) is 7:24.

▣ **“I am tired of relenting”** The VERB (BDB 521, KB 512, *Niphal* PERFECT) is used of exhausted patience. The *Niphal* PERFECT can be used in a good sense.

1. 6:11, in relation to YHWH’s wrath
2. 20:9, in relation to YHWH’s word
3. Isa. 1:14, in relation to YHWH’s feasts

It can be used in a bad sense.

1. 9:5, in relation to iniquity
2. Isa. 47:13, in relation to occult practices

The second VERBAL (BDB 636, KB 688, *Niphal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) means to be moved with pity. Here it is negated. YHWH will not be moved with pity (cf. 7:16). Judgment is coming! He has waited and waited but Judah would not repent and return to Him (cf. v. 7c; 7:13).

15:7 “At the gates of the land” This would refer to the

1. walled cities near the borders where invading armies would travel (i.e., coastal plain)
2. fortresses on the invasion routes (i.e., caravan routes)

15:8 This verse is difficult to understand.

1. Does it refer to the dead children of the widows who were strong young soldiers but now dead? (i.e., little children)
2. Does it refer to the death of the remaining widows by young invaders because their own children/warriors cannot defend them?

The “widows” described as “the sand of the sea” is an allusion to YHWH’s promise to Abraham about his numerous descendants (cf. Gen. 22:17; 32:12). But now his many descendants will be destroyed! The fathers/husbands and their young men/soldiers are already dead, and now their mothers also (i.e., no hope for a next generation).

▣ **“A destroyer at noonday”** This seems to refer to the personification of an invading army that attacks at the time when the defenders could see best (cf. 6:4). This would then be a symbol of the invulnerability of the invaders.

▣ **“Anguish”** This word (BDB 735 I, KB 822 II) is found only here and in Hosea 11:9. It denotes “shock” and “agitation” (KB).

▣ **“dismay”** This word (BDB 96, KB 111) basically means “sudden fear” (cf. Ps. 78:33). It is used in the “cursing and blessing” section of Leviticus (cf. Rev. 26:16). In Isa. 65:23 it is used of what will not happen to a restored, repentant people of God.

15:9 There have been several ways to understand v. 9, line 2.

1. “her breathing is labored,” NASB

2. “she has breathed her last,” NKJV, NIV, NAB
3. “gasps for breath,” NRSV
4. “she has swooned away,” NJB

The numerous widows and mothers of vv. 7-8 are again used as imagery of Judah invaded, defeated, and taken into exile.

▣ **“seven”** This is a symbolic number, going back to Genesis 1-2, for perfection. A woman with seven sons would be considered uniquely blessed by God (cf. I Sam. 2:5).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SYMBOLIC NUMBERS IN SCRIPTURE

- A. Certain numbers functioned both as numerals and symbols.
 1. One – God (e.g., Deut. 6:4; Eph. 4:4-6)
 2. Four – the whole earth (i.e., four corners, four winds)
 3. Six – human imperfection (one less than 7, e.g., Rev. 13:18)
 4. Seven – divine perfection (the seven days of creation). Notice the symbolic usages in Revelation:
 - a. seven candlesticks, 1:12,20; 2:1
 - b. seven stars, 1:16,20; 2:1
 - c. seven churches, 1:20
 - d. seven spirits of God, 3:1; 4:5; 5:6
 - e. seven lamps, 4:5
 - f. seven seals, 5:1,5
 - g. seven horns and seven eyes, 5:6
 - h. seven angels, 8:2,6; 15:1,6,7,8; 16:1; 17:1
 - i. seven trumpets, 8:2,6
 - j. seven thunders, 10:3,4
 - k. seven thousand, 11:13
 - l. seven heads, 13:1; 17:3,7,9
 - m. seven plagues, 15:1,6,8; 21:9
 - n. seven bowls, 15:7; 21:9
 - o. seven kings, 17:10
 5. Ten – completeness
 - a. use in Gospels
 - (1) Matt. 20:24; 25:1,28
 - (2) Mark 10:41
 - (3) Luke 14:31; 15:8; 17:12,17; 19:13,16,17,24,25
 - b. use in Revelation
 - (1) 2:10, ten days of tribulation
 - (2) 12:3; 17:3,7,12,16, ten horns
 - (3) 13:1, ten crowns

- c. multiples of 10 in Revelation
 - (1) 144,000 = 12x12x1000, cf. 7:4; 14:1,3
 - (2) 1,000 = 10x10x10, cf. 20:2,3,6
 - 6. Twelve – human organization
 - a. twelve sons of Jacob (i.e., twelve tribes of Israel, Gen. 35:22; 49:28)
 - b. twelve pillars, Exod. 24:4
 - c. twelve stones on breastplate of High Priest, Exod. 28:21; 39:14
 - d. twelve loaves, for table in Holy Place (symbolic of God’s provision for the twelve tribes), Lev. 24:5; Exod. 25:30
 - e. twelve spies, Deut. 1:23; Josh. 3:22; 4:2,3,4,8,9,20
 - f. twelve apostles, Matt. 10:1
 - g. use in Revelation
 - (1) twelve thousand sealed, 7:5-8
 - (2) twelve stars, 12:1
 - (3) twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve tribes, 21:12
 - (4) twelve foundation stones, names of the twelve apostles, 21:14
 - (5) New Jerusalem was twelve thousand stadia squared, 21:16
 - (6) twelve gates made of twelve pearls, 21:12
 - (7) tree of life with twelve kinds of fruit, 22:2
 - 7. Forty – number for time
 - a. sometimes literal (exodus and wilderness wanderings, e.g., Exod. 16:35); Deut. 2:7; 8:2
 - b. can be literal or symbolic
 - (1) flood, Gen. 7:4,17; 8:6
 - (2) Moses on Mt. Sinai, Exod. 24:18; 34:28; Deut. 9:9,11,18,25
 - (3) divisions of Moses life:
 - (a) forty years in Egypt
 - (b) forty years in the desert
 - (c) forty years leading Israel
 - (4) Jesus fasted forty days, Matt. 4:2; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2
 - c. Note (by means of a Concordance) the number of times this number appears in time designation in the Bible!
 - 8. Seventy – round number for people
 - a. Israel, Exod. 1:5
 - b. seventy elders, Exod. 24:1,9
 - c. eschatological, Dan. 9:2,24
 - d. mission team, Luke 10:1,17
 - e. forgiveness (70x7), Matt. 18:22
- B. Good references
- 1. John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology*
 - 2. D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*

▣ **“Her sun has set while it was yet day”** This imagery speaks of sudden hopelessness. It may

1. relate to v. 1, line 4
2. relate to Jer. 6:4
3. relate to the prophetic imagery of Amos 8:9

▣ **“So I will give over their survivors to the sword”** This phrase appears to denote a complete destruction of Judah by the sword. This is prophetic hyperbole because we know many thousands were exiled. Poetry is meant to function on an emotional level, not a literal, historical level.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:10-11

¹⁰**Woe to me, my mother, that you have borne me
As a man of strife and a man of contention to all the land!
I have not lent, nor have men lent money to me,
Yet everyone curses me.**
¹¹**The LORD said, “Surely I will set you free for *purposes of good*;
Surely I will cause the enemy to make supplication to you
In a time of disaster and a time of distress.”**

15:10-18 This is known as the second “Confession of Jeremiah,” but it may be better characterized as his “complaint.” He prays in vv. 15-18. YHWH responds and reassures him in vv. 19-21.

15:10-11 Verse 10 is obviously a lament from Jeremiah. He expresses how he feels about the way his ministry is being accepted.

1. expresses sorrow for his birth (cf. 20:14-18, i.e., a metaphor of his life)
2. he has become a man of strife (BDB 936) and contention (BDB 193 I) instead of a servant of YHWH (i.e., [1] he has no honor or [2] is always in a lawsuit against Judah)
3. he is rejected by his own (i.e., metaphor of lending money as causing problems)

Verse 11 is difficult to understand in the MT. It could mean

1. YHWH is answering (LXX) Jeremiah (NJB) by reminding him of his call (i.e., Jer. 1:4-10). His birth (#1 above) was the will of YHWH (i.e., Jer. 1:5).
2. Jeremiah continues to talk to YHWH of his faithfulness (NRSV, TEV)
3. YHWH speaks to Judah of the hope for a remnant (NKJV, JPSOA)

The Hebrew of v. 11 is uncertain. The diversity of the versions and the *Kethiv* and *Qere* of the Masoretes show this.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:12-14

¹²**“Can anyone smash iron,
Iron from the north, or bronze?
¹³Your wealth and your treasures
I will give for booty without cost,
Even for all your sins
And within all your borders.
¹⁴Then I will cause your enemies to bring *it*
Into a land you do not know;
For a fire has been kindled in My anger,
It will burn upon you.”**

15:12-14 The NASB strophe describes the judgment of Judah by YHWH (notice the “I will. . .”). He is addressing Judah in vv. 12-14 (cf. 17:3-4).

1. invasion from the north by a strong invader (iron)
2. wealth confiscated (i.e., because of their sin)
3. wealth taken out of the country (NASB, i.e., the temple treasures)

There is a problem with the first VERB of v. 14.

1. “cause to pass” – BDB 716, KB 778, *Hiphil* PERFECT
 - a. NASB – “then I will cause your enemies to bring *it*”
 - b. NKJV – “and I will make *you* cross over with your enemies”
2. “cause to serve” – BDB 712, KB 773 (LXX, NRSV, TEV, NJB, REB, Net Bible, Peshitta, UBS’s Text Project gives this a C rating)
3. “bring your enemies by way of a land you have not known” (JPSOA)

15:13 “without cost” This phrase is difficult to interpret in this context. The LXX omits it, which makes the verse much easier to understand in the strophe. This is followed by TEV. The “without cost” refers to the invaders confiscating Judah’s wealth easily, without great loss to the invaders’ military.

15:14 The threat of exile was initially stated in the “cursing and blessing” section of Deuteronomy (i.e., 28:36,64).

Lines 3 and 4 are related to Deut. 33:22. Remember the prophets are “covenant mediators.” They hold Israel and Judah to the Mosaic legislation! If they obey – abundance; if they disobey – judgment (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-28).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:15-18

- ¹⁵**You who know, O LORD,
Remember me, take notice of me,
And take vengeance for me on my persecutors.
Do not, in view of Your patience, take me away;
Know that for Your sake I endure reproach.**
- ¹⁶**Your words were found and I ate them,
And Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart;
For I have been called by Your name,
O LORD God of hosts.**
- ¹⁷**I did not sit in the circle of merrymakers,
Nor did I exult.
Because of Your hand *upon me* I sat alone,
For You filled me with indignation.**
- ¹⁸**Why has my pain been perpetual
And my wound incurable, refusing to be healed?
Will You indeed be to me like a deceptive *stream*
With water that is unreliable?**

15:15-18 This is Jeremiah’s prayer for YHWH to take notice of his faithfulness and service. Notice the names for Deity.

1. “Thou who knowest” (BDB393, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT)
2. “O YHWH” (i.e., YHWH)
3. “Thy name”

4. “O LORD of hosts” (see Special Topic below)

These are all covenant names (cf. v. 16, line 2, see Special Topic 1:2). If Judah has not been faithful, Jeremiah has and he has suffered for it.

SPECIAL TOPIC: LORD OF HOSTS

This title, “LORD of Hosts” is made up of

- A. the covenant name for God, YHWH. See Special Topic: Names For Deity at Isaiah 1:1
- B. the term “hosts” (BDB 838) can denote
 1. angels in general (cf. Neh. 9:6)
 2. the heavenly army of angels (cf. I Sam. 17:45; Dan. 8:10; Luke 2:13)
 3. the angelic council (cf. I Kgs. 22:19; Dan. 7:10)
 4. human army (i.e., Num. 2:4,6; Jdgs. 8:6; 9:29)
 5. the lights in the night sky thought to be spiritual powers (i.e., Babylonian astral worship, cf. Deut. 4:19; 17:3; II Kgs. 17:16; 21:3,5; 23:4-5; II Chr. 33:3,5; Jer. 8:2; 19:13)
 6. It became a title for YHWH in Amos 4:13; 5:27 (with ARTICLE in Amos 3:13; 6:14; 9:5 and without ARTICLE in Amos 5:14,15,16; 6:8; I Kgs. 19:10,14). It denoted YHWH fighting on Israel’s behalf.
 7. There is a specialized use in Josh. 5:14-15, which may refer to Michael the angelic guardian of Israel. This is in some way parallel to the Angel of the Lord as a representation of Deity Himself.

15:15 Notice the prayer requests (i.e., IMPERATIVES) in this verse.

1. remember me – BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. take notice of me (lit. “visit me,” see note at 15:3) – BDB 823, KB 955, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. take vengeance for me – BDB 667, KB 721, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE
4. do not take me away – BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
5. know that for Your sake I endure reproach – BDB 383, KB 390, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

15:16 Jeremiah is expressing, even in the midst of persecution (i.e., v. 15), the joy (BDB 965) and delight (BDB 970) of being YHWH’s prophet. The idiom “I ate them” refers to God’s message (cf. Ezek. 3:3).

Some commentators have suggested that the phrase “Your words were found” refers to the discovery of the Law found in the remodeling of the Temple during Josiah’s reign (cf. II Kings 22; II Chronicles 34; i.e., 621 B.C.).

15:17-18 Jeremiah describes how being God’s prophet affected his life.

1. I did not sit in the circle of merry-makers
2. I did not exult
3. I sat alone

He states that this is a result of YHWH’s call.

1. Your hand was upon me
2. You filled me with indignation
3. I have perpetual pain
4. I have an incurable wound

15:18c-d This is one of the most shocking assertions about YHWH in the OT. Jeremiah feels so comfortable with YHWH that he can express himself in hyperbolic imagery (exactly the opposite of 2:13).

1. YHWH is like a deceptive stream (BDB 469). This phrase is intensified by the presence of an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB of “to be” (BDB 224, KB 243).
2. The parallel line is like water that is unreliable (BDB 52, KB 63, *Niphal* PERFECT, see Special Topic at 3:12; and Special Topic below).

SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVE, TRUST, FAITH, AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (אמן)

I. Opening Statement

It needs to be stated that the use of this theological concept, so crucial to the NT, is not as clearly defined in the OT. It is surely there, but demonstrated in key selected passages and persons.

The OT blends

- A. the individual and the community
- B. the personal encounter and covenant obedience

Faith is both personal encounter and daily lifestyle! It is easier to describe in a person than in a lexical form (i.e., word study). This personal aspect is best illustrated in

- A. Abraham and his seed
- B. David and Israel

These men met/encountered God and their lives were permanently changed (not perfect lives, but continuing faith). Testing revealed weaknesses and strengths of their faith encounter with God, but the intimate, trusting relationship continued through time! It was tested and refined, but it continued as evidenced by their devotion and lifestyle.

II. Main root used

A. אמן (BDB 52)

1. VERB

- a. *Qal* stem – to support, to nourish (i.e., II Kgs. 10:1,5; Esther 2:7, the non-theological usage)
- b. *Niphal* stem – to make sure or firm, to establish, to confirm, to be faithful or trustworthy
 - (1) of men, Isa. 8:2; 53:1; Jer. 40:14
 - (2) of things, Isa. 22:23
 - (3) of God, Deut. 7:9; Isa. 49:7; Jer. 42:5
- c. *Hiphil* stem – to stand firm, to believe, to trust
 - (1) Abraham believed God, Gen. 15:6
 - (2) the Israelites in Egypt believed, Exod. 4:31; 14:31 (negated in Deut. 1:32)
 - (3) Israelites believed YHWH spoke through Moses, Exod. 19:9; Ps. 106:12,24
 - (4) Ahaz did not trust in God, Isa 7:9
 - (5) whoever believes in it/him, Isa. 28:16
 - (6) believe truths about God, Isa. 43:10-12

2. NOUN (MASCULINE) – faithfulness (i.e., Deut. 32:20; Isa. 25:1; 26:2)

3. ADVERB – truly, verily, I agree, may it be so (cf. Deut. 27:15-26; I Kgs. 1:36; I Chr. 16:36; Isa. 65:16; Jer. 11:5; 28:6). This is the liturgical use of “amen” in the OT and NT.

- B. אמת (BDB 54) FEMININE NOUN, firmness, faithfulness, truth
 1. of men, Isa. 10:20; 42:3; 48:1
 2. of God, Exod. 34:6; Ps. 117:2; Isa. 38:18,19; 61:8
 3. of truth, Deut. 32:4; I Kgs. 22:16; Ps. 33:4; 98:3; 100:5; 119:30; Jer. 9:5; Zech. 8:16
- C. אמונה (BDB 53), firmness, steadfastness, fidelity
 1. of hands, Exod. 17:12
 2. of times, Isa. 33:6
 3. of humans, Jer. 5:3; 7:28; 9:2
 4. of God, Ps. 40:11; 88:12; 89:1,2,5,8; 119:138

III. Paul's use of this OT concept

- A. Paul bases his new understanding of YHWH and the OT on his personal encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9; 22; 26).
- B. He found OT support for his new understanding in two key OT passages which use the root אמן.
 1. Gen. 15:6 – Abram's personal encounter initiated by God (Genesis 12) resulted in an obedient life of faith (Genesis 12-22). Paul alludes to this in Romans 4 and Galatians 3.
 2. Isa. 28:16 – those who believe in it (i.e., God's tested and firmly placed cornerstone) will never be
 - a. Rom. 9:33, "put to shame" or "be disappointed"
 - b. Rom. 10:11, same as above
 3. Hab. 2:4 – those who know the faithful God should live faithful lives (cf. Jer. 7:28). Paul uses this text in Rom. 1:17 and Gal. 3:11 (also note Heb. 10:38).

IV. Peter's use of the OT concept

- A. Peter combines
 1. Isa. 8:14 – I Pet. 2:8 (stumbling block)
 2. Isa. 28:16 – I Pet. 2:6 (cornerstone)
 3. Ps. 118:22 – I Pet 2:7 (rejected stone)
- B. He turns the unique language that describes Israel, "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession" from
 1. Deut. 10:15; Isa. 43:21
 2. Isa. 61:6; 66:21
 3. Exod. 19:6; Deut. 7:6
 and now uses it for the church's faith in Christ

V. John's use of the concept

- A. Its NT usage

The term "believe" is from the Greek term (*pisteuō*), which can also be translated "believe," "faith," or "trust." For example, the NOUN does not occur in the Gospel of John, but the VERB is used often. In John 2:23-25 there is uncertainty as to the genuineness of the crowd's commitment to Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Other examples of this superficial use of the term "believe" are in John 8:31-59 and Acts 8:13, 18-24. True biblical faith is more than an initial response. It must be followed by a process of discipleship (cf. Matt. 13:20-22,31-32).

B. Its use with PREPOSITIONS

1. *eis* means “into.” This unique construction emphasizes believers putting their trust/faith in Jesus
 - a. into His name (John 1:12; 2:23; 3:18; I John 5:13)
 - b. into Him (John 2:11; 3:15,18; 4:39; 6:40; 7:5,31,39,48; 8:30; 9:36; 10:42; 11:45, 48; 12:37,42; Matt. 18:6; Acts 10:43; Phil. 1:29; I Pet. 1:8)
 - c. into Me (John 6:35; 7:38; 11:25,26; 12:44,46; 14:1,12; 16:9; 17:20)
 - d. into the Son (John 3:36; 9:35; I John 5:10)
 - e. into Jesus (John 12:11; Acts 19:4; Gal. 2:16)
 - f. into Light (John 12:36)
 - g. into God (John 14:1)
2. *en* means “in” as in John 3:15; Mark 1:15; Acts 5:14
3. *epi* means “in” or “upon,” as in Matt. 27:42; Acts 9:42; 11:17; 16:31; 22:19; Rom. 4:5, 24; 9:33; 10:11; I Tim. 1:16; I Pet. 2:6
4. the DATIVE CASE with no PREPOSITION as in Gal. 3:6; Acts 18:8; 27:25; I John 3:23; 5:10
5. *hoti*, which means “believe that,” gives content as to what to believe
 - a. Jesus is the Holy One of God (John 6:69)
 - b. Jesus is the I Am (John 8:24)
 - c. Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Him (John 10:38)
 - d. Jesus is the Messiah (John 11:27; 20:31)
 - e. Jesus is the Son of God (John 11:27; 20:31)
 - f. Jesus was sent by the Father (John 11:42; 17:8,21)
 - g. Jesus is one with the Father (John 14:10-11)
 - h. Jesus came from the Father (John 16:27,30)
 - i. Jesus identified Himself in the covenant name of the Father, “I Am” (John 8:24; 13:19)
 - j. We will live with Him (Rom. 6:8)
 - k. Jesus died and rose again (I Thess. 4:14)

VI. Conclusion

Biblical faith is the human response to a Divine word/promise. God always initiates (i.e., John 6:44,65), but part of this Divine communication is the need for humans to respond.

A. trust

B. covenant obedience

Biblical faith is

1. a personal relationship (initial faith)
2. an affirmation of biblical truth (faith in God’s revelation)
3. an appropriate obedient response to it (daily faith)

Biblical faith is not a ticket to heaven or an insurance policy. It is a personal relationship. This is the purpose of creation and humans being made in the image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) of God. The issue is “intimacy.” God desires fellowship, not a certain theological standing! But fellowship with a holy God demands that the children demonstrate the “family” characteristic (i.e., holiness, cf. Leviticus 19:2; Matthew 5:48; I Peter 1:15-16). The Fall (cf. Genesis 3) affected our ability to respond

appropriately. Therefore, God acted on our behalf (cf. Ezek. 36:27-38), giving us a “new heart” and “new spirit,” which enables us through faith and repentance to fellowship with Him and obey Him!

All three are crucial. All three must be maintained. The goal is to know God (both Hebrew and Greek senses) and to reflect His character in our lives. The goal of faith is not heaven someday, but Christlikeness every day!

Human faithfulness is the result (NT), not the basis (OT) for a relationship with God: human’s faith in His faithfulness; human’s trust in His trustworthiness. The heart of the NT view of salvation is that humans must respond initially and continually to the initiating grace and mercy of God, demonstrated in Christ. He has loved, He has sent, He has provided; we must respond in faith and faithfulness (cf. Eph. 2:8-9 and 10)!

The faithful God wants a faithful people to reveal Himself to a faithless world and bring them to personal faith in Him.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:19-21

¹⁹**Therefore, thus says the LORD,
“If you return, then I will restore you—
Before Me you will stand;
And if you extract the precious from the worthless,
You will become My spokesman.
They for their part may turn to you,
But as for you, you must not turn to them.**

²⁰**Then I will make you to this people
A fortified wall of bronze;
And though they fight against you,
They will not prevail over you;
For I am with you to save you
And deliver you,” declares the LORD.**

²¹**“So I will deliver you from the hand of the wicked,
And I will redeem you from the grasp of the violent.”**

15:19-21 YHWH answers Jeremiah’s complaints and requests. YHWH is apparently offended by Jeremiah’s characterization in 18c-d. Jeremiah himself must repent (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERFECT; see Special Topic at 2:22).

If Jeremiah “turns back” to YHWH, then YHWH will restore (same VERB) him. The covenant always has two parties.

The play on the word “return” (used four times in v. 19) continues in v. 19f-g. Jeremiah, as YHWH’s spokesman, would hopefully have the Judeans come to him to hear God’s word, but he must be careful not to be influenced by their apparent response.

One wonders how much Jeremiah’s sense of rejection and prayer for protection and vengeance is meant to reflect the feelings of the godly remnant of Judah/Jerusalem. Often the prophet feels for YHWH. Is it possible he now feels for the repentant remnant?

15:19 “**And if you extract the precious from the worthless**” I like what UBS *Handbook* (p. 379) says about line 4, “the precious is YHWH’s message (v. 16) and the worthless is Jeremiah’s evaluation” (cf. v. 18, lines 3-4).

15:20 This alludes to 1:18-19. Jeremiah must be strong to face the opposition that will surely come for speaking the true word of God.

▣ **“save...deliver”** These are in a parallel relationship. They both refer to physical deliverance (BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT; BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT). The second VERB is repeated in v. 21 (*Hiphil* PERFECT), parallel to “ransom” (BDB 804, KB 911, *Qal* PERFECT, see Special Topic below).

15:21 “deliver...redeem” These are also in a parallel relationship. For “redeem” (BDB 804, KB 911, *Qal* PERFECT) see Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: RANSOM/REDEEM

I. OLD TESTAMENT

A. There are primarily two Hebrew legal terms which convey this concept.

1. *Ga'al* (BDB 145, I), which basically means “to free by means of a price paid.” A form of the term *go'el* adds to the concept a personal intermediary, usually a family member (i.e., kinsman redeemer). This cultural aspect of the right to buy back objects, animals, land (cf. Leviticus 25,27), or relatives (cf. Ruth 4:14; Isa. 29:22) is transferred theologically to YHWH’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt (cf. Exod. 6:6; 15:13; Ps. 74:2; 77:15; Jer. 31:11). He becomes “the redeemer” (cf. Job 19:25; Ps. 19:14; 78:35; Pro. 23:11; Isa. 41:14; 43:14; 44:6,24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7,26; 54:5,8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16; Jer. 50:34).
2. *Padah* (BDB 804), which basically means “to deliver” or “to rescue”
 - a. the redemption of the firstborn (Exod. 13:13,14 and Num. 18:15-17)
 - b. physical redemption is contrasted with spiritual redemption (Ps. 49:7,8,15)
 - c. YHWH will redeem Israel from their sin and rebellion (Ps. 130:7-8)

B. The theological concept involves several related items.

1. There is a need, a bondage, a forfeiting, an imprisonment.
 - a. physical
 - b. social
 - c. spiritual (cf. Ps. 130:8)
2. A price must be paid for freedom, release, and restoration.
 - a. of the nation of Israel (cf. Deut. 7:8)
 - b. of the individual (cf. Job 19:25-27; 33:28)
3. Someone must act as intermediary and benefactor. In *gaal* this one is usually a family member or near kin (i.e., *go'el*, BDB 145).
4. YHWH often describes Himself in familial terms.
 - a. Father
 - b. Husband
 - c. Near Kin Redeemer/Avenger

Redemption was secured through YHWH’s personal agency; a price was paid, and redemption was achieved!

II. NEW TESTAMENT

A. There are several terms used to convey the theological concept.

1. *Agorazō* (cf. I Cor. 6:20; 7:23; II Pet. 2:1; Rev. 5:9; 14:3-4). This is a commercial term which reflects a price paid for something. We are blood-bought people who do not control our own lives. We belong to Christ.
2. *Exagorazō* (cf. Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5). This is also a commercial term. It reflects Jesus' substitutionary death on our behalf. Jesus bore the "curse" of a performance-based law (i.e., Mosaic Law. Cf. Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 2:14), which sinful humans could not accomplish. He bore the curse (cf. Deut. 21:23) for us all (cf. Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21)! In Jesus, God's justice and love merge into full forgiveness, acceptance, and access!
3. *Luō*, "to set free"
 - a. *Lutron*, "a price paid" (cf. Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). These are powerful words from Jesus' own mouth concerning the purpose of His coming, to be the Savior of the world by paying a sin-debt He did not owe (cf. John 1:29).
 - b. *Lutroō*, "to release"
 - (1) to redeem Israel (Luke 24:21)
 - (2) to give Himself to redeem and purify a people (Titus 2:14)
 - (3) to be a sinless substitute (I Pet. 1:18-19)
 - c. *Lutrōsis*, "redemption," "deliverance," or "liberation"
 - (1) Zacharias' prophecy about Jesus, Luke 1:68
 - (2) Anna's praise to God for Jesus, Luke 2:38
 - (3) Jesus' better, once offered sacrifice, Heb. 9:12
4. *Apolytrōsis*
 - a. redemption at the Second Coming (cf. Acts 3:19-21)
 - (1) Luke 21:28
 - (2) Romans 8:23
 - (3) Ephesians 1:14; 4:30
 - (4) Hebrews 9:15
 - b. redemption in Christ's death
 - (1) Romans 3:24
 - (2) I Corinthians 1:30
 - (3) Ephesians 1:7
 - (4) Colossians 1:14
5. *Antilytron* (cf. I Tim. 2:6). This is a crucial text (as is Titus 2:14) which links "release" to Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross. He is the one and only acceptable sacrifice, the one who dies for "all" (cf. John 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:2; 4:14).

B. The theological concept in the NT.

1. Mankind is enslaved to sin (cf. John 8:34; Rom. 3:10-18; 6:23).
2. Mankind's bondage to sin has been revealed by the OT Mosaic Law (cf. Galatians 3) and Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matthew 5-7). Human performance has become a death sentence (cf. Col. 2:14).

3. Jesus, the sinless lamb of God, has come and died in our place (cf. John 1:29; II Cor. 5:21). We have been purchased from sin so that we might serve God (cf. Romans 6).
4. By implication both YHWH and Jesus are “near kin” who act on our behalf. This continues the familial metaphors (i.e., father, husband, son, brother, near kin).
5. Redemption was not a price paid to Satan (i.e., Medieval theology), but the reconciliation of God’s word and God’s justice with God’s love and full provision in Christ. At the cross peace was restored, human rebellion was forgiven, the image of God in mankind is now fully functional again in intimate fellowship!
6. There is still a future aspect of redemption (cf. Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14; 4:30), which involves our resurrection bodies and personal intimacy with the Triune God. Our resurrected bodies will be like His (cf. I John 3:2). He had a physical body, but with an extra dimensional aspect. It is hard to define the paradox of I Cor. 15:12-19 with I Cor. 15:35-58. Obviously there is a physical, earthly body and there will be a heavenly, spiritual body. Jesus had both!

JEREMIAH 16

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS (The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Distresses Foretold	Jeremiah's Lifestyle and Message	The Prophet's Life Is Itself Symbolic	The LORD'S will for Jeremiah's Life	Jeremiah's Life
16:1-4	16:1-4	16:1-4	16:1-4	16:1-4
16:5-9	16:5-9	16:5-7 16:8-9	16:5-7 16:8-9	16:5-9 Judah's Fate
16:10-13	16:10-13	16:10-13	16:10-13	16:10-13
God Will Restore Them	God Will Restore Israel	The Return of the Scattered Israelites	The Return From Exile	Israel's Homecoming
16:14-15	16:14-15	16:14-15 The Invasion Foretold	16:14-15 The Coming Punishment	16:14-15 No Refuge For Judah
16:16-18	16:16-18	16:16-18 The Conversion of the Nations	16:16-18 Jeremiah's Prayer of Confidence in the LORD	16:16-18 Conversion of the Heathen
16:19-20 (19-20)	16:19-20 (19-20)	16:19-21 (19-21)	16:19-20	16:19-20 (19-20)
16:21 (21)	16:21 (21)		16:21	16:21

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:1-4

¹The word of the LORD also came to me saying, ²“You shall not take a wife for yourself nor have sons or daughters in this place.” ³For thus says the LORD concerning the sons and daughters born in this place, and concerning their mothers who bear them, and their fathers who beget them in this land: ⁴“They will die of deadly diseases, they will not be lamented or buried; they will be as dung on the surface of the ground and come to an end by sword and famine, and their carcasses will become food for the birds of the sky and for the beasts of the earth.”

16:2 Jeremiah is restricted by YHWH from taking a wife (very unusual for a Jewish man) or having children (cf. Lev. 26:22). The reason given is that families will soon die in YHWH’s judgment (cf. 15:2-3) for their idolatry.

1. deadly diseases (cf. Lev. 26:16)
2. sword (cf. Lev. 26:25)
3. famine

Their bodies will be unburied (no one left to bury them, cf. Ps. 79:2-3) and will be food for birds and animals (cf. v. 4; 19:7; 34:20).

YHWH surprisingly restricts Jeremiah from all societal comforts. He must be comforted by his service to YHWH, who would be his hope, comfort, and peace (cf. v. 19)!

16:3 Notice the three uses of the root for having children.

1. born – BDB 409, KB 411, ADJECTIVE
2. bore – BDB 408, KB 411, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
3. begot – BDB 408, KB 411, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE

The next generation, along with the current generation of Judeans, will be destroyed!

16:4 Notice the IMPERFECT VERBS.

1. “die” – BDB 559, KB 562, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. “lamented” – BDB 704, KB 763, *Niphal* IMPERFECT (negated)
3. “buried” – BDB 868, IB 1064, *Niphal* IMPERFECT (negated)
4. “will be as dung” – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* IMPERFECT
5. “come to an end” – BDB 477, KB 476, *Qal* IMPERFECT

Being unmourned, unburied, and devoured by animals was a great fear and curse for ANE people (cf. 7:33; 8:2; 9:22; 15:3; 19:7; 34:20; Deut. 28:26).



NASB, NRSV,

NJB, NIV “deadly diseases”

NKJV, JPSOA “gruesome deaths”

LXX “a sickly death”

REB “a horrible death”

This is a CONSTRUCT of BDB 560 (i.e., “deadly,” cf. Ezek. 28:8) and BDB 316 (i.e., “diseases,” cf. 14:18; II Chr. 21:19; Ps. 103:3). These were the result of covenant disobedience (cf. Deut. 29:14-21, 22-28, esp. v. 22).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:5-9

⁵For thus says the LORD, “Do not enter a house of mourning, or go to lament or to console them; for I have withdrawn My peace from this people,” declares the LORD, “My lovingkindness and compassion. ⁶Both great men and small will die in this land; they will not be buried, they will not be lamented, nor will anyone gash himself or shave his head for them. ⁷Men will not break *bread* in mourning for them, to comfort anyone for the dead, nor give them a cup of consolation to drink for anyone’s father or mother. ⁸Moreover you shall not go into a house of feasting to sit with them to eat and drink.” ⁹For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “Behold, I am going to eliminate from this place, before your eyes and in your time, the voice of rejoicing and the voice of gladness, the voice of the groom and the voice of the bride.

16:5-9 The first strophe (vv. 1-4) denotes the death of families with no lamentation or burial (cf. v. 6). This second strophe picks up on

1. “mourning” – BDB 931
2. “lament” – BDB 704
3. “console” – BDB 626
4. “mourner” – BDB 5
5. “consolation” – BDB 637

The book of Jeremiah is structured/edited/compiled by

1. theological themes
2. word plays
3. genre (i.e., laments, court scenes)

16:5 Notice the commands of v. 5.

1. do not enter a house of mourning – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. do not lament – BDB 229, KB 240, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. do not console them – BDB 626, KB 678, *Qal* JUSSIVE

▣ **“I have withdrawn”** (BDB 62, KB 74, *Qal* PERFECT)

1. My peace, BDB 1022, cf. 12:12; 30:5; see Special Topic at 6:14
2. My lovingkindness, BDB 338 I, cf. 13:14, see special Topic at 2:2
3. My compassion, BDB 933, cf. Deut. 13:17; Neh. 9:19,27,31; Ps. 25:6; 40:12; 77:9; 79:8; 103:4; Isa. 63:7,15; Hos. 2:19 (this term is found only here and 42:12 in Jeremiah)

The eternal covenant is negated, broken, cancelled! Shocking! A new covenant must come now (cf. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38).

16:6 As all of the family dies in vv. 1-4, in v. 6 all levels of society die (cf. 6:13; 8:10)!

▣ **“nor will anyone gash himself or shave his head for them”** These are pagan mourning rites (cf. Lev. 19:28; 21:5; Deut. 14:1; I Kgs. 18:28; Jer. 41:5; 47:5; 48:37; see Special Topic at 2:37). This shows how far the Judeans had progressed in idolatry!

16:7

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, NJB,

JPSOA, REB

“break *bread*”

The LXX revocalized the Hebrew word “for them” to get the translation “bread.” The KJV translates the phrase as “neither shall men tear themselves,” which would relate to v. 6 (i.e., “gash”).

Because of the mention of a cup later in the verse, probably “bread” or “food” (NIV) makes more sense. However, the Jerome Bible Commentary (p. 316) reminds us of food being offered to the dead (cf. Deut. 26:14; Ezek. 24:17,22; Tobit 4:17), which would make this another idolatrous practice, so perhaps KJV is a valid way of understanding this verse.

16:8 This may relate to 15:17. Apparently these dinners were connected to burial rites (i.e., breaking the fast of the mourning period. The word “mourning” (BDB 931) can denote a banquet in Aramaic. Also, the phrase “the cup of consolation” is found only here and may refer to a meal after the funeral.

Some commentators relate this verse to a marriage feast (cf. v. 9, UBS, *Handbook*, p. 382).

16:9 Beginning in v. 9 several covenant titles for Deity are used in this chapter (see Special Topic at 1:2).

1. the LORD of hosts, v. 9
2. the God of Israel, v. 9
3. the LORD our God, v. 10
4. as the LORD lives, vv. 14,15 (cf. 4:2)
5. my strength, v. 19
6. my stronghold, v. 19
7. my refuge, v. 19
8. My name is the LORD, v. 21

▣ **“I am going to eliminate”** The first list is YHWH telling “where,” “who,” and “when.”

1. from this place (i.e., Judah)
2. before your eyes
3. in your time

He will cause all normal social activities to cease.

1. voice of rejoicing
2. voice of gladness
3. voice of the groom
4. voice of the bride

This phrase is repeated in 7:34; 25:10; 33:11. It is surprising that the text jumps from an occasion of grief to an occasion of joy. Possibly this is meant to highlight that all social life and events will cease because all are dead!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:10-13

¹⁰“Now when you tell this people all these words, they will say to you, ‘For what reason has the LORD declared all this great calamity against us? And what is our iniquity, or what is our sin which we have committed against the LORD our God?’ ¹¹Then you are to say to them, ‘It is because your forefathers have forsaken Me,’ declares the LORD, ‘and have followed other gods and served them and bowed down to them; but Me they have forsaken and have not kept My law. ¹²You too have done evil, *even* more than your forefathers; for behold, you are each one walking according to the stubbornness of his own evil heart, without listening to Me. ¹³So I will hurl you out of this land into the land which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers; and there you will serve other gods day and night, for I will grant you no favor.’”

16:10-13 The question “why us, why now” is addressed (cf. Deut. 29:24-36; Jer. 5:18-19; 9:12-16).

1. the people’s (cf. v. 12)
 - a. iniquity
 - b. sin
2. their forefathers
 - a. had forsaken YHWH
 - b. had not kept His law
 - c. followed after other gods
 - d. served other gods
 - e. bowed down to other gods

Because of their multi-generational idolatry, YHWH will

1. exile (“cast,” BDB 376, KB 373, *Hiphil* PERFECT, v. 13; 22:26) them from the Promised Land
2. cause them to serve the pagan gods of that land (cf. 5:19)
3. cause them not to have the favor (BDB 337, this form of the root found only here in the OT) of YHWH

Notice the number of personal PRONOUNS used of YHWH. His special, covenant people have rejected Him. It is personal!

16:12 The people’s lifestyle actions are characterized.

1. walk according to the stubbornness of his own evil heart (cf. 7:24; 9:14; 11:8; 13:10)
2. without listening (*Shema*, BDB 1033) to YHWH (cf. 11:8)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:14-15

¹⁴“Therefore behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when it will no longer be said, ‘As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt,’ ¹⁵but, ‘As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of the north and from all the countries where He had banished them.’ For I will restore them to their own land which I gave to their fathers.”

16:14-15 This is the first of four brief strophes that deal with YHWH’s promise of restoration! It is so common in the prophetic literature for “judgment” oracles to be matched with “promise” oracles.

These verses reappear in 23:7-8. The book of Jeremiah is an anthology of his poems!

☐ **“days are coming”** Usually phrases like this refer to Judgment Day (cf. 7:32, see Special Topic at 4:9), but here it refers to restoration (i.e., a new exodus) day. The same “living” God (in contrast to the lifeless idols) who fulfilled His promise to Abraham (cf. Gen. 15:12-21) will do it again, but instead of Egypt, it will be out of Mesopotamia.

The reason for the restoration is not stated. YHWH chooses to act based on His character, will, and actions not His fallen, disabled, covenant people (cf. vv. 17-18). A new covenant is present (cf. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:16-18

¹⁶“Behold, I am going to send for many fishermen,” declares the LORD, “and they will fish for them; and afterwards I will send for many hunters, and they will hunt them from every mountain and every hill and from the clefts of the rocks. ¹⁷For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity concealed from My eyes. ¹⁸I will first doubly repay their iniquity

and their sin, because they have polluted My land; they have filled My inheritance with the carcasses of their detestable idols and with their abominations.”

16:16-18 YHWH (emphatic in v. 16) uses several metaphors to describe the return of all His exiled people.

1. fishermen (opposite of Amos 4:2)
2. hunters (opposite of Isa. 2:21)

It is surely possible that vv. 16-18 refer to judgment, while vv. 14-15 and vv. 19-20,21 refer to restoration. It seems to me that v. 17 is saying YHWH has not overlooked their sin. He has fairly and proportionally punished them, but now He is bringing them back (i.e., a new exodus)!

16:18 Before YHWH restores, He punishes them for their sin, especially idolatry. The phrase “doubly repay” is an idiom used in the sense of “fully” (cf. Isa. 40:2) or complete judgment.

▣ **“My inheritance”** The NET Bible (p. 1337) has a good note on how this word is used in Jeremiah.

1. the Promised Land (Palestine), 2:7
2. the covenant people themselves, 10:16; 12:8-9
3. the temple in Jerusalem, 12:7

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:19-20

**¹⁹O LORD, my strength and my stronghold,
And my refuge in the day of distress,
To You the nations will come
From the ends of the earth and say,
“Our fathers have inherited nothing but falsehood,
Futility and things of no profit.”
²⁰Can man make gods for himself?
Yet they are not gods!**

16:19-20 This is a wonderful universal promise that all humans will come to YHWH (cf. 3:17; 4:2; 12:15,16). These universal, inclusive statements are more common in Isaiah (cf. 2:2-4; 12:4-5; 25:6-9; 42:6-12; 45:22-23; 49:5-6; 51:4-5; 56:6-8), but surely present in Jeremiah. The hope of Gen. 3:15 and 12:3; 22:18 is fulfilled (see Special Topic at 1:5)!

16:19 The last two lines and v. 20 are clearly a turning from idols to YHWH, from falsehood to truth!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:21

**²¹“Therefore behold, I am going to make them know—
This time I will make them know
My power and My might;
And they shall know that My name is the LORD.”**

16:20 Notice YHWH will make the nations

1. know His power
2. know His might
3. know His name

JEREMIAH 17

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS (The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Deceitful Heart	Judah's Sin and Punishment	Judah's Contaminated Worship	The Sin and Punishment of Judah	Judah's Sin
17:1-4 (1-4)	17:1-4 (1-4)	17:1-4 (1-4)	17:1-4	17:1-4
		A Group of Wisdom Sayings	Various Sayings	Trust in God
17:5-8 (5-8)	17:5-6 (5-6)	17:5-6 (5-6)	17:5-6 (5-6)	17:5-6
	17:7-8 (7-8)	17:7-8 (7-8)	17:7-8 (7-8)	17:7-8 (7-8)
				The Heart Is Devious
17:9-11 (9-11)	17:9-10 (9-10)	17:9-10 (9-10)	17:9-10 (9-10)	17:9-10 (9-10)
				A Proverb
	17:11 (11)	17:11 (11)	17:11 (11)	17:11 (11)
		Confidence in the Temple and Yahweh		God's Ways Are High
17:12-18 (12-18)	17:12-13a (12-13a)	17:12-13 (12-13)	17:12 (12)	17:12-13 (12-13)
	17:13b (13b)		17:13 (13)	
	Jeremiah Prays For Deliverance	A Prayer For Vengeance	Jeremiah Asks the LORD for Help	Jeremiah's Third Personal Lament
	17:14-18 (14-18)	17:14-18 (14-18)	17:14-15	17:14-18 (14-18)
			17:16-18	
The Sabbath Must Be Kept	Hallow the Sabbath Day	Observance of the Sabbath	On Observing the Sabbath	Judah and the Sabbath
17:19-23	17:19-23 (19-23)	17:19-27	17:19-23	17:19-23
17:24-27	17:24-27 (24-27)		17:24-27	17:24-27

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:1-4

¹The sin of Judah is written down with an iron stylus;
With a diamond point it is engraved upon the tablet of their heart
And on the horns of their altars,

²As they remember their children,
So they *remember* their altars and their Asherim
By green trees on the high hills.

³O mountain of Mine in the countryside,
I will give over your wealth and all your treasures for booty,
Your high places for sin throughout your borders.

⁴And you will, even of yourself, let go of your inheritance
That I gave you;
And I will make you serve your enemies
In the land which you do not know;
For you have kindled a fire in My anger
Which will burn forever.

17:1-4 These verses are missing in the Septuagint.

17:1-2 This is an idiomatic way of asserting the unrepentant nature of Judah's idolatry.

The three metaphors used are

1. engraved with an iron stylus with a diamond (BDB 1038) point—no way to erase the message (cf. Job 29:24)
2. on the tablet of the heart—the innermost thoughts and personality (cf. Pro. 3:3; 7:3); this was the place that the new covenant would abide (cf. 31:31-34)
3. on the horns of their altars—in Hebrew rituals this is an allusion to the altar of sacrifice (cf. Exod. 27:2) and/or incense altar (cf. Exod. 30:2) in the temple. “Horns” were a symbol of power. They lifted the sacrifice to YHWH. This was where the blood was smeared (cf. Lev. 16:18).

Verse 2 shows that Jeremiah is using “altars” in an idolatrous sense. The fertility gods of Canaan were worshiped on hills, under trees, (cf. 3:6), or on specially built stone platforms (see Special Topic: Fertility Worship in the ANE at 2:20). The intensity of Judah's devotion to *Ba'al* and *Asherah* is seen in the phrase “as they remember their children.”

17:3 “O mountain of Mine in the countryside” This refers to the temple. But it was not in the countryside, rather in the capital of Jerusalem. Jeremiah must be alluding to the future, complete destruction of the capital and temple (cf. 9:11; 26:18; Micah 3:12). What a shocking statement to these Judeans! Even the temple treasures will be taken (cf. 15:13; 20:5).

The alternate interpretation is that this refers to *Ba'al* worship on the high hills throughout Judah. Both interpretations are possible. However, *Ba'al/Asherah* platforms did not have horned altars, nor did their worshipers keep “treasures” at the rural sites.

17:3-4 These verses are similar to 15:13-14.

17:4 Exile is surely coming (cf. 15:14; 27:12-13) because of their idolatry. YHWH is furious, jealous, and committed to judgment.

For “fire” (cf. 15:14) see Special Topic at 4:4.

The last line of v. 4 is hyperbolic. Jeremiah’s hearers/readers understood this genre; moderns do not! See D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic*.

▣ “forever” See Special Topic at 7:7

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:5-8

**⁵Thus says the LORD,
“Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind
And makes flesh his strength,
And whose heart turns away from the LORD.
⁶For he will be like a bush in the desert
And will not see when prosperity comes,
But will live in stony wastes in the wilderness,
A land of salt without inhabitant.
⁷Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD
And whose trust is the LORD.
⁸For he will be like a tree planted by the water,
That extends its roots by a stream
And will not fear when the heat comes;
But its leaves will be green,
And it will not be anxious in a year of drought
Nor cease to yield fruit.”**

17:5-8 This strophe is theologically and idiomatically related to Psalm 1. Here “bless” is BDB 138 (to kneel), but in Psalm 1 it is BDB 80 (to be happy).

17:5 “Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind” The word “curse” (BDB 76, KB 91, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) is used in an exclamatory sense in 11:3; 17:5; 20:14,15; 48:10 [twice]; Deut. 27:15-26. It denotes the opposite of YHWH’s blessing.

The term “trust” (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means “a sense of security.” These trusted in political alliances and national armies (cf. 46:25) instead of their covenant God (i.e., Ps. 118:8-9; 146:3).

This VERB is common in Jeremiah used of Judah trusting in different things (cf. 5:17; 7:14; 12:5; 13:25; 48:7; 49:4), but not in YHWH Himself (cf. Ps. 62:8; 115:9-11; Isa. 26:3-4; 30:15). To trust YHWH brings security and rest.

▣ **“heart”** See Special Topic at 4:19.

▣ **“whose heart turns away from the LORD”** Remember these were covenant people who worshiped regularly at the temple in Jerusalem. Yet, they also worshiped at the altars of the Canaanite fertility gods (cf. Deut. 11:16; 17:11,17; 29:18-20; 30:17). This was not ignorance but purposeful rebellion!

17:6 “bush” This word (BDB 792, KB 887) is found only twice in the OT, both in Jeremiah (cf. 48:6). A similar root is found in Ps. 102:17 and is translated “destitute” (NASB margin, “naked”). The NASB translates it “juniper” in 48:6. KB translates it as “tamarisk.” *The UBS Fauna and Flora of the Bible* sees it as juniper (p. 131, REB) and does not even list it with the ARTICLE on tamarisk (p. 182).

▣

NASB **“prosperity”**

NKJV, NRSV,

JPSOA, REB **“good”**

NJB **“relief”**

The word (BDB 375 III) means “a good thing,” “benefit,” or “welfare.” In Deut. 28:12 the same root (BDB 373 II) refers to “rain,” which makes sense in this context.

▣ **“a land of salt”** See Deut. 29:23 where this phrase is used of YHWH’s judgment.

17:7 “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD” This proverb (BDB 138, KB 159, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) is a recurrent theme of the Psalms! It is the theological opposite of “cursed.” Both are exclamatory! There are only two kinds of people.

1. those who trust in YHWH (not just the things He gives) – v. 7
2. those who trust in humanity (humanism, nationalism) – v. 5

The results of each are very different (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28; Psalm 1; Matthew 5).

SPECIAL TOPIC: BLESSING

There are several kinds of blessings (BDB 139) in the OT. The two most common are

1. blessings of God
 - a. to all nations through Abraham (and the Patriarchs), Gen. 12:3; 27:29; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8
 - b. conditioned on repentance, Exod. 32:29; Joel 2:12-14
 - c. conditioned on obedience to the covenant, Lev. 25:18-21
 - d. a proper relationship with God brings prosperity (i.e., the cursings vs. blessings), Deut. 11:26,27,29; 23:5; 28:2,8; 30:1,19; Josh. 8:34; Ps. 133:3; Pro. 10:22
 - e. on obedient Israel, Deut. 12:15; 16:17; 32:23; Isa. 44:3; Ezek. 34:25-31; Mal. 3:10-12
 - f. on Levitical priests, Ezek. 44:28-31; Mal. 3:10-12
 - g. on David and the Messianic line, II Sam. 7:29; Ps. 3:8; 21:3; 118:26 (cf. Matt. 21:9; 23:39; Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35; 19:38; John 12:13)

- h. on the one who is sent by God, Ps. 118:26; 129:8
- 2. the blessing of parents
 - a. Isaac blessing Jacob (by trickery), Gen. 27:12,18-29,35
 - b. Jacob, Gen. 49:3-27,28-29
 - c. Moses (surrogate parent), Deut. 33:1-25

God's word, and for that matter, the spoken blessings of the Patriarchs, became an independent, self-directed power to accomplish its purpose, Isa. 55:11; 45:23; Matt. 24:35 (5:17-19); Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33. The power of the spoken word can be seen in:

- 1. creation (i.e., "He said. . .")
- 2. Messiah called "word," John 1:1,14; I John 1:1; Rev. 19:13

God's greatest blessing is Himself! His personal presence with, for us!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:9-11

⁹**"The heart is more deceitful than all else**

And is desperately sick;

Who can understand it?

¹⁰**I, the LORD, search the heart,**

I test the mind,

Even to give to each man according to his ways,

According to the results of his deeds.

¹¹**As a partridge that hatches eggs which it has not laid,**

So is he who makes a fortune, but unjustly;

In the midst of his days it will forsake him,

And in the end he will be a fool."

17:9-11 This is the recurrent message of Scripture after the Fall of Genesis 3 (cf. Gen. 6:5,11,12,13; Rom. 3:9-18).

The metaphor of "sinfulness" as "sickness" (BDB 60, cf. 30:12; Isa. 1:5-6; 17:11; Micah 1:9) is found in the Hebrew concept of abundance/health vs. poverty/sickness (cf. v. 14; 14:19; Deuteronomy 27-28; Job; Ps. 103:1-5; Isa. 1:5-6; 53:4-6). The book that has helped me in this area, written by a charismatic author is Gordon Fee, *The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospel*.

17:9

NASB, NKJV,

TEV, REB "deceitful"

NRSV, NJB,

JPSOA "devious"

This word (BDB 784 I) comes from "heel" or "footprint." It is used of Jacob's birth (cf. Gen. 25:26; 27:36). It is used in 9:4 and translated "craftily" or "supplanter" (another reference to Jacob's treatment of Esau).

17:10 "I, the LORD, search the heart" See note at 11:20.

▣ **“Even to give to each man according to his ways”** YHWH is an ethical god. He created a moral universe. There are consequences to choices! We reap what we sow (cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Pro. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; I Cor. 3:8; II Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7-10; II Tim. 4:14; I Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12).

There is a conflict between human (v. 5) and the spiritual (v. 7), which is expressed well in Rom. 8:1-11.

17:11 As the proverb goes, a partridge sits on other birds’ eggs (cf. NIV). This may have developed from the large number of eggs that partridges lay (rabbinical proverb). However, when the young hatch and develop they leave the false parent. Those who succeed by unrighteous means will also be abandoned by them.

The bird “partridge” (BDB 896) is discussed in UBS’, *Fauna and Flora of the Bible*, p. 64. Colors, gems, trees, flowers, and animals of the ANE are often difficult to specify with certainty. Usually, however, the allusions, idioms, and metaphors which use them are understandable.

▣ **“fools”** This is the only occurrence of this NOUN (BDB 614) in Jeremiah, though the VERB occurs in 14:21. This is a common term in Wisdom Literature, but it does occur in

1. Deut. 32:6,21
2. I Sam. 25:25; II Sam. 3:33; 13:13
3. Isa. 32:5-6
4. Ezek. 13:3

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:12-18

**¹²A glorious throne on high from the beginning
Is the place of our sanctuary.**

**¹³O LORD, the hope of Israel,
All who forsake You will be put to shame.
Those who turn away on earth will be written down,
Because they have forsaken the fountain of living water, even the LORD.**

**¹⁴Heal me, O LORD, and I will be healed;
Save me and I will be saved,
For You are my praise.**

**¹⁵Look, they keep saying to me,
“Where is the word of the LORD?
Let it come now!”**

**¹⁶But as for me, I have not hurried away from *being* a shepherd after You,
Nor have I longed for the woeful day;
You Yourself know that the utterance of my lips
Was in Your presence.**

**¹⁷Do not be a terror to me;
You are my refuge in the day of disaster.**

**¹⁸Let those who persecute me be put to shame, but as for me, let me not be put to shame;
Let them be dismayed, but let me not be dismayed.
Bring on them a day of disaster,
And crush them with twofold destruction!**

17:12-18 Notice of all the English translations listed at the beginning of each chapter only NASB sees vv. 12-18 as a separate strophe. All others start a new strophe at v. 14.

This is another of Jeremiah's laments/confessions. Verses 12-14 may be an introduction to Jeremiah's prayer. It seems to be another way to express v. 10.

17:12 This refers to the temple in Jerusalem. The "Holy of Holies" contained the Ark of the Covenant, where YHWH symbolically dwelt. It symbolized YHWH's covenant with Abraham's seed (cf. 14:21). One day all the earth would come and meet Him here (cf. 3:17).

See Special Topic: The Ark of the Covenant at 3:16.

17:13 "O LORD, the hope of Israel" See note at 14:8.

▣ The Judeans are characterized as:

1. all who forsake (BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) You
2. those who turn away (BDB 693, KB 747, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, *Qere* reading) on earth (the UBS Text Project gives the *Qere* vocalization a "B" rating)

Notice the consequences of their actions.

1. will be put to shame
2. will be written down (cf. 17:1; i.e., in the book of deeds, see Special Topic below)

These consequences are the result of forsaking (*Qal* PERFECT) YHWH, who is described as "the fountain of living water" (cf. 2:13; Ps. 36:9).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TWO BOOKS OF GOD

A. In one sense the title of this Special Topic could describe

1. nature (i.e., creation, cf. Ps.19:1-6)
2. Scripture (cf. Ps. 19:7-14)

This is why I do not think that ultimately there should be a conflict between science and faith, all truth is God's truth. Please see my commentary on Genesis 1-11 online free at www.freebiblecommentary.org

B. There are two books mentioned in the Bible (cf. Dan. 7:10; Rev. 20:12)

1. The book that contains all the deeds of humans, both good and bad. In a sense it is a metaphor of God's memory and that one day all humans will give an account to their Creator of their stewardship of the gift of life.
 - a. Psalm 56:8; 139:16
 - b. Isaiah 65:6
 - c. Malachi 3:16
 - d. Rev. 20:12-13
2. The book that lists those who have a faith/repentant/obedient relationship with YHWH/Jesus. This is a metaphor of God's memory of those who are redeemed and heaven-bound.
 - a. Exodus 32:32-33
 - b. Psalm 69:28
 - c. Isaiah 4:3

- d. Daniel 12:1
- e. Philippians 4:3
- f. Hebrews 12:23
- g. Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12,15; 21:27
- h. also mentioned in I Enoch 47:3; 81:1-2; 103:2; 108:3

These books represent God’s faithfulness to His Word. For those who rebel and refuse, He remembers their sins; for those who repent, believe, obey, serve, and persevere, He forgets their sins (cf. Ps. 103:11-13; Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Micah 7:19). There is abundant assurance and confidence in God’s unchanging, merciful, character, promises, and provisions. God is trustworthy!



NASB, LXX	“...on earth will be written down”
NKJV	“Shall be written in the earth”
NRSV, NJB, NET	“will be registered in the underworld”
TEV, REB	“They will disappear like names written in the dust”
TEV (footnote)	“go to the world of the dead”
JPSOA	“Shall be doomed men”

There seem to be two ways to interpret this phrase.

1. those who reject YHWH will be recorded in the book of deeds
2. those who reject YHWH will be registered in the lists of the dead in *Sheol* (“earth,” ארץ [see Special Topic at 6:18-19], seen as coming from Ugaritic root for “underworld,” see AB, p. 118)

17:14 Jeremiah begins his lists as prayer requests to YHWH.

1. heal me – BDB 950, KB 1272, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. and I will be healed – *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
3. save me – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
4. and I will be saved – BDB *Niphal* COHORTATIVE

“Healing” is a metaphor for forgiveness, see note at v. 9. “Saving” is a metaphor for physical deliverance. Jeremiah felt the need of strength and assurance in both the spiritual and physical realms. Humans are creatures of both (cf. Gen. 2:7).

▣ **“For You are my praise”** Jeremiah’s strength and assurance were in YHWH (cf. Deut. 10:21; Ps. 109:1). There is no other source (cf. v. 17b; 16:19).

17:15 This is the Judean’s response to Jeremiah’s message. YHWH’s delay was misinterpreted (cf. Isa. 5:19; Rom. 2:4; II Pet. 3:3-7). The delay of judgment was so that they might repent and return to YHWH. They accused Jeremiah of being a false prophet (cf. Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20-21), but he was a true prophet (cf. Deut. 18:19)! They will die!

▣ **“Let it come now!”** This VERB (BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) catches the arrogance and unbelief of these Jerusalemites/Judeans. They do not fear YHWH’s spokesperson or YHWH Himself!

17:16 Jeremiah describes his own thoughts, feelings, and actions.

1. I have not hurried away from being a shepherd after You (see textual note below)
2. I have not longed for the woeful day (i.e., judgment day, invasion, exile)
3. my message was Your message (i.e., in/from Your presence)



MT, NASB,

NKJV, NJB

JPSOA, NIV “I have not hurried away from *being* a shepherd after You”

Peshitta, NRSV,

TEV, REB,

NET

“Yet I never urged you to send disaster”

The problem is not the first VERBAL “pressed” (BDB 21, KB 23, *Qal* PERFECT), but the following PARTICIPLE.

1. MT, רעה, “from a shepherd” – BDB 944, KB 1258, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
2. suggested, מרעה, “from evil,” from root רעע – BDB 949, KB 1269

17:18 Jeremiah (in typical Eastern language) lists his request against those of his own people who opposed him and his message.

1. let those who persecute me be put to shame – BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. let them be dismayed – BDB 369, KB 365, *Qal* – BDB IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. bring on them a day of disaster – BDB 97, KB 112, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
4. crush them with twofold destruction – BDB 990, KB 1402, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

Jeremiah was in a spiritual/physical struggle for the minds and hearts of the covenant people. YHWH wanted to use them in His eternal redemptive plan for all humans (cf. 3:17; 4:2; 16:19-21). This type of hyperbolic prophetic poetry seems so violent and aggressive to moderns. But there are falsehoods, spiritual deceptions, satanic alternatives to truth (cf. Eph. 4:14)!

▣ **“twofold destruction”** This is an idiom which denotes “complete and full” destruction (cf. Isa. 40:2; Jer. 16:18; Rev. 18:6).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:19-23

¹⁹Thus the LORD said to me, “Go and stand in the public gate, through which the kings of Judah come in and go out, as well as in all the gates of Jerusalem; ²⁰and say to them, ‘Listen to the word of the LORD, kings of Judah, and all Judah and all inhabitants of Jerusalem who come in through these gates: ²¹Thus says the LORD, “Take heed for yourselves, and do not carry any load on the sabbath day or bring anything in through the gates of Jerusalem. ²²You shall not bring a load out of your houses on the sabbath day nor do any work, but keep the sabbath day holy, as I commanded your forefathers. ²³Yet they did not listen or incline their ears, but stiffened their necks in order not to listen or take correction.””

17:19-27 YHWH responds to Jeremiah’s prayer by focusing on covenant obedience, specifically Sabbath observance. Judah would be blessed or cursed based on her obedience (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-29). This one command represented all the Mosaic legislation.

The Judeans knew this but YHWH would remind them through Jeremiah’s proclamation at a specific gate of the temple used by the king.

Their response is recorded in vv. 23 and 27. Verses 24-27 function as a parallel strophe.

YHWH wanted to bless (cf. vv. 25-26) Judah so that the world might come to know Him (see Special Topic at 1:5), but they would not (cf. Ezek. 26:22-32).

17:20 “listen” The term (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) means to hear so as to do (i.e., Deut. 4:1; 5:1; 6:3,4)! It is repeated in vv. 23, 24 (intensified), 27. This is similar to James 1:23-27. True faith involved heart, head, and hand!

17:21 “take heed for yourselves” The MT is literally an idiom, “take heed for the sake of your lives.” The VERB (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE) denotes careful listening (cf. Deut. 4:9,15,23; 6:12; 8:11; Josh. 23:11).

17:23 “stiffened their necks” See note at 7:26. They were unwilling to hear and respond!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:24-27

²⁴“But it will come about, if you listen attentively to Me,” declares the LORD, “to bring no load in through the gates of this city on the sabbath day, but to keep the sabbath day holy by doing no work on it, ²⁵then there will come in through the gates of this city kings and princes sitting on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their princes, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and this city will be inhabited forever. ²⁶They will come in from the cities of Judah and from the environs of Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin, from the lowland, from the hill country and from the Negev, bringing burnt offerings, sacrifices, grain offerings and incense, and bringing sacrifices of thanksgiving to the house of the LORD. ²⁷But if you do not listen to Me to keep the sabbath day holy by not carrying a load and coming in through the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates and it will devour the palaces of Jerusalem and not be quenched.””

17:24 “if you listen attentively to Me” The IMPERFECT VERB is intensified by the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE of the same root (BDB 1033, KB 1570).

17:25 “forever” See Special Topic at 7:7.

JEREMIAH 18

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Potter and the Clay	The Potter and the Clay	Jeremiah Visits the Potter	Jeremiah at the Potter's House	The Allegory of the Potter House
18:1-4	18:1-4	18:1-12	18:1-4	18:1-4
18:5-12	18:5-10 18:11 God's Warning Rejected 18:12		18:5-12	18:5-11 18:12
		About Israel's Repudiation of Yahweh	The People Reject the LORD	Faithless Judah is Condemned to Endless Walking
8:13-17 (13-17)	18:13-14 (13-14) 18:15-17 (15-17)	18:13-17 (13-17)	18:13-17 (13-17)	18:13-17 (13-17)
	Jeremiah Persecuted	A Plot Against Jeremiah	A Plot Against Jeremiah	Jeremiah's Fourth Personal Lament
18:18	18:18	18:18	18:18	18:18
18:19-23 (19-23)	18:19-23 (19-23)	18:19-23 (19-23)	18:19-23	18:19-23 (19-23)

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:1-4

¹The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD saying, ²“Arise and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will announce My words to you.” ³Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something on the wheel. ⁴But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make.

18:1 See note at 7:1.

18:2 The potter is a metaphor for YHWH (cf. Isa. 29:16; 30:14; 41:25; 64:8; Zech. 11:13; Rom. 9:21; Rev. 2:27). The VERBAL for “formed” is often used of YHWH’s creative activity (cf. Gen. 2:7,8,18; Isa. 43:1,21; 44:21; 45:9,11,18). YHWH’s covenant people were part of a larger purpose (see Special Topic at 1:5), but their covenant disobedience caused that plan to be damaged (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). Therefore, the potter starts over again to make a new piece of the wheel (cf. v. 4). The theological question is “who/what” is the new piece?

18:4 The problem is defective clay not a poorly skilled potter! The clay is fallen (cf. Genesis 3), even with all of YHWH’s benefits (cf. Rom. 9:4-5).

The JPSOA translation adds “if,” which denotes that not all vessels were “spoiled.” But the context suggests YHWH is depicting Judah as a corporate entity.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:5-12

⁵Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, ⁶“Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter *does*?” declares the LORD. ⁷“Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel. ⁸At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy *it*; ⁹if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. ¹⁰Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant *it*; ¹¹if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it. ¹²So now then, speak to the men of Judah and against the inhabitants of Jerusalem saying, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Behold, I am fashioning calamity against you and devising a plan against you. Oh turn back, each of you from his evil way, and reform your ways and your deeds.”’ ¹³But they will say, ‘It’s hopeless! For we are going to follow our own plans, and each of us will act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.’

18:7 The actions of YHWH are the very actions given to Jeremiah at his call (cf. 1:10). YHWH exercises interest and control over all nations (cf. Deut.32:8; all the judgment chapters are addressed to them in the prophets).

1. to uproot – BDB 684, KB 737, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
2. to pull down – BDB 683, KB 736, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
3. to destroy – BDB 1, KB 2, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT

The actions of renewal and rebuilding mentioned in 1:10 are conditionally stated in vv. 8-9. Faith and faithfulness have consequences, as do idolatry and disobedience (cf. v. 10).

18:8,10 “if. . .” There are some unconditional promises based on YHWH’s desire to redeem mankind. However, they are addressed to nations and individuals on conditional bases (i.e., 7:3-7; 12:16). This is where the doctrine of “God’s Sovereignty” and “Human Freewill” meet!

SPECIAL TOPIC: PREDESTINATION (CALVINISM) VERSUS HUMAN FREE WILL (ARMINIANISM)

Titus 2:11 is a balance to other NT passages on election. I thought it might be theologically helpful to provide my commentary notes from Romans 8:29 and 9, as well as Ephesians 1.

I. Romans 8:29 – Paul uses “foreknew” (*proginōskō*, “to know before”) twice, here and 11:2. In 11:2 it refers to God’s covenant love for Israel before time began. Remember that the term “know” in Hebrew related to intimate, personal relationship, not to facts about someone (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5). Here it was included in a chain of eternal events (cf. Rom. 8:29-30). This term was linked with predestination. However, it must be stated that God’s foreknowledge is not the basis of election because if that were so, then election would be based on fallen humanity’s future response, which would be human performance. This term is also found in Acts 26:5; I Pet. 1:2,20 and II Pet. 3:17.

A. “foreknew” (*proginōskō*, “to know before”)

The terms “foreknow” and “predestine” are both compounds with the PREPOSITION “before” and, therefore, should be translated “to know before,” “to set bounds before,” or “mark off before.” The definitive passages on predestination in the NT are Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:13-14; and Romans 9. These texts obviously stress that God is sovereign. He is in total control of all things. There is a preset divine plan being worked out in time. However, this plan is not arbitrary or selective. It is based, not only on God’s sovereignty and foreknowledge, but on His unchanging character of love, mercy, and undeserved grace.

We must be careful of our western (American) individualism or our evangelical zeal coloring this wonderful truth. We must also guard against being polarized into the historical, theological conflicts between Augustine versus Pelagius or Calvinism versus Arminianism.

B. “predestined” (*proorizō*, “to set the bounds before”)

Predestination is not a doctrine meant to limit God’s love, grace, and mercy nor to exclude some from the gospel. It is meant to strengthen believers by molding their world-view. God is for all mankind (cf. I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9). God is in control of all things. Who or what can separate us from Him (cf. Rom. 8:31-39)? God views all history as present; humans are time bound. Our perspective and mental abilities are limited. There is no contradiction between God’s sovereignty and mankind’s free will. It is a covenantal structure. This is another example of truth given in dialectical tension. Biblical doctrines are presented from different perspectives. They often appear paradoxical. The truth is a balance between the seemingly opposite pairs. We must not remove the tension by picking one of the truths. We must not isolate any biblical truth into a compartment by itself.

It is also important to add that the goal of election is not only heaven when we die, but Christlikeness now (cf. Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:4; 2:10). We were chosen to be “holy and blameless.” God chooses to change us so that others may see the change and respond by faith to God in Christ. Predestination is not a personal privilege, but a covenantal responsibility. This is the major truth of the passage. This is the goal of Christianity. Holiness is God’s will for every believer. God’s election is to Christlikeness (cf. Eph. 1:4), not a special standing. The image of God, which was given to man in creation (cf. Gen. 1:26; 5:1,3; 9:6), is to be restored.

- C. “conformed to the image of His Son”—God’s ultimate goal is the restoration of the image lost in the Fall. Believers are foreordained to Christlikeness (cf. Eph. 1:4).

II. Romans 9

- A. Romans 9 is one of the strongest NT passages on God’s sovereignty (the other being Eph. 1:3-14), while chapter 10 states humans’ free will clearly and repeatedly (cf. “everyone” v. 4; “whosoever” vv. 11,13; “all” v. 12 [twice]). Paul never tries to reconcile this theological tension. They are both true! Most Bible doctrines are presented in paradoxical or dialectical pairs. Most systems of theology are logical half-truths. Augustinianism and Calvinism versus semi-Pelegianism and Arminianism have elements of truth and error. Biblical tension between doctrines is preferable to a proof-texted, dogmatic, rational, theological system that forces the Bible onto a preconceived interpretive grid.

- B. This same truth (found in Rom. 9:23) is stated in Rom. 8:29-30 and Eph. 1:4,11. This chapter is the strongest expression of God’s sovereignty in the NT. There can be no dispute that God is in total charge of creation and redemption. This great truth should never be softened or diminished.

However, it must be balanced with God’s choice of covenant as a means of relating to human creation, made in His image. It is surely true that some OT covenants, like Genesis 15, are unconditional and do not relate at all to human response, but other covenants are conditioned on human response (e.g., Eden, Noah, Moses, David). God has a plan of redemption for His creation; no human can affect this plan. God has chosen to allow individuals to participate in His plans. This opportunity for participation is a theological tension between sovereignty (Romans 9) and human free will (Romans 10).

It is not appropriate to select one biblical emphasis and ignore another. There is tension between doctrines because eastern people present truth in dialectical or tension-filled pairs. Doctrines must be held in relationship to other doctrines. Truth is a mosaic of truths.

III. Ephesians 1

- A. Election is a wonderful doctrine. However, it is not a call to favoritism, but a call to be a channel, a tool, or means of others’ redemption! In the OT the term was used primarily for service; in the NT it is used primarily for salvation which issues in service. The Bible never reconciles the seeming contradiction between God’s sovereignty and mankind’s free will, but affirms them both! A good example of the biblical tension would be Romans 9 on God’s sovereign choice and Romans 10 on mankind’s necessary response (cf. 10:11,13).

The key to this theological tension may be found in 1:4. Jesus is God’s elect man and all are potentially elect in Him (Karl Barth). Jesus is God’s “yes” to fallen mankind’s need (Karl Barth). Ephesians 1:4 also helps clarify the issue by asserting that the goal of predestination is not heaven only, but holiness (Christlikeness). We are often attracted to the benefits of the gospel and ignore the responsibilities! God’s call (election) is for time as well as eternity!

Doctrines come in relation to other truths, not as single, unrelated truths. A good analogy would be a constellation versus a single star. God presents truth in eastern, not western, genres. We must not remove the tension caused by dialectical (paradoxical) pairs of doctrinal truths (God as transcendent versus God as immanent; security vs. perseverance; Jesus as equal with the Father vs. Jesus as subservient to the Father; Christian freedom vs. Christian responsibility to a covenant partner, etc).

The theological concept of “covenant” unites the sovereignty of God (who always takes the initiative and sets the agenda) with a mandatory initial and continuing repentant faith response from man. Be careful of proof-texting one side of the paradox and depreciating the other! Be careful of asserting only your favorite doctrine or system of theology.

- B. “He chose us” in Eph. 1:4 is an AORIST MIDDLE INDICATIVE which emphasizes the SUBJECT. This focuses on the Father’s choice before time. God’s choice must not be understood in the Islamic sense of determinism, nor in the ultra-Calvinistic sense as some versus others, but in the covenantal sense. God promised to redeem fallen mankind (cf. Gen. 3:15). God called and chose Abraham to choose all humans (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6). God Himself elected all persons who would exercise faith in Christ. God always takes the initiative in salvation (cf. John 6:44,65). This text and Romans 9 are the biblical basis for the doctrine of predestination emphasized by Augustine and Calvin.

God chose believers not only to salvation (justification), but also to sanctification (cf. Colossians 1:10-12). This could relate to (1) our position in Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:21) or (2) God’s desire to reproduce His character in His children (cf. 2:10; Rom. 8:28-29; Gal. 4:19). God’s will for His children is both heaven one day and Christlikeness now!

“In Him” is a key concept of Eph. 1:4. The Father’s blessings, grace, and salvation flow through Christ (cf. John 14:6). Notice the repetition of this grammatical form (LOCATIVE of SPHERE) in v. 3, “in Christ”; v. 4, “in Him”; v. 7, “in Him”; v. 9, “in Him”; v. 10, “in Christ,” “in Him”; v. 12, “in Christ” and v. 13, “in Him” (twice). Jesus is God’s “yes” to fallen mankind (Karl Barth). Jesus is the elect man and all are potentially elect in Him. All of God the Father’s blessings flow through Christ.

The phrase “before the foundation of the world” is also used in Matt. 25:34; John 17:24; I Pet. 1:19-20 and Rev. 13:8. It shows the Triune God’s redemptive activity even before Gen. 1:1. Humans are limited by their sense of time; everything to us is past, present, and future, but not to God.

The goal of predestination is holiness, not privilege. God’s call is not to a selected few of Adam’s children, but to all! It is a call to be what God intended mankind to be, like Himself (cf. I Thess. 5:23; II Thess. 2:13); in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). To turn predestination into a theological tenet instead of a holy life is a tragedy. Often our theologies speak louder than the biblical text.

The term “blameless” (*amōmos*) or “free from blemish” is used of (1) Jesus (cf. Heb. 9:14; I Pet. 1:19); (2) Zachariah and Elizabeth (cf. Luke 1:6); (3) Paul (cf. Phil. 3:6); and (4) all true Christians (cf. Phil. 2:15; I Thess. 3:13; 5:23). God’s unalterable will for every Christian is not only heaven later, but Christlikeness now (cf. Rom. 8:29-30; Gal. 4:19; I Pet. 1:2). Believers are to reflect God’s characteristics to a lost world for the purpose of evangelism.

Grammatically the phrase “in love” in this verse could go with either v. 4 or v. 5. However, when this phrase is used in other places in Ephesians it always refers to human love for God (cf. 3:17; 4:2,15,16).

- C. In Eph. 1:5 the phrase “He predestined us” is an AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. This Greek term is a compound of “before” and “mark off.” It refers to God’s predetermined redemptive plan (cf. Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 4:28; 17:31; Rom. 8:29-30). Predestination is one of several truths related to mankind’s salvation. It is part of a theological pattern or series of related truths. It was never meant to be emphasized in isolation! Biblical truth has been given in a series of tension-filled,

paradoxical pairs. Denominationalism has tended to remove the biblical tension by emphasizing only one of the dialectical truths (predestination versus human free will; security of the believer versus perseverance of the saints; original sin versus volitional sin; sinlessness versus sinning less; instantaneously declared sanctification versus progressive sanctification; faith versus works; Christian freedom versus Christian responsibility; transcendence versus immanence).

God's choice is not based on foreknowledge of human performance, but on His gracious character (cf. vv. 9 & 11). He wishes that all (not just some special ones like the Gnostics or modern-day ultra-Calvinists) would be saved (cf. Ezek. 18:21-23,32; John 3:16-17; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9). God's grace (God's character) is the theological key to this passage (cf. vv. 6a, 7c, 9b), as God's mercy is the key to the other passage on predestination, Romans 9-11.

Fallen mankind's only hope is the grace and mercy of God (cf. Isa. 53:6 and several other OT texts quoted in Rom. 3:9-18). It is crucial in interpreting these first theological chapters to realize that Paul emphasizes those things which are totally unrelated to human performance: predestination (chap. 1), grace (chap. 2), and God's eternal plan of redemption (mystery, 2:11-3:13). This was to counterbalance the emphasis of the false teachers on human merit and pride.

18:8 "I will relent" This is the VERB "be sorry" (BDB 636, KB 688, *Niphal* PERFECT), often translated "repent." It is difficult to speak of YHWH as "repenting." This is obviously anthropomorphic language (see Special Topic at 1:9). YHWH is willing to change (His actions, but not His character, cf. Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29; see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 209-210) based on:

1. a person's/nations' change of attitude and actions
2. intercessory prayer (see Special Topic at 7:16)

There are several places where this VERB is used of YHWH (cf. Gen. 6:6-7; Exod. 32:14; I Sam. 15:11; II Sam. 24:16; Ps. 106:45; Jer. 18:7,8; 26:13,19; Amos 7:3,6; Jonah 3:9-4:2,11). However, the opposite is also stated in Scripture (cf. Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29; Ps. 132:11; Jer. 4:28; Ezek. 24:14; Mal. 3:6; James 1:17; see Special Topic below). YHWH chooses grace over judgment, if humans will only respond in faith and faithfulness. Prophecy (except Messianic) is conditional.

Two good references I trust on this issue are:

1. F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, pp. 129-130
2. *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 70-75

SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION/PREDESTINATION AND THE NEED FOR A THEOLOGICAL BALANCE

Election is a wonderful doctrine. However, it is not a call to favoritism, but a call to be a channel, a tool or means of others' redemption! In the Old Testament the term was used primarily for service; in the New Testament it is used primarily for salvation which issues in service. The Bible never reconciles the seeming contradiction between God's sovereignty and mankind's free will, but affirms them both! A good example of the biblical tension would be Romans 9 on God's sovereign choice and Romans 10 on mankind's necessary response (cf. 10:11,13).

The key to this theological tension may be found in Ephesians 1:4. Jesus is God's elect man and all are potentially elect in Him (Karl Barth). Jesus is God's "yes" to fallen mankind's need (Karl Barth). Ephesians 1:4 also helps clarify the issue by asserting that the goal of predestination is not heaven, but holiness (Christlikeness). We are often attracted to the benefits of the gospel and ignore the responsibilities! God's call (election) is for time as well as eternity!

Doctrines come in relation to other truths, not as single, unrelated truths. A good analogy would be a constellation versus a single star. God presents truth in eastern, not western, genres. We must not remove the tension caused by dialectical (paradoxical) pairs of doctrinal truths:

1. Predestination vs. human free will
2. Security of the believer vs. the need for perseverance
3. Original sin vs. volitional sin
4. Sinlessness (perfectionism) vs. sinning less
5. Initial instantaneous justification and sanctification vs. progressive sanctification
6. Christian freedom vs. Christian responsibility
7. God's transcendence vs. God's immanence
8. God as ultimately unknowable vs. God as knowable in Scripture
9. The Kingdom of God as present vs. future consummation
10. Repentance as a gift of God vs. repentance as a necessary human covenantal response
11. Jesus as divine vs. Jesus as human
12. Jesus is equal to the Father vs. Jesus as subservient to the Father

The theological concept of "covenant" unites the sovereignty of God (who always takes the initiative and sets the agenda) with a mandatory initial and continuing repentant, faith response from humans. Be careful of proof-texting one side of the paradox and depreciating the other! Be careful of asserting only your favorite doctrine or system of theology!

18:11 YHWH, like the potter, made and destroyed a piece of pottery. The VERB (BDB 427, KB 428) translated "fashioning" is the same *Qal* PARTICIPLE translated "potter" (vv. 2,3,4 [twice],6 [twice],11). It is also used of God's activity in forming Adam (cf. Gen. 2:7,8) and Jeremiah (Jer. 1:5) and a nation from Abraham's seed (cf. Isa. 27:11; 43:1,21; 44:21; 45:9,11; 64:8).

▣ **"I am fashioning calamity against you and devising a plan against you"** The OT asserts the full sovereignty of YHWH. His control of "all" events (i.e., one causality in the universe) was a theological way of asserting monotheism (see Special Topic at 1:5). This "one causality" can be seen in II Chr. 20:6; Eccl. 7:14; Isa. 14:24-27; 43:13; 45:7; 54:16; Jer. 18:11; Lam. 3:33-38). For a good brief discussion of this see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 305-306. This in no way is meant to assert that YHWH is the source of evil!

- ▣ There are two IMPERATIVES which describe YHWH's message to Judah.
1. "turn back" – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, see Special Topic at 2:22
 2. "reform" (lit. "make good") – BDB 405, KB 408, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

Notice that true repentance is not only a turning from evil, but a turning to good!

18:12 This is YHWH's understanding of the unrepentant heart of Judah (cf. 2:25; 17:1). They will not, they cannot change (cf. 13:23). They have passed the time of repentance. They walk in open-eyed rebellion (cf. 7:24; 9:13; 13:10; 16:12)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:13-17

¹³“Therefore thus says the LORD,
‘Ask now among the nations,
Who ever heard the like of this?

The virgin of Israel
Has done a most appalling thing.

¹⁴Does the snow of Lebanon forsake the rock of the open country?
Or is the cold flowing water *from a foreign land* ever snatched away?

¹⁵For My people have forgotten Me,
They burn incense to worthless gods
And they have stumbled from their ways,
From the ancient paths,
To walk in bypaths,
Not on a highway,

¹⁶To make their land a desolation,
An object of perpetual hissing;
Everyone who passes by it will be astonished
And shake his head.

¹⁷Like an east wind I will scatter them
Before the enemy;
I will show them My back and not *My face*
In the day of their calamity.”

18:13-17 This strophe describes the horrible and unique situation of a nation changing her god/gods (cf. 2:9-13). YHWH formed/created them but now they have “forgotten” (BDB 1013, KB 1489, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 2:32; 3:21; 13:25) Him, the only true God (see Special Topic at 1:5), the One who brought them into existence, protected them, provided for them, was personally present with them!

How could this happen?

1. They burned incense to worthless gods.
2. They stumbled from God’s clearly revealed way (i.e., ancient paths, cf. 6:16; Ps. 16:11; 139:24).
3. They walked in bypaths that were not YHWH’s path.

What are the consequences of their choices/actions?

1. The land of promise will be a desolation.
2. It will be a sign of shame and scorn (lit. “shake the head,” cf. 48:27).
3. They will be scattered (cf. Lev. 26:33; Jer. 9:16; 13:24; 31:10).
4. YHWH will show them His back and not His face (this is a revocalization of the MT).

18:13 “**a most appalling thing**” This phrase is used of nation changing gods. The word “appalling” (BDB 1045 III, KB 1619 III) has several forms.

1. שַׁעֲרָר = horrible things, cf. 5:30; 23:14
2. שַׁעֲרָרִי = something horrible, cf. 18:13; Hosea 6:10
3. שַׁעַר = rotten figs, cf. 29:17

18:14 This verse (a parenthetical statement) is difficult to translate. It obviously describes that which normally or expectedly occurs. Here apparently, the snow stays on Mt. Hermon and its melted waters continually flow down. Nature can be predicted with regularity, but not the seed of Abraham!

18:15 “not on a highway” Verse 15 resumes the theme of v. 13. The theme of a special highway is recurrent in Isaiah.

1. a highway for the exiled Jews to return, Isa. 11:16; 57:14
2. a highway for Gentile worshipers to come, Isa. 19:23
3. a highway of holiness, Isa. 26:7; 35:8; 43:19; 49:11; 51:10
4. a Messianic highway, Isa. 40:3; 42:16

18:16-17 This is exactly opposite of what YHWH wanted to do for His covenant people who He settled in His land. They were to be a light to the nations, but they became an object of scorn and astonishment (cf. Ezek. 36:22-23).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:18

¹⁸Then they said, “Come and let us devise plans against Jeremiah. Surely the law is not going to be lost to the priest, nor counsel to the sage, nor the *divine* word to the prophet! Come on and let us strike at him with *our* tongue, and let us give no heed to any of his words.”

18:18 This verse is an introductory strophe to the poem of vv. 19-23. Jeremiah’s enemies plan their attack (cf. 20:10).

1. come – BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. let us devise plans – BDB 362, KB 359, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
3. come – same as #1
4. let us strike at him with our tongue – BDB 645, KB 697, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
5. let us give no heed to any of his words – BDB 904, KB 1151, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE
 - a. stop listening, MT, Peshitta, JPSOA, NRSV
 - b. listen and try to find faults, LXX, JB

This is the only verse in the OT where all three means or genres of YHWH’s revelation are mentioned together.

1. the priest – the Law (question about how to apply the law)
2. the sage – counsel (i.e., Wisdom Literature)
3. the prophet – the divine word

These are mentioned to assert their belief that Jeremiah’s messages are not from YHWH. He is a false prophet (cf. Deut. 13:1-5) and should be killed! Because these false leaders have done this to Jeremiah; YHWH will remove all of His revelation from Judah!

The three groups of leaders are mentioned several times in Jeremiah (cf. 2:8,26; 4:9; 5:31; 8:1; 13:13; 26:16; 28:1).

1. kings, princes
2. priests
3. prophets

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:19-23

**¹⁹Do give heed to me, O LORD,
And listen to what my opponents are saying!**

**²⁰Should good be repaid with evil?
For they have dug a pit for me.
Remember how I stood before You
To speak good on their behalf,**

So as to turn away Your wrath from them.

**²¹Therefore, give their children over to famine
And deliver them up to the power of the sword;
And let their wives become childless and widowed.
Let their men also be smitten to death,
Their young men struck down by the sword in battle.**

**²²May an outcry be heard from their houses,
When You suddenly bring raiders upon them;
For they have dug a pit to capture me
And hidden snares for my feet.**

**²³Yet You, O LORD, know
All their deadly designs against me;
Do not forgive their iniquity
Or blot out their sin from Your sight.
But may they be overthrown before You;
Deal with them in the time of Your anger!**

18:19-23 Jeremiah answers their plans with a prayer to YHWH (another of his laments/confessions). It starts out with the same VERB that ends v. 18 (“heed”). Notice his requests (hyperbolic prophetic IMPERATIVES, see D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*).

1. Do give heed to me – BDB 904, KB 1151, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE. His enemies will not heed/hear, but YHWH will!
2. Listen to what my opponents are saying – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - a. MT – listen to opponents
 - b. LXX – listen to me
3. Remember how I stood before You for them – BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - a. to speak good on their behalf (i.e., 14:13-16)
 - b. to turn away Your wrath from them (cf. 15:1)
4. Therefore, YHWH, respond to them.
 - a. give over their children to famine – BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - b. deliver them to the power of the sword – BDB 620, KB 669, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
 - c. let their wives become childless – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - d. let their wives become widows – same as c
 - e. let their men also be smitten to death (“by pestilence,” BDB 560) – BDB 246, KB 255, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE
 - f. let their young men be struck down by the sword – BDB 645, KB 697, *Hophal* PARTICIPLE
 - g. let an outcry be heard from their homes – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense. For the NOUN “cry out,” see 20:16; 48:4,34; 50:46; 51:54; Isa. 15:5
 - h. do not forgive their iniquity – BDB 497, KB 493, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - i. Do not blot out their sin from Your sight – BDB 562 I, KB 567, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - j. may they be overthrown before You – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qere*, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - k. deal with them in the time of Your anger – BDB 793 I, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

18:20 “**Should good be repaid with evil**” Apparently this refers to Jeremiah’s prayers (“I stood before You”) for Judah (cf. 17:16), but they responded by trying to kill him.

▣ “**they have dug a pit for me**” This is an allusion to a hunting technique (cf. Ps. 57:6; 119:85). It may be literal (i.e., they will try to kill him) or figurative (they will try to ruin his reputation, cf. v. 22, i.e., his prophecies have not occurred, cf. Deut. 13:1-5).

18:23 Is Jeremiah being vindictive? He seems to want justice for Judah’s repeated covenant violations. His own circumstances bothered him but Judah’s sin bothered him more! There will be justice. There will be a day when humans give an account to God for the gift of life (i.e., Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15). It will be an especially bad day for covenant, informed people (cf. Luke 12:48)!

JEREMIAH 19

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Broken Jar	The Sign of the Broken Flask	The Broken Jug and the Altercation with Pashhur (19:1-20:6)	The Broken Jar	The Public Persecution of Jeremiah (19:1-20:6)
19:1-9	19:1-3 19:4-9	19:1-9	19:1-9	19:1-9
19:10-13	19:10-13	19:10-11a 19:11b-13	19:10-13	19:10-13
19:14-15	19:14-15	19:14-15	19:14-15	19:14-15

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:1-9

¹Thus says the LORD, "Go and buy a potter's earthenware jar, and *take* some of the elders of the people and some of the senior priests. ²Then go out to the valley of Ben-hinnom, which is by the entrance of the potsherd gate, and proclaim there the words that I tell you, ³and say, 'Hear the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Behold I am about to bring a calamity upon this place, at which the ears of everyone that hears of it will tingle. ⁴Because they have forsaken Me and have made this an alien place and have burned sacrifices in it to other gods, that neither they nor their forefathers nor the kings of Judah had

ever known, and because they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent⁵ and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, a thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it ever enter My mind; “therefore, behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when this place will no longer be called Topheth or the valley of Ben-hinnom, but rather the valley of Slaughter. ⁷I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place, and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies and by the hand of those who seek their life; and I will give over their carcasses as food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth. ⁸I will also make this city a desolation and an *object of hissing*; everyone who passes by it will be astonished and hiss because of all its disasters. ⁹I will make them eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they will eat one another’s flesh in the siege and in the distress with which their enemies and those who seek their life will distress them.”

19:1 Chapters 18 and 19 are connected by the use of imagery, “potter” and “pottery jar” (BDB 132 CONSTRUCT 427, i.e., a small drinking flask).

The “pottery jar” would have been a fired clay vessel between 4" and 10" with a narrow neck used for liquids. This type of container was very common in the ANE.

▣ **“the elders of the people and some of the senior priests”** “Elders” was the title of older, respected, established leadership. It was a carryover from the “tribal days” of Israel’s past (cf. Exod. 3:16,18; 4:29; 12:21, etc.). See Special Topic at 26:17.

These two groups would represent the civic and religious leadership of Judah/Jerusalem.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ELDER

1. used of the angels of God who make up the angelic council (cf. Isa. 24:23). This same terminology is used of the angelic creatures of Revelation (cf. 4:4,10; 5:5,6,8,11,14; 7:11,13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4).
2. used of tribal leaders (*zaqen*) in the OT (cf. Exod. 3:16; Num. 11:16). Later in the NT this term is applied to a group of leaders from Jerusalem who made up the high court of the Jews, the Sanhedrin (cf. Matt. 21:23; 26:57). In Jesus’ day this seventy-member body was controlled by a corrupt priesthood.
3. used of the local leaders of a NT church. It was one of three synonymous terms (pastor, overseer, and elder cf. Titus 1:5,7; Acts 20:17,28). Peter and John use it to include themselves in the leadership group (cf. I Peter 5:1; II John 1; III John 1).
4. used of older men in the church, not necessarily the leadership (cf. I Tim. 5:1; Titus 2:2).

19:2 “the valley of Ben-hinnom” The following information on *Gehenna* is taken from the Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? *Gehenna* reflects the OT phrase, “the valley of the sons of Hinnom,” (south of Jerusalem). It was the place where the Phoenician fire god, *Molech* (BDB 574), was worshiped by child sacrifice (cf. II Kgs. 16:3; 21:6; II Chr. 28:3; 33:6), which was forbidden in Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5.

Jeremiah changed it from a place of pagan worship into a site of YHWH’s judgment (cf. Jer. 7:32; 19:6-7). It became the place of fiery, eternal judgment in I Enoch 90:26-27 and Sib. 1:103.

The Jews of Jesus’ day were so appalled by their ancestors’ participation in pagan worship by child sacrifice, that they turned this area into the garbage dump for Jerusalem. Many of Jesus’ metaphors for eternal judgment came from this landfill (fire, smoke, worms, stench, cf. Mark 9:44,46). The term *Gehenna* is used only by Jesus (except in James 3:6).

1. Jesus' usage of *Gehenna*
 - a. fire, Matt. 5:22; 18:9; Mark 9:43
 - b. permanent, Mark 9:48 (Matt. 25:46)
 - c. place of destruction (both soul and body), Matt. 10:28
 - d. paralleled to *Sheol*, Matt. 5:29-30; 18:9
 - e. characterizes the wicked as "son of hell," Matt. 23:15
 - f. result of judicial sentence, Matt. 23:33; Luke 12:5
 - g. the concept of *Gehenna* is parallel to the second death (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14) or the lake of fire (cf. Matt. 13:42,50; Rev. 19:20; 20:10,14-15; 21:8). It is possible the lake of fire becomes the permanent dwelling place of humans (from *Sheol*) and evil angels (from *Tartarus*, II Pet. 2:4; Jude v. 6 or the abyss, cf. Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:1-11; 20:1,3).
 - h. it was not designed for humans, but for Satan and his angels, Matt. 25:41
2. It is possible, because of the overlap of *Sheol*, *Hades*, and *Gehenna* that
 - a. originally all humans went to *Sheol/Hades*
 - b. their experience there (good/bad) is exacerbated after Judgment Day, but the place of the wicked remains the same (this is why the KJV translated *hades* (grave) as *gehenna* (hell).
 - c. the only NT text to mention torment before Judgment is the parable of Luke 16:19-31 (Lazarus and the Rich Man). *Sheol* is also described as a place of punishment now (cf. Deut. 32:22; Ps. 18:1-5). However, one cannot establish a doctrine on a parable.



NASB	"the potsherd gate"
NKJV, NJB	"the Potsherd Gate"
JPSOA	"Harsith Gate"
LXX	"the gate Charsith"
Peshitta, KJV	"the east gate"

A gate of Jerusalem by this name is found only here in the OT. Here are the suggestions.

1. Dung (refuse) Gate of Neh. 2:13; 3:13-14; 12:31 (Aramaic Targums). This would be the place for garbage to be dumped.
2. Gate on the south side of Jerusalem, which led to the Hinnom Valley, would be close to the potters' workshops.
3. The Peshitta (Syriac translation) gets "east" from the similarity of the Hebrew name with the Greek *heres* for sun. This is surely inaccurate. The NKJV changes it to "Potsherd Gate."

19:3 "the LORD. . .the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel" See Special Topic: Names For Deity at 1:2.

Notice that these are covenant titles and are repeated several times in the chapter. The covenant people are being confronted by the God of the covenant. They have totally failed as YHWH's revelation to "the nations" (cf., v. 15)!



NASB	"a calamity"
NKJV	"a catastrophe"
NRSV, TEV, NJB	"a disaster"

The root (רעה) has several distinct meanings.

1. pasture, project, or shepherd – BDB 944 I, KB 1258 I, 27 times in Jeremiah
2. be associated with (i.e., friend or companion) – BDB 945 II, KB 1262 II, used 21 times in Jeremiah

3. pleasure or desire – 946 III
4. that which is harmful (from ערע, BDB 948, used 32 times in Jeremiah) – BDB 949, KB 1262, used 92 times in Jeremiah.

It is translated by NIV in several different ways.

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| a. disaster | h. calamity |
| b. wickedness | i. offense |
| c. trouble | j. ruin |
| d. evil | k. crimes |
| e. punishment | l. evil deeds |
| f. harm | m. discomfort |
| g. sin | n. destruction |
| | n. cruelty |

▣ **“the ears of everyone that hears it will tingle”** This is a Hebrew idiom of a surprising judgment (cf. I Sam. 3:11; II Kgs. 21:12). This is similar to the “lips quivering” in Hab. 3:16.

19:4-5 The calamity is coming on Judah because

1. they have forsaken YHWH (cf. 1:16; 2:13,17,19; 5:7,19; 16:11; 17:13; Deut. 28:20; 31:16)
2. they worship foreign gods (cf. Deut. 11:28) in the valley of Ben-hinnom
3. they have either
 - a. sacrificed their children to *Molech* (vv. 4,5; II Kgs. 17:17; Ps106:37; see Special Topic at 2:23)
 - b. killed innocent people, cf. 2:34; 7:6; 12:3,17; 26:15; Ps. 106:38, cf. TEV
4. they built high places to *Ba'al* (cf. 7:9; 11:13,17; see Special Topic at 2:20)

19:5 **“a thing which I never commanded or spoke of nor did it ever enter My mind”** This reflects YHWH’s thoughts about human sacrifice. It is possible some misunderstood Gen. 22:2 or Exod. 13:1 and used it as a “proof-text” for the child sacrifices to

1. *Molech*
2. *Ba'al*

Even the death of Job’s family (cf. Job 1) could be seen by some as instigated by YHWH to test Job.

The one thing that must be added to this issue is that YHWH will sacrifice His only, unique “Son” (symbolized in Abraham’s offering Isaac, cf. Gen. 22:9-19) for the good of the whole (cf. John 3:16; II Cor. 5:21). Jesus’ death was a human/divine death/gift for human sin (i.e., child sacrifice)!

19:6-9 YHWH describes the judgments He will send on them for their wickedness.

1. the name of the valley of Ben-hinnom will be changed to the valley of Slaughter
2. the counsel of their wise men will be voided (cf. 8:8-9)
3. many will be killed by invasion
4. there will be no proper burial, cf. 7:33; 16:4
5. Jerusalem will be turned into an object of hissing, cf. 15:4; 18:16
6. cannibalism will develop (i.e., siege warfare), cf. Lev. 26:29; Deut. 28:53,55,57; Lam. 4:10

19:7 **“I shall make void”** This VERB (בקק, BDB 132 II, KB 150, *Qal* PERFECT), BDB says it is used “of a mug dipped in water, or emptied of water.” Therefore, this is an intentional play on the word for “drinking flask” (בקבוק, BDB 132) in v. 1.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:10-13

¹⁰“Then you are to break the jar in the sight of the men who accompany you ¹¹and say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Just so will I break this people and this city, even as one breaks a potter’s vessel, which cannot again be repaired; and they will bury in Topheth because there is no *other* place for burial. ¹²This is how I will treat this place and its inhabitants,” declares the LORD, “so as to make this city like Topheth. ¹³The houses of Jerusalem and the houses of the kings of Judah will be defiled like the place Topheth, because of all the houses on whose rooftops they burned sacrifices to all the heavenly host and poured out drink offerings to other gods.””

19:10 In chapter 18 the potter remade a lump of clay, but here, after firing, the clay could not be saved, only destroyed! There was no hope of repentance on Judah’s part or YHWH’s part (cf. 18:8). Invasion, destruction, slaughter, and exile are coming!

Jeremiah’s breaking the clay water flask to symbolize the destruction of Jerusalem is theologically parallel to Ezekiel making a brick to symbolize Jerusalem and then hitting it with a cooking pan (cf. Ezekiel 4).

The image of a broken clay pot as a symbol of judgment and destruction is common in the ANE (i.e., Sumer and Egypt).

19:13 “on whose rooftops they burned sacrifices to all the heavenly host” The worship of the lights of the sky was common in the ANE (cf. 8:2; 32:29; II Kgs. 23:5,12; Zeph. 1:5).

1. Egypt
2. Mesopotamia

For one example, note Special Topic below or “moon worship.”

SPECIAL TOPIC: MOON WORSHIP

Moon worship was the most widespread mythology of the Ancient Near East starting with Sumer. There was both a male and female aspect to the myth. Originally the moon god came from the rape of the grain goddess, *Ninlil* by *Enlil*, the sky god. *Enlil* was cast out of the pantheon and condemned to the underworld for his act, but when *Ninlil* found out she was with child she joined him. The child, *Sin*, was allowed to climb into the sky each night.

The worship of the moon is designed by its different phases.

1. new moon – *Asimbabbar*
2. crescent moon – *Sin*
3. full moon – *Nanaa* (Sumerian “illumination” from *En-su*, “lord of wisdom”)

These names basically mean “wise lord” (i.e., *Suen*) or “illumination” (*Nanaa*), worshiped at Ur of the Chaldees. The city itself was often called the city of Nannar. The fertility pair were worshiped at Ziggurats (large pyramids with flat tops) located in the city. The sun god (*Shamash*) was the firstborn of the couple and later *Ereshkigal* (the Queen of the Underworld) and *I Nanna* (*the Queen of Heaven/sky*).

The cult was spread all across the ANE, but the major centers of worship were

1. Ur
2. Haran
3. Tema
4. Canaan
5. Mecca

Basically this mythology combined the fertility emphasis with astral worship.

The OT rejects astral worship (cf. Deut. 4:19; 17:3; II Kgs. 21:3,5; 23:5; Jer. 8:2; 19:13; Zeph. 1:5) and fertility worship (i.e., *Ba'al* and *Asherah*, Ugarit poems). The Hebrews, originally nomads, were very careful to resist moon worship because in general moon worship was characteristic of nomadic peoples who traveled at night, while the sun was much more generally worshiped by settled or agricultural peoples. Eventually nomads settle and then astral worship in general became the problem.

▣ **“pour out libations to other gods”** This was part of the worship of “the queen of heaven” (cf. 7:18; 44:18).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:14-15

¹⁴Then Jeremiah came from Topheth, where the LORD had sent him to prophesy; and he stood in the court of the LORD’s house and said to all the people: ¹⁵“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Behold, I am about to bring on this city and all its towns the entire calamity that I have declared against it, because they have stiffened their necks so as not to heed My words.’”

19:14-15 Since these two verses are in the third person, possibly they are Baruch’s (Jeremiah’s scribe) later editorial comments.

19:14 “Topheth” The word (BDB 1075 II) means “fire-place” (possibly from an Aramaic root), which denotes a valley south of Jerusalem in the Kidron Valley. Josiah turned it into a landfill where garbage was burned (see Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at 4:4 for *Gehenna*). It was a place where

1. the god *Molech* (cf. Lev. 18:21; see Special Topic at 19:4-5) was worshiped by child sacrifice, cf. 7:31; II Kgs. 23:10 (note Isa. 30:33)
2. it is a metaphor for the slaughter of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, cf. 7:32; 19:6
3. it is a burial place of the dead of Jerusalem, cf. 19:11-12

▣ **“the court of the LORD’s house”** The temple of Jeremiah’s day was Solomon’s temple. It had several outer courts where the people of Israel could gather. Jeremiah is said to proclaim YHWH’s message there several times (cf. 7:2; 26:2).

19:15 “stiffened their necks so as not to heed My words” The covenant people refused to hear and respond to the covenant God (cf. 7:26; 17:23; Neh. 9:17). They were His people in name only!

JEREMIAH 20

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		(19:1-20:6)		(19:1-20:6)
Pashhur Persecutes Jeremiah	The Word of God to Pashhur		Jeremiah's Conflict With Pashhur the Priest	
20:1-6	20:1-6	20:1-6	20:1-6	20:1-6
Jeremiah's Complaint	Jeremiah's Unpopular Ministry	Selections From the 'Confessions' of Jeremiah	Jeremiah's Complaints to the LORD	Jeremiah's Fifth and Sixth Personal Laments
20:7-13 (7-13)	20:7-10 (7-10)	20:7-13 (7-13)	20:7 (7)	20:7-12 (7-12)
			20:8-13 (8-13)	
	20:11-12 (11-12)			
	20:13			20:13 (13)
20:14-18 (14-18)	20:14-18 (14-18)	20:14-18 (14-18)	20:14-18 (14-18)	20:14-18 (14-18)

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:1-6

¹When Pashhur the priest, the son of Immer, who was chief officer in the house of the LORD, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things, ²Pashhur had Jeremiah the prophet beaten and put him in the stocks that were at the upper Benjamin Gate, which was by the house of the LORD. ³On the next day, when Pashhur released Jeremiah from the stocks, Jeremiah said to him, “Pashhur is not the name the LORD has called you, but rather Magor-missabib. ⁴For thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I am going to make you a terror to yourself and to all your friends; and while your eyes look on, they will fall by the sword of their enemies. So I will give over all Judah to the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will carry them away as exiles to Babylon and will slay them with the sword. ⁵I will also give over all the wealth of this city, all its produce and all its costly things; even all the treasures of the kings of Judah I will give over to the hand of their enemies, and they will plunder them, take them away and bring them to Babylon. ⁶And you, Pashhur, and all who live in your house will go into captivity; and you will enter Babylon, and there you will die and there you will be buried, you and all your friends to whom you have falsely prophesied.’”

20:1 “Pashhur” There are several people in the OT with this name.

1. In this text a priest whose task was to maintain order in the temple (cf. 29:26), vv. 1,2,3,6.
2. Another priest in Jeremiah’s day, but with a different father, 21:1; 38:1; Neh. 11:12.
3. Another person in Jer. 38:1 (two Pashhurs in this verse).
4. Head of a post-exilic family, Ezra 2:38; 10:22; Neh. 7:41; 10:4; 11:12.

KB 980 quotes two authors who speculate that Pashhur is an Egyptian name (cf. JPSOA marginal note), “son of Horus.” If so, this is a strange name for a priest of YHWH (possibly part of a pro-Egyptian faction). Most scholars simply say the meaning is unknown.

Jeremiah renames him “terror on every side,” cf. vv. 3-6.

▣ **“heard Jeremiah prophesying these things”** This goes back to chapter 18 or 19, or both.

20:2 Although YHWH promised to protect Jeremiah (cf. 1:18-19), it did not mean he would not emotionally and physically suffer!

▣ **“beaten”** Probably in the fashion of Deut. 25:2-3. Jeremiah would have been labeled “a wicked man” (i.e., false prophet, cf. Deut. 13:1-5).

▣ **“stocks”** This word (BDB 246) refers to wooden bars with holes in them for the hands, feet, and neck. These holes were spread widely apart to increase pain and discomfort. The pain was both physical and mental! In II Chr. 16:10 a false prophet was put in them (or it). Jeremiah was being treated as a “false prophet.” This is what bothered him so badly!

The JPSOA translates this word as “cell” and sees it as a small room of confinement. The LXX also has “dungeon,” but “stocks” in a footnote.

20:4-6 These verses describe the terror (BDB 159 II).

1. his friends will die by the invaders’ (i.e., Babylon), sword, while you watch
2. Judah’s remaining population will be exiled to Babylon
3. all the wealth of Jerusalem (including the temple) will be carried to Babylon
4. Pashhur and his family will be exiled and die in Babylon

20:4 “hand” See Special Topic at 1:9.

20:6 “you have falsely prophesied” Exactly how this priestly temple official “prophesied” is uncertain. But he would bear the curse of Deut. 13:1-5 for it! The false prophecy was related to the stability of the temple and Jerusalem (possibly quoting Isaiah’s message to Hezekiah, i.e., Isaiah 36-39). It was a message of hope and faith, but at this point in time, it was not YHWH’s message (cf. 14:14-16)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:7-13

**⁷O LORD, You have deceived me and I was deceived;
You have overcome me and prevailed.**

**I have become a laughingstock all day long;
Everyone mocks me.**

**⁸For each time I speak, I cry aloud;
I proclaim violence and destruction,
Because for me the word of the LORD has resulted
In reproach and derision all day long.**

**⁹But if I say, “I will not remember Him
Or speak anymore in His name,”
Then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire
Shut up in my bones;
And I am weary of holding *it* in,
And I cannot endure *it*.**

**¹⁰For I have heard the whispering of many,
“Terror on every side!
Denounce *him*; yes, let us denounce him!”
All my trusted friends,
Watching for my fall, say:
“Perhaps he will be deceived, so that we may prevail against him
And take our revenge on him.”**

**¹¹But the LORD is with me like a dread champion;
Therefore my persecutors will stumble and not prevail.
They will be utterly ashamed, because they have failed,
With an everlasting disgrace that will not be forgotten.**

**¹²Yet, O LORD of hosts, You who test the righteous,
Who see the mind and the heart;
Let me see Your vengeance on them;
For to You I have set forth my cause.**

**¹³Sing to the LORD, praise the LORD!
For He has delivered the soul of the needy one
From the hand of evildoers.**

20:7-13 This is another complaint/lament. Even those called by God experience doubt and fear! He feels that YHWH has

1. deceived him – BDB 834, KB 984, *Piel* PERFECT and *Niphal* IMPERFECT (this is an intensified form of a strong VERB often used of seduction; it refers to his call in chapter 1)
2. overcome him – BDB 304, KB 302, *Qal* PERFECT
3. prevailed against him – BDB 407, KB 410, *Qal* IMPERFECT

The results (cf. vv. 7-8) are that

1. he has become a laughingstock all day long (cf. 48:26,39; Lam. 3:14)
2. everyone mocks him (cf. Lam. 3:14)
3. he is reproached
4. he is derided

Verse 10 describes the fear he feels as he hears people whispering their curses.

1. he has described his own situation by the very words YHWH used to rename Pashhur (i.e., “terror on every side!”)
2. they denounce him
3. his friends are watching for him to fall
4. they hope to prevail against him
5. they hope to take revenge against him

Since the current canonical structure of Jeremiah is an anthology of his poetic messages, vv. 7-13 are obviously placed here because of the “catch-word” *Magor-missabib* of vv. 3 and 10 (cf. 6:25; 46:5; 49:29).

20:9 Jeremiah tries to express both the pain and joy of being YHWH’s spokesperson. Remember this is highly figurative poetry.

1. he tries to forget YHWH
2. he tries not to speak His words anymore

But he cannot! They are like a burning fire shut up in his bones. He cannot hold them back. He must speak (cf. Amos 3:8).

Many of us who feel called to preach/teach/share know these thoughts and feelings.

20:11 Verse 11 describes YHWH as “a dreaded champion” (BDB 150 and BDB 792, cf. 1:8,19; 15:20).

Notice what happens to those who oppose him.

1. they will stumble
2. they will not prevail
3. they will be utterly ashamed
4. they will not succeed
5. they will have an everlasting disgrace
6. they will not be forgotten in their shame

20:12 Jeremiah describes YHWH.

1. You test the righteous.
2. You see the mind (i.e., kidneys)
3. You let me present my cause to You (cf. 11:20).

20:13 This verse starts with two IMPERATIVES.

1. sing to the Lord – BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. praise the Lord – BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERATIVE

This adulation is because YHWH has delivered the soul of the needy one from the hand of evil doers.

What a wild swing of emotions is expressed in these verses. From complete discouragement in YHWH in v. 7 to joyous praise in v. 13. This wild swing continues in the next poem (vv. 14-18). Jeremiah was a highly emotional person.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:14-18

¹⁴**Cursed be the day when I was born;
Let the day not be blessed when my mother bore me!**

¹⁵**Cursed be the man who brought the news
To my father, saying,
“A baby boy has been born to you!”
And made him very happy.**

¹⁶**But let that man be like the cities
Which the LORD overthrew without relenting,
And let him hear an outcry in the morning
And a shout of alarm at noon;**

¹⁷**Because he did not kill me before birth,
So that my mother would have been my grave,
And her womb ever pregnant.**

¹⁸**Why did I ever come forth from the womb
To look on trouble and sorrow,
So that my days have been spent in shame?**

20:14-18 These verses continue the lament begun in 15:10. Remember these are hyperbolic poetic images! The questions are “Why is he so sad? Is it his personal life or the terrible judgment coming to Judah and Jerusalem?”

20:16 The first two lines refer to YHWH’s destruction of the cities of the plain in Gen. 19:24-28. Some suggest that “man” be emendated to “day,” but there is no textual or versional evidence.

JEREMIAH 21

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jeremiah's Message for Zedekiah	Jerusalem's Doom Is Sealed	Oracle Against Zedekiah and Jerusalem	Jerusalem's Defeat Is Predicted	Jeremiah Answers the Envoys of Zedekiah
21:1-2	21:1-2	21:1-2	21:1-2	21:1-7
21:3-7	21:3-7	21:3-7	21:3-7	
21:8-10	21:8-10	21:8-10	21:8-10	21:8-10
	Message to the House of David	Oracles Concerning the Royal House (21:11-23:8)	Judgment on the Royal House of Judah	Address to the Royal Family of Judah
21:11-12 (12)	21:11-12 (12)	21:11-14 (12-14)	21:11-14	21:11-14 (12-14)
21:13-14 (13-14)	21:13-14 (13-14)			

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Brief outline of messages to Judah's royal house, cf. 21:11-23:8
 1. Zedekiah (Mattaniah) – 21:1-14
 2. Jehoahaz (Shallum) – 22:10-12
 3. Jehoiakim (Eliakim) – 22:13-19
 4. Jehoiakim (Coniah) – 22:24-30

- B. Zedekiah (BDB 843), another of Josiah’s sons, was placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylon (cf. II Kgs. 24:17). He reigned from 597-586 B.C. He was king when Jerusalem fell. He was loyal to Babylon for eight years. Then a pro-Egyptian nationalist party persuaded him to revolt. See Appendix Four: Kings of the Divided Monarchy.
- C. This section of Jeremiah is much more clearly linked to its historical settings. The specifics of
 1. time
 2. place
 3. proper names
 abound!
- D. The house of David had all the wonderful (“eternal”) promises of II Samuel 7, but they too were conditional!
- E. Remember that Nebuchadnezzar’s army captured Jerusalem several times: 605 B.C., 597 B.C., 586 B.C., and 582 B.C. They destroyed the city and temple in 586 B.C.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:1-2

¹The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD when King Zedekiah sent to him Pashhur the son of Malchijah, and Zephaniah the priest, the son of Maaseiah, saying, ²“Please inquire of the LORD on our behalf, for Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon is warring against us; perhaps the LORD will deal with us according to all His wonderful acts, so that *the enemy* will withdraw from us.”

21:1 “Pashhur” This is different from the priest/false prophet by the same name in 20:1 (see note there).

▣ **“Zephaniah”** This priest is also mentioned in 29:25,29; 37:3; 52:24; II Kgs. 25:18-21. He was assistant to the High Priest.

21:2 “inquire” This *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 205, KB 233) means to petition God on behalf of another (cf. 37:7; Ezek. 20:1,3). One Aramaic Targum translates it as “pray.” Zedekiah requests that YHWH act on Judah’s behalf against Babylon as He had done in the past (i.e., Isaiah 36-39). It was part of the covenant promises especially related to the conquest of Canaan in II Kings 18 from Isaiah to Hezekiah.

▣ **“Nebuchadnezzar”** The spelling here is closer to the Babylonian spelling. It (BDB 613, KB 660) means “Nebo protect the boundary” or “Nebo protect the heir to the crown.” See Appendix Three: A Brief Historical Survey of the Powers of Mesopotamia. The normal Hebrew spelling with an “N” may reflect a sarcastic corruption, “Nebo protect my mule.” The Jews loved to add vowels or consonants that made a name refer to something shameful.

▣ **“wonderful acts”** The king was hoping for a repeat of Isa. 37:36-37 or the “Holy War” of the Exodus or Joshua’s conquest of Canaan (cf. 32:16-25).

SPECIAL TOPIC: WONDERFUL THINGS (פלא)

This word (BDB 810) denotes actions that humans cannot accomplish themselves or can even explain, acts which cause wonder and awe (cf. Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:17,27; Zech. 8:6).

The VERB

1. the Exodus, Exod. 3:20; 34:10; Mic. 7:15
2. plagues, Deut. 28:59
3. crossing of Jordan, Josh. 3:5
4. past events of God, Jdgs. 6:13; I Chr. 16:9,12,24; Neh. 9:17
5. birth of Samson, Jdgs. 13:19
6. David's love for Jonathan, II Sam. 1:26
7. often in Job, 5:9; 9:10; 10:16; 37:5,14; 42:3
8. thirty-two times in the Psalms
9. YHWH's counsel, Isa. 28:29
10. YHWH's acts, Isa. 29:14 (twice); Joel 2:26

The NOUN

1. the Exodus, Exod. 15:11; Ps. 77:11,14; 78:12
2. in relation to the dead, Ps. 88:10,12
3. heaven praises YHWH's acts, Ps. 89:5
4. YHWH's laws, Ps. 119:129
5. YHWH's Messiah, Isa. 9:6
6. YHWH's acts, Isa. 25:1; 29:14
7. end-time actions, Dan. 12:6

God acts in powerful, redemptive ways to reveal Himself to His highest creation (mankind). He wants them to know Him and trust Him. His acts are revelation, the recording of those acts is inspiration, and the understanding of those acts is illumination. YHWH wants the world to know Him!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:3-7

³Then Jeremiah said to them, "You shall say to Zedekiah as follows: ⁴Thus says the LORD God of Israel, "Behold, I am about to turn back the weapons of war which are in your hands, with which you are warring against the king of Babylon and the Chaldeans who are besieging you outside the wall; and I will gather them into the center of this city. ⁵I Myself will war against you with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm, even in anger and wrath and great indignation. ⁶I will also strike down the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast; they will die of a great pestilence. ⁷Then afterwards," declares the LORD, "I will give over Zedekiah king of Judah and his servants and the people, even those who survive in this city from the pestilence, the sword and the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their foes and into the hand of those who seek their lives; and he will strike them down with the edge of the sword. He will not spare them nor have pity nor compassion."

21:4-7 This is not the answer from YHWH that Zedekiah was praying for. He wanted covenant mercy and promises without covenant faith and faithfulness!

YHWH spells out in graphic terms the “wonderful acts” He will do to faithless Judah/Jerusalem.

1. YHWH will not fight for Judah but will be with the Babylonian army (cf. 32:5; 33:5; 37:8-10; 38:2,17,18).
2. YHWH’s actions and emotions are described as (see Special Topic at 1:9)
 - a. an outstretched hand (cf. Exod. 6:6)
 - b. a mighty arm (cf. Deut. 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; 26:8)
 - c. angry
 - d. full of wrath
 - e. greatly indignant
 - f. setting His face against Jerusalem, v. 10
 - g. for harm and not for good, v. 10
 - h. giving Jerusalem to the king of Babylon to burn, v. 10
3. Like “Holy Way” (cf. Joshua 6), all that breathes, human and animal, will die.
4. The Davidic seed, Zedekiah, and his house and the survivors of the siege will be exiled.
5. Nebuchadnezzar will act as YHWH’s representative in judgment.
 - a. will not spare
 - b. will not have pity
 - c. will not have compassion (cf. 13:14; 16:5)

This is what the covenant people could not comprehend. YHWH, their God, fighting against them and His own temple! They had missed the key ingredients of

1. faith
2. faithfulness

The wonderful covenant with Abraham had conditions (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-28) and consequences!

21:4 “Chaldeans” This was the racial identity of southern Babylon; later the term became the title of the entire nation.

Herodotus (450 B.C.), *Hist.* I, uses this term to refer to an ethnic group (cf. II Kgs. 24:1-4; Dan. 5:30) as well as a priestly class (cf. Dan. 2:2; 3:8; 4:7; 5:7,11) whose usage goes back to Cyrus II. Even before this Assyrian records used the term (BDB 505) in an ethnic sense (cf. R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 1113). Also read the good discussion of the possibility of a confusion of two similar terms (i.e., Kal-du vs. Kasdu) in *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 14-15 or Robert Dick Wilson, *Studies in the Book of Daniel*, series 1.

Because Gen. 11:28 states that Ur of the Chaldeans was the home of Terah and his family, Chaldeans may have been ethnically Semitic (i.e., same racial group as the Hebrews).

21:7 “pestilence, the sword, and the famine” These are the typical description of the results of invasion and siege warfare (cf. 14:12). All of the surrounding villages gathered to the walled cities. Food, water, and sanitation became compromised.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:8-10

⁸“You shall also say to this people, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death. ⁹He who dwells in this city will die by the sword and by famine and by pestilence; but he who goes out and falls away to the Chaldeans who are besieging you will live, and he will have his own life as booty. ¹⁰For I have set My face against this city for harm and not for good,” declares the LORD. “It will be given into the hand of the king of Babylon and he will burn it with fire.””

21:8-10 This describes the conditional nature of the covenant. A good parallel text is Deut. 30:15-18. I have included my notes from that commentary here.

Deut. 30:15 “I have set before you today life and prosperity or death and adversity” Even covenant Israel had to choose! This is referring to the blessing and cursing (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28). Remember the choice is set in a covenant of grace. This is very similar to Wisdom Literature’s idiom of the “two ways” (cf. Pro. 4:10-19; Jer. 21:8; Matt. 7:13-14). Our choices show who we are! How we respond to life’s inexplicable “in and outs” reveals our spiritual orientation!

30:16-18 These verses are a summary of covenant conditions and consequences:

1. the responsibility (cf. 8:6; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9)
 - a. “to love the Lord,” v. 16 (BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
 - b. “walk in His ways,” v. 16 (BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
 - c. “keep His commandments,” v. 16 (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* INFINITIVE)
2. the consequences of obedience
 - a. “you may live,” v. 16 (BDB 310, KB 309, *Qal* PERFECT)
 - b. “you may multiply,” v. 16 (BDB 915, KB 1156, *Qal* PERFECT)
 - c. “your God may bless you,” v. 16 (BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* PERFECT)
3. the conditions and consequences of disobedience
 - a. if your heart turns away,” v. 17 (BDB 815, KB 937, *Qal* IMPERFECT)
 - b. “if you will not obey,” v. 17; (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERFECT)
 - c. idolatry
 - (1) drawn away (BDB 623, KB 673, *Niphal* PERFECT)
 - (2) worship (BDB 1005, KB 295, *Hishtaphel* PERFECT)
 - (3) serve (BDB 712, KB 773, *Qal* PERFECT)
 - d. “you shall surely perish,” v. 18 (BDB 1, KB 2, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Qal* IMPERFECT, which expresses intensity)
 - e. “you shall not prolong your days,” v. 18 (BDB 73, KB 88, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT)

Notice how v. 20 reinforces these covenant responsibilities so that the Patriarchal blessing can be fulfilled! This terminology is characteristic of Deuteronomy.

In this context the term “life” refers to physical deliverance from death at the hands of the Babylonian army. The Deuteronomy passage refers to the blessings of the obeyed covenant of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-29.

21:9 “he who goes out. . .will live” Jeremiah is asserting YHWH’s promise that if they surrender (cf. 38:2; 39:18; 45:5) they will be exiled but will live.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:11-12

¹¹“Then say to the household of the king of Judah, ‘Hear the word of the LORD,

¹²O house of David, thus says the LORD:

“Administer justice every morning;

And deliver the *person* who has been robbed from the power of *his* oppressor,

That My wrath may not go forth like fire

And burn with none to extinguish *it*,

Because of the evil of their deeds.

21:11-14 These are words to the royal Davidic house. Some English translations have one strophe, some two. The reason this information is important is that each strophe, like each paragraph, has one main truth/point. Outlining by strophe/paragraph an interpreter can find the intent of the original author more clearly.

21:12 YHWH seems still to hold open the chance that Judah's leadership may repent, as seen in their actions.

1. administer justice every morning (BDB 192, KB 220, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 7:5; 22:3; probably at the city gate, early each day)
2. deliver the person who has been robbed from the power of the oppressor (BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

If they change (cf. I Kgs. 6:12-13) then YHWH will relent of the judgment He plans to send but if not, "wrath. . .fire" (cf. 4:4).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:13-14

¹³**"Behold, I am against you, O valley dweller,**

O rocky plain," declares the LORD,

"You men who say, 'Who will come down against us?

Or who will enter into our habitations?'

¹⁴**But I will punish you according to the results of your deeds," declares the LORD,**

"And I will kindle a fire in its forest

That it may devour all its environs."'"

21:13-14 These two verses address those Judeans who live in the hills and remote valleys of Judah. They thought they would be safe, but not so!

JEREMIAH 22

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Warnings of Jerusalem's Fall	Message to the House of David (21:11-22:10)	Oracles Concerning the Royal House (21:11-23:8)	Jeremiah's Message to the Royal House of Judah	Address to the Royal Family of Judah (21:11-22:9)
22:1-7	22:1-5	22:1-7	22:1-5	22:1-5
(6b-7)	22:6-9 (6b-7)	(6b-7)	22:6-7	22:6-7 (6b-7)
22:8-9		22:8-10	22:8-9	22:8-9
			Jeremiah's Message Concerning Jehoahaz	Prophecies Against Various Kings: Against Jehoahaz
22:10 (10)	22:10 (10)	(10)	22:10 (10)	22:10 (10)
	Message to the Sons of Josiah			
22:11-12	22:11-12	22:11-17	22:11-12	22:11-12
Message About the Kings			Jeremiah's Message Concerning Jehoiakim	Against Jehoiakim
22:13-17 (13-17)	22:13-14 (13-14)	(13-17)	22:13-17 (13-17)	22:13-17 (13-17)
	22:15-17 (15-17)			
22:18-23 (18b-23)	22:18-19 (18b-19)	22:18-23 (18b-23)	22:18-19 (18b-19)	22:18-19 (18b-19)
			Jeremiah's Message About the Fate of Jerusalem	Against Jehoiachin
	22:20-23 (20-23)		22:20-23 (20-23)	22:20-23 (20-23)
	Message to Coniah		God's Judgment of Jehoiachin	
22:24-30 (28-30)	22:24-28 (28)	22:24-30 (28-30)	22:24-27	22:24-30 (28-30)
			22:28-30	
	22:29-30 (29-30)		(29-30)	

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- B. Zedekiah (BDB 843), another of Josiah's sons, was placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar II, king of Babylon (cf. II Kgs. 24:17). He reigned from 597-586 B.C. He was king when Jerusalem fell. He was loyal to Babylon for eight years. Then a pro-Egyptian nationalist party persuaded him to revolt. See Appendix Four: Kings of the Divided Monarchy.
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 1. time
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- E. Remember Nebuchadnezzar's army captured Jerusalem several times: 605 B.C., 586 B.C., and 582 B.C. They destroyed the city and temple in 586 B.C.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:1-7

¹Thus says the LORD, “Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and there speak this word ²and say, ‘Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, who sits on David’s throne, you and your servants and your people who enter these gates. ³Thus says the LORD, “Do justice and righteousness, and deliver the one who has been robbed from the power of *his* oppressor. Also do not mistreat *or* do violence to the stranger, the orphan, or the widow; and do not shed innocent blood in this place. ⁴For if you men will indeed perform this thing, then kings will enter the gates of this house, sitting in David’s place on his throne, riding in chariots and on horses, *even the king* himself and his servants and his people. ⁵But if you will not obey these words, I swear by Myself,” declares the LORD, “that this house will become a desolation.””” ⁶For thus says the LORD concerning the house of the king of Judah:

“You are *like* Gilead to Me,
Like the summit of Lebanon;
Yet most assuredly I will make you like a wilderness,
Like cities which are not inhabited.
⁷“For I will set apart destroyers against you,
Each with his weapons;
And they will cut down your choicest cedars
And throw *them* on the fire.

22:1-2 The directions to Jeremiah are emphatic.

1. go – BDB 432, KB 434, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (“go down” refers to the palace, being on a lower hill than the temple, cf. 26:10)
2. speak – BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* PERFECT
3. hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

22:1 “the house of the king of Judah” All of this chapter is a word play on “house,” meaning

1. descendants (cf. II Samuel 7)
2. king’s palace (vv. 13-14 speak of enlarging and beautifying the palace in an attempt to be a great king)

Only God can build a house (cf. Ps. 127:1-3). God’s house is depicted as

1. His temple (cf. II Samuel 7)
2. His king (cf. II Samuel 7)
3. His people

All will be captured, destroyed, or exiled!

22:3 There is a series of commands addressed to the Davidic King which addresses covenant faithfulness.

1. do justice – BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (see Special Topic at 4:2)
2. do righteousness – same as #1 (see Special Topic at 4:2)
3. deliver the one who has been robbed – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
4. do not mistreat the stranger, the orphan, or the widow – BDB 413, KB 416, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
5. do not do violence to (the group mentioned in #4) – BDB 329, KB 329, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

- do not shed innocent blood (lit. “pour out”) – BDB 1049, KB 1629, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (this could refer to murder or child sacrifice)

▣ **“the stranger, the orphan, or the widow”** This is a key phrase from Deuteronomy. It characterized YHWH’s action and care (Deut. 10:18; Ps. 146:8-10). It is mentioned several times in Deuteronomy.

- help them – 14:29; 24:17,19
- rejoice with them – 16:1
- special offering for them – 26:12-13
- cursings if one distorts their justice – 27:19

22:4 “if” The verse states the conditional element which is related to the actual doing of the covenant commands of v. 4. Verse 4 is first found in 17:25.

▣ **“then”** Here are the promises to the king if he will be faithful to the covenant.

- kings (i.e., generations of kings) will enter the gates of this house
- sit on David’s throne
- riding in chariots and on horses with his household

22:5 Again the conditional “if.” YHWH swears (BDB 989, KB 1396, *Niphal* PERFECT) by Himself that if covenant faithlessness continues, Jerusalem and the temple will become a desolation (BDB 352)! YHWH’s oath has a sense of certainty and finality (cf. Gen. 22:16; Amos 6:8; Heb. 6:13).

22:6-7 This is a brief poem describing the desolation.

- Judah will become a wilderness (BDB 184)
- Judah’s cities will be uninhabited (BDB 442, KB 444, *Niphal* PERFECT [*Qere*])
- YHWH will consecrate (i.e., “set apart for His service,” BDB 872, KB 1073, *Piel* PERFECT, cf. 6:4) the armed destroyers (i.e., this is “holy war” terminology. The point being YHWH is not on Judah’s side).
 - cut down your best forest (i.e., cities, cf. Isa. 10:33-34)
 - burn them

Just a textual note, the last VERB of v. 6, “inhabited” (BDB 442, KB 442), in the MT, is a *Niphal* PARTICIPLE, SINGULAR, but the Masoretic scholars suggested (*Qere*) a *Niphal* PERFECT, PLURAL.

▣ **“You are like Gilead to Me”** These first two lines of poetry in v. 6b and c are parallel and address the royal house. The imagery is that as Gilead and Lebanon were beautiful and forested, so too, the house (palace) of Judah. But it will be destroyed! The house of the king (physical and seed) and the house of the Lord will both be destroyed! Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-28 have come to painful reality!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:8-9

⁸“Many nations will pass by this city; and they will say to one another, ‘Why has the LORD done thus to this great city?’ ⁹Then they will answer, ‘Because they forsook the covenant of the LORD their God and bowed down to other gods and served them.’”

22:8-9 Verse 8 expressed the theological question connected to YHWH’s judgment of His own covenant people (cf. 16:10; Deut. 28:24-26; I Kgs. 9:8-9; II Chr. 7:20-22).

Moses' prayer of intercession for Israel entreated YHWH about this very issue (cf. Exod. 32:11-13) and YHWH changed His mind (cf. Exod. 32:14). But the covenant people had become so idolatrous (cf. 1:16; 5:19; 8:2; 16:11) and rebellious that only radical surgery could save their corporate life.

Remember, in that day every nation had its own national deity. The more powerful deity won the battles for its people. Some might think that YHWH was weak because

1. the northern kingdom (Israel) was exiled by Assyria
2. the southern kingdom (Judah) was defeated and exiled several times by Babylon (605, 597, 586, 582 B.C.)

The real problem was the sin of the covenant people (cf. v. 9; II Chr. 34:25), not YHWH!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:10

**¹⁰Do not weep for the dead or mourn for him,
But weep continually for the one who goes away;
For he will never return
Or see his native land.**

22:10-12 This brief poem and prose conclusion addresses the issue of the Davidic seed (Shallum or Jehoahaz, son of Josiah) exiled! This seems to violate II Sam. 7:13-17, but the reality of Ezekiel 18 must also be taken into account. YHWH's promises are sure but they are conditional in relation to individual leaders' volition. Sin has consequences!

There is a series of commands in v. 10.

1. do not weep for the dead – BDB 113, KB 129, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. do not mourn for him – BDB 626, KB 678, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. weep continually – BDB a *Qal* IMPERATIVE and INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE from the same root (BDB 113, KB 129)

The king shall never return from captivity! There may be a word play on “return” (BDB 996, KB 1427), which can mean

1. repent
2. return

He was capable of neither!

The AB and UBS Handbook suggest that “the dead” of v. 10a refers to King Josiah, killed by the Egyptian army at Megiddo in 609 B.C. (Cf. II Kgs. 23:28-35; II Chr. 35:20-25). The phrase “who departs” (v. 10b) refers to Jehoahaz (Shallum, cf. I Chr. 3:15), who was Josiah's son who succeeded him but was exiled to Egypt three months later by Pharaoh Necho (cf. II Kgs. 23:31-34; II Chr. 36:2-4).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:11-12

¹¹For thus says the LORD in regard to Shallum the son of Josiah, king of Judah, who became king in the place of Josiah his father, who went forth from this place, “He will never return there; ¹²but in the place where they led him captive, there he will die and not see this land again.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:13-17

**¹³“Woe to him who builds his house without righteousness
And his upper rooms without justice,
Who uses his neighbor's services without pay
And does not give him his wages,
¹⁴Who says, ‘I will build myself a roomy house**

**With spacious upper rooms,
And cut out its windows,
Paneling *it* with cedar and painting *it* bright red.’**

¹⁵Do you become a king because you are competing in cedar?

**Did not your father eat and drink
And do justice and righteousness?
Then it was well with him.**

¹⁶He pled the cause of the afflicted and needy;

**Then it was well.
Is not that what it means to know Me?”
Declares the LORD.**

¹⁷“But your eyes and your heart

**Are *intent* only upon your own dishonest gain,
And on shedding innocent blood
And on practicing oppression and extortion.”**

22:13-23 This long strophe is addressed to King Jehoiakim and is related to the Davidic promises of II Samuel 7.

Notice the “woe” (BDB 222) of v. 13 and “alas” (DB 222, four times) of v. 18.

Jehoiakim is condemned because

1. he builds his house without righteousness (i.e., II Kgs. 23:34-35)
 - a. palace
 - b. royal family
2. so opposite of Josiah (cf. vv. 15-16) who “knew” (BDB 395) YHWH. To know YHWH is to live in covenant obedience and compassion. David’s reign is described by these terms in II Sam. 8:15.
 - a. Josiah did justice
 - b. Josiah did righteousness
 - c. Josiah pled the cause of
 - (1) the afflicted
 - (2) the needy
 - d. it was well with him (vv. 15d, 16b)
3. Jehoiakim (v. 17)
 - a. intent on dishonest gain
 - b. shed innocent blood
 - c. practiced oppression
 - d. practiced extortion (note 5:20,29, like King, like people)
4. results
 - a. no lament for him in his death (v. 18)
 - b. had a donkey’s burial (v. 19)
 - c. no one to lament (v. 20) because all political alliances (i.e., “lovers”) have been crushed
5. YHWH spoke to him (v. 21) or a way of referring to Jerusalem
 - a. in your prosperity
 - b. in your youth
 - c. but he would not (same VERB)
 - (1) listen
 - (2) obey

22:16

NASB, NJB

“Is not that what it means to know Me?”

NKJV

“Was not this knowing Me?”

NRSV

“Is not this to know me?”

TEV

“That is what it means to know the Lord”

JPSOA

“That is truly heeding Me”

JPSOA (footnote) “That is the reward for heeding Me”

LXX

“Is not this so, because you do not know me?”

REB

“Did not this show he knew me?”

The MT has “not this to know me?” Knowing YHWH involves several aspects.

1. personal faith relationship (i.e., prayer and worship)
2. cognitive belief (i.e., Scripture truly reveals God)
3. volition (i.e., acting on the truth you know; lifestyle faith)

All are crucial! All reflect biblical faith (cf. Deut. 10:12-13; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:8).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:18-23

¹⁸Therefore thus says the LORD in regard to Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah,

“They will not lament for him:

‘Alas, my brother!’ or, ‘Alas, sister!’

They will not lament for him:

‘Alas for the master!’ or, ‘Alas for his splendor!’

¹⁹He will be buried with a donkey’s burial,

Dragged off and thrown out beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

²⁰Go up to Lebanon and cry out,

And lift up your voice in Bashan;

Cry out also from Abarim,

For all your lovers have been crushed.

²¹I spoke to you in your prosperity;

But you said, ‘I will not listen!’

This has been your practice from your youth,

That you have not obeyed My voice.

²²The wind will sweep away all your shepherds,

And your lovers will go into captivity;

Then you will surely be ashamed and humiliated

Because of all your wickedness.

²³You who dwell in Lebanon,

Nested in the cedars,

How you will groan when pangs come upon you,

Pain like a woman in childbirth!”

22:20-23 The NJB thinks that these verses address Jehoiachin, who reigned only three months, before being removed and exiled by Nebuchadnezzar. However, the TEV and UBS *Handbook* think these verses are addressed to Judah/Jerusalem (FEMININE SINGULAR VERBS).

It is difficult to know exactly which verses refer to which Davidic king. The NKJV version simply titles the section “Message to the sons of Josiah.”

22:20 There are three mountain ranges mentioned.

1. Lebanon (i.e., Mt. Hermon or its foothills)
2. Bashan (i.e., mountains in TransJordan to the northwest)
3. Abarim (i.e., mountains of Moab, cf. Num. 27:12; Deut. 32:49)

One wonders why these places?

1. the higher elevations were used as places of *Ba'al* worship
2. these are the places to which some Judeans fled to hide from and escape the invasion
3. this is sarcasm of the grief Judah felt over the loss of her foreign alliances
4. they describe the full extent of David's kingdom and the limits of the Promised Land

▣ **“your lovers”** This refers to all of Judah's political alliances (cf. 2:25; 3:1) in the armies of foreign nations instead of YHWH (cf. Ps. 20:7; 33:16-17; Isa. 31:1; also note Eccl. 9:11).

22:21 “I will not listen!”

This has been your practice from your youth The covenant people had been a stiffnecked, rebellious people (cf. 7:22-26) from the beginning (i.e., two early examples: Exodus 32 and Numbers 16).

22:22 Notice how “shepherds” (Judah's civic and religious leaders, cf. 1:18; 2:8; 10:21; 23:2) are paralleled with “lovers” (foreign alliances). What a sad situation!

22:23 “You who dwell in Lebanon,

Nested in the cedars” This seems to be a literary figure of speech referring to the royal family in Jerusalem. The king's palace was known as “the House of the Cedars of Lebanon” (cf. I Kgs. 7:2; 10:17).

▣

NASB, NKJV,

NJB, LXX

Peshitta, Vulgate **“How you will groan”**

NKJV **“How gracious will you be”**

MT, TEV **“How pitied you will be”**

The MT has נהנת from נהן, BDB 335, KB 334, *Niphal* PERFECT. The LXX reflects נהת (there are several roots starting with an “n” meaning “groan” (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 3). Either fits the context and parallelism.

▣ **“Pain like a woman in childbirth”** This imagery (BDB 408) was used earlier in 4:31; 6:24; 13:21 (also note 30:6; 49:24; 50:43). The pain, though expected, is sudden and intense! The imagery is often used in judgment contexts.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:24-30

²⁴“As I live,” declares the LORD, “even though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were a signet *ring* on My right hand, yet I would pull you off; ²⁵and I will give you over into the hand of those who are seeking your life, yes, into the hand of those whom you dread, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of the Chaldeans. ²⁶I will hurl you and your mother who bore you into another country where you were not born, and there you will die. ²⁷But as for the land to which they desire to return, they will not return to it.

²⁸Is this man Coniah a despised, shattered jar?

Or is he an undesirable vessel?

**Why have he and his descendants been hurled out
And cast into a land that they had not known?**

**²⁹O land, land, land,
Hear the word of the LORD!**

**³⁰Thus says the LORD,
'Write this man down childless,
A man who will not prosper in his days;
For no man of his descendants will prosper
Sitting on the throne of David
Or ruling again in Judah.'**

22:24-30 This is specifically addressed to Coniah (i.e., Jeconiah, cf. 24:1), also known by his throne name, Jehoiachin (cf. v. 24). He was exiled in 597 B.C. to Babylon (cf. II Kgs. 24:8-17; 25:27-30). Verses 28-30 are poetry, while vv. 24-27 are prose.

22:24 “As I live” This is a recurrent oath formula where YHWH swears by Himself (cf. v. 5; 44:26; 49:13; 51:14; Gen. 22:16; Deut. 32:40; Isa. 45:23; Amos 6:8). It is a word play on His covenant name, YHWH, from the Hebrew VERB “to be.” Covenant people were “to swear by His name” (cf. 4:2; 12:16; Deut. 6:13; 10:20).

22:24 “signet ring on My right hand” This is Hebrew imagery for the Davidic royal family, especially the current reigning descendant of David (cf. Hag. 2:23).

22:25 Notice how specific and repetitive is the reference to Jehoiachin’s captors.

1. into the hand of those who are seeking your life
2. into the hand of those whom you dread
3. into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon
4. into the hand of the Chaldeans

For the idiom using “hand” see Special Topic at 1:9.

22:27 “they desire” The UBS *Handbook for Translators* (p. 489) points out that this English phrase is a translation of a Hebrew idiom “they will lift up their souls” (cf. 44:14).

22:28-30 The poem is addressed to Coniah/Jehoiachin (cf. I Chr. 3:16). He has become a vessel of dishonor (cf. 25:34; Hos. 8:8). The potter (YHWH) makes different vessels. Some are spoiled.

1. remade (unfired)
2. destroyed (fired)

The promises of II Samuel 7 are vacated/annulled. No more descendants on the throne (i.e., he had children but none ruled, cf. v. 30)! This was absolutely shocking to Judeans. YHWH’s promise nullified! They forgot that the promises to individuals are always conditional! This opens the theological door for a “new” covenant (cf. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38)!

It is very clear who is being described but it is not clear who is speaking.

1. the people of Judah/Jerusalem
2. the prophet Jeremiah (cf. v. 29)

22:29 “O land, land, land” The threefold repetition was a Hebraic idiom of intensity (cf. 7:4; Isa. 6:3; Ezek. 21:27), although some grammarians think it was a liturgical chant. It is even possible that “the land” (see

Special Topic at 6:18-19) was functioning as a legal witness in this court genre. The land of Palestine is experiencing the judgment of God because of the sin of God's people. The curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-28 have come in full force! After one reads this text, they are so grateful for Rom. 8:18-25! The new covenant is wonderful!

The word translated "land" has several connotations. See Special Topic at 6:18-19.

22:30 "Write this man down childless" This command from YHWH seems to be unfulfilled because Jehoiachin had several children (cf. I Chr. 3:16-17). However, they never sat on David's throne. A good discussion of the seeming contradiction is found in *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, p. 310. Another good source for interpreting prophetic literature is D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*, especially pp. 151-154.

JEREMIAH 23

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Coming Messiah: The Righteous Branch	The Branch of Righteousness	Messianic Oracle	Hope For the Future	Messianic Prophecies: The Future King
23:1-4	23:1-4	23:1-4	23:1-4	23:1-4
23:5-6 (5-6)	23:5-6 (5-6)	23:5-6	23:5-6	23:5-6 (5-6)
23:7-8	23:7-8	23:7-8	23:7-8	23:7-8
False Prophets Denounced	False Prophets and Empty Oracles	Oracles Concerning the Prophets	Jeremiah's Message About the Prophets	A Tract Against the False Prophets
23:9-12 (9-12)	23:9-10 (9-10)	23:9-15 (9-15)	23:9-10 (9-10)	23:9 (9)
				23:10-12 (10-12)
	23:11-15 (11-15)		23:11-14 (11-14)	
23:13-15 (13-14)				23:13-15 (13-15)
(15b)			23:15 (15b)	
23:16-22 (16-22)	23:16-17 (16-17)	23:16-17	23:16-17	2:16-17 (16-17)
	23:18-20 (18-20)	23:18-20 (18-20)	23:18-20	23:18
				23:19-22 (19-22)
	23:21-22 (21-22)	23:21-22 (21-22)	23:21-22	
23:23-24 (23-24)	23:23-24 (23-24)	23:23-32	23:23-32	23:23-24 (23-24)
23:25-32	23:25-27			23:25-28a
	23:28-29 (28-29)			23:28b-29 (28b-29)
	23:30-32		The LORD'S Burden	23:30-32
23:33-40	23:33-40	23:33-40	23:33-40	23:23
				23:34-40

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The literary context of chapter 23 starts in 21:11-14, which begins YHWH's word to the royal house of Judah.
- B. The basic outline of 22:1-23:8
 1. Zedekiah, 22:1-9
 2. Shallum, 22:10-12 (Jehoahaz)
 3. Jehoiakim, 22:13-23
 4. Jehoiachim, 22:24-30 (Coniah)
 5. Zedekiah, 23:1-8 (although Zedekiah is not mentioned by name in 23:1-8, if the shepherd series continues, he is the object of the message)
- C. This chapter is a sharp contrast between the false shepherd and YHWH's Righteous Branch (i.e., Messiah). The contrast is heightened by the use of
 1. say – BDB 55, KB 65, used 16 times
 2. speak – BDB 180, KB 210, used 5 times
 3. prophesy – BDB 612, KB 659, used 6 times
- D. This chapter has several titles for Judah's Deity.
 1. the LORD God of Israel, v. 2
 2. a righteous branch, v. 5
 3. the LORD our righteousness (Davidic Messiah's name), v. 6
 4. the LORD of hosts, vv. 15,16,36
 5. a God who is near, v. 23
 6. not a God far off, v. 23
 7. the living God, v. 36
 8. our God, v. 36

- E. In the midst of terrible judgment comes the wonderful promise of YHWH's righteous Branch! There is hope; there will be salvation; there will be justice! A new day will arise from the ashes of judgment.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:1-4

¹“Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!” declares the LORD. ²Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: “You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,” declares the LORD. ³“Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply. ⁴I will also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares the LORD.

23:1-4 This is a “woe” strophe (i.e., funeral dirge, a 3/2 meter/beat). The false shepherds (prophets, priests, civic leaders):

1. are destroying YHWH's flock, v. 1
2. are scattering YHWH's flock, vv. 1-2
3. have not attended YHWH's flock, v. 2
4. have driven them away, v. 2

YHWH will raise up true shepherds.

1. He will gather His flock, v. 3
2. they will be fruitful and multiply, v. 3 (the expressed desire of YHWH in Gen. 1:22,28; 9:1,7)
3. good shepherds will tend them, v. 4
4. they will not be afraid or terrified any longer, v. 4
5. none of them are missing, v. 4

YHWH's special Davidic leader (cf. Ezekiel 34):

1. Davidic seed
2. righteous seed
3. Branch (cf. 30:9; 33:15-16; Isa. 4:2; 11:1-5; 53:2; Zech. 3:8; 6:12-13)
4. He will reign as king, v. 5
5. He will act wisely, v. 5
6. He will do justice and righteousness, v. 5
7. His name will be “the LORD our righteousness,” v. 6

What a contrast!

1. the wicked leaders do not attend YHWH's flock. He will attend them for their evil deeds, v. 2
2. the righteous leader will
 - a. save, v. 6 (i.e., physical deliverance)
 - b. cause to dwell securely, v. 6
 - c. return them to the Promised Land, v. 8 (i.e., reflects the land promise of Gen. 12:1-3)

The God who acts, will act (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38)! The Good Shepherd will come (John 10), but He will be rejected (cf. Zechariah 11).

23:3 “I Myself shall gather the remnant of My flock” Notice that the problem of fallen human's, even covenant humans, inability to follow God is answered by God Himself acting on their behalf. This is the

“new covenant” of 31:31-34 (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). The new covenant is based on grace, not performance (i.e., Rom. 3:21-31; Galatians 3; the book of Hebrews).

The term “remnant” has several meanings. See Special Topic at 5:10-13. However, in this context it carries the dual meaning of

1. returnee from exile
2. the faithful followers of YHWH

This chapter makes it hard to distinguish between the return from exile and the future Messianic reign (cf. v. 4).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:5-6

⁵“Behold, *the* days are coming,” declares the LORD,
“When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch;
And He will reign as king and act wisely
And do justice and righteousness in the land.
⁶In His days Judah will be saved,
And Israel will dwell securely;
And this is His name by which He will be called,
‘The LORD our righteousness.’”

23:5 “I will raise up for David a righteous Branch” This is literally “sprout,” BDB 855. This was a symbol of life out of death. It was used of the Messiah in 33:15-16; Zech. 3:8; 6:12; the same concept but different terms in Isa. 11:1 (“twig,” BDB 310 and “shoot,” BDB 666); 53:2 (“young plant,” BDB 413; “a root,” BDB 1057). It (BDB 855) apparently refers to Zerubbabel in Zechariah, but foreshadows the Messiah.

In the midst of oracles of judgment, judgment, judgment, comes hope, promise, and a new leader, a new day! The concept of a Messiah is recurrent in the OT although the term is not. The Aramaic Targums read “Messiah” in this context, paralleling “Branch,” which shows the rabbis of that day saw this text as Messianic. See *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 343-344, for the title’s four different usages.

I would like to add my comments from Isaiah 4:2 which includes brief quotes from Zech. 3:8; 6:12, and a Special Topic.

Isa. 4:2 “the Branch of the LORD” To describe this title (BDB 855, Targums interpreted it as the Messiah) let me quote from my commentary on Daniel and Zechariah where the term is also used (but just a note of caution, we must be careful about assigning a technical meaning everywhere a word or phrase is used—context, context, context is crucial). This term may have developed over time from a reference to ideal abundance to God’s special Servant who will restore that abundance (i.e., a shoot, a branch).

Let me share notes from my commentary on Zechariah.

Zech. 3:8 “the Branch” This may be “sprout” (BDB 855). This is another Messianic title (cf. 6:12; Isa. 4:2; 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15). See full discussion and Special Topic: Jesus the Nazarene at Dan. 4:15.

This title is used of Zerubbabel in 6:12 as a symbol of the royal Davidic line. It is surprising that it is used in this context, which emphasizes the priestly aspect of the Messiah. The twin aspects of redeemer (priestly, cf. Isaiah 53) and administrative leader (kingly, cf. Isa. 9:6-7) are merged in the book of Zechariah (cf. chapter 4).

Zech. 6:12 “Branch” This word (BDB 855) means “sprout” (cf. 3:8; 6:12; Isa. 4:2; 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15). This is a title for the Messiah. In Zechariah it refers to Zerubbabel as a type of the Messiah (cf. Ibn Ezra and Rashi). The name, Zerubbabel, in Akkadian, means “shoot of Babylon.” This was possibly a play on his name since he rebuilt the temple in 516 B.C., but it is really an ultimate reference to Jesus. This title and the matching VERB (“will branch out,” *Qal IMPERFECT*) appear together in this verse.

SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS THE NAZARENE

There are several different Greek terms that the NT uses to precisely designate which Jesus is being referenced.

1. NT Terms

- a. Nazareth - the city in Galilee (cf. Luke 1:26; 2:4,39,51; 4:16; Acts 10:38). This city is not mentioned in contemporary sources, but has been found in later inscriptions.

For Jesus to be from Nazareth was not a compliment (cf. John 1:46). The sign over Jesus’ cross, which included this place name, was a sign of Jewish contempt.

- b. *Nazarēnos* - seems to also refer to a geographical location (cf. Luke 4:34; 24:19).
 - c. *Nazōraios* - may refer to a city, but could also be a play on the Hebrew Messianic term “Branch” (*netzer*, cf. Isa. 4:2; 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12; in the NT Rev. 22:16). Luke uses this of Jesus in 18:37 and Acts 2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 22:8; 24:5; 26:9.
 - d. Related to #c., *nāzir*, which means consecrated one by means of a vow.
- ### 2. Historical usages outside the NT. This designation has other historical usages.
- a. It denoted a Jewish (pre-Christian) heretical group (Aramaic *nāsōrayyā*).
 - b. It was used in Jewish circles to describe believers in Christ (cf. Acts 24:5,14; 28:22, *nosri*).
 - c. It became the regular term to denote believers in the Syrian (Aramaic) churches. “Christian” was used in the Greek churches to denote believers.
 - d. Sometime after the fall of Jerusalem, the Pharisees reorganized at Jamnia and instigated a formal separation between the synagogue and the church. An example of the type of curse formulas against Christians is found in “the Eighteen Benedictions” from *Berakoth* 28b-29a, which calls the believers “Nazarenes.”

“May the Nazarenes and heretics disappear in a moment; they shall be erased from the book of life and not be written with the faithful.”

- e. It was used by Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 126:1 who used Isaiah’s *netzer* of Jesus.
- ### 3. Author’s opinion
- I am surprised by so many spellings of the term, although I know this is not unheard of in the OT as “Joshua” has several different spellings in Hebrew. Yet, because of
- a. the close association with the Messianic term “Branch”
 - b. combined with the negative context
 - c. little or no contemporary attestation to the city of Nazareth in Galilee
 - d. it coming from the mouth of a demon in an eschatological sense (i.e., “Have you come to destroy us?”),

I remain uncertain as to its precise meaning.

For a full bibliography of studies of this word group by scholarship see Colin Brown (ed.), *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 2, p. 346, or Raymond E. Brown, *Birth*, pp. 209-213, 223-225.

- ▣ A description of YHWH’s “Branch” (NKJV, NRSV, JB)
 1. beautiful, BDB 840, cf. Jer. 3:19 (often used of Promised Land in Dan. 8:9; 11:16,41)
 2. glorious, BDB 458 means “abundance,” “honor,” and “glory” (“glory,” BDB 802, also in this verse)

These two terms are often used together (cf. 13:19; 28:1,4,5).

Some versions take this verse as a reference to plant growth in the period of restoration (LXX, Peshitta, TEV, NJB, REB, NET Bible). In a sense the Messiah and the age of restoration are lexically linked (first part of v. 2; second part fruitful Promised Land).

This is also from my notes on Isaiah 11:1:

11:1 “a shoot” This rare word found only here in the OT (“twig,” “branch,” or “shoot” translated “rod” in Pro. 14:3, BDB 310, KB 307), obviously refers to a supernatural Davidic descendant (cf. 6:13; II Samuel 7; Rev. 22:16). Out of this seemingly dead stump (i.e., exiled Judah) will come a new king! This imagery (but different Hebrew word) is seen again in the Suffering Servant Song of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (i.e., v. 2).

The Jewish Study Bible (p. 807) adds an interesting comment on “stump.”

“If the translation ‘stump’ is correct, then the passage may presume that the Davidic dynasty will (or has) come to an end; this reading would deviate significantly from Isaiah’s notion that Davidic kings will reign eternally (cf. II Sam. 7:8-16; Ps. 89:20-37). But the Hebrew ‘geza’ refers not only to a stump of a tree that has been cut down but also to the trunk of a living tree.”

I cannot confirm this meaning for “shoot” unless it is 40:24.

- ▣ **“from the stem of Jesse”** Jesse was King David’s father. This future descendant is mentioned in v. 10; 9:7; 16:5.

The OT gives the lineage of the Special Coming One, the Anointed One.

1. from the tribe of Judah, Gen. 49:8-12, esp. v. 10 and Rev. 5:5
2. from the family of Jesse, II Samuel 7

The special child of the new age has now been identified as a special ruler. His person will characterize the new age (cf. Jer. 23:5).

- ▣ **“a branch from his roots”** The NOUN “branch,” “sprout,” or “shoot” (BDB 666, cf. 14:19; 60:21; Dan. 11:7) is parallel to “branch” or “sprout” (BDB 855, cf. 4:2; 61:11). New growth will come! See Special Topic at 4:2.

- ▣ **“will bear fruit”** The MT has the VERB “bear fruit” (פָּרָה, BDB 826, KB 963, *Qal* IMPERFECT, Dead Sea Scrolls, NASB), but most ancient and modern versions assume a similar VERB, פָּרָה (BDB 827).

1. NKJV, NRSV, Peshitta, “shall grow out”
2. NJB, “will grow”

3. LXX, Targums, “shall come up”
4. REB, “will spring from”
5. JPSOA, “shall sprout”

The second option fits the parallelism best!

SPECIAL TOPIC: MESSIAH

This is taken from my commentary note at Daniel 9:6. The difficulty in interpreting this verse is because of the possible meanings associated with the term Messiah or anointed one (BDB 603).

1. used of Jewish kings (e.g., I Sam. 2:10; 12:3)
2. used of Jewish priests (e.g., Lev. 4:3,5)
3. used of Cyrus (cf. Isa. 45:1)
4. #1 and #2 are combined in Psalm 110 and Zechariah 4
5. used of God’s special coming, Davidic King to bring in the new age of righteousness
 - a. line of Judah (cf. Gen. 49:10)
 - b. house of Jesse (cf. II Samuel 7)
 - c. universal reign (cf. Psalm 2; Isa. 9:6; 11:1-5; Mic. 5:1-4ff)

I personally am attracted to the identification of “an anointed one” with Jesus of Nazareth because of

1. the introduction of an eternal Kingdom in Daniel 2 during the fourth empire
2. the introduction of “a son of man” in Dan. 7:13 being given an eternal kingdom
3. the redemptive clauses of Dan. 9:24, which point toward a culmination of fallen world history
4. Jesus’ use of the book of Daniel in the NT (cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14)

23:6 “Judah. . . Israel” This would predict the reunited kingdom. The United Monarchy split in 922 B.C. under Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, and Jeroboam II, an Ephraimitic labor leader (cf. I Kings 12).

▣ **“The LORD our righteousness”** This may be a play on the name “Zedekiah,” which means “the Lord is righteous,” the person Nebuchadnezzar put on the throne to replace Jehoiachin (cf. II Kings 24). It is a descriptive Messianic title in 30:15; 33:16. It is parallel to “a righteous Branch” in v. 5.

23:7,8 This is a repeated literary piece from 16:14-15. The same sentiment is found in Isa. 43:18-19. A new day is coming (cf. 16:14; Hos. 3:4-5)! The new age of the Spirit, the new age of righteousness, the new age of the Messiah is coming!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:7-8

⁷“Therefore behold, *the* days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when they will no longer say, ‘As the LORD lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ ⁸but, ‘As the LORD lives, who brought up and led back the descendants of the household of Israel from *the* north land and from all the countries where I had driven them.’ Then they will live on their own soil.”

23:7 “As the LORD lives” See note at 22:24.

23:8 “who brought up and led back” As YHWH’s power and grace were seen in the Exodus, so too, in the return from exile!

▣ **“from the north land”** Assyria and Babylon were to the east of Palestine, but the only land route was from/to the north (i.e., basically following the Euphrates River). This is due to the large desert between Palestine and the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers (i.e., Mesopotamia).

▣ **“where I had driven them”** God is in control of history. Assyria and Babylon were merely His tools of judgment (cf. Isa. 10:5).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:9-12

⁹**As for the prophets:**

**My heart is broken within me,
All my bones tremble;
I have become like a drunken man,
Even like a man overcome with wine,
Because of the LORD
And because of His holy words.**

¹⁰**For the land is full of adulterers;
For the land mourns because of the curse.
The pastures of the wilderness have dried up.
Their course also is evil
And their might is not right.**

¹¹**“For both prophet and priest are polluted;
Even in My house I have found their wickedness,” declares the LORD.**

¹²**“Therefore their way will be like slippery paths to them,
They will be driven away into the gloom and fall down in it;
For I will bring calamity upon them,
The year of their punishment,” declares the LORD.**

23:9-32 Jeremiah addresses the false prophets, as they surely condemned him (cf. Example in chapter 28).

23:9 The prophet is speaking of the physical effects of God’s message on him. This is much like what happened to Daniel (i.e., Dan. 7:15,28; 8:27; 10:8,16).

1. broken heart (i.e., the center of the intellect, not emotions, cf. 8:18)
2. bones tremble
3. like an intoxicated person (i.e., with YHWH’s revelation)

▣ **“drunken man. . . a man overcome with wine”** Drunkenness here is a sign of confusion, but in 25:15 it is a sign of judgment. See Special Topic below.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: BIBLICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD ALCOHOL (FERMENTATION) AND
ALCOHOLISM (ADDICTION)**

I. Biblical Terms

A. Old Testament

1. *Yayin* – This is the general term for wine (BDB 406), which is used 141 times. The etymology is uncertain because it is not from a Hebrew root. It always means fermented fruit juice, usually grape. Some typical passages are Gen. 9:21; Exod. 29:40; Num. 15:5,10.

2. *Tirosh* – This is “new wine” (BDB 440). Because of climatic conditions of the Near East, fermentation started as soon as six hours after extracting the juice. This term refers to wine in the process of fermenting. For some typical passages see Deut. 12:17; 18:4; Isa. 62:8-9; Hos. 4:11.
3. *Asis* – This is obviously alcoholic beverages (“sweet wine,” BDB 779, e.g. Joel 1:5; Isa. 49:26).
4. *Sekar* – This is the term “strong drink” (BDB 1016). The Hebrew root is used in the term “drunk” or “drunkard.” It had something added to it to make it more intoxicating. It is parallel to *yayin* (cf. Pro. 20:1; 31:6; Isa. 28:7).

B. New Testament

1. *Oinos* – the Greek equivalent of *yayin*
2. *Neos oinos* (new wine) – the Greek equivalent of *tirosh* (cf. Mark 2:22).
3. *Gleuchos vinos* (sweet wine, *asis*) – wine in the early stages of fermentation (cf. Acts 2:13).

II. Biblical Usage

A. Old Testament

1. Wine is a gift of God (Gen. 27:28; Ps. 104:14-15; Eccl. 9:7; Hos. 2:8-9; Joel 2:19,24; Amos 9:13; Zech. 10:7).
2. Wine is a part of a sacrificial offering (Exod. 29:40; Lev. 23:13; Num. 15:7,10; 28:14; Deut. 14:26; Jdgs. 9:13).
3. Wine is used as medicine (II Sam. 16:2; Pro. 31:6-7).
4. Wine can be a real problem (Noah – Gen. 9:21; Lot – Gen. 19:33,35; Nabal – I Sam. 25:36; Uriah – II Sam. 11:13; Amnon – II Sam. 13:28; Elah – I Kgs. 16:9; Benhadad – I Kgs. 20:12; Rulers – Amos 6:6; and Ladies – Amos 4).
5. Wine can be abused (Pro. 20:1; 23:29-35; 31:4-5; Isa. 5:11,22; 19:14; 28:7-8; Hosea 4:11).
6. Wine was prohibited to certain groups (priests on duty, Lev. 10:9; Ezek. 44:21; Nazarites, Numbers 6; and rulers, Pro. 31:4-5; Isa. 56:11-12; Hosea 7:5).
7. Wine is used in an eschatological setting (Amos 9:13; Joel 3:18; Zech. 9:17).

B. Interbiblical

1. Wine in moderation is very helpful (Ecclesiasticus 31:27-30).
2. The rabbis say, “Wine is the greatest of all medicine, where wine is lacking, then drugs are needed.” (BB 58b).

C. New Testament

1. Jesus changed a large quantity of water into wine (John 2:1-11).
2. Jesus drank wine (Matt. 11:18-19; Luke 7:33-34; 22:17ff).
3. Peter accused of drunkenness on “new wine” at Pentecost (Acts 2:13).
4. Wine can be used as medicine (Mark 15:23; Luke 10:34; I Tim. 5:23).
5. Leaders are not to be abusers. This does not mean total abstainers (I Tim. 3:3,8; Titus 1:7; 2:3; I Pet. 4:3).
6. Wine used in eschatological settings (Matthew. 22:1ff; Rev. 19:9).
7. Drunkenness is deplored (Matt. 24:49; Luke 12:45; 21:34; I Cor. 5:11-13; 6:10; Gal. 5:21; I Pet. 4:3; Rom. 13:13-14).

III. Theological Insight

A. Dialectical tension

1. Wine is the gift of God.
2. Drunkenness is a major problem.
3. Believers in some cultures must limit their freedoms for the sake of the gospel (Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; I Corinthians 8-10; Romans 14).

B. Tendency to go beyond given bounds

1. God is the source of all good things.
2. Fallen mankind has abused all of God's gifts by taking them beyond God-given bounds.

C. Abuse is in us, not in things. There is nothing evil in the physical creation (cf. Mark 7:18-23; Rom. 14:14,20; I Cor. 10:25-26; I Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:15).

IV. First Century Jewish Culture and Fermentation

A. Fermentation begins very soon, approximately 6 hours after the grape is crushed.

B. Jewish tradition says that when a slight foam appeared on the surface (sign of fermentation), it is liable to the wine-tithe (*Ma aseroth* 1:7). It was called "new wine" or "sweet wine."

C. The primary violent fermentation was complete after one week.

D. The secondary fermentation took about 40 days. At this state it is considered "aged wine" and could be offered on the altar (*Edhuyyoth* 6:1).

E. Wine that had rested on its lees (old wine) was considered good, but had to be strained well before use.

F. Wine was considered to be properly aged usually after one year of fermentation. Three years was the longest period of time that wine could be safely stored. It was called "old wine" and had to be diluted with water.

G. Only in the last 100 years with a sterile environment and chemical additives has fermentation been postponed. The ancient world could not stop the natural process of fermentation.

V. Closing Statements

A. Be sure your experience, theology, and biblical interpretation do not depreciate Jesus and first century Jewish/Christian culture! They were obviously not total-abstainers.

B. I am not advocating the social use of alcohol. However, many have overstated the Bible's position on this subject and now claim superior righteousness based on a cultural/denominational bias.

C. For me, Romans 14 and I Corinthians 8-10 have provided insight and guidelines based on love and respect for fellow believers and the spread of the gospel in our cultures, not personal freedom or judgmental criticism. If the Bible is the only source for faith and practice, then maybe we must all rethink this issue.

D. If we push total abstinence as God's will, what do we imply about Jesus, as well as those modern cultures that regularly use wine (e.g., Europe, Israel, Argentina)?

▣ Lines 6 and 7 give the reason for Jeremiah's distress. He believed God's word! He knew it was true. I so wish modern believers would tremble at God's word (cf. Isa. 66:5). Do we grieve over our own sinful societies and the sure wrath of God that will come (i.e., Romans 1-2; Gal. 6:7)?

23:10 “adulterers” In this context this could refer to

1. fertility worship (literal adultery), 3:2,6,8-9; 5:7-8
2. foreign alliances (spiritual adultery), i.e., “lovers” (cf. 2:25; 3:1; 22:20,22)

▣ **“land mourns”** This is parallel to 10c, “dries up.” This is part of the curses of Lev. 26:4,19-20; Deut. 28:23-24; 29:20-21; and Rom. 8:18-22!

▣

NASB	“Their course also is evil, And their might is not right”
NKJV	“Their course of life is evil. And their might is not right”
TEV	“they live wicked lives and misuse their power”
NJB	“They are prompt to do wrong, Make no effort to do right”
JPSOA	“For they run to do evil. They strain to do wrong”

There is no VERB in these last two lines of v. 10. It seems that Jeremiah has changed imagery from nature disrupted to humans disrupted! Neither is what YHWH intended in Gen. 1:31!

23:11 It is a common theme in Jeremiah to condemn both prophet and priest (cf. 2:8). What a terrible situation! The people only hear the false words.

The prophets of Israel are described in v. 12 and the prophets of Judah in v. 14. YHWH’s judgment falls on both in v. 15.

One wonders about the historical setting of this strophe. It seems to assume Israel was still in the land. The time element of Hebrew VERBS is totally related to the context. Jeremiah had his ministry soon after Josiah became king (± 626 B.C.). The northern kingdom of Israel was exiled in 722 B.C. by Assyria. This reference is not a “history thing” (western mindset), but a “theme thing” (eastern mindset).

Possibly the reason for mentioning the prophets of Israel is that the prophets of Judah should have learned from other’s judgment (cf. 3:6-10; Ezek. 23:4-49).

23:12 “slippery paths” This is a Hebrew idiom of sinful living (cf. 13:16; Ps. 35:6; 73:18; Pro. 4:19). It is the opposite of “faith,” which is “to be firm” or “to be sure” (see Special Topic at 15:18). God’s word/will was like a clearly marked path (cf. Ps. 119:105; Pro. 6:23).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:13-15

¹³**“Moreover, among the prophets of Samaria I saw an offensive thing:**

They prophesied by Baal and led My people Israel astray.

¹⁴**Also among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing:**

The committing of adultery and walking in falsehood;

And they strengthen the hands of evildoers,

So that no one has turned back from his wickedness.

All of them have become to Me like Sodom,

And her inhabitants like Gomorrah.

¹⁵**Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets,**

**‘Behold, I am going to feed them wormwood
And make them drink poisonous water,
For from the prophets of Jerusalem
Pollution has gone forth into all the land.’”**

23:13 “Samaria” This was the capital of the northern kingdom and used as a symbol for the nation as a whole.

▣ **“They prophesied by Baal”** This refers to Canaanite fertility worship (cf. 2:8). See Special Topic at 2:20.

▣ **“astray”** This VERB (BDB 1073, KB 1766, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) denoted mental and moral confusion and the resulting poor choices (cf. II Kgs. 21:9; Isa. 3:12; 9:16; Jer. 23:13,32; 42:20; Amos 2:4; Micah 3:5). The people of Judah were morally responsible for their choices, but they also had been led astray by people they trusted!

23:14 This verse describes the prophets of Judah (i.e., involved in *Ba'al* worship like Israel).

1. They committed adultery (see note at v. 10)
2. They walked in falsehood (i.e., lies)
3. They strengthened the hand of evildoers
4. No one repented (people or prophet or priest or shepherd)

Notice how often Jeremiah addresses the false prophets (cf. 2:8; 4:9; 5:30-31; 6:13-15; 8:10-12; 14:13-15; 18:18-23; 26:8,11,16; 27:1-22; 28:1-17).

Every generation of believers must decide to whom they will listen and respond. There are charlatans, deceivers, crooks. How does a believer know who to believe! Here are some Scriptural guidelines.

1. the accuracy of their predictions, cf. Deut. 13:1-5; 18:18-22 (this does not relate to conditional prophecies like Jonah’s)
2. lifestyle, cf. Jer. 23:13-22; Matt. 7:15-23
3. content of the message (for NT), cf. I Cor. 12:3; 15:3-4; I John 4:1-3

See Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, pp. 210-211, “The Characteristics of False Prophets.”

23:15 This verse describes what YHWH will do to these false prophets (cf. 9:15).

1. feed them wormwood
2. make them drink poisonous water

He gives them a taste of their own actions. They taught poison, now they must drink it themselves (cf. 17:10; Gal. 6:7). False teaching spreads like gangrene!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:16-22

¹⁶Thus says the LORD of hosts,
“Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you.
They are leading you into futility;
They speak a vision of their own imagination,
Not from the mouth of the LORD.

¹⁷They keep saying to those who despise Me,
‘The LORD has said, “You will have peace”;

And as for everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart,
They say, ‘Calamity will not come upon you.’

¹⁸But who has stood in the council of the LORD,
That he should see and hear His word?
Who has given heed to His word and listened?

¹⁹Behold, the storm of the LORD has gone forth in wrath,
Even a whirling tempest;
It will swirl down on the head of the wicked.

²⁰The anger of the LORD will not turn back
Until He has performed and carried out the purposes of His heart;
In the last days you will clearly understand it.

²¹I did not send *these* prophets,
But they ran.
I did not speak to them,
But they prophesied.

²²But if they had stood in My council,
Then they would have announced My words to My people,
And would have turned them back from their evil way
And from the evil of their deeds.

23:16 “They speak a vision of their own imagination” They speak in God’s name but the message is their own (cf. v. 25; 5:31; 14:14; Ezek. 13:2,17).

▣ “futility” This VERBAL (BDB 211, KB 236, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE) occurs only here. The *Qal* form occurs in 2:5. The NOUN form (BDB 210) is used of the nothingness of idols.

▣ Judeans are not to “listen” (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) because they are prophesying (BDB 612, KB 659, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE, see Appendix Two) falsehoods. This is recorded in v. 17b (cf. 6:14; 8:11; 14:13-14). The Babylonians

1. will invade
2. will capture Judah and her leaders
3. will destroy Jerusalem and the temple
4. will exile most of the population
5. will take the temple treasures to the temple of *Marduk* in Babylon as spoils

▣ “They speak a vision of their own imagination” “Imagination” is literally “heart.” One wonders if they knew it was a false vision. Were they self-duped or intentionally lying? Verse 17 implies they knew it was a false message of hope (cf. v. 21,26).

23:17 “They keep saying” This is the *Qal* PARTICIPLE and INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE of the same root (“to say,” BDB 55, KB 65), denoting intensity.

▣

NASB, NKJV,

NJB, JPSOA “to those who despise Me,
The LORD has said”

LXX, NRSV,

REB “to those who despise the word of the LORD”

The UBS Text Project gives the first option (NASB) a “C” rating. The difference is a matter of vowel choice, not a consonantal change. The NET Bible prefers option #2 (LXX).

▣ **“You will have peace”** This was the basic message of the false prophets (cf. 5:12; 6:14; 8:11; 14:13; 28:8-9; Ezek. 13:10). God’s word to the wicked is a “fire” and a “hammer” (cf. 23:29).

23:18 Jeremiah is describing his own situation. He did “see” (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) in the council of YHWH (cf. Amos 3:7). He heard YHWH’s word (i.e., from Him directly, or a literary way of referring to the “heavenly council” of YHWH and those angels who serve Him (cf. I Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 2:1-6) and performed it/spoke it! YHWH honors those who hear/heed/live His word and will (cf. v. 22).

▣ **“in the council of the LORD”** This may refer to the heavenly council of YHWH and those angels who surround Him.

1. for praise – Isa. 6:2-3; Rev. 4:8
2. for protection – Gen. 3:24, Ezek. 1:15; 10:1-22
3. for action – Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; I Kgs. 22:19-22; Job 1:6; 2:1; 29:4; Ps. 89:7
4. for judgment – Dan. 7:10,22,26

23:19-20 This is similar to 30:23-24. The repetition occurs often in Jeremiah, which shows his various sermons and poems were collected and edited after his death or towards the end of his life (cf. vv. 7-8, repeated in 16:14-15; v. 15 repeated in 9:15).

23:20 YHWH’s judgment will come (cf. 30:24; Isa. 45:23; 55:11). The time for repentance has past. Judah cannot repent (cf. 13:23). YHWH’s only choice for His larger redemptive purpose of using Israel was to destroy and exile the current idolatrous generation. Only radical surgery can save the patient (cf. Isa. 1:5-6).

▣ The last line of v. 20 seems to be a promise of a future time when God’s people will, one day, understand

1. His actions and greater purpose (i.e., eschatological, see chapter 17, “God’s Plan” in Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, second ed., pp. 371-390; also see Special Topic at 1:5)
2. that they were duped by their false leadership (i.e., Babylonian invasion and exile, cf. 30:23)

The NET Bible (p. 1357) has a good comment about “clearly understand.” This is “a Hebrew construction where a noun functions as the object of a verb from the same word root (the Hebrew cognate accusative).” See BDB 106, KB 122, *Hithpolel* IMPERFECT and BDB 108.

23:21-22 YHWH speaks again, as in vv. 16-18 and also vv. 23-24, 25-32. It is difficult to know how the OT writers received YHWH’s revelation. Either they speak in His name and then comment on it or there is a more direct verbal reception of the message. See *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, chapter 8, pp. 66-69.

SPECIAL TOPIC: INSPIRATION

The “once-for-all” faith refers to the truths, doctrines, concepts, world-view teachings of Christianity (cf. II Pet. 2:21). This once-given emphasis is the biblical basis for theologically limiting inspiration to the writings of the NT and not allowing later or other writings to be considered revelatory. There are many

ambiguous, uncertain, and grey areas in the NT, but believers affirm by faith that everything that is “needed” for faith and practice is included with sufficient clarity in the NT.

This concept has been delineated in what is called “the revelatory triangle”

1. God has revealed Himself in time-space history (REVELATION)
2. He has chosen certain human writers to document and explain His acts (INSPIRATION)
3. He has given His Spirit to open the minds and hearts of humans to understand these writings, not definitively, but adequately for salvation and an effective Christian life (ILLUMINATION)

The point of this is that inspiration is limited to the writers of Scripture. There are no further authoritative writings, visions, or revelations. The canon is closed. We have all the truth we need to respond appropriately and pleasingly to God.

This truth is best seen in the agreement of biblical writers versus the disagreement of sincere, godly believers. No modern writer or speaker has the level of divine leadership that the writers of Scripture did.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ILLUMINATION

“God has acted in the past to clearly reveal Himself to mankind. In theology this is called revelation. He selected certain men to record and explain this self-revelation. In theology this is called inspiration. He has sent His Spirit to help readers understand His word. In theology this is called illumination. The problem arises when we assert that the if Spirit is involved in understanding God’s word—why are there so many interpretations of it?

Part of the problem lies in the reader’s pre-understanding or personal experiences. Often a personal agenda is addressed by using the Bible in a proof-text or atomistic fashion. Often a theological grid is imposed over the Bible allowing it to speak only in certain areas and in selected ways. Illumination simply cannot be equated with inspiration although the Holy Spirit is involved in each.

The best approach may be to attempt to assert the central idea of a paragraph, not interpret every detail of the text. It is the topical thought which conveys the original author’s central truth. Outlining the book or literary unit helps one follow the intent of the original inspired author. No interpreter is inspired. We cannot reproduce the biblical writer’s method of interpretation. We can and must attempt to understand what they were saying to their day and then communicate that truth to our own day. There are parts of the Bible that are ambiguous or hidden (until a certain time or period). There will always be disagreements on some texts and subjects, but we must state clearly the central truths and allow freedom for individual interpretations within the boundary of the original author’s intent. Interpreters must walk in the light they have, always being open to more light from the Bible and the Spirit. God will judge us based on the level of our understanding and how we live out that understanding.

23:21 YHWH rejects these proclaimers of “peace” (cf. 29:9,23).

23:22 YHWH’s spokespersons can effect change and help His people turn from evil and walk in His word and ways!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:23-24

²³“Am I a God who is near,” declares the LORD,
“And not a God far off?”

²⁴“Can a man hide himself in hiding places
So I do not see him?” declares the LORD.

“Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?” declares the LORD.

23:23-24 Notice the three rhetorical questions. The first and third expect a “yes” answer and the second a “no” answer.

This brief strophe is a self-affirmation of YHWH’s

1. personal presence with His people
2. desire for fellowship
3. active participation in His people’s lives
4. His presence throughout creation (cf. I Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 139:7-16; Isa. 66:1)

This expresses YHWH’s immanence! He is the Holy One of Israel, but He is also “Father” (cf. Isa. 57:15).

Some see this brief strophe as YHWH’s way of denying that He is just one of many local deities (see Special Topic: Monotheism at 1:5). See chapter 15, “God’s Nearness and Distance. . .” in Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, second ed., pp. 327-345.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:25-32

²⁵“I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy falsely in My name, saying, ‘I had a dream, I had a dream!’ ²⁶How long? Is there *anything* in the hearts of the prophets who prophesy falsehood, even *these* prophets of the deception of their own heart, ²⁷who intend to make My people forget My name by their dreams which they relate to one another, just as their fathers forgot My name because of Baal? ²⁸The prophet who has a dream may relate *his* dream, but let him who has My word speak My word in truth. What does straw have *in common* with grain?” declares the LORD. ²⁹“Is not My word like fire?” declares the LORD, “and like a hammer which shatters a rock? ³⁰Therefore behold, I am against the prophets,” declares the LORD, “who steal My words from each other. ³¹Behold, I am against the prophets,” declares the LORD, “who use their tongues and declare, ‘*The Lord declares.*’ ³²Behold, I am against those who have prophesied false dreams,” declares the LORD, “and related them and led My people astray by their falsehoods and reckless boasting; yet I did not send them or command them, nor do they furnish this people the slightest benefit,” declares the LORD.

23:25-32 YHWH describes the false prophets. They claim revelation but have none! They even get their message from one another (v. 30). Their message (in dreams) is their own message and it will destroy Judah.

For “dreams” as a method of revelation in the ANE, see John Walton, *ANE Thought and the OT*, p. 243.

23:25 “I had a dream, I had a dream” This was a claim to divine revelation. Dreams were common ways for God to communicate (cf. Gen. 20:3; 28:12; 31:11,24; 37:5; Deut. 13:1-5). Joseph had dream interpretation as a gift from God (cf. Genesis 40-41), as did Daniel (cf. Daniel 2).

23:26

NASB “is there *anything* in the hearts of the prophets”

NKJV “How long will *this* be in the heart of the prophets”

Other suggestions by scholars is to supply the missing SUBJECT (cf. JPSOA)

1. my word
2. lies (LXX)
3. My name

23:27 “forgot My name” This is that special use of the name to refer to God’s covenant relationship and eternal character. Judah was attributing God’s acts to *Ba’al!*

23:29 In this verse YHWH describes His word as

1. a fire (cf. 5:14; 20:9)
2. a hammer which shatters a rock

God’s word has results (cf. Isa. 49:2)! The false prophets bring no benefit (cf. v. 32; this is the *Hiphil* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB of the same root [BDB 418, KB 420] which denotes intensity).

The imagery in the NT of Jesus with a two edged sword coming out of His mouth is the same type of figurative language (cf. Rev. 1:16; 2:12,16; 19:15; Heb. 4:12).

23:30-32 the UBS Handbook says these verses are a summary of YHWH’s message against the false, self-deceived prophets (p. 513, this is such a helpful grammatical and syntactical resource for translators and interpreters).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:33-40

³³“Now when this people or the prophet or a priest asks you saying, ‘What is the oracle of the LORD?’ then you shall say to them, ‘What oracle?’ The LORD declares, ‘I will abandon you.’ ³⁴Then as for the prophet or the priest or the people who say, ‘The oracle of the LORD,’ I will bring punishment upon that man and his household. ³⁵Thus will each of you say to his neighbor and to his brother, ‘What has the LORD answered?’ or, ‘What has the LORD spoken?’ ³⁶For you will no longer remember the oracle of the LORD, because every man’s own word will become the oracle, and you have perverted the words of the living God, the LORD of hosts, our God. ³⁷Thus you will say to *that* prophet, ‘What has the LORD answered you?’ and, ‘What has the LORD spoken?’ ³⁸For if you say, ‘The oracle of the LORD!’ surely thus says the LORD, ‘Because you said this word, “The oracle of the LORD!” I have also sent to you, saying, “You shall not say, ‘The oracle of the LORD!’”’ ³⁹Therefore behold, I will surely forget you and cast you away from My presence, along with the city which I gave you and your fathers. ⁴⁰I will put an everlasting reproach on you and an everlasting humiliation which will not be forgotten.”

23:33-40 This strophe presents its message by a series of questions that Judeans ask each other about YHWH’s revelation (i.e., what is the oracle of the Lord).

1. prophets
2. priests
3. people

Jeremiah’s answer is that there are no more messages to be received, only judgment (i.e., “I shall abandon you,” cf. 12:7; 23:39). The religious leaders were making up their own message in YHWH’s name (cf. v. 36). They did not really want to hear from Him.

Because of this false message from God, YHWH says

1. I will forget you (this is a PERFECT VERB and in INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE from the same root)
2. I will cast you away from My presence
3. I will cast away the Jerusalem/temple
4. I will give you an everlasting reproach
5. I will give you an everlasting humiliation, either of which will never be forgotten

Wow! These idolatrous Judeans and their leaders will be permanently cut off. The faithful remnant, though not specifically mentioned, will be restored.

23:33 “oracle” The term (BDB 672 I) meant “to lift up a burden.” It is a play on the two uses of this term:

1. a heavy word from God
2. a load that an animal carried

The AB suggests that the Hebrew text be divided in a different way from the MT. If so it could read, “What is the massa” (that is, the utterance of Yahweh? say to them, “you are the massa [that is, the burden], and I will cast you off – Yahweh’s word,” p. 150). The LXX and Vulgate, followed by NRSV, REB, NET, have, “You are the burden.” Hereby the word play on “burden” (BDB 672 I) is made clear.

23:35-36 This is exactly the opposite of the “new covenant” of 31:31-34. Knowledge of the Lord is the exception, not the rule!

23:36 “every man’s own word will become the oracle” This very phrase is the reality of a post-modern, western, twenty-first century culture. There are no absolutes! Everyone’s opinion has weight and authority! This is a tragedy if there is an inspired revelation from the one true God.

▣ **“you have perverted the words of the living God, the LORD of hosts, our God”** The VERB (BDB 245, KB 253, *Qal* PERFECT) means “to turn” or “to overturn.” To put this in modern idiom, these false religionists put a “spin” on their words, their interest, their presuppositions, their historical setting, their personal preferences, into God’s words (notice the threefold titles. For “LORD of Hosts” see Special Topic at 15:15-18)! The same occurs today by denominations and secularists! Only a commitment to revelation and a knowledge of it can protect a believer.

23:39

NASB “I shall surely forget you and cast you away”

NKJV “I, even I, will utterly forget you and forsake you”

NRSV “I will surely lift you up and cast you away”

TEV “I will certainly pick them up and throw them far away”

JPSOA “I will utterly forget you and I will cast you away”

There are several grammatical elements.

1. the first VERB, “forget” (BDB 674, KB 728, *Qal* PERFECT) is followed by its INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE of the same root in the MT
2. some Hebrew MSS and the Septuagint change the VERB to “lift up” (BDB 669, KB 724), which is the same root as “burden,” used in vv. 33 (twice), 34, 36 (twice), 38 (thrice)
3. the parallel VERB in v. 33, “cast off” (BDB 643, KB 695, *Qal* PERFECT) is repeated in v. 39
4. the change made by the LXX makes sense in the context of vv. 33-40 (i.e., word play), but does not answer why the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE of the VERB “forget” is in the text; it is best to go with the MT

23:40 “everlasting” This Hebrew term, *‘olam* (BDB 761), must always be interpreted theologically in light of

1. the context where it is used
2. the conditional nature of God’s covenant with humans (i.e., mercy and repentance are possible)

See Special Topic at 7:7.

▣ **“everlasting reproach”** The first NOUN is *‘olam* (BDB 761), see Special Topic at 7:7. It must be interpreted in specific context because of its wide semantic field.

The second NOUN (BDB 357) means “reproach” or “scorn.” The root is used several times in Jeremiah (cf. 6:10; 15:15; 20:8; 23:40; 24:9; 25:18; 31:19; 42:18; 44:8,12; 49:13 (of Edom); 51:51).

▣ **“everlasting humiliation”** The first NOUN is the same as above. The second NOUN (BDB 484) is found in this form only here in the OT and means “ignominy.” A related root is found in 20:11, where it is translated “eternal dishonor” or “eternal disgrace.”

JEREMIAH 24

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Basket of Figs and the Returnees	The Sign of Two Baskets of Figs	The Vision of the Basket of Figs	Two Baskets of Figs	The Two Baskets of Figs
24:1-3	24:1-3	24:1-3	24:1-3a 24:3b	24:1-10
24:4-7	24:4-7	24:4-7	24:4-7	
24:8-10	24:8-10	24:8-10	24:8-10	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:1-3

¹After Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and the officials of Judah with the craftsmen and smiths from Jerusalem and had brought them to Babylon, the LORD showed me: behold, two baskets of figs set before the temple of the LORD! ²One basket had very good figs, like first-ripe figs, and the other basket had very bad figs which could not be eaten due to rottenness. ³Then the LORD said to me, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" And I said, "Figs, the good figs, very good; and the bad *figs*, very bad, which cannot be eaten due to rottenness."

24:1 “Nebuchadnezzar” See Appendix three, B., 4.

▣ This specifically dates this strophe as 597 B.C (cf. II Kgs. 24:10-16; II Chr. 36:9-10). The king goes by three names

1. Jeconiah, 24:1; 27:20; 28:4; 29:2
2. Coniah, 22:24,28; 37:1
3. Jehoiachin, 52:31; II Kings 24-25

See Appendix Four, #3.

▣ **“craftsmen”** This term (BDB 360, cf. 29:2) refers to an engraver of

1. gems (cf. Exod. 28:11)
2. stone (cf. II Sam. 5:11)
3. wood (cf. 10:3)
4. metal (cf. 10:9)

It can also mean “idol-maker” (cf. II Kgs. 24:14,16; Isa. 44:11; 45:16).

▣ **“smith”** This ambiguous term (BDB 688, KB 604 II) may refer to a metal worker (NJB, NET). It could also mean “harem” (REB textual marginal note) or possibly “builders” or “engineers.”

▣ **“two baskets of figs”** This is another visual image to communicate God’s message vividly to the people of Judah who were left in Jerusalem.

Amos used the same type of imagery in Amos 8:1-3.

▣ **“set before the temple of the LORD”** These baskets of figs represented two groups of people. They were seen as offerings to YHWH (cf. Deut. 26:2-11), to use for His purposes.

1. good figs – those Judeans already exiled
2. bad figs – those Judeans in Palestine

24:2 “very bad figs” These same inedible, rotten figs are mentioned in 29:17.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:4-7

⁴Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁵“Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the captives of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place *into* the land of the Chaldeans. ⁶For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them again to this land; and I will build them up and not overthrow them, and I will plant them and not pluck them up. ⁷I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.

24:5 The good figs are, surprisingly, the Judeans taken into exile. One would have thought the ones left in Palestine were the favored ones, but not so. YHWH will work with the exiles (to whom Ezekiel ministered in Babylon).

▣ **“Chaldeans”** See Special Topic at

24:6-7 List the promises YHWH makes to the Judeans in exile.

1. He will regard them as “good”
2. He will set His eyes on them for good

3. He will bring them back to Judah
4. He will build them up and not overthrow them
5. He will plant them and pluck *them* up
6. He will give them a heart to know Him

Verse 7 has several covenant terms. It speaks of a new day of faithfulness and devotion (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38; Jer. 31:31-34). YHWH will give them a “new heart” and a “new mind.”

The phrases “build them up” (BDB 124, KB 139); “not overthrow them” (BDB 248, KB 256); “plant them” (BDB 642, KB 694); and “not pluck *them* up” (BDB 684, KB 737) are also used in Jeremiah’s call in 1:10. Here these VERBS are preceded by a vision, but there they are preceded by two visions (an almond rod and a boiling pot).

24:7 “they will return to Me” This VERB (BDB 996, KB 1427) is used to express true repentance. See Special Topic at 2:22. This involves the mystery of foreknowledge, human free will and predestination (see Special Topics at 18:8).

▣ **“with a whole heart”** This is a Hebrew idiom of complete devotion (cf. 3:10; I Sam. 7:3; I Chr. 22:19; II Chr. 22:9; Joel 2:12-14). It was used of David’s devotion to YHWH but not Solomon who, in his old age, became involved in idolatry (cf. I Kings 11).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:8-10

⁸“**But like the bad figs which cannot be eaten due to rottenness—indeed, thus says the LORD—I will abandon Zedekiah king of Judah and his officials, and the remnant of Jerusalem who remain in this land and the ones who dwell in the land of Egypt. ⁹I will make them a terror *and an evil* for all the kingdoms of the earth, as a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse in all places where I will scatter them. ¹⁰I will send the sword, the famine and the pestilence upon them until they are destroyed from the land which I gave to them and their forefathers.”**

24:8-10 The royal family of Zedekiah and all his helpers will be abandoned (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal IMPERFECT*). This VERB has a wide semantic field. The context requires “give over” (cf. Num. 21:3,29; Deut. 7:2,23; 31:5; Jdgs. 20:13; etc.). This is so shocking in light of II Samuel 7!

24:8 “the remnant of Jerusalem” See Special Topic at 5:10-13.

▣ **“the ones who dwell in the land of Egypt”** Who these are depends on to whom verses 8-10 refer. It probably refers to those in Zedekiah’s day, after the exile of 597 B.C. If so, then who are “the ones”?

1. those taken into exile by Pharaoh Necho along with Jehoahaz (609 B.C.; cf. II Kgs. 23:31-34)
2. pro-Egypt supporters who fled when they saw Babylon invading
3. a future reference to those who fled to Egypt after the murder of Gedaliah (cf. chapters 40-41)

24:9-10 These two verses describe what YHWH will do to those who remain in Judah and those who fled to Egypt.

1. make them a terror (BDB 266)
2. make them an evil (BDB 949)
3. make them a reproach (BDB 357)
4. make them a proverb (BDB 605)
5. make them a taunt (BDB 1042)
6. make them a curse (BDB 887)

7. send the sword
8. send the famine
9. send the pestilence

This was because of their continuing, unrepentant covenant disobedience. YHWH revoked the covenant promises made to their forefathers (cf. v. 10). Instead of the “nations” seeing YHWH’s mercy, grace, and justice in the covenant people, they saw His judgment (cf. Deut. 28:25,37; Ezek. 36:22-38). This very purpose in YHWH’s calling Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:3) has been compromised!

JEREMIAH 25

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS (The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prophecy of the Captivity	Seventy Years of Desolation	Babylon, God's Instrument for Punishment	The Enemy From the North	Babylon, the Scourge of Yahweh
25:1-7	25:1-7	25:1-7	25:1-7	25:1-2 25:3-7
25:8-11	25:8-11	25:8-14	25:8-14	25:8-13a
Babylon Will Be Judged				
25:12-14	25:12-14			The Vision of the Cup 25:13b 25:14
25:15-16	25:15-26	25:15-16	25:15-16	25:15-26
25:17-26		25:17-26	25:17-18 25:19-26	
25:27-29	25:27-29	25:27 25:28-29	25:27-29	25:27-29
25:30-31 (30b-31)	25:30-31 (30b-31)	25:30-31 (30b-31)	25:30-31 (30b-31)	25:30-32 (30b-32)
25:32 (32)	25:32 (32)	25:32 (32)	25:32-33	
25:33-38 (34-38)	25:33 25:34-38 (34-38)	25:33-38 (34-38)	25:34-38	25:33 25:34-38 (34-38)

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2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:1-7

¹The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), ²which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, ³“From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, even to this day, these twenty-three years the word of the LORD has come to me, and I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened. ⁴And the LORD has sent to you all His servants the prophets again and again, but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear, ⁵saying, ‘Turn now everyone from his evil way and from the evil of your deeds, and dwell on the land which the LORD has given to you and your forefathers forever and ever; ⁶and do not go after other gods to serve them and to worship them, and do not provoke Me to anger with the work of your hands, and I will do you no harm.’ ⁷Yet you have not listened to Me,” declares the LORD, “in order that you might provoke Me to anger with the work of your hands to your own harm.”

25:1 This is obviously an attempt to date the prophecy historically (cf. v. 3).

1. the fourth year of Jehoiakim (i.e., 605 B.C., same year as the defeat of Egypt at Carchemish; see chart in Appendix One)
2. the first year of Nebuchadnezzar II (see historical survey in Appendix Three)

The poems of Jeremiah have been organized by themes, key words, word plays (sound plays, semantic field). They are not chronological (although the earlier chapters may be).

One tenant in hermeneutical theory is to establish the historical setting and try to identify the reason for the poem/prophecy. When there is no historical item mentioned it becomes theological speculation.

Notice the king of Neo-Babylon is spelled here *Nebuchadnezzar*. There are always differences when transliterating names. The Babylonian name is *Nabu-kudurri-osur*, but it is transliterated two different ways in the OT (with an “n” and an “r”).

25:2 Jeremiah identifies his audience as

1. all the people of Judah, vv. 1,2
2. all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, v. 2

The first designation would relate to the common people of Judah and the second to her leadership and elite of society.

Notice that in v. 4 he calls them “His servants.” YHWH’s people are meant to be servants and priests (see Special Topic at 1:5). Jeremiah’s twenty-three years of delivering YHWH’s revelations had not affected these sin-hardened people.

25:3 “the thirteenth year of Josiah” This would be 627 B.C., the year of Jeremiah’s call (cf. 1:1-3).

▣ **“even to this day”** This phrase (and variations) occurs many times in the OT. For most scholars it shows the presence of a later editor/compiler, but here it is used by an author to refer to his previous ministry. We

must always be careful of our assumptions. They are just that! Moderns do not understand ancient literature as well as they think they do!!

▣ **“the word of the LORD has come to me”** As a modern preacher/teacher, how do I know the Lord has spoken to me, directed me? It is obvious the OT prophets and NT apostles had a unique revelation (see Special Topics at 23:21-22). For those of us who live and serve in the post-apostolic age, our message must be linked to inspired authors and their message. Every text has only one meaning (i.e., the intent of the original author) but many applications. We cannot just say, “God told me!” We must point people to texts that they can evaluate themselves! Texts have priority!



NASB, REB “again and again”
NKJV “rising early and speaking”
NRSV, JPSOA “I have spoken persistently to you”
NJB “I have never tired of speaking to you”

The NKJV is the Hebrew idiom (two INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES). It occurs in v. 4; 7:25; 11:7; 26:5. This idiomatic language represents one of the greatest challenges to interpreters because idioms, by their very nature, are not literal. The words have a special meaning. An idiom such as this can be understood because it is repeated and contextually obvious, but others are very difficult

1. to identify as an idiom
2. to ascertain its meaning in context

I am sure when we get to heaven and get to visit with these original authors, we and they, will be shocked by what we think they wrote!

▣ **“but you have not listened”** This VERB (BDB 1033, KB 1570) is a *Qal* PERFECT which denoted a settled opposition to hearing and obeying YHWH! These are His people. They have His revelation but they seem not to recognize the choice of “life” or “death” (cf. Deut. 30:15) connected to YHWH’s words (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-28).

For further insights to this VERB, see notes in my commentary on Deuteronomy 4:1; 5:1; and 6:5. It is online free in several languages at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

25:4 Notice the parallelism between

1. you have not listened
2. inclined your ear to hear

Hebrew poetry must be interpreted through (1) purposeful parallelism, (2) parallel passages, and (3) word plays. See the Appendix One: Introduction to Hebrew Poetry.

Also notice the number of Hebrew words that begin with Ψ in vv. 305.

1. hear (thrice), שמע
2. send (twice), שלח
3. rise (twice), שכם
4. turn, שוב
5. dwell, ישב

25:4-7 YHWH lists why He is angry with His people, Judah.

1. they have not listened and obeyed, vv. 4,7
2. they have not responded (see Special Topic at 2:22), v. 5

3. they have committed flagrant idolatry, vv. 6,7 (i.e., “the work of your hands,” cf. v. 14; 1:16; 10:3-5; Isa. 2:8; 17:8; 37:19)

25:5 “dwell in the land which the LORD has given to you and your forefathers forever and ever” This reflects 7:7 (see Special Topic there), which reflects Deut. 4:40. The land was part of the Abrahamic Covenant (cf. Gen. 12:1-3; 15:12-21). It was meant to be a permanent gracious gift, but there were conditions (i.e., covenant obedience, cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-28,30).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:8-11

⁸“Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Because you have not obeyed My words, ⁹behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will send to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land and against its inhabitants and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them and make them a horror and a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. ¹⁰Moreover, I will take from them the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp. ¹¹This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

25:8-11 YHWH lists the results of their disobedience (v. 8).

1. I will send and take all the families of the north. YHWH controls both Assyria and Babylon, as well as Persia, for His purposes!
2. They will invade, destroy, and exile the people of Palestine.
3. Society will be radically changed from peace to panic.
 - a. I will take (i.e., “cause to perish”) the voice of joy
 - b. I will take the voice of gladness
 - c. I will take the voice of the bridegroom
 - d. I will take the voice of the bride
 - e. I will take the sound of the millstone
 - f. I will take the light of the lamp

This means utter destruction (cf. v. 9). The land of promise and abundance will be the land of

1. horror, vv. 9,11
2. hissing, v. 9
3. everlasting desolation, vv. 9,11

25:9 “My servant” This is the same title (BDB 712, 713) used of the Messiah in Isaiah 40-66. Here it is not used in a Messianic sense, but is a way of denoting one who fulfills YHWH’s purpose (i.e., 27:6; 43:10; Isa. 13:3).

Cyrus is called “My shepherd” (Isa. 44:28) and “His anointed” (Isa. 45:1) in the same sense. As YHWH used Pharaoh in the Exodus, so He uses these kings.

The one true God (see Special Topic at 1:5) is actively involved in all of human history. The Bible records that aspect of this involvement that relates to redemption through Israel and the Messiah (see Special Topic at 23:5).

▣ **“utterly destroy”** This is the Hebrew VERB *herem* (BDB 355 I, KB 353), *Hiphil* PERFECT. It is used of things devoted to God and thereby they become too holy for common use (BDB 356, cf. Lev. 27:21,28,29; Num. 28:14; Deut. 7:26; 13:17; Josh 6:17-18; 7:1,11,12,13,15). The same root (BDB 355) means “to

completely destroy” (cf. 25:9; 50:21,26; 51:3; Exod. 22:20; Lev. 27:28,29; Num. 21:2,3; Deut. 2:34; 3:6; 7:2; 13:15; 20:17). This second sense is how the word is used in Jeremiah.

This is “holy war” terminology. The God who fought for Israel in the conquest of Joshua now fights against Judah and Jerusalem (i.e., the very place He caused His name to dwell).



NASB “horror”

NKJV “astonishment”

NRSV, NJB,

REB “object of horror”

JPSOA “desolation”

This Hebrew word (BDB 1031, KB 1566) means “waste” or “devastation.” It is used numerous times by Jeremiah (cf. 4:27; 6:8; 9:11; 10:22; 12:10,11; 25:12; 32:43; 34:22; 44:6; 49:2,33; 50:13; 51:26,62).

▣ **“hissing”** This Hebrew word (BDB 1057, KB 1657) means “to hiss” (cf. v. 18) or “to whistle.” The Jewish Study Bible, at Jer. 18:6, has the footnote, “These actions were performed at the sight of ruin to ward off a like fate from the observer” (p. 964).

▣ **“an everlasting desolation”** The word translated “everlasting” (BDB 352) must be interpreted in context. It has a wide semantic field. See Special Topic at 7:7.

For a good discussion of the use of hyperbole, see D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*, chapter 2, “What Makes Prophecy Problematic?” (pp. 31-57).

25:11 “seventy years” This time prediction is also mentioned in 29:10; II Chr. 36:21-23; Dan. 9:2; and Zech. 7:5. Seventy is a round number which denotes (1) multiple generations or (2) a complete life (cf. Ps. 90:10; Isa. 23:15). It is interesting that the date of the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar (i.e., 586 B.C.) is exactly seventy years from the rebuilding of the second temple by Zerubbabel (i.e., 516 B.C., cf. Zech. 1:12).

Remember the ancients used numbers differently than moderns. See the Special Topic: Symbolic Numbers in Scripture at 15:9.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:12-14

¹²‘Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,’ declares the LORD, ‘for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation. ¹³I will bring upon that land all My words which I have pronounced against it, all that is written in this book which Jeremiah has prophesied against all the nations. ¹⁴For many nations and great kings will make slaves of them, even them; and I will recompense them according to their deeds and according to the work of their hands.’”

25:12-14 Jeremiah records YHWH’s commitment to judging Babylon. The same phrase, “an everlasting desolation” from v. 9 is now used of the ones who made Palestine desolate.

Notice that Jeremiah alludes to his own book (i.e., “this book”), but notice Jeremiah is mentioned by name, which implies Baruch (cf. 36:4,29,32) or another editor (i.e., Ezra). The destruction and judgment of Neo-Babylon is predicted and described in chapter 51.

25:13 “against all the nations” Several of the Prophets have chapters about YHWH’s judgment of the nations. These nations probably never heard these messages. They are written to show the universal nature of Israel’s God. All history is before Him. He is not like the dead, blind, deaf idols; He acts in His world.

The NJB entitles 25:13c-38 “Introduction to the Prophecies Against the Nations.” The LXX moves these prophecies from chapters 46-51 in the MT to begin at chapter 25 in the Septuagint.

25:14 This verse is in parentheses in the NASB, NKJV, which denotes the comments of an editor or an aside from Baruch.

☐ **“I will recompense them according to their deeds”** See full notes at 17:10. We reap what we sow, often in kind!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:15-16

¹⁵For thus the LORD, the God of Israel, says to me, “Take this cup of the wine of wrath from My hand and cause all the nations to whom I send you to drink it. ¹⁶They will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them.”

25:15 “this cup of the wine” This is a Hebrew idiom for judgment (cf. 13:13; 51:7; Ps. 75:8; Isa. 51:17,22). Notice it again asserts that YHWH, not the gods of the nations, controls the outcome of wars and international treaties, etc. (cf. v. 28; 1:10; Deut. 32:8).

This same imagery is used of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (cf. Matt. 24:39; also note 20:22).

Notice the number of times the VERBS related to drinking/drunkenness are used.

1. give to drink – BDB 1052, KB 1639, *Hiphil* PERFECT, vv. 15,17
2. drink – BDB 1059, KB 1667, *Qal* PERFECT, vv. 16,26,28 (thrice)
3. be drunk – BDB 1016, KB 1500, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, v. 27
4. surely drink – BDB 1059, KB 1667, INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Qal* IMPERFECT of the same root for intensity, v. 27

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:17-26

¹⁷Then I took the cup from the LORD’s hand and made all the nations to whom the LORD sent me drink it: ¹⁸Jerusalem and the cities of Judah and its kings *and* its princes, to make them a ruin, a horror, a hissing and a curse, as it is this day; ¹⁹Pharaoh king of Egypt, his servants, his princes and all his people; ²⁰and all the foreign people, all the kings of the land of Uz, all the kings of the land of the Philistines (even Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and the remnant of Ashdod); ²¹Edom, Moab and the sons of Ammon; ²²and all the kings of Tyre, all the kings of Sidon and the kings of the coastlands which are beyond the sea; ²³and Dedan, Tema, Buz and all who cut the corners *of their hair*; ²⁴and all the kings of Arabia and all the kings of the foreign people who dwell in the desert; ²⁵and all the kings of Zimri, all the kings of Elam and all the kings of Media; ²⁶and all the kings of the north, near and far, one with another; and all the kingdoms of the earth which are upon the face of the ground, and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them.

25:17 “all the nations” The list of nations in vv. 18-26 is

1. mostly listed in chapters 46-51
2. listed as part of the Persian Empire

25:23 “all who cut the corners of *their hair*” This pagan practice is mentioned two other times in Jeremiah (cf. 9:26; 49:32) and may relate to Lev. 19:27-28 or 21:5 (cf. Deut. 14:1-2). Its exact nature is uncertain.

25:26 “all the kings of the north, near and far” This phrase is used of those nations directly north of Palestine and those of the Fertile Crescent/Mesopotamia.

☐ “**Sheshach**” This (BDB 1058) is a cryptogram for Babel (footnote on p. 1001 from the New Oxford Annotated Bible, NRSV). AB says in a footnote, “a cipher by which letters of one name, counted from the beginning of the alphabet, are exchanged for corresponding letters counted from the end” (p. 161). This is from Jerome. The method is called *atbash* (also note 51:1).

☐ “**all the kingdoms of the earth which are upon the face of the ground**” This is hyperbole (cf. v. 29)! This refers to the nations of which Israel/Judah had knowledge (i.e., the ANE). It would not include China, the Americas, etc., but theologically it would! God loves all the nations and wants all of them to know Him!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:27-29

²⁷“You shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Drink, be drunk, vomit, fall and rise no more because of the sword which I will send among you.”’ ²⁸And it will be, if they refuse to take the cup from your hand to drink, then you will say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: “You shall surely drink! ²⁹For behold, I am beginning to work calamity in *this* city which is called by My name, and shall you be completely free from punishment? You will not be free from punishment; for I am summoning a sword against all the inhabitants of the earth,” declares the LORD of hosts.’

25:27 there is a string of commands related to drunkenness as a metaphor for judgment.

1. drunk – BDB 1059, KB 1667, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. be drunk – BDB 1016, KB 1500, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. vomit – BDB 883, KB 1096, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. fall – BDB 656, KB 709, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
5. notice the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB of #1 in v. 28 for intensity

25:29 Jerusalem, who had such privileges, will be judged along with the rest of mankind!

☐ “**completely free**” This is the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB from the same root (BDB 667, KB 720) for dramatic emphasis. The city which was called by YHWH’s name was surely responsible for her covenant breaking, refusal to repent, continued idolatry!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:30-31

³⁰“Therefore you shall prophesy against them all these words, and you shall say to them,
‘The LORD will roar from on high
And utter His voice from His holy habitation;
He will roar mightily against His fold.
He will shout like those who tread *the grapes*,
Against all the inhabitants of the earth.

³¹“A clamor has come to the end of the earth,
Because the LORD has a controversy with the nations.

**He is entering into judgment with all flesh;
As for the wicked, He has given them to the sword,' declares the LORD."**

25:30-31 This strophe characterizes YHWH and His purposes. He wanted to bless mankind but they would not, so judgment came on all (hyperbole). Notice the one true God judges (cf. v. 38)

1. His own flock, v. 30, line 4
2. the world (i.e., "the nations," "all flesh"), v. 31

25:30 "roar" The metaphor of YHWH's judgment changes in vv. 30-38 to YHWH as a lion.

"Roar" is the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB from the same root (BDB 980, KB 1367) for intensity. For this same imagery see Joel 2:11 and Amos 1:2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:32

**³²Thus says the LORD of hosts,
"Behold, evil is going forth
From nation to nation,
And a great storm is being stirred up
From the remotest parts of the earth.**

25:32-38 Again a poem of YHWH's universal judgment is appended to the similar poem of vv. 30-31. Were they spoken together at the same time? Probably not. The reason the prophet seems so repetitive is the organization of these poems by theme or key words.

Notice the phrases that speak of universal judgment.

1. v. 15 – "caused all the nations to drink it" (cup of judgment)
2. v. 17 – "made all the nations to drink it"
3. v. 19 – "all his (i.e., Pharaoh) people"
4. v. 20 – "all the foreign people"
5. v. 20 – "all the kings" (vv. 20 [twice], 22 [thrice], 24, 24, 24)
6. v. 26 – "all the kingdoms of the earth which are upon the face of the ground"
7. v. 15 – "all the inhabitants of the earth" (for "earth" see Special Topic at 6:18-19)
8. v. 30 – "against all the inhabitants of the earth"
9. v. 31 – "to the ends of the earth"
10. v. 31 – "with the nations"
11. v. 31 – "with all flesh"
12. v. 32 – "from nation to nation"
13. v. 32 – "from the remotest part of the earth"
14. v. 33 – "from one end of the earth to the other"

One God created the earth (see Special Topic: Monotheism at 1:5). One God wanted fellowship with humans made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26,27). All humans rebelled (i.e., in Adam, Genesis 3, and in personal choices, Rom. 3:9-18,23). The consequences are universal, but so too, the love of God in the Messiah (cf. John 3:16; II Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:2). Judgment is not the last word but it is a necessary word!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:33-38

³³"Those slain by the LORD on that day will be from one end of the earth to the other. They will not be lamented, gathered or buried; they will be like dung on the face of the ground.

³⁴“Wail, you shepherds, and cry;
 And wallow *in ashes*, you masters of the flock;
 For the days of your slaughter and your dispersions have come,
 And you will fall like a choice vessel.
³⁵Flight will perish from the shepherds,
 And escape from the masters of the flock.
³⁶Hear the sound of the cry of the shepherds,
 And the wailing of the masters of the flock!
 For the LORD is destroying their pasture,
³⁷And the peaceful folds are made silent
 Because of the fierce anger of the LORD.
³⁸He has left His hiding place like the lion;
 For their land has become a horror
 Because of the fierceness of the oppressing *sword*
 And because of His fierce anger.”

25:34 There are two difficulties in this verse.

1. “dispersions” (NASB, NKJV, NRSV)
 “shattered” (NJB, NIV)
 “break you in pieces” (JPSOA)
 The Hebrew word is found only here and its root is uncertain.
2. “vessel” (MT, NASB, NKJV, NJB, JPSOA)
 “rams” (LXX, TEV, AB)
 The Hebrew word is uncertain. The UBS Text Project gives “vessel” a “B” rating.

25:38 “His fierce anger” See Special Topic at 1:9.

JEREMIAH 26

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS (The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Cities of Judah Warned	Jeremiah Saved From Death	The Temple Sermon	Jeremiah Is Brought To Trial	Arrest and Trial of Jeremiah
26:1-6	26:1-6	26:1-6	26:1-3	26:1-6
A Plot To Murder Jeremiah			26:4-6	
26:7-9	26:7-9	26:7-9	26:7-9	26:7-10
26:10-11	26:10-11	26:10-11	26:10-11	26:11-15
26:12-15	26:12-15	26:12-15	26:12-15	
Jeremiah Is Spared				
26:16-19	26:16-19	26:16-19	26:16	26:16-18
(18c)	(18c)	(18c)	26:17-19 (18c)	(18c)
				26:19
26:20-23	26:20-24	26:20-23	26:20-23 (parenthesis)	26:20-24
26:24		26:24	26:24	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BRIEF OVERVIEW

- A. Chapters 1-25 are written in the FIRST PERSON, while chapters 26-45 are in the THIRD PERSON. This change is possibly due to Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe (cf. 36:4,18; 43:3)
- B. Chapter 25 is written in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, while 26:1 is at the beginning of his reign. Jeremiah is not in chronological order, though many of the early chapters may be.
- C. Chapter 26 is parallel to chapter 7. It possibly records the people at the temple's reaction to Jeremiah's Temple sermon recorded in 7:2-15.
- D. Chapters 27-28 deal with the prophecy concerning the fall of Jerusalem.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:1-6

¹In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came from the LORD, saying, ²“Thus says the LORD, ‘Stand in the court of the LORD’s house, and speak to all the cities of Judah who have come to worship *in* the LORD’s house all the words that I have commanded you to speak to them. Do not omit a word! ³Perhaps they will listen and everyone will turn from his evil way, that I may repent of the calamity which I am planning to do to them because of the evil of their deeds.’ ⁴And you will say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD, “If you will not listen to Me, to walk in My law which I have set before you, ⁵to listen to the words of My servants the prophets, whom I have been sending to you again and again, but you have not listened; ⁶then I will make this house like Shiloh, and this city I will make a curse to all the nations of the earth.””

26:1 “In the beginning of the reign” This CONSTRUCT (BDB 912 and 575) is a technical phrase for the ascension year of a new king. The reigns of kings were figured differently from country to country. Judah counted the first partial year as one year of a king's reign, while Israel did not.

▣ **“Jehoiakim”** He was a son of Josiah and reigned from 609-597 B.C. He was put on the throne by Pharaoh Necho II of Egypt. His original name was Eliakim.

26:2 “Stand in the court of the LORD’s house” Jeremiah has been directed to share his revelations there several times (cf. 7:2; 17:19; 19:16). From this locale he could address “all the cities of Judah.”

▣ **“Do not omit a word”** This is literally “diminish” (BDB 175, KB 203, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense). It implies a very specific divine message (cf. Deut. 4:2; Pro. 30:6). See the Special Topics at 23:21-22. This reminds me of

1. Samuel and Eli in I Samuel 3
2. two verses in Jeremiah, 1:17 and 42:4
3. Paul's words in Acts 20:20
4. Revelation 22:18-19

In vv. 12-13 Jeremiah claims that his words are YHWH's words.

26:3 This verse reflects the message of 25:4-5 (repeated with the same VERBS in 26:5). The problem is that Judah will not listen and respond (i.e., repent, lit. “turn,” BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. v. 13).

YHWH will repent (lit. “be sorry,” BDB 636, KB 688, *Niphal* PERFECT) of His decrees of judgment (cf. vv. 4-6) and exile if Judah will turn back to Him. This is the desire of the covenant God! But Judah would not, could not, did not respond!

It is difficult for modern western people to comprehend God “repenting” or “changing His mind” or “being sorry,” however, this is an anthropomorphic way of showing His merciful character and His attention to His people’s prayers and covenant obedience. See *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 108-109.

26:4-5 Notice the covenant criteria YHWH lists as a prerequisite to changing His mind.

1. if you listen to Me
2. if you walk in My law
3. if you listen to the words of My servants, the prophets (cf. Deut. 18:19)

26:6 “like Shiloh” This was the site of an ancient Jewish sanctuary which was destroyed by the Philistines in 1050 B.C., cf. 7:12,14.

▣ **“I will make this house. . . a curse to all the nations of the earth”** This hyperbolic language continues from 24:9 and 25:18. God’s people were meant to be a blessing to the world (i.e., Gen. 12:3), but because of their sin, the world (i.e., the nations) saw only the judgment of YHWH, not His grace and mercy (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:7-9

⁷The priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD. ⁸When Jeremiah finished speaking all that the LORD had commanded *him* to speak to all the people, the priests and the prophets and all the people seized him, saying, “You must die! ⁹Why have you prophesied in the name of the LORD saying, “This house will be like Shiloh and this city will be desolate, without inhabitant’?” And all the people gathered about Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

26:7 The different groups of Judah’s leadership are condemned (cf. 1:18; 2:8; 10:21; 23:2,13-15,16,25-26,33-34, 35, etc.).

26:8 “You must die” This is an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and an IMPERFECT VERB from the same root (BDB 559, KB 562), used for emphasis. The religious leaders considered Jeremiah’s message blasphemy (cf. v. 9; Deut. 18:20) against the Davidic promises of II Samuel 7 and Isaiah’s theology concerning Jerusalem (i.e., Isa. 33:20 and chapters 36-39). They failed to take seriously the conditional nature of the covenant promises (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-28; 30:15-20). This was not the first or last attempt on Jeremiah’s life (cf. 11:19; 18:23).

The NASB Study Bible mentions that the phrase is similar to Exod. 21:15-17; Lev. 24:16-17,21; Deut. 18:20; I Kgs. 21:13, all of which describe the ultimate penalty for gross violations of the Mosaic covenant (p. 1098).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:10-11

¹⁰When the officials of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king’s house to the house of the LORD and sat in the entrance of the New Gate of the LORD’s house. ¹¹Then the priests and the prophets spoke to the officials and to all the people, saying, “A death sentence for this man! For he has prophesied against this city as you have heard in your hearing.”

26:10 “sat in the entrance of the New Gate” The location of the New Gate is unknown (cf. 36:10). Rashi says it was the rebuilt Eastern Gate.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:12-15

¹²Then Jeremiah spoke to all the officials and to all the people, saying, “The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that you have heard. ¹³Now therefore amend your ways and your deeds and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will change His mind about the misfortune which He has pronounced against you. ¹⁴But as for me, behold, I am in your hands; do with me as is good and right in your sight. ¹⁵Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood on yourselves, and on this city and on its inhabitants; for truly the LORD has sent me to you to speak all these words in your hearing.”

26:13 This repeats the message of vv. 3-6.

26:15 “know for certain” This is an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and an IMPERFECT VERB from the same root (BDB 393, KB 390) which denotes intensity.

▣ **“innocent blood”** See 7:6; Deut. 19:10; Pro. 6:16-17.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:16-19

¹⁶Then the officials and all the people said to the priests and to the prophets, “No death sentence for this man! For he has spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.” ¹⁷Then some of the elders of the land rose up and spoke to all the assembly of the people, saying, ¹⁸“Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah; and he spoke to all the people of Judah, saying, ‘Thus the LORD of hosts has said,

“Zion will be plowed as a field,
And Jerusalem will become ruins,
And the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.”

¹⁹Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him to death? Did he not fear the LORD and entreat the favor of the LORD, and the LORD changed His mind about the misfortune which He had pronounced against them? But we are committing a great evil against ourselves.”

26:16-19 The civil officials and the people are more sensitive to Jeremiah’s words than the spiritual leadership (i.e., priests and prophets). They even mention an earlier example of a prophetic message of judgment against Jerusalem (cf. Micah 3:12). In a sense this is a call to repentance as in Hezekiah’s day (cf. II Chr. 29:3-11).

26:17 “elders of the land” This refers to wealthy land owners and influential families. See Special Topic: Elders at 19:1.

26:18 “Zion” Jerusalem was built on several hills. One of the tallest was Zion, where the Jebusite fortress was built and captured by David (cf. II Sam. 5:7; I Chr. 11:5). It became a way of referring to the whole city of Jerusalem (cf. I Kgs. 8:1). The phrases “the virgin daughter of Zion” (i.e., II Kgs. 19:21) was a way of referring to god’s covenant people whose capital and temple were in Jerusalem.

▣ **“And the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest”** Another translation has, “The temple mount will become a mere wooded ridge.” This imagery reflects the worship of “trees” (i.e., *Astarte*) located on *Ba'al* platforms. It would equal the groves “of fertility worship.”

26:19

NASB, NRSV “entreat the favor of”
NKJV “seek the favor of”
TEV “tried to win his favor”
NJB “plead with him”
JPSOA “implore”
REB “seek to placate”

The VERB (BDB 318 II, KB 316, *Piel* IMPERFECT) was used in the sense of “make the face sweet” (i.e., Aramaic, Arabic). The “face” represents the person. In judgment, the judge could not “lift the face” (i.e., show preferential treatment). Here possibly touch the face (NET Bible, p. 1367 and Expositors Bible commentary, vol. 6, p. 541).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:20-23

²⁰Indeed, there was also a man who prophesied in the name of the LORD, Uriah the son of Shemaiah from Kiriath-jearim; and he prophesied against this city and against this land words similar to all those of Jeremiah. ²¹When King Jehoiakim and all his mighty men and all the officials heard his words, then the king sought to put him to death; but Uriah heard *it*, and he was afraid and fled and went to Egypt. ²²Then King Jehoiakim sent men to Egypt: Elnathan the son of Achbor and certain men with him *went* into Egypt. ²³And they brought Uriah from Egypt and led him to King Jehoiakim, who slew him with a sword and cast his dead body into the burial place of the common people.

26:20 “Uriah” Verses 20-22 function as a parenthesis (cf. TEV, NET). The time phrase is uncertain. Apparently Micah is used as an example of a prophet who spoke judgment against the temple and was spared. The priests brought up the example of another prophet who preached judgment against Jerusalem and was executed by the civil leadership.

It is also possible that the reaction of Hezekiah to YHWH’s prophet is shown to be different from Jehoiakim’s reaction to YHWH’s message (cf. NASB Study Bible footnote, p. 1099).

Uriah is otherwise unknown. He was either (1) a disciple of Jeremiah or (2) another prophetic voice about YHWH judging Judah. However, Jehoiakim had him killed! Judah was about to kill another prophet!

26:22 “Elnathan the son of Achbor” He is part of a group of godly leaders who (36:11-19)

1. gave Baruch and Jeremiah warning to hide (36:19)
2. encouraged King Jehoiakim not to burn Jeremiah’s prophecies (36:25)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:24

²⁴But the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, so that he was not given into the hands of the people to put him to death.

26:24 “Ahikam” This was the father of Gedaliah, who later became the appointed Babylonian governor of Judah under Nebuchadnezzar II. Also he was part of the deputation to Huldah from Josiah in II Kgs. 22:12ff. Jeremiah was not without supporters and advocates.

JEREMIAH 27

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Nations To Submit to Nebuchadnezzar	Symbol of the Bonds and Yokes	The Yoke of the King of Babylon (27:1-28:17)	Jeremiah Wears An Ox Yoke	The Symbolic Yoke and the Message to the Neighboring Kings
27:1-7	27:1-11	27:1-7	27:1-7	27:1-11
27:8-11		27:8-11	27:8-11	
27:12-15	27:12-15	27:12-15	27:12-15	27:12-15
27:16-22	27:16-18 27:19-22	27:16-22	27:16-18 27:19-20 (parenthesis) 27:21-22	27:16-22

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The LXX text of this chapter is much shorter (LXX chapter 34). The question is, "Does the LXX remove the doublets and repetitions or does the MT expand the text for clarity or current stylistic considerations?"

- B. Notice Jeremiah addresses several groups.
1. the ambassadors from the surrounding nations (cf. v. 3) who wanted Judah to join their coalition against Babylon
 2. the king of Judah, Zedekiah, v. 12-15
 3. the priests, v. 16
 4. the people, v. 16
- C. Notice the number of times and the variety of phrasing that Jeremiah used to assure his audiences that he is speaking the message of YHWH, not his own opinion.
1. this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD, v. 1
 2. thus says the LORD to me, v. 2
 3. thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, vv. 4,21
 4. the LORD has spoken to that nation (i.e., Babylon), v. 13
 5. v. 15 has two disclaimers of YHWH speaking through the false prophets
 6. thus says the LORD, v. 16
 7. thus says the LORD of hosts, v. 19
 8. declares the LORD, v. 22
- D. Chapters 27-29 form a literary unit.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:1-7

¹In the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying—²thus says the LORD to me—“Make for yourself bonds and yokes and put them on your neck, ³and send word to the king of Edom, to the king of Moab, to the king of the sons of Ammon, to the king of Tyre and to the king of Sidon by the messengers who come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah. ⁴Command them *to go* to their masters, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, thus you shall say to your masters, ⁵“I have made the earth, the men and the beasts which are on the face of the earth by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and I will give it to the one who is pleasing in My sight. ⁶Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and I have given him also the wild animals of the field to serve him. ⁷All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson until the time of his own land comes; then many nations and great kings will make him their servant.

27:1 “Zedekiah” Most manuscripts of the MT have “Jehoiakim” (JPSOA). However, the Peshitta (Syriac) and the Arabic, along with three Hebrew MSS, have “Zedekiah” because of:

1. vv. 3, 12; 28:1
2. the internal setting of the chapter fits Zedekiah better
3. the LXX omitted the verse

The date must be after 597 B.C., possibly 594 B.C., because an account in the Babylonian Chronicles tells us of the attempted coalition between small western states against Nebuchadnezzar II (cf. v. 3).

▣ **“Jeremiah”** Jeremiah’s name (יֵרֵמְיָהוּ, i.e., 26:7) is spelled differently in Hebrew (יְרֵמְיָהוּ), reason unknown. Several names in the OT are spelled differently, examples are Joshua, Nebuchadnezzar.

27:3 “bonds and yokes” This refers to oxen yokes (BDB 557). How many Jeremiah made is uncertain, whether one for himself or one for each ambassador. They symbolized servitude (cf. v. 8; Deut. 28:48). Probably the Hebrew “them” of v. 3 refers to a message, not a yoke.

▣ **“by the messengers”** This refers to the officials sent by the surrounding nations who were trying to encourage Zedekiah to resist Babylon, along with them.

27:5 This is the theological assertion that YHWH is the God of creation (cf. Gen. 1:1-2:3). Verses 5-6 also assert His sovereignty over all nations (cf. Deut. 32:8; Job 12:23; Acts 17:26).

▣ **“by My great power and by My outstretched arm”** This is a repeated anthropomorphic (see Special Topic at 1:9) theme.

1. YHWH’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt, Deut. 4:34; 5:15; 6:21; 9:29
2. YHWH as creator, II Kgs. 19:15; Jer. 27:5; 32:17

▣ **“I will give it to the one who is pleasing in My sight”** This phrase also refers to Cyrus II, King of Persia (cf. Isa. 44:28; 45:1-7), but here to Nebuchadnezzar II (cf. 28:14). YHWH is in control of history!

The VERB (BDB 678, KB 733) is used four times in vv. 5-8. The emphasis is not on the power of human kings, but on YHWH’s control of nations and events for His redemptive purposes!

27:6 “My servant” This is a honorific title used of (1) the Messiah (cf. Isa. 52:13) and (2) Nebuchadnezzar II (cf. 25:9; 43:10). God is in control of history, men, nations, and even Satan, who may all be used to accomplish His redemptive purposes!

The footnote of the Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 545, is very helpful as it outlines the different usages of the title “My Servant.”

1. a servant of God as a prophet, cf. Num. 12:7-8; Neh. 1:7; Dan. 9:11
 - a. Moses
 - b. Daniel, cf. Dan. 9:17
2. a servant of God as a military leader (i.e., Joshua), cf. Josh. 24:29; Jdgs. 2:8
3. a servant of God as King (i.e., David), cf. II Sam. 7:5,8; Psalm 18,36; Ezek. 34:24; 37:24
4. a servant of God as administrator
 - a. Nehemiah, cf. Neh. 1:6
 - b. Zerubbabel, cf. Hag. 2:23
5. all Israel (or Jacob), cf. Isa. 42:1,19; 43:10; 44:1,21; 49:3; Ezek. 28:25; 37:25
6. the remnant of Israel, cf. Isa. 41:8-10
7. a godly individual, cf. Job 1:8; 2:3; 42:8
8. unbelieving rulers who serve YHWH’s purposes
 - a. Cyrus, Isa. 44:28; 45:1
 - b. Nebuchadnezzar, Jer. 25:9; 27:6; 43:10

▣ **“also the wild animals of the field to serve him”** This is a strange phrase. It apparently relates to v. 5, where it is a way of referring to creation. Here it is used in a series of statements (cf. 28:14).

1. creation given, v. 5
2. lands given, v. 6
3. animals given, v. 6
4. nations given, v. 7

▣ **“to serve him”** This VERB (BDB 712, KB 773, here used of Nebuchadnezzar) is used eleven times in this chapter.

1. *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, v. 6
2. *Qal* PERFECT, vv. 7(twice),11(twice)
3. *Qal* IMPERFECT, vv., 8,9,13,14
4. *Qal* IMPERATIVE, vv. 12,17

27:7 “him, and his son, and his grandson” The LXX omits “grandson.” Historically the throne was seized from Nebuchadnezzar’s son by a relative. Remember, modern westerners turn Hebrew prophecy into “historical narrative.” This phrase is a literary way of asserting Babylon’s domination for a period of time (i.e., 70 years, cf. 25:11).

Also notice that as YHWH used Nebuchadnezzar to punish His unrepentant people, the day is coming when YHWH will use Cyrus to judge Babylon for her sins (cf. 25:12; chapters 50-51; Isa. 14:4-6).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:8-11

⁸“It will be, that the nation or the kingdom which will not serve him, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and which will not put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, I will punish that nation with the sword, with famine and with pestilence,” declares the LORD, “until I have destroyed it by his hand. ⁹But as for you, do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers or your sorcerers who speak to you, saying, ‘You will not serve the king of Babylon.’ ¹⁰For they prophesy a lie to you in order to remove you far from your land; and I will drive you out and you will perish. ¹¹But the nation which will bring its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will let remain on its land,” declares the LORD, “and they will till it and dwell in it.””

27:8 “the nation or the kingdom which will not serve him” A good example of this is Jeremiah’s words to Zedekiah in 38:17-23.

▣ **“sword. . .famine. . .pestilence”** This is a common trio used to describe a military takeover and its consequences. See note at 14:12.

27:9 ▣ **“do not listen”** This VERB (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) is repeated in vv. 14,16, and 17! We have a choice who we listen to!

▣ There is a series of forbidden ways to know God’s will and manipulate future events (cf. Deut. 18:9-14).

1. your prophets (BDB 611) – false prophets (cf. v. 9; 2:8; 23:13-15,26; 29:9)
2. your diviners (BDB 890) – This is from the Hebrew root for “divine” (BDB 890, cf. Num. 22:7; 23:23; Ezek. 21:21; II Kgs. 17:17). It is the general term describing several different methods, but all intent on determining the will of a deity by mechanical or natural means (such as examining the livers of sheep or casting arrows). It is based on the pagan worldview that there is information about the future hidden in natural events and that gifted humans (i.e., false prophets, e.g., Jer. 27:9; 29:8; Ezek. 13:9; 22:28) know it and influence this future.
3. your dreamers (BDB 321) – false revelations (cf. 23:25-28; 29:8; Deut. 13:1-3; see good brief article in John Walton, *ANE Thought and the OT*, p. 243). The REB changes the vowels and translates this as “your women dreamers.” NEB has “wise women.”
4. your soothsayers (BDB 778) – This term (BDB 778 II, KB 857) is related to the term “cloud” (BDB 777). Linguists think the term is related to sound:
 - a. the hum of insects

- b. sound of wind in the trees
- c. unknown etymology (if cloud, then related to sight)

The parallel passage in Moses' writings which prohibits these same pagan practices is in Lev. 19:26-20:8 (see esp. 19:26). This same term is also found in Jdgs. 9:37; II Kgs. 21:6; II Chr. 33:6; Isa. 2:6; 57:3; Jer. 27:9; Micah 5:12.

- 5. your sorcerers (BDB 506, the NOUN occurs only here) – This term (BDB 506, KB 503) basically means “to cut up” (1) as in the shredding of ingredients for a magical potion or (2) cutting oneself as a way of getting the deity's attention (i.e., Syrian usage, cf. I Kgs. 18:28). This term was used to describe Pharaoh's wise men in Exod. 7:11 and Nebuchadnezzar's wise men in Dan. 2:2.

27:10 “lie” This (BDB 1055) is placed first for emphasis.

27:11 This verse is illustrated in 40:9-12 and alluded to in 21:9; 38:2. YHWH is true to His promises. Even in judgment, obedience to His word brings its own reward (cf. Num. 21:4-9 [cf. John 3:14-15])!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:12-15

¹²I spoke words like all these to Zedekiah king of Judah, saying, “Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him and his people, and live! ¹³Why will you die, you and your people, by the sword, famine and pestilence, as the LORD has spoken to that nation which will not serve the king of Babylon? ¹⁴So do not listen to the words of the prophets who speak to you, saying, ‘You will not serve the king of Babylon,’ for they prophesy a lie to you; ¹⁵for I have not sent them,” declares the LORD, “but they prophesy falsely in My name, in order that I may drive you out and that you may perish, you and the prophets who prophesy to you.”

27:12,17 Jeremiah's words to King Zedekiah have urgency.

- 1. bring your necks under the yoke – BDB 97, KB 112, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
- 2. serve him – BDB 712, KB 773, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 3. live – BDB 310, KB 309, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

Several of these IMPERATIVES are repeated in v. 17 (i.e., #2, #3). Verse 12 is addressed to Zedekiah, while v. 17 is addressed to the priests and people (cf. v. 16).

27:15 “for I have not sent them” This statement is repeated in 23:21 and 29:9. I wonder if the false prophets thought He had or if they knew in their hearts they were speaking only for themselves (or because of political pressure).

I ask that because all speakers for God who do not receive verbal messages must wonder also! My only consolation is that I seek to communicate revelatory Scripture, not cultural or denominational personal opinions. Even then we face the task of application! I rest in the fact that

- 1. God knows the heart
- 2. the message of the NT is priority
- 3. NT prophets are different from OT prophets (see Special Topic at 1:4 and NT Prophets in Special Topic list online)
- 4. the Spirit is present with gospel proclaimers

It is uncertain how the inappropriate means of v. 9 are related to the methods of the false prophets of Judah or the surrounding pagan nations (cf. v. 3).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:16-22

¹⁶*Then I spoke to the priests and to all this people, saying, “Thus says the LORD: Do not listen to the words of your prophets who prophesy to you, saying, ‘Behold, the vessels of the LORD’s house will now shortly be brought again from Babylon’; for they are prophesying a lie to you. ¹⁷Do not listen to them; serve the king of Babylon, and live! Why should this city become a ruin? ¹⁸But if they are prophets, and if the word of the LORD is with them, let them now entreat the LORD of hosts that the vessels which are left in the house of the LORD, in the house of the king of Judah and in Jerusalem may not go to Babylon. ¹⁹For thus says the LORD of hosts concerning the pillars, concerning the sea, concerning the stands and concerning the rest of the vessels that are left in this city, ²⁰which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon did not take when he carried into exile Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem. ²¹Yes, thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that are left in the house of the LORD and in the house of the king of Judah and in Jerusalem, ²²‘They will be carried to Babylon and they will be there until the day I visit them,’ declares the LORD. ‘Then I will bring them back and restore them to this place.’”*

27:16 “the vessels” See v. 18; I Kgs. 7:15-20; Jer. 52:17ff. The first deportation had already occurred (i.e., 597 B.C., cf. v. 20). However, the false prophets were asserting these taken items would be returned soon.

27:18 “if they are prophets” Jeremiah puts them to the test of Deut. 13:1-3!

27:19 Several of the items of the temple were left.

1. the pillars (cf. I Kgs. 7:15; II Kgs. 25:13,17)
2. the sea (cf. I Kgs. 7:23-26)
3. the stands (cf. I Kgs. 7:27-39)
4. the rest of the vessels

See Jer. 52:17-23 where all are taken to Babylon, most placed in *Marduk’s* temple.

27:20 The exile of Jehoiachin is described in Jer. 22:28; 24:1; II Kgs. 24:12,14-16; II Chr. 36:10,18.

27:22 “Then I will bring them back” Here is the hope and promise of Ezra 1:7-11; 5:13-15; 7:19! YHWH sends and YHWH brings back (see 1:10; Isa. 6:9-10)! He is sovereign in world affairs!

JEREMIAH 28

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Hananiah's False Prophecy	Hananiah's Falsehood and Doom	The Yoke of the King of Babylon (27:1-28:17)	Jeremiah and the Prophet Hananiah	The Dispute with Hananiah
28:1-4	28:1-4	28:1-4	28:1-4	28:1-4
28:5-9	28:5-9	28:5-9	28:5-9	28:5-9
28:10-11	28:10-11	28:10-11	28:10-11	28:10-11
28:12-16	29:12-17	28:12-16	28:12-14 28:15-16	28:12-14 28:15-16
28:17		28:17	28:17	28:17

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2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This chapter is the dialog between two priests who both claim to be prophets. The word "say" (BDB 55, KB 65) is used sixteen times.
- B. Only an accurate prediction can prove which is the true prophet (cf. Deut. 13:1-3; 18:15-22). This will be verified within one year.

- C. Hananiah predicts (cf. vv. 1-4) a defeat of Babylon and a return of
1. Jeconiah and the exiles
 2. temple vessels
- Jeremiah predicts the fall of Judah, her destruction, and total exile for seventy years! Who is speaking for God? Time will clearly tell!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:1-4

¹Now in the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, in the fifth month, Hananiah the son of Azzur, the prophet, who was from Gibeon, spoke to me in the house of the LORD in the presence of the priests and all the people, saying, ²“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. ³Within two years I am going to bring back to this place all the vessels of the LORD’S house, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place and carried to Babylon. ⁴I am also going to bring back to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and all the exiles of Judah who went to Babylon,’ declares the LORD, ‘for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.’”

28:1 “the prophet” The LXX has “false prophet.”

▣ **“Gibeon”** This was a Levite city (Josh. 21:17). Both of these “prophets” have the same credentials. Jeremiah was from a city of priests and both are called “the prophet” (cf. v. 5). Both use the same introductory formula, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel” (v. 2; 27:4,21). How does the hearer know which to believe?

▣ **“in the presence of the priests and all the people, saying”** Hananiah publically confronted Jeremiah, possibly at a yearly or monthly feast.

28:2 “I have broken the yoke” The TENSE in Hebrew (*Qal* PERFECT) speaks of the act as already accomplished.

There is a sound play between

1. “break,” שבר – BDB 990, KB 1402
2. “bring back,” שרב – BDB 996, KB 1427

Both of these are used together two times (vv. 2,4).

28:3-4 “vessels. . .Jeconiah. . .exiles of Judah. . .in two years” This prophecy was very specific and detailed. It spoke to the nationalistic prejudice of the Judean people. It was a repudiation of Jeremiah’s sermon in chapter 27.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:5-9

⁵Then the prophet Jeremiah spoke to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and in the presence of all the people who were standing in the house of the LORD, ⁶and the prophet Jeremiah said, “Amen! May the LORD do so; may the LORD confirm your words which you have prophesied to bring back the vessels of the LORD’S house and all the exiles, from Babylon to this place. ⁷Yet hear now this word which I am about to speak in your hearing and in the hearing of all the people! ⁸The prophets who were before me and before you from ancient times prophesied against

many lands and against great kingdoms, of war and of calamity and of pestilence. ⁹The prophet who prophesies of peace, when the word of the prophet comes to pass, then that prophet will be known as one whom the LORD has truly sent.”

28:6 “Amen” Jeremiah wished Hananiah’s message was true, but it was not! For “amen” see special Topic at 3:12.

28:8 This shows that the prophets read/knew the prophets before them. Previous revelation is a great blessing. Much of the biblical imagery and idioms is used again and again. The theological message of vv. 8-9 is that the context of the message (i.e., war or peace) cannot be used to determine if the message is from a true prophet. Only accurate fulfillment (or repentance and God changing His mind) can do that!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:10-11

¹⁰Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from the neck of Jeremiah the prophet and broke it. ¹¹Hananiah spoke in the presence of all the people, saying, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Even so will I break within two full years the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all the nations.’” Then the prophet Jeremiah went his way.

28:10 “took the yoke. . .broke it” This was possibly a violent act!

28:11 “Jeremiah went his way” Why we don’t know, but possibly because he had to wait for YHWH’s reply.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:12-16

¹²The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah after Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, saying, ¹³“Go and speak to Hananiah, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD, ‘You have broken the yokes of wood, but you have made instead of them yokes of iron.’” ¹⁴For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “I have put a yoke of iron on the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they will serve him. And I have also given him the beasts of the field.”” ¹⁵Then Jeremiah the prophet said to Hananiah the prophet, “Listen now, Hananiah, the LORD has not sent you, and you have made this people trust in a lie. ¹⁶Therefore thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I am about to remove you from the face of the earth. This year you are going to die, because you have counseled rebellion against the LORD.’”

28:12 “Jeremiah. . .Jeremiah” This seems to confirm that this section of chapters was penned by Baruch.

28:13

NASB, NKJV	“you have made”
TEV	“he will replace”
LXX	“I will”
NEB	“I will make”

The MT has “you” and the UBS Text Project gives it a “B” rating. The LXX seems to catch the meaning better, but usually the more difficult reading is original (see Appendix on Textual Criticism).

28:14 YHWH will replace the wooden symbol with an iron symbol! Jeremiah's prophecy, not Hananiah's, will come to pass (cf. v. 15).

Verses 15-17 are YHWH's response through Jeremiah to Hananiah. He will die in the same year. His prophecy was considered "rebellion against the LORD!"

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:17

¹⁷So Hananiah the prophet died in the same year in the seventh month.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTERS 27-29

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why was Jeremiah so disliked?
2. Is all history really controlled by God? If so, think of the implications.
3. Why is man so obsessed with knowing and altering the future? Is this prevalent today?
4. Why is it that God's spokesmen are always rejected by their contemporaries?
5. How do you know the false from the true prophets?
6. Did Hananiah really believe he was a prophet?

JEREMIAH 29

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Message to the Exiles	Jeremiah's Letter to the Captives	Jeremiah's Letters to Babylon	Jeremiah's Letter to the Jews in Babylonia	The Letter to the Exiles
29:1-9	29:1-3 29:4-9 (4-9)	29:1-9	29:1-3 29:4-9	29:1-3 29:4-14
29:10-14	29:10-14 (10-14)	29:10-14	29:10-14	
29:15-20	29:15-20 (15-20)	29:15-23	29:15-20	29:15-20
29:21-23	29:21-23 (21-23)		29:21-23	29:21-23
29:24-28	29:24-28 (24-28)	29:24-28	The Letter of Shemaiah 29:24-25 29:26-28	Prophecy Against Shemaiah 29:24-28
29:29-32	29:29-32	29:29-32	29:29-32	29:29-32

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is a rare example of personal correspondence during the period of the fall of the kingdom of Judah. This represents letters between the Jewish exiles in Babylon and the Jews in Jerusalem. There were two previous deportations by Nebuchadnezzar (605 and 597 B.C.) before the city was completely destroyed in 586 B.C.
- B. There is some conjecture as to how many letters are combined in this chapter. The theories are:
1. there is only one letter
 2. there are two letters: 29:1-14 and 29:15-32
 3. there are three letters: 29:1-15; 29:21-23; 29:31-32
 4. there are four letters: 29:1-14; 29:15-20; 29:21-23; 29:31-32
- It seems to me that there are probably four pieces of correspondence either being alluded to or comprising this chapter.
- C. Some see the date of this chapter as around 594 B.C. for the following reasons.
1. We know from secular literature (i.e., Babylonian Chronicles) that there were internal problems within the Babylonian Empire.
 2. Some prophets among the Jewish exiles seem to have been killed because they advocated rebellion, 29:21-22.
 3. This is the year that Zedekiah was required to show loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar and this may be reflected in the coming of the officials to Babylon, 29:3.
- D. King Jeconiah, mentioned in v. 2, is really King Jehoiachin. His father, King Jehoiakim, had paid tribute to Nebuchadnezzar for three years and then had rebelled. Before Nebuchadnezzar could come militarily, Jehoiakim died. His son replaced him and apparently ruled with the help of his queen-mother. Nebuchadnezzar arrived and exiled him to captivity after he had reigned only three months. He was replaced by another relative (uncle) of Josiah, Zedekiah.
- E. This chapter clearly presents YHWH's sovereignty in the actions of history. Notice the string of "I have. . ." or "I will . . ." statements.
1. I have sent into exile, vv. 4,14,18,20
 2. I have not sent them (i.e., the false prophets in Babylon), v. 9
 3. I will visit you (i.e., in Babylon), v. 10
 4. I will fulfill My good word (i.e., to bring you back to Palestine), v. 10
 5. I have plans for you (two emphatic "I's"), v. 11
 6. I will listen to you (see note at vv. 11-14), v. 12
 7. I will restore your fortunes, v. 14
 8. I will gather you from all the nations. . .where I have driven you, v. 14
 9. I will send upon them the sword, famine, and pestilence (i.e., the Jews still in Judah), v. 17
 10. I will make them like rotten fruit (i.e., the Jews still in Judah), v. 17
 11. I will pursue them with the sword, v. 18
 12. I sent to them again and again My servants (i.e., the prophets), v. 19
 13. I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar (i.e., false prophets killed in Babylon), v. 21
 14. I did not command them (i.e., the false prophets to speak), v. 23
 15. I am He who knows and am a witness, v. 23

16. I am about to punish Shemaiah (i.e., false prophet), v. 32

17. I am about to do (good) to My people (i.e., the Jews in Babylon), v. 32

YHWH, unlike the lifeless idols, is active in the lives of His people for His larger redemptive purposes!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:1-9

¹Now these are the words of the letter which Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the rest of the elders of the exile, the priests, the prophets and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. ²(This was after King Jeconiah and the queen mother, the court officials, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem.) ³The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiyah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, saying, ⁴“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, ⁵“Build houses and live *in them*; and plant gardens and eat their produce. ⁶Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease. ⁷Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.’ ⁸For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Do not let your prophets who are in your midst and your diviners deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream. ⁹For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them,’ declares the LORD.

29:1 “to the rest of the elders of the exile” The term “rest” (BDB 451 #1,2) can mean “remnant” or “residue,” but also “preeminence” (#3, cf. Gen. 49:3). Some believe that many of the elders or leaders of the Jewish community had already been killed by Nebuchadnezzar because of their treasonous activity, along with prophets (cf. vv. 21-23).

29:2 The NASB and NKJV show v. 2 as a parenthesis, probably related in II Kgs. 24:12-16. The JPSOA has a dash separating v. 1 from v. 4. This may be an editorial addition to specify the exact historical setting.

The group of exiled leadership would match the exile of 596 B.C. (cf. II Kgs. 24:10-17).

1. King Jeconiah (i.e., Jehoiachin)
2. the queen mother (i.e., Nehushta, cf. II Kgs. 24:8)
3. court officials
4. children of Jeconiah (possibly 605 B.C., cf. Dan. 1:3)
5. children of powerful families in Jerusalem (possibly 605 B.C., cf. Dan. 1:3)
6. craftsmen (possibly taken in 605 B.C.)
7. smiths (possibly taken in 605 B.C.)

▣ **“the court officials”** This literally is “eunuchs.” It is an Akkadian word which means “the one at the head.” Usually this refers to those who had been castrated and put into public service. But, since Potiphar (Gen. 39:1) was married and has this same title, this term may have come to mean simply “a government official.”

▣ **“the craftsmen and the smiths”** It is obvious that the first term means “craftsmen” or “artisan,” but the second term in Hebrew is very uncertain (see note at 24:1). There is no unanimity about its meaning or

origin. We know that this exile occurred in 597 B.C. (II Kgs. 2:14) and is alluded to in Jer. 52:28. The number of the exiles is somewhat different in these two passages and scholars are not exactly sure why.

29:3 “Elasah the son of Shaphan” This is probably Ahikam’s brother of 26:24 who helped Jeremiah during the reaction to his temple sermon. The father mentioned here was probably the scribe of Josiah (cf. II Kgs. 22:8).

▣ **“Gemariah the son of Hilkiyah”** Although we know nothing about this man, his father may have been the high priest who is referred to in II Kings 24, but this is only conjecture.

▣ **“whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to Babylon”** The purpose for this may have been (1) to pay tribute or (2) to assure Nebuchadnezzar of Zedekiah’s loyalty. These two men are supportive of Jeremiah and willingly, enthusiastically brought his letter to the exiles.

This VERB “send” (BDB 1018, KB 1511) is used an unusual number of times in this chapter.

1. letter sent, v. 1
2. people sent, v. 3
3. prophets YHWH did not send, vv. 9,25,31
4. YHWH sends the sword, famine, and pestilence, v. 17
5. YHWH’s word sent by His prophets, vv. 19 (twice), 28,31

It is a common VERB but its repetition shows the problem—who speaks for God?

29:4 “whom I have sent into exile” Again, throughout the account of this period God claims to be in control of history (i.e., Isa. 10:5). The exile is His judgment on Judah in order to bring His people back to personal faith in Him (cf. v. 7).

29:5-8 “build houses. . .plant gardens. . .take wives” Jeremiah’s advice is to settle down and make life as normal as possible. Apparently the Jews were living in makeshift houses and some were even refusing to unpack. Jeremiah advises them to settle down for a long wait. This very message is referred to in the letter by Shemaiah, a false prophet mentioned in v. 28. It must have seemed like treason to the Jewish leaders.

Notice the commands in Jeremiah’s letter (i.e., vv. 5-8; also note v. 28).

1. build houses – BDB 124, KB 139, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. live in them – BDB 442, KB 444, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. plant gardens – BDB 642, KB 694, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. eat their produce – BDB 37, KB 46, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
5. take wives – BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
6. beget (i.e., have children) – BDB 408, KB 441, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
7. take wives for your sons – same as #5
8. give your daughters – BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
9. that they may bear – BDB 408, KB 441, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
10. multiply there – BDB 915, KB 1176, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
11. do not decrease – BDB 589, KB 611, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
12. seek the welfare of the city – BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
13. pray to the Lord on its behalf – BDB 813, KB 933, *Hithpael* IMPERATIVE
14. do not let your prophets. . .deceive you – BDB 674, KB 728, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
15. do not listen to the dreams – BDB 1033, KB 150, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

The whole point is, resume a normal as possible life. You will not be back in Judah until the 70 year prophecy (cf. v. 10) is fulfilled.

29:7 “seek the welfare of the city. . .and pray to the LORD on its behalf” This is the only example in the OT of praying for one’s enemies, particularly a Gentile city(s) of exile. Some have said that this is the beginning of the belief that prayers can substitute for sacrifice or that this refers to prayer at the local synagogue, which would be the beginning of this institution during the exilic period. Or, this may form the basis of the rabbinical admonition, followed by the NT, of praying for civil government (cf. Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:1).

29:8 “let your prophets. . .your diviners. . .the dreams which they dream” This is referring to false prophets among the exiles. Most of the letters recorded in this chapter are either about false prophets or are from false prophets. The list of what the prophets were doing is condemned in Lev. 19:26,31; 20:6; Deut. 18:9-13 (cf. Jer. 27:9-10). It is important to note the biblical material on how to test a true prophet (cf. Deut. 13:1-5; 18:14-22; Matt. 7:15-27; I John 4:1-3).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:10-14

¹⁰“For thus says the LORD, ‘When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place. ¹¹For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. ¹²Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. ¹³You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. ¹⁴I will be found by you,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will restore your fortunes and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places where I have driven you,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will bring you back to the place from where I sent you into exile.’”

29:10 “When seventy years have been completed for Babylon” This same round number is mentioned in Jer. 25:11,12. Some see the time span

1. from the fall of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria in 612 B.C. to the fall of the capital of Babylon in 539 B.C.
2. from the destruction of the first temple in 586 B.C. to the construction of the second temple in 516 B.C.
3. from Nebuchadnezzar becoming king in 605 B.C. to the fall of Babylon in 539 B.C.

The truth of the matter is that there is no literal seventy year period about which scholars are unanimous. This seems to be a round number which refers to several generations or the normal life span of one individual. See Special Topic: Symbolic Numbers in Scripture at 15:9.

▣ **“I will visit you”** This visit may be the vision of Ezekiel 1 and 10. YHWH leaves the temple because of its idolatry (Ezekiel 8) and comes to the exiles.

▣ **“fulfill My good”** This is described later in v. 10 as restoration to the land of promise (cf. 24:6-7).

29:11-14 This beautiful passage is an affirmation that the covenant has not been totally revoked. God would fulfill His Deuteronomistic agreement with His people after this period of judgment (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28,30; Leviticus 26). The emphasis here is that His people must return to Him. Only a spiritually renewed remnant will return and be blessed.

Notice the conditions of blessing.

1. you call upon Me – BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* PERFECT
2. come to Me – BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 33:3; Isa. 55:6
3. pray to Me – BDB 813, KB 933, *Hithpael* PERFECT
4. seek me – BDB 134, KB 152, *Piel* PERFECT, cf. Deut. 4:29
5. search for Me with all your heart – BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Deut. 4:29; Jer. 24:7

All of these denote a worship experience that has become a lifestyle relationship.

Notice how YHWH responds (possible allusion to Deut. 30:3-5).

1. I will listen to you, v. 12 – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 33:3; Deut. 4:30
2. you will find Me, v. 13 – BDB 592, KB 619, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Deut. 4:29
3. I will be found by you, v. 14 – BDB 592, KB 619, *Niphal* PERFECT
4. I will restore your fortunes – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* PERFECT (term often used of repenting)
5. I will gather you from all the nations – BDB 867, KB 1062, *Piel* PERFECT, cf. 23:3; 31:8
6. I will bring you back (i.e., to Palestine) – BDB 996, KB 1427 (see #4), *Hiphil* PERFECT

29:11 The PRONOUN “I” (אני, BDB 59) is repeated twice for emphasis. YHWH will bring about His plans and purposes for His people (see Special Topic at 1:5).

YHWH’s plan of restoration is clarified

1. for welfare (BDB 1022, see Special Topic at 6:14)
2. not for calamity (BDB 449, such a common word in Jeremiah)
3. give you a future
 - a. a people’s existence, cf. Num. 24:20
 - b. posterity, cf. Pro. 23:18; esp. 24:14
4. give you a hope, cf. Pro. 23:18; 24:14; Ezek. 37:11

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:15-20

¹⁵“Because you have said, ‘The LORD has raised up prophets for us in Babylon’—¹⁶for thus says the LORD concerning the king who sits on the throne of David, and concerning all the people who dwell in this city, your brothers who did not go with you into exile—¹⁷thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Behold, I am sending upon them the sword, famine and pestilence, and I will make them like split-open figs that cannot be eaten due to rotteness. ¹⁸I will pursue them with the sword, with famine and with pestilence; and I will make them a terror to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse and a horror and a hissing, and a reproach among all the nations where I have driven them, ¹⁹because they have not listened to My words,’ declares the LORD, ‘which I sent to them again and again by My servants the prophets; but you did not listen,’ declares the LORD. ²⁰You, therefore, hear the word of the LORD, all you exiles, whom I have sent away from Jerusalem to Babylon.

29:15-23 These verses seem to involve a second letter. It is interesting that vv. 16-20 are not found in the LXX, which is the Greek translation of the OT (but are in all Hebrew MSS). This section seems to break the sequences between vv. 15 and 21. Possibly these ancient Jewish translators saw this section simply as a repeat of 24:8-10. There are many repetitious passages in Jeremiah because it is obviously an book edited around themes, not chronological sequence (an anthology).

29:17 “the sword, famine, and pestilence” This is the threefold horror of ancient warfare (see note at 14:12). It is extremely significant that God’s favor rest with the Jews in exile and not the Jews remaining in Jerusalem. At this time apparently the Jews in Jerusalem were claiming spiritual superiority because they had been spared captivity, but in reality the opposite was true.



NASB “split-open”
NKJV, NSRV,
TEV, NJB, REB “rotten”
JPSOA “loathsome”

This ADJECTIVE (BDB 1045) has several meanings (KB 1613-1615). The NASB gets its translation from KB 1614 II, Syrian “to split” or Arabic “to break open.” This ADJECTIVE is found only here in the OT.

The same three consonants are found in the word for “horrible thing” (BDB 1045) in 5:30; 18:13; 23:14, but it is uncertain if it is related etymologically.

As with so many of these rare words, the context is clear even if the word is not. Meaning is not affected!

29:18 See notes at 24:9.

29:19 Here is the recurrent problem. Humans, even covenant humans, do not listen and obey YHWH’s words/message/covenant (cf. 6:19)! Obedience is a marker of devotion (cf. Luke 6:46).

Notice that the same series of words beginning with *w* is found in 25:4 (BDB 1018, 1014, 1033).

Also see the note at 7:13 for the Hebrew idiom “again and again.”

29:20 “hear the word of the LORD” This VERB (BDB 1033, KB 1570) can be translated (examples from NIV):

1. hear – 2:4; 5:21; 6:19; 7:2; 10:1; 13:15; 17:20; 19:3; 21:11; 22:2; 31:30; 42:15; 44:24,26; 49:20; 50:45
2. obey – 7:23; 11:4,7; 35:13; 38:20
3. listen – 11:2,6
4. proclaim – 4:5,16; 5:20; 46:14 (twice); 50:2
5. summon – 50:29; 51:27

This is the crucial covenant issue!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:21-23

²¹“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab the son of Kolaiah and concerning Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, who are prophesying to you falsely in My name, ‘Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he will slay them before your eyes. ²²Because of them a curse will be used by all the exiles from Judah who are in Babylon, saying, “May the LORD make you like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire, ²³because they have acted foolishly in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbors’ wives and have spoken words in My name falsely, which I did not command them; and I am He who knows and am a witness,” declares the LORD.””

29:21 “LORD of hosts” See Special Topic at 15:15-18.

“Ahab. . .Zedekiah” These were false prophets who were in Babylon and who apparently would be publicly executed by Nebuchadnezzar. We learn from Ezekiel 13 that there were other false prophets in exile also. This entire literary unit, chapters 26-29, seems to be related by the theme of false prophets.

The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 556 and the NASB Study Bible, p. 1103, make the interesting comment that there is a purposeful word play between

1. Kolaiah – BDB 877, קוליה

2. curse – BDB 887, קללה
3. roast – BDB 885 I, קלה

29:22 “May the LORD make you like” This verse reflects an ancient proverb and curse formula.

▣ **“roasted in fire”** We have learned from the Code of Hammurabi that this was a common public means of execution (cf. Section 25:110,157). These prophets betrayed themselves by their lifestyle (cf. v. 23; 7:15-23; Matt. 7:15-27).

29:23

NASB “folly”
NKJV “disgraceful things”
NRSV “perpetrated outrage”
TEV “terrible sins”
NJB “scandalous thing”
JPSOA “vile”
REB “outrage”

This NOUN (BDB 615, KB 663) obviously has a wide semantic field, but it denotes some kind of evil thought or act. It denotes someone who acts inappropriately either mentally or morally (cf. Gen. 34:7; Deut. 22:21; Josh. 7:15; Jdgs. 19:23-24; 20:6,10; I Sam. 25:25; II Sam. 13:12; Job 42:8; Isa. 9:17; 32:6). In this context of Jer. 29:23 (only use in Jeremiah) it describes the actions of two false prophets.

1. adultery (cf. 23:14)
2. spoken falsely in YHWH’s name (cf. 2:8; 23:13)

▣ **“in Israel”** This does not speak so much of geographical Israel as genealogical Israel. For the name “Israel” see Special Topic at 2:3.

▣ **“I am He who knows, and am a witness”** This is the affirmation that God judges the heart as well as the deeds (cf. Jer. 7:11; 16:17; 17:10; 32:19; Pro. 5:21; I Cor. 4:5; Heb. 4:13). This should be a warning to all those who claim to speak for God!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:24-28

²⁴To Shemaiah the Nehelamite you shall speak, saying, ²⁵“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Because you have sent letters in your own name to all the people who are in Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah, the priest, and to all the priests, saying, ²⁶“The LORD has made you priest instead of Jehoiada the priest, to be the overseer in the house of the LORD over every madman who prophesies, to put him in the stocks and in the iron collar, ²⁷now then, why have you not rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth who prophesies to you? ²⁸For he has sent to us in Babylon, saying, ‘*The exile will be long; build houses and live in them and plant gardens and eat their produce.*’”””

29:24 “Shemaiah” This is a reference to another false prophet in exile who apparently wrote letters to the priestly leaders in Jerusalem encouraging them to judge and punish Jeremiah for his treasonous statements (cf. v. 27).

▣ **“the Nehelamite”** This refers either to the name of a city whose site is unknown or it is a form of the root “to dream” (*Niphal* PARTICIPLE), which may refer to his being a prophet.

29:25 “Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah, the priest” This man is referred to in Jer. 1:1; 37:3).

29:26 “Jehoiada” This is possibly the person left in charge of the temple police (cf. II Kings 11).

▣ **“every madman”** The term “madman,” alluding to Jeremiah, BDB 993, was originally used of animal sounds (i.e., pigeon, camel), but came to denote humans in a deranged sense of howling or anger. It is true that the prophets of the older sections of the OT had these kinds of actions (i.e., I Sam. 10:9-13). It was used of prophets in

1. II Kgs. 9:11
2. Hosea 9:7

It was a slur to discredit the actions and words of a speaker for YHWH, here Jeremiah (i.e., in stocks in 20:2). It disregarded the message because of the way in which it was delivered. Even though part of Jeremiah’s prophecy had come true, the vast majority of the leaders of Judah still thought that Jeremiah was a treasonous, insane person.

29:28 This is a reference to Jeremiah’s message recorded in vv. 5-6

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:29-32

²⁹Zephaniah the priest read this letter to Jeremiah the prophet. ³⁰Then came the word of the LORD to Jeremiah, saying, ³¹“Send to all the exiles, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite, “Because Shemaiah has prophesied to you, although I did not send him, and he has made you trust in a lie,” ³²therefore thus says the LORD, “Behold, I am about to punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite and his descendants; he will not have anyone living among this people, and he will not see the good that I am about to do to My people,” declares the LORD, “because he has preached rebellion against the LORD””

29:31 “he has made you trust in a lie” This same phrase is used in 28:15. It is referring to the messages of peace and rapid restoration coming from the false prophets in both the Jewish community in Babylon and the Judean capital of Jerusalem. Ezekiel well describes these false prophets in Ezek. 13:2-3,22; 22:28.

The concept of “lie” (BDB 1044) can denote

1. idols (cf. 10:14; 13:25; 51:17)
2. false messages (cf. 14:14; 18:8; 20:6; 23:5,6; 27:10,14,16; 28:15; 29:9)
3. false testimony (cf. 5:2; 37:14)
4. unbelief (cf. I John)
5. rejecting YHWH’s message/messenger (cf. 28:16)

29:32 “he shall not have anyone living among this people” Jeremiah pronounces judgment on this false prophet in the total eradication of all of his relatives and descendants. To a Jew this was a horrifying prospect.

▣ **“because he has preached rebellion against the LORD”** Notice that the rejection of God’s prophet is the rejection of God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. How many letters seems to be involved or mentioned in this chapter?
2. Explain the historical background of chapter 29.
3. Why were Jeremiah's words believed to be treasonous?
4. What are the implications of v. 7?
5. Is seventy years meant to be a symbolic or literal figure?
6. How do you know a false prophet?

JEREMIAH 30

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS (The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Deliverance From Captivity Promised	Restoration of Israel and Judah	The Book of Consolation (30:1-31:40)	The LORD'S Promises to His People	Promise of Recovery for Israel
30:1-3	30:1-3	30:1-3	30:1-3	30:1-3
30:4	30:4-9	30:4-7	30:4	30:4
30:5-7 (5-7)	(5-7)	(5-7)	30:5-7 (5-7)	30:5-7 (5-7)
30:8-11	(8-9)	30:8-9	30:8-9	30:8-9 (parenthesis)
(10-11)	30:10-11 (10-11)	30:10-11 (10-11)	30:10-11 (10-11)	30:10-11 (10-11)
30:12-17 (12-17)	30:12-17 (12-15) (16-17)	30:12-17 (12-17)	30:12-22 (12-22)	30:12-17 (12-17)
Restoration of Jacob				
30:18-22 (18-22)	30:18-22 (18-22)	30:18-22 (18-22)		30:18-21 (18-21) 30:22-24 (22-24)
30:23-24 (23-24)	30:23-23 (23-24)	30:23-24 (23-24)	30:23-24	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The concept of “covenant” is discussed in the Special Topic at 3:7. Basically in this theological context it is an agreement between two unequal partners. Both have obligations and privileges. YHWH sets the conditions and makes the initiative.
- B. God made a covenant with Israel to represent Him before the world (see Special Topic at 1:5). They failed to uphold their obligations and God terminated the covenant. However, He established an even more significant agreement with mankind (i.e., “new covenant,” 31:31-24).
- C. Israel’s covenant was meant to help the world see YHWH’s love and justice. The Old Testament, Old Covenant, laid the foundation for the understanding and implementation of the New Covenant in Christ.
- D. Chapters 30-33 form a literary unit of hope and promised restoration which scholars call the “Book of Consolation.” When Jerusalem was about to fall, Jeremiah gave his most encouraging revelations! The city and temple would be destroyed but YHWH restore them and His people!
- E. Jeremiah 31:22 refers to the northern ten tribes, while vv. 23-26 refer to the southern tribes and vv. 27-40 refer to the reunited, restored nation.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:1-3

¹The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, ²“Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Write all the words which I have spoken to you in a book. ³For behold, days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel and Judah.’ The LORD says, ‘I will also bring them back to the land that I gave to their forefathers and they shall possess it.’”

30:2 “Write all the words I have spoken to you in a book” Verses 1-3 form an introduction to the entire literary unit of chapters 30-33. They deal with hope amidst judgment.

▣ **“in a book”** This refers to a scroll (BDB 706, #3). Obviously Jeremiah was involved in writing down YHWH’s words, as well as speaking them. However, does this refer to

1. the book of Jeremiah as we know it today
2. the book that the king burned
3. the book that Jeremiah dictated to Baruch after the destruction of the first scroll

These are the kinds of modern questions that cannot be answered. We do not know

1. when the OT was compiled
2. how/by what criteria
3. by whom
4. when

The main truth “God has revealed Himself!” By faith we believe the Spirit authored and preserved the essential message! See the Special Topics at 23:21-22.

30:3 “days are coming” This could refer to

1. the end of the 70 year Babylon exile (i.e., Ezra, Nehemiah, cf. Jer. 16:14; 29:10)

2. an eschatological setting (cf. 3:16; 23:5; 31:27,31-34; Zech. 12:10-13:1)

The question arises, “How do these promises to national Israel relate to the NT?” Please look carefully at the Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHY ARE THE END-TIME EVENTS SO CONTROVERSIAL?

Through the years of my study of eschatology I have learned that most Christians do not have or want a developed, systematized, end-time chronology. There are some Christians who focus or major on this area of Christianity for theological, psychological, or denominational reasons. These Christians seem to become obsessed with how it will all end, and somehow miss the urgency of the gospel! Believers cannot affect God’s eschatological (end-time) agenda, but they can participate in the gospel mandate (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). Most believers affirm a Second Coming of Christ and an end-time culmination of the promises of God. The interpretive problems arising from how to understand this temporal culmination come from several biblical paradoxes.

1. the tension between Old Covenant prophetic models and New Covenant apostolic models
2. the tension between the Bible’s monotheism (one God for all) and the election of Israel (a special people)
3. the tension between the conditional aspect of biblical covenants and promises (“if . . . then”) and the unconditional faithfulness of God to fallen mankind’s redemption
4. the tension between Near Eastern literary genres and modern western literary models
5. the tension between the Kingdom of God as present, yet future
6. the tension between belief in the imminent return of Christ and the belief that some events must happen first.

Let us discuss these tensions one at a time.

FIRST TENSION (OT racial, national, and geographical categories vs. all believers over all the world)

The OT prophets predict a restoration of a Jewish kingdom in Palestine centered in Jerusalem where all the nations of the earth gather to praise and serve a Davidic ruler, but Jesus nor the NT Apostles ever focus on this agenda. Is not the OT inspired (cf. Matt. 5:17-19)? Have the NT authors omitted crucial end-time events?

There are several sources of information about the end of the world.

1. OT prophets (Isaiah, Micah, Malachi)
2. OT apocalyptic writers (cf. Ezekiel 37-39; Daniel 7-12; Zechariah)
3. intertestamental, non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic writers (like I Enoch, which is alluded to in Jude)
4. Jesus Himself (cf. Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)
5. the writings of Paul (cf. I Corinthians 15; II Corinthians 5; I Thessalonians 4-5; II Thessalonians 2)
6. the writings of John (I John and Revelation).

Do these all clearly teach an end-time agenda (events, chronology, persons)? If not, why? Are they not all inspired (except the Jewish intertestamental writings)?

The Spirit revealed truths to the OT writers in terms and categories they could understand. However, through progressive revelation the Spirit has expanded these OT eschatological concepts to a universal scope (“the mystery of Christ,” cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13. See Special Topic at 10:7). Here are some relevant examples:

1. The city of Jerusalem in the OT is used as a metaphor of the people of God (Zion), but is projected into the NT as a term expressing God’s acceptance of all repentant, believing humans

(the new Jerusalem of Revelation 21-22). The theological expansion of a literal, physical city into the new people of God (believing Jews and Gentiles) is foreshadowed in God's promise to redeem fallen mankind in Gen. 3:15, before there even were any Jews or a Jewish capital city. Even Abraham's call (cf. Gen. 12:1-3) involved the Gentiles (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5).

2. In the OT the enemies of God's people are the surrounding nations of the Ancient Near East, but in the NT they have been expanded to all unbelieving, anti-God, Satanically-inspired people. The battle has moved from a geographical, regional conflict to a worldwide, cosmic conflict (cf. Colossians).
3. The promise of a land which is so integral in the OT (the Patriarchal promises of Genesis, cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:7,15; 17:8) has now become the whole earth. New Jerusalem comes down to a recreated earth, not the Near East only or exclusively (cf. Revelation 21-22).
4. Some other examples of OT prophetic concepts being expanded are
 - a. the seed of Abraham is now the spiritually circumcised (cf. Rom. 2:28-29)
 - b. the covenant people now include Gentiles (cf. Hos. 1:10; 2:23, quoted in Rom. 9:24-26; also Lev. 26:12; Exod. 29:45, quoted in II Cor. 6:16-18 and Exod. 19:5; Deut. 14:2, quoted in Titus 2:14)
 - c. the temple is now Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:61; 27:40; John 2:19-21) and through Him the local church (cf. I Cor. 3:16) or the individual believer (cf. I Cor. 6:19)
 - d. even Israel and its characteristic descriptive OT phrases now refer to the whole people of God (i.e., "Israel," cf. Rom. 9:6; Gal. 6:16, i.e., "kingdom of priests," cf. I Pet. 2:5, 9-10; Rev. 1:6)

The prophetic model has been fulfilled, expanded, and is now more inclusive. Jesus and the Apostolic writers do not present the end-time in the same way as the OT prophets (cf. Martin Wyngaarden, *The Future of The Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment*). Modern interpreters who try to make the OT model literal or normative twist the Revelation into a very Jewish book and force meaning into atomized, ambiguous phrases of Jesus and Paul! The NT writers do not negate the OT prophets, but show their ultimate universal implication. There is no organized, logical system to Jesus' or Paul's eschatology. Their purpose is primarily redemptive or pastoral.

However, even within the NT there is tension. There is no clear systemization of eschatological events. In many ways the Revelation surprisingly uses OT allusions in describing the end instead of the teachings of Jesus (cf. Matthew 24; Mark 13)! It follows the literary genre initiated by Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah, but developed during the intertestamental period (Jewish apocalyptic literature). This may have been John's way of linking the Old and New Covenants. It shows the age-old pattern of human rebellion and God's commitment to redemption! But it must be noted that although Revelation uses OT language, persons, and events, it reinterprets them in light of first century Rome (cf. Rev. 1:7).

SECOND TENSION (monotheism vs. an elect people)

The biblical emphasis is on one personal, spiritual, creator-redeemer, God (cf. Exod. 8:10; Isa. 44:24; 45:5-7,14,18,21-22; 46:9; Jer. 10:6-7). The OT's uniqueness in its own day was its monotheism. All of the surrounding nations were polytheists. The oneness of God is the heart of OT revelation (cf. Deut. 6:4). Creation is a stage for the purpose of fellowship between God and mankind, made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). However, mankind rebelled, sinning against God's love, leadership, and purpose (cf. Genesis 3). God's love and purpose was so strong and sure that He promised to redeem fallen humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15)!

The tension arises when God chooses to use one man, one family, one nation to reach the rest of mankind. God's election of Abraham and the Jews as a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:4-6) caused pride instead of service, exclusion instead of inclusion. God's call of Abraham involved the intentional blessing of all mankind (cf. Gen. 12:3). It must be remembered and emphasized that OT election was for service, not salvation. All Israel was never right with God, never eternally saved based solely on her birthright (cf. John 8:31-59; Matt. 3:9), but by personal faith and obedience (cf. Gen. 15:6, quoted in Romans 4). Israel lost her mission (the church is now a kingdom of priests, cf. Rev. 1:6; II Pet.2:5,9), turned mandate into privilege, service into a special standing! God chose one to choose all!

THIRD TENSION (conditional covenants vs. unconditional covenants)

There is a theological tension or paradox between conditional and unconditional covenants. It is surely true that God's redemptive purpose/plan is unconditional (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). However, the mandated human response is always conditional!

The "if. . .then" pattern appears in both OT and NT. God is faithful; mankind is unfaithful. This tension has caused much confusion. Interpreters have tended to focus on only one "horn of the dilemma," God's faithfulness or human effort, God's sovereignty or mankind's free will. Both are biblical and necessary.

This relates to eschatology, to God's OT promises to Israel. If God promises it, that settles it! God is bound to His promises; His reputation is involved (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). The unconditional and conditional covenants meet in Christ (cf. Isaiah 53), not Israel! God's ultimate faithfulness lies in the redemption of all who will repent and believe, not in who was your father/mother! Christ, not Israel, is the key to all of God's covenants and promises. If there is a theological parenthesis in the Bible, it is not the Church, but Israel (cf. Acts 7 and Galatians 3).

The world mission of gospel proclamation has passed to the Church (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). It is still a conditional covenant! This is not to imply that God has totally rejected the Jews (cf. Romans 9-11). There may be a place and purpose for end-time, believing Israel (cf. Zech. 12:10).

FOURTH TENSION (Near Eastern literary models vs. western models)

Genre is a critical element in correctly interpreting the Bible. The Church developed in a western (Greek) cultural setting. Eastern literature is much more figurative, metaphorical, and symbolic than modern, western culture's literary models. It focuses on people, encounters, and events more than succinct propositional truths. Christians have been guilty of using their history and literary models to interpret biblical prophecy (both OT and NT). Each generation and geographical entity has used its culture, history, and literalness to interpret Revelation. Every one of them has been wrong! It is arrogant to think that modern western culture is the focus of biblical prophecy!

The genre in which the original, inspired author chooses to write is a literary contract with the reader. The book of Revelation is not historical narrative. It is a combination of letter (chapters 1-3), prophecy, and mostly apocalyptic literature. It is as wrong to make the Bible say more than was intended by the original author as it is to make it say less than what he intended! Interpreters' arrogance and dogmatism are even more inappropriate in a book like Revelation.

The Church has never agreed on a proper interpretation of Revelation. My concern is to hear and deal with the whole Bible, not some selected part(s). The Bible's eastern mind-set presents truth in tension-filled pairs. Our western trend toward propositional truth is not invalid, but unbalanced! I think it is possible to remove at least some of the impasse in interpreting Revelation by noting its changing purpose to successive generations of believers. It is obvious to most interpreters that Revelation must be interpreted in light of its own day and its genre. An historical approach to Revelation must deal with what the first readers would have, and could have, understood. In many ways modern interpreters have lost the meaning of many of the

symbols of the book. Revelation's initial main thrust was to encourage persecuted believers. It showed God's control of history (as did the OT prophets); it affirmed that history is moving toward an appointed terminus, judgment or blessing (as did the OT prophets). It affirmed in first century Jewish apocalyptic terms God's love, presence, power, and sovereignty!

It functions in these same theological ways to every generation of believers. It depicts the cosmic struggle of good and evil. The first century details may have been lost to us, but not the powerful, comforting truths. When modern, western interpreters try to force the details of Revelation into their contemporary history, the pattern of false interpretations continues!

It is quite possible that the details of the book may become strikingly literal again (as did the OT in relation to the birth, life, and death of Christ) for the last generation of believers as they face the onslaught of an anti-God leader (cf. II Thessalonians 2) and culture. No one can know these literal fulfillments of the Revelation until the words of Jesus (cf. Matthew 24; Mark. 13; and Luke 21) and Paul (cf. I Corinthians 15; I Thessalonians 4-5; and II Thessalonians 2) also become historically evident. Guessing, speculation, and dogmatism are all inappropriate. Apocalyptic literature allows this flexibility. Thank God for images and symbols that surpass historical narrative! God is in control; He reigns; He comes!

Most modern commentaries miss the point of the genre! Modern western interpreters often seek a clear, logical system of theology rather than being fair with an ambiguous, symbolic, dramatic genre of Jewish apocalyptic literature. This truth is expressed well by Ralph P. Martin in his article, "Approaches to New Testament Exegesis," in the book *New Testament Interpretation*, edited by I. Howard Marshall:

"Unless we recognize the dramatic quality of this writing and recall the way in which language is being used as a vehicle to express religious truth, we shall grievously err in our understanding of the Apocalypse, and mistakenly try to interpret its visions as though it were a book of literal prose and concerned to describe events of empirical and datable history. To attempt the latter course is to run into all manner of problems of interpretation. More seriously it leads to a distortion of the essential meaning of apocalyptic and so misses the great value of this part of the New Testament as a dramatic assertion in mythopoetic language of the sovereignty of God in Christ and the paradox of his rule which blends might and love (cf. 5:5,6; the Lion is the Lamb)" (p. 235).

W. Randolph Tate in his book *Biblical Interpretations* said:

"No other genre of the Bible has been so fervently read with such depressing results as apocalypse, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation. This genre had suffered from a disastrous history of misinterpretation due to a fundamental misunderstanding of its literary forms, structure, and purpose. Because of its very claim to reveal what is shortly to happen, apocalypse has been viewed as a road map into and a blueprint of the future. The tragic flaw in this view is the assumption that the books' frame of reference is the reader's contemporary age rather than the author's. This misguided approach to apocalypse (particularly Revelation) treats the work as if it were a cryptogram by which contemporary events can be used to interpret the symbol of the text. . . First, the interpreter must recognize that apocalyptic communicates its messages through symbolism. To interpret a symbol literally when it is metaphoric is simply to misinterpret. The issue is not whether the events in apocalyptic are historical. The events may be historical; they may have really happened, or might happen, but the author presents events and communicates meaning through images and archetypes" (p. 137).

From *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, edited by Ryken, Wilhost and Longman III:

"Today's readers are often puzzled and frustrated by this genre. The unexpected imagery and out-of-this-world experiences seem bizarre and out of sync with most of Scripture. Taking this

literature at face value leaves many readers scrambling to determine ‘what will happen when,’ thus missing the intent of the apocalyptic message” (p. 35).

FIFTH TENSION (the Kingdom of God as present yet future)

The kingdom of God is present, yet future. This theological paradox becomes focused at the point of eschatology. If one expects a literal fulfillment of all OT prophecies to Israel then the Kingdom becomes mostly a restoration of Israel to a geographical locality and a theological pre-eminence! This would necessitate that the Church is secretly raptured out at chapter 5 and the remaining chapters relate to Israel (but note Rev. 22:16).

However, if the focus is on the kingdom being inaugurated by the promised OT Messiah, then it is present with Christ’s first coming, and then the focus becomes the incarnation, life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Christ. The theological emphasis is on a current salvation. The kingdom has come, the OT is fulfilled in Christ’s offer of salvation to all, not His millennial reign over some!

It is surely true that the Bible speaks of both of Christ’s comings, but where is the emphasis to be placed? It seems to me that most OT prophecies focus on the first coming, the establishment of the Messianic kingdom (cf. Daniel 2). In many ways this is analogous to the eternal reign of God (cf. Daniel 7). In the OT the focus is on the eternal reign of God, yet the mechanism for that reign’s manifestation is the ministry of the Messiah (cf. I Cor. 15:26-27). It is not a question of which is true; both are true, but where is the emphasis? It must be said that some interpreters become so focused on the millennial reign of the Messiah (cf. Revelation 20) that they have missed the biblical focus on the eternal reign of the Father. Christ’s reign is a preliminary event. As the two comings of Christ were not obvious in the OT, neither is a temporal reign of the Messiah!

The key to Jesus’ preaching and teaching is the kingdom of God. It is both present (in salvation and service), and future (in pervasiveness and power). Revelation, if it focuses on a Messianic millennial reign (cf. Revelation 20), is preliminary, not ultimate (cf. Revelation 21-22). It is not obvious from the OT that a temporal reign is necessary; as a matter of fact, the Messianic reign of Daniel 7 is eternal, not millennial.

SIXTH TENSION (imminent return of Christ vs. the delayed *Parousia*)

Most believers have been taught that Jesus is coming soon, suddenly, and unexpectedly (cf. Matt. 10:23; 24:27,34,44; Mark 9:1; 13:30; Rev. 1:1,3; 2:16; 3:11; 22:7,10,12,20). But every expectant generation of believers so far has been wrong! The soonness (immediacy) of Jesus’ return is a powerful promised hope of every generation, but a reality to only one (and that one a persecuted one). Believers must live as if He were coming tomorrow, but plan and implement the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20) if He tarries.

Some passages in the Gospels (cf. Mark 13:10; Luke 17:2; 18:8) and I and II Thessalonians are based on a delayed Second Coming (*Parousia*). There are some historical events that must happen first:

1. world-wide evangelization (cf. Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10)
2. the revelation of “the man of Sin” (cf. Matt. 24:15; II Thessalonians 2; Revelation 13)
3. the great persecution (cf. Matt. 24:21,24; Rev. 13)

There is a purposeful ambiguity (cf. Matt. 24:42-51; Mark 13:32-36)! Live every day as if it were your last but plan and train for future ministry!

CONSISTENCY AND BALANCE

It must be said that the different schools of modern eschatological interpretation all contain half truths. They explain and interpret well some texts. The problem lies in consistency and balance. Often there is a set of presuppositions which use the biblical text to fill in the pre-set theological skeleton. The Bible does not reveal a logical, chronological, systematic eschatology. It is like a family album. The pictures are true,

but not always in order, in context, in a logical sequence. Some of the pictures have fallen out of the album and later generations of family members do not know exactly how to put them back. The key to proper interpretation of Revelation is the intent of the original author as revealed in his choice of literary genre. Most interpreters try to carry their exegetical tools and procedures from other genres of the NT into their interpretations of Revelation. They focus on the OT instead of allowing the teachings of Jesus and Paul to set the theological structure and let Revelation act as illustrative.

I must admit that I approach this commentary on Revelation with some fear and trepidation, not because of the curse of Rev. 22:18-19, but because of the level of controversy the interpretation of this book has caused and continues to cause among God's people. I love God's revelation. It is true when all men are liars (cf. Rom. 3:4)! Please use this commentary as an attempt to be thought provoking and not definitive, as a sign post and not a road map, as a "what if," not a "thus says the Lord." I have come face to face with my own inadequacies, biases, and theological agenda. I have also seen those of other interpreters. It almost seems that people find in Revelation what they expect to find. The genre lends itself to abuse! However, it is in the Bible for a purpose. Its placement as the concluding "word" is not by accident. It has a message from God to His children of each and every generation. God wants us to understand! Let us join hands, not form camps; let us affirm what is clear and central, not all that may be, might be, could be true. God help us all!

▣ **"Israel and Judah"** Israel was taken captive by Assyria in 722 B.C. Judah was taken captive by Babylon in 605, 597, 586, 582 B.C. This speaks of their reunification that is based on their repentance and God's restoration of the covenant. The normal VERB used of repentance (BDB 996, KB 1427, see Special Topic at 2:22) is used in two senses in this verse.

1. I will restore (i.e., turn back, *Qal* PERFECT), v. 18
2. I will bring them back (*Hiphil* PERFECT), v. 10

When His people turn back to Him, He will restore them.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:4

⁴Now these are the words which the LORD spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah:

30:4 Verse 4 is an introductory literary phrase.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:5-7

⁵For thus says the LORD,

**'I have heard a sound of terror,
Of dread, and there is no peace.**

⁶Ask now, and see

**If a male can give birth.
Why do I see every man
With his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth?
And why have all faces turned pale?**

⁷Alas! for that day is great,

**There is none like it;
And it is the time of Jacob's distress,
But he will be saved from it.**

30:5 “I have heard” The MT has the PLURAL. This may reflect the “Us” of Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; Isa. 6:8. This could reflect

1. YHWH and His angelic council (cf. I Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 2:1-6)
2. a rare and late Hebrew grammatical form for emphasis called “the PLURAL OF MAJESTY”
3. a precursor of the concept of a Triune God (i.e., Trinity, see Special Topic below)

The UBS Text Project gives “we” (MT) a “B” rating.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY

Notice the activity of all three Persons of the Trinity in unified contexts. The term “trinity,” first coined by Tertullian, is not a biblical word, but the concept is pervasive.

- A. the Gospels
 1. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19 (and parallels)
 2. John 14:26
- B. Acts – Acts 2:32-33, 38-39
- C. Paul
 1. Rom. 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4,8-10
 2. I Cor. 2:8-10; 12:4-6
 3. II Cor. 1:21-22; 13:14
 4. Gal. 4:4-6
 5. Eph. 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6
 6. I Thess. 1:2-5
 7. II Thess. 2:13
 8. Titus 3:4-6
- D. Peter – I Pet. 1:2
- E. Jude – vv. 20-21

A plurality in God is hinted at in the OT.

- A. Use of PLURALS for God
 1. Name *Elohim* is PLURAL, but when used of God always has a SINGULAR VERB
 2. “Us” in Genesis 1:26-27; 3:22; 11:7
- B. The Angel of the Lord was a visible representative of Deity
 1. Genesis 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16
 2. Exodus 3:2,4; 13:21; 14:19
 3. Judges 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22
 4. Zechariah 3:1-2
- C. God and His Spirit are separate, Gen. 1:1-2; Ps. 104:30; Isa. 63:9-11; Ezek. 37:13-14
- D. God (YHWH) and Messiah (*Adon*) are separate, Ps. 45:6-7; 110:1; Zech. 2:8-11; 10:9-12
- E. The Messiah and the Spirit are separate, Zech. 12:10
- F. All three are mentioned in Isa. 48:16; 61:1

The Deity of Jesus and the personality of the Spirit caused problems for the strict, monotheistic, early believers.

1. Tertullian – subordinated the Son to the Father

2. Origen – subordinated the divine essence of the Son and the Spirit
3. Arius – denied Deity to the Son and Spirit
4. Monarchianism – believed in a successive chronological manifestation of the one God as Father, Son, and Spirit

The Trinity is a historically developed formulation informed by the biblical material

1. the full Deity of Jesus, equal to the Father, was affirmed in A.D. 325 by the Council of Nicea (cf. John 1:1; Phil. 2:6; Titus 2:13)
2. the full personality and Deity of the Spirit equal to the Father and Son was affirmed in A.D. 381 by the Council of Constantinople
3. the doctrine of the Trinity is fully expressed in Augustine’s work *De Trinitate*

There is truly mystery here. But the NT seems to affirm one divine essence with three eternal personal manifestations.

30:6 “if a male can give birth” Ancient women gave birth by kneeling at a birthing stone. The men of Judah were so frightened they looked as if they were giving birth (cf. 6:24; 22:23). This metaphor of birthing is used in the NT to describe the birth pain of the New Age (cf. Rom. 8:22).

30:7-8 “that day is day” Notice that to one group (Israel and Judah) it is a day of restoration, and to the other (i.e., Babylon) it is a day of judgment. See Special Topic at 4:9.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:8-11

⁸**‘It shall come about on that day,’ declares the LORD of hosts, ‘that I will break his yoke from off their neck and will tear off their bonds; and strangers will no longer make them their slaves. ⁹But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.**

¹⁰**‘Fear not, O Jacob My servant,’ declares the LORD,
 ‘And do not be dismayed, O Israel;
 For behold, I will save you from afar
 And your offspring from the land of their captivity.
 And Jacob will return and will be quiet and at ease,
 And no one will make him afraid.**

¹¹**‘For I am with you,’ declares the LORD, ‘to save you;
 For I will destroy completely all the nations where I have scattered you,
 Only I will not destroy you completely.
 But I will chasten you justly
 And will by no means leave you unpunished.’**

30:8 “I will break his yoke” This picks up on the metaphor of a “yoke” (cf. Lev. 20:13) used by Jeremiah in 2:20 and chapters 27 and 28.

▣ **“and strangers shall no longer make them their slaves”** Why does this not accurately describe restored Judah’s experience (i.e., Persia, Seleucids, Rome)? Either the covenant people broke the covenant again and are punished again or the reference is to an end-time period.

30:9 “David” This relates to the Davidic promises given in II Sam. 7:12-16. We know that there was not a restoration of a king immediately after the return from Babylon (Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel were “princes of Judah”), therefore, many believe it refers to an eschatological setting (i.e., Jesus, cf. Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Hosea 3:5).

30:10 “fear not. . .do not be dismayed” These are both *Qal* IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense.

▣ **“O Jacob. . .O Israel”** This refers to all Jewish people (Israel and Judah are reunited). Remember that Jacob’s name was changed to Israel at the brook Jabbok after he wrestled with an angel (cf. Gen. 32:22-32).

▣ **“I will save you”** This refers to the covenant people’s restoration to the Promised Land. YHWH sent them into exile; He will restore them.

▣ **“shall be quiet and at ease”** These two descriptions of restoration and peace are used several times in Jeremiah.

1. quiet (BDB 1052), cf. 46:27; 47:6,7; 48:11; 49:23
2. ease (BDB 983), cf. 46:27; 48:11

This had always been YHWH’s will for His covenant people (as was “joy” of v. 19).

30:10-11 Notice what YHWH promises to do for them (vv. 10-11, this is repeated in 46:27-28).

1. save them – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE
2. they will be quiet – BDB 1052, KB 1641, *Qal* PERFECT
3. they will be at ease – BDB 983, KB 1374, *Palel* PERFECT
4. no one shall make them afraid – BDB 353, KB 350, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE
5. I am with you to save you (first spoken to Jeremiah, cf. 1:8,19; 15:20; 20:11, but now to all of Abraham’s seed)

But also notice that covenant disobedience has consequences as well as benefits.

1. I will not destroy you completely
2. I will chasten you justly
3. I will by no means leave you unpunished (this is an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and an IMPERFECT VERB from the same root [BDB 667, KB 729] which denotes intensity, cf. 25:29; 49:12)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:12-17

¹²**“For thus says the LORD,
‘Your wound is incurable
And your injury is serious.**

¹³**There is no one to plead your cause;
No healing for *your* sore,
No recovery for you.**

¹⁴**All your lovers have forgotten you,
They do not seek you;
For I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy,
With the punishment of a cruel one,
Because your iniquity is great
And your sins are numerous.**

¹⁵**Why do you cry out over your injury?
Your pain is incurable.**

**Because your iniquity is great
And your sins are numerous,
I have done these things to you.**

**¹⁶Therefore all who devour you will be devoured;
And all your adversaries, every one of them, will go into captivity;
And those who plunder you will be for plunder,
And all who prey upon you I will give for prey.**

**¹⁷For I will restore you to health
And I will heal you of your wounds,' declares the LORD,
'Because they have called you an outcast, saying:
"It is Zion; no one cares for her."**

30:12-17 YHWH used foreign pagan nations to discipline His people. His people surely deserved it (cf. vv. 12, 14e,f, 15c,d). His people were

1. worshiping the fertility gods
2. making foreign alliances involving other gods

However, YHWH will act on their behalf after He judges them.

1. those who God used to judge Judah/Israel will also be judged in the same manner (see note at 17:10)
2. He will restore their health (sickness was a metaphor for sin, cf. Isa. 1:5-6)
3. He will heal their wounds
4. by implication from v. 13, He will also be their advocate (BDB 192, #3, cf. 5:28; 22:16)

30:12 **"Your wound is incurable"** This word, "curable" (BDB 60 I) is from the same consonants as "*enosh*" (BDB 60), which speaks of man's frailty, weakness, and fallenness. The paradox of this incurable wound (idolatry of which they will not repent, cf. 15:18; 30:15; Micah 1:9) is found in v. 17, where God freely heals His people. The horror of 8:18-22 is now reversed!

30:17 **"Zion"** The city of Jerusalem was built on seven hills. Mt. Zion was the site of the old Jebusite fortress. David built his palace there. It came to be an idiom for the entire city of Jerusalem (i.e., 3:14).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:18-22

**¹⁸"Thus says the LORD,
'Behold, I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob
And have compassion on his dwelling places;
And the city will be rebuilt on its ruin,
And the palace will stand on its rightful place.
¹⁹From them will proceed thanksgiving
And the voice of those who celebrate;
And I will multiply them and they will not be diminished;
I will also honor them and they will not be insignificant.
²⁰Their children also will be as formerly,
And their congregation shall be established before Me;
And I will punish all their oppressors.
²¹And their leader shall be one of them,
And their ruler shall come forth from their midst;**

**And I will bring him near and he shall approach Me;
 For who would dare to risk his life to approach Me?’ declares the LORD.
 22You shall be My people,
 And I will be your God.’”**

30:18-22 In a sense this reflects the “new covenant” described in Ezek. 36:27-38. YHWH will act on behalf of His people. Notice the covenant language of v. 22. This poem is functioning as the blessing section, similar to Deuteronomy 27-28. YHWH acts for His name sake, for His purposes (see Special Topic at 1:5).

1. I will restore the fortunes, v. 18b
2. I will have compassion
 - a. dwelling places, v. 18c
 - b. the city, v. 18d
 - c. the palace, v. 18e
3. I will multiply them (i.e., one of the promises to Abraham, cf. Gen. 15:2-5), v. 19c
4. I will honor them, v. 19d
5. I will punish all their oppressors (cf. vv. 12-17)
6. I will bring their leader near (priestly language), v. 21
7. covenant language, v. 22 (cf. 31:1)

A new day has come! The benefits of the covenant are reestablished based on YHWH’s mercy, not His people’s covenant obedience (cf. 31:31-34; esp. Ezek. 36:22-38).

30:18 “the tents of Jacob” This is a Hebrew idiom for family units.

▣ **“shall be rebuilt on its ruin”** This is the Hebrew term *tel* (BDB 1068, cf. Josh. 11:18), which is used by modern archaeology for the destroyed mound of an ancient city. This implies that Jerusalem (i.e., the city and the temple) will be rebuilt on the same site.

30:19 “the voice of those who make merry” God wants His people to rejoice in creation and in Himself (cf. 7:34; 31:12-13; 33:11).

30:20 “their (lit. “His”) congregation shall be established before Me” This terminology is priestly (i.e., approach YHWH in the temple). The covenant people (OT, Exod. 19:5-6; NT, I Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6; 20:6) were meant to be “a kingdom of priests,” as the Messiah is

1. an ideal Israelite in Isaiah 53
2. also an ideal priest in v. 21; Ps. 110:1-3; Zech. 3:8; 4:11-14; 6:13

This section may be a “multi-fulfillment” prophecy to Zerubbabel (prince of Judah) and Joshua (descendant of the last High Priest). Jesus is both priest and king (cf. NT book of Hebrews)!

30:21

NASB	“leader”
NKJV	“governor”
NRSV, TEV,	
NJB	“prince”
JPSOA	“chieftain”
REB	“a ruler”

This is the term (BDB 12, KB 13) used to describe the leader of the congregation in the new day of restoration. It is parallel to “ruler” (BDB 605).

This term appears two other times in Jeremiah denoting leaders.

1. 14:3 – nobles
2. 25:34-36 – shepherds/lords

The fact that this context has a priestly orientation may denote the Messianic aspect of the Messiah as

1. Davidic – Genesis 49
2. priestly – Psalm 110:1-3; Zech. 3:8; 4:11-14; 6:13

The Dead Sea Scroll community expected two Messiahs, one from the line of Judah and one from the line of Levi. Jesus fulfills both (cf. Heb. 1:3; 2:17; 3:1; 4:14-15; 5:5,10; 6:20; 7:26,28; 8:1,3; 9:11; 10:21). He is the High Priest and the ultimate sacrifice!

▣ **“I will bring him near and he shall approach Me”** These are priestly phrases used in the sense of approaching God at the altar. Because of the next phrase this seems to refer to the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ (Messiah is Priest and King, cf. Ps. 110:1-3; Zech. 3:8; 4:11-14; 6:13; Heb. 1:2-3).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:23-24

²³**Behold, the tempest of the LORD!**

Wrath has gone forth,

A sweeping tempest;

It will burst on the head of the wicked.

²⁴**The fierce anger of the LORD will not turn back**

Until He has performed and until He has accomplished

The intent of His heart;

In the latter days you will understand this.

30:23-24 These verses are almost exactly like 23:19-20. Remember Jeremiah’s poems were recorded and edited/compiled later. He used the same phrases in several poems.

▣ **“the tempest of the LORD...wrath...fierce anger of the LORD”** These anthropomorphic phrases (see Special Topic at 1:9) are in parallel. The judgment of God has a larger redemptive purpose (cf. v. 24, see Special Topic at 1:5).

JEREMIAH 31

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS (The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Israel's Mourning Turned to Joy	The Remnant of Israel Saved	The Book of Consolation (30:1-31:40)	Israel's Return Home	Promise of Recovery for Israel (30:1-31:22)
31:1-6 (2-6)	31:1 31:2 (2) 31:3-6 (3-6)	31:1-6 (2-6)	31:1-9	31:1-6 (2-6)
31:7-9 (7-9)	31:7-9 (7-9)	31:7-9 (7-9)	(7-9)	31:7 (7) 31:8-9 (8-9)
31:10-14 (10-14)	31:10-12 (10-12) 31:13-14 (13-14) Mercy On Ephraim	31:10-14 (10-14)	31:10-14 (10-14)	31:10-14 (10-14)
31:15-20 (15-20)	31:15 (15) 31:16-17 (16-17) 31:18-20 (18-20) 31:21-22 (21-22)	31:15-17 (15-17) 31:18-20 (18-20)	31:15-17 (15-17) 31:18-18 (18-19) 31:20-22 (20-22)	31:15-20 (15-20) 31:21-22 (21-22)
31:21-22 (21-22)	Future Prosperity Of Judah	31:21-22 (21-22)	The Future Prosperity of God's People	Promise of Restoration to Judah
31:23-26 (23c)	31:23-30	31:23-30 (23c) (25)	31:23-30 (23c)	31:23 (23c) 31:24-25 31:26 (26)
A New Covenant				Israel and Judah
31:27-30				31:27-28

	A New Covenant			Individual Retribution
(29)	(29)	(29)	(29)	31:29-30 (29)
				The New Covenant
31:31-34	31:31-34	31:31-34	31:31-37 (35-37)	31:31-34
				Israel Will Endure
31:35-37 (35-37)	31:35 (35)	31:35-36 (35-36)		31:35-37 (35-37)
	31:36 (36)			
	31:37 (37)	31:37 (37)		Jerusalem Magnificently Rebuilt
31:38-40	31:38-40	31:38-40	31:38-40	31:38-40

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Many of these strophes were written in different historical contexts. There is a mixing of references to Israel (the northern ten tribes) and Judah (the southern three tribes). These separate poems are combined in this chapter, which emphasizes the restoration of both.
- B. Note the references to
 1. the united seed of Abraham
 - a. vv. 1,2 (i.e., the Exodus)
 - b. vv. 4,21 ("O virgin of Israel")
 - c. v. 7 ("for Jacob. . . remnant of Israel")
 - d. v. 27 ("the house of Israel and the house of Judah")
 - e. v. 33 ("the house of Israel after those days")

2. Israel
 - a. v. 5 (“the hills of Samaria”)
 - b. v. 6 (“the hills of Ephraim”)
 - c. v. 9 (“Ephraim is My first-born”)
 - d. v. 15 (“Ramah. . . Rachel”)
 - e. vv. 18,20 (“Ephraim”)
3. Judah
 - a. v. 12 (“the height of Zion”)
 - b. v. 14 (“the priests”)
 - c. v. 23 (“the land of Judah”)
 - d. v. 23 (“O holy hill”)

C. The unique reference to a “new covenant” is very important. It points toward a new way of being right with YHWH based on faith and repentance, not human performance. Obedience is an evidence of the new relationship but not the means to it (cf. Eph. 2:8-9,10). Fallen mankind was unable to please God and follow Him. Substitutionary atonement became the new mechanism for a free and full salvation (cf. Isaiah 53; Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21) which issues in Christlikeness (cf. Eph. 1:4). God now has a people who reflect His character to those who do not yet know Him.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:1-6

¹“At that time,” declares the LORD, “I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people.”

²Thus says the LORD,

“The people who survived the sword
Found grace in the wilderness—
Israel, when it went to find its rest.”

³The LORD appeared to him from afar, *saying*,
“I have loved you with an everlasting love;
Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness.

⁴Again I will build you and you will be rebuilt,
O virgin of Israel!
Again you will take up your tambourines,
And go forth to the dances of the merrymakers.

⁵Again you will plant vineyards
On the hills of Samaria;
The planters will plant
And will enjoy *them*.

⁶For there will be a day when watchmen
On the hills of Ephraim call out,
‘Arise, and let us go up *to Zion*,
To the LORD our God.’”

31:1 “At that time” This refers to 30:23-24 or the words Jeremiah wrote (i.e., 30:1-24).

▣ Notice the covenant terminology (cf. 30:22) and that Judah and Israel are united again (cf. Gen. 17:7-8). This covenant terminology can also be seen in Lev. 26:12; Jer. 7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:33; 32:38.

31:2 This may be an allusion to a new “wilderness wandering period.” The VERB “went to find rest” (BDB 921, KB 1188, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) communicates a reality of peace and YHWH’s presence. A different word (BDB 628) is used in Exod. 33:14 and Deut. 28:65, but reflects the same theological concept (cf. Hos. 2:14).

▣ **“the sword”** The Aramaic Targums have “Egypt’s sword,” therefore the “sword” is a metaphor for death more than a reference to war. This section seems to refer to God’s loving acts during the Wilderness Wandering Period.

31:3 “him” The MT has “me” (cf. NKJV, NJB). The LXX has “him” (cf. NRSV). It seems to refer to the descendants of Jacob/Israel (cf. Deut. 4:37; 7:8).

▣ **“I have loved you. . . I have drawn you”** Both of these VERBS are *Qal* PERFECTS.

The word “you” must be a COLLECTIVE FEMININE SINGULAR (twice) because of

1. the context of v. 4 as national renewal and restoration
2. the continuation of the COLLECTIVE FEMININE SINGULAR

▣ **“everlasting love. . . lovingkindness”** These are covenant terms and promises. God wants His exiled people to know He has not forsaken them.

1. everlasting love – BDB 12 CONSTRUCT 761, see Special Topic at 7:7
2. lovingkindness – BDB 338, see Special Topic at 2:2

31:4 The things asserted in vv. 4-5 are the very things that were taken with them into the exile.

▣ **“O virgin of Israel”** This phrase is used several times in the OT (cf. v. 21; 14:17; 18:13; 46:11; Amos 5:2). God’s people have committed spiritual adultery (cf. v. 22b). God forgives and restores them. The title “Israel” is used in three ways in this chapter.

1. as a reference to Jacob
2. as the whole nation of his descendants
3. as the northern ten tribes also called Ephraim or Samaria

See Special Topic at 2:3.

31:5 “hills of Samaria” This was the site of the capital of the northern kingdom built by Omri. Verses 5-6 speak to the area of the northern tribes, Israel.

▣ **“enjoy”** This verb literally means “profane” (BDB 320, KB 319, *Piel* PERFECT). It is a reference to the OT custom of offering first fruits to God (cf. Lev. 19:23-25; Deut. 20:6). Here “profane” means “to use for normal consumption.” The first four years’ fruit and then the first ripened fruit of the following years were symbolically given to YHWH in order to show His ownership of all the crops. However, here the phrase is metaphorical for a long extended period of peace and abundance (cf. Deuteronomy 28).

31:6 “Ephraim” This is a reference to the northern ten tribes who had by Jeremiah’s day already been exiled by Assyria (722 B.C.). It went by several names after the united monarchy under Saul, David, and Solomon split in 922 B.C.

1. Israel (a collective term)
2. Samaria (their capital)
3. Ephraim (their largest tribe)

To keep Ephraim from returning to Zion to worship YHWH, Jeroboam I set up “golden calves” at Bethel and Dan (i.e., alternate sites of temples to YHWH). They were turned into sites of *Ba'al* worship but now they no longer exist!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:7-9

⁷For thus says the LORD,
 “Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,
 And shout among the chief of the nations;
 Proclaim, give praise and say,
 ‘O LORD, save Your people,
 The remnant of Israel.’
⁸Behold, I am bringing them from the north country,
 And I will gather them from the remote parts of the earth,
 Among them the blind and the lame,
 The woman with child and she who is in labor with child, together;
 A great company, they will return here.
⁹With weeping they will come,
 And by supplication I will lead them;
 I will make them walk by streams of waters,
 On a straight path in which they will not stumble;
 For I am a father to Israel,
 And Ephraim is My firstborn.”

31:7 Verses 7-9 are another poem/strophe. There is a series of IMPERATIVES expressing YHWH’s will for the reunified covenant people (Israel/Jacob).

1. sing aloud – BDB 943, KB 1247, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. shout – BDB 843, KB 1007, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. proclaim – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
4. give praise – BDB 237, KB 248, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
5. say – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
6. save – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (this is a prayer to YHWH expressed loudly. The LXX changes the imperative to a declarative, which makes it the OBJECT of the other IMPERATIVES)



- NASB “chiefs of the nations”
- NKJV, NRSV,
- NJB “chief of the nations”
- TEV “the greatest of the nations”
- JPSOA “at the crossroads of the nations”
- REB “lead the nations”
- LXX “the head of the nations”

This imagery goes back to (1) Exod. 4:22; Ps. 2:7, where Israel is YHWH’s firstborn or (2) Ps. 18:43, where David is called “the head of the nations.” Both of the above are combined in Ps. 89:27. In Deut.

28:13 Israel is called “the head and not the tail,” which is the same imagery (cf. Isa. 61:9). This imagery shows the central place of Abraham’s descendants (cf. Deut. 26:19) in YHWH’s plan for all the earth (see Special Topic at 1:5).

▣ **“the remnant of Israel”** In this context it is parallel to “those who survived the sword” of v. 2b. See Special Topic at 5:10-13. Jeremiah uses this term (BDB 984) twenty-three times.

31:8 “I am bringing them from the north country” This reference is to the Assyrian exile of the northern kingdom in 722 B.C. The only land route into Palestine from Mesopotamia was from the north because the Arabian Desert was to the east. It became a symbol of invasion, but here is a symbol of hope and restoration.

▣ Notice how the returnees are characterized.

1. from the remote parts of the earth (cf. Isa. 43:6)
2. the blind (cf. Isa. 42:16)
3. the lame (cf. Micah 4:6; Zeph. 3:19)
4. women with children
5. pregnant women

This is in contrast to how they were taken into captivity. Only the strong, middle-aged were taken. The young, the old, the sick, the weak, the leaders were all killed!

31:9 “with weeping. . . by supplication” Verse 19 refers to the repentant nature of the returners (cf. vv. 7e,9b; Deut. 30:6). This same form appears in Zech. 12:10 for Israel’s repentance and faith in the Messiah.

▣ **“walk by streams of water”** This imagery describes the new age (cf. Deut. 28:30) of abundance. The desert is transformed into a “watered garden” (cf. v. 12; Isa. 58:11). This is imagery from Isaiah (cf. 35:7-8; 41:17-20; 43:19-20; 49:10-11).

The way home (i.e., highway) will be easy and “without want!” YHWH is bringing His people back to the Promised Land. A new exodus and wilderness wandering period has begun.

▣ **“on a straight path in which they shall not stumble”** The way home will be smooth and easy. YHWH will prepare the road (physically and spiritually). This is the “highway of holiness” described by Isaiah (cf. 35:8; 40:3; 49:11; 57:14; 62:10).

▣ **“I am a Father to Israel”** God is spoken of as “Father” (see Special Topic at 3:4) to the descendants of Abraham. God is spoken of as a husband to them in 11:15 (cf. Hosea 1-3). The Bible uses the most intimate family terms to describe the relationship between God and His people (cf. Hosea 1-3,11).

It is difficult in this chapter (which seems to combine poems from several periods of Jeremiah’s ministry) to know when the terminology refers to the Northern Ten Tribes or to all Israelites (see Contextual Insights, B).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:10-14

**¹⁰Hear the word of the LORD, O nations,
And declare in the coastlands afar off,
And say, “He who scattered Israel will gather him
And keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.”**

**¹¹For the LORD has ransomed Jacob
And redeemed him from the hand of him who was stronger than he.**

^{12c}“They will come and shout for joy on the height of Zion,
 And they will be radiant over the bounty of the LORD—
 Over the grain and the new wine and the oil,
 And over the young of the flock and the herd;
 And their life will be like a watered garden,
 And they will never languish again.
¹³Then the virgin will rejoice in the dance,
 And the young men and the old, together,
 For I will turn their mourning into joy
 And will comfort them and give them joy for their sorrow.
¹⁴I will fill the soul of the priests with abundance,
 And My people will be satisfied with My goodness,” declares the LORD.

▣ This strophe is describing the joyful return of the exiles. The theology is twofold.

1. YHWH exiled them for their sin. He will restore them in their repentance and faith (v. 9).
2. YHWH is sovereign over all nations (cf. v. 10; Deut. 32:8). YHWH, not the non-existent idols of the pagan nations, controls time/history.

31:10 There are three IMPERATIVES.

1. hear – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. declare – BDB 616, KB 665, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. say – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

The nations must hear YHWH’s message of restoration. They must know Him: His love, power, provision! YHWH works with the descendants of Abraham in special ways to inform and attract the descendants of Adam! This is surely the implication of monotheism (see Special Topic at 1:5) and Gen. 12:3!

▣ **“shepherd keeps his flock”** This is an OT title for “God” (cf. Psalm 23; Isa. 40:11; Ezek. 34:11-14,31). This title is used of Jesus in John 10 (cf. Ezek. 34:23; Micah 5:4). Attributing OT titles for YHWH to Jesus is a common way for NT writers to confirm the deity of Christ.

1. OT titles of YHWH applied to Jesus
2. OT actions of YHWH applied to Jesus
3. grammatical constructions where God and Jesus are the dual OBJECTS of VERBS or PREPOSITIONS
4. clear statements (cf. John 1:1; 5:18; 8:58; 10:30; 14:9; 17:11; 20:24; Rom. 9:5; Heb. 1:8; II Pet. 1:1)

31:11 “ransomed. . .redeemed” These two terms are parallel. Both are metaphors of God’s love for fallen humanity. See the Special Topic at 15:21.

1. ransom – BDB 804, KB 911, *Qal* PERFECT, 15:21; Hosea 13:14; Micah 6:4; Zech. 10:8
2. redeem – BDB 145, KB 169, *Qal* PERFECT, so common in Leviticus, Ruth, Isaiah. Title for YHWH in Isa. 41:14; 43:14, but used only twice in Jeremiah, here and 50:34 (also title for YHWH).

31:12 “on the height of Zion” Zion is one of seven hills on which Jerusalem was built. Mt. Zion was the site of the Jebusite fortress captured by David. He built his palace on this hill.

However, in this context, Zion stands for Jerusalem. The word “height” would refer to Mt. Moriah, the site of the rebuilt temple. The place “God chose His name to dwell” (recurrent phrase in Deuteronomy).

▣ **“they shall never languish again”** The covenant blessing of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 are present and secure (cf. v. 5). In this statement is the promise of no more exiles (cf. Isa. 35:10; 60:20; 65:17-25)! The new day has come! Was this fulfilled in the post-exilic return? Was that restoration still conditional? Has the new day of a new heart, mind, and spirit arrived? I think this imagery points toward the gospel (initiated covenant) and eschatological fulfillment (consummated covenant).

31:13-14 Notice the people who were rejoicing.

1. young women (lit. “virgin”)
2. young men
3. old men
4. the priests
5. “my people” (collective term)

Verse 12 is related to “the nations” which will be included but v. 13 relates to the returning exiles. This inclusiveness reminds one of Joel 2:28-29, quoted in the first Apostolic sermon in Acts 2.

31:14 “I will fill the soul of the priests with abundance” This refers to the re-institution of the sacrificial system. Jeremiah was not opposed to the cultus but wanted faith and ritual (cf. Lev. 7:32-36), not ritual alone.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:15-20

¹⁵Thus says the LORD,
“A voice is heard in Ramah,
Lamentation *and* bitter weeping.
Rachel is weeping for her children;
She refuses to be comforted for her children,
Because they are no more.”

¹⁶Thus says the LORD,
“Restrain your voice from weeping
And your eyes from tears;
For your work will be rewarded,” declares the LORD,
“And they will return from the land of the enemy.

¹⁷There is hope for your future,” declares the LORD,
“And *your* children will return to their own territory.

¹⁸I have surely heard Ephraim grieving,
‘You have chastised me, and I was chastised,
Like an untrained calf;
Bring me back that I may be restored,
For You are the LORD my God.

¹⁹For after I turned back, I repented;
And after I was instructed, I smote on *my* thigh;
I was ashamed and also humiliated
Because I bore the reproach of my youth.’

²⁰Is Ephraim My dear son?
Is he a delightful child?
Indeed, as often as I have spoken against him,

**I certainly *still* remember him;
 Therefore My heart yearns for him;
 I will surely have mercy on him,” declares the LORD.**

31:15-22 The strophe is addressed to the northern ten tribes. They, too, will participate in YHWH’s restoration and new day! The split of the United Monarchy in 922 B.C. was a sad and destructive event, both physically and spiritually. All of the prophets condemned the northern kings. Restoration was the only option.

31:15 “Ramah” The Hebrew word “height” (BDB 928) is possibly not a reference to a place name. The rabbis see this as a reference to God’s hearing in heaven. The MT is not pointed for a place name.

▣ **“Rachel”** This was Jacob’s favorite wife and the mother of Joseph (and, therefore, the grandmother of Ephraim and Manasseh) and Benjamin (cf. Gen. 35:16-18). The rabbis say she was buried by the very road on which the northern tribes were taken into exile by Assyria in 722 B.C. This verse is quoted in Matt. 2:18 concerning Herod’s killing of the children of Bethlehem (in order to kill the newborn “King of the Jews” who the Wise Men sought).

31:16 Rachel should not weep because the exiles from Israel will be brought back to Palestine.

31:18 “I have surely heard” This is an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB from the same root (BDB 1033, KB 1570) for emphasis. God does hear when we pray (cf. Exod. 3:7).

▣ **“Like an untrained calf”** This is terminology from Hosea 4:16.

▣ **“Bring me back that I may be restored”** This is a *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (i.e., a prayer to YHWH). The rabbis say that such a radical repentance is involved that only God can give it (i.e., the new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34, described in Ezek. 36:22-38). The divine initiation is stressed in v. 19. This reflects Jeremiah’s prayer of 17:12-18.

31:19 “I smote on my thigh” This is a cultural idiom of grief or shame (cf. Ezek. 21:12).

31:20 This verse begins with a question(s). Some translations have

1. no question mark (possibly assuming the question(s) expect a “yes,” LXX, Peshitta, JPSOA, TEV)
2. one question (NJB, REB, NIV)
3. two questions (NASB, NKJV, NRSV)

Verse 20 describes YHWH as a loving parent who disciplines His son but still loves him. The discipline is for the purpose of restoration (cf. Hosea 11:8-9; 14:4-7).

The UBS *Handbook on Jeremiah* (p. 641) makes the interesting comment, “This verse is God’s reply to Israel’s statement of repentance, just as 4:1-2 is God’s response to Israel’s repentance in 3:22-25.”

▣ **“dear son. . .delightful child”** These statements are parallel. The words (BDB 430 and 1044) express YHWH’s love in parental terms. It reminds me of Exod. 19:5-6. There was so much potential in the covenant people, but what a disaster their idolatry caused (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38).

▣ **“I have spoken against him”** The Hebrew can be interpreted as “of him,” which fits the context better.

▣ **“remember. . .have mercy”** Both of these are the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB of the same root for the intensity of YHWH’s love and forgiveness!

1. I certainly still remember him – BDB 269, KB 269
2. I will surely have mercy on him – BDB 933, KB 1216

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:21-22

²¹**“Set up for yourself roadmarks,
Place for yourself guideposts;
Direct your mind to the highway,
The way by which you went.
Return, O virgin of Israel,
Return to these your cities.**

²²**How long will you go here and there,
O faithless daughter?
For the LORD has created a new thing in the earth—
A woman will encompass a man.”**

31:21-22 There is a series of IMPERATIVES given to the exiles related to their return trip to Palestine.

1. set up for yourselves roadmarks – BDB 662, KB 714, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. place for yourselves guideposts – BDB 962, KB 1321, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. direct your mind to the highway – BDB 1011, KB 1483, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. return – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (twice). This same word is often used of “repentance,” see Special Topic at 2:22

Notice how the imagery changes.

1. in v. 20 Ephraim is a “son,” a “child” (MASCULINE, cf. v. 9)
2. in v. 21 she is a “virgin of Israel” (FEMININE, cf. v, 4)

31:21 “roadmarks. . .guideposts” These two terms are rare.

1. roadmarks – BDB 846, usually denotes a grave marker (cf. II Kgs. 23:17; Ezek. 39:15)
2. guideposts – BDB 1071, found only here in the OT

The third line of the verse shows the context as a “highway” (BDB 700, only here in Jeremiah) so the first two parallel lines must fit this imagery. The exiles are to set their minds to the road that took them into exile (i.e., idolatry), but now to the road (i.e., repentance, faith) that will bring them home.

Jeremiah continued to tell Judah that she would go into exile for 70 years. Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed. Here he seems to say to them, mark your path/road as you travel into exile because one day you will return and these markers you set up in grief will become markers of joy on the way home to Palestine!

31:22 “For the LORD has created a new thing” The mention of “new” (BDB 294) brings the imagery from Isaiah of the Messianic age (i.e., “new covenant,” 31:31-34).

1. new things, Isa. 42:9; 48:6
2. new song, Isa. 42:10 (Rev. 5:9; 14:3)
3. something new, Isa. 43:19 (Rev. 3:12)

4. new name, Isa. 62:2 (cf. Isa. 56:3)
5. new heavens and new earth, Isa. 65:17; 66:22 (cf. II Pet. 3:13)

Also note Ezek. 11:19; 18:31; 36:26 (36:22-38 is a description of the new covenant age).

Note that the same VERB (BDB 135, KB 153) used in Gen. 1:1 is used again of YHWH's creative activity in restoring His people (and through them His eternal redemptive plan). Creation was for fellowship with all humanity (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 3:8), so too, the restoration of Israel. The Messiah will come from her and for all!



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV "A woman will encompass a man"

TEV, NET "a woman protecting a man"

NJB "the woman sets out to find her husband again"

JPSOA "a woman courts a man"

REB "a woman will play a man's part"

LXX "people will go about in safety"

Peshitta "a woman shall love her husband"

There are many theories (notice no parallel passages) about the meaning of this phrase.

1. reference to Israel's renewed love for YHWH (BDB 686, *Poel* #1, cf. NJB)
2. women will stand guard on the way home
3. the virgin birth (i.e., Jerome, Calvin)
4. the rabbis say women take on the male characteristics of firmness or strength
5. cultural proverb whose meaning is lost
6. the LXX has "in which people will go about in safety" (i.e., different text)
7. if the thrust is role reversal (i.e., 30:6) then I wonder how much it may relate to the subservience of women in Genesis 3, restored to the mutuality of Genesis 1-2? There are many Pentateuch allusions in this chapter.

I like #5. The same VERB and form is used of YHWH's care and protection for Israel in the Wilderness Wandering Period in Deut. 32:10.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:23-26

²³Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Once again they will speak this word in the land of Judah and in its cities when I restore their fortunes,

**'The LORD bless you, O abode of righteousness,
O holy hill!'**

²⁴Judah and all its cities will dwell together in it, the farmer and they who go about with flocks.

²⁵For I satisfy the weary ones and refresh everyone who languishes." ²⁶At this I awoke and looked, and my sleep was pleasant to me.

31:23-26 These verses are about the restoration of Judah.

1. her cities, v. 24)
2. her capital
3. the temple (i.e., "holy hill")

Verse 24 is difficult in the MT, "and they shall wander," but in the LXX, "and he shall be raised up with a flock." The point from the context is that "farmers" and "herdsmen" will dwell together. This may be a veiled allusion to the problem between Cain and Abel, but in the new day there will be no tensions related to vocations.

Verse 26 is also difficult. It seems out of place or at least ambiguous as to whom it relates.

1. northern ten tribes
2. all descendants of Abraham (TEV)
3. the prophet receiving revelation (“I,” cf. 30:1)

31:26 “I awoke and looked, and my sleep was pleasant” This is possibly a reference to (1) the prophet’s dream of restoration (Jewish Study Bible marginal note suggests he saw in a dream of the future, much like Abraham in Gen. 15:12-21, p. 990) or (2) a statement of the inhabitants relating to the restored Judah (TEV).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:27-30

²⁷“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and with the seed of beast. ²⁸As I have watched over them to pluck up, to break down, to overthrow, to destroy and to bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant,” declares the LORD.

²⁹“In those days they will not say again,
‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes,
And the children’s teeth are set on edge.’

³⁰But everyone will die for his own iniquity; each man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth will be set on edge.

31:27 The verse is using “abundance imagery” from Lev. 26:1-13 and Deut. 28:1-14; 30:1-10. The fruitfulness of humans, animals, and crops will be restored (cf. Ezek. 36:9,11; Hosea 2:23).

Notice that vv. 27,31, and 38 all begin with the same introduction formula, “Behold, days are coming,” which denotes the new Messianic age, the age of the Spirit, the age of the “New” (see note at v. 31).

31:28 This is a series of INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS that describe YHWH’s activities of judgment and restoration. This is the prophetic mandate that was given to Jeremiah in 1:10.

31:29 “The fathers have eaten sour grapes” This was a proverb (cf. Ezek. 18:2; Lam. 5:7) that tried to blame the parent’s actions for God’s current judgments. Ezekiel 18 was written to help explain Deut. 5:9. Yes, families are affected by sin, but God’s forgiveness relates to the individual’s faith and obedience (cf. v. 30b; Deut. 7:9; 24:16).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:31-34

³¹“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ³²not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. ³³“But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

31:31 “Behold, days are coming” Notice that the same introductory phrase begins three poems in this chapter (vv. 27,31,38),

The question has always been, “When does this new day start?”

1. the return under Cyrus in 538 B.C. (i.e., Ezra, Nehemiah, Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel, Joshua)
2. the life of Christ (cf. Heb. 8:8-12 which quotes this text)
3. the second coming of Christ

The post-exilic period embodied the hope of a new day of faith, but it did not materialize (cf. Malachi). The new internal nature of the covenant based on God’s grace and performance, not mankind’s, even covenant mankind (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38), was not manifested until the ministry and death/resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. The new covenant has been inaugurated with Jesus’ first coming and will be consummated at His second coming!

▣ **“I will make a new covenant”** This is the only mention in the OT of a “new covenant,” although Isa. 55:3 mentions “an everlasting covenant” (it is possible that Duet. 18:15-19 implies the need of a new covenant with the coming of the new prophet). This would have been very shocking to the Jews. They thought God’s covenant with Moses was unconditional and eternal (cf. Gen. 17:7,13,19; Lev. 16:34; 24:8; Num. 25:13; I Chr. 16:17; Ps. 105:10; see Special Topic at 7:7). Isaiah 24:5 says it was broken! Jesus calls His death “the new covenant in My blood,” which links to Moses’ words in Exod. 24:8. For “covenant” see Special Topic at 3:7.

▣ **“house of Israel. . .house of Judah”** The New Covenant would restore unity to the divided kingdom (cf. vv. 1-3,27,33). It will go far beyond that and restore the unity between God and humanity so obvious in Genesis 1-2 (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; 3:21-31; 9:24-33; 11:11-24,25; 15:7-16; Galatians 2; 3; Eph. 2:11-3:13).

31:32 “not like the covenant which I made with their Father” There is both a continuity and discontinuity between the old covenant and the new covenant. First, it is important to list the different significant covenants.

1. Abraham
2. Moses
3. David
4. new covenant (i.e., Jesus, cf. Hebrews)

The first and third are still in effect, as far as the eternal redemptive plan. The fourth is the fulfillment of that plan. Here are some of the similarities.

1. God initiates it and sets its parameters
2. humans must respond in repentance, faith, obedience, and perseverance
3. the Spirit draws humans to respond appropriately (i.e., John 6:44,65)

The big difference is that the performance model is replaced by a grace model. God still wants a people to reflect and reveal His character to a lost world. However, because of the Fall, His covenant people, with all their privileges (cf. Rom. 9:4-5), could not keep the Mosaic covenant. Therefore, God initiates a covenant of grace that uses the Messiah’s obedience and sacrifice (cf. Isaiah 53; Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21) to fulfill the old covenant and begin a new age characterized by a new heart, a new mind, a new spirit (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). Internal motivation will replace external laws. But remember the goal is still a Christlike people (i.e., covenant language, cf. v. 33d; 24:7)! The eternal redemptive purpose continues (see Special Topic at 1:5).

▣ **“I took them by the hand”** The emphasis here is on God’s parenthood (cf. Hosea 11:1-4,8-9).

▣ **“My covenant which they broke”** This is a summary of the history of the Jewish nation (cf. 25:4; 33:8; Galatians 3; the book of Hebrews).

▣ **“I was a husband to them”** God uses human relationships to describe His relationship with Israel (cf. Hosea 1-3). See Special Topic at 1:9.

31:33 “the house of Israel” Notice that in vv. 27,31 “Israel” refers to the northern ten tribes after the split of the United Monarchy in 922 B.C. The northern ten tribes, led by Jeroboam I, were called

1. Israel (collective term)
2. Samaria (the capital)
3. Ephraim (the largest tribe)

However, here in v. 33 it must refer to its original meaning of the descendants of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. See full note in Contextual Insights, B.

▣ **“I will put My law within them”** This is analogous to the phrase “circumcise your heart” of Deut. 30:6. It is parallel to the new heart, new mind, and new spirit of Ezek. 36:22-38. From the NT this refers to the indwelling Holy Spirit.

▣ **“on their heart”** This refers to the entire person (cf. Deut. 6:6; 11:18; 30:14). See the Special Topic at 4:19.

The Fall of Genesis 3 affected human’s spiritual orientation and worldview. They came to focus on “self,” not God. This fallenness was the reason that Abraham’s descendants could not keep/perform the Mosaic covenant (cf. Deut. 31:29; Josh. 24:19). Therefore, YHWH must give them a new heart (cf. 24:7 and “the circumcised heart,” cf. Deut. 30:6). Then the Scriptures of Deut. 6:6; 30:11,14 can be fulfilled. The clearest description of this new orientation and spiritual worldview is

1. OT – Ezek. 36:22-38
2. NT – Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7

▣ **“I will write it”** As YHWH wrote the Ten Commandments before Moses on Mt. Sinai (cf. Exod. 31:18; 32:15-16; 34:1,28), He now writes on the human heart by His Spirit. The new covenant is a new internal code from a restored image of God! This faith relationship has always been the plan of God (cf. Lev. 26:41; Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:25-26).

31:34 “for they will all know Me” Notice the play between the IMPERATIVE (BDB 353, KB 390, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, which relates to the performance model, i.e., the Old Testament) and the IMPERFECT, which relates to the new age, new mind, new heart, new spirit (i.e., new covenant).

There will be an intimate, personal relationship between YHWH and all of His people. This intimacy is illustrated by the Hebrew concept of “know” in Gen. 4:1 and Jer. 1:5; 9:24. See the Special Topic: Know at 1:5.

▣ **“from the least of them to the greatest of them”** This inclusive, “no respecter of persons” language is parallel to Joel 2:28-29 (quoted in Acts 2:27-28). It is used in a negative sense in Jer. 6:13; 8:10.

▣ **“I will forgive”** When God forgives, God forgets (cf. Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Ezek. 18:22; 33:16; Ps. 103:10-14; Micah 7:19)! What a great truth!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:35-37

³⁵Thus says the LORD,
Who gives the sun for light by day
And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night,

Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar;
The LORD of hosts is His name:

³⁶“If this fixed order departs
From before Me,” declares the LORD,
“Then the offspring of Israel also will cease
From being a nation before Me forever.”

³⁷Thus says the LORD,
“If the heavens above can be measured
And the foundations of the earth searched out below,
Then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel
For all that they have done,” declares the LORD.

31:35-37 YHWH’s new covenant is as stable and permanent as the fixed orders (BDB 349) and cycles of creation. Verse 37 expresses the positive truth in a negative statement (i.e., conditional expression which cannot be fulfilled).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:38-40

³⁸“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when the city will be rebuilt for the LORD from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. ³⁹The measuring line will go out farther straight ahead to the hill Gareb; then it will turn to Goah. ⁴⁰And the whole valley of the dead bodies and of the ashes, and all the fields as far as the brook Kidron, to the corner of the Horse Gate toward the east, shall be holy to the LORD; it will not be plucked up or overthrown anymore forever.”

31:38-40 This paragraph is declaring the full restoration of Jerusalem. Not only will the city be rebuilt but expanded. This new city (cf. Isa. 1:26; 45:13; 60:14) will never be

1. plucked up – BDB 684, KB 737, *Niphal* IMPERFECT
2. overthrown – BDB 248, KB 256, *Niphal* IMPERFECT

Since the rebuilt Jerusalem of the post-exilic period was destroyed by Titus in A.D. 70, this must be interpreted as

1. the promises of God are conditional
2. it points toward the “new Jerusalem” (i.e., heaven) of Rev. 21:1-21 (which also uses “new” imagery)

31:40 “valley of dead bodies and of the ashes” This phrase refers to the “Valley of the Sons of Hinnom” (cf. 7:31; 19:2,6), which became the Hebrew contraction for *Gehenna*. See Special Topic at 4:4.

This phrase is missing in the LXX. There are some scholars who do not accept this identification because the word used for “valley” (BDB 770) is different than in 7:31-32 and 19:2,6 (BDB 161). However, the dead bones and ashes seem to demand it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why was the prophecy so radical to its hearers?
2. Has this been fulfilled? When?
3. Why is 31:30-34 so significant?
4. What is involved in the New Covenant?

JEREMIAH 32

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS (The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jeremiah Imprisoned	Jeremiah Buys a Field	Jeremiah Purchases Land in Anathoth	Jeremiah Buys a Field	Jeremiah Buys a Field in Token of Future Prosperity
32:1-5	32:1-5	32:1-5	32:1-5	32:1-5
32:6-8	32:6-12	32:6-8	32:6-15	32:6-15
32:9-15		32:9-15		
	32:13-15			
Jeremiah Prays and God Explains	Jeremiah Prays For Understanding		Jeremiah's Prayer	
32:16-25	32:16-25	32:16-25	32:16-23	32:16-25
	God's Assurance of the People's Return		32:24-25	
32:26-35	32:26-35	32:26-35	32:26-35	32:26-27
			A Promise of Hope	32:28-35
32:36-44	32:36-41	32:36-41	32:36-41	32:36-44
	32:42-44	32:42-44	32:42-44	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapters 30-33 form a literary unit commonly referred to as “the Book of Consolation.”
 - 1. chapters 30 and 31 describe God’s new covenant with His people
 - 2. chapters 32 and 33 describe the symbolic act which assures His people of future restoration
- B. From other parts of Jeremiah we learn the exact historical setting of chapter 32.
 - 1. From 39:1 we know the exact date that the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar began, in the ninth year of Zedekiah in the tenth month. This means that we can date chapter 32 around the year of 588 or 587 B.C.
 - 2. From Jer. 37:5 we learn that there was a brief respite in the siege of Jerusalem because of the appearance of the Egyptian army in Palestine. However, the Egyptians and Babylonians never fought and the siege of Jerusalem was renewed quickly.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED)TEXT: 32:1-5

¹The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. ²Now at that time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem, and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the guard, which *was in* the house of the king of Judah, ³because Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, “Why do you prophesy, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Behold, I am about to give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will take it; ⁴and Zedekiah king of Judah will not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but he will surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will speak with him face to face and see him eye to eye; ⁵and he will take Zedekiah to Babylon, and he will be there until I visit him,” declares the LORD. “If you fight against the Chaldeans, you will not succeed”?””

32:1 “the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar” This would make the date 587 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar’s father, Nabopolassar (626 - 605 B.C.), was the founder of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. When the last strong king of Assyria (Ashurbanipal) died in 626 B.C., Nabopolassar rebelled. He started a new empire which was very successful. In 605 B.C., after the death of Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 B.C.) returned to Babylon. This was after his successful battle at Carchemish, where he defeated the remnant of the Assyrian army and Pharaoh Necho’s Egyptian army at the headwaters of the Euphrates. After being crowned king he returned to this area to subdue Palestine.

32:2 This new place of imprisonment (cf. 38:13,28; 39:14) was an improvement of the prophet’s situation. He had originally been placed in a cistern and was in danger of death (cf. chapter 38).

32:3 This summarizes Jeremiah’s prophetic message inside Jerusalem as the Babylonian army lay siege to the city (cf. 21:3-7; 27:12-15).

32:4 “but he will surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon” The VERB (BDB 678, KB 733, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) is intensified by the addition of the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE of the same root.

The term “hand” is a Hebrew idiom for “power.” See Special Topic at 1:9.

The term “Chaldean” has several possible meanings.

1. an ethnic group
2. a language
3. a group of Babylonian wise men

See full note at Daniel 1:4 online at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

▣ **“and he will speak with him face to face and see him eye to eye”** This Hebrew idiom speaks of a personal encounter (cf. 39:5). We learn from II Kgs. 25:4-7 that Zedekiah’s family was put to death before his eyes and then his eyes were blinded and he was taken into exile.

32:5 “until I visit him” This VERB (BDB 823, KB 955, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is used several times in Jeremiah as both positive and negative constructions. YHWH’s “visit” means His presence.

1. positive (i.e., care for)
 - 15:15
 - 23:2 (negated but the action is positive)
 - 27:22
 - 29:10
 - Ruth 1:6
 - Psalm 65:10; 106:4
2. negative (i.e., punish)
 - 5:9,29; 6:6,15; 9:9,28; 11:22; 14:10; 21:14; 23:34; 25:12; 27:8; 29:32; 30:20; 32:5; 36:31; 44:13,29; 46:25; 49:8; 50:18,31; 51:44,47,52

Zedekiah was blinded after he was forced to watch his sons killed, along with the princes of Judah. He was exiled to Babylon, where he died in prison (cf. 52:10-11).

NASB (UPDATED)TEXT: 32:6-8

⁶And Jeremiah said, “The word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁷Behold, Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle is coming to you, saying, “Buy for yourself my field which is at Anathoth, for you have the right of redemption to buy it.” ⁸Then Hanamel my uncle’s son came to me in the court of the guard according to the word of the LORD and said to me, ‘Buy my field, please, that is at Anathoth, which is in the land of Benjamin; for you have the right of possession and the redemption is yours; buy it for yourself.’ Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.

32:7 God tells Jeremiah what is going to happen even before the events occur so that he will have confidence in the strange purchase God demands (cf. v. 8).

▣ **“the right of redemption”** This is discussed in Lev. 25:25-31 and alluded to in Ruth 4:1-12. It is often called the right of the *Go’el*. It is interesting that Jeremiah’s family would request that he purchase a field for the following reasons.

1. Jeremiah had no descendants
2. his family had betrayed and rejected him earlier

It is important for Jeremiah to accomplish this symbolic act of hope. The closer the fall of Jerusalem came to reality the more Jeremiah’s prophecy turned to the hope of restoration (see chapters 30-33, the Book of Consolation).

32:8 “Hanamel my uncle’s son” Jeremiah’s cousin from Anathoth came to see him in the court of the guard (i.e., the place of his imprisonment). The very fact that this man could travel and enter Jerusalem

shows that the siege had been lifted (i.e., because of the appearance of the Egyptian army). Some have asserted that he wanted to sell the land because

1. he was afraid of the obvious Babylonian defeat (cf. v. 25)
2. he was in great debt
3. he was testing Jeremiah's message about the future hope
4. the truth is that we do not know the psychological motivations of many of the activities of the Bible

▣ **“Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD”** I think we sometimes assume that the OT prophets did not have to live by faith since they were spoken to audibly by God. This is a good example that the prophet had to live by faith also and was not 100% sure that this was the word of God until it was fulfilled. This shows that any dogmatism as to exactly how God communicated with the prophets is probably unfounded.

NASB (UPDATED)TEXT: 32:9-15

⁹“I bought the field which was at Anathoth from Hanamel my uncle’s son, and I weighed out the silver for him, seventeen shekels of silver. ¹⁰I signed and sealed the deed, and called in witnesses, and weighed out the silver on the scales. ¹¹Then I took the deeds of purchase, both the sealed *copy* containing the terms and conditions and the open *copy*; ¹²and I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, in the sight of Hanamel my uncle’s *son* and in the sight of the witnesses who signed the deed of purchase, before all the Jews who were sitting in the court of the guard. ¹³And I commanded Baruch in their presence, saying, ¹⁴“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Take these deeds, this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware jar, that they may last a long time.” ¹⁵For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Houses and fields and vineyards will again be bought in this land.””

32:9 “weighed out the silver for him, seventeen shekels of silver” See Special Topic at 13:12.

32:10-11 “I signed and sealed. . .and called in witnesses, and weighed out. . .the sealed *copy*. . .the open *copy*” This reflects the ancient legal procedures of buying a piece of property. This has been confirmed archaeologically from the Elephantine Papyri from the fifth century B.C., which was found in Egypt on an island in the Nile River.

32:12 “Baruch” This is the first mention of Jeremiah's private and personal secretary. He was probably the editor and recorder of most of Jeremiah's sermons and messages.

32:14 “put them in an earthenware jar” This method of preservation of documents has been confirmed archaeologically, not only by the elephantine papyri but also the Dead Sea Scrolls.

32:15 “Houses and fields and vineyards” It is interesting that “vineyards” are mentioned specifically. It took a number of years for a vineyard to grow and become productive. Judah will be destroyed but a restoration is coming after 70 years.

NASB (UPDATED)TEXT: 32:16-25

¹⁶“After I had given the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah, then I prayed to the LORD, saying, ¹⁷“Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and

by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You,¹⁸ who shows lovingkindness to thousands, but repays the iniquity of fathers into the bosom of their children after them, O great and mighty God. The LORD of hosts is His name;¹⁹ great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, giving to everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds;²⁰ who has set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, *and* even to this day both in Israel and among mankind; and You have made a name for Yourself, as at this day. ²¹You brought Your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and with wonders, and with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm and with great terror; ²²and gave them this land, which You swore to their forefathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey. ²³They came in and took possession of it, but they did not obey Your voice or walk in Your law; they have done nothing of all that You commanded them to do; therefore You have made all this calamity come upon them. ²⁴Behold, the siege ramps have reached the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans who fight against it, because of the sword, the famine and the pestilence; and what You have spoken has come to pass; and behold, You see *it*. ²⁵You have said to me, O Lord GOD, “Buy for yourself the field with money and call in witnesses”—although the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.”

32:16-25 Jeremiah bought the field as a symbol of trust in God and His promises, but apparently he still had some degree of doubt. These verses are a strophe recording Jeremiah’s prayer to God who tries to assure him:

1. by using the prophet’s very same words from v. 17
2. by reminding him of God’s gracious acts to the seed of Abraham (cf. Neh. 9:9-38).

32:17 This verse expresses the recurrent emphasis on YHWH as the creator Deity (i.e., monotheism, see Special Topic at 1:5). The idols cannot

1. act (v. 19)
2. predict (v. 19)
3. hear

but YHWH can and does do all these things!

▣ **“Your outstretched arm”** This is an anthropomorphic phrase. See Special Topic at 1:9.

▣ **“Nothing is too difficult for You”** This is asserting that YHWH can accomplish Judah’s fall and rebuilding (cf. 31:28).

For the word “difficult” (BDB 810) see Special Topic: Wonderful Things at 21:5.

32:18 This is a wonderful list of the characteristics of God. Similar lists can be found in Exod. 34:6-7; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 145:8). What a great God. He will not give up on His purpose of fellowship with His fallen human creatures! See Special Topic at 12:1.

▣ **“shows lovingkindness to thousands, but repays the iniquity of fathers into the bosom of their children after them”** This is an allusion to Deut. 5:9 and 7:9. Jeremiah is a prophet of the Mosaic covenant and his phraseology and theology reflect the book of Deuteronomy. This is a very important quote because it shows the relationship between the wrath of God and the love of God. The wrath of God, based on Deut. 5:9, goes to the third and fourth generations, while the love of God, Deut. 7:9, goes to the thousandth generation.

There is both a corporate aspect to sin and an individual aspect (cf. Ezekiel 18). Both sin and faith run through families!

▣ Notice the different phrases in this context for Israel’s Deity (see Special Topic at 1:2).

1. LORD (i.e., YHWH), vv. 1,6,17,26,27,28,42,44
2. LORD of hosts, vv. 14,15,18
3. God of Israel (i.e., *Elohim*), vv.14,15,25,38
4. Lord (i.e., *Adon*), vv. 17,25
5. O great and mighty God, v. 18
6. the God of all flesh, v. 27 (cf. Num. 16:22; 27:16)
7. the LORD God of Israel (i.e., YHWH and *Elohim*), v. 36

One descriptive phrase that is unusual, “with all My heart and with all My soul.” What a shocking physical (anthropomorphic) phrase to describe the trustworthy commitment of the eternal, ever-present, non-corporal Deity.

32:19 “giving to everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds” This truth is also mentioned in Jer. 17:10 (see full note there). We reap what we sow (cf. Gal. 6:7).

▣ In the OT this is the obvious outcome of a performance-based covenant. In the NT it becomes the evidence of a new relationship with God through Christ. Believers are new creatures in Christ, led by the Spirit into daily Christlikeness. Godly living is not the basis of that new relationship, but the natural outcome of a new heart, new mind, new spirit. The good works are the confirmation, the evidence of our free salvation! I believe Eph. 1:4 and 2:8-10 have helped me see this truth.

32:20-22 This is a reference to the major historical act of God’s deliverance from Egypt and bringing the people into the Promised Land as He had promised their forefathers (cf. Gen. 15:12-21).

32:20 YHWH is active in the lives of the descendants of Abraham. However, He also has a wide interest and plan (i.e., “among mankind,” see Special Topic at 1:5) for all people. He wants His name known among all the nations (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38) that they may come to Him (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5; Ps. 22:27; 66:1-4; 86:9-10; Isa. 2:2-4; 25:6-9; 42:6-10; 45:22-23; 49:5-6; 51:4-5; 56:7-8; 60:1-3; 66:23; Micah 4:1-4; Mal. 1:11).

▣ This same imagery used of the Exodus is found in Deut. 4:34; 7:19; 26:8.

32:22 “a land flowing with milk and honey” This is not only a descriptive phrase (cf. 11:5), but the title for Palestine found in Assyrian documents.

32:23 “but they did not obey Your voice or walk in Your law” This was the problem. There was a conditional covenant between God and Israel and Israel had failed to keep the conditions (i.e., 31:32). Therefore, the Judean exile reflects God’s abrogating (or at least modifying) of this covenant, but He will inaugurate a “new covenant” (31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38).

32:24 “the siege mounds” In the ANE walled cities were captured by surrounding them, thereby cutting off the food supply. At the sign of danger the people fled to the walled cities. Therefore, the water, sanitation, and food systems were stressed. The enemy built dirt mounds against the wall(s). These mounds supported wooden, mobile A-frames which held a ramming mechanism (cf. 6:6; 33:4; Isa. 37:33). These rams would hit the stone/brick wall again and again in one place until they crumbled.

▣ “the sword, the famine and the pestilence” See full note at 14:12.

NASB (UPDATED)TEXT: 32:26-35

²⁶Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, ²⁷“Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?” ²⁸Therefore thus says the LORD, “Behold, I am about to give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he will take it. ²⁹The Chaldeans who are fighting against this city will enter and set this city on fire and burn it, with the houses where *people* have offered incense to Baal on their roofs and poured out drink offerings to other gods to provoke Me to anger. ³⁰Indeed the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah have been doing only evil in My sight from their youth; for the sons of Israel have been only provoking Me to anger by the work of their hands,” declares the LORD. ³¹“Indeed this city has been to Me *a provocation of My anger and My wrath from the day that they built it, even to this day, so that it should be removed from before My face,* ³²because of all the evil of the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah which they have done to provoke Me to anger—they, their kings, their leaders, their priests, their prophets, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ³³They have turned *their* back to Me and not *their* face; though *I* taught them, teaching again and again, they would not listen and receive instruction. ³⁴But they put their detestable things in the house which is called by My name, to defile it. ³⁵They built the high places of Baal that are in the valley of Ben-hinnom to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through *the fire* to Molech, which I had not commanded them nor had it entered My mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

32:26-44 This is God’s reply to Jeremiah’s prayer. It covers several aspects of judgment and several wonderful promises of future hope.

32:27 “the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me” This is God’s affirmation that Jeremiah’s theology was accurate (i.e., monotheism) and his doubts were unfounded.

32:28 Jerusalem will fall to the Babylonians!

32:29 The city of Jerusalem will be burned because of its idolatrous practices (cf. v. 30), as the Canaanite cities were burned in the conquest (cf. Deut. 3:6).

▣ **“Baal”** The worship of *Ba’al* (the male fertility god of the Canaanites) was somehow connected with the astral deities (i.e., Babylonian, cf. 8:2; 19:13). See Special Topic: Fertility Worship of the ANE at 2:20. Possibly the Babylonian deities (which were called on by name and rituals) became known to Palestine through political alliance treaties.

32:31 This is a strange verse! It seems to imply that Jerusalem (and by implication, the temple) was not pleasing to YHWH, even from their beginnings. This is surely hyperbolic, but does clearly show YHWH’s reaction to His people worshipping other gods (who are not gods).

32:32 The entire population, from king to peasants, were unfaithful, disobedient, and idolatrous. Even those who should have known better (priests, prophets) did not obey!

32:33-35 These verses describe how serious their rebellion was.

1. They turned their backs to God (no respect, cf. 18:17; no worship, cf. 2:27).
2. They should have faced Him (i.e., intimate, personal relationship illustrated in worship and life).
3. YHWH spoke (through His prophets) again and again (cf. similar idiomatic statements in 7:13,25; 11:7; 25:3,4; 26:5,19; and also note Hos. 11:2).

4. They would not listen or heed the words of YHWH.
5. They put idols in YHWH's temple (cf. 7:30; II Kgs. 23:4; II Chr. 33; Ezekiel 8).
6. They built high places to *Ba'al* (cf. 19:5).
7. They worshiped, by child sacrifice, the fertility god, *Molech* (cf. 7:31; Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5).

32:34 “the house which is called by My name” This refers to the temple (cf. 7:10,11,14,30). This reflects the language of Deuteronomy, “the place I will cause My name to dwell” (cf. Deut. 12:5,11,14,18,21,26; 14:23,24; 15:20; 16:2,6,11,15; 17:8,10; 18:6; 26:2; 31:11).

For more information see Deut. 12:5 and 26:2 online at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

32:35 “which I had not commanded them nor had it entered My mind that they should do this abomination” Child sacrifice was part of the worship of *Molech* (cf. Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5; Deut. 12:31; 18:10; II Kgs. 21:1-7). There may have been some confusion about the child sacrifice being the will of God because of the account of Abraham offering Isaac at God's command in Genesis 22 (or even the death of Job's children in Job 1). A reflection of this misunderstanding is seen in Micah 6:7.

YHWH clearly and emphatically rejects this false understanding of worship.

For “Ben-hinnom” see note at 31:40 (i.e., “the valley of dead bodies and of the ashes”).

For “abomination” see Special Topic at 2:7.

NASB (UPDATED)TEXT: 32:36-44

³⁶“Now therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning this city of which you say, ‘It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine and by pestilence.’ ³⁷Behold, I will gather them out of all the lands to which I have driven them in My anger, in My wrath and in great indignation; and I will bring them back to this place and make them dwell in safety. ³⁸They shall be My people, and I will be their God; ³⁹and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good and for *the good of their children* after them. ⁴⁰I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me. ⁴¹I will rejoice over them to do them good and will faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul. ⁴²For thus says the LORD, ‘Just as I brought all this great disaster on this people, so I am going to bring on them all the good that I am promising them. ⁴³Fields will be bought in this land of which you say, “It is a desolation, without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.” ⁴⁴Men will buy fields for money, sign and seal deeds, and call in witnesses in the land of Benjamin, in the environs of Jerusalem, in the cities of Judah, in the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the lowland and in the cities of the Negev; for I will restore their fortunes,’ declares the LORD.”

32:36-44 As so often occurs in the prophets, a judgment oracle is followed by a promise oracle. The judgment was horrible and deserved, but the restoration is glorious and sure (i.e., Ps. 103:8-14).

32:37 YHWH's mercy (v. 37c) does not dull His reaction to sin, disobedience, and rebellion.

1. in My anger
2. in My wrath
3. in great indignation

Sin can be forgiven (i.e., Manasseh on his deathbed, cf. II Chr. 33:12-13,15-16), but the consequences continue through time.

32:38 “They shall be My people, and I will be their God” This is covenant language (cf. 30:22; 33:1). This has always been YHWH’s desire. This will be the culmination of the “new covenant.”

32:39 “and I will give them one heart and one way” There is a tension between humans making a new heart, Ezek. 18:31, and God giving a new heart, Ezek. 36:26; Jer. 31:33. This paradoxical relationship is normative throughout the Bible (i.e., covenant). God always takes the initiative but humans must respond in faith, repentance, obedience, and perseverance. However, the Fall of Genesis 3 made it impossible for humans, even the faith seed of Abraham, to fulfill God’s covenant desires. Therefore, the need of a new heart, new mind, new spirit!

▣ Notice what the visible outcome of a “new heart” is.

1. respect (“fear”) of YHWH always
2. the abundance/prosperity/peace of those who know Him (cf. v. 41a, as a witness to the nations)
3. stable, happy societies, generation after generation

This was always the desire of God for humanity. We were created for fellowship with Him (cf. Jer. 31:34; Gen. 1:26-27; 3:8).

If there is no visible change, there is no new heart (cf. Matt. 7:15-27 and the NT books of James and I John)! God wants a people to reflect His character to a lost and needy world. Conversion demands transformation (cf. Matthew 13). Eternal life has observable characteristics! See Special Topic at 18:8.

32:40 “and I will make an everlasting covenant with them” The new term found here is the term “everlasting” (cf. Isa. 55:3; 61:8; Ezek. 16:60; 37:26). The Hebrew here is rather ambiguous (see Special Topic at 7:7). We know from further history that the returning exiles do not faithfully fulfill the covenant either. There has always been a conditional element built into the covenant. God has always been willing to make the covenant permanent but mankind continues to rebel.

32:41 We see again an anthropomorphic phrase used for the intensity of God’s love for Israel (cf. Hos. 11:8,9; Jer. 8:18-9:16).

The last part of this verse has three phrases which describe YHWH’s commitment to His gracious acts toward a restored/repentant Judah.

1. “faithfully” – BDB 54, see Special Topic at 3:12
2. “with all My heart” – used only here in the OT, see Special Topic: Heart at 4:15
3. “with all My soul” – this is another surprising use of a term which is used of humans (Gen. 2:4) and animals (Gen. 1:24; 2:19) – *nephesh* (BDB 659, KB 711)

YHWH is accommodating Himself to physical human language to make His point to Jeremiah.

32:42 God is the source of all things (i.e., one causality in the universe). If there is only one God (see Special Topic: Monotheism at 1:5), then basically He either allows or uses both good and evil. This is the affirmation of the OT. The OT recognized no secondary causes!

32:44 The promises of restoration are multi-fulfillment oracles. These promises were meant to be a reality to the post-exilic Judean community and, in one sense, they were. However, the “eternal covenant” was broken again as the interbiblical and Roman periods clearly demonstrate. For me these promises to national Israel must be re-evaluated in light of the life and teaching of Jesus. If the NT is revelation, then it must be noted that the national promises have been universalized, which was always YHWH’s intent (see Special Topics at 1:5 and 30:3). Please look at these Special Topics; they show my biases and meta-narrative orientation.

JEREMIAH 33

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS (The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Restoration Promised	Excellence of the Restored Nation	God Will Rebuild the Walls of Jerusalem	Another Promise of Hope	Another Promise of Recovery
33:1-9	33:1-3 33:4-9	33:1-9	33:1-9	33:1-9
33:10-11 (11c)	33:10-11 (11c)	33:10-11 (11c)	33:10-11 (11c)	33:10-11
33:12-13	33:12-13	33:12-13	33:12-13	33:12-13
The Davidic Kingdom				The Institutions of the Future
33:14-18	33:14 33:15-18 (15-16) The Permanence of God's Covenant	33:14-16 33:17-18	33:14-18	33:14-18 (15-16)
33:19-22	33:19-22	33:19-22	33:19-22	33:19-22
33:23-26	33:23-24 33:25-26	33:23-26	33:23-26	33:23-26

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:1-9

¹Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the second time, while he was still confined in the court of the guard, saying, ²“Thus says the LORD who made *the earth*, the LORD who formed it to establish it, the LORD is His name, ³‘Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.’ ⁴For thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning the houses of this city, and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah which are broken down *to make a defense* against the siege ramps and against the sword, ⁵‘While *they* are coming to fight with the Chaldeans and to fill them with the corpses of men whom I have slain in My anger and in My wrath, and I have hidden My face from this city because of all their wickedness: ⁶Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them; and I will reveal to them an abundance of peace and truth. ⁷I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel and will rebuild them as they were at first. ⁸I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned against Me and by which they have transgressed against Me. ⁹It will be to Me a name of joy, praise and glory before all the nations of the earth which will hear of all the good that I do for them, and they will fear and tremble because of all the good and all the peace that I make for it.’”

33:1 This shows that chapters 32 and 33 are linked (as are chapters 30-33, the Book of Consolation).

33:2 This is one of several references in Jeremiah to YHWH as creator.

1. The first VERB “made” (BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) is used in a parallel way to “create” (BDB 135, KB 153, cf. Gen. 1:1), which is clearly seen in 1:7,16,25; 3:1. YHWH made the earth (LXX), which is denoted in the MT by the PRONOUN “it.” However, it could refer to His eternal redemptive plan (JPSOA).
2. The second VERB “formed” (BDB 427, KB 428, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) is also used often of YHWH as creator
 - a. Adam – Gen. 2:7,8
 - b. Israel as a covenant nation – Isa. 27:11; 43:1,21; 44:21; 45:9,11; 64:7
 - c. Jeremiah – Jer. 1:5
3. The third VERB “to establish it” (BDB 465, KB 464, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) may relate to the fixed order of nature in Jer. 31:35-37 or to YHWH establishing the world by His wisdom in Jer. 10:12.
4. All three VERBS are present in Isa. 45:18.

▣ “the LORD is His name” See Special Topics below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: “THE NAME” OF YHWH

The use of “the name” as a substitute for YHWH Himself is parallel to the Exod. 23:20-33 use of “angel,” who is said to have “My name is in Him.” This same substitution can be seen in the use of “His glory” (e.g., John 1:14; 17:22). All are attempts to soften the personal anthropomorphic presence of YHWH (cf. Exod. 3:13-16; 6:3). YHWH is surely spoken of in human terms, but it was also known that He was spiritually present throughout creation (cf. I Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 139:7-16; Jer. 23:24; Acts 7:49 quotes Isa. 66:1).

There are several examples of “the name” representing YHWH’s divine essence and personal presence.

1. Deut. 12:5; II Sam. 7:13; I Kgs. 9:3; 11:36
2. Deut. 28:58
3. Ps. 5:11; 7:17; 9:10; 33:21; 68:4; 91:14; 103:1; 105:3; 145:21
4. Isa. 48:9; 56:6
5. Ezek. 20:44; 36:21; 39:7
6. Amos 2:7
7. John 17:6,11,26

The concept of “calling on” (i.e., worshiping) the name of YHWH is seen early in Genesis.

1. 4:26, the line of Seth
2. 12:8, Abraham
3. 13:4, Abraham
4. 16:13, Hagar
5. 21:33, Abraham
6. 26:25, Isaac

and in Exodus:

1. 5:22-23, speak in Thy name
2. 9:16, show My name through all the earth (cf. Rom. 9:17)
3. 20:7, do not take the name of the Lord your God in vain (cf. Lev. 19:12; Deut. 5:11; 6:13; 10:20)
4. 20:24, where I cause my name to be remembered (cf. Deut. 12:5; 26:2)
5. 23:20-21, an angel (“since My name is in him”)
6. 34:5-7, Moses calls on (or “called out”) the name of the Lord. This is one of a handful of texts that describe YHWH’s character (cf. Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8; Joel 2:13)

Knowing someone by name implies an intimacy (cf. Exod. 33:12); Moses knows YHWH’s name and in 33:17, YHWH knows Moses’ name. This is the context where Moses wants to see God’s glory (cf. v. 18), but God allows him to see “His goodness” (v. 19), which is parallel to “the name” (v. 19).

The Israelites are to destroy “the names” of Canaan’s gods (cf. Deut. 12:3) and call on Him (cf. Deut. 6:13; 10:20; 26:2) at the special place He causes His name to dwell (cf. Exod. 20:24; Deut. 12:5,11,21; 14:23,24; 16:2,6,11; 26:2).

YHWH has a universal purpose involving His name.

1. Gen. 12:3
2. Exod. 9:16
3. Exod. 19:5-6
4. Deut. 28:10,58
5. Micah 4:1-5

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAME OF THE LORD

This was a common NT phrase for the personal presence and active power of the Triune God in the church. It was not a magical formula, but an appeal to God's character.

Often this phrase refers to Jesus as Lord (cf. Phil. 2:11)

1. at the profession of one's faith in Jesus at baptism (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; Acts 2:38; 8:12,16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16; I Cor. 1:13,15; James 2:7)
2. at an exorcism (cf. Matt. 7:22; Mark 9:38; Luke 9:49; 10:17; Acts 19:13)
3. at a healing (cf. Acts 3:6,16; 4:10; 9:34; James 5:14)
4. at an act of ministry (cf. Matt. 10:42; 18:5; Luke 9:48)
5. at the time of church discipline (cf. Matt. 18:15-20)
6. during preaching to Gentiles (cf. Luke 24:47; Acts 9:15; 15:17; Rom. 1:5)
7. in prayer (cf. John 14:13-14; 15:2,16; 16:23; I Cor. 1:2)
8. a way of referring to Christianity (cf. Acts 26:9; I Cor. 1:10; II Tim. 2:19; James 2:7; I Pet. 4:14)

Whatever we do as proclaimers, ministers, helpers, healers, exorcists, etc., we do in His character, His power, His provisions—in His Name!

33:3 Notice the personal element of biblical, covenant faith. Notice the VERB forms.

1. "call to Me" – BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, SINGULAR, cf. 29:12
 - a. Jeremiah
 - b. His people, collectively
2. "I will answer you" – BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
3. "I will tell you" – BDB 616, KB 665, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE

▣ **"Call to Me, and I will answer you"** Here again is the sign of the renewed covenant. Earlier Jeremiah had been told not to pray for the people could not repent. Now they are assured that as they sought God, He would respond to them.

▣ **"great and mighty things, which you do not know"** The term "mighty" is literally "inaccessible" (BDB 130). This word was often used for breaking into a fortified city (cf. 15:20; 52:7; II Chr. 32:1). It refers to that which is beyond human ability ("which you do not know"), therefore, God's revelation (cf. Isa. 48:6) about future acts for His people.

33:4 The buildings inside the walls of Jerusalem (both of the king and the citizens) are torn down to

1. fortify, support
2. fill in the damage done by the Babylonian siege machines (i.e., A-frames with ropes and logs)
3. drop rocks on the siege machines placed against the walls

In v. 5 YHWH will show His wrath on Jerusalem by allowing dead bodies to fill the holes made by the siege machines! The JPSOA and the AB both assert the ambiguity and uncertainty of the end of v. 4 and the beginning of v. 5.

JPSOA's translation, "for [defense] against the siegemounds and against the sword, and were filled by those who went to fight the Chaldeans" (p. 995).

AB simply leaves it blank with two blank parentheses (p. 292).

▣ **“Against the sword”** This is an uncertain Hebrew term (BDB 352, KB 349). The JPSOA indicates that vv. 4c-5a are ambiguous. The Septuagint translates this as “fortifications” (cf. Isa. 22:10).

33:5 “to fill them with corpses” The places where the buildings were torn down became burial places for the soldiers slain and/or the citizens who died from famine and pestilence.

▣ **“and I have hidden My face from this city because of all their wickedness”** Judah’s idolatry and unwillingness to listen to Jeremiah or repent of their wickedness has caused the personal God to turn His face away (i.e., not to be attentive to the prayers of His people). This imagery begins in Deut. 31:17 and is repeated often in the prophets.

1. Isa. 1:15; 8:17; 45:15; 54:8; 59:2
2. Jer. 21:10; 44:11
3. Amos 9:4
4. Micah 3:4

As sin drove Adam, Eve, and Cain from the Garden of Eden, it now drives the descendants of Abraham out of the Promised Land!

33:6-9 The great and mighty things of v. 3 are explained in vv. 6-9. Chapters 30-33 are the most positive messages in all of Jeremiah.

Notice what YHWH will do.

1. bring health (BDB 74) and healing (BDB 951), cf. 8:22; 30:17 (opposite of 8:15; 14:19)
2. bring peace (BDB 1027, possibly “prosperity”)
3. bring truth (BDB 54, possibly “security”)
4. restore the fortunes of both Judah and Israel (some LXX MSS change “Israel” to “Jerusalem,” however, Jeremiah does mention the reunification often, cf. 3:18; 30:3; 31:27; 33:11,14,17; and possibly v. 24)
5. rebuild them both (i.e., completely restore them)
6. cleanse them from all their iniquity (#6 and #7 are part of the promise of the new covenant in 31:31-34)
7. pardon all their iniquities (the first seven above are all PERFECTS)
8. the restored covenant people will resume their place as a light to the nations (v. 9; 3:17,19; 4:2; 16:19)

33:8 This is a tremendous affirmation of God cleansing His people. It seems to reflect the new covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-33). All three Hebrew words for sin are found in this verse (as they are in Psalm 51).

1. iniquity – BDB 730, KB 800
2. sin – BDB 306, KB 305 (twice), *Qal* PERFECTS
3. transgress – BDB 833, KB 981, *Qal* PERFECT, also translated “rebel”

They all refer to some deviation from the standard of judgment which is God Himself, as revealed in the covenant. However, God affirms that He will cleanse (BDB 372, KB 369, *Piel* PERFECT) and pardon (BDB 699, KB 757, *Qal* PERFECT). “Pardon” is a term which is always used for God’s forgiveness.

33:9 It must be stated with emphasis that God chose Israel to choose the whole world (see Special Topic at 1:5). However, the light that was being given to the world was not the wonderful, merciful character of God (cf. Lev. 26:2-13; Deut. 28:1-6; 30:1-20), that He wanted to reveal (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). Because of Israel’s and Judah’s disobedience the only aspect of YHWH’s character the nations saw was judgment. God wanted to use Israel as a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:5-6, note the phrase’s use in I Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6) to reach

the whole world (cf. 3:17,19; 4:2; 16:19). In my opinion the church has become that evangelistic light (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8), but the same warning (cf. Rom. 11:18-22; James 2:14-26) that was given to Abraham's physical seed is obviously appropriate for Abraham's spiritual seed (cf. Rom. 2:28-29). See Special Topic at 2:19.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:10-11

¹⁰“Thus says the LORD, ‘Yet again there will be heard in this place, of which you say, “It is a waste, without man and without beast,” *that is*, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without man and without inhabitant and without beast, ¹¹the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who say, “Give thanks to the LORD of hosts, For the LORD is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting”; *and of those who bring a thank offering into the house of the LORD. For I will restore the fortunes of the land as they were at first,*’ says the LORD.

33:10-11 What a contrast v. 10 is to v. 11! Verse 10 expresses the tragedy of the destruction and exile of Jerusalem/Judah. The human population and their flocks and herds are all gone! One note I would add is that even though there are no domesticated animals left, there is also no mention of wild animals inhabiting the site. These wild animals often denoted the presence of the demonic (cf. 9:11; 10:22; Isa. 13:22; 34:11-15; Zeph. 2:14).

Verse 11 is a litany of the joys of normal social activities (i.e., weddings, feast days). This joy is possible because YHWH has brought His people back to their land and He dwells with them (i.e., the temple). This theme of joy is recurrent in the prophets (i.e., 31:12; Isa. 12:1-6; 25:9; 35:10; 51:3,11; 65:18; 66:10; Zeph. 2:6-7). A new day is coming because a new covenant is coming. That new covenant is Jesus Christ and salvation by grace through faith (cf. Eph. 2:8-10), which issues in Christlikeness (cf. v. 15).

The voice of joy (a command of thanks, BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) is also found in Ps. 106:1; 107:1; 118:1; 136:1. So it must have been a well known poem/proverb/ritual affirmation!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:12-13

¹²“Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘There will again be in this place which is waste, without man or beast, and in all its cities, a habitation of shepherds who rest their flocks. ¹³In the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the lowland, in the cities of the Negev, in the land of Benjamin, in the environs of Jerusalem and in the cities of Judah, the flocks will again pass under the hands of the one who numbers them,’ says the LORD.

33:12-13 The strophe further explains vv. 10-11.

33:13 “will again pass under the hands of the one who numbers them” This refers to the daily actions a shepherd (cf. Lev. 27:32; this imagery is the background of John 10:1-18).

1. making sure that all of the sheep were in the pen at night
2. a way of counting the sheep for tithing purposes
3. the Aramaic Targums specifically attribute this action to the Messiah

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:14-18

¹⁴“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, ‘when I will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth. ¹⁶In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety; and this is *the name* by which she will be called: the LORD is our righteousness.’ ¹⁷For thus says the LORD, ‘David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; ¹⁸and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings and to prepare sacrifices continually.’”

33:14-16 This passage is absent in the LXX. Some scholars postulate that the reason it is omitted in chapter 33 is because it seems to be a development and repetition of the same truth found in Jer. 23:5-6 (this is a characteristic of the LXX; see notes at 23:5-6). However, this is a tremendous Messianic passage which promises a future fulfillment, not only of the exiled seed of Abraham to the Promised Land, but also of the restoration of the Davidic seed and the restored temple.

R. K. Harrison is one of my favorite authors. In his commentary (Tyndale OT series) on Jeremiah he gives a list of all the descriptive titles and phrases Jeremiah uses of the coming Davidic seed/Messiah (p. 144).

1. the Fountain of living waters, 2:13; 17:13
2. the good Shepherd, 23:4; 31:10 (3:15 PLURAL)
3. the righteous Branch, 3:15; 23:5
4. the Redeemer, 50:34
5. the Lord our righteousness, 23:6; 33:16
6. David the king, 30:9
7. agent of the new covenant, 31:31-34

33:15 “In those days and at that time” This refers to a future period. It and similar phrases are used often in chapters 30-33.

1. 30:3,24
2. 31:27,29,31,33,38
3. 32:14
4. 33:14,15,16

The exact time element is not stated but since it is the “new covenant period,” Christian scholars believe it refers to the New Testament and Jesus, while Jewish scholars believe it refers to the post-exilic period (i.e., Zerubbabel and Joshua). If it is post-exilic then even though it is not stated in the “if. . .then” format, it is a conditional covenant (i.e., future Seleucid and Roman defeats). Here, one’s meta-narrative structures the text to fit a particular worldview. My biases are spelled out in the Special Topic: Bob’s Evangelical Biases at 1:5.

▣ **“I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth”** This is the same Messianic metaphor used in 23:5-6 and 30:9. It was a favorite metaphor of

1. Isaiah, cf. 4:2; 7:5; 45:24-25; also note 11:1-5
2. Zechariah, cf. 3:8; 6:12,13

33:16 “the LORD is our righteousness” This title of the Messiah (cf. 23:6) is transferred to the repentant and obedient people of God (cf. 31:31-34). The goal of God is a people who reflect His character to a lost and needy world!

For Hebrew people a change of name marked a significant event in the life of a person (cf. Gen. 32:28). A significant, permanent change has occurred to the nation personified in this title (also note the title in 21:23 for Jerusalem).

33:17 “For thus says the LORD, ‘David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel’” This goes back to the prophecy of II Sam. 7:11-16; 23:5 (cf. Ps. 89:30-37). However, we learn from history that Jerusalem did fall, the temple was destroyed and the Davidic seed was carried into captivity in Babylon. This section certainly reflects the Messiah (i.e., Jesus, the line of David, Matthew 1; Luke 2), but some see it as referring to Zerubbabel as the Davidic branch (i.e., Prince, possibly Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel are the same person or relatives, cf. Ezra 1:8; 5:14) who returned after the exile (cf. Zech. 4:6-10; 6:12).

33:18 “the Levitical priests shall never lack a man before Me” There has been much discussion about this promise of a renewed Levitical priesthood. Some say it means that there will be sacrifices in the end-time period. However, my understanding of Jesus as fulfilling both the roles of king and priest (cf. Heb. 1:2-3) probably makes this a spiritual promise instead of one to be literally fulfilled. There are several places in the OT where the Messiah has both a priestly and royal aspect (cf. Ps. 110:1-3 [royal], then 4 [priestly]; also Zerubbabel [royal] and Joshua [priestly], cf. Zechariah 4, esp. v. 14; 6:9-15).

Remember that Melchizedek, in Gen. 14:17-24, was the priest/king of Salem. The NT book of Hebrews, particularly chapters 5-7, asserts that the Messiah’s twin roles (priest/king) is foreshadowed in him. This same priest/king combination is revealed in Psalm 110 and Zechariah 3 and 4. The Dead Sea Scroll community expected two Messiahs, one from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:8-12) and one from the tribe of Levi.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:19-22

¹⁹The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, ²⁰“Thus says the LORD, ‘If you can break My covenant for the day and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time, ²¹then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant so that he will not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levitical priests, My ministers. ²²As the host of heaven cannot be counted and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.’”

33:19-22 This strophe claims that the new covenant is going to be permanent because the order and cycles of nature are permanent (cf. 31:35-37). Western science was developed on this premise of the regularity of God’s creation (cf. v. 25; Gen. 8:22; Ps. 74:16-17; 89:36-37).

33:22 “counted. . .measured” These are both *Niphal* IMPERFECTS. They are the same metaphors (i.e., stars and sand) used in the promises to the Patriarchs about the number of descendants to

1. Abraham – Gen. 13:16; 15:5; 22:17
2. Isaac – Gen. 26:4
3. Jacob – Gen. 28:14; 32:12
4. all of them – Exod. 32:13

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:23-26

²³And the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, ²⁴“Have you not observed what this people have spoken, saying, ‘The two families which the LORD chose, He has rejected them’? Thus they

despise My people, no longer are they as a nation in their sight. ²⁵Thus says the LORD, ‘If My covenant *for day and night stand not, and the fixed patterns of heaven and earth I have not established,* ²⁶then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, not taking from his descendants rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them.’”

33:23-26 This strophe expresses the same truth as vv. 19-22.

Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (p. 216), calls this strophe a “disputation speech” (cf. Isa. 28:14-19; Ezek. 18:1-20) where the prophet uses the opponents’ own words to show their sin and rebellion. Each of their statements is answered by the prophet and a future setting/outcome is revealed.

33:24 “this people. . . My people” The first use of “people” refers to unrepentant Jews who are about to be destroyed and the second uses refers to the repentant remnant (see Special Topic at 5:10-13) which will one day return.

▣ **“the two families”** This may refer to

1. Abraham – Gen. 13:16; 15:5; 22:17
2. Isaac – Gen. 26:4
3. the tribes of Judah (royal) and Levi (priestly), cf. vv. 7,14
4. Jacob and David – cf. v. 26
5. David and Levi – cf. v. 21

33:26 “I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them” The term “mercy” is a family term (BDB 933, cf. Ps. 103:13; Isa. 49:15). What a great affirmation that God will not leave His people totally defenseless. But, notice the conditional element that they must repent and that the time of judgment was necessary to pull them away from the idolatry and ritualism to which they had fallen.

▣ **“restore”** The MT has “restore” (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERFECT) but the Masoretic scholars suggested instead “bring back” (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, cf. NKJV, NJB); both concepts are found together in 29:14.

The concept of “restore” is mentioned in 29:14; 30:3,18; 31:23; 32:44; 33:7,11. It refers to the covenant blessings given to the Patriarchs. The concept of “bring back” is included in this larger agenda.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTERS 30-33

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. How are Jeremiah 30-33 related?
2. Why is Jeremiah's symbolic act of buying a field so significant?
3. How has archaeology confirmed the historicity of Jeremiah 32?
4. Why is the close of Jer. 32:8 so spiritually significant?
5. How are the gods *Ba'al* and *Molech* related?
6. How do we explain Jer. 32:39 in light of Ezek. 18:31?
7. List and define the three Hebrew words for sin found in Jer. 33:8
8. Why is Jer. 33:14-18 so significant and how does it impact our understanding of the end-time?

JEREMIAH 34

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Prophecy Against Zedekiah	Zedekiah Warned by God	Warning to Zedekiah	A Message to Zedekiah	The Fate of Zedekiah
34:1-5	34:1-5	34:1-5	34:1-5	34:1-5
34:6-7	34:6-7	34:6-7	34:6-7	34:6-7
	Treacherous Treatment of Slaves	Manumission of Slaves and Perfidy of the Jerusalemites	Deceitful Treatment of Slaves	The Episode of the Liberated Slaves
34:8-11	34:8-11	34:8-22	34:8-11	34:8-16
34:12-16	34:12-16		34:12-22	
34:17-22	34:17-22			34:17-22

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:1-5

¹The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army, with all the kingdoms of the earth that were under his dominion and all the peoples, were fighting against Jerusalem and against all its cities, saying, ²“Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘Go and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah and say to him: “Thus says the LORD, ‘Behold, I am giving this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will burn it with fire. ³You will not escape from his

hand, for you will surely be captured and delivered into his hand; and you will see the king of Babylon eye to eye, and he will speak with you face to face, and you will go to Babylon.”⁴ Yet hear the word of the LORD, O Zedekiah king of Judah! Thus says the LORD concerning you, ‘You will not die by the sword. ⁵You will die in peace; and as *spices* were burned for your fathers, the former kings who were before you, so they will burn *spices* for you; and they will lament for you, “Alas, lord!”’ For I have spoken the word,” declares the LORD.

34:1

NASB, NKJV,

TEV, NJB “Nebuchadnezzar”

NRSV, JPSOA,

REB “Nebuchadrezzar”

#1 with an “n” in 27:6,8,20; 28:3,11,14; 29:1,3 (most common spelling outside Jeremiah)

#2 with an “r” in 21:2,7; 22:25; 24:1; 25:1,9; 25:21; 32:1,28; 34:1; 35:11; 37:1; 39:1,5,11; 43:10; 44:30 and several more (but only in Jeremiah and 4 times in Ezekiel)

The MT follows option #2. In Jeremiah the word is spelled both ways.

It is difficult to transcribe ancient names from one language to another, but it is surprising that two different spellings occur in one author. This may be a textual hint of a later editor/compiler.

▣ **“all his army with all the kingdoms of the earth”** The military force was made up of (1) Babylonians; (2) mercenaries; and (3) vassal people (cf. II Kgs. 24:1-2). This descriptive phrase links up with Jer. 1:15.

34:2 **“Go and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah”** This chapter refers to two different messages related to Zedekiah, the last king of Judah.

1. his personal fate and the fate of Jerusalem
2. the fate of his leaders who broke their covenant with YHWH and their servants

▣ **“hand”** A Hebrew idiom of “power” (cf. vv. 3,21; 21:7). See Special Topic at 1:9.

▣ **“he will burn it with fire”** This was a

1. means of total destruction (i.e., uninhabited, cf. Isa. 34:11-15; Zeph. 2:13-15)
2. symbol of the judgment of God (see Special Topic at 4:4)

34:3 **“you will not escape”** The “you” is emphatic! There are three accounts of Zedekiah’s capture in the OT (cf. 39:4-7; 52:7-11; II Kgs. 25:4-7). It was God’s will that Babylon succeed (cf. Ezek. 17:11-21). Only capitulation could have saved the city from destruction.

▣ **“you will surely be captured”** This is an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and an IMPERFECT VERB from the same root (BDB 1074, KB 1779), used for emphasis.

▣ **“face to face”** Zedekiah was brought before Nebuchadnezzar. They had a personal (lit. “mouth to mouth,” BDB 804), “eye to eye” (BDB 744) encounter (cf. 32:4).

34:4-5 Zedekiah will experience

1. the death of his sons
2. the death of all the princes (the royal family or leaders in general)
3. being blinded

4. exiled in chains
5. put in prison in Babylon until his death

However, at this death in Babylon (cf. 52:11) he was honored as a royal Judean king.

34:4 This chapter is characterized by VERBS being doubled.

1. captured, v. 3
2. die, v. 4
3. speak, vv. 5-6
4. turn, v. 11
5. proclaim, v. 17
6. give, vv. 17-18
7. pass over, vv. 18-19

“Says” is often found side by side (cf. vv. 1-2,2,12-13), but these other VERBS being doubled form a characteristic of Jeremiah’s writing style.

34:5 “burn spices for you” Literally this is the VERB “to burn” (BDB 976). Exactly what, why, or how is not specified. It may be a reference to (1) large amounts of spices burnt in honor of the dead king as a symbol of prayers on his behalf (cf. II Chr. 16:14; 21:19). The people did it not so much for him personally but for the memory of their homeland’s once-proud heritage. This was just opposite of Jehoiakim’s funeral (cf. 22:18-19). (2) This is a conditional promise (though the “if. . .then” is not stated) message which did not come to pass because Zedekiah would not heed YHWH’s words from Jeremiah.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:6-7

⁶Then Jeremiah the prophet spoke all these words to Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem ⁷when the army of the king of Babylon was fighting against Jerusalem and against all the remaining cities of Judah, *that is*, Lachish and Azekah, for they *alone* remained as fortified cities among the cities of Judah.

34:7 “Lachish” Archaeologists have found letters (i.e., the Lachish Letters on 21 ostraca) from this siege period. The city was larger than Jerusalem during this time. It is about 23 miles southwest of Jerusalem.

▣ **“Azekah”** This city was about eleven miles southwest of Jerusalem. This verse implies that all other cities of Judah had already been destroyed.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:8-11

⁸The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD after King Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people who were in Jerusalem to proclaim release to them: ⁹that each man should set free his male servant and each man his female servant, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman; so that no one should keep them, a Jew his brother, in bondage. ¹⁰And all the officials and all the people obeyed who had entered into the covenant that each man should set free his male servant and each man his female servant, so that no one should keep them any longer in bondage; they obeyed, and set *them free*. ¹¹But afterward they turned around and took back the male servants and the female servants whom they had set free, and brought them into subjection for male servants and for female servants.

34:8-11 This paragraph describes one example of the evil and disrespect for YHWH that existed among the leadership of Jerusalem. They made a public commitment to YHWH and His law (i.e., setting slaves/

servants free, cf. v. 14; Exod. 21:1-11; Lev. 25:39-55; Deut. 15:12-18), but when the circumstances seemed to change they reversed their actions.

34:8 “covenant” This word (BDB 136, cf. vv. 13,15,18; 31:32) is not a Hebrew word. Its etymology is uncertain, possibly

1. “to cut,” cf. vv. 18-19
2. “to bind” from Akkadian; see Special Topic at 3:7
3. “to establish a covenant with an oath” from Akkadian
4. “to eat a meal together,” which sealed the covenant (BDB 136 I, הרב, I Kgs. 8:25)

34:9 “Hebrew” This word (BDB 720 I, cf. Gen. 14:13; 39:14,27) is not used much (i.e., 34 times in all the OT). It reflects the nomadic background of the Jews (BDB 397 I, an ADJECTIVE formed from the NOUN Judah, cf. 32:12; 38:19; 40:11,12; 41:3,19; 44:1; 52:28,30) and is often associated with servitude more than racial lineage.

34:10-11 Jeremiah’s poetry often used words that sound alike. Notice

1. hear, v. 10 – שמע (twice)
2. send away, vv. 10,11 – שלח (twice)
3. turn, v. 11 – שוב (twice)

If you go back to v. 9, there are eight words from vv. 9-11 that begin with ש.

34:11 “afterward they turned around and took back the servants” Jeremiah 37:7-10,11 and 34:21-22 tell us that the Egyptian army was the cause of the siege being broken off briefly.

The Mosaic law allowed a Hebrew to sell himself or herself for a set period of time, six years. They were to be released at the end of one year of rest following the six of labor (cf. Exod. 23:10-11; 21:2-11; Lev. 25:39-46; Deut. 15:1,12-18). The rich people of the city vowed this act to impress God but when the siege was lifted they reneged!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:12-16

¹²Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, ¹³“Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘I made a covenant with your forefathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, saying, ¹⁴“At the end of seven years each of you shall set free his Hebrew brother who has been sold to you and has served you six years, you shall send him out free from you; but your forefathers did not obey Me or incline their ear to Me. ¹⁵Although recently you *had* turned and done what is right in My sight, each man proclaiming release to his neighbor, and you had made a covenant before Me in the house which is called by My name. ¹⁶Yet you turned and profaned My name, and each man took back his male servant and each man his female servant whom you had set free according to their desire, and you brought them into subjection to be your male servants and female servants.””

34:14 “end of seven years” The LXX has “six years.” The meaning is “at the beginning of the seventh year.” This reflects the ancient law (cf. Exod. 21:2-11; Lev. 25:39-46; Deut. 15:1,12-18).

☐ **“did not obey Me or incline their ear to Me”** This same reluctance to hear and obey is seen in 7:24-26; 17:23; 19:15. It was not an issue of ignorance of God’s will but willful, recurrent disobedience.

1. “obey” – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* PERFECT, lit. “hear” (*Shema*, cf. Deut. 6:4)
2. “incline” – BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* PERFECT, cf. Josh. 24:23; Ps. 119:36

34:15 “in the house which is called by My name” This Deuteronomic language refers to the temple, which will eventually be in Jerusalem (cf. 7:10-11,14,30; 32:34).

The concept of the temple as “house” is the word play of II Sam. 7:2,13,16.

34:16 “profaned My name” This root (BDB 320 III, KB 319, *Piel* IMPERFECT) means “to pollute,” “to defile,” or “to profane” (cf. Lev. 18:21; 19:12; 20:3; 21:6; 22:2,32; Ezek. 20:39; 36:20-23; Amos 2:7; Mal. 1:12; 2:10).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:17-22

¹⁷“Therefore thus says the LORD, ‘You have not obeyed Me in proclaiming release each man to his brother and each man to his neighbor. Behold, I am proclaiming a release to you,’ declares the LORD, ‘to the sword, to the pestilence and to the famine; and I will make you a terror to all the kingdoms of the earth. ¹⁸I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not fulfilled the words of the covenant which they made before Me, *when* they cut the calf in two and passed between its parts—¹⁹the officials of Judah and the officials of Jerusalem, the court officers and the priests and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf—²⁰I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their life. And their dead bodies will be food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth. ²¹Zedekiah king of Judah and his officials I will give into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their life, and into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon which has gone away from you. ²²Behold, I am going to command,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will bring them back to this city; and they will fight against it and take it and burn it with fire; and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without inhabitant.’”

34:17 The leaders of Jerusalem swore in God’s name to “free” their Hebrew slaves but they did not. Now YHWH will “free” (lit. “liberty,” BDB 204 I) the sword (BDB 352), pestilence (BDB 184), and famine (BDB 944) on them (see note at 14:12).

▣ **“and I will make you a terror to all the kingdoms of the earth”** This same phrase is used in 29:18 and Deut. 28:25. God’s covenant people were meant to be a light to the nations but they had become a proverb of disaster! This was an exact reversal of God’s purposes (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38)!

34:19 “who passed between the parts of the calf” This was an ancient method of ratifying a covenant (cf. Gen. 15:9-10,17). See Special Topic at 3:7.

34:20 An improper burial was a horror to ancient Jewish people (cf. 19:7; I Sam. 17:44,46; I Kgs. 14:11; 16:4). It functioned as a threat and curse.

34:22 “I will bring them back to this city” As Nebuchadnezzar was besieging Jerusalem in 588 B.C., the Egyptian army appeared in Judah. The Babylonians withdrew their siege of Jerusalem for a brief period to meet the new threat (cf. Jeremiah 37), but there was no battle and the siege of Jerusalem was quickly reestablished.

Notice it is YHWH (lit. “I am going to command” – BDB 845, KB 1010, *Piel* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) who directs the Babylonian military (cf. II Kgs. 24:3). Remember the concept of monotheism (see Special Topic at 1:5) is often communicated by the absence of secondary causes! YHWH is in control of individual, national, and international (as well as physical) events!

JEREMIAH 35

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS (The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Rechabites' Obedience	The Obedient Rechabites	The Symbol of the Rechabites	Jeremiah and the Rechabites	The Example of the Rechabites
35:1-11	35:1-11	35:1-11	35:1-5	35:1-5
Judah Rebuked			35:6-11	35:6-11
35:12-17	35:12-17	35:12-17	35:12-17	35:12-17
35:18-19	35:18-19	35:18-19	35:18-19	35:18-19

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This chapter is built around the faithfulness of the Rechabites to not drink wine.
 1. VERB – “give to drink” – BDB 1052, KB 1639, *Hiphil* PERFECT, v. 2
 2. VERB – “drink” – BDB 1059, KB 1667, vv. 5,6 (twice), 8,14 (twice)

In contrast to the people of Judah who were not obedient to what they had heard. This chapter is not about total abstinence (see Special Topic at 23:9). This chapter is about faithfulness to a message. Be careful not to read your modern issues (total abstinence from the American temperance movement) into these ancient texts, where wine drinking was the societal norm.
- B. The VERB “hear” (BDB 1033, KB 1570) is used many times in this chapter (vv. 8,10,13,14 [twice],15,16,17,17). The Rechabites “hear” but Judah does not!

- C. There is a sound play on words with ש (cf. 25:3-5; 29:19-20; 34:9-11).
1. v. 14 – drink, שתה (twice)
– hear, שמע (twice)
 2. v. 15 – send, שלח
– rise early, שכח
– send, שלח

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 35:1-11

¹The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying, ²“Go to the house of the Rechabites and speak to them, and bring them into the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink.” ³Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, son of Habazziniah, and his brothers and all his sons and the whole house of the Rechabites, ⁴and I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan the son of Igdaliah, the man of God, which was near the chamber of the officials, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the doorkeeper. ⁵Then I set before the men of the house of the Rechabites pitchers full of wine and cups; and I said to them, “Drink wine!” ⁶But they said, “We will not drink wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, ‘You shall not drink wine, you or your sons, forever. ⁷You shall not build a house, and you shall not sow seed and you shall not plant a vineyard or own one; but in tents you shall dwell all your days, that you may live many days in the land where you sojourn.’ ⁸We have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he commanded us, not to drink wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons or our daughters, ⁹nor to build ourselves houses to dwell in; and we do not have vineyard or field or seed. ¹⁰We have only dwelt in tents, and have obeyed and have done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. ¹¹But when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against the land, we said, ‘Come and let us go to Jerusalem before the army of the Chaldeans and before the army of the Arameans.’ So we have dwelt in Jerusalem.”

35:1 “Jehoiakim” When one compares 34:2 it is easy to see how the book of Jeremiah is out of chronological order (chapters 35-36 precede 32-34). Someone compiled and edited his work, probably Baruch (cf. 32:12,13,16; 36:4,5,8,10,13,14,15,16; 43:3,6; 45:1,2).

35:2 “the house of” This idiom means “the family of.”

▣ **“Rechabites”** We do not know much about them (cf. I Chr. 2:55; Jdgs. 1:16). They seem to be a nomadic Arab tribe related to Midionites or Kenites, the in-laws of Moses’ first wife. Moses’ father-in-law goes by four names—Jethro, Jether, Revel, Hobab (cf. Exod. 2:18; 3:1; 4:18; Num. 10:29; Jdgs. 4:11 and two titles—the Kenite, Jdgs. 1:16 and “priest of Midian,” Exod. 3:1; 18:1).

It is obvious that YHWH is commanding the testing of the family traditions of this family group. The test is intensified by

1. bring them to the temple
2. take into a private chamber
3. tempt them with an abundance of wine to drink (IMPERATIVE in v. 5)

35:4 “the man of God” This phrase is used of Moses (cf. Deut. 33:1; Josh. 14:6) and prophets (cf. I Kgs. 12:22; 17:18,24; 20:28) but here it is used of one of their godly ancestors (i.e., Hanan).

▣ **“the door keeper”** This phrase (BDB 1036 CONSTRUCT 706 II) denoted a very important position in the temple (cf. 52:24; II Kgs. 12:9; 25:18).

35:5 “pitchers” This Egyptian loan word (BDB 149, cf. Gen. 44:2,12) refers to very large bowls.

35:6 “Jonadab” This man is mentioned in II Kgs. 10:15-27).

35:6-7 There is a series (*Qal* IMPERFECTS) of things the original father of the family commanded his descendants not to do (i.e., stay nomadic).

1. do not drink wine, v. 6c
2. do not build a house, v. 7
3. do not sow seed
4. do not plant a vineyard
5. do not own a vineyard
6. live in tents

35:7 “that you may live many days in the land” This phrase is similar to the phrase in Deuteronomy about honoring parents (cf. Deut. 5:16,33; 4:40; 11:9).

35:11 Like so many of the people of the land, this family fled into the walled city of Jerusalem for protection.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 35:12-17

¹²Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, ¹³“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Go and say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, “Will you not receive instruction by listening to My words?” declares the LORD. ¹⁴“The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, which he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are observed. So they do not drink *wine* to this day, for they have obeyed their father’s command. But I have spoken to you again and again; yet you have not listened to Me. ¹⁵Also I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, sending *them* again and again, saying: ‘Turn now every man from his evil way and amend your deeds, and do not go after other gods to worship them. Then you will dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your forefathers; but you have not inclined your ear or listened to Me. ¹⁶Indeed, the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have observed the command of their father which he commanded them, but this people has not listened to Me.’” ¹⁷Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Behold, I am bringing on Judah and on all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the disaster that I have pronounced against them; because I spoke to them but they did not listen, and I have called them but they did not answer.’”

35:13 This is the key verse as to the theological point of the chapter (cf. vv. 16-17). This family obeyed their father but Judah did not obey their Father (i.e., God).

35:14 God sent His spokesperson again and again, but Judah would not hear and obey! See note below.

35:15 “I have sent to you all My servants the prophets, sending *them* again and again” This is a recurrent theme of Jeremiah (cf. 7:13,25; 11:7; 25:3-4; 26:5; 29:19; 32:33; 35:14-15; 44:4).

The Recabites heard and responded to one message by an ancient ancestor, but Judah rejected again and again the message of their God!

▣ A sample of the message is recorded in v. 15.

1. (an implied “if”) turn – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 18:11
2. amend – BDB 405, KB 408, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. 7:3; 18:11
3. do not go (walk) after other gods – BDB 229, KB 240, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. 7:6
4. then you shall dwell in the land – BDB 442, KB 444, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

The conditional element of the message has been violated as the last line of v. 15 shows (cf. 7:24)!

35:17 Notice the threefold emphasis on the One who is speaking the message.

1. the LORD (YHWH)
2. the God of hosts (usually YHWH of hosts, cf. v. 18)
3. the God of Israel (usually *Elohim* of Israel, cf. v. 18)

He “spoke” and “called,” but Judah would not “listen” or “respond” (cf. 7:13,26,27; 26:5).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 35:18-19

¹⁸Then Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Because you have obeyed the command of Jonadab your father, kept all his commands and done according to all that he commanded you; ¹⁹therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me always.””

35:19 YHWH’s promise is not that this family group will be a priest in the temple, but that they will continue to be a family through time (including this crisis).

JEREMIAH 36

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jeremiah's Scroll Read in the Temple	The Scroll Read in the Temple	Jehoiakim Burns a Scroll of Jeremiah	Baruch Reads the Scroll in the Temple	The Scroll Written in 605-604 B.C.
36:1-3	36:1-3	36:1-3	36:1-3	36:1-4
36:4-8	36:4-8	36:4-8	36:4-8	36:5-8
36:9-10	36:9-10	36:9-10	36:9-10	36:9-10
	The Scroll Read in the Palace		The Scroll is Read to the Officials	
36:11-19	36:11-19	36:11-19	36:11-17 36:18-19	36:11-20
The Scroll Is Burned	The King Destroys Jeremiah's Scroll		The King Burns the Scroll	
26:20-26	36:20-26	36:20-26	36:20-26	36:21-26
The Scroll Is Replaced	Jeremiah Rewrites the Scroll	Jeremiah Dictates Another	Jeremiah Writes Another Scroll	
36:27-31	36:27-31	36:27-31	36:27-31	36:27-31
36:32	36:32	36:32	36:32	36:32

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:1-3

¹In the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, ²“Take a scroll and write on it all the words which I have spoken to you concerning Israel and concerning Judah, and concerning all the nations, from the day I *first* spoke to you, from the days of Josiah, even to this day. ³Perhaps the house of Judah will hear all the calamity which I plan to bring on them, in order that every man will turn from his evil way; then I will forgive their iniquity and their sin.”

36:1 “In the fourth year of Jehoiakim” This is the same introductory phrase used in chapters 25, 45, and 46. The year is 605 B.C. This was the year of the Battle of Carchemish in which the Babylonians defeated the Egyptian and the remnants of the Assyrian armies. Daniel had been in exile for one year (cf. Dan. 1:1). This Judean king was a son of the godly King Josiah. He grew up under godly teachers but his heart turned away from God. Ezekiel 18 uses him and his father or Hezekiah and Manasseh as types.

36:2 Jeremiah’s message was not his own! YHWH wanted His message delivered to that generation in writing so it could be a witness to us also (cf. Rom. 4:23-24; 15:4; I Cor. 10:6,11; I Pet. 1:10-12). He spoke to a particular culture, at a particular time, but the basic message has relevance for all believers for all times! The best book I have read that discusses this issue is Gordon Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*. I commend it to you.

▣ **“concerning Israel and concerning Judah, and concerning all the nations”** YHWH is not a God of the Israelites only (see Special Topic at 1:5) but a God of all the world (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5; Ps. 22:27; 66:1-4; 86:8-10; Isa. 2:2-4; 12:4-5; 25:6-9; 42:6-12; 45:22-23; 49:5-6; 51:4-5; 56:6-8; 60:1-3; 66:23; Jonah; Micah 4:1-4; Mal. 1:11; John 3:16; 4:42; I Tim. 2:4; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:1; 4:14)!

36:3 “all the calamity which I plan to bring on them” This is a difficult phrase to understand. Does this mean that every physical tragedy is from the hand of God? I think not! But sometimes it is or at least He allows the consequences of a fallen world to manifest in the lives of nations and individuals. If this occurred every time we sinned, we would all live in constant crises. Here is a problem.

1. God does use problems (physical, emotional, relational, spiritual) to cause us to recognize His presence and purpose for our lives. There are consequences for disobedience (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-28,30).
2. Everything that happens to us in our lives is not the hand of God but the consequences of living in a fallen world.
3. I never know if what happens to me is a result of #1 or #2, so I choose to use the circumstances (good or bad) to seek God and His will and pleasure for my life. He is with us and for us (my worldview). I filter everything through this truth.
4. In the OT all causality is attributed to God to affirm monotheism (see Special Topic at 1:5). The OT does not recognize or designate “secondary causes”!

▣ **“every man will turn from his evil ways”** This is a continuing emphasis of individual responsibility (i.e., a conditional covenant, cf. 31:31-34; Ezek. 18:2-4). Notice how YHWH desires that all Judah repent, one person at a time.

▣ **“I will forgive their iniquity and their sins”** This is the continuing promise of the graciousness of God, that if humans (i.e., Judah) will turn to Him in repentance and faith (cf. 7:5-7; 26:3; Ps. 103:6-14; Isa. 1:16-

19; Mark 1:15), He will turn to them (cf. Zech. 1:3; Mal. 3:7). Note the implied “if. . .then” conditional covenant.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:4-8

⁴Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah, and Baruch wrote on a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD which He had spoken to him. ⁵Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, “I am restricted; I cannot go into the house of the LORD. ⁶So you go and read from the scroll which you have written at my dictation the words of the LORD to the people in the LORD’S house on a fast day. And also you shall read them to all *the people of Judah* who come from their cities. ⁷Perhaps their supplication will come before the LORD, and everyone will turn from his evil way, for great is the anger and the wrath that the LORD has pronounced against this people.” ⁸Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading from the book the words of the LORD in the LORD’S house.

36:4 “Baruch” This man functions as Jeremiah’s scribe. He was of an important family in Jerusalem (i.e., his brother, Seraiah, was a high official, cf. 51:59). It is uncertain how much he contributed to the book (i.e., helped grammatically, lexically, structurally), but v. 17 implies he simply wrote down what Jeremiah said to him.

▣ **“on a scroll”** This scroll would have been written on (1) long pieces of leather with the writing in small columns or (2) papyrus pages glued together. The leather scroll of Isaiah, found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, is 29 feet long.

This phrase (BDB 166 CONSTRUCT 706) is found only here and in Ps. 40:7; Ezek. 2:9.

36:5 “I am restricted” The root term is “debarred” (BDB 783, KB 870). It means (1) he had been put under house arrest (cf. 32:2; 33:1) and barred from the Temple area or (2) he had become ceremonially unclean and, therefore, could not enter the Temple area.

36:7 Notice the interplay between the corporate (“everyone”) and individual (“his”). I often wonder if God holds me responsible, not only my own sins but also the sins of my culture/society. Often in the OT God’s leaders prayed for their sins and their people’s sins! Somehow these are related. The same theological question could be asked about Adam/Eve’s sin. Am I responsible for Adam’s sin or my own? Yes!

▣ **“for great is the anger and the wrath”** This is anthropomorphic language. See Special Topic at 1:9.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:9-10

⁹Now in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, in the ninth month, all the people in Jerusalem and all the people who came from the cities of Judah to Jerusalem proclaimed a fast before the LORD. ¹⁰Then Baruch read from the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the upper court, at the entry of the New Gate of the LORD’S house, to all the people.

36:9 “in the ninth month” This is the first mention in the OT of the Babylonian calendar (NET Bible #11, p. 1398). In this same month, Ashkelon, a major Judean city forty-five miles from Jerusalem, fell to Babylon. This may be the reason for this fast (i.e., not “the Day of Atonement,” Leviticus 16 or the fall of Jerusalem in 605 to Babylon).

36:10 “Shaphan, the scribe” This was an official in Josiah’s court. He was comparable to modern America’s Secretary of State (cf. II Kgs. 22:3).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:11-19

¹¹Now when Micaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, had heard all the words of the LORD from the book, ¹²he went down to the king’s house, into the scribe’s chamber. And behold, all the officials were sitting there—Elishama the scribe, and Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, and Elnathan the son of Achbor, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the other officials. ¹³Micaiah declared to them all the words that he had heard when Baruch read from the book to the people. ¹⁴Then all the officials sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, to Baruch, saying, “Take in your hand the scroll from which you have read to the people and come.” So Baruch the son of Neriah took the scroll in his hand and went to them. ¹⁵They said to him, “Sit down, please, and read it to us.” So Baruch read it to them. ¹⁶When they had heard all the words, they turned in fear one to another and said to Baruch, “We will surely report all these words to the king.” ¹⁷And they asked Baruch, saying, “Tell us, please, how did you write all these words? *Was it at his dictation?*” ¹⁸Then Baruch said to them, “He dictated all these words to me, and I wrote them with ink on the book.” ¹⁹Then the officials said to Baruch, “Go, hide yourself, you and Jeremiah, and do not let anyone know where you are.”

36:12 “all the officials were sitting there” This was an official meeting of the leaders of both the Temple and the royal court (cf. 26:20-23).

36:14 “Jehudi” His name means “man of Judah” (BDB 397 II). His lineage is listed to the third generation because

1. he was a man of some renown
2. he was of the royal line (cf. Zeph. 1:1)
3. he had an ancestor name Cush (i.e., “black” or from Cush, cf. Gen. 10:6-8)

36:15 “Sit down, please, and read it to us” Apparently these leaders were very cordial to both Baruch and to Jeremiah. This shows that at some level the leadership recognized the truthfulness of Jeremiah’s prophecy.

The LXX and Aramaic Targums change the vowels to read “read it again.” They had heard it before but wanted to hear the message of doom again (cf. vv. 10-11). They were hoping and praying for royal repentance (cf. vv. 24-25).

36:16 Notice the reaction of these leaders to Jeremiah’s message — “they turned in fear (BDB 808, KB 922, *Qal* PERFECT) one to another.”

▣ **“We will surely report all these words to the king”** The INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB of the same root (BDB 616, KB 665) are used to denote the urgency and intensity of their feelings about Jeremiah’s prophecy.

36:17-18 Apparently these leaders wanted to know how Baruch received this message. Baruch assures them that these are exactly the words Jeremiah spoke to him with the implication that these are the very words YHWH spoke to Jeremiah. See Special Topic at 23:21-22.

36:19 “Go, hide yourself, you and Jeremiah, and do not let anyone know where you are” “Go” (BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) and “hide” (BDB 711, KB 771, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE) are their strong suggestions because they feared the King’s reaction (i.e., v. 26; 26:23) and wanted to protect Jeremiah and Baruch.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:20-26

²⁰So they went to the king in the court, but they had deposited the scroll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and they reported all the words to the king. ²¹Then the king sent Jehudi to get the scroll, and he took it out of the chamber of Elishama the scribe. And Jehudi read it to the king as well as to all the officials who stood beside the king. ²²Now the king was sitting in the winter house in the ninth month, with a fire burning in the brazier before him. ²³When Jehudi had read three or four columns, the king cut it with a scribe’s knife and threw it into the fire that was in the brazier, until all the scroll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier. ²⁴Yet the king and all his servants who heard all these words were not afraid, nor did they rend their garments. ²⁵Even though Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah pleaded with the king not to burn the scroll, he would not listen to them. ²⁶And the king commanded Jerahmeel the king’s son, Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel to seize Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet, but the LORD hid them.

36:22 “winter house” This was not a separate structure but a two story dwelling. In the summer the ancients lived on the second story which had many open windows, and in the winter on the first floor which had few windows.

36:23 “read three or four columns” Remember this was a scroll written in columns on rolled material. As the scroll was unrolled several columns would appear. The king would cut off the columns that had just been read and burn them. Thus, bit by bit the whole scroll was destroyed!

The word translated “columns” is literally “doors” (BDB 195). It is used in this sense only here. The columns of the scroll would be the same dimensions (i.e., rectangular) as a door.

▣ “a scribe’s knife” This was a small penknife used to sharpen quills for writing. This word is found only here (BDB 789 CONSTRUCT 707).

36:24 What a contrast between the leaders’ hearing of the prophecy (cf. v. 16) and the king’s (cf. Ps. 36:1). For the phrase “rend their garments” see Special Topic at 2:37.

36:26 “the king’s son” This was probably not a true son of the king but a title for a member of the royal family or even possibly an official at court (cf. Jer. 38:6; I Kgs. 22:26; II Chr. 28:7).

▣ “but the LORD hid them” This is similar to YHWH’s protection of Elijah from King Ahab in I Kgs. 17:3-7. As Hebrews 11 shows, some prophets are killed and some are spared! Either way, YHWH is in control. Circumstances do not affect the love and presence of YHWH.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:27-31

²⁷Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah after the king had burned the scroll and the words which Baruch had written at the dictation of Jeremiah, saying, ²⁸“Take again another scroll and write on it all the former words that were on the first scroll which Jehoiakim the king of Judah burned. ²⁹And concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah you shall say, ‘Thus says the LORD, “You have burned this scroll, saying, ‘Why have you written on it that the king of Babylon will certainly come

and destroy this land, and will make man and beast to cease from it?”³⁰ Therefore thus says the LORD concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah, “He shall have no one to sit on the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat of the day and the frost of the night.³¹ I will also punish him and his descendants and his servants for their iniquity, and I will bring on them and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the men of Judah all the calamity that I have declared to them—but they did not listen.””

36:29 “the king of Babylon will certainly come” This is the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and the IMPERFECT VERB of the same root (BDB 97, KB 112) used for certainty/emphasis.

▣ **“destroy this land”** The VERB (BDB 1007, KB 1469) form is *Hiphil* PERFECT. The destruction is complete and assured (i.e., a PROPHETIC PERFECT)!

36:30 “He shall have no one to sit on the throne of David” Was this a false prophecy? Jehoiakim was succeeded by his son, Jehoiachin, for three months before he was taken into exile by Nebuchanezzar II.

It has been a lifelong process for me to understand OT prophetic literature. A book that has really helped me is D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*. For this subject chapters 6 and 7 are especially helpful. Modern westerners expect literal, complete fulfillment of every detail, but ancient easterners did not. They recognized the hyperbolic and idiomatic nature of this genre.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:32

³²Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to Baruch the son of Neriah, the scribe, and he wrote on it at the dictation of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire; and many similar words were added to them.

36:32 “and many similar words were added to them” It is almost a good thing that the king burned Jeremiah’s prophecy because his second copy included many more words. It is not certain what part of our current book of Jeremiah was included in this scroll, although many scholars believe the LXX, which puts the judgment of the nations (i.e., chapters 46-51) after chapter 25, is the original form.

Obviously Jeremiah used some notes to help recall YHWH’s messages. Moderns are not certain how or when the OT books were collected and edited. It is a faith presupposition that they are uniquely inspired and preserved at every stage of their development (see Special Topics at 23:21-22)!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Did King Zedekiah heed Jeremiah's warnings?
2. Why are vv. 8-11 so characteristic of the need for judgment?
3. Why was the removal of the Babylonian army so badly misinterpreted by the defenders of Jerusalem (cf. Isa. 33:20)?
4. Does chapter 35 speak to the modern use of alcohol?
5. Why do the Rechabites in chapter 35 want to continue in their nomadic existence?
6. List God's terms for "forgiveness" in 35:15.

JEREMIAH 37

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jeremiah Warns Against Trust in Pharaoh 37:1-5	Zedekiah's Vain Hope 37:1-5	Jeremiah, Zedekiah and the Siege (37:1-38:28) 37:1-2	Zedekiah's Request To Jeremiah 37:1-2	A Verdict On Zedekiah 37:1-2
37:6-10	37:6-10	37:3-5 37:6-10	37:3-5 37:6-10	Zedekiah Consults Jeremiah During the Siege of 588 B.C. 37:3-5 37:6-10
Jeremiah Imprisoned 37:11-16	Jeremiah Imprisoned 37:11-15	37:11-16	Jeremiah Is Arrested and Imprisoned 37:11-13 37:14-16	The Arrest of Jeremiah 37:11-16
37:17-21	37:16-21	37:17-38:6	37:17a 37:17b-20 37:21	Improvement In His Treatment 37:17-21

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:1-5

¹Now Zedekiah the son of Josiah whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had made king in the land of Judah, reigned as king in place of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim. ²But neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land listened to the words of the LORD which He spoke through Jeremiah the prophet. ³Yet King Zedekiah sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah, the priest, to Jeremiah the prophet, saying, “Please pray to the LORD our God on our behalf.” ⁴Now Jeremiah was *still* coming in and going out among the people, for they had not *yet* put him in the prison. ⁵Meanwhile, Pharaoh’s army had set out from Egypt; and when the Chaldeans who had been besieging Jerusalem heard the report about them, they lifted the *siege* from Jerusalem.

37:1 “king of Babylon had made king” Zedekiah was Jehoiachin’s uncle (Mattaniah, cf. II Kgs. 24:17) who was made a vassal king by Nebuchadnezzar. See II Kgs.24:17 for the historical account.

▣ **“Coniah”** This is the contracted name for Jeconiah, whose throne name was Jehoiachin (cf. 22:24,28; 24:1; 52:31; II Kgs. 24:12; I Chr. 3:16; II Chr. 36:9,10). It has been eighteen years since the events recorded in chapter 36 (i.e., 605 B.C. - 586 B.C.).

37:2 “the people of the land” This phrase (BDB 766 I CONSTRUCT 75) is used in two distinct senses: (1) pre-exilic, “landed gentry” and (2) post-exilic, “common poor people.” Here it seems to refer to all the people of Jerusalem, therefore, a third usage.

37:3 “Jehucal” Jehucal is one of the leaders who asserts that Jeremiah should be put to death for treason (cf. 38:1-4).

▣ **“Zephaniah”** In 52:24 he is called the “second priest.” He seems to have been favorable to Jeremiah (cf. 21:1; 29:25-29).

▣ **“please pray to the LORD”** This must have been a request for a special prayer for the protection of Jerusalem, but Jeremiah had already proclaimed its defeat (cf. 21:1-14). The request does show that Zedekiah believed Jeremiah was a true prophet.

37:5 “Pharaoh” In the Bible this Pharaoh is called “Hophra” in 44:30. He is also known as Apries (i.e., Herodotus 2.161; 4.159). He ruled from 589-570 B.C.

▣ **“the Chaldeans”** In this passage this title is synonymous to “Babylonians,” but at one time they referred to wise men from Media (cf. Dan. 1:4 online at www.freebiblecommentary.org).

▣ **“they lifted the *siege*”** However, a battle between Egyptian and Babylonian armies did not occur (or at least is not recorded) and the siege of Jerusalem was quickly restored. It lasted from 588 B.C. until 586 B.C., when the city fell (cf. Jeremiah 52; II Kings 25; II Chr. 36:17-21).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:6-10

⁶Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, saying, ⁷“Thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘Thus you are to say to the king of Judah, who sent you to Me to inquire of Me: “Behold, Pharaoh’s army which has come out for your assistance is going to return to its own land of Egypt.

⁸The Chaldeans will also return and fight against this city, and they will capture it and burn it with fire.” ⁹Thus says the LORD, ‘Do not deceive yourselves, saying, “The Chaldeans will surely go away from us,” for they will not go. ¹⁰For even if you had defeated the entire army of Chaldeans who were fighting against you, and there were *only* wounded men left among them, each man in his tent, they would rise up and burn this city with fire.’”

37:8 All the VERBS are PERFECTS denoting completed future action. Grammarians call them “PROPHETIC FUTURES.”

37:9 “Do not deceive yourselves” This refers to false hope. The VERB (BDB 674, KB 728, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, is used in a JUSSIVE sense. They had convinced themselves of a falsehood! The falsehood is “The Chaldeans will surely go away from us.” This is expressed emphatically by the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB from the same root (BDB 229, KB 246).

37:10 This is a hyperbolic situation, given to assure the Judeans that Jerusalem would be destroyed, along with YHWH’s temple. Egypt cannot help (cf. Isa. 30:6-17). Judah’s army cannot help!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:11-16

¹¹Now it happened when the army of the Chaldeans had lifted *the siege* from Jerusalem because of Pharaoh’s army, ¹²that Jeremiah went out from Jerusalem to go to the land of Benjamin in order to take possession of *some property there among the people*. ¹³While he was at the Gate of Benjamin, a captain of the guard whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah the son of Hananiah was there; and he arrested Jeremiah the prophet, saying, “You are going over to the Chaldeans!” ¹⁴But Jeremiah said, “A lie! I am not going over to the Chaldeans”; yet he would not listen to him. So Irijah arrested Jeremiah and brought him to the officials. ¹⁵Then the officials were angry at Jeremiah and beat him, and they put him in jail in the house of Jonathan the scribe, which they had made into the prison. ¹⁶For Jeremiah had come into the dungeon, that is, the vaulted cell; and Jeremiah stayed there many days.

37:12 “to take possession of *some property there among the people*” The Hebrew is ambiguous but possibly somehow related to 32:1ff, although this chapter predates that account.

37:13 “Gate of Benjamin” This was the gate of Jerusalem to the north.

▣ “You are going over to the Chaldeans” This accusation was not unreasonable when one compares 21:8-10.

37:15 “the officials” This is a different group of officials than is mentioned in 36:1.

▣ “beat. . .put in jail” Jeremiah had no easy life. His messages from YHWH were viewed as treason by most Judeans, even his own family in Anathoth.

▣ “Jonathan the scribe” This position was like modern America’s Secretary of State.

37:16

NASB “the dungeon, that is, the vaulted cell”

NKJV “the dungeon and the cells”

NRSV “the cistern house, in the cells”

TEV “an underground cell”

NJB “an underground vault”

JPSOA “the pit and the cells”

REB “a vaulted pit beneath the house”

This (BDB 333, KB 333, occurs only here in the OT) is possibly a cistern, converted into a place of solitary confinement.

▣ “stayed there many days” Jeremiah thought he would die there (cf. v. 20).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:17-21

17Now King Zedekiah sent and took him *out*; and in his palace the king secretly asked him and said, “Is there a word from the LORD?” And Jeremiah said, “There is!” Then he said, “You will be given into the hand of the king of Babylon!” **18**Moreover Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, “*In what way* have I sinned against you, or against your servants, or against this people, that you have put me in prison? **19**Where then are your prophets who prophesied to you, saying, ‘The king of Babylon will not come against you or against this land’? **20**But now, please listen, O my lord the king; please let my petition come before you and do not make me return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, that I may not die there.” **21**Then King Zedekiah gave commandment, and they committed Jeremiah to the court of the guardhouse and gave him a loaf of bread daily from the bakers’ street, until all the bread in the city was gone. So Jeremiah remained in the court of the guardhouse.

37:17 “Is there a word from the LORD” The message had not changed! Zedekiah, for all his weakness, still sought YHWH, but he would not act on YHWH’s message! Good intentions do not replace obedient actions!

37:19 This is a good question. Why have not all those false prophets been put in prison or killed (cf. Deuteronomy 18)? His message was obviously true, why is he being persecuted?

37:20 This verse has several commands that denote a polite request from Jeremiah to Zedekiah.

1. please listen – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. please let my petition come before you – BDB 656, KB 709, *Qal* JUSSIVE
3. do not make me return – BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

37:21 Zedekiah sent Jeremiah to “the court of the guardhouse,” which was a much better situation than the dungeon. The king also commanded that he be given bread as long as supplies lasted.

▣ “bakers street” This shows that merchants of one trade lived in close proximity to one another, usually on one street or in one section of a city.

JEREMIAH 38

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jeremiah Thrown Into the Cistern	Jeremiah In the Dungeon	Jeremiah, Zedekiah and the Siege (37:1-38:6)	Jeremiah in the Dry Well	Jeremiah Is Thrown Into the Storage Well
38:1-13	38:1-13	38:1-6	38:1-4	38:1-3 38:4-6
		38:7-13	38:5-6 38:7-13	Ebed-melech Intervenes 38:7-13
	Zedekiah's Fears and Jeremiah's Advice		Zedekiah Asks Jeremiah's Advice	The Last Conversation Between Jeremiah and Zedekiah
38:14-16	38:14-16	38:14-16	38:14 38:15	38:14-23
Interview With Zedekiah			38:16	
38:17-23 (22b)	38:17-23 (22b)	38:17-23 (22b)	38:17-18 38:19	(22b)
			38:20-22 (22b) 38:23	
38:24-28	38:24-28	38:24-28	38:24-28	38:24-26 38:27-28

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. The Anchor Bible Commentary by John Bright says that 37:11-21 is the first recorded interview of Jeremiah face to face with Zedekiah and 38:1-28 is a second account.

B. R. K. Harrison, in the Tyndale OT series lists the similarities of 37:11-21 and 38:1-28.

1. Jeremiah charged with treason
2. Jeremiah imprisoned
3. Jeremiah has a secret meeting with Zedekiah

However, there are also differences which leave open the possibility of separate events (p. 154).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 38:1-13

¹Now Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashhur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur the son of Malchijah heard the words that Jeremiah was speaking to all the people, saying, ²“Thus says the LORD, ‘He who stays in this city will die by the sword and by famine and by pestilence, but he who goes out to the Chaldeans will live and have his *own* life as booty and stay alive.’” ³Thus says the LORD, ‘This city will certainly be given into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon and he will capture it.’” ⁴Then the officials said to the king, “Now let this man be put to death, inasmuch as he is discouraging the men of war who are left in this city and all the people, by speaking such words to them; for this man is not seeking the well-being of this people but rather their harm.” ⁵So King Zedekiah said, “Behold, he is in your hands; for the king can *do* nothing against you.” ⁶Then they took Jeremiah and cast him into the cistern *of* Malchijah the king’s son, which was in the court of the guardhouse; and they let Jeremiah down with ropes. Now in the cistern there was no water but only mud, and Jeremiah sank into the mud. ⁷But Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, a eunuch, while he was in the king’s palace, heard that they had put Jeremiah into the cistern. Now the king was sitting in the Gate of Benjamin; ⁸and Ebed-melech went out from the king’s palace and spoke to the king, saying, ⁹“My lord the king, these men have acted wickedly in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet whom they have cast into the cistern; and he will die right where he is because of the famine, for there is no more bread in the city.” ¹⁰Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, “Take thirty men from here under your authority and bring up Jeremiah the prophet from the cistern before he dies.” ¹¹So Ebed-melech took the men under his authority and went into the king’s palace to *a place* beneath the storeroom and took from there worn-out clothes and worn-out rags and let them down by ropes into the cistern to Jeremiah. ¹²Then Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said to Jeremiah, “Now put these worn-out clothes and rags under your armpits under the ropes”; and Jeremiah did so. ¹³So they pulled Jeremiah up with the ropes and lifted him out of the cistern, and Jeremiah stayed in the court of the guardhouse.

38:2 “die” This chapter uses this VERB (BDB 559, KB 562) often.

1. those who stay in Jerusalem will die, v. 2
2. those who desire to kill Jeremiah, v. 4
3. Jeremiah’s death as a result of being put into the empty cistern, vv. 9,26

4. desire to save Jeremiah, v. 10
5. Jeremiah's message to Zedekiah, v. 15
6. Zedekiah's response to Jeremiah, v. 16
7. Zedekiah's threat to Jeremiah, v. 24
8. the official's threat to Jeremiah, v. 25

▣ **“the sword and by famine and by pestilence”** These are the three killers of the siege experience. See full note at 14:12.

▣ **“live”** As “die” is used often in this chapter, so too, “live” (BDB 310, KB 309).

#1-3. In v. 2 there is a threefold usage.

- a. “will live” – The *Kethiv* (written in the MT) has it as a *Qal* IMPERFECT but the *Qere* (suggested in the margin by MT formatters) has a *Qal* PERFECT, which matches the next two VERBS

#4-6. In v. 17 (twice) and again in v. 20, are Jeremiah's words to Zedekiah.

Obedience to YHWH's message through Jeremiah brings life, but disobedience brings death. In a sense it reflects the “two ways” of Deut. 30:15-20 (cf. Jer. 21:8). Life is a gift of which we are stewards. There are consequences, both temporal and eternal, connected to human choices and actions!

Verses 2-3 are the same prophecy Jeremiah gave in 28:8-10! This never changed!

38:3 “This city will certainly be given” The prophecy by Jeremiah of the complete destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon has not changed!

The VERB (BDB 678, KB 733, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) is matched by the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE of the same root which denotes certainty! There was no hope for Jerusalem and the Temple to be spared.

38:4 “the men of war who are left” Apparently there had been casualties and desertions.

▣ **“this man is not seeking the well-being of this people”** These court officials still totally misunderstood Jeremiah and his message. They purposefully ignored the promise of “life” in v. 2.

38:5 This verse shows the weakness of Zedekiah (so too, Saul, cf. I Sam. 15:24 and even of David, cf. II Sam. 3:39).

Notice the play on “hand.”

1. “discouraging” of v. 4 is literally “weakening the hands”
2. “all the people” of v. 4 is literally “the hands of all”
3. “he is in your hands” of v. 5 is an idiom of power over someone (see Special Topic at 1:9)

38:6 “the king's son” This was an official title, not necessarily a blood relationship, but probably someone of the royal family (cf. 36:26).

▣ **“Jeremiah sank into the mud”** Josephus adds the tradition that it was up to his neck (*Antiq.* 10.7.5). He was meant to die there (cf. v. 4). The “mud” would have been the sediment which had collected in the bottom of a cistern. Cisterns caught the runoff of rain water.

38:7 “Ebed-melech” This term (BDB 715) is literally “servant of the king.” It is not a name but a title also found in other Semitic cultures.

▣ **“Ethiopian”** This (BDB 469 I) is often translated “Cushite” (cf. 13:23), which denotes a person from the nation just south of Egypt. This was a foreign servant/official in the Judean palace.

▣ **“a eunuch”** This term can be translated “official” (BDB 710). Physical castration was often involved (cf. Isa. 56:3-5), but not always (i.e., Potiphar in Gen. 39:1ff).

▣ **“the king was sitting in the Gate of Benjamin”** The gate was the place of social and legal activities. Apparently Zedekiah, the King, was holding public court.

38:8 “spoke to the king” Either he was a trusted official who had the ear of the king or he took advantage of public court to speak.

38:9 The reason for Jeremiah’s feared death is stated as famine. Conditions are much worse now than in 37:21.

38:10 “thirty men” One Hebrew MS and the LXX have “three” (cf. RSV, NEB, NIV). The UBS Text Project gives “thirty” an A rating (very high probability).

38:11

NASB “beneath the storeroom”

NKJV “under the treasury”

NRSV “to a wardrobe of the storehouse”

TEV “the palace storeroom”

NJB “the treasury wardrobe”

JPSOA “a place below the treasury”

LXX “the underground chamber”

The exact site is uncertain. It refers to a cistern somewhere in the palace.

38:12 “put these worn-out clothes and rags under your armpits” Apparently a room close by had some worn out clothes that could be used to cushion Jeremiah as he was pulled from the cistern. This shows the man’s concern for Jeremiah. This is an eyewitness detail!

38:13 He was rescued from the cistern but would stay in custody!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 38:14-16

¹⁴Then King Zedekiah sent and had Jeremiah the prophet brought to him at the third entrance that is in the house of the LORD; and the king said to Jeremiah, “I am going to ask you something; do not hide anything from me.” ¹⁵Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, “If I tell you, will you not certainly put me to death? Besides, if I give you advice, you will not listen to me.” ¹⁶But King Zedekiah swore to Jeremiah in secret saying, “As the LORD lives, who made this life for us, surely I will not put you to death nor will I give you over to the hand of these men who are seeking your life.”

38:15 Zedekiah still holds Jeremiah in a sacred position (i.e., Herod and John the Baptist) but

1. meets with him secretly (cf. vv. 16,24-27)
2. will not act on his words

He wants to know the word of YHWH (cf. v. 14) but he will not do it (James 1:22).

38:16 The king promises

1. not to kill Jeremiah (cf. v. 15)
2. not to turn him over to his officials who want to kill him (cf. v. 4)

Zedekiah swore by the covenant Deity's name ("As the LORD lives") and His creative action ("who gave us life/breath"). Zedekiah was a religious man but a weak, indecisive one!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 38:17-23

¹⁷Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, "Thus says the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, 'If you will indeed go out to the officers of the king of Babylon, then you will live, this city will not be burned with fire, and you and your household will survive. ¹⁸But if you will not go out to the officers of the king of Babylon, then this city will be given over to the hand of the Chaldeans; and they will burn it with fire, and you yourself will not escape from their hand.'" ¹⁹Then King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, "I dread the Jews who have gone over to the Chaldeans, for they may give me over into their hand and they will abuse me." ²⁰But Jeremiah said, "They will not give you over. Please obey the LORD in what I am saying to you, that it may go well with you and you may live. ²¹But if you keep refusing to go out, this is the word which the LORD has shown me: ²²Then behold, all of the women who have been left in the palace of the king of Judah are going to be brought out to the officers of the king of Babylon; and those women will say,

**"Your close friends
Have misled and overpowered you;
While your feet were sunk in the mire,
They turned back."**

²³They will also bring out all your wives and your sons to the Chaldeans, and you yourself will not escape from their hand, but will be seized by the hand of the king of Babylon, and this city will be burned with fire."

38:17 Notice the three titles of the One in whose name (cf. 35:17) Jeremiah speaks.

1. YHWH (LORD)
2. God of hosts
3. God of Israel

The VERB "go out to" means "surrender" (BDB 422, KB 425) in this context. It is intensified by the presence of the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE of the same root!

Notice, if the king will respond appropriately, even at this late date, to YHWH's words, there is hope for the city/temple! But if not—v. 18!

38:19 As Zedekiah was afraid of the officials in vv. 4-5, now he is afraid of the Judean deserters! He should have been afraid of YHWH! If only he would have trusted in YHWH's promise (cf. v. 20). Divine promises are linked to human choices!

38:20 This reaffirmation of YHWH's promise has

1. a command to obedience – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. two conditional JUSSIVES
 - a. it may go well with you – BDB 405, KB 408, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - b. you may live – BDB 310, KB 309, *Qal* JUSSIVE

38:21-23 YHWH's promises, ignored or refused, result in consequences.

1. women of the palace will be given over to the officials of the Babylonian army

2. they will accuse the king of vacillation and weakness to his counselors (“your feet were sunk in the mire” is an idiom of indecision)
3. Zedekiah’s wives and children will be exiled. The VERB may imply
 - a. sexual abuse
 - b. humiliation
 3. exile
4. Zedekiah will be tortured as he feared
5. the city and temple will be destroyed

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 38:24-28

²⁴Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, “Let no man know about these words and you will not die. ²⁵But if the officials hear that I have talked with you and come to you and say to you, ‘Tell us now what you said to the king and what the king said to you; do not hide *it* from us and we will not put you to death,’ ²⁶then you are to say to them, ‘I was presenting my petition before the king, not to make me return to the house of Jonathan to die there.’” ²⁷Then all the officials came to Jeremiah and questioned him. So he reported to them in accordance with all these words which the king had commanded; and they ceased speaking with him, since the conversation had not been overheard. ²⁸So Jeremiah stayed in the court of the guardhouse until the day that Jerusalem was captured.

38:26 “you are to say to them” Jeremiah agrees to the cover story. He did ask the king this very question in 37:20.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTERS 36-38

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. How much time separates chapter 36 from 37?
2. What does 37:3 and 17 imply about the king?
3. Why was Jeremiah arrested in chapter 37?
4. Did the officials have any grounds for his arrest?
5. What does 37:20 say about Jeremiah?
6. Why do some scholars see chapters 37 and 38 as two accounts of one occurrence?
7. In which verse of chapter 38 does the weakness of Jeremiah show clearly?
8. Why did the officials want to kill Jeremiah?
9. Who is Ebed-melech?
10. Did Jeremiah lie in 38:26?

JEREMIAH 39

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jerusalem Captured	The Fall of Jerusalem	Jeremiah and the Fall of Jerusalem (39:1-40:6)	The Fall of Jerusalem	The Fall of Jerusalem and What Happened to Jeremiah
39:1-10	39:1-3	39:1-10	39:1-2	39:1-2
			39:3	39:3
	39:4-10		39:4-10	39:4-10
Jeremiah Spared	Jeremiah Goes Free		Jeremiah's Release	
39:11-14	39:11-14	39:11-14	39:11-14	39:11-12
				39:13
				39:14
			Hope For Ebed-melech	A Prophecy Assuring the Safety of Ebed-melech
39:15-18	39:15-18	39:15-18	39:15-18	39:15-18

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 39:1-10

¹Now when Jerusalem was captured in the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came to Jerusalem and laid siege to it; ²in

the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, in the ninth *day* of the month, the city *wall* was breached. ³Then all the officials of the king of Babylon came in and sat down at the Middle Gate: Nergal-sar-ezer, Samgar-nebu, Sar-sekim the Rab-saris, Nergal-sar-ezer *the* Rab-mag, and all the rest of the officials of the king of Babylon. ⁴When Zedekiah the king of Judah and all the men of war saw them, they fled and went out of the city at night by way of the king's garden through the gate between the two walls; and he went out toward the Arabah. ⁵But the army of the Chaldeans pursued them and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and they seized him and brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, and he passed sentence on him. ⁶Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes at Riblah; the king of Babylon also slew all the nobles of Judah. ⁷He then blinded Zedekiah's eyes and bound him in fetters of bronze to bring him to Babylon. ⁸The Chaldeans also burned with fire the king's palace and the houses of the people, and they broke down the walls of Jerusalem. ⁹As for the rest of the people who were left in the city, the deserters who had gone over to him and the rest of the people who remained, Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard carried *them* into exile in Babylon. ¹⁰But some of the poorest people who had nothing, Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard left behind in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at that time.

39:1 “Jerusalem was captured” Jerusalem fell in 586 B.C. (there is a parallel account in chap. 52, cf. II Kgs. 25:1-12).

▣ **“in the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month. . .laid siege to it”** The siege began in 589 B.C. It lasted nineteen months (cf. Jer. 52:4-6; II Kgs. 25:1).

39:3 The names and titles of the Babylon officials mentioned in v. 3 (cf. v. 13) are very confusing.

1. the Septuagint, King James, and American Standard versions list six men
2. Josephus (*Antiq.* 10.7.2) and the Peshitta list five men
3. the Revised Standard Version and Jewish Publication Society of America Bible list four men
4. the New International Version, the New English Bible, and the Revised English Bible list three
5. the New Jerusalem Bible lists two men

▣ **“Nergal-sar-ezer”** This (BDB 669) is possibly the same as Neri-glissar, who was the successor to Nebuchadnezzar's son, Evil-merodach.

39:4 “they fled and went out of the city at night” Josephus tells us that it was midnight (*Antiq.* 10.7.2, cf. Jer. 52:7; II Kgs. 25:4).

▣ **“by way of the king's garden”** From Neh. 2:14; 3:15; 12:37 it appears that this is the fountain of the Pool of Siloam.

▣ **“Arabah”** This refers to the great rift valley that runs from above the Sea of Galilee down into the Sinai. Here it would refer to the forested valley east of Jerusalem (cf. v. 5).

39:5 “the Chaldeans pursued” This is predicted in 32:4-5; 38:18,23. Josephus tells us that Jewish deserters informed the Babylonian officials of their flight.

▣ **“he passed sentence on him”** Josephus tells us that it was for (1) ingratitude and/or (2) treason. His sentence is spelled out in graphic detail in vv. 6-7; 52:10-11; and II Kgs. 25:7.

39:6 “Riblah” this was where Nebuchadnezzar’s main expeditionary military camp was located. It is about fifty miles north of Damascus.

39:8 “the houses of the people” The Masoretic Text is singular (UBS Text Project gives it a B rating) and, therefore, could mean (1) meeting hall, (2) the Temple, or (3) following the Talmud, the main synagogue.

However, Kimchi, a Jewish exegete of the Middle Ages, translates this phrase, “the peoples’ houses” (cf. II Kgs. 25:9). This translation has influenced all English translations.

☐ **“broke down the walls of Jerusalem”** When limestone is exposed to high heat it loses its strength and cannot be reused for construction. The walls themselves were pulled down (BDB 683, KB 736, *Qal* PERFECT) the slopes so that it would be very difficult to raise them.

Jerusalem was totally destroyed and left uninhabited and uninhabitable!

39:9 “Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard” It is uncertain whether this title (BDB 913 II CONSTRUCT 371, literally “the chief slaughterer”) refers to an executioner or the chief cook.

It is uncertain how many groups of people are exiled. There are two other groups.

1. those left in the city
2. those who deserted

There is either a repeated reference to #1 or a third group which the NJB and REB identify as “artisans,” which involves an emendation of the MT, but fits with the parallel of 52:15.

39:10 One way for the Babylonians to leave a loyal people who paid taxes was to give the land to those who had nothing (i.e., the poor of the countryside). None of them were owners nor producers!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 39:11-14

¹¹Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave orders about Jeremiah through Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard, saying, ¹²“Take him and look after him, and do nothing harmful to him, but rather deal with him just as he tells you.” ¹³So Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard sent word, along with Nebushazban the Rab-saris, and Nergal-sar-ezer the Rab-mag, and all the leading officers of the king of Babylon; ¹⁴they even sent and took Jeremiah out of the court of the guardhouse and entrusted him to Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, to take him home. So he stayed among the people.

39:11-14 Jeremiah 40:1-6 seems to be a different account of the same event (similar to chaps. 37 and 38). Some have asserted that these are in sequential order and others see two different accounts of the same event. At this point we just do not know. Moderns tend to read ancient literature through the filter of their own culture and era.

39:12 Nebuchadnezzar must have heard about Jeremiah’s prophetic message from

1. Daniel
2. Jewish deserters
3. spies in the city

He gives several orders.

1. take him – BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (meaning “locate him”)
2. look after – BDB 962, KB 1321, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. do nothing harmful to him – BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* JUSSIVE
4. deal with him just as he tells you – BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

39:14 “Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam” Later Gedaliah became the Babylonian governor of Judah (cf. 40:7). He was not of the lineage of David. His father had been friendly to Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 26:24; II Kgs. 22:12-14).

▣ **“take him home”** At this point Gedaliah chose the city of Mizpah (cf. 40:8) to be his headquarters. Mizpah means “watchtower” and there were many towns by this name in Palestine.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 39:15-18

¹⁵Now the word of the LORD had come to Jeremiah while he was confined in the court of the guardhouse, saying, ¹⁶“Go and speak to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Behold, I am about to bring My words on this city for disaster and not for prosperity; and they will take place before you on that day. ¹⁷But I will deliver you on that day,” declares the LORD, “and you will not be given into the hand of the men whom you dread. ¹⁸For I will certainly rescue you, and you will not fall by the sword; but you will have your *own* life as booty, because you have trusted in Me,” declares the LORD.””

39:15-18 YHWH’s gracious attitude and actions toward Ebed-melech are because of his kind treatment and intercession on behalf of His prophet, Jeremiah (cf. 37:7-13).

39:17 “I will deliver you” This VERB (BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* PERFECT) is a promise that YHWH will deal kindly and with special protection to this foreigner (non-Jew). In v. 18 he is said to have trust (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* PERFECT) in YHWH (cf. 17:7,8).

39:18 “I will certainly rescue you” This is a literary parallel to v. 17. The VERB (BDB 572, KB 589) is intensified by the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and the IMPERFECT VERB of the same root.

JEREMIAH 40

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jeremiah Remains In Judah	Jeremiah With Gedaliah the Governor	Jeremiah and the Fall of Jerusalem (39:1-40:6)	Jeremiah Stays with Gedaliah	Further Details About the Treatment of Jeremiah
40:1-6	40:1-12	40:1-6	40:1 40:2-4 40:5-6	40:1 40:2-6
40:7-12		The Third Revolt (40:7-41:18) 40:7-12	Gedaliah, Governor of Judah 40:7-12 Gedaliah Is Murdered (40:13-41:18)	Gedaliah the Governor; His Assassination (40:7-41:18) 40:7-10 40:11-12
40:13-16	40:13-16	40:13-16	40:13-15 40:16	40:13-16

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2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:1-6

¹The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD after Nebuzaradan captain of the bodyguard had released him from Ramah, when he had taken him bound in chains among all the exiles of Jerusalem and Judah who were being exiled to Babylon. ²Now the captain of the bodyguard had taken Jeremiah and said to him, “The LORD your God promised this calamity against this place; ³and the LORD has brought *it* on and done just as He promised. Because you *people* sinned against the LORD and did not listen to His voice, therefore this thing has happened to you. ⁴But now, behold, I am freeing you today from the chains which are on your hands. If you would prefer to come with me to Babylon, come *along*, and I will look after you; but if you would prefer not to come with me to Babylon, never mind. Look, the whole land is before you; go wherever it seems good and right for you to go.” ⁵As Jeremiah was still not going back, *he said*, “Go on back then to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon has appointed over the cities of Judah, and stay with him among the people; or else go anywhere it seems right for you to go.” So the captain of the bodyguard gave him a ration and a gift and let him go. ⁶Then Jeremiah went to Mizpah to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam and stayed with him among the people who were left in the land.

40:1 “The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD” Notice no word/message is recorded. One wonders if the theological quote from vv. 2-3 were a part of that message. The theology recorded is so specific and unexpected from the lips of a Babylonian military commander.

▣ “Nebuzaradan captain of the bodyguard” From II Kgs. 25:3,8 it seems that this man came one month after the capture of Jerusalem to oversee the complete destruction of the city.

▣ “Ramah” This city was on the route of the Judean exiles to Babylon (cf. 31:15).

▣ “he had taken him bound in chains” The Jewish *Midrash* says Jeremiah saw the young men in chains and joined them. But it seems he was mistakenly arrested and taken as far north as Ramah before Nebuchadnezzar’s orders (cf. 39:11-14) were finally carried out.

40:2-4 These verses are often rejected by scholars because of their high theological content. It is quite possible that Jeremiah’s prophecies were relayed to the Babylonians after the city’s downfall.

40:4 This verse has several idioms and IMPERATIVES.

1. “if you would prefer” is literally “it is good in your eyes”
2. “came. . .came” – This is a *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT and a *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 97, KB 112)
3. “I will look after you” is literally “set my eyes on”
4. “if you would prefer” is literally “it is evil in your eyes”
5. “never mind” is literally “cease” – BDB 292, KB 292, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
6. “look” – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
7. “go. . .to go” – This is an INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT and *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 229, KB 246). This same phrase is repeated in v. 5.

40:5 “as Jeremiah was still not going back” The Hebrew here is very confusing. Literally “and still he will not remain then return to Gedaliah.” Both VERBS are BDB 996, KB 1427.

▣ **“Gedaliah the son of Ahikam”** This man’s father was a supporter and helper of Jeremiah (cf. 26:24). Gedaliah was entrusted with Jeremiah’s care in 39:14. This was a godly family (cf. II Kgs. 22:14).

40:6 “Mizpah” This means “watchtower” (BDB 859). There are several cities by this name. One of them was the location of Saul being chosen as king (cf. I Sam. 10:17ff). It became a central meeting place for the tribes (cf. Jgds. 20:1-3). This is where Gedaliah had his headquarters.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:7-12

⁷Now all the commanders of the forces that were in the field, they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam over the land and that he had put him in charge of the men, women and children, those of the poorest of the land who had not been exiled to Babylon. ⁸So they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah, along with Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, and the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah the son of the Maacathite, both they and their men. ⁹Then Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, swore to them and to their men, saying, “Do not be afraid of serving the Chaldeans; stay in the land and serve the king of Babylon, that it may go well with you. ¹⁰Now as for me, behold, I am going to stay at Mizpah to stand *for you* before the Chaldeans who come to us; but as for you, gather in wine and summer fruit and oil and put *them* in your *storage* vessels, and live in your cities that you have taken over.” ¹¹Likewise, also all the Jews who were in Moab and among the sons of Ammon and in Edom and who were in all the *other* countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant for Judah, and that he had appointed over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan. ¹²Then all the Jews returned from all the places to which they had been driven away and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah at Mizpah, and gathered in wine and summer fruit in great abundance.

40:7 “the commanders of the forces that were in the field” This refers to Jewish military units not captured by Nebuchadnezzar’s army because they were not in Jerusalem when it fell.

▣ **“those of the poorest of the land who had not been exiled to Babylon”** This links with 39:10.

40:9 “Gedaliah...swore to them” The new governor’s first responsibility was convincing the Jewish forces to lay down their arms (cf. II Kgs. 25:23-24).

Notice what Gedaliah swore (BDB 989, KB 1396, *Niphal* IMPERFECT).

1. do not be afraid – BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. stay in the land – BDB 442, KB 444, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. serve the king of Babylon – BDB 712, KB 773, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. that it may go well with you – BDB 405, KB 408, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

▣ **“serving the Chaldeans”** The Septuagint has “do not be afraid of the Chaldean officials” (cf. II Kgs. 25:24).

40:10 “to stand before the Chaldeans” This VERBAL (BDB 763, KB 840, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is often used of priests standing before God on behalf of sinful humans. Therefore, we can understand the word to mean “mediator” in this context.

▣ **“gather in wine and summer fruit and oil”** The war had left the fields unattended. If this fruit was not gathered it would spoil and they would have no food for winter.

There are three commands in Gedaliah’s statement.

1. gather – BDB 62, KB 74, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. put – BDB 962, KB 1321, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. live – BDB 442, KB 444, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

40:11-12 Many Jewish exiles in the neighboring countries returned to take advantage of the free land and prepare for winter by harvesting the ripe crops.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 40:13-16

¹³Now Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces that were in the field came to Gedaliah at Mizpah ¹⁴and said to him, “Are you well aware that Baalis the king of the sons of Ammon has sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to take your life?” But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam did not believe them. ¹⁵Then Johanan the son of Kareah spoke secretly to Gedaliah in Mizpah, saying, “Let me go and kill Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and not a man will know! Why should he take your life, so that all the Jews who are gathered to you would be scattered and the remnant of Judah would perish?” ¹⁶But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said to Johanan the son of Kareah, “Do not do this thing, for you are telling a lie about Ishmael.”

40:14 **“Are you well aware”** Johanan thought that it was common knowledge that Ishmael was going to attempt to assassinate Gedaliah. This is an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB of the same root (BDB 393, KB 390), used for emphasis.

▣ **“Baalis the king of the sons of Ammon”** Baalis’ name is related to the Canaanite fertility god *Ba’al*. The Jewish Study Bible (p. 1008) asserts that he may be the “*ba’alyash*” from a 6th century Ammonite seal impression (also note NASB Study Bible, p. 1122 footnote).

▣ **“Ishmael”** Ishmael was of the Davidic line (cf. 41:1; II Kgs. 25:25). The exact reason for his assassination of Gedaliah is uncertain.

1. attempt to restore the ancient covenant promises
2. jealousy because he had been overlooked
3. acting on behalf of Baalis, King of Ammon
4. he was just a cruel man (cf. 41:4-10)

40:15-16 Gedaliah did not believe the rumor about Ishmael. He did nothing to protect himself.

JEREMIAH 41

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Gedaliah Is Murdered	Insurrection Against Gedaliah	The Third Revolt (40:7-41:18)	Gedaliah Is Murdered (40:13-41:18)	Gedaliah the Governor; His Assassination (40:7-41:18)
41:1-3	41:1-3	41:1-3	41:1-3	41:1-3
41:4-8	41:4-10	41:4-8	41:4-7 41:8-10	41:4-10
41:9-10		41:9-10		
Johanan Rescues the People				
41:11-18	41:11-18	41:11-18	41:11-15 41:16-18	41:11-18

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2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:1-3

¹In the seventh month Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the royal family and *one* of the chief officers of the king, along with ten men, came to Mizpah to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam. While they were eating bread together there in Mizpah, ²Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and the ten men who were with him arose and struck down Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of

Shaphan, with the sword and put to death the one whom the king of Babylon had appointed over the land. ³Ishmael also struck down all the Jews who were with him, *that is* with Gedaliah at Mizpah, and the Chaldeans who were found there, the men of war.

41:1 “Now it came about” Chapter 41 continues the literary unit which began in chapter 40, specifically about the plot to assassinate Gedaliah (40:13-16).

▣ **“while they were eating bread together there at Mizpah”** The viciousness of this act can only be seen in the eastern culture’s attitude toward the importance of eating together (i.e., Ps. 41:9).

41:2 “arose and struck down Gedaliah” The exact date is uncertain but it preceded the deportation of 582 B.C. (cf. Jer. 52:30). The time can be from three months after the fall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.) to (2) four years after the fall of Jerusalem (the deportation of 582 B.C., cf. 52:30).

▣ **“struck down Gedaliah”** Josephus says that Gedaliah was drunk (*Antiq.* 10.9.4).

41:3 “and the Chaldeans who were found there, the men of war” As we learn from v. 18, the remaining Jews were afraid of Babylon’s reprisals (cf. *Antiq.* 10.9.5).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:4-8

⁴Now it happened on the next day after the killing of Gedaliah, when no one knew about it, ⁵that eighty men came from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria with their beards shaved off and their clothes torn and their bodies gashed, having grain offerings and incense in their hands to bring to the house of the LORD. ⁶Then Ishmael the son of Nethaniah went out from Mizpah to meet them, weeping as he went; and as he met them, he said to them, “Come to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam!” ⁷Yet it turned out that as soon as they came inside the city, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and the men that were with him slaughtered them *and cast them* into the cistern. ⁸But ten men who were found among them said to Ishmael, “Do not put us to death; for we have stores of wheat, barley, oil and honey hidden in the field.” So he refrained and did not put them to death along with their companions.

41:5 “Shechem. . .Shiloh. . .Samaria” These were three northern cities. Samaria was the ancient capital of the Northern Ten Tribes, established by Omri. This area was devastated by Assyria in 722 B.C.

▣ **“with their beards shaved off and their clothes torn and their bodies gashed”** They were Jews going to Jerusalem to bemoan the destruction of the temple (see Special Topic: Grieving Rites at 2:37). The gashing of their bodies is related to pagan mourning rites (cf. 16:6; 47:5; Lev. 19:28; 21:5; Deut. 14:1; 1 Kgs. 18:28). The elements of the amalgamated worship of YHWH and the gods of Canaan continue.

41:6-10 Something of Ishmael’s personality can be seen.

1. fake crying, v. 6
2. killing 70 innocent mourners, apparently just to cover up his slaughter of Gedaliah
3. sparing ten people for their hidden supplies or for ransom
4. polluting the water supply of Mizpah with the dead corpses
5. kidnapping the remainder of the population of Mizpah, for what reason is unsure, possibly to sell into slavery or as a gift to Baalis

41:8 “oil and honey hidden in the field” This was a usual procedure both for keeping the food cool and for hiding it in times of war.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:9-10

⁹Now as for the cistern where Ishmael had cast all the corpses of the men whom he had struck down because of Gedaliah, it was the one that King Asa had made on account of Baasha, king of Israel; Ishmael the son of Nethaniah filled it with the slain. ¹⁰Then Ishmael took captive all the remnant of the people who were in Mizpah, the king’s daughters and all the people who were left in Mizpah, whom Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard had put under the charge of Gedaliah the son of Ahikam; thus Ishmael the son of Nethaniah took them captive and proceeded to cross over to the sons of Ammon.

41:9 “because of Gedaliah” The Masoretic Text has “by the hand of Gedaliah.” This is obviously an impossible translation, therefore, some scholars have used a Ugaritic root to translate “because of Gedaliah.” The LXX omits this phrase.

▣ **“the one that King Asa had made on account of Baasha, king of Israel”** See the account in I Kgs. 15:17-22; II Chr. 16:1-6.

41:10 “all the remnant of the people who were in Mizpah” This group must have included Jeremiah.

▣ **“the king’s daughters”** This could refer to the literal royal family left in Gedaliah’s charge or some of the line of David returning from the surrounding countries.

▣ **“to cross over to the sons of Ammon”** This implies that he traveled to the east and planned to cross the Jordan River into the transJordan region controlled by Baalis (cf. 40:14).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 41:11-18

¹¹But Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces that were with him heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done. ¹²So they took all the men and went to fight with Ishmael the son of Nethaniah and they found him by the great pool that is in Gibeon. ¹³Now as soon as all the people who were with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah and the commanders of the forces that were with him, they were glad. ¹⁴So all the people whom Ishmael had taken captive from Mizpah turned around and came back, and went to Johanan the son of Kareah. ¹⁵But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men and went to the sons of Ammon. ¹⁶Then Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces that were with him took from Mizpah all the remnant of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, after he had struck down Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, *that is*, the men who were soldiers, *the* women, *the* children, and *the* eunuchs, whom he had brought back from Gibeon. ¹⁷And they went and stayed in Geruth Chimham, which is beside Bethlehem, in order to proceed into Egypt ¹⁸because of the Chaldeans; for they were afraid of them, since Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had struck down Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon had appointed over the land.

41:12 “the great pool that is at Gibeon” Archaeology has found a large rock cistern seventy to eighty feet deep at Gibeon (cf. II Sam. 2:12-16).

41:13 “they were glad” This must refer to those taken forcibly from Mizpah (cf. vv. 10,16).

41:17 “Geruth Chimham” The first word (BDB 158) means “lodging place” or “inn.” It denoted a caravan camping place (possibly had a well or natural protection from the wind).

The second word (BDB 484) can be

1. a location near Bethlehem
2. a person (cf. II Sam. 19:37,38,40, an attendant of David)

Josephus calls the place “Mandara” (*Antiq.* 10.9.5).

▣ **“in order to proceed into Egypt”** This shows that Johanan had already made up his mind to go to Egypt, and also sets the stage for chapter 42. They went to Egypt out of fear of Nebuchadnezzar’s reprisals!

JEREMIAH 42

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Warning Against Going to Egypt 42:1-6	The Flight to Egypt Forbidden 42:1-6	Flight to Egypt (42:1-43:7) 42:1-6	The People Ask Jeremiah to Pray For Them 42:1-3 42:4 42:5-6	The Flight to Egypt (42:1-43:7) 42:1-6
42:7-17	42:7-12 42:13-17	42:7-17	The Lord's Answer to Jeremiah's Prayer 42:7-12 42:13-17	42:7-22
42:18-22	42:18-22	42:18-22	42:18 42:19-22	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 42:1-6

¹Then all the commanders of the forces, Johanan the son of Kareah, Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiiah, and all the people both small and great approached ²and said to Jeremiah the prophet, "Please let our petition come before you, and pray for us to the LORD your God, *that is* for all this remnant; because we are left *but* a few out of many, as your own eyes *now* see us, ³that the LORD your

God may tell us the way in which we should walk and the thing that we should do.” ⁴Then Jeremiah the prophet said to them, “I have heard *you*. Behold, I am going to pray to the LORD your God in accordance with your words; and I will tell you the whole message which the LORD will answer you. I will not keep back a word from you.” ⁵Then they said to Jeremiah, “May the LORD be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not act in accordance with the whole message with which the LORD your God will send you to us. ⁶Whether *it* is pleasant or unpleasant, we will listen to the voice of the LORD our God to whom we are sending you, so that it may go well with us when we listen to the voice of the LORD our God.”

42:1 “Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiiah” The person mentioned in 42:1 seems to be the same as in 43:2. The Septuagint has “Azariah” in both places.

▣ **“both small and great”** There are several forms of this Hebraic idiom which denote all the people (cf. 6:13; 8:10; 42:8; 44:12). This is a hyperbolic, inclusive idiom which does not mean every person.

42:2 “Jeremiah the prophet” This designation is repeated in v. 4. There is no doubt now, after the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonian army, that Jeremiah was a true prophet (cf. Deut. 13:1-5). All that he had predicted came true. This is also a warning to those remaining Judeans who seek YHWH’s counsel through him (cf. v. 4).

In a sense this chapter is an example of a reverse “exodus.” The Judeans refused to trust YHWH and stay in Palestine! Disobedience remains the problem!

▣ **“the LORD your God”** This is not a theological statement of the petitioner’s lack of faith in YHWH, but simply a cultural idiom (cf. I Kgs. 13:6; Jer. 37:3; 42:3,6, and esp. v. 20).

▣ **“for all this remnant”** See Special Topic: Remnant: Three Senses at 5:10-13.

▣ **“because we are left *but* a few out of many”** This may be an allusion to Deut. 28:62. The covenant people were to be as the stars of heaven, the sand in the seashore, but they rebelled and violated the covenant.

42:3 This is false piety. They really did not want to know YHWH’s will. They wanted Him to affirm their decision of fleeing to Egypt. They had not followed YHWH’s will (expressed through Scripture and the prophets) up to this point in their history. This is a sample of “fox-hole” faith (i.e., faith in crisis) that only lasts until the crisis has passed!

42:4 Jeremiah agrees to pray on their behalf. He will pass on their words to YHWH and will give them “exactly” His words!

The last phrase of this verse, “I will not keep back a word from you,” reminds one of the interchange between Eli and Samuel in I Sam. 3:17-18.

42:5-6 These verses are a tremendous statement of faith, but just not true! They really wanted God to approve their plans. Words of faith do not replace lives of faith!

42:5 These two theologically significant words, “true” and “faithful,” are forms of the same root.

1. true – BDB 54, cf. 2:21; 4:2; 9:5; 10:10; 14:13; 23:28; 26:15; 28:9; 32:41; 33:6; 42:5

2. faithful – BDB 52, cf. 12:6; 15:18; 40:14; 42:5

See Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith and Faithfulness in the OT at 15:18.

42:6 “that it may go well with us when we listen to the voice of the LORD our God” The phrase “go well” is an idiom from Deuteronomy (cf. Deut. 4:40; 5:16,29,33). It is used in Jeremiah in 7:23; 38:20. Remember, the desire of YHWH for His covenant people is “blessing” so that the nations may be attracted to Him. This is part of the OT’s “two ways” (cf. Deut. 30:15-20).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 42:7-17

7Now at the end of ten days the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah. **8**Then he called for Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces that were with him, and for all the people both small and great, **9**and said to them, “Thus says the LORD the God of Israel, to whom you sent me to present your petition before Him: **10**‘If you will indeed stay in this land, then I will build you up and not tear you down, and I will plant you and not uproot you; for I will relent concerning the calamity that I have inflicted on you. **11**Do not be afraid of the king of Babylon, whom you are *now* fearing; do not be afraid of him,’ declares the LORD, ‘for I am with you to save you and deliver you from his hand. **12**I will also show you compassion, so that he will have compassion on you and restore you to your own soil. **13**But if you are going to say, “We will not stay in this land,” so as not to listen to the voice of the LORD your God, **14**saying, “No, but we will go to the land of Egypt, where we will not see war or hear the sound of a trumpet or hunger for bread, and we will stay there”; **15**then in that case listen to the word of the LORD, O remnant of Judah. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “If you really set your mind to enter Egypt and go in to reside there, **16**then the sword, which you are afraid of, will overtake you there in the land of Egypt; and the famine, about which you are anxious, will follow closely after you there *in* Egypt, and you will die there. **17**So all the men who set their mind to go to Egypt to reside there will die by the sword, by famine and by pestilence; and they will have no survivors or refugees from the calamity that I am going to bring on them.””

42:7 “at the end of ten days the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah” Notice that Jeremiah had to wait for God to respond. He could not voice his own opinion. For “ten” see Special Topic at 15:9.

42:10 “If you will indeed stay in this land, then I will build you up and not tear you down” This is related to Jeremiah’s call in 1:10. This is a tremendous promise of restoration, covenant, and divine protection!

▣ **“I will relent”** This is literally “to be sorry” (BDB 636, KB 688, *Piel* PERFECT). Usually this concept is found in the *Niphal* stem (cf. 18:8m10; Joel 2:13; Amos 7:3,6; Jonah 3:10; 4:2). The *Piel* usually denotes “compassion” (cf. Hos. 11:8).

Remember all characterizations about Deity are communicated in human language (see Special Topic at 1:9). A change of heart and mind in a human triggers a positive response from God! Most prophecies are conditional (even when not stated). They express what will happen if the current attitude and actions continue. But if repentance occurs the future changes (i.e., Jonah)!

42:11 What a wonderful encouragement.

1. do not be afraid of the king of Babylon – BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (cf. 1:9)
2. whom you are *now* fearing – BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
3. do not be afraid of him (repeated for emphasis)

4. I am with you
 - a. to save – BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (15:20)
 - b. to deliver – BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (cf. 1:19)

This was YHWH’s word to them! Would they believe it and obey it by faith? They said they would (vv. 5-6), but they would not!

42:12 YHWH promises that as He shows compassion/mercy (BDB 933, KB 1216), He will guide His servant Nebuchadnezzar to show mercy to the remaining remnant of Judeans.

The phrase “I will restore you to your own soil” may reflect that

1. Jeremiah wrote this text while in Egypt
2. it is idiomatic for their own personal ancestral property

42:13-17 The conditional nature of YHWH’s answer to their prayers through Jeremiah is clearly spelled out in these verses. Rejection of YHWH’s repentance and mercy becomes the curse of judgment (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-30). There is an awesome responsibility in seeking YHWH’s guidance!

The IMPERATIVE of “listen” (“hear,” BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) in v. 15 has consequences (cf. Luke 12:48).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 42:18-22

¹⁸For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “As My anger and wrath have been poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so My wrath will be poured out on you when you enter Egypt. And you will become a curse, an object of horror, an imprecation and a reproach; and you will see this place no more.” ¹⁹The LORD has spoken to you, O remnant of Judah, “Do not go into Egypt!” You should clearly understand that today I have testified against you. ²⁰For you have *only* deceived yourselves; for it is you who sent me to the LORD your God, saying, “Pray for us to the LORD our God; and whatever the LORD our God says, tell us so, and we will do it.” ²¹So I have told you today, but you have not obeyed the LORD your God, even in whatever He has sent me to *tell* you. ²²Therefore you should now clearly understand that you will die by the sword, by famine and by pestilence, in the place where you wish to go to reside.

42:18 “you will see this place no more” This is God’s stern warning that if they violated His words, there would be no restoration for them!

Notice the list of negative consequences for disobeying YHWH’s revealed will.

1. as My anger and wrath have been poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so too, on you
2. you will become a curse (BDB 46, cf. 29:18; 42:18; 44:12)
3. you will become an object of horror (BDB 1031 I, cf. 5:30; 25:9,11; 29:18; 42:18; 44:12,22; 49:13,17; 50:23; 51:37,41)
4. you will become an imprecation (BDB 887, cf. 24:9; 25:18; 29:22)
5. you will become a reproach (BDB 357, cf. 6:10; 24:9; 29:18; 42:18; 44:8,12; 49:13)
6. you will see this place (i.e., Judah) no more

42:19 “clearly understand” This is an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and an IMPERFECT VERB from the same root (BDB 393, KB 390) used for emphasis. For even added emphasis, it is repeated twice (vv. 19 and 22). These Judeans asked for YHWH’s guidance and now they were knowingly rejecting it! Ignorance is one thing, but open-eyed disobedience is another.

42:20 “**you have *only* deceived yourselves**” How characteristic of fallen mankind! We tend to do what we want to do! We only appear to be religious!

▣ “**we will do it**” They were planning incredible disobedience in light of vv. 5 and 6!

JEREMIAH 43

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
In Egypt Jeremiah Warns of Judgment 43:1-7	Jeremiah Is Taken to Egypt 43:1-7	Flight to Egypt (42:1-43:7) 43:1-7	Jeremiah Is Taken to Egypt 43:1-7	The Flight to Egypt (42:1-43:7) 43:1-3 43:4-7
43:8-13	43:8-13	Jeremiah In Egypt (43:8-44:30) 43:8-13 (11)	43:8-13	Jeremiah Foretells the Invasion of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar 43:8-11 (11) 43:12-13

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

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4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 43:1-7

¹But as soon as Jeremiah, whom the LORD their God had sent, had finished telling all the people all the words of the LORD their God—that is, all these words—²Azariah the son of Hoshai, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the arrogant men said to Jeremiah, “You are telling a lie! The LORD our God has not sent you to say, ‘You are not to enter Egypt to reside there’; ³but Baruch the

son of Neriah is inciting you against us to give us over into the hand of the Chaldeans, so they will put us to death or exile us to Babylon.” ⁴So Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces, and all the people, did not obey the voice of the LORD to stay in the land of Judah. ⁵But Johanan the son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces took the entire remnant of Judah who had returned from all the nations to which they had been driven away, in order to reside in the land of Judah—⁶the men, the women, the children, the king’s daughters and every person that Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam and grandson of Shaphan, together with Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch the son of Neriah—⁷and they entered the land of Egypt (for they did not obey the voice of the LORD) and went in as far as Tahpanhes.

43:1 “**Jeremiah, whom the LORD their God had sent**” This phrase, like “Jeremiah the prophet” in 42:2,4, affirms the true status of Jeremiah. He was YHWH’s spokesperson to them. He was the giver of the “voice of YHWH” (cf. 42:13,21). To disobey his prophecy was to disobey YHWH!

43:2

NASB, TEV,

NJB “the arrogant men”

NKJV “the proud men”

NRSV “the insolent men”

Peshitta “the wicked men”

The Hebrew word (BDB 267) has the connotation of those who knowingly reject YHWH’s word/message (cf. Ps. 119:21; Pro. 21:24; Mal. 4:1 [MT 3:19]).

This type of person is described in 5:12-13. The consequences of this attitude was clearly stated in 42:5-6.

▣ **“you are telling a lie”** They knew that Jeremiah was a prophet because all of his predictions had come true, yet they had already made up their minds (cf. 41:17). They wanted the pretense of spirituality but not the demanded obedience!

43:3 “**but Baruch is inciting you against us**” This shows that Baruch was more than just a secretary. He had great influence on Jeremiah (cf. chapter 45).

43:5 “**who had returned from all the nations to which they had been driven away, in order to reside in the land of Judah**” They were afraid because of Ishmael’s ruthless acts against Gedaliah and the Babylonian honor guard. These people had returned to live in the land of Judah; how ironical that now they were fleeing to Egypt.

43:6 “**together with Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch**” The prophet and his scribe were forced to accompany them in the face of God’s warning.

43:7 “**Tahpanhes**” This is one of the border cities (i.e., in Egyptian, “the Fortress of Penhase”) in the eastern delta region on the caravan route to Palestine. It was just barely into Egypt’s national boundary.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 43:8-13

⁸Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying, ⁹“Take *some* large stones in your hands and hide them in the mortar in the brick *terrace* which is at the entrance of Pharaoh’s palace in Tahpanhes, in the sight of some *of the Jews*; ¹⁰and say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts,

the God of Israel, “Behold, I am going to send and get Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and I am going to set his throne *right* over these stones that I have hidden; and he will spread his canopy over them. ¹¹He will also come and strike the land of Egypt; those who are *meant* for death *will be given over* to death, and those for captivity to captivity, and those for the sword to the sword. ¹²And I shall set fire to the temples of the gods of Egypt, and he will burn them and take them captive. So he will wrap himself with the land of Egypt as a shepherd wraps himself with his garment, and he will depart from there safely. ¹³He will also shatter the obelisks of Heliopolis, which is in the land of Egypt; and the temples of the gods of Egypt he will burn with fire.””

43:8-13 This paragraph describes the Babylonian invasion and destruction of Egypt as far as Heliopolis (Hebrew, “House of the Sun”). Jeremiah is again giving a very specific prophecy to prove/validate his role as prophet (possible date is 568-567 B.C.).

43:10

NASB, NJB,

REB “canopy”

NKJV, Peshitta “royal pavilion”

TEV “royal tent”

JPSOA “pavilion”

LXX “his weapons”

The BDB 1051 and KB 1636 suggest that this term (found only here in the OT) could mean

1. royal pavilion
2. canopy
3. carpet
4. scepter (from Akkadian root)

The first three suggestions assume an Assyrian VERB, “to spread out.”

43:11 This is a literary way of expressing YHWH’s sovereignty (cf. 15:2) through Nebuchadnezzar (called YHWH’s servant in v. 10).

The translation of v. 12a reflects this by the NRSV and REB having “he” and the MT having “I.” Nebuchadnezzar’s army will do it but the real power and will are YHWH’s.

43:12 The idols will be burned and their gold, silver, and jewels taken to Babylon.

JEREMIAH 44

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Conquest of Egypt Predicted	Israelites Will Be Punished in Egypt	Jeremiah in Egypt (43:8-44:30)	The LORD'S Message to the Israelites in Egypt	The Judeans in Egypt and the Queen of Heaven
44:1-10	44:1-10	44:1-10	44:1-6	44:1 44:2-14
			44:7-10	
44:11-14	44:11-14	44:11-14	44:11-14	
44:15-19	44:15-19	44:15-19	44:15-18	44:15-19
Calamity For the Jews			44:19	
44:20-23	44:20-23	44:20-23	44:20-23	44:20-23
44:24-30	44:24-30	44:24-30	44:24-30	44:24-28 44:29-30

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3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. There is little historical evidence for an invasion of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar II.
 1. fragment of Nebuchadnezzar annals from the 37th year (568-567 B.C.)
 2. Herodotus
 3. Ezekiel 29:19-21

- B. The invasion may have been a punitive raid which, after initial success, was suspended. After this the political relationship between Egypt and Neo-Babylon improved.
- C. There was another military campaign against Egypt by Nabonidus (550-539 B.C.) in the closing days of the Neo-Babylonian Empire which lasted ten years.
- D. Chapters 43 and 44 are a literary unit but deal with two different groups of Judean refugees.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 44:1-10

¹The word that came to Jeremiah for all the Jews living in the land of Egypt, those who were living in Migdol, Tahpanhes, Memphis, and the land of Pathros, saying, ²“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘You yourselves have seen all the calamity that I have brought on Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah; and behold, this day they are in ruins and no one lives in them, ³because of their wickedness which they committed so as to provoke Me to anger by continuing to burn sacrifices *and* to serve other gods whom they had not known, *neither* they, you, nor your fathers. ⁴Yet I sent you all My servants the prophets, again and again, saying, “Oh, do not do this abominable thing which I hate.” ⁵But they did not listen or incline their ears to turn from their wickedness, so as not to burn sacrifices to other gods. ⁶Therefore My wrath and My anger were poured out and burned in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, so they have become a ruin and a desolation as it is this day. ⁷Now then thus says the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, “Why are you doing great harm to yourselves, so as to cut off from you man and woman, child and infant, from among Judah, leaving yourselves without remnant, ⁸provoking Me to anger with the works of your hands, burning sacrifices to other gods in the land of Egypt, where you are entering to reside, so that you might be cut off and become a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth? ⁹Have you forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, the wickedness of the kings of Judah, and the wickedness of their wives, your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives, which they committed in the land of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? ¹⁰But they have not become contrite even to this day, nor have they feared nor walked in My law or My statutes, which I have set before you and before your fathers.””

44:1 The cities of Migdol and Tahpanhes are in the eastern delta region. Memphis is about 100 miles up the Nile. The Land of Pathros is another 100 miles up the Nile (i.e., city of No-Amon). These locations would represent most of Egypt.

It is surprising that the expected full phrase “the word . . . from the LORD” is shortened but it still reflects the full revelatory formula of 7:1; 11:1; 18:1; 21:1; 30:1; 32:1; 34:1,8; 35:1; 40:1.

44:2 “the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel” This extended title using YHWH and *Elohim* is repeated four times in this chapter (cf. vv. 2,7,11,25). He is creator and covenant making Deity. See Special Topic at 1:2.

44:3 Israel and Judah’s problem was covenant disobedience.

1. not listening to and obeying YHWH (cf. v. 23)
2. going after other gods (cf. vv. 3,5,15-19)

▣ **“burn sacrifices”** This VERB (BDB 882, KB 1094, *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) can mean (cf. 1:16)

1. the smoke of a sacrifice
2. the smoke of incense (cf. vv. 17-18)

44:4 “again and again” This is literally “rising early and sending” (cf. 7:13,25; 25:4; 26:5; 35:15). The Judeans knew YHWH’s will through previous revelations to the Patriarchs and Moses/Joshua, as well as the messages of the prophets.

▣ **“abominable thing”** For this phrase see 16:18; 32:34,35 and the Special Topic at 2:7.

44:6 The fall of Judah was not because of the power of the Babylonian god *Marduk* or the power of the Babylonian army. It was Judah’s continued covenant disobedience that caused YHWH to bring to bear the “curses” of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-30.

44:7 This verse is parallel to 42:20 (cf. 26:19). One’s choices determine the consequences (cf. Deut. 30:15,19). These Judean’s choice will bring their lineage to an end (hyperbolic, some did survive)!

44:8 The idolatry of the Judeans continues in Egypt! The Jews have changed the worship of the gods of Canaan to the gods of Egypt (cf. 2:13).

▣ **“become a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth”** See note at 42:18. The covenant people were to be a blessing to all the nations (cf. Gen. 12:3), but they had become a curse. They were meant to reveal the mercy and goodness of YHWH to the nations, but all they revealed was His anger (cf. Ezek. 38:22-36)!

44:10 “But they have not become contrite” The VERB (BDB 193, KB 221, *Pual* PERFECT) usually means “to crush”; here it is uniquely used to denote a crushed, repentant spirit.

Their lack of repentance is characterized as

1. they have not feared YHWH
2. they have not walked in His revelation (i.e., law, statutes; see Special Topic at 5:4)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 44:11-14

¹¹“Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Behold, I am going to set My face against you for woe, even to cut off all Judah. ¹²And I will take away the remnant of Judah who have set their mind on entering the land of Egypt to reside there, and they will all meet their end in the land of Egypt; they will fall by the sword *and* meet their end by famine. Both small and great will die by the sword and famine; and they will become a curse, an object of horror, an imprecation and a reproach. ¹³And I will punish those who live in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, with the sword, with famine and with pestilence. ¹⁴So there will be no refugees or survivors for the remnant of Judah who have entered the land of Egypt to reside there and then to return to the land of Judah, to which they are longing to return and live; for none will return except *a few* refugees.”

44:11 “I am going to set My face against you for woe” This is vocabulary from Leviticus 26 (i.e., the cursings and blessings connected to covenant obedience, cf. v. 17). This phrase was used earlier in Jer. 21:10 (cf. Amos 9:4). A similar phrase is used in Jer. 44:27. YHWH will personally bring His people to judgment.

44:12-13 This is a repeat of 42:15-18,22.

44:14 “for none will return except a few refugees” A small number will survive and return to Palestine (cf. v. 28). The Judeans who will be spared and returned are the ones taken to Babylon.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 44:15-19

¹⁵Then all the men who were aware that their wives were burning sacrifices to other gods, along with all the women who were standing by, as a large assembly, including all the people who were living in Pathros in the land of Egypt, responded to Jeremiah, saying, ¹⁶“As for the message that you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD, we are not going to listen to you! ¹⁷But rather we will certainly carry out every word that has proceeded from our mouths, by burning sacrifices to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, just as we ourselves, our forefathers, our kings and our princes did in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; for *then* we had plenty of food and were well off and saw no misfortune. ¹⁸But since we stopped burning sacrifices to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything and have met our end by the sword and by famine.” ¹⁹“And,” said the women, “when we were burning sacrifices to the queen of heaven and were pouring out drink offerings to her, was it without our husbands that we made for her *sacrificial* cakes in her image and poured out drink offerings to her?”

44:16 As the Judean remnant in Judea would not listen (cf. 42:14-17; 43:2), so too, the ones already in Egypt.

44:17-19 These Judeans attribute their current condition to their lack of idolatrous sacrifices! O my, when light becomes darkness, how great is the darkness!

44:17 “we will certainly carry out every word” The VERB is an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB from the same root (BDB 793, KB 889). This same intensive form is in v. 25 (twice). It denotes their strong intent to offer idolatrous sacrifices!

44:18 The historical period these idolaters are referring to must have been the reign of Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, who reigned 55 years and was the most wicked king of Judah. Josiah tried to bring the idolatry to an end (cf. II Kings 23) but at his death it returned!

These three kings (i.e., Hezekiah, Manasseh, and Josiah) may be the background to Ezekiel 18.

44:19 The queen of heaven (i.e., female fertility goddess, cf. 7:18; 44:17,19,25; II Kgs. 17:16) was a popular idol for women in the Ancient Near East. Notice the number of times “wife” or “women” is used in this chapter (cf. vv. 9 [twice],15,19,20,24,25).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 44:20-23

²⁰Then Jeremiah said to all the people, to the men and women—even to all the people who were giving him *such* an answer—saying, ²¹“As for the smoking sacrifices that you burned in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, you and your forefathers, your kings and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the LORD remember them and did not *all this* come into His mind? ²²So the LORD was no longer able to endure *it*, because of the evil of your deeds, because of the abominations which you have committed; thus your land has become a ruin, an object of horror and a curse, without an inhabitant, as *it is* this day. ²³Because you have burned sacrifices and have sinned

against the LORD and not obeyed the voice of the LORD or walked in His law, His statutes or His testimonies, therefore this calamity has befallen you, as *it has this day.*"

44:20-30 This is the last message of Jeremiah recorded in the book. He was in Egypt and was confronted again with widespread idolatry by the Judeans, a total disregard for YHWH's revelation/covenant.

44:22 This is similar to the warnings of 25:9,11,18,38; 29:18; 42:18; 44:13.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 44:24-30

²⁴Then Jeremiah said to all the people, including all the women, "Hear the word of the LORD, all Judah who are in the land of Egypt, ²⁵thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, as follows: 'As for you and your wives, you have spoken with your mouths and fulfilled *it* with your hands, saying, "We will certainly perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn sacrifices to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her." Go ahead and confirm your vows, and certainly perform your vows!' ²⁶Nevertheless hear the word of the LORD, all Judah who are living in the land of Egypt, 'Behold, I have sworn by My great name,' says the LORD, 'never shall My name be invoked again by the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, "As the Lord GOD lives.'" ²⁷Behold, I am watching over them for harm and not for good, and all the men of Judah who are in the land of Egypt will meet their end by the sword and by famine until they are completely gone. ²⁸Those who escape the sword will return out of the land of Egypt to the land of Judah few in number. Then all the remnant of Judah who have gone to the land of Egypt to reside there will know whose word will stand, Mine or theirs. ²⁹This will be the sign to you,' declares the LORD, 'that I am going to punish you in this place, so that you may know that My words will surely stand against you for harm.' ³⁰Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I am going to give over Pharaoh Hophra king of Egypt to the hand of his enemies, to the hand of those who seek his life, just as I gave over Zedekiah king of Judah to the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, *who was his enemy and was seeking his life.*"

44:25 This verse repeats the committed promises of the Judean idol worshippers of v. 17 to continue their rebellious worship practices (here two intensified IMPERFECT VERBS and matching INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES).

44:26 The committed vows of idolatry by the Judean families in Egypt are now matched by the commitment of YHWH to bring judgment on them (cf. v. 27). They shall never call on His name again.

44:27 "I am watching over them for harm and not for good" The VERB (BDB 1052, KB 1638, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) is a recurrent theological word in Jeremiah (cf. 1:12; 31:28 [twice]) denoting YHWH's focused attention to those who

1. do His will
2. disobey His will

44:29 "My words will surely stand against you for harm" The VERB (BDB 877, KB 1086) is an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and an IMPERFECT VERB denoting emphasis. This very form was used in v. 25 related to the idolaters' promise to continue to offer sacrifices. Now it is used of the certainty of YHWH's judgment.

44:30 YHWH will judge Pharaoh Hophra (cf. 43:9-13 and 46:25; also note Ezek. 29:3). Pharaoh Hophra (Herodotus called him Apries) reigned from 588 to 569 B.C., when he was killed in a rebellion led by one of his own officials. He was succeeded by Amasus (569-525 B.C.).

Hophra was the Pharaoh who encouraged Zedekiah to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar. He was the one who sent the Egyptian army into Palestine during the siege of Jerusalem (cf. 37:5).

JEREMIAH 45

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Message To Baruch	Assurance To Baruch	God's Word to Baruch	God's Promise To Baruch	A Prophecy of Comfort For Baruch
45:1-5	45:1-5	45:1-5	45:1-3 45:4-5	45:1-5

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 45:1-5

¹*This is the message which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written down these words in a book at Jeremiah's dictation, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, saying:* ²*“Thus says the LORD the God of Israel to you, O Baruch: ³‘You said, ‘Ah, woe is me! For the LORD has added sorrow to my pain; I am weary with my groaning and have found no rest.’” ⁴Thus you are to say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Behold, what I have built I am about to tear down, and what I have planted I am about to uproot, that is, the whole land.” ⁵But you, are you seeking great things for yourself? Do not seek *them*; for behold, I am going to bring disaster on all flesh,’ declares the LORD, ‘but I will give your life to you as booty in all the places where you may go.’”*

45:1 “in the fourth year of Jehoiakim” The date for this would be 605 B.C. This was the same year Babylon defeated the remnants of the Assyrian army and the Egyptian army at Carchemish in northern Syria (cf. 46:1).

The historical setting for this brief chapter is chapter 36.

45:3 Baruch was grieving over the current state of affairs (i.e., the king burning Jeremiah’s scroll, chapt. 36).

1. “woe is me!” (cf. 4:13,31; 6:4; 10:19; 13:27; 15:10; 22:13; 23:1; 48:1,46; 50:27, obviously a cultural idiom of despair)
2. the Lord has added sorrow to my pain
3. I am weary with my groaning
4. I have found no rest

45:4 This verbiage reflects Jeremiah’s call in 1:10 (cf. 18:7-10; 24:6; 31:28; 42:10). The curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-30 have come to reality! A reverse “exodus” has occurred in parallel to the removal of the Canaanite population who had previously inhabited Canaan (cf. Gen. 15:16). Their idolatry caused them to be exiled, so too, now Judah’s idolatry has caused her to be exiled.

45:5 “But you, are you seeking great things for yourself” This is always an appropriate question for fallen, self-centered humanity. Believers must remember that all things are in our God’s hands. We are only stewards.

A good biblical example of a person who recognized his spiritual stewardship (at least at first) was Solomon (cf. I Kgs. 3:9,11).

▣ **“I am going to bring disaster on all flesh”** This hyperbolic idiom is also found in 25:31 and Isa. 66:16. It is difficult for modern westerners to interpret ANE poetry because of our tendency toward literalism. A book that has really helped me in this genre is D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic*. I commend it to you!

▣ **“but I will give your life to you as booty”** YHWH promises to spare Baruch’s life in the midst of the judgment which will fall on the Judeans in Egypt.

This military imagery occurs several times in Jeremiah (cf. 21:9; 38:2; 39:18).

JEREMIAH 46

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Defeat of Pharaoh Foretold	Judgment on Egypt	Oracles Against Foreign Nations (46:1-51:64)	Egypt's Defeat at Carchemish	Prophecies Against the Nations
46:1	46:1-2	46:1 Against Egypt	46:1-4	46:1 Prophecies Against Egypt, The Defeat At Carchemish
46:2-12 (3-12)	46:3-6 (3-6)	46:2-5 (3-5) 46:6 (6)	(3-4) 46:5-9 (5-9)	46:2 46:3-6 (3-6)
	46:7-10 (7-10)	46:7-12 (7-12)	46:10-12 (10-12)	46:7-12 (7-12)
	46:11-12 (11-12)			
	Babylon Will Strike Egypt		The Coming of Nebuchadnezzar	The Invasion of Egypt
46:13-24 (14-24)	46:13-19 (14-17)	46:13-17 (14-17)	46:13-16 (14-16)	46:13 46:14-21 (14-21)
	(18-19)	46:18-19 (18-19)	46:17-24 (17-24)	
	46:20-26 (20-22)	46:20-21 (20-21)		
	(23-24)	46:22-24 (22-24)		46:22-24 (22-24)
46:25-26		46:25-26	46:25-26	46:25-26
	God Will Preserve Israel		The LORD Will Save His People	
46:27-28 (27-28)	46:27-28 (27-28)	46:27-28 (27-28)	46:27-28 (27-28)	46:27-28 (27-28)

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This begins the literary unit of the book dealing with YHWH's judgment on the surrounding nations (cf. 25:15-38).
- B. These nations would never hear/read these prophecies. YHWH is addressing them in a literary way to show that He is the only God, the God of all the earth.
- C. The nations addressed are
 1. Egypt
 2. Philistia
 3. Moab
 4. Ammon
 5. Edom
 6. Syria
 7. Kedar and Hazor
 8. Elam
 9. Babylon

D. Chart of Prophecies Against Nations and Regions (Jeremiah 46-49)

NATIONS	CHAP/VERSE	DATE	GODS LISTED	WHY JUDGMENT	BY WHOM	ANY HOPE
Egypt	46:2-12	605 B.C.		Arrogance	Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish	46:11
Egypt	46:13-26	?	Apis (Haf) 46:15	Idolatry 46:25	Nebuchadnezzar invades Egypt	46:26
Philistia	47:1-7	609, 605, 604, 601 B.C.			Waters from North (i.e., Babylon) 47:2	
Moab	48:1-47		Chemosh 48:7,13,26	Trust in Yourselves 48:7 Overconfidence 48:11 Pride 48:29 Arrogance 48:26	An Eagle 48:40 A Destroyer 48:8,32	48:47
Ammon	49:1-6		Malcam Milcom Molech 49:1,3	Trust in Her Treasures 49:4		49:6
Edom	49:7-22			Arrogance in Geography 49:16	A Lion 49:19 An Eagle 49:22	
Damascus	49:23-27	733 B.C.				
Kedar and Hazor	49:28-33	599 B.C.			Nebuchadnezzar 49:28,30	
Elam	49:34-39					49:39

E. This chapter describes Egypt's defeat by Nebuchadnezzar's army at Carchemish in Syria. It is poetic and contains numerous commands.

1. Verses 3-4 (IMPERATIVES)
 - a. line up the shield and buckler
 - b. draw near for the battle
 - c. harness the horses
 - d. mount the steeds
 - e. take your stand with helmets on (the only *Hiphil* in a series of *Qal* IMPERATIVES)
 - f. polish the spears
 - g. put on the scale-armor
2. Verse 6 (IMPERFECTS used as JUSSIVES)
 - a. let not the swift man flee
 - b. let not the mighty man escape
3. Verse 8 (two IMPERFECTS used as COHORTATIVES and one COHORTATIVE)
 - a. I will rise
 - b. I will cover
 - c. I will surely destroy
4. Verse 11 (*Qal* IMPERATIVES)
 - a. go up
 - b. obtain

5. Verse 14 (4 *Hiphil* IMPERATIVES, 1 *Qal*)
 - a. declare in Egypt
 - b. proclaim in Migdol
 - c. proclaim (*Qal*) also in Memphis and Tehpanhes
 - d. take your stand
 - e. get yourself ready
6. Verse 16 (*Qal* IMPERATIVE and COHORTATIVE)
 - a. get up
 - b. let us go back

F. Verses 2-12 deal with the battle at Carchemish (i.e., in Syria to the west of Haran on the headwaters of the Euphrates River) in 605 B.C.

Verses 13-26 deal with Nebuchadnezzar's military invasion in 568-567 B.C. Egypt was completely conquered by Persia in 525 B.C.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 46:1

¹That which came as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the nations.

46:1 This is an introductory verse for the literary unit dealing with YHWH's judgments against the surrounding nations (chapters 46-51).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 46:2-12

²To Egypt, concerning the army of Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt, which was by the Euphrates River at Carchemish, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon defeated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah:

³"Line up the shield and buckler,
And draw near for the battle!

⁴Harness the horses,
And mount the steeds,
And take your stand with helmets *on*!
Polish the spears,
Put on the scale-armor!

⁵Why have I seen *it*?
They are terrified,
They are drawing back,
And their mighty men are defeated
And have taken refuge in flight,
Without facing back;
Terror is on every side!"
Declares the LORD.

⁶"Let not the swift man flee,
Nor the mighty man escape;
In the north beside the river Euphrates
They have stumbled and fallen.

⁷Who is this that rises like the Nile,

Like the rivers whose waters surge about?

⁸Egypt rises like the Nile,

Even like the rivers whose waters surge about;
And He has said, “I will rise and cover *that* land;
I will surely destroy the city and its inhabitants.”

⁹Go up, you horses, and drive madly, you chariots,

That the mighty men may march forward:
Ethiopia and Put, that handle the shield,
And the Lydians, that handle *and* bend the bow.

¹⁰For that day belongs to the Lord GOD of hosts,

A day of vengeance, so as to avenge Himself on His foes;
And the sword will devour and be satiated
And drink its fill of their blood;
For there will be a slaughter for the Lord GOD of hosts,
In the land of the north by the river Euphrates.

¹¹Go up to Gilead and obtain balm,

O virgin daughter of Egypt!
In vain have you multiplied remedies;
There is no healing for you.

¹²The nations have heard of your shame,

And the earth is full of your cry *of distress*;
For one warrior has stumbled over another,
And both of them have fallen down together.”

46:2 “Pharaoh Neco” Necho II (609-593 B.C.) marched through Judah to confront Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish in Syria. Josiah attempted to stop him and was wounded at Meggido. Josiah later died of his wounds (i.e., 609 B.C.). Pharaoh Neco’s army was defeated (partially because Josiah delayed him which allowed Babylon to defeat the remaining Assyrian army). As Pharaoh Neco returned to Egypt he stopped at Jerusalem and exiled King Jehoahaz, Josiah’s successor of only three months (cf. II Kgs. 23:28-37; II Chr. 35:20-36:4). Neco placed Jehoiakim (a relative of Josiah) on Judah’s throne as his surrogate (cf. II Kgs. 23:29ff).

▣ **“defeated”** See II Kgs. 24:7 for a description of the battle.

46:3-4 “line up” These IMPERATIVES (see Contextual Insights, D) were orders given by Egyptian officers to the Egyptian soldiers.

46:4 “helmets” These helmets were rarely worn, therefore, this denotes that the soldiers were to “immediately prepare for battle.”

46:5 What powerful poetry of fear and defeat. It reminds me of Nahum 2.

Line 7, “terror is on every side,” is an often repeated phrase in Jeremiah (cf. 6:25; 20:3,10; 49:29, see BDB 159 II, KB 544).

46:7-8 These two verses seem to reflect the arrogant attitude of the Egyptian army; they used the annual overflowing of the Nile as the imagery of victorious military conquest. But it is all a myth, a false hope.

In reality the Egyptian army and her mercenaries flee before the Babylonian military. Instead of the Nile overflowing its banks, it retreats!

46:9 This verse identifies several national elements of the Egyptian army (i.e., Ethiopia, Put, and Lydia). It is uncertain if they were mercenaries (cf. v. 21) or defeated armies that joined Egypt's victorious army.

46:10 “the Lord GOD of hosts” (twice) The first title “Lord” is the term *Adon* (BDB 10) which denotes “owner,” “master,” “lord,” “husband.”

The second title is literally “YHWH Sabbaoth.” YHWH is usually noted in English Bibles as all capitals, LORD.

Verse 10 may be the Divine response to Pharaoh Necho killing Josiah and replacing (exiling) his heir who reigned only three months!

▣ **“the sword”** Often in poetic passages in the OT the “sword” is personified. The sword of the Babylonians is the sword of YHWH.

▣

NASB “a slaughter for the LORD”

NKJV “the LORD. . .has a sacrifice”

NRSV “the LORD. . .holds a sacrifice”

NJB “the LORD. . .is holding a sacrificial feast”

JPSOA “the LORD. . .is preparing a sacrifice”

The UBS' *A Handbook On Jeremiah* (p. 847) has a good comment on this phrase. The picture is that of a sacrificial feast in which the worshiper is allowed to eat part of the animal that has been sacrificed. The same idea is conveyed in Isa. 34:5-7; Ezek. 39:17-20; Zeph. 1:7.

46:11 Gilead was widely known for its healing balms. But there was no balm for Egypt (cf. lines 3, 4). She is doomed to defeat and shame.

▣ **“virgin daughter of Egypt”** This is the NOUN CONSTRUCT of “virgin” (BDB 413) and “daughter” (BDB 123 I). The CONSTRUCT “daughter(s) of _____” is a way to refer to a nation.

1. Zion/Jerusalem/Judah – Ps. 9:14; Isa. 1:8; 10:32; 16:1; 23:12; 37:22; 52:2; 62:11; Jer. 4:11; 6:2,23,26; 8:11,19,21,22; 9:1,7; 14:17; Lamentations (many times); Micah 1:13; 4:8,10; Zeph. 3:14; Zech. 2:7,10; 9:9
2. Israel – II Sam. 1:24; Ezek. 16:55
3. Tyre – Ps. 45:12
4. Babylon/Chaldea – Ezra 2:61; Ps. 137:8; Isa. 47:1,5; 50:42; 51:33
5. Egypt – Jer. 46:24
6. Tarshish – Isa. 23:10
7. Philistia – Ezek. 16:27,57
8. all nations – Ezek. 32:16

When the term “virgin daughter” is used it seems to emphasize the vulnerability of the nation addressed.

1. Zion – II Kgs. 19:21; Isa. 37:22; Jer. 14:17; Lam. 2:10,13
2. Israel – Jer. 18:13; 31:4,21; Amos 5:2
3. Babylon – Isa. 47:1
4. Egypt – Jer. 46:11

In II Kgs. 19:21 both forms are found in poetic parallel. Also note the changing meaning of “Israel,” sometimes referring to all of the covenant people, descendants from Jacob/Israel, and in other contexts (i.e., the Divided Monarchy, 922 B.C. - 722 B.C.) it refers to the Northern Ten Tribes (i.e., Israel, Samaria, Ephraim).

46:12 “The nations have heard of your shame” This is exactly the opposite of YHWH’s intended purpose for His covenant people (cf. Gen. 12:3; Ezek. 36:22-36). YHWH wanted the descendants of Abraham to reflect His character to the world and thereby to attract the world to Himself. This is still His purpose for His people. See Special Topic: Bob’s Evangelical Biases at 1:5.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 46:13-24

¹³***This is the message which the LORD spoke to Jeremiah the prophet about the coming of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to smite the land of Egypt:***

¹⁴**“Declare in Egypt and proclaim in Migdol,
Proclaim also in Memphis and Tahpanhes;
Say, ‘Take your stand and get yourself ready,
For the sword has devoured those around you.’**

¹⁵**Why have your mighty ones become prostrate?
They do not stand because the LORD has thrust them down.**

¹⁶**They have repeatedly stumbled;
Indeed, they have fallen one against another.
Then they said, ‘Get up! And let us go back
To our own people and our native land
Away from the sword of the oppressor.’**

¹⁷**They cried there, ‘Pharaoh king of Egypt *is but* a big noise;
He has let the appointed time pass by!’**

¹⁸**As I live,” declares the King
Whose name is the LORD of hosts,
“Surely one shall come *who looms up* like Tabor among the mountains,
Or like Carmel by the sea.**

¹⁹**Make your baggage ready for exile,
O daughter dwelling in Egypt,
For Memphis will become a desolation;
It will even be burned down *and* bereft of inhabitants.**

²⁰**Egypt is a pretty heifer,
But a horsefly is coming from the north—it is coming!**

²¹**Also her mercenaries in her midst
Are like fattened calves,
For even they too have turned back *and* have fled away together;
They did not stand *their ground*.
For the day of their calamity has come upon them,
The time of their punishment.**

²²**Its sound moves along like a serpent;
For they move on like an army
And come to her as woodcutters with axes.**

²³**They have cut down her forest,” declares the LORD;
“Surely it will no *more* be found,**

Even though they are *now* more numerous than locusts

And are without number.

**²⁴The daughter of Egypt has been put to shame,
Given over to the power of the people of the north.”**

46:13-26 As verses 1-12 describe the battle at Carchemish in Syria in 605 B.C., vv. 13-26 describe a later invasion of Egypt itself.

46:14 All of these locations are mentioned in 44:1 as places where the doomed Judeans were living.

46:15

NASB, Peshitta “become prostrate”

NKJV, JPSOA “swept away”

NRSV, NJB

REB, LXX “Apis (Haf) fled”

TEV “Apis fallen”

There are several translation issues with this verse.

1. “mighty ones” (BDB 7) can refer to
 - a. soldiers (NIV, NET Bible)
 - b. the Egyptian bull god (LXX, NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 234)
2. the VERB is SINGULAR, the NOUN PLURAL. The LXX divides the VERB (הָפַח) into two words (הָפַח וְהָפַח) which means “Hap (Apis) has fled.” The UBS Text Project supports this division by giving it a “B” rating (p. 293).
3. The defeat of the Egyptian soldiers or bull god (possibly a reference to Pharaoh as the incarnation of Egypt’s gods) is attributed to YHWH (line 2).

46:16

NASB “They have repeatedly stumbled”

NKJV, JPSOA “He made many fall”

NRSV “Your multitude stumbled and fell”

TEV “Your soldiers have stumbled and fallen”

NJB “he has caused many to fall”

LXX “your multitude was weak and fell”

REB “the rabble of Egypt stumble and fall”

Peshitta “Multitudes of them are fallen”

The MT has “he made many stumble” (*Hiphil* PERFECT and *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, both MASCULINE SINGULAR). The “he” is YHWH from v. 15. Some translations assume it is a collective reference to the Egyptian army.

46:17

NASB, NKJV,

NET “a big noise”

NRSV, LXX “braggart”

NJB “Much-noise”

REB “Bombast”

Peshitta “Pharaoh the Lame. . .the troublemaker”

The Hebrew word (BDB 981, KB 1370 II) means

1. roar of water (i.e., battle) – Isa. 17:12; Jer. 48:45; 51:55; Amos 2:2; Hos. 10:14

2. uproar of battle – Ps. 74:23; Isa. 17:12-13; 25:5
3. festival uproar – Isa. 5:14

It is used here as a possible play on Pharaoh’s name or a ridicule of his military appearing and then disappearing (Jer. 37:5).

46:18 “the King

Whose name is the LORD of hosts” YHWH, the covenant Deity, has always been “king” (cf. I Sam. 8:7). The Judean kings (cf. Gen. 49:10) from the line of Jesse/David (cf. II Samuel 7) have only served as earthly representatives of Him.

The opening phrase, “As I live,” functions in two ways.

1. a word play on the Hebrew VERB “to be” and YHWH (i.e., the ever-living, only-living Deity)
2. it is an idiom introducing an oath. An oath by YHWH in His name is a powerful promise that His words will come to be.

▣ **“Mount Tabor. . .Mount Carmel”** These are metaphors of the topological features that dominate a landscape. They are used here as metaphors of overwhelming power (i.e., the Babylonian army against the Egyptian army).

46:19

NASB, LXX “It will even be burned down”

NKJV, TEV, REB “a ruin”

NJB, JPSOA, Peshitta “desolate”

The Hebrew VERB (BDB 428, KB 429, *Niphal* PERFECT) means “to kindle” or “to burn” (cf. Jer. 2:15; 11:16; 17:27; 21:14; 43:12; 49:2,27; 50:32; 51:30,58), but it is also used of “ruin” or “waste” (cf. Jer. 4:7; 9:11).

46:21-23 “her mercenaries” They are mentioned in v. 9. Even these experienced, hired soldiers act like defenseless, pampered calves! They all flee (cf. v. 5) in the face of Nebuchadnezzar’s army (“horsefly” of v. 20), as do the Egyptian soldiers, symbolized as a slithering snake in v. 22.

Notice the different metaphors used to describe Babylon’s army.

1. woodcutters with axes
2. more numerous than locusts

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 46:25-26

²⁵The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, says, “Behold, I am going to punish Amon of Thebes, and Pharaoh, and Egypt along with her gods and her kings, even Pharaoh and those who trust in him. ²⁶I shall give them over to the power of those who are seeking their lives, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of his officers. Afterwards, however, it will be inhabited as in the days of old,” declares the LORD.

46:25-26 In this chapter several prose verses introduce a poetic section.

1. vv. 1-2, then poem vv. 3-12
2. v. 13, then poem vv. 14-24
3. vv. 25-26, about the previous poem

46:25 This verse seems to repeat itself. The LXX shortens it to “Behold, I am avenging Amon, her son, on Pharaoh and on those who trust in him.”

Amon (BDB 51 I) was supposed to be the “king of the gods.” The three gods, Ra, Ptah, and Amon, are often combined. As the worship of Apis (cf. v. 15) was centered in Memphis, the worship of *Amon* was centered in Thebes.

46:26 Egypt will be completely destroyed (cf. Ezek. 29:8-12) but it will be reinhabited (cf. Ezek. 29:13-14).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT:46:27-28

²⁷“**But as for you, O Jacob My servant, do not fear,
Nor be dismayed, O Israel!
For, see, I am going to save you from afar,
And your descendants from the land of their captivity;
And Jacob will return and be undisturbed
And secure, with no one making *him* tremble.**

²⁸**O Jacob My servant, do not fear,” declares the LORD,
“For I am with you.
For I will make a full end of all the nations
Where I have driven you,
Yet I will not make a full end of you;
But I will correct you properly
And by no means leave you unpunished.”**

46:27-28 The parallel to these verses is in 30:10-11. This section of Jeremiah is called the Book of Hope. It addresses the Judeans who have been exiled to Babylon.

46:27 The first two VERBS are IMPERFECTS used in a JUSSIVE sense. The exiles in Babylon (not Egypt) are commanded not to be afraid. YHWH will save (BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE, cf. 23:3-4; 29:14) them!

Notice the VERBS used to describe YHWH’s people in Babylonian exile.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. do not fear (v. 28) | 5. you shall be undisturbed |
| 2. do not be dismayed | 6. you shall be secure |
| 3. I am going to save you | 7. no one will make you tremble |
| 4. you shall return | |

A new day of restoration and security is promised!

In the literary unit of judgment on the nations there are several passages related to the exiles of Judah (cf. 50:4-10,17-20; 51:36-40,50-53).

46:28 The basis of the Babylonian exiles’ hope is YHWH and His promises (cf. II San. 7:8-16).

1. I am with you
2. I shall make a full end of all the nations where you were exiled
3. I shall not make an end of you
4. I shall correct you properly

Discipline but not judgment. This is similar to YHWH’s promise to David’s royal descendants in II Samuel 7:14.

Verses 27-28 are very similar theologically to 30:10-11. The theme of restoration is repeated for emphasis!

JEREMIAH 47

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prophecy Against Philistia	Judgment On Philistia	Against the Philistines	The LORD'S Message About Philistia	Prophecy Against the Philistines
47:1	47:1-2a	47:1-7 (2-7)	47:1-7 (2b-7)	47:1
47:2-7 (2-7)	47:2b-5 47:6-7 (6-7)			47:2-7 (2b-7)

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 47:1

¹That which came as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the Philistines, before Pharaoh conquered Gaza.

47:1 This first verse dates the prophecy (i.e., before Pharaoh conquered Gaza).

The Babylonian conquest of Philistia was also prophesied in 25:20. There are several other places where the destruction of Philistia is prophesied (cf. Isa. 14:29-31; Ezek. 25:15-17; Joel 3:4-8; Amos 1:6-8; Zeph. 2:4-7; Zech 9:5-7).

Herodotus (*Hist. II*, 159) mentions that Pharaoh Necho II conquered a Philistine city (i.e., Gaza) about 609 B.C. This would link up with his replacing Josiah's heir (Jehoiahaz) with another puppet king

(Jehoiakim), also in 609 B.C. The problem with this date is that Nebuchadnezzar did not invade until 601 B.C.

The Expositors Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 655, lists three possible dates for the invasion of Babylon (if the MT is correct).

1. 609 B.C. – same time as the death of Josiah by Necho II
2. 604 B.C. – after the defeat of the Egyptian army at Carchemish
3. still later in the reign of Pharaoh Hophra (or Apries, 588-569 B.C.), when he invaded Phoenicia and Philistia, which were on the way (i.e., southern coast)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 47:2-7

²Thus says the LORD:

**“Behold, waters are going to rise from the north
And become an overflowing torrent,
And overflow the land and all its fullness,
The city and those who live in it;
And the men will cry out,
And every inhabitant of the land will wail.**

**³Because of the noise of the galloping hoofs of his stallions,
The tumult of his chariots, *and* the rumbling of his wheels,
The fathers have not turned back for *their* children,
Because of the limpness of *their* hands,**

**⁴On account of the day that is coming
To destroy all the Philistines,
To cut off from Tyre and Sidon
Every ally that is left;
For the LORD is going to destroy the Philistines,
The remnant of the coastland of Caphtor.**

**⁵Baldness has come upon Gaza;
Ashkelon has been ruined.
O remnant of their valley,
How long will you gash yourself?**

**⁶Ah, sword of the LORD,
How long will you not be quiet?
Withdraw into your sheath;
Be at rest and stay still.**

**⁷How can it be quiet,
When the LORD has given it an order?
Against Ashkelon and against the seacoast—
There He has assigned it.”**

47:2 “waters. . .from the north” The invasion of Babylon into Palestine has been characterized by several metaphors.

1. overflowing boiling pot pouring south (cf. 1:13-14)
2. biting fly from the north (cf. 46:20)
3. here as a flooding river (Egypt is often described as the flooding Nile)

The imagery of an invading nation as an overflowing river is common in the OT.

1. Assyria – Isa. 8:8-9

2. Egypt – Jer. 46:7-8; Amos 8:8; 9:5

47:2e-3 This describes the actions of the Philistines.

1. the men cry out, v. 2e
2. every inhabitant of the land will wail, v. 2f
3. fathers have not turned back for their children, v. 3c
4. their hands are limp, v. 3d

What has terrified them?

1. the noise of the galloping hooves of his stallions, v. 3a
2. the tumult of his chariots, v. 3b

47:4 All of the small nations on the Mediterranean coast (the only possible land route from Mesopotamia to Egypt because of the desert in between) will be invaded and defeated.

▣ **“The remnant of the coastland of Caphtor”** The Philistines were from Caphtor (cf. Deut. 2:23; Amos 9:7). However, “Caphtor” here may be a general reference to all the islands of the eastern Mediterranean.

47:5 There were five independent city-states which made up Philistia.

1. Gaza
2. Ashkelon
3. Ashdad
4. Gath
5. Ekron

▣

NASB, NKJV,

JPSOA “O remnant of their valley”

NRSV “O remnant of their power”

NJB “you who remain in the valley”

LXX, RSV “the remaining Enakim” (i.e., “Anakites,” cf. Josh. 11:22)

REB “the remnant of the Philistine power”

The NASB reflects the MT. The NRSV and REB assume a different root found in Ugaritic (AB, p. 310). The LXX is an emendation about the giants found at Gaza, Gath, and Ashdad in Josh. 11:22. The REB assumes that Ashkelon was the only remaining undefeated Philistine city-state.

SPECIAL TOPIC: TERMS USED FOR TALL/POWERFUL WARRIORS OR PEOPLE GROUPS

These large/tall/powerful people are called by several names.

1. *Nephilim* (BDB 658) – Gen. 6:4; Num. 13:33
2. *Rephaim* (either BDB 952 or BDB 952 II) – Gen. 14:5; Deut. 2:11,20; 3:11,13; Josh. 12:4; 13:12; II Sam. 21:16,18,20,22; I Chr. 20:4,6,8
3. *Zamzummin* (BDB 273), *zuzim* (BDB 265) – Gen. 14:5; Deut. 2:20
4. *Emim* (BDB 34) – Gen. 14:5; Deut. 2:10-11
5. *Anakim* (sons of *Anak*, BDB 778 I) – Num. 13:33; Deut. 1:28; 2:10-11,21; 9:2; Josh. 11:21-22; 14:12,15

▣ **“gash yourself”** This was part of

1. their idol worship (see Special Topic at 2:20)
2. their mourning rites (see Special Topic at 2:37)

Because of the parallelism with v. 5a, probably #2 is correct.

47:6 This verse addresses the personified sword of YHWH (cf. 12:12; Isa. 34:6; Amos 9:4).

The question is asked (apparently by those being conquered) how long will it

1. not be quieted
2. withdraw into its sheath
3. be at rest
4. stay still

The last three are IMPERATIVES!

47:7 Verse 7 is an answer to the question of v. 6 (i.e., LXX text). There is no rest for YHWH’s sword because the conquest of Palestine by Babylon is His will (i.e., “He has assured it,” BDB 416, KB 419, *Qal* PERFECT). YHWH is in charge of world history! He now uses Babylon, as He previously used Assyria and will use Persia in the future, to accomplish His purposes.

JEREMIAH 48

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prophecy Against Moab	Judgment On Moab	Against Moab	The Destruction of Moab	Prophecies Against Moab
48:1-10 (1-10)	48:1a	48:1-13 (1-2)	48:1-3 (1-3)	48:1-2 (1-2)
	48:1b-5 (1b-5)			48:3-9 (3-9)
		(3-6)	48:4-6 (4-6)	
	48:6-10 (6-10)		48:7-10 (7-10)	
		(7-8) (9)	The Cities of Moab Are Destroyed	48:10
48:11-20 (11)	48:11-25 (11)	48:11-13 (11)	48:11	48:11 (11)
	(12-13)		48:12-13	48:12-13
(13-20)		48:14-20 (14-17)	48:14-16 (14-16)	48:14-17 (14-17)
	(14-15) (16-17)		48:17-20 (17-20)	
	(18-20)	(18-20)		48:18-20 (18-20)
48:21-35	(21-25)	48:21-25	48:21-25	48:21-24
			Moab Will Be Humbled	48:25 (25)
	48:26-39 (26-28)	48:26-27	48:26-27	48:26-27
(28-33)		48:28-33 (28-33)	48:28-33	48:28 (28)
				48:29-33 (29-33)
	(30-34)			
		48:34-36	48:34-35	48:34
	(35-36)			48:35

48:36-39			48:36-39	48:36-39
	(37-39)	48:37-44	No Escape For Moab	
48:40-44 (40-44)	48:40-44 (40-44)	(40-44)	48:40-46	48:40-43 (40-43)
				48:44 (44)
48:45-47 (45-47)	48:45-47 (45-46) (47)	48:45-47 (45-47)		48:45-46 (45-46)
			48:47	48:47 (47)

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is a lengthy condemnation of Moab (cf. Isaiah 15-16) made up of several different poems and comments about their judgment. Moab, Ammon, and Edom were relatives of the Israelites.
 1. Moab – judged in chapter 48
 2. Ammon – judged in 49:1-6
 3. Edom – judged in 49:7-22

- B. There are many (17 or 18) IMPERATIVES in this chapter. Several of them are involved in *Kethiv*, (in MT text) *Qere* (suggested reading in the margin) issues. The Masoretic scholars recognized about one thousand places in the OT where one form is in the text but another is suggested in the margin. There are five of these in this chapter and three are related to the gender of the IMPERATIVES.
 1. v. 18, “sit” (BDB 442, KB 444)
 - a. *Qal* PARTICIPLE MASCULINE PLURAL (*Kethiv*)

- b. *Qal* IMPERATIVE FEMININE SINGULAR (*Qere*)
- 2. v. 20, “wail” (BDB 410, KB 413)
 - a. *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE FEMININE SINGULAR (*Kethiv*)
 - b. *Hophol* IMPERATIVE MASCULINE PLURAL (*Qere*)
- 3. v. 20, “cry out” (BDB 277, KB 277)
 - a. *Qal* IMPERATIVE FEMININE SINGULAR (*Kethiv*)
 - b. *Qal* IMPERATIVE MASCULINE PLURAL (*Qere*)

This same “FEMININE” vs. “MASCULINE” issue is also involved in v. 27.

- 1. *Niphal* PERFECT FEMININE SINGULAR (*Kethiv*)
- 2. *Niphal* PERFECT MASCULINE PLURAL (*Qere*)

The issue involves the proper gender when addressing a nation or inhabitants of a city.

C. Notice how many cities are listed in this chapter.

- 1. Nebo, vv. 1, 22 (cf. Isa. 15:2)
- 2. Kiriathaim, vv. 1, 23 (cf. Ezek. 25:9)
- 3. Heshbon, vv. 2,34, 45 (cf. Isa. 15:4; 16:8,9)
- 4. Dimon/Dibon (“Madmen”), vv. 2, 18, 22 (cf. Isa. 15:2,9)
- 5. Horonaim, vv. 3, 5, 34 (cf. Isa. 15:5)
- 6. Luhith, v. 5 (cf. Isa. 15:5)
- 7. Aroer, v. 19 (possibly v. 6, cf Deut. 2:36; 3:12; 4:48)
- 8. Holon, v. 21 (possibly Horon, cf. Isa. 15:5 and same as #5)
- 9. Jahzah, vv. 21, 34 (cf. Isa. 15:4)
- 10. Mephaath, v. 21 (cf. Josh. 13:18; 21:37)
- 11. Beth-diblathaim, v. 22
- 12. Beth-gamul, v. 23
- 13. Beth-meor, v. 23
- 14. Kerioth, vv. 24, 41 (cf. Amos 2:2)
- 15. Bozrah, v. 24
- 16. Kir-heres, vv. 31, 36 (one of Moab’s capitals, cf. Isa. 16:7, 11)
- 17. Sibmah, v. 32 (cf. Isa. 16:8,9)
- 18. Jazer, v. 32 (cf. Isa. 16:8,9)
- 19. Elealeh, v. 34 (cf. Isa. 15:4; 16:9)
- 20. Zoar, v. 34 (cf. Isa. 15:5, RSV and NEB have it in v. 4)
- 21. Eglath-shelishiyah, v. 34 (cf. Isa. 15:5)
- 22. Sihon, v. 45 (name of an Amorite king who lived in Heshbon, #3)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 48:1-10

¹Concerning Moab. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel,

“Woe to Nebo, for it has been destroyed;
 Kiriathaim has been put to shame, it has been captured;
 The lofty stronghold has been put to shame and shattered.

²There is praise for Moab no longer;
 In Heshbon they have devised calamity against her:
 ‘Come and let us cut her off from *being* a nation!’

You too, Madmen, will be silenced;

The sword will follow after you.

³The sound of an outcry from Horonaim,

‘Devastation and great destruction!’

⁴Moab is broken,

Her little ones have sounded out a cry of distress.

⁵For by the ascent of Luhith

They will ascend with continual weeping;

For at the descent of Horonaim

They have heard the anguished cry of destruction.

⁶Flee, save your lives,

That you may be like a juniper in the wilderness.

⁷For because of your trust in your own achievements and treasures,

Even you yourself will be captured;

And Chemosh will go off into exile

Together with his priests and his princes.

⁸A destroyer will come to every city,

So that no city will escape;

The valley also will be ruined

And the plateau will be destroyed,

As the LORD has said.

⁹Give wings to Moab,

For she will flee away;

And her cities will become a desolation,

Without inhabitants in them.

¹⁰Cursed be the one who does the LORD’S work negligently,

And cursed be the one who restrains his sword from blood.”

48:1 “Moab” The etymology of the name is uncertain. Genesis 19:37 seems to connect it to Lot’s daughter, linking the child to her father, “from my father” or “water of my father,” but this is the type of popular etymology so common in the OT. Lot’s incestuous child becomes the designation of a nation (as does the other daughter’s son, Ammon (cf. Gen. 19:38). Their territory was between the Zered and Arnon Rivers on the eastern side of the Dead Sea.

▣ **“Nebo”** This term (BDB 612) has several biblical orientations.

1. a Babylonian deity (cf. Isa. 46:1), sometimes spelled “Nabu.” He was the eldest son of *Marduk*.
2. a mountain in Moab just east of the top of the Dead Sea, in the plains of Moab from which Moses was allowed to view (but not enter) the Promised Land (cf. Deut. 32:48-52). He died there and was buried by God (cf. Deuteronomy 34). The mountain was also known as Pisgah (cf. Deut. 34:1).
3. a city on the plains of Moab (cf. Num. 32:3,38; Isa. 15:2; Jer. 48:1,22)

▣ **“Kiriathaim”** This city (not to be confused with Kiriatharim) is located on the eastern side of the Jordan River on the plateau of Moab (cf. line 5) in the tribal allocation of Reuben (cf. Num. 32:37; Josh. 13:19; Jer. 48:1,23; Ezek. 25:9). The name itself (BDB 900) means “double city.”



NASB	“the lofty stronghold”
NKJV	“the high stronghold”
NRSV, NET	“the fortress”
TEV	“its mighty fortress”
NJB	“the citadel”
REB, JPSOA footnote	“Misgab”
LXX	“Hamagab”
JPSOA	“the stronghold”

This word (BDB 960, KB 640) basically means “high refuge” (cf. Isa. 33:16). However, it has the ARTICLE which is unusual – “the fortress” – unless it is referring to all of the plateau of Moab (cf. v. 8d). Also, the NOUN for fortress is MASCULINE in gender, but all the VERBS used in 48:1 (except for the first one, “say”) are THIRD PERSON FEMININE SINGULAR. There are two other cities listed in v. 1. These FEMININE forms fit a place name (cf. LXX and REB). Unfortunately this place name appears nowhere in ancient literature.

48:2 “Heshbon” This city (BDB 363 II) is in northern Moab but it was in an area contested by Ammon (cf. Num. 21:25). Apparently it is involved in a conspiracy against Moab, possibly by the Ammonites. However, it is probably better to see it as a reference to a campsite of the Babylonian army.

There is a word play between the name of Heshbon (BDB 363 II, *השבון*) and the VERB “devised calamity” (BDB 362, KB 359, *Qal* PERFECT, *השבו*).

▣ **“Madmen”** There is considerable doubt about the meaning of this word (*מדמן*, BDB 199, KB 226-227). Do not confuse it with the English meaning.

1. a play on the VERB (BDB 198 I, KB 226 I) “be silenced” (cf. LXX)
2. a play on dung hill (BDB 199 I, KB 226, *גמד*, cf. Isa. 25:10)
3. a city’s name (BDB 199), found only in Jer. 48:2
4. a play on “Dimon” (BDB 192, *דימון*, cf. Isa. 15:9), a variant of Dibon (BDB 192, cf. Isa. 15:2)

48:3 “Horonaim” The term (BDB 357) means “two hollows,” “two caves,” or “two ravines.” This city’s name is found only in Isa. 15:5 and Jer. 48:5,34 although RSV translates II Sam. 13:34 as a form of this word.

48:4 “Her little ones” The RSV and NRSV think this word (*צעוריה* [translated “servants” in 14:3], BDB 859) should be translated by a city’s name, Zoar (*צער*, BDB 858, cf. v. 34 and Isa. 15:5). The LXX also has a place name here (i.e., Zogora).

The UBS Text Project gives the *Qere* reading, “her little ones,” a “B” rating. In this way the grammar of the Hebrew verse fits better.

48:5 “Luhith” This Moabite city (BDB 532) is linked to Horonaim as a place of ascent and descent, probably close to the Dead Sea.

48:6 The cities of Moab are doomed. They are commanded to

1. flee – *Qal* IMPERATIVE

2. save your lives – *Piel* IMPERATIVE
3. give wings – *Qal* IMPERATIVE



NASB, NKJV	“like a juniper”
NRSV, LXX	“like a wild ass”
TEV, NJB	“like a wild donkey”
JPSOA	“like Aroer”
REB	“like one destitute”
Pehsitta	“like a plant”

The MT is uncertain, as the various options show. Aroer (cf. v. 19b) is the name of a city in Moab (BDB 792 II) and the parallelism of other cities seems to favor this option.

However, a similar word “shrub” or “juniper” is used in Jer. 17:6 (BDB 792 I),

“Aroer” – כַּעְרוֹעַר (BDB 792 II), as in v. 19

“wild ass” – כַּעְרוּד (KB 882) in LXX and Aquila, cf. 2:24; 14:6 (different Hebrew word)

“juniper” – כַּעְרוֹעַר (BDB 792 I, KB 883, cf. 17:6) in MT which UBS Text Project gives a “C” rating

48:7 “For because you trusted in...” Several things are mentioned that Moab trusted (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT).

1. NASB “our own achievements”
- NKJV “works”
- NRSV, LXX “strongholds”
- TEV “strength”
- NJB “deeds”
- JPSOA “wealth”
- REB “defenses”

The MT has “deeds” or “works” (BDB 795), which could refer to a number of things.

2. “treasures” JPSOA sees both #1 and #2 as parallel
3. they also trusted in their national idol Chemosh who would utterly fail them (cf. vv. 13,35)

The pride, arrogance, and idolatry of Moab is clearly seen in vv. 29-30,42.

▣ **“Chemosh”** This was the national deity of the Moabites (cf. Num. 21:29), where Moab is called “the people of Chemosh.” In Jdgs. 11:24 this deity is linked to Ammon. Solomon brought this cult into Jerusalem in I Kgs. 11:7; II Kgs. 23:13, on behalf of his young Canaanite wives.

The etymology of the name itself (BDB 484) is uncertain. Some scholars assume “destroyer,” or “subduer,” while other scholars see it linked to a “fish god.” Most of our information about this Canaanite deity comes from the Mesha Stele called “the Moabite Stone,” discovered in 1868 at Dibon.

The text of II Kgs. 3:21-27 (esp. v. 27) strongly suggests that Chemosh was worshiped with child sacrifice, as were *Molech* and *Ba'al*, two other Canaanite fertility gods.

48:8 Moab’s doom was by the word of YHWH (cf. v. 15c). His instrument was Babylon.

48:9

NASB, NKJV,	
NJB, JPSOA	“Give wings”
NRSV	“Set aside salt”
TEV	“Set up a tombstone”

LXX

“give signs”

REB

“give a warning signal”

There are several options on how to understand this line of poetry.

1. the MT has “wings” (BDB 851 II), a unique meaning from a supposed Aramiac root used only here
2. LXX, TEV, and REB see the VERB as a road marker (BDB 846, cf. 33:21)
3. the NRSV assumes a Ugaritic root, “salt,” which would fit the context of judgment (cf. Jdgs. 9:45)

48:10 Many English translations mark this as a parenthesis (cf. TEV, NJB, NET). It is addressed to the Babylonian invaders, admonishing them to fully execute YHWH’s judgment on every city in Moab. Show no mercy!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 48:11-20

¹¹“**Moab has been at ease since his youth;**

He has also been undisturbed, like wine on its dregs,

And he has not been emptied from vessel to vessel,

Nor has he gone into exile.

Therefore he retains his flavor,

And his aroma has not changed.

¹²Therefore behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will send to him those who tip vessels, and they will tip him over, and they will empty his vessels and shatter his jars. ¹³And Moab will be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel, their confidence.

¹⁴How can you say, ‘We are mighty warriors,

And men valiant for battle?’

¹⁵Moab has been destroyed and men have gone up to his cities;

His choicest young men have also gone down to the slaughter,”

Declares the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts.

¹⁶“The disaster of Moab will soon come,

And his calamity has swiftly hastened.

¹⁷Mourn for him, all you who *live* around him,

Even all of you who know his name;

Say, ‘How has the mighty scepter been broken,

A staff of splendor!’

¹⁸Come down from your glory

And sit on the parched ground,

O daughter dwelling in Dibon,

For the destroyer of Moab has come up against you,

He has ruined your strongholds.

¹⁹Stand by the road and keep watch,

O inhabitant of Aroer;

Ask him who flees and her who escapes

And say, ‘What has happened?’

²⁰Moab has been put to shame, for it has been shattered.

Wail and cry out;

**Declare by the Arnon
That Moab has been destroyed.”**

48:11-20 Notice that all the English translations have different ways to divide this chapter into paragraphs/strophes. It is often difficult to distinguish between prose and poetry. Even though these divisions are not inspired (i.e., marked in the original text) they serve the hermeneutical purpose of determining the literary units and how they relate to each other. Every paragraph/strophe has one main truth. This information is crucial in trying to find and follow the original inspired author’s intent. See *Biblical Interpretation Seminar* online at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

48:11-12 This is imagery drawn from the wine industry (see Special Topic at 23:9). Notice how this is also seen in verses 26 and 33. Because of these allusions to wine making these poems may have been joined together in one context

48:13 Idol worship brought shame and humiliation, to Israel or to Moab (i.e., v. 35; Isa. 44:10-11; 45:16).

The allusion to Bethel: (1) a title for God used by the Jewish inhabitants of Elephantine, an island in the Nile River (lit. “House of God”) or (2) a place name involving Jeroboam I setting up a rival temple site at Bethel where the symbol of YHWH (i.e., the golden calf, cf. Exodus 32) was turned into Canaanite fertility worship (cf. I Kgs. 12:25-33).

As fallen humans trust (BDB 105) in the power of manmade gods and reject or ignore the one true God, there is no hope, confidence, or security! Idols cannot affect reality!

48:17-20 This part of a larger poem addresses two groups.

1. those who live near Moab
2. those who have heard of it

These two groups are collectively personified and give advice to Moab.

1. mourn, v. 17 – *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. say, v. 17 – *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. come down, v. 18 – *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. sit, v. 18 – *Qal* IMPERATIVE(*Qere*)
5. stand by, v. 19 – *Qal* IMPERATIVE
6. keep watch, v. 19 – *Piel* IMPERATIVE
7. ask, v. 19 – *Qal* IMPERATIVE
8. say, v. 19 – *Qal* IMPERATIVE
9. wail, v. 20 – *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
10. cry out, v. 20 – *Qal* IMPERATIVE
11. declare, v. 20 – *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

48:17 “scepter. . .staff” These are both royal symbols of power.

1. scepter – BDB 641, a staff or rod
2. staff – BDB 596

They could refer to

1. a shepherd’s staff (cf. Gen. 32:10)
2. a traveler’s stick (cf. Exod. 12:11)
3. riding stick (cf. Num. 22:27)
4. weapon (cf. I Sam. 17:40; Ezek. 39:9)
5. diviner’s rod (cf. Hos. 4:12)

6. kingly power (i.e., Messianic in Zechariah 11)
Here it refers to the kingdom of Moab.

48:18-28 The Jewish Study Bible (p. 1022) asserts that this poem/oracle is based on the imagery of a woman being raped (i.e., Moab by Babylon), possibly because there are so many FEMININE SINGULAR forms.

48:18

NASB, NRSV,	
NJB, REB	“sit on the parched ground”
NKJV, JPSOA	“sit on the ground in the dust”
LXX	“sit on moist ground”
Peshitta	“sit in disgrace”
AB	“sit in filth [?]”

The footnote in the AB (Anchor Bible Commentary by John Bright) lists the options as (p. 315):

1. basso’ah – filth/excrement
2. bassama – thirst (MT)
3. bassame – on parched ground (cf. Isa. 44:3)

The JPSOA footnote says “Meaning of the Heb. uncertain” (p. 1022). Often in poetry one must rely on

1. context (i.e., parallelism and strophe emphasis)
2. cognate roots in other Semitic languages
3. parallel passages (for Jeremiah 48 use Isaiah 15-16)

The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (p. 662) has a chart that shows the relationship between Isaiah 15-16 and Jeremiah 48.

- Isa. 15:2 – Jer. 48:1
- Isa. 15:2-3 – Jer. 48:37
- Isa. 15:3 – Jer. 48:38
- Isa. 15:4 – Jer. 48:21,5
- Isa. 15:4-6 – Jer. 48:5,34
- Isa. 15:5 – Jer. 48:3
- Isa. 15:5; 16:7,11 – Jer. 48:31
- Isa. 15:7 – Jer. 48:36
- Isa. 16:6 – Jer. 48:29
- Isa. 16:8-9 – Jer. 48:32
- Isa. 16:10 – Jer. 48:33
- Isa. 16:11 – Jer. 48:36
- Isa. 16:12 – Jer. 48:35

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 48:21-35

²¹“Judgment has also come upon the plain, upon Holon, Jahzah and against Mephaath, ²²against Dibon, Nebo and Beth-diblathaim, ²³against Kiriathaim, Beth-gamul and Beth-meon, ²⁴against Kerioth, Bozrah and all the cities of the land of Moab, far and near. ²⁵The horn of Moab has been cut off and his arm broken,” declares the LORD. ²⁶“Make him drunk, for he has become arrogant toward the LORD; so Moab will wallow in his vomit, and he also will become a laughingstock. ²⁷Now was not Israel a laughingstock to you? Or was he caught among thieves? For each time you speak about him you shake *your head in scorn*.

²⁸Leave the cities and dwell among the crags,
O inhabitants of Moab,

And be like a dove that nests
Beyond the mouth of the chasm.

²⁹We have heard of the pride of Moab—he *is* very proud—
Of his haughtiness, his pride, his arrogance and his self-exaltation.

³⁰I know his fury,” declares the LORD,
“But it is futile;
His idle boasts have accomplished nothing.

³¹Therefore I will wail for Moab,
Even for all Moab will I cry out;
I will moan for the men of Kir-heres.

³²More than the weeping for Jazer
I will weep for you, O vine of Sibmah!
Your tendrils stretched across the sea,
They reached to the sea of Jazer;
Upon your summer fruits and your grape harvest
The destroyer has fallen.

³³So gladness and joy are taken away
From the fruitful field, even from the land of Moab.
And I have made the wine to cease from the wine presses;
No one will tread *them* with shouting,
The shouting will not be shouts *of joy*.

³⁴From the outcry at Heshbon even to Elealeh, even to Jahaz they have raised their voice, from Zoar even to Horonaim *and to Eglath-shelishiyah*; for even the waters of Nimrim will become desolate.
³⁵I will make an end of Moab,” declares the LORD, “the one who offers *sacrifice* on the high place and the one who burns incense to his gods.”

48:21-24 The cities of Moab are listed.

48:25 Two ancient metaphors are used to describe Moab’s total defeat.

1. her “horn” has been cut off (BDB 154, KB 180, *Niphal* PERFECT)
2. her arm broken (BDB 990, KB 1402, *Niphal* PERFECT)

48:26 The imagery from excessive wine drinking is used as a metaphor for judgment (cf. 52:27; Isa. 19:14).

1. make him drunk
2. wallow in his vomit (lit. “splash,” see BDB 706, *Qal* #3, meaning used only here, usually the VERB means to “clap” one’s hands in joy or one’s thigh in grief)

The reasons for YHWH’s judgment of Moab:

1. he is arrogant toward YHWH, vv. 26, 42
2. he is prideful, v. 29 (cf. Isa. 16:6)
3. his idle boasts are futile, v. 30



NASB, NRSV,
NJB, JPSOA “laughingstock”
NKJV, REV,

Peshitta “derision”

This word (BDB 966) denotes joyous laughter (Job 8:21; Ps. 126:2; Eccl. 2:2; 10:19), but when used in sarcasm it denotes derision (cf. Jer. 20:7; Lam. 3:14; Job 12:4).

48:27 What Moab did to Israel is now done to them (i.e., reversal)! For an example of this kind of derision see Lamentations 2:15-17!

48:28 This verse has three *Qal* imperatives. They use imagery involving the inhabitants of Moab, to seek safety in the uninhabited places (i.e., crags, caves, cf. 16:16; Jdgs. 6:2; I Sam. 13:6; Isa. 2:19).

48:29-39 The Jewish Study Bible (p. 1022) notes that these verses are written in a 3/2 beat, which characterized funeral songs. This is the lament form often used in prophetic literature in the sense of “woe.”

48:29 This is similar to Isa. 16:6. Moab’s judgment is discussed in Isaiah 15-16. There are many literary parallels and allusions between Jeremiah 48 and Isaiah 15-16. Isaiah wrote before Jeremiah.

The UBS *A Handbook on Jeremiah* (p. 888) mentions that there are several NOUNS used to describe the pride of Moab.

1. the pride of Moab (BDB 144)
2. he is very proud (BDB 144 and 547)
3. his haughtiness (BDB 147)
4. his pride (BDB 144)
5. his arrogance (BDB 144)
6. his self-exaltation (lit. “elevation of his heart,” BDB 927 CONSTRUCT BDB 524)

This purposeful repetition is to powerfully communicate the prideful attitude of Moab (cf. v. 7).

48:31-32 The subject is YHWH (cf. vv. 33,36; 31:20; Isa. 16:11; Hosea 11:8-9). He continuously grieves over the necessity of judgment on Moab, part of the tribal inheritance of His people. Judgment is YHWH’s strange work! He desires to bless, prosper, and restore!

Notice the powerful, remorseful parallel.

1. I wail – BDB 410, KB 413, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
2. I cry out – BDB 277, KB 277, *Qal* IMPERFECT
3. I mourn – BDB 211, KB 237, *Qal* IMPERFECT (form is 3rd person but parallelism is 1st person)

The NASB Study Bible (p. 1132) asserts that the FIRST PERSON PRONOUN should refer to the prophet and uses Isa. 15:5 and 16:9 as examples.

48:32 Lines 3 and 4 are repeated from Isa. 16:8. The MT has “sea” twice but the LXX does not. The “sea” would refer to the Dead Sea.

48:34 The geographical locations are uncertain, but the meaning is obvious—the outcry of judgment is heard far and wide!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 48:36-39

³⁶“Therefore My heart wails for Moab like flutes; My heart also wails like flutes for the men of Kir-heres. Therefore they have lost the abundance it produced. ³⁷For every head is bald and every beard cut short; there are gashes on all the hands and sackcloth on the loins. ³⁸On all the housetops of Moab and in its streets there is lamentation everywhere; for I have broken Moab like an undesirable vessel,” declares the LORD. ³⁹“How shattered it is! How they have wailed! How Moab

has turned his back—he is ashamed! So Moab will become a laughingstock and an object of terror to all around him.”

48:37-38 These were signs of mourning (cf. 4:8, see Special Topic at 2:37). It is possible they were also denoting idol rituals (i.e., “gashes on their hands,” cf. 16:6, or “on house tops,” cf. 19:13; 32:29) or possibly even the corrupted worship of YHWH (cf. 41:5).

48:39 “turned back” This VERB (BDB 815, KB 937, *Hiphil* PERFECT) can refer to

1. humiliation
2. retreat in battle

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 48:40-44

⁴⁰**For thus says the LORD:**

**“Behold, one will fly swiftly like an eagle
And spread out his wings against Moab.**

⁴¹**Kerioth has been captured**

**And the strongholds have been seized,
So the hearts of the mighty men of Moab in that day
Will be like the heart of a woman in labor.**

⁴²**Moab will be destroyed from *being* a people**

Because he has become arrogant toward the LORD.

⁴³**Terror, pit and snare are *coming* upon you,**

O inhabitant of Moab,” declares the LORD.

⁴⁴**“The one who flees from the terror**

**Will fall into the pit,
And the one who climbs up out of the pit
Will be caught in the snare;
For I shall bring upon her, even upon Moab,
The year of their punishment,” declares the LORD.**

48:40 This refers to Nebuchadnezzar’s army (cf. 4:13; 49:22; Ezek. 17:3; Hos. 8:1).

48:41

**NASB, NKJV,
LXX, JPSOA**

Peshitta “Kerioth”

**NRSV, TEV,
NJB, REB**

“the towns”

The Hebrew root, קרת (BDB 900) means “city.” The form in the text, הקריות, is used of a proper name in Amos 2:2 (but a different Hebrew word for “strongholds”) and also on the Moabite Stone.

▣ **“like. . .a woman in labor”** See note at 30:6.

48:43-44 This same terminology is used in Isa. 24:17-18, possibly a well known proverbial saying because it is a sound play on the three words (BDB 808, 809, 809 I). Imagery from hunting techniques are used of YHWH's judgment (cf. Amos 5:19). There is no escape, no help, no hope!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 48:45-47

⁴⁵**“In the shadow of Heshbon**

The fugitives stand without strength;

For a fire has gone forth from Heshbon

And a flame from the midst of Sihon,

And it has devoured the forehead of Moab

And the scalps of the riotous revelers.

⁴⁶**Woe to you, Moab!**

The people of Chemosh have perished;

For your sons have been taken away captive

And your daughters into captivity.

⁴⁷**Yet I will restore the fortunes of Moab**

In the latter days,” declares the LORD.

48:45 “the forehead of Moab” This is an allusion to Num. 24:17, which is one of the prophecies of Balaam. “Forehead” (BDB 802), like “rod” and “staff” of v. 17, is a symbol of royal power.

It is also possible that “forehead” is parallel to “crown” (BDB 869), meaning the heads of the rebellious Moabites were crushed (i.e., killed in battle).

48:47 As YHWH grieves over His need to judge (cf. vv. 31,36), now He promises a future day of hope (cf. 12:14-17). It must be remembered that YHWH chose Abraham/Israel to choose the world (see Special Topic at 1:5).

JEREMIAH 49

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS (The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prophecy Against Ammon	Judgment On Ammon	Against Ammon	The LORD'S Judgment On Ammon	Prophecy Against Ammon
49:1-6 (1-6)	49:1-2 (1b-2) 49:3-6 (3-6)	49:1-6 (1-6)	49:1-6	49:1-5 (1-5) 49:6
Prophecy Against Edom	Judgment On Edom	Against Edom	The LORD'S Judgment On Edom	Prophecy Against Edom
49:7-11 (7-11)	49:7-11 (7b-11)	49:7-22 (7-11)	49:7-11	49:7-11 (7-11)
49:12-13	49:12-13		49:12-13	49:12-13
49:14-16 (14-16)	49:14 (14) 49:15-19 (15-16)	(14-16)	49:14-16	49:14-16 (14-16)
49:17-19	(17-18) (19)		49:17-22	49:17-18 49:19-22 (19-22)
49:20-22	49:20-22 (20-22)			
Prophecy Against Damascus	Judgment On Damascus	Against Damascus	The LORD'S Judgment On Damascus	Prophecy Against the Towns of Syria
49:23-27 (23-27)	49:23-27 (23-27)	49:23-27 (23-27)	49:23-27	49:23-25 (23-25) 49:26 49:27 (27)
Prophecy Against Kedar and Hazor	Judgment On Kedar and Hazor	Against Kedar and Hazor	The LORD'S Judgment on the Tribe of Kedar and the City of Hazor	Prophecy Against The Arab Tribes
49:28-33 (28b-33)	49:28-33 (28b-29) (30) (31-33)	49:28-33 (28b-30) (31-33)	49:28-29 49:30-31 49:32-33	49:28-33 (28b-33)
Prophecy Against Elam	Judgment On Elam	Against Elan	The LORD'S Judgment of Elam	Prophecy Against Elam
49:34	49:34-35a	49:34	49:34-39	49:34-35a

49:35-39 (35-39)	49:35b-38 (35b-38)	49:35-38	49:35b-36 (35b-36)
			49:37-38 (37-38)
	49:39 (39)	49:39	49:39

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This chapter deals with the prophecies against
 1. Ammon, vv. 1-6
 2. Edom, vv. 7-22
 3. Syria, vv. 23-27
 4. Kedar and Hazor, vv. 28-33
 5. Elam, vv. 34-39
- B. Many cities are listed, as in chapter 48 (judgment on Moab).
 1. Ammon, vv. 1-6
 - a. Rabbah, vv. 2,3
 - b. Heshbon, v. 3
 - c. Ai, v. 3
 2. Edom, vv. 7-22
 - a. Teman, v. 7
 - b. Dedan, v. 8
 - c. Bozrah, vv. 13,22
 3. Syria, vv. 23-27
 - a. Damascus, vv. 23,34,27
 - b. Hamath, v. 23
 - c. Arpad, v. 23
 - d. "the city of praise, "the town of My joy," v. 25 (i.e., Damascus)

- C. As there was a ray of hope and restoration related to Moab in 48:47 (cf. 12:14-17), so now there is also a ray of hope and restoration for
1. Ammon, v. 6
 2. Elam, v. 39
- D. There is a recurrent emphasis on YHWH speaking.
1. thus says the LORD, vv. 1b, 2g, 12a, 18, 28
 2. declares the LORD, vv. 2b, 6c, 13b, 16h, 31b, 32d, 38c, 39c
 3. declares the LORD God of hosts, v. 5b
 4. thus says the LORD of hosts, vv. 7b, 26c, 35a
 5. a message from the LORD, v. 14
- It is possible that v. 25 is also a word from YHWH, but not probable; see note.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 49:1-6

¹Concerning the sons of Ammon. Thus says the LORD:

“Does Israel have no sons?

Or has he no heirs?

Why then has Malcam taken possession of Gad

And his people settled in its cities?

²Therefore behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD,

“That I will cause a trumpet blast of war to be heard

Against Rabbah of the sons of Ammon;

And it will become a desolate heap,

And her towns will be set on fire.

Then Israel will take possession of his possessors,”

Says the LORD.

³“Wail, O Heshbon, for Ai has been destroyed!

Cry out, O daughters of Rabbah,

Gird yourselves with sackcloth and lament,

And rush back and forth inside the walls;

For Malcam will go into exile

Together with his priests and his princes.

⁴How boastful you are about the valleys!

Your valley is flowing *away*,

O backsliding daughter

Who trusts in her treasures, *saying*,

‘Who will come against me?’

⁵Behold, I am going to bring terror upon you,”

Declares the Lord GOD of hosts,

“From all *directions* around you;

And each of you will be driven out headlong,

With no one to gather the fugitives together.

**‘But afterward I will restore
The fortunes of the sons of Ammon,’
Declares the LORD.**

49:1 “Ammon” These people (like Moab) were descendants of Lot by his own daughter (cf. Gen. 19:38). Therefore, they were relatives of Abraham’s family. Their territory was northeast of Moab on the eastern side of Jordan. A group known as “Amorites” lived next to the Jordan River and the Ammonites to the east, closer to the desert. Their capital was Rabbath. They were a potent rival to King Saul, but a vassal to Kings David and Solomon.

The Jerome Biblical Commentary (p. 334) reminds us that Ammon

1. rejoiced at the fall of Jerusalem (cf. Ezek. 25:1-7)
2. their king, Baalis, encouraged Ishmael to assassinate the new Babylonian governor, Gedaliah (cf. 40:11-16)

49:1,3

NASB	“Malcam”
NKJV	“Milcham”
NRSV, NJB,	
JJPSOA, REB	“Milcom”
TEV	“Molech”
Peshitta	“Malcolm”
LXX	“Melchol”

The MT has “their king.” All of these names are a word play on the Hebrew word for “king,” מלך (BDB 572). In I Kgs. 11:5,33, this Ammonite national deity is called “Milcom,” but in v. 7 “Molech” (TEC), which is the more common name of this fertility god. See Special Topic at 2:33.

The UBS Text Project (p. 304) gives “Milcom” a “B” rating.

▣ **“Gad”** This refers to the tribal allocation of Gad (cf. Num. 32:33-37; Josh. 13:24-28). It included the territory of the Amorites and part of the territory of Ammon.

The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh asked for and received their tribal inheritance on the eastern side of the Jordan River (cf. Josh 13:8).

The exact reference to Ammon expanding into the territory once held by the tribe of Gad is during the period of Assyrian power (i.e., Tiglath-pileser III in 734-732 B.C., cf. II Kgs. 15:29).

49:2 “a trumpet” The word is not in the MT, only the CONSTRUCT “cry of battle” (BDB 929 CONSTRUCT 536). It may refer to

1. a particular battle cry
2. the blast of a trumpet (see Special Topic: Horns Used By Israel at 4:5)

▣ **“towns”** This term (BDB 123 I) is literally “daughters,” but is often used in an idiomatic way (i.e., BDB 123 I, #4) for “surrounding villages” (cf. Num. 21:25,32; Jdgs. 1:27; Neh. 11:25-31). In v. 3 it is difficult to know if the word means

1. inhabitants of Rabbah
2. villages around Rabbah

49:3 This series of IMPERATIVES calls on the Ammonites to grieve over their defeat and exile.

1. wail – BDB 410, KB 413, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

2. cry out – BDB 858, KB 1042, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. gird. . .sackcloth – BDB 291, KB 291, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. lament – BDB 704, KB 763, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
5. rush back and forth – BDB 1001, KB 1439, *Hithpolel* IMPERATIVE or possibly “gash yourselves,” REB, cf. 48:37; this line is missing in the LXX)

▣ **“Ai”** A city by this name is unknown in Ammon. NJB changes it to “Ar.” The LXX has “Gai.” The best explanation comes from R. K. Harrison (Tyndale OT Commentary, “Jeremiah,” p. 179). He notes that when “Ai” is used for a city it always has the ARTICLE, but there is no ARTICLE here. The word itself (BDB 743) means “ruins” and, therefore, is a reference to Heshbon’s destruction.

49:4 Ammon had some knowledge of YHWH. Instead of trusting in Him they trusted in

1. their geography (i.e., fertile valleys, lit. “flowing,” BDB 264, KB 206)
2. their treasures (i.e., possibly revenue from trading routes, cf. 48:7)

The JPSOA translates the first two lines as:

“Why do you glory in strength,
Your strength is drained”

They interpret the Hebrew root (BDB 770) “valley” as coming from an Akkadian root for “strength” (cf. NRSV, TEV, REB, NET).

49:5 Josephus (*Antiq.* 10.9.7) mentions that Ammon was devastated by Nebuchadnezzar in his twenty-third year (i.e., 582 B.C.).

49:6 This is another promise of restoration like 48:47 (cf. 12:14-17). The same terminology is also used of Elam in v. 39. These promises have an eschatological orientation, not to these specific nationalities, but to the promised inclusion of “the nations” through Israel’s God and His Messiah (i.e., Ps. 22:27; 66:1-4; 86:8-10; Isa. 2:2-4; 12:4-5; 25:6-9; 42:6-12; 45:22-23; 49:5-6; 51:4-5; 56:6-8; 60:1-3; 66:23; Micah 4:1-4; Mal. 1:11; John 3:16; 4:42; I Tim. 2:4; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:1; 4:14)! Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 49:7-11

⁷Concerning Edom.

Thus says the LORD of hosts,

“Is there no longer any wisdom in Teman?

Has good counsel been lost to the prudent?

Has their wisdom decayed?

⁸Flee away, turn back, dwell in the depths,

O inhabitants of Dedan,

For I will bring the disaster of Esau upon him

At the time I punish him.

⁹If grape gatherers came to you,

Would they not leave gleanings?

If thieves *came* by night,

They would destroy *only* until they had enough.

¹⁰But I have stripped Esau bare,

**I have uncovered his hiding places
So that he will not be able to conceal himself;
His offspring has been destroyed along with his relatives
And his neighbors, and he is no more.
¹¹Leave your orphans behind, I will keep *them* alive;
And let your widows trust in Me.”**

49:7 “Edom” There is no hope given to Edom, as there is to the other nations. Edom was a perennial enemy of Judah.

SPECIAL TOPIC: EDOM AND ISRAEL

- A. Edom, which came from Esau, Jacob’s brother, is the nation east of the Dead Sea (cf. Genesis 25-28; 32-33). Edom means “red” while Esau means “hairy” (cf. Gen 25:25, 30).
- B. Israel was commanded to respect Edom (cf. Deut. 23:7)
- C. Israel and Edom had continuing problems.
 - 1. Num. 20:14-21
 - 2. Jdgs. 11:16-17
 - 3. I Sam. 14:47-48
 - 4. II Sam. 8:14
 - 5. I Kgs. 11:14-22
 - 6. II Kgs. 14:22; 16:5-6
 - 7. II Chr. 20:10-30; 21:8ff
 - 8. Amos 1:6, 9
- D. Other prophecies against Edom.
 - 1. Isa. 34:5ff; 63:1ff
 - 2. Jer. 49:7-22
 - 3. Lam. 4:21-22
 - 4. Ezek. 25:12-14; 35:1-15; 36:2-6
 - 5. Amos 1:11-12
- E. In Obadiah Edom was condemned because of
 - 1. her pride, vv. 3-4
 - a. in geographical security
 - b. in political alliances and military power
 - c. in commercial wealth
 - d. in traditional wisdom
 - 2. her violation of Judah, her kinsman, vv. 10-14
 - a. rejoiced over the fall of Jerusalem (Lam. 2:15-17; 4:21)
 - b. refused to help (v. 15)
 - c. active support of enemy (v. 14)
 - d. took Judah’s property (Jer. 13:19)
 - 3. her rejection and disdain of YHWH (v. 16)

- F. Edom may be a symbol (type) for all nations who rebelled against God and His people, vv. 15-21 (cf. Psalm 2).
- G. Possible historical fulfilment of this prophecy
1. destruction of Edom by Neo-Babylon about 5 years after the fall of Jerusalem, 580 B.C.
 2. displacement of Edom from Petra by Nabatean Arabs about 550-449 B.C. (cf. Mal. 1:2-5). Edom not mentioned in Nehemiah's list of surrounding enemies, but is replaced by Arab tribes. Edom moved to the Negev.
 3. defeat of Edom by Alexander's general, Antigonos, in 312 B.C. (recorded in Diodorus Seculus)
 4. defeat of Edom in the Negev by Judas Maccabaeus around 175 B.C. (cf. I Maccabees 5:3,15; II Maccabees 10:15; Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* 12:8:1; 13:9:1)
 5. Edom forced to accept Judaism by John Hyrcanus in 125 B.C. They are now called Idumeans.
 6. The Roman General, Titus, completely destroyed the Idumean influence in A.D. 70.

▣ **“wisdom. . . good counsel”** There are several words used to describe Edom's reputation of having “wise men” (use of three questions). Job was probably from Edom (i.e., “the land of Uz,” and one of his friends from Teman, a city in Edom).

1. wisdom (BDB 315)
2. counsel (BDB 420)
3. the prudent (BDB 106, KB 122, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE)

Jeremiah 9:23-24 is very clear that true wisdom is inseparably linked to a knowledge of YHWH.

▣ **“Teman”** This NOUN (BDB 412) means “south” (cf. Josh. 12:3; 13:4) or “south wind” (cf. Ps. 78:26). It is used as a designation for

1. a descendant of Esau, Gen. 36:11; I Chr. 1:36
2. an Arabian clan, Gen. 36:15; I Chr. 1:53
3. a territory or country, Gen. 36:34; Obadiah v. 9
4. a city, Jer. 49:7,20; Ezek 25:13; Amos 1:12

▣

NASB	“decayed”
NKJV, NRSV,	
NJB	“vanished”
TEV	“disappeared”
JPSOA, AB	“gone stale”
REB	“dispersed abroad”
Peshitta	“taken away”

This VERB (BDB 710, KB 769) in *Qal* means “to be loosed.” This is the only occurrence of the VERB in *Niphal*. The root has several senses and different lexicons list them differently.

1. BDB 710
 - a. VERB
 - (1) *Qal* – go free, be unrestrained
 - (2) *Niphal* – let loose in the sense of dismissed
 - b. NOUN – excess (cf. Exod. 26:12)

2. KB 769
 - a. VERB
 - (1) to stink (Syrian)
 - (2) to stop
 - (3) obstinance
 - (4) falsehood
 - (5) hanging down
 - (6) projecting
 - (7) lounge around)

KB # (1) seems to fit the VERB form and context best (KB 769 II), but it is found only here, which makes certainty impossible.

49:8 This is another series of IMPERATIVES, like v. 3, related to Edom’s judgment.

1. flee away – BDB 630, KB 681, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. v. 24; 46:21
2. turn back – BDB 815, KB 937, *Hophal* IMPERATIVE, cf. v. 24; 46:21
3. dwell in the depths – BDB 770, KB 847, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (i.e., an attempt to hide, cf. v. 10, or possibly to leave the transJordan plateau and return to their original homeland, cf. NET Bible, p. 1432, #5)

▣ **“Dedan”** This was an Arabian tribe connected with Sheba (cf. Gen. 25:3; I Chr. 1:32). They are somehow related to Edom in Jer. 25:23 and Ezek. 25:13. The best guess is that a group/city/clan of them had settled in the territory of Edom; not that Edom’s influence had spread that far south and east.

49:9-10 This is very similar to Obadiah 5-6.

49:9 **“gleanings”** This term (BDB 760) is from Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut. 24:20-22, where it describes YHWH’s provision for the poor as it relates to harvesting a field. The grain which was not gathered the first time through and the grain in the corners was left for the poor to harvest enough to eat but not to gather in quantities to sell.

49:10 There is a play on the word “offspring” (lit. “seed,” BDB 282) connected to “gleaning.” Edom will be completely and utterly destroyed, nothing left.

▣ **“and he is no more”** This represents the MT. Some versions of the LXX change this to “and there is none to say,” which gives a context to v. 11, thereby making specific who the speaker is (i.e., the invaders).

49:11 Is v. 11 (1) another ray of hope linked to v. 12 or (2) an affirmation of complete destruction of even the most vulnerable? The context fits #2 best (cf. v. 20).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 49:12-13

¹²For thus says the LORD, “Behold, those who were not sentenced to drink the cup will certainly drink it, and are you the one who will be completely acquitted? You will not be acquitted, but you will certainly drink it. ¹³For I have sworn by Myself,” declares the LORD, “that Bozrah will become an object of horror, a reproach, a ruin and a curse; and all its cities will become perpetual ruins.”

49:12 “the cup” The word “cup” (BDB 468) is often an idiom for judgment. As one drinks and becomes drunk with its physical and emotional consequences, the idiom of “cup” became a way to describe poor choices and their consequences. Some examples of this idiom:

1. Job 21:20
2. Psalm 60:3; 75:8
3. Isa. 29:9; 51:17; 63:6
4. Jer. 25:15-16,28; 49:12
5. Lamentations 4:21
6. Ezek. 23:32-34

It is used in the NT of

1. Jesus – Matt. 20:22; 26:38-42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:47; John 18:11
2. the beast – Rev. 14:10; 16:19; 19:15

▣ **“certainly drink”** There are three INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES and IMPERFECT VERBS of the same root used for emphasis in this verse.

- 1-2. drunk – BDB 1059, KB 1667 (twice)
3. acquitted – BDB 667, KB 720

49:13 “I have sworn by Myself” There is no one greater to swear by than YHWH Himself (cf. 22:5; 44:26; 51:14; Gen. 22:16; Isa. 45:23; Amos 6:8; Heb. 6:13,18). Oath taking was a cultural way of affirming the absolute trustworthiness/truthfulness of a statement or promise.

▣ **“Bozrah”** This was a major city (possibly the capital in the seventh century) in Edom. The “Bozrah” mentioned in 48:24 is an unknown site in Moab. The root for the city’s name (BDB 131 II) is related to the VERB for “grape-gathering” (lit. “those who cut off”) in v. 9 (BDB 130, KB 148, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE).

▣ **“an object of horror, a reproach, a ruin and a curse”** This is a series of terms used to describe people’s reaction to God’s judgment.

1. a horror – BDB 1031 I, cf. Deut. 28:37; Jer. 5:30; 25:9,11,18,38; 29:18; 42:18; 44:12,22; 49:13,17; 50:23; 51:37,41
2. a reproach – BDB 357, cf. Jer. 24:9; 29:18; 42:18; 44:8,12
3. a ruin – BDB 351 II, cf. Ezek. 29:10; 38:8; Zeph. 2:4
4. a curse – BDB 887, cf. 24:9; 25:18; II Kgs. 22:19; Zech. 8:13

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 49:14-16

**¹⁴I have heard a message from the LORD,
And an envoy is sent among the nations, saying,
“Gather yourselves together and come against her,
And rise up for battle!
¹⁵For behold, I have made you small among the nations,
Despised among men.
¹⁶As for the terror of you,
The arrogance of your heart has deceived you,
O you who live in the clefts of the rock,
Who occupy the height of the hill.**

**Though you make your nest as high as an eagle's,
I will bring you down from there," declares the LORD.**

49:14 There is a literary relationship between this verse and the opening verses (i.e., 1-4) of Obadiah. I assume that Jeremiah has influenced Obadiah and thereby makes Obadiah an early post-exilic prophet (which goes against the order of the book in the scroll of the Minor Prophets).

YHWH's prophet is calling on a foreign invader to decimate Edom.

1. gather yourselves – BDB 867, KB 1062
2. come against her – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. rise up for battle – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Obad. 1:1

49:16

NASB “As for the terror of you”

NKJV “Your fierceness”

NRSV “the terror you inspire”

TEV “your pride”

NJB “your reputation for ferocity”

JPSOA “your horrible nature”

REB “your overbearing arrogance”

This word (BDB 814) occurs only here. Most lexicons relate it to the VERB listed just above it in BDB “shuddering” (cf. Job 21:6; Ps. 55:5; Isa. 21:4; Ezek. 7:18).

The AB (p. 331) speculates that it may relate to the name of an idol, possibly mentioned in I Kgs. 15:13 (twice), because the NOUN is FEMININE but the VERB (“deceive,” BDB 674, KB 728, *Hiphil* PERFECT) is MASCULINE.

▣ **“arrogance”** Edom thought her topography (i.e., a high table land or plateau) would make her immune to invasion but she was mistaken.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 49:17-19

¹⁷“Edom will become an object of horror; everyone who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss at all its wounds. ¹⁸Like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah with its neighbors,” says the LORD, “no one will live there, nor will a son of man reside in it. ¹⁹Behold, one will come up like a lion from the thickets of the Jordan against a perennially watered pasture; for in an instant I will make him run away from it, and whoever is chosen I shall appoint over it. For who is like Me, and who will summon Me into court? And who then is the shepherd who can stand against Me?”

49:17 “an object of horror. . .hiss” See note at v. 13 for other words used to describe the shame and reproach. Here

1. everyone who passes by it will be horrified – BDB 1030, KB 1563, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Lev. 26:32; Jer. 18:16; 19:8; 50:13
2. everyone who passes by it will hiss – BDB 1056, KB 1656, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. I Kgs. 9:8; Jer. 19:8; 50:13; Lam. 2:15

49:18 “like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah with its neighbors” Sodom and Gomorrah were the wicked cities destroyed by God in Genesis 19. Their destruction and lack of habitation became a cultural idiom (cf. Deut. 29:23; Isa. 1:9-10; 13:19; Jer. 23:14; 50:40; Lam. 4:6; Ezek. 16:46,48,49,53,55,56; Amos 4:11; Zeph. 2:9; Matt. 10:15; 11:23-24; Rom. 9:29; II Pet. 2:6; Jude v. 7; Rev. 11:8).

▣ **“a son of man”** This is the Hebrew CONSTRUCT *ben-adam* (i.e., Ezek. 2:1), which meant human person. In this verse it is parallel to “no one.”

SPECIAL TOPIC: SON OF MAN (taken from notes in my commentary on Daniel 7:13)

The Aramaic phrase (“ben *enosh*,” CONSTRUCT BDB 1085 and 1081) “son of man” is different from the similar Hebrew phrase (“ben *adam*”) found in Psalms and Ezekiel. Both phrases are used in parallel in Job 25:6; Ps. 8:4; 90:3; 144:3; Isa. 13:12. This obviously refers to the Messiah and it links His humanity (cf. 8:17; Job 25:6; Ps. 8:4; Ezek. 2:1), which is the meaning of the Aramaic and Hebrew phrases, “son of man,” with His Deity because the clouds are the transportation of deity (cf. Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Rev. 1:7; 14:14).

Jesus uses the phrase to refer to Himself in the NT. It was not used of the Messiah in rabbinical Judaism. It had no exclusivistic, nationalistic, militaristic connotations. It uniquely describes the Messiah as fully human and fully God (cf. I John 4:1-3). Daniel’s usage is the first which focuses on its divine aspect!

Jesus used the phrase for Himself in three senses.

1. His suffering and death (e.g. Mark 8:31; 10:45; 14:21; Luke 9:22,44)
2. His coming as Judge (e.g. Matt. 16:27; 25:31; John 5:27)
3. His coming in glory to set up His kingdom (e.g. Matt. 16:28; 19:28; Mark 13:26-27; 14:62)

From *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 1657 (also see George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 136-139), the later Jewish tradition about this text are listed.

1. This context is Messianic (cf. I Enoch 46:1; 48:10; 4 Ezra [2 Esdras] chapter 13; b. Sanh. 98a)
2. All predictions in this context are already fulfilled (cf. b. Sanh. 97b)
3. This context does not refer to the end-time (cf. Gen. Rab. 98:2)
4. This context represents Israel (cf. Ibn Ezra and Rashi)

49:19-21 This is very similar to 50:44-46, obviously common cultural idioms.

49:19 “like a lion from the thickets of the Jordan” At one time the Jordan River valley was heavily forested and had many wild lions.

▣ **“whoever is chosen I shall appoint over it”** This phrase is uncertain in the MT. Possibly Nebuchadnezzar was YHWH’s choice for judgment and Cyrus for restoration (cf. Isa. 44:28; 45:1-7). Some commentators change this phrase so as to refer to a shepherd trying to protect the sheep from the lion (AB footnote e, p. 329).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 49:20-22

²⁰Therefore hear the plan of the LORD which He has planned against Edom, and His purposes which He has purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: surely they will drag them off, *even* the little ones of the flock; surely He will make their pasture desolate because of them. ²¹The earth has quaked at the noise of their downfall. There is an outcry! The noise of it has been heard at the Red Sea. ²²Behold, He will mount up and swoop like an eagle and spread out His wings against Bozrah; and the hearts of the mighty men of Edom in that day will be like the heart of a woman in labor.

49:20 “the plan of the LORD” History and nations are in YHWH’s control! He establishes and destroys (cf. 1:10). His ultimate plan is the redemption of all human beings (see Special Topic: Bob’s Evangelical Biases at 1:5).

49:21 “at the Red Sea” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE RED SEA

I. Name

- A. Literally the name is *Yam Suph*.
 - 1. “Sea of Weeds” or “Sea of Reeds” (Egyptian root)
 - 2. “Sea at the end (of the earth)” (Semitic root)
- B. This can refer to
 - 1. salt water, I Kgs. 9:26 (Gulf of Aqaba); Jonah 2:5 (Mediterranean Ocean)
 - 2. fresh water, Exod. 2:3; Isa. 19:26
- C. The Septuagint is the first translation to call it “the Red Sea.” Possibly these translators were relating it to the sea of Edom (red). This designation was perpetuated by the Latin Vulgate and later the King James English translation.

II. Location

- A. There are several bodies of water referred to by this name.
 - 1. the narrow body of water between Egypt and the Sinai peninsula about 190 miles long (Gulf of Suez)
 - 2. the body of water between the Sinai peninsula and Arabia about 112 miles long (Gulf of Aqaba)
- B. It could relate to the shallow marsh area in the northeastern part of the Nile delta close to Tanis, Zoan, Avaris, Rameses, which is on the southern shore of Lake Menzaleh (the marshy region).
- C. It could be used metaphorically of the mysterious waters to the south, often used of the sea at the end (of the earth). This means it could refer to
 - 1. modern Red Sea (Gulf of Suez or the Gulf of Akaba, cf. I Kgs. 9:26)
 - 2. Indian Ocean (cf. Herodotus 1.180)
 - 3. Persian Gulf (cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* 1.7.3)

III. *Suph* in Numbers 33

- A. In Num. 33:8 the body of water that was miraculously divided is called *suph*.
- B. In Num. 33:10,11 the Israelites are said to camp by *yam suph*.
- C. There are two different bodies of water.
 - 1. the first is not the Red Sea (Gulf of Suez)
 - 2. the second is probably the Red Sea (Gulf of Suez)
- D. The term *suph* is being used in the OT in three ways.
 - 1. body of water parted by YHWH to allow the Israelites to pass, but the Egyptian soldiers to drown
 - 2. the northwestern extension of the Red Sea (Gulf of Suez)

3. the northeastern extension of the Red Sea (gulf of Akaba)
- E. *Yam suph* possibly does not mean “reed sea” because
 1. there were/are no reeds (papyrus) in the Red Sea (salt water)
 2. the supposed Egyptian etymology refers to a land, not a lake
- F. *Suph* could come from the Semitic root “end” and refer to the mysterious unknown waters to the south (see Bernard F. Batts, “Red Sea or Reed Sea? What *Yam Suph* Really Means” in *Approaches to the Bible*, vol. 1, pp. 291-304).

49:22 “He will mount up and swoop like an eagle” Nebuchadnezzar’s army is depicted in this imagery in 4:13; 48:40; and Lam. 4:19. It denoted a swift, powerful, deadly attack.

▣ **“Bozrah”** This was an ancient capital of Edom, mentioned several times in judgment oracles (cf. Isa. 34:6; 63:1; Jer. 49:13,22; Amos 1:12).

▣ **“a woman in labor”** This was a recurrent idiom of fear and anguish (cf. 4:31; 30:6; 48:41; Isa. 13:8; 26:17; Micah 4:9-10). At that moment they were helpless!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 49:23-27

²³**Concerning Damascus.**

**“Hamath and Arpad are put to shame,
For they have heard bad news;
They are disheartened.
There is anxiety by the sea,
It cannot be calmed.**

²⁴**Damascus has become helpless;**

**She has turned away to flee,
And panic has gripped her;
Distress and pangs have taken hold of her
Like a woman in childbirth.**

²⁵**How the city of praise has not been deserted,**

The town of My joy!

²⁶**Therefore, her young men will fall in her streets,**

And all the men of war will be silenced in that day,” declares the LORD of hosts.

²⁷**“I will set fire to the wall of Damascus,**

And it will devour the fortified towers of Ben-hadad.”

49:23 “Damascus” This was the capital of the Syrian kingdom (i.e., Aramean kingdom, cf. Gen. 14:15; 15:2; I Kings 11:24; 15:18; 19:15; 20:34; II Kings 8:7,9; 14:28; 16:10-12; Isa. 7:8). It was north/northeast of Israel. It was part of the land bridge between Mesopotamia and Egypt. Caravans and armies took this route because of the desert to the east of Palestine. It was conquered by the Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser in 733 B.C.

49:23-24 “they have heard bad news” This refers to the invasion of the Babylonian army. Notice the series of words used to describe their fear.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. put to shame | 6. helpless |
| 2. heard bad news | 7. turned away to flee |
| 3. disheartened | 8. panic has gripped her |
| 4. anxiety (this line of poetry is uncertain) | 9. distress |
| 5. cannot be calmed | 10. pangs |

49:24 “like a woman in childbirth” This is a recurrent metaphor (BDB 408) for fear and pain (cf. 6:24; 13:21; 22:23; 49:22; 50:43; Ps. 48:6; Isa. 13:8; 21:3; 42:14; Hos. 13:13; Micah 4:9,10).

49:25 It is hard to know who is speaking these words.

1. YHWH
2. people of Syria

There is no reason why Damascus should be called “the city of praise” or “the town of My joy” by YHWH. Poetry is so condensed and figurative that it is often difficult to follow who is speaking. In the judgment of the nations poems of those who are being judged are often quoted as hypothetical of what they would/might have said.

☐ **“has not been deserted”** This goes against the rest of the context of judgment. Many scholars see the “not” (Hebrew לֹא) as a grammatical feature called “an emphatic lamedh” (Hebrew L) and, therefore, meaning, “has been completely deserted.”

49:26 This is very similar to 50:30, obviously cultural idioms and war imagery (cf. v. 27; Amos 1:4) is/are repeated often in ANE poetry.

49:27 “Ben-hadad” This means “son of Hadad.” Hadad was one of the fertility gods of the Ancient Near East (i.e., a storm/rain god, like *Ba’al*). Many of the kings of Syria were called by this name.

1. I Kings 15:18,20; II Chr. 16:2,4
2. I Kings 20 (mentioned by name 13 times)
II Kings 6:24; 8:7,9
3. II Kings 13:3,24,25; Amos 1:4

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 49:28-33

²⁸Concerning Kedar and the kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon defeated. Thus says the LORD,

**“Arise, go up to Kedar
And devastate the men of the east.**

**²⁹They will take away their tents and their flocks;
They will carry off for themselves
Their tent curtains, all their goods and their camels,
And they will call out to one another, ‘Terror on every side!’**

**³⁰Run away, flee! Dwell in the depths,
O inhabitants of Hazor,” declares the LORD;
“For Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has formed a plan against you
And devised a scheme against you.**

³¹Arise, go up against a nation which is at ease,
Which lives securely,” declares the LORD.

“It has no gates or bars;
They dwell alone.

³²Their camels will become plunder,
And their many cattle for booty,
And I will scatter to all the winds those who cut the corners *of their hair*;
And I will bring their disaster from every side,” declares the LORD.

³³“Hazor will become a haunt of jackals,
A desolation forever;
No one will live there,
Nor will a son of man reside in it.”

49:28 “Kedar” This name (BDB 871) originally referred to the second son of Ishmael (cf. Gen. 25:13; I Chr. 1:29). The family became a desert, nomadic clan (Bedouin) that lived in tents (cf. v. 29; Ps. 120:5; Song of Songs 1:5; Isa. 60:7).

Josephus (*Apion* I.19) quotes a Babylonian historian, Berossus, saying that Nebuchadnezzar took over the area where they lived and controlled the caravan routes (IDB, International Dictionary of the Bible, vol. 3, pp. 3-4).

▣ **“the kingdoms of Hazor”** This does not refer to the Canaanite city that was defeated by both Joshua (cf. Josh. 11:1-15) and later Deborah/Barak (cf. Judges 4-5). The Hebrew word (BDB 347) could also be understood as “unwalled villages” (BDB 347, cf. Gen. 25:16; Isa. 42:11).

This refers to Arabian desert dwellers to the east of Ammon who were conquered by Nebuchadnezzar in about 598 B.C. This event is also recorded by Josephus.

Nebuchadnezzar is commanded by YHWH to conquer.

1. rise – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. go up – BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. devastate – BDB 994, KB 1418, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. commands #1 and #2 are repeated in v. 31

▣ **“the men of the east”** This descriptive phrase can refer to different people groups on the eastern side of the Jordan (cf. Gen. 29:1; Jdgs. 6:3,33; 7:12; 8:10; I Kgs. 4:30; Job 1:3; Isa. 11:14; Jer. 49:28; Ezek. 25:4,10).

49:29 “Terror on every side” This phrase is used several times in Jeremiah (cf. 6:25; 20:3,10; 46:5; 49:29; Lam. 2:22). This would be similar imagery to “the four winds” of v. 36.

49:30 This is another series of three IMPERATIVES directed to Kedar and Hazor.

1. run – BDB 630; KB 681, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. flee – BDB 626, KB 678, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. dwell in the depths – BDB 770, KB 847, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

This was common imagery; see v. 8.

▣ **“a plan”** Nebuchadnezzar’s plan is really YHWH’s plan (i.e., v. 20; 51:10,11; Isa. 14:24). Nebuchadnezzar is His instrument of judgment, as Cyrus will later be His instrument of restoration.

49:32 “who cut the corners of their hair” This was a practice of several desert tribes (cf. 9:26; 25:23). It is uncertain if it was idolatrous (cf. Lev. 19:27) or societal (i.e., a ritual or a standard of appearance).

49:33 “a haunt of jackals” It is possible that the references to the destruction and lack of human habitation was

1. an idiom of complete and continuing devastation (cf. Isa. 34:10)
2. the presence of the demonic (i.e., cursed place), cf. 9:11; 10:22; Isa. 34:11-15

The NEB, based on new archaeological finds, was the first English translation to see these animals as possibly the demonic symbols of idols.

▣ **“a son of man”** See note at v. 18.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 49:34

³⁴**That which came as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet concerning Elam, at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, saying:**

49:34 “Elam” This represents the highland area east of the Tigris River. Over the centuries its territory expanded and contracted. Both Susa/Shushan and Persepolis were in its territory. Today it would be in Iran.

The Jerome Biblical Commentary (p. 335) mentions an account found in the “Babylonian Chronicles” that tells of Nebuchadnezzar defeating an Elamite king in about 597 B.C. The exiles in Babylon may have been hoping that Nebuchadnezzar would be defeated by Elam. This hope was dashed!

▣ This prophecy is dated in the same time frame as 28:1. Zedekiah reigned from 597 B.C. to the fall and destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 49:35-39

³⁵**“Thus says the LORD of hosts,
‘Behold, I am going to break the bow of Elam,
The finest of their might.**

³⁶**I will bring upon Elam the four winds
From the four ends of heaven,
And will scatter them to all these winds;
And there will be no nation
To which the outcasts of Elam will not go.**

³⁷**So I will shatter Elam before their enemies
And before those who seek their lives;
And I will bring calamity upon them,
Even My fierce anger,’ declares the LORD,
‘And I will send out the sword after them
Until I have consumed them.**

³⁸**Then I will set My throne in Elam
And destroy out of it king and princes,’
Declares the LORD.**

³⁹**But it will come about in the last days**

**That I will restore the fortunes of Elam,”
Declares the LORD.**

49:35 “break the bow” This was an idiom for the destruction of a nation’s military power (cf. 51:56; Psa. 46:9; Isa. 22:6). Apparently Elam was famous for its archers.

49:36 “the four winds of heaven” The number “four” is often used to represent the whole world. See Special Topic: Symbolic Numbers in Scripture at 15:9. The inhabitants of Elam will be scattered out of existence but notice God’s promise in v. 39. See note at v. 6, where the same terminology and promise is given to Ammon (but not to Edom).

49:37 Again common imagery is used as before in 9:16.

49:38 “I will set My throne in Elam” This seems to be a reference to Nebuchadnezzar’s control of the area, functioning as YHWH’s chosen vessel of judgment.

49:39 This is a repeated promise and hope (cf. 30:3,18; 31:23; 32:44; 33:7,11,26; 48:47; 49:6,39). See full note at 48:47 and 49:6. This seems to be an eschatological reference (cf. Deut. 30:3-5).



NASB, NRSV **“I shall restore”**
NKJV **“I will bring back”**

The MT has “return” (BDB 996, KB 1477, *Qal* IMPERFECT but the *Qere* form is Hiphil IMPERFECT of the same VERB).

JEREMIAH 50

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prophecy Against Babylon	Judgment On Babylon and Babylonia	Against Babylon (50:1-51:64)	Babylon's Capture	Prophecy Against Babylon
50:1-3 (2)	50:1-3 (2-3)	50:1-3 (2)	50:1-3 (2)	50:1
			Israel's Return	The Fall of Babylon and the Liberation of Israel
				50:2-3 (2-3)
50:4-5	50:4-5 (4-5)	50:4-5	50:4-5	50:4-5 (4-5)
50:6-7 (6-7)	50:6-7 (6-7)	50:6-7	50:6-7	50:6-10 (6-10)
50:8-10 (8-10)	50:8-10 (8-10)	50:8-10	50:8-10	
			Babylon's Fall	
50:11-16 (11-16)	50:11-13 (11-13)	50:11-16 (11-16)	50:11-13	50:11-13 (11-13)
	50:14-16 (14-16)		50:14-16	50:14-16 (14-16)
			Israel's Return	
50:17-20	50:17-20 (17)	50:17-20	50:17-20	50:17a (17a)
	(18b-20)			50:17b-18
				50:19-20 (19-20)
			God's Judgment on Babylon	The Fall of Babylon Proclaimed to Jerusalem
50:21-27 (21-27)	50:21-28 (21-28)	50:21-27 (21-27)	50:21-27	50:21-22 (21-22)
				50:23-24 (23-24)
				50:25-26 (25-26)
				50:27 (27)
50:28 (28)		50:28	50:28	50:28 (28)
				The Sin of Arrogance
50:29-32 (29-32)	50:29-32 (29-32)	50:29-32	50:29-30	50:29 (29)

		(31-32)	50:31-32	50:30 50:31-32 (31-32) Yahweh the Redeemer of Israel
50:33-38 (33-38)	50:33-40 (33-38)	50:33-34	50:33-34	50:33-34 (33-34)
		50:35-38 (35-38)	50:35-38 (35-38)	50:35-38 (35-38)
50:39-40 (39-40)	(39-40)	50:39-40	50:39-43 (41-43)	50:39-40 (39-40) The Enemy From the North and the Lion of Judah
50:41-43 (41-43)	50:41-46 (41-42)	50:41-42 (41-42)		50:41-43 (41-43)
	(43)	50:43 (43)		
50:44-46	(44)	50:44-46	50:44-46	50:44-46 (44-46)
	(45-46)			

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapters 50 and 51 are a literary unit which describe
 1. the fall of Babylon (both the capital and the nation as a whole)
 2. the restoration of God's people to their land (cf. 50:4-5,6-10,17-20,33-34; 51:36-40)

- B. This prophecy is characterized by YHWH's (through His prophet) commands to
 - 1. the destroyer of Babylon (i.e., Persia, Cyrus II), 50:2,14,21,26-27,29
 - 2. the Jewish exiles, 50:8
- C. The destruction of Babylon is also found in Isaiah 13; 14:22-27; 21:1-9; 47:5,9; 48:14

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 50:1-3

¹The word which the LORD spoke concerning Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans, through Jeremiah the prophet:

²“Declare and proclaim among the nations.

Proclaim it and lift up a standard.

Do not conceal *it but* say,

‘Babylon has been captured,

Bel has been put to shame, Marduk has been shattered;

Her images have been put to shame, her idols have been shattered.”

³For a nation has come up against her out of the north; it will make her land an object of horror, and there will be no inhabitant in it. Both man and beast have wandered off, they have gone away!

50:2 This verse is characterized by

- 1. a series of IMPERATIVES from YHWH to publicize Babylon's demise
 - a. declare – BDB 616, KB 665, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
 - b-c. proclaim – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (twice)
 - d. lift up a standard – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
 - e. do not conceal – BDB 470, KB 469, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - f. say – BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
- 2. a series of PERFECTS denoting a complete action (i.e., PROPHETIC PERFECTS) of events yet to occur, but which surely will occur because of YHWH's stated will
 - a. Babylon has been captured – BDB 539, KB 530, *Niphal* PERFECT
 - b. *Bel* has been put to shame – BDB 101, KB 116, *Hiphil* PERFECT
 - c. *Marduk* has been shattered – BDB 369, KB 365, *Qal* PERFECT
 - d. her images have been put to shame – same as #b
 - e. her idols have been shattered – same as #c

▣ **“Bel”** Below are my notes from Isa. 40:1. *Bel*, like *Ba'al*, means “lord,” “master,” “owner.”

Isa. 46:1 “Bel” *Bel* (BDB128, KB 132, Akkadian for “lord”) is a similar title to the Canaanite title *Ba'al*. This is an allusion to the chief god of the Akkadian pantheon (*Enlil*, who was called “lord”). As Babylon came to power the chief deity's name was changed to *Marduk* (BDB 597, cf. Jer. 50:2).

▣ **“Nebo”** This was the son of *Marduk* (named only here in the OT) and was the god of learning and writing (BDB 612). *Bel* and *Nebo* can be seen in many of the Babylonian names of the period (Nebuchadnezzar [Dan. 1:1]; Nebushazban [Jer. 39:13]; Nebuzaradan [Jer. 39:9]; Nabopolassar [first king of Neo-Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar's father]; Nabonidus [Beshazzar's father, last

king of Neo-Babylon]; Belteshazzar [Dan. 1:7]; Belshazzar [Dan. 5:1]). These were the two chief gods of the Babylonian pantheon.



NASB, TEV,
NJB, REB “Marduk”
NKJV, NRSV,
JPSOA “Merodack”

The MT has “Merudack” (BDB 597). It is another way to transliterate the consonants for *Marduk*. The Summerian pantheon is fluid. Originally the title “lord” was applied to *Enlil*, but when the city of Babylon became more important, her chief deity, *Markuk*, took the place of *Enlil/Bel* as the head of the pantheon. For a further outline of these Summerian gods and their myths, see my commentary on Genesis 1-11, the introduction, online at www.freebiblecommentary.org.

The last king of Babylon (i.e., Nabonidus) depreciated *Marduk* for the worship of the moon goddess (see Special Topic at 19:13). When the Persians attacked the city of Babylon they were supported by the priests and followers of *Marduk*.

50:3 As the covenant people had to fear the enemy from the north (i.e., 1:13-15; 4:6; 6:1,22), now that very enemy (i.e., Babylon) must fear another instrument of God’s judgment from the north (i.e., Cyrus and the armies of Persia).

Notice the two PROPHETIC PERFECTS,” like the five of v. 2.

1. have wandered off – BDB 626, KB 678, *Qal* PERFECT
2. have gone away – BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* PERFECT

Babylon’s judgment is sure because YHWH wills it, plans it, and will bring it to pass.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 50:4-5

⁴“In those days and at that time,” declares the LORD, “the sons of Israel will come, both they and the sons of Judah as well; they will go along weeping as they go, and it will be the LORD their God they will seek. ⁵They will ask for the way to Zion, turning their faces in its direction; they will come that they may join themselves to the LORD in an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten.”

50:4-5 These verses are a ray of hope and promise that YHWH will restore His covenant people to their promised homeland.

Notice that the returnees are repentant descendants of both Israel and Judah. Also notice they came for the purpose of finding and fellowshiping with their covenant God. This new day of fellowship through repentance and faith is the essence of the “new covenant” of 31:31-34.

The NASB version translated the second VERB of v. 5 (BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) in a future sense, “they will come,” but it is an IMPERATIVE “come” (UBS Text Project gives the IMPERATIVE a “B” rating, p. 314). This is the invitation to faith, repentance, and intimate worship which brings the exiles home to the temple and the Promised Land. There is both divine sovereignty and human free will involved. See Special Topic at 18:8.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 50:6-7

**⁶“My people have become lost sheep;
Their shepherds have led them astray.
They have made them turn aside on the mountains;**

**They have gone along from mountain to hill
 And have forgotten their resting place.
⁷All who came upon them have devoured them;
 And their adversaries have said, ‘We are not guilty,
 Inasmuch as they have sinned against the LORD *who is* the habitation of righteousness,
 Even the LORD, the hope of their fathers.’”**

50:6-10 This is a poem that describes

1. the past sins of the covenant people (i.e., fertility worship, v. 6 and faithlessness to YHWH, v. 7)
2. YHWH command for them to leave Babylon (v. 8) because God is bringing a destroyer from the north (i.e., Persia, vv. 9-10)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 50:8-10

**⁸“Wander away from the midst of Babylon
 And go forth from the land of the Chaldeans;
 Be also like male goats at the head of the flock.
⁹For behold, I am going to arouse and bring up against Babylon
 A horde of great nations from the land of the north,
 And they will draw up *their* battle lines against her;
 From there she will be taken captive.
 Their arrows will be like an expert warrior
 Who does not return empty-handed.
¹⁰Chaldea will become plunder;
 All who plunder her will have enough,” declares the LORD.**

50:8 “Babylon. . .the Chaldeans” These are two ways of referring to the peoples/nations of the southern area of the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers (cf. vv. 1,8,35,45). The terms “Babylonian” and “Chaldean” are parallel.

50:9 There is a sound play between the first three VERBS of v. 9.

1. עור – BDB 734, KB 802, “arouse”
2. עלה – BDB 748, KB 828, “bring up”
3. ערך – BDB 789, KB 884, “draw up their battle lines”

▣ **“a horde of great nations”** The Persian army was made up of Medes and Persians and the mercenaries of conquered armies (cf. 51:27-28).

▣

NASB, NKJV,

LXX “an expert warrior”

NRSV, JPSOA “a skilled warrior”

TEV “skillful hunters”

NJB “experienced soldiers”

The MT has the VERB “miscarry” (BDB 1013, KB 1491, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE, i.e., “make childless”). Most translations take it from the root “skilled” (BDB 968). The first letter in MT is Ψ , but in the other versions, ψ . The rest of the consonants are the same. These were lethal archers!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 50:11-16

- ¹¹“Because you are glad, because you are jubilant,
O you who pillage My heritage,
Because you skip about like a threshing heifer
And neigh like stallions,
¹²Your mother will be greatly ashamed,
She who gave you birth will be humiliated.
Behold, *she will be* the least of the nations,
A wilderness, a parched land and a desert.
¹³Because of the indignation of the LORD she will not be inhabited,
But she will be completely desolate;
Everyone who passes by Babylon will be horrified
And will hiss because of all her wounds.
¹⁴Draw up your battle lines against Babylon on every side,
All you who bend the bow;
Shoot at her, do not be sparing with *your* arrows,
For she has sinned against the LORD.
¹⁵Raise your battle cry against her on every side!
She has given herself up, her pillars have fallen,
Her walls have been torn down.
For this is the vengeance of the LORD:
Take vengeance on her;
As she has done *to others*, so do to her.
¹⁶Cut off the sower from Babylon
And the one who wields the sickle at the time of harvest;
From before the sword of the oppressor
They will each turn back to his own people
And they will each flee to his own land.”

50:11 There are several suggestions from the Masoretic scholars (*Qere*) about changing the VERBS in the MT (*Kethiv*), which are FEMININE SINGULAR, to MASCULINE PLURAL.

1. you are glad
2. you are jubilant
3. you skip about
4. neigh like stallions (lit. “mighty ones”)

When you read vv. 12-13 you see where the FEMININE understanding came from in v. 11. Verse 11 addresses the people of Babylon who have had such victory and easy living. All of that will change (cf. vv. 12-16)!

50:13 “will be horrified. . .will hiss” This imagery is recurrent; see notes at 18:16 and 49:17.

50:14 In vv. 14-16 YHWH uses IMPERATIVES to address the invading and victorious Persian army. This verse uses imagery from archery.

1. “bend the bow” (lit. “tread” so as to bend the bow for the string)
2. shout
3. do not be sparing with your arrows
4. the LXX refers to archers in v. 29

The reason for the military attack is that Babylon sinned against YHWH.

1. vv. 29-32 – arrogance
2. Hab. 2:8,17 – murder and idolatry
3. v. 38; Hab. 2:19– idolatry

As she did to others, so now it will be done to her (cf. v. 15f, 29f).

50:15

NASB “pillars”
NKJV “foundations”
NRSV, LXX “bulwarks”
NJB, JPSOA,
REB “bastions”
NET Bible “towers”

The word in the MT (BDB 78, KB 04) occurs only here. It is spelled אִשָּׁה. A similar word, אִשָּׁה, means “foundation,” found in Deuteronomy and Joshua. The KB lists several cognate options.

1. Assyrian – tower
2. Aramaic – wall
3. Syrian – pillar
4. Arabian – columns

It refers to some type of protective structure/fortification.

50:16 The first two lines predict the complete collapse of commerce and food production.

The next three lines are a warning for all foreigners to flee.

1. mercenaries
2. merchants
3. possibly even exiles/captives who could

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 50:17-20

¹⁷“Israel is a scattered flock, the lions have driven *them* away. The first one *who* devoured him was the king of Assyria, and this last one *who* has broken his bones is Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. ¹⁸Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Behold, I am going to punish the king of Babylon and his land, just as I punished the king of Assyria. ¹⁹And I will bring Israel back to his pasture and he will graze on Carmel and Bashan, and his desire will be satisfied in the hill country of Ephraim and Gilead. ²⁰In those days and at that time,’ declares the LORD, ‘search will be made for the iniquity of Israel, but there will be none; and for the sins of Judah, but they will not be found; for I will pardon those whom I leave as a remnant.’”

50:17-20 This prose paragraph connects with vv. 4-5. God’s people are coming home!

This paragraph lists the covenant people’s two main enemies of this period.

1. Assyria who took the northern ten tribes into exile with the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C.
2. Neo-Babylon who took Judah into exile with the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

The nation that God will use to bring judgment on the Mesopotamia powers and restore His people is Persia, under Cyrus II (cf. Isa. 44:28; 45:1).

50:17

NASB, NKJV,

TEV, NJB “Nebuchadnezzar”

NRSV, JPSOA,

REB “Nebuchadrezzar”

LXX (leaves out the name but has) “king of Babylon”

Both of these refer to the same person, son of Nabopolassar. There are several forms of his Babylonian name in Hebrew letters. It is difficult to transliterate names from one language to another.

50:20 This is such an important theological text. The faithful remnant of YHWH’s people have been forgiven (i.e., 31:31-34) and restored!

In the future period (“in those days”) a repentant and obedient Israel and Judah will be united in restoration and forgiveness.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 50:21-27

²¹“Against the land of Merathaim, go up against it,
And against the inhabitants of Pekod.
Slay and utterly destroy them,” declares the LORD,
“And do according to all that I have commanded you.

²²The noise of battle is in the land,
And great destruction.

²³How the hammer of the whole earth
Has been cut off and broken!
How Babylon has become
An object of horror among the nations!

²⁴I set a snare for you and you were also caught, O Babylon,
While you yourself were not aware;
You have been found and also seized
Because you have engaged in conflict with the LORD.”

²⁵The LORD has opened His armory
And has brought forth the weapons of His indignation,
For it is a work of the Lord GOD of hosts
In the land of the Chaldeans.

²⁶Come to her from the farthest border;
Open up her barns,
Pile her up like heaps
And utterly destroy her,
Let nothing be left to her.

²⁷Put all her young bulls to the sword;
Let them go down to the slaughter!

**Woe be upon them, for their day has come,
The time of their punishment.**

50:21-28 YHWH calls on (i.e., commands) His instrument of judgment (i.e., Persia) to attack and conquer Babylon.

1. go up against it, v. 21 – BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. slay, v. 21 – BDB 352, KB 349 (lit. “attack”), *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. utterly destroy, v. 21 – BDB 355, KB 353, (lit. “under the ban”), *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
4. do according to all that I have commanded you, v. 21 – BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
5. come to her, v. 26 – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
6. open up her barns, v. 26 – BDB 834, KB 986, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
7. pile her up, v. 26 – BDB 699, KB 757, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
8. utterly destroy, v. 26 – same as #3
9. let nothing be left, v. 26 – BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* JUSSIVE
10. put. . .to the sword, v. 27 – same as #2
11. let them go down to slaughter, v. 27 – BDB 432, KB 434, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

50:21 “Merathaim. . .Pekod” There seems to be a word play between these terms and some people/areas of Babylon (i.e., south and east). The word play is difficult to bring into English in a meaningful way. Poetry often uses the sound association to make a point to its original hearers/readers.

Merathaim would mean “double rebellion” (BDB 601) and Pekod would mean “punishment” or “visitation” (BDB 824). YHWH will judge all of Babylon and its surrounding allies.

▣ **“utterly destroy”** This is an important VERB. Below is my note from Deut. 3:6. It is available online free at www.freebiblecommentary.org in OT Studies section, under Written Commentaries.

Deuteronomy 3:6

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV

“utterly destroyed”

TEV

“destroyed”

NJB

“the curse of destruction”

REB

“under solemn ban”

JPSOA

“doomed”

This VERB (BDB 355, KB 353) is used twice in this verse (*Hiphil* IMPERATIVE and *Hiphil* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE). Its basic meaning is to devote something to God whereby it becomes too holy for human use and must be destroyed. It is regularly used in “holy war” contexts (cf. 2:34; 7:2; Exod. 22:20; Josh. 6:17,21) to assert that the victory and, thereby, the spoils belong to YHWH. In these conquest contexts the things devoted to God are Canaanites and their property. They are judged because of their abominable sins and unwillingness to repent (cf. Gen. 15:16; Lev. 18:24-26; Deut. 9:5).

For a good discussion of “holy war” see *Ancient Israel*, by Roland deVaux, vol. 1, pp. 258-267.

50:23-24 There is a series of seven PERFECT TENSE VERBS that describe Babylon’s fall and destruction as if it already happened (PROPHETIC PERFECTS).

50:24 One wonders if this verse, especially line 2, is a historical prediction about the unexpected fall of Babylon in 539 B.C. by Cyrus' army. They took the city by surprise with almost no opposition (cf. 51:8; Daniel 5).

50:25 This imagery describes YHWH as having an armory of stored weapons. This is referring to the weaponry of the Persian army acting as YHWH's instrument of wrath.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 50:28

**²⁸There is a sound of fugitives and refugees from the land of Babylon,
To declare in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God,
Vengeance for His temple.**

50:28 Notice how YHWH and His temple are identified together. As His "name" stands for Him, so too, "the place He caused His name to dwell" (repeated phrase in Deuteronomy).

The UBS Handbook asserts that this verse is a parenthesis (TEV, NET Bible) referring to the returning Jewish exiles sharing how YHWH judged Babylon (p. 946).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 50:29-32

**²⁹“Summon many against Babylon,
All those who bend the bow:
Encamp against her on every side,
Let there be no escape.
Repay her according to her work;
According to all that she has done, so do to her;
For she has become arrogant against the LORD,
Against the Holy One of Israel.
³⁰Therefore her young men will fall in her streets,
And all her men of war will be silenced in that day,” declares the LORD.
³¹“Behold, I am against you, O arrogant one,”
Declares the Lord GOD of hosts,
“For your day has come,
The time when I will punish you.
³²The arrogant one will stumble and fall
With no one to raise him up;
And I will set fire to his cities
And it will devour all his environs.”**

50:29 “she has become arrogant against the LORD” Verses 29-32 are a poem about Babylon's arrogance (BDB 267, KB 268). Daniel 4 is addressed to Nebuchadnezzar on this same issue.

▣ **“the Holy One of Israel”** Notice that this phrase and “the LORD God of hosts,” both covenant titles for Israel's Deity (see Special Topic at 1:2), are named in this condemnation of Babylon's arrogance.

The title is used often in Isaiah, but rarely in Jeremiah (cf. 51:5).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 50:33-38

³³Thus says the LORD of hosts,

“The sons of Israel are oppressed,
And the sons of Judah as well;
And all who took them captive have held them fast,
They have refused to let them go.

³⁴Their Redeemer is strong, the LORD of hosts is His name;

He will vigorously plead their case
So that He may bring rest to the earth,
But turmoil to the inhabitants of Babylon.

³⁵A sword against the Chaldeans,” declares the LORD,

“And against the inhabitants of Babylon
And against her officials and her wise men!

³⁶A sword against the oracle priests, and they will become fools!

A sword against her mighty men, and they will be shattered!

³⁷A sword against their horses and against their chariots

And against all the foreigners who are in the midst of her,
And they will become women!

A sword against her treasures, and they will be plundered!

³⁸A drought on her waters, and they will be dried up!

For it is a land of idols,
And they are mad over fearsome idols.”

50:33-40 This poem is directed at the Jewish exiles and promises that their God will defeat their Babylonian captors and bring them home.

50:34 Notice the names of God.

1. Redeemer (see Special Topic at 15:21)
2. LORD of hosts (twice)
3. God (*Elohim*, see Special Topic at 1:2)

▣ **“He will vigorously plead their case”** This is the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB of the same root (BDB 936, KB 1224), which denoted a vigorous legal defense (cf. I Sam. 24:15; Ps. 35:1; 119:154; Isa. 50:8-9; 51:22; Micah 7:9). One wonders if the title for Jesus and the Spirit as “advocate” came from this imagery. Below is my note from I John 2:1.

I John 2:1 “we have an Advocate with the Father” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE which refers to Jesus’ ongoing intercession as our heavenly Advocate (*paraklētos*). This was a legal term for a defense lawyer or “one called alongside to help” (from *para*, beside and *kaleō*, to call). It is used in the upper room discourse in the Gospel of John, for the Holy Spirit, our earthly, indwelling advocate (cf. John 14:16,25; 15:26; 16:7). However, this is the only use of the term for Jesus (although it is implied in John 14:16; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 4:14-16; 7:25; 9:24). Paul used this same concept for the intercessory work of Christ in Rom. 8:34. In this same passage he also speaks of the intercession of the Holy Spirit in Rom. 8:26. We have an Advocate

in heaven (Jesus) and an Advocate within (the Spirit), both of whom the loving Father sent on His behalf.

50:35-37 There is a repeated pattern (i.e., “a sword against. . .”):

1. the Chaldeans, v. 35
2. inhabitants of Babylon, v. 35 (parallel)
3. her officials, v. 35
4. her wise men, v. 35 (parallel)
5. the oracle priests, v. 36
6. her mighty men, v. 36
7. their horses, v. 37
8. their chariots, v. 37
9. all the foreigners (possibly mercenary military), v. 37
10. her treasures, v. 37
11. v. 38 could also have “sword” instead of “drought”; both have the same consonants (BDB 351, KB 352)

YHWH’s judgments fall on every aspect of Babylonian society!

50:38 “they are mad over fearsome idols” The word translated “mad” could also mean “glory in” (cf. REB). Both make sense in this context. The difference is only one vowel in the Hebrew text.

1. the idols are afraid (as are their priests, cf. v. 36)
2. the idol worshipers glory in their idols but to no avail (cf. 36a). Terror falls on all!

The UBS Text Project gives the text followed by NASB a “C” rating (p. 318).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 50:39-40

³⁹“Therefore the desert creatures will live *there* along with the jackals;

The ostriches also will live in it,

And it will never again be inhabited

Or dwelt in from generation to generation.

⁴⁰As when God overthrew Sodom

And Gomorrah with its neighbors,” declares the LORD,

“No man will live there,

Nor will *any* son of man reside in it.”

50:39-40 These two verses bring together two idioms of destruction.

1. the presence of wild animals in her ruins, which was a symbol of
 - a. complete destruction
 - b. no human habitation
 - c. the presence of the demonic (cf. Ps. 74:14; Isa. 13:21; 23:13; 34:14)
2. the allusion to the complete destruction of the cities of the plain in Genesis 19 and its perpetual non-habitation (cf. 49:18)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 50:41-43

⁴¹“Behold, a people is coming from the north,

And a great nation and many kings

Will be aroused from the remote parts of the earth.

⁴²**They seize *their* bow and javelin;**

They are cruel and have no mercy.

Their voice roars like the sea;

And they ride on horses,

Marshalled like a man for the battle

Against you, O daughter of Babylon.

⁴³**The king of Babylon has heard the report about them,**

And his hands hang limp;

Distress has gripped him,

Agony like a woman in childbirth.”

50:41-43 As Babylon was “a people from the north” to judge God’s people (cf. 1:13-15; 4:6; 6:1,22), now a people from the north (i.e., Persia) will come and defeat them! As they did to others now it will be done to them (cf. vv. 15, 29).

These verses are very similar to 6:22-24, where YHWH’s judgment is directed at Jerusalem, but now Babylon.

50:41 The Persian army, like the Babylonian army, was made up of many mercenary soldiers.

50:42 This describes in poetic terms the Persian army.

50:43 As other nations feared the Babylonians, now they fear.

1. hands hang limp
2. distress like child birth

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 50:44-46

⁴⁴**“Behold, one will come up like a lion from the thicket of the Jordan to a perennially watered pasture; for in an instant I will make them run away from it, and whoever is chosen I will appoint over it. For who is like Me, and who will summon Me *into court*? And who then is the shepherd who can stand before Me?”** ⁴⁵**Therefore hear the plan of the LORD which He has planned against Babylon, and His purposes which He has purposed against the land of the Chaldeans: surely they will drag them off, *even* the little ones of the flock; surely He will make their pasture desolate because of them.**

⁴⁶**At the shout, “Babylon has been seized!” the earth is shaken, and an outcry is heard among the nations.**

50:44-46 This prose section continues the context of Babylon’s defeat. Verses 44-45 are very similar to 49:19-20. See notes there.

JEREMIAH 51

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Babylon Judged For Sins Against Israel	The Utter Destruction of Babylon	God's Judgment Against Babylon	Further Judgment on Babylon	Yahweh Makes War on Babylon
51:1-4 (1-4)	51:1-5 (1-5)	51:1-10 (1-10)	51:1-9	51:1-5 (1-5)
51:5-10 (5-10)	51:6-8 (6-8)			51:6-10 (6-10)
	51:9-10 (9-10)		51:10	
51:11-14 (11-14)	51:11-14 (11-14)	51:11-14 (11a) (12-14)	51:11a	51:11 (11a)
			51:11b-12a	
			51:12b-14	51:12 (12)
			A Hymn of Praise To God	51:13-14 (13-14)
51:15-23 (15-23)	51:15-16 (15-16)	51:15-19 (15-19)	51:15-19 (15-19)	51:15-19 (15-19)
	51:17-19 (17-19)		The LORD'S Hammer	Yahweh's Hammer and the Giant Mountain
	51:20-23 (20-23)	51:20-23 (20-23)	51:20-23 (20-23)	51:20-23 (20-23)
			Babylonia's Punishment	
51:24-26 (25-26)	51:24	51:24	51:24-26	51:24
	51:25-26 (25-26)	51:25-33 (25-33)		51:25-26 (25-26)
				The End of Babylon Is Imminent
51:27-32 (27-32)	51:27-32 (27-32)		51:27-35	51:27 (27)
				51:28
				51:29 (29)
				51:30-33 (30-33)
51:33 (33)	51:33 (33)			Yahweh's Vengeance

51:34-40 (34-40)	51:34-35 (34-35)	51:34-37 (34-37)	(34-35)	51:34-35 (34-35)
			The LORD Will Help Israel	
	51:36-40 (36-40)		51:36-40	51:36-40 (36-40)
		51:38-40 (38-40)	Babylon's Fate	A Dirge For Babylon
51:41-44 (41-44)	51:41-44 (41-44)	51:41-49 (41-49)	51:41-44a	51:41-43 (41-43)
				Yahweh Punishes the Idols
			51:44b-49	51:44-45 (44-45)
51:45-48 (45-48)	51:45-48 (45-48)			51:46
				51:47-52 (47-52)
51:49-51 (49-51)	51:49-50 (49-50)		God's Message to the Israelites in Babylonia	
		51:50-53 (50-53)	51:50-53	
	51:51 (51)			
51:52-53 (52-53)	51:52-53 (52-53)			51:53-57 (53-57)
			Further Destruction Of Babylon	
51:54-58 (54-58)	51:54-56 (54-56)	51:54-57 (54-57)	51:54-58 (54-58)	
	51:57 (57)			Babylon Razed to the Ground
	51:58 (58)	51:58 (58)		51:58 (58)
	Jeremiah's Command To Seraiah		Jeremiah Message Is Sent To Babylonia	The Written Prophecy Thrown Into the Euphrates
51:59-64	51:59-64	51:59-64	51:59-64	51:59-64

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:1-4

¹Thus says the LORD:

**“Behold, I am going to arouse against Babylon
And against the inhabitants of Leb-kamai
The spirit of a destroyer.**

²I will dispatch foreigners to Babylon that they may winnow her
And may devastate her land;
For on every side they will be opposed to her
In the day of *her* calamity.

³Let not him who bends his bow bend it,
Nor let him rise up in his scale-armor;
So do not spare her young men;
Devote all her army to destruction.

⁴They will fall down slain in the land of the Chaldeans,
And pierced through in their streets.”

51:1 “Leb-Kamai” This is a CONSTRUCT of “heart” (BDB 524) and the VERB “arise” or “stand up” (BDB 877, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE). It could be translated literally as

1. UBS Text Project – “heart of my adversaries”
2. NKJV (footnote) – “the midst of those who rise up against Me”
3. AB and UBS Handbook – “the heart of those who rise up against Me”

The LXX and most English commentators and translations take it as an Atbash cipher (letters of the alphabet are reversed to make them into a code) for “Kasdim” (i.e., Chaldean referring to Babylon). Another cipher for Babylon is “Sheshack” of 25:26 or “Sheshak” of 51:40. The Apostle John used a similar code mechanism in Revelation 18, where “Babylon” refers to Rome.



NASB “that spirit of a destroyer”
NKJV, NRSV,
TEV, NJB,
LXX, REB,
JPSOA “a destroying wind”

The Hebrew word *ruah* (BDB 924) can mean “wind,” “breath,” or “spirit” (see Special Topic at 10:14-15). Only context can determine which is intended by the original author. In this context (i.e., Jeremiah) “wind” fits best (cf. 4:11-12; 13:24; 18:17; 22:22; 49:32,36). Verse 11b demands a translation of “spirit.” Context, context, context!

Verse 17 demands a translation of “breath.”

51:2

NASB, TEV “foreigners”

NKJV, NRSV,

NJB “winnowers”

JPSOA “strangers”

The MT has “strangers” (BDB 266 I, cf. 5:19; 30:8; 51:2,51; Lam. 5:2), but other ancient versions read “winnowers” (BDB 279, cf. 4:11; 15:7; the same root is translated “scatter” in 49:32,26). The UBS Text Project gives “strangers” a “C” rating.

The LXX translates this term as “spoilers” or “insolent men.”

51:3 This verse is uncertain. It could be addressing the invaders to charge ahead or it could address the defenders that all their efforts are useless. The invaders are called on

1. not to spare (BDB 328, KB 328, negated *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. v. 4)
2. to devote to God (BDB 355, KB 353, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, i.e., put under the ban, cf. 25:9; 50:21,26)

All of Babylon’s defenders are helpless, just as they mercilessly defeated others, so now no mercy to them!

51:4 “pierce” This VERB (BDB 201, KB 230, *Pual* PARTICIPLE) denotes a badly wounded person (cf. 37:10).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:5-10

⁵For neither Israel nor Judah has been forsaken

By his God, the LORD of hosts,

Although their land is full of guilt

Before the Holy One of Israel.

⁶Flee from the midst of Babylon,

And each of you save his life!

Do not be destroyed in her punishment,

For this is the LORD’S time of vengeance;

He is going to render recompense to her.

⁷Babylon has been a golden cup in the hand of the LORD,

Intoxicating all the earth.

The nations have drunk of her wine;

Therefore the nations are going mad.

⁸Suddenly Babylon has fallen and been broken;

Wail over her!

Bring balm for her pain;

Perhaps she may be healed.

⁹We applied healing to Babylon, but she was not healed;

Forsake her and let us each go to his own country,

For her judgment has reached to heaven

And towers up to the very skies.

¹⁰The LORD has brought about our vindication;

Come and let us recount in Zion

The work of the LORD our God!

51:5 In light of 33:24-26, this is an important affirmation that YHWH has not permanently rejected the descendants of Abraham, but only temporarily judged them for their sin (cf. Isa. 54:7-8). They, both Israel and Judah, have now been “widowed” (BDB 48).

51:6 There is a series of IMPERATIVES very similar in meaning to 50:8.

1. flee – BDB 630, KB 681, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. save – BDB 572, KB 589, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
3. do not be destroyed – BDB 198, KB 226, negated *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

YHWH commands the Jewish exiles to leave Babylon before His judgment comes! One wonders how exiles could leave before Persia’s victory and Cyrus’ decree. Possibly they could leave the capital city of Babylon, not the country.

51:7 Babylon served as YHWH’s instrument of judgment (cf. 25:15; Hab. 2:16). The “cup” was an idiom for judgment (i.e., drunkenness, cf. Rev. 14:8, see note at Jer. 49:12).

▣ **“the nations are going mad”** This VERB (BDB 237, KB 248, *Hithpoel* IMPERFECT) is also used in 25:16.

51:8 This is sarcasm addressed to Babylon’s subservient nations.

1. wail over her – BDB 410, KB 413, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. bring balm for her pain – BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

51:9 All the efforts of the subservient nations are to no avail. Therefore,

1. forsake her – BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. let us each go to his own country – BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense (cf. 50:16; Isa. 13:14)

▣ **“has reached to heaven. . .up to the very skies”** Poetry is difficult to interpret because of its brevity and imagery. These VERBS seem to imply that

1. the sins of Babylon have come to YHWH’s notice
2. YHWH’s judgment of Babylon is so extensive that it symbolically reaches to the heavens

51:10 As v. 5 promised YHWH’s forgiveness and restoration, v. 10 demands that the covenant people share His victory in Zion.

1. come – BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. let us recount – BDB 707, KB 765, *Piel* COHORTATIVE, cf. 50:28; Isa. 40:2
 - a. in Zion
 - b. the work of YHWH

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:11-14

¹¹Sharpen the arrows, fill the quivers!

**The LORD has aroused the spirit of the kings of the Medes,
Because His purpose is against Babylon to destroy it;
For it is the vengeance of the LORD, vengeance for His temple.**

¹²Lift up a signal against the walls of Babylon;

Post a strong guard,

Station sentries,

Place men in ambush!

**For the LORD has both purposed and performed
What He spoke concerning the inhabitants of Babylon.**

¹³O you who dwell by many waters,

Abundant in treasures,

Your end has come,

The measure of your end.

¹⁴The LORD of hosts has sworn by Himself:

**“Surely I will fill you with a population like locusts,
And they will cry out with shouts of victory over you.”**

51:11-14 This poem addresses the invading army. TEV attributes the commands to the Persian army officers.

1. sharpen the arrows, v. 11 – BDB 140, KB 162, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. fill the quivers, v. 11 – BDB 569, KB 583, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. lift up a signal, v. 12 – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. post a strong guard, v. 12 – BDB 304, KB 302,, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
5. station sentries, v. 12 – BDB 877, KB 1086, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
6. place men in ambush, v. 12 – BDB 465, KB 464, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

However, #3-#6 could refer, in sarcasm, to the ineffective Babylonian defenders (cf. v. 13). The reason they are ineffective is because YHWH is against them (cf. vv. 12e-f, 14).

51:11

NASB, NRSV,

NJB, JPSOA,

REB

“fill the quivers”

NKJV

“gather the shields”

TEV

“get your shields ready”

The MT has “fill the shields” (BDB 1020), but KB (1522-23) shows that this root was used in the Dead Sea Scrolls for “quiver.” There is an Akkadian root with the same meaning. “Quiver” fits this context best in linking with

1. the previous line of poetry
2. the VERB “fill”

The word “shields” in the Dead Sea Scrolls could refer to a throwing (i.e., spear), slinging, or shooting (i.e., arrow) weapon.

▣ **“the kings of the Medes”** The invader from the north is now identified (i.e., Medo-Persia under King Cyrus II, “Cyrus the Great”). The MT has “kings” (PLURAL) but the LXX has the SINGULAR. Cyrus’ empire was made up of several small nations, or it may be the Hebrew grammatical feature called the “PLURAL OF MAJESTY,” denoting Cyrus’ greatness.

51:11d This last line of poetry repeats the message of 50:28. Babylon will be destroyed with its magnificent pagan temples, as they destroyed YHWH’s temple (i.e., 586 B.C.).

51:13 “you who dwell by many waters” This phrase refers to the southern part of Babylon which was made up of marshes formed at the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.

▣ **“measure”** This is literally “cubit” (BDB 52 II, see Special Topic at 13:12). The phrase, line 4, refers to the thread being cut from a loom. Here it is an idiom for death (cf. Job 6:9; Isa. 38:12).

51:14 “the LORD of hosts has sworn by Himself” This concept goes back to Gen. 22:16 and 26:3. There is no one or power greater than YHWH, so to swear (BDB 989, KB 1396, *Niphal* PERFECT) by Him is the ultimate oath. This same imagery is used in Jer. 22:5; 44:26; 49:13 and Isa. 14:24; 45:23; 62:8. The thing YHWH purposes (cf. v. 12e) He will perform (cf. v. 12e)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:15-23

- ¹⁵***It is He who made the earth by His power,
Who established the world by His wisdom,
And by His understanding He stretched out the heavens.***
- ¹⁶***When He utters His voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens,
And He causes the clouds to ascend from the end of the earth;
He makes lightning for the rain
And brings forth the wind from His storehouses.***
- ¹⁷***All mankind is stupid, devoid of knowledge;
Every goldsmith is put to shame by his idols,
For his molten images are deceitful,
And there is no breath in them.***
- ¹⁸***They are worthless, a work of mockery;
In the time of their punishment they will perish.***
- ¹⁹***The portion of Jacob is not like these;
For the Maker of all is He,
And of the tribe of His inheritance;
The LORD of hosts is His name.***
- ²⁰***He says, “You are My war-club, My weapon of war;
And with you I shatter nations,
And with you I destroy kingdoms.***
- ²¹***With you I shatter the horse and his rider,
And with you I shatter the chariot and its rider,***
- ²²***And with you I shatter man and woman,
And with you I shatter old man and youth,***

**And with you I shatter young man and virgin,
²³And with you I shatter the shepherd and his flock,
 And with you I shatter the farmer and his team,
 And with you I shatter governors and prefects.”**

51:15-23 The NASB sees this as one literary unit but most other English translations see vv. 15-19 and vv. 20-23 as separate. There is no textual marker to insure the division of ancient texts into literary units. However, the task is primary in interpretation. This is where checking several modern versions can be helpful (see the paragraph divisions on the first page of each chapter).

51:15-19 This is a comparison of YHWH, the God who knows and acts, with the idols who are blind, dumb, uninformed, and cannot act!

Notice the attributes of YHWH listed.

1. creator, v. 15
2. provider, v. 16
3. covenant God of Jacob, v. 19

Notice the characterization of the idols.

1. made by mankind, v. 17
2. worthless to help, even provide false hope, v. 18

This strophe is paralleled in 10:12-16. These truths were a recurrent theme of YHWH's reality versus the idols of the nations' non-existence.

51:17 “there is no breath in them” This same phrase describing the lifeless idols is in 10:14. The word “breath” is *ruah*, translated “spirit” in vv. 1,11. See Special Topic: “Spirit” in the Bible at 10:14-15. The prophets regularly “make fun of” and ridicule the non-existence of pagan idols (i.e., Isa. 40:18-20; 41:6-7; 44:9-11,12-17; 46:5-7). They “cannot”; YHWH can and does!

51:20-23 The only true God (see Special Topic at 1:5) will bring judgment on Babylon by His chosen instrument (i.e., war-club, lit. “hammer,” BDB 659), Persia and Cyrus II, who are named by a specific prophecy in Isa. 44:28; 45:1.

1. shatter nations
destroy kingdoms
2. shatter horse and its rider
shatter chariot and its rider
3. shatter man
shatter woman
4. shatter old men
shatter youth
5. shatter young men
shatter virgins
6. shatter the shepherd
shatter his flock
7. shatter the farmer
shatter his team
8. shatter governors
shatter prefects

All levels of society will be “shattered” (BDB 658, KB 711, nine *Piel* PERFECTS).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:24-26

²⁴**“But I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea for all their evil that they have done in Zion before your eyes,” declares the LORD.**

²⁵**“Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain,
Who destroys the whole earth,” declares the LORD,
“And I will stretch out My hand against you,
And roll you down from the crags,
And I will make you a burnt out mountain.**

²⁶**They will not take from you even a stone for a corner
Nor a stone for foundations,
But you will be desolate forever,” declares the LORD.**

51:24-26 This poem (vv. 25-26) describes the destruction of Babylon (“O destroying mountain”) in highly figurative language. The book that has helped me understand this genre is by D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic*.

It is possible that this imagery relates to the Babylonian sky gods who were worshiped on the tops of ziggurats (i.e., the tower of Babel, Genesis 11). These manmade mud brick structures dominated the flat river plains of Babylon’s chief cities. Each one had their own god and tower. The great ziggurat of *Marduk* was in the city of Babylon.

The violent and complete destruction of the city of Babylon did not occur in 539 B.C., when the city was taken without a fight and with minimal destruction, by the Persian army. However, it did occur later in history (i.e., by Xerxes I in 482 B.C.).

51:25 “O destroying mountain” This imagery is uncertain. It is obviously figurative language referring to Babylon as a military victor. But why “mountain”?

1. the home of the gods (i.e., divine empowerment, i.e., Isa. 14:13)
2. the God of Mt. Moriah (i.e., the Jewish temple, i.e. Isa. 2:2-3)
3. the military advantage of “higher ground”
4. the awesome physical sites of mountains and their strength
5. root of the mountains as the entrance to the underworld
6. imagery used of a mountain where pagan altars were located (cf. II Kgs. 23:13)

This destroying mountain will be destroyed (i.e., fire, see Special Topic at 4:4) by YHWH. He sends and uses Babylon but also holds them responsible!

51:26 This is imagery of a complete and lasting destruction (cf. 50:13). Usually in the ANE the sites of major cities were advantageous sites (i.e., water, protection, fertility), so destroyed cities were quickly rebuilt, often using the building material lying around. This verse prophesies no habitation. Note the ruins of Babylon today!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:27-32

²⁷**Lift up a signal in the land,
Blow a trumpet among the nations!
Consecrate the nations against her,
Summon against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni and Ashkenaz;
Appoint a marshal against her,**

Bring up the horses like bristly locusts.

²⁸**Consecrate the nations against her,
The kings of the Medes,
Their governors and all their prefects,
And every land of their dominion.**

²⁹**So the land quakes and writhes,
For the purposes of the LORD against Babylon stand,
To make the land of Babylon
A desolation without inhabitants.**

³⁰**The mighty men of Babylon have ceased fighting,
They stay in the strongholds;
Their strength is exhausted,
They are becoming *like* women;
Their dwelling places are set on fire,
The bars of her *gates* are broken.**

³¹**One courier runs to meet another,
And one messenger to meet another,
To tell the king of Babylon
That his city has been captured from end *to end*;**

³²**The fords also have been seized,
And they have burned the marshes with fire,
And the men of war are terrified.**

51:27-32 YHWH calls on the Persian Empire to take up arms against Babylon in a series of IMPERATIVES.

1. lift up a signal – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. v. 12; 50:2; Isa. 5:26; 13:2
2. blow a trumpet – BDB 1075, KB 1785, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. consecrate the nations – BDB 872, KB 1073, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
4. summon. . .kingdoms – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
5. appoint a marshal – BDB 823, KB 955, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 49:19; 50:44
6. bring up horses – BDB 748, KB 828, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
7. in v. 28a #3 is repeated

51:27 “Ararat” This nation is located around Lake Van. Today its territory is in Armenia, Russia, and Iran. It was known as *Urartu* by the Assyrians. This ethnic group participated in the Persian attack on Babylon.

▣ **“Minni”** This refers to the people group south of Lake Van. They were later known as Scythians but at this time as “Mannaeans.”

▣ **“Ashkenaz”** This group of people is mentioned in Gen. 10:3; I Chr. 1:6, living east of Lake Urmia. They are also part of what later became the Scythians.

51:30 This is ANE imagery of dis-spirited soldiers.

1. they have ceased fighting
2. they stay in the stronghold
3. their strength is exhausted

4. they are like women

Their fortifications are breached.

1. set on fire
2. gate bars broken

51:31-32 This is a message to be delivered to the king of Babylon by the city's defenders.

1. the city is captured
2. fords seized
3. marshes burned
4. soldiers terrified

There was no way to escape!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:33

³³**For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel:**

“The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor

At the time it is stamped firm;

Yet in a little while the time of harvest will come for her.”

51:33 It is uncertain if this should be a separate literary unit or part of vv. 27-32. The speaker of vv. 22-32 is YHWH, so too, here. Babylon's fate is set. Her doom is sure! What she did to others will be done to her.

▣ **“threshing”** This is often used in judgment imagery (cf. Isa. 21:10; 41:15-16).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:34-40

³⁴**“Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has devoured me *and* crushed me,**

He has set me down *like* an empty vessel;

He has swallowed me like a monster,

He has filled his stomach with my delicacies;

He has washed me away.

³⁵**May the violence *done* to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon,”**

The inhabitant of Zion will say;

And, “May my blood be upon the inhabitants of Chaldea,”

Jerusalem will say.

³⁶**Therefore thus says the LORD,**

“Behold, I am going to plead your case

And exact full vengeance for you;

And I will dry up her sea

And make her fountain dry.

³⁷**Babylon will become a heap *of ruins*, a haunt of jackals,**

An object of horror and hissing, without inhabitants.

³⁸**They will roar together like young lions,**

They will growl like lions' cubs.

³⁹**When they become heated up, I will serve *them* their banquet**

And make them drunk, that they may become jubilant

And may sleep a perpetual sleep

And not wake up,” declares the LORD.

**⁴⁰“I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter,
Like rams together with male goats.”**

51:34-39 Jerusalem/Judah (v. 35d) is personified as a devastated people (v. 34).

1. Babylon has devoured me – BDB 37, KB 46, *Qal* PERFECT
2. Babylon has crushed me – BDB 243, KB 251, *Qal* PERFECT
3. Babylon has set me down as an empty vessel – BDB 426, KB 427, *Hiphil* PERFECT
4. Babylon has swallowed me like a monster – BDB 118, KB 134, *Qal* PERFECT
5. Babylon has filled his stomach with my delicacies – BDB 569, KB 583, *Piel* PERFECT
6. Babylon has washed me away – BDB 188, KB 216, *Hiphil* PERFECT

Every one of these (except #5) has a *Kethiv* and *Qere* form related to PLURAL or SINGULAR.

51:34

NASB “washed me away”

NKJV “spit me out”

NRSV, REB “spewed me out”

TEV “threw the rest away”

NJB “threw me out”

JPSOA “rinsed me out”

LXX --- omit ---

The MT has the VERB “rinse” or “cleanse away” (BDB 188, KB 216, *Hiphil* PERFECT). The VERB can refer to

1. ritual washing – II Chr. 4:6; Ezek. 40:38
2. cleansing – Isa. 4:4
3. here the context seems to demand a mouth rinse and expulsion of the liquid

The point is Babylon used Jerusalem and then spit her out as useless!

51:35a This is praying/wishing that what Babylon did to Jerusalem/Judah, others will do to her (cf. 50:15,29). The speaker is personified Jerusalem.

51:36-40 YHWH describes what He will do to Babylon and for Judah.

1. for Judah
 - a. plead your case, 10:22; 50:34; 51:6,11 (i.e., act as your advocate)
 - b. exact full vengeance on her behalf
2. to Babylon
 - a. dry up her sea (i.e., commerce)
 - b. become a heap of ruins
 - c. become a haunt of jackals, cf. 49:33
 - d. become an object of horror, cf. 18:16
 - e. become an object of hissing, cf. 19:8; 25:9,18; 29:18
 - f. make them the food of a banquet
 - g. make them drunk (lit. “rejoice”), cf. v. 57
 - h. make them sleep forever
 - i. make them sacrificial animals

51:38-39 The context demands that this refers to Babylon. They are enjoying their spoils in v. 38. However, their victories make them vulnerable to excess (drunkenness), which leads to destruction and death (v. 39, lines 3 & 4, v. 40).

In v. 40 the Babylonians are like animals being led to slaughter. They cannot defend themselves. As they treated others, now they will receive!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:41-44

⁴¹**“How Sheshak has been captured,
And the praise of the whole earth been seized!
How Babylon has become an object of horror among the nations!**
⁴²**The sea has come up over Babylon;
She has been engulfed with its tumultuous waves.**
⁴³**Her cities have become an object of horror,
A parched land and a desert,
A land in which no man lives
And through which no son of man passes.**
⁴⁴**I will punish Bel in Babylon,
And I will make what he has swallowed come out of his mouth;
And the nations will no longer stream to him.
Even the wall of Babylon has fallen down!”**

51:41-44 Another poem of YHWH’s judgment on Babylon (there are several separate poems in this chapter brought together by topic). Most of the VERBS are PROPHETIC PERFECTS describing future events as completed actions.

51:41 “Sheshak” See note at 25:26. This is another atbash cipher.

51:42 Babylon was a country of rivers, canals, and marshes (cf. 51:13a); her waterways are disrupted as an idiom of divine judgment (cf. v. 36). YHWH, the creator God, controls the waters (cf. 5:22; 31:35). The nation of “waters” will be dry (v. 42b).

51:44 “Bel” See note at 50:2.

▣ **“what he has swallowed”** This is the imagery of eating used to describe conquest. As Babylon “ate” Jerusalem in v. 34, then spit her out, so too, now Babylon. Her deities must regurgitate!

▣ **“even the wall of Babylon has fallen down”** This prophecy of complete destruction of the city of Babylon (cf. 50:15; 51:58) is a hyperbolic description of Persia’s defeat, but literal for future events. See note on the genre of prophecy at 51:24-26.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:45-48

⁴⁵**“Come forth from her midst, My people,
And each of you save yourselves
From the fierce anger of the LORD.**

⁴⁶Now so that your heart does not grow faint,
 And you are not afraid at the report that *will be* heard in the land—
 For the report will come one year,
 And after that another report in another year,
 And violence *will be* in the land
 With ruler against ruler—
⁴⁷Therefore behold, days are coming
 When I will punish the idols of Babylon;
 And her whole land will be put to shame
 And all her slain will fall in her midst.
⁴⁸Then heaven and earth and all that is in them
 Will shout for joy over Babylon,
 For the destroyers will come to her from the north,”
 Declares the LORD.

51:45-48 This is another poem with two emphases.

1. YHWH calls for His people to leave the city of Babylon before His judgment comes (cf. 50:8; 51:6)
2. YHWH will punish Babylon

51:46 This may relate to 50:28. There are two reports circulating.

1. Judah/Israel’s restoration (cf. Isa. 48:20)
2. Babylon’s fall

▣ **“lest your heart grow faint”** The faith challenge to God’s people is “do not fear, do not lose heart,” because I am with you; I am in control (cf. Deut. 3:22; 7:18; 20:3; 31:6,8; Josh. 1:6,7,9; Isa. 43:5; Jer. 46:27,28). This same admonition is for the people of faith today!

The Jerome Biblical Commentary (p. 336) and NASB Study Bible (p. 1142) assert that this verse is reflected in Jesus’ eschatological discourse of Matt. 24:6ff.

51:48 “heaven and earth” These are the two ancient witnesses (cf. Isa. 44:23; 49:13). They summarize all creation (cf. Gen. 1:1). “Heaven” refers to the atmosphere above the earth.

▣ **“from the north”** See notes at 50:3,9,41, which build on 1:13-15.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:49-51

⁴⁹Indeed Babylon is to fall *for* the slain of Israel,
 As also for Babylon the slain of all the earth have fallen.
⁵⁰You who have escaped the sword,
 Depart! Do not stay!
 Remember the LORD from afar,
 And let Jerusalem come to your mind.
⁵¹We are ashamed because we have heard reproach;
 Disgrace has covered our faces,

**For aliens have entered
The holy places of the LORD'S house.**

51:49-51 This poem is addressed to the remnant (see Special Topic at 5:10-13) of the exiles who returned to Judah under Cyrus' decree in 538 B.C. I believe vv. 52-53 should go with 49-51.

51:49 Notice Babylon is reaping the judgment of YHWH because of its treatment of the covenant people (i.e., their treatment of the temple, cf. v. 51; 50:28c; Lam. 1:10; 2:6-7). The irony is that it was YHWH who sent Babylon but still she is responsible for her actions. See Special Topic at 18:8.

There is another way to interpret this phrase. It is possible to make it parallel to v. 47. If so, it is not just "for the slain of Israel," but for all the slain of all the nations.

51:50 YHWH commands His exiled people in Babylon to think of Jerusalem/temple and leave their captivity.

1. depart – BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. do not stay – BDB 763, KB 840, negated *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. remember the Lord from afar – BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. let Jerusalem come to your mind – BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

The exiles of Nebuchadnezzar's previous deportations (i.e., 605, 597 B.C.) heard of the atrocities that occurred in 586 B.C. with the fall and destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (cf. v. 51), but they are encouraged now to remember YHWH!

The vast majority of exiled Jews did not return under the leadership of Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel/Joshua, Ezra, and Nehemiah in the Persian period.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:52-53

⁵²"Therefore behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD,
"When I will punish her idols,
And the mortally wounded will groan throughout her land.
⁵³Though Babylon should ascend to the heavens,
And though she should fortify her lofty stronghold,
From Me destroyers will come to her," declares the LORD.

51:53 The imagery of geographical high places which was used of Edom does not fit Babylon, which was located mostly in the Tigris/Euphrates River valley and plain. It is imagery which may reflect her trust in the gods of the sky who they worshiped from their manmade towers, ziggurats (possibly related to Genesis 11, "the Tower of Babel").

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:54-58

⁵⁴The sound of an outcry from Babylon,
And of great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans!
⁵⁵For the LORD is going to destroy Babylon,
And He will make *her* loud noise vanish from her.
And their waves will roar like many waters;
The tumult of their voices sounds forth.

⁵⁶For the destroyer is coming against her, against Babylon,
And her mighty men will be captured,
Their bows are shattered;
For the LORD is a God of recompense,
He will fully repay.

⁵⁷“I will make her princes and her wise men drunk,
Her governors, her prefects and her mighty men,
That they may sleep a perpetual sleep and not wake up,”
Declares the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts.

⁵⁸Thus says the LORD of hosts,
“The broad wall of Babylon will be completely razed
And her high gates will be set on fire;
So the peoples will toil for nothing,
And the nations become exhausted *only* for fire.”

51:54-58 This is another in a series of POETIC PROPHECIES about the fall of Babylon.

51:54 There are no VERBALS in v. 54, just stark NOUNS.

1. hark – BDB 876
2. cry – BDB 277
3. great destruction – ADJECTIVE, BDB 152 and NOUN, BDB 991

51:56 “a God of recompense” This characterization of YHWH as One who holds humans accountable for their actions is a recurrent theme (cf. 51:6; Isa. 35:4; 59:18 [twice]; 66:6; Lam. 3:64). For a full list of all the places in Scripture where this truth is revealed, see the note at 17:10.

▣ **“He will fully repay”** This is an intensified grammatical form. The INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB of the same root (BDB 1022, KB 1532) are used.

51:58 “will be completely razed” As v. 56 had an intensified grammatical form, so too, here (i.e., INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB of the same root).

This purposeful hyperbole is a common feature of prophetic and apocalyptic literature (see D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*). It was not meant to be taken in a modern, western literalism. In fact, Cyrus did not destroy the walls of the city of Babylon. The amazingly huge, thick double walls of Babylon (cf. Herodotus 1.178ff) were destroyed by Xerxes I in 482 B.C.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 51:59-64

⁵⁹The message which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the son of Neriah, the grandson of Mahseiah, when he went with Zedekiah the king of Judah to Babylon in the fourth year of his reign. (Now Seraiah was quartermaster.) ⁶⁰So Jeremiah wrote in a single scroll all the calamity which would come upon Babylon, *that is*, all these words which have been written concerning Babylon. ⁶¹Then Jeremiah said to Seraiah, “As soon as you come to Babylon, then see that you read all these words aloud, ⁶²and say, ‘You, O LORD, have promised concerning this place to cut it off, so that there will be nothing dwelling in it, whether man or beast, but it will be a perpetual desolation.’ ⁶³And as soon as you finish reading this scroll, you will tie a stone to it and throw it into the middle of the

Euphrates, ⁶⁴and say, ‘Just so shall Babylon sink down and not rise again because of the calamity that I am going to bring upon her; and they will become exhausted.’” Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.

51:59-64 This is a concluding prose section relating a message sent by Jeremiah by the hand of Seraiah (possibly Baruch’s brother, cf. 32:12) to the exiles already in Babylon (i.e., 605, 597 B.C.).

When the visit occurred in 594/3 B.C. (Zedekiah began to reign in 597 B.C., see chart of the Kings of the Divided Monarchy online at www.freebiblecommentary.org). This is the only mention of this visit in the Bible. Possibly it was when Zedekiah tried to convince Nebuchadnezzar of his loyalty and denial of any duplicity in the alliances/revolts of the far western nations.

51:63 This was done for one of two reasons (or maybe both).

1. as a symbol of Babylon’s destruction
2. as a way to protect the message from causing a reaction from the Babylonian captors (i.e., note the ciphers of 25:26; 51:1,41).

One wonders how much of chapters 50-51 was included on that scroll. It seems that many poems from different periods of Jeremiah’s life were brought together by topic in these two chapters.

Also note the cultural emphasis on oral presentation versus written. The ANE was made up of oral societies (for the most part).

51:64

MT, NASB,

NKJV, NRSV

“Thus far are the words of Jeremiah”

TEV

“The words of Jeremiah end here”

REB

“Thus far are the collected sayings of Jeremiah”

LXX, JPSOA

— omit —

There is no VERB. Many scholars believe this is an editorial comment to separate chapter 52 (destruction of Jerusalem, cf. II Kgs. 24:28-25:30) from Jeremiah’s writings. The faith presupposition of “inspiration” must cover the editing and compiling of OT books (see the two Special Topics at 23:21-22).

JEREMIAH 52

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

(The parentheses represent poetic literary units)

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Fall of Jerusalem	The Fall of Jerusalem Revisited	Historical Appendix	The Fall of Jerusalem	The Destruction of Jerusalem and the Pardon of Jehoiachin
52:1-11	52:1-7	52:1-11	52:1-3a 52:3b-11	52:1-3a 52:3b-11
	52:8-11			
	The Temple and City Plundered and Burned		The Destruction of the Temple	
52:12-16	52:12-16	52:12-16	52:12-16	52:12-14 52:15-16
52:17-23	52:17-23	52:17-23	52:17-23	52:17-23
	The People Exiled To Babylon		The People of Judah Are Taken To Babylon	
52:24-27	52:24-27	52:24-27	52:24-27a 52:27b-30	52:24-27
52:28-30	52:28-30	52:28-30		52:28-30
	Jehoiachin Released From Prison			
52:31-34	52:31-34	52:31-34	52:31-34	52:31-34

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. There are three historical events discussed in this historical appendage.
1. the fall of the city of Jerusalem, vv. 1-11 (cf. 39:1-10)
 2. the destruction of the city and its temple, vv. 12-23
 3. a summary statement of the several deportations of Judeans to Babylon, vv. 23-34
- B. This chapter contains the same basic information as II Kings 24:18-25:30. Comparing these two recordings of the same event shows modern readers something of scribal tendencies.
- This same event is discussed in Jeremiah 39, however, this chapter is much closer to the II Kings account, which implies that it was added by an editor and not written by Jeremiah. The NASB Study Bible (p. 1143) says that Baruch may have been the author of this chapter and that both the author of Kings and this chapter may have used a common source.
- C. All that Jeremiah said would happen, occurred. He was a true prophet (cf. Deuteronomy 13, 18).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 52:1-11

¹Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. ²He did evil in the sight of the LORD like all that Jehoiakim had done. ³For through the anger of the LORD *this* came about in Jerusalem and Judah until He cast them out from His presence. And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. ⁴Now it came about in the ninth year of his reign, on the tenth *day* of the tenth month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, camped against it and built a siege wall all around it. ⁵So the city was under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. ⁶On the ninth *day* of the fourth month the famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land. ⁷Then the city was broken into, and all the men of war fled and went forth from the city at night by way of the gate between the two walls which *was* by the king's garden, though the Chaldeans were all around the city. And they went by way of the Arabah. ⁸But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho, and all his army was scattered from him. ⁹Then they captured the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, and he passed sentence on him. ¹⁰ The king of Babylon slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and he also slaughtered all the princes of Judah in Riblah. ¹¹Then he blinded the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him with bronze fetters and brought him to Babylon and put him in prison until the day of his death.

52:1-3 This information is also found in II Kgs. 24:18-20 and II Chr. 36:11-36. Zedekiah reigned from 597 B.C. - 586 B.C.

He succeeded Jehoiachin who was exiled by Nebuchadnezzar after only three months (cf. II Kgs. 24:8-17). At that time Nebuchadnezzar made his uncle, named Mattaniah, a puppet king of Judah in his place. The uncle was given the throne name "Zedekiah." He was the youngest of the children of Josiah to reign (i.e., Jehoahaz, exiled by Pharaoh Necho and Jehoiakim, cf. I Chr. 3:15). He was a spiritually weak and easily manipulated person, as the writings of Jeremiah clearly show.

52:1 “Hamutal” The meaning of the name is uncertain (BDB 327, KB 326). She was the wife of King Josiah and mother of

1. Jehoahaz – II Kgs. 23:31
2. Zedekiah – II Kgs. 24:18; here

52:2 “he did evil in the sight of the Lord” Jeremiah uses the word “evil” (BDB 948) more than any other OT author. This phrase became a standard evaluation of all the kings of Israel and most of the kings of Judah. Moses had given the covenant people a clear choice (i.e., good or evil, obedience or disobedience, prosperity or judgment, cf. Deut. 30:15). They said they would choose “good” (cf. Josh. 24:16-28) but they could not/did not.

1. did not seek YHWH – II Kgs. 11:6; II Chr. 12:14
2. did not keep the covenant – Deut. 31:29
3. made and worshiped pagan gods – Deut. 4:25; Jdgs. 2:11; 3:7,12; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1; I Kgs. 14:22; 15:26,34; 16:19,25,30; 22:52; II Kgs. 3:2; 8:18,27; 13:2,11; 14:24; 15:9,18,24,28; 17:2,17; 21:2,16,20; 23:32,37; 24:9,10.
4. all disobedience is viewed as “doing evil” (cf. I Sam. 15:19) but obedience brings acceptance (cf. II Chr 19:3)

52:3 YHWH is the God of love and acceptance. He wants all humans made in His image to know Him but when His overtures of covenant revelation are rejected or compromised, wrath is the response.

In this text it is expressed by the powerful phrase “He cast them out from His presence” (cf. 7:15; II Kgs. 13:23; 17:20; 24:20; Ps. 51:11).

“His presence” is literally “face to face.” This is what we as humans were created for! Fellowship with our creator is “the” basic need of mankind.” YHWH wants to cast away our sins (cf. Isa. 38:17; Micah 7:19), not us!

▣ **“Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon”** The absence of YHWH’s presence caused him to make poor choices!

52:4 The date of the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem is very specific (as is the fall of the city, vv. 5-7).

52:7 “the city was broken into” Although it does not state specifically how, the implication is that the siege machines broke down a gate or a piece of the outer wall.

A siege machine was a portable “A frame” with ropes, suspending a large log. This was placed next to the outer wall where it repeatedly rammed the building blocks.

▣ **“between the two walls”** Many ancient cities had double outer walls (i.e., Jericho). The space between them was designed to be a “killing zone,” but here this space provided a way of escape when the wall was breached in another part of the city.

▣ **“the Arabah”** This refers to the Jordan Rift Valley, which extends from the area of the Sea of Galilee to the Gulf of Aqaba (cf. II Sam. 4:7). It was lower than the surrounding area and had dense forest and vegetation. South of the Dead Sea (cf. Deut. 2:8) it would be the large wilderness depression going south/southwest.

52:8-11 This is a summary of what happened to Judah’s royalty.

1. Zedekiah was captured as he fled the city, v. 8
2. Zedekiah was brought north to Nebuchadnezzar’s camp in Riblah in the land of Hamath, for a face-to-face meeting, v. 9
3. Nebuchadnezzar killed Zedekiah’s sons before his eyes, v. 10
4. he also killed Zedekiah’s officials and generals (lit. “princes”), v. 10
5. he blinded Zedekiah, v.11
6. he exiled him and put him in prison until his death in Babylon, v. 11

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 52:12-16

¹²Now on the tenth *day* of the fifth month, which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan the captain of the bodyguard, who was in the service of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. ¹³He burned the house of the LORD, the king’s house and all the houses of Jerusalem; even every large house he burned with fire. ¹⁴So all the army of the Chaldeans who *were* with the captain of the guard broke down all the walls around Jerusalem. ¹⁵Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away into exile some of the poorest of the people, the rest of the people who were left in the city, the deserters who had deserted to the king of Babylon and the rest of the artisans. ¹⁶But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and plowmen.

52:12 As the date of the siege and the fall of Jerusalem are specified, so too, the date when Nebuchadnezzar’s military official arrived in Jerusalem to oversee its destruction.

1. burned the temple, v. 13
2. burned the palace, v. 13
3. burned all large houses, v. 13
4. broke down the whole outer wall, v. 14
5. exiled even more people
6. left a few people, v. 15
 - a. defectors from the Babylonian military
 - b. the remaining craftsmen

The parallel in II Kgs. 25:8 has “the seventh day,” not the “tenth day.” R. K. Harrison, Tyndale OT Commentary Series, p. 190, speculates the difference is between the day Nebuzaradan came to Jerusalem and the day the destruction started. This follows a rabbinical tradition (B. Ta’anit 29a). The NASB Study Bible, (p. 1143) asserts that one of the two dates (i.e., “seven” or “ten”) is a copyist error.

In the ANE there were two ways to calculate a king’s reign: (1) from the first partial year, (2) from the annual coronation ceremony. Often these ways are mixed, as is done in v. 12 (1 above) and v. 19 (2 above).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 52:17-23

¹⁷Now the bronze pillars which belonged to the house of the LORD and the stands and the bronze sea, which were in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans broke in pieces and carried all their bronze to Babylon. ¹⁸They also took away the pots, the shovels, the snuffers, the basins, the pans and all the bronze vessels which were used in *temple* service. ¹⁹The captain of the guard also took away the bowls, the firepans, the basins, the pots, the lampstands, the pans and the drink offering bowls, what was fine gold and what was fine silver. ²⁰The two pillars, the one sea, and the twelve bronze bulls that were under the sea, *and* the stands, which King Solomon had made for the house of the LORD—the bronze of all these vessels was beyond weight. ²¹As for the pillars, the height of each pillar *was* eighteen cubits, and it *was* twelve cubits in circumference and four fingers in thickness, *and* hollow. ²²Now a

capital of bronze was on it; and the height of each capital was five cubits, with network and pomegranates upon the capital all around, all of bronze. And the second pillar was like these, including pomegranates. ²³There were ninety-six exposed pomegranates; all the pomegranates *numbered* a hundred on the network all around.

52:17-23 This is a list of the things taken to Babylon.

1. the bronze pillars of the temple
2. the stands (i.e., twelve bronze bulls, v. 20) and the bronze sea (cf. vv. 20-33)
3. pots, shovels, snuffers, basins, pans, and all other bronze vessels used in the temple
4. bowls, firepans, basins, pots, the lampstand, its spoons, libation bowls, all gold and silver items

Verses 17-18 list bronze items, while v. 19 lists gold and silver items. Verses 20-23 describe in detail the two bronze pillars (cf. I Kgs. 7:40-42).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 52:24-27

²⁴Then the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest and Zephaniah the second priest, with the three officers of the temple. ²⁵He also took from the city one official who was overseer of the men of war, and seven of the king's advisers who were found in the city, and the scribe of the commander of the army who mustered the people of the land, and sixty men of the people of the land who were found in the midst of the city. ²⁶Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. ²⁷Then the king of Babylon struck them down and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was led away into exile from its land.

52:24 As Zedekiah was forced to view the death of his "sons" and "princes," so now the temple leadership was forced to view the exile of the temple treasures and decorations.

1. Seraiah the high priest (see genealogy in I Chr. 6:1-15)
2. Zephaniah the second priest (cf. 29:24-32; 37:3)

52:25 Others were also brought to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah.

1. the city official who was overseer of the Judean military
2. seven of Zedekiah's advisors
3. the scribe of the commander of enlistment for the Judean military
4. sixty citizens of Jerusalem (probably of the wealthy land owner class)

52:26-27 All of these mentioned above were killed at Riblah and all others were taken into exile.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 52:28-30

²⁸These are the people whom Nebuchadnezzar carried away into exile: in the seventh year 3,023 Jews; ²⁹in the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar 832 persons from Jerusalem; ³⁰in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried into exile 745 Jewish people; there were 4,600 persons in all.

52:28-30 These verses list the different groups, numbers, and the dates they were exiled. Remember the city of Jerusalem was partially captured in 605, 597, 586, and completely in 582 B.C. The current event was 586 B.C. Earlier events were 605 and 597 B.C. A later event was after the murder of Gedaliah (582 B.C.). This account may have been written before or after 582 B.C., but the "twenty-third year" of v. 30 fits 582 B.C., if one calculates from 605 B.C. The total number of people exiled in this list is 4,600.

These verses are absent in the LXX. The numbers differ with the Kings account. These historical records of Kings and Jeremiah are very similar but not exact. Both apparently used the same source (cf. Tyndale OT Series, p. 190). Possibly Jeremiah 52 lists only the adult males.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 52:31-34

³¹Now it came about in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-fifth of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the *first* year of his reign, showed favor to Jehoiachin king of Judah and brought him out of prison. ³²Then he spoke kindly to him and set his throne above the thrones of the kings who *were* with him in Babylon. ³³So Jehoiachin changed his prison clothes, and had his meals in the king's presence regularly all the days of his life. ³⁴For his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king of Babylon, a daily portion all the days of his life until the day of his death.

52:31-34 This paragraph describes the later, favorable treatment of King Jehoiachin, who was exiled by Nebuchadnezzar after he had reigned only three months (he was considered the legitimate heir of Josiah), by *Evil-merodach* (or *Amel-Marduk*), who reigned from 562-560 B.C. (cf. II Kgs. 25:27-30). One wonders what theological purpose this last paragraph serves.

1. further historical detail
2. a sign of future hope of release from exile
3. a way to show YHWH still had a hand in Judah's destiny
4. ending the prophecy of Jeremiah in a positive way

APPENDIX ONE

INTRODUCTION TO HEBREW POETRY

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. This type of literature makes up 1/3 of the Old Testament. It is especially common in the “Prophets” (all but Haggai and Malachi contain poetry) and “Writings” sections of the Hebrew canon.
- B. It is very different from English poetry. English poetry is developed from Greek and Latin poetry, which is primarily sound-based. Hebrew poetry has much in common with Canaanite poetry. There are no accented lines or rhyme in Near East poetry (but there is a beat).
- C. The archaeological discovery north of Israel at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) has helped scholars understand OT poetry. This poetry from the 15th century B.C. has obvious literary connections with biblical poetry.

II. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF POETRY

- A. It is very compact.
- B. It tries to express truth, feelings or experiences in imagery.
- C. It is primarily written not oral. It is highly structured. This structure is expressed in:
 - 1. balanced lines (parallelism)
 - 2. word plays
 - 3. sound plays

III. THE STRUCTURE (R. K. Harrison, *Introduction To The Old Testament*, pp.965-975)

- A. Bishop Robert Lowth in his book, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1753) was the first to characterize biblical poetry as balanced lines of thought. Most modern English translations are formatted to show the lines of poetry.
 - 1. synonymous – the lines express the same thought in different words:
 - a. Psalm 3:1; 49:1; 83:14; 103:13
 - b. Proverbs 19:5; 20:1
 - c. Isaiah 1:3,10
 - d. Amos 5:24; 8:10
 - 2. antithetical – the lines express opposite thoughts by means of contrast or stating the positive and the negative:
 - a. Psalm 1:6; 90:6
 - b. Proverbs 1:29; 10:1,12; 15:1; 19:4
 - 3. synthetic – the next two or three lines develop the thought - Ps. 1:1-2; 19:7-9; 29:1-2
 - 4. chiasmic – a pattern of poetry expressing the message in a descending and ascending order. The main point is found in the middle of the pattern.

- B. A. Briggs in his book, *General Introduction to the Study of Holy Scripture* (1899) developed the next stage of analysis of Hebrew poetry:
1. emblematic – one clause literal and the second metaphorical, Ps. 42:1; 103:3.
 2. climatic or stair-like – the clauses reveal truth in an ascending fashion, Ps. 19:7-14; 29:1-2; 103:20-22.
 3. introverted – a series of clauses, usually at least four are related by the internal structure of line 1 to 4 and 2 to 3 – Ps. 30:8-10a
- C. G. B. Gray in his book, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (1915) developed the concept of balanced clauses further by:
1. complete balance – where every word in line one is repeated or balanced by a word in line two – Psalm 83:14 and Isaiah 1:3
 2. incomplete balance where the clauses are not the same length - Ps. 59:16; 75:6
- D. Today there is a growing recognition of literary structural pattern in Hebrew called a chiasm, which denotes an odd number of parallel lines forming an hour glass shape whereby the central line is emphasized.
- E. Type of sound patterns found in poetry in general, but not often in eastern poetry
1. play on alphabet (acrostic. cf. Ps. 9,34,37,119; Prov. 31:10ff; Lam. 1-4)
 2. play on consonants (alliteration, cf. Ps. 6:8; 27:7; 122:6; Isa. 1:18-26)
 3. play on vowels (assonance, cf. Gen. 49:17; Exod. 14:14; Ezek. 27:27)
 4. play on repetition of similar sounding words with different meanings (paronomasia)
 5. play on words which, when pronounced, sound like the thing they name (onomatopoeia)
 6. special opening and close (inclusive)
- F. There are several types of poetry in the Old Testament. Some are topic related and some are form related.
1. dedication song – Num. 21:17-18
 2. work songs – (alluded to but not recorded in Jdgs. 9:27); Isa. 16:10; Jer. 25:30; 48:33
 3. ballads – Num. 21:27-30; Isa. 23:16
 4. drinking songs – negative, Isa. 5:11-13; Amos 6:4-7 and positive, Isa. 22:13
 5. love poems – Song of Songs, wedding riddle - Jdgs. 14:10-18, wedding song - Ps. 45
 6. laments/dirge – (alluded to but not recorded in II Sam. 1:17 and II Chr. 35:25)
II Sam. 3:33; Ps. 27, 28; Jer. 9:17-22; Lam.; Ezek. 19:1-14; 26:17-18; Nah. 3:15-19
 7. war songs – Gen. 4:23-24; Exod. 15:1-18,20; Num. 10:35-36; 21:14-15; Josh. 10:13; Jdgs. 5:1-31; 11:34; I Sam. 18:6; II Sam. 1:18; Isa. 47:1-15; 37:21
 8. special benedictions or blessing of leader – Gen. 49; Num. 6:24-26; Deut. 32; II Sam. 23:1-7
 9. magical texts – Balaam, Num. 24:3-9
 10. sacred poems – Psalms
 11. acrostic poems – Ps. 9,34,37,119; Prov. 31:10ff and Lamentations 1-4
 12. curses – Num. 21:22-30
 13. taunt poems – Isa. 14:1-22; 47:1-15; Ezek. 28:1-23
 14. a book of war poems (Jashar) – Num. 21:14-15; Josh. 10:12-13; II Sam. 1:18

IV. GUIDELINE TO INTERPRETING HEBREW POETRY

- A. Look for the central truth of the stanza or strophe (this is like a paragraph in prose.) The RSV was the first modern translation to identify poetry by stanzas. Compare modern translations for helpful insights.
- B. Identify the figurative language and express it in prose. Remember this type of literature is very compact, much is left for the reader to fill in.
- C. Be sure to relate the longer issue oriented poems to their literary context (often the whole book) and historical setting.
- D. Judges 4 and 5 are very helpful in seeing how poetry expresses history. Judges 4 is prose and Judges 5 is poetry of the same event (also compare Exodus 14 & 15).
- E. Attempt to identify the type of parallelism involved, whether synonymous, antithetical, or synthetic. This is very important.

APPENDIX TWO

INTRODUCTION TO OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Opening Statements

1. The believing community does not agree on how to interpret prophecy. Other truths have been established as to an orthodox position throughout the centuries, but not this one.
2. There are several well defined stages of OT prophecy
 - a. premonarchial (before King Saul)
 - 1) individuals called prophets
 - (a) Abraham – Gen. 20:7
 - (b) Moses – Num. 12:6-8; Deut. 18:15; 34:10
 - (c) Aaron – Exod. 7:1 (spokesman for Moses)
 - (d) Miriam – Exod. 15:20
 - (e) Medad and Eldad – Num. 11:24-30
 - (f) Deborah – Jdgs. 4:4
 - (g) unnamed – Jdgs. 6:7-10
 - (h) Samuel – I Sam. 3:20
 - 2) references to prophets as a group - Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20-22
 - 3) prophetic groups or guilds – I Sam. 10:5-13; 19:20; I Kgs. 20:35,41; 22:6,10-13; II Kgs. 2:3,7; 4:1,38; 5:22; 6:1, etc.
 - 4) Messiah called prophet – Deut. 18:15-18
 - f. non-writing monarchial prophets (they address the king)
 - 1) Gad – I Sam. 7:2; 12:25; II Sam. 24:11; I Chron. 29:29
 - 2) Nathan – II Sam. 7:2; 12:25; I Kgs. 1:22
 - 3) Ahijah – I Kgs. 11:29
 - 4) Jehu – I Kgs. 16:1,7,12
 - 5) unnamed – I Kgs. 18:4,13; 20:13,22
 - 6) Elijah – I Kgs. 18; II Kgs. 2
 - 7) Milcaiah – I Kgs. 22
 - 8) Elisha – II Kgs. 2:8,13
 - g. classical writing prophets (they address the nation as well as the king): Isaiah—Malachi (except Daniel)

B. Biblical Terms

1. *ro'eh* = seer, I Sam. 9:9. This reference shows the transition to the term *Nabi*, which means “prophet” and comes from the root, “to call.” *Ro'eh* is from the general Hebrew term “to see.” This person understood God’s ways and plans and was consulted to ascertain God’s will in a matter.
2. *hozeh* = seer, II Sam. 24:11. It is basically a synonym of *ro'eh*. It is from a rarer Hebrew term “to see in a vision.” The PARTICIPLE form is used most often to refer to prophets.
3. *nabi'* = prophet, cognate of Akkadian VERB *nabu* = “to call” and Arabic *naba'a* = “to announce.” This is the most common OT term to designate a prophet. It is used over 300 times. The exact etymology is uncertain, but “to call” at present seems the best option. Possibly the best understanding comes from YHWH’s description of Moses’ relationship to

Pharaoh through Aaron (cf. Exod. 4:10-16; 7:1; Deut. 5:5). A prophet is someone who speaks for God to His people (cf. Amos 3:8; Jer. 1:7,17; Ezek. 3:4).

4. All three terms are used of the prophet's office in I Chr. 29:29; Samuel – *Ro'eh*; Nathan - *Nabi*; and Gad – *Hoze*.
5. The phrase *'ish ha – 'elohim*, “man of God,” is also a broader designation for a speaker for God. It is used some 76 times in the OT in the sense of “prophet.”
6. The word “prophet” is Greek in origin. It comes from (1) *pro* = “before” or “for”; (2) *phemi* = “to speak.”

II. DEFINITION OF PROPHECY

- A. The term “prophecy” had a wider semantic field in Hebrew than in English. The Jews labeled the history books of Joshua through Kings (except Ruth) “the former prophets.” Both Abraham (Gen. 20:7; Ps. 105:5) and Moses (Deut. 18:18) are designated as prophets (also Miriam, Exod. 15:20). Therefore, beware of an assumed English definition!
- B. “Propheticism may legitimately be defined as that understanding of history which accepts meaning only in terms of divine concern, divine purpose, divine participation” (*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3, p. 896).
- C. “The prophet is neither a philosopher nor a systematic theologian, but a covenant mediator who delivers the word of God to His people in order to shape their future by reforming their present” (“Prophets and Prophecy,” *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 13, p. 1152).

III. PURPOSE OF PROPHECY

- A. Prophecy is a way for God to speak to His people, providing guidance in their current setting and hope in His control of their lives and world events. Their message was basically corporate. It is meant to rebuke, encourage, engender faith and repentance, and inform God's people about Himself and His plans. They hold God's people to fidelity to God's Covenants. Often it is used to clearly reveal God's choice of a spokesman (Deut. 13:1-3; 18:20-22). This, taken ultimately, would refer to the Messiah.
- B. Often, the prophet took a historical or theological crisis of his day and projected it into an eschatological setting. This end-time view of history (teleological) is unique to Israel and her sense of divine election and covenant promises.
- C. The office of prophet seems to balance (Jer. 18:18) and supplant the office of High Priest as a way of knowing God's will. The Urim and Thummim transcend into a verbal message from God's spokesman. The office of prophet seems to also have passed away in Israel after Malachi (or the writing of Chronicles). It does not appear until 400 years later with John the Baptist. It is uncertain how the New Testament gift of “prophecy” relates to the OT. New Testament prophets (Acts 11:27-28; 13:1; 14:29,32,37; 15:32; I Cor. 12:10,28-29; Eph. 4:11) are not revealers of new revelation, but forth-tellers and fore-tellers of God's will in recurrent situations.
- D. Prophecy is not exclusively or primarily predictive in nature. Prediction is one way to confirm his office and his message, but it must be noted “. . .less than 2% of OT prophecy is Messianic. Less

than 5% specifically describes the New Covenant Age. Less than 1% concerns events yet to come” (Fee & Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 166).

- E. Prophets represent God to the people, while Priests represent the people to God. This is a general statement. There are exceptions like Habakkuk, who addresses questions to God.
- F. One reason it is difficult to understand the prophets is because we do not know how their books were structured. They are not chronological. They seem to be thematic, but not always the way one would expect. Often there is no obvious historical setting, time-frame, or clear division between oracles. It is difficult (1) to read the books through in one sitting; (2) to outline them by topic; and (3) to ascertain the central truth or authorial intent in each oracle.

IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPHECY

- A. In the Old Testament there seems to be a development of the concept of “prophet” and “prophecy.” In early Israel there developed a fellowship of prophets, led by a strong charismatic leader such as Elijah or Elisha. Sometimes the phrase “the sons of the prophets” was used to designate this group (II Kgs. 2). The prophets at times were characterized by forms of ecstasy (I Sam. 10:10-13; 19:18-24).
- B. However, this period passed rapidly into the time of individual prophets. There were those prophets (both true and false) who identified with the King, and lived at the palace (Gad, Nathan). Also, there were those who were independent, sometimes totally unconnected with the status quo of Israelite society (Amos, Micah). They are both male and female (II Kgs. 22:14).
- C. The prophet was often a revealer of the future, conditioned on a person’s or a people’s immediate response. Often the prophet’s task was to unfold God’s universal plan for His creation which is not affected by human response. This universal eschatological plan is unique among the prophets of Israel in the Ancient Near East. Prediction and Covenant fidelity are twin foci of the prophetic messages (cf. Fee and Stuart, p. 150). This implies that the prophets were primarily corporate in focus. They usually, but not exclusively, address the nation of Israel.
- D. Most prophetic material was presented orally. It was later combined by means of theme or chronology, or other patterns of Near Eastern literature, which are lost to us. Because it was oral, it is not as structured as written prose. This makes the books difficult to read straight through and difficult to understand without a specific historical setting.
- E. The prophets use several patterns to convey their messages
 1. Court scene – God takes His people to court; often it is a divorce case where YHWH rejects his wife (Israel) for her unfaithfulness (Hosea 4; Micah 6).
 2. Funeral dirge – the special meter of this type of message and its characteristic “woe” sets it apart as a special form (Isaiah 5; Habakkuk 2).
 3. Covenant blessing pronouncement – the conditional nature of the Covenant is emphasized and the consequences, both positively and negatively, are spelled out for the future (Deuteronomy 27-29).

V. BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR VERIFICATION OF A TRUE PROPHET

- A. Deuteronomy 13:1-5 (predictions/signs are linked to monotheistic purity)
- B. Deuteronomy 18:9-22 (false prophets/true prophets)
- C. Both men and women are called and designated as prophets or prophetesses
 - 1. Miriam – Exodus 15
 - 2. Deborah – Judges 4:4-6
 - 3. Huldah – II Kings 22:14-20; II Chronicles 34:22-28
- D. In the surrounding cultures prophets were verified by means of divination. In Israel they were verified by
 - 1. a theological test – the use of the name of YHWH
 - 2. a historical test – accurate predictions

VI. HELPFUL GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETING PROPHECY

- A. Find the intent of the original prophet (editor) by noting the historical setting and the literary context of each oracle. Usually it will involve Israel breaking the Mosaic Covenant in some way.
- B. Read and interpret the whole oracle, not just a part; outline it as to content. See how it relates to surrounding oracles. Try to outline the whole book (by literary units and to paragraph level).
- C. Assume a literal interpretation of the passage until something in the text itself points you to figurative usage; then attempt to put the figurative language into prose.
- D. Analyze symbolic action in light of historical setting and parallel passages. Be sure to remember that this is Ancient Near Eastern literature, not western or modern literature.
- E. Treat predictions with care
 - 1. Are they exclusively for the author's day?
 - 2. Were they subsequently fulfilled in Israel's history?
 - 3. Are they yet future events?
 - 4. Do they have a contemporary fulfillment and yet a future fulfillment?
 - 5. Allow the authors of the Bible, not modern authors, to guide your answers.
- F. Special concerns
 - 1. Is the prediction qualified by conditional response?
 - 2. Is it certain to whom the prophecy is addressed (and why)?
 - 3. Is there a possibility both biblically and/or historically for multiple fulfillments?
 - 4. The NT authors under inspiration were able to see the Messiah in many places in the OT that are not obvious to us. They seem to use typology or word play. Since we are not inspired, we best leave this approach to them.

VII. HELPFUL BOOKS

- A. *A Guide to Biblical Prophecy* by Carl E. Armerding and W. Ward Gasque
- B. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart
- C. *My Servants the Prophets* by Edward J. Young
- D. *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic* by D. Brent Sandy
- E. *Cracking the Old Testament Code*, D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr.

APPENDIX THREE

A BRIEF HISTORICAL SURVEY

A Brief Historical Survey of the Powers of Mesopotamia (using dates based primarily on John Bright's *A History of Israel*, p. 462ff):

A. Assyrian Empire (Gen. 10:11):

1. religion and culture were greatly influenced by the Sumerian/Babylonian Empire.
2. tentative list of rulers and approximate dates:
 - a. 1354-1318 Asshur-Uballit I:
 - (1) conquered the Hittite city of Carchemish.
 - (2) began to remove Hittite influence and allowed Assyria to develop.
 - b. 1297-1266 Adad Nirari I (powerful king).
 - c. 1265-1235 Shalmaneser I (powerful king).
 - d. 1234-1197 Tukulti-Ninurta I
 - first conquest of Babylonian empire to the south.
 - e. 1118-1078 Tiglath-Pileser I
 - Assyria becomes a major power in Mesopotamia.
 - f. 1012- 972 Ashur-Rabi II
 - g. 972- 967 Ashur-Resh-Isui II.
 - h. 966- 934 Tiglath-Pileser II.
 - i. 934- 912 Ashur-Dan II.
 - j. 912- 890 Adad-Nirari II.
 - k. 890- 884 Tukulti-Ninurta II.
 - l. 890- 859 Asshur-Nasir-Apal II.
 - m. 859- 824 Shalmaneser III.
 - Battle of Qarqar in 853
 - n. 824- 811 Shamashi-Adad V.
 - o. 811- 783 Adad-Nirari III.
 - p. 781- 772 Shalmaneser IV.
 - q. 772- 754 Ashur-Dan III.
 - r. 754- 745 Ashur-Nirari V.
 - s. 745- 727 Tiglath-Pileser III:
 - (1) called by his Babylonian throne name, Pul, in II Kgs. 15:19
 - (2) very powerful king
 - (3) started the policy of deporting conquered peoples
 - (4) in 735 B.C. there was the formation of the “Syro-Ephramatic League,” which was an attempt to unify all the available military resources of the trans-Jordan nations from the head waters of the Euphrates to Egypt for the purpose of neutralizing the rising military power of Assyria. King Ahaz of Judah refuses to join and is invaded by Israel and Syria. He wrote to Tiglath-Pileser III for help against the advice of Isaiah (cf Isa. 7-12).
 - (5) in 732 Tiglath-Pileser III invades and conquers Syria and Israel and places a vassal king on the throne of Israel, Hoshea (732-722 B.C.). Thousands of Jews were exiled to Media (cf. II Kgs. 15-16).

- t. 727- 722 Shalmaneser V.
 - Hoshea forms an alliance with Egypt and is invaded by Assyria (cf. II Kgs. 17).
- u. 722- 705 Sargon II:
 - (1) after a three year siege, started by Shalmaneser V, his general and successor Sargon II, conquers the capital of Israel, Samaria. Over 27,000 are deported to Media.
 - (2) the Hittite empire is also conquered.
 - (3) in 714-711 another coalition of trans-Jordan nations and Egypt rebelled against Assyria. This coalition is known as “the Ashdod Rebellion.” Even Hezekiah of Judah originally was involved. Assyria invaded and destroyed several Philistine cities.
- v. 705- 681 Sennacherib:
 - (1) in 705 another coalition of trans-Jordan nations and Egypt rebelled after the death of his father, Sargon II. Hezekiah fully supported this rebellion. Sennacherib invaded in 701. The rebellion was crushed but Jerusalem was spared by an act of God (cf. Isa. 36-39 and II Kgs. 18-19.)
 - (2) Sennacherib also put down rebellions in Elam and Babylon.
- w. 681- 669 Esarhaddon:
 - (1) first Assyrian ruler to attack and conquer Egypt.
 - (2) he had great sympathy for Babylon and rebuilt its capital city.
- x. 669- 663 Assurbanipal:
 - (1) also called Osnappar in Ezra 4:10
 - (2) his brother Shamash-shum-ukin was made king of Babylon. This brought several years of peace between Assyria and Babylon but there was an undercurrent of independence which broke out in 652, led by his brother.
 - (3) fall of Thebes, 663
 - (4) defeat of Elam, 653, 645
- y. 633- 629 Asshur-Etil-Ilani.
- z. 629- 612 Sin-Shar-Ishkun.
- a.a. 612- 609 Asshur-Uballit II:
 - enthroned king in exile in Haran after the fall of Asshur in 614 and Nineveh in 612.

B. Neo-Babylon Empire:

- 1. 703- ? Merodach-Baladan:
 - started several revolts against Assyrian rule.
- 2. 652 Shamash-Shum-Ukin:
 - (a) Esarhaddon’s son and Assurbanipal's brother.
 - (b) he started a revolt against Assyria but was defeated.
- 3. 626- 605 Nabopolassar:
 - a. he was the first monarch of the Neo-Babylonian Empire.
 - b. he attacked Assyria from the south while Cyaxares of Media attacked from the northeast.
 - c. the old Assyrian capital of Asshur fell in 614 and the powerful new capital of Nineveh fell in 612
 - d. the remnant of the Assyrian army retreated to Haran. They even installed a king
 - e. in 608 Pharaoh Necho II (cf. II Kgs. 23:29) marched north to help the remnant of the Assyrian army for the purpose of forming a buffer zone against the rising power of Babylon. Josiah, the godly king of Judah (cf. II Kgs. 23), opposed the movement of the

Egyptian army through Palestine. There was a minor skirmish at Megiddo. Josiah was wounded and died (II Kgs. 23:29-30). His son, Jehoahaz, was made king. Pharaoh Necho II arrived too late to stop the destruction of the Assyrian forces at Haran. He engaged the Babylonian forces commanded by the crown prince Nebuchadnezzar II and was soundly defeated in 605 at Carchemish on the Euphrates.

On his way back to Egypt he stopped at Jerusalem and sacked the city. He replaced and deported Jehoahaz after only three months. He put another son of Josiah on the throne, Jehoiakim (cf. II Kgs. 23:31-35).

- f. Nebuchadnezzar II chased the Egyptian army south through Palestine but he received word of this father's death and returned to Babylon.

Later the same year he returned to Palestine. He left Jehoiakim on the throne of Judah but exiled several thousand of the leading citizens and several members of the royal family. Daniel and his friends were part of this deportation.

4. 605-562 Nebuchadnezzar II:
 - a. from 597-538 Babylon in complete control of Palestine.
 - b. in 597 another deportation from Jerusalem occurred because of Jehoiakim's alliance with Egypt (II Kgs. 24). He died before the arrival of Nebuchadnezzar II. His son Jehoiachin was only king for three months until he was exiled to Babylon. Ten thousand citizens, including Ezekiel, were resettled close to the city of Babylon by the Canal Kebar.
 - c. in 586, after continued flirtation with Egypt, the city of Jerusalem was completely destroyed (II Kgs. 25) and a mass deportation occurred. Zedekiah, who replaced Jehoiachin, was exiled and Gedaliah was appointed governor.
 - d. Gedaliah was killed by Jewish renegade military forces. These forces fled to Egypt and forced Jeremiah to go with them. Nebuchadnezzar invaded a fourth time (605, 596, 586, 582) and deported all remaining Jews that he could find.
5. 562-560 Evil-Merodach, also known as Amel-Marduk
 - he released Jehoiakim from prison but he had to remain in Babylon (cf II Kgs. 25:27-30; Jer. 52:31).
6. 560-556 Neriglissar.
 - he was Nebuchadnezzar's general who destroyed Jerusalem
7. 556- Labaski-Marduk
 - he was Neriglissar's son but was assassinated after only nine months
8. 556-539 Nabonidus:
 - (a) Nabonidus was not related to the royal house so he married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar II
 - (b) spent most of the time building a temple to the moon god *Sin* in Tema. He was the son of the high priestess of this goddess. This earned him the enmity of the priests of Marduk, chief god of Babylon.
 - (c) spent most of his time trying to put down revolts and stabilize the kingdom
 - (d) he moved to Tema and left the affairs of state to his son, Belshazzar, in the capital in Babylon (cf. Dan. 5)
9. ? -539 Belshazzar (co-reign)
 - the City of Babylon fell very quickly to the Medo-Persian Army under Gobryas of Gutium by diverting the waters of the Euphrates and entering the city unopposed. The priests and people of the city saw the Persians as liberators and restorers of Marduk. Gobryas was made Governor of Babylon by Cyrus II. Either Cyrus II or Gobryas is the "Darius the Mede" of Dan. 5:31 and 6:1. Darius means "Royal One."

- C. Medio-Persian Empire: Survey of the Rise of Cyrus II (Isa. 44:28; 45:1-7):
1. 625-585 Cyaxares was the king of Media who helped Babylon defeat Assyria.
 2. 585-550 Astyages was king of Media. Cyrus was his grandson by Mandane.
 3. 550-530 Cyrus II of Ansham was a vassal king who revolted.
 - (a) Nabonidus, the Babylonian king, supported Cyrus.
 - (b) Cyrus II dethroned Astyages.
 - (c) Nabonidus, in order to restore a balance of power, made an alliance with:
 - (1) Egypt.
 - (2) Croesus, King of Lydia (Asia Minor).
 4. 547- Cyrus II marched against Sardis (capital of Lydia).
 5. November 2, 539, Gobryas of Gutium, with Cyrus' army, took Babylon without resistance. Gobryas was made governor of Babylon.
 6. 539- in October, Cyrus II "the great" personally entered as liberator. His policy of kindness to national groups reversed years of deportation as a national policy.
 7. 538- Jews and others were allowed to return home and rebuild their native temples.
 8. 530- Cyrus' son, Cambyses II, succeeded him.
 9. 530-522 reign of Cambyses II.
 - added Egyptian empire in 525 to the Medo-Persian Empire.
 - possibly committed suicide.
 10. 522-486 Darius I came to rule.
 - (a) he was not of the royal line but a military general.
 - (b) he organized the Persian Empire using Cyrus' plans for Satraps (cf Ezra 1-6; Haggai; Zechariah).
 - (c) he set up coinage like Lydia.
 11. 486-465 reign of Xerxes I:
 - (a) put down Egyptian revolt.
 - (b) intended to invade Greece and fulfill Persian dream but was defeated in the battle of Thermopylae in 480 and Salamis in 479.
 - (c) Esther's husband who is called Ahasuerus in the Bible was assassinated in 465.
 12. 465-424 Artaxerxes I reigned (cf. Ezra 7-10; Nehemiah; Malachi):
 - (a) Greeks continued to advance until confronted with the Peloponnesian Civil Wars.
 - (b) Greece divides (Athenian - Peloponnesian).
 - (c) Greek civil wars lasted about 20 years.
 - (d) during this period the Jewish community is strengthened.
 13. 423-404 Darius II reigned.
 14. 404-358 Artaxerxes II reigned.
 15. 358-338 Artaxerxes III reigned.
 16. 338-336 Arses reigned.
 17. 336-331 Darius III reigned.
- D. Survey of Egypt:
1. Hyksos (Shepherd Kings - Semitic rulers)-1720/10-1550 B.C.
 2. 18th Dynasty (1570-1310 B.C.)
 - a. 1570-1546 Amosis
 - b. 1546-1525 Amenophis I (Amenhotep I).
 - c. 1525-1494 Thutmose I
 - d. ? Thutmose II
 - e. ? Hatshepsut
 - f. 1490-1435 Thutmose III

- g. 1435-1414 Amenophis II.
- h. 1414-1406 Thutmosis IV
- i. 1406-1370 Amenophis III
- j. 1370-1353 Amenophis IV (Akhenaten)
- k. ? Smenkhare
- l. ? Tutankhamun
- m. ? Ay
- n. 1340-1310 Haremhab
- 3. 19th Dynasty (1310-1200 B.C.):
 - a. ? Rameses I
 - b. 1309-1290 Seti I
 - c. 1290-1224 Ramesses (Rameses II)
 - d. 1224-1216 Marniptah (Merenptah)
 - e. ? Amenmesses
 - f. ? Seti II
 - g. ? Siptah
 - h. ? Tewosret
- 4. 20th Dynasty (1180-1065 B.C.):
 - a. 1175-1144 Rameses III
 - b. 1144-1065 Rameses IV - XI
- 5. 21st Dynasty (1065-935 B.C.):
 - a. ? Smendes
 - b. ? Herihor
- 6. 22nd Dynasty (935-725 B.C. - Libyan):
 - a. 935-914 Shishak (Shosenk I or Sheshong I)
 - b. 914-874 Osorkon I
 - c. ? Osorkon II
 - d. ? Shoshnek II
- 7. 23rd Dynasty (759-715 B.C. - Libyan)
- 8. 24th Dynasty (725-709 B.C.)
- 9. 25th Dynasty (716/15-663 B.C. - Ethiopian/Nubian):
 - a. 710/09-696/95 Shabako (Shabaku)
 - b. 696/95-685/84 Shebteko (Shebitku)
 - c. 690/89, 685/84-
664 Tirhakah (Taharqa)
 - d. ? Tantamun
- 10. 26th Dynasty (663-525 B.C. - Saitic):
 - a. 663-609 Psammetichus I (Psamtik)
 - b. 609-593 Necho II (Necho)
 - c. 593-588 Psammetichus II (Psamtik)
 - d. 588-569 Apries (Hophra)
 - e. 569-525 Amasis
 - f. ? Psammetichus III (Psamtik)
- 11. 27th Dynasty (525-401 B.C. - Persian):
 - a. 530-522 Cambyses II (Cyrus II's son)
 - b. 522-486 Darius I
 - c. 486-465 Xerxes I

- d. 465-424 Artaxerxes I
- e. 423-404 Darius II

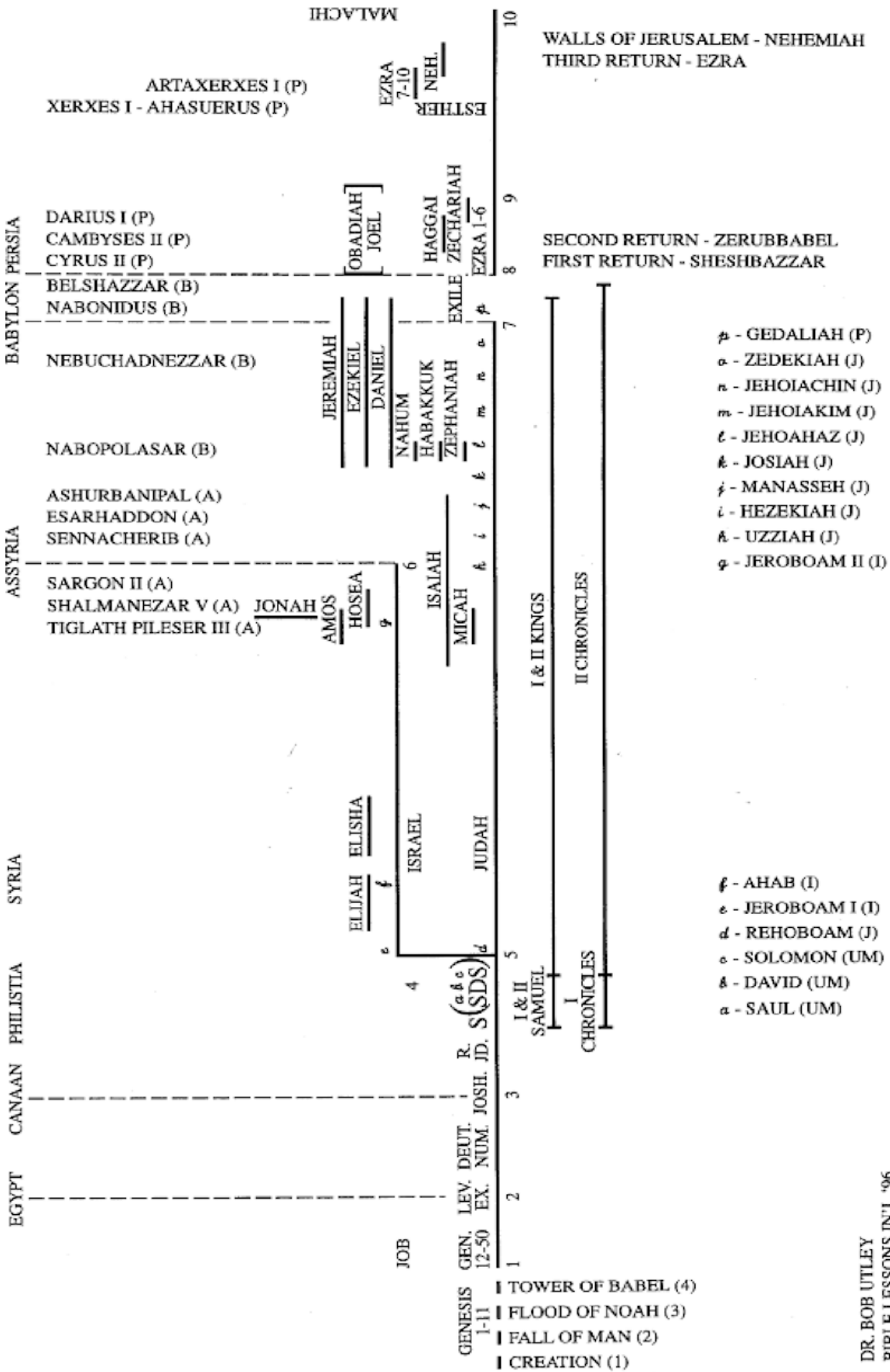
*for a differing chronology see *Zondervan's Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 p. 231.

E. Survey of Greece:

1. 359-336 Philip II of Macedon:
 - a. built up Greece.
 - b. assassinated in 336.
2. 336-323 Alexander II "the Great" (Philip's son):
 - a. routed Darius II, the Persian king, at the battle of Issus.
 - b. died in 323 in Babylon of a fever at 33/32 yrs of age.
 - c. Alexander's generals divided his empire at his death:
 - (1) Cassander - Macedonia and Greece
 - (2) Lysimachus - Thrace
 - (3) Seleucus I - Syria and Babylon
 - (4) Ptolemy - Egypt and Palestine
 - (5) Antigonus - Asia Minor (He did not last long)
3. Seleucids vs. Ptolemies for control of Palestine
 - a. Syria (Seleucid Rulers):
 - (1) 312-280 Seleucus I
 - (2) 280-261 Antiochus I Soter
 - (3) 261-246 Antiochus II Theus
 - (4) 246-226 Seleucus II Callinicus
 - (5) 226-223 Seleucus III Ceraunus
 - (6) 223-187 Antiochus III the Great
 - (7) 187-175 Seleucus IV Philopator
 - (8) 175-163 Antiochus IV Epiphanes
 - (9) 163-162 Antiochus V
 - (10) 162-150 Demetrius I
 - b. Egyptian (Ptolemaic) Rulers:
 - (1) 327-285 Ptolemy I Soter
 - (2) 285-246 Ptolemy II Philadelphus
 - (3) 246-221 Ptolemy III Euergetes
 - (4) 221-203 Ptolemy IV Philopator
 - (5) 203-181 Ptolemy V Epiphanes
 - (6) 181-146 Ptolemy VI Philometor
 - c. Brief Survey:
 - (1) 301- Palestine under Ptolemy rule for years
 - (2) 175-163 Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the 8th Seleucid ruler, wanted to Hellenize Jews by force, if necessary:
 - a) constructed gymnasiums.
 - b) constructed pagan altars of Zeus Olympius in the Temple

APPENDIX FOUR CHARTS

**OLD TESTAMENT TIMELINE
(on following page)**



DR. BOB UTLEY
BIBLE LESSONS IN 'L '96

KINGS AND EVENTS OF THE BABYLONIAN, PERSIAN, AND GREEK DYNASTIES

- 612 B.C. Nineveh falls to neo-Babylonian army (Nebuchadnezzar)
- 608 Pharaoh Necho II marched to Carchemesh to halt expansion of neo-Babylonian power
 Josiah, King of Judah, tries to stop him
 Death of Josiah and assumption of throne by his son, Jehoahaz
 Jehoiakim, another son of Josiah, replaced Jehoahaz on the authority of Pharaoh
 Necho II within 3 months
 Palestine and Syria under Egyptian rule
 Josiah's reforms dissipate
- 605 Nabopolassar sends troops to fight remaining Assyrian army and the Egyptians at
 Carchemesh
 Nebuchadnezzar chased them all the way to the plains of Palestine
 Nebuchadnezzar got word of the death of his father (Nabopolassar) so he returned to
 Babylon to receive the crown
 On the way back he takes Daniel and other members of the royal family into exile
- 605 - 538 Babylon in control of Palestine, 597; 10,000 exiled to Babylon
- 586 Jerusalem and the temple destroyed and large deportation
- 582 Because Jewish guerilla fighters killed Gedaliah another last large deportation
 occurred

SUCCESSORS OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR

- 562 - 560 Evil-Merodach released Jehoiakim (true Messianic line) from custody
- 560 - 556 Neriglissar
- 556 Labaski-Marduk reigned
- 556 - 539 Nabonidus:
 Spent most of the time building a temple to the mood god, *Sin*. This earned enmity of
 the priests of Marduk.
 Spent the rest of his time trying to put down revolts and stabilize the kingdom.
 He moved to Tema and left the affairs of state to his son, Belshazzar

Belshazzar:

Spent most of his time trying to restore order.

Babylonia's great threat was Media.

Rise of Cyrus

585 - 550 Astyages was king of Media (Cyrus II was his grandson by Mandane)

550 Cyrus II, a vassal king, revolted

Nabonidus, to restore balance of power, made alliances with:

1. Egypt
2. Crecus, King of Lydia

547 Cyrus marched against Sardis (capital Lydia) and captured all of Asia Minor

539 Gobiyas took Babylon without resistance (Dan. 5; Belshazzar Nabonidus' co-regent; also Gobiyas possibly Darius the Mede, Dan. 5:31).

Oct. 11, 539 Cyrus entered as liberator from Nabonidus' moon goddess, *Zin*

Cyrus' Successors

530 Cyrus' son succeeded him (Cambyses II)

530 - 522 Reign of Cambyses (Elephantine Papyri)

Added Egypt in 525 to the Medo-Persian Empire

522 - 486 Darius I came to rule

He organized the Persian Empire along Cyrus' plan of satraps

He set up coinage like Lydia's

486 - 465 Xerxes I (Esther)

Put down Egyptian revolt

Intended to invade Greece, but was defeated in the Battle of Thermoply in 480

Xerxes I was assassinated in 465

480 Battle of Thermoply

465 - 424 Artaxerxes I Longimanus (Ezra 7-10, Nehemiah, and Malachi)

Greeks continued to advance until confronted with Peloponisian Wars

Wars lasted about 20 years

During this period the Jewish community is reconstructed

Authorized the feast of unleavened bread in the Elephantine Temple

404 - 358 Artaxerxes II

358 - 338 Artaxerxes III
338 - 336 Arses
336 - 331 Darius III

GREECE

359 - 336 Philip II of Macedon built up Greece
He was assassinated in 336

336 - 323 Alexander the Great (Philip's son)
Routed Darius II at battle of ISUS
He died in 323 in Babylon of a fever after conquering the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East
Alexander's generals divided his empire at his death:

1. Cassander - Macedonia and Greece
2. Lysimicus - Thrace
3. Selects I - Syria and Babylon
4. Ptolemy - Egypt and Palestine
5. Antigonus - small part of Asia Minor

Seleucids vs. Ptolemies

301 Palestine was under Ptolemy's rule for 100 years

175 - 163 Antiochus Epiphanes
Wanted to Hellenize Jews, constructed gymnasium
Constructed pagan altars; priests were mistreated

Dec. 13, 168 Hog was slain on the altar by Antiochus Epiphanies. Some consider this to be the abomination of desolation.

167 Mattathias and sons rebel. Mattathias killed. Judas took control.
Judas Maccabeaus wages successful guerilla warfare

Dec. 25, 165 Temple rededicated

RULERS

BABYLON

MEDIA

626 - 605	Nabopolassar dies (“Nabu, Protect the Sun”) 625 - 585
	Cyrzares
605 - 562	Nebuchadnezzar II (“Nebo, Protect the Boundary”) 585 - 550 Astyages
562 - 560	Evil Merodack 550 Cyrus II
556	Labaski Marduk
556 - 539	Nabonidus Belshazzar
539 -	Gobiyas

MEDO-PERSIAN

550 - 530	Cyrus II (538 Medo-Persian dominate power called Achaemenian Empire)
530 - 522	Cambyses II (Egypt added and Cyprus)
522	Gaumata or Pseudo, Smerdis (reign 6 months)
522 - 486	Darius I (Hystaspes)
486 - 465	Xerxes I (Esther’s husband)
465 - 424	Artaxerxes I (Ezra and Nehemiah in Palestine)
423 -	Xerxes II
424 - 404	Darius II Nothus
404 - 359	Artaxerxes II Mnemon
359 - 338	Artaxerxes III Ochus
338 - 336	Arses
336 - 331	Darius III Codomannus

GREEK

359 - 336 Philip II of Macedon

336 - 323 Alexander the Great

323 - Generals divide Empire

1. Cassander - Macedonia
2. Lysimachus - Syria
3. Seleucus I - Syria and Babylon
4. Ptolemy - Egypt
5. Antigonos - Asia Minor (killed in 301 B.C.)

The Ptolemies controlled Palestine, but in 175 - 163 control passed to the Seleucids

175 - 163 Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the eighth Seleucid ruler

*Dates and names have been mostly taken from *A History of Israel* by John Bright, pp. 461-471.

KINGS OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

JUDAH'S KINGS (I CHR. 3:1-16; MATT. 1:6-11)					ISRAEL'S KINGS				
NAMES & DATES	BRIGHT	YOUNG	HARRISON	BIBLE TEXTS	NAMES & DATES	BRIGHT	YOUNG	HARRISON	BIBLE TEXTS
Rehoboam	922-915	933-917	931/30-913	I Kgs. 11:43-12:27; 14:21-31 II Chr. 9:31-12:16	Jeroboam I	922-901	933-912	931/30-910/09	I Kgs. 11:26-40; 12:12-14:20
Abijah (Abijam)	915-914	916-914	913-911/10	I Kgs. 14:31-15:8 II Chr. 11:20,22					
Asa	913-873	913-873	911/10-870/69	I Kgs. 15:8-30; 16:8,10, 23,29; 22:41,43,46 Jer. 41:9	Nadab Baasha	901-900 900-877	912-911 911-888	910/09-909/08 909/08-886/85	I Kgs. 14:20; 15:25-31 I Kgs.15:16-16:7; II Kgs..9:9 II Chr. 16:1-6 Jer. 41:9
Jehoshaphat	873-849	873-849	870/69-848	I Kgs. 15:24; 22:1-51 II Kgs. 3:1-12; 8:16-19 I Chr. 3:10 II Chr. 17:1-21:1	Elah	877-876	888-887	886/85-885/84	I Kgs. 16:8-14
(Jehoram Co-regent)	-----	-----	853-848	I Kgs. 22:50 II Kgs. 1:17; 8:16; 12:18	Zimri (Army General) Omri (Army General)	876 876-869	887 887-877	885/84 885/84-874/73	I Kgs. 16:9-20 II Kgs. 9:31 I Kgs. 16:15-28 II Kgs. 8:26 Micah 6:16
Jehoram (Joram)	849-842	849-842	848-841	I Chr. 21:1-20 Matthew 1:8					
Ahaziah	842	842	-----	II Kgs. 8:24-9:29 II Chr. 22:1-9	Ahab Ahaziah	869-850 850-849	876-854 854-853	874/73-853 853-852	I Kgs. 16:29-22:40 I Kgs. 22:40,41,49,51-53 II Chr. 18:1-3,19
Athaliah (Queen)	842-837	842-836	841-835	II Kgs. 8:26; 11:1-20 II Chr. 22:2-23:21	Jehoram (Joram)	849-842	853-842	852-841	II Kgs. 1:17; 3:1-27; 8:16-9:29
Joash (Jehoash)	837-800	836-797	835-796	II Kgs. 11:2-3; 12:1-21 II Chr. 22:11-12; 24:1-27	Jehu (Army General)	842-815	842-815	841-814/13	I Kgs. 19:16-17 II Kgs. 9:1-10:36; 15:12 II Chr. 22:7-9 Hosea 1:4

JUDAH'S KINGS (I CHR. 3:1-16; MATT. 1:6-11) [CON'T.]					ISRAEL'S KINGS (CON'T.)				
NAMES & DATES	BRIGHT	YOUNG	HARRISON	BIBLE TEXTS	NAMES & DATES	BRIGHT	YOUNG	HARRISON	BIBLE TEXTS
Amaziah	800-783	797-779	796-767	II Kgs. 12:21; 14:1-22 II Chr. 25:1-28					
(Uzziah Co-regent)	-----	-----	791/90-767	II Kgs. 14:21; 15:1-7	Jehoahaz	815-801	814-798	814/13-798	II Kgs. 10:35; 13:1-9
Uzziah (Azariah)	783-742	779-740	767-740/39	II Chr. 26:1-23 Hosea 1:1; Amos 1:1 Zechariah 14:5	Jehosah	801-786	798-783	798-782/81	II Kgs. 13:9-13,25 II Chr. 25:17-25 Hosea 1:1; Amos 1:1
(Jotham Co-regent)	750-742	-----	750-740/39	II Kgs.15:7,32-38	(Jer. II Co-regent)	-----	-----	793/92-782/81	II Kgs. 13:13; 14:16,23-29 Hosea 1:1
Jotham	742-735	740-736	740/39-732/31	I Chr. 5:17 II Chr. 26:23-27:9 Isa. 1:1; 7:1 Hosea 1:1; Micah 1:1	Jeroboam II	786-746	783-743	782/81-753	Amos 1:1; 7:9-11 II Kgs.15:8-12
(Ahaz Co-regent)	-----	-----	744/43-732/31	II Kgs. 15:30-16:20 II Chr. 27:9-28:27	Zechariah	746-745		753-752	
Ahaz	735-715	736-728	732/31-716/15	Isa. 1:1; 7:1ff; 14:28; 38:8 Hosea 1:1; Micah 1:1	Shallum	745	743	752	II Kgs. 15:10,13-15
(Hezekiah Co-regent)	-----	-----	729-716/15	II Kgs. 16:20; 18:1-20,21 II Chr. 28:27-32:33 Prov. 25:1	Menahem	745-738	743-737	752-742/41	II Kgs. 15:14,16-22
Hezekiah	715-687	727-699	716/15-687/86	Isa. 1:1; 36:1-39:8 Hosea 1:1; Micah 1:1 Matt. 1:9-10	Pekahiah	738-737	737-736	742/41-740/39	II Kgs. 15:23-26
(Manaseh Co-regent)	-----	-----	696/95-687/86	II Kgs. 20:21-21:18; 23:12,26; 24:2	Pekah	737-732	736-730	740/39-732/31	II Kgs. 15:27-31; 16:5 II Chr. 28:6; Isa. 7:1
Manasseh	687/86-642	698-643	687/86-642/41	II Chr. 32:33-33:20 Jer. 15:4ff; II Kgs. 21:18-26	Hoshea	732-724	730-722	732/31-723/22	II Kgs. 17:1-18
Amon	642-640	643-641	642/41-640/39	II Chr. 33:20-25 Jer. 1:2; Zeph. 1:1 I Kgs. 13:2-3	Fall of Samaria to Assyria	724 B.C.	722 B.C.	722 B.C.	

JUDAH'S KINGS (CON'T.)					ISRAEL'S KINGS (CON'T.)				
NAMES & DATES	BRIG HT	YOUNG	HARRISO N	BIBLE TEXTS	NAMES & DATES	BRIGHT	YOUNG	HARRISON	BIBLE TEXTS
Josiah	610-609	640-609	640/39-609	II Kgs. 21:24; 22:1-23:30 II Chr. 33:25-35:27 Jer. 1:2; Zeph. 1:1 Matt. 1:10-11					
Jehoahaz	609 (3 mths)	609	609	II Kgs. 23:30-34 II Chr. 36:1-4					
Jehoiakim	609-598	609-598	609-597	II Kgs. 23:34-24:6,19 II Chr. 36:4-8 Jer. 1:3; 22:18-23; 25:1ff; 26:1ff; 27:1ff; 35:1ff; 36:1ff Dan. 1:1-2					
Jehoiachin	598/97 (3 mths)	598	597	II Kgs. 24:6,8-17; 25:27-30 II Chr. 36:8-9 Jer. 52:31; Ezek. 1:2					
Zedekiah	597-586	598-587	597-587	II Kgs. 24:17-25:7 II Chr. 36:10-11 Jer. 1:3; 21:1-7; 24:8-10; 27:1ff; 32:4-5; 34:1-22; 37:1-39:7; 52:1-11					
Fall of Jerusalem to Babylon	586 B.C.	587 B.C.	587 B.C.	Lamentations					

For a good discussion on the problems of dating see E. R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*.

APPENDIX FIVE – DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I do not particularly care for statements of faith or creeds. I prefer to affirm the Bible itself. However, I realize that a statement of faith will provide those who are unfamiliar with me a way to evaluate my doctrinal perspective. In our day of so much theological error and deception, the following brief summary of my theology is offered.

1. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, eternal Word of God. It is the self-revelation of God recorded by men under supernatural leadership. It is our only source of clear truth about God and His purposes. It is also the only source of faith and practice for His church.

2. There is only one eternal, creator, redeemer God. He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. He has revealed Himself as loving and caring although He is also fair and just. He has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Spirit; truly separate and yet the same in essence.

3. God is actively in control of His world. There is both an eternal plan for His creation that is unalterable and an individually focused one that allows human free will. Nothing happens without God's knowledge and permission, yet He allows individual choices both among angels and humans. Jesus is the Father's Elect Man and all are potentially elect in Him. God's foreknowledge of events does not reduce humans to a determined pre-written script. All of us are responsible for our thoughts and deeds.

4. Mankind, though created in God's image and free from sin, chose to rebel against God. Although tempted by a supernatural agent, Adam and Eve were responsible for their willful self-centeredness. Their rebellion has affected humanity and creation. We are all in need of God's mercy and grace both for our corporate condition in Adam and our individual volitional rebellion.

5. God has provided a means of forgiveness and restoration for fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, God's unique son, became a man, lived a sinless life, and by means of his substitutionary death, paid the penalty for mankind's sin. He is the only way to restoration and fellowship with God. There is no other means of salvation except through faith in His finished work.

6. Each of us must personally receive God's offer of forgiveness and restoration in Jesus. This is accomplished by means of volitional trust in God's promises through Jesus and a willful turning from known sin.

7. All of us are fully forgiven and restored based upon our trust in Christ and repentance from sin. However, the evidence for this new relationship is seen in a changed, and changing, life. The goal of God for humanity is not only heaven someday but Christlikeness now. Those who are truly redeemed, though occasionally sinning, will continue in faith and repentance throughout their lives.

8. The Holy Spirit is "the other Jesus." He is present in the world to lead the lost to Christ and develop Christlikeness in the saved. The gifts of the Spirit are given at salvation. They are the life and ministry of Jesus divided among His body, the Church. The gifts which are basically the attitudes and motives of Jesus need to be motivated by the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit is active in our day as He was in the biblical times.

9. The Father has made the resurrected Jesus Christ the Judge of all things. He will return to earth to judge all mankind. Those who have trusted Jesus and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will receive their eternal glorified bodies at His return. They will be with Him forever. However, those who have refused to respond to God's truth will be separated eternally from the joys of fellowship with the Triune God. They will be condemned along with the Devil and his angels.

This is surely not complete or thorough but I hope it will give you the theological flavor of my heart. I like the statement:

"In essentials—unity, In peripherals—freedom, In all things—love."