

Expansions on the Book of Jeremiah

Introduction

This text is next in line after a number of similar “expansion” texts pertaining to both the Old and New Testaments, all of which are viewed from the point of *lectio divina*. At the same time the prospect of going through a lengthy document comprised of fifty-two chapters is a cause for concern and hesitation. The reason? A cursory glance reveals that it contains page after page of curses (many of which are repetitive) along with digressions on obscure places and people long forgotten. It’s easy to get lost in this sea of condemnations as they come after you wave after wave. This brings up an obvious question, of how such material is relevant in today’s world. The reader may struggle with this more than with other biblical texts. It’s left to him or her to decide if the effort is worthwhile, hopefully with the aide of a document like the one at hand. While Jeremiah can be read straight on through, it’s not intended as such. What’s presented here is more a guide for going through certain sections that may strike one’s fancy. Also it should be noted that perhaps the Book of Jeremiah might be appreciated better after having been exposed to (for example) Isaiah and Hosea.

While you may hit upon a nugget here and there, let’s face it. They are few and far between. This is especially true after you’ve gone through lengthy pages...chapters...depicting human misery¹ which result from fleeing God’s presence. If this weren’t bad enough we have Jeremiah himself, of how he could endure abuse from his own people over an extended period of time. Granted he was favored by God...but this abuse? Nevertheless, there’s something captivating about the style of the book despite the onslaught of curses and laments. It can’t be explained except by jumping in and going through the text line by line where plenty of material can be discovered from the vantage point of *lectio divina*. The repetition of human rebellion against God and the resulting misery has direct and stark application not just to contemporary society but to the reader. Parallel with this is the uninterrupted, unflinching loyalty of God to his people, quite amazing to see through the eyes of Jeremiah’s various prophecies.

Furthermore throughout the ups and downs (mostly the latter) a more comprehensive view emerges as it had with the last “expansion” text of Second Kings. That book similarly is full of curses and vile behavior by notable people and of how the Lord remains so patient. It should be noted that this unremitting stress upon rebellion, sin and faithlessness is a sure sign that the Lord is active. Few if any other nations have the courage to hold up a mirror and behold themselves with such unrelenting honesty and courage. And so it seems that in the end we are no different from the characters involved as in Second Kings, Jeremiah or any other book².

1 A note with regard to *rah* or evil. As noted in 1.16, a quick glance at a Hebrew lexicon shows that the Book of Jeremiah contains the greatest amount of references to it.

2 A personal observation...while Jeremiah does go into seemingly endless rants about Israel having abandoned the Lord and his *torah*, there’s something not so boring or wearisome about it. Hard to explain, really, but perhaps a clearer picture of this will emerge towards the end of the book.

A brief remark is in order with regard to references of verbs within the text. Although a given verb may be closer in the text to the one noted, the reference preferred is the verb belonging to the same form. That means the second reference can be further removed in the Book of Jeremiah. For example, the verb *paqad* (set) is first found in 1.10. The next occurrence is 3.16 but not noted as such because the two forms differ. That is to say, the reference given is 36.20 because it's the next form of *paqad*. If a verb isn't found in Jeremiah, a reference from another biblical book is given. Also with regard to a verb, the last reference in the text is noted regardless of its form.

In other "expansion" documents the conjunctive *v-* has been singled out for special reference. This small word...actually letter...is prefaced to the first word of many verses translated usually as "and" as well as other similar terms. Sometimes it isn't even translated at all. The purpose of the conjunctive is to show the close connection between what had just happened and what is transpiring at the moment. While Jeremiah certainly has the conjunctive *v-*, it isn't seem as prevalent as in other books. You may not detect it at first, but as you move along this lack gives the book a different pace. Perhaps upon completion of these notations the reason will become clear and a note will be made of it.

At the end of each chapter are the transliterated words noted upon which are inserted for easier cross reference. A note with regard to *davar*, the spelling of which is the same for both a noun and a verb. Primarily it pertains to an utterance or word-as-expression from the Lord through Jeremiah to the people. It's not listed because it's so common. Also many times *davar* is left untranslated so as to bring home more forcefully the word's intent.

Citations are taken from **The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha (RSV)**, (New York, 1973). Also the **NIV Study Bible** (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1984) has been used chiefly for general information with regard to the text.

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Chapter One

This book opens prophetically and significantly with the noun *davar* or word-as-expression which will play an important role throughout the ensuing fifty-two chapters. Here the plural form belongs to Jeremiah who is author of all that follows. His background is described briefly as coming from a priestly class; other than that no further information is provided. For a prophet—and this would hold true if we could walk right up and ask him—any background or personal information is purely irrelevant. Like all those who came before, his attention is fixed wholly upon the Lord and what's required of him. This makes Jeremiah more or less oblivious to earthly concerns, one reason why people—especially those in authority—tend to loathe him. In fact, the Lord warns him about this straightaway just as he had done with the other prophets.

Vs. 2 forms one sentence with the book's first verse and is significant insofar as the *davar* of the Lord came to Jeremiah. If it weren't for this singular divine *davar*, the prophet's own *davar* which

is plural would be of no value. The next two verses are careful to mention three kings of Judah which incarnates what the Lord wishes to *davar*. First in line is Josiah, thirteen years into his reign, a significant amount of time, and an auspicious moment for Jeremiah to get his career off the ground. As for this king, “he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord” and most importantly of all, “walked in all the way of David his Father, and he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left” [2Kg 22.2]. For all kings David is something like the gold standard by whom they are measured.

The second king is Jehoiakim, quite another story, who like many of his predecessors “did what was evil in the sight of the Lord according to all that his fathers had done” [2Kg 24.9]. He set the stage, if you will, for King Nebuchadnezzar to lay siege to Jerusalem. However, Second Kings concludes on an upbeat note, that is, Jehoiakim was treated royally by his captives. Despite any hesitations as to his character, one has to overlook an individual case, for it turned out to forebode well for the Israelite captives.

Finally we have Zedekiah who like Jehoiakim, “did what was evil in the sight of the Lord” [2Kg 24.19]. His actions again provoked King Nebuchadnezzar who not only besieged Jerusalem but took him and the survivors captive. However, the Babylonians slew his sons and then blinded him, leaving him to linger on with bitter memories.

Against this eventful background vs. 4 has Jeremiah speaking about the *davar* of the Lord coming to him. It begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “now” and serves to show the connection between two events. How and under what circumstances the *davar* came to him aren’t given. Still, Jeremiah had to be disposed to receive it which means he had a readiness to listen. As for the context, Israel was going through considerable political upheaval, especially the undoing of what King Josiah had accomplished, which must have shaken Jeremiah considerably. On the other hand, it was a perfect time for this divine *davar* to kick in and define his mission.

Vs. 5 spells out both the personal and communal nature of this *davar* with regard to appointing Jeremiah a prophet, *nave’* being one especially attuned to expressing the Lord’s *davar* which is *natan*, the common verb to give. Note that Israel isn’t specified but nations or *goy*...in other words, all peoples. This mission is in the Lord’s mind before he had formed Jeremiah, *yatsar* as a potter fashions clay into a pot or the like. “For he is the one who formed all things” [10.16]. Furthermore, the Lord had consecrated him, *qadash* as to be holy or to set apart. “Prepare war against her” [6.4]. Jeremiah may have had an inkling of this throughout his life or perhaps up to this point but was unable to articulate it adequately. Therefore he had been uneasy, in a state of waiting.

Vs. 6 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” which shows that Jeremiah responded immediately to the divine invitation. As one would expect, he begins with *’ahah* translated as “ah” which conveys his astonishment. It also intimates a sense of relief...relief insofar as at last that uneasy feeling which had been gnawing at him throughout life finally stopped. That latent knowledge of having been formed and appointed before his birth has come to fulfillment. In the same breath Jeremiah exclaims *hineh* or “behold,” that he’s unable to speak (the verb *davar*)—to

respond to the divine *davar* with *davar* equal to it—because he’s a mere youth or *nahar* (cf. vs. 7), technically a male ready for marriage but not yet betrothed.

Vs. 7 has the conjunctive *v-* translated as “but,” signaling a retort by the Lord to Jeremiah’s misgivings about being a *nahar* or youth. Instead, the Lord tells Jeremiah that he’s taking the initiative by sending him to those whom he wishes to speak (*davar*) what’s commanded of him, the verb being *tsavah* also as to set up, appoint. Thus *davar* and *tsavah* are one and the same. “And say to them everything that I command you” [vs. 17]. Then in vs. 8 the Lord decides it’s time to offer some consolation, about not being afraid of them literally as “from their faces.” He will be with Jeremiah to deliver him, *natsal* also as to snatch, remove. “For I am with you, says the Lord, to deliver you” [vs. 19]. All will be fine Jeremiah says to himself. The problem is with regard to what people and where? The Lord used *goy* or nations in vs. 5 which can intimate those other than his fellow Israelites. So now it’s a waiting game and for how long nobody knows. Both options are attractive as well as scary.

Without waiting for a response, in vs. 9 the Lord goes ahead and touches Jeremiah’s mouth, *nagah* also as to reach, strike. “Whereas the sword has reached their very life” [4.10]. This gesture is preceded immediately by the Lord extending his hand suggesting a personal touch. As for *nagah*, the same gesture was made to Isaiah in Is 6.7: “And he touched my mouth and said, ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin forgiven.’” Here it’s a seraphim compared with the Lord himself, an incident Jeremiah must have recalled. As for Isaiah, clearly he’s sent to Israel. However, it turns out the people are closed to any divine communication which doesn’t forebode well for Jeremiah. On the other hand, going to the *goy* may find them more open. Right now the choice is up for grabs.

As for the Lord’s touch or *nagah*, it’s the means by which he inserts his *davar*. Once in Jeremiah’s mouth, the Lord will simply *davar* them, no distinction between the two but without confusing the human and divine. After withdrawing his hand, in vs. 10 the Lord spells out what he has in mind, again referring to *goy* as well as *mamlakah* or kingdoms. “For I cam calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north” [vs. 15]. This must have been troubling for Jeremiah since as of yet there’s no mention of his native Israel. So it looks like his task will be quite formidable with regard to having been set over these *goy*, the verb *paqad* having military connotations fundamentally as to muster, pay attention. “So they went into the court to the king, having put the scroll in the chamber of Elishama the secretary” [36.20].

Jeremiah’s mission in vs. 10 is threefold and contains two pairs, they sounding like something applicable to a ruler: *natash* and *natats* (pluck up and break down, 12.15 & 31.28), *avad* and *haras* (destroy and overthrow, 18.7 & 31.28), *banah* and *natah* (build and plant, 35.9 & 18.9). Of the three, only the last is positive; the first two are necessary for clearing the way.

After this commission where the Lord touches Jeremiah’s mouth to insert his *davar*, in vs. 11 this same *davar* comes to him immediately afterwards. Furthermore, in vs. 13 the divine *davar* comes yet again. The Lord asks more or less rhetorically as to what Jeremiah sees, the rod of almond right before his eyes, *shaqed* having three other biblical references, one of which is Ecc 12.5: “The

almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along and desire fails.” The Lord responds favorably, that Jeremiah has seen well, for the Lord is watching (*shaqad*) over his *davar* in order to bring it to fruition. As for the verb *shaqad* (root of *shaqed*), cf. 5.6: “A leopard is watching against their cities.”

In vs. 13 the *davar* of the Lord comes to Jeremiah again, clearly distinct from the first one which is divided into two parts. However, no time interval is given. As in vs. 11, the Lord bids his prophet-in-the-making to look at what turns out to be a boiling pot, the noun *syr* as in 52.18: “And they took away the pots...and all the vessels of bronze used in the temple service.”

A footnote in the RSV says that the words “facing away from the north” are uncertain in the Hebrew text though the image is that of a pot spilling over and whose contents rush toward the south. So in vs. 14 the Lord tells Jeremiah something that is imminent, namely, many invasions have come from the north. The boiling signifies not just an intense, unwavering type of evil (*rah*, cf. vs. 16) but one which breaks forth, *patach* also as to open, let loose. “The cities of the Negeb are shut up with none to open them” [13.19]. So after having designated Jeremiah as a prophet (cf. vs. 5) to *goy* with nothing said about his native land, the threat of an invasion of Israel is close at hand. What’s worse is that the people haven’t the slightest knowledge of it.

Vs. 15 begins with *hineh* (cf. vs. 6) or “lo,” a way of getting attention which here consists of an invasion that appears right around the corner, it being instigated by the Lord himself. After all, it is he who is calling (*qara*) all the tribes from the north. “For behold, I begin to work evil at the city which is called by my name” [25.29]. As for tribes, *mishpachah* is used which more specifically refers to families. “Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel” [2.4]. All these peoples who aren’t identified further will make their way to Jerusalem and set up their thrones before it or more specifically, at the city gates and walls including other cities of Judah. This is a way of saying that although they have as yet to capture these places, they are sufficiently confident of the outcome. It’s simply a matter of time before they move in and take over.

In vs. 16 for the first time the Lord intimates his intent for Jeremiah. Earlier he was set aside to be a prophet to the *goy* or nations in general whereas here he implies strongly that his mission is for Israel. The Lord will *davar* his *mishpat* or judgment, sentence against his people, that is, through those who had invaded from the north and who will so be encamped at the very threshold of Jerusalem and other towns. He identifies evil or *rah* (cf. vs. 14) with having forsaken him, *hazav*. “They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters and hewed out cisterns for themselves” [2.13]. Not only this but worse. Israel has burned incense to foreign gods and worshiped the work of their own hands. This was nothing new to Jeremiah. At least he had a confirmation of what he knew was true and could proceed accordingly.

A note with regard to *rah* or evil...a quick glance at a Hebrew lexicon shows that the Book of Jeremiah contains the greatest amount of references to it.

Vs. 17 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “but” with the Lord telling Jeremiah what to do in light of the disaster at hand. When the enemy is encamped outside city walls, it won’t as yet breach the walls but is on the verge of doing so. Girding up his loins is equivalent to tightening one’s belt for intense action ahead, this followed by *qum* or arise which implies suddenness or springing into action. “Arise and save us” [2.27]!

Once so prepared, Jeremiah is to *davar* all that the Lord had said to him. Then he gives a warning, a threat of sorts...not to be dismayed by whatever the people throw at him, the verb being *chatat* fundamentally as to be broken down with fear. “Learn not the way of the nations nor be dismayed at the signs of the heavens” [10.2]. If Jeremiah succumbs to this *chatat*, the Lord with *chatat* him in return.

In response to the hostile forces which will take up their position outside Jerusalem and other towns, the Lord will fortify Jeremiah not so much against them but against Israel, implying that this will happen before the invasion. So to his own people it seems that the prophet is on the enemy’s side. That is to say, Jeremiah will become both a fortified city, iron pillar and bronze wall:

- 1) *Mivtsar* is a noun also as stronghold. “Assemble and let us go into the fortified cities[4.5]!
- 2) *Hamud* or pillar. “For thus says the Lord of hosts concerning the pillars” [27.19].
- 3) *Chomah* or wall. “And I will make you to this people a fortified wall of bronze” [15.20].

All three are to be done against the entire land, officials and priests. In sum, every inhabitant of Israel is included, a task no one could undertake unless with divine assistance...and a lot of it. Even though Jeremiah’s own people will fight against him, the Lord will do it for him, *lachim*. “They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you” [15.20]. In addition to the Lord doing the heavy lifting, he will save Jeremiah, *natsal* meaning to snatch as in vs. 7. And so Jeremiah faced a threat on two fronts: an enemy from without and one from within, the latter which will prove to be the more treacherous.

Thus the opening chapter has the call of Jeremiah to be a prophet followed by an impending invasion from the north which results from Israel’s apostasy. The real battle is not against them—for they are divine agents, if you will—but against Israel. And so Jeremiah is left with the prospect of being a one man army of sorts against his own people. Nothing is said of how he feels about all this which is secondary to the story but certainly we are left wondering.

5) nave’, natan, goy, yatsar, qadash, 6) hineh, 7) nahar, tsavah, 8) natsal, 9) nagah, 10) goy, mamlakah, paqad, natash, natats, ‘avad, haras, banah, natah, 11) shaqed, shaqad, 13) syr, 14) rah, patach, 15) hineh, qara’, mishpachah, 16) mishpat, rah, hazav, 17) qum, chatat, 18) mivtsar, hamud, chomah, 19) lachim, natsal

Chapter Two

This new chapter opens with the untranslated conjunctive *v-* which often shows a close connection between the action just described and the current situation. This verse repeats 1.11 but is specific as to what Jeremiah is to do, literally, “call (*qara*) in the ears of Jerusalem.” “Have you not just now called to me” [3.4]? As we advance through this chapter, Jeremiah lays it on thick and simply keeps on going. You wonder how he managed to stay alive and not be killed on the spot. Despite the charges leveled against Israel, there’s something positive to say about the nation, her willingness to put up with such a barrage. Perhaps things will change later, for Jeremiah doesn’t seem the type to back down.

Earlier it was said that Jeremiah seemed called to the *goy*, but this was resolved later by an impending invasion from the north against Jerusalem. Now he seems to be siding with the invaders. The need to shout in the ears of the Jerusalemites is a preview of what’s in store for both them and for Jeremiah, and each knows it. This is the beginning of what will become a pattern for the prophet. He will recall how desperately he’ll need to be reminded of what the Lord promised him: a fortified city, iron pillar and bronze wall (cf. 1.18).

Instead of hitting the people with the full force of the divine *davar*, Jeremiah begins with an appeal. That is to say, he recalls Jerusalem’s devotion when young, *chesed* being the noun which is considered untranslatable and not unlike the New Testament concept of *agape*. “I am the Lord who practices steadfast love” [9.24]. Similar to this *chesed* is bridal love, *’ahavah* connoting affection either for good or ill. “How well you direct your course to seek lovers” [vs. 33]! In the same verse (2) the Lord refers to Israel’s glory days during the forty years in the Sinai wilderness where she followed him, the common verb *halak*. He calls that place a “land not sworn” which can mean that the wilderness was a place Israel didn’t put down roots, was always on the move and thus had to trust more directly upon the Lord and Moses.

Vs. 3 continues the theme of Israel’s glory days when the people had been holy or *qodesh* to the Lord, that is, set apart for him. “Can vows and sacrificial flesh avert your doom” [11.15]? Also she had been the first fruits of his harvest, *re’shyth*. “In the beginning of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, the king of Judah, this word came from the Lord” [26.1]. So far so good. However, the Lord now says that anyone who ate of this first fruits became guilty followed by evil (*rah*, cf. 1.16) coming down hard upon them. As for the verb *’asham*, it connotes failure of duty or commitment. “We are not guilty, for they have sinned against the Lord” [50.7].

Although Chapter Two begins with “Thus says the Lord,” for emphasis the conclusion of this three verse communication with “says the Lord.”

Vs. 4 begins with “hear the word of the Lord,” this being the first time *shamah* is used with regard to *davar* and is found next in 7.2. Also it’s the first time Jeremiah tried it out, as it were, and continues through 3.5. In the verse at hand *shamah* is directed to Jacob as well as families of Israel, *mishpachah* found last in 1.15 in reference to *goy* or nations. It’s followed by what will become very familiar, “Thus says the Lord.” It’s found last in vs. 2 and in vs. 5 assumes a direct, rhetorical question by the Lord to his people with regard to their fathers put in terms of their youth (cf. vs. 2). As for rhetorical questions, this is the first of fourteen in Chapter Two. Their rapid-fire

appearance is a way of wearing down the people, shaming and cajoling them all at once, until they (hopefully) return to the Lord. Those listening may balk, thinking why should the Lord be concerned about people who had lived many years ago? What effect do they have on us now? Such an attitude is a denial of responsibility as well as acknowledgment that people living then were of no difference from the current generation including all those generations in between.

So when the Lord says that Israel's fathers had found wrong in him, they simply did not stray but went far from him. *Havel* also means wickedness or depravity as in Ps 7.3: "O Lord my God, if I have done this, if there is wrong in my hands." The verb is *rachaq* with two prepositions functioning as one (*mehalay*), literally "from upon me." "With the result that you will be removed from your land, and I will drive you out, and you will perish" [27.10]. The end result of this *rachaq*? Worthlessness or *hevel* which also means emptiness or vanity along with its verbal root *haval*. References are as follows: "Why have they provoked me to anger with their...foreign idols" [8.19]? "Filling you with vain hopes" [23.16]. Although not mentioned explicitly, idol worship is the bone of contention.

The rhetorical question of the previous verse is countered in vs. 6 with one the Lord wishes Israel had asked. In other words, the people failed to inquire where the Lord had been, the same Lord who had brought them from Egypt into the Sinai wilderness. This place is described in really miserable terms: a land of deserts (*haravah*, cf. 5.6), pits (*shuchah*, cf. 18.20), drought (*tsiyah*, cf. 50.12), deep darkness (*tsalmaveth*, cf. 23.26) and a place where no one goes, let alone dwell. While all this is true, their biggest omission, of course, is not to follow through on God's revelation to them at Mount Sinai. So right off the bat we have a contrast that will play out not only in the Book of Jeremiah but within virtually every other prophet. That is to say, clear and unmistakable revelations of the Lord are in conflict with the incorrigible persistence of human desires and refusal to accept transcendent reality working on their behalf.

The Lord continues (apparently to deaf ears) that he had brought Israel into a land that's plentiful or literally a "land of the garden, *karmel*." "I looked, and lo, the fruitful land was a desert" [4.26]. There Israel was to enjoy the produce of this garden, reminiscent of the Garden of Eden though *gan* is the word used for it, something enclosed with trees. However, the opposite happened. Israel is marked by having been exiled from Eden which when as vs. 7 says, comes into "my land" or the Lord's land, *erets* (cf. vs. 15). This is more than a physical spot but essentially home which she had defiled, *tame'* as making it unclean. "They have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name to defile it" [7.30]. Also Israel had made this garden also called the Lord' heritage an abomination, *nachalah* and *tohevah* (that which is abhorred) with the verb *sum* which connotes a placing and therefore something permanent. As for the two nouns: "A heritage most beautiful of all nations" [3.19] and "Were they ashamed when they committed abomination [6.15]?"

In vs. 8 Jeremiah singles out three categories of people responsible for Israel's well-being, but all have failed miserably:

1) The priests (*kohen*, cf. vs. 26) who didn't ask "Where is the Lord?" They are handlers of the *torah*, *taphash* meaning to take hold of and keep as in 46.9: "Men of Ethiopia and Put who handle the shield, men of Lud, skilled in handling the bow." As for *torah*, cf. 6.19: "And as for my

law, they have rejected it.” In sum, the priests are noted for not knowing the Lord, *yadah* implying intimate knowledge. “Know and see that it is evil and bitter for you to forsake the Lord your God” [vs. 19]. Of all three groups, this one is supposed to excel in such *yadah*.

2) Next come the rulers which literally read shepherds, *rahah* being a participle meaning to feed. “Shepherds with their flocks shall come against her” [6.3]. In the verse at hand they trespassed against the Lord, *pashah* also as to rebel and with the preposition *b-*, “rebelled in me.” “You have all rebelled against me” [vs. 29].

3) Finally we have the prophets who prophesied by (*b-*, in) Baal who pursued what was of no profit, *yahal*. “But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit” [vs. 11]. Jeremiah was quite familiar with these prophets under whose influence he had lived, for example, King Jehoiakim mentioned in Chapter One.

Vs. 9 begins with *laken* or therefore, indicative even before he goes further that the Lord already has and is continuing to take drastic steps to remedy the situation just described. When he means contend or *ryv* (to plead a case), it’s with *hod* or still...that the Lord has been doing this since Israel had been in the Sinai desert right up to the present. Despite the long, drawn-out affair, undoubtedly he will win. “Why do you complain against me [vs. 29]?”

In vs. 10 the Lord invites—one could say almost taunt—Israel to travel from Cyprus to Kedar in order to examine closely if any such thing as he had described is true. In short, go and find out for yourselves. The verb *byn* or to understand is used along with the adverb *me’od*, “to understand excessively.” “Consider and call for the mourning women to come” [9.17]. This leads to another rhetorical question in vs. 11, that is, concerning a nation (*goy*, cf. 1.10) which has changed its gods even if they didn’t exist, the verb being *mur* as in 48.11: “and his scent is not changed.” *Mur* as used is transferred over to Israel with respect to their innate glory for that which is worthless, *yahal* (cf. vs. 8), *kavod* being found next in 13.16: “Give glory to the Lord your God before he brings darkness.”

Vss. 12-13 has the Lord turning attention away from Israel, telling the heavens above to be appalled, *shamam* also as to be desolate and rhymes with *shamym*. “The priests shall be appalled and the prophets astonished” [4.17]. He also tells the heavens to be shocked and utterly desolate, *sahar* and *charav*, the former also as to be afraid and the latter to be laid waste. “Before him is a devouring fire, round about him a mighty tempest” [Ps 50.3]. “Slay and utterly destroy after them, says the Lord” [50.21]. The reason for this attitude? Israel has committed two evils (*rah*, cf. vs. 3) made all the more poignant by calling her “my people,” that is, very personal. The two are:

1) Forsook the Lord, *hazav* (cf. 1.17) also as to abandon the fountain of living waters, *maqor* as in 9.1: “O that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears.”

2) Hewed out cisterns or *bo’r* which contrasts with the natural state of *maqor*. This is the only use of the noun in the Bible but closely related to one of a similar spelling. The very act of hewing or *chatsav* means applying oneself to digging where it isn’t required as with a fountain. “And he set stone cutters to prepare dressed stones for building the house of God” [1Chron 22.2]. In the verse at hand, these cisterns which are in the ground are broken or *shavar*. “For long ago you broke your yoke and burst your bonds” [vs. 20].

Vs. 14 has another rhetorical question by the Lord addressed to Israel, this time with regard to being a slave or *heved* as well as a servant who is born at home. “I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them” [17.20]. If this is so, then why has Israel become prey or *baz*, this also as spoil? “Your wealth and your treasures I will give as spoil without price” [15.13].

In vs. 15 Israel has become prey to a lion which roared again her, *sha’ag*. “The Lord will roar from on high” 25.30]. Just as in that verse, lions similarly and literally “give their voices.” This *sha’ag* is so loud, if you will, that it lays waste Israel, *shamah* also as astonishment and prevents anyone to live in any of her cities. *Gan* or “moreover” functions here like the conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 16 to show the close connection between this and invaders singled as coming from Memphis and Tahpanhes and as having broken the crown of Israel’s head.

Vs. 17 has another rhetorical question, their large number of indicative of the Lord’s great displeasure with his people. They have brought this calamity upon themselves by forsaking (*hazav*, cf. vs. 13) the Lord who had led them in his way, *derek* which also means a journey. *Derek* is found in vs. 18 literally as “to the way to Egypt.” In other words, Israel wants to return to the place of slavery and drink the Nile River’s water. The same applies to Assyria.

Instead of the Lord taking it out on Israel, vs. 19 says that her own wickedness and apostasy will do the job, *rah* (cf. vs. 13) and *meshuvah*, the latter literally as a turning away. “Have you see what she did, that faithless one, Israel” [3.6]? As for the former, it will chasten and as for the latter, reprove, *yasar* and *yakach*. *Yasar* has a positive side, to instruct and to correct. “Correct me, O Lord, but in just measure” [10.24]. “Let no man strive nor reprove another” [Hos 4.4].

In this same verse (19) the Lord warns Israel both to know and to see (*yadah* and *ra’ah*, vss. 8 and 10 but not noted there) it’s evil and bitter (*rah* and *mar*, vs. 19 and 4.18) to forsake or *hazav*. This verb means to abandon as in vs. 17 him simply because Israel lacks fear of the Lord, *pachdah* being the only use of this noun in the Bible which is rendered here literally and directly as “no fear to (*el*) you.”

In vs. 20 “long ago” isn’t specified but most likely refers to Israel in the Sinai Desert or when she broke her yoke bonds (*hol* and *moser*). She proclaimed boldly that she wouldn’t serve the Lord, the common verb *havad* also as to be a slave, both found together in 5.5: “But they all alike had broken the yoke, they had burst the bonds.” However, Israel exchanged free bondage, as it were, to the Lord, for worship of idols (though the verse doesn’t mention it except for hills and trees) as well as degrading herself to the role of a harlot, the participle *zannah* as in 3.3: “Yet you have a harlot’s brow, you refuse to be ashamed.”

The Lord planted Israel as a choice vine or *soreq* in vs. 21, most likely referring to the newly repossessed land of Canaan, the only other biblical reference being Is 5.2, the context being similar, that is, a vineyard: “He dug it and cleared it of stones and planted it with choice vines.” This vine contained seed that was choice, the noun *emeth* being used, literally as “seed of truth.” “If you swear, ‘As the Lord lives,’ in truth, in justice and in uprightness” [4.2]. Right after this comes another rhetorical question which at this stage is becoming quite embarrassing for Israel. She has

become degenerate, that is, a wild vine, the verb being *haphak*. “Why has every face turned pale” [30.6]? The adjective *nakry* is used which connotes being strange or alienated. “The children of strangers” [Is 2.6].

In vs. 22 Israel attempts to clean herself with lye and soap or *neter* and *boryth* (Prov 25.20 and Mal 3.2 are the only other biblical references). Despite use of such strong cleaning material, she can't get rid of the stain of her guilt (*havon*, cf. 3.13), the verb being *katim*, a word which is used only once. The picture is of Israel as someone desperately scrubbing herself made all the more pathetic by reason of doing this “before me” or before the Lord. This attempt to remove what can't be removed leads to a further rhetorical question in vs. 23, namely, that Israel tries to justify herself by saying she isn't defiled or *tame'* (cf. vs. 7) which is equivalent to going after the Baals (cf. 2.8).

In this same verse (23) the Lord bids Israel to consider her way or *derek* (cf. vs. 17), that is, her manner of life, in the valley, singular being used which can be indicative of her favorite hideaway from the Lord. There she took refuge to engage in illicit sexual activity depicted as a restive young camel and wild ass. The adjective *qal* as restive means light or swift. “The swift cannot flee away nor the warrior escape” [46.6]. As for the wild ass, it enjoys sniffing the wind in her heat, *sha'aph* being the verb meaning to pant hard. “The wild asses stand on the bare heights, they pant for air like jackals” [14.6]. No one can restrain the lust of such an animal, *shuv* meaning to turn back. “If you return, I will restore you” [15.19]. At the same time anyone who seeks out Israel as this lustful animal won't grow weary, *yahaph* also as to faint. “And the nation weary themselves only for fire” [51.58].

In vs. 25 the Lord mockingly encourages Israel to keep her sandals on and to drink plenty of water to which she responds that she is compelled to go after strangers whom she has loved. *Zur* is the participle fundamentally as to turn aside; compare with *nakry* in vs. 21, similar in meaning. “And scattered your favors among strangers under every green tree” [3.13].

Next in vs. 26 the Lord compares Israel along with her kings, princes, priests and prophets to the shame experienced by a thief, *bosh* as in vs. 36: “You shall be put to shame by Egypt as you were put to shame by Assyria.” They were chiefly responsible for idol worship, calling a tree father and stone as one who had given birth, both referring to physical statues and other representations. This, as vs. 27 says, is a sign that the people have turned their backs on the Lord, *horeph* more commonly as neck which contrasts with the divine face or *panym*. For the former, cf. 7.26: “They did not listen to me or incline their ear but stiffened their neck.” So in the time of trouble or *rah*, more as evil (cf. vs. 19), Israel cries out for salvation to these idols, the verb *yashah* being used and found in the next verse.

The next rhetorical question posed by the Lord to Israel is in vs. 28 where in light of her distress he asks where are her gods now, *yashah* (verbal root for 'Jesus'). She shouldn't have trouble getting aide from them because they are as numerous as her cities.

Vs. 29 has another rhetorical question, of why Israel complains to the Lord, *ryv* as in 2.9 meaning to plead as one would a case. Israel has no case to win simply because she has rebelled against the Lord, *pashah* (cf. vs. 8).

The Lord had attempted to correct Israel's children—the generation recently born and currently learning from their parents—but in vain, *shave'* being uses in vs. 30 and found next in 4.30: "In vain you beautify yourself." However, this younger generation failed to take divine correction, *musar* also as chastisement. "You have consumed them, but they refused to take correction" [5.3]. If this generation isn't responsive to the Lord, let alone its parents, then all is lost. Furthermore, Israel slew the prophets sent to her just like a ravening lion, *shachat* meaning to destroy as well as to corrupt. "A destroyer of nations has set out" [4.7]. Although Jeremiah is uttering these *davar*, he can't help but think of his recent calling of a prophet, that his fate will be the same of his predecessors.

In vs. 31 the Lord shifts attention to the current generation by bidding them to hear the *davar* of the Lord. This is a preface to a rhetorical question where the Lord asks if he had been a wilderness or *midbar* to Israel, this in a negative sense and found last in vs. 24 but not noted there. Equivalent to *midbar* is *ma'pelyah*, the only use of this noun in the Bible yet related closely to *'aphelah*, thick darkness. Then there follows another rhetorical question which the Lord claims that Israel poses, namely, that they are free, this freedom in essence consisting of nothing to do with the Lord. The verb is *rud* which means to have dominion and has two other biblical references, Gn 27.40 and Hos 11.12, the former being cited here: "But when you break loose you shall break his yoke from your neck."

In vs. 32 we have another rhetorical question, all this part of the divine *davar* communicated to Jeremiah. Israel is compared with a maiden and bride forgetful of their adornments which for all practical purposes is impossible on a wedding day. The common verb is *shakach* as in 3.21: "They have forgotten the Lord their God." Such forgetfulness in both instances as well as others in Jeremiah are voluntary...chosen deliberately...and put aptly in the verse at hand as consisting of "days without number" or literally, "days with no counting."

The Lord mocks Israel as to directing her way (*derek*, cf. vs. 18) in a search for her lovers, the verb in vs. 33 being *baqash* which connotes a striving after. "Your lovers despise you; they seek your life" [4.30]. Mention of evil women or those who are *rah* (cf. vs. 27) is suggestive of either prostitutes or those engaged in divinization. Israel is worse than both; that is to say, she teaches (*lamad*) her *derek* to them, making them worse or the same as she. This use of *derek* is parallel to the one in the verse at hand relative to Israel's lovers. "They have taught their tongue to speak lies" [9.5]. As for the verb *lamad*, cf. 9.5: "They have taught their tongue to speak lies."

The blood (literally, 'blood of souls,' *nepesh*: cf. vs. 24 but not noted there) of innocent people or the poor who are guiltless is found on Israel's skirt, they presumably having broken into her house. *'Evyon* also means those who are wretched or oppressed as in 5.28: "And they do not defend the rights of the needy." Still, in vs. 35 Israel persists in proclaiming her innocence, *naqy* being the adjective also as free from blame. "If you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow or

shed innocent blood” [7.6]. Such presumed innocence leads Israel to the delusion that the Lord’s anger has turned away from her, *’aph* also as nostrils and intimating short, heavy breathing. “For the fierce anger of the Lord has not turned back from us” [4.8].

In vs. 36 the **RSV** translates *’azal* as to *gad* which means to spin or go away. “‘It is bad, it is bad,’ says the buyer; but when he goes away, then he boasts” [Prov 20.14]. Intimated here is frivolous, aimless activity while Israel changes her way, *derek* (cf. vs. 33). Earlier she had been shamed (*bosh*, cf. vs. 26) by Assyria and soon will experience the same by Egypt.

The last verse of Chapter Two has Israel being led into apparent captivity (presumably by Egypt; cf. the previous verse). She has no one to rely upon because the Lord rejected (*ma’as*, cf. 4.30) those whom she had trusted and will no longer prosper because of them, *tsalach* also as to come upon with might. “The cause of the fatherless, to make it prosper” [5.28].

2) qara’, chesed, ‘ahavah, halak, 3) qodesh, re’shyth, rah, ‘asham, 4) shamah, mishpachah, 5) havel, rachaq, hevel, haval, 6) haravah, shuchah, tsiyah, tsalmaveth, 7) karmel, ‘erets, tame’, nachalah, tohevah, sum, 8) kohen, taphash, torah, yadah, rahah, pashah, yahal, 9) ryv, 10) byn, me’od, 11) goy, mur, kavod, yahal, 12) shamam, sahar, charav, 13) rah, hazav, maqor, b’or, chatsav, shavar, 14) heved, baz, 15) sha’ag, shamah, 17) hazav, derek, 18) derek, 19) rah, meshuvah, yasar, yakach, yadah, ra’ah, rah, mar, pachdah, 20) hol, moser, havad, zanah, 21) soreq, ‘emeth, haphak, nakry, 22) neter, boryth, havon, katim, 23) qal, 24) sha’aph, shuv, yahaph, 25) zur, 26) bosh, 27) horeph, panym, 27) rah, 28) yashah, 29) ryv, pashah, 30) shave’, musar, shachat, 31) midbar, ma’pelyah, rud, 32) shakach, 33) derek, baqash, rah, lamad, derek, 34) nephesh, ‘evyon, 35) naqy, ‘aph, 36) ‘azal, 36) derek, bosh, ma’as, tsalach

Chapter Three

If Israel entertained the thought of being in for a break after Jeremiah’s introductory prophecy, she is delusional. Vs. 1 begins with *le’mor* or “saying,” pretty much equivalent to the conjunctive *v-* showing the close connection between the content of two chapters. We have no mention of the divine *davar* nor of Jeremiah, *le’mor* making this unnecessary.

The opening verse of this new chapter brings up the subject of divorce and has the Lord posing only two rhetorical questions compared with a whole slew of them in Chapter One. Should a woman run off with a man other than her husband, she would pollute the land. Interestingly the marriage bond and land as noted with regard to 2.7, *’erets* is more than a physical place, more a permanent dwelling set aside by the Lord. The verb meaning to pollute or to make the land unclean is *chaneph*. “Because harlotry was so light to her, she polluted the land” [vs. 9]. Thus the divorce is more far-reaching than Israel envisioned. The *chaneph* extends to Israel playing the harlot, *zanah* (cf. vs. 20) with a multitude of lovers. Here the Lord asks if she’d then return to him, this really putting Israel on the spot.

The rhetorical question in vs. 2 has the Lord asking Israel to look up to the bare heights or *shephy*, this suggestive of baldness and so high that it's above the tree line. "A voice on the bare heights is heard, the weeping and pleading of Israel's sons" [vs. 21]. This, of course, will play a role later to Israel's chagrin. Similarly Israel is told to look by the wayside (*derek*, cf. 2.36) as an Arab in the wilderness waiting to pounce on an unwary traveler, this resulting in polluting the land (*chaneph* again as in vs. 1) but in a vile fashion, *rah* (cf. 2.33).

Israel's harlotry caused rain and showers to cease, implying drought for the *'erets* of vs. 1. Despite this calamity, she has the brow of a harlot and refuses to be put to shame, *kalam* also as to confound. "Were they ashamed when they committed abomination" [8.12]?

Vs. 4 has the second and final rhetorical question, this time the Lord saying that Israel is quite presumptuous in calling him father and friend from her youth, *'aluph* also as a leader of a family or tribe. "But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter" [11.19]. In other words, the Lord won't be angry forever, the verb *natar* meaning to keep as in vs. 12 with the same wording. To this the Lord simply responds that Israel had done all the evil (*rah*, cf. vs. 3) she could, taking advantage of him.

Vss. 6-12 change style, if you will, in that they are in prose form which represents a time gap from the reign of Jehoiakim noted in 1.3 to now, the reign of King Josiah, both being dealt with in Second Kings. Regardless of which king he finds himself under, the situation for Jeremiah doesn't change. Perhaps Israel will return to the Lord, but history thus far proves it's temporary. Jeremiah knows this fact all too well yet continues to perform his function as prophet.

Vs. 6 begins with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated showing the close connection between what had occurred and what is to follow. As for Jeremiah, we have no information about him though as the conjunctive intimates, we can assume that he didn't experience a time gap between the two kings as far as being under the influence of the divine *davar*. "Days of Josiah" intimate that Jeremiah had been affected by this king who had instituted many religious reforms and took courage by the fact that his prophetic *davar* weren't in vain.

Vs. 6 has the Lord asking his prophet if he had seen what Israel had done, calling her faithless, the noun *meshuvah* meaning one who backslides and noted in 2.19. As in 2.20, this is manifested by her preference for green trees and high hills, favored places to play the harlot, *zanah*. Then in vs. 7 the Lord mistakenly thinks that Israel will return to him (*shuv*, cf. 2.24), a fact witnessed by her false sister Judah, *bagud* being the only use of this adjective in the Bible. Just like Israel, Judah does the same, thereby doubling the grief for the Lord and Jeremiah.

Judah sees that the Lord divorced her sister and follows after her by playing the harlot, *zanah* (cf. vs. 2). Not only did this harlotry seem light (*qol*: the noun for voice perhaps mistaken for *qal* as in 2.23; cf. vs. 21) to her, she polluted (*chaneph*, cf. vs. 3) the land (*'erets*...as identified with Israel, cf. vs. 1) with adultery, stone and tree suggestive of idols. At the same time vs. 10 says that Judah had a change of heart (*lev*, cf. vs. 15) insofar as she saw personal gain in her relationship with the Lord.

Thus she return in pretense only, *sheqer* also as that which is false. “Truly the hills are a delusion” [vs. 23].

Vs. 11 has the conjunctive *v-* as “and” to show a continuation of the Lord speaking (*amar* or to say, not *davar*) with Jeremiah which in vs. 12 through vs. 14 returns to a poetic style. The Lord now bids his prophet to proclaim or *qara'* (cf. vs. 4 but not noted there) these *davar* towards the north, this verb more as to cry out and north being places to which many Israelites had been exiled. Thus what follows is addressed to those exiled from their own land.

After a series of rebukes, many of which are quite strong, the Lord decides to take a new approach, one that he had in mind all along. To date he tried to shake up Israel but to no avail. Now he speaks in accord with his true nature as a loving father asking faithless (*meshuvah*, cf. vs. 6) Israel to return (*shuv*, cf. vs. 7). He won't bother looking upon her in anger which reads literally as “I will not let fall (*naphal*, cf. 6.15 but not noted there) my face in you.” In sum, the Lord is too merciful, *chasyd* (related to *chesed* as in 2.9). “But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself” [Ps 4.3]. This manifestation of *chesed* counters the threat of the Lord being angry with Israel forever or as it's put literally, “I will not keep (*natar*) forever” as in vs. 4.

The condition for this *chesed* is quite simple, that Israel acknowledge her guilt, the verb *yadah* and noun *havon* (2.19 and 2.22). Such *yadah* means intimate, detailed knowledge as it pertains to her rebellion, *pashah* (cf. 2.29) made all the more serious by the preposition *b-* which reads literally, “in the Lord,” not simply against him. Such rebellion takes on the concrete form of scattering favors (*davar*) among strangers, the verb *pazar* as in 50.17: “Israel is a hunted sheep.” *Zur* is a participle for strangers as in 2.25. Next the conjunctive *v-* is used as “and” to show how much this has affected the Lord because Israel had not listened (*shamah*, cf. 2.15) literally “in (*b-*) my voice.”

In vs. 14 the Lord extends an invitation to Israel as his faithless children or *shovav* that she return (*shuv*, cf. vs. 7), the former derived from the latter. “Return, O faithless sons” [vs. 22]. This *shuv* of her who is *shovav* is a restoration of the Lord being master, the verb *bahal* being used which can translate as “I am your husband.” “To bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke” [cf. 31.32]. *Bahal* is the verbal root for Baal and can be taken as a play on words of exchanging worship of alien gods for the Lord...*Baal* for *bahal*. Vs. 14 continues with the Lord taking one person from a city and two from a family, the purpose of which is to bring them to Zion or Jerusalem. Zion is found next in 4.6.

Vss. 15-18 are a shift to prose from poetry where the Lord speaks of the future restoration of Israel under responsible leaders whom he calls shepherds, the participle *rahal* meaning to feed (cf. 2.8) which is used in this verse. Even more specifically, these are to be according to the Lord's heart or *lev* (cf. vs. 10). The fodder consists of knowledge and understanding, *dehal* and *sakal* [1Sam 2.3 and 9.24], the latter being a verb meaning to give attention to, to be prudent. Vs. 16 has Israel multiplying and increasing in the land or *erets* (cf. vs. 9), *rahal* (cf. 2.22 but not noted there) and *parah* (cf. 23.3), the latter more as to be fruitful. This twofold fecundity will cause Israel exclaim no more “the ark of the covenant of the Lord” because the Messiah will have come although this

isn't explicitly mentioned. As for this exclamation, the Lord says it will be forgotten completely, one of three phrases reading literally "not go upon the heart" (*lev*, cf. vs. 15).

"At that time" in vs. 17 refers to the arrival of the unmentioned but inferred Messiah when Jerusalem will be called "throne (*kise'*, cf. 1.15 but not noted there) of God" and all nations (*goy*, cf. 2.11) shall gather together before it, *qavah* also as to wait. "We looked for peace, but no good came" [8.15]. This is reminiscent of Revelation where the throne of God plays a dominant role. The Hebrew has *shem* or name for the RSV's "presence," this name presumably the one revealed by the Lord to Moses in Ex 3.14 having the power to prevent Israel from being stubborn enough, *shryroth* as a noun found next in 7.24: "But walked in their own counsels and the stubbornness of their evil hearts." In both verses *rah* and *lev*, vss. 3 and 15 respectively.

Compare "in those days" of vs. 18 with "at that time" of vs. 17. Judah will be joined with Israel and both go to the land (*'erets*, cf. vs. 16) the Lord gave their fathers as a heritage or *nachalah* which is mentioned in 2.7.

Vs. 19 begins the poetic form of expression which continues through vs. 24 after which the remaining verses are in prose form where the Lord changes his tone of voice using *'amar* (to speak; cf. vs. 11) twice as "I thought." The tone is more wishful of something that could have been done, namely, setting Israel among his sons or literally "in (*b-*) his sons," the verb being *shyth* (cf. 2.15 but not noted there) which also means to appoint. There Israel would enjoy a land or *'erets* (cf. vs. 18) which is pleasant which reads literally as a "land of desire" or *chemdah*. "They have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness" [12.10]. This is also described as a heritage (*nachalah*, cf. vs. 18) which is the most beautiful of all nations, literally as "beauty of hosts of nations" (*goy*, cf. 2.17). *Tsevy* is a noun meaning splendor as well as gazelle: "Save yourself like a gazelle from the hunter" [Pro 6.5] and is similar in sound to *tsava'* (cf. 2.19 but not noted there) or hosts.

The Lord adds poignantly that he thought Israel would call him father and not turn from him. However, she behaved as a faithless wife, the verb *bagad* being used, to act perfidiously. "For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have been utterly faithless to me" [5.11].

Vs. 21 mentions voice, weeping and pleading or *qol* (cf. vs. 9 as lightness, perhaps mistaken as the adjective *qal*), *beky* (cf. 9.10) and *tachanunym* (cf. 31.9). All three take place on the bare heights or *shephy* as in vs. 2. It's as though Israel's sons chose that spot—a favorite one for their mother's former harlotries—so their lament could resound throughout the entire land. These sons too have perverted their way or *derek* (cf. vs. 3), *havah* being the verb which means to deal perversely and in this context, the same as forgetting (*shakach*, cf. 2.32) the Lord. "Everyone deceives his neighbor, and no one speaks the truth" [9.5].

At once the Lord responds to this voice, weeping and pleading on the bare heights as he invites these faithless (*shuv*, cf. vs. 14) sons with the offer to heal this affliction, *rapha'* being the verb also as to cast down, leave off. "For I will restore health to you" [30.17]. Without missing a beat, the sons chime in, speaking for the rest of the chapter. They claim that they will return to the Lord which reads literally as "behold, we to you." Despite this admission of dire straits and need for

help, the Lord knows that these sons will falter yet again. More to prop themselves up in vs. 23 these sons call the hills a delusion as well as the orgies on mountain tops, *sheqer* (cf. vs. 10) and *hamon* fundamentally as multitude or uproar. “When he utters his voice there is a tumult of waters in the heavens” [10.13]. And so the sons acknowledge that the Lord is Israel’s salvation, *teshuhah*. “Wait for the salvation of the Lord” [Lam 3.26].

Vs. 24 has the faithless sons of Israel speak of a shameful thing or *bosheth* (cf. 2.26 but not noted there) as having devoured all that their fathers labored for. To make up for this they offer to lie down in this *bosheth* and let their dishonor cover them, *kelimah* also as confusion and reproach. “Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten” [20.11]. They sum up their shame and willingness to repent by acknowledging that they have sinned and did not listen (*shamah*, cf. vs. 13) to the Lord’s voice, literally as “in (*b-*) voice (*qol*, cf. vs. 21) of the Lord.” While this concludes Chapter Three on a positive note, it remains to be seen if this acknowledgment of guilt and promise to return to the Lord takes hold.

1) ‘erets, chaneph, 2) zannah, shephy, 3) derek, chaneph, rah, kalam, 4) ‘aluph, natar, 5) natar, 6) meshuvah, zannah, qol, 7) shuv, 9) chaneph, ‘erets, 10) lev, sheqer, 11) ‘amar, qara’, 12) meshuvah, naphal, chasyd, natar, 13) yadah, havon, pazar, zur, shamah, 14) shuv, shovav, bahal, 15) rahah, lev, dehah, sakal, 16) ‘erets, lev, 17) kise’, goy, qavah, shryroth 18) ‘erets, nachalah, 19) shyth, ‘erets, chemdah, tsevy, tsava’, 20) bagad, 21) qol, beky, tachanunym, derek, havah, shakach, 22) shuv, rapha’, sheqer, hamon, teshuhah, 24) bosheth, 25) kelimah, shamah, qol

Chapter Four

This new chapter begins with an if...a very big if...actually three of them...which intimates that the Lord has gotten sufficient experience of Israel with his *davar*. This comes, of course, through Jeremiah who isn’t mentioned actually until 7.1. The Lord had extended an invitation to return or *shuv* earlier (cf. 3.21) but by now has become wary of Israel’s intent. However, the invitation is always there. Thus “if” sets the tone for what will follow. In the second part of vs. 1 the Lord makes clear that any *shuv* must be to him, the reason why this verb occurs a second time.

As for “if” (*im*), it serves to lay out the condition for such a return in the second sentence of vs. 1. We have the familiar request to abandon (*sur*, found next in vs. 4) worship of alien divinities which is put in turns of abominations or *shiquts* usually in reference to idols. “They have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name to defile it” [7.30]. That verse is similar to the one at hand insofar as it’s in the Jerusalem temple as indicated by “from my presence” in vs. 1 or literally “from my face.” However, the invitation to return to the Lord demands no wavering, *nud* also as to remove. “Who will turn aside to ask about your welfare” [15.5]?

Vs. 2 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “and” which continues the introductory theme of “if.” The “if” at hand consists in swearing an oath of sorts, *shavah* from which the sacred number seven is derived. “That I may perform the oath which I swore to your fathers” [11.5]. The words of this oath are “As the Lord lives” on the surface seem simple enough. However, they are set against

a long...too long...history (and unfortunately, future) of Israel backsliding. Here it's in truth, justice and uprightness or *'emeth* (cf. 2.21), *mishpat* (cf. 1.16) and *tsedaqah* (cf. 9.24). Hopefully all three will have an effect upon the nations or *goy* (cf. 3.17), most if not all of which subscribed to the above mentioned abominations. Instead, they will bless the Lord and glory in him, *barak* and *halal*, the latter also as to praise. "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord" [17.7]. "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom" [9.23].

Vs. 3 gets more specific as to whom the Lord is speaking, namely, the men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Both are to break up their ground and fallow it. This applies to land which has been plowed and harrowed but left unsown for a period of time in order to restore its fertility as part of a crop rotation or and to avoid making the earth sterile. The verb and noun is *nyr* (same spelling) and are found in one other biblical verse: "Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord" [Hos 10.12]. In the verse at hand, the Lord cautions further not to sow among thorns which had been going on for some time.

When the Lord bids the two groups to circumcise themselves in vs. 4, in effect he's reminding them to be faithful to the covenant he had made with Abraham (cf. Gn 17.9-14). The next and only time circumcision (the verb *mul*) is mentioned in Jeremiah is 9.25: "The days are coming when I will punish all those who are circumcised but yet un-circumcised." More specifically, this is to be done with regard to the heart or *lev* (cf. 3.16). If not, the Lord will release his wrath or *chemah* which intimates intense heat and fury as in 6.11: "Therefore I am full of the wrath of the Lord." Once let go, nobody can stop it, *kavah* meaning to quench. "Lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour with none to quench it for Bethel" [Am 6.5]. Both the men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem are responsible by reason of their evil deeds which is rendered literally as "evil of deeds," *roah* and *mahalal*: "Behold, I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the Lord" [23.2]. "Your ways and your doings have brought this upon you" [vs. 18].

Vs. 5 begins with a slightly different audience, if you will, compared with vs. 3, Judah and Jerusalem. The Lord says to Jeremiah (he isn't mentioned) that he's to declare or *nagad* to both, this verb suggestive of speaking openly. A verse virtually identical to this one is 5.20: "Declare this in the house of Jacob, proclaim it in Judah." Such *nagad* is to take the form of blowing a trumpet and crying out, the two similar sound verbs being *taqah* and *qara'*, (cf. 6.1 and 3.11). Some kind of invasion is about to happen ('evil from the north,' vs. 6) meaning everyone must take shelter in fortified cities, *mivtsar* (cf. 1.18) being a noun for stronghold.

Chief among these fortified cities is Jerusalem called Zion in vs. 6 toward which a standard is to be raised, *nes* also as a military banner. "How long must I see the standard" [vs. 21]? Apparently this *nes* will be a sign for many to take refuge, *huz* being the verb which literally means to be strong. "Flee for safety, O people of Benjamin from the midst of Jerusalem" [6.1]! Word got out quickly about an invasion from the north as noted back in 1.13. Without mentioning any nation...who couldn't be ignorant as to its identity?...vs. 7 describes it as a lion and destroyer of nations, *mashchyth*. "Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain" [51.25]. Also land = waste and cities = ruins. The second noun of the first pair is *shamah* (cf. 2.15); as for the second, we have the verb

natsah which also means to strive against. “These are the Dathan and Abiram...who contended against Moses and Aaron” [Num 26.9].

In vs. 8 those in Judah and in Jerusalem are to gird themselves with sackcloth, lament and wail, *saphad* and *yalal*, the former as to beat the breast. Both are found in 49.3: “Wail, O Heshbon, for Ai is laid waste! Cry, O daughters of Rabbah! Gird yourselves with sackcloth, lament and run to and fro among the hedges!” The reason? Through this undisclosed but in truth known invader from the north the Lord expresses his fierce anger, literally as “heat of anger” which consists of *charon* and *‘aph* (cf. vs. 26 and 2.35).

Vs. 9 begins with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated and is in reference to “that day” meaning the time of the invasion from the north still isn’t given, this phrase being more as a warning to Israel to make preparations. Unfortunately for the people, the leadership will falter: fail, appalled and astounded. The first is *‘avad* (cf. 10.15) or to perish with *lev* or heart (cf. vs. 4), the second is *shamah* as in vs. 7 and the third is *tamah* also as to marvel as in Is 13.8: “They will look aghast at one another.”

After having engaged in this prophecy about Israel, Jeremiah interrupts his role as medium of the divine *davar* and decides to confront the Lord. He does so spontaneously, his outrage building the more he *davar* about his fellow Israelites. This must have caught the Lord off guard who lets him speak anyway. Jeremiah claims that the Lord has been deceiving Israel, *nahsa*: “The horror you inspire has deceived you” [49.16]. He cites what he thinks are the Lord’s own words to Israel, “It shall be well with you.” They aren’t found exactly but implied by the good things the people will enjoy should they return to the Lord. *Shalom* is the word for well: “Saying ‘peace, peace’ when there is no peace” [6.14]. Apparently while the Lord is uttering these words of deception, he’s sending a sword right into their soul or *nephesh* (cf. 2.34).

Vs. 11 begins literally as “in (*b-*) that time” referring to the impending invasion of which Israel had been warned and hopefully prepared. Note the words, “It will be said” as opposed to coming directly from the Lord or through Jeremiah though the source is obvious. Deliberately putting it this way has a more ominous ring to it. Earlier the north was specified, but a wind (*ruach*, cf. 2.24 but not noted there) which is hot implies a sirocco coming from the south. As for the adjective *tsach*, it connotes clearness. “My beloved is white and ruddy” [Sg 5.10]. And so tempest barrels down from the bare heights (*shephy*, cf. 3.2) into the desert where it picks up steam, having the “daughter of my people” directly in its sights.

This sirocco as the **RSV** calls it, isn’t to winnow or to cleanse (*zarah* and *barar*, cf. 15.7 and 51.11) as Israel might hope but as vs. 12 puts it, is “too full” in the sense of too strong for mere cleansing. Instead, it’s an opportunity for the Lord to speak in judgement, *misphat* (cf. vs. 2).

Vs. 13 continues to describe this ominous storm coming supposedly from the south in terms of the Lord himself, clouds and whirlwind (*suphah*; cf. Hos 8.7), the latter as chariots drawn by horses which are swifter than an eagle. This makes the people cry out *‘oy* (cf. vs. 31) or “woe” because they recognize that ruin has come upon them, *shadad*. “Disaster follows hard on disaster, the

whole land is laid waste” [4.20]. However, the Lord offers salvation at the last-minute provided that Jerusalem wash evil (*rah*, cf. 3.3) from her heart (*lev*, cf. vs. 9), the verb being *yashah* (cf. 2.28).

Vs. 14 concludes with a rhetorical question...more as a plea,,with the Lord asking Jerusalem as to how long will evil thoughts reside in her, *lun* being the verb which means to pass the night. “Like a wayfarer who turns aside to tarry for a night” [14.8]? In the verse at hand, such *lun* is *qerev* or in the very center or interior of Jerusalem. The two words *machasheveth* and *’aven* read together literally as “machinations of iniquity” [cf. 6.19 and vs. 15], the latter also as falsehood and wickedness.

Vs. 15 has a voice (*qol*, cf. 3.25) declaring and proclaiming, *nagad* and *shamah* (cf. vs. 5 and 3.25), the latter more literally as “causing to be heard” as it pertains to evil, *’aven* (cf. vs. 14). Both verbs are with respect to two others in vs. 16, *zakar* (cf. 2.2 but not noted there) and *shamah* (vs. 15), warning and announcing. For those in Jerusalem the warning is somewhat confusing because it includes the unknown “he is coming” which almost certainly refers to the Lord along with besiegers from an equally unknown land described only as distant. As for the latter, they’re described colorfully as keepers of a field surrounding Jerusalem, the image conjuring up reapers who soon will cut down the inhabitants of the city. All this came about due to the people having rebelled against the Lord (*marah*; cf 5.23 but not noted there) though they seem to be clueless as to how or why they caused this sad state of affairs. “But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart” [5.23].

Because the people refused to acknowledge their rebellious nature, in vs. 18 the Lord puts it to them, namely, that their ways and doings (*derek* and *mahalal*, cf. 3.21 and vs. 4) have brought disaster upon them. He calls it their doom or *rah* (cf. vs. 14) which is *mar* (cf. 2.19) or bitter. Even more poignantly, the Lord says that this *rah* has reached (*nagah*, cf. 1.9 as touch) literally “upon (*hal-*) their heart” or *lev* (cf. vs. 14). In other words, it has leaped upon them and won’t let them go.

In vs. 19 Jeremiah (or is the Lord?; both are almost interchangeable through impartation of *davar*) exclaims his anguish or *mehah* which also means bowels. “Your offspring would have been like the same and your descendants like its grains” [Is 48.19]. In contrast to Jerusalem’s heart, we have that of the Jeremiah which beats so wildly that he can’t keep silent, *charash* also as to plow. “So they left of speaking with him” [38.27]. Similarly, Jeremiah can’t hear the trumpet which sounds a warning for battle. With this in mind, vs. 20 speaks of disaster following upon disaster—a heartbeat counter to Jeremiah’s if you *will-shever* (cf. vs. 6 but not noted there) being the noun also as a breaking or fracture. This verse concludes with the land being laid waste, *shadad* (cf. vs. 13 but not noted there).

The second sentence in vs. 20 says that Jeremiah’s tents and curtains are destroyed which must have made him think of the ironical application of Is 54.2: “Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out.” This is followed by Jeremiah sickened by

hearing the standard of the enemy and its trumpet blasts, *nes* and *shophar* (cf. vs. 6 and vs. 5, the latter not noted there).

In vs. 22 Jeremiah speaks...*davar*...on behalf of the Israelites whom he calls, rather personalizes, as “my people.” They are marked by the following three:

1) Foolish or *évył*, this connoted impiety. “Some were sick (fools) through their sinful ways” [Ps 107.17]. The impiety enters because Israel doesn’t know the Lord, *yadah* (cf. 3.13).

2) Stupid (as children) or *sakal* which connotes wickedness. “Hear this, O foolish and senseless people” [5.21]. The opposite of *sakal* in this verse is *byn* or understanding, the verbal root for the preposition “between.” Thus to have *byn* implies being able to see in between things and events.

3) Skilled or *chakam* (verbal root is wisdom). “How can you say, ‘We are wise’ [8.8]? *Rah* (cf. vs. 18) or evil is the object of this skill. *Yadah* is used a second time with regard to ignorance concerning what’s good.

Between vs. 23 and 26 Jeremiah engages in looking, *ra’ah* (cf. 2.19) being the most common verb for this. In each verse it’s coupled with *hineh* (cf. 1.15) or “lo.” It should be noted that these verses are an interval of sorts in that they are in between the Lord *davar* to Jeremiah which picks up again at vs. 27 through the rest of this chapter:

1) On earth (*érets*, cf. 3.19) which was *tohu* and *bohu*, the same as in Gn 1.2: “The earth was without form and void.” The major difference is that in the verse at hand there’s no creative Spirit hovering upon the face of the waters. As for the heavens above, they lack light.

2) Mountains were quaking and hills moving to and fro, *rahash* and *qalal* (8.16 and 6.14, the latter also as to be swift, light).

3) No one was present as well as birds.

4) The land which had been fruitful: *karmel* to *midbar* or desert (2.7 and 2.31). Also cities were in ruins, *natats* also as to cast down (cf. 1.10 but not noted there). The Lord’s fierce anger caused this, *hamon* and *’aph* (cf. 3.22 and vs. 8).

Vs. 27 resumes with the Lord speaking (*’amar*, not *davar*, cf. 3.11) where he lays it on thick, that the entire *érets* (cf. vs. 23) becomes a desolation, *shemamah* not unlike *tohu* and *bohu* of vs. 23. “Lest I make you a desolation, an uninhabited land” [6.8]. Despite such extreme words the Lord relents, this indicated by the conjunctive *v-* translated as “yet.” In other words, he won’t make a full end, *kalah*. “Go up through vine-rows and destroy but make not a full end” [5.10]. Vs. 28 continues this theme despite the Lord making the earth mourn and heavens blackening, that is to say, he has *davar* and well as *zamam*, the latter connoting to propose to oneself. “For the Lord has both planned and done what he spoke concerning the inhabitants of Babylon” [51.12]. Also the Lord says that he will neither relent nor turn back, *nacham* and *shuv* (cf. 18.8 and vs. 1), the former also as to comfort.

In vs. 29 invaders flood through Israel, the words of Rev 6.16 being applicable to those so affected: “calling to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne.” This is followed in the next verse by a rhetorical question as to why the people decorate themselves, the words applicable to women, while her lovers despise her, *ma’as* (cf. 2.36).

Not only that, they seek her life or *nephesh* (cf. vs. 10), often used in reference to the soul or one's inmost self.

The concluding verse of this chapter (31) has Jeremiah listening to his people crying out as a woman in travail or *chul* (it also means to stay or to abide), reference here as in the process of giving birth. "Do you not tremble before me" [5.22]? While suffering this pain, the daughter of Zion exclaims "woe" or *'oy* (cf. vs. 13) because she's fainting before those who are about to murder (*harag*; cf. 14.30) her...her *nephesh* (cf. vs. 30) literally as soul. *Hayeph* is the only use of this adjective in the Bible; a similar adjective exists with a slightly different spelling" 31.25: "For I will satisfy the weary soul and every languishing soul I will replenish."

1) shuv, sur, shiquts, nud, 2) 'emeth, mishpat, tsedaqah, shavah, goy, barak, halal, 3) nyr, 4) mul, lev, chemah, kavah, roah, mahalal, 5) nagad, taqah, qara', mivtsar, 6) nes, huz, 7) shamah, natsah, 8) saphad, yalal, charon, 'aph, 9) 'avad, lev, shamah, tamah, 10) nasha', nephesh, shalom, 11) ruach, tsach, shephy, zarah, barar, 12) mishpat, 13) suphah, 'oy, shadad, 14) rah, lev, yashah, lun, qerev, machasheveth, 'aven, 15) qol, nagad, shamah, 'aven, 16) shamah, zakar, 17) marah, 18) derek, mahalal, rah, mar, nagah, lev, 19) mehah, charash, 20) shever, shadad, 21) nes, shophar, 22) 'evyl, yadah, sakal, byn, chakam, rah, 23) ra'ah, hineh, 'erets, tohu, bohu, 24) rahash, qalal, 26) karmel, midbar, natats, hamon, 'aph, 27) 'amar, 'erets, shemamah, kalah, 28) zamam, nacham, shuv, 30) ma'as, nephesh, 31) chul, 'oy, harag, nephesh

Chapter Five

This new chapter starts off with a bang, Jeremiah mediating th Lord's *davar* to run through Jerusalem's streets, *shut* connoting a frantic, zipping back-and-forth as in 49.3. It's expressed vividly by Satan in response to the Lord's question as to where he had been: "Whence have you come? 'From going to and fro on the earth and from walking up and down on it" [Job 1.7]. Also this opening verse is reminiscent of Wisdom in Prov 1.29: Wisdom cries aloud in the street; in the markets she raises her voice (etc)" [Prov 1.20].

In the verse at hand, the command is to both look and to take note, *ra'ah* and *yadah* (cf. 4.23 and 4.22). The purpose? To search out someone who does justice and seeks the truth, the two verbs being *baqash* (cf. 2.33) and *matsa'* (cf. 2.5 but not noted there). *Mishpat* and *'emunah* (cf. 4.12 and vs. 3) are the two objects with *baqash* applied also to the latter. If successful, the Lord will pardon Jerusalem, *salach* found next in vs. 7 which also means to forgive.

The inhabitants of Jerusalem give lip service to what's said in vs. 1, that is, "as the Lord lives." However, they swear falsely, *shavah* and *sheqer* (cf. 4.1 and 3.22). The latter is prefaced with the preposition *l-* reading literally "to what is false."

In vs. 3 Jeremiah exclaims rhetorically that despite the Lord looking for truth or literally, "your eyes not to truth" (*'emunah*, cf. vs. 1), he smote them, *nakah* found next in vs. 6. However, the people experienced no anguish, *chul* (cf. 4.31) being a verb. The same applies when the Lord consumes (*kalah*, cf. 4.27) them; they don't receive divine correction, *ma'as* and *musar* (cf. 4.30

and 7.39). This is demonstrated by the people having made their faces harder than rock in their refusal to repent, *ma'as* used as second time and *shuv* (cf. 4.28).

In vss. 4 and 5 Jeremiah speaks, most likely to the Lord, in defense of his people saying that they are poor and lack sense, *dal* and *ya'al*. The former suggests weakness and is found next in 39.10: "Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, left in the land of Judah some of the poor people who owned nothing." As for the verb, it means to be keen on something, to be prepared. "A sword upon the diviners that they may become fools" [50.36]! Furthermore, the people don't know (*yadah*, cf. vs. 1) the Lord's way as well as his law (*derek* and *mishpat* or judgment, cf. vs. 4.18 and vs. 1).

Perhaps if Jeremiah goes to the leaders and *davar* with them, the situation might turn out better, for he believes...and naively so...that they know both the way and law of the Lord, *yadah* with regard to both *derek* and *mishpat*, all three found in vs. 1. To his chagrin it turns out they were just as bad, having broken both the divine law put in terms of a yoke and bonds or *hol* and *moser*, both found in 2.20. Because of their transgressions and apostasies mentioned in vs. 6, the lion, wolf and leopard will devour them, *peshah* and *meshuvah* (cf. Lam 1.5 and 3.12). The latter has the verb *hatsam* meaning to increase or be firm. "I have made their widows more in number than the sand of the seas" [15.8].

After coming away disillusioned from the leaders, in vs. 7 Jeremiah poses a rhetorical question to them as well as to the people, *davar* in the name of the Lord as to granting pardon, *salach* hearkening back to vs. 1. They have forsaken the Lord which is equivalent to swearing by no gods, *hazav* and *shavah* (cf. 2.17 and vs. 2). In place of having fed the people—*savah* (cf. 44.16) being a play on *shavah*—everyone went off to commit adultery and visit harlots, the graphic verb *gadad* fundamentally as to cut oneself, as if pushing and shoving to go there. "No one shall lament for them or cut himself or make himself bald for them" [16.6].

Because everyone resembled lusty stallions going after the wives of their neighbors, the Lord asks rhetorically in vs. 9 whether or not he'll punish and avenge himself, *paqad* and *naqam* (cf. vs. 29 for both; also cf. 1.10 for the former).

In vs. 10 the Lord gets down to business by ordering Jeremiah to destroy (*shachat*, cf. 2.30) the vine-rows of Israel. At the same time he isn't to do so fully or make a *kalah* or full end as in 4.27. Similarly he is to strip away the branches which is reminiscent of Jn 15.2: "Every branch that bears no fruit, he takes away." All in all, both the house of Israel and Judah haven't been faithful to the Lord which is rendered literally and vividly as "treacherous they are treacherous in (*b-*) me." *Bagad* and *bagod* (cf. 3.20 and vs. 3.10). This is manifested in vs. 12 by having spoken falsely (*kachash*) "in (*b-* again) the Lord," this verb also as to lie or to deceive. "But he lied to him" [1Kg 13.18]. In short, the people believe that the Lord won't bring any evil (*rah*, cf. 4.22) upon them. Even the prophets—and this hits home with Jeremiah—speak wind or *ruach* (cf. 4.11), this word in reality as wholly different from *ruach* as spirit.

Vs. 14 begins ominously with *laken* or "therefore" meaning it's time for the Lord to respond to the way the people *davar* their *davar*—have spoken their word (the RSV has a footnote saying 'you'

instead of 'they'). He will make his own *davar* a fire in their mouths with them being wood as fuel. Furthermore, the Lord will bring a far-off nation (*goy*, cf. 4.2) mentioned in 4.16 which will turn out to be Babylon. The Lord describes it as enduring and ancient, and that the Israelites won't be able to understand their language. *Eyatan* is the adjective for enduring, a noun meaning strength. "Behold, like a lion coming up from the jungle of the Jordan against a strong sheepfold" [49.19]. Vss. 16-17 describe how this nation will devour not only Israel's produce but her children.

In vs. 18 the Lord reiterates his words of vs. 10 ('but make not a full end,' *kalah*) which easily could have blown right by the Israelites after hearing such dire news as to their fate. "But even in those days" begins with the conjunctive *v-* where *gan* ('even') underscores his concern for the people. One can almost here his stressing *gan*. Anticipating a response from the people to Jeremiah for such calamity, the Lord bids him to continue with equally frightful words although he doesn't have in mind their utter destruction. Jeremiah reminds them of the real issue as hand, of having forsaken (*hazav*, cf. vs. 7) the Lord in favor of foreign gods, *nekar* being the adjective suggestive of strangeness. "Why have they provoked me to anger...with their foreign gods" [8.19]? They had done this in their own land or *'erets* (cf. 4.27), this word driving home what comes next. Instead of engaging in apostasy in the comfort of their own place, the people will serve strangers in an *'erets* not their own. *Zur* (cf. 3.13) is the participle which also means to turn aside, especially in reference to another nation and their alien divinities. And so ends the bittersweet words with no response, after which Jeremiah continues his usual prophetic words.

It's to Israel's credit that the people haven't risen up and stoned Jeremiah by now. At least they are listening or some of them. And so vs. 20 begins with making known what's on the Lord's mind, *nagad* and *shamah* together as in 4.15. Vs. 21 follows with another use of *shamah*, this time directly as to hear and calls the people foolish and senseless or *sakal* (cf. 4.22), the latter reading literally as "there is no heart" [Lev, cf. 4.18]. This is borne out by having eyes yet not seeing and having ears but not hearing, the latter another instance of the importance of *shamah*.

With words that smack of the Lord being affronted, vs. 22 poses two rapid-fire rhetorical questions. They deal with the people neither fearing nor trembling, *yare'* and *chul* (cf. 3.8 but not noted there and vs. 3). Right after this the Lord puts the sea as a boundary, that is, to the west, whereas the impending invasion and subsequent exile seem to point to the east. Despite that formidable barrier, the heart (*lev*, cf. vs. 21) of the people continues in its rebellious ways and turns away, the two similar sounding words being *sarar* and *sur*; both being found in 6.28: "They are all stubbornly rebellious, going about with slanders."

Vs. 24 laments how the Israelites fail to say in their hearts (*lev*, cf. vs. 23) that they should fear (*yare'*, cf. vs. 22) the Lord. They're interested only in the material benefit of being provided with rain in both spring and autumn, this vital for a successful harvest which means holding a celebration. However, Israel's iniquities and sins (*havon* and *chata'th*, cf. 3.13 and 14.10) prevented them from coming. Vs. 26 narrows down the collective guilt of Israel a bit by saying that wicked men (*rashah*) are among them; i.e., not everyone is such. "Why does the way of the wicked prosper" [12.1]? Such men aren't out in the open but lurking and laying in wait behind the scenes. Chances are that the Lord has in mind leaders of Israel who have profited from their treachery or *mirmah* also as deceit. "Heaping oppression upon oppression and deceit upon deceit, they refuse

to know me, says the Lord” [9.6]. All the while they have grown fat and sleek, *shaman* and *hashath*, the latter being the only other use of this verb in the Bible (cf, Dt 32.15 and Jon 1.6).

Vs. 28 continues with this divine denunciation about not knowing any bounds to wickedness rendered by *davar* and *rah* (cf. vs. 12), which can be rendered literally as “words of evil.” Also they’re merciless toward the fatherless and need, prompting the Lord to ask rhetorically in vs. 29 that he’s bound to both punish and avenge himself against them, *paqad* and *naqam*, both found in vs. 9.

Chapter Six draws to a close with the Lord saying that an appalling and horrible event has transpired, *shamah* and *shaharur* (cf. 4.7 and 23.14, the latter being the only other biblical reference). It consists of prophets engaging in false prophecy (*sheqer*, cf. vs. 2) and priests ruling in accord with their personal whims (literally, ‘ruling on their hands,’ that is, the hand of the people). What’s so telling is that the people not only consent, they love (*’ahav*, cf. 2.25 but noted there) this corrupt situation. There follows an equally telling question both rhetorical and direct when the Lord asks what will the people do when the end comes, implying the imminent Babylonian invasion.

1) shut, ra’ah, yadah, baqash, matsa’, derek, mishpat, ’emunah, salach, 2) shavah, sheqer, 3) ’emunah, nakah, chul, kalah, ma’as, shuv, musar, 4) dal, ya’al, yadah, mishpat, 5) yadah, derek, mishpat, hol, moser, 6) peshah, meshuvah, hatsam, 7) salach, hazav, savah, gadad, 9) paqad, naqam, 10) shachat, kalah, 11) bagad, bagod, 12) bagad, rah, kachash, 13) ruach, 15) goy, ’eyatan, 18) kalah, 19) hazav, nekar, ’erets, 20) nagad, shamah, 21) shamah, sakal, lev, shamah, 22) yare’, chul, 23) lev, sarar, sur, 24) lev, yare’, 25) havon, chata’th, rashah, 27) mirmah, 28) shman, hashath, rah, 29) paqad, naqam, 30) shamah, shaharur, sheqer, 31) ’ahav

Chapter Six

Right off the bat the Lord gets down to warning the people through his prophet Jeremiah about the impending invasion though there’s no mention of Babylon. Perhaps this is so because it’s common knowledge, word about it having spread like wildfire. Vs. 1 singles out Benjamin which is north of Jerusalem, the home territory of Jeremiah. *Huz* (cf. 4.6) or flee for safety is the verb and is from the very midst (*qerev*, cf. 4.14) of Jerusalem, indicative that what is about to happen will be terrifying. Similarly warning trumpets are to sound with regard to evil (*rah*, cf. 5.28) literally looking down from the north, *shaqaph* implying a bending over. “And righteousness will look down from the sky” [Ps 85.11].

Turning his attention to Jerusalem itself, the Lord will destroy her, *damah* being the verb which also means to cut off. “Ashkelon has perished” [47.5]. More specifically, what’s near and dear to Jerusalem will meet this fate, namely, those who are comely and delicately bred, *navah* meaning a dwelling along with the verb *hanag*: “And you, O seacoast, shall be pastures” [Zeph 2.6]. “But the meek shall possess the land and delight themselves in abundant prosperity” [Ps 37.11]. Yet unnamed Babylon is put in term of shepherds who will pitch their tents around Jerusalem and then pasture

(*rahaḥ*, cf. 3.15 but not noted there), a vivid word describing the act of laying siege. The invaders decide to strike at noon or when it's hottest. Also vs. 5 says that they will attack at midnight...perhaps these two times signaled out to throw Jerusalem off guard.

The invaders claim to be on a righteous mission as if knowing they are sent by the Lord, when they exclaim in vs. 6 that Jerusalem needs to be punished, *paqad* (cf. 5.29) due to oppression that's present within her, her *qerev* as noted in vs. 1. The noun for oppression is *hosheq* as in 22.17: "For practicing oppression and violence." Continuing this theme, vs. 7 has a vivid image of how Jerusalem retains evil (*rah*, cf. vs. 1) in her very center, *qur* being the verb which also means to undermine. "I dug wells and drank foreign waters" [2Kg 19.24].

Even though the Lord holds out a dire prophecy, he warns Jerusalem, *yasar* (cf. 2.19) with the intent to chastize her and avoid alienation. The verb *yaqah* implies dislocation of his *nephesh* (cf. 4.31) or soul which the RSV has as the first person singular, a vivid example being Gn 32.35: "Jacob's thigh was out of joint." The result? The Lord will make Jerusalem a desolation, the two similar sounding words being *sum* and *shemamah* (cf. 2.7 and 4.27). The added threat is that the land (*'erets*, cf. 5.19) won't be inhabited. This compels the Lord to make the people glean Israel's remnant (*sh'eryth*) as a vine, *halal*. Cf. 38.19 for another meaning of this verb: "lest I be handed over to them and they abuse me." As for *sh'eryth*, cf. 8.3: "Death shall be preferred to life by all the remnant that remains of this evil family." Note that such gleaning is to be done before the Babylonians capture Jerusalem.

Despite his best efforts, the Lord knows he's up against a stubborn people even as their enemy is at their gates. That's why in vs. 10 he resorts to another rhetorical question as to whom he might speak and give warning, *davar* and *hod*, the latter fundamentally as to testify. "I signed the deed, sealed it, got witnesses and weight the money on scales" [32.10]. Quickly the Lord discovers that the ears of the people aren't circumcised, *harlah* being the noun for foreskin. "I will punish all those who are circumcised but yet uncircumcised" [9.25]. At the same time they can listen or acknowledge the *davar* of the Lord, that it's out there but as an object of scorn, *cherpah*. "Know that for your sake I bear reproach" [15.15]. Furthermore, Israel takes no pleasure in this *davar*, *chaphets* indicative of inclining and thus listening. "He establishes him in whose way he delights" [Ps 37.23].

Vs. 11 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "therefore" to show the close connection between what he communicated from the Lord to blurring out that he's full of the Lord's wrath (*chemah*, cf. 4.4) and can't hold it in any longer, *la'ah* being the verb which means to be weary. "They commit iniquity and are too wary to repent" [9.5]. Without further reflection, Jeremiah bids the Lord—all along he's been communicating plenty of unpleasant news to his own people—to pour out divine *chemah*, singling out children and old folk. The Lord would prefer to spare these two but by now is utterly frustrated. Vs. 12 continues the theme of payment for personal wrongdoing, namely, destruction of Israel's homes and fields.

In vs. 13 the Lord laments an all pervasive greed or *betsah* which also means covetousness. "Because everyone is greedy for unjust gain" [8.10]. As for those whom people would look up to

for guidance—prophets and priests—they all deal falsely, *sheqer* (cf. 5.30). What’s disheartening is that these leaders went through the motions of offering help such as healing (*rapha’*, cf. 3.22) the wounded. The verb *qalal* (cf. 4.24) is used in reference to this cursory fashion while they cry out *shalom* (cf. 4.10) or peace when it’s absent.

The Lord comes off with another rhetorical question in vs. 15, asking if the people had been shamed (*bosh*, cf. 2.36) when having committed an abomination or *tohevah* (cf. 2.7). As expected, their answer is no which compels the Lord to single them out for punishment, *paqad* (cf. vs. 6). This verse ends with “says the Lord” and leads into the next one beginning with “Thus says the Lord.” Such interjections seem frequent...too frequent...yet are necessary because of the almost inconceivable stubbornness of the people. Nevertheless, the Lord invites his people to stand by the road (*derek*, cf. 5.5) and ask for the ancient paths (*ntyvah*). The former has broader application as a way or life whereas the latter more specifically refers to that which is trodden by feet. Both are found in 18.15: “They have stumbled in their ways, in the ancient rods and have gone into bypaths, not the highway.” When asking for the good *derek*, Israel should walk in it, but they refused.

In vs. 17 the Lord sets watchmen over Jerusalem, *tsaphah* being a participle. “Stand by the way and watch, O inhabitant of Aroer” [48.19]! He tells them to heed the trumpet blast, *qashav* as to listen more as to be attentive, but they refuse outrightly. “I have given heed and listened, but they have not spoken aright” [8.6]. What the Lord says is appalling, really, for the watchmen’s chief duty is to warn the city’s inhabitants of an impending danger. In response, the Lord turns to both the nations (*goy*, cf. 5.15) and the congregation or *hedah* which often is applied to Israel itself. “And their congregation shall be established before me” [30.20].

Similar to the *qashav* relative to nations and the congregation in vs. 19 the Lord tells the earth (*erets*, cf. 5.30) to hear (*shamah*, cf. 5.30) followed by “behold” or *hineh* (cf. 4.23) which makes what he’s about to say is very important as well as foreboding. That is to say, the Lord is about to bring evil (*rah*, cf. vs. 7) upon Israel which actually is the fruit of their own devices, *machasheveth* (cf. 4.14) also pertaining to their thoughts or purposes. Note that the Lord is so disgusted with Israel that he doesn’t use the proper name but prefers “this nation” almost out of sheer disgust. So while the earth had paid attention or *shamah*, the people did not *qashav* or literally “upon my *davar*.” Similarly, they have rejected (*ma’as*, cf. 5.3) the Lord’s law, *torah* (cf. 2.8).

The Lord poses another rhetorical question in vs. 20 as to the value of frankincense from Sheba and sweet cane from a distant though unnamed land. Furthermore, the Lord doesn’t find burnt offerings acceptable, *ratson* being a noun meaning favor or will. “You cover him with favor as with a shield” [Ps 5.12]. To counter this, the Lord will lay out stumbling blocks or *mikshul* which will trip up people, *kashal* being the verbal root: “And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel” [Is 8.14]. “In the north by the river Euphrates they have stumbled and fallen” [46.6]. Even worse, father and son shall perish, *avad* (cf. 4.9).

In vs. 22 the Lord says that the impending invasion will come from the north as predicted in 1.14: ““Out of the north evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land.” Even more

ominously, this yet unknown nation surmised by everyone to be Babylon is stirring from the earth's farthest reaches, *hur* being the verb which also means to awake. Even this awakening is enough to strike fear into other surrounding nations. "A great tempest is stirring from the farthest parts of the earth" [25.32]! This people is cruel and merciless, *'akzary* and the verb *racham* (cf. 30.14 and 13.14)..i.e., having no *racham*. With these multiple warnings of a threat coming from the north, certainly Israel must have sent out scouts to detect enemy movement. Such is the reason why vs. 24 speaks of a report, two uses of the verb *shamah* (cf. vs. 19) or to hear. This caused Israel to go into convulsions resembling a woman in labor.

Without further ado, Israel puts on sackcloth as in mourning, in essence having acknowledged her powerlessness and in hope of persuading the Lord well before the (Babylonian) invaders reach them. Such is the force of the reports they have been receiving now for some time. While this is transpiring, the Lord tells Jeremiah that he is both an assayer and tester *bachon* and *mivtsar*. The former is the only biblical reference and the latter (cf. 1.18) fundamentally means a fortress. Thus *mivtsar* suggests that the *davar* of Jeremiah is Israel's only place of refuge. With regard to *bachon*, the verb *yadah* (cf. 5.5) applies; as for *mivtsar*, it's the verb *bachan* (root of *bachon*) or to test or try. "Behold, I will refine them and test them" [9.7].

The reason for the just mentioned *yadah* and *bachan* is that Israel is acting in a two-faced manner. As noted above, she has virtually surrendered to the enemy even before it invaded while on the other hand remains rebellious in a stubborn fashion, *sur* and *sarar*, both noted as in 5.23. Similarly in vs. 29 there' mention of bellows which can be applicable to the forging of weapons in preparation for battle. However, it applies to Israel's almost irredeemable stubbornness of heart; despite the refining implied by bellows, those who are wicked (*rah*, cf. vs. 19) among here aren't removed or *nataq* meaning to pluck or break off. "All my cords are broken" [10.20].

And so Chapter Six ends on a gloomy note of resignation with Israel helplessly embroiled in her own wickedness as she awaits an invasion from the north. Some like Jeremiah welcome this invasion although they'd prefer another alternative had existed. The Lord calls Israel silver which is refuse, basically dross that has be discarded because he has rejected them, *ma'as* (cf. vs. 22). With all this in mind, the invaders should enjoy an easy victory. Most likely they had their own spies sent ahead to assess the situation.

1) huz, qerev, shaqaph, rah, 2) damah, navah, hanag, 3) rahah, 6) paqad, qerev, hosheq, 7) rah, 8) yasar, yaqah, nephesh,, sum, shemamah, 'erets, 9) halal, sh'eryth, 10) hod, harlah, cherpah, chaphets, 11) chemah, la'ah, 13) betsah, sheqer, 14) rapha', qalal, shalom, 15) bosh, tohevah, paqad, 16) derek, ntyvah, 17) tsaphah, qashav, 19) goy, hedah, shamah, 'erets, hineh, rah, machasheveth, ma'as, torah, 20) ratson, 21) mikshul, kashal, 'avad, 22) hur, 23) 'akzary, racham, 24) shamah, 27) bachon, mivtsar, yadah, bachan, 28) sur, sarar, 29) rah, nataq, 30) ma'as

Chapter Seven

A footnote to the NIV says that from the beginning of this chapter through 10.25 we have “a series of temple messages delivered by Jeremiah, perhaps over a period of several years.” And so we start off with the *davar* of the Lord coming to Jeremiah. As for the relationship between *davar* and Jeremiah who utters it, the passage of time is of secondary consequence since both have their roots in eternity. As for the divine *davar* coming to a prophet like Jeremiah, we have no description of how it actually is transmitted. However, we can assume that the person on the receiving end is disposed for this *davar* and realizes it on his own accord as by an overpowering awareness of the holy in juxtaposition with human sinfulness. And that, to be sure, is depicted in great detail as has been the case so far and as it will continue as such to the end of the book. It seems that such a chosen person doesn’t consult others but simply goes ahead with the task assigned to him. However, we can be certain that he is keenly aware of current events, perhaps more than any of his contemporaries.

In vs. 2 the *davar* bids Jeremiah to take his position in the gate of the Lord’s house, the verb *hamad* (cf. vs. 10 for next occurrence) suggestive of remaining there; also it means to serve. Being “in” the gate can mean a certain space actually part of it such as a narrow passageway where Jeremiah would literally rub up against anyone entering or leaving. There he is first to *qara’* (cf. 4.5) the *davar* of the Lord followed by saying “*shamah* (cf. 6.24) or hear the *davar* of the Lord.” You’d think the order would be reversed—hear followed by proclaiming—but this gate is special by reason of being associated with the Lord’s house. As for *qara’* coming first, those who receive it will be enabled to make others *shamah* it after the manner of Jeremiah, that is, to imitate him as a prophet. As the verse says, the context is with regard to those entering to worship the Lord, *shachah* (cf. 1.16 but not noted there) fundamentally as to bow down.

Within this special gate signifying a place of transition from the profane to the sacred Jeremiah utters words now familiar to everyone, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel” [vs. 3]. He bids those entering the Lord’s house to amend their ways and doings (*derek* and *mahalal* both found in 4.18), *yatav* (verbal root of the common adjective *tov* or good). “Neither is it in them to do good” [10.5]. Should that be carried out, the Lord will allow the people to dwell (*shakan*) in this place or *maqom* which can be taken as a unity of Israel as well as the Lord’s house where people are entering. Reference to both words are found in vs. 7: “Then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever.” A warning follows against those who encourage people with deceptive words (i.e., *davar* which are *sheqer*, cf. 6.13) to put their trust in the Lord’s temple simply by saying it belong to him. *Heykal* is the noun for temple which refers more to what might be called the nave of a cathedral, the space between the entrance and holy of holies. “Behold, two baskets of figs placed before the temple of the Lord” [24.1].

Vs. 5 begins with a series of four “ifs” or amending one’s ways which runs through vs. 6 and are listed as follows:

- 1) Amend (*yatav*, cf. vs. 3) one’s ways (*derek* and *mahalal* as in vs. 3) which reads literally “to make good you shall make good.”
- 2) Execute justice or do *mishpat* (cf. 5.5).
- 3) Do not oppress three vulnerable types of people along with one injunction: alien, fatherless, widow including murder, *hashaq* also as to treat unjustly. “And deliver from the hand of

the oppressor” [21.12]. As for the last, it’s not to be done in this place or *maqom* (cf. vs. 3), the Lord’s house.

4) Not to go after alien gods which will cause personal harm or *rah* (cf. 6.29).

Vs. 7 contains the all important conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” or that which follows the four “ifs” just delineated. Provided that the four are carried out, the Lord repeats what he said in vs. 3, that he will allow the Israelites to dwell in this place (*shakan* and *maqom*). Here he adds *’erets* (cf. 6.19) or land and fleshes it out by saying that he had given it to their fathers.

Vs. 8 begins with *hineh* (cf. 6.19) or behold, a way of getting attention after the promising words just spoken, of reminding them of their deceptive words or *davar* which are *sheqer*, both of which are in vs. 4. In other words, such words turn out to be useless, *yahal* (cf. 2.11). Right away the Lord launches into a lengthy rhetorical question now that he has gotten the people’s attention. He asks if they are ready to commit all sorts of crimes including worship of Baal and gods they haven’t known. While engaged in such practices they’d enter his house claiming to have been delivered, *natsal* (cf. 1.19) also as to be snatched away. Similarly the people would continue with their abominations or *tohevah* (cf. 6.15).

Vs. 11 follows with another rhetorical question, again in reference to the Lord’s house or temple called by his name, this being the second time in a row which makes it more personal. In other words, the people have transformed the temple into a den of thieves which is reminiscent of Jesus: “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers” [Mt 21.13]. To all this is added, “behold (*hineh*, cf. vs. 9), I have seen it”...have seen it from the temple which has become the focal point for abominable deeds.

Next (vs. 12) follows a command to leave the Jerusalem temple and head to Shiloh in order to abandon the abominations practiced there, Shiloh having been founded after the conquest of Canaan. There the people will see what the Lord had done to that sacred place for the evil (*rah*, cf. vs. 6) having been committed in it. In other words, Shiloh’s ruin are a warning. Still, the people continued with their ways despite the Lord having persisted, *shakam* fundamentally as to rise early in the morning, a vivid way to express their stubbornness.

After venting himself, vs. 14 introduces the Lord with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “therefore” and reveals his determination to do something about a seemingly intractable problem. In other words, the Lord will bring to ruin the Jerusalem temple as he had done to Shiloh. The people had trusted in both temples which came to nought. Now in vs. 15 the Lord will cast the people literally “from upon my face,” using Ephraim’s offspring as an example. A footnote in the NIV says that here Ephraim is another name for Israel and “ironically, the tribal territory in which Shiloh was located.”

Vs. 16 begins with “as for you,” that is, the Lord now turns attention to Jeremiah who had been speaking on his behalf since the beginning of this chapter. It’s signified by the conjunctive *v-* prefaced to *’atah* or “you.” Jeremiah may have been troubled upon hearing this, knowing that the

Lord is about to ask for something further than he had been doing, perhaps an even less than desirable task. So the Lord tells him three things of which he already must have had an inkling:

1) Not to pray for “this people”, this phrase a kind of put-down on Israel, the verb being *palal* also as to judge, intercede. The same command is repeated in 11.14.

2) Not to lift up a cry or prayer for them, *tephilah* and *rinah*, also in 11.14.

3) Not to intercede or *pagah*, also as to meet or hit upon. “Let them intercede with the Lord with the Lord of Hosts” [27.18]. The Lord directs this third command directly to Jeremiah made all the more forceful by the preposition *b-*, literally as “do not intercede in me.” Then he adds the words “for I do not hear (*shamah*, cf. vs. 2) you” which Jeremiah can take as being slighted.

To re-enforce the words of vs. 16, the Lord resorts to a rhetorical question, a favorite way of venting his frustration. He tells Jeremiah to look at the people in Jerusalem as they make preparations to honor the queen of heaven and pour drink offerings to other gods, a sure fire way of provoking him to anger. The verb is *kahas* as in 11.14 noted above with regard to vs. 16 and the three commands issued to Jeremiah. Right away the Lord adds another rhetorical question, namely, that the people aren’t so much provoking him but are adding to their own confusion, literally “shame of their faces,” *bosheth* (cf. 3.24). Next the Lord says that he will pour out both his anger and wrath (*’aph* and *chemah* (cf. 4.8 and 6.11)). He can’t bring himself to mention Jerusalem by name but refers to it as “this place” (*maqom*, cf. vs. 7) which will be consumed along with animals and everything else growing on the land.

In vs. 21 the Lord continues his invective against Israel through Jeremiah beginning with “Thus says the Lord of hosts.” To the offerings noted in vs. 18 he says with some sarcasm that they should add to the sacrifices, reminding the people when their ancestors came from Egypt. At that time he didn’t speak about burning offerings and sacrifices. Instead, the Lord reminds the people of a command or *davar* which is more comprehensive by listening (*shamah*, cf. vs. 16) his voice and walking in all his ways (*derek*, cf. vs. 5) which will be a source of benefit (*yataw*, cf. vs. 5) for them. Then comes the expected response, namely, that they failed, *shamah* being used again with the added failing to incline their ears. Instead, the people preferred their own counsels and stubbornness of heart (*lev*, cf. 5.24), *mohetsoth* and *shryroth*, two other references being Ps 5.10: “Let them fall by their own counsels” and 3.17. This made the people walk backward, not forward.

In vs. 25 the Lord engages in some deliberate exaggeration when recounting how he sent prophets from the day Israel left Egypt, the **RSV** using the adverb “persistently” but rendered literally as “day to rise early” (*shakam*, cf. vs. 13). While uttering these words on behalf of the Lord, Jeremiah considered himself to be included among such prophets. Instead of listening to these messengers, the people stiffened their neck, *qashah* as pretty much the same in 17.23. To top this off, the Lord adds that the people did worse (*raha*) than their fathers which is reminiscent of so many of Israel’s kings as recounted in Second Kings. A similar sentiment is expressed in 16.12: “And because you have done worse than your fathers.”

Vs. 27 has the conjunctive *v-* translated as “so then” where the Lord continues to give Jeremiah instructions as how to *davar* with the people in light of their unmitigated stubbornness but with

full knowledge that they won't listen, *shamah* (cf. vs. 16). In other words, nothing new. Jeremiah is to continue by trying to shame his listeners by speaking of the people as "this is the nation" which failed in *shamah*, implying that if he had addressed other nations, they would respond more favorably. Similarly the people failed to accept discipline or *musar* (cf. 2.30) which caused the extinction of truth (*'emunah*, cf. 5.3) or more precisely, truth being cut off from the lips of the people.

As a sign of their plight, the people are to cut off their hair as for mourning. "Then Job arose and rent his robe and shaved his head and fell upon the ground and worshiped" [Job 1.20]. Then they are to lament on the bare heights, this corresponding to their shaved heads. At this point all seems lost. The Lord has both rejected and forsaken (*ma'as* and *natash*, cf. 6.30 and 1.10) this generation which is identified with divine wrath, *havrah* intimating an outpouring. "I know his insolence" [48.30].

In vs. 30 the Lord provides the reason for this mourning, namely, that the people have done evil or *rah* (cf. vs. 12) in his sight along with having set up abominations in the Jerusalem temple, *shiquts* (cf. 4.1). Worse than this is the sacrifice of sons and daughters, something which vs. 31 puts literally as "did not go up upon my heart (*lev*, cf. vs. 24)."

The remaining verses of Chapter Seven speak of days which are coming. In fact, they have been intimated as coming for some time now. The Lord will allow the dead bodies of his people to be exposed as food for birds and wild beasts with result of the land having become a waste or *charbah* which also means a desert. "I swear by myself, says the Lord, that this house shall become a desolation" [22.5].

2) shachah, hamad, qara', shamah, 3) derek, mahalal, yatav, shakan, maqom, 4) sheqer, heykal, 5) yatav, derek, mahalal, mishpat, 6) hashaq, rah, 7) shakan, maqom, 'erets, 8) sheqer, yahal, 9) hineh, 10) natsal, tohevah, 11) hineh, 12) rah, 13) shakam, 16) palal, tephilah, rinah, pagah, shamah, 18) kahash, 19) bosheth, 20) maqom, 'aph, chemah, 24) lev, mohetsoth, shryroth, 25) shakam, 26) qashah, rahah, 27) shamah, 28) musar, 'emunah, 29) ma'as, natash, havrah, 30) rah, shiquts, 31) lev, 34) charbah

Chapter Eight

This new chapter begins with the phrase "at (*b-* or 'in') that time," the last instance being 4.11, and refers to the detailed tragic situation delineated just above. Also it's a hint of what's to come which unfortunately turns out to be more of the same. Another aspect of this phrase is that it introduces several verses of prose (through vs. 3) before assuming a poetic form through the end of the chapter.

Jeremiah isn't mentioned, obviously he being taken for granted as continuing to utter the *davar* of the Lord. Vs. 1 speaks of bones belonging to those from kings to commoners brought from their tombs and spread out on the ground for all to see. Vs. 2 mentions sun and moon meaning the

bones will be exposed day and night, more specifically inferring the divinities these heavenly bodies which the Israelites had as their objects of veneration. The five verbs are as follows: *'ahav*, *havad*, *halak*, *darash* and *shachah* or loved, served, gone after, sought and worshiped (5.31 and 2.20, 2.2, 14.3 and 7.2). Being deaf and dumb, they were completely indifferent to the spectacle below. Because of this, they will be left as dung to simply rot away.

As for those who brought these bones from their tombs, nothing is said, so let's presume they were angels in service of the Lord. Surely Jeremiah foresaw the vision of Ezekiel of dry bones (cf. Chapter 37 of Ezekiel), a favorable image of Israel's fate. How he wished the same could apply to his situation as he looked back and considered how his vision compared with his predecessor. As for Jeremiah, being a prophet immersed in the divine *davar*, it was possible to be free of the constraints of time and space, enabling him to look either forward or backward as with regard to Ezekiel's vision.

Those beholding such a spectacle are called an evil (*rah*, cf. 7.30) family which won't be confined to the unspecified place where they had been strewn. Rather, they will be in all the places (*maqom*, cf. 7.20) where the Lord has driven them, *nadach*. "And out of all the countries where he had driven them" [16.15]. This hadn't occurred yet but certainly infers the Babylonian invasion. And so the bones will accompany Israel, the "evil family," when it goes into exile. This phrase applied to a nation both serves to humiliate and to isolate it. In the meanwhile the previously adored heavenly bodies will be following it, inescapably day and night.

In vs. 4 the Lord bids Jeremiah to say (*'amar*, cf. 4.27) to Israel-as-evil-family, "thus says (*'amar*) the Lord." He is to use this form of address pretty much as he does to the exposed bones, dried and bleached, not unlike the Israelites who are alive yet completely dead to hearing the *davar* of the Lord. The living bones, as it were, are listening to Jeremiah and automatically equate "thus says the Lord" with a rhetorical question, actually three of them in rapid succession. The first two have a remedy, that is, those who fall yet rise along with those who have turned away yet return. However, the third asks why has "this people"—a kind of put-down, as though the Lord refused to use the name Israel—has turned away (*shuv*, cf. 5.3).

Jerusalem is mentioned (not in the **RSV**) as engaged in a backsliding which is perpetual, *meshuvah* (cf. 5.6; *shuv* is the verbal root) and *natsach* which is found abundantly in the Psalms. This is followed by the Lord giving the answer which his audience knows full well, that the people are both holding fast (*chazaq*, cf. 5.3 but not noted there) to deceit and are refusing to return (*shuv* again). As for the noun "deceit" or *tarmyth*, it has four other biblical references, one of which is in 14.14: "They are prophesying...the deceit of their own minds."

In the midst of proclaiming all this about his fellow Israelites Jeremiah decides it's time to intervene and make a personal statement. He claims (and rightly so) that he has given heed and listened (*qashav* and *shamah*, cf. 6.17 and 7.27). This is in contrast to the people not having spoken aright nor have repented (*nacham*, cf. 4.28). The verb is *davar*; that they haven't responded adequately to the divine *davar* with their personal *davar*. Furthermore, nobody has asked the very personal question, "What have I done?" Instead, people have turned to their own

course, *shuv* (cf. vs. 5) with *merutsah* (also as running) which has three other biblical references, one of which is 22.17: “For practicing oppression and violence (i.e., incursion).” As for this running, it’s likened to a horse rushing headlong into battle.

Vs. 7 has the example of several birds which keep the time of their coming, the verb *yadah* (cf. 6.27) with *mohed* which also means a season and feast. “Noisy one who lets the hour go by” [46.17]. Contrast this inbuilt *yadah* or knowing with Israel not knowing the Lord’s ordinances or *mishpat* (cf. 7.5).

The first half of vs. 8 is a rhetorical question to the people about claiming to be wise or *chakam* (cf. 4.22) and having the divine *torah* (cf. 6.10). At the same time the scribes had falsified it, *sheqer* (cf. 7.8) being a noun. This rhetorical question receives an answer, if you will, by the wise being shamed, dismayed and taken: *bosh*, *chatat* and the common verb *lakad* (cf. 6.14, 1.17 and 5.26 but not noted there). Then *hineh* (cf. 7.11) or “lo” follows with the people rejecting the Lord’s *davar*, *ma’as* (cf. 7.29) with the preposition *b-* or “in.” Then comes another rhetorical question as to asking what wisdom (*chakmah*) is in them. “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom” [9.23].

Without mentioning the impending Babylonian invasion, in vs. 10 the Lord says that he will hand over the Israelite wives to them by reason of their desire for unjust gain, *betsah* (cf. 6.13). Everyone...including prophet and priest...have dealt falsely, *sheqer* (cf. vs. 8).

Vs. 11 repeats the content of 6.14 with regard to crying out a false peace (*shalom*) where it doesn’t exist followed in the next verse by a rhetorical question as to the people being ashamed (*bosh*, cf. vs. 9) when having committed abominations or *tohevah* (cf. 7.9). The answer is obvious, and the Lord decides to punish them, *pequdah*. (cf. 10.15).

Vs. 13 bears a resemblance to Lk 13.7 with regard to Israel producing no grapes nor figs: “Lo, these three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down; why should it use up the ground?” In light of this, the people ask why they are sitting around doing nothing and decide to enter their fortified cities and await God’s punishment there. *Damam* is the verb for doomed and also means to be silent. “You also, O madmen, shall be brought to silence” [48.2].

Vs. 15 is a lament by the people which the Lord heard but not responded to as they looked for peace and healing (*shalom* and *marpe*), a sentiment echoed in 14.19: “We looked for peace, but no good came; for a time of healing, but behold, terror.” Instead of both, vs. 16 speaks of the Babylonians coming, Israel being as among serpents and adders which can’t be charmed. The noun *lachash* has four other biblical references and whose verbal root means to whisper. “If the serpent bites before it is charmed, there is no advantage in a charmer” [Eccl 10.11].

From vs. 18 to the end of Chapter Eight we have a series of quick interjections by Jeremiah, the people and the Lord. Jeremiah blurts out his anguish which he calls grief, *yagon*. “Why did I come forth from the womb to see toil and sorrow” [20.18]? Such sorrow is beyond healing, a word which the **RSV** labels as “uncertain.” In addition to this, his heart (*lev*, cf. 7.31) is sick, *davay* also as faint which has two other biblical references, one of which is Lam 1.22: “And my heart is faint.” As

for Jeremiah's lament, it's interrupted (and agreed upon, if you will) by the Lord speaking for himself in vs. 19 after which the prophet continues.

Hineh (cf. vs. 9) opens vs. 19 which the **RSV** translates as "hark," the words about to follow echoing Jeremiah's personal grief over his people's fate. Throughout the entire land—north to south, east to west—they send up a cry (*qol*, cf. 4.15) with a desperate rhetorical question which has no answer as to the Lord not being present in Zion, intimating that he has left the temple. Immediately afterwards comes another but from the Lord, namely, that why have they provoked (*kahas*, cf. 7.18) him to anger with graven images and foreign idols, *pesylym* and *hevel* (cf. 2.5) which are *nekar* (cf. 5.19). As for the former, cf. 50.38: "For it is a land of images, and they are made over idols."

In vs. 20 the people chime in, complaining that after the summer harvest they are not saved or *yashah* (cf. 4.14). It's followed by Jeremiah saying that Israel's wound is the same as his in his heart (*lev*, cf. vs. 18), *shever* meaning a breaking as in 4.20. In other words, Jeremiah is suffering from a broken heart causing him to mourn and be overtaken (*chazaq*, cf. vs. 5) by dismay. *Qadar* (cf. 4.28 but not noted there) is the verb meaning to be black...not just a broken heart but one which is darkened.

Chapter Eight draws to a close with three rapid-fire rhetorical questions by Jeremiah. The first concerns balm from Gilead, *tsory* as found next in 46.11 and also associated with Gilead: "Go up to Gilead and take balm." The second that no physician from that area, *rapha'* (cf. 6.14) being a participle meaning to heal. In a poignant way Jeremiah has been calling her "daughter of my people" since vs. 19 whose health hasn't been restored. Both the noun and verb (*'arukah* and *halah*) are found in 30.17: "For I will restore health to you, and your wounds I will heal."

2) 'ahav, havad, halak, darash, shachah, 3) rah, maqom, nadach, 4) 'amar, 5) shuv, meshuvah, natsach, chazaq, tarmyth, 6) qashav, shamah, nacham, shuv, merutsah, 7) yadah, mohed, mishpat, 8) chakam, torah, sheqer, 9) bosh, chatat, lakad, hineh, ma'as, chakmah, 10) betsah, sheqer, 11) shalom, 12) bosh, tohevah, pequdah, 14) damam, 15) shalom, marpe', 17) lachash, 18) yagon, lev, davay, 19) hineh, qol, kahas, pesylym, hevel, nekar, 20) yashah, 21) lev, shever, qadar, tsory, rapha', 'arukah, halah

Chapter Nine

Vs. 1 in the **RSV** is 8.23 in the Hebrew, the former being followed here for convenience.

Although this new chapter begins with a dramatic image, what he *davar* is to be transformed into a fountain (more a waterfall when you come right down to it) that he may weep both day and night, *bakah*. "My eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears because the Lord's flock has been taken captive" [13.17]. Even though the Babylonians hadn't invaded, he sees his fellow Israelites as already slain, *chalal* implying pollution or defilement. "If I go out into the field, behold, those slain by the sword" [14.18]!

After expressing himself as such, Jeremiah echoes the psalmist's words: "O that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest" [Ps 55.6]. He wishes to take up residence in the desert—not permanently but temporarily—in a wayfarer's lodging which most likely means a tent, *malon*. "They have crossed over the pass, at Geba they lodge for the night" [Is 10.29]. In other words, Jeremiah wishes to leave behind (*hazav* connotes abandonment, cf. 5.19) his people presumably slain and have nothing to do with them. They have become outright adulterers and are treacherous, *na'aph* (cf. 3.8 but not noted there and *bagad*, cf. 5.12).

In vs. 3 Jeremiah likens his people to having bent their tongues like bows allowing falsehood and not truth (*sheqer* and *'emunah*, cf. 8.10 and 7.28) take its place. The verb *gavar* often applies to a warrior's strength, the example here being the opposite. "Because the enemy prevailed" [Lam 1.16]. Furthermore, the Israelites advance from evil or *rah* (cf. 8.3) to *rah* as they presumably do the same with regard to knowing (*yadah*, cf. 8.7) the Lord.

As a result of the treacherous behavior just delineated, Jeremiah cautions about trusting one's neighbor. This is put as a supplanter and slanderer in vs. 4, *haqav* and *rakyl*, the latter found in 6.28 but not noted there. *Haqav* is a verb made famous by Isaac who supplanted his brother Esau: "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times" [Gen 27.36]. Then in vs. 5 Jeremiah adds deception and not speaking the truth, *hatal* and *'emeth* (cf. 4.2). As for the former, cf. Gn 31.7: "Yet your father has cheated me." The latter is made worse by use of the verb *davar*, of speaking lies every-which way. To this is added iniquity or *sheqer* (cf. vs. 3) and "too weary to repent" is rendered literally as "your dwelling." Finally to this litany is added oppression and deceit, literally as "your dwelling is the minds of deceit" or *mirmah* (cf. 5.27).

In light of what has been said, we can now appreciate the significance of "therefore" coupled "behold" (*hineh*, cf. 8.19) as the Lord speaks with the intention of refining and testing the people, *tsaraph* and *bachan* (cf. 65.29 but not noted there and 6.27). In light of vs. 3 where the people's tongue is like a bow, vs. 8 uses the same image as they speak deceitfully (*mirmah*, cf. vs. 6) but plan to ambush their neighbors despite words of peace (*shalom*, cf. 8.15). In other words, their *davar* is exactly opposite of the divine *davar*. To this the Lord speaks rhetorically...out loud, if you will...about punishment and avenging himself (*paqad* and *naqam* both found in 5.29).

In vss. 10 and 11 the Lord calls for weeping and wailing, *beky* and *nehy* (cf. 3.21 and 18.17) because he will lay waste the land, *yatsath* also as to kindle a fire (cf. 2.15 but not noted there). Included are Jerusalem and the cities of Judah.

Vs. 12 consists of three rapid fire rhetorical questions. The first is with regard to anyone wise enough to understand what the Lord had just said, *byn* (cf. 4.22). The second concerns anyone to whom the Lord has spoken or *davar* and can declare it, *nagad*, cf. 5.20). Finally the Lord asks why the land (*'erets*, cf. 7.7) has become a wilderness (*midbar*, cf. 4.26). Everyone of course knows the reason stated in vs. 13 which consists of three parts: 1) the people have forsaken (*hazav*) the divine *torah* (cf. vs. 2 and 8.8), 2) haven't obeyed the Lord's voice, *shamah* and *qol*, cf. 8.6 and 8.19) and 3) haven't walked (*halak*, cf. 8.2) in accord with this hearing of the Lord's voice. In place of these

three Israel went after the Baals, a practice they got from their fathers, this having been mentioned in 2.23: “How can you say, ‘I am not defiled, I have not gone after the Baals?’”

As noted with regard to vs. 7, “therefore” coupled with “behold” (*hineh*) introducing vs. 15 sets the stage for a warning as to what is about to happen. This takes the form of the people drinking wormwood and scattering (*puts*, cf 23.2) Israel among the nations (*goy*, cf. 6.19) completely unknown to them and their fathers. Not only that, the Lord will send a sword after them.

Vs. 17 begins with “Thus says the Lord of hosts” (last noted in vs. 7) followed by a command to consider or *byn* (cf. vs. 12) or to pay close attention as what is to follow. He calls for both female mourners and skillful women (*qun* and *chakam*, cf. 8.8). As for the former, it’s a participle pertaining to professional women: “This is a lamentation which shall be chanted; the daughters of the nations shall chant it” [Ezk 32.16]. Combination of the two makes for a penetrating wailing sound (*nehy*, cf. vs. 10) because Israel is shamed. As a result the people had to leave their own land, a sentiment reminiscent of Ps 137.1: “By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion.”

So while these two groups of women are plying their trade, the Lord bids them to hear the *davar* of the Lord in vs. 20. Not only that, they are to allow their ears to receive this *davar* followed by teaching (*lamad*, cf. 2.33) their daughters to follow in their profession as well as their neighbors a dirge or *qynah* (cf. 7.29 but not noted there). Next we have the graphic image of death entering windows and cutting children off from the streets. Then vs. 22 begins with the command from the Lord to Jeremiah that he *davar*, beginning with “thus says the Lord” noted last in vs. 17. It concerns men being slain, using the image of a reaper going through the fields but not gathering them.

The remaining verses from 23 onward are in prose form, the one at hand beginning with “thus says the Lord” right after these words in the previous verse. The Lord gives a warning to the wise, the mighty and rich man (*chakam*, *gibor* and *hashyr*: cf. vss. 17, 5.16 but not noted there and Ps 45.12). All are not to glory in their respective natural abilities, *halal* (cf. 4.2). Obviously this leads to *halal* being transferred over to the Lord where they will both understand and know him (*sakal* and *yadah*, cf. 5.21 and vs. 3). After all, it’s the Lord, source of steadfast love, justice and righteousness (*chesed*, *mishpat* and *tsedaqah*: 2.2, 8.7 and 4.2). Note that they are done in the earth or *‘erets*, the same *‘erets* which is ruined and laid waste as a wilderness in vs. 12. Such are the three which delight the Lord, *chaphets* (cf. 6.10). Unfortunately most of the people fail to realize how simple are the requirements and the result, *chaphets* indicative of pure joy.

The next to last verse of Chapter Nine begins with *hineh* or behold (cf. vs. 15) to get Israel’s attention as to the serious nature of what is transpiring. He speaks of coming days—not specified but intimated as close—when he will punish (*paqad*, cf. vs. 9; it has a military connotation, apt for the context) both the circumcised and un-circumcised. Vs. 26 lists five specific peoples and a sixth living in the desert. This is followed by Israel whose un-circumcision is of the heart or *lev* (cf. 8.21).

1) bakah, chalal, 2) malon, hazav, na'aph, bagad, 3) sheqer, 'emunah, gavar, rah, yadah, 4) haqav, rakyl, 5) hatal, 'emeth, sheqer, 6) mirmah, 7) hineh, tsaraph, bachan, 8) mirmah, shalom, 9) paqad, naqam, 10) beky, nehy, yatsath, 12) byn, nagad, 'erets, midbar, 13) hazav, torah, shamah, qol, halak, 15) hineh, goy, 16) puts, 17) chakam, qun, 19) nehy, 20) lamad, qynah, 23) chakam, gibor, hashyr, halal, sakal, yadah, 24) chesed, mishpat, tsedaqah, 'erets, chaphets, 25) paqad, 26) lev

Chapter Ten

This new chapter commences with the familiar command but with a new twist: “Hear the *davar* which the Lord *davar* to you” followed in vs. 2 with “Thus says (*'amar*, cf. 8.4) the Lord.” The Lord has frequent need of these words due to the stubbornness of Israel, matching her one-for-one, if you will. Clearly it's a sign of divine love and concern despite the obstacles his people throw in the way. Because Jeremiah is the Lord's mouthpiece, this must be quite a learning experience for him.

After castigating Israel thoroughly the Lord takes a more conciliatory stance but without letting Israel off the hook for her aberrant behavior. Perhaps that's why he starts off with the “double *davar*” just noted. Keeping in mind Israel's unique status as chosen by the Lord from among all the nations (*goy*, cf. 9.15), the Lord bids her not to learn their ways, the verb *lamad* (cf. 9.20) implying to be a disciple. Just as important, she isn't to be dismayed (*chatat*, cf. 8.9) at heavenly signs (*'oth*), this noun related to something in the future, a portent. “Who has shown signs and wonders in the land of Egypt” [32.20]. In other words, such nations—and the Lord seems infer them all—are presumed to have the ability to make heavenly bodies affect events on earth as well as to predict the future. Vs. 3 is a part of vs. 2 and sums this up neatly by saying that such customs practiced by so many peoples are false, *hevel* (cf. 8.19) more as vain or empty. *Chuqah* (cf. 5.24 but not noted there) as customs applies to statutes as well, something pretty much hard and fast governing the nations which Israel is to stay away from.

Vs. 3 contains a second sentence of which the previous few are introductory in fashion. That is to say, the Lord goes into some detail about idol worship or more specifically, the nature of idols in and by themselves. He speaks of how men go out into the forest, cut down a tree and bring it to a craftsman or *charash* also as an engraver or carpenter. “They are all the work of skilled men” [vs. 9]. Those who bring the timber have a plan in mind for the idol, most likely a copy of one of the Canaanite deities. After plating it with silver and gold the tree (and this is the word implied...not idol...from vs. 3) is nailed down so it can't move. Once fashioned, the idol might come alive in the middle of the night and walk away. The Israelites knew this, of course, but going into the gritty details—like going into how meat from a live animal arrives on the table—is something they'd rather not hear.

Vs. 5 speaks of the idols (a footnote in the **RSV** reads ‘they’ for idols) as scarecrows in a field unable to *davar*, this a significant observation in and by itself. At least such idols have a practical function, that is, to scare away birds. They must be carried from one field to another which is the opposite of being nailed down as noted above. With this in mind, in the same verse the Lord tells his people not to fear them because they can do neither evil nor good. Implied is a distinction

between those who had fashioned the idol and Israel. Presumably the former used the idol as a kind of catechetical tool to indoctrinate the people and make them like the nations, to submerge them in the overall polytheistic culture of the time and place.

Between vs. 6 and vs. 10 Jeremiah breaks out into a spontaneous song...exclamation...of praise which is due to the Lord, *ya'ah* or to be seemly, becoming, this being the only use of the verb in the Bible. In vs. 7 he singles out those who are wise or *chakam* (cf. 9.23) among the nations (*goy*, cf. vs. 2), they in turn being stupid and foolish, *bahar* and *kasal*. The former also means to burn as in 44.6: "Therefore my wrath and my anger were poured forth and kindled." As for the latter, it's the only found here. Immediately following this Jeremiah exclaims that the instruction (*musar*, cf. 7.28) of idols is as dead and dense as the wood from they had been hewn. Then he goes into some description as to the precious metals used to adorn this wood in contrast to the Lord as true (*emeth*, cf. 9.5) God. To show his indignation at such idolatry, the Lord manifests his wrath and indignation, *qetseph* and *zaham*. Both are found in 21.5: "I myself will fight against you with outstretched hand and strong arm, in anger and in fury and in great wrath."

Upon completion of his short, spontaneous burst of praise, the Lord gets back to business with "thus shall you say to them." It continues with the familiar theme of worshiping alien gods who shall perish (*avad*, cf. 6.21) not only from the earth but from under the heavens, two realms from which they had derived their supposed strength. In contrast, vs. 12 presents three pairs: *hasah* associated with *koach* (made and power), *kun* associated with *chakmah* (established and wisdom), *natah* associated with *shamym* (stretch out and heavens).

Vs. 13 is reminiscent of the flood associated with Noah with water coming from heaven above and from the earth below (cf. Gn 7.11). That is to say, the Lord literally "gives his voice" or *qol* (cf. 9.13) to create a tumult (*hamon*, cf. 4.26) of waters in heaven above and midst (*nasy'*) from the earth's ends. Note that the latter more fundamentally means a prince, from a verbal root meaning to lift up. This verse is almost the same as 51.16: "When he utters his voice there is a tumult of waters and the heavens, and he makes the midst rise from the ends of the earth." In addition to this, the Lord makes lightning and causes wind to blow.

Vs. 14 is the same as 51.17, so words found in the verse at hand are noted as from there. The Lord comes right out and calls anyone stupid and without knowledge or *bahar* (cf. vs. 8) and *dahath* (prefaced with *m-* or 'from'). "Is not this to know me" [22.16]? At the same time he says that the idols fashioned by a goldsmith put him to shame (*bosh*, cf. 8.12) because they are images, *pesel* pertaining to anything graven or molten. The same applies to images which are false, *neseq* (cf. 7.18 but not noted there) also as drinking offering modified by *sheqer* (cf. 9.5).

Vs. 15 has such idols as worthless (*hevel*, cf. vs. 3) and a work of delusion, *tahtuhym*, the only other reference being 51.18: "They are worthless, a work of delusion." Nevertheless, both are destined for punishment, *pequdah* (cf. 8.15) which results in immediate death, *avad* (cf. vs. 11). The Lord is quick to add in vs. 16 that he's not like them, being called instead the portion of Jacob, *cheleq* found in 51.19 and identical to the verse at hand. Compare *cheleq* with Israel as inheritance or *nachalah* (cf. 3.18), this irrevocably tied in with the Lord who formed all things (*yatsar*, cf. 1.5).

All in all what we've seen thus far is a quick alteration of two extremes. On one hand the Lord roundly condemns Israel and in the next breath he shows paternal care for his people. Despite their depravity, this must have been confusing for them, let alone Jeremiah who is conveying this *davar*.

In vs. 17 the Lord bids the people, presumably of Jerusalem, to prepare to leave the land which is put in dramatic words as slinging them out of their land, *qalah* also as to carve. "Everyone who could sling a stone at a hair and not miss" [Judg 20.16]. In addition to this (if anything could be added, really, but it is) the Lord plans to bring a distress (*tsarar*) which can be felt (*matsa'*, cf. 5.1; also as to find). As for the former, cf. [48.41: "The cities shall be taken and the strongholds seized."

Being the mouthpiece for the divine *davar* gets to Jeremiah, uttering all these calamities against his people who seem oblivious to their fate. In vs. 19 he breaks out into a spontaneous lament over his own hurt and wound (*shever* and *makah*, cf. 8.21 and 6.7 but not noted there). Almost immediately he wakes up to the fact that Israel has brought this upon herself, and he must bear it as an affliction or *choly*, also as a sickness (cf. 6.7 but not noted there).

In vss. 20-21 Jeremiah continues his lament over Jerusalem as if it were himself, using the image of a tent that has been uprooted. Then he turns attention to Israel's shepherds or leaders whom he calls stupid, *bahar* (cf. vs. 14) at having caused their flock to be scattered. In vs. 22 Jeremiah comes out of his depression by suddenly hearing a rumor, literally as "sound of a report (*qol*, cf. vs. 13)." Given the expected Babylonian invasion, he puts it in terms of a great commotion from the north, this mentioned in 6.22, which will lay waste the land.

In both vs. 23 and 24 Jeremiah turns his attention from the people to the Lord himself, realizing (*yadah*, cf. 9.23) that a man's way isn't in himself, *derek* (cf. 7.5) implying following the Lord. Without missing a beat he applies this to himself, asking the Lord to correct him, *yasar* (cf. 6.8) in what literally reads as judgment or *mishpat* (cf. 9.24). At the same time Jeremiah doesn't want to feel the full brunt of divine anger or *'aph* (cf. 7.20).

Typical of the alteration between mediating divine mercy and judgment, the last extended verse of this chapter has Jeremiah speaking of the latter in terms of wrath or *chemah* (cf. 7.2). This time it isn't upon Israel but nations who do not know (*yadah*, cf. vs. 23) the Lord. Already these nations have devoured and consumed Jacob, putting this in terms of eating. In sum, Jeremiah sees what will happen in the near future.

2) 'amar, goy, lamad, chatat, 'oth, 3) chuqah, hevel, charash, 7) ya'ah, chakam, goy, 8) bahar, kasal, musar, 10) 'emeth, qetseph, zaham, 11) 'avad, 12) hasah, koach, kun, chakmah, natah, shamym, 13) qol, hamon, nasy', 14) bahar, dahath, bosh, pesel, nesek, sheqer, tahtuhym, 15) pequdah, 'avad, 16) cheleq, yatsar, 19) qalah, tsarar, matsa', 19) shever, makah, choly, 21) bahar, 22) qol, 23) yadah, derek, 24) yasar, mishpat, 'aph, 25) chemah, yadah

Chapter Eleven

This new chapter begins with “The *davar* that came to Jeremiah from the Lord” and is noted last in 7.1. It implies that the *davar* had been away from him, if you will. This was something he didn’t miss, given the burden it placed on him; instead, it was relief from so much negative prophesying. So when the *davar* returned to him, Jeremiah must have uttered more than a few groans in private. He had reason to do so. All one has to do is look at the concluding verses of this chapter...and we have quite a lot to get before arriving there.

In vs. 2 Jeremiah’s *davar* is aimed at Israel in general, that she hear (*shamah*, cf. 9.13) the *davar* of the covenant or *beryth* (cf. 3.16 but not noted there). Mention of the covenant automatically sets off warning bells, for it means serious business, referring to a whole manner of life given by the Lord to Moses on Mount Sinai. Jeremiah is to communicate what the Lord has in mind to a more specific audience, the men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. The words of vs. 3 (“Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel”) are pretty much in line with what he had been doing all along, namely, warning the people, even cajoling them. Anything to get them to change their ways. Anyone is cursed who doesn’t hear the *davar* of the covenant, *’arar* being the verb as in 17.5: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm.”

Vs. 4 lays out this covenant in familiar words, that is, what the Lord had commanded Israel’s fathers when he brought them from Egypt using the image of an iron furnace for that land: “The Lord took you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be a people of his own possession as at this day” [Dt 4.20]. If Israel complies, the Lord will be her God. This would be in accord with the intent of fulfilling the oath (*qum*, cf. 1.17) he had sworn, *shevuhah* being derived from *shavah* (cf. 5.2), this verb also the root for the sacred number seven. The land or *’erets* (cf. 9.24) Israel was destined to possess as flowing with the familiar image of milk and honey is the exact same *’erets* as now or when the Lord is speaking to his people through Jeremiah. The main problem is that Babylon is threatening to consume it.

Vs. 6 has the conjunctive *v-* translated as “and” to indicate a shift where the Lord engages Jeremiah who is to follow the pattern laid down in vs. 2, that is, with regard to the men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. He is to proclaim (*qara’*, cf. 7.2) the *davar* of the covenant that they may hear and follow through on it. Again he refers to when the Lord brought Israel from Egypt, putting it in terms of a solemn warning to Israel’s fathers, *hud* being rendered literally as “to testify I testified.” “Know for a certainty that I have warned you this day” [42.19]. This *hud* applies with the same force “even to this day” as it had done back then, literally to “hear in (*b-*) my voice” (*shamah* and *qol*, cf. vs. 2 and 10.22). The preposition *b-* suggests not just a casual listening but a putting into practice what the people just heard.

As Jeremiah expected in keeping with Israel of old, the people neither heard nor turned their ear (*shamah* and *natah*, cf. vs. 7 and 10.12). Instead, they persisted in the stubbornness of their heart (*lev*, cf. 9.26), the adjective *rah* (evil, cf. 9.3) driving home the point. *Shryroth* is the noun which connotes hardness as well (cf. 7.24). This left Jeremiah with no other option except to bring upon (*hal-*) Israel the *davar* of the covenant and all that involves...equivalent to throwing the book at them. Still, their *shryroth* made these *davar* roll off their backs.

In vs. 9 the Lord shows his relentless persistence with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “again” where he speaks to Jeremiah of a revolt or *qesher* which implies treason. “Do not call conspiracy all that this people call conspiracy” [Is 8.12]. More precisely, this conspiracy harkens back to Israel’s forefathers who both returned their iniquities (*havan*, cf. 5.25) and refused to hear the Lord’s *davar*. The two verbs *shuv* and *ma’én* thus work hand-in-hand (cf. 8.6 and 9.6 but not noted there); they contribute to the people going after alien gods and being their slaves, the verb *havad* (cf. 8.2) implying this. Clearly as the Lord continues, Israel and Judah have broken his covenant, *parar* also as to make void. “My covenant which they broke though I was their husband” [31.32].

Because of this *parar*, in vs. 11 the Lord is going to bring *rah* (cf. vs. 8) or evil upon the people which they won’t be able to escape despite any cry (*zahaq*) to him, this verb found in the next verse as it pertains to their alternative, gods who can’t save them, *yashah* (cf. 8.20). The multiplication of gods are as many as Jerusalem’s streets and Judah’s cities. Such is the real reason...the perennial one...which vexed the Lord from day one.

Vs. 14 begins with the conjunctive *v-* which isn’t translated and reads literally as “and you.” This is put in a slightly veiled though intentional manner as though Jeremiah’s prayers won’t count for anything, the verb being *palal*. As 7.16 notes, fundamentally it means to intercede or to judge. In other words, forget-about-it. Obviously the people will cry out (*qara’*, cf. vs. 6) in their distress, but the Lord won’t listen (*shamah*, cf. vs. 8) to them at all in the time of trouble, *rah* (cf. vs. 11) or evil which Israel had brought upon herself.

In vs. 15 the Lord asks a rhetorical question which must have both surprised and shamed the people, for he calls them his beloved, *ydyd* being an adjective. “How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of Hosts” [Ps 84.1]! She has no place in the Lord’s own house by reason of having done vile deeds, house suggestive of the Jerusalem temple. *Mezmaḥ* can apply to machinations or intent, the latter as in 23.20: “The anger of the Lord will not turn back until he has executed and accomplished the intents of his mind.” Two other short rhetorical questions follow in the same verse pertaining to sacrifices made to avert Israel’s doom or *raḥah* which is equivalent to the just mentioned *rah*. This leads to the third rhetorical question as to how Israel can exult by reason of such *raḥah*, *halaz* being the verb which also means to rejoice. “I did not sit in the company of merry-makers nor did I rejoice” [15.17].

In vs. 16 Jeremiah changes the tone of this address to Israel, that is, speaking of the Lord’s dealings with his people, of how he called her a green olive tree. However, he will subject it to the roar (*qol*, cf. vs. 7) of a great tempest or *hamulah* which has one other biblical reference, Ezk 1.24: “A sound of tumult like the sound of a host.” As for Israel being planted as this olive tree, the Lord pronounces evil or *rah* (cf. vs. 13) against her. And this evil consists in Israel provoking the Lord to anger, *kahas* (cf. 8.19) by burning incense to Baal.

In vs. 18 Jeremiah complains to the Lord that he’s an agent for communicating a torrent of bad news to Israel; after all, they are his people. The verb *yadah* is used twice: as from the Lord to

Jeremiah with the result that he grasped it which is followed immediately by the Lord revealing the evil deeds of the people, *mahalal* (cf. 7.5). The adjective “evil” is lacking in the Hebrew...lets say deliberately because all their deeds are such. While this *yadah* is going on, Jeremiah claims he is as a gentle lamb being led to slaughter. This echoes the Suffering Servant of Isaiah: “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter...so he opened not his mouth” [Is 53.7]. Throughout all this Jeremiah was ignorant of schemes devised against him, *chashav* (to account, esteem, value) and the noun derived from it, *machasheveth* (cf. 6.19). “If that nation concerning which I have spoken turns from evil, I will repent of the evil that I intended to do it” [18.8].

As for the *chashav* at hand, it consists of the people turning against Jeremiah, likening him to a tree which they’re bent on cutting down that his name won’t be remembered. Naturally this prompts Jeremiah to appeal to the Lord, knowing that he judges justly (*shaphat* and *tsedeq*, cf. 7.21 but not noted there and 22.13, the latter being a noun) along with trying both heat and mind. The verb is *bachan* (cf. 9.7) and the nouns are *kelayoth* and *lev* (cf. vs. 8), the former also as kidneys. “They are near in their mouth and far from their heart (*kelayoth*)” [12.2]. As an act of personal revenge, Jeremiah bids the Lord to see his vengeance upon the people, *neqamah*. “Then we can overcome him and take our revenge on him” [20.10]. While saying this, he continues that he has committed his cause (*ryv*, cf. 2.29) to the Lord, *ryv* and *galah* also as to reveal, uncover both found in 20.12: “Let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you have I committed my cause.”

Vs. 21 begins with *laken* or “therefore” showing that the Lord has heard Jeremiah’s fear of being put to death by the inhabitants of Anathoth which is mentioned in the very first verse of this book. In other words, Jeremiah comes from there and is more susceptible to any condemnation by reason of people being familiar with him. Such a threat is reminiscent of Mt 13.57: “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house.” In light of this, the Lord promises Jeremiah that he will punish these people, *paqad* (cf. 9.25) with the preposition *hal-* added for emphasis or “upon them.”

2) shamah, beryth, 3) ‘arar, 5) qum, shevuhah, shavah, ‘erets, 6) qara’, 7) hud, shamah, qol, 8) shamah, natah, lev, rah, shryroth, 9) qesher, 10) havon, shuv, ma’en, havad, parar, 11) rah, zahaq, 12) yashah, 13) palal, qara’, shamah, rah, 15) ydyd, mezmah, rahah, halaz, 16) qol, hamulah, 17) rah, kahas, 18) yadah, mahalal, 19) chashav, machasheveth, 20) shaphat, tsedeq, 20) bachan, kelayoth, lev, neqamah, ryv, galah, 22) paqad

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