

## 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 a welcomed 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 both private and communal 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 this point. *Shryroth* is the noun which connotes hardness as well (cf. 7.24). Jeremiah is left 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 hearkens back to Israel’s forefathers who both returned their iniquities (*havon*, cf. 5.25) and refused to hear the Lord’s *davar*. The two verbs *shuv* and *ma’en* 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]! This beloved has no place in the Lord’s own house by reason of having done vile deeds, house suggestive of the Jerusalem temple. *Mezmah* 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 offered to avert Israel’s doom or *rahaḥ* 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 *rahaḥ*, *halaz* being the verb which also means to rejoice. “I did not sit in the company of merrymakers 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 heart 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

## Chapter Twelve

This new chapter begins with Jeremiah giving vent to being frustrated at his calling as a prophet and continues through vs. 4. He begins politely with calling the Lord righteous or *tsadyq* found next in 20.12: “O Lord of hosts, who tries the righteous.” In the same breath he adds that he’s making a complaint or *ryv* (cf. 2.9; 11.20 for the noun). This he does in the context of pleading his case which is put literally as “speaking judgments” (*davar* and *mishpat*; cf. 10.24 for the latter).

Two rhetorical questions follow immediately in vs. 1 which form Jeremiah’s complaint: why do the wicked prosper and why do the treacherous thrive? The first pair consists of *rashah* and *tsalach* (cf. 5.25 and 2.36); the second, *shalah* and *bagad* (cf. 9.2) which reads literally as “being treacherous of treachery.” *Shalah* has another meaning, to be at ease, to prosper: “May they prosper who love you” [Ps

122.6]!

In vs. 2 Jeremiah throws responsibility for these two types of people onto the Lord, that is, he was responsible for having planted them. At the same time they are close to the Lord or appear to be so by reason of what they speak but far from him in their heart or *kelayoth* (cf. 11.20). At the same time Jeremiah is quick to add that the Lord knows, sees and tries him (*yadah*, *ra'ah* and *bachan*, cf. 11.18, 5.1 and 11.20) or more specifically, his mind which is rendered as *lev* (cf. 11.20). Despite this, he wishes the Lord to set them aside for slaughter as sheep.

Vs. 4 consists of two sentences, the first being rhetorical and symptomatic of Jeremiah's frustration. He asks how long will the land (*'erets*, cf. 11.5) mourn because of the wicked (*rahaḥ* or *rah*, cf. 11.17) dwelling in it. Their presence causes all living things to be swept away, *saphah* also as to be consumed. "Let them be put to shame and confusion altogether who seek to snatch away my life" [Ps 40.14]. While all this evil is being done, those involved are saying to themselves that the Lord doesn't see their end or what happens to them.

To this the Lord responds in vs. 5 with two rhetorical questions as to how men can compete racing with horses and how they can extricate themselves from the jungle of the Jordan, *ga'on* more specifically as swelling or pride. "Even so will I spoil the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem" [13.9]. In addition, members of their own families who have dealt treacherously (*bagad*, cf. vs. 1) are crying after them, *qara'* (cf. 11.13). They aren't to be believed despite their fair words, the verb *davar* being used.

In the verses following vs. 7 the Lord laments the fate of Israel brought on by their own actions which causes him to forsake his house (Jerusalem temple) and abandon his heritage (*nachalah*, cf. 3.18) the two verbs being *hazav* and *natash* (cf. 9.13 and 7.29). To top it off, the Lord who calls Israel the beloved of his soul (*ydyd* and *nephesḥ* (cf. 11.15 and 6.8) will give her into her enemies' hands, presumably the Babylonians. As for being the Lord's heritage, because Israel has lifted up her voice against the Lord (literally as "has given on my in voice," *qol*; cf. 11.16), he hates her.

In vs. 9 the Lord throws out another rhetorical question as to Israel having become a speckled bird of prey and summons wild beasts to come against her along with shepherds. They are to trample down the Lord's heritage called a portion in vs. 10, *cheleq* (cf. 10.16). The verses through 13 speak of how these shepherds have made the land desolate, all this due to the Lord's fierce anger or *charon* (cf. 4.8).

Despite the unremitting bitterness the Lord shows toward Israel, from vs. 14 to the end of this chapter he turns attention to his evil neighbors who have touched Israel which he still calls his heritage, *nagah* (cf. 4.18) being the verb. In other words, he is determined to pluck them up from their land as well as pluck up Judah from among them, *natash* (cf. vs. 7). This *natash* is a preliminary phase in that the Lord will have compassion, *racham* (cf. 6.23) followed by a return to their heritage and land, *nachalah*, ‘*erets* (cf. vss 7 and 4).

Chapter Twelve ends with a verse having the conjunctive *v-* translated as “but” along with “if.” Israel’s neighbors are to learn diligently (double use of *lamad*, cf. 10.2) the ways of the Lord’s people, intimating a return to the Torah followed by swearing (*shavah*, cf. 11.5) by the Lord’s name, not that of Baal. This will result in the people not just being built up (*banah*, cf. 1.10) but done so in the midst (*betok* intimates the center) of the people. Implied is that some remained faithful to the Lord despite so many instances when Israel had gone astray. Failure to do this voluntarily will result in being plucked up (*natash*, cf. vs. 14) and then destroyed or ‘*avad* (cf. 10.15).

1) tsadyq, ryv, mishpat, rashah, tsalach, shalah, bagad, 3) yadah, ra’ah, bachan, kelayoth, lev, 4) ‘erets, rah, saphah, 5) ga’on, 6) bagad, qara’, 7) nachalah, hazav, natash, ydyd, nephesh, 8) qol, 10) cheleq, 13) charon, 14) nagah, natash, 15) racham, nachalah, ‘erets, 16) lamad, shavah, banah, 17) natash, ‘avad

### Chapter Thirteen

Most divine communications beginning with the words “Thus says the Lord” are to the people of Israel but here we have one directed to Jeremiah alone which must have made him feel being put on the spot instead of his usual summons to fulfil his prophetic office. The Lord bids Jeremiah to procure a linen waistcloth or ‘*ezur* which he isn’t to wash. “He (Elijah) wore a garment of haircloth with a girdle of leather about his loins” [2Kg 1.8]. Without hesitation Jeremiah goes out to get one “according to the *davar* of the Lord” which doesn’t preclude him dreading the prospect of having to wear it indefinitely. Obviously linen is a more expensive material and associated with priests, Jeremiah being one (cf. Ezk 44.17). Thus his purchase didn’t raise any eyebrows.

In vs. 3 the *davar* of the Lord came a second time though the interval between the first *davar* and the current one isn’t given. The Lord’s command not to wash the linen waistcloth intimates that Jeremiah had to keep it on much longer than he’d

expect under normal conditions. Contrary to any use, priestly or otherwise, he is to hide it in a cleft of a rock by the Euphrates River. Again, Jeremiah obeyed without questioning which didn't preclude him from wondering what it was all about.

Vs. 6 says that the linen waistcloth remained in that cleft for many days after which the Lord bade Jeremiah to fetch it. As for this second time interval, nothing is said as to what the prophet had been doing, but he must have been preoccupied by the recent events at hand. As expected, Jeremiah found the waistcloth ruined after which we have another divine *davar* coming to him with a second "Thus says the Lord" not to Jeremiah as in vs. 1 but with regard to Israel. As expected, the waistcloth was symbolic of pretty much what Jeremiah had been railing against thus far, the corrupting behavior of his people. The Lord intends to spoil the pride of both Judah and Jerusalem, the latter's singled out as "great." The verb at hand is *shachat* (cf. 5.10) which also means to destroy. As for its object, *ga'on* (cf. 12.5) intimates a swelling.

In vs. 10 the Lord tells what Jeremiah already knew about the disintegrated waistcloth that he had worn before putting in the cleft. As to be expected, the Lord calls Israel an evil (*rah*, cf. 12.4) people whose fate is to end up as this garment by reason of the following:

- 1) Refusing (*ma'en*, cf. 11.9) to hear his *davar*.
- 2) Going in the stubbornness of their hearts (*lev*, cf. 12.3), *shryroth* connoting hardness and found last in 3.17 but not noted there.
- 3) Went after other gods to both serve and to worship them, *havad* and *shachah* (11.10 and 8.2), the former suggestive of being a slave to such divinities.

On the positive side, the image of this waistcloth—made of linen and thus connoting a certain priestly element—is symbolic of the union between the Lord and Israel by way of it clinging to him, *davaq* as glue holding two pieces together. "Then the sword which you fear shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt" [42.16]. If Israel chose this *davaq*, praise and glory would resound as praise and glory to the Lord. The last two nouns are *tehilah* and *tip'arah* (cf. 17.14 and vs. 18), the latter suggestive of being an ornament. Now comes the clincher. Vs. 11 ends with Israel not listening, *shamah* (cf. 11.13) being the all-important condition both now and in the future.

In vs. 12 the Lord shifts from the image of a linen waistcloth, telling Jeremiah to speak a *davar* with regard to all jars being filled with wine. *Nevel* most likely pertains to a wineskin and is related to a verbal root meaning to be foolish or stupid

which fits in well with what's going on here. Vs. 13 has *hineh* (cf. 11.15) or "behold," a means by which the Lord wishes to get attention concerning this image of jars/wineskins. That is to say, he will fill all the people with drunkenness or *sikaron*, this word having two other biblical references (Ezk 23.33 and 39.19), the latter being cited here: "You will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow." The Lord is at pains to listen kings, priests and prophets...no one is exempt."

How to rectify this all-pervasive stupor? The Lord will dash them against each other, *naphats* also as to scatter. "You are my hammer and weapon of war; with you I break nations in pieces" [51.20]. He continues with withholding pity, sparing or having compassion (*chamal, chus, racham*: cf. 15.5, 21.7 and 12.15) and ends with *shachat* (cf. vs. 9) or to destroy the people.

In vs. 15 the Lord continues his plea to Israel with that oft-mentioned *shamah* or hear along with giving ear or 'azan. "Give ear to my words, O Lord" [Ps 5.1]. Linked with this is not being proud or *gavah* as in Ezk 16.50: "They were haughty and did abominable things before me." Then the Lord concludes with the fact that he has *davar*, in essence the only thing he can do with his people, awaiting their response or as in most cases, their lack of it.

The Lord changes his approach in vs. 16 when he bids his people to give him glory or *kavod* (cf. 2.11), for inevitably he will bring upon them darkness. The noun *chashak* is similar to the sentiment of Ps 105.28: "He sent darkness and made the land dark; they rebelled against his words." Even when the people are looking for light, the Lord will turn it into gloom and deep darkness or *tsalmaveth* and *haraphel*. The former is found in 2.6 but noted there. As for the latter, "A day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness" [Jl 2.2]!

Vs. 17 is revealing of the Lord's concern for his people who won't listen to him. His soul (*nephesh*, cf. 12.7) will weep in secret, *bakah* and *mistar* (cf. 9.1 and 23.24) over their pride. It reads literally as "from faces of pomp" or *gevah*. This noun has two other biblical references, Job 22.29 and 33.17, the former being cited here: "For God abases the proud, but he saves the lowly."<sup>1</sup> This lengthy verse continues with the Lord weeping bitterly because his flock has been taken captive (by the Babylonians). The verb *damah* (-h being the letter *hayin*) is used twice which emphasizes divine

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<sup>1</sup>The RSV has a footnote saying part of this verse reads literally as "When they abased you said, 'Proud.'"

bitterness, this being its only use in the Bible.

Vs. 18 mentions the king and queen mother, the NIV noting it's probably Jehoiachin and Nehushta (cf. 2Kg 24.8), the two presumably being taken into captivity by the Babylonians. Both are to get off their thrones because "your beautiful crown has come down from you head" which the RSV notes as "obscure." To top it off, the Lord continues with saying that the cities in the Negeb are shut up and Judah is exiled.

Vs. 21 has two rhetorical questions presumably addressed to King Jehoiachin as to his response to presumably former allies, Egypt and Babylon, the latter now pressing upon him. This will resemble a woman undergoing the pangs of childbirth. As for the question posed as well as the remaining verses of this chapter, they can apply equally to Israel as a whole. We can intimate this by the concluding words of vs. 27 where the Lord utters a "woe" against Jerusalem and wondering how long it will be before she is cleansed, *tahar* also as to shine or to be bright. "I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me" [33.8].

Sandwiched in between these verses is the Lord going on about Israel's iniquity—all too familiar territory—saying in vs. 25 that such is her lot and portion which he has measured out, *goral* and *manah*. "Come, let us cast lots" [Jon 1.7]. "The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot" [Ps 16.5]. Such is the fate of forgetting the Lord as well as trusting in lies, *shakach* and *sheqer* (3.21 and 10.14).

1) 'ezur, 9) shachat, ga'on, 10) rah, ma'en, shryroth, lev, havad, shachah, 11) davaq, tehilah, tip'arah, shamah, 12) nevel, 13) hineh, sikaron, 14) naphats, chamal, chus, racham, shachat, 15) shamah, 16) kavod, chashak, tsalmaveth, haraphel, 17) nephesh, bakah, mistar, gevah, damah, 25) goral, manah, shakach, sheqer, 27) tahar

## Chapter Fourteen

This new chapter begins with the relative pronoun '*asher* and reads literally "which was the *davar* of the Lord to Jeremiah on the *davar* of the drought." Normally we'd expect '*asher* to be where the RSV places it as such: "The *davar* of the Lord which came to Jeremiah (etc.)." In the way '*asher* is presented it seems similar to the conjunctive *v-* showing the close connection between the rhetorical question concluding the previous chapter ('How long will it be before you are made clean?') and the drought of vs. 1. As for the *davar* itself, it functions in a context which by

now has become very familiar...more punishment to be dished out for Israel.

In vs. 2 Judah and Jerusalem mourn out loud, the gates of the former being singled out for languishing, *'amal* as to speak mostly in a poetic fashion as well as meaning to cut off. Such gates are the points of entry and exit for inhabitants and visitors, both of whom are caught in the grips of the drought. This is not unlike Elisha and the woman whose son he had restored to life, telling her to leave because of a famine (cf. 2Kg 8+). So when those who have been sent to obtain water from wells, they return ashamed and confounded. The servants behaved this way knowing that they will face wrath from their masters—a way to vent frustration—despite them not deserving it.

Vs. 4 reveals the depth of dismay in that the land (*'adamah* being the physical earth compared with *'erets*), the verb being *chatat* (cf. 10.2). Added to this are wild animals fainting due to a lack of water.

This great distress evokes a spontaneous response from the people, that is, from vs. 7 through vs. 10. They begin after hearing the *davar* of the Lord from Jeremiah who must have been looking on with a mixture of sympathy and scepticism...scepticism in the sense that we've-been-here-before. In vs. 10 the noun *havon* (cf. 11.10) as iniquities is accompanied with the verb from which it's derived, *hanah* or to testify, to answer, found in 7,13 but not noted there. In light of this we have a sense that the people are doubling their efforts in crying out because of their despair. Compounding this further, the preposition *b-* is used, literally as “in us.” The same verse contains backslidings and sin, *meshuvah* and the verb *chata'* (cf. 8.5 and 8.14, the latter not mentioned there) along with the preposition *l-*, literally as “to you.”

In vs. 8 Israel adapts a different tactic, that is, she begins by calling the Lord her hope and savior, *miqveh* and *yashah* (17.13 and 11.12). Then she puts forth what on the surface is the first of two rhetorical questions...rhetorical but demanding an answer. To Israel the Lord resembles a stranger and wayfarer, *ger* and *'arach*. The first is found in 7.6 but not noted there; it implies someone passing through with little or no interest at what's going on around him. The second is similar, one who is traveling and found in 9.2 but not noted there as well. Attempting to shame the Lord is yet another indication of desperation.

The second rhetorical question in vs. 9 is more direct, revealing Israel's plight. She calls the Lord confused as well as a mighty man unable to save or *yashah* (cf. vs. 8), *daham* and *gibor* (only use of this participle in the Bible and 9.23). Then as a last resort, Israel acknowledges the Lord as being in her midst, *qerev* or very center (cf.

6.6) plus being called by his name. The last few words of this verse come out as “leave us not,” knowing that already he has done so.

All the while the Lord has been paying attention, barely being able to restrain himself, for Israel had multiple times to repent and return to him. Now in vss. 11-12 he speaks through Jeremiah with the blunt words of not bothering to pray for the people, *palal* (cf. 11.13) fundamentally as to intercede. He is to pay no attention to their efforts despite prayers, crying and offerings. Instead, fire, sword and other forms of violence will be their end.

To this brief but not unexpected reply by the Lord Jeremiah responds in vss. 13-16 by referring to prophets as mentioned in 2.8: “the prophets prophesied by Baal and went after things that do not profit” [2.8]. They had denied all that the Lord would bring upon Israel with the false promise of peace or *shalom* (cf. 9.8). To this the Lord shoots back that such charlatans prophesy lies or *sheqer* (cf. 13.25) in the Lord’s name. Instead, they’ve concocted a lying vision...a *chazon* (cf. 23.16) characterized by the just mentioned *sheqer* which the Lord mocks as worthless divinization and deceit coming from their own minds, two pairs of two nouns *qesem* and *‘elyl* (cf. Ezk 13.6 and Ezk 30.13) and *tarmyth* and *lev* (the only biblical reference and 13.10).

In response to this false prophecy vs. 15 begins with *laken* or “therefore” which lends a sense of impending doom from the Lord to anyone who is listening. Those prophets who had used the Lord’s name will fall by the sword and famine, the very things which they were so certain would not touch Israel. The same will happen to those who followed them, for the Lord will pour out their own wickedness (*rah*, cf. 13.10) upon them.

In vs. 17 the Lord tells Jeremiah to communicate a *davar* to the people in the form of a lament, this running to the end of the chapter. He calls Jerusalem a virgin daughter being afflicted with the sword and famine brought on by the people’s support of the false prophets just mentioned. Those outside Jerusalem suffer the same ruin as those inside.

Vs. 19 contains three rapid-fire rhetorical questions Jeremiah presents to the Lord as to his rejection of his own people. Another two follow in vs. 19 and then an acknowledgment of wickedness and having sinned, *rashah* and *chata’* (cf. 12.1 and vs. 7). Next comes a desperate request not to be spurned and not to break the covenant made all the more pitiful by two further rhetorical questions. Note that in vs. 22 the people acknowledge that false gods can’t bring rain followed by a

confession that their hope rests in the Lord, *qavah* being the verb (cf. 3.17).

Nothing is said of how the Lord as well as Jeremiah responded to this cry of desperation so familiar to them. Of course, the Lord will forgive and Jeremiah will continue with his prophecy followed by the people relapsing into worship of false gods. Thus the two sides are locked in a perpetual struggle–love affair, really—which cannot be broken even if either one wished it could happen.

2) ‘amal, 4) ‘adamah, chatat, 7) havon, hanah, meshuvah, chata’, 8) miqveh, yashah, ger, ‘arach, 10) yashah, daham, gibor, qerev, 11) palal, 13) shalom, 14) sheqer, chazon, qesem, elyl, tarmth, lev, 16) rah, 20) rashah, 22) qavah

## Chapter Fifteen

The conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” is a continuation of the overall theme of the previous chapter which by now is quite familiar to the reader. As usual, Jeremiah bears the brunt of what the Lord has to say (*‘amar*, cf. 10.2) who brings to his attention two of Israel’s illustrious predecessors with respect to the current crisis, Moses and Samuel. Should these two luminaries be present, the Lord’s heart (*nephesh*: cf. 13.17), often as soul or referring to oneself, wouldn’t turn to assist his people. This reads literally as “send from upon my face and go forth.” Next the Lord tells Jeremiah straightaway to get the people out of his sight, something Moses and Samuel would do gladly. For Jeremiah to be put on the same plane as these two men is a real compliment.

When the people respond to these strong, shocking words, they ask where they should go. Jeremiah is instructed to shoot back with “Thus says the Lord,” words signaling something they’d rather not hear. The message follows a pattern by now all too familiar: some are destined for pestilence, others for the sword and the remainder for famine and captivity. Then the Lord adds (*paqad*, cf. 11.22; this verb having military connotations) four types of destroyers for each, *mishpachah* which connotes family as in 2.4 and includes dogs, birds and wild beasts. The result? The people will be a horror to all nations, *zevahah* suggestive of agitation and trouble and has four other biblical references, one being 24.9: “I will make them a horror (for evil, the Hebrew text) to all the kingdoms of the earth.” Blame is narrowed more specifically to Manasseh, son of King Hezekiah. He deeds are recounted in Chapter Twenty-one of Second Kings, namely, restoring abominable practices of the nations and even worse, having sacrificed his own son. In other words, the people are a

mirror image of Manasseh.

In vs. 5 the Lord takes up one of his favorite forms of rebuke, two rhetorical questions. They're favorites because they put the people on the spot as well as offer them a chance to respond and thus amend their ways. In the first he asks who will pity and bemoan Jerusalem (*chamal* and *nud*, cf. 13.14 and 4.1). In the second he ask if anyone will turn (*sur*, cf. 6.28) aside for her welfare, the verb *sha'al* meaning to ask (cf. 6.16 but not noted there).

As expected, Israel's rejection (*natash*, cf. 12.17) of the Lord works to her own disadvantage, after which he proceeds through vs. 9 listing all he that he has done against her. Reading through them is quite poignant, for they convey a real sense that the Lord detests what he's compelled to do. He had no other choice because Israel continues to slide backward. This results in having stretched out his hand literally "upon (*hal-*) you" with the intent of destroying (*shachat*, cf. 13.14) her. Finally the Lord expresses his weariness in relenting, the two verbs being *la'ah* and *nacham* (cf. 6.11 and 8.6).

Vs. 7 continues with having winnowed the people in the gates of the land (*'erets*, cf. 12.15) or approaches to Israel implying that anyone who draws near will be subject to divine winnowing. The effect of this? The Lord has bereaved over and destroyed his people, *shakal* and *'avad* (cf. 50.9 and 12.17) for not having turned from their ways, *shuv* and *derek* (cf. 11.10 and 10.23).

Vs. 8 recounts the Lord creating a countless number of widows plus bringing against mothers a destroyer of young men, *shadad* (cf. 4.20). He does this at noon, the hottest time of day, when everyone is at rest and don't expect an attack. For good measure, the Lord throws in anguish and terror which in the Hebrew text is rendered by one word with three other biblical references, *behalah*. "So he made their days vanish like a breath and their years in ruin" [Ps 78.33].

Vs. 9 concludes this list with the Lord speaking of his people as a woman who, having given birth to sons, "her son" ('her' makes it all the more personal) set while it was still daylight by reason of having been shamed and disgraced, *bosh* and *chapher* (cf. 10.14 and 50.12). As for anyone else not on this list, the Lord will slay them before their enemies who will look on, having been spared the effort.

Vs. 10 begins with *'oy* (cf. 4.31) or "woe" as attention is turned to Jeremiah and his personal lament over all that he has witnessed by reason of being a medium for the

Lord's *davar*. He uses the personal "mother" with regard to Israel and laments the fact of being a man of strife and contention, *ryv* (cf. 12.1) and 'ysh *madon*, the latter literally as "man strife." "You make us the scorn (strife) of our neighbors" [Ps 80.9]. Although Jeremiah claims that never he had engaged in borrowing or lending, he's the object of revilement, *qalal* (cf. 6.14). It appears that the people would use any pretext to shift their guilt onto someone...anyone...Jeremiah being the obvious candidate.

The RSV of vs. 11 begins with "So let it be, O Lord" compared with the Hebrew "The Lord said." Also the RSV has a footnote saying "obscure" with regard to the rest of the verse. The overall idea is that the Lord will intervene for Jeremiah by making his enemies plead with him in a time of evil and distress, *rah* and *tsarah* (cf. 14.16 and 14.8, the latter not noted there). Obviously Jeremiah had been through a lot and will experience much more. He must have had serious doubt over the Lord's original promise to be with him as in 1.8, for at that time he was flushed with excitement at the prospect of being a prophet.

Vs. 12 follows immediately with a rhetorical question by the Lord with regard to breaking iron and bronze from the north. It must have reminded Jeremiah of his first vision in 1.13 with regard to a boiling pot facing away from the north. That is to say, the pot is about to pour its contents southward toward Israel.

The Lord continues speaking through Jeremiah in vs. 13. In retaliation for Israel's sins he will give her wealth and treasure as spoil (*baz*, cf. 2.14), *chayl* and 'otsar, both found in 17.3; the former means valor as well as strength. Note that it will be throughout her entire land, *gevul* (cf. 5.22 but not noted there) also meaning border and can imply this punishment pushing up against each side of Israel from within to without. Finally before Jeremiah speaks the Lord says that he'll make Israel serve her enemies, *havad* (cf. 13.10) also as to be a slave. This will be in a place Israel doesn't know, but certainly by now the people had an intimation that it will be Babylon. Added to this suspense is that the Lord will kindle fire that never will be quenched.

Jeremiah now speaks in vss. 15-18, continuing his painful lament but with acknowledgment of some divine favor. He starts by claiming that the Lord knows, remembers, visits and takes vengeance (*yadah*, *zakar*, *paqad* and *naqam*: 12.3, 4.16, vs. 3 and 9.9). He knows this to be true but finds it difficult to realize, given the seemingly endless flow of evil emanating from Israel. In the same verse Jeremiah appeals to the Lord's forbearance or literally "slow of anger" ('erek and 'aph, cf.

10.24 for the latter). The former is an adjective pertaining to that which is long. As for the former, cf. Ps 86.15: “Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.” *Cherpah* (cf. 6.10) is the reproach Jeremiah is forced to bear.

Vs. 16 begins with “your *davar* were found” ...passive...most likely referring to the “*davar* of this book” in 2Kg 22.13 or when the Torah was found in the temple during King Josiah’s reign. Jeremiah had eaten these *davar*, not literally but spiritually because they were a joy and delight to his heart (*Iev*, cf. 14.14) or *sason* and *simchah* (cf. 7.34 for both but not noted there). The source of this lays in him being called by the Lord’s name, this calling or *qara’* (cf. 12.6) resulting in the prophet transmitting the divine *davar*.

Instead of partaking of his nation’s wrongdoings (vs. 17 calls them merry-makers), Jeremiah claims he sat alone because the Lord’s hand was upon him, the verb *yashav* (cf. 3.2 but not noted there) connoting a permanent resting. Apparently the divine hand pressing down upon Jeremiah filled him with indignation or *zaham* (cf. 10.10). It caused him to utter two heart-felt rhetorical questions in vs. 18:

1) With regard to his pain and wound, *ke’ev* and *makah*, the latter also as a plague and found in 10.19. As for the former, cf. Ps 39.2: “I was dumb and silent, I held my peace to no avail; my distress grew worse.”

2) With regard to likening the Lord to a deceitful brook whose waters fail, ‘*akzav* being the adjective with one other biblical reference: “The house of Achzib shall be a deceitful thing to the king of Israel” [Mic 1.14].

Vs. 19 begins with the familiar “Thus says the Lord,” putting Jeremiah on the spot after he had vented his frustration. It must have surprised him, for the Lord’s words contain a tinge of reproach, of being cut from the same cloth as his fellow Israelites. The verse at hand contains two “ifs” which to Jeremiah’s surprise suggest that he had strayed from the Lord. Return leads to restoration and then to standing before the Lord, the sequence of verbs being *shuv* to *shuv* to *hamad* (cf. vss. 7 and 7.2). Secondly, uttering what’s precious and avoiding what is worthless leads to Jeremiah being the Lord’s mouth. He had this role from the beginning, so it must have surprised him to have the Lord question it. Perhaps he wanted to see if his prophet were still up to the job. *Yatsa’* is the common verb meaning to go out with regard to *yaqar* (also as rare, splendid) as in Ps 36.7: “How precious is your steadfast love, O God!” As for the verb *shuv* used twice, it will apply again but differently: to the people returning to Jeremiah and he not returning to them.

Vs. 20 is reminiscent of the Lord's original promise to Jeremiah: "I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar and bronze walls against the whole land." Then at last Jeremiah hears the reassuring words that the Lord will save and deliver him, *yashah* and *natsal* (cf. 14.10 and 7.10). The former connotes liberation, setting free, while the latter, to snatch away.

The concluding verse of this chapter ends with a pair similar to *yashah* and *natsal* of the previous verse. *Natsal* is used again with regard to those who are wicked (*rah*, cf. vs. 11) and with *padah* or to redeem. "For the Lord has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him" [31.11]. Reference in the verse at hand are those who are ruthless or *haryts* which also means terror stricken. "But the Lord is with me as a dread warrior" [20.11].

1) nephesh, 3) paqad, mishpachah, 4) zevahah, 5) chamal, nud, sha'al, sur, 6) natash, shachat, la'ah, nacham, 7) 'erets, shakal, 'avad, derek, shuv, 8) shadad, 9) bosh, chapher, 10) 'oy, ryv, 'ysh madon, qalal, 11) rah, tsarah, 13) chayl, 'otsar, baz, gevul, 14) havad, 15) yadah, zakar, paqad, naqam, 'erek, 'aph, cherpah, 16) lev, sason, simchah, qara', 17) yashav, zaham, 18) ke'ev, makah, 'akzav, 19) shuv, hamad, yatsa', yaqar, 20) yashah, natsal, 21) natsal, rah, padah, haryts

## Chapter Sixteen

This chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated along with the divine *davar*. It shows the close connection between the end of the previous chapter where the Lord promises deliverance to Jeremiah and a mode of living he must adopt. Already Jeremiah had been living in accord with the *davar* of the Lord—a full-time job—and will continue for sometime to come although he doesn't know when this association will end. Should he marry and raise a family, that would interfere with his vocation as a prophet. More than this, given that Jeremiah had come under threat from his fellow Israelites, he wouldn't want a family to be subject to that kind of abuse. As for the verse at hand, note the phrase "in this place." It isn't specified—most likely Jerusalem—and is a real put-down and sentiment of disgust by the Lord with regard to Jeremiah's own people.

After the *davar* of the Lord came to Jeremiah with this news we move directly to "Thus says the Lord" where he spells out the reason for him to avoid getting married. Again he uses "in this place" along with those who bore children "in this land" (*'erets*, cf. 15.7). Apparently the Lord will afflict everyone there with some

kind of plague, *tachalu'ym* as in 14.18 but not noted there. Even worse, their bodies will go unburied and left to rot on the ground ('*adamah*, cf. 14.4). Then birds of air and beasts of the earth ('*erets*) will devour their corpses. All this makes marriage an unattractive option for Jeremiah, and if the situation continues to make it so, Israel is bound to a dismal future or better, none at all.

Vs. 5 begins with “Thus says the Lord,” the second of three instances in this chapter, the one at hand coming on the heels of the previous one which is indicative of the seriousness at hand. He cautions Jeremiah not to engage in any mourning over those recently slain. He has taken the radical step of removing his peace, steadfast love and mercy or *shalom*, *chesed* and *rachamym* (cf. 14.13, 9.24 and 42.15). The people may not have perceived this threefold removal at once but gradually as it sank in more clearly.

Vss. 6-9 contain a litany of prohibitions for Jeremiah to observe concerning the people's failure to obey the Lord even though nothing specific thus far hasn't come to light. That which was said earlier is presumed. What stands out is the Lord's preference for the phrase “in this place” [vs. 9] as noted above regarding vs. 3 and just before it in vs. 2, a total of three instances. As for the third which contains another “(from) this place” reference, the Lord will bring an end to any gladness, especially as it pertains to marriage celebrations. This hearkens back, of course, to the Lord discouraging Jeremiah from getting married.

Vs. 10 begins with the conjunctive *v-* to show the close connection between what the Lord intends to do to his people and “all these *davar*” Jeremiah says to them. In response they act astonished at the great evil (*rah*, cf. 15.21) the Lord has *davar* upon them. This is followed by two more questions as to their iniquity and sin or *havon* and *chata'* (both in 14.7), blatantly lying about it. Jeremiah's response? He's to bring to their attention that their fathers were responsible by having forsaken (*hazav*, cf. 12.7) the Lord in their pursuit of false gods as well as having served and worshiped them. As noted earlier, the verb *havad* (cf. 15.14) implies being slaves to these idols. The Lord also throws in that their fathers had not kept his law or *torah* (cf. 9.13). “Fathers” as used here and elsewhere can refer all the way back to when Israel had entered Canaan and were tempted to worship such divinities, this abominable practice lasting pretty much up to the present moment.

The punishment is outlined in vs. 12 beginning with *hineh* (cf. 13.13) or “behold” and the threatening words “everyone one of you” or the whole nation which has been following their stubborn wills or *lev*. This noun also means heart (cf. 15.16) which

refuses to listen to the Lord, *shamah* (cf. 13.15) being absolutely essential. What follows is known to any Israelite. The Lord will hurl each and every one of them from the land into a land completely unfamiliar to them, two uses of *'erets* (cf. vs. 4). “I will hurl you and the mother who bore you into another country where you were not born” [22.26]. Even the fathers of the present generation were ignorant of this land where those so hurled will serve (*havad* as slavery again, cf. vs. 11) other gods. Then he adds that this *havad* will last “day and night” because he won’t show them favor, *chanynah* being the only use of this noun in the Bible but related to the verbal root *chanan*, to be gracious or to act favorably.

Vs. 14 signals a turn-around on the Lord’s part. It should be kept in mind that Jeremiah is funneling all this to the people as he speaks of the future which isn’t determined. At that time Israel’s ancient confession which acknowledges the Lord having brought Israel from Egypt will be altered. Instead of that, people will acknowledge when the Lord will bring Israel from the north country as well as other lands to which he had driven them. In other words, the second will be a new Exodus and foundation for a confession of faith.

Vs. 16 begins with *hineh* as is the case with vs. 12 where the Lord will send (presumably on the days that are coming) fishers and hunters to root out those Israelites who are in hiding. Even so, the Lord’s eyes are upon their ways (*derek*, cf. 16.7) despite any attempts to flee from this gaze. Furthermore, the Lord will make a double recompense for their iniquity and sin (*havon* and *chata’* as in vs. 10), the verb being *shalam*, the root for *shalom* which connotes bringing to an end or completion. “And I will recompense them according to their deeds and the work of their hands” [25.14]. The people have polluted not simply their land (*'erets*, cf. vs. 13) but the Lord’s (‘my land’), the verb being *chalal* also as to begin. “For behold, I begin to work evil at the city which is called by my name” [25.29]. The pollution isn’t simply of the physical kind nor even of detestable idols (*shiquts*, cf. 7.30) but of their carcasses, this word implying not the human kind but something bordering upon the animal. Another part of this double recompense is having filled the Lord’s inheritance—his, not Israel’s—with abominations or *tohevah* (cf. 8.12).

What the Lord had just said causes Jeremiah to break out and exclaim that nations from all over will come and curse Israel. First Jeremiah calls the Lord his strength, stronghold and refuge or *hoz*, *mahoz* and *manus* (cf. 48.17, Ps 27.1 and 25.35), the first and second being of the same verbal root. All will come in handy in the day of trouble or *tsarah* (cf. 15.11), “day” most likely being an extended period of time. These assembled nations will mimic Israel by using the phrase “our fathers,”

throwing it back on them as having bequeathed their sons—the present generation—nothing but likes and worthless things, *sheqer* and *hevel* (cf. 14.14 and 10.3). Finally they add a rhetorical question as to whether any man can fashion a god, for they are non-existent. This is quite a statement coming from the nations who presumably adhere to their own divinities. Perhaps they are more enlightened than Israel which all along thought God was on their side.

This chapter concludes with the Lord coming on the scene after having let the nations pronounce their condemnation of Israel. He begins with *hineh* (cf. vs. 16) or behold, addressing an indeterminate audience. That is to say, “them” is used which could include the just mentioned nations. Vs. 21 has three uses of the verb *yadah* (cf. 15.15) or to know, this calling for extreme attention on their part, one that isn’t opted for but compelled. Most likely it comes about by the people being reduced to near total despair and not having anywhere else to turn...in other words, they’re desperate. The object of the second *yadah* more precisely is the Lord’s power and might, *yad* and *gevurah*. The first is the common word for hand and the second in 10.6 but not noted there. The third *yadah* contains the objects of the second one but with regard to “they” knowing that the name of the person speaking to them is the Lord. Perhaps part of this implies that while Jeremiah has been the medium between the Lord and Israel, some might attribute him as partaking of the divine along the lines of the above mentioned detested idols or the like.

3) ‘erets, 4) tachalu’ym, ‘adamah, ‘erets, 5) shalom, chesed, rachamym, 10) rah, havon, chata’, 11) hazav, havad, torah, 12) hineh, lev, shamah, 13) tul, ‘erets, chanynah, 16) hineh, 17) derek, 18) shalom, havon, chata’, ‘erets, chalal, shiquts, tohevah, 19) hoz, mahoz, manus, tsarah, sheqer, hevel, 21) hineh, 21) yadah, gevurah

## Chapter Seventeen

This new chapter starts off with the Lord mentioning the sin of Judah which unfortunately is common to every single person. It’s so abominable yet demanding of attention that the Lord decides to write it with two instruments, a pen of iron and the point of a diamond. Both are used to inscribe or *charash* (cf. 10.3) this collective sin on the tablet of Judah’s heart (*lev*, cf. 16.12). This image is parallel to Job 19.24: “Oh that with an iron pen and lead they (Job’s words) were grave in the rock forever!” As for this tablet (*luach*: the only mention in Jeremiah) of the heart, compare with another sense: “Let not loyalty and faithfulness forsake you; bind them about your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart” [Prov 3.3]. In addition to an

interior engraving we have the same inscribed on the altar's horns and therefore are witnesses to any sacrifices made upon it.

Vss. 2 and 3 are part of the previous verse fleshing out the image of Judah's sin as inscribed outwardly, that is, they remember (*zakar*, cf. 15.15) their own altars and Asherim (wife of El, Canaan's chief god). Asherim are mentioned first in Ex 34.13 where the Lord commands Moses to tell the people to destroy such images. In the verse at hand, they are virtually everywhere—green trees and high hills—meaning that from Moses' time until now such idolatrous worship had both persisted and flourished. Because of this the Lord will give as spoil (*baz*, cf. 16.13) Judah's wealth and treasures throughout her territory or *gevul* (cf. 15.13) which also means border.

As a result, Judah will loosen grip on its heritage, the verb *shamat* also as to drop which in the Hebrew reads literally as “and in you.” “For the oxen stumbled” [2Sam 6.6]. As for this heritage or *nachalah* (cf. 12.15), it's given by the Lord himself. In exchange for this heritage, the most precious possession of all, the Lord will make Judah serve her enemies in a land she doesn't know, *havad* (cf. 16.11) meaning to be a slave, reading something like “I will cause you to be a slave.” The way it's to be carried out isn't direct but indirectly. Finally the Lord throws in the fact that within his anger (*'aph*, cf. 15.15) a fire will burn (*yaqad*: also to set on fire, cf. 15.14 but not noted there) forever.

Vs. 5 begins with “Thus says the Lord” and runs through vs. 8, the previous verses being in prose form. The prose form resumes with vs. 19 and runs to the end of the chapter. A footnote in the RSV says that vss. 5-8 “probably are the source of Ps 1.” in light of this, that psalm is included for comparison:

- 1) Blessed is the man  
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked  
nor stands in the way of sinners  
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
- 2) but his delight is in the law of the Lord,  
and on his law he meditates day and night.
- 3) He is like a tree  
planted by streams of water  
that yields its fruit in its season,  
and its leaf does not wither.  
In all that he does, he prospers.
- 4) The wicked are not so

but are like chaff which the wind drives away.

5) Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment  
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;

6) for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked will perish.

Instead of Psalm One beginning with “Blessed is the man” we have in vs. 5 “cursed is the man,” *‘arar* (cf. 11.3). The reason for such a condemnation is that Judah puts her trust in human strength signified by “arm,” a sure-fire way to make one’s heart (*lev*, cf. vs. 1) turn away or *sur* (cf. 15.5). Vs. 6 likens a man to a desert shrub in place of a tree by streams of water, for he can’t see any good (*tov*). “Salt land” or *‘erets* (cf. 16.17) is the opposite of land normally perceived as the place where Israel dwells.

Vs. 7 makes a transition from this bleak picture and is more in line with Psalm One by calling a man blessed or *barak* (cf. 4.2); however, the psalm uses *‘ashry* (happy) instead. Such blessedness rests in trusting (*batach*, cf. vs. 7 but not noted there) the Lord. Continuing into vs. 8, this man is likened to a tree planted (*shatal* as in Ps 1.3) by water which shields him from a drought. *Da’ag* is the verb to be anxious as well as fearful. “I am afraid of the Jews who have deserted to the Chaldeans” [38.19]. *Shatal* is the verb for planted as in Ps 1.3. The imagery is reminiscent of Rev 22.1-2: “the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit.”

Vs. 9 is an interjection which Jeremiah utters from sheer despair after which the Lord resumes speaking. For the moment he sets aside his role of a medium for the divine *davar* and picks it up again in vs. 10. Jeremiah calls the heart (*lev*, cf. vs. 5) deceitful and not just corrupt but desperately so. *Haqov* is the adjective for the former and fundamentally means crooked. It has two other biblical references, Is 40.4 and Hos 6.8, the former quoted here: “The uneven ground shall become level.” As for the latter, *‘anash* is the verb as in 15.18 but not noted there. Then Jeremiah blurts out with the memory of so many recent burdens of his prophetic role, “Who can understand (*yadah*, cf. 16.21) it?”

In vs. 10 the Lord doesn’t wait to respond saying that he searches the mind and tries the heart. The two verbs are *chaqar* and *bachan* (cf. 12.3), the former meaning to search in a thorough manner: “And the foundations of the earth below can be explored” [31.37]. The two objects are *lev* and *kelayoth* found together in 12.3. He

does both in order to repay each person in accord with his ways and doings or *derek* and *mahalal* (cf. 16.17 and 11.18). Implied is that a becomes aware of this divine *chaqar* and *bachan* by reason of what's manifested in them. And so ends the Lord's response to his prophet.

In vs. 11 Jeremiah resumes his mediating role for the divine *davar* with the example of a partridge found one other time or in 1Sam 26.20 where David speaks to Saul who's seeking his life: "For the king of Israel has come out to seek my life (the Hebrew reads flea) like one who hunts a partridge in the mountains." The moral? A person who obtains wealth not by right will lose it and become a fool or *naval*, an adjective which implies being senseless. "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'" [Ps 14.1].

In vs. 12 Jeremiah speaks of what reads literally as a "throne of glory" (*kavod*, cf. 13.16), the place (*maqom*, cf. 8.3) of Israel's sanctuary. Note the four words beginning with the letter "m," indicative of both something superlative and exalted: *marom*, *mer'shon*, *meqom* and *miqdashnu* (on high, from the beginning, place and sanctuary). Next the prophet calls the Lord Israel's hope or *miqueh* (cf. 14.8), another "m word." In the same breath he adds that anyone who forsakes this hope will be put to shame, the verbs being *hazav* and *bosh* (cf. 16.11 and 15.9).

Vs. 12 continues with anyone who turns away from (*sur*, cf. vs. 5) the Lord (the Hebrew has 'me') will have his name written in the earth or 'erets (cf. vs. 6) which here seems to be equivalent to dust. Note the second use of the verb *hazav*, both relative to the Lord, equivalent to a fountain of living water, *maqor* (cf. 2.13). This image is reminiscent of Jesus saying to the Samaritan woman, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink;' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water" [Jn 4.10].

In vs. 14 Jeremiah realizes his personal sinfulness, the same sinfulness he has been prophesying with regard to his own people. He cries out to the Lord for both personal healing or *rapha'* and salvation (*yashah*, cf. 8.21 and 15 .20). Jeremiah concludes by calling the Lord his praise or *tehilah* (cf. 13.11).

In vs. 15 Jeremiah complains to the Lord that his enemies are taunting him as to the *davar* of the Lord and wishing it to come. This is not unlike the chief priests saying to Jesus "He saved others; he cannot save himself...Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him" [Mt 27.42].

In light of such taunts, Jeremiah claims that he hasn't forced the Lord to send evil which reads differently in the Hebrew. The verb 'ots (to make haste) is found in vs. 16 along with the participle *raha* meaning to pasture (cf. 6.3). The idea seems to be that Jeremiah didn't shrink from shepherding his people. Also he states that anything he had uttered (referring to *davar*) remained before the Lord's face. Then in vs. 17 Jeremiah expresses the hope that he won't have the Lord being a personal terror or *mechitah* (also as destruction). "So Moab has become a derision and a horror to all that are round about him" [48.39]. Such hope rests upon the Lord being his refuge or *machseh* not at the present but later at some indeterminate time called the "day of evil" (*rah*, cf. 16.10). As for *machseh*, see Ps 14.6: "You would confound the plans of the poor, but the Lord is his refuge."

The indeterminate time or "day of evil" (*rah*, cf. vs. 17) mentioned a second time is the fate Jeremiah wishes upon his enemies; trouble destruction rendered by the verb *shavar* which connotes breaking (cf. 2.13) and the noun derived from it, *shivaron*. This noun has one other biblical reference, Ezk 21.6: "Sigh therefore, son of man; sigh with breaking heart and bitter grief before their eyes."

From vs. 19 to the end of this chapter the Lord speaks in prose form compared with the poetic form going back to vss. 1-5. Jeremiah is to stand right in (*b-*) the Benjamin Gate which in Hebrew reads "sons of people," this being the entrance and exit for Judah's kings. He is to do the same at the rest of Jerusalem's gates and exclaim "Hear (*shamah*, cf. 16.12) the *davar* of the Lord." Given his role of prophet, all he has to do is stand in the gate, that being sufficient for the divine *davar* to resound throughout the rest of them.

The people are to take heed with regard to their very lives, the verb being *shamar* with *nephesh*, often as soul (cf. 5.24 but not noted there and 15.1). *Shamar* (also as to preserve, to attend to) is associated with observing the Sabbath by not bearing any burden and thus keeping it holy, *qadash* (cf. 1.5) fundamentally as to set apart from everything else. This is in accord with what Israel's fathers had done: "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. Not with our fathers did the Lord make this covenant but with us who are all of us here alive today" [Dt 5.2-3]. And as expected, these forbears neither listened (*shamah*, cf. vs. 21) nor inclined their ears, the latter suggestive of giving greater attention. What follows is a stiffening of their necks, the last time this being noted in 7.26. By now such a twofold refusal is now familiar: they failed to hear (*shamah* again) and failed to receive instruction or *musar* (cf. 10.8). Similarly the people stiffened their necks, this phrase found last in 7.26.

Vs. 24 offers hope insofar as the people listen (*shamah*) to the Lord, repeating what is said in vs. 22. However, it's conditioned by a big "if" which the Lord knows won't come to pass. Then we have an equally big "then," the conjunctive *v-*. Such religious observation has practical ramifications, for if the Sabbath is observed, kings and princes (the latter in the Hebrew of vs. 25) will enter Jerusalem's gates. Nothing is said of the Benjamin Gate in vs. 19 (literally, 'sons of people'), for having heard the *davar* of the Lord though Jeremiah will make all gates worthy of receiving royalty. Vs. 25 concludes with the observation that Jerusalem will be inhabited forever, the verb being *yashav* (cf. 15.17), the verbal root of Sabbath.

A positive response to the "if-then" just noted will attract people from all over Judah and other places as they bring various offerings. This is followed by a predictable threat, that "if" the kings of Judah, all Judah and Jerusalem (cf. vs. 2) don't listen (*shamah*, cf. vs. 24) to the Lord with regard to the Sabbath, "then" he will kindle a fire in the city gates. These gates, of course, are the same ones in which Jeremiah was bidden to *davar* the Lord. From there the fire will spread to consume Jerusalem's palaces and never will be quenched, *kavah* (cf. 4.4).

1) charash, luach, lev, 2) zakar, 3) baz, gevul, 4) shamat, nachalah, havad, 'aph, yaqad, 5) 'arar, sur, lev, 6) 'erets, 8) shatal, da'ag, 9) haqov, 'anash, yadah, 10) chaqar, bachan, lev, kelayoth, derek, mahalal, 11) naval, 12) maqom, kavod, 13) miqveh, hazav, bosh, sur, 'erets, maqor, 14) rapha', yashah, tehilah, 16) 'ots, rahah, 17) mechitah, 17) machseh, rah, 18) rah, shavar, shivaron, 20) shamah, 21) shamar, shamah, nephesh, 23) shamah, musar, 24) shamah, 25) yashav, 27) shamah, kavah

## Chapter Eighteen

This new chapter begins with a *davar* coming to Jeremiah from the Lord, the last occurrence being at the beginning of Chapter Sixteen. The Hebrew has the verb "to be," literally as "the *davar* was to Jeremiah from the Lord." While such occasions are familiar not just to Jeremiah but to other prophets and holy people, seldom are they examined, for it's impossible to actually know the disposition of the person receiving the divine *davar*, word-as-expression. However, we can surmise that someone like Jeremiah didn't become aware of it on his own initiative; it seems to be linked intimately with his first calling by the Lord. Origins of this vocation forms an essential part of receiving the *davar*, of knowing that an event out of the usual has come to the surface of one's consciousness. When it does, you have three choices: accept, reject or ignore, each of which have their own consequences. While all have

accepted, surely they were tempted to reject or ignore this *davar*, especially later in their ministry when the going got rough.

In vs. 2 the *davar* bids Jeremiah to arise (*qum*, cf. 11.5) as if to get him out of his lassitude and visit a potter whose works is vital insofar as he provides containers for carrying and storing all sorts of items. And so the *davar* of the Lord tells the prophet that once there, he—and it’s the Lord, not his *davar*—lets him hear his *davar*. In other words, first the singular *davar* of the Lord comes after which Jeremiah will here the plural *davar*. And so the hearing (*shamah*, cf. 17.27) Jeremiah is to do is tied in with what he will observe at the potter’s workshop. Such a shop as this must be one of the busiest places in town since people of all walks of life required containers. That means the potter had a considerable number of associates and apprentices, and Jeremiah standing there as an observer wouldn’t be noticed as unusual.

The potter was hard at work not paying attention to Jeremiah milling about with others in his shop because he was unhappy that the clay had been spoiled, *shachat* (cf. 15.6) also as to be corrupted. Being focused on making as much income as possible, he decided against discarding it and worked the clay into another vessel. Chances are the potter decided to put the finished product on a “seconds” shelf where someone of lesser means would purchase it. If the potter were honest, he’d advertize the product as such so as to retain his clientele.

Vs. 5 has the *davar* of the Lord coming to Jeremiah, a slight difference from vs. 1 with “the *davar* that came to Jeremiah from the Lord.” While at the potter’s shop, Jeremiah had no interaction with the craftsman, marveling at how he changed defective clay into something worth selling, even second hand. After some time Jeremiah leaves and utters a rhetorical question, most likely within ear-shot of those frequenting the potter’s shop. Though tinged with some desperation, Jeremiah recognizes that the Lord can do the same with Israel as the potter had done with spoiled (corrupted) clay. Those who heard him either thought he was crazy or trying to put the potter out of business.

In vs. 7 the Lord *davar* of a nation or kingdom—no specific one is mentioned—which at his own whim he decides to pluck up, break down and destroy (*natash*, *natats* and ‘*avad* 15.6, 4.26 and 15.7). However, should any one of them turn from evil (*shuv* and *rah*, cf. 15.19 and 17.18), the Lord will relent from inflicting it, the verb being *nacham* (cf. 15.6) even though he had intended to carry through with (*chashav*, cf. 11.19) a sentence well deserved. In vs. 9 the Lord counters this with a second *davar* concerning a nation or kingdom he wishes to build or plant. In other words, should it

do evil (*rah*, cf. vs. 8)—vs. 10 specifies this with the Lord looking on, “in my eyes” and not listening (*shamah*, cf. vs. 2) to his voice—he will carry through with his threat, a second use of the verb *nacham*.

Having offered an either-or option, the Lord bids Jeremiah to speak to the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem, for only he can do this, having had hard earned experience with the nation’s infidelity. The message? The Lord is shaping evil against them, *yatsar* (cf. 10.15) connoting that he’s fashioning it along with devising a plan, the verb *chashav* and the noun derived from it, *machasheveth*, both found in 11.19. The preposition *hal-* is added for emphasis, “upon you.” In the same breath he holds out hope with the invitation to return (*shuv*, cf. vs. 8) and to amend their ways, *yataw* with *derek* (both in 7.5).

The clincher—and the Lord was expecting it—comes in vs. 12 when the people say outrightly that his proposal is made purely in vain, *ya’ash* also as to despair (cf. 2.25 but not noted there). Instead, the people will follow their own plans or *machasheveth*, throwing back the same word the Lord had brought against them. In addition to this, they will remain in the stubbornness of their evil heart (*shryroth*, *lev* and *rah*, cf. 3.17, 17.10 and vs. 9). Of course, no surprise here. In fact, the Lord may have admired them in a grudging sort of way for their honesty which reveals that eventually they will repent. Jeremiah must have felt the same.

Vss. 1-17 are a kind of poetic commentary on this blatant (yet at the same time hopeful) defiance beginning with the Lord who bids Jeremiah to pose a rhetorical question. He is to ask among the nations (*sha’al* and *goy*, cf. 15.5 and 10.7), that is, he summons them as witnesses against his virgin (*betulah*, cf. 14.17 but not noted there) people. This designation suggests that Israel is set apart, even if most nations can’t comprehend the reason. At the same time it perks their interest as to why this is so, especially since Israel is accused of doing something horrible or *shahrury*, which isn’t spelled out but already assumed. *Shahrury* is an adjective with one other biblical reference, Hos 6.10: “In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing.” Vs. 14 follows with two more rhetorical questions in rapid fire sequence as taken from nature, both of which having a tone of astonishment.

In vs. 15 the Lord exclaims somewhat publically—for he wants the nations of vs. 13 to know all about it—that his people had forsaken him, *shakach* also as to forget (cf. 13.25) and have burned incense to false (*shave’*, cf. 2.30) or vain gods. Nothing new, of course, but this repeated apostasy is testing the Lord sorely. Such worship inevitably leads to stumbling (*kashal*, cf. 6.21) which has a cascading effect involving

three different words for a road: ways, ancient roads, bypaths and highway or *derek* with *holam*, *ntyvah*, and *derek* with *shalal*. Cf. vs. 11 and 17.25 but not noted there, 6.16; as for the last, *shalal* is a verb meaning to cast up as in Prov 15.19: “The path of the upright is a level highway.”

The forgetting of vs. 15 leads the Lord’s people to make their land (*‘erets*, cf. 17.13) a horror, the verb being *sum* with *shamah* (cf. 5.20; compare with *shemamah* and the same verb of 6.8). Note only that, passers-by will hiss at this land which is Israel herself, *sharuqoth* being a noun, the only one in the Bible along with the verb to *nud* (cf. 15.5), literally as “shake in their heads.”

Vs. 17 concludes the poetic form begun with vs. 13 and resumes after vs. 18 until the end of the chapter. Now the Lord will scatter (*puts*, cf. 9.16) his people before their enemy meaning that those arrayed against Israel won’t have to do a thing except look on and gloat. After this he will show them his back instead of his face, parallel yet opposite in meaning when he revealed himself to Moses in Ex 33.23: “you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.” The revelation will happen in an unspecified “day of calamity” or *‘eyd* which also means destruction. The day is unspecified meaning that it will add greatly to Israel’s anguish in anticipation of it. “For the day of their calamity has come upon them, the time of their punishment.”

After such a horrendous prophecy Jeremiah became the object of revenge and knew it. The people decide to plot (*chashav*, cf. vs. 8) against him claiming that already they have an existing source of support in their law, priests, wise men and prophets. They are correct historically speaking, but that’s all they can do, using history as a false pretense. At least the people haven’t said anything about killing Jeremiah, preferring to smite him with their tongue and not pay attention to his *davar*. Obviously this translates as not paying attention to the Lord.

From vs. 19 through the end of Chapter Eighteen Jeremiah utters a heart-felt lament to the Lord over being an object of derision from his own people and ends up roundly condemning them. *Qashav* (cf. 8.6) as give heed is an intensification of the more common *shamah* (cf. vs. 16) or to hear which is included in this verse. As an object to both verbs the Hebrew has “my adversaries,” *yaryv* having two other references (Ps 35.1 and Is 49.25), the former being quoted here: “Contend, O Lord, with those who contend with me.”

To no one’s surprise, Jeremiah begins with a rhetorical question, evil being a recompense for good, *rah* and *tov* (vs. 12 and 17.6, the latter not mentioned). The

verb *shalam* (cf. 16.18) connotes fulness or completeness. This provides a take-off point, if you will, for Jeremiah to begin a verbal assault upon his fellow countrymen. He reminds the Lord of how he spoke on their behalf in order to turn away his wrath (*chemah*, cf. 10.25). This is followed predictably in vs. 21 through vs. 22 using “therefore” to set up a whole list of curses which consists of the following: famine, sword, childlessness, widowhood, pestilence, the sword, cry and marauder.

The last verse of Chapter Eighteen shifts gears where Jeremiah puts the Lord on his side insofar as he knows his enemy’s plots or *hetsah* also as counsel (cf. vs. 18 but not noted there). He expects the Lord to do the following: not forgive their iniquity, not to blot out their sin, to be overthrown with special emphasis as before the Lord and deal with them at the time of his anger. The last is more or less a recap of what Jeremiah just mentioned, “time” being right now and with no delay as far as he is concerned.

2) qum, shamah, 4) shachat, 7) natash, natats, ‘avad, 8) shuv, rah, nacham, chashav, 9) rah, 10) shamah, nacham, 11) chashav, yatsar, machasheveth, yatav, derek, 12) ya’ash, machasheveth, lev, rah, shryroth, 13) sha’al, goy, betulah, shahrury, shakach, shave’, kashal, derek, holam, ntyvah, derek, shalal, 16) ‘erets, sum, shamah, sharuqoth, nud, 17) puts, ‘eyd, 18) chashav, 19) qashav, shamah, yaryv, 20) rah, tov, shalam, chemah, 23) hetsah

## Chapter Nineteen

This new chapter opens with “Thus says the Lord” to Jeremiah who proceeds to purchase an earthen flask or *baqbuq* which is found in vs. 10. It has one other biblical reference, 1Kg 14.3: “Take with you ten loaves, some cakes and a jar of honey.” He’s to get it from a potter, most likely the same craftsman in 18.2 who had fashioned a vessel from spoiled clay. The potter must have recognized Jeremiah by reason of his earlier visits and by now his prophetic utterances. Actually his previous visit and subsequent prophecy must have attracted attention but not for the good. Many faithful customers must have thought of this potter as bringing bad luck and thus went to other shops.

After procuring his earthen flask—it seems to be an inferior vessel—Jeremiah is commanded to taken some elders and senior priests to the “valley of the son of Hinnom” at the entrance of the Potsherd Gate. These people were allied with him, sympathetic to his mission and already had a sense of what he was about to do by

reason of the destination and the *baqbuq* he was carrying. There Jeremiah is to proclaim (*qara'*, cf. 15.16) meaning to cry out the *davar* which the Lord will reveal or *davar* to him.

In vs. 3 Jeremiah and his companions take up their position at the entry to the Potsherd Gate, a place for maximum effect. There he speaks to the kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem the familiar “Hear (*shamah*, cf. 18.19) the *davar* of the Lord” followed by the equally familiar “Thus says the Lord.” Such wording is not so much done in a formal way but to grab attention. What follows continues through vs. 9, a theme which by now has become familiar but in a wearisome fashion. The Lord is bringing down evil (*rah*, cf. 18.20), the report of which will makes ears tingle or *tsalal* which has three other biblical references, one of which is 1Sam 3.11: “Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which the two ears of everyone that hears it will tingle.”

Through Jeremiah the Lord continues to lament that the people have forsaken him, *hazav* connoting abandonment (cf. 17.13) and have profaned the temple designated as “this place” (*maqom*, cf. 17.12). The verb *nakar* in another form means to acknowledge: “Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the exiles from Judah.” [24.5]. As for *maqom*, it occurs five times through vs. 10, as though the Lord couldn't bring himself to call Jerusalem by its proper name. Even though Israel has had a long history of apostasy, the Lord claims that her fathers didn't know such gods which suggests that they are recent concoctions. Vs. 4 continues into vss. 5 and 6 as one sentence with mention of newly constructed high places (*bamah*, cf. 17.3 but not noted there) for Baal. There the people have sacrificed their sons which fills the temple as “this place” with blood, *maqom* being used yet again. Because these practices are so abominable, the Lord is quick to add that they hadn't entered his mind, literally as “have not gone upon my heart (*lev*, cf. 18.12).

Vs. 6 begins with *laken* or “therefore,” indicative that the Lord is about to take action. It isn't immediate but will happen in coming days, another way of intimidating the people in the hope that they will return to him. This verse echos 7.31-23 by renaming “this place” or *maqom* (third occurrence) the valley Slaughter or *Haregah*, a place where those who had sacrificed innocents (cf. vs. 5) or children will be put to death instead.

Vs. 7 contains the fourth reference to *maqom* where the Lord says openly that he will make void any plans devised by Judah and Jerusalem, *baqaq* fundamentally as to pour out in the sense of emptying. “I will send to Babylon winnowers...and they shall

empty her land” [51.1]. This, in turn, will cause their people to be slain by the sword after which the Lord will make Jerusalem a horror: the verb *sum* (cf. 18.16) and the noun *shamah* (cf. 18.16), both sounding the same which adds drama to the text. Also the verb *sharaq* to hiss and the noun *shreqah* (cf. 49.17 and 25.9) are similar to *sharuqoth* of 18.16. The reason for making such a denigrating sound? The people will be committing cannibalism as recounted in vs. 9.

Up until now Jeremiah had that earthen flask in his hand, waiting for the opportunity to break it in the sight of those accompanying him, vs. 10 being the occasion as told by the Lord. This breaking or *shavar* (cf. 17.18) is, as his companions suspected all along, symbolic of what the Lord will do to Jerusalem. Furthermore, any house which had incense burned upon it to alien gods will be defiled, *tame’* (cf. 2.7). This is the second reference to Topheth, the last being in vs. 6 and refers to where children were offered to Canaanite divinities by burning them alive. Vs. 12 contains the fifth reference to *maqom*.

After this dramatic gesture, Jeremiah returns to the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, a short distance away, and addresses the people milling about in the courtyard. He comes off with the familiar “Thus says the Lord,” preparing them to hear that the Lord is going to inflict them with evil or *rah* (cf. vs. 3) which he has *davar* against it, for they have failed to hear his *davar*, *shamah* (cf. vs. 3) and *davar* being an inseparable pair.

1) baqbuq, 2) qara’, 3) shamah, rah, tsalal, 4) hazav, maqom, nakar, 5) bamah, maqom, lev, 6) maqom, 7) maqom, baqaq, 8) sum, shamah, 8) sharaq, shreqah, 10) shavar, 12) maqom, 13) tame’, 15) rah, shamah

## Chapter Twenty

This new chapter opens with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “now” to show the close connection between Jeremiah’s recent prophecy and Pashur. He’s identified as a priest as well as officer in the Lord’s house or temple, *paqyd* being derived from the verbal root *paqad* (cf. 15.15) with it’s military connotation to muster troops. “To have charge in the house of the Lord over every madman who prophesies” [29.26]. His position seems to be one of enforcing discipline within the temple precincts, so when he heard Jeremiah prophesying “these things” or *davar*, first he beats him and then puts him in stocks or *mahpeketh*. This is found in the next verse as well as 29.26 and has one other biblical reference, 2Chron 16.10. As for the frequent use of *davar*,

it has various effects on different people, here an accusatory one as often is the case. Pashur must have heard these *davar* first hand since he was charged with being on the look-out to imprison Jeremiah by order of Jerusalem's authorities as well as the high priest.

Jeremiah's imprisonment lasted only overnight, and no explanation why is given. Perhaps those elders and senior priests who had accompanied Jeremiah in 19.1 used their clout to intervene. Upon his release, Jeremiah didn't hesitate to rename Pashur "terror on every side," *magor* alternately meaning fear as in 6.25 but not noted there. Without missing a beat, Jeremiah comes off with "Thus says the Lord" directed to Pashur, actually taking great delight in these both majestic and condemnatory words, that he'll become a terror not just to himself but to his friends, the participle '*ahav* (cf. 8.2) fundamentally as to love. Jeremiah goes well beyond this single person and speaks of the people being taken off to captivity in Babylon—a long anticipated event—and be slain there. Once this has been carried out, the Lord will hand over the city and all its wealth to their enemies, carrying them off to Babylon as well.

In vs. 6 once again Jeremiah turns attention to Pashur against whom he has a special grudge which perhaps extends further than recently having been beaten and punished by this priest. Pashur and his entire family will be hauled off to Babylon and die there, a result of having prophesied falsely, *sheqer* (cf. 16.19) with the preposition *b-* (in) prefaced to it, "in falsehood."

From vs. 7 through the rest of Chapter Twenty Jeremiah launches into an extended lament directed to the Lord despite coming off with some many instances of "Thus says the Lord," indicative of being his spokesman. Interestingly he, like Job, never brings up doubts as to God's existence, accepting that as a rock solid given. Jeremiah begins with claiming to have been deceived, *patah* found next in vs. 10 and having the connotation of being seduced. The Lord succeeded in this by reason of being stronger and thus was able to prevail, *yakal* (cf. 19.11 but not noted there) also as to be able and to have power.

In the same verse (7) Jeremiah turns away from the just mentioned direct confrontation with the Lord to lament the fact that he has become a laughingstock or *sechoq* not just once but "all the day." "He too shall be held in derision" [48.26]. Throughout it all everyone will mock Jeremiah, *lahag*. "He who mocks the poor insults his Maker" [Prov 17.5]. It seems this scorn derives from Jeremiah speaking or *davar* which assumes two forms in vs. 8, *zahaq* and *qara'* (cf. 11.11 and 19.2) or

shouting and crying out. Both pertain to violence and destruction, *chamas* and *shod* (both found in 6.7 but not noted there).

In vs. 8 Jeremiah continues his lament as to the *davar* of the Lord turning against him or having become his personal reproach and derision, *cherpah* and *qeles*. The former is found in 15.15 and the latter has two other biblical references, one of which is Ps 44.13: “The derision and scorn of those about us.” As with vs. 7, both are “all day long.” In vs. 9 Jeremiah turns back in on himself saying (with the secret wish that he be heard by others) that no longer he will remember or *davar* with regard to the Lord. His heart (*lev*, cf. 19.5) is burning as well as his bones, weary with containing it, *la’ah* and *kul* (cf. 15.6 and 6.11 but not noted there).

In vs. 10 Jeremiah addresses the Lord directly but first qualifies it with the intent of getting him on his side. That is to say, the Lord is one who tries the righteous, *bachan* and *tsadyq* (17.10 and 12.1) and sees the heart and mind kidneys. The verb is *bachan* (cf. 9.7) and the nouns are *kelayoth* and *lev*, the former also as kidneys. With these two pairs in mind Jeremiah confidently asks the Lord to see vengeance upon his foes, *neqamah*. All four are found together in 11.3. The Jeremiah says confidently that he has entrusted his cause to the Lord, *galah* and *ryv*; both found in 11.20.

Amid all this doom and gloom Jeremiah spontaneously breaks into a joyful mood comprised of singing and praising the Lord, *shyr* and *halal* (cf. 16.18), the former being the only use of that verb in the text at hand. He goes on to say in the same verse (13) that the Lord has delivered the life (*nephesh* alternately as soul; cf. 17.21) from evildoers, the verb *natsal* and *rah* (cf. 15.21 for both).

Now from vs. 14 to the end of the end of the chapter Jeremiah takes a radically different turn which a footnote in the RSV calls an independent section. Here he sounds eerily like Job at the beginning of his sufferings. He doesn’t so much rail against God or deny his existence but laments his own existence. Twice he uses the verb ‘*arar* or to curse (cf. 17.5). Actually the language Jeremiah prefers is strong, even more so than his counterpart Job whom he possibly used to vent his frustration. The strongest is a rhetorical question posed to the Lord as to why he didn’t kill him in the womb of his mother.

1) paqyd, 2) mahpeketh, 4) magor, ‘ahav, 6) sheqer, 7) yakal, sechoq, lahag, 8) zahaq, cherpah, qeles, qara’, 9) lev, la’ah, kul, 12) bachan, tsadyq, kelayoth, lev, neqamah, galah, ryv, 13) shyr, halal, nephesh, natsal, rah, 14) ‘arar

## Chapter Twenty-One

A footnote in the RSV says that vs. 1-10 “are another account of the event described in 37.1-10.” While such historical information is important, the subject matter as presented here as well as throughout the entire Expansion document is from the vantage point of *lectio divina*. That means, of course, looking at the text as an aide to prayer while keeping in mind certain key words such as *davar* (word-as-expression and its verbal form) as an end to this. By now or approaching the halfway point of the book, we see how Jeremiah communicates it as well as how people receive it. More often than not, people (especially their leaders) tend to reject the divine *davar* directed to them for their own benefit.

This new chapter—the shortest in the entire book—begins with the *davar* from the Lord coming to Jeremiah. King Zedekiah sent Pashur (not the same person as in the last chapter) and Zephaniah to Jeremiah requesting that he inquire of the Lord, *darash* (cf. 8.2). This verb fundamentally means to tread, to trample and thus intimates urgency in the seeking at hand. Jeremiah is to bring the force of this *darash* to bear as to deciding whether or not King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon is to start a war against Israel. Zedekiah knew the odds were stacked against him winning. Out of desperation this forced him to couch his terms positively. At the same time he realizes the situation could turn out for the worse which is why vs. 2 contains ‘*ulay* or “perhaps.” That is to say, perhaps the Lord will deal favorably, *hasah* (cf. 10.12) and *pala*’, the second being a participle. “Nothing is too hard for you” [32.17]. Such wishful thinking is that Nebuchadrezzar will decide against his proposed attack.

Vs. 3 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” which sets up a negative response from Jeremiah with Peashur and Zephaniah knowing the outcome before the prophet says anything further. Both (beginning with ‘Thus says the Lord’) are to inform King Zedekiah that the Lord will turn back (*shuv*, cf. 18.8) all weapons in the king’s hands which he had prepared against the Babylonian invasion. It’s as though these defensive weapons will assume a life of their own and slay those possessing them. Afterwards the Babylonians will enter not just the city but the Lord himself will gather them its midst, ‘*asaph* meaning to assemble or to gather. From there they will spread out to all four corners.

In vs. 5 the Lord says that he himself will fight against King Zedekiah, the image of an outstretched hand and strong arm coupled with anger, fury and wrath, ‘*aph*, *chemah* and *qetseph* (cf. 17.4, 18.20 and 10.10). Not only that, all Jerusalem’s

inhabitants will perish as the result of a great pestilence or *dever* (cf. 14.12 but not noted there). As for *dever*, it's from the same verbal root as *davar*; we could say that the divine *davar* has become this *dever*, word-transformed-into-pestilence. Any survivors, including the king, will be handed over to King Nebuchadrezzar who won't show a shred of pity or compassion by sparing them, *chus*, *chamal* and *racham*. All three are found in 13.14.

Vs. 8 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “and,” intimating the same thing as in vs. 3 where it's rendered as “then.” That is to say, what applies to King Zedekiah applies equally to “this people,” “this” being used in a somewhat derogatory manner. The people too are at the receiving end of a “Thus says the Lord” followed by *hineh* (cf. 16.21) or behold, a double way of getting everyone's attention. The Lord sets before the people two ways (*derek*, cf. 18.17) which they have to choose, life or death. Simple and direct as that. Those remaining in Jerusalem will be slain by the Babylonians gathered in its midst (cf. vs. 4). Those opting to leave will be taken captive which vs. 9 puts in terms of being a “prize of war” or *shalal*. “He shall have his life as a prize of war” [38.2].

In vs. 10 the Lord shows his resolve to carry through his threat by saying that he has set (*sum*, cf. 19.8) his face for evil literally “in (*b-*) this city.” Such divine resolution will be carried out by the king of Babylon who will burn Jerusalem.

In vs. 11 the Lord commands Jeremiah to turn his attention to the king of Judah whom he bids to hear his *davar* calling it the “house of David.” By naming the nation's most famous king he heaps further shame upon them. This verse has a double sense in that the Lord bids the king to do justice or *mishpat* (cf. 12.1) as well as to deliver (*natsal*, cf. 20.13) anyone who has been robbed from those oppressing them. In the same breath the Lord bids his wrath or *chemah*—the same *chemah* of vs. 7 most likely including ‘*aph* and *qetseph*—which will burn unquenchably.

Vs. 12 has another *hineh* or behold, the first one being in vs. 8 addressed to the singular inhabitant of the valley as well as rock of the plain, the RSV saying that the meaning is unclear. However, reference seems to be Jerusalem surrounded by valleys and Mount Zion against which is the Lord, the preposition ‘*el-* translated often as “to.” Supposing it's Jerusalem and Zion—and most likely this is the case—both come off which a rhetorical question in the form of a taunt, namely, that no one can come against them. For this the Lord is determined to inflict punishment through fire, the verb being *paqad* (cf. 15.15).

2) darash, ‘ulay, hasah, pala’, 4) shuv, ‘asaph, 5) ‘aph, chemah, qetseph, 6) dever, 7) chus, chamal, racham, 8) hineh, derek, 9) shalal, 10) sum, 11) mishpat, natsal, chemah, 14) paqad

## Chapter Twenty-Two

This new chapter opens with “Thus says the Lord” last found in 21.12 and is addressed to Jeremiah signifying that he go on a new mission which is to the king of Judah. Jeremiah echos this divine utterance with the phrase “Hear the *davar* of the Lord” which is to the king, reminding him that he’s sitting on the throne of David. Any king who forgets this ultimately is doomed to failure. As for the present king, no name is given, but a footnote in the NIV says it’s most likely Zedekiah (cf. 21.3) whom the Jeremiah prophesied will be handed over to the Babylonians.

Certainly King Zedekiah got word of Jeremiah’s prophecy but now hears from him face to face meaning that the prophet indeed was taking considerable personal risk. Perhaps he even used “Hear the *davar* of the Lord” as something behind which to hide. As for this *davar*, it holds out an opportunity to avoid being hauled off to Babylon. To save himself as well as the nation, the king is to do what is only just and right or the nouns *mishpat* and *tsedaqah* (cf. 9.24 for both) plus championing the cause of those who are vulnerable. *Chamas* or to do (no) violence (cf. 13.22 but not noted there) is the verb. This can be summed up by not shedding blood in this place or *maqom* (cf. 19.12) suggestive of the temple.

Vs. 4 begins with “if,” the first of two which sets up a choice for King Zedekiah to make not just for himself but for his people and their future:

“If #1” consists of doing (*hasah* in Hebrew, not obeying cf. 21.2) the *davar* just spoken which will result in kings occupying David’s throne and their entry into this house along with their retinue, presumably Jerusalem. These words are found in part in 17.25 showing that David’s lineage will not only continue but prosper.

“If #2” consists in not hearing (*shamah*, cf. 19.15) the *davar* uttered by Jeremiah which will result on the Lord making “this house” or the lineage of David a desolation or *charbah* (cf. 7.34) which also means a waste. To show that he means business, the Lord swears by himself, *shavah* (cf. 12.16).

The second part of vs. 6 through the next verse are in poetic form. This use of language brings home more dramatically what the Lord is communicating and hence

the urgency of listening to him. Gilead and Lebanon are mentioned by reason of the exceptional wood they produced. In place of that, the Lord will make Judah a desert without habitation and people who will come and hew their cedars. This can't help but make one think of King Hiram who sent both cedar and laborers to help Solomon erect the Jerusalem temple (cf. 1Kg 5.7+).

Vss. 8-9 revert to prose, this alteration continuing through vs. 12 after which the Lord speaks for an extended time (through vs. 23) in poetic form. As for the message of these two verses, the Lord will have nations pass the city as they wonder what its inhabitants had done to provoke the Lord. The reason ultimately is straight-forward and twofold. They have forsaken the Lord's covenant, *hazav* (cf. 19.4) also as to abandon along with having gone off to serve other gods. Although not mentioned, such abominations most likely took place in the Jerusalem temple making them more offensive.

Vs. 10 alone is in poetic form where the Lord bids the mourning of King Josiah who isn't mentioned by name. Instead, it's reserved for Jehoahaz, also known as Shallum in vs. 11. It sets the stage for a whole series of woes from vs. 13 through vs. 24 where the text reverts to poetic form. A footnote in the RSV says this section is comprised of oracles concerning Kings Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin of Judah. *Hoy* is the word for "woe," similar to 'oy in 15.10 and elsewhere, echoing as it does throughout the rest of the chapter.

The oracles start off apparently with one directed toward King Jehoiakim in mind who isn't mentioned until vs. 18, the words beginning in vs. 13 presumably applicable to him. It begins with building his house by means of unrighteousness (literally no righteousness or *tsedeq*, cf. 11.20) which seems applicable to his palace. While words relative to construction are used, easily than can apply to Jehoiakim's lack of concern for the people his under his rule.

Vs. 15 changes tone basically to shame King Jehoiakim by posing a rhetorical question. His father Josiah did justice and righteousness (*mishpat* and *tsedaqah*: cf. vs. 3 for both) which worked in his favor. In vs. 16 he poses another rhetorical question, namely, that he knew all about it, the noun *dahath* (cf. 10.14) being used. In the face of such pointed questions, how could anyone respond adequately?

In vs. 17 the Lord resumes his attack on King Jehoiakim with the ominous *ky* or "but." He has eyes and heart (*lev*, cf. 20.12) only for personal gain and is willing to kill anyone standing in the way. Next follows in vs. 18 the familiar "Thus says the

Lord” where he calls out Jehoiakim by name plus mentioning his righteous father Josiah as alluded to in vs. 15. Twice he calls out that no one will lament for him, *saphad* (cf. 4.8) being the verb which means to beat the breast. His end will be like that of an ass dragged out of the city gates.

In vs. 20 the Lord mentions two extreme ends of Israel, Lebanon and Bashan to the north and Abarim to the south or east of the Dead Sea, ideal places from which the entire country could be addressed. The most poignant part is vs. 15 when the Lord spoke to Jehoiakim in his prosperity or *shalvah* being plural. Ps 122.7: “Peace be within your walls and security within your towers!” As for the two opposite poles, they are places from which the Lord condemns roundly King Jehoiakim, singling out Lebanon in vs. 25 most likely for the king having taken cedars from there. Lebanon is depicted as nestling among its cedars, in essence, hiding from the Lord much as the man and his wife hid themselves among the trees in the garden of Eden (cf. Gn 3.8).

Vss. 24-27 resume a prose form beginning with “As I live,” the first time such words are used in this book meaning that the Lord is dead serious as to what is speaking of. In essence he continues railing against King Jehoiakim (also known as Coniah), giving him over to King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon. Then with vs. 28 through the end of this chapter the poetic form resumes, vs. 28 having two rhetorical questions as to Coniah being a vessel or broken pot nobody wants and he and his children cast into a foreign land which, of course, is Babylon although the verse says they don’t know it. Perhaps this means that they haven’t visited it beforehand by reason of being enemy territory.

Keeping in mind that the Lord is addressing Israel from Lebanon and Bashan in the north as well as Abarim towards the south as noted in vs. 20, it comes as no surprise in vs. 29 that he cries out “land” (*‘erets*, cf. 18.16) three times that it hear the *davar* of the Lord. This land...Israel...is to address King Jehoiakim or “this man,” a phrase of contempt, who won’t prosper (*tsalach*, cf. 12.1) during his reign and that children will not occupy the throne of David.

3) mishpat, tsedaqah, chamas, maqom, 4) hasah, 5) shamah, charbah, shavah, 9) hazav, 13) tsedeq, 15) mishpat, tsedaqah, 15) shalvah, 16) dahath, 17) lev, 18) saphad, 29) ‘erets, 30) tsalach

## Chapter Twenty-Three

*Hoy* or “woe” right away sets the tone for this new chapter with the Lord lamenting Judah’s rulers who are called shepherds, the participle *rahaḥ* (cf. 17.16) being used. Contrary to their duty, they prefer to destroy, scatter and drive away, ‘*avad*, *puts* and *nadach* (cf. 18.7, 18.17 and 8.3) those under their care. Such care is signified by the verb *paqad* (cf. 21.14) or to attend and frequently has military connotations such as mustering. This provokes the Lord into action, the second use of *paqad*.

Vs. 3 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” suggesting that for some time the Lord had been keeping watch over Judah’s corrupt shepherds and now decides to step in. He does this by reversing the three verbs in vs. 1 with two of his own: gathering and bringing back, *qavats* and *shuv* (cf. 31.10 and 21.4). The former suggests grasping by the hand and pertains to countries whereas the second pertains to the sheepfold where they will prosper. Such is the Lord’s task and his alone. Then he picks shepherds (*qum*: literally as to rise; cf. 18.2) who care for his people, the same verb *rahaḥ* being used as the noun. *Paqad* (cf. vs. 2) is found again, this time as (not) missing. Surely Jesus Christ must have been aware of this passage and used its imagery where he contrasts (cf. Jn 10.1+) himself with irresponsible shepherds as in vs. 1.

Nevertheless, resolution of this crisis doesn’t come at once as most people would like. Vs. 5 uses the familiar “days are coming” (last time is 19.6) intended to instill hope though it’s pretty much left like that. If the people—those being shepherded—knew the exact date perhaps they would try to take matters into their own hands in anticipation of that divine intervention. If they took that route, hope would disappear and they would be worse off than they are now. As for that unspecified future time in terms of “days,” the Lord will raise up (*qum*, cf. vs. 4) a branch (*tsemach*) which is righteous or *tsadyq* (cf. 20.12). This phrase is found in 33.15, a slightly different form and a similar time format: “In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous branch (literally, ‘branch of righteousness’) to spring forth for David.” Note that in both instances they are done for King David.

The name of the king who will mirror David, the archetype of all kings, remains unknown which certainly must have everyone speculating about his identity. Regardless, they are relieved to know that he will do justice and righteousness, *mishpat* and *tsedaqah* being applied to King Josiah (cf. 22.15 for both). As a result, both Judah and Israel will dwell securely, *shakan* and *betach* (cf. 7.7 and 32.37). In a sense, personal details about the future king are secondary, for in vs. 6 the Lord comes right out and says that his name will be “The Lord is our righteousness” or *tsedaqah*, this noun found in the previous verse.

Vs. 7 begins with the phrase “days are coming” shortly after its last occurrence two verses ago, both backed up by “says the Lord” to show his determination to make such days a reality though in both instances the time isn’t specified. The latter case foresees these days as when people will no longer recite the familiar story as to how the Lord had delivered Israel from Egypt. This had been part and parcel of Israel’s religious heritage since the Exodus, a call to prayer, if you will. Now it’s supplanted by acknowledgment of the Lord who brought Israel from the north country and lands from which he had exiled her, that is, Babylon. This verse repeats 16.14-15.

As for the verses beginning Chapter Twenty-Three, the prose section ends and resumes briefly with vss. 16-17. Vss. 9-15 are in poetic form and concern prophets or more specifically, false ones.

Jeremiah is fully aware that he has been called by the Lord to be a prophet whose task is utter his *davar* regardless of personal preferences and consequences. During his ministry thus far he has encountered plenty of false prophets starting with those following Baal in 2.8. Now Jeremiah begins a lament (something at which he excels) over how they had impacted his life. First he compares himself to someone thoroughly intoxicated “because of the Lord” and “because of his holy *davar*.” Compare such words with those of the false prophets in vs. 16: vain hopes and vision of their own minds.

In vs. 10 Jeremiah says that the land (*‘erets*, cf. 22.29) is chock full of adulterers, another word for these false prophets, they being responsible for a drought. Their course is evil and their might is not right, *merutsah* and *gevurah* (cf. 8.6 and 16.21). In the same breath Jeremiah mentions priests along with prophets who are ungodly, *chaneph* (cf. 3.9) connoting pollution. Such corruption is bad enough but worse because it’s found with the Lord’s own house or the Jerusalem temple, he speaking this in vs. 11 which melds in pretty much with the sentiment of Jeremiah’s words begun in vs. 9.

After bemoaning these false prophets, the Lord continues—he and Jeremiah being of the same mind and heart—speaking through vs. 15 after which there’s a pause of sorts, and he resumes through the rest of that verse. Vs. 12 begins with “therefore” which shows resolve on the Lord’s part to take action. That is to say, he makes slippery the path for false prophets and instead of the frequently mentioned days which are coming, speaks of a “year of their punishment” or *pequdah* (cf. 10.15). Practice of this false prophesying extends to Samaria as related to Baal, this hearkening back to 2.8 with regard to vs. 9.

Prophets located in Jerusalem fare no better, for in vs. 14 the Lord beholds a horrible thing or *shaharury*, this noun having one other biblical reference which echos the verse at hand, Hos 6.10: “In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing; Ephraim’s harlotry is there, Israel is defiled.” Even worse than Hosea, in vs. 14 the Lord likens Israel to Sodom and Gomorrah.

Vs. 15 has another “Thus says the Lord” with regard to the prophets, this time meaning hosts or the heavenly array of angels. He will feed them with wormwood and poisoned water for their ungodliness or *chanupah* which has not remained confined to Jerusalem but has spread throughout the land or ‘*erets* (cf. vs. 10), this noun implying uncleanness and is the only such word in the Bible.

As noted above, vss. 16-17 revert to prose with “Thus says the Lord” and acts as a kind of pause or to bring back the people’s attention to what’s being communicated. They are not to listen to the *davar* of the false prophets, driving home the necessity of this *shamah* (cf. 22.5) which is so frequent and necessary. Such charlatans *davar* visions from their own minds (*chazon* and *lev*, cf. 22.17 and 14.14) instead of from the Lord or literally, “from the mouth of the Lord.” Being so close to this divine mouth implies listening which unfortunately isn’t the case at hand. Instead they prefer to say continuously (‘*amar* used twice) to those despising (*na’ats*: cf. 14.21 but not noted there) the Lord’s *davar* that all will be well. Similarly they claim that no evil (*rah*, cf. 20.13) will approach them.

Vss. 18-22 revert to poetic form, Jeremiah apparently speaking. Throughout this he and the Lord are virtually indistinguishable from each other insofar as both proclaim the same message. Jeremiah begins with a rhetorical question asking who of the false prophets has stood in the Lord’s council or *sod* (cf. 15.17 but not noted there), literally a couch which implies sitting together. If so, that person would both perceive and hear the divine *davar*, the verbs being *shamah* and *qashav* (cf. 18.19 for both). In sum, the *davar* of the false prophets is at war with the *davar* of the Lord.

In vs. 21 the Lord speaks (or is Jeremiah?...It doesn’t matter, the two being the same) and continues to do so for the rest of the chapter. Although he neither sent nor *davar* to them, they continued in their false prophesying. If they remained in his divine *sod* (cf. vs. 18), things would have turned out differently. That is to say, they would have proclaimed his *davar*, the verb *shamah* (cf. vs. 18) here translated as something like “would have caused to hear.” Not only that, they would have turned the people (‘my people’ of vs. 22) from their evil ways and deeds, *rah* with *derek* and

*mahalal* both found in 17.10.

Vs. 23 reverts to prose form and remains as such through the end of Chapter Twenty-Three. The Lord poses three rapid fire rhetorical questions, this time intimating a certain rejection and insult coming from his people. The first concerns whether he's a God from afar off. The second, whether someone can hide himself and not be seen and the third that he fills both heaven and earth. All three pretty much encapsulate what the Israelites have been doing.

The Lord scorns the false prophets who claim they have dreamed, the source of their prophecies. This is followed by another rhetorical question in vs. 26—quite extended—as to how long the false prophets will entertain lies within their hearts (*sheqer* and *lev*: cf. 20.16 and vs. 17). Apparently these people love exchanging their dreams among each other in their attempt to outdo each other. This puts them in direct line with their fathers who had gone after Baal.

Vs. 28 has the first of two rhetorical questions in another series as posed by the Lord. It seems he has decided to let things run their course. The false prophet can dream as much as he wants while the person who has the divine *davar* will *davar* it in faith (*'emeth*, cf. 10.10). The one at hand concerns straw versus wheat followed in vs. 29 by the Lord's *davar* being likened to fire which smashes rocks to pieces. Then he states his opposition to prophets stealing his own *davar* from one another which suggests that each one rightly possesses them.

In vs. 33 the Lord poses a question, that is, with regard to “you” which refers to Jeremiah though without mentioning his name. It concerns a person inquiring about the “burden of the Lord,” *masa'* (cf. 17.27 but not noted there) also meaning oracle or prophecy. The response reads literally, “What burden?” Thus anyone posing this question will be subject to divine punishment (the verb *paqad*, cf. vs. 4) along with his household which means an extended family and possessions.

As for this *masa'* with its dual meaning of burden/oracle, in vs. 36 the Lord bids no further mention of it because it's equal to each person's personal *davar*. Furthermore the Lord takes great pains to mention his *davar* under three titles: “the living God,” “the Lord of hosts” and “our God.” The reason? Such *davar* have been subject to perversion, *haphak* being the verb (cf. 2.21) which suggests being overthrown.

The next few verses spell out this notion of *masa'* with regard to any prophet who

persists in saying “burden of the Lord.” The sequence is simply terrible. First the Lord will lift him up and then cast him out (‘his presence’ isn’t in the Hebrew text) along with the city or Jerusalem which had been given to the fathers. If this weren’t enough there follows shame and reproach or *cherpah* and *chelmah* (cf. 20.8 and 20.11, the latter not being noted there). The first is described as everlasting and the second as perpetual, *holam* (cf. 18.13) being used for both adjectives and equivalent to the negative of not being forgotten which concludes Chapter Twenty-Three.

1) rahah, ‘avad, puts, 2) nadach, paqad, 3) qavats, shuv, 4) qum, rahah, paqad, 5) qum, tsemach, tsadyq, mishpat, tsedaqah, 6) shakan, betach, tsedaqah, 10) ‘erets, merutsah, gevurah, 12) pequdah, 14) shaharury, 15) chanupah, ‘erets, 16) shamah, chazon, 17) lev, na’ats, rah, 18) sod, shamah, qashav, 22) sod, shamah, rah, derek, mahalal, 26) sheqer, lev, 28) ‘emeth, 33) masa’, 34) paqad, 36) haphak, 40) cherpah, chelmah, holam

## Chapter Twenty-Four

This short chapter begins with King Nebuchadrezzar having taken King Jeconiah of Judah into exile along with princes and craftsmen. Nothing is said of the rest of the population, notably from Jerusalem. This was done, of course, to put them at the service of constructing and maintaining various building in Babylon. Those chosen considered themselves lucky to have escaped the sword or enslavement.

In vs. 1 the Lord showed Jeremiah a vision of two baskets of figs before the temple in Jerusalem. Obviously it’s a vision and has nothing to do with the actual structure which isn’t mentioned as being destroyed or left as it was. Jeremiah sees one basket with good figs and the other with rotten ones. This is followed by vs. 4 which begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” and the *davar* of the Lord coming to Jeremiah with “Thus says the Lord.”

As for the good figs, they represent exiles from Judah whom the Lord will watch over and restore to their own land, ‘erets (cf. 23.15) with the preposition *hal-*, literally as “upon this land.” That is to say, two pairs of opposites follow: *banah* and *haras*, *natah* and *natash*; the two found in 1.10.

The just mentioned two pairs are followed in vs. 7 by the Lord intending to give his people a heart (*lev*, cf. 23.26) to know him or to have intimate knowledge of him as intimated by the verb *yadah* (cf. 17.9). The result? The Lord will be theirs and they

will be his. As vs. 7 concludes, this is conditioned by the people returning to him with their whole heart, the verb being *shuv* (cf. 23.3).

Vs. 8 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “but” and deals with the bad (*rah*, cf. 23.22) figs, an image of King Zedekiah of Judah and the remnant remaining in Jerusalem as well as in Egypt. He will make them literally a “horror for evil” (*zevahah*, cf. 15.4) along with *rah* again, the two being prefaced with the preposition *l-*, “to.” In addition to this, the Lord adds four other curses in vs. 9: reproach, byword, taunt and curse. They are as follows: *cherpah* (cf. 23.40), *mashal* being the only occurrence in Jeremiah; also as parable, *shenynah* as the only occurrence in Jeremiah (cf. Dt 28.37) and *qelalah*, cf. 25.18. All are all prefaced with the preposition *l-* as well and with respect to wherever the Lord drives them.

If that weren't enough, the Lord will send sword, famine and pestilence resulting in their utter destruction, the verb *tamam* (cf. 1.3 but not noted there) meaning to bring to an end or to finish. What makes this particularly tragic is that it's done pertaining to the people's relationship with their land, '*adamah* (cf. 16.4) being the physical earth comprising '*erets*, land more as a nation. After all, it's the land the Lord had given to their fathers.

6) '*erets*, *banah*, *haras*, *natah*, *natash*, *yadah*, 7) *shuv*, *lev*, 8) *rah*, 9) *zevahah*, *cherpah*, *mashal*, *shenynah*, *qelalah*, 10) *tamam*, '*adamah*

## Chapter Twenty-Five

A footnote in the NIV says that Chapters Twenty-Five through Twenty-Nine deal with the forthcoming destruction of Jerusalem and exile to Babylon. That means we can be certain of one thing: a steady stream of woes, curses and condemnation, many of which have been encountered thus far. In short, we have the same human condition but with a new historical condition.

Once again the *davar* of the Lord comes to Jeremiah. One wonders how he feels about all these comings since the beginning of his ministry...a kind of what-now attitude surely must be running through his mind. On this occasion the *davar* concerns the inhabitants of Judah with a specific time frame, the fourth year of King Jehoiakim's reign. Vs. 2 continues as one sentence which takes pains to say that Jeremiah *davar* to the inhabitants of Judah, this time mentioning Jerusalem. He does so right on through vs. 14.

In vs. 3 Jeremiah commences his address which has the air of a lament coupled with some whining...understandable...since he's been a mouthpiece for the *davar* of the Lord for twenty-three long years. He had been faithful as he *davar*, the adverb "persistently" rendered by a verb, literally as "day to rise early" or *shakam* (cf. 7.25). It suggests rising each and every day well before sunrise to carry out an unpleasant mission while nobody had listened (*shamah*, cf. 23.22).

Jeremiah repeats himself in vs. 4, namely, that in addition to not having listened, the plural people had not inclined their singular ear, a phrase which is more to the point. He speaks not just of himself but of "all his servants, the prophets" (cf. 7.25-26 for this same phrase). Their message had been consistent with his, that is, they bid the people to turn from (*shuv*, cf. 24.7) their evil ways and wrong doings (*rah* and *mahalal*, cf. 23.22 for both). If they can do that, they will dwell upon the land (*'adamah*, cf. 24.10) the Lord had given not just to them but to their fathers. The verb here is *yashav* (cf. 17.25); compare with *shuv* or turning from just mentioned, the former dependent upon the latter.

Vs. 6 is part of a longer sentence beginning with the previous verse where the prophets have warned about going after false gods. The two words '*acharey* and '*acherym* ('after' and 'other') play on each other and intimate a trap such divinities have in store. Should they ignore this warning, the people will provoke the Lord, *kahas* (cf. 11.17), more specifically do so with the work of their hands and implying the fashioning of idols to worship. Vs. 6 ends on a cautionary note, that the Lord will do no harm or *rah* (cf. vs. 5) should they follow through. However—and this is to be expected—the people failed to listen (*shamah*, cf. vs. 3) and went ahead with fashioning these idols, all to their own harm or *rah* as just noted.

In vs. 8 through Jeremiah the Lord uses "Thus says the Lord" to shift not so much the tone of what he had just said but to get into the details of the impending disaster. Because Israel hadn't obeyed—the all important *shamah* again (cf. vs. 8) coupled with *davar*—the Lord will send Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon against them. To drive home the seriousness of the situation, the Lord calls this king "my servant," *heved* (cf. 2.14), an ironic title which also means a slave, the king obviously not being aware of the fact. He will come against the land (*'erets*, cf. 24.6) and those dwelling there, the preposition *hal-* meaning "upon" which suggests a more violent and ultimately permanent presence. Finally through this unwitting divine servant...slave...the Lord will destroy, make a horror, a hissing and everlasting reproach (i.e., desolations).

After reading this, one wonders what could happen next, but as we've seen earlier,

something worse invariably follows. This is conveyed by vs. 10 beginning with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “moreover.” Here it consists of the Lord banishing (*avad* fundamentally as to destroy, cf. 23.1) four types of voices (*qol*, cf. 12.8) or glad sounds as well as those pertaining to work. Another way of putting this complete absence of normal human activity is that the entire land or *‘erets* (cf. vs. 9) will become both a ruin and waste or *charbah* and *shamah* (cf. 22.4 and vs. 9, the latter not noted). Israel won’t be affected alone, but as vs. 11 says, she with other nations will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years. The verb is *havad* (cf. 17.4) with respect to King Nebuchadnezzar called in vs. 8 the *heved* of the Lord.

Vs. 12 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then;” compare with vs. 10 (‘moreover’), the two showing different types of transition. Once the captivity of seventy years has passed—nothing is said of how the exiles will fare—the Lord will punish his *heved* and nation, the verb being *paqad* with its military associations. The result? Babylon will become an everlasting waste or *shemamah* (cf. 6.8).

In vs. 13 the Lord brings against Babylon all the *davar* which he *davar* against (*hal-*, literally as ‘upon’). He doesn’t use the proper name but calls it “that land” as though he can’t bear pronouncing it. While the Lord continues to speak he mentions Jeremiah by name which must have caught the prophet off guard since he’s the one actually mediating the divine *davar*. That is to say, the Lord will bring to completion all that his prophet had uttered, namely, that many nations will enslave even Babylon, a way of recompensing (*shalam*, cf. 18.20) them in accord with their actions. The verb is *havad*, the root for servant which in vs. 8 the Lord calls King Nebuchadnezzar. It’s as though this king’s *heved* will become *havad* (cf. vs. 7), his title bestowed by the Lord anticipating his own demise.

Vs. 15 is a very brief pause, if you will, where Jeremiah breaks in where he says that the Lord told him to take a cup of wrath or *chemah* (cf. 21.11) which all the nations will drink. Then he describes what he will do. The cup will cause them to stagger and be crazed, the latter being *halal* as found in 20.13 but here with a different meaning, to become foolish, as they are devoured by the sword.

Vs. 18 changes tone, that is, Jeremiah takes the cup from the Lord himself and makes Jerusalem and the cities of Judah drink it which makes them a hissing and curse down to the present, the verbs being *sharaq* and *qalal* (cf. 19.8 and 15.9). This verse contains five words prefaced with the preposition *l-* (literally, ‘to’) which drives home the Lord’s determination to see through on his promise. Without missing a beat, he continues with mentioning Egypt, Uz, Philistines, Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, Sidon,

coastlands, Dedan, Tema, Buz, Arabia, Zimri, Elam, Media, kingdoms of the north and the remaining ones of the world. Finally in a separate sentence the Lord says that the king of Babylon will be the last to drink of this cup of wrath. While many such names are now no longer familiar, they are included through vs. 27 simply for effect and to show the Lord's determination.

As with vs. 15, vs. 27 is a very brief pause where the Lord speaks to Jeremiah as the God of Israel, bringing in that title in order that all the nations involved may acknowledge him as identified with that one. Naturally these nations will refuse to drink from the cup of wrath, and there's no clear indication that they did or did not. Chances are they persisted in their refusal prompting the Lord to take action not so much against them but against his own people, Jerusalem. The Lord refuses to mention it aloud because of the evil (*rah*, cf. vs. 7) he's about to bring about. This is followed by the next-to-last sentence in prose form or the second sentence of vs. 29 where the Lord will bring a sword against all the nations. So it seems that both Israel and everyone else is about to suffer the same devastation.

Vs. 30 has the Lord telling Jeremiah to prophesy a whole laundry list of *davar* against the just mentioned nations (and Israel), the preposition 'el- being used which means literally "to." From here Jeremiah adopts a poetic form of address (vs. 33 being an exception) which makes it all the more terrifying. This same verse begins with a list of words where sound is emphasized and continues through vs. 32: roar, utter his voice, roar mightily, shout, clamor and concludes with tempest (*sahar*; also as whirlwind), this implying the sounds just mentioned and then some. He will do it from his holy habitation or *naveh* (cf. 23.3 but not noted there), this noun also being a pasture.

The prose form of vs. 33 is a kind of break between two lashings-out by the Lord with mention of "that day" which goes unspecified but intended to put those whom he's addressing on notice. Those slain will go unburied and unlamented.

Vs. 34 through the end of this chapter have a series of condemnations against Israel's rulers depicted as shepherds who have neglected...abused...those in their care and will suffer, as the concluding verse says, the Lord's fierce anger, *charon* (cf. 12.13). Such wrath is likened to that of a lion. Compare this with 23.3+ where the Lord will appoint a righteous Branch as shepherd.

3) shakam, shamah, 5) shuv, rah, mahalal, 'adamah, yashav, 6) kahas, rah, 7) shamah, rah, 8) shamah, heved, 9) 'erets, 10) 'avad, qol, 10) 'erets, 11) charbah,

shamah, havad, 12) paqad, shemamah, 14) shalam, havad, 15) chemah, halal, 18) sharaq, qalal, 29) rah, 32) sahar, 38) charon

## Chapter Twenty-Six

This chapter opens with the beginning of King Jehoiakim's reign and the familiar *davar* which is rendered more specifically as "this *davar*." In vs. 2 there follows its articulation with "Thus says the Lord." The occasion is Jeremiah addressing the people standing in the court of the Lord's house, *beyth* synonymous with the temple at Jerusalem, his speech being short or through vs. 6. He is to *davar* all the *davar* given to him by the Lord and isn't to hold back a single one. The verb is *garah* which also means to take in, to lay up. "For every head is shaved (i.e., clipped) and every beard cut off" [48,37]. As a footnote in the RSV has it, the occasion may have been the Feast of Booths when people far and wide attended.

Vs. 3 begins with *'ulay* (cf. 21.22) or "it may be" or "perhaps" and deserves closer attention at this point in the book. Through one small word we get a glimpse at the Lord's long suffering of Israel's stubbornness of heart and refusal to accept him. He holds out the possibility that..."it may be"...they will *shamah* (cf. 25.11) or listen while at the same time he knows full well they will refuse. If the impossible happens, the Lord promises to repent or change his mind, *nacham* (cf. 18.10). This is used in reference to three uses of evil or *rah* (cf. 25.29): each person's evil way, the evil intended by the Lord and the one of the people collectively speaking.

Vs. 4 has the Lord giving instructions to Jeremiah with the almost formulaic "Thus says the Lord" opening with *'im* or "if" which contains three parts followed by "then" or the conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 6. The sequence runs thus: listen (to me), walk (*torah*, cf. 16.11), heed (*davar*) leading to this-house-as- Shiloh (cf. 7.15) and city-as-curse (*qelalah*, cf. 24.9). As for this conjunctive, it is quite frequent in Chapter Twenty-Six compared with the rest of the book, often as "when" and "then." They will be pointed out because their subtle yet essential role in the narrative.

Vs. 7 begins with the conjunctive *v-* which the RSV doesn't translate, introducing the priests, prophets and all the people gathered to hear Jeremiah *davar* the Lord's *davar*. Compare the location "house of the Lord" with "court of the Lord's house" of vs. 2, the latter indicative of being within the Jerusalem temple compared with another building. The conjunctive *v-* begins vs. 8 (translated as 'and') followed by a second as "then" which shows the swift reaction of Jeremiah's audience to these

*davar*. They seized him, *taphas* as in 37.13: “When he was at the Benjamin Gate, a sentry there...seized Jeremiah the prophet.” Along with this, everyone couldn’t resist shouting out that he must be put to death. The people found it impossible to bear hearing Jeremiah comparing their city with the devastation of Shiloh (cf. vs. 6), *charav* (cf. 2.12) being the verb. Vs. 9 concludes with a second sentence, that is, everyone gathered about Jeremiah, *qahal* often associated with a sacred assembly. Using *qahal* in this situation is an anti-*qahal*, if you will, not in the least a religious gathering.

Vs. 10 begins with the conjunctive *v-* as “when” relative to the princes of Judah coming from the king’s house to the house of the Lord where they met the priests and prophets who then (vs. 11, i.e., the conjunctive) spoke to the princes and people. The two conjunctives intimate fast-paced action in a desire to rouse the population that they may convict and do away with Jeremiah. Vs. 12 continues the action with the conjunctive as “then” or Jeremiah making his own defense by getting up to speak. He doesn’t mince words—doesn’t alter his original message—and puts it right out there by saying that the Lord had sent him to prophesy. Note two uses of “this” relative to house (the Jerusalem temple) and the city itself, a way of singling both out in a not so subtle negative fashion.

Vs. 13 has the conjunctive *v-* as “now” where Jeremiah tells...virtually begs...the people to do the following three: 1) amend their ways, *yatav* (cf. 18.11) literally meaning to be good, 2) to make good their ways and doings (*derek* and *mahalal*, cf. 23.22 and 25.5) and 3) to obey or *shamah* (to listen, cf. vs. 3) which here is prefaced with the preposition *b-*, literally as “in the voice of the Lord.” Within this same verse is another conjunctive as “and” which shows what would happen should the people follow through and the Lord repent of the evil (*rah*, cf. vs. 3) which he has *davar*. The verb is *nacham* as in vs. 3, here with the preposition *hal-*, literally as “upon you.”

The conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 14 translates as “but” where Jeremiah speaks of himself, as being in the hands of the people for them to do as they wish. Naturally he conditions this by saying that if they execute him, innocent blood will be upon “this city,” another use of “this” as though he could barely bring himself to pronounce its proper name. Jeremiah concludes his defense with a tinge of resignation, namely, that he had been faithful to his divine mission by *davar* all the *davar* given him in their ears, planting them there but to no avail.

In vs. 16 the princes and people didn’t waste time as signified by the conjunctive *v-*

“then.” That is to say, they addressed the priests and prophets who would suffer most from the temple’s destruction by coming to Jeremiah’s defense, for as vs. 11 has it, the latter demanded his death because he *davar* in the name of the Lord.

Furthermore, some elders cite the example of Micah who issued a prophecy when Hezekiah was king by quoting from his book (i.e., 3.12) which runs the same as what we have in vs. 18. In sum, Zion, Jerusalem and the temple will be destroyed. As a footnote in the NIV points out, this is the only instance in the Old Testament when one prophet quotes another with the source being identified.

Vs. 19 has the princes and people asking the priests and prophets two rhetorical questions with regard to King Hezekiah. Despite Micah’s dire prophecy, he didn’t put him to death and repented of the evil brought to bear upon him. Then they conclude ominously that they, the current generation, will bring a great evil (*rah*, cf. vs. 13) upon itself (*nephesh* also as soul, cf. 20.13).

Vs. 20 speaks of a second prophet like Micah...Uriah...who used *davar* similar to those of Jeremiah although he isn’t mentioned elsewhere in the Bible. Uriah had faced a problem common to most prophets, namely, that King Jehoiakim sought his death, vs. 21 adding for effect warriors and princes who had heard his *davar*. Although Uriah fled to Egypt for safety, nevertheless the king sent agents to capture him, bring him back home and then slay him.

So with the two cautionary tales of Micah and Uriah in mind, Chapter Twenty-Six concludes with Ahikam, an official of King Josiah, who protected Jeremiah. In this way the people were prevented from putting him to death.

2) garah, 3) ‘ulay, shamah, nacham, rah, 4) torah, 6) qelalah, 8) taphas, 9) charav, 13) yatav, derek, mahalal, shamah, nacham, rah, 19) nephesh

## Chapter Twenty-Seven

Vs. 1 gives a time frame for when the *davar* of the Lord came to Jeremiah, the very beginning of King Zedekiah’s reign. Surely between the conclusion of the last chapter and the beginning of the new one Jeremiah had been in a state of waiting for this *davar*, not exactly knowing what it would entail. One thing can be certain. The Lord is watching continuously and governing all the events unfolding through this *davar*. On this occasion he prepares the king for his coming enslavement by telling him to fashion thongs and yoke-bars, *mosar* and *motar* (cf. 2.20 but not noted there and

28.10), the two being pretty much the same. The means of doing it is by Jeremiah assuming the uncomfortable yoke-bars and walking around with them which caught everyone's attention.

Next Jeremiah is to send word (the Hebrew text has 'send them') to five neighboring kings by means of envoys (*mal'ak* also as messenger as well as angel, the only used of this word in Jeremiah). They have come to King Zedekiah in Jerusalem and speak to him who uses the customary "Thus says the Lord of hosts." The Lord wants to make it clear that he is in command by putting these words in the mouths of the envoys, words usually reserved for prophets. They begin as mouthpieces of the Lord saying that he made the earth through his great power (*koach*, cf. 10.12) and outstretched arm, the former being exercised by the latter. Then men and animals are added, giving all this to whom it seems right (*yashar*). "I will make them walk...in a straight path in which they shall not stumble" [31.9].

Now the Lord throws in the clincher, that he has handed over all lands to King Nebuchadnezzar<sup>2</sup>, king of Babylon. He calls this king (who is completely clueless of being used) his servant or *heved* just as in 25.8. It's as though Nebuchadnezzar as *heved* will become *havad* or become a slave, thereby anticipating his own demise. This will come about after all nations are subject to the king or as vs. 7 puts it, "until the time of his own land comes." That is to say, until his kingdom is subjected by many nations which will make him their slave, *havad*. Such is the prophecy from the Lord through Jeremiah. However, there's an interim period where King Nebuchadnezzar will hold forth described in vs. 8 and so forth. Should any nation fail to submit to him, the Lord himself will take it upon himself to punish them with the sword, famine and pestilence until all are consumed, *tamam* (cf. 24.10) being an apt verb which sums up the three types of punishment.

Obviously those listening to these dire words will try to make good their escape by any means possible. In their desperation they are tempted to consult any one and any thing. This includes prophets, diviners, dreamers, soothsayers and sorcerers who all with one accord proclaim loudly that nobody shall serve Nebuchadnezzar. In other words, what they're prophesying a lie or *sheqer* (cf. 23.26) which conforms to a misguided desire by the people. This *sheqer* will have the following effect: Israel removed from their land...not just that but far away as the verb *rachaq* (cf. 2.5)

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<sup>2</sup> As the RSV notes, Jeremiah uses the form Nebuchadnessar through Chapters 27-29 whereas the form Nebuchadrezzar appears elsewhere; i.e., the same person.

reveals, Such *rachaq* is accompanied by the Lord driving them out, *nadach* (cf. 23.2) after which they will perish. On the other hand, any nation submitting to King Nebuchadnezzar's rule will remain on its own land or '*adamah* (cf. 25.5) which it can cultivate. Thus the role of '*erets* in the verses so far plays an important role as to the identity of Israel as well as other nations. To be removed from this '*erets* is equivalent to a death sentence.

Vs. 12 begins with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated in the RSV where Jeremiah turns attention to King Zedekiah, speaking words or *davar davar*. That is to say, he urges the king to submit to the king of Babylon by placing his neck under his yoke (cf. vs. 2), subjects included. If he does, they'll be spared by serving him. Next comes a rhetorical question: if he fails to do this it will result in the death of both he and the people. King Zedekiah is encouraged not to listen to the *davar* of the prophets, the equivalent to a blatant lie or *sheqer* (cf. vs. 10). Unfortunately such is not the case. Because the Lord hadn't sent these charlatans, he will drive out (*nadach*, cf. vs. 10) Zedekiah which will result in his death along with the false prophets. As more often than not, the people will end up suffering the most even if they're not involved directly.

Vs. 16 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "then" which counters the one of vs. 12 directed to King Zedekiah, this time aimed at the priests and all "this people," the phrase being used several times before in somewhat contemptuous fashion. In a last-ditch effort, Jeremiah attempts to persuade both not to listen to the *davar* of the false prophets. Their prophecy consists in saying that the vessels of the temple (i.e., 'Lord's house') will be returned in the near future, for when Babylon had invaded Judah earlier, they were taken away as booty. And so we have yet another lie or *sheqer* (cf. vs. 14) In place of this, for a second time Jeremiah urges a long term solution, submission to King Nebuchadnezzar followed by a rhetorical question as to why Jerusalem should become a desolation (*charbah*) when there's no reason for it.

With an air of barely disguised ridicule the Lord says that if these prophets are genuine and if his *davar* is with them, they should be free to intercede (*pagah*, cf. 7.16) with him. The reason? That the remaining vessels in the temple not be shipped off to Babylon, for some were left to continue the required rites of sacrifice. Such items include the pillars, sea, stands and assorted vessels as noted in vs. 19. However, the Lord saw through these prophets and knew they wouldn't consult him.

Chapter Twenty-Seven concludes with the prospect that the Babylonians will carry off even the remaining sacred vessels. There they will remain until the Lord gives

them proper attention, *paqad* (cf. 25.32). Despite this disaster which could be avoided, the Lord will intervene by returning the vessels and putting them back in their proper place, the temple at Jerusalem.

1) mosar, motar, 3) mal'ak, 4) tsavah, 5) yashar, 6) heved, 7) havad, 8) tamam, 10) sheqer, 10) rashaq, nadach, 11) 'adamah, 'erets, 14) sheqer, 15) nadach, 16) sheqer, 17) charbah, 18) pagah, 22) paqad

## Chapter Twenty-Eight

Compare vs. 1 with 26.1 and 27.1, all three noting the beginning of a reign, the first being with respect to King Jeohoiakim and the other two with respect to King Zedekiah. The commencement of a king's reign is a means of situating a given event and in a way, of telling time on a larger, national scale. The verse at hand has the conjunctive *v-* which isn't translated, signifying a close connection between what had just occurred and what is about to unfold; the other two lack it. That is to say, Hananiah from Gibeon is identified as a prophet who spoke (*'amar*) to Jeremiah in the "house of the Lord" or Jerusalem temple literally "in the eyes" of the priests and all the people.

Hananiah had called for an assembly which means he had some clout among both people and the priestly caste, otherwise no one would have paid attention to him. So in vs. 2 he begins his address with the familiar prophetic preamble of "Thus says the Lord of hosts." He doesn't use the verb or noun *davar*, a significant clue as to his lack of authenticity such as "Hear the *davar* of the Lord." Hananiah proceeds to announce that within two years the temple vessels carried off to Babylon will be returned. Compare with the authentic "and remain there until the day when I give attention to them," the concluding verse of the last chapter. *Paqad* is the verb there, something Hananiah is incapable of doing. He also proclaims boldly that the Lord will return Jeconiah, son of King Jehoiakim along with exiles in Babylon, this after having broken the yoke imposed on them.

Upon finishing these words, Jeremiah gets up and directly addressed Hananiah before the assembly. Everyone knew of Jeremiah's dire prophetic words, so a collective groan must have filled the Lord's house knowing that he'd launch into one of his familiar tirades. He begins with "Amen" which shows an apparent agreement of Hananiah's prophecy (we don't hear that from those assembled). Jeremiah concurs with the heart-felt desire of all his *davar*, using this word himself along with

the verb *qum* (cf. 23.5) meaning to arise...to have the *davar* arise, if you will.

Everyone familiar with Jeremiah took in these words half-heartedly, waiting for him to reveal his true colors. Obviously he didn't disappoint, for in vs. 7 he draws everyone's attention to the *davar* which he is about to *davar*, contrary to Hananiah not using it. In fact, Jeremiah makes a point by using this word and gives emphasis by doing it literally in the ears of both those present and all the people. He gives a brief history lesson, that is, speaks of all the prophets from ancient times who had predicted calamities. Then he adds that the sign of a genuine *davar* as used in vs. 9 is when it comes to peace or *shalom* (cf. 16.5).

Vs. 10 has Hananiah make a dramatic move in response to Jeremiah basically accusing him of being a liar. He took a pair of yoke bars upon Jeremiah's neck which apparently he had going back to 27.2. That means Jeremiah addressed his audience in the temple so burdened, a fact not clear until now. Barely could Hananiah contain his glee when he saw an opportunity to remove these yoke bars from his challenger in order to advance his position. And so he did after which Jeremiah simply went his way.

Vs. 12 begins with "sometime" or sometime after this incident which must have been humiliating for Jeremiah before so many people, this in the temple of the Lord. Nevertheless, the *davar* of the Lord came to him once again. Now it was time to avenge himself for this all too public humiliation. The Lord told his prophet that instead of yoke bars of wood, ones made of iron will take their place upon the people. Then he brings up King Nebuchadnezzar again, the one who will effect this change from the relative ease of wood to the harshness of iron.

Shortly afterwards Jeremiah seeks out Hananiah to lay it on thick, telling him in vs. 15 to listen or *shamah* (cf. 26.13). We don't know if it was public or not. The point was to expose Hananiah as a fraud telling people to put their trust in a lie or *sheqer* (cf. 27.16). The penalty is that the Lord will blot him out for having *davar* rebellion against the Lord, the noun being *sarah* (cf. 29.30) or literally, rebellion to ('*el-*) the Lord. A fitting end to this saga is the last verse where Hananiah died, the cause not given. Then again, it's irrelevant. He—rather the lie he had propagated—was no more.

6) *qum*, 9) *shalom*, 15) *shamah*, *sheqer*, *sarah*