

Chapter Twenty-Nine

The conjunctive *v-* opens this chapter and goes untranslated in the RSV showing the close connection (as it does usually) between what had just transpired and the current situation. Jeremiah puts his *davar* in the form of a letter to those in exile in Babylon. This is the first occasion where *davar* are consigned to being captured, if you will, in a letter, presumably a scroll of parchment, and meant to be read aloud. Surely the bearers of this letter, Elasah and Gemariah, took exceptional care to protect these *davar* as they made their way eastward. As for Jeremiah, he was left virtually alone or among those not deemed suitable to be brought to Babylon. Chances are his captives discovered his identity, he having worked in their favor, so they allowed him to remain home, a “reward” for having prophesied in Babylon’s favor or so they had thought. Nevertheless, Jeremiah must have had some misgivings about not being taken so as to be with his fellow Israelites. On second thought, his life might be in danger, some exiles holding him responsible for their miserable plight.

In vs. 4-23 the *davar* of the letter are read among the exiles in Babylon after trusted local scribes had copied it as quickly as possible that they may diffuse it among the Israelites. They read it over beforehand to make sure these *davar* would be acceptable almost as though coming directly from God through Jeremiah’s mouth. Like his spoken word, the *davar* at hand begin in typical fashion with “Thus says the Lord of hosts.” Immediately it follows with the Lord taking direct responsibility for having sent them into exile, this in case anyone had doubt as to their situation. If the Lord was responsible, he has the power to reverse it.

The letter starts off in an upbeat manner, perhaps surprising to many listeners because the exiles are told to build houses, get married and increase. In other words, they are to stay in place. Though not explicit, the listeners must have drawn a parallel between their exile and their ancestors in Egypt who prospered over a period of four hundred years. If they could do so, so could we. The major advantage of the current situation is that the exiles had this divine intervention as a guide and were counting on a similar dramatic rescue...a second Moses and to some, hopefully not Jeremiah. Meanwhile Jeremiah (rather, the divine *davar*) encourages the exiles to seek (*darash*, cf. 21.7) the welfare or *shalom* (cf. 28.9) of Babylon. If they do so, this *shalom* will rebound to their own *shalom*.

Right after these encouraging *davar*, the Lord comes off in vs. 8 with a second “Thus says the Lord of hosts” where he warns the people not to consult diviners, soothsayers or sorcerers (cf. 27.9) whom he identifies as belonging to them (“*your*

diviners,' etc.). Actually they are in the midst of those led off to exile, *qerev* (cf. 14.10) suggestive of being in their very center and hence all the more dangerous. In large part they were responsible for their plight and continue to foster a false hope among their fellows. Babylon was renowned for their own diviners who saw them as a danger to be watched since they had the potential of fermenting an uprising. For example, they were fond of transmitting their messages supposedly from the Lord by dreams who advised against serving King Nechudnezzar. A temptation, to be sure, but this would seal the exiles' fate for good. In other words, their prophesying is an outright lie or *sheqer* (cf. 28.15) because the Lord hadn't sent them.

The letter containing the divine *davar* continues with a third "Thus says the Lord of hosts" in vs. 10. This is the most important part of the letter because the Lord says that after seventy years in Babylon the Lord will visit his people, *paqad* (cf. 27.22) as noted earlier which has military connotations. Hence his visit can be taken mistakenly as a divine military intervention...in sum, an invasion of Babylon. Seventy years turns out to be about one generation away, not terribly long. Concomitant with this *paqad* is the Lord fulfilling his promise and return the exiles to "this place" or *maqom* (cf. 22.3), another word for Israel. The text reads literally as "I will arise upon you my good *davar*," *qum* (cf. 28.6) being the verb. The exiles are west of their native *maqom*, so this *qum* is not unlike the sun rising toward their east, beckoning them home.

In vs. 11 the Lord gives further reassurance insofar as he knows the plans he has in store for the exiles, *yadah* (cf. 24.6) as intimate knowledge coupled with *machashevaheth* (cf. 18.18 but not noted there) and often associated with evil thoughts, not the case at hand. Perhaps that's why the Lord uses it as a quick after-thought coupled with *shalom*, *'acharyth* and *tiqvah* or future and hope (cf. vs. 7, 23.20 and 31.17), the second two not noted. Vs. 12 follows with "then" or the conjunctive *v-* where the Lord gives in to the people's response, namely, that he will hear their prayers. Usually this hearing or *shamah* (cf. 28.15) is done by the people whereas here it's by the Lord. Subsequent to *shamah* in vs. 13 we have seeking and finding the Lord, *baqash* and *matsa'* both found in 5.1 and to be done by the heart (*lev*, cf. 24.7). Sometimes the request to seek the Lord is fraught with disappointments or half-hearted efforts. However, if done sincerely, the Lord will respond. Not only that, in vs. 14 the Lord will do the following two which are effected as one:

1) Restore his people's fortunes, *shuv* and *shevyth* (cf. 30.3), the latter derived from the former (cf. 25.5), essentially meaning that he will return them to their

former state.

2) Gather (*qavats*, cf. 23.3) Israel not just from Babylon, her current place of exile, but from all the nations. His bringing them back to their native place (*shuv* and *maqom* (cf. vs. 14 and vs. 10) is added for good measure.

In vs. 15 the Lord takes words right out of the exiles' mouth, the false claim that he has raised up prophets for them in Babylon. In the next verse he follows up with the fourth "Thus says the Lord" with regard to King Zedekiah (not mentioned by name). He's located in Jerusalem and identified specifically as sitting on David's throne. Although spared, essentially he was a king without a kingdom. Those in the capitol will suffer a far worse fate in the relative safety of Babylon by being afflicted with sword, famine and pestilence. Such is the usual scourge befitting anyone who did not heed (*shamah*, cf. vs. 12) the Lord's *davar*. Not only that, a whole bunch of other misfortunes are to be heaped upon them.

The all-important *shamah* with regard to *davar*, hearing or obedience following upon word, again comes into play in vs. 20. Here the Lord addresses the exiles followed by the fifth occurrence of "Thus says the Lord." Now he speaks of Ahab and Zedekiah, not the two kings but two false prophets who are uttering lies (*sheqer*, cf. vs. 9). The punishment? They will be handed over to death at the hands of King Nebuchadrezzar. Both have brought a curse or *qelalah* (cf. 26.6) upon the exiles which will be propagated. It consist of using the two names of these charlatans with regard to anyone like them, wishing them to be roasted alive by fire, a common method of execution in Babylon. In addition to the *sheqer* or lie Ahab and Zedekiah had propagated, both have engaged in adultery and spoke further *sheqer* in the Lord's name. All this must have been disconcerting for the exiles who thought that they might be able to sit out their captivity in relative peace.

By no means is the Lord finished. In vs. 24 he speaks of a false prophet called Shemaiah whose name is a play on the verb *shamah* or to listen. In other words, Shemaiah does not *shamah*. He is among the exiles in Babylon whom the Lord accuses of not having rebuked Jeremiah's prophecy which had come true. It turns out that the priest Zephaniah had read the letter. In his sympathy toward Jeremiah, he decides to punish Shemaiah, utterly blotting him and his family out of existence for having plotted rebellion against the Lord. The noun is *sarah* as in 28.16 with the verb *davar*.

7) darash, shalom, 8) qerev, 9) sheqer, paqad, 10) qum, maqom, 11) yadah, shalom, 'acharyth, tiqvah, 12) shamah, 13) baqash, matsa', lev, 14) shuv, shevyth, qavats,

shuv, maqom, 19) shamah, 20) shamah, 21) sheqer, 22) qelalah, 23) sheqer, 24) shamah, 32) sarah

Chapter Thirty

This chapter opens with the *davar* of the Lord coming to Jeremiah or literally “*davar* of the Lord was to Jeremiah,” the phrasing of which suggests not-coming but a being-with of varying intensity as with similar instances. Thus the divine *davar* may be said never to be apart from Jeremiah...present but not always speaking.

The Lord bids Jeremiah to write all the *davar* he had spoken in a book, this reminiscent of Moses who wrote the *davar* of the covenant: “Write these *davar* in accordance with these *davar* I have made a covenant with you and with Israel” [Ex 34.27]. In both instances this writing was done in an almost instantaneous manner without haste or weariness, the *davar* uttered and the *davar* written being virtually synonymous. As for this writing, it’s to be put in a *sepher* or a scroll, a way of making visible and permanent for all to both hear as well as to see. Nothing is said as to where this book is to be delivered as the letter of 29.1 sent to the exiles in Babylon. Most likely it went there. As for *sepher*, it applies to both letter and book.

The Lord continues to speak with Jeremiah through vs. 3 where he informs him as to the content of the book apparently just before writing it. This verse begins with “behold” or *hineh* (cf. 21.8), a way of introducing something important, namely, an explanation to Jeremiah of the *davar* to be sent. The phrase “days are coming” lack the customary ominous warning and are intended to strike a positive note. The Lord is going to restore the fortunes of his people, *shuv* being used as it is in 29.14. Even the phrase “my people” is a relief, a kind of code if you will, signifying that the Lord hadn’t rejected them totally. *Shuv* applies to both Judah and Israel, bringing them to their own land or ‘*erets* (cf. 27.11) given to their fathers after which they’ll take possession of it (*yarash*, cf. 49.1). The three elements of ‘*erets*, fathers and *yarash* are crucial for Judah and Israel to maintain their identity and perhaps to signal their eventual union (or re-union) as one nation.

Vs. 4 begins with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated in the RSV to show the connection between the Lord’s *davar* to Jeremiah and the *davar* contained in the book along with the usual “Thus says the Lord.” He begins with the first person plural quoting, as it were, what the exiles were saying to each other in their plight. That is to say, they’ve heard a cry (*qol* also as voice, cf. 25.10) which contains three

elements:

1) Panic or *charadah* also as trembling, fear. “They will cloth themselves with trembling” [Ezk 26.16].

2) *Pachad* which connotes dread. “Terror, pit and snare are before you, O inhabitant of Moab” [48.43]!

3) No peace or *shalom* (cf. 29.11).

This threefold *qol* prompts three rhetorical questions in vs. 6:

1) Can a man bear a child?

2) Why does a man act as though he were pregnant?

3) Why has his face become pale?

Vs. 7 gives the answer, if you will: the day on which this will occur is so great no one can compare it with anything else (cf. vs. 3, ‘days are coming’). Nevertheless, the same verse says that although distress or *tsarah* (cf. 16.19) is in store for Jacob, salvation will come out of it, the verb being *yashah* (cf. 17.14).

Vss. 5-7 are in poetic form whereas vss. 8-9 are in prose; vs. 10 through the rest of Chapter Thirty revert to poetic form. Vs. 8 mentions “that day,” presumably the same one of great distress in vs. 7 where the Lord does something favorable despite it being foreboding. This second mention is an occasion when he will remove the existing yoke on his people’s neck, freeing them from their slavery. Although not mentioned, this slavery is imposed by Babylon. Once so freed, the people will serve (*havad*, cf. 27.7) the Lord as well as King David who’s mentioned as if he were alive, a way of saying that the existing king inherits the throne directly from him. As for this king, he isn’t ruling now but will be, for vs. 9 says that the Lord will raise (*qum*, cf. 29.10) him up.

Vs. 10 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” to show, as it often does, the close connection between what had been recounted and the current situation. The Lord tells both Jacob and Israel neither to fear nor to be dismayed, *yare’* and *chatat* (cf. 5.24 and 14.4). The reason? He will save them (*yashah*, cf. vs. 9) but will do this from afar along with their children currently held captive. This salvation-at-a-distance must have puzzled Jeremiah’s listeners as to how it would come about. Would the Lord appoint someone, a kind of knight in shining armor, to ride into Babylon, slay its inhabitants and bring back the exiles or even better, come down from heaven itself? Regardless, the main point is that Jacob shall return, enjoy quiet

and ease and not fear from anyone else. The three verbs begin with the letter “sh:” *shuv* (cf. vs. 3), *shaqat* and *sha’an*. The second two are similar; the first implies resting down and the second to live in tranquility (cf. 46.27 for both).

Compare the salvation-at-a-distance just described (*yashah* again, cf. vs. 7) in vs. 11 with the Lord saying that he is with the exiles (Jacob being mentioned in vs. 10, not Israel) as well as the familiar “Thus says the Lord. “ At the same time he promises to make a “full end” of the nations or more specifically those among whom the people had been scattered. The noun is *kalah* as in 5.18 and used with regard to the people not suffering this *kalah*. Nevertheless, they will be subject to chastisement, not letting them off the hook as far as punishment is concerned. As for the first part, *yasar* with *mishpat* (cf. 10.26 and 23.5) read literally “discipline to judgement.” As for the second part, *naqah* or to be pure is used twice reading literally “I will not leave you innocent to be innocent.”

Between vss. 12 and 15 the Lord spells out the chastisement and punishment described in vs. 11 starting with “Thus says the Lord.” He tells the people that their hurt is incurable and their wound is grievous, the adjectives being ‘*anash* and *chalah* (cf. 17.9 and 14.17, the latter not noted there, the latter alternately as sick). They know it, of course, but are afraid to admit it to the Lord who had to confront them head on as he did in the Garden of Eden with the man and woman. In vs. 13 the Lord rubs it in further, that no one is available to uphold their cause nor is there any medicine strong enough to effect a cure. As for the former, the verb *dyn* and the noun derived from it (same spelling) are used, literally as “no one to judge your judgment (or cause).” Both the verb and noun are found last in 22.16 but not noted there.

Because of this self-inflicted misery, the lovers of both Israel and Jacob who, after all, are the two being addressed, have forsaken them, *shakach* and *darash* (cf. 18.13 and 29.7), the latter meaning no one is engaged in seeking. They go unidentified but most likely are surrounding peoples who have seduced and then abandoned the two. As for this abandonment, it isn’t a result of other people *per se* doing such harm but the Lord himself acting through them as the last words of vs. 15 say outrightly. Thus he is treating them harshly as an enemy and a merciless foe, ‘*ayav* and ‘*akzary* (cf. 21.7 but not noted there and 6.23). Such is the result of their great guilt and flagrant sins; the adjective for the latter is *hatsam*, a verb meaning to increase, to be firm (cf. 5.6).

The Lord brings this situation to a head, vs. 15 beginning with a rhetorical question

to which it's impossible to elicit a response as to why the people are crying out over their hurt or *shavar* (cf. 19.10) also as a breaking. Without waiting for a response, he continues by saying that their sins are flagrant or *hatsam*, the second use of these words (cf. vs. 14).

In vs. 16 the Lord changes his tune abruptly, as if he realized that he had been overdoing it, this signified by *laken* or therefore. Now the tables are turned fourfold: 1) Those devouring Israel and Jacob will be devoured, 2) their enemies will be led into captivity, 3) those despoiling will be despoiled and 4) those preying on them shall be preyed upon. In place of these the Lord will restore health and heal wounds, this the second instance of *shuv* (cf. vs. 3). The first reads literally "I will cause to ascend longevity or health to you," '*arukah* (cf. 8.21) and the verb to the latter is *rapha*' (cf. 17.14) or to heal. This is in response to their enemies calling them an outcast, the participle *nadach* being used (cf. 27.15), essentially someone who had been thrust out violently and not cared for (*darash*. cf. vs. 14).

From vs. 18 through the end of Chapter Thirty the Lord elaborates upon his turn of heart starting with the familiar "Thus says the Lord" along with "behold" or *hineh*. These are two favored ways of getting attention which here are combined in order to make sure Israel and Jacob are paying close attention. More specifically, the Lord will do a whole series of marvels described through vs. 22 which are listed accordingly:

Restore Jacob's fortunes, the third instance of *shuv* in this context, here as it pertains to Jacob's tents.

Have compassion on his dwellings, *racham* (cf. 21.14). In other words, both those preferring to live as nomads or shepherds and those opting for city life will be free to do so.

Vs. 18 also includes a city which goes unnamed but most likely Jerusalem, for palace is mentioned, '*armon* being the noun and found in 17.27 in conjunction with the capitol.

As a result of this fourfold *shuv* (tents, dwellings, city and palace), the people burst into songs of thanksgiving and merry-making, *todah* (cf. 17.26 but not noted there) and a *qol* (cf. vs. 5) or voice associated with the participle *sachaq* (cf. 15.17) which also can imply mocking or scorn.

A multiplication of the population and honoring them, the latter being *kaved* and the only use in Jeremiah. It also means to be heavy, weighty as in Lam 3.7: "He has put heavy chains on me."

A sure sign of divine favor is when the Lord speaks of children as in vs. 20,

more specifically as in times past which most likely refers to the kingdom before being split into Jacob and Israel.

The establishment or re-constitution of one congregation or *hedah* (cf. 6.19) which as then, now will be established (*kun*, cf. 10.12) before the Lord. At the same time the Lord will punish all oppressors, the verb being *paqad* (cf. 29.9) with its familiar connotations.

Both the prince and ruler shall be of their own kin, not imposed from without as by an occupier. Vs. 21 says that the Lord will “make him draw near” while not distinguishing between the two which could be taken as one person. After the Lord makes this person draw near to him, he will approach, the two verbs being *harav* and *nagash*. Without this divine invitation it would be impossible for anyone to come to the Lord which is why this part of vs. 21 is put as a rhetorical question out there for all to ponder. As for the two verbs, the first is found in 6.20 but not noted there as being sweet; it also means to act as surety and in the verse at hand is used with *lev* (cf. 29.13) or heart. Thus the phrase reads literally as “give surety of heart.” As for *nagash*, it’s found next in 42.1: “And all the people from the least to the greatest came near.”

The last of this list of divine benefits begun with vs. 18 is a summary of sorts where the Lord says that he will be their God and they will be their people. Note the use of the preposition “to” or *l-* which literally runs as to me, to people, to you and to God.

The remaining two verses conclude on a definite vigorous note. That is to say, after the Lord has come out passionately on behalf of his people, Jeremiah beholds (*hineh*, cf. vs. 3) a storm from the Lord, *seharah* (cf. 23.19 but not noted there). This is a whirlwind, the same type which swept the prophet Elijah into heaven as recounted in 2Kg 2.11. Jeremiah couldn’t help but draw the parallel...would the same happen to him upon completion of his ministry?

In the concluding verse (24) this *seharah* is manifested also as fierce anger or *charon* (cf. 25.38) more as an intense burning which will not turn back (*shuv*, cf. vs. 18) until it has finished what it had set out to do or *qum* (cf. vs. 9), this verb usually meaning to arise. *Qum* has as its object a divine intent or *mezimah* which connotes a certain craftiness, even lewdness as in 11.15. As for his mind or *lev* (cf. vs. 21), this most often refers to the heart or that which is most dear to him.

2) sepher, 3) hineh, shuv, yarash, ‘erets, 5) qol, charadah, pachad, shalom, 7) tsarah, yashah, 9) havad, qum, 10) yare’, chatat, shuv, shaqat, sha’an, 11) yashah, yasar, kalah, mishpat, naqah, 12) ‘anash, chalah, 13) dyn, dyn, 14) shakach, darash, ‘ayav,

‘akzary, hatsam, 15) shavar, hatsam, 17), shuv, ‘arukah, rapha’, nadach, darash, 18) shuv, racham, ‘armon, 19) todah, qol, sachaq, kaved, 20) hedah, kun, paqad, 21) harav, lev, nagash, 23) hineh, seharah, charon, shuv, qum, mezimah, lev

Chapter Thirty-One

This rather lengthy chapter continues the theme of Israel’s return from exile in Babylon and her restoration. It begins with “At (*b-* or ‘in’) that time,” the last occasion being 8.1, that being on a less than positive note. As for the Lord, reference to this future time is synonymous with his speaking, the verb *na’am* being in conjunction with many prophetic utterances found last in 30.21 but not noted there. The Lord continues with fleshing out “that time” after making sure the people are paying attention. He will be the God of all Israel’s families or *mishpachah* (cf. 15.1) which also can refer to tribes; similarly they will be his people. The preposition *l-* is used twice: “to me” and “to people” (no definite article) indicative of a direct, ongoing relationship. Israel, of course, had belonged to the Lord but as her history reveals, strayed often from it. The latest installment in this head-strong attitude, if you will, brought about her exile to Babylon.

Vs. 2 begins with “Thus says the Lord” almost immediately after “says the Lord” of the previous verse. You’d think hearing this incessant command through Jeremiah would impact the people not just now but further back in her history. Unfortunately it seems to have little effect because most are so blinded by their own propensity toward idolatry they might as well be deaf.

The Lord continues to speak through vs. 6 and resumes with another “Thus says the Lord” in vs. 7 after which it goes through vs. 14 before another one appears. In the verse at hand the Lord through Jeremiah says that the people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness. *Saryd* is the noun for survivor as from a slaughter as in 42.17: “They shall have no remnant or survivor from the evil which I will bring upon them.” No information is given as to the number of these survivors, perhaps not many, but they experienced in the desert something akin to what their forefathers went through in the Sinai wilderness after having departed Egypt. *Chen* is the word for grace, also as favor, the only occurrence in this book. “For the Lord God is a sun and shield; he bestows favor and honor” [Ps 84.11].

The same verse continues further implying the Sinai experience or when Israel had sought rest, *ragah* also connoting to terrify, to tremble. “(The Lord) who stirs up the

sea so that its waves roar” [vs. 35]. Vs. 2 flows into the next one, the two being as one sentence. While so engaged in this *ragah*, the Lord appeared “to me” as the Hebrew text has it and does so from afar.

In vs. 3 Lord expresses freely his great love for Israel where the noun ‘*ahavah* (cf. 2.33 but not noted there) and the verb from which it’s derived (‘*ahav*, cf. 20.4) are used. Along with this he speaks of his continued faithfulness to Israel, that is, *mashak* his *chesed* (cf. 16.5), the verb fundamentally as to draw. Often *mashak* applies to drawing to oneself, not away, and implies that the Lord is drawing Israel back to himself in *chesed*, that untranslatable word whose New Testament equivalent is *agape*. “Then they drew Jeremiah up with ropes and lifted him out of the cistern” [38.13].

Vs. 4 begins with “again” which occurs a second time in the same verse as well as beginning vs. 5 which implies that what the Lord is doing now he had done before. While listening to these divine words uttered through Jeremiah, the people couldn’t help but find an echo in Ps 137.1: “By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when remembered Zion.” Now this memory of Zion is about to be left behind or rather, fulfilled. The building (*banah*, cf. 24.6) which the Lord proposes takes place in the future and done by himself. More precisely, he does it passively as well, as it were: “you shall be built.” The second can imply participation by the people in this divine *banah* which applies not just to Jerusalem and other places but to the people themselves as a nation. And the Lord calls this nation a virgin or *betulah* (cf. 18.13).

The second “again” of vs. 4 applies to Israel celebrating the Lord’s intervention on their behalf which they do through dancing. There follows immediately a third “again” in vs. 5 when they shall enjoy the fruit of what they had planted.

Vs. 1 speaks of “that time” whereas vs. 6 mentions a day, a *kairos* if you will, when watchmen (the participle *natsar* as in 4.16 but not noted there) will call (*qara*’, cf. 20.8) in the hill country of Ephraim. Their purpose seems not so much as to warn about potential invaders but to mark various phases of the moon which determine the time for observing various feasts. In the case at hand they exclaim that the people are to go to Zion to worship the Lord.

As noted in vs. 2, what follows from “Thus says the Lord” continues through vs. 6; in vs. 7 it’s noted again and continues through vs. 14. You might say that both form a gap of sorts when Jeremiah is taking a pause to catch his breath and to see whether or not what he had just uttered has impacted his listeners. At the same time he knew

well that shortly upon hearing his word, they will revert to their old ways. This case, however, is different, given that it is in the context of the Babylonian exile. Still—and this is a sore point with Jeremiah and rightly so—he knows instinctively that the people will forget this traumatic event quickly, let alone the Lord’s concern on their behalf.

As for vs. 7, what flows directly from the second “Thus says the Lord” is a command with four parts:

1) To sing with gladness for Jacob or *ranan* with *simchah* (cf. 51.48 and 15.16), the verb usually associated with shouting aloud.

2) Raise shouts or *tsahal* as in 5.8 but not noted there and translated as a horse neighing after someone’s wife. In the verse at hand, it’s for chiefs, literally “in the head of the nations.”

3) Proclaim or something like “make be heard” or *shamah* (cf. 29.24) which is coupled with

4) giving praise or *halal* (cf. 25.15). All four end up with the people saying that the Lord has saved his people (*yashah* (cf. 30.11) who are identified as being a remnant or *she’eryth* (cf. 23.3).

Vs. 8 begins with *hineh* or behold which is not unlike “Thus says the Lord” in the sense of being a means to get attention. The Lord will bring Israel from the north and farthest points of the earth which includes Babylon as well as anywhere else that the people had been scattered or fled to avoid going into exile. Included are those considered societal rejects such as the blind and lame together with women about to give birth. All form a great company or *qahal* (cf. 26.17 but not noted there), this word intimating a solemn, religious gathering.

In vs. 9 Israel will return with weeping or *bakah* (cf. 13.17) while at the same time the Lord will get involved by 1) leading them with consolations, literally with supplications or *tachanunym* (cf. 3.21) and 2) making them walk by brooks of water meaning that the people won’t lack for water. This implies that the people had a collective sense of being guided, albeit invisibly, on a straight path (*derek*, cf. 26.13) without stumbling or *kashal* (cf. 18.13). This, of course, is reminiscent of Ps 23.3: “He leads me beside still waters (literally, ‘waters of rest’); he restores my soul.” In the verse at hand, note the three types of movement: come, walk and lead back or *bo’* (to come in), *yaval* (to conduct or bear along) and *halak* (to go). The Psalm verse just above uses the second.

Essential to all three is that the Lord is a father to Israel as vs. 9 continues, the preposition *l-* being used twice: “to Israel to father” as it reads literally. Also Ephraim is singled out as being the Lord’s first-born referred to in vs. 20, the son of Joseph (cf. Gn 41.50-52).

Vs. 10 opens with “Hear (*shamah*, cf. vs. 7) the *davar* of the Lord,” a slight variation on “Thus says the Lord” noted earlier, reference being upon *davar*. Here it’s addressed to two groups of people: nations or *goy* (cf. 18.13) which is all-inclusive and coast lands or those bordering the Mediterranean Sea. The latter intimates ports where such *goy* chiefly from the west disembark and come to Israel. As for this area, the divine *davar* is to be declared (*nagad*, cf. 9.12). The message of *shamah* and *nagad*, of hearing and declaring concern the Lord who had scattered (*zarah*, cf. 5.11) Israel after which he gathered her (*qavats*, cf. 29.14). Once so assembled, he will keep (*shamar*, cf. 17.21) them as a shepherd, again reminiscent of the sentiment of Psalm 23.

After the announcement to nations and coast lands in vs. 10, vs. 11 spells it out further in terms of the Lord having both ransomed and redeemed Jacob, *padah* and *ga’al*. For the former, cf. 15.21 and for the latter, 50.34: “Their Redeemer is strong.”

Vs. 12 has a second instance of *ranan*, the first being in vs. 7 (‘sing aloud’), the one at hand being on the height of Zion or most likely the temple. Such *ranan* makes the people radiant over the Lord’s goodness. The verb is *nahar* which also means to flow and has echos in Ps 34.5: “Look to him and be radiant so your faces shall never be ashamed.” *Nahar* has practical implications: a super-abundance of grain, wine and oil. Furthermore, in the same verse the life (*nepshesh*, cf. 26.19; also as soul) of the people will resemble a watered garden which will preclude them from languishing. *Raveh* is the adjective with two other biblical references, one of which is Is 58.11 akin to the one at hand: “and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water whose waters fail not.” This watering will preclude languishing or *da’av*. “For I will satisfy the weary soul, and every languishing soul I will replenish” [vs. 25]. Some of those being watered could not help but think of the Garden of Eden where “a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it became four rivers” [Gn 2.10].

Once so ensconced in Zion, vs. 13 speaks of the maidens and young men rejoicing, for the Lord will effect two turn-about, if you will:

- 1) Turn their mourning into joy or ‘*evil* into *sason* (cf. 16.11 and 15.16; the

former not noted there)

2) Gladness for sorrow, *samach* into *yagon* (cf. 8.18). As for the former, it's used in this verse as "the maidens rejoice in the dance." In between these two we have the Lord comforting his people, *nacham* (cf. 26.13). The sentiment expressed in vs. 13 is reminiscent of Rev 21.4: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain."

In vs. 14 the Lord is feasting the singular soul or *nephesh* (cf. vs. 12), of the collective priests, the verb being *ravah* from which *raveh* in vs. 12 is derived as noted in conjunction with vs. 25. Compare this *ravah* with *savah* (cf. 5.7) concerning the people which implies pretty much the same but with emphasis more upon satisfaction. The former applies to drink whereas the latter more with being satisfied in the general sense although drink can be involved. *Ravah* attributes abundance or *deshen* to the priests whereas *savah* concerns divine goodness with regard to the people. *Deshen* also means fatness associated with sacrifices, so it's a fitting term to be connected with priests. "Delight yourself in fatness" Is 55.2. *Tov* is the noun (same spelling as the adjective; cf. 2.7) for goodness or more specifically "my (the Lord's) goodness." The conclusion of the section from vs. 2 through 14 ends with "says the Lord."

The next or third instance of "Thus says the Lord" in this chapter is vs. 15, taking off from "says the Lord" in vs. 14. Vs. 15 is a somber interjection, if you will, within an otherwise joyous passage reminding the Israelites of the severity of their transgression and subsequent exile to Babylon. It is one instance of this phrase which must have cut to the heart of the people.

Although the Lord is speaking and a voice (*qol*, cf. 30.19) is heard in Ramah, the two have some connection. Ramah is located just north of Jerusalem and is mentioned because those in the city were led through there en route to captivity in Babylon. It was close enough for the exiles to get one last glimpse of the capitol or what was left of it, a memory that was seared into Israel's collective memory throughout their time in Babylon. Furthermore, it steeled their resolve to return and rebuild at some later date.

Rachel was Jacob's wife and mother of Joseph and Benjamin as well as grandmother of Ephraim and Manasseh. Thus the voice of this beloved matriarch couldn't help but be heard by her current children or those going into exile all the way to Babylon. Rachel's inability to be comforted or *nacham* (cf. vs. 13) applied equally to them. And so the near despair of this verse ends with the simple but stark warning

regarding Rachel's children which is applicable to the Israelites, "they are not." As for Rachel's weeping, it continued to resound down to the birth of Jesus Christ where vs. 15 is quoted (cf. Mt 2.18) in conjunction with Herod having slain the male children. We can say with confidence that Rachel's *qol* finally was silenced with this tragic event.

Vs. 16 has the fourth instance of "Thus says the Lord" which speaks of a second *qol* (cf. vs. 15 for the first one), one of weeping, certainly a continued echo of Rachel. If prolonged, this would be too much for the people to bear and would compel them to stop imitating her sorrow and distress. Not only that, the Lord takes it two steps further:

1) The work or *pehulah* of the Israelites shall be rewarded, *sakar* as a noun and also implies that which is for hire. References to these two are: Ps 17.28: "They regard not the works of the Lord" and Ps 127.3: "Lo, sons are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward."

2) The Israelites will return (*shuv*) from the land of their enemies, that is, Babylon. 'Erets (cf. 30.3) is the word for land and implies a close connection between the physical place and the people dwelling upon it. So for Israel to leave the 'erets of Babylon means they are exchanging identity with it for their own 'erets.

Vs. 17 expresses hope for the future which parallels 29.11 where the same words *tiqvah* and 'acharyth are found, the instance at hand coupled with "says the Lord." Then follows a promise of return for the children to their own country or *gevul* (cf. 17.3) which as border differs from 'erets or the previous verse. One could say that the *gevul* encompasses and protects the 'erets. Note that children are mentioned, not the generation in Babylon, which can imply that they or many of them won't return but die in exile.

In vs. 18 the Lord singles out Ephraim, the son of Joseph, by paying close attention to him or as the text reads literally, "to hear I hear" (*shamah*; cf. vs. 10). That is to say, Ephraim is bemoaning his fate, *nod* (cf. 22.10 but not noted there) also as to agitate, to move the head, and continues through the next verse. However, this is a sign of repentance in recognition of having been chastened, *yasar* (cf. 30.11) as an untrained calf. *Lamad* (cf. 12.16) is the verb fundamentally as to teach and often used in conjunction with being instructed in the Torah. The desire of Ephraim to rectify his untrained character moves him to ask the Lord whom he acknowledge right up front to bring him back in order to be restored where the verb *shuv* (cf. vs. 16) is used twice.

In vs. 19 Ephraim speaks candidly by admitting the following three transitions in his life:

1) *Shuv* -> *nacham* (cf. vss. 18 and 13) or turned away -> repented.

2) *Yadah* -> *saphaq* (cf. 29.11 and 48.26 as to wallow) or instructed -> smote.

Saphaq implies making a gesture of repentance.

3) *Bosh* -> *kalam* (cf. 17.13 and 3.3).

All in all, Ephraim had borne the disgrace or *cherpah* (cf. 24.9) of his youth. This cause the Lord to pose two rhetorical questions in vs. 20 not just to him but to the other Israelites. Indeed, Ephraim is the Lord's dear son and darling child, *yaqyr* and *shahashuhym* being the adjectives. The former is found only here in the Bible and is similar to *yaqar*, also the same. The latter is a noun (plural) meaning delight. "Your testimonies are my delight" [Ps 119.24]. Even though the Lord may *davar* against Ephraim (the preposition *b-* or 'in him'), he continues to hold him in remembrance, *zakar* (cf. 17.2). *Zakar* is the verbal root for male and thus has a physical connotation, of continued lineage.

Furthermore, the Lord says that his heart yearns for Ephraim and will have mercy upon him. *Mehym* (cf. 4.19) is a noun in the plural meaning heart or more specifically, belly or bowels (compare with the more common *lev*, also as senses, affection). In the same breath the Lord says that he will have mercy on Ephraim, literally, "to have compassion I am having compassion," the verb being *racham* (cf. 30.18). It's put this way to show the intensity of divine love which is capped off by "says the Lord."

In vs. 21 the Lord turns attention to Israel as whole, bidding the exiles to leave signs of their exile into Babylon so they may retrace their steps home. It consists of way-marks and guideposts as well as taking care to note the highway on which they are walking. This is rendered literally as "put to your heart (*lev*, cf. 30.23)" both *derek* (cf. vs. 9) and *mesilah*, the latter being an embanked road. As for the latter, the words of Ps 84.5 couldn't help but be on their lips: "Blessed are the men whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion" (The Hebrew lacks Zion). Hopefully they would take up this song in reality as they returned home. As for the setting up of posts, etc., it must have been done secretly or towards the end of the line, for if the Babylonian captors discovered them, there would have been severe consequences. After having instructed the people to set up these markers, the Lord speaks of Israel as a virgin or *betulah* (cf. vs. 4), a term of endearment, and bids them to return or *shuv* (cf. vs. 18) to their cities.

Vs. 22 contains a rhetorical question, an echo of the sentiment in 3.14, with regard to the people wavering or their hesitancy in returning not so much to their native land but to the Lord. This hesitancy compels him to call them a faithless daughter, *shovav* (cf. 3.14) being the adjective which connotes backsliding (cf. its verbal root *shuv*). *Chamaq* is the verb which has one other reference, Sg 5.6: “I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned and gone.” Following this question intended to put the people on the spot while at the same time identifying them as a virgin, the Lord says that he has created something new or unheard of. He does this marvel on the earth, ‘*erets* (cf. vs. 16), suggestive of more than Israel but of all peoples: a woman protects a man, *savav* meaning to turn back or encompass (cf. vs. 39). In other words, the natural order is reversed.

Vs. 23 has the fifth instance of “Thus says the Lord” where he says that the people will recite the *davar* contained in the next verse upon having returned home. That is to say, once he has restored their fortunes, *shuv* echoing the same sentiment as in 30.18. The people will exclaim a blessing from the Lord, short but to the point, with regard to the holy hill, most likely Zion. It’s called a habitation of righteousness, *naveh* (cf. 25.30) and *tsedeq* (cf. 22.29).

Vss. 23-34 are in prose form where the Lord continues his restoration of Judah and promises to satisfy (*ravah*, cf. vs. 14) any soul which is weary and languishing. *Nephesh* (cf. vs. 14) is used twice, one with regard to the adjectives *hayeph* and *da’av* (cf. vs. 12). A reference as to the former is Ps 63.1: “O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you as in a dry and weary land.” Both are replenished or *male’*, the common verb to fill.

Vs. 26 stands alone, a kind of interjection where Jeremiah speaks for himself for the first time as though what he had uttered thus far was in a dream. Given the fact that he had been coming off with one round of condemnation after another, no small wonder he exclaimed that his sleep had been pleasant or *harav* (cf. 30.31 with a different sense of this verb).

Vs. 27 resumes Jeremiah’s prophecy. The text doesn’t say he went back to sleep or not. He begins with *hineh* or behold with regard to “the days are coming,” a familiar way of getting attention. After having sown both Israel and Judah which united the kingdom, the Lord will watch over them as they grow and flourish, the verb for this watching being *shaqad* (cf. 1.11) also as to lie in wait with expectation. Having kept a close eye on the people’s nefarious activities over a period of time, the Lord will continue his *shaqad* which will result in the people building and planting.

“In those days” of vs. 29 shows the contrast between the people’s aberrant behavior and their response to having acknowledged it through a proverb current at the time and quoted in Ezk 18.2. The taste of sour grapes eaten by fathers is transmitted to their children who have to live with this bitterness. The problem, of course, is how to get rid of it. The Lord steps in and remedies this intractable problem by saying that each person is responsible for his own sin and will pay a price for it by death.

Having set the stage in vs. 31 for personal responsibility, the Lord employs another *hineh* or behold with “the days are coming.” On this occasion the future indeterminate days represent the making of a new covenant (last mentioned in 22.9), the verb *karath* meaning to cut or to hew and usually is associated with it (cf. 11.10 but not noted there). There’s a major different with this one, however. It won’t resemble the covenant “cut” long ago with Israel’s fathers when the Lord led them from Egypt, the image being a father taking the hand of a child. Reference, of course, is to the covenant in the Sinai wilderness with Moses being the chief representative. As the Lord reminds his people, they had broken that covenant, *parar* (cf. 11.10) implying to split, to divide. Furthermore, he puts it in terms of a marital relationship which made it equivalent to a divorce.

In vs. 33 the Lord begins to delineate the covenant he will make (*karath* again) but only after “those days” which refer to when the older covenant was in force. This time he will put (*natan*, to give; cf. 1.5) the *Torah* (cf. 26.4) within them, *qerev* (cf. 29.8) which implies their very center and from which they can’t escape. The Lord brings this a step further by promising to write the Torah upon their hearts. Note the uses of the two prepositions: *b-* prefaced to *qerev* and *l-* prefaced to *lev* (cf. vs. 21); i.e., “in” and “to.” As for the latter, it’s used four times to top of this verse: “to them,” “to God,” “to me” and “to people.”

Vs. 34 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “and” to show that the force of what the Lord has just said continues forward. Once the new covenant is in place, there won’t be a need for people to teach each other, *lamad* being the verb (cf. vs. 18) in reference to knowing (*yadah*, cf. vs. 19) the Lord, of having intimate knowledge both with and of him. The reason? Everyone will possess *yadah* (*dahath*, the noun) regardless of social status. Jesus quotes this verse in the context of identifying himself as the bread which had come down from heaven. To it he adds “Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me” [Jn 6.45]. Jesus puts traditional stress upon first hearing followed by learning or the *lamad* at hand. Part and parcel of *lamad/yadah* is that the Lord will forgive the people’s iniquity and no longer keep in mind their sin, *salach* and the negative *zakar* working together

(cf. 5.7 and vs. 20).

Vss. 35 through 37 resume the poetic form beginning with the sixth reference of “Thus says the Lord.” He’s identified as the Lord of cosmic powers, the sun, moon and stars used for marking time. Vs. 35 associates the moon with a “fixed order” or *chuqah* which also means a statute and similar to *choq* in vs. 36 (cf. 10.3 and 5.22 but not noted in both). So if the *choq* departs (*mush*, cf. 17.8 but not noted there) from before the Lord—this intimating the *choq* has some degree of autonomy—Israel’s descendants will likewise depart or cease from being a nation, also as before the Lord. In sum, Israel won’t have a lunar calendar, essential not just for telling time and keeping sacred festivals but for planting crops.

Vs. 37 has the seventh reference of “Thus says the Lord” and concludes with “says the Lord,” all this as in other instances to make sure the people are listening and not allowing their attention to drift. Here the Lord gives one of his most dramatic expressions of commitment to Israel. Should both the heavens and earth’s foundations be measured (which apparently they cannot), he will cast off Israel’s descendants for their past deeds. The verb *ma’as* (cf. 8.9) is used with the preposition *b-* prefaced to *kal*, literally “in all.”

“Days are coming” in vs. 38 signals a conclusion of Chapter Thirty-One which is prefaced with *hineh* or behold. He speaks of the city (Jerusalem though not named) being rebuilt and expanded. Included is a valley, most likely Hinnom (cf. 19.2+) where dead bodies have been cast. Instead of being cursed for this, it will be sacred (*godesh*, cf. 2.3) to the Lord which fundamentally means set apart for him.

1) na’am, mishpachah, 2) saryd, chen, ragah, 3) ‘ahav, ‘ahavah, mashak, chesed, 4) banah, betulah, 6) qara’, natsar, 7) ranan, simchah, tsahal, shamah, halal, yashah, she’eryth, 8) qalah, 9) bakah, tachanunym, derek, bo’, yaval, halak, 10) shamah, goy, nagad, zarah, qavats, shamar, 11) padah, ga’al, 12) ranan, nahar, nephesh, raveh, da’av, 13) ‘evel, sason, samach, yagon, nacham, 14) nephesh, ravah, savah, deshen, tov, 15) qol, nacham, 16) qol, pehulah, sakar, shuv, ‘erets, 17) tiqvah, ‘acharyth, gevul, 18) shamah, nod, yasar, lamad, shuv, 19) shuv, nacham, yadah, saphaq, bosh, kalam, 20) cherpah, yaqyr, shahashuhym, zakar, mehym, racham, 21) lev, derek, mesilah, betulah, shuv, 22) shovav, chamaq, ‘erets, savav, 23) shuv, naveh, tsedeq, 25) ravah, nephesh, hayeph, da’av, male’, 26) harav, 28) shaqad, 31) karath, 32) parar, 33) natan, Torah, qerev, lev, 34) lamad, yadah, salach, zakar, 35) chuqah, choq, mush, 38) ma’as, 40) qodesh

Chapter Thirty-Two

This new chapter begins with the *davar* of the Lord coming to Jeremiah, literally (as in other previous instances) “was to Jeremiah.” Not only that, it was at a specific time during the reigns of two adversarial kings, Zedekiah and Nebuchadrezzar. A footnote in the RSV says that chronologically speaking, Chapter Thirty-Two should follow Chapter Thirty-Seven. While such observations are helpful to keep in mind, the document at hand operates on a different plane, reading the text through the lense of *lectio divina*. While this is the intent above and beyond all else, being reminded of historical elements from time to time is helpful, even necessary, to keep the document at hand grounded. It serves to prevent the *lectio* approach from dealing loosely with the biblical text. As for the *davar* of vs. 1, Jeremiah doesn’t utter it until vs. 6.

Vs. 2 continues to specify the time when the divine *davar* “was to Jeremiah,” that is, during his confinement in the royal palace belonging to King Zedekiah. It must have been trying as he heard people rushing about and perhaps even the Babylonians in the distance in their repeated attempts to breach the city walls. During that time or most likely when the siege made life most difficult, the king asked Jeremiah about his prophesying. Zedekiah proceeds to mock him, throwing back his all too familiar stock-phrase “Thus says the Lord” along with his prophecy about Nebuchadrezzar. That is to say, the Lord has handed over Jerusalem into the hand of the king of Babylon. All Zezekiah has to do and wait for its fulfilment which is being acted out at the moment.

“Hand” is mentioned two more times (vs. 4), the idea being that no one can escape the “hand of the Chaldeans” and “hand of the king of Babylon.” After capturing Jerusalem, Nebuchadrezzar will meet one-on-one with Zedekiah and haul him off to Babylon. However, a false glimmer of hope remains, namely, that the Lord visits him, *paqad* (cf. 30.20). Unknown to Zedekiah, he will suffer a terrible fate: “He (Nebuchadrezzar) put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him in fetters...and put him in prison until the day of his death” [52.11]. Finally King Zedekiah finishes with his mockery of Jeremiah saying that any attempt to be victorious over the Chaldeans is doomed to failure, *tsalach* (cf. 22.29).

Perhaps this is one of the most difficult experiences of Jeremiah’s career as prophet. It was more so than his current imprisonment and even later when in the cistern (cf. Chapter 38) as he pondered his fate. As King Zedekiah expected and admittedly

feared (though he tried to keep it to himself), Jeremiah begins with “the *davar* of the Lord was to me” as in vs. 1. To the king’s surprise, Jeremiah took a completely different direction, not rebuking him but discussing the purchase of land in his hometown of Anathoth. Woven among all this is mention of the noun *davar* on two occasions: 1) Jeremiah’s cousin Hanamel who visited him in prison “in accord with the *davar* of the Lord.” 2) Jeremiah knowing that Hanamel’s request to purchase the land was the *davar* of the Lord.

And so vs. 9 through 15 recount the business transaction which is more than purchasing a field as indicated by the prophetic words of “Thus says the Lord.” The transaction is a sign that houses, fields and vineyards will be bought and sold. There’s added the very important words, “in this land” or in this ‘*erets* (cf. 31.22) which is more than the physical land but often synonymous with the nation of Israel.

After having handed over the deed of purchase—keeping in mind that Jeremiah is still in jail—he offers an extended prayer running through vs. 25. It may be outlined as follows:

Vs. 17 begins with ‘*ahah* or “Ah” which is both an expression of relief and joy despite Jeremiah’s imprisonment. Since God has made heaven and earth, nothing is too hard for him. The reads literally as “there is not wonderful from you all *davar*,” the verb being *pala*’ which also means to be arduous, to be distinguished. “Is anything too hard for me” [vs. 27]?

Vs. 18 part of the previous verse. Actually it’s extended through vs. 20 beginning with divine *chesed* (cf. 31.3) which the Hebrew text says he “does” or *hasah* (cf. ‘made the heavens and the earth’ as in vs. 17). Although the *hasah* of this *chesed* is extended to thousands, the Lord requites guilt of fathers to the children. The verb is *shalam* along with the noun *havon* (cf. 25.14 and 16.18). Despite the outpouring of such *chesed*, any guilt remains hereditary and can’t be escaped easily.

Vs. 19: Jeremiah extolls the Lord as great in counsel and mighty in deed, *hetsah* (cf. 18.23) and *halylyah*, the latter being found only here. Also his eyes are literally upon (*hal-*) the ways (*derek*, cf. 31.21) of men; he rewards each person in accord with his particular *derek*; *mahalal* (cf. 26.13) or doings is added as well.

Vs. 20: Signs and wonders or ‘*oth* and *mopeth* (cf. 10.2 and vs. 21) done in Egypt which, according to the NIV, echo Dt 26.8: “and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with and outstretched arm, with great terror, with signs and wonders.” Also, to this very day the Lord has made a name for himself through Israel, referring to the many times he had rescued the people not so much from external enemies but chiefly from themselves.

Vs. 21: A repeat of the previous verse as to the Lord delivering Israel from Egypt, signs and wonders mentioned again along with *mora'* or (great) terror. "Put them in fear, O Lord" [Ps 9.20]!

Vs. 22: Giving Israel "this land" or the *'erets* (cf. vs. 15) on which the people are right now, the one flowing with milk and honey (cf. Ex 3.8).

Vs. 23: When Israel took possession of the *'erets* given by the Lord, right away they did the following: 1) did not obey his voice or *shamah* (cf. 31.18) literally "in (*b-*) his voice" (*qol*, cf. 31.16), 2) did not walk in the *Torah* (cf. 31.33), another instance of the preposition *b-* and 3) failed to carry out what the Lord commanded them, *tsavah* (cf. 27.4). The result? Evil or *rahah* (cf. 17.16) befell Israel.

Vs. 24: The seeds sown already or when the Lord had delivered Israel from Egypt as recounted in the previous verse are manifesting themselves in the very present when the Chaldeans are besieging Jerusalem. In other words, what the Lord has *davar* is coming to pass.

Vs. 25: Despite this dire situation, Jeremiah concludes his prayer to the Lord by saying it was he who made him purchase the field at Anathoth while the Chaldeans are about to take Jerusalem.

In vs. 26 or shortly after this extended prayer, the *davar* of the Lord "was" to Jeremiah, this verse beginning with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated. It seems the Lord was waiting almost impatiently for Jeremiah to conclude the prayer so he could move on. He reveals this impatience in vs. 27 with *hineh* or "behold" followed by a rhetorical question which Jeremiah isn't expected to answer. It's designed more to both reassure him and put him in his place...something like he had done with Job. Then the Lord throws back to Jeremiah the words at the beginning of his prayer, that nothing is too hard for him where the verb *pala'* (cf. vs. 17 or to be marvelous) is used along with *davar*.

Vs. 28 states what's obvious to everyone by now, that King Nebuchadrezzar will take Jerusalem followed in the next verse by mentioning those housetops where people had offered incense to Baal. Obviously this provoked the Lord to anger, *kahas* (cf. 25.6). Note that Jerusalem isn't mentioned by name, "this city" being preferred with some scorn and sarcasm noted in earlier instances. It was almost too much for the Lord to utter the proper name Jerusalem, given the abominable practices that went on there. This is spelled out further in vs. 30 where the Lord complains that the people had done nothing but evil. What makes it worse is that they did it "in his sight" or with full awareness of their actions and consequences. That's why the Lord will remove "this city" [vs. 31] from his sight, evil having been perpetrated since it was founded. Once such incident the Lord must have had in mind is King Solomon

who” built a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem” [1Kg 11.7].

This rejection is described further in vs. 33 where the Lord complains of the people having turned their backs to him, not their faces, so they could do their evil deeds supposedly free from his prying eyes. This, however, counters doing evil in his sight noted in vs. 30. Their shame, it seems, was almost too much for them to admit to themselves, yet they persisted despite being instructed (*lamad*, cf. 31.34) and not listening to divine instruction (*musar*, cf. 17.23). The former has the verb *shakam* which translated literally reads “to teach them to rise early” and similar to the rendering in 25.3. Instead, the people set up their abominations or *shiquts* (cf. 16.18) in the temple and built high places where they offered their sons and daughters. Even this the Babylonians must have found revolting.

From vs. 36 to the end of this chapter the Lord takes a positive stance beginning with “thus says the Lord.” His attention is toward not-named Jerusalem, again preferring “this city.” Despite having been conquered by King Nebuchadrezzar, the Lord will gather (*qavats*, cf. 31.10) his people to each and every place they had been scattered. However, they gave cause for manifesting his displeasure through his anger, wrath and indignation or ‘*aph*, *chemah* and *qetseph* (cf. 21.5, 25.15 and 21.5). In contrast to these we have a second mentioning of the Lord returning them home, that is, that they may dwell in safety or *betach* (cf. 23.6), this word also meaning trust.

In vs. 38 the people will become the Lord’s—meaning as of now they aren’t—where the preposition *l-* or “to” occurs four times in a short sentence: *l-* me, *l-* people, *l-* them and *l-* God. Nothing could be more thorough than that, really. From this verse through vs. 41 are a series of gestures the Lord will make, very much aware that the people can (and will) fall back into their evil ways. With this cautionary note in mind, they are outlined as follows and are found throughout other places in the Bible:

Vs. 39: One heart and one way, *lev* and *derek* (cf. 31.33 and vs. 19) which are directed toward fear of the Lord. Note the added “forever” hopefully to counter the people’s seemingly inability to shake off their abominable practices. It’s for the benefit of the current generation and that of their children.

Vs. 40: A covenant which is everlasting, similar to “forever” of the previous verse and again to counter backsliding. Here the Lord will put fear of him into the hearts of the people so they won’t turn from him.

Vs. 41: Here the Lord reveals much of his true nature. Despite the people’s tendency to evil, he will do the following: 1) rejoice (*sus*) in doing them good. “In the

way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches” [Ps 119.14]. 2) Make four gestures with the preposition *b-* or “in;” plant them *b-* this land, ‘*erets* (cf. vs. 22), *b-* faithfulness or ‘*emeth* (cf. 23.28), *b-* all his heart (*lev*, cf. vs. 39) and *b-* all his soul (*nephesh*, cf. 31.25).

Vs. 42 has two instances of the verb *bo’* (cf. 31.9) or to bring upon and has two different prepositions: ‘*el-* or literally “to” concerning evil (*rah*, cf. 26.13) and *hal-* or more properly “upon” with respect to good (*tov*, cf. 31.14). The Lord promises this good, *davar* being the verb.

The concluding verses of Chapter Thirty-Two speak of the buying and selling of fields, this signaling a return to normalcy. The very last words of this chapter sum up such practices, “I will restore their fortunes,” *shuv* and *shevyth* as in 29.14.

5) paqad, tsalach, 15) ‘erets, 17) pala’, 18) chesed, hasah, shalam, havon, 19) hetsah, halylyah, derek, mahalal, 20) ‘oth, mopeth, 21) mora’, 22) ‘erets, 23) shamah, qol, Torah, tsavah, rahah, 27) pala’, 29) kahas, 33) lamad, shakam, musar, 34) shiquts, 37) ‘aph, chemah, qetseph, betach, 39) lev, derek, 40) sus, ‘erets, ‘emeth, 42) bo’, rah, tov, 44) shuv, shevyth

Chapter Thirty-Three

At the beginning of a new chapter the *davar* of the Lord comes (i.e., ‘was’) to Jeremiah a second time, the last being in 32.26 where it continues reverberating through the rest of that chapter. Apparently there’s a time gap between the conclusion of the first *davar* and initiation of the second one, otherwise we wouldn’t have it noted as such. Although Jeremiah never would acknowledge it, being *davar-*less must have been a relief. He had a chance to rest from having so often delivered contentious messages, some of which involving a threat to his own life. The case at hand, however, is different. Here he is, shut up in prison, finding the confinement very difficult to handle compared with the freedom associated with the divine *davar* despite the woes that went with uttering it.

In vs. 2 this *davar* which “was” to Jeremiah is in conjunction with the familiar “Thus says the Lord” here associated with having made and formed the earth. Earth isn’t mentioned in the Hebrew text, but we can assume that’s what is meant. In addition to this making or *hasah* (cf. 32.18) we have *yatsar* and *kun* (cf.. 18.11,19.11 and 30.20), all three implying the exercise of great love and care. The words “the Lord is his

name” at the end of this verse is a proud testimony of what he has done by associating it with his very name...a kind of seal of approval.

Vs. 3: *qara'* and *hanah* (cf. 31.6 and 14.7) or call and answer which work hand-in-hand with respect to the Lord; i.e., one effects the other simultaneously. The *hanah* following *qara'* results in the Lord telling things which are great and hidden or not known (*yadah*, cf. 31.34). Such is the result of divine telling or *nagad* (cf. 31.10) which is akin to Jeremiah's relationship with the *davar* of the Lord.

Vs. 4 opens with the second “Thus says the Lord,” this oft-repeated phrase fleshing out the *nagad* or telling in the previous verse. In this instance “thus” pertains to the houses of “this city” (Jerusalem) and Judah which were torn down to make way for defensive positions against the impending attack by the Chaldeans. The Lord foresees this in vs. 5 where the Hebrew reads “They are coming in to fight against the Chaldeans.” As for these invaders, the Lord is using them to smite (*nakah*, cf. 5.3) his people in anger and wrath, *'aph* and *chemah*, both found together in 32.37. On this occasion the Lord is so horrified that he decides to hide his face from “this city.” Once again he's too disgusted to use the proper name Jerusalem because of their wickedness or *rah* (cf. 32.42). As for the Chaldeans or any other foreign land the Lord deploys against Israel, chances are they don't have insight as to being such instruments. However, some (especially commanders, etc.) could have an inkling that they were participants...not simply pawns...in a larger scheme of things. Once they had played their role, perhaps they got a better overall picture enabling some, not all, to convert to Israel's religion.

In vs. 6 the Lord changes his tune abruptly with *hineh* or “behold.” Such a sudden change would have been close to incomprehensible for the people to grasp if it weren't for this introductory warning, if you will. Instead of the wrath and fury at the hands of the Chaldeans, the Lord will restore the fortunes of Judah and Israel as in 32.44: *shuv* and *shevyth*, as well as rebuilding them or restoring them as they had been prior to their rejection of the Lord as mentioned in vss. 11 and 26. An essential component to this rebuilding is to have a king similar to David. After all, he is the gold standard for all successors as commented upon frequently in First and Second Kings. Note that what the Lord says from vs. 6 through vs. 9 takes place in the future. In the meanwhile, the people are still stuck in their misery. As for what the Lord will do (i.e., in the future), it may be outline as follows through these verses:

Bring health and healing, the verb *halah* (cf. 8.21) suggestive of going up with regard to *'arukah* and *marpe'* (cf. 8.22 and 8.15). In the same breath the Lord says

that he will heal as well as reveal (*rapha'* and *galah*, cf. 30.17 and 20.12) an abundance of prosperity and security or *shalom* and *'emeth* (cf. 30.5 and 32.40).

Restore the fortunes of both Judah and Israel, *shuv* and *shevyth* (cf. vs. 6) plus rebuilding them as they had been.

Cleanse and forgive (*tahar* and *salach*, cf. 13.27 and 31.34) sins and rebellion.

“This city” or Jerusalem as a name of joy, praise and glory: *sason*, *tehilah* and *tip'arah* (cf. 31.13, 17.14 and 13.11). It will be for the benefit of the nations or *goy* (cf. 31.10). Their response will be one of fear and trembling at the prosperity or *shalom* (cf. vs. 7) the Lord will bestow up Judah and Israel. Hopefully upon hearing this the nations will ally themselves not so much with Judah and Israel but with the Lord.

Vs. 10 has the third instance of “Thus says the Lord” with regard to the people’s response upon returning home as well as with respect to Jerusalem. When they do return home they will find it a waste or *charev* found next in vs. 12, this noun connoting dryness. “Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies in ruins” [Hag 1.4]? The desolation found there is intensified by the lack of sounds associated with a bustling, inhabited place. However, in vs. 11 the Lord says that this will change with the people singing a song of thanksgiving echoing Ps 136.1: “O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever,” *chesed* (cf. 32.18) being the central theme. This is followed by another mention of *shuv* and *shevyth* (cf. vs. 6). As we move through the Book of Jeremiah and get a more comprehensive view of Israel having forsaken the Lord and his willingness to receive them afterwards, the role of *chesed* becomes increasingly central and appreciated.

Vs. 12 continues the theme of abandoned places which will be restored with emphasis upon flocks repopulating them. Again, the future tense dominates these verses and continues for the rest of the chapter. Emphasis upon the future continues once again where vs. 14 begins with *hineh* or “behold” concerning future days which remain unspecified as in other occasions. Here the Lord will fulfill a promise made to Israel and Judah which reads literally as “I will make arise (*qum*, cf. 30.23) the good (*tov*, cf. 32.42) *davar* I *davar* (or made).” *Davar* puts the uncertainty of future days into perspective. That is to say, by reason of the eternal nature of the divine *davar*, the future is contained within the present or same time the Lord is uttering it.

Vs. 15 mentions again “those days” with the added “at that time,” this keeping in mind the synchrony between past, present and future with respect to *davar* of the previous verse. Here we have mention of the righteous Branch found in 23.5 or a

branch (*tsemach*) which is righteous or *tsadyq*, a clear reference to King David and a successor to follow in his footsteps. There the similarly unspecified future rendered as “days are coming” is used with the verb *qum* or to arise. In the verse at hand, we have instead the verb *tsamach*, the root for *tsemach*. It is in the hiphil form, indicative of causation instead of the branch doing the rising. In sum, *tsamach* is imposed from without. A similar example: “There I will make a horn to sprout for David” [Ps 132.17]. Once this is done there follows execution of justice and righteousness by this Branch, *mishpat* and *tsedaqah* (cf. 30.11 and 23.6).

Vs. 16 mentions again “those days” when Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell securely, *yashah* and *shakan* with *betach* (cf. 31.7 and 23.6 for the second two). As for Jerusalem, it will be called “The Lord is our righteousness” or *tsedaqah* (cf. vs. 15). Vs. 17 continues the theme of King David as a model for the ruler-to-be (his name hasn’t been revealed yet) which is made more personal by addition of his name which makes it as though he were still alive and active. Never will he lack a man to occupy his throne accompanied by Levitical priests to make offerings in the temple.

Vs. 19 has the *davar* of the Lord coming to Jeremiah—“was to Jeremiah”—suggesting another pause of unspecified time between what had been said and what is about to be said or about to be *davar*. It’s in conjunction with the fourth instance of “Thus says the Lord.” The Lord is presenting an impossible scenario, an attempt to break (*parar*, cf. 31.32) the rhythm of day and night couched in terms as a covenant. However, should that impossibility come to be, the covenant made with David will suffer *parar*, and his descendants won’t occupy the throne. Vs. 22 continues the same cosmic imagery emphasizing the impossibility to number the heavenly host and sand of the sea. Similarly David’s descendants can’t be numbered along with the Levitical priests. Such words echo the covenant made with Abraham: “I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore” [Gn 22.17].

Vs. 23 has yet another pause in the action having the *davar* of the Lord coming or “was to Jeremiah.” The Lord now puts a rhetorical question to his prophet, asking if he has gotten wind of a rumor circulating among the people which consists of having rejected Judah and Israel, they being put in terms as families or *mishpachah* (cf. 31.3). In other words, the two families are no longer a nation (*goy*, cf. vs. 9) as far as they’re concerned. If they’re not a nation, they have lost any clout with surrounding peoples and are subject to be conquered. To this the Lord responds with the fifth and final “Thus says the Lord” of Chapter Thirty-Three. He returns to the image of

rejecting (*ma'as*, cf. 31.38) his covenant made with the day and night. If the Lord went that route, the same will apply to the present descendants, bringing to mind the names of David, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In other words, he refers to that covenant noted above with regard to Gn 22.17. Nevertheless, this chapter ends on a positive note almost as though the Lord had let his tongue slip and wishes to correct himself. That is to say, he will restore the people's fortunes and have mercy upon them, *shuv* and *shevyth* as in vs. 11. Instead of *chesed* as in that verse, the verb is just as touching, *racham* (cf. 31.20), to have mercy as coming from his inmost being or bowels.

2) *hasah*, *yatsar*, *kun*, 3) *qara'*, *hanah*, *yadah*, *nagad*, 5) *nakah*, 'aph, *chemah*, *rah*, 6) *shuv*, *shevyth*, 7) *halah*, 'arukah *marpe'*, *rapha'*, *galah*, *shalom*, 'emeth, 8) *tahar*, *salach*, 9) *sason*, *tehilah*, *tip'arah*, *goy*, *shalom*, 10) *charev*, 11) *chesed*, *shuv*, *shevyth*, 14) *qum*, *tov*, 15) *tsemach*, *tsadyq*, *mishpat*, *tsedaqah*, 16) *yashah*, *shakan*, *betach*, *tsedaqah*, 20) *parar*, 23) *mishpachah*, 24) *goy*, 26) *ma'as*, *racham*

Chapter Thirty-Four ¹

A new chapter with the *davar* of the Lord coming (i.e., 'was') to Jeremiah which intimates a pause of indefinite length from what had transpired in the previous chapter. By now Jeremiah was very familiar with these divine visitations as well as adept at carrying out the *davar* entrusted to him. At the same time he's fully aware that he will meet resistance. No matter how often this occurs, never can he get accustomed to it and can't help but wonder privately, "When will it all come to an end?"

The situation at hand is the most dramatic one of his prophetic career. King Nebuchadrezzar is assaulting Jerusalem and other cities; not just that, but he has at his disposal all the kingdoms under his dominion (rendered literally as 'ruling of his hand') which makes the siege all the more formidable. Chances are some if not most of these allies were there in a half-hearted way. They had a simple choice: either join in the fight or face utter destruction.

¹ This note from the NIV is inserted here at the beginning of this chapter simply for general information: "The first major division of the book (chs. 2-35) now comes to a close, Jeremiah's warnings and exhortations to Judah are concluded with a historical appendix (chs. 34-35) as well. Ch. 52, written by someone other than Jeremiah, serves as a fitting historical appendix to the entire book."

The *davar* of vs. 1 is followed by the expected “Thus says the Lord” in vs. 2. Although the common verb ‘*amar*’ is used, it conveys the divine *davar* when used in such a formulaic mode of expression as expressed through a prophet. Jeremiah is to communicate the “Thus says the Lord” just given to him to King Zedekiah, a kind of mirror image where the *davar* goes from the Lord to Jeremiah to Zedekiah. This time the *davar* at hand begins with *hineh* or “behold.” The Lord is about to hand over Jerusalem to the Babylonians which again he calls “this city,” another instance of a barely veiled disgust.

In vs. 3 the Lord gets personal about the fate of King Zedekiah which must make Jeremiah especially uncomfortable as mouthpiece of the divine *davar*. He will be exiled to Babylon and won’t be put to the sword. Instead, he will die in peace or *shalom* (cf. 33.9). In fact, his memory is compared favorably with former kings whom people remembered by burning spices in their honor. Such people, of course, will accompany Zedekiah in exile to Babylon. The details of his future fate conclude in vs. 5 with the definitive “I have *davar* the *davar*, says the Lord.” So despite the impending destruction of Jerusalem, the death of many of its inhabitants and, of course, the ruined temple, King Zedekiah can take great comfort at being spared. Hopefully his serenity in the ensuing tragedy of the Babylonians capturing Jerusalem can become an example and assuage his subjects similarly exiled.

Vs. 6 begins in a somewhat formal way with “Jeremiah the prophet” who *davar* all these *davar* to King Zedekiah or what was recounted above and is prefaced with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then.” It takes place while the Babylonians were in the process of fighting against Jerusalem. Following this double *davar*, if you will, comes another *davar* in vs. 8 when it comes (i.e., ‘was’) to Jeremiah. The occasion? Zedekiah had made or cut (*karath*, cf. 31.31) a covenant with the inhabitants of Jerusalem as to proclaiming liberty. The verb is *qara’* with the noun *deror* (cf. vs. 15) which also means a swallow or a free, abundant flow. For a reference similar to the one at hand, cf. Is 61.1: “To proclaim liberty to the captives.” This proclamation pertains to setting free slaves which during this crisis, a precautionary gesture insofar as such people might use the siege as an occasion to side with the Babylonians in the hope of escaping slaughter or exile. Besides, King Zedekiah had the advantage of knowing his future fate as prophesied by Jeremiah.

Vs. 11 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “but” to show as it usually does the close connection between an action accomplished and what is about to happen. Added to (or with) this conjunctive we have “after” which anticipates the quick change of mind the people showed concerning the royal proclamation, this indicated

by the verb *shuv* (cf. 33.11) or to turn around. *Shuv* is used a second time as if to show this double-take, that is, as “took back.” Apparently there was a brief–very brief–time when these slaves had been set free. Before they knew it, they were put back into captivity precisely due to the fear of internal rebellion.

This incredible, sudden turn of events in the midst of a siege leads to the *davar* of the Lord coming (i.e., ‘was’) to Jeremiah with another verse (i.e., 12) beginning with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated. Following this *davar*, of course, comes “Thus says the Lord” with regard to a covenant had made...cut (*karath*, cf. vs. 8) with Israel when he had brought them from Egypt. Everyone was familiar with this, part and parcel to their tradition, but to be reminded of it now and under such circumstances was especially painful. It was even more so by mention of “house of bondage (*heved*, cf. 27.6)” with a direct connection to those slaves (*heved*) so recently set free and re-possessed.

In vs. 14 the Lord fleshes out this covenant by reminding people of what he had said in Ex 21.2 and Dt 15.1-2 about setting free fellow Hebrews at the end of six years who had been enslaved. The Lord continues to say that their fathers neither listened nor inclined their ears to him. Unfortunately this double form of denial is just as pertinent now as it was then, and everyone was keenly aware of it, indeed, shamefully so.

From vs. 15 to the end of Chapter Thirty-Four the Lord continues to say how the people first repented, quickly turned around and profaned his name, *shuv* and *chalal* (cf. vs. 11 and 16.18). As for the latter, it takes the form of enslaving fellow citizens. When reading this, one can’t help but feel sorry for the Lord who not only here but throughout the entire book of Jeremiah has put up and continues to put up with such stubborn resistance. He punishes a little here and a little there but always is ready to take back his wayward people.

Those who had transgressed the Lord’s covenant didn’t keep its terms, *qum* (cf. 33.14) and *davar*. This is put in terms of a sacrificial offering or having cut (*karath*, cf. vs. 12) a calf in two and passing in between them where the verb is used in the opposite sense of cutting a covenant. As a result, the Lord will hand them over to their enemies, the Babylonians at the gate, and their bodies will be food for wild beasts, etc. And so the Lord will destroy “this city” and make a desolation of the cities of Judah, *shemamah* (cf. 25.12).

5) shalom, 8) karath, qara’, deror, 11) shuv, 12) karath, 13) heved, 15) shuv, chalal,

18) qum, karath, 22) shemamah

Chapter Thirty-Five

A new chapter with the familiar *davar* of the Lord coming ('was') to Jeremiah, this time with a different twist. The prophet is told to visit the house of the Rechabites, "house" implying the entire clan. First he is to *davar* with them—transmit the divine *davar*—and then bring them to the house of the Lord, second use of "house." Thus one house is to go to another house or more specifically, a chamber adjacent to the temple. There Jeremiah is to offer them wine, a way of offering hospitality and cutting any tension. However, it was against the Rechabites' custom. In brief, they comprise a kind of religious order which a footnote in the RSV says resembles the Nazirites. They were zealous for the old religious worship which had been in place going back to Israel once it had left Egypt and whose religious practices had been threatened when the people entered Canaan. In other words, Jeremiah was attempting to make peace with a group that had a somewhat fearsome reputation but was willing to go all out in defending Israel against the impending Babylonian invasion.

And so Jeremiah goes ahead with the meeting, the two houses (Rechabites and the temple) coming together under one roof, as it were. Without missing a beat, they told Jeremiah that they refrained from drinking wine. This must have embarrassed him, having forgotten something that he should have known. It didn't seem like a good starting point for further dialogue. In an admirable yet somewhat archaic way the Rechabites recounted how they lived (that is, in tents) but when King Nebuchadrezzar came against Jerusalem, they took refuge there. On one hand this must have caused some tension among the inhabitants yet on another, were glad to have such staunch defenders of the faith on their side in this hour of peril. At the same time their quasi-apocalyptic outlook must have welcomed the coming disaster, for it signaled a return to the old ways...or at least that was their hope.

In vs. 12 the *davar* of the Lord "was" to Jeremiah a second time, the conjunctive *v-* translated as "then." It came just in time too, for Jeremiah wasn't sure how to proceed at this point and was grateful for their support. Keeping in mind what the Rechabites told him in the sanctity of the temple precincts, when he addresses the people his attitude is different. In other words, he shares some of what these Rechabites hold dear.

In vs. 13 Jeremiah puts forth his communication from the Lord in a rhetorical question. It pertains to the people's willingness (or more accurately, unwillingness) to receive divine instruction (*musar*, cf. 32.33) and listen (*shamah*, cf. 32.23) to his *davar*, the two being pretty much one and the same. This is a lead-in, if you will, to where the Lord praises the Rechabites for their fidelity in their faithfulness to the Lord. In the meanwhile he had spoken persistently to the people, *davar* and *shakam* (cf. 32.33), the latter meaning to rise early. Then the Lord launches into what is a familiar refrain which the people would rather not hear, namely, that he had sent them prophets, again persistently (*shakam*). Their collective message echoing 25.4-6? Turn from evil (*rah*, cf. 33.5) ways, amend (*yataw*, cf. 26.13) their doings and don't go after false gods and serve (*havad*, cf. 30.9) them. Should the people do all three, especially the last, they will become slaves, for *havad* is the verbal root of the noun *heved* as in 34.13.

To this rhetorical question and the accusations that followed the Lord adds that the people failed to listen to him as well as inclining their ear. The two are combined as elsewhere to drive home the failure to *shamah* (cf. vs. 13) along with "ear" being singular for the collective or people. I.e., one ear for the nation which failed miserably in this *shamah*. Vs. 16 follows up on this by the people not obeying the Lord, another use of *shamah* in comparison with the Rechabites who had followed through on this not just now but throughout their history.

Vs. 17 begins with *laken* or "therefore" which signals something the people would rather not hear but are forced to do so, for now their collective ear has no other choice. This isn't said directly but implied. The Lord is about to bring evil or *rah* (cf. vs. 15) which he had *davar* against them ('*el-* or literally 'to them'), this echoing 11.11. The second part of vs. 17 again has *davar* along with *qara'* (cf. 34.8) or to cry out, a rather poignant way bordering upon desperation with another instance of the people not responding. Although the people keep on repeating their infidelity in one way and then another, it's amazing to see how the Lord can put up with this. By now one wonders if there is a limit not just with the Book of Jeremiah has been communicating but elsewhere. Perhaps a chief redeeming feature is that Jeremiah and other prophets have recorded such infidelity without making an attempt to conceal it.

The *laken* or "therefore" of the previous verse is countered in vs. 18 by the conjunctive *v-* translated as "but." That is, the Lord says that the Rechabites had set an example with their obedience to their father Jonadab or through their *shamah* and *shamar* (cf. 31.10), keeping his precepts. In conclusion, vs. 19 adds a "Thus says

the Lord” immediately following vs. 18 concerning Jonadab. Never shall he lack a man to stand before the Lord, literally as “to my face.” Such are the *davar* which are both encouraging and condemning at the end of this chapter.

13) musar, shamah, 14) shakam, 15) shakam, rah, yatav, havad, shamah, 16) shamah, 17) rah, qara’, 19) shamah, shamar

Chapter Thirty-Six

Vs. 1 opens with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated, coming immediately after Jeremiah’s dealings with the Rechabites. That chapter opened with “in the days of Jehoiakim” while the current one is pretty much the same but with the difference (and hence addition of the conjunctive) of “in the fourth year of Jehoiakim.” In other words, *v-* carries over into the same period of time or better, the same crisis noted in a footnote of the RSV. There it speaks of the “portentous events” of 25.1-14” or the Babylonian crisis. Actually that permeates everything through and through and rightly so.

Jeremiah receives the *davar* of the Lord as “this *davar*,” the last phrasing of which is in 27.1. Actually *davar* as noun and verb occur very frequently in this chapter. When he hears it put as such, he must have said to himself something like “what now?” It turns out to be a scroll or *megilah*, first occurrence in this book or more specifically, the first of many occurrences only in Chapter Thirty-Six. Jeremiah is to write (*katav*, also as to inscribe; cf. vs. 6) in it all the *davar* which the Lord has *davar* against Israel and Judah as well as other nations (*goy*, cf. 33.24). Such inscribing is to cover a lot of territory: from the reign of Josiah (cf. 26.1) up until the present. However, we’re dealing with the divine *davar* at work here. It’s the same *davar* which frequently “was to Jeremiah” as noted numerous times and implies an immediate presence, he is able to accomplish it swiftly and without exertion. In this instance Jeremiah must have recalled the same command to Moses, using him as a template: “Write these *davar*; in accordance with these *davar* I have made a covenant with you and with Israel” [Ex 34.27].

Such inscribing is to be transmitted through hearing (*shamah*, cf. 35.19), for the Lord wishes this scroll presented as containing the evil he intends, *rah* and *chashav* (cf. 35.15 and 18.18. The verb implies plotting, the doing of something in secret with evil intent as we have here. However, since this *chashav* comes from the Lord, the end cannot but be beneficial, that each person turn from his evil (*rah*) way *which*

results in the Lord forgiving (*salach*, cf. 33.8) his or her iniquity as well as sin (*havon* and *chata'th*, cf. 32.18 and 5.25).

Vs. 4 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” to show, as it usually does, the close connection between an event that just occurred and what follows. Here that connection consists of Jeremiah summoning his secretary Baruch (cf. 32.12 but not noted there) who is to write at his master’s direction all the *davar* which the Lord had *davar* to him. The reason for this becomes clearer as the chapter moves on. At first glance you’d think delegating Baruch to do the writing would give way for making mistakes. However, the *davar* from the Lord to Jeremiah and then on to Baruch is seamless. Hence there’s no problem as to the transmission of the *davar*, again with Moses in mind.

In vs. 5 Jeremiah tells Baruch the reason for delegating the task of writing the *davar* of the Lord, that he’s restrained (*hatsar*, cf. 20.9 but not noted there; also as to shut up) from going to the temple, the reason for which isn’t clear. Jeremiah must have had an urge to go, but this recent visit by the *davar* prevented him, the reason for which he couldn’t articulate to others what he knew in his heart. Anyway, Baruch is to take his place and go there on a fast day and read literally “in the ears” of all the people, remaining true to what his master had *davar*.

Next Baruch holds out the possibility—important to stress this instead of the certainty—that the people will offer supplication to the Lord, *techinah* implying grace as well as mercy. “Let my humble plea come before you” [37.20]. Such a plea might...just might..result in the people (i.e., plural) turning from their evil (*rah*, cf. vs. 3) way (i.e., singular), *derek* being noted last in 32.39. If they do this, they’ll escape what the Lord has *davar*—the negative side of *davar*—which is tied in with his anger and wrath, both *‘aph* and *chemah* as in 33.5. And so Baruch followed through and read all the *davar* in accord with what he had been commanded.

Vs. 9 jumps ahead to a specific time or the winter during King Jehoiakim’s reign when the Babylonians were making a move against Ashkelon. The people assembled in Jerusalem and proclaimed (*qara’* as to cry out; cf. 35.17) a fast literally “to the face of” the Lord. In other words, this fast took on a sense of urgency by boldly being right in his face. It was on this occasion that Baruch read the *davar* from the scroll literally in the ears of the people as in vs. 5, this mirroring “to the face of” the Lord. Chances are they knew Baruch had a long association with Jeremiah as his secretary and were accustomed to him doing the reading.

Among the crowd was Micaiah who upon hearing all the *davar* of the Lord, rushed to inform several princes who refrained from attending along with five singled out by name plus a few others not named. One can just imagine them tucked away in both the king's house and in the secretary's chamber, that is, two stages removed from prying ears, as if this isolation could shield them from the divine *davar*.

Nevertheless, according to vs. 13, Micaiah communicated the *davar* pronounced by Baruch within this self-imposed protective shield. Their response was what you'd expect. Immediately they sent Jehudi to fetch Baruch, have him sit down and read it himself which he did under pressure, anxious as to what might happen to him upon finishing. All the while he was putting his trust in the *davar* he was reading. Actually this is the second time the assembled princes heard the *davar* of the Lord, Micaiah being the first and Baruch the second.

Upon hearing the *davar*, the princes were terrified, *pachad* (cf. 30.5) intimating dread, and rushed off to inform the king. The way vs. 16 puts it, their fear is so intense, "they turned to one another in fear" or literally, "each man to his neighbor." But before hastening to the king, they wondered how Baruch had written all these *davar*, surmising correctly that they came from Jeremiah although his name isn't mentioned. It seemed they were just afraid of Jeremiah as they were of the *davar*. To Baruch's relief, the princes commanded him as well as Jeremiah to hide themselves.

Vs. 20 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "so" when the princes who visited Baruch went immediately to see the king, having placed the scroll in the chamber of Elishama the secretary. Only then did they report all the *davar* to the king. Note the distinction between the *davar* of the scroll and the *davar* intended for the king. Upon hearing this, without delay the king send for the scroll, vs. 21 beginning with the conjunctive translated as "then," indicative of the swiftness of action involved. His assistant proceeded to read it not just to the king but to the princes, most likely the same delegation that had just read the scroll. That means they were hearing it for the second time. While it was being read, King Jehoiakim took his seat. He isn't mentioned by name throughout, possibly out of contempt by the hostility he had toward Baruch and in actuality, Jeremiah. Mention of the ninth month and winter house signify coldness not just of the season but of the overall atmosphere.

Adding to the dramatic effect of this coldness, an assistant by the name of Jehudi was reading the scroll, and having completed several columns, the king cut them off and cast them into the fire. The overall impression is that he did this in slow motion for greater effect. Vs. 24 takes pains to say that Jehoiakim and the princes weren't afraid of the *davar*, not even rending their garments as one would expect. Although those

present with the king felt the warmth of the fire nearby, to them it was as cold as that time of the year. Three men—they were either princes or royal advisors—urged their master not to continue burning the scroll which infuriated the king. This prompted him to send for Baruch and Jeremiah but no one could find them because as vs. 19 recounts, the princes told them to hide. Nothing is said whether Jehoiakim suspected the princes which testifies to the completeness of their scheme to protect Jeremiah. If the king found out, God help them.

Vs. 27 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “now,” another indication of the fast-paced action at hand. We have the *davar* of the Lord coming again to Jeremiah after having mentioned that the *davar* conveyed to Baruch. Even before this happened, Jeremiah had an inkling that the Lord would ask for another scroll on which he’d write the same *davar* as the first. With Moses again in mind (cf. vs. 2), Jeremiah recalled exactly such *davar* and inscribed them at once and with ease,

Now for the first time since vs. 9 Jehoiakim is mentioned by his proper name instead of being referred to as king and is done so by the Lord himself, vs. 29 beginning with “Thus says the Lord.” In this same verse the Lord puts in Jeremiah’s mouth a rhetorical question for the king as to why he had prophesied about Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon’s invasion which will cut off both man and beast, the verb being *shachat* (cf. 18.4) also as to corrupt. Right away in the following verse (30) we have another “Thus says the Lord” directly addressed to King Johoiakim who won’t have any successor to sit on the throne of David. The very mention of this archetypal king by which all others are judged is the ultimate condemnation. At the same time it intimates that while something bad is in store for Jehoikim and his descendants along with Israel itself, the seat of David somehow will put through.

This chapter draws to an end with the Lord having pronounced (*davar*) that evil or *rah* (cf. vs. 3) for all intensive purposes has come into effect. Nevertheless, no one would hear (*shamah*, cf. vs. 2) it. So here as well as throughout the Book of Jeremiah (and further down the road) we have the ever recurring theme of *rah* = no *shamah*.

The last verse of Chapter Thirty-Six begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” as it speaks of a third scroll which Jeremiah gave to Baruch. As noted earlier, Jeremiah was able to do this following the example of Moses writing the *davar* of the Lord with full accuracy and precision, let alone speed. Interestingly there are similar *davar* added which aren’t detailed here but certainly must pertain to the response (and ultimate) fate of King Johoiakim and Israel.

2) megilah, katav, goy, shamah, 3) rah, chashav, salach, havon, chata'th, 5) hatsar, 7) techinah, derek, 'aph, chemah, 9) qara', 16) pachad, 29) shachat, 31) rah, shamah

Chapter Thirty-Seven

This new chapter starts off with King Nebuchadrezzar having established a new ruler, Zedekiah, in Judah to take Johoiakim's place as foretold in 36.30: "He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat by day and the frost by night." Then vs. 2 brings up—regurgitates is an apt way of putting it—something all too familiar by now. Neither he, his servant nor the people listened to the *davar* which Jeremiah *davar, shamah* (cf. 36.31) another term we've encountered many times before. One wonders what Nebuchadrezzar thinks about all this or even if it had registered with him. Perhaps he thought of it as some kind of internal wrangling among the Israelites about their religion and a crazed prophet. Nevertheless, this supposedly crazed prophet just might be of advantage to him.

One of the first acts of King Zedekiah is to send for Jeremiah and ask his prayers, *palal* (cf. 14.11) being the verb implying to judge or to intercede. Then vs. 4 gives a status report on Jeremiah, if you will, who at this point hadn't been imprisoned. This is put interestingly enough as "he came and went in the midst of the people," *betok* indicating the very center of the people. Apparently Pharaoh of Egypt's army had come to the king's assistance, he being under siege by the Chaldeans who withdrew at the report. As for Jeremiah's intercession, the text doesn't explicitly associate it with this development. This concurs with a note in the RSV: "the inhabitants concluded that a deliverance as in the days of Hezekiah had occurred, but Jeremiah warned them that such optimism was wholly unwarranted."

Vs. 6 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "then" to show, as it always does, the close connection between what had just happened and what comes quickly on its heels. Here it applies to the *davar* of the Lord which came ('was') to Jeremiah followed by the customary "Thus says the Lord." Jeremiah is to see the king who made the request to inquire of Jeremiah, *darash* (cf. 30.17) fundamentally as to tread and thus intimates a certain desperation and urgency, certainly the case at hand. Jeremiah is to unpack the divine *davar*, namely, that the Egyptians will return home and the Chaldeans will come back and capture Jerusalem, "this city." Most importantly, King Zedekiah isn't to deceive himself with false hopes, least of all his people, the verb *nasha'* and noun *nephesh* as found in 4.10. The Lord concludes this warning with even sterner words. Even if Israel could defeat the Chaldeans, they will

rise up once more and burn “this city.”

When the Chaldeans withdrew from their siege of Jerusalem, Jeremiah took advantage of this lull to set off for his home town to take care of some family business or as the RSV puts it, “get his portion (labeled ‘obscure’) *betok* or “from the very midst of his people.” He felt now was a good time when the *davar* of the Lord would leave him alone, every temporarily, but such was not the case. A sentry mistook Jeremiah for deserting to the Chaldeans whose side apparently he had favored. Such was the popular opinion. If it were any other inhabitant, things may have turned out differently, but here was the prophet himself who had talked openly so much about the impending siege and fall of the city. Naturally the princes were enraged who then beat and imprisoned Jeremiah. So once again he couldn’t take a vacation even for a brief time from his role of prophet. He was thrust back into an all too familiar situation where the *davar* of the Lord would make use of him though initially such thoughts were far from his mind.

Vs. 16 says that Jeremiah remained imprisoned “for many days,” perhaps far longer than he had anticipated. Given the situation, you’d think that King Zedekiah would have visited him sooner but did not. No reason is given; perhaps he was afraid to get an unfavorable prophecy yet again. Finally he questioned Jeremiah secretly, literally “in his house in secret” or *seter*. “Then King Zedekiah swore secretly to Jeremiah” [38.16]. He wasn’t a bit concerned whether Jeremiah was deserting or not but wanted to know if he had received any further *davar* from the Lord. Jeremiah responded directly and in matter-of-fact fashion as he had done earlier that Zedekiah will be handed over to the Babylonians. Then Jeremiah questioned the king as to why he had been cast into prison, claiming that he had done no wrong. He threw in a rhetorical question as to the whereabouts of prophets who prophesied that the king of Babylon won’t come against Israel. No answer, of course, was presented.

Chapter Thirty-Seven concludes with Jeremiah pleading that King Zedekiah do not send him to the house of Jonathan the secretary who’d put him to death. The king relented and kept him where he was, feeding him some bread until it ran out because of the siege. In the meanwhile, Jeremiah could hear the commotion both within the city and without, feeling completely helpless at not being able to move. One wonders what his captors thought as the Babylonians tightened the noose even more. Furthermore, where was the *davar* of the Lord now?

1) shamah, 3) palal, 7) darash, 9) nasha’, nephesh, 17) seter

Chapter Thirty-Eight

This new chapter is part of a larger whole dealing with Jeremiah's imprisonment which is why vs. 1 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "now," the usual sign of a close connection between an event that had transpired and one about to take place. Four men are mentioned by name in this opening verse who most likely were visitors, even associates, to see Jeremiah. The text at hand takes pains to say that they had heard (*shamah*, cf. 37.1) the *davar* which their friend had been speaking, *shamah* being the first word of this opening chapter. Such rare obedience suffices to mention their names: Shephatiah, Gedaliah, Jucal and Pashhur. This is joined with the usual "Thus says the Lord." As applied to just four people, *shamah* stands in sharp contrast to the entire nation of Israel not listening to the divine *davar*. I.e., a hint, if you will, at the notion of a remnant that many of the prophets speak of.

The *davar* as treasured by these four men are worth mentioning by reason of their *shamah*. Anyone who remains within Jerusalem shall perish, but whoever goes out to the Chaldeans shall live, his life being a "prize of war," *shalal* as in 21.9. In other words, they will become spoil or booty. It's a foregone conclusion ("Thus says the Lord" again in vs. 3) that Jerusalem will be taken by the Babylonians.

Vs. 4 has the princes asking King Zedekiah for Jeremiah to be put to death because his *davar* were in danger of weakening the resolve of the soldiers defending Jerusalem, *rapha'* (cf. 33.7) implying to be slack, to let down. They were, of course, playing on the king's fear and how Jeremiah had foretold how the Babylonians would capture him. In reality they were more fearful of their own lives. At once Zedekiah concedes, saying that he's unable to do anything against them, for the princes had him just where they wanted him. Right away (this is conveyed by the conjunctive *v-* translated as 'so' in vs. 6) they took Jeremiah and cast him into a cistern dramatically described as empty of water but full of mud into which he had sunk. Nothing is said of a stench, but surely it must have been awful.

However, a eunuch by the name of Ebed-melech sympathetic to Jeremiah and perhaps associated with his four friends mentioned in vs. 1, heard of this. He rushed off to King Zedekiah and begged for Jeremiah's rescue. He relented, telling the eunuch to go ahead with his plan. Apparently Zedekiah had a change of heart somewhere along the line which must have enraged the princes. After all, he said in vs. 5 "the king can do nothing against you."

Vs. 14 begins with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated, intimating that King

Zedekiah rushed to see Jeremiah at the third entrance of the temple, a supposedly secret place away from the princes' prying eyes. He posed a question which he had longed to ask to which Jeremiah gave one condition, that he not be put to death. Zedekiah concurred, and Jeremiah responded in vs. 17 with "Thus says the Lord." By now the king was familiar—too much so for his taste—with these words which brought up old, familiar scenarios from the past, ones he'd rather leave there. As he feared, Jeremiah told him to surrender to the king of Babylon who will spare not just his life but those in Jerusalem. The alternative, of course, does not have to be made known. It was very obvious. Zedekiah was thinking primarily of his own life and blurted out that he was more afraid of the Jews who had deserted to the Chaldeans than the Chaldeans themselves. Jeremiah reassured the king, provided that he obey or *shamah* (cf. vs. 1) the voice of the Lord, *qol* (cf. 32.23) being used as a more emphatic expression of *davar*. Again, we have an example of the importance of *shamah* vis-a-vis *davar*, of hearing/obeying the word of the Lord.

In vs. 21 Jeremiah presents King Zedekiah with the option he was aware of fully, that failure to be attentive to this *shamah* will lead to a vision he had which interestingly is put in terms of a *davar*, again stressing the importance of *shamah*. The *davar* consists of women in the house of the king of Judah who were led out to the king of Babylon. Most likely they were concubines very much prone to gossip and palace intrigue. This is reflected in a ditty they expressed in vs. 22, namely, that the king's trusted friends had deserted him, and his feet were stuck in mire, most likely referring to Jeremiah's experience in the cistern. Nothing could be more embarrassing for the king when such women publically announced what supposedly had been kept secret. Everyone knew, of course, but now it was being played out before everyone.

In vs. 23 Jeremiah gets personal. King Zedekiah's wives and sons will be taken by the Chaldeans as prophesied earlier. Then the king told the prophet to keep quiet about all this in order that the princes discover their meeting. However, should they find out, Jeremiah is to say that the king responded to his plea that he wouldn't return him to the house of Jonathan to die. Obviously the princes got wind of the conversation—it was virtually impossible to hide even under the conditions of a siege—and things worked out well for Jeremiah. However, the Chaldeans were at the gate while this drama was being played out. In the meanwhile, the king, princes and everyone inside Jerusalem were holding their breath awaiting the fate in store for them.

1) *shamah*, 2) *shalal*, 4) *rapha'*, 2) *shamah*, *qol*

Chapter Thirty-Nine

This new chapter begins with reference to the length of reigns of the two antagonists, King Zedekiah and King Nebuchadrezzar, a way of setting up the final climax or fall of Jerusalem. It's zeroed in further for increased drama in vs. 2 regarding Zedekiah: eleventh year, fourth month, ninth day of the month. Just about everyone expected Jerusalem to fall, for there's no mention of the city's inhabitants resisting the Babylonians. This is intimated in vs. 3 by their princes sitting in the middle gate along with military officers. Upon seeing them, King Zedekiah became terrified and decided to escape accompanied with other soldiers, making their way outside Jerusalem under cover of darkness. Unfortunately they failed to *shamah* the *davar* of Jeremiah, this action sealing their fate.

Vs. 4 describes the escape route outside Jerusalem. However, the Chaldeans got wind of this, pursued them and took them captive. Now it was up to King Nebuchadrezzar to pass sentence, this being rendered literally as "to *davar* judgment" or *mishpat* (cf. 33.15). It was an awful judgment indeed. First they slew Zedekiah's sons and then blinded him, hauling him off to Babylon, most likely in some kind of animal cart. Thus the very last thing Zedekiah had seen was the death of his sons and worse, that he would have nobody to succeed him on the throne. During the long trip to Babylon he couldn't help but regret not heeding...not *shamah*...the *davar* of the Lord uttered by Jeremiah. Now he was to live out his days as a trophy of sorts as well as a living admonishment to any ruler who might attempt to challenge the might of Babylon.

After having burned the house of King Zedekah, Nebuchadrezzar carried into exile the inhabitants along with those who earlier deserted to him. The two groups must have been kept separate, otherwise they'd be at each others' throats. However, Nebuchadrezzar gave order for his captain of the guard to leave some poor people, *dal* being the adjective as found last in 5.4. They were given vineyards and fields not out of pity but as non-threatening inhabitants to maintain and cultivate the land. Actually, they turned out to be better off than expected and ultimately received the exiles upon their return from Babylon. Hopefully the four friends or associates of Jeremiah—Shephatiah, Gedaliah, Jucal and Pashhur—are among those left behind.

As for Jeremiah, in vs. 11 the king put him in charge of the same captain of the guard who was to treat him well and not do him any harm or *me'umah* along with *rah* (cf. 36.31) or evil, the same. As for the former, it's found in vs. 10 concerning the poor left behind, those "who owed nothing." Even better than this, the captain was to do

anything Jeremiah should *davar* him. And so Jeremiah was handed over to Gedaliah, who in turn, was to take him home. Vs. 14 end with “So he dwelt among the people,” suggesting that the prophet didn’t go into exile and *betok* as in their very center. On one hand it must have been difficult not to be with the exiles while on the other, a relief to remain at home despite the destruction wrought by the Babylonians. Once he and those *dal* in vs. 10 among whom he resided had recovered, they could organize and form a working community. Such is the meaning of Jeremiah being in their *betok*.

Vs. 15 has the *davar* of the Lord coming to Jeremiah confined in the court of the guard, this most likely being a part of Jerusalem not destroyed. It was a familiar *davar*, one addressed to the eunuch Ebed-melech who had rescued him from the cistern (cf. 38.7). The contents? That the Lord will fulfil his *davar* for evil or for *rah* (cf. vs. 12) against Jerusalem and will do so the very day they are uttered, not surprising given the circumstances. However, Chapter Thirty-Nine closes on an upbeat note. The Lord will save Ebed-melech as a prize of war, *shalal* as in 38.2 for having trusted in him.

5) mishpat, 10) dal, 12) me’umah, rah, 16) rah, 18) shalal

Chapter Forty

The last chapter recounted the catastrophic event of Jerusalem’s fall and King Nebuchadrezzar not only having spared Jeremiah but treating him well possibly because he was so insistent on the city surrendering to him. In other words, to Babylonian eyes Jeremiah was a secret agent, not so much a prophet. Now the *davar* of the Lord comes...“was”...to him yet again. Although Jeremiah was spared and commanded to be looked after well (cf. 39.12), the Babylonian captain of the guard had him bound in chains along with exiles destined for Babylon. Since Jeremiah had been the most notable person after (or before) King Zedekiah now off the scene, his presence among the exiles could be problematic. In other words, despite his prophesying which favored the Babylonians, Jeremiah just might become a rallying figure and cause trouble later on.

The captain of the guard took Jeremiah aside and acknowledged that his God had *davar* evil (*rah*, cf. 39.16) against Jerusalem which he calls contemptuously “this place.” Again in vs. 3 this foreigner acknowledged that the Lord had *davar* such a catastrophe because you...the collective you...had sinned against him, *chata’* (cf.

16.18), the result being that this *davar* (as ‘thing’) had occurred. Even to him it was clear that Israel had failed to listen to the Lord’s voice, *shamah* and *qol* (both in 38.2) with the preposition *b-* or “in” prefaced to *qol*, literally “in his voice.”

Now the captain graciously offers Jeremiah the choice of coming with him to Babylon or to remain at home using such words reminiscent of the Lord to Abram in Gn 13.15: “for all the land which you see I will give to you and to your descendants forever.” That is to say, he offers the prophet “the whole land” before him. Surely Jeremiah must have been reminded of the Genesis verse just mentioned. Regardless of his choice, it would be beneficial for the Babylonians. With that, the captain let Jeremiah go along with some food and a present. Apparently Jeremiah didn’t give a response, too overwhelmed with such generosity. Interestingly the *davar* of the Lord didn’t intervene in this decision. Because Jeremiah was a prophet, he foresaw the role another prophet would play in Babylon, his name being Daniel. In this light it wasn’t a hard choice. Also Jeremiah didn’t want to be labeled with being a traitor among the exiles going to Babylon, for chances are that once there, the king would promote him as was the fate of Daniel. That would be overstepping his current role of prophet.

Jeremiah decided to live with Gedaliah, first mentioned as among the four friends who had visited him in prison (cf. 38.1). To him the Babylonians had committed the poorest (*dal*, cf. 39.10) of the land who were not sent into exile but left to tend the land. Gedaliah assured them not to fear the Chaldeans but to serve them, for that would work in their favor. Obviously a deal too good not to be turned down, for in vs. 12 they did as they were told and gathered wine and fruit in great abundance. Some was for themselves, and the rest they would sell to the Babylonians occupying Israel.

Although everything seemed to go according to plan, Johanan, a leader of forces which apparently managed to escape the Babylonians, approached Gedaliah. He came with information about a certain Ishmael from the king of the Ammonites who was seeking his life for having colluded with the Babylonians. Gedaliah dismissed the report about Ishmael, thinking that it was false. As for Jeremiah, nothing is said about him amid this intrigue though he must have been aware of it. For him it was up to the Lord’s intervention, to have another *davar* come to him. As for this *davar*, it isn’t mentioned until 42.7.

2) rah, 3) chata’, shamah, qol, 7) dal

Chapter Forty-One

As has been the case for a while now, the chapters at hand aren't prime material for *lectio divina*, hence the short notations. Regardless, our focus as well as guide has been and will continue to be upon *davar* or word-as-expression. Without that, the text is pretty much a purely historical account, curse upon curse. It should be noted that Jeremiah is absent from the chapter at hand.

Vs. 1 turns attention to Ishmael first noted towards the end of the last chapter who approaches Gedaliah with ten men, they presumably armed and spoiling for a fight. While eating, these men struck down Gedaliah along with other Jews and Chaldean soldiers stationed at Mizpah. A day afterwards, eighty men came in a penitential mood, bringing cereal offerings to the Lord in the temple. Apparently the temple or part of it had been restored after the Babylonian invasion and what seems to be a light occupation on their part.

Ishmael took the opportunity to deceive them, pretending that Gedaliah was alive, and slew them upon having entered the city. However, ten of the eighty pleaded for their lives, their stores of produce from the land being their salvation.

Johanan got word of Ishmael's atrocity and went after him causing those under the latter's thumb to rejoice. However, Ishmael escaped with eight men to the Ammonites. Despite this setback, Johanan freed those held captive who decided to take refuge in Egypt because they feared the Chaldeans as well as Ishmael.

Chapter Forty-Two

This chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "then" which shows the fast-paced action at hand, these chapters pretty much running into each other as they deal with the fall of Jerusalem and the aftermath. Given the heinous act by Ishmael, Johanan and others allied with him, they came to Jeremiah. This outrage is significant insofar as all the people were called "from the least to the greatest," united and ready to take vengeance. Jeremiah certainly was informed which saddened him considerably. Perhaps he wished that he had taken up the offer to go to Babylon after all to escape such internecine warfare.

The people made a request from Jeremiah which is summed up in vs. 3 by a "thing" or *davar* they are to do: allow their supplication (*techinah*, cf. 36.7) to come before

the Lord and to pray to him, *palal* (cf. 37.3) meaning to judge as well as to intercede. In desperation they add the fact that they are so few, having been left behind by the Babylonians with a pretty good deal but soured by the likes of Ishmael. Indeed, Jeremiah heard them loud and clear. Without delay he fulfills their request after which he'll inform them as to the Lord's answer.

Vs. 5 contains something akin to a vow or promise: those speaking with Jeremiah say that the Lord will be a witness against them. He is both true and faithful, a *hed* (cf. 29.23 but not noted there) modified by 'emeth and 'aman (cf. 33.7 and 40.14, the latter not noted there). 'Emeth means truth and 'aman is the verb from which it's derived. They ratify this vow, if you will, by saying that they will obey (*shamah*) the voice of the Lord, the verb *shamah* and *qol* prefaced with the preposition *b-*, literally as "hear in the voice of the Lord" (cf. 40.3 for both). In other words, they will carry out this *shamah* or hearing mentioned a second time with regard to whomever Jeremiah sends them. This is a deceptively admirable disposition, but a footnote in the NIV says that "they soon demonstrate that they have already decided to follow their own inclinations." Jeremiah must have known this but said nothing which is why the narrative drops off with an interval of ten days. Besides, this failure with regard to *shamah* is typical not just of Johanan and his followers but to the nation of Israel as a whole.

At the end of ten days the *davar* of the Lord comes ('was') to Jeremiah, the intervening time being one of waiting where unfortunately Johanan and his group go back on their word. Jeremiah summons Johanan and his military men, the words "from the least to the greatest" intimating that everyone was involved. It begins typically with "Thus says the Lord," these very words being an embarrassment that their intent has been discovered. Nevertheless, Jeremiah had to respect their choice which was made freely. Should they decide to remain in the land, the Lord will present two options: 1) build up vs. not pull down (*banah* vs. *harash*, cf. 31.4 and 24.6 with the latter not noted there) and 2) plant vs. not pluck up (*natah* vs. *natash*, cf. 25.6 for both). In other words, the Lord will repent or go back on the evil (*nacham* and *rah*: cf. 31.19 and 40.2) he had done to them.

In vs. 11 the *davar* of the Lord continues to *davar* through Jeremiah that Johanan and his people shouldn't fear the king of the Babylonians, his troops at this juncture being occupiers of the land. The Lord is present both to save and to deliver, *yashah* and *natsal* (cf. 33.16 and 21.11), the latter meaning to snatch. Next he throws in a bonus: that he will grant mercy (*racham*, cf. 33.26) in order that King Nebuchadrezzar will do the same and not send them off into exile as he had done

with the bulk of the population. Thus the divine *racham* will have a direct impact upon the human *racham*. However—and this is a big however rendered by the conjunctive *v*—such *racham* is contingent upon *shamah* the Lord’s *qol* (cf. vs. 6 for both). Already the Lord saw through them, that they’d rather flee to Egypt for safety.

Vs. 15 prompts a quick response from the Lord who has been speaking all along, that is, by the conjunctive *v*- translated as “then” followed by *shamah* (cf. vs. 13) and *davar*. Note that he calls Johanan and his group “this remnant,” a thinly veiled sarcastic phrase. In other words, how can a group of people spared exile, let alone their lives, go against the Lord? If they opt for Egypt, what they feared most will pursue them there. No one will live to tell of their story.

Vs. 18 begins with “Thus says the Lord” which by now must be painful to hear for anyone like Johanan who first consented to obey and shortly change his mind. In essence, never did they intend to change their minds as noted already. Just as the Lord has poured out his anger and wrath (*aph* and *chemah*: cf. 36.7 for both) upon Jerusalem, so the same will be poured out should “this remnant” head off to Egypt, the perennial safe haven.

In vs. 19 the Lord says sternly that they will know for certain—this indicated by double use of the verb *yadah* (cf. 33.3)—that if they go to Egypt, they’re doomed. They made that choice at the very cost of their lives or *nephesh* (cf. 37.9), also as soul which here can apply not just to their physical lives but to their very being. At this point Jeremiah as spokes-mouth of the divine *davar* steps forward. He tells the people before him that they had sent him to the Lord asking for him to intercede which, of course, he had done. In fact, he declared it to them, *nagad* (cf. 33.3) being a more forceful *davar* as to propose, to announce. Then the all too familiar reminder kicks in: they failed to *shamah* the Lord’s *qol* (cf. vs. 15 for both), *qol* again prefaced with the preposition *b-* or “in” for reference.

And so Chapter Forty-Two concludes on a somber note which Jeremiah knew was in store for Johanan and his followers. We have the double use of *yadah* as in vs. 19, “know for a certainty” with respect to certain death should they choose Egypt. This *yadah-yadah* is just about the same as *shamah* or the consequences of not engaging in *shamah*. Although Israel is occupied by Babylonian troops, remaining there is far better. Should they have obeyed, they would have been among the *dal* or poor (cf. 40.7) who kept the land for the exiles’ return which turned out not to be that long.

2) techinah, palal, 5) hed, ‘emeth, ‘aman, 6) qol, shamah, 10) banah, harsh, natah, natash, nacham, rah, 11) yashah, natsal, 13) racham, shamah, qol, 15) shamah, 18) ‘aph, chemah, 19) yadah, 20) nephesh, 21) shamah, qol, 22) yadah

Chapter Forty-Three

This new chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated, again showing the close connection between events or Jeremiah’s communication of the divine *davar* in the previous chapter and his ceasing (*kalah*, cf. 30.11) this *davar*. Now Azariah and Johanan give their voice, they being described as insolent or *zed* which also means proud: “Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins” [Ps 19.13]. Having this state of mind makes them impervious to any *davar* from the Lord, a fact which Jeremiah had known long before, hence his response that they are telling a lie or *sheqer* (cf. 29.23). It centers around their supposed divine inspiration concerning going to Egypt. In other words, Azariah and Johanan were putting *davar* where such *davar* don’t belong which is pretty much in line with *sheqer*. Next Jeremiah embarrasses the pair by saying that Baruch is behind this *sheqer*, that is, he wanted them to hand over Jeremiah and those with him to the Chaldeans.

In vs. 5 Johanan and his ilk rounded up those inhabitants of Judah who managed to escape capture from the Babylonians along with Jeremiah and his secretary Baruch. They brought them to Egypt which was in accord with their original plan noted in 42.14. As for this journey, nothing is said as to how those forced to go along fared. Did they put themselves in the shoes of Jacob who went to Egypt so long ago? At least he had the eventual joy and consolation of discovering his son, Joseph. Also, Egypt was the place from which Moses had led the Israelites despite in later centuries it enjoyed the reputation of being a place of refuge. As for Johanan and those under his command, vs. 7 sums it up in a fashion we’ve grown accustomed to by now. They failed to hear the voice of the Lord, *shamah* and *qol* with the latter having the preposition *b-* prefaced to it, “in the Lord.”

Vs. 8 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then” or when Jeremiah arrived in Tahpanhes, Egypt, the *davar* of the Lord having come (‘was’) to him as it has so many times earlier independent of place or circumstance. Now this *davar* comes off with a prophetic and symbolic gesture, namely, that Jeremiah is to take some large stones—not too large, for they are to fit in his hands—and hide them in the pavement before the entrance to Pharaoh’s house. This is more difficult than at first glance, for surely guards were posted there. Nevertheless, Jeremiah manages to pull it off in the

sight of his compatriots from Judah and claim that King Nebuchadrezzar will set up his throne upon the stones. The Lord calls the Babylonian king “my servant,” *heved* with its double meaning of slave as in 27.6. After having spread his canopy over these stones, Nebuchadrezzar will smite Egypt with pestilence and sword, words reminiscent of Moses and the ten plagues.

2) kalah, zed, sheqer, 7) shamah, qol, 10) heved

Chapter Forty-Four

A new chapter with the familiar introduction of the *davar* of the Lord coming (‘was’) to Jeremiah, this time in a wholly different environment, Egypt. Now it concerns the Jews dwelling there, mentioning four different parts of the country. Being a prophet, Jeremiah must have had special insight into Israel’s history in that much maligned country. Despite this, Egypt was the place where Joseph had become ruler and invited his family where they remained, enjoying prosperity for over four hundred years. It was only when the pharaoh who dealt with Moses and the Israelites that Egypt got a bad rap which unfortunately had stuck in the popular imagination. For Jeremiah to take this all in must have been quite an experience. Nevertheless, as noted in 43.10 he foresees King Nebuchadrezzar taking over the land. So there he was awaiting this invasion, and when it came it would be his second one. How would Nebuchadrezzar treat him this time? Most likely not favorably.

Those with Jeremiah were familiar with his role as prophet and must have expected him to come off with a prophecy in their favor, a reassurance that they were safe in Egypt. So when in vs. 2 he begins typically with “Thus says the Lord,” all eyes and ears were upon him. Right away the *davar* is negative, not what they expected. The evil or *rah* (cf. 42.10) which the Lord had brought upon Jerusalem, etc., will follow them in the supposed safe haven of Egypt. Actually this isn’t made explicit until vs. 7 which begins with the conjunctive *v-* prefaced to *hatah* or “now” although the Israelites knew at once the *davar* being proclaimed wasn’t favorable to them. The Lord signals them out as witnesses, of having seen first hand this *rah* in their native land.

In vs. 2 the Lord calls the cities he just mentioned as a desolation or *charbah* (cf. 27.17) without inhabitants, traceable to their wickedness (*rah*, cf. vs. 3) which, in turn, provoked him to anger, *kahas* (cf. 32.29). Such wickedness can be traced to the burning of incense to other gods and serving them...even worse, they did this without

knowing such gods, let alone their fathers. Then in vs. 4 the Lord pretty much sums up the Book of Jeremiah as well as other the prophets: persistently he had sent his servants (a.k.a. prophets), another use of the verb *shakam* (35.15) as to rise early. Their common message? Simply as not to engage in any abominable practice the Lord hates, the two nouns *davar* and *tohevah* (cf. 16.18). Then as now or as in the case of those present, the people failed to listen and incline (*shamah* and *natah*: cf. 43.7 and 35.15 but not noted there) their ear, singular ear belonging to everyone and hence a collective sin with equal collective responsibility. Compare *natah* as to stretch out with *shuv* or to return, the latter with respect to wickedness or *rah* (cf. vs. 2).

The conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 6 is translated as “therefore” brings to conclusion the Lord’s experience of having had to deal with such a rebellious people and leads into “and now” of vs. 7 as noted above. He speaks of having dished out his wrath and anger or *chemah* and ‘*aph* (for both, cf. 42.18) which reduce the cities of Judah and Jerusalem to a waste and desolation (*charbah* and *shemamah*, cf. vs. 2 and 34.22) lasting to “this day.” This phrases is a strong suggestion that the *charbah* and *shemamah* just mentioned will apply to those in Egypt.

Vs. 7 with its already twice mentioned “and now” has “thus says the Lord,” is a sure sign that those listening to Jeremiah’s communication of the divine *davar* has something in store which the people would rather not hear. The Lord sets forth not just one rhetorical question but two others. The first asks why they have committed such a great evil (*rah*, cf. vs. 5) against their very selves and leaving no remnant. The second in vs. 8 deals with provoking the Lord to anger (*kahas*, cf. vs. 3) in Egypt. It seems that during the four hundred year sojourn of the Israelites there’s no mention of this. However now they’ve become a curse and taunt, *qelalah* and *cherpah* (cf. 29.22 and 31.2). What makes it worse is that it’s is down out in the open, before every nation on the earth.

Vs. 9 contains the third rhetorical question which confronts the listeners with not having remembered wickedness or *rah* (cf. vs. 7), this occurring five times or with regard to fathers, kings and their wives, their own and their wives. All have failed to humble themselves, *daka*’ suggestive of being broken into small pieces. “To crush under foot all the prisoners of the earth” [Lam 3.34]. Just as with vs. 6, “this day” (relative to ‘waste and desolation’) applies here as to a profound disobedience against the Lord’s law and statutes (*torah* and *choq*, cf. 32.23 and 31.35).

Vs. 11 gets right to the point as to those who had fled for refuge to Egypt. The Lord will set his face literally “in (*b-*) you to (*l-*) evil or *rah* (cf. vs. 9)” as he had done in

21.10. This is equal to cutting off Judah in its entirety, *karath* being the verb (cf. 34.18). As for the remnant in Egypt who've set their faces to go there—the wording being the opposite of the Lord doing this in the same verse—they'll end up by being consumed by the sword and famine, these two means mentioned twice for emphasis. If such thorough destruction weren't enough, the Lord adds that they will become an execration, horror, curse and taunt or '*alah, shamah, qelalah* and *cherpah*, all of which are mentioned in 42.18.

The Lord is on quite a roll here. In vs. 13 he says that he will punish (*paqad*, cf. 32.5; has military connotations) those who've fled to Egypt. Not one of them will escape back home except for some fugitives or *palet* which has two other biblical references, 50.28 and 51.50. This word is akin to a remnant and means even fewer than those whom the Babylonians left behind after their conquest of Israel.

This *davar* in its most extreme form prompts a quick response by those to whom it's addressed as indicated by the conjunctive *v-* translated as “then.” They did so with full knowledge that their wives had offered incense to local gods. A certain coyness is at work here; the men are blaming their wives, not unlike Adam blaming Eve for having eaten the forbidden fruit. Despite the extremeness just pronounced, they said outrightly that they won't hear (*shamah*, cf. vs. 12) the *davar* which Jeremiah had *davar* in the name of the Lord. They continue boldly saying that they will carry through on all that they have vowed which reads literally as “we will do all the *davar* which goes forth from our mouths.” So instead of accepting the divine *davar*, they opted for their own *davar*, a sure sign of impending disaster.

This self-centered *davar* takes the form of worship and sacrificing to the queen of heaven, the Babylonian goddess Ishtar (cf. 7.18). They and their fathers had done the same, “streets of Jerusalem” indicative of its pervasive popularity, devotion to which ensuring an abundance of food and absence of evil. Since they stopped worshiping Ishtar, things went badly for them. Apparently the Egyptian menagerie of gods and goddesses was a kind of pick-and-choose where a whole variety of divinities were tolerated, including Babylonian divinities.

In vs. 20 Jeremiah lets loose with a vengeance, having found it difficult to restrain himself to this point. He poses a sharp rhetorical question: did the Lord remember their worship of the queen of heaven back home? Didn't it come to his mind, *lev* (cf. 32.39) or heart? Surely it did despite their self-proclaimed rebellion noted above. As a result, their land—and this could refer to Egypt as well—became a desolation, waste and curse or *charbah, shamah* and *qelalah* as noted in vs. 12. Then in vs. 23 the

Lord brings up the painful failure to hear his voice. So what we have thus far amounts to an incredible slew of curses which amazingly rolled off the back of the people like water.

Vs. 24 begins with the conjunctive *v-* which goes untranslated, signaling that the Lord is to respond and does so by blurting out “Hear or *shamah* (cf. vs. 2) the *davar* of the Lord.” There follows (as to be expected) “Thus says the Lord.” Jeremiah acknowledges that both men and women were fulfilling their vows (*nadar*) in reference to the peculiar type of false worship proper to each. “How he (David) swore to the Lord and vowed to the Mighty one of Jacob” Ps 132.2]. What particularly disgusts the Lord is this added feature of vows which means swearing allegiance. Offering sacrifices, etc., is bad enough, but this? In contrast to such an abomination the Lord speaks of his great name which he’ll forbid anyone to mention whether in Judah or in Egypt.

The Lord continues his invective, fully aware of a “so what” attitude the people expressed above which is why he’s particularly galled. That’s why in vs. 27 the Lord says that he’s watching over them, *shaqad* (cf. 31.28) and the preposition *hal-* (‘upon’) implying to lay in wait for and ready to pounce. As for what happens, it is as to be expected *rah* (cf. vs. 11) or evil.

Despite this most intense manifestation of divine anger, a few will manage to return from Egypt to Judah. They are akin to those fugitives in vs. 14, a remnant of a remnant, if you will. Yet all who had come to Egypt will know (*yadah*, cf. 42.22) whose *davar* will stand (*qum*, cf. 34.18; literally ‘to arise’), theirs or his. In order to prove which side wins out, the Lord proposes a sign (‘*oth*, cf. 32.20) consisting of a punishment or *paqad* (cf. vs. 13) used with *hal-* or “upon.” It will surely stand against them for evil, *qum* again with *davar* and a third use of the preposition *hal-*.

And so the unrelenting flow of divine condemnations, punishments and brash resistance to them concludes with the Lord saying that he will give the current pharaoh of Egypt into the hands of those seeking his life. The model he’ll use is his handing over of Zedekiah to Nebuchadrezzar. As for this pharaoh named Hophra, hopefully he didn’t hear of Jeremiah’s prophecy. Chances are slim to nothing, for Jeremiah was simply another foreigner who had taken refuge in Egypt, ranting on about his own god.

2) rah, charbah, 3) kahash, shakam, 4) shakam, tohevah, shamah, natah, 5) shamah, natah, rah, 6) chemah, ‘aph, charbach, shemamah, 7) rah, kahash, qelalah, cherpah,

9) rah, 10) raka', torah, choq, 11) rah, karath, 12) 'alah, shamah, qelalah, cherpah, 13) paqad, 14) palet, 16) shamah, 21) lev, 22) charbah, shamah, qelalah, 24) shamah, 25) nadar, 27) shaqad, rah, 28) yadah, qum, 29) 'oth, paqad, qum,

Chapter Forty-Five

This, the shortest chapter of the Book of Jeremiah, consists of five verses. It begins with the *davar* which Jeremiah *davar* to Baruch concerning the *davar* he had written during King Jehoiakim's reign. A footnote in the RSV puts this well: "Advised of the difficulties ahead and surveying the trying years now past, Baruch concludes his memoirs by recalling God's assurance of physical deliverance." While Jeremiah has been and continues to be the means by which the Lord *davar* to his people, Baruch is very close to this *davar* by reason of his position of writing them down.

In vs. 2 Jeremiah, the divine mouthpiece, says to Baruch "Thus says the Lord" but with the added twist that the *davar* are directed right to him. Earlier Baruch had complained that the Lord had added sorrow to his pain, *yagon* (cf. 31.13) with the preposition *hal-* ('upon') prefaced to *mak'ov* (cf. 30.15 but not noted there). This had made Baruch weary and unable to rest, *yagah* and *menuchah* as in 51.58 and 51.59, the latter as quartermaster.

Out of concern for his faithful secretary, Jeremiah is asked by the Lord (who is equally concerned) to console him with "thus says the Lord," this the second such phrase in such a short chapter. The Lord is breaking and plucking up what he has built and planted, that is, the entire land or '*erets* (cf. 32.40). Then in vs. 6 he poses a rhetorical question as to whether or not Baruch is seeking great things for himself which he's encouraged not to do.

This divine advice should be taken, for the Lord is bringing evil or *rah* (cf. 44.27) upon everyone with the exception of Baruch. He will give his life as a prize for war wherever he goes, *shalal* being used as in 39.18 where the Lord will save Ebed-melech for being such, the result in having trusted in him.

2) *yagon*, *mak'ov*, *yagah*, *menuchah*, 4) '*erets*, 5) *rah*, *shalal*

Chapter Forty-Six

This chapter begins a whole slew of oracles against foreign nations right on through Chapter Fifty-One, next-to-last chapter of the book. Just the fact of knowing so many lay ahead can be daunting from the vantage point of *lectio divina* or any vantage point for that matter. And so it begins, the relative pronoun ‘*asher*’ or “which.” It seems to function not unlike the familiar conjunctive *v-*, here connecting all that had gone before and the remaining chapters of the book. Then we have the *davar* of the Lord coming (‘was’) to Jeremiah concerning the nations (*goy*, cf. 36.2).

First in line is Egypt which takes up this entire chapter, beginning with the army of Pharaoh Neco whose army King Nebuchadrezzar had defeated by the Euphrates River. Because there follows a long account in poetic form of military related events, they will be listed accordingly in abbreviated form by way of summary. This will apply through vs. 26. The same applies to the ensuing chapters dealing with other nations:

Vs. 3: buckler and shield

Vs. 4: harness horses, helmets, polish spears, coats of mail

Vs. 5: warriors dismayed and have retreated in haste, terror on every side

Vs. 6: the swift cannot flee nor can the warrior escape

Vs. 8: Egypt rises like the Nile to cover the earth

Vs. 9: the Lord orders horses and chariots to advance along with allies from Ethiopia, Put and Lut

Vs. 10: day of vengeance for the Lord, *neqamah* (cf. 20.12) who holds a sacrifice by the Euphrates

Vs. 11: Egypt to go to Gilead for balm because it lacks healing

Vs. 12: nations heard of Egypt’s shame and fallen warriors

Vs. 13 is a pause, if you will, in prose form amid this litany where the *davar* of the Lord through Jeremiah is about the invasion of Egypt by King Nebuchadrezzar.

Vs. 14: Egypt, Migdol, Memphis and Tahpanhes are to prepare themselves to be devoured by the sword

Vs. 15: The Lord thrust down Apis and its bull or god

Vs. 16: Those who have stumbled exhort each other to return home to escape the sword

Vs. 17: summon Egypt’s pharaoh who is called the nosy one

Vs. 18: the Lord will come as Tabor among the mountains and Carmel by the sea

Vs. 19: Egyptians are to make preparations for exile

Vs. 20: a gadfly from the north has come to Egypt, a beautiful heifer

Vs. 21: Egypt's soldiers resemble fatted calves who have fled

Vs. 22: Egypt slithers away as a serpent against those coming against her

Vs. 23: Egypt's enemies will cut down her forest as locusts

Vs. 24: Egypt will be handed over to a people from the north

Vs. 25-6 are in prose form where the Lord will bring punishment upon Egypt and those trusting in pharaoh after which he will hand them over to King Nebuchadrezzar.

In vs. 27 the Lord turns attention to Jacob/Israel and continues through the rest of this chapter or for two lengthy verses. He tells the nation not to fear nor be dismayed, *yare'* and *chatat* as both found in 30.10. The Lord will not just save (*yashah*, cf. 42.11) him but will do so from afar. With regard to this distance, it's a result of the people having strayed from the Lord, that being abundantly clear from what has been said thus far. Upon return home from exile, Jacob will enjoy quiet and ease, *shaqat* and *sha'an* (cf. 30.10 for both) with no one to fear.

For the second time the Lord tells Jacob not to fear (*yare'*, cf. vs. 27) because he is with him to fully destroy (*kalah*, cf. 43.2) the nations to which he had been driven. Nevertheless, Jacob must assume responsibility for past actions which is why the Lord will dish out chastisement and not leave him unpunished. The first is expressed by the verb *yasar* and noun *mishpat* which is prefaced with the preposition *l-*, literally "to judgment" (cf. 31.18 and 39.5). As for the second, the verb is *naqah* (cf. 30.11).

1) *goy*, 10) *neqamah*, 27) *yare'*, *chatat*, *yashah*, *shaqat*, *sha'an*, 28) *sha'an*, *yasar*, *mishpat*, *naqah*

Chapter Forty-Seven through Fifty-Two

Notations on the remaining chapters are combined because they form a list of seemingly endless condemnations of people and nations hostile to Israel. That is noted with regard to Chapter Forty-Six although an outline of such oracles is provided. With regard to Chapter Forty-Seven, the Lord directs Jeremiah's attention from Egypt to the Philistines, enemies of Israel from the day Joshua led the people into Canaan. Again, the *davar* of the Lord "was" to Jeremiah who begins typically with "thus says the Lord." One wonders if the Philistines, like the Egyptians of the

previous chapter as well as other peoples of ensuing chapters actually are listening. Perhaps Jeremiah's trusted secretary Baruch is actually writing them down as opposed to the prophet uttering them, that is, Jeremiah dictating the divine *davar*.

As for Chapter Forty-Eight, there's no mention of *davar* of the Lord against Moab, just "Thus says the Lord of hosts."

As for Chapter Forty-Nine, the oracle concerns the Ammonites with "Thus says the Lord." Vss. 7-22 concerns Edom followed by Damascus and Elam.

As for Chapter Fifty, the *davar* of the Lord concerns Babylon where the people of Judah and Israel will come together, asking the way home to Zion. Vs.5 says that they voluntarily they will join themselves (*lavah*) to the Lord in a covenant which is everlasting. "And many nations shall join themselves to the Lord in that day and shall be my people" [Zech 2.11]. Later in vs. 34 a redeemer (the participle *ga'al*, cf. 31.11) will do the following three 1) intercede (*ryv*, cf. 20.12) on Israel's behalf, 2) give rest (*ragah*, cf. 31.2) to the land and 3) give unrest (*ragaz*, cf. 33.9 but not noted there) to the Babylonians, this verb meaning to tremble.

As for Chapter Fifty-One, more is said against Babylon which essentially is the enemy throughout the Book of Jeremiah. the Lord will stir up the spirit (*ruach*, cf. 5.13) of a destroyer against Babylon which goes unspecified. This chapter concludes with the simple sentence in vs. 64, "Thus far are the *davar* of Jeremiah." This is more important than at first glance because throughout mostly torturous fifty-one chapters (Chapter Fifty-Two lacks *davar*) Jeremiah had been the mouthpiece of the Lord, taking the brunt of what he had uttered. Now those days or his mission are over.

Chapter Fifty-Two brings this book to a conclusion with a historical appendix, speaking of how two kings of Israel were treated. First comes Zedekiah mentioned at the very beginning and who later met a dreadful fate of having witnessed his sons slain by King Nebuchadrezzar and then blinded before being led off into captivity. Next comes Jehoiachin who fared much better under King Evil-Merodach of Babylon. Note the following two gestures in italics which can apply fortuitously for the Israelites held captive. That is to say, this new king *lifted up* the head of Jehoiachin and *put off* his prison garments. Those aware of such events could take courage with regard to the near future. As for the prophet Jeremiah, Chapter Fifty-Two says nothing, his role having come to completion with 51.64 quoted just above.

A brief summary

Throughout this document numerous references are made to the verb and noun *davar*, word-as-expression, so nothing further remains to be said except as a reminder. That is to say, when ploughing through Jeremiah, it's helpful to have *davar* as a guide, especially when the book becomes tedious. In its most familiar form, *davar* is found in two expressions: “Thus *davar* the Lord” and “Hear the *davar* of the Lord.” The latter shows the importance of hearing (*shamah*) with regard to *davar* compared, for example, to seeing or any other sense. And so hearing is perhaps the most difficult sense on which to bring attention even though sounds pass through us continuously. No small wonder that the Israelites failed in this regard as we would if put their situation.

For reference *davar* as word is found a total of fifty times accordingly. The first number represents the chapter while the second, the verse:

1:4, 2:2, 6:1, 7:1, 8:1, 9:1, 13:3, 14:1, 16:1, 17:2, 18:1, 19:1, 20:1, 21:1, 22:2, 23:1, 24:1, 25:1, 27:1, 28:1, 29:2, 31:1, 32:4, 33:3, 34:2, 35:1, 36:1, 37:1, 39:1, 42:2, 43:1, 44:1, 46:1, 49:1.

For reference, *shamah* as to hear with regard to the divine *davar* is found a total of fourteen times:

7:1, 10:1, 11:2, 17:1, 19:1, 21:1, 22:2, 29:1, 31:1, 34:1, 42:1, 44:1.

And so the interplay between these references of *davar* and *shamah*, word-as-expression and hearing-as-obedience, can sum up quite neatly the Book of Jeremiah.

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