ORACLES OF ORDER: THE ROLE OF CREATION IN THE RHETORIC OF
JEREMIAH 1–10

by

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ABSTRACT

Oracles of Order: The Role of Creation in the Rhetoric of Jeremiah 1–10

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It is common for scholars to subordinate creation theology in Jeremiah to other theological themes, such as redemption or covenant, or not acknowledge its formative role in the book's message. Failure to recognize creation's important roles in Jeremiah's rhetoric results in a skewed understanding of Israel's sins and their effects on the cosmos, as well as the rationale behind their judgment. Similarly, God's identity as Creator is what distinguishes him from other deities and should result in the exclusive fear and worship of him, and it is this Creator God who has brought disaster upon his people and land.

This study analyzes creation theology in the rhetoric of Jeremiah in order to demonstrate its important role in the book's message. To achieve this goal, the study first narrows creation theology to the occasions in which YHWH is presented as the Creator of the cosmos, which are labeled as YHWH's creation claims. This study then identifies the four passages in the opening section of the book (chs. 1–10) that contain at least one clear creation claim (1:4–12; 4:23–28; 5:20–25; 10:1–16). The study then performs a rhetorical-critical analysis of these four passages, identifying the various functions YHWH's creation claims play in individual passages and providing a more systematic assessment of creation theology in the rhetoric of the book's message.

This study argues that Jer 1–10 uses creation to universalize the scope of his message and bolster the validity of his indictment, meaning creation plays a unique and necessary role in the prophet's persuasive intents, namely repentance, theodicy, and doxology. Jeremiah's message of judgment thus becomes an expression of YHWH's exclusive identity as Creator of the cosmos and Sustainer of its order. Furthermore, Judah's judgment is at least partially the result of their inability to properly recognize YHWH as Creator (5:20–25; 10:1–16), recognize that Jeremiah has been commissioned by the Creator (1:4–12), or repent in response to the horrific vision of Judah's destruction at the hand of the Creator (4:23–26). As Creator, YHWH upholds the created order, which sometimes requires judgment.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
AfOB	Archiv für Orientforschung: Beiheft
ANEM	Ancient Near East Monographs
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BBRSup	*Bulletin for Biblical Research, Supplements*
BCOTWP	Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms
BHRG	Merwe, Christo H. J. van der, Jacobus A. Naudé, and Jan H. Kroeze. *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*. 2nd edition. New York: T. & T. Clark, 2017
Bib	Biblica
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quartlerly Monograph Series
COS	*The Context of Scripture*. Edited by William W. Hallo. 3 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1997–2002
CRBS	*Currents in Research: Biblical Studies*

DCH	Clines, David J. A. *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. 8 vols. Sheffield: Sheffield, 1993.
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HS	*Hebrew Studies*
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HThKAT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
IBHS	Waltke, Bruce K., and M. O'Connor. *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JHS	*Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*
JOTT	*Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics*
JRitSt	*Journal of Ritual Studies*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JTS	*The Journal of Theological Studies*

KHC	Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
NAC	New American Commentary
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDOTTE	VanGemeren, Willem, ed. *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*. Vol. 2. 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OTE	*Old Testament Essays*
GBS	Guides to Biblical Scholarshi
OTL	Old Testament Library
PHSC	Perspectives on Hebrew Scriptures and Its Contexts
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Studies Monograph Series
SSN	Studia Semitica Neerlandica
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

When considering the prophets of the Old Testament, one is hard-pressed to find a

prophet who faced a more difficult situation than Jeremiah. According to the book

bearing his name, the so-called "weeping prophet" foresaw the painful decline and

destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of Babylon and the deportation of its people. The

opening lines of the book are aware of this series of events leading to exile and situate the

prophet's words within this context (1:1–3). But Jeremiah's audience further complicates

the situation. The people are consistently portrayed as lacking any knowledge and

wisdom regarding righteous behavior or covenant expectations (4:22; 5:4, 9, 21; 8:7–9;

cf. 9:12) and having perverted the law (8:8, 9).[1] The book captures the prophet's struggle

to persuade the audience toward repentance and preserves this message for the reading

audience facing the ongoing challenges of exile, articulating the warning that "in every

generation, sin leads to national disaster, but repentance leads to new life and salvation."[2]

To this end, the book's rhetoric is oriented primarily toward the goal of repentance, yet it

also demonstrates that the people's judgment was of divine necessity.[3] The second

objective expresses itself in both a theodical concern surrounding the people's judgment

and the eventual doxological affirmation from its readers.

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[1] Unless noted otherwise, all passage references are according to MT–Jer. Similarly, "Jeremiah" refers to MT–Jer in particular. MT–Jer is only maintained in contexts where comparisons are made to LXX–Jer.

[2] Barton, "History," 247.

[3] Barton classifies this as a form of theodicy (see Barton, "History," 248). See also, Allen, "Structural Role," 95–96. Boda ("From Complaint to Contrition," 196–97) also sees Jer 14:1—15:4 as signaling an important shift toward something closer to penitential prayer. Elsewhere, Boda (*Return to Me*, 84) connects the (likely insincere) penitential nature of this passage to the questions in the surrounding context regarding why calamity has befallen the people (13:22; 16:10).

In both of these objectives, the prophet uses creation theology to bolster his argument and situate his indictment, pronouncement of judgment, and explanation of events.[4] The prophet does not merely embellish his words with imagery from the natural world but draws from creation traditions that assert YHWH's role as Creator.[5] These are referred to as creation claims. Foundational to these important claims is the assertion that YHWH alone created the earth and heavens, and thus, he alone has the prerogatives to create and destroy. These creation claims appear in key aspects of the prophet's activity and rhetoric, suggesting that YHWH's role as Creator serves as the basis for much of his message in the opening section of the book. Even the prophet's commission is bound up in YHWH's identity and activities as Creator (1:4–12). The goal of this dissertation is to determine the particular rhetorical function(s) of Jeremiah's extensive use of these creation claims in the shaping of his message in Jer 1–10, specifically in 1:4–12; 4:23–28; 5:20–25; and 10:1–16. Failure to do so results in undervaluing the basis and scope of the prophet's message and the significant roles creation plays in the prophetic message. It also risks minimizing the doctrine of creation and its relationship to other key aspects of Old Testament theology, such as covenant and redemption, which are typically the priorities of Jeremiah studies.[6]

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[4] Creation will be defined in the following section. In short, while it includes both the awareness of God's creative activities and the sustaining of the natural order, our focus will be on passages that explicitly express YHWH's role as Creator, which I label as creation claims. However, he certainly operates with a sensitivity to the natural world and its connection to Israel's actions (e.g., 2:21–25; 3:3; 4:7, 11–13, 23–28; 5:6, 17, 20–25; 6:7–9; 8:6–9, 13; 9:9, 10–11; 10:1–16)

[5] For a detailed study of animal metaphors used in Jeremiah, see Foreman, *Animal Metaphors*.

[6] Perdue (*The Collapse of History*, 141) writes that "Presentations of the theology of Jeremiah have focused largely on salvation history and divine judgment, the Mosaic covenant as the basis for punishment and hope, and the pathos of God and prophet. However, theologies of this prophetic book pay little attention, if any, to the importance of creation." Though the situation has improved since he wrote this in 1994, it remains largely true.

Trends in Reading Jeremiah

First, we will briefly survey trends in approaching the book of Jeremiah in general, as this provides the context necessary for framing the ways in which creation has been understood in the book, as well as for situating and defining our own rhetorical-critical approach. On the larger scale, what we observe in approaches to Jeremiah is a gradual shift away from diachronic approaches with an emphasis on compositional issues and toward synchronic approaches with an emphasis on literary features and coherence. Even when diachronic concerns are maintained, it is not at the expense of acknowledging the intentional shaping of the book into a final product. When addressing the topic of creation in Jeremiah, how one approaches the book in general often shapes how the specific topic of creation is understood.[7]

Many approaches to Jeremiah have been driven by more compositional or diachronic concerns. This originated in the works ranging from figures such as Bernard Duhm, Sigmund Mowinckel, and, at a later time, William McKane.[8] These compositional approaches resulted in a text fractured into several sources with a final redactor, or even the idea of text developing over a long period of time without a systematic rationale. However, they also opened the door for further investigations into topics in Jeremiah, such as wisdom and creation.[9] Even within approaches that sought to connect the book to

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[7] More specifically, one's compositional concerns can result in a case-by-case assessment of passages in Jeremiah, where only some passages are examined due to the scholar's perspective on that particular passage and its authenticity. Examples of this will be seen below, particularly in relation to Weippert, *Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde*.

[8] See Duhm, *Jeremia*; McKane, *Jeremiah*; Mowinckel, *Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia*. For overviews of these developments, see the thorough review in Henderson, "Duhm and Skinner's," 1–15; Henderson, *Jeremiah*.

[9] Brueggemann, "*Jeremiah*," 152–53. Dell, "Jeremiah," 375–90. Much of this came through the correlation found between the Deuteronomist and wisdom in the work of Weinfeld (*Deuteronomy*, 244–319), which extends to the Deuteronomistic layer of Jeremiah.

the life of the historical prophet rather than additional sources, compositional approaches have been prominent.[10]

Although compositional approaches often serve as the starting point for many studies on Jeremiah, this does not mean that all scholarship maintains the idea that Jeremiah is composed of multiple sources, each being related to the prophet with varying levels of authenticity. Yet the historical prophet and ministry remain elusive. In many ways, it may be argued that the shortcomings of these previous diachronic, compositional, and biographical approaches to Jeremiah have paved the way for more synchronic approaches with greater emphasis on literary, rhetorical, and poetic elements.[11] This is partly because scholars have come to recognize two important, related ideas. The first is that the three supposed sources behind the book bear a great deal of similarity to one another, blurring the criteria for and increasing subjectivity when differentiating between sources.[12] The second idea operates on a more literary level, which is the recognition that even if three (or more) sources have been intertwined into a

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[10] This is seen most clearly in Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 1–10; Skinner, *Prophecy and Relgion*. See also Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 9–27, 94–106. Extreme cases of this have been rightly challenged, though many still understand it to be possible to recover elements of the prophet's career. For a brief overview of challenges, see Leuchter, *Josiah's Reform*, 7–8. Chief among these challenges—according to Leuchter—are McKane's tendencies to assume that tensions are the result of deletion or emendations, or that tensions cannot be part of the book's design and that it must be untidy. Another important criticism is the vagueness of the term authenticity. See Lalleman, *Jeremiah in Prophetic Tradition*, 30.

[11] Stulman and Silver, "A Critical Introduction," 9. They attribute this movement to the influence of figures like Robert Alter, Brevard Childs, Jacques Derrida, and Paul Ricoeur, as well as Jeremiah-specific works like Diamond, O'Connor, and Stulman's *Troubling Jeremiah*. Kessler's *Reading the Book of Jeremiah* should also be added to this trajectory. In many ways, this shift in Jeremiah is reflective of the broader movement in biblical studies as whole toward an emphasis on the text, primarily starting in the 1960's. See Perdue, *The Collapse of History*, 153–96. It is important to note, however, that there are still exceptions to this shift, such as Leuchter, *Josiah's Reform*, 1–17. For additional criticisms of the diachronic approaches, see Fischer, *Jeremiah Studies*, 32–33. His criticisms highlight the fact that diachronic reasonings ultimately fail to explain the structure or arrangement of the book. Some have argued for a more flexible understanding of diachronic issues, most notably Stulman's (*Order amid Chaos*, 172) proposition of Jeremiah reflecting "a trajectory rather than fixed point."

[12] See Bright, *Jeremiah*, LXII; Bright, "The Date," 15–35; Holladay, "Prototype and Copies," 351–67; Holladay, "Style," 44–54; Muilenburg, "Baruch the Scribe," 215–38; Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles*; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 46–49; Weippert, *Die Prosareden des Jeremiabuches*, 228–34.

single whole, an approach to Jeremiah should be mindful of the final version(s).[13] Thus,

Jeremiah should be appreciated for its rich complexity and tapestry of themes and forms.

In other words, "Jeremiah would not be Jeremiah" without its complexity.[14] This results

in a focus on the literary shaping of the book with a greater appreciation of rhetorical and

literary features without the compositional or biographical concerns driving the

hermeneutic.[15] The aim of more recent literary approaches has been to focus primarily on

understanding the shape of the book rather than allowing the perceived process of its

composition to dominate the interpretive process.[16] As we navigate the emphasis on the

particular topic of creation in Jeremiah, this spectrum of approaches remains important,

as it can influence how one approaches the topic or if a prophet at this time is even

capable of using such language. It also provides a basis for the rhetorical-critical

approach taken in the present dissertation, which is defined in Chapter 2.

Previous Approaches to Creation in Jeremiah

The purpose of this section is to survey previous approaches to understanding creation in

Jeremiah. One's understanding of the topic of creation in Jeremiah is greatly impacted by

their approach to the book as a whole and can be categorized in one of two ways. The

first is oriented toward the relationship of creation to the rest of Old Testament theology

and is generally more diachronic in nature. The second way includes approaches to the

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[13] E.g., Childs, *Introduction*, 353; Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 5–22; Stulman, *Order amid Chaos*, 17. Still, even within this perspective, scholars have the tendency to place some level of priority on the Deuteronomistic layer's role in the final shape of the book. See Brueggemann, "Preface," ix; Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 27.

[14] Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 27. It should be noted though that in its context, Fretheim is saying this because he understands there to be a Deuteronomistic layer to the book.

[15] For an overview and criticism of purely literary and rhetorical approaches, see Leuchter, *Josiah's Reform*, 1–13; Leuchter, "The Historical Jeremiah," 7890. Leuchter still places value in reconstructing the prophet.

[16] More on the nature of a prophetic book will be in Chapter 2.

topic that are concerned primarily with the relationship between Israel's actions and the natural world and are generally more synchronic in nature. Still, it is important to note that many of the approaches listed below have a great deal of overlap with one another, meaning scholars can participate in multiple categories simultaneously. While one scholar's approach can be largely oriented toward the book of Jeremiah itself, that same scholar can still implement elements or express concerns of a more diachronic nature.

<center>Issues of Creation in Old Testament Theology</center>

In combination with compositional and literary issues surrounding the book of Jeremiah, trends in Old Testament theology have also influenced the topic of creation in Jeremiah. This group of approaches is divided into three sections. The first concerns itself with the issue of pre-exilic creation theology and the potential for a prophet of Jeremiah's time to use creation theology. The second concerns itself with creation as a distinct theological concept in Old Testament theology, paying special attention to the conversations as they relate to Jeremiah. The third focuses on wisdom as an explanation for creation language and its presence in Jeremiah, which is based on Jeremiah's relationship with either Deuteronomistic theology in particular or wisdom theology in general.

Pre-exilic Creation Theology

Perhaps the most influential factor in understanding creation's presence in Jeremiah has been the issue of whether a pre-exilic prophet could have spoken in such eloquent ways concerning creation. Much of this trajectory originates in Gerhard von Rad's article, "The

Theological Problem of Creation in Old Testament Theology."[17] Although nearing a century old, this article remains influential in Old Testament scholarship's treatment of creation in Old Testament theology and thought. Even if scholars do not fully agree with von Rad's conclusions, his work still plays an important role in their assessments, which will be evident below.

In this essay, von Rad addresses the question of YHWH as Creator and the relevance of this doctrine, particularly because, as he asserts, Israel's religion in the Old Testament is based on their election and is thus concerned primarily with redemption.[18] Significant for his study is his analysis of creation in Second Isaiah, where he concludes that the doctrine of creation does not "appear in its own right," but rather "provides a foundation for the message of redemption, in that it stimulates faith."[19] Creation is thus not its own distinct doctrine and has been "absorbed" into the doctrine of soteriology.[20] It is a late development catalyzed by the exile, and Second Isaiah is the first prophet to incorporate creation theology into soteriology.[21]

von Rad's influential article resulted in a shift in thinking, where creation was absorbed by (or at least placed in a secondary position to) redemption. This perspective results in the view that even though creation plays an important role in Second Isaiah, it

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[17] von Rad, "Problem," 53–64. Originally published as "Das theologische Problem des alttestamentlichen Schöpfungsglaubens," 138–47. It is important to note that von Rad's perspective on the theology of creation developed in his life from his earlier work on the topic. Part of his early perspective was likely in response to the political atmosphere of his time, as he "fought the isolation and prioritization of creation theology that might have led to the sacralization of certain elements of nature (and of state)." See Keel and Schroer, *Creation*, 8.

[18] von Rad, "Problem," 53.

[19] von Rad, "Problem," 56.

[20] von Rad, "Problem," 58. More will be said on this below.

[21] Regarding Jeremiah, von Rad placed him firmly within the exodus and Sinai-covenant traditions of Moses, though he also assumed the Messianic tradition of David. See von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2:217. See also Brueggemann, "The Epistemological Crisis," 85–105.

does not reflect the existence of a unique doctrine of creation. Instead, creation becomes a secondary, supporting element of the prophet's message of redemption. However, even if von Rad's reading of Second Isaiah is correct, this does not necessitate the conclusion that creation theology must be a later development or that it is subservient to election or redemption. In fact, von Rad himself even noted the dangers of such a view of creation in OT theology, noting the importance of the issue of idolatry and that "Jahwe war nicht eine der tragenden Weltkräfte, auch nicht ihre Summe, sondern ihr Schöpfer."[22]

Helga Weippert makes an important step in this discussion by challenging the idea that Second Isaiah is the first prophet to incorporate creation theology into their message.[23] However, her approach to Jeremiah is largely redactional in nature, meaning not all creation passages are treated equally. Some passages are understood to be from a later hand, while other passages are considered to be the "Keimstätte" of other creation passages (i.e., Jer 5:21–25).[24] So, as an example, she understands Jer 5:21–25 to be from the prophet himself, yet passages like 10:12–16 are not.[25] She also supports the idea of Jeremiah's use of creation because the prophet defends the reality of God's control over creation and nature that some attributed to Baal. More fundamental, however, is the idea that God was in covenant with his people, promising to send the seasonal rains and

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[22] von Rad, "Aspekte alttestamentlichen Weltverständnisses," 61. "Yahweh was not one of the main world forces, nor their sum, but rather their Creator."

[23] Weippert, *Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde*. Other scholars shortly challenged some of von Rad's conclusions, though the focus here is on those pertaining to Jeremiah. For two key examples focusing on creation outside of Jeremiah, see Schmid, "Creation," 102–17; Westermann, "Biblical Reflection on Creator-Creation," 90–101.

[24] Weippert, *Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde*, 22. "Fountainhead" may be the best English equivalent for this term.

[25] Weippert, *Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde*, 17, 28. Duhm (*Das Buch Jeremia*, 62) views this entire unit, including 5:19, to be an addition. Crenshaw (*Hymnic Nature of Divine Justice*, 111–12) rightfully challenges von Rad's understanding of creation as a late development, though he places Jeremiah's doxology in the exilic or early post-exilic era based on his study of other prophetic doxologies.

uphold creation's order. The people failed to maintain their covenant obligations, which enabled chaos to re-enter the cosmos.[26] Rather than the exile catalyzing the doctrine of creation in prophetic thought, Weippert asserts that Jeremiah's creation theology was driven instead by the threat of exile. In response to this threat and God's role as Creator, "Jeremiah responded by believing in Yahweh as the creator of the world and the Lord of world history."[27] YHWH's universal sovereignty was a timely response to the threat of exile and destruction.

Weippert's assessment rightfully demonstrates that Jeremiah had a creation theology prior to the exile. She also highlights several functions of Jeremiah's use of creation, such as defending against Baalism, enforcing the covenant, and providing perspective under threat of exile. However, the shortcomings of her analysis come largely from her uneven treatment of the text. Most importantly, her arguments about the book's composition determine which texts are relevant to the discussion. Thus, for Weippert, Jer 10:12–16 is exilic,[28] while 10:2–10 is either late exilic or post-exilic[29] (though many of these arguments have been challenged by other scholars).[30] This also leads her to the conclusion that the claim of YHWH's creation of the world appeared late and suddenly in Jeremiah's career.[31] Additionally, other important functions are largely missing, such as creation's use in Israel's indictment, which demonstrates that Israel's issue is not just a violation of the covenant relationship but also of the created order. Although she initially

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[26] Weippert, *Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde*, 87.
[27] Weippert, *Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde*, 87. My translation.
[28] Weippert, *Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde*, 28.
[29] Weippert, *Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde*, 35.
[30] E.g., Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 582; Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 295.
[31] Weippert, *Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde*, 77. See the challenge by Lalleman, "Jeremiah," 15–24.

calls for a more systematic approach to creation in Jeremiah,[32] the need remains in the sense that additional Jeremiah texts need to be included in the discussion, as well as greater detail on how creation functions in Jeremiah's rhetoric and message. For our study, it is also important to identify the rhetorical value of YHWH as Creator for the final readers of the book, not necessarily within the contexts of the book's development.

Creation within Old Testament Theology

The second major issue of creation theology is its existence as a distinct doctrine and, consequently, its relationship to the rest of Old Testament theology. A more recent example of von Rad's influence regarding this issue is seen in Jack Lundbom's analysis of Jeremiah's use of creation, particularly in reference to natural order.[33] Lundbom assesses the role of creation in Jeremiah, highlighting the prophet's concern with the undoing of creation.[34] He agrees with von Rad that it is not a separate doctrine and that Jeremiah is not interested in merely affirming God as creator or creation's undoing, but he disagrees with von Rad's notion that creation is a late development.[35] He sees Jeremiah's primary concern being Israel's covenant violations and creation's reversal or disruption due to Israel's covenant violations.[36]

Lundbom's analysis is helpful in that he allows for an earlier doctrine of creation and acknowledges the important role creation theology has in the prophet's rhetoric. But his exclusive prioritization of covenantal concerns distorts creation's role in the prophet's rhetoric. This understanding creates an unnecessary tension in which, in Lundbom's own

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[32] Weippert, *Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde*, 16.
[33] Lundbom, "Jeremiah and the Created Order," 80–98.
[34] Lundbom, "Jeremiah and the Created Order," 80.
[35] Lundbom, "Jeremiah and the Created Order," 92.
[36] Lundbom, "Jeremiah and the Created Order," 83–84.

words, "As for Jeremiah and the prophets, they too have no interest in simply affirming Yahweh's creation or lamenting its undoing, although Jeremiah does a considerable amount of both."[37] So, even though creation is an idea that can be used by the prophet, and the prophet consistently celebrates Yahweh as Creator and mourns creation's undoing, creation cannot be of primary interest. Such a conclusion is forced and goes against Jeremiah's observable concern for creation and his lamenting of its undoing. In fact, what seems to be at stake is that what makes Israel's God so unique and worthy of worship is that he alone created the cosmos (5:22; 10:11, 12, 16), sustains its order (5:22; 10:13), and rules over every nation (10:7, 10; cf. 1:10).[38] God's exercise of covenantal judgment is described as an outworking of his role as Creator, which allows him to withhold seasonal rains in response to Israel's actions (5:24–24) and summon foreign armies to bring about judgment and cataclysmic destruction upon his covenant people (4:5–31). Creation, particularly the claim that YHWH is Creator, seems to be foundational to Jeremiah's argument.

Leo Perdue challenges the dominance of historical criticism's treatment of creation, and he uses Jeremiah as a point of demonstration.[39] His underlying premise is that when one focuses primarily on historical matters, it distorts or neglects a large portion of the Old Testament's texts and traditions.[40] Furthermore, he notes that other theological doctrines, such as history, redemption, or anthropology, find their meaning in relation to cosmology.[41] This speaks to the key issue of reclaiming creation's place in Old

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[37] Lundbom, "Jeremiah and the Created Order," 83–84.
[38] Brueggemann (*Jeremiah*, 105) similarly observes that "The total tradition of Jeremiah affirms that Judah is in the jeopardy which Jeremiah announces, precisely because it has abandoned Yahweh and embraced other gods who cannot give life."
[39] Perdue, *Collapse*, 111–50.
[40] Perdue, *Collapse*, 113.
[41] Perdue, *Collapse*, 115.

Testament theology, namely the subjugation of creation to redemption, which is driven

by the pattern observed in the biblical text to orient creation themes toward concerns of

redemption and God's actions in history on behalf of Israel.[42]

Perdue's observations in Jeremiah paint a different picture, though, as he notes

that the threats in Jeremiah's world are "not simply to Judah, but to the entire cosmos."[43]

The prophet's perspective is concerned with more than Judah. As a result, creation is

presented in Jeremiah as a more foundational concept. Perdue articulates that:

> The dichotomy between creation and history, while heuristically useful in
> describing Jeremiah's understanding of God, leads to serious misunderstanding, if
> the two dimensions of divine lordship and activity are placed in opposition, or if
> history is given priority. It is because Yahweh is creator that he expresses his
> divine sovereignty over history. Yahweh's covenant with and through Israel binds
> him, not only to all other peoples, but also to the entirety of all creation.[44]

In his view, creation should not be pitted against redemption, nor should it be subjugated

to it. He also rightly observes that Israel's election and covenant are cast within the larger

picture of creation and its well-being.[45] This emphasis on the underlying role of creation

bears similarities to how others have understood creation in relation to other key Old

Testament themes, most notably in the sense that "The creational context is foundational

for redemption, and redemption has as its goal the full realization of creational

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[42] For examples, see McCarthy, "'Creation' Motifs in Ancient Hebrew Poetry," 74–89;
Ollenburger, "Isaiah's Creation Theology," 54–71; von Rad, "The Theological Problem," 53–64.
Brueggemann (*Theology of the Old Testament*, 145–64) connects the use of creation language to a wider
variety of purposes.

[43] Perdue, *Collapse*, 142. See also Childs, "The Enemy from the North," 187–98. Important to
note, however, is the fact that Childs brings the authenticity of Jer 4:23–26 into question on the basis that it
appears to be more trans-historical and apocalyptic in nature. Pre-exilic passages include historical
enemies, while exilic and post-exilic passages include enemies that superhuman and connected to the chaos
myth. Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 357) critiques the apocalyptic categorization by rightly noting that each of
the themes used to categorize this passage as apocalyptic are found elsewhere in pre-exilic prophecies.
Additionally, the present dissertation does not follow Perdue's reading of the passage and suggests that
only Judah is in view here, not the entire cosmos.

[44] Perdue, *Collapse*, 145. See also Boda (*The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology*, 85–10), who
reintegrates creation with the rest of Israel's theology.

[45] Perdue, *Collapse*, 143.

priorities."[46] The two spheres of creation and redemption are intertwined in such a way that creation should not be considered subservient to redemption. Additionally, Perdue's emphasis on YHWH being Creator is perhaps a more helpful way of approaching creation theology in Jeremiah and understanding the relationship between creation and redemption.[47]

Walter Brueggemann continues the discussion of Jeremiah's use of creation by helpfully drawing attention to the extreme role creation plays in the prophet's theology and rhetoric, primarily because of the extreme situations facing the audience.[48] Brueggemann offers a summarizing point that "Jeremiah places Yahweh on a wide, panoramic screen, as wide as all creation, and situates Judah in its theo-political crisis amid the guarantees and threats that are as large as all creation."[49] For him, creation theology leads to the response of wonder.[50] Though needing greater specificity, this wonder then summons its "listening community to face its own lived life, to ensure Yahweh as the pivotal player in that lived life, and to certify to coming generations that lived reality presided over by Yahweh is a reliable lens through which to engage other crises that have the same world-ending and world-making scope."[51] Though vague, this begins to shed light on the potential rhetorical force creation has in the prophet's message. His thoughts demonstrate the universalizing effect of creation theology in

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[46] Boda, *The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology*, 102. Important to note, however, is that Boda (*The Heartbeat of Old Testament Theology*, 85–104) discusses the inclusion of YHWH's creational activity and authority in primarily later passages, which are focused on redemption history (e.g., Neh 9). In earlier recitals of Israel's redemptive history, creation is largely absent.

[47] Emphasis on Creator theology as the priority of creation theology is seen in the earlier work of Schmid ("Creation," 110)

[48] Brueggemann, "Jeremiah: *Creatio in Extremis*," 168–69.

[49] Brueggemann, "Jeremiah: *Creatio in Extremis*," 155. See also Perdue, *The Collapse of History*, 141–50.

[50] Brueggemann, "Jeremiah: *Creatio in Extremis*," 167–68.

[51] Brueggemann, "Jeremiah: *Creatio in Extremis*," 169.

Jeremiah, as well as the foundational role of understanding God as Creator in the book's rhetorical aims.

Brueggemann also argues against von Rad's understanding of soteriology, noting that he placed too great a divide between creation and soteriology, as well as von Rad's idea of subordinating creation to soteriology.[52] Still, he argues that there is merit to von Rad's claim that creation was not meant to be its own doctrine,[53] which is certainly a break from Perdue. Instead of identifying creation theology as a distinct doctrine, he places it within the broader category of God's governance, stating that "creation theology is an instance of the theonomous character and quality of all of reality, including the reality of Israel's life."[54] An explanation for his claim is seen in his *Theology of the Old Testament*, which specifies that a theology of Israel's utterances of God as Creator is a firmer basis since Israel expresses the acts of creation in a plethora of ways, which are not as consistently defined as the idea that God is the Creator.[55] This view is shared by others, who note that creation is concerned primarily with the assertion that "Yahweh is king over all."[56]

Such an abstraction creates difficulty, though, as Brueggemann still places creation within Israel's covenant thought, something that could also be considered part of all of reality and part of Israel's life.[57] To speak of creation theology is not necessarily an

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[52] Brueggemann, "Jeremiah: *Creatio in Extremis*," 167.
[53] Brueggemann, "Jeremiah: *Creatio in Extremis*," 167.
[54] Brueggemann, "Jeremiah: *Creatio in Extremis*," 167.
[55] Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 163–64.
[56] McCarthy, "'Creation' Motifs in Ancient Hebrew Poetry," 83. See also Ollenburger, "Isaiah's Creation Theology," 60–61.
[57] Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 157–58. He (*Theology of the Old Testament*, 157–58) proposes that for Israel, all of creation is covenantally oriented and notes Israel's place in creation. However, this should also suggest the inverse idea that covenant is creationally oriented.

assertion that all passages expressing creation speak in a wholly homogenous manner.[58]

While creator theology might be a more precise description of what is observed in the

passages under investigation in the present dissertation, YHWH's creation claims are

viewed here as part of creation theology in order to identify it from other distinct parts of

Israel's life, such as covenant, judgment, and redemption, and how they relate to one

another.

Wisdom Approaches

Creation's connection to wisdom has provided additional avenues for understanding its

presence in Jeremiah. Walter Zimmerli's assessment of wisdom theology has had a

lasting effect on the discussion, most notably the notion that "Wisdom thinks resolutely

within the framework of a theology of creation."[59] While creation theology can be

understood as reflecting wisdom, Jer 1–10 provides more overt connections by

emphasizing issues of foolishness and wisdom. We see the foolishness of the people in

4:22 (אויל ;סכל ;לא ידעו); 5:21 (סכל ;אין לב); 8:7–9 (לא ידעו). We see the emphasis on

wisdom expressed by references to scribes and sages (8:8–9; cf. 18:18), the use of

wisdom forms (8:8–9; 10:23), and the use of חכמה and חכם (4:22; 8:8–9; 9;12, 17, 23;

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[58] Similarly, God as Creator is not perfectly homogenous in the sense that a variety of verbs are assigned. Creation theology acknowledges the centrality of God as Creator but also speaks to the various ways God's creation is spoken about. See Schmid, "Creation," 110. In the discussion of creation myths, Simkins (*Creator and Creation*, 47) helpfully illustrates that through the telling of creation events, one observes aspects of God's activity toward creation and Israel's value of and relationship to the rest of reality, noting that "Creation myths are the vehicle by which the diverse parts of reality . . . are integrated into the whole. In particular, creation myths proclaim a central absolute (i.e., independent) reality, such as the gods or some other primal force and describe its relation to all other, relative (i.e., dependent) realities." Simkins is speaking specifically about creation myths, though the passages under investigation in the present dissertation are not creation myths. However, his statements regarding creation myths largely apply to the picture of creation theology, which develops the various ways the Old Testament presents God's relationship with his creation, as well as the relationships shared between different parts of his creation.
[59] Zimmerli, "Place and Limit," 148.

10:7, 9, 12).[60] As will be evident, the present dissertation investigates four creation

passages, three of which contain key wisdom lexemes or are heavily prefaced by wisdom

issues.[61]

The door for seeing wisdom in Jeremiah was initially opened by the

compositional approaches of the previous century, primarily the approach that identified

a Deuteronomistic layer of the book.[62] Moshe Weinfeld's prominent work on

Deuteronomy and its composition suggests that Deuteronomic thought has a distinct

conception of wisdom that incorporates elements such as proper behavior, morality, law,

and judgment.[63] Weinfeld suggests that "True wisdom, to the Deuteronomist's mind, is

the intellectual faculty which enables man to distinguish between good and evil in the

judicial sphere."[64] In many ways, this definition reflects a similar pattern of how

Jeremiah uses the term, particularly in 4:22, 5:21, and 8:7–9. Despite the significant

similarity in how wisdom functions, this view is open to criticism. Most problematic is

that this perspective constructs a wedge between law and wisdom and, consequently,

prophecy.[65] It also prevents one from allowing similar language to belong to Jeremiah or

the prophets. If Deuteronomy's perception of wisdom does shape the presence of wisdom

theology in Jeremiah, then it would serve as a suitable explanation for creation's

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[60] See also Allen, "The Structural Role," 95–108. He focuses primarily on the appearance of wise/wisdom and the use of wisdom forms. Brueggeman ("The Epistemological Crisis," 99) also discusses Jeremiah's focus on wisdom, focusing particularly on 9:22–23 and the concept of knowing YHWH.

[61] 1:4–12 is the only exception to this. Of the three passages connected to wisdom, 4:22 prefaces 4:23–28 with the people's utter foolishness, lack of knowledge, skill at doing evil; 5:21 forms a core part of the people's indictment in 5:20–25, emphasizing their foolishness and senselessness; and 10:1–16 contains the heaviest concentration of wisdom themes and lexemes.

[62] Brueggemann, "Jeremiah," 152–53. Weinfeld (Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School, 242 n 2) goes as far as suggesting in a footnote that perhaps "some of the central religious ideas of Second Isaiah," such as creation, "may not have their roots in deuteronomic theology."

[63] Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, 254–56.

[64] Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, 246–47.

[65] See Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and Law*, 118. He views Deuteronomy as a merging of the two streams of wisdom and law.

(understood as a wisdom theme) presence in the Deuteronomistic sermon (7:7, 20) but not the poetic oracles.[66] Regardless of whether one still perceives a distinct Deuteronomistic revision, these perspectives on wisdom and Jeremiah have led scholars to continue drawing connections to wisdom and creation elements in Jeremiah. Other scholars argue that certain passages containing creation elements are the result of a later wisdom influence in a vague sense.[67] The result of this line of thought is that these creation passages are not part of Jeremiah's own thought and are instead the result of a later hand.

Within the wisdom approaches to creation in general, several key issues emerge. Most foundationally, one has to consider the nature of the supposed wisdom tradition, as well as its relationship to creation theology. Although some scholars have held to the idea of a particular wisdom tradition, typically associated with the scribes and sages Jeremiah confronts (8:8–9; 18:18), many scholars have rightfully pushed back against a formal group of sages who have a completely distinct theology in contrast to law and prophecy.[68] Instead, it is more appropriate to understand the relationship between the supposedly distinct traditions as sharing many of the core aspects, even if some literary

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[66] Weinfeld (*Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, 42 n 2) goes as far as suggesting in a footnote that perhaps "some of the central religious ideas of Second Isaiah," such as creation, "may not have their roots in deuteronomic theology."

[67] E.g., Lindblom ("Wisdom," 204) on Jer 10:23–25; Hermisson, "Weisheit im Jeremiabuch," 175–91.

[68] For examples of those who see a distinct class and tradition, see Fichtner, "Jesaja unter den Weisen," 75–80; Lindblom, "Wisdom in the Old Testament Prophets," 201–203; Scott, "Priesthood, Prophecy, Wisdom, and the Knowledge of God," 1–15. Such a view can result in attaching aspects like a natural order explicitly to wisdom, leading Ahn ("The Trace of Wisdom in the Book of Jeremiah," 191) to claim that "world order is the object of the sages and their wisdom studies. Jeremiah has utilized the world order as a tool for persuasion because people could share the knowledge of it with him." A clear issue with this view is that natural order is somehow a broad enough concept for any listener to understand and agree with, yet distinct enough to link exclusively with a sage and not a prophet. For examples of those who do not see such a tradition or class of scribes, see Kynes, *An Obituary for "Wisdom Literature,"* 15–18; Sneed, "Is the 'Wisdom Tradition' a Tradition?," 50–71; Sneed, *The Social World of the Sages*; Weeks, *Early Israelite Wisdom*, 74–91; Whybray, *The Intellectual Tradition in the Old Testament*, 15–54.

works of the tradition approach issues from a different perspective.[69] This directly

influences how we address the presence of creation as well, especially if this is theology

shared by both the prophets and sages rather than wisdom having a monopoly on it. To

further push back against the relationship between wisdom and creation, Stuart Weeks

proposes instead that wisdom theology is focused less on creation and more on God as

Creator.[70] It thus becomes the notion of God's creative activity that forms an important

basis of its theology. Such a perspective allows one to appeal to God in a more universal

way.[71] A similar perspective of YHWH is presented in Jer 1–10 (esp. 10:1–16), though

YHWH's creative activity may not be exclusive to the wisdom tradition, thus not

requiring a wisdom influence.

Although acknowledging the reality that wisdom and creation theology are not

one and the same—and that creation is the broader concept of the two—Katharine Dell

surveys prior studies of Jeremiah in an effort to demonstrate that creation is an important

part of the tapestry of themes in Jeremiah.[72] She then uses creation as a natural segue to

wisdom elements in Jeremiah. Her conclusion is that wisdom and creation are a "key

formative element of Jeremiah's message."[73] Although I agree with this particular notion,

her presentation of creation's presence in Jeremiah in relation to wisdom elements is

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[69] See Sneed, *The Social World of the Sages*, 183–216.

[70] Weeks, "The Place and Limits of Wisdom Revisited," 10. For Weeks, a creator theology distinguishes itself from a creation theology in that God is clearly depicted as the creator in wisdom literature. Conversely, Weeks suggests that there is no consistent concern with or approach to creation as a whole, and even a loosened concept of creation does not properly characterize wisdom literature as a whole. Similar to Egyptian *ma'at*, order is part of creation but is not creative in nature. Elsewhere, Weeks (*An Introduction to the Study of Wisdom Literature*, 119) notes that creator theology is not unique to wisdom literature but is "intrinsic to its character."

[71] Weeks, "The Place and Limits of Wisdom Revisited," 10.

[72] Dell, "Jeremiah," 379. See also, Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, who pairs wisdom and creation themes together, linking them to Jer 3:3; 4:22; 5:20–25; 8:4–7, 8–9; 10:1–15.

[73] Dell, "Jeremiah," 388–89.

vague. If the two concepts are separate, then there is no clear basis for discussing the two together apart from the fact that wisdom was traditionally associated with creation. Perhaps this is due to how she understands Jeremiah in relation to Deuteronomic theology.[74] Furthermore, she cautions against creation being overemphasized in Jeremiah by scholars such as Terence Fretheim, who takes a more ecological approach.[75] Her basis for this caution is the idea that the theme of creation is interwoven with many other themes, and isolating a particular theme can distort its importance. Although her caution against distorting themes is valid, no clear reason is provided for why creation cannot be of primary interest to the prophet, or at least one of his primary interests. This is especially problematic if the tapestry of Jeremiah is shown to consistently base other theological themes—such as covenant, judgment, and redemption—on creation. Additionally, even though she allows Jeremiah to be the originator of supposed wisdom elements in chs. 1–10, this is only because she understands the prophet to be using the sages' ideology against them. The result is that wisdom is used by the prophet but is still a borrowed element that remains foreign to how a prophet would traditionally speak.

The wisdom approaches are helpful in that they rightly emphasize the prophet's focus on wisdom in Jer 1–10. In fact, it seems as though one of the primary issues in this section is the people's lack of wisdom and knowledge (4:22; 5:4, 9, 21; 8:7; 9:12). Weinfeld's definition of wisdom from a Deuteronomic perspective aptly describes a driving issue in the book. But the notion that creation's appearance in these chapters is because of a wisdom (or Deuteronomic) influence falls short and does not do justice to

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[74] Dell ("Jeremiah," 375–76) takes much of chs. 1–25 to be from Jeremiah and sees enough overlap between the prophet and Deuteronomic thought that Jeremiah could be a Deuteronomist.

[75] Dell, "Jeremiah," 378. See Fretheim, *God and World*, 157–98.

the prominent role of creation theology in the book, championed by scholars such as Perdue, Fretheim, and Brueggemann. More recent trends in wisdom studies observe a more integrated and natural relationship between the traditions of law (and covenant), wisdom, and, thus, prophecy.[76] In these views, scholars identify a conceptual reality behind the text where the realms of nature, society, and morality are parts of an integrated whole.[77] William Brown asserts that "Without categorical distinction, nature and civilization, cosmos and community, were the inseparable products of divinely instituted creation," of which morality and human society are central concerns.[78] Law and wisdom operate in tandem within the created order as complementary elements.[79] From this perspective, then, the morality expressed in Israel's covenant with God is within the same framework of thinking as Israel's view of the natural order and creation tradition. In fact, one could argue that covenants presuppose creation.[80] This inseparable nature of the cosmos and all it contains extends to the covenant and torah. The implication of this is that even when Jeremiah condemns his audience on the basis of law and morality, he is not severing law and morality from the larger natural order.[81] One need not turn to

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[76] For examples of this, see Boda, "Prophecy and Wisdom Literature," 459–74; Burnside, "Law and Wisdom Literature," 423–39. Burnside rightfully cautions against collapsing the two categories of law and wisdom as if they are one and the same. An example of their distinction is visible in Deut 4:5–6, which explicitly links together law and wisdom. Despite the association between the two, "statutes and ordinances" remain distinct from "wisdom and discernment," leading Burnside ("Law and Wisdom Literature," 434) to conclude that "Law is like Wisdom, if it is recognized as wise, but not all wisdom is legal."

[77] See Brown, *The Ethos of the Cosmos*, 2–3.

[78] Brown, *The Ethos of the Cosmos*, 2.

[79] See Burnside, "Law and Wisdom Literature," 435–36.

[80] See Crenshaw, *Hymnic Affirmation of Divine Justice*, 97. Schmid, "Creation," 110–11; van Leeuwen, "Theology," 79.

[81] In fact, the covenant violations produce natural disorder. More will be said on this in the following sections on the natural order and natural law.

wisdom influence as an explanation for creation's presence in a prophetic text addressing covenant people.[82]

<div align="center">Israel's Actions and the Natural Order</div>

The second category of approaches to understanding creation in Jeremiah is determined by their shared interest in the disruption of the natural order of creation. The two approaches listed below are concerned primarily with the relationship between Israel's behavior and creation as it concerns the natural order. This is not to suggest that compositional concerns play no role in these approaches or that no significant overlap with the previously mentioned approaches exists, but rather, the central concern is on the connections between Israel's actions and the non-human world around them. Ecological approaches form the first group and pay careful attention to the effects of Israel's actions on the created order, such as the land, plant life, and animal life. Approaches informed by a concern for natural law comprise the second group, which focuses primarily on the symmetry between the order instilled in creation as a whole and inscribed in *torah* in particular.

Ecological Approaches

Terence Fretheim approaches creation in Jeremiah from an ecological perspective and begins with the assertion that creation is more prominent in the prophets than is typically

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[82] Recent intertextual trends have challenged the strong dichotomy between prophecy and wisdom, as well as law and wisdom. The similarities extend to matters such as rhetoric, key lexemes, and values. See Boda, "Prophecy and Wisdom Literature," 459–74; Kynes, *An Obituary for "Wisdom Literature."*

recognized.[83] Central to his approach to the matter is the question of how God is involved

in the activities of judgment and disaster. He observes the important point that "*God's*

actions in history are grounded in an understanding of God as Creator. God's purposes

span the globe, and God's actions with Israel are interconnected with these creation-wide

designs."[84] An example of this is that judgment is built into the created order, rather than

being something that is added.[85] Fretheim rightly argues that Jeremiah's "drumbeat" is

that "moral order affects creational order, though not mechanistically or inevitably."[86]

This is evidenced in the reality that innocent parties, such as the land and animals, are

caught up in the judgment experience alongside the wicked. Two crucial parts of his

conclusion on the matter are that Israel's law may find its roots in creation theology and

that wrath cannot be "reduced to matters of covenant" but reflects an emphasis on God's

creation being jeopardized by Israel's sins.[87] Fretheim's attention to creation highlights

important realities present in the text, such as judgment being part of the created order or

the importance of God's identity as Creator in the outworking of judgment. However, his

emphasis on ecological implications and Jeremiah's presentation of God can limit what

he draws from a passage. The result of this, for example, is that for 4:22–26, his focus is

on environmental catastrophe.[88] Though he is not wrong to make such a connection,

important issues, such as how the text presents disaster beyond ecological language, still

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[83] Fretheim, *God and World*, 157. For more on ecological approaches, see Clayville, "Ecological Hermeneutics," 637–47; Fretheim, *God and World*, 157–98; Habel, "Introducing," 1–8; Marlow, "Ecology," 187–202; Marlow, "Law," 650–60.

[84] Fretheim, *God and World*, 162. Italics original.

[85] Fretheim, *God and World*, 165. Elsewhere, Fretheim (*Jeremiah*, 168) clarifies that wrath and judgment are part of God's created order.

[86] Fretheim, *God and World*, 173.

[87] Fretheim, *God and World*, 165.

[88] Fretheim, *God and World*, 158; Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 101.

need to be addressed. Though the passage reflects destruction with ecological language, the destruction is portrayed in ways similar to the Day of YHWH and military disaster.

Hilary Marlow presents another ecological approach to Jeremiah but with special attention to the interplay between natural law (and obedience to natural law) and the land's wellbeing.[89] She rightfully observes in 9:12 that the prophet "moves seamlessly" from the land's destruction to Judah's covenant violations.[90] She also points out that only those who are wise can connect the land's desolation to Judah's sins.[91] While demonstrating that Deuteronomy shares a similar perspective on the connection between nature and obedience, she rightly asserts that "For this Jeremianic sermon writer, adherence to *tôrâ* and following God's ways are fundamental to the order of the world, and failure to do so results in catastrophe [*sic*] devastation for the natural world as well as its human inhabitants."[92] However, as seen in her language here, her view is still largely informed by her redactional approach to the book. Thus, even though she rightfully demonstrates the connection between land and law in Jer 9, this is the language of the Deuteronomist, not Jeremiah.[93] Despite the clear connections she observes between the prose sermon in Jer 9 and Deuteronomy, Marlow rightfully demonstrates a clear relationship between creation and Israel's faithfulness to *torah* is visible in the poetic

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[89] Marlow, "Law," 651.
[90] Marlow, "Law," 651.
[91] Marlow, "Law," 655.
[92] Marlow, "Law," 656.
[93] For discussion on prosaic sermons coming from the prophet rather than the Deuteronomist, see Bright, "The Date," 15–35; Bright, *Jeremiah*, lxii; Holladay, "Prototype and Copies," 351–67; Holladay, "Style," 44–54; Muilenburg, "Baruch the Scribe," 215–38; Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles*; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 46–49; Weippert, *Die Prosareden des Jeremiabuches*, 228–34. After reviewing challenges to the Deuteronomistic layer, Leuchter (*Josiah's Reform*, 10–11). Marlow's ("Law," 656) argument for Jer 9 coming from the Deuteronomist provides an example of how scholars operate with a blend of the approaches categorized in the present dissertation.

portions of Jeremiah as well (e.g., 4:19–26), making room for assessing how creation is utilized across multiple literary styles presented in the book.[94]

Natural Law

Similar to what has been observed within more wisdom-oriented approaches, particularly the worldview where nature and morality are not seen as wholly separate realms, some scholars have demonstrated a form of natural law present in ancient cosmology. This holistic understanding of creation operates in tandem with what some have observed in the prophets. John Barton, for example, assesses the idea of the prophets operating in some instances from the perspective of natural law.[95] By this, he means either the moral norms accepted by all of humanity or moral norms established in the natural order.[96] This is present in both the prophets and wisdom literature, but he focuses his analysis on the prophets. Using Isaiah as an example, he rightfully avoids attributing Isaiah's use of a moral norm in the natural order to wisdom, and instead sees this as a common concern "deriving from belief in a kind of cosmic order: an order which is God-given in the sense that God, after all, is the creator of the world, but which has very little to do with what we might call the 'revealed religion' of law and covenant."[97] The result of this in Isa 1:2 is that it emphasizes the unnaturalness of Israel's sinful actions, where the sins should be

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[94] Marlow, "Law and the Ruining," 656–59.

[95] Barton, "Natural Law," 1–14.

[96] Barton, "Natural Law," 2; Jindo, *Biblical Metaphor Reconsidered*, 104. Contra Holladay (*Jeremiah*, 280), who argues that in Jer 8:7, the prophet is not referring to laws of nature, but rather "had a keen eye out for the regularities of nature." See also Carroll's (*Jeremiah*, 187) analysis of Jer 5:20–25, in which he argues that "Technically neither nature or the laws of nature form part of biblical thought," and the metaphor is a poor example due to issues like erosion.

[97] Barton, "Natural Law," 6. Schmid ("Creation," 106–107) even highlights that in the pre-exilic prophets there is the similar idea of act-consequence ideology, which is a shared understanding that if one cannot disrupt the created and moral orders without consequence.

obvious, which he refers to as "cosmic nonsense."[98] Barton's analysis of natural law

demonstrates at least part of a connection between morality and nature in the prophets

that likely would have been known by the audience. It thus forms a connection to the

prophet's argumentation, particularly in the sense that creation is used in the prophet's

persuasive rhetoric.[99] The challenge, then, is determining how creation is used by

Jeremiah in his argumentation—specifically the role of YHWH as Creator—which this

dissertation seeks to address.

It must be noted, however, that despite Barton's work helpfully acknowledging

the important role of the natural order in the prophets, this should not be at the expense of

the order revealed specifically in *torah* through the covenant. More specifically, the

natural order observed within Israel is from a Yahwistic perspective and is bound

specifically and explicitly to *torah*.[100] As a prophet to God's people, Jeremiah is clearly

concerned with a particular order. More specifically, as seen in 5:24–25 and 9:11–12, the

prophet is concerned with the disruption of the order as described in the covenant.[101] In

this way, covenant and cosmic order are brought together but not collapsed into a

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[98] Barton, "Natural Law," 7.

[99] Barton (*Reading the Old Testament*, 200) sees rhetoric as persuasion.

[100] Ollenburger ("Isaiah's Creation Theology," 56) critiques Barton's approach by noting that Isaiah's judgment against the people is based on their rejection of YHWH's *torah* (30:9) rather than "being dense to a morally ordered natural hierarchy." However, the question of תורה refers to in the prophets is highly debated, and the term can often refer to elements like prophetic speech rather than the Mosaic *torah* (Isa 1:10). For an analysis of this issue in Isaiah, see Fantuzzo, "Torah in Servant-Form." However, in Jer 5:20–25, there is a connection between the sea's perpetual boundary (חק), the regularity (חקה) of the harvest, and the people's actions. In the rest of the book, the YHWH's decrees (חקה) are ignored by Israel (44:10, 23). Further connections to the YHWH's decrees related to the orderliness of the non-human realm of creation appear in 31:35–36; 33:25.

[101] Walton and Walton (*The Lost World of the Torah*, 93) state, "The Torah therefore is not focused simply on maintaining order in the cosmos and society by executing justice; it is designed to define the covenant order so that it will reflect the identity that Yahweh wishes to establish for himself." Simpkins (*Creator and Creation*, 160) highlights the important point that the disruption of the created order should not be read exclusively as a punishment-reward system established by God but also explicitly in relation to Israel's covenantal conduct and thus as an act-consequence relationship. This perspective upholds the important symmetry between Israel's actions and their effects on the natural world.

singular concept. Ryan O'Dowd articulates this idea by contending that "torah gives form to the diversity of the created order, founding the divine-human relationship upon the principles which unify the creation."[102] O'Dowd's words illustrate the level of continuity that was understood between natural law and covenantal law.[103] While the observable order of the cosmos is a helpful indictment against the people in Jer 8:7, it is still in the context of YHWH's commands. Similarly, the disrupted cosmic order in Jer 5:24–25 and 9:11–12 is expressed in relation to covenant violations. The disruption of the cosmic order is based on the disruption of the covenantal order.

Summary

Previous approaches to creation in Jeremiah have moved the discussion forward in positive ways. One such way has been by demonstrating that Jeremiah could have used creation in his message as a pre-exilic prophet rather than the first prophet being Second Isaiah. One need not choose between creation or redemption, as if creation must be subordinate to redemption. Most notably, scholars have demonstrated that Jeremiah's assertation that YHWH is Creator is central to the book's theology and argumentation.

However, these approaches have been limited by things such as redactional approaches to the book that omit some creation passages while prioritizing others. Additionally, even though scholars have highlighted the importance of creation, greater clarity is required if one is to claim that creation is not subject to covenant or redemption.

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[102] O'Dowd, *Wisdom*, 164. A clear example of this relationship is conveyed in Ps 19.

[103] See also, Burnside, *God, Justice, and Society*, 69–73. Burnside (*God, Justice, and Society*, 70) observes that the psalmists reflect "the belief that biblical law is intrinsic to the natural order." Much of this argument can be seen in Ps 19, where 19:1–6 (English) and its description of the created order prepares the reader to ponder torah in 19:7–14.

By showing the role creation plays in Jeremiah's rhetoric, its relationship with other theological concerns of the book can be understood with greater precision.

My Approach

I argue that Jer 1–10 uses creation to universalize the scope and bolster the validity of his message, meaning creation greatly contributes to the prophet's persuasive intents of repentance, theodicy, and doxology. In the prophet's attempt to persuade his audience to respond, he places Israel's unique identity, covenant violations, and judgment within the broader scope of creation, chiefly the claim that YHWH is the sole Creator of the cosmos. Israel's covenant God is the Creator of the cosmos. This claim is supported by performing a rhetorical-critical study on passages in Jer 1–10 that express YHWH's role as Creator of the cosmos.

This differs from previous approaches in a few important ways. First, rhetorical criticism can operate on a more synchronic level to assess rhetorical strategies employed across a variety of the literary styles presented in the book rather than isolating texts identified solely by compositional concerns. This is not to suggest that the present dissertation is in any way unconcerned with the book's compositional history but that attention is given to creation theology as it appears in the text of Jeremiah, regardless of its editorial layer. Second, rhetorical criticism allows for greater emphasis on the potential effects of these passages on the book's reading audience. Third, I seek to provide a more systematic understanding of creation's role in Jeremiah's rhetorical intent. Understanding rhetoric as persuasion allows creation to be analyzed as a fundamental part of the book's message by providing both style and legitimacy for persuasive intent. Failing to recognize creation's important roles in Jeremiah's rhetoric results in a skewed

understanding of Israel's sins and their effects on the cosmos, as well as the rationale

behind their judgment. Similarly, failure to acknowledge the significance of YHWH's

role as Creator in Jeremiah results in the contemporary reader missing the idea that God's

identity as Creator is what distinguishes him from other deities and should result in his

exclusive worship. It also contextualizes the power and prerogatives of the Creator God,

who has brought judgment on his people. Fourth, properly understanding creation's roles

addresses one of the key issues in Jer 1–10, namely that the people lack moral knowledge

and wisdom (4:22; 5:4, 9, 21; 8:7; 9:12) and have perverted the very law that was

supposed to provide knowledge (8:8, 9). Thus, creation can be seen as important, not just

in communicating Israel's sin and judgment, but also in confronting an audience that is

without knowledge and has perverted its law.

Finally, it is important to specify what is meant by "creation" based on the

previous survey. In one sense, creation can be abstract enough to entail everything from

nature, society, and morality, including that which is described in the covenant. While

certain elements of this broader view are important to keep in mind, such as the natural

(non-human) order and the relationship between Israel's action and nature, this is too

broad a view of creation to be useful here and makes identifying key passages difficult.

However, as many of the scholars discussed above have recognized, YHWH's identity as

Creator is a foundational component of creation theology.[104] Thus, the focus of the

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[104] Fretheim (*God and World*, 4–9) helps differentiate between creation and other related terms, such as nature and world, in that creation pertains to the divine activities of originating, continuing, and completing, and it is often the term used to identify the result or object of these divine actions. Creation thus extends beyond origins and speaks to God's maintenance of that which he formed, which includes nature and the world. While elements like human society are certainly a component of creation, distinct creation theology is often identified by explicit divine action, as well as when non-human factors (or elements not controlled by human agency) are viewed in juxtaposition to one the dimensions of human life. Brueggemann (*Theology of the Old Testament*, 145–49) highlights some of the verbs used for YHWH's creative activity, extending beyond origination to a how God summons, orders, sustains, governs the

present dissertation on creation theology is oriented toward the creation claims in Jer 1–

10, where YHWH's creation activity is made explicit. Jeremiah is aware of and utilizes

the concept that YHWH created the heavens and the earth, which we will refer to as

creation claims.[105] This narrows down the passages under investigation to 1:4–12; 4:23–

28; 5:20–25; and 10:1–16.[106]

Using the criteria of a clear creation claim, four main passages come into view:

1:4–12; 4:23–28; 5:20–25; and 10:1–16.[107] The first passage involves Jeremiah's

commissioning as a prophet, in which YHWH claims his involvement in the formation of

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entirety of reality, which may also include acts of warfare or conflict. Ollenburger (*God the Creator*, 5) contributes additional elements to this understanding, such particularly that of God repairing his creation. His reference to God repairing the cosmos and its order is an important component of God sustaining his creation. To further clarify the terminology of creation, the present study focuses on moments in Jer 1–10 when God's involvement in the originating and sustaining of the cosmos (human and non-human) is in view, where God functions as the primary or sole agent of actions related to creation. This can be seen in lexemes, concepts, or traditions associated with the divine originating and sustaining of the cosmos, such as YHWH forming (יצר) Jeremiah, the likening of human kingdoms to the non-human realm, or the use of a creation tradition to demonstrate YHWH's unique power or authority to destroy. While God's creation claims and other components of creation theology can have extensive overlap with other elements, such as covenant or redemption, the creation claims of the present study are identifiable in that they are not merely a lens for viewing other related elements or themes but are distinct actions of YHWH or evidence of his authority to accomplish other activities.

[105] This specification is similar to Weeks' (*An Introduction to the Study of Wisdom Literature*, 118–19) creator theology. Though specifically within the context of Job, Weeks (*An Introduction to the Study of Wisdom Literature*, 118) presents the activities of this Creator God as "This deity is supreme god, creator god, and judge of humanity, who watches, controls, and intervenes.

[106] Though Jer 5:20–25 and 10:1–16 reflect an awareness of God's creative activity in a more direct fashion, 4:23–26 contains an awareness of a creation tradition by reflecting many similarities to the creation account in Gen 1 and its undoing. See Fishbane, "Jeremiah IV 23–26," 151–67; van Ruiten, "Back to Chaos," 21–30. For a popular view challenging the authenticity of this passage and attributing it instead to an apocalyptic glossator, see Epstein, "The Day of Yahweh," 93–97. The decision to isolate passages that contain explicit creation claims is in contrast to other passages that provide helpful connections (e.g., 8:7; 9:11) but do not make explicit claims of YHWH's creation activity. The emphasis on explicit creation claims allows for clearer criteria for the identification of specific passages and addresses the foundational component of creation theology, namely YHWH's creation of the cosmos.

[107] As noted by Marlow ("Law,") the relationship between Israel's actions and the natural order is shared across a variety of other passages. Many of these passages (e.g., 8:7; 9:10–12), while not explicitly claiming YHWH as Creator, reflect similar strategies as those identified for study in the present dissertation (e.g., 5:20–25). Certainly, these other passages are important as they contribute to the role of creation in the prophet's rhetoric. However, due to limitations, the present dissertation focuses primarily on the identified passages in Jer 1–10 that convey a clear creation claim and consults other related passages when similar thoughts or strategies are conveyed. One such example is 5:22–23, which compares the people to the sea, and 8:7, which compares the people to birds.

Jeremiah in his mother's womb, his destining of Jeremiah since before his birth, and the commissioning of the prophet to participate in creational prerogatives of creation and destruction through the proclamation of the prophetic word. The second passage, 4:23–28, contains one of the most jarring visions of judgment in which language from the Gen 1 creation account is used to convey the undoing of Jerusalem through warfare. The creation claim in this passage is based on the use of a known creation tradition and thus operates on the notion that YHWH's creation of the cosmos and the destruction of Jerusalem are both expressions of his creational prerogatives. The third passage, 5:20–25, condemns the people and bases the indictment on two clear creation claims: God's creation of the sand as an eternal boundary for the sea and his provision of the seasonal rains in their appropriate times. The people fail to exclusively recognize YHWH as the one who established such boundaries and similarly fail to recognize why YHWH withholds the seasonal rains guaranteed through covenant obedience. The final passage, 10:1–16, is an elaborate doxology of YHWH that is driven primarily by the reality that the true God, YHWH, is the sole creator and sustainer of the cosmos and sovereign over the nations. There is no competition to his dominion because there were no other participants in the creation of the cosmos. Collectively, these passages work to produce three chief responses from the audience, namely repentance, agreement with divine judgment, and praise.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

The previous chapter demonstrated that Jeremiah has been approached primarily through compositional and redactional approaches, which have emphasized the compositional complexity of the text rather than a unified whole.[1] Rhetorical criticism, although a broad and "pluralistic" methodology, offers the best approach for the present study as it approaches Jeremiah with an emphasis on its literary unity, enabling YHWH's creation claims to be assessed across Jer 1–10.[2] More specifically, however, rhetoric as persuasion enables one to present a more systematic understanding of YHWH's creation claims in Jeremiah's rhetorical intent in a way that accurately reflects its functions within his argument rather than merely categorizing stylistic occurrences.

In short, rhetorical criticism "requires a close reading of the text in order to discern how its form, structure, and use of imagery point toward its persuasive intent."[3] From this perspective, rhetorical criticism is understood as a primarily synchronic approach that engages with diachronic elements.[4] Rhetoric as persuasion is the key

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[1] Barker (*Depths of Despair*, 25) similarly acknowledges the compositional issues pertaining to Joel, suggesting rhetorical criticism as a way forward. It is important to note that this approach is often unknowingly performed, especially due to its similarities to literary approaches. See also, Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 201; Dell, "Jeremiah," 379; Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 27; Brueggemann, *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah*, xv.

[2] Trible uses the term pluralistic to counter the idea that this methodology provides a singular model (see Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 61). Walton ("Rhetorical Criticism," 6) highlights this point by specifying that rhetorical criticism is best when used alongside other approaches. Patrick (*The Rhetoric of Revelation*, 7) calls his approach eclectic and an art rather than a method due to his implementation of various approaches in his rhetorical criticism. Gitay (*Prophecy and Persuasion*, 35–36) follows Corbett ("Introduction," xxvi–xxviii) in clarifying that any research investigating the relationship between a literary work, audience or reader, and the author classifies as a rhetorical analysis and does not need to be bound to traditional rhetorical discipline, though he implements the framework of Classical rhetoric in his study of Second Isaiah.

[3] Barker, *Depths of Despair*, 25.

[4] Kennedy (*Rhetorical Criticism*, 3–4) makes a similar point that rhetorical criticism can fill the void between form criticism and literary criticism. See also, Barker, *Depths of Despair*, 32. An example of

element in this approach, which means rhetoric is shaped to have a particular effect on the audience. The goal of this chapter is to lay out the rhetorical-critical approach and procedure taken in the present dissertation.

Rhetorical Criticism

Muilenburg introduced rhetorical criticism to Old Testament studies as a way to supplement form-critical approaches.[5] His rhetorical approach originated as a way to address the shortcomings of form criticism, where "Exclusive attention to the *Gattung* may actually obscure the thought and intention of the writer or speaker."[6] Muilenburg's approach to rhetorical criticism focuses primarily on style and emphasizes the stylistic features and structural patterns of a literary unit. Within this approach, the critic first delimits the literary unit in order to understand its major motif with the goal of identifying the intention of the writer or speaker.[7] As form criticism generalizes the genres of a literary unit, Muilenburg's rhetorical criticism seeks to appreciate the uniqueness of that particular unit's construction and authorial purpose.[8] Though Muilenburg introduced rhetorical criticism to Old Testament studies with an emphasis on style, rhetorical criticism has found a life of its own in biblical studies and is often categorized as being either "rhetoric as composition" or "rhetoric as persuasion."[9]

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this in the present dissertation is the discussion of 10:1–16 and elements of its compositional history due to its drastic differences from its LXX–Jer counterpart.

[5] Muilenburg, "Form Criticism."

[6] Muilenburg, "Form Criticism," 6.

[7] Muilenburg, "Form Criticism," 5. Emphasis is added here to contrast with Barton on the goal of determining the intention of the figure behind the text or the effect of the text on the intended audience.

[8] Patrick and Scult, (*Rhetoric and Biblical Interpretation*, 14) highlight an underlying issue confronted by Muilenburg's rhetorical approach regarding the shortcomings of form criticism: genre is directly connected to function, meaning form criticism allowed scholars to uncover the function of a passage in light of the original form or genre underlying a passage. Thus, he recognized the issue of moving away from the particulars of a passage and toward a more general form.

[9] See Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 23–52.

Within the approaches that understand rhetoric as composition, many of Muilenburg's students have continued in ways that reflect his concern for stylistic features. In the context of Jeremiah studies, Lundbom is a prime example.[10] Lundbom, though he gives attention to the effect of the text on the audience, focuses heavily on the stylistic features of inclusio and chiasm. In his approach, these features shed light on how Jeremiah was compiled and arranged: inclusio shapes the argument, and chiasm "aids memory, enhances the argumentation, and shapes the totality of thought."[11] While this remains a viable way of moving forward, much of its emphasis is on the literary devices used in the structuring of the discourse, particularly as consistent literary devices and structural patterns may shed light on the text's compositional unity.[12] When examining YHWH's creation claims in Jeremiah, a compositional approach is not the most effective method, as creation claims are not limited to stylistic features or structural devices.

Instead, rhetoric as persuasion provides the best path forward due to its emphasis on the argumentation of the text and its potential effect on the audience. While style remains important in this approach, this avenue of rhetorical analysis focuses on a text's "orientation toward a pragmatic goal."[13] George Kennedy's model of rhetoric as persuasion within New Testament studies paved the way forward and often serves as the basis for other approaches to the Old and New Testaments.[14]

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[10] See Lundbom, "Delimitation of Units"; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*; Lundbom, *Jeremiah*. Brueggemann (*The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah*, xv) is also influenced by Muilenburg's approach. Holladay also uses inclusio and chiasmus extensively in his delimitation and structuring of units. See Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*; Holladay, *The Architecture of Jeremiah 1–20*.

[11] Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 35.

[12] For a more critical understanding of this approach, see Wuellner, "Rhetorical Criticism," 448–63.

[13] Gitay, *Prophecy and Persuasion*, 35.

[14] Kennedy, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 3–38. See also Barker, *Depths of Despair*; Möller, *A Prophet in Debate*; Shaw, *The Speeches of Micah*; Walton, "Rhetorical Criticism," 4–8. Gitay's (*Prophecy and Persuasion*, 36–41) provides an earlier example of rhetoric as persuasion, though he follows the framework

Rhetoric as Persuasion

In the approaches that understand rhetoric as persuasion, style remains an essential

element in the analysis of a text, but rhetoric is understood in relation to a text's potential

effort to address an issue and persuade an audience of a particular conclusion or

response.[15] Karl Möller, echoing Lloyd Bitzer's definition, articulates that rhetoric "is a

mode of altering reality . . . by the creation of discourse which changes reality through

the mediation of thought and action."[16] The "communicative aims" of a prophetic text

seek to change the outcome of a situation by persuading an audience of a specific

conclusion or response.[17] Rhetoric as persuasion is more suitable for approaching the

rhetorical roles of YHWH's creation claims, as the interest of the present dissertation is

the communicative aims of YHWH's creation claims and their potential effects on the

audience.

Kennedy's systematization of rhetorical criticism includes the analysis of four key

components: the rhetorical unit, rhetorical situation, rhetorical strategy, and rhetorical

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of Classical rhetoric in his approach. Black ("Rhetorical Criticism and Biblical Interpretation," 256–57) favors Kennedy's model as the clearest procedure and considers it to be a true method rather than an interpretive perspective.

[15] See Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 40–47, 55–56; Also see Kennedy, *Rhetorical Criticism*. Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric*, 185–508. Kennedy (*Rhetorical Criticism*, 3) similarly adds that the identification of rhetoric as style does not capture the rhetoric of antiquity and that elements such as invention ("the treatment of the subject matter, the use of evidence, the argumentation, and the control of emotion") are of greater significance than style.

[16] Bitzer, "Rhetorical Situation," 5. Möller, *A Prophet in Debate*, 26. Similarly, Kennedy (*Rhetorical Criticism*, 3) begins his monograph with the statement, "Rhetoric is that quality in discourse by which a speaker or writer seeks to accomplish his purposes." Furthermore, Barton (*The Old Testament*, 247) considers the prophets to be a rhetorical *tour de force*, particularly in their attempts to persuade their audiences into a proper understanding of their judgment and the needed response of repentance. Boadt ("Prophetic Persuasion," 1) similarly suggests that persuasive rhetoric is a chief concern of the prophets.

[17] "Communicative aims" is a term borrowed from Möller, *A Prophet in Debate*, 2. I use this term as a helpful replacement for how "rhetoric" is often used as a shorthand but with special attention to persuasive intentions.

effectiveness.[18] While the specifics of what takes place in each of the four components are subjective, his fourfold framework provides a clear model for moving forward.

Rhetorical Unit

The rhetorical unit forms the first component of the procedure, as one must determine the parameters of the passage under investigation. The rhetorical unit must form a complete thought or argument with the potential to affect a particular response in the audience.[19] The limits of a rhetorical unit can extend from (1) an individual pericope (e.g., 5:20–25, signaled by elements like quotation formulas or shifts in genre, forming an individual (sub)unit; (2) a collection or series of (sub)units (e.g., chs. 1–10); and (3) an entire prophetic book.[20] While the identification of individual units is an important part of the present study, attention must also be given to the book of Jeremiah as a whole and its situation, particularly as YHWH's creation claims are used in several different units of chs. 1–10.

Rhetorical Situation

The delimitation of a rhetorical unit is followed by identifying the rhetorical situation. Joel Barker summarizes, "The role of the rhetor is to affect individuals in the audience

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[18] Scholars see a varying number of steps within Kennedy's approach, ranging from four to six steps. See Barker, *Depths of Despair*, 30; Barker, "Rhetorical Criticism," 680–81; Black, "Rhetorical Criticism and Biblical Interpretation," 254; Fiore, "NT Rhetoric and Rhetorical Criticism," 717; Hansen, "Rhetorical Criticism," 824; Möller, *A Prophet in Debate*, 37–43; Walton, "Rhetorical Criticism," 5. One reason for this is due to the placement of rhetorical genre or species in his method.

[19] Wuellner ("Rhetorical Criticism," 455) identifies a rhetorical unit as an "argumentative unit affecting the reasoning or the reader's imagination."

[20] See Möller, *A Prophet in Debate*, 37. Renz (*The Rhetorical Function*, 22) adds that the various units within a book form larger units and contribute to the idea of reading a prophetic book as an integrated whole. This opens the door for connections between individual units while still upholding the integrity of an individual unit.

through discourse and to persuade them to rectify the exigence by reacting in the way the rhetor proposes."[21] The fact that rhetoric is situationally embedded requires one to identify the exigence of the audience and how the rhetorical discourse moves its audience toward a particular response to resolve the exigence.[22] Lloyd Bitzer presents a rhetorical situation as being comprised of three main components: the *exigence*, "the *audience* to be constrained in the decision and action, and the *constraints* which influence the rhetor and can be brought to bear upon the audience."[23] The rhetorical exigence can be understood as a situation or problem identified by the rhetor that can be positively affected by persuading the audience to respond in a certain way.[24] The audience and constraints, as noted by Bitzer, are defined by a complex of "persons, events, objects, and relations."[25]

The identification of a unit's rhetorical genre is related to its situation and strategy, which forms the following component in Kennedy's framework. For Kennedy, the identification of the rhetorical genre (or species) occurs in connection to the rhetorical situation, particularly as it relates to what is expected of the audience in light of the

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[21] Barker, *Depths of Despair*, 49. Barker's description of the rhetorical situation is oriented toward a synchronic approach and is meant to support the literary presentation of the situation.

[22] An exigence must also be understood in the context of the complex of persons, events, objects, and relations. For instance, Bitzer ("Rhetorical Situation," 6) rightly presents that for an exigence to be rhetorical, it must be able to be modified by an audience response. He suggests that things such as death, winter, and some natural disasters cannot be considered rhetorical exigences. Ironically, however, the issue of drought is considered a core component of the rhetorical exigence in Jer 5:20–25 due to it being related to covenant curses and Israel's covenant infidelity.

[23] Bitzer, "Rhetorical Situation," 6. Emphasis original.

[24] Bitzer ("Rhetorical Situation," 6) defines an exigence as "an imperfection marked by urgency." In his discussion about the reception of Btizer's definition of a rhetorical exigence, Barker (*Depths of Despair*, 40–41) clarifies that an issue with identifying an exigence is that an audience might not perceive their situation as problematic or worthy of a response, meaning the prophet must also persuade the audience into properly understanding their situation as an exigence worthy of their response. Thus, an exigence can be defined as a situation identified by the rhetor that can be positively affected by persuading the audience to respond in a certain way. This contributes to why single passage can participate in multiple rhetorical genres or reflect a blending of genres, as the audience response can be a layered or multifaceted response, or there could be multiple simultaneous responses.

[25] Bitzer, "Rhetorical Situation," 6.

exigence and the nature of the rhetorical address. As such, it functions as a bridge

between the situation and strategy.[26]

The rhetorical genres within Classical rhetorical theory include judicial,

deliberative, and epideictic and are deeply connected to the more specific communicative

aims of the text. For Kennedy, rhetoric is judicial "when the author is seeking to persuade

the audience to make a judgment about events occurring in the past."[27] It is thus

retrospective in its orientation. It includes both prosecution and defense. The second

major rhetorical genre is deliberative, which aims to persuade the audience "to take some

action in the future."[28] The communicative aims of deliberative rhetoric are oriented

toward a particular action of the audience. Finally, there is the epideictic genre of

rhetoric, which aims to persuade the audience "to hold or reaffirm some point of view in

the present."[29] However, others have demonstrated that this third genre is also aimed at

reinforcing an audience's "intensity of adherence to values," and these values form the

foundation of judicial and deliberative speeches.[30] Epideictic rhetoric can include

celebration or denouncement, as well as praise or blame.[31]

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[26] Kennedy (*Rhetorical Criticism*, 36) places the rhetorical genre within the "preliminary approach to the rhetorical unit." When Kennedy (*Rhetorical Criticism*, 45–49, 66) employs his method in his example chapters, the identification of a passage's rhetorical genre functions as a transition between the analysis of a passage's rhetorical situation and strategy, though it still occurs in relation to the rhetorical situation. See also, Wuellner, "Rhetorical Criticism," 456.

[27] Kennedy, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 19.

[28] Kennedy, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 19.

[29] Kennedy, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 19.

[30] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric*, 52–53. Zimmerman ("On Definition and Rhetorical Genre," 108) demonstrates the relationship between epideictic values and their effects on other genres in an example by concluding, "I was persuaded because I had already been . . . persuaded and so this apparently straight-forward example of deliberative rhetorical became, at least as far as this member of the audience was concerned, a rather less straight-forward example of epideictic rhetoric. It reinforced my disposition toward a certain type of action and my lack of disposition toward a contrary type of action in terms of values that, respectively, it either praised or blamed." Such an example demonstrates the subjectivity involved in classifying genres, as well as their interrelatedness.

[31] Kennedy, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 19. While elements such as style, imagery, metaphor, and emotional appeal are important for each of the three rhetorical genres, they play a prominent role in the epideictic genre and its various aims, such as eliciting worship from or inciting fear in the audience.

While these three genres can be beneficial in rhetorical analysis and will be referenced, the communicative aims of a given passage are of greater significance as they specify the particular responses expected of the audience. As such, this study understands genre in a more function-oriented approach, where it is "a socially defined constellation of typified formal and thematic features in a group of literary works, which authors use in individualized ways to accomplish specific communicative purposes."[32] The identification of genres is an important step as it can connect the various strategies employed in a text to the specific situations of the unit, placing special emphasis on the particular communicative aims of the text for its audience(s). Barker's approach reflects this understanding of genre, as he highlights aspects related to the "generic orientation for each rhetorical unit," he prioritizes "the rhetorical strategies that the text employs to make its persuasive appeal.[33] While the connection between genre and an audience's situation remains important, Barker's subordination of genre to a text's rhetorical strategies provides greater clarity regarding the strategies and communicative aims of a given passage.

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[32] Brown, "Genre Criticism," 122. See also Green, "Genre Criticism and the Prophets," 260. Barker (*Depths of Despair*, 52) follows a similar approach and summarizes that "This definition nicely captures the idea that there should be common features that bind a collection of Texts together as a genre category while leaving sufficient space for individual creativity and adaptation within the confines of this category." Möller (*A Prophet in Debate*, 40) similarly focuses instead on rhetorical strategies rather than genres. Consequently, Möller does not attach great significance to determining a unit's rhetorical genre. Barker (*Depths of Despair*, 53 n 75) observes that rhetorical genre is completely absent from Shaw's (*The Speeches of Micah*) analysis of Micah. Additionally, while Kennedy (*Rhetorical Criticism*, 36–37) includes genre in his procedural outline and provides three chapters as examples of the three rhetorical genres, discussion of rhetorical genre is absent in his analysis of passages in his other chapters.

[33] Barker, *Depths of Despair*, 54. Barker (*Depths of Despair*, 64) instead places the discussion of rhetorical genre within the rhetorical strategy rather than having it be its own step in the procedure. Möller (*A Prophet in Debate*, 39–40), who generally follows Kennedy's model, similarly does not place the same emphasis on the rhetorical genre. Shaw (*The Speeches of Micah*) does not mention rhetorical genre in his study of Micah.

Rhetorical Strategy

The third major component of Kennedy's model is the analysis of the unit's rhetorical strategy or arrangement. A unit's arrangement is not its structure in the general sense but focuses on how the components of the passage orient themselves toward addressing the issues identified in the rhetorical situation.[34] As the critic seeks to analyze a passage's arrangement, they must assess the individual elements of a passage as they work together, paying careful attention to "its assumptions, its topics, and its formal features . . . and of the *devices of style*, seeking to define their function in context."[35] This portion of the rhetorical analysis demands the most attention, as the goal is to determine the argument being made and how it is formed. In the context of the passages containing YHWH's creation claims, special attention is given to poetics and the use of metaphor, as well as intratextual and intertextual connections or developments. Doing so reflects Kennedy's concern that the rhetorical critic gives attention to the distinctive "traditions of Jewish speech."[36]

Poetics

Poetics plays an important role in rhetorical-critical analysis, particularly regarding the element of comparison or likeness.[37] Hebrew poetry performs comparisons on the conceptual level through the use of metaphor. On a structural level, comparison is accomplished through parallelism, the juxtaposition of clauses.[38]

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[34] Kennedy, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 37.

[35] Kennedy, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 37.

[36] Kennedy, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 12. See also Möller, *A Prophet in Debate*, 45.

[37] Metaphor will play a prominent role in this context. See Kennedy, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 26; Alter, *Biblical Poetry*, 171–204; Berlin, "Reading Biblical Poetry," 25–36; Jindo, *Biblical Metaphor Reconsidered*; Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*.

[38] See Berlin, "Reading Biblical Poetry," 27–28.

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                    ┌──────────────┐
                    │   Poetic     │
                    │  Comparison  │
                    └──────┬───────┘
              ┌────────────┴────────────┐
     ┌────────┴────────┐       ┌────────┴────────┐
     │   Parallelism   │       │    Metaphor     │
     │   (linguistic;  │       │   (conceptual;  │
     │     verbal)     │       │    non-verbal)  │
     └─────────────────┘       └─────────────────┘
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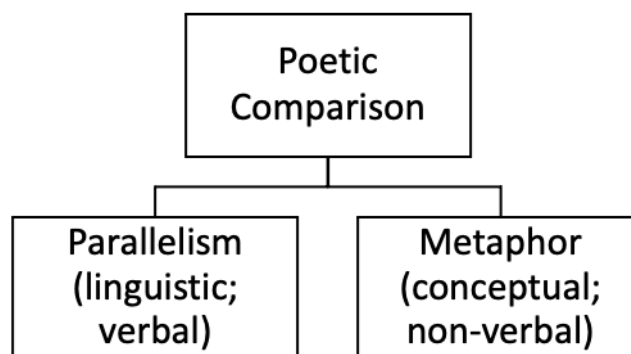
Through the juxtaposition of clauses containing grammatical and semantic elements, tension is created between the sameness and difference between the two clauses.[39] Conceptual comparisons, however, not only embellish the argument or style, but they form a "unit of thought."[40] As a unit of thought, the persuasive weight of a metaphor is demonstrated by its movement from an agreeable basis of knowledge to something potentially more contentious or controversial. Metaphors thus function as a mode of argumentation and are used pervasively in prophetic texts.[41] As such, they play a significant role in a passage's rhetorical strategy, such as describing the actions of the literary audience.

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[39] Berlin, "Reading Biblical Poetry," 27.

[40] Gitay, "Biblical Argumentation," 89. Gitay ("Biblical Argumentation," 91) later states that "the metaphor portrays the argumentative matter in terms that are conceived by our senses." Gitay (Biblical Argumentation," 95) continues by stating that "a metaphor represents a known fact, which is irrefutable to the audience." In this sense, the persuasive weight of a metaphor is demonstrated in its movement from an agreeable basis of knowledge to something potentially more contentious or controversial. However, Gitay follows the notion that metaphors are allegories. Foreman's (*Animal Metaphors*, 15) differentiation between the two is more accurate. Foreman's reasoning is that allegories are not tropes and are forms of prose.

[41] For metaphor as argumentation, see Amador ("Rhetorical Criticism," 205), who notes metaphors "*constitute* a form of argumentation by employing implicit and covert values or presumptions that serve as foundation for a given perspective or position." Italics original. See also, Kennedy, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 26; Alter, *Biblical Poetry*, 171–204; Berlin, "Reading Biblical Poetry," 25–36; Jindo, *Biblical Metaphor Reconsidered*; Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*.

An example of this is God's description of his people as a choice vine in Jer 2:21–25, or in 5:20–25, where the people are compared to the raging waves of the sea that unsuccessfully and futilely push against their boundaries. In the context of 5:20–25, the comparison to the waves of the sea is a crucial component of the rhetorical strategy that illustrates the absurdity of the people's actions and disposition, meaning metaphor plays an important role in assessing the rhetorical strategy and argument. Another example is seen in 8:7, which compares migratory birds to Israel. Benjamin Foreman clarifies, "the statement is a conceptual anomaly . . . Since this anomaly involves two semantic fields ('birds' and 'humans'), the utterance is a metaphor."[42] Through these structurally juxtaposed subjects, a comparison is asserted.

Metaphors are identified by the "semantic incongruity which involves the crossing of semantic fields."[43] This is not to say, however, that every apparent shift in semantic field is purely metaphorical or non-literal. In fact, it is a central part of Jeremiah's argument that disorder and harm have befallen the environment because of the people's sins and waywardness (e.g., 4:28; 9:11). While passages like 4:28 and 9:9–11 demonstrate that metaphor and non-literal comparisons can be made, such as ascribing the mourning process to the heavens, the connection between the people's actions and the environment are literal and real. Metaphor thus becomes a crucial component of a passage's rhetorical strategy.[44]

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[42] Foreman, *Animal Metaphors*, 212.
[43] Foreman, *Animal Metaphors*, 212.
[44] While metaphor is typically limited to the rhetorical strategy of a passage, metaphor and intertextuality play an important role in specifying the rhetorical situation of 4:23–28. This is largely due to how the foe from the north and the coming military destruction are defined, which form a crucial component in grounding the rhetorical situation in the Babylonian invasion.

Intratextuality and Intertextuality

Intratextuality and intertextuality provide necessary supporting roles in the rhetorical

approach of the present dissertation for two main reasons. The first reason is that

intratextuality is necessary for the present dissertation's aim, which seeks to assess the

role of YHWH's creation claims across Jer 1–10. This requires engagement across the

various individual passages under investigation. The second reason is that intratextuality

and intertextuality both prevent reading a single rhetorical unit in isolation from other

related texts that likely would have shaped the audience's perception of the rhetorical

unit.[45]

Intratextuality acknowledges the idea of a book being a rhetorical unit and that

readers (and rereaders) of the text would be familiar with other passages in the book and

potential interactions and developments within the book.[46] Intratextuality removes a

passage from isolation and enables the reader to place the passage under investigation in

dialogue with thematic developments within the literary unit or book as a whole.[47] This

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[45] Tull ("Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality," 166) addresses a similar issue and suggests "But if rhetorical contexts influence both writing and reading, consideration of texts in isolation from the rhetorical contexts of authors and readers yields interpretation that is truncated and incomplete, maybe even irrelevant. In fact, to ignore one's own rhetorical context is to offer interpretation that is unconsciously overdetermined by one's reading practices." Tull ("Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality," 173) further notes that effective orators anticipate their audience's awareness, management, and organization of other pronouncements of the same subject. However, this could extend to related subjects as well.

[46] Ben Zvi ("The Prophetic Book," 281) defines a prophetic book "as a text characterized by a clear beginning and a conclusion, by a substantial level of textual coherence and of textually inscribed distinctiveness vis-`a-vis other prophetic books, and that, accordingly, leads its intended and primary readers (and rereaders) to approach it in a manner that takes into account this distinctiveness, is *by necessity* socially and historically dependent."

[47] This discussion of intratextuality, in many ways, mirrors the idea of arrangement in rhetorical criticism. Kennedy (*Rhetorical Criticism*, 13) defines arrangement as "the composition of the various parts into an effective whole." In noting the introductory salutation in 1 Cor 1:4–9, he (*Rhetorical Criticism*, 24) notes that it is "amplified with topics important for the ethos and logos of the letter." Though arrangement speaks particularly to the bringing together of distinct parts connected to a rhetorical intention, the act of bringing together distinct parts leads to observations regarding the interconnectedness of the separate parts. See also Watson, "Rhetorical Criticism," 169. For Renz (*The Rhetorical Function*, 22–23, 58), the coherent argument of the book's larger literary units leads him to view the whole book as a rhetorical unit, particularly as both sections of the book serve the epideictic concerns of the book. For example, Renz (*The*

leads the (re)readers to draw connections between the various sections of a prophetic book and relevant texts.[48] The self-contained book thus shapes the way in which individual units can be read and understood. Intratextuality both prevents reading a rhetorical unit in isolation and enables the interpreter to more systematically assess the role of rhetorical components—such as the role of YHWH's creation claims in Jeremiah—within a book across individual units.

In the context of Jeremiah, a clear example of intratextuality is the interaction between the prophet's commission in 1:4–12 and his vocational lament in 20:7–18. The formation of the prophet before coming out of his mother's womb in 1:5 has explicit echoes in 20:18 and the prophet's lament regarding coming out of his mother's womb. In the opening chapter, the prophet initially resists his calling, while in 20:7–18, he laments it. These two passages are clearly connected in a purposeful manner due to lexical and thematic overlap.[49] There is a sense, then, that readers can understand the prophet's refusal in the opening chapter with the prophet's later turmoil in mind, influencing how an audience should respond to the prophet's reluctance in 1:4–12.[50] Intratextuality enables a reader to more accurately perceive the rhetorical effect of the prophet's resistance to his commission as it culminates in his lament. Similarly, a second example

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Rhetorical Function of the Book, 59) traces the characterization of exiles as בית מרי (a rebellious household) throughout the book, but predominantly in the first half. Similarly, Möller (*A Prophet in Debate*, 147–51) traces the development of an argument in Amos 1–4, suggesting the importance of arrangement in the book, given by the redactors. This narrativity is a crucial part of the book's persuasive intent. See also Barker, *Depths of Despair*, 151–52; Sweeney, "Metaphor and Rhetorical Strategy in Zephaniah," 120–30.

[48] See Ben Zvi, "The Prophetic Book," 281 n 16, 282.

[49] See Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 229) considers 20:18 to form an inclusio with 1:5 and uses the close relationship of 1:5 and 20:18 to suggest that 20:18 concludes the first edition of the book. More will be said on this below.

[50] Gitay ("The Projection of the Prophet," 47) notes that part of Jeremiah's intertextual presentation is oriented toward producing sympathy and confidence in the prophet and his words. This is heightened when one recalls the later struggles of the prophet and his emotional disposition in 20:7–18.

is the imagery describing Jeremiah's ministry in 1:10. The language of this verse

reverberates throughout the book (e.g., 12:14–17; 18:7–9; 24:6; 31:28, 38–40; 24:10;

45:4) and shapes the book's language used for judgment and restoration (e.g., 8:13).[51]

Intratextual readings illustrate how the language and imagery of 1:10 anchors the

important creational and agricultural language of Jer 1–10 in the prophet's opening

commission. Finally, since we are evaluating the role of specific passages containing

YHWH's creation claims, intratextuality allows us to interpret YHWH's creation claims

in specific passages as well as how they operate within their literary contexts of the book

as a whole. Thus, while Jer 4:23–28 forms its own rhetorical unit, it can be informed by

the trajectories of 4:5–31 as a whole and other connections to chs. 1–10. Intratextuality

allows us to move between the various passages under investigation and identify the

various rhetorical functions within the larger literary section of 1–10 rather than

attempting to analyze a rhetorical unit in isolation from its provided literary contexts.

Intertextuality provides a complementary function and allows the reader to be

informed by the broader biblical pattern of particular language, images, or concepts, such

as the darkening of the clouds or the Day of YHWH.[52] Typically, Deuteronomic language

or concepts are approached from a redaction- or source-critical perspective and assigned

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[51] See Jindo, *Biblical Metaphor*, 177. In making this point, Jindo (*Biblical Metaphor*, 177) notes that "Obviously, however, the reading of Jer 1:10 proposed thus far cannot be achieved if we read that verse in isolation, as is the conventional treatment, but only if we consider its meaning in relation to other horticultural [and architectural] images in Jeremiah on the conceptual level." Most important for Jindo is the presentation of Jerusalem as YHWH's royal garden.

[52] Wendland (*The Discourse Analysis*, 250–51) demonstrates the role of intertextuality in Joel's imagery in that Joel employs defamiliarization, which is when there is a reversal of connotation, reference, association, evaluation, or application of an earlier text. Barker (*Depths of Despair*, 238) clarifies that "It is an ironic parody of the expected prophetic word presented with the same form but invoking the opposite meaning." Such inversion is an important component of the rhetorical strategy, making awareness of the intertextual environment a necessary part of the rhetorical endeavor.

primarily to the Deuteronomistic layer of Jeremiah, most notably the prose sermons.[53]

However, as scholars such as Dalit Rom-Shiloni have demonstrated, poetic portions of

Jeremiah—those which have traditionally been deemed most likely authentic to the

prophet—utilize Pentateuchal literature and legal materials as well.[54] Returning again to

the prophet's commission, Gitay traces the form of this passage in relation to the calls of

Moses and Gideon. By evaluating these two other call narratives, Gitay rightfully

observes that Jeremiah's complaint regarding his inability to speak is an indirect refusal

of God's commission.[55] Intertextual patterns can also bring clarity to how Jeremiah's

words participate in concepts found in other Old Testament books, such as the Priestly

creation tradition found in Gen 1.[56] Thus, when examining 4:23–28, the clear connections

to the Pentateuchal creation account form an important part of the rhetorical analysis,

particularly describing the extent of the audience's coming judgment and its intended

effects on the audience.[57]

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[53] For more on this, see Rom-Shiloni, "The Forest and the Trees," 59. For assigning Deuteronomic phrases to source C of Jeremiah, the prose sermons, see also Duhm, *Jeremia*, xi–xiv, xvi; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School*, 4.

[54] See Rom-Shiloni, "Compositional Harmonization," 913–42; Rom-Shiloni, "Jeremiah and Inner Biblical Exegesis," 282–308; Rom-Shiloni, "A Non-Dueteronomic Phrase," 621–47; Rom-Shiloni, "The Forest and the Trees," 56–92. This does not suggest that the poetic sections of the book are more authentic to the prophet than the prose sections.

[55] This is done in combination with the illocutionary force of his complaint. Jeremiah's complaint carries the same function of Moses' straightforward refusal in Exod 3:11. See Gitay, "The Projection of the Prophet," 44. While he is not alone in observing connections between Jeremiah's call narrative and that of others, he provides a clear example of intertextuality within rhetorical criticism.

[56] Rom-Shiloni ("The Forest and the Trees," 78 n 65) considers 4:23–26 as a reference to the Priestly creation story. In a later publication, she ("Jeremiah and Inner Biblical Exegesis," 299) considers 4:23–28 as a harmonization of Non-Priestly and Priestly elements, though no further detail is given.

[57] The connection between Jeremiah and earlier biblical texts across both the prosaic and the poetic material of the book allows rhetorical criticism to engage in both synchronic and diachronic issues. Certainly, Möller (*A Prophet in Debate*, 8) is correct to state that the tension between rhetorical criticism and diachronic concerns is whether one considers certain historical-critical arguments to be correct, noting that the "surge of alternative modes of interpretation (of which rhetorical criticism is only one example) testifies to the fact that an increasing number of scholars now question historical-critical readings." Renz (*The Rhetorical Function*, 27–38) and Barker (*Depths of Despair*, 32) also allow rhetorical criticism to speak to historical issues behind the text. See also, Boadt ("Poetry of Prophetic Persuasion," 4–5), who argues that our attention to poetic persuasion in the text should help determine which text is closer to the

Intertextuality also extends to comparison with extra-biblical literature or traditions.[58] However, intertextuality with extra-biblical literature is used in the present study to better understand Jeremiah's formation in the womb (1:5), the use of warfare language (4:5–31), God's separation of the waters and maintenance of the seasons (5:20–25), and the parodying of the Mesopotamian idol-making process (10:1–16). Consulting extra-biblical texts enables us to incorporate concepts or motifs that would have been familiar to the book's speaker and audience.[59]

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original prophet's words. This harmonizes well with the rhetorical work done by scholars who note the overlapping rhetorical styles and devices between the prose and poetry of Jeremiah. See Bright, *Jeremiah*, LXII; Bright, "The Date of the Prose Sermons," 13–35; Holladay, "Prototype and Copies," 351–67; Holladay, "Style, Irony, and Authenticity in Jeremiah," 44–54; Muilenburg, "Baruch the Scribe," 215–38; Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles*; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 46–49; Weippert, *Die Prosareden des Jeremiabuches*, 228–34.

[58] This is traditionally called the "contextual approach" by Hallo (*The Book of the People*, 23–34), though Hallo ("The Context of Scripture," 9–15) considers the enterprise to be partly intertextual. Similarly, Walton ("Interactions in the Ancient Cognitive Environment," 333) calls this "cognitive environment criticism." Walton ("Interactions in the Ancient Cognitive Environment," 333–39) identifies five forms of interaction and Old Testament can have with its cognitive environment, extending from interaction with a specific text to engaging in a concept that is not confined to a singular text but has been culturally disseminated. I place Israel's cultural interactions within the section on intertextuality for the present dissertation because specific texts are referenced. However, these interactions may best be described as diffusions of common knowledge, a term used by Walton ("Interactions in the Ancient Cognitive Environment," 335). As such, the intertextual connections demonstrate a knowledge known by ancient Israel without requiring Israel's scribes or audience to connect that knowledge with a particular text. Interactions between Israel's prophetic literature and that of ANE literature have been studied thoroughly. For examples, see Aster, *Reflections of Empire in Isaiah 1–39*; Machinist, "Assyria and Its Image," 719–37; Weinfeld, "Ancient Near Eastern Patterns in Prophetic Literature," 178–95. For those performed in connection to intertextual methods, see Hayes, "Echoes of the Ancient Near East?," 20–43; Hutton, "Isaiah 51:9-11 and the Rhetorical Appropriation and Subversion of Hostile Theologies," 271–303.

[59] Again, this does not require that the speaker or audience be familiar with a particular text but rather the knowledge that can be observed in other texts. This aligns closely with what Walton ("Interactions in the Ancient Cognitive Environment," 335) calls "diffusion." In his analysis of Isaiah's use of Assyrian royal texts, Aster (*Reflections of Empire in Isaiah 1–39*, 316–17) sees Isaiah's main audience as the Judahite elite and used Assyria motifs because he expected his audience to be familiar with them. For the transmission of this knowledge to other levels of society, see Aster, "Transmission of Neo-Assyrian Claims," 25. Machinist ("Assyria and Its Image," 736) also allows for some instances of Assyrian imagery in some passages to be a reuse of imagery, for both Assyria and its successors. The reuse of imagery by later biblical authors also opens the door for some of these images to be examples of biblical intertextuality, primarily between biblical books. Speaking more generally, Patrick (*Rhetoric of Revelation*, xiii–xiv) acknowledges at the forefront of his rhetorical study that biblical "authors of scripture employed artistic means to represent a human world in which God is an active participant. This representation was built upon the cultural assumptions of the ancient Near East that certain occurrences and outcomes are attributable to divine agency."

Intratextuality and intertextuality prevent the reader from evaluating a rhetorical unit in isolation by placing it in conversation with the book as a whole, as well as networks of other relevant texts.[60] Comparisons with other passages, biblical and extra-biblical, can provide clarity for understanding the rhetorical strategy of a passage and the intended effect on its readers.[61] Furthermore, it allows YHWH's creation claims to be assessed throughout the literary section of Jer 1–10 and its various (sub)units.

Rhetorical Effectiveness

Rhetorical effectiveness is the final element and determines if "the utterance is a fitting response to the exigency that occasioned it."[62] However, a challenge to this emerges from the fact that we are largely unaware of how effective the biblical rhetoric actually was for its intended audience. The approach to rhetorical effectiveness taken in the present dissertation assesses the potential effectiveness of the passage. This approach to rhetorical effectiveness in prophetic literature is demonstrated most clearly by Möller, who acknowledges the issues of determining effectiveness but instead argues that the interpreter must determine if the prophet's words were a fitting response to the situation and thus had the potential to produce the ideal response.[63] In combination with this,

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[60] Though working within the context of scrolls containing narratives, Schnittjer ("The Narrative Multiverse," 232) makes the important point that "Although it may be tempting to claim that the edges of the scroll containing the narrative define the outer limits of the story's context, the echoes within this context reach outside of it. Texts contain echoes which reach beyond the context of the book itself." For other

[61] For discussion on the listening audience's ability to perceive intertextual relationships important for interpretation and response, see Edenburg, "Intertextuality," 131–48. She uses intertextuality in a broad sense to capture any relationship between texts.

[62] Möller, *Prophet in Debate*, 42. Kennedy (*Rhetorical Criticism*, 38) describes this final step as reviewing the rhetorical unit and considering "its success in meeting the rhetorical exigence and what its implications may be for the speaker or audience." The term is seen as either exigence or exigency.

[63] Möller, *A Prophet in Debate*, 295–96. Barker *(Depths of Despair*, 56) rightfully acknowledges that the idea of whether rhetoric is a fitting response to a situation has the potential to be self-fulfilling.

Barker's use of the implied audience and the universal audience provides a helpful

progression, allowing the interpreter to assess the potential effect on the ideal audience

constructed by cues in the text, as well as the enduring life of the text for continuing

audiences.[64] The continued life of the text may speak to its potential to effectively

produce a particular response in its readers due to a continuing exigence.[65]

Identifying the Rhetorical Situation of Jeremiah

Before providing the present study's procedure, the rhetorical situation of Jeremiah must

be identified. Determining the specific audience and constraints of biblical texts,

particularly prophetic books, proves challenging due to the highly debated nature of

views pertaining to authorship, composition, redaction, and the identity of the reading

audience. Despite these challenges, identifying the rhetorical situation and audience of a

prophetic book, when possible, remains important.[66] More specifically, since a rhetorical

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[64] Barker, *Depths of Despair*, 60–62. This avoids some of the self-fulfilling pitfalls of Möller's approach.

[65] Bitzer ("The Rhetorical Situation," 13) acknowledges the reality of a text that continues to speak to a later audience due to situations that persist.

[66] Barker (*Depths of Despair*, 46–47) rightfully acknowledges the difficulties posed by diachronic approaches to identifying the rhetorical situation due to the subjectivity of diachronic issues. He is primarily critiquing Möller (*A Prophet in Debate*) and Shaw (*The Speeches of Micah*) In his study of Joel, Barker takes a synchronic approach to the issue by focusing on the exigence and situation as presented in the text. He uses Stamps' ("Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation," 199) definition of a synchronic rhetorical situation to define it as "the situation embedded in the text and created by the text which contributes to the rhetorical effect of the text." This leads Barker to focus more on a universal reading audience. The idea of a universal audience is particularly beneficial in his study on Joel, as establishing a historical context of the audience or book with any certainty is nearly impossible. For discussions on universal audience or implied readership, see Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric*, 31–32; Stamps, "Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation," 193–210; Wuellner, "Rhetorical Genre," 93–118. A universal audience is particularly helpful in situations where a speaker "might rely on arguments that are foreign or even directly opposed to what is acceptable to persons other than those he is presently addressing." See Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric*, 31. A key difference between Barker's study in Joel and the present dissertation is that Joel includes no superscription or indication of its reading audience, while Jeremiah opens with a historical superscription and includes several historical references throughout that signal specific times and situations. The book's inclusion of this information allows for greater precision regarding the book's rhetorical situation, especially when there is an overlap between the situation presented in the text and the reading audience of the book.

unit's (or book's) situation, genre, and strategy are related to one another, providing a clear situation for a text can help identify how various genres and strategies are employed to address the audiences and their exigencies.

A crucial point in the process of determining the rhetorical audience of a text is that there is both an inscribed audience(s) presented in the text and the reading audience of the book.[67] In the case of Jeremiah, the inscribed audiences are identified throughout the book (e.g., 2:1–2; 7:1–2; 29:1–3; etc.) and refer back to the historical audiences that responded to the historical figure of Jeremiah. The inscribed audience is the main audience being identified for each passage in the rhetorical situation, as the rhetorical situation sections of each chapter are oriented toward the situation presented in the text. Simultaneously, there also exists a reading audience of the text, which is envisioned by descriptions in the text that suggest their particular situation. For example, the book's awareness of exile and the fates of exilic communities through 560 BCE makes it clear that the reading audience has already experienced the events described in the text.[68] The fact that this audience is referred to as a reading audience is not meant to suggest that Jeremiah had a large audience of literate individuals but that this audience hears the

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[67] Eggleston (*See and Read*, 126–28) correctly observes that Jeremiah's audience is audience's portrayal is vague, expansive, and multifaceted in nature. His observation regarding the expansive or multigenerational audience properly represents concerns found within the text (e.g., 3:6–10; 7:12–15, 21–26; 24:4–7). Eggleston (*See and Read*, 151) argues that the ambiguity of the audience, such as the specified audience of 29:1–3 and the following broader audience of 30:1–2 indicate that "Audience ambiguity, then, produces a temporal loosening of the prophetic text to speak not only to an initial generation but to many subsequent ones."

[68] Fretheim (*What King of God*, 285) rightly observes that "In reading Jeremiah a distinction must be made between the audience for the preaching of the prophet and the audience for the book (though these audiences overlap). The opening lines (1:1–3) make clear that the present form of the book is addressed to an audience on the far side of the destruction of Jerusalem; the earlier preaching of Jeremiah has been appropriated as a resource to speak a new word into a new context (probably the exile)." He provides further detail on this point in his *Jeremiah*, 1–9. See also McConville, *Judgment and Promise*, 27–28.

words of the book (or scroll) being read to them.[69] It will be argued that this audience

applies to the book as a whole, resulting in the reading audience being addressed

primarily in the analysis of each passage's rhetorical effectiveness.

In the context of prophetic books, the relationship between the inscribed audience

and the reading audience is marked by both association and disassociation. The

association between the two audiences is observable in the characterization of the

inscribed audience presented in the text, which at least partially reflects the reading

audience. This is especially true if at least part of the reading audience contains people

who are also part of the historical audience inscribed in the book, such as the exiles.[70] In

addition to this point, the book's superscription contextualizes the prophet's ministry in a

particular context, inviting the reading audience to hear the prophet's message in the

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[69] For more on relationship between texts and their public readings, see van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 51. Regarding Jeremiah in particular, see Eggleston, *See and Read*, 151–53. Despite the fact that the reading audience were those listening to the text being read to them, reading is the preferred term as it speaks to book's audience rather than the listening audience of the historical prophet. Additionally, speaking of readers or reading audiences in this manner is preferred term in the discipline. See Ben Zvi, "The Prophetic Book," 276–97. As the inscribed audience is the audience within the book of Jeremiah, the reading audience includes the audience hearing the book of Jeremiah.

[70] See Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 4–9. Fretheim (Jeremiah, 7–8) adds, "While the text commonly speaks of these events in future terms, readers would recognize that they have already experienced them and continue to bear their effects." It will be argued that the two audiences overlap in Jer 10:1–16.

context of the inscribed audience and their situation.[71] This inscribed situation also provides a lens for reading the book in a particular context.[72]

On the level of disassociation between the inscribed literary audience and the reading audience, the failures and shortcomings of the audience presented in the text challenge the readers to be different from those who came before them. In his assessment of this same issue for the book of Ezekiel, Thomas Renz clarifies, "While the book does not militate against our hypothesis of a strong continuity between the prophet's audience and the intended readership of the book in terms of their basic situation, it points to a measure of resistance encountered by the prophet which requires the readership to see themselves in discontinuity with the prophet's audience."[73] In other words, though the book's readership is meant to identify with the inscribed audience in many ways, a strong

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[71] Ben Zvi, "The Prophetic Book," 289. Seitz ("The Place of the Reader in Jeremiah, 71–72) notes that "The book has been shaped to allow the reader to participate in the refusal of an earlier generation to heed God's calls to repentance and to experience the judgment they eventually experienced, though not with a clear confession of wrongdoing and an acknowledgment that Jeremiah was a true prophet send by God—something for which he was persecuted rather than honored and heeded." Seitz rightly identifies points in which the audience is invited to respond in such a way in passages that include phrases signaling confession and repentance (e.g., 3:25). In relation to the expected response of repentance is the response of worship. Eggleston (*See and Read*, 153–55) follows Baumgartner (*Jeremiah's Poems of Lament*, 101) in arguing that the prayers and praise of the book move beyond the original historical audience to provide words for additional audiences that may desire to use similar language. In his discussion about the precision of Haggai and Zechariah's superscriptions, Boda ("Terrifying the Horns," 22–23) suggests that the superscript's precision signals to the reader that the books "were deeply concerned that the readers grasp the connection between the prophecies and the historical circumstances of the prophet and community," and that this should shape the reading strategy of the book. Additionally, this connection is evident in the natural connection between audiences, namely that the reading audience finds in the text a telling of their own history and of previous generations. The theodical nature of the text provides an explanation for why the text's readers are in their situation. Nicholson (*Preaching to the Exiles*, 117, 123) places the prose material of Jeremiah in the Deuteronomistic circle of those living in Babylonian exile and connects it to the need to explain the course of judgment for its readers.

[72] Ben Zvi ("Studying Prophetic Texts," 129) specifies that the historical descriptions in the opening superscription "provide the historical community of readers with a built-in interpretive key for the text" in which the word of YHWH came to the prophet "at a specific point in a communally accepted 'history' of Judah." His comment addresses the issue of understanding these superscriptions in relation to authorship in the modern sense of the term. Future readers are also invited into this setting through the archetypal force of the text, which extends beyond the original historical context of a passage and allows it to apply to future readers. See Alter, *Art of Biblical Poetry*, 182.

[73] Renz, *The Rhetorical Function*, 41.

disconnect emerges in the sense that they are meant to respond to the prophetic word in a wholly different manner. There are factors of the initial situation that persist in the readership's context, which gives the opportunity for the readership to respond appropriately upon hearing of the prophetic word via the book.

The Rhetorical Situation of Jeremiah

The approach taken in the present dissertation places the setting and readership of the book of Jeremiah within the broader context of Babylonian exilic ideology. The perspectives within this ideology are diverse and include the texts written, compiled, and edited by those living in Babylon and those who returned from Babylon to Persian Yehud.[74] The Babylonian exilic ideology, in general, is helpful for speaking of the rhetorical situation because it allows for the identification of a reading community and situation without being overly specific. One of the clearest connections to this ideology is the book's emphasis on the events of exile and those who went into exile. The exile in Jeremiah is introduced at the outset of the book in the superscription and contextualizes the prophet's words and activities within the events leading up to the exile (1:1–3). The book also concludes with a narrative focusing on Jerusalem's destruction and deportation and two of its kings living in Babylon, each representing the outcome of potential

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[74] Rom-Shiloni, "Group Identities in Jeremiah," 13. See also, Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity*, 198–252. Leuchter (*The Polemics of Exile*) makes similar observations, though he associates this situation in connection with the scribes responsible for the text. Passages of particular importance for the group identities include 24:1–10; 29:16–20; 42:13–22; 44:11–14. Leuchter ("Group Identity and Scribal Tradition in Jeremaih," 55) sees a connection between the figs motif in 24:1–10 and Gedaliah's words in 40:9–10 and suggests that these passages reflect a scribal decision to "hybridize the Jehoiachin group's ideology, making it part of a broader stream of ideas and discourses that originated not strictly with the captives of 597 BCE but with at least some of the supporters of Jeremiah who still lived in the land down to 586 BCE and sets some precedent for later additions to the book in the post-exilic era. While such a conclusion is not impossible, it is not clear from the available evidence. Boda ("Reconsidering Exclusive Inclusivity," 9) draws attention to the tensions in such a sociological endeavor due to the inability to use a text to discern between a sociological reality and sociological rhetoric, as the text speaks only to the rhetoric.

responses to the prophet's message. That the book both begins and ends with exile in view orients the reader toward the exile and its aftermath.[75]

The book also maintains its focus on the situations of the exilic communities and their fates. First, Jeremiah places special emphasis on Babylon's coming judgment by placing oracles concerning Babylon at the end of the book.[76] After dealing with his people, God will bring destruction to Babylon, the nation that violently ravaged God's people. Their destruction is anticipated in 25:11–12; 29:10; 50:8–13; 51:1–28 and assigned to the Medes, who are also described as a foe from the north.[77] The fact that Cyrus' capture of Babylon did not fully embody the anticipated judgment of Babylon lends support to assigning the fulfillment of that judgment to Darius.[78] Regarding the exilic communities, 24:1–10 speaks positively of those who surrendered and were displaced under Jehoiachin (cf. 29:10) while pronouncing the destruction of those who fled to Egypt (cf. 29:16–20; 42:13–22; 44:11–14). These passages that focus on the fates

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[75] Hill, *Friend or Foe?*, 26–27. He rightfully acknowledges that the superscription contextualizes the prophet's ministry until 587, yet there are narratives that continue past this date. He suggests that 1:1–4 sets the context of the prophet within the events leading up to 587, while 52:1–34 picks up with the events of 587 and continues to 560 when the people are still facing exile. He then uses the exilic framing to support his argument of an unending exile.

[76] See Sweeney, *Reading Prophetic Books*, 135. This is anticipated in 10:23–25, which ends the opening literary section with the anticipation of Babylon's judgment. This is also supported by the comparison of the two traditions of Jeremiah. Shead ("Jeremiah," 479–80) summarizes the state of current scholarship in that "There is now a broad consensus . . . that Jeremiah LXX translates an older, short Hebrew text than that represented in the MT," suggesting that the longer MT–Jer's pluses are the result of "conscious editing by a recensor" who "aimed at improving the clarity and structure of the discourse, and at shaping the message to be relevant for the Babylonian community." For other discussions, see Shead, "The Text of Jeremiah (MT and LXX)," 255–79; Sweeney, *Form and Intertextuality*, 65–77; Sweeney, *Reading Prophetic Books*, 135–53.

[77] See Boda ("Terrifying the Horns," 24–25) for the prophetic expectation of Babylon's judgment.

[78] See Boda, "Terrifying the Horns," 35–41. Boda rightly contextualizes the events of Zech 1:1—6:15 within Darius' reign as the fulfillment of Babylon's anticipated judgment. Important for this argument is that Zech 1:12 contextualizes the end of the exile with Jeremiah's seventy years (Jer 25:11–12; 29:10).

of the exilic communities after the wake of the exile demonstrate a concern for group identity and relationships between these groups.[79]

While discourses on group identity remain central to this ideology and those shaped by Babylonian exile, the text bears witness to the exigence of those shaped by Babylonian exile, namely how they should respond to the inscribed prophetic word in anticipation of restoration. Jeremiah's words place a heavy emphasis on the continued need for repentance. This need for repentance is directly connected to the expectation of restoration.[80] Closely associated with the audience's continued need for repentance is the theme of theodicy, or the need for the audience to properly understand the nature and necessity of divine judgment.[81] Jeremiah's unsuccessful struggle to urge his inscribed audience toward repentance and the fulfillment of his pronouncements of judgment validate his words and their continued importance for those facing the aftermath of this judgment. YHWH's words to and through the prophet demonstrate a similar concern to explain the necessity and wisdom of Jerusalem's judgment. Together, these factors contribute to the exigence of exile in which various communities need to properly respond to the prophetic word through repentance. The theodical concern of the text

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[79] For discussions on group identity and issues related to the book's composition, see Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant*, 226. See also Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant*, 65–82, 226–48; Crouch, *Israel and Judah Redefined*, 9–24; Leuchter, "Group Identity and Scribal Tradition in Jeremiah," 49–56; Leuchter, "Remembering Jeremiah in the Persian Period," 384–414; Rom-Shiloni, *Exclusive Inclusivity*; Rom-Shiloni, "Group Identities in Jeremiah," 11–46; Seitz, *Theology in Conflict*; Sharp, *Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah*. For a recent challenge to reading passages such as 24:1–10 as literalistic instead of something oriented toward giving a jolt to those in Judah at the time, see Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 37–38. Crouch (*Israel and Judah Redefined*, 33) acknowledges that while titles such as the "House of Israel" may reflect an exilic context for Jerusalemite elites, the book as a final product preserves such social entities "on approximately equitable terms."

[80] Boda, *A Severe Mercy*, 336.

[81] Nicholson (*Preaching to the Exiles*, 123) rightly connects the explanation of their judgment to the people's continued rejection of the prophetic word and Law. See also, Eggleston, *See and Read*, 128–29. Condemnations of certain groups in the text for their rejection of the prophetic word are visible in passages like 37:2.

provides a closely associated element that offers support to the call to repentance by validating the prophetic word and explaining the exigence of exile in accordance with divine wisdom. It also shapes the words of praise in response to God's acts of judgment.

Rhetorical Genres and Communicative Aims

As noted above, identifying the rhetorical situation can help determine the genre of a text in relation to its audience and its exigencies. Jeremiah addresses the situation of Babylonian exilic ideology in various ways, reflecting deliberative, judicial, and epideictic genres to move its audience toward certain responses or conclusions.[82]

While the judicial category certainly applies to the book of Jeremiah, some have provided nuance to some of the particular judicial functions of the Hebrew prophetic books. Thomas Renz assesses Ezekiel's rhetoric and clarifies that the audience is not pronouncing judgment but is rather expected to affirm a judgment already proclaimed and agree with the judge's decision. However, his clarification should be understood as a contextualization of judicial rhetoric within a Hebrew prophetic book instead of concluding that Ezekiel's rhetoric is something other than judicial.[83] Furthermore, the shaping of Jeremiah toward a Babylonian context suggests that the reading audience is expected to participate in or respond to, at least to a limited extent, the judicial concerns

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[82] It is important to acknowledge the fact that, as demonstrated by Renz (*The Rhetorical Function*, 57) and Möller (*A Prophet in Debate*, 39–40), a book can have a dominant genre within individual units, while the book as a whole reflects a different genre. Additionally, Barker (*Depths of Despair*, 223, 228, 234) also refers to a text as reflecting the judicial genre while also identifying a different action expected from the audience or a particular value to which they should adhere. It is thus more appropriate to refer to a text as reflecting a genre while still maintaining emphasis on the communicative aims and strategies employed in a text.

[83] Renz, *The Rhetorical Function*, 57. The support for this is drawn from Kennedy's (*Rhetorical Criticism*, 8) observation that "Rhetoric is a historical phenomenon and differs somewhat from culture to culture." Thus, Jeremiah can be judicial in a way that reflects the values of the book's audience, even if they are expected to affirm the judge's decision rather than pronounce their own decision.

of the book. This aim is seen in the rhetorical strategy of the book. Perhaps the most forthcoming example of the audience's expectation to respond to the judicial nature of the book is the use of the interrogatives YHWH poses to Jeremiah and the audience. These questions ask if there is any fault in YHWH (2:5), if there is any basis to forgive the people for their actions (5:7), and if it is not necessary for YHWH to bring punishment (5:9, 29; 9:7, 9, 12). The questions are also directed toward the people to demonstrate the absurdity of their actions when compared to normal human behavior (2:11, 14; 7:19; 8:4). The interrogative nature of YHWH's communication with the literary audience in the opening section of the book demonstrates YHWH's intention to explain the baselessness of the people's actions and the necessity or correctness of YHWH's judgment of them.[84] As a result, these passages reflect something similar to the theme of theodicy.[85]

The communicative aims of deliberative rhetoric are oriented toward a particular action of the audience. The present dissertation identifies repentance as one of the chief deliberative aims of Jeremiah as a whole.[86] As stated in the rhetorical situation of

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[84] For further diachronic discussion of the nature of these questions, see Long, "Two Question and Answer Schemata," 129–39. For questions that match the form of 22:8, Long observes an exilic setting for these questions and their answers.

[85] For the goal of theodicy or theological interpretation of historical events, see Allen, *Jeremiah*, 15; Allen, "Jeremiah," 439; Barton, *The Old Testament*, 248; Ben Zvi, "The Prophetic Book," 296; Kratz, "The Prophetic Literature," 137; Kratz, *The Prophets of Israel*, 30; Rom-Shiloni, *Voices from the Ruins*. For the connection between prophetic books and historiography, see Weeks, "Jeremiah as a Prophetic Book," 265–74. For the Deuteronomistic historians as well as the Jeremianic prose tradition and their connection to theodicy, see Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles*, 117, 123.

[86] The rhetorical genre of the book as a whole can also contribute to the understanding of a particular passage. For instance, Möller (*A Prophet in Debate*, 39–40) notes that Amos can be considered epideictic even if the majority of its passages are deliberative and at times epideictic. Similarly, Renz (*The Rhetorical Function*, 57) identifies the rhetorical genre of distinct parts of Ezekiel as well as the entire book, which he argues is epideictic. This leads Renz (*The Rhetorical Function*, 58) to conclude that "the rhetorical purpose of the book of Ezekiel is to create a 'community of character," whose self-understanding is formed by adherence to the values expressed in Yahweh's acts of judgment and restoration to which it is a witness. The book as a whole can therefore be described as 'epideictic,' that is, as designed to reinforce certain values." Within Renz's description of Ezekiel, one can observe how his categorization of the book as epideictic is reinforced by the judicial and political (or deliberative) aspects of the book. Barker (*Depths*

Jeremiah, there is a chronic issue of unrepentance inscribed in the book that suggests the

deliberative aim of the book may be oriented particularly toward the action of repentance,

especially as repentance is connected to the benefits of survival and restoration.[87] An

example of repentance's central role is seen in the prose sermon of 7:1—8:3, where

Jeremiah's audience is characterized in ways resembling the rebellious generation of the

exodus and wilderness narratives.

MT		Translation
לְמִן־הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר יָצְאוּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וָאֶשְׁלַח אֲלֵיכֶם אֶת־כָּל־עֲבָדַי הַנְּבִיאִים יוֹם הַשְׁכֵּם וְשָׁלֹחַ:	Jer 7:25	For from the day that your ancestors came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I sent to you all my servants, the prophets, day after day, again and again.
וְלוֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֵלַי וְלֹא הִטּוּ אֶת־אָזְנָם וַיַּקְשׁוּ אֶת־עָרְפָּם הֵרֵעוּ מֵאֲבוֹתָם:	Jer 7:26	But they did not listen to me and did not incline their ear, but they have hardened their neck; they did more evil than their ancestors.

This passage draws a connection between Jeremiah's audiences and the audience who

rebelled against God after the exodus (cf. 7:12–15). Their unrepentance and rejection of

the prophetic word are chronic and key parts of the people's characterization and, thus, a

contributing issue to the rhetorical exigence.[88] Andrew Abernethy comes to a comparable

conclusion regarding the audience, noting that "By portraying a continuum of rebellion

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of Despair, 52–53) cautions that a pitfall of identifying a rhetorical genre of a larger work like Amos, Joel, or even Jeremiah is that potentially all prophetic books could be labeled in this way. Part of this caution is also related to the presuppositions a reader brings to something labeled a prophetic text or deliberative rhetoric, and these presuppositions can limit how one approaches a particular genre.

[87] This reflects the deliberative category of self-interest, which connnets a positive outcome to the anticipate future action. See Kennedy, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 46. For the connection of repentance to restoration, see Boda, *A Severe Mercy*, 336.

[88] This is continued in other portions of the book. Allen (*Jeremiah*, 17) adds that "A range of other passages that move explicitly from such exhortations to relate failure to do so may be compared (18:11–12; 25:5–7; 27:12–15; 35:15; 36:3, 6–7, 31), as well as yet others that simply state a lack of repentance (5:3; 8:4–6; 9:5 [4])." One could also consider the emphasis on unrepentance as judicial, as it prosecutes Israel in her unrepentance. For a similar example against the foreign nations, see Barker, *Depths of Despair*, 227.

from the ancestors to those of Jeremiah's time, along with the repetition of 'heart' to

depict disobedience among Judah and the nations, a pattern arises for expecting sin to

continue among future readers."[89] The readers of the text are exhorted to respond in

repentance, unlike the audiences portrayed in the book.[90]

The persistent nature of their unrepentance is further illustrated by the calls to

repentance in the opening chapters (e.g., 3:22; 4:1–2, 3–4, 14).[91] In these passages,

Northern Israel's call to repentance is recontextualized to motivate Judah to repent, likely

extending to the unrepentant readers in a way similar to 7:25–26.[92] The inscribed

audience's lack of repentance bolsters the judicial nature of the book by basing the

judgment of God on the lack of repentance by the audience.[93]

Finally, epideictic rhetoric is important for the present dissertation, as one of the

passages under investigation utilizes doxological language (10:1–16).[94] While the hymnic

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[89] Abernethy, "Theological Patterning in Jeremiah," 160. See also Sharp, *The Prophetic Literature*, 91.

[90] Conversely, the negative depiction of the unrepentant audience and their judgment is an act of dissuasion. For the language of exorhtation and dissuasion, see Kennedy, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 20; Walton, "Rhetorical Criticism," 4. See also Renz, *The Rhetorical Function*, 59. Ezekiel also uses this technique. In his comparison of Ezek 16, 20, and 23, Renz (*The Rhetorical Function*, 83) observes that Ezek 20 shows the issue of idolatry as problematic against successive generations leading to the exilic readership. The readers are then expected to disassociate with their previous generations through repentance from idolatry.

[91] Allen (*Jeremiah*, 17) argues that "The calls to repentance in 3:22; 4:1–2, 3–4, 14 have often been hailed as transcending their preexilic time and place and as relevant to the book's exilic readers. However, these calls are set firmly in the prejudgment contexts and draw implicit attention to the fact that repentance did not take place." This is largely due to his argument that these positive potential responses in the book are given to reinforce the culpability of previous generations. This thus creates a strong connection to theodicy. However, the characterization of previous generations as unrepentant and the enduring issue of unrepentance, even if they are attached to previous generations in an explanatory sense, contribute to the book's notion that repentance is a crucial part of restoration. See also, Boda, *A Severe Mercy*, 336.

[92] The opening unit of Zechariah (1:1–6) uses a similar tactic and language as that found in Jeremiah's call to repentance. Zechariah's words demonstrate the need for the reading community to respond to the prophetic call to repentance, unlike their ancestors, initiating the process of restoration. See Boda, *A Severe Mercy*, 336.

[93] See also Sharp, *The Prophetic Literature*, 91–92. She traces this theme primarily in the Deuteronomistic passages of Jer 7, 25, 26, 29, 35, and 44. See also, Boda, "From Complaint to Contrition," 186–97.

[94] Crenshaw (*Hymnic Affirmation of Divine Justice*, 82–89) rightfully connects Jer 10:1–16 to a doxological stratum in the prophets, suggesting a late exilic or early post-exilic setting for their origin.

language dominates the passage, it does so while also affirming YHWH's judgment of the idol-worshipping nations, including Israel. The doxology affirms YHWH's activity of judgment and is deeply connected to the prophetic message of "penitence and confession."[95] As such, the doxological nature of 10:1–16 contributes to the passage's explanation of judgment and instruction to refrain from idol worship. Furthermore, the vision of 4:23–28 is largely epideictic in that it brings about terror and dread in the audiences regarding Babylon's destruction of Jerusalem.

In summary, the situation of Babylonian exilic ideology provides the context for the reading audience and their exigence. Furthermore, the issue of unrepentance has resulted in their exile, presenting repentance as the way forward toward restoration.

The placement of the audience within the Babylonian exilic ideology provides an opportunity for the rhetorical genres of a book to come into view. More specifically, distinguishing between the inscribed audience of a passage and the book's reading audience demonstrates how a text can be deliberative for one audience while judicial for another. Since the reading audience and their situation apply to the whole book, the analysis of the rhetorical situation for each passage focuses on the inscribed audience, though attention is given to the reading audience in the rhetorical effectiveness.

Procedure

The goal of this part of the chapter is to lay out the four steps of rhetorical criticism that will be followed in the analysis of each passage containing YHWH's creation claims in Jer 1–10. These steps include identifying the rhetorical unit, locating the rhetorical

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[95] Crenshaw, *Hymnic Affirmation of Divine Justice*, 143.

situation, determining the rhetorical strategy, and analyzing the rhetorical effectiveness.[96] The section dedicated to the rhetorical unit and its delimitation is brief, though Chapter 3 will provide greater clarity on the criteria for delimiting a rhetorical unit and Jeremiah's structure. The section on the rhetorical situation highlights the three major components of a rhetorical situation and presents a particular readership for the book of Jeremiah. The section on the rhetorical strategy presents how the rhetorical strategy of each passage will be assessed in the present dissertation. Finally, the section on rhetorical effectiveness details how the potential effectiveness of a passage will be understood.

Rhetorical Unit

The rhetorical unit in view for this study is the block of Jer 1–10. Though a detailed structure of this larger block will be argued in Chapter 3, it is important to state here that the smaller literary units of the block include 1:1–19; 2:1—6:30; and 7:1—10:25. YHWH's creation claims are identified in each of these three units in 1:4–12; 4:23–28; 5:20–25; and 10:1–16.

While more detailed criteria used for unit delimitation will be covered in Chapter 3, Jeremiah uses a plethora of structuring devices and does not consistently prioritize one particular device over the other. Though certain forms of the prophetic formula are viewed as more disjunctive than other structural devices in the book, unit delimitation in Jeremiah is accomplished through a combination of structural devices. When assessing the key passages of our study (1:4–12; 4:23–28; 5:20–25; 10:1–16), attention will be

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[96] While Kennedy's (*Rhetorical Criticism*) model is generally followed, Barker's (*Depths of Despair*) inclusion of the rhetorical genre after assessing the rhetorical strategy allows the genre to be determined by a passage's strategy and content. For an explanation of the ordering of the steps in rhetorical criticism, see Renz, *The Rhetorical Function*, 25–26.

given at the forefront to justify the identification of the unit in light of structural devices

and how the unit relates to the surrounding material so as not to remove a unit from its

literary context(s). Though each chapter assessing a particular passage will argue for the

delimitation of the passage under investigation as a rhetorical unit, these arguments will

draw heavily from the criteria of Chapter 3.

Rhetorical Situation

The second step of our analysis consists of identifying the rhetorical situation, as all

rhetoric is embedded in a particular situation.[97] The present section will lay out the

procedural aspects of the rhetorical situation, which is followed by a proposed rhetorical

situation for the book of Jeremiah. Since there is both the inscribed audience and the

reading audience, there are the rhetorical situations of the individual passages as well as

the book as a whole. The rhetorical situation of the inscribed audience will be assessed

for each passage. The rhetorical situation of the book as a whole highlights those living in

the wake of Babylonian exile, who are still expected to repent, properly understand the

reasoning behind their judgment, and respond by praising God. Determining the

rhetorical situation of a passage and book provides a necessary context for understanding

the rhetorical strategies and the potential effectiveness on the audiences.

For the individual passages evaluated in the present dissertation, attention will be

given to the inscribed audience(s) and constraints that contribute to the inscribed

rhetorical situation and exigence. This may require one to look at other places in

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[97] Bitzer, "Rhetorical Situation," 3. In his influential study of the topic, Bitzer ("Rhetorical Situation," 6) defines a rhetorical situation "as a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence."

Jeremiah, the Old Testament, or extrabiblical texts for clarity. An example of this includes "House of Israel," which initiates the unit of 10:1–16 and builds off the verses prior to 10:1 that characterize this designator (9:24–25).

Rhetorical Strategy

Analysis of each passage's rhetorical strategy is oriented toward providing an interpretation of the passage at hand but also highlighting prominent or relevant rhetorical strategies or devices used in the passage. The goal is to provide an analysis of the text and its argument in a way that leads to understanding its intended effect(s) or communicative aims on the audience, but also the role creation claims play in the prophet's communicative intent. As such, the strategies employed differ from passage to passage. For example, 4:23–28 is a vision report using vivid imagery to convey the extensive destruction of the coming destruction and is structured as a reversal of the creation tradition found in Gen 1, while 5:20–25 contains an explanatory discourse between YHWH and the audience, in which he uses certain devices such as rhetorical questions and metaphors. The doxology of 10:1–16 incorporates other techniques, such as the parody of idol-making and oscillating comparisons between YHWH and the idols. Rhetorical strategies will thus differ from passage to passage.[98]

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[98] Similarly, Barker (*Depths of Despair*, 75) acknowledges the fact that each unit uses its own rhetorical strategies and notes that the assessment of a passage's distinct rhetorical strategies is where rhetorical-critical studies most represent Muilenburg's rhetoric as composition. Patrick (*Rhetoric of Revelation*, 6) also makes this connection as he seeks to be "sensitive to how the text under study exercises power, communicates its truth claims, and achieves an effect" and "seek[s] to supplement categorization with attention to its particular embodiment." This is partially because of Patrick's use of form criticism in his analysis similar to Muilenburg, as well as his eclectic approach to rhetorical criticism as the art of reading a text in the way it engages the reader. Patrick (*Rhetoric of Revelation*, 7) also acknowledges that his "model applies to only certain types of texts." As each text is unique and uses its own strategies, even to argue a point such as YHWH's identity and role as Creator, the interpreter must remain sensitive to the uniqueness of the text at hand.

This study's assessment of a passage's rhetorical strategy prominently includes imagery, metaphor, style, literary devices such as rhetorical questions or comparisons, and structural devices such as oscillation. Most importantly, attention is given to how YHWH's creation claims contribute to the rhetorical strategy and resolving the exigence of each passage. Intratextuality can play an important role in this part of the study, as elements such as characterization or imagery can span several literary units of Jeremiah, requiring the inclusion of other passages. Intertextuality with other Old Testament passages and ANE texts can also be useful for understanding or contextualizing imagery used by Jeremiah, as well as how the readers may have understood it.

Rhetorical Effectiveness

The analysis of each passage's rhetorical effectiveness will first highlight the potential effectiveness of the passage and the inscribed situation and audience, though this is not always clear. The analysis will also address the potential effectiveness on the argued reading audience of Jeremiah, those who were shaped by the Babylonian experience and dealing with the issues of exile. Important for this step is also each passage's participation in various rhetorical genres, which help identify specific communicative aims for both the inscribed and reading audiences.

Summary

Chapter 3 will provide the criteria for unit delimitation in Jeremiah and an argument for the structure of chs. 1–10 and the book as a whole. Chapters 4–7 will assess the passages containing YHWH's creation claims and be structured according to the rhetorical unit, situation, strategy, and effectiveness. Special attention will be given to the role of

YHWH's creation claims in the rhetorical situations and strategies and how they participate in producing a particular response from the reading audience. The final chapter will then provide a clear synthesis of YHWH's creation claims in the prophet's argument. As discussed in the introductory chapter, creation is both foundational to the prophet's argument and an extreme part of his rhetoric. YHWH's creation claims in 1:4–12; 4:23–28; 5:20–25; and 10:1–16 are crucial aspects of Jeremiah's rhetoric. A rhetorical-critical study allows the interpreter to properly assess this central part of creation theology in order to more precisely articulate its role in the prophet's message and relationship with other streams of Old Testament theology.

CHAPTER 3: UNIT DELIMITATION AND LITERARY STRUCTURE

The aim of this chapter is to provide the criteria for unit delimitation in Jeremiah that will

be used throughout the present dissertation. This criteria will then be used to propose a

delimitation and structure of 1:1—10:25 and the book as a whole. While historical factors

pertaining to the book's composition may be valid, the focus of these criteria is literary.[1]

The delimitation of individual passages under investigation takes place in the respective

chapters.

Unit Delimitation

Identifying the opening and closing of units in Jeremiah has posed serious problems for

interpreters. As already noted, Jeremiah has at times been considered a hodgepodge of

material without a clear or uniform structure.[2] Mark Biddle begins his analysis of

Jeremiah's structure in the following manner: "To date, every attempt to identify a clear,

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[1] Although not used in the present dissertation, one method used by commentators for delimiting passages comes from the setumot and petuḥah in the text and draws from delimitation criticism. For examples of this, see Becking, "Impressions and Intuition," 10–14; Korpel, "Who Is Speaking in Jeremiah 4:19–22," 95; Lundbom, "Delimitation of Units," 146–74; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*; Tov, "Jeremiah"; Ulrich, "Impressions and Intuition," 1–45. See also the *Pericope* series published by Brill, which includes important discussions on this methodology and its importance. Some have suggested that Lundbom follows these markers because he takes the text in its final form, as well as that he follows only para-textual signals. However, Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 74) understands that these markers are based on more ancient codices (which he includes in his assessment), and he clearly places a heavy emphasis on inclusio and chiasmus within the text to support delimitation. Lundbom himself even admits that these markers should not be read as "infallible guides." See also Glanz, *Participant-Reference Shifts*, 149–50. The present dissertation will not use this method for two related reasons. The first is that it introduces a historical methodology to a largely literary approach, and the second being that it is largely subjective and inconclusive. The result of delimitation criticism in this context is in essence an appeal to how certain manuscripts have been divided, which does not reflect consistency. For example, 1:6 concludes with a petuḥah, though the dialogue continues uninterrupted from 1:6–7. Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 228) notes that the Aleppo Codex has a setumah following 1:6, while the St. Petersburg Codex of the Prophets B3 (Codex P) and one manuscript from the Cambridge Genizah Collection (NC: 58:18) lack a break following 1:6.

[2] Bright, *Jeremiah*, lvi.

intentional, overarching structure in the book of Jeremiah has failed."[3] From the outset, it must be noted that clear structural boundaries are not necessarily identifiable by a singular element but rather by a combination of elements. Ideally, "structural analyses receive confirmation by claiming the support of coinciding structural markers."[4] Wendland calls this convergence.[5] Thus, the norm is that multiple elements work in tandem to delimit a unit. This section aims to identify the key devices used to open and close units in Jeremiah. Examples demonstrating both the usefulness and limitations of these markers will be cited and discussed when appropriate.

Inclusio

For rhetorical-critical studies, particularly in Jeremiah, inclusio has served as the backbone of unit delimitation. Particularly in Muilenburg's approach, as well as that of Holladay and Lundbom, inclusio (along with chiasmus) is seen as pervasive in the book and provides the clearest forms of rhetorical structuring.[6] One reason for inclusio's prominence is that it "effects both aperture and closure simultaneously, though the former is not fully apparent until the latter is in place," meaning inclusio is recognized only retrospectively.[7]

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[3] Biddle, "Jeremiah," 241. See also the acknowledgment of subjectivity in Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 17.

[4] Möller, *A Prophet in Debate*, 67.

[5] See Wendland, *The Discourse Analysis*, 63–70. Wendland (*The Discourse Analysis*, 64–65) describes convergence as "The more rhetorical-structural markers that appear together in a given colon or bicolon, the more likely it is that this particular utterance constitutes a border which either opens or closes some larger compositional segment," though it can also indicate a peak in content or purpose.

[6] Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*; Holladay, *The Architecture of Jeremiah 1–20*; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*; Lundbom, *Jeremiah*; Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," 1–18.

[7] Wendland, *The Discourse Analysis*, 47.

Inclusio marks off smaller units of text, such as a poem or strophe.[8] The fact that it can provide structure for multiple subunits of a passage means that it does not always necessitate the aperture or closure of the passage as a whole. An example of this last point is seen in 10:6–7:

MT		Translation
מֵאֵין כָּמוֹךָ יְהוָה גָּדוֹל אַתָּה וְגָדוֹל שִׁמְךָ בִּגְבוּרָה׃	10:6	*There is none like you*, O YHWH! Great are you and great is your name in might!
מִי לֹא יִרָאֲךָ מֶלֶךְ הַגּוֹיִם כִּי לְךָ יָאָתָה כִּי בְכָל־חַכְמֵי הַגּוֹיִם וּבְכָל־מַלְכוּתָם מֵאֵין כָּמוֹךָ׃	10:7	Who will not fear you, O King of the Nations? For it befits you, for among all wise ones of the nations and among all their dominion, *there is none like you*!

The inclusio "there is none like you" demarcates the short poem spanning 10:6–7 but does not isolate itself from the larger subunit of 10:6–10. In other words, the presence of an inclusio on its own may not necessitate the opening or closing of a unit. It may, however, contribute to the division between 10:5 and 10:6, as it connects 10:6 to what follows, which is also dominated by hymns declaring the incomparable YHWH.

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[8] Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 282–83. Watson (*Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 282–83) also discusses the similar envelop figure, which occurs no more than once in a passage. Lundbom (*Jeremiah*, 55, 74) observes that inclusio can extend beyond the pattern of repetition to different strategies, as he observes in 3:1–5, where the unit opens with a rhetorical question and concludes with an incongruous or unexpected answer on the same topic to the opening question. While one can make such an argument, this type of strategy seems to extend beyond inclusio as a repetition delimiting a poem or passage in a clearer manner. Additionally, the only formal repetition between 3:1 and 3:5 is הנה And the incongruous answer begins prior to 3:5. It is better to understand 3:5 as merely concluding the argument of 3:1–5, which means it will likely naturally share similarities with the preceding verses. The present dissertation seeks to prioritize the inclusios that contain clearer repetitions.

Chiasmus

Chiasmus is defined as a series of lines and its inversion that, when combined, form a unit.[9] Chiasmus can occur between a couple of lines or across a larger passage and can be used as a structural device or in an expressive sense, such as expressing a merism or antithesis. Though more will be said about this passage at a later time, an example of how chiasmus functions in unit delimitation is observable in the chiastic structure of 10:2–10.[10] While one can argue for the division of this subunit into 10:2–6 and 10:7–10, the chiastic structure persuades one to read it as a single subunit. This is followed by a self-contained chiasmus in 10:11, which speaks further to that verse's prominent role in the passage. Lundbom provides another example of chiasmus appearing in the dialogue of 8:13–17.[11] In this example, 8:13 poses serious issues in the division of these two units. The issue is whether or not 8:13 belongs with vv. 4–12 or 8:14–17. The identification of 8:13–17 forming a chiasm lends strong support for understanding 8:13 as part of this second subunit.

Quotation Formulas

Quotation formulas appear in a variety of forms throughout the book and have several functions.[12] The table below includes the formulas identified by Parunak, with modifications and examples signaled by footnotes.[13] In the left column, the three-letter

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[9] Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, 201.

[10] See Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 578.

[11] Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 109–11. This structure is built around the word אין in 8:13, 17; בוא and עיר in 8:14, 16; and אין again in 8:15.

[12] For the most in-depth overview of these formulas, see Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 489–519.

[13] Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 489–519. For greater clarity, see Parunak's endnotes 12, 17, 18, 26, 35, and 41, respectively, on pages 516–18.

abbreviation is made of the first letter of keywords in each quotation formula, signaled by the italic letters below the abbreviation. For example, WLC is formed by "w," "L," and "c" in "The *w*ord of the *L*ord *c*ame," and can be in either first person or third person. The middle column contains the formula in Hebrew.

Formula Tag	Formula with Translation	Formula Example Passages
WLC 3ps	אשר היה דבר־יהוה אל־ירמיהו "The *w*ord of the *L*ORD *c*ame to Jeremiah" (3rd person)	Jer 14:1; 28:12; 46:1; 47:1; 49:34
WLC 1cs	ויהי דבר־יהוה אלי "The *w*ord of the *L*ORD *c*ame to me" (1st person)[14]	Jer 1:4, 11, 13; 2:1; 13:3, 8; 16:1; 18:5; 24:4
LSM	ויאמר יהוה אלי "The *L*ORD *s*aid to *m*e"[15]	Jer 1:7, 9, 12, 14; 3:6, 11; 11:6, 9; 13:6; 14:11, 14; 15:1; 24:3
WTC	הדבר אשר היה אל־ירמיהו "The *w*ord *t*hat *c*ame to Jeremiah"[16]	Jer 7:1; 11:1; 18:1; 21:1; 25:1; 30:1; 32:1; 34:1, 8; 35:1; 40:1; 44:1
TWC	היה הדבר הזה "*T*his *w*ord *c*ame to Jeremiah"	Jer 26:1; 27:1; 36:1
HWL	שמעו דבר־יהוה "*H*ear the *w*ord of the *L*ORD"	Jer 2:4; 7:2; 17:20; 19:3; 21:11; 22:2, 29; 29:20; 31:10; 34:4; 42:15; 44:24, 26
TSL	כה־אמר יהוה "*T*hus *s*ays the *L*ORD"[17]	Jer 2:2, 5; 4:3, 27; 5:14; 6:6, 9, 16, 21, 22; 7:3, 21; 8:4; 9:6, 14, 22; 10:2, 18
OOL	נאם־יהוה "*O*racle *o*f the *L*ORD"[18]	Jer 1:8, 15, 19; 2:3, 9, 12, 29; 3:1, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, 20; 4:1, 9, 17; 5:9, 11, 15, 18, 22, 29; 6:12; 7:11, 13, 19; 30, 32; 8:1, 3, 13, 17; 9:2, 5, 8, 21, 23, 24

A quick glance at the above table demonstrates a potential problem with relying exclusively on quotation formulas for structural insight, namely that they appear in a

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[14] WLC is divided into 3ps and 1cs for greater clarity, as both forms are not equally disjunctive. See Biddle, "Jeremiah," 242.

[15] Parunak ("Some Discourse Functions," 516) includes 9:6 in this list, though it does not include אלי.

[16] Parnak ("Some Discourse Functions," 516) also includes 46:13, which includes a variant with the verb דבר instead of היה as well as 50:1.

[17] This formula is often followed by אלי, such as in 13:1. This formula appears 459 times in Jeremiah alone.

[18] Due to the OOL formula appearing 336 times in Jeremiah and not bearing significant disjunctive weight, the example passages are limited to those found within Jer 1–10.

variety of forms throughout the book. This requires an assessment of which of these formulas are structurally significant and which are not. Sweeney references a "standard" form, "the word that came to Jeremiah from YHWH, Saying . . ." that introduces major sub-units of the book.[19] He then suggests the variants of this formula are "subsumed structurally under the preceding blocks."[20] Biddle adds 27:1 and 36:1 to this list as being structurally important and provides further clarity regarding these formulas or *Wortereignis*.[21] On the one hand, Biddle suggests the syndetic first-person version (WLC 1cs), which appears in chs. 1–25, and the third person version (WLC 3ps), which appears in chs. 26–51, are not "structurally significant new beginnings, but continuations within a context."[22] On the other hand, the asyndetic formulas, such as those identified by Sweeney in 7:1, do provide structural breaks in the text by signaling an aperture. Biddle uses the asyndetic formulas in conjunction with a title formula initiated by "concerning" (ל; 22:1, 6:11, 18; 23:2, 9), as well as references to "on this scroll" (בספר הזה; 25:13; 29:30; 30:2; 32:10, 44; 36:2; 45:1).[23] He uses these formulas in conjunction with the messenger formula to provide clear structural breaks in Jeremiah.

The shortcoming of these two approaches is that there are more styles of quotation formulas than the ones discussed in their assessment, requiring further clarification, such as that seen in Parunak's work. Additionally, and particularly with Biddle's assessment, WLC in both forms can play a role in the division of the book.

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[19] Sweeney (*Reading Prophetic Books*, 138) lists the following examples: 28:12; 29:30; 32:26; 33:1; 34:12; 35:12; 36:27; 37:6; 43:8; 39:15.

[20] Sweeney, *Reading Prophetic Books*, 138.

[21] Biddle, "Jeremiah," 242; Shead, "The Text of Jeremiah (MT and LXX)," 273–76.

[22] For WLC 1cs, Biddle ("Jeremiah," 242) lists 1:4, 11, 13; 2:1; 13:3, 8; 16:1; 18:5; and 24:4 as examples. For TSC 3ps, he lists 28:12; 29:30; 32:26; 33:1; 34:12; 35:12; 36:27; 37:6; 43:8; and 39:15.

[23] Biddle, "Jeremiah," 243.

Though these formulas may not be as disjunctive as WTC or additional statements such as "concerning" or "on this scroll," WLC formulas remain disjunctive in nature, particularly when found in conjunction with other formulas or information. A key example of this is 2:1, which includes WLC 1cs and is followed in 2:2 by imperatives introducing a new and particular setting, as well as a TSL formula. Imperatives regarding the prophet's movement and proclamation also occur in 3:12 (following an LSM formula in 3:11), suggesting that these chapters detail his prophetic endeavors for Judah, Jerusalem, and perhaps the Northern communities.[24] The WLC 1cs in 2:1 can thus be understood as introducing the prophet's activity in these settings until a WTC formula and the new context of the temple initiate a new section (7:1—10:25).

Parunak provides the most thorough analysis of the quotation formulas in Jeremiah and goes as far as proposing a disjunctive cline for the various formulas.[25] In his assessment, the most disjunctive formulas are the WTC. This places Sweeney, Biddle, and Parunak in general agreement regarding this particular formula. The WTC formula is used to "introduce extended sections."[26] Within these extended sections, WLC formulas are the next significant disjunctive marker, followed by LSM.[27] HWL then has greater weight compared to TSL.[28] Within this cline, TWC is too infrequent to be included, and OOL is "not disjunctive at all."[29] The formulas also have the potential to serve other

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[24] Goldingay (*Jeremiah*, 104–105) translates these imperatives to proclaim as "read in the ears of" and connects the prophet's activity in chs 2–6 with the events of ch. 36. Thus, the reading of these words in chs. 2–6 is what leads to the events of 36. More will be said later regarding the potential ministry to the North.

[25] Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 489–519.

[26] Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 513.

[27] Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 513. This relationship between WLC and LSM supports reading 2:1 as a break but not 3:11.

[28] Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 513.

[29] Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 513–14 (514).

functions in the text other than providing structural markers.[30] OOL "provides focus at the phrase or clause level."[31] More specifically, OOL forms a unit with a summary clause, and that unit can occur at any point in a passage.[32] As such, its role is more relevant to the rhetorical strategy than it is in identifying the rhetorical unit. Parunak also suggests that, like the OOL, the HWL is used to reference the recipient of a message.[33] His analysis, particularly regarding his attention to the fact that these formulas are used for additional functions beyond providing structure and his attention to separating each of the individual formulas, provides a foundation for the present dissertation and how I structure Jeremiah.[34]

The WTC quotation formula is often associated with a unit's aperture. Its role in Jeremiah's structure can be discerned from how this term is one of the common pluses of MT–Jer.[35] Sweeney sees Jer 1–10 culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, though it also looks forward to Babylon's destruction.[36] While chs. 2–6 focus on Israel and Judah, chs. 7–10 highlight Jerusalem and the Temple. This leads him to suggest that Jer 1–10 (and the book as a whole) addresses the two nations of Israel and Judah but "is especially concerned with Jerusalem and the Temple."[37] His delimitation

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[30] For more detail, see Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 515.

[31] Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 514.

[32] Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 511–13. While the summative nature of OOL results in often appearing at the end of a rhetorical unit or passage, it serves as a closure for clauses or bi-colons rather than entire passages and can appear at any point in a passage.

[33] Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 514.

[34] Formulas such as the OOL and TSL are related more to the rhetorical strategy of a passage rather than its structure and functions to summarize a thought or maintain attention on YHWH as speaker.

[35] Sweeney, *Reading Prophetic Books*, 137.

[36] Sweeney, *Reading Prophetic Books*, 137. The basis of Sweeney's study is a comparison of LXX and MT Jeremiah, highlighting the addition of the superscription in the MT and its importance from structuring and reading Jer 1–10. LXX Jer 7:1 lacks the superscription, thus placing it with the previous oracles.

[37] Sweeney, *Reading Prophetic Books*, 151. This statement is connected to his comparison of MT and LXX Jeremiah as a whole. Sweeney's synchronic analysis of this literary section in MT–Jer provides a helpful point regarding the judgment of Babylon. In addition, the literary-situational context of the temple

decisions are in line with Parunak's cline, which states that this formula is the strongest disjunctive of the formulas considered.[38] Still, delimitation is not signaled exclusively by this formula.

TSL can mark paragraphs in a single oracle, though it is better understood as validating the message as originating from YHWH.[39] It should be understood as participating in the rhetorical strategy of a passage rather than functioning as part of a structural marker. An example of this is seen in chs. 30–31. Jeremiah 30:1 begins with TWC, followed by a TSL in 30:2 and the description of writing in a book. This introduction ends in 30:4 with a transitional statement that says, "These are the words . . . concerning." In 30:5, TSL introduces the first saying of YHWH but is clearly conjoined with 30:4 with a כי.[40]

Regarding OOL, this formula does not function as a structural marker. Although it can appear alongside unit openings and closures, as well as other structural markers, its function is not for structural clarity.[41] An example of this occurs in 8:13–17. In this passage, OOL participates in an inclusio in 8:13–17.[42] Its appearance in vv. 13, 17 lends

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in 7:1–2 is another important observation, though more detail is needed about how much this affects the entire unit of 7:1—10:25.

[38] Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 504.

[39] Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 505.

[40] כי overrides much of the disjunctive power this phrase could have, similar to how it does the same for the formula in Zechariah (e.g., 8:14). See Clark, "Discourse Structure in Haggai," 14. Sweeney (Jeremiah 30–31, 573) uses TSL as a structural marker in Jer 30–31 as well, as it appears in 30:2, 18; 31:2, 15, 16, 23, 35, 37. However, Bob Becking (Impressions and Intuition," 17–19) rightly challenges Sweeney's division, taking issue with the inconsistencies of Sweeney's delimitation of the chapters. However, Becking relies instead on setumah and petuḥah, to correspond to the formulas and their occurrences. The structure in the body of the paragraph above is favorable as it highlights the multiple elements in 30:1–4 that introduce the larger literary section, which is held together by TSL formulas that emphasize the continuation of YHWH's speech. While the setumah and petuḥah in some manuscripts agree with such a structure, formulas provide more consistent evidence for the structure.

[41] Möller, A Prophet in Debate, 75–77.

[42] Willis, "Dialogue between Prophet and Audience," 70. The important factor of these occurrences of the formula is that they highlight the speaker as YHWH, which supports the alternation of speakers in this passage. See Lundbom, Jeremiah 1–20, 520–21.

strong support to placing v. 13 with 14–17. Thus, while OOL appears in this subunit's first and last verse, it is not the structural marker.

In summary, some formulas, such as TWC and WLC, provide clear structural breaks, while the ever-present OOL is not disjunctive. The key principle is that strong disjuncture is typically signaled by multiple factors. Even with the most disjunctive TWC and WLC formulas, a convergence of multiple structural markers creates a clearer break.[43] The following chart lists the formulas in order of their disjunctive weight and clarifies the function(s) of the formula if it is not used in a disjunctive manner.

Formula Tag	Formula with Translation	Disjunctive Weight
WTC	הדבר אשר היה אל־ירמיהו "The *w*ord *t*hat *c*ame to Jeremiah"[44]	Most disjunctive
WLC 3ps	אשר היה דבר־יהוה אל־ירמיהו "The *w*ord of the *L*ORD *c*ame to Jeremiah" (3rd person)	Very disjunctive
WLC 1cs	ויהי דבר־יהוה אלי "The *w*ord of the *L*ORD *c*ame to me" (1st person)[45]	Very disjunctive
TWC	היה הדבר הזה "*T*his *w*ord *c*ame to Jeremiah"	Disjunctive
LSM	ויאמר יהוה אלי "The *L*ORD *s*aid to *m*e"[46]	Not strongly disjunctive; primary role is introducing smaller oracles or conversations
HWL	שמעו דבר־יהוה "*H*ear the *w*ord of the *L*ORD"	Not disjunctive on its own; can appear alongside shifts in setting
TSL	כה־אמר יהוה "*T*hus *s*ays the *L*ORD"[47]	Not disjunctive; validates message from YHWH; can appear in the opening of a subunit

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[43] O'Brien (*Discerning the Dynamics*, xxiv) similarly asserts that shifts in context and content are important alongside TWC formulas. He is responding specifically to Stulman (*Order Amid Chaos*, 32) for not properly acknowledging the weight of context and content.

[44] Parnak ("Some Discourse Functions," 516) also includes 46:13, which includes a variant with the verb דבר instead of היה as well as 50:1.

[45] WLC is divided into 3ps and 1cs for greater clarity, as both forms are not equally disjunctive. See Biddle, "Jeremiah," 242.

[46] Parunak ("Some Discourse Functions," 516) includes 9:6 in this list, though it does not include אלי.

[47] This formula is often followed by אלי, such as in 13:1. This formula appears 459 times in Jeremiah alone.

OOL	נאם־יהוה "*O*racle *o*f the *LORD*"[48]	Not disjunctive; maintains emphasis on the speaker

Shift in Genre

Shifts in genre within Jeremiah studies have traditionally been connected to potential shifts in sources, with source A being poetry that was deemed largely authentic, source B being prose narratives, and source C being Deuteronomic prose sermons. However, many aspects of this argument have been challenged, particularly the poetry being a sign of authenticity.[49] Still, shifts between poetry and prose can signal the closing or opening of a new unit or subunit.[50] On a smaller scale, this is seen in 9:11. The subunit initiated in this verse is signaled by a shift from poetry to prose, as well as a shift in speaker. On a larger scale, the temple sermon of 7:1—8:3 is often recognized as a unit due to its sermonic and prose nature. The vast majority of the section leading to 7:1 is comprised of poetry, while 8:4 begins another unit made of mostly poetry.[51] Despite the fact that shifts in genre can occur alongside the opening of a new unit, Fischer's caution that shifts in genre alone do not form the primary disjunctive signals remains an important nuance.[52]

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[48] Due to the OOL formula appearing 336 times in Jeremiah and not bearing significant disjunctive weight, the example passages are limited to those found within Jer 1–10.

[49] See Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 47; Henderson, "Jeremiah 2–10," 121–22.

[50] Most famously, this is developed in Stulman, *Order Amid Chaos*. Fischer (*Jeremia 1–25*, 83; cf. 57) compares some prose chapters to the supporting pillars of a building. This is seen most clearly in chs. 1 and 52, two prose chapters that form bookends, though 7:1—8:3 and 11:1–14 both have the same function on a smaller level. In his view, chs. 1, 7, and 11 are described as forming walls that are briefly interrupted by windows of poetry. Still, Fischer (*Jeremia 1–25*, 84) cautions that shifts in genre alone do not entail a large break between units and suggests the TWC formulas as providing clearer disjunctive signals. It is both the formula and shift in genre that signal the break.

[51] WLC 3ps is also present in 7:1, though the prose nature of this passage is also crucial for seeing the shift. For examples of 7:1—8:3 being a distinct unit, see Allen, *Jeremiah*, 93–94; Craigie et al., *Jeremiah 1–25*, 116–17; Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 234; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 94.

[52] Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25*, 84.

Shift in Topic

Jeremiah also structures itself topically, and a shift in theme can indicate the opening of a unit.[53] It is important to note that theme is defined as "the principle theme, or subject of discussion, of a larger discourse unit, not simply that of a single bicolon or verse."[54] Though discernable shifts are present, they can operate only on a general level and with a certain level of subjectivity. Robert Carroll notes that "No cycle of poetry can be given a thematic unity without its becoming obvious to the intelligent reader that the descriptive category is only an extrapolation from part of the cycle and not an accurate descriptive account of everything in the cycle," listing the foe from the north cycle in 4:5—6:26 as an example.[55] This unit of text focuses heavily on the enemy from the north and the coming military destruction, but there are portions that speak to other matters, such as the indictment of the people (5:20–31). Still, readers can sense these topical or tonal divisions of the unit and generally agree that the dominating focus of 4:5—6:30 is the foe from the north.[56]

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[53] Wendland, *The Discourse Analysis*, 32.

[54] Wendland, *The Discourse Analysis*, 32. He also notes that "Topic is also associated with the psychological mood, or tone, that is manifested over a connected group of verses." This can coincide with shifts in form and tone, thus making topic a preferable category for each of these shifts. See Wendland, *The Discourse Analysis*, 33. Form is not listed as a major point of aperture or closure for three reasons. First, as already noted, it often coincides with shifts in tone, making it redundant to a point. Second is the debate surrounding the difference between poetry and prose and if such a difference can be discerned. This, however, is not to deny a difference between the two. Third is the reality that poetry and prose are often "intermingled in a single thematic cycle," and "it is very difficult to isolate a cycle of poetry which does not contain some prose." Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 41. See also Wendland, *The Discourse Analysis*, 24. When discussing the use of form criticism for delimitation within scholarship, Lundbom expresses "The main criticism is again with structure. There is no agreement among these scholars on what constitutes the literary unit." Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 19.

[55] Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 41. Carroll considers 6:27–31 to be a coda.

[56] Mayfield acknowledges this with regard to Ezekiel and the reality that "intuitive readers can observe things such as the pessimistic nature of the earlier portion of Ezekiel and the optimistic nature of the latter section. See Mayfield, *Literary Structure and Setting in Ezekiel*, 2.

Topical shifts can be signaled grammatically or by word concentration. A key grammatical marker has already been noted in references to Biddle's work. This is when a section begins with the ל preposition.[57] He provides 22:1, 6:11, 18; and 23:2, 9 as examples of this. However, a similar structural marker occurs toward the end of Jeremiah in the Oracles against the Nations (OAN). This unit is introduced in 46:1 with a messenger formula but also signals a shift in topic על־הגוים. Then, each subsequent subunit is signaled by ל in correspondence with a particular nation (46:1; 46:13; 47:1; 48:1; 49:1, 7, 23, 28, 24; 50:1), though sometimes this is followed by על to provide further clarity to the topic (46:2).

Another way shifts in topics are demonstrated is through word concentration, or what Wendland calls "Grammatical Cohesion."[58] Despite the challenges posed by the book's structure and compositional history, topical groupings "suggest a phenomenon that may have played an important role in the formation of the Jeremiah tradition, namely the topic collection and arrangement of Jeremianic materials in small corpora that were precursors to the larger collection that constitutes the book."[59] This can also be demonstrated "concerning" (על) a particular topic or addressee, his statement applies equally to other passages that focus on a particular topic or theme such as apostasy or repentance. A famous example of this, and one that receives a large amount of attention due to it presenting a potentially conflicting view of repentance, is located in some of the opening oracles of the prophet that center around the idea of repentance and a high

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[57] Biddle, "Jeremiah," 243.
[58] Wendland, *The Discourse Analysis*, 89.
[59] Biddle, "Jeremiah," 243.

concentration of שוב. In fact, שוב appears twenty times in 3:1—4:4.[60] Scholars commonly

acknowledge that this unit is centered around either repentance or the double topic of

apostasy and repentance.[61] John Goldingay agrees with Abma by stating that "One could

call 2:1—4:4 as a whole a 'teshuva speech.'"[62] The closure of this unit is signaled in 4:5

by an imperative of נגד, as well as a shift to the topic of disaster coming from the north.

Shifts in topic, though not as evident on the surface as a quotation formula, help

show both the cohesiveness of a unit and can support a break from the previous unit.[63] It

provides a helpful criterion when paired with other markers in the text to demonstrate

when a new unit initiates.

Shift in Speaker

Another element in identifying a break in a unit is a shift in speaker.[64] Jeremiah poses

serious challenges when trying to determine who is speaking in a given passage, though

there are some shifts that are more apparent than others.[65] Jer 8:18—9:1 is a passage that

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[60] McConville, "Jeremiah," 86.

[61] Allen, *Jeremiah*, 53–54; Brueggemann, *Jeremiah*, 41; Craigie et al., *Jeremiah 1–25*, 47; Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 79–80; Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 141; Lalleman, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, 28–39; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 249; McConville, *Judgment and Promise*, 28; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 188–89. Holladay chooses to structure everything around the language of harlotry. See Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 62–63; Holladay, *The Architecture of Jeremiah 1–20*, 30–34. Apostasy is described through the marriage metaphor in 2:1–37, which serves as the basis for the message of repentance beginning in 3:1.

[62] Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 141. See Abma, *Bonds of Love*, 243.

[63] Jindo (*Biblical Metaphor*, 70) rightfully summarizes the role of topical transitions in the book, noting that "The presence of transitional patterning may indicate an attempt, perhaps of a creative compiler, to smooth the progression in themes, and thus it is indicative of the following two points: (1) an intended ordering of literary segments according to a certain logic of progression; (2) an internal integrity of the book's elements, though they may seem heterogeneous on the surface."

[64] Wendland, *The Discourse Analysis*, 30. See Lee (*The Singers of Lamentations*, 55) for a more detailed chart of speakers in the early portion of Jeremiah. Some scholars, such as have used markers in various manuscript traditions to determine speakers, though this is external criteria others have applied to the text throughout history rather than something within the text itself. For an example, see Korpel, "Who Is Speaking in Jeremiah 4:19–22," 88–98.

[65] For the most thorough assessment of speaker shifts, see Glanz, *Participant-Reference Shifts*. For the possibility of a communal dirge singer portraying a female Jerusalem, see Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 57–59.

notoriously demonstrates the challenges of determining the speaker: is it God or Jeremiah who is weeping, or someone else? There are certainly arguments in favor of one over the other.[66] A more likely option for this passage is that it includes multiple speakers in response to one another and the unfolding judgment.[67]

Other passages have more discernable shifts in the speaker. This is demonstrated alongside other markers, such as a shift in topic or verbal form. An example of this comes in 8:14. In 8:13, the speaker is clearly YHWH, which is marked by the formula נאם יהוה. In 8:14 the speaker is a 1cp asking a question before giving an imperative to the rest of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 8:14 also speaks of YHWH "our" (1cp) God, who has brought destruction on "us" (1cp). Thus, there is a clear shift in the speaker between 8:13 and 8:14. Although this is an example of a clear shift in the speaker, it does not indicate a break in the unit, as 8:13 belongs with 8:14–17.

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[66] O'Connor (*Jeremiah*, 65) gives an assumed reason for some readers not assigning this grief to YHWH, believing that they "do not want a weeping God, a poetic character with human-like emotions," or because "a weeping God is too vulnerable." A similar concern is expressed in Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 148. However, their suggestion that the decision to assign the verses to the prophet for theological reasons is not reflected in commentaries or discussions on the topic. The basis for O'Connor's (*Jeremiah*, 63) reading is that "A prominent feature of Jeremiah's poetry is its mix of voices, gliding in and out without announcing who they are," the use of phrases such as my "my people," and the evidence for him lamenting elsewhere. Henderson ("Who Weeps," 191–206) upholds God as the speaker with an emphasis on his wrath and a study of "my people." McKane (*Jeremiah*, 1:198–99) sees YHWH as the speaker for 9:1–7 (Eng.). Biddle (*Polyphony and Symphony in Prophetic Literature*, 28–31) also attributes these verses to YHWH. Craigie et al. (*Jeremiah 1–25*, 143) attribute 9:1–7 (Eng.) to YHWH. Kaiser, Jr. and Rata (*Walking the Ancient Paths*, 146–47) attribute 9:1–7 to both God and the prophet, saying that the passage expresses both of their desires and thus form a middle ground similar to the one favored here and found also in Fretheim *Jeremiah*, 148. Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, 289) argues for Jeremiah in 9:1 based on its correlation with 14:17–18. Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 535) attributes all of 8:22–9:1 to the prophet. Allen (*Jeremiah*, 111) similarly attributes all of 8:22–9:1 to Jeremiah as his tearful response. While still favoring YHWH as speaking, a more nuanced response is found in Bosworth ("The Tears of God," 43), who argues that "Thus, in those passages that allegedly originate in the image of Jeremiah as 'the weeping prophet', the focus is on the tears of YHWH, not Jeremiah.'

[67] Lee (*The Singers of Lamentations*, 63–66) uses more specific criteria than some of the other arguments to establish the speakers participating in 8:18—9:1. More specifically, Lee (The Singers of Lamentations, 54) uses the consistency of genres, imagery and themes, terminology, rhetorical techniques, and expressions of content across various passages to argue for the speakers' identities. For example, the first person complaint regarding "my heart" is found in Jer 4:19; 8:18; Lam 1:22, though Jer 8:18 and Lam 1:22 both use the fuller expression "my heart is weak." Likewise, Jeremiah responds in 8:21–23 to the female poet's outcry with the expression "Daughter of My People."

Shift in Setting

A shift in setting can also indicate the start of a new unit or passage and often includes a shift in audience. These shifts can take a variety of forms throughout the book. Typical indicators for these shifts include "concerning" (עַל), chronological markers, or the specification of a particular location.[68] For example, 2:1–2 indicates an audience in Jerusalem, which adds support for viewing this as a new unit.[69] Similar shifts in setting are seen in 7:1–2, where the prophet is told to stand at the Temple and speak to the people of Judah. Chronological markers can also indicate a shift in temporal context, such as the one in 3:6, where the setting of the passage is placed "in the days of" (בִּימֵי) King Josiah's reign. These chronological markers are seen more consistently in the narrative sections of the second section of the book, in chs. 26–45, which may also provide a framework for the section.[70]

Shift in Verbal Form

A shift in verbal form, such as a shift to an imperative, can also indicate the opening or closing of a new section.[71] This is especially important since Jeremiah abounds in dialogical material and caricatured speech. However, like many of the other delimiting

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[68] In Wendland's (*The Discourse Analysis*, 34–37) analysis called "Shift in Time (Setting)," he focuses primarily on changes in verb tenses that indicate a shift in temporal setting. Though these appear in Jeremiah, such as in the shift between the past in 2:8 and the future in 2:9, such shifts are more useful in the division of a passage into smaller subunits rather than on a larger scale.

[69] Although Jerusalem is identified in 2:1–2, Jerusalem is not mentioned as an addressee again until 4:3. After 4:3, Judah and Jerusalem become the dominant referents. See Albertz, "Jer 2–6 Und Die Frühzeitverkündigung Jeremias," 26–27. This leads Albertz to suggest that 2:1—4:2 focus primarily on Israel, and 4:3—6:30 focus on Judah.

[70] Yates, "Narrative Parallelism and the 'Jehoiakim Frame,'" 263–81. These indicators typically contextualize the following literary block within a particular context of a king's reign, most notably, Jehoiakim. For a challenge of this view that emphasizes Zedekiah's role in the structuring of the unit, see Firth, "Binocular Vision in Dated Sections."

[71] Wendland, *The Discourse Analysis*, 43–44, 52. The future sense of the verb can be signaled by other phrases, such as בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא.

criteria, shifts in verbal form typically coincide with other criteria and will likely function in a supporting role. An example of this is 8:4, which includes a shift to an imperative toward the prophet to speak a message.[72] Though this verbal shift is not the chief indicator of a new literary unit and coincides with a quotation formula, the imperative contributes to the disjunctive effect.

Summary

As noted at the outset of this chapter, multiple elements can occur at the opening or closing of a literary unit. While WLC is typically given the greatest disjunctive weight, unit aperture and closure are typically signaled by a convergence of different structural devices, especially at major divisions in the book. The structural devices discussed here provide the primary disjunctive signals for both the delimitation of individual passages in future chapters, as well as the proposed structure for the book as a whole.

Structuring the Book

Providing a structure for the whole book helps the reader identify how the passages under investigation relate to larger blocks of material while also further demonstrating the important role of WTC formulas and multiple disjunctive markers occurring in tandem. The clearest division in the book is the inclusio formed by 1:1 and 51:64 regarding the words of the prophet. The next clearest divisions form the literary blocks of 1:1—25:38; 25:1—45:5; and 46:1—51:64, with 25:1–38 functioning as a hinge between the two halves of the book.

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[72] Lundbom notes this shift as part of what marks 8:4 as the beginning of a new unit. See Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 504.

I.   1:1—51:64 // The words of the prophet Jeremiah

     a.   1:1—25:38 // "Poems and sermons against Judah and Jerusalem"[73] (largely poetic)

     b.   25:1—45:5 // Narratives concerning Jeremiah and Jerusalem[74]

     c.   46:1—51:64 // Oracles against the nations

II.   52:1–34 // Jeremiah's account of Jerusalem's fall and future

As noted, the clearest division in the book occurs in 1:1 and 51:64, which form an inclusio that initiates and concludes the words of the prophet Jeremiah.

דִּבְרֵי יִרְמְיָהוּ בֶּן־חִלְקִיָּהוּ	1:1	The words of Jeremiah, son of Hilkiah, . . .
עַד־הֵנָּה דִּבְרֵי יִרְמְיָהוּ:	51:64	Thus concludes the words of Jeremiah.

Despite the tidiness of this inclusio, the book continues for an additional chapter without explicit mention of Jeremiah or his words. The final chapter details the destruction of Jerusalem and traces the fates of Zedekiah and Jehoiachin in Babylon until their deaths. In doing so, it displays an awareness of events taking place in Babylonian exile and continues the prophetic word to an exilic audience. Though some have described the final chapter as an appendix that confirms the outworking of the prophet's words, its function may be closer to an epilogue.[75] As an epilogue, it continues the

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[73] Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 18.

[74] Ch. 25 is listed twice here due to it being a hinge transition between the two sections.

[75] Scholars often use terms like appendix, postscript, or epilogue. For those who classify the final chapter as an appendix, see Bright, *Jeremiah*, 370; Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 651; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 436; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 651. The term appendix can give the impression of it being peripheral and speaks more to the role of the chapter as merely confirming the prophet's message regarding Jerusalem's destruction. Lundbom (*Jeremiah 37-52*, 537-38) calls the chapter a postscript that details the events of destruction and exile while uplifting the spirits of the exiles, which is closer to its function. While this attributes to it a function beyond confirming the prophet's message, it still functions like an appendix. For those who call the chapter an epilogue, see Allen, *Jeremiah*, 534; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 857. Even though these two commentators call it an epilogue, it still functions like an appendix. While one can identify differences between the different terms applied to Jer 52, the key issue centers around how one sees the

prophetic message of the book through the juxtaposition of Zedekiah and Jehoiachin as embodiments of the response to the prophetic message, with Zedekiah representing the response that leads to death and Jehoiachin the response that leads to life. Additionally, despite the absence of Jeremiah, the two Babylonian kings of the concluding chapter proclaim words over Zedekiah and Jehoiachin that echo the prophet's own words.[76] At the largest scale, then, one can see the two uneven sections of 1:1—51:64 and 52:1–34.

Apart from the large-scale inclusio for the book, the WTC formulas typically appear throughout the book and can indicate disjunctives, breaking it down into literary blocks and sections (e.g., 7:1; 11:1; 21:1; 30:1). However, when this formula is paired with other delimitation markers and content, it creates a few breaks that are more disjunctive than others. By this, I mean that though 7:1 and 11:1 provide important breaks in the book with the WTC formula, ch. 25 is more significant due to the appearance of several markers alongside the WTC formula in 25:1, such as Biddle's observation of בספר הזה at key junctures of the book.[77] The next clearest division occurs in 46:1, which includes a WLC 3ps formula, a shift in topic toward oracles concerning the nations, and a shift from prose to poetic oracles.[78] This section is then concluded with a prose narrative in 51:59–64 that links the prophet to the scribes and the scroll.

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chapter functioning in relation to the rest of the book, particularly whether it is peripheral and merely a confirmation of the prophet's words rather than a genuine continuation of the prophetic message.

[76] For more detail, see Bovard, "Prophetic Historiography," 77–95; Harger, "Reading Jeremiah 52," 511–22; Waard, *Jeremiah 52*.

[77] Biddle, "Jeremiah," 243. Often accompanying the naming of a book or scroll is a topical heading, such as the one found in 25:13 (על כל הגוים).

[78] Commentators who divide the text here include Allen, *Jeremiah*, 12; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52*, 181. Due to MT–Jer's relocation of the OAN, Holladay (*Jeremiah 2*, 308–309) views 45:1–5 as independent and does not attach it to the preceding chapters. Carroll (*Jeremiah*, 475–78) also considers 45 to be distinct from what precedes and defines כל בשר as a reference to a supra-historical war with all nations. Part of why 45:1 is seen to be in tension with what precedes is that the date of this verse connects itself to that of 36:1. Other commentators view 45:1–5 as transitional, similar to what has been argued here for Jer 25. The commentators who acknowledge the transitional nature of 45:1–5 include Fretheim,

The role of ch. 25 can be understood as either the conclusion to the first section (chs. 1–25),[79] the introduction to the second section (chs. 25–45),[80] or a hinge between the first two sections of the book.[81] Still, some identify a break at 25:13,[82] while others see a break at chs. 20–21.[83] The text can be reasonably divided at any of these points according to both compositional factors as well as textual markers.[84] For example, 26:1 begins with a chronological statement, placing it within the time of Jehoiakim's reign and initiates a largely narrative and prosaic section of the book, which breaks from the largely poetic section that dominates the first half of the book and concludes in ch. 25.[85]

Jeremiah, 571; Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 818. For an overview of perspectives, see Taylor, "Jeremiah 45," 79–98. Taylor highlights the importance of Jehoiakim's fourth regnal year, which appears in 36:1; 45:1; 46:2. This connection provides additional merit for seeing 45:1 as a transitional chapter, as this regnal year is connected with the surrounding units. While 45:1–5 may have some transitional function in the book, 46:1 provides a clean break with what proceeds and orients the reader toward the OAN. Additionally, Lundbom (*Jeremiah 37–52*, 172) notes that 45:1–5 is labeled as a colophon and is often seen at the conclusion of units (cf. 36:1–8; 51:59–64).

[79] For the fullest discussion of connections between chs. 1 and 25, such as regnal context, reappearance of the term "nations," and frequency of דבר, see Stulman (*Order amid Chaos*, 36–39). See also Bright, *Jeremiah*, 163; Craigie et al., *Jeremiah 1–25*, 364; Nicholson, *Jeremiah*, 14–15. Compositionally, due to the differences between MT–Jer and LXX–Jer at 25:13a and the placement of the OAN, many see this chapter as evidence of an earlier edition of the text. See Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 353; Leuchter, *Josiah's Reform and Jeremiah's Scroll*, 179–80.

[80] See Shead, *A Mouth Full of Fire*, 70. His primary reason for this is that the "disjunctive heading," or messenger formula, occurs in 25:1, not 26:1.

[81] See Fischer, "Jer 25 und die Fremdvölkersprüche," 488; Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 61–64; Kessler, "The Function," 71. Fischer draws this division based on the fact that there are three abrupt shifts in subject in the book.

[82] Biddle, "Jeremiah," 246.

[83] See Lundbom, "Delimitation of Units," 156; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 333–35. Lundbom sees the first section as including only chs. 1–20, which he would further subdivide into 1:1–19; 2:1—4:4; and 4:5—20:18. His rationale for this division is the inclusio between 1:5 (תצא מרחם) and 20:18 (מרחם יצאתי). Despite the validity of this inclusio, it is better understood marker for the conclusion of a largely poetic section before shifting to the largely prosaic sections in the following chapters. Furthermore, the disjunctive elements in ch. 25 provide greater disjunctive weight and speak to the conclusion of a scroll.

[84] An example of division based on compositional criteria is best evidenced in the difference between MT–Jer and LXX–Jer after 25:13. At this point, LXX–Jer has the oracles against the nations, which are placed in MT–Jer 46–51. For discussion, see Stipp, "Two Ancient Editions," 93–94; Sweeney, "Jeremiah Among the Prophets," 28–29.

[85] Though this is a diachronic criterion, we also know that MT–Jer and LXX–Jer both follow different orders after 25:13a, which suggests that this may have been where a first edition concluded before developing in its separate traditions. Aejmelaeus suggests that MT–Jer's plus of 25:14 "functions as a patch to repair the place where the oracles had been removed." See Aejmelaeus, "Jeremiah at the Turning-Point of History," 478; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 288.

However, the WTC formula in 25:1 could be indicative of a break rather than 26:1, which lacks this formula. Despite the fact that clear support can be made for either division of the text, it is best to understand that ch. 25 functions as a transitional hinge for the book, both concluding the first section and launching the reader into the second section.[86] Another way of expressing this is that the delimitation markers observable in ch. 25 do not section off the chapter as the start of a new unit (or the conclusion of the previous unit) as much as they section it off as a transitional chapter between units.[87]

The provided structure of the book further demonstrates the various methods of division and transition located in Jeremiah. Most importantly, the provided structure illustrates the pattern where multiple methods of division are used to signal stronger points of division. In addition, the provided structure for the whole book helps the reader identify how the literary block under investigation (1:1—10:25) relates to the rest of the book.

Delimitation of Jeremiah 1:1—10:25

Now that a macrostructure for the book has been provided, a justification for the assessment of 1:1—10:25 is necessary, as well as its division into smaller units. Doing this prior to the macrostructure also minimizes repetition. On the broadest level, the clearest support for a structural break after 10:25 is that 11:1 contains a WTC formula,

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[86] As defined by Jindo (*Biblical Metaphor*, 69), "when the prophetic discourse shifts from one subject to another (or from one image to another), there is usually a component (an expression, motif, or passage) between them, related to both the preceding and following sections, that facilitates the shift from one subject to another."[86] Jindo (*Biblical Metaphor*, 70) gives the example of 4:1–2, which both "concludes the theme of Jeremiah 3 and opens the theme of the following unit."

[87] Fischer (*Jeremia 1–25*, 84) describes ch. 25 as a central pillar between the halves of the book, having connections to each half. Fischer (*Jeremiah 1–25*, 64 n 31) rightly critiques the approach of others, such as McConville (*Judgment and Promise*, 146–47), who suggest the evenness of chs. 1, 25, and 53 points to a concentric structure from chs. 25–51, noting the differing lengths of each part of the structure and the differences in elements of those parts.

which is the strongest disjunctive formula, as well as a shift in genre and setting.[88]

Another WTC formula appears in 7:1. These two formulas result in at least two separate

literary blocks of 1:1—6:30; and 7:1—10:25. The effects of the WTC formulas provide a

basis for assessing 1:1—10:25 together. However, it will be argued below that there is a

break between 1:19 and 2:1. Thus, while my focus is on Jer 1:1—10:25 as a literary

block, the block is actually made of several smaller units: 1:1–19; 2:1—6:30; 7:1—10:25.

Certainly, some of the proposed titles could be phrased differently to highlight

other topics. As Carroll reminds his readers about the subjectivity of such titles, "each

section or description of that section may be disputed as to extent of division or accuracy

of the summary of its contents."[89] With that being said, I have proposed titles and

subtitles for each of the suggested units and their divisions, highlighting what I think to

be the dominant topic or function. Below is my proposed structure for the literary block

of Jer 1–10 as described above, followed by an analysis of its various (sub)units and

points of tension.

I.   1:1–19 // Jeremiah's call and commission

      a.   1:1–3 // Jeremiah's context (superscription)

      b.   1:4–12 // Jeremiah's call

      c.   1:13–19 // Jeremiah's commissioning vision

II.   2:1—6:30 // Judgment on Judah

      a.   2:1—4:4 // Perpetual apostasy

          i.   2:1—3:5 // Israel's apostasy from the exodus to now

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[88] Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 504. Furthermore, 11:1 moves the reader into a section dominated by the prophet's confessions.

[89] Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 17.

        ii. 3:6—4:4 // Israel as a warning for Israel

   b. 4:5—6:30 // Judgment is coming

        i. 4:5–31 // A foe from the north

        ii. 5:1–31 // An explanation of judgment

        iii. 6:1–30 // A lament for the coming judgment

III.   7:1—10:25 // Judgment is coming

   a. 7:1—8:3 // Sermon against Jerusalem's perpetual apostasy

   b. 8:4—9:25 // Jerusalem must be judged

        i. 8:4–12 // Indictment against Jerusalem

        ii. 8:13—9:25 // Dialogue surrounding the coming judgment

   c. 10:1–25 // Response to judgment

        i. 10:1–16 // A doxology of YHWH

        ii. 10:17–25 // Dialogue about the present judgment

Jeremiah 1:1–19 focuses primarily on the prophet's context, calling, and general message. This unit can be divided into further subunits, though they ultimately work together within this opening chapter. For example, 1:4 can be understood as a break from 1:1–3 on several levels. The WLC 1cs in 1:4 provides some disjunctive emphasis due to the shift to first-person and moving from the prosaic historical superscription to dialogue between God and his prophet. WLC 1cs formulas are seen again in 1:11, 13, which can be understood as initiating their own smaller passages, supported by the shift to visions and their explanations.

The second major literary block is formed by 2:1—6:30, which is introduced by a WLC 1cs formula in 2:1. The absence of a WTC formula leads some scholars to see no

break between 1:19 and 2:1.[90] Though the WLC 1cs formula on its own does not

necessitate the start of a new unit, 2:1–2 also contains a shift in verbal forms to

imperatives and a shift in setting. Together, these indicators suggest a break between 1:19

and 2:1, despite the absence of a WTC formula.[91]

The next major break in the text does not appear until 7:1, which is signaled by a

WTC formula. Within 2:1—6:30, two main units emerge, which are separated by a

change in topic. The first unit is 2:1—4:4, which focuses on Israel and Judah's perpetual

apostasy, and the second is 4:5—6:30, which focuses on the coming judgment and foe

from the north.[92] The first unit can be further subdivided into 2:1—3:5, which focuses on

Israel's apostasy from the exile until the present, and 3:6—4:4, which is introduced by an

LSM formula with a chronological introduction and focuses on northern Israel's history

as an example and rebuke against Judah. This unit is dominated by poetry. The unit of

4:5—6:30 also contains two of the passages under investigation, 4:23–28; 5:20–25. The

vision material of 4:23–28 is part of 4:5–31, which focuses on the coming foe from the

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[90] See Biddle, "Jeremiah," 245. Allen (*Jeremiah*, 39) argues that 2:4 initiates the unit of 2:4—6:30 as a "giant oracle of disaster" that moves from the basis for disaster and then its certainty.

[91] Most commentators see 2:1 as the start of a new unit. See Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 17–18; Craigie et al., *Jeremiah 1–25*, 19–20; Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 62, 98–99; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 62; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 249–50; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 159–60. While it is argued here that 2:1 initiates a new unit apart from 1:1–19, this does not fully isolate 1:1–19 from the larger 1:1—10:25.

[92] Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 332–34) sees 4:5—10:25 as a unit instead of the traditional 2:1—6:30 and 7:1—10:25. His primary reason is that the oracles and sermons of 4:5—10:25 are centered around the foe from the north and that there is no break at the end of 6:30. The result of his view is that the foe oracles continue begin in 4:5 and pick up again at 8:4, supported by the similarity between 8:10b–12 and 6:13–15. Though this is a possible structure, the WTC formula in 7:1, its shift in setting, and the shift in genre provide a clear break from 6:30. O'Brien (*Discerning the Dynamics*, xxvi) sees the divisions as 1:1–19; 2:1—3:5; 3:6—10:25 due to his emphasis on the commands for Jeremiah to go and preach at a particular location, typically the gates. These changes in setting (e.g., 3:11) are typically signaled by a prologue (e.g., 3:6–10). While he classifies this type of disjunctive as a change in context, a convergence of disjunctives provides greater weight and consistency. For O'Brien, these changes in context—especially when combined with a prologue—are the most disjunctive signal. Even within O'Brien's own analysis, he does not mark 18:1 as a new unit or subunit even though it contains a TWC disjunctive because it does not contain a command to go and speak to a particular setting, which he sees at the other main junctures of the book. Shifts in setting may be helpful on a smaller scale for delimiting subunits, but more disjunctive markers are needed for a larger section.

north, and is marked off by a shift in speaker in 4:23 and the change in setting back to the scene of military invasion in 4:29. The passage of 5:20–25 is connected to 5:20–21 and is marked by the change in setting in 5:20, an emphasis on "these people" (as opposed to "my people" in 5:26–31), and a כי in 5:26.

The third major literary block begins with a WTC formula in 7:1 and extends to the end of our section at 10:25. This literary block can be subdivided into three units. The first unit is 7:1—8:3, which contains prose sermons in the social context of the Temple that again highlight the people's perpetual apostasy. The second unit is 8:4—9:25 and returns to mostly poetic form with an emphasis on the necessity of the coming judgment and is initiated by a TSL formula.[93] The final unit is 10:1–25, which is introduced by an HWL variant formula identifying the house of Israel as the audience and a TSL formula. This final unit largely consists of a response to judgment by way of a doxology in 10:1–16 and a dialogue between YHWH and Jerusalem in 10:17–25 regarding exile.[94] This section of Jeremiah is marked off by a WTC formula in 11:1 that initiates the section of 11:1—20:18. This break is further supported by a new specified setting in 11:2 and a shift to prose.

Summary

From the delimitation criteria listed here, a few observations can be made. The first is that Jeremiah contains a plethora of methods to structure the book. In other words,

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[93] Although Parunak rightly notes that the TSL does not hold much disjunctive weight, he does suggest that it can sometimes introduce a dispatch. See Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 505. There is also a rhetorical question here, though this is not clearly indicative of a new passage or unit. Wendland (*The Discourse Analysis*, 44) notes that a rhetorical question can signal aperture, though he acknowledges it as a supplemental signal due to the fact that rhetorical questions can occur at any point in a passage.

[94] See Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 290–91. While he specifies the speaker to be Judah, Jerusalem, or Jerusalem's poet, is likely the more appropriate speaker. See Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 66–72.

Jeremiah "does not slot neatly into a single structural scheme at every small point."[95]

This leads us to the second important observation, which is that because there is no

consistent pattern throughout the entirety of the book, there is typically no single

delimiting marker that can definitively delimit a unit on its own authority. Again, the

norm is that there should be multiple markers or devices that point toward a break in the

text, especially when delimiting the larger blocks or sections of the book.

Finally, this lack of pattern or dominating delimitation marker can lead to a

variety of perspectives regarding the structure of the book, and these differing

perspectives are often supported by delimitation criteria within the text.[96] These

observations speak to the complexity of dividing a prophetic book such as Jeremiah but

also suggest the subjectivity involved in the process. The subjectivity of unit delimitation

and structure also forms the basis of why it is best to divide the text when multiple

delimitation criteria are present.

The present dissertation assesses four passages within the opening literary block

of 1:1—10:25, which is part of the larger literary section of 1:1—25:38. Within the

opening literary block are three smaller units: 1:1–19; 2:1—6:30; 7:1—10:25. The

specific passages under investigation occur within these units as follows:

Literary Units	Passages
1:1–19	1:4–12
2:1—6:30	4:23–28

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[95] Shead, *A Mouth Full of Fire*, 66. See also Biddle, "Jeremiah," 241; Murphy, "The Quest for the Structure," 306–18. Murphy ("The Quest for Structure," 318) refers to the book as "an anthology of the prophet's ministry, loosely held together by bookends (chaps. 1 and 52)." Such a perspective overlooks the thematic and literary overlaps in the micro and macro structure.

[96] Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 17. For similar expressions, see Barker, *Depths of Despair*, 67; Coggins, *Joel and Amos*, 18.

	5:20–15
7:1—10:25	10:1–16

Moving forward, the discussion of each passage will begin with a unit delimiting the passage and relating it to the larger literary unit. The delimitation process depends heavily on the criteria for unit delimitation identified in the present chapter.

CHAPTER 4: GOD AS CREATOR IN JEREMIAH 1:4–12

The prophet's commissioning initiates the book with strong creation claims that play an important role in the characterization of both YHWH and his prophet, as well as their activities moving forward. The prophet is portrayed as a reluctant prophet like Moses, formed by YHWH for his prophetic ministry, and invited into the creational activities of judgment and blessing. His initial reluctance is a topic that continues to reappear throughout the rest of the book, as does creation language reminiscent of 1:10 (12:14–17; 18:7, 9; 24:6; 31:28, 38–40; 42:10; 45:4). YHWH is presented as Creator, particularly through the formation and destining of Jeremiah, the creational prerogatives of judgment and blessing, and his power over the nations. This passage is especially important for the book's portrayal of YHWH as Creator because of its prominent position at the beginning of the book, identifying YHWH as Creator from the outset and basing the prophet's words on the Creator's authority.

MT		Translation
וַיְהִ֥י דְבַר־יְהוָ֖ה אֵלַ֥י לֵאמֹֽר׃	1:4	Then the word of YHWH came to me saying:
בְּטֶ֨רֶם אֶצּוֹרְךָ֤ בַבֶּ֙טֶן֙ יְדַעְתִּ֔יךָ וּבְטֶ֛רֶם תֵּצֵ֥א מֵרֶ֖חֶם הִקְדַּשְׁתִּ֑יךָ נָבִ֥יא לַגּוֹיִ֖ם נְתַתִּֽיךָ׃	1:5	"Before I formed[1] you in the womb, I knew you; and before you came out of the womb, I sanctified[2] you. I

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[1] The *ketib* suggests "fashioned" (צור) rather than "formed" (יצר), though both are functionally the same. The *ketib* reading is vocalized as אֶצּוֹרְךָ versus the *qere* of אוֹרְךָ. See McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:6. Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, 20) follows the *ketib* and understands the term to mean "summon," noting that "There is then the strong possibility of a 'near miss' here: one expects 'form' but hears 'summon,' preserved in the ketib." He references Isa 49:1, 5 where קרא is used in a similar context. Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 231) challenges this particular stance and argues that "this is largely to accommodate his view that Jeremiah's 'true' call came at birth."

[2] Goldingay (*Jeremiah*, 80–81) appropriately translates קדש as "sanctified" as opposed to "set apart." However, he still maintains that the idea behind this term is that one set apart for a particular purpose, which he compares to the setting apart of the firstborn (Num 3:13; 8:17). The connection to the firstborn is significant, as this is the only time קדש occurs in the *hiphil* with a human object. Allen

Hebrew	Verse	English
		established[3] you as a prophet to the nations.
וָאֹמַר אֲהָהּ אֲדֹנָי יְהוִֹה הִנֵּה לֹא־יָדַעְתִּי דַּבֵּר כִּי־נַעַר אָנֹכִי׃ פ	1:6	But I said, "Alas Lord YHWH! Take note, I do not know how to speak, for I am a youth!"
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי אַל־תֹּאמַר נַעַר אָנֹכִי כִּי עַל־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר אֶשְׁלָחֲךָ תֵּלֵךְ וְאֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר אֲצַוְּךָ תְּדַבֵּר׃	1:7	Then YHWH responded to me, "Do not say 'I am just a youth! For you must go to all that I am sending you to and say all that I command you.
אַל־תִּירָא מִפְּנֵיהֶם כִּי־אִתְּךָ אֲנִי לְהַצִּלֶךָ נְאֻם־יְהוָה׃	1:8	Do not be afraid before them, for I am with you to deliver you," declaration of YHWH.
וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוָה אֶת־יָדוֹ וַיַּגַּע עַל־פִּי וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי הִנֵּה נָתַתִּי דְבָרַי בְּפִיךָ׃	1:9	YHWH extended his hand and touched my mouth. Then YHWH said to me, "Take note, I have put my words in your mouth!"
רְאֵה הִפְקַדְתִּיךָ׀ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה עַל־הַגּוֹיִם וְעַל־הַמַּמְלָכוֹת לִנְתוֹשׁ וְלִנְתוֹץ וּלְהַאֲבִיד וְלַהֲרוֹס לִבְנוֹת וְלִנְטוֹעַ׃ פ	1:10	Look! I have appointed you today over the nations and over the kingdoms to uproot and to pull down and to destroy and to tear down, to build up and to plant.
רְאֵה הִפְקַדְתִּיךָ׀ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה עַל־הַגּוֹיִם וְעַל־הַמַּמְלָכוֹת לִנְתוֹשׁ וְלִנְתוֹץ וּלְהַאֲבִיד וְלַהֲרוֹס לִבְנוֹת וְלִנְטוֹעַ׃ פ	1:11	And the word of YHWH came to me saying, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" And I said, "The branch of an almond tree, I see."
רְאֵה הִפְקַדְתִּיךָ׀ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה עַל־הַגּוֹיִם וְעַל־הַמַּמְלָכוֹת לִנְתוֹשׁ וְלִנְתוֹץ וּלְהַאֲבִיד וְלַהֲרוֹס לִבְנוֹת וְלִנְטוֹעַ׃ פ	1:12	And YHWH said to me, "You have seen correctly. For I am watching over my word to bring it about."

Rhetorical Unit

The preceding superscription in 1:1–3 clarifies the context of the historical prophet's ministry in Judah, which took place between the reign of Josiah and the events of the

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(*Jeremiah*, 23–26) takes a similar approach, though he phrases it as being set apart for a "sanctified purpose," which is attached to his role as a prophet.

[3] Although Goldingay (*Jeremiah*, 73) and Fischer (*Jeremiah 1–25*, 133) view this verb as a *qal* performative, the evidence for reading this as a performative verb is unconvincing. Most importantly, there is a succession of verbs in this sentence that reference a time "before" (בתרם) the current situation, and the final statement containing the verb in question does not include an additional marker suggesting a performative action, such as בימים (as in Deut 26:3; cf. 8:19; 30:18; Ruth 4:9) or הנה (as in 1 Kgs 15:19). For other examples, see Andrason, "Making It Sound," 1–58.

exile. These opening verses serve as the historical backdrop for Jeremiah's ministry as a whole, but also his initial calling as a prophet. Jeremiah 1:4 initiates our subunit with a WLC 1cs formula, which introduces YHWH's conversation with the prophet.[4] This same formula initiates the following two subunits comprised of visions (1:11–12, 13–19). The structure of this opening chapter is as follows:

I. 1:1–19 // Jeremiah's call and commission

    d. 1:1–3 // Jeremiah's context (superscription)

    e. 1:4–12 // Jeremiah's call

    f. 1:13–19 // Jeremiah's commissioning visions

        i. 1:13–16 // Vision two: A boiling pot and an enemy from the north

       ii. 1:17–19 // Jeremiah's fortification for ministry

Lundbom presents 1:4–19 as a single unit, dividing the visionary material into two sections regarding call and commission.

    1:4–12 Articulation of the call

        1:11–12 Vision of the call

        1:13–14 Vision of the commission

    1:15–19 Articulation of the commission[5]

Key to identifying this structure is that 1:13 contains a including שני, which separates it from the previous vision.[6] Thus, while both 1:11 and 1:13 each contain a WLC 1cs formula, which typically does not bear much disjunctive weight, the שני does carry some disjunctive weight. Although Lundbom's particular structure is preferred, others have

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[4] Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 501.

[5] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 227. For an extended criticism, see Allen (*Jeremiah*, 24–25), who also holds that the visions function as a core.

[6] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 227.

noted the a broader A–B–A' structure, in which call material (1:4–12, 17–19) surrounds

the visionary material (1:11–12, 13–16).[7] Lundbom's structure, however, emphasizes the

continuity across the call narrative in 1:4–10 and the closely related first vision in 1:11–

12.

     While not starting new units or full subunits, the WLC 1cs formulas provide

structure within this larger passage, composed by a call narrative and accompanying

vision (1:4–12).[8] The following literary block (2:1—6:30) provides a strong break from

what precedes through a WLC 1cs formula in 2:1, which is accompanied by the

introduction of a new audience in 2:2, where YHWH instructs the prophet to

communicate a message to those living in Jerusalem.[9]

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[7] Allen, *Jeremiah*, 25. For others who hold this view, see Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25*, 132–33; Thiel, "Vom Norden her wird das Unheil eröffnet," 233. Although these two scholars properly recognize the shift back to content about Jeremiah's calling, the ואתה in 1:17 ties this final part of the commission to the preceding vision. There is also no additional WLC 1cs formula in 1:17 as there is in 1:11, 13.

[8] Lewin ("Arguing for Authority," 109) observes that while the two visions of 1:11–12, 13–14 shift the genre, the WLC 1cs formulas in 1:11, 13 break from standard vision report patterns (Amos 7:1, 4, 7; 8:1) and connect the visions to the divine word spoken through the prophet. Boda ("Writing the Vision," 110) specifies that in this pattern of visionary material, oracles conclude each report. Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, 23) highlights the insufficiency of form criticism alone to base the division of the unit on the occurrence of two visions, which could easily be in the context of a call. However, he (*Jeremiah 1*, 25) later uses form criticism to divide the unit. Craigie et al. (*Jeremiah 1–25*, 8) offer an additional caution against strict form-critical approaches in that the fluidity of the call narratives of each of the three Major Prophets "undermine any confidence that there was a clearly delineated literary type." Important to note, however, are the WLC 1cs formulas and שני, which support the shifts in genre.

[9] Alternatively, Biddle ("Jeremiah," 245) proposes that 1:1–10 stands in its own right, while 1:11–19 is labeled "Crisis is Imminent" and is placed with what follows, forming 1:11—6:30. In some regard, this is perfectly reasonable in that 1:1–10 focuses on the situation of the prophet's call, while 1:11–19 begins discussing the content of his message. After all, the first-person formulas are not necessarily structurally significant, and 2:1 begins with a third sequential first-person formula. However, because this is contextualized with a specific hearing audience rather than being exclusively between YHWH and his prophet suggests a break. Additionally, if a break is placed at 1:11 even though it begins with a first-person formula, then the larger literary block should be 1:1—6:30.

Rhetorical Situation

Jeremiah 1:4–12 addresses the exigence of a reluctant prophet who is commissioned to a resistant and hostile audience to pronounce their judgment. This exigence is complicated by the urgent issue of the certainty of the audience's exile. The inscribed audience's resistance to the prophetic message is a core component of the exigence (1:17–19).[10] The prophet is fortified by YHWH to speak his message to a resistant and combative audience in the years leading up to their destruction and exile. The strategy employed in the prophet's call is oriented toward attaching the prophet's ministry and voice to Creator YHWH's authority and preparing him to minister to a resistant audience. Furthermore, the immediately preceding superscription in 1:1–3 alerts the reader that the dynamic between the prophet and the inscribed audience will result in exile.[11] From the outset of the book, Jeremiah's ministry guides the reader from the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign through the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah to the exile (1:1–3). This places the prophet roughly in the range of 627/6–586/7 BCE.[12] Two opposing and important events are represented in this superscription: the glory of Josiah's reign and religious endeavors, and Jerusalem's destruction and exile. The polar extreme of these two moments in time creates a trajectory that contextualizes the prophet's situation, which could aptly be entitled "The Self-Paved Road to Exile."[13] The visionary material details the nature of

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[10] See also Boda, *A Severe Mercy*, 231.

[11] Habel ("Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," 307) suggests that the absence of clear historical markers for the call in 1:4–12 points to the possibility that "an original historical note has been absorbed into the editor's preface." While this is certainly possible, the placement of the call in such close proximity to the historical superscription points to the shared historical context in view.

[12] Goldingay (*Jeremiah*, 2–5) and Allen (*Jeremiah*, 23) note the challenges of assigning specific dates to regnal years.

[13] Allen (*Jeremiah*, 92) uses this title for the literary block of Jer 7:1—10:25. See Allen, *Jeremiah*, 92.

this destruction as being summoned from the north by YHWH (1:13–16) in response to the people's wickedness and abandonment of him (1:16).

Debates regarding Jeremiah's activity during the time of Josiah have led to a variety of conclusions. For example, some have suggested that 1:2 references his birth and not the start of the prophet's ministry, meaning Jeremiah did not minister during Josiah's reign.[14] Others suggest that he not only ministered during Josiah's reign but was part of the king's reform efforts in the Northern Kingdom.[15] A form of the second option seems most likely, particularly due to references in the text explicitly mentioning Josiah in 3:6 and the north in reference to Israel in 3:11–12. However, caution must be shown in this regard due to the absence of any overt reference in Jeremiah to Josiah's northern endeavors or the prophet's participation in such work.[16] Despite the likeliness of a scenario where the prophet ministers to the northern kingdom during Josiah's reign, the purpose of references to the northern tribes is not for the reader to reconstruct the prophet's itinerary but rather for the readers to situate themselves in the time of Josiah's reign.[17] Similarly, it is best to understand 1:2 as referencing the prophet's commission as a prophet rather than his birth on the basis that 25:3 further anchors the prophet's ministry as beginning in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign.[18] It must be stated that the

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[14] Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 1, 14–15; Holladay, *Jeremiah: A Fresh Reading*.

[15] Leuchter, *Josiah's Reform and Jeremiah's Scroll*, 50–86; Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah*, 223–25. See also Conrad, ed., *Reading the Latter Prophets*, 111. Noting that Jerusalem is the audience identified in 2:1–2 and 4:3, Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, 63) also suggests that an earlier core of material could be expanded upon for Jerusalem's context.

[16] For a view regarding the "House of Israel" and other terms typically associated with the Northern Kingdom, see Crouch, *Israel and Judah Redefined*, 1–33. Crouch argues that the references to Israel pertain primarily to the Jerusalemite elite who have been exiled.

[17] Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 150. Similarly, Craige et al. (*Jeremiah 1–25*, 8) suggest that since Jeremiah does not contain a description of the circumstances surrounding his call, unlike Isaiah and Ezekiel, the purpose of this narrative is likely oriented toward the authority of the prophet and his word rather than conveying biographical information.

[18] See also Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 70–71.

importance of these historical anchors is that Jeremiah and his words become a lens for understanding the period of time leading up to the exile. The significance is not to connect each of the book's oracles and laments to specific moments of time within the prophet's life and construct a biography of the prophet.[19] Instead, we know that the prophet's ministry navigates the trajectory toward the inscribed audience's exile (1:4). The readers are invited to retrace the steps of the proverbial self-paved road to exile.

The prophet's call in 1:4–12 affirms the ministry and message of a reluctant prophet against a resistant audience. The superscription (1:1–3), in combination with the vision of the coming disaster (1:13–16), provides further clarity by detailing the trajectory toward exile. As readers, we recognize that for destruction to be averted, repentance must be the people's response. This is suggested by the opening oracles of the book and their emphasis on repentance (2:1—4:5).[20] Knowing that Jeremiah's ministry ends in exile draws attention to a tension within the following chapters: despite the reality that there have been opportunities for repentance throughout Israel's and Judah's histories, their inability to respond appropriately to the prophetic word has sealed their fates for judgment. Though there once may have been an opportunity for Israel and Judah to repent for judgment to be averted, that opportunity was neglected. The prophet's call in

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[19] Contra Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 1–10. An alternative to this would be to read it in light of 2 Kgs 22–23. For this approach, see Conrad, ed., *Reading the Latter Prophets*, 111–22. Fretheim (*What Kind of God*, 285 phrases this in another way and highlights the blending of the prophetic word with the prophetic figure: "In short, the text in its present form functions not as prophetic (auto)biography, but as *proclamation*; the word of God is conveyed in and through a suffering prophet who is *textually embodied*." Emphasis original.

[20] For this reason, Goldingay (*Jeremiah*, 141) follows Abma (*Bonds of Love*, 243) in calling this unit "a *teshuva* speech." While seeing 2:1—4:4 as a unit, Holladay (*The Architecture of Jeremiah 1–20*, 30–54) focuses primarily on the language of a harlot and its structural role in the unit. Despite the importance of this language, the pervasiveness of שוב and related terms, such as עזב (2:13) and פנה (2:27), emphasize the importance of reorienting back to YHWH. Abma (*Bonds of Love*, 244) makes an important observation regarding the significance of this opening unit in that it has a prominent position in the book as the first part of its message after the prophet's calling and introductory chapter.

1:4–12 affirms the prophet's authority for the reading audience as the book guides its readership into exile through the lens of the prophet's message. YHWH's role as Creator is a primary way in which this exigence is addressed and will be traced in the following assessment of the rhetorical strategy.

Rhetorical Strategy

The prophet's commission contains the first creation claim of the book and orients the reader toward the importance of understanding Jeremiah's words in relation to YHWH's role as Creator. This is best captured through the characterization of Jeremiah's prophetic ministry, which stems from YHWH's creational authority and involvement. The prophet's commission characterizes his ministry in three ways, each of which is connected to YHWH's role as Creator. The first is that YHWH formed Jeremiah as a prophet in his mother's womb, which functions as YHWH's claim in the creation of his prophet. The second is in presenting Jeremiah as a reluctant prophet like Moses, in which YHWH's authority as Creator is effective in persuading the prophet to submit to the call. Finally, Jeremiah's words and ministry participate in the Creator's prerogatives of creation and destruction that reverberate throughout the whole book.

YHWH's involvement in the prophet's formation and calling in 1:4–12 draws attention to the reality that Jeremiah is a legitimate expression of the Creator's word and will, emphasizing the primarily judicial nature of the passage.[21] The reluctant prophet's

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[21] Tension remains on how to read the calls to repentance in 2:1—4:4. As this dissertation has suggested, repentance is a primary concern of the book as a whole. But issues remain regarding the possibility of averting disaster through repentance in these earlier oracles of the book. Boda (*A Severe Mercy*, 231) rightfully highlights that this unit showcases the challenges posed by the prophet's audience regarding the objective of repentance, noting Israel's rejection of God's warnings "exonerate God from exacting judgment without warning." Allen (*Jeremiah*, 62) helpfully observes that the penitential dialogue extending from 3:19—4:4 concludes without a positive response to the summons to repentance. He rightly

words are bound to the activities and authority of Creator YHWH, and the

pronouncement of judgment bears the weight of a messenger appointed over the nations.

A Prophet Formed by God

The first and most apparent goal that YHWH's creation claims participate in revolve

around YHWH's forming of Jeremiah and appointment of him as a prophet over the

nations. YHWH's first creation claim of the book takes place in his involvement in the

prophet's birth, particularly through the language of "forming" (יצר). YHWH's role in

forming (יצר) people is connected to giving them a specific role.[22] This is further

emphasized by the parallelism between the two lines of 1:5, in which the second line

clarifies the intent of the first.[23] Scholars often note the similarity between this language

and extrabiblical texts.[24] Regarding a deity's involvement in the formation of a person

(king) in the mother's womb, the Great Hymn to the Aten claims:

> Who makes seed grow in women,
> Who creates people from sperm;
> Who feeds the son in his mother's womb,
> who soothes him to still his tears.

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concludes that the unit of 2:1—4:4 "presents a series of missed opportunities" for repentance, which results in the destruction described in 4:5—6:30. Fretheim (*Jeremiah*, 88–89) rightfully maintains focus on the exilic readers who have already experienced these events. The return from exile is in view here, particularly if one views 3:18 and the departure from a northern land to the land of inheritance as the return from exile. See Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25*, 196. Similarly, Carroll (*Jeremiah*, 157) notes that the possibility of a change in circumstances points to a context after judgment has occurred. Carroll's (*Jeremiah*, 158–59) reasoning is tied also to diachronic elements, such as the use of Deuteronomistic language like "the evil of (your) doings" and "circumcise your mind," as well as the pattern in Deuteronomistic literature to summon the people to repent after catastrophe in order to avoid future divine anger. His reasoning here may be correct, but the literary progression of neglected repentance observed by Allen and the mention of the return from exile preferable forms of evidence since they do not depend on diachronic aspects. The emphasis is less on averting upcoming judgment and oriented toward explaining the progression of unrepentance that led to catastrophe.

[22] Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 79. He references Isa 49:5 and 44:2. This is further supported in *NIDOTTE*, 2:504. Though also connected to עשׂה, further connections between forming (יצר) and purpose are seen in Jer 18:1–10.

[23] See Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 80.

[24] Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, 97; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 231.

Nurse in the womb,
Giver of breath,
To nourish all that he made.
When he comes from the womb to breathe,
On the day of his birth,
You open wide his mouth,
You supply his needs.[25]

Regarding the Egyptian pharaoh Pianchi, it was written:

It was in the belly of your mother that I said concerning you that you were to be ruler of Egypt; it was as seed and while you were in the egg, that I knew you, that (I knew) you were to be Lord.[26]

On his cylinders, Assurbanipal boasts:

I (am) Assurbanipal, offspring (creature) of Assur and Bêlit, the oldest prince of the royal harem (*bît-ridût*), whose name Assur and Sin, the lord of the tiara, have named for the kingship from earliest (*lit*., distant) days, whom they formed in his mother's womb, for the rulership of Assyria; whom Shamash, Adad and Ishtar, by their unalterable (*lit*., established) decree, have ordered to exercise sovereignty.[27]

King Nabonidus also uses similar language:

I, Nabonidus, the great king, the strong king, the king of the universe, the king of Babylon, the king of the four corners, the caretaker of Esagil and Ezida, for whom Sin and Ningal in his mother's womb decreed a royal fate as his destiny . . .[28]

These texts legitimize the king's position as being destined by the patron deity to rule. Although one might be tempted to state that this was a common way to communicate a deity's election of a person, perhaps a better way of phrasing the observable pattern is that this is a pronounced or effective way to communicate a deity's election of a person in a way that the audience would have understood.[29] The connection

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[25] "The Great Hymn to the Aten," *COS* 1.28:45. See also Keel and Schroer, *Creation*, 87.

[26] Gilula, "An Egyptian Parallel," 114.

[27] Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, 2:291.

[28] "The Sippar Cylinder of Nabonidus," *COS* 2.123A:310.

[29] Voth ("Jeremiah," 237) notes "These and other similar examples demonstrate that the idea of a deity electing a person before birth was common in the ancient Near East." The primary issue with such a conclusion is that these examples are associated primarily with royal figures, making it difficult to consider such a trope "common."

between Jeremiah's call and God's creation of him authorizes his prophetic ministry. While Jeremiah must first accept the summons to the prophetic ministry (cf. 20:7), this opening passage places the origins of the prophet's ministry before his birth.[30]

The term used for YHWH shaping or forming (יצר) Jeremiah in the womb is connected with creation imagery across the Old Testament. In Genesis, YHWH God formed (יצר) humanity from the ground (Gen 2:7–8, 19). Job speaks of YHWH forming (יצר) humanity in the womb (Job 31:15). Similarly, Isaiah casts Israel as YHWH's son whom he formed (יצר) in the womb (Isa 43:1, 7, 21; 44:2, 21). He forms (יצר) the individual components of the human (Pss 33:15; 94:9; Zech 12:1). God is also seen as the one who formed (יצר) the mountains and world (Ps 95:5; Isa 45:18; Amos 4:13). This language is indicative of YHWH's creative involvement in his cosmos, including humanity. For Jeremiah, YHWH is Creator, and he has set Jeremiah apart for his prophetic ministry before he formed (יצר) the prophet. Ronald Simkins draws a summative connection between Jeremiah's commission and the servant in Isaiah, noting, "Like Jeremiah, the servant is directed by God from birth, and God's claim on the servant is that God created the servant by forming him in the womb."[31] The nature of God's involvement in Jeremiah's calling is something we see contested by the prophet in 20:7–18, which 20:14 forms an inclusio with 1:5.[32]

MT		Translation

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[30] Regarding this verse, Carroll (*Jeremiah: A Commentary*, 98) states that it addresses "the skeptical question, unexpressed but implicit in the necessity for including such an assertion as this, 'when did he become a prophet?' it [this verse] responds 'before he was born!'" While the basis of Jeremiah's ministry is founded upon YHWH's creational authority of the prophet while still in his mother's womb, the prophet must also accept the call to ministry.

[31] Simkins, *Creator and Creation*, 93.

[32] See Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 42–44.

אָר֣וּר הַיֹּ֔ום אֲשֶׁ֥ר יֻלַּ֖דְתִּי בֹּ֑ו יֹ֛ום אֲשֶׁר־יְלָדַ֥תְנִי אִמִּ֖י אַל־יְהִ֥י בָרֽוּךְ׃	20:14	Cursed is the day on which I was born, may the day that my mother gave birth to me not be blessed.

The prophet suffers for his unbearable message of judgment, yet he is unable to withhold it. As the prophet laments over why he ever came out of his mother's womb, YHWH addresses this for the prophet and the book's readers in 1:5, "to be a prophet to the nations."[33] The fact that the prophet laments this reality in 20:7 affirms YHWH's successful persuasion of the prophet in 1:4–12. The prophet's reluctance in response to his commission reverberates throughout the book and should also lead the reading audience to recognize Jeremiah not as an antagonist but as a prophet reluctant to speak a message of destruction over his own people. However, the issue of YHWH's successful persuasion requires one to consider what aspect of the divine call was effective in overcoming Jeremiah's reluctance.

A Prophet like Moses

While Jeremiah is painted as a reluctant prophet like Moses, YHWH's creational authority and the assurance of his presence are enough to overcome Jeremiah's reluctance. Though formed by Creator YHWH before his birth and given authority to pronounce the fates of the nations and kingdoms, Jeremiah expresses reluctance in his calling similar to the call of Moses in Exod 3–4. Moses and Jeremiah are both reluctant in their commissions (Exod 3:11, 13; 4:1, 10, 13; Jer 1:6; cf. 20:7, 9), providing speech-related excuses to YHWH (Exod 4:10; Jer 1:6).[34] Each of these elements contributes to

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[33] Lewin, "Arguing for Authority," 116–17.

[34] There is also the promise of divine presence in both accounts (Exod 3:12; Jer 1:19). Fischer (*Jeremiah Studies*, 231) adds the additional comparisons from Deut 18:18 and the prophet like Moses: Jer

the larger goal of legitimizing Jeremiah as a prophet like Moses (cf. Deut 18:15; 34:10–12).[35]

When one considers the inner-biblical relationship between Jeremiah and Moses, the prophet's hesitation assumes the additional effect of legitimization.[36] Within Moses' call in Exod 3–4, Moses and God reflect a similar dialogue as that seen in Jer 1:5–6.

MT		Translation
וְעַתָּה לְכָה וְאֶשְׁלָחֲךָ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה וְהוֹצֵא אֶת־עַמִּי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרָיִם:	Exod 3:10	"So now go, for[37] I have sent you to Pharaoh. Bring out my people, the sons of Israel, from Egypt."
וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים מִי אָנֹכִי כִּי אֵלֵךְ אֶל־פַּרְעֹה וְכִי אוֹצִיא אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרָיִם:	Exod 3:11	But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, or that I should bring out the sons of Israel from Egypt?"

Moses immediately objects to God's charge (Exod 3:11). Later in the narrative (4:10–12), we see Moses object again by pointing out his inability to speak.

MT		Translation

1:9 and Deut 18:18 contain a unique phrase (נתן דברי בפה), which is not found elsewhere; Deut 18:18 also notes that the Mosaic prophet will speak all that the Lord commands (דבר כל־אשר צוה), as seen in Jer 1:7, 17.

[35] Jeremiah's portrayal as a Moses-like figure is a pervasive theme in the book and one of its most studied components. Additional connections include the following: Moses and Jeremiah both intercede on behalf of their people (Exod 32:30–32; 34:9; Jer 7:16; 11:14; 14:11), with Moses' intercessions even being recalled in Jeremiah's context (Jer 15:1); Moses leads the people out of Egypt (Exod 12:31–42), while Jeremiah is taken against his will to Egypt by the people (Jer 43:1–7); Moses leads the people out of Egypt in the exodus events (Exod 12:31–42; 13:17—14:31), while Jeremiah looks forward to a new exodus (Jer 16:14–15; 23:7–8; cf. 31:32). For the connections between Moses and Jeremiah, see Fischer, *Jeremiah Studies*, 231–47; Habel, "Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," 297–323; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 26–31; Holladay, "Jeremiah and Moses," 17–27; Lundbom, *Jeremiah: Prophet Like Moses*; Rossi, "Reshaping Jeremiah," 575–93; Seitz, "The Prophet Moses," 3–27; Yates, "Intertextuality," 286–303; Yates, "New Exodus and No Exodus," 1–22. Connections also extend to Gideon in Judg 6. See Habel, "Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," 297–323.

[36] In contrast to the visionary calls of Isaiah (Isa 6) and Ezekiel (Ezek 1–3), in which there is a great distance between YHWH and his prophets, the calls of Moses and Jeremiah place YHWH in dialogue with his prophets in which there is room for object. See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1*, 98–99.

[37] I translate the waw to reflect the idea of purpose, motivation, or consequence. See BHRG §40.24.4.2 (4), (5); IBHS §33.4b. This can happen when a *wayyiqtol* follows an imperative. Rendering it as an a cohortative does not fully fit the context. See Davies, *Exodus 1–18*, 1:235.

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה בִּי אֲדֹנָי לֹא אִישׁ דְּבָרִים אָנֹכִי גַּם מִתְּמוֹל גַּם מִשִּׁלְשֹׁם גַּם מֵאָז דַּבֶּרְךָ אֶל־עַבְדֶּךָ כִּי כְבַד־פֶּה וּכְבַד לָשׁוֹן אָנֹכִי׃	Exod 4:10	But Moses said to YHWH, "Pardon me, Lord, I am not a man of words, neither recently, nor in the past, nor since you started speaking to your servant, for I am heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue.
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלָיו מִי שָׂם פֶּה לָאָדָם אוֹ מִי־יָשׂוּם אִלֵּם אוֹ חֵרֵשׁ אוֹ פִקֵּחַ אוֹ עִוֵּר הֲלֹא אָנֹכִי יְהוָה׃	Exod 4:11	So YHWH said to him, "Who made[38] humanity their mouth? Or who made them mute or deaf, sighted or blind? Was it not I, YHWH?
וְעַתָּה לֵךְ וְאָנֹכִי אֶהְיֶה עִם־פִּיךָ וְהוֹרֵיתִיךָ אֲשֶׁר תְּדַבֵּר׃	Exod 4:12	So now Go! I will be with your mouth and teach you what you will say."

Moses' objection in 4:10 focuses on his inability to speak well, which is met by YHWH's claim that he created humanity's mouth and made the mute or deaf, sighted or blind. YHWH's appeal to his creational authority and the promise of divine aid are not enough to persuade the reluctant Moses.

The symmetry between Moses and Jeremiah is important to note. This is particularly the case as both figures are sent as divine messengers, yet both object to their commission by drawing attention to their inability to speak well and their status. Similar to Moses, Jeremiah's objection surrounding his inability to speak well is paired in 1:6 with his status as a boy (נער).[39] In each case, the human messenger's objections are countered by a God who is present and a God who creates (Exod 4:11–12; Jer 1:5, 7–8).

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[38] The use of שׂים in this passage is translated as "make." Although it could be rendered "gave," the nature of the content being given suggests creative activity. Additionally, other contexts of this word include creative activity (e.g., Job 24:7; Prov 30:26; Isa 43:1 See *DCH*, "שׂים I," 8:143.

[39] Fischer (*Jeremia 1–25*, 135) observes that the term נער being used for Joseph in Egypt (Gen 41:12), Samuel at the beginning of his call (1 Sam 3:1), and Solomon at the beginning of his reign (1 Kgs 3:7). He uses this as evidence to suggest that Jeremiah's point here is less about his age and more about his lack of authority or experience. Such a reading is also helpful because it provides further similarities to Moses' objection of "Who am I?"

This objection to YHWH's word is short-lived in the opening chapter of Jeremiah and does not receive as much attention in the text as Moses' objection in Exodus. However, this initial objection and God's promise to uphold him set the tone for prophetic persecution and rejection in the following chapters, culminating in 20:7–18. Between these chapters, we see a prophet commissioned to pronounce nothing but catastrophic doom upon his people, summoning them to repentance. However, he is met with aggression and responds with lament to God. The promise of God that "I will be with you to deliver you" (1:8) also anticipates the level of conflict the prophet will face and provides further connection to Moses' call (3:12). At some point in the following story, Jeremiah will need deliverance from his audience.[40] Through this opening dialogue, we see Jeremiah's initial response to the commission is an objection, though YHWH persuades him to embrace it (20:7).[41] In the midst of such a tumultuous ministry, one is reminded of the prophet's initial objection and the anticipation of prophetic conflict.

Even without appealing to the inner-biblical relationship between the calls of Jeremiah and Moses, one can already observe that Jeremiah is a reluctant prophet. YHWH initiates his call in 1:5, but this is met immediately with the prophet's hesitation

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[40] As similar observation is made by Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25*, 136.

[41] Diamond (*The Confessions of Jeremiah in Context*, 111) provides a helpful translation of 20:7 as "You pressured me and I was compelled." Despite the issues surrounding the translation of פתה, Fischer (*Jeremia 1–25*, 615) helpfully suggests that the issue may be better understood in relation to Jeremiah's perceived contradiction between the promise of protection (1:8, 17–19) and deliverance and his experienced suffering (20:2). This translation is preferred over the language of seduction, as per Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 459). While this term can be used in contexts where seduction is the appropriate translation (Judg 16:5), this does not seem to be the case. Lundbom views the following line's חזק as further evidence of seduction language, as this term can mean "laid hold of." However, the emphasis is still on the persuasive overpowering of YHWH against the prophet, or his deceiving, which does not necessitate the connotations associated with seduction. This complaint has already been seen in 15:8 and the accusation the YHWH is a lying (כזב) brook. Jer 4:19–21 is not an example of the prophet's turmoil as it is likely voiced by Jerusalem's poet, as argued by Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 56–62.

in 1:6. In many ways, the presentation of a reluctant prophet is an attempt to mitigate the

audience's resentment of the prophetic figure, which is represented in the inscribed

audience. This is particularly true when the vision given to Jeremiah categorizes his

message as one of extreme destruction (1:13–16). Yehoshua Gitay notes that:

> . . . the prophetic books reflect the struggle of individuals. That is, prophets who are inspired by God's revelation to deliver a message which rebukes their audience. Given the harsh tone of the prophetic speeches, the books represent the prophets as provoking antipathy. As the prophet is aware of his audience's probable reaction to his critical message, the prophetic books reflect the inner tensions of the prophets as sensitive human beings, and their rhetorical attempts to reach their antagonistic audiences.[42]

The opening characterization of Jeremiah as providing a speech-related objection creates

a certain level of empathy from the reading audience and draws the reader into a dialogue

between YHWH and his obedient yet reluctant messenger. His characterization at the

initiation of the book is that of a prophet who bears Mosaic authority but is ultimately

reluctant to participate in the prophetic ministry. Unlike Moses (Exod 4:11–12; cf. 3:12),

however, God's appeal to his authority as Creator (1:5) and the accompanying assurance

of his presence and help (1:7–8) is effective in persuading Jeremiah to accept his

commission. As we see throughout the rest of the book, the prophet mourns and laments

over his calling due to his message being one defined by wrath and judgment (15:15–18;

17:14–18; 18:19–23; 20:7–18). Jeremiah is no aloof prophet who rejoices over the

message of judgment he is meant to bring. Instead, he is reluctant to embrace his calling

and experiences nothing but anguish and hardship throughout his ministry. The prophet's

reluctance opens the door for the opportunity for YHWH to identify himself as Creator.

YHWH shaped and appointed Jeremiah as a prophet before he was even born.

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[42] Gitay, "The Projection of the Prophet," 41. See also Lewin, "Arguing for Authority," 105–19.

In Moses' and Jeremiah's calls, each is confronted by the reality that God is the creator (Exod 4:11; Jer 1:5). In fact, Moses' "objection provides God with the opportunity to appeal to his power as Creator."[43] God's persuasive responses in both call narratives are met with different outcomes. In Exod 4, God attempts to appease Moses' concern by saying that he is the one who made humanity's mouth and will be with Moses (4:11–12; cf. 3:12). Despite such a claim, Moses objects again (Exod 4:13). Conversely, the lack of further objections by Jeremiah reflects—at least to an extent—the prophet conceding to YHWH's creational authority and the accompanying assurance of divine presence (1:5, 7–8). This persuasive language used by Creator God is perhaps one reason why Jeremiah later responds with remorse about YHWH prevailing over him by convincing him to accept the prophetic ministry, particularly the prophet coming out of his mother's womb where he was formed by YHWH (Jer 20:18).

This act of persuasion on YHWH's part is driven by the claim that he created Jeremiah in his mother's womb and sanctified him as a prophet. Regarding Jeremiah's call, YHWH's creation claim and the reassurance of his presence with Jeremiah are enough to persuade Jeremiah to respond to the call with obedience.

Participation in Creational Prerogatives

The third way we see YHWH's role as Creator appear in this passage uses agricultural language to describe Jeremiah's ministry as participation in the Creational prerogatives of creation and destruction. The agricultural terms "uproot" (נתש) and "plant" (נטע) both reflect YHWH's creational authority as they liken the nations to plants and thus place the

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[43] Patrick, *Rhetoric of Revelation*, 29.

nations under the same authority that governs the non-human realm of the created order.[44]

YHWH's authority to uproot or plant any nation reflects his universal dominion. These

two agricultural terms enclose a chiasmus in the passage in which A and A' are "uproot"

and "plant," B and B' are "pull down" and "build up" (construction terms), and C and C'

are "destroy" and "tear down" (construction terms).[45]

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[44] The other primary motivation for reading these two agricultural verbs in relation to YHWH's role as creator is the role of "plant" (נטע) in contexts oriented toward YHWH's creation. "Uproot" (נתש) finds its connection to YHWH's as Creator due to its juxtaposition to נטע and function to capture the destructive counterpart of creational authority. A clear depiction of "uproot" (נתש) as an agricultural term is seen in Ezek 19:10–14 but specifically in 19:12 when the vine (the mother of Israel's princes) was uprooted and tossed to the ground. "Plant" (נטע) has far more agricultural examples throughout the OT in which gardens or plants are in view (Gen 2:9; 9:20; 21:33; Lev 19:23; Num 24:6; Deut 6:11; 20:6; 28:30, 39; Josh 24:13; 2 Kgs 19:29; Ps 104:16; 107:37; Prov 31:16; Ecc 2:4, 5; 3:2; Isa 17:10; 37:30; 40:24; 44:14; 65:21, 22; Jer 29:5; 31:5; 35:7; Ezek 28:26; Amos 5:11; 9:14; Zeph 1:13). A clear example of Israel being portrayed as being planted by YHWH is seen in Ps 80:8 (cf. 80:15). Isaiah 5:2 provides another clear example of Israel being planted as a vineyard. Within Jeremiah, we see Israel being planted with additional agricultural imagery in 2:21; 12:2 (cf. Ezek 36:36). The pattern of YHWH planting (נטע) Israel in a particular land in passages without additional agricultural terms likely still reflects an agricultural component (e.g., Exod 15:17; 2 Sam 7:10; 1 Chr 17:9; Ps 44:2). These two verbs in Jer 1:10 participate in the metaphorical planting and uprooting of nations. Jindo (*Biblical Metaphor Reconsidered*, 176) is correct to connect these terms to the divine garden paradigm, which is seen throughout Jer 1–24. If this is to be the case, then the underlying metaphor behind the use of agricultural verbs and language, according to Jindo (*Biblical Metaphor Reconsidered*, 81, 183), is that of the cosmos being a state, closely linking the concepts of creation, royalty, and covenant. Additional connections can be seen between creation and these agricultural terms connected to a garden in the creation accounts of Gen 1–2. God's royal dominion over his city and the nations is tethered to his creation of the cosmos and the nations. See also Ollenburger, *God the Creator*, 46–48. For a demonstration of the connection between creation, garden language, and destruction, see Ollenburger, *God the Creator*, 146–48. Fretheim (*God and World*, 2) provides additional support for connecting this verse's agricultural terms to creation, primarily with God's planting being a counterpart to God shaping human life in the womb, as seen with יצר. Fretheim (*God and World*, 174) also suggests that Jeremiah's focus on creation serves as the foundation for the prophet's call to the nations in 1:5, 10, as God is the God of all nations and is at work in them. In summary, while the two agricultural terms might not appear to be explicitly oriented toward presenting YHWH as Creator, the broader use of these terms in creational contexts and the comparison of human powers to non-human parts of creation support reading the two agricultural terms in connection to YHWH as Creator.

[45] Fretheim (*Jeremiah*, 51) categorizes the verbs into three domains: agricultural (A, A'), construction (B, B'), and military (C, C'). However, no clear justification exists for dividing construction terms from military terms, particularly as both are used in overlapping contexts. The only exception for overlapping could be that אבד can apply to the killing of human life. A more appropriate division between the words is agricultural (A, A') and construction (B, B'; C, C'). This is similar to Jindo's (*Biblical Metaphor*, 175) division, though he uses the terminology of architecture and horticulture. The positive verbs of planting and rebuilding are employed in 31:4–5. Outside of the repeated formulation of infinitive verbs, the agricultural term נתש employed negatively in 12:15. 17; 31:40; the term נתע is used positively in 2:21; 11:17; 12:2; 32:41 (humans are instructed as agents of the verb in 29:5, 28; 31:5; 35:7). The construction terms are used negatively to convey destruction of cities (and defenses) and positively to convey rebuilding. נתץ is employed in 4:26; 33:4; 39:8 to convey the destruction of Jerusalem; בנה is employed positively in 30:18; 31:4, 38; 32:31; 33:7; (humans are instructed as agents of the verb in 29:5,

	1:10	To uproot
לנתוש		
ולנתוץ		and to pull down
ולהאביד		and to destroy
ולהרוס		and to tear down,
לבנות		to build up
ולנטוע		and to plant.

Of the six verbs used to describe the prophet's message, four of them are negative or

destructive in nature. This likely reflects the general tone of his message as one of

judgment, particularly as the prologue explicitly connects his ministry to the exile (1:3).[46]

The agricultural language used in Jeremiah's commission introduces the reader to

an important pattern seen throughout the first literary block and section of the book,

namely the comparison of humanity to plants or animals from the natural realm. To the

one who created and governs the world and its inhabitants, the human kingdoms are

likened to other parts of the created realm.[47] The connection between the Lord's people

and plants is made abundantly clear in passages such as 2:3 and 2:21. More importantly,

Job Jindo highlights that agricultural imagery is a dominant image for the people in Jer

1–24, suggesting ultimately that Israel is portrayed as a royal garden.[48] His basis for this

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28; 35:7, 9). The term אבד is used negatively to convey ruin or perishing, depending on the recipient of the verb (human or object), in 6:21; 9:11; 10:15; 15:7; 23:1 (of their shepherds); 27:10, 15; 40:15; 46:8; 48:8, 36, 46; 49:7, 38; 51:18; הרס is employed in 50:15 to speak of Babylon's destruction.

[46] See Craigie et al., *Jeremiah 1–25*, 11; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 235.

[47] See Foreman, *Animal Metaphors*. Later in 5:20–25, the people are likened to the raging sea and its waves, while in 8:7 they are compared to the birds. This language is similar to the comparison made between Nineveh and the plant in Jonah 4:10, as well as the mirroring verb (המה) shared for both the roaring waves and the roaring kingdoms in Ps 46:3, 6.

[48] Jindo, *Biblical Metaphor*, 151–52. Jindo highlights the following passages: Jer 1:10; 2:3, 7, 21; 4:3-4, 17; 5:10, 14; 6:9; 8:13; 9:21; 11:16-17, 19; 12:2, 10; 17:5-8; 21: 14; 22:6-7; 23:5; ch. 24. His view and the broader creation imagery argued for in this dissertation are not mutually exclusive. He also uses the language of horticulture metaphors rather than agricultural. Weippert (*Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde*, 84–85 n 66) also draws attention to Isa 5:2 and 2 Sam 7:10 and the language of planting in relation to Israel's formation, suggesting that 1:10 draws a connection between YHWH as Israel's covenant God and Creator, as well as his role of Creator of the world and its history. In Isa 5:2 and 2 Sam 7:10, planting language is attached to the depiction of Israel as YHWH's vineyard. Simpkins (*Creator and Creation*, 103–105) similarly identifies agricultural metaphors and language (such as planting) as a way to express the creational component of redemption, noting (*Creation and Creation*, 103) that "creation myths and metaphor give cosmological significance to God's redemption of Israel."

is the pervasiveness of plant and agricultural imagery throughout the first portion of

Jeremiah, suggesting that the frequency of this imagery is purposeful in the portrait of

Israel as YHWH's royal garden.[49] In ANE thought, stories such as Enuma Elish and

Atrahasis portray humanity as being created to do work on behalf of the deities, which

can be understood in conjunction with the divine manor and garden, where the deity

lives.[50]

The agricultural language expressing the relationship between YHWH and his

people reflects YHWH's position as King and Creator. It then serves as a characterization

of the divine word given through the prophet. Though 1:10 uses agricultural verbs as the

first and sixth (final) verbs in his commissioning, the six verbs cover two related

domains: agriculture and construction. In this line of thinking, "the architectural words

correspond to Jerusalem or the land of Israel as described in the basic poetic sphere of the

composition, whereas the horticultural words correspond to Jerusalem or the land of

Israel as perceived as God's treasure garden."[51] The metaphorical association of these

two semantic spheres provides a firm connection between some of the plant imagery and

the destruction pronounced over Israel. This royal garden imagery is conceptualized

within creation or mythopoetic language and further contributes to YHWH's portrait as

Creator.

The subsequent message of judgment in 2:1–8 is heavily shaped by language that

harkens back to 1:10 and the agricultural terms. The ongoing agricultural metaphors in

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[49] Jindo, *Biblical Metaphor*, 151–52. Though he acknowledges the vividness such imagery would add to the descriptions of judgment, the purpose of this language extends beyond vivid and emotive effect. He cites Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 127) and his assessment of 2:21 as an example of scholarly treatment that limits the function of this metaphor to giving lucidity to the message.

[50] Jindo, *Biblical Metaphor*, 154. He notes that echoes of humans serving in a divine garden are visible in Gen 2:15.

[51] Jindo, *Biblical Metaphor*, 176. He uses the term horticultural in place of agricultural.

the prophet's message of judgment establish a conceptual bridge between the execution

of covenant judgment and YHWH's prerogative to destroy as Creator. The first oracle

given to the prophet defines Israel in agricultural language alongside marital language.

The agricultural language is identified in 2:3, 7 with italicized words.

MT		Translation
וַיְהִ֥י דְבַר־יְהוָ֖ה אֵלַ֥י לֵאמֹֽר׃	2:1	And the word of YHWH came to me saying:
הָלֹ֡ךְ וְקָֽרָאתָ֩ בְאָזְנֵ֨י יְרוּשָׁלַ֜͏ִם לֵאמֹ֗ר כֹּ֚ה אָמַ֣ר יְהוָ֔ה זָכַ֤רְתִּי לָךְ֙ חֶ֣סֶד נְעוּרַ֔יִךְ אַהֲבַ֖ת כְּלוּלֹתָ֑יִךְ לֶכְתֵּ֤ךְ אַחֲרַי֙ בַּמִּדְבָּ֔ר בְּאֶ֖רֶץ לֹ֥א זְרוּעָֽה׃	2:2	"Go and call out in the ears of Jerusalem saying: 'Thus said YHWH: I remember about you[52] the faithful-love of your youth, your love as a bride; you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown.
קֹ֤דֶשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל֙ לַֽיהוָ֔ה רֵאשִׁ֖ית תְּבוּאָתֹ֑ה כָּל־אֹכְלָ֣יו יֶאְשָׁ֔מוּ רָעָ֛ה תָּבֹ֥א אֲלֵיהֶ֖ם נְאֻם־יְהוָֽה׃ פ	2:3	Israel was holy to YHWH, the *first-fruits of his harvest*; all who *devoured* it would become guilty, calamity would come upon them.'"[53] Declaration of YHWH.
שִׁמְע֥וּ דְבַר־יְהוָ֖ה בֵּ֣ית יַעֲקֹ֑ב וְכָֽל־מִשְׁפְּח֖וֹת בֵּ֥ית יִשְׂרָאֵֽל׃	2:4	"Hear the word of YHWH, House of Jacob, and all the families of the House of Israel.
כֹּ֣ה ׀ אָמַ֣ר יְהוָ֗ה מַה־מָּצְא֨וּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶ֥ם בִּי֙ עָ֔וֶל כִּ֥י רָחֲק֖וּ מֵעָלָ֑י וַיֵּֽלְכ֛וּ אַחֲרֵ֥י הַהֶ֖בֶל וַיֶּהְבָּֽלוּ׃	2:5	Thus says YHWH: 'What wrong did your ancestors find in me, that they went far away from me and went after vain idols and became vain themselves?
וְלֹ֣א אָמְר֔וּ אַיֵּ֣ה יְהוָ֔ה הַמַּעֲלֶ֥ה אֹתָ֖נוּ מֵאֶ֣רֶץ מִצְרָ֑יִם הַמּוֹלִ֨יךְ אֹתָ֜נוּ בַּמִּדְבָּ֗ר בְּאֶ֨רֶץ עֲרָבָ֤ה וְשׁוּחָה֙ בְּאֶ֙רֶץ֙ צִיָּ֣ה וְצַלְמָ֔וֶת בְּאֶ֗רֶץ לֹֽא־עָ֤בַר בָּהּ֙ אִ֔ישׁ וְלֹֽא־יָשַׁ֥ב אָדָ֖ם שָֽׁם׃	2:6	And they did not ask, "Where is YHWH who brought us up from the land of Egypt, who led us through the wilderness, in a land of deserts and ravines,[54] in a land of dryness and deep darkness, in a land men don't venture

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[52] Craigie et al (*Jeremiah 1–25*, 22) and Allen (*Jeremiah*, 33) helpfully smooth out this phrase as "What I remember about you." Goldingay (*Jeremiah*, 102) may be correct to understand the *qatal* verb as an action having an effect on the present, rendering the phrase as "I have been mindful about you." See BHRG §19.2.2.

[53] Allen's (*Jeremiah*, 33) translation of these verbs makes the most sense. The verbs in vv. 2–3 prior to the participle (אכל) are retrospective, looking back at Israel's history. Yet the participle and *yiqtol* (אשם) function as "*customary non-perfective*" verbs. See Allen, *Jeremiah*, 38 d. *IBHS*, §31.2b.

[54] *DCH*, "שׁוּחָה," 8.303.

		through, and where humans don't reside?"
וָאָבִ֤יא אֶתְכֶם֙ אֶל־אֶ֣רֶץ הַכַּרְמֶ֔ל לֶאֱכֹ֥ל פִּרְיָ֖הּ וְטוּבָ֑הּ וַתָּבֹ֙אוּ֙ וַתְּטַמְּא֣וּ אֶת־אַרְצִ֔י וְנַחֲלָתִ֖י שַׂמְתֶּ֥ם לְתוֹעֵבָֽה׃	2:7	And I brought you to a *land of the garden*[55] to *eat its fruit* and its *good things*. Yet you came and *defiled my land* and my *inheritance*, transforming it into an abomination.
הַכֹּהֲנִ֗ים לֹ֤א אָֽמְרוּ֙ אַיֵּ֣ה יְהֹוָ֔ה וְתֹפְשֵׂ֤י הַתּוֹרָה֙ לֹ֣א יְדָע֔וּנִי וְהָרֹעִ֖ים פָּ֣שְׁעוּ בִ֑י וְהַנְּבִיאִים֙ נִבְּא֣וּ בַבַּ֔עַל וְאַחֲרֵ֥י לֹֽא־יוֹעִ֖לוּ הָלָֽכוּ׃	2:8	The priests did not say, "Where is YHWH?" And the keepers of the law did not acknowledge me. And the shepherds rebelled against me. And the prophets prophesied by Ba'al and went after things that are of no use.

Most significant to our focus are 2:3 and 2:7. In 2:3, YHWH looks back to his history with his people and identifies Israel as "the first-fruits of his harvest." Those who would "devour" YHWH's harvest would have faced calamity. As the oracle progresses in conjunction with Israel's entrance into the land, the land is called "a land of the garden," "my land," and "my inheritance," referencing YHWH's ownership of the fruitful and garden-like land.[56] Yet, upon the people's entrance, they defiled the land and turned it into an "abomination." The land and people of Israel are likened to a garden and its produce, yet the garden has been defiled, and the produce has gone bad. The use of agricultural language in reference to judgment extends to other portions of our literary

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[55] *DCH*, "כַּרְמֶל," 4.462. While the term can potentially have a different referent in 4:26, the decision here to translate כרמל as "garden" is that it refers to the whole land. For it to serve as a specific geographical reference for Carmel means that the region of Carmel is also the referent of "my land" and is the place YHWH led the people to. Furthermore, the passage above already uses related language for the people by calling them first-fruits. For the reading of this term as the region of Carmel in 4:26, see Rom-Shiloni (*Voices from the Ruins*, 296–97). Many scholars translate the term as something similar to vineyard, garden land, or fruitful land. See Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25*, 158; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 87; Jindo, *Biblical Metaphor*, 113, 151; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 260. Thompson (*Jeremiah*, 168) is an exception and translated the term as "fertile land" while adding that it would remind the audience of "the luxurious growth of the Mount Carmel area," though it should be clarified that Mount Carmel is different than the Carmel region.

[56] "Inheritance" (נחלה), while not inherently agricultural, is often employed in contexts of acquiring land (e.g., Exod 15:17; Num 18:21; 26:53; 32:19; 33:54; 34:14; Deut 4:21; 12:9; 15:4; 24:4; 29:7; Josh 11:23; 13:6; Judg 20:6; Jer 2:7; 12:14; 17:4; Ezek 47:14; 48:29; Mal 1:3; Pss 105:11; 1 Chr 16:18). In these contexts, inheritance is a term used to refer to a family's, official's, or nation's land.

block, describing the destruction brought about by both YHWH and the foe from the north with the same language.[57] Even in the prophet's vision of Judah's cataclysmic judgment in 4:23–28, which describes the land's destruction as a reversal of the creation account in Gen 1, the land of Judah is again referenced as כרמל (4:26):

MT		Translation
רָאִ֙יתִי֙ וְהִנֵּ֣ה הַכַּרְמֶ֣ל הַמִּדְבָּ֔ר וְכָל־עָרָ֗יו נִתְּצוּ֙ מִפְּנֵ֣י יְהוָ֔ה מִפְּנֵ֖י חֲר֥וֹן אַפּֽוֹ׃	4:26	I looked and behold, the *garden (fruitful land)*[58] is the wilderness, and all its cities are in ruins, before YHWH, before his fierce anger.
כֹּ֤ה אָמַר֙ יְהוָ֣ה צְבָא֔וֹת עוֹלֵ֛ל יְעוֹלְל֥וּ כַגֶּ֖פֶן שְׁאֵרִ֣ית יִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל הָשֵׁב֙ יָדְךָ֔ כְּבוֹצֵ֖ר עַל־סַלְסִלּֽוֹת׃	6:9	Thus says YHWH of Armies, "They shall *glean* thoroughly like a *vine*, the remnant of Israel. Bring your hand back like a *grape-harvester* over the *branches*."
אָסֹ֥ף אֲסִיפֵ֖ם נְאֻם־יְהֹוָ֑ה אֵין֩ עֲנָבִ֙ים בַּגֶּ֜פֶן וְאֵ֧ין תְּאֵנִ֣ים בַּתְּאֵנָ֗ה וְהֶֽעָלֶה֙ נָבֵ֔ל וָאֶתֵּ֥ן לָהֶ֖ם יַעַבְרֽוּם׃	8:13	"*Gathering*, I will end them." declaration of YHWH, "There are *no grapes* on the *vine* and there are *no figs* on the *fig tree*; and the *leaves* have *withered*, and what I have given to them will pass away from them."
מִדָּ֤ן נִשְׁמַע֙ נַחְרַ֣ת סוּסָ֔יו מִקּוֹל֙ מִצְהֲל֣וֹת אַבִּירָ֔יו רָעֲשָׁ֖ה כָּל־הָאָ֑רֶץ וַיָּב֗וֹאוּ וַיֹּֽאכְלוּ֙ אֶ֣רֶץ וּמְלוֹאָ֔הּ עִ֖יר וְיֹ֥שְׁבֵי בָֽהּ׃	8:16	From Dan the snorting of his horses is heard, from the sound of the neighing of his stallions the whole land quakes. They come and *consume* the land and what fills it, the city and its residents.
וְנָתַתִּ֧י אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלִַ֛ם לְגַלִּ֖ים מְע֣וֹן תַּנִּ֑ים וְאֶת־עָרֵ֧י יְהוּדָ֛ה אֶתֵּ֥ן שְׁמָמָ֖ה מִבְּלִ֥י יוֹשֵֽׁב׃	9:10	"And I will make Jerusalem into a heap of ruins, a jackal's den; and the cities of Judah I will make a *desolation* without an inhabitant."
ק֤וֹל שְׁמוּעָה֙ הִנֵּ֣ה בָאָ֔ה וְרַ֥עַשׁ גָּד֖וֹל מֵאֶ֣רֶץ צָפ֑וֹן לָשׂ֞וּם אֶת־עָרֵ֧י יְהוּדָ֛ה שְׁמָמָ֖ה מְע֥וֹן תַּנִּֽים׃	10:22	"The sound of the news! Take note, it is coming! And a great roar from a land in the north, to make the cities of Judah a *desolation*, a jackal's den."
שְׁפֹ֣ךְ חֲמָתְךָ֗ עַל־הַגּוֹיִם֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר לֹֽא־יְדָע֔וּךָ וְעַ֨ל מִשְׁפָּח֔וֹת אֲשֶׁ֥ר בְּשִׁמְךָ֖ לֹ֣א קָרָ֑אוּ כִּֽי־אָכְל֣וּ אֶֽת־יַעֲקֹ֗ב וַאֲכָלֻ֙הוּ֙ וַיְכַלֻּ֔הוּ וְאֶת־נָוֵ֖הוּ הֵשַֽׁמּוּ׃	10:25	"Pour out your wrath against the nations that do not know you, and against[59] the families that do not call upon your name. For they have *consumed* Jacob, they have *consumed*

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[57] Jindo, *Biblical Metaphor*, 117–18. See also Jer 22:6–7.
[58] See Chapter 5 for the translation of this term.
[59] The proposition indicates opposition. See IBHS §11.2.13f.

		him and have brought him to an end, and have made his fields desolate."[60]

Throughout each of these descriptions of destruction, we see important agricultural language. Perhaps most significant are the verbs used for the judgment itself, "gathering" (אסף), "gleaning" (עלל), and "consuming" (אכל) in 6:9; 8:13, 16; 10:25. These verbs are attributed to both YHWH and the enemy to conceptualize the coming devastation, which results in the land or garden (כרמל) becoming a "desolation" (שממה). "Desolation" (שממה) is often seen in contexts describing ecological destruction and may, at times, serve as the counterpart of a cultivated garden.[61] The agricultural language of 1:10 initiates a development in the following oracles that likens the land and people of Israel to Creator YHWH's garden and its first-fruits. In ways similar to the uprooting pronounced in 1:10, the language of judgment in the succeeding oracles is shaped by agricultural language to convey that the coming destruction will change YHWH's garden into a barren wasteland. So extreme is this level of destruction that it is envisioned as the uncreating of Jerusalem and a reversal of the Gen 1 creation account. The effects of these

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[60] The verbal aspect in this verse shifts to mirror that of Ps 79:6–7 or the underlying tradition and can be understood as another intercession by the prophet on behalf of the people, although not in the sense of negating judgment. See Craigie et al., *Jeremiah 1–25,* 164.

[61] While "desolation" (שממ/שממה) may not be as overtly recognized as agricultural, such as a term like "garden" (כרמל), the term is consistently used to convey the agricultural devastation in the wake of destruction, a true antithesis to something like a "garden" (כרמל) or place marked by human care. As such, it describes the transformation of a well-kept garden into something untamed or unmarked by human care, or making a good piece of land something that cannot be cultivated or suitable for human life. In other contexts when שממה is paired with היה with land or a region as the indirect object, it can also suggest the idea of land becoming unkept (Exod 23:29; Lev 26:33; Isa 17:9; 64:9; Jer 50:13; Ezek 12:20; 14:15, 16; 29:12; 35:4, 15; Zeph 2:9.) In many cases, the word pair is connected to wasteland (מדבר) or ruins (חרבה) and suggests something akin to being uninhabitable for human life, though Jer 51:62 extends this to animal life as well. Jindo (*Biblical Metaphor Reconsidered*, 170) also argues that when "desolation" (שממ/שממה) occurs alongside agricultural language, it also participates in the metaphor a garden being destroyed. Due to its use to describe the ruining of a garden or כרמל, it is considered to participate in the agricultural imagery of destruction in Jeremiah. "Desolation" (שממ/שממה) and "ruin" (חרבה) are both used in relation to God's acts of ecological destruction in Rom-Shiloni, *Voices from the Ruins*, 286–87.

agricultural images and verbs lead to understanding the Babylonian invasion as a divine action by Creator YHWH and intensifying the image of the coming destruction, persuading them to recognize the creational authority of God and repent before destruction arrives.

Furthering this agricultural imagery is the first vision attached to the call narrative of 1:4–12. In 1:11–12, YHWH's word, which already came to Jeremiah (1:4), is being watched by YHWH to ensure its completion. The driving connection between what Jeremiah observes and what YHWH confirms is seen in a wordplay between the almond tree (שקד) and YHWH's watching (שקד) over his word. However, further significance is found in the agricultural nature of this first vision of an almond tree, which is among the first trees to blossom.[62] Such language is reminiscent of Jeremiah's appointment in 1:10 and the agricultural language found there. YHWH's word will be brought about in the same way as the blossoming almond tree of Jeremiah's vision.[63] As pointed out by Thompson, God is watching over his word just given to Jeremiah in 1:10, a connection drawn later in in 31:28. As such, the vision of 1:11–12 affirms YHWH's ability to bring his word about, strengthening the appointment of Jeremiah to uproot and plant through his prophetic ministry.[64]

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[62] Fretheim, *Jeremiah*; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 37; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 236. Perhaps further significance can be found when comparing this vision in Jeremiah's call to the role of the sign in Exod 4:1–5.

[63] Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, 37) suggests that the almond tree (שקד) can be understood as blossoming. However, McKane (*Jeremiah*, 1:15) and Goldingay (*Jeremiah*, 153) clarify that there is nothing in the text that requires the reader to envision the almond branch as already in blossom, as the emphasis is on the wordplay and thus YHWH's watching. Despite the emphasis on the wordplay, the close association of the almond tree to blossoming may indicate that the imagery remains relevant. Craigie et al. (*Jeremiah 1–25*, 15) maintain the possibility of the almond branch being in blossom, noting that "the vision would indicate to Jeremiah that the divine word he was to proclaim was like the blossom in bud."

[64] Brueggemann (*Jeremiah*, 37) suggests that, "It is asserted that Yahweh's purpose (i.e., plucking up and tearing down, planting and building) has been unleashed in history."

Summary

Creation plays a vital role in the introduction of the book, characterizing YHWH and his relationship with his prophet, his people, and the nations. YHWH is the Creator of the cosmos, who rules over the nations and exercises his creative prerogatives of creation and destruction. As Creator, he destined Jeremiah to be a prophet and formed him in his mother's womb. YHWH's creational authority and the assurance of divine presence and aid are enough to overcome the reluctant prophet's objection. The prophet is appointed by YHWH to pronounce the uprooting and planting of YHWH's royal garden. The people are then identified by agricultural and animal imagery, though most prominent is the description of the land of Israel and its people as YHWH's royal garden and first-fruits. The perversion of the royal garden will lead to their consumption at the hand of a coming foe sanctioned by the Creator to devour them.

Gitay identifies the apologetic intent of the passage, which seeks to gain the audience's trust in the prophet at the forefront of the book and stirs up the audience's sympathy.[65] Thus, the judicial nature comes to the forefront and seeks to defend the prophet's legitimacy and authority, persuading them to judge him not as an adversary but as one of their own people. The defense of the prophet is also formed by God's successful persuasion of the prophet, which contributes to the severe turmoil endured by the prophet in light of the literary audience's rejection of and hostility toward the prophet (20:7–18).

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[65] Gitay, "The Projection of the Prophet," 46–48. Gitay's understanding of Jeremiah's commission is more extreme, in that Jeremiah is not a deliberative opponent and has no choice in being a prophet since he was destined to be one before his birth. The idea that Jeremiah has no choice extends beyond the evidence of the text, which points more toward a struggle (20:7). It is more appropriate to say that since accepting his prophetic call, Jeremiah is commissioned by God against his own people and cannot withhold the divine word of judgment from them. Still, the point is not that the prophet has no choice in accepting his commission.

Rhetorical Effectiveness

The opportunity to measure rhetorical effectiveness occurs by determining the *potential* effectiveness the text could have on the identified audiences. The strategies of Jer 1:4–12 result in Jeremiah's commission functioning as an apologetic, defending the prophet's authority and eliciting trust and sympathy from the audience.[66] As such, the passage participates heavily in the judicial genre. Certainly, other portions of the book affirm the validity of the prophet in contrast to false prophets (e.g., 23:9–40). However, 1:4–12 affirm Jeremiah's authority by being a prophet formed by Creator YHWH (1:5), being persuaded by YHWH's creation acts and presence (1:5, 7–8), and participating in the pronouncement of YHWH's creational prerogatives of creation and destruction (1:10).

The clearest sign of the effectiveness of this passage and the first of YHWH's creation claim (1:5) is seen in YHWH's ability to overcome the prophet's objection. While this style of creational appeal was less than effective in Moses' commission (Exod 4:10–13), the appeal to YHWH's creational authority and the accompanying reassurance of divine presence and aid in Jer 1:7–8 are enough to persuade the prophet into the prophetic ministry. The successful persuasion of the prophet to embrace his call serves as the backdrop of the affliction he experiences as a result of his message.

The judicial nature of the prophet's commission is reinforced for the readers in 20:7–18. This passage displays the remorse of the prophet in light of the hostility and antagonism he faced from the inscribed audience. Fretheim reflects on this "vocational crisis" in relation to its readership, noting, "At best, reading this text might engender remorse and/or repentance among them, as they observe the agony through which they

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[66] Gitay, "The Projection of the Prophet," 52.

put both prophet and God. Look at what it took—such personal cost—for the prophet to speak the word of God to them."[67] The reading audience is exposed to the inscribed audience's rejection of the prophetic word and the effect of their rejection of the prophet.[68] The reading audience should recognize the authority of the prophetic word from Creator YHWH, particularly through the fulfillment of his message of judgment, and subsequently be moved by the inscribed audience's hostility toward Jeremiah.

Conclusion

Jeremiah 1:4–12 follows the book's superscription and contains the prophet's commission before presenting his initial visions. The three main rhetorical strategies are oriented around Jeremiah being formed by YHWH for the prophetic office, being persuaded to embrace the prophetic office by an appeal to YHWH's authority as Creator, and Jeremiah's participation in the divine creational prerogatives of creation and destruction.

The prophet's call and commission in 1:4–12 initiates the prophet's ministry with vivid expressions of YHWH's authority as Creator. YHWH's creational activity is seen in his forming of the prophet in his mother's womb and his authority to establish the prophet with the power to pronounce the uprooting of Judah and any nation. YHWH expresses his creational prerogatives of creation and destruction through the agricultural language of uprooting and planting, verbs that participate in a larger pattern of likening Israel and its people to a garden and its produce. The cataclysmic vision of 4:23–28

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[67] Fretheim, *What Kind of God*, 285.

[68] Lewin ("Arguing for Authority," 117) pushes beyond reading 20:7–18 as a vocational crisis and instead sees the passage as a glimpse into the struggles of a sixth-century prophet, in which the prophet's suffering and faithfulness add authority to the message.

provides another occurrence of this agricultural metaphor and is the next passage under investigation, in which the creation tradition of Gen 1 is reversed to convey Creator YHWH turning his garden into a barren land (4:26).

CHAPTER 5: GOD AS DESTROYER IN JEREMIAH 4:23–28

The prophet's vision in 4:23–28 famously depicts the catastrophic destruction of the land with strong connections to Gen 1:2, demonstrating the extent of Judah's devastation in the wake of the coming Babylonian military invasion. Maintaining the already discussed comparison of Judah to a garden, the fruitful land or garden (כרמל) of Judah has become a barren wilderness (שממה) at the hand of Creator YHWH. The devastation is so severe that, much like the earth in Gen 1:2, the land of Judah is now תהו ובהו. While the vision focuses on the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah, its employment of the creation tradition of Gen 1 to articulate the level of destruction demonstrates YHWH's creational authority. In addition to the use of a creation tradition, the vision further establishes YHWH's identity as Creator through the description of creation's response to YHWH's presence and fury. It is this Creator YHWH who stands behind the land's destruction.

MT		Translation
רָאִ֙יתִי֙ אֶת־הָאָ֔רֶץ וְהִנֵּה־תֹ֖הוּ וָבֹ֑הוּ וְאֶל־הַשָּׁמַ֖יִם וְאֵ֥ין אוֹרָֽם׃	4:23	I looked at the earth and behold, it was formless and empty; and toward the heavens, and there was no light!
רָאִ֙יתִי֙ הֶֽהָרִ֔ים וְהִנֵּ֖ה רֹעֲשִׁ֑ים וְכָל־הַגְּבָע֖וֹת הִתְקַלְקָֽלוּ׃	4:24	I looked at the mountains and behold, they were quaking, and all the hills were shaking!
רָאִ֕יתִי וְהִנֵּ֖ה אֵ֣ין הָאָדָ֑ם וְכָל־ע֥וֹף הַשָּׁמַ֖יִם נָדָֽדוּ׃	4:25	I looked and behold, there was no humankind, and all the birds of the skies had fled.
רָאִ֕יתִי וְהִנֵּ֥ה הַכַּרְמֶ֖ל הַמִּדְבָּ֑ר	4:26	I looked and behold, the fruitful land[1] was a wilderness,

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[1] Rom-Shiloni (*Voices from the Ruins*, 296–97) persuasively suggests an alternative view of this term in light of her understanding of the relationship between 4:23–25 and 4:26, in which she identifies "an ethnocentric approach to the land, which uses ecological observations to serve theological concepts." The ethnocentric aspect of this passage is the result of the sins of a small nation inflicting harm to the rest of

וְכָל־עָרָיו נִתְּצוּ מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה מִפְּנֵי חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ: ס		and all its cities were in ruins, before YHWH, before his fierce anger.
כִּי־כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה שְׁמָמָה תִהְיֶה כָּל־הָאָרֶץ וְכָלָה לֹא אֶעֱשֶׂה:	4:27	For thus says YHWH: "The entire land[2] will be a desolation, though I will not completely destroy it.[3]
עַל־זֹאת תֶּאֱבַל הָאָרֶץ וְקָדְרוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל עַל כִּי־דִבַּרְתִּי זַמֹּתִי וְלֹא נִחַמְתִּי וְלֹא־אָשׁוּב מִמֶּנָּה:	4:28	Because of this, the earth will mourn and the heavens above will grow dark, because I have spoken, I have planned, and I have not relented and I will not repent from it."

Rhetorical Unit

Jeremiah 4:23–28 is situated within the literary block of 2:1—6:30, but more locally, the

unit of 4:5—6:30. The first section of 2:1—4:4 focuses heavily on the themes of

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creation. She argues that the term should be in reference to the cultivated region of Carmel and its towns. This would reflect Jeremiah's awareness of Carmel's need for rain and the serious threat of drought for the region and its inhabitants, which would surely result in it becoming an inhabited desert. In favor of this reading is also the reference to mountains and hills in 4:24. While reading this term in reference to the region of Carmel may very well be the case, it cannot be said either way with complete certainty whether it is in reference to Carmel or the land of Judah as a whole being a fruitful land. However, the emphasis of the imagery in 4:26 (cf. 2:7) is still on the turning of fruitful land into a desert, which can apply to either referent. Jindo's (*Biblical Metaphor Reconsidered*, 113) argument for reading כרמל as "vineyard" (or "fruitful land") in Jer 2:7 and 4:26 within the metaphor of YHWH's royal garden remains most convincing, however. Thompson's (*Jeremiah*, 168) thought that the term be translated as fruitful land while also likely reminding them of the lush Carmel region may provide a helpful middle ground while emphasizing the image of a fruitful land turning to ruin. Additionally, the cities of כרמל in 4:26 may find a counterpart in the "cities of Judah" in 4:16, which is particularly relevant if the prophet's vision of destruction in 4:23–26 is viewed in the context of the scenes of battle in 4:11–18. This would strengthen the connection between the cities mentioned in 4:26 being the cities of Judah rather than those of a specified region. Furthermore, in Isa 29:17, כרמל is used in a similar pattern as 2:7 and 4:26, where Lebanon is turned into a fruitful land (כרמל), which is surely not saying that Lebanon is turning into Carmel (cf. Isa 32:15–16). That passages like Amos 1:2 and 9:3 reference Carmel as a particular mountainous and lush region is less challenging due to their references to the top (ראש) of Carmel. Similarly, in Micah 7:14, Carmel is a clearer referent due to the mention in conjunction with other specified locations, Bashan and Gilead (cf. Isa 33:9; 35:2).

[2] כל־הארץ is translated as "the entire land" since the focus is on the ruining of Judah and its cities. See McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:108. Many similarly render this as "the whole country." See Allen, *Jeremiah*, 67; Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 180. Some assign this destruction to the entire world and reflect this in their translation. See Craigie et al., *Jeremiah 1–25*, 80–82; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 143, 167; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 356–61.

[3] וכלה לא אעשה poses challenges for translation on a logical level. Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, 143, 166–67) renders the line as "and none of it will I remake" by revocalizing וכלה as וכלה. This is unnecessary. It need not present a contradiction with the previous line, as if שממה necessitates the idea of total annihilation.

repentance and the indictment against the people that results in the judgment portrayed in

4:5—6:30.[4] When 4:5–31 is isolated as its own smaller unit, it can be further divided into

smaller subunits:

I.   4:5–31 // A foe from the north

        a. 4:5–18 // Prepare for disaster from the north!

               i. 4:5–10 // A foe from the north is coming

              ii. 4:11–18 // Jerusalem's evil has brought a devastating army

        b. 4:19–21 // Jerusalem laments over the coming destruction

        c. 4:22 // YHWH condemns the people for their foolishness

        d. 4:23–28 // Jerusalem becomes a world undone

               i. 4:23–26 // Jeremiah reports his vision of the land's destruction

              ii. 4:27–28 // YHWH explains Jeremiah's vision

        e. 4:29–31 // Military disaster has arrived

               i. 4:29 // Jeremiah returns to the scene of battle

              ii. 4:30–31 // YHWH speaks against Jerusalem and hears Jerusalem's distress[5]

Jeremiah 4:5–31 sections itself off from what precedes in a variety of ways. On a topical

level, there is a shift from indictment and warning of potential judgment to the arrival of

judgment and dramatic scenes of its arrival. As Holladay notes, "There is a marked

change of style at 4:5; from this point onward we hear the sounds of battle and meet the

foe from the north."[6] In addition to the change in style, 4:5 initiates with an imperative

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[4] Evidence for this is described in Chapter 3.

[5] The provided structure follows the voicing analysis of Lee (*The Singers of Lamentations*, 55). Central to her approach to the chapter's structure is her argument for reading Jerusalem (or Jerusalem's poet) as the speaker of 4:19–21.

[6] Holladay, *The Architecture of Jeremiah 1–20*, 55.

and specifies a new setting in the presence of Judah and Jerusalem. While 4:3–4 similarly

identifies Judah and Jerusalem and uses imperatives, 4:5 shifts away from the summons

to repentance and presents the audience with the panic of a battle scene, which serves as

the backdrop of 4:5–31 as a whole.

In the midst of this larger poetic collection about the coming foe from the north is

the vision of military disaster in 4:23–28. The break from 4:22 to 4:23 is signaled by a

shift in speaker. Although the change of speaker is not clearly labeled in 4:23, 4:26

contains a reference to YHWH in the third person, and its participation in the verbal

patterning of 4:23–26 supports reading 4:23–26 as coming from the same speaker.[7] The

TSL also provides a minor break between 4:23–26 and 4:27–28 and emphasizes YHWH

as the speaker of 4:27–28. The third-person reference to YHWH in 4:26 can then be

contrasted with the first-person language of 4:27–28.[8] While 4:22 is clearly spoken by

YHWH, the prophet's voice is heard in 4:23–26. The unit is also signaled by a shift in

tone, as 4:22 is a poetic explanation from YHWH of why judgment is coming, while

4:23–26 is a vision with an accompanying divine explanation in 4:27–28.

A superficial break occurs after 4:26 to signal a shift between the vision report

and the explanation.[9] This is signaled by a transitional כי at the start of 4:27 and a change

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[7] The similarity in diction and verbs tempts one to posit YHWH as the speaker of Jer 4:23–26 as he is in Gen 1. Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, 148) notes this possibility but still adheres to Jeremiah as the speaker.

[8] There is also the point that the collocation ראיתי והנה in prophetic books is typically connected to a human speaker (e.g., Ezek 1:4; 2:9; 8:2, 7, 10; 10:1, 9; 37:8; 44:4 Zech 2:1, 5; 4:2; 5:2, 9; 6:1; cf. Dan 8:3; 10:5). The only time when this collocation is assigned to YHWH is in the metaphor of YHWH's relationship with Israel in Ezek 16:8 and is non-visionary. See also Boda, "Writing the Vision," 110–11.

[9] This general structure of Jeremiah's speaking and YHWH's explanation mirrors the same structure of 4:19–22, which leads Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, 147–48) to consider the two passages as two subunits of the same unit. This is a possible understanding of the structure, particularly due to 4:22 opening with כי. Borges de Sousa ("Jer 4,23–26 als P-orientierter Abschnitt," 420) follows Holladay but views 4:23–26 as a distinct unit. However, it is better to understand 4:19–22, 23–28, 29–31 as a sequence of interrelated subunits extending back to 4:5. The כי and TSL formula do not provide enough disjunctive weight to separate 4:27 from what precedes. The כי also serves to connect it with 4:23–26 as the expected

in speaker, which is indicated by a TSL formula. The כי and TSL formula attach the

cause of destruction to YHWH's burning anger in 4:26.[10] YHWH becomes the speaker

for all of 4:27–28 as he expresses the extent of the coming judgment and his intent to

bring it about. Thus, there is the vision report of 4:23–26 and its explanation in 4:27–28.[11]

The כי and TSL do not provide enough disjunctive weight to the passage, meaning the

unit as a whole is 4:23–28.

Following 4:23–28, vv. 29–31 breaks from the vision and its explanation and

returns to the scene of battle. The scene of battle depicts the desertion of the city upon

hearing the arrival of enemy horses and archers (4:29). YHWH presents a series of three

questions to the city, personifying the city as a woman (4:30).[12] He continues speaking

through 4:31 as he hears Daughter Zion's groaning and crying out. Her voice is the last

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explanation of the vision or an attached prophetic oracle. McKane (*Jeremiah*, 1:108–111) sees this small subunit being 4:27–29. However, the similarity to 4:19–21 and its evenly proportioned nature suggest that 4:29 belongs with what follows. See Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 364–67. Most commentators divide the text between 4:28 and 4:29. See Allen, *Jeremiah*, 70; Brueggemann, *Jeremiah*, 61–62; Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, 171–73; Craigie et al., *Jeremiah 1–25*, 83–84; Duhm, *Jeremia*, 54–55; Lalleman, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, 94; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 364–67; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 231–33; Weippert, *Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde*, 50–54. Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, 168), however, divides the unit at this point as well but sees YHWH as the speaker of 4:29–30. Goldingay (*Jeremiah*, 182) sees 4:29 as standing on its own, similar to Nicholson (*Jeremiah*, 54–56). Goldingay's rationale for this is that 4:29 returns to the scene of military invasion. Boda ("Writing the Vision," 109–110) correctly identifies the phrase thus says YHWH as part of the vision oralces in the prophets. This understanding brings unity to 4:23–28 while also acknowledging the shift from observation report to prophetic oracle at 4:27.

[10] Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 69.

[11] Similarly structured passages include the symbolic visions in Jer 24:1–3; Ezek 1:4–28; 2:9–10; 8:1–18; 10:1–22; 37:1–28; 44:4–8; Amos 7:1–9; 8:1–2; Zech 1:8–17; 2:1–4, 5–17; 3:1–10; 4:1–14; 5:1–4, 5–11; 6:1–15. See Boda, "Writing the Vision"101–118. A key difference is that the vision in Jer 4:23–28 is divided by a כי with a TSL rather than ואמר or ויאמר. Prophetic oracles can often follow visions, but YHWH's words in 4:27–28 are more explanatory, similar to YHWH's description of judgment in Amos 7:9 in relation to the vision of 7:8–9. See Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 151.

[12] Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, 145–46) places 4:29–30 in the mouth of YHWH. Goldingay (*Jeremiah*, 188) and Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 368) have Jeremiah as the speaker of 4:30. It seems more appropriate to have 4:29 function as a scene from battle, much like earlier in the chapter, where the prophet is recording what he sees. The similarities to the earlier visions of the chapter consist of returns to the sound of the approaching enemy and the people fleeing. The identity of the speaker of 4:30 ultimately remains unclear. However, the questioning in 4:30 reflects some of the accusations leveled against the city in 3:1–5, suggesting that he could be the speaker here as well. Fischer, (*Jeremia 1–25*, 228) also sees YHWH as the speaker.

voice of the scene from destruction as she succumbs to her attackers. What follows in

5:1–31 is initiated by YHWH's imperatives to the prophet to go and search throughout

the city of Jerusalem for an honest person (5:1–2).[13]

The vision of 4:23–28 is thus a self-contained unit occurring in the middle of an

extended battle scene. Because of its placement in the larger unit of 4:5–31, aspects of

this larger unit are important for informing the rhetorical situation and shaping the

rhetorical strategy. Within the larger unit of 4:5–31, the vision of 4:23–28 describes the

extent of the catastrophic disaster and identifies YHWH as the one standing behind and

orchestrating the events.

Rhetorical Situation

Jeremiah 4:5–31 moves the reader toward the Day of YHWH and the judgment brought

about by YHWH's use of the foe from the north, Babylon. The inevitable arrival of this

northern enemy is part of the prophet's commissioning visions, particularly in 1:12–16.

The fourth chapter of the book initiates the realization of this enemy's arrival, as the

prophet experiences visions and siege scenes and speaks oracles regarding the foe from

the north and the cataclysmic destruction brought about by its army (4:5–6).

The situation of 4:23–26 is driven by the exigence that the foolish people of

Jerusalem face military disaster from the foe from the north. Now that disaster has

arrived and is unavoidable, it becomes important to recognize that Creator YHWH stands

behind the city's coming destruction.[14] The vision is also embedded in a Day of YHWH

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[13] The imperatives of 5:1, 10, 20: 6:1 all function to initiate new units and subunits. Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 190. The shifts in ch. 5 are also signaled by changes in setting and speaker, with YHWH voicing the imperatives.

[14] 4:14 poses a challenge for commentators regarding the nature of salvation mentioned by the prophet if the people cleanse themselves. Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 348) suggests that this salvation

(4:9) passage. In this coming day of destruction, YHWH brings summons of the foe from the north to ravage the land of Judah. In this context, the foe from the north refers to Babylon. Each of these elements is important for understanding the nature of the vision in 4:23–28 and interpreting the imagery used in the passage.

The impetus behind the situation and the coming destruction is the people's lack of knowledge, which forms the basis of their judgment (4:22) and how they respond to judgment (4:30). In the verse directly preceding our unit, YHWH characterizes the people of Jerusalem, עמי, as foolish and lacking knowledge of God.

MT		Translation
כִּי אֱוִיל עַמִּי אוֹתִי לֹא יָדָעוּ בָּנִים סְכָלִים הֵמָּה וְלֹא נְבוֹנִים הֵמָּה חֲכָמִים הֵמָּה לְהָרַע וּלְהֵיטִיב לֹא יָדָעוּ׃	4:22	For my people are foolish, they do not know me; they are foolish children and have no understanding. They are wise at doing evil and do not know how to do good.

The description of the people as being void of any knowledge is a consistent portrait throughout Jer 1–10 (5:21; 8:7–9; 9:11; cf. 9:23). This is a problem needing a potent rhetorical response: how can the people's guilt and subsequent judgment be communicated if they lack the intelligence to grasp the coming reality? Subsequently, does the reading audience now have the wisdom to understand judgment?

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should be understood in light of the immediate threat of military destruction. He clarifies, however, that while the verse mentions deliverance as a possibility, it is not anticipated by the prophet. See also Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 177; Thompson, *Jeremiah*, 225. Fretheim (*Jeremiah*, 98) draws attention to 4:12, which specifies that judgment is now certain. For him, salvation must be in reference to something other than deliverance from the immediate military deliverance and better fits with the context of exilic readers. For similar discussions, see Allen, *Jeremiah*, 66; Brueggemann, *Jeremiah*, 56. Carroll (*Jeremiah*, 164) follows Duhm (*Jeremia*, 51) in suggesting that this verse is foreign to the passage and is the result of later hands who have shaped and preserved the passage in various contexts. While the call to repent in 4:14 certainly speaks to the reading audience's need to repent for restoration, the possibility that there is a final attempt at repentance in the face of destruction cannot be dismissed. As noted by Lundbom, while deliverance may be a possibility, it is not anticipated. The people's continued refusal to repent even in the face of destruction further condemns the inscribed audience according to their persistent unrepentance.

In the few verses following our passage, the prophet envisions his people in a similar way (4:30–31).

MT		Translation
וְאַתִּי שָׁדוּד מַה־תַּעֲשִׂי כִּי־תִלְבְּשִׁי שָׁנִי כִּי־תַעְדִּי עֲדִי־זָהָב כִּי־תִקְרְעִי בַפּוּךְ עֵינַיִךְ לַשָּׁוְא תִּתְיַפִּי מָאֲסוּ־בָךְ עֹגְבִים נַפְשֵׁךְ יְבַקֵּשׁוּ׃	4:30	But what are you[15] doing—one who is about to be destroyed[16]—dressing yourself in scarlet, putting on gold jewelry, and highlighting your eyes with makeup? To no gain will you beautify yourself! Your lovers despise you, they will seek your life!
כִּי קוֹל כְּחוֹלָה שָׁמַעְתִּי צָרָה כְּמַבְכִּירָה קוֹל בַּת־צִיּוֹן תִּתְיַפֵּחַ תְּפָרֵשׂ כַּפֶּיהָ אוֹי־נָא לִי כִּי־עָיְפָה נַפְשִׁי לְהֹרְגִים׃ פ	4:31	For I hear a voice like a weak one, anguish like one giving birth to her first baby, the voice of daughter Zion! She gasps for breath, she stretches out her hands: "Woe to me, for my life is fading before my killers!"[17]

The inhabitants of Jerusalem are unable to recognize the need to flee the attacking army. Instead, they are described as accepting the army's attacks like a woman adorning herself for her lovers, who will kill her. Goldingay captures the harsh nature of the rebuke presented in these three verses: "And are you tarting yourself up instead of fleeing? We see the woman/city taking care of her appearance, putting on clothing, jewelry, and makeup, as if getting ready to go out and enjoy herself."[18] The city's inability to understand the dire circumstances extends from the time leading up to the attack until the attack itself.[19]

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[15] The *ketiv* reflects an archaic spelling of the 2fs pronoun, reading ואתי. Some manuscripts read the *qere* ואת, which is the normal spelling. For a discussion, see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 145.

[16] While the preceding pronoun is 2fs, the passive participle is in masculine form. *BHRG* § 20.3.3 (3).

[17] A wooden translation would be: "Woe now for me, for it is fading, my life before my killers." Allen (*Jeremiah*, 68) and Goldingay (*Jeremiah*, 180) simplify this final line in a similar way.

[18] Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 188.

[19] Lee (*The Singers of Lamentations*, 60) argues that YHWH's response in 4:31 and the shared lexemes with 4:19 suggests that YHWH has not heard their cry until only just then.

Another factor contributing to the people's foolishness is the issue of false prophecy and the tension it poses with Jeremiah's visions and oracles in this chapter. This is seen in 4:10, where the prophet accuses YHWH of deceiving the people (cf. 20:7). The prophet assigns to YHWH the deceiving words spoken to Jerusalem, "It will be peace for you," when in fact, it will be nothing but destruction. Although false prophecy is a known judgment from YHWH (cf. 1 Kgs 22:19–23; Ezek 14:1–11), YHWH's true prophet is appalled by the reality that YHWH permitted such messages.[20] On the one hand, the inhabitants anticipate peace, yet our passage (4:23–28) reveals such full destruction that it can be described only as a return to תהו ובהו. This contrast between expectation and reality, in combination with the coming destruction in a general sense, may drive the lament in 4:19–21. As the reader progresses through the chapter, it is gradually revealed that rather than the peace that was deceptively promised, there would be nothing but complete annihilation, with YHWH standing before it all (4:26).

The people's senselessness contributes to the situation of our passage in a variety of ways. On one level, it serves as the basis for the coming judgment envisioned by the true prophet (4:22). On another level, it contributes to the shock experienced when, rather than peace, YHWH sends an unparalleled level of destruction against his people. The vision of destruction could easily be met with denial by a people expecting peace (4:10).

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[20] Allen, *Jeremiah*, 66. McKane (*Jeremiah*, 1:95) suggests that 4:10 could be read as a plea of mitigation due to the ambiguity of such a message from YHWH in which peace "has degenerated into an assertion about the inviolability of Jerusalem which does not leave room for an authentic faith in Yahweh." Though this could certainly be the case, the issue at hand still seems to be the permission of false prophecy, particularly due to the reality that false prophecy is a prominent issue in the book. Fischer (*Jeremia 1–25*, 217) observes that this is linked to the larger problem throughout the book, particularly ch. 23, regarding the problem of identifying who is truly sent by YHWH and who is not. More recently, Wessels ("The Dilemma," 7) has argued that 4:10 speaks to a development in Jeremiah's thought, especially in relation to 23:17, but ultimately points to "the royal-Zion ideology, promoted uncritically by some optimistic prophets," that "created a false sense of security which was detrimental to the people of Judah."

The language of our passage is devastating enough, but it is compounded by the people's anticipation of peace. More significantly, however, the people's lack of knowledge forms an important challenge for the prophet that must be addressed in his rhetorical strategy. The strategy of the passage must be capable of shocking the inscribed audience into realizing the severity of the coming destruction, depending heavily on epideictic rhetoric.

As military destruction quickly approaches, the people remain unresponsive to the prophetic call to repentance or the vivid scenes of battle. The people's senselessness and anticipation of peace must be overcome if they are expected to respond appropriately to the message of coming destruction.

Rhetorical Strategy

The rhetorical strategy of 4:23–28 is structured and described in ways similar to the creation tradition of Gen 1, establishing YHWH's role as Creator. As Creator, YHWH is envisioned as exercising his prerogative to destroy. The following rhetorical analysis focuses on the text's presentation of YHWH as Creator and how the presentation shapes the picture of judgment and destruction. As previously noted, however, it is important to remember that this creation claim operates within the situation of military destruction, communicating that Creator YHWH is exercising his destructive prerogative by "uncreating" Jerusalem and Judah through warfare. Thus, the analysis begins with an assessment of how the passage describes the coming day of destruction.

The basis of the creation claim in 4:23–26 is its similarities to Gen 1 in structure and language. Scholars have long noted the similarities between Jer 4:23–26 and the creation tradition of Gen 1, but most notably Gen 1:2 and the occurrence of תהו ובהו in Jer 4:23. John Bright states that "the story of Genesis i has been reversed: men, beasts,

and growing things are gone, the dry land itself totters, the heavens cease to give their light, and primeval chaos returns. It is as if the earth had been 'uncreated.'"[21] There are two main factors of the prophet's vision in 4:23–26 that point to YHWH's role as Creator. The first is the similarities to the creation tradition of Gen 1 and its reversal. The similarities to Gen 1, when paired with the situation of military destruction, clarify the nature and extent of תהו ובהו. The second is the passage's depiction of creation's response to the presence and anger of YHWH. These factors result in the passage being primarily epideictic in nature, as its disturbing and intense image of destruction results in the outcry of even Jerusalem (4:19–21; cf. 4:31).

A Day of Destruction

The unit of 4:5–31 is situated on the coming Day of YHWH (4:9). The judgment experienced on this cataclysmic day is driven by warfare destruction brought about by God's utilization of a northern foe. The vision of 4:23–28 participates in the larger unit's emphasis on coming military destruction in several ways, as it presents the aftermath of the Babylonian invasion. From the outset, one can observe several lexical connections to the larger unit of 4:5–31, particularly in 4:7–8 and its description of the enemy and land.[22] The consistency of language throughout the larger unit reinforces the idea that the prophet's vision is anchored in the context of imminent military invasion. In other words, what the prophet sees in his vision is clearly linked to the destruction brought by this foe

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[21] Bright, *Jeremiah*, 33.

[22] Hayes (The Earth Mourns, 71–72) identifies the following connections between 4:7–8 and 4:23–28: "land" (ארץ), "waste" (שמה), ruins (נצה), "because of this" (על־זאת), "sackcloth" (שק), "lament" (ספד), "wail" (ילל; cf. 4:28 אבל; קדר), "fierce anger of YHWH" (חרון אף־יהוה), "not turn away" (לא־שב), and "from us" (ממנו; cf. 4:28 ממנה).[22] Additionally, the מדבר of 4:26 recalls the מדבר of 4:11.

from the north. As Creator, YHWH has summoned this enemy and its destruction as expressions of his fierce anger.

The vivid image of destruction requires us to define the elements in the text that connect it to the Day of YHWH and the description of the foe from the north. Placed in connection to the previous discussion about the foolish and deceived people, the situation of the vision in 4:23–28 is the Day of YHWH when God brings against his foolish people mighty Babylon. Much attention is given here to the type of language used to describe and intensify the coming military invasion.

Day of YHWH

Though the seemingly "uncreated" state of Jerusalem is a driving theme in 4:23–28 and will be discussed below, the vision is embedded within the context of the Day of YHWH. Bright famously categorizes 4:23–26 as being "one of the most powerful descriptions of the Day of Yahweh in all prophetic literature."[23] At the beginning of 4:5–31, the phrase והיה ביום־ההוא appears in 4:9, embedding the envisioned disaster within the backdrop of the Day of YHWH.[24] Rather than coming to destroy Israel's enemies, YHWH mounts his destructive powers against Israel.[25]

Though the specific phrase "Day of YHWH" is absent from our passage, relevant language is present.[26] Several factors in our passage and the unit as a whole correspond

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[23] Bright, *Jeremiah*, 32–33.

[24] Within the broader scholarly discussion, this is among the phrases that can be used to invoke the Day of YHWH. See Barker, "Day of the Lord," 133–36.

[25] Within the scope of what can occur on the Day of YHWH, the judgment of Israel is among the possibilities, as seen in Joel 2:1–11 and Obadiah 11–14. See Nogalski, "Recurring Themes," 126–27. See also Isa 22:1–25; Zeph 3:6–8.

[26] Hoffman argues that we should begin our study of this theme with only the fifteen passages that contain the explicit phrase יום יהוה, none of which occur in Jeremiah. See Hoffman, "The Day of the Lord," 44. From there, other passages can be included in the discussion. However, the multifaceted context of this

with the standard depiction of the Day of YHWH seen elsewhere in the Old Testament. In summarizing the associated elements, Barker notes that "These include most obviously the appearance of Yahweh, which often is accompanied by descriptions of war, cosmic upheaval, judgment and destruction, the targets of the day, and its temporal proximity."[27] In addition to this is the element of YHWH's anger upon arrival. Jeremiah 4:5–31 contains many elements that connect it to the Day of YHWH theme, including references to the hills and mountains, that the desolation occurs מפני יהוה, YHWH's fierce anger (חרון), the absence of light with the presence of darkness, turning the land of Judah into ruins and desolation, and the images of military attacks in the surrounding passages. These factors can often contribute to the presentation of YHWH as a Divine Warrior, which also seems to take place in our passage when these factors are attached to the arrival of YHWH.[28] Each of these aspects will be described below.

The mountains and hills often appear in the passages concerning the Day of YHWH as either being leveled, shaken, or prospering, depending on the immediate context (Isa 2:2, 14; 30:25; 42:15; 54:10; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13; Nah 1:5; Hab 3:6; Ps 46:3–4; cf. Isa 5:25; 40:4; 64:1, 3; Ezek 33:28; Mic 1:4). In our passage, the scene of the mountains and hills shaking and quaking matches well with the calamity of this day (Jer 4:24). There is also the fact that behind the described destruction stands YHWH, as all of this occurs מפני יהוה (Jer 4:26), which occurs in other Day of YHWH passages (Nah 1:5,

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phrase and its variants pose issues for this particular phrase as an entry point. See Barker, "Day of the Lord," 133. There is the Day mentioned in Jer 46:10.

[27] Barker, "Day of the Lord," 136.

[28] Hayes (*The Earth Mourns*, 73) notes that "The traditional signs of the presence of the divine warrior include the darkening of the sky, earthquake, the panic and presumed flight of the enemy, and the depopulation and desolation of the land." She also forms a link between our passage and Nahum's opening hymn, which I explore in greater detail below.

6; Zeph 2:2; cf. Judg 5:5). YHWH's presence behind the destruction, as well as the effects of God's presence on the hills and mountains, illustrate the severity of the coming devastation.

We see similar imagery in Nah 1:5, which also connects these events to YHWH's presence (מפניו).[29] In the context of Nahum's opening hymn, the response of the mountains and hills "is meant to stress YHWH's strength."[30] In Jeremiah's vision, the structure of the passage communicates a similar emphasis, particularly in the sense that the prophet sees the destruction of the land until it is revealed that all of this happens in the presence of YHWH (4:26). It thus emphasizes YHWH's active role in the destructive process. To further emphasize the similarities between the two passages, Nah 1:6 asks the rhetorical question, "Who can endure before his fierce anger (בחרון אפו)?" This phrasing also mirrors the driving source of judgment in Jer 4:26, which is again before YHWH's fierce anger (חרון אפו). The connections between the two passages, one a hymn and the other a vision report, highlight the destructive nature of YHWH's presence and fierce anger. The fierce anger of YHWH enacted on the created order results in nothing short of a severe undoing or disruption of the created order that he otherwise sustains.[31]

Another clear connection to the Day of YHWH imagery is the presence of darkness and the absence of light (Jer 4:23, 28). Perhaps the most explicit example of this

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[29] For more detail on the connection between these two passages, see Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 72–74.

[30] Renz, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 74.

[31] The fact that all of this happens in response to God's anger is perhaps best captured by Thomas Renz (*The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 88) in his reflection on Nahum's opening hymn: "A more systematic theologian would rightly point out that the normal functioning of the universe is the result of God constantly upholding what he has created. Our poet does not make this assumption explicit, but the fact that things fall apart when God acts on his anger implies at the least that they only hold together when and because God does not act on his anger."

pattern is seen in Amos 5:18–20, where the contrast between light and dark is used twice.

The use of darkness can, at times, be paired with the concept of judgment, while light is

paired with deliverance.[32] However, darkness or the absence of light is also commonly

employed in Day of YHWH scenes to describe the type of day it will be (Isa 13:10; MT

8:22—9:1; Ezek 30:2; Joel 2:2; MT 3:4; MT 4:14–15; Zeph 1:15).[33] While the presence

of darkness can serve to alert the reader to the Day of YHWH, the absence of light and

presence of darkness in 4:23, 28 play the additional roles of drawing further connections

to the creation account of Gen 1.[34]

The use of warfare language is also a common pattern in the prophetic

presentation of the Day of YHWH (e.g., Ezek 13:5; 30; Joel 2:1, 11; Zeph 1:14). Warfare

language is often seen in the presentation of YHWH as a warrior or the arrival of an

invading army, though both can occur simultaneously. The destructive force of an

attacking military contributes to the desolation of the land (e.g., Isa 17:9; Joel 2:3). In the

wake of warfare, the land lies in ruins. When YHWH is presented as the warrior, he

brings ruin to his enemies, which can result from both military destruction and his

cosmic-warrior imagery. YHWH uses the foe from the north as his mode of destruction,

which is made clear by the vision that YHWH ultimately stands behind the destruction of

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[32] Carroll R., *The Book of Amos*, 336.

[33] Carroll R., *The Book of Amos*, 336. In his summary of *Chaoskampf* in relation to Gog, an enemy related to the enemy from the north, Fitzpatrick (*The Disarmament of God*, 87) notes that "Gog comes from a region that lies at the fringes of creation, and his presence means the undoing of that creation. This image presents Gog as the antithesis of creation. Gog of Magog is the ultimate symbol of anti-creation and all that stands in opposition to the divine sovereign. It is characteristic of the *Chaoskampf* myth that darkness accompanies the reign of the monster."

[34] This imagery is also connected to the heavens and earth mourning in response to judgment. This will be discussed below. Boda (*Zechariah*, 746, 763) notes a similar pattern regarding the absence of light in the presentation of a future Day of YHWH in Zech 14:7 and its use of Gen 1:3–5, leading him to argue that 14:7 includes a moment of recreation following being earth prior to the creation of Gen 1. The lexical connections between Zech 14:7 and Gen 1:5 include "particular day" or "day one" (יום־אחד), day (יום), night (לילה), and evening (ערב). "Particular day" is the translation used by Boda (*Zechariah*, 763).

4:23–28 and 4:5–31 as a whole. Each of the elements described here contributes to the

destruction of 4:5–31, and 4:23–28 in particular, occurring on a Day of YHWH.

Enemy from the North

The foe from the north is introduced as a main character or entity in the introductory

chapter of the book. After the prophet's second vision, YHWH explains that he will use a

kingdom from the north to pass judgment on his people, Judah (1:14–16). YHWH reveals

to the prophet what will happen to the people because of their sins, and the reappearance

of this northern enemy in 4:5–31 functions as a conduit of YHWH's judgment.[35] Two

aspects help inform the identity of this foe, namely its function within the book as a

whole and the Mesopotamian descriptors assigned to its army.

The Foe from the North in Jeremiah

As important of a character as this foe is, its precise identity can be challenging. Within

the first several chapters of the book, Jeremiah provides a variety of descriptions for the

foe. The foe comes from a foreign land to the north (1:14; 4:6; 6:1, 22) and is depicted as

speaking a foreign language and being ancient (5:15). Additionally, their attack is sudden

and strong, with descriptions of a mighty military (4:11–13, 20; 29; 5:16; 6:4, 5, 23).[36] In

a prominent article on the identity of the northern foe, Brevard Childs argues that the foe

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[35] Perhaps the clearest example of how God's actions align with those of Babylon is provided in chart form by Fretheim (*What Kind of God*, 303), who corresponds the actions of both parties throughout the book.

[36] Childs ("The Enemy from the North and the Chaos Tradition," 190) provides a similar description of the people in the opening section of Jeremiah. Perdue ("Jeremiah in Modern Research," 6–7) describes them in the following manner: "the enemy comes from the North and from a distant land, is an 'ancient' and 'enduring' nation, speaks a foreign language, is merciless, consists of great warriors, attacks unexpectedly, rides on swift horses and chariots, is armed with bows and spears, uses battle formations, and is bold enough to attack a fortified city even at noon."

cannot be identified with a particular historical nation.[37] Childs traces the idea that

Jeremiah initially had no specific referent in mind, but the passing of time revealed the

enemy to be Babylon. However, the later additions to the book recapture this language

and embed it within the chaos tradition.[38] Part of the issue with such a proposition is that

it is based almost entirely on the book's redactional development and the apocalyptic

development of the foe in a later context. This is not to suggest that the enemy plays no

role in the apocalyptic or *Chaoskampf* literature of later periods (such as Ezek 38–39),

but rather challenges the idea that the identity of this foe developed so extensively within

the Jeremiah tradition in such a brief period of time. If this were the case, then the foe

was initially a vague enemy in authentic Jeremiah material but eventually identified as

Babylon in Jeremiah in material from a later date (25:9). The foe then became

mythologized in an apocalyptic or *Chaoskampf* tradition, which is how it should be

understood in Jer 50–51 and 4:23–26, since many hold that these passages originate from

a later period.[39] While not impossible, such drastic shifts in identity are not the most

plausible reading, particularly if one does not connect this foe exclusively to an

apocalyptic tradition but instead sees it in relation to standard language applied to

Mesopotamian threats.

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[37] Childs, "The Enemy from the North and the Chaos Tradition," 190.

[38] Childs ("The Enemy from the North and the Chaos Tradition, 188 n 5) defines chaos myth as "traditions dealing with the struggle between Yahweh's creative activity and the primeval forces of disorder which oppose him." Part of his ("The Enemy from the North and the Chaos Tradition," 188–93) argument regarding the connection between the for from the north and chaos is the Hebrew term רעשׁ, which became a term appearing in Jeremiah alongside the foe in 4:24; 8:16: 10:22. Regarding this term's use in the Old Testament and its production, he considers its occurrence in 4:24 to be the first clearly eschatological use of the term.

[39] For a similar critique, see Reimer, "The 'Foe' and the 'North' in Jeremiah," 225.

For the vast majority of the book, one could make a strong case for the identification of the enemy as Babylon.[40] This connection is made explicit in 25:9.[41] In the same subunit of 25:8–11, the outcome of Babylon's arrival mirrors the language used for the enemy in 4:5–31, most notably with the use of כל־הארץ and שמה.

MT		Translation
כִּי־כֹה אָמַר יְהוָֹה שְׁמָמָה תִהְיֶה כָּל־הָאָרֶץ וְכָלָה לֹא אֶעֱשֶׂה:	4:27	For thus says YHWH: "The *entire land* will be *a desolation*, though I will not completely destroy it.
וְהָיְתָה כָּל־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְחָרְבָּה לְשַׁמָּה וְעָבְדוּ הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה אֶת־מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל שִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה:	25:11	"And this *entire land* will become ruins and *a desolation*, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon for seventy years."

Jeremiah 25:8–11 clarifies that the northern foe ravaging the land is none other than Babylon. Later in the book, this enemy from the north attacks Egypt (46:20, 24) and Philistia (47:2) as well, and we can historically connect this to Babylon.[42] Despite the consistency of these particular instances in relation to historical Babylon, a complication emerges toward the end of the OAN when Babylon is pictured facing this enemy from the north (50:3, 9, 41, 48). Thus, in Jeremiah, we have the foe being clearly depicted as Babylon itself but also against Babylon.

David Reimer categorizes typical understandings of this foe in terms of specific versus non-specific and this-worldly versus mythical, though it must be added that compositional and biographical issues still come to the forefront of this identification

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[40] The discussion of this foe being the Scythians due to Herodotus's reference to them has fallen out of favor. For an overview of this, see Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 137.

[41] It must be noted, however, that these words are absent in LXX–Jer, suggesting that they are a later interpretation of the editors of MT–Jer. See Reimer, "The 'Foe' and the 'North' in Jeremiah," 224–25. Still, in the context of the Hebrew and Babylonian tradition of MT–Jer, the connection stands.

[42] Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 146–47.

process.[43] Thus, part of the tension that Reimer constructs in his analysis regarding the enemy as a historical enemy is that "if later in Jeremiah's career he came to identify the foe with Babylon, it is rather odd that in so short a space of time the motif should be used against Babylon, the putative foe, itself."[44] This echoes a similar criticism I state against Childs's perspective above. Certainly, as Perdue notes, "this adaptation demonstrates the fluidity of the expression even in Jeremiah."[45] However, the fluidity of the term is perhaps best understood in relation to its reference to a Mesopotamian power from Israel's perspective, which could transcend the succession of the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Medo-Persian empires.

The connection to Mesopotamian powers (and their successions) also challenges those who may overemphasize the connection between the enemy from the north and apocalyptic traditions where the foe is almost exclusively a chaos power. The connection between the foe and apocalyptic perspectives is justified (e.g., Ezek 38–39), but an overemphasis can lead one to see Jeremiah's foe oracles as purely mythological or apocalyptic in nature.[46] Instead, a more appropriate description of this enemy is that it is a historical force, and its description is conditioned by the ongoing onslaughts by Assyria or Babylon (and later Persia). David Vanderhooft suggests a similar conclusion and

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[43] This categorization comes from Reimer, "The 'Foe' and the 'North' in Jeremiah," 223–32. Much of this is displayed even in Childs, "The Enemy from the North and the Chaos Tradition," 187–98.

[44] Reimer, "The 'Foe' and the 'North' in Jeremiah," 225. He later rephrases this as "it must be thought strange that the 'foe from the north' is itself threatened with a 'foe from the north.'" See Reimer, "The 'Foe' and the 'North' in Jeremiah," 230.

[45] Perdue, "Jeremiah in Modern Research," 7; See also Reimer, "The 'Foe' and the 'North' in Jeremiah," 225. While there can be fluidity in the identity of the entity, the clear Mesopotamian language assigned to the enemy in relation to the successive powers coming from Mesopotamia is preferable to Reimer's reading of the foe from the north, in which the prophet does not need a particular entity in mind, and צפון refers to a place of judgment. The paradigmatic foe begins as Babylon, though they in turn must face the Medes and Persians.

[46] Such a view is also fueled by those who view 4:23–28 as apocalyptic in origins. See Eppstein, "Day of Yahweh," 97.

alludes to 4:23 as an example.[47] Vanderhooft argues that much of this language in the OT

refers to enemies from Mesopotamia and began with Assyrian domination but continued

with the assumption that Babylon carried the mantle of what Assyria started.[48] If this is

the case, then the reference to the enemy from the north and their attack on Babylon in

Jer 51 could be a reapplication of this language to the Medes and Persians.[49] While these

nations are not perfectly north of Judah, their coming from the north likely speaks to the

reality that the eastern Mesopotamian threats, due to the geographical limitations from

the Mediterranean Sea to the West and the Desert to the East (and Southeast), traveled

North and South on the highway system down into Israel.[50]

However, another factor in the discussion has been largely overlooked, namely

God's use of nations as agents of judgment against his people. Built into the covenant

curses is the expectation of distant foreign nations being used by God to judge his people

(Deut 28:49, 33). Similarly, Isaiah portrays Assyria as a weapon used by YHWH (שבט

אפי) to judge his people (10:5), and Jeremiah later refers to Babylon in similar

terminology (51:20). As a war club, God wields Babylon to destroy nations and

kingdoms through physical warfare (50:21–23). In response, YHWH proclaims that he

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[47] Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 148–49. He points to Josiah's death as further indication that Judah was aware of a Mesopotamian successor to Assyria. For Jeremiah, the northern foe language is conditioned by ongoing incursions by Mesopotamian powers, starting with Assyria in the previous centuries.

[48] Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 144–49. Boda ("Terrifying the Horns," 26) similarly proposes that the continuity between Assyria's exile of Israel and Babylon's exile of Judah may also be the reason behind the image of the two animals in (Hebrew) Zech 2:1–4.

[49] Such a conclusion seems to be shared by Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 899. Lundbom (*Jeremiah 37–52*, 371) over-historicizes 50:3 by pointing out that "excavations of ancient Babylon indicate that Nebuchadnezzar's fortifications were aimed at strengthening the capital on its northern side, where danger of invasion was always the greatest." While the enemy in Jeremiah is certainly historical in nature, it is written from Israel's perspective. The northern enemy of 50:3 is likely viewed as another Mesopotamian enemy to the "north" of Israel, rather than describing the direction another nation will attack Babylon.

[50] Arnold, "Babylon," 58. Contra Reimer, "The 'Foe' and the 'North' in Jeremiah," 229–32. Crouch ("The North," 562–77) has also recently challenged Reimer by arguing that the enemy from the north in Jeremiah is geographical in nature and should be identified with Babylon.

will repay Babylon for what they did to Jerusalem (51:24–25).[51] The language previously describing the Babylonian aggressions is reversed and now captures their own judgment. Much of the language of the enemy from the north also appears in Ezekiel's famous text on Gog of Magog, in which a foe is similarly portrayed as a weapon of YHWH.[52] In this context, however, Gog serves as a representative of any potential nation that God could use to recreate the events of 586 BCE in the future. In his description of this cosmic battle, Fitzpatrick states that "In exercising his wrath before the nations, God proves his true identity: Sovereign Creator and Lord of history . . . No enemy ever comes against Yhwh's people counter to his will and after this battle of cosmic proportions there will be no enemy left among the nations for Yhwh to employ."[53] While the enemy in Jeremiah's case is clearly historical in nature, it similarly speaks of YHWH's power as Creator to wield even distant armies as his weapon (Jer 51:20).

In summary, it seems best to understand the enemy from the north as historical in nature though multivalent in reference. It speaks of the succession of empires that came from Mesopotamia. In Jeremiah's time, at least after 605 BCE, this enemy was clearly Babylon, though the exact referent can shift in changing political landscapes.[54] In later contexts, such as Ezek 38–39, the historically and generally specific enemy becomes

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[51] See also Zech 1:15, in which the secure nations (Babylon) extended disaster toward Jerusalem beyond God's anger. See Boda, "Terrifying the Horns," 22–41.

[52] Fitzpatrick (*The Disarmament of God*) presents a convincing argument that part of Gog's role alongside participating in God's recreation is to demonstrate that he is disarming himself from his weapon of choice against his people. As pointed out by Strine and Crouch ("Yhwh's Battle against Chaos in Ezekiel," 884–85), the Psalter's depiction of YHWH's conflict with the sea and chaos is also intimately connected with YHWH's kingship.

[53] Fitzpatrick, *The Disarmament of God*, 96.

[54] See also Boda, "Terrifying the Horns," 29–30, 34–41.

mythologized.[55] When assessing texts such as Jer 4:5–31, the enemy is clearly being used

by YHWH to judge his enemies and is intratextually connected to Babylon (25:8–11).

Mesopotamian Descriptions

The blending of warfare with natural forces and animal imagery is another important

element that connects the foe's identity with Mesopotamian power. The metaphorical

descriptions of the foe's armies reflect similar patterns observed in other descriptions of

Mesopotamian armies in both the Old Testament and other ANE texts. In the case of Jer

4:5–31, Babylon has come as the foe from the north, and its army is the agent of

YHWH's judgment against Jerusalem.

In 4:7, the "destroyer of nations" is clearly a militant force but is described as a

lion emerging from his lair.[56] In 4:11–12, the coming judgment is described as a

"scorching wind" and "a wind too strong" for the people of Jerusalem to endure. In 4:13,

the horses are portrayed as eagles, which are "the symbol of courage and military

prow."[57] These attacks will result in the destruction and abandonment of all of Judah (4:7,

20, 27, 29).[58] The blending of warfare and non-human (animal and weather) imagery in

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[55] In their discussion on Ezekiel's use of this language in relation to the Chaoskampf in Judah's mythology, Strine and Crouch ("Yhwh's Battle against Chaos in Ezekiel," 889) note that "Since Yhwh's battle against chaos was intertwined with Judah's relationship to the surrounding foreign powers, it followed that any rendering of the *Chaoskampf* attempting to account for Judah's new political situation as a subdued and subordinate (non)entity had to account" role the role of these political powers.

[56] This is a comparison already made in Isaiah and his use of Assyrian imagery to describe Assyrian attack (Isa 5:29). Though this is a common depiction of Assyria's power, the lion is connected to the broader ANE background, which makes it difficult to identify a specific Assyrian source as the backdrop for Isaiah. The lion, Nineveh, is ripped apart and defeated in God's judgment in Nahum 2:12–14 (MT). Machinist ("Assyria and Its Image," 736) draws the connection between these passages in Isaiah and Nahum to suggest that "Nahum appears, in any case, to treat them as part of the Isaianic tradition on Assyria."

[57] Marcus, "Animal Similes," 94.

[58] The destruction brought about by an attacking army is not unheard of in ANE literature. In "Lamentation Over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur (1.166)," The primary image used by the speaker to describe the destruction of the city by an attacking army is a storm. See *COS*, I, 536.

the description of the coming foe and destruction provides further basis for reading our passage in 4:23–26 as speaking directly to the destruction of Judah by the hand of Babylon's army rather than the apocalyptic destruction of the whole world.

Similar comparisons to storm and animal language are used for warfare descriptions elsewhere in the ANE. In his commentary section on The Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I, Peter Machinist explains that "The presence in the battle of monster winds (VA 50'-51') exemplifies to be sure, a widespread association of storm and battle imagery in Near Eastern literature."[59] An example from The Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I is seen in the line, "The warriors of Assur f[all]/f[ell] like a serpent upon the army of the king of the Kassites."[60] Another includes: "And destructive monster winds blew at each other like attacking lions. The confusion of swirling dust storms whirls about in the battle."[61] In a more ancient context, the attack on Ur is described on several occasions as a storm, though it is clearly depicting an attacking army.[62] David Tsumura summarizes that storm, flood, or sea imagery "can be used metaphorically to describe a devastating force, as that of a human army or a divine being."[63] We even see Isaiah make use of this language in Isa 28:15, 18 at an earlier time in response to Assyria.[64] The fact that Jer 4:5–31 describes the coming military using similar metaphors is no surprise. In 4:7, 13, the enemy's army

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[59] Machinist, "The Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I," 350. Some note that Isaiah makes use of metaphors seen in Assyrian propaganda. See van der Deijl, *Protest or Propaganda*, 259, 293; Machinist, "Assyria and Its Image," 728, 735. For another biblical comparison, see Ezek 38:9. See also Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction*, 182–95.

[60] Machinist, "The Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I," 111.

[61] Machinist, "The Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I," 121.

[62] In "Lamentation Over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur (1.166)," See *COS*, I, 536–39. Hayes (*The Earth Mourns*, 78) suggests the possibility that the darkening of the sky in 4:28 could be picturing a storm.

[63] Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction*, 195.

[64] There is some debate surrounding these two verses and their use of שׁוֹט. This term more commonly refers to a whip, though the context here is clearly a flood. For a discussion of this term, see Machinist, "Assyria and Its Image," 727; Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 517.

is described through animal metaphors similar to other warfare passages. The devastation

brought about by this army is similarly described in 4:11–13 through storm imagery. The

employment of such vivid language for the city's destruction helps situate the prophet's

vision in 4:23–28 as the aftermath of the envisioned military destruction rather than an

apocalyptic description of the world's destruction. The metaphors used for the army also

connect the foe to a Mesopotamian power, which we know to be Babylon.

<div align="center">Creation Language</div>

The rhetorical analysis now shifts toward YHWH's creation claims, which intensify the

nature of the coming day of destruction. Behind the devastating Day of YHWH imagery

and description of the Babylonian invasion stands YHWH, the Creator of the cosmos,

who wields his creational authority against his people.

Similarities to Genesis 1

In his summarizing statement of scholarship until the time of his own article on the

passage, Michael Fishbane states that "scholars have not failed to notice that it serves as a

counterpart to the first chapter of Genesis," in which the structure of the vision leads to a

state of "chaotic doom."[65] He thus proposes the following similarities:

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[65] Fishbane, "Jeremiah," 151. Fishbane "Jeremiah," 153 suggests similarly that the connection Discussions surrounding the close affinities between the two passages must contend with the text-critical issues of MT–Jer 4:23 and the fact that LXX–Jer 4:23 does not include ובהו. This is crucial to the discussion, as van Ruiten ("Back to Chaos," 27) Hebrew phrase forms "The most obvious similarity with Genesis 1." For discussions of this issue, see Allen, *Jeremiah*, 67; Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, 169; Duhm, *Jeremia*, 53; Eppstein, "Day of Yahweh," 93–97; Hayes, "Jeremiah IV 23," 247–49; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 165; Holladay, "The Recovery of Poetic Passages," 401–35; Kim, "Tsunami, Hurricane, and Jeremiah 4:23–28," 64–61; Lundbom, "Haplography," 307–10; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 360; McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:107; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 29–31; van Ruiten, "Back to Chaos," 21–30; Walser, *Jeremiah*, 228; Weippert, *Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde*, 50 n 91.

Jeremiah		Genesis		
4:23	תהו ובהו	1:2	תהו ובהו	Pre-creation
4:23	אור	1:3	אור	First Day
4:23	שמים	1:8	שמים	Second Day
4:23, 4:24	ארץ : הרים ,גבעות	1:9, 10	ארץ : יבשה	Third Day
		1:14	מארות	Fourth Day
4:25	עוף	1:21	עוף	Fifth Day
4:25	אדם	1:26	אדם	Sixth Day
4:26	חרון אפו	2:2	שבת	Seventh Day[66]

Fishbane's article on Jer 4:23–26 and its use of Gen 1 initiated a discussion on the relationship between the two passages and how closely Jeremiah follows Genesis. Although Lundbom's caution that "The correspondences between the two are not as neat as Fishbane . . . would have us believe" is helpful, many of Lundbom's observations continue the similarities beyond what Fishbane initially observed.[67]

From the outset, one can observe that the prophet's vision is highly structured. As detailed above, the unit of 4:23–28 can be divided into two subunits: 4:23–26, 27–28. The first subunit is a vision of cataclysmic destruction, and the second is an explanation of the vision and destruction spoken by YHWH. The poetic style of the first subunit is far more structured and rhythmic than the second, making it a "step-by-step rhetorical

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[66] Fishbane, "Jeremiah," 152.

[67] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 357. Some of his observations with be discussed below. Not much reasoning is attached to his criticism of Lundbom. McKane (*Jeremiah*, 1:108) suggests that Fishbane's connections are "hardly legitimate." This is only clarified in Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction*, 28–30. Despite the many other differences, the ordering of terms and phrases differs between the two texts. Thus, rather than תהו ובהו, light, heavens, earth (mountains, hills), bird, man, his fierce anger, as proposed by Fishbane, the actual order is earth as תהו ובהו, heavens without light, mountains and hills, man and bird, fruitful land and desert, and towns. See Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction*, 28–29. Additionally, heavens (שמים) appears in both 4:23, 25, and there is no counterpart to the fourth day in Jer 4:23–26. However, Fishbane ("Day of YHWH," 152 n 1, 154) acknowledges there the reappearance of heavens causes no problems for his proposal, and his comparison between Job 3 and Gen 1 is similarly missing a counterpart to the third day of creation.

dismantling of creation."[68] The procedural nature of this vision is exemplified by each of

the lines in 4:23–26 beginning in the same manner:

	MT	Translation
4:23	רָאִ֙יתִי֙ אֶת־הָאָ֔רֶץ וְהִנֵּה־תֹ֖הוּ וָבֹ֑הוּ	I looked at the earth and behold, it is formless and empty
4:24	רָאִ֙יתִי֙ הֶהָרִ֔ים וְהִנֵּ֖ה רֹעֲשִׁ֑ים	I looked at the mountains and behold, they are quaking
4:25	רָאִ֕יתִי וְהִנֵּ֖ה אֵ֣ין הָאָדָ֑ם	I looked and behold, there is no humankind
4:26	רָאִ֕יתִי וְהִנֵּ֥ה הַכַּרְמֶ֖ל הַמִּדְבָּ֑ר	I looked and behold, the fruitful land is a wilderness

The key difference between the lines is that 4:23, 24 begin with ראיתי → object → *waw +*

הנה, while 4:25, 26 do not place a direct object between ראיתי and והנה.[69] The result is all

the same: each line progresses the reader through the prophet's vision with sequentially

shortening lines.

The "repetitions and balancing terms" of vv. 23–26 provides this unit with a

highly structured cadence.[70] Jeremiah 4:23–24 follows the same pattern on the opening

line of "I looked at X and behold! . . ." and each verse envisions two environments as

direct objects, the earth and heavens in 4:23 and the mountains and hills in 4:24. The

subsequent 4:25–26 also follows the same pattern in their opening line of "I looked and

behold!" without a direct object separating these two visionary signals, and both verses

follow the same extent of destruction on the second line of "all the birds" in 4:25 and "all

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[68] Brueggemann, *Jeremiah*, 59.

[69] Eppstein ("Day of Yahweh," 95) argues that the differences between the patterns between vv. 23–24 and 25–26 are due to a noun being lost from the text and proposes that את הארץ is the missing noun in 4:25 and that it "was restored in the margin," and את השמים in 4:26 despite the need to also read אין אדם as אין ארם. This view seems unlikely.

[70] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 357. See also Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25*, 224.

the towns" in 4:26.[71] The clear, procedural cadence of the passage is reminiscent of the

creation account of Gen 1 and suggests a reversal of the process of Gen 1. The result is

that Jeremiah's "looking" in this passage mirrors God's "looking" in Gen 1.[72] As will be

discussed below, however, the nature of תהו ובהו is not a return to primordial chaos.

Instead, the structure of the passage leads to a state of תהו ובהו to communicate the idea

that the God who creates in Gen 1 has brought about military destruction against his

people and exercises his creational prerogative of destruction.

The vision of 4:23–26 is also structured so that each line gets progressively

shorter, excluding the double prepositional phrase of 4:26 (מפני יהוה מפני חרון אפו).

	MT	Translation
4:23	רָאִ֙יתִי֙ אֶת־הָאָ֔רֶץ וְהִנֵּה־תֹ֖הוּ וָבֹ֑הוּ וְאֶל־הַשָּׁמַ֖יִם וְאֵ֥ין אוֹרָֽם׃	"I looked at the earth and behold, it is formless and empty, and the heavens are without light!
4:24	רָאִ֙יתִי֙ הֶֽהָרִ֔ים וְהִנֵּ֖ה רֹעֲשִׁ֑ים וְכָל־הַגְּבָע֖וֹת הִתְקַלְקָֽלוּ׃	I looked at the mountains and behold, they are quaking, and all the hills are shaking!
4:25	רָאִ֕יתִי וְהִנֵּ֖ה אֵ֣ין הָאָדָ֑ם וְכָל־ע֥וֹף הַשָּׁמַ֖יִם נָדָֽדוּ׃	I looked and behold, there is no humankind, and all the birds of the skies have fled.
4:26	רָאִ֕יתִי וְהִנֵּ֥ה הַכַּרְמֶ֖ל הַמִּדְבָּ֑ר וְכָל־עָרָ֗יו נִתְּצוּ֙ מִפְּנֵ֣י יְהֹוָ֔ה מִפְּנֵ֖י חֲר֥וֹן אַפּֽוֹ׃ ס	I looked and behold, the fruitful land is a wilderness, and all the cities are in ruins, before YHWH, before his fierce anger."

Some have suggested that the "progressively shorter lines simulate the undoing of

creation, heightening the sense of loss and leaving the audience to experience an eerie

silence at the end."[73] This is certainly plausible, though one must take into account the

prepositional phrases concluding 4:26 (מפני יהוה מפני חרון אפו). Holladay addresses this

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[71] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 357–58.
[72] Kim, "Tsunami, Hurricane, and Jeremiah 4:23–28," 55.
[73] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 358. See also Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 186; Holladay, "The Recovery of Poetic Passages," 405.

particular issue by restructuring the verse as a tricolon in which "and all its cities demolished before Yahweh" is joined together, and "before his hot anger (made desolate)" forms the third cola.[74] Elsewhere, he notes that these last two cola fall outside the parallelisms and mark the climax of the poem, revealing YHWH's agency in judgment.[75] In support of excluding these two colas from the analysis is the general parallelism of the structure, where וכל־עריו complements וכל־עוף and וכל־הגבעות of the previous two verses.[76] The climactic revelation of YHWH behind the destruction of the prophet's vision makes sense as standing outside the rhythmic structure of the passage, which supports the progressive shortening of lines in the subunit. Thus, his suggestion to restructure as a tricolon is unnecessary. The shocking revelation brought about the vision's shortening structure that concludes with the prepositional phrases is that YHWH stands above the envisioned calamity and brings about the destruction of his people seen in the vision. YHWH's presence and fierce anger also serve as a connection to the Day of YHWH setting of the entire chapter.

Holladay observes another helpful division in the text, namely that 4:23–24 deals with "the realm of nonlife (earth, heavens; mountains, hills)," while 4:25–26 deals with "the realm of life (man, birds; fruitful land, cities)."[77] This is a helpful conceptual division of the passage in that the vision first looks at the environment and then at the inhabitants and their specific habitats. However, this division is best understood as

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[74] Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 143. He provides a verb in the third colon and suggests that this provides a chiastic structure. This seems unlikely and unnecessary.

[75] Holladay, "The Recovery of Poetic Passages," 405.

[76] For a discussion of parallelism in the poem, see Holladay, "The Recovery of Poetic Passages," 405–406.

[77] Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 148. Interestingly, this collection of earth, heavens, mountains, and hills is seen in 40:12, which similarly highlights YHWH's creative power.

operating only within the vision report itself. Otherwise, part of this division is undone by the fact that the land and heavens will enter into mourning in the explanation of the vision in 4:28. This language likely speaks to the residents of the land and heavens will mourn, though it could certainly be understood as a personification of the land and heavens.

Both Kim and Fishbane draw attention to the contrast between Jer 4:23–28 and Gen 1, noting that while Jeremiah's vision leads to judgment, Genesis leads to all things being declared good and the Sabbath.[78] Similarly, Holladay notes a connection between the absence of humanity in both Jer 4:25 and Gen 2:5, partly due to אין and אדם not being collocated in other OT texts.[79]

These similarities between Gen 1 and the vision in Jer 4:23–26 provide helpful support for seeing a connection between the two passages.[80] The result of these similarities and the clear connection leads to the suggestion that Jer 4:23–26 employs the language of a creation account to convey the nature of the coming military devastation, meaning the one who created in Gen 1 has come against his people in his great wrath and destructive powers (Jer 4:26).

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[78] Fishbane, "Jeremiah," 151–53; Kim, "Tsunami, Hurricane, and Jeremiah 4:23–28," 55.

[79] Holladay, "The Recovery of Poetic Passages," 406. The connection to 2:4 is preferred to its lexical overlap than Paul Kim's ("Tsunami, Hurricane, and Jeremiah 4:23–28," 55) connection to Gen 1:26.

[80] van Ruiten ("Back to Chaos," 29) proposes that כרמל is another connection to Gen 1–2, and that its occurrence in 4:26 should be taken as another example of the land being referred to as the Garden of Eden, giving Joel 2:3; Isa 51:3; and Ezek 36:35 as examples. While this is certainly one possible reading of the term, the better reading places 4:26 and the other passages she lists as examples of passages reflecting the metaphor of YHWH's royal garden. Interestingly, not only does Ezek 36:35 refer to the "garden" (כרמל) becoming desolate (שמם), but 36:36 employs similar agricultural language as Jer 1:10 with the replanting (נתע) of what was desolate (שמם). This passage in Ezekiel is an oracle directed toward the people of Israel and the land they came from, which was given to their ancestors, which again seems to refer to the land as a whole rather than the Carmel region.

The Nature and Extent of תהו ובהו

Despite these remarkable points of overlap, the function of these similarities remains

within the situation of the prophet's vision. It must be remembered that 4:23–28 occurs in

the context of the military invasion that shapes the entirety of 4:5–31. The situation of

military invasion requires that one reconcile the cosmic similarities the vision shares with

Gen 1 to the specific situation of warfare in 4:5–31. Interpreting the connections to Gen 1

within the situation of warfare destruction clarifies the relationship between the prophet's

vision and the situation of warfare without needing to view the vision as an apocalyptic

gloss.[81]

Not all scholars agree that a connection exists between the two texts or even that

תהו ובהו should be understood as primordial chaos. David Tsumura rejects any

connection between Jer 4 and Gen 1, noting that "Because without v. 23 there would be

no reason to compare the Jeremiah passage with the Genesis creation story, we should

conclude that the two single verses, Jer 4:23 and Gen 1:2, simply share a common literary

tradition in their use of *tōhû wābōhû*, which, according to the Jeremiah context, refers to

a 'desert-like' state of the 'earth.'"[82] Tsumura challenges the standard implication and

meaning of the phrase תהו ובהו in the two passages. For him, this phrase does not indicate

primordial chaos, as is often understood, but is instead translated as "an unproductive and

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[81] McKane (*Jeremiah*, 1:108) provides a helpful caution regarding overemphasizing the extent of judgment described in the vision: "The antithesis between particular and universal, or historical and cosmic may be an over-simplification, since a prophet who is also a poet, and who is stretching his powers of expression to the limit, may find that the universalizing of a moment of historical disaster which he anticipates is the ultimate power which he possesses to convey the totality of the coming catastrophe." Such an understanding mitigates the need to assign this passage to world-ending apocalyptic literature in general or to a later hand. Though there are certainly concepts and phrases within this passage that are familiar to later readers of apocalyptic literature, the emphasis is on the military destruction of Judah.

[82] Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction*, 31–32.

uninhabited place."[83] His recharacterization of the phrase as referring to the land being

uninhabitable is certainly welcomed in so far as it challenges understanding this passage

in an eschatological or apocalyptic context.[84] While God's destructive powers and his use

of military destruction against Judah might result in an uninhabitable land, defining the

phrase as such in both Gen 1:2 and Jer 4:23 does not adequately capture the meaning of

the phrase in either context. However, Goldingay provides a more appropriate description

of the phrase, understanding it as "the formless void that existed before God began to

work on the newly created earth."[85]

While being a more diachronic concern, many scholars hold the passage's

similarity to later apocalyptic literature means it should be understood as a later addition

to the text.[86] In this perspective, one could claim that "Logically, vs 23 is unrelated to the

context and to the historical message of Jeremiah."[87] However, this is an unnecessary

assumption. In noting the differences between Jeremiah and later apocalyptic literature,

van Ruiten emphasizes that "The author makes no distinction between cosmic and

historical events. Here, too, the focus remains on the destruction of Judah and

Jerusalem."[88] A (proto)apocalyptic perspective does not accurately represent the

prophet's perspective in this passage. Despite the "prophetic hyperbole" used by

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[83] Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction*, 35.

[84] In a similar vein, John Goldingay (*Genesis*, 27) proposes that the phrase in Gen 1:2 could be rendered as meaning "formless and shapeless," which can be observed in environments like a trackless waste. His actual translation of the phrase is "formless void." The rendering of the phrase in Gen 1:2 as chaos could be misleading due to the lack of warfare language when compared to its ANE counterparts.

[85] Goldingay, Jeremiah, 230.

[86] Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, 168; Eppstein, "Day of Yahweh," 97. Olson ("Jeremiah 4.5–31 and Apocalyptic Myth," 81–107) goes as far as suggesting that all of 4:5–31 is dependent on 1 Enoch and the Book of Watchers.

[87] Eppstein, "Day of Yahweh," 96.

[88] van Ruiten, "Back to Chaos," 27.

Jeremiah to describe the coming destruction, the passage reminds the readers that he will not destroy it completely (4:27).[89]

Furthermore, those who understand this passage as apocalyptic exaggerate the passage's extensive scope of what is meant by הארץ (4:23). Despite the fact that he does not see 4:23 as an apocalyptic or even eschatological text, Lindblom sees this passage as describing the destruction of the entire universe.[90] Rather than being a disparate passage about the end of the world as a whole, the passage should be understood as using cataclysmic language to describe the end of Judah, which is the referent for הארץ. Allen reminds the reader that in 4:20 and 4:27, כל־הארץ envelops our passage and may be better understood as "the whole country."[91] Additional support for this view is found in 4:26 with וכל־עריו. The inclusion of "all its cities" seems to have in view the idea of a country rather than the entire earth.[92] The use of וכל־עריו in the immediate context to refer to the land of Judah provides a strong connection between the two passages and understanding the meaning of הארץ in 4:23–26. In other words, the reference to cities (וכל־עריו) serves as a point of continuity between our specific passage and its surrounding context, though one should not be dismissive of the potentially exaggerative nature of the phrase.

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[89] Prophetic hyperbole is Lundbom's description of the language used by the prophet in our passage. See Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 357.

[90] Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, 127. See also Craigie et al., *Jeremiah 1–25*, 82. For a more extensive use of this phrase, see Isa 1:23

[91] Allen, *Jeremiah*, 69. Fischer (*Jeremia*, 223–24) maintains the ambiguity of the referent and says that one can maintain a minimal approach, in which the term refers to Judah, or a maximalist approach, where the term envisions all of creation. However, the maximalist view of the term is supported primarily when 4:23–28 is not read in conversation with the description of military in 4:5–31 or the other occurrences of ארץ and עיר in the passage.

[92] Hoffman ("Eschatology," 79–80) proposes a similar reading of this passage as not being eschatological in perspective, noting that the reference to specific locations prevents the exaggerated metaphorical language from being applied universally. This leads him to conclude that the references to land should be understood in reference to the land of Judah.

Regarding Judah specifically, what Jeremiah sees turn into a wilderness is כרמל, which is used for the Promised Land in 2:7, particularly as YHWH previously led them through the מדבר and into כרמל (2:6–7).[93]

Despite the vision's use of drastic language to describe the coming destruction, the resulting תהו ובהו will not result in the complete termination of Judah and its people. The tension of Judah's fate in 4:28 clarifies the extent of Judah's destruction. The negated verbs (שוב; נחם) in 4:28 express that YHWH will not change his mind regarding judgment.[94] The question of repentance on Israel's part is a challenging interpretive issue for Jer 2–6. Regardless of whether one sees an opportunity for Judah to avert disaster through repentance earlier in this section, the certainty of YHWH's decision is clearly stated in 4:28. Although some see even YHWH's statement here as not being his final statement or that the judgment described in our passage hinges on Jerusalem's desire to repent, this seems out of the question.[95] One can certainly point to passages such as 12:15 and 18:1–10 as examples of Jerusalem's restoration, but that takes place only after the destruction described in our passage.[96] Others suggest that this passage reflects uncertainty in YHWH's mind regarding the extent of judgment, which is driven by the understanding that YHWH makes a contradiction or counterpoint to the coming destruction.[97] This is an unnecessary conclusion. The occurrences of this phrase in 5:10,

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[93] See van Ruiten ("Back to Chaos," 29), who observes a similar pattern but connects it back to Eden, though this is not likely in the context of Jer 4:23–26. If adopted, Rom-Shiloni's (*Voices from the Ruins*, 296–98) argument for כרמל referring to the Carmel region directly above Jerusalem would also contribute to reading the extent of the environmental devastation as being limited to the region and not the whole world or cosmos.

[94] Interestingly, in a sermon driven by Israel and Judah's lack of and inability to repent, YHWH matches their refusal to repent by securing judgment.

[95] Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 188.

[96] These passages are cited by Goldingay (*Jeremiah*, 188) as support.

[97] Brueggemann, *Jeremiah*, 60.

18; 30:11, and 46:28 place it in juxtaposition to destruction. It thus seems likely that its use in our passage serves the same function. It is also important to remember that although we see in the vision report the destruction of Judah on a cataclysmic scale, the heavens and earth are still present to mourn. How can they participate in the mourning process if everything has been uncreated? Similarly, the vision report is what the prophet sees, and YHWH's explanation comes in 4:27–28. He clarifies that despite the large-scale destruction, Judah will not be destroyed entirely. This conclusion should not be difficult, as prophets are elsewhere seen grappling with a vision of seemingly complete destruction (Amos 7:1– 9; cf. Jer 10:25).

It makes the most sense to understand Jeremiah envisioning the destruction of Judah while describing it abstractly through the cataclysmic reversal of creation. Through military destruction, Judah becomes תהו ובהו. But it must be emphasized that Judah, specifically its land and its cities, is experiencing this destruction, not the whole world.

Creation's Response to Creator YHWH's Presence

Creation's response to YHWH's presence and anger (4:26) in the prophet's vision demonstrates YHWH's power as Creator and connects it to the context of the Day of YHWH. As seen in 10:12–13, there is a firm connection between YHWH's creative activity and judgment, as creation responds to the presence and anger of its Creator.

As already discussed, the initial sight of the earth and heavens reflecting their state in Gen 1:2 initiates a jarring vision. The role of the earth and heaven imagery is focused on highlighting the extent of damage brought about by YHWH and his arrival. The pairing of earth and heaven is found in other passages describing YHWH's arrival and cataclysmic judgment (e.g., 2 Sam 22:8; Ps 68:8; Isa 13:13; 24:4, 18; Jer 4:23, 28;

10:13; 51:16; Joel 2:10, 30; 3:16; Hag 2:6, 21). On two occasions in Jeremiah, this word

pair appears in connection with God's creation of the heavens and earth and his ability to

destroy them, though this is a repetition of the same hymnic language (Jer 10:11-13;

51:15–16). The clear connection to Gen 1 in Jer 4:23–28 and the claims that YHWH

alone created the earth and heavens place YHWH's destructive powers in tandem with

his creative activity, making them counterparts of his role as creator in the book's

theology. This passage provides the only example, however, of ארץ returning to a

condition reflecting its Gen 1:2 state. The heavens being darkened or not producing light

is seen in other prophetic texts (Isa 13:9; Ezek 32:7). Yet, again, the emphasis on the light

(אור) being gone rather than darkness draws further connections to Gen 1:3 (ויהי־אור).

What Jeremiah sees is the antithesis of Gen 1:3.

Mountain (הר) and hill (גבעה) in Jer 4:24 form a common word pair in the

prophetic books and other parts of the Old Testament, particularly in the context of

YHWH's arrival on the Day of YHWH. A key image that comes to mind with this pair is

their permanence. They are a place of refuge in calamity (Jer 16:6; Isa 30:17; Hos 10:8;

cf. Jer 49:16) and an indicator of antiquity and temporal permanence (Prov 8:25; Job

15:7). Thus, when ultimate destruction is pronounced, the destruction, movement, or

flattening of the hills and mountains becomes a powerful way to communicate the extent

of destruction (Pss 114: 4, 6; Isa 40:4; 41:15; 54:10; Nah 1:5; Hab 3:6 cf. Ezek 6:3; 35:8;

36:4, 6). Their quaking and shaking in Jer 4:24 contribute to the severity of judgment by

using the mountains and hills as reference points.[98] It should also be noted that this word

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[98] See Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25*, 224–25; Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 185. Goldingay (*Jeremiah*, 185) clarifies that the image of their shaking "speaks to the disorder and chaos brought into the political and historical events of which Jeremiah is warning (cf. Isa 13:13)." Goldingay's connection to the political and historical spheres of life provide further justification for reading this cataclysmic language in reference to

pair occurs in contexts that speak of YHWH's agency in destruction, which our passage reflects (4:26). Though the people flee to the rocks (4:29), Jeremiah informs the reader that even this is not a secure location of refuge on the Day of YHWH.[99]

The expression of YHWH's creational prerogative of destruction is another important point needing clarification, particularly due to the focus of the present dissertation. The destruction of creation by its creator is not an isolated event in the Old Testament. Othmar Keel and Silvia Schroer give an example from the Egyptian Book of Dead (Utterance 175:35-40):

> But I [Atum] shall destroy all that I have created,
> This world will become primeval ocean (Nun),
> Primeval flood as at its beginning.
> It is I who will remain, together with Osiris,
> after I have transformed myself into another serpent,
> which men do not know and gods do not see.[100]

Similar to this example, we see the use of a creation tradition assigned to YHWH in the pronouncement of judgment against Judah. Just as God created when the earth was תהו ובהו, he will destroy Judah to the extent that it reflects תהו ובהו.

As the subunit moves from environments to inhabitants, the lack of inhabitants in 4:25 recalls the phrase from Gen 2:5 about there not being a person to work the

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military destruction, as does the people's retreat to the rock (of the mountain) in 4:29. Rom-Shiloni (*Voices from the Ruins*, 295) connects this the shaking of hills and mountains to theomachy, or creation through combat. While absent in the Priestly creation tradition of Genesis, Jer 5:22 reflects knowledge of a creation tradition involving tension with the sea. Rom-Shiloni (*Voices from the Ruins*, 295) thus concludes that "Hence, as in many other instances, Jeremiah uses a Priestly tradition about creation and harmonizes it with other traditions, clearly unconcerned about the thematic contradictions that scholars emphasize between the two."

[99] Fischer (*Jeremia*, 227) notes that "rocks" (כפים) occurs only in this passage and Job 30:6, though he references Sir 40:15 as well since the term is later translated as πετρα. Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 367–68) connects this term to caves. Craigie et al. (*Jeremiah 1–25*, 84) connect this term to the hills. Clines (*DCH*, 4:452) helpfully connects the term to mountain tops when paired with the verb עלה, as in Jer 4:26. Ultimately, the term is connected in some way to the mountains as a place of refuge during military attacks that cannot be defended against.

[100] Keel and Schroer, *Creation*, 153.

ground.[101] As the cosmic environment unravels, the inhabitants of the world have fled

and are no longer present. The fleeing of birds and absence of human inhabitants are also

seen in 9:10–11, though the animals (בהמה) are also included in this abandonment as

well. The playing out of this abandonment is described in the scene of 4:29–31 (29) as

some of the people run to the thickets (עב) and others go to the rocks (כף), ultimately

leaving the towns abandoned. The fact that כף is connected to the top of mountains, it

may draw a further connection to the swaying of the hills and mountains in 4:24, meaning

that the mountains will not be able to provide sufficient refuge.[102] Katherine M. Hayes

rightfully connects the vividness of the land's emptiness as an image of "exile and

extinction that conveys the physical realities of military devastation" and expresses the

loss of YHWH's favor as the "foundations and elements of life" relapse into

nothingness.[103]

The vision report concludes with the sight of the fruitful land (כרמל) becoming a

desert (מדבר) in 4:26. This is paralleled by the following line, which states that all of

Judah's towns will become ruins (נתץ). The word pair of כרמל and מדבר is used twice in

Isa 32:15–16, which describes the desert turning into fertile land, the opposite of what we

see in Jer 4:26. As discussed above, in addition to highlighting YHWH's destructive

powers, Jer 4:26 presents an effective undoing of Israel's entrance into the land, as seen

in 2:7. All the cities of Judah are now in ruins, reflecting complete devastation, which

reverberates throughout the rest of the book (19:15; 34:1, 7; 44:2). Similarly, their

restoration is described with such extensive language as well (31:24; 33:12). In reference

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[101] Holladay, "The Recovery of Poetic Passages," 406; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 360.

[102] See *DCH*, כֵּף, IV, 452.

[103] Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 88–89.

to Jeremiah's initial commission in 1:10, his words demonstrate YHWH's ability to tear

down (נתץ) and build up.

We return again to the cosmic scope in 4:28, as the earth is described as mourning

and the heavens growing dark. The reason for this is that God's spoken judgment cannot

be averted because he has made up his mind. When the verb אבל is placed with earth or

land, it typically depicts it as withering under the effects of drought (Isa 24:4; Hos 4:3; cf.

Jer 12:11).[104] Some have suggested that the verse pictures the inhabitants of the land

mourning, which is seen elsewhere with this word pair (Zech 12:12).[105] The better

understanding of this passage is something closer to a cosmic dirge or mourning, in

which the earth and heavens both participate.[106] As Holladay points out, the darkening of

the heavens in the parallel line supports this reading.[107] If this is the case, then the "land

is personified and given voice to participate in the mourning."[108] Ecological approaches

to the text have illustrated that earth "is marked by the awful punishment carried out by a

jealous God in an attempt to cleanse and purify a wayward partner."[109] Earth mourns over

the coming judgment as the heavens grow dark (קדר). Holladay notes that this darkening

reflects the mourning process as when "in dismay one neglects to wash face and

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[104] For this discussion, see also Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 167. It is important to note, however, that others have connected this verb in relation to land (ארץ) and understand it as a personification of the land mourning, such as in Jer 23:10. See Wessels, "The Earth Mourns," 310, 313–14.

[105] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 361.

[106] Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, 170; Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 101.

[107] Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 167.

[108] Clayville, "Ecological Hermeneutics," 646. The full quote is focused on 12:4 and states: "Additionally, the land is personified and given a voice to participate in the mourning of the exile of the Israelites and its own ecologically specific suffering as the animals flee and the land dries out."

[109] Wurst, "Retrieving Earth's Voice," 172. I would not, however, agree with including Earth as one of the primary cast members of Jeremiah who participates in the dialogue of Jer 4. Wurst ("Retrieving Earth's Voice," 179) refers to Earth as "an older woman, the former partner of YHWH" and joins with Israel and Judah as lamenting women.

clothes."[110] His summary of the state of the cosmos is that "In a way the whole cosmos is in mourning for itself."[111] Hayes connects the response of the heavens and the earth to YHWH's desolation of the land, noting, "Because of this divine determination, earth and sky will mourn, enacting the purposed desolation."[112] This language of the heavens and earth mourning fits the level of calamity that has occurred, again reflecting the cosmic-level description of Jerusalem's destruction.[113]

<center>Summary</center>

The above discussion on the rhetorical strategy operates on the understanding of YHWH as Creator. While there is no explicit claim to creation, such as his forming of the prophet in the womb (1:5), the vision's dependence on a creation tradition suggests that the key to understanding the effect of this passage is to see YHWH as Creator. YHWH's role as Creator is heightened by the Day of YHWH language, which speaks not only of YHWH as a warrior but also of creation's response to the arrival of its Creator. When YHWH arrives in anger on the day of Judah's judgment, it results in darkness and the trembling of even the most stable places of refuge. In short, the rhetorical strategy of this passage is driven by the claim that it is the Creator God of Gen 1 that brings destruction against his people. When he musters the armies of Babylon to bring judgment upon his people, it

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[110] Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 167. He gives 1 Sam 19:25 and Job 30:28 as examples.

[111] Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 168.

[112] Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 77. It is important to note that Hayes allows for the possibility of mourning due to the occurrence of mourning verbs in this verse, though she places emphasis instead on the darkening language. Her purpose for this is that the darkening language of 4:28 harkens back to the beginning of the vision in 4:23 and also matches the description of the earth returning to a wasteland due to a sirocco.

[113] Hayes ("When None Repents, Earth Laments," 138) identifies a potential reason for the earth's mourning, namely that the earth's mourning "accords with the distress of both the prophet and deity, but clashes with the indifference of the people, who do not see the hand of God in what is happening around them." Perhaps a similar situation occurs in 4:23–26 due to the people's characterization in 4:22 as without knowledge.

will be as if the people and land of Judah experience a reversal of Gen 1 and return to a

state of תהו ובהו.

The use of the creation tradition from Gen 1 and the implementation of the Day of

YHWH theme should evoke fear and recognition of Creator YHWH's power in

judgment, thus contributing primarily to the epideictic nature of the text. The haunting

language of the scene of judgment is best captured in Jerusalem's outcry in 4:18–21 (cf.

4:31). Such is the appropriate response to the devastation described in 4:5–31, which

reaches its climax in 4:23–28 when the land is described in such extreme language as

being תהו ובהו. The epideictic nature of the text is further heightened by the mourning

imagery ascribed to the heavens and earth, which both witness the ecological destruction

of the land.[114] The extreme language used to describe the coming military destruction

should shock the inscribed audience into realizing the severity of the coming judgment,

motivating them to repentance and thus heightening the deliberative nature of the text.

Simultaneously, the passage also highlights the inscribed audience's refusal to repent

prior to the coming judgment.

Rhetorical Effectiveness

The rhetorical effectiveness of 4:23–28 is strengthened by placing it in conjunction with

the surrounding subunit of 4:5–31, as well as the book's opening oracles in 2:1—4:4. The

opening oracles emphasize the tension between Israel's disposition and the necessary

actions to avert judgment. In order to avoid disaster, the people must repent. Yet the

people are defined by their inability to repent (3:12). The opening oracles of the book

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[114] Hayes, "When None Repents, Earth Laments," 138; Wessels, "The Earth Mourns," 310–14.

conclude with a final call to repentance in 4:1–4, in which Israel is given a final opportunity to repent in order to avoid experiencing YHWH's wrath. In the opening of 4:5–31, a scene of the coming destruction is described. The people are expected to lament because YHWH's fierce anger has not turned from them (4:8). In the explanation of the prophet's vision, we are again told that destruction is certain because YHWH has not relented (4:28). The inscribed audience's lack of repentance displayed in the opening chapters of the book is now met by the certainty of judgment by a God who will not relent from sending disaster. Thus, for its inscribed audience, the revealed image of destruction should have motivated them to repentance and to lament the extent of the coming catastrophe.[115]

For the reading audience, the vision maintains its epideictic aim to produce lament over the realized destruction brought about by unrepentance, as well as its deliberative aim to evoke repentance among the reading audience after seeing the result of the inscribed audience's judgment. The words for lament and response to their destruction are thus supplied in 4:19–21, 31. Zimmerli concludes that the lament of disaster "demands that the people should break into laments and wailing as a result of what is taking place."[116] The vision is also judicial in its aim to provide an understanding of their destruction, demonstrated by the inscribed audience's continued resistance to repentance. The inscribed audience refused repentance even in the face of the extreme devastation described in the vision.

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[115] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (*The New Rhetoric*, 52–53) highlight the role of epideictic rhetoric in moving an audience toward a particular action. Due to the calls to repentance in the larger literary unit, one could also add that the passage has deliberative intentions for the inscribed audience.

[116] Zimmerli, "Visionary Experience in Jeremiah," 103.

On the far side of destruction and lament, the readers who remember the described events and have experienced its effects are met by the aftermath of their pattern of unrepentance. To this end, 4:22 informs the reader that disaster has come because of the people's lack of wisdom in that they do not know YHWH or how to do good. They are instead skilled (חכם) only at doing evil. The issue of wisdom continues into subsequent passages (5:20–25; 8:4–12; 9:10–11; 10:1–16). Most relevant is 9:9, 11 and the connections to Jeremiah's vision in 4:23–26, where the birds have fled and there are no people. The end of the prophet's vision in 4:26 further describes the land as a מדבר. The destruction in 9:9 is described in ways similar to the prophet's earlier vision, where the pastures have become a מדבר, and there are no cattle, birds, or animals. God begs the question in 9:11, "Who is wise (חכם) enough to understand this? Who has been instructed by YHWH and can explain it? Why has the land been ruined and laid waste like a desert (מדבר) that no person can cross?" YHWH justifies the people's disaster (9:12–15) and presents a response to the issue of 4:22 in 9:22–23. Part of the issue leading to the disaster presented in 4:23–28 is described in 4:22 with the phrase "they do not know me" (אותי לא ידעו). In 9:22–23, YHWH reveals what it means to know him, "YHWH who practices kindness, justice, and righteousness" (cf. 22:16).

When 4:22 is read in relation to the larger issue of the people's lack of knowledge, the vision of 4:23–28 can be understood as "a rhetorical attempt to engage this numbed, unaware community in an imaginative embrace of what is happening."[117] The vision shocks the foolish audience's systemic lack of knowledge regarding YHWH

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[117] Brueggemann, *Jeremiah*, 61. This statement applies equally to the inscribed and reading audiences.

and his ways, being epideictic in that it invites the readers to know YHWH and adhere to the values seen in his character. Though the readers are typically meant to identify with the inscribed audience to a certain extent, the negative caricatures in our chapter—particularly the audience's inability to recognize their own doom in 4:29–31—provide a crucial point for distancing themselves from the literary audience. Seeing that their destruction and uncreation are YHWH's response to their lack of wisdom and repentance, the vision of 4:23–28 shocks the audience into recognizing their destruction in relation to their sins. The likely response to this recognition is their understanding of their demise and repentance for the purpose of restoration.

Conclusion

The prophet's vision in 4:23–28 vividly describes the people and land's devastation by Creator YHWH. By using the creation tradition of Gen 1, the prophet envisions the land experiencing the reversal of the Gen 1 creation process until the land is תהו ובהו. The same God who created the cosmos in Gen 1 now stands against the people's destruction in 4:5–31. The vividness of the military destruction brought about by Creator YHWH's anger results in the epideictic nature of the text as it seeks to evoke both audiences' emotions and lament and motivate them to repent. The issue of the people's foolishness in 4:22 and the use of a creation tradition repeats itself in 5:20–25, where YHWH is again presented as the sole Creator.

CHAPTER 6: GOD AS SUSTAINER IN JEREMIAH 5:20–25

The subunit of 5:20–25 includes two important creational claims for our study. The first is that YHWH created a boundary for the sea, and the second is that he controls the rainfall for Judah. Both of these claims differentiate YHWH from the idols receiving Israel's worship. The fact that it is YHWH alone who created and sustains the cosmos should drive the people to fear him and realize that they cannot prevail against him. The boundary that YHWH established for the sea also serves as an important rebuke against the people and their stubborn hearts.

MT		Translation
הַגִּידוּ זֹאת בְּבֵית יַעֲקֹב וְהַשְׁמִיעוּהָ בִיהוּדָה לֵאמֹר׃	5:20	"Explain[1] this in the house of Jacob, and proclaim it in Judah saying:
שִׁמְעוּ־נָא זֹאת עַם סָכָל וְאֵין לֵב עֵינַיִם לָהֶם וְלֹא יִרְאוּ אָזְנַיִם לָהֶם וְלֹא יִשְׁמָעוּ׃	5:21	'Hear this, foolish people without any sense;[2] who have eyes but do not see, who have ears but do not hear.
הַאוֹתִי לֹא־תִירָאוּ נְאֻם־יְהֹוָה אִם מִפָּנַי לֹא תָחִילוּ אֲשֶׁר־שַׂמְתִּי חוֹל גְּבוּל לַיָּם חָק־עוֹלָם וְלֹא יַעַבְרֶנְהוּ וַיִּתְגָּעֲשׁוּ וְלֹא יוּכָלוּ	5:22	Do you not fear me?' Says YHWH. 'Do you not tremble in my presence? (Me)[3] who set the sand as a boundary for the sea, as a perpetual statute that it cannot pass;

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[1] Although it generally means "Declare" or "Announce," I translate נגד as "explain" due to the explanatory nature of 5:20–31. This is certainly within the semantic range of the term. See *DCH*, "נגד," V, 599. The term is often used in passages where speech plays an explanatory function (e.g., Gen 41:24; Judg 14:12; Dan 2:2), which seems to be in view for the unit of 5:20–31. It is even used in Gen 41:24 in conjunction with the *hiphil* of ידע. This rendering of it is also seen elsewhere in Jeremiah (e.g., 9:12; 16:10; 36:17, 20; 38:15). This translation decision is more for emphasis rather than suggesting the term does not function as an imperative to "announce," as when it appears with other declaratory terms (e.g., 4:5, 15).

[2] Goldingay (*Jeremiah*, 206) correctly clarifies that the mind is in view for this accusation, meaning the people have "no mind." See also McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:129. Other occurrences of this sense include Prov 6:32; 7:7; 9:4, 16; 10:13; 11:12; 12:11; 15:21.

[3] The first-person pronoun is added here to show the resumptive nature of the participle.

Hebrew	Verse	English
וְהָמוּ גַּלָּיו וְלֹא יַעֲבָרֻנְהוּ׃		Though the waves[4] rage, they cannot prevail; Its waves roar, but they cannot pass it.
וְלָעָם הַזֶּה הָיָה לֵב סוֹרֵר וּמוֹרֶה סָרוּ וַיֵּלֵכוּ׃	5:23	Yet this people is stubborn and rebellious of heart; they have turned aside and gone away.
וְלֹא־אָמְרוּ בִלְבָבָם נִירָא נָא אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ הַנֹּתֵן גֶּשֶׁם וירֶה וּמַלְקוֹשׁ בְּעִתּוֹ שְׁבֻעוֹת חֻקּוֹת קָצִיר יִשְׁמָר־לָנוּ׃	5:24	They do not say in their heart, "Let us please fear YHWH our God, who gives rain, the early rain and late rain, in its appointed[5] time, who keeps for us the weeks allotted for harvest."
עֲוֺנוֹתֵיכֶם הִטּוּ־אֵלֶּה וְחַטֹּאותֵיכֶם מָנְעוּ הַטּוֹב מִכֶּם׃	5:25	Your iniquities have disrupted these, and your sins have kept the good from you.'"

Rhetorical Unit

Jeremiah 5:20–25 is situated within the literary block of 2:1—6:30 and, more locally, the unit of 4:5—6:30. The smaller unit of 5:20–31 separates itself from the surrounding passages and presents a condemning description of the people and an explanation for the necessity of judgment.[6] Jeremiah 5:1–9 focuses on a dialogue between YHWH and his prophet in which YHWH explains why judgment must occur. This is followed in 5:10–19, which gives a final indictment (5:10–13) before returning to a judgment oracle (5:14–17), which concludes with a prosaic explanation by YHWH for future audiences (5:18–

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[4] "Waves" (גל) does not appear until later in the line, though it is introduced here as the agent of the plural געש.

[5] "Appointed" is not in the Hebrew but is supplied here since that is in view, particularly when paired with חקה in the next line. The breaking up of this line as "rain, the early rain and late rain, in its appointed time" is meant to reflect the 3ms pronoun attached to ב. See also Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 192–93.

[6] Goldingay (Jeremiah, 205–206) divides this unit as 5:20–23, 24–29, 30–31. The third person plural verb in 5:24 does not signal a new speaker or audience, as one also appears in 5:23. Holladay (*The Architecture of Jeremiah 1–20*, 88–89) divides the passage as 5:20–24 and 25–29 based on vague word patterns and a supposed inclusio with אלה in vv. 25, 29, which could equally function as mirroring conclusions.

19). Finally, 6:1 begins with imperatives to the people of Benjamin to flee and envisions another scene from the foe to the north's attack.

Although 5:20–25 makes up only part of the unit of 5:20–31, there are several justifications for at least partially isolating 5:20–25 from what follows in 5:26–31. Lundbom notes that there is a shift in line length between 5:20–25, which contains generally longer lines, and 5:26–31, which is made of generally shorter lines.[7] This is true only in a general sense and does not contribute much weight to the delimitation of 5:20–25. He also maintains that 5:26–31 can function as a single subunit, though this is not a uniformly held position.[8] In support of 5:26–31 functioning as a subunit is the inclusio formed in 5:26, 31 by the repetition of "my people" (עמי).[9] While this contributes to the shaping of the subunit, it is preferable to see the term "people" (עם) as loosely providing structure to the whole of 5:20–31. As such, it occurs in in 5:21, 23, 26, 31 and forms three poems centered on the theme of people.[10] The three poems include 5:20–25, 26–29, 30–31.

   I.   5:20–31 // The People's Sins and Judgments

       a.   5:20–25 // "These People" Have Sinned

       b.   5:26–31 // Explanation of "My People's" Judgments

           i.   5:26–29 // My People Became Wealthy through Unlawful Gain

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[7] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 400.

[8] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 406–07.

[9] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 406.

[10] This is linked primarily to Craigie et al., *Jeremiah 1–25*, 95. Fischer (*Jeremia*, 237) also follows this structure. While not citing him, Carroll (*Jeremiah: A Commentary*, 186–90) also divides 5:20–31 into three smaller subunits, 5:20–25, 26–29, 30–31. Allen (*Jeremiah*, 81) forms a similar structure, though 5:29 stands on its own. Goldingay (*Jeremiah*, 205–206) divides this unit as 5:20–23 (a charge), 24–29 (a reflection), 30–31 (a reflection). However, he does not provide clear reasoning for this division. Holladay (*The Architecture of Jeremiah 1–20*, 88–89) divides the passage as 5:20–24 and 25–29 based on vague word patterns and a supposed inclusio with אלה in vv. 25, 29, which could equally function as mirroring conclusions.

ii. 5:30–31 // My People's Leaders Have Led Astray

It is important to note that 5:26–29, 30–31 have a closer connection to one another than to 5:20–25 due to the inclusio of "my people." Thus, the two poems in 5:26–31 are brought together. Additionally, while 5:26 begins a new poem focusing on the basis for future wrath, the כי at the beginning of 5:26 connects it to the preceding poem of 5:20–25.[11]

A clear shift in time and audience marks 5:20–25 from what precedes. Most notably, judgment occurs in 5:10–17 and is then reflected on in vv. 18–19. In 5:18, the time is marked by וגם בימים ההמה. The people then refer back to the pronounced judgment (את־כל־אלה) through a *qatal* verb (עשה). Those being spoken of in this audience have experienced the pronounced judgments in the passage (5:19).[12] An imperative directed to the prophet initiates 5:20–25 as a new subunit and helps signal the opening of a new unit. The audience is now specified as בבית יעקב located in Judah. The OOL formula in 5:22 places YHWH as the main speaker of the unit, with the prophet functioning as the prophetic mediator.[13] The shift to speaking of the audience in the third person in 5:23–24 may indicate that YHWH is speaking to Jeremiah about his previously

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[11] While the כי at the beginning of 5:26 provides some connection to the preceding poem, several elements other than "my people" in 5:26, 31 contribute to the division after 5:25. Most notably, 5:26–29 focus on issues of social injustice, which form the basis of future judgment as indicated by the double occurrence of "this" (אלה) in 5:29. While he argues that 5:20–25 speaks of already occurring judgments and 5:26–29 speaks of future judgments, Allen (*Jeremiah*, 81) views 5:26–29 as explaining the iniquities and sins mentioned in 5:25. However, if the two poems are referencing different judgments, it is unlikely that the כי in 5:26 functions to explain what came before in 5:25.

[12] Fischer (*Jeremia*, 248) notes that this is signaled by the use of "us" in 5:19.

[13] Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 508. See also Finsterbusch, "YHWH as the Speaker," 378–79. In their monograph on the issue of Jeremiah as the speaker, they highlight two levels of the book. The first is the narrator who guides the reader in 1:1–4. The second is the teller. In this sense, Finsterbusch and Jacoby (*MT–Jeremia und LXX–Jeremia 1–24*, 26) note that Jeremiah tells a story primarily by quoting different voices, especially the words of God given to a particular audience and expected to be pronounced by the prophet.

mentioned foolish people and constructing a caricature of them, though the switch back

to second person plural in 5:25 and אלה at the end of the first line connects it with the

preceding verses of 5:23–24, demonstrating continuity.[14] In summary, 5:20–31 as a

whole contains aspects of the people's sins and shortcomings and the justification of their

judgment. However, the inclusio formed by "my people" in 5:26, 31 and the כי in 5:26

allow 5:20–25 to be assessed as its own subunit.

Rhetorical Situation

The exigence of 5:20–25 is drought brought on by the people's sins and their inability to

recognize the creational authority of YHWH. Idolatry could be a contributing factor to

their senselessness. In support of this view, the people are described in ways that are

elsewhere connected to the issue of idolatry (Deut 4:28; Pss 115:5–6; 135:16–17; Isa 43:8

Ezek 12:2; cf. Isa 6:9–10). Idolatry is seen in the immediate context as a serious issue

(5:18–19), though so is the issue of injustice (5:26–31). Additionally, YHWH rebukes the

people for their lack of fear in him, clarifying that it was YHWH who established a

boundary for the sea and who sends the seasonal rains. Such clarification could be

understood as a necessary response to the people attributing these activities to another

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[14] Brueggemann (*Jeremiah*, 67–68) suggests that 5:22–24 combines a doxology about YHWH's power and greatness with the people's rejection of YHWH. Presumably, 5:22 would be a first-person doxology, while 5:23–24 would form the people's rejection. While this may be possible, several issues emerge. The most important is that it excludes 5:25 from the poem and results in the "these" (אלה) of 5:25 not having a clear referent. However, he divides the unit as 5:21–24, 25–28. Elsewhere, Brueggemann ("Jeremiah's Use," 365) views the unit as 5:20–29 and argues that the division of the unit into 5:20–25, 26–29 is unwarranted.

deity.[15] Regardless of what may be causing their senselessness, their lack of awareness is expressed in their lack of appropriate fear of YHWH. [16]

The audience of 5:20–25, "these people," is described at the forefront of the poem as "foolish" and "without any sense" (5:21). The nature of their foolishness is connected to the absurdity of their lack of fear.[17] The people's description in 5:21 means that they have been numbed to the creational power of YHWH and have taken on the characteristics of the objects they worship (cf. Jer 10:5, 8, 14).[18] The covenant people

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[15] Goldingay (*Jeremiah*, 248) summarizes in a similar way: "either they showed reverence for other deities like Baal or simply neglected Yahweh."

[16] Thompson (*Jeremiah*, 248) clarifies that the issue of the people not fearing YHWH in 5:22 could suggest that the people either feared Baal or neglected YHWH. The proximity to idolatry in 5:21, however, suggests that idolatrous worship remains in view. Weippert (*Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde*, 25–26, 36) further clarifies that exactly who the people attributed the creation of the sea and sustaining of the seasonal rains to, it clearly was not YHWH. She notes that the connection between idols ("nothings") and rainfall is explicit only in 14:22. In her view, it is only in the early exilic 10:12–16 that idols are treated in greater detail. Beale ("Isaiah VI 9–13," 257–78) argues a similar point for the people's description in Isa 6:9–10, which also follows the language of Ps 135:15–17; 115:15–17. As such, the people's description in Isa 6:9–10, 13 serves as a pronouncement of judgment on the people for their idolatrous worship. Beale (*We Become What We Worship*, 44 n 10, 118, 122) considers Jer 5:21 to be a passage reflecting the same description of idolatrous Israel. See also, Meadors, *Idolatry*, 11, 66, 72. Meadors (*Idolatry*, 72–73) summarizes the situation of Jer 5:21 and Isa 6:9 in the following way: "Rather, in giving Judah over to hardening and sensory deprivation, Yahweh allows Judah to experience for herself the truth of his exclusivity as the living Lord, the truth of the prophecy of Deuteronomy 28–30, and the real loss of life that results from separating oneself from one's creator through sin."

[17] Contra Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 403), who views the switch to the third person as a "reflective aside" that mocks the idols rather than the people. Even if the idols are included in this mockery, it still results in the mockery of the people since they would assume the traits of what they worshipped. Thus, his point that the third-person statements are directed toward the idols exclusively is not necessary, even if they are indirectly mocked in the process. Allen (*Jeremiah*, 80) similarly describes that the "negative wisdom vocabulary is used to reprimand the community, here for failure to learn an obvious lesson." However, he still views the objects of their hearing and seeing as international political developments directed toward Babylon or what the people see in the city in 5:26–31. Due to Brueggemann's ("Jeremiah's Use," 365) structuring of the passage in this article, he views the rhetorical questions of 5:29 as responses to the double rhetorical questions in 5:22. As a result, Israel's foolishness extends to the matters of injustice in 5:26–28. While the structural issues of his approach have already been addressed, the people's foolishness seems to be more closely associated with the issue of idolatry, as it is in 10:1–16. Certainly, 4:22 connects the issue of foolishness to the inability to do what is right. In the immediate context of 5:20–25, however, the particular issue of "these people" is idolatry. Their characterization as foolish idolaters further connects to 10:1–16 and the self-indicting nature of the doxology in that passage against the "House of Israel," who is idolatrous like the nations (cf. 9:24–25).

[18] Similar to Thompson (*Jeremiah*, 247), who similarly connects their foolishness to the people "not discerning Yahweh's control of nature and history as well as his power to visit his people in judgment."

become so hardened "that they are incapable of awe and no longer feel the impact of Yahweh's majesty."[19] Subsequently, their blindness and deafness prevent them from perceiving God's word to them or why they have not experienced the seasonal rains as a covenant blessing (5:25).[20]

In 5:24, YHWH is described as the one who sends timely rains that make a harvest possible. Their survival depends on these rains and their appropriate timing in the created order. However, in 5:25, it is stated that the people's disobedience has disrupted the created order so that they have not experienced the goodness (טוב) of this order.

Paradigmatically, drought connects to the covenant curses expected to be experienced by the people in the land (Deut 28:12, 22–24; cf. Lev 26:19–20; Deut 11:13–14).[21] Certainly, the language of drought brings to mind the concept of covenant, but the language of covenantal blessings is based on God's creational activities.[22] In many ways, the covenant blessings reflect the reality that Israel is meant to be a microcosm in which the goodness of the ideal created order is experienced through covenant obedience. Conversely, as reflected in the passage at hand, covenant disobedience results in the inability to experience the goodness of the ideal created order. In other words, "adherence to *tôrâ* and following God's ways are fundamental to the order of the world, and failure

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[19] McKane, *Jeremiah*, 1:129.

[20] Craigie et al., *Jeremiah 1–25*, 95–96.

[21] The connection to drought is not an attempt to place this passage within a particular moment of the historical prophet's life, such as the autumn of 601, but to highlight the issue facing the inscribed audience. Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, 195) places this passage in the autumn of 601. The context of drought is also not an attempt to connect 5:20–25 to other passages in Jeremiah, such as 12:4 or 14:2–6. However, the reoccurrence of drought imagery may suggest that it is an ongoing exigence of those who lived in the land.

[22] Rendtorff (*Canon and Theology*, 111) understands this passage, particularly the preservation of seasons, to be an echo of Gen 8:22 and the promise to Noah. See Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology*, 111. Weippert (*Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde*, 24) also connects YHWH's giving of rain to the creation account in 2:5, which produces a habitable garden. Her observation, along with Rendtorff's, means that the neglect of fear YHWH is not just neglect of the covenant God, but also the Creator God. This will be discussed in greater detail below under the subheading "Perpetual Boundaries and Allotted Times."

to do so results in catastrophe [sic] devastation for the natural world as well as its human inhabitants."[23] The connection to creation is strengthened by the expected response of fearing YHWH, who is the one who orders the chaos of the sea in 5:22 and sustains a natural order of rainfall necessary for the people's wellbeing in 5:24. Both verses ultimately appeal to YHWH's creative activities in the sustaining of the created order but do so in the context of covenant.

The covenant curses speak of the connection between Israel's actions and their effects on creation and the environment. Jonathan Burnside notes that "A number of these curses have specifically environmental effects. However, although these consequences are the result of human behavior, they are also presented as being the direct action of God," which is reflected by the first-person agency in Lev 26:19–20.[24] Thus, while 5:25 places the blame on the people's wrongdoing as the cause of the environmental effects, the verbs of 5:24 place the giving of necessary rains as an activity of YHWH. Though the people's actions have brought it about, it is YHWH who gives and withholds the rains.

The exigence of 5:20–25 can be summarized as drought brought about by the inscribed audience's actions and lack of fear in YHWH. Their sins and absence of fear of YHWH have resulted in the absence of the covenantal blessing of seasonal rains. The people are thus described as being utterly foolish due to their refusal or inability to recognize YHWH as the one who created and sustains the created order. To address the foolish and fearless people, 5:20–25 reorients the people to YHWH's supreme authority as the sole Creator.

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[23] Marlow, "Law and the Ruining," 656.
[24] Burnside, *God, Justice, and Society*, 76.

Rhetorical Strategy

In the face of drought and idolatry, YHWH speaks a message to the people that both

condemns their actions and explains why they experience drought. In his message,

YHWH creatively draws attention to himself as the sole Creator and Sustainer of the

cosmos and its order. YHWH is the one who established a perpetual barrier for the raging

sea (5:22), and it is YHWH alone who provides Israel with the seasonal rains (5:24).

Conversely, the people are presented as foolish and without fear in YHWH (5:21, 23).

The absurdity of their characterization is demonstrated most potently by comparing them

to the sea, which cannot prevail against God's חק־עולם (5:22). Yet "these people" seem to

think they can go astray from YHWH (5:23).

The weight of the argument of 5:20–25 is YHWH's role as Creator and Sustainer

of the cosmos, who established the חק־עולם of the sea and preserves the cosmic order

necessary for Israel's survival. Conversely, the people are absurdly defiant of God's

creational powers and do not fear him. The central objective of this passage's argument is

to present the absurdity of the people's refusal to fear God and understand the reason for

the already occurring judgment of drought.[25]

A God Who Creates and Sustains

Two main elements in the passage contribute to the presentation of YHWH as the one

who creates and sustains. The first is the use of rhetorical questions, which heighten the

absurdity of the people not worshipping YHWH instead of the idols. The second is the

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[25] Working from a different structure of the poem, Brueggemann ("Jeremiah's Use," 365) suggests that 5:23–28 presents "an extended indictment against those who in their foolishness reject his [YHWH's] creating work."

employment of a common trope in creation traditions where the creator deity divides the seas. In support of this is the claim that YHWH is the one who upholds the order of the cosmos and sends the seasonal rains in their due time.

Rhetorical Questions

Significant for our passage is the use of the double rhetorical question in 5:22 (cf. 5:9; 8:4). The basic outcome of these questions demonstrates the people's disorderly actions. YHWH initiates the indictment against his people with a double rhetorical question, a common pattern in Jeremiah (e.g., 2:14, 18, 31; 3:5; 5:9, 29; 8:4, 22; 9:8; 14:19, 22 18:14; 22:28; 22:23–24; 30:6; 31:20).[26] YHWH asks the people if they do not fear him or tremble before him. The answer to this double question is that the people should surely fear and tremble before YHWH, but they do not.[27] The basis for this is marked causally (אשר) and includes a demonstration of YHWH's power to tame the chaotic sea.

Following the language of Quintilian, the category of these interrogatives is *interrogare*, where the intent is to prove a point rather than gain knowledge.[28] Rhetorical questions can thus be utilized to emphasize a point or embarrass the addressee.[29] The heart of YHWH's message to the people begins in 5:22 with a double rhetorical question,

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[26] For more detail and examples, see Brueggemann, "Jeremiah's Use," 358–74; Rom-Shiloni, *Voices from the Ruins*, 209 n 29.

[27] See Brueggemann, "Jeremiah's Use," 365.

[28] See Adams, *The Performative Dimensions*, 2; Quintilian, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, 3:377.

[29] Adams (*The Performative Dimensions*, 2) provides a fuller list, noting that rhetorical questions can be used to "ask to emphasize a point, pose a question which cannot be denied, ask something which is difficult to reply, ask to throw odium on the addressee, ask to provoke pity, ask to embarrass an opponent, ask to express indignation, ask to express wonder, ask to express a command, ask oneself, to ask as an answer a question, to ask to provoke laughter, to ask and answer oneself, to ask without waiting for a reply, to ask involving a comparison, to ask with hesitation to express a truth." See also Quintilian, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, 3:376–85.

which is signaled by the interrogative ה on the first line and the אם on the second.[30] The

assumed answer is that the people should fear and tremble before YHWH. When

assessing the function of double rhetorical questions in Jeremiah, Brueggemann observes

that "The rhetorical question concerning natural phenomena only intensifies the harsh

judgment made upon the unnatural, unexpected, inexplicable cleavage between Yahweh

and Israel."[31]

Drawing further attention to the double rhetorical question is the use of an OOL

formula between the two questions. The function of this phrase is to draw attention to

YHWH as the speaker and thus the point being made.[32] The formula marks YHWH as the

speaker, giving the words "an especially emphatic, even severe or austere tone."[33] By

asking rhetorical questions to the addressee, YHWH places emphasis on the expected

responses to YHWH's creational powers displayed by establishing a חק־עולם for the sea.

The notion that the people should fear YHWH in response to his establishing a barrier for

the sea is signaled by a כי, linking the rhetorical questions to God's acts of establishing

the perpetual boundary. In other words, by emphasizing the rhetorical question, YHWH

emphatically states that fear and trembling are the only proper responses to YHWH's

creative power.

In each of these two questions, the audience's response would be self-condemning

in nature, further highlighting the people's foolishness. To not fear YHWH, the one who

tamed the sea by establishing for it a חק־עולם is absurd. The reality that YHWH must

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[30] For this style of answer, see BHRG §42.2.1(3)(b); IBHS §40.3.b.

[31] Brueggemann, "Jeremiah's Use," 359.

[32] Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 508. For an overview of scholarly understandings of this phrase, see Parunak, "Some Discourse Functions," 508–12.

[33] Finsterbusch, "YHWH as the Speaker," 379.

define himself as Creator and Sustainer of the cosmos further demonstrates the self-condemning nature of these questions, that the people lack the sense to fear YHWH or tremble before him.

Perpetual Boundaries and Allotted Times

A twofold creation claim is made in 5:20–25 and presents YHWH's power over the chaotic waters and ability to preserve the regularity of the seasons. This twofold creation claim is connected by the shared emphasis of YHWH's divine decrees in the cosmos, namely the "perpetual boundary (חק)" for the sea (5:22) and his ability to send rains and uphold the "weeks allotted (חקה) for harvest" (5:24).[34] Both claims are also tied to the expectation for the people to fear (ירא) YHWH in response to his creational authority.[35] Together, the two claims speak to God's maintained regularity of the created order.

YHWH's argument that his people should fear and tremble before him in 5:22 is supported by the common creation tradition in which he tames chaos in the created order by establishing a barrier for the sea. The establishment of the sand as a boundary for the sea is seen in Gen 1:6–7, 9–10; Job 38:8–11; Ps 104:9; and Prov 8:29 (cf. Pss 33:6–8; 89:10–15; Isa 27:1). Through the ongoing taming or overpowering of chaotic forces (particularly, but not limited to, water), YHWH "reveals himself as Creator."[36]

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[34] Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, 187; Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 207; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 197; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 401.

[35] Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 401) rightfully argues against McKane's (*Jeremiah*, 1:131) conclusion that the two verses are out of balance, noting the cognate balance of חק and חקה and the shared thought. McKane (*Jeremiah*, 1:131) views 5:24 as unbalanced and the inclusion of חקה for seasons unnatural. In contrast to this, Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, 197) helpfully identifies a similar use of חקה in 31:35; 32:25.

[36] Keel and Schroer, *Creation*, 105. Other forces of chaos include darkness or the wilderness or beings such as Rahab and Leviathan. Keel and Schroer (*Creation*, 105) helpfully refer to this type of conflict as "cosmos preserving." Certainly, these threats can take various forms.

Establishing the sand as a border demonstrates YHWH's ability to enforce order in the world by limiting the sea's reach and ability to interfere with the created order.[37] The OT employs this common theme of conflict against chaos in a variety of contexts, such as threats against the Temple or Davidic dynasty, or the exodus (e.g., Isa 51:9; Pss 74:12–17; 77:17–21; 89:9–10).[38]

The concept of a deity's conflict with the sea is important here, which reflects the deity's ability to overpower the forces of chaos.[39] In Enuma Elish, Marduk is described as splitting Tiamat and using her corpse for the sea. Similar language is used in the OT to describe God splitting the sea, crushing Leviathan, and establishing the created order in Ps 74:12–17 (cf. Ps 89:10–15; Isa 27:1). However, less obvious language can also reflect divine conflict with chaos when God limits the sea's reach. The language of the water's fearful response in 104:7 and his "locking up an unruly sea" in Job 38:8–11 are two examples of divine conflict with the sea that could be considered less obvious but still speak of conflict.[40]

It is this conflict language that is present in Jer 5:22. YHWH is described as making the sand an everlasting boundary for the sea.[41] This boundary continues containing the sea despite the fact that its waves "rage" (געש) and "roar" (המה). These two terms often appear in contexts where military conflict is present. Later in Jeremiah, Egypt

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[37] See Craigie et al., *Jeremiah 1–25*, 96; Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 206; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 403; Ollenburger, *God the Creator*, 101.

[38] Keel and Schroer (*Creation*, 148–49) refer to this as the "historicizing of myth" and "mythicization of history."

[39] Ollenburger, *God the Creator*, 101.

[40] Simkins, *Creator and Creation*, 77. This is compared to more overt passages that speak of "splitting" Leviathan (Ps 74:12–17). "Less obvious language" is used here particularly because some understand passages like Job 38 or Psalm 104 to be God addressing the sea prior to it becoming a threat rather than conflict or violence. See Ollenburger (*God the Creator*, 101), who takes this approach but notes the exception of God roaring at the waters in Ps 104:7.

[41] Hess, *Israelite Religions*, 161.

is compared to the raging (געש) waters in relation to their military aggression (46:7–8).

Other people groups or individuals are similarly compared to the roaring (המה) sea in the

context of battle (Jer 6:23; 50:42; 51:55; Pss 46:3, 6; 83:3; cf. Isa 17:12). These two verbs

are clearly connected to conflict or battle imagery, suggesting YHWH's employment of

these verbs in Jer 5:22 are meant to convey conflict as well. This conflict also provides a

clear basis for the comparison used to characterize the foolish people who consistently

resist God through their stubborn and rebellious hearts (5:23).

Closely connected with God dividing the waters is God's authority to maintain the

seasons, particularly through the sending of rain at appropriate times. The connection

between dividing waters and providing rain is seen in Gen 1:6–8, where God's separation

of the waters also results in the waters above, which provide rain, snow, and hail.[42] As

such, it is YHWH alone who gives rain from his storehouse above (Jer 10:13; 14:22; cf.

Ps 104:13).[43] Additionally, Jeremiah draws a connection between 5:22, 24. In 5:22, God

establishes a perpetual "boundary" (חק) for the sea, and in the closing line of 5:24, it is

God "who keeps for us the weeks allotted (חקה) for harvest."[44] While the line regarding

harvest speaks to the issue of preserving the seasons, this is likely continuing the

emphasis on sending rain at appropriate times. One reason for this is the twofold

emphasis on rain in the previous lines. A second reason is noted by Lundbom, who notes

that God does not send rain during the harvest weeks.[45]

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[42] Simkins, *Creator and Creation*, 196. Similar connections are made in Ps 104:9–17 and the various forms of water God provides for his creation.

[43] The connection between God's acts of creation and his provision of rain is also seen in 10:12–13, where God's formation of the world is immediately followed by his ability to send rain and water.

[44] See Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, 187.

[45] Lundbom, (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 404) follows Kimḥi's observations. See also Arnold, "Climate and Environment," 22.

In Jeremiah, the connection between God and the maintenance of the seasons is often associated with the issue of idolatry, which is a driving part of the exigence of Jer 5:24 (cf. 10:1–16; 14:22). In the texts connecting rain and the issue of idolatry, YHWH's distinctness is illustrated by his sole authority to provide rain, rather than attributing this activity to a foreign idol. However, the people's lack of fear in YHWH and idolatrous activities have resulted in them not experiencing the goodness of the created order, particularly the seasonal order and rains (5:25).[46] The significance of this is best articulated in a statement by Brueggemann, who notes that "The praise of Yahweh does not concern the history of Israel, but God's power in creation, the taming of chaos (Jer. 5:22), and the governance of the rain (v. 24)."[47] The poem specifies that it is Israel's sins that disrupt the timely giving of rain. YHWH's covenant with Israel is certainly involved in such a dynamic (cf. 33:19–22), but the poem prioritizes YHWH's distinct ability as Creator to send or withhold Israel's seasonal rains.

The twofold creation claim related to God's maintenance of order in the cosmos, particularly for Israel's good (5:25), demonstrates the severity of the people's idolatrous and sinful actions, as well as the consequences of these actions on the created order. While this twofold creation claim highlights God's sole authority as Creator and Sustainer of the cosmic order, 5:23 presents a striking rebuke of Israel's stubbornness in light of the sea's boundaries in 5:22.

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[46] This is simultaneously an issue of the created order and covenant curse, as discussed above.

[47] Brueggemann, *Jeremiah*, 68.

A Foolish and Fearless People

The people's foolishness and lack of fear brought about by idol worship are portrayed by comparing them to the sea with the sand as its barrier. If God established a חק־עולם over the sea that even it cannot breach, how foolish and stubborn must the people be if they think they can breach their own "boundary"? As Allen summarizes, "Here the limitation put upon the sea, preventing the irruption of chaos on the earth, is used to set up a model of compliance. Yet while in the natural order God's 'Thus far and no farther' (Job 38:11) met with conformity, the covenant community had gone out of control, showing no parallel respect for Yahweh."[48]

The comparison is drawn out by stating the normal activity of the ocean and contrasting that with their limitations, indicated by a negated (לא) verb. The attempts of the waves to pass their barrier by raging and roaring are negated by their inability to pass the perpetual barrier. Georg Fischer rightly suggests the appropriate comparison to be drawn between the sea and Israel, namely that the term used as the boundary for the sea (חק־עולם) is also used for aspects of torah instruction (Exod 28:29; 30:21; Lev 6:11, 15).[49] By using the raging sea as a basis of comparison for Israel, YHWH claims that "they have proved more rebellious than the raging sea."[50]

The emphasis of such a comparison is undoubtedly on the characterization of the people, highlighting the absurdity of their ways. This pattern of comparing the audience to aspects of the non-human realm of creation is seen elsewhere in the prophets (e.g.,

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[48] Allen, *Jeremiah*, 80.
[49] Fischer (*Jeremia*, 250).
[50] Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 114.

2:23–25; 13:23; cf. Isa 1:3; 6:12). A similar comparison is made between the people and

the birds in 8:7.

MT		Translation
גַּם־חֲסִידָה בַשָּׁמַיִם יָדְעָה מוֹעֲדֶיהָ וְתֹר וְסוּס וְעָגוּר שָׁמְרוּ אֶת־עֵת בֹּאָנָה וְעַמִּי לֹא יָדְעוּ אֵת מִשְׁפַּט יְהוָה:	8:7	Even the stork in the sky knows its appointed time, and the turtledove, swallow, and crane keep their time to go; yet my people do not know the ordinance of YHWH.

This verse expresses a sentiment similar to the metaphor of the sea. In short, "The

supposition of this text is that if a bird knows when to migrate, then the people should

know the ordinance of Yahweh."[51] Again, the people are being likened to something

from the non-human realm and its expected behavior. The basis of such a comparison is

that each party (birds; people) has an expected behavioral pattern in the created order. For

birds, it is the timing of the migratory patterns, while for Judah, it is YHWH's מִשְׁפָּט. The

expected behavior is so much of a norm that YHWH begins his comparison in 8:7 with

an emphatic גם. Though Lundbom is correct to render מִשְׁפָּט as "order," "ordinance" is

used here to emphasize the term's connection to the law.[52] As clearly stated in 8:8–9, the

people's issue is their perversion of the law of YHWH and rejection of the word of

YHWH. In other words, YHWH's מִשְׁפָּט provides the basis of their knowledge and

function, and their lack of knowledge of YHWH's מִשְׁפָּט is comparable to a bird not

knowing its migration patterns.

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[51] Foreman, *Animal Metaphors*, 212.
[52] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 513.

Returning to the example of 5:22–23, the comparison between the people and the sea is upheld by the law functioning in a similar manner as the boundary for the sea. As Goldingay notes, the people "don't acknowledge the way YHWH exercises authority, which they are supposed to follow."[53] To this end, 5:24–25 may also participate in the condemning characterization of Israel, as the חק־עולם of the sea and the חקה of the seasons stand in direct contrast to Israel's disorderly and "unstable behavior."[54]

Lundbom's observation provides a helpful summary of the use of non-human metaphors in 5:22 and 8:7: "Jeremiah took particular notice of regularity within the created order, and cited examples of this regularity for the purpose of making a contrast with the irregular behavior of the covenant people. At times, this irregular behavior stretched into incredulity."[55] YHWH's argument draws from an expected behavior in the created order, something any reasonable audience member could verify as true. It then uses this norm as a basis of comparison to highlight the absurdity of their behavior. In the cases assessed here, it means that the people are more senseless and rebellious than the sea, thinking that they could prevail against God's created order without consequence, and more foolish than a bird who does not know its own migration pattern! Important to note is that in both of these passages, along with 4:23–28, the people's utter lack of knowledge or wisdom is their defining characteristic (4:22; 5:21; 8:8–9).

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[53] Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 265.
[54] Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, 187.
[55] Lundbom, "Jeremiah and the Created Order," 86.

Summary

The subunit of 5:20–25 presents YHWH as the sole Creator and Sustainer of the cosmos and the people as foolish and lacking the appropriate fear of Creator YHWH. The people's foolishness is the result of idolatry, which prevents them from properly perceiving YHWH, his word, and the outworking of covenant curses through drought. Fretheim succinctly notes, "The implication is that Israel has been looking (fruitlessly) to other gods for these blessings."[56] In response to this issue, YHWH employs a metaphor comparing the people's foolish actions to the raging of the sea. If the sea cannot prevail against its established boundary, neither could Israel. Thus, while the people do not properly perceive YHWH or his judgments of them, the absurdity of their foolishness becomes an avenue through which their sense of YHWH's creational authority can be communicated, and the problem of drought can be explained.

The text is primarily epideictic for the inscribed audience, seeking to first shock them into realizing the absurdity of their rebellion, properly acknowledging and fearing YHWH as Creator, and repenting from their idolatrous activity. The epideictic nature of the passage is seen primarily in the shock value of the comparison between the audience and the sea (5:22–23), as well as the repetition of the expectation to fear God (5:22, 24). The aim to produce fear of YHWH is driven by the presentation of YHWH's creation activities, namely his making a boundary for the sea and provision of rain. God has the authority to overpower chaotic forces and maintain the stability of his created order. The deliberative nature of the text is apparent from the issue of idolatry confronted in the text and is upheld by the attempt to elicit fear of YHWH, which should motivate them to

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[56] Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 114. See also Craigie et al., *Jeremiah 1–25*, 96.

repentance. Furthermore, 5:25 clarifies that it is the people's sins that prevent them from experiencing God's intended goodness in creation and covenant. Repentance and the proper fear of YHWH should lead to their enjoyment of the blessing of the created order.

Rhetorical Effectiveness

This passage bears many similarities to the previous vision of cataclysmic destruction in 4:23–26. Most notably, there is a similarity in the people's characterization of being foolish (4:22), though 5:21–22, 24 connect their foolishness to idolatry and not fearing YHWH. The text is primarily epideictic for the inscribed audience, seeking to first shock the foolish, dulled, and stubborn audience into realizing the absurdity of their rebellion, properly acknowledging and fearing YHWH as Creator, and repenting from their sin that has disrupted the created order. Due to the ongoing issue of drought presented in the book (14:22) and the fact that the Babylonian invasion came due to continued unrepentance, we know that the passage largely failed at persuading the inscribed audience to these aims.[57]

The magnitude of their sins confronts the inscribed and reading audiences by casting their covenant disobedience against the larger backdrop of the cosmos and the created order. In one sense, their rebellion reflects just how stubborn and absurd their thinking is. In another sense, the fact that their actions have prevented receiving the benefits of the created good established in the covenant draws a direct connection between the people's actions and the created order. Their sinful actions in violating the

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[57] Sweeney (*Reading Prophetic Books*, 151) makes a similar point regarding the prophet's attempts to move the inscribed audience toward repentance, noting "Although that effort fails initially in the perspective of MT Jeremiah, it will ultimately play a role in the restoration of the city as the people repent in the aftermath of judgment and return to Jerusalem to restore the covenant with YHWH."

covenant relationship have disrupted the created order. Upon understanding the reason for their experience of judgment, 5:20–25 beckons its readers to repent from their disruptive sins and fear YHWH alone.

The epideictic nature of the passage makes it appropriate to expect the reading audience to adhere to the fear of YHWH and his way, leading them to repent. While the inscribed audience experienced drought in response to its sin, the reading audience has experienced the more severe covenant curses of destruction and exile. YHWH's speech initiates with a double rhetorical question that interrogates a basic or assumed response that the people should demonstrate. The entire basis of YHWH's questioning is the claim that he established a boundary for the sea and sustains the goodness of the created order. In one sense, an expected outcome for this text is to recapture the necessary fear of YHWH that Israel should display if YHWH's power were properly perceived, which is most evidently communicated in relation to his creational authority. However, the text also pushes the reader in the direction of agreement with the divine decision to judge. The people are forced to recount their lack of understanding and fear and hear the description of their ongoing issue of unrepentance. In other words, the goal of the passage is that the people would recognize that their "sins kept the good from" them (5:25).

The concern for the reading audience to recognize the reason for their experience of judgment is strengthened by the double rhetorical question and comparisons made between the inscribed audience and the sea. The interrogatives establish the reality that the people do not truly know God because of their lack of fear (5:22). The people's comparison with the sea and its waves demonstrates the absurdity of the inscribed audience's disposition. Despite how powerful the sea is with its raging waves, there is no

reality in which it could prevail against the חק־עולם. Yet, the people's actions are equally absurd. The inscribed audience is stubborn enough to think they can prevail over God's rule for them. If God is the one who established and sustains the created order, including Israel's place in it, should Israel not recognize their limitations and the effects of their rebellion? Creator YHWH needed to respond to their sinful actions, as their covenant unfaithfulness led to cosmic disruption.

Conclusion

YHWH's identity as sole Creator and Sustainer of the cosmos undergirds the argument of 5:20–25, though the recognition of his creational authority is also a key objective. YHWH is described as not only the covenant God of Israel but the Creator God of the cosmos. The actions of creation and judgment are both expressions of a God who holds authority over creation. While allusions to covenant curses are made in 5:24–25 regarding drought, the underlying issue is that the people do not acknowledge YHWH as the one who gives them rain. Thus, fundamental to the proper covenantal response is the recognition of YHWH as sole Creator.

Israel has also disrupted the created order in such a way that the Creator brings about a disruption of the created order (5:25). The outcome of such rhetoric is again to draw the people into a proper understanding of YHWH as Creator and the one who has enacted judgment. Subsequently, the people should respond through repentance by fearing YHWH alone and repenting from their sins that have earned judgment, which is idolatry in this case. It is YHWH alone who holds back chaos and gives the people the seasonal rains. Crucial to fearing YHWH here means to recognize that he has an exclusive claim over creation. The rhetoric of YHWH's creation claims in this passage

also establishes an important relationship between the concepts of wisdom/foolishness,

idolatry, and YHWH as Creator, which is further developed in 10:1–16.

CHAPTER 7: GOD AS CREATOR AND JUDGE IN JEREMIAH 10:1–16

In what is perhaps one of the most compositionally challenging passages in the book, Jer 10:1–16 presents a powerful doxology that proclaims YHWH's superiority over foreign idols and instructs the people to avoid idol worship. The constant oscillation between YHWH and the idols serves as a valuable rebuke for those tempted to worship other gods and directs the readers' minds to praise after a long series of judgment oracles. Many scholars have noted the abrupt nature of the doxological unit, as it "arrests the attention of the reader."[1] This is especially true when one recalls the larger trajectory of Jer 1–10, which is one defined by judgment.

The trajectory of Jer 1–10 has been moving toward the inscribed audience's judgment and exile in Babylon. However, in 10:1–16, we see a shift in focus toward the impending exile by calling the House of Israel not to fear or worship the idols of a foreign land. When assessed within its literary context(s), 10:1–16 presents a doxology of praise for YHWH after his people have experienced judgment for practicing the ways of the nations.[2] In the aftermath of judgment, the hymns of 10:1–16 allow the audience to simultaneously affirm their judgment and express faith that Creator YHWH will restore them and judge their enemies.

This final passage also serves as the longest example of YHWH's creation claims. In fact, YHWH's role as Creator forms the backbone of the polemic against idols and

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[1] Eggleston, *See and Read*, 155. See also Holladay, *The Architecture of Jeremiah 1–20*, 124.
[2] In this way, the purpose of this doxology resembles the doxologies of judgment in Crenshaw, *Hymnic Affirmation of Divine Justice*, 29. See also Horst, "Die Doxologien im Amosbuch," 45–54.

forms the basis for his exclusive praise. In each subunit of the passage, YHWH's

creational powers are on full display.[3] YHWH's exclusive claim over the entirety of

creation, human and non-human alike, is what distinguishes him from worthless idols.

YHWH's creational power also bolsters the audience's faith in God's power over

Babylon, despite what their current circumstances may reflect. For these reasons, 10:1–16

is a crucial part of understanding the role YHWH's creation claim plays in the book's

message.

Rhetorical Unit

Jeremiah 10:1–16 is part of the concluding chapter that closes the literary units of Jer 1–

10 and 7:1—10:25. In the context of 7:1—10:25, the shift to 10:1–16 is made clear by an

HWL formula directed at the "House of Israel," a TSL formula to mark the beginning of

YHWH's speech (10:2–5), and a move away from judgment language to plural

imperatives forbidding the audience from participating in idol worship. The subunit

following the doxology begins by returning to a scene from military invasion and the use

of imperatives for the inhabitants to gather their belongings and leave the land (10:17).

Although 10:1–16 is composed of several smaller subunits and shifting speakers,

the smaller subunits have been combined into a larger unit. In addition to the structural

features identified below, the liturgical response resolves some of the perplexing voicing

of the passage, such as the unnamed speakers of 10:6–10, 11, and 12–16 and who is

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[3] Fischer (*Jeremia*, 336) notes that the doxology addresses theological questions regarding YHWH's status and power, particularly his dominion and incomparability to other gods. Yet, what is most significant for his argument is that YHWH alone created the heavens and the earth. This is what provides him with such authority and distinguishes him from idols.

being addressed in 10:11.[4] When we turn to Psalms for other examples of prayer and

praise, we find similar abrupt shifts in voicing (Pss 4, 7).[5] Although hymnic passages are

often assumed to be human speech directed toward God, the didactic elements of 10:2–5

(such as imperatives and social address) and complex voicing patterns in other Hebrew

liturgical material suggest that it can include human speech directed toward humans as

well.[6] Although it might also be tempting to understand the lack of speaker identification

as problematic, others demonstrate that a lack of speaker clarification is common in

ancient hymns.[7] So, while there are grounds to separate 10:2–5 from 10:6–16, as it likely

presents two separate speakers, the unity of 10:1–16 can still present a doxology that

instructs the people to abstain from idol worship and directs their praise to YHWH alone.

Due to its length, the following translation is divided according to its shorter

subunits with accompanying assessments of each subunit's structure and delimitation,

beginning with the superscription:

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[4] For the association of this passage with liturgy, see Eggleston, *See and Read*, 148–56. Eggelston (*See and Read*, 156) convincingly argues that 10:1–16 demonstrates that Jeremiah preserves a "repository for psalms of lament and praise." As liturgy, 10:1–16 functions alongside the other hymns and laments of the book that shapes the reading audience into one of praise and worship. Most notable are passages that include the painful response to the city's destruction, such as 4:19–21. Problematic to this view are passages that may not fully align with the pronouncement of judgment given by YHWH and Jeremiah, such as Lee's (*The Singers of Lamentations*, 70) argument that the poet of 10:22–25 presents a subtle dispute against YHWH. Despite reflecting views that do not fully align with full affirmation of the community's judgment, such is the nature of lament (cf. Ps 88). It should also be noted that the voice of passages like 4:19–21 and 10:22–25 are not the same as the voice of 10:1–16. Jerusalem's Poet voices the former two passages, while the latter is presumably voiced by the receiving audience in exile. The Hebrew (proto-MT) tradition, although reflecting an editorial layer that caters to a Babylonian context, was preserved by a reading community in and around Jerusalem. For this argument, see Shead, "Jeremiah," 480; Sweeney, *Reading Prophetic Books*, 135. This is witnessed by the record of its existence in the Qumran library that supports a proto-MT version of the book (4QJer[a], 4QJer[c]).

[5] Suderman ("From Dialogic Tension to Social Address," 1–26) focuses on this issue primarily within the context of lament.

[6] Although Suderman ("From Dialogic Tension to Social Address," 24) favors labeling these verses as shift in audience by the same speaker instead of instructional language, removing this label does not eliminate the role these instructional verses play in the community. See Suderman, "From Dialogic Tension to Social Address," 24.

[7] Glanz, *Participant-Reference Shifts*, 168.

MT		Translation
שִׁמְע֣וּ אֶת־הַדָּבָ֗ר אֲשֶׁ֨ר דִּבֶּ֧ר יְהוָ֛ה עֲלֵיכֶ֖ם בֵּ֥ית יִשְׂרָאֵֽל:	10:1	Listen to the word that YHWH has spoken to you, O House of Israel:

This opening line functions to call attention to YHWH's words and highlights the House of Israel as the addressee. Its break from the previous unit (9:24–25) is also signaled by a superscription with a new audience, HWL formula, and a shift from prose to poetry in 10:2–5.

MT		Translation
כֹּ֣ה׀ אָמַ֣ר יְהוָ֗ה אֶל־דֶּ֤רֶךְ הַגּוֹיִם֙ אַל־תִּלְמָ֔דוּ וּמֵאֹת֧וֹת הַשָּׁמַ֛יִם אַל־תֵּחָ֖תּוּ כִּֽי־יֵחַ֥תּוּ הַגּוֹיִ֖ם מֵהֵֽמָּה:	10:2	Thus says YHWH: "Do not learn *the ways of the nations*,[8] and *do not be terrified* by[9] the signs of the heavens, for *the nations are terrified* by them.
כִּֽי־חֻקּ֥וֹת הָֽעַמִּ֖ים הֶ֣בֶל ה֑וּא כִּֽי־עֵץ֙ מִיַּ֣עַר כְּרָת֔וֹ מַעֲשֵׂ֥ה יְדֵֽי־חָרָ֖שׁ בַּֽמַּעֲצָֽד:	10:3	*For the customs of the peoples*—they are worthless! For he cuts down a tree from the forest, it is the product of the hands of craftsmen with his chisel.
בְּכֶ֥סֶף וּבְזָהָ֖ב יְיַפֵּ֑הוּ בְּמַסְמְר֧וֹת וּבְמַקָּב֛וֹת יְחַזְּק֖וּם וְל֥וֹא יָפִֽיק:	10:4	He covers[10] it with silver and with gold, they secure them with a nails and hammers so[11] it does not totter.[12]
כְּתֹ֨מֶר מִקְשָׁ֥ה הֵ֙מָּה֙ וְלֹ֣א יְדַבֵּ֔רוּ נָשׂ֥וֹא יִנָּשׂ֖וּא כִּ֣י לֹ֣א יִצְעָ֑דוּ אַל־תִּֽירְא֤וּ מֵהֶם֙ כִּי־לֹ֣א יָרֵ֔עוּ וְגַם־הֵיטֵ֖יב אֵ֥ין אוֹתָֽם: ס	10:5	They are like a scarecrow in a cucumber field; and they do not speak, they must be carried because they are not able to march. Do not fear them for they can do no harm nor good— they are nothing!

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[8] The italicized words form an inclusio identified in Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 579.

[9] The preposition מן indicates the source of an attitude (fear). See BHRG §39.14.(1)(d). See also IBHS, §11.2.11d.

[10] The Targum and Syriac both read "יצפהו" instead, meaning cover. The fact that both of these differ from the -- is important, as well as the fact that a scribe would be more inclined to change it from a plural to a singular.

[11] The simple *waw* attached to the negation *lo'* should be understood as expressing the purpose of the preceding clause. See BHRG §40.23.4.2.(4).

[12] The MT here has this verb in the singular. However, the LXX and 4QJer[b] both read plural, which would match the issue in the previous verb.

This second section is signaled by a TSL formula, which often appears at the beginning of a unit even if it is not the sole indicator of a unit's aperture. The TSL further emphasizes that YHWH is addressing his people, and his speech begins in 10:2 with a string of plural imperatives against idol worship. [13] The two clauses introduced by כי in 10:3 are understood as continuing to explain the futility of idol worship.[14] Spanning 10:2–3 is a chiastic structure with "the ways of the nations . . . do not be terrified" mirroring "they are terrified . . . the customs of the peoples."[15] At the close of 10:5, there is a return to negated imperatives to not fear the idols, which is followed by another explanatory כי. The subsequent 10:6–10 is largely hymnic and celebrates YHWH's uniqueness.

מֵאֵין כָּמוֹךָ יְהוָה גָּדוֹל אַתָּה וְגָדוֹל שִׁמְךָ בִּגְבוּרָה:	10:6	*There*[16] *is none like you,*[17] O YHWH! Great are you, and great is your name in might!
מִי לֹא יִרָאֲךָ מֶלֶךְ הַגּוֹיִם כִּי לְךָ יָאָתָה כִּי בְכָל־חַכְמֵי הַגּוֹיִם וּבְכָל־מַלְכוּתָם מֵאֵין כָּמוֹךָ:	10:7	Who will not fear you, O King of the Nations? For it befits you, for among all wise ones of the nations and among all their dominion, *there*[18] *is none like you*!
וּבְאַחַת יִבְעֲרוּ וְיִכְסָלוּ מוּסַר הֲבָלִים עֵץ הוּא:	10:8	And every person is stupid and foolish;

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[13] Parunak ("Some Discourse Functions," 505) adds that it often "validates the message it introduces as a word from Yahweh."

[14] Craigie et al., *Jeremiah 1–25*, 159. Goldingay (*Jeremiah*, 295) provides a helpful division of 10:2–3, where the two כי clauses continue from 10:2, while מעשה starts a new thought centered on the process of idol-making. This is similarly upheld by Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 584), who also notes that the singular pronoun "can emphatically resume a subject," which would here be "the ways" from 10:2. He draws from GKC §145u n 3. See also BHRG §36.1.1.3.(2). However, there is no comparison being made. The pronoun functions in apposition to the main topic of 10:2 and draws attention back to it.

[15] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 579. Lundbom notes this chiasm, though I am using my own translation.

[16] The MT has מאין, but the מ is likely the result of dittography.

[17] The italicized words form an inclusio described below.

[18] The MT has מאין, but the מ is likely the result of dittography

		the instruction of worthless idols[19]—it is wood!
כֶּסֶף מְרֻקָּע מִתַּרְשִׁישׁ יוּבָא וְזָהָב מֵאוּפָז מַעֲשֵׂה חָרָשׁ וִידֵי צוֹרֵף תְּכֵלֶת וְאַרְגָּמָן לְבוּשָׁם מַעֲשֵׂה חֲכָמִים כֻּלָּם:	10:9	Hammered silver brought up from Tarshish and gold from Uphaz,[20] the handiwork of a craftsman and hands of a goldsmith. They are clothed in blue and purple, handiwork of wise men[21]—all of them!
וַיהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֱמֶת הוּא־אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים וּמֶלֶךְ עוֹלָם מִקִּצְפּוֹ תִּרְעַשׁ הָאָרֶץ וְלֹא־יָכִלוּ גוֹיִם זַעְמוֹ: ס	10:10	But YHWH is the true God, he is the Living God, Everlasting King! The earth quakes because of[22] his fury, and the nations cannot endure his indignation!

A shift in voice and addressee initiates 10:6–10. While the prior subunit (10:1–5) was formed by YHWH's instructions and explanations regarding idol worship, this subunit is voiced by an unmarked speaker to YHWH, who is addressed in the second person pronoun (10:6). This second person addressee pattern is maintained in 10:6–7, though YHWH is referred to in the third person in 10:10. An inclusio also binds 10:6–7 together around the phrase מאין כמוך.[23] In 10:8–9, the unmarked speaker returns to the earlier topic of explaining the futility of idol worship. In 10:10, the speaker again proclaims a celebration of YHWH's superiority and power, referencing him in the third person.

כִּדְנָה תֵּאמְרוּן לְהוֹם אֱלָהַיָּא דִּי־שְׁמַיָּא וְאַרְקָא לָא עֲבַדוּ יֵאבַדוּ מֵאַרְעָא וּמִן־תְּחוֹת שְׁמַיָּא אֵלֶּה: ס	10:11	Thus you will say to them: The gods who[24] did not make the heavens and the earth, they will perish from the earth and from under the heavens.

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[19] Jeremiah uses הבל throughout this pericope to designate idols and that which he deems worthless. הבל is translated as "worthless idols" here to maintain the connection.

[20] The Syriac, and Targum each read "Ophir" here, while the Greek has "Mophaz." The locations of these place names are unknown. See Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 588–89.

[21] Although the sense behind this word is likely that of a "skilled individual," this occurrence is translated as "wise men" to preserve the emphasis on חכם. See Allen, "Structural Role," 95–108.

[22] The preposition מן indicates the idea of grounds, specifying YHWH's anger as the cause of the earth's shaking. See BHRG §39.14.(4)(b).

[23] Lundbom, *Jeremiah*, 61.

[24] The די should be understood as marking the relative pronoun, "who." See Johns, *Biblical Aramaic*, 16.

The prose verse of 10:11 stands on its own for several reasons. On a more obvious level is that the verse is in Aramaic. This is likely for the purpose of preserving a wordplay between עבד and אבד, which would be lost in Hebrew. The verse also begins with a 2mp imperative to an unmarked addressee from an unmarked speaker.[25] Even though the verse is written in prose, Lundbom notes that it is highly stylized and that "There is actually a double chiasmus: 1) "heavens / earth / earth / heavens"; and 2) "gods / make / perish / these."[26]

עֹשֵׂה אֶרֶץ בְּכֹחוֹ מֵכִין תֵּבֵל בְּחָכְמָתוֹ וּבִתְבוּנָתוֹ נָטָה שָׁמָיִם:	10:12	He[27] made the earth by his power, he established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding he stretched out the heavens.
לְקוֹל תִּתּוֹ הֲמוֹן מַיִם בַּשָּׁמַיִם וַיַּעֲלֶה נְשִׂאִים מִקְצֵה אָרֶץ בְּרָקִים לַמָּטָר עָשָׂה וַיּוֹצֵא רוּחַ מֵאֹצְרֹתָיו:	10:13	At the sound of his uttering,[28] the waters of heaven roar, and he causes the clouds to ascend from the end of the earth;[29] he makes lightning for rain and he brings forth the wind[30] from his storehouse.

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[25] Adcock ("Does Jeremiah Dispel Diaspora Demons," 396) argues that 10:11 was originally a war taunt against Zion's idolatry. Such a perspective, while only plausible, makes sense when one acknowledges the presence of warfare language throughout Jer 10:1–25. Adcock points to elements such as "fear" in 10:2–10, the presence of war oracles throughout the chapter, 10:12–16 and it demonstration of YHWH's militant strength and appearance in 50:15–19, and the use of YHWH of Armies in 10:16. While the classification of 10:11 as a war taunt is appealing, assigning it to a foreign voice mocking Israel's idolatry is not a necessary conclusion. Carroll (*Jeremiah: A Commentary*, 256) similarly describes 10:11 as a protective formula.

[26] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 593. Holladay also makes note of the verse's chiastic structure and notes that if it is not poetry, then it is carefully framed prose. See Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 325.

[27] The LXX and Syriac both read "The Lord" in place of this pronoun. The fact that the Syriac typically follows the MT is significant. However, the MT is the shorter text, and it seems more likely that "The Lord" would have been added in for clarity instead of being removed. If this is the case, it is important to remember that the LXX is not free from its own pluses.

[28] This phrase is absent in the LXX and is awkward. See Craigie et al., *Jeremiah 1–25*, 156–57. Its awkwardness suggests that it is original, as an added phrase would smooth out the reading. More importantly, the consecutive endings of מים- result in the mechanical issue *homeoteleuton*.

[29] BHS has הארץ here as a *Qere*. The issue may be a simple case of haplography with the ending of the previous word.

[30] The MT has wind, but the LXX has light (φος). 4QJer[a] also contains wind, showing that this is an older reading as well.

נִבְעַר כָּל־אָדָם מִדַּ֫עַת הֹבִישׁ כָּל־צוֹרֵף מִפָּ֫סֶל כִּ֫י שֶׁ֫קֶר נִסְכּוֹ וְלֹא־ר֫וּחַ בָּם:	10:14	Every person is stupid without knowledge, every goldsmith is ashamed because[31] of his image, for his molten image[32] is false and no breath is in them.
הֶ֫בֶל הֵ֫מָּה מַעֲשֵׂה תַּעְתֻּעִים בְּעֵת פְּקֻדָּתָם יֹאבֵֽדוּ:	10:15	They are worthless—a work of mockery; they will perish at the time of their punishment.[33]
לֹא־כְאֵ֫לֶּה חֵ֫לֶק יַעֲקֹב כִּי־יוֹצֵר הַכֹּל ה֫וּא וְיִשְׂרָאֵל שֵׁ֫בֶט נַחֲלָתוֹ יְהוָה צְבָא֫וֹת שְׁמֽוֹ: ס	10:16	Jacob's Portion is not like these, for he is the one who formed all things; and Israel is the tribe[34] of his inheritance; YHWH of Hosts[35] is his name!

This concluding unit is initiated in 10:12 by speaking of YHWH in the third person through 3ms pronouns attached to verbs, which continues into 10:13. In 10:14–15, the unmarked speaker returns to the topic of calling out the futility of idol worship. In 10:16, the speaker proclaims YHWH's superiority over these (אלה) idols and references both YHWH and Israel in the third person.

Although several subunits contribute to this larger unit, there is still reason to read it as a unified whole. A chiastic structure spans 10:2–10, supporting the unity of the first two subunits:[36]

The way of *the nations*	vv 2–3aα
A silver and gold work of a craftsman	vv 3aß–4

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[31] The preposition מן indicates the idea of grounds, specifying the cause of the goldsmith's shame. See BHRG §39.14.(4)(b).

[32] The use of נסך is difficult. The LXX, Targum, and Syriac read this as a plural verb for pouring or casting (נסך). See Craigie et al., *Jeremiah 1–25*, 156–57; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 598. The fact that the Targum and Syriac differ from the MT in this reading is significant. The issue here is how to understand the vowels, and there is no shorter reading.

[33] 4QJer[b] reads "When I punish them." This fragment is typically understood to support the shorter LXX. Although this verse in the LXX is within YHWH's own speech, it maintains the third person focus.

[34] The Greek omits "Israel the tribe." This may be redactional.

[35] The Greek omits "of Hosts." This may be an example of the MT embellishing.

[36] This chiasm is taken from Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 578. The translation and italics are his.

The idols are inert scarecrows	v 5
King of *the nations* unlike "wise" of *the nations*	vv 6–7
Instruction of inert idols is wood	v 8
A silver and gold work of a craftsman	v 9
The nations cannot handle Yahweh's indignation	v 10

In this context, the nations form the first, central, and closing line of the structure. Lundbom also notes that in each of the major subunits of the passage, there is an emphasis on the heavens and the earth.[37] Thus, 10:2, 10 make reference to the heavens and earth, 10:11 references both heavens and earth twice, and 10:12–13 similarly includes the heavens and earth twice.[38]

Scholars have also rightly noted the oscillation between YHWH and the foreign idols that spans the entire passage of 10:2–16.[39]

Jeremiah	Subject
10:2–5	foreign idols
10:6–7	Yahweh, King of the nations
10:8–9	foreign idols
10:10	Yahweh, King everlasting
10:11	foreign idols
10:12–13	[Yahweh] God of creation
10:14–15	foreign idols

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[37] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 596.
[38] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 594, 596.
[39] Margaliot, "Jeremiah," 298, 301. See also Ackroyd, "Jeremiah X. 1—16," 389; Clendenen, "Discourse Strategies in Jeremiah 10," 403–404; Overholt, "The Falsehood of Idolatry," 7–8.

10:16	Yahweh, Portion of Jacob and God of creation

Framed between the two liturgies (10:6–10, 12–16), scholars rightly recognize that the lone Aramaic taunt serves as a climax of the passage (10:11).[40] The unit oscillates between YHWH and foreign gods, which means it also alternates between the forms of praise and satire.[41] The result of such structural and stylistic features is that the doxology of the unit highlights YHWH's supremacy against foreign idols and directs the readers to praise him alone. Subsequently, the passage as a whole seeks to instruct its audience to abstain from idol worship.

Rhetorical Situation

The rhetorical situation of Jer 10:1–16 is the most challenging of the assessed passages so far. The text reflects a wide range of possible backgrounds, perhaps reflecting its extended development process.[42] Despite the compositional challenges posed by 10:1–16, there are two main reasons to associate it with a Babylonian context. The first is the literary features that convey Babylon and exile. This is evidenced by the literary placement of 10:1–16 as it relates to 10:17–25, as well as some of the features of 10:11, 12–16, which bring exile and Babylon into the forefront (10:12–16, 18, 22, 25; cf. 51:15–

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[40] Clendenen, "Discourse Strategies in Jeremiah 10," 403–404; Margaliot, "Jeremiah," 298, 301. This argument is shared by other commentators. See Craigie et al., *Jeremiah 1–25*, 158; Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 294; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 593.

[41] Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 295.

[42] A detailed discussion on the compositional development of the passage is beyond the reach of the present study. However, this passage is perhaps one of the clearest examples that support the independent development of MT–Jer and LXX–Jer. Ben-Dov ("A Textual Problem and Its Form-Critical Solution," 97–128) provides the most convincing argument for the later development of this text by recognizing that MT–Jer's main pluses (10:6–8, 10) are in hymnic form. His argument is to be preferred over others, though such a development could have occurred during the initial part of the exile, even during Jeremiah's ministry. For a different perspective that also acknowledges the form-critical differences, see Mizrahi, *Witnessing a Prophetic Text in the Making*.

19). The second is the distinctly Mesopotamian nature of the idol-making process described in the satire of 10:1–16. In addition to these two factors pointing to Babylon, the identity of the "House of Israel" must also be determined, which may also reflect a Babylonian context. The factors suggesting a Babylonian context contribute to a blurring between the inscribed and reading audiences, as the exilic experience brings the inscribed audience into the book's situation within Babylonian exilic ideology.

The emphases of idolatry and Babylon throughout 10:1–16 and its context suggest an exigence in which those exiled to Babylon must continue abstaining from idolatry but also recognize that their history with idolatry has made them subject to judgment. It is this second factor of the exigence that results in a theodical concern of 10:1–16, which ideally results in the sole worship of YHWH.

Babylonian Indicators in the Literary Context

Several features of Jer 10:1–16 and its immediate literary context (the subsequent 10:17–25, as well as other portions of Jer 7–10) point to a Babylonian context for the chapter. The first connection to Babylon occurs within the doxology under investigation. 10:12–16 is a hymn celebrating YHWH's defeat of Babylon. While this is not apparent from reading 10:1–16 on its own, the hymn of 10:12–16 is also found in an oracle against

Babylon in 51:15–19.[43] The book's association of this hymn with Babylon's destruction

provides a clear connection between the doxology and a Babylonian context.[44]

Even if one does not hold to 10:1–16 originating in exile, the literary block of Jer

7–10 contains several references to an exilic setting. In 8:19, the people's cries are heard

"from a distant land" (8:19).[45] While some commentators will suggest that this voice

comes from within the land of Judah, "from a distant land (מארץ מרחקים)" often has

connections with Mesopotamian sources of power and the direction from which Babylon

came (e.g., Isa 13:5; 46:11; Jer 4:16).[46] This suggests Babylonian exile as the source of

the voice crying out in 8:19.[47] The basis of their punishment is seen later in 8:19, where

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[43] Carroll (*Jeremiah: A Commentary*, 259) also notes that the incantation against idolatrous cults in 10:11 reaches its completion in their perishing in 10:15. As Fischer (*Jeremia*, 385) cautions, the presence of 10:12–16 in 51:15–19 does not necessitate that it originated in the latter's context. For example, in Allen's (Jeremiah, 127–28) treatment of 10:12–16, he suggest that "This unit, verified as such by its reappearance in 51:15–19, functions as a hymnic development of vv. 1–5, one that became the literary inspiration for vv. 6–10 and was already a firm part of the written tradition before ch. 51 was added." More detail on the process of this proposal could strengthen such an argument.

[44] Though stated in his discussion on the placement and order of the OAN in MT–Jer, the connection between 10:12–16 and Babylon's judgment in 51:15–19 suggest that Sweeney's (*Form and Intertextuality*, 76) point can apply here, namely that the literary presentation "displays a much greater interest in the question of Babylon's downfall—and thus with Judah's restoration—in the aftermath of the Babylonian exile." Whether written before or after 51:15–19, the explicit repetition of 10:12–16 in 51:15–19 forms a basis for reading 10:12–16 in connection to Babylon. Important to note, however, is that while the connection to Babylon exists, the context of 10:1–16 within Israel's issue with idolatry is meant to affirm Creator God's judgment of both Israel and Babylon. While 51:15–19 is epideictic in its goal of producing praise regarding Babylon's judgment, 10:12–16 is also bound to a judicial aim in that the House of Israel was an idolatrous nation worthy of judgment. Terblanche ("Jeremiah 51:15–19," 155–69) makes a similar connection between the two hymns of 10:12–16 and 51:15–19 by noting that the parallel hymns lead the reader to understand that God has the power to judge both Judah and Babylon.

[45] Some view this to be the voice of the prophet. See Allen, *Jeremiah*, 111. Lee (*The Singers of Lamentations*, 63–66) rightly argues that the voice of 8:19 is Jerusalem's poet. Important for the passages assigned to Jerusalem's poet is that her three speeches (4:19–21; 8:18; 10:19–20, 22–25) share themes and lexemes, such as שדדה and שבר. 10:21 is not assigned to the Jerusalem Poet as it returns again to a prophetic condemnation, much like the break between 4:19–21, 22. Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 531) places 8:19 in an exilic context, though he acknowledges that this is not a common view and understands "a cry of my dear people from a land far off" to be a later supplement to the original context of those in Jerusalem.

[46] For those who place this voice within Judah, see Allen, *Jeremiah*, 111–12; Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 270. Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, 293) translates the phrase as "land far and wide" (ארץ מרחקים) and compares it to Isa 33:17. However, his comparison here omits the proposition מ from ארץ.

[47] Despite viewing this line as a later supplement, Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 531) counters the idea that such a location means the voice is merely Jeremiah's imaginative anticipation of exile by reminding his readers that the people of Jerusalem had already begun being exiled to Babylon during Jeremiah's ministry.

they have angered YHWH with their foreign images (הבלי נכר). There are also several

references to the land being emptied or the people being cast out of the land (e.g., 7:3, 7;

9:15, 18; 10:17–18, 20–21). Thus, even if there are no clear indicators of a Babylonian

context when viewing 10:1–16 in isolation, the literary context already displays

awareness of the trajectory toward exile.[48]

In the unit immediately following 10:1–16, we return to a scene from the

Babylonian siege against Jerusalem (10:17; cf. 4:5–18). In response to this scene and its

imperatives to gather up possessions in preparation for departure, YHWH declares that he

will cast out (קלע) the inhabitants of the city (10:18). YHWH's words on the day of

disaster introduce the events of the exile in immediate succession to the doxology of

10:1–16. Finally, Jerusalem's poet laments and responds to siege and exile in 10:19–20,

22–25.[49] The poet identifies Babylon as the attacker (10:22) and requests the destruction

of Babylon for its actions against the city (10:25). In 10:22, the poet references "the land

from the north," which has been identified as Babylon. In 10:25, the poet's request for the

judgment of Babylon uses the term אכל to describe what Babylon has done to the city,

which is a term used earlier in the book when referencing the devouring of YHWH's

garden (2:3; 6:9; 8:13, 16).

Other studies on the doxologies of the prophetic corpus support the connection

between 10:12–16 and the exilic period. James Crenshaw's pioneering work on

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[48] Allen (*Jeremiah*, 119, 130) understands 9:12–16, 17–22 to be securing the fate of exile (9:15), which is what 10:17–25 expands upon.

[49] See Lee, *The Singers of Lamentations*, 66. Rom-Shiloni (*Voices from the Ruins*, 214; cf. 221) considers 10:19–25 to "express the views of the prophet himself, in his role of praying for the people." While this could be a demonstration of the prophet's awareness of lament and prayer material, Lee's (The Singers of Lamentations, 66–73) argument that Jerusalem's poet speaks in 10:19–20, 22–25 based the repetition of key lexemes is favorable.

doxologies in the prophetic corpus is particularly helpful in the identification of this

passage as a doxology related to a similar (though often shorter) strand of doxologies in

the prophetic corpus.[50] Apart from the inclusion of hymnic language throughout the

passage and its context within such strong judgment language, the declaration of the

refrain יהוה צבאות שמו in 10:16 is an important phrase marking other doxologies assigned

to this era.[51] He places the doxological refrain in the exilic or early post-exilic context.[52]

Crenshaw argues that the function of the refrain יהוה צבאות שמו is to counter

idolatry and is synonymous with his role as Creator. In other words, "Yahweh is the

name of the only God, the Creator of heaven and earth, in whose name all oaths must be

taken."[53] The refrain marries the themes of creation and redemption by communicating in

its context that Creator YHWH neutralizes any threats against the deliverance he

provides.[54] In the context of Amos' doxologies, Möller challenges the views of those who

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[50] Crenshaw, *Hymnic Affirmation of Divine Justice*.
[51] Crenshaw, *Hymnic Affirmation of Divine Justice*, 82–84. Crenshaw (*Hymnic Affirmation of Divine Justice*, 103–104, 111–12) observes that this refrain (or its variants) bears similarities to standard oath-taking in cultic settings, displayed negatively in 12:14–17 when Israel swore by other gods and positively in 4:1–4 (cf. 12:16) as part of the repentance process if Israel were to swear by YHWH's name. Crenshaw (*Hymnic Affirmation of Divine Justice*, 83, 89, 92, 111–12) identifies four themes that consistently appear in the context of the refrain: judgment, creation, idolatry, and swearing. Though swearing does not appear in 10:1–16, the other three themes are clearly visible. The theme of judgment is abundant in the opening section of Jeremiah. Even in the immediate context of the passage, judgment is present (9:24–25; 10:17–25). Within the doxology itself, judgment language is seen most notably in 10:10 but also in 10:11, 13, and 15. The theme of creation is abundant within our passage. Creation language appears in 10:10, 11, 12–13. YHWH's claim to creation is the key part of Jeremiah's argument in this passage that distinguishes YHWH from the pagan deities. Idolatry is thus abundantly present in our passage, which is seen in 10:2–5, 8–9, 11, and 14–15.
[52] Crenshaw, *Hymnic Affirmation of Divine Justice*, 111–12. He still views creation as something that developed earlier in Israel's history than the exile. This is in opposition to von Rad ("Das theologische Problem," 138–47), who views creation as a later development. Earlier scholars provide similar assessments regarding the doxologies in Amos, noting their power to have the audience retrospectively affirm the validity of the exile. For an example, see Horst, "Die Doxologien im Amosbuch," 54. Weippert (*Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde*, 32) also places 10:12–16 in a "post-Jeremiah" context, though potentially still in the exilic period. However, her basis for this claim is not the refrain discussed by Crenshaw but rather the statement that the God of Jacob is the "Creator of everything" (10:16).
[53] Crenshaw, *Hymnic Affirmation of Divine Justice*, 92.
[54] Crenshaw, *Hymnic Affirmation of Divine Justice*, 92.

suggest that these are supposed to be understood as exilic responses of praise, primarily due to the lack of indication within the text for such a reading.[55] Instead, he suggests that the doxologies of Amos stress YHWH's destructive powers and are fragments of an earlier hymn.[56] Though this is a possible assessment of Amos' doxologies, the references to Babylon in Jer 10:1–16 and its surrounding context provide a basis for reading it in light of Babylonian destruction and exile.

In summary, the literary context of 10:1–16 and the book's connection of 10:12–16 to Babylon's judgment (51:15–19) places the doxology within the context of destruction and exile. While this evidence does not necessitate that 10:1–16 originated from an exilic context, it does place it in conjunction with the exilic setting and anticipation of Babylonian judgment. In addition to the literary context of 10:1–16 the doxology's presentation of idolatry is distinctly Mesopotamian in nature, pointing to an exilic context.

Idolatry

The second factor of our passage's exigence is the threat of idolatry, which points to a Babylonian context. From a surface reading of the text, one can already observe the text's focus on idol worship. While the section on Rhetorical Strategy will focus more on the literary elements pertaining to idolatry, the goal of this section is to develop the historical nature of the idolatry presented in the passage and how it relates to the reading audience.

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[55] Möller, *A Prophet in Debate*, 113–14. He specifies Horst, "Die Doxologien im Amosbuch," 54.
[56] Möller, *A Prophet in Debate*, 115–16.

In his article on Jer 10:1–16, Jonathan Ben-Dov presents several challenges to the standard understanding of this passage that will be rehearsed to some extent here.[57] Most important for our current interest is his argument that 10:1–16 presents Mesopotamian forms of idolatry rather than Canaanite idolatry seen elsewhere in the book.[58] The relevant passages he uses in his comparison include 2:5–13, 27–28; 3:1–5; 5:20–25; and 14:22.[59] He rightfully acknowledges some of the factors that these passages and 10:1–16 have in common, such as "condemning inanimate materials (2:27), picturing the idols as 'no gods' or 'can do no good' (2:11; cf. 2:28) or stating that they cannot bring forth the rain (14:22)."[60] Thus, one could conclude that 10:1–16 naturally maintains Jeremiah's discourse against idol worship.

Despite these commonalities, serious differences exist that need to be addressed. The first is that 10:1–16 focuses heavily on the idol-making process in a distinctly Mesopotamian manner.[61] This passage highlights the process of covering wood with costly materials. Conversely, the earlier passages of the book use wood (עֵץ) and stone (אֶבֶן) to depict idols (2:27; 3:9). In 10:1–16, however, the passage speaks of a wooden core overlaid with expensive metals, while stone is left out of the passage's "almost

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[57] Ben-Dov, "A Textual Problem and Its Form-Critical Solution," 97–128. Beyond the discussion of Mesopotamian idol making, his other major contribution is the contribution form criticism plays in the textual history of this passage, namely that the MT pluses of 10:6–8, 10 are all hymnic.

[58] See also Lundberg, "The *Mis-Pi* Rituals and Incantations," 223. McConville (*Judgment and Promise*, 48–49) makes a similar claim.

[59] Ben-Dov, "A Textual Problem and Its Form-Critical Solution," 104. These are drawn from Overholt, "The Falsehood of Idolatry," 1–12; Preuss, *Verspottung fremder Religionen im Alten Testament*. Due to the immediate context of idolatry in 3:1–5, these verses seem to maintain idol worship as its focus. Contra Crouch (*Israel and Judah Redefined*, 20), who views 3:1–5 as being political rather than cultic, despite the language and metaphors being applicable to political alliances.

[60] Ben-Dov, "A Textual Problem and Its Form-Critical Solution," 104.

[61] Ben-Dov, "A Textual Problem and Its Form-Critical Solution," 104–105. He is not alone in this understanding. See also Dick, "Prophetic Parodies," 30; Kniger, "Ideology and Natural Disaster," 370; Lundberg, "The *Mis-Pi* Rituals and Incantations," 212–13.

encyclopedic list of materials."[62] Ben-Dov uses these material differences to suggest that

"The prophet struggles against a different cult, and therefore uses different tactics."[63]

Weirdly, our passage instructs against idolatry to a people who are defined by their

idolatry.[64] While the passages that Ben-Dov points out condemn Israel for idolatry, 10:1–

16 instructs them not to participate in idol worship, as if they were not guilty of this very

thing.[65] It is for this reason that Carroll claims that 10:1–16 could not come from

Jeremiah, as he understands the poem "is sympathetic to Israel and encourages it to be

independent of the false cults," a tone that is only connected to those living in exile.[66]

Carroll's connection of this poem to those in exile may be correct. However, his assertion

that the poem is sympathetic to Israel is open to criticism if one understands the doxology

as affirming the House of Israel's guilt, as they have been guilty of idolatry throughout

the book and were condemned in 9:24–25.

Ben-Dov's argument that the doxology includes a parody of a distinctly

Mesopotamian idol-making process remains instructive for understanding the rhetorical

situation and strategy. The fact that idol-making becomes such a dominant topic in the

prophets who address an exilic audience speaks to the severity of the threat that idol

worship must have posed. This is especially true when idolatry was a prominent cause of

Judah's exile. Jeremiah speaks strongly against Judah's tendency to worship idols,

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[62] Dick, "Prophetic Parodies," 35. See also Schneider, *Ancient Mesopotamian Religion*, 76–77.

[63] Ben-Dov, "A Textual Problem and Its Form-Critical Solution," 105.

[64] Carroll (*Jeremiah: A Commentary*, 254–55) acknowledges a similar tension as well.

[65] As stated in the previous section, this is why the passage carries the additional function of condemning those in Israel who are guilty of idol worship. Ben-Dov ("A Textual Problem and Its Form-Critical Solution," 105) also raises the point that the language of 10:13 is not meant to counter the idea that YHWH is a storm god instead of Baal but is instead a theophany, thus not supporting a Jerusalem or Canaanite backdrop. This will be discussed in greater detail below. In short, while it may be theophany language, it still presents YHWH's power over storms in direct relationship with his creational activity (10:12).

[66] Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, 254–55.

particularly in Jer 1:16; 2:5–13, 27–28; 3:1–5; 5:20–25; 7:9, 30–34; 8:2, 19. In fact, 1:16

and 8:19 state idolatry as a contributing reason for exile. Their adulterous idolatry results

in YHWH mocking them, saying that even the wicked woman could learn from Israel's

adulterous ways (2:33).[67] Meanwhile, Ezekiel explicitly links the exile with idolatry,

most strikingly through the vision of an idol inside the temple itself, which is connected

to YHWH's departure (Ezek 8–11; esp. 8:11, 19). The exile was partially the result of

idolatry but also presented the exiles with the challenge of being immersed in an idol-

worshipping culture.[68] Second Isaiah also has a strong discourse against the same idols

that uses the same satire as Jer 10:1–16, except focused on YHWH's control over history

rather than creation (Isa 40:18–20; 41:7, 29; 44:6–20; and 46:5–7). The appearance of so

many idol polemics of this era speaks to the remaining threat idol worship presented,

which forms a foundational part of the rhetorical exigence addressed in our passage of Jer

10:1–16.

In summary, the idolatrous "House of Israel" is confronted again by idolatry.

However, unlike earlier depictions of idolatry that reflect standard Canaanite cults, the

image-making process described in 10:6–10 is distinctly Mesopotamian. The satirical

presentation of image-making in a Mesopotamian fashion reflects an exilic setting for its

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[67] As Jer 2–6 focuses on Israel's abandonment of YHWH, idolatry plays a prominent role in the description of her abandonment. Israel follows other gods in 2:5, 8, 23, 25. See Allen, *Jeremiah*, 32.

[68] Levtow (*Images of Others*, 15–17) helpfully draws attention to the political connotations of the idol mockery in 10:1–16 by emphasizing the connection between religion and politics. In other words, YHWH's claim over the gods of Babylon is a political statement as well, expressing the power dynamic of YHWH over Babylon. The political connection to the power dynamic is especially significant when one remembers that 10:12–16 is also found in the oracle against Babylon in 51:15–19, demonstrating YHWH destruction of Babylon as a political entity. Allen (Jeremiah, 14) similarly notes that "the hymn looks forward to the destruction of implicitly Babylonian idols in v. 15," which would surely imply the destruction of Babylon as well.

setting rather than a setting in Judah. Our attention now turns to the identity of the

"House of Israel."

House of Israel

The nature of who is being addressed by the designation "House of Israel" clarifies the

audience of the rhetorical situation. The designation appears in other passages in Jer 1–

10, such as 2:26; 3:18, 20; 5:11, 15; 9:25. One of the challenges with this designation is

that it is potentially connected to several different groups in the book.[69] The "House of

Israel" is used in contexts where the Northern Kingdom is seemingly in view, particularly

when the term is placed in juxtaposition to the "House of Judah" (3:18; 5:11; 11:10;

31:31).[70] At the same time, other uses of the term seem to imply the nation as a whole

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[69] Margaliot ("Jeremiah," 307) suggests that the phrase refers to the exiles from the Northen Kingdom and "was intended for the whole people: primarily for the remnants of the northern tribes, including the descendants of those Judeans who were exiled in 700, when almost all Judah was conquered by the Assyrians." Margaliot ("Jeremiah," 307) posits the range of 627–605 as a potential context due to the lack of any references to historical events after 605. Leuchter (*Josiah's Reform and Jeremiah's Scroll*, 127 n 7) suggests 609–605 as a more fitting context due to seeing tensions between the wisdom tradition and the Deuteronomic program. He bases his argument on the similarities in language to 8:4–12 and 9:11–13 in relation to the Temple Sermon. Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, 329–30) believes the prophet to have in mind Assyria's siege against Jerusalem and the Rabshakeh's taunt against the city and YHWH (2 Kgs 18–19; esp 18:26–28, 33–35; 19:4, 18). He lists Jer 4:10 as support for this view, though this is not clear either. In his view, this would also explain the Aramaic verse in 10:11, which was spoken in Rabshakeh's taunt. Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 592–93) suggests a less specific context while favoring a pre-exilic context in general. Reasons for this include the reality that chs. 8–10 have a strong polemic tone to them against the Jerusalem cult, the emphasis on wisdom terms and שקר in 10:1–16 that is shared by chs. 8–10, and the possibility that this refutation of idolatry would reflect any time ranging from Josiah's reforms to the initial phase of the exile (which is supported by the lone Aramaic of 10:11). He (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 592) states that "The satire on idols and their makers is suitable any time." However, the appearance of these satires during the exilic period points to a more particular context of this era.

[70] Crouch (*Israel and Judah Redefined*, 1–2, 4, 9–14) counters many of the approaches taken to understand "House of Israel," as well as the mention of Israel and Judah in the same verse or context through Jeremiah and Ezekiel. She suggests that Israel and the "House of Israel" refer to the Jerusalemite elites taken in the deportation of 597. The exiled Jerusalemites use this terminology to maintain continuity with their homeland and distinguish themselves from the Judahites living back in the land. Thus, 9:24–25 refers to both a general population living in Judah, which is compared to the other nations, and the "House of Israel," who are superior and here reflect the common issue of outward piety without inward change. The sins of these elites are typical socioeconomic and political issues, as seen in passages like 5:26–31. While there is certainly an abundance of political and economic issues throughout Jer 5:1–31, there is also a focus on the participation of the average citizen, such as in 5:1, 4. Crouch (*Israel and Judah Redefined*, 33) acknowledges that Jeremiah, at least in its final form, "preserves a tradition in which Judah and Israel

(2:4; 31:33). This multivalency of the "House of Israel" creates a challenge for

determining the addressee listed in 10:1.

What is important to note, however, is that the "House of Israel" is referenced in

the passage immediately preceding 10:1–16, which may shed light on the function of the

doxology. The concluding two verses of 9:24–25 include a criticism of the House of

Israel alongside the nations:

MT		Translation
הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים נְאֻם־יְהוָה וּפָקַדְתִּי עַל־כָּל־מוּל בְּעָרְלָה:	9:24	"Look! The days are coming," declaration of YHWH, "when I will visit upon all who are circumcised in the foreskin:
עַל־מִצְרַיִם וְעַל־יְהוּדָה וְעַל־אֱדוֹם וְעַל־בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן וְעַל־מוֹאָב וְעַל כָּל־קְצוּצֵי פֵאָה הַיֹּשְׁבִים בַּמִּדְבָּר כִּי כָל־הַגּוֹיִם עֲרֵלִים וְכָל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל עַרְלֵי־לֵב: ס	9:25	upon Egypt and upon Judah, upon Edom, upon the Ammonites, upon Moab, and upon all who are trimmed to the side who live in the desert. For all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the House of Israel is uncircumcised of heart."

The result of this grouping in 9:24–25 is that YHWH's judgment, "believed to be

the fate of all the 'uncircumcised' nations, would also befall Israel."[71] In this context,

"House of Israel" seems to include YHWH's people and functions as a designation for

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come to be conceived as parallel entities, viewed on approximately equitable terms." This is largely due to later migrations to Babylonia. The fact that the final edition of Jeremiah preserves Israel and Judah side by side results in a reading of the book and its references to Israel that is hard to differentiate from views that understand Israel as an inclusive term.

[71] Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, 252. Fischer (*Jeremia 1–25*, 582) observes the similarity Jer 10:1 has to Amos 3:1, which begins a passage that emphasizes Israel's election among the nations. In Jer 10:16, Israel's election and uniqueness are emphasized in comparison to the nations.

both kingdoms of Israel and Judah.[72] The issue is that Israel is unable to be distinguished from the nations because they are ultimately uncircumcised of heart.

Thus, leading up to our passage in 10:1–16 that begins with the "House of Israel," the audience is placed alongside the uncircumcised nations, nations that will be judged by YHWH. In this depiction of judgment, "Yahweh is now seen showing no partiality to any nation—Judah included—practicing physical circumcision."[73] The opening verses of our passage highlight that the House of Israel ought not to learn the ways of the nations, providing a link with 9:24–26 and the nations represented there and designated for judgment. To further cement this reality, much of the audience's indictment in the earlier passages of the book is centered around the sin of idolatry. So, though 10:1–16 presents a doxology, there is also the alarming possibility that the negative description of the nations indirectly applies to Israel and Judah. In support of this is the concluding designation of Israel as YHWH's inheritance (10:16). This concept expresses their relationship to YHWH through the exclusive worship of YHWH, which is clearly not how the prophet characterizes the people in Jer 1–10. Though there are elements that cause our passage to stick out in its context, referring to Israel through such language creates a tension in their characterization that cannot be missed. This also addresses the important observation made by Carroll, who notes the strangeness of the passage in that "The community

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[72] Contra Crouch (*Israel and Judah Redefined*, 13), who holds that Judah is a reference to the general population of the land, and "House of Israel" is a reference to the Jerusalemite elites. She acknowledges the tension between 9:24–25 and 4:3–4, which contains instruction for the people of Judah and Jerusalem to circumcise their hearts to YHWH. She (*Israel and Judah Redefined*, 13 n 5) resolves the tension by arguing that "this is a new instruction to the general population, given in hope of saving it from the devastation in which it was about to be caught up . . . . implying that they are not yet Yahwists."

[73] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 575. Wright (*The Message of Jeremiah*, 134) rephrases Jeremiah's message here: "There really is no difference between you and all these other nations you despise. They all practise [*sic*] physical circumcisions as do you. But you are just as uncircumcised in reality as they are. You have become no different from the other nations in heart or flesh."

condemned for idolatry, apostasy, social injustice and abandoning Yahweh in many of

the poems is here addressed in eirenic tones which aim to warn them about the falseness

(*šeqer*) of the nations' religious ways," noting the passage's sympathetic and supportive

tone toward Israel.[74] His observation is correct and an overlooked aspect of how the

passage fits into its context. Understanding our passage as admonishing idol worship

while also highlighting the judgment of idol-worshipping nations (including Israel)

addresses the challenge of how this passage relates to the audience. It also provides a

foundation for the multivalent functions of this passage as directing praise to YHWH,

prohibiting the worship of foreign gods, characterizing Israel as being no different from

the foolish and idolatrous nations, and explaining the judgment of Israel and her

treatment like the other nations. As with other uses of the House of Israel in our literary

block, the use of the designation in 10:1 thus applies to the nation as a whole, including

those in exile.

Summary

The rhetorical situation for our passage can broadly be defined as an exilic context in

which the audience, the "House of Israel," is faced with the worship of foreign deities

while living under Babylonian dominion. In support of this doxology being read in an

exilic context is the distinctly Mesopotamian nature of the idolatry described in the

passage and the surrounding context of 10:1–16 making references to the exile and

awaiting Babylon's own destruction. The result of situating this passage within the

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[74] Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, 254–55 (254).

Babylonian exile is that it closes the gap between the inscribed and reading audiences of the book.

Idol worship has plagued the audience for generations and even forms an important part of the prophet's indictment against the people, which eventually leads to exile. The audience, identified as the "House of Israel," is cast against the foreign nations to demonstrate that when they worship idols, they become no different than the nations. This makes them worthy of the same judgment as the idol-worshipping nations (cf. 9:24–25). The result of this is that while 10:1–16 instructs against idol worship and directs praise to YHWH alone, it provides an explanation for their own judgment.

Rhetorical Strategy

Underlying the functions of our passage in Jeremiah's argument in 10:1–16 is that there is no God like YHWH. YHWH's incomparability is reflected twice in the pericope (10:7, 16), emphasizing the centrality of this concern. Humorously, other gods are compared to him to demonstrate the incomparability of YHWH. When compared to the idols, YHWH alone holds the power to respond to his people, create the cosmos, sustain the cosmos, and rule over the nations. Consequently, YHWH alone can enact his vengeance and wrath against those who oppose him. As the climax of the doxology proclaims, YHWH alone made the heavens and the earth (10:11).

Before assessing the rhetorical strategy of 10:1–16, it must first be acknowledged that there are seemingly competing literary genres in the passage. 10:1 is a superscription; 10:2–5 contains imperatives not to fear the ways of the nations because of their futility; 10:6–10 contains a hymn; 10:11 contains a taunt or protective formula; and 10:12–16 returns to a hymn. Embedded throughout are verses that are satire against foreign cults

and idol worship (10:2–5, 8–9, 11, 14–15). Despite the varying literary genres, the classification of 10:1–16 as a doxology can be attributed to the passage being dominated by hymnic language, though the doxology is aimed at urging the audience to abstain from idolatry. Scholars are likely correct to assume that the aniconic core of the passage was initially an independent text to which the hymnic material was added. Nathaniel Levtow describes this fusion of icon parodies and hymns as a hybrid genre that "developed in response to social circumstances specific to the latter half of the sixth century."[75] Although he is correct in highlighting the likely reality of hymnic material being introduced to the text, the final product makes it so that satirical material serves the purposes of the hymnic material by giving it the basis of YHWH's proclaimed superiority. In other words, "The hymnic verses serve as the positive counterpoint to the negative parodies: Yahweh is exalted and empowered according to the very same standards by which cult images are denigrated and disempowered."[76]

Contained within the complex doxology of 10:1–16, two important strategies are employed to demonstrate YHWH's superiority. The first is satire, which carefully mocks the futility of idol worship with awareness of Mesopotamian idol-making procedures. The second is an oscillation between idols and YHWH, which compares the powers of both to underline the futility of idol worship and the supremacy of Creator YHWH.

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[75] Levtow, *Images of Others*, 77.

[76] Levtow, *Images of Others*, 52. Similarly, Patrick (*Rhetoric of Revelation*, 107) similarly observes that the most common function of such a recurring form is praise for YHWH, in which "The unreality of the idol is a negative term for comparison for YHWH, the 'living God.'"

Satire

At the heart of Jeremiah's satirical presentation of idolatry is the argument that idols are

unresponsive and impotent blocks of wood.[77] Much of the prophet's criticism of idol

worship is displayed by his familiarity with the idol-making process and his use of the

process as a parody to reveal the idol's lifelessness. Levtow provides an extended

description of icon parodies "as acts of self-identification through self-differentiation by

means of a power-oriented discourse and its comparative, oppositional focus on iconic

embodiments of social power relations."[78] Levtow's definition of parodies is helpful in

the present context because it emphasizes the political dynamics of the audience dealing

with Babylonian rule. As the exiles faced the power dynamic of Babylonian rule, YHWH

is presented as having power over even Babylon. Thus, the parody extends beyond

rudimentary descriptions of idol worship and seeks to clarify who truly holds power over

the nations: YHWH, King of nations (10:7).

As noted in the Idolatry portion of the Rhetorical Situation, the idol-making

process portrayed in 10:2–5, 8–9 is a clear depiction of Mesopotamian idol production.

Its close affinities with the process result in a satire against the vanity of idol worship,

which justifies the use of imperatives against foreign religion. Michael Dick summarizes

the idol-making procress in the following way: "(1) first the wooden core of the statue is

prepared (v. 3); (2) next, the cores are plated with gold and silver (vv. 4a, 9a, 14); (3)

then the image is fastened to its base (v. 4b); (4) finally, the statue is clothed (v. 9b)."[79]

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[77] Though there is certainly a strong criticism of idols and foreign gods in the passage that expose their impotence and existence, it still remains better to speak of this passage as presenting an argument rather than labeling it a form of abuse. See Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant*, 175.

[78] Levtow, *Images of Others*, 17.

[79] Dick, "Prophetic Parodies," 17–18.

Jeremiah conveys an awareness of much of this process in 10:2–5, 9, though an important

aspect (*mīs-pî*) is noticeably absent. By recreating the process in a particular manner, the

satire serves to undermine the efficacy of the process. The primary issue with idol-

making is that the idols are ultimately the product of human hands.[80]

Within Mesopotamian cults, idols were constructed as representations of deities.

The image simultaneously was and was not the deity. For example, in the Marduk

Prophecy it is stated that "He (Sennacherib) took Marduk by the hand and led him to

Assur. He dealt with the country (i.e., Babylonia) consonantly with the divine anger, and

the prince Marduk did not cease from his anger. For twenty-one years he made his

residence in Assur."[81] Though Marduk is spoken of here, it is the statue of Marduk in

view.[82] Thus, the deity is identified with the statue itself. Conversely, there is the reality

that a deity could have multiple temples and, thus, multiple statues.[83] In other words,

"The evidence is thus clearly contradictory: the god *is* and at the same time *is not* the cult

statue."[84] Jacobsen clarifies this tension by detailing that the statue becomes a stage of

divine presence in a mystic or transcendent manner, making the human-made statue

transubstantiated and being the god it represents through ritual, though the divine

presence is in no way a limitation of the deity or their presence.[85] It is clear from Jer

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[80] Dick, "Prophetic Parodies," 35. For a challenge to Dick's argument, see Lundberg, "The *Mis-Pi* Rituals and Incantations," 210–27. One point of tension she identifies is that the Ark and its descriptions often reflect similarities with the making of images in Mesopotamia and are at least quasi-divine. Regardless of whether her criticism is fully accurate, she helpfully identifies that for Jeremiah and Isaiah, their main challenge is that the gods represented by the images are not real gods.

[81] Jacobsen, "The Graven Image," 17. Jacobsen is citing Langdon, *Die neubabylonische Königsinschrften*, 271.

[82] Jacobsen, "The Graven Image," 17.

[83] Jacobsen, "The Graven Image," 17–18.

[84] Jacobsen, "The Graven Image," 18. Jacobsen's comment in this regard provides a helpful balance to generalizations made by Dick ("Prophetic Parodies," 39) and pointed out above by Lundberg ("The *Mis-Pi* Rituals and Incantations," 216).

[85] Jacobsen, "The Graven Image," 22–23.

10:1–16 that the prophet is familiar with such a process and undermines the idea that the idol bears any power beyond being a piece of wood.

In the fabrication process of images, artisans and smiths from other professions contribute to the furnishing of a wooden base. As Dick notes, "The creation of the god was a supreme act of synergy between heaven and earth . . . for the statue had been produced by earthly and godly artisans."[86] In one text, we see Esarhaddon request that the deity "(18) Endow the skilled craftsmen who you ordered to complete this task with as high an understanding as Ea, their creator. (19) Teach them skills by your exalted word; (20) make all their handiwork succeed through the craft of Ninšiku."[87] In another text, King Nabu-apal-iddina states "By means of the expertise of Ea, and the workmanship of the carpenter, goldsmith, sculptor, and gem-cutter gods he truly and with care fashioned the statue of the great lord Shamash with ruddy gold and clear lapis-lazuli."[88] The process of crafting the statue was sanctioned, designed, and directed by the deities through the skilled craftsmen, as in Jer 10:9 (חכמים).

The satire of 10:1–16 demonstrates that despite the extravagance of materials, idols are merely objects made by skilled workers. Regarding the materials used, the prophet notes that they are made from wood, covered in gold and silver, and adorned with royal clothing. Some materials, such as gold and silver in 10:9, craftsmen had to acquire from distant lands. Fretheim proposes that the two distant locations from which they get their material for the idols may reflect the extensive efforts of the people to

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[86] Dick, "Prophetic Parodies," 39.

[87] Dick, "Prophetic Parodies," 39. Dick is citing from Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons*, §53.

[88] Jacobsen, "The Graven Image," 21. Jacobsen is citing King, *Babylonian Boundary Stones*, XXXVI, 120–27. There is some modification between his citation and that found in King.

manufacture their ultimately worthless idols.[89] That the idol is clothed in blue and purple

also demonstrates the costly and extravagant nature of these images.[90]

This brings us to the vital missing element in Jeremiah: *mīs-pî* ritual. Once

formed, a Mesopotamian image underwent a ritual by which it was purified and enabled

to represent the deity. This process is referred to as the *mīs-pî* ritual or mouth-washing

ritual. This ritual resulted in the statue being "empowered to speak, or to see, or to act,

through various culturally subscribed channels."[91] The need for such a process is

ironically the result that they, too, understood the reality that the statue was still a product

of human hands. This is one reason why the deity's involvement was necessary in the

crafting process.[92] Jeremiah's words embody a more potent sting with this potential

shortcoming in mind. His words against the foreign images capitalize on the tension

already in place that ritualization attempts to reconcile.[93] Furthermore, how could a mute,

powerless, and unwise god give instruction for the construction of its image?

Oscillation

The oscillation between idols and YHWH operates in a way that establishes YHWH's

superiority. The satire against the idols is pitted against the praises declaring YHWH's

power over his creation. Oscillation is a device that allows the biblical authors to make

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[89] Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 170. Goldingay (*Jeremiah*, 299) acknowledges that neither Tarshish nor Uphaz can be definitively identified, though the typical connections are for Tarshish to be in Spain and Uphaz to the south in Arabia. Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 588–89) and Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, 332–33) provide fuller lists of options.

[90] Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 589) acknowledges the difficulty of these terms but connects the colors to Tyre via 1 Chr 2:14. The cities in the region of Phoenicia produced purple dye from sea snails.

[91] Winter, "Idols of the King," 13.

[92] Levtow, *Images of Others*, 88–89.

[93] As Patrick (*Rhetoric of Revelation*, 110) notes, satire against idols in the Mesopotamian context may be understood as exposing the truth of such a tension.

comparisons to establish differentiation through hierarchy.[94] The immediate juxtaposition of competing claims of authority and divinity allows the audience to make a direct comparison between YHWH and the idols, concluding that YHWH alone deserves their worship.[95] Holladay describes the effect of the poem's oscillation as "giving the hearer a kind of vertigo in awareness" regarding YHWH's superiority and uniqueness.[96]

The doxology's oscillation results in the following thematic structure:

Section I:
        vv. 2–5: The weakness of the idols.
        vv. 6–7: The power of the Lord.
Section II.
        vv. 8–9: The dead idols.
        v. 10: The living Lord.
Section III.
        v. 11: The non-creating idols.
        vv. 12–13: The creator God.
Section IV.
        vv. 14–15: The foolish worshipers of idols.
        v. 16: The non-foolish worshipers of the Lord.[97]

This structure is more general and prioritizes the shift in subjects between YHWH and the idols. Understood in this manner, the doxology oscillates between YHWH and the idols, contrasting their claims to power, existence, creation, and wisdom. However, despite this structure's tidiness, the comparisons between YHWH and the idols are not always seen in the corresponding verses. Perhaps the most evident point of incongruity in

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[94] Levtow draws from Olyan in his analysis and highlights instead the totality and hierarchy associated with binaries. See Levtow, *Images of Others*, 55; Olyan, *Rites and Rank*, 6–7. However, the binary established here seems to focus less on the concept of totality and more on providing contrast. Levtow (*Images of Others*, 55) states that "Broadly speaking, the authors of this text classify Babylonian and Israelite myth, ritual, and deity, arraying these two cultural systems along a hierarchical continuum and positioning each according to a power-centered discourse. The literary and ideological structure of the text is a set of privileged binary oppositions: life and death, strength and weakness, wisdom and foolishness, truth and falsehood."

[95] Fischer, *Jeremia*, 377.

[96] Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 336.

[97] Margaliot, "Jeremiah," 299.

the oscillating pattern is seen in 10:14–15 versus 10:16 and the comparison of wisdom.

Even though 10:14–15 emphasizes the foolishness of idol worship, 10:16 does not use the

same wisdom language to describe YHWH. The expected comparable language for such

a comparison is instead seen in 10:12. Margaliot provides a more detailed structure of the

thematic comparisons and includes additional points of comparison where the aspects

being compared do not appear in the corresponding verse(s):

List of divine attributes (affirmative or negative)	About idols *vv.*	About YHWH *vv.*
1. Incomparability expressing itself in supreme power	5	6, 12
2. Constancy, eternity	11, 15	10a
3. Creator of heaven and earth	11	12, 16
4. Dynamic ruler of cosmic forces	14	13
5. Life, i.e. dynamic behavior	3–4	10a, 13
	8b–9	
	14–15	
6. Possessing superhuman wisdom	7b	7b, 12
7. Feared and respected by humanity	5b	7, 10b
8. Moral retribution	5b	
9. Speaking, i.e. responding to humanity's prayer	5a	
10. Walking, i.e. in heaven to help humanity[98]	5a	

While such an incongruity exists, one can maintain that the simpler division based

on subjects (YHWH and the idols) is still relevant for two reasons. The first is that the

text's presentation of a clear contrast between YHWH and the idols is the most dominant

and important basis for comparison. The second is that the unit must be read as a whole.

As an example, even though 10:16 does not contain the clear wisdom language expected

for its comparison to 10:14–15, the expression "not like these" (לֹא־כָאֵלֶּה) serves as a

substitute to link it with 10:14–15 and the preceding verse (10:2) that have already

established YHWH's wisdom. In addition, we will also see that while explicit wisdom

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[98] Margaliot, "Jeremiah," 300.

language is not used in 10:16, intertextual connections with Deuteronomy demonstrate that 10:16 implicitly utilizes wisdom language, meaning the pattern still provides a meaningful structure for the text. Thus, the following analysis follows the simplified structure seen above while acknowledging additional points not in the corresponding verses.

Power and Weakness (10:2–5, 6–7)

The contrast between YHWH and the idols begins in 10:2–5 with a denunciation of idols having any power. In conjunction with this is the claim that the ways of the nations and signs of the heavens similarly have no validity.[99] 10:2–5 includes a large portion of the satire against idol-making, which leads to the conclusion that idols must be carried if they are to move and must be pinned down so they do not topple over.[100] Such argumentation exposes the reality that they are unable to do evil or good. This remains a fundamental part of the argument of the entire pericope regarding why Israel should not worship or fear foreign idols and why idol worship is complete folly. The impotence of idols becomes their defining characteristic.

Conversely, YHWH is unique and unmatched. While the idols are unable to do good or evil, YHWH is great (גדול), and his name is great (גדול) in might (גבורה).[101] His

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[99] Thompson (*Jeremiah*, 327) draws attention to passages reflecting earlier parts of Israel's history when heavenly signs and powers were problematic (2 Kgs 21:5; 23:5, 11, 12; Amos 5:25–26).

[100] Eichler ("The Assyrian Sacred Tree," 412 n 45) makes a similar note regarding the mockery of their inability to move, observing that "The brilliance of the mockery in the last part of this verse has not been sufficiently appreciated: not only can idols not move voluntarily, but the total inability to move *involuntarily* is the hallmark of a 'good' idol." Emphasis original. He proposes that תמר מקשה should be understood as an Assyrian sacred tree or decorative tree.

[101] Goldingay (*Jeremiah*, 299) understands the description of YHWH as great (גדול) to be a reference to his size, noting that "Yahweh is a *big* guy, by analogy with the big guys and nations that Jeremiah has mentioned (5:5; 6:13, 22; 8:10)." Italics original. The comparison to other occurrences of greatness (גדול) in Jer 1–10 does not seem necessary. In addition, size is likely not in view for the

greatness provides a clarifying point for the basis of comparison in that the idols can do

neither harm nor good, which should be understood in the context of deliverance or

disaster. In other words, idols are unable to defend their cities or destroy their enemies.

This is perhaps best illustrated in idols having to be carried out of the city by either the

enemy or those fleeing the attack.[102] YHWH's greatness distinguishes him from the idols

of the nations, especially as he is the one who brings judgment (10:10, 11, 12–16). In a

context where warfare is viewed through a religious lens, this demonstrates YHWH's

power to not just protect his people but also defeat the foreign gods (cf. Jer 2:27–28).[103]

His might is further demonstrated by his universal dominion, captured by the title

King of the Nations.[104] Goldingay clarifies that even "the Babylonians are his unwitting

servants."[105] Due to his claim over all of creation, his dominion entails all nations and

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references he mentions either. Instead, it is better to understand the language of greatness in 10:6 in reference to YHWH's power, as per Craigie et al., *Jeremiah 1–25*, 159.

[102] An example of this in the prophets is seen in Amos 5:26–27, though it is dependent on נשא being translated in the future tense. In Amos' example, the idols are mocked because they were unable to defend their city or protect their people. To further emphasize their impotence, "The prophet announces that Israel will take into exile the gods in whom it trusted." See Carroll R., *The Book of Amos*, 349. Israel trusted their gods to save them, yet they themselves must hoist them up and carry them out of the city in defeat. Conversely, it is YHWH who departs the Jerusalem temple without being carried by human hands in Ezek 10–11.

[103] This is an important point of interpretation for understanding military victory and defeat. This is demonstrated in Rabshakeh's taunt against Jerusalem and YHWH in Isa 36:4–22; 37:9–13 and YHWH's response in 37:5–9, 14–38. Most important are 36:7, 10, 15, 18, 19–20. The point of tension between Assyria's forces and Jerusalem was YHWH's capability to protect them from Assyria and its gods, especially when compared to the inability of other conquered regions and their gods. The listeners are asked to consider if the gods of other conquered territories were able to protect their inhabitants, which would lead to the conclusion that YHWH is unable to protect his people in Jerusalem. To further illustrate this point, there are indications that when conquered cities requested their deity statues back from Assyria, they were returned with "might of Assur" written on it. See Press, "Where Are the Gods of Hamath," 207. There is also the expectation that statues could protect a city. See Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion*, 32. Although implicit at best, this forms the only potential support for Holladay's (*Jeremiah 1*, 329–30) connection of our passage to the events of 702.

[104] Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 588) rightly identifies much of the language describing YHWH's greatness and kinship with the language used in Psalms for the same purposes. He links Jer 10:6–7 with the following psalms: Pss 22:29 [Eng 22:28]; 40:17 [Eng 40:16]; 47:8–9 [Eng 47:7–8]; 48:2 [Eng 48:1]; 86:10; 95:3; 96:4; 96:10. 135:5; 147:5. For a treatment of Jeremiah's relationship with the Psalms, see Holladay, "Indications of Jeremiah's Psalter," 245–61.

[105] See Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 299. This is further demonstrated in the presentation of God using Babylon as his instrument of justice, which has already been discussed in a previous chapter.

their histories. The proper human response is to fear YHWH. The reappearance of ירא in

10:7 harkens back to 10:2 as a counterpoint in order to positively redirect their fear and

reverence (cf. 5:22). Interestingly, the appearance of fear is almost juxtaposed to the wise

men at the conclusion of 10:7, reinforcing the common connection between the fear of

YHWH and wisdom (Prov 1:7, 29; 2:5; 3:7; 9:10; 15:33).[106]

Jeremiah 10:7 also provides an early exposure of a theme contrasted in 10:14–16,

namely the wisdom of YHWH worship against the foolishness of idol worship. The

contrast is demonstrated in 10:7 through the comparison that the wise men (חכם) of the

nations are incomparable to YHWH. This provides a catchword that carries us to the first

part of the next comparison, a contrast between the lifeless idols and the living God.

Before moving to the next comparison, 10:7 provides the basis for a particular

response from the audience. Although there is doubtlessly the presence of an intellectual

apologetic tone, the presence of fear language in 10:2, 5, and 7 speaks to the emotive

response from the audience and all of humanity, contributing to the epideictic nature of

the passage (cf. 5:22, 24).[107] The royal language of YHWH's portrait in the passage

certainly demands a sense of reverence, yet the concept of fear typically entails more than

solely terror or reverence.[108] Fear of God ultimately shapes one's allegiance and response

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[106] Jindo ("The Divine Courtroom Motif," 89) adds the important connection to the concept of fearing YHWH, in which "The fear of God is a particular state of mind that derives from the recognition that one is not an autonomous being but rather a subject of a cosmic government under the absolute authority and providence of God and his council."

[107] Allen, *Jeremiah*, 126.

[108] Fretheim (*Jeremiah*, 169) speaks of reverence in 10:7, though he brings up the possibility of ירא being genuine fear as well, as in 5:22. Allen (*Jeremiah*, 126) understands fear in this sense to be a positive expression in opposition to negative fear in 10:5. He also understands the fear in 5:22, 24 to be positive. Jindo provides an overview of traditional understandings of this term and suggests instead that "the fear of God is rather a distinct state of mind that may lead individuals to live and behave virtuously . . . an awareness of the living presence of the celestial authority—an awareness that affects and directs one's inner faculty. . . a mental state attained through a reflection about one's relationship to the celestial authority, whose presence may evoke such an ineffable, numinous feeling." See Jindo, "The Divine

to a given situation (cf. Isa 8:12–13). For those living in exile, the summons to fear God

aligns their trust and allegiance to YHWH alone, while the imperative not to fear the

ways of the nations undermines any reason to trust them as a source of life.[109] This is

conveyed in 10:7 through a rhetorical question that could be rendered as a statement

reminding them of how absurd it is not to fear YHWH alone. Its expression as a

rhetorical question adds greater emphasis to the statement and requires some form of

audience response.[110]

Dead and Living (10:8–9, 10)

Within 10:8–9, we see an admonition against the wise men of the foreign nations and the

reality that they are indeed stupid (בער) and foolish (כסל).[111] The main point of this

comparison is that the instruction of idols is nothing (הבל) because they are blocks of

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Courtroom Motif," 89 n 43. See also Jindo, "On the Biblical Notion of Human Dignity," 433–53. Eichrodt (*Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:268–69) further notes that this fear of YHWH reflects the gap between God and humanity, and that fear of this nature includes both fear and trust. To place too great a divide between fear and reverence may miss the significance of YHWH's greatness and his power to deliver or judge (cf. Isa 8:12–13).

[109] Kustko (*Between Heaven and Earth*, 54) cautions that "While the prophets might argue that Yahweh was using Babylon as an instrument of vengeance on Israel, one wonders how theologically effective this message was." In other words, one could easily assume that it was Babylon's gods who had defeated Israel and its God. However, the reminder of YHWH's power, realness, and kingship in Jer 10:1–16 offers the timely reminder of YHWH's control and, conversely, the impotence of Babylon's הבל gods.

[110] In addition to the rhetorical question being a call for the exiles to maintain fear in YHWH as King, the fact that it begins with "who" (מי) rather than a direct address to Israel makes the question more inclusive. As a result, it may serve as an implicit reference to Babylon. Allen (*Jeremiah*, 126) also draws a connection to the Babylonian Empire. Another example of this style of rhetorical question is in Nah 1:6, which begins a similar rhetorical question with "who" (מי), clearly referencing Assyria as the one who cannot withstand his fury. Goldingay (*Jeremiah*, 298) also observes that many of those in Judah were guilty of not fearing YHWH. This is displayed most clearly in Jer 5:22, 24. In addition to Israel's issue with idolatry, not fearing YHWH contributes to their judgment.

[111] "Senseless" (בער) has not yet been applied to Judah, though it reappears in 10:14, 25. "Foolish" (כסל) is specific to 10:8. However, Jeremiah has consistently linked Judah and its leaders with synonyms of these two words, even in context of idolatry (4:22; 5:21; 8:7–8; 9:11–12). Holladay (*Jeremiah 1*, 332) reads "senseless" as the homonym "burn," though the context suggests that "senseless" is the better understanding. In his reading, their burning His reason is that Isa 44:15, 16, 19 speaks of burning wood that is also used for idols, it is paired with foolishness here.

wood. In other words, they are lifeless objects, ironically made by skillful (חכם) people.

Conversely, YHWH is the true or real (אמת) and living (חי) God and everlasting (עולם)

King.[112] As Allen notes, this declaration "finds in the person of Yahweh divine reality

and the quintessence of life and power."[113] The assertion that YHWH is king counters

part of the imagery used for the idol and its adornment, particularly the blue and purple

clothing, which are colors associated with royalty.[114]

The point of comparison between the existence of YHWH and the idols is that the

idols are mere products of craftspeople, while YHWH is the real God.[115] This comparison

plays on an important concept in Israel's admonition of idols, namely that God is

responsive and dynamic. Unlike the idols, YHWH can respond to his people. YHWH's

designation as the living or real god is connected to the reality that he can interact,

particularly through spoken word (Deut 5:26; Ps 42:2; Jer 23:26), but also of his ability to

act on behalf of his people (2 Kgs 19:4, 16; Isa 37:7, 17). In other words, God as the

living God is a further elaboration of his being real (אמת).[116] In his commentary on the

topic, Holladay aptly summarizes the significance of these descriptions with the judgment

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[112] Goldingay (*Jeremiah*, 300) associates אמת with YHWH being "the real thing." While YHWH's realness or trueness (אמת) can be understood in relation to his validity or faithfulness, McKane (*Jeremiah*, 1:225) makes the important point that the term is ultimately meant to contrast with nothing or worthless (הבל) of 10:8 regarding the idols, noting that "Yahweh has a massive substantiality; he is truth and effectiveness."

[113] Allen, *Jeremiah*, 127.

[114] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 589.

[115] Lundberg ("The *Mis-Pi* Rituals and Incantations," 217) summarizes that "It is not that cult images are to be rejected because they involve human manufacture and corporeal materials, but they are to be considered as only the products of human manufacture because they are not true gods." While her assessment is helpful in highlighting the main issue of the gods behind the idols not being real gods, the manufacturing process of the images still bears witness to their being nothing. Kustko's (*Between Heaven and Earth*, 27, 35) work on idolatry and God's presence in Ezekiel provides greater clarity to prophetic thought toward idolatry toward the time of exile. Most important is that God's absence and lack of any signs of his physical presence (such as through an image) is actually a sign of his realness and presence. Conversely, images are signs of divine absence.

[116] Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 333.

language that follows: "The expressions in v 10a are all noun phrases and tempt one therefore to hear them as static descriptions; the temptation is dispelled by the violent verbal clauses that follow."[117]

Because God is the living and powerful deity who stands against the powerless and dead idols, creation responds to his wrath (קצף) and anger (זעם).[118] In 10:10, the parallelism captures the totality of creation's response to YHWH. In the first line, the earth (ארץ) responds to his wrath by quaking (רעש), and the nations (גוי) are unable to endure his anger.[119] This introduces a major context for the passage in pronouncing the judgment of the nations, who are identified by their idol worship. YHWH's wrath and anger recenter the topic around the topic of judgment, which has been a major theme of the literary block as a whole but also in the verses prior to the hymn (9:24–25).

Created and Creator (10:11, 12–13)

In 10:11 an Aramaic taunt highlights a fundamental issue with other deities: they did not create the heavens and the earth and they will perish. The fact that they did not participate in the creation of the cosmos and hold no claim over creation signifies the foolishness of worshipping them. This is the only occurrence in the doxology where the idols are referred to as אלה.[120] Prior to 10:11, the dominant term for the idols and foreign acts of

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[117] Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 334.

[118] God's wrath (קצף) is applied to both Judah (21:5) and Babylon (50:13; cf. 32:37). God's anger (זעם) is applied only to Babylon (50:25).

[119] Craigie et al. (*Jeremaih 1–25*, 159) make the humorous comparison with the idols in 10:3: "The idol-gods can only shake the earth by falling over, but they are prevented from falling by being nailed down. The earth, however, shakes at the wrath of the Lord, and the nations shake at his anger." Conversely, one could also claim that the shaking of the earth may cause the idols to topple.

[120] Goldingay, *Jeremiah*, 301. The connection between idols and אלה forms a stark contrast between Ezekiel and Jeremiah, as Ezekiel never acknowledges their existence and is more provocative of their portrayal. Kustko (*Between Heaven and Earth*, 38) notes that the term אלהים is never used for idols or foreign gods, indicating that "idols are never gods."

worship has been הבל.[121] As already noted, 10:11 forms the center and climax of our passage. The key issue being addressed in the centerpiece of the doxology and polemic is that the foreign deities have no creative power over creation. Put differently, when YHWH is compared to the foreign gods, what stands out as his chief distinguishing factor is his creation of the heavens and the earth.

YHWH alone made (עשה) the earth by his power (כה), established the world by his wisdom (חכמה), and stretched out the heavens according to his understanding(תבונה). The emphasis on wisdom and understanding in God's creation activities, particularly regarding the founding of the earth and stretching out the heavens, closely aligns with creation texts in the wisdom tradition (Prov 3:19–20; 8:22–31; Job 37:16).[122] Wisdom has remained an important point of tension in the book, as the so-called wisdom of certain parties has been challenged throughout the block of chs. 7–10 (8:8–9; 9:13–15, 16–21; 10:7, 9).[123] It also forms the characterization of idol worshippers in our passage (10:14–15). The result of this trajectory is that YHWH alone is wise.[124]

The claim that YHWH "made (עשה) the earth (ארץ)" harkens back to God's creation activity found in Genesis, which reverberates throughout the OT (e.g., Exod 20:11; 2 Kgs 19:15; Isa 45:12, 18; Jer 27:5; 32:17; Jon 1:9; Prov 8:26; Neh 9:6; 2 Chr

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[121] הבל appears in 10:3 to describe foreign practices and again in 10:8, 15 as the term for "idols." פסל Is used for "idols" in 10:15, as is נסך for "images."

[122] Keel and Schroer (*Creation*, 97) argue that these terms used for God's creation of the world present God as a craftsman and demonstrate the wisdom or skill he uses in creation. This could provide a helpful contrast to the artisans involved in idol-making. See also Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 333.

[123] Allen ("The Structural Role of Wisdom," 102) provides an additional point of contrast in that power and wisdom are both presented as issues in 9:22–23. This contributes to seeing the judgment of Judah within this passage as well.

[124] Allen, "The Structural Role of Wisdom," 102–103.

2:11).[125] Additionally, the stretching out of the heavens is also seen throughout the OT
(e.g., Isa 44:24; 45:12; Ps 104:2; Job 9:8), as well as the making of the heavens with his
understanding (תבונה) in Ps 136:5; Isa 51:13.[126] The combination of stretching out the
heavens and laying the foundation of the earth is also seen in Isa 51:13; Zech 21:1. God's
establishing of the world is also celebrated in Pss 93:1; 96:10; 1 Chr 16:30.[127] Because of
YHWH's creation activity, creation responds to him alone, and the order of the cosmos is
sustained by him alone.

The creation of the cosmos in 10:12 is followed by his sustaining of the natural
order and control of weather patterns in 10:13. Similar to the creation tradition of
establishing a boundary for the sea in 5:22 and YHWH's preservation of the seasons
through the provision of rain in 5:24, 10:12–13 pairs YHWH's creation activities with his
power to send rain. YHWH alone provides rain, clouds, lighting, and rain with the sound
of his voice. The reference to God controlling "the waters of heaven" in 10:13 reflects the
division of the waters seen in Gen 1:6–9, where the waters above are used for rain (cf. Ps
104:9–17). Job 36:29–33 similarly emphasizes God's use of thunder and lighting,
connecting these activities to God's governance of the nations and provision of food.

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[125] Genesis 1:1 uses ברא to capture God's creation of the earth (ארץ). Despite this difference, אשׂה
is used throughout the creation narrative of Gen 1:1—2:3. More importantly, 2:4 summarizes the events of
the creation as YHWH making (אשׂה) and the earth (ארץ) and the heavens. See Jon 1:9, where Jonah uses
אשׂה to describe God's creation of the heavens and dry land (יבשה).

[126] While addressing the role of creation in Second Isaiah, Simpkins (*Creator and Creation*, 115)
draws out the purpose of creation for the audience by appealing to Isa 51:12–13, noting that "Because
Yahweh is the creator, the people do not need to fear human oppressors . . . . Yahweh the creator has not
slumbered from his tasks. The people have simply forgotten that Yahweh is the creator and that Yahweh is
in control of human affairs and able to redeem them from their oppression." While this is certainly the case
in Isa 51:12–13 and may also apply to Jer 10:12–16 and its focus on Babylon's judgment (51:15–19), it
could be said that these acts of judgment or deliverance fall within the responsibilities of YHWH's identity
as Creator (cf. Job 36:29–33).

[127] "Earth" (ארץ) can be used instead of "world" (תבל), as in Ps 119:90. Additionally, Ps 65:6
speaks of God establishing (כון) the mountain by his strength (כה).

Rain and lightning are also paired in Ps 135:7, prior to detailing his judgment of Egypt and the nations in 135:8–12. However, the storm imagery in Job 36:29–33 provides a helpful caution against disassociating the storm imagery in Jer 10:13 from God's governing and provisional activities over his creation.[128] His power over the storm extends to both judgment and provision.

Alberto Green notes that the storm imagery is a clear counterpoint to the temptation to attribute these activities to Baal.[129] This would certainly recall the similar language in 5:20–25 (cf. 14:22). However, this claim can also be read in light of Mesopotamian deities.[130] Though the storm imagery speaks of YHWH's power over the created order, it also speaks to his power to use the elements in judgment.[131] The creation activity of 10:12–13 thus moves from God's acts of creation to his acts of sustaining and judgment that flow from his authority as sole Creator.

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[128] Longman (*Job*, 404) similarly concludes his discussion of the storm imagery in Elihu's speech by stating, "His thunder not only signals life-giving rain but is also an expression of passionate anger against sin."

[129] Green, *The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East*, 277.

[130] Levtow, *Images of Others*, 54–55. Holladay (Jeremiah 1, 335) clarifies, "manifestations of the storm that were attributed by Canaanites to Baal and by various Mesopotamian peoples to Adad are affirmed to be under the direction of Yahweh." Storm imagery does not necessitate connections to Baal.

[131] Ben-Dov ("A Textual Problem and Its Form-Critical Solution," 105) argues that 10:13, unlike 5:24 is not meant to describe YHWH's powers over the rain and storms but should be read as theophany language. Weippert (*Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde*, 30) shares a similar view, in which the storm elements are detached from Old Testament creation theology. However, its context in the hymn connects it to the concept of creation theology. While the point is clear that judgment and theophany are in view in 10:13, his ability to bring such fierce judgment is based on his role as Creator in 10:12. Goldingay (*Jeremiah*, 301–302) rightfully connects the language used in Jer 10:13 with language found in 1 Kgs 18:41, 44–45 in relation to God's power to end drought, specifically in contrast to Baal's lack of power. While this language can be used in passages like 135:7 in the context of judgment, it still operates on the claim that YHWH has authority over the rain and storms. Fretheim (*Jeremiah*, 168) helpfully draws the connection between creation and judgment by noting, "wrath is understood to be an integral part of the created order, in and through which God works in judgment. . . God is thereby being true to the very created order of things."

Foolishness and Wisdom (10:14–15, 16)

In the final comparison, 10:14–15, everyone is described as stupid (בער) and without

knowledge (דעת) because of the vanity of worshipping lifeless idols that they

constructed. Furthermore, there is a time coming when they will be punished.[132] There is

a return to the reference of the idols as being vanity (הבל), which was first seen in 10:3, 8

(cf. 2:5). Their vanity subjects them to mockery (תעתעים), which is part of the ongoing

argument of the passage and is performed through their comparison with Creator YHWH.

This term emphasizes the "nonexistence or emptiness of other gods or the foolishness of

activities associated with idols."[133] When judgment comes for the idol worshippers, their

impotent vanities will be unable to deliver them.

In contrast to this, YHWH is specified as "not like these" (לא־כאלה), again

emphasizing his superiority to the idols. However, Israel is meant to be unique as well.

The pericope concludes with an emphasis on the relationship between YHWH and his

inheritance (נחלה), Israel, which is an important metaphor for Israel's identity. This

metaphor appears in both Deuteronomy and Jeremiah in two senses: as an expression of

familial relationship and the designation of the land of Israel as a perpetual shared space

between YHWH and the ongoing generations of Israel.[134] Jeremiah also makes use of this

metaphor in 2:7; 3:18–19; 12:7–15; 17:4; 50:11; and 51:19. Two important elements exist

in the background of this metaphor. The first is the exodus events, in which YHWH's

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[132] The subject of 10:15 is המה and references the images of 10:14. The images will face YHWH judgment (פקד). Goldingay (*Jeremiah*, 303) connects the destruction of idols to Isa 2:18, 20; 24:21. Lundbom (*Jeremiah 1–20*, 599) helpfully connects 10:15 to the judgment anticipated in 10:11.

[133] Kutsko, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 37–38 n 39.

[134] Important passages for this metaphor in Deuteronomy include 4:21-24; 9:25–29; and 32:8–9. However, this term appears in Deut 1:38; 3:28; 4:20, 21, 38; 9:26, 29; 10:9; 12:9, 10, 12; 14:27, 29; 15:4; 18:1, 2; 19:3, 10, 14; 20:16; 21:16, 23; 24:4; 25:19; 26:1; 29:8; 31:7; 32:8, 9.

deliverance of Israel from Egypt serves as the basis for claiming Israel as his inheritance (e.g., Deut 4:20). The second important element for this metaphor is that it casts Israel's very identity against their exclusive relationship with YHWH. In other words, central to Israel's identity is that they belong only to YHWH and can worship only him. To worship another deity is to betray their very identity. Though this metaphor forms an important connection between our passage and several passages in Deuteronomy, Christopher Wright correctly draws a connection between Jer 10:1–16 and Deut 32:1–43 due to specific overlapping themes.[135] In addition to the connections observed by Wright, Deut 32:21 (cf. 32:28–29) also speaks of YHWH using a foolish nation to provoke his people, which is the key description of the idolatrous nations in 10:14–15. Interestingly, Israel is described in Deut 32:28–29 as being without sense (אבד עצות) and understanding (ואין בהם תבונה).[136] This anticipates the association of Israel with the foolish nations and their idolatry and pending judgment.[137] The foolishness and senselessness of Israel has already been evidenced in Jeremiah in relation to idolatry (5:21).[138] Additionally, 9:24–25 casts Israel and Judah alongside the other nations subject to judgment.

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[135] Wright (*The Message of Jeremiah*, 135 n 30) draws a connection between Jer 10:1–16 and Deut 32:1–43 and that many of the main features of Deut 32 appear in Jer 10, namely the characterization of Israel as perverse, Israel's rejection of YHWH in favor of other deities, a contrast of YHWH and the other gods, God's violent judgment, and the use of foreign nations as agents of YHWH's judgment.

[136] There is debate on whether or not Israel is the referent of "they" (הם) in 32:28 and the subject of this passage. Those who consider Israel's enemies to be the subject, see Cook, *Reading Deuteronomy*, 235; Lundbom, *Deuteronomy*, 893–94; Nelson, *Deuteronomy*, 375. Those who understand Israel as the nation in view include Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 386; Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, 421. Regardless of if this passage speaks of Israel or her enemy, there remains the association of a lack of wisdom and the unawareness of YHWH's activity. Christensen (*Deuteronomy 21:10—34:12*, 808) proposes a supporting alternative in which the identity of the subject is intentionally vague. He suggests that the description is applied to the enemy but also to Israel, thus characterizing both nations.

[137] This point is detailed in the Rhetorical Situation in relation to doxology as affirmation of judgment, as well as in the headings of Idolatry and House of Israel.

[138] For the various roles of wisdom language in Jer 7–10, particularly in relation to exile and judgment, see Allen, "The Structural Role of Wisdom," 95–108. Allen focuses primarily on wisdom in relation to covenant traditions and adherence, as well as the appearances of חכמה/חכם. While this is the case, negative wisdom terms are used in direct relation to idolatry in 10:1–16 and 5:21. This specifies the

Summary

The doxology of Jer 10:1–16 is structured according to an oscillation between YHWH

and Babylon's idols. The oscillation uses both satire and praise to magnify the uniqueness

of YHWH and that YHWH alone created and sustains the cosmos. Satire is used to mock

the worthless idols, which are not gods and did not create the heavens and the earth.

However, by mocking the powerless and foolish idols, YHWH is praised as the only true

and living God who created the heavens and the earth and rules over all nations. The

doxology of 10:1–16 is also performed in response to judgment, affirming YHWH's

judgment of the people. YHWH is just to send judgment to those who worship idols,

including Israel, and it is through Creator YHWH's power that Israel will be brought

through exile. Israel has earned her place in judgment due to their idolatry (5:21) and

uncircumcised hearts (9:24–25).

The rhetorical strategies employed in 10:1–16 result in a passage that can best be

described as a doxology urging the audience to abstain from idol worship. The

imperatives found in 10:2–5, 11 highlight the centrality of idolatry. However, the passage

as a whole is largely epideictic, which is demonstrated by the dominance of the hymnic

language and the emotional expectation of fear in 10:7. It is also seen in the movement to

persuade Israel to value her uniqueness among the nations by worshipping YHWH alone,

which provides a path forward toward restoration. However, the epideictic elements of

the passage can also be understood as contributing to the passage functioning as a

"hymnic affirmation," which seeks to persuade the audience to agree with God's past

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nature of wisdom and foolishness in these settings, particularly concerning idolatry. It is more appropriate
to understand Israel's judgment in 10:1–16 in relation to her foolishness from idolatry. Israel's rejection of
their very identity (נחלה) as YHWH's people forms the basis of their judgment.

judgment by responding in praise.[139] This concern is best demonstrated in relation to the

"House of Israel" being compared to the nations in 9:25–26 and the consistent issue of

their idolatry throughout the book. Judah's judgment is fair due to the people's idolatry,

which places them among the idolatrous nations worthy of judgment. Still, epideictic

remains at the forefront, as much of these additional aims are centered around Israel

adhering to their identity as the people of YHWH's inheritance.

Rhetorical Effectiveness

The potential rhetorical effectiveness of 10:1–16 is connected to the doxology's potential

to move the audience away from their pattern of idolatry and toward the affirmation of

their judgment and the sole praise of YHWH. The aims of the text should be effective in

exposing the foolishness and absurdity of worshipping powerless and lifeless idols, who

did not create the world. The overtly epideictic elements, namely the hymnic language

and the emotional expectation of fear in 10:7, should elicit the proper fear of God and

move the audience toward the praise of YHWH alone. The ideal audience, identified as

the House of Israel and Inheritance of YHWH, is characterized as a worshipping

audience.[140]

The doxology of 10:1–16 also makes it clear that YHWH will judge the foreign

gods and those who foolishly worship them. However, we have also seen that the "House

of Israel" in 10:1 is characterized in a way that aligns them more with the uncircumcised

of heart and foolish nations than as YHWH's inheritance (9:24–25; 10:16). As a

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[139] This is drawn from the title of Crenshaw, *Hymnic Affirmation of Divine Justice*.

[140] Eggleston (*See and Read*, 148) similarly concludes that the audience of the book of Jeremiah is ideally one that responds to the mediated word of YHWH through worship. See also Eggleston, *See and Read*, 146–51.

doxology of affirmation, 10:1–16 moves the audience toward agreeing with their judgment as they have betrayed what it means to be YHWH's inheritance (10:16), a term which is often combined with the sole worship of YHWH.

Conclusion

The doxology of 10:1–16 is the longest and most complex of YHWH's creation claims assessed so far. It has been argued that the audience of the passage is those living in Babylonian exile, which blurs the distinction between an inscribed audience and the book's readers. The literary context of 10:1–16, including the association of 10:12–16 with Babylon in 51:15–19, points to a Babylonian setting. In addition to this, the idolatry mocked in the passages reflects a distinctly Mesopotamian nature. While the passage ultimately praises YHWH, it also anticipates the judgment of those who worship such idols, namely Babylon. However, the audience of the passage, identified as the "House of Israel" (10:1), has betrayed its identity as YHWH's inheritance (10:16) by worshipping foreign idols and has thus earned their place in judgment. Crenshaw asks an important question at the outset of his study, "why were the doxologies placed in their present position instead of somewhere else?"[141] To this end, the doxology's placement in the larger trajectory of Jer 1–10 presents hymnic affirmation as the intended response to judgment, proclaiming that Creator YHWH is just in his judgment. It is through fearing and trusting in Creator YHWH, King of the Nations, that those in exile will be restored.

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[141] Crenshaw, *Hymnic Affirmation of Divine Justice*, 1. Eggleston (*See and Read*, 148) adds that the audience of the book of Jeremiah is ideally one that responds to the mediated word of YHWH through worship

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

This work identifies the ways in which creation theology, particularly YHWH's creation claims, functions in Jeremiah's discourse. The rationale for this study is to counter the tendency to identify creation theology as a peripheral or subordinate theme in Jeremiah, resulting in a distorted or incomplete picture of the book's presentation of God and how he relates to his covenant people and the rest of his creation. Even within the work of scholars who attribute significant weight to Jeremiah's creation theology, one could still risk viewing creation as a merely stylistic feature, and there has been no systematic investigation into the specific roles of creation theology in Jeremiah.

This work presents a rhetorical analysis of key creation passages in the opening literary block of the book (Jer 1–10) in order to present a more precise understanding of the various roles creation plays in Jeremiah's message. Due to the breadth of what could be categorized as creation theology, this work focused on passages that convey the concept of YHWH's identity as Creator. In the opening literary block of the book, the passages containing the clearest creation claims are 1:4–12; 4:23–28; 5:20–25; and 10:1–16. Upon the isolation of these passages, a rhetorical-critical analysis was conducted on each passage, with special attention given to how creation contributes to the rhetorical intentions of each passage.

I have argued that Jer 1–10 uses creation to universalize the scope of his message and bolster the validity of his indictment, meaning creation plays a unique and necessary role in the prophet's persuasive intents of repentance, theodicy, and doxology. Jeremiah's message of judgment thus becomes an expression of YHWH's exclusive identity as

Creator and Sustainer of the cosmos and its order. Furthermore, Judah's judgment is at least partially the result of their inability to properly recognize YHWH as Creator (5:20–25; 10:1–16) or that Jeremiah has been commissioned by the Creator (1:4–12). Jeremiah embeds God's judgment of the people within the created order and justifies it as an expression of YHWH's creational prerogatives (1:4–12; 4:23–28; 10:12–16). Furthermore, the reading audience shaped by Babylonian exile is expected to see the absurdity of the literary audience's refusal to repent, often characterized through metaphor (5:20–25), further justifying the divine decision to judge. As Creator, YHWH upholds the created order, which sometimes requires judgment (5:24–25; 10:12–13). The present conclusion aims to summarize these findings and assess the implications of Jeremiah's use of creation claims.

Summary

Chapter 1 demonstrated that scholarly approaches to the topic of creation in Jeremiah have often given creation a limited role in the book and its message. While approaches to Jeremiah as a whole often determine much of how one views its presentation of creation theology, the two other driving factors can be divided into two groups: (1) factors shaped by larger issues of creation in Old Testament theology as a whole; and (2) those which highlight the relationship between Israel's actions and their effects on the natural order. I then presented rhetorical criticism as a way forward in understanding Jeremiah's creation theology, as it focuses on the strategies employed across each of the literary styles in the book rather than isolating texts determined by compositional perspectives. Rhetorical analysis also allows for a more systematic approach to understanding creation theology in Jeremiah and identifying particular functions within the book's message. Failing to

recognize creation's important roles in Jeremiah's rhetoric results in a skewed understanding of Israel's sins and their effects on the cosmos, as well as the rationale behind their judgment. Similarly, failure to acknowledge the significance of YHWH's role as Creator in Jeremiah results in the reader missing the idea that God's identity as Creator is what distinguishes him from other deities and should result in his exclusive worship. His identity as Creator also contextualizes the power and prerogatives of the Creator God who has brought judgment on his people.

Chapter 2 introduced the model of rhetorical criticism utilized in this work. The most important feature of this approach is that rhetoric is understood as persuasion rather than style, enabling creation claims to be assessed as a significant factor in the book's arguments. A version of Kennedy's rhetorical-critical model was presented and modified in four ways: (1) by emphasizing the communicative aims of a passage; (2) by placing special emphasis on the important role of metaphor in Hebrew poetics; (3) by using intratextuality to ensure a passage is not read in isolation from its literary context; and (4) by drawing from intertextuality to provide a more informed reading of particular phrases and images used in each passage. Chapter 2 also presented a rhetorical situation for the book of Jeremiah as a whole, which is defined by the Babylonian exilic ideology or Babylonian experience. While this situation applies to the readers of the whole book, each the analysis of each passage identifies the inscribed rhetorical situation in the passage.

Chapter 3 presented the primary structural devices used in Jeremiah for unit division, arguing that unit aperture and closure are best identified when multiple structural devices are present. These are also the main types of structural devices

identified in the passages under investigation, providing a basis for the delimitation of the passages containing creation claims in the subsequent chapters. Chapter 3 also proposed a structure for the book of Jeremiah as a whole and Jer 1:1—10:25 in particular, as this literary block forms its own distinct unit and contains each of the four passages under investigation in the present work. I argued that while Jer 1:1—10:25 can be clearly divided into smaller subunits (1:1–19; 2:1—6:30; 7:1—10:25), it functions as its own literary block within the first half of the book (1:1—25:38). The division of the text in this way provides a complete literary block for rhetorical analysis.

Chapter 4 focused on the prophet's commission according to Jer 1:4–12, which is the first passage with a clear creation claim. YHWH presents himself as Creator by proclaiming his involvement in forming (יצר) the prophet in his mother's womb, persuading the reluctant prophet to accept his commission, and inviting Jeremiah into the creational prerogatives of creation and destruction, demonstrated in the verbs of uprooting (נתש) and planting (נטע), which are both used in the context of creation activity. Creation thus plays a crucial role in shaping the prophet's commission and contributes to the aims of the passage. Jeremiah's commission is judicial in the sense that YHWH forms the reluctant prophet for the prophetic ministry, and his words are expressions of YHWH's universal authority to create and destroy nations. Within the inscribed situation of the text, YHWH successfully overcomes the prophet's objections by appealing to his identity as Creator (1:5) and assuring the prophet of his presence and aid (1:7–8) as he prepares the prophet to minister to a hostile audience. The reluctant prophet is overcome by the creation claim and given YHWH's authority, yet he is met with hostility and rejection from his audience until he laments over his situation (20:7–

18). For the readers, not only should the prophet's authority be affirmed, but the prophet's reluctance should also elicit the reading audience's remorse over the hostility against Jeremiah.

Chapter 5 analyzed the vision of 4:23–28, which reveals the coming judgment by implementing a reversal of the Gen 1 creation tradition. The reversal of this creation tradition toward destruction results in the image of Creator YHWH coming in anger to destroy or "uncreate" Judah through military destruction. The epideictic nature of this passage comes to the forefront due to the extreme images of the destruction of Judah's cities and land, as well as the surrounding laments in 4:19–21, 31. For the inscribed audience, the epideictic nature of the vision is meant to shock them into repentance, yet no sign of their repentance is expected. For the reading audience, the epideictic nature of the vision is heightened by the inscribed audience's refusal to repent, urging them toward repentance if restoration is to be realized.

Chapter 6 analyzes Jer 5:20–25, which presents a twofold creation claim conveyed in YHWH's establishing of a perpetual boundary for the sea (5:22) and his continued maintenance of the seasonal rains (5:24–25). These two creational activities demonstrate YHWH's exclusive ability to overpower the forces of chaos and uphold the created order. These claims are made against a "foolish" people who are plagued by their idolatry to the point of not appropriately fearing YHWH or recognizing his authority as Creator, which prevents them from experiencing the goodness of the created order through covenant blessing. To demonstrate the irrationality of the people's waywardness, the sea and its raging waves are presented as a metaphor for the people: as foolish as it would be for the sea to prevail against the order God has assigned to it, Israel continues

rebelling against God and his ways. Their stubbornness is also contrasted with the orderliness of the created order demonstrated by the rains and seasons that can be experienced when living in covenant faithfulness. Such a comparison also leads to the conclusion that Israel's sins have severely disrupted the created order. This passage is primarily epideictic for the inscribed audience, seeking to first shock them into realizing the absurdity of their sin, properly acknowledging and fearing YHWH's authority as Creator, and repenting from their idolatrous activity. For the reading audience, the passage remains epideictic in its aim to demonstrate with extreme vividness the absurdity and scope of their sins, aiming to draw them into repentance and the appropriate fear of YHWH.

Chapter 7 analyzed the doxology of 10:1–16, which celebrates YHWH as the sole Creator of the cosmos, who has the prerogative to judge the idol-worshipping nations. Within the passage, Israel's covenant God (10:16) is presented as the universal authority when satirically compared to the foreign idols due to his creation of the cosmos and preservation of its order. It was also argued that the passage envisions an exilic setting, which blurs the distinction between the inscribed and reading audiences. In the wake of judgment and exile, 10:1–16 is a hymn that urges the audience to abstain from idol worship while also justifying their own destruction due to idolatry. The epideictic nature of the passage is ultimately centered on the "House of Israel" adhering to the identity of YHWH's inheritance.

The Contributions of YHWH's Creation Claims to Jeremiah's Message

The primary contribution of this study is that it systematically demonstrates the various roles creation theology plays in Jeremiah's rhetoric. While it is certainly true that creation

is formative for the prophet's rhetoric and conveys an extreme form of rhetoric for the extreme situation of exile and restoration, YHWH's creation claims significantly contribute to the book's communicative aims.[1] While creation claims are far more than a stylistic feature of the text, they contribute most dominantly to the epideictic aims of a text in a way that could be disregarded at first glance as being merely stylistic. In particular, the reversed creation tradition in 4:23–28 and its sequential undoing and vivid imagery contribute to the epideictic nature of the passage in highly stylistic ways. Similarly, the comparison between the stubborn people and the raging sea in 5:20–25 presents another stylistic feature. Further still, the oscillation between the idols and Creator YHWH in 10:1–16 presents another example of how creation claims are a foundational component of the book's style, used to elevate YHWH's superiority and incomparable power.

However, these stylistic and structural components are essential for eliciting the desired responses of fear, worship, or repentance while also functioning as legitimate evidence of God's power over the idols and nations. To counter the notion that creation claims are peripheral or merely stylistic, rhetorical critical analysis has demonstrated the centrality of YHWH's creation claims in presenting the realities of judgment and God's maintenance of the created order, particularly in relation to the communicative aims of the text. The pattern of YHWH's creation claims participating in a passage's epideictic aims does not reduce Jeremiah's use of creation theology to a peripheral or stylistic component but rather acknowledges these claims as integral components of the book's

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[1] For the language of creation as an extreme form of rhetoric for Judah's situation, see Brueggemann, "Jeremiah: *Creatio in Extremis*," 155, 167–69.

rhetoric and its presentation of other rhetorical aims.[2] Furthermore, many of the main issues addressed in the passages—idolatry, lack of fear, and foolishness—require rhetorical strategies that are epideictic in nature, as this rhetorical genre often seeks to evoke particular emotions and expressions of praise.

YHWH's creation claims are also an integral part of the book's judicial aims. While passages such as 1:4–12 demonstrate how YHWH's creational activity is used to help the readers judge Jeremiah as a reluctant prophet rather than an antagonist, other passages demonstrate God's judgment as part of his preservation of the created order. Judgment as an expression of God's preservation of the created order is also articulated in Jer 10:12–16 (cf. 1:10). Such a reading is supported by 9:11–15, which demonstrates God's response to the devastation of the land due to Israel's covenant violations. Similarly, the comparison between disorderly Judah and the orderliness of creation in 5:20–25 and the rebuke of the people in 5:23 further supports the idea that if God is the one upholding the order of the cosmos, he is also the one who must address Israel's stubborn waywardness and their disruption of the created order.

Additionally, the epideictic nature of the creation claims also contributes toward the communicative aim of repentance. For example, in the attempt to persuade the people to repent from idolatry and worship only YHWH, YHWH must first be properly recognized as worthy of worship and fear, which is demonstrated by his creation activity. The creation claims are thus a necessary component in the book's attempts to move the audience toward action, particularly the response of repentance.

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[2] It could also be argued that there is a certain realness to the agricultural language of 1:10 as, at least in some ways, reflecting a genuine picture of the ecological devastation of Judah.

YHWH's creation claims also contribute to our understanding of other theological topics within Jeremiah. This study especially enhances Jeremiah's portrait of God. God's concern for his people, in particular, and his creation as a whole are magnified by the important appeals to God's creational authority. While YHWH is certainly Israel's covenant God (10:16), his creation activity forms the basis of his universal authority over both human and non-human realms, extending to all nations. God is capable of such drastic forms of destruction and restoration precisely because of his identity as Creator. His universal authority over the nations, to both judge them and use them as agents in destruction, mirrors his universal authority over the non-human realms of creation and the chaotic forces found therein. Consequently, when YHWH comes to judge his people, he arrives as Creator YHWH, ready to uproot (נתש) and harvest (עלל) his fruitful land (כרמל), and he summons Babylon to consume (אכל) its fruit. Such devastation is best captured by the haunting image of Judah becoming תהו ובהו. This study thus enriches our portrait of God as he upholds his commitment to a sinful covenant people while also preserving the goodness of the created order by addressing disorder, whether that be from the raging sea or a rebellious people. As Creator, YHWH seeks to provide his creation and people with what they need to flourish. However, his creational prerogatives also result in expressions of judgment (5:24–25; 10:12–16).

The foundational role of creation in the opening literary block of the book paves the way for further evaluation of other portions of the book. Most notably, the Book of Comfort in Jer 30–33 incorporates creation theology in YHWH's response to restoration from exile. Passages such as 32:17 identify YHWH as the Creator of the heavens and the earth and connect this creational activity to his character and saving activities for Israel in

the following verses. Although this passage upholds the connection between creation and redemption commonly observed by scholars in texts like Second Isaiah, perhaps the assessment of creation provided in the present dissertation can provide further motivation for understanding creation theology as a more crucial component of Jeremiah's message of both judgment and restoration.

While there is room to expand this study into other portions of Jeremiah, this study provided a clear presentation of the role of YHWH's creation claims in Jeremiah, particularly in the indictment of Judah and the pronouncement of judgment. At the outset of this study, it was noted that the theology of YHWH as Creator was central to Jeremiah's message and that this claim is not subordinated to other doctrines. It can be confirmed that Jeremiah employs creation theology in a way that extends far beyond mere style or a subordinate theme, as YHWH's creation claims are a crucial component of Jeremiah's persuasive efforts and form the basis of the book's prophetic authority, indictment of Judah for covenant violation, and pronouncement of judgment. While topics such as redemption and covenant are often present in the assessed passages, the proper recognition of YHWH as the sole Creator who holds all authority is often missing in the audience and necessary for properly responding to the exigencies. YHWH's identity as Creator and Sustainer is thus an essential part of how the book seeks to produce the intended responses from its audience. As such, the theology of YHWH as Creator extends beyond what could be classified as a subordinate doctrine but functions as a core component of the book.

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