EXPOSITION OF JEREMIAH

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by

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Canonical Context

All 66 inspired books of the Protestant canon relate to the progressively revealed Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible, but not in the same way. Each book either *carries* the metanarrative,[1] *contributes* to it but does not carry it,[2] or *contemplates* the metanarrative.[3] A book's placement into one of these three categories does not necessarily depend on genre, even though a correlation frequently exists. Rather, a book's categorization depends on its contents and its relationship to other books.[4]

In the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of Scripture, the following compose the major elements of the story:

Table 1: Elements of the Metanarrative of Scripture

Setting:	Heaven and earth	Gen 1–2
Hero:	God the Father	Gen 1–2
Hero's desire:	Image bearers to rule the earth	Gen 1:26–28
Problem:	Image bearers gave their rule to the serpent	Gen 3
Solution (the plot):	Promise seed will strike the serpent and restore rule to image bearers	Gen 3:15–Rev 19
Turning point:	The Cross	Gospels
Climax:	The Great Tribulation	Rev 6–19

[1] The carrier category refers to biblical books that carry the primary plotline of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible. Many books of historical narrative and certain parts of prophetic books fall into this category because they carry the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative. Such books describe the outworking of the promise in Genesis 3:15–16.

[2] The contributor category refers to biblical books that contribute to, but do not carry, the plot of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible. Most prophetic books and certain parts of the NT epistles fall into this category because while they do not carry the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative, they contribute important (often prophetic) information about that metanarrative. Additionally, certain historical narratives run in parallel to one another (e.g., Kings and Chronicles, the four Gospels). In these cases, 1–2 Kings function as the carrier and 1–2 Chronicles as the contributor. Among the Gospels, Matthew functions as the carrier and the other three as contributors.

[3] The contemplator category refers to biblical books that neither carry nor contribute to the plot of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible. Rather, these books reflect upon (contemplate) the realities of that narrative. Books of wisdom, poetry, and most NT epistles fall into this category, because in light of the Genesis 3:15 promised seed having come, they address how the people of God should live until he returns to establish his kingdom.

[4] For this reason, certain biblical books fit into more than one of these three categories.

Resolution / denouement:	Image bearers again rule the earth	Rev 20–22

As shown in Table 1, the Bible as a whole presents God as the hero of the story who desires his image bearers to rule the world on his behalf. This metanarrative begins in the book of Genesis and concludes in the book of Revelation. Genesis presents the setting,[5] the characters,[6] the plot problem,[7] and the beginning of the rising action. The problem identified in Genesis 3 did not change God's desire for his image bearers to rule the world. The prophecy of Genesis 3:15–16 indicates a war between the serpent's seed and the woman's seed. This battle is the central conflict in the entire biblical narrative; a conflict not resolved until Revelation 20. In this prophecy, God promised the seed of the woman—a man—would defeat the serpent, restore humanity to the garden, and restore rule of the earth to God's image bearers. The anticipation of this promised seed drives the plot of the biblical narrative. The entire plot of the metanarrative thus revolves around how Genesis 3:15–16 comes to fruition. This prophecy reaches the first phase of its fulfillment in Revelation 20 in the thousand-year kingdom of Christ on earth, and its final phase of fulfillment in Revelation 21–22 in the new heaven and earth.

Whereas Deuteronomy 16–18 delineates the roles of judges, kings, priests, and prophets, so-called "Deuteronomic history" plays out in Joshua–2 Kings as the judges, kings, priests, and prophets fail to produce covenant faithfulness in the "holy nation" of "royal priests." Just as post-flood humanity had descended into rebellion at the tower of Babylon (Gen 11), the failure of these offices results in the chosen nation's exile east into the new Babylon, echoing the exile east of the garden.[8] As the metanarrative progresses through the story's carriers (Genesis–Kings in the OT), Yahweh elected the nation Israel to be his inheritance (Deut 32:9) and to function as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod 19:6). The Gentile nations, by contrast, Yahweh gave to the "sons of God" (Deut 32:8), a reference to the fallen angels. The Pentateuch therefore identified the Gentiles as serpent-seed nations—those who rule the earth with the serpent (Gen 4:7). The Mosaic Covenant (i.e., the Law, the Torah) governed the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. Accordingly, Israel's obedience would bring covenant blessings, while infidelity would result in covenant curses (see Deut 28; also Lev 26). If the Pentateuch was aimed primarily at why the Israelites should enter the promised land and how to live in covenant fidelity and so enjoy blessing in the land, the rest of Deuteronomic history (Joshua–Kings) describes how the nation's covenant infidelity resulted in banishment from the land and Babylonian exile. Moses had established four offices in Israel: judges, priests, kings, and prophets (Deut 16–18). Deuteronomic history (Joshua–Kings) successively revealed the failure of each office to establish a lasting righteousness in the nation, and how the nation's covenant infidelity resulted in banishment from the land into Babylonian exile. The book of Judges described the failure of the judges (chs. 3–16) and the Levites (chs. 17–21) and set the stage for

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[5] Heaven and earth, Genesis 1–2.

[6] God, the hero of the story; mankind, the object of God's desire; and the antagonist, the serpent.

[7] Despite God's desire for mankind to rule the earth on his behalf, the man and woman gave their rule over to the serpent (Gen 3).

[8] Gary E. Schnittjer, *Torah Story: An Apprenticeship on the Pentateuch*, second edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2023), 38.

the failure of the levitical high priest (1 Sam 1–7), the kings (1 Sam 9–2 Kgs 25), and the prophets (1 Kgs 17–2 Kgs 13).[9] The prophets Elijah and Elisha, and even the so-called "good" Judean kings who effected spiritual and cultic reformation (e.g., Asa, Joash, Hezekiah, and Josiah) ultimately failed to bring about lasting righteousness. These failures ultimately point to the need for the eternal Judahite king (king-priest-judge-prophet) as per the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7) who would restore covenant fidelity to the people and place them in the promised land forever as per Yahweh's promise (Deut 30:1–10) in the Land Covenant.

The book of Jeremiah pointed out how the nation of Israel had irreparably broken the Mosaic Covenant and that nothing remained for them through that covenant except death and exile. They would need to place their hope in the restoration of Israel through the New Covenant and the good shepherd (a righteous Davidic king) provided by Yahweh to rule in righteousness. The book of Jeremiah, then, does not *carry* the plot of the Messiah-redeemer-rule metanarrative. However, it provides extensive prophetic details as well as reflections on the metanarrative in respect to Israel's then-current situation in the exile. For these reasons, the book of Jeremiah therefore functions as a *contributor* and a *contemplator* of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative.

Occasion

Who?

Jeremiah either personally wrote or dictated to a scribe (likely Baruch) the vast majority of the contents in the book. Certain narrative portions of the text seem written by Jeremiah in the first person, while other portions read from a third-person perspective. This difference, however, does not require an author other than Jeremiah. One such narrative passage (52:31–34) concerns events ca. 560 BC in Babylon and the possibility seems quite remote that Jeremiah would have written those four verses. In any case, Jeremiah appears to have written (or dictated) the vast majority of the text. It is reasonable to think that an anonymous exilic author / editor / compiler among the exiles in Babylon set the book in its final form ca. 560 BC.

Jeremiah's prophetic ministry began in Judah in 626 BC during Josiah's reign, and it continued in Jerusalem throughout the era of Babylonian invasion and deportations (605 BC, 597 BC, 586 BC). His ministry even extended to Egypt with the exiles who kidnapped him and fled there in the years following 586 BC. Jeremiah was probably born in the 640's BC to a priestly family in Anathoth, a levitical town in Benjamin approximately three miles northeast of Jerusalem.[10] He never married (16:1–2). The name יִרְמְיָהוּ, "Jeremiah," is variously interpreted as "Yahweh hurls," "Yahweh establishes," or "Yahweh exalts."

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[9] David Klingler, "Validity in the Identification and Interpretation of a Literary Allusion in the Hebrew Bible" (PhD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2010), 210.

[10] Although, some have proposed that the call to ministry in 626 BC (1:2) was actually a reference to Jeremiah's birth. See William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 1–25*, ed. Paul D. Hanson, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 1.

To Whom?

The Judean exiles in Babylon were the intended audience of the book of Jeremiah. The Babylonians tended to take captive members of the upper and ruling class (e.g., Dan 1:3–4) while leaving "the poor of the land" (Jer 52:16) behind.[11] So most likely, the audience consisted of upper class Jewish exiles, along with the priests and prophets whom the Babylonians had taken captive. Such an understanding would align with Jeremiah's frequent emphasis on the poor shepherding quality of Judah's kings, princes (officials), priests, and prophets.

When?

Jeremiah's prophetic ministry began in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign (1:1; ca. 626 BC). While the book places Jeremiah in Egypt in the late 580's BC following Jerusalem's fall (586 BC), we have no information on Jeremiah after that time. Most likely he died there in Egypt at an unknown date along with the Judean fugitives who kidnapped him, and some anonymous Judean among the exiles in Babylon composed the final form of the work ca. 560 BC.

On the other hand, Jeremiah may have escaped from Egypt and made his way to Babylon. While the majority of Jewish tradition places his death in Egypt (and this seems the most plausible scenario), a minority alternative tradition placed Jeremiah's last days in Babylon. Since Jeremiah's message so consistently emphasized that life for Judah lay in Babylon, and death everywhere else, why would he willingly remain in Egypt? Unless confined there against his will by the Judean fugitives (not only possible, but probable), he would have made every effort to move to Babylon in alignment with his own prophetic message. If he did so, then his writing of even the final verses of ch. 52 of events ca. 560 BC does not become impossible.

Where?

While Jeremiah hailed from Anathoth in Benjamin (about three miles northeast of Jerusalem), most of his ministry occurred in Jerusalem, and most likely died in Egypt with the Judean fugitives who kidnapped him and took him there (although: see above section "When?" for an alternative view of him dying in Babylon). The final composition of the text was likely done by an anonymous Israelite editor ca. 560 BC in Babylon. As a contemporary of Jeremiah's, Ezekiel lived in the Jewish settlement of Tel-Aviv[12] (3:15) with other exiles of Judah. This town sat along the Kebar River (cf. 1:1), an irrigation canal near Nippur in southern Mesopotamia, just

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[11] See also 2 Kgs 24:14, "He [Nebuchadnezzar] deported all of Jerusalem: all of the commanders, and all of the skilled warriors, ten thousand captives, and all of the skilled craftsmen and the artisans; no one was left over except the poorest of the people of the land." Unless otherwise noted, all quotations of Scripture in this paper will follow the Lexham English Bible (LEB).

[12] "The exact site of this settlement is unknown, but the Kebar River has been identified with the Grand Canal (Akk., *naru kabaru*) in Babylon. This canal branched off from the Euphrates just above Babylon and flowed east of the city. It continued through the site of ancient Nippur and then reentered the Euphrates near Uruk (biblical Erech)" (Charles H. Dyer, "Ezekiel," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, edited by J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck [Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985], 1:1226).

south of Babylon.[13] See Figure 1 below. Those Judeans who lived in Tel-Aviv would certainly be included in the audience of Jeremiah, although it would likely include all Judeans who lived in the broader Mesopotamian plain.

Figure 1: Tel-Aviv on the Kebar River near Nippur in Southern Mesopotamia[14]

[13] Longman III and Dillard, An Introduction to the Old Testament, 357.

[14] Image captured from the Logos Bible Software Atlas tool, "The Geography of Ezekiel, Overview."

Why?

Since the book of Jeremiah intersects with so many extremely important historical events in Judah and in the broader Ancient Near East, the chronology below presents important dates and events which help situate the text.

- 645–640 BC – Probable birth of Jeremiah.
- 640 BC – Josiah reigned for thirty-one years.
- 627 BC – Jeremiah's call to prophetic ministry.
- 626 BC – Nabopolassar reigned in Babylon.
- 622 BC – Josiah's reforms.
- 612 BC – Nineveh (Assyria) destroyed by Babylonians and Medes.
- 609 BC – Josiah killed at Megiddo opposing Pharaoh Neco II.
- 609 BC – Egypt allied with Assyria battled against Babylon in Haran.
- 609 BC – Jehoahaz (Shallum) reigned for three months, then taken prisoner to Egypt. Died in Egypt.
- 609 BC – Jehoiakim (Eliakim) appointed vassal king by Neco. Reigned 11 years. Died in Jerusalem.
- 605 BC – Nebuchadnezzar defeated Assyria and Egypt at Carchemish.
- 605 BC – Jehoiakim's allegiance to Egypt led to the Babylonian siege against Jerusalem.
- 605 BC – First deportation to Babylon (including Daniel).
- 605 BC – Nebuchadnezzar replaced his father as Babylonian king.
- 601 BC – Nebuchadnezzar's attack on Egypt failed. Jehoiakim allied again with Egypt.
- 598 BC – Babylonian siege against Jerusalem. Jehoiakim died.
- 598 BC – Jehoiachin (Jeconiah, Coniah) reigned three months and surrendered. Taken to Babylon. Later elevated to the king's table ca. 560 BC.
- 597 BC – Second deportation to Babylon (including Ezekiel).
- 597 BC – Zedekiah reigned 11 years. Captured by Nebuchadnezzar. Died in Babylon.
- 588 BC – Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon.
- 587 BC – Babylon besieged Jerusalem.
- 586 BC – Jerusalem destroyed. Third and final deportation to Babylon. Gedaliah appointed governor of Judah.
- 585 BC – Ishmael assassinated Gedaliah.
- 58(?) BC – Judean fugitives kidnapped Jeremiah and fled to Egypt.
- 570's–560's (??) BC – Jeremiah died in Egypt (most likely).
- 539 BC – Medo-Persian empire conquered Babylon. Decree of Cyrus regarding the Jewish return to Jerusalem.

As demonstrated in the above timeline, Jeremiah ministered during an extremely tumultuous time in the Ancient Near East. Not only did he witness a change in the dominant superpower (Assyria to Babylon, with Egypt always playing second fiddle to them), but also the numerous rapid sieges and attacks against Jerusalem, multiple rounds of deportations, and ultimately the destruction of Jerusalem and termination of the Davidic kingdom.

Jeremiah essentially sought to explain to his audience that because of unrepentant covenant violations, nothing remained for Israel & Judah under the Mosaic Covenant except

destruction, exile, and death. Instead, their hope lay in the restoration of a united Israel with a righteous Davidic king under the New Covenant. That pathway of hope, however, lay *through* accepting the Babylonian exile and then returning to Judea after seventy years serving Babylon. Against Jeremiah (who spoke for Yahweh) were the voices of various kings, officials, priests, and prophets (all false shepherds) who contradicted Jeremiah's words and refused to believe him. Jeremiah contended with, for example, lying prophets who had convinced the people of their assured peace and blessing. Jeremiah's contemporary, Ezekiel, likewise countered false prophets already in Babylon who spoke of prosperity and hope, thinking the return from exile to be imminent (Ezek 13:2–16). Whether still in Judah or already in exile, the Judeans remained stubbornly optimistic about the exiles' soon restoration to Jerusalem and the nation's security.[15] They also failed to perceive their own guilt and viewed the exile as an unjust punishment. The book of Kings dealt with this very same issue among the exilic community, as did Ezekiel. Against all such voices, Jeremiah exerted no small amount of rhetorical effort to show that those who listened to him and went to Babylon would prosper, while those who ignored him and chose any other path would die. See Table 2 below. While the Israelites' hope lay *through* Babylon, Jeremiah did not want the exiles to remain there forever.[16] Once the seventy years of exile had expired, Babylon would be judged, and so the exilic community should leave Babylon and return to their homeland at that time.

Table 2: Outcomes for those who opposed Jeremiah's words

Individual(s) Opposed to Jeremiah	**Outcome**
People of Anathoth plotted against Jeremiah	Death by sword and famine (13:22–23)
Lying prophets	Death by sword and famine (14:15)
The people made evil plans against Jeremiah	Overthrown in Yahweh's wrath (18:23)
Passhur, who persecuted Jeremiah	Exile and death (20:6)
Hananiah the false prophet who contradicted Jeremiah	Death (28:16–17)
Ahab son of Kolaiah, a false prophet among the exiles	Executed by Nebuchadnezzar (29:21)
Zedekiah son of Maaseiah, a false prophet among the exiles	Executed by Nebuchadnezzar (29:21)
Shemaiah the Nehelamite, a false prophet	Death for him and his family (29:32)
Jehoiakim burned Jeremiah's scrolls	Corpse desecrated and none of his sons would sit on the throne (36:30–31)
Zedekiah failed to listen to Jeremiah	Sons executed by Nebuchadnezzar, eyes put out, captivity in Babylon (39:6–7)
Zedekiah's officials persecuted Jeremiah	Executed by Nebuchadnezzar (39:6)

In contrast to the death of those who defied Jeremiah's words, Ebed-Melech (ch. 39), Baruch (ch. 45) and certain Judeans who defected to Babylon submitted to Jeremiah's words and were granted life.

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[15] Hence the need for Jeremiah to write a letter to the exiles informing them of their seventy-year exile (Jer 29).

[16] Many thousands of Jews still lived in "Babylon" (now Iraq) even until the AD 1960's.

In summary, the book of Jeremiah functioned to validate Jeremiah's standing as a true prophet of Yahweh so that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous king and the New Covenant, (3) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, and (4) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired.

Genre

Like many of the latter prophets, the final form of the works includes a variety of genres. In Jeremiah, scholars have identified war oracles, autobiographical speeches, poetry, prose, parable, visionary experiences, sermons, and narratives.[17] It is perhaps best, overall, to classify the entire document as a prophetic literary work.

Proposed Message Statement

In order to address the Israelite nation's covenant infidelity, their exile in Babylon, and the ongoing belief that the nation had not warranted the punishment of exile, an anonymous Israelite editor ca. 560 BC, and likely among the diaspora in Babylonian exile, compiled a prophetic literary work in order to validate Jeremiah's standing as a true prophet of Yahweh so that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

[17] See Harrison, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, 30.

Critical Issues

Significant textual differences exist between the Masoretic Text (MT) and the Septuagint (LXX).[18] To summarize:

- The LXX lacks approximately 2,700 words present in the MT (about 13% of the text).
- The LXX rearranges the placement of the oracles against the nations (chs. 46–51 in the MT), instead placing them after 25:13.
- The LXX omitted doublets and other elements of Hebrew parallelism; apparently the translators thought them redundant.
- The LXX adds nearly 100 words not present in the MT.

The differences between the LXX and MT are difficult. When also considering the Dead Sea Scrolls, it becomes clear that two recensions of Jeremiah existed by the third century. As noted by one scholar commenting on such difficulties, "It is frankly impossible to ascertain the original order of the oracles in the prophecy."[19] While the compositional history of Jeremiah remains problematic and obscure, this paper will assume a rhetorical / literary unity of the final form of the Masoretic Text. It is this final form which this paper will analyze.

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[18] This summary is gleaned from information in R. K. Harrison, *Jeremiah and Lamentations: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 21, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 46–47, and Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Tiberius Rata, *Walking the Ancient Paths: A Commentary on Jeremiah* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 11–12.

[19] Harrison, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, 47.

Use of Rhetoric in Jeremiah

Classical rhetoric employs three modes and three species of rhetoric. The three modes of rhetoric include *logos*,[20] *pathos*,[21] and *ethos*.[22] The three species include judicial,[23] epideictic,[24] and deliberative[25] rhetoric.[26] The book of Jeremiah employs all three modes, and has both judicial and deliberative purposes.

First, perhaps the most prevalent mode in Jeremiah is the use of ethical rhetoric. The author sought to persuade his exilic audience of the necessity of heeding the voice of Jeremiah rather than all the opposing voices of the people of the land, and the false shepherds—the kings, princes / officials, priests, and prophets. To that end, many / most of the sections of Jeremiah involve some ethical element which bolsters Jeremiah's credibility as a legitimate and true prophet of Yahweh (*ethos*). For example, the exilic audience had historical hindsight to know that many of Jeremiah's prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem came true (these were also recorded within the book), as did many of his prophecies for individuals such as the kings and false prophets. As another element of ethical rhetoric, those characters who heeded Jeremiah's words (e.g., Baruch, Ebed-Melech, some of the people of Jerusalem who defected to Babylon) were granted life, while those who refused to heed his words (Zedekiah, Jehoiakim, various false prophets) died as per Jeremiah's predictions. See Table 2 above for a summary. All of these examples built up the credibility of Jeremiah showing that following his words led to life, while ignoring or spurning them led to death. Therefore, the exilic audience should listen to Jeremiah.

Second, the author employed a significant amount of judicial / logical rhetoric in that he sought to convince the audience of the justice of the exile. Like in the books of Ezekiel and Kings, the exilic audiences complained of the injustice of their Babylonian captivity. A significant part of Jeremiah's rhetoric involves persuading the exiles to convict the guilty

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[20] The rhetoric of *logos* employs logical arguments intended to appeal to rational principles found within the author's discourse.

[21] The rhetoric of *pathos* employs arguments intended to arouse an emotional reaction and play upon the audience's feelings.

[22] The rhetoric of *ethos* makes ethical appeals on the basis of credibility: good character or authority.

[23] With judicial rhetoric, the author seeks to persuade the audience to make a judgment about events that occurred in the past. This judgment often deals with questions of truth or justice, and can be positive (a defense or "apology" of correctness / innocence) or negative (a prosecution, emphasizing guilt).

[24] With epideictic rhetoric, the author seeks to persuade his audience to hold or reaffirm a certain point of view in the present time. The author wants to increase (or decrease / undermine) his audience's asset to a certain value or belief. To this end, epideictic rhetoric will frequently use examples of *praise* and *blame*.

[25] With deliberative rhetoric, the author seeks to persuade the audience to take (or not take) some action in the (often near) future. Deliberative rhetoric deals with questions of self-interest and future benefits for the audience, and appears in the form of exhortation (positive) or warning (negative).

[26] For a complete discussion of classical rhetoric in biblical studies, see George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, Studies in Religion (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

generations before them (judicial) based on their violations of the Mosaic Covenant and thus accept the fairness of the exile (*logos*).

Third, Jeremiah's extensive prophecies of restoration and blessing under the righteous Davidic king and good shepherds provided an enormous amount of hope for the audience (*pathos*).

All three of these modes contributed to Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

Proposed Outline

A. Jeremiah's call (1:1–19)
B. Jeremiah's first word (2:1–3:5)
C. Jeremiah's second word (3:6–6:30)
D. Jeremiah's third word (7:1–9:25 MT [7:1–9:26])
E. Jeremiah's fourth word (10:1–25)
F. Jeremiah's fifth word (11:1–13:27)
G. Jeremiah's sixth word (14:1–15:21)
H. Jeremiah's seventh word (16:1–17:27)
I. Jeremiah's eighth word (18:1–20:18)
J. Jeremiah's ninth word (21:1–24:10)
K. Jeremiah's tenth word (25:1–38)
L. Jeremiah's eleventh word (26:1–24)
M. Jeremiah's twelfth word (27:1–28:17)
N. Jeremiah's letters to the exiles (29:1–32)
O. Jeremiah's thirteenth word (30:1–31:40)
P. Jeremiah's fourteenth word (32:1–44)
Q. Jeremiah's fifteenth word (33:1–26)
R. Jeremiah's sixteenth word (34:1–22)
S. Jeremiah's seventeenth word (35:1–36:32)
T. Jerusalem's fall (37:1–40:6)
U. Death in Egypt (40:7–44:30)
V. Jeremiah's word to Baruch (45:1–5)
W. Jeremiah's eighteenth word (46:1–51:64)
X. Narrative fulfillment of Jeremiah's words (52:1–34)

Proposed Argument Exposition

The articulation of **Jeremiah's call (1:1–19)** functions to establish the credibility of Jeremiah as a legitimate prophet of Yahweh (*ethos*), thus contributing to the argument that the Judean exiles should heed his words. Jeremiah's credibility was established by several means.

First, that the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah for forty years (626–586 BC) highlighted his enduring service as a prophet (1:2–3).[27] Second, Yahweh had chosen Jeremiah for the prophetic office before his birth, and even prior to his conception (1:4–5). Third, Jeremiah's reticence to the prophetic call actually bolstered his credibility (1:6). Whereas false prophets abounded in Jeremiah's day and they no doubt sought such positions for the prestige, influence, and money, Jeremiah's reluctance places him alongside true prophets like Moses, Ezekiel, and Jonah who resisted such a role.[28] Fourth, Yahweh's commissioning of Jeremiah to speak the words Yahweh (1:7) establish Jeremiah's role as a spokesman for Yahweh. Fifth, Yahweh's promise of protection despite opposition (1:8) is played out in the rest of the book, so validating Yahweh's protection of his prophet. Sixth, Yahweh's touching of Jeremiah's mouth (1:9) establishes Jeremiah's words as Yahweh's words. Seventh, on behalf of Yahweh, Jeremiah was appointed to uproot, tear down, destroy, overthrow, build, and plant Gentiles and kingdoms (1:10). These are key verbs which will appear throughout Jeremiah in reference to the nations. Eighth, that Yahweh validated Jeremiah's seeing of the almond tree branch (1:11–12) demonstrated that Jeremiah indeed interpreted visions correctly. Yahweh's validation that he was watching for the fulfillment of his words (implied: through Jeremiah) further strengthened Jeremiah's status as a prophet of Yahweh (1:12).[29] The same validation is achieved in that Jeremiah correctly saw a boiling pot tilted toward Judah from the north (1:13) and Yahweh described this as his pouring out of disaster on the nation (1:14). Ninth, Yahweh's declaration that kings would set up their thrones in the gates of Jerusalem (1:15) reached its fulfillment at Jerusalem's fall in 586 BC when "Nergal-sharezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim the chief officer, Nergal-sharezer the high official, with all the rest of the officials of the king of Babylon … sat in the Middle Gate [of Jerusalem]" (39:3). The exilic audience would have the benefit of historical hindsight (and chapter 39) to know that this event took place. Yahweh's declaration here demonstrates alignment between (1) his words, (2) Jeremiah's words as his prophet, and (3) historical reality. Tenth, Yahweh's affirmation of his being with Jeremiah and the Judeans' inability to prevail against Jeremiah (1:19) place Yahweh and Jeremiah together. These ten elements all serve to validate Jeremiah's role as a legitimate prophet of Yahweh (*ethos*).

Jeremiah's call also served two more introductory functions. First, it introduced the audience to the placement of Yahweh and Jeremiah on one side, and all the Judeans (kings, princes, priests, prophets, and people) on the other, so establishing the decision the exilic audience must make. Ultimately, they could listen to Yahweh's words through Jeremiah and be

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[27] In the Bible, a length of forty years often describes a complete period of time or service (e.g., Moses, Joshua, Eli, David, Solomon, etc.).

[28] Granted, their willingness and desire to be "prophets" is assumed, the fact the false prophets elsewhere prophesy for money (e.g., Micah 3:11) would have made it a "desirable" profession.

[29] A wordplay (pun) is employed here: Jeremiah saw the branch of an "almond tree" (שָׁקֵד), and Yahweh was "watching" (שֹׁקֵד)

delivered like Jeremiah (1:19), or they could fight against the "iron pillar" and "fortified city" by going against Jeremiah, and ultimately, Yahweh. This choice, however, would result in death and judgment.

The second introductory function is that of identifying the justification for Judah's judgment. Yahweh's judgments came on account of Judah's wickedness in forsaking Yahweh by turning to idols (1:16). Jeremiah will later comment on the Judeans' assumed innocence and their thinking about an unjust punishment. Ezekiel and the author of Kings dealt with the very same issue among their exilic Judean audiences (see "Why?" section in the introduction above).

Thus, Jeremiah's call (1:1–19) served one major purpose, and two minor. Primarily, the call validated Jeremiah's authenticity as a legitimate prophet of Yahweh (*ethos*). The exilic audience ultimately needed to make a choice to heed or ignore Jeremiah's words. So much of the remainder of the book will develop the concept that heeding Jeremiah's words leads to life, while eschewing his words results in judgment and death. Antagonism to Jeremiah's words was ultimately futile (see especially 1:18–19). This introductory chapter therefore functions to establish that initial credibility for the prophet to convince the Judean exilic audience that they should indeed obey Jeremiah's words. Secondarily, this section introduced Judah's covenant violations as the rationale for her judgment, a concept that will likewise be further developed in the rest of the text. In these ways, the record of Jeremiah's call contributed to his overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

Jeremiah's first word (2:1–3:5) attacked the prevailing notion of assumed innocence in Jerusalem by pointing to Judah's spiritual promiscuity at an undated time prior to its fall. For the exilic audience, this section served two primary functions. First, Jeremiah's word to Jerusalem (from the vantage point of the audience, a historical word) confronting the Judeans' assumed innocence rhetorically served to confront *the exiles'* belief in the injustice of their exile. He wanted the audience to condemn the previous generation of their idolatry (judicial rhetoric). Second, Jeremiah's declarations of the unreliability of foreign nations and foreign gods upon whom Judah had relied anticipated the hope inherent in the New Covenant and the righteous Davidic king promised by Yahweh.

Confronting Jerusalem on an unspecified date, Jeremiah challenged the Judeans' presumption of their own innocence (2:23, 35; 3:4–5) by issuing Yahweh's charges concerning their guilt through covenant infidelity. Throughout this section, Jeremiah employed colorful poetic language, repetition, and vivid illustrations to establish the guilt of the nation. Jeremiah therefore pointed to: (1) the historical record of Israel's unfaithfulness since the time of the Exodus (2:2–8), (2) her abandonment of Yahweh by going after foreign gods (2:2–12, 20–28) and foreign nations (2:13–19, 36), and (3) illustrations like camels and donkeys in mating season (2:23–24), broken cisterns (2:13), a thief caught in the act (2:26), a woman's jewelry and wedding ornaments (2:32), and divorce (3:1) and prostitution (3:2). As further proof, Jeremiah pointed to the covenant curses bearing witness to the sins of Judah (3:3). Jeremiah further pointed to the priests, prophets, and shepherds (רֹעִים) who rebelled and followed Baal (2:8; also

2:26).[30] Such idolatry led to Yahweh's lawsuit against them *and* the subsequent generations (2:9)—a key point for the exiles who complained of unjust sins from the parents applying to them (31:29). Ironically, not even pagan Gentile nations abandoned their gods, the very thing Israel did (2:10–11). Israel also forsook Yahweh by allying themselves with foreign nations (2:13–18). All of the nation's sins had led to the land becoming an abomination to Yahweh (2:7) and thus resulted in the judgment from the north, already introduced in 1:13–16. The rhetorical question concluding the first word (3:4–5) further points to the supposed innocence despite continual evil.

Thus, Jeremiah's first word (2:1–3:6) employed both repetition of message and variety of illustration to demonstrate the guilt of Judah which resulted in the exile, so seeking to persuade the exilic audience of the justice of the very exile of their lived experience despite their presumed innocence (*logos*). Jeremiah's highlighting of the failure of the leaders (shepherds) also anticipated his announcement of righteous shepherds after Yahweh's own heart (3:15). In these ways, this first word contributed to Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

Jeremiah's second word (3:6–6:30) was initially spoken during the reign of Josiah (3:6), and for the exilic audience this word functioned in at least three ways. First, it justified the exile by showing the continual refusal of Judah to heed Jeremiah's calls for repentance (*logos*). Second, it validated Jeremiah's standing as a legitimate prophet by showing the truth of his words against the countervailing words of the "shepherds" of Josiah's day (*ethos*). Third, the contrast between the failed "shepherds" of Judah and the righteous shepherds who will lead the restored nation prompted hope for that restored state of righteousness (*pathos*).

First, Jeremiah justified the exile by showing that even under Josiah's religious reforms, the "revival" was only in pretense and not in heart (3:6–10). In fact, Judah proved even more treacherous than Israel (3:11). Since Israel had earned a certificate of divorce (3:8) and been exiled, Judah was all the more deserving of exile—especially so since under the reforms of righteous Josiah the nation still continued in evil. Thus, employing an argument from lesser to greater, Jeremiah showed how Judah deserved the just punishment of exile (*logos*). In this, Jeremiah wanted the exilic audience to agree with his assessment of the nation's guilt (judicial rhetoric). Jeremiah noted his issuing of commands to return / repent (שׁוּב) (3:12, 14, 22), to circumcise their hearts (4:4), cleanse their hearts from evil (4:14), and to follow the ancient and good paths (the Torah) (6:16). He offered the very words of repentance they should utter (3:22–25) and even appealed to positive incentives such as restoration of the nation under righteous shepherds (3:14–18; 4:1–2) and glory among the nations (4:19). Yet despite the commands, the model of repentance, and the incentives, Jeremiah equally noted Judah's stone-faced refusal to repent (3:19; 5:3; 6:28) among both the people and the leaders (5:3–5). Not one righteous person lived in Jerusalem (5:1), and the entire nation (Israel and Judah) had dealt treacherously with Yahweh (5:11). Because of this stubborn unrepentance, Yahweh had warned through Jeremiah during Josiah's day of the certainty of the coming judgment (4:5–21, 28; 5:6, 15–17; 6:1–12, 18–

[30] Jeremiah will take the leaders of Israel to task throughout the book.

23). By using creation language (Gen 1) in his warning (4:23–26), Jeremiah compared the disaster of the coming invasion to "uncreation," meaning the judgment would be exceedingly awful. Thus, the thrust of the author's argument pointed to the logic of discipline and disaster based on the nation's sins (*logos*), so pointing to the justice of the exile.

Second, this section validated Jeremiah's authenticity as a prophet (*ethos*). The exilic audience had historical hindsight and knew that Babylon had already destroyed Jerusalem (the "judgment from the north"), thus confirming the truth of Jeremiah's message of judgment to Jerusalem in times prior. Contradictory voices had opposed Jeremiah's words of judgment, proclaiming good news (5:12), but those prophets were merely speaking wind (5:13) and prophesying lies (5:31). Interestingly, Ezekiel dealt with the same issue of false prophets speaking positive confessions in Babylon (Ezek 13:2–16). Since the judgment had occurred, the audience could therefore know that Jeremiah was right and the contradictory prophets wrong. Yahweh had indeed made Jeremiah's words like fire which devoured the people (5:14). Despite the severity of Yahweh's judgment, his promises made through Jeremiah to preserve a remnant (4:27; 5:18) in preparation for the nation's restoration (3:14–18) held true in the exilic audience themselves. They *were* that preserved remnant saved from utter destruction. The destruction and the preservation of a remnant spoken of by Jeremiah held true and they now served foreigners in a land not their own just as Jeremiah had foretold (5:19). Therefore, the audience could be certain of Jeremiah's authenticity as a prophet of Yahweh and should heed his words lest they likewise perish. Thus, this section further contributes to the validation of Jeremiah as a legitimate prophet of Yahweh (*ethos*).

Third, Jeremiah pointed to the failure of the kings, princes, priests, and prophets (the "shepherds" of Judah) in executing their duties. Moses had intended the kings, priests, prophets, and judges to promote righteousness in Israel (Deut 16–18). Yet even righteous Josiah only managed a superficial reformation (3:10). Jeremiah further pointed to the failure of the leaders (5:5) who miscarried justice (5:27–28) and prophesied lies (5:31). He highlighted the horror of the "kings", "princes," "priests," and "prophets"[31] of Judah (4:9) because of the judgment come upon them contrary to their prophetic expectations (5:12–13). They were shamelessly greedy and prophesied falsely (6:13–15). Jeremiah intended these negative depictions to elicit emotional repugnancy (*pathos*). All of these failed shepherds contrasted with Yahweh's promise of good shepherds after his own heart (3:14) to lead a restored and united Israel in righteousness (3:17–18). This contrast prepared the audience for Jeremiah's prophecies concerning the righteous king who will lead Israel under the New Covenant.

Thus, Jeremiah's second word (3:6–6:30) pointed to the justification for the exile (*logos*), the authenticity of Jeremiah as a prophet of Yahweh (*ethos*), and the future hope of righteous shepherds in Israel (*pathos*). By these means, this section contributed to Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

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[31] In connection to the four Mosaic offices described in Deuteronomy 16–18, it is assumed that the "princes" of whom Jeremiah spoke (שַׂר) are functionally equivalent to the "judges" (שֹׁפְטִים) of which Moses wrote.

Jeremiah's third word (7:1–9:25 MT [7:1–9:26]) to the Judeans at the temple at an unknown time functions to develop Jeremiah's credibility as a true and caring prophet (*ethos* and *pathos*) in contrast to the lying false prophets, and further prompts an inherent fear of Jeremiah's words (*pathos*) in the exilic audience because they knew that Jeremiah's terrible predictions for Jerusalem had come true. This word further justifies the judgment of destruction and exile on account of Judah's sins (*logos*).

The book of Jeremiah regularly presented its audience with a choice between Jeremiah's words (i.e., the words of Yahweh), and the words of other contrary voices. This "third word" bolsters Jeremiah's credibility in several ways in an effort to persuade the audience to listen to and obey his words. First, Jeremiah's call to examine Shiloh (7:12) functioned as a case-in-point: in Eli's day, Shiloh had served as Israel's central worship center. The Israelites treated the ark like a protective talisman in battle (1 Sam 4:3–4) but suffered defeat anyways (1 Sam 4:10), and nothing was left of Shiloh (26:6, 9; also Ps 78:60). The same came true of Jerusalem and the deceitful words of the Judeans (7:4, 8) (*logos*). Second, Yahweh's solemn command that Jeremiah not pray or petition on behalf of the people (7:16) because of their idolatry (7:17–19) and because of Yahweh's determination to pour out his wrath on them (7:20) functioned to elicit fear among the exilic audience (*pathos*) and further credibility for Jeremiah the prophet (*ethos*). Third, in contrast to the lying scribes (8:8), "wise" men without wisdom (8:9), and the deceitful prophets and priests (8:10–12) (i.e., the false "shepherds" of Judah), Jeremiah's words came true. Fourth, Jeremiah's sorrowful heart (8:18) and weeping for the destruction of his people (8:20–23 MT [8:20–9:1] revealed his emotional posture toward his fellow Judeans. Despite their complete untrustworthiness (9:1–7 MT [9:2–8]), his care and love for them would strengthen his credibility in their eyes, and likewise the eyes of the exilic audience. While Yahweh would avenge the nation for their sins (9:8 MT [9:9]), Jeremiah would lament (9:9 MT [9:10]). The exilic audience could know that Jeremiah didn't merely have a love for judgment and destruction, but he openly wept for his lost people. This would foster a positive emotional response toward Jeremiah (*pathos*) while strengthening his credibility (*ethos*). Fifth, Jeremiah had prophetically explained the coming judgment and exile. Jeremiah's questions of who is wise enough to understand [the coming destruction] and who has been instructed by Yahweh and can explain it (9:11 MT [9:12]) are rhetorical and the answers to both are: Jeremiah.[32] Sixth, Jeremiah's prophecies confirmed his validity. The exilic audience would recognize that his numerous prophecies (in this section alone) concerning Judah's destruction had been fulfilled (*ethos*),[33] and, their current life in exile fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy of Judah being scattered among the nations (9:15 MT [9:16]). Since Jeremiah has these six points in favor of his prophetic credibility, the audience should listen to his words and obey them rather than any of the (many)

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[32] Jeremiah asked, "To whom has the mouth of Yahweh spoken, so that he may declare it?" (9:11 MT [9:12]). Jeremiah had previously written, "Yahweh stretched out his hand and he touched my mouth, and Yahweh said to me, "Look, I have put my words in your mouth"" (1:9). Likewise, Yahweh was "making my words in your mouth like a fire, and this people wood" (5:14).

[33] For example, Jeremiah foretold of Yahweh's wrath being poured out on Jerusalem (7:20), the bodies of the Judeans being exposed and eaten by animals (7:32–33; 8:1–2), their scattering among the nations, the lament and wailing of women because of the attack (9:16–20 MT [9:17–21]), the dead bodies lying in the open field (9:21 MT [9:22]), and the punishment of all who are circumcised only in the flesh (9:24–25 MT [9:25–26]). All these prophecies came true when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC.

contrarian voices, such as the bad shepherds and false prophets still operating in Babylon (see Ezek 13:2–16).

Jeremiah's third word also demonstrated the judicial-logical justification for Jerusalem's destruction to an audience frequently asserting the unfairness of exile. In contrast to the Judeans' superstitious understanding of rote recitations and the Jerusalem temple as a protective talisman (7:4, 8), Jeremiah pointed to the abundance of sin and unrighteousness (7:5–6, 9–11) as justification for the exile (7:15) (*logos*). Jeremiah's words had prevailed over his original Judean audience, and whatever certainty the exilic audience held—be it talismans or words of hope uttered by false prophets—it was nothing in comparison to the certainty of Jeremiah's words. That Israel's history was replete with the people ignoring the words of the prophets (7:21–25), and Jeremiah's initial audience in Jerusalem continued and expanded upon the sins of their ancestors (7:26) justify Yahweh's abandonment of that generation to his wrath (7:27–29). Jeremiah's acts of cutting his hair and throwing it away (7:29) served as a visual illustration of that abandonment. Ultimately Jeremiah confronted the Judeans with the reality that despite their claims to the contrary (8:8), they had forsaken Yahweh's Law (7:30; 8:8; 9:12 MT [9:13]). Therefore, judgment would certainly come (7:20, 32–33; 8:1–2; 9:21, 24, 25 MT [9:22, 25, 26]) (*logos*).

Thus, Jeremiah's third word (7:1–9:25 MT [7:1–9:26]) contributes to the logical connection between Judah's sin and her judgment (*logos*) and to the reliability of Jeremiah and his words over those of contrarian voices (*ethos*). In these ways, this section contributed to Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

Jeremiah's fourth word (10:1–25) to the house of Israel at an unknown time contrasts the idols of men with Yahweh the true God, so building Yahweh's *ethos*. Jeremiah's emotional response to the coming judgment also contributes to his *ethos* because of his obvious care for the house of Israel.

The sharp contrast between the way of the Gentiles and their impotent idols (10:2–5, 8–9, 11, 14–15) and the all-powerful majesty of Yahweh (10:6–7, 10, 12–13, 16) reveals Yahweh's authority and power (*ethos*) for the exilic audience. Yahweh's declaration that, "I am about to sling out the inhabitants of the land at this time, and I will bring distress to them, so that they may feel it" (10:18) was the audience's very lived experience in Babylon, thus confirming both Yahweh's word and his prophet, Jeremiah (*ethos* and *logos*).

Jeremiah's prayer (10:19–25) demonstrated his lament over the fall of Judah at the judgment from the north (Babylon), and his desire for the justice upon the nations that came against Israel (especially 10:25). This revealed for the exilic audience that Jeremiah did not merely desire Judah's destruction because he loved death. Rather, he mourned the disaster and desired justice against the invading nation. This would bolster his credibility with the audience (*ethos*) because they could see that he was not inherently against them, but *for* Yahweh and *for* Israel. Jeremiah's remark about foolish shepherds who do not seek Yahweh (10:21) anticipates the installation of righteous shepherds ruling over Israel.

Thus, the fourth word (10:1–25) functions to build the credibility of Yahweh and of his prophet Jeremiah who spoke for him (*ethos*). In this way, this section contributed to

Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

Jeremiah's fifth word (11:1–13:27) at an unknown time in Judah carries a somewhat judicial rhetorical function in that the author intended the exilic audience to agree with the guilt of the nation and the people of Anathoth, so condemning them and therefore justifying their respective punishments (*logos*).

Yahweh's word to Jeremiah concerning the terms of the Mosaic Covenant (11:2–7), Israel's violations leading to covenant curses (11:8–10), and the decreed disaster upon Judah (11:11–17) show the inescapable and logical outcome of the covenant. The author desired the exilic audience to render a guilty verdict upon the nation, thus justifying the exile (judicial-logical). While this judgment occurred at the national level, a specific judgment also took place for the town of Anathoth. Because the Anathothites demanded Jeremiah no longer prophesy in the name of Yahweh and plotted to kill him (11:18–19, 21), Yahweh decreed their deaths (11:22–23). This situation exemplified the conflict between the words of Jeremiah and Yahweh against the words of others. The Anathothites thus served as an example of those opposed to the words of Jeremiah, and their end was judgment and death. See Table 2 in the introductory section. The people of Anathoth thus served as the first of many examples in the book where death came to those who opposed Jeremiah and his words. The author intended the audience to recognize this pattern so that they would choose life through obedience to Jeremiah's / Yahweh's words.

Jeremiah's complaint of the wicked prospering (12:1–4) and God's answer that he would surely judge them (12:5–14) with death or exile matches the judicial and logical pattern already established with the Mosaic Covenant (ch. 11). The author intended the audience to agree that the wicked should not prosper and that their judgment was righteous. Logically, they would arrive at the inescapable conclusion that the exile was justified (*logos*). As elsewhere, Yahweh's mention of shepherds ruining his vineyard and fields (12:10) refers to the kings, princes, priests, and prophets working against Yahweh's intentions, and so it anticipates the coming of a good shepherd who will rule the nation in righteousness. Yahweh's word about the evil neighbors of Israel (12:14–17) demonstrated that the principle of uprooting and replanting even applied to the Gentile nations. If they followed the ways of Yahweh's people, he would be compassionate to them. But whereas Yahweh promised not to utterly destroy Israel, the Gentile nations which failed to turn to Yahweh would be completely uprooted and destroyed (12:17). This anticipates the judgment on the nations (chs. 46–51). Thus, judgment for sins applied to Judah, the Anathothites, and the Gentiles as well. None could charge Yahweh with unfairness or injustice. The exilic audience could therefore know their exile was justified (*logos*).

Yahweh explained the illustration of the ruined linen belt (13:1–11) as him ruining the pride of Judah and Jerusalem (13:9) because the evil people refused to listen to / obey (שׁמע) his words. The text of Jeremiah regularly indicated Jeremiah spoke the words of Yahweh (e.g., 1:2; 2:1; 3:6, etc.). Jeremiah therefore spoke the words of Yahweh. Failure to listen to and obey Jeremiah, therefore, meant a failure to listen to and obey Yahweh. Since the nation had failed in this way, Yahweh therefore promised to ruin them and make them useless. This illustration

therefore carries a judicial / logical force whereby the exilic audience was expected to condemn the previous generation and accept that their present exile in Babylon was indeed just.

The illustration of the wineskins (13:12–14) explained as the drunkenness of the shepherds of Judah (kings, priests, and prophets) serves as further justification for the destruction of Jerusalem (*logos*), and anticipates the coming righteous shepherd.

Jeremiah's warning (13:15–23) and Yahweh's declaration (13:24–27) also carry a judicial rhetorical function. On account of Judah's failure to listen / obey (13:17), judgment would come from the north (13:20) and her exile was guaranteed (13:19). Should the nation ask why this happened (13:22), it was on account of her sins (13:22), trusting in lies (13:25),[34] and her shameful fornications (13:27). The author intended the exilic audience to agree that Jerusalem's destruction and the Babylonian exile were indeed justified (*logos*).

Thus, Jeremiah's fifth word (11:1–13:27) employed a primarily judicial and logical approach to persuade the exilic audience in the justice of Jerusalem's destruction and the Babylonian exile. The nation had broken the Mosaic Covenant by her sins, and so her punishment was well deserved (*logos*). This section also developed the major theme in Jeremiah of *listening* to the words of Yahweh through Jeremiah. Those who listened / obeyed would have life, and those who did not would die. The fulfilled prophecies of Jeremiah concerning Jerusalem's certain destruction (from the historical perspective of the exilic audience) also bolstered his reliability as a true prophet speaking the words of Yahweh (*ethos*). In these ways, this section contributed to Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

Jeremiah's sixth word (14:1–15:21) at an unknown time concerning a drought (a covenant curse) functioned primarily to add further credence to Jeremiah's status as a prophet of Yahweh by (1) demonstrating his desire to mediate on behalf of the nation, and (2) revealing Yahweh's promise to deliver Jeremiah—as one who loved Yahweh's words—from his enemies. This "word" therefore continued to build the case for why the exilic audience should listen to Jeremiah's words (*ethos*).

At a time of covenant cursing via drought (14:1–6), Jeremiah confessed the nation's sins (14:7) and pleaded on behalf of the nation (14:8–9). However, because of their sins Yahweh did not accept them and was determined to punish them (14:10). Indeed, Yahweh told Jeremiah not to mediate on behalf of Judah, for he would not listen (14:11–12). Despite the contrarian words of the false prophets proclaiming blessing and hope (14:13–15), Yahweh's determination of destruction was final (14:16–18). Jeremiah's second appeal and plea for the nation (14:19–22) was answered that Yahweh would not even accept the (hypothetical) mediation of Moses and Samuel (15:1)—two of the most righteous characters in Hebrew Scripture—on behalf of Judah (logical argument from greater to lesser). Jeremiah's desire for the forgiveness and deliverance of Judah functioned ethically to bolster his credibility with the exilic audience because they could see his care and love for the nation (*ethos*). However, Yahweh's determination to destroy Judah by sword, famine, death, and exile would not be abated (15:2–9, 12–14). Jeremiah's love

[34] The words of the bad shepherds and lying prophets.

for Yahweh's words (15:15–17) led to the nation cursing him (15:10), but Yahweh would make him like a wall of bronze (15:20; also 1:18) and would save and deliver him (15:20–21). Jeremiah, then, functioned as a paradigm (example) for the exilic audience to follow. As Jeremiah did, they should acknowledge their guilt (14:7, 20), repent (15:19), listen to Yahweh's words and love them (15:16), and Yahweh would deliver them (15:20–21). This aligns with Jeremiah's message that his words would lead to life. But those who fought against the words of Jeremiah / Yahweh would only face the sword, famine, death, and exile. Yahweh's promise that Jeremiah's enemies would plead with him in times of disaster (15:11) came true when Zedekiah sought his council near Jerusalem's destruction (37:17; 38:14). Multiple references to evil kings, priests, and prophets (bad shepherds) in this section (14:13–15, 18; 15:4) anticipate the coming righteous shepherd to rule over Israel.

Thus, the sixth word (14:1–15:21) showed the contrast between those who listened to Yahweh's words and those who didn't. Jeremiah functioned as a paradigm (example) of listening, obeying, and being delivered. The bad shepherds and people of the land who fought against Jeremiah only had death and exile ahead of them. The exilic audience would need to make their choice regarding who they would listen to. Would they follow Jeremiah's words and example, and so live? Or would they reject his words and face a hopeless future? This sixth word therefore functioned ethically to bolster Jeremiah's credibility as a prophet (*ethos*) and prepare the audience to listen to all of his words regarding the future. In these ways, this section contributed to Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

Jeremiah's seventh word (16:1–17:27) at an unknown time functions in several important ways. First, it works judicially and logically to portray the justice of the exile (*logos*). Second, it provides hope for restoration (*pathos*) through trust in Yahweh. Third, this "word" continued to portray Jeremiah as a legitimate prophet of Yahweh and thus offered further rationale for why the exilic audience should listen to his words (*ethos*).

Yahweh's command that Jeremiah abstain from marriage, funerals, and feasts on account of the coming destruction (16:1–9) served as a portrait of the coming judgment. Thus, his very lifestyle validated his status as a true prophet, and the exilic audience, with their historical hindsight could recognize this about him (*ethos*). When Jeremiah's audience demanded to know why judgment would come (16:10), his answer included the rhetoric of entrapment. Jeremiah's original Judean audience (those he spoke to) would have readily enough agreed to the sins of their forefathers (16:11). But anticipating their protest over the injustice of them suffering for their ancestor's sins, Jeremiah announced, "You (plural) have done more evil than your (plural) forefathers" (16:12). Thus, Jeremiah's audience was trapped. The exilic audience, likewise, could not protest Yahweh's response (16:16–18) as unjust, for Yahweh acted in accordance with the Mosaic Covenant. Likewise, Yahweh's speech to Jeremiah regarding keeping the Sabbath (17:19–27) follows clear Mosaic Covenant-style language. The nation would be blessed if they kept the Sabbath, and an unquenchable fire would ensue if they did not (17:27). From the perspective of the exilic audience, that "unquenchable fire" had already burned Jerusalem, and so the only logical conclusion was that the Judeans had failed to keep the Sabbath (*logos*).

Jeremiah's announcement of eschatological restoration (16:14–15) and the Gentile nations coming to the land and knowing Yahweh (16:19–21) provided a measure of hope for the exilic audience (*pathos*), as well as a contrast against which the Judeans could be measured. This essentially forms an argument from lesser to greater: if even the pagan Gentiles whose forefathers worshiped idols could come to know Yahweh, then how much more Judah, the nation covenanted with that very living God? This would provoke some jealousy in the audience (*pathos*) based on their covenanted ethnic identity (*ethos*—appeal to identity). Instead, however, sin was engraved on the Israelites' hearts with an iron stylus (17:1). On account of their spiritual prostitution and totally owing to their own sins, Yahweh would send the judgment (17:2–4) (*logos*).

Hope in the restoration, then, lay through trust in Yahweh as exemplified by Jeremiah (17:5–18). Jeremiah thus served as a paradigm (example) of individual faith which can weather the drought (17:8; also 14:1). His pleas to Yahweh (17:14–18) portray the reality that any who opposed Jeremiah in fact opposed Yahweh (*ethos*). The exilic audience, then, was confronted yet again with the choice between listening to Jeremiah's words and following his example of repentance and trust in Yahweh, so leading to deliverance and salvation on the one hand, and death and destruction on the other.

Thus, the seventh word (16:1–17:27) continued to build the case for Jeremiah being a legitimate prophet of Yahweh and an example of individual faith to follow (*ethos*). For a people who still did not accept their own guilt, it also provided justification for the exile because their covenant sins resulted in covenant curses, including exile (*logos*). In these ways, this section contributed to Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

Jeremiah's eighth word (18:1–20:18) at an unknown time employs a judicial and logical rhetorical function in that the author intended the exilic audience to agree with the airtight case of guilt against the nation (*logos*). Judah had refused to listen, had rebelled, and made plans against Yahweh's prophet. Therefore, their judgment was justified. Pashhur's persecution of Jeremiah exemplified the will of the people in their opposition to Jeremiah, and Jeremiah's response presents the contrasting options for the exilic audience to make regarding which voice(s) they will listen to. This word further contributed to Jeremiah's reliability as a prophet since, from the historical perspective of the exilic audience, his prophecies had already come true (*ethos*).

The illustration of the potter and the clay (18:1–12) demonstrated that Yahweh was willing to judge *or* to relent from judgment depending on a nation's response to him. Thus, the Israelites could not mischaracterize Yahweh and so blame his capricious character for their destruction. Rather, the blame rested solely on Judah's unwillingness to repent (18:11–12), and this brought about their judgment (18:13–17) (*logos*). Likewise, the Judeans' pursuit of evil plans against Jeremiah (18:18–23) implied a rejection of Yahweh because Jeremiah spoke for Yahweh. Furthermore, their refusal to listen to Jeremiah (18:10, 18) but instead listen to the priests, prophets, and wise men (false shepherds) (18:18) represented the explicit choice for the audience: they must choose between Jeremiah's / Yahweh's words, and all the contrarian voices. In a case of talionic justice, the Judeans planned evil against Jeremiah (18:18, 23), but Yahweh

planned evil against them (18:11). Jeremiah's sign-act of shattering a jar at the Valley of Ben Hinnom (19:1–15) also pointed to the nation's shattering because of their idolatry, bloodguilt, and failure to listen (*logos*). The exilic audience could not avoid the logical conclusion that Yahweh's punishment on the guilty nation was indeed just (*logos*). Furthermore, since from the perspective of the exilic audience, history had proven Jeremiah correct regarding the destruction of Jerusalem, these prophecies further validated the status of Jeremiah as a true prophet (*ethos*) and thus provided rational for why the exilic audience should heed his words.

Pashhur's persecution (20:1–2) exemplified the evil plans of the people for Jeremiah (18:18–20). But Jeremiah's response (20:3–18) delineated the two sides in the conflict of opposing voices. Those opposed to Jeremiah desired his downfall (20:7–8, 10–11) and contributed to his sorrow and shame, but in doing so they fought against Yahweh. To them would be the judgments of death and exile. On the other hand, Jeremiah could not keep Yahweh's words contained within (20:10) and so he spoke for Yahweh (20:8). Therefore, Yahweh was like a mighty warrior bringing salvation to Jeremiah (20:13) and destruction to his enemies (20:11). If the exilic audience ignored Jeremiah's words, they would likewise fight against Yahweh and face the same judgment of death. Alternatively, they could embrace Yahweh's salvation through acceptance of Jeremiah's words.

Thus, the eighth word (18:1–20:18) continued the veins of thought consistently communicated through the book of Jeremiah thus far. This word justified the exile (*logos*), validated Jeremiah's words (*ethos*), and forced the exilic audience to decide who they would align themselves with: Yahweh and his victorious prophet Jeremiah, or their judged and defeated opponents? In these ways, this eighth word contributed to Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

Jeremiah's ninth word (21:1–24:10) contrasted the failure of Israel's shepherds—kings and prophets—with the coming righteous king who will restore and protect all Israel. Since Judah's unrighteous kings and lying prophets only led to the nation's judgment, this section primarily functioned as a polemic against the voices (kings and prophets) who spoke contrary to Jeremiah, and therefore contributed to the case for the exilic audience to listen to Jeremiah's words (*ethos*) and so receive life in the restored Israel under the righteous Davidic king *through* the Babylonian exile.

This ninth word contains sections spoken at different dates: Zedekiah's reign during a Babylonian attack (21:1–2; ca. 587 / 586 BC), Shallum's (Jehoahaz's) reign (22:11; ca. 609 BC), Jehoiakim's reign (22:18; ca. 609–598 BC), and Jehoiachin's reign (22:24–30; for three months ca. 598 BC). However, the prophecies were arranged together here for a rhetorical purpose. The failures of Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah to reign righteously (21:11–12; 22:3, 13–17, 21–22) led only to judgment. For Zedekiah, his unrighteousness resulted in the slaughter of Jerusalem and his being given over to Nebuchadnezzar without compassion (21:7). For Jehoahaz, a ruined palace and death in exile (22:5–11). For Jehoiakim, death and the burial of a donkey (22:19). For Jehoiachin, exile and death in captivity (22:26–27) and a curse upon his descendants so that none would sit upon the Davidic throne (22:30). Likewise, the false and lying prophets (23:3–40) were unjust (23:10), godless (23:11), wicked (23:11), adulterers

(23:14), and evil (23:22). They promoted evil (23:14), spread ungodliness throughout the land (23:15), and did not benefit the people in the least (23:32). Indeed, these false prophets brought for themselves and those who listened to them Yahweh's wrath (23:19), exile (23:39), and everlasting shame and disgrace (23:40). Unlike Jeremiah, the false prophets had never stood in Yahweh's council (23:18, 22). Thus, the kings and prophets had not only failed to promote righteousness in Israel, but actually accelerated evil. These bad shepherds had led to the sheep (the people of Israel) being scattered (that is, exiled) (23:1–2). Thus, the exile was the logical outcome of the leadership of the evil shepherds (*logos*).

In contrast to those evil shepherds, Jeremiah anticipated Yahweh's restoration of the scattered Israelites as one united people (Israel and Judah) (23:3–4) under good shepherds (23:4) and a righteous king in the line of David (23:5–6) whose name is יְהוָה צִדְקֵנוּ, "Yahweh Our Righteousness" (23:6). However, Jeremiah's vision of the fig baskets (24:1–10) imparted the truth that hope of restoration lay *through* Babylon. The vision demonstrated the contrast between the exiles in Babylon and all the other survivors post-586 BC who either remained in the Promised Land or fled to Egypt. Yahweh's lauding of the exiles in Babylon as the "very good figs" and his promises to watch, build, plant, and restore them to the Promised Land with a heart to know him (24:5–7) demonstrated one of Jeremiah's major points in the entire work: hope for Israelite restoration lay *through* Babylon. On the other hand, Yahweh would curse the "very bad figs" like Zedekiah and those who remained in the land or fled to Egypt, and they would be consumed by the covenant curses of sword, famine, and plague (24:9–10).

Thus, in the ninth word (21:1–24:10) Jeremiah set before his original Judean audience the way of life and the way of death (21:8).[35] Life and restoration lay *through* Babylon, and death would be the result of staying the land or fleeing to Egypt. Heeding Jeremiah's words to accept captivity in Babylon would therefore be the first step toward participating in the restored Israel under the righteous Davidic king, a good shepherd. Heeding the contrary words of the evil kings and false prophets (bad shepherds) would only result in judgment, exile, and death. For the exilic audience reading the final composition of the book of Jeremiah, they needed to accept their captivity and recognize that hope for them lay through Babylon. Jeremiah's persuasive force involved both logical and emotional appeals. Logically, the superior outcome lay with Jeremiah's words, so the exilic audience should heed him (*logos*). Emotionally, the hope and joy associated with life under a righteous Davidic king contrasted with the shame and disgrace and judgment associated with the words of the bad shepherds (*pathos*). Thus, this section functions to persuade the exilic audience to heed Jeremiah's words, which are also Yahweh's words (*ethos*). In these ways, this ninth word contributed to Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

Jeremiah's tenth word (25:1–38) about Judah in 605 BC functioned to (1) convince the audience of the justice of the exile with logical arguments (*logos*), and (2) communicate the imperative for the exiles to leave Babylon and return to Israel following their seventy years of service to Babylon.

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[35] Moses did the same (Deut 30:15).

First, Jeremiah pointed to the justice of the exile with logical arguments. Not only had he spoken to Judah for twenty-three years (25:3), but so had many other prophets and servants of Yahweh (25:4). Despite repeated calls to turn from idolatry and evil and to return to covenant fidelity (25:5–6), Judah had not listened (25:7–8). Therefore, Yahweh would use Babylon to punish his people (25:9–11), and Judah would serve Babylon seventy years (25:11–12).[36]

Second, since Babylon served as Yahweh's sword and would punish not only Judah, but also Egypt and all the surrounding nations (25:15–38), the only safe place for the chosen nation would be within Babylon itself. This reinforced Jeremiah's message that restoration lay *through* the Babylonian exile. However, since Yahweh would likewise judge Babylon at the conclusion of seventy years (25:12–14, 26),[37] the exiles should not stay longer, but return to Israel at that point.

In these ways, this tenth word (25:1–38) contributed to Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

Jeremiah's eleventh word (26:1–24) to Jerusalem in 609 BC demonstrated the conflict between Yahweh's words and the people of Judah, so forcing the exilic audience to determine whose words they would listen to. It also functioned to build the credibility of Jeremiah as a legitimate prophet of Yahweh (*ethos*).

Jeremiah's prophecy of destruction (26:2–6) and the angry, murderous response of the people, priests, false prophets, and the king (26:7–11, 21, 23) demonstrated the conflict between the two opposing voices: Jeremiah speaking for Yahweh, and everyone else in Judah. Later, the conflict between the princes and the people on the one hand, and the priests and false prophets on the other (26:16) revealed a microcosm of the tension that the exilic audience surely felt. They might have leaned toward listening to Jeremiah, but had voices opposing them. They should not, however, malign Jeremiah's words just because of the predictions of destruction. Indeed, the elders of Judah had pointed to the precedent of the prophet Micah proclaiming destruction and not being put to death (26:17–19). Their words, "we are about to do a great evil to ourselves" (26:19) [for killing Jeremiah] would echo in the ears of the exilic audience, should they fail to heed Jeremiah's words. That King Jehoiakim put to death the true prophet Uriah (for he prophesied the same thing as Jeremiah) (26:20–23) demonstrated the very real danger for Jeremiah. If not for Ahikam son of Shaphan, perhaps one of the elders of the land (26:17),

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[36] The seventy-year period does not refer to the exile itself, but to the "service" of the nations to Babylon. The prophet Daniel noted the termination of the seventy years (Dan 9:2) after the fall of Babylon in the first year of the Medo-Persian empire in 539 BC. Seventy years prior was 609 BC, when Babylon defeated Assyria at Haran and became the major superpower of the Ancient Near East. The seventy years therefore refers to the duration of the Neo-Babylonian empire during which it exerted control over Israel—whether as a vassal state or in captivity in Babylon.

[37] The judgment of the מֶלֶךְ שֵׁשַׁךְ "King of Sheshak" is a cryptogram, or an "Atbash" (אתבש) where שֵׁשַׁךְ means בבל, and thus, "Babylon." There was never a country named Sheshak. See Brown, "Jeremiah," *REBC*, 337.

Jeremiah might have likewise been killed at this time (26:24). But his survival here validated Yahweh's earlier promises of protection (1:8, 18–19; 15:20–21), thus contributing to his authenticity as a prophet (*ethos*).

Thus, the eleventh word (26:1–24) exemplified the life-and-death conflict of words and compelled the audience to decide whose words they would listen to. Since Uriah was killed over the same words as Jeremiah, but Jeremiah was protected (as per Yahweh's promise), it authenticates Jeremiah as a true prophet of Yahweh and the one to whom the exilic audience should listen (*ethos*). In this way, this eleventh word contributed to Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

Jeremiah's twelfth word (27:1–28:17) to Jerusalem in 609 BC further demonstrated how the path to life lay through submission to Babylon, and how contradiction to Jeremiah's words only resulted in death, so reinforcing Jeremiah's credibility as a true prophet to whom the exilic audience should listen (*ethos*).

Jeremiah's proclamation to Jerusalem and the surrounding Gentile nations that survival depended upon submission to Babylon (27:1–8) presented (yet again) the choice for the audience. Choosing life meant accepting the Babylonian exile, while resistance to it meant death. Jeremiah's note that Yahweh had given all the nations into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar and his son and his grandson until their time had come (27:7) reinforced Jeremiah's earlier proclamation that Babylon would rule for seventy years but then face judgment (25:11–12), and contributes to his message that the Judean exiles should not stay in Babylon beyond that point. Jeremiah's warning not to listen to the false and lying prophets (27:9–10, 14–15, 16–17) exemplifies the conflict of words. Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the temple articles being taken to Babylon (27:19–22) was directly contradicted by Hananiah the false prophet (28:1–4). But Jeremiah's appeal to history and to the Law that a prophet is validated by his words coming true (28:6–9) would reinforce for the exilic audience that the prophet proclaiming peace was indeed false. Jeremiah's prophecy of Hananiah's demise (28:16) and his actual death two months later (28:17; for dating reference, see 28:1) not only validated Jeremiah as a true prophet because his words came true (*ethos*), but also exemplified the principle that ignoring Jeremiah's words led to death. The exilic audience would also have the benefit of historical hindsight to know that the temple articles were not returned within two years, as Hananiah falsely foretold, but all the previous temple vessels actually were taken to Babylon as per Jeremiah's word (27:22; see 52:17–23).

Thus, the twelfth word (27:1–28:17) reinforced for the exilic audience that the path to life and restoration lay through submission to the Babylonian exile. It demonstrated the prophetic reliability of Jeremiah and how his words led to life while opposing them it led to death (*ethos* and *pathos*). Therefore, the exilic audience should listen to Jeremiah (*logos*). In these ways, this twelfth word contributed to Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

Jeremiah's letters to the exiles (29:1–32) ca. 597 BC continued to reveal the conflict of opposing voices. Jeremiah / Yahweh offered life and hope for a future *through* the seventy years of service to Babylon, while the false prophets told lies and were killed. These letters and the events surrounding them further bolstered Jeremiah's status as a true prophet (*ethos*) and they function to persuade the audience to accept his words.

Jeremiah's first letter to the exiles (29:4–28) reflects the conflict between his words / Yahweh's words and those of the false prophets spreading lies among the exiles. This letter would be especially pertinent among the exilic audience, since they likely still had false prophets (or at least contrarian voices) working among them. Jeremiah's emphasis that life and hope lay *through* the Babylonian captivity (29:4–7, 10–14) ran against the words of the false prophets. Meanwhile, those who had stubbornly stayed in Jerusalem would suffer sword, famine, and plague (29:16–19). That is, those who opposed Jeremiah and his words would die. Furthermore, the lying prophets Ahab son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah would be executed (29:20–23), and Shemaiah the Nehelamite (another false prophet among the exiles) and his family would likewise suffer death (29:31–32), so reinforcing the point. Jeremiah predicted this in his second letter to the exiles (29:30–32).

Thus, Jeremiah's letters to the exiles (29:1–32) reinforced the author's point that life and hope rested in the promises of Yahweh as communicated by Jeremiah. The hope of Israel's restoration lay in building up Jewish families in Babylonian captivity. On the other hand, failing to heed Jeremiah's words only led to death, as demonstrated by the three false prophets revealed in the letters. Thus, the letters have an implicitly ethical function to further contribute to Jeremiah's credibility as a true prophet (*ethos*) while simultaneously contributing to his message of submission to Babylon. In these ways, this section contributed to Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

Jeremiah's thirteenth word (30:1–31:40) at an unknown time and location provided immense hope for the exilic audience because of Yahweh's many promises concerning Israel and Judah's restoration in Jerusalem and the Promised Land under a New Covenant (*pathos*). However, the exilic audience needed to know that just as seventy years serving Babylon would precede their return to the land, great distress and discipline would occur prior to the restoration foretold under the New Covenant.

The excursus below explains the timing and provisions of the New Covenant, along with its relationship to the church.

Excursus: The New Covenant

Historically, two groups other than the house of Israel and the house of Judah (national Israel) have appropriated the New Covenant to themselves: the Essene community and the Church. The Essene community in Qumran believed they were living in the last days. Separating themselves by living in the desert, their members swore an

oath to remain in the community their whole lives (1QS 3:11–12), maintaining a "New Covenant in the land of Damascus."[38] As such, they believed themselves to be a יחד, the community of New Covenant Israel.[39] This covenant was also referenced in their literature as the "covenant of God," the "eternal covenant," the "covenant of *hesed*," and the "covenant of repentance."[40] The *Manual of Discipline* (1QS) and the *Damascus Document* (CD 6:19; 8:21)[41] suggest that the Qumran community have already entered into the New Covenant "'in the land of Damascus,' a cryptonym for their place of exile in the Qumran desert."[42] Besides the Essenes, a few centuries into church history, once the church had adopted a more allegorical hermeneutic and as Gentile influence grew, the church somewhat mirrored the Essene's appropriation of Jeremiah's New Covenant: they came to view themselves as the New Israel under the New Covenant, separate and distinct from Old Israel and the Old Covenant.

Canonically, the New Covenant in Jeremiah fits with the promise of restoration in Deuteronomy 30. Specifically, it mentions in 30:6, "Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants." Yahweh had placed demands in Deuteronomy 30:2 and 30:10 to return (שׁוב) and obey (שׁמע). Amazingly, God would then provide divine enablement to do so as a gracious gift (30:6).[43] Among Jeremiah's writings, Yahweh had already promised this gift—but without covenantal language—in Jeremiah 24:7, "I will give them a heart to know me … they will return (שׁוב) to me with their whole heart." Much like Jeremiah's message, this promise in Deuteronomy 30 occurs in the context of Israel's prosperity and multiplication in the land of Israel (Deut 30:5). Such New Covenant concepts like these appear broadly across the OT. For example, in Ezekiel 11:17–20 Yahweh also promised to place a new spirit within Israel, removing their heart of stone and replacing it with a heart of flesh. This likewise occurs in the context of a regathered people of Israel prospering in the land of Israel (Ezek 11:17). Ezekiel later conveyed the same ideas in 36:24–31 where the filthiness of their idolatry would be sprinkled clean with water. By contrast, in Jeremiah 2:22 the people had tried in vain to wash themselves with lye and soap, yet their stains of iniquity remained. In fact, based on their content and context, a significant number of OT passages apply to the New Covenant. For example, one finds the "everlasting covenant" (Jer 32:40; 50:5; Ezek 16:60; 37:26; Isa 24:5; 55:3; 61:8), the "new heart" and a "new spirit" (Ezek 11:19; 18:31; 36:26), the "covenant of peace" (Isa 54:10; Ezek 34:25; 37:26), and a covenant placed in the context of "in that day" passages (Isa 42:6; 49:8;

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[38] Philip R. Davies, *The Damascus Covenant: An Interpretation of the "Damascus Document,"* JSOT, Supplement Series, 25 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1983), 176, 198. See also Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36*, 473 and Robert H. Eisenman, "An Esoteric Relation between Qumran's 'New Covenant in the Land of Damascus' and the NT's 'Cup of the New Covenant in (His) Blood'?," *Revue de Qumran* 21 (3) 2004: 454.

[39] Davies, *The Damascus Covenant*, 176–77.

[40] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36*, 473.

[41] The *Damascus Document* is also known as the *Zadokite Document*.

[42] Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36*, 473.

[43] Wright, *The Message of Jeremiah*, 326.

Hos 2:18–20).[44] Many OT passages consistently employ the New Exodus theme where Yahweh promises to regather Israel in their land and provide immense blessing. The New Covenant, then, is not merely Jeremiah 31:31–34, but an array of concepts and promises.

The provisions of the New Covenant include the following: (1) *physical provisions*: abundant physical blessings to Israel relating to fertile productivity of the land (Jer 30:3, 18; 31:5, 23; 32:41, 44; 33:7, 11, 26; 32:41; Ezek 34:29) and animals (Jer 33:12–13; Hos 2:18), and a multiplying population (Jer 30:18–19; Ezek 36:37–38), (2) *national provisions*: regathering the people of Israel to the land of Israel (Jer 30:3; 31:8–10; 32:41), a joyful and blessed population (Jer 31:12–14; 33:11), the perpetual existence of one united national Israel (Jer 31:35–37) in the promised land of Israel (Jer 31:41; Ezek 36:28; see Gen 15:18–21), and the restoration and eternal security of Jerusalem (Jer 31:38–40), (3) *political provisions*: righteous and just political leadership under the messianic king (Jer 23:3–8; 30:5; 33:14–17), the punishment of Israel's oppressors (Jer 30:20), and peace and freedom from warfare (Hos 2:18), (4) *religious provisions*: a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem (Ezek 37:26–28; cf. Ezek 40–44) and a functioning Levitical priesthood (Jer 33:18–22), and (5) *spiritual provisions*: Yahweh's Spirit granting renewed hearts and minds that internalize Yahweh's laws (Jer 31:33; 32:40; Ezek 11:19; 18:31; 36:26–27; Isa 59:21), sole devotion to Yahweh (Jer 31:33), salvation, knowledge of Yahweh, and complete sanctification for every Jew alive—or born—under the enacted New Covenant (Jer 31:34), and the complete and gracious forgiveness of Israel's national sins (Jer 31:34; 33:6). The New Covenant thus includes a wide range of provisions for national Israel encompassing blessings of Yahweh that are physical, national, political, religious, and spiritual. Such provisions effectively bring about the establishment of the messianic kingdom.

Regarding the timing of the New Covenant, few major clues provide an understanding of when the New Covenant will come into effect. First, an unprecedented time of distress for Israel called "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer 30:7) will precede the freedom and blessing that comes about "on that day" (Jer 30:8). Second, Yahweh will raise up (resurrect?) "David their king" to rule over them (Jer 30:9). Third, Yahweh will regather the Israelites scattered amongst the nations and give them rest in the land of Israel (Jer 30:10). The literary context of the New Covenant is that of a regathering, or a New Exodus. Yahweh will bring the people of Israel in the land of Israel by his own power, just as he did with the first Exodus. Fourth, Yahweh will judge all the nations (Jer 30:11). Since these events have not been fulfilled historically, Israel still awaits their completion in the eschaton. Yahweh himself placed the enactment of the New Covenant in an eschatological setting with the phrases, "Days are surely coming" (31:31) and, "After those days" (31:33). The timing of the New Covenant's enactment is thus eschatological, and has specific associated events that must occur like a time of great tribulation, a New Exodus, the appearance of Messiah, and judgment of the Gentile nations.

Accordingly, the New Covenant does *not* apply to the church. Even among more literal interpreters, like premillennial dispensationalists, some still think the New Covenant applies, at least in part, in the present day to the church. They generally hold to

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[44] Kaiser, "The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31–34," *JETS* 15, 14.

stability of meaning, yet are frequently inconsistent on this point in regard to the New Covenant. This paper, however, argues that if one consistently holds to stability of meaning, then the New Covenant is entirely future and does not apply to the church. The following argumentation provides five reasons for this.

First, the New Covenant does not apply to the church because the NT never claims fulfillment of the New Covenant. All references to the New Covenant preserve Jeremiah's original historical-grammatical meaning. The New Covenant's provisions have "[n]ever been fulfilled for Israel, nor [are] they even remotely appl[icable] to the Church."[45] As Kaiser states, "Yahweh does not make any kind of a covenant with the church … the church has no grounding and no vitality except through the promises made to Israel."[46] The blessings given to the church through Christ are manifold, and they come not through the New Covenant but through the Abrahamic promise of the seed that will be a blessing to all nations (Gen 12:3). But this does not mean the New Covenant applies to the church.

Second, the New Covenant does not apply to the church because Yahweh established the New Covenant with national Israel, and the church is *not* "the house of Israel and the house of Judah." If the church were participating in the New Covenant, then which part of the church is the house of Israel? And which part is the house of Judah?[47] Unless one changes the parties of the New Covenant, and so transforms Jeremiah's meaning, this issue of incorrect covenant party identification cannot be overcome. The covenants belong to Israel (Rom 9:4).

Third, the New Covenant does not apply to the church because the timing of the New Covenant's enactment is entirely eschatological. Therefore the church cannot presently participate in a covenant that isn't even active. Quoting Toews and Master, "The NT retains the eschatological context in which the New Covenant was originally promised and does not speak of its present fulfillment."[48] Likewise, its enactment demands events that have never happened in the past. As Fruchtenbaum writes, "Before the New Covenant can be put into effect there must be a national salvation and restoration of all Israel, and the second coming."[49] In other words, the New Covenant is what brings about the kingdom of God on earth. The author of Hebrews emphasized Jesus as *mediator* of the New Covenant, but not its fulfillment in his day. A mediator simply means, "One who goes between two parties,"[50] and the identification of Christ as the New Covenant's mediator need not demand its present enactment. How one views the New Covenant is analogous to how one understands the kingdom of God. Many—indeed, the majority—of Christendom believe that the church in the present age *is* the kingdom,

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[45] Lewis S. Chafer, *Dispensationalism* (Dallas, TX: Dallas Seminary Press, 1951), 86.

[46] Kaiser and Rata, *Walking the Ancient Paths*, 370.

[47] Lewis, "The New Covenant: Enacted or Ratified?," 135.

[48] Toews and Master, *The New Covenant in the NT: An Eschatological Perspective*, 19.

[49] Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 357.

[50] Toews and Master, *The New Covenant in the NT: An Eschatological Perspective*, 18.

or at least a partial manifestation of the kingdom. Now, everyone is correct to link the establishment of the kingdom with New Covenant fulfillment, an idea this paper vigorously defends. But if we live in a state of "inaugurated eschatology"—a confused and contradictory term—and the church is the kingdom, then it follows that the New Covenant is at the very least partially enacted, or in some way fulfilled in the present time. If the interpreter holds to stability of meaning, however, such views are inconsistent. How can the church participate in a covenant that hasn't even been enacted? This paper suggests the enactment of the New Covenant brings about God's kingdom on earth because it is tied with the New Exodus of Israel and the earthly presence of Messiah. But these things will only occur at the second advent of Christ, who at that time will apply the manifold blessings of the New Covenant to national Israel. As Pentecost noted, "There is a marked and critical difference between the institution of the covenant and the realization of its benefits. By His death, Christ laid the foundation for Israel's New Covenant—but its benefits will not be received by Israel until the second advent of Messiah."[51]

Fourth, the New Covenant does not apply to the church because "partial fulfillment" is not a valid category of prophetic fulfillment. Some premillennial dispensationalists believe that the church participates in *some* of the New Covenant blessings like the indwelling Spirit and forgiveness of sins.[52] They usually claim a "partial fulfillment" of the New Covenant. But this view has at least two problems. First, what exactly is a "partial fulfillment?"[53] Just like "inaugurated eschatology," this is a contradiction of terms. How can a prophecy be both fulfilled and unfulfilled at the same time? A prophecy either sees fulfillment or it does not. And second, one must break with the stability of meaning to conclude that a partial fulfillment has occurred. As will be shown in the comparison in Table 1 below, the work of the Spirit in the church age and the work of the Spirit under the New Covenant result in two very different lived experiences. The Spirit-indwelled life of the church age believer cannot be compared to the vastly superior spiritual life of the New Covenant recipient. Partial fulfillment advocates also claim that New Covenant forgiveness of sins applies to the church. It's true that the blood of Christ *always* serves as the basis for forgiveness of sins. But in order to remain consistent and maintain stability of meaning, church age believers do not receive forgiveness *on account of the New Covenant*. This is so for two reasons. First, the New Covenant has not yet been enacted—it is purely eschatological. And second, New Covenant forgiveness is unique to national Israel. So at the time of their eschatological regathering and establishment of the kingdom, forgiveness will be granted to them. Unless one changes the timing and parties of the New Covenant (i.e., transforms

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[51] Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come*, 173.

[52] Dyer, "Jeremiah," *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 1:1172. Dyer is representative of this view.

[53] Partial fulfillment is understood two ways. If prophecies A, B, C, and D are made in the OT, and A and B are fulfilled at Christ's first advent but not C and D, this is commonly called "partial fulfillment." In reality though, prophecies A and B were completely, literally fulfilled, while C and D were not. But that is not the issue. What this paper argues against is the idea that prophecy A can be partially fulfilled and partially unfulfilled at the same time.

Jeremiah's original meaning), the church does not receive forgiveness on account of the New Covenant. Forgiveness in the church age, then, is *analogous to*, but not identical to, forgiveness under the New Covenant. Thus, the Spirit-indwelled, sin-forgiven Christian is a prefigurement, or a type, of the greater Jewish New Covenant recipient.[54]

Fifth, the New Covenant does not apply to the church because our spiritual lives do not resemble the spiritual promises of the New Covenant. The description of spiritual blessings in Jeremiah 31—such as salvation to every Jew, complete sanctification, a deep and internal knowledge of Yahweh, and no need for teaching ministries—have never been realized in the church age. Our lived experience even as Spirit-indwelled Christians in no way fulfills the spiritual provisions of the New Covenant. Indeed, the church age believer seems to endure just as much struggle with sin as OT saints did. The following table taken from Toews and Master demonstrates the differences between church age believers and New Covenant recipients.[55]

Table 3: Comparison of Church Age Believers and New Covenant Recipients

Church Age Believers	**New Covenant Recipients**
The life of the believer is patterned after OT saints like Abraham and David.	A new work of the Spirit unlike any other in the OT or NT.
Growth in sanctification, but ever struggling with the reality of sin (like Abraham and David).	Complete sanctification as the Spirit causes the saint to walk in God's ways.
The believer must listen to the voice of the Lord in the Scriptures (Ps 1, 19, 119).	Torah of Yahweh written on the heart, creating a nature that only wills to love God.
Teaching ministry required.	No teaching ministry.
For Jews and Gentiles.	For Jews only.

The differences between church age believers and New Covenant recipients are so large as to preclude the New Covenant's application in the church age. Indeed, far greater differences appear between the spiritual life of the New Covenant recipient and the church age believer, than between the church age believer and the OT saint. In other words, OT saints and church age believers appear to live similar spiritual lives. But New Covenant recipients will experience a higher and completely new level of spiritual living.

Belief in the church's lack of participation in the New Covenant isn't novel. John Nelson Darby "held that the new covenant belonged to Israel alone in both Old and New Testaments … though the church participates in the benefits of the sacrifice of Christ."[56] Darby's view is exactly what this paper contends. Even dispensationalists in the early-to-middle 20th century like Scofield, Chafer, Walvoord, Ryrie, and Pentecost (although Pentecost would change his view later in life) held belief in two New Covenants: one for

[54] Toews and Master, *The New Covenant in the NT: An Eschatological Perspective*, 6.

[55] Toews and Master, *The New Covenant in the NT: An Eschatological Perspective*, 6. Much of this table retains Toews and Master's original wording, although numerous changes were made.

[56] John F. Walvoord, "The New Covenant with Israel," *BSac* 110 (1953): 195.

> Israel and one for the church.[57] In one respect, their beliefs concur with this paper in that the church does not participate in Israel's (i.e., Jeremiah's) New Covenant. Of course, their belief in a separate New Covenant with the church is a point of disagreement. To avoid the problem of unstable meaning, they must claim the New Covenant references in the NT refer to something other than Jeremiah's. However, the whole of Scripture is one unified story and the likelihood seems slim that NT authors would quote Jeremiah—verbatim, in the case of Hebrews 8—and intend to designate a *different* New Covenant than the one Jeremiah described. Thus, the conclusion that the church does not participate in the New Covenant stands in the strong tradition of dispensationalism.

As demonstrated in the above excursus, the New Covenant provides eschatological benefits for national Israel and, while ratified at the cross with Christ's blood, the provisions will only be enacted at Christ's return. Their fulfillment brings about the kingdom age (Rev 20). For the book of Jeremiah's exilic audience, they most likely didn't distinguish between the eschatological regathering of Israel under the New Covenant and the regathering of Judah at the conclusion of the seventy years' service to Babylon, but they could nevertheless look to the bountiful provisions with immense hope (*pathos*) and marvel at the character of Yahweh (*ethos*). At the same time, they had to recognize, right in line with Jeremiah's message, that discipline would precede restoration. In any case, their future hope lay not in the land of Babylon, but back in the Promised Land. In these ways, this section contributed to Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

Jeremiah's fourteenth word (32:1–44) in Jerusalem ca. 587 BC during the final Babylonian siege functions to justify the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity on account of Israel's sins (*logos*), while Jeremiah's purchase of land in Benjamin foreshadows Yahweh's promised hope for restoration in the land (*pathos*).

Zedekiah's opposition to Jeremiah (32:3–5) served as an example of an evil shepherd opposed to the words of Jeremiah, and particularly to the notion of serving Babylon (32:5). With the historical hindsight available to the exilic audience, they would know that Zedekiah was wrong to resist Babylon and Jeremiah was right to encourage submission. Zedekiah's quote of Jeremiah promising a failure to thrive for resisting Babylon (32:5) points to Jeremiah's message for the audience that they submit to Babylon and live in acceptance of the exile. Yahweh's command that Jeremiah purchase land in Benjamin (32:6–12) despite the imminent collapse of Jerusalem (32:16–25) on account of Israel's unrepentant sins (32:26–36) gave further occasion for Yahweh's promises of future restoration and commerce in the land (32:13–15, 37–44). Jeremiah put, as it were, "his money where his mouth was." The logical connection between the perverse sins of Israel and Yahweh's destruction of Jerusalem (32:26–36) also contributed to the rationale for judgment (*logos*). In these ways, this word (32:1–44) contributed to Jeremiah's

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[57] See Walvoord, "The New Covenant with Israel," *BSac* 110: 194–204, and Charles C. Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* (Dubuque, IA: ECS Ministries, 2005), 99.

overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

Jeremiah's fifteenth word (33:1–26) in Jerusalem ca. 587 BC during the final Babylonian siege functions primarily to offer immense hope of restoration (*pathos*) for the people (Israel and Judah), the city (Jerusalem), and the land (Israel) based on the character and loyal love (חֶסֶד) of Yahweh (*ethos*).

Despite the imminent filling of Jerusalem with dead bodies (33:4–5), Yahweh's promises to heal and restore the nation (33:6–14, 16) under the eternal and righteous Davidic branch (33:15, 17) which he tied to the creation order itself (33:20–26) would have provided immense hope to the exilic audience for their future (*pathos*).[58] Governed by the fullness of Jeremiah's message, that hope for restoration would of course only materialize *through* the Babylonian captivity.[59] Yahweh's tying of the restoration promises to the very created order functioned to build his credibility (*ethos*) and reassure the exiles of their future hope (*pathos*). Thus, in this word, the *ethos* of Yahweh and the hope of restoration (*pathos*) mutually reinforce each other. In these ways, this word (33:1–26) contributed to Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

Jeremiah's sixteenth word (34:1–22) in Jerusalem ca. 587 BC during the final Babylonian siege functions in two ways. First, it contributed to Jeremiah's standing as a true prophet based on his predictions of the city's destruction by fire and Zedekiah's peaceful death in exile (*ethos*). Second, it justified the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity on account of the Judeans' unrepentant covenant violations (*logos*).

First, this word pointed to the validity of Jeremiah as a true prophet of Yahweh. Jeremiah's declaration that Jerusalem would burn and Zedekiah would have a peaceful death (34:2–5) would be, from the perspective of the exilic audience ca. 560 BC, historically verifiable facts. Because of Jeremiah's continuous record of correct prophetic predictions, the Judean exiles should therefore heed Jeremiah and his message for them (*ethos*).

Second, Zedekiah and the peoples' breaking of a covenant before Yahweh to release their Hebrew slaves thus returning the slaves to captivity (34:8–11) and so violating the Mosaic Covenant would therefore result in the judgments of sword, famine, plague, death, and captivity (34:12–22). This example of talionic justice (taking captives and then *being* taken captive) constitutes a logical argument justifying the fairness of the Babylonian exile (*logos*).

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[58] The promises issued in ch. 33 connect theologically to the New Covenant announced in ch. 31.

[59] While the promises of restoration in ch. 33 are eschatological, the exilic audience from their vantage point ca. 560 BC would likely not have perceived any difference between the return after seventy years serving Babylon and the eschatological restoration.

In these two ways, this word (34:1–22) contributed to Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

Jeremiah's seventeenth word (35:1–36:32) during Jehoiakim's reign (ca. 609–598 BC) contrasted the covenant-keeping Rechabites who listened to their ancestors and were blessed, as character foils against the covenant-violating king Jehoiakim who rejected the words of Yahweh and was cursed. The contrast provides a logical justification for why Jehoiakim and Jerusalem faced death and destruction at the hands of the Babylonians (*logos*).

The Rechabites' refusal to drink wine according to the command of their forefather (35:5–6) served as a paradigm (example) in listening / obeying which Yahweh intended for the Judeans (35:13). Whereas the Rechabites listened, the Judeans failed to listen to Yahweh through his servants the prophets (35:14–15). As a result of the Rechabites' obedience, Yahweh promised that Jonadab would always have a descendant to stand before Yahweh (35:18–19).

By contrast, king Jehoiakim's burning of Jeremiah's scroll (36:23) represented a repudiation of Yahweh's words (36:1) and a failure to listen (36:25, 31), and it resulted in a curse upon Jehoiakim (36:30). Whereas not one male of Jonadab's would be cut off (35:19), Jehoiakim would die and his corpse be disgraced (36:30). Whereas Jonadab would always have a son standing before Yahweh (35:19), Jehoiakim would not have even one descendant sit on David's throne (36:30). The author intended the exilic audience to recognize the contrast between the Rechabites and the evil shepherd (Jehoiakim, in this case). Yahweh's character was not such that he arbitrarily punished. Rather, judgment fell on the Judeans because of their covenant violations (*logos*).

Through contrasting examples of the Rechabites and Jehoiakim, the seventeenth word (35:1–36:32) demonstrated how the Babylonian captivity was justified on account of the covenant violations and the failure to listen to Yahweh and his prophets (*logos*). In this way, this section contributed to Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

Covering events ca. 587–586 BC just before and after **Jerusalem's fall (37:1–40:6)**, the author portrayed the contrast in outcomes between those who blessed Jeremiah and listened to him, with those who did not. To that end, Zedekiah and Ebed-Melech serve as the two character contrasts. Zedekiah refused to listen to Jeremiah and suffered under Nebuchadnezzar, while Ebed-Melech blessed Jeremiah and was saved by Yahweh from the Babylonians. Jeremiah's commands that Zedekiah submit to Babylon reinforced his argument for the exiles that they likewise submit to the captivity while waiting the seventy years for restoration, and the outcome for Zedekiah and his court fulfilled Jeremiah's words, so validating his status as a true prophet (*ethos*).

The narrator immediately characterized Zedekiah and his servants and those who refused to listen to the words of Yahweh spoken through Jeremiah (37:1–2). By this point in the

book, the audience well knows that bad things happen to those who don't listen to Jeremiah. Yahweh's warning against the Judeans deceiving themselves about being able to withstand the Babylonians (37:9–10) would rhetorically carry over to the exilic audience. They should place no hope in political or military revolt against their captors but instead wait for the conclusion of the seventy years. Likewise with Jeremiah's words to Zedekiah that he should obey Yahweh by submitting to the Babylonians and so gain life (38:17–20). These words remained consistent with Jeremiah's message that the Judeans could live if they surrendered to Babylon, a message that carried over to the exiles' acceptance of their captivity until the seventy years were fulfilled.

The character contrast in this narrative unit compares Zedekiah and his officials against the ironically-named Ebed-Melech עֶבֶד־מֶלֶךְ, "Servant of the King."[60] On the one hand, Zedekiah and the very officials who imprisoned and persecuted Jeremiah (37:13–16; 38:4–6) and failed to listen to him (37:1–2) tried to flee from the Babylonian forces only to be captured and taken to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah in Hamath (see Image 1 below). Zedekiah witnessed his sons' slaughter and then had his eyes put out, and Nebuchadnezzar executed the remainder of his officials there (39:6–7). By contrast, Ebed-Melech sought to help Jeremiah (38:7–13) and Yahweh promised to deliver him despite the destruction of the evil city (39:15–18). His salvation here demonstrated that he was willing to listen to / obey Jeremiah's words and submit to the king—in this case, Nebuchadnezzar (so living up to his name). Ebed-Melech thus served as a character foil to Zedekiah and his officials. Like Ebed-Melech, Nebuchadnezzar's special instructions for his officials to protect Jeremiah (39:11–14) both validate Jeremiah's words and prophetic character (*ethos*) and serve to illustrate the principle that submission to Babylon would result in life. In addition to Ebed-Melech, Jeremiah himself served as an example of the principle: his release by Nebuzaradan (40:1–6) demonstrated that submission to Babylon led to life.

[60] While this Cushite man ostensibly served King Zedekiah, Yahweh's promise to save him (39:17–18) demonstrated that he heeded Jeremiah's words and was in fact willing to submit to King *Nebuchadnezzar*.

Image 1: Nebuchadnezzar punishes Zedekiah and his officials at Riblah in Hamath[61]

Jeremiah's foretelling of the destruction of Jerusalem (37:7–10; 38:1–3, 17–18, 20–23) and its coming to pass (39:1–4) validated Jeremiah's status as a prophet speaking true words (*ethos*). His much earlier prophecy that foreigners from the north would set their thrones in the gates of Jerusalem (1:15) also came to pass (39:3). His fulfilled predictions stood in contrast to the false prophets whom Jeremiah rightly called out for their false predictions of peace and safety (37:19). The exilic audience could therefore know Jeremiah was in a class of his own against all the lying prophets who uttered their positive confessions, and thus that Jeremiah possessed the words of Yahweh which would lead to life (*ethos*).

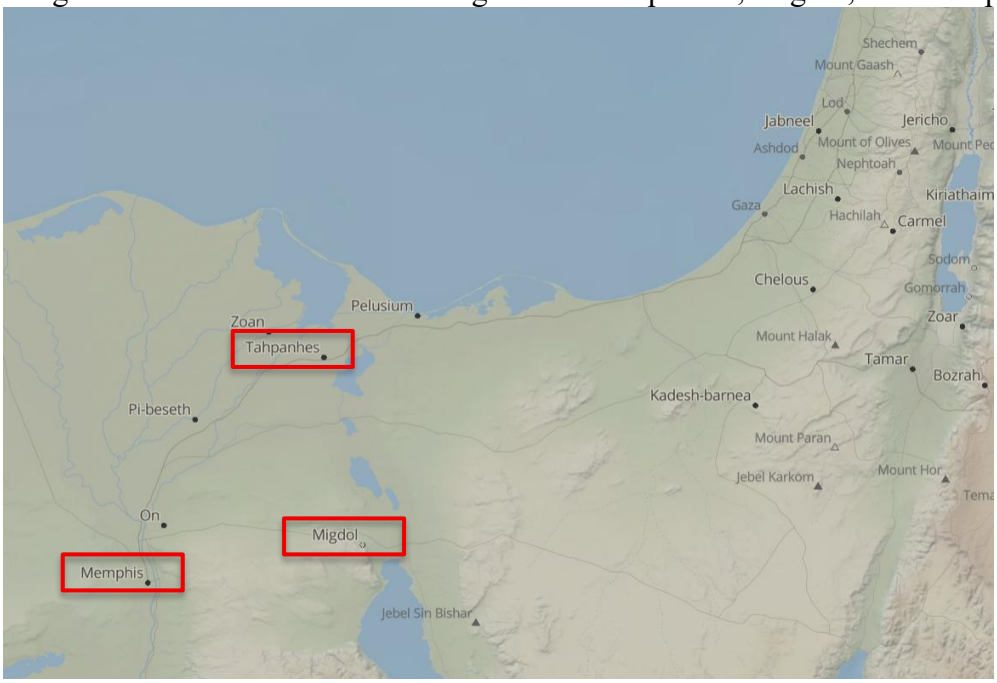
Thus, the account of Jerusalem's fall (37:1–40:6) continued to validate Jeremiah's status as a true prophet of Yahweh (*ethos*) and to reiterate Jeremiah's message that heeding his words resulted in life, while refusal lead to death and judgment. The exilic audience could thus see the necessity for acceptance of Jeremiah's words and the need to accept their Babylonian captivity. In this way, the narrative account of Jerusalem's fall contributed to Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

[61] Image taken from Logos Bible Software Atlas tool.

The author's narrative account of the Judean fugitives' **death in Egypt (40:7–44:30)** points to the example of the Judean fugitives' failure to heed Jeremiah. Their flight to Egypt contrary to Jeremiah's words resulted in their deaths, thus contributing to the argument that the exilic audience should choose life by heeding Jeremiah's words (*ethos*).

The exhortation of Gedaliah to settle in the land and serve the king of Babylon, that it would go well for them (40:9) aligned with Jeremiah's words. The narrator therefore characterized him positively. Following the assassination of Gedaliah (41:1–3), the Judeans still remaining sought Yahweh's word for them through Jeremiah (42:1–3) and promised to obey (42:5–6). Jeremiah's command to stay in the land and submit to Nebuchadnezzar with the promise of blessing and life (42:10–12) aligned with Gedaliah and with his overall message to the exiles (submit to Babylon). Likewise, the warning of sword, famine, plague, and death should the remnant flee to Egypt (42:13–22) aligned with Jeremiah's message that disobeying his / Yahweh's words would lead to death. However, the remnant's refusal to obey Jeremiah and flee to Egypt (43:1–7) led to Jeremiah's prophetic declaration that Nebuchadnezzar would even destroy them there in Egypt (43:8–13). As usual in Jeremiah, obedience would bring life, and disobedience, death.

Image 2: Jeremiah and the Judean fugitives in Tahpanhes, Migdol, and Memphis[62]



After the Judean fugitives had settled in Tahpanhes, Memphis, and Migdol (44:1; see Image 2 above), Jeremiah's comparison of Jerusalem's fall on account of idolatry (44:2–6) to Yahweh's anger and judgment on the Judean fugitives (44:7–14) who likewise stubbornly insisted on continuing their idolatrous worship (44:15–19) demonstrated (1) the justification of death for their sins (*logos*), and (2) an example of the book's principle that death results from

[62] Image taken from Logos Bible Software Atlas tool. In addition to these three locations, the Judean fugitives also settled in Upper Egypt (44:1), which meant south of Memphis.

failing to listen to / obey (44:16) Yahweh's words as spoken through Jeremiah (*ethos*). Yahweh's promise of death (44:26) and the sign of delivering Pharaoh Hophra to Nebuchadnezzar (44:29–30) would validate for the remnant that Jeremiah's word would stand over theirs (44:28) (*ethos*).

Thus, the narrative account of the Judean fugitives' death in Egypt (40:7–44:30) served in the book as a another validation of the veracity of Jeremiah's words. Not only had he been proven correct regarding death and exile for those who resisted Nebuchadnezzar in Jerusalem, but now the same would come true of the fugitives in Egypt as well. This narrative account therefore functioned to bolster Jeremiah's prophetic status (*ethos*) as well as justify the death of the Judean rebels on account of their idolatry (*logos*). For the exilic audience ca. 560 BC, this account would reinforce that heeding Jeremiah's words led to life while ignoring them led to death. In these ways, this narrative section contributed to Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

Jeremiah's word to Baruch (45:1–5) further reinforced Jeremiah's message of life through his words. Along with Yahweh granting life to Ebed-Melech for heeding the words of Jeremiah (chs. 38–39), he did the same for Jeremiah's loyal friend and scribe Baruch. Despite Yahweh's intent to destroy Jerusalem (45:4) and bring disaster on all flesh (45:5), he would grant Baruch his life wherever he should go (45:5). Thus, Jeremiah's word to Baruch demonstrated yet another example whereby heeding the words of Jeremiah led to life. Baruch thus functioned as a character foil to the fugitives who fled to Egypt, and the word to Baruch functioned ethically to bolster the credibility of the prophet (*ethos*) and to persuade the exilic audience to listen to Jeremiah and have life through his words. In this way, this section contributed to Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

Jeremiah's eighteenth word (46:1–51:64) pronouncing judgment on the Gentile nations served as the rhetorical climax and the capstone of the author's argument for the exilic audience. The restoration of various Gentile nations following their judgment by Babylon (i.e., Egypt, Moab, Ammon) typifies the same pattern for Judah. While Yahweh would use Babylon as an instrument of judgment on the Gentile nations, he would then judge Babylon and terminate that empire. Thus, while life and restoration for the Judean exiles lay *through* Babylon, they should not stay in Babylon but return to the Promised Land of Israel once the seventy years were complete. Rhetorically, this eighteenth word contributed to (1) Jeremiah's credibility as a true prophet because many of the prophecies were fulfilled by the Babylonian invasions (*ethos*), (2), the justice of Yahweh's enactment of Judah's exile by showing that he punishes *all* nations, not just Israel (*ethos*—Yahweh's character), and (3) the exilic community's hope for restoration and departure from Babylon following their seventy years of punishment (*pathos*), knowing that Babylon's end would come.

First, Jeremiah's foretelling of judgment on the Gentile nations, both near and far, demonstrated Jeremiah's credibility as a true prophet (*ethos*). While Egypt judged the Philistines (ch. 47), Babylon served as Yahweh's instrument of judgment upon Egypt (ch. 46), Moab (ch. 48), Ammon (49:1–6), Edom (49:7–22), Damascus (49:23–27), Kedar and Hazor (49:28–33), and *possibly* Elam (49:34–39).[63] In any case, from the historical perspective of the exilic audience ca. 560 BC, the majority of the prophecies in chs. 46–49 had already been fulfilled, thus validating Jeremiah as a true prophet of Yahweh (*ethos*) and so contributing to the argument that the exiles should listen to his words. The judgments on these nations also demonstrated that no matter where the Israelites may have fled, they could not escape judgment *except* by submitting to Babylon. Babylon thus represented the place of safety and the path to life. This section especially confirmed the erroneous choice of the Judeans who kidnapped Jeremiah and fled to Egypt with him (chs. 40–44), since Egypt would subsequently face the wrath of Babylon (also foretold by Jeremiah in 43:8–13).

Second, the judgment on the nations contributed to the justice of the exile by demonstrating Yahweh's sovereign and universal justice over all nations (*ethos*). Yahweh had not acted capriciously against Judah. Rather, Babylon served as Yahweh's instrument of judgment for *many* nations. Furthermore, Yahweh would eventually destroy Babylon as well for her injustices against Zion (50:28; 51:24, 35–36, 49). Thus, the exiles could not accuse Yahweh of acting maliciously against them. Yahweh enacted his sovereignty over the nations with justice, just as he would in the future with Babylon. That Yahweh would judge and then restore Gentile nations (Egypt, Moab, Ammon) prefigured Israel and Judah's restoration as well. Thus, far from being a fickle act of anger on Yahweh's part, the Judean exiles could see how Yahweh justly permitted the Babylonian captivity and intended it to purify and prepare the nation for its restoration to the Promised land.

Third, the prophecy of Babylon's end (chs. 50–51) contributed to Jeremiah's message to the exiles that while hope for life and restoration lay *through* the Babylonian captivity for the duration of the seventy years, the exiles should not *stay* in Babylon once the days of service were complete. Hence the calls to, "Come out of her midst, my people" (51:45), and, "You who survived the sword [those from Jerusalem who survived sword, famine, and plague], go! And do not linger! Remember Yahweh from far away [in Babylon], and let Jerusalem come to your mind" (51:50). Yahweh's prophetic plan involved the restoration of Israel and Judah as one united people with him as their God *in* the Promised Land (50:4–5, 18–20). Thus, Yahweh commanded them through Jeremiah not to stay in Babylon. As a matter of biblical and historical record, following Cyrus' declaration of return in 539 BC, only a fraction of the Jews in Mesopotamia returned to the Promised Land, but the majority did not. The books of Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah confirm this. In line with the author of Jeremiah, the author of Chronicles also argued in the post-exilic era that the diaspora scattered abroad should return to the Promised Land and worship Yahweh in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem.[64] In this way, Jeremiah's message was preliminary to that of Chronicles.

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[63] It is difficult to find historical records corroborating Elam's destruction following Jeremiah's prophecy ca. 597 BC. Elam had already been significantly subdued decades earlier by the Assyrians in the 640's BC, and would later rise to be among the Medo-Persian empire that took power from Babylon.

[64] See this author's argument for Chronicles.

Thus, Jeremiah's eighteenth word (46:1–51:64) about judgment on the Gentile nations placed a capstone on the author's arguments that (1) the Babylonian captivity was an act of justice (judicial-logical), (2) Jeremiah was a legitimate prophet who spoke for Yahweh (*ethos*), and (3) life and restoration for Israel lay through Babylon, but because Babylon would be destroyed, their future wasn't in Mesopotamia. Rather, Israel's hope lay in returning to the Promised Land of Israel under the conditions of the New Covenant and the leadership of the righteous Davidic king and Israel's good shepherds. In these ways, this eighteenth (and final) word of Jeremiah contributed to Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

The **narrative fulfillment of Jeremiah's words (52:1–34)** articulating the fall of Jerusalem ca. 586 BC and Jehoiachin's release ca. 560 BC functioned to (1) demonstrate historically that Jeremiah's predictions for Jerusalem came true, thus reinforcing Jeremiah's status as a true prophet (*ethos*), and (2) point to the hope of Israel's restoration under the promised Davidic king (*pathos*).[65]

First, the concluding narrative demonstrates Jeremiah's status as a true prophet of Yahweh because his words came true. See Table 4 below.

Table 4: Jeremiah's predictions fulfilled in ch. 52

Prediction	Fulfillment
Temple will be destroyed like Shiloh (7:14; 26:6, 9)	Temple burned (52:13)
Wealth of the city will be taken by Babylon (15:13; 17:3–4; 20:5)	Valuable temple articles taken to Babylon (52:17–23)
Zedekiah will not escape, but be taken to Babylon (32:4–5; 34:3)	Zedekiah captured and taken to Babylon (52:7–11)
Zedekiah will not die by the sword, but in peace (34:4–5)	Zedekiah died in Babylonian prison (52:11)
Temple vessels will be taken to Babylon (27:19–22;	Nebuzaradan removed the temple vessels (52:17–23)
Death by sword, famine, and plague (14:12; 21:7–9; 24:10; 27:8)	Famine (52:6) and sword (52:7–10, 27)
Jehoiachin will live and die in exile (22:24–27)	Jehoiachin sat at Evil-Merodach's table until he died (52:34)

As demonstrated above in Table 4, various predictions that Jeremiah made throughout his ministry and recorded in the book were fulfilled in the narrative recorded in ch. 52. The lying prophets predicting peace and safety were proven false, and Jeremiah proven true. Thus, the pattern of fulfilled prophecies built Jeremiah's credibility as a legitimate prophet and one to whom the exilic audience should listen (*ethos*).

Second, Jehoiachin's release from Babylonian prison and elevation to the king's table (52:31–34) ca. 560 BC until the day he died (an unknown date) leaves the exilic reader with a sense of optimism. Not only did Jeremiah—the true and validated prophet—foretell of Babylon's

[65] This concluding narrative portion is nearly identical to 2 Kings 24:18–25:30.

destruction after seventy years (thus the audience could be certain of it), but he had also foretold of a righteous Davidic king ruling the united people of Israel and Judah under the New Covenant. Jehoiachin's release from prison indicated a hope for that future Davidic king, the good shepherd who would rule in righteousness from Jerusalem. Thus, the narrative account of Jehoiachin's release constitutes an argument for why the exilic audience should patiently submit to the Babylonian captivity while waiting for the conclusion of the seventy years and then return to the Promised Land.

Thus, the narrative fulfillment of Jeremiah's words (52:1–34) constitutes the concluding argument for why the exilic audience should heed Jeremiah's words. Since many of his prophecies came true in 586 BC and following, they could be certain that his predictions of Babylon's fall and Israel's restoration under the Davidic king would also come true. Jeremiah spoke the true words of life, so they should listen to him (*ethos*). In these ways, this concluding narrative contributed to Jeremiah's overall deliberative purpose that the exiles in Babylon would heed his words and (1) accept the exile as a just punishment under the Mosaic Covenant, (2) understand that their hope for restoration lay *through* the seventy-year exile in Babylon, (3) return to their homeland after the seventy years expired, and (4) hope for the restoration of Israel under the righteous Davidic king and the New Covenant.

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