

Bar-Ilan University

**The New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34 [MT 30-33]**

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## List of Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BDB	<i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Brown-Driver-Briggs)
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
BS	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBR	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
CTSJ	<i>Chafer Theological Seminary Journal</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
HALOT	<i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
HeBAI	<i>Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel</i>
HTKAT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
ITC	International Theological Commentary
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JMAT	<i>The Journal of Ministry and Theology</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
KHAT	Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies

NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>OTE</i>	<i>Old Testament Essays</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
<i>RTJ</i>	<i>The Reformed Theological Journal</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Southwestern Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SVT</i>	<i>Supplements to Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>TB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren. Translated by J. T. Willis, G. W. Bromiley, and D. E. Green. 16 vols. Grand Rapids, 1974–2018
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplement
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>ZAR</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

## Abstract

The Book of Jeremiah is closely tied to the word *בְּרִית* which appears twenty-four times in nine units (3:12-18; 11:1-17; 14:19-22; 22:6-9; 31:31-34; 32:36-44; 33:19-26; 34:8-22; 50:1-5). The covenant theme penetrates the whole book by playing a pivotal role in revealing God's ultimate plan for the nation through divine judgment and restoration. The tapestry of the covenant concept throughout the book serves to understand the significant meaning of the new covenant in 31 as well as the book as a whole.

This thesis discusses the meaning of covenant in general and the 'new covenant' in particular in the context of the book as a whole. The covenant units stand at the heart of the thesis, which aims to present the meaning the 'new covenant' unit (31:31-34) conveys. Based on the understanding of the essentiality of the covenant theme in the book, the thesis examines each of the covenant units through a literary reading. So, it analyzes the meaning of each covenant unit and the new covenant unit in particular, the nature of the connection between the new covenant unit and other covenant units, the structure of the whole book related to the new covenant unit, and the centrality of the new covenant within the frame of the whole book. The way of analyzing all the covenant units reveals the recurring characteristics of covenants and the significance of the place the new covenant takes within the book. Consequently, this thesis demonstrates that the new covenant is a renewed covenant that has an inseparable relationship with other covenants within the structure and process of the covenant units.

This thesis contains the following three parts: the first part is the introduction of the thesis, the central one is the literary analysis of the covenant units, and the last part is the conclusion. The introduction presents the thesis subject, structure, methodology, and justification, reviewing the central scholarly approaches regarding the book—its historical context, textual background, composition and authorship, structure, and central issues—and covenant in the Bible—research trends toward the covenant, covenant types, and the new covenant. The second part is divided into nine sections to present a detailed literary analysis of each covenant unit. Each part examines an individual covenant unit with its distinctive context based on covenant character, type, literary design, timing, initiator, speaker, addressee, and so on. As each unit is analyzed separately, the literary analysis of all the units can hint at the connections between the units, which are explicitly discussed in the last part. The conclusion presents the overall picture based on the detailed analysis and the covenantal process of the

book, emphasizing the recurring characteristics of the covenant throughout the units, the similarities and various connections between the units, and the place and meaning of the new covenant in the overall structure and process.

Below I present the main findings in relation to each of the units, as they are presented in the thesis, and the main conclusions included in the summary chapter of the thesis:

The unit 3:12-18 is a consolation prophecy. It does not describe making a covenant but rather, its consequence. It shows that the fate of apostate Israel as a negative example serves to demonstrate that Judah's current behavior is leading to the same historical destiny. God's urge for the backslidden Israel to come back, *Return, faithless Israel* שׁוּבָה מִשׁוּבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל (v. 12), is used to reveal God's strong wish of the faithless Judah to return, שׁוּבוּ בָּנִים שׁוֹבְבִים (v. 14). The word שׁוּב here implies that God does not require repentance תְּשׁוּבָה but just demands the people of Judah to return to God in the setting of the intimate relationship as it is followed by the verb בָּעַלְתִּי in v. 14. God's urgent call for covenant partner Judah to return goes with His faithfulness in her restoration and God's universal control of the nations. God wills to provide the momentum for their restoration after devastation through His concrete actions—וְהִבֵּאתִי in v. 14, וְנָתַתִּי in v. 15, תִּרְבוּ וּפְרִיתֶם in v. 16, וְנִקְוִי in v. 17, and וְיָבֵאוּ יְהֻדָּה in v. 18. They will not need *the ark of God's covenant* יְהוָה אֲרוֹן בְּרִית יְהוָה since Jerusalem as *the throne of God* כִּסֵּא יְהוָה will replace the ark in days to come. Comparing two phrases, אֲרוֹן בְּרִית יְהוָה and כִּסֵּא יְהוָה, the unit highlights that their religious faith with the ark of God's covenant will be transformed by God's glorious presence. The ark of the Sinai covenant is temporary; it will never enter their minds or be remembered. While the nation faces calamity that the conditional covenant accuses their sin, Jerusalem as God's throne embodies the everlasting promise for restoration. Their promising future only depends on God Himself in spite of their present situation doomed by their sin. In this unit, God is explicitly characterized as One who enthusiastically embraces Judah's return, fulfilling His promise of Judah's physical and spiritual restoration, including a promise for Israel and nations.

The unit 11:1-17 portrays Judah's rejection of God's covenant and a divine judgment as a result of the covenant violation. It represents the rebuke and the severe condition of the nation through four oracles followed by a poem. The oracles contain basic elements of the Sinai covenant; the first oracle (vv. 1-5) is about the covenant curse, the second (vv. 6-8) about failure to follow the covenant, the third (vv. 9-10) about a conspiracy of idolatry, the fourth (vv. 11-14) about the upcoming judgment, and the poem (vv. 15-17) about the disaster for evil schemes.



In particular, the recurring words—שָׁמַע (vv. 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14), בְּרִית (vv. 2, 3, 6, 8, 10), עָשָׂה (vv. 4, 6, 8), and אָבוֹת (vv. 4, 7, 10)—reflect God’s appeal to the nation and their severe reality from the covenant breach. The word שָׁמַע represents various meanings: a demand to hear God’s voice and obey the covenant (vv. 2, 3, 4), the process of their disobedience on God’s command (vv. 6, 7, 8), their stubbornness מֵאַנּוֹן לְשָׁמוֹעַ (v. 10), and God’s decisive rejection upon their cry אֲשַׁמַּע לֹא שָׁמַע/לֹא אֲשַׁמַּע (vv. 11, 14). Another recurring word הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת—*this covenant* (vv. 2, 3, 6, 8) and *my covenant* בְּרִיתִי (v. 10)—refers to the Sinai covenant in the unit with its different characters; while בְּרִית implies a historical covenant to recall that God’s promise was given to Israel through the covenant (vv. 2, 3), it denotes a present covenant to show that the Israelites’ evil hearts have brought all the curses of the covenant on them (vv. 6, 8) and also that the house of Judah has broken the covenant (v. 10). Since God had delivered the Exodus generation out of Egypt and made a covenant with them at Sinai, they had to listen only to God’s voice, but they have hastily overlooked their responsibility and their identity as the covenant people. Their infidelity, their *conspiracy* קִשָּׁר (v. 9) and *lewdness* הַמְזוּמָה (v. 15), thwarts covenant blessings and provokes God to bring the covenant curse in a context of their idolatry. This idolatry as spiritual adultery is the essential reason for the broken covenant. The operation of the curses is revealed in God’s judgment, that is, the culmination of a long history of their apostasy. God has continually compelled His people to keep the words of the covenant, but *My beloved* יְדִידִי (v. 15) has become a harlot as if the wife Israel is divorced from her husband God. God’s gracious initiative of planting His people, זֵית רִעְוָן יָפֶה פְּרִי תֹאֵר (v. 16), has been thwarted by their apostasy and resulted in the destruction of the tree rather than into its growth and fruitfulness. This unit explicitly shows that they cannot avoid the divine judgment as God is decisive to punish their covenant violation and idolatrous apostasy.

The unit 14:19-22 describes Judah’s urgent request to God to remember the unconditional covenant, presenting Jeremiah’s own communal laments, which are even expanded to include a confession of Judah’s sin. Making strategic petitions based on their covenant relationship with God, Jeremiah expresses their grief with rhetorical questions to God (v. 19), confesses their wickedness and *our fathers’ iniquity* עֲוֹן אֲבוֹתֵינוּ (v. 20), reminds God of *the sake of Your name* לְמַעַן שְׁמֶךָ and *the throne of Your glory* כִּסֵּא כְבוֹדֶךָ for the request to *remember, not break Your covenant with us* זָכֹר אֶל תִּפְרֹךְ בְּרִיתְךָ אִתָּנוּ (v. 21), and urges divine help through the declaration that their trust and hope are in God as the Creator but in no other gods (v. 22). They looked for peace but have found no good, and they hoped for a time of healing but faces terror instead. It is a gap between their desire that peace would be their continuing

experience and their reality that God has rejected them and brought them trouble. Their deliberate request to God for remembering the unconditional covenant in this unit ends with their praising God the Omnipotent. The covenant in this unit implies comfort and hope for the nation in the midst of the divine judgment upon them. Even though repentance is shown as part of their petition in the unit, it is not a condition for the unconditional covenant. This unit indeed embodies that God Himself guarantees the everlasting covenant relationship with them for the sake of His name and glory, maintaining that the covenant does not depend on the nation's behavior.

The unit 22:6-9 delivers God's oracle regarding the fate of the nation Judah. The unit contains two sub-parts, vv. 6-7 and vv. 8-9, which have a causal relationship between them. The first sub-unit shows the covenant curse by using the images of *בית מלך יהודה* such as *גלעד*, *ראש הלבנון*, and *מבצר ארזיך* (vv. 6-7). God will destroy the magnificent palace by commissioning His agents, *מַשְׁחֵתִים* (v. 7). In particular, the phrase *they will cut up your fine cedars* *וְכָרְתוּ מִבְּצֵר אֲרָזֶיךָ* (v. 7) represents the dynamic transition of the fate of the king's house. As the king is a representative of the nation, the king's fate symbolizes the punishment for the nation. The second sub-unit describes the reason of the curse, the nation's forsaking the covenant and worshipping idols. The destruction of the royal palace and Jerusalem is significantly described as an inevitable consequence of Judah's violation of God's covenant. The fact that the phrase *לְעֹזֵב בְּרִית* is used in parallel with the phrase *וַיַּעֲבֹדוּם וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְאֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים* here in v. 9 demonstrates that Judah's communal practice of pagan worship ends up in the covenant breach. The unit represents the conditional covenant from God's point of view as it explicitly shows that their breaking God's covenant will result in the covenant curse of national destruction.

The unit 31:31-34, the only passage to mention *a new covenant* *בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה* (v. 31) in the OT, introduces God's proclamation that He will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the old covenant that was made between God and their forefathers at Sinai. The word *but* *כִּי* in v. 33 emphasizes the distinctive characteristics of the new covenant contrary to the ones of the old one, and the repeated phrases *יָאֵם יְהוָה* (vv. 31, 32, 33, 34) and *בְּיוֹם/יָמִים* (vv. 31, 32, 33) represent God's compelling intention for the new covenant in the future. When the days are coming, God will give His people a new covenant unconditionally. The characteristics of the new covenant are described by the alternated rhetorical expression of positive vocabularies (vv. 31, 33) and negative ones (vv. 32, 34), which makes an explicit comparison between the new covenant and the old covenant. The metaphorical verb *בְּעַלְתִּי* in v. 32 indicates the husband-wife relationship, emphasizing Israel's

covenant breaking in the form of apostasy; they have violated the essence of the covenant, the intimate relationship with God. Nevertheless, God will renew the covenant relationship with them in the new covenant; God proclaims, *I will be their God, and they shall be my people* לַעֲמֹת יְהוָה לֵאמֹר יְהוָה יְהוּי לִי לֵאלֹהִים (v. 33). The eternal nature of the new covenant is revealed in the comparison between the old and the new covenants. God will write His law on their hearts and forgive their sins (vv. 33-34), so that all of them will know Him based on a renewed relationship between God and them. Writing on the heart will eradicate the external constraints and liability of the old system of written documents and human mediators as well as break through the internal hindrance to the perfection of the covenant relationship. The emphasis on this internal transformation serves to perceive the new covenant as a renewed Sinai covenant. The religious renovation will be fulfilled by the new covenant as all the people, לְמִקְטָנָם וְעַד גְּדֹלָם (v. 34), will know God through the new covenant written on their hearts without the condition of human teaching and learning, לֹא יִלְמְדוּ עוֹד אִישׁ אֶת רֵעֵהוּ וְאִישׁ אֶת אָחִיו לֵאמֹר דַּע אֶת יְהוָה (v. 34). Furthermore, God promises to bestow the divine forgiveness אֶסְלַח לְעוֹנֵם and also not to remember their sin anymore לֹא אֶזְכֹּר עוֹד, so their heart and mind written with the knowledge of God cannot turn to sin again. Therefore, the unit argues that the new covenant does not replace the old covenant but renews the old covenant, revealing that the new covenant as a renewed covenant magnifies God's unfailing love and faithfulness revealed through the dynamic continuity with the old covenant throughout His salvific history toward His people Israel.

The unit 32:36-44 discloses God's initiative to restore the covenant relationship with His people and the land prosperity; the renewed covenant promise (vv. 36-41) and its guarantee (vv. 42-44). God's dynamic action for the nation's restoration is disclosed in the opposite word pairs, הַדְּחָתִים-מְקַבְּצֵם (v. 37) and הַטּוֹבָה-הַרְעָה (v. 42). God will gather His people (מְקַבְּצֵם) from all the countries where He drove them (הַדְּחָתִים) in His furious anger and great wrath (v. 37). Just as God has brought all the great evil/calamity (הַרְעָה) upon them, He will bring upon them all the good/prosperity (הַטּוֹבָה) that He has promised them (v. 42). The repeated assonance verbs שׁוּב (to turn back, return) and יָשָׁב (to sit, remain, dwell) also serve to define the coherency of the unit; God will bring them back to the land and make them to dwell (v. 37), He will not turn away from them (v. 40), and He will restore them to their original situation and make their captivity to return (v. 44). Making an everlasting covenant, God will deliver His people from exile, reinitiate a covenant relationship with them, create a transformation, and give them *one heart and one way* לֵב אֶחָד וְדָרֶךְ אֶחָד (v. 39) to fear Him *forever* כָּל הַיָּמִים (v. 39) and not to stray

into apostasy. The oracle of hope claims the ironic relationship between the present harsh reality and a future restoration by showing that the present terror of God's wrathful scattering will be overcome by the future gathering of God's merciful power. God promises an unconditional restoration without a precondition of repentance, breaking through all seeming constraints to create a new reality and turn punishment into restoration, destruction into good, and danger into security. God Himself reveals His willingness to do good forever to His people during the doom of Israel's history (v. 40). God rejoices to restore the nation because of His unbreakable and irrevocable covenant relationship with them. God Himself renews the covenant unconditionally and reassures the covenantal relationship through the everlasting covenant. The everlasting covenant in the unit continues the new covenant concept by putting the covenant on people's heart and renewing the covenant relationship between God and them. While the new covenant in 31:31-34 looks like an inclusive concept to cover all the aspects of the restoration of Israel and Judah, the everlasting covenant in 32:36-44 as a new covenant offers a very concrete concept by guaranteeing their physical and historical return from exile with prosperity.

The unit 33:19-26 conveys God's everlasting promise through God's oracles with the repeated key phrases, *My covenant with the night and the day* בְּרִיתִי הַיּוֹם וּבְרִיתִי הַלַּיְלָה (vv. 20, 25) and *the seed of David My servant* זֶרַע דָּוִד עַבְדִּי (vv. 22, 26). Two oracles, vv. 19-22 and vv. 23-26, parallel in the protasis-apodosis argumentative form and in content, which fortifies the divine guarantee of the stability of God's covenant. The eternal nature of God's promise is supported by the creation covenant. The constant alternation of day and night ensures the everlasting covenant with David, aiming for the eternal covenant with the nation. The eternal nature of God's covenant is interestingly revealed in relation to the Noahic covenant and Abrahamic covenant as the creation covenant echoes the story of the Flood (Gen 9:8-17) and the blessing of Abraham (Gen 13:16; 22:17). The perpetuity of God's covenant ties with His chosen people. God's everlasting covenant assures His fidelity to David, the Levites, and the nation. God promises numerable servants to come and Davidic ruling over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Davidic covenant, which is unbreakable and unconditional, sustains the promising destiny of the nation, the continuance of the Davidic dynasty, and the return of their captivity to the homeland in God's appointed time. Although the main tiding of the unit is comfort, this unit partially contains the mood of threat that comes from the negative formulation used throughout the unit—תִּפְּרוּ (v. 20), תִּפְּרָה (v. 21), וַיִּמְאַסְכֶם (v. 24), לֹא (v. 25), אֶמְאַס (v. 26). Since the nation does not deserve the promise in their own right, God Himself grants

them the unconditional promise. From this perspective, the unit continues the new covenant concept. The everlasting covenant neither depends on the nation's behavior nor their merit but on the eternal nature of the previous covenants.

The unit 34:8-22 is exceptional in its context, in opposition to the previous two units and the one that followed. When Zedekiah made a covenant with all the people in Jerusalem to proclaim emancipation for Hebrew slaves, they obeyed and set their slaves free. However, the slave liberation was a short-lived freedom since they changed their minds and returned the slaves whom they had set free. Although the covenant of liberty was solemnly undertaken in God's sight בְּעֵינַי (v. 15), it was turned over *at their pleasure* לְנַפְשָׁם (v. 16). The unit strategically delivers God's judgment on the violation of the covenant regarding slaves, implying that Zedekiah's covenant is in the continuation of Sinai covenant. Based on the whole context of the unit, the Sinai covenant made between God and their forefathers בְּרִית אֶת אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם (v. 13) is set alongside Zedekiah's making covenant before God in the temple (vv. 8, 15) that God refers to as *My covenant* בְּרִיתִי (v. 18). A demand of obligation to obey a conditional covenant is well described in a covenant ceremony (vv. 18-19), cutting the calf in two and walking solemnly between its pieces בֵּין בְּתָרָיו וַיַּעֲבְרוּ לִשְׁנַיִם. The severity of breaking Zedekiah's covenant is explicitly revealed in the phrases, נִקְרָא שְׁמִי in v. 15 and וַתִּחַלְלֵנוּ אֶת שְׁמִי in v. 16. The double use of God's name is a rhetorical device to show the solemnity and seriousness of Zedekiah's covenant. In particular, the unit is characterized by considerable repeated keywords—כָּרַת (vv. 8, 13, 15, 18), דָּרוֹר (vv. 8, 15, 17), שׁוּב (vv. 11, 15, 16, 22), and עָבַר (vv. 18, 19)—that justify God's actions of judgment and also embody the severity of the punishment. These recurring terms represent the connection between covenant making and breaching as well as reinforce the connections between disobedience and judgment. The unit sharply rebukes the covenant breakers through these rhetorical devices of many parallels and contrasts to manifest a horrible judgment upon the great sin committed against God. The unit ends with the vivid picture of divine punishment by employing the *hiphil* form of שׁוּב; God will bring back (v. 22 וַהֲשִׁבְתִּים) the Babylonian army to destroy Jerusalem and the cities of Judah since they sinned to bring back (v. 11 וַיִּשְׁבּוּ, v. 16 וַתִּשְׁבּוּ) their former slaves. God holds them accountable for their act of infidelity because the covenant they entered and broke demands their obedience.

The unit 50:1-5 represents the decline of Babylon (vv. 1-3) but the restoration of Israel and Judah in an eternal covenant (vv. 4-5). These two themes are intimately interwoven by a linking phrase בְּיָמֵם הַהֵמָּה וּבְעַת הַהִיא (v. 4a). When a nation from the north makes Babylon

desolate, the restoration of God's people will start dramatically. The unit emphasizes the fall of Babylon itself as a critical factor directly related to a significant change in the exile's fate. As the defeat of Babylon entails the end of exile for the Israelites, the destruction of Babylon is a new chance for the exiled to return to their homeland. The repeated verb *הָלַךְ* (vv. 3, 4) is employed in describing Babylon's decline on the one hand and united Israel's restoration on the other hand. While *הָלַכוּ* in v. 3 represents the dissolution of both men and animals in the land of Babylon, *הָלוֹךְ* and *יָלְכוּ* in v. 4 refer to Israel's restoration of covenant relationship alongside returning to the land of Zion. Therefore, Babylon's destruction rhetorically serves the renewed relationship between God and His covenant people through dynamic comparisons. At the time of Babylon's fall, the nation will come back to Zion and take the initiative to bind themselves to God in an everlasting covenant that will never be forgotten. The everlasting covenant *בְּרִית עוֹלָם* in the oracle of 50:4-5 continues to carry on the new covenant concept of *בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה* in 31:31 and *בְּרִית עוֹלָם* in 32:40 by expressing the everlasting relationship between God and the nation. The everlasting covenant in v. 5 as a new covenant highlights a human initiation in returning from the Babylonian exile to their homeland as well as in seeking the covenant relationship with God.

The conclusion chapter confirms the significant meaning of the new covenant in relation to the meanings of other covenants in the book. It examines the recurring characteristics throughout the units, the covenant meanings created from the similarities and various connections between the units, and the place and meaning of the new covenant in the overall structure and process. Each of the nine covenant units has its distinctive context regarding the recurring parameters, such as covenant type, time, tidings, initiator, speaker, and addressee, which can show the dynamic process of covenant terms in the book. While various biblical covenants are enumerated in the book, the Sinai covenant plays a governing paradigm in representing a conditional character of the covenant. In particular, there is a significant division between conditional covenants (3:16; 11:2, 3, 6, 8, 10; 22:9; 31:32a, 32b; 34:8, 10, 13, 15, 18a, 18b) and unconditional covenants (14:21; 31:31, 33; 32:40; 33:20a, 20b, 21, 25; 50:5). Interestingly, the new covenant in 31:31-34 continues in the other units—32:36-44, 33:19-26, and 50:1-5—that repeat the new covenant concept with their distinctive expressions. The book deals with the conditional covenant first to indict Judah's covenant violation alongside the tiding of calamity and then highlights the unconditional covenant in the later parts to convey God's promise of all Israel's restoration alongside the tiding of comfort. The whole structure of the covenant units in the book and the process it builds present all the meanings and essences

encapsulated in the ‘covenant.’ It also accentuates the new covenant concept, conveying rebuke and doom for those who have broken the covenant on the one hand but an unconditional hope and promise for the restoration of the covenant people on the other hand. While the conditional covenant reflects human behaviors, the unconditional covenant depends on God Himself, not on His people. While the literary reading of the units focuses on the significance of the covenant and the new covenant in particular, it succeeds in presenting the central themes of the book, which are the themes of sin, punishment, return, repentance, hope, and restoration that cooperate together to form the whole message of the covenant.

The tapestry of the covenant concept in the units weaves the new covenant into the fabric of the former covenants, strategically revealing the centrality of the new covenant and highlighting the restoration of united Israel and Judah in comparison to divine judgment on Judah. The new covenant makes a turning point between calamity and comfort, representing not only a new beginning of the nation but also the climax of prophecies in the book. Reviewing the literary analysis of all the covenant units, this conclusion chapter clarifies that the new covenant in 31 is a renewed covenant along with the inseparable relation to old covenants in light of the framework of the covenant in the book as a whole.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Thesis Subject and Objectives

The Book of Jeremiah is closely tied to the word ‘covenant בְּרִית’ which appears twenty-four times in the book (3:16; 11:2, 3, 6, 8, 10; 14:21; 22:9; 31:31, 32a, 32b, 33; 32:40; 33:20a, 20b, 21, 25; 34:8, 10, 13, 15, 18a, 18b; 50:5) within nine units (3:12-18; 11:1-17; 14:19-22; 22:6-9; 31:31-34; 32:36-44; 33:19-26; 34:8-22; 50:1-5). All these covenant units convey the various meanings of covenant, but not all of them are ‘covenant units’ par excellence. There is a diverse representation of the covenant theme in the units. As I will exemplify in the following thesis, the covenant penetrates the whole book by playing a key role to reveal God’s ultimate plan for Israel dynamically. The tapestry of the covenant concept throughout the book indeed serves to better understand the significant meaning of the new covenant in 31 as well as the book as a whole.

Based on the understanding the ‘new covenant’ as the core of the book, or at least of the covenant subject in the book, this thesis will discuss a few significant questions in light of the arrangement of the book. What is meant by each covenant unit and the new covenant unit particularly? How does the connection between the new covenant unit and other covenant units look like? What is the relationship between the new covenant and the other covenants? How does the structure of the whole book affect the content and interpretation of the new covenant unit? What is meant by the new covenant within the frame of the whole book—is it totally new and replacing the Sinai covenant, or is it only renewed in preserving the Sinai covenant?

The aim of this thesis is to comprehend the meaning of the new covenant by analyzing the recurring characteristics of covenants in all the units and the significance of the place the new covenant takes among the units. Therefore, although the new covenant seems like a totally new one based on the immediate context of the unit 31:31-34, this thesis demonstrates that the new covenant is a renewed covenant with an inseparable relation to the old covenants which are presented in the other units in the book.



## 1.2. The Book of Jeremiah

### 1.2.1. Historical Context

Some scholars analyze the historical context of the book in depth and the dating of the commencement of Jeremiah's ministry. Scholars such as Nelson, House, Brueggemann, and Thompson examine political motivation during Judah's final period.<sup>1</sup> While Bright, Thompson, Craigie, Eaton, and Keck regard the date 627/626 BCE as the beginning of Jeremiah's active ministry,<sup>2</sup> Holladay, Hyatt, and May assume that this date refers to the birth of Jeremiah.<sup>3</sup> Clements refers to a clue for Jeremiah's silence during his early years, arguing that "the beginning of Jeremiah's work as a prophet therefore was not conterminous with the concern to preserve a record of his prophecies on a scroll."<sup>4</sup>

In terms of reality and history in the book, while Carroll denies the historical Jeremiah,<sup>5</sup> Thompson, Martens, Holladay, Brueggemann, and Lipschits claim that the book is plausibly constructed upon the reliable and historical information of the life and times of Jeremiah.<sup>6</sup>

### 1.2.2. Textual Background

Scholars have discussed the text of the book. They conclude that there is the significant variation between two ancient manuscripts of the book, the older Greek Septuagint text (LXX) and the Masoretic Hebrew text (MT).<sup>7</sup> Tov maintains that the LXX has profound variances

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<sup>1</sup> Nelson (1983, 177-89) examines the last years of Judah through the motivations of political action and attitude in Judah during this vital seventh-century period, which can provide the reasons for changes of policy by Judaeans rulers. House (1995, 349) claims that Jeremiah's prophecies must be recognized in the context of Judah's betrayal of Yahweh with the fulfillment of all the prophecies about devastation, as Jeremiah's ministry was under the final periods of Judah's declining situation. The historical context of Jeremiah was characterized by political ambitions between the Assyrian and the Babylonian empires (Brueggemann, 1998, 1). Jeremiah's ministry was under a shifting political climate. The Assyrian power was fading, but Babylonian kingdom was growing (Thompson, 1980, 50).

<sup>2</sup> Bright 1965, xc; Thompson, 1980, 50; Craigie, Kelley and Drinkard, Jr., 1991, 3; Eaton, 1997, 100; Keck, 2001, 556.

<sup>3</sup> Holladay, 1989, 25-26; Hyatt, 1966, 204-214; May 1945, 227.

<sup>4</sup> Clements, 1988a, 5.

<sup>5</sup> In his opinion, the figure of Jeremiah fades away from both the poetry and the prose of the book without the later Deuteronomistic redactional framework (Carroll, 1986, 48). The literary figure of the prophet reflects the fortunes of various Jewish communities during and after the Babylonian period; the prophetic character does not have to be built upon historical reality (Ibid, 62-64). He assumes, with a sociological approach, that the Book of Jeremiah is composed from traditions stemming from various spheres active after the fall of Jerusalem and during the Persian period as well as from the backgrounds involved in a power struggle during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ibid, 69-71).

<sup>6</sup> Thompson, 1980, 94-106; Martens, 1986, 18-19; Holladay, 1986, 1-10; Holladay, 1989, 24-35; Brueggemann, 1988, 11-12; Lipschits, 2005, 36-359.

<sup>7</sup> Becking, 2004. Keck (2001, 557) says, "Sometimes the differences are just a word or a phrase, but often they are several verses (e.g., 8:10-12; 33:14-26; 39:4-13 are not present in the Greek)." Sweeney (2010, 94) argues that

from the order of arrangement in the MT on which English Bible translations are based for the most part.<sup>8</sup> Tov made several studies about the problematic existence of the two texts, the MT and the LXX, in his essay.<sup>9</sup> Rofé also makes a fuller treatment on the difference arrangement between the MT and the LXX in the book.<sup>10</sup>

Driver, Craigie, Rofé, and Lundbom claim for the superiority of the MT<sup>11</sup> while Smith, Cross, Holladay, Jones, Williamson, Sharp maintain that the LXX is superior to the MT which was developed either from the Greek Septuagint text or from a closely related version.<sup>12</sup> Becking argues that there is no superiority between the two versions.<sup>13</sup> Lundbom emphasizes that it must be careful “not to overgeneralize the tendentious qualities of each version” in textual criticism, making a very thoughtful comment about the relationship between the MT and the LXX.<sup>14</sup>

### 1.2.3. Composition and Authorship

There are discussions about the composition and authorship of the book based on the MT version. The book, according to Duhm, consists of three major sources: the poetic speeches of Jeremiah (chs. 1-25), a biographical prose of Jeremiah (26-45), and a number of supplements throughout the book influenced by a Deuteronomistic style.<sup>15</sup> Later, Mowinckel developed three-source theory based on Duhm’s classification.<sup>16</sup> However, Holladay and Thompson have

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the LXX shows concerns typical of the early Persian period, while the MT implies perspectives which did not reach their realization until the 2nd century BCE in spite of being known in the Persian period.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, in terms of the oracles against the nations, they are the last major unit in MT (chapters 46-51) but roughly the center of LXX, which can offer a very different sequence between two different text versions (Tov, 1992, 319-27).

<sup>9</sup> Tov, 1981, 145-67.

<sup>10</sup> Rofé (1989, 396-98) points out that the oracles against the nations, which are chapters 46-51 in the MT, are inserted into chapter 25 in the LXX and that the order of the nations are different between two texts.

<sup>11</sup> Driver, 1889, 333-36; Lundbom, 1999, 57-62. Craigie (1991, xliii) says, “one could hardly but agree with the principle of accepting the primacy of the Hebrew text, for in many places the LXX represent a thoroughly inadequate translation of the Hebrew original.” Rofé (1997, 43) insists, “The MT arrangement is the original one, whereas the LXX version discloses a secondary intervention and editing which was not introduced in all MSS.”

<sup>12</sup> Smith, 1887, 199; Cross, 1958, 186-94; Jones, 1992, 49; Williamson, 2009, 168; Sharp, 2016, 456. LXX is shorter than MT: about 2,700 words of MT are lacking in LXX, while LXX has about 100 words lacking in MT (Holladay, 1986, 3). Over 300 words of LXX are not found in MT, but over 3,000 words of MT are not found in LXX.

<sup>13</sup> Becking, 2004, 18.

<sup>14</sup> Lundbom, 1992, 708.

<sup>15</sup> Duhm, 1901, xi-xx.

<sup>16</sup> Mowinckel (1914, 20-45) argued that the original book consists of chapters 1-45 with four literary sources—a collection of poetic oracles (source A, 1-25), prose sermons by an anonymous author (source B, 26-45), prose speeches written in a Deuteronomistic style and theology (source C, 1-45), and oracles about the future salvation (source D, 30-31)—and regarded 46-52 as later additions.

different thoughts from the Duhm-Mowinckel idea.<sup>17</sup> Holladay's argument is based on distinctive Jeremianic vocabulary across the various "sources" and the identification of the "authentic voice" of Jeremiah in all the alleged sources.<sup>18</sup> Thompson, based on the agreement with the Duhm-Mowinckel source divisions, makes some modifications that prose speeches throughout chapters 1- 45 are authentic to Jeremiah. Thompson claims that chapters 1-25 contain authentic poetic sermons of Jeremiah.<sup>19</sup>

Bright, Craigie, and Jones argue about the Jeremiah traditions with deuteronomistic influence in Jeremiah's prose. According to Bright, the Jeremiah traditions were simultaneously transmitted over a long period of time both as the oral tradition which is more flexible and easily supplementing materials over time and the written tradition which is more static and serving as a control of the oral and would have interacted with each other.<sup>20</sup> Craigie assumes that the prophet employed both poetry and prose in his speeches.<sup>21</sup> Jones argues that the prose of the book is Deuteronomistic in style but reflects a specific Jeremianic tradition preserved by distant disciples of Jeremiah educated in the Deuteronomistic schools, not the Deuteronomists of the post-exilic synagogue or in the Babylonian exile.<sup>22</sup> In particular, Robinson, Bright, Thompson, and Sweeney regard the 'new covenant' passage of chapter 31 as Jeremiah's authentic preaching, not as postexilic prose.<sup>23</sup>

#### 1.2.4. Structure

There are various attempts to analyze the structure of the book (MT) with different principles even though it is not easy to understand the structure of the book which is not organized by a clear chronology or topic.<sup>24</sup> Bright examines the structure based on a thematic approach.<sup>25</sup> Lundbom investigates the arrangement of the book with chronological factors, arguing that the

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<sup>17</sup> Holladay (1960, 354) disagrees with the Duhm-Mowinckel idea of sources regarding authorship. Thompson (1980, 46-47) makes some modifications that prose speeches throughout chapters 1- 45 are authentic to Jeremiah.

<sup>18</sup> Holladay, 1989, 15.

<sup>19</sup> According to Thompson (1980, 46-47), prose sermons in chapters 26-45 are the historical material most likely from Baruch who was a contemporary eyewitness with the events; unlike the consensus view, prose speeches throughout chapters 1- 45 are probably also authentic to Jeremiah, as prose sermons could be already well developed in Jeremiah's lifetime, as Deuteronomistic histories and the Jeremiah prose may share the rhetorical prose style of the late seventh and early sixth centuries in Judah.

<sup>20</sup> Bright, 1965, 32.

<sup>21</sup> Craigie, 1991, xxxii -xxxvii. It seems that there is a Deuteronomistic influence in Jeremiah, but not necessarily a Deuteronomistic redactor (Ibid.).

<sup>22</sup> Jones, 1992, 19-22. Although Jeremiah's prose is Deuteronomistic in form, it is the pattern employed by learned circles during the seventh and sixth centuries BCE (Ibid.).

<sup>23</sup> Robinson, 1924, 209-21; Bright, 1951, 15-29; Bright, 1965; Thompson, 1980; Sweeney, 1996, 569-83.

<sup>24</sup> Bandstra, 2011, 438.

<sup>25</sup> Bright (1965, LVI-LIX) proposes three collections (1:1-25:13a; chs. 30-31, if not 33; and chs. 46-51) added by biographical narratives (chs. 26-29 and 34-35).

book consists of an original scroll prepared in 605 (chapters 1-20) and a supplementary part (chapters 21-51).<sup>26</sup> Rosenberg outlines the overall structure of the book with the symmetrical literary pattern.<sup>27</sup> Rofé views the structure of the book with two principles—the formation based on the topical or formal homogeneity, and the symmetrical inner construction—which cooperate for the arrangement of the book.<sup>28</sup>

### 1.2.5. Central Issues in the Book of Jeremiah

There are studies devoted to discussing the major issues in the Book of Jeremiah. Biddle, Allen, Murphy, and Yates focus on the concepts of judgment and hope which are constructing Jeremiah's holistic message in the book.<sup>29</sup> Holladay and Unterman talk about repentance, return, and redemption and discuss their relations with each other.<sup>30</sup> Lundbom uses different words, grace and salvation which are given simultaneously with judgement, arguing that the

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<sup>26</sup> The following is a series of additions, according to Lundbom (1999, 92-101), "The King and Prophet Appendix" (chs. 21-23), collections of narrative prose (chs. 24-29, 34-36, and 37-44), "Book of Restoration" (chs. 30-33), and oracles against foreign nations (chs. 46-51). Chapter 52 is a historical appendix.

<sup>27</sup> A. Historical headnote (1:1-3); B. Commission (1:10); C. "Prophet to the nations" theme introduced (1:5-10); D. Doom for Israel; poetic oracles predominate (1:11-10:25); E. Prophet cut off from Anathoth; focus on prophet's trials and conflicts; prose predominates (11:1-28:17); F. Optimistic prophecies; renewal of Israel; prose brackets poetic center (29:1-31:40); E'. Prophet Returns to Anathoth; focus on prophet's trials and conflicts; prose predominates (32:1-45:5); D'. Doom for the nations; poetic oracles predominate (46:1-49:39); C'. "Prophet to the nations" theme culminates (50:1-51:58); B'. Prophet's concluding message (51:59-64); A'. Historical appendix (52:1-34) (Rosenberg, 1987, 190-191). Rosenberg (Ibid, 192-93) also shows the symmetrical pattern of Jeremiah 20-40 with "Book of Consolation" (30-31) as the center of the symmetrical structure.

<sup>28</sup> According to Rofé (1989, 390-98), I. Chs. 1-24: Visions, prophecies of judgement, laments, mostly undated; II. Chs. 25-36: Speeches of Jeremiah and stories about him; III. Chs. 30-33: Words of consolation, a collection organized around the restoration story and speech of ch. 32; IV. Chs. 37-45: A continuous biographical account of Jeremiah before and after the fall of Jerusalem; V. Chs. 46-51: Oracles about the nations; VI. Ch. 52: Historical appendix, the fall and exile of Jerusalem. Rofé (1997, p. 42) presents that the first collection begins with visions (1: 11-16) and ends with a vision (ch. 24), and the second one begins and ends in the fourth year of Jehoiakim (ch. 26; 36). Especially, Rofé (1989, p. 390) makes a significant point for the structure of the book; there are two principles of literary organization in the Book of Jeremiah, the formation based on the topical or formal homogeneity, and the symmetrical inner construction, and both principles cooperate together for the arrangement of the book, arguing, "the identification of single collection on the basis of their homogeneity is confirmed by their symmetrical design, while the detection of symmetrical elements finds its corollary in the unity of the subject-matter."

<sup>29</sup> Yates (2010, 144-65) examines Jeremiah's message in light of God's judgment and hope which form the whole message of the book. Biddle (1990, 220-28) regards judgement and hope as the penetrating themes of the message of the book as a whole. According to the outline of the Book of Jeremiah by Murphy (2009, 317), Judgment seems like the most common thought of the book. Allen (2008, 17-18) claims that hope as the "overruling message" of the Book of Jeremiah is "the purposeful trajectory of overriding grace that stretches over the book like a rainbow."

<sup>30</sup> Holladay (1958, 116-57) regards repentance as spiritual return, saying that the occurrence of covenantal שׁוּב in Jeremiah is about 30% of all instances in the OT (Ibid, 117-18). Unterman (1987, 11) discusses about the meaning of return in relation to repentance; prophetic return consists of three steps such as "acknowledgment of sin," "cessation of sin," and "the return of the people to the path of obedience and faithfulness." Unterman (Ibid, 23-116) examines the Book of Jeremiah based on an overarching theme, redemption, specifically focusing on Jeremiah's prophecies of redemption to Ephraim during the reign of Josiah, to the Judeans exiled with Jehoiachin, and to Judah and Ephraim on the night of destruction. For Unterman (Ibid, 11), while repentance is regards as "the spiritual act of the people's will," redemption is "the spiritual act of God's mercy" for restoration.

messages of grace and salvation are interweaving throughout the book.<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, Barton and Knight examine questions of morality and social life as the context of Jeremiah's messages.<sup>32</sup>

Some scholars particularly discuss the covenant which portrays God-people relationship, concluding that it is impossible to understand the book without the perception of the covenant which is the main theme to construct the whole book. Holladay views the covenant as the dominant motif penetrates through Jeremiah's understanding of himself, his God, and his message to Israel.<sup>33</sup> Martens talks about the objective of the covenant which is "intimacy with God."<sup>34</sup> Thompson understands the restoration of Judah based on Yahweh's new acts of grace and His ancient covenant relationship.<sup>35</sup> Brueggemann argues that the Sinai covenant is the governing paradigm for the Jeremiah tradition based on the obvious connections between Jeremiah and Deuteronomy as the classic expression of the Mosaic covenant.<sup>36</sup> Rom-Shiloni discusses the covenant in Jeremiah with the concept of its political and family metaphors.<sup>37</sup>

### 1.3. Covenant (בְּרִית *berith*) in the Bible

Covenant (בְּרִית *berith*) is the one of major themes in the Bible. All forms of the Hebrew *berith* are attested about 290 times in the Bible, not attested in Joel, Jonah, Mic, Nah, Zeph, Hag, and Megillot but frequently mentioned in Gen 27 times, Exod 13, Lev 10, Deut 27, Josh 22, 1-2 Kgs 27, 1-2 Chr 29, Ps 21, Isa 12, Jer 23, and Ezek 18.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Lundbom, 1992, 719-20. Lundbom (Ibid, p. 719) introduces many passages about grace and salvation: Yahweh's prior grace to Israel in Jeremiah's earliest preaching, Jeremiah's profound gratitude to Yahweh, Yahweh's grace to the exiles, a salvific word given to Baruch, salvation presented as an eschatological hope, calling to return to Zion, Zion's restoration, etc. Lundbom (Ibid, p. 720) makes an insightful implication of grace and salvation, saying, "Unlike judgment, divine grace and salvation do not require from Yahweh a reason; in fact, they most often come without a reason. It is entirely due to Yahweh's initiative that Israel can hope for national restoration, and also that a new covenant will be made where Yahweh's law will be written on people's hearts."

<sup>32</sup> Barton (1978, 44-64) radically engages in handling of the problems of interpreting comments on social and ethical matters to understand not only prophetic but Old Testament thought in general. Knight (1980, 87-105) clarifies the nature of the Jeremiah material by providing a survey of the categories of ethical thought.

<sup>33</sup> Holladay, 1989, 70-71. Holladay (Ibid, 15) distinctively observes Jeremiah's use of the verb *shuv* "(re)turn" in "covenantal contexts" where Israel or God expresses a change of loyalty to the other party.

<sup>34</sup> Martens (1986, 23-24) draws out the significance of the covenant formula, "I will be your God and you shall be my people."

<sup>35</sup> Thompson (1980, 114-16) discusses about Judah's royal-temple ideology with the concepts of God's sovereignty and pathos that Yahweh would not totally desert His people without a future hope.

<sup>36</sup> Brueggemann, 1988, 3. For Brueggemann (Ibid, 4-5), God's pathos and covenant are Jeremiah's theological platform; the pathos of God is set in tension with the curses of the Sinai covenant.

<sup>37</sup> Rom-Shiloni, 2015b, 155-71.

<sup>38</sup> HALOT, 1994, 157.

Covenant, according to *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, is defined as “an agreement enacted between two parties in which one or both make promises under oath to perform or refrain from certain actions stipulated in advance.”<sup>39</sup> Etymologically, it relates to many other meanings such as “the festive meal accompanying the covenantal ceremony,” “recuperation or convalescence,” “between, among,” “selecting,” and so on. However, it is most plausibly associated with the meaning “bond” related to “the Akkadian and Hittite terms for treaty”; this “bond” metaphor can be an expression to strengthen and validate the treaty.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, its etymological discussion maintains that it is the legal obligation to fasten the treaty as a bonding relationship between two parties.

### 1.3.1. Research Trends toward the Covenant

As the study of the covenant in biblical studies has been developed, the characteristics of the research have been changed. Since the seventeenth century, the study of covenant had become the central theme of the Bible.<sup>41</sup> In this period, the harmonization between the textual data on covenant and other theological constructs was the way to understand biblical covenants.<sup>42</sup>

Since the mid-twentieth century, a comparative attitude has been developed. The close relationship between the biblical covenants and treaty documents of the ancient Near East had been discovered, especially between some of the covenants recorded in the Bible and the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium Hittite treaty form.<sup>43</sup> Some scholars assert that biblical covenants need to be understood in light of the treaty documents of the ancient Near East.<sup>44</sup> There are two different views regarding understanding the Sinai covenant, focuses on the closeness between the Sinai covenant and the 2<sup>nd</sup>-millennium Hittite treaty as a mutually beneficial and satisfactory one or between the Sinai covenant and the 1<sup>st</sup>-millennium Assyrian treaties as loyalty oaths.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Mendenhall and Heroin, 1992, 1179.

<sup>40</sup> Weinfeld, *TDOT*, 1975, 254-55.

<sup>41</sup> Cocceius, 1648. The seminal work of Cocceius in 1648 was one of the beginnings to view covenant as the central theme of the Bible and became the basis for Covenant theology in the Reformed tradition.

<sup>42</sup> Niehaus, 2007, 259-73; Poythress, 1988, 139.

<sup>43</sup> Williamson, 2007, 24; Niehaus, 2009, 225.

<sup>44</sup> Weinfeld, 1972, 59-80; McCarthy, 1978, 51-52; Kalluveetil, 1982; Mendenhall and Herion, 1992, 1183, 1189; Haran, 1997, 203-19; Weeks, 2004, 38-50; Niehaus, 2008; *Ibid*, 2010, 535-559; *Ibid*, 2013, 249-71. The Hittite treaties as the suzerain-vassal treaties had to be based on a written document as it played a significant role in the religion of Israel; the relationship between God as king and Israel as vassal should be described in written form, i.e., the tablets of the covenant (Weinfeld, *TDOT*, 1975, 276). A treaty type of covenant is based on the political and legal relationship between God as king and Israel as vassal; God was conceived as king by the Israelites, as the belief that God is the real king of Israel was prevailing in ancient Israel (*Ibid*, 275).

<sup>45</sup> Mendenhall, 1954, 50-76; Hiller, 1969; Perliitt, 1972, 110-21; Nicholson, 1986. The former group believes that the Sinai *berit* related with the Hittite treaties is originally regarded as a covenant in the true sense of the word, not as an imposed obligation, while the latter one argues that the Sinai *berit* connected with the Assyrian treaties

### 1.3.2. Covenant Types

Scholars attempt to define the different covenant types according to covenant parties: the biblical covenants were made not only between persons but also between God and man.<sup>46</sup> Scofield develops his arguments upon the biblical covenants by focusing on the covenants between God and specific individuals which penetrate the whole Bible.<sup>47</sup> Hahn, in particular, presents the covenant with Abraham which corresponds to the three essential covenants in Israel's history such as "the formative covenant at Sinai, the second covenant on the Plains of Moab (i.e., Deuteronomy), and the Davidic covenants associated with Zion."<sup>48</sup> Relating to three covenants between Abraham and God in Genesis chapters 12–17, scholars like Boadt, North, Williamson, Coogan, and Hahn discuss the unique application of the covenant in the P source in comparison to the other sources.<sup>49</sup>

Some scholars discuss the definition of biblical covenants regarding the degree of commitment between two parties. While Köhler talks about a covenant between two people as a "partnership," an agreement voluntarily accepted by both parties,<sup>50</sup> scholars such as Vos, McCarthy, Kline, and Mendenhall and Herion understand a covenant between unequal partners

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traditionally means a loyalty oath as an imposed obligation. However, both of groups agree that there is a familiarity between the Sinai covenant and the international treaties, the Hittite and the Assyrian treaties, prevalent in biblical times (Herion, 2000, 291).

<sup>46</sup> The covenant between men is regarded as a treaty, constitution, agreement, alliance of friendship or "brotherly obligation" and relationship of marriage or "bond of matrimony"; coming to an agreement, granting an agreement to someone, entering into an agreement, accepting someone into a formal arrangement, and so on (*HALOT*, 157). The covenant between God and man emphasizes on "a divine constitution or ordinance with signs or pledges" to show that the kingship of God over the Israelites is based on the covenantal relationship between God and them (*ALHATORAH*, <http://mg.alhatorah.org/Dictionary/1285>).

<sup>47</sup> Scofield (2002) describes different covenants between God and Man regarding the relationship with the salvific plan of God: the Edenic (Gen 2:16), the Adamic (Gen 3:15), the Noahic (Gen 9:16), the Abrahamic (Gen 12:2), the Mosaic (Ex. 19:5), the Palestinian (Deut. 30:3), and the Davidic (2 S. 7:16) covenants.

<sup>48</sup> Hahn (2009, 101-35) focuses on the covenant with Abraham based on God's promises to Abraham (Gen 12:1-4) with three covenant making episodes between God and Abraham—nationhood (Gen 15), a great name (Gen 17), and blessing for all nations (Gen 22).

<sup>49</sup> North, 1993, 5. Boadt (1984, 103-105) states that P source, as the last great narrative source to supplement J and E sources, actually weaves "the themes of blessing, promise, covenant, the revelation of the divine name, and human response to God around the stories of the major patriarchal figures before Moses." Distinguishing three covenants between God and Abraham based on Jahwist, Elohist and Priestly sources, Coogan (2008, 62–68) argues that the covenant of circumcision in Gen 17 (P source) is conditional, while the covenants in Gen 12 (J source) and 15 (E source) are unconditional that God grants Abraham land and descendants without any stipulations. Williamson (2007, 89) regards the Genesis 17 covenant as a bilateral covenant on the contrary of the Genesis 15 covenant as a unilateral covenant. Hahn characterizes Gen 17 as a conditional suzerain–vassal type treaty (Hahn, 2009, 115) but Gen 15 as an unconditional grant type treaty (Ibid, 102).

<sup>50</sup> Köhler (1957, 61) presents a covenant between individual partners as an agreement or arrangement with one another Abraham and Abimelech (Gen 21:27), Laban and Jacob (Gen 31:44), Jonathan and David (1 Sam 23:18), and Solomon and Hiram (1 Kgs 5:12).

as obligatory and legal bondage between parties.<sup>51</sup> Interestingly, Hahn argues, “Covenants have not only legal but social, ethical, familial and cultic-liturgical aspects.”<sup>52</sup>

Pink, Brueggemann, and Kline distinguish the covenant of grace as an unconditional covenant from the covenant of works as a conditional one upon the requirement of personal obedience.<sup>53</sup> Weinfeld and Murray emphasize that a grant type of covenant like the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants is the royal grant with the unconditional nature of the gift.<sup>54</sup> In the meantime, Eichrodt and Kline try to make a balance between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.<sup>55</sup> However, Walton made a slightly different grouping by regarding the Noahic covenant as a common grace covenant and grouping all subsequent covenants together as one covenant.<sup>56</sup> Dumbrell and Hafemann also argue about God’s one covenant.<sup>57</sup>

### 1.3.3. The New Covenant

The term ‘a new covenant’ is only found in Jer 31:31 in the OT. The new covenant, according to Bright, von Rad, Nicholson, Carroll, Clements, and Brueggemann, has been regarded as one of the most insightful texts in the Bible.<sup>58</sup> Kaiser Jr., Fredrickson, and Gunn argue that many

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<sup>51</sup> Mendenhall (1992, 1179) describes that a covenant is “an agreement enacted between two parties in which one or both make promises under oath to perform or refrain from certain actions stipulated in advance.” According to Vos (1948, 32-33), a covenant is a legally binding obligation with the addition of a religious sanction. For Kline (1964, 17), a covenant is “a sovereign administration of the Kingdom of God” and “an administration of God’s lordship, consecrating a people to himself under the sanctions of divine law.”. Kline argues that the essence of covenant is an obligation which is a relationship under sanctions (Ibid, p. 3). McCarthy (1978, 54) claims that the Hebrew word *berith* (covenant) reflects the idea of a binding tie.

<sup>52</sup> Hahn, 2005, 285.

<sup>53</sup> Pink (1973, p11) divides covenants into the covenant of works made with Adam and the covenant of grace made between God and fallen humanity such as the Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and new covenants. Meredith G. Kline (2006) did a more nuanced reworking of this scheme. Brueggemann (1997, 418) makes a transition from the Abrahamic covenant to the Sinaitic covenant, claiming that the covenant made with Abraham is an unconditional covenant of divine initiative, but the covenant made at Sinai is a covenant of human obligation. <sup>54</sup> Weinfeld (*TDOT*, 1975, 270) maintains that a grant type of covenant is based on the promise through God’s faithfulness to fulfill His covenant from generation to generation; even when the Israelites sin against God, He intercedes to help them overcome their problems, because He will not withdraw His everlasting covenant (Lev. 26:44). Murray (1954, 31) defines a grant type of covenant as “a sovereign administration of grace and promise, arguing that it is not a ‘compact’ or ‘contract’ or ‘agreement’ which provides the constitutive or governing idea but that of ‘dispensation’ in the sense of disposition.”

<sup>55</sup> Kline (1964, 27) argues that when men swear to a binding obligation there arises a covenant of law, but that when God does there arises a covenant of grace. For Eichrodt (1961, 37), a covenant is being at once both grace and rule.

<sup>56</sup> Walton, 1994, 47.

<sup>57</sup> Dumbrell (1984, 42) focuses on the overarching unity in God’s purposes in creation with only one divine covenant. Hafemann (2007, 20–65) also emphasizes on God’s one covenant relationship with humanity.

<sup>58</sup> Nicholson (1970, 83) regards Jer 31:31-34 as the highest point of the OT. Bright (1965, 287), Clements (1988a, 189), Carroll (1986, 612), and Brueggemann (1998, 291) consider the text as one of the most profound prophecies in the Bible. Rad (1965, 212) towers it “above any previous prophetic prediction.”



passages in the OT imply the new covenant idea.<sup>59</sup> This fact motivates me to define the unique characteristics of the new covenant in the Book of Jeremiah. Fackenheim and Wolff made deeper attempts to consider this passage and its context in relation to Jewish-Christian discussion.<sup>60</sup>

Many biblical scholars have examined the meaning of the new covenant in relation to the Sinai covenant, wondering whether it is a new covenant or a renewed covenant. Some scholars—Childs, Anderson, von Rad, Potter, Wolff, Carroll, Hoch, McKane, Bozak, Keown, Pettegrew, Robinson, Lundbom, Adeyemi, and Kartveit—argue that the new covenant is authentically a new covenant, not a renewed old covenant, maintaining that the old covenant was really broken.<sup>61</sup> On the other hands, other scholars—Kline, Kaiser, Swetnam, Weinfeld, Lohfink, Rendtorff, Walton, Holmgren, Lewis, Otto, Rom-Shiloni, and Rossi—claim that the new covenant is a renewed covenant, focusing on the continuity between the new covenant and preceding covenants, that is, a renewal of the old covenant.<sup>62</sup> In this view, Hiller and Pettegrew

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<sup>59</sup> Kaiser (1972, 14) argues that the new covenant idea is widespread although Jer 31:31 is the only place in the OT for the phrase, “new covenant,” showing Bible passages based on similar content and contexts to the new covenant. Fredrickson (2010a, 97-126) proposes new covenant passages in the OT, such as Deut 30:1-6; Isa 32:9-20; Isa 42:1-7; Isa 49:1-13; Isa 59:15b-21; Jer 31:27-40; Jer 32:36-44; Ezek 16:53-63; Ezek 36:22-38; Ezek 37:21-28. He (2010b, 79-104) makes a comparison four different lists of the new covenant elements and passages in OT according to Walter Kaiser, Pierre Buis, John Master, and David Fredrickson. Gunn (2013, 37-77) proposes an overview of all the major texts referring to the new covenant with a preliminary evaluation on the passages.

<sup>60</sup> Wolff (1983, 49-62) presents the Jewish-Christian dialogue on Jer. 31:31-34. Fackenheim (1980, 191-205) did a much more radical exposition.

<sup>61</sup> Wolff, 1983, 53, 60; Bozak, 1991, 118; Carroll, 1993, 68; Hoch, 1995, 105; McKane, 1993, 232; *Ibid.*, 1996, 818; Keown, 1995, 130-31; Robinson, 2001, 187-89; Kartveit, 2018, 167. Childs (1960, 79-80) argues that newness in the Old Testament is both new in time and new in quality. “The new covenant . . . is not simply a renewal of the Sinai covenant as occurred in the yearly festivals.” Anderson (1963, 231) says, “But Jeremiah’s oracle cannot be understood as reactualization of the past sacred history. He speaks of a new covenant, not a covenant renewal, and thereby assumes a radical break with the Mosaic tradition.” Rad (1965, 212) states, “What is important and towers right above any previous prediction, lies in the prophecy of a new covenant which Jahweh intends to make with Israel. This is clearly something quite different from Jahweh’s saying that days were coming when he would again remember his covenant which he made with Israel. No, the old covenant is broken, and in Jeremiah’s view Israel is altogether without one. What is all important is that there is no attempt here—as there was, for example, in Deuteronomy—to re-establish Israel on the old bases. The new covenant is entirely new, and in one essential feature it is to surpass the old [that is that Jahweh is to give his people a heart to know Him (Jer 24:7)].” Potter (1983, 350) writes, “The whole point of these verses is that they are a deliberate contrast to Deuteronomy, not a complement to it, or a restatement of it.” Pettegrew (1999, 253) argues that the new covenant is a new covenant, “not a renewed old covenant,” as Jeremiah 31:32 implies that it will not be like the Mosaic Covenant: newness in the Old Testament means “both new in time and new in quality.” Adeyemi (2006, 319) claims that the meaning of the Hebrew adjective שָׁרָן is not “renewed” but “new, fresh,” while the piel form of the verb שָׁרָן sometimes means “to renew” and its hithpael form does “to be renewed.” Lundbom (2004, 466) argues about a new beginning in the divine-human relationship through the new covenant. “Although this new covenant will have admitted continuity with the Sinai covenant, it will still be a genuinely new covenant, one that marks a new beginning in the divine-human relationship because 1) it is given without conditions; 2) it will be written in the hearts of people in a way the Sinai covenant was not (v 33); and 3) it will be grounded in a wholly new act of divine grace, i.e., the forgiveness of sins (v 34).”

<sup>62</sup> Kline, 1968, 53-75; Swetnam, 1974, 112-15; Weinfeld, 1976, 17-56; Lohfink 1991, 45; Rendtorff, 1993, 198; Holmgren, 1999, 75-95; Lohfink, 2003, 48; Otto, 2006, 947; Rom-Shiloni, 2015b, 170-71; Rossi, 2018, 202-25. Lewis (2002, 56) says, “The New Covenant not only enlarges and fulfills all the promises of the Abrahamic

maintain that the covenant in the Bible is everlasting and irrevocable based on the promise of faithful and sovereign God.<sup>63</sup>

There are arguments regarding whether covenant confirms an existing relationship between two parties or creates a new relationship between them. While Dumbrell and Hafemann both affirm that the idea of covenant ratifies an existing relationship between the parties,<sup>64</sup> Niehaus asserts that a covenant brings about a new relationship,<sup>65</sup> which is also accepted by Hahn and Williamson.<sup>66</sup>

#### **1.4. Thesis Structure**

This thesis discusses the meaning of covenant in general, and the ‘new covenant’ in particular, in the context of the book as a whole. In the introduction chapter, I reviewed the book regarding its historical context, textual background, composition and authorship, structure, and central issues as well as covenants in the Bible regarding research trends toward covenant, covenant type, and the new covenant.

The central part of my thesis is divided into nine chapters, each chapter analyzes one of the nine units containing the term ‘covenant’ in the book and, therefore, separately relevant to the discussion. Each unit has its distinctive context regarding covenant type, tidings, initiator, speaker, addressee, and so on. This analysis can firstly clarify the various characteristics the term covenant can contain within the context of the Book of Jeremiah. Secondly it helps me to

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Covenant, but also supersedes the Mosaic Covenant (the Law).” According to Kaiser (1972, 17), the new covenant is a renewed covenant as being “new in time and renewed in nature.” He (Ibid, 21) also claims that “the new covenant is a continuation of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants with the same sing, promise doctrine sustained in them all.” He (Ibid., 1974, 307) regards the various biblical covenants as a beautiful covenant tapestry; God is weaving each new covenant into the fabric of the former covenants throughout the OT. Walton (1994, 60-61) argues that the old and the new covenants as one covenant overlap and are consistent with each other, stating, “I would propose that there is one covenant in two major stages, Old and New. The former is articulated in phases that are linked, yet distinct. The purpose of this one covenant is to serve as a mechanism for God’s self-revelation. That purpose is expressed in the original proclamation of the covenant in terms of Abraham and his family serving as instruments of God’s blessing on the world.”

<sup>63</sup> Pettegrew (1999, 254) argues, “According to the prophets, the New Covenant, once inaugurated, would be an everlasting covenant (Jer 32:40; cf. Isa 55:3; 61:8; Ezek 16:60; 37:26). God began His marvelous covenant program with a series of promises to Abraham and his heirs”. Regarding the covenant rite in Gen. 15, Hiller (1969, 103) says, “What makes this ancient account eerily impressive is the bold way in which it depicts Yahweh as swearing to Abraham. Abraham makes all the preparations for a covenant ceremony; he splits up animals and arranges the parts for the swearing of an oath. Then he falls asleep, and Yahweh, as a smoking oven and a flaming torch, passes between the parts. The author is discreet; he does not flatly say that Yahweh invokes a curse on himself. But the vision he has related makes the literal restatement unnecessary, and the imagination of the reader can supply: “Just as this heifer is cut up, so may I. . . .”

<sup>64</sup> Dumbrell, 1984, 16–20; Hafemann, 2007, 30–34.

<sup>65</sup> Niehaus (2009, 234) describes that “a covenant establishes a new relationship, although on the basis of some historical background of relationship between the covenanting parties.”

<sup>66</sup> Hahn, 2009, 5– 6; Williamson, 2007, 39.

better understand the unique characteristics of the new covenant unit (31:31-34). Above that, it can also show an organic and dynamic process of covenant terms in the book. After discussing every unit by itself, while emphasizing its individual characteristics, the conclusion chapter defines the process that these units create during the book. As a result, it can reveal a structure of the book based on the process between these units: the individual covenant unit does not only stand by itself but rather becomes a unique part of the beautiful covenant tapestry of the book. Furthermore, the centrality of the new covenant unit (31:31-34) is distinctively disclosed among other covenant units. Through the interpretation of all the covenant units, this thesis examines the various meanings of the covenant in the book, and the process created between the units that can decipher the meaning of the new covenant in the current structure of the units. In short, the new covenant concept is evidently revealed and enhanced by the structure and the process.

In sum, this thesis on the new covenant in Jer 31:31-34 consists three main parts: (1) an introduction, which concludes the problem statement and thesis objectives as well as reviews on the book and the biblical covenant, thesis structure, methodology, and justification, (2) the body part as a literary analysis, which interpretes all the covenant units of the book for the organic process of the covenant in the book, and (3) a conclusion, which presents an overall view of the study and a review of the major conclusions.

### **1.5. Methodology**

Based on the research that had been done on the Book of Jeremiah in general and the covenant in the book in particular as well as the lacunas that have been left, this thesis makes plausible arguments accordingly. In order to achieve the aim of the thesis, as elaborated above, it uses the following methods.

As abovementioned, there is a significant variation between the LXX and the MT of the book,<sup>67</sup> but textual criticism between the different versions will not be considered here. This thesis follows scholars like Driver, Craigie, Rofé, Lundbom, and Kessler who claim that the MT Jeremiah as the original arrangement is a coherent composition.<sup>68</sup> Like scholars, such

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<sup>67</sup> Tov, 1981, 145-67; Rofé, 1989, 396-98; Tov, 1992, 319-27; Keck, 2001, 557; Sweeney, 2010, 94.

<sup>68</sup> Kessler, 2004, 13. Rofé (1997, 43) insists, "The MT arrangement is the original one, whereas the LXX version discloses a secondary intervention and editing which was not introduced in all MSS." Some other scholars, such as Driver (1889, 333-36), Lundbom (1999, 57-62), and Craigie, also claims about the superiority of the Masoretic Text. Craigie (1991, xliii) says, "one could hardly but agree with the principle of accepting the primacy of the Hebrew text, for in many places the LXX represent a thoroughly inadequate translation of the Hebrew original."

as Thompson, Bennett, Carroll, Holladay, Rosenberg, Patterson, and Rofé,<sup>69</sup> it makes a synchronic analysis of the book.

For the interpretation of the ‘covenant units’ of the book, this thesis uses ‘Literary Criticism’ approach focusing on “the literature as such—the artistry and interrelationships within the biblical text as we have it, regardless of how it came to be.”<sup>70</sup> It can help the study of all the covenant units of the book, providing the literal sense of each unit separated from its historical layers.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, the literary criticism is implemented for the discussion based on the clarification of all the covenant units in the book.

While analyzing the literary aspects of the units, this thesis uses specifically the tools of ‘Close Reading’ method. Close reading as the careful interpretation of texts serves, first and foremost, to analyze the covenant units as they stand for themselves.<sup>72</sup> It thus helps, on the next step, to define the whole process: each covenant unit works with its distinctive context within the organic process of covenant terms in the book, so the small parts of text clues help to understand the whole.

While interpreting each prophetic unit, the initial step is to clarify the main subject and ideas of the unit and define the literary means, paying attention to the wording and formulation of the verses expressed in the unit. Furthermore, it is very crucial to move on interpreting it as part of the whole book. It is fundamental to read the text as an independent pericope not only with its immediate context but also in light of the prophetic book’s or its author’s worldview penetrated throughout the whole book.<sup>73</sup>

The synchronic method deals with each text as a closed system based on a single stage of time, as well as focusing on logical connections between texts without considering the

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<sup>69</sup> Thompson, 1980; Bennett, 1981, 19-75; Carroll, 1986; Holladay, 1986, 1989; Rosenberg, 1987, 184-206; Patterson, 1989, 109-31; Rofé, 1989, 390-98.

<sup>70</sup> McKenzie (2010, 26) explains two basic kinds of academic methods of Bible study, diachronic as historical-critical and synchronic as literary-critical, saying that the diachronic method which is concerned with the relationship of the biblical materials to history attempts to trace the development of the biblical literature through time, while synchronic method focuses on “the literature as such - the artistry and interrelationships within the biblical text as we have it, regardless of how it came to be.” See also: Powell, 1992, 18.

<sup>71</sup> Barr (1973, 20-21) defines literary criticism as “a study of the structures and the imagery of works, their modes, symbols and myths, their poetic, dramatic and aesthetic effect,” distinguished from “historically different layers in composite works, the history of the tradition during the period of its development in written form, as distinct from its development in a spoken form before it was written down.”

<sup>72</sup> Watson and Hauser (1993, 4) claim that close reading focuses on the particular over the general and helps to understand “how the literary conventions used in ancient Israel were given particular shape and content in order to convey a specific, unique message.”

<sup>73</sup> Zimran, 2020, 181-83.

changes through time.<sup>74</sup> Through the synchronic analysis of the MT Jeremiah, this thesis can examine the book as a coherent composition and structure of its current form and also investigate literary unity across many parts of the book for the synthetic relation of the new covenant in 31:31-34 to the book as a whole. ‘The book as a whole’ method is used to analyze processes created through units which are considered by their wider literary connections in the book as a whole,<sup>75</sup> so this process can serve to interpret the units within the comprehensive context of the whole book from “increasingly widening perspectives.”<sup>76</sup> Since this thesis intends to analyze the process that emerges from the connections between the ‘covenant units’, this approach is also utilized. Therefore, the significance of the units is revealed by examining the book’s intention to communicate as well as by considering the literary context of the book for the coherence between each unit and the whole book in terms of the covenant theme.

## **1.6. Justification**

As mentioned above, many scholars have discussed the ‘new covenant,’ which is intended to stand at the core of this thesis. Some of them have discussed the meaning of the new covenant in 31:31-34 based on the comparison between the old covenant and the new covenant, while some have defined the characteristics of the new covenant based on the exegetical study within 31:31-34 or the Book of Consolation (Jer 30-31), as elaborated above. These researches are meaningful and insightful. However, the new covenant has not been fully examined by the perspective penetrated throughout the whole book. Without discussing the passage 31:31-34 from ‘the book as a whole’ point of view, in addition to a literary analysis of the unit in its isolation, the literary angle can overlook what the book intends to communicate through the new covenant passage. Therefore, the connection between the new covenant unit and the rest of the covenant units in the book should be analyzed, and the relationship between the conceptions of ‘new covenant’ and the other covenants must be explored. In other words, the new covenant unit must be examined in light of the structure of the whole book.

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<sup>74</sup> Saussure (1986, 98) states that synchronic linguistics regards “logical and psychological connexions between coexisting items constituting a system, as perceived by the same collective consciousness.”

<sup>75</sup> For example: Clements, 1988b, 190-92. Clements (Ibid, 192) argues that “once the basis of interpretation of a passage is lifted beyond the question of its historical point of origin and its wider literary connections are considered, then its meaning becomes much clearer.”

<sup>76</sup> According to Zimran (2020, 181), “the best way in which to read a prophetic unit is from increasingly widening perspectives, the clear line of demarcation between which presents them as alternative hermeneutic bases—from the prophetic pericope, to the immediate context, to all the prophecies attributed to the prophet under discussion, to the book as a whole, and to later prophecies that make use of this unit.”

Based on this way of thought, this thesis can shed a new light on the structure definition of the book. Since the structure of MT Jeremiah is complicated due to its unclear chronology and topic, there are various attempts to analyze the structure, as I have elaborated above. This thesis helps to support the ‘symmetrical structure’ definition from the covenant point of view, as well as to develop the covenant perspective through the symmetrical formation.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> As I already mentioned in the structure review above, Rosenberg (1987, 190-93) shows the symmetrical pattern of the whole book and, in particular, Jeremiah 20-40 with “Book of Consolation” (30-31) as the center of the symmetrical structure.

## 2. Literary Analysis on the Covenant Units

The term covenant contains diverse meanings in the Hebrew Bible, as exemplified above. Since each develops a different theme and aim, it is crucial to clarify the meanings the term contains within the Book of Jeremiah and as part of its overall contents. This clarification, which will be held through a detailed analysis of each of the nine covenant units in the book, 31:31-34 (MT 31:30-33) included, will help to present the covenant's character in each unit and the meaning of the new covenant in chapter 31. Since 31:31-34 discusses the making of a new covenant, it is essential to confirm what is considered as the 'old covenant' in the book, what the consequences of this new covenant are, and why it is needed to make a new covenant. All of that will help me to understand the unit and its contents themselves in a better way.

In the following chapters, I will present a detailed analysis of each unit of the nine covenant units, 31:31-34 in particular, in the Book of Jeremiah. Through this analysis, I will be able to demonstrate the meaning of each unit and discuss the process created between the units and the process the nation undergoes alongside the covenant. Therefore, the sequential reading of the units will enable an understanding of the new covenant unit from the perspective of the book as a whole to show the connection between the new covenant unit and all the other covenant units and represent the meaning of the new covenant within the process.

### 2.1. Jer 3:12-18

#### 2.1.1. Introduction

The unit describes that the two sisters, apostate Israel and faithless Judah, are called for returning which leads to restoration in Zion (Jerusalem).<sup>1</sup> Although the unit mentions both Israel and Judah, it seems that the recipient of the prophecy is Judah. The fate of the northern kingdom is shown as a negative example to the Southern to demonstrate that Judah's current behavior is leading to the same historical destiny. However, the treacherous Judah ignored this lesson and stood condemned for not returning.<sup>2</sup>

God urgently calls for Judah's return שׁוּבוּ בָּנִים שׁוֹכְבִים, not only through the negative example of apostate Israel but also based on the marriage relationship with her people- אֶנְכִי-אֶרְוֶן בְּרִית יְהוָה- and then promises Judah's restoration without the ark of His covenant בְּעֶלְתֵי בָרָךְ. The unit employs a literary device of comparison between the ark of God's covenant and

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<sup>1</sup> Thompson, 1980, 197; Lundbom, 1999, 305.

<sup>2</sup> Thompson, 1980, 197.

Jerusalem as God's throne to emphasize the theme and the covenant's character, arguing that the ark of God's covenant will be replaced by Jerusalem as the throne of God (הַכֹּסֶם יְהוָה) for Judah's restoration. Regarding the relationship between the theme of Judah's return and the covenant, the relationship between the northern kingdom Israel (v. 12) and the ark of God's covenant contrasts with the one between the southern kingdom Judah (v. 14) and the throne of God. As Israel rebelled against God by disobeying His commandments, the ark of God's covenant embodies the covenant's conditional character which demands obedience. Nevertheless, Jerusalem as God's throne represents God's eternal character since God unconditionally promises Judah's restoration without demanding her obedience. God Himself guarantees the promise of Judah's restoration. While Israel's hopeless fate came from her disobeying the covenant, Judah's future restoration depends on God's unconditional promise.

In this chapter, I will argue that the threat of the nation's calamity is based on the conditional covenant while the nation's hope is based on God's eternal promise by clarifying the relationship between the nation's fate and the covenant.

### 2.1.2. Boundary Justification

The unit can be divided into two sub-units: vv. 12-13 and vv. 14-18.<sup>3</sup> Israel is depicted as a legitimate warning (vv. 12-13) to Judah in order to command Judah's return and highlight God's concrete promise for Judah's restoration in Zion (vv. 14-18). God indeed focuses on Judah's return and restoration through the lesson of Israel's fate.

Israel's Fate as a Lesson	vv. 12-13
God's Call for Judah's Return and God's Promise for Judah's Restoration	vv. 14-18

In this process, God is represented as forgiving sins and making an unconditional and eternal covenant with His covenant people. Furthermore, the unit offers a fuller picture of the covenant in which all the nations will be also included.

The unit is developed based on the idea of the covenantal relationship to embody the theme of Judah's return and restoration. The root verb שׁוּב (vv. 12, 14) enhances the coherence of the unit with its different nuances in representing the intimate relationships between God and His people.<sup>4</sup> God's oracle in the first sub-unit employs the word שׁוּבָה in v. 12 to emphasize God's solemn warning to the northern kingdom as their relationship with God was already

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 197-204; Carroll, 1981, 146-51; McKane, 1986, 69-77; Craig et al., 1991, 56-61; Lundbom, 1999, 309-16.  
<sup>4</sup> Craig, 1991, 55.



broken because of their unfaithfulness—*your iniquity* עֲוֹנֶיךָ, *you have transgressed and have scattered* פָּשַׁעְתָּ וַתִּפְזְרִי, and *have not obeyed* לֹא שָׁמַעְתָּם (v. 13).<sup>5</sup> The second sub-unit begins with the word שׁוּבוּ in v. 14 to express God’s desperate heart for Judah; God promises the return of His covenant people Judah to Himself and their prosperity in Zion—and *I will bring* וְהִבֵּאתִי (v. 14), and *I will give* וְנָתַתִּי (v. 15), *you are multiplied and increased* תִּרְבוּ וּפְרִיתֶם (v. 16), *shall be gathered* וְנִקְוּוּ (v. 17), and *and they shall come together* וְיָבֵאוּ יַחְדָּו (v. 18). The broken relationship between God and Israel serves to accentuate the renewed relationship between God and Judah as well as the future restoration of Judah. The word שׁוּב in the unit is an allegorical expression for Judah’s return to God and Zion. In short, the unit is interestingly built up within the opposite sceneries of Israel and Judah. Israel’s doomed fate as a lesson plays a critical role to reinforce God’s call for Judah’s return and God’s promise for Judah’s restoration.

### 2.1.3. God’s Call for Return, שׁוּבוּ בְּנֵי שׁוֹכְבִים

God calls Judah through the fate of the northern kingdom Israel. The incident that God assures Israel of His mercy (v. 12) is used as God’s intention for summoning Judah to return. God urges the backslidden Israel to come back, *Return, faithless Israel* שׁוּבָה מִשְׁכָּבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל (v. 12).<sup>6</sup> The word *return* שׁוּב here has a meaning beyond a geographical significance—return from exile; it contains a prior reference to forgiveness and reconciliation.<sup>7</sup> God passionately appeals that they return to Him thoroughly and sincerely, showing His faithfulness (v. 12). Although obedience that leads to blessing is a basic requirement for God’s covenant people, Israel neither heard His words nor committed herself to the words in obedience (v. 13); God refers to Israel’s wrongdoing that she had rebelled (פָּשַׁעַת) against God and lavished her favors on foreign gods under every green tree.<sup>8</sup> They turned from the path of true faith and pursued the ways to the idol worship, running into the opposite direction from the covenant faith, a way of obedience to the divine voice which springs from the loving heart of the covenant relationship.<sup>9</sup> Apostate

<sup>5</sup> The broken marriage relationship is revealed through the divorce idea in vv. 12-13 (McKane, 1986, 68).

<sup>6</sup> Thompson, 1980, 200. Three oracles in vv. 12-13 call sympathetically for Israel to return to God (Lundbom, 1999, 309), reaffirming His faithfulness in v. 12, כִּי חָסִיד אָנֹכִי וְנָאֵם יְהוָה לֹא אֶטְוֹר לְעוֹלָם, and urging Northern Israel to confess their guilt and rebellion against God in v. 13 (Lundbom, 1999, 311). Interestingly, there is a word play in the phrase “שׁוּבָה מִשְׁכָּבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל”; the consecutive words “שׁוּבָה return” and “מִשְׁכָּבָה turned-away, faithless” which have the same root are forms of the verb שׁוּב (Lundbom, 1999, 310). Craig (1991, 55) also argues that “מִשְׁכָּבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל” means Israel’s turning from God to wickedness. Therefore, the word מִשְׁכָּבָה can rhetorically accentuate the meaning of the previous word שׁוּבָה.

<sup>7</sup> McKane, 1986, 70. Holland (1986, 118) also argues that the word “return, שׁוּב” refers to a return to God, that is, repentance and also implies geographical return from exile and “return in loyalty from political and cultic schism,” a reunion of the north and the south in loyalty to Jerusalem.

<sup>8</sup> Thompson, 1980, 201.

<sup>9</sup> Craig et al., 1991, 57-58.

Israel, guilty in her own right, is an allegorical entity as a rhetorical device designed to enable the turn towards Judah. This allegory presents God's earnest call for Judah as a comparative warning in the face of the text's explicit rejection of Judah.<sup>10</sup>

God's urgent call to Judah's return **שׁוּבוּ כְּנִים שׁוֹכְבִים** is based on the intimate relationship between God and Judah (v. 14). Now God is calling Judah for a prompt reaction of returning. While the call for Israel is used allegorically, the call for Judah here is realistic and imminent at present. Since the content of v. 14 raises the possibility that the imperative "שׁוּבוּ" has a physical meaning of coming back to Zion and mentions no further action from their side, it seems that repentance is not a condition for this renewed relationship. Therefore, the word **שׁוּבוּ** here implies that God does not require repentance **תְּשׁוּבָה** but just demands the people of Judah to return to God in terms of the relational meaning. Interestingly, it is followed by the verb **בָּעַל** "to be master (husband, lord)" in v. 14; the sovereign Lord of the covenant calls Israel to be His servant in the setting of the covenant.<sup>11</sup> God, who is the only true master **בָּעַל** to Judah (v. 14), will bring the exiles of Judah back to Zion and also the north back into unity with the south (v. 18).<sup>12</sup> As for a marriage metaphor, God's marriage to Judah reveals the exclusive and pure relationship between God and His people.<sup>13</sup> Although the treacherous Judah does not deserve the marital relationship with her holy husband, God declares, **אֲנֹכִי בָּעַלְתִּי בְכֶם**. Whether **בָּעַל** refers to master or husband, this phrase implies that Judah is no longer bound to any other gods which had taken them away from the true covenant faith.<sup>14</sup> God desperately wants the sole relationship with Judah. God will not keep His anger forever but will show His mercy. The gracious invitation to Judah's return comes from God's covenant character such as His perpetual love and kindness.

#### **2.1.4. God's Promise**

The unit not only contains a call, but rather also a promise. The future promise in verses 14-18, "the first hope-centered oracles" in the book, is explicitly described with concrete pictures for restoration, a renewal of the marriage relationship and a restoration of good government in

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<sup>10</sup> Shields, 2004, 79, 86-87; Ibid., 83 n. 40.

<sup>11</sup> Thompson, 1980, 201.

<sup>12</sup> Holland, 1986, 120.

<sup>13</sup> Crouch, 2020, 594.

<sup>14</sup> Craig et al., 1991, 60. There are several verses in the Book of Jeremiah (2:2; 3:1-2, 6-8, 10-14; 31:32) to represent the nation married to God. Especially, Jer 3 expresses the marital relationship between God and Israel through the words such as **נָגִית** (v. 1), **בְּנִימְיָהּ** (v. 2), **נִתְנָה** (v. 6), **גֹּאֲפָה**, **כִּרְיִיתֶיהָ**, **גֹּאֲפָה**, and **נִתְנָה** (v. 8).

Zion.<sup>15</sup> The promise for Judah in vv. 14ff is not dependent on their deeds but rather on God's will. Urging Judah to end their rebellion (שׁוֹבְבוּ בְּנִים שׁוֹבְבִים) with an affirmation that He is their true Lord (אֲנֹכִי בַּעֲלֵתִי בְכֶם), God promises them a return to Zion (צִיּוֹן וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם).<sup>16</sup> On the days of restoration, God will replace the unfaithful shepherds with His own faithful ones. This new line of kings would *rule* (רָעָה, “shepherd, pasture”) people with knowledge and understanding; the faithful leaders after God's heart, not their own, will look after their citizens properly with true insights (v.15).<sup>17</sup>

Within the prophetic context of the exile of Judah, God promises to plant the seed of hope in the hopeless people (vv. 16-18).<sup>18</sup> In particular, the picture of the days of restoration is enlarged by material prosperity (וְהָיָה כִּי תִרְבּוּ וּפְרִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ בְּיָמֵים הַהֵמָּה) and true religion (לֹא יֵאמְרוּ לֹא יְהִי עוֹד אֲרוֹן בְּרִית יְהוָה) in v. 16.<sup>19</sup> It represents the measure of restoration and also indicates the next period of redemption; after calling them, their prospective return to Zion will be necessary to increase their population in the land, and Jerusalem will be כְּפֶסַח יְהוָה. God assures them of religious revolution that *the ark of the covenant* אֲרוֹן בְּרִית יְהוָה will no longer be needed (v. 16). The ark, as the most sacred object in the Temple's holy of holies, seems to be the throne of God in this specific unit.<sup>20</sup> However, *at that time* בְּעֵת הַהִיא (v. 17) of the restoration, Jerusalem will be called as *the throne of God* כְּפֶסַח יְהוָה (v. 17) instead of the ark of God's covenant.<sup>21</sup> Jerusalem community adorned with righteousness and wisdom, which depends wholly on God, is a more glorious throne for God than the cherubim and the ark.<sup>22</sup> God will be enthroned in the hearts of His people who trust in Him, as the ark of the covenant would not enter people's mind (וְלֹא יִעָלֶה עַל לֵב) v. 16) but be disappeared and forgotten.<sup>23</sup> Abandoned Jerusalem will

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.; Lundbom, 1999, 309. The verses affirm that one day God's people in exile will return to Zion, and the whole nation Israel will be reunited by presenting the pictures of a return to Zion, the reunification of the whole nation Israel, the new rulers with wisdom and understanding, the replacement of the ark of the covenant with God's own presence in Jerusalem, and the renewal of worship in Zion (Thompson, 1980, 199; Crouch, 2020, 596).

<sup>16</sup> Lundbom, 1999, 315

<sup>17</sup> Thompson, 1980, 202.

<sup>18</sup> Lundbom, 1999, 316.

<sup>19</sup> Thompson, 1980, 202.

<sup>20</sup> Eichler (2021: 150-51) argues that “[t]he temple is not the locus of divine presence at all, but merely the focus of divine attention,” introducing other portrayals of God's throne beyond the temple; Jerusalem constitutes God's throne, the throne is observed in Chaldea (Ezek 1:3; 3:23), an animate supernatural creature such as living beings הַיּוֹת (Ezek 1:1-3:14) accompanies the throne, heaven is His throne (Isa 66:1; Ps 103:19), and law (Ps 9:8) or justice and law (Pss 89:15; 97:2) is the very foundation of the throne. He (Ibid., 151) continues to claim that even heaven cannot really contain God based on the theology of the Prayer of Solomon (1 Kgs 8:27; 2 Chr 6:18).

<sup>21</sup> Craig et al., 1991, 61.

<sup>22</sup> McKane, 1986, 74.

<sup>23</sup> Haran (1963, 46-58) claims that the ark did not exist throughout much of the monarchic period, arguing that the disappearance of the ark had already occurred by Manasseh. However, Eichler (2021, 8) asserts that this assumption has no positive evidence to defend it and has difficulty to contend with some exceptions raised from a recent discussion about the ultimate fate of the ark (see Day 2005: 250-270). Weinfeld (1976, 23) dates verses

become a center to worship God, and God’s people, including all nations, would be united once again. All nations will be gathered in Jerusalem to worship the name of God **שֵׁם יְהוָה** and be transformed by walking away from the stubbornness of their evil heart **שָׁרְרוּת לִבָּם הָרַע** (v. 17).<sup>24</sup> Lundbom explicitly describes a vivid picture of the holistic restoration and transformation of His people in Zion.

Returnees will become fruitful, and life in the land will be made anew. The ark will be gone, and Jerusalem will now be Yahweh’s throne. There need be no nostalgic remembrances of the ark, nor should people think of remaking it. To Yahweh’s expanded throne will come an expanded people—one that includes Gentiles. The covenant people will no longer be stubbornly evil. In conclusion, it is stated once again that both Israel and Judah will return to the land promised to their fathers.<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, God’s anointing presence will be upon the Jerusalem community, and all the nations will also stream to Jerusalem.<sup>26</sup> Jerusalem as **כְּסֵא יְהוָה** will become a symbol for a new period when the ark is not needed. Since the absence of the ark is not taken as a testimony of loss and exile anymore, Jerusalem as **כְּסֵא יְהוָה** is undoubtedly a part of symbols for an everlasting covenant.

God ensures that Judah will physically restore the united kingdom *in those days* **בַּיָּמִים הַהֵמָּה** (v. 18) which refers to the time after Judah will undergo exile.<sup>27</sup> It seems like a return to the days of David and Solomon—especially, 1 Kgs 8, which describes the key moment of the Temple dedication, embodies the willingness that everyone, even the foreigner who does not belong to the people of Israel, can come to Jerusalem and pray toward the temple. The restoration of the kingdom given to Judah is depicted as a vivid picture with the splendid anticipation that the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel and return together from the places of their exile to the promised land in order to reoccupy the land (v. 18). Thompson portrays this reunification as follows.

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16-17 to the reign of Josiah. Lundbom (1999, 316) argues that it is best to date the oracle of vv. 16-18 around the time of Jerusalem’s destruction since the ark being replaced is mentioned in this oracle. Thomson (1980, 203) claims that “if the text implies that the Ark was no longer in existence, then the original words of v. 16 should be dated either to the days of Zedekiah or shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.” Bright (1965, 27) states that verses 16-18 were probably added after 587.

<sup>24</sup> Jeremiah looks forward to a transformation of all nations as God will be also enthroned in all the nations (v. 17). It is a covenant neither with Judah nor Israel, but rather with all nations, which is something new that is not grounded in the special connection between Israel and their God.

<sup>25</sup> Lundbom, 1999, 316.

<sup>26</sup> Isaiah describes that God’s enthronement is above the ark in His earthly temple (Isa 6:1). However, “in the last days **יְהוָה בְּאַהֲרִית הַיָּמִים**” Jerusalem will become the God’s appointed place under His sovereignty, so that many people from the nations will also join this spiritual movement in Jerusalem (Isa 2:2-5). **וְנִקְוּ אֵלָיָה גּוֹיִם רַבִּים** can be depicted as a variation of **וְנִהְרָו אֵלָיָה עַמִּים** from Isa 2.

<sup>27</sup> Thompson, 1980, 203.

In the days of the united monarchy, Zion (Jerusalem) was the symbol of unity both of the state and the cult. When the North returned to Zion, the whole of Israel would again be united and in place of rival sanctuaries there would be one. The external indications of division would then be removed and there would be one people, and one Lord.<sup>28</sup>

Restoring the land of Judah will be fulfilled because of God's faithful and everlasting promise to His people. Jeremiah looks forward to seeing Judah's victorious return to the land that God gave for an inheritance to their forefathers.

### **2.1.5. Conclusion**

This unit is not a description of making a covenant but rather a description of its consequence. It foresees the renewed relationship between Judah and God and what will happen afterwards thank to God's action.

God wishes the faithless covenant partner Judah to come back home, so He urges adamantly Judah to return. God wills to provide the momentum for their restoration after devastation.<sup>29</sup> They will not need the ark of the covenant in order to represent their new connection with God. Instead, in days to come, Jerusalem will replace the ark and be called as the throne of God (כִּסֵּא יְהוָה), and even all the nations will be gathered to Jerusalem and worship יְהוָה. Indeed, Jerusalem as כִּסֵּא יְהוָה embodies part of God's work and part of the eternal covenant. Furthermore, the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel and return together to Zion. In this unit, God is explicitly characterized as One who enthusiastically embraces Judah's return, fulfilling His promise of Judah's physical and spiritual restoration, including a promise for Israel and nations.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 202.

<sup>29</sup> Brueggemann, 2007, 84.

## 2.2. Jer 11:1-17

### 2.2.1. Introduction

Jer 11, that stands within the larger context of Jer 11:1-28:17,<sup>1</sup> depicts Jeremiah's preaching on the broken covenant (11:1–17) as well as the conspiracy and threat of his fellow townsmen, the men of Anathoth (11:18–23).<sup>2</sup> The unit (11:1-17), Jeremiah's preaching to the people of Judah and Jerusalem, accuses that the house of Judah has broken the covenant made between God and their forefathers at the time of the national deliverance of Israel from Egypt. It also shows that God will bring the divine judgment upon them because of the stubbornness of their evil hearts (v. 8).

The indictment toward the nation in the unit is very straightforward and heavy. The previously analyzed unit, 3:12-18, deliberately threatened Judah by reminding Israel's fate and even gently persuaded Judah to return to God by showing God's promise of Judah's restoration. However, starting to mention the covenant curse, this unit acidly charges that they have refused to hear God's word, turned back to the iniquities of their forefather, and turned away from God by following other gods to serve them, claiming that the judgment is a result of the covenant violation. As the unit has five references of the covenant, such as *this covenant* הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת (vv. 2, 3, 6, 8) and *my covenant* בְּרִיתִי (v. 10), the successive reading of its context makes an impression that the covenant they have broken is the very Sinai covenant made with their fathers despite the time gap between the two covenants. The reason for the broken covenant and the consequence of the covenant breach are described specifically through repeated keywords, such as *שמע*, *בְּרִית*, *עֲשָׂה*, *אָבוֹת*, *רָעָה*, and *לְקַטֵּר לְבַעַל*. All that Judah has done are against God and His covenant, such as disobedience *וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ*, conspiracy *קִשְׁר*, idolatry *אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים*, *לְעַבְדָּם*, and lewdness *הַמְזֻמָּתָה*. The covenant relationship between God and them seems to be totally crashed because of their breaking the covenant. God will not only leave them in a disaster as the covenant curse that they cannot escape but also refuse to listen to their crying prayers *אֵינֶנִּי שֹׁמֵעַ בְּעֵת קְרָאָם אֵלַי*.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Rosenberg (1987, 190-91), a. Historical headnote (1:1-3); b. Commission (1:10); c. "Prophet to the nations" theme introduced (1:5-10); d. Doom for Israel; poetic oracles predominate (1:11-10:25); e. Prophet cut off from Anathoth; focus on prophet's trials and conflicts; prose predominates (11:1-28:17); f. Optimistic prophecies; renewal of Israel; prose brackets poetic center (29:1-31:40); e'. Prophet Returns to Anathoth; focus on prophet's trials and conflicts; prose predominates (32:1-45:5); d'. Doom for the nations; poetic oracles predominate (46:1-49:39); c'. "Prophet to the nations" theme culminates (50:1-51:58); b'. Prophet's concluding message (51:59-64); a'. Historical appendix (52:1-34).

<sup>2</sup> Lipinski and Sperling, 2007, 132.

In this chapter, I will prove that the covenant in the unit has a conditional character that will bring Judah calamity as the covenant curse, showing how severely the people of Judah have sinned against the covenant and why God will bring them the covenant curse.

### 2.2.2. Boundary Justification

The style of the unit is Deuteronomic in a way of a conversation between God and the prophet Jeremiah regarding the Sinai covenant. Jeremiah in the unit as a preacher of the covenant uses the Deuteronomistic language and ideas: *the words of this covenant* (vv. 2, 3, 6, cf. Deut 29:1, 9; II Kgs 23:3), *cursed be . . . Amen* (vv. 3-5, cf. Deut 27:15-26), *from the iron furnace* (v. 4, cf. Deut 4:20; I Kgs 8:51), *a land flowing with milk and honey* (v. 5, cf. Deut 6:3; 11:9; 26:9, 15; 27:3; 31:20), and *to go after other gods* (v. 10, cf. Deut 6:4; 8:19; 11:28; 13:2; 28:14).<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the style reflects Jeremiah's genuine emotion and activity to urge obedience to the covenant.<sup>4</sup> The reference to Deuteronomic traditions seems to stem from the prophet himself as "rhetorical and literary strategies of allusion and exegesis with the prophecy."<sup>5</sup> Jeremiah creates a truly "new" idea of covenant conditioned by obedience, rather than merely following the Deuteronomistic model while using Deuteronomic traditions.<sup>6</sup> As Jeremiah had a strong personal conviction that he stood in the succession of Moses,<sup>7</sup> the unit strongly reveals the characteristic of his own preaching.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Carroll, 1986, 267. According to Nicholson (1970, 67-68), as the Deuteronomistic phrases are repeated throughout Jeremiah's sermon, his presentation is characteristically Deuteronomistic. Stulman (1999, 53-54) claims that the unit offers the recital of the covenant in the introductory part as a justification for God's righteous decision on Judah's failure to listen to the terms of the covenant, referring to a Deuteronomic curse upon those who are disobedient to the covenant. Jeremiah's presentation of the Deuteronomic curse formula foreshadows the future fate of Judah (Holladay, 1976, 160-62; O'Connor, 1988, 131). Holladay (1986, 353) argues that Jer 11:3-5 imitates the diction of Deut 27:15-26,<sup>3</sup> and Henderson (1851, 73) also asserts that the phraseology of Jer 11:5 is borrowed from Deut 27:26.

<sup>4</sup> Bright, 1965, 88-89.

<sup>5</sup> Rom-Shiloni, 2015, 622. Bright (1965, lxxi) considers the Deuteronomic character of Jeremiah to be "a style in its own right with peculiarities and distinctive expressions of its own," arguing that it is not simplistically to be categorized as Deuteronomistic. Craigie (1991, 168-69) claims that Jer 11:1-17 as Jeremiah's prose sermon shows unique characteristics of Jeremianic prose despite parallels with Deuteronomistic language and style. The unit, according to Lundbom (1999, 615), is Jeremiah's actual preaching during the years of Josiah's reform before the exile, having the unique vocabulary and phraseology not found in Deuteronomy such as "conspiracy קִשְׁר" in v. 9 and "the first הָרִאשׁוֹנִים" in v. 10. Nevertheless, according to Rom-Shiloni (2015, 624), some scholars such as Duhm, Mowinckel, Hyatt, Bright, Thiel, and Holladay argue that the unit is Deuteronomistic without Jeremiah's unique character. In particular, Duhm (1901, 107-8) and Mowinckel (1914, 31) claim that Jer 11:1-14 is non-Jeremianic passage by addressing the issue of formal and thematic literary resemblances between Jer 11:1-14 and Deut 27. Holladay (1986, 353) maintains that Jer 11:3-5 imitates the diction of Deut 27:15-26.

<sup>6</sup> Rom-Shiloni, 2015, 644. Jeremiah and Ezekiel, as well as their followers or editors strategically shared allusion to and exegesis of pentateuchal materials, each in his own ways and contexts (Rom-Shiloni, 2012, 203-30).

<sup>7</sup> Holladay, 1964, 153-64.

<sup>8</sup> Thompson, 1980, 342.

The unit contains some basic elements of the covenant, such as the curse with the recital of God's actions on Israel's behalf (vv. 3-5), the stipulations and the people's commitment to be obedient (vv. 6-8), the judgment that curse entails (vv. 8, 11-12, 16-17), and a covenant witness Jeremiah (v. 5).<sup>9</sup> It is also interwoven by several repeated vocabularies and phraseologies as follows:<sup>10</sup>

שָׁמַע	vv. 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14
דָּבַר	vv. 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 10
בְּרִית (דְּבָרִי)	vv. 2, 3, 6, 8, 10
עָשָׂה	vv. 4, 6, 8, 15, 17
מֵאַרְצֵי מִצְרַיִם	vv. 4, 7
אָבוֹת	vv. 4, 7, 10
צָנָה	vv. 4, 8
הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה	vv. 5, 7
יִשְׁבִּי יְרוּשָׁלַם/אִישׁ יְהוּדָה	vv. 2, 9
חֲצוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם/עָרֵי יְהוּדָה	vv. 6, 13
אֱלֹהִים	vv. 10, 12, 13
רָע	vv. 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17
לְקַטֵּר לְבַעַל	vv. 13, 17

In particular, the recurring terms שָׁמַע, דָּבַר, בְּרִית, עָשָׂה, רָע, and לְקַטֵּר לְבַעַל represent expecting obedience and its breaking by disobedience. The nation has been expected to hear God's voice and obey the words of the covenant, but they have disobeyed God's words and broken the covenant by walking in the stubbornness of their evil heart and worshipping Baal.

Despite the linguistic similarity, there are some significant differences between vv. 1-14 and 15-17. The former (vv. 1-14) is the prose integrated with messenger formulas (vv. 1, 3, 6, 9, 11) and takes Deuteronomistic diction, while the latter (vv. 15-17) is a poem with imaginaries and takes the general pattern of Jeremiah's diction.<sup>11</sup> However, these two parts are closely linked by catchwords such as עָשָׂה, רָע, and לְקַטֵּר לְבַעַל.<sup>12</sup>

	<b>vv. 1-14</b>	<b>vv. 15-17</b>
עָשָׂה	vv. 4, 6, 8	vv. 15, 17
רָע	vv. 8, 11, 12, 14	vv. 15, 17
לְקַטֵּר לְבַעַל	v. 13	v. 17

<sup>9</sup> Fretheim, 2002, 179. Interestingly, there are similarities found between the biblical covenants between God and Israel and the Hittite treaties between suzerainties and vassals. In the ancient world, the formulation of the covenant relationship presents a suzerain's will and a vassal's accepting the will by oath with the conditional curses and blessings as sanctions to the obligations in the stipulations. According to Mendenhall (1954, 66-87), the basic elements of the Hittite suzerainty treaties, as follows: titulary, historical introduction, stipulations, a list of divine witnesses, blessings and curses, and recital of the covenant and deposit of its tablets. McCarthy (1978, 67) suggests a slightly revised form of the treaty: the titulary, history, statement of relationship, stipulations, list of divine witnesses, and curses and blessings. The treaty was more than the word, being tied closely to ritual: "taking the oath was a ritual act, curses were represented ritually and not merely spoken, the treaty text was deposited in a shrine and treated as a sacred object" (Ibid., 157).

<sup>10</sup> Craigie, 1991, 169; Lundbom, 1999, 616, 619.

<sup>11</sup> Holladay, 1986, 353-54.

<sup>12</sup> Lundbom, 1999, 619-20, 632.



In particular, v. 17 as “a secondary pastiche” makes a connection between the prose of vv. 1-14 and the poetry of vv. 15-16.<sup>13</sup> It also plays a role of a conclusion by relating to the preceding section of chapter 11 in respect of topic and vocabulary.<sup>14</sup> God will bring disaster רָעָה on His people (v. 11), and He decrees disaster רָעָה for them (v. 17); they build altars to offer to Baal לְקַטֵּר לְבַעַל (v. 13), and they provoke God by offering to Baal לְהַכְעִסְנִי לְקַטֵּר לְבַעַל (v. 17). Furthermore, v. 17 also functions as a secondary commentary on vv. 15-16; the 2<sup>nd</sup> person feminine singular suffix of the phrase הַנוֹטֵעַ אוֹתָהּ in v. 17 refers to Israel as the beloved in v. 15 and the olive tree in v. 16.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the unit is intimately constituted as one organic and coherent composition.

### 2.2.3. Internal Structure

The unit can be broken down into five subunits based on content, variations of the messenger formula,<sup>16</sup> and the poetic insert as follows:<sup>17</sup>

- a. 1-5: The Curse of the covenant
- b. 6-8: Failure to follow the covenant
- c. 9-10: Following other gods
- d. 11-14: Judgment is coming
- e. 15-17: Judgment because of idolatry

In particular, four oracles on the covenant are found in vv. 1-14—Oracle I (vv. 1-5), Oracle II (vv. 6-8), Oracle III (vv. 9-10), and Oracle IV (vv. 11-14)—and followed by a poem about God’s judgment upon Judah’s idolatry in vv. 15-17. Interestingly, these oracles have similar introductions: הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר הָיָה אֵל יְרֵמְיָהוּ (v. 1), וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי (vv. 6, 9), and כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה (v. 11). Oracle I describes the theoretic consequences for disobeying covenant, being concerned with the intended blessing of the covenant (v. 5, which opens with the word: לְמַעַן). The core of vv. 1-5 is a curse uttered by God (v. 3), to which Jeremiah responds with *Amen, Lord* אָמֵן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ. Jeremiah gives his consent to the curse laid on those who do not keep the terms of the covenant. Oracle II depicts Israel’s actual disobedience and rebelliousness, focusing on the warnings given of loomed judgment (v. 8). God has consistently warned the Israelites again and again from the Exodus time up to the present time, recalling the curse caused by the stubbornness

<sup>13</sup> Holladay, 1986, 349.

<sup>14</sup> McKane, 1986, 252.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> It is clear that the prose of vv. 1-14 is structured with variations of the messenger formula: “The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר הָיָה אֵל יְרֵמְיָהוּ” (v. 1), “Thus the LORD, the God of Israel said כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה, the LORD said to me וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה, אֵלַי” (v. 6), “And the LORD said to me וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה, אֵלַי” (v. 9), “Therefore thus the LORD said לְכֹן, כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה” (v. 11). These parallel formulas are ruled by the phrase “speak . . . and say to them” of vv. 2-3, while the words of v. 1 serve as a general title of the unit (Holladay, 1986, 348).

<sup>17</sup> Craigie, 1991, 169.

and evil heart of the wilderness generation.<sup>18</sup> Oracle III portrays a current conspiracy returning to the iniquities of former generations, and Oracle IV announces judgment upon the breach of the Sinai covenant by burning incense to Baal.

It is important to pay attention to the way the recurring words appear in the sub-units: שָׁמַע (vv. 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14), בְּרִית (vv. 2, 3, 6, 8, 10), עָשָׂה (vv. 4, 6, 8), and אָבוֹת (vv. 4, 7, 10). These repeating words play a different role in each sub-unit, emphasizing that God has continually compelled His people to hear His voice and keep the words of the covenant as well as revealing the heartbreaking reality that they will be cursed/punished as they have not obeyed Him. In particular, the recurring word שָׁמַע expresses a demand to hear God's voice and obey the covenant in Oracle I (vv. 2, 3, 4), indicates the process of their disobedience on God's command in Oracle II (vv. 6, 7, 8), represents their stubbornness מֵאַנּוֹן לְשִׁמוּעַ in Oracle III (v. 10), and shows God's decisive rejection upon their cry אֲשַׁמַּע לֵא/שָׁמַע/לֵא in Oracle IV (vv. 11, 14). Another recurring word בְּרִית refers to the Sinai covenant in the unit, but there are different characters of its occurrence in the sub-units; while בְּרִית in Oracle I (vv. 2, 3) implies a historical covenant to recall that God's promise was given to Israel through the covenant, בְּרִית in Oracle II (vv. 6, 8) and Oracle III (v. 10) denotes a present covenant to show that the Israelites' evil hearts have brought all the curses of the covenant on them (vv. 6, 8) and also that the house of Judah has broken the covenant (v. 10). Therefore, the role they play serves to support the division of vv. 1-14 as well as to define the process of breaking the covenant expressed throughout the unit as a whole.

These four oracles are followed by the section 11:15-17 that reinforces the statement to confirm God's divine anger upon His covenant people; the judgment was promised with literary expressions such as divine fire, the roar of a mighty storm, and broken branches.<sup>19</sup> Metaphorically portraying Judah as God's chosen people, vv. 15-17 emphasize God's rage upon how Judah has gone astray from the way of keeping the covenant. Judah as God's beloved (v. 15) has practiced her wicked schemes in the temple, which is the cause of God's disaster.<sup>20</sup> Judah as a green olive tree (v. 16) will be burned and broken due to burning incense to Baal (v. 17); God's judgment will bring catastrophic destruction upon Israel as a once green olive tree. Judah's bad fate is inescapable and inevitable as she has broken the covenant.

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<sup>18</sup> Lundbom, 1999, 623.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 626, 632.

<sup>20</sup> Carroll, 1986, 273.

#### 2.2.4. The Broken Covenant

As mentioned above, the unit has five references of the covenant: *this covenant* הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת (vv. 2, 3, 6, 8) and *my covenant* בְּרִיתִי (v. 10). What is the meaning of the expression *this covenant*? A lot of discussions have been done on this question.<sup>21</sup> There are two different interpretations of the expression *this covenant* הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת, that is, Josiah's covenant and the Sinai covenant. At first sight, it may seem to be Josiah's covenant that was so familiar with Jeremiah's audience.<sup>22</sup> While several scholars—Duhm, Cornill, Giesebrecht, Condamin, Eissfeldt, Kimchi, and Bright—view it as a reference to Josiah's covenant at the time of the reform stimulated by the discovery of Deuteronomy in 622, other scholars—Volz, Rudolph, Weiser, Carroll, Holladay, Lundbom, and Fischer—regard it as the Sinai covenant.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, the context of the unit serves to clarify what “this covenant” means. Brueggemann comments on vv. 1-5 as follows.<sup>24</sup>

There is no hint of what covenant, but the following verses make it clear that it is the covenant of Sinai with its Torah demands. . . . The community was summoned to listen but did not listen . . . Yahweh reminds Jeremiah that the old generation of Sinai and wilderness was judged for disobedience.

In my opinion, there is no doubt that it is the Sinai covenant as vv. 3-4 explicitly state that God made the covenant with the exodus generation at the time of the national deliverance of Israel from Egypt: *the words of this covenant that I commanded your fathers in the day I brought them out from the land of Egypt* דְּבַרֵי הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אֶת אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם בְּיוֹם הוֹצִיאִי אֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם.<sup>25</sup> Jeremiah uses the phrase הוֹצִיאִי אֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם in v. 4 to emphasize the God of deliverance who entered a covenant relationship with Israel at Sinai.<sup>26</sup> The Sinaitic covenant relationship between God and Israel can be kept on the condition that Israel is to worship God only. However, they have forsaken the God of covenant and have broken (הִפְרִוּ, v. 10) the covenant by following other gods to serve them. Therefore, when Jeremiah refers to the broken covenant, it is sure that he points to the Sinai covenant.

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<sup>21</sup> Feinberg, 1982, 96.

<sup>22</sup> Thompson, 1980, 343.

<sup>23</sup> Holladay, 1986, 349; McKane, 1986, 244; Carroll, 1986, 269; Lundbom, 1999, 621; Fisher, 2005, 408-09. In terms of “this covenant,” Rom-Shiloni (2015, 626) claims that “Jeremiah intentionally, and consistently with other prose passages, avoids invoking Sinai/Horeb.”

<sup>24</sup> Brueggemann, 1988, 104.

<sup>25</sup> Lundbom, 1999, 621.

<sup>26</sup> In Exodus 20:2-3, God says, *I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.* In Leviticus 26:12-13, God says, *I will also walk among you and be your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt so that you should not be their slaves, and I broke the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect.*

Interestingly, in defining *this covenant*, there is a sharp distinction between the Sinai covenant and Josiah's covenant as the expression of *this covenant* may imply "a recent and specific covenant rather than the ancient and well-known covenant made at Sinai."<sup>27</sup> Josiah's covenant was the renewed Mosaic covenant as ratification and reactivation of the Mosaic covenant in the time of Josiah. However, *the words of this covenant* in v. 3, which refer to the newly discovered law, are the words of the Sinai covenant because it is clear from the succeeding context.<sup>28</sup> The covenant in the unit as a reference to the Sinai covenant has its strong emphasis upon the moral law with the condition of God's continued blessing.<sup>29</sup> The Sinai covenant between God and Israel compels God to uphold and bless her as well as obligates Israel to obey Him. As the reform was based on the discovered book of Deuteronomy that expounded on the Sinai covenant, Jeremiah could have underlined obedience to the Sinai covenant rather than Josiah's covenant. Holladay also claims that "this covenant" is not Josiah's covenant but the Sinai covenant summarized by Deuteronomy, the covenant expressed in the recitation of Deuteronomy.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, it is more plausible that the broken covenant in the unit is identified with the Sinai covenant.

### 2.2.5. The Covenant Essence

The heart of the covenant is to hear God's word and voice and also to obey God and do what He commanded, expressed through the recurrence words—*שמעו* (vv. 2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 11), *שמעו* (vv. 4, 7), *שמעו* (vv. 4, 6, 8), and *שמעו* (vv. 4, 8). Jeremiah urges the people of Judah to hear God's voice and obey the terms of the covenant (vv. 2-4). The call to obey God is rooted in the covenant formula as well as in the historical context of national deliverance in v. 4.<sup>31</sup> Israel's acceptance of God's demands establishes their covenant relationship with God.<sup>32</sup> Obedience to God's voice as an essential requirement at the Sinai covenant confirms the covenant relationship between God and His people (v. 4).<sup>33</sup> The pronoun "I" within the covenant formula in v. 4 is repeated to emphasize who God is for them; *and I, I will be God to you* *ואני יהוה לכם*.<sup>34</sup> God Himself expresses His strong desire to be their God. This covenant relationship is guaranteed when they obey God and do everything He commands them.

<sup>27</sup> Bright, 1965, 89.

<sup>28</sup> Keil, 1985, 210.

<sup>29</sup> Hyatt, 1956, 905.

<sup>30</sup> Holladay, 1986, 352.

<sup>31</sup> Edwards, 2018, 43.

<sup>32</sup> McKane, 1986, 237.

<sup>33</sup> Exod 19:5 says, *Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples for the earth is Mine.*

<sup>34</sup> Lundbom, 1999, 622.

A historical retrospect reminds that the terms of this covenant were laid on the forefathers of the nation at the time of their deliverance from Egypt (vv. 4-5, 10). When they experienced God's salvation from Egypt and His covenant-making with them at Sinai, they as His people were summoned and obligated to obey Him and observe all the terms of the covenant. Their historical experience provides a significant message for their future shape that is wholly determined by their attitude to the covenant. God promised His people for the material and spiritual needs in their infancy as a nation through their obedience to the Sinai covenant.<sup>35</sup> Israel would be able to keep staying at the promised land with blessings on the requirement of her obedience, while she would have to be under curses on the condition of her disobedience. God's solemn promise to the patriarchs in the condition of their obedience implemented Israel's possession of *the land flowing with milk and honey* וְדָבַשׁ וְחֵלֶב וְזָבַת אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֵלֶב וְדָבַשׁ (vv. 4-5). Indeed, obedience is the central essence of the covenant.

#### 2.2.6. Breaking the Covenant

God instructs Jeremiah to proclaim the covenant stipulations that people must follow, *the words of this covenant* הַדְּבָרִים הַבְּרִיתִית הַזֹּאת, in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem with a reminder of Israel's unfaithful past (vv. 6-8). However, they have disobeyed it and have broken (הִפְרִי, v. 10) the covenant God made with their forefathers (אֲבוֹתָם, v. 10). Jeremiah describes not only God's disappointment and sorrow but also God's judgment upon those who abandoned their God, emphasizing the curse as the result of breaking the covenant. Jeremiah recalls that his contemporaries do not still listen or pay attention although God's prophetic spokesmen have warned the Israelites again and again, from the time of the Exodus up to the present, to obey the terms of the covenant (vv. 7-8). The long process of reversion of their fate has been underway, and its final outcomes are about to be unveiled. Both the ancestral community and the current community are guilty of covenant-breaking, so they must be responsible for its consequences, all the curses of the covenant (v. 8). God's judgment caused by breaching the covenant is justified by the inner structure presented earlier and also by the recurring words related to covenant, warning, and breaking. According to the internal structure, the unit begins with a reminder of the terms of the covenant, mentions God's warning on Israel's disobedience, and announces God's irrevocable judgment upon the people of Judah who broke the covenant by their disobedience as a spiritual conspiracy to serve other gods. The recurring terms אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם... בְּיוֹם הוֹצִיאֵהוּ אֶתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם (vv. 4, 7) and וְשָׁמַעוּ בְּקוֹלִי (v. 7) are

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<sup>35</sup> Thompson, 1980, 344.

intended by Jeremiah to reveal their disobedience. As the center of the covenant is obedience *שָׁמְעוּ*, the expression “not listening” represented through the same words embodies the seriousness of breaking the core of the covenant.

The essential reason for the broken covenant is idolatry as spiritual adultery (11:10; 22:9). The issue of idolatry can connect the unit and the covenant theme to the whole book. Throughout the history of Israel, idolatry is a critical sin to demolish the root of their covenant relationship with God. Judah’s apostasy is specifically described in the phrase *they have turned back to the iniquities of their fathers* *שָׁבוּ עַל עֲוֹנוֹת אֲבוֹתָם הָרָאשׁוֹנִים* (v. 10). Like their forefathers, they have refused to hear God’s words, God’s covenant demands, and have followed the stubborn and apostatic ways to serve other gods with their evil hearts. A recurrence to the sins of forefathers is a history of apostasy as idolatrous worship happened in both the house of Israel and the house of Judah.<sup>36</sup> The long history of apostasy extended to the present brought them the curses of the covenant.<sup>37</sup> Their apostasy renounced God’s lordship and their covenant obligations.<sup>38</sup> Judah’s sin of apostasy is portrayed here through three different terms—*not listening* *וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ* in v. 8, *conspiracy* *קִשְׁר* in v. 9, idolatry *לְעִבְדָם אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים* in v. 10. The expression *not listening* refers to a passive attitude, *conspiracy* is a betrayal of God, and “idolatry” is an active deed to the other direction, toward other gods. This is part of the process Israel had sinned against God. Furthermore, as the order of these terms shows the increase of the severity in the portrayal of their action, Judah’s sin has become more hostile against God. Breaking the covenant starts from the description with the word *not listening to God* (v. 8). Afterwards, the distinctive term *conspiracy* *קִשְׁר* (v. 9)<sup>39</sup> depicts spiritual infidelity as a failure in listening to God’s covenant terms<sup>40</sup> and portrays a formal uniting of the people of Judah against God and expose the nature of Judah’s defiance in relation to God.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, the conspiracy among the people of Judah and the inhabitants in Jerusalem has led them into idolatry, which has broken the Sinai covenant made with their forefathers (v. 10). The reference to their forefathers *אֲבוֹתָם* is not to the reforms of Josiah, but it could partially refer to Josiah’s reform as a revival of the Sinai covenant. Nevertheless, Jeremiah does not lose his

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<sup>36</sup> McKane, 1986, 239.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Thompson, 1980, 345.

<sup>39</sup> McKane (1986, 239) states that the context of the *conspiracy* *קִשְׁר* (v. 9) is political in other Old Testament passages (2 Sam 15:12; 1 Kgs 16:2; 2 Kgs 11:14; 12:21; 14:19; 15:15, 30), describing the overthrow of government. Lundbom (1999, 624) claims that the conspiracy reflects the political climate change of Jerusalem; because of Josiah’s death and Jehoiakim’s accession, the reform was fully stopped. However, Craigie (1991, 170-71) argues that it has a spiritual implication within the political setting.

<sup>40</sup> Allen, 2008, 140.

<sup>41</sup> Thompson, 1980, 345.

concentration on the Sinai covenant. Thompson argues, “Judah needed to be called to the historic Sinai event when God promised to supply the material and spiritual needs of the people in their infancy as a nation in return for their undivided worship and obedience.”<sup>42</sup> There was an expectation that the covenant would be fulfilled. However, Judah did not listen, committed a sin of the conspiracy, and worshipped other gods. As a result of her apostasy, the Sinai covenant given as a blessing has become a curse, and even the punishment upon them is justified.<sup>43</sup>

### 2.2.7. God’s Irrevocable Judgment

God proclaims that the curses of the covenant will be coming upon the people of Judah because they have broken the covenant through their apostasy. As v. 11 starts with the word לְכֹן, the conspiracy of Judah’s apostasy in vv. 9-10, as the preceding context, offers the direct cause of an upcoming calamity upon them. Breaking the covenant brings the threat of imminent disaster that the present community cannot avert. They had turned to idols from serving God, so God will not hear them when they will cry to Him and even prohibits a prophetic intercession for them (vv. 11-14). It is too late for them to seek God’s help as God already decided to bring all the curses of the covenant on the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. Although they will appeal to the gods that they worship, they will recognize that these gods cannot help them when the calamity approaches them (vv. 11-12). It is specifically stated that God’s judgment comes from a lot of alters on which Judah offers sacrifices to the shameful god Baal in Judah’s territory and Jerusalem’s streets (v. 13). Because of their worshipping Baal, God forbids His prophet Jeremiah to intercede on behalf of them as He will not listen to any plea or petition for them (vv. 13-14).

The section of vv. 15-17 describes more dynamically about God’s divine judgment upon His people as a result of their breaching the covenant, using rhetorical expressions such as *my beloved* יְדִידִי and *a thriving olive tree, fair with goodly fruit* זֵית רַעְעָן יִפְהָ פְרִי תֹאֵר in vv. 15-16. God’s beloved has become a harlot as if the wife Israel is divorced from her husband God (v. 15). They render themselves into the object of a destructive judgment that is the opposite of their nature as the beloved. The juxtaposition of love and threat here shows that the deep relationship between God and His beloved Israel intensifies the threat of imminent judgment.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 344.

<sup>43</sup> However, there is an assumption that the existence of the Sinai covenant will enable the renewal of the relationship.

<sup>44</sup> McKane, 1986, 251.

The word *lewdness* הַמְזֻמָּה in v. 15 indicates a practical denunciation of God's will for His people in a context of idolatry in Baal shrines. The evil idolatry provoked God to decree disaster for those who were His beloved, which is the evitable consequence of their breaching the covenant. Their wickedness carried on in God's house, the Temple, causes God's refusal to hear His people's cries; their offerings in the temple will have no effect upon the deity because of their evil schemes and wickedness (v. 15). Ritual sacrifice without faithfulness and obedience to God is empty. Such a futile sacrifice humiliates God who really wants an intimate relationship with His people rather than just satisfying people's needs only.<sup>45</sup> God does not accept their ritual zeal combined with a general contempt of His moral demands, asking a question, *what is my beloved doing in my house?* מָה לִּידְיָי בְּבַיְתִי (v. 15). It refers that they have forfeited their right to come before God's presence and worship Him alone.<sup>46</sup> God Himself planted them and called them a leafy olive tree, but His divine judgment was pronounced upon them because of their evil against the covenant made between God and them. God will set them on fire and destroy them by a mighty storm (v. 16). Their evil apostasy, burning incense to Baal, provoked God to anger with this disaster as divine punishment (v. 17). God could not delay His judgment upon them anymore even though they were God's chosen people (v. 4), His beloved (v. 15), and the tree He has planted (v. 16). Judah's fate described with a metaphor of fire is ironically combine with a thriving olive tree as an image of beauty and vitality (v. 16). The olive tree Israel, as the covenant partner, became unfaithful and treacherous people because they neglected and even deserted their covenant relationship.<sup>47</sup> God changed His attitude to them by announcing a judgment and disaster upon them, which is a natural consequence for them to break the covenant. Indeed, the covenant partner is responsible for the blessing of obedience and the curse of disobedience.

### 2.2.8. Conclusion

This unit makes the impression that the covenant is broken, and the punishment that expresses the separation between God and Judah is inevitable and therefore justified. The people of Judah must bear God's judgment as the curse of the covenant as they have broken the covenant. The broken covenant in the unit is the Sinai covenant, not the covenant made by Josiah during his reform after the discovery of the Book of the Law. Jeremiah as a prophet of doom confronts the people to claim the responsibility laid on them in virtue of the Sinai covenant; the blessing

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<sup>45</sup> Thompson, 1980, 346.

<sup>46</sup> McKane, 1986, 248.

<sup>47</sup> Allen, 2008, 141.



flows from their obedience, and the curse comes from their disobedience. Since God had delivered the Exodus generation out of Egypt and made a covenant with them at Sinai, they had to listen only to the voice of the One who summoned them. However, they have hastily overlooked their responsibility and recklessly violated their identity as the covenant people. The fact that Israel's infidelity, which thwarts the blessing of the covenant, provokes God to bring the divine judgment upon His people, reminds them of the exodus event and the subsequent covenant. The covenant curse indeed depends on the way the nation behaves.

The Sinai covenant had been continually broken, but all the curses as a result of its breach were not executed until the national disaster in 587 BCE.<sup>48</sup> The operation of the curses of the covenant is revealed in God's judgment, that is, the culmination of a long history of their apostasy.<sup>49</sup> God's gracious initiative of planting His people, the olive tree, has been thwarted by their apostasy and resulted in the destruction of the tree rather than into its growth and fruitfulness.

In short, the unit explicitly shows that the fate of Judah is indeed doomed as they cannot avoid God's divine judgment due to their breaching the covenant. The notion of the broken covenant in the unit highlights that God is decisive to punish the community's failure in obeying His Word and their conspiracy to follow other gods. Is there any possibility of keeping the covenant between Israel and their God? This question will be able to be examined through the next units, especially in the new covenant unit.

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<sup>48</sup> Carroll, 1986, 270.

<sup>49</sup> McKane, 1986, 245.

## 2.3. Jer 14:19-22

### 2.3.1. Introduction

The unit is a prophetic petition of Jeremiah to God on behalf of the nation Judah in the midst of divine punishment upon them. Jeremiah's own communal laments are expanded to include a confession of Judah's sin. Judah's community also participates in the symphony of sorrow by crying out in grief, acknowledging its transgression, and petitioning for God's mercy and help.<sup>1</sup> However, it is unveiled throughout the unit that God's judgment upon the people of Judah is irrevocable.

It is interesting to see the meaningful connection between the previously analyzed unit and the current one; the previous unit ends with God's prohibition of Jeremiah's plea for the nation, but this one begins with Jeremiah's prophetic petition to God on behalf of them. In my opinion, it seems to show his desperate response to the nation's urgent situation rather than his disobedience to the prohibition of praying for them. Even if these two units are not directly connected to each other, the thematic unity between the two units makes the current unit an answer to the previous one and gives a hope that this is not the end of the story. The nation desperately requests God to remember His eternal covenant (זָכַר בְּרִיתִי) in order to seek His favor. When read sequentially, it seems that, in this unit, the nation is trying to escape from the divine punishment of the broken covenant presented in the previously analyzed unit by confessing their sin and even by appealing to God's character, לְמַעַן שְׁמִי and כִּסֵּא כְבוֹדִי, and the everlasting covenant. The unit exceptionally discusses Judah's sins, which seems to show that God requests their repentance. However, from God's side as can be seen from other units in the book, the covenant or the new covenant is not dependent on repentance. The fact that they confess their wickedness and sin is not a condition for the covenant but just shows their desperate attitude before God. Therefore, the unit is unique in terms of perspective regarding the covenant, such as the character of the covenant and the way Jeremiah regards the covenant here.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate that the nation can hope for salvation which only comes from God's unconditional covenant in the midst of their doomed destiny from the conditional covenant breach. By that, the unit represents this aspect in the term 'covenant'.

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<sup>1</sup> Stulman, 2005, 144.

### 2.3.2. Internal Structure

Lamentation, according to Sweeney, has typical elements such as exhortations to mourn and petitions to save the remnant; people in a disaster are called to lament, repent, and urge God to rescue the remnant.<sup>2</sup> This unit fits this typical structure of lament in prophetic literature, which besides helping to define the unit's subject, enhances the definition of its boundary. Through the communal laments in the unit, Jeremiah conveys Judah's hopelessness over the uncertainties of life as well as pleads the divine responses for their deliverance and restoration out of the calamity. Jeremiah expresses their grief with rhetorical questions to God (v. 19), confesses their wickedness and their forefathers' sin (v. 20), reminds God of *for the sake of Your name* לְמַעַן שְׁמִי and *the throne of Your glory* כִּסֵּא כְבוֹדְךָ for the request to remember His covenant with them (v. 21), and urges divine help through the declaration that their trust and hope are in God as the Creator but in no other gods (v. 22).<sup>3</sup>

Through all the three rhetorical questions in v. 19, Jeremiah tries to figure out if God indeed intends to break the relationship with Judah; he asks whether God has completely rejected Judah, despises Zion, and has afflicted the people of Judah so that they cannot be healed. They seemingly accuse that God is responsible for the tragedy happened to Judah.<sup>4</sup> These questions in v. 19 represent the fact that it is very difficult for them to face the present situation as it does not make sense to them. They are frustrated and terrified with their broken relationship with God.

The covenant at the end of v. 21 is the main request that represents *not forgetting* Judah. The plea that God *remember, not break Your covenant with us* זָכֵר אֶל תִּפְרֹךְ בְּרִיתְךָ אִתָּנוּ is the heart of the matter in the unit.<sup>5</sup> In order to plead God to keep the covenant with Judah, Jeremiah uses two different strategies here; Judah confesses their sins first (v. 20), and then they speak about God's name and glory (v. 21), and God's might (v. 22). The first strategy deals with their own problem, but the second one turns to God's character. All these strategies, before and after, are meant to convince God to fulfill the request of not abandoning them, emphasizing God's merit and ability, not the nation's. Therefore, this emphasis on God's character, not depending on their repentance, deliberately reveals the unconditional nature of the covenant, and goes hand in hand with the previous unit that discusses the nation's sins.

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<sup>2</sup> Sweeney, 1996, 523.

<sup>3</sup> Thompson, 1980, 385.

<sup>4</sup> Fretheim, 2002, 225.

<sup>5</sup> Bracke, 2000, 130.

v. 19	Judah's grief through rhetorical questions
v. 20	Confession of sin
v. 21a	For the sake of God's name and glory
v. 21b	Remember Your Covenant
v. 22	God the Almighty

### 2.3.3. Remember Your Covenant זָכַר בְּרִיתְךָ

God's covenant with His people is a crucial foundation for Jeremiah's plea in the unit. Judah expects the word of deliverance by pleading God's obligation upon the unconditional covenant which is "the most profound of obligations" to deliver them from the upcoming calamity.<sup>6</sup> According to Lundbom, the covenant which Judah asks God to remember is the covenant with Abraham renewed with the other patriarchs.<sup>7</sup> The covenant with Abraham, which is built on God's promises to Abraham (Gen 12:1-4), is the covenant of grace as the royal grant with the unconditional nature of the gift.<sup>8</sup> Judah asks God to remember His everlasting covenant with them and anticipates God's promise to bestow unconditional blessings upon them. Their hope is in the God of Israel יְהוָה only who can bring rain.<sup>9</sup> They acknowledge that God is almighty and that none of the false gods can bring rain, desperately expecting that God will bring rain by pleading that God remembers the covenant of grace.

On behalf of Judah's ardent appeal, *Remember Your covenant*, they confess their sin first (v. 20). Here we can see the repentance from the prophet Jeremiah's point of view. It seems that their behavior has to be urgently taken into account by the prophet. Jeremiah is desperate for the hope that they will come back to God and make a repentance. Since Judah's relationship with God was broken, Jeremiah, in the typical lament, identifies himself with the nation to confess guilt on their behalf and acknowledge their own wickedness רָשָׁע and sin חַטָּאת against God as well as the *iniquity* עֲוֹן of their forefathers which portray a picture of three different types of transgression (v. 20).<sup>10</sup> The phrase *our fathers' guilt* עֲוֹן אֲבוֹתֵינוּ refers to "the corporate guilt of the nation accumulated through the generations."<sup>11</sup> As the fathers' past iniquity to worship the false gods has been accumulated over time and inherited to their children, the present generation must be also responsible for the iniquity of prior generations.<sup>12</sup> From God's side, as much as I can say from 14:19-22, repentance is not a condition for an unconditional

<sup>6</sup> Thompson, 1980, 386.

<sup>7</sup> Lundbom, 1999, 717.

<sup>8</sup> Murray, 1954, 31; Weinfeld, 1975, 270; Hahn, 2009, 101-35.

<sup>9</sup> There is the interesting relationship between water and hope; the word "hope מִקְוֵה" can be interpreted as "pool of water" (Craig et al., 1991, 202).

<sup>10</sup> Thompson, 1980, 386.

<sup>11</sup> Bright, 1965, 102.

<sup>12</sup> Lundbom, 1999, 716.

covenant; God does not demand repentance for the keeping the covenant. The unit indeed shows that the covenant does not depend on the nation's behavior.

The people of Judah move to another strategy for the request as God ignores their first scheme. During their acknowledge sinning against God, He keeps silent without any response to them; it seems that God does not change His stern attitude to them. Therefore, they try to stimulate God's favorable response to their petition by taking advantage of God's divine character (vv. 21a-22). Their plea changes its direction to God being asked to act on behalf of God's sake while their communal lament was expressed on behalf of the people by Jeremiah.<sup>13</sup> They desperately persuade God to sustain the covenant relationship with them not only by making repentance (v. 20) but also by pleading to God through His name and glorious throne as the ground of their appeal to God (v. 21).<sup>14</sup> They also urges divine help through their proclamation that their trust and hope are in God the Almighty who can control rain (v. 22). Judah indeed anticipates that God Himself will guarantee their security for the sake of His reputation.

#### **2.3.4. Conclusion**

The unit describes Judah's communal laments which is Jeremiah's petition to God for the sake of the people of Judah when they confront their own bewildering situation. They looked for peace but found no good, and they hoped for a time of healing but faces terror instead. It is a paradoxical gap between their desire that peace would be their continuing experience and their reality that God has rejected them and brought them troubles.<sup>15</sup> Even though they look forward to God's deliverance, God shows His irrevocable judgment upon them in spite of their confession and petition.

Judah's strategic petitions based on her covenant relationship with God is indeed highlighted in the midst of her fate following a national catastrophe. As their covenant relationship with God was broken because of their sinning against Him and their forefathers' iniquity, they make a repentance to get God's favor. Furthermore, they do their best to pacify and persuade God through mentioning His name and glory in order to restore the broken

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<sup>13</sup> Craig et al., 1991, 205.

<sup>14</sup> Stulman, 2005, 144-45.

<sup>15</sup> Thompson, 1980, 386; McKane, 1986, 331.

relationship. Their deliberate request to God for remembering the unconditional covenant in this unit ends with their praising God the Omnipotent.

## 2.4. Jer 22:6-9

### 2.4.1. Introduction

The unit describes that Jeremiah delivers God's oracle regarding the fate of the nation Judah; the destruction of the royal palace and Jerusalem is significantly described as an inevitable consequence of Judah's violation of God's covenant. The divine oracle is conveyed with theological reason, the covenant breach resulted from Judah's communal practice of pagan worship; the nation's disaster is evidence of the abandoned covenant.<sup>1</sup> As idolatry is the very reason for the covenant breach and God's irrevocable judgment, the theme of idol worship can connect this unit and the covenant theme to the whole book.

God sternly wills to fulfill the nation's destruction as the curse of the covenant because of their idolatry. The faint hope was revealed in the previous analyzed unit 14:19-22, as they appealed to God to remember the unconditional covenant. However, in the current unit, God sticks to His original plan of punishment upon them by taking the initiative to demolish their palace and towns through destroyers (מִשְׁחָתִים) as God's agents. The nation's apostasy (v. 9) issue that was seriously mentioned in unit 11:1-17 is the very reason for the covenant breach in the unit, so the theme of idol worship indeed makes a meaningful connection between this unit and unit 11:1-17. The unit uses literary devices of simile and imagery to describe how the total destruction of the nation will look like and also employs the perspective of many nations (גוֹיִם רַבִּים) to portray the nation's daring and shameless idolatry and increase the impression of the destruction tiding.

In this chapter, I will confirm that the covenant the nation has forsaken is conditional by representing the character of the conditional covenant shown in the nation's severe devastation as the covenant curse.

### 2.4.2. Boundary Justification

The unit shows coherence in imagery and theme.<sup>2</sup> The king or the king's palace is denoted in vv. 6-7, and then the city and the nation are represented in vv. 8-9. The phrase *the house of the*

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<sup>1</sup> Carroll, 1986, 421.

<sup>2</sup> Lundbom, (2004, 121-27) distinguishes the unit 22:6-9 with the topic of "A Cutting in Lebanon South." Brake (2000, 168) claims that the theme of Jer 21-25 is covenant curse, introducing life as covenant blessing and death as curses (Deut 30:15-20) directly connected with Israel's choice of obeying God's commandments or not; a broken relationship with God results in misfortune and hardship, particularly the loss of the land.

*king of Judah* בֵּית מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה in v. 6 refers to the royal palace.<sup>3</sup> The terms גְּלֵעָד and רֹאשׁ הַקְּבָנוֹן (v. 6) as the images of בֵּית מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה also refer to the king or the king's house. The great city in v. 8 is certainly assumed as Jerusalem from the context. These images enhance the covenant theme by visualizing the covenant curse. The covenant curse is symbolically described as the total destruction of the royal palace and the great city Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup> The destruction of the king's royal palace described in vv. 6b-7 is shifting to the fall of the city Jerusalem in v. 8. As the city is an individualized component of the nation, the city's destruction is a symbol of the punishment for the nation; it is possible to understand it as a personification of the nation. Even though it seems, at the beginning, that the unit deals with the covenant curse upon the king and its royal house, it moves to argue the nation's wicked behaviors. The unit, despite its direct appeal to the king, doesn't discuss the monarchy alone but rather the nation. It aims to the whole nation's covenant breach through the Davidic monarchy's destruction; it expands its context from the house of the king of Judah (vv. 6, 7) to the great city Jerusalem (v. 8) and the people of Judah (v. 9).<sup>5</sup> The unit coherently succeeds in depicting how God will bring the covenant curse to the nation through the symbolic description of the divine judgment process.

### 2.4.3. Internal Structure

The unit contains two sub parts, vv. 6-7 and vv. 8-9, arguing God's adamant judgment caused by the nation's failure to obey God's covenant.<sup>6</sup> It is unfolded from the Davidic dynasty to many nations, moving from singular (vv. 6-7) to plural (vv. 8-9); it makes a transition from God's oracle to many nations' speaking. The first sub-unit (vv. 6-7) shows the covenant curse that the king's house will be destroyed and uninhabited like a wilderness, describing God's inevitable punishment upon the king's house as 'covenant curse.'<sup>7</sup> The second sub-unit (vv. 8-9) describes the nations' conversation of Judah's forsaking the covenant and worshipping idols, arguing the issue of the abandoned covenant as the definite reason for the devastation upon the great city Jerusalem and the nation.

vv. 6-7	Covenant Curse
vv. 8-9	Abandoned Covenant

<sup>3</sup> Lundbom, 1999, 123-24.

<sup>4</sup> Bright, 1965, 145. Brake 2000, 168.

<sup>5</sup> Lundbom, 1999, 123-24. According to v. 9, the people of Judah forsook God's covenant and worshipped idols.

<sup>6</sup> Scholars such as Craigie (1991, 299-304), Holladay (1986, 583-86), McKane (1986, 517-22), and Carroll (1986, 418-22) argues the unit with two individual parts, vv. 6-7 and vv. 8-9.

<sup>7</sup> Lundbom (2004, 121) argues that the covenant curses will fall upon the king's house if the king has failed to obey the commandments of God's covenant.



God's covenant has been abandoned because the nation has deserted their covenantal responsibility, which has brought the covenant curse to the nation.

#### 2.4.4. The Conditional Covenant

The covenant in the unit is presented from God's point of view. Although it is expected to read about God's absolute blessing based on the Davidic covenant due to the unit that opens with an appeal to the king, there is no allusion to the unconditional covenant here.<sup>8</sup> The covenant mentioned here in v. 9 is conditional as the upcoming disaster of the nation's fate in the unit has been caused by the nation's violation of God's covenant. Many nations גוים will pass by and see the devastated Jerusalem, and they will wonder why God has done the destruction of this great city.<sup>9</sup> Its answer is simple and specific (v. 9); Judah as the covenant people has departed from God by forsaking God's covenant וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לֵאלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וַיַּעֲבֹדוּם through worshipping and serving other gods וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לֵאלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וַיַּעֲבֹדוּם.<sup>10</sup> Judah's idolatry represents the breach of the covenant which leads to curse and death.<sup>11</sup> Their forsaking the covenant and their worshipping idols are not two different actions but one action as the covenant breach is expressed through the idolatry. The decisive term לְעֹזֵב in the phrase *abandoning covenant* לְעֹזֵב בְּרִית is used in parallel with the worship of other gods here; the pagan worship ends up in the breach of God's covenant that is the most fundamental violation for the harshness of judgment.<sup>12</sup> Their abandoning covenant refers to abandoning their relationship with God and furthermore abandoning God.<sup>13</sup>

The abandoned covenant has brought a critical change in the nation's fate from prosperity and stability to doom. The unit, literally, is shifting from the king to the nation, from representing the king's status to presenting the nation's fate. The Davidic monarchy or the king house has self-meaning at the beginning and gains national-symbolic meaning at the end. Therefore, the miserable catastrophe upon the king's palace implies a tragedy for the whole nation. The allegorical oracle with the images of Gilead and Lebanon highlights a covenant curse that depended on the nation's disobedience of the conditional covenant, moving from the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 1999, 119-21. Brake argues (2000, 173) that God's promise to David ensures the kings of Judah of well-being and place forever (2 Sam 7:12-17).

<sup>9</sup> The foreign people mentioned here might be assumed as the very soldiers who will cause the destruction as the verb עָבַר is used in a military sense of "cross over against, but it is not stated explicitly (Craigie et al., 1991, 303).

<sup>10</sup> Lundbom (1999, 125) argues that verses 8-9 are an adaptation of Deut 29:24-26.

<sup>11</sup> Thompson, 1980, 475. Deut 28:25 describes the covenant curse, *You shall become a thing of horror to all the kingdoms of the earth* (Brake, 2000, 174).

<sup>12</sup> Brueggemann, 1988, 190; Ibid., 1998, 197; Allen, 2008, 245.

<sup>13</sup> Fretheim, 2002, 318. Holladay (1986, 585) finds the phrase "abandon me [= Yahweh]" in Jer 1:16, the phrase "break my covenant" in 11:10 and 31:32, and the equivalent phrase "abandon my law" in 9:12.

positive image to the strong oath language. The king's house like גִּלְעָד and לְבָנוֹן with a full of trees symbolizes its fertility. The Davidic dynasty has been great and majestic like the fertile land of Gilead and the powerful cedars of Lebanon as these places richly forested in biblical times are metaphors for the royal palace's strength and beauty.<sup>14</sup> However, God decided to make the palace desolate like uninhabited towns and turn the fertile land into a wilderness (v. 6b). The destruction of the choice palace is represented by the phrase *they will cut up your fine cedars* אֲרָזֵיךָ מִבְּחַר אֲרָזֵיךָ (v. 7), whose expression enhances the dynamic transition of the fate of the king's house. The image מִבְּחַר אֲרָזֵיךָ recalls the rhetorical expression of *a thriving olive tree, fair with goodly fruit* תָּרֵיב רֵעֵנָה יְפֵה פְרִי תֹאֵר in 11:16 that is the nation's original imagery of beauty and vitality as the covenant partner. The dynasty itself has created a hopeless situation and is under severe judgment without an invitation to repent.<sup>15</sup> The image of trees indeed represents the whole process from glory to destruction, demonstrating the connection between the king and the nation.

God adamantly shows His initiative in carrying out the conditional covenant upon the nation by commissioning destroyers as God's agents.<sup>16</sup> God Himself will execute the devastation through His agents, *destroyers* מְשַׁחֲתִים (v. 7). The destroyers מְשַׁחֲתִים will involve in God's sacred act, the holy war against Judah, with their weapons of destruction by cutting down the choicest cedars and burning them down (v. 7).<sup>17</sup> The interpretation of מְשַׁחֲתִים as the hostile forces is the allusion to holy war idea in the phrase וְקִדְּשֵׁתִי.<sup>18</sup> The verb לְקַדֵּשׁ is literally "consecrate" and also can be translated as "commission" or "prepare (battle)" in the context of war; here God uses "holy-war phraseology" against His own people!<sup>19</sup> God's wrath upon the house of the king of Judah with burning fire is described as the consequence of the holy war against the nation.<sup>20</sup> Nothing will be able to prevent the destruction as God Himself will release the destroying forces to do so. In this catastrophe, all the valuable and cherished things such as the royal house, family, and palaces will be devastated. God intimidates Judah by using the metaphor of destroyers as 'demolition agents' rather than 'lumberjacks' (v. 7).<sup>21</sup> God

<sup>14</sup> Craigie et al., 1991, 300; Lundbom, 1999, 124.

<sup>15</sup> Brueggemann, 1988, 189; Ibid., 1998, 197.

<sup>16</sup> According to Thompson (1980, 475), the Babylonians are portrayed as "woodcutters" who defile the temple with axes, hatchets, and hammers as well as burn the sanctuary to the ground (Ps 74).

<sup>17</sup> The term "your choicest cedars (מִבְּחַר אֲרָזֵיךָ)" refers to the Temple and king's palace in Jerusalem which Solomon built with cedars from Lebanon (Brake, 2000, 174). The palace was burned by Babylonians after Jerusalem was sieged in the ninth year of Zedekiah.

<sup>18</sup> Carroll, 1986, 419.

<sup>19</sup> Holladay, 1986, 584.

<sup>20</sup> Craigie et al., 1991, 302.

<sup>21</sup> McKane, 1986, 520.

emphasizes the point that He would not fight for Judah against the Babylonians but prepare the warriors to fight against her.<sup>22</sup> The abandoned covenant will indeed arouse God's holy anger with His particular action of preparing destroyers against the nation Judah as God's covenant partner. Although it is certain that the nation has God's covenant, God will attack His own nation as His own covenant partner; this severe situation indeed shows that the covenant is conditional.

#### **2.4.5. Conclusion**

The unit reveals a critical view on the nation Judah's disobedience in keeping the conditional covenant; the disaster coming upon the nation is trouble caused by their violating the covenant (v. 9). Jeremiah explicitly delivers God's oracle based on the conditional covenant to show that the national destruction as a covenant curse will come from their breaking God's covenant, representing the covenant from God's point of view. God is the ultimate one who will make the devastation happen by commissioning God's agents, מְשֻׁקְתִים, for the holy war as well as will carry out God's covenant with them although this process will be indeed difficult and painful for the nation to go through. Even though the type of covenant is not explicitly stated in the unit, it could be the Sinai covenant as the conditional covenant.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Craigie et al., 1991, 301.

<sup>23</sup> Lundbom (2004, 125) maintains that the destruction of the nation is the curse of the Sinai covenant upon the covenant people, regarding verses 8-9 as an adaptation of Deut 29:24-26.

## 2.5. Jer 31:31-34 (MT 31:30-33)<sup>1</sup>

### 2.5.1. Introduction

The Sinai covenant was broken (הַפְּרוּ, v. 32) by the Israelites' disobedience and sin against God, and they face God's punishment. In the midst of the national calamity, God announces that He Himself will make *a new covenant* בְּרִית הַדְּנֵשָׁה (v. 31) with *the house of Israel and the house of Judah* בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וּבֵית יְהוּדָה (v. 31) *after those days* אַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים הָהֵם (v. 33) based on the covenant relationship between God and His people Israel.<sup>2</sup> The two houses will be united into one *house of Israel* in v. 33, which is different from the meaning of the term בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל in v. 31; the house of Israel in v. 33 should be understood as the whole people of Israel, not the house of Israel as the northern kingdom.<sup>3</sup> The whole book of Jeremiah also demonstrates that both houses as one community share a common destiny for God's plan: these two houses stand together under judgment (5:11; 11:10, 17) and promise (31:31; 33:14), their reunification is part of the promised restoration (3:18), and they will return together to Zion in tears (50:4-5).<sup>4</sup> The phrase *after those days* אַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים הָהֵם in v. 33 is not the specific dating formula but indicates sequence as a later time, playing a critical role to magnify God's divine inauguration of the new covenant.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jer 31:31-34 is set in a series of Jer 30-31, the Book of Consolation. Based on the relationship between the unit 31:31-34 and chapters 30-31, there is no agreement regarding the dating of the 'new covenant' passage (Potter, 1983, 347-49). In particular, Duhm is the first and most vigorous opponent to assert Jeremiah's authenticity of the new covenant passage (Duhm, 1901, 254f), and scholars such as Swetnam and Lindars follow Duhm's view by dating it to the exilic period (Swetnam, 1974, 111-15). Lindars (1979, 47-62) claims that the new covenant unit is the oracle after 587 BCE. Carroll and Maier also assert that it is a postexilic text as a redactional addition (Carroll, 1986, 613-14). However, scholars such as Volz, Robinson, Bright, Rudolph, Weippert, Thompson, and Rom-Shiloni regard it as Jeremiah's authentic preaching, not as a postexilic prose (Robinson, 1924, 209-21; Bright, 1951, 15-29; Bright, 1965; Weippert, 1973; Thompson, 1980). For example, Volz (1922, xxiv) regards it as oracles between 594 and 588 BCE, and Rudolph (1968, 201) regards it as oracles between 621 and 609 BCE. Rom-Shiloni (2009, 254-81; 2014: 757-75; 2015:621-47; 2016:913-42) argues that that Jer 31:31-34 is a Jeremiah authentic sermon based on the relationship of Jeremiah to the Torah.

<sup>2</sup> Some scholars try to eliminate *the house of Judah* as a gloss in v. 31, as v. 33 does not have "Judah" (Volz, 1922, xxiv; Rudolph, 1968, 201; Hyatt; Bright, 1965, 283; Wolff, 1983, 50-51). However, the preceding context of 30:3-4 and 31:27 serves to claim that *Israel* in v. 33 refers to all Israel, the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Lundbom, 2004, 466).

<sup>3</sup> Hubbard, 1982, 132; Carroll, 1986, 610. Jer 3:18 emphasizes the united restoration of Judah and Israel by specifically mentioning both the house of Judah and the house of Israel. As the doomed fate of Israel is used for the lesson for Judah's return, Israel's return with Judah is a significant sign of restoration. Nevertheless, 31:33 mentions the house of Israel only for the nation's restoration. Although v. 31 mentions a new covenant made with both the house of Israel and the house of Judah, v. 32 comes to remind that their forefathers, before the division of Judah and Israel, broke the Sinai covenant. As v. 32 and v. 33 are within the continuing context of the turning point from the covenant breach to the new covenant, the house of Israel in v. 33 can represent the whole Israel.

<sup>4</sup> Keown, 1995, 131.

<sup>5</sup> Rudolph (1968, 188) regards *those days* as the time of the promised return of Ephraim. However, Keown (1995, 132) argues that *those days* could be the days when God will begin to plant, build, and repopulate the land after the complete of His judgment (31:27-30) based on the context of the Book of Consolation.

The unit shows a totally different picture of the nation's fate with the new covenant that will guarantee the future restoration of the united nation. The previously analyzed units (3:12-18; 11:1-17; 22:6-9) delivered the tiding of the nation's calamity caused by the broken covenant, emphasizing the conditional characteristic of the covenant. However, the current unit dramatically makes a turning point of the nation's destiny, from punishment to restoration, through the new covenant. The need for making the new covenant is much emphasized since the previously analyzed units have represented the severe covenant breach and the serious consequences of the breach.

The unit highlights the new covenant and its eternal nature by using a literary device of comparison between positive and negative phrases and also by making distinctive contrasts between the old covenant and the new covenant. Regarding the concept of the new covenant in relation to the Sinai covenant, biblical scholars have examined whether the new covenant is a new covenant or a renewed covenant. As mentioned in the introduction chapter, some scholars argue that the new covenant is authentically a new covenant, not a renewed old covenant, maintaining that the old covenant was really broken.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, other scholars claim that the new covenant is a renewed covenant, focusing on the continuity between the new covenant and preceding covenants, that is, a renewal of the old covenant.<sup>7</sup>

In this chapter, I will clarify the differences and connections that the new covenant unit makes between the old and new covenants in order to demonstrate that the new covenant is a renewed covenant with a significant relation with the old covenant despite its distinctive characteristics that can differentiate it from the old covenant.

### **2.5.2. Boundary Justification**

Jer 30-31 is generally regarded as a homogeneous unit; two chapters of Jer 30-31 form a distinct unit and are closely joined by both content and style.<sup>8</sup> Bozak determines the text boundaries of Jer 30-31 through the close reading of two chapters.<sup>9</sup> These two chapters as a literary unit have

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<sup>6</sup> Childs, 1960, 79-80; Anderson, 1963, 231; Rad, 1965, 212; Potter, 1983, 350; Wolff, 1983, 53, 60; Bozak, 1991, 118; Carroll, 1993, 68; Hoch, 1995, 105; McKane, 1993, 232; *Ibid.*, 1996, 818; Keown, 1995, 130-31; Pettegrew, 1999, 253; Robinson, 2001, 187-89; Lundbom, 2004, 466; Adeyemi, 2006, 319; Kartveit, 2018, 167.

<sup>7</sup> Kline, 1968, 53-75; Kaiser, 1972, 17, 21; *Ibid.*, 1974, 307; Swetnam, 1974, 112-15; Weinfeld, 1976, 17-56; Lohfink 1991, 45; Rendtorff, 1993, 198; Walton, 1994, 60-61; Holmgren, 1999, 75-95; Lewis, 2002, 56; Lohfink, 2003, 48; Otto, 2006, 947; Rom-Shiloni, 2015b, 170-71; Rossi, 2018, 202-25.

<sup>8</sup> Bright, 1965, 284.

<sup>9</sup> Bozak (1991, 18-128) divides Jer 30-31 as follows: Prose Introduction 'Words of Restoration' (30:1-4), Poem I 'A Study in Contrasts (30:5-11), Poem II 'Healing of the Incurable Wound' (30:12-17), Poem III 'Yhwh's Caring and Chastising Presence' (30:18-31:1), Poem IV 'Once...; Again...' (31:2-6), Poem V 'Yhwh's Great Assembly' (31:7-14), Poem VI 'Hope Renewed' (31:15-22), and Prose conclusion 'Total Newness' (31:23-40).

poetic character, describing the restoration of both the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel.<sup>10</sup>

Bracke demonstrates the coherence of Jer 30-31 through their theological content and their affirmation of God's promise of restoration as well as argues that the promise of a new covenant is the base for God's restoration of His people in Jer 30-31.<sup>11</sup> Bozak considers the unit Jer 31:23-40 as the conclusion of Jer 30-31 that consist of prose introduction (30:1-4), six poetic parts (30:5-11, 30:12-17, 30: 18-31:1, 31:2-6, 31:7-14, 31:15-22), and prose conclusion (31:23-40).<sup>12</sup> Regarding the prose conclusion part 31:23-40 that has a series of five short salvation oracles (vv. 23-26, 27-30, 31-34, 35-37, 38-40), "a chiasm centered on 31:31-34, the promise of the new covenant," is found thematically.<sup>13</sup> The third oracle 31:31-34 is the central unit of the five oracles within the passage 31:23-40 that forms a chiastic structure: the first (31:23-26) and fifth (31:38-40) oracles refer to Jerusalem, and the second (31:27-30) and fourth (31:35-37) oracles create a comparing tension between human being's sin and God's faithful promise. Therefore, the initiation of the new covenant in 31:31-34 will be the solution for the tension, bringing forgiveness of sin and transformation of broken relationship between God and Israel.<sup>14</sup> In short, the unit 31:31-34 is the climatical oracle of the five oracles in the passage 31:23-40 that is the prose conclusion of Jer 30-31; the unit Jer 31:31-34 stands within the close context of 31:23-40 and also within the broad context of Jer 30-31 the "Little Book of Consolation." The new covenant unit Jer 31:31-34 is the thematic center of Jer 30-31.

- a. **First oracle** (vv. 23-26): Promise of a restoration of the land and cities of Judah
- b. **Second oracle** (vv. 27-30): Declaration of a restoration of the house of Israel and the house of Judah (God's faithfulness in spite of Israel's sin)
- c. **Third oracle** (vv. 31-34): Announcement of God's promise of the new covenant for His people Israel
- b'. **Fourth oracle** (vv. 35-37): Declaration of God's everlasting love for Israel (God's faithfulness in spite of Israel's sin)
- a'. **Fifth oracle** (vv. 38-40): Promise of a restoration of the city of Jerusalem

The new covenant unit is also strengthened by the chiastic pattern of Jer 31:23-40. Lundbom supports the centrality of the unit 31:31-34, arguing that there are 11+ lines of text

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<sup>10</sup> Keck, 1994, 804.

<sup>11</sup> Bracke, 1983, 88-102.

<sup>12</sup> Bozak, 1991, 71-128.

<sup>13</sup> Keown, 1995, 126. The first oracle 31:23-26 promises a restoration of the land and cities of Judah. The second oracle 31:27-30 declares a restoration promise to the house of Israel and Judah by building and planting them. The third oracle 31:31-34 announces God's promise of the new covenant for His people. The fourth oracle 31:35-37 proclaims God's everlasting love for Israel. The fifth oracle 31:38-40 promises the rebuilding of the city.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 126-27.

and 101 words for vv. 23-30 and 12+ lines of text and 101(2) words for vv. 35-40 in BHS.<sup>15</sup> The unit 31:23-40 contains two groups of paired units (vv. 23-30 and vv. 35-40) with two introductory phrases: *כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה* (vv. 23, 35, 36) and *הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים* (vv. 27, 31, 38).<sup>16</sup> The first unit of each pair starts with the phrase *כֹּה-אָמַר יְהוָה*, and the second unit of each pair begins with the phrase *הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים* as follows:

vv. 23-26	<i>כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה</i> (v. 23)	┌
vv. 27-30	<i>הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים</i> (v. 27)	└
vv. 31-34	<i>הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים</i> (v. 31)	
vv. 35-37	<i>כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה</i> (v. 35)	┌
vv. 38-40	<i>הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים</i> (v. 38)	└

This chiastic structure shows the close connection between these five units; the third unit 31:31-34 as a climax is surrounded by two groups of paired units. Nevertheless, as the phrase *behold, the days are coming* *הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים* in v. 31 indicates that a new unit begins, the chiastic structure serves more dynamically to highlight the unit 31:31-34 as one organic unit that makes a divine announcement that God will make a new covenant with His people Israel. In conclusion, despite the contextual connection between the oracle of 31:31-34 and other oracles, Jer 31:31-34 as the only reference of a new covenant in the Old Testament is explicitly distinguished and isolated from other four units.

The similes of marriage and family in the unit 31:31-34 are one of the parameters to unite the verses all together and distinguish them from their surroundings, highlighting God's love and care for His people Israel based on the covenant relationship. When God makes a covenant with the Israelites at Sinai, the religious and ethnic status of Israel is radically changed by being adopted as God's people; the Sinaitic covenant promises the familial intimacy with God, not political supremacy.<sup>17</sup> The similes of marriage and family are expressed through the phrase *בְּיּוֹם הֶחְזִיקֵנִי בְיָדִם* (v. 32), the verb *בָּעַלְתִּי* (v. 32), and the phrase *וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים וְהָמָּה יְהוֹי* (v. 33). The phrase *in the day I took them by the hand* *בְּיּוֹם הֶחְזִיקֵנִי בְיָדִם* in v. 32 is the metaphoric expression to describe God's intimate guidance in the exodus deliverance, reflecting the marriage relationship between God and Israel (Isa 40:11b; 41:13; 42:6; Hos 11:3).<sup>18</sup> According to Holladay, this exodus expression *in the day I took them by the hand* in v. 32 is not common in the OT, as the similar expressions of the phrase *in the day I brought them out of the land of Egypt* found in Jer 7:22 are widespread.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the exodus event is

<sup>15</sup> Lundbom, 2004, 465.

<sup>16</sup> Bracke, 1983, 56-57.

<sup>17</sup> Muffs, 2005, 45-51.

<sup>18</sup> Lundbom, 2004, 467.

<sup>19</sup> Holladay, 1989, 197.

intentionally described with God's parental affection on His people Israel within the phrase בְּיוֹם הַחֲזִיקִי בְיָדָם.

The metaphorical verb בָּעַלְתִּי in v. 32, which also appears in 3:14 (אֲנֹכִי בָּעַלְתִּי בָכֶם), indicates husband-wife relationship, emphasizing a husband's rights and authority exercised over his wife to point out Israel's covenant breaking in the form of apostasy.<sup>20</sup> God loves Israel, gives her a sweet honeymoon in the desert, and brings her into the promised land. However, the Israelites have violated "the substance of the covenant by their apostasy," and their marriage relationship with God has been broken.<sup>21</sup> The love of God through a family experience is the simile of the experience concerning God and His bride, the nation Israel.<sup>22</sup>

The covenant formula of *I will be their God, and they shall be my people* וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם וְהָיָה יְהוָה לָהֶם in v. 33 appears four other times in the book, twice related to the Sinai covenant (7:23; 11:4) and the other twice for the future promise (24:7; 32:38).<sup>23</sup> The phrase וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם וְהָיָה יְהוָה לָהֶם reflects the renewed relationship between God and His people Israel that will be established within the new covenant, portraying this relationship as a mutual comment.<sup>24</sup> The familial phrase *my people . . . your God* (Exod 6:7; Lev 26:12; Deut 27:9; Hos 1:9) is the vocabulary of the Mosaic covenant; in particular, Israel's rebellion must lead to the dissolution of their familial relationship with God,<sup>25</sup> offering two family-establishing relationships between God and Israel, God-people and husband-wife relationships.<sup>26</sup>

### 2.5.3. Internal structure

The structure of Jer 31:31-34 is built upon chiasmus, which contributes for defining the self-stand of these verses. The first part (vv. 31-33a) explicitly shows a chiastic structure. It is framed by the days to come in the beginning and the end as well as by the day of the exodus in the center. It begins with *the days/time* נְיָמִים, being followed by the reference to the new covenant, *I shall make with the house of Israel...a new covenant* וְכָרַתִּי אֶת בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת בֵּית יְהוּדָה בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה, and the reference to the old covenant, *not like the covenant I made with their fathers* לֹא כַּבְרִית אֲשֶׁר כָּרַתִּי אֶת אֲבוֹתָם. The centerpiece in the first part is the word of salvation history, *on the day I took them by hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt* בְּיוֹם הַחֲזִיקִי בְיָדָם.

<sup>20</sup> Keown, 1995, 132. The root verb בעל occurs only two times in the Book of Jeremiah, 3:14 and 31:32).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>22</sup> Harper, 1905, 205.

<sup>23</sup> Keown, 1995, 132-33.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>25</sup> Stuart, 1987, 32.

<sup>26</sup> Muffs, 1992, 49.



להוציאם מארץ מצרים. Then it moves on the reference to the old covenant, *it was they who broke my covenant, of whom I was master* בְּאִשֶּׁר הִמָּה הִפְרוּ אֶת בְּרִיתִי וְאֲנֹכִי בָעַלְתִּי בָם, and the reference to the new covenant, *this is the covenant I shall make with the house of Israel* זֹאת הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר אֶכְרֵת אֶת בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל. Finally, it ends with *the days/time* יָמִים.<sup>27</sup>

- a. *days are coming* יָמִים בָּאִים
- b. *I shall make with the house of Israel...a new covenant* וְכָרַתִּי אֶת בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת בֵּית יְהוּדָה בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה
- c. *not like the covenant I made with their fathers* לֹא כַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר כָּרַתִּי אֶת אֲבוֹתָם
- d. *on the day I took them by hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt* בְּיוֹם הַקְּחוֹתִי בְיָדָם לְהוֹצִיאָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
- c'. *it was they who broke my covenant, of whom I was master* אֲשֶׁר הִמָּה הִפְרוּ אֶת בְּרִיתִי וְאֲנֹכִי בָעַלְתִּי בָם
- b'. *this is the covenant I shall make with the house of Israel* זֹאת הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר אֶכְרֵת אֶת בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל
- a'. *after those days* אַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים

The second portion (vv. 33b-34) also shows a chiasmic structure; it begins and ends with “two bicola, each of which contains a pair of first-person singular verbs; each of these bicola offers a chiasmus with respect to verbs and prepositional complements.”<sup>28</sup>

Verses 31-34 as a whole show anaphora with the repetition of the phrase *declares God/oracle of God* יְהוָה נֹאֵם in each verse, which demonstrates that God Himself reveal His compelling intention for the future of Israel through the new covenant.

- |       |  |   |
|-------|--|---|
| v. 31 | <i>Behold, days are coming—oracle of God—when I will make ... a new covenant</i> | הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים נֹאֵם יְהוָה; וְכָרַתִּי ... בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה |
| v. 32 | <i>not like the covenant ... oracle of God.</i>                                  | לֹא כַבְּרִית ... נֹאֵם יְהוָה.                                     |
| v. 33 | <i>But this is the covenant ... oracle of God:</i>                               | כִּי זֹאת הַבְּרִית ... נֹאֵם יְהוָה                                |
| v. 34 | <i>... oracle of God ...</i>   | ... נֹאֵם יְהוָה ...  |

In particular, there is a turning point from v. 33 that begins with the word *but* כִּי; the structure with two groups, vv. 31-33a and 33b-34, serves to highlight the distinctive characteristics of the new covenant related to the ones of the old one. While the former, vv. 31-32, stresses that the new covenant is not like the old covenant made in the day God took the Israelites out of Egypt, the latter, vv. 33-34, emphasizes that the new covenant will bring about an internal transformation and a religious renovation that differentiate the new from the old. While the old covenant was made with the exodus generation, the new covenant will be made with the future generation who will undergo “spiritual return and geographical removal from a different place of captivity (31:15-22; 50:4-5).”<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Holladay, 1989, 164-165.  
<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 165.  
<sup>29</sup> Keown, 1995, 131.

The presentation mode of the contrast between the old covenant and the new is also manifested by the contrast between prose (vv. 31-33a) and poetry (vv. 33b-34) as a part of the intentional effect of the passage.<sup>30</sup> It seems that the prose section as the big picture of the new covenant leads readers to better focus on the dynamic nature of the new covenant in the poetry section. Then, what does it mean by the phrase *not like the old covenant* in v. 32? The phrase is a metaphorical expression to compare the nature of two covenants. It means that the new covenant contains its distinctive characteristics that can be differentiated from the old one; its uniqueness is specifically depicted in vv. 33-34. However, we must remember that the phrase does not negate the old covenant itself, as it does not say that the new covenant will replace the old one.

#### 2.5.4. Positive and Negative

The characteristics of the new covenant are dynamically described by the alternated rhetorical expression of positive and negative vocabularies as follows:

positive (v. 31)	<i>I will make ... a new covenant</i>	וְכָרַתִּי ... בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה
negative (v. 32)	<i>not like the covenant I made ...</i>	... לֹא כַבְרִית אֲשֶׁר כָּרַתִּי ...
positive (v. 33)	<i>but this is the covenant that ...</i>	... כִּי זֹאת הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר ...
negative (v. 34)	<i>they shall not teach anymore ...</i>	... וְלֹא יִלְמְדוּ עוֹד ...

According to Wolff, certain “antithetical word-pairs” are used to convince audience in exhortation speech.<sup>31</sup> This positive-negative device in this unit can serve to reveal more effectively God’s oracle about the new covenant for His people Israel with an intimate relationship. As Jeremiah adeptly employs these alternative phrases with antithetical word pairs in the unit, he can lead his audiences more dynamically to understand the distinctive characteristics of the new covenant, “what the new covenant will be” and “what it will not be.”<sup>32</sup>

The whole structure of positive-negative shows the contrast between the old covenant and the new covenant. However, the comparison does not refer to the change in the role or requirements of either Israel or God in the covenant but the change in the way the covenant is kept.<sup>33</sup> The Israelites were at fault, not the covenant itself; there was no failure or discrepancy in the old covenant.<sup>34</sup> The Israelites were required to obey the requirements of the old covenant,

<sup>30</sup> Holladay, 1989, 164-65.

<sup>31</sup> Wolff, 1973, 67.

<sup>32</sup> Lundbom, 2004, 464.

<sup>33</sup> Clements, 1988, 191.

<sup>34</sup> Norris, 1991, 56.

but they failed to keep the covenant and were under the judgement of God. Even though God gave them the old covenant on the stone tablets, they could not help failing to keep the old covenant because of their disobedience and stubborn heart (12:2; 13:23). While Israel was the one who had to satisfy the requirements of the covenant in the old covenant, God is the one who is responsible to fulfill the requirements of the covenant in the new covenant. God will make the new covenant in a different way; God will put His Torah within them and write it on their heart, *וְנָאֵם יְהוָה נְתַתִּי אֶת תּוֹרָתִי בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וְעַל לִבְכֶם אֶכְתָּבְנָהּ*, (v. 33). God Himself guarantees the fulfillment of the new covenant as He will transform their will and heart and empower their inner capacity to keep the covenant. Moreover, there is no conditional characteristics of the new covenant described in the unit.<sup>35</sup> God does not require people to do anything for their restoration, but rather He explicitly promises to bestow them the spiritual blessings such as the religious transformation, *כִּי כוֹלֶם יִדְעוּ אוֹתִי לְמִקְטָנָם וְעַד גְּדוּלָּם*, (v. 34). While their fathers broke the old covenant because of their incapability to meet its conditional requirements, the new covenant goes beyond the conditionality through God's divine mercy of forgiveness, *כִּי אֶסְלַח*, *לְעֹנֵיכֶם וּלְחַטָּאתֵיכֶם לֹא אֶנְכַּר עוֹד*, without the condition of obedience (v. 34).<sup>36</sup> God is not only the maker of the new covenant but also the guarantor of its accomplishment, so that all the responsibilities related with the new covenant are upon God Himself. The identity of Israel in the new covenant will be totally changed; God will not demand her any obligation because He will solve the problem of her inability to keep the covenant.

The new covenant unit makes a transition in the third verse (v. 33) that starts with the transitional word *but* *כִּי* that can lead to the emphasis on the significant nature of the new covenant different from the old one. Jeremiah describes how different two covenants are from v. 33. While the old covenant was written on the stone tablets, the new covenant written on the heart will bring about the promised relationship between God and His people Israel, a religious transformation, and God's divine mercy of pardoning the new covenant generation's sin.

### 2.5.5. Eternity

The eternal nature of the new covenant is revealed in the comparison between the old and the new covenants. The distinction between the promised future and the past (*no longer* *לֹא... עוֹד* in v. 34) is emphasized as the accent in the new covenant passages; although the Torah will

<sup>35</sup> Becking, 2004, 260; Frish, 2020, 161.

<sup>36</sup> Brueggemann, 2007, 143.

remain in the new covenant and still demand its obligations, conditions to comply with its demands are vastly improved as God promises to write His Torah on the human heart.<sup>37</sup>

Being written on the human heart (v. 33) is the crucial characteristic of the new covenant, which is one of reasons that the new covenant is innovative.<sup>38</sup> The heart in the book is deceitful, evil, stubborn, and rebellious, so people do not have an ability to obey God's law. God was far from the stubborn hearts of the people of Judah (12:2), so that only a heart circumcision (4:4) and inscription by God's own hand can break through the hardness of their heart and prepare them for faithful obedience. Thing written on the heart is deeper, more internal, and indelible, so it becomes part of the human personality.<sup>39</sup> Writing on the heart by God's hands is fundamentally different from writing on the stone by human hands since the writing of the new covenant cannot be deleted and lose its validity. When God will make a new covenant with Israel, He will penetrate their hearts, write His law in them, and let them know Him. God Himself promises to make it happen through the new covenant.

The concept of heart *לֵב* in v. 33 relates to the circumcision of heart in Deuteronomy (10:16; 30:6).<sup>40</sup> God demands a new kind of obedience to keep the covenant requirements.<sup>41</sup> The notion of the law being in Israel's heart (Deut 6:6; 30:6, 14) portrays that God would place His law within them and write it on their hearts.<sup>42</sup> The question of Israel's obedience to the law was central to the whole issue and to the very existence of Israel as God's people. However, the Deuteronomistic history (Deuteronomy to 2 Kings) shows how Israel had repeatedly failed to live in accordance with the terms of the covenant and judgment thus came upon first the northern kingdom in 722 BCE and finally Judah in 587 BCE. Their failure to obey the covenant laws brought about judgment upon the nation; the book of Deuteronomy describes a long list of the curses for the failure to obey these laws. The real problem was that Israel had not only

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<sup>37</sup> Lundbom, 1992, 1088-89.

<sup>38</sup> Rad, 1965, 213-14; Wolff 1983, 54.

<sup>39</sup> Holladay, 1986, 486.

<sup>40</sup> There are similarities in the motifs and ideas between Jeremiah and Deuteronomy as the period of Jeremiah largely overlaps with that of the Deuteronomistic history before the First Temple destruction (Frish, 2020, 172). Regarding the covenant conception between two books, the Book of Jeremiah contains not only "thematic resemblances to the book of Deuteronomy" but also "clear echoes of phrase and style, and even specific literary allusions" to prominent passages of Deuteronomy for the prophetic message of Jeremiah (Rom-Shiloni, 2015, 621). In particular, Hyatt (1942, 15-73) and Rowley (1950, 157-74) argue that the prose sections of Jeremiah reflect the rhetoric and theological assumptions of the tradition of Deuteronomy in the claims of covenant theology. The poetic materials of Jeremiah, according to Brueggemann (2007, 140-41), is also influenced by the covenantal insistence of Deuteronomy, staying close to the covenantal commitments of Deuteronomy. Interestingly, Rom-Shiloni (2015, 621-47) challenges the simplistic perception of the use of Deuteronomistic expressions in Jeremiah by claiming the influence of both Deuteronomistic and Priestly Pentateuchal materials on Jeremiah's conception of covenant.

<sup>41</sup> Keck, 1994, 804.

<sup>42</sup> Nicholson, 1975, 71.

failed to obey the law but also was not capable to obey it, which Jeremiah indeed wants to point out (13:23).<sup>43</sup> Therefore, God Himself graciously announces the new covenant to bring about the necessary change in His people's will and ability by putting His law in His people's inner nature and writing it on their hearts in a way that prevents their violation, so that each of them will know Him and spontaneously obey and love His ways.

The unconditional character of the new covenant is described in the metonymic phrase *from the least of them to the greatest of them* לְמִקְטַנָּם וְעַד גְּדוֹלָם in v. 34. It is the expression of merismus: two contrasting vocabularies, the least קְטַנָּם and the greatest גְּדוֹלָם, are used here together to stand for the whole, all ages and classes. According to Holladay, it can refer to “from young to old” or “from the lowest class to the aristocracy.”<sup>44</sup> God Himself will reveal the knowledge to all ages and classes in the new covenant (v. 34).<sup>45</sup> The religious transformation will be fulfilled by the new covenant; all the people, from the least of them to the greatest of them, will know God without the condition of human teaching and learning as God will instill His Torah directly in their hearts. The expression of the sentence, *everyone will teach no more his neighbor knowing God* לֹא יִלְמְדוּ עוֹד אִישׁ אֶת רֵעֵהוּ וְאִישׁ אֶת אָחִיו לְאֵמֹר דַּעוּ אֶת יְהוָה (v. 34), describes the eternal nature of the new covenant.

The eternal nature of the new covenant is also shown in God's divine mercy of pardon as a gift of the new covenant (v. 34). God will not remember sin of the new covenant generation anymore, so they will be free from the guilt of their ancestors' sin and their own sin. The phrase לֹא עוֹד appears twice in v. 34; the first appearance is related to teaching, and the second one to forgiveness. As the two convey the semantic emphasis to demonstrate God's never-failing intention by employing the same phrase repeatedly within the same verse, they create together the everlasting covenant. While the old covenant did not last because of their unforgiven sin, the new covenant will bestow the divine forgiveness, אָסַלְחָ לְעוֹנֵם, without the condition of obedience. Furthermore, God promises not to remember their sin anymore לֹא אֶזְכֹּר עוֹד, so their heart and mind written with the knowledge of God cannot turn to sin again.<sup>46</sup> God's gracious gift of pardon as well as the heart and mind inscribed with God's revelation will be granted to the people of the new covenant, which is not a human achievement but God's

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<sup>43</sup> Nicholson, 1975, 70-71.

<sup>44</sup> Holladay, 1989, 198.

<sup>45</sup> Keown, 1995, 135.

<sup>46</sup> Rudolph, 1968, 185; Brueggemann, 1988, 71; Keown, 1995, 135.

willingness and mercy.<sup>47</sup> God does not expect the faithfulness of His people anymore, so He promises to make the covenant eternal.

### 2.5.6. Conclusion

Jer 31:31-34, as the only passage to mention a new covenant in the Old Testament, is not only the high point of Jeremiah's theology but also "one of the profoundest and most moving passages in the entire Bible."<sup>48</sup> When the days are coming, God will give His people a new covenant unconditionally, write His law on their hearts, and forgive their sins, so that all of them will know Him based on a renewed relationship between God and them.

The unit skillfully highlights the characteristics of the new covenant by making a comparison between the old covenant and the new covenant. Keown emphasizes the discontinuity between the old covenant and the new one, arguing that the new covenant promised in Jer 31:31 means the changed relationship between God and His people for some time in the future.<sup>49</sup> However, there was no failure or discrepancy in the old covenant, but the Israelites failed to keep the covenant. The contrast between the old covenant and the new covenant does not refer to the change in the role or requirements of either Israel or God in the covenant, but the change in the way the covenant is kept and the identity of the one who is in charge of keeping it.

The covenantal relationship between God and Israel is not changed but everlasting. The Sinai experience in Exodus is based on the concept of the relationship to God in ancient Israel, showing the most ancient picture of Israel's perception regarding its relationship to God.<sup>50</sup> The covenant formula of *I will be their God, and they shall be my people* in v 33 serves to claim that the new covenant is not a totally new covenant but a renewed Sinai covenant, as it appears four other times in the book related to both the Sinai covenant (7:23; 11:4) and the future promise (24:7; 32:38). The new covenant in the unit confirms this covenantal relationship that occupies a central position between the declaration that the Torah will be written on the hearts of the Israelites and the other declaration that all of them will know God without any external help.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Keown, 1995, 135.

<sup>48</sup> Bright, 1965, 287.

<sup>49</sup> Keown, 1995, 130.

<sup>50</sup> McCarthy, 1978, 244.

<sup>51</sup> Rendtorff, 1998, 34.

The new covenant does not replace the old covenant but renews the old covenant by writing God's law on the people's heart. Writing on the heart will eradicate the external constraints and liability of the old system of written documents and human mediators as well as break through the internal hindrance to the perfection of the covenant relationship.<sup>52</sup> This emphasis on the internal transformation serves to perceive the new covenant as a renewed Sinai covenant; some passages of Deuteronomy (6:6; 30:6, 14) which highlight a heart circumcision and God's Word on the heart are renovated by the new covenant passage that God Himself would place His Torah within the Israelites and write it on their hearts.

The Torah will remain in the new covenant, even though Jeremiah does not mention what it will consist of. Keown argues that the content of the Torah will be modified in the new covenant, maintaining that *my law/Torah* (v. 33), in the book, usually indicates "the revelation of God's will and way in the form of commandments, statutes, and words."<sup>53</sup> However, the new covenant passage does not have any reference to something new of the law, rather it underlines that God will write His law on the heart, not on the stone, reveal His knowledge to all ages and classes, from the least of them to the greatest of them, not through human teaching and learning anymore, bestow His divine mercy of forgiveness, and remember sin of the new covenant generation no more.

In conclusion, the comparison between the old and new covenants distinguishes the new covenant from the old covenant through its distinctive characteristics. While Israel is the one who failed to satisfy the requirements of the covenant in the old covenant, God is the only one who will fulfill the requirement of the covenant in the new covenant. Not implying the discontinuity between the two covenants, the comparison adeptly argues that the new covenant is a renewed covenant that magnifies God's unfailing love and faithfulness for His people Israel revealed in the dynamic continuity with the old covenant.

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<sup>52</sup> Keown, 1995, 134.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. Frish (2020, 161) argues that the term 'Torah' in Jeremiah does not refer to a law or instruction in the narrow sense but rather indicates the terms of the covenant that God will be with the people.

## 2.6. Jer 32:36-44

### 2.6.1. Introduction

The unit, following 31:31-34, continues to deliver God's oracle about the promise of the future restoration of the nation, indicating how God's people will return to their land from the judgment at the hand of the Babylonians.<sup>1</sup> It is located within the broader context of Jer 30-33, the Book of Restoration commonly confined to the poetic oracles of 30-31 that emphasize the hope of a new covenant and extended to the proses of Jer 32-33 that underline the joy of a new covenant.<sup>2</sup> As the unit proclaims an everlasting covenant (בְּרִית עוֹלָם) for the restoration promise, it repeats the new covenant concept of the previous unit with linguistic connections such as the covenant on people's heart (31:33; 32:39) and the covenant relationship between God and the nation as His people (31:33; 32:38). Nevertheless, this unit shows a more concrete description than the previous unit by portraying how the nation will return from exile physically and historically.

The unit contains God's oracle, *this is what God says* כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה (vv. 36, 42),<sup>3</sup> as a divine answer from God that shows why He commanded Jeremiah to buy the fields in a context of communal lament. God explicitly speaks to His people about His redemptive plan for them while the key negative motif is echoed (vv. 36, 42, 43).<sup>4</sup>

אֵל הָעִיר הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם אֹמְרִים נִתְּנָה בְּיַד מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל בְּחֶרֶב וּבְרָעָב וּבְדָבָר (v. 36).  
הַבָּאֲתִי אֵל הָעָם הַזֶּה אֶת כָּל הַרְעָה הַגְּדוּלָה הַזֹּאת (v. 42).  
שְׂמִמָּה הִיא מֵאִין אָדָם וּבְהִמָּה נִתְּנָה בְּיַד הַכַּשְׂדִּים (v. 43).

Although those in Jerusalem or Judah will be exiled, God promises a restoration for the next generation in the exile, not the current Jerusalem community or “co-extensive with the inhabitants of that city.”<sup>5</sup> In the midst of the fulfillment of the inevitable disaster, the good news of restoration is revealed to Jeremiah; God will readopt His people who were rejected (v. 38), and the covenant will be reinstated with Exiles upon their return (v. 40).<sup>6</sup> It seems paradoxical that a word of promise regarding the future restoration of Israel is announced in

<sup>1</sup> According to Lundbom (2004, 522), the unit reflects the period of the final siege a year before the fall of Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> Allen, 1990, 330-80; Fretheim, 2002, 453.

<sup>3</sup> According to Holladay (1989, 218), it is “a self-imposed affirmation of what Yahweh will say in time to come.”

<sup>4</sup> Allen, 2008, 370.

<sup>5</sup> McKane, 1996, 850.

<sup>6</sup> Rom-Shiloni, 2015, 159-60. According to Rom-Shiloni (Ibid.), the covenant relationship between God and the people is chronological: “[t]he God-people relationship is set on the axis of time, tracing its past, referring to or rather neglecting its present, and projecting its future. While judgment prophecies are the context for observing the covenant from its constitution to its present violation, exhortations and prophecies of consolation are the framework in which the contemporary state and the future fate of the covenant are examined.”



the present catastrophe, the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, which is used as the divine judgment to fulfill God's redemptive plan as the divine promise.

The unit embodies the word of hope, a salvation oracle for Jerusalem. God joyfully promises the future blessing as an unconditional restoration of the eternal covenant, without the precondition of repentance.<sup>7</sup> God's promise of the restoration is "a powerful word about the future and the renewal of life in the land, not in a series of oracles but the story of Jeremiah's purchase of a field in his home territory" before the Babylonian captivity.<sup>8</sup> God will bring the scattered Israelites from exile to their homeland, let them live securely in the land, and give them one heart and one way to fear Him. God Himself reveals His willingness to do good forever to His people during the doom of Israel history and also makes sure that the land of Judah, which has been handed over to the Babylonians, will be restored as a process of the restoration.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate that the eternal covenant only depends on God, without a precondition of repentance. God Himself joyfully reveals a hope for the exilic community and fulfills their future return to their homeland through the everlasting covenant when the day comes.

### **2.6.2. Boundary Justification**

Jer 32 presents accounts of Jeremiah's purchase of land during his confinement in the court of the guard (vv. 1-15) and Jeremiah's praying to ask why he had been commanded to buy the land (vv. 16-25).<sup>9</sup> Jeremiah's dialogue with God in Jer 32:16-25 shows that it was not easy for him to believe the promises that he had uttered simply because of the compulsion of God's divine word that had come to him.<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, there are oracle of threatening nature as the promise of judgment (vv. 26-35) and oracle of an everlasting covenant as the promise of restoration (vv. 36-44).

The unit 32:36-44 begins with the word *but/and now* הַעַתָּה (v. 36), which is an indication for a new unit by referring to a discourse shift from present to future.<sup>11</sup> God's dramatic plan for His people is revealed throughout the unit, from present judgment to future restoration; God promises the return of Israelite and Judahite exiles, resettlement of exiles and restored

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<sup>7</sup> Keck, 2001, 821.

<sup>8</sup> Keck, 2001, 819.

<sup>9</sup> Bright, 1965, 297-98.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 297.

<sup>11</sup> Lundbom, 2004, 518.

community life in Judah, and new and ongoing covenants between God and Israel-Judah.<sup>12</sup> This dynamic characteristic of these verses is disclosed in the opposite word pairs: מִקְבָּצֵם-הַדְּחָתִים (v. 37) and הַטּוֹבָה-הַרְעָה (v. 42). God will gather His people (מִקְבָּצֵם) from all the countries where He drove them (הַדְּחָתִים) in His furious anger and great wrath (v. 37). Just as God has brought all the great evil/calamity (הַרְעָה) upon them, God will bring upon them all the good/prosperity (הַטּוֹבָה) that He has promised them (v. 42).

The unit includes a few repeating words to support its boundary. The recurring phrase of *this is what God says* הֲנֵה אָמַר יְהוָה (vv. 36, 42) shows that God Himself will change Judah's doomed reality into a hopeful future by promising the restoration based on an everlasting covenant. The repeating assonance verbs שׁוּב (to turn back, return) and יָשָׁב (to sit, remain, dwell) also serve to define the coherency of the unit. God will bring them back to the land and make them to dwell (v. 37), He will not turn away from them (v. 40), and He will restore them to their original situation and make their captivity to return (v. 44). The same is true also to the recurring term טוֹב. God will do them good from their falling into despair because they are His covenant people.

לְטוֹב לָהֶם וְלְבְנֵיהֶם אֶחְרִיהֶם (v. 39).  
 לְהִיטִיבִי אוֹתָם (v. 40).  
 לְהִטִּיב אוֹתָם (v. 41).  
 אֲנֹכִי מְבִיא עֲלֵיהֶם אֵת כָּל הַטּוֹבָה (v. 42).

What does it mean that God will do them good? It refers to God's promise that they and their descendants will return to their homeland and also have a prosperity in the land. They will inherit all the good that God has promised them (vv. 42-44) as God will fulfill His word וְנִשְׁעָתִים הַזֶּאת בְּאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת (v. 41); fields in the land of Benjamin and every other region of Judah will once again be bought with silver, deeds will be sealed, and witnesses will be summoned for land transactions.

The unit has a thematic distinction from the whole chapter, Jer 32, which discusses the field purchase. It is part of the chapter but presents another layer, not only coming back to the land but also the renewed covenant that depends on God. The unit highlights that the land purchase is the consequence of the covenant renewal as the significant present for the covenant people. God does not demand anything from them for the land restoration. Jeremiah's land purchase is a covenantal example for all future purchases to actualize the future restoration of Israel's fortunes in his present,<sup>13</sup> and also a covenantal symbol and action to make the

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 499.

<sup>13</sup> Keown, 1995, 162.

restoration realistic and vivid in anticipating God’s restorative work for His covenant people.<sup>14</sup> As their homeland is the promised land that God has given to them as a blessing, their returning from exile to the land and thriving in the land is an essential part of their restoration. Therefore, the unit 32:36-44 is organically interwoven based on God’s unconditional covenant, demonstrating that God’s faithful sovereignty for His covenant people never fails in spite of their unqualified behaviors and lives.

### 2.6.3. Internal Structure

Jer 32:36-44 discloses God’s initiative as His unilateral grace for underserved Israel in light of the covenant relationship between God and His people, highlighting the inner transformation as the significant characteristic of the restoration and the land prosperity as a concrete consequence of the restoration. The unit can be divided into two sub-units: the renewed covenant promise (vv. 36-41) and its guarantee (vv. 42-44), under the theme of God’s promised salvation.<sup>15</sup> As the second part begins with the word כִּי, there is an intimate causal connection between the first one and the second one.

#### Renewed Covenant Promise (vv. 36-41)

Announcement of God’s oracle (v. 36)  
 Return of the exiles (v. 37)  
 Covenant relationship/formula (v. 38)  
 Transformation through one heart and one way (v. 39)  
 Making an everlasting covenant (v. 40)  
 Doing them good by planting them in the land (v. 41)

#### The Guarantee (vv. 42-44)

God’s decisive resolution to bless His people (v. 42)  
 Land purchase amid a desolate situation (v. 43)  
 Fortune Restoration through field transactions (v. 44)

The first subunit (vv. 36-41) talks about a renewed covenant, beginning with the promise for the return of God’s people to the land of Judah. It depicts the process of Israel’s restoration: God’s intervening to deliver His people from exile (37), God’s reinitiating a relationship with His people, and God’s creating a transformation.<sup>16</sup> God promises to give them *one heart* and *one way* לֵב אֶחָד וְדֶרֶךְ אֶחָד,<sup>17</sup> so they will fear him forever (v. 39) and will not stray into apostasy (v. 40). In terms of the process of the restoration here, it is interesting that the covenant formula (v. 38)<sup>18</sup> precedes God’s deed in giving one heart (v. 39) and making an

<sup>14</sup> Fretheim, 2002, 469.

<sup>15</sup> Lundbom, 2004, 498, 524. Keown (1995, 145) divides vv. 36-41 into two sub-themes, restoration (vv. 36-37) and the eternal covenant (vv. 38-41).

<sup>16</sup> Raitt, 1977, 132. The new covenant unit Jer 31:31-34 is the passage with two components, God’s reinitiating a relationship with His people and God’s creating a transformation.

<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, LXX has a different translation, “another heart and another way” (Bright, 1965, 295), and Peshitta also has a distinctive expression, “a new heart and a new spirit,” which has been assimilated to Ezek 18:31, לֵב נְדָשָׁה וְרוּחַ נְדָשָׁה (McKane, 1986, 850).

<sup>18</sup> Stuart (1987, 32) argues that this formula is the vocabulary of the Mosaic covenant. There are two family-establishing relationships between God and Israel, God-people and husband-wife relationships (Muffs, 1992, 49). The familial relationship with God and Israel, “my people . . . your God” (Exod 6:7; Lev 26:12; Deut 27:9; Hos

everlasting covenant (v. 40). The restoration is unconditional; the heart and covenant are not the condition for the restoration. The heart and covenant were given to the Nation in order to maintain the everlasting relationship with God. His people will be brought to the land of Israel (v. 37) and be settled in the land forever (v. 41); the situation will be same, but forever. God reinforces an unbreakable and irrevocable covenant relationship between God and His people, without apostasy (v. 40b); because of the everlasting covenant, God will not turn away from them but bring divine blessing as “good” upon them and plant them in their homeland, and they will not depart from God but fear God from their hearts forever (vv. 40-41). In short, the first part, which is constituted based on the covenant as the core of this subunit (40), presents promise for the restoration of the people and the land (vv. 36-38), new heart and covenant (vv. 39-40), and everlasting promise (v. 41).

The second subunit (vv. 42-44) speaks about all the prosperity God have promised His people by expressing concretely a restoration with geographical terms as a direct reference to Jeremiah’s query about a field purchase, closing with the promise for the restoration of fields in the land (v. 44).<sup>19</sup> Contrasting the good and bad, verse 42 claims that God’s good gifts are just as sure as his tremendous judgment; the promised prosperity will be sure to happen as the threatened calamity had come true.<sup>20</sup> While this contrast reinforces the tension between judgment and hope,<sup>21</sup> the great calamity upon the people serves as a guarantee that the blessing of salvation will come. Jeremiah’s present purchase of land in vv. 43-44 is the sign of God’s promise. The future land transaction makes a clear connection between present disaster and future restoration. The fortune restoration in substantializes the return of the Israelites and the renewal of their covenant relationship with God. As Jer 32:26-35 points out the betrayal of the nation as God’s judgment, it is significant that the unit deals with God’s promise of the land restoration and the covenant restoration. In opposition to the previous parts of chapter 32, Jeremiah’s land purchase in the unit is not a symbol just for the land restoration, but an anchor of the whole renewed relationship. While the land purchase in v. 15 plainly refers to a symbolic act that affirms a significant prediction of future restoration, the land purchase in the unit, beyond the divine settling and planting in the ordinary form of real estate transactions,<sup>22</sup>

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1:9), depends on Israel’s obedience; her rebellion must lead to the termination of her familial relationship with God (Stuart, 1987, 32). According to Muffs (2005, 45-51), the religious and ethnic status of Israel is radically changed by being adopted as God’s people when God makes a covenant with the Israelites at Sinai; the Sinaitic covenant promises the familial intimacy with God, not political supremacy.

<sup>19</sup> Thompson, 1980, 596.

<sup>20</sup> Lundbom, 2004, 521; Allen, 2008, 371.

<sup>21</sup> Holladay, 1989, 209.

<sup>22</sup> McKane, 1986, 851; Fretheim, 2002, 453; Allen, 2008, 371.

highlights that the restoration of Israel's fortunes is guaranteed by their covenant relationship with God. It is a comforting prophecy for the continuity of settlement in the land as privileges of inheritance.<sup>23</sup> The restoration of fortunes refers to both economic and moral renewals and also different modes of life, so that the renewal and transformation cannot be limited to one area of life but will cover all the complexities of life.<sup>24</sup> The promise of restored fortunes includes all the geographical areas such as villages and towns in the land as the sites of the future purchase transactions (v. 44).<sup>25</sup> Jeremiah's single purchase becomes the model for all future purchases<sup>26</sup> that will bring freedom from foreign occupation, self-conducting their affairs in traditional ways, and being repopulated with people in their homeland.<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, the first part (vv. 36-41) that reveals God's promise for the restoration of His people is reinforced by the second part (vv. 42-44) that shows the significance of their buying fields as a concrete anchor for His redemptive promise. The unit as a whole is intrinsically constructed with an optimistic theme of Israel's restoration that linguistically focuses on the next generation in exile, emphasizing God's character and role in the restoration assurance with His concrete plan for their physical restoration in the land.

#### **2.6.4. God's Role**

The way God is presented in the unit is quite different from how *הַכְּשָׁדִים* and *מֶלֶךְ בְּבָרָה* are described as a tool of God's judgment to destroy the nation in vv. 26-35. No matter what circumstances the nation is facing, all hope for their future depends on the very character of God.<sup>28</sup> God is willing to do them good because of His faithfulness. Disaster and restoration are not a contradiction but a paradoxical confirmation; "God's power to destroy was also available for renewal and restoration, which were guaranteed by Yahweh's deep commitment to the covenant between God and people."<sup>29</sup>

God Himself is actively working for His people in the midst of their present doom that serves their future restoration within His holistic plan. God's divine judgment upon Israel's wickedness and God's faithfulness in restoring Israel are working together to fulfill His ultimate plan for Israel. Just as He punished them for their apostasy, God will bring all the

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<sup>23</sup> Rom-Shiloni, 2003, 206.

<sup>24</sup> Keck, 2001, 823.

<sup>25</sup> Fretheim, 2002, 468.

<sup>26</sup> Keown, 1995, 161-62.

<sup>27</sup> Lundbom, 2004, 521.

<sup>28</sup> Brueggemann, 1986, 79.

<sup>29</sup> Allen, 2008, 371-72.

prosperity that He now promises to His people.<sup>30</sup> Although the land is desolate now, God will bring the good to the land. God is urging the people of Jerusalem and Judah to accept the fall of Jerusalem as the divine judgment and be exiled to Babylon without hesitating to leave the land because God will bring the next generation back to their fathers' land and giving them all the good that He has promised. Jeremiah perceives the exile as an inevitable step that will be for the benefit of the nation at the end. Nevertheless, the restoration of Israel will come true by God's unconditional pledge, not by a political factor such as the collapse of Babylon's power. Therefore, God's oracle of their return and land restoration in the midst of fall and exile dynamically reveals how God Himself has been controlling human history for His people with His willingness and sovereignty to accomplish an eternal covenant made with them ( וְכָרַתִּי לָהֶם ) (בְּרִית עוֹלָם, v. 40), without regard to any circumstance.

God's plan of Israel's restoration based on the unconditional covenant is initiated by God not because Israel deserves it. God takes an initiative in the process of the restoration of Israel to gather them from all the countries although He Himself drove the people out of their land and scattered them among nations because of their evildoing and disobedience (32:28-35, 36, 42). God promises to accomplish Israel's restoration by Himself: *I will gather them...I will bring them...I will make them* (v. 37); *I will be their God* (v. 38); *I will give them one heart and one way* (v. 39); *I will make with them an everlasting covenant...I will not turn away from..., and I will put the fear of me in their hearts* (v. 40); *I will rejoice..., and I will plant them* (v. 41); *I will bring upon them all the good* (v. 42); *I will restore their fortunes* (v. 44). All this repetition represents God's initiative acting and also emphasizes that Israel stays passive in this process—they neither repent nor do anything else. God is the only active agent who transforms their hearts and makes them to permanently revere Himself. On the day of restoration, God will be delighted to bestow His goodness on His people; God will not turn away from them but plant them firmly in their land with all His heart and soul (vv. 40-41).<sup>31</sup> All these declarations of the restoration are irrevocable, emphasizing God's centrality in this restoration process.

### **2.6.5. The Everlasting Nature of the Covenant**

All the happenings upon God's people depend on the renewed covenant between God and them. Israel as the covenant partner violated the covenant, so she is responsible for the curses of the covenant.<sup>32</sup> Israel had come under judgment due to her rebellion; the sword, famine, and

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<sup>30</sup> McKane, 1986, 849, 851.

<sup>31</sup> Thompson, 1980, 596.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 595.

disease had been in the city's fall (v. 36).<sup>33</sup> God's irrevocable judgment has been determined (v. 37). However, God reveals a redemptive plan to gather the exiles from all the countries where He scattered them in His furious anger,<sup>34</sup> bring them back (וְהָשִׁבְתִּים, v. 37) to their homeland, *this place* הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה, and let them dwell in safety (v. 37). The phrase *from all the lands where I banish them* מִכָּל הָאֲרָצוֹת אֲשֶׁר הִדְחִיתִים שָׁם (v. 37) highlights the ironic contradiction between God's previous judgment and His present deliverance.<sup>35</sup> It also demonstrates that God is in charge of the punishment and the restoration as well. The unit explicitly assures that God promises the fulfillment of the restoration in the midst of the desperation of the current situation.<sup>36</sup> While the unit Jer 11:1-17 shows that there is no hope since Israel disobeyed God, this unit emphasizes that the everlasting covenant neither demands Israel's obedience nor depends on her behavior.

The covenant formula in v. 38,<sup>37</sup> as the divine cause of Israel's return,<sup>38</sup> plays the central role of the unit in light of the continuation with the everlasting covenant (v. 40). God Himself comes to renew the covenant unconditionally and reassures covenantal formulations through an everlasting covenant.<sup>39</sup> The covenant relationship between God and Israel is the climax of the restoration proclamation. It is God's declaration of the eternal covenant as a covenant of grace, from which God will not desert and leave them.<sup>40</sup> Verse 38 explicitly shows that Israel's obedience is not prerequisites for the covenant relationship, which is only sustained by God's divine initiative.<sup>41</sup> The unconditional covenant relationship with God indeed guarantees their return to the land and their safe living in the land.

<sup>33</sup> "Sword, famine, and pestilence/disease" are the three typological disasters that play a major role as God's instruments of war; these disasters from God impacted the city first and then caused its fall (Rom-Shiloni, 2003, 209).

<sup>34</sup> God's divine outrage, בָּאֵפִי וּבְקִצְרִי גָדוֹל, denotes His warlike action against His own people; the first-person singular pronoun וּבְקִצְרִי בָאֵפִי emphasizes on His direct divine action (Ibid., 211-12).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 210. The word "הִדְחִיתִים" as the causative form (Hiphil verb) indicates God's active action regarding His role in the exile (Ibid., 211).

<sup>36</sup> God also speaks that He is the God of all mankind for whom nothing is impossible in vv. 26-27.

<sup>37</sup> Rendtorff (1998, 13, 31, 35-36) explores the different ways covenant formula is used in the Bible, introducing the three versions of covenant formula in the Old Testament: Yhwh's being God (formula A); Israel's being God's people (formula B); the combination of Yhwh's being God and Israel's being God's people in a single formula (formula C). The Book of Jeremiah has only the covenant formula C, with two exceptions (Jer 13:11, formula B).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>39</sup> The expression "everlasting covenant" appears eighteen times in the Old Testament; in particular, the rainbow is portrayed as the sign of the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures in Gen 9:16, and God makes an everlasting covenant with David and his house in 2 Sam 23:5 (Holladay, 1989, 220).

<sup>40</sup> Rendtorff, 1998, 34-35, 44.

<sup>41</sup> Keown, 1995, 160. Keown (Ibid) distinguishes the covenant relationship of Jer 32:38, which has the absence of the command to obey God, from the original offer of the covenant in Jer 7:23, *Obey my voice, and I will become your God and you will become my people*. Lundbom (2004, 518) points out the repetition of the pronoun "I" as the emphasis on God here in the standard covenant formula, also found in the formulas of 11:4, 24:7, and 30:22.

The heart is the foundation for the covenant. God will make an internal transformation upon the human heart by giving His people *one heart* לֵב אֶחָד to fear Him all the time (v. 39).<sup>42</sup> The internal transformation of the heart is prior to the reinstatement of the covenant between God and the exiles.<sup>43</sup> God will prepare Israel's heart for participation in the promised covenant, so that the internal transformation will be expanded into "the corporal site of the mind in its capacity to reason, will, decide, make commitments, and control actions," enabling people to fulfill God's call upon their lives.<sup>44</sup> When God will regather the people from exile, He will solve their spiritual problem by removing their stony hearts and giving them a new heart in order to help them to obey Him easily and follow His statutes and ordinances.<sup>45</sup> The Israelites were free to choose God, but they did not choose Him due to their stubbornness and disobedience as a stony heart. Their ears could not hear His words because their ears were uncircumcised (Jer 6:10). However, the self-forged chains of sin can be broken only by a heart transplant which could achieve obedience to God's revelation, uttering that only God can grant sufficient inner resources.<sup>46</sup> God will replace their hopelessly corrupted heart with His own desire to goodness and righteousness, which will bring to pass that they revere Him.<sup>47</sup> Although God indeed wants the covenant to last forever, they themselves will not be able to make a repentance that enables the new covenant. Therefore, God will unilaterally perform the heart transplant to assure their absolute and continuous obedience; a new heart will empower them to follow God's statutes and carefully observe His ordinances.<sup>48</sup> Heart as "the hidden center of thought" goes through an internal transformation, a way חַדְשׁ as the "an outer expression of behavior" refers to "religious conduct" in the Bible, and the repetition of אֶחָד implies an absolute commitment to God (v. 39).<sup>49</sup> Allen explains well about the inner renewal in light of the concept of a new covenant relationship between God and Israel:

Yahweh would creatively endow Israel with new wills that were to be sensitive rather than stony and hard in their reactions to Yahweh's will. Thanks to him, their lives would be governed by a new impulse that was to be an expression of Yahweh's own spirit. He would re-make their human natures, so that they marched to the music of the covenant terms that expressed

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<sup>42</sup> It is also depicted as circumcision of the heart (Deut 30:6; Jer 4:4, 9:25-26), giving a heart (Jer 24:7), and writing the law upon a heart (Jer 31:33).

<sup>43</sup> Rom-Shiloni, 2003, 213; *Ibid.*, 2012, 217.

<sup>44</sup> Keown, 1995, 160.

<sup>45</sup> Lundbom, 2004, 520; Block, 1998, 428.

<sup>46</sup> Allen, 1990, 180.

<sup>47</sup> Greenberg, 1997, 730.

<sup>48</sup> Keck, 2001, 1492. Greenburg (1997, 737) claims that "[t]he future change will consist of a total identification of the human will with the divine teaching; "knowledge of (= devotion to) God" will be internalized, so that a perfect harmony will exist between God and man. It is a scene of bliss unmarred by coercion or remorse."

<sup>49</sup> Rom-Shiloni, 2003, 215.



Yahweh's nature and will. Only thus could the covenant relationship become a living actuality rather than a doctrinal truth.<sup>50</sup>

As heart is the seat of the mind, inclinations and resolutions,<sup>51</sup> a new heart transplant will bring about the resolution of human will to follow God's will. Emphasizing God's initiative and centrality as well as indicating the disappointment from Israel's disability to repent by themselves, the new heart as a basis for the renewed covenant promises the everlasting nature of the covenant.

God's genuine commitment to doing them good indicates the eternal characteristic of the covenant. God said to them, "I will not turn away from them to do them good לֹא אֶשְׁיֵב לָאֵלֹהִים מֵעַתָּה לְהִיטִיבֵי אוֹתָם" (v. 40). The eternal duration of God's loyalty to Israel makes possible their devotion to fear God *forever* (כָּל הַיָּמִים/always, v. 39), which is the first and most important "good" that God can do for them (vv. 39-42).<sup>52</sup> Because of God's loyal fidelity to the covenant, His people could go from being exiled in Babylon to being planted in their homeland as well as how they could be transformed from the people of God's great wrath to the people to whom God delights to do good. The Sinai covenant with its blessings and curses was never guaranteed to be eternal. However, the everlasting covenant and the new covenant are both without conditions; they really are for all the time.<sup>53</sup> God will unconditionally do good to this and each succeeding generation by restoring them and planting them in the land (vv. 41-44), so that they will be able to experience the everlasting covenant with a holistic renewal "in the form of justice, the elimination of oppression, the protection of life, and the blessings of God's presence."<sup>54</sup> God Himself promises their future by declaring, "I will cause their captivity to return אֶשְׁיֵב אֹת שְׁבוּתָם" (v. 44).

#### **2.6.6. A Comparison to 31:31-34**

The prophecy of the new covenant in 31:31-34 seems to be repeated in the oracle of 32:36-44 which demonstrates the promise of the nation's restoration with the prophecy of the everlasting covenant. It is generally agreed that the eternal covenant in 32:36-44 is the 'new covenant' promised by God in 31:31-34.<sup>55</sup> The restoration with the everlasting covenant will come true not by a purely political factor such as a promise that Babylon's power would fail, but by the

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<sup>50</sup> Allen, 1990, 179.

<sup>51</sup> Brown, 1957, 524-25.

<sup>52</sup> Keown, 1995, 161.

<sup>53</sup> Lundbom, 2004, 519.

<sup>54</sup> Keown, 1995, 161.

<sup>55</sup> Von Rad, 1965, 214-15.

promise of a new covenant.<sup>56</sup> Both passages mention that God will put the covenant on people's heart and confirms the relationship between God and the people of Israel and Judah as His people. In both passages the following terms are repeated: covenant (31:31; 32:40), heart (31:33; 32:39), and covenant formula (31:33; 32:38).

**Jer 31:31-34**

*a new covenant* בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה (v. 31)  
*I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*  
 (v. 33)  
*on their heart* עַל לִבָּם (v. 33)

**Jer 32:36-44**

*an everlasting covenant* עוֹלָם עוֹלָם (v. 40)  
*They shall be my people, and I will be their God.* (v. 38)  
*one heart and one way* לֵב אֶחָד וְדַרְךְ אֶחָד (v. 39)

The prophecy for the everlasting covenant (32:38-44) starts with the covenant formula in v. 38 (וְהָיוּ לִי לְעָם וְאָנֹכִי אֶהְיֶה לָהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים) and then God's deed in v. 39 (וְנָתַתִּי לָהֶם לֵב אֶחָד וְדַרְךְ אֶחָד). One heart and one way are gifts of the covenant relationship that will sustain and encourage the integrity of individuals in fearing God and committing their lives and thoughts to Him with respect, awe, worship, and love.<sup>57</sup> The restoration of Israel through the internal transformation is the integrity between the divine gift of one heart and one way and the consecrated human will. Within this restoration process, God will provide His people perpetual security based on divine protection and also “a tenderness, joy and concern implemented by the deity” which contrast with God's brutal anger, rage, and wrath (32:29-31) in the past.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, the new covenant passage (31:33-34) has God's deed ( וְנָתַתִּי אֶת תּוֹרָתִי בְּקִרְבָּם וְעַל ) (לִבָּם אֶכְתֹּבֶנָּה) first and then the covenant formula (וְהָיוּ לִי לְעָם).<sup>59</sup> The new covenant written on the heart will bring about the promised relationship between God and His people Israel, a religious transformation, and God's divine mercy of pardoning the new covenant generation's sin. God Himself guarantees the fulfillment of the new covenant by transforming their heart and empowering their inner capacity to keep the covenant. Writing on their heart is part of the everlasting nature of the new covenant, which is a different expression of the same idea of the everlasting covenant.

The different order between the two units shows that each unit can have a different emphasis in the process of the covenant fulfillment. However, it is more significant to perceive the considerable difference between mentioning the Torah in 31 for the connection to the past, Sinai Covenant, and not mentioning it with the content of restoration in 32 for the connection to the future. Therefore, while Jer 31 unit indeed highlights the continuity of the new covenant

<sup>56</sup> Keown, 1995, 160.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 160-61. Keown (Ibid.) states that both “one way” and “one heart” mean “integrity, the complete compatibility of will and way of life,” and indicate “unity and solidarity among God's people”

<sup>58</sup> Carroll, 1986, 629-30.

<sup>59</sup> Rom-Shiloni, 2003, 219-20.

with the old covenant, Jer 32 unit, which stands together with Jer 31 unit and creates a seamless process in the book, emphasizes the everlasting character of the new covenant that tangibly guarantees the very future hope of the restoration based on the unchangeable covenant relationship between God and His people. Jer 31 offers the firm foundation of the new covenant, and Jer 32 presents its future-oriented dynamics for God's divine plan for Israel's destiny.

The everlasting covenant in 32:36-44 is formulated in the context of two significant events, the nation's exile and return, while the new covenant in 31:31-34 is highlighted in the setting of divine time, *the days come* יָמֵי בָּאִים (31:31) and *after those days* אַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים הָהֵם (31:33). The new covenant promised in 31:31 refers to the changed relationship between God and His people for some time in the future.<sup>60</sup> The phrase אַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים הָהֵם in 31:33 is not the specific dating formula but indicates sequence as a later time; based on the context of the Book of Consolation, *those days* could be the days when God will begin to plant, build, and repopulate the land after the complete of His judgment (31:27-30).<sup>61</sup> However, 32:36-44 has a concrete context to describe that God promises to bring the people back to their own land and let them live in safety, which will confirm the new covenant with the renewed relationship between God and His people as well as the renewed heart of the people. In short, the new covenant of 31:31-34 looks like an inclusive concept to cover all the aspects of the restoration of Israel and Judah, whereas the everlasting covenant of 32:36-44 as a new covenant is particularly connected with their physical and historical return from exile. As the everlasting covenant unit goes with a very concrete description, the people of Judah can tangibly look forward to anticipating what God promises for the return and prosperity.

### 2.6.7. Conclusion

Jeremiah's people hear God's promise that He will eventually bring them back to their homeland although they will be scattered in the near future because of the divine punishment of God's furious anger and great wrath. The oracle in the unit claims on the ironic relationship between present harsh reality and a future restoration, showing that the present terror of God's wrathful scattering can be overcome by the future gathering of God's merciful power.<sup>62</sup> God's power and grace are at work to accomplish a radical reversal of present reality; God of covenant will break through all seeming constraints to create a new reality and turn punishment into restoration, destruction into good, and danger into security.<sup>63</sup> God promises to bring good to

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<sup>60</sup> Keown, 1995, 130.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>62</sup> Keck, 2001, 821.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 822.

the people of Judah and Jerusalem just as well as evil. The restoration and prosperity will come after banishment and calamity. So, the restoration to the land is totally God's mercy, and all the prosperity there will last as God will give them obedience as a gift.<sup>64</sup> God Himself will accomplish His promise for the restoration, without the precondition of their repentance. It seems that God does not want the repentance as a testimony for the perception that the exile is the only way to recreate the connection between Israel and God. The exile is inevitable not in order to punish Israel, but rather in order to create the everlasting covenant.

God's joyful act of restoration will dynamically prove and reinforce the unbreakable and irrevocable covenant relationship between God and His people Israel. God shows the hope for the exilic community's future return to their fathers' land. Despite this national tragedy, the Israelites should not lose their faith on God of the everlasting covenant who will fulfill the promise, because the promise of restoration will be given to their next generation in exile. The oracle in the unit strongly encourages the people in Jerusalem to look forward to seeing the day of restoration when their captivity will be free, and their lands of Israel will be brought back. When the day comes, fields in Benjamin and every other region of Judah will be restored. This land restoration does not only refer to "the socioeconomic recovery of land and place" but also to "the theopolitical renewal of the covenant."<sup>65</sup> The field purchase is an enacted prophecy that God will bring the exiles back to their homeland and let them live in safety.

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<sup>64</sup> Keown, 1995, 162-63.

<sup>65</sup> Keck, 2001, 821.

## 2.7. Jer 33:19-26

### 2.7.1. Introduction

The unit continues to highlight God's everlasting promise after 31:31-34 has announced the new covenant. It develops the new covenant concept through presenting the creation covenant and the unbreakable covenants between God and His chosen people, appealing to what God has unconditionally promised for the nation's future. Therefore, it carries on the new covenant concept, which starts in 31:31-34 and repeats in 32:36-44, through a different way to guarantee that the new covenant is unconditional and everlasting. The creation covenant represents the heavenly bodies as a security deposit for the covenant. Noahic covenant, Abrahamic covenant, and Davidic covenant guarantee the promise for the nation, showing the permanency of God's covenant and God's fidelity to His people. In particular, two parallel oracles with the protasis-apodosis argumentative form deliberately assure the unbreakable covenant with David (vv. 20-21, 25-26). Although the main tiding of the unit is comfort, the unit partially contains the mood of threat that comes from the negative formulation used throughout the unit—**וַיִּמְאַסֶם, תִּפְרָר, תִּפְרוּ**—**לֹא, אֶמְאַס**. This point reflects both calamity and hope revealed in the sequential reading of the previous units. Divine punishment on the nation is inevitable due to the stubbornness of their evil heart in the previous units, but the reason for making the new covenant with them becomes more apparent because of God's ultimate ruling over them in this unit. It shows that God Himself promises them the permanent Davidic dynasty and the return from captivity because of the unbreakable and unconditional covenant while the nation does not deserve the promise. Indeed, God's promise and compassion endure forever in the midst of their upcoming captivity.

In this chapter, I will represent that the new covenant concept continues in this unit with its unconditional and everlasting nature, demonstrating its unique expression in this unit.

### 2.7.2. Boundary Justification

The unit develops the coherence of God's oracles through the repeated key phrases such as *My covenant with the night and the day* **בְּרִיתִי הַיּוֹם וּבְרִיתִי הַלַּיְלָה** (vv. 20, 25) and *the seed of David* **עֲבָדֵי יְהוָה** (vv. 22, 26). It assures the continuance and fulfillment of God's unbreakable covenant with the nation by employing the constancy of the cosmos.<sup>1</sup> It also grounds the covenant promise to David in God's creation covenant with a recall of the covenant to Abraham, **לֹא יִסְפָּר צֶבֶא הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלֹא יִמְד חוֹל הַיָּם**, in v. 22a which promises a multiplication of his

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<sup>1</sup> Lundbom, 2004, 543.

descendants *like the dust of the earth* כַּעֲפַר הָאָרֶץ (Gen 13:16) as well as *like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore* כְּכוכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכַחוּל אֲשֶׁר עַל שֵׁפַת הַיָּם (Gen 22:17). God's covenant with the nation is indeed unbreakable like the firm stability of the cosmos and nature as well as everlasting like God's faithful promise to the Davidic dynasty.

### 2.7.3. Internal Structure

The unit consists of two oracles that are parallel divine guarantees of the stability of God's covenant.<sup>2</sup> The oracles parallel in form, the protasis-apodosis argumentative form, and in content, as follows.<sup>3</sup> This parallelism enhances the coherence of the unit, demonstrated above.

	<u>Oracle I (vv. 19-22)</u>		<u>Oracle II (vv. 23-26)</u>
v. 19	נִיְהִי דְבַר יְהוָה	v. 23	נִיְהִי דְבַר יְהוָה
v. 20	אִם	v. 25	אִם לֹא...
v. 21	בְּרִיתִי הַיּוֹם וּבְרִיתִי הַלַּיְלָה	v. 26	בְּרִיתִי יוֹמָם וַלְלַיְלָה
v. 22	גַּם... דָּוִד עֲבָדִי זָרַע דָּוִד עֲבָדִי		גַּם... זָרַע ... וְדָוִד עֲבָדִי

In particular, both oracles connect two issues as an assurance to the covenant with David, but in a different way; the first one is a threat, and the second one is a promise. Oracle I is delivered with a threat that if the covenant of the night and the day *בְּרִיתִי הַיּוֹם וּבְרִיתִי הַלַּיְלָה* can be broken, then the covenant with David will be also broken (...גַּם...). Oracle II ends with the promises of their restoration to the land and their ongoing experience of God's mercy *אָשׁוּב (אָשִׁיב) אֵת* *אָשׁוּב* (restoration),<sup>4</sup> saying that if God has not made the covenant with day and night *בְּרִיתִי הַיּוֹם וּבְרִיתִי הַלַּיְלָה* and has not appointed the ordinance of heaven and earth, then also God will reject the seed of Jacob and David *זָרַע יַעֲקֹב וְדָוִד* but will not take one from David's seed *זָרַע דָּוִד* to rule over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob *זָרַע אַבְרָהָם יִשְׁחָק וְיִצְחָק* in v. 26a (...גַּם...לא אִם...)<sup>5</sup>

### 2.7.4. The Everlasting Covenant

The eternal nature of God's promise is supported by the creation covenant.<sup>6</sup> As God the Creator appointed the ordinances of heavens and earth, the constant alternation of day and night is secured by divine promise. Implying God's faithful and powerful capacity to do what God

<sup>2</sup> Holladay, 1989, 230.

<sup>3</sup> Lundbom, 2004, 543. According to Allen (2008, 378), these two oracles have similarities to 31:35-37; vv. 20-21 and 31:35-36, v. 22 and 31:37, and vv. 24-25 and 31:35-36.

<sup>4</sup> Fretheim, 2002, 480.

<sup>5</sup> The two families *הַמְשִׁפְחוֹת* in v. 24 may refer to Israel and Judah or the Davidic line and the priesthood from v. 22 (Lundbom, 2004, 545). However, *הַמְשִׁפְחוֹת* are more likely the houses of Israel and Judah (Bright, 1965, 97; Thompson, 1980, 603; Carroll, 1986, 638; Holladay, 1989, 230-31; Keown, 1995, 175; Allen, 2008, 379).

<sup>6</sup> Brueggemann, 1998, 321. Carroll (1986, 638) argues that the creation covenant described by the term *בְּרִית* (vv. 20, 25) implies a fixed and permanent obligation rather than an agreement between two parties.

promises, historical structures rooted in God's promises are as certain as cosmic orders, the assurance and regularity of day and night, authored by God the Creator.<sup>7</sup> The promise rooted in reliable cosmic sequence indeed reveals the voice of hope for the nation's future. The fact that God does not break the order of day and night is God's assurance for the future of all of Israel by offering the reliability and permanence of God's promises.<sup>8</sup> The orders of creation maintain their inexorable course no matter what people do. In the same manner, God fulfills the inexorable Word of His promise no matter how present circumstance is. The Word of God's promise is surer than the orders of creation, so God's covenant with the nation is everlasting.

The eternal nature of God's covenant is interestingly revealed in relation to Noahic covenant and Abrahamic covenant as the creation covenant echoes the story of the Flood (Gen 6-9) and the blessing of Abraham (Gen 13, 22). God promises that day and night will never cease יום וְלַיְלָה לֹא יִשְׁבְּתוּ (Gen 8:22), and the covenant with Noah—God's absolute commitment to maintain the inherent relationship with creation בְּרִית עוֹלָם בֵּין אֱלֹהִים וּבֵין כָּל נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה בְּכֹל בְּשָׂר (Gen 9:16)—is unconditionally established by God in Gen 9:8-17; נֶאֱמַר הִנְנִי מְקַיֵּם (Gen 9:9) and וְהִקְמַתִּי אֶת בְּרִיתִי אִתְּכֶם (Gen 9:11).<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the phraseology of “לֹא יִסְפַּר צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם, וְלֹא יִמַּד חוֹל הַיָּם” in verse 22 is evocative of God's promise to Abraham, and this is another expression of the everlasting nature of this covenant. God blesses Abraham with an unilateral promise that his descendants will be numerous *like the dust of the earth* כַּעֲפַר הָאָרֶץ (Gen 13:16) as well as *like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore* כְּכּוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכַחֲסוּל (Gen 22:17).<sup>10</sup> The guarantee in v. 22 is an appeal to the Abraham-Sarah promise about future fertility and productivity as the stars of the heavens and the sand of the seashore; the ancestral tradition explicitly moves from stars and sand to the royal, priestly families.<sup>11</sup>

The perpetuity of God's covenant ties with His chosen people. God's everlasting covenant appeals to His fidelity to David, the Levites, and the nation. God neither breaks the

<sup>7</sup> Brueggemann, 1998, 320.

<sup>8</sup> Thompson, 1980, 603. It is parallel with Jer 31:35-36 in form and in content (Lundbom, 2004, 543).

<sup>9</sup> Bracke, 2000, 41-42. The Noahic covenant is a divine pledge given unconditionally to Noah and to every living creature on earth in order to preserve God's relationship with the natural order; God promises never again to destroy the earth with a flood.

<sup>10</sup> Holladay, 1989, 230; Bracke, 2000, 42; Lundbom, 2004, 545-46. Jer 31:35-37, as the close reference of the unit, does not use “covenant,” but its expressions are reminiscent of the covenant with Noah (Gen 9:9-17). God reminds Abram of His promise to give him many descendants as the dust of the earth (Gen 13:16) and reconfirms His promise to Abraham that God will multiply his descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand on the seashore (Gen 22:17). The Abrahamic covenant as the covenant of grace comes in the form of a promise to Abraham; God takes the initiative with him and gives promises to him unilaterally.

<sup>11</sup> Brueggemann, 1998, 320.

covenant with David or the Levites (vv. 21-22) nor rejects the offspring of Jacob and God's promises to Israel's ancestors (v. 26) as God does not break the covenant with the day and night (vv. 20, 25). The permanency of God's covenant and God's fidelity to His people is reinforced by the constancy of the cosmic rule.<sup>12</sup> God's faithful pledge to them is as certain as the unchanging order of creation. The divine covenant with time, as one that people cannot interrupt, participates in a covenant relationship between God and His people.<sup>13</sup> As God fixed the succession of day and night and the ordinances of heaven and earth, the foundation of God's chosen people and of Davidic kingship is unshakable and enduring.<sup>14</sup> The Davidic covenant and the priestly covenant endure forever (v. 21), so permanent Davidic monarchy and perpetual Levitical priesthood are parts of God's plans.<sup>15</sup> The covenant with David was that his seed would reign forever on the throne of David. Jeremiah expands this covenant, saying not only that God will increase the descendants of David but also that one of David's sons will rule over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Davidic kingship should not be annulled but will rule over all of Israel as the seed of Jacob and of David in v. 26 refers to Israel as a whole. God's covenant with His people, the promise to the ancestors in Genesis and to the Davidic dynasty, continues from generation to generation as it is unbreakable and everlasting in spite of any circumstances. Although the main tiding of the unit is comfort, this unit partially contains the mood of threat that comes from the negative formulation used throughout the unit—*תִּפְרוּ* (v. 20), *תִּפֹּר* (v. 21), *וַיִּמְאַסֶם* (v. 24), *לֹא* (v. 25), *אֶמְאַס* (v. 26). The root verb *פָּרַר* means "to break, violate" in the context of covenant, appearing also in 11:10, 14:21, and 31:32.<sup>16</sup> The root verb *מָאַס* with the subject as God refers to the meaning of "to reject" and even means "to despise," occurring twelve times in the book (2:37; 4:30; 6:19, 30a, 30b; 7:29; 8:9; 14:19aα, 19aβ; 31:37; 33:24, 26).<sup>17</sup> It shows that since the nation does not deserve the promise in their own right, God Himself grants them the unconditional promise. From this perspective, the unit continues the 'new covenant' concept. The everlasting covenant neither depends on the nation's behavior nor their merit but on the solid nature of the previous covenants.

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<sup>12</sup> Holladay, 1989, 229.

<sup>13</sup> Allen, 2008, 378-79.

<sup>14</sup> McKane, 1996, 864-65.

<sup>15</sup> Keown, 1995, 174; Allen, 2008, 379. 1 Sam 23:3 states the eternal covenant with David, and Num 25:12-13 describes a covenant of eternal priesthood that God grants Phinehas and his descendants (Keown, 1995, 174).

<sup>16</sup> ALHATORAH, <https://mg.alhatorah.org/Dictionary/6565>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., <https://mg.alhatorah.org/Dictionary/3988>.



### **2.7.5. Conclusion**

The unit highlights God's everlasting covenant by engaging with the constant alternation of day and night as a solid guarantee. The creation order ensures the everlasting covenant with David, aiming the eternal covenant with the nation. The covenant is made with David and bears on the nation. This unbreakable and unconditional covenant sustains the promising destiny of the nation, the continuance of the Davidic dynasty, and the return of their captivity to the homeland in God's appointed time.

## 2.8. Jer 34:8-22

### 2.8.1. Introduction

Zedekiah declared the emancipation of Hebrew slaves, both male and female,<sup>1</sup> and slaveowners obeyed the proclamation and entered decisively into the covenant.<sup>2</sup> When Zedekiah and the people of Jerusalem made the solemn covenant, they repented and did what was right based on the covenant made between God and their forefathers. But then they turned around and profaned God's name by subjugating the slaves.

The current unit argues that Zedekiah's covenant is the continuation of the Sinai covenant with respect to a legal tradition regarding Hebrew slave liberation. The last three analyzed units were future-oriented to emphasize God's unconditional promise for the nation's restoration based on the new covenant. However, highlighting the conditional covenant, this unit changes its tiding from hope to calamity through a narrative of Judah's capricious act of infidelity and disobedience during the days of King Zedekiah. As the unit goes back to the doomed tiding, the divine judgment of the nation based on the conditional covenant maximizes the tension between hope and calamity. The alternate appearance of calamity and hope in the analyzed units increases a threat within the complicated situation of the nation despite the hope of their restoration through God's everlasting promise and covenant. The current state of Judah's incapability confirms that they cannot have any hope under the conditional covenant. The unit is characterized by these repeated keywords—פְּרַת, דְּרוֹר, שׁוֹב, and עֶבֶר—which represent the connection between covenant-making and covenant-breaking as well as reinforce the connection between the sin of the people's disobedience and judgment for their disobedience throughout the unit.

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<sup>1</sup> The terms הָעֶבְרִי וְהָעֶבְרִיָּה (v. 9) are unusual here as the Covenant Code (Exod 21:2-3) mentions only the release of male Hebrew slaves after six years. Hebrew and Hebrewess occur in Deut 15: 12; "the inclusive nature of the law" is stated in Deut 15:12 (Lundbom, 2004, 561-62).

<sup>2</sup> The phrase "enter into the covenant" נִכְאֵוּ בְּבְרִית (v. 10) found in 2 Chr 15:10-14 of Asa's covenant that people entered into a covenant בְּבְרִית נִכְאֵוּ in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa (Holladay, 1989, 239). Zedekiah's covenant was made during the initial siege of Jerusalem, and the incident of the covenant breach took place during the period that the Babylonians temporarily withdrew from Jerusalem, since vv. 21-22 mention that God will bring the Babylonian army back to Jerusalem again to punish the nation (Keown, 1995, 186; Lundbom, 2004, 568). The last two verses (vv. 21-22) of the unit provide the chronological information that the divine judgment was pronounced during the temporary withdrawal of the Babylonian army from Jerusalem (Holladay, 1989, 239; McKane, 1996, 882; Keown, 1995, 189; Allen, 2008, 388).

In this chapter, I will analyze the close relationship between Zedekiah's covenant and the Sinai covenant to show how severely the nation has sinned against God and has broken the conditional covenant, therefore the unit justifies the following punishment.

### 2.8.2. Boundary Justification

The term ברית appears six times in the unit; Zedekiah's covenant regarding Hebrew slaves (vv. 8, 10, 15, 18a, 18b) and a covenant made between God and forefathers (v. 13).

v. 8	כרת המלך צדקיהו ברית את כל העם
v. 10	באו בברית
v. 13	אנכי פרתי ברית את אבותיכם
v. 15	נתקרתו ברית לפני בבית
v. 18a	העברים את ברתי
v. 18b	דברי הברית אשר קרתו לפני העגל

Although Zedekiah's covenant does not seem relevant to the covenant theme of the book at first sight, the unit examines it as a continuation of the Sinai covenant. This way of discussion makes the unit coherent. The covenant of slave release is based on the Sabbatical release law (שמיטה) and a Jubilee Year release.<sup>3</sup> The covenant was sworn before God in the temple (v. 15). The covenant between Zedekiah and the slaveowners took place within the political situation with Babylonian army's sieging Jerusalem and temporary lift of the siege as well as within religious context with a covenant ritual that God as a covenant partner was involved with.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, the covenant of liberty was turned over at their pleasure. The covenant that was solemnly undertaken in God's sight was easily breached because the people turned around by taking back their male and female slaves (vv. 15-16). As the cut calf is a victim in a religious ritual, the people who entered into the covenant and reneged will be victims of God's judgment (vv. 18-20).<sup>5</sup> God holds them accountable for their covenantal action, so their act of infidelity brought the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah's towns as divine punishment (vv. 21-22). The unit demonstrates that a reason for the destruction is disobeying Zedekiah's covenant. As Zedekiah's covenant is the succession of the Sinai covenant, their turning around from the slave liberation represents the disobedience of the Sinai covenant which is the common reason for the temple destruction in the book. The problem is not with the slaves but rather with the divine covenant.

<sup>3</sup> Lundbom, 2004, 561.

<sup>4</sup> McKane, 1996, 881-82.

<sup>5</sup> McKane, 1996, 882.

Recurring terms דב"ר (vv. 8, 12, 18) and שמ"ע (vv. 10, 14, 17) in the unit are employed to demonstrate a meaningful connection between the nation, God, and His covenant.<sup>6</sup> God says that they have neither heard Him nor obeyed the words of His covenant. They have been expected to hear God's voice and obey the words of the covenant, but they have broken the covenant by disobeying God's words. Therefore, these two recurring terms serve this unit to highlight that God's expectation for their obeying the covenant has been destroyed because of their disobedience.

### 2.8.3. Internal Structure

The unit contains a prose narrative (vv. 8-11) and oracles (vv. 12-22) that coherently build up a concentric formation as the narrative is carefully structured to introduce the divine oracles.<sup>7</sup> The narrative describes the covenant of slave emancipation made between Zedekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem (vv. 8-10) and the people's surprisingly disobeying the covenant (v. 11). The oracles deliver a short historical review to mention the disobedience of their forefathers (vv. 12-14), pronouncement of the indictment for their disobedience of subjugating the slaves (vv. 15-16), and divine judgment as a covenant curse which is the consequence of Judah's covenantal disobedience (vv. 17-22). The accusation against Judah in vv. 12-16 serves as the basis for an announcement of judgment in vv. 17-22.<sup>8</sup> There are three divine oracles found. Oracle I is accusation and Oracles II and III are judgments; in particular, Oracle II condemns the king and the people of Jerusalem while Oracle III judges Jerusalem and the cities of Judah.<sup>9</sup>

Oracle I (vv. 13-16)	(v. 13) כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
Oracle II (vv. 17-21)	(v. 17a) לָכֵן כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה <sup>10</sup> (v. 17b) נֹאֵם יְהוָה
Oracle III (v. 22)	(v. 22) נֹאֵם יְהוָה

The unit indeed provides a solid ground for God's judgment of covenant violation through the larger contrast between historical view (vv. 8-11) and the prophetic comment (vv. 12-22).

<sup>6</sup> Verb דָּבַר occurs five times in the covenant units (11:2, 17; 32:42; 33:24; 50:1), and noun דָּבָר occurs thirteen times in the covenant units (3:12; 11:1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 10; 33:19, 23; 34:8, 12, 18; 50:1). Verb שָׁמַע occurs fourteen times in the covenant units (3:13; 11:2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14; 34:10, 14, 17; 50:2).

<sup>7</sup> Lundbom, 2004, 557-58.

<sup>8</sup> Brack, 2000, 48-50; Stulman, 2005, 286. Nicholson (1970, 34) proposes the structure of the unit as follows: introduction (vv. 8-12), call to obedience (vv. 13-14), the nation's apostasy and disobedience (vv. 15-16), and judgment announced (vv. 17-22).

<sup>9</sup> Lundbom, 2004, 556.

<sup>10</sup> This oracle as part of Oracle II is the reason of punishment.

#### 2.8.4. Conditional Covenant

Zedekiah's proclamation to release slaves was made in the temple, compared with the Sinai covenant (vv. 13-16). God reminds us that the emancipation of Hebrew slaves is required in the seventh year after they have served for six years based on the Sinai covenant stipulations regarding slaves' sabbatical liberation (vv. 13-14).<sup>11</sup> Zedekiah's covenant as the succession of the Sinai covenant was motivated by obeying the covenant at Sinai. Supporting the whole context of the unit, the Sinai covenant made between God and their forefathers (v. 13) is set alongside Zedekiah's making covenant before God in the temple (vv. 8, 15) that God refers to as "my covenant בְּרִיתִי" (v. 18).<sup>12</sup>

v. 8	כָּרַת הַמֶּלֶךְ זְדַקְיָהוּ בְרִית	a covenant between Zedekiah and the people
v. 13	בְּרִית אֶת אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם	the Sinai covenant made between God and their forefathers
v. 15	בְּרִית לְפָנַי, בְּבַיִת אֲשֶׁר נִקְרָא שְׁמִי	Zedekiah's covenant made before God in the temple
v. 18	בְּרִיתִי	<i>My covenant</i> , God's divine covenant

In particular, the repetition of the verb כָּרַת here serves to reinforce the significant connection between Zedekiah's covenant and the Sinai covenant. This connection shows that in God's eyes Zedekiah's covenant is a divine covenant made with God. Zedekiah's covenant is indeed the reflection of God's covenant with the nation! Although it is a human covenant made between King Zedekiah and his people, it should not be ignored or broken because of its divine nature. Therefore, the abrogation of Zedekiah's covenant represents the violation of the Sinai covenant, bringing the destruction of Jerusalem as a divine punishment.

A demand of obligation to obey a conditional covenant is well described in a covenant ceremony (vv. 18-19), cutting the calf in two and walking solemnly between its pieces כָּרְתוּ. The ceremony parallels Zedekiah's covenant in demanding a covenant obligation. The slaveowners, as the party to the covenant, made an oath at the covenant ceremony as they passed through the cut calf הָעֵגֶל, but they violated the covenant and did not fulfill the words of the covenant הַבְּרִית (v. 18). The covenant breakers are specifically stated in v. 19; the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem, the palace officials, the priests, and the people of the land passed between the parts of the calf. At this point, the fate of the calf is a symbol of their fate, judgment on the covenant-breaker; they will become like *the calf cut in two* כָּרְתוּ לְשָׁנִים because they broke the

<sup>11</sup> V. 9 does not mention that this slave liberation is limited only to those who had been slaves for six years, indicating that all slaves should be free (Fretheim, 2020, 488). The law is articulated in Exod 21:2-6 and Deut 15:12-18. While the former law does not mention female slaves, the latter refers to them (Thompson, 1980, 611).

<sup>12</sup> Fretheim, 2020, 487.

covenant.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, Gen 15:7-21, a biblical precedent for this covenant ceremony,<sup>14</sup> describes the covenant that God Himself made with Abraham unilaterally as an example of a covenant ceremony that uses particular terms such as בְּתָר, עֶבֶר, and כָּרַת. The procedure of the covenant ritual in the *Covenant between the Parts* בְּרִית בֵּין הַבְּיָתָרִים (Gen 15) is a reference for God's punishment of those who broke the covenant (v. 18).<sup>15</sup> This connection transforms the covenant between Zedekiah and the slaveowners into the covenant between God and Abraham in terms of the notion of 'victimization'; those who made the covenant and revoked will be the victims of God's judgment.<sup>16</sup> This Abraham's covenant was unconditional as there were no demands on Abraham, "no chance for either noncompliance or abrogation."<sup>17</sup> In the covenant ritual between God and Abraham in Gen 15:7-21, Abraham was not a covenant party unlike Zedekiah and the people of Jerusalem who were party to the covenant of slave manumission. The covenant ceremony in both Gen 15 and Jer 34 also symbolizes a solemn pledge before the divine presence; Gen 15 presents the scene that a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between the pieces of animals in the darkness (v. 17), and Jer 34 highlights that the ceremony took place before God (v. 18).<sup>18</sup> Although Zedekiah's covenant is related to Abraham's covenant by employing the ceremonial vocabularies and picture, it is a concrete parallel to the Sinai covenant in its conditional nature. Only the character of the ceremony is Abraham's covenant, and the nature of the covenant is the Sinai covenant. The oath ratified covenant of slave manumission indeed demands obedience from Zedekiah and the people of Jerusalem as a covenant party. In short, the covenant ceremony described in vv. 18-19 represents a solemn covenant made in the midst of God's divine intervention and also vividly sheds light on a legally binding obligation of obeying a conditional covenant made with God.

### 2.8.5. Disobedience: Making Covenant and Breaking Covenant

Based on the unit's formulation, Zedekiah's covenant reflects the Sinai covenant on the one hand and Abraham's covenant on the other hand. Although the divine covenant demands obedience, people turning around to follow the significant decision of slave liberation. Why did Zedekiah and the people so easily break the covenant of slave liberation that they made recently? The reason of their breaking the covenant is well represented in the word לְנַפְשָׁם *at*

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<sup>13</sup> Thompson, 1980, 611-12; Lundbom, 2004, 565. Keown (1995, 186) says, "The oath-taking ceremony involves cutting up a calf, as in Gen 15:7-21, the LORD's covenant with Abraham."

<sup>14</sup> McKane, 1996, 881; Holladay, 1989, 239.

<sup>15</sup> Holladay, 1989, 239.

<sup>16</sup> McKane, 1996, 882.

<sup>17</sup> Lundbom, 2004, 566.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

*their pleasure* (v. 16) that highlights the people's recklessness of bringing back the slaves with selfish desire. It was not a counterfeit that they had repented and done what was right, but they turned around from the covenant by themselves for their selfish purpose. Even though this is not the main concern of my study, in order to figure out the reason of making and breaking the covenant, it is very helpful to comprehend historic-realistic aspect of the context of the unit. They repented and entered into the covenant in the midst of the awful siege of Jerusalem. Why should Zedekiah and his nobles suddenly decided to liberate their slaves? Regarding the motivation for releasing slaves, there can be three possibilities: an economic reason to reduce the number of people to feed, a military reason to have more available people to defend the city, and a religious reason to gain God's favor.<sup>19</sup> There was a religious justification for the liberation ostensibly. Zedekiah and slaveowners might try to motivate God to lift the siege and save the city through their decision to comply with the law.<sup>20</sup> However, it could be more an economic move than a religious motivation as slaves would be useless to their owners during the siege, rather a burden to the owners to feed them.<sup>21</sup> During the siege, it may have been a matter of convenience since slaves had to be fed and could no longer be used for work in the fields. Both the obedience of their repentance and the disobedience of their turning around from the covenant came from the historical and economic situation that they were in. They were overanxious to make a satisfaction of their own desire. The covenant was degraded to a human trick for them to escape temporarily from the realistic adversity. Indeed, the issue of disobedience in the unit was totally dependent upon their pleasure לְנַפְשָׁם.

The severity of breaking Zedekiah's covenant is explicitly revealed in the phrases, נִקְרָא שְׁמִי and נִתְחַלְלֵנוּ אֶת שְׁמִי. The people sworn the covenant of slave release before God in His name נִקְרָא שְׁמִי (v. 15), but they turned around from the covenant and profaned His name נִתְחַלְלֵנוּ אֶת שְׁמִי (v. 16). The double use of God's name, is a rhetorical device to show disobedience of their cruel betrayal through the violation of their covenant relationship with God, highlighting the solemnity and seriousness of what Zedekiah and the slaveowners agreed.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, as claimed above, Zedekiah's covenant made in God's name is a continuation of the Sinai covenant. This way of presenting the covenant raises its value and importance and accordingly increases the severity of its breaching. Furthermore, describing the slaves as brothers and

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<sup>19</sup> Carroll, 1986, 647; Keown, 1995, 187; Stulman, 2005, 289.

<sup>20</sup> Stulman, 2005, 289. Maybe it is better to represent the disputation in the chapter itself and then just to cite the scholars in the footnotes. You have also to explain why you think that Stulman's explanation is the right one

<sup>21</sup> Lundbom, 2004, 562.

<sup>22</sup> Holladay, 1989, 242; Brueggemann, 1998, 328.

neighbors in v. 17 represents the severity of the covenant breach. The terms, “his brother אָחִיו” and “his neighbor רֵעֵהוּ,” refer to the ideal relationship between the slaveowners and their slaves that precedes their economic relationship.<sup>23</sup> They should have been generous and compassionate to their slaves as they all were set free from the slave bondage of Egypt. However, they disobeyed the divine covenant made in God’s name and brought back the Hebrew slaves who were liberated for a while.

Proving their unfaithfulness to God’s covenant, a play on the word שׁוּב highlights the issue of disobedience and repentance.<sup>24</sup> The term שׁוּב in the unit is dynamically employed to describe the right and wrong directions of the people, their obedience to the law of slave emancipation (v. 15) but their disobedience against the law (vv. 11, 16).<sup>25</sup>

שׁוּב	v. 11 וַיִּשׁוּבוּ	They turned around (from the covenant)/changed their minds.
	v. 11 וַיִּשְׁבוּ	They caused (the slaves) to return.
	v. 15 וַתִּשְׁבוּ	They turned/repented.
	v. 16 וַתִּשְׁבוּ	They turned around (from the covenant).
	v. 16 וַתִּשְׁבוּ	They brought back (the slaves).

When Zedekiah made the covenant of slave release with the people, they turned around/repented וַתִּשְׁבוּ (v. 15) from their sin and proclaim liberty of their Hebrew male and female slaves in God’s eyes.<sup>26</sup> This emancipation should be executed according to the law of releasing slaves every seventh year.<sup>27</sup> However, they overlooked the law, turned around (וַיִּשׁוּבוּ in v. 11 and וַתִּשְׁבוּ in v. 16) from the covenant recently made with Zedekiah, and caused the slaves, whom they had let go free, to return (וַיִּשְׁבוּ in v. 11 and וַתִּשְׁבוּ in v. 16). The terms וַיִּשׁוּבוּ and וַיִּשְׁבוּ (v. 11) as well as וַתִּשְׁבוּ and וַיִּשְׁבוּ (v. 16) are critical vocabularies as it indicates Judah’s rebellious attitude to the covenant.<sup>28</sup> Besides the term שׁוּב, there are other expressions for the concept of disobedience with these particular phrases—לֹא שָׁמַעְתֶּם אֵלַי לֹא (v. 17) and לֹא הִקִּימוּ אֶת דְּבָרַי הַבְּרִית (v. 18)—that evidently point out their disobedience to the covenant also indicate their disobedience. The parallel of their two opposite behaviors deliberately points out a specific incident of the people’s changing loyalty.<sup>29</sup> They did exactly the opposite from what they were expected to do as well as from what their initial covenant was meant.

<sup>23</sup> Keown, 1995, 189.

<sup>24</sup> Fretheim, 2020, 487.

<sup>25</sup> Lundbom, 2004, 563-64.

<sup>26</sup> In the OT, the term *Hebrew* עֶבְרִי was not normally used by the people of Israel but appeared during periods in their history when they were in Egypt in the pre-Exodus days and at the time of the Philistine domination (Thompson, 1980, 610).

<sup>27</sup> Bright, 1965, 223.

<sup>28</sup> Brack, 2000, 49.

<sup>29</sup> It is reinforced by the hiphil form וַתִּשְׁבוּ (v. 16), *bringing back* their former slaves, and the *hiphil* form וַתִּשְׁבֵּתֶינִי (v. 22), *bringing back* the Babylonian army to Jerusalem (Holladay, 1989, 241).



As mentioned above, there was a possible reason for their changing minds to take back their slaves they had freed and enslaved them again. When the Babylonian siege was lifted, the threat was gone. So, there was no more need for them to radically repent. The Babylonian withdrawal could be God’s favor to their obedience as an effort to behave in accordance with the Sinai covenant, but their subsequent turnaround indicates a continuation of the covenant violations of their forefathers.<sup>30</sup> The people could not even follow through on their own good intentions, observed in their turnaround from the initial covenant to release slaves according to the law (vv. 8-11).<sup>31</sup> This covenant violation reveals their inability to stay with a covenant to which they have committed themselves.<sup>32</sup> Zedekiah’s covenant could not be revoked arbitrarily by any situation as the covenant was a divine proclamation made as a temple ritual before God (v. 15). All the people involved in the covenant were given to a divine judgment as they had abrogated the covenant made in God’s eyes.

### 2.8.6. Sin and Punishment

This unit is characterized by considerable repeated key words: *כָּרַת* (vv. 8, 13, 15, 18), *דָּרוּר* (vv. 8, 15, 17), *שׁוּב* (vv. 11, 15, 16, 22), and *עָבַר* (vv. 18, 19). These repeating words not only represent the connection between making covenant and breaching it, but also reinforce the connection between the sin of the people’s disobedience and judgment for their disobedience throughout the unit. The repeated words, as I explain below, justify God’s actions of judgment and also embody the severity of the punishment. Ironically, some of the words that describe the punishment are taken from the description of the initial covenant.

		<u>Making Covenant</u>	<u>Sin</u>	<u>Judgment</u>
<i>כָּרַת</i>	v. 8 <i>כָּרַת</i> , v. 13 <i>כָּרַתִּי</i> , v. 15 <i>וַתִּכְרַתוּ</i>  v. 18 <i>כָּרַתוּ</i>	making a covenant (Zedekiah’s covenant, the Sinai covenant)		cutting an animal as a symbol of judgment
<i>דָּרוּר</i>	v. 8 <i>דָּרוּר</i> , v. 15 <i>דָּרוּר</i>  v. 17 <i>דָּרוּר</i>	release/liberty of Hebrew slaves		God’s release of the sword, plague, and famine
<i>עָבַר</i>	v. 18 <i>וַיַּעֲבְרוּ</i> , v. 19 <i>הָעֹבְרִים</i>	They passed between the pieces of the calf as a covenant ritual.		

<sup>30</sup> Keown, 1995, 187.

<sup>31</sup> Fretheim, 2020, 483.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 489.

	v. 18	הֵעֲבְרִים		They violated or transgressed the covenant.
שוב	v. 11 qal	וַיִּשְׁבוּ		They turned around from the covenant.
	v. 11 hiphil	וַיִּשְׁבוּ		They caused the slaves to return.
	v. 15 qal	וַתִּשְׁבוּ	They repented from sin.	
	v. 16 qal	וַתִּשְׁבוּ		They turned around from the covenant.
	v. 16 hiphil	וַתִּשְׁבוּ		They brought back the slaves.
	v. 22 hiphil	וַהֲשִׁבְתִּים		God will bring back the Babylonian army.

First of all, the word *cut* כָּרַת in the unit is used for *made* a covenant—the parallel of God who made a covenant and Zedekiah who made a covenant<sup>33</sup>—and also for a ritual act of “cutting” an animal. Those who cut כָּרְתוּ a covenant to liberate their slaves (v. 8) and then revoked their vow will undergo the same destiny as a sacrificial calf cut כָּרְתוּ into halves (v. 18).<sup>34</sup> The cut calf is a radical symbol to portray God’s cruel punishment for those who cut a covenant and then turned around from the covenant. The word עָבַר is used allegorically in the unit with the contrast of God, who kept a covenant, and Judah, who violated a covenant, demonstrating their hypocritical actions in both making a covenant and breaking a covenant.<sup>35</sup> These two terms, כָּרַת and עָבַר, indeed show a dynamic wordplay related to covenant-making and covenant-breaking within the context of the covenant ritual here. Those who made (כָּרַת, v. 8; וַתִּכְרְתוּ, v. 15) a covenant with God by passing (וַיַּעֲבְרוּ, v. 18; הֵעֲבְרִים, v. 19) between the parts of animal will be like the ceremonial animal that they cut כָּרְתוּ (v. 18) in two because they have transgressed (הֵעֲבְרִים, v. 18) the divine covenant.<sup>36</sup> The association with the oath-taking ceremony denotes the seriousness of the covenant violation when they revoke their own pledged covenant, vividly portraying the consequence of the violation sin.<sup>37</sup> Employing the same words denotes the severity of disobeying the covenant—they did exactly the opposite of what was demanded. They should have remembered the calf through whose parts they passed.

<sup>33</sup> Brueggmann, 1998, 328.

<sup>34</sup> Fretheim, 2002, 490; Stulman, 2005, 291.

<sup>35</sup> Brueggmann, 1998, 328.

<sup>36</sup> Miller, 1984, 611-13; Fretheim, 2002, 490.

<sup>37</sup> Keown, 1995, 186.

Those who cut the covenant accepted the warning of the curse, so they will be cut like the calf as they violated the covenant.

The word *release* דָּרוֹר in the unit matches slave liberty/release as well as divine punishment.<sup>38</sup> Zedekiah's covenant is to proclaim דָּרוֹר (vv. 8, 15) for Hebrew slaves while דָּרוֹר in v. 17 shows God's furious reaction to the unfaithful, that is, God's intentional punishment on those who turned around from the freedom proclamation.<sup>39</sup> God's declaration of the *release* דָּרוֹר of the sword, plague, and famine (v. 17) is an ironic adaptation of the *liberty* דָּרוֹר proclamation (vv. 8, 15).<sup>40</sup> As Zedekiah and the slaveholders failed to proclaim דָּרוֹר of their Hebrew slaves, God proclaims דָּרוֹר of the sword, plague, and famine against them. They will face trouble among all the kingdoms of the earth because God will free them from His protection.

The term שׁוּב shown as two different forms in the unit—its qal form and hiphil form—reveals the connection between sin and punishment. The qal form of שׁוּב (vv. 11, 16) represents the people's sin by describing their impulsive attitude as they turned twice in capriciousness. They did wrong to turn around (v. 11 וַיִּשׁוּבוּ, v. 16 וַתָּשׁוּבוּ) from their recent covenant fidelity.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, the hiphil form of שׁוּב (vv. 11, 16, 22) is employed to reveal both their sin and God's punishment by underscoring the inconsistency of the people in obeying the covenant as well as God's adamant punishment upon their evil caprice. They sinned to bring back (v. 11 וַיִּשׁוּבוּ, v. 16 וַתָּשׁוּבוּ) their former slaves, so God will punish them by bringing back (v. 22 וַיָּשׁוּבוּ) the Babylonian army to capture Zedekiah and his officials, destroying Jerusalem, and making the cities of Judah a desolation without inhabitant as they have transgressed the words of the covenant regarding emancipation for their slaves (vv. 20-22).<sup>42</sup> As they went against God's law by aborting the whole exercise of proclaiming emancipation, God will punish Jerusalem through the Babylonian. The poignant fate of Jerusalem is directly related to their disobedience. God determined to complete the work of judgment, so they cannot escape the judgment with the hand of their enemies and the hand of those who seek their life. God shows His freedom to bring back the Babylonian army as divine judgment while the people reveal their own

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<sup>38</sup> The phrase *proclaiming liberty* לְקַרְאֵ דָּרוֹר (vv. 8, 15, 17) is found in Lev 25:10; the liberty in Lev 25 is to be proclaimed in a jubilee year while the release in Deut 15 is to be in a sabbatical year (Holladay, 1989, 238).

<sup>39</sup> Brueggmann, 1998, 329; Keown, 1995, 189; Fretheim, 2002, 490; Stulman, 2005, 290. The term דָּרוֹר is used for “the various social transformations in the jubilee year” intended to make the poor return to their families and their inherited land, such as “manumission of slaves and cancellation of debt” (Keown, 1995, 188).

<sup>40</sup> Allen, 2008, 387.

<sup>41</sup> Brueggmann, 1998, 328. Regarding the wordplay of qal שׁוּב, the words *repented* (v. 15) and *renege* (v. 16) are translations of an identical verb, וַתָּשׁוּבוּ (Keown, 1995, 189).

<sup>42</sup> Carroll, 1986, 650; Keown, 1995, 185.

disobedience in revoking the covenant of slave freedom and bringing back all their slaves. In short, the plays on these words are simply rhetorical maneuvers to proclaim a theodicy—a horrible judgment as the great sin committed against God.<sup>43</sup> These rhetorical devices make the unit vibrant by offering dynamic progress with many parallels and contrasts.

### 2.8.7. Conclusion

The unit describes a narrative of the infidelity of the nation Judah during the days of King Zedekiah, highlighting Judah's disobedience with respect to a legal tradition regarding slave liberation.<sup>44</sup> When Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people in Jerusalem to proclaim emancipation for Hebrew slaves, they obeyed and set their slaves free. However, the slave liberation was a short-lived freedom; afterwards, they changed their minds and returned the slaves whom they had set free. They had a great opportunity to obey God and do good to their fellow Hebrews by proclaiming liberty of the slaves. They missed this great opportunity by disobeying God.

God had appointed a special judgment for those who broke their promise to set their slaves free in obedience to the law. The emancipation carried out by Zedekiah is parallel to the procedure of a covenant ceremony. As they turned back from the covenant, they will bear a curse embedded in the ritual making of the covenant; they made the covenant before God as if they passed through the pieces of the calf.<sup>45</sup> God will bring back the Babylonian army to Jerusalem as the consequence of their breaking the covenant. They invoked the curse on themselves by disobeying the words of the covenant. Judah's failure to keep the covenant causes God's harsh condemnation and warning upon Jerusalem and the cities of Judah.

Zedekiah's covenant is basically the continuation of Sinai covenant as the unit clearly shows that the covenant of slave liberation is built upon the covenant made between God and forefathers at Sinai. The repeating key words—פָּרַת, דָּרוֹר, שׁוּב, and עָבַר—rhetorically emphasizes a covenant violation as severe sin against God and a divine punishment as its consequence, representing that the covenant demands continuous obedience regardless of any realistic condition. The sin is exactly the opposite of what was expected, and the expectations represent the Sinai covenant, so the punishment is so serious. Furthermore, a triple connection is discovered in this unit: the Sinai covenant-Zedekiah's covenant (פָּרַת), Zedekiah's covenant-

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<sup>43</sup> Brueggmann, 1998, 329.

<sup>44</sup> This tradition is found in Deut 15; the release of debt slaves should be done every seven years.

<sup>45</sup> Carroll, 1986, 650.

breaking this covenant (שׁוֹבֵב), and breaking the covenant-punishment (עֲבַר, דְּרוֹר). Through the dual literary and linguistic contrast, the unit as a whole demonstrates that the sin of disobedience causes the divine judgment based on the conditional covenant.

## 2.9. Jer 50:1-5<sup>1</sup>

### 2.9.1. Introduction

The unit proclaims the fall of Babylon as an accomplished fact under the nations (vv. 2-3) and delivers hope for Israel and Judah to return to their homeland (vv. 4-5).<sup>2</sup> Babylon had been the agent of God's judgment against Judah, but now she is to be attacked by a nation from the north in the unit. As the defeat of Babylon entails the end of exile for the Israelites, the destruction of Babylon is a new chance for the exiled to return to their homeland; "the people are urged to take advantage of their new opportunity for freedom by returning to the land of God's promise."<sup>3</sup> When the fall of Babylon will take place, the nation come back to Zion and bind themselves to God in an everlasting covenant.

The unit goes back to a tidings of hope by showing the opposite picture of the previously analyzed unit regarding the nation's fate and the direction of the people's behaviors. The sequential reading of the units does not undermine the message of threat and calamity but rather constructively utilizes the message to increase the need for hope of restoration. The previous unit described a calamity of the nation's judgment under the conditional covenant, claiming that the people of Judah turned around from the covenant at their pleasure. However, the current unit focuses again on an everlasting covenant for the guarantee of the nation's return to Zion, demonstrating that Babylon will be declined in the future and that the nation will turn to the everlasting covenant by getting actively involved in the restoration process. Like the unit 32:36-44, it continues to repeat the new covenant concept with the term בְּרִית עוֹלָם, since unit 31:31-34 has made a turning point between the covenant units that mainly discuss calamity and those that deal with comfort. Whereas the new covenant concept in 31:31 and 32:40 represents

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<sup>1</sup> The unit emphasizes the fall of Babylon itself as a critical factor directly related to a significant change in the exile's fate. No power in ancient times affected the fortunes of Israel in a more catastrophic way than did Babylon; she started to be dominant in the ancient Near Eastern world by defeating Egypt at Carchemish in about 604 BCE and lasted its domination until 538 BCE when the Persians conquered Babylon (Bracke, 2000, 143). Babylon was replaced by Persia as a new superpower. The historical background of 50:1-5 is the period of the power shift from Babylonian to Persian forces (Carroll, 1986, 818). When Babylon was fallen, it was not by the Medes from the north but by King Cyrus of Persia from the east (Allen, 2008, 508). McKane (1996, 1253) argues that although the Persians were from the east rather than the north, they already had territory in the north when Cyrus attacked Babylon. However, Jeremiah did not know that Persia was the nation from the north מִצְפוֹן to attack Babylon (v. 3) because the first Persian Empire was founded by Cyrus the Great in 550 BCE after Jeremiah's death.

The unit was composed when Babylon still had an imperial power, reflecting an earlier period than Cyrus' overthrow of the Median king Astyages in 550 BCE (Bright, 1965, 360; Thompson, 1980, 732; McKane, 1996, 1250; Fretheim, 2002, 621). However, some scholars, such as Duhm, Cornill, Weiser, Rudolph, Fohrer, and Christensen, do not regard it as Jeremiah's authentic material (Kewon, 1995, 357-58).

<sup>2</sup> Bright, 1965, 359; Thompson, 1980, 731; Lundbom, 2004, 372; Beuken, 2014, 54.

<sup>3</sup> Kessler, 1999, 69.

God's divine initiation to lead all the aspects of the nation's restoration, the everlasting covenant of 50:5 as a new covenant particularly highlights a human initiation in returning from the Babylonian exile to their homeland and seeking their covenant relationship with God. The people's eager participation in the unit purely shows their desperate hearts for return and restoration as the everlasting covenant does not demand human obedience.

In this chapter, I will argue that the everlasting covenant endures unconditionally only by God's grace beyond human effort and historical situation. Although Babylon's fall is a historical opportunity for the exiled to flee from Babylon and return to Zion, the nation's restoration depends on the everlasting covenant alone.

### 2.9.2. Internal Structure

The unit consists of two divine oracles: the first section (vv. 1-3) addresses Babylon, and the second one (vv. 4-5) addresses Israel and Judah. These two sub-units have two different themes, the fate of Babylon (vv. 1-3) and the restoration of Israel and Judah (vv. 4-5). These two themes are intimately interwoven by a linking phrase *בְּיָמֵי הַהִמָּה וּבְעֵת הַהִיא* (v. 4a) that makes a coherent transition between two themes. When a nation from the north makes Babylon desolate, the restoration of God's people will start dramatically.<sup>4</sup> It is a chronological continuity between two significant events, not a causality that their restoration is the consequence of Babylon's fall.

Oracle I (vv. 1-3)	<i>דָּבַר יְהוָה אֶל בְּכָל</i> (v. 1a)	The Fall of Babylon
Oracle II (vv. 4-5)	<i>בְּיָמֵי הַהִמָּה וּבְעֵת הַהִיא</i> (v. 4a)	The Restoration of
	<i>נְאֻם יְהוָה יְבֹאוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַמָּה וּבְנֵי יְהוּדָה</i> (v. 4)	Israel and Judah

These two oracles make a dynamic contrast between the destinies of Babylon and God's people, Israel and Judah. Although the downfall of Judah's archenemy Babylon is announced, Jeremiah delivers a hope of their return to the homeland and to their God in a covenantal relationship. Babylon's idols will be put to shame and dismayed, but God of Israel will be sought and joined by the people. The unit starts with a divine oracle of Babylon's doom, but it is indeed used for guiding the restoration of Israel and Judah in an everlasting covenant. Furthermore, the repeated verb *הִלָּךְ* is employed in describing Babylon's decline on the one hand and the united Israel's restoration on the other hand. While *הִלָּכוּ* in v. 3 represents the dissolution of both men and animals in the land of Babylon, *הִלָּךְ* and *יָלְכוּ* in v. 4 refer to Israel's restoration of covenant relationship alongside returning to the land of Zion.<sup>5</sup> Therefore,

<sup>4</sup> Bracke, 2000, 146.

<sup>5</sup> Aitken, 1984, 34.

Babylon's destruction rhetorically serves the renewed relationship between God and His covenant people through dynamic comparisons.

### 2.9.3. The Fall of Babylon

A divine oracle (vv. 1-3) announced to the nations conveys a theological perspective related to Babylon's demise. Since Babylon had an impact on all surrounding nations, this oracle needed to be publicly declared among the nations. When Babylon is conquered, Babylon's fall is represented in two ways: the disgrace of her idols in v. 2 and the desolation of her land in v. 3. First of all, her idols are humiliated, most notably *Bel* בֵּל and *Merodach* מְרֹדַךְ (v. 2).<sup>6</sup> The primary consequence of the capture of Babylon is the humiliation of the Babylonian deity, so the defeat of Babylon is the defeat of her god and the triumph of God.<sup>7</sup> The oracle specifically focuses on the spiritual judgment on Babylon by mentioning the names of her particular idols. All the images of this celebrated Babylonian deity will be shamed, and astonishing news of their fall will be spread to the nations by word.<sup>8</sup> The discrediting of Babylon's idols removes a challenge to God's own supremacy.<sup>9</sup> It is a shift in the theological judgment about Babylon to affirm the sovereignty of God over nations and kingdoms.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the decline of Babylon, expressed by the shame of Babylon's idols, is not regarded as a strategic achievement but rather as a theological event.

The first oracle continues to reveal Babylon's decline through the desolation of her land (v. 3). Interestingly, this incident goes within a shift in Babylon's historical situation. Babylon has been the agent of God's judgment against the nations, as Babylon is defined as the typical foe from the north against Judah in Jeremiah's early oracles (4:6; 6:1-4, 22). In view of the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE, Babylon became the target of great hostility as well as the place where many Israelites lived. So many Judaeans saw Babylon as the destroyer of Jerusalem and temple.<sup>11</sup> However, as God, the ruler of all nations, will arouse a new agent who will fight against Babylon, God's alliance with Babylon is now terminated.<sup>12</sup> Now God's old agent, Babylon, will be attacked by God's a new agent, a nation from the north גּוֹי מִצְפוֹן (v. 3) that is not defined in the unit.<sup>13</sup> Babylon will face its doom fate that is really the opposite from

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<sup>6</sup> *Bel* בֵּל and *Merodach* מְרֹדַךְ are the same as the poetic parallelism demonstrates; Bel is the title of the state-god of Babylon, and Merodach is its name (Thompson, 1980, 732; Holladay, 1989, 415).

<sup>7</sup> Carroll, 1986, 819.

<sup>8</sup> Lundbom, 2004, 372.

<sup>9</sup> Allen, 2008, 511.

<sup>10</sup> Bracke, 2000, 144.

<sup>11</sup> Carroll, 1986, 817.

<sup>12</sup> Brueggemann, 2007, 112.

<sup>13</sup> Allen, 2008, 511.



her status in the exilic period.<sup>14</sup> The new foe from the north will make Babylon's land desolate and uninhabitable, וְלֹא יִהְיֶה יוֹשֵׁב בָּהּ (v. 3).<sup>15</sup> The land of Babylon will be desolate without inhabitants, neither humans nor beasts. She will not be able to provide them with houses and food anymore. This upcoming disaster on her will cause the exile in her land to go back to their homeland.

#### 2.9.4. Restoration of the Covenant People

At the time of Babylon's fall, the restoration of God's people will take place; they will come out of Babylon, go back to Zion in tears, and seek their God. The restoration does not come from Babylon's decline, but the unit simply shows a chronological continuity between two big events with the unique expression for the timing of the restoration, *in those days and at that time* בְּיָמֵים הַהֵמָּה וּבְעֵת הַהִיא (v. 4a), which refers a considerable time interval from the previous verse.<sup>16</sup> It is not the subsequence of the fall of Babylon but the important event in the future time as God's appointed time. Even though it will chronologically take place after Babylon's fall, it is intentionally designed by God Himself within His divine plan. The exiles, on their return, will be weeping while marching. While the phrase with continual weeping וַיִּבְכוּ (v. 4) can show the tears of joy for going back to Zion out of their bondage in Babylon, it instead conveys a theological meaning by representing the depth of their repentance to seek God וְאָתָּה וְנָלוּנוּ אֵל יְהוָה בְּרִית עוֹלָם and go back to His covenant's arms אֶל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם יִבְקְשׂוּ (vv. 4-5), even though repentance is not mentioned in the verses. On the one hand, the defeat of Babylon would be a great joy, and the details of the event could be supplied from traditional songs of triumph over the enemy.<sup>17</sup> According to Ps 126, the captives that God brought back to Zion had songs of joy in their tongues. On the other hand, the tears indicate their changed condition, the onset of contrition, and so they will weep as penitents.<sup>18</sup> The weeping process presents their strong desire of a returning back not only to Jerusalem but also to God as they will be actively engaged in God's restoration work through their passionate expression. They will eagerly anticipate such a privilege to dwell in Jerusalem as the place of God's presence while going on their way to Zion.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 508.

<sup>15</sup> Brueggemann, 1998, 465.

<sup>16</sup> This exact phrase, "בְּיָמֵים הַהֵמָּה וּבְעֵת הַהִיא," also appears in Jer 33:15 and 50:20 and Joel 4:1. It does not mean subsequence but rather a special timing of a very exceptional event in the future.

<sup>17</sup> Carroll, 1986, 816. Carroll (1986, 816) says, "Taunt songs furnish their own emotional charge independent of the actual course of events and, like the folk songs of so many cultures, often are a preferred surrogate to the more mundane reality they celebrate."

<sup>18</sup> McKane, 1996, 1254.

### 2.9.5. Israel and Judah

The future restoration of God's people, the children of Israel בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל and the children of Judah בְּנֵי יְהוּדָה, includes the unity of Israel and Judah, return to the land, and renewal of the covenant which will not be broken again and never be forgotten (vv. 4-5).<sup>19</sup> Jeremiah delivers a salvation oracle for the whole people of God, a united Israel and Judah. A few other units in the book demonstrate that both houses as one community share a common destiny for God's plan such as the union of Judah and Israel as well as the restoration of Judah and Israel; their reunification is part of the promised restoration (3:18), these two houses stand together under judgment (5:11; 11:10, 17) and promise (31:31; 33:14), and they will return together to Zion in tears (50:4-5).<sup>20</sup> The return of Israel and Judah to the land conveys the restoration of the relationship with God. The covenant relationship with God will be restored as a band of weeping people return to Zion and seek their God.<sup>21</sup> The restoration of the people to their homeland goes with the renewal of their relationship with God as a permanent covenant.<sup>22</sup> God does not act in a performative way when they hear the message of Babylon's fall, even though He has the ability to intervene.<sup>23</sup> Instead, they are acting in seeking God and returning to Zion, so now they are entering into an everlasting covenant and have a renewed relationship with God.<sup>24</sup> Although God is the acting power behind this oracle, the people coming back to Zion are actively involved in making the everlasting covenant, which will undergird the divine-human relationship for all days to come.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, Israel and Judah together will join themselves to God and participate in this unconditional covenant initiated by God.

They will come and join themselves to God in an everlasting covenant בָּאוּ וְנִלְווּ אֶל יְהוָה (v. 5).<sup>26</sup> The verb וְנִלְווּ *and join yourselves* in v. 5 is the niph'al form of the verb לָוָה *to join*.<sup>27</sup> According to Lundbom, there are three common readings about *Come! And they attach themselves to God* בָּאוּ וְנִלְווּ אֶל יְהוָה:

1. people are either being called to attach themselves to God;

<sup>19</sup> Thompson, 1980, 733.

<sup>20</sup> Keown, 1995, 131.

<sup>21</sup> Seeking God וְנִלְווּ אֶל יְהוָה in v. 4b means seeking Him in worship (Lundbom, 2004, 375).

<sup>22</sup> Carroll, 1986, 823; Fretheim, 2002, 626.

<sup>23</sup> Aitken, 1984, 62; Beuken, 2014, 63.

<sup>24</sup> Stulman, 2005, 373.

<sup>25</sup> Lundbom, 2004, 376; Allen, 2008, 512.

<sup>26</sup> Bracke, 2000, 147.

<sup>27</sup> BDB, 1972, 530-31; HALOT, 1995, 522; Clines, 1998, 523. It is parallel to the form of niph'al verb נִלְוָה in Trito-Isaiah, *participle* נִלְוָה in Isa 56:3 and plural נִלְווּ in Isa 56:6; הַבְּנֵי הַנִּלְוָה אֶל יְהוָה “the son of the foreigner *who has joined himself to the LORD*” in Isa 56:3 and הַבְּנֵי הַנִּלְוִים עַל יְהוָה “also the sons of foreigner *who join themselves to the LORD*” in Isa 56:6 (BDB, 1972, 530-31). In Trito-Isaiah, הַבְּנֵי הַנִּלְוִים are not from Israel; the sons of foreigner join Israel. However, וְנִלְווּ here refers that Israel themselves join God. While Trito-Isaiah represents the human movement from nations to Israel, Jer 50:5 emphasizes a divine concept of the human approach to God.

2. they are calling themselves to be attached to God; or
3. they are said to be actually carrying out attachment at a future time when their rebellion is over.<sup>28</sup>

It is certain that they, as covenant people, will willingly join themselves to God when they return to their homeland. Their returning home implies a return to covenant with God as they will come back to God on the terms of His covenant.<sup>29</sup> Their relationship with God is based on a perpetual covenant. God's goodness and care are given to them on the basis of the covenant. The renewed and restored relationship with God is celebrated as everlasting, so Judah and Israel will have a solid and enduring destiny with God.<sup>30</sup> The covenant will not be forgotten by the people, unlike the Sinai covenant.<sup>31</sup> As they failed the conditional covenant, they were exiled to Babylon. However, when the people of Israel and the people of Judah together will return to their homeland in the midst of Babylon's decline, they will join themselves to God in an eternal covenant. The term *בְּרִית עוֹלָם* here in 50:5 seems to repeat the new covenant concept of *בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה* in 31:31 and *בְּרִית עוֹלָם* in 32:40 in expressing the everlasting relationship between God and the nation.<sup>32</sup> Whereas the new covenant in 31:31 and 32:40 represents God's divine initiation to lead all the aspects of the nation's restoration, the everlasting covenant of 50:5 as a new covenant particularly highlights a human initiation in returning from the Babylonian exile to their homeland and seeking their covenant relationship with God. The nation as a whole will enthusiastically partake in the restoration process by looking for God and joining themselves to God at His appointed time, while God will be acting behind this oracle.

#### **2.9.6. Conclusion**

The unit speaks not only about Babylon's demise but also about the restoration of Israel and Judah. Babylon will be destroyed by an enemy from the north, and the reputation of her gods will be discredited. The unit does not say that Babylon deserves destruction as a punishment, but Babylon's fall is simply described as a future event. The oracles against Babylon, describing Babylon's fall in graphic detail, take one significant step further; Babylon's doom fate enables the exiled Israelites to flee from Babylon.<sup>33</sup> These chronological events are naturally connected to the nation's return to Zion as a reversal of their fate at the hands of Babylon as well as the renewal of their covenant relationship with God. The unit is formulated

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<sup>28</sup> Lundbom, 2004, 375.

<sup>29</sup> These are promises associated with the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34 and 23:3-8, Ezek 11:16-20 and 36:24-28).

<sup>30</sup> Brueggemann, 1998, 465.

<sup>31</sup> Lundbom, 2004, 376.

<sup>32</sup> The exact term *בְּרִית עוֹלָם* appears only in the oracles of Jer 32:36-44 and 50:4-5 in the book.

<sup>33</sup> Kessler, 1999, 68-69; Fretheim, 2002, 621.

as a description of the future. This formulation is a literary representation of the unconditional and eternal nature of this covenant: the formulation means that it is what it is going to be, and it is not dependent on their will or behavior but will happen naturally after the collapse of Babylon. At God's appointed time in the coming days, the nation's restoration will be initiated by the exiled in Babylon. They will return to Zion and take the initiative to bind themselves to God in an everlasting covenant that will never be forgotten.

### **3. Conclusion**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

Until now, each of the covenant units has been analyzed separately, which could also hint at the connections between the units. This conclusion chapter will concentrate on the recurring characteristics throughout the units, the significance of the covenant meaning created from the similarities and various connections between the units, and the place and meaning of the new covenant in the overall structure and process. Therefore, it will be able to confirm the new covenant concept within the meaning of the covenant in the book, which was already revealed through the literary analysis of the units.

This thesis explores the Book of Jeremiah in general and the covenant in the book in particular in order to deliberately figure out the meaning of the new covenant in 31:31-34 in relation to other covenants in the book. As claimed in the introduction, the book exists in two ancient versions, that is, the older Greek Septuagint text (LXX) and the Masoretic Hebrew text (MT); since there are different layers and stages of composition, a vast discussion regarding the original version of the book has been done. Although most modern scholars analyze the book with a diachronic approach due to the differences between the layers of the book, this thesis is based on the MT-Jer version as the endtext of the book. The synchronic reading of the book is used in this thesis to examine the book as a whole, and the covenant units in particular, so that it could serve to present the meaning of the covenant with the literal sense of each unit separated from its historical layers. As each unit has its own content and its own historical background, the units are neither organically connected nor related to the same period. However, the units are thematically connected through the same central terms closely related to the theme of the covenant. The recurring verb roots, such as כר"ת, שו"ב, בו"א, שמ"ע, דב"ר, and פר"ר, present each of the themes and the process between calamity and comfort. Therefore, there is a significance in discussing the covenant units together to observe the meaning of the covenant created from the connections between the units.

#### **3.2. Recurring Characteristics**

The book, as mentioned at the beginning of the thesis, is closely tied to the word “covenant בְּרִית,” which appears twenty-four times throughout the book (3:16; 11:2, 3, 6, 8, 10; 14:21; 22:9; 31:31, 32a, 32b, 33; 32:40; 33:20a, 20b, 21, 25; 34:8, 10, 13, 15, 18a, 18b; 50:5). These

appearances are divided into nine units in the book which develop the concept of the בְּרִית, as follows: 3:12-18; 11:1-17; 14:19-22; 22:6-9; 31:31-34; 32:36-44; 33:19-26; 34:8-22; 50:1-5.<sup>1</sup>

Unit	Topic	Term "Covenant" Occurrence	Covenant Character	Covenant Type	Time	Tidings	Initiator	Speaker	Addressee
3:12-18	God's call for the faithless Judah's return with His promise of restoration in Zion	1 (v. 16)	Sinai Covenant אָרוֹן בְּרִית יְהוָה	Conditional	Past	Calamity	Divine	God	Judah
11:1-17	The theoretic consequence, God's blessing, for obeying the covenant (vv. 1-5)	2 (vv. 2, 3)	Sinai Covenant דְּבָרֵי הַבְּרִית	Conditional	Past	Calamity	Divine	God	Judah
	Failure to obey the covenant (vv. 6-8)	2 (vv. 6, 8)	Sinai Covenant דְּבָרֵי הַבְּרִית	Conditional	Present	Calamity	Divine	God	Judah
	Breaking the covenant by idolatry (vv. 9-17)	1 (v. 10)	Sinai Covenant בְּרִיתִי	Conditional	Present	Calamity Rebuke	Divine	God	Judah
14:19-22	Judah's urgent request to God for remembering the unconditional covenant	1 (v. 21)	Covenant with Abraham בְּרִיתֵךְ	Unconditional	Present	Comfort	Divine	Judah	Judah
22:6-9	The consequences that the house of Judah abandoned the covenant	1 (v. 9)	Sinai Covenant בְּרִית יְהוָה	Conditional	Present	Calamity Rebuke	Divine	God	Judah
31:31-34	A new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the old covenant that Israel have broken	4 (vv. 31, 32a, 32b, 33)	New Covenant (vv. 31, 33) בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה v. 31 זֹאת הַבְּרִית v. 33	Unconditional	Future	Comfort Hope	Divine	God	The nation as a whole
			Sinai Covenant (v. 32a, 32b) כְּבְרִית/בְּרִיתִי	Conditional	Past	Calamity			
32:36-44	Restoration of Israel based on an everlasting covenant as a new covenant	1 (v. 40)	Everlasting Covenant בְּרִית עוֹלָם	Unconditional	Future	Comfort Hope	Divine	God	The nation as a whole
33:19-26	God's everlasting promise of restoration based on the unbreakable covenant between God and His people	4 (vv. 20a, 20b, 21, 25)	Creation Covenant, Noahic & Abrahamic covenants (vv. 20a, 20b, 25) בְּרִיתֵי יוֹזֵם וְלִלְקָה	Unconditional	Present	Comfort	Divine	God	The nation as a whole
			Covenant with David (v. 21) בְּרִיתִי ... כִּנּוּן	Unconditional	Future				
34:8-22	God's judgment on the violation of the covenant regarding slaves	6 (vv. 8, 10, 13, 15, 18a, 18b)	Zedekiah's Covenant (vv. 8, 10, 15, 18a) בְּרִית/בְּרִיתִי	Conditional	Present (vv. 8, 10, 15, 18)	Calamity	Human (vv. 8, 10)	Jeremiah (vv. 8, 10)	Judah
			Sinai Covenant (vv. 13, 18b) דְּבָרֵי הַבְּרִית/בְּרִיתִי		Past (v. 13)		Divine (vv. 13, 15, 18)	God (vv. 13, 15, 18)	
50:1-5	Decline of Babylon but the restoration of Israel and Judah in an eternal covenant	1 (v. 5)	Everlasting Covenant בְּרִית עוֹלָם	Unconditional	Future	Comfort Hope	Divine	God	The nation as a whole

As can be seen from the table above (which is based on my previous analysis), each of the nine covenant units has its distinctive context regarding the recurring parameters: covenant

<sup>1</sup> Not all the nine units are 'covenant units' par excellence. In particular, the unit 3:12-18 uses the term covenant to represent the relationship between God and Judah in a different way from the way other units use the term. There is a diverse representation of the covenant theme in the units which shows not only the meaning but also parameters for its direct discussion and vague representation in using the term covenant.

type, time, tidings, initiator, speaker, and addressee, which can show the dynamic process of covenant terms in the book. First of all, the different biblical covenants are enumerated in the book, such as the creation covenant (33:20, 25), Abrahamic covenant (14:21), the Sinai covenant (3:16; 11:2, 3, 6, 8, 10; 22:9; 31:32a, 32b; 34:13, 18b), Davidic covenant (33:21), Zedekiah's covenant (34:8, 10, 15, 18a), a new covenant (31:31, 33), an everlasting covenant (32:40; 50:5). The Sinai covenant plays a significant role in the Jeremiah tradition through a Deuteronomistic influence on the book.<sup>2</sup> However, it is interesting that there is the absence of the Moab covenant in the book. Why is the Moab covenant not mentioned in the book? The Moab covenant succeeds the Sinai covenant in Deuteronomy by having the same terms of the covenant with different contexts, being addressed to the Moab generation rhetorically as if they were the Sinai generation and reshaping the Sinai covenant for life in the promised land as a new context and situation.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it seems that the book does not have to mention the Moab covenant as a particular one because the Sinai covenant in the book can fully represent a conditional character of the Mosaic covenant.

The time of the covenant's happening is past (3:16; 11:2, 3; 31:32a, 32b; 34:13), present (11:6, 8, 10; 14:21, 22:9; 33:20, 25; 34:8, 10, 15, 18), and future (31:31, 33; 32:40; 33:21; 50:5). Therefore, the book as a whole shows the movement of the chronological sequence in term of the time when the covenant takes place. In terms of the identity of the initiator, the speaker, and the addressee, the covenant units are different from each other: All covenants in the book have divine initiation except Zedekiah's covenant (34:8, 10). Those divine covenants were conditionally or unconditionally initiated by God Himself while Zedekiah's covenant was commenced by king Zedekiah to liberate slaves of his people based on the Sinai covenant. God Himself is a speaker for most covenants, but there are a few covenants with other speakers, such as the covenant with Abraham (14:21) spoken by the people of Judah, the Sinai covenant

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<sup>2</sup> Brueggemann, 1988, 3. For Brueggemann (Ibid, 4-5), God's pathos and covenant are Jeremiah's theological platform; the pathos of God is set in tension with the curses of the Sinai covenant. According to Bright (1965, 32), the Jeremiah traditions were simultaneously transmitted over a long period of time both as the oral tradition, which is more flexible and easily supplementing materials over time and the written tradition which is more static and serving as a control of the oral and would have interacted with each other. Craigie (1991, xxxii -xxxvii) assumes that the prophet employed both poetry and prose in his speeches; it seems that there is a Deuteronomistic influence in Jeremiah, but not necessarily a Deuteronomistic redactor. Jones (1992, 19-22) argues that the prose of the book is Deuteronomistic in style but reflects a specific Jeremianic tradition preserved by distant disciples of Jeremiah educated in the Deuteronomistic schools, not the Deuteronomists of the post-exilic synagogue or in the Babylonian exile; although Jeremiah's prose is Deuteronomistic in form, it is the pattern employed by learned circles during the seventh and sixth centuries BCE.

<sup>3</sup> Gentry, 2014, 54. The Moab covenant inaugurates a covenant renewal as an essential facet of the covenant itself and reinterprets the imposed obligation of the Sinai covenant; the Sinai covenant would be constantly effective as a continual updating and reapplication in each generation of Israel (Williamson, 2003, 139-55).

(22:9) by many nations, and Zedekiah's covenant (34:8, 10) by Jeremiah. While Judah is the addressee of the units with historical and present context (3:12-18; 11:1-17; 14:19-22; 22:6-9; 34:8-22), the nation as a whole is the addressee of the future-oriented units (31:31-34; 32:36-44; 33:19-26; 50:1-5). Judah indeed comes to anticipate the hope of a united nation in the future because of the everlasting covenant.

In particular, there is a significant division between conditional covenants (3:16; 11:2, 3, 6, 8, 10; 22:9; 31:32a, 32b; 34:8, 10, 13, 15, 18a, 18b) and unconditional covenants (14:21; 31:31, 33; 32:40; 33:20a, 20b, 21, 25; 50:5).<sup>4</sup> The book deals with a conditional covenant first to indict Judah's covenant violation and then highlights an unconditional covenant in later parts for God's promise of all Israel's restoration. This significant division between the two different types of covenants can show interesting and remarkable dynamics by comparing to each other's characteristics. Firstly, the conditional covenants in the book represent the Sinai covenant (3:16; 11:2, 3, 6, 8, 10; 22:9; 31:32a, 32b; 34:13, 18b) and Zedekiah's covenant (34:8, 10, 15, 18a) as the succession of the Sinai covenant, showing the tidings of calamity (3:16; 11:2, 3, 6, 8, 10; 22:9; 31:32a, 32b; 34:8, 10, 13, 15, 18a, 18b).<sup>5</sup> They are employed within the historical background (3:16; 11:2, 3; 31:32; 34:13, 18b) and also within the present context (11: 6, 8, 10; 22:9; 34:8, 10, 15, 18a). Units 11:1-17 and 34:8-22, respectively, have many occurrences of recurring terms דב"ר (11:1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 17; 34:8, 12, 18) and שמ"ע (11:2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14; 34:10, 14, 17) connected with the conditional covenant to describe both expecting obedience and its breaking by disobedience. These significant occurrences also strengthen the thematic connection between the units and present them as part of one sequential process which will be elaborated below. The nation has been expected to hear God's voice and obey the words of the covenant, but they have broken the covenant by disobeying God's words. Secondly, the unconditional covenants in the book imply the Abrahamic covenant (14:21), a creation covenant (33:20a, 20b, 25), the Davidic covenant (33:21), and a new covenant as an everlasting covenant (31:31, 33; 32:40; 50:5), delivering the tiding of comfort (14:21; 31:31, 33; 32:40; 33:20, 21, 25; 50:5) within present context (14:21; 33:20, 25) and future perspective (31:31, 33; 32:40; 33:21; 50:5). Interestingly, recurring term ברא is closely related to the unconditional covenant. Its *qal* form (31:31; 50:4) is connected to the restoration process of the nation; at the days come, the united nation will come to their homeland. Its *hiphil* form (מְבִיא, הִבְאִיתִי) in 32:42

<sup>4</sup> I cite here all the references of the term, instead of referring to the units.

<sup>5</sup> As for unit 3:12-18, the ark of God's covenant represents the conditional character of the covenant, while Jerusalem as אֶרֶץ יְהוָה embodies unconditional covenant. As I focus on the term covenant, I clarify the type of covenant in the phrase 'the ark of God's covenant' as a conditional one. So, the unit itself emphasizes unconditional character, but the ark of God's covenant refers to the conditional one.



with a connection with the terms רָע and טוֹב is employed to emphasize that God will bring the good on the nation as He has brought evil on them. In short, the division between the conditional covenants and the unconditional covenants shows that the new covenant unit is a beginning page to change the tiding of the units from calamity to hope based on its significant connection with the other units.

### 3.3. Central Themes

While this thesis focuses on the significance of the covenant and the ‘new covenant’ in particular, it succeeded in presenting the fundamental issues of the book. The themes of sin, punishment, return, repentance, hope, and restoration cooperate together to form the whole message of covenant.<sup>6</sup> The book is interwoven by the theme of sin and judgment on the one hand and the messages of grace and salvation on the other hand throughout the book.<sup>7</sup> It is a narrow perspective through the lens of the term covenant, but by using the same term and concept it serves readers to figure out how the fundamental issues are working throughout the book as a whole. Especially it is one of the most important terms to portray the God-people relationship, emphasizing “intimacy with God.”<sup>8</sup> The covenant relation between God and His people is a central concern for Jeremiah, so the theme of covenant is well depicted by Jeremiah—Jeremiah’s self-understanding, his understanding of God, and his message to his people—within “the three-way relation” among God, Jeremiah, and the people.<sup>9</sup> The covenant relationship, alongside God’s new acts of grace, provides a foundation for the restoration of

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<sup>6</sup> Yates, 2010, 144-65. Biddle (1990, 220-28) regards judgment and hope as the penetrating themes of the message of the book as a whole. According to the outline of the Book of Jeremiah by Murphy (2009, 317), Judgment seems like the most common thought of the book. Allen (2008, 17-18) claims that hope as the “overruling message” of the Book of Jeremiah is “the purposeful trajectory of overriding grace that stretches over the book like a rainbow.” Holladay (1958, 116-57) regards repentance as a spiritual return, saying that the occurrence of covenantal שׁוּב in Jeremiah is about 30% of all instances in the OT (Ibid, 117-18). Unterman (1987, 11) discusses the meaning of return in relation to repentance; prophetic return consists of three steps such as “acknowledgment of sin,” “cessation of sin,” and “the return of the people to the path of obedience and faithfulness.” Unterman (Ibid, 23-116) examines the Book of Jeremiah based on an overarching theme, redemption, specifically focusing on Jeremiah’s prophecies of redemption to Ephraim during the reign of Josiah, to the Judeans exiled with Jehoiachin, and to Judah and Ephraim on the night of destruction. For Unterman (Ibid, 11), while repentance is regarded as “the spiritual act of the people’s will,” redemption is “the spiritual act of God’s mercy” for restoration.

<sup>7</sup> Lundbom, 1992, 719-20. Lundbom (Ibid, 719) introduces many passages about grace and salvation: Yahweh’s prior grace to Israel in Jeremiah’s earliest preaching, Jeremiah’s profound gratitude to Yahweh, Yahweh’s grace to the exiles, a salvific word given to Baruch, salvation presented as an eschatological hope, calling to return to Zion, Zion’s restoration, etc. Lundbom (Ibid, 720) makes an insightful implication of grace and salvation, saying, “Unlike judgment, divine grace and salvation do not require from Yahweh a reason; in fact, they most often come without reason. It is entirely due to Yahweh’s initiative that Israel can hope for national restoration, and also that a new covenant will be made where Yahweh’s law will be written on people’s hearts.”

<sup>8</sup> Martens (1986, 23-24) draws out the significance of the covenant formula, “I will be your God and you shall be my people.”

<sup>9</sup> Holladay, 1989, 70-71. Holladay (Ibid, 15) distinctively observes Jeremiah’s use of the verb *shuv* “(re)turn” in “covenantal contexts” where Israel or God expresses a change of loyalty to the other party.

His people.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, it is critical to understand the book by perceiving the central themes in relation to the theme of the covenant, which constructs the whole book more coherently and dynamically.

### **3.4. The New Covenant in terms of the Meaning of Structure and Process**

Based on the thematic and linguistic connections between the units, when tracking the covenant units as a sequence, it appears that the book starts with the old covenant and moves to the present problems caused by the covenant breach, and then it highlights making a new covenant along with the future of all Israel's restoration. The new covenant unit, based on the sequence of the units, is an open page for the hope of the united nation, and the new covenant concept continues in the following units (32:36-44; 33:19-26; 50:1-5) to guarantee the nation's future.

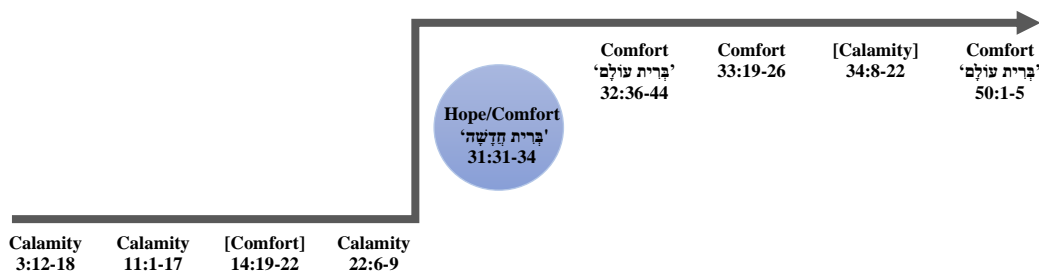
In particular, recurring verb roots and terms throughout the units present the process between calamity and comfort. As elaborated below, this sequence represents the initial promise and its breaching, the consequences of breaking the covenant, and the future promise of making a new covenant. The sequence, when discussed in this way, makes the meaning of the new covenant clearer since it explains the need for making a new covenant after the nation had broken the covenant. It also explains the significance of making a new covenant for a nation in the middle of distress. The recurring verb root שׁו"ב delivers the tiding of calamity through God's solemn warning for the nation's unfaithfulness (3:12, 14), their rebellious caprice to the covenant (34:11, 16), and God's punishment for their sin (11:10; 34: 22) as well as the tiding of hope through God's promise for their restoration (32:37, 40, 44; 33:26). The recurring verb roots כר"ת and פר"ר can be part of the process by exemplifying expectation, the derived punishment, and the future hope. The verb פָּרַת (cut) in the book is mainly employed in making covenants. The fact that they have broken (הִפְרִי, 11:10; 31:32) the covenant made with God, such as the Sinai covenant (11:10; 31:32; 34:13) and Zedekiah's covenant (34:8, 15, 18), represents that God will punish them to be cut like the sacrifice animal (34:18). However, the making of a new covenant (31:31, 33) and an everlasting covenant (32:40) reveals the future hope for the nation. The recurring terms רָע, טוֹב, and בּוֹיָא, which I mentioned above, represent the process through their opposite meanings. As they have not obeyed the covenant by walking in their evil (3:17; 11:8, 15), God will punish them by bringing evil and trouble on them (11:11, 17; 32:42). Nevertheless, at the days come (31:31), God will transform their fate by bringing

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<sup>10</sup> Thompson (1980, 114-16) discusses Judah's royal-temple ideology with the concepts of God's sovereignty and pathos that Yahweh would not totally desert His people without a future hope.

on them all the good that He has promised (32:42) since He announces the new covenant in 31 and repeats its concept through the everlasting covenant in 32. The recurring term לֶב is also employed to show the transformational process under the unconditional covenant. Although people’s evil hearts have caused the covenant breach (11:8) and will not keep the covenant (3:16), God will write His Torah in their hearts (31:33) through the new covenant and give them one heart to fear Him forever because of an everlasting covenant (32:39). God will unconditionally transform their hearts, so they will never turn away from Him.

The place the new covenant takes in the process reveals another significant meaning of this unit: it represents that the new covenant is a turning point from the first part, whose tiding is mostly calamity and rebuke with the feeling of sin and hopeless, to the second part that begins with the development of the new covenant in the unit 32:36-44. The diagram below presents the dynamic movement of the structure before and after the new covenant in 31:31-34.



It is interesting to find the insertion of the one comfort unit in the first part and one calamity unit in the second part; the former hints at calamity in the midst of speaking about comfort, and the latter alludes to restoration through the tiding of calamity. It enables a glimpse of hope in the midst of distress and a warning that is inserted in the middle of an optimistic period. The severe breach of the covenant was represented by the first part, and the future hope of restoration was highlighted by the second part. On the one hand, the new covenant represents the severe condition of Israel that needs unconditional covenant. On the other hand, it represents a great hope for the future that can come from the eternal covenant. Both are emphasized in the covenant units, and even more by their sequential reading. God neither expects His people to be faithful anymore nor requires anything from them, so He Himself is willing to prepare their promising future by making a new covenant with them. Both the nation’s severe condition and future hope indeed provide the need for the new covenant. The new covenant delivers them from suffering and promises them restoration.<sup>11</sup> By this means,

<sup>11</sup> Keown, 1995, 135.

the new covenant unit fits its place in the middle of the covenant units, between calamity and comfort. This structural development of all the units strategically reveals the centrality of the new covenant, showing that the book highlights hope for restoring the united Israel and Judah in comparison to divine judgment on Judah.<sup>12</sup> From this perspective, the new covenant treasures all the meanings and open a new future from the beginning, playing a pivotal role in unveiling God's ultimate plan for all Israel.

### 3.5. The Meaning of the New Covenant

The tapestry of the covenant concepts in the book, revealed in the analyzed covenant units of this thesis, serves readers to comprehend the significant meaning of the new covenant. The term covenant encapsulates the initial promise, the mutual commitment, and the derived potential future, but also the possibility of breaking the expectation and the derived punishment. Making the new everlasting covenant charges the term with all those meanings revealed separately in the various units, once again from the beginning. God reminds Judah that He had given the Sinai covenant to her forefathers and accuses her that the Sinai covenant was broken by her evil and unfaithful heart (11:1-17; 22:6-9).<sup>13</sup> However, God promises to make a new covenant בְּרִית הַדְּוֹשָׁה with the house of Israel בְּיַת יִשְׂרָאֵל and the house of Judah בְּיַת יְהוּדָה (31:31-34), and this new covenant concept repeats in 32:36-44, 33:19-26, and 50:1-5 for representing His faithful promise to restore the nation. God will change the nation's fate from doom of judgment to the hope of restoration through the new covenant, which will be able to open of a new page between God and the nation. Therefore, the new covenant is not only a new beginning that represents God's desperation for the nation but also the climax of prophecies of calamity, reproach, desperation, and hope of the nation.

The new covenant, as mentioned above, stands at the center of the covenant units. Although the term בְּרִית הַדְּוֹשָׁה appears in 31:31-34 only, its concept continues in other units, 32:36-44, 33:19-26, and 50:4-5, with distinctive expressions. Firstly, the prophecy of the new covenant in Jer 31:31-34 repeats in the oracle of Jer 32:36-44 which proclaims an everlasting

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<sup>12</sup> Keown (Ibid., 131) argues that the Book of Jeremiah as a whole demonstrates that both houses as one community share a common destiny for God's plan: their reunification is part of the promised restoration (3:18), these two houses stand together under judgment (5:11; 11:10, 17) and promise (31:31; 33:14), and they will return together to Zion in tears (50:4-5).

<sup>13</sup> The term Horeb covenant can be used interchangeably here for the Sinai covenant as there is the Deuteronomistic influence on the Book of Jeremiah. Deut 5:2 says, "The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb בְּרִית בְּהַר־חֹרֵב עָשָׂנוּ כְּרַת עִמּוֹ אֱלֹהֵינוּ כְּרַת עָשָׂנוּ" while Exod 19-24 describes the covenant at mount Sinai that God made with the exodus generation. In this thesis, nevertheless, I prefer to use the term the Sinai covenant not because of any influence of Exod 19-24 on the covenant units or the book.

covenant for the promise of Israel's restoration in the future. Both passages point out that God will put the covenant on people's hearts and confirms the relationship between Him and the people of Israel and Judah as His people. Jer 32 unit, which stands together with Jer 31 unit and creates a seamless process in the book, emphasizes the everlasting character of the new covenant that tangibly guarantees the very future hope of the restoration based on the unchangeable covenant relationship between God and His people. Nevertheless, the new covenant in Jer 31:31-34 will be accomplished when the time is coming, while the everlasting covenant in Jer 32:36-44 is related to the very specific event that the people will be coming back from Babylon. Jer 32:36-41 has a concrete context to describe that God promises to bring the people back to their own land and let them live in safety, which will confirm the new covenant with the renewed relationship between God and His people as well as the renewed heart of the people. The new covenant of Jer 31:31-34 looks like an inclusive concept to cover all the aspects of the restoration of Israel and Judah, whereas the everlasting covenant of Jer 32:36-44 as a new covenant is particularly connected with the physical return from the Babylonian exile. As Jer 31 unit offers the firm foundation of the new covenant alongside the continuity of the new covenant with the old covenant, Jer 32 unit can build up its future-oriented dynamics for God's divine plan for Israel's destiny. Secondly, unit 33:19-26 continues to convey the new covenant concept by representing God's everlasting promise of restoration based on the unbreakable creation covenant and the eternal covenant with David. This unbreakable and unconditional covenant sustains the promising destiny of the nation, the continuance of the Davidic dynasty, and the return of their captivity to the homeland. Thirdly, the concept of the new covenant *בְּרִית חֲדָשָׁה* in Jer 31:31 is also repeated in the oracle of 50:4-5 that represents the everlasting relationship between God and the nation.<sup>14</sup> They will enthusiastically partake in the restoration process by looking for God and joining themselves to God at His appointed time, while God will be acting behind this oracle. The everlasting covenant *בְּרִית עוֹלָם* of Jer 50:5 as a new covenant particularly highlights a human initiation in returning from the Babylonian exile to their homeland and seeking their covenant relationship with God, whereas the new covenant of Jer 31:31 represents God's divine initiation to lead all the aspects of the nation's restoration.

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<sup>14</sup> The exact term *בְּרִית עוֹלָם* appears only in the oracles of 32:36-41 and 50:4-5 in the book.

### **3.6. Conclusion**

The new covenant unit itself contains the hope and promise for future restoration. Nevertheless, reading this unit within the covenant units of the Book of Jeremiah enables me to discover deeper insights related to the new covenant by revealing the significant meaning of the new covenant concept and the critical place of the new covenant unit based on the structure and the process created through the units.

Firstly, the sequential reading of the units accelerates the new covenant concept among all the meanings and essences encapsulated in the ‘covenant’ as the covenant serves different issues, themes, and essences within the various tidings of calamity, obligation, obedience, comfort, security, and guarantee throughout the book. It represents the hope of the nation in the midst of the tension between calamity, the doom of exile and destruction under the conditional covenant, and comfort, God’s promise of restoration under the unconditional covenant. It also simultaneously conveys two different tidings: rebuke and doom for those who have broken the covenant on the one hand but an unconditional hope and promise of restoration for the covenant people on the other hand. While the conditional covenant reflects human behaviors, the unconditional covenant depends on God Himself, not on His people.

Secondly, from the perspective of this process, it seems that the new covenant of 31:31-34 makes a turning point between the units that mainly discuss calamity and those that deal with comfort, by that it creates an impression of the process that develops between the units. As they have sinned against God and broken His covenant through their stubborn behaviors and evil hearts, there is only calamity under the conditional covenant. However, the reality that the covenant was broken by their evil hearts ironically increases the need for making a new covenant with them. The broken covenant should be renewed, and the everlasting promise given to forefathers needs to be assured in the midst of the current punishment upon them. Only the new covenant’s everlasting character matters for the nation’s fate. God unconditionally guarantees them a hope of restoration, without a condition of their repentance. As God Himself is willing to take the initiative in restoring them, the new covenant God will make with the united nation in the coming days opens a new page between God and the nation.

In short, upon exploring the covenant units from the literary analysis, this thesis shows that the whole structure of the units and the process it builds weave the new covenant into the fabric of the former covenants by making a beautiful covenant tapestry and developing the coherent dynamics of the book with distinctive characteristics of covenants. Thanks to the repeated use of the same term ‘covenant,’ the new covenant cannot be separated from the

continuous relationship with preceding covenants. In spite of the distinct comparison between the new and the old covenants throughout the book, the literary reading of all the covenant units plausibly enables me to demonstrate that the new covenant in 31 is not a totally new covenant but indeed a renewed covenant with a solid connection with the old covenant.

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## תקציר

ספר ירמיהו קשור קשר הדוק למילה "בְּרִית" המופיעה עשרים וארבע פעמים בתשע היחידות (ג 12-18; יא 1-17; יד 19-22; כב 6-9; לא 31-34; לב 36-44; לג 19-26; לד 8-22; נ 1-5). נושא ה"ברית" מהווה מוטיב מרכזי בספר, ובכך הוא משחק תפקיד מרכזי בחשיפת תוכניו הסופית של אלוהים עבור האומה באמצעות שיפוט ושיקום אלוהי. מושג הברית השזור בטקסטים של הספר משמש להבנת החשיבות של הברית החדשה בפרק לא, ואת המקום שהיא תופסת במכלול הספר.

תשע יחידות הברית עומדות בלב תזה זו, שמטרתה להציג את המשמעות של יחידת הברית החדשה (לא 31-34). בהתבסס על הבנת המרכזיות של נושא הברית בספר, התזה בוחנת כל אחת מיחידות הברית באמצעות קריאה ספרותית. בהתאמה, היא מנתחת את המשמעות של כל יחידת ברית, את אופי הקשר בין יחידת הברית החדשה ליחידות הברית האחרות, את המבנה של הספר כולו מתוך פרספקטיבה זאת, ואת מרכזיותה של הברית החדשה במסגרת הספר כולו. אופן הניתוח של כל יחידות הברית חושף את המאפיינים החוזרים של הבריתות ואת המשמעות של המקום שהברית החדשה תופסת בתוך הספר. כתוצאה מכך, תזה זו מדגימה שהברית החדשה היא ברית מחודשת שיש לה קשר בלתי נפרד עם בריתות היסטוריות אחרות המופיעות בספר ויחד הן מייצרות מבנה בעל חשיבות ותהליך משמעותי.

עבודה זו מכילה את שלושת החלקים הבאים: החלק הראשון הוא המבוא, החלק המרכזי מתעמק בניתוח הספרותי של יחידות הברית, והחלק האחרון הוא המסקנות. המבוא מציג את נושא התזה, המבנה, המתודולוגיה וההצדקה לעיסוק בנושא זה. כמו כן הוא סוקר את הגישות המרכזיות במחקר המודרני לגבי ספר ירמיהו—ההקשר ההיסטורי שלו, הרקע הטקסטואלי, חיבור הספר, המבנה והסוגיות המרכזיות. בנוסף הוא סוקר את מגמות המחקר ביחס לנושא של הברית בתנ"ך, הנוגעות למהות הברית, סוגי הבריתות בכלל והברית החדשה בפרט. החלק השני והמרכזי מחולק לתשעה פרקים המציגים ניתוח ספרותי מפורט של כל 'יחידת ברית'. כל חלק בוחן יחידת ברית אינדיבידואלית עם ההקשר הייחודי שלה בהתבסס על אופי הברית, סוג הברית, עיצוב ספרותי, בשורה מרכזית, יוזם, דובר, נמען ועוד. מכיוון שכל יחידה מנותחת בנפרד, הניתוח הספרותי של כל היחידות יכול לרמוז על הקשרים בין היחידות, הנידונים במפורש בחלק האחרון. החלק האחרון של העבודה מציג את התמונה הכוללת העולה מן הניתוח המפורט ומהתהליך שהברית בספר, תוך שימת דגש על מאפייניה החוזרים של הברית ביחידות, הדמיון והקשרים השונים בין היחידות, והמקום והמשמעות של הברית החדשה במבנה כולו וברצף יחידות.

להלן אציג את עיקרי הממצאים ביחס לכל אחת מהיחידות, כפי שהם מוצגים בעבודה, ואת עיקרי המסקנות הנכללות בפרק הסיכום של העבודה:

היחידה ג 12-18 היא נבואת נחמה. היא אינה מתארת כריתת ברית אלא את תוצאותיה. היא עושה שימוש בגורל ישראל החוטא, כדוגמה שלילית, להדגים שהתנהגותו הנוכחית של יהודה מובילה לאותו גורל היסטורי. הדחף של אלוהים לשובו של ישראל, "שׁוּבָה מִשָּׁבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל" (פס' 12), משמש כדי לגלות את רצונו העז של אלוהים

המופנה כלפי יהודה, "שׁוֹבוּ בָּנִים שׁוֹבְבִים" (פס' 14). המילה "שוב" מרמזת כאן שאלוהים אינו דורש תשובה אלא רק דורש מבני יהודה לחזור לאלוהים במסגרת היחסים האינטימיים כפי שמתבטא בפועל "בְּעֵלְתִּי" המופיע בפס' 14. קריאתו הדחופה של אלוהים ליהודה שותפו לברית לשוב, משתלבת עם נאמנותו בהשבת השליטה האוניברסלית של אלוהים על האומות. אלוהים רוצה לספק את התנאים המיטביים לשיקומם לאחר החורבן באמצעות פעולותיו הקונקרטיים— "וְהִבְאֵתִי" בפס' 14, "וְנָתַתִּי" ב פס' 15, "תָּרְבוּ וּפְרִיתֶם" בפס' 16, "וְנִקְוּוּ" בפס' 17, ו"וְיָבֹאוּ יַחְדָּו" בפס' 18. לא יהיה עוד צורך ב"אָרוֹן בְּרִית יְהוָה" שכן ירושלים "כִּפָּא יְהוָה" תחליף את הארון בימים שיבואו. על ידי השוואה בין שני ביטויים, "אָרוֹן בְּרִית יְהוָה" ו"כִּפָּא יְהוָה", היחידה מדגישה כי אמונתם הדתית בעת נוכחותו של ארון הברית של אלוהים תשתנה על ידי נוכחותו המפוארת של אלוהים. ארון ברית סיני הוא זמני; זמניותו אינה מאפשרת להדגיש מאפיינים ניצחיים של הברית. בעוד שהעם עומד בפני פורענות כשהברית המותנית היא יסוד להאשמה שלהם בחטאם, ירושלים ככס אלוהים מגלמת את ההבטחה הנצחית לשיקום. עתידם הטוב תלוי רק באלוהים עצמו והוא מובטח למרות מצבם הנוכחי שנגרם כתוצאה מחטאם. ביחידה זו, אלוהים מאופיין במפורש כמי שמעוניין בשובו של יהודה, ומעוניין לקיים את הבטחתו לשיקום הפיזי והרוחני של יהודה, כולל הבטחה לישראל ולעמים.

היחידה יא 1-17 היא נבואת תוכחה. היא מציגה את הדחיה של ברית אלוהים והמשפט האלוהי על ידי יהודה כתוצאה מהפרת הברית. הוא מייצג את התוכחה ואת מצבה הקשה של האומה באמצעות ארבעה אורקלים ואחריהם שיר. האורקלים מכילים יסודות בסיסיים של ברית סיני; האורקל הראשון (פס' 1-5) הוא על קללת הברית, השני (פס' 6-8) על אי ביצוע הברית, השלישי (פס' 9-10) על קשר המתבטא בעבודת אלילים, הרביעי (פס' 11-14) על פסק הדין הקרוב, והשיר (פס' 15-17) על אסון שיבוא בגלל 'מזימות רעות'. המילים החוזרות ביחידה— "שָׁמַע" (פס' 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14), "בְּרִית" (פס' 2, 3, 6, 8, 10), "עֲשֵׂה" (פס' 4, 6, 8), ו"אֲבֹת" (פס' 4, 7, 10)—משקפות את הפנייה של האל אל העם ואת מצבם החמור בשל הפרת הברית. בפרט, המילה "שָׁמַע" מייצגת משמעויות שונות: דרישה לשמוע בקולו של אלוהים ולציית לברית (פס' 2, 3, 4), אי-ציות לצו ה' (פס' 6, 7, 8), עקשנותם— "מֵאֲנֵנוּ לְשָׁמוֹעַ" (פס' 10), ודחייה נחרצת של אלוהים כלפי זעקתם "לֹא אֶשְׁמַע/ אֲנִי שָׁמַע" (פס' 11, 14). מילה נוספת שחוזרת על עצמה היא ברית— "הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת" (פס' 2, 3, 6, 8) ו"ברית" (פס' 10). המילה ברית מתייחסת ביחידה זאת לברית סיני על מאפייניה השונים; בעוד שברית מרמזת על ברית היסטורית המזכירה שהבטחת אלוהים ניתנה לישראל באמצעות הברית (פס' 2, 3), היא מציינת ברית נוכחית שמראה שליבם הרע של בני ישראל הביא עליהם את כל קללות הברית (פס' 6, 8) וכן שבית יהודה הפר את הברית (פס' 10). מאחר שאלוהים הציל את דור יציאת מצרים וקרת עמם ברית בסיני, הם נאלצו להקשיב רק לקולו של אלוהים, אך הם התעלמו מהאחריות שלהם ומהזוהות שלהם כעם הברית. בגידתם, "קָשַׁר" (פס' 9) ו"הִמְזַמְתָּה" (פס' 15), מסכלת את ברכות הברית ומביאה את אלוהים לממש את קללת הברית בגלל עבודת האלילים. עבודת אלילים זו כניאוף רוחני היא הסיבה המהותית להפרה של הברית. פעולתן של הקללות מתגלה במשפטו של אלוהים, כלומר, שיאה של היסטוריה ארוכה של בגידתם. אלוהים דרש מעמו ללא הרף לקיים את דברי הברית, אך "יִדְּקִי" (פס' 15) הפך לזונה, כאילו האישה, ישראל התגרשה מבעלה, אלוהים. הרצון הטוב של אלוהים לנטוע את עמו, "זֵית רַעְוֵן יְפֶה פְּרִי תֶּאֶר" (פס' 16), סוכל בגלל חטאם והביא להשמדת העץ ולא לצמיחתו ולפיריונו. יחידה זו מראה במפורש שהם אינם יכולים

להימנע ממשפט אלוהים, שכן דווקא על בסיס קיומה של הברית, אלוהים מכריע להעניש אותם על הפרת הברית שלהם ועל חטאיהם.

היחידה יד 19-22 היא קינה. היא מתארת את בקשתו הדחופה של יהודה לאלוהים לזכור את הברית הבלתי מותנית, ומציגה את קינותיו הקהילתיות של ירמיהו עצמו, אשר אף כוללות וידוי על חטאו של יהודה. על ידי הצגת בקשות אסטרטגיות המבוססות על יחסי הברית שלהם עם אלוהים, ירמיהו מביע את צערם בשאלות רטוריות לאלוהים (פס' 19), מתוודה על רשעותם ו"עוֹן אֲבוֹתֵינו" (פס' 20), מזכיר לאלוהים את "לְמַעַן שְׁמָךְ" ו"כִּפָּא כְבוֹדְךָ" כבקשו "זָכֵר אֵל תְּפַר כְּרִיתְךָ אֲתָנוּ" (פס' 21), וקורא לעזרה אלוהית באמצעות ההכרזה שאמונם ותקוותם מכוונות כלפי אלוהים כבורא ולא באלים אחרים (פס' 22). הם חיפשו שלום אך לא מצאו טוב, והם קיוו לזמן של ריפוי אך מתמודדים עם אימה במקום זאת. זהו פער בין רצונם שהשלום יהיה חווייתם המתמשכת לבין המציאות שלהם שאלוהים דחה אותם והביא להם צרות. בקשתם המכוונת לאלוהים לזכור את הברית הבלתי מותנית ביחידה זו מסתיימת בשבחם לאלוהים הכל יכול. הברית ביחידה זו מרמזת על נחמה ועל תקווה לאומה בעיצומו של הדין האלוהי עליהם. למרות שמוצגת חזרה בתשובה במסגרת עתירתם ביחידה, אין זה תנאי לברית. יחידה זו מגלמת את התפיסה שאלוהים בעצמו מבטיח לקיים יחסי ברית נצחיים עמם למען שמו ותפארתו, תוך שמירה על כך שהברית אינה תלויה בהתנהגות האומה.

היחידה כב 6-9 מתארת את גורלו העתידי של יהודה. היחידה מתחלקת לשני חלקים שיש ביניהם קשר סיבתי: פס' 6-7 ופס' 8-9. תת-היחידה הראשונה מציגה את קללת הברית על ידי שימוש בדימויים "בית מְלֶךְ יְהוּדָה", "גִּלְעָד", "רֹאשׁ הַלְּבָנוֹן", ו"מְבַחַר אֲרָזִיךָ" (פס' 6-7). מכיוון שהפרת הברית נובעת ממנהגי הפולחן האילי של יהודה, אלוהים יביא לחורבן על ידי שליחי אלוהים, "מְשַׁחֲתִים" (פס' 7). הביטוי "וְכָרְתוּ מְבַחַר אֲרָזִיךָ" (פס' 7) מייצג את גורל בית המלך. מכיוון שהמלך הוא נציג האומה, גורלו של המלך מסמל את העונש על האומה. החלק השני מתאר את סיבת הקללה, הנטישה של הברית ועבודת האילים. חורבן ארמון המלוכה וירושלים מתואר כתוצאה בלתי נמנעת של הפרת הברית על ידי יהודה. העובדה שהביטוי "לְעֵזֵב כְּרִית" משמש במקביל ל"וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְאֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וַיַּעֲבֹדוּם", כאן בפס' 9, מוכיחה שלפי יחידה זו הפולחן האילי מסתיים בהפרת ברית ה'. ביחידה נאמר במפורש, שהברית היא ברית מותנית מנקודת הראות של אלוהים, שכן הפרת הברית גורמת לחורבן הלאומי שהוא קללת הברית.

היחידה לא 31-34 (30-33 בנוסח המסורה), שהיא היחידה המשתמשת בצירוף "כְּרִית תְּדַשֶּׁה" בתנ"ך, מציגה את הכרזת ה' כי הוא יכרות ברית חדשה עם בית ישראל ועם בית יהודה, שתהיה שונה מהברית שנכרתה בין אלוהים לאבותיהם בסיני. המילה "כִּי" הפותחת את פס' 33 מדגישה את המאפיינים הייחודיים של הברית החדשה העומדים בניגוד לאלו של קודמתה. הביטויים החוזרים "נָאֵם יְהוָה" (פס' 31, 32, 33, 34) ו"יָמִים / כְּיֹמִים" (פס' 31, 32, 33) מייצגים את כוונתו הנחושה של אלוהים לכרות ברית החדשה בעתיד. בבוא הימים, אלוהים יתן לעמו ברית חדשה ללא תנאי. מאפייני הברית החדשה מתוארים על ידי ביטוי רטורי לסירוגין של אוצר מילים חיובי (פס' 31, 33) ושילי (פס' 32, 34), המייצר השוואה מפורשת בין הברית החדשה לבין הברית הישנה. הפועל המטפורי "כָּעֲלֵתִי" בפס' 32 מציין יחסי בעל-אישה, תוך שימת דגש על הפרת הברית של ישראל; הם הפרו את מהות הברית,

את הקשר האינטימי עם אלוהים. אף על פי כן, אלוהים יחדש את יחסי הברית עמם בברית החדשה; אלוהים מכריז, "וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים וְהָמָּה יִהְיוּ לִי לְעָם" (פס' 33). טבעה הנצחי של הברית החדשה מתגלה אף הוא בהשוואה בין הברית הישנה לחדשה: אלוהים יכתוב את תורתו על ליבם ויסלח על חטאיהם (פס' 33-34), כדי שכולם יכירו בו על סמך מערכת יחסים מחודשת בין אלוהים לבינם. כתיבה על הלב הופכת את הברית לישירה, ללא הטלת אחריות חיצונית או התערבות של מתווכים חיצוניים שעשויים להביא ליחס מרוחק עם האל. משום כך היא תאפשר להגיע לשלמות של מימוש יחסי הברית. הדגש על שינוי פנימי זה משמש לתפיסת הברית החדשה כברית סיני מחודשת. החידוש הדתי יתגשם על ידי הברית החדשה שכן כל העם, "לְמִקְטָנָם וְעַד גְּדוֹלָם" (פס' 34), יכירו את אלוהים ישירות באמצעות הברית החדשה הכתובה על ליבם, ולא על ידי הוראה ולימוד: "לֹא יִלְמְדוּ עוֹד אִישׁ אֶת רֵעֵהוּ. וְאִישׁ אֶת אָחִיו לֵאמֹר דַּעוּ אֶת יְהוָה" (פס' 34). יתר על כן, אלוהים מבטיח להעניק את הסליחה האלוהית, "אֶסְלַח לְעוֹנֵם", וגם לא לזכור יותר את חטאם, "לְחַטְאֵתֶם לֹא אֶזְכֹּר עוֹד". כיוון שידיעת אלוהים בליבם ובדעתם הם אינם יכולים לחזור לחטוא. לפיכך הטענה ביחידה זו היא שהברית החדשה אינה מחליפה את הברית הישנה אלא מחודשת את הברית הישנה; היא מראה שהברית החדשה היא ברית מחודשת המגדילה את אהבתו ונאמנותו הנצחית של אלוהים המתגלות דרך ההמשכיות הדינמית של הברית הקדומה.

היחידה לב 36-44 חושפת את יוזמתו של אלוהים לשקם את יחסי הברית עם עמו ולהביא לשגשוג הארץ; הבטחת הברית המחודשת (פס' 36-41) והערבות להתגשמותה (פס' 42-44). פעולתו של אלוהים לשיקום האומה מתגלה בצמדי המילים ההפוכים, "מְקַבְּצִים" - "הַדְּחָתִים" (פס' 37) ו"הַרְעָה" - "הַטּוֹבָה" (פס' 42). אלוהים יאסוף את עמו (מְקַבְּצִים) מכל הארצות שאליהן גירש אותם (הַדְּחָתִים) בכעסו ובזעמו הגדול (פס' 37). כשם שאלוהים הביא עליהם את כל הפורענות (הַרְעָה), הוא יביא עליהם את כל השגשוג (הַטּוֹבָה) שהבטיח להם (פס' 42). החזרה המצולולית של הפעלים "שוב" ו"ישב" משמשת גם היא להגדרת הקוהרנטיות של היחידה; ה' יחזיר אותם לארץ וישיב אותם (פס' 37), הוא לא ישוב מאחריהם (פס' 40), ישיב אותם למצבם המקורי וישיב את שבותם (פס' 44). על ידי כריתת ברית נצחית. אלוהים יציל את עמו מהגלות, יתחיל מחדש יחסי ברית עימם, ייצור שינוי וייתן להם "לֵב אֶחָד וְדָרֶךְ אֶחָד" (פס' 39) לירא ממנו "כָּל הַיָּמִים" (פס' 39) ובכך ימנע את הבגידה והריחוק שלהם. נבואת תקווה זאת מציגה את היחס האירוני בין המציאות הקשה הנוכחית לבין שיקום עתידי בכך שהוא מראה התמודדות עם האימה הנוכחית של פיזור הזעם של אלוהים על ידי קיבוץ עתידי באמצעות כוחו הרחמן של אלוהים. אלוהים מבטיח שיקום ללא תנאי מוקדם של חזרה בתשובה, שיפרוץ את כל המכשולים הקיימים לכאורה, כדי ליצור מציאות חדשה שתהפוך עונש להתחדשות, הרס לטוב וסכנה לביטחון. אלוהים עצמו מגלה את נכונותו לעשות טוב לעמו במהלך תקופת החורבן של ישראל (פס' 40). אלוהים נכון לשקם את האומה בגלל יחסי הברית נצחיים והבלתי הפיכים איתם. אלוהים עצמו מחדש את הברית ללא תנאי ומבטיח את יחסי הברית באמצעות הברית הנצחית. הברית הנצחית ביחידה ממשיכה את תפיסת הברית החדשה שהוצגה ביחידה הקודמת על ידי העמדת הברית על לב האנשים וחידוש יחסי הברית בינם לבין אלוהים. בעוד שהברית החדשה ב-31-34 נראית כמו מושג כללי המכסה את כל ההיבטים של שיקום ישראל ויהודה, הברית הנצחית ב-36-44 מוצגת כברית חדשה המציעה תפיסה קונקרטי מאוד על ידי ההבטחה לחזרה פיזית מהגלות ולשגשוג בארץ.



היחידה לג 19-26 משקפת את הבטחתו הנצחית של אלוהים באמצעות ביטויי המפתח החוזרים ונשנים, "בְּרִיתִי הַיּוֹם וּבְרִיתִי הַלַּיְלָה" (פס' 20, 25) ו"זָרַע דָּוָד עֶבְדִּי" (פס' 26, 22). שני אורקלים, פס' 19-22 ופס' 26-23, מקבילים בצורת הטיעון המותנית (פרוטאזיס-אפודוזיס), המחזקת את הערבות האלוהית ליציבותה של ברית אלוהים. האופי הנצחי של הבטחת אלוהים נתמך על ידי ברית הבריאה. ההחלפה המתמדת של יום ולילה מבטיחה את הברית הנצחית עם דוד, ומכוונת את הברית הנצחית עם האומה. הטבע הנצחי של ברית אלוהים מתגלה בצורה מעניינת ביחס לברית נח וברית אברהם, שכן ברית הבריאה מהדהדת את סיפור המבול (בראשית ט 8-17) ואת ברכת אברהם (בראשית יג 16; כב 17). הנצחיות של ברית אלוהים נקשרת עם עמו הנבחר. ברית הנצח של אלוהים מבטיחה את נאמנותו לדוד, ללויים ולעם. אלוהים מבטיח שמספר רב של משרתים יבואו ודוד ימלוך על צאצאיהם של אברהם, יצחק ויעקב (פס' 22). ברית דוד, שאינה ניתנת להפסקה ואינה מותנה, מבטיחה את הישועה של האומה, את המשך שושלת דוד, ואת שובם למולדת במועד שנקבע על ידי האל. למרות שהבשורה העיקרית של היחידה היא נחמה, יחידה זו מכילה בחלקה הלך רוח של איום הנובע מהניסוח השלילי שבו נעשה שימוש בכל היחידה—"תִּפְרוּ" (פס' 20), "תִּפְרוּ" (פס' 21), "וַיִּמְאָס" (פס' 24), "לֹא" (פס' 25), "אָמַס" (פס' 26). מאחר שהעם עצמו אינו ראוי להבטחה, אלוהים מעניק להם את ההבטחה הבלתי מותנית. מנקודת מבט זו, ממשיכה היחידה את תפיסת הברית החדשה: הברית הנצחית אינה תלויה בהתנהגות האומה ובזכותה, אלא בטבע הנצחי של הבריתות הקודמות.

היחידה לד 8-22 עומדת בניגוד לשתי היחידות הקודמות וזו שלאחריה, מבחינת האופי שלה. זאת יחידת תוכחה שאינה טומנת בחובה תקווה. כאשר כרת צדקיהו ברית עם כל העם בירושלים להכריז על שחרור העבדים העבריים, הם ציינו ושחררו את עבדיהם. עם זאת, שחרור העבדים היה קצר מועד שכן הם שינו את דעתם והחזירו את העבדים ששחררו. אף על פי שברית החירות נכרתה בחגיגות לעיני אלוהים "בְּעֵינַי" (פס' 15), היא התהפכה ל"נִפְשָׁם" (פס' 16). היחידה מוסרת את פסק דינו של אלוהים על הפרת הברית בנושא העבדים, אולם ברית זאת נתפסת כבעלת משמעות רחבה יותר: בהתבסס על כל ההקשר של היחידה, ברית סיני שנכרתה בין אלוהים לאבותיהם "בְּרִית אֶת אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם" (פס' 13) עומדת לצד כריתת הברית עם צדקיהו לפני אלוהים בבית המקדש שאלוהים מכנה בשם "בְּרִיתִי" (פס' 18). חומרת הפרת הברית של צדקיהו מתגלה במפורש בביטויים, "נִקְרָא שְׁמִי" בפס' 15 ו"נִתְחַלְלוּ אֶת שְׁמִי" בפס' 16. השימוש הכפול בשם אלוהים הוא אמצעי רטורי להראות את הרצינות של ברית צדקיהו. דרישת חובה לציית לברית המותנית מתוארת היטב בטקס ברית (פס' 18-19), ביתור העגל לשניים והליכה טקסית בין חלקיו "כִּרְתוּ לְשָׁנִים וַיַּעֲבְרוּ בֵּין בְּתָרְיוֹ". היחידה אף מתאפיינת במילות מפתח חוזרות רבות—"כִּרְתוּ" (פס' 8, 13, 15, 18), "דָּרֹר" (פס' 8, 15, 17), "שׁוּב" (פס' 11, 15, 16, 22) ו"עֲבַר" (פס' 18, 19)—המצדיקות את הגמול האלוהית ומגלמות גם את חומרת העונש. מונחים חוזרים אלה מייצגים את הקשר בין כריתת הברית ובין הפרתה וכן מחזקים את הקשר בין החטא ובין העונש. היחידה מוכיחה בחריפות את פורעי הברית באמצעות אמצעים רטוריים אלה של ריבוי הקבלות וניגודים כדי להפגין משפט נורא על החטא הגדול שנעשה נגד אלוהים. היחידה מסתיימת בתיאור חי של עונש אלוהי על ידי שימוש בצורת ההפעיל של "שׁוּב"; אלוהים יחזיר (פס' 22 "נִהְיָשְׁבִים") את צבא בבל להחריב את ירושלים ואת ערי יהודה מאחר שחטאו והחזירו (פס' 11 "וַיִּשְׁבוּ", פס' 16 "וַתִּשְׁבוּ") את עבדיהם המשוחררים. אלוהים מטיל עליהם דין וחשבון על מעשה הבגידה שלהם מכיוון שהברית שנכנסו אליה ואותה הפרו דורשת את ציותם.

היחידה נ 5-1 מייצגת את שקיעתה של בבל (פס' 1-3) בצד השיקום ישראל ויהודה בברית נצחית (פס' 5-4). שני הנושאים הללו שזורים באופן קרוב על ידי ביטוי "בְּיָמֵי הַהִמָּה וּבְעַת הַהִיא" (פס' 4א). כאשר גוי מצפון יהפוך את בבל לשוממה, השיקום האלוהי יתחיל באופן דרמטי. היחידה מדגישה את נפילת בבל עצמה כגורם קריטי הקשור ישירות לשינוי משמעותי בגורלם של הגולים. מכיוון שתבוסת בבל גוררת את קץ הגלות עבור בני ישראל, הרי שחורבן בבל הוא הזדמנות חדשה עבור הגולים לחזור למולדתם. הפועל החוזר "הִלָּךְ" (פס' 3, 4) משמש בתיאור שקיעת בבל מחד גיסא ושיקום ישראל המאוחדת מאידך גיסא. אולם בעוד "הִלָּכוּ" בפס' 3 מייצג את ההשמדה של בני האדם והחיות בארץ בבל כאחד, "הִלָּךְ" ו"יָלְכוּ" בפס' 4 מתייחסים לשיקום יחסי הברית של ישראל לצד החזרה לארץ ציון. לכן, חורבן בבל משרת באופן רטורי את מערכת היחסים המחודשת בין אלוהים לעם בריתו באמצעות השוואות דינמיות. בזמן נפילת בבל, העם יחזור לציין וייוזם קשר מחודש עם אלוהים בברית נצח שלעולם לא תישכח. הברית הנצחית "בְּרִית עוֹלָם" ב-נ 5 ממשיכה לשאת את תפיסת הברית החדשה של לא 31 ואת ברית עולם ב-לב 40, על ידי ביטוי היחסים הנצחיים בין אלוהים לאומה. הברית הנצחית בפס' 5 כברית חדשה מדגישה יוזמה אנושית בשיבה מגלות בבל למולדתם וכן בחיפוש אחר יחסי הברית עם אלוהים.

פרק הסיום של העבודה מאשש את המשמעות של הברית החדשה ביחס למשמעויות של בריתות אחרות בספר. הוא בוחן את המאפיינים החוזרים לאורך היחידות, את המשמעויות של הברית שנוצרו מהדמיון ומהקשרים השונים בין היחידות. על בסיס זאת הוא מציג את המקום והמשמעות של הברית החדשה בתוך המבנה והתהליך הכלליים. כל אחת מתשע יחידות הברית מיישמת בדרך ייחודית את הפרמטרים החוזרים, כגון סוג הברית, זמן ההתממשות, הבשורה המרכזית, יוזם הברית, הדובר והנמען. ההופעה הייחודית של הפרמטרים מייצרת תהליך דינמי של הברית בספר. בעוד שבריתות מקראיות שונות מוזכרות בספר, ברית סיני מהווה את הפרדיגמה השלטת בספר ובכך מייצגת את האופי המותנה של הברית. באופן ייחודי, קיימת חלוקה משמעותית בין אזכורי הברית המותנית (ג 16; יא 2, 3, 6, 8, 10; כב 9; לא 32א, 32ב; לד 8, 10, 13, 15, 18א, 18ב) ואזכורי הברית שאינה מותנית (יד 21; לא 31, 33; לב 40; לג 20א, 20ב, 21, 25; נ 5). מעניין לציין שהברית החדשה ב-לא 31-34 ממשיכה לקבל ביטוי ביחידות האחרות (לב 36-44; לג 19-26; נ 4-5), החזרות על העקרונות של הברית החדשה ביישום ייחודי לכל אחת מהן. הספר עוסק בברית המותנית תחילה במסגרת של האשמה בהפרת ברית לצד בשורת הפורענות. לאחר מכן היחידות מבליטות את הברית הבלתי מותנית בחלקים המאוחרים של הספר ובכך מבטאות את הבטחת ה' לשיקום כל ישראל לצד בשורת הנחמה. המבנה של יחידות הברית בספר, והתהליך שהוא בונה, מאפשר הצגה של כל המשמעויות והמהויות הכלולות ב'ברית'. הוא גם מבטא את תפיסת הברית החדשה, המשדרת תוכחה ואבדון למי שהפר את הברית מחד גיסא אך תקווה והבטחה ללא תנאי להשבת עם הברית מאידך גיסא. בעוד שהברית המותנית משקפת מגוון של התנהגויות אנושיות, הברית הבלתי מותנית תלויה באלוהים עצמו, לא בעמו. למרות שהקריאה הספרותית של היחידות בעבודה זאת מתמקדת בדיון במשמעות הברית והברית החדשה בפרט, היא מצליחה להציג את הנושאים המרכזיים של הספר, שהם נושאי החטא, העונש, השיבה, החרטה, התקווה והשיקום, השלובים יחד ומשקפים את כל המסר של מושג הברית.

המושג של הברית ביחידות שוזר את הברית החדשה במרקם הבריתות הקודמות, חושף את מרכזיותה של הברית החדשה ומדגיש את שיקום ישראל ויהודה בהשוואה לעונש האלוהי שהושת כלפי יהודה. יחידת הברית החדשה מהווה נקודת מפנה בין פורענות לתקווה, ומייצגת לא רק התחלה חדשה של העם אלא גם את שיא נבואות הברית בספר. על בסיס הניתוח הספרותי של כל יחידות הברית, פרק סיום זה מבהיר כי הברית החדשה בפרק לא היא ברית מחודשת בעלת קשר בלתי נפרד אל הבריתות הקודמות והיא חלק ממסגרת הברית של הספר בכללותו.

**עבודה זו נעשתה בהדרכתה של ד"ר יסכה זימרן**

**מן המחלקה לתנ"ך ע"ש זלמן שמיר, אוניברסיטת בר-אילן.**

אוניברסיטת בר-אילן

'הברית החדשה' בירמיהו ל"א 31-34 [נ"מ 30-33]

סוקו גיאנג

עבודה זו מוגשת כחלק מהדרישות לשם קבלת תואר מוסמך

במחלקה לתנ"ך ע"ש זלמן שמיר, אוניברסיטת בר-אילן

תשפ"ג

רמת גן