

## PART II THE PROMISE OF RESTORATION IN JEREMIAH

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 THE PROBLEM OF THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE BOOK

The book of Jeremiah consists of three major types of material: poetic diction, biographical prose, and prose discourses. Since Duhm's presentation (1901:xi-xx), the prevailing idea among commentators has been to separate the book into three major sources: the prophetic oracles (source A), the biographical narratives (source B), and prose sermons by Deuteronomistic redactors (source C) (cf. Thompson, 1980:33-50; Raitt, 1977:110ff; Prinsloo, 1982:68). The scholars who follow Duhm's theory hold the view that most prose passages of the book are not to be taken as the original words of the prophet but as primarily shaped by a school of "Deuteronomistics". The biographical narratives are mostly assigned to Jeremiah's disciple(s) like Baruch.

The arguments as to the prophetic oracles, which are our main concern, are very confusing. The larger part of the poetic word of judgment in the first half of the book is generally believed to be from the mouth of the prophet himself, but the second half of the book is a critic's nightmare (cf. Raitt 1977:110). The situation is that none of the thirty salvation oracles in the book of Jeremiah can readily be taken as evidence for Jeremiah's authenticity (Raitt, 1977:110). Hyatt rejects all (1958:1023-41); Fohrer and Sellin deny authenticity for most of them except for the two significant promises of 30:18-22 and 31:2-6 (1968:400). Some argue the authenticity of several salvation passages: 29:10-14 is not doubted for its authenticity because it is connected directly to Jeremiah's letter of the exiles (Rudolph, 1968:189; Weiser, 1960:213; Bright, 1965:210-11); and 32:42-44 is often added to this category by the fact of the symbolic act of Jeremiah described in 32:6-15 (Volz, 1922:244-47; Rudolph, 1968:189; Leslie, 1954:240-42; Bright

1965:297-98; Streane, 1913:207); 33:6-9 is thought to be genuine by Rudolph (1968:198), Weiser (1960:303), Bright (1965:298), Streane (1913:207), and Leslie (1954:243-44). The most prominent scholars, except Hyatt (1958:996-98), underline 24:4-7 as an authentic part (Volz, 1922; Rudolph, 1968; Weiser, 1960; Fohrer, 1968:398; Eissfeldt, 1965:353; Bright, 1965:194). Raitt claims that the following six prose passages together represent the mind of Jeremiah and could very well be of the original sources of Jeremiah: 24:4-7; 29:4-7; 10-14; 32:6-15, 42-44; 31:31-34; 32:36-41; 33:6-9 (1977:112-119).

The most important passage, 31:31-34, has been abundantly studied. Traditionally the passage has been regarded as Jeremiah's own writing. Nevertheless, there is a growing body of opinion which sees it as redactional and secondary. Carroll observes:

I cannot imagine why it ought never to have been questioned, because it looks so much like a secondary addition to the chapter that a strong argument would be needed to show why one should even think of attributing it to Jeremiah (1981:261, also see p 321, fn. 28).

The main reason for disagreement comes from the fact that the style in certain places is remarkably similar to that of the latter chapters of Isaiah and that the material indicates a date during the period of exile. Bright strongly argues that it is to be Jeremiatic:

Although the passage may not preserve the prophet's *ipsissima verba*, it represents what might well be considered the high point of his [Jeremiah's] theology (1965:287; cf. 1976, 194; see also Skinner, 1922:332f).

Vaillancourt rightly maintains the importance of this passage, saying that without this passage, the whole of the structural themes (destruction of the nation and the futuristic hope) of the book of Jeremiah would "remain unexplainable" (1976:171f). It is difficult to doubt that Jeremiah himself held some sort of hope for the future of his people, and without the new covenant passage this future hope of Jeremiah cannot be explained.

After having a brief look at the attitudes of modern scholarship towards a section of Scripture, our interest cannot be directed at separating the

genuine source from secondary materials. This does not mean, however, insisting that the whole bulk of the book be seen as Jeremiah's verbatim. The book as a final form might rather be remembered, understood, and repeated in the circle of his followers (cf. Bright, 1965:lxii). The method of literary-historical criticism, attempting to arrive at a decision whether it is the "genuine" words of the prophet or "non-genuine", is a wholly subjective procedure and produces an endless and non-productive debate. Apart from the confusion emerging from this debate, the text in its final form was not always taken sufficiently seriously. Prinsloo proposes the proper approach:

Without denying or overlooking the importance of the diachronic aspects, our focus of interest in this paper is not the theology of the prophet Jeremiah or the tracing of his ipsissima verba; nor is it the theology of one of the alleged sources or the 'Deuteronomic edition.' Our concern is with the theology of the book of Jeremiah as it appears to us now (1982:68).

Thus, we want to turn our attention to the "final form" of the canon.

With respect to the relationship of Jeremiah with Deuteronomy, the most critical issue of the authorship for Jeremiah, the question has usually been raised: "Are these Jeremiah's original words; or perhaps a contribution of the Deuteronomic editors?" Van Rooy on the other hand formulates a question in this way: "Was Jeremiah active as a prophet during the period of Josianic reform?; or is it an attempt by the Deuteronomic editors to depict Jeremiah as an ardent supporter of that movement?" (van Rooy 1982:95). For us it is not too difficult to find out what Jeremiah's activity was in the Josianic reformation throughout the first half of the book. Van Rooy adds another question: "Does it not limit the scope of these words if we connect them with the Josianic reform and Deuteronomy?; Should it not rather be connected with the Sinai covenant, especially Exodus 24?" (1892:95). As we have already seen (Part I, 3), most doom oracles are obviously governed by the idea of the Sinai covenant (cf. Volz, 1922:128-31).

## 1.2 THEMES IN THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH

### 1.2.1 The judgment theme

Among all the prophets, Jeremiah stands out as a proclaimer of doom, accusing the nation of setting herself on the brink of total disaster. An important thrust of the prophet's mission from the time of his call was to announce to the people an impending disaster from the north (1:14-15) (cf. Welch, 1955:97). The reason for the Babylonian domination is directly and indirectly ascribed to the violations of the covenant. It appears that the prophet never announced disaster against Israel as a mere political phenomenon but always spoke of it as Yahweh's punishment for violations of the covenant (Vaillancourt, 1976:120).

Jeremiah's message of doom is in perfect agreement with the Mosaic tradition. The motif of deliverance from Egypt appears ten times in Jeremiah (2:6; 7:22,25; 11:4,7; 16:14; 23:7; 31:32; 32:21; 34:13). This motif is generally used by the prophet to mark the beginning of the special relationship between Yahweh and Israel, the time when demands were imposed upon the latter, the moment from which Yahweh began to demand obedience (Vaillancourt, 1976:121). Although the word "covenant" is seldom used by the prophet (14:21; 31:32), the covenant reality was foremost in his preaching (cf. 6:19; 7:22f; 9:12; 11:3-8; 16:11; 24:7; etc.).

Admonition and repentance appear as covenantal challenges through the linguistic structure of the protasis/apodosis (if/then). When Moses first called the people to decision about entering into the covenant at the foot of Mt Sinai, he employed a positive set of protasis/apodosis conditions: "If you will obey my voice and keep my covenant" (protasis), "(then) you shall be my own possession among all peoples" (apodosis) (Ex 19:5-6; cf. Jos 24:20-21; Dt 28:1-15; etc.; cf. Jr 3:12f,14,22; 4:1-2,3-4,14; 7:3-7; 15:19; 18:11; 22:3-5; 25:5-6; 26:13; 31:21-22; 35:15). The people could have been judged for a

failure to respond to the calling to repentance. In 7:23-29 God seems to exhaust every possibility - admonitions to obey, calls to repent, chastisements - every one of them failing to win a response, until the prophet announces God's fateful sentence: "for the Lord has rejected and abandoned this generation that is under his wrath" (v 29).

The punishment in Jeremiah leads to the consequence of their losing the land (Jr 3:1-5,19-25; 24:1-4) (Brueggemann, 1974:157). When Jeremiah saw the coming of the Babylonian invasion threatening the loss of the land, he recognised it as the judgment of Yahweh, for Israel had defiled the land by abusing the old law, and had refused the son's right to inherit it (cf. Jr 12:7-13). In Jeremiah 12:7-13, the passage again sets forth the hopelessness of Israel. The land has now been irrevocably lost. Jeremiah leaves no room for doubt that in his view the chastisement was the whole purpose of Yahweh as foretold in Deuteronomy 28:15ff. It is Yahweh who summons all the kingdoms of the north (1:15), who brings evil from the north (4:6), who will wholly destroy the land (4:27), who will do to the temple just as He did to Shiloh (7:14), who will turn Jerusalem into a heap of ruins and the cities of Judah into a waste (9:10), who gives all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, his servant (27:6) (Vaillancourt, 1976:133ff).

### 1.2.2 A shift from "doom" to "salvation"

In spite of the impending disaster for Judah, the prophet found solid ground for confidence. Through all his denunciations he saw God's final aim to be that of blessing his people. In this sense Jeremiah's message of doom must not stop at "doom" itself, but rather flow forward to the message of salvation. Yahweh's chastisement and dissolution were necessary in order that Yahweh would be able to initiate a new relationship with those who survive the ordeal. Jeremiah may have recognised the necessity of the total destruction of the nation to bring the realisation of renewal. Yahweh, who is sincere in his covenant, had to bring destruction against her according to the Sinai

covenant. At the same time He who is sincere in his covenant must keep the nation as his own. If the nation is to endure, as promised to Abraham, then a number of the people must be saved from the destructive scourge. It is apparently for this reason that in his letter to the exiles, Jeremiah gives advice to ensure survival (29:4-15). The remaining people, i.e., the remnant, in the exile are representative of the nation (Ezk 11:15). The nation keeps going through the remnant. It seems that the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel pay attention to the core rather than the majority of the people. Their concern is placed upon the question of survival of the nation rather than the question how many people would be saved. It is obvious that Jeremiah was confident that the survivors of this disaster would form the new nation in the promised land and with their own king (20:1-7; 32:36-37; 33:10-13) (cf. Vaillancourt, 1976:150f).

We may conclude that the purpose of Yahweh's decree of war and destruction against his people was not annihilation to the very last Israelite. Despite Israel's failure, the prophet insisted that Yahweh was not altogether abandoning his purpose of the election of Israel, but merely eliminating the source of failure. For this reason, Yahweh would save some of the people with whom he would initiate a new covenant unlike the first covenant.

In order to concentrate on the most important passages relevant to our study, we will not discuss other passages in this Part (but they will be considered in Part V). The promise of return is found in various passages (3:18; 16:14; 29:10; etc), and this promise will be fully discussed in the selected passages. The concern of Jerusalem appears in 3:17, but it will be dealt with in detail in 31:38-40. The promise of Messianic king is also found in 24:5-6, but this passage will be considered in dealing with 33:14-26.

## 2 JEREMIAH 24:1-7: ILLUSTRATION USING GOOD FIGS

### 2.1 STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT

The visionary message of this text occurred after the events during which Jehoiachin (Jeconiah) was taken captive to Babylon together with prominent persons from Judah in 597 B.C. (Harrison, 1973:124). The message consists of two motifs of "doom" and "salvation". Those who remained in the land would be punished and be desolate; and those who were in exile would be saved and brought back to their homeland.

Unlike most of the chapters, this chapter is narrated in the autobiographical style of an oracle that came to Jeremiah through a visionary experience. Due to the historical and autobiographical style, the authenticity of this chapter is hardly questioned by scholars. Even Nicholson, who strongly supports the authorship of Deuteronomistic historians, holds the view that "this chapter offers an excellent example of how a saying originally spoken by Jeremiah was subsequently taken up by Deuteronomic editors and further developed by them..." (Nicholson, 1973:205).

The chapter contains three distinctive parts: Jeremiah's vision of the two baskets of figs (vs 1-2); a dialogue between Yahweh and the prophet (v 3); and the oracle extending to Yahweh's own interpretation like the case of 1:11-16. After the manner of a typical presentation of "doom" and "salvation" oracles in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the third part of Yahweh's speech (vs 5-10) begins with a messenger formula, "thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel" (v 5a; KJV). The oracle develops the motifs of "salvation" and "doom" in a comparison between "good" and "bad" figs (we will deal only with the "salvation" passage).

The oracle reflects the optimistic view of the contemporary Judean people about the political and religious situation. From chapter 27, we learn how Zedekiah

and his fellows became involved in a conspiracy for further rebellion against the Babylonians; and in chapter 28 how they believed that the exiles were shortly to be brought back home (Nicholson, 1973:204). In the religious situation, those remaining in Jerusalem boasted as if they were good enough to be preserved as the "remnants", while they despised those who went far away in exile as deserving punishment because of their sins. This message is comparable with Ezekiel 11 and arose out of the same situation and purpose as Ezekiel's passage (Ackroyd, 1968:55). Both bring up the question of "who are the remnants through whom Yahweh will rebuild the new nation of Israel?". In the view of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the real Israelites are not the Jerusalemites of the time but those in exile. While the Jerusalemites filled themselves with pride, and remained in their stubbornness, the exiles were shocked to repentance and committed to the single-minded worship of God. Those who had been deported to Babylon did in fact represent the core of Israel through whom Yahweh would restore the nation of Israel.

## 2.2 EXEGETICAL AND REVELATION-HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE TEXT

### 2.2.1 The vision of the baskets of figs (vs 1-4)

Jeremiah saw a vision of two baskets of figs placed in front of the temple (v 1). Bright translates *mw'dym* (in the Hophal participle of *y'd*) into "arranged", meaning "set, directed" (1965:193). The vision resembles the one in Amos 8:1-3. It is to be believed that those baskets were set before the temple as an offering. According to the law in Deuteronomy 26:2, the people had to bring every first fruit to Yahweh, and arrange it at the appointed place of the temple, so that priests could examine and accept good fruits for offerings to the Lord. The good figs in Jeremiah's vision are like "those that ripen early". Fig trees in Palestine produce fruit three times a year. The first-ripe figs in June are especially juicy, and were valued as a delicacy (cf. Is 28:4; Hs 9:10) (cf. Feinberg, 1982:171; Harrison, 1973:125). In contrast with it,

the other figs are so bad that they can not be eaten (v 3). The vision focuses on the question: "who is the good who can be accepted by God?"

### 2.2.2 Promises of restoration in the image of "good figs" (vs 5-7)

The passages identify the good figs as the exiles to the land of the Babylonians. Those exiles have the promises of future blessing:

1) Yahweh's eyes will keep watching them, despite the fact that they are far away from the Lord's temple (v 6a). Although they can not come to the Lord with offerings as the Jerusalemites do, their hearts will be taken into account before the Lord's eyes. Even Ezekiel describes the fact that the Lord moves from Jerusalem to the land of the exile, being Himself a sanctuary among the exiles (Ezk 11:16).

2) Yahweh will bring them back to their land(v 6b). In contrast with the Jerusalemites who will be slain at the destruction of the city, the exiles will return and possess the promised land after they have passed the test and been purified. They will build the new community of Israel and will never be uprooted again.

3) Yahweh will give them a new heart (v 7a). Through the centuries Israel had shown herself unwilling to obey God's law, or was unable to do so because of her uncircumcised heart (Dt 30:6; Jr 9:25). Jeremiah's serious concern was the people's superficiality in serving the Lord without their whole hearts. Thus, He rebukes them:

Their tongue is a deadly arrow; it speaks with deceit. With his mouth each speaks cordially to his neighbor, but in his heart he sets a trap for him (9:8; cf. 8:8; 12:2).

Israel's old problem will be overcome by the transformation of the people's heart (cf. Jr 31:33; 32:38f; Ezk 11:19; 36:26) (see ch. 3.2.5).

4) "To know me, that I am the Lord" (v 7a). The purpose of giving a new heart is to recognize that Yahweh is the Lord. This promise is clearly in accordance with the promise in 31:33 and 32:38f where the renewal of heart makes the total obedience to the Lord's law possible (cf. Ezk 11:19f; Nicholson, 1973:207). Knowing God is not just knowledge but He is known through the

experience of keeping his law and walking in communion with Him (see ch. 3.2.9). The acknowledgment of Yahweh by Israel and the nations is also emphasized in Ezekiel's restoration passages (Ezk 20:30, 26; 34:30f; 37:28; 39:38; etc.).

5) **The covenant formula:** "They will be my people, and I will be their God" (v 7b). The covenant relationship represents the epitome of hope to the people. Once the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and the people was broken by their rebellious deeds, but the new covenantal relationship secured the restoration of Israel (see ch. 3.2.7). Weiser rightly remarks that the use of the "Bundesformel" indicates that Jeremiah envisioned the new future of God's people in terms of the covenant renewal, i.e., returning back to old religious traditions. But he seems to go too far in asserting that the restoration for Jeremiah means not forming a new political state of life for the nation, but only a new religious state of life (1960:221). But the present text of restoration starts with an implication of a political situation (the people's optimism) and contains a promise of returning from exile (which is clearly a political aspect). In the restoration oracles through Jeremiah and Ezekiel the restoration of the religious sphere by "renewing the heart", "forgiveness of sin", and "restoring of the relationship between Yahweh and the people", is predominant over the political aspect. However, the political aspect of restoration such as "returning to the homeland", "having a united nation under one king", "restoring the Davidic throne", etc. is neglected by neither prophet.

### **3 THE NEW COVENANT (JR 31:31-40)**

#### **3.1 THE LARGER CONTEXT IN THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION**

Chapters 30-33 interrupt the biographical materials. This so-called Book of Consolation is a collection of sayings about the restoration of Israel and Judah, from various periods of Jeremiah's ministry. The greater part of chapters

30 and 31 is composed in poetic form, while the remaining part is written in prose. Most of Jeremiah's optimistic statements occur in this section. The main theme of these chapters is that although God will punish them for their sins, He will not throw them off, nor will He root them out. God has a very great plan to bless His people. The passages embody expectations for Israel's future. The promises of restoration for Israel are described in various ways throughout the collection.

**Chapter 30:1-3 : A brief introduction.** These verses introduce the theme of the people's returning to the land:

"The days are coming", declares the Lord, "when I will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity and restore them to the land I gave their forefathers to possess", says the Lord (vs 2-3).

Yahweh is going to reveal what He has planned for Israel. Thus, He commands Jeremiah to write down everything that He says to him. The formulas, "The days are coming" or "When I bring them...", appear very often within the Book of Consolation (31:23-25,27-30,38-40; 32:36-37, 43-44; 33:6ff,10ff,12-13). This fact indicates the common source of the collection.

**Verses 4-7 : Descriptions of crying, terror, and misery; their sins are rebuked.** The descriptions would be partly in the present situation and partly in the near future, in contrast with God's blessing which is all in the eschatological future. The Book of Consolation starts from a present situation, and passing through the near future, it intentionally turns to the future blessing.

**Verses 8-11 : God replies to their crying.** Yahweh wants to discipline them. He will totally destroy their sinful nature. Then He will take them up. Even through this test, He assures them that "He will be with them".

**Verses 12-15 : The passage goes back to descriptions of misery again.**

**Verses 16-17 : Judgment for hostile nations.** The destruction of Israel was brought about by Yahweh Himself using foreign powers as his instrument. But Yahweh will not forget the boasting and the way the enemy had afflicted his people. If the enemies are safe, then they might also think that they are the very ones that brought the punishment upon Israel.

**Verses 18-24 : The promise of the the restoration of Jacob's tents.** The ruined tents and dwellings in Jerusalem and in the land will be rebuilt, repopulated and governed by a native prince. The nation will experience the blessings of renewed fellowship with the Lord. The people who have been neglected by the nations for a long time will experience joy and honour along with material prosperity. Instead of degradation and insignificance, the people will grow in number and in the esteem of the nations. The capital city will shine in splendour as in the time of David and Solomon.

**Chapter 31:1-14 : Blessings after the great tribulation.** The blessing includes restoring the relationship between Yahweh and the people, bringing them back to the land, having them settled peacefully in the land, rebuilding the places, and having them rejoice in prosperity.

**Verse 15 : The southern Kingdom's future misery.**

**Verses 16-22 : The prediction of the returning (both northern and southern kingdoms).** The northern tribes will be included in the return and blessings. Ephraim is still remembered by the Lord.

**Verse 22b** gives a new hope for the whole world, saying "the Lord will create a new thing on earth - A woman will surround a man" ("woman will protect the man" (RSV); "A woman shall compass a man" (KJV)). The word sbb can be translated as to "surround" in most cases in the Old Testament, and "go around" two times in Jonah. The church fathers interpreted this passage as a prophecy of the Virgin Birth, based on Isaiah 9:6 where the same word gbr denotes the Messiah. However, most commentators interpret it in the context

of Israel's return from exile or of marriage (cf. Driver, 1906:366f). Streane sees it as woman's controlling of man and that in the new age the creation order between man and woman will be changed round (1913:192f). Harrison sees it as a situation of loving care (1973:136). Hyatt inclines to the view that the words "woman" and "man" refer figuratively to Israel and Yahweh, as describing the return of the virgin Israel to Yahweh (1956:1034). Isaiah 42:13 describes Yahweh going out for battles as *gbr* (a "warrior"). And Isaiah 9:6 indicates a divine Warrior. Thus the word *gbr* in this text possibly refer to God. And in the larger context of the people's return from the exile, this suggestion can be highly possible. The revival of the nation out of the radical destruction (cf. Jr 1:10) is to be a new creation. Moreover, Israel's coming to love Yahweh with a new heart is to be really a new creation.

**Verses 23-30: A new and blessed life in the restored land.** The popular proverb is quoted to disprove the truth of the proverb : "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge" (v 29; cf. Ezk 18:2; Lm 5:7). When those appointed days come when Yahweh brings his people to their homeland, they may obviously realise the falsehood of this proverb (compare Hyatt, 1956:1036) (see ch. 3.2.1, for the formula "the days are coming"). Hyatt contends that this passage is in conflict with the future hope in verse 34 (1956:1036), but it may not be the case as the present writer understands it. Salvation can not be given automatically to Abraham's descendants in the collective sense. It must be applied to individuals. The restored nation in the future will be formed by those saved individuals, not by Jews collectively. There will be no impure element within the renewed nation (v 34) in contrast with the situation of Jeremiah's time. The returned people will live in safety and prosperity. Yahweh will plant "the house of Israel and the house of Judah" in the mountains of Israel and Judah, watch over them, and never let them be uprooted and torn down again (v 27f).

**Verses 31-34: The new covenant;** declaring God's continued favour for Israel despite their sins and failure in keeping the old covenant.

**Verses 35-37:** Strong language for his providence in keeping the nation (by oath).

**Verses 38-40:** Prediction for enlarging the city of Jerusalem. The city will never again be demolished or uprooted.<sup>4</sup>

## 3.2 EXEGETICAL AND REVELATION-HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE TEXT (JR 31:31-34)

### 3.2.1 Eschatological formula (v 31a)

"(Behold) The time is coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" (v 31).

The passage begins with the demonstrative particle "behold" (hnh, untranslated in NIV). The word calls attention to things to come and vividly points to those events. The word is often used to point to things or a person directly before one's eyes - "behold thy wife (hnh astk), take her" (Gn 12:19, KJV; cf. Gn 18:9; 16:14; Ex 24:8; 1 Ki 2:29; etc.) - and sometimes used with reference to the future. In the latter case it serves to introduce a solemn or important declaration (BDB:244) as in the case of Genesis 20:3, "Behold, you are a dead man (NASB, hnk mt, lit 'behold you are about to die,' BDB:244)" (cf. Ex 32:34; 34:10; Is 3:1; 7:14; 10:33; 17:1; etc.). In the present text, any of the above indications can be applied.

The passage of Jeremiah 31:31-34 is one of a collection which forms the Book of Consolation. As seen in the previous sub-chapter, the various independent oracles were put together without direct connection to each other, and it is the case in this passage as well when compared to the preceding passage (see Carroll, 1981:204-15). However, the Book of Consolation is a well-designed

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<sup>4</sup> We will treat with chapters 32 and 33 under separate headings.

series, so the preceding and following oracles must be placed logically together with the new covenant passage as a preliminary part and a conclusion. The formula "behold, the days are coming" (NASB) occurs in all three oracles (vs 27, 31, 38). The first oracle (vs 27-30) starts with an expectation of a future growing out of the contemporary situation of disaster (the expectation is introduced specifically with the promise of bringing the people back to the land); the new covenant passage details the renewal of the covenant relationship between Yahweh and the people; and the last oracle (vs 38-40) concludes with laying down the boundaries for the new kingdom.

### "The days are coming"

The phrase announces the new era of salvation in the period of the new covenant. The phrase "the days are coming" points to a certain time in the future. It is a time set by Yahweh, which has long been expected by prophets. We find the explicit expectation of that time in oracles of the "day of Yahweh" (Am 5:18-20; Is 2:12-21; Zph 1:7-18; Joel passages; etc.); and in expressions such as "in that day" (Am 8:3,9; 9:11; Is 4:2; 11:10-11; 19:16-25; Zph 3:11; etc.) and "the days are coming" (Am 8:11; 9:13; Ezk 12:23; Jeremiah's passages; etc.). Sometimes the phrases refer to the definite time and/or acts of judgment in the near future, but mostly to a decisive time of judgment (on the nations, or on Israel herself) and/or restoration in the eschatological frame of reference. It is often clearly indicated by the phrase "in the end of the days" (Hs 3:5; Is 2:2; Mi 4:1; Ezk 38:8,16; etc.).

The phrase is found very frequently in Jeremiah and can refer to the time of judgment as well as to the time of salvation (Jr 7:32; 9:25; 19:6; 34:5,7; 30:3; 31:27, 38; 33:14). Jeremiah's most explicit words in this respect are found in 23:7f:

"So then, the days are coming", declares the Lord, "when people will no longer say, "As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt", but they will say, "As surely as the Lord lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them". Then they will live in their own land.

Both this passage and our present text expose a movement from the event of the deliverance out of Egypt to another major event, namely the return from exile, not only from Babylon but from all the lands where the Israelites had been dispersed. Thus we may call the latter a new Exodus (cf. Vaillancourt, 1976:170). The new covenant in the time of the new Exodus is comparable with the Sinai covenant (cf. Ezk 20:33-38).

In connection with the immediately preceding oracle in verse 27-30, we find more clearly the prophet's expectation of the certain time of salvation to come. Verse 27f depicts a time quite unlike the period in which the prophet was living. The attack of the Babylonians and the long siege had brought the houses and land to ruin, but the towns and mountains will be restored at a certain time. The prophet affirms a time of readapting and prosperity in his own land. Our present text is concerned with the very same time of salvation as that of 31:27f. Westermann, taking into account the nature of the promise of the new covenant, states that "it now means the end of the previous history of God with his people" (1963:218-9).

The present passage clearly indicates the final stage of salvation as follows: "perfect obedience to the law", "restoration of relationship between God and the people", "perfect knowledge of God (or universal recognition of God)", and "forgiveness". Thus, the passage must be put in the group of the eschatological formula "the day of the Lord". Skinner expresses the passage as "the locus classicus of Jeremiah's eschatology...to express his deepest insight into the final manifestation of religion" (1922:320). Anderson, seeing its eschatological characteristic, describes it as follows:

The oracle stands out as a separate Gattung, with a clear beginning characteristic of eschatological oracles and a conclusion in which *ki* is employed effectively to introduce the decisive moments in the movement of thought (1963:229).

The prophet employs climactic usages of *ki* through the oracle (esp. in v33) (Kaiser, 1972:19, fn 41). It is a decisive fact to describe the radically dis-

tinguishing characteristic of the Messianic period from the former dispensation with the Mosaic covenant (1972:19).

### 3.2.2 To whom are the promises of the new covenant given? (v 31b)

**"With the house of Israel and with the house of Judah"**

Jeremiah precisely presents the parties that participate in the covenant: The Lord, the house of Israel, and the house of Judah. Just as the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants were made directly with each of these men, so the new covenant was made with "the house of Israel and the house of Judah". As Jeremiah speaks about the failure of the people to keep the old covenant (Sinai), he speaks again of the same people of Israel who participate in a renewed covenant. Most Christian interpreters so easily overlook the clear statement of participators in the covenant. Kaiser, however, duly remarks:

The whole context meticulously connects the new covenant strophe with a literal restoration of the Jewish nation. This includes not only the larger context of these six strophes (in chapter 30-31) and the second half of the "Book of Comfort" (Jer. 32-33), but also the immediate context of Jeremiah 31:27-28 and 31:35-36 (1972:15).

These passages include the northern kingdom in the promise. It is to be remarked that the preceding pericope (v 27) also starts with "the house of Israel and house of Judah". Although the kingdom of Israel had been adulterous by refusing to serve Yahweh rightly, He continually sent to them prophets like Elijah, Elisha, Amos, and Hosea. While the northern kingdom had been in exile, Jeremiah announced the promise that she would earn God's mercy and be taken back into the land (3:7). God would consider her more righteous than unfaithful Judah (3:11). God gave the certificate of divorce, but He still did not break the marriage bond with her. Thus He still issues an appeal for her to "return, I am your husband (or your Lord)" (3:14). The expression, "the house of Israel and the house of Judah", implies the cleavage of the nation into two kingdoms, but indicates at the same time that

God will restore the one nation Israel out of these two (for this promise, see Part III, 7.2 and 7.3.1).

Our main question for this study is: to whom the new covenant was given, and whether Israel continues her privilege to obtain the new covenant blessing in the new era of salvation. If we find the continuity between the old covenants and the new, the continuity of Israel's privilege must be positive.

### 3.2.3 Continuity or discontinuity with the old covenant ? (v 32a)

It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers... (v 32a)

The oracle introduces the new covenant and describes its nature in comparison with the old covenant. The phrase "when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt" clearly refers to the event of the Exodus from Egypt. In other words the covenant which has failed is no other than the Sinai covenant, thus it excludes the Abrahamic covenant and the Davidic covenant (cf. Vaillancourt, 1976:173). The text discloses defect with the old covenant, "because they broke my covenant". Thus the new covenant must supersede and cover the defects of the old. Since it is not like the former covenant, the merits of the new must figure over the defects of the old.

#### New things in the new age

The concept of "new" also occurs in Ezekiel in a restoration context. After he announces the fall of Jerusalem, the prophet Ezekiel opens his mouth for the message of hope (Ezk 33:10-22). The message claims that Yahweh will give a new heart and a new spirit and will take away the heart of stone (36:26f; 11:19). Isaiah also brings up "new" for the announcement of the future (Is 41:22f). The "new" will be distinguished from the "former" (42:9f); it is hitherto completely unknown (48:6). By the effect of the "new", the "past" can fall completely into oblivion (43:18f). The new exodus distinguishes itself fundamentally from the old as the onset of the new time of salvation (52:12;

55:12f). The "new" heaven and the new earth" are awaited by Isaiah (65:17; 66:22).

### Novel or renewal?

What does the new element constitute in this future covenant? In the Old Testament, the word "new" (ḥdšh) is used in a number of ways. On the one hand, it can refer to something which is of recent origin, unknown, unheard of, or never having been used or seen before (Ex 1:8; Dt 32:17; 1 Sm 6:7; Ec 1:10). We might call this sense of new, brand new or novel (Lemke 1983:184). On the other hand, "new" may also be used to refer to something which was known previously but which has received renewed vitality or validity, as for instance in Lamentations 3:22-23, where the poet asserts that Yahweh's gracious mercy and compassion are new (ḥdšym) every morning. In this instance "new" cannot mean "novel".

Taking the latter sense, Nicholson holds forth the former as a series of covenant renewals (1970:83ff). His idea is brought about by thorough examination of the parallel between the covenant formula in Deuteronomy (esp. Dt 30) and that of the new covenant. He states:

Once again, however, as in the past so also now Yahweh would act to renew the relationship between himself and his people and this renewal, again as in the past, is conceived of in terms of a covenant. In this respect the promise of a new covenant in Jeremiah 31:31ff conforms to the pattern of a series of covenant renewal ceremonies in the deuteronomistic presentation of Israel's history...at a crucial moment in Israel's history and like them its purpose is to usher in a new phase in the relationship between Yahweh and his people (1970:83).

Anderson also admits, on the one hand, its possible connection with covenant renewals, saying:

It is possible that Jeremiah's conception of the "new covenant" was influenced by the tradition of the covenant-renewal festival which was kept alive in north-Israelitic circles, as reflected in the Book of Deut. In these circles covenant renewal did not imply a return to the beginning, a restoration to a former condition, after the manner of pagan myth and ritual, but rather a reactualisation (Vergegenwärtigung) of the covenant under the conditions of the present... The reform of Josiah in 621 B.C., which made a deep impression upon Jeremiah's thoughts, was based on a passionate attempt to reactualize the Mosaic covenant (1963:236).

But on the other hand, Anderson directs his attention toward discontinuity from the traditional renewals of the covenant. He speaks of the new covenant as not a mere covenant renewal but rather "a radical break with the Mosaic tradition" (1963:236).

We cannot heartily agree to the implication of "a series of covenant renewal ceremonies" and "reactualisation of the past history" in connection with the new covenant. The new covenant does not follow the characteristic structure of the series of renewal such as preamble, historical prologue, stipulations, curses and blessing, et cetera (cf. Kline, 1978:133; Vannoy, 1978:133ff). Nevertheless, we may adopt Anderson's idea of both aspects, continuity and discontinuity between the new covenant and the renewal series, by looking at the contents and their effectiveness.

#### The elements of continuity

Bright understands that though it is said to be "not like" the old covenant, the new covenant does not differ from it either in form or content (1966:194). Calvin convinces us that God has never made any other covenant than that which He made formerly with Abraham, and, at a further renovation, with Moses. He says that:

it is not so called as to the new covenant because it is contrary to the first covenant; for God is never inconsistent with Himself, nor is He unlike Himself. He who once made a covenant with His chosen people, had not changed His purpose, as though He had forgotten His faithfulness. If it was a contrary or a different covenant from the previous ones, how can we derive our hope of salvation from the blessing promised to Abraham? Further why are we called the children of Abraham? Why does Christ say, that some will come from the east and the west, and sit down in the kingdom of heaven with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Luke 16:22; Mt 8:11)? (Calvin, 1855:127).

Hengstenberg also sees it the same way. He cites:

It will not be the newness of the covenant, but its stability. The covenant with Israel is an everlasting covenant. Yahweh would not be Yahweh, if an entirely new commencement could take place.... The making of the new covenant is thus the consequence of the covenant-faithfulness of God (1856 II: 431).

If the old covenant were temporary and insignificant, then Israel's religion which was established by the covenant relation of God to Israel would not be regarded more highly than other religions in the world. Paul explicitly declares in Galatians 3:17 that the Abrahamic covenant is still in force. Thus, any covenant in the history of Israel cannot be banished from attention as if it were insignificant.

Some commentators, such as Calvin and Pentecost (1972:118f) tend to confirm the continuity with the Abrahamic covenant (avoiding the Mosaic covenant). However, the provisions of the new covenant are more parallel with the Mosaic covenant than any others. Then, if there is continuity between the Mosaic and the new covenants, the continuity of Israel as covenanted people will also be testified to.

We find the elements of continuity from the old covenant (esp. Mosaic covenant) as follows:

1) Like the Sinai covenant, it is given by divine initiative - "I will make" (v 31) - solely on the basis of divine grace, and presupposes obedience to the divine law.

2) The new covenant, like the old, is still between God and his people Israel; the purpose of the covenant, in both instances, is the establishment of a relationship between God and his people (vs 33; 7:23; 32:38; cf. Ex 6:7; Dt 26:16-19; Lv 26:12). The fellowship with God is the "basic promise" of the Old Testament (Anderson, 1963:237).

3) It involves the torah which is the core of the old covenant (see ch. 3.2.6, where we will deal with the "torah" at length because it is a crucial matter in deciding the question of continuity or discontinuity).

4) Both covenants involve the forgiveness of sins (v 34; cf. Ex 34:6-7; Nm 14:18; 2 Chr 7:14).

5) Both speak about keeping the law in terms of "heart" (Dt 6:6; 30:14; etc.).

## The elements of discontinuity

The new covenant brings about the end of all traditions even including covenant renewal ceremonies. It marks a great discontinuity of Israel's tradition.

The most distinctive feature of the new covenant in contrast to the Sinai covenant is its inwardness (spirituality). In the old provision, the law was ineffective for the people's life. But having been transformed from the stone heart to the flesh heart, the people will be able to keep the law effectively (cf. Jr 24:16; 32:39; Ezk 11:19; 36:26). Bright thinks that the phrases, "within the people" and "written on their hearts" (instead of "written on tables of stone") show the desire and the power to obey it (1966:194).

Another important and distinctive feature of the new covenant is its perfection and its universalism, portrayed and emphasised in the first part of verse 34. The phrase, "know the Lord", does not simply mean knowing facts about God, but rather refer to complete knowledge of God in saving faith. The sentence, "from the least to the greatest will know Him", indicates the universality of faith in Yahweh.

We may summarise the element of discontinuity as follows:

1) There will be a greater degree of internalisation and immediacy in the appropriation of God's Torah or revelation, with a corresponding de-emphasis upon human or external mediation (see ch. 3.2.5).

2) Its universality: The knowledge of God will be more widespread and pervasive, not reserved for the initiated few or specially qualified, but available to all from the least to the greatest, to young and old alike (see ch. 3.2.9).

3) The degree of its capability: It is different in the degree of man's capability. God now gives his people the ability to obey (see also ch. 3.2.5).

4) The degree of its perfection: Because God takes the initiative of "forgiveness" (v 34), it will affect man's salvation perfectly, in contrast with conditions put to man in the old covenant (see ch. 3.2.10).

In noting the elements of discontinuity, we do not find any discontinuity of provisions of the old, but the effect and capability of elements.

### Conclusion

The new covenant basically remains within the boundary of the covenant series in the Old Testament (covenants with Noah, with Abraham, with Moses, and with David). The provisions in the new covenant are the same as those in the old (esp. Mosaic covenant). But they are radically transformed in the effect of those provisions. Kaiser portrays it as follows:

The same nation that had previously broken a divinely ordained covenant is now offered a renewal of that covenant with many of the same features and more. There is a diversity of covenants in the Old Testament but one God and one promise doctrine throughout all of them (1972:19).

Kaiser summarises it as follows:

The new was anticipated by the old. The new is only different from the old in the sense of completion (1972:19).

#### 3.2.4 The broken covenant (v 32b)

Because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them, declares the Lord (v 32b).

The main thought of the covenant is that of a bond (or a mutual agreement) between two parties (Robertson, 1980:4ff).<sup>5</sup> Although in the biblical covenant one party is vastly superior to the other and the initiative rests with the divine Lord, yet the Mosaic covenant imposes the terms or stipulations upon

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<sup>5</sup> Kutsch renders *bryt* as "obligation" (Verpflichtung), either the suzerain party takes self-obligating promises to the counter party, imposes an obligation upon the subject, or both parties take mutual obligations (1971:341-44; cf. Weinfeld, 1973:784f). However, McCarthy does not agree fully with Kutsch. He has the same idea of "bond" but inclines to use the word "relationship", expressing "the formation of a reliable relationship beyond the natural family relation" (1978:16-24, esp. 20f).

the human party in correspondence to the pattern of the Hittite suzerainty and vassal treaties (cf. Freedman, 1964:420; Vannoy, 1978:132ff). Exodus 19-24 explicates entering into a covenant bond clearly. The Lord took the initiative and the people responded all together, "We will do" (Ex 19:8). The stipulation was issued (Ex 20:1-23:33), and it was to be written on two tablets (perhaps one for the suzerain Lord and another for the counter party, see Kline, 1978:119ff) and kept in the sanctuary. Then it was confirmed by sprinkling the blood, half of it on the altar and the other half on the people (24:5-8). A bond of life and death was firmly established between God and the people. From time to time the people of Israel were reminded and warned of violations of the stipulations of the covenant through a series of covenant renewals at the plain of Moab (Deuteronomy), at Shechem (Jos 24), at Gilgal (1 Sm 11:14-12:25, see Vannoy, 1978), with Joash (2 Ki 12:17-21), and et cetera

But now the Lord declares that "they broke my covenant" (Jr 31:32). The relationship between God and the people is in danger of permanent dissolution. The threat hangs over Israel in her historical existence. The sovereign Lord holds the fate of the nation (life or death) in his mighty hands. The phrase "though I was a husband to them" implies this fact. Hengstenberg (1856 II:433) reads it "yet I married them unto me". The word *b'ltiy* is difficult to render. Most modern Bibles translate it as "husband" (KJV, NIV, NASB). Bright (1965:283) thinks that the figure of Yahweh as the husband and Israel as the wife, had been current in prophetic speech since Hosea and was employed elsewhere by Jeremiah (ch 3). Driver (1906:191) renders the phrase "and I abhorred them" as based on the references of Jeremiah 14:19 and Leviticus 24:30. It is found also in 3:14 where Yahweh accuses Israel of being unfaithful children. Surely in both instances, the word bears a similar meaning (Vaillancourt, 1976:173). Since 3:14 speaks of "sons" (some English versions render "people"), the word *b'ltiy* may not properly imply that Yahweh acted like a husband who in the event of infidelity would divorce his wife. Vaillancourt explains it in the light of the Hittite vassal treaties: the vassal

who enters into a covenant becomes the servant of the king who in turn becomes lord and master of the vassal. The latter's destiny, therefore, lies in the hands of the king. In the Hittite treaty, when the covenant is broken, the (lord) king will wage war against the vassal and if it needs to be, he will destroy the vassal. The word b'ltiy in our text, therefore, is correctly rendered as **Master** and is to be viewed as signifying Yahweh's position as the **Lord of the covenant**. In the sentence of verse 32b the first person pronouns are emphatic and contrastedly used - "They were the ones who broke my covenant, though it was I who was their Lord". The breach of covenant was entirely on the people's side, not on God's.

Now we confront a difficulty in trying to answer how the Lord, imposing the conditions of the old, is justified in entering the new blessings. Zimmerli points out that in the history of Yahweh with his people Israel there were fulfilments of the promise, although each fulfilment became a promise of something greater yet in store. Thus the promise is not the unbroken continuity of a straight line but the movement of a history (cited by Anderson, 1963:240). Anderson further suggests theology of the theocentricity through which this problem may be compromised. Theocentricity is expressed in the doctrine of election, to which the covenant motif is essentially related. Anderson notes:

His election is not a guarantee of status or the promise of stability but it is rather the grace that makes them a people, holds on to them despite their infidelity, and pursues them through the brokenness and suffering of their history. Viewed theologically, the history of Israel is not only the history of the broken covenant but the history of divine grace, concretely embodied in the life of a people. Through this history Israel knows the God who with almighty grace "actualises his possibilities" and whose forgiveness makes a new beginning (1963:240).

The election rests upon divine initiative on the ground of his grace. God, after He had elected his people, freely entered the covenant binding Himself to his people. This bond cannot be broken by human fault, whether or not the people of Israel failed to keep the covenantal obligation. This theocentric theology still makes Paul portray the unbroken relationship between God and his people Israel in Romans 9-11. Thus, when Yahweh declares another

covenant, namely the new covenant, He is totally justified by the doctrine of theocentricity in handling the fate of the people.

### 3.2.5 Inwardness (v 33b)

"I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts" (v 33b).

The preceding verse has stated what the new covenant would not be. Verse 33 begins with an affirmation of what it will be. The problems with the old covenant, for Jeremiah, occurred mainly in the people's outward observance of the law and the fact that they did not keep it in their hearts. Jeremiah views it that not only is the **outward** ceremonial of sacrifice discounted but it is regarded as threatening Yahweh's true religion when the people depend on it only while failing to keep to ethical demands. When the restoration of Israel is announced, the covenant takes effect again. At this time, it must reach the individual heart, passing over mere outward observation. Thus, it will now be placed **within** ("in their inwards") the people and written on **their hearts** (i.e., on their "minds" and "wills"; Bright, 1965:195), so that it may give them both the desire and the power for an attitude of fidelity to God, so that the new covenant may not fail any more.

#### The meaning of "heart"

In terms of **etymology**, "heart" is the inner life, emotional and intellectual will in full harmony with Yahweh's will. The "heart" includes man's emotional, ethical, and intellectual life (Peake, 1910:46). Its nature is individual, internal, and universal (Feinberg, 1982:221). It involves willing and acting (Johnson, 1949:84). Pedersen describes it as designating "the whole of the essence and character" - i.e., the "totality" of a person (1926:102).

### In what sense is it "new"?

But what is involved in the new covenant by changing from the external nature to internal observation? There seems to be no different element between the two covenants. Both covenants tell of God's direct writing of the law. Both demand legal stipulations. Both require the heart to follow up (Dt 6:6; 30:14). We find that Deuteronomy frequently exhorts man to love Yahweh "with all the heart and soul" (cf. Dt 4:29; 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 24:16; 30:2,6,10; Jos 22:5; 1 Sm 12:20-24; etc.). Jeremiah's demand to the heart is clearly akin to that found in Deuteronomy 30:6: Jeremiah pronounces judgment upon the people because their hearts are not circumcised (9:25). The circumcising of Israel's heart is paralleled by other Deuteronomic texts in which Yahweh is described as effecting a change in the heart (cf. Dt 2:30; 29:3; 1 Sm 10:9; 1 Ki 3:9,12; 10:24).

Jeremiah often uses the term in a metaphorical image. Jeremiah 4:4 employs a radical metaphor of the circumcised heart. The metaphor is embodied in the imagery of the soil (v 3).

"Break up your unplowed ground and do not sow among thorns.  
Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, circumcise your heart,..." (v 3,4).

The new planting and sowing means a new beginning for the self that is offered, dedicated, and fully committed from its centre to Yahweh (Polk, 1984:43). This passage is comparable with Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6 but with a slight difference. Jeremiah employs poetic bi-pola with two verbs in parallel: "Circumcise (hmm1w) and "remove" (hsrw); the latter has the independent object "the foreskin of your heart", while the former is a self-contained predicate. The effect of the first colon in Jeremiah's text is to keep the actual cultic rite of circumcision firmly in view and thereby to sound again the theme of the covenant. And in the second colon, Jeremiah turns into a metaphorical expression with the same subject. The purpose of verse 4, as throughout the passage and the surrounding context, is to emphasise the

fundamental importance of strict fidelity in Judah/Israel's relationship with God. Polk states:

The use of "heart" here in 4:4 focuses attention on the moral agency of human subjects. It is a way of addressing or representing people in their capacity as creatures profoundly responsible for what they do and who they are, and what they make of themselves.....Now indeed, Jeremiah's command presupposes that what the audience have made of themselves is somehow skewed or not enough: they stand in need of a radical operation, but "operation" of the sort appropriate to moral agents, not simply physical objects... (1984:43).

In the same way, the phrase "uncircumcised ears" in 6:10 implies that the people have failed to acknowledge the word of Yahweh and lacked the capacity to submit themselves to Yahweh's will. In another relevant passage, Jeremiah 5:21,23, the prophet says:

"Hear this, you foolish and senseless people, who have eyes but do not see, who have ears but do not hear...But these people have stubborn and rebellious hearts; they have turned aside and gone away".

"Heart" functions here as a correlative concept of "eyes" and "ears". The context 5:20-28 entails the people's disobedience. Jeremiah here figures it very prominently in his explanations of the causes of God's judgment (cf. 17:1; 4:18). He also talks about the people's "evil hearts" in connection with judgment (3:17; 7:24; 11:8; 18:12; etc.). All these passages tell that their attitude of "heart" is the core problem in Israel's religion under the old covenant.

From the above observation, we find that Yahweh demands of the people to keep the law with their hearts in Deuteronomy and in the judgment passages of Jeremiah. In the old covenant, the law was written on the tablets, and the people had to try and keep it in their hearts. Whether they were saved or not was dependent on the condition of their hearts. In contrast with it, however, the salvation oracles in Jeremiah never put it as a requirement, but just provides its fulfilment as a promise. Another new covenant passage, 32:39 also says about "heart":

"I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me for their own good and the good of their children after them."

In the old covenant the law was objective that the heart had to seek for it; but in the new, it is already in the heart. When God restores man according to the new covenant, at the same time He takes the initiative to fulfil the requirement of the law. Jeremiah states the same thing in two ways, emphasising God's act: "I will put my law in their inward parts", and then "I will write it in their hearts". Thus no failure of keeping the law can be expected under the new covenant.

To summarise, as far as the feature of "heart" is concerned, there seems to be no difference between the new covenant and the old. But there is a difference in its effectiveness. This promise of heart is given as a new and unconditional scheme of salvation (Raitt, 1977:177). While it was demanded of man for reward or punishment in the old (Jr 17:10), it is a free gift by God's grace. The new era of salvation is inaugurated with the fulfilling of the law requirement, so that the people can readily meet Yahweh's expectation. In this sense the new can be regarded as the "completion" of the old.

### 3.2.6 The Law (v 33b)

#### 3.2.6.1 Law and covenant

It is often argued that the term "covenant" is identical with "law" or "obligation" (see ch. 3.2.4). The law of Israel had its roots in the covenant (cf. Robertson, 1980:5, fn 4; see Kline, 1968:17-21. He discusses the compatibility of the Mosaic as a "law covenant" with the Abrahamic as a "promise covenant"). In Hosea 8:1f, *twrty* (My torah) is closely related to the knowledge of God which may be defined as a covenant relation of the people to God (Lindars, 1968:132). Jeremiah also announces that to keep the covenant relationship with Yahweh means to keep his law (see ch. 3.2.6.3). The above factors testify to the important place of the law in the covenant.

The law which was the core in the old covenant appears once again in the new covenant. Now, we will see what part the law plays in the promise of a new covenant. We may first define what sense of law is used in the book of Jeremiah as well as in the context of the new covenant. If we find that the law in the new covenant is not different from the one in the old, we may stand more firmly on the view of "continuity".

### 3.2.6.2 Torah : A semantic consideration

Many scholars have studied the etymology of the term, but without making very constructive contributions towards an understanding of the term (for various theories, see Jensen, 1973:4ff; cf. Gutbrod, 1967:1044). It is widely agreed that the general meaning of the torah is "teaching, instruction" instead of "law" as a legal code (Esser, 1976:440; Harrelson, 1962:80f; Jensen, 1973:27).

Jensen suggests that although the term can be generalised as meaning "instruction", the term has been used very often to designate a legal code (1973:27). Lindars thinks that since the generalised meaning of the torah was developed in the Deuteronomic period (he means about the exilic time), it would be a mistake to apply the general sense to the older cases (1968:119). Gutbrod (1967:1046) also argues that in many cases the meaning of the torah is too narrow to be rendered just as "teaching" or "instruction" (cf. 2 Chr 17:9; 19:10; Neh 8).

In each case, we must define its meaning in the context, with a question about the development in a particular circle or milieu in which the word is used. Three main aspects of the torah are generally accepted: the priestly (sometimes legal code is distinguished from the priestly), the prophetic, and the wise (Lindars 1968:117ff; Gutbrod 1967:1045; Begrich, 1936:63-88; Ostborn, 1945; Scott, 1961:1-15; Lindblom, 1962:156ff; Jensen 1973:5ff; etc.).

## Priestly torah

The priestly torah, considered the oldest one (cf. Jensen, 1973:6), is originally and primarily connected with the priestly function and the priestly teachings in reference to commandments and ritual observances (Dt 17:9,11; 33:10; Hs 4:6; Jr 2:8; 18:18; Ezk 7:26; Zph 3:4; Mi 3:11; etc.; e.g., the clean and unclean, reference to urim and thummim, ritual instructions, and etc.). Some prophetic passages indicate that administration of the torah was the special task of the priest (Hs 4:6; Zph 3:4; Mi 3:11; Jr 18:18; Ezk 7:26; 22:26). Also in the post-exilic Books the term was applied to a cultic direction of the priest (Hg 2:11; Ml 2:6ff).

## Torah as a legal code

The bodies of legal regulation are found among the legislative sections of the Pentateuch. Because "law codes" are found in the so-called priestly materials, the law of legal reference is often overlooked as belonging to the priestly torah. But beside the question of literary hypothesis, we cannot agree that it functioned only as priestly teaching. It functioned as prophetic teaching as well.

In the earlier books of the Bible "torah" is sometimes used to designate the narrow sense of "legal" references for the code of the covenant (e.g., Ex 24:14) and for covenant regulation (e.g., Jos 24:26). But the term more often indicates the larger body of Mosaic legal references (e.g., Dt 33:4; Jos 1:8; 8:31,32,34; 23:6; 1 Ki 2:3; 2 Ki 14:6; etc.). In later times the "legal" reference of the torah comes up in phrases like "the law of Moses" (Neh 8:1). Thus, we assume that there was a growing tendency of usage of the word "torah" to designate the whole body of Israel's legislation. Lindars sees this development as starting with the Deuteronomic school. According to Lindars, "torah" occurs in Deuteronomy in the following verses: 1:5; 4:8,44; 17:11,18,19; 27:3,8,26; 28:58,61; 29:20,28; 30:10; 31:9,11,12,24,26; 32:46;

33:4,10. Of these occurrences, the case of 17:11 is the only one within the core legislation, and here it means a "judicial decision" (Gutbrod thinks that it is used here in the old narrow sense; 1967:1045). Lindars points out that the torah in Deuteronomy is to be distinguished from other synonyms for the laws like "mispatim", "huqqim", "edot", and "miswot" (1968:123-25). He notes that the Decalogue is not called the torah but "debarim", while the Covenant Code is called "mispatim". In contrast with the narrow sense of other terms, according to Lindars, "torah" conveys the concept of "the code as a complete expression of the will of God, having the same binding force as the Decalogue...to be learnt and pondered by them", or even Deuteronomy itself is called *spr htwrh* (Dt 17:18f; cf. Jos 8:32; 2 Ki 22:8-11) (1968:131). Lindars concludes that the usage of this wider sense of the torah, containing the meaning of a "legal law", began to appear at the time when Deuteronomy was beginning to be composed (at the time of Josiah's reformation).

Now we must leave out the debate on the date of Deuteronomy or the deuteronomistics. But the significance for the present study is, from Lindar's contribution (also Gutbrod), that "torah" as the wider regal reference which appears in the book of Deuteronomy, was likely known by Jeremiah who was directly involved in Josiah's reformation.

### Prophetic torah

"Torah" is also found in the prophetic references - mainly in Isaiah (Is 1:10; 8:16; 30:8; possibly 51:4,7; 5:24, and in cases of 2:3; 43:4,21,24 are very much debatable) and other prophets (Dn 9:10; Zec 7:1-7). It is used for the prophetic "teaching" equivalent to "torah". The above references suggest "torah" as the collection of oracles of the prophets (cf. Harrelson, 1962:80f; cf. Östborn, 1945:127; Banks, 1975:46-47).

However, in most cases the prophets speak of the torah as referring to the legal references. Hosea is quite explicit in reference to the transgression of

the law in the context of the covenant (8:1,12). Sometimes he refers to the Decalogue itself (13:4). When Amos announces the judgment to come, he mentions the torah as Yahweh's statutes, and indicates the violation of the covenant (2:4-5; cf. Harrison, 1973:81). Thus when prophets use the word "Torah", in most cases it refers to the legal obligation, either in a positive sense or in a negative sense.

### Wisdom torah

Human counsel given by a teacher of wisdom is also called "torah" (Prv 13:14; 28:4,7,9; etc.). It then takes on the general sense of instruction in Proverbs: Instruction of the mother (1:8; 6:20), the father (4:2), the teaching of the wise (3:1; 7:2; cf. Job 22:22). However, some passages closely refer to other strata of the torah collection (Prv 28:4,7,9; 29:18) (Gutbrod, 1967:1045), and it could possibly be legal references.

#### 3.2.6.3 Torah in Jeremiah

For Jeremiah 31:33, four main interpretations of the torah have been suggested:

- 1) The Decalogue;
- 2) The written law (in the sense of "legal reference") in the Pentateuch or Deuteronomy (or as a whole);
- 3) Instruction or revelation as prophetic torah;
- 4) Inward principles (cf. Banks, 1975:66).

Some argue that it is meant here as the prophetic torah by Jeremiah. Banks suggests:

The law in v 33 written in the heart is linked with "knowledge" (v 34) of the Lord; thus it is clear from Jeremiah 2:8; 3:15; 5:1-4; 8:7; 11:18; 24:7; 32:8; 44:29 that knowledge of Yahweh embraces much more than obedience to the law.... It seems probable then that the torah in verse 33, as in the Isaianic passages, refers primarily to the survival of Yahweh's prophetic instruction beyond the disintegration of the present covenantal framework (1975:66f).

Before coming to a conclusion, we must examine in what sense the torah is used by Jeremiah, outside of the new covenant text. Jeremiah contains eleven occurrences of the torah: 2:8;6:19; 8:8; 9:12;16:11; 18:18;26:4; 31:33; 32:23; 44:10,23.<sup>6</sup>

Firstly we must be reminded that the book of Deuteronomy plays a very important role in the book of Jeremiah. It is generally accepted that the book of Deuteronomy was known by Jeremiah (see Ackroyd, 1984:47-52, for a valuable survey of studies in this area) on the basis of the fact that the book of Deuteronomy was thought of as "torah" when it was found in the temple (2 Ki 22-23).<sup>7</sup> Skinner states: "in Jeremiah's time Deuteronomy was the only written law which we can readily imagine..." (Skinner, 1922:103).

#### 1) Jeremiah 8:8-9,13

"How can you say, 'We are wise, for we have the law of the Lord,'" when actually the lying pen of the scribes has handled it falsely?.... Since they have rejected the word of the Lord,....

Here Jeremiah uses the term negatively in his discourse accusing the false teachers. There is a contrast between the torah and the "word of Yahweh". The latter is doubtless meant as the word of the prophet, while the former is supposed to be material (Hyatt, 1958:383) written by the scribes. "Torah" must here be something other than Deuteronomy or a part of the Pentateuch because Jeremiah claims its falsehood. It must be an interpretation of old laws the idea of which is opposed to the word of the prophet and to the real torah. The scribes of verse 8 must not be thought of merely as copyists, but as the ones who are involved in some degree of interpreting and even making the torah (Hyatt, 1958:384).

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<sup>6</sup> Once again we will leave out the debate on authenticity problems from these secondary passages. Whether it is Jeremiah's conception of the meaning of the torah or the editor's, the important thing is what the concept of the torah in the book of Jeremiah, regarding the book as a whole, plays in formulating the new covenant passage.

<sup>7</sup> But most modern scholars feel that the torah found in the Temple is a part of Deuteronomy, the edition and the compilation of our Deuteronomy is suggested as being some time later.

## 2) Jeremiah 2:8

The priests did not ask, "Where is the Lord?" Those who deal with the law did not know me: the leaders rebelled against me. The prophets prophesied by Baal, following worthless idols.

Jeremiah here singles out four groups of people who in particular have led the people away from Yahweh: The priest, *twpśy httwrh*, the shepherds or rulers, and the prophets. It is difficult to translate and interpret the verb *twpś* here. It is frequently used in the sense "to hold in order to wield, to use skilfully", especially in a participle (cf. Gn 4:21; Jr 46:9; 50:16; Ezk 27:29; 38:4; Am 2:15; Nm 31:27). Thus Hyatt suggests that *twpśy httwrh* means "those who are skilled in the Torah", i.e., those who interpret and administer it (1941:386). It is a highly possible equivalent to the scribes in 8:8. Thus we may assume that the scribes who were experts on the law exercised their skills in making the legal code by interpreting the Law of the Mosaic books.

## 3) Jeremiah 18:18

It is certain that in 18:18 the torah is clearly presented as a priestly code (cf. Jensen, 1973:20). The three phrases are parallel: "teaching of the law by the priest"; "the counsel from the wise"; "the word from the prophets". The first is evidently different from the others as much as the second is from the third. Here torah was the priests' special prerogative while "counsel" was of the wise and the word of the professional prophets. Thus we must distinguish the torah from the wise men's instruction and the prophetic words. It should be, therefore, the legal torah, possibly in connection with the cults.

## 4) Jeremiah 6:19

Hear, O earth: I am bringing disaster on this people, the fruit of their schemes, because they have not listened to my words and have rejected my law.

Here "My torah" is parallel with "my words" (cf. Is 1:10; 5:24). Hyatt (1958:389) testifies that the two phrases cannot be identical with one another. In the context of verses 16-21, the first summons to seek out "the ancient paths" and "to walk in them" (cf. Dt 11:22; etc.) failed. Yahweh then sent to the people "watchmen", undoubtedly prophets, but again they refused to hear the trumpet-sound of these watchmen. In verse 19 Yahweh, therefore, declares the coming of misfortune, "because they have not listened to My words and have rejected my torah". Hyatt concludes that "my torah" refers back to "the ancient paths" in verse 16 while "My words" goes back to the watchmen's trumpet in verse 17. The ancient path must refer to Mosaic teaching. Thus the torah here can be suggested to be the wider concept of the Mosaic law.

#### 5) Jeremiah 26:4

In 26:4 we read, "if you do not obey me", and the phrase is followed by "to walk (h1k) in my torah which I set before you", and in verse 5, "to listen to the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you...". If the two infinitives are intended to say the same thing, the torah here would be the prophetic word but it is not the case here. Another temple oracle in chapter 26 must be seen in the light of chapter 7. In chapter 7 Jeremiah mainly condemns the people's outward performance of the ritual ceremonies while they are robbing, murdering, committing adultery, swearing falsely, burning incense to Baal, and serving other gods. Finally, in 7:22f, Jeremiah declares:

"...For when I brought your forefathers out of Egypt..., I did not (just) give them commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices, but I gave them this command: Obey me, and I will be your God.... Walk in all the ways I command you, that it may go well with you..."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Most English versions do not have the word "just" in verse 22 but only NIV does. Without taking "just" critical scholars argue the priestly source came much later than the prophetic writings (see Streane, 1913:55f). We will leave this discussion because the problem with the insertion of "just" does not affect our study.

We may understand from this verse that Jeremiah considers that the true torah of Yahweh is not (just) ritual requirements which have unfortunately been misused by false priests, but rather ethical demands from Yahweh. The phrases "obey me" and "walk in" in the two texts (26:4 and 7:23) prove to be parallel to each other. Thus the torah in 26:4 is identical with the command in 7:23 which was given to their forefathers in the desert.

The phrase *hlk btwrh* along with "which I set before you" also occurs in 44:10; 9:12 (cf. 32:23), which clearly has a legal sense (Jensen, 1973:21), without any connection with prophetic teachings. Considering another temple oracle of Jeremiah which is very similar in context and wordings, and in which Jeremiah talks particularly about Mosaic legal regulation, and comparing the same phrases with other references, "walking in my torah" in our text is likely to be an ancient regal regulation. The text may tell of two ways in which the people can know the will of God, the torah and the words of the prophets.

#### 6) Jeremiah 32:23 (21-24), 44:10,23, 9:12, and 16:11

These passages are similar in content to the preceding passages and the passages of Deuteronomy. The passage 32:21-24 contains similar phrases of the Mosaic books (esp. Deuteronomy) such as: The remembrance of the deliverance from Egypt (verse 21), "sworn to give their forefathers" (Dt 1:8; 11:9; Ex 3:8; 13:5), "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Dt 11:9; 8:8; Jos 5:6; Ex 3:8,17; etc.), "they did not obey you", "what you commanded them to do", and "brought all this disaster upon them". Yahweh's "torah" here, therefore, must be Deuteronomy or likewise. In 44:23, the people were accused of not having obeyed (*šm'*) the voice of Yahweh. The verse continues with "you have not walked (*hlk*) according to his torah, his *hqqwt*, and his *'dwtyw*". Similarly, in 44:10 it is a question of not walking (*hlk*) in the torah and the *hqqwt* "which I set before you and your fathers". Similar expressions appear in 32:23, 16:11, and 9:12. In 16:11 and 9:12 the pertinent phrase is

"They forsook ('zb) and did not keep my torah (šmr)"; šmr and 'zb also impose the Deuteronomic legal sense (see Hyatt, 1941:392f).

### Conclusion

Jeremiah did contradict some form of the written torah (from the priests and the false scribes) in which some legal (esp. ritual) matters differed from the teaching of the true torah. On the other hand, the prophet may have had in mind the true "torah" which is often parallel with "the ancient paths" - i.e., the ethical will of Yahweh, and the command regarding the cult. We may follow Hyatt's conclusion (1941:394) that Jeremiah does not identify the torah with the prophetic "word", neither does he speak in contradiction (cf. 8:9; 6:19; 26:4f). Like other prophets, Jeremiah calls upon the people to practise a purer form of religion such as that which they had known and practised in the desert (1941:395). As we admit that the book of Jeremiah itself was strongly influenced by Deuteronomy, we may suggest that the torah would most probably be Deuteronomy (or a part of it) which was found in the temple by Josiah, or some parts or the whole of the Mosaic teaching in the desert. Thus, Jeremiah's torah does not depart in any sense from the law of the Mosaic covenant.

#### 3.2.6.4 Torah in the new covenant

If Jeremiah customarily used the word torah in the sense of Mosaic law, then the torah in the new covenant should be the same one. This true torah fits well into the new covenant passage. Jeremiah does not speak of a new torah here but only of a new covenant. The same torah serves for the new covenant with the same form and content but in a different manner, written on men's hearts rather than on tablets of stone. We must refuse any other suggestion than that God's law here is the very same law of Moses (cf. Vaillancourt, 1976:176; Bright, 1966:194; Feinberg, 1982:221).

Bright thinks that the law must remain in the Gospel era (1965:5f). The law primarily meant, according to Bright, the "demanding will of God", and is at the same time a pledge of grace - that is, Gospel in its theological sense. He states:

The writings of the Old Testament, especially the bodies of law, have been misunderstood as mere "law", as God's demand and as the epitome of human self-redemption. Thereby, the law of the Old Testament appeared as something fundamentally opposed to the Gospel which is often restricted to the New Testament as the epitome of redemption, instead understood as "pledge of redemption", as justification and pardon. Deuteronomy, the central portion of the Old Testament law, shows that the law - the demanding will of God - in the situation of the old covenant, is likewise Gospel, to show that it conveyed justification and pardon through God upon Israel (196:5f).

In the New Testament James speaks about the law that brings about freedom (Jm 1:25). Paul explains it in the same way: "I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life..." (Rm 7:10). When the new covenant was brought into reality by Christ, Jesus declared: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them" (Mt 5:17). In the new era God speaks to us openly, as if it were face to face and not under a veil as Moses put on when he addressed the law to the people (2 Cor 3:13). This is the reason why the prophet calls it a new covenant (Calvin, 1855:128). Thus we must not necessarily separate the law of the new covenant (regarding the Gospel) from the old (as a legal stipulation). Calvin states:

God does not say here, "I will give you another Law", but I will write my Law, that is, the same Law, which had formerly been delivered to the Fathers. He then does not promise anything different as to the essence of the doctrine, but he makes the difference to be in the form only (1854:132).

When a real new relationship between God and man is to be established, it will be a relationship in which the law of the old covenant finds expression in the very being of the people of the new covenant (cf. Is 49:8-13; Ezk 11:17-20; 36:24-27; 37:26-28; Hs 2: 18-20). Ezekiel also speaks about the law in the renewed community in the sense that all the law and statutes are to be strictly obeyed (44:23-24). By identifying the law as being the same as the old, the continuity between the old and the new covenant is firmly es-

tablished. Once again we confirm that the new covenant is not so radical that it can demolish the important contents of the old. In a new Jerusalem, a new temple, a newly founded city, Israel is to be God's people with the law again and forever.

### 3.2.7 Bundesformel (v 33c)

"I will be their God, and they will be my people" (v 33).

The so-called Bundesformel, a covenant formula, is found in Jeremiah 24:7; 31:33; 32:38; Ezekiel 11:20; 34:30; 36:28; 37:23,27, and in abbreviation in Ezekiel 34:24; 37:12-13. It is striking that whenever the "covenant" appears in the deliverance oracles, this formula always accompanies it. Thus, we may conclude that it has its setting of life (Sitz im Leben) in the covenant (cf. Dt 26:17-18). In other words, when this formula appears, the text possibly conveys the idea of the covenant.

The formula is most explicit in the relationship of the two covenant partners. We find the entering of this relationship between Yahweh and his people when the old covenant was inaugurated at Mount Sinai in Exodus 19.

Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex 19:5,6; cf. Dt 32:8-9).

The phrases "you will be my kingdom of priests" and "you are my holy nation" express the most distinguishing consequence of becoming Yahweh's special possession. Zimmerli sees the phrases as describing a quality of the people which is based on Yahweh (1976:85). Being a "priest", Israel stands in the privileged place so that she can readily have access to God.

Since Jeremiah 31:31-34 begins with the promise of a new covenant, the Bundesformel in verse 33 assures us of the reaffirmation of the old covenant. However, we must not fall into a mistake by sticking to the old concepts. We should be able to see it in the sense of "new" (or "renewed"). Raitt insists

that it can hardly be justified as a reaffirmation of the continuity of an election made at Sinai, since it is framed before and after with words about the transformation of heart and of forgiveness (1977:199). Following Weiser (1960:287), Raitt renders the Bundesformel as communicating re-election. The new covenant simply promises the relationship with God rather than depict it as being contracted or structured between two parties as illustrated in Exodus 19. Fohrer also sees the formula in the new covenant as being more meaningful than a contracted relationship as it was in the old covenant. In contrast to the earlier time, the true and genuine relationship between Yahweh and Israel has now materialised more strongly. Fohrer holds that it is a "most far-reaching relationship between God and man" (1955:205). Why should it be? Because it has as its purpose the communion between God and man who is newly created in his inner life, as the inner goal and result of the redemption. According to Fohrer, the Bundesformel is to be understood in such a context as denoting the most inward, personal dimension of a covenant relationship, not the structured, institutional, formal part of a covenant arrangement. This relationship, existing under the old covenant, shall be restored, but with a new and permanent significance (Streane, 1913:196). In the new era, the restoration of Yahweh's peoplehood was not based on their ability to keep the law. But it was based on Yahweh's remembrance of his own work of the deliverance from Egypt (Ezk 36:20f). Here is a hope that comes from the Lord: "It is not for your sake, o house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name" (Ezk 36:22-25). The question of this people's honour is left entirely mysterious, according to God's own pleasure. It is outside human logic. It is held totally in Yahweh's hands.

### **3.2.8 Abrogating the traditional system (v 34a)**

"No longer will a man teach his neighbor" (v 34a).

Carroll is right when he sees the effect of the new covenant, taking verse 34, as abrogating the need for teacher and system in the community (1981:218f). The problem under the old dispensation was due to the fact that

the externalised system became greater than its reasonable function. God commanded Moses to teach the Torah (Ex 24:12; Dt 4:5,14; etc.). He authorised or inspired some persons to teach (Ex 35:34; Dt 4:10). Moses set aside Aaron and his sons as teachers of the Torah (Lv 10:11; Dt 33:10; 24:8). Nonetheless, it became decadent when power and authority got involved in the teaching system. Then the system was formidably organised and people were bound to the system. Under such a rigorous system, the teachers easily became corrupted or ignorant, and then the people were totally misled.

Jeremiah (18:18) accuses three authorities; the priest, scribes, and (false) prophets who taught the community. They proclaimed mainly the covenant obligations on the basis of "torah liturgies" (Scott, 1961:2f; Mowinckel, 1956:124). An external law written on the tables of stone and the law on the heart serve the same purpose which is to "know Yahweh" (v 34). But the weakness of the old dispensation was that the mere inculcation of external precepts by priests, teachers, or parents failed to reach the springs of action and to produce the true knowledge of God, which makes His will the guiding principle of life (Skinner, 1922:331).

Now, in the new age, the charismatic approach is quietly revolutionary. It is based on the fact that Yahweh teaches his people directly, and that forgiveness of sins comes without the aid of an intermediary; this is a profitable notion of the new covenant (Ps 25:4-5,8-9,12; Is 2:3; Mi 4:2) (cf. Derrett, 1981:374).

"From the least...to the greatest" means from the most junior to the most senior, from the least to the most important; in other words, this will hold true throughout the population without any regard for status. That is a charismatic situation. Illiterate or unlearned people will no longer be dependent on scholars. The gist of the Torah will be possessed by all, and "knowledge of God", which implies a true and spontaneous discipline, will be absolutely common and equal. "Neighbour" means, in reality, that they are

fellow-citizens and equals of each other. It promises God's personal teaching of his people (cf. Is 54:11-13).

### 3.2.9 The knowledge of God (v 34b)

"Because they will all know me" (v 34b).

Jeremiah frequently picks up a motif which is familiar to Hosea: "the people do not know Yahweh" (Hs 2:8; 4:1,6; 5:4; 6:6; 11:3; Jr 4:22; 5:4,5; 8:7; 9:3,6). The knowledge of God envisaged here refers not primarily to an abstract intellectual knowledge about God, but rather to an immediacy of personal relationship and a willing and intimate acknowledgement of God's lordship over one's life (cf. Ezk 11:19; 36:26, Carroll 1981:218). Bright interprets the "knowledge of God" as including not only a correct awareness of God's demands but also conduct in accordance with it (1965:195). This knowledge is seen by the prophets as a supreme virtue (cf. Jr 9:24; 22:16). Vriezen suggests that "the knowledge of God" is fulfilling the demand of love (Dt 6), walking humbly in the way of the Lord (Mi 6:8; cf. Hs 6:6; 2:20; 4:1; 5:4), living in a close relationship, namely the communion with God. He insists that it is not having a conception of God ontologically, but knowing God existentially and experimentally (Vriezen, 1966:129ff). God never tries to reveal his being, but He hides his being as indicated in the second commandment. However, He showed Himself in history, and makes Himself known through experience. Mowinckel also understands this in the same way: "'knowledge of God' primarily means that he lives constantly in personal fellowship with God, deriving all his power, his aims, and the very nature of his being from this fellowship" (1956:1,180).

The technical term "know" in the treaty terminology has been recognised in reference to the mutual legal recognition between the two parties of the treaty, and the recognition of the treaty stipulations as binding (cf. Moran, 1963:77-87; Hillers, 1964:46-47; Huffmon, 1966a:31-37; 1966b:36-38). In Genesis 18:19, "For I knew him" means that Yahweh recognised Abraham as

his legitimate servant; and he should direct his children and his household after him "to keep the way of the Lord...". In 2 Samuel 7:20, responding to Nathan's oracle concerning God's promises, David says "What more can David say to you? For you know (i.e., recognised as legitimate) your servant, O Sovereign Lord, you have also spoken about the future of the house of your servant...". In Amos 3:2 we read, "You only have I chosen (known) of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins". Even though Amos is silent about the term covenant, he uses the verb "to know" in the sense of the covenant relationship (Huffman, 1959:35), and by the consequence of covenant-breaking, Yahweh invokes the curse (punishment for their iniquity). The same idea also appears in Hosea 13:4-5, "But I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt. You shall acknowledge (know) no God but me, no Savior except me...". It is obviously said with reference to the Sinai covenant, recognising the mutual agreement of two covenant parties. Thus we may conclude that *yd'* in the covenant context means "recognising Yahweh as a sovereign Lord", "keep his stipulation", and "walking in the way of the Lord". It is remarkable that in the New Testament, the knowledge (*γινωσκειν*) is conveyed in terms of the unity between man and God (or Christ) (Jn 14:17-20). It is expressed in a mutual indwelling of God in man, man in God (cf. Dodd, 1968:169).

Although very often the prophets invoke the people to know Yahweh, they scarcely claim that Israel now knows God. In Jeremiah 9:24(23), following the condemnation of Israel for "ignorance" of God (9:3,6), we read "but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness...". This passage well illustrates the context of "knowledge" of God, but it does not go so far as to say that anyone actually is entitled to boast of such knowledge. In the majority of cases the knowledge of God is the object of exhortation, aspiration, or promise. It is, for prophets, a blessing yet to come (Dodd, 1968:164).

### 3.2.10 Forgiveness (v 34c)

"For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (v 34c).

The forgiveness can be defined in the context of transformation, from the old condition to the new free condition. It is well illustrated by the promise in Jeremiah 33:6-9 which embraces three images at once: "Heal" (rpa) in verse 6, "cleanse" (ṭhr) and "forgive" (slḥ) in verse 8.

Raitt suggests the following characteristics of forgiveness in the new covenant:

1) Under the old covenant, the image of forgiveness was usually expressed by the word nsa which commonly means "lift up, bear, carry" (Ex 34:7; Nm 14:18; Jos 24:19; Ps 85:2; 99:8; etc.). Raitt explains the characteristics of this word:

means to lift up the weight of guilt and punishment arising from sin. It is relief from guilt-punishment conceived as a heavy burden pressing down ominously before the guilt-punishment sequence had moved its customary and inexorable way toward death (Raitt, 1977:186).

Even with slḥ, under the mosaic covenant, the idea of punishment is mitigated (Nm 14:20-23).

Nonetheless, in the deliverance oracles of Jeremiah as well as of Ezekiel, according to Raitt, one never finds forgiveness carried under the image of "bear up the guilt-punishment". Forgiveness in Jeremiah (in the word slḥ) is comprehensive and complete. Raitt calls it "a revolutionary understanding of an act" which no longer merely controls or cancels destructive forces (1977:186). The "forgiveness" becomes an integral part of the salvation work for the new era, transforming human nature to meet God's expectations so that new things will be possible.

2) When Moses asked for forgiveness for the people in Ex 31:30-33, Yahweh denied his request. It seems that the hope for forgiveness is more often denied than it is granted (cf. Ex 23:21; Dt 29:20; Jos 24:19; Hs 1:6; 8:13; Is 22:14; Jr 4:8, 28; 5:1,7; 6:20; 13:14; 14:10; 15:6; 16:13; 23:20; Ezk

5:11; 7:4, 9; 8:18; 9:5,10; 24:14). But in the deliverance oracles of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, there is absolutely no uncertainty about whether God will forgive or not. He assumes it on his own initiative. What was once a very unpredictable indulgence has now become a firm and dramatic part of God's plan for the future (Raitt, 1977:187).

3) The most important aspect of forgiveness is that under the Mosaic covenant it was contingent upon repentance as a prerequisite. Forgiveness in the old era was forthcoming only in response to genuine repentance (Dt 4:26-31; 30:1-10; 1 Ki 8:46- 53; Jr 26:3; Ezk 18:21-22). But it is shocking enough that there is no prerequisite for forgiveness in the deliverance era (cf. Jr 24:7; Is 44:22; Ezk 36:31) (Raitt, 1977:187). The forgiveness, therefore, is purely an act of God's intervention, an exercise of his divine prerogative. Forgiveness once again becomes a part of the mystery of God to enter the new era.

In the deliverance era, we have begun to move under new procedures. God is operating under a new plan. A tremendous number of serious restrictions have suddenly been lifted. The rules have been changed. In the new (eschatological) era, the newness would be striking, powerful, and revolutionary, and it is unique and not compatible with that in the serial of the covenant renewals although forgiveness was an important part in the covenant renewals (cf. Hyatt, 1958:786).

Transformation of the heart prepares man for a new kind of relationship; forgiveness breaks the stalemate of the past and opens the door to the future. In the new era of deliverance the new qualities are to be imposed upon God's people. All these elements of new qualities constitute the very comprehensive plan of salvation. But those qualifications will be accomplished by divine initiative, and will be completed and perfected by his Mighty Power.

## 4 THE OATH AND THE SEALING OF THE COVENANT (JR 31:35-40)

### 4.1 TAKING AN OATH BY CALLING A WITNESS (VS 35-37)

After the manner of a common covenant formula, the new covenant is going to be confirmed by the sealing and the calling of witnesses. The covenant in the book of Deuteronomy was confirmed by calling on heaven and earth to be witnesses (Dt 32); Joshua finished the covenant renewal by setting a large stone at Schechem, saying, "See!...This stone will be a witness against us...." (Jos 24:26f); Samuel called the thunder and rain as witnesses so that the people could realise what an evil thing they had done (1 Sm 12:16-19). Now God Himself takes an oath by calling on nature to be a witness to seal this covenant. Declaring Himself as the creator of the fixed order of heavenly bodies, He calls these fixed orders as a witness of the new covenant (Harrison, 1973:137).

This is what the Lord says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar - the Lord Almighty is his name: "Only if these decrees vanish from my sight," declares the Lord, "will the descendants of Israel ever cease to be a nation before me" (vs 35,6).

Of what value is an eternal covenant if any one party should threaten its existence? Therefore, Yahweh's covenant must not come to an end by the death of the nation. The permanence of the nation is illustrated from the fixed arrangements in nature. As unchangeable as the laws of nature, God's covenant is with the endless nation. According to eternal and inviolable laws, the sun and the moon must appear every day at a fixed time, and have done so for thousands and thousands of years. God's omnipotence is testified to by a look at nature. In the very same manner it is testified to by a look at the nation Israel, surviving. Hengstenberg strongly states:

To believe that He has for ever rejected Israel, is to degrade Him, to make Him an idol, a creature.....so that every rising of the sun and moon is to them a guarantee of it (1856 II:446).

The survival of Israel through the centuries can be explained only on supernatural grounds (v 36; cf. 33:20, 25). It is utterly impossible that Israel should cease to be a nation before God (v 37). Feinberg holds that "Scripture knows no greater guarantee for the validity and permanence of the covenant than that stated here" (1982:222).

Verse 37 gives the sole ground of hope for Israel.

This is what the Lord says: "Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth below be searched out, will I reject all the descendants of Israel because of all they have done," declares the Lord.

The measuring of heaven and the searching out of the innermost parts of the earth here come into consideration as being impossible things. This passage implies the promise, as well as the threat, that a remnant be always left. However, the above passages refer to the nation of Israel. The messages are not talking about individual survivors, but the ethnic nation as a whole. It means that even if He should reject individual members of the nation, the totality of the nation cannot perish.

Divine election implies grace, and yet he never stops to pronounce judgment whenever they go against Him. God, who freely links Himself to his people, cannot be bound by any limitation through the people's fault (see esp. Brouwer, 1949:84ff) (see ch. 5.2.3). The survival of Israel is a mystery if we see both his sovereignty and justice (cf. Anderson, 1963:240). It is unfathomable like the deepest things in the universe. Even though in the present situation it does not appear that Israel survived as a covenantal nation, we must not alter it by being impatient but should await in faith God's plan for Israel. Human reason cannot but admit his decisive Words.

#### 4.2 THE PROMISE OF REBUILDING THE CITY (VS 38-40)

"(Behold!) the days are coming": The passage starts with the same eschatological formula as the new covenant. After noting the formula, we move

to the eschatological picture of rebuilding the city in detail. The passage is one of the collection of restoration for the Book of Consolation. But it is intentionally put after the new covenant, into a part of the covenant oath. In the immediately preceding passage Yahweh took an oath by calling on immutable nature; now Yahweh takes an oath by declaring the rebuilding of his own city Jerusalem. "This city will be rebuilt for me": literally, "The city shall be built to me". It means that "the city belongs to Yahweh" (Hengstenberg, 1856 II:449).

"The tower of Hananel": It was located at the north-east corner of Jerusalem (cf. Zch 14:10; 2 Ki 14:13; 2 Chr 26:9). "the Corner Gate": At the north-west corner of the city (cf. Zch 14:10; 2 Ki 14:13; 2 Chr 26:9; Neh 3:1; 12:39). Together they marked the limits of the north wall from east to west.

In verse 39, "The measuring line will stretch from there (ngdw) to the hill of Gareb", suggests that the boundaries of the city now goes beyond the former dimensions (Hengstenberg, 1856 II:449). Now the hill Gareb is included within the circumference of the new city. "Gareb" and "Goah" are unknown locations. But since verse 38 is concerned with the northern limit of the city, and verse 40 apparently with the south and east, the present verse seems to indicate an extension of the boundary of Jerusalem on the west side (Harrison, 1973:137). Bright assumes that the hill Gareb was apparently some point south-west of the "corner-gate," where the wall made a turn to the south till it reached Goah, which is presumably at the west end of the south wall (1965:192). The word "grb" which appears in Leviticus 21:20; 22:22; Deuteronomy 28:37, means "itch, scab" (BDB:173). Hengstenberg suggests that "grb has no other signification than 'the leper'; and 'the hill of the leper' can only be the hill where the lepers had their abode" (1856 II:450). The law against the lepers was so restrictive (Nm 5:3) that even the king Uzziah lived in a separate house (2 Ki 15:5). Hengstenberg also suggests that Goah (a feminine participle form) is possibly derived from gw' (1856 II:453). "gw'" is used to mean a violent death, other than of a natural death (Nm 17:27f), of

a death like that of the company of Korah (cf. 2 Chr 13:8). This derivation possibly suggests that Goah would denote "the hill of expiring" which would be a very suitable name for the place for the execution of criminals.

**"The whole Valley where dead bodies and ashes are thrown":** The "valley" is supposed to be Hinnom (Harrison, 1973:137f; Bright, 1965:192), which is located in the south of the city, where heathen cults had been practiced (cf. 2:23; 7:31; 2 Ki 23: 10; etc.). **"Dead bodies"** might indicate the cursed bodies both of idols and of idol worshippers that were smitten by God's anger (Lv 26:30; cf. Jr 33:5; 1 Sm 17:46; Is 44:24; Am 8:3; Nah 3:3). **"Ashes"** must be the fat-soaked remains of human sacrifice from the altar (Bright, 1965:193). Hengstenberg notes that the word *dšn* is used only of the ashes of the sacrificial animals (cf. Lv 1:16; 6:3,4; 1 Ki 13:5; Nm 4:13; Ex 27:3) (1856 II:456). **"All the terraces":** The location would be south-east of the city, where the wadi er-raba-bi runs down from the west and on the south of Jerusalem, meets the wady of the Kidron from the north. Lehmann suggests that the word *šrdmwt* is a compound word "field of death" or "field of Mot (the Canaanite god of death)" (1953:361-71). There is no doubt that the human sacrifices were offered to Molech in that valley (Jr 7:31; 32:35). Lehmann supposes that this refers to the site where human victims, sacrificed in the valley of Hinnom, were interred. After the place (called "topheth") was desecrated by Josiah, "so no one could use it to sacrifice his son or daughter in the fire to Molech" (2 Ki 23:10), it is suggested to have been used for an open burial place (Hengstenberg, 1856 II:455). Isaiah 30:33 promises that such a place of execution and burial has already been prepared for the Assyrian invaders. It is probably the place which the vicious king, Jehojakim's body was thrown by the rebels (Jr 22:19). **"the Horse Gate"** is located at the south-east corner of the temple (cf. Neh 3:28).

Most of those words used to describe the circumference of the city indicate an unclean locale. Jerusalem is to be rebuilt, including certain districts outside the old city which were polluted by human sacrifices. God will purify

the place just as He will purge the nation from sin. In the present time, just outside of the holy city there is the most unclean place containing the dead bodies of the transgressors, idols, and unclean beasts. In the days to come, it will be purified when all impurities and iniquities are taken away from the people. It says that the city "will be holy to the Lord". The whole city would be considerably extended, and consecrated to Yahweh (cf. Jl 3:17; Zch 14:20f).

"The city will never again be uprooted or demolished": In strong language the section closes with the affirmation that the city will be invincible forever. The restoration of the nation is guaranteed by the restoration of Jerusalem, which under the old covenant was God's seat and the religious centre for the people. In both the spheres of politics and religion, the glorification of the nation is now strengthened and increased with the rebuilt Jerusalem. While formerly it was attacked and assailed by evil nations, and often could not prevent the enemy from penetrating into the innermost heart of its territory, it shall never be destroyed any more (v 40).

The present text seems strongly to indicate the territorial restoration of the nation (cf. Feinberg, 1982:223). This passage no doubt expresses an enlargement of the bounds of the city, but because of our ignorance of the exact position of the places named, we cannot speak more definitely (Streane, 1913:197). It is the very city that Jeremiah was before long going to see destroyed by the Chaldean army. A renewed covenant demands a renewed Jerusalem. It will be greatly enlarged and permanently settled. However, we must consider that most names were used figuratively, rather than indicating exact locations. If we compare it with other Zion oracles, it is clear that the text is not interested in defining the boundaries. The city will be enlarged too greatly to be measured by human instruments (Zch 2:1ff). The Holy Mountain will cover even the whole earth, including the nations (Is 11:9; cf. 11:1-16). The passages rather intend to show the inclusion of the unpurified situations. The place should be called the Holy City. But it was

surrounded on all sides by unholy places. Nonetheless, when the restoration takes place, all these outlying places become holy unto the Lord (Hengstenberg, 1856 II:447). The outward destruction was caused as a consequence of inward corruption. The strength of the city must start with a removal of the profanation. By the new covenant their inward strength is secured, and this brings the outward security. The rebuilding is not for themselves or for secular purposes but for the glory of the Lord. It will be dedicated to Him (v 40).

Now, we should bring up the question of "when did or will this be fulfilled?" The first possibility can be suggested as having already been fulfilled by Nehemiah's hand. But it may not be likely because of the following factors:

- 1) the contextual considerations demand the end time (cf. eschatological indication of "days are coming", in connection with the new covenant passage, and its characteristic of holiness, etc.);

- 2) the strongest argument against it would be the fact that the city, rebuilt by Nehemiah and the temple rebuilt by Zerubbabel, were not very holy and were thrown down thereafter (cf. Mt 24:1-2; Lk 21:20-24). It is in contrast with its permanence (cf. v 40b).

Another suggestion arises: "Is it said in the spiritual sense, i.e., heavenly (or symbolic) Jerusalem, or physical Jerusalem?"

- 1) Since it is so full of literal details, the spiritualisation cannot be permitted easily.

- 2) Regards to other restoration passages in the broader context of the Book of Consolation, which speak about the people of Israel returning to their own land and possessing it, the present passage is also hardly considered merely as a description of the heavenly place.

- 3) If we consider it along with the new covenant passages, we may suggest that by the first coming of our Lord it was fulfilled in the spiritual dimension (cf. Heb 9:23ff), but it is yet to be fulfilled in the physical dimension when He comes again (cf. Feinberg, 1982:223; Pentecost, 1972:508f).

But it does not mean that the restored city will be like the one that was destroyed in Jeremiah's time. It will be sanctified for the glory of the Lord. The city will be enlarged so that it can accommodate all the people returned from the scattered countries and all the Gentiles who join in the return of Israelites (cf. 3:17).<sup>9</sup>

## 5 THE RESTORATION OF THE LAND ILLUSTRATED BY THE FIGURE OF JEREMIAH'S BUYING A FIELD (JR 32:36-44)

### 5.1 THE LARGER CONTEXT, FORM AND STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT

The second half of the Book of Consolation is written entirely in prose. This whole chapter is written in the autobiographical style and is a dialogue between Jeremiah and Yahweh. The chapter consists of two main accounts: The account of Jeremiah's purchase of a piece of land during his confinement; Yahweh's messages subsequent to the figurative action. The passage in verses 36-44, which is our main concern, is directly connected to Jeremiah's action of purchasing the field from his uncle. The symbolic action is to illustrate the resuming of normal life in the land one day. Jeremiah asks in prayer how it can happen (vs 16ff). Since the situation seemed so hopeless, it would seem that Jeremiah himself scarcely dared to believe the promises that he had uttered (Bright, 1965:297). Jeremiah is commanded to do such a thing. The instruction from Yahweh is intended to give an assurance, firstly to him that God will do as he did by his hand and before his eyes.

Yahweh's answer to Jeremiah's prayer is given in verses 26-44. This part contains two messages: Judgment and salvation. Each section begins with *lkn* (v 28b and v 36). Since the salvation message illogically follows on an accu-

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<sup>9</sup> The following Scriptural references tell about glorified Jerusalem, and they may support its physical sphere in the final stage of the world, but the boundaries would be not limited to be as the old city: Is 2:2-4; 9:7; 33:20-21; 52:1-12; 60:15; 61:3; 62:1-12; 66:10-14; Jr 3:17; 30:16f; 31:6,23; Ezk 48:30-35; Jl 3:17ff; Mi 4:1; Zch 2:1-13; 14:10f; etc.

sation against Israel, the text (vs 36-44) is often questioned by critics in terms of its authenticity. But the passage is directly connected to Jeremiah's action to purchase the field of his uncle. We may understand it in this way that Yahweh's answer to Jeremiah stresses that "both actions of Judgment and salvation are options with Him, and if He has performed the one, He is capable also of performing the other" (Martens, 1972:84).

## **5.2 EXEGETICAL AND REVELATION-HISTORICAL STUDY OF THE TEXT**

The conjunction *lkn* in verse 36 indicates that the following words link up with the preceding passage concerning the judgment upon Israel. The verse says it is "concerning this city (Jerusalem)", but in the wider sense, the capital city represents the whole nation because the promises written in this section cannot be limited only to the city. The promises in this section are summarised as follows:

### **5.2.1 Gathering, returning, and settling the people (v 37)**

The scattering of the people is presupposed by this verse. "All the lands" indicates the world-wide dispersion, beyond the land of Babylon. The words "bringing back to this place and let them live in safety" are used in contrast to their dispersion from the land. It means that the people will never experience this disaster any more once they have returned.

### **5.2.2 The new covenant is reinstalled (vs 38-40)**

"I will make an everlasting covenant with them" (v 40).

This covenant cannot be different from the "new covenant" of 31:31b. In this text the new covenant is reiterated in the context of the promise of returning the people to their land. The whole context of the Book of Consolation strongly suggests that the new covenant in 31:31-34 was given in the circumstance of the returning promise. But that passage itself concentrated on

describing the nature of the covenant. This passage, after already giving a clear idea of this covenant, can freely be put in the direct link to that specific circumstance in which the covenant must be located. The so-called covenant formula, "They will be my people, and I will be their God" appears to support this covenant (v 38). The phrase "singleness of heart and action" in verse 39 is comparable with "one heart and one way" in Ezekiel 11:19 and the "new heart" and "new spirit" in Ezekiel 18:31 and 36:26. All these parameters single out the idea of the indestructability of the new covenant. This covenant is characterised as the **everlasting covenant**.

### 5.2.3 Yahweh's initiative doing good for the people (vs 40b-41)

The text gives so many promises to Israel but all phrases show the strong initiative action of Yahweh: "I will gather them...", "I will bring them...", "(I will) let them live in safety", "I will be their God...", "I will give them singleness of heart...", "I will make an everlasting covenant...", et cetera. The motivation of all these promises is suggested in the declaration: "I will rejoice in doing them good" (v 41a). The passage conveys all the principles of salvation, namely, "according to his sovereign will". It does not start from the human side. Yahweh utters the words "I will never stop doing good to them" (Jr 32:40b). He will "assuredly plant them in this land with" all his **heart and soul** (v 41b). The expression "with all my heart and soul" emphatically points to his loving and compassion toward his people (cf. 1 Ki 10:9; Jr 30:3; Hs 2:23; 3:1ff). He will do all these good things for them because **He rejoices in doing them good** (Jr 32:41a).

### 5.2.4 Restoring their fortunes (vs 42-44)

Yahweh who brought all the calamity onto these people will restore all their fortunes. It is the Lord who caused the disaster and who will give all the prosperity. The phrase "all the prosperity I have promised them" is com-

patible with the formula "the land which I gave to your forefathers". Jeremiah most probably bears in mind the promise to the Patriarchs.

Verse 43 and further deal with their restoring the field and territory which have been handed over to the Babylonians. The message in these verses is the brief conclusion of the whole chapter. The perplexity of the prophet about the instruction to purchase a piece of land in a time of siege is solved by Yahweh's revealing his future plan for his people: "I will restore their fortunes, declares the Lord" (v 44).

## 6 THE RESTORATION OF THE DAVIDIC KINGDOM (JR 33)

### 6.1 THE STRUCTURE OF JEREMIAH 33

This chapter concludes the Book of Consolation (chs 30-33). It contains additional promises of future blessing. The time reference in verse 1, "While Jeremiah was still confined in the courtyard of the guard," links this chapter to the preceding one. Bright testifies to its strong link to the foregoing chapter, by recognising its similarity in tone to that in chapter 32, and by further development of the theme sounded in 32:15 (1965:298). In chapter 32, the salvation message was delivered in the form of answering to Jeremiah's request to the Lord in prayer for further revelation regarding the purchase of the field. In the present chapter the messages are given in answer to Jeremiah's asking for further revelation of unsearchable things (v 3).

### 6.2 PRELIMINARY TO THE PROMISES (VS 1-5)

The Lord underscores their unfaithfulness by affixing his eternal name to them in verse 2: "The Lord is his name". He is God and is to be distinguished from any human dominion, and is unchangeable and omnipotent (a similar expression is frequently found in Isaiah 47:4; 48:2; etc.). In Jeremiah 10:16

it is also used in connection, as here, with Yahweh as Creator of all things (cf. 31:35).

"Call to me and I will answer you..." (v 3): the phrase "call to me" signifies to pray to God, i.e., to beseech Him for deliverance in time of need (cf. Ps 3:5; 28:1; 30:9; 55:17; etc.). The word "answer" from God is also found frequently in Psalms (cf. 55:17; 4:2,4; 18:7; 27:7; etc.). He invites Jeremiah to ask Him for remarkable disclosures of things to come. It is a call for him to test the Lord (Feinberg, 1982:232). "Tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know": "Unsearchable (things)" *bsr* means literally "cut off", "inaccessible" (Streane, 1913:208; Feinberg, 1982:232), implying that they are beyond the grasp of human knowledge (Harrison, 1973:143).<sup>10</sup> What are these unknown and great things? In the following verse Jeremiah describes these as two things: (1) The destruction of the nation; (2) The restoration of the nation.

Verses 4-5 give a brief message about human failure to keep the city in safety. God had already set up his decision for the fate of Jerusalem. It is a mysterious thing to the contemporary Jerusalemites.

### 6.3 THE PROMISE OF THE RESTORATION OF THE CITY OF JERUSALEM (VS 6-13)

"Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it; I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security..... I will cleanse them from all the sin they have committed against me and will forgive all their sins of rebellion against me" (vs 6-8).

In contrast with the failure of human effort, the city will be kept in health and safety by Yahweh's hands (v 6).<sup>11</sup> The word "health" (*arkh*) in verse 6

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<sup>10</sup> In accordance with RSV, Streane suggests the alteration of the word to *nsr*, changing one consonant in accordance to LXX and some Hebrew MSS, which means "hidden", as in Isaiah 48:6 (1913:208). But Harrison finds it more difficult to read this alteration (1973:143).

<sup>11</sup> The pronoun in 3p sg *fm* denotes the city, separated from the other pronoun in 3p pl *ms* which directs to the people.

is properly "new flesh" that grows at the wounded spot (BDB:74; Bright, 1965:296) (cf. 8:22,). Also it is used for the "restoration" of Israel (Jr 30:17; Is 58:8) and "rebuilding" of the walls of the temple (2 Chr 24:13; Neh 4:1). With regard to glyty it is not certain here whether it comes from g11 ("to roll") or g1h ("to reveal"). G11 appears in Amos 5:24; Is 48:18; 46:12, where the fulness of prosperity is compared to a stream and the waves of the sea. But Keil (1880:67) maintains that here and in 11:20, it is used in the sense of making known and unfolding of the prosperity before all nations (cf. v 9). "Abundant peace and security": 'trt occurs only here. Duhm and others read 'trt meaning "treasures" (cf. Bright, 1965:296). "Peace" in biblical thought does not just mean rest from war, but also the prosperity in the land. "Security" does not just mean "stability" but "truth" or "faithfulness" (Keil, 1880:67; Streane, 1913:208). The verse denotes God's faithfulness in His promises and covenants as expressed in Psalms 85:11,12, where mercy and truth, righteousness and peace are specified as the gracious benefits with which the Lord blesses His people.

Verse 7 indicates that the restoration does not mean creating a totally new circumstance, but returning to what they were before. In verse 8 this prosperity gains stability and permanence through the people's being cleansed of their sins by means of the forgiveness in accordance with the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:34. Once more the vital element of the new covenant is reiterated.

Verse 9 reads "Then this city will bring me renown, joy, praise and honor..." - literally, "And it will be to Me a name of joy...". Šm here signifies not fame, but a name. The name, as always in Scripture, is the expression of the essential nature of a person (cf. Keil, 1880:68). The future for the Jew will be so glorious that the nations will stand in awe of Israelites and tremble at their greatness. Thus Jerusalem is reversed from her former state and is made holy. The form in which this idea is presented is not inconsistent with those elsewhere used by Jeremiah when he depicts the future blessedness of

Israel. There is nothing here unworthy of Jeremiah, keeping to his conception of a peaceful and well-ordered commonwealth, enjoying the blessing of Yahweh in her own land and under her own government.

In verses 10-13, the prosperity of his people is designated by the Lord. There are descriptions in two strophes: The joyous life of men, and peace (vs 10f) and prosperity in the land (vs 12f). The tense of the verb *ḥrb* ("desolate") in verse 10 seems to indicate that Jerusalem has already fallen. However, Keil sees it that the description, "it is desolate", does not imply the burning of Jerusalem (52:12f), but only the desolation which began about the end of the siege (1880:69).

Verse 11 says that the prophet lost the joyous life in the contemporary time, but gladness and joy shall once more prevail, and God will be praised for this.

"Give thanks to the Lord Almighty, for the Lord is good; his love endures forever" (v 11b).

This liturgical formula in thanksgiving to God is used in the temple services (1 Chr 16:34; 2 Chr 5:13; 7:3,5; Ezr 3:11; Ps 106:1, 118:1; 136:1) (cf. Keil, 1880:69; Streane, 1913:14; Harrison, 1973:144). It implies that the prosperity of the restored land will evoke a spontaneous chant from those bringing offerings of gratitude to the temple, and be reminiscent of the golden age of the early monarchy.

Verses 12-13 make a comparison again with the present situation and the future. The land, which is now laid waste and emptied of men and beasts, will become the place where shepherds with their flocks move about and lie down again. "The shepherds" in this passage and 23:1ff, as elsewhere, implies Judah's rulers. This passage has many similarities with chapter 23:1-8. In chapter 23 the present "shepherds" (perhaps the king Zedekiah and the nobles, see Bright 1965:143) are compared with a true "Branch" of David's line (cf. 33:15). When an invasion of enemies is dreaded, shepherds dare not go forth to protect the flock and the flock have no peace and liberty. But in

the future the Jews would be in a tranquil state, expressed by the phrase, "the shepherds will make their sheep to lie down" (cf. Calvin, 1855:245). "This place" (v 12) is specified by mentioning the several parts of the land, as in 32:44; 17:26.<sup>12</sup> The passage very strongly parallels the prophecy of the Messiah in 23:1-8. The wording is not exactly identical, but the parity of ideas is unmistakable. Thus, we will study the following verses along with chapter 23.

## 6.4 THE PROMISE OF RESTORING THE DAVIDIC KINGSHIP (33:14-26; 23:1-8)

### 6.4.1 Introductory formula (33:14)

(Behold), The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfil the gracious promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah.

The oracle is introduced by an eschatological formula - "Behold, the days are coming" (NASB) - the same as Jeremiah 31:27, 31, and 38. While the passage in 31:31 introduces the new covenant and promise with the same introductory formula, the present passage refers to the old covenant and promise. "The gracious promise" literally means "good word (or thing)." In Deuteronomy 28 the "good" word and the "evil" word are placed side by side: the former is blessed (Dt 28:1-14) and, afterwards, the curse is declared. The centre and substance of this good word in this passage is the promise to David, through whose righteous Sprout all the promises to Israel will find their final fulfilment. That promise is identified as given primarily to Israel "the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (compare with Jr 31:31). The following verses picture the contents of the Davidic covenant in the broad context of the eschatology of Israel. The covenant will temporarily be interrupted, but is guaranteed to be reinstated to endure for ever.

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<sup>12</sup> This passage is not in LXX, and has therefore been suspected by many commentators to be non-Jeremiac as coming from a later editor (cf. Bright, 1965:298). But Bright argues in the same poetry of 23:5-6 that there is no convincing reason for denying this saying to Jeremiah since it contains a play on Zedekiah's name (Bright, 1965:146). Some other scholars are equally convinced that the passage is in the right place and is perfectly compatible with chapters 30-33 (Feinberg, 1982:235).

#### 6.4.2 The righteous branch from the Davidic line (33:15-17; 23:5f)

In those days and at the time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line... (v 15).

"When I will raise up to David a righteous Branch" (23:5a).

The kingly ideology of the Jews is often suggested as having been adopted from mythical references of the Ancient Near Eastern ideology of kingship (see Mowinckel, 1956:164). Mowinckel refuses the influence of a mythical, Canaanite form or conception of kingship in forming the background of an Israelite idea of the future king (1956:162). He suggests that the conception emerged in the later monarchy, or after the end of the monarchy, when because of the influence of the prophets, the mythical element of the ideal kingship grew in the concept of eschatology (1956:162).

The word "Branch"  $\text{šmḥ}$  was used in meaning "vegetation" (Is 4:2), "sprout," or "growth" (Gn 19:25; Is 61:11; Ez 16:7; 17:9; Hs 8:7; etc.), and used as a technical term for the Messiah here and in other passages (Jr 23:5; Zch 3:8; 6:12; Is 11:1). It must be held here to be a Messianic title (Jr 23:5; cf. Is 4:2), a title of the ideal king, thinking of legitimate descent from David's line (cf. Mowinckel, 1956:161ff). Mowinckel suggests that the term "branch" is first used by Zechariah, and adopted here by later editors. But, in any case, the idea of the Davidic Branch serves the book of Jeremiah in a theologically important role.<sup>13</sup>

In 23:5 the "Branch" is to be a real and wise king, not a puppet like Zedekiah.

Bright states in the note of 23:5-6

The similarity of the future David's name to that of Zedekiah is scarcely coincidental. Very probably Jeremiah uttered these words early in Zedekiah's reign, when dynastic hopes were being attached to that king by certain of his courtiers; while he tacitly accepts these hopes as in principle valid, he declares that they will not be fulfilled in Zedekiah but in a "true Shoot" of totally different stamp (1965:143).

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<sup>13</sup> Taking account of chapter 23, where the term Branch is used along with the name of king Zedekiah, it is difficult for us to borrow Mowinckel's idea. However, we will leave out the debate on authenticity. Our intention is to see the theological significance of the Messiah king in Jeremiah and in the Scriptures as a whole.

## The righteous One

"And do what is just and right in the land" (33:15c).  
"He will do what is just and right in the land" (23:5b).

The "Branch" being "righteous" (שֶׁדָּקִי) and "just" (שֶׁמֶיךָ) is distinguished from the false leaders (shepherds) (see vs 12f). The prophet emphasises both the moral qualities of the future king and his legitimacy, being the rightful heir of David and inheritor of the promise made to David. Although it is simply called "David" in verse 17 (cf. Jr 30:9; Ezk 34:23f; 37:24; Hs 3:5), it must mean "David's scion" (Mowinckel, 1956:164). The prophecy has to do with the ideal king (Messiah) of the Davidic line under whose just and victorious rule all the dynastic hopes would be realised (cf. Ps 2; 72; etc.). "Salvation" which would be brought about by the Branch, includes not only deliverance, preservation, and victory in war, but also every kind of well-being, good fortune, and ideal conditions (Mowinckel, 1956:177). The words "just" and "righteousness" have the same suggestion of well-being, and of favourable internal conditions.

## The work of the Messiah king

In those (his in 23:6) days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem (Israel in 23:6) will live in safety (33:16)

The words "those days" refer to eschatological time. This passage is parallel with the contents of Nathan's words to David in 2 Samuel 7:8ff. Both passages say that Israel's security among the nations is guaranteed through David whom Yahweh appoints (or will appoint) as king over His people and "violent men" or "foreigners" shall no more "afflict" them or "hold them in servitude".

The (Messianic) king is depicted as a warrior who defends the land and people from foreign hostility and who breaks the yoke of the oppressors and sets them free (Jr 23:5f; cf. Is 9:5; Zch 9:10; Mi 5:4). The people under his rule will live in safety (Jr 23:6; 33:16). The Messianic king is also described as the One who will bring a peaceful life for his people (Mi 5:3f). If any one creates

separation between the political and the religious figures of the Messiah, it is a mistake. For instance, Volz holds the Messiah as essentially a political figure, without considering the religious factor of the final salvation. The Messiah, for Volz, is nowhere represented as a prophet or a teacher; he stands in no immediate relation to the individual, but only to the community as a whole. He is the Deliverer from oppression, the Ruler of the golden age. He is, in short, a symbol of the particular aspect of the eschatological hope - of Israel's aspiration after material greatness and world power (P. Volz, *Die vorexilische Jahwe prophetie und der Messias*, 1897. Cited by Skinner, 1922:316).

Of course the Messiah is a political personage. He is a king, and the office of a king is necessarily political. Skinner, however, rightly repudiates Volz's idea, seeing that the Old Testament never separates the Messiah from the idea of the people's social and religious well-being. In chapter 32, buying the land, in chapter 31 planting and eating fruits, peace under green trees, prosperity, forgiveness of sins, and the covenant formula, all these expressions indicate a perfect theocracy, in terms of political, social, and religious aspects taken all together (1922:317). The theocratic kingdom will be established on the basis of the right relationship between Yahweh and his people, as it is expressed in the covenant formula. The king and the people will walk in Yahweh's laws and observe his statutes perfectly (Jr 23:6; 30:9,21f; 33:16; cf. Ezk 37:24).

#### 6.4.3 Promise to the Levitic priests (33:18)

"...nor will the priests, who are Levites, ever fail to have a man to stand before me continually to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings and to present sacrifices" (v 18).

The very same way of promise to the Davidic throne is used for the Levitical priests (or the family of Levi). Monarchy and priesthood were the two bases of the Old Testament theocracy. When these appeared to be in extreme danger

of extinction in Jeremiah's day, we find their continuance couched in sure and irrevocable terms.

Although the promise contains the renewal of the cultic system ("sacrifices"), its efficiency will be totally different as shown in the new covenant passage. It will not be comparable with that of Jeremiah's time (see Jeremiah's condemnation of the temple and the sacrifices in 7:21-23).

We had better understand this verse, however, in the light of the Levitic covenant. The Aaronic covenant must remain forever as does the Davidic covenant. In Malachi 2:4, God once reminds us, saying "so that my covenant with Levi may continue".<sup>14</sup> The present text confirms its (the Levitic covenants) permanence like that of the Davidic covenant. Its stability would be threatened very often as in the case of the Davidic covenant. But its permanence will not depend on the Levites themselves, but on the faithfulness of Yahweh to the covenant (v 21).

We remember how the building of the temple, which David longed to do, was directly involved in the Davidic covenant. The possibility of the rebuilding of the temple and the renewal which the sacrificial cult would obviously have involved, mark the highest point of the hope, calling to mind the promises to David (Nicholson, 1970:92). The rebuilding of the temple is often mentioned by the prophets Ezekiel, Haggai, and Zechariah in visions of the future

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<sup>14</sup> The covenant of Levi in Malachi 2:8 is much debated. Traditionally it is thought to refer to the covenant with Phinehas, which is called a "covenant of peace" (Nm 25:11-13). McKenzie and Wallace argue that it is another covenant with Levitic priests whose main task (which newly emerged in the post-exilic period) is instruction rather than the sacrificial duties (1983:550f). But the present writer is still convinced of the traditional view seeing Malachi's great concern with their corruption in connection with cultic duties (Ml 1:6ff), and of the fact that the Levitic covenant is already known by Jeremiah in the present text.

kingdom. With this cultic system, the new theocratic kingdom will be firmly established.<sup>15</sup>

## 6.5 THE PROMISE IS SEALED BY CALLING ON THE TESTIMONY OF NATURE (33:19-26)

The covenants of David and of Levi are sealed for eternity in the same manner as the new covenant is to be. Unceasing processes of the sun, moon, and stars from day to night and from season to season testify to the stability of Yahweh's work (vs 20,21). Calvin's statement is noteworthy in this regard (except his application of Israel to the church):

We have now rain, then fair weather, and we have various changes in the seasons; but the sun still continues its daily course, the moon is new every month, and the revolving of day and night, which God has appointed, never ceases; and this unbroken order declares.....that God's covenant with his Church shall be no less fixed and unchangeable than what it is with mankind with regard to the government of the world (1855:261f).

Both the covenants of David and of the Levites are repeated again and again and are to be sealed together (v 21 and v 22).

"Have you not noticed that these people are saying, "The Lord has rejected the two kingdoms he chose"? So they despise my people and no longer regard them as a nation (v 24).

But God's determination is very firm:

"If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed laws of heaven and earth, then I will reject the descendants of Jacob and David my servant..." (v 25,26).

The tribes of the two kingdoms (the North and the South) together will be finally recognised as his people, although the nations will not recognise them. The word 'my ("my people") is never used for anyone besides Israel. The verb *b̄h̄r* ("chose") in verse 26 refers only to God's choice of Israel (cf. Ex

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<sup>15</sup> We will deal with a debate on how the promises concerning the temple and the priests are fulfilled in the light of the New Testament in Part VI.

19:5-6; Am 3:2). Any one can say other things, but God will never forsake them utterly and finally. In verses 25-26 the Lord declares this: 'I am the same God, who has fixed the succession of day and night, and has promised that the descendants of Jacob and David will not be annihilated'. They will certainly return from exile (v 26). They are undeniably the eternal nation. The Lord will allow no one to interrupt his covenant promises to Israel. The promises have again become valid and effective.

## 7 CONCLUSION

Facing a pending disaster by the invasion of the Babylonians, Jeremiah stood as a prophet announcing the coming "doom" with sorrow and tears for his fellow countrymen. The messages of "doom" of Jeremiah are in strict accordance with Sinaitic traditions (esp. Deuteronomy). His admonition and calling for repentance are covenant challenges. If the people failed to react to his appeal, it would lead to the consequence of their losing the land.

He was not just a pessimistic prophet, but also a prophet of the future. His logic develops from Yahweh's sincerity: Yahweh who is sincere in his covenant had to bring destruction according to the Sinai covenant; at the same time He, who is sincere in his covenant, must keep the nation from destruction. This combined logic appears well in chapter 24 in the illustration of the fig baskets. On the one hand, Yahweh is determined to destroy the bad figs which are symbols of the contemporary Jerusalemites, but He shows his intention of restoring the nation out of the exiles.

The salvation oracles mainly appear in the Book of Consolation. Along with chapter 24 (also chs 3 and 23), we may summarise the picture of the restoration as follows:

1) Yahweh will bring the exiles back to their land (3:18; 23:3; 24:6; 30:3,10,; 31:8,16,23; 32:37; 33:7);

- 2) They will enjoy abundant fertility (31:5,12-14);
- 3) Yahweh will give them a new heart (24:7; 31:33b; 32:39);
- 4) The people will be able to keep the law (31:33b);
- 5) They will know Yahweh (31:34);
- 6) Yahweh will forgive their sins (31:34b; 33:8);
- 7) The true relationship between Yahweh and his people will be established (24:7; 30:22; 31:1; 31:33c; 32:38);
- 8) The Davidic king will rule over the people (23:5; 30:9; 33:14-17);
- 9) The nation will be safe, and the people will live in peace and justice (23:6; 33:15-17).

Although Yahweh is sincere in his covenant, it does not mean that He will restore the nation on the basis of the old covenant. He rather enters into a new covenant relationship with the people. The new covenant is the most basic background of the restoration. It appears twice within the Book of Consolation. The direct context of the new covenant in chapter 32, and the larger context of the Book of Consolation suggest that the new covenant was given in the circumstance of the return promise. The crucial issue as regards to the new covenant is the question of continuity or discontinuity from the old. There is undeniable continuity between the two. The original meaning of "covenant", namely "bond", implies that the new covenant also creates a relationship between Yahweh and his people; and yet it does not introduce another party different from the old, but the same "house of Israel and the house of Judah". Regarding the fact that the same parties have the same relationship, the new covenant is called a "renewal". The "torah" which was the core element of the old covenant appears in the new one, too. When one examines the usage of "torah" in the other parts of Jeremiah, it seems that the "torah" is none other than the Mosaic teaching, namely the same law of the Mosaic covenant. Keeping the "torah" with the people's heart, knowing God (i.e., the communion with God), and being forgiven sins also take place in both the old and the new.

On the other hand there is discontinuity between the two covenants. The statement of the new covenant passage itself testifies to the discontinuity: "I will make a new covenant... It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant..." (31:31). The restoration does not mean to return to the old system of the nation. The old systems are radically internalised. Yahweh Himself directly takes initiative without an intermediary structure such as the cultic system. Thus it requires not practising strict literal interpretation of some elements of restoration, especially such as restoring Davidic kingship and Levitic priesthood in the restored sanctuary. The new covenant works effectively without further failure because it does not depend on outward instruments.

The two aspects of "continuity" and "discontinuity" seem to be paradoxical to one another. It is a mystery. But the restoration will be completed on these two bases. Thus the new covenant can be said to be the completion of the old.

In the debate on "spiritualisation" in connection with the question "to whom the new covenant was given", we must give serious consideration to the fact of "continuity" between the two covenants. By seeing "discontinuity" between the two, the new covenant has been fulfilled by Christ in the spiritual realm and the present church enjoys all the blessings of the new covenant. Nonetheless, we must be careful about what the Old Testament passages truly say about the recipient of the covenant. And also we must carefully examine the New Testament passages of the new covenant (esp. Heb 8-9) which speak about its fulfilment.

We will leave the study of the New Testament passages for Part VI (see Part VI, 5), but let us be sincere in looking at the real fact of promises in the book of Jeremiah. The promise of restoration in Chapter 3 is primarily aimed at the returning of Israel (the northern tribes). The returning of the people,

joined by the northern tribes, cannot be easily applied to someone other than the house of Israel and the house of Judah (3:14,18). Chapter 24 contains all kinds of promises of restoration, and yet the text clearly specifies that "those who are in the exile" are "good figs" to whom those promises are given in contrast with the contemporary Jerusalemites. The Book of Consolation repeats the promises of return from the exiles, and the passage 30:18-24 speaks of restoring the fortunes of Jacob's tents, the city will be rebuilt on her ruins, giving a strong impression that the nation and the land are the very same ones that the exiles had belonged to and lived in. In chapter 32 Jeremiah actualises the people's being restored to their fortunes by buying his uncle's field, and the message cannot be understood in any other way than the Israelites' return from their exile to redeem the land (v 8).

Of all the passages, the best illustration is found in the passages of Yahweh's oath to seal the covenants (31:35-40; 33:19-26). Yahweh swears that unless the day and night no longer come at their appointed times, "will the descendants of Israel ever cease to be a nation before me" (31:36). Then, what else do we have to present as the evidence of Israel being the covenanted people?

The greatest emphasis in all the promise passages falls on the sovereign will of Yahweh (cf. 24:6f; 29:32b; 30:10f,20; 32:37ff; etc.). It is expressed in the oracles of salvation "thus said the Lord..., I will...", or "behold, the days are coming, said the Lord, that I will..." (23:5; 24:5; 30:3,8; 31:23,27,31,38; 32:10,14; etc.). This theocentricity in the messages of salvation also appears in Ezekiel with the phrases "for the sake of my holy name", and "they will know that I am the Lord" (see Part III, 1.2.3). The making of the covenant and the election of Israel are his own choice. However, the election does not merely aim at saving the nation or the individuals of Israel, but rather at making the nation serve Yahweh (cf. 3:17; 33:9f) and the purpose of the revelation history which directs at the redemption of the world

(3:17; 4:1f; 33:9). Then, the redemption of the world aims at glorifying Yahweh (cf. Rm 12:32; see Part VI, 4.9).

The hope of the future for Israel lies in Yahweh's sovereign determination. It is compared with unfathomable things in the universe (31:37). It is a mystery, and no human reason can argue with God's purpose, nor can human knowledge definitely determine how the future of Israel will be and how the promises will be fulfilled.