How Prophecy Works

A Study of the Semantic Field of נבֵiָ and a Close Reading

of Jeremiah 1.4–19, 23.9–40 and 27.1–28.17

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Abstract

There is a longstanding scholarly debate on the nature of prophecy in ancient Israel. Until now, no study has based itself on the semantics of the Hebrew lexeme ťôḇī ('prophet'). In this investigation, I discuss the nature and function of prophecy in the Hebrew book of Jeremiah. I analyse all occurrences of ťôḇī in Jeremiah and perform a close reading of three primary texts, Jeremiah 1.4–19, 23.9–40 and 27.1–28.17. The result is a detailed explanation of how prophecy works, and what it meant to call someone a ťôḇī in ancient Israel.

Chapter one introduces the work and surveys the main trends in the research literature on prophecy. First I describe scholarly constructs and definitions of the phenomenon of prophecy. I then survey contemporary debates over the meaning of ťôḇī and the problem of ‘false’ prophecy. I also describe the methods, structure, corpus and aims of the investigation.

In part one, I take all the occurrences of the lexeme ťôḇī in Jeremiah and analyse its relations to other words (syntagmatics and paradigmatics). For ťôḇī, the conceptual fields of communication and worship are significant. There is also a close semantic relation between ťôḇī and kôhēn ('priest').

Part two analyses prophecy in the literary context of three key texts. Chapter three is a close reading of Jeremiah 1.4–19. Chapter four is a close reading of Jeremiah 23.9–40. Chapter five is a close reading of Jeremiah 27.1–28.17. In my analysis I situate these passages in the wider context of an ancient cultural worldview on divine communication. This brings to light the importance of legitimacy and authority as themes in prophecy.

Chapter six concludes the work. I combine the results of the semantic analysis and close readings with conclusions for six main areas of study: (1) the function and nature of prophecy; (2) dreams and visions; (3) being sent; (4) prophets, priests and cult; (5) salvation and doom; and (6) legitimacy and authority. These conclusions explain the conceptual categories related to ťôḇī in the corpus. I then situate these findings in two current debates, one on the definition of ťôḇī and one on cultic prophecy.

This thesis contributes to critical scholarship on prophecy in the ancient world, on the book of Jeremiah, and on prophets in ancient Israel. It is the first major study to ana-
lyse nābiʾ based on its semantic associations. It adds to a growing consensus which understands prophecy as a form of divination. Contrary to some trends in Jeremiah scholarship, this work demonstrates the importance of a close reading of the Masoretic (Hebrew) text. This study uses a method of a general nature which can be applied to other texts. Thus there are significant implications for further research on prophecy and prophetic literature.
For Jackie
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Declaration

I hereby affirm that I have composed this thesis, that it does not exceed 100,000 words, that it is my own work, and that I have not submitted it for any other degree or professional qualification.

____________________________________  ________________________________
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Candidate
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S. D. G.
Abbreviations

All abbreviations used in this work are drawn from Schwertner, IATG3. Internationales Abkürzungsverzeichnis für Theologie und Grenzgebiete, 3., überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage, Berlin, 2014, and Collins, Buller and Kutsko, dir., The SBL Handbook of Style, 2nd ed., Atlanta, GA, 2014. Citations of scholarly literature in the footnotes are given in an abbreviated form; full references are found in the bibliography. For matters of bibliographic style, I have consulted primarily the SBL Handbook of Style. Sigla for texts and versions follow those found in BHS, pp. xlvii–li. Unless indicated otherwise, all biblical citations refer to the Masoretic (Hebrew) version in BHS, and all translations of ancient texts into English are my own. For the reader’s convenience, I have provided below a select list of abbreviations indicating text editions consulted and frequently cited works.

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>ⲧ</td>
<td>Arabic version. See Walton, Biblia Sacra polyglotta, 2 vols., Londinensis, 1657.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dalman</td>
<td>Dalman, Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina, 7 Bände, Gütersloh, 1928–42.</td>
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### Abbreviations

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Abbreviations

K Ketib
KTU Dietrich, Loretz, and Sanmartín, Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani und anderen Orten, 3., erweiterte Auflage, AOAT 360/1, Münster, 2013.
L Codex Leningradensis B 19 a. See BHS.
Lane Lane, Arabic-English Lexicon, 8 vols., London/Edinburgh, 1863–94.
Masoretic Text. See BHS.
Q Manuscripts discovered at Khirbet Qumran and surrounding areas
Q Qere
RLA Streck and Edzard, eds., Reallexikon der Assyriologie, founded by E. Ebeling and B. Meissner, continued by E. Weidner and W. von Soden, 14 Bände, Berlin, 1928—.
S Peshitta (Syriac) version, as found in Ceriani, ed., Translatio syra pescitto, Mediolani, 1876–83.
ThWQ Fabry and Dahmen, eds., Theologisches Wörterbuch zu den Qumrantexten, 3 Bände, Stuttgart, 2011–16.
TWNT Kittel and Friedrich, eds., Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, 10 Bände, 1933–79.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Every society in the ancient Near East, in some form or another, knew individuals who spoke on behalf of their gods. In ancient Israel, these individuals were primarily known as prophets. Prophecy is a fundamentally significant category in the religion, history and literature of the Hebrew Bible. How does prophecy work? What does it mean to call someone a prophet? No book in the Hebrew Bible has more to say about prophets than Jeremiah,1 the primary text corpus for the present study. This investigation returns to basic questions in order to explain the nature of prophecy in ancient Israel. In light of recent critical developments, such a return is warranted. What follows, to borrow a famous phrase, is an account of ‘what we talk about when we talk about prophets’ in the Hebrew book of Jeremiah.2

I. What we talk about when we talk about prophets

In modern critical scholarship on the Hebrew Bible, ‘when we talk about prophets’ we tend to talk about some of the most basic concepts in the discipline. It was Wellhausen who promoted the idea of lex post prophetas,3 and his contemporary Duhm who regarded the prophets as religious innovators and champions of ethical monotheism.4 The influence of Wellhausen and Duhm’s ideas is staggering, and they ‘deserve to be called the principal architects of the scholarly idea of people called prophets’.5 In their wake, the romanticised image of the prophets—free and inspired individuals, without institutional

1 NB, in this study the term ‘Jeremiah’ always refers to either the Hebrew edition of the Jeremiah scroll, or the literary character ירמיהו unless otherwise noted.


connections, courageously proclaiming the revealed word of God to hostile audiences—
took root in scholarship and exerted a profound influence.\(^6\) With this picture in mind, and
with a positivistic approach to the text of the Bible, traditional scholarship ‘was strongly
oriented towards the personal achievements of the great prophets’ and the unique contrib-
utions they made to the development of Israelite religion.\(^7\) Thus it was critical to separate
these contributions, the genuine words spoken by the prophets, the *ipsissima verba*,
from the accretions of later tradition within the books bearing their names.

Jeremiah, conventionally ‘the paradigmatic prophet of the Bible,’ is one of the major
figures of this ‘classical’ portrait of prophecy.\(^8\) In the Hebrew book named after him, there
are more narratives about Jeremiah than in any other prophetic book, and deeply emotive
‘confessional’ poetry with a strongly biographical character. One could say that with
Jeremiah, the romantic portrait of the prophet reaches its climax, as Lundbom calls him
‘the fullest expression of divine prophecy’.\(^9\) However, especially after the work of Carroll,
it is increasingly clear to scholars that the relationship between Jeremiah the prophet and
Jeremiah *the book* is a vexed one.\(^10\) Carroll made clear that one cannot conflate the ‘histor-
ical’ Jeremiah with the ‘literary’ Jeremiah, especially due to the complex compositional
history of the book.\(^11\) Furthermore, the strongly biographical character of the book often
dramatically influences the way scholars discuss the concept of prophecy in the book. For
example, Blenkinsopp suggests that in Jeremiah, ‘the basic prophetic idea of instrument-

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\(^6\) Numerous examples could be cited here. See, e.g., Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, Bal-
timore, MD, 1940, 228-55; Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, II, EETH 1, München, 1960, 83-92; Wester-

\(^7\) Nissinen, *Prophecy as a Construct*, 26-27.

York, 1999, 92.


\(^10\) Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant*, London, 1981, 5-30; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 55-64. Most recently, see Kratz,

\(^11\) See esp. Duhm, *Jeremia*, KHC 11, Tübingen, 1901, xi-xx; Mowinckel, *Komposition*, SNVAO.HF 1933, Kristia-
nia, 1914; Thiel, *Deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 1–25*, WMANT 41, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1973; Thiel,
*Deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 26–45*, WMANT 52, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1981; Lohfink, Gab es eine
deuteronomistische Bewegung?, in: *Jeremia und die »deuteronomistische Bewegung«*, ed. Groß, BJB 98, 1995,
333-82; Römer, La conversion du prophète Jérémie, in: *The Book of Jeremiah and Its Reception – Le livre
ality, being called and used for a transcendent purpose, is becoming increasingly a matter not just of speaking but of a service tending toward a total life investment. In Jeremiah, it is especially difficult to disentangle who Jeremiah is and what prophecy is.

Some thirty years ago, Deist suggested the onset of a ‘paradigm shift’ in the study of biblical prophecy. He identified how new discoveries, changes in intellectual attitudes, new questions, and new generations of scholars have led to the ‘undermining of the dominant paradigm’ indicated above. Chief among these changes for prophetic studies are two developments. First is the discovery that the prophetic phenomenon was not unique to Israel; an ever growing ‘corpus’ of prophetic texts proves that prophetism was an institution found across the ancient Near East. Second is the rise of the socio-anthropological approach, which situates phenomena within their cultural and ideological systems; as Deist notes, ‘within this frame of mind it is not evolution but function that constitutes meaning [my italics].’ Understanding prophets requires understanding the cultural systems in which they prophesied.

In the Kuhnian model, paradigm shifts can be slow. New paradigms emerge as new questions are asked of old problems that the old paradigm could not solve. Though it took some time, it is now clear that the image of the prophet as the ‘lonely voice in the wilderness’ is a historical fiction. At the end of his article, Deist identified that the ‘new paradigm’ emerging in prophetic studies may suggest that the sharp distinction between prophet and priest, and between

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12 Deist, Prophets, 5–14.
13 Durand, Archives épistolaires de Mari; Parpola, Assyrian Prophecies, SAA 9, Helsinki, 1997. Other editions have followed and made these texts even more accessible; see, e.g., Nissinen, ed., Prophets and Prophecy, with contributions by C. L. Seow and R. K. Ritner, SBL.WAW 12, Atlanta, GA, 2003.
14 Deist, Prophets, 10.
15 Deist, Prophets, 14.
16 Kratz, Prophets of Israel, 151.
‘true’ and ‘false’ prophets as well as the traditional picturing of the priests and the ‘professional prophets’ as the villains may be in need of serious rethinking.²⁹

It is precisely this kind of serious rethinking that prompted the present analysis. In the study of ancient Israelite prophecy generally, and Jeremiah specifically, these distinctions cited by Deist in 1989 persist in contemporary scholarship. This study explores how prophecy works as found in the book of Jeremiah, one of the premier sources for prophecy in the Hebrew Bible. What follows is a review of scholarly literature related to these basic issues: (1) the ‘new paradigm’ for the study of prophecy; (2) the terminology for prophets and their relation to the phenomenon of prophecy; and (3) a particular debate to which this work intervenes, namely, so-called ‘false’ prophecy.

1.1. Constructs of prophecy

So, what do we talk about when we talk about prophets? In order to establish any discourse about ‘prophets’ or ‘prophecy’, it is necessary to define clearly what these terms mean. The nuances of the modern English word ‘prophet’ rather inexact matches the terminology of ancient sources; the modern concept is strongly future oriented and value laden.²⁰ Most scholars who work with ancient sources for prophecy, as Nissinen points out, are unhappy with the modern definition of ‘prophet’ when applied to the texts. ‘[B]ehind the future-oriented everyday meaning of “prophecy” are other elements which can better claim to be its ‘main’ feature.’²¹ Prediction plays only a small part in the ancient conception of prophecy, which becomes clear when one considers the intellectual and cultural framework to which prophecy belonged.

1.1.1. Definitions of prophecy

Continuing with the term used by Deist, the ‘new paradigm’ in prophetic studies is to consider prophecy as a phenomenon, as an occurrence, a type of cross-cultural behaviour observed in various societies across temporal and geographic bounds. Because the phe-
nomenon is cross-cultural and sociological, the study of prophecy involves specifying what behaviours are prophetic, and how they function in its particular social setting.22

What, then, constitutes the phenomenon observed in various cultures and societies? Petersen described five typologies which have typically been used to define what it means to be a prophet: (1) to have an ‘intense experience of the deity’, otherwise referred to as ‘ecstasy’; (2) to speak or write ‘in a distinctive way’; (3) to ‘act in a particular social setting’; (4) to have ‘distinctive personal qualities, for example, charisma’; (5) to be an ‘intermediary’; and (6) to have a ‘distinctive message’.23 While there is still debate about ecstatic experience as a defining feature of prophecy,24 scholars for the most part would agree with Petersen’s conclusion that prophecy is essentially a kind of intermediation.25 Prophets, as scholars prefer to understand them, functioned as mouthpieces for the gods and spoke on their behalf. Weippert’s definition of a prophet follows this understanding, and reflects a general consensus:

Bei religiöser Offenbarungsrede ist dann von [Prophetie] zu sprechen, wenn eine Person (a) in einem kognitiven Erlebnis (Vision, Audition, audiovisuelle Erscheinung, Traum o.ä.) der Offenbarung einer Gottheit oder mehrerer Gottheiten teilhaftig wird, und ferner (b) sich durch die betreffende(n) Gottheit(en) beauftragt weiß, das ihr Geofenbarte in sprachlicher Fassung (als »P.«, »Prophetenspruch«) oder in averbalen Kommunikationsakten (»symbolischen« oder »Zeichenhandlungen«) an einen Dritten (oder Dritte), den (die) eigentlichen Adressaten, weiterzuleiten.26

Weippert’s definition does place more emphasis on the inner experience of the prophet than some would prefer, but other contemporary definitions are mostly similar.27 A proph-

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22 Nissinen is right to emphasise that prophecy is a social rather than a natural phenomenon. For this reason, it is necessary to consider the social matrices within which it functions. Nissinen, Prophecy as a Construct, 11. See also Barstad, What Prophets Do, in: Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah, ed. Barstad and Kratz, BZAW 388, Berlin, 2009, 24-31.
24 See, e.g., Stökl’s view that the Old Babylonian mubhwan was an ecstatic cult official who would occasionally prophesy. Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, CHANE 56, Leiden, 2012, 97-100.
25 Petersen, Defining Prophecy, 41-42.
27 There are other important definitions which depart from Weippert, but usually only in minor detail.
et, according to the consensus, is a person who functions as an intermediary transmitting information to others regarding the divine will.

1.1.2. Divination and prophecy

If the first task is to define what behaviours are to be deemed ‘prophetic,’ then the second is to explain the function of these behaviours in their social settings. As defined above, the prophet is essentially an intermediary between natural and supernatural spheres—in the ancient world, the human and divine realms. As they mediate between these spheres, they are understood to transmit information from one to the other in what Zuesse calls ‘the art or practice of discovering the personal, human significance of future or, more commonly, present or past events.’ In contrast to empirical or scientific hypotheses, the concerns of divination pertain to the “ought” in relation to an individual or a group.

Prophecy, according to a modern consensus, is a type of divination. This represents a major development in the field. Under the ‘old paradigm,’ scholars sought to differentiate between prophecy and divination, quite often for apologetic reasons. In order to give Israelite prophecy a more privileged status, it was contrasted with ‘primitive’ prac-

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As such it is not primitive ‘science,’ as is sometimes assumed. Zuesse, Divination: An Overview, ER IV, 2369.

Chapter 1. Introduction

tics found in neighbouring cultures. Even quite recently, one finds variations of this view. For example, Uffenheimer claims that ‘divination was a dominant element in early prophecy,’ but ‘[i]n later, classical prophecy, it was largely eclipsed;’ and Vondergeest argues the deuteronomistic traditions draw a sharp distinction between prophecy and divination, clearly attempting to portray the former as a central practice while marginalizing the latter as much as possible to show it as peripheral.

At least as far back as Plato (Phaedrus, 244a–245a) and Cicero (De divinatione, 1.1; 1.4; 1.12; 1.34), divinatory techniques have been distinguished according to two main types: those which use deductive, technical reasoning based on observation, and those which use inspired mental states. In modern terminology, these forms are commonly referred to as ‘technical’ and ‘intuitive’ forms of divination. Though this distinction holds for divinatory techniques, it probably should not be stressed too much when understanding the function of divination. Both ‘technical’ and ‘intuitive’ divination involve the transmission of information. As observed by Cryer, the information mediated by the diviner is to the practitioner, a form of knowledge. He offers a purely formal definition of divination as a set of socially defined and structured procedures for producing (notional) knowledge in a society from what are presumed to be extra-human sources. The ‘notional’ quality of knowledge produced by such procedures has to do with its perceived importance rather than its positivistic truth value. Unlike scientific explanations, divinatory prognoses do not produce falsifiable results; it is not expected to do so. Put another way, the epistemological status of divinatory knowledge pertains to matters of value instead of fact. In this regard, ‘truth’ equals ‘significance’.

As Cryer points out, quite appropriately for the discussion at hand, this emphasis on notional knowledge ‘avoids the silly—but widely held—belief that divination has to

36 See, e.g., Nissinen, What is Prophecy?, 21-22; Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 10-11.
38 Cryer, Divination in Ancient Israel, 121-22.
do with “predicting the future”\textsuperscript{38}. Rather than think of the system of divinatory knowledge as solely interested in future events, it is better to understand divinatory inquiry as ‘triggered by uncertainty.’\textsuperscript{39} Thus, in Nissinen’s words, the ‘future-oriented’ aspects of divination are not necessarily attempts to predict future events; rather, it is ‘a method of tackling the anxiety about the insecurity of life and coping with the risk brought about human ignorance.’ The diviner, ‘by virtue of their background, education, or behavior’ is able to gain access to super-human knowledge that is sufficient for alleviating this anxiety.\textsuperscript{40}

1.1.3. Ancient Hebrew prophecy and biblical prophecy

The description of prophecy as phenomenon takes it as an observable instance of something. But where and how is it observed? Prophecy in the ancient world is known almost exclusively through texts. It is at this point that the study of prophecy as phenomenon reaches one of its ‘most vexing issues’, namely, the extent to which the phenomenon of prophecy in the biblical and ancient Near Eastern texts corresponds to ‘the socio-historic-al realities of prophecy [my italics].’\textsuperscript{41}

In the case of the Bible, the relationship between text and reality is fraught with difficulty and debate, and scholars such as Edelman and Ben Zvi view the prophetic books as products of scribal activity in the Persian and Hellenistic periods. Israelite prophecy, then, is a literary creation that has little to do with ancient realities of prophecy at all.\textsuperscript{42} One corollary to this argument is that prophetic terminology (i.e. נבּוֹן) was grafted onto non-prophetic literature, thus ‘creating’ the prophets in the scribal process. Many have criticised this view,\textsuperscript{43} however, some care must be taken to clarify the relationship between the phenomenon of ‘ancient Hebrew prophecy’ and the phenomenon of ‘biblical prophecy’.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{38} Cryer, Divination in Ancient Israel, 122, see also n. 1.

\textsuperscript{39} Nissinen, Prophecy and Omen Divination, 341.

\textsuperscript{40} In my reading of Nissinen, I do not think this description of ‘anxiety’ is an attempt to psychologise, but a more general comment about the universal human experience of being confronted with a future that is unknown. Nissinen, Prophecy and Omen Divination, 341.

\textsuperscript{41} Kelle, Phenomenon of Israelite Prophecy in Contemporary Scholarship, 277.


Instead of viewing these as mutually exclusive approaches, though, it is better to let ‘creative tension between them generate diverse understandings of prophetic identity and activity that cannot be subsumed under a single model.’

To what extent does the terminology of prophecy (i.e. נביא) relate to the ancient phenomenon of prophecy? A series of papers by Auld and their responses, cast doubt on the term נביא as an appropriate label for the so-called ‘classical’ prophets of Israel. In Auld’s view, the ‘prophets’ were never called נביא because they hated נביאים and ‘would hardly have been seen dead in their company’. It was only later that the term נביא was ‘grafted’ onto them in certain books, thus making them ‘prophetic’; the positive application of the term נביא to the ‘classical’ prophets was an editorial development well-beyond their individual lifetimes. In Carroll’s view, the ‘prophets’ were never really prophets at all; ‘[t]hey were certainly poets, probably intellectuals, and possibly ideologues.’ Such distance exists between text and history, however, that their societies are long lost to us, and we can know little to nothing about their lives.

In this debate, Jeremiah holds a special place, sometimes considered to be one of the first Israelite prophets to be called a נביא. Similar arguments in support of Auld’s

44 Nissinen, Historical Dilemma; Anthonioz, Le prophétisme biblique, 11-15; Nissinen, Prophecy as a Construct, 33-35.
45 Kelle, Phenomenon of Israelite Prophecy in Contemporary Scholarship, 277. See also Nissinen, Historical Dilemma, 107-08.
48 Auld, Prophets Through the Looking Glass, 16.
49 Carroll, Poets not Prophets, 25, also 28.
50 Carroll’s quite brilliant chapter titled ‘The Quest of the Historical Jeremiah’ is a clear articulation of these problems and his views; see Carroll, From Chaos to Covenant, 5-30. Cf. Carroll, Jeremiah, 55-64. These questions are still quite live in Jeremiah scholarship; cf. Kratz, Why Jeremiah?; Levinson, Was Jeremiah Invented?
51 Auld suggests that the words ‘prophet’ and ‘prophesy’ both ‘only came to be attached to those whom we regard as the towering prophets of the bible in a period no earlier than when Jeremiah and Ezekiel became similarly re-presented.’ Auld, Prophets and Prophecy, 82. Similarly, see Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 185.
view are found in more recent literature. Gonçalves argues that the ‘writing prophets’ resisted and opposed נביאים in their lifetimes, and a positive tradition of prophecy in Israel, originating with Moses, is a later deuteronomistic construction. In like manner, de Jong argues that successive ‘profiles’ of Jeremiah in the stages of the book’s composition are a ‘re-definition of the prophetic function’. Jeremiah progresses from a figure ‘pro society’ to a figure ‘contra society’, only then to be recast positively in Mosaic prophetic succession. Stökl also makes the more general claim, in agreement with Carroll, Gonçalves and de Jong, that it appears relatively certain that almost none of the pre-exilic writing prophets regarded themselves as נביאים.

Several aspects of the debate opened by Auld are related to the discussion of ‘ancient Hebrew prophecy’ and ‘biblical prophecy’ above. What is the relationship between text and history, or between literary and social phenomena, in Jeremiah? The focus on the ‘statistical use of terminology’ in exchanges between Auld, Carroll and their respondents, according to Barstad, ‘may establish whether or not the later editors regarded these books as “prophetic”, but it does not necessarily follow from this that the materials found in these books were not “prophetic” in the first place’. Nissinen is happy to affirm that the Hebrew prophetic texts are ‘late literary creations of the Persian, or even Hellenistic eras’, but still affirms that there are ‘good enough reasons to see a historical relation between these texts and the prophetic phenomenon.’

As Barstad has put it, much of what is found in Jeremiah corresponds with the ‘common pattern’ of prophecy in the ancient Near East, even if much of the book is fictional. The distinction between ‘ancient’ and ‘literary’ constructs allows the scholar to

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54 Jong, Why Jeremiah is Not Among the Prophets, JSOT 35 (2011), 510.
56 Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 184-86, esp. 184.
57 Barstad, No Prophets?, 52.
58 Nissinen, Historical Dilemma, 115.
59 Barstad, What Prophets Do, 27.
read Jeremiah in a non-positivistic way. Nissinen affirms this essential point, that ‘there is an element of fact in every fiction’ and that although prophetic books ‘do not translate as accurate records of historical factualities’, they do ‘in all likelihood present their narrative world in a way that was imaginable to their audiences.’ Thus, the discussion of the social realities of prophecy and the literary presentation of prophecy in Jeremiah can be placed in conversation; one can use the social model to describe how the prophetic phenomenon functions in the book apart from an historical biography of the prophet.

1.2. Prophetic terminology. The lexeme נביא

So far in this review of literature, I have outlined the current scholarly discussion of the phenomenon of prophecy. Now that the subject matter is established conceptually, I shall turn to the terminology used in the Hebrew Bible to refer to the phenomenon. The two most important ‘prophetic’ terms in the Old Testament are the Hebrew נביא and the Greek προφήτης. Here the two main issues relate to definitions and method, that is, what the words mean, how one determines their meaning.

With 322 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, the nominal lexeme נביא, and its derived forms, is the most frequently used terms for ‘prophet’ by a wide margin. From extra-biblical evidence, it is also clear that the lexeme נביא has some antiquity; it is used in Judah at least as far back as the late seventh or early sixth century BCE. The word refers to a variety of prophetic individuals and activities, and its semantic value seems to have changed over time (cf. 1 Sam 9.9).

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59 Nissinen, Historical Dilemma, 109.

60 There are 322 occurrences of the lexeme נביא in the Hebrew Bible; 95 of these occurrences are found in Jeremiah, the highest number of any book. The following is a tabulation of instances of נביא according to major corpora in the Hebrew Bible, sorted by percentage of the total number: Jeremiah (x95) = 29.5%; Kings (x84) = 26.09% (1 Kgs [x50] = 15.33%, 2 Kgs [x34] = 10.56%); Chronicles (x31) = 9.63% (1 Chr [x4] = 1.24%, 2 Chr [x27] = 8.39%); Twelve Prophets (x29) = 9.01%; Ezekiel (x17) = 5.28%; Pentateuch (x15) = 4.66% (Deuteronomy [x10] = 3.11%); Psalms (x3) = 0.93%.

61 Petersen identified four ‘role labels’ for prophecy in the Hebrew Bible. Petersen, Roles of Israel’s Prophets, JSOTS 17, Sheffield, 1981.

62 This is evident in finds from ancient Lachish in the Judaean Shephelah. The presence of the lexeme נביא in Lachish ostracon III, line 20 (KAI 193), as Stökl observes, ‘makes it abundantly clear even to the most ardent sceptic that the word is at least of late pre-exilic origin.’ Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 175. See Barstad, Lachish Ostracon III, in: Avraham Malamat Volume, ed. Ahituv and Levine, Elsr 24, Jerusalem, 1993, 8–12; Parker, Lachish Letters, in: Uncovering Ancient Stones, ed. Hopfe and Richardson, Winona Lake, IN, 1994, 65–78.
The vast majority of previous scholarship on the word נביא has appealed to etymology and comparative philology in order to clarify the root and its meaning. These traditional philological methods have exerted enormous influence in the field and continue to do so. One should not look past the contributions of philology and etymology, so I will briefly review the (vast) literature on the topic and survey the main positions.

For the etymology of Hebrew נביא, scholars have mostly appealed to cognates in Akkadian and Arabic; given the rich stores of vocabulary available in these languages, this is rather unsurprising. There is general agreement that the root of the Hebrew noun נביא is נבך, though scholars have made a variety of other suggestions: Land suggested a passive form from נבך; Robertson Smith thought it ‘hardly doubtful’ it derives from an Arabic stem nb; Gesenius suggested it derives from Syriac and Arabic nb’ ‘(bubble up)’, and Görg suggested a derivation from Egyptian nb ‘(lord)’ or nb:b ‘(to rage, to be excited)’. On comparative Semitic evidence, the Hebrew root נביא is more likely, as a range of languages attest the common Semitic root nb’h found in, for example, Akkadian, Aramaic, Syriac, Mandaic, Arabic, Old South Arabian, Sabaic, and Ethiopic. Instead of an Arabic ori-

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56 See, e.g., Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 4.
57 For bibliographic material in this section, in addition to literature cited in lexica, I have relied on Jere-
58 mias, ThWAT, THAT II (1976), 7–26; Müller, HALOT I, 661–62; Gesenius, SAHD, (2012).
59 HALOT I, 661–62; Gesenius 18, 773–74; BDB, 611–12. See also Ben Yehuda IV, 3482–85.
60 Land, Over den godsnaam, ThWAT V (1986), 140–63; Stökl, ZW (1961), 99–100.
62 Gesenius Thes. II, 838. See also Keumen, Onderzoek, 3 delen, Amsterdam, 1861–65, II, 5–7, esp. n. 8; Keu-
63 nen, Profeten, 2 delen, Leiden, 1875, I, 49.
64 Akkadian nabû A, CAD XI/1, 32–39; nabû(m) II, AHw II, 699–700. Cf. the adjectival form nabû (nabû), DAI XI/1, 31.
66 LS, 882.
67 See NBA I (‘to act as a prophet, prophesy’) in Drower and Macuch, Mandaic Dictionary, Oxford, 1963, 287. See also the participial ettafel form serialization (‘1st Prophet’) noted by Nödcke, Mandäische Grammatik, Halle, 1875, 265.
68 See naba’a (‘utter a low voice, or sound’) and naba (‘utter a sound, cry’) in Lane VIII, 2752–53.
69 Conti Rossini, Christomathia Arabica, Pubblicazioni dell’Istituto per l’Oriente, Roma, 1931, 183. See also Holscher, Die Propheten, Leipzig, 1914, 139.
70 Compare the entries for nb’h (‘promise, vow an offering to a deity’) in Beeston, Ghul, Müller, and Ryck-
71 mans, Dictionnaire sabéen, Publication of the University of Sanaa, Yar, Louvain-la-Neuve/Beyrouth, 1982. and NB I (‘announce, promise’) in Biella, Dictionary of Old South Arabic, HSS 25, Chico, CA, 1982, 289–90.
gin, Tur-Sinai and Albright suggested that the word derives from Akkadian nabû(m) (‘to name, invoke, call’), and this is now the common view.\(^7\)

While accepting the derivation of נבּא from the Hebrew root הָנָב, still more suggestions have been made regarding the sense of the root. Following the etymological link to Akkadian, and a basic sense of \(nb\) found in the common Semitic root, the standard view relates the sense of נבּא as a nominative from ‘to call’.\(^7\) The remaining debate concerns whether the sense is active, meaning ‘one who calls (upon the gods)’, or passive, meaning ‘one who is called (by the gods)’. In morphological terms, the lexeme נבּא is a qāṭīl pattern noun, a form traditionally understood to have either an active or passive meaning.\(^8\) The active meaning won some impressive support from Brockelmann, König and Barth, and was advanced more recently by Fleming.\(^8\) However, the passive sense gradually became the majority view.\(^8\) Huehnergard marshalled together evidence for the qāṭīl pattern in Biblical Hebrew, and concluded that ‘there are no certain examples of active qāṭīl forms’.\(^8\)

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7 See the entry for nabîyy (‘prophet, one who predicts’), Leslau, Comparative Dictionary of Geez, Wiesbaden, 1991, 385, cf. pp. 649, 792. According to Leslau, the Ge’ez word derives from the Arabic term nabîy rather than from Hebrew or Aramaic.

8 Tur-Sinai (Torczyner), Das literarische Problem der Bibel, ZDMG 85 (1931), 322; Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity, 231-32. See also Albright, Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan, Garden City, NY, 1968, 208-09.

9 Fleming suggests that this derivation is not from the Akkadian verb nabû(m), but from the terms nābî and *munabbiatu, of West Semitic origin, attested in Akkadian from Mari and Emar. He suggests these terms refer to prophets, a view countered by Huehnergard and Stökl. See Fleming, Etymological Origins of the Hebrew nābî, CBQ 55 (1993), 217–24; Fleming, Nābû and Munabbiată, JAO 133 (1993), 175–83. Huehnergard and Stökl have rejected this view; see Huehnergard, Etymology and Meaning of Hebrew nābî, in: Frank Moore Cross Volume, ed. Levine, King, Naveh, and Stern, Ehrsr 26, Jerusalem, 1999, 88*-93*; Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 61-66.

8 GKC §84; GVG I, §128, pp. 354–56; Bauer-Leander II, 40–71; Joüon-Muraoka, §88 E b. On נבּא as a qāṭīl form, see, e.g., Huehnergard, Etymology and Meaning of Hebrew nābî; Fox, Semitic Noun Patterns, HSS 52, Winona Lake, IN, 2003, 187–96; Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 138.


10 See, e.g., Tur-Sinai (Torczyner), Das literarische Problem der Bibel, 322; Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity, 232; Jeremias, נבּ, THAT II, 7; Petersen, Roles of Israel’s Prophets, 71; Müller, נבּ, ThWAT V, 143-45; Huehnergard, Etymology and Meaning of Hebrew nābî, *91*-*92; Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 166-67.

11 Huehnergard, Qāṭīl and Qāṭīl Nouns, in: Sha‘arei Lashon, ed. Maman, 3 vols., Jerusalem, 2007, *28. This confirms his earlier view, that ‘[t]here are, in short, no qāṭīl forms for which an active meaning is necessary, or even the most likely’, expressed in Huehnergard, Etymology and Meaning of Hebrew nābî. Cf. Joüon-Muraoka, §88 E b. Fox, Semitic Noun Patterns, 193.
Thus, deriving from the Semitic root *nb* ‘to call’, the Hebrew word נביא is translated ‘one who is called’.84

There are some problems in this approach. The first problem, pointed out by Fleming, is that the idiomatic use of the Akkadian verb *nabû(m)* tends to include its direct object, most often *šumu(m)* (‘name’), and often includes mention of the actual name.85 In the use of this idiom, one mostly finds ‘the narrow application of this idiom to election of kings and rulers.’86 Nowhere is used to describe a religious intermediary.

In discussing etymologies, Barr asserted that ‘the test of explanations of words is by their contexts.’87 Turning to the evidence in biblical Hebrew, it is interesting that the verb נביא is used in reference to a נביא or their behaviour only three times. 1 Sam 9.9 relates how in older times, the נביא ‘seer’ was called a נב (“nabî”), providing no evidence for נביא as ‘one who is called’. Fleming refers to two marginal cases in 1 Kgs 18.26 and 2 Kgs 5.11. In both texts, the activity of a נביא includes ‘calling on the name’ (נביא נביא), of Ba’al and YHWH respectively. Fleming then suggests these instances ‘may represent a vestige of the prophet as “namer” in the Bible’; however, just as one must attend to the idiomatic use of Akkadian *nabû(m)*, the same must be done for the phrase נביא נביא, a common idiom for prayer or worship that is in no way restricted to specific religious intermediaries or cultic settings.88

Here I would refer to Barr’s dictum, that ‘the etymology of a word is not a statement about its meaning but about its history.’89 It would be a misrepresentation to say that he rejected etymology altogether; rather, Barr advocated for consistency in methods and a clear understanding of the claims one can make from them. In his view,

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84 Cf. Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 167.
85 See *nabî A*, CAD XI/1, 33–37.
86 Fleming, Etymological Origins of the Hebrew nabi’, 221. See also Uffelheimer, Early Prophecy in Israel, 17; Fleming, Prophets and Temple Personnel, 61.
88 For the phrase, see Gen 4.26; 12.8; 13.4; 21.33; 26.25; 1 Kgs 18.24; 2 Kgs 5.11; Isa 64.6; Jer 10.25; Joel 3.5; Zeph 3.9; Zech 13.9; Psa 79.6; 80.19; 116.4, 13, 17. Labuschagne also points to an idiomatic use of נביא נביא which expresses an announcement of the significance of YHWH’s name (Exod 33.19; 34.5; Isa 12.4; Psa 105.1 = 1 Chr 16.8). Labuschagne, *THAT II* (1976), 672-74. See also
89 Barr, Semantics of Biblical Language, 109. In the present debate, it is interesting to note that Robertson Smith already noted that ‘[i]n this case, the etymology becomes comparatively unimportant, and in any case the origin of the name lies too remote from the historical development of Hebrew prophecy to be of value in illustration of the conception of a prophet among the Israelites.’ Robertson Smith, Prophets of Israel, 390, n. 18.
A crassly arbitrary method can be avoided only when it is accepted that etymological statements are historical and not authoritative and that semantic statements must be based on the social linguistic consciousness related to usage.\(^9\)

While the etymological discussions cited above may shed light on the history of the Hebrew word נביא, they contribute very little to the meaning of the word as it is used in context. There is no convincing evidence that נביא means ‘the called’ in any text in the Hebrew Bible. Even Stökl has to admit after his etymological discussion that there is ‘no indication that Israelites or Judeans would have understood it to mean anything else but simply ‘prophet’ in the post-exilic period!’\(^9\) This definition for the biblical usage is not very problematic, it simply raises a natural follow-up question: what is a prophet?

1.3. ‘False’ prophecy

So far I have outlined some of the basic elements in the discussion of prophets and prophecy. The constructs of ancient Near Eastern and biblical prophecy operate within a divinatory framework, and these phenomena are referred to with particular terminology which are important for understanding the phenomena themselves. It is well-known that in several passages, the Greek versions of Jeremiah and Zechariah use the term ψευδοπροφήτης (‘false prophet’) for the Hebrew נביא instead of the usual προφήτης.\(^9\) Hebrew has no word for ‘false prophet’,\(^9\) so the Greek word, a neologism invented by Jewish translators in the Hellenistic period,\(^4\) adds another interpretive element beyond προφήτης. The word ψευδοπροφήτης might have been new, but the problem of ‘falsehood’

\(^{9}\) Barr, Semantics of Biblical Language, 159.

\(^{9}\) Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 167. Here my question in response would be, why stop at the post-exilic period, especially in light of the use of the term in Lachish ostracon III (KAI 193)?

\(^{9}\) In the Greek versions of the Hebrew Bible, there are ten occurrences of the lexeme ψευδοπροφήτης, nine of which are in Jeremiah: Jer 6.13; 33.7, 8, 11, 16 [=26.7, 8, 11, 16 Mt]; 34.9 [=27.9 Mt]; 35.1 [=28.1 Mt]; 36.1, 8 [=29.1, 8 2t]; cf. Zech 13.2. Crenshaw, Prophetic Conflict, BZAW 124, Berlin, 1971, 1. NB, there are a number of differences in the versification of 6 and 9 for Jeremiah. This fact is complicated by differences in the versification of the various editions of 6. In this study, all verse references for 6 follow that of the Göttingen edition; see Ziegler, Jeremias..

\(^{9}\) The closest construction comes in Jer 23.26, where נביא הרמה is the nomens regens in the phrase נביא הרמה של נב (‘prophets of deceit of their heart’).

\(^{4}\) LEH, 673. See also Krämer, προφήτης, προφητέα, προφητεία, προφητικός, ψευδοπροφήτης A. Die Wortgruppe in der Profangräzität, TWNT VI (1959), 784; Reiling, ψευδοπροφήτης, NT 13 (1971), 148; Vawter, Were the Prophets nābē‘i?, Bib. 66 (1985), 218-19.
in prophecy was not; the Greek speaking ancient world was well-acquainted with the problem of trustworthiness in divination.\textsuperscript{95} With \textit{ψευδοπροφήτης}, the translators did not introduce a new idea; they recognised a problem in the texts they read and sought to clarify it according to their understanding of what it meant to be a \textit{ψρπ}. For a long time indeed, the question of what constitutes a ‘false’ prophet was inseparable from the question of what makes a ‘true’ prophet.

What happens when a prophet is ‘false’? Or, as Carroll puts it, when prophecy \textit{fails}?\textsuperscript{96} Prophetic conflict, ‘false’ prophets/prophecy, inner-prophetic polemics, prophet-versus-prophet, these are all headings used to describe a prolific sub-section of prophetic research related to this question. All of these topics relate to the basic problem of charlatanism in prophetic speech and strife among prophets. A variety of narratives and polemics show prophets engaged in a kind of conflict with one another, and are related to the problem of so-called ‘false prophecy’. In a classic study of the topic, Crenshaw suggested that these texts, each in their own way, point to a problem inherent to the prophetic process, what he called ‘the Achilles-heel of ancient prophecy, namely the absence of any validation for a prophetic word’.\textsuperscript{97}

Various models have been used to frame the nature of false prophecy or prophetic conflict, but there continue to be several main trends in distinguishing between prophets which roughly correlate with the categories of ‘true’ and ‘false’ prophets. Thus, while Lange's divisions between three periods holds, it is also helpful to classify studies in this area according to type. I have done so here according to the following categories: (1) theology, morality and ethics; (2) socio-anthropology and ideology; (3) psychology and ecstasy; and (4) tradition-history.\textsuperscript{98}

\textsuperscript{95} For an excellent discussion of similar issues in ancient Greece, see the chapter ‘Disbelief and Skepticism about Seers’ in Flower, \textit{Seer in Ancient Greece}, 132-52. He concludes his discussion with a comment relevant for the present context: ‘What we can say, what the evidence unequivocally shows, is that most people throughout antiquity had a belief in the validity and importance of divination. As in all societies that practice divination, the figure of the seer was both respected and ridiculed, but he or she was never wholly dismissed. And even if a particular seer was shown up as a charlatan or a failure, a person could and did take comfort in the conviction that other seers were competent and trustworthy. One really had no choice if one wanted to take advantage of such knowledge and advice as the gods were willing to share’ (p. 152).


\textsuperscript{98} These categories are broad by necessity, since there are a huge number of works in this area. I have tried to be as fair as possible in grouping these works together according to these categories. As is often the
Chapter 1. Introduction

1.3.1. Theology, morality and ethics

One of the most common approaches to the question of ‘true’ and ‘false’ prophecy is essentially theological in nature. In this approach, interpreters have understood the differences and conflicting perspectives among prophets to reflect beliefs regarding worship, faith and salvation; at the heart of these studies are conceptions of God’s action in history, and the proper (and improper) responses of the people of God.

In a classic articulation of this view, von Rad understood prophetic conflict primarily between institutional Heilspropheten promoting nationalistic expectations of salvation and free Unheilspropheten who accurately understood YHWH’s action in their own historical period. These disagreements were essentially theological, as von Rad states,

‘Es handelt sich nicht um soziale Fragen, nicht um den Kultus, nicht um das Vergeltungsdogma, nicht um das Verhältnis der Fremdvölker zu Jahve. Allein die Frage nach dem Schicksal des eigenen Volkes steht zur Debatte und auch da nur die Frage: Heil oder Gericht.’

It is only in the prophet’s attention to the will of YHWH within the present historical moment that the ‘true’ prophet is able to identify the ‘false’. Von Rad, and others in his wake, did not think that there was any one single criterion for distinguishing between true and false prophecy; only ‘the complete historical reality’ can help adjudicate between prophets and their messages. More generally, however, many other studies implicitly or explicitly regard ‘doom’ prophecy in the biblical tradition as true, and ‘salvation’ prophecy as false—or at least more suspect since ‘Unheilsprophetie war die Regel.’

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Case in a review of scholarship, there is an art to how much one focuses on the ‘forest’ in contrast to the ‘trees’. Here my aim lies more with the forest, as I emphasise common elements of various scholarly works in terms of shared patterns and continuity. For bibliographic material in this section, I have consulted the literature reviews in Crenshaw, Prophetic Conflict, 5-22; Lange, Vom prophetischen Wort zur prophetischen Tradition, FAT 34. Tübingen, 2002, 4-33. Relevant entries in dictionaries and encyclopaedia include Ramlot, Prophétisme, in: Dictionnaire de la Bible. Supplément, VIII, ed. Pirot, Robert, Cazelles, and Feuillet, Paris, 1972, 1040-50; Crenshaw, Prophecy, False, in: Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible, ed. Crim, Furnish, Bailey, and Bucke, Nashville, TN, 1976, 701–2; Paul and Sperling, Prophets and Prophecy, EJ XVI (2007), 576-77; Klein, False Teachers, False Prophets I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, EBR VIII (2014), 779–81.


Rad, Die falschen Propheten, 112.

Rad, Die falschen Propheten, 120.


Wolff, Hauptprobleme alttestamentlicher Prophetie, EvTh 10 (1955), 465. See also Jeremias, Kult-
A similar understanding of false prophecy views the moral life of the prophet as a guarantor of his or her truthfulness. The true prophet is a humble representative of God who leads the people to repentance, while the immorality of the false prophet demonstrates that they do not truly know God or God's will. Skinner summarises this view by emphasising that the falseness of the messenger falsifies the message:

In their indifference to the sin of the people, in their positive encouragement of evil-doers, and in their own immoral lives, they proclaim their entire ignorance of Yahwe’s truth. It is the men themselves who are false; and to a false heart no true revelation is vouchsafed.

Thus the only way to measure a prophet’s truthfulness is by the ‘fruit’ of their moral life, the work of the spirit of God in their person, and the prophet’s individual dependence on the word of God.

While morality is a popular measure of prophet veracity, an ‘unfaithfulness towards God’, as Shead asserts, ‘infects all of the person’s speech and behaviour with a moral taint that is real and present even in the absence of outward immorality.’ Thus along with moral behaviour, scholars have often emphasised a necessary ‘orthodoxy’ of the prophet.

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105 Jeremias, »Wahre« und »falsche« Prophetie, 349.


108 Wolff, Wie wird der falsche Prophet erkannt?, in: Prophetische Alternativen, München, 1982, 79-80; Schneider, Krisis des Glaubens, ThA 46, Berlin, 1988, 85; Herrmann, Jeremia, EdF 271, Darmstadt, 1990., Jeremia, 140-45, esp. 140. In a similar sense, see Quell’s view that there is no essential difference between true and false prophecy, and it is only by means of the spirit that one can discern between them. Quell, Wahre und falsche Propheten, BFChTh, Reihe I, 46/1, Güttersloh, 1954, 206-218, esp. 213.


110 Shead, Mouth Fall of Fire, NSBT 29, Nottingham, 2012, 158.

usually in contrast with syncretistic practices related to ‘Canaanite’ worship.\textsuperscript{113} Some go further to stress that ‘[g]enuine prophecy, subservient to Yahweh’s sovereignty, was observant of covenant loyalty, concretized in the demand for radical theonomy in Israel’s public life.’\textsuperscript{114} The true prophet respects the freedom of God and recognises that ‘there should be, in matters pertaining to the Truth, an attitude of reticence towards any absolute claims.’\textsuperscript{115} Who knows, YHWH might change his mind.\textsuperscript{115} Still others have taken an even more ‘theocentric’ view where the veracity of a prophetic word ‘is not abrogated by the quality of its communicator, whether by a true or a false prophet’ but is ‘measured completely by the effect of the word of God.’\textsuperscript{116}

Closely related to the orthodoxy requirement for ‘true’ prophecy, according to many, is the need for repentance. Scholars have often highlighted the call to repentance as a primary feature of true prophecy; more emphatically, in Stevenson’s words, ‘true prophecy, fundamentally, is a call for repentance.’\textsuperscript{117} False prophets, by contrast, only reassure with messages of well-being, while true prophets ‘preached of sin and repentance, of punishment and judgment as the necessary way to find salvation.’\textsuperscript{118} Thus, it is possible to measure the truthfulness of a prophet or his or her message by the response it achieves from its audience, by ‘the impact the prophet makes on his audience: his honesty, his courage, his reliability—the ability to make real to his listeners the experience and message of God.’\textsuperscript{119} When scholars have noted how close this resembles a fulfilment criterion, they backtrack a little; for example, Moberly contends that a true prophet at least \textit{tries} to


\textsuperscript{116} Hibbard, \textit{True and False Prophecy}, J\textit{SOT} 35 (2011), 339–58. Hibbard comments that ‘the predictive capacity of prophecy recedes in favor of a more strident call for changes in religious attitude and political policy. As such, the criterion of fulfillment as an indicator of true prophecy is replaced by prophecy’s function as a source of reform’ (353–54).


\textsuperscript{119} Lindblom, \textit{Prophecy in Ancient Israel}, 213.

\textsuperscript{119} Freedman, Between God and Man, 66. See also the claim that it is ‘peculiar to the Bible’, in contrast to ‘cultures where ecstatic prophecy was the practice,’ that ‘God is influenced by the way people respond to prophecy and has the sovereign right to change the prophecy, to retract the threat.’ Freedman and Frey, \textit{False Prophecy Is True}, in: \textit{Inspired Speech}, ed. Kaltner, Stulman, and Mein, JSOTS 378, London, 2004, 84.
get his audience to repent. Motives, then, often become a subject of speculation in this view; it is common to see ‘populism’ or a desire for acceptance or profit suggested as impulses for the reassuring words of false prophets.

Within a similar framework of theological interpretation, others have taken a literary approach to the theme of false prophecy. Here ‘canonical’ interpretations tend to shift the discussion closer to reception history and interpretive communities who read biblical texts. Some have focused primarily on Jeremiah, such as Osuji on Jer 26–29 or Epp-Tiessen on 23.9–29.32, and argued that the interpretive keys to understanding true and false prophecy are found in the text’s narrative patterns and structure.

1.3.2. Socio-anthropology and ideology

Especially with the work of Crenshaw, questions regarding ‘false’ prophecy moved in a sociological direction; by shifting his terminology to ‘prophetic conflict’, Crenshaw focused on the social networks and traditions supported or threatened by prophetic messages. In this reading, the nationalism and populism which others treated in theological terms was understood in increasingly ideological terms. For socio-anthropological criticism, the model for the ‘true’ versus ‘false’ prophets becomes inter-group conflict or sectarianism. In Carroll’s words, ‘[o]ur prophets are good, their prophets are bad.’ Some of

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120 In my view, this argument is a rather strained instance of special pleading. See Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 83-88.
123 Osuji, Where Is the Truth?
126 Crenshaw identified two trends in scholarship prior to his writing; first, an increasing ‘denial of valid criteria for distinguishing the false from the true prophet,’ and second, a developing appreciation for the ‘human ingredient of all prophecy.’ Crenshaw, Prophetic Conflict, 13.
127 Diverse traditions within Israel produced their champions, and interpretations of divine activity differed from time to time depending upon sacram traditions deemed normative. Crenshaw, Prophecy, False, 702.
129 Carroll, From Chaos to Covenant, 196. Similarly, see Grabbe, Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages,
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the traditional dichotomies still hold true in this view, such as the distinction between salvation and doom prophecy, but in this account the true prophet's role as an oppositional figure is related to an establishment use of salvation prophecy rather than an abstract theological position. In Wilson's terms, the conflict is determined by social settings, and exists between the 'central' prophets (i.e. cultic Heilspropheten) and the 'peripheral' prophets (i.e. free Unheilspropheten).

In a widely cited article, Nissinen expressed similar ideas in more explicitly ideological terms. He uses the example of two Neo-Assyrian texts, both of which express concern about the potential for prophecy to undermine royal rule. The first, the Succession Treaty of Esarhaddon (SAA 2 6:108–22), shows a concern for any word spoken against the crown prince. Any person who speaks an 'evil, improper, ugly word' against the regime is suspect. The other text cited by Nissinen is a letter from Nabû-rehtu-uṣur, an unknown individual, to Esarhaddon concerning an alleged conspiracy (SAA 16 59 rev. 2’–10’). In this letter, Nabû-rehtu-uṣur reports a prophecy against the king spoken by a slave girl, not as the 'harmless nonsense of some soothsayer' but as something to be taken seriously. Such words would have been a part of schemes and plots against the reigning king—which, importantly, shows that prophecies against one's own king were not unique to the Israelite prophetic tradition. In the Neo-Assyrian context, simply put, the issue of false prophecy is an issue of propaganda and of Realpolitik; '[e]'s kommt nun schließlich darauf an, wer und mit welchem Recht die Macht besitzen, die Wahrheitskriterien zu bestimmen.
und zu sanktionieren.”

For Nissinen, this helps to explain texts such as Deut 13.2–6 and 18.20–22 as resting on the issue of exclusive fidelity to YHWH.

I.3.3. Psychology and ecstasy

There are some appeals to psychology and mental states in the ‘true’ versus ‘false’ prophecy debate. For example, Neher retreats to the assertion that any knowledge of a prophet’s truth was rooted only in the subjective knowledge and experience of the prophet. Similarly, Moberly at times appears to connect his morality criterion to a change in disposition or consciousness, not in terms of an altered mental state, but an ‘appropriation of God’s will in such a way that one’s vision of the world and of life within it, and one’s conduct correspondingly, is transformed.’

Equating ecstasy with false prophecy is a traditional option. One of the longstanding debates in prophetic scholarship concerns the role of ecstasy in prophetism, especially in its historical development in Israel. For example, Mowinckel argued that Hebrew ‘nebhi’ism’ originated in earlier ‘Canaanite’ forms of cultic ecstasy and mysticism which were integrated into the Israelite cult, evidence of which can be seen in certain psalms. It was through the reforming prophets of the 8th and 7th centuries BCE that the ecstatic basis of prophetism was overshadowed by a rationalism based on a concept of the word of YHWH. In this way Mowinckel understood ‘true’ and ‘false’ prophecy, ori-

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116 Nissinen, Falsche Prophetie, 195. See also Nissinen, References to Prophecy, 150-53, 160-62. As Huffmon describes it, “[t]he issue is not so much whether the prophecy is ‘true’ or ‘false,’ whether from a deity or not ... but whether the word is inimicable to the king.” Huffmon, Company of Prophets, in: Prophetie in its Ancient Near Eastern Context, ed. Nissinen, SBLSymS 13, Atlanta, GA, 2000, 62, cf. 67-69. These are aspects of the practical role played by prophecy and other forms of divination in legitimising kingship; see Pongratz-Leisten, Herrschaftswissen in Mesopotamien, SAAS 10, Helsinki, 1999, 88-91.


118 Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 81.


121 Mowinckel, Ecstatic Experience, 278. This does not mean, according to Mowinckel, that a mystical element such as a mysterium tremendum et fascinosum is excluded from the reforming prophets’ self-understanding; rather they sought the ‘certitude of the experience depends on whether it has a definite content, capable of being apprehended by the mind and tested by religious and moral standards.’ Mowinckel, Ecstat-
ginating in the reforming prophets’ rejection of primitive, ecstatic forms of prophethood, in terms of a contrast between free and cultic prophecy.  

Stökl draws a contrast between ecstatic possession and the idea of ‘being sent’, one of the common litmus tests for a prophet, suggesting that ‘[s]omeone who is possessed by a spirit or a deity can hardly be said to be sent, as they would no longer be in control of their own behaviour.’ However, it is precisely a kind of compulsion which drives a ‘true’ prophet to speak, according to Jeremias, ‘especially in the respect that he will speak Yahweh’s word independent of his own appraisal of its content’ as a kind of revelation. For Crenshaw, ‘the belief that Yahweh made use of men against their will or knowledge to accomplish his intentions, indeed on occasion sent deceptive visions to further the divine purpose for Israel’ only heightened the contrast and tension between ‘human limitation and divine sovereignty’.

1.3.4. Tradition-history

Another way to approach the problem of ‘false’ prophecy has been to examine the growth of the literary traditions themselves. By considering the literary growth of the texts, scholars have more closely considered scribal contributions to the biblical accounts. In this view, it is likely the case that many of the so-called ‘false prophecy’ texts ‘originated after the downfall of Jerusalem as a kind of reflection on the past.’ Just as the tradition’s interpretation of history validates the true prophet for the canonical critic (e.g. Childs), the same is true for the scribes who actually wrote the texts. Here Kratz may serve as a representative example. For him, the major disasters of Israelite history prompted the same reaction in various prophetic texts. In the case of Isaiah, Micah and Hosea, ‘der Fall Samari-


144 I have mentioned this tendency already above; in addition, see Wolff, Hauptprobleme alttestamentlicher Prophetie, 452-56; Stolz, Der Streit um die Wirklichkeit, WuD 12 (1973), 9–30.

145 Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 223.

146 Jeremias, Remembering and Forgetting, in: Remembering and Forgetting in Early Second Temple Judah, ed. Ben Zvi and Levin, Tübingen, 2012, 51-54. Jeremias refers to passages such as Jer 5.14; 6.11; 23.9–12 as indicators of this compulsion.

147 Crenshaw, Prophetic Conflict, 110. See also Hamori, Spirit of Falsehood, CBQ 72 (2010), 15–30.

as den Anstoß zur Bildung der prophetischen Überlieferung;\textsuperscript{147} for Jeremiah, the fall of Jerusalem provided an opportunity for ‘die spätere theologische Deutung des historischen Sachverhalts.’\textsuperscript{148} He asserts that the best explanation for these shared phenomena lies in \textit{ex eventu} reflections on the history of Israel, and in the case of ‘false’ prophecy, this also reflected a later development.\textsuperscript{149} Where there was once an actual political disagreement between Jeremiah and his rivals, the tradition has transformed it into a theological decision for the reader: ‘Doch nachdem die Geschichte Jeremia Recht gegeben und die anderen als »falsche Propheten« erwiesen hatte, hat die Überlieferung das politische Dilemma in eine theologische Alternative umformuliert: die Entscheidung für oder gegen Jhwh.’\textsuperscript{150}

A similar position was articulated in the work of Hossfeld and Meyer, as they shifted the discussion of prophetic conflict to the editorial history of the Hebrew Bible.\textsuperscript{151} Where early forms of prophetic conflict existed between cultic and free prophets, later textual interpolations had more to do with conflicting interpretations in the exilic and post-exilic periods. Lange follows largely the same interpretive trajectory, with a more finely tuned account of layers of editorial activity added to the prophets’ \textit{ipsissima verba};\textsuperscript{152} he suggests the so-called ‘end of prophecy’ signalled by texts such as Zech 13.2–6 and Jer 23.33–40 can explain the culmination of prophetic conflict as a rejection of inspired forms of prophecy (\textit{kyrigmatische Prophetie}) in favour of interpretive forms of prophecy (\textit{Tradentenprophetie}). In his account, eventually there was a cessation of prophetic activity in favour of the exegesis of authoritative texts.

Schmitt, rather helpfully, focuses his discussion of these issues on what he calls a discourse concerning legitimate and illegitimate forms of divination.\textsuperscript{153} This discourse stems from the destruction of the first Jerusalem temple and is found in prophetic, histor-

\textsuperscript{147} Kratz, \textit{Die Propheten Israels}, München, 2003, 60.
\textsuperscript{148} Kratz, \textit{Die Propheten Israels}, 75.
\textsuperscript{150} Kratz, \textit{Die Propheten Israels}, 80.
\textsuperscript{152} Lange, \textit{Vom prophetischen Wort zur prophetischen Tradition}. Otto, while appreciating his contribution, notes that Lange's approach rests on a good deal of confidence in his ability to recover the \textit{ipsissima verba} of the prophets. Otto, Antiprophetische Traditionen, \textit{ZABR} 12 (2006), 310.
ical and legal texts. The fundamental point of contention concerns the role of institutional (i.e. cultic) forms of divination which supported and legitimised royal power; these forms were contrasted with a romanticised ‘Bild des Propheten als unabhängiger Außenseiter’ found in the programmatic Prophetengesetz of Deut 18.9–22.¹⁵⁴

1.3.5. Summary of debate

Discussions of ‘prophecy’ inevitably concern constructs of the phenomenon, whether literary or social in nature. This is to be expected, and in some debates more than others, this fact can be quite problematic. If each scholar working on a problem has his or her own idea of what the problem is, it becomes increasingly difficult to find common ground in the debate; this recalls to my mind the image of a house built upon shifting sands. In critical scholarship on prophecy, in my view, this is the case of the so-called ‘false prophecy’ debate.

I will not be the first to note that the ‘true’ versus ‘false’ debate rests upon problematic ideas about prophecy. Roberts, stating his view rather sharply, describes his dissatisfaction with this debate:

Indeed much of the older discussion of prophetic conflict which often assumed clear and obvious distinctions, sometimes terminologically marked, between true and false prophecy corresponding to such contrasts as cultic versus non-cultic, professional versus non-professional, group versus individual, salvation versus judgment, was never convincing, and deserves to be consigned to oblivion.¹⁵⁵

Without being too polemical about it, I would agree with Roberts’ basic point. Similarly, de Jong classified the ‘true’ versus ‘false’ distinction as a fallacy. Such concepts do not ‘relate to historical prophetic practice’ nor are they ‘at the heart of the biblical prophetic literature either.’ He calls the debate a blending together of various images into a ‘cocktail of

¹⁵⁴ Schmitt, Mantik im Alten Testament, 123-24. This idealised picture of prophecy asserts that the true prophet ‘kann nur derjenige sein, der wie Mose direkt Gott und sonst niemanden verantwortlich ist und dessen Weissagungen sich in ihrem Eintreffen als wahr erweisen und nicht von staatlichen Autoritäten in ihrem Sinne angestrengt werden’ (123).

“true versus false”.82 This blended image suggests too much of a sharp contrast between true and false when the realities are much more blurred.

In summary, many of the positions outlined in this survey rest on distinctions that are not native to the prophetic phenomenon. Prophecy is a rather fluid practice that reaches across all of the ‘clear and obvious distinctions’ made in the ‘true’ versus ‘false’ debate. Perhaps it is better, then, to reassess the phenomenon in terms of the function of prophecy rather than clearly defined roles or types corresponding to theological, ideological, social or economic categories.

1.4. Summary

The model of the paradigm shift explains the major differences between contemporary approaches to prophecy and those of a generation ago. It is clear that the prophets of ancient Israel were a part of broader cultural, social and religious pattern of divinatory practices. It is within this ancient framework of intermediation that scholars now try to understand the prophets, whereas the old paradigm often cast them in the mould of Protestant reformers or theologians. As Jeremias put it quite explicitly, the prophets’ concern for the revelatory nature of the divine word is ‘das entscheidende Anliegen mit der Theologie der großen Reformatoren’.83 The task of recent scholarship has been to re-contextualise the prophets of ancient Israel in the cultural world of the ancient Near East.

Scholars have also clarified the relationship between the textual and social-historical forms of prophecy. The phenomena of biblical prophecy and ancient Israelite prophecy are related, though there is some debate about the nature of this relationship. On the one hand, it is clearly naïve to assume that the biblical portrait exactly corresponds to the ancient social reality. On the other hand, as scholars like Nissinen and Barstad argue, it is productive and illuminating to consider the two phenomena in conversation with one another. By considering how prophecy functioned in ancient society, one can recast some of the intractable debates and problems in the biblical presentation in new a light. The new

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82 Jong, Fallacy of “True and False”, 29. His views also accord with those of Roberts when he states: ‘The idea that prophecy of judgement and prophecy of salvation were two completely different types of prophecy has been a huge impediment for an adequate view of prophecy as a historical phenomenon. This idea should be abandoned’ (op. cit., p. 26).
83 Jeremias also compares the possible falsification of prophetic speech with Bonhoeffer’s concept of ‘cheap grace’. Jeremias, »Wahre« und »falsche« Prophetie, 349.
appreciation for the *nature* of the social realities of prophecy illustrates the *nature* of prophecy in the biblical text.

Through all of this, two problems still remain. The first relates to the Hebrew lexeme נביא. What does the word mean? So far, this question has been answered with traditional philological methods. It is not clear that these methods provide a sufficient answer. In a related way, another following question must be asked: Does the word have anything to do with the phenomenon of prophecy? To answer this question, one must have an idea in mind of what a prophet is.

By focusing on these questions, of what the word נביא means, and of what prophecy is, this investigation reassesses and intervenes in the so-called ‘false prophecy’ debate and seeks to reorient the discussion. With a sharper appreciation for the interaction between the constructs of biblical prophecy and ancient Israelite prophecy, my focus throughout is on the foundational aspects of how prophets and prophecy are understood in Jeremiah. The aim is, as I have put it, to provide an account of ‘what we talk about when we talk about prophets’ in the book of Jeremiah.

2. Methodology

In line with the aims of this work, I have adopted primarily synchronic methods drawn from the fields of semantics and literary theory. Quite deliberately, I have chosen approaches that are widely accepted. My methods are closely interrelated with my aims. In order to understand the function of prophecy in Jeremiah, I have examined both *language* and *text*. In the following, I explain what I mean by ‘semantics’ and ‘close reading’ as methodological approaches.

2.1. Semantics

Semantics, as a branch of semiotics, is the study of meaning, and linguistic semantics is the study of meaning expressed in language. Additional range of methods and approaches are used in this field, with a number of sub-disciplines and foci, and semantic

methods in biblical studies have their own history and use. Thus it will be beneficial to clarify what is meant by ‘semantics’ in the method of the present work. Related to structural linguistics and semantic field theory, the semantic methods I use here concern the sense relations of words as they function within their linguistic system. According to structuralist semantics, words express meaning only in their use and only in their relations with other words.

There are two primary sources of inspiration for the semantic approach in the present work. First is the work of Saussure and the school of structuralist linguistics associated with him. Several Saussurean principles in structuralist linguistics guide my analysis. In a purely synchronic approach, Saussurean structuralist linguistics makes a critical distinction between language as an abstract system of conventions (langue) and speech as the choices made by a speaker in actual use (parole). Words function essentially as signs, and the connection between the word (signifiant) and the concept (signifié). These signs exist in a linguistic system where the differences in value between them are determined by their relation to other signs (i.e. paradigmatics), or in their use in particular utterances (i.e. syntagmatics). Lexical meaning, in the structuralist view, is thus determined by ‘the interdependence of entities, rather than their individual and separate existence’. The relational structures of words are described in terms of their association with ‘semantic fields’, which are networks of word meanings where associated linguistic signs stand in relation to one another as they refer to overlapping or partially identical concepts.


166 Very briefly, it is important to note that there are differences between European and American traditions of structuralist linguistics. Instead of Saussurean terminology, American structural linguistic traditions tend to use terms introduced by Chomsky. Accordingly, rather than ‘langue’ and ‘parole’ one will find the broadly similar terms ‘competence’ and ‘performance’, which Chomsky himself likened to the corresponding Saussurean terms. See Chomsky, Aspects of the Theory of Syntax, Cambridge, MA, 1965, 4, passim. Unfortunately, any further discussion of Chomsky and his views go well beyond the bounds of the present study. For an overview which I have used and found helpful, see Joseph, Structural Linguistics, in: The Routledge Handbook of Linguistics, ed. Allan, Routledge Handbooks in Linguistics, London, 2016, 431–46.

16a Lyons, Linguistic Semantics, 90 (see also 16–22, 89–96, 103–7).

16a Lyons describes semantic fields as ‘the external, interlexical, relational structures — semantic fields — in which semantically related and interdefinable words, or word-meanings, function as units’. Lyons, Linguistic Semantics, 107. The idea of ‘semantic fields’ is usually accredited to Trier, Der Wortschatz im
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A second source of inspiration for this study is the work of Barr. Historically speaking, biblical studies owes a great debt to Barr for introducing semantics to the field, and his work remains a touchstone of contemporary scholarship.\(^{165}\) It is difficult to understate the importance of his work in this regard. In several influential publications,\(^{164}\) Barr forcefully advocated for the use of rigorous and consistent methods in the handling of linguistic data. One of the most basic insights he stressed in the study of biblical languages is that words only have meaning in their actual contexts. This involves, according to Barr, a word’s syntactic environment,\(^{165}\) its historical setting,\(^{166}\) and its place in the lexical inventory of the language.\(^{167}\) One aspect of his legacy is that semantics has occupied an important place in biblical exegesis since.\(^{168}\)

It is with the work of Saussure and Barr in mind that I understand the concept of ‘semantic fields’, one of the most prolific and well-known aspects of semantic analysis in biblical scholarship. The concept is a part of an approach to the study of biblical language—for Hebrew perhaps best represented by the Sheffield dictionary\(^ {169}\)—which consists of a detailed analysis of the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations shared between words. It is in these relations that semantic meaning is expressed and understood as a part of the language system.


\(^{164}\) For example, see Lambert, Refreshing Philology, BibInt 24 (2016), 332–56.


\(^{166}\) ‘Only within their syntactical environment do words function.’ Barr, Biblical Words for Time, 154.

\(^{167}\) Words can only be intelligibly interpreted by what they meant at the time of their use, within the language system used by the speaker or writer: Barr, Semantics of Biblical Language, 139-40.

\(^{168}\) In each language words function in relation to other words in the same or contiguous semantic field. The meaning of הָנַח, for instance, can be described only in relation to the other words existing in the Hebrew of a certain time in the field of sacrifice, gift, and tribute. Its meaning is then a choice within a series of possibilities available within Hebrew: Barr, Comparative Philology, 170.

In order to remain as clear as possible, I would adopt two basic definitions set forth by Lyons that are based on structuralist principles. By ‘semantic field’ I mean essentially the same concept Lyons describes as the lexical field:

[T]he meaning of any linguistic unit is determined by the paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations which hold between that unit and other linguistic units in a language-system. Lexemes and other units that are semantically related, whether paradigmatically or syntagmatically, within a given language-system can be said to belong to, or to be members of, the same (semantic) field; and a field whose members are lexemes is a lexical field. A lexical field is therefore a paradigmatically and syntagmatically structured subset of the vocabulary (or lexicon).\(^7\)

Similarly, he provides a definition of the kinds of sense-relations implied by the terms ‘syntagmatic’ and ‘paradigmatic’. For the most part, I follow Lyons in his definition of these terms:

Sense-relations are of two kinds: substitutional and combinatorial (or, in the Saus- surean terms more familiar to linguists, paradigmatic and syntagmatic). Substitutional relations are those which hold between intersubstitutable members of the same grammatical category; combinatorial relations hold typically, though not necessarily, between expressions of different grammatical categories (e.g. between nouns and adjectives, between verbs and adverbs, etc.), which can be put together in grammatically well-formed combinations (or constructions).\(^7\)

The terminology I employ is drawn from commonly accepted descriptions of Hebrew grammar, syntax, poetic techniques, and genre. Thus ‘syntagmatic’ relations will relate to grammatical and syntactical patterns and uses of the word, and ‘paradigmatic’ relations

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\(^7\) Lyons, *Linguistic Semantics*, 124.
are primarily lexical. I have not worked with a rigid set of conceptual fields; rather I discuss terms according to broad semantic categories drawn from modern lexica.

It must be clear from the outset that all semantic analysis of this kind is provisional by its very nature. This is not only due to the limitations imposed by the nature of the corpus of Classical Hebrew, but also to the nature of the text corpus chosen for this study. The Hebrew Bible is a heavily edited document written in dead languages from a distant and ancient culture only fragmentarily attested. For the modern scholar, only an approximate understanding of the conceptual world of a speaker of Classical Hebrew is possible. This point, I fear, does not appear to be taken into account often enough. Strictly speaking, the conclusions of this investigation will be provisionally relevant for the corpus, namely the Hebrew edition of Jeremiah (BHS).

Finally, it is methodologically critical that a semantic analysis derive from the conceptual world of the language being studied. It is for this reason I have chosen the lexeme נבוא as the starting point of this work. This avoids the risk of a circular argument by beginning with a domain, such as ‘prophecy’, which is itself a construct. Thus I have chosen to begin with the lexeme נבוא and describe the semantic field(s) related to it.

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175 I have referred to DCH in this regard. A useful discussion of semantic domains is in Nida and Louw, Lexical Semantics, 107-14.

176 On the limited nature of Biblical Hebrew as a language, see Ullendorff, Is Biblical Hebrew a Language?, BSOAS 34 (1971), 241–55; Knauf, War ‘Biblisch-Hebräisch’ eine Sprache?, ZAH 3 (1990), 11–23. The two sources of linguistic data for semantics, according to Cruse, are spoken and written outputs and intuitive judgments of native speakers. Since ‘the native language-user is central to both of them’, he comments: ‘Probably the most disadvantaged researchers in this respect in the field of linguistic semantics are those who study “dead” languages. Often virtually the only direct evidence available to them is a corpus of written utterances, of somewhat fortuitous make-up, and now probably fixed for eternity’ Cruse, Lexical Semantics, Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics, Cambridge, 1986, 9. Given the additional complexities regarding text, culture and history, the gravity of this disadvantage in Hebrew Bible studies must not be underestimated. See Loader, Job and Cognition in Context, in: Job 28, ed. Woude, BibInt 64, Leiden, 2003, 321–29.

177 Barr, Scope and Problems, ZAH 6 (1993), 5-6.
2.2. Close reading

In criticism and literary theory, close reading is a method closely associated with New Criticism, an approach to the study of English literature from roughly 1900–1960. Inspired in part by Russian formalism, the New Critics sought to establish procedures in the study of literature free from historicism and ‘scientific’ in their own right. Developments and changes in criticism during the 20th century are complex, to say the least, and they are well-documented elsewhere. Here I will survey the rise of the method of close reading, in literary theory and in biblical studies, and provide a brief account its contemporary usage.

The so-called New Critics did not comprise a ‘school’ or ‘movement’ in any formal sense; they also did not share one particular ‘method’ or technique. In Brooks’ words, their ‘only common trait was their reaction against the reigning historicism and their renewed respect for the structure and inner workings of the poem or novel or drama in question.” No one thinker represents New Criticism in total, but the approach was associated with a constellation of writers in Britain and in America. Taken together, the proponents of New Criticism tended to share certain points of emphasis, namely,

(a) the autonomy of the work; (b) the total experience of the work; (c) the organic, internally unified nature of the individual work; (d) the importance of complexity, and especially irony and paradox, which are harmonized in the work but not necessarily resolved; (e) the need for close scrutiny of diction, syntax, metaphor, and im-

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agery; and (f) the responsibility of the critic to make critical judgments.\textsuperscript{79}

Thus, the guiding principle of this critical perspective was a central concern for the poem (i.e. the literary work) itself, rather than a conventional 'method' \textit{per se}. Along with a concern for the autonomy of the poem, New Critics downplayed authorship and reception in their approach. This was made (in)famous in the 'fallacies' of intention and affect argued by Wimsatt and Beardsley. For them, the result of a focus on these fallacies 'is that the poem itself, as an object of specifically critical judgment, tends to disappear.'\textsuperscript{80} For the New Critics, asserting the autonomy of the poem and establishing formal procedures of literary analysis freed the study of literature as a discipline from history or psychology. Hence, one of the most significant legacies of New Criticism is the introduction of formal, scientific method in the study of (English) literary works as a corrective against historicism and romanticism.\textsuperscript{81} Its dominance in literary theory began to fade in the 1960's with the rise of poststructuralism and deconstruction, and more recently, new historicism and culture studies.\textsuperscript{82}

Close reading is one of the hallmarks of New Criticism, and Richards declared that 'all respectable poetry invites close reading.'\textsuperscript{83} For the most part, close reading 'entails a scrupulous attention to textual detail and to the contradictions, ambiguities, and tensions that constitute the poem as a self-contained “verbal icon.”'\textsuperscript{84} This attention, or interpretation of a work, as Eliot describes it, 'is only legitimate when it is not interpretation at all, but merely putting the reader in possession of facts which he would otherwise have

\textsuperscript{79} Harris, New Criticism, 267. These tendencies
\textsuperscript{80} Wimsatt and Beardsley, \textit{The Verbal Icon}, 21. This view is articulated further in the pair of essays, 'The Intentional Fallacy', op. cit., pp. 3–8, and 'The Affective Fallacy', op. cit., 21–39. Not all
\textsuperscript{81} As Gallop describes it, 'when New Criticism took over English studies, it injected methodological rigor into what had been a gentlemanly practice of amateur history.' Gallop, Historicization of Literary Studies, \textit{Profession 2007} (2007), 183. New Criticism enjoyed great success and exerted enormous influence, partly due to the wide use of their approaches as pedagogical tools in higher education. On the significance of New Criticism for the study of English in the American university, see, e.g., Gallop, Historicization of Literary Studies; Meredith, Anglo-American New Criticism, 33-34.
\textsuperscript{83} Richards, \textit{Practical Criticism}, London, 1929, 203.
\textsuperscript{84} Meredith, Anglo-American New Criticism, 38.
missed.\textsuperscript{\textdegree} In other words, the poem has an irreducibility which the critic must respect, lest he or she succumb to the ‘heresy of paraphrase.’\textsuperscript{\textdegree}

Biblical criticism adopted the approaches and methods of New Criticism in a wave of literary studies in the 1980’s.\textsuperscript{\textdegree} According to Barton, close reading operates in the discipline by ‘analysing how the author/editor achieves his effects, why he arranges his material the way he does, and above all what devices he uses to give unity and coherence to his work.’\textsuperscript{\textdegree} A kind of biblical formalism came to regard ‘the self-contained, unified text as the primary focus of interpretation,’ rather than the author’s historical, biographical or cultural influences, or the impact of a work on an audience or implied reader.\textsuperscript{\textdegree} Of course, reception history and reader response criticism are two examples of developments in a different hermeneutical direction.

In usual practice among biblicists, close reading is a label for studies which are either exclusively or primarily synchronic and which aside issues regarding composition, redaction or literary growth of a given text.\textsuperscript{\textdegree} Quite often, scholars use close reading together with a concept of the text’s ‘final form’ made popular in the canonical criticism of Childs.\textsuperscript{\textdegree} However, any text can be ‘closely form’ as a way to explore its meaning, and one does not need to claim an alleged ‘final form’ of the text—a highly problematic idea—for this kind of approach.\textsuperscript{\textdegree} There are other avenues for making use of close reading as a methodological approach, and it is possible to go beyond the rather unfortunate, in my view, debate between ‘synchronic’ and ‘diachronic’ methods.

Not all of the New Critics were so dogmatic in their rejection of context. One major example is Empson’s use of close reading, which makes broad use of culture and context in his analysis; for him, close analysis ‘is insufficient unless embedded in historical, bio-

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{\textdegree} Eliot, Selected Essays, 2nd ed., London, 1934, 32.
\textsuperscript{\textdegree} See the essay by the same name in Brooks, The Well Wrought Urn, London, 1947, 176-96.
\textsuperscript{\textdegree} Barton, Reading the Old Testament, London, 1984. Similarly, see the simple description of a method which seeks to ‘read and understand’ in Barstad, What Prophets Do, 19.
\textsuperscript{\textdegree} Exum and Clines, eds., New Literary Criticism, JSOTS 143, Sheffield, 1993.
\textsuperscript{\textdegree} See, for example, Barton, Reading Texts Holistically, in: Congress Volume Ljubljana 2007, ed. Lemierre, VTS 153, Leiden, 2010, esp. 379.
\end{flushleft}

A student of literature ought to be trying all the time to empathize with the author (and of course the assumptions and conventions by which the author felt himself bound); to tell him that he cannot even partially succeed is about the most harmful thing you could do.\footnote{Empson, Using Biography, London, 1984, viii. Here Empson has Wimsatt in view; cf. op. cit., p. 104.}

Consequently, the method of close reading has not always necessarily been moored in formalist criticism in the bent of Brooks or Ransom. While not called ‘close readings’ as such, the careful attention paid to tensions, ambiguities and ideologies in texts in deconstructionist and poststructuralist criticism closely resembles the method and demonstrates its ideological flexibility;\footnote{Meredith, Anglo-American New Criticism, 40.} rather than ‘challenge the centrality of close reading to English’, these theoretical perspectives ‘infused it with new zeal’.\footnote{Gallop, Historicization of Literary Studies, 182.} No one critical perspective can claim disciplined attention to detail as its exclusive domain.

I have adopted the method of close reading and a primarily literary approach because of what I understand myself to read. It is not my aim or interest to make claims about textual development, literary cohesion, editorial/authorial intention, or narrative shaping. Rather, I use these methods in order to explore the relationship between the phenomena of biblical and ancient Near Eastern prophecy. I am convinced that literary methods must not succumb to an ‘historical aporia’.\footnote{As rightly observed in Barstad, What Prophets Do, 31. See also Becking, No More Grapes from the Vineyard?, in: From David to Gedaliah, ed. Becking, OBO 228, Göttingen, 2007, 35–51.} Thus, without being a ‘comparative’ investigation, this work does not ignore the contours of Jeremiah’s ancient culture and context.

3. Structure

I have divided the present investigation into two parts. This is to allow both aspects of the methodology, the semantics and close reading, to receive a full treatment. In the first part, I make extensive use of semantic analysis focused primarily on the syntagmatic and
paradigmatic relations of נביא in Jeremiah. The goal here is to describe the semantic field of נביא. In the second part, three chapters each provide close readings of texts in Jeremiah which are particularly focused on prophecy and prophets. This analysis is primarily exegetical in nature; the goal is to expound the ways in which this literature describes, understands and explores the nature of prophecy.

Both parts make explicit their use of a given method, but both also are engaged in the same hermeneutical operation. That is to say, both parts are focused on the question of the nature of prophecy in mutually supporting ways. Just as there are exegetical concerns in the first part which contribute to the semantic analysis, vice versa, there are semantic concerns which guide the exegetical analysis.

Two basic insights guide this rationale. First, it is critical to recognise that one cannot perform a ‘word study’ in order to explain the nature of prophecy. Neither can one expect to explain a phenomenon simply by defining it. Both the literary presentation and the social reality of prophecy are constructs which represent a variety of activities, behaviours, functions and ideas. To explain the phenomenon of prophecy, it is simply insufficient to focus exclusively on the terms used for prophets. On the one hand, it is true that the lexeme נביא plays a crucial part in the construct of prophecy in the book; on the other, it does not reveal all there is to know about prophecy in the book.

Second, in order to discuss the meaning of a word, its semantics is only a necessary first step. Though semantic methods have been hugely influential in the way word meaning is understood, it is still necessary to account for the context in which it is used. As Barr puts it, ‘the meaning of a vocabulary item is a function both of the item itself and of the item as occurrent in various contexts’. An analysis of the semantics of נביא is worthwhile in its own right, but incomplete insofar as it tells us about the phenomenon of prophecy. Likewise, in the most basic sense, all biblical exegesis involves the study of words. It is implicit, then, that exegetical discussions of the text involve an account of word meaning. So, in the present study, the first part of the work is an account of the meaning of the ‘item itself’, that is the lexeme נביא; the second part is an account of the ‘item as occurrent in various contexts’, that is, the literary settings of the chosen pericopes.

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198 Barr, Semantics of Biblical Language, 38.
199 Barstad, No Prophets?, 52.
The methods, structure, and title of this investigation, therefore, are all connected to the same question: How does prophecy work? It is the function of prophets and prophecy that is the primary interest here, both in linguistic terms (i.e. semantics), and in hermeneutic terms (i.e. in close readings of particular texts). It is with this combination of methods that I argue that basic conceptions of prophecy and the function of prophets in Jeremiah are, too often, insufficiently understood. With both semantics and close reading, I am able to describe the function of prophets in a fresh perspective absent in contemporary scholarship until now.

4. Corpus

Perhaps no choice is more important in a scholarly work than the selection of its corpus. Why Jeremiah? And perhaps more crucially, which Jeremiah? It is well known that the book has a complex textual history; this is most evident in the fact that Greek text forms of Jeremiah have approximately one-sixth less material than the Hebrew,\(^{200}\) and likely represent an earlier edition. Some may find the decision to read the Hebrew edition a bit controversial.

I base my choice of text on two main considerations. The first is practical. I have chosen a primarily synchronic method partly because I do not wish to ground my argument in text-critical matters. These matters are particularly fraught; text-critical data in Jeremiah are interpreted in different ways by competing models of the text’s growth.\(^{201}\) Because it is my primary aim to explain the nature and function of prophecy in the texts, I have set aside text-critical and composition-critical issues. I should hasten to add, however, that this is not a ‘fundamentalist’ statement of general preference or implied superiority of one version over another.

My second consideration is more theoretical, as it arises from my use of semantic methods. For a structuralist semantic method, it is absolutely essential to consider the meaning of a lexeme within its linguistic system. The Italian maxim traduttore, traditore (‘translation is treason’) or the Hungarian fordítás, ferdítés (‘translation is distortion’) are


\(^{201}\)Tigchelaar notes that Bogaert and Tov (‘two literary editions’), McKane (‘rolling corpus’) and Lundbom (‘textual corruption’) all interpret the same text-critical evidence for their own compositional models. Tigchelaar, Jeremiah’s Scriptures in the Dead Sea Scrolls, in: Jeremiah’s Scriptures, ed. Najman and Schmid, JSLS 173, Leiden, 2017, 289-291, cit. 290.
distillations of this principle, that there is always a loss of meaning in translation equivalents. Since one of my aims is to describe the meaning of the Hebrew lexeme נבּוּא, it is imperative to work with a Hebrew text. As Barr puts it in his discussion of philological methods, ‘the very high importance which attaches to the ancient versions does not alter the fact that they are not Hebrew manuscripts. The effect they have upon our thinking is, in respect of directness and complexity, quite different from the effect of manuscript evidence in Hebrew.’ Since the language of Jeremiah, as Hornkohl has argued, seems to reflect good usage for the 6th and 5th centuries BCE, there is not much advantage to disregarding the Hebrew version, especially in terms of word meaning. Getting ‘closer to the original’, so to speak, reflects a different set of concerns for the study of prophecy, especially in the search for the ipsissima verba of the prophets. There is much to learn about the nature of prophecy in the Hebrew version of Jeremiah.

For my text, I take the Masoretic version of Jeremiah in the critical edition BHS as the primary text of study. I have also adopted a practical method for reading BHS. Because it is a critical text edition, it is necessary to work with the textual apparatus. It is simply a part of the ‘text’ which is being read. As is well-known, however, the apparatus criticus has suffered severe criticism for the varying degree of relevance of some of its material. To negotiate this difference, I have restricted myself only to commenting on editorial instructions in the apparatus (e.g. lege, delendum, insere). For each of my primary texts, I reproduce the consonantal text of BHS, comment on the critical apparatus’ views, and offer an original translation. Since I make no claims about an ‘original’ text or reading, issues related to philology, grammar, syntax and Ketiv/Qere are of primary concern for my translation and textual commentary.

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202 Barr, Comparative Philology, 2.
204 We also know that the word נבּוּא was in use at this time. See Barstad, Lachish Ostracon III.
205 Despite its flaws BHS is a foundational part of scholarly discourse as the only complete critical edition of the Hebrew Bible. Though I have not directly referred to it in this study, I have consulted the excellent Hebrew University Bible edition of Jeremiah edited by Rabin and Talmon; see Rabin, Talmon, and Tov, eds., Jeremiah, Hebrew University Bible Project, Jerusalem, 1997. The editions of Jeremiah in Biblia Hebraica Quinta or The Hebrew Bible: A Critical Edition (formerly Oxford Hebrew Bible) are yet to appear.
For the semantic analysis, I analyse every instance of the lexeme נביא in the book of Jeremiah. I have selected the primary texts in Jeremiah for close reading based on my own subjective judgment. Each in their own way, however, has played an important role in the issues and debates outlined above (§1.3). These texts, Jer 1.4–19, 23.9–40 and 27.1–28.17, illustrate salient and significant aspects of the nature of prophecy in Jeremiah: 1.4–19 is a positive description of the prophetic function; 23.9–40 criticises prophets and offers perspective on expectations regarding prophecy; and 27.1–28.17 narrates an encounter between prophets with opposing prophetic messages. Each of these texts also allow contextual space for me to illustrate the exegetical impact of the semantic discussion.

5. Aims

After surveying the main problems involved in the study of ‘prophecy in Jeremiah, it is left to conclude with brief remarks about the course of analysis to follow. Current research has not yet approached the nature of prophecy in Jeremiah with a semantic method, and current debates are in need of an intervention.

The starting point of this investigation is a semantic analysis of the lexeme נביא. In chapter two, I organise and categorise all occurrences of the lexeme נביא in Jeremiah. Insights drawn from the field of lexical semantics guide this analysis. This allows for the construction and interpretation of the semantic field of נביא. It also provides its relationships with other words, themes and concepts.

In the following chapters, I perform close readings of key texts for the nature of prophecy. Chapter three is a close reading of Jeremiah 1.4–19, chapter four is a close reading of Jeremiah 23.9–40, and chapter five is a close reading of Jeremiah 27.1–28.17. This part of the work describes and explains the nature and function of prophecy in these texts. Though not an ‘historical’ or ‘comparative’ investigation, my readings of the text remain attuned to issues of social and cultural context. The semantic part of the work is like a foundation hewn from rock, and the close readings build a house upon it.

In the concluding chapter, I summarise the total findings of the investigation. Conclusions drawn from these findings, then, are applied to current debates in scholarship. At the end, I will have provided my account of how prophecy works in the book of Jeremiah.
Part I. Semantics
Chapter 2. Semantic analysis of נביא in Jeremiah

For the study of prophecy in ancient Israel, no single word is more central or significant than the lexeme נביא. In Jeremiah, it is the most fundamental word associated with prophecy in the book.\(^{207}\) While a great number of studies have examined נביא with primarily historical and philological methods,\(^{208}\) exceedingly few make use of semantic analysis or base their approach on principles of semantics.\(^{209}\) The following study seeks to fill this gap in the scholarly literature.

I. Nominal forms of נביא (‘prophet’)

The nominal lexeme נביא occurs 95 times in 85 verses in Jeremiah.\(^{210}\)

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207 There are 135 occurrences of words which derive from נביא in Jeremiah, found in 1:5, 2:8, 26, 30: 4:9; 5:3, 31; 6:13; 7:25; 8:1, 10; 13:13; 14:13, 14, 15 (x2), 18; 18:18; 20:2; 23:9, 11, 13, 14, 15 (x2), 16, 21, 25, 26 (x2), 28, 30, 31, 33, 34, 37; 25:2; 26:5, 7, 8, 11, 16; 27:9, 14, 15, 16, 18; 28:1, 5 (x2), 6, 8 (x2), 9 (x4), 10 (x2), 11, 12 (x2), 15 (x2), 17; 29:12, 8, 15, 19, 29, 32, 32; 34:6; 35:15; 36:8, 26; 37:2, 3, 6, 13, 19 (x2); 38:9, 10, 14; 42:2, 4; 43:6; 44:4; 45:1; 46:1, 13; 47:1; 49:34; 50:1; 51:59. Statistics of this kind in this chapter are drawn from Even-Shoshan and Lisowsky, Konkordanz zum hebräischen Alten Testament, Stuttgart, 1938.

208 Among the most recent publications, see especially Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 171-92; Schmitt, Mantik im Alten Testament, 29-42. Other influential studies include Jepsen, Nabi; Guillaume, Prophecy and Divination, BaL, London, 1938, 107-41; Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel, 95-104; Ramlot, Prophétisme, 91-43; Fleming, Etymological Origins of the Hebrew nabi; Fleming, Nābū and Munabbāṭu; Pomponio, Nabū. A. Philologisch, RLA IX (1998), 16-24; Huehnergard, Etymology and Meaning of Hebrew nabi.

209 See the entries in DCH for נביא vb. prophecy (V, 582–83), נביא n.f. prophecy (V, 584). נמב n.m. prophet (V, 587–91) and נב עב n.f. prophet (V, 592). DCH is an extremely useful and important source of data for analysing Hebrew lexemes, and these articles are no exception. There is an entry for נביא in the Semantics of Ancient Hebrew Database as well; see Stökl, נביא, SAHD. DBHE makes use of a semantic approach (‘Introduccion,’ 7–17), and very brief entries can be found for נביא and related forms (DBHE, 472–73). While not strictly based on semantic methods, the major theological dictionaries provide very helpful linguistic data. See especially Jeremias, נביא, THAT II; Müller, נביא, ThWAT V. In a different but related context, see Xeravits, נביא, ThWQ II (2013), 847–52.

210 Jer 1:5, 2:8, 26, 30; 4:9; 5:13, 31; 6:13; 7:25; 8:1, 10; 13:13; 14:13, 14, 15 (x2), 18; 18:18; 20:2; 23:9, 11, 13, 14, 15 (x2), 16, 21, 25, 26 (x2), 28, 30, 31, 33, 34, 37; 25:2; 26:5, 7, 8, 11, 16; 27:9, 14, 15, 16, 18; 28:1, 5 (x2), 6, 8 (x3), 10 (x2), 11, 12 (x2), 15 (x2), 17; 29:1 (x2), 8, 15, 19, 29, 32, 33; 34:6; 35:15; 36:8, 26; 37:2, 3, 6, 13, 19; 38:9, 10, 14; 42:2, 4; 43:6; 44:4; 45:1; 46:1, 13; 47:1; 49:34; 50:1; 51:59. On the term ‘lexeme’, see Lyons, Linguistic Semantics, 48-54.
1.1. Morphology

The lexeme נביא is a masculine qāṭīl pattern noun derived from the root נב. Of the total number of occurrences, 47 are singular and 43 are plural. Two forms include possessive suffixes: נביאים (2.26; 32.32).

1.2. Syntagmatic data

The syntagmatic data offered here is primarily restricted to syntax on the levels of phrase, clause and sentence. This means I have restricted my focus to particular collocations that use נביא (Table 1), verbs where נביא is subject (Table 2), verbs that take נביא as an object (Table 3), and participles that describe נביא (Table 4). For each of these categories I have listed the lexemes and collocations alphabetically and included basic information, for example, grammatical form and a simple gloss. After each table I have offered some comments on the semantic information to be gleaned from the syntagmatic data.
1.2.1. Collocations with נביא

One of the first places to look for semantic information the lexeme נביא are collocations. These are simply short phrases, which can be either unique or frequent, that provide some semantic context for the lexeme. In Table 1 are a series of collocations which deserve some further comment.

Table 1. Collocations with נביא

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collocation</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>אזני יירמיהו הנביא</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>Jer 29.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>איה נביאיכם</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>Jer 37.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נביאי גן כים</td>
<td>x2</td>
<td>Jer 14.18; 23.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>דבר הנביא</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>Jer 28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>דבר יבאיא</td>
<td>x2</td>
<td>Jer 23.16; 27.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נحيا הנביא</td>
<td>x6</td>
<td>Jer 28.1, 5, 10, 12, 15, 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ירמיה(1) הנביא</td>
<td>x31</td>
<td>Jer 20.2; 25.2, 25.5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 15, 29.1, 29; 32.2; 34.6; 36.8, 26; 37.2, 3, 6, 13; 38.9, 10, 14; 42.2, 4; 43.6; 45.1; 46.1, 13; 47.1; 49.34; 50.1; 51-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כהניהם ונביאיהם</td>
<td>x2</td>
<td>Jer 2.26; 32.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>של הראשי (עברית)</td>
<td>x6</td>
<td>Jer 7.25; 25.4; 25.6; 29.19; 35.15; 44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>יראים הנביא</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>Jer 23.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נביאי ירשלם</td>
<td>x2</td>
<td>Jer 23.14, 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נביאי הים</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>Jer 27.18</td>
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<tr>
<td>נביאי לניה</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>Jer 1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נביאי שמריה</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>Jer 23.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>נביאי תמר</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>Jer 23.26</td>
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<tr>
<td>נביאים אשר</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>Jer 29.8</td>
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<td>בקרבס</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ענפמם הנביא</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>Jer 8.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>עזואר ירמיה הנביא</td>
<td>x2</td>
<td>Jer 28.10, 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

215 The term ‘collocation’ simply refers to a combination of words that is not random.
The most frequent collocations with נבּי נבּי in Jeremiah the lexeme is *nomens rectum* in a phrase ‘[Proper Name], the prophet’. Only two individuals are named in these constructions. Jeremiah occurs 31 times in Jeremiah, and נבּי נבּי occurs six times. From this total, a dozen of these occurrences are found in the narrative in Jer 28.1–17, the only pericope in Jeremiah with multiple named prophets. Jeremiah is referred to as נבּי נבּי in formulaic introductions to oracles concerning Judah and Jerusalem (25.1–11), Zedekiah's fate (34.1–7), Egypt (46.1, 13), Elam (49.34), Philisia (47.1) and Babylon (50.1). The appellative also is used of Jeremiah in the address of his letter to the Judaean deportees (29.1), and the Baruch and Seraiah colophons (45.1; 51.59). It is also found in narrative episodes such as the conflict with the priest Pashhur (20.1–6), Jeremiah's purchase of a field (32.1–44), Baruch's reading from Jeremiah's scroll (36.1–32), Jeremiah's interactions with Zedekiah and royal officials (37.1–38.28), and Jeremiah's interactions with Johanan ben Kareah (42.1–43.13). It is difficult to say if there is a pattern to this usage beyond marking 'official' business. That is, they reflect situations where Jeremiah's activity concerns public interest, or when it would be important to note the status of the actors involved.

Several collocations combine the lexemes נבּי נבּי and כֹּהֵן כֹּהֵן. While the precise collocation נֶבֶי נבּי כֹּהֵן נבּי כֹּהֵן appears in Jer 14.18 and 23.11, the two lexemes נבּי נבּי and כֹּהֵן כֹּהֵן are frequently used in combination with one another. The phrase 'their priests and prophets' (הנביאים והכהנים) is found in two lists (2.26; 32.32), as well as the plurals נביאים and כהנים in parallel (2.8; 4.9; 29.1).

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26 The name יִרְמְיָהוּ occurs more frequently without the attributive נבּי נבּי, as is the case in Jer 1.1, 11; 7.1; 11.1; 18.1, 18; 19.14; 20.1, 3 (2x); 21.1, 3; 25.4; 26.7, 8, 9, 12, 20, 24; 29.29; 30.1; 31.2, 6, 26; 33.4, 19, 23; 34.1, 8, 12; 35.12, 18; 36.1, 4, 5, 10, 19, 27 (2x), 32 (2x); 37.4, 12, 14 (2x); 15, 16 (2x), 17, 18, 21 (2x); 38.1, 6 (3x), 7, 11, 12 (2x), 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 24, 27, 28; 39.11, 14, 15; 40.1, 2, 6; 42.5; 7; 43.1, 2, 8; 44.15, 20, 24; 45.1; 51.60, 64 (cf. cf. דֶּמוֹת רְクラス וְהַנָּבִיאוֹת in 29.27). Where Jeremiah's name is spelled defectively, it appears in the phrase נבּי נבּי (28.5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 15, 29.1) except in 27.1. In 28.1 Hananiah's full name, הַנְנֵיאָה וְרָכָּף, is given, and only in Jer 28.11 does his name appear without כֹּהֵן כֹּהֵן.

27 Compare the introductions to the oracles concerning Moab (48.1–47), Ammon (49.1–6), Edom (49.7–22), Damascus (49.23–27), Kedar (49.28–33).

28 I am not wedded to this view, but I suggest it because the use of נבּי נבּי as a title is usually regarded as a (very) late expansion. I propose this reading to suggest it is at least possible to find another explanation. See, e.g., Gonçalves, Les « Prophètes Ecrivains », 176–77; Stipp, Prophetentitel und Eigenname, in: *Gerechtigkeit und Recht zu üben* (Gen 18,19), ed. Achenbach and Arneth, BZABR 13, Wiesbaden, 2009, 293–307.
One frequently used collocation concerns 'all my servants the prophets' (כלי צעירים), a phrase found predominantly in longer prose speeches and addresses (Jer 7.25; 25.4; 35.15; 44.4; cf. 26.5; 29.19).\(^{219}\) The first person suffix of יְבֹד refers to YHWH in every case, and the contexts of the phrase are consistently negative. Despite being sent frequently (משתמש_USAGE יַשְׁמַע), these prophets were not listened to or heeded. The phrase is used in the recurring motif of highlighting failures in religious devotion to YHWH.

Some collocations where the lexeme נביא is *nomens rectum* use terms related to the human body. These include the phrases 'the bones of the prophets' (עצמות נביאים) in Jer 8.1; 'the hearing of the prophet Jeremiah' (אוזן רימיה הנביא) in 29.29; 'the shoulders of Jeremiah the prophet' (`]ץרא רימיה הנביא) in 28.10, 12; and 'the will of the prophets' ( volont of הנביאים) in 23.26. Several of these bodily terms have non-literal connotations in these collocations as well; the heart (לב) often indicates a person's will or intentions, and the ear (אנ) often refers to a person's presence or audience.

Two phrases, the 'words of the prophets' (דבר נביאים) in Jer 23.16; 27.14\(^{220}\) and the 'word of the prophet' (דבר הנביא) in 28.9, make an association between a person and speech.\(^{221}\) Both of the plural phrases in 23.16 and 27.14 are predicates of the phrase 'do not listen' (אל תשמע) and are associated with the negative words שקר and מבהלים respectively. The phrase 'when the word of the prophet comes' (הנבאים אשר שלח יוהו אמת) is further associated with the prophet whom YHWH has sent in truth (verity) as such.

Two short collocations with נביא appear related to issues regarding status, reliability or authority. The first, 'where are your prophets' (אלא נביאיכם), is a question Jeremiah asks of the king Zedekiah in 37.19. These prophets, so the question implies, could have given the king guidance instead. The second, 'they are prophets' (נבאים attività), is used in a pair of conditional clauses in 27.18, where the two phrases, 'if they are prophets and if they have the word of YHWH' (านביאים הם ואם יש דבר יהוה אמת) parallel one another.

In three collocations the lexeme נביא is used with words which are related to place names and location. Two references to the prophets of Jerusalem are found in Jer 23.14, 15,

\(^{219}\) On this phrase, see Sharp, *Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah*, 41-80.

\(^{220}\) Cf. 2 Chr 18.12.

\(^{221}\) Cf. Deut 6.4.
and a similar reference to the prophets of Samaria appears in 23.13. Each of these references is negative; these prophets are criticised primarily for religious failures, particularly apostasy. The groups are described negatively with the terms ‘tastelessness’ (תפלה) and ‘horror’ (שערורה). The third phrase, found in Jeremiah’s letter to the Judaean deportees in Babylon in 29.8, is a reference to ‘your prophets in your midst’ (נביאיכם אשר בקרבכם). In parallel with ‘your prophets’ (נביאיכם) in 29.8 are ‘your diviners’ (伝えיכם). The deportees are warned against being deceived (נשא) by these religious specialists; in parallel, they also are told not to listen (אל תשמעו), literally, to the dreams these individuals dream to them (chlامتיכם אשר אתם מחלמים).

A similarly negative context in Jer 23.26 includes the phrase ‘prophets of the deceit of their hearts’ (נבאים תרמת לבם) which is in parallel with ‘the prophets prophesying deceit’ (הנבאים נביא השקר). Both of these collocations are unique. The following phrase in 23.17 accuses these prophets of apostasy; as the Judaean’s ancestors forgot YHWH’s name due to Ba’al, the prophets plan to make the people forget YHWH’s name by their dreams (חלום).

1.2.2. נביא as subject of a finite verb

The lexeme נביא is associated with a wide range of activities, behaviours and states. It is the subject of 82 different finite verbs formed from 68 different roots. In the following table are listed all of these verbs according to binyan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexeme</th>
<th>Binyan</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>אַהֲבָּה</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘love’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>אָמַר</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>x16</td>
<td>‘say’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>אָסָף</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘gather’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

222 For the only other references to Samaria in Jeremiah, see Jer 31.5; 41.5.
223 Infinitives constructs and infinitive absolutes, where נביא is involved in the verbal action, are listed separately from finite forms.
224 I have included hiphil verbs where נביא or נביאים is the ‘second subject’ participating in the verbal action. See IBHS §27.d–f. Waltke and O’Connor note the view of Speiser, Studies in Semitic Formatives, JAOS 56 (1936), 22–46. For the distinctive aspect of hiphil in contrast with piel, see Jenni, Der hebräische Piel, Zürich, 1968.
### Chapter 2. Semantic analysis of נביא in Jeremiah

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Reference</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>בוא</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'go'</td>
<td>Jer 37.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בש</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>x2</td>
<td>'be ashamed'</td>
<td>Jer 6.15 = 8.12</td>
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<tr>
<td>בוש</td>
<td>hiphil</td>
<td>x3</td>
<td>'be ashamed'</td>
<td>Jer 2.26; 6.15 = 8.12</td>
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<tr>
<td>בוט</td>
<td>hiphil</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'trust'</td>
<td>Jer 28.15</td>
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<tr>
<td>בנב</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'build'</td>
<td>Jer 32-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>דבר</td>
<td>piel</td>
<td>x8</td>
<td>'speak'</td>
<td>Jer 1.6, 7; 23.16, 28; 25.2; 28.16; 34.6; 45.1</td>
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<td>niphal</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'push'</td>
<td>Jer 23.12</td>
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<td>'be ashamed'</td>
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<td>x1</td>
<td>'trust'</td>
<td>Jer 28.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>qal</td>
<td>x2</td>
<td>'build'</td>
<td>Jer 32-35</td>
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<tr>
<td>נביא</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'be strong'</td>
<td>Jer 23.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>ישל</td>
<td>piel</td>
<td>x2</td>
<td>'dream'</td>
<td>Jer 23.25 (x2)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>qal</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'pollute'</td>
<td>Jer 23.11</td>
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<tr>
<td>ידע</td>
<td>piel</td>
<td>x2</td>
<td>'speak'</td>
<td>Jer 1.6; 28.16; 34.6; 45.1</td>
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<td>niphal</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'know'</td>
<td>Jer 28.9</td>
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<td>x2</td>
<td>'profit'</td>
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<td>qal</td>
<td>x1</td>
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<td>Jer 38.15</td>
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<tr>
<td>י들도</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>x2</td>
<td>'dwell'</td>
<td>Jer 37.16; 38.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>בוח</td>
<td>piel</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'hide'</td>
<td>Jer 38.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>כותש</td>
<td>piel</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'be strong'</td>
<td>Jer 23.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כשל</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>x2</td>
<td>'stumble'</td>
<td>Jer 6.15 = 8.12</td>
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<tr>
<td>מתב</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'write'</td>
<td>Jer 51.60</td>
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<td>להק</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'take'</td>
<td>Jer 28.10</td>
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<tr>
<td>תות</td>
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<td>x2</td>
<td>'die'</td>
<td>Jer 38.15, 16</td>
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<td>qal</td>
<td>x3</td>
<td>'die'</td>
<td>Jer 28.17; 38.9, 10</td>
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<td>x1</td>
<td>'withhold'</td>
<td>Jer 42.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>נאם</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'speak'</td>
<td>Jer 23.31</td>
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<tr>
<td>نبא</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'prophesy'</td>
<td>Jer 28.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>נביא</td>
<td>hithpael</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'prophesy'</td>
<td>Jer 23.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>נביא</td>
<td>hiphil</td>
<td>x2</td>
<td>'declare'</td>
<td>Jer 38.15; 42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נביא</td>
<td>hiphil</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'rest'</td>
<td>Jer 43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>andal</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>x3</td>
<td>'fall'</td>
<td>Jer 6.15 = 8.12; 23.12</td>
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<tr>
<td>נביא</td>
<td>hiphil</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'deceive'</td>
<td>Jer 29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נביא</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'trade'</td>
<td>Jer 14.18</td>
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<tr>
<td>נביא</td>
<td>piel</td>
<td>x3</td>
<td>'relate'</td>
<td>Jer 23.27, 28, 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נביא</td>
<td>hiphil</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'hide'</td>
<td>Jer 36.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נביא</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'serve'</td>
<td>Jer 8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נביא</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'stand'</td>
<td>Jer 23.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נביא</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>x5</td>
<td>'do, make'</td>
<td>Jer 6.15 = 8.12; 28.13; 32.32; 38.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נביא</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'meet'</td>
<td>Jer 27.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נביא</td>
<td>hithpael</td>
<td>x2</td>
<td>'pray'</td>
<td>Jer 37.3; 42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נביא</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>x2</td>
<td>'turn'</td>
<td>Jer 2.27; 32.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The infinitive construct לאמר is used to introduce direct discourse from a נביא in Jer 26.9; 32.3; 23.25; 27.16; 37.19; cf. 25.30. The combination of the infinitive absolute אמרים with the participle אוּרִים in Jer 23.17 is unique to the book.
who are said to be prophesying falsely in YHWH's name ((Student: הנבאים מספרים שקר)). Dreams are likened to other oracular messages in 23.28; the who has a dream is to report it (Student: piel), and the who has YHWH's word is to declare it (Student: piel).

Not all of a prophet's communicative acts are strictly verbal. The physical actions of Hananiah taking (לך qal) yoke bars and breaking them (شرح qal) accompany his oracle in the temple (Jer 28.10). In turn, Jeremiah refers to this act as a metaphor for YHWH's judgment against Hananiah (28.13).

is the subject of two verbs for deceit (Student: piel, נביה hiphil) that also are closely related to communication. In Jer 5.12 the prophets are accused of being unfaithful to YHWH (rebbe הבותה) because they say (_trajectory qal) they will not see disaster or destruction.26

Two verbs which appear to be closely related to the semantic field of communication are ונה niphal and ונה hithpael. The lexeme נביא is the subject of finite verbal forms of נביא in Jer 23.13 and 28.6. Here the critical question is the extent to which this signifies verbal speech.27 In the two instances of finite forms in Jeremiah, there is not much clear evidence. There appears to be a focus on the verbal element in 28.6, where Jeremiah responds to refers to the words which Hananiah prophesied (ברר אשר נבאת), and repeats part of Hananiah's message. Hananiah speaks (_trajectory qal) to Jeremiah and those gathered in the temple in 28.1. The behaviour of the prophets of Samaria in 23.13 is less clear; it is difficult to determine from context if the הנביא niphal refers to more than verbal speech here. Movement is associated with the lexeme הנביא in a similar fashion in 23.21, where niphal is in parallel with 드 qal.

In a critical context, the lexeme הנביא is the subject of רפא piel, a word for healing and restoration (Jer 6.14 = 8.11). The accusation that 'they heal the wound of my people'

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26 There is some disagreement over text boundaries for Jer 5.12–14. In support of reading 5.12 independently of 5.11, where could function as the subject of in 5.12, see McKane, Jeremiah i-xv, ICC, Edinburgh, 1986, 121.

27 Here it is worth noting the debate concerning semantic development in verbal forms of נביא. Where it appears that the verb specifies a form of communicative speech in Jeremiah (cf. Jer 29.26), other instances seem to suggest observable behaviour (e.g. 1 Sam 10.6). See Jeremias, Jeremiah, THAT II, 11-12; Meier, Speaking of Speaking, VTS 46, Leiden, 1992, 196. Cf. the view that 도 not just mean speaking is shown by 도 as found in Ezek 21.14, 33: 30.2; 34.2; 36.1, 3, 6; 37.4, 9, 12; 38.14; 39.1 (HALOT 1, 659). However, the patterns of marking direct speech in Ezekiel are highly formulaic and structured, especially in Ezek 11.14–39.29. Meier, Speaking of Speaking, 230-39. The examples cited in HALOT may be more illustrative of a literary tendency than a semantic difference between the two verbs. See also Meier, Speaking of Speaking, 195-97.
Lexemes which pertain to a command or instruction (יהוה piel, קים hiphil and qal) take שליח as a subject in a few contexts, particularly the character of Jeremiah. Baruch ben Neriah does what Jeremiah instructs him (בכל גזרות) by reading from a scroll in the Jerusalem temple (Jer 36.8). The Seraiah colophon relates the instructions (הזרה איש, שם חזק) that Jeremiah gives to Seraiah, the ‘quartermaster’ (שבר מעזה), in 51.59. Jeremiah sends (שלוח qal) a letter to the deportees in Babylon (29.1). The letter quotes in 29.15 the claim made by the people that YHWH has raised up prophets for them in Babylon (הכמים מִיַּחֲדַשׁ שָׁלְחֵנֵי בָבֶל).

A number of lexemes related to inquiry or requests made toward a deity (דרש qal, מנהיג qal, היפיאות למקהל) take נביא as a subject. In context, מנהיג qal, היפיאות למקהל and qal are used to describe settings where a נביא mediates between YHWH and another party (Jer 23.33; 27.18; 37.3. 42.2). The sense of דרש qal in 8.1–3 parallels this inquiry with acts of religious worship.228

Words related to religious devotion or service are frequently paired with נביא. The lexemes והב qal, הבש hiphil, חשה היפlicants qal, פנים qal, שָׁמַע hiphil and היפlicants qal are used to describe settings where a נביא mediates between YHWH and another party (Jer 23.33; 27.18; 37.3. 42.2). The sense of דרש qal in 8.1–3 parallels this inquiry with acts of religious worship. Words which indicate forms of help (יהוה piel, והב piel) describe religiously motivated activity of prophets in relation to other people. Prophets are said to ‘do’ (עשה qal) abominable things (לשהיים) in 6.15 = 8.12, which is a criticism largely concerned with religious behaviour (cf. 28.13; 32.32; 38.12).

Knowledge is a semantic field associated with נביא where it is the subject of ידע qal and ידע niphal. Most of these instances refer to a lack of knowledge. The context in Jer 14.18 is critical of prophets who lack knowledge despite ‘roaming’ (המר qal) the land, and in 6.15 = 8.12 prophets are accused of lacking a sense of shame, not aware of their humiliation (הכלים). In 1.6 the verb refers to a lack of ability or authorisation, as Jeremiah says he does not know how to speak (אמר qal). The niphal verb in 28.9 refers to a prophet being known or recognised as such.

228 Thelle, Ask God, BET 30, Frankfurt am Main, 2002, 225.
Verbs for listening (šamā' qal) take the lexeme נביא as a subject in contexts where speech is recognised or affirmed. Jeremiah tells Hananiah to listen (šamā' qal) both as he responds to him in the Jerusalem temple and when he delivers an oracle against him (Jer 28.7, 15). When asked by military officers to grant their request for prayer, Jeremiah acknowledges that he has heard them (šem'ah) and that he will pray accordingly (םברך) in Jer 42.4.

A range of semantic fields are associated with נביא in contexts of punishment or threat. Along with other professional classes, prophets are told their bones will not be gathered (נברא niphal) for burial (קבר niphal) in Jer 8.2. Death (מות qal, מוות hiphil) is both a threat to Jeremiah (38.9, 10, 15, 16) and a consequence of YHWH’s judgment in Hananiah’s case (28.17). Falling (בסל niphal, תמר qal) and being pushed (הדוה niphal) are parts of metaphors for punishment (6.15 = 8.12; 23.12), and the sense of being made complete (נטה qal) is associated with judgment. Imprisonment is implied in the context of descriptions of literal, physical force, as in being cast (שלך hiphil) into a pit (38.9), or hiding ( Parses hiphil) in order to avoid arrest in 36.26.

Emotional or mental states are described in several contexts. נביא is the subject of verbs for shame (בוש qal, בוש hiphil), in Jer 2.26 where it is compared to a caught thief (הכשת גנב וכילא), and in 6.15 = 8.12 where it results from doing abominable things (נוחה שעשוי). Prophets are said to be in a state of shock, as described by the verb תמה qal, in 4.9.

A variety of physical actions and activities are associated with נביא. The lexeme is the subject of verbs for movement (בעש qal, בוש hiphil, הלך qal, שחר qal, והר qal), sometimes in a literal sense (Jer 28.11; 37.16) and also in metaphors for prophesying (23.21), or worship and religious fidelity (1.8; 2.8; 8.2; 14.18). Sensory verbs for sight (ראה qal) and hearing (שמע qal) take נביא as a subject, as well as drinking (שאך hiphil), or residing (נוש qal, והר hiphil). The ‘to be’ verb (יהיה qal) is used with נביא to refer generally to their existence in the past (28.8), and negatively to their state in the future (5.13; 8.2).

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230 This is the only instance of the verb תמה in Jeremiah; cf. Gen 49.33; Deut 28.28; Isa 13.8; 29.9; Hab 1.5; Zech 12.4; Ps 48.6; Job 26.11; Eccl 5.7.

231 The phrase ירא את יהוה in Jer 2.26a is expanded 2.26b, where המה מﻠיטים שורים והותים adds specificity to the subject of the verb.

232 In Jer 4.9b נביא qal parallelsniphal, and is related to the phrase מבך מבך in 4.9a.

233 Both Jer 5.13 and 8.2 use the verb יהיה qal in similes which refer to future judgments against prophets. In 5.13 the prophets will become ‘like breath’. In 8.2 they will become ‘like dung’.
1.2.3. נביא as object of a finite verb

The lexeme נביא is the grammatical object of 40 verbs formed from 40 different roots.

Table 3. נביא as object of a finite verb

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexeme</th>
<th>Binyan</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>References</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>אבד</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>xi</td>
<td>'perish'</td>
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<td>qal</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'eat'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>אמר</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>x14</td>
<td>'say'</td>
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<tr>
<td>אסק</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'gather'</td>
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<td>hiphil</td>
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<td>'go'</td>
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<tr>
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<td>x1</td>
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<td>x1</td>
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<td>qal</td>
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<td>'answer'</td>
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<tr>
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<td>qal</td>
<td>x1</td>
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<td>piel</td>
<td>x4</td>
<td>'command'</td>
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<td>qal</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'be angry'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ראו</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>x2</td>
<td>'see'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References:
Jer 2.30; 23.21; 25.2; 46.13; 38.14; 42.2; 5; 13, 15; 38.14; 42.2; 5; 13, 15; Jer 1.5; Jer 2.27; Jer 28.1, 5, 11, 13, 15; Jer 1.15; Jer 1.5; Jer 37.14; Jer 2.26; Jer 6.15 = 8.12; Jer 14.15; 23.15, 33, 37; 26.16; 28.1, 5, 6, 11; Jer 46.1; 47.1; 49.34; Jer 38.14; 42.2; 5; Jer 32.3; Jer 38.14; 43.5; Jer 38.15, 16; Jer 42.1; Jer 43.6; Jer 23.33; Jer 20.2, 37.15; Jer 13.14; Jer 1.5; 37.4, 15; 38.7, 16 (!); Jer 36.26; Jer 38.10, 13; Jer 23.37; Jer 38.9; Jer 6.15 = 8.12; 23.34; Jer 1.7; 14.14; 23.32; 32.35; Jer 1.5; Jer 29.15; Jer 37.15; Jer 23.13, 14.
One of the most frequent associations with בָּעָשׁ in this list are verbs related to instructions or commands (気に qal, הָגֵשׁ piel, קְוָשׁ hiphil, נָשָׁה qal). These verbs are all used in contexts where the authority or validity of a בָּעָשׁ is discussed. The verb that most frequently takes בָּעָשׁ as object, with 19 occurrences, is בָּעָשׁ qal.\(^{333}\) YHWH is usually the subject (Jer 1.7; 7.25; 25.4; 26.5; 29.19; 35.15; 44.4), though a בָּעָשׁ is also sent to YHWH by a human party to intercede on their behalf (37.7; 42.6, 9, 20).\(^{334}\) Six passages in Jeremiah describe YHWH sending ‘sent’ בָּעָשׁ qal.\(^{335}\) and in each instance the lexeme ‘sending’ הבש הַנְּבֵיאִים is used adverbially with בָּעָשׁ qal.\(^{336}\) These terms are also related to ‘send’ piel, as in 14.14 where Jeremiah relays YHWH’s claim that he has neither sent (לֹא בָּרָא) nor commanded (לֹא עָשִּׂי), nor spoken to prophets (לֹא דָּרָה)...

\(^{333}\) In Jer 23.33–40 YHWH rejects those who ask about the בָּעָשׁ that he has sent (23.38). When Johanan ben Kareah and Jezeaniah ben Hoshaiyah ask Jeremiah to pray on their behalf, they promise to do so (42.5). After Jeremiah warns Azariah and Johanan against going to Egypt, the narrative describes the message as all the words יִשָּׂא יְהוָ הַנְּבֵיאִים (43.1). In these instances the reference to ‘being sent’ is related to the message relayed through a בָּעָשׁ. There are also references to Jeremiah ‘sending’ messages to his audiences, such as yoke bars to royal envoys (27.3) or letters and messages to Judaeans in Babylon (29.1, 3, 28, 31; cf. 29.25).

\(^{334}\) Twice Zedekiah sends priests to Jeremiah to ask him to pray to (פָּלוּ) or inquire of (דָּרָה) YHWH on their behalf (Jer 21.1–2; 37.3, 7). In another text the king sends for Jeremiah in order to ask (שָׁאֵל) for counsel regarding military affairs (38.14). On the technical dimensions of these terms, see Thelle, Ask Go. In another instance Johanan ben Kareah and ‘all the people’ send Jeremiah to YHWH to intercede on their behalf (42.6, 9, 20).

\(^{335}\) Five of these texts repeat the same phrase with only some variation: יִשָּׂא יְהוָ הַנְּבֵיאִים את מִלְּךָ אֲנֵהוֹלֵי (7.25). Only in 25.4 is the phrase used in third person, where Jeremiah declares YHWH’s ‘sending’ (i.e. הבש) אֲנֵהוֹלֵי (7.25) in contrast with the obstinate unwillingness of the people to repent. Cf. 2 Kgs 17.13–14; cf. 17.23; 21.10; 24.2. See the discussion in Sharp, Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah, 41–80.

\(^{336}\) The combination of הבש and בָּעָשׁ is used in reference to my servants the prophets’ six times in the book with positive connotations (Jer 7.25; 25.4; 26.5; 29.19; 35.15; 44.4). The phrase occurs 24 times in the Hebrew Bible (cf. 2 Kgs 9.7; 17.13; 21.10; 24.2; Amos 3.7; Zech 1.6; Dan 9.6, 10; Ezra 9.1).
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In five negative oracles YHWH claims that his prophets were not sent (14.14–15; 23.21, 32; 27.15; 29.9). Jeremiah rejects Hananiah’s oracle in 28.15 by claiming that YHWH spoke falsely and he warns the Judean deportees in Babylon not to listen to his prophets and that YHWH has not sent them since they have not been sent (29.9).  

YHWH gives Jeremiah instructions in Jer. 1.7 with the phrase עליכם נביא, which parallels אולוך הוא נביא.  

In all but one instance, the lexemepiel takes שלחנ as subject in parallel with את אלוהים שלחנ. In 32.35, יכרע שלחנ נביא as object, in parallel with YHWH-regarding religious sacrifices. The lexemespiel, hiphil, qal and יכדר qal also are used in the semantic sense of commanding or instructing. The verbs parallel each other in 1.5, where YHWH commissions Jeremiah as a נביא לארץ נביא and again in 23.15. The lexemeקחרב hiphil also relates to this semantic field when the Judean deportees claim that YHWH has raised up prophets for them in Babylon (29.15).  

Lexemes in the semantic field of communication (אמר qal, דבר piel, ענה qal) take נביא as object, as prophets are addressed in oracles (Jer 14.15; 23.15, 33, 37) and in narratives (26.16; 28.1, 5, 6, 11, 13, 15; 38.14; 42.2, 5). Speech in the form of an answer (anzaq qal) is directed toward a נביא נביא in 23.33. In a similar sense, נביא qal in 42.1, as military officers ‘approach’ Jeremiah for consultation and for him to pray to YHWH on their behalf. In formulaic clichés that introduce prophetic speech, the verb for existence (יהוה qal) describes a word (דבר) coming or being present with a נביא נביא in 46.1; 47.1; 49.34.  

Some highly negative verbs take נביא as object in contexts related to judgment or punishment. Death (אמר qal, מות hiphil) is a threat made against prophets (Jer 27.15) and a feared consequence of prophetic speech (38.15, 16). Eating (أكل qal) is a metaphor for death in the phrase אחלה הרצבים נביאים (‘your sword has consumed your prophets’) in 2.30. General threats of punishment ( ++) by YHWH in 6.15 = 8.12; 23.34, and more specific warnings of destruction in the form of smashing (++ piel) in 13.14 and being

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337 The phraseעליכם נביא is found in Jer 14.14; 23.32. Being ‘sent’ (ﺸלחנ qal) and being ‘spoken to’ (דבר piel) are parallel concepts in 23.21.
338 This is a claim also levelled against Jeremiah by Azariah ben Hoshaiyah and Johanan ben Kareah in their flight to Egypt (Jer 43.2).
339 Only twice in these occurrences does שלחנ qal take the prepositionלע. In Jer. 1.7, YHWH instructs Jeremiah to go לע with the phrase Shelby והיהו לע, and in 26.15 Jeremiah claims to his audience in the temple that ושלי היהו לע. In most other cases צו is used instead; see 7.25; 25.4; 29.19; 35.15; 42.5; 44.4. Some of Jeremiah’s activity is couched in language related to ‘being sent’ to perform a task by YHWH (see 19.14; 23.15; 17; 26.15).
340 The prophetic clichéלכ ה פ י גר י יוהו כעבאתה לעenuine is in Jer 14.15; 23.15 introduces oracles directed against prophets (cf. 23.9).
thrown (נמצא qal) in 23:33 all take נביא as object. Even post-mortem threats are made against prophets, whose bones, instead of being gathered for burial, will be spread out (נמצא qal) like dung on the ground in 8.2.

Lexemes related to the use of physical force or restraint are used in relation to נביא. A series of words in this general semantic field take נביא as object in reference to imprisonment. Prophets are the object of verbs for being restrained (והלך qal) in Jer 32.3, taken (והלך qal) in 38.14: 43.5, seized (התפס qal) in 26.8; 37.13, 14, and brought (והלך hiphil) before officials in 37.14. After being taken into custody, Jeremiah is resettled (והלך hiphil) in Egypt (43.6). Twice Jeremiah is struck (והלך) by priests as a form of official censure (20.2; 37.15). Jeremiah is both cast (והלך) into a pit (8.9) and put (ותפש qal) into a pit (8.7); similarly he is put (ותפש qal) into prison (37.4, 15). The king assures Jeremiah that he will not put him in the hand (אחת ביד) of those who seek his life in 38.16. In order to escape punishment or censure, Jeremiah and Baruch are hidden (והלך hiphil) in 36.26; Jeremiah is released (והלך hiphil) from prison in 20.3, and rescued from the pit by being pulled out (ותפש qal) in 38.13 and brought up (ותפש hiphil) in 38.10, 13.

Verbs in the semantic field of emotional states are used in relation to נביא. In Jer 2.26 and 6.15 = 8.12, prophets are threatened with shame (והלך hiphil). In 37.15, officials (שרי) become angry (שמש qal) with Jeremiah after he is accused of defecting to the foreign Babylonian army (38.11–14).

Verbs related to the senses take נביא as object, as prophets are both heard (שמע qal) in Jer 23.25; 26.7; 27.9, 14, 16; 29.8; 37.14; 38.15 and seen (ראה qal) in 23.13, 14. The semantic range of 'hearing' includes auditory perception (23.25; 26.7) or more specifically listening to or heeding a prophet (27.9, 14, 16; 29.8; 37.14; 38.15).

Some lexemes refer to religious concepts. Two religious statements in Jer 2.27 are a part of a religious critique of prophets. 'Confessional' statements are made to idols made of wood and stone; they are acknowledged as 'my father' (אב) and as the one who gave birth to the prophets (לד qal). In a time of need the prophets are accused of asking them to rise up (🐎 qal) and to help (שמע hiphil) them.

1.2.4. נביא with a non-finite verb

The lexeme נביא is associated with 26 participles formed from 23 verbal roots. Of these participles, 22 are in absolute state and 4 are in construct state. נביא is also associated
with 28 infinitives formed from 22 verbal roots. Of these infinitives, 10 are infinitive absolutes and 17 are infinitive constructs.

### Table 4. נביא with a non-finite verb

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexeme</th>
<th>Binyan</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>References</th>
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<tr>
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<td>absolute</td>
<td>x1</td>
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<td>absolute</td>
<td>x1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>construct</td>
<td>x1</td>
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<td>absolute</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'think'</td>
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<td>infinitive</td>
<td>construct</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'be unclean'</td>
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<td>construct</td>
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<td>x1</td>
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<tr>
<td>צחק</td>
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<td>construct</td>
<td>x2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>מת</td>
<td>qal</td>
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<td>'die'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>מת</td>
<td>hiphil</td>
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<td>absolute</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'die'</td>
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<tr>
<td>מלא</td>
<td>piel</td>
<td>participle</td>
<td>absolute</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'fill'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נאך</td>
<td>piel</td>
<td>participle</td>
<td>absolute</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>'commit adultery'</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Lexemes which refer to a kind of command or instruction, whether sending (שלח qal, שלח piel) or teaching (למד piel), describe the lexeme נביא. YHWH is the agent in most instances of these non-finite forms (Jer 25.4; 26.5; 28.16; 29.19; 32.33; 35.15; 44.4). The most common theme associated with the infinitive absolute שלח qal is YHWH sending (שלח qal) his servants the prophets (25.4; 26.5; 29.19; 35.15; 44.4). 241 Each instance of this motif

241 Note the single instance an absolute participle in the motif in Jer 26.5.
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includes the phrase נביאיכם שלח, where YHWH’s ‘sending’ of the prophets is characterised by a sense of persistence with נביא כם hiphil.44 In the other instances where the agent of שלח qal is not YHWH, Zedekiah is described as ‘sending’ for Jeremiah in 37.7, and the people are described as ‘sending’ Jeremiah to YHWH to pray on their behalf in 42.6.

Prophets who are not sent or commanded are accused of doing the people no good (edores lev) in Jer 23.32. The combined finite and infinitive forms of עלי hiphil here describe the semantic field of value. Similarly with the lexeme דבר hiphil, prophets are accused of making their audience empty (מבהלה) in 23.16; the sense in 23.16 is similar to 23.32, since the claim is that their prophecies have no value.

A range of non-finite forms in the semantic field of communication דבר אמרים qal, דברpiel, דבר niphal) refer to actions performed by a speaker. The most frequent forms are derived from דבר qal. Speech quotations are frequently introduced by the infinitive construct (Jer 5.14, passim) and participles from דבר qal (2.27; 14.13; 15; 23.17; 27.9, 14). One instance of a participle from דבר qal in 28.7 introduces speech in a similar fashion. Speech is associated with knowledge or ability (ידע qal) in the phrase לא ידעך דבר in 1.6. Participles from הניב niphal parallel these and similar words for speech (14.15; 23.16, 25; 27.16).44 Speech is likened to theft (ניבו piel) in 23.30, and prophets are accused of taking (לך qal) their tongues and, literally, ‘oracling an oracle’ (חרמאNEWS niphal) in 23.31.

Non-finite forms of lexemes related to consultation (לעה piel, פלע hithpael, שאץ qal, שאץ niphal) are found in relation to דבר qal and related finite verbs. Priests are sent to Jeremiah in order to inquire (לא דבר qal) of YHWH in Jer 37.7 and king Zedekiah asks (שאץ qal) for a word in 38.14. Jeremiah agrees to pray (פלע hithpael) according to the request made by military officers in 42.4.

Dreaming (לע תѣ hiphil) is associated with ניבו in Jer 29.8. Jeremiah warns the Judaeans in Babylon against listening to the dreams of their prophets (ניבים) and diviners (המכת). The phrasing of Jeremiah’s instruction not to listen to the dreams of the proph-

44 See ‘again and again, persistently’ (DCH VIII, 354), ‘eifrig, auszudrücken’ (Gesenius’, 826–27), ‘diligenter, studiose, indefesse’ (Zorell, 842). See also the phrases אמרים והשמ ניrier (Jer 7.13; 25.3; 33.14), אמרים והשמ ניrier (קך וירצ) (11.7), and אמרים והשמ ניrier (32.33).

44 Participial forms of הניב niphal are directly associated with speech in Jer 23.25, 27.16 and 32.3, where they are followed with the infinitive construct Vânא hiphil. In these texts the quotation formula introduces the content of what the participle Vânא niphal signifies.
ets (לא תשמו את 함יתיכם אשר את מחלימים) indicates a form of communication which can be heard and therefore heeded.

Planning (הָשַׁב qal) is associated with נביא in the critical context of Jer 23.26. Here prophets are accused of intending to cause YHWH’s people to forget (was התה hiphil) his name by means of their dreams.

In Jer 6.14 = 8.11, the lexeme נביא is the subject of the verb ראה piel. They are described as healing the wound of YHWH’s people (ממלא את שבר עמי qal, ירפש את שבר עמי hiphil) ‘lightly’ or ‘offhandedly’ ( üzerine נפל fi). The participle from כל niphal is related to the semantic field of help along with the verb ראה piel which it modifies.

Death (רומ qal, רומ hiphil), destruction (שבר qal, שבר hiphil) and punishment (שחת qal, שחת hiphil) are concepts associated with נביא in a variety of negative contexts (Jer 13.14; 27.15; 28.12; 35.15). Verbal forms of these lexemes take both human and divine subjects. YHWH declares that he will smash (שבר qal) and destroy (שחת hiphil) prophets without pity or mercy in 13.14. In 28.16,hlen piel is used euphemistically for death as Jeremiah tells Hananiah that YHWH will send him off the face of the earth (משלאך מעל פניו הארץ). Falling (נפל qal) is associated with YHWH’s judgment against prophets in 6.15 = 8.12. Being filled (ממלא piel) with drunkenness is a metaphor for YHWH’s judgment directed against prophets in 13.13.

In the negative context of Jer 23.12, eating (הוטל hiphil) is a participle which takes נביא as its object. YHWH will make prophets eat wormwood (тсяלקים) and they will drink bitter waters (השקחתים 믿 ראש); while these acts could be metaphors for punishment, it is more likely that they refer to a ritual ordeal which tests its participants for their trustworthiness. Perhaps similarly, YHWH declares that he will fill (ממלא) with drunkenness a range of civic and religious leaders in 13.13.

The lexeme נביא is associated with emotional states (כעס וות hiphil, כעס אל hiphil, כעס כל hiphil, כעס כעל hiphil), both as the recipient (Jer 6.15 = 8.12) and as the agent (32.32). It is also related to words which signify movement (נביא כעל qal, לול hiphil) and physical activity (עש). Jeremiah’s vision (ראה qal) is referred to in 42.2, where military leaders acknowledge that he can see their desperate state. Falling (נפל qal) is used to refer to a נביא לול defecting an enemy army in 37.13, 14. Also, Jehoiakim seeks to apprehend (לול qal) Jeremiah and Baruch in 36.26, and Jeremiah is bound (רור qal) in prison in 32.2.
The semantic field of purity and cleanliness refers to the lexeme בְּנֵי תֵבָא with the strongly religious terms הנָשָׁה, הַשָּׁם הָיָה and בְּנֵי הָיָה. Figures who are a part of the Judaean leadership are accused in Jer 32.32–35 of religious and cultic failures, which YHWH associates with 'defiling' (כָּמָה piel) his temple and causing the people to sin (כָּמָה hiphil). Rather than listen (שָׁמְע qal) or take instruction (לָעַב qal) from YHWH, these leaders turned their backs. Sexual infidelity is used as metaphor for religious devotion when prophets are accused of adultery (נָשָׁה qal) in 23.10, 14. The participle in the phrase 'adulterers fill the land' (מַגְאִים מִלְאָה הָאָרֶץ) in 23.10 most likely refers to prophets, and the infinitive absolute הָאָרֶץ in 23.14 is a part of the Jerusalem prophets' behaviour that YHWH finds objectionable (רָשָׁע רֶשֶׁע).

1.2.5. Summary

Summarising the syntagmatic analysis of בְּנֵי תֵבָא, the most frequent collocations with בְּנֵי תֵבָא involve proper names; this accounts for nearly half of all occurrences of בְּנֵי תֵבָא in Jeremiah. Combinations of the lexemes בְּנֵי תֵבָא וּבְנֵי תֵבָא are quite frequent; another oft-used phrase is בְּנֵי תֵבָא מְלַאֵים מִלְאָה הָאָרֶץ. The semantic field whose verbs most frequently takes בְּנֵי תֵבָא as a subject is communication (qal,piel,hiphil,transit,transitive), command or instruction (qal,piel,hiphil andpiel), worship and religious service (qal,piel,hiphil,transitive,transitive), Another semantic field which seems significant is purity or integrity (qal,piel,transitive,transitive). These verbs are all syntagmatically related to בְּנֵי תֵבָא.

1.3. Paradigmatic data

The semantic field of the lexeme בְּנֵי תֵבָא will consist of words which describe the same conceptual field and share with it a syntagmatic or paradigmatic relation. So, in order to describe its semantic field, it is necessary to examine words with a paradigmatic relation to בְּנֵי תֵבָא. This will include words and collocations which are the subject or object of the

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Footnotes:

444 The following lexemes are listed as synonyms of בְּנֵי תֵבָא in DCH V, 599: "seer", "pray", "diviner", "cohen", "oracle", "prophet", "wise one", "priest", "judge", "head", "king", "ruler", "loyal one", "people", "soothsayer", "sorcerer", "messenger", "head", "king", "ruler", "loyal one", "people". Only כָּמָה ("elder") is listed as an antonym.

445 Words such as prepositions, proper names and particles have been excluded from this list. It is more...
same verb as נבּא, are used in parallel with נבּא, or are syntactically related to נבּא. Such words are found in Table 5, which is discussed in detail below.

Table 5. Lexemes paradigmatically related to נבּא

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexeme/Collocation</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>איש יהודה</td>
<td>'men of Judah'</td>
<td>Jer 32.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בית ישראל</td>
<td>'house of Israel'</td>
<td>Jer 2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בנות המלך</td>
<td>'daughters of the king'</td>
<td>Jer 43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בני יהודה</td>
<td>'sons of Judah'</td>
<td>Jer 32.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בני ישראל</td>
<td>'sons of Israel'</td>
<td>Jer 32.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בכי פקד</td>
<td>'guard officer'</td>
<td>Jer 37.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>זכר</td>
<td>'man'</td>
<td>Jer 43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>גנב</td>
<td>'thief'</td>
<td>Jer 2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>השירים וה услуги</td>
<td>'the officers and all the people'</td>
<td>Jer 26.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>זקנים הארץ</td>
<td>'elders of the land'</td>
<td>Jer 26.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>זקנים הכהנים</td>
<td>'elders of the priests'</td>
<td>Jer 19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>זקנים הים</td>
<td>'elders of the people'</td>
<td>Jer 19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>חכם</td>
<td>'sage'</td>
<td>Jer 18.18 (cf. 50.35; 51.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נכ</td>
<td>'children'</td>
<td>Jer 43.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>תושבי ירושלים</td>
<td>'inhabitants of Jerusalem'</td>
<td>Jer 8.1; 13.13; 25.2; 32.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>תושבי הארץ</td>
<td>'inhabitants of the land'</td>
<td>Jer 13.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>זקני הגלות</td>
<td>'prominent elders of the exiles'</td>
<td>Jer 29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כהן</td>
<td>'priest'</td>
<td>Jer 2.8; 4.9; 5.31; 6.13 = 8.10; 8.1; 13.13; 14.18; 18.18; 20.1; 23.11, 33, 34; 26.7, 8, 11, 16; 27.16; 28.1, 5; 29.1, 29; 32.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>קש</td>
<td>'magician'</td>
<td>Jer 27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>מלך</td>
<td>'king'</td>
<td>Jer 4.9; 8.1; 32.32; 37.3; 38.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>מלכי יהודה</td>
<td>'kings of Judah'</td>
<td>Jer 8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נער</td>
<td>'youth'</td>
<td>Jer 1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נפש</td>
<td>'living thing'</td>
<td>Jer 43.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

helpful to comment on particular collocations and syntactic constructions. This analysis follows Table 1.

I understand ‘parallelism’ in terms of Kugel’s description, summarised as ‘A is so, and what’s more, B’. The basic phenomenon is ‘the recurrent use of a relatively short sentence-form that consists of two brief clauses, where the second clause, B, has an emphatic, “seconding” character’. Kugel, Idea of Biblical Poetry, New Haven, CT, 1991, 1, 23, 51. For a positive reference to Kugel, and a detailed account of parallelism in poetic use, see Watson, Traditional Techniques in Classical Hebrew Verse, JSOTS 170, Sheffield, 1994, 114-59, esp. 114-22.
One place to start with analysing the semantic field of נביא are lists where the lexeme is found along with other similar words. Such lists are found in three texts which refer to נביא as a subset of a larger group (Jer 2.26–28; 8.1–3; 32.32–35). In these texts, נביא is paradigmatically related to the collocations ‘the house of Israel’ (בת ישראל), ‘the sons of Israel’ (בני ישראל) and ‘the sons of Judah’ (בני יהודה), which refer to larger national or ethnic categories. Each of these texts is explicitly critical of (alleged) cultic and religious practices: requesting help and assistance from idols (2.26), astral worship (8.2), illicit sacrifices to other gods and defilement of sacred space (32.34–35). The 베ית ישראל, בני ישראל and בני יהודה are held responsible for these practices, which are then more specifically associated with particular public and religious functionaries.

In Jer 2.26 YHWH criticises the idolatrous practices of the ‘house of Israel’ (בת ישראל), likening it to a thief (גנב) who has been caught in the act of stealing. An independent pronoun הניה then specifies a subset of the house of Israel subject to YHWH’s criticism with a list of lexemes, each with possessive suffixes: ‘their kings, their officers, their priests and their prophets’ (מלכותם שרים וכהניהם ונביאותם). A similar pattern is found in Jer 32.32, where YHWH expresses his frustration with the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah, who have acted wickedly so as to anger him (עש יתברעתי). Similar to 2.26,
Chapter 2. Semantic analysis of נביא in Jeremiah

the pronoun הוה in 32.32 lists lexemes belonging to these two groups, each with possessive suffixes and sub-grouped into smaller categories: first kings and officers (מלך ושרים), then priests and prophets (כהנים ונביאים), and finally the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem’ (אשי השליה והנני יהוד). A similar list of nouns appears in Jer 8.1. The text specifies groups of individuals whose bones YHWH says will be disinterred and desecrated: יושבי ירושלים, נביאים, כוהנים, מלכי יהודה, and לעם ברית, שערי יהודה. The only item in the list with a suffix is שערי יהודה, which seems to refer to the kings of Judah in the collocation מלכי יהודה. The two collocations יושבי ירושלים and מלכי יהודה bookend the list. Where the lexemes ממלך and שר appear to share a syntactic relation to יושב, יהודה, andمري is collocated with והeğin יהדות, the lexemes כהן and נביא remain without any further specification.

These paradigmatic relationships, between ממלך and שר and between כהן and נביא, are generally found in this arrangement throughout Jeremiah.247 The semantic pattern is like a simile: as ממלך relates to שר, so כהן relates to נביא.248 To trace this semantic pattern, it will be helpful to examine the occurrences of these terms together.

A similar list of collocations and lexemes is found in Jer 13.13. YHWH declares his intent to fill these individuals with drunkenness (_Mouseion שכרו), smash them, and destroy them. The collocations מַלְכָּם and מלכי יהודה and מְלֹא וְנַבַּיִם and נביאים环卫 את הארץ, as well as the priests and the prophets. Again, the lexemes כהן ושר are referred to generally, while other parties are referred to more specifically (cf. 2.26; 8.1; 32.32).

Parallelisms that include the lexemes כהן, נביא, ממלך and שר are found in other texts. All four terms are found in a negative passage which describes YHWH’s judgment (Jer 4.9). ממלך and שר are governed by the same verb and are described as suffering a loss of will (אבדות). Two phrases then describe states of shock experienced by הכוהן and

247 The lexemes ממלך and שר are also collocated together in contexts where נביא is absent. See Jer 1.18; 3.25; 24.1; 8; 25.18, 19; 26.21; 29.2; 34.21; 36.21; 38.22; 39.3, 13; 44.17, 21; 49.38.
248 Two texts that go against this trend are Jer 48.7 and 49.3. These texts make very similar claims against the deities Chemosh and Milcom (Q מַלְכָּם is preferable to K כְּפַדָּם in Jer 48.7. In 49.1, 3 the word מֶלֶךְ should be repointed כְּפַדָּם). Together with הנביאים ושרים, they will go into exile. In Jer 48.7, Chemosh will go (וְנַבַּיִם qal) into exile, and in 49.3, Milcom will go (מלך qal) into exile. These are unique instances where כְּפַדָּם and שר are isolated together in parallel with possessive suffixes. The statements are nearly identical, but differ slightly in their phrasing. Here שר seems to refer to a religious official (contra HALOT II, 1351). The lexeme שר has a wide range of semantic uses; see DCH VIII, 182–90.
The priests will be appalled (昬ע niphal) and the prophets will be astounded (החו qal).

In Jer 26.1–23, a text which narrates Jeremiah’s trial, the three classes of ‘the priests, the prophets and all the people’ (הכהנים והנביאים وكل העם) engage in a kind of legal proceedings with the ‘officers of Judah’ (שרי יהודה) after hearing Jeremiah’s speech in the temple (26.10–11). In the ensuing dialogue, the parties split into two ‘sides’, one being (הכהנים והנביאים (26.11, 16) and the other (השרים ואלה בני העם (26.12, 16). Eventually, a group of people from the elders of the land (כלה בני העם) address both parties and advocate on Jeremiah’s behalf (26.17–23). They also cite the case of another individual who was executed by the king on account of his prophesying; this was after his message was heard by the king, all his warriors (כל גבורי), and all his officers (כל השם). Similarly, Jeremiah speaks to all the priests and the people (כל הכהנים וכל העם) as a group in order to warn them against listening to prophets who are prophesying to them (27.16). Both Hananiah and Jeremiah address one another in the presence of the priests and the people (ליעז הנביאים וליעז כל העם), who are described as ‘standing’ (ממד qal) in what appears to be an official capacity in the Jerusalem temple (28.1, 5).

In a number of other texts הכהין and בני are used together in a word pair or in a parallelism. As a word pair where both lexemes are grammatically singular, they are accused of greed (Jer 6.13 = 8.10), lacking knowledge (14.18), and godlessness (23.11). They are also described as asking (שאלו qal) for an oracle from YHWH in 23.33, an act which is viewed negatively in context.

Singular forms are also found in parallel with other lexemes and collocations. An unspecified group expresses confidence in a series of religious functions in Jer 18.18: ‘instruction from the priest’ (רור מכהן), ‘counsel from the wise’ (עץ חכם), and ‘word from the prophet’ (דבר הנביא). The semantic overlap of the lexemes זכוא and דבר suggests these figures are involved in similar activity. In 23.33–40, should a prophet, priest or people (עם) request particular oracles, YHWH declares he will punish them and their house (23.34).

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45 Cf. the phrase שניהם مكان האור in Jer 26.17 with the phrase בני בני יחזק אל in 19.1.
As plurals, they are depicted as acting in concert in Jer 5.31; as the prophets prophesy falsely—just how the people like it (הָבָה בְשַׁאֲרָם) (דִּיָּרָה עַל דִּיָּרָה). In Jer 2.8 four groups are criticised together: the priests fail to ask ‘where is YHWH?’ (רָאָה יְהוָה) (הֲמָשַׁר תֹּחֲרֵי) ‘the guardians of the law’ (הָכֹסַם, בְּרֵאשִׁים); ‘the guardians of the law’ (הָכֹסַם, בְּרֵאשִׁים) are accused of not knowing (qal) YHWH; shepherds (הָרַעְשִׁים) are accused of rebelling (qal) against YHWH; and prophets are accused of prophesying by Ba’al. These failures are collectively summarised in the concluding phrase, ‘they went after “no good”’ (אַחֲרָיו לְעֶזֶל הַלְבָּן). In Jer 29.1 priests and prophets are addressed together, along with certain elders among the exiles (וֹודֶר חָכָמִים והָעָם) and all the people (כָּל הָעָם) exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon.59

A series of lexemes parallel נבּאים in Jer 27.9, all of which describe classes of individuals who are giving advice to kings. Jeremiah warns these kings not to listen (שָמַע qal) to their religious specialists, namely, prophets (נביאים), diviners (כָּסִמים), dreams (נשׁים), augurs (כָּסָמִים), and magicians (נביאים). The lexemes נביא and כָּסָמִים are also found together in 29.8, where they are conceptually related to communicating divine messages. Here YHWH warns the Judaean exiles against being deceived (נֶשֶׁת hiphil) by them listening to (שָמַע qal) their dreams.

In the account of his commission as a prophet to the nations (נביא נגוגים) in Jer 1.4–10, Jeremiah protests to YHWH that he does not know how to speak because he is a נער (1.6). The inherent assumption in Jeremiah’s statement is that his status as a נער excludes him from being able to speak as a נבּאים. Thus the relationship between the lexemes נבּאים and נער is construed negatively.

Various additional interactions between a נבּאים and other individuals and groups are attested in Jeremiah. A gatekeeper (יֻלָּד מְפַדָּה) exercises sufficient authority to arrest Jeremiah and bring him before officers (שָרָים) in Jer 37.13–14. Jeremiah is consulted by king Zedekiah in 37.3 and 38.14. Jeremiah hides along with the scribe (נֵפֶר) Baruch in 36.26. In the narrative account of the Judeans’ flight to Egypt (43.4–7), Johanan ben Kareah and the military officers (ל שִׁיאָרִית) take the entire remnant of Judah (ל שִׁיאָרִית)...

59 Following the list of addressees in Jer 29.1, other individuals are referred to as having left Jerusalem: king Jeconiah, the נבּאים (‘queen mother’); the נבּאים (‘eunuch’); the נבּאים (‘eunuch’); the נבּאים (‘eunuch’); as well as the difficult terms נבּאים (‘craftsman’) and נבּאים (‘smith’).
60 For exegetical comments on this text, see chapter 5, section 2.3, page 170.
61 Neither the king, his servants (נֵפֶר) nor the נבּאים (‘eunuch’) listen to (שָמַע qal) the words of a prophet in Jer 37.2.
62 Jeremiah is imprisoned in the house of Jonathan, who is called נבּאים in Jer 37.45.
with them to Tahpanhes in Egypt. General descriptions of the inhabitants include men, women and children, and people who had returned to Judah to sojourn there. More specifically, a group of ‘daughters of the king’ (בנאי המלך), Jeremiah the prophet, and Baruch ben Neriah went with the Judean remnant to Egypt (43.6). In superscriptions and colophons the lexeme נביא is associated with ‘all the people of Judah’ (כל עם יהודה) and ‘all the inhabitants of Jerusalem’ (כל תושבים ירושלים) in 25.2 and the ‘quartermaster’ (שר) in 51.59.  

1.4. Summary of נביא

I have already summarised the syntagmatic analysis of נביא in detail (§1.2.5, p. 60.), so here I will only briefly mention the primary results. In addition to proper names, נביא is most frequently found together with כהן and in the collocation קליעי הבנאים. The semantic fields associated with נביא are communication, command or instruction, worship and religious service, and purity or integrity. This is a rough outline of the syntagmatic relations of נביא.

There are a diverse set of paradigmatic relations for נביא. The most significant of these is כהן, a lexeme which also has a significant syntagmatic relation to נביא. Among the paradigmatic relationships, there is a frequent parallelism between וּכְלֵי מָלֶךְ and וּכְלֵי נָבָיא and which suggests that these terms are interrelated. I would argue that they follow a semantic pattern: as נביא relates to נביא, כהן relates to נביא, כיון שֶׁרָאָה, so כהן relates to נביא. This highlights one of the most important conclusions from the foregoing analysis of the semantic field of נביא. That is, the closest word to נביא, in terms of consistency and frequency of association, is כהן, and the two are used together as a ‘word pair’.

2. Verbal forms from נביא (‘prophesy’)

Verbal forms from נביא appear 40 times in Jeremiah in 36 verses. Of these occurrences, 17 are finite verbs, 21 are participles, and two are infinitive constructs.

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355 See HALOT II, 1352.
356 Jer 2.8; 5.31; 11.21; 14.14 (x2), 15, 16; 19.14; 20.1, 6; 23.13, 16, 21, 25, 26, 32; 25.13, 30; 26.9, 11, 12, 18, 20; 27.10, 14 (x2), 15 (x2), 16 (x2); 28.6, 8, 9; 29.9, 21, 26, 27, 31; 32.3: 37.19.
357 Finite forms are found in Jer 2.8; 5.31; 11.21; 20.1, 6; 23.13, 21; 25.13, 30; 26.9, 11, 20; 28.6, 8, 9; 29.31; 37.19. Participles are found in 14.14 (x2), 15, 16; 23.16, 25, 26, 32; 26.18, 20; 27.10, 14, 15 (x2), 16 (x2); 29.9, 21, 26, 27; 32.3. Infinitive constructs are found in 19.14; 26.12.
2.1. Morphology

The verb נביא (‘prophesy’) is a נב verb from נב. It is widely considered to be a denominative from נב. In Jeremiah, verbal forms of נב occur in niphal and hithpael binyanim. Forms of נב hithpael occur in Jer 14.14; 23.13; 26.20; 29.26, 27.

2.2. Syntagmatic data

The syntagmatic data listed here is primarily restricted to syntax on the levels of phrase, clause and sentence. I have listed collocations with verbal forms of נב (Table 6), subjects of נב (Table 7), and prepositional phrases with נב (Table 9). Lexemes and collocations, with basic information, are listed alphabetically in each table, and followed by my comments.

First, there are some repeating patterns in the use of verbal forms which can be analysed as collocations, and they are listed in Table 6 below. In some instances I have included singular and plural forms of the verb נביא. These decisions are discussed in more detail in my comments.

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258 There is disagreement regarding the form in the phrase נבנוג in Jer 23.12. Unlike other forms, here the masoretic vocalisation indicates doubling of the initial נ. Some hold that the -ן- infix typical of the hithpael stem has been assimilated in the first radical, thus supposing the form *הנתננבע (Bauer-Leander §15; GKC §54c). It is possible the נבנוג in Jer 23.12 results from dittography; see ‘der ganz parallelen Stelle’ נב in 28 (GKB §9d, cf. II, 99 §15g). For other proposals, see Eitan, Light on the History of the Hebrew Verb, *JQR* 12 (1921), 25–32; Yellin, Hippa’el-Níf’al Conjugation in Hebrew and Aramaic, *JPOS* 4 (1924), 85–106.

259 See, e.g., HALOT 1, 659. Cf. Huehnergard classifies נבנוג as an actant noun in the qātīl pattern. Such forms ‘may be described as reflecting the result of the action of the associated (verbal) root.’ The semantics of these forms are subdivided as follows: ‘forms derived from stative roots are descriptive in meaning, those from active intransitive roots are resultative, and those from transitive roots are passive.’ Because Huehnergard derives נבנוג from the common Semitic root nb (‘to call’), which is transitive, the qātīl form נבנוג is passive. Huehnergard, Qātīl and Qātīl Nouns, *10, *19. See also Huehnergard, Etymology and Meaning of Hebrew נבנוג.

260 The morphological forms of נב niphal found in Jeremiah are: נבנה (Jer 19.14; 26.12); נבנוג (20.6; 28.6); נבניא (26.9); נבנוג (20.1; 25.13; 26.11; 29.31); נבניא (2.8; 5.3; 37.19); נבניא (23.21). נבניא [participle] (26.18; 32.3); נבניא (14.14, 15, 16; 27.10, 14, 15, 16; 29.9); נבניא (14.15; 23.16, 25; 27.15; 29.21); נביא (23.26, 32); נביא (11.21; 25.30); נביא (28.9); נביא (26.20); נביא (28.8). See Even-Shoshan II, 1361–62.

261 The morphological forms of נב hithpael found in Jeremiah are: נבנה (Jer 23.13); נבנה (26.20); נביא (29.26); נביא (29.27); נביא (14.14). See Even-Shoshan II, 1361–62.
2.2.1. Collocations with נבָא

Verbal forms from נבָא are found in a number of collocations listed in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Collocations with נבָא

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collocation</th>
<th>Binyan</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>דבר אשר נבוא</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1 Jer 28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>הנביאים מבני</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>participle</td>
<td>x4 Jer 14.14, 15; 23.25; 29.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>הנביאים הנביאים לם</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>participle</td>
<td>x3 Jer 23.16; 27.15, 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>הנביאים נביא השקר</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>participle</td>
<td>x1 Jer 23.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>הנביאים אושר נבוא</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x2 Jer 28.8; 37.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>הנביאים הנביא</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1 Jer 2.8; 5.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>הנביאים</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1 Jer 28.8; 37.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>יהוה שלחני להנ生物医药</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>inf cstr</td>
<td>x1 Jer 26.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>לא תנבא</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1 Jer 11.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>משמע נובנננה</td>
<td>hithpael</td>
<td>participle</td>
<td>x1 Jer 29.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>מתנבאים לם</td>
<td>hithpael</td>
<td>participle</td>
<td>x2 Jer 14.14; 29.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נביאを行 יוה</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>participle</td>
<td>x1 Jer 23.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נביא בוש היה</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1 Jer 26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נביא בשקר</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x2 Jer 5.31; 20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נביא לם</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x2 Jer 29.31; 37.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נביאו לכם</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>participle</td>
<td>x1 Jer 23.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>שקר ובירי לם</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>participle</td>
<td>x3 Jer 27.10, 14, 16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most frequent association with verbs from נבָא is with the lexeme נביא. These words are most often paired in participial phrases, such as הנביאים הנביאים לם (Jer 14.14, 15; 23.25; 29.21) and הנביאים הנביאים לם (23.16; 27.15, 16). The phrase is repeated three times in 27.10, 14, 16 and the pronoun הוא refers an instance of נבָא in each case. Contextually, these phrases share a large amount of semantic overlap; they describe very similar phenomena in a small cluster of texts in 14.11–15, 23.16–32, 27.10–16 and 29.21–28. Finite forms of the verb appear in two אשר clauses, also describing the lexeme נבָא (28.8; 37.19).

Twice the hithpael participle is used in the phrase מתנבאים לם to summarise a message or set of behaviour as prophesying (Jer 14.14; 29.27). In both cases the phrases refer to the lexeme נבָא and in 14.14 the hithpael participle is parallel to the niphal.
The lexeme שקר is used in several collocations with verb forms of נביא. It is used adverbially in the phrase הנביאים נביי השקר in Jer 5.31 and 20.6; the phrase הנביא נבי השקר in 23.26 is grammatically difficult, but also associates שקר with the verb נביא.

2.2.2. Subjects of נביא

For 17 finite verbal forms of נביא in Jeremiah, there are eight different subjects. Of these subjects, five are proper names; the other three are nominal forms of נביא. Except for the hithpael in Jer 23.13, all of the finite verbs from נביא in Jeremiah are niphal forms. The sense of the denominative niphal verb, and the closely associated hithpael, is to act or behave like a נביא.

Table 7. Subjects of נביא

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexeme or collocation</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>אוריהו בנים שמהיהו</td>
<td>‘Uriah ben Shemaiah’</td>
<td>Jer 26.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>הנביא</td>
<td>‘prophet’</td>
<td>Jer 28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>הנביאים</td>
<td>‘prophets’</td>
<td>Jer 2.8; 5.31; 23.21; 28.8; 37.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>הנביאים</td>
<td>‘prophets’</td>
<td>Jer 28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>חנניה</td>
<td>‘Hananiah’</td>
<td>Jer 20.1, 25.13, 26.9, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ירמיה</td>
<td>‘Jeremiah’</td>
<td>Jer 20.1, 25.13, 26.9, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ירמיה</td>
<td>‘Jeremiah’ (?)</td>
<td>Jer 11.21, 25.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נביאי שמירתון</td>
<td>‘prophets of Samaria’</td>
<td>Jer 23.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>פשחור</td>
<td>‘Pashhur’</td>
<td>Jer 20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>שמיעיה הנהלמי</td>
<td>‘Shemaiah the Nehelamite’</td>
<td>Jer 29.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unsurprisingly, Jeremiah is the subject of the finite verb נביא on multiple occasions (Jer 20.1, 25.13, 26.9, 11). The reference in 25.13 is a description of הכותים המסרות תורה in Jer 51.60. Fischer compares the language in 25.13 to the phrase הכותים המסרות תורה in Deut 28.58; 29.19-20; 26; 30.10 and similar phrases in Jos 1.8; 2 Kings 22.13; 23.2, 21; 2 Chronicles 34.21, 31. Fischer, Jeremia 1–25, HThKAT, Freiburg, 2005, 741.

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262 Jer 2.8; 5.31; 11.21; 20.1; 6; 23.13, 21; 25.13, 30; 26.9, 11, 20; 28.6, 8, 9; 29.31; 37.19.

263 Denominative niphal verbs are rare, and likely ‘related to [the niphal’s] ingressive-stative and causative-reflexive functions’ (IBHS §23.5b; cf. 23.3c; 23.4h). On niphal in relation to the hithpael, see Siebesma, Function of the niph'al in Biblical Hebrew, SSN 28, Assen, 1991, 167-69. See also IBHS §26.1.2c.

264 Cf. the phrase הכותים המסרות תורה in Jer 51.60. Fischer compares the language in 25.13 to the phrase הכותים המסרות תורה in Deut 28.58; 29.19-20; 26; 30.10 and similar phrases in Jos 1.8; 2 Kings 22.13; 23.2, 21; 2 Chronicles 34.21, 31. Fischer, Jeremia 1–25, HThKAT, Freiburg, 2005, 741.
second person singular instances of נבָא in Jer 11.21 and 25.30 are somewhat unclear; however, most commentators understand Jeremiah as the subject. Other named individuals are the subject of the verb as well. Hananiah is the subject of the verb in Jer 28.6, where Jeremiah asks YHWH to establish (קום) the words he has prophesied.

The most frequent subject for finite forms of נבָא is the plural נביאים (Jer 2.8; 5.31; 23.21; 28.8; 37.19). It is not possible to identify a specific group to which the plural נביאים refers. In a dialogue between Jeremiah and king Zedekiah (37.17–21), Jeremiah asks the king, ‘where are your prophets who prophesied to you?’ (והוא נביאיכם אשר נבאו לכם), assuming some relationship between the king and a group of prophets. The reference to the prophets of Samaria in 23.13 is paralleled by two references to the prophets of Jerusalem in 23.14, 15.

2.2.3. Verbal phrases with נבָא

The syntax of the verb נבָא can be analysed constructively by looking at the prepositional constructions used with it. These collocations are arranged by preposition in Table 8 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collocation</th>
<th>Binyan</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>נבָא אלם</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>אלים</td>
<td>Jer 25.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נבָא אלים</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>בער יוזמה</td>
<td>Jer 26.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נבָא ביתו</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>ביתו</td>
<td>Jer 26.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נבָא עני יוזמה</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>עני יוזמה</td>
<td>Jer 26.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נבָא ארץ נבנה</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>ארץ נבנה</td>
<td>Jer 28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נבָא אלהים</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>האלהים</td>
<td>Jer 20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נבָא בותי</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>בותי</td>
<td>Jer 2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נבָא בותי</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>שם</td>
<td>Jer 5.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נבָא בותי</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>שם</td>
<td>Jer 11.21; 26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נבָא בותי</td>
<td>niphal</td>
<td>שם</td>
<td>Jer 14.14, 15; 23.25; 27.15; 29.9, 21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See, e.g., Fischer, Jeremia 1–25, 423.

There are other instances of נביאיכם (‘your prophets’) in Jeremiah, though none of them refer directly to a Judaean monarch (Jer 2.30; 27.9, 16; 29.8). The possessive suffix in 27.9 refers to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon, who are listed in 27.3. In the context of Jeremiah’s letter to the exiles, the possessive suffixes of נביאים (‘prophets’) in 29.8 refers back to כֹּסְפֹּסְפִים and נביאים (‘diviners’) in 29.4. See also נביאיהם (‘their prophets’) in 2.26; 32.32.
Chapter 2. Semantic analysis of נביא in Jeremiah

The phrases נביא על־ (Jer 25.13; 26.20; 12, 28.8) and נביא אל (25.30; 26.20) show very little semantic difference in their usage. In 25.30 the phrases נאמרה נביא אליהם and אמרת אליהם are parallel, but the referent of the prepositional suffixes is unclear. It is possible the reference to 'YHWH's dispute with the nations' (ריב ליוה וגוים) in 25.31 hints that the suffixes refer to גוים. This would correlate with the use of 'against the nations' (על כל) with נביא נבא in 25.13. In 26.11, 12 and 28.8 the preposition על refers to geographical or physical spaces; this also the case for the preposition על in 26.20. Because the one instance of the verb in 28.8 takes both על ממלכת גולה and אל ארץ רבת as its object, the prepositions appear to be used synonymously.

In only one instances does the verb נביא take a direct object marked with את. The collocation נביא את־ in Jer 20.1 takes הדברים האלה as its object. In this passage, Jeremiah prophesies words which Pashhur the chief priest hears (שמע qal).

Except for Jer 28.8, in every instance of the collocations נביא ל and נביא אל the use is datival and the sense can be broadly classified as 'in regard to' (14.14; 16; 23.16; 27.10, 14, 15, 16; 28.9; 29.9, 21, 27, 31). The activity signified by the verb in these instances is done on behalf of the referent of the preposition. There also appears to be no semantic

\[\text{Cf. Ezek 6.2; 13.2; 16; 21.2; 7; 36.1; 37.9; Amos 7.15.}\]

\[\text{Cf. Ezek 4.7; 11.4; 13.17; 25.2; 28.21; 29.2; 34.4; 36.6; 37.9; 38.2; 39.1; 1 Chr 25.2; 3; Amos 7.16.}\]

\[\text{IBHS §11.2.10d. Cf. Joel 3.1, as well as the collocation התנבא על־ in 2 Chr 18.7; 20.37; 1 Kgs 22.8.}\]
difference between the *niphal* and *hithpael* that suggests a ‘negative’ connotation to the *hithpael* forms. They are used in parallel to describe the same activity and parallel some of the same verbs.\(^{270}\)

The collocations נבָא בּ (Jer 2.8; 5.31; 11.21; 14.14, 15; 23.25; 26.9; 27.15; 29.9, 21)\(^{271}\) and נבָא תִּהְפָּאֵל (23.13; 26.20) take either either שֶׁמֶר (יְהוָה) or כֵּסֵר. In the one instance of the phrase נבָא תִּהְפָּאֵל, the sense of the preposition is adverbial; the phrase would then be translated as ‘they prophesied falsely’. In the remaining instances where these collocations are used with בּ, כֵּסֵר, שֶׁמֶר (יְהוָה) or בכֵּסֵר שֶׁמֶר (יְהוָה) the preposition בּ is used circumstantially. The association between the verbal action and either כֵּסֵר or בכֵּסֵר שֶׁמֶר (יְהוָה) signifies the means by which the verbal action is performed.\(^{272}\)

2.2.4. Summary

The most frequent association with verbs from נבָא is with the lexeme נבָא. The most frequent subject for finite forms of נבָא is the plural נבָאים נבָא, but it is not possible to identify securely a specific group to which the plural נבָאים נבָא refers. As a denominative, the verb does not often take a direct object. Thus, one does not prophesy things so much as one prophesies about, with or concerning things. The verb uses the prepositions על and ב nearly synonymously, and the preposition ב in a dative sense, meaning ‘in regard to’. There appears to be no semantic difference between the *niphal* and *hithpael* that suggests a ‘negative’ connotation to the *hithpael* forms. They are used in parallel to describe the same activity and parallel some of the same verbs.

2.3. Paradigmatic data

Paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations between the verb forms will clarify the semantic field of נבָא.\(^{273}\) Words with a paradigmatic relation to נבָא will mostly be found in parallel to it.\(^{274}\) These words are found in Table 9, which is discussed in detail below.

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\(^{270}\) This does not necessarily contradict the view, ‘So bezeichnet das Ni. in der Mehrzahl der Fälle prophetisches Reden, das Htp. dagegen kaum, sondern zumeist äußerlich sichtbare Seiten prophetischer Tätigkeit.’ Jeremias, נבָא, THAT II, 16.

\(^{271}\) Cf. 1 Chr 25.1.

\(^{272}\) See IBHS §11.2.5d–e.

\(^{273}\) The synonym נָבְיל for נבָא niphal, and שֶׁמֶר הָיָה pual (‘be mad’) for נבָא hithpael are suggested in DCH V, 591.

\(^{274}\) Words such as prepositions, proper names and particles have been excluded from this list. It is more
Chapter 2. Semantic analysis of נביה in Jeremiah

Table 9. Parallel and paradigmatic lexemes and collocations with נביה

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexeme</th>
<th>Binyan</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>אובד</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘love’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>אמר</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x7</td>
<td>‘say’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>אמר</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘say’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>אמר אל</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘say’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>אמר</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>participle</td>
<td>x2</td>
<td>‘say’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>אמר</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>inf abs</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘say’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>אמר</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>inf abs</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘say’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בטח</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘trust’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בטח על</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘rebuке’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בטח על</td>
<td>piel</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘speak’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בטח על</td>
<td>piel</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘speak’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בטח על</td>
<td>hiphil</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘make empty’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בטוח על</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘go after’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בטוח על</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘dream’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בטוח על</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘know’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בטוח על</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>inf cstr</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘say’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בטוח על</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘die’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בטוח על</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>inf abs</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘commit adultery’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בטוח על</td>
<td>piel</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘announce’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בטוח על</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘stand’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בטוח על</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘rebel’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בטוח על</td>
<td>piel</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x2</td>
<td>‘command’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בטוח על</td>
<td>piel</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘scrape out’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בטוח על</td>
<td>piel</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘run’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בטוח על</td>
<td>piel</td>
<td>participle</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘be mad’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בטוח על</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x10</td>
<td>‘send’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בטוח על</td>
<td>qal</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x1</td>
<td>‘send’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>בטוח על</td>
<td>hiphil</td>
<td>finite</td>
<td>x2</td>
<td>‘lead astray’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twice Jeremiah is described as being sent in order to prophesy; these are the only two instances of the infinitive construct להנבא in the book (Jer 19.14; 26.12).²⁷⁵

²⁷⁵ When Jeremiah returns from Topheth to Jerusalem, he is described as standing (אנייר) in the temple and speaking (אמר) to all of the people (Jer 19.14).

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²⁷⁵ Helpful to comment on particular collocations and syntactic constructions. This analysis follows Table 1.
Verbs related to speech are paradigmatically related to verbal forms of נביא. This is evident in a text such as Jer 25.30, where YHWH instructs Jeremiah both to prophesy (הנבא) and to speak (אמר). Similar instances include the qal participle אמרנה referring to the same activity as the niphal participle הנביאים in 14.15, the quotation formula יהי נביא ואמר נבאו in 26.9, and the phrase introducing speech resulting from the verb נבא standing in parallel with אמר qal in 26.18. Similarly, the verbpiel signifies the same activity as הנביא in 23.21, and the relative clause ‘which Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations’ refers to the same speech that YHWH declared (דברpiel) and that is ‘written in this scroll’ (הכתוב 벌سفر הזה) in 25.13.

Two verbs describe closely related action in Jer 23.17; those who prophesy deceitful dreams report them (ספר piel) and lead the people astray (הputer hiphil). The verb תעה hiphil is paradigmatically related to נביא in 23.13 where the two phrases ‘they prophesied by Ba’al and led my people astray’ (הנבאו עבאל ותעה אלעם אתי ישראל) parallel one another. Similarly, prophesying is negatively identified as ‘emptying’ or ‘deluding’ (הלך niphal) in 23.16. The lexeme pual appears in parallel with נביא in the phrase ‘for every madman and prophet’ (לכל איש משמע ומימים) in 29.26; these verbs describe activity in the Jerusalem temple which priests are expected to regulate.

Words which have the same subject of verbal forms of נביא and are used in parallel are אמר qal in Jer 23.17, והלך hiphil in 23.25, and נביא נביא qal in 23.31 (cf. 28.16). These forms are not as strongly associated with נביא as those with paradigmatic relations (see above), but they still describe similar behaviours and outcomes associated with נביא.

Two instances of finite verbs from נביא are associated with צוה piel where YHWH claims that he did not send nor command individuals who prophesy (Jer 14.14; 23.32). In 23.21, prophets are criticised for prophesying (נביא niphal) without being sent (שלח qal) by YHWH; likewise, they are criticised for running (עד qal) without being spoken to (דבר piel) by YHWH. Jeremiah is threatened to either stop prophesying or die (אמר qal) in 11.21.

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776 Both verbs in Jer 25.30 use the prepositional phrase אליהם. See above.
777 On חולם and the notion of prophetic ‘madness’, see HALOT II, 1415; Parker, Possession Trance and Prophecy, 282-85.
778 In Jer 14.14 it is specified that a צוה is the subject of the verb נביא, while in 23.32 the participial phrase נביא does not necessarily refer to the lexeme נביא.
Chapter 2. Semantic analysis of נביא in Jeremiah

The remaining verbs in Table 9 parallel נביא but are associated with a different grammatical subject: יֵדַע qal and אמר qal (Jer 2.8); רָדָה qal and אהב qal (5.31); וַעֲק qal (29.27).

2.4. Summary of נביא

Earlier, I have summarised the syntagmatic relations of נביא in detail (§2.2.4, p. 72.); I will provide a rough outline of the results here. נביא is the most frequent subject of נביא, especially the plural נביאים. It is not possible to identify these נביאים with a particular group on semantic grounds. Since it is denominative, the verb does not often use a direct object; thus one tends to prophesy about, with, or concerning something. This is true for both niphal and hithpael forms, with no indication that the hithpael is negative or derogatory.

In terms of the verb’s paradigmatic relations, it is verbs related to speech (אמר qal, דבר piel, ספר piel) that appear most closely related to נביא. Other verbs put the activities of dreaming (חלם qal), trust (בטח hiphil), and misleading (תעה hiphil) in parallel with נביא. Thus, these activities are at least conceptually related on a semantic level as they describe similar behaviours and activities related to prophesying.

3. Conclusion

Out of all the occurrences of נביא in Jeremiah, nearly half of them are collocated together with a proper name. Frequently used collocations combine the lexemes נביא and כהן, and include כל־עבדי הנביאים. Stökl also noted the parallels between נביא and כהן, suggesting that these and other parallels suggest that the נביא are also counted as ‘members of the elite’.

He concludes that ‘[t]he frequency with which the נביא is mentioned with the elites of the people in those writings set around the end of the Judean monarchy and exile suggest that the נביא was part of the establishment of Judean society’. I am less convinced that the semantic data demonstrates these claims. Instead, I prefer to say that the נביא and כהן seem to share similar functions and concerns related to worship and service rendered to YHWH, and ascertaining his will.

279 Stökl, נביא, SAHD, §5, A.3. Compare this with his claim that ‘[t]he frequency with which the נביא is mentioned with the elites of the people in those writings set around the end of the Judean monarchy and exile suggest that the נביא was part of the establishment of Judean society.’

280 Stökl, נביא, SAHD, §7.
The semantic field whose verbs most frequently takes נביא as a subject is communication (qal, piel, ו Erdoğan: נביא qal, נביה piel, נביה qal, נביה piel, נביה qal), command or instruction (qal, piel, hiphil and הביש qal), and worship and religious service (qal, מברר piel, הביש hiphil, הביש, הביש qal, הביש qal). The semantic field of purity or integrity (qal, qal,iß פסח hiphil) is also significant. These data also contrast somewhat with Stökl’s view that ‘the Hebrew root √nb is connected to divination’. From a semantic perspective, in Jeremiah at least, it is more accurate to say that נביא is associated with communication and religious service, which is then used in divinatory practice.

Paradigmatic relationships between נביא and הביש and between נביא and הביש are interrelated and follow a semantic pattern: as הביש relates to הביש, so נביא relates to הביש. The closest word to הביש, in terms of consistency and frequency of association, is הביש, and the two are used together as a ‘word pair’. This is a major conclusion. It is a semantic piece of evidence which suggests that the הביש and הביש are both related to the same domain of activity, particularly the cult. One should be careful not to assume that this is evidence for a sociological assertion that there is a specific type of ‘cultic’ prophets associated with temples as professionals. Rather, it suggests that both the הביש and הביש are associated with shared concerns for the ‘proper conventions for worshipping YHWH’. This view is supported further by the semantic associations נביא shares with the domain of worship and religious service noted above.

The most frequent association with verbs from נביא is with the lexeme נביא. This is not unexpected, given that נביא is a denominative. The most frequent subject for finite forms of נביא is the plural נביא, but it is not possible to identify securely a specific group to which the plural נביא refers. I do not find a semantic basis for viewing the plural נביא negatively in contrast with the singular נביא. Thus, I conclude that the view that the plural נביא ‘apparaissent toujours comme un groupe, une classe, ou une sorte de corporation dont les membres restent anonymes’ and ‘apparaissent sous un jour défavor-

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281 Stökl, ביאס ביאס, SAHD, §5, A.1.
283 Against the views found, e.g., in Jeremias, ביאי, THAT II, 10; Bergman, Ringgren, and Dommershausen, ל, THWAT IV (1984), 77-78.
284 Zevit, Prophet versus Priest Antagonism Hypothesis, 192.
able’ cannot be upheld on semantic grounds.\textsuperscript{285} Semantic associations between both singular and plural forms of נביא are very similar.

As a denominative, the verb does not often take a direct object. Thus, one does not prophesy things so much as one prophesies about, with or concerning things. The verb uses the prepositions ל and על nearly synonymously, the preposition ב in a dative sense, meaning ‘in regard to’. As a result, one should not place too much exegetical weight on נביא as an indication of criticism or a position against something. The ‘critical’ aspect of prophecy has often been privileged in biblical interpretation, and clearly pertains to the content of prophetic messages in addition to the semantics of the verb נביא.\textsuperscript{286} As I will make clear in my close reading, this point has major influence on the interpretation of Jer 28.8–9, one of the most critically important texts used to uphold the distinction between ‘types’ of prophets.\textsuperscript{287}

There appears to be no semantic difference between the niphal and hithpael that suggests a ‘negative’ connotation to the hithpael forms.\textsuperscript{288} They are used in parallel to describe the same activity and parallel some of the same verbs. Hithpael forms of נביא have often been read as references to ‘false’ prophetic behaviours in the ‘true’ versus ‘false’ debate.\textsuperscript{289} This distinction cannot be upheld on the basis of verbal forms of נביא. Thus the contrast between ‘ecstatic’ and ‘rational’ forms of prophetic behaviours is not upheld on a semantic level.

Verbs related to speech (דברי, piel, ספר piel) are paradigmatically related to verbal forms of נביא. Verbal forms of נביא are used in parallel with verbs for dreaming ( newArray蹼, piel qal, trust (בש), and misleading (הפל hiphil). These verbs are all used to describe similar behaviours, and they are associated with the outcomes and results of prophesying (e.g. Jer 23.25–32). In my view, the semantic associations with dreaming are quite signific-

\textsuperscript{285} Gonçalves, Les « Prophètes Écrivains », 149-55, cit. 150.
\textsuperscript{286} The ‘critical’ element of prophecy was widely known in the ancient Near East. On this point, see Nissinen, Das kritischen Potential.
\textsuperscript{287} See chapter 5, section 4.3, pp. 183-191. In support of this claim, see, e.g., Jong, Isaiah, 31-13; Jong, Fallacy of “True and False”, 16-19.
\textsuperscript{288} Meyer, Jeremia und die falschen Propheten, 60-62; Wilson, Prophecy and Ecstasy, JBL, 98 (1979), 335-36; Gonçalves, Les « Prophètes Écrivains », 150-57.
\textsuperscript{289} See, for example, Lundbom’s interpretation of the hithpael form of נביא in Jer 29.27. He reads this accusation, along with Parker, as an attempt to discredit Jeremiah by ‘comparing him to earlier ecstatic prophets or prophets still around who show the old characteristics.’ Parker, Possession Trance and Prophecy, 282; Lundbom, Jeremiah 21–36, AncB 21B, New York, 2004, 364-65.
ant for the study of prophecy. There is ongoing debate over the distinction between prophecy and dreams; Stökl sharply distinguishes between dreaming and prophesying, while Huffmon and Nissinen classify them together. In this debate, because of the semantic data, I would side with Huffmon and Nissinen. The exegetical significance of this point will be made clear in my reading of Jer 23.25–32.

392 See chapter 4, section 4, pp. 144-155.
Part II. Close reading
Chapter 3. Jeremiah 1.4–19

1. Preliminary remarks

In a mixture of dialogue, oracles and vision reports, Jer 1.4–19 provides one of the most direct descriptions of what it means to be a prophet in the book of Jeremiah. The themes of the text are programmatic; the descriptions of prophetic activity found here are closely related to those found elsewhere in the book. In short, this is a rich and foundational text for major themes in Jeremiah. The pericope of 1.4–19 is thematically unified as its contents fall into three main sections: a report of dialogue between YHWH and Jeremiah in 1.4–10; a pair of vision reports which warn of YHWH’s judgment in 1.11–14; and an oracle of support in the face of threat in 1.15–19.

2. Jeremiah 1.4–10

The account of YHWH appointing Jeremiah as a נביא לגוים in Jer 1.4–10 ranks among the most famous texts in the book. It is basically a report of a dialogue between YHWH and Jeremiah as the deity legitimises his prophet and assigns him tasks. Concepts related to ‘nations’ and ‘kingdoms’ mark thematic boundaries of 1.4–10, as YHWH makes Jeremiah a נביא לגוים and tells him to prophesy concerning nations and kingdoms in 1.10. Many of the features of this text are rightly celebrated as rather unique; at the same time, and in an equally important sense, many of its features are fairly conventional.

2.1. Text and translation

יְהִי דְבֵר יְהוָה אֵלֵי אֲלֵם (4)
בַּטַּרְם יָשֵׁר הָבַר לְכָל גוֹי תַּכּוֹנָה יְהוָה מֵאַהַּמ (5)

The two readings are closely related. It seems that K אֶצָּרְ is a plene spelling derived from צָרִי III (‘fashion, form, shape’), which itself may be a related form of צָר; see HALOT I, 428–29, II 1015–16; Gesenius8, 111; Zorell, 687. The lexeme צָרִי III appears only in 1 Kgs 7.15; the form in Exod 32.4 is disputed. Some cognates may shed additional light on צָר מֵאָרְק, such as Palmyrene swr I qal in DNWSI II, 965 KBL, 799; or Aramaic צָרִי in ATTM I, 675; Sokoloff, Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, Dictionaries of Talmud, Midrash and Targum 3, Ramat-Gan, 2002, 956. Cf. Fraenkel, Die aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen, 272, 294. In contrast, Q צָרָד, אֶצָּרְ, derives from צָר qal (‘form’); see Isa 44.2, 24; 49.5 (cf. Gen
Chapter 3. Jeremiah 1.4–19

There was a word of YHWH to me:
Before I formed you in the belly, I knew you; before you went out of the womb, I consecrated you; a prophet to the nations I appointed you.
And I said, Ah! But Lord YHWH, I do not know how to speak, for I am an attendant.
YHWH said to me, Do not say 'I am an attendant,' but go everywhere I send you, and speak everything I command you.
Fear not on their account, for I am with you to deliver you, oracle of YHWH.
And YHWH stretched out his hand and touched my mouth, and YHWH said to me, Look, I have placed my words in your mouth.
See, I have appointed you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to uproot and to tear down, and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.

2.2. Prophet to the nations

In a basic sense, the text of Jer 1.4–10 is a reported dialogue between YHWH and Jeremiah. The opening verse in 1.4 relates that a word from YHWH came to Jeremiah (ויהי דבר יהוה על לאמר) and it marks the initial boundary of the text unit. The pericope uses the first person in this opening phrase and in 1.6, 11, 13 (cf. 2.1; 13.8; 16.1; 18.5; 24.4).\(^4\) The word introduced by 1.4 primarily consists of instructions and encouragement from YHWH as he commands Jeremiah to prophesy.

\(^4\) On the Wortereignisformel, see Zimmerli, Ezechiel, I, BKAT XIII/1, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1969, 38*. On the form in Jeremiah, see Neumann, »Das Wort, das geschehen ist«, VT 23 (1973), 171–217; Levin, Das Wort Jahwes an Jeremia, ZThK 101 (2004), 257–80. The phrase is similar to other markers of divine speech and here in 1.4 the most basic function of the phrase is to report a divine message and to introduce the dialogue in 1.4–10. As Meier notes: 'The excessive ordinariness' of the Hebrew phrase דברי ה' and its Akkadian cognate awatu bašu ‘may be grasped by inquiring of the alternatives if one wished to be as minimally descriptive as possible when observing that communication had occurred: it is precisely this phrase that would be chosen: “there was a word”’. Meier, Speaking of Speaking, 38.

2.7; Isa 42.6; 43.7; 45.9). For the lexeme דברי, see HALOT I, 428–29; DCH III, 269–70; VII, 107; Even-Shoshan II, 908; Otzen, פרבר, ThWAT III (1982), 830–39; Konkel, פרבר, NIDOTTE II (1996), 503–6. I find it preferable to follow Q דיבור, though there is only a slight difference in meaning (see GKB, §26e, §31h).
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A very influential form-critical assessment considers Jer 1.4–10 a ‘call narrative’, a conventional literary pattern in texts where an individual is summoned for a particular task or appointed to a particular role by the deity.295 As the form is usually discussed in the case of Jer 1.4–10, the dialogue between YHWH and Jeremiah uses established tropes, such as an objection, a word of reassurance, and a sign, to describe YHWH’s role in legitimising the one who is called. In Jeremiah’s case, this fundamentally has to do with this function as a נביא לגוים.296 At times, this form-critical judgment can lapse into the ‘old paradigm’ of prophecy, which valorises the individual and his ‘peculiar personal relationship’ with God; Habel asserts that the ‘prophetic call narratives are much more than autobiographical records. They are traumatic public proclamations in which the prophet announces his divine commission and thereby commits himself openly to the secret, inner compulsion from God’.297 In this view, ‘calling’ is that special personal quality that justifies a prophet, and that distinguishes him from other religious specialists; as Orlinsky put it, ‘divination was a craft, and prophecy a calling’.298 As I will show, there are other factors at play in this text; prophetic legitimation and authority depends on other cultural factors. Jer 1.4–10, along with the other ‘call narratives’, has the implicit view that human agents perform certain tasks with divine support, or in accordance with the divine will.

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296 See Habel, Form and Significance of the Call Narratives, 297–301. There are also, however, many clear differences between the ‘call narrative texts’, and at times they have more in common with non-‘call-narrative’ texts than with each other (e.g. Jer 1.4–10 and Isa 49.1–6). See Miller, Prophetic Conflict in Second Isaiah, in: Wort–Gebot–Glaube, ed. Stoebe, ATANT 59, Zürich, 1970, 77–85; Vermeylen, La rédaction de Jérémie 1.4–19, ETL 58 (1982), 271–72.


298 Orlinsky, Seer in Ancient Israel, OrAnt 4 (1965), 156.
2.2.1. Divine support

In the opening part of the dialogue, YHWH makes a series of reassuring statements to Jeremiah, culminating in YHWH appointing (נָחַס qal) Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations (נאֶס לְעָלָיו). In conjunction with this act, YHWH describes how his support for Jeremiah began even before he was born. There is not much semantic difference between the three descriptions of YHWH’s activity in Jer 1.5, as all three verbs describe acts where YHWH prepares Jeremiah for his task. They all express the same basic idea, namely, that Jeremiah’s prophetic task originates completely in YHWH’s action (c. 1.7, 9–10, 17–19). Before YHWH fashioned him in the belly, the deity knew (לָשׁ qal) him; YHWH can ‘know’ a person’s inner intentions (12.3; cf. 17.16), and here the verb indicates a sense of special care or concern (15.15; 29.11, 26). Before he he went out of the womb, YHWH consecrated (לָשׁ hiphil) him; here the verb has the sense ‘to set apart’ for a particular purpose, and this is the same sense in the only other occurrence of the verb in Jeremiah (cf. 12.3). Finally, YHWH appointed (נָחַס qal) him a prophet to the nations; this lexeme is immensely flexible and has a wide semantic range, in this instance meaning ‘appoint’.

Some of the conventional aspects of Jer 1.4–10 are apparent from the initial description of YHWH’s action in 1.5. The description of Jeremiah’s appointment as a prophet to the nations uses several well-known motifs that play a part in confirming the authority YHWH invests in Jeremiah.

Jeremiah’s appointment as a prophet to the nations was apart from his own initiative or decision, as the source and impulse for the call is YHWH alone. Other texts in the book express similar ideas. Jeremiah is also appointed a ‘fortified city (עיר מבצר), an iron pillar (עמוד ברזל), and a bronze wall (עמוד נחושת) in 1.18. Similarly, the verb phrase

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299 On the virtual synonymity of the three main verbs in Jer 1.5, see Botterweck, «Gott erkennen», BBB 2, Bonn, 1951, 19–20.
300 For this sense with YHWH as subject, see DCH IV, 100–1.
301 The lexemes נָחַס and לָשׁ appear together in Isa 46.3; Jer 1.5; Ps 22.11; 58.4; Job 3.11; 10.18–19; 31.15.
302 See DCH VII, 193–94.
303 See DCH V, 807–10.
304 Zum propheten wird man berufen, nicht gehoren.’ Herrmann, Jeremiah, BKAT 12/1, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1986, 57. See also Aeschimann, Jérémie, Neuchâtel, 1959, 44-45; Mottu, Aux sources de notre vocation, RThPh 114 (1982), 107.
305 Jer 1.18–19 forms a doublet with 15.26, where the images of a doublet with 15.26, where the images of a יְהֹוָה נְחָשׁ in 1.18 are combined in the phrase יְהֹוָה נְחָשׁ בֵּית הָרָע (‘fortified wall of bronze’). On this doublet, see Jüngling, Ich mache
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is also found in 6.27, where YHWH appoints Jeremiah as an ‘assayer’ (berapa) of his people. One further text does not refer to Jeremiah or a prophet, but rather to the priest Zephaniah ben Maaseiah in 29.25. His colleague Shemaiah the Nehelamite uses a similar description to remind Zephaniah that YHWH appointed him (תנחך) as a priest in order to oversee the temple and regulate the behaviour of a madman (משנאת) or prophet (מגלה) in the Jerusalem temple.

Similar descriptions in the Hebrew Bible confirm the conventional nature of the phrases in Jer 1.5. General similarities are found in poetic texts that describe YHWH's care for the unborn, or YHWH's work forming a child in the womb (e.g. Job 31.15; Ps 139.13; Qoh 11.5). YHWH has plans and tasks in mind for great figures in Israel's history before they are born (Judg 13.5; Exod 2; 1 Sam 1.1–2.10). Supportive claims in Deutero-Isaiah bear close resemblance to Jer 1.5. YHWH reassures Jacob that he has helped him 'since birth' (מזכס) and encourages him not to be afraid (אל תירא) as in Jer 1.5 and 1.8. In Isa 49.1–6 YHWH calls ( الوزراء qal) and names (_caption) his servant while in the womb (cf._PHOTO_13.jpg), much like Jer 1.5, and the two phrases נת⒠יך נביא לציון (Jer 49.5) and מתתיך לאוז (Jer 1.5) are extremely similar. These are kindred uses of the motif in oracles of encouragement and support.

Motifs related to divine selection before birth also are found in royal texts and archives throughout the ancient Near East. Kings in Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Levant claimed that they were divinely chosen by the gods to rule; this characterisation was typically extended to the point that kings were often regarded as semi-divine as well. These descriptions are related to the idea that a king's claim to rule was legitimated and

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307 E.g. Vermeylen, _La rédaction de Jérémie 1.4–19_, 266.
upheld by the gods. A celebrated parallel to Jer 1.5 is found in the Gebel Barkal Stele of Piye, where Amon-Re assures Piye that he was selected to be king even while he was still in the womb:

‘I said concerning you (while you were) in the body of your mother, that you would be the ruler of Egypt. I recognized you in the semen when you were in the egg, that you would be lord of what I have made.’ (Gebel Barkal Stele no. 26 of year 3, ll. 2–6). 30

Similarities between the Stele of Piye and Jer 1.5 are readily apparent, and correspondences between the two texts have led some to argue for a case of direct literary borrowing. 31 As Jeremiah is told that he was known ‘in the belly’ and consecrated ‘in the womb’ so also was the Egyptian king. Very similar descriptions are found in texts ranging from the XII to XXV dynasties, referring to kings such as such as Sesostris I, 32 Hatshepsut, 33 and Rameses II. 34

Because the same kinds of claims are found in Mesopotamian texts as well, it suggests that we are dealing with a cultural motif rather than a case of literary borrowing. Examples of the motif of selection while still in the womb or before birth are found in Assyrian and Babylonian royal texts that document, for example, the reigns of Šulgi (2094–2047

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31 The case might be strengthened by other Egyptian motifs used in Jer 1.18; the architectural image of the *mutter khatet* (‘bronze wall’) may be related to Egyptian royal self-descriptions. The image of a fortified bronze wall which resists the onslaught of enemies is an aspect of Egyptian rhetoric intended to express divine support and protection of a royal figure. These similarities were first noted by Alt, Hic murus aheneus esto, *ZDMG* 86 (1933), 33–48. See also Herrmann, *Die Herkunft der »ehernen Mauern«*; Görg, *Die »ehernen Säulen«*; in: *Prophetie und geschichtliche Wirklichkeit im alten Israel*, ed. Liwak and Wagner, Stuttgart, 1991, 134–54; Riede, *Ich mache dich zur festen Stadt*, 35-38; Maier, *Jeremiah as YHWH’s Stronghold.*

32 Sesostris I (XII Dynasty) claims to have been ‘mighty in the egg’ and appointed king ‘before the swaddling-clothes were loosed for me’. ARE I, 243 §502. See also the ‘Praise of Sesostris I’ from *Sinuhe*, B 46-73 in COS I, 78; Kitchen, *Poetry of Ancient Egypt*, Documenta mundi. Aegyptiaca 1, Jonsered, 1999, 91-96, §15. This and several other of the following examples are found in Wyatt, *Myths of Power*, 292.

33 Khnum tells Hatshepsut ‘I have formed thee of these limbs of Amun, Presider over Karnak. I have come to thee to fashion thee better than all gods.’ ARE II, 82 §203.

In sum we can observe that the motif of divine selection prior to birth is a widespread phenomenon in royal self-descriptions aimed at legitimising the rule of the king.  

Though there is great variation between Egyptian, Babylonian and Assyrian royal inscriptions, one of the most basic functions of these documents is like ‘propaganda,’ in a non-pejorative sense. That is, as these documents sought ‘to disseminate or promote particular ideas,’ the claim of divine selection was an attempt to support the king’s claim to power, reassure his supporters, and dissuade enemies or rivals from opposing him.

This basic function is present in Jer 1:5. When YHWH expresses his support to Jeremiah with these claims, there is an implicit assumption that some will oppose him (cf. 1:8, 17–19). All of these kinds of declarations were intended to win support and deter opposition. Thus, a legitimising claim is at the heart of 1:5.

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314 Sin and Nergal determined that he should rule when he was still in his mother’s womb. Translation from COS II, 310. See also Langdon, Neubabylonischen Königinschriften, VAB 4, Leipzig, 1912, 281; Berger, Die neubabylonischen Königinschriften, AOAT 4/1, Münster, 1973, 375–77.

315 Further examples are found in Jacobsen, Treasures of Darkness, New Haven, CT, 1976, 158.


Chapter 3. Jeremiah 1.4–19

2.2.2. Nations and kingdoms

There are a wide range of opinions concerning the nature of Jeremiah’s commission and the sense of the collocation נבאים נלוהים. The phrase could refer to the content of Jeremiah’s oracles, meaning that they are focused on ‘international’ concerns (e.g. Jer 46–49). But, if the phrase refers primarily to foreign nations, then why is so much of Jeremiah’s prophetic activity directed toward Judah and Jerusalem? A fundamental part of the Jeremiah tradition is concerned with the fate of Judah at the hands of the Babylonians. Is Judah included among the גרים or does the phrase refer to ‘foreign nations’ exclusively?

Second, since the book of Jeremiah contains major sections devoted to oracles against foreign nations (i.e. Jer 25.15–38; 46–51), the term נבאים נלוהים is sometimes thought to refer to some of the contents of the book instead of the prophet. If Jeremiah’s commission to be a נביא נלוהים is a reference to some of the contents of the book (i.e. 25.15–38; 46–51), then one might also ask why Jeremiah is singled out for the distinction among the

335 Sharp notes the unease in Giesebrecht’s statement that ‘kein wahrer Proph. zu den Heiden gesendet war’. Giesebrecht, Jeremia, HK III/2.1, Göttingen, 1907, 2; Sharp, Call of Jeremiah, JBL 119 (2000), 421; Sharp, Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah, 83. Similar views led some scholars to emend נבאים נלוהים to a more satisfactory term. Stade proposed emending נבאים נלוהים to נלוהים ‘to my nation’ to resolve this problem; Stade, Emendationen, ZAW 22 (1902), 328. Similarly, Bruston emended נבאים נלוהים ‘the nations’ to ‘les grands; Bruston, Jérémie, ZAW 27 (1907), 75–78. Among more recent works, Fischer notes how the foreign nations ‘spielen überdies in vielen anderen Texten eine wichtige Rolle, insofern sie das Schicksal Jerusalems und Judas beeinflussen’. While true, this description is rather general; Fischer, Jeremia 1–25, 134. Similarly, see Herrmann, Jeremia, BKAT 12/2, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1990, 199. Inversely one can contend that the phrase indicates that Jeremiah is a נביא נלוהים insofar as his proclamations against Judah, the people’s recalcitrance, and their subsequent judgment are lessons for Judah’s neighbours; they are to learn from Judah’s fate; see, e.g., Olmo Lete, La vocación personal, Claretianum 11 (1971), 66; Olmo Lete, La vocacion del lider, Bibliotheca Salmanticensis 3/2, Salamanca, 1973, 278–79; Vermeylen, La redaction de Jérémie 1.4–19, 273–76; Herrmann, Jeremia, 1, 60–61.

336 Another option is to suggest that the ‘nations’ may be a reference to the communities of Judaeans dispersed outside of Palestine, and therefore among the nations. This does accord well with other passages in the book which are clearly concerned with displaced Judaeans (Jer 24.1–10; 29.3–14; 43.8–13), however it seems to read over the basic thrust of the phrase. Cf. Herrmann, Die Bewältigung der Krise Israels, in: Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Theologie, ed. Donner, Hanhart, and Smend, Göttingen, 1977, 167–69; Carroll, Jeremiah, 96.

337 Römer represents this view and asserts that ‘15b et 10 présupposent toutes les grandes parties du livre et tentent d’en souligner la cohérence en faisant en même temps de Jérémie un personnage aussi incontrôlable que le Moïse de Dt 34.10-12.’ Römer, Du livre au prophète, in: Les recueils prophétiques de la Bible, ed. Macchi, Nihan, Römer, and Rückl, MoBi(G) 64, Genève, 2012, 277. Fischer stresses this point when he asserts that ‘ist Jer 1 nicht als biographische Schilderung einer Berufung mitzuverstehen’ but the text rather ‘hat vielmehr rahmende und orientierende Funktion für die Leser und ist wie andere solche Berichte von Beauftragungen eine theologische reflektierte Zusammenfassung’. Fischer, Jeremia 1–25, 143. For arguments concerning Jeremiah as a ‘prophet like Moses’, see chapter 3, section 2.4, page 96.
How Prophecy Works

other prophetic books in the Hebrew Bible—all of which, except Hosea, contain oracles against foreign nations.328

To better understand the phrase גּוֹי מַקְרָא לְנָפִי (‘nation’), it is helpful to survey of the semantic range and use of the lexeme גּוֹי (‘nation’).329 The term shares a high degree of semantic overlap with the lexeme גֵּר (‘people’).330 The main difference in sense between them, in the most general terms, is that גֵּר tends to refer to a group of people who share kinship or ethnic ties, while גּוֹי describes a federated group of people not primarily united from kinship or ethnic ties.331 Put another way, one could generalise and say that גּוֹי is bound together by politics and people described as an גֵּר are bound by kin. Speiser notes the basic units which comprise גּוֹי and גֵּר are גָּאוֹת and איש respectively; one is made up of individuals while the other is a collective. Thus גּוֹי even when not tied to the land or linked to a state, is a regimented body, e.g., when it crosses a stream or makes war.332

The lexeme גּוֹי has 87 occurrences in the book of Jeremiah, and the term גֵּר (‘people’) has 162 occurrences in Jeremiah; only three instances of גֵּר are plural (Jer 10.3; 34.1; 51.58).333 There is no use of the plural גָּאוֹת to describe Israel or Judah in Jeremiah, but the singular גּוֹי is used to describe one or the other (5.9, 29; 7.28; 9.8). The use of the first singular suffix in גּוֹי (‘my people’) is frequently used to refer to Judah, whilst גּוֹי never ap-


329 See DCH III, 329–34.

330 Speiser points out the absence of personal ties in the example of the ‘table of nations’ in Gen 10. Here the גּוֹי are united by geography (לא אשר) and language (הלָשְׁנָתָם). Speiser, “People” and “Nation” of Israel, JBL, 79 (1960), 159. See also Rost, Bezeichnungen für Land und Volk, in: Festschrift Otto Procksch, ed. Alt, Leipzig, 1934, 141; Cody, When Is the Chosen People Called a γοῦ?, VT 14 (1964), 1–6. While גֵּר is widely attested in Semitic languages, גּוֹי occurs only in Hebrew and in Akkadian texts from Mari; see gâ’u (CAD V, 59); gā’am, gāwam (AHw I, 284). On the military sense of gāywum, see Matthews, Pastoral Nomadism in the Mari Kingdom, ASOR Dissertation Series 3, Cambridge, MA, 1978, 63-65; Malamat, Mari and the Early Israeliite Experience, Schweich Lectures 1984, Oxford, 1989, 38–39.

331 Cody, When Is the Chosen People Called a γοῦ?, 3.

332 Speiser, “People” and “Nation” of Israel, 159-60. See also Hulst’s summary of the distinction between גֵּר and גּוֹי: ‘Als Begriff aus dem verwandtschaftlichen Bereich ist bei um die Zusammengehörigkeit von innen gegeben und keineswegs erst durch äußere Umstände bedingt, während bei γοῦ eine naturgemäße Einheit, wenn schon vorhanden, nicht entscheidend zu sein scheint, weil gerade andere Faktoren mit im Spiele sind (entweder territoriale oder vor allem politische?).’ Hulst, גֵּר/גּוֹי, THAT II (1976), 294. Cody understands the domain of גּוֹי to be ‘territory and government and what we would call today foreign relations.’ Cody, When Is the Chosen People Called a γοῦ?, 5. See also Block, Nations/Nationality, NIDOTTE IV (1996), 966-67.

333 For relevant statistics, see Hulst, גֵּר/גּוֹי, THAT II, 294.
pears with a suffix in Jeremiah.\textsuperscript{334} Thus the book shows a preference for \textit{עִם} \textit{גוים} when referring to Judah, but Judah’s status as an \textit{עִם} does not preclude it from also being a \textit{גוים}. The terms \textit{עִם} and \textit{גוים} do appear in parallel, and Judah’s status as YHWH’s \textit{עִם} \textit{גוים} does not disqualify it from being considered among the \textit{גוים} (6.22; 50.41).\textsuperscript{335} A few examples are worth mentioning. In the context of 18.1–12, YHWH likens the house of Israel to clay in a potter’s hand; the judgment described in this text against nations (נְגוֹי) and kingdoms (מַמלָכּוֹת) applies equally well to Judah and Jerusalem as it does foreign nations (18.7, 9). In several judgment oracles, YHWH asks rhetorically whether judgment should be brought against a nation such as this (נְגוֹי אֲשֶׁר חָוָה), i.e. Judah (5.9, 29; 9.8). Jeremiah refers to Judah as the nation (נְגוֹי) which would not listen to the voice of its god (7.28), and in 31.36 YHWH upholds the status of Israel as a nation for all time (נְגוֹי לִפְלִלָּם חֵיוֹן) so long as his statutes endure.\textsuperscript{336} Finally, in the ‘cup of wrath’ passage in 25.15–38, Judah and Jerusalem are included in the list of nations (נְגוֹי) commanded to drink from YHWH’s cup (cf. 25.13).

In sum, the semantic range of the lexemes \textit{עִם} \textit{גוים} and \textit{גוים} in Jeremiah do not encourage a distinction between ‘native’ and ‘foreign’ in the phrase \textit{בָּנָי נְגוֹי}. Thus, reading the phrase explicitly or implicitly as a reference to being a ‘prophet to the \textit{foreign} nations’ does not match well with the meaning of the term in the book, or the semantic thrust of the collocation. It is more accurate, however, to view the term in Jer 1.5 as an indication of the function of Jeremiah’s prophetic activity. The term stresses that he is to function as a \textit{נביא} at the level of international affairs, so to speak, which will involve, by necessity, both domestic and foreign issues.

Further evidence for this view can be found in the elaboration of Jeremiah’s commission in Jer 1.10. This verse concludes the text unit of 1.4–10 and revisits themes from 1.5 in a kind of inclusio. In 1.10 YHWH tells Jeremiah that he has appointed (פָּקַד)\textsuperscript{337} him on this day ‘against the nations’ (לְעֵילָם נְגוֹי) and ‘against the kingdoms’ (לְמַמלָכּוֹת). It is a little unclear how phrase ‘on this day’ (דַּיָּה הָוָה) functions in 1.10; there is little evidence

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item For \textit{גוים} with a possessive suffix, cf. Gen 10.5; 20.31, 32; Ezek 36.13; Zeph 2.9; Ps 106.5.
\item Rudolph understands this as a promised political future; see Rudolph, \textit{Jeremia}, 204. In contrast, see Weiser, \textit{Jeremia} 25.15 – 52.34, 5. Auflage, ATD 21, Göttingen, 1969, 297.
\item Conrad translates this in Jer 1.10 as ‘made you governor’ in view of the same word being used in relation to Gedaliah’s appointment as governor by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 40.5, 7, 11; 41.2, 10, 18). Conrad, \textit{Fear Not Warrior}, BJJS 75, Chico, CA, 1985, 50. This might be a bit of an over-interpretation of the term in the context of 1.10. See DCH VI 743–44.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
of setting in the passage, so it likely acts rhetorically to bring focus to the act being performed. After this reference, a list of infinitive constructs supply a description of the activity Jeremiah is to perform in relation to the nations and kingdoms: לָנוֹת ('to uproot'), לָנוֹת ('to tear down'), לָאָבְד ('to destroy'), לָהוֹר ('to overthrow'), לָבַּן ('to build'), and לָנֵט ('to plant'). These terms are attested across Jeremiah in a variety of contexts.\footnote{See Bach, Bauen und Pflanzen, in: Studien zur Theologie der alttestamentlichen Überlieferungen, ed. Rendorff and Koch, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1961, 7–32; Albertz, Exilzeit, 238–39. Cf. Stipp, Deuteroknjemianische Konkordanz, ATSAT 63, St. Ottilien, 1998, 96–97.}

Various lists and combinations of the terms in Jer 1.10 are scattered throughout the book and rarely are they combined in the same way (12.14–17; 18.7, 9; 24.6; 31.28, 38, 40; 42.10; 45.4). Of all these texts, only 1.10 uses a human subject for these verbs.\footnote{Carroll, Jeremiah, 95; Fischer, Jeremia 1–25, 137.} One particularly important example is found in 18.7–10, where five of the verbs from 1.10 (לָנוֹת ('to uproot') לָאָבְדיח ('to destroy') לָהוֹר ('to overthrow') לָבַּן ('to build') and לָנֵט ('to plant') are used in a divine warning. YHWH says that though he might announce salvation or judgment against a nation (מלכתו) or kingdom (מלכים), that nation's ongoing behaviour could lead to him changing his mind. Thus, both YHWH's words of salvation and doom are conditional.\footnote{Holladay, Jeremiah 1–25, 516; Sharp, Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah, 87–88.}

The connection between nation (נאם) and kingdom (מלכה) is particularly stressed in Jer 1.10. And as the thematic motifs of 'building and planting' and 'uprooting and tearing down' show, the role of the הנביא is to go as commanded by YHWH (cf. 23.21, 32; 28.15; 43.2) and declare the divine message whether favourable or unfavourable (cf. 42.6, 9, 20).

2.3. Sending the prophets

As a part of the dialogue between YHWH and Jeremiah, Jer 1.6–9 reports a conventional exchange concerning Jeremiah's fitness for YHWH's commission. The soon-to-be prophet responds to YHWH's words in 1.5 with a twofold protest, introduced by the phrase אֲנִי אֲבָרָהָם in 1.6a. This phrase appears elsewhere in the book in complaints against YHWH's judgment (4.10; 14.13; 32.17).\footnote{Vermeylen, La rédaction de Jérémie 1.4–19, 268.} The complaint here has to do with Jeremiah's inability to perform the task of functioning as a נביא לוהים. His response hints at a basic un-
standing of what the job involves; it is because he does not know how to speak (לא דעה) that he protests YHWH’s commission. The response is not too dissimilar to expressions typical in prayers, where the supplicant admits his or her weakness in an appeal for divine aid. Jeremiah will require some help if he is to learn how to speak as a אבמה למלש נער.

Jeremiah objects on the basis that he is a נער. What does being a נער have to do with being unable to speak? The lexeme נער is generally refers to a person of a young age or a person of a particular social rank, which would be similar to a servant. Thus there are two primary explanations of how being a נער might disqualify Jeremiah from being a נער and from knowing how to speak. First, since the lexeme נער can refer to a person of young age, the thrust of Jeremiah’s claim could be that his ‘youth’ is the reason for his inability to speak. However, when נער is used as an indicator of age, it usually pertains to the status of an individual within a family structure as a dependent. Since the context of 1.4–10 is hardly domestic, it is difficult to accept that age is the deciding factor.

Second, if the lexeme נער is taken with the sense of ‘servant, attendant’, Jeremiah’s reason could boil down to a lack of experience, status or authority. Though it is a little generic, the term נער can describes a person who functions as an attendant or servant for

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341 See also, for example, Gen 32.10–11; Num 11.14; 1 Kgs 3.7, 9; cf. Amos 7.2. See Miller, Prayer as Persuasion, WW 13 (1993), 359–60.


343 נער refers to unweaned or very recently weaned children in Exod 2.6; Judg 13.5, 7, 8, 12; 1 Sam 1.22–24; 4.21. Youths are also called נער before reaching adulthood in Gen 21.12; 37.2; 2 Chr 34.3. Both Isaac and Abraham’s attendants are referred to with נער in Gen 22.3, 5, 12, 19. Stähli, Knabe–Jüngling–Knecht, 96–100. However Fox notes that נער is sometimes a marker ‘of a person’s inexperience in a certain role rather than a mark of age or status’. An example is when Solomon refers to himself as a נער רע when praying to YHWH for guidance in 1 Kgs 3.7. Fox, In the Service of the King, MHUC 23, Cincinnati, OH, 2000, 183–84. Cf. Stähli, Knabe–Jüngling–Knecht, 113–17.

someone of higher social rank, often royalty.346 For example, a בַּנְיָן נָעַר is involved in transmitting messages in 1 Sam 25.5–7.347

In sum, while נָעַר can refer to a person’s social position in terms of age, i.e. ‘youth’, a reference to social rank, i.e. ‘attendant’, has a better sense in the context of Jer 1.6–9. The term should be understood as an indication that speaking as a נָעַר לִגוֹים requires a person to be invested with a certain amount of authority—which, in this case, is answered by YHWH’s instructions in 1.7–9. As such, it does not necessarily offer much insight regarding Jeremiah’s age.348 Here the term is used as a conventional expression of inadequacy for a divinely appointed task.

In the following verses of Jer 1.7–9, YHWH counters Jeremiah’s protest by reassuring him. Jeremiah is not to suppose that he cannot speak on YHWH’s behalf. In the first part of YHWH’s response, Jeremiah’s words are repeated back to him; he is told not to say ‘I am only an attendant’ (לא הנמר נער אנכי). YHWH rebuffs his protest by giving him a pair of instructions in 1.7b. Again, the objection Jeremiah gives to YHWH is merely conventional; it interrupts YHWH’s commission only momentarily, and offers the deity a chance to express his support to Jeremiah.

The two instructions that YHWH gives Jeremiah in Jer 1.7 pertain to speaking as a נָעַר לִגוֹים, and there is some similarity between these instructions and those generally given messengers in the ancient world.349 However, not too much should be made of the parallel to messenger speech. It should be noted that model has come under serious ques-

346 Fox determines that נָעַר לִגוֹים should be classified as royal functionaries’ in texts such as Exod 2.5; 2 Sam 13.17, 28–29; 2 Kgs 19.6; Esth 2.2; 4.4, 6; 4.3. See also Stähli, Knabe–Jüngling–Knecht, 183. Other non-royal persons are served by נָעַר לִגוֹים in similar roles as attendants; see Gen 22.3; 24.6; Exod 24.5; 33.11; Num 22.22; 1 Sam 9.27; 25.5, 42. Joseph is called a נָעַר whilst imprisoned before being summoned to interpret the Pharaoh’s troubling dreams (Gen 41.12; cf. 41.46). Three other examples may have some significance for Jer 1.6: a נָעַר works in the service of a נָעַר in 1 Sam 2.13, 15 (cf. Jeremiah’s lineage of נָעַר in Jer 1.1); Samuel’s service to Eli as a נָעַר in 1 Sam 3.1, 8; and Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, is called a נָעַר in 2 Kgs 4.12 (cf. Jeremiah’s role as נָעַר in 1.5b).


349 Meier best summarises the instructions given to messengers in the ancient Semitic world: ‘Direct address to the messenger often featured imperatives such as go (2 Sam 18; 2 Kgs 1; CTA 2.5; STT 28; EE; IE; Lú-dingir-ra), run, set your face (CTA 2; 3; 4.14; STT 28), speak (CTA 2; 3; 3.3; 4; 4.14; Atr; ELA; CTH 7), say, tell, repeat, bring word, bow (CTA 2; 3; 3.3; 4; STT 28), rise, stand, and others, some of which attained a formulaic status. “Thus says PN” is characteristic of West Semitic literature (Gen 32; 1 Kgs 20; CTA 2; 3.3; 3.6; 4; 5; 14). Characteristic of Akkadian was the phrase “I will send you” (STT 28; EE; Harem laws; cf. Sud).’ Meier, Messenger in the Ancient Semitic World, 36–57, esp. 57.
tion as an appropriate analogue in general for prophecy. The basic conceptual framework for prophetic activity in the context of 1.4–10 does not seem to depend on a messenger motif. Jeremiah’s concern in 1.6 that he does not know how to speak implies a lack of ability not a lack of a message, and the elements of YHWH’s commission all tend to stress the investiture of authority in an individual.

Jeremiah is given specific instructions in Jer 1.7b. YHWH tells him to go (활동 qal) where he is sent (הנהל qal), and to speak (דבר piel) what he is commanded (הוא piel). The operative verbs in Jer 1.7, as already shown in the semantic analysis, have a close relationship to the discussion of prophecy and prophets in the book.

The two parallel lexemes הניח piel and הנחל qal represent typical aspects of discussions concerning prophetic commission and authority. There are 89 occurrences of the root הנח in the book of Jeremiah in various contexts. YHWH is the most frequent subject of the verb, and often הנחל is used in negative oracles to describe YHWH ‘sending’ judgment, either against Judah or against foreign nations. There are also more general references to individuals who are ‘sent’ for various reasons, usually as a form of communication or to perform a particular task. As seen in the semantic analysis, the most fre-

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359 One example that is sufficient for the present context is how the so-called Botenformel ‘thus DN has said’ has been interpreted to support this view. See esp. Westermann, Grundformen prophetischer Rede, 70-91.). Meier has shown quite convincingly that the so-called ‘messenger formulae’ do not provide direct evidence for the prophet-as-messenger analogy. Meier, Speaking of Speaking, 277-91. He rightly notes that ‘[t]he question of the messenger status of the classical prophets is an issue that is much larger than the significance of the single phrase הניחוּר והנהל. However, this phrase is a major support for that perception.’ Meier, Speaking of Speaking, 288. Cf. Wagner, Prophetie als Theologie, FRLANT 207, Göttingen, 2004.

360 Other terms which are used in reference to the commissioning of a נביא (‘call’) or קורא piel (‘raise up’) as in Jer 29.15; cf. 28.6.

357 Jer 1.7, 9; 2.10; 3.1, 8; 7.25(2x); 8.17; 9.15, 16; 14.3, 14, 15; 15.1; 16.15; 17.8; 19.14; 21.1; 23.21, 32, 38; 24.5, 10; 25.4, 9, 15, 16, 17; 27; 26.5, 12, 15, 22; 27.3, 15; 28.9, 15, 16; 29.3, 3, 9, 17, 19, 20, 25, 28, 31; 34-9, 10, 11, 14, 16, 35-15; 36.14, 21; 37.3; 7, 17; 38.6, 11, 14; 39.13, 14; 40.1, 5, 14; 42.5, 6, 9, 20, 21; 43.1, 2, 10; 44.4; 48.12; 49.14; 37; 50-33; 51.2. Of this total, 53 occurrences are piel form: Jer 1.7, 9; 2.10; 7.25; 9.16; 14.3, 14, 15; 16.16(x2) 19.14; 21.1; 23.21, 32; 25.4, 15, 16, 17, 27; 26.5, 12, 15, 22; 27.15; 28.9, 15; 29.1, 3, 9, 19, 25, 31; 35.15; 36.14, 21; 39.3, 7, 17; 38.14; 39.13, 14; 40.14; 42.5, 6, 9, 20, 21; 43.1, 2, 10; 44.4; 20; 49.14. The remaining 36 are piel form: Jer 3.1, 8; 8.17; 9.15; 15.1; 17.8; 24.5, 10; 27.3; 28.16; 29.17, 20; 34.9, 10(x2), 11, 14(x2), 16; 38.6, 11, 40.1, 5; 48.12; 49.37; 50-33; 51.2.

358 Jer 1.7; 7.25; 14.14, 15; 16.16; 19.14; 23.21, 32, 38; 25.4, 9, 15, 17; 26.5, 12, 15; 27.15; 28.9, 15; 29.9, 9, 19; 31; 35-15; 42.5, 21; 43.1, 2, 16; 44.4.

354 YHWH sends (הנהל qal) a form of judgment in Jer 8.17; 9.15; 16.16; 24.10; 25.9, 16, 27; 29.17; 43.10; 48.12; 49.37; 51.2.

355 Individuals who are described as ‘sent’ in the book are Elasah (Jer 29.3), Elhanathan (26.22), Gemariah (29.3), Hananiah (28.15), Ishmael (40.14), Jehucal (37.3), Jehudi (36.14, 21), Jeremiah (1.7; 19.14; 25.15, 17; 26.12, 15; 37.7; 42.5, 6, 9, 20, 21; 43.1, 2), Nebuchadnezzar (25.9; 43.10), Pashhur (21.1), Shemaiah (29.3), and Zephaniah (21.1; 37.3). YHWH is said to have sent ‘my servants the prophets’ (נביאים מכהpies) in multiple texts (7.25;
quent use of the lexeme נביא as its subject, and these instances are a key component of the discussion of prophecy and prophets in the book.  

The verb זאר, with 39 occurrences in Jeremiah, is also typical for contexts related to prophetic authority and commission. In Jer 14.14, a negative oracle criticises prophets who were not commanded (יהוה) to speak, yet they did anyway, and in 26.8 a positive appraisal of Jeremiah's actions in the temple claims that he spoke as he was commanded (יהוה) by YHWH. In the majority of cases YHWH is the subject of the verb, though Jeremiah also issues commands to other individuals as well (27.4; 32.13; 36.5, 8; 51.59).

After instructing Jeremiah to go where he is sent and speak what he is commanded, YHWH reassures him against any resistance with the formulaic expression ‘fear not’ (לא תזרע) in Jer 1.8. This statement appears as a part of YHWH’s expression of support for Jeremiah, and it should be understood in connection to the similar expression ‘gird up your loins’ (要做 מנהしましょう) in 1.17. Both idioms pertain to preparations for conflict, war or strife; as reassurances given to Jeremiah, they seem to presume that he will encounter strife in his prophetic activity.

One of the ongoing points of discussion in current definitions of prophecy in contemporary scholarship is the notion of a Sendungsbewusstsein among ancient prophetic figures. There is still debate regarding whether or not this is a part of the biblical construct of prophecy or an historical aspect of ancient Near Eastern prophetic activity. It is apparent that many texts in the Hebrew Bible use the motif of ‘being sent’ by YHWH with

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25.4; 26.5; 29.19; 35.15; 44.4. Other figures who are sent are: Jeremiah (14.3), and Isaiah (49.14) and Hosea (9.16).

315 Jer 1.7; 7.25; 14.14; 15; 23.21; 32; 25.4; 27.15; 28.9, 15; 29.9, 19; 35.15; 37.3; 7.17; 38.14; 42.5; 44.4. See my comments in part I, chapter 2, section 1.2.3, page 52.

316 Jer 1.7; 7.22, 23(x2), 31; 11.4(x2), 8; 13.3, 6; 14.14; 17.22; 19.5; 23; 22; 38.14; 42.5; 44.4. See my comments in part I, chapter 2, section 1.2.3, page 52.

317 Jer 1.7; 14.14; 23.32; 32-35. Again, see my comments in part I, chapter 2, section 1.2.3, page 52.

318 Jer 1.7; 7.22, 23, 31; 11.4, 8; 13.3, 6; 14.14; 17; 19.5; 23; 35; 38; 32; 35; 34; 42.5; 44.4. See my comments in part I, chapter 2, section 1.2.3, page 52.

319 More is said about Jer 1.8 in this chapter, section 3.4, page 96.

דָּלֶשׁ qal in reference to a variety of important figures, including prophets; it is important to note that the idea is not restricted to a particularly 'prophetic' use.364

In discussions of a particularly prophetic Sendungsbewusstsein, several texts from Mari are often adduced as evidence of the significance of the concept in the ancient Near Eastern prophetic phenomenon. Six texts from Mari share the motif of a figure involved in intuitive divination being 'sent' by a deity.365 This has led some to conclude that the motif is operative in a very similar fashion in both the Hebrew Bible and the Mari texts, and therefore more likely to be a significant aspect of the ancient Near Eastern conception of prophecy overall.366

It is important to stress that, due to the nature of the sources, we simply cannot know definitively whether or not a prophetic figure, in Jerusalem or Mari, regarded himself or herself as 'sent' by a deity.365 However, it is clear that the concept of 'being sent' was significant for discussions about prophecy and prophets. In this respect it is worth mentioning some correlations between the texts from Mari and Jeremiah. A prophetic oracle in ARM 26/1 210 begins with the statement ‘Dagan m’a envoyée’, thus identifying the divine origin of the oracle.366 In ARM 26/1 212 the claim made in the text is that the message was sent by the deity, not that the assinnu was sent.367 Two of the claims of ‘being sent’ are made by the same figure, which could be understood as ‘the idiosyncrasy of one muhhum’

364 See, e.g., Exod 3.14, 15; 4.13, 28; 5.22; 7.16; Num 16.28, 29; Deut 34.11; Josh 24.5; Jdg 6.8; 1 Sam 12.8; 15.4; 16.1; 2 Sam 12.1; 24.13; 2 Kgs 2.2, 4, 6; Isa 42.19; 48.16; 61.1; Jer 1.7; 7.25; 14.14, 15; 19.14; 23.21, 32, 38; 25.4; 15.17; 26.5, 12; 15; 27.15; 28.9, 15; 29.9, 19, 31; 35.15; 42.5, 21; 43.1, 2; 44.4; Ezek 2.3, 4; 3.6; 13.6; Mic 6.4; Hag 1.12; Zech 2.12, 13, 15; 4.9; 6.15; Mal 3.1, 23; Ps 105.26; Neh 6.12; 2 Chr 24.19; 25.15; 36.15. Richter, Die sogenannten vorprophetischen Berufungsberichte, 156-58. See also Delcor and Jenni, דלוש, THAT II (1976), 913-14.

365 Four of these texts refer to prophets: A.3217 = ARM X 6 = ARM 26/1 212; A.4865 = ARM II 90 = ARM 26/1 220; A.2030 = ARM III 40 = ARM 26/1 221; M.13843 = ARM XIII 114 = ARM 26/1 210. Two of the texts are dream reports: A.15 = ARM 26/1 233; A.3424 = ARM 26/1 240. These references are drawn from Huffman, Company of Prophets, 56; Roberts, Mari Prophetic Texts, in: The Bible and the Ancient Near East, Winona Lake, IN, 2002, 157–253.


367 Discussions regarding 'prophetic psychology' are particularly vulnerable to excess speculation, and one must take great methodological care in approaching the topic. See Joyce, Prophets and Psychological Interpretation, in: Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel, ed. Day, LHBOTS 531, London, 2010, 17-32.

368 Transliteration and translation of all the following texts from Mari are found in Durand, Archives épistolaires de Mari. I have also consulted the English translations found in Roberts, Mari Prophetic Texts; Nissinen, Prophets and Prophecy; Heimpel, Letters to the King of Mari, MC 12, Winona Lake, IN, 2003.

369 Cf. Jer 23.38; 42.5; 43.1.
(ARM 26/1 220; 221), though the presence of the motif is clearly attested in both texts.\footnote{Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 222.} The ‘sending’ motif also appears in the dream texts ARM 26/1 233 and ARM 26/1 240; a similar connection between prophetic dreams and ‘being sent’ is Jer 23.25–32.

Because of the nature of the present work, conclusions drawn from comparative evidence must be circumspect and cautious. The significance of the examples mentioned above primarily indicate that the concept of ‘being sent’ was common to some discussions of prophecy in the ancient Near East.\footnote{On the significance these common conceptions, particularly in reference to Mari, see, e.g., Barstad, Mari and the Hebrew Bible, SEÅ 70 (2005), 21–32; Barstad, Sic dicit dominus, in: Essays on Ancient Israel in Its Near Eastern Context, ed. Amit, Ben Zvi, Finkelstein, and Lipschitz, Winona Lake, IN, 2006, 21–52.} Thus the idea of ‘being sent’ as a known aspect of the prophetic phenomenon in the ancient world matches well with the descriptions in Jeremiah.

2.4. Prophet like Moses

Following YHWH’s reassurance to Jeremiah in Jer 1.8, the text describes YHWH reaching out his hand and touching Jeremiah’s lips (יוֹבֵא יְהוָה אָם יִרְאוּ עֲלֵי פָּנֶיךָ). As YHWH does this, he says that he has placed his words in Jeremiah’s mouth. The effect is essentially to authorise Jeremiah as a fully legitimate YHWH-prophet.

There is little evidence of setting for the act in Jer 1.9, and not much can be said about this event or experience. Could it be a vision, or a part of the ‘inner experience’ of the prophet, or a sign of a formal ritual?\footnote{Cf. Herrmann, Jeremia, 1, 53.} Answers are not forthcoming, but there are other texts in Jeremiah which make similar claims (see 5.14). Rather than try to get ‘behind’ the description—that is, speculate on the kind of experience it may represent—I prefer to understand it as making a claim. The ‘sign’ found in 1.9 is a metaphorical description of the main theme of the passage, which is namely to legitimate Jeremiah as YHWH’s prophet.

Along with Jer 1.7b and 1.17a, YHWH’s act in 1.9 is commonly associated with a motif where prophets are compared to or associated with Moses.\footnote{It is commonly thought that these texts display a strong deuteronomic influence and are a part of late deuteronomistic redactions of the book. Many commentators have noted the close linguistic similarity between Jer 1.7b, 9b, 17a and Deut 18.8, a similarity often considered ‘too much of a coincidence’ to preclude some literary connection between the two texts. Achenbach, “Prophet like Moses”, in: The Pentateuch, ed. Dozeman, Schmid, and Schwartz, FAT 78, Tübingen, 2011, 446; Römer, Comment distingué ?, in: Comment...} There is a near communio
opinions which holds that Jer 1.7b, 9 are dependent on Deut 18.18 and that Jeremiah is being presented in 1.4–19 as a ‘prophet like Moses’. For the present context, I will focus strictly on the shared language in Deut 18.18 and Jer 1.7, 9.

In Jer 1.7b, YHWH instructs Jeremiah to speak everything he is commanded, using the phrase א masturbationר תדה (body) is similar, as YHWH says he will speak to the people of Israel all that he is commanded (דיבור אליהם ואת כל אשר אתה). There is clearly similar language in these texts, and variance in person and number are attributable to context. Where Jeremiah tends to combine the verbs שלח qal and את זוה hipil in Deuteronomy the verb קים qal expresses the idea of commission in 18.18 (cf. Jer 29.15; 28.6).

Further similarities are found in Jer 1.9b and Deut 18.18b. The phrase ההנה תִדר בפיך describes YHWH placing his words in the prophet’s mouth in Jer 1.9 (cf. 5.14). In Deut 18.18b, the phrase ההנה תִדר בפיך describes a similar idea. While these two texts both use the verb שלח qal, other texts have nearly identical phrasing (cf. הנתי דבר בפיך in Isa


375 See also the similar descriptions found in some of the ‘confessions’ of Jeremiah (Jer 15.16; 17.15; 20.8–9). Nicholson, Deuteronomy 18:9-22, 155.
and other descriptions of the same idea use the semantically overlapping verb שָׁמָּה (Num 22.38; 23.5; 12; Isa 51.16; 59.21). In my view, the phrases and descriptions of prophetic activity in Jer 1.4–10 are more integrally related to the language found throughout Jeremiah than to that of Deut 18.18. Jeremiah is 'sent' (שלח) rather than ‘raised up’ (קרוי), which fits the ancient Near Eastern pattern. As McKane, Schmidt and Nicholson have observed, the same description of YHWH putting words in the mouth of a prophet is found in Jer 5.14; it is therefore not necessarily the case that this language comes from Deuteronomy. In fact, some argue that the dependence might go the other direction. The language in the texts from Jeremiah and Deuteronomy are shaped by particular necessities of context, and some of it is much more widespread than just these two instances. It is preferable to me, therefore, to interpret the claims of Jer 1.7, 9 in light of similar language in Jeremiah than in light of Deut 18.18.

2.5. Summary

In Jer 1.4–10, YHWH’s reassuring statements to Jeremiah culminate in YHWH appointing him as a prophet to the nations ( İşecם לנהות). YHWH expresses his support to Jeremiah by describing how it preceded his birth, which is a common cultural motif. These statements tend to reflect concerns of legitimacy and authority in the face of opposition or rival claims (cf. 1.8, 17–19). One might see this used as an example of the spirituality of the prophet; for example, when Aeschimann invokes ‘le grand mystère ... de la prédestination’ or Fischer claims that it shows the special relationship between YHWH and Jeremiah, ‘emotional und persönlich’ eng zusammen’, they appear to miss the issue of legitimation. At the heart of 1.5 is a claim to authorise Jeremiah as a YHWH-prophet.

376 Köckert, Zum literargeschichtlichen Ort des Prophetengesetzes, 86-87.
377 See Thiel, Deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia i–25. 67-68; Otto, Jeremia und die Tora, 59. Both hold that this language is derived from a deuteronomistic redaction.
To be a נביא לגוים does not imply prophesying only about certain issues or in regard to certain groups. In addition, the semantic range of נביא in Jeremiah does not encourage a distinction between ‘native’ and ‘foreign’ in the phrase נביא לגוים. What the phrase does indicate is a certain function. Jeremiah is to perform as a נביא at the level of international affairs, which always involves domestic affairs in turn; while a unique phrase, this is still a typical description of prophecy.\textsuperscript{383} And as the thematic motifs of ‘building and planting’ and ‘uprooting and tearing down’ show in 1.10, both favourable and unfavourable words will be necessary for this function. Together the commission to a נביא לגוים in 1.5 and the tasks of ‘uprooting’ and ‘planting’ do not encourage a distinction between ‘salvation’ and ‘doom’ as distinct types of prophecy.\textsuperscript{384}

Jeremiah’s protest against his commission follows conventional patterns, and it expresses a feeling of inadequate authority for the role of נביא לגוים. His ‘youth’ is a deficit of rank and authority, not of age; thus ‘biographical’ readings of Jer 1.4–10 miss this crucial point.\textsuperscript{385} This is why YHWH instructs Jeremiah in 1.7–9. ‘Being sent’ and ‘being commanded’ are the conceptual spheres which relate to prophetic authority.

Many of the concepts found in Jer 1.4–10 are common to the ancient Near East, and are also found throughout the book of Jeremiah. In my view, then, it is not necessary to explain them in 1.4–10 in terms of their connection to Deuteronomy.\textsuperscript{386} The language in which Jeremiah is allegedly cast as a ‘prophet like Moses’ is not as close a match as is often thought.\textsuperscript{387} The contextual concerns in these two texts are rather different. It is necessary, however, to understand the descriptions of prophetic activity in 1.4–10 as integrally related to the language found throughout Jeremiah.

3. Jeremiah 1.11–14

A close connection between the two visions in Jer 1.11–14 is supported by both literary and thematic considerations. Formal characteristics are shared between them, such as a ques-

\textsuperscript{383} Barstad, No Prophets?, 54-55.
\textsuperscript{385} Holladay, Jeremiah 1–25, 34-35.
\textsuperscript{386} I agree with Schmitt that legitimacy is one of the critical aspects of the passage, but disagree with the view that it must derive from deuteronomistic perspectives. Schmitt, Mantik im Alten Testament, 165. Cf. Herrmann, Jeremia, I, 63.
\textsuperscript{387} In support, see Schmidt, Jeremia 1–20, 47-48; Nicholson, Deuteronomy 18:9-22, 154-55.
tion-and-answer format, as well as repeated phrases and clichés. Both texts describe Jeremiah being asked what he sees (מה אתה רואה), and both times Jeremiah responds ‘I see ...’ (Jer 1.11, 13). The message of the first vision in 1.11–12 is concerned with YHWH’s intent to act and the second vision in 1.13–14 is an elaboration of judgment which describes imminent threat for Judah.

Literally the two visions are quite similar as they follow a question-and-answer pattern using the same phrases and terms.³⁸⁵ There is a repetition of the phrase המ אתה רואה in 1.11, 13 and both times Jeremiah responds (אמר) to YHWH’s question by describing what he sees with the phrase אתה רואה (cf. 24.3). YHWH’s speech is introduced twice with ויאמר אלה in 1.12, 14. This might explain part of the development of the text of 1.4–19 but it does not explain other internal consistencies shared by 1.4–10 and 1.11–14, such as the use of the first-person in the introductory phrase ראה אלה with ויהי בubby יהוה אלה in 1.4, 11, 13 and the interest in the predicate ירא in 1.9, 12.³⁸⁸ It is also possible that a wordplay between the lexemes ירא and ראה links the two sections, as YHWH’s instruction to Jeremiah אל תירא in 1.8 is followed by the question מה אתה רואה in 1.11, 13 (cf. Ps 40.4; 119.74; Jb 6.21).³⁸⁹

3.1. Text and translation

(11) There was a word of YHWH to me, saying, What do you see, Jeremiah?
And I said, I see an almond branch.

(12) And YHWH said to me, Well seen, for I am watchful to act upon my word.

(13) There was a word of YHWH to me a second time, saying, What do you see?
And I said, I see a steaming pot, facing away from the north.

(14) And YHWH said to me, Out of the north disaster will be opened upon all the inhabitants of the land.

³⁸⁵ Behrens, Prophetische Visionsschilderungen, AOAT 292, Münster, 2002, 110; Schmidt, Jeremia 1–20, 58.
³⁸⁸ Holladay, Jeremiah 1–25, 25.
³⁸⁹ On the wordplay, see Barr, Comparative Philology, 153-54.
3.2. The first vision: Jeremiah 1.11–12

In the first vision report (Jer 1.11–12), Jeremiah sees an almond branch (לֶעֹז שָׁקֵד), and YHWH says he is watchful (שָׁקֵד) to act upon his word. The vision and the interpretation hinge on a word-play between שָׁקֵד ('almond') in 1.11 and שָׁקֵד ('watch') in 1.12. YHWH's 'watchfulness' is usually related to judgment in Jeremiah (5.6; 44.27), but can also be used in a salvific context as well (31.28). There is no indication in 1.11–12 whether YHWH is keen to act in judgment or salvation. However, the premise of the vision seems to focus on the relation between YHWH's word and YHWH's action.

The peculiar phrase מַקֵּל שָׁקֵד ('almond rod') in Jer 1.11 is unique. The lexeme מַקֵּל ('rod') is used to describe a shepherd's staff (Gen 30.37; 1 Sam 17.40, 43), or a ruler's sceptre (Jer 48.17), and can also describe a weapon (Ezek 39.9) or an instrument used in rhabdomancy. The most common and well-known motif which uses a מַקֵּל מַכָּה or מַכָּה מַקֵּל is that of a staff or rod as a symbol of authority carried by powerful figures such as Moses (e.g. Exod 4.2, 17, 20; 7.17; 17.19), Aaron (e.g. Exod 7.19–20; 8.1, 12) and Elijah (described as a מַשְׁנֶה מַכָּה in 2 Kgs 4.29, 31). If מַכָּה מַקֵּל is to be understood as a 'rod' then it has a connotation of authority, power or legitimacy.

What then is the significance of the rod being related to almond? One view relates the nominal form שָׁקֵד to the lexeme שָׁקֵד ('watch, wake') due to the early seasonal bloom of almond trees; the amygdalus communis, or almond, is referred to by the term שָׁקֵד because it is 'wakeful' in the spring. Thus in this reading the 'watchful' early bloom of the almond is likened to YHWH being 'watchful' to act imminently. Though poetic, this view can be improved with a closer look at the lexeme מַכָּה.

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390 DCH V, 466–67; HALOT I, 627; Gesenius 17, 436; Gesenius 18, 730. See André, מַכָּה, ThWAT IV (1984), 1129–31.
391 HALOT I, 627. Cf. the parallelism of מַכָּה ('rod of strength') and מַסְדֵּה מַכָּה ('staff of office') in Jer 48.17.
393 E.g., BDy, 1052. ‘Weil der Mandelbaum gar nicht zu schlafen scheint, eignet er sich zu diesem Bilde.’ Dalman 1/1, 255-56. Cf. Wood, Jeremiah’s Figure of the Almond Rod, JBL 61 (1942), 99–103; Sauer, Mandelzweig und Kessel, ZAW 78 (1966), 56–61. See also Jacob and Jacob, Flora, ABD II (1992), 806. Cf. HALOT I, 522 and the lexeme ולל.
Various staffs and rods have been suggested as possible referents for the מַכָּל שֶׂפֶד in Jer 1.11. Aaron’s staff (משה) appears similar, as it blossomed and bore almonds (שקדים) in Num 17.16–26 (cf. Gen 30.37–41). The מַכָּל שֶׂפֶד might refer to a particular cultic instrument in the Jerusalem temple; perhaps it is a priestly staff used in cultic contexts as a signifier of authority or power. If an object like this is in view in 1.11–12, then it is possible that the מַכָּל שֶׂפֶד has a divinatory role or significance which legitimates the one in possession of it (cf. Gen 30.37–43; Hos 4.12). Thus YHWH being ‘watchful’ to act is connected to an image of authority; the cultic rod becomes a symbol of the efficacy of YHWH’s word.

However the phrase מַכָּל שֶׂפֶד is interpreted, the implication of the vision is that YHWH acts upon his word. The vision’s function is related to the overall pattern in 1.4–19; it legitimates Jeremiah and confirms YHWH’s support for his prophetic activity. YHWH tells Jeremiah he has seen rightly (רָאוּשָׁת לָאָדָה) in 1.12, and declares that the ‘word’ YHWH gives to him will be acted upon. Importantly, this is not a general ‘theology’ of YHWH’s word. The phrase דבר יהוה and the concept of YHWH’s word is often made into a theological concept. In context, however, YHWH’s word is in Jeremiah’s mouth, which means he is authorised to speak on YHWH’s behalf.

3.3. The second vision: Jeremiah 1.13–14

Both of the vision reports in Jer 1.11–12 and 1.13–14 are introduced by the phrase דבר יהוה, which also introduces 1.4–10. A connection between the two visions is sug-

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394 Toorn, Did Jeremiah See Aaron’s Staff?, JSOT 43 (1989), 83–94. So also Wood, Jeremiah’s Figure of the Almond Rod; Williams, Jeremiah’s Vision of the Almond Rod, in: A Stubborn Faith, ed. Hobbs, Dallas, 1956, 90–99.


397 Meier, in a welcome contrast, cautions against ‘expansive generalizations’; he shows convincingly that the ‘word of PN’ pattern ‘simply reflects the language of an authoritative individual’. Meier, Speaking of Speaking, 314–19.
gested by the statement in 1.13 that a message from YHWH came to Jeremiah a second time (שנית). It appears that there is a stronger textual connection between 1.11–12 and 1.13–14 than there is between 1.4–10 and 1.11–14; since both 1.4 and 1.11 report a word from YHWH, 1.13 is actually the third time that YHWH’s word comes to Jeremiah in the text.398

The second vision in Jer 1.13–14 hinges on an image of judgment, the description of which in 1.13 is somewhat difficult. After being asked by YHWH what he sees (מו אמתו) in 1.13, Jeremiah responds that he sees a ‘steaming pot’ (סר נפוח) and in describing it he says it is ‘facing away from the north’ (מצפוני מהים). Each of these phrases must be addressed in turn in order to make sense of the image.

The main image described in Jer 1.13 is a ‘boiling pot’ (סר נפוח). The lexeme סר I refers to a large, earthenware or metal, wide-necked cooking pot or cauldron often used for boiling meat (e.g. Exod 16.3; 2 Kgs 4.38–41; Ezek 24.11).399 The modifier, a passive participle from נפוח qal, is typically understood to be a reference to steam, rising from hot or boiling water.400 The image, then, is of a large pot filled with liquid, placed over a fire, and steaming over.401

The second half of the vision description notes the direction of the steaming pot, facing away from the north (מצפוני מהים). The construction is somewhat awkward: מצפונים מפורים is, very literally, ‘and its face from the face’ which is then combined with the lexeme ממфр with a locative ה. The main thrust is a description the surface rim of the pot as faced away from the north.402 Thus the image is of a cauldron filled with boiling liquid and

398 This incongruity may suggest that 1.4–10 and 1.11–14 were separate texts later joined together, a position which is widely held. See Renaud, Jér 1, in: Le Livre de Jérémie, ed. Bogaert, BETL 54, Louvain, 1981, 182; McKane, Jeremiah i-xvi, 16-17; Schmidt, Jeremia 1–20, 42-43; Römer, Du livre au prophète, 260-70.
400 DCH V, 714; HALOT I, 708. A similar use of the qal passive participle לצבה is found in Jb 41.12 where YHWH describes the dawn cloud with smoke coming from his nostrils רָעִים (like a glowing, boiling cauldron). This reads לצבה (‘reeds’) with the conjectured אֲנָשׁ I ‘be hot’; cf. KBL, 9; HALOT I, 10; Gesenius’18, 12.
401 Gesenius’, 884.
402 GKC §90e. Driver suggested emending מפורים to the qal passive participle פנוי (‘turned’). Driver, Linguistic and Textual Problems, JQR 28 (1937), 97.
facing away from the north, which YHWH tells Jeremiah is a premonition of judgment against Judah.

This image is interpreted by YHWH in 1.14 as a reference to a coming catastrophe (משתחוה והרעה niphal). The particular phrasing, where ירה is ‘opened’ is unusual, but the sense is clear: the image portends a disaster which will come upon all those who dwell in the land (על כל יהודא). The theme of ‘disaster from the north’ and an ‘enemy from the north’ is found in a number of texts in Jeremiah. Attempts to identify this enemy are quixotic, and have largely been abandoned in contemporary scholarship.

For some time it has been recognised that there are texts in the Hebrew Bible in which צופן cannot mean ‘north’ (e.g. Job 26.7). In light of the texts from Ras-Shamra, it has become clear that the term צופן can have a ‘mythic’ connotation in ancient West Semitic religious thought. The Ugaritic lexeme spn refers to Mons Cassius, modern day Jebel el-Aqra’, which was understood as the mythological dwelling place of Ba‘al. This has provided an analogue for the similar conceptual understanding of Mount Zion (הר ציון) as the ‘summit of Zaphon’ (הר בתו צופן), the residence of YHWH in Jerusalem, as found in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Ps 48.3). These motifs leave open the possibility that צופן can have a mythological sense which refers to YHWH’s dwelling place. If this reading is

404 Against the view that these oracles form a ‘corpus’, see Reimer, ‘Foe’ and the ‘North’, ZAW 101 (1989), 228-29. See also Childs, Enemy from the North, JBL 78 (1959), 192-93.
405 The old ‘Scythian hypothesis’ is the classic representative of this approach. It rests on a misunderstanding Herodotus’ description of Scythian domination in ‘all Asia’. The phrase was thought to include Syria-Palestine, but it strictly refers to Asia Minor (Hist. i 104-6). For a thorough refutation of the Scythian hypothesis, see Vaggione, Over All Asia?, JBL 92 (1973), 523–30. Also helpful are the clarifying comments in McKane, Jeremiah i-xlv, 18-21. The other main option is to take Babylon as the ‘enemy from the north’, even if Babylon is not actually very ‘north’ of Judah. Only one text makes this identification clear (Jer 25.9), but Babylon is also threatened by the same enemy in other texts (50.3, 9. 41; 51.48). Reimer, ‘Foe’ and the ‘North’, 224-25.
406 See also Josh 13.27; Judg 12.1; Ezek 32.20. This fact was first recognised by Eissfeldt, Baal Zaphon, BRGA 1, Halle, 1932, 11-14. For a more recent account, see Wyatt, Significance of SPN, in: Ugarit – ein ostmediterranes Kulturzentrum im Alten Orient, ed. Dietrich and Loretz, ALASP 7, Münsen, 1995, 216-18. Contra Day, Yahweh, JSOTS 265, Sheffield, 2000, 10-11.
407 Illustrative examples include: the epithet b/l spn in KTU 1.47.3, passim; descriptions such as the phrase גרי b/l him qds (‘the mountain of Baal-Zaphon, the holy fortress’) in KTU 1.6.1-7; the appearance of spn in god lists such as KTU 1.18.14; spn as the recipient of offerings in KTU 1.41;34: 1.48.6. See DUL II, 788; Eissfeldt, Baal Zaphon, 5.7; Lauha, Zaphon, AASF 49/2, Helsinki, 1943, 36-52; Langbe, Les textes de Ras-Shamra–Ugarit, Universitas catholica Lovaniensis II/35, Gembloux, 1945, 217-44. see
followed, the claim being made by the phrase מֵתֶן תַּמְלִית הָרֹעֶה in Jer 1.14 would be that YHWH is the source of the disaster which will come upon Judah. This makes the statement all the more shocking, which the syntax of the phrase might even support, as מֵתֶן is fronted for emphasis.\textsuperscript{406} The text itself does not point to a foreign threat against Jerusalem; it makes YHWH the source of the threat.

3.4. Summary

The two vision reports 1.11–14 elaborate the content of the message Jeremiah is to communicate. The first vision in 1.11–12 is concerned with YHWH’s intent to act and the second vision in 1.13–14 is a statement of judgment which describes imminent disaster. Since there is an open possibility that מֵתֶן can have a mythological sense in the Hebrew Bible, the shocking claim implied in Jer 1.14 is that YHWH is the source of the disaster which will come upon Judah. The threat against Judah is not necessarily ‘foreign’, as it is brought by YHWH. However the phrase מֵתֶן Malone is interpreted, the vision expects that YHWH acts upon his word.

One of the primary functions of the visions in Jer 1.11–14 is to legitimise Jeremiah and confirm YHWH’s support for his prophetic activity.\textsuperscript{409} In the immediate context, just after Jeremiah’s commission as נבּא מְלֹאך, visions are clearly understood to be a part of prophetic activity, and their function does not seem to differ from other visions with warnings in the book (e.g. 4.23–26; 24.1–10). There is little reason to doubt the importance of visions for prophets in Jeremiah.\textsuperscript{410} Thus, even though the means by which the message is received, there appears to be little reason to distinguish this text sharply from other prophetic oracles. This is but one example of the difficulty one has in contrasting visions (and dreams) from other forms of prophecy. Also, in a passage where Jeremiah ‘sees’ (ראה) what YHWH wishes to communicate, it is a little strange that so much emphasis has been placed on דבר יהוה as a concept.\textsuperscript{411} The ‘word’ and ‘vision’ support one another in

\textsuperscript{406} Hill, Friend or Foe?, BibInt 40, Leiden, 1999, 52.
\textsuperscript{411} Shead, Mouth Full of Fire, 122, 186-87.
this context, and to stress the priority of one over the other misses their cooperative function.

4. Jeremiah 1.15–19

Following the commission in Jer 1.4–10 and the two visions in 1.11–14 are a pair of oracles from YHWH, one negative and one positive. After the pair of visions in 1.11–14, the theme of YHWH’s judgment and its relation to Zechariah continues in 1.15–16. YHWH announces that he is summoning all of the clans of the kingdoms of the north, who will then besiege Jerusalem. Because of the break signalled in 1.15 by the phrase ‘for behold’ (בִּאָה נַעֲנֵ ה), the shift of reference to human parties, and the disappearance of the closely paralleled and symmetrical structure of the two visions, these verses does not appear to be in the same textual subsection as 1.11–14.413 New themes are introduced in 1.15–19: Jerusalem as the recipient of YHWH’s judgment (1.15), religious and cultic failures (1.16), and resistance from the local population. YHWH gives further instructions to Jeremiah and a final word of support.

4.1. Text and translation

413 Among those who treat Jer 1.11–16 as a unit are Carroll, Jeremiah, 104-08; Holladay, Jeremiah 1–25, 26. Jer 1.15–16 are discussed separately in Herrmann, Jeremia, I, 76–79; McKane, Jeremiah i-xxv, 16-21; Schmidt, Jeremia 1–20, 62-63.

BHS deletes מְשַפֶּחְתּוֹ because it is absent in 6 and suggests it is a secondary insertion from Jer 25.9. The view represented by the apparatus criticus is that מְשַפֶּחְתּוֹ reduplicates the sense of מְמלֹכָּה because the construct מְשַפֶּחְתּוֹ easily can be repointed to the absolute מְשַפֶּחְתּוֹ. Many commentators follow this view. See e.g. Cornill, Jeremia, Leipzig, 1905, 10; Giesebrecht, Jeremia, 5; Condamin, Jérémie, EtB 380, Paris, 1920, 5; Volz, Jeremia, KAT 10, Leipzig, 1928, 8; Bright, Jeremia, AncB 21, Garden City, NY, 1965, 4; Rudolph, Jeremia, 8; Holladay, Jeremiah 1–25, 22. In this case I do not find the grammar of 1.15 so difficult to warrant emendation. The view represented by the apparatus criticus is quite understandable as a construct, and the two terms are not strict synonyms; they indicate different levels of social organisation. Neither are the phrases מְשַפֶּחְתּוֹ מְמלֹכָּה in 1.15 and מְשַפֶּחְתּוֹ מְמלֹכָּה in 25.9 contradictory. The same argument raised against phrases such as מְשַפֶּחְתּוֹ מְמלֹכָּה in Ps 22.28 and מְשַפֶּחְתּוֹ מְמלֹכָּה in Ps 96.7; 1 Chr 16.28. I do not find the arguments for the proposed emendation persuasive.
Chapter 3. Jeremiah 1.4–19

For behold, I am calling all the clans of the kings from the north, oracle of YHWH, They will come and each will place their throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all her surrounding walls around and all the cities of Judah.

I will announce my judgment to them, concerning all their wickedness by which they have forsaken me. They have sacrificed to other gods, and bowed down to the works of their hands.

So you, gird up your loins, arise, and speak to them everything I command you. Do not despair before them, lest I shatter you before them.

Behold I have appointed you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar and bronze walls against all the land, the kings of Judah, her officers, the priests and the people of the land.

They will attack you, but they will not overcome you, oracle of YHWH, for I am with you, to deliver you.

4.2. Opposition and attack

The commission YHWH gives Jeremiah forces him to fight on two fronts. The conclusion to the pericope of Jer 1.4–19 envisions two distinct threats which Jeremiah must face. The first relates to the disaster coming from the north, as external threats come against Jerusalem (1.15–16). The second relates to dissent within the ranks, so to speak, as Jeremiah is cast as an antagonist to the Judaean leadership (1.17–19).

The phrase משפחות ממלכת is unique in Jeremiah, but is similar to the similar reference to the families of the north (משפחות זפונה) in 25.9. The lexeme משפחות appears nine times in Jeremiah, and has enough semantic overlap with ממלכת to lead many into thinking the text here is redundant. In the context of 1.15–16 it makes good sense to read משפחות as ‘kings' since they would be the ones in possession of thrones to set up before the gates of Jerusalem. The situation described in 1.15, in my view, is very clearly a

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45 The he locale can indicate direction to or from a location. See IBHS §10.5. In Jeremiah this is used several times with the location (‘from the north'); cf. Jer 1.13; 3.12; 23.8.

46 Jer 1.15; 2.4; 3.14; 8.3; 10.25; 15.3; 25.9; 31.1; 33.24.

description of a siege. The judgment (儆戒) announced by YHWH in 1.16 pertains to Jerusalem and the walled cities of Judah on account of all their wickedness (כל רעתי). A litany of misdeeds completes the verse, as YHWH criticises them for forsaking (עב qal) him, sacrificing to other gods (חרטהו ולאלהים אחרונים), and worshipping idols (희שוהו).418

In Jer 1.8 and 1.17, YHWH gives Jeremiah encouragement and support with two formulaic expressions: ‘fear not’ (אל תירא),419 and ‘gird up your loins’ (תאזר ויכול). Both idioms are closely related to situations where one is preparing for conflict, war or strife. In 1.8, YHWH’s reassurance follows his instructions to Jeremiah; YHWH will be with him (יתהלך לך) in order to deliver him (לחללו). The context is similar in 1.17, though the sense is more combative. Jeremiah is to gird up his loins, arise (ресפ qal), and to speak (דבר piel) everything that YHWH commands (ראה piel). The final phrase in 1.17b is both supportive and not; YHWH encourages Jeremiah by telling him not to despair, or be dismayed, but then threatens him should he do so. The two instances of the verb תָּחֵת, one niphal and one hiphil, have the senses ‘despair’ and ‘shatter’ respectively.420 Should Jeremiah falter, all will be lost.

Opposition to Jeremiah also comes in the form of local resistance as well. YHWH reassures Jeremiah with promises of security and inviolability.421 In Jer 1.18 (cf. 15.20), YHWH says he has made Jeremiah into a fortified city (chersו ממבצר), an iron pillar (עמוד ברזל), and a wall of bronze (>({סָדִי} נחושת). The images are meant to illustrate resistance to the onslaught of enemies, and they express divine support and protection.422 Instead of protection against foreign enemies, however, these provisions of support barricade

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419 Cf. Gen 15:1; 21:17; 26:24; 35:17; 43:23; 46:3; 59:19; 60:21; Exod 14.13; 20.17; Num 14.9; 21:34; Deut 1.21; 3.2; 20.3; 31.6; Josh 8.1; 10.8; 10.25; 11.6; Judg 4.18; 6.23; 1 Sam 4.20; 12.20; 22.23; 23.17; 28.13; 2 Sam 9.7; 13.28; 1 Kgs 17.13; 2 Kgs 11.5; 6.16; 19.6; 25.24; Isa 7.4; 10.24; 35.4; 37.6; 40.9; 41.10, 13–14; 43.4, 5; 44.2; 51.7; 54.4; Jer 1.8; 10.5; 30.10; 40.9; 42.11; 46.27–28; Eek 2.6; Joel 2.21–22; Zeph 3.16; Hag 2.5; Zech 8.13, 15; Ps 49.17; Job 5.22; Prov 3.25; Ruth 3.11; Lam 3.57; Dan 10.12; 19; Neh 4.8; 1 Chr 22.13; 28.20; 2 Chr 20.15, 17; 32.7. See Nissinen, Fear Not, in: The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century, ed. Sweeney and Ben Zvi, Grand Rapids, MI, 2003, 122–61.

420 Cf. Job 38.3; 40.7. Note also the idiom אָרָא גָּדוֹל as in 1 Sam 2.4 and 장 둔 in Isa 8.9 (x2). For 장, see DCH I, 172; HALOT I, 28; Gesenius,38, 31.


422 Riede, Ich mache dich zur festen Stadt, 82-86. Additionally, see Maier, Jeremiah as YHWH’s Stronghold.

423 The two phrases are joined together as חומות נሱת ברזל (‘fortified wall of bronze’) in Jer 15.20.

Jeremiah from his own land (عنלאזרחי; על כל הארץ) the kings of Judah, the officers, the priests and all the people are the ones who will attack (ל singapore) Jeremiah. Despite the fact that Jeremiah will be attacked, he will not be overcome (לא יברון לן). A final saying of divine support is identical to the one found in 1.8; YHWH will be with Jeremiah (כ יאבד אתך) in order to deliver him (ל hỏng). Such a strong expression of salvation and deliverance is rare for the book (cf. 42.11; 46.28).

4.3. Summary

YHWH gives Jeremiah a commission which inherently involves conflict. The two distinct threats which Jeremiah must face are both domestic and foreign. As external threats come against Jerusalem, most importantly a siege (Jer 1.15–16), Jeremiah will also deal with an antagonistic relationship with the Judaean leadership (1.17–19). This is further emphasised by the two phrases 'fear not' and 'gird up your loins' (1.8, 17). Both idioms are closely related to situations of strife and conflict, and especially the 'fear not' (אלהי יאבד) formula is common in prophetic speech.

Among those opposing Jeremiah are the priests (כהנים) of Judah, and the criticisms YHWH lists as reasons for his 'judgment' (משפט) against Jerusalem are primarily cultic in nature. These data should not be taken to indicate an antagonistic relationship between prophet and cult. In my view, the opposite conclusion is preferable, that the concern for illicit offerings and worship offered to idols and other gods indicates their importance for prophecy. The entire leadership is criticised for a failure to worship YHWH properly; the rhetorical force of the prophetic statement depends on the significance of these practices for the parties involved.

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465 See other lists of political figures in Jer 2.26; 4.9; 8.1; 13.13; 17.25; 21.7; 24.1, 8; 25.19; 26.11, 12, 16; 29.2, 16; 32.32; 34.19, 21; 37.21; 39.3, 13; 44.9, 17, 21. The only texts out of this selection which include the לארשי are 34.19; 37.21; 44.21.


468 This is a more recent way of thinking about cultic criticisms in prophetic speech; instead of showing a prophetic rejection of the cult, these polemics serve different rhetorical purposes. See Eidevall, Role of Sacrificial Language, in: Ritual and Metaphor, ed. Eberhart, SBLRBS 68, Atlanta, GA, 2011, 49–61.
5. Conclusion

What does Jer 1.4–19 say about prophets? The pericope of Jer 1.4–19 may only have one instance of the word נביא, but it is a distillation of several important themes and concepts of prophecy which are programmatic for the book. Its basic concerns in this regard, as I argue, have to do with legitimacy and authority. Jeremiah’s appointment as a נביא ל negerim is famous among biblical scholars as a unique description of a prophet. However, the uniqueness of this phrase should not overshadow the more typical aspects of the description seen in its context. 429

To summarise the content of the text, the three sections of Jer 1.4–10, 11–14 and 15–19 each provide reassurances to the prophet. In Jer 1.4–10, YHWH appoints Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations (נביא ל negerim). Prophecy is construed in relation to nations (נגוים), kingdoms (משפחות), and tribes (ממלכות), who appear related to the themes of war and siege in 1.11–14 and 15–19. These themes are also related to the conceptual sphere of worship and cult, as failures to worship YHWH properly are cited as grounds for judgment. Though his commission involves conflict, for which he must prepare (1.17), Jeremiah is encouraged with the common expression to ‘fear not’ (1.8). In addition, the text uses a common cultural motif where a deity expresses support for an individual from the womb (1.5). A final image describes him as a fortress resistant to attack (1.18). Jeremiah is ‘sent’ and ‘commanded’ to go and speak on YHWH’s behalf. These are basic conceptual spheres which relate to prophetic authority seen throughout the book. The prophetic message is construed as both positive and negative, as it may be favourable or unfavourable for those who receive it (1.10); the text does not authorise one kind of prophetic message over another. 430 Jeremiah is portrayed as an effective prophet, who rightly divines the meaning of visions from YHWH (cf. יסיבת ל_words in 1.12), and whom YHWH will support and save (1.8, 19). YHWH acts upon his word, which has been entrusted to Jeremiah; should he waver, YHWH will judge him (1.17).

Common ancient Near Eastern motifs are used to support the authority of the prophet. Jeremiah is often described as a ‘prophet like Moses’ based on Jer 1.4–10, but one also could say that Jeremiah’s ‘prophet like-ness’ is related to common conceptions of

429 Barstad, No Prophets?, 54-55.
prophecy in the ancient Near Eastern milieu. Particularly important in this regard is the way that Jeremiah being ‘sent’ matches similar descriptions of prophecy in Mari; though debated, there is still a wide range of support for the view that this is a basic element in the ancient Near Eastern conception of prophecy. In my view, it is not necessary to explain them in 1.4–10 in terms of their connection to Deuteronomy. The idea of ‘being sent’ is widespread in Jeremiah, and will be discussed in more detail later in the present work.

As it is discussed in Jer 1.4–19, being a ‘prophet to the nations’ describes a function, not necessarily a role. There is a broad semantic range for the idea of being a prophet to the nations, as the text understands Jeremiah’s prophetic function to affect a range of social strata, including its highest levels of organisation (cf. 1.10, 15, 18). This should be preferred to construing the function of a נביא לגוים to primarily ‘foreign’ entities.

Biographical readings, even if restricted to a purely ‘literary’ concept of biography, appear to miss these themes. Jeremiah’s self-description as a נביא לצבאים has encouraged these readings when understood primarily in terms of age. Instead, it should be understood as a lack of rank and authority, not of age and maturity. Divine support from the womb is a common cultural motif related to concerns of legitimacy and authority in the face of opposition or rivalry (cf. 1.8, 17–19). This does not necessarily function to claim an intimacy between Jeremiah and YHWH, in implicit contrast with other ‘false’ prophets.

Visions are portrayed as a part of the prophetic task. Here it is important to note that their function in the pericope is to legitimate the prophet and confirm YHWH’s support for his prophetic activity. In terms of the means of communication between deity and prophet, a formal difference between ‘seeing’ and ‘speaking’ does not imply a functional difference. This text gives no indication of a sharp division between types of

439 Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel, 182-97; Huffmon, Company of Prophets; Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 221-24.
435 In support, see Schmidt, Jeremiah 1–20, 47-48; Nicholson, Deuteronomy 18:9-22, 154-55.
432 Cf. Fischer, Jeremiah 1–25, 143; Shead, Mouth Full of Fire, 125.
433 Allen, Jeremiah, 22, 26.
436 Schmitt, Mantik im Alten Testament, 49-50. Using a cognitive approach, Hayes argues that ‘both the visions and the speech situations used to frame the visions taken together are vital for establishing prophetic authority’: Hayes, Role of Visionary Experiences, 59-70, cit. 59.
438 Behrens, Prophetische Visionsschilderungen, 66-70; Hayes, Role of Visionary Experiences.
439 This is in contrast to the view of Stökl. In his view, since visions ‘have their own terminology’ this
prophetic intermediation, nor does it make visionary experience the grounds for authentic prophetic experience. Instead, it suggests a cooperative relationship between vision and speech. More will be said later in this work about the relationship between prophecy and visions.

440 Mayes, Prophecy and Society in Israel, in: Of Prophets' Visions and the Wisdom of the Sages, ed. McKay and Clines, JSOTS 162, Sheffield, 1993, 25–42; Anthonioz, Le prophétisme biblique, 24; Schmitt, Mantik im Alten Testament, 49-50. Similarly, an ‘evolutionary’ paradigm where visions are superseded by rational speech should not be accepted either. Cf. the suggestion that Jeremiah represents a ‘transitional stage’ toward an emphasis on YHWH’s word in Zimmerli, Visionary Experience in Jeremiah, 115. ‘Word’ is similarly prioritised in Shead, Mouth Full of Fire, 122, 186-87.
Chapter 4. Jeremiah 23.9–40

1. Preliminary remarks

In Jer 23.9–40 there is a lengthy discussion of prophets, their oracles and their activities. This discussion is not always positive; many of these verses are deeply polemical as they judge prophets harshly. The text unit of Jer 23.9–15 begins with the heading להבשיט (‘for the prophets’), which marks the opening textual boundary of 23.9–40. The subject matter of the text follows the cue of the heading. The words, activities and behaviours of prophets are one of the central concerns of the text; the lexeme נביא appears 17 times in the pericope.44 Within 23.9–40 are five subsections, each pertaining to prophets in the main, but showing enough variation in emphasis to deserve their own comments: 23.9–15, 16–22, 23–24, 25–32 and 33–40.

2. Jeremiah 23.9–15

A collection of poetic oracles concerning prophets and priests in Jer 23.9–15 make up the first subsection of 23.9–40. The text is primarily critical of prophets and priests for the negative consequences their actions have for the land of Judah. Matters related to the cult are highly important for these verses. The concepts of impurity, profanation, pollution, adultery and apostasy are all found in 23.13–15. Specific criticisms are levelled against prophets associated with Samaria and Jerusalem.

2.1. Text and translation

לנביאים ובבכר רוחם כל עמוותיהם וחיי איש שבור וגובר יי מפתי
(9) יי הופך דברי קדשו
(10) כי מנאפים מלאה הארץ כי מספי אללה הארץ ובישה נאות מכבר והוה
מרוחמים וגו"ר לן כל

44 Jer 23.9, 11, 13, 14, 15(x2), 16, 21, 25, 26(x2), 28, 30, 31, 33, 34, 37.
44 BHS (probabilitet) inserts מפרשים after the first כי in Jer 23.10. Rudolph justifies this ‘versuchsweise’ change on metrical grounds, as it results in a ‘notwendigen Vollzeile’. Rudolph, Jeremia, 148. So also Duhm, Jeremia, 183; Giesebrecht, Jeremia. In my view, meter does not provide the most secure support for emending the text in Jer 23.10.
For the prophets.444 My heart is broken within me, all my bones quiver,445 I have become like a drunk, and like a man who is overcome by wine,446 because of YHWH and because of his holy words.

For the land is full of adulterers, the land withers because of a curse,447 the pastures of the wilderness are dried up; their race is evil, their strength is not right.448

443 BHS reads the yiqtol יֵשָׁבֵב in place of shall stand in L. Typically לֶבַל לֶבַל negates an infinitive construct, or sometimes a yiqtol verb (GKC §152x; see Exod 20.20). The perfect tense verb here is incorrect (Jouon-Muraoka §160; GKB, §28b). See also Jer 27.18. For these grammatical reasons, I adopt the reading proposed in the apparatus criticus.

444 The majority of interpreters read נבואות in Jer 23.9 as a heading rather than integrate it in the syntax of the rest of the verse. Here נביאות has a similar function to headings in some 'oracles against the nations' (46.2; 48.1; 49.1; 49.7; 49.23), as well as the phrase נביאות in 21.11 (cf. Isa 8.1; Ezek 37.16). On the so-called lamed inscriptionis, see GKC §191u.

445 The lexeme נַשֵּׂבַי appears three times in the Hebrew Bible and as qal verb only here in Jer 23.11. Two instances of the verb in the piel are found in Gen 1.2 and Deut 32.11. In Gen 1.2 the phrase והר האמת רמה over the primordial waters, and in Deut 32.11 the phrase نحوו describes the spirit of God 'hovering' over the primordial waters, and Deut 32.11 the phrase נֵבָע describes a bird of prey 'hovering' over its young. Surveying the standard lexica one finds meanings for נַשֵּׂבַי piel related to hovering and flushing, as with the wings of a bird: רָוַד רָוַד II 'hover, tremble' (DCH VII, 472); 'tremble', piel 'hover and tremble' (HALOT II, 1220); 'zitternd schweben' (HALAT IV, 137–38); 'beben, zittern' (Gesenius*, 1237); 'beben, zittern'; piel 'rachen' (Even-Shoshan III, 1996); 'dislocarse, entrechocar' (DBHE, 700); cf. Jenni, Der hebräische Piel, 139. See cognates in causative stems, e.g. Ugaritic ḫpt (G f. ptc.) as in the phrase ḫpt [b šm][n]rm[m] 'who hovers in the high heavens' (KTU 1.1088) and ḫp (D) 'to fly about' (KTU 1.18 iv 21, 31; 19 i 22; see DUL II, 727–28; Aistliehner, Wörterbuch der urgäritischen Sprache, 2508); Syriac ḫp pa. 'to hover over' (LS, 1458). The meaning of qal is much less certain. In the context of Jer 23.9 נַשֵּׂבַי is in parallel with 'become shéphar niphal' to be broken. Various Arabic cognates are suggested in the lexica, the most commonly accepted one being ṭabaf 'be soft' (BDB, 934; DCH VII, 472; Keil, Jeremiah, BC III/2, Leipzig, 1872, 264). This verb is not listed in Lane, but can be found in Freytag, Lexicon arabico-latinorum, 4 vols., Halle, 1830–37. II, 134–35. See Halliday, Jeremiah 1–25, 626. Others are mentioned as well, e.g., ṭaffa, ṭaffa 'beben, flattern' (Gesenius*, 1237; cf. KBL, 886–87; Gesenius*, 756).

446 On a relative clause following a substantive, see GKC §126p, §155h–h.

447 Some commentators have been troubled by נאם (‘curse’) in Jer 23.10, though the term is used similarly in 29.18; 42.18; 44.12. My reading is similar to the one suggested by Barthélemy et al., ‘ouï, à cause de la malédiction, le pays est dans le deuil’. Similar uses of the lexeme נאם without the article can be found in Isa 24.6; Ez 16.59; 17.18; see Barthélemy, Critique textuelle, rapport final du Comité pour l’analyse textuelle de l’Ancien Testament hébreu institué par l’Alliance Biblique Universelle, OBO 50/2, Fribourg/Göttingen, 1986, 642.

448 I read ב as a substantive in parallel with רעה ‘evil’, as in ‘(what is) right, true’. A similar meaning is found in Jer 48.30, where ב cannot describe a non-existent thing (cf. 2 Kgs 17.9). So also Holladay, Jeremi-
Chapter 4, Jeremiah 23.9–40

(11) For both prophet and priest are polluted; even in my house I find their wickedness, oracle of YHWH.\(^{460}\)

(12) So their path will be to them like slippery ground, they will be pushed\(^{450}\) into darkness and there they shall fall; for I will bring disaster upon them, the year of their visitation, oracle of YHWH.

(13) And in the prophets of Samaria I have seen offensiveness; they prophesied by Baal and led astray my people Israel.

(14) And in the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen repulsiveness; adultery and walking in deceit, and they strengthen the hands of the wicked\(^{450}\) so that no one turns from his wickedness; they have all become to me like Sodom, and her inhabitants\(^{452}\) like Gomorrah.

(15) So thus says YHWH of Hosts to the prophets, behold I will make them eat wormwood and make them drink bitter waters; for from the prophets of Jerusalem pollution has gone out to the whole land.

2.2. Concerning the prophets

A series of critical statements directed against both prophets and priests are found in Jer 23.9–15. Specific attention to 23.10–11 and the instances where prophet and priest are mentioned together will follow a little further on.\(^{453}\) Here the context of the passage and its central themes will be discussed.

The language of these verses is closely related to the genre of lament (e.g., cf. Jer 4.19–21), and the majority of interpreters see the phrases in 23.9 as spoken by the prophet Jeremiah out of his own personal despair brought on by YHWH’s holy words.\(^{454}\) In the first

\(^{ah\,1–25,\,279.}\)

\(^{460}\) Here the qatal is translated in English in the present tense though it is ‘expressing the passing of a phase’, i.e. a past event. Joosten, *Verbal System of Biblical Hebrew*, 199–200.

\(^{450}\) It is unclear whether the verb וְיַחְדָּ refers from either וּסְתַלְתִּי or וּסְתָּלַי, but both roots are understood by the standard lexica to have essentially the same meaning. See DCH II, 431; HALAT I, 209–10; cf. Bauer-Leander §32.2.5d. See also 2 Sam 14.14; Pr 14.32.


\(^{453}\) It is most likely that the 3fs suffix of יִשְׁבֵּיהוּ refers back to וְיִשְׁבֵּי, but the distance between the pronominal suffix and its referent leaves some room for ambiguity. This has led some to propose emendations which seek to clarify the suffix’s referent. For example, Duhm proposed reading לְיַחְדָּי (Duhm, *Jeremia*, 185.) and Rudolph suggested לְיַחְדָּי (Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 150.; cf. Isa 40.22; 51.6; Ezek 26.17; Mic 6.12, 16). In this case I agree with McKane that the ‘distance of יָשִׁיבָה from יִשְׁבֵּי is awkward, but should be tolerated.’ McKane, *Jeremiah i–xxv*, 576.

\(^{454}\) See in this chapter, section 2.3, page 122.

\(^{455}\) Note how Oeming frames the issue, ‘Gottes Unheilswort und die Wahrnehmung der Mißstände in Israel lassen den wahren Propheten wie einen zitternden Trunkenbold erscheinen’. Oeming, *יִשְׁבֵּי, ThWAT VIII* (1995). 4. Cf. Fischer, *Jeremia* 1–25, 710. However, there is a minority view which holds that YHWH speaks in
half of 23.9, the language is quite similar to descriptions of personal distress found in the ‘confessions’ of Jeremiah. 455 Two metaphors for distress, broken-heartedness and drunkenness, are used to describe a state of shock or concern in the lamentor. A broken heart (שָׁכַר לְבֵי בּכֶר) is a common image which is further amplified by what follows; the unusual motif of quivering bones, with the verb רָדָה, matches the description of the inner parts of a person being incapacitated due to deep distress. 456 These are not primarily emotional states, rather they describe a deep-seated concern related to the activity and behaviour of the prophets and priests. 457

Similarly, a state of drunkenness is described in poetic parallelism with the phrases הנבר עבדי יהוה והירית לאשה שכור. These precise constructions are unique to the passage, but both phrases express the idea of an otherwise able male incapacitated by the overconsumption of alcohol. 458 Much of the language in Jeremiah which is related to being drunk is metaphorical. Images of strong drink and its aftermath, such as the vomit and stupor brought upon the nations after drinking from YHWH’s cup of wrath are used to describe YHWH’s judgment upon Israel and Judah (Jer 25.27; cf. 48.26; 51.7, 39, 57). 459 It is not necessary to assume that the lament language 23.9–12 arises from a personal feeling of conviction or emotion; the language is common to the book and is not strictly related to the ‘emotional’ sphere. Rather, the criticisms against the prophets, and priests, have a strongly cultic character.

23.9 and assumes the role of a divine lamentor (cf. Jer 8.18–23; 12.7–13; 13.20–27; 15.5–9). This language, as Roberts points out, is very similar to those spoken by the gods in ancient Near Eastern city-laments. Roberts, Motif of the Weeping God, OTE 5 (1992), 361–74.


456 The lexeme שכר (see Jer 20.9) metaphorically refers to the ‘seat of pain or feeling’ (DCH VI, 534–37).

457 Holladay, Jeremiah 1–25, 625.

458 Jer 23.9 is the only occurrence of the lexeme שכר ‘drunk’ in the book. See DCH VIII, 349. In all cases שכר has negative overtones; it is used in narrative literature to describe individuals negatively perceived (1 Sam 11.3; 25.36; 1 Kgs 16.9; 20.16) and in prophetic texts שכר is used primarily in oracles of judgment and doom (Isa 19.14; 24.20; 28.1, 3; Joel 1.5). See Oeming, ThWAT VIII. The nominal form שכר appears in Jer 13.13, where YHWH announces destruction upon the inhabitants of the land, the Davidic kings, the priests and the prophets. See also note 524 on page 133.

459 In these texts the theme of drunkenness is not a part of moral or ethical judgments of social behaviours; שכר is consistently used as a metaphor for the judgment of YHWH rendered against a nation or people (Jer 25.15–29; 48.26, 49.12; 51.57). McKane, Jeremiah i-xxv, 297–98.
After the judgment declared by YHWH in Jer 23.12, a new section of text in 23.13–15 opens with references to misdeeds observed in the prophets of Samaria and Jerusalem. Two phrases in 23.13 and 23.14 introduce accusations for these two groups: הביבא שמריא and הביבא ירשלמ אראיה שועוריה ראתית תפלה as they both describe the religious failures of these groups. These two phrases mark out the basic structure of the passage: the two groups are named in 23.13–14, accusations of wrongdoing follow, and then an announcement of judgment concludes the section at 23.15.

Prophets in Samaria and Jerusalem are criticised in mirroring phrases with two negative terms in parallel; השעריה תפלה and השעריה תפלה are somewhat uncommon criticisms of prophets. First the prophets of Samaria are criticised as ‘offensive’ with the lexeme השעריה, and the precise meaning of this word is not immediately clear. In the parallelism of Jer 23.13–14, השעריה should be understood in relation to השעריה, a term which is sharply critical and negative. The lexeme השעריה derives from השער with the sense ‘to be horrible’, and it only appears three times in Jeremiah (5.30; 18.13; 23.14). In 5.30 it is used in parallel with השער (‘desolation’). Thus these two terms do not differ in their severity; rather they express a similar attitude toward behaviours which are reprehensible and objectionable on religious and ethical grounds. The particular failures of the prophetic groups, which are largely related to matters related to cultic matters and apostasy, are articulated in greater detail in what follows.

The Samaritan prophets’ ‘offensiveness’ outlined in Jer 23.13 is that they prophesy by Ba’al and lead astray (תעה) the people. Only in Jer 2.8 does the same accusation of

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46 There are only a few collocations where הביבא שמריא is the nomen regens. The two constructs הביבא ירשלמ in Jer 23.13 and הביבא ירשלמ in 23.14, 15 are unique. In Jeremiah these references are limited to this passage. Cf. Ezek 13.2, 16; 38.17. The association of הביבא with particular locales occurs sporadically; see, e.g., 1 Sam 10.5; 1 Kgs 22.10; 2 Kgs 2.3, 5, 15.

47 The word only appears here and in Job 1.22, where it describes how Job did not make an accusation against God for his suffering. The sense of ‘taste’ does not seem to fit the contexts of Jer 23.13 or Job 1.22. Job’s accusation of ‘tastelessness’ would make little sense, and the sharply negative context of Jer 23.13–15 seems to demand a stronger sense. See the view of Fischer: ‘Es handelt sich um Unrechtes, das Gottes Blick nicht entgeht.’ Fischer, Jeremiah i–25, 692. McKane reasons via English that the connection between ‘taste’ and ‘sense’ is evident in the way that a lack of taste ‘develops in the direction of “intellectual discrimination”’; in my view, this argument is a bit wide of the mark. McKane, Jeremiah i–xxv, 573-74.

48 In this view I follow McKane, Jeremiah i–xxv, 574. There are others who see an escalation of criticism and guilt from Jer 23.13–14, where the behaviour of the Jerusalem prophets is understood as far worse than their Samaritan counterparts. For this view, see Holladay, Jeremiah i–25, 693; Fischer, Jeremiah i–25, 692.

49 For a similar combination of תעה and הביבא, cf. Mic 3.5–8.
prophesying by Ba’al occur, though the verb נאם in 23.14 is _hiphil_ while in 2.8 it is _niphal_. This polemic does not imply any rejection of prophetic speech as such; this accusation directed at the prophets of Samaria is primarily cultic in nature as it relates directly to the theme of apostasy. The result of their prophesying by Ba’al is that the people are ‘led astray’ (הנאם _hiphil_), an accusation which implies a deceitful attempt to mislead or misguide (see 23.32). The connotations of הנאם _hiphil_ are strongly religious, where the idea of ‘straying’ or ‘wandering’ indicates a kind of religious error, or a failure to obey and follow YHWH (cf. 2 Kgs 21.9; 2 Chr 33.9). Therefore the result of the prophets’ behaviour is religious apostasy.

As one of the primary deities in the local, ‘foreign’ (i.e. ‘Canaanite’) pantheon, Ba’al is a frequent target of disdain in the Hebrew Bible. Ba’al was understood as a competitor to YHWH and one of the main threats to maintaining devotion to YHWH. There are a number of instances of the lexeme בַּעַל in Jeremiah which refer to the deity Ba’al (Jer 2.8; 7.9; 11.13, 17; 12.16; 19.5; 23.13, 17; 32.29) as well as the plural הבעלים as an encompassing term for illegitimate gods (2.23; 9.13). In 23.13 the accusation directed against the prophets of Samaria in Jer 23.13 is that ‘בנאם הבעלים (‘they prophesy by Ba’al’). The lexeme בַּעַל appears 16 times in Jeremiah, twice in verbal form referring to YHWH’s relationship with Israel as husband (Jer 3.14; 31.32), once in the phrase בַּעַל פַּקֵּד (‘officer of the gates’) where it refers to the title of a public official (37.13). The remaining 11 occurrences are the singular בַּעַל and relate to the deity (2.8; 7.9; 11.13, 17; 12.16; 19.5 (x2); 23.13, 27; 32.29, 35), and a further two are the plural הבעלים (2.23; 9.13).

As it is easy to recognise, most of the texts in Jeremiah which refer to Ba’al do so in reference to worship practices. Some references are metaphorical, as in the phrase הָאָרְרִי הַבַּעַל, which is a general description for apostasy (Jer 2.23; 9.13). In 9.13 the act of

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[464] Jer 2.8 and 23.14 are the only instances of נאם and נאם in Jeremiah. Other texts in Jeremiah draw a contrast between YHWH’s name and Ba’al. In 12.16 a contrast is drawn by YHWH between הלשון בשמי (‘to swear by my name’) and הלשון בבעלים (‘to swear by Ba’al’), and in 23.27 YHWH criticises prophets who plan their également לא שמי horny (‘to cause my people to forget my name’) in the same manner that שבת אבותי את שמי (‘their fathers forgot my name because of Ba’al’). Cf. the criticism of Ephraim, יראת בני (‘and he incurred guilt by Ba’al’) in Hos 13.1


[466] There is a close connection to the polemics directed against אלהים אחרים (‘other gods’) found in Jeremiah. For occurrences of the phrase אלהים אחרים, see Jer 1.16; 7.6, 9, 18; 11.10; 13.10; 16.11, 13; 19.4, 13; 22.9; 25.6; 32.29; 35.15; 44.3; 8, 15.

following after Ba’al is parallel to following after one’s own stubbornness (אוהר שורחת), an act of disobedience usually found in Jeremiah as an antonym for heeding or listening to YHWH in worship or counsel (see 3.17; 7.24; 11.8; 13.10; 16.12; 18.12; 23.17). In a few cases the current disobedience of the people is likened to the behaviour of their ancestors (9.13; 16.12). In the case of 23.27, the prophets are accused of planning (שהב) to cause the people to forget YHWH’s name by means of Ba’al in the same way that their ancestors did.}

In the prophets of Jerusalem, YHWH observes a list of misdeeds and ill behaviour, beginning with a phrase with two infinitive absolutes, נאפו התלך בשקר (‘adultery and walking in lies’). These infractions, together as a pair, form a unique accusation not only in Jeremiah but in the Hebrew Bible. In almost all cases, the lexeme נאף does not seem to indicate a moral failure; rather it has a strongly cultic character. Some instances of נאף may be references to illicit sexual behaviour which is objectionable on moral grounds. Adultery is one of the activities criticised in 7.9, and it is unclear whether it is a moral or cultic infraction which is in view. The people of Judah are

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468 See Herrmann, Baal באל, DDD, (1999), 128. Other illicit forms of Ba’al worship are found in polemics against sacrifices. Specific practices are polemised in the rejection of burnt offerings (Jer 7.9; 11.13; 17), human sacrifices (32.33), and building shrines (11.13; 17; 32.23). Two texts also fit within the theme of Ba’al worship, though do not likely refer to historical practice. In both Jer 19.5 and 32.35 (cf. 7.31) there are references to human sacrifice to both Ba’al and Molech. Some think these references may refer to a form of divinatory sacrifice in times of extreme crisis, but this is not likely. See Stavarakopoulou, King Manasseh and Child Sacrifice, BZAW 338, Berlin, 2004, 283–99. See also Heider, Molech מלח, DDD, (1999), 581–85.

469 Holladay notes the presence of the lexemes נאף (inf. abs.), התלך and בשקר in Jer 7.6, but the similarities between 23.14 and 7.6 are only general. Also, the phrase התלך בשקר is absent in 7.6. Holladay, Jeremiah 1–25, 631–32.

470 The lexeme נאף appears 34 times in the Hebrew Bible; see Exod 20.14; Lev 20.10; Deut 5.18; Isa 57.3; Jer 3.8, 9; 5.7; 7.9; 9.1; 13.27; 23.10, 14; 29.23; Ezek 16.34, 38; 23.37, 43; 23.45; Hos 2.4; 3.1; 4.2; 13; 4.14; 7.4; Mal 3.5; Ps 50.18; Job 24.15; Prov 6.32; 30.26. Cf. also the parallel between נאפים לאסורים in Leviticus and נאפים in Hos 2.4.

471 The first two words of Jer 7.6, והבשר עלי בשקר (‘will you steal, murder’), are not separated with a, but all of the illicit behaviour listed thereafter are: והבשר עלי והשבע עלי (‘and [commit] adultery’); והשבע עלי (‘and swear falsely’);
criticised in 9.1 for being adulterers and נאף נאף (`a band of rebels`). The only other place where prophets are charged with adultery is in 29.23, where נאף נאף is used to describe the behaviour of Ahab and Zedekiah, a reference which is usually understood to indicate literal sexual infidelity. However, even this reference is debatable. Since the term appears mostly in cultic criticisms related to covenant fidelity, and since it is combined with נאף נאף in other polemics directed against prophets, נאף נאף appears to be more related to religious and cultic concerns. In 3.6–11, the metaphor of the sisters Israel and Judah, the adultery נאף נאף and whoring of the people served to pollute (הניף) the land (cf. 23.10, 15). It is highly significant that this adultery was done נאף نאף נאף נאף נאף נאף נאף נאף (‘with stone and with wood’); נאף נאף is the same word-pair used in 2.27 as a euphemism for idolatrous divination. YWHH asks in 5.7 why he should forgive the people for swearing by other gods, since after he provided for them they committed adultery and ‘went to the house of the harlot’ (בבית הנשה ת닻דה). In 13.27 the adulteries of Jerusalem are seen by YWHH together with a litany of other specifically cultic failures, such as abominations (שלחן) on the hills (cf. 3.1) and a lack of purity (טהור). Because the term is so rooted in cultic critiques found elsewhere in Jeremiah, it is highly likely that it is also a cultic criticism in 23.14. As a result of the prophets of Jerusalem's adultery and deceit, wicked and evil behaviour in the people is both fostered and encouraged (Jer 23.15). The hands of evildoers are strengthened and no individual turns from his or her own wickedness. These are common criticisms directed against prophets. As a result, YWHH likens the people to Sodom and Gomorrah, one of three references to these cities in Jeremiah (see also 49.18; 50.40). These texts refer to the narrative in Gen 18.16–19.29 where the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed for their unrighteousness. In these texts, Abraham intercedes on be-

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472 The lexeme נאף נאף is also used to refer to נבנה הוהרה (‘faithful Judah’) in Jer 3.8, 11.

473 E.g. Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 71 n. 80.

474 For this argument, see Wyatt, Word of Tree and Whisper of Stone, VT 57 (2007), 483–510.

475 Jer 5.1 is reminiscent of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen 18–19, where YWHH declares that even if one were to search the streets and squares of Jerusalem, not a single person who acts justly or seeks the truth would be found. See Jindo, Biblical Metaphor Reconsidered, Harvard Semitic Museum Publications, HSM 64, Winona Lake, IN, 2010, 125–26.
Chapter 4. Jeremiah 23.9–40

half of the cities in the hope that YHWH will relent; in the end he is unsuccessful, and only Lot and his family are spared.476

At the end of the list of accusations in Jer 23.13–14, another word from YHWH is announced (‘concerning the prophets’) in 23.15. Since we do not have a specific reference in 23.15 to either the prophets of Samaria or of Jerusalem, it is safe to assume that the judgment in 23.15 refers to both groups as it concludes the poetic unit of 23.13–15.

But does Jer 23.15 announce a judgment from YHWH? It is clear that the context is negative; 23.15b criticises the prophets because they have sown נפש (‘pollution’) throughout the land—a criticism not too dissimilar from the critique in 23.11. After the introduction of divine speech in 23.15a, YHWH declares that he will make the prophets eat (Maisel) and drink (השקיתים) noxious substances. The phrasing of the verse sets the terms נשון and ראש in parallel, similar to 8.14, where the phrase יושן is a judgment due to the people’s sin (师事务), as well as 9.14, where the phrase ראש נשון shares the same language. It is typical for ראש and ראש to appear together and their meanings are closely related; six of the eight instances of ראש in the Hebrew Bible parallel ראש נשון.477 Traditionally, נשון is associated with the plant artemisia absinthium and is translated as ‘wormwood’.478 whilst ראש can either refer to a similar kind of plant which is impossible to identify (Deut 29.17; Hos 10.4; Amos 6.12), or something which is bitter (e.g. Deut 32.32) or poisonous, as in the venom of snakes (Deut 32.33; Job 20.16).479 We cannot say for certain if the intended effect of the eating and drinking in Jer 23.15 is death by poison, and there is a close similarity between this text and the ritual

476 For additional comments on Abraham as an intercessor and YHWH as a judge in the divine council in Gen 18.21, see Jindo, Biblical Metaphor Reconsidered, 91.

477 See Deut 29.17; Jer 9.14; 23.15; Hos 10.4; Amos 6.12; Lam 3.19; cf. Prov 5.4; Lam 3.15.

478 The association between נשון and ‘wormwood’ is not entirely secure and is likely derived fromAmygdalus in רע (Jer 9.15 [=9.14 יָר]; 23.15; Prov 5.4) and absinthium in רע (Amos 5.7; Jer 9.14; 23.15; Lam 3.15; Prov 5.4). See, e.g., Dalman II, 318; Löw, Die Flora der Jüden 1/1, Veröffentlichungen der Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation 4, Wien, 1926, 386-90. DCH IV, 556; Zorell, 400; DBHE, 394; HALOT I, 533. McKane has marshalled a range of philological data on נשון, especially from ל, כ, כ and מ, but the versions offer only clues about the plant to which נשון refers. McKane, Poison, Trial by Ordeal and the Cup of Wrath, VT 30 (1980), 478-87. An Aramaic cognate is used metaphorically in the phrase dbr lnh (‘a wicked word’) in the Deir ‘Alla plaster text, combination ii 17 (DNWSI I, 579–80).

479 It is likely that ראש II developed the sense of ‘poison’ secondarily, and its primary sense relates to the bitter extract from an herb or plant. It is used metaphorically in describing a ‘bitter’ experience (Lam 3.19); in Lam 3.5 it is paralleled with תָּלָת (‘hardship’), in Ps 69.22 with זָר (‘vinegar’) and in Deut 32.32 with מִרְדָּה (‘a bitter thing’). See McKane, Poison, Trial by Ordeal and the Cup of Wrath, 484-85. DCH VII, 376–77.
in Num 5.486 Inducing an oracle by drink is a known phenomenon in the ancient Near East, which least leaves open the possibility that YHWH intends to test the prophets in order to ensure their credentials, so to speak.487

2.3. Prophets and priests

There is a high degree of semantic overlap between the lexemes נביא and כהן in Jeremiah.488 As priests and prophets are discussed in the book of Jeremiah, their functions and activities overlap as well.489 Criticisms of prophets and priests also draw from similar language, metaphors and conceptual themes. To better understand the relationship between prophet and priest, all of the texts which discuss prophets and priests together are assembled here. They are divided into three basic classes: texts that describe the activity of prophets and priests together (Jer 5.31; 6.13 = 8.10; 14.18; 23.11); texts that describe the activity of prophets and priests in parallel with other figures (2.8; 4.9; 18.18; 23.33–34); and texts that list prophets and priest with other figures (2.26; 8.1; 13.13; 32.32).484

2.3.1. Jeremiah 5.31; 6.13 = 8.10; 14.18; 23.11

In four texts, priests and prophets are referred to as an independent pair. All of the relevant texts, Jer 5.31, 6.13 = 8.10, 14.18 and 23.11, are critical and negatively appraise the activity of prophets and priests.

Jeremiah 5.31

A critique of prophets and priests appears in Jer 5.30–31 in the context of a pair verses which are almost unanimously agreed to be a short, independent piece of poetry. The

486 Rudolph, Jeremia, 63-64.
488 See my analysis in part I, chapter 2, section 1.3, page 60.
489 Very few studies focus on the priests in Jeremiah, and one of the few to analyse the themes of priesthood and cult in Jeremiah is Tiemeyer, Priests and the Temple Cult, in: Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah, ed. Barstad and Kratz, BZAW 388, Berlin, 2009, 234. Tiemeyer focuses on the ‘oracular’ material rather than the prose; for reasons which are not explicitly stated, Jer 13.13 is omitted from her study. For another study of the pair, see Pflöger, Priester und Prophet, ZAW 63 (1951), 157–92.
484 All the texts that at least mention prophets and priests together are Jer 2.8, 26; 4.9; 5.31; 6.13; 8.1, 10; 13.13; 14.18; 18.18; 23.11, 33, 34; 26.7, 8, 11, 16; 27.16; 28.1, 5; 29.1, 29; 32.32; 37.3. Texts which have a positive view of priests are Jer 31.14; 33.18, 21. See Tiemeyer, Priests and the Temple Cult.
highly charged words שערור and שמה open 5.30 and set the critical tone of the text (cf. 23.14). A threefold description sets the activity of prophets, priests and people in parallel: הנביאים נבוא بشקר והכהנים ידו על אלים ופתיעים ובו עדו. In this passage the prophets and priests are primarily criticised for their behaviour, as the people are accused of being complicit in their approval.

The syntax of the phrase נבאו בשקר in Jer 5.31 is the same accusation made against the priest Pashhur in 20.6, who imprisoned Jeremiah after hearing his oracle of doom in 19.14–15. The phrase is also similar to the accusations of prophesying בבעל in 2.8 and 23.13. The similarity of the collocations נבאו בשקר and נבאו בשקר has led some to suppose that it is a euphemism for Ba’al. This interpretation is unlikely, but the act of ‘prophesying falsely’ and ‘prophesying by Ba’al’ are criticised for having essentially the same effect. The people are misled when the prophets behave deceitfully and the result is just as serious as the apostasy of Ba’al worship.

The misleading effect of the prophets’ behaviour is mirrored in the activity of the priests, described with the peculiar phrase ידו על ידיהם (‘they scrape out their hands’).485 The meaning of this phrase is quite uncertain; it may be an antonym for the technical description of priests ‘filling up’ their hands, that is, being consecrated as priests (cf. Judg 17.5–12; Ezek 43.26).486 Thus, the priests ‘scraping out’ their hands in Jer 5.31 could have a connotation of ‘deconsecration’, meaning a disqualification from their service as priests. In this case the phrase would not be a general attack on priests as such; rather the critique points out that the priests’ behaviour has the ironic effect of undermining their intended function.

485 Two options are usually given: (1) understanding the verb as derived from דוד I (‘rule, direct’), which does not square well with ‘on their hands’; or, (2) deriving the verb from דוד II (‘scrape’), as in Judg 14.9 where Samson scraps honey from a lion’s carcass. It is better to understand the verb in Jer 5.31 as deriving from דוד II. BHS notes in the apparatus criticus that two emendations have been proposed for דוד I (‘they scrape’) both deriving from דוד I (‘teach, rule’): מבוי (‘they teach’), as found in, e.g., Condamin, Jérémie, 30; Rudolph, Jerusalem, 42. and מבו (‘they rule’), as found in, e.g. Carroll, Jeremiah, 189-90.

486 The phrase דואל (‘fill the hand’) appears twice in the Hebrew Bible, and though the precise meaning of this description is unclear, it does seem to function as a liturgical idiom; this is evident in Ezek 43.26, where the phrase simply describes the consecration of an altar. Holladay, “The Priests Scrape out on Their Hands”, VT 15 (1965), 112. See also Dahood, Jeremiah 5.31, Bib. 57 (1976), 106–8.
How Prophecy Works

Jeremiah 6.13 = 8.10b

A criticism levelled against priests and prophets is found in Jer 6.13–15 = 8.10b–12, one of the ‘doublets’ in Jeremiah. The accusation in 6.13 = 8.10b is directed against the singular ‘priest’ and ‘prophet’ (cf. 23.11). Here a criticism against a general group and a specific one appears in poetic parallelism: as everyone, ממקסום ודע רוחל ('from the least to the greatest'), is greedy, the priest and prophet practice falsehood (ועשה שקר), literally ‘do falsehood’.

The general criticism of ‘doing falsehood’ in Jer 6.13 = 8.10b is specified in 6.14–15 = 8.11–12. Both priest and prophet are accused of healing (_rgba piel) the wounds of the people lightly, saying there is well-being (שלם שלום) when there is none (cf. 8.15; 14.19). This behaviour is rejected as shameful ( وحتى ובש hiphil) and abominable (בוש piel) in 6.15 = 8.12, yet the priests and prophets do not suffer shame. Language related to falling (תפל and stumbling (של) expresses YHWH’s punishment in 6.15 = 8.12. The only other place where these verbs appear together in Jeremiah is in the oracle against Egypt (46.6, 12, 16).

Jeremiah 14.18

The short and difficult text of Jer 14.18 is found in the context of the ‘drought liturgy’ of 14.1–15.6. The relationship of 14.18 to its surrounding context is unclear. A bleak scene is described in the first half of the verse: in the field lay those slain by the sword (חלה חרב), and in the city are those afflicted by famine (חלה ארע). It is very clear that this is a description of a siege — perhaps the most dominant theme in the book of Jeremiah. Death

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488 The pair שלמה שלם appears only in Jer 6.13 = 8.10 (cf. Isa 26:3; 57:19; 1 Chr 12:19). The phrase שלמה שלם is found in 12:12; 30:5 (cf. Isa 48:22; 57:21; Ezek 13:10; 16; Zech 8:10; Ps 38:4; 2 Chr 15:5). There is some similarity between 6.14 = 8.11 and phrases in 8.15 and 14.19. In 8.15, there is a rueful comment that קוה שלמה יאמ ונב 'we hoped for well-being but there was no good; for a time of healing, but behold — terror!'. In 14.19 a similar comment is found, as the phrase קוה שלמה יאמ ונב (='we hope for well-being but there is no good; for a time of healing, but behold — terror!') expresses a similar idea.

Chapter 4. Jeremiah 23.9–40

by violence beyond the security of the city walls, and death by hunger in the walled confines of the city are dire consequences of siege warfare.

The bleak setting of Jer 14.18a is understood as a consequence of the \( qal \) clause in 14.18. Prophet and priest are mentioned together in the phrase \( יִכְבַּר אֵלֶּה יִכְבַּר אלֶּה יִכְבַּר \) (cf. 23.11). They are said to ‘go around’ the land \( qal \) and yet not ‘know’ \( qal \). This statement is somewhat difficult to understand; 14.18 is the only instance where \( qal \) takes the preposition \( אל \). The sense of the lexeme \( סַחֵר qal \) pertains to mercantile activity; it indicates ‘trading’ in an economic sense by ‘wandering’ or ‘going about’. The final phrase \( לֹא יָדַע \) \( לֹא יָדַע \) (‘and they do not know’) does not offer much help, and it is not clear whether to interpret it as an independent or an adjectival clause. The basic interpretive difference seems to be whether לֹא יָדַע refers to some lack of situational awareness or knowledge while ‘trading’, or whether it refers to a lack of knowledge pertaining to their movement about the land (i.e. they know not where).

It is also possible to more explicitly connect סַחֵר to the concept of a siege. The phrase סַחֵר does seem to indicate economic activity, basically meaning the prophets and priests ‘go about trading in the land’. They have gone about making acquisitions, and the gist of the criticism is that they have received more than they bargained for. YHWH essentially criticises prophet and priest in 14.18 for unwittingly contributing to the dire military circumstances faced by Jerusalem during the Babylonian siege(s).

Jeremiah 23.11

In the section of the main text under discussion in this chapter (Jer 23.9–15), a criticism of priest and prophet \( יִכְבַּר \) (\( יִכְבַּר \)) appears in the context of three \( יִכְבַּר \) clauses in Jer 23.10–11. In the first, the land withers from a curse \( יִכְבַּר \) (\( יִכְבַּר \)) is said to be full of adulterers (\( יִכְבַּר \)). Adultery is a criticism associated elsewhere with prophets (23.14). In 23.10 the \( יִכְבַּר \) which fills the land seems to be understood as a result of the behaviour of the prophet and priest mentioned in 23.11.

The second \( יִכְבַּר \) clause in Jer 23.10–11 introduces the concept of a drought. A parallelism describes an environmentally sorry state: the land \( יִכְבַּר \) is dried up due to a curse

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490 The verb סַחֵר \( qal \) has the sense ‘go around’, which refers to the act of going around for the purpose of trade. See Gen 34.10, 21; 42.34. The \( qal \) verb in Jer 14.18 is the only one listed in DCH which has the meaning of ‘going around’ for reasons other than trade (DCH VI, 144–46). See Gordon, Abraham, \( JNES \) 17 (1958), 29.
and the wild pastureland (אֶדֶם) is withered from drought (בְּשֵׂה). Criticisms against prophets are found in the ‘drought liturgy’ of 14.1–15.6 as well, so it is not surprising to see the agricultural well-being of the land linked to prophetic activity in 23.11 as well.⁴⁹³

In the succeeding half of Jer 23.10, the pronominal suffixes in the phrase תזרי מרותם רעה ונבחרים לא כל (‘for their race is evil and their strength is not right’) refer back to the נביאים who fill the land.⁴⁹⁴ These metaphors of physical activity and strength in 23.10b criticise prophet and priest together. Running is a metaphor used to describe wicked behaviour of the people in 8.6, who are likened to a horse galloping to war,⁴⁹⁵ and the lexeme רָץ parallels נֵבֶש in 23.21.

A third יב יב clause appears in Jer 23.11, describing the polluted state of prophet, priest and temple. Two parallel clauses marked with בֹּם compare the prophet and priest (בֹּם נבאי) with YHWH’s temple (בֹּם בָּבִית).⁴⁹⁶ The prophet and priest are accused of being polluted (חנף qal) and evil is found (רעה niphal) in the temple. qal is a Leitwort in the oracles against Judah and Israel in 3.1–5 and 3.6–11, where it strongly conveys a negative view of apostasy in terms of sexual deviance.⁴⁹⁷ This verse makes it apparent that the negative consequences outlined in 23.10 relate to the combination of prophet, priest and temple. They are all held together in the context of a poetic critique. This is also evident from the repetition of the word רעה in 23.10–11; the race run by prophet and priest is evil, and ‘their evil’ (רעותם) is found in the temple. The text therefore draws a link between the pollution of the prophet and priest and the evil found in the temple.

Finally, the judgment announced against ‘them’ in Jer 23.12 presumably refers to the prophet and priest in 23.11. YHWH announces that their way will be like ‘slippery places’

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⁴⁹³ The phrase נבאי מטיר also appears in the lament in Jer 9.9, and the lexeme הבש (‘be dry’) appears in laments in 12.4; 50.38; 51.36 (cf. Joel 1.19–20; 2.22; Ps 65.13).

⁴⁹⁴ The images of drought in Jer 23.10 also recall the the vision of destruction in 4.23–26, where the destruction of arable lands (הַרְכָּמִים חַרְכָּמִים) is seen in 4.26, and the phrase כִּי יִֽהְיֶה מַעֲלָן חָרָם qal in 4.26 closely mirrors the phrase כִּי יִֽהְיֶה מַעֲלָן כְּרָשׁ qal in 23.9. In Jer 4.28 and 12.4 the lexeme אַרְעָי is the subject of the verb אֲבָל qal (cf. Isa 24.4; 33.9; Hos 4:3; Joel 1.10; Amos 1.2). In Jer 14.1, Judah mourns because of drought (cf. Hos 3.1–3).

⁴⁹⁵ The order of the verse here troubles some commentators; e.g., Holladay assesses the text plainly, saying ‘The text of v.10 is in dissarray.’ Holladay, Jeremiah 1–25, 626.

⁴⁹⁶ For additional instances of מַעֲלָן, see Jer 8.6; 22.17; cf. 2 Sam 18.27. NB, the phrase לא נבאי appears in 8.6 as well.

⁴⁹⁷ As mentioned previously, the identical phrase נבאי מטיר is found in Jer 14.18.

⁴⁹⁸ See DCH III, 276. The lexeme נבאי parallels נבאי and רָץ in Jer 3.2 and לַאֲל in 3.9.
and they will be cast into darkness where they will fall. These judgments are not unlike others levelled against prophets in Jeremiah (cf. 6.15 = 8.12). Again the word 'ruaḥ' appears, drawing a connection between the punishment and the crime. As YHWH finds evil in his temple, so will he bring evil upon the prophet and priest in judgment.

2.3.2. Jeremiah 2.8; 4.9; 18.18

Three texts describe the activity of prophets and priests in parallel with other members of Israelite leadership.

Jeremiah 2.8

In the context of Jer 2.4–13, several categories of Judaean leaders are criticised for their failure to follow YHWH properly. A poetic unit in 2.6–8 recounts part of the salvation history of the Exodus event and twice mentions a failure to ask את תִּזְמַן הַיָּהָוֶה (‘where is YHWH?’). Rather than seek after YHWH, the people are accused in 2.7 of defiling (כָּנָה piel) the the land and making it an abomination (חֲרֹנָעִב).

Four groups are specified and criticised in 2.8; all of the accusations have a strongly cultic character. First, YHWH accuses the priests of failing to ask את תִּזְמַן הַיָּהָוֶה. The phrase appears to be a liturgical formula with no direct parallel in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Isa 63.11–13). Second, a group identified as לָאִים יִשְׁרָאֵל (‘guardians of the instruction’) are criticised for not knowing YHWH whether (לֹא יִדְעָו). There is little evidence to determine precisely who these people are and whether or not they constitute a distinct group of religious leadership. Third, YHWH accuses הֶרְעִים (‘the shepherds’) of rebelling against YHWH. The

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407 There could be an alternative meaning לָאָלְקָלֵקָת הַיָּהָוֶה II (‘darkness’) for the occurrence in Ps 35.6 where it is found in conjunction with לָאָלְקָלֵקָת (‘way’) and לָאָלְקָלֵקָת (‘darkness’), though לָאָלְקָלֵקָת I (‘smoothness’) is possible as well (DCH 3.246). In Jer 23.12 לָאָלְקָלֵקָת is used with similar terms, both לָאָלְקָלֵקָת and לָאָלְקָלֵקָת (‘darkness’), though the sense of לָאָלְקָלֵקָת I is appropriate enough. The lexeme לָאָלְקָלָקָת II (‘be smooth’) can refer to speech as ‘smooth’, in the sense of flattery, which explains the sense in Dan 11.21, 34. See Pr 2.16; 7.5; 29.5; Ps 5.10; 28.23; 36.3. There is an additional possibility forוְלָאָלְקָלֵקָת, namely that it is related to the Ugaritic verb ḫq (‘perish’), though this meaning here is less likely. See Holladay, Jeremiah 1–25, 628.

408 The only other instance of the lexeme לָאָלְקָלָקָת in Jeremiah is Jer 2.31, where appears in the construct לָאָלְקָלָקָת (a land of intense darkness’); the compound suffix of לָאָלְקָלָקָת is a possessive מַלָּאָלָקָת with feminine מ and signalling agreement with the feminine word מַלָּאָלָקָת. McKane, Jeremiah i.xxv, 52. See also Exod 10.22; Deut 28.29; Isa 8.22; 59.9; Joel 2.2; Zeph 1.15. Another text in Jeremiah which uses the image of stumbling in darkness as a metaphor for judgment is Jer 13.16.

409 The basic combination בָּא הוא היא is a typical phrase of judgment; cf. 1 Kgs 14.10; 2 Kgs 21.12; 22.16; Jer 6.9; 11.23; 19.3; 45.5; 2 Chr 34.24.

410 Cf. also Judg 6.13; 2 Kgs 2.14; Job 35.10. See Holladay, Jeremiah 1–25, 73-74.
How Prophecy Works

lexeme לשון qal is typically used in Jeremiah in reference to idolatrous worship practices. The two phrases והיה בימים祖יהו and בימים祖יהו (‘and in that day’) and following after useless things (‘at that time’) parallel one another and frame 4.9–10 and 4.11–12 respectively. In 4.9 there is an oracle of doom concerning the Judaean leadership. Three parallel statements describe states of shock and dismay among these leaders. The verb אבד qal describes the state of the ירבד, indicating a state of mental dismay or a loss of nerve. The priests are then described as ‘appalled’ (נשון niphal) and the prophets as ‘astounded’ (משון qal). All of these descriptions point to deep distress and mental anguish.

A shift occurs in Jer 4.10 where YHWH is accused of deceiving (משון hiphil) the people and Jerusalem. With the particle כל and the complementary infinitive absolute דבר, the phrase is emphatic. Presumably Jeremiah makes this accusation against YHWH, as the first person verb והיה אדרי introduces speech by the prophet (cf. 1.16; 14.13; 32.31–32). Jer 4.10 is one of several texts in the Hebrew Bible to address the thorny issue of divine deceit (cf. 1 Kgs 22.19–23; Ezek 14.6–11). YHWH deceives the people by means of the leadership in 4.9, who are unaware as they say שלום יהוה לשב (cf. 23.17). In this passage, then, the prophets are both the object and

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501 See Jer 2.29; 3.13; 5.6; 33.8.
502 Compare the similar accusation made against the Judaean ancestors, אלי הארץ יהנה ידו in Jer 2.5.
503 See Jer 1.13-15; 4.19-21; 4.29-31; 5.15-17; 6.1-5; 6.22-26. On the enemy from the north, see, e.g., Childs, Enemy from the North; Reimer, Foe’ and the ‘North’.
504 Similar statements are used in oracles of doom in Jer 25.33; 48.41; 49.22, 26; 50.30 (cf. 39.16-17). Duhm believed this to signal a distant future, but it is equally likely that this would refer to more contemporary events. Duhm, Jeremia, 49. In contrast, see Rudolph, Jeremia, 34.
505 Pace Schmidt, Jeremia 1–20, 128.
506 For expensive; see HALOT I, 47. On the intensifying use of the infinitive absolute, see IBHS §35.3.1.
507 Fischer, Jeremia 1–25, 215.
the instigators of an act of deception; this adds some variation to the many accusations of deceit (שקר) made against prophets in Jeremiah (e.g. 5.12–14; 14.11–16).509

There is no claim here that the prophets, in concert with the perspectives of the king, officials and priests, were not authorised to say שלאו לי הזדב (cf. Jer 23.17). Rather YHWH is held accountable for what his authorised representatives are saying. The claim made in 4.9–10 is that these leaders do not understand that the stakes cannot be more desperate and pressing—a blade pressed against the throat (כננה חרב על הפה). Their utter dismay and shock will therefore be all the more severe.

Jeremiah 18.18

Another text which deals with various leaders including priests and prophets is Jer 18.18, a short accusation against Jeremiah in the context of 18.18–23.510 The accusation in 18.18 provides the context for the prayer that follows it in 18.19–23; while others wish to disregard (כש hiphil) Jeremiah’s words in 18.18, Jeremiah pleads to YHWH to hear his case (כש hiphil) in 18.19.511 The unspecified opponents of Jeremiah are said to devise a plan against him,512 where they will ‘strike him with the tongue’ (安宁ו בלשון) and disregard (آل נפשו) his words.

509 According to Carroll, Jer 4.10 shows independence from other material in the book critical of the prophets, as ‘the theology of 4.10 appears to play no part in the attack on the prophets in 23.9–40: 27–29.’ Carroll, Jeremiah, 162. For the view that the passage is late, with 14.13 and 23.17 dependent on it, see Lange, Vom prophetischen Wort zur prophetischen Tradition, 187.

510 The textual boundaries of 18.18–23 are clear, as the context shifts from an oracle of doom in 18.13–17 to a report of an accusation against Jeremiah in 18.18 by an unspecified group of individuals. The text is unclear on who is in the group accusing Jeremiah; a plot (שבב) against the prophet is mentioned in 11.19 (cf. 11.18–23), but there is little direct connection to 18.18. All we can say is that the threat to Jeremiah’s life in 18.18–23 bears close resemblance to the threat posed by the ‘conspirators’ and men of Anathoth in 11.19–23. See Maier, Jeremia als Lehrer der Tora, FRLANT 196, Göttingen, 2002, 307. A series of texts share the theme of the prophet’s vulnerability: he will be attacked by kings, officers, priests and the people (1.18–19); he is taunted for YHWH’s word failing to appear (17.15; cf. Jer 28.8–9; Deut 18.22; Isa 14.24; 46.11); he is surrounded by those wishing to inform (♯כע) against him in a legal prosecution and exact vengeance (20.10); he is to die for sedition (26.11) and damaging morale (38.4); he is threatened with imprisonment (29.21–28; 36.26) and beaten and detained (37.15, 21; 38.28); he is trapped in a muddy pit (38.6). The prophet is also accused of lowering the morale of Judaeans soldiers by giving oracles of doom, and is threatened with death (38.4). On this theme, see Biddle, Polyphony and Symphany, Studies in Old Testament Interpretation 2, Macon, GA, 1996, 83.

511 McKane, Jeremiah i–xxv, 435.

512 The verb נשקש is repeated in the phrase נשקש על הפה मקשבה in Jer 18.18, literally meaning something like ‘let us plan a plan’. Cf. the phrase יЈ עخمسו מקשבות (‘for they made plans against me’) in 11.19.
These unnamed opponents cite their reasons for the plan against Jeremiah. They believe that the basic functions of religious specialists will not fail (תורה ‘instruction’) will not fail from the priest, nor will עצת (‘counsel’) fail from the wise man, nor will דבר (‘word’) fail from the prophet. To them, Jeremiah’s words contradict these views. Most of the interpretation of Jer 18.8 tends to wonder whether the figures listed here represent a series of distinct professional classes. Most assume this is true of the terms Cohen and חכם, so the question becomes whether or not חכם (‘wise man’) functions the same way in Jeremiah.

The question of ‘professional classes’ seems to rest in part on a view that understands the responsibilities of the individuals listed in Jer 18.8 as technical terms. So, in this view, תורה is a reference to the written, legal corpus which is the responsibility of the priest; עצת has a strongly ‘political’ character appropriate for high-ranking administrators; similarly, דבר refers to the official prophetic Offenbarung. To be clear, these are not unimportant issues. However, the general nature of the list and its clear use of parallelism should not be overlooked; each ‘group’ is referred to without much specification, and each lexeme associated with them refers to their general area of activity. The three lexemes תורה (‘instruction’), עצת (‘counsel’) and דבר (‘word’), in the most basic terms, re-

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52 Some are skeptical of the conclusion that these three terms represent distinct political or professional classes. See Whybray, Intellectual Tradition, BZAW 135, Berlin, 1974, 21–31. Others think that these groups are generally reflective of Judean leadership. See Ittmann, Die Konfessionen Jeremia, 99–103. Jer 18.8 has close parallels to Ezek 7.26b, a verse most commentators view as influenced by Jer 18.8. Whybray, Intellectual Tradition, 27–28; Bezzel, Konfessionen Jeremia, BZAW 378, Berlin, 2007, 202–06.
53 See, e.g., Grabbe, Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages, 152–80. There are some instances where חכם seems to refer to a particular group: in Jer 6.8 it appears that scribes are identified as חכם as their wisdom is criticised (יחב את חכם ממלכת מさせて; the ‘ruler’) and חכם of Babylon parallel one another in 50:35, and the חכם is listed together with ‘שוה’, ‘ишע’, and ‘מצרים’ (‘gentleman’) and ‘_batches’ (‘strong man’) in 51:57. However, other texts use חכם more generally: YHWH is praised as unique, as none like him can be found ממלכת (‘among all the wise of the nations’) or ממלכת (‘among all their kingdoms’) in 10.7; or contrast the wise with the ‘strong man’) and ‘rich man’) in a more general sense in 9.22.
54 Lundbom, Jeremia 1–20, 826–27. There are 11 occurrences of the lexeme דבר in Jeremias: 2.8; 6.19; 8.8; 9.12; 16.11; 18.18; 26.4; 31.33; 32.23; 44.10; 44.23; Jer 2.8; 8.8; 18.18 are typically isolated as ‘authentic’ or non-deuteronomistic instances; see García López, Jerusalem’s, ThWAT VIII (1995), 614–15.
56 In this instance Maier cites Grether’s classification of Grether as a ‘terminus technicus für die prophetische Wortoffenbarung’, though here we have only דבר. Grether, Name and Wort Gottes, BZAW 64, Giessen, 1934, 76; Maier, Jeremia als Lehrer der Tora, 308.
late to similar kinds of speech. In this context they have a similar semantic range related to understanding and following the divine will. Thus, the three groups are understood as engaged in broadly similar behaviour, giving advice and instruction in line with the will of YHWH.

Jeremiah 23.33–34

In the opening verses of Jer 23.33–40, prophets and priests are mentioned together and are described as engaged in similar behaviour. They, along with מַעֲנָת הָיוֹת, are depicted as asking (נָשָׁה qal) about or repeating the phrase (נָשָׁה qal) the ‘speech of YHWH’ (23.33–34). There is little distinction made in 23.33–40 whether the question מַעֲנָת יְهوֹת (‘what is the burden of YHWH?’) comes from the people, a prophet or a priest. In response, the prophet (presumably?) is instructed to respond with a negative statement punning the form of the question: נָשָׁה אֶחָּךְ (‘I will cast you off’). Using this particular phrase results in being ‘cast off’ מַעֲנָת (מַעֲנָת).

In 23.34 YHWH declares that he will punish מַעֲנָת the prophet, priest or people who says מַעֲנָת יְهوֹת. Rather than ask מַעֲנָת יְهوֹת, the people are encouraged to speak to one another concerning מַעֲנָת יְهوֹת, מַעֲנָת מָדְבַּר יְهوֹת (‘what has YHWH answered?’) or מַעֲנָת מָדְבַּר יְרוּדָה (‘what has YHWH said?’). In these phrases the conceptual framework is essentially the same as asking about the מַעֲנָת יְרוּדָה. All of them refer to the same process of inquiry, with differences only regarding the terminology, and prophets and priests are engaged in the same activity.

2.3.3. Jeremiah 2.26; 8.1; 13.13; 32.32

Priests and prophets are mentioned together as a pair in four critical texts which describe YHWH’s judgment against the leaders of Israel and Judah (Jer 2.26; 8.1; 13.13; 32.32). The shared instances of the items in these lists can be illustrated as follows:

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59 Maier understands these three terms ‘als mündliche Übermittlung eines Gottesbescheides oder als mündliche Unterweisung im Rahmen der Erziehung’. Maier, Jeremia als Lehrer der Tora, 308.

59a Traditionally the phrase נָשָׁה יְרוּדָה, repeated throughout Jer 23.33–40, has been translated as ‘the burden of YHWH’. The sense of the passage is far clearer if instead one reads ‘oracle of YHWH’, following Petersen, Late Israelite Prophecy, SBL.MS 23, Missoula, MT, 1977, 27–33. The term is now understood as a term for a prophetic oracle; see, e.g., Boda, Freeing the Burden of Prophecy, Bib. 87 (2006), 338–57. NB, to differentiate the phrases נָשָׁה יְרוּדָה and נָשָׁה יְרוּדָה in the present work, I translate נָשָׁה יְרוּדָה as ‘message of YHWH. I comment further on this passage later on in this chapter in section 5.1, page 155. On מַעֲנָת and divine consultation in Jer 23.33–40, see Thelle, Ask God, 186–89.
In 2.26 these figures are listed as members of the בית ישראל and in 32.32 the figures are included within the categories of both בני יהודו and and an added detail in 13.13 specifies the kings as those יושב בית יהודה ('sitting on the throne of David'). In each instance, priests and prophets are mentioned together as a pair.

Jer 2.26–28 is a small unit of poetry found in the larger setting of 2.20–28. In this context YHWH is critical of Israel's idolatrous practices. In 2.26 the leaders are singled out for critique, and in 2.27 YHWH accuses them of illicit divinatory practices with עץ ('wood') and אבן ('stone'). The religious language uses these kinship terms as a 'confession' and a cry for assistance (cf. 11.12).

In the context of Jer 7.1–8.3, the criticism against is strongly associated with the various alleged cultic and moral failures of the Jerusalem temple. A small unit in 8.1–3 describes one aspect of YHWH's judgment directed against various leaders of Judah, including the prophets and the priests. Desecrating the remains of the dead is a deeply religious phenomenon and in this setting it is explicitly connected to astral worship. Because the

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314 The parallel terms עץ and אבן most likely are cultic objects with associations to divine figures; see Hadley, Cult of Asherah, UCOP 57, Cambridge, 2000, 4-11; Wyatt, Word of Tree and Whisper of Stone. Many associate עץ in this context with Asherah; see, e.g., Smith, Early History of God, San Francisco, CA, 1990, 81-85; Binger, Asherah, JSOTS 232, Copenhagen International Seminar 2, Sheffield, 1997, 129-40; Wiggins, Asherahs and Trees, JANER 1 (2001), 158–87.

315 Tiemeyer, Were the Neo-Assyrian Prophets Intercessors?, in: "Thus Speaks Ishtar of Arbela", ed. Barstad and Gordon, Winona Lake, IN, 2013, 264-68. There is an element of satire in the kinship terms here: the wooden object, typically representing a female deity, is called father (נן אשור), and the stone, typically representing the male deity, is described as giving birth (לידה Q). As a rejection of gods other than YHWH, this 'polemical distortion' is ‘in keeping with Deuteronomistic ideology’ Olyan, Cultic Confessions, ZAW 99 (1987), 255, 258-59; Fischer, Jeremia 1–25, 170-71.

316 The two key terms עזה ('arise') and בוא ('save us') in Jer 2.27 are calls for help that are found throughout the Hebrew Bible. YHWH is called upon to rise up (עזה) for various purposes on behalf of others: to defend his people (Isa 2.19–21; 14.22; 26.21; 33.10; Ps 3.8; 9.20; 10.12; 12.6; 17.13; 74.22; 76.10; 82.8; 102.14; Job 31.14); to move against his people's enemies in war or judgment (Num 10.35; Isa 14.22; 28.21; 31.2; Am 7.9; Ps 7.7; 35.2; 44.27; 68.2; cf. Isa 33.10); to confirm or complete his stated purposes, or keep a vow (Isa 44.26; cf. Jer 10.20; 28.6; 29.10; 30.24; 33.14).
Judaean leadership loved (שכור qal), served (עבד qal) and worshipped (hishtaphel) the sun, moon and all the host of heaven (cf. Deut 4.19; 17.13; 2 Kgs 23.5), their bones will be exposed on the ground before them. In consequence for their idolatry, YHWH will scatter their bones on the ground like faeces.

A short statement sets the theme of Jer 13.12–14, as YHWH says that every jar will be filled with wine (כלי נבל יתלע), the text assumes its audience already is familiar with this saying, as they claim, 'Don't we already know?' YHWH's response is strident: he will judge all the inhabitants of the land, fill them with drunkenness (שכור), and shatter them against each other without relenting. Priests and prophets are included in the classes of leaders singled out in 13.13. Along with all of the inhabitants of the land, YHWH will destroy them.

In a long speech in Jer 32.26–44, YHWH details his rationale for judging Jerusalem and giving it over to the Babylonians. Priests and prophets are listed with other leaders in 32.32 (cf. 11.17). The general accusation of ‘doing evil’ (עשה רע) is made against the leadership in 32.34–35. YHWH accuses the people of Israel and Judah of defiling (טמא piel) his temple with their abominations (שאריות), and building shrines for Ba'al in the Ben Hinnom valley to make child sacrifices to Molech (cf. 7.31; 19.5). For this abomination (воротה), which YHWH never commanded the people to do, the people are defiled as well (טמא hiphil).

2.4. Summary

In the first text unit of Jer 23.9–40, the criticisms against prophets and priests in 23.9–15 have a strongly cultic character and use the language of lament. It is not necessary to read the expressions of distress and despair in 23.9 as biographical; the rhetorical force of the language does not depend on the prophet’s strong feelings or personal concerns. Their force comes from basic expectations prophets. In the criticisms outlined in the following verses, the expectation is that prophetic speech should uphold certain cultic obligations.

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524 The nominal form שכרת only appears in Jer 13.13. In 23.9 is found the only occurrence of the lexeme ‘drunk’ in the book. See DCH VIII, 349. In all cases שכרת has negative overtones; see my comments in note 458 on page 116.

525 See Watson, Hinnom Valley, ABD III (1992), 202–3; Heider, Molech and DDD. On the close association between these sacrifices and the Tophet, see Stavrakopoulou, Jerusalem Tophet, SELVOA 29/30 (2012), 137–58.

526 Cf. Fischer, Jeremia 1–25, 690; Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 70–71.
Thus, the adultery (נתן) and pollution (חפץ) of the prophets and priests is not a contrast of moral standards with Jeremiah;⁵²⁷ they reflect general expectations of prophetic speech. The implicit assumption is that they have failed in their expected function.⁵²⁸

Some of the results of the semantic analysis in this study’s first part become especially pertinent in Jer 23.9–15. Prophets and priests criticised in the same terms, with similar language, metaphors and conceptual themes. These features of the text, together with the semantics of the lexeme נביא, do not suggest a sharp dichotomy between prophets and priests.⁵²⁹ There is a high degree of semantic overlap between the lexemes נביא and נביא in Jeremiah. As priests and prophets are discussed in the book of Jeremiah, their functions and activities overlap as well, as is demonstrated in the criticisms laid against them. My reading of these references to prophets and priests together confirms the view that they are closely related.⁵³⁰ They are collaborative partners responsible for the sins and troubles Jeremiah observes in the land.⁵³⁰

3. Jeremiah 23.16–24

An introduction of divine speech in Jer 23.16 opens a section of text in 23.16–22. Where 23.9–12 and 23.13–15 discussed the misdeeds of prophets and priests together, in 23.16–22 the priests are absent and attention falls squarely on the prophets. However, the prophets are not addressed directly as with על הנביאים in 23.15. Instead YHWH warns an unspecified audience against listening to the messages delivered by the prophets (23.16, 21).

3.1. Text and translation

"כราม הוה אלהים עתים ועומד על דבר הנביאים הנבואים לכספ הבכילה מה נביאים כלם ולאlek המדות אתה יהוה (16) העכמה להו לבבי לא אף יהוה" ⁵³¹

⁵²⁷ Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 71 n. 80.
⁵²⁸ Tiemeyer observes that the priests are not criticised in Jeremiah apart from the prophets. Tiemeyer, Priests and the Temple Cult, 256-57.
⁵²⁹ See also Tiemeyer, Priests and the Temple Cult, 234.

⁵³² BHS deletes the phrase הנביאים לכספ on account of its absence in 6°. However, a nominal form of הנביאים followed by a niphal participle הנביאים הוא rather typical in the book; see, e.g., Jer 14.14, 15; 23.25, 26; 27.15. See also the similar phrase הנביאים והאמורים איילבכ in Jer 27.14. Because the phrase is typical, I think that הנביאים לכספ should be retained here.
Chapter 4. Jeremiah 23.9–40

531 BHS deletes the infinitive absolute אַלָּא אַלָּא יְשַׁמֵּעַ, an apparent duplication, on account of its absence from the versions. On the one hand, there are a few similar combinations of a participle with the infinitive absolute. The only comparable instances are found in Jdg 20.39 and ‘הַשָּׁמַע’ in Is 22.17. Joosten, *Verbal System of Biblical Hebrew*, 237 n. 324. On the other hand, doubled uses of אַלָּא_roof before direct discourse are quite normal; see Exod 21.5; 1 Sam 2.30; Ezek 28.9; cf. 1 Sam 20.21. See Meier, *Speaking of Speaking*, 69–70. I do not find it necessary to delete אַלָּא רֹאֶה.

532 BHS reads מִלְמַי יְרַע (to those who despise the word [of YHWH]) in place of מִלְמַי יְרַע (to those who despise me, saying). The *apparatus criticus* cites 6 יְרוּם יְרַע יְרַע יְרַע נִגְוֹף מַעְלֵלֵהֶם in support of this reading (cf. 2). The phrase יְרַע יְרַע is unusual, as here it introduces divine speech, as in ‘YHWH has said,’ which is related by the BHS to 23.16. Commentators have struggled with the phrase as well. Regarding this use in Jer 23.33. 37 Barthélemy et al. believe 'l'authenticité est incertaine' (Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 643.). McKane notes that the context of 23.16–22 is direct address, where 'l'ensemble makes better sense. McKane, *Jeremiah i-xxv*, 577. I read L without emendation.

533 BHS notes the absence of אַלָּא רֹאֶה from אַלָּא רֹאֶה and proposes deleting it. In my view, אַלָּא רֹאֶה should be retained. The verbs יְרַע יְרַע יְרַע יְרַע YHWH’s despisers and to those who follow their own will.

534 BHS suggests reading יְרַע יְרַע in place of יְרַע יְרַע, thus adding a 3ms suffix to the verb. The suffix would presumably refer to YHWH and not his word, since אַלָּא רֹאֶה already functions as the direct object for both יְרַע יְרַע יְרַע יְרַע. Variou evidence from the versions is cited in the *apparatus criticus*, though only אַלָּא רֹאֶה adds a suffix to the verb (whizzzy). The difficulty in L is not grammatical, but it has to do with יְרַע יְרַע being both ‘seen’ (אַלָּא רֹאֶה) and ‘heard’ (שָׁמַע). Cf. Jer 23.31, a phrase BHS deletes as an *additamentum lectoris*, apparently for similar reasons; see McKane, *Jeremiah i-xxv*, 51–52. I prefer to retain L and not to add a suffix to יְרַע יְרַע. See main text for comment on יְרַע יְרַע.

535 K מִלְמַי יְרַע, Q מִלְמַי יְרַע. The vocalisation of L also suggests a Masoretic preference for a 3ms suffix. BHS prefers 3ms, but Barthélemy et al. say the 1cs suffix ‘constitue una lectio difficilior’ (Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 644.). I follow Q and read מִלְמַי יְרַע, which matches the phrases יְרַע יְרַע יְרַע יְרַע מַעְלֵלֵהֶם. See also McKane, *Jeremiah i-xxv*, 581.

537 BHS reads *fury* instead of *whirling storm* as in the parallel text of Jer 30.23. The *apparatus criticus* deletes the 1 because מַעֲלֵלִים is considered secondary (*additamentum*), both here and in 30.23. However, the combination of יָוָה and מַעֲלֵלִים is unique to Jeremiah; see 4.4 = 21.12. Parke-Taylor, *Formation of the Book of Jeremiah*, 87. If מַעֲלֵלִים is retained then the phrase מַעֲלֵלִים (‘and a whirling storm’) elaborates the phrase מַעֲלֵלִים (‘fury goes forth’). The 1 then has an epexigetic function; see BHS §39.2.4. Thus I read L in this way and do not support emending the text here.
How Prophecy Works

Thus says YHWH of Hosts, do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with emptiness; they speak a vision of their own hearts, not from the mouth of YHWH.

They declare to those who despise me, YHWH has said, you will be safe; and [to] all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts they say, No disaster shall befall you.

For who has stood in the council of YHWH and seen and heard his word? Who has heeded his word and heard?

Behold the storm of YHWH, wrath goes forth, a whirling storm, it will whirl down upon the head of the wicked.

The anger of YHWH will not return until it has made and established the purposes of his heart; in time to come you will fully understand.

I did not send the prophets, but they ran; I did not speak to them, but they prophesied.

But if they had stood in my council, and had proclaimed my words to my people, they would make them turn back from their evil ways and evil deeds.

Am I a close god, oracle of YHWH, and not a distant god?

If a man hides in secret, do I not see him, oracle of YHWH? Do I not fill the heavens and the earth, oracle of YHWH?

A series of criticisms directed against prophets in Jer 23.16–17 associate their words with delusional visions. YHWH rejects their speech as he claims it is a vision of their own hearts (לְבָם לֵבָם) rather than from his mouth. This vision is associated with their twofold message of well-being: ‘it will go well for you’ (שלום ידעת לֵבָם) and ‘disaster will not come upon you’ (לא תבוא עליーム רעה).

Jer 23.16 begins with a warning not to listen (אל תשמע) to the words of the prophets, but it is not immediately clear who is being instructed. In contrast to other instruc-

540 One expects to have הַלֵּבָם here, a reading which, according to McKane is ‘an emendation which is grammatically necessary’. McKane, Jeremiah i-xxv, 577.
541 Here I read the נ in the phrase מְשֶׁר מַזְמוּרָתָל as epexigetical.
542 See Barthélemy et al. and their view of 23.23, 24; 31.16, 17; 48.38; 49.5, 31. 37; 51.25. ‘Considérant qu’en ces cas l’ajoute ou l’omission de cette expression constitue une initiative d’ordre littéraire’ (Barthélemy, Critique textuelle, 645.).
543 Here I have translated כְּמָעוֹרָתָם as a plural of abstraction, see Joüon-Muraoka §136g (cf. §136j).
tions not to heed the prophets, this audience is told not to heed the words of the prophets. These words only serve to fill their audience with emptiness, a process described by the hiphil participle נאץ הבל. The meaning of the lexeme נאץ is famously difficult to translate and it is infrequently used in Jeremiah. Its only other occurrence in the book comes in Jer 2.5, where Israel and Judah’s fathers followed after הבל with the result that they became like נאץ נבל. In this context נאץ should be understood as a reference to idolatry and a failure to follow YHWH. This sense is also appropriate for 23.17, where the prophets are accused of misleading the people away from YHWH’s will.

Both prophets and their audiences are criticised in Jer 23.17. To those who despise נאץ YHWH, the prophets share a positive message from him (והל ייה לם). This same message appears in 4.10, where Jeremiah accuses YHWH of deceiving the people with the same assurance of well-being (cf. 6.14 = 8.11; 14.13). To those who follow the will of their own hearts (כל תלבש מｰר להéo), the prophets provide assurances that disaster will not come upon them (לא תבוא עליכם רעה). This word contrasts with YHWH’s judgment announced against the prophets in 23.12 (5.12). Both of the ‘quotations’ from the prophets in 23.17 are quite general and do not offer much by way of specifics. Instead, they look like responses to specific questions: ‘Will it go well?’ and ‘Will we see disaster?’ If this is the case, then it is positive answers of support and encouragement that are criticised, not the prophets who give them per se. They delude and mislead because they do not come from YHWH and because they are given to the wrong people.

It is later in the pericope where we find critiques of prophets which closely resemble those found elsewhere in the book. A poetic parallelism relates the lexemes נאץ niphal and רי רעה qal to one another. YHWH did not send (והל qal) the prophets, but they ran, and YHWH did not speak (דבר piel) to the prophets, but they prophesied. Running is a metaphor used to describe wicked behaviour (cf. 8.6), and adulterers (תנמאפים) who are criticised because of their evil race (מרעתה רעה) in 23.10.

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544 This form of הבל is only found here in the Hebrew Bible.
545 Verb forms of נאץ are rare in the Hebrew Bible, and qal forms of נבל are found only in Jer 2.5; Ps 62.11; Job 27.12.
546 The phrase ‘שירירית הלבל (obstinacy of the heart)’ is used to describe the people in Jer 3.17; 7.24; 9.13; 11.8; 13.10; 16.12; 18.12; 23.17).
547 A group which apparently includes prophets says essentially the same thing; cf. לא תבוא עליך רעה לא תבוא עליכם רעה in Jer 5.12.
548 See my comments on page 126 and in note 494.
A text which appears to be a vision report then directly contrasts with the חזון (‘vision’) of the prophets in Jer 23.16, as YHWH’s judgment is described with the metaphor of a whirling storm (סער) crashing down on the head of the wicked (Jer 23.19–20 = 30.23–24). Where the text presented YHWH’s speech in the first person in 23.16–17, 21, in these verses he is referenced in third person. Language related to winds and storms are often associated with YHWH’s anger and wrath (cf. 25.32). Here in 23.19 the fury of YHWH is directed against the רשעים (‘wicked’), a designation used in reference to parts of the population in Judah (cf. 5.26; 12.1; 25.31). As a vision report, the language in 23.19–20 = 30.23–24 resembles 4.23–26. In that text YHWH’s fiery anger (חרון אפו) is the cause of natural destruction, where earth, sky, mountains, hills and pastures are ruined and made desolate by YHWH.

YHWH’s anger is unrelenting and will not turn back until it completes its purposes. The description of YHWH’s anger (אף יהוה) in Jer 23.20 parallels YHWH’s storm (סערה יהוה) in 23.19. Both verses signal YHWH’s judgment with references to wrath (חמה) and anger (אף). This judgment will not turn back (שיב), implicitly just like the people will not turn back from their wickedness. In 23.20a = 30.23a, YHWH’s anger is understood as satisfying his plans and expectations, as it will not turn back until it has done (עשה qal) and established (קום hiphil) his will. The lexeme מצות (‘purposes’) is uncommon in Jeremiah; it is used once to describe the wicked plans of YHWH’s ‘beloved’ (ידיד) in 11.15, and once to describe YHWH’s intent to destroy Babylon in 51.11.

In the comment which concludes 23.20, YHWH tells his audience that they will understand in future times (באחרית הימים תתנוננו בה בינה). Some read this statement as an indication that prophetic oracles were expected to be fulfilled, but here the words of the prophets are not at issue; rather the statement suggests that understanding (בינה) will be available only ‘after the fact’. In the words of Fox, ‘[t]hrough binah Israel will know how to read the meaning in events.’

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549 Fox, Words for Wisdom, ZAH 6 (1993), 155.
3.3. Prophets and the council of YHWH

The well-known concept of the divine council appears in Jer 23.18, 22.558 While this particular construct סוד יהוה (‘council of YHWH’) is found sparingly (Jer 23.18, 22; Ps 25.14), it is widely agreed that it is a part of a wider range of terminology related to the concept of the heavenly assembly.559 The lexeme סוד can refer to a small collective or group of individuals, advice or plans; in the present context, it describes the setting in which plans are made.560 Standing in the divine council is a description of intermediation and communication between deity and diviner; one who has access to divine knowledge is able to provide sound advice in the face of uncertainty.561 Previously, the opening question of the verse in Jer 23.18 was thought to be rhetorical, essentially claiming that no one has direct access to YHWH’s plans. Especially after an important study by Nissinen, it is now recognised that an ‘essential prerequisite of prophecy’ involved being present in the divine council.562

There has been disagreement among scholars over the connotations of Jer 23.18. The opening question, מִי עָנָא בָּשָׂדֶּה יְהוָה, is a critical assessment of the prophets generally in 23.16–22; they should not be heeded because, though they should have, they have not stood in the סוד of YHWH. The prophets are expected to stand in YHWH’s council and make his words known to his people (Jer 23.22; cf. 23.18). By doing so they would cause the

558 Mullen considered the Israelite tradition to represent a ‘radical break with all other council traditions in the ancient Near East.’ Mullen, Divine Council, HSM 24, Chico, CA, 1980, 283. However, as Nissinen pointed out, he made this statement without the help of more recently published sources. Now it is assumed that the Hebrew tradition largely conformed to the ancient Near Eastern pattern and it is a communio opinionis that prophets were understood by their societies to participate in the divine council. Nissinen, Prophets and the Divine Council, in: Kein Land für sich allein, ed. Hübner and Knauf, OBO 186, Göttingen, 2002, 4–19. Among important studies which should be mentioned are Wheeler Robinson, The Council of Yahweh, JTS 45 (1944), 151–57; Cross, Council of Yahweh, JNES 12 (1953), 274–77; Niehr, Der höchste Gott, BZAW 190, Berlin, 1990, 71-94; Neef, Gottes himmlischer Thronrat, AzTh 79, Stuttgart, 1994. Cf. McKane, who simply translates סוד here as ‘secrets’. McKane, Jeremiah i-xcv, 582-83.

559 See Fabry, דוד, ThWAT V (1986), 775–82.


561 Nissinen, Prophecy and Omen Divination, 345-46.

562 Nissinen, Prophets and the Divine Council, 17. Stökl qualifies this claim somewhat, arguing that evidence for the Old Babylonian period is sketchy at best. See Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 224-26. Mullen claims the designation נבון itself ‘implies the background of the council’, and translates the term ‘one who is called’ (cf. Akkadian nabû’tum). Mullen, Divine Council, 216. Compare this view with the results of my semantic analysis in Part I.
people to turn from their wicked ways (יֵשׁבֹּם מֵרֶדֶם וּרְעָה) and from their wicked deeds (מֻלְלָיָה).

If we read this statement in juxtaposition with the storm of YHWH passage in 23.19–20, then we might think that this is the function of Unheilsprophetie, that is, negative prophetic speech intended to make the people repent. However, the language of 23.22 is rather non-specific about the kind of words YHWH has for the people. It is clear that negative speech is intended to bring about repentance in the people, but encouraging speech also has this same function. Prophetic speech from YHWH functions to reinforce fidelity to YHWH and adherence to his will regardless of whether or not it is positive or negative.

YHWH’s self-referential questions in Jer 23.23–24 stand out in their context. Many commentators have some difficulty relating them to their context. How do these statements regarding YHWH being either near (מַרְאֵת) or far (מָקוּב) relate to the criticisms of the prophets in the context of the pericope of 23.9–40? On the surface, there is not much in Jer 23.23–24 that relates directly to prophets, or even to its literary context in 23.9–40; these verses are not polemical, nor do they mention any religious figures or behaviours. The relation between 23.23–24 and its context is more indirect; in these meditations on YHWH’s presence, there are ramifications for the commission of Jeremiah as נבּא לָנוּ in 1.5 as well as the idea of the divine council found in 23.18, 22. Only some suggestive comments can be offered here.

The governing word pair in Jer 23.23–24 is found in the opening verse; the two terms מַרְאֵת/מָקוּב in 23.23 are key to the interpretation of the passage. The two terms מַרְאֵת/מָקוּב are commonly used in poetry as a pair of opposites. Their function in the question in 23.23, however, is somewhat vague. In what sense is YHWH both ‘near’ and ‘distant’? Modern commentators understand the terms to refer to geographical space, in contrast to some rabbinic interpretations that understood the word-pair also to have a

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555 Moberly tries to argue on semantic grounds for the sense ‘they would have sought to turn’ them from their wicked way and from their evil deeds [emphasis mine]. However, I do not find this proposal very convincing. Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 87.

556 A comment on these issues more specifically in chapter 5, section 4.3.1, page 184.

557 On קָרָב and קַלָּד as a word-pair, see Olmo Lete, Ugaritico-hebreos preteridos, AuOr 2 (1984), 19.

558 Quell is of the view that nothing in Jer 23.23–24 that connects with 23.9–40. Quell, Wahre und falsche Propheten, 214–15. So also McKane, Jeremiah i-xxi, 587.

temporal connotation. Other clues in the text make it more likely that a geographical reference is present in the יתדות איש מבתרים word-pair. The reference to שמם/ארץ (‘a man hides in secret’), along with the other word-pair of geographical terms שמם/ארץ (‘heaven/earth’), both point to a geographical description in 23.23 (cf. Ps 139.7–10).

If we consider two significant notions related to prophecy in Jeremiah, namely the collocation נבנאי נביאים in Jer 1.5 and the divine council in 23.18, 22, some additional possibilities emerge. One possible interpretation of the question in Jer 23.23 is that YHWH is discouraging a provincial mindset in the prophets who prophesy well-being. By describing himself as both ‘near’ and ‘distant’, YHWH implicitly is rejecting the notion that his jurisdiction is restricted to a narrow horizon. That is to say, the god of Israel and Judah is rightly powerful and operative both in Judah and beyond (cf. 27.5–8). For his prophet, appointed a בנא לארץ in 1.5, the concern and authority YHWH has for his people has to do with both national and international affairs.

There may also be some slight connection to the prior references to YHWH’s council in Jer 23.18, 22. In the two references to the divine council in 23.16–22, the assumption is that prophets are meant to stand (עמד) in the council, and to see (ראות) and hear (שמע) YHWH’s word. In 23.24 YHWH makes it clear that he sees (ראות) those who might hide in secret, and the motif of ‘seeing’ is a frequent metaphor in passages which describe YHWH’s judgment (e.g. 4.23–26). The idea could then be summarised as such: YHWH issues his decrees from his council, from whence prophets are understood to be obligated to report them to others, and this council sees and judges all of the cosmos (23.24).

3.4. Summary

Attention falls squarely on the prophets in 23.16–22, though they are not addressed directly, and the theme of their legitimacy runs throughout. Instead, YHWH warns an unspecified audience against listening to their messages. The motifs of being sent (שלショー), commanded (זהו) and spoken to (דבר) are used in accusations against the prophets. The expectation, naturally, is that they ought to be. Again we find similar elements here in Jeremiah as in the ancient Near Eastern conception of prophecy.

560 Kimchi took מקרוב to be a reference to those who are in Deut 32.17 (cf. Judg 5.8). See the discussion in McKane, Jeremiah i-xcv, 585.
561 Schmitt, Mantik im Alten Testament, 134.
562 On the prophetic Sendungsbewusstsein, see Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel, 182-97; Huffmon,
The audience is told not to listen to the words of the prophets, a message summarised as ‘it will go well for you’ (shalom yehi letem) and ‘disaster will not come upon you’ (la el ha baveh yireh). Their prophesying is called חוח תונב (‘a vision of their own hearts’) in 23.16. It should be noted that this accusation puts the prophetic word and vision in parallel; to the polemicist in 23.16, they have the same function and effect, making the people empty (מכתב). As I have already argued in 1.4–19, visions are portrayed as a part of the prophetic task. In 23.16–24, visions have a similar function as they are set in parallel to prophetic messages. I would draw the same conclusion in 23.16 and assert that they function to legitimate prophetic speech. As in 1.11–14, the text in 23.16 suggests a cooperative relationship between vision and speech. By attacking these visions as false, Jeremiah empties their words of their legitimacy.

Where scholars once thought that prophetic participation in the divine council was unique to the Hebrew tradition, it is now a common view that this was true of prophets across the ancient Near East. Prophets were generally expected to stand in the divine council. The language of Jer 23.22 is rather non-specific about the kind of words YHWH has for the people; as with any other prophesying, messages that come from the divine council are expected to encourage fidelity to YHWH regardless of whether or not they are positive or negative.

In one of the recent monographs concerning the so-called ‘false prophecy’ problem, Moberly offers a prolonged discussion of the divine council. He points to the various senses of the word דוד, noting that it refers to ‘a gathering of people’ in Jer 15.17 and also can refer to the ‘understanding that characterizes those who are intimate with one another’ as in Prov 25.9. Based on these analogies, he suggests that in Jer 23.18, 22 the

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Company of Prophets; Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 221–24.

Behrens, Prophetische Visionsschilderungen, 66–70; Hayes, Role of Visionary Experiences; Schmitt, Mantik im Alten Testament, 49–50.

Mayes, Prophecy and Society in Israel; Schmitt, Mantik im Alten Testament, 49–50.

E.g. Mullen, Divine Council.


Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 75–88.

This reference to דוד in Jer 15.17 may not be as simple as Moberly thinks. Gordon pointed out that in the preceding verse, Jeremiah accepts a kind of ‘divine word commissioning him to be a prophet’ as he describes consuming YHWH’s word. This would mean that a similar concern with prophetic legitimacy is at work in 15.17. Gordon, Standing in the Council, 194–95.
concept of standing in YHWH’s council refers to personal ‘intimacy with YHWH’ that comes from being in his presence like Abraham (Gen 18.17–19) and Moses (Deut 5.23–33). One can verify claims to stand in the divine council with ‘the prophet’s lifestyle and message … which give content to the claim about God’. Accordingly, he asserts that it is ‘not a matter of some unusual “experience”, as in a form of prophetic ecstasy. Rather, Moberly claims it is

having a disposition that is open to, engaged with, and responsive to YHWH’s will for his people when YHWH calls; such a person’s consciousness is indeed altered, but not through transitory or induced states of “exaltation” but through appropriation of God’s will in such a way that one’s vision of the world and of life within it, and one’s conduct correspondingly, is transformed.

This kind of reading, of course, follows Deist’s ‘old paradigm’ of prophetic criticism, which is interested in the deeds and character of the ‘great’ prophets as moral paragons. It also personalises and interiorises a widely spread cultural idea common throughout the ancient Near East. However, in the context of ancient divination, this is not the way that claims about the divine council would be evaluated.

Three other possibilities are much more likely. First, the divine council could be associated with the temple precinct itself (cf. Isa 6; Psa 82). As Nissinen observed, this fits the pattern found in Neo-Assyrian texts, where prophets are even associated with a particular ritual related to the divine council (cf. SAA 12 69:27–31). Second, the council could be associated with its human counterpart, the royal court (cf. 1 Kgs 22). The parallels between the royal and divine courts include both as places where important deliberations are made. Third, the divine council could simply be a visionary experience, which

Chapter 4. Jeremiah 23.9–40

560 Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 74, 81. In my view, this is an astonishingly simplistic reading of these texts. On Gen 18 as a text related to ideas about the divine council, see Gordon, Standing in the Council.

561 Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 81.

562 Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 81.

563 Compare this to Skinner’s declaration that ‘to a false heart no true revelation is vouchsafed.’ Skinner, Prophecy and Religion, 195.

564 See the very useful survey of material from across the ancient Near East in Kee, Heavenly Council and its Type-scene, JSOT 31 (2007), 259–73.

565 Niehr, Der höchste Gott, 79-84; Nissinen, Prophets and the Divine Council, 16-17.


567 Gordon, Standing in the Council, 200-04.
seems to be the common view. The likeliest explanation is that the different cultural manifestations of this common idea are dependent on context. In some places, a royal or cultic setting might best explain the instance. Here in the context of Jer 23.16–24, it appears to be related to a visionary experience that legitimises the prophet. This reading neatly fits a context which is already occupied with the relationship between prophetic messages and visions (cf. 23.16).

4. Jeremiah 23.25–32

A new section of text opens in Jer 23.25 with the introduction of the theme of dreams. Where 23.23–24 contains a general meditation on the presence of YHWH, 23.25–32 is a series of negative, critical statements directed against prophets, culminating in the statement in 23.31–32 that YHWH himself is יִלּוּ הָנְבוֹאָם (‘against the prophets’). Dreams are a consistent theme in these polemics, as the lexeme חָלָם appears in 23.25, 27–28, 32 and marks the thematic boundaries of the pericope.

4.1. Text and translation


577 See the survey in Kee, Heavenly Council and its Type-scene. Similarly, see Niehr, Der höchste Gott, 81–82.

578 BHS suggests reading יהוה for יהוה, noting the absence of יהוה in the versions and Exod 23.21. According to this reading, שמי is a combination of an interrogative יהוה with ושמי (‘my name’). In favour of this view, see, e.g. HALAT II, 423, HALOT I, 444. Others have come up with solutions, such as היה לי לב (‘wird sich bekehren das Herz [der Propheten]’) suggested by Duhm, Jeremia, 191. The phrase היה לי לב is strange, but the basic sense is clear enough (see McKane, Jeremiah i-xvi, 589.).

579 BHS emends (probabiliter) ובאי to ובנא. This would replace the plural construct with another niphal participle, as in Jer 23.26a. Because of the text internal evidence (parallel niphal participles), and the minimal change to the consonantal text, this suggestion is reasonable. However, the 1 in ובנא can be read as having an epexegetical function, providing more detail about the verb ישמע in 23.26a; see IBHS §39.2.4. Thus I do not find it necessary to adopt the suggested change.

580 BHS reads (‘his dream’) and refers to:> (תַּהֲפֹךְ הָיוֹם אֶפֶם). In my view, this change in L is more interpretative than text-critical. It reflects a longstanding tendency to privilege the ‘word of YHWH’ concept over other means of revelation such as dreams. Thus (‘his dream’) contrasts with אני (‘my word’), which is to say, dreams come from prophets but the word comes from YHWH. With this in mind, I do not find the arguments supporting the emendation to be persuasive text-critically.
I have heard what the prophets have said, prophesying deceit in my name, saying, I have had a dream, I have had a dream.

How long? Is there\(^{58}\) in the heart of the prophets who prophesy deceit, and prophets with their deceptive hearts,\(^{58}\)

the intent to make my people forget my name with their dreams which they report to each other, as their fathers forgot my name because of Baal?

Let the prophet who has a dream report the dream, and who has my word announce my word accurately. What does straw have to do with grain, oracle of YHWH?

Is not therefore my word like fire, oracle of YHWH, and like a hammer that shatters rock?

Therefore here I am against the prophets, oracle of YHWH, who steal my words from one another.

Here I am against the prophets, oracle of YHWH, who take their tongue and announce oracles.

Here I am against those who prophesy lying dreams, oracle of YHWH, and report them and lead my people astray with their lies and their boasting. I did not send them and I did not command them. They profit this people nothing, oracle of YHWH.

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58 BHS reads בְּמַלְאָךְ. The qal participle לָמוּד derives from לֹא (‘burn’), a verb with no other occurrences in qal (cf. Isa 43.4; Prov 6.28; HALOT I, 465). This is an old suggestion still followed by several commentators; see Barthélemy, Critique textuelle, 646f., as well as Volz, Jeremia, 241; Nötscher, Jeremia, HSAT VII/2, Bonn, 1934, 182; Rudolph, Jeremia, 154; Weiser, Jeremia 1–25.14, 207f. Though the syntax is unusual (see Neh 13.18), I prefer not to emend the text here.

58 BHS inserts הָרְפָּאָה after the niphal participle בָּכָה in Jer 23.32, citing versional evidence in 6(חפ2). Presumably in order to supply a grammatical subject.

59 An older reading supposes that the sense of אִשֶּׁה is similar to that found in Jer 37.17 where Zedekiah asks Jeremia הָרְפָּאָה (‘Is there a word from YHWH?’). Following this view, the phrase with אִשֶּׁה in 23.19 would mean, ‘Is there [a word] in the heart of the prophets ... [namely] the intent to make my people forget my name?’ On this view, see Barthélemy, Critique textuelle, 646f–47.

54 It is normal in Jeremiah for a nominal form of בָּכָה to be followed by a niphal participle; see e.g. Jer 14.14, 15; 23.25, 26; 27.15.

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4.2. Prophets and deceit

In the opening verse of Jer 23.25–32, YHWH claims to have heard what the prophets prophesy in his name, and he characterises it with the lexeme שקר (‘lie’).\(^{395}\) שקר has a wide semantic range and is associated with a variety of behaviours including prophesying. Various accusations of deceit are made against prophets in a number of texts (5.12–14, 31; 6.13 = 8.10; 14.11–16; 20.6; 23.14, 26, 32; 27.10, 14–16; 28.15; 29.9, 21, 23, 31; 43.2). The accusation of deceit in 23.25 is paired with collocation תֹּעים בְּשָׁם יְהוָה and is a part of the textually difficult phrase תֹּעים בְּשָׁם יְהוָה in 23.26.

Speaking and prophesying in the name of YHWH are regarded as significant behaviours in Jeremiah; there are claims that people speak properly (e.g. Jer 26.24) and improperly in YHWH’s name. Other religious behaviours are performed ‘in/with YHWH’s name’: it is called upon (הָעָם qal) in 10.25; sworn by (שֶבֶט hiphil) in 12.16; 44.26; prophesied in/with (בֵּן niphal) in 14.14–15; 27.15; 29.9, 21; and spoken in (דֶּרֶךְ piel) in 20.9; 29.23.

The seriousness of speaking in YHWH’s name is not too dissimilar to the description in Jer 23.29, where YHWH’s word is likened to fire and a hammer that shatters rock (cf. 20.9). A very similar text, which is also critical of prophets, is found in 5.14, where YHWH tells Jeremiah that he has placed his words in his mouth like fire (הָנָנִי לְבָרָר). YHWH’s wrath (ǰםhma) is compared to fire in 4.4 and 21.12. The only other mention of a hammer (חֲמָס piel) comes in 50.23, where Babylon is metaphorically described as פָּסִיתי כָּל הָאֲרוּם (‘the hammer of the whole earth’). These images taken together in 23.29 form a destructive picture of YHWH’s word.

In the context of Jer 23.25–32, there are two claims which use שקר made against individuals who prophesy. First, is the claim in 23.25–28 that the prophets prophesy falsehood (טְלָעָת הָלֶיתָה) in YHWH’s name as they claim (טְלָעָת שֶׁכֶר) (‘I had a dream, I had a dream’).\(^{396}\) Second, in the last of a series of clauses introduced with ההנה in 23.30–32, YHWH declares himself against those who prophesy שֶׁכֶר (‘lying dreams’). In both instances, the prophets are accused of leading the people into apostasy; these dreams will

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\(^{396}\) I discuss prophecy and dreams in more depth later in this chapter; see section 4.3, page 152.
make the people forget (רשׁון שָׁבָת hiphil) YHWH’s name (23.27) and cause them to be led astray (זָנוּהּ hiphil) due to recklessness (23.32). Both of these claims in 23.25–28 and 23.30–32 are essentially related to the issue of apostasy; yet, there are some distinct points of emphasis in each claim that merit some comment.

First there is the claim of deceit in Jer 23.25. In the main clause, YHWH claims to hear what the prophets say; the rest of the verse is a participial phrase introduced by הנביאם הבושת שקר, modifying the noun הבושת שקר. In this phrase, these prophets are quoted as saying ‘they report falsely’. Here emphasis in each claim that merit some comment.

Thus, in both 23.25 and 23.28, the lexemes תלול and הנביאים are strongly associated with הנביא; dreams are firmly considered to be a part of prophetic behaviour.

In what follows in Jer 23.26–28, the falsehood (שקר) spoken by the prophets is criticised as deceit from their own hearts (חזרתי ל דבר) and a plan (쓰בן) to make the people forget YHWH’s name. The prophets are accused of leading the people away from YHWH by means of their dreams (‘which they relate to one another’). The lexeme סֵפֶר (relate, number) is used several times in 23.25–32 to describe prophets transmitting their oracles to an audience. Three times it takes dreams (מלומות) as its object (23.27, 28, 32) and it parallels דבר in 23.28. The prophets are described as interacting with each other, relate their dreams (‘one to another’) in 23.28 and are accused of stealing YHWH’s words (‘one from another’) in 23.30. On account of the dreams the prophets make known (ספר), the people run risk of repeating the sins of the forefathers, forgetting YHWH’s name on account of Ba’al. I have discussed these criticisms

57 In my view, too much of the commentary of the verse is distracted by the first person pronominal suffixes in the phrase ומאות דברי אתי דבר דברי אמתי in Jer 23.28. The lexemes תלול and הנביאים should be understood more like synonyms than antonyms in this context.

58 Only two other occurrences of סֵפֶר are found in Jeremiah, once in Jer 33.22 where it describes counting the sand of the sea, and once in 51.10 where the people encourage each other to recount in Zion YHWH’s acts of salvation.

59 Only twice does the lexeme מָנב (‘steal’) appear as a verb in Jeremiah, once in Jer 7.9 as a qal infinitive absolute, and once in 23.30 as a piel participle.
already in other passages, and they do not vary much from the general pattern in 23.26–28.⁵⁹⁶ In this case, it is clear that the dreams of the prophets are criticised not because they are dreams per se, but because they result in leading the people into apostasy.

One aspect of Jer 23.26 which has troubled scholars for some time is the opening phrase in the verse, עד מתי הוא בל הנבאים. It is very likely that the text is corrupt.⁵⁹⁷ As the text stands, two phrases introduce questions, as עד מתי (‘how long?’) is followed immediately withيش, the particle יש (‘there is’) with an interrogative ה. This makes little grammatical sense. One way to alleviate the difficulty of יש is to read as an affirmation that one has a (prophetic) word; for comparison, the word יש is used in this manner in 37.17, where Zedekiah asks Jeremiah if there is a word from YHWH (יהוה דבר).⁵⁹⁸ A very similar phrase occurs in 27.18, where YHWH encourages prophets to intercede with him את שבר יהוה=uמאת (= ‘if the word of YHWH is with them’). Read this way, the text of 23.26 is still slightly awkward and problematic, but a little less so.

Having discussed the first of the two שקר claims in Jer 23.25–32, now I turn to the second in 23.32. YHWH declares himself against those who are prophesying lying dreams (על בכאו הולחת שקר). This claim is made in the context of three successive ההנה (‘behold’) statements in 23.30–32. The repeated opening in these three verses suggests they should be considered together.

First in 23.30, YHWH declares כל מני על הנבאים who steal his words from one another. The phrasing of the claim המני דבר יאש מאה לעוה in 23.30 bears similarity to the description of the prophets’ plan to mislead the people הבלחמות אש DISPATCHER איש לערוה in 23.27. Prophets interact with one another, so it seems, and here they are accused of theiving YHWH’s word from one another with the lexeme נב piel. This is one of only two instances of the verb in Jeremiah (cf. הנב qal in 7.9), and only one of two instances of הנב piel in the Hebrew Bible.⁵⁹⁹ The sense of הנב piel appears to include a hint of deceit in these uses, as suggested in some of the lexica.⁶⁰⁰ This would fit well con-
textually with the accusation of deceit in 23:32. Of course, and quite importantly, the claim that these prophets are secretly stealing YHWH's word from one another assumes that they must have YHWH's word in the first place.⁵⁹⁵

In the second statement in 23:31, YHWH declares himself against the prophets who take their tongues and announce oracles (ברקדים לשון וראות נאם). In context, the phrase ברקדים לשון may be derogatory, but it seems to have a plain meaning of ‘take their tongue’. Most of the arguments in favour of a negative sense seem to rest on a particular reading of the verb נאם qal. Significantly, this is the only instance of a verbal form from נאם לשם in the Hebrew Bible. The well-known nominal form appears very frequently in the phrase נאם יהוה. In 23:31 the phrase נאם יהוה means, quite literally, ‘to oracle an oracle’.

The third statement in 23:32 contrasts with the previous two since it does not concern prophets per se. Here YHWH declares that he is נאם לשון שקר. This participial collocation is unique and does not refer necessarily to a particular ‘group’. More precisely, it refers to people engaged in a particular activity or performing a particular function.

This culminating statement rejects these prophets because they lead astray (תעה) the people with their lies (בשקריהם) and their ‘boasting (?)’ (במפתותיהם). The plural form פפות, a substantive from phía, is a hapax legomenon.⁵⁹⁶ The meaning of the word is quite uncertain, and it appears best to understand it as semantically parallel to at least in this context. By prophesying lying dreams and relating them (במפתותיהם piel) to YHWH's people, these individuals lead the people astray (תעה hiphil), which is similar to the claim in 23:13. Part of 23:21 is repeated in 23:32, as YHWH says that he did not send (שלח qal) or command (ז緩 piel) these individuals. As a result, they do the people no good (הועיל לא יועיל), the same claim made against the Judaean leadership in 2:8.⁵⁹⁷

Two other texts in Jeremiah, 14:13–16 and 29:21–23, refer to prophets הנביאים הבッシים and accuse them of deceit with שקר.⁵⁹⁸ The phrases and ideas in these texts that are

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⁵⁹⁵ This is in contrast with Fischer, who uses scare-quotes in his translation ‘die stehend sind »meine worte«, Einer vom Anderen’. Fischer, Jeremiah 1–25, 685.
⁵⁹⁶ Cf. ‘Schamlosigkeit’ (ATTM I, 667). For במשפויות, see ‘boasting’ HALOT II, 924. See also Lange, Die Wurzel pbfz, VT 51 (2001), 497–510.
⁵⁹⁷ The lexeme לע appears in Jer 2:8, 11; 7:8; 12:13; 16:19; 23:32.⁵⁹⁸ In the present work, see chapter 2, section 2.2.1, page 68.
shared with 23.25–32 merit their inclusion in here. In what follows, I will briefly discuss each in turn.

4.2.1. Jeremiah 14.11–16

In the context of the ‘drought liturgy’ of Jer 14.1–15.4, 599 most interpreters identify a smaller text of 14.11–16 concerned with prophets. This text contains a series of polemical statements directed against the prophets and their activity. In the first two verses, YHWH instructs Jeremiah not to pray (מֵלָל hithpael) for the people’s benefit (לָשׁוֹנָה). YHWH will not listen to their cry (רְאוֹת) while they fast (וַּעֲשֵׂה qal), and will not accept their burnt sacrifice (מַצֶּה) or grain offering (צָהוֹ). Both the intercessory prayer and the sacrificial practices have the same objective: to persuade YHWH to act on the supplicant’s behalf and stay the danger. In this case, YHWH will not heed. He will subject the people to sword, famine and pestilence. 600

Similarly to Jer 4.10 (cf. 1.6), Jeremiah addresses YHWH with the exclamation אָהֶד in 14.13. The prophets, he recounts, are saying to the people that they will not experience disaster; rather, YHWH will give them complete safety (שָׁלֹחַ נַפְשֹׁת). The prophets claim this safety applies here, where ‘this place’ is usually a reference to the Jerusalem temple (e.g. 7.4, 10). The polemical statement against prophets begins in Jer 14.14. YHWH says in response to Jeremiah, שַׁוְּךָ הֲנָבָאִים נָבָאִים בְּשָׁם, which is the same phrase found in 23.25. This is followed with the common accusation that YHWH has not sent (שָׁלֹח qal), nor commanded (נָשָׁה piel), nor spoken to (דָּרָה piel) these prophets (cf. 23.21).

Following this claim is a list of negative descriptions of these prophets’ activity: זָאוֹן ‘false vision’, קָסַם ‘divination’, אֲלֵיל ‘idol’, 601 וּרְאֵי豳 ‘deceit of their heart’. 602 These polemics are all summarised in the phrase הָהָיָה מִתְנַבֵּאת לְכָם at the end of 14.14. The strongly negative character of the preceding list has led many to understand


601 Here Q אֶלְעָל should be preferred to K אֶלְעָל. The masoretic vocalisation of K indicates one should read a ה in place of the internal ה (pace BHS). McKane reads the pair as a hendiadys, ‘idolatrous divination’. McKane, Jeremiah i-xxxv, 324.

602 In my view, here Q אָלֶל should be preferred to K אָלֶל.
the נב实用性 participle in a negative sense, that is, that the prophets merely play at prophesying as they say these worthless things. This seems to place too much interpretive stress on the distinction between niphal and hithpael forms of נב实用性. The niphal describes the activity of the same prophets three times in 14.14–16; the hithpael and niphal verbs parallel one another, and the hithpael emphasises an iterative sense as it summarises a list.

YHWH goes on to accuse these prophets of speaking in his name without being sent (shall qal) in Jer 14.15. The prophets will suffer the very things they say the land will not; by sword (חרב) and famine (רעב) they will perish. The same horrible fate will befall the people, who will be left to die in the streets, without burial, due to their wickedness (רעיה).

4.2.2. Jeremiah 29.21–23

In Jeremiah’s letter to the deportees in Babylon (Jer 29.1–32), two named individuals, Ahab ben Kolaiah and Zedekiah ben Maaseiah, are accused in 29.21–23 of prophesying to the community of Judaeans (הנבאים למב שמות שקר). YHWH says he will deliver them to be put to death by king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and it is normal for a king to issue punishment for ‘deviant’ prophetic behaviour in Jeremiah (e.g. 26.20–23; 36.26). A curse (קללה) modelled on their fate will be used by the deportees, that YHWH would roast the unlucky person with fire (קללה באתש).

The reasons for the polemic and judgment against Ahab and Zedekiah are cited in Jer 29.23. They did outrageous things (עשו בנבלה) and they committed adultery with their neighbours’ wives (זאו נשים רעיהים). The vast majority of interpreters take this reference to sexual misbehaviour literally; Ahab and Zedekiah were morally unfit to perform as prophets. In my view, this is problematic. It would be strange to repay a case of sexual infidelity with a public political execution by a foreign king, a legacy of a religious curse, an accusation of sacrilege, and an invocation of divine witness; the punishment does not fit the crime. The language and themes of 29.21–23 are deeply religious and

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603 See my discussion of the hithpael in chapter 2, section 2.2.3, page 70.
605 While death was the prescribed punishment for adultery in Israelite legal traditions (e.g. Lev 20.10; Deut 22.22), there are several key differences in the situation described in Jer 29.23. The wronged husband
political in nature: kings in the ancient Near East attempted to quell prophetic attempts to foment unrest and political instability;\textsuperscript{606} נבולה is lexeme closely related to apostasy and idolatry;\textsuperscript{607} נאף is used metaphorically to describe a failure in singular adherence to YHWH; and the only other instance of YHWH functioning as an רפי in Jeremiah is found in the context of vows taken during a divinatory inquiry (42.5).\textsuperscript{608} Ahab and Zedekiah prophesy שקר not because of moral unfitness, but due to religious failures.

4.3. Prophets, dreams and visions

Only a handful of texts in Jeremiah refer to dreamers or dreams with חזון (Jer 23.25–32 27.9; 29.8), and the lexeme חזון (‘vision’) only appears in 14.14 and 23.16. While there is some ongoing debate over the classification of dreams and visions, and their distinctiveness in relation to ancient prophecy, most understand prophecy, dreams and visions as similar ‘intuitive’ forms of divinatory activity in comparison to ‘technical’ forms.\textsuperscript{609}

In Jeremiah, dreams and visions appear well within the normal range of prophetic activity, and several texts make use of visions as a part of their message (Jer 1.11–14; 24.1–10; cf. 4.23–26; 38.21–23).\textsuperscript{610} There is no hint of a negative association between prophesying and visions as they are related by the prophet Jeremiah. They appear as normal forms of prophetic speech.

The two instances of חזון, in Jer 14.14 and 23.16, are both a part of criticisms directed against prophets, but both associated with prophetic speech. Prophets are accused of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Nissinen, Falsche Prophetie, 176-79.
\item The sense of ‘folly’ in relation to sexual offences is questioned in DCH V, 595–96.
\item HALOT I, 788.
\item The lexemes חזון (‘seer’) and the related word חזון (‘vision’) are understood as a synonyms to בנת; see DCH V, 591. The word appears in the Zakkur inscription (KAI 202, A, line 12), where messages are delivered חזון בד, חזון בנן, חזון שדר.
\item The term is also found in the phrase חזון עלים in the Deir ‘Ala plaster text (KAI 312), combination I, line 1. See DNWSI I, 357–61. On this distinction, see Cancik-Kirschbaum, Prophetismus und Divination, 44-51; Nissinen, What is Prophecy?, 21-22; Nissinen, Prophecy and Omen Divination; Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 7-11; Schmitt, Mantik im Alten Testament, 6-8.
\item On the two vision reports in Jer 1.11–14 and 24.1–10, see Behrens, Prophetische Visionsschilderungen, 105-37.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Schmitt, for comparison to understand the saying. For to
both dreams' and 'prophesying' are conceptually quite similar (23.16; 27.9, 14, 16–17).

In the context of Jer 23.25–32, dreaming and dreams are associated with 'prophesying' four times. The prophets are accused of prophesying falsehood (שקר) in YHWH's name as they say חלמתי. In 23.27 they are accused of using their dreams to lead the people astray, and in 23.32 the same claim is made against individuals prophesying lying dreams (על נביא חלמות שקר). In 23.28, there is a direct association between a dream (חלום) and a word (דבר). The two clauses in this verse are parallel to one another as they modify the noun הנביא; both אשר דברי אתו יבר דברי ושאר אשא חלום יספר חלום describe the same activity.\(^6\)

Twice in Jeremiah, YHWH gives instructions not to listen (שמע qal) to the dreams communicated by prophets in Jer 27.9 and 29.8. In the list of religious specialists in 27.9, there is a reference to dreams (חלמות).\(^6\) In this case the diviners are associated with foreign kings, but a similar reference in 29.8 associates diviners and dreams with Judaeans. Jeremiah's letter to the deportees in Babylon includes a warning not to allow their prophets or diviners to deceive them. YHWH instructs them not to listen to the dreams they dream (אלא תשמעו את חלומות ראש אמה חלומים). The same warning not to listen (אל) is frequently used in reference to prophets elsewhere, suggesting that 'dreaming dreams' and 'prophesying' are conceptually quite similar (23.16; 27.9, 14, 16–17).

Some place a great deal of interpretive weight on the first person pronoun suffixes of the phrase אשר דברי אתו יבר דברי אמה in Jer 23.28. The verse is interpreted as an implicit comparison and value judgment between two different means of prophesying. In this view, dreams are the prophet's but the word is YHWH's. Accordingly, dreams should be greeted with more suspicion than the words spoken by prophets. As I have argued in this section and elsewhere, this distinction does not hold on a semantic level.\(^6\)

Both of the lexemes דברי חלום and דבר piel, prophesying a 'lying vision' (יחלום משקר) in 14.14. Similarly in 23.16, the prophets are said to speak a vision of their heart (מה ללבם דבר) which does not come from the mouth (דבר יבר) of YHWH. Semantically, a דבר is both 'spoken' (דבר piel) and 'prophesied' (דבר hithpael).

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\(^6\) A short maxim appears in Jer 23.28 which is somewhat vague: מכ חלבון את דברי. Neither straw (בר) nor wheat (בר) appear elsewhere in Jeremiah, so there is little basis for comparison to understand the saying. For בון cf. Isa 11.7; 65.25. For ב ר see Joel 2.24; Amos 5.11.

\(^6\) See the discussion in chapter 5, section 2.3, page 170.


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Dreams, prophecy, and associated with the activity of prophets—including Jeremiah.64

4.4. Summary

Prophesying in the name of YHWH constitutes an important behaviour which must be done properly. The theme of falsehood and the term שקר (‘lie’) has been much discussed,65 and in Jer 23.25–28 the prophets are accused of שקר המלים (‘I had a dream, I had a dream’). On account of their dreams, the prophets make the people repeat the sins of their ancestors, forgetting YHWH’s name on account of Ba’al. However, in this case, it is clear that the dreams of the prophets are criticised not because they are dreams per se, but because they result in leading the people into apostasy.66 In terms of the means of inspiration, the act of prophesying in 23.26–32 includes reporting a dream.

There is ongoing debate over the distinction between prophecy and dreams; Stökl sharply distinguishes between dreaming and prophesying,67 while Huffmon and Nissinen classify them together.68 As Huffmon argues, there are ‘many variations and “exaggerations” of the possibilities of prophetic revelation’ in the ancient Near Eastern sources. Different communities would simply choose from the available options.69 As I have already argued in the semantic discussion, there is a degree of semantic overlap between the verbs חזות and חלמתי. In this context, the dreams of the prophets are criticised not because they are dreams per se, but because they result in leading the people into apostasy. The same warning not to listen (אל תשמעו) is used in reference to prophetic words and dreams, suggesting that they are conceptually quite similar (23.16; 27.9, 14, 16–17). Thus, in

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66 Cf. Lundbom, Jeremiah 21–36, 204-6, 399.
67 Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 10, 98, 222-23.
68 Huffmon, Company of Prophets, 48, passim; Nissinen, What is Prophecy?, 21-22; Huffmon, Prophecy in the Mari Texts, 205-13, esp. 208-9. Also in support of this view is Schmitt, Mantik im Alten Testament, 56-57.
69 Huffmon, Company of Prophets, 70.
my reading of this passage, dreams and visions appear well within the normal range of prophetic activity, and they appear to be normal forms of prophetic speech.\footnote{Cf. Becking, Means of Revelation, 41-42; Schmitt, Mantik im Alten Testament, 133-35.}

5. Jeremiah 23.33-40

Following after Jer 23.25-32 is brief passage regarding the נשא הוא. In Jeremiah, this collocation is unique to 23.33-40 and it functions as the primary interest of the text. The opening verse in 23.33 establishes the theme of the passage. After the situation has been introduced, the following verses in 23.34-40 articulates particular conditions and consequences for speaking about the נשא הוא.

5.1. Text and translation

Thus, I read

\begin{quote}
וכי ישאלوك עון הזה או הנביא או כל אדם מזאצא הזה אוגריא את הנבואה 내ותישת אבתך נאם הזה

והנביא והנביא או אמר נאם הזה מפקיח על אתיי הזה על ידו

וכ תאמר אנא אשתך דוע כי נאם הזה לאיש לאה ם דברי ידך אוליהו

יהי דברךנאך אחלהני

cf. הлежа מעני דבריך

וכ תאמר לא הנביא או העיך ידך ודבריך

ואם נאם זה הנביא או כל אדם ממך אדםך ואת אדבר מה משא הזה

ואשלי אלἰcbc או ממך משא הזה

לבך עני ונשחת ושבך שלושה ָנאם נושה נועית אבוא את אבך ואת עיר נועית כל
\end{quote}

\footnote{BHS reads נשים instead of נשים in place of נשים ואחרדיכים, and cites ב in support of this view (see GKC §179m). Barthélemy et al. are of divided opinion, but the majority supports this correction; it is in their view ‘improbable that this signification too fine a bit is improperly inscribed after coup dans le texte si on y lisait auparavant le très clair לא תאמרו במשה (Barthélemy, Critique textuelle, 648-49). There is an alternative view, which holds that it is possible to read the ב in the ב as the nota accusativi in the sense of ‘as for’ or ‘regarding’. This would roughly translate as follows: ‘and tell them what the oracle is, “and I will cast you off.”’ In my view, the text of L is corrupt in Jer 23.33 and the corrected reading in BHS makes sense of the text. Thus, I read הנבואה המ donna along with, e.g., Holladay, Jeremiah 1-25, 647; McKane, Jeremiah i-xxv, 599.

\footnote{For נשים, BHS reads נשים instead of נשים המ donna with some Hebrew manuscripts and ב. The problem here is driven by grammatical issues. The relationship between the qal perfect ומשה and qal inf. abs. נשים is complicated. The internal ו in the 1cs weqatal form ומשה suggests the verb is נשים I (‘to forget’), and נשים seems to be from נשים I (n. II, see HALOT I, 728; DCH V, 776-77; Gesenius*, 854; GKC, §23l; GKB, §29g). The forms are closely related. BHS understands these verbs as from נשים I (‘lift’), perhaps as another wordplay on נשים and as a related idea to הנעשה إطلاقה (‘and I will cast you off’) in Jer 23.33. For an exhaustive discussion of these and related problems, see McKane, מנה in Jeremiah 23:33-40, in: Prophesy, ed. Emerston, BZAW 150, Berlin, 1986, 35-54; McKane, Jeremiah i-xxv, 597-604. Along with other commentators (e.g. Barthélemy, Critique textuelle, 649-51), I adopt with the change proposed by BHS.

\footnote{BHS reads נשים for נשים along with some Hebrew manuscripts and ב. For the grammatical issues involved, see my comment above in note 62a. I adopt the change proposed by BHS.}
And when this people, or the prophet or priest, asks you, saying, ‘What is the message of YHWH?’ you will say to them ‘You are the burden, and I will cast you off,’ oracle of YHWH.

And the prophet, the priest or the people who says ‘the message of YHWH’ — I will punish that man and his house.

Thus you shall say to one another, each to his brother, ‘What did YHWH answer?’ or ‘What did YHWH say?’

But ‘the message of YHWH’ do not remember any more, for the burden for a man will be his own word. You pervert the words of the living god, YHWH Hosts, our god.

Thus you will say to the prophet, ‘What did YHWH answer you?’ or ‘What did YHWH say?’

But if you say ‘the message of YHWH’ then thus says YHWH, Because you said this word, ‘the message of YHWH,’ when I sent to you, saying, ‘Do not say “the burden of YHWH,”’

Therefore, behold, I will lift you up and I will cast you off, and the city that I gave to you and your fathers, away from my presence.

And I will lay upon you an eternal reproach, an eternal shame which will not be forgotten.

5.2. The speech of YHWH

It is clear that the dominant interest of Jer 23:33–40 is the phrase משׂא יהוה. In most of its occurrences, משׂא refers to a physical burden; for example, it is used to refer to literal ‘burdens’ in regulations concerning sabbath observation in Jer 17.21–24. In this basic, literal sense, a משׂא is a heavy load; in a metaphorical sense, it is a responsibility. However, the sense of משׂא is much different in the instances where it describes prophetic speech, as is the case in 23:33–40.

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624 Following Petersen, I have translated משׂא in the relevant places as ‘message’, corresponding to his translation of ‘oracle’. This preserves a distinction between the phrases נאם יהוה and משׂא יהוה in English.

625 There is disagreement over the interpretation of משׂא here, especially as it relates to the lexeme משׂא. Those who understand משׂא as a debt or a pledge tend to take משׂא as ‘forsake’. See, e.g., Tur-Sinai (Torczyner), MGWF 76 (1932), 273–84; Weil, Exégèse de Jérémie 23, 33–40, RHR 118 (1938), 201–8. HALOT I, 695.

626 See HALOT I, 641–42.

627 There are a number of instances where the term משׂא describes or introduces prophetic speech. See 2 Kgs 9.25; Isa 13.1; 14.28; 15.1; 17.1; 19.1; 21.1, 11, 13; 22.1; 23.1; 30.6; Jer 23.33 (x2), 34, 35 (x2), 38 (x3); Ezek 12.10; Nah
Or is it? A great number of studies have attempted to make sense of the lexeme משות as a description of prophetic speech that is somehow a ‘burden’ or ‘heavy’, largely by appeals to the etymological origins of the term.⁶²⁸ This led to the view that a ‘burdensome’ oracle was a negative one.⁶²⁹ However, as is the case in Jer 23.33–40, it is not necessarily the case that a משות prophecy is inherently negative. As it is used here, it is more like a technical term for a prophetic oracle.⁶³⁰

Some aspects of the text are particularly relevant for the present investigation. One of the technical terms for divinatory inquiry, משות qal, opens the text in Jer 23.33. The text imagines the people asking for a word from YHWH. It is not specified in 23.33 to whom this question is asked; however in 23.38 YHWH instructs the people how they should speak (משות qal) to the prophet. It is likely that a prophet is being asked for an oracle in 23.33. The question they ask ממה משות יהוה (‘what is the burden of YHWH?’) can come from either the people, a prophet or a priest—there is little distinction between them here. In response, the prophet (?) is instructed to respond ‘I will cast you off’ (משות נטש). This is one of the distinctive characteristics of the text, namely, an ironic play on the plain meaning of משות as a heavy load.

In Jer 23.34 YHWH declares that he will punish (משות) the prophet, priest or people who says ממה משות יהוה, apparently contradicting the situation in 23.33. Rather than say ממה משות יהוה, the people are encouraged to ask to one another ‘what has YHWH answered?’ (מה דיבר יהוה) or ‘what has YHWH said?’ (מה נאמר יהוה). In either case, the conceptual framework is similar to asking about the משות יהוה; the process of inquiry is only different regarding the terminology used to refer to YHWH’s oracle. This is reemphasised in 23.36–37, where the same prohibition against the משות יהוה is replaced with asking about YHWH’s answer (נך דבר יהוה) and YHWH’s word (דבר יהוה). If anyone says ממה יהוה, YHWH declares (cf. 23.30–32), he will completely forget (משות נאש) that person and forsake (משות נטש) them along with their ancestral city (23.39), and set an eternal reproach (חרפת עלם) upon them which will never be forgotten (23.40).

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⁶²⁸ An overview can be found in Boda, Freeing the Burden of Prophecy, 338-41.
5.3. Summary

Jer 23:33–40 is uniquely interested in the phrase משאת יהוה, but its interest in prophets is similar to the rest of 23.9–32. Here the close relation between prophet and priest is found yet again, as both are involved in the same process of inquiry and both receive the same form of judgment. The text’s pronounced focus on the phrase משאת יהוה shows an interest in types of prophetic oracles and the technical language used to refer to them. According to the older view, the sense of משאת יהוה was related to ‘burden’, and by extension, a ‘burdensome’ oracle was an oracle of doom. As Boda observes, rather importantly, the conceptual framework for asking משאת יהוה for oracles with the phrases המשאת יהוה and דבר יהוה is the same for משאת יהוה. The process of inquiry is the same, and only the terminology is different. He concludes that in the texts give ‘no indication that prophecy as a means of revelation has been eradicated’, but are concerned with the threat of idolatry.

6. Conclusion

Under the heading לְנֶבֶים in Jer 23.9, the material in 23.9–40 contains a rich store of information for the nature and function of prophecy. Examining these features on a phenomenological level, the patterns and motifs used here are a rich source of information for the conceptual understanding of prophecy in Jeremiah. However, the tendency to read these verses as ‘biographical’ continues to obscure the basic functions of prophecy found there. Lament and cult are major themes in 23.9–15, and the accusations of adultery (זָעַה) and pollution (פָּסָחִים) signal the general importance of these concepts for prophecy. The implicit assumption of these criticisms is that the prophets, together with the priests, have failed in their expected function. They should not be read as a contrast of moral

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633 Boda, Freeing the Burden of Prophecy, 355. This contrasts with Lange’s view, that the text reflects ‘eine allgemeine Ablehnung jeder gegenwärtigen und zukünftigen Prophetie’. Lange, Vom prophetischen Wort zur prophetischen Tradition, 298. Similarly, Pedersen argued that the text seeks ‘to prohibit the prophetic enterprise as we know it from the classical prophets.’ Petersen, Late Israelite Prophecy, 33.
634 Cf. Fischer, Jeremiah 1–25, 690; Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 70-71.
635 Tiemeyer observes that the priests are not criticised in Jeremiah apart from the prophets. Tiemeyer,
standards with Jeremiah.\footnote{Mo\-berly, Prophecy and Discernment, 74, 81.} Similarly, reading the references to the divine council in 23.18, 22 as a testimony of Jeremiah's personal ‘intimacy with YHWH’ evident in his ‘lifestyle’ seems to miss the fundamental point.\footnote{Gordon, From Mari to Moses, 71-74; Nissinen, Prophets and the Divine Council, 16-17; Gordon, Standing in the Council, 190-92. Cf. Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 224-26.} If prophets elsewhere were also expected to participate in the divine council in some way, then it would discourage the conclusion that only the exceptionally pious prophets were privy to it.\footnote{On the prophetic Sendungsbewusstsein, see Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel, 182-97; Huffmon, Company of Prophets; Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 221-24.} It is important to recognise that the rhetorical force of the polemics against prophets in the passage comes from the expectation that they ought not to be the case. Prophets ought not to promote apostasy, they ought to promote acceptable cultic practices, and they ought to stand in the divine council.

Prophetic legitimacy is a major theme in Jer 23.9–40, and the concepts of being sent (וַיָּלֻּלֶת), commanded (וַיִּתְזַבְּר) and spoken to (וַיֹּאמֶר) in 23.16–22 follow the pattern of ancient Near Eastern conception of prophecy.\footnote{On the prophetic Visionsschilderungen, see Behrens, Prophetische Visionsschilderungen, 66-70; Hayes, Role of Visionary Experiences; Schmitt, Mantik im Alten Testament, 49-50.} These concepts are used to reinforce the authority and authorisation of a prophet to speak on behalf of the deity. Similarly, visions (חָזֹן) appear in 23.16 in a cooperative relationship with speech, and they too function to legitimate prophetic speech (cf. 1.11–14). These visions parallel prophetic words in 23.16 and have the same effect. I see little reason to draw a sharp distinction between speech and visions in the discussion of prophecy in 23.16–24.\footnote{Behrens, Prophetische Visionsschilderungen, 66-70; Hayes, Role of Visionary Experiences; Schmitt, Mantik im Alten Testament, 49-50.} In 23.16–24, visions have a similar function as they are set in parallel to prophetic messages. I would draw the same conclusion in 23.16 and assert that they function to legitimate prophetic speech. As in 1.11–14, the text in 23.16 suggests a cooperative relationship between vision and speech.\footnote{Mayes, Prophecy and Society in Israel; Schmitt, Mantik im Alten Testament, 49-50.}

Similar to the way prophetic visions are polemised in Jer 23.16 (cf. לֹא לֶבַם לָהֵן), the prophets are accused of falsehood (שֶׁפֶר) and in 23.25–28 as they claim to have had a

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\footnotesize{Priests and the Temple Cult, 256-57.}

\footnote{Cf., e.g., Tilson, False Prophets in the Old Testament, 433-36; Wolff, Hauptprobleme alttestamentlicher Prophetie, 465-68; Oswald, Falsche Prophetie, 28-29; Vogels, Comment discerner le prophète authentique ?, 660-98; McNamara, Kriterien zur Unterscheidung; Münderlein, Kriterien wahrer und falscher Prophetie; Jere-\mias, »Wahre« und »falsche« Prophetie, 348; Mo-berly, Prophecy and Discernment, 71 n. 80; Willi, »Anhalt-punkte« zur Unterscheidung, 102.}

\footnote{Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 74, 81.}

\footnote{Gordon, From Mari to Moses, 71-74; Nissinen, Prophets and the Divine Council, 16-17; Gordon, Standing in the Council, 190-92. Cf. Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 224-26.}

\footnote{On the prophetic Sendungsbewusstsein, see Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel, 182-97; Huffmon, Company of Prophets; Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 221-24.}
dream (חלם). As in the case of their visions, the dreams of the prophets are criticised not because they are dreams per se; this is not a criticism of the means of prophetic inspiration. These dreams are criticised because they lead the people into apostasy. In contemporary scholarship on prophecy, there is still some debate over the relationship between prophecy and dreams as ‘intuitive’ forms of divination. To cite recent examples, Stökl would differentiate between prophecy and dreams, while Huffman and Nissinen would not.643 In my view, it is because their function is the same that I would not draw a sharp distinction between prophetic messages and dreams. The same warnings are issued for both, and the same outcomes are criticised for both. An additional piece of evidence in support of this claim is my finding in the semantic analysis that the verbs נבאת and החלם share semantic overlap. Dreams and visions appear well within the prophetic purview.643

Prophetic participation in the divine council is a common feature of prophecy in the ancient Near East, and the Israelite prophetic tradition is no exception.644 The references to the divine council in Jer 23.18, 22 are also a part of the concern for prophetic legitimacy in this text. In contrast to Moberly, I do not think these references concern a kind of personal ‘intimacy with YHWH’.645 Instead, there is good reason to read this as another reference to visionary experience in relation to prophetic messages. Claiming that one has had a vision serves to underwrite a prophetic message with greater authority.

prophet and priest

Finally, in support of the semantic analysis that נבאת and החלם are very closely related, the relation between prophet and priest is emphasised in Jer 23.9–40. They are criti-
cised in the same terms, with similar language, metaphors and conceptual themes; their activities and functions overlap; they are involved in the same process of inquiry and both receive the same form of judgment. Tiemeyer has called the prophet and priest pair a ‘merism’, and I would agree that there is not a sharp distinction between them.\textsuperscript{646} They are collaborative partners.

\textsuperscript{646} Tiemeyer, Priests and the Temple Cult, 234. See also Haldar, Associations of Cult Prophets; Tilson, False Prophets in the Old Testament, 427; Cryer, Divination in Ancient Israel, 286-95; Grabbe, Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages, 112-13.
Chapter 5. Jeremiah 27.1–28.17

I. Preliminary remarks

The reported prophetic messages and short narrative of Jer 27.1–28.17 contain numerous references to prophets, their messages and their activities. Being concerned with prophetic conflict in Jeremiah, the statements in 27.18 and 28.8–9 are especially significant for our interest and shall be discussed in context.

The political and religious interests of the text relate to two primary themes. First is the ‘yoke of Babylon’ (Jer 27.8, 11, 12; 28.2, 4, 11, 14) and the central question of whether or not to serve the king of Babylon. Second is a concern for people and goods which were taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 596 BCE. This concern primarily relates to the ‘vessels of the house of YHWH’ (27.16, 18, 19, 21; 28.3, 6) and Jeconiah ben Jehoiakim, king of Judah (27.20; 28.4). Some unique textual features also are present in 27.1–28.17 which bind the chapters together. Several names have different spellings in these chapters than in the rest of the book. These and other features encourage analysing them together.

Justly famous in prophetic studies is the story of Hananiah and Jeremiah in Jer 28.1–17. Continuing themes from 27.1–22, it is a dramatic portrayal of interaction between prophets in the temple court. A number of shared themes and similarities suggest Jer 27–28 are best discussed together: similar chronological notices in 27.1 and 28.1, repetitions of key words, such as על (‘yoke’) in 27.8, 11–12; 28.2, 4, 11, 14 and שקר (‘lie’) in 27.10, 14–16; 28.15, and common themes, such as the temple vessels (27.16, 18–19, 21; 28.3, 6) and submission to Babylon (cf. 27.2, 5–8; 28.2–4, 11, 13–14). Most importantly, the two texts are fundamentally interested in prophets; the lexeme נביא appears twenty-one times in these chapters (27.9, 14–16, 18; 28.1, 5–6, 8–12, 15, 17).

The basic structure of Jer 27.1–22 consists of a chronological heading in 27.1 and four oracles, concerning similar themes, addressed to three different audiences. The first

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647 The יְהוָה theophoric ending of Jeremiah’s name is shortened to יְרֵם (27.1; 28.3, 6, 10, 11, 12, 15; see also 29.1); Nebuchadnezzar’s name is typically spelled נבכדראצר in Jeremiah, but in 27–28 is spelled נבוכדנאצר (27.6, 8, 20; 28.3, 11, 14; see also 29.1, 3); additional unique spellings include יְרוּם in 27.1, and the spelling of Jehoiachin’s name as יִכְנוּי in 27.20 and יִכְנֵי in 28.4; 29.2. [note justifying choice not to examine 29 in full]
in 27.2–11 concerns a group of Syro-Palestinian kings who have sent envoys to Jerusalem. The second oracle in 27.12–15 is addressed to king Zedekiah of Judah. Both of these messages in 27.2–11 and 12–15 emphasise YHWH’s command to serve the king of Babylon. A third oracle in 27.16–18 addresses the priests and people in Jerusalem and warns them against hopeful prophetic messages. Each of these oracles in 27.2–11, 12–15 and 16–18 warn their audiences against listening to other prophets and diviners who contradict Jeremiah’s message. The fourth oracle in 27.19–22 is also addressed to the priests and people in Judah and concerns the return of individuals and goods from exile; however, its hopeful tone differs from the other oracles in 27.2–18.

The narrative of Jer 28.1–17 can be divided into two minor ‘episodes’ in 28.1–11 and 28.12–17. I will treat 28.1–11 and 28.12–17 in two parts, though my reading and conclusions pertain to the narrative whole.

2. Jeremiah 27.1–15

The oracle from YHWH in Jer 27.1–11 is a message which supports the rule of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and warns against resisting him. It primarily addresses the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon. These kings had sent emissaries to Jerusalem, and most interpreters understand this act as an attempt to form an alliance against Babylon. The text of 27.1 is corrupt since it sets the oracle during רבאשיט המלך (‘the beginning of the reign’) of Jehoakim but then refers to Zedekiah (27.3b, 12; cf. 28.1). The opening verses of 27.1–4 are cumbersome; a barrage of formulaic phrases envelop, like Russian nesting dolls, the prophet’s oracle in layers of ‘quotation marks’. For two prophetic messages in 27.2–3 and 27.5–11 there are five layers of speech-within-speech.

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64a These three kingdoms, Edom, Moab and Ammon are referred to together in Jer 9.25; 25.21; 40.11. Ammon, referred to as בני עמות (`the sons of Ammon’; cf. Gen 19.36–38), has an OAN in 49.1–6. Moabites and Ammonites are among the armies which attacked Jehoiakim in Judah according to 2 Kgs 24.2. Nebuchadnezzar is said to attack Ammon in Ezek 21.25, 33.

64b A summary of the levels of quotation in the communication chain is as follows: (1) word comes to Jeremiah (יהוה הדבר הזה אל הדבר-mouth של דברי יהוה) in Jer 27.1b; (2) there is a quotation formula (ביד של דברי יהוה) in 27.2; (3) YHWH instructs Jeremiah to send to a group of kings by way of messengers (ביד של דברי יהוה) in 27.4a; (4) YHWH tells Jeremiah what to say to the messengers (ביד של דברי יהוה) in 27.4b; (5) the speech directed to the messengers is introduced with another quotation formula (בְּכַמָּר יוֹדֶה בָּשָׁמָיִם) in 27.4b; (6) a set of instructions are given directly to messengers (בְּכַמָּר יוֹדֶה בָּשָׁמָיִם) in 27.4b; (7) the content of YHWH’s speech to the kings follows in 27.5.
2.1. Text and translation

There is little text-critical support for emending this particular phrase; the *apparatus criticus* notes that all of Jer 27.1 is missing from 6. This change adopts secondary evidence from 28.1 and the phrase *בשעה הרבי עמי* found there. It is possible that 27.1 is a scribal interpolation from 26.1, perhaps supplying a missing chronological heading for 27.2–22; Janzen, *Studies in the Text of Jeremiah*, 14-15. As Tov cautions, ‘from the point of view of method it is very questionable to correct individual words in 27.1 (as in BHS), since those corrections do not solve the problems of meaning (except for one detail) of 26.1 and 27.1, or of the absence of the verse in the LXX.’ Tov, Literary History, in: *Empirical Models of Biblical Criticism*, ed. Tigay, Philadelphia, PA, 1985, 218 n. 25. Thus, while I interpret the context of 27.2–22 as Zedekiah's reign, I do not emend this phrase in 27.1.

BHS reads in place of *法令* in Jer 27.1. The *apparatus criticus* cites support from some Hebrew manuscripts and א, but this evidence is quite weak. Most of the text-critical evidence supports L (see Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 665). As it stands in L, 27.1 sets the reign of Jehoiakim as the context of the passage, only to address Zedekiah instead in 27.3, 12. I do not adopt this proposed change; see my comments above in note 650.

BHS reads for שולחתם, citing support from 6. This view appears to make more sense for Jeremiah to send a message rather than the actual yoke bars. The text-critical evidence does not affect L, so I read and do not follow the suggestion of BHS.

BHS reads instead of מלאכים and cites 6 in support. Rudolph thinks a missing suffix here is ‘aufällig’; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 177. Small harmonisations in (e.g. person, gender, number) in the versions do not necessarily indicate textual variants. See Tov, Exegetical Notes, *ZAW* 91 (1979), 81. I do not find it necessary to emend L here.

BHS reads instead of וַאֲשֶׁר. Rudolph thinks influences the masculine suffix here; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 177. The difference is minor. I do not follow the reading of the *apparatus*.


BHS reads for and cites ה in support. The verb המ וַאֲשֶׁר is a *gal* infinitive construct from תָּמְס (‘be
In the accession year\(^6\) of Jehoiakim ben Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from YHWH, saying,

Thus said YHWH to me; make for yourself cords and yoke bars and set them upon your neck.

And send them the king of Edom, and the king of Moab, and the king of the sons of Ammon, and the king of Tyre, and the king of Sidon by the hand of messengers who are coming to Jerusalem to Zedekiah, king of Judah.

And command them to their masters, saying, Thus said YHWH of Hosts, God of Israel, thus shall you say to your masters, saying,

I myself made the earth, the human, and the beast on the surface of the earth by my great strength and by my outstretched arm, and I gave it to whom it is right in my eyes.

And now I myself gave all of these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar complete'); in all other instances in the Hebrew Bible נבאים is used as an intransitive verb (cf. DCH VIII, 647 §7 for comment on Jer 27.8; Ps 64.7). According to Rudolph, in the phrase נבאים, the verb 'gibt keinen Sinn'. Rudolph, Jeremia, 177. The text could be a corruption of the phrase נבאים 'עד תם ואל' (until their destruction) as found in 24.10 (Weippert, Prosareden des Jeremiabuches, 169; Gesenius-Buhl, 882; HALOT II, 1754). To keep the intransitive sense, one solution is to read נבאים ' אני נבאים ' (I am done with them'), as proposed in DCH VIII, 647 §5b. In my view, there is insufficient evidence to emend the text; I read the phrase נבאים with a transitive meaning, 'until I finish them'. Cf. Jer 14.15.

\(^{6}\) BHS reads נבאים for עליון in 1, and cites the versions in support of this reading. Apparently BHS feels that עליון (‘your dreams’) fits awkwardly in a list of personnel. There are other ways to resolve this tension; Holladay suggests one could repoint the word as a feminine participle עליון (‘your dreaming women’). Holladay, Jeremiah 26–52, 113. Jer 29.8 warns against listening to נבאים (‘your prophets’), קסמים (‘your diviners’) and עליון (‘the dreams they dream’). These words appear in the same order in 27.9, suggesting a relation between נבאים, נבאים and dreams. I do not think the text should be emended.

\(^{608}\) See note 700 on page 178.
ar, king of Babylon, my servant; even the beasts of the field I have given to him to serve him.

(7) Every nation shall serve him, and his son, and the son of his son until the time comes for his land, and many nations and great kings will impose service upon him.

(8) But the nation or the kingdom which will not serve him, Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and which will not put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, with sword, famine and pestilence I will visit upon that nation, oracle of YHWH, until I finish them by his hand.

(9) And you, do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreams, your augurs or your sorcerers who say to you, saying, Do not serve the king of Babylon.

(10) For it is a lie which they prophesy to you in order to remove you from your land; I will drive you out and you will be destroyed.

(11) But the nation which brings its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serves him, I will make it rest on its land, oracle of YHWH, and they will till it and they will dwell upon it.

(12) And to Zedekiah, king of Judah, I spoke like all these words, saying, Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, and his people, and live.

(13) Why should you die, you and your people, by sword, by famine and by pestilence, as YHWH said to the nation which will not serve the king of Babylon?

(14) And do not listen to the words your prophets say to you, saying, Do not serve the king of Babylon, for it is a lie that they prophesy to you.

(15) For I did not send them, oracle of YHWH, but they prophesy in my name for a lie, in order to drive you out and you, and the prophets who prophesy to you, be destroyed.

2.2. The yoke of Babylon

YHWH instructs Jeremiah in Jer 27.2 to make for himself a set of cords and yoke bars (מִמַּשָּׁת מִשָּׁתָה) and to wear them on his neck. This ‘sign-act’ is explained in the accompanying oracle in 27.5–11 as the nation which refuses to serve Babylon will be punished

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659 For מִמַּשָּׁת (‘bonds’), see HALOT I, 557; Gesenius⁴, 644. The word word מִשָּׁת is rather uncommon in the Hebrew Bible, also appearing in a masculine form מִשָּׁת. The masculine noun מִשָּׁת can refer to a carrying frame (Num 4.10, 12) or a pole (Nah 1.13, Ps 66.9; 121.3). The feminine noun מִשָּׁת can refer to a yoke in the singular (Is 9.3; 58.6, 9; Jer 28.10, 12) as well as in the plural (Lev 26.13; Jer 27.2; 28.13; Ezek 34.27), and it can also refer to a carrying pole (Ezek 30.18; 1 Chr 15.15). For מִמַּשָּׁת (‘yoke bars’), see HALOT I, 555. The form here in 27.2 is מִמַּשָּׁת מִמַּשָּׁת from מִמַּשָּׁת מִמַּשָּׁת. Occurrences of the defective spelling are found in Lev 26.13; Is 9.3; Jer 27.2; 28.13; Ezek 34.27; Nah 1.13; the plene spelling is found in Is 58.6, 9; Jer 28.10, 12.
Chapter 5. Jeremiah 27.1–28.17

with sword, pestilence and famine (27.8). Prophets are known to have performed their oracles by using objects, physical gestures or strange behaviour along with oral explanations of the action. These non-verbal performances seemed to function primarily to add rhetorical weight and persuasiveness to prophetic communication.

Cords and yoke bars are parts of the apparatus of a yoke and are closely related to the lexeme חרב (‘yoke’). The מוסר and מוסרה ברכות are parts of the instrument used to bind animals together and harness their labour. In connection to pastoral work these lexemes do not necessarily have negative connotations. Taken together in their agricultural context, the lexemes מוסר and מוסרה על refer to instruments used in everyday life to till and work land. A yoke is a productive agricultural instrument.

In the context of Jer 27.5–11, the idea of wearing a yoke is not so positive, as it is used as a metaphor for service rendered to a foreign ruler. YHWH opens his message in 27.5 by asserting his power and authority as the one who made the earth, humans and beasts with his strength. YHWH does what he wills and gives the land to whomever he sees fit; this description is closely similar to the passage which compares YHWH to a potter in 18.4 (cf. 34.15). Since YHWH has given all of these lands to his servant Nebuchadnezzar, to whom YHWH has even given the beasts of the field to serve him, every nation must serve Babylon for two generations (27.6–8). A time will come for the land of Babylon to serve many nations and great kingdoms, but until then all nations are subject to the yoke of Babylon. Any nation or kingdom that does not serve Nebuchadnezzar and does not put the yoke of the king of Babylon on its neck will be punished with sword, famine and pestilence.

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660 Various combinations of the lexemes חרב (‘sword’), חרב (‘famine’) and חרב (‘pestilence’) appear in Jeremiah (Jer 14.12; 21.7; 49.7–10; 27.8; 13; 28.8; 29.17; 18; 32.24; 36; 34.17; 38.2; 42.17; 22; 44.13). For a detailed discussion, see Weippert, Prosareden des Jeremiabuches, 148–91.


662 For a description, see Dalman II, 99–105.

663 This point is emphasised as well by Silver from a sociological point of view. See Silver, Performing Domination / Theorizing Power, JANER 14 (2014), 186–216.

664 See Jer 32.17.
Two of the central motifs in 27.5–11, wearing a yoke on one's neck and 'serving' (עבד) a superior, are commonly used as a metaphor for political or religious servitude or subservience. This is actually the most frequent use for the terms לְעֵילָה מְסֻרָה and מְסֻרָה in the Hebrew Bible, since only a few texts refer to yokes in an everyday, agricultural sense (Num 19.2; Deut 21.3; 1 Sam 6.7). In some cases the yoke metaphor is cast in strongly negative terms, especially when used for serving a foreign king (e.g. Deut 28.48; Jer 28.13–14). This is unsurprising since foreign rule could be harshly oppressive and would often result in economic hardship.

It is also the case in Jeremiah that the notion of 'serving' a king or god is described metaphorically by wearing a yoke. For example, in Jer 30.8–9 a word of salvation from YHWH to Israel and Judah uses the metaphor of the yoke to express a hopeful message of support (cf. Nah 1.13). YHWH will save the house of Jacob from foreign oppression and allow him to serve (עבד) YHWH and a Davidic king. When Israel and Judah 'serve' YHWH they will also 'serve' a Davidic king; the loyalty paid to a god and a king is the same. It is this view which is also present in 27.6, where YHWH expresses his support to Nebuchadnezzar. Surprising as it may be to see a foreign king called YHWH's servant in 27.6 (cf. 25.9; 43.10), the ideology of serving YHWH by serving his appointed king is known elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Ps 8.8).

The relationship between YHWH and Israel and Judah is described in pastoral terms in Jer 2.20–28, where the idea of loyalty is expressed through the metaphor of the yoke. In 5.5 the key phrase תַּקְנָה מְסֻרָה ('to break the bonds') indicates a rebellious act; in the context of 5.1–9 the yoke is connected with the ethical demands of YHWH's דרך ('way') and מְשֻׁטָּה ('justice'), and therefore the yoke metaphor is positive rather than oppressive.

It is clear from Jer 27.11 that a positive outcome is expected for the nation that brings its neck under the king of Babylon's yoke and serves it. In one sense, the positive

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66 See Gen 27.40; Lev 26.13; Deut 28.48; 1 Kgs 12.4, 9, 10, 11, 14; Isa 9.3; 10.27; 14.25; 47.6; Ezek 34.27; Hos 11.4; Lam 1.14; 3.27; 2 Chr 10.4, 9, 10, 11, 14. Friebel, Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts, 144.
66 The case is the same for מְסֻרָה, which refers to literal bonds only in Job 39.5. Friebel, Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts, 144.
66 Many think these verses are late additions inserted between Jer 30.5–7 and 30.10–11, but one should not overlook the fact that the notion of 'service' is very similar to that of 27.2 and 28.11. For examples and citations of the view that 30.8–9 are an insertion, see Becking, "I Will Break His Yoke", in: New Avenues in the Study of the Old Testament, ed. Woude, OTS 25, Leiden, 1989, 71-72.
66 See also Ps 2.3; 57.14. Becking, "I Will Break His Yoke", 76.
outcome is avoiding disaster; YHWH already warned the nations of the suffering which sword, famine and pestilence will bring to the nation that does not serve (27.8). Stronger still, YHWH offers assurances of salvation to the nation that does serve; he will make it rest upon its land (הנהרי ועל אדמתו), where it will both till (שיבד) and dwell upon the land (שב百货). 569

A contrary point of view is found in Jer 27.9–10. Here YHWH instructs the Syro-Palestinian kings not to listen (שמוע) to their religious specialists who tell them לא תמעדו את מלך בבל (‘do not serve the king of Babylon’). This is, of course, the opposite of what YHWH has instructed Jeremiah to say (27.8, 11, 12, 17; 28.14; cf. 27.14), and YHWH rejects this message in 27.10. The ‘do not serve’ position is שקר (‘a lie’) and has dire consequences. The religious specialists prophesy this message so that the kings will be והרחיק אתכם מעלם (‘removed from their land’), and YHWH himself declares והחדת אתכם ואבדתם (‘I will banish you and make you perish’). Whatever intended outcome the religious specialists have in mind, YHWH will bring to completion the negative consequences.

Jeremiah addresses Zedekiah in Jer 27.12–15 with an oracle very similar to 27.8–11. Essentially the same message is given to the Syro-Palestinian kings and Zedekiah; serve Babylon and live, or resist and die (27.12–13). 607 YHWH again warns that the outcome of refusing to serve Babylon is sword, famine and pestilence, and he asks למה תמות אזה ועופך (‘why should you and your people die?’) to drive home the point. As YHWH has already said to the nation who refuses to serve (27.13b), 607 only destruction results from resisting Babylon.

Just as the Syro-Palestinian kings are warned against listening to their religious specialists, Zedekiah is also cautioned against listening to his prophets. 608 The prophets also say not to serve Babylon, and YHWH calls this message שקר as in 27.10. 609 Common critiques against prophets follow in 27.15a; YHWH did not send (שלחו) these prophets, but still they prophesy lies in his name. The result of their prophesying is similar to 27.11.

607 For occurrences where שיבד takes אתכם as its object, giving the sense of tilling the ground, see Gen 2.5; 3.23; 4.2, 12; 2 Sam 9.10; Isa 30.24; Zech 13.5; Prov 12.11; 28.19; cf. Gen 2.15; Deut 28.39; Isa 23.10. See DCH VI, 210.
608 The life and death contrast is an additional element not found in Jer 27.1–11.
609 Phrasing in Jer 27.8 and 27.14 are closely similar, though additional elements are found in 27.8. Both אתה לא יעיבי אתנא ובכדעתיך מלך בבל (‘the nation or kingdom’) are warned in 27.8, and this is expanded with the reference to Nebuchadnezzar.
601 I find little reason to agree with Lundbom’s view that the possessive suffix here is to denigrate the prophets’. Lundbom, jeremiah 21–36, 321.
607 The phrase כי תשמך אתה נביאים נאם is identical in Jer 27.8 and 27.14.
How Prophecy Works

YHWH will drive off (דָּרָה hiphil) Zedekiah and the people (?), and they will perish (אֶבֶר) along with the prophets who prophesy to them.

2.3. Prophets and diviners

In Jer 27.9 YHWH warns the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon against listening to their religious specialists. The text assumes that prophets are not alone in consulting kings in their affairs whether positively (e.g. 27.4–8) or negatively (e.g. 27.12–18). All of these figures are depicted as advising their kings on political matters and saying not to serve Babylon (לָא תעבדו את מלך בָּבֶל).

After the lexeme נביא in Jer 27.9 is the qal participle קסמאוים (‘your diviners’). Another identical form appears in 29.8 in parallel with בראכים. In both cases YHWH warns against listening (שמע qal) to what these figures have to say. The nominal form קסם appears in 14.14 where it is the object of a participial form of נביא hithpael. It is negatively described in 14.14 as it is paired with אליל (‘idol’) and paralleled with שָׁר הַשָּׁר (‘lying vision’) and חָרְמֵת לבט (‘deceit of their heart’). The word קסמאוים (‘your dreams’) is slightly different from the others in the list, since it does not appear to refer to an individual engaged in an activity.694 However, it is associated with the lexemes נביא and קסם qal in 29.8. The other divination-related lexemes in Jer 27.9, עֹנָה (‘augur’)695 and חָשִׁי (‘sorcerer’), only occur here.

None of the figures in Jer 27.9 are polemicised as such; rather they are understood to be engaged in the same communicative process as prophets. They are specialists whose function is to transmit information and knowledge about the divine will to others. What is criticised is the content of their message, not necessarily their methods for acquiring or transmitting it. In sum, the list has a rhetorical function in the literary context of 27.1–15. As Jeremiah advises these kings against refusing Babylon’s yoke, he lists all the possible voices these kings could be listening to instead. Regardless of whether it is a prophet, a diviner, a dream, a magician or an augur, do not listen to them if they tell you to rebel. The consequences, according to YHWH, are too severe.

694 Cf. Holladay’s suggestion to repoint the word as a feminine participle קסמאוים (‘your dreaming women’). Holladay, Jeremiah 26–52, 113.
2.4. Summary

Using the metaphor of a yoke, Jeremiah encourages kings of Syria and Palestine, including Judah, to serve the king of Babylon in Jer 27.1–15. The metaphor describes this service in terms of agricultural labour. As productive agricultural instruments, such pastoral work is not necessarily negative; similar metaphors are used to describe the relationship between YHWH and Israel and Judah, loyalty is expressed through service. ⁶⁷⁷

Other divinatory specialists have the opposite message to the kings: do not serve (Jer 27.9, 14). The response to these messages in 27.10 and 27.14 is the same in both instances; this is classified as a lie being prophesied to them (ך יִשְׁרֵי הַנְּבָאִים לָכֶם). It is clear that the diviners listed in 27.9 are understood in the same conceptual terms as prophets. All of these individuals are engaged in the same intellectual activity of transmitting information concerning the divine will. Fischer, for example, comments that ‘[e]s ist gefährlich, den Produkten der eigenen nächtlichen Phantasie Glauben zu schenken, und mindestens genauso riskant, wie den beiden zuvor erwähnten religiösen »Spezialisten« zu vertrauen.’ ⁶⁷⁸ While prophecy has often been contrasted with ‘primitive’ practices found in neighbouring cultures, the distinction does not hold on a functional level. ⁶⁷⁹ Even though several of the terms in 27.9 are found in Deut 13.2–6 and 18.9–22, the polemical character of the Deuteronomistic texts is absent here in Jeremiah.

There is one clear conceptual difference, however, between the diviners in Jer 27.9 and the prophets in 27.14. YHWH claims that he did not send (שלח) the prophets in 27.15, although the prophesy in his name. Given the shared language in 27.10 and 27.15, it seems clear that the motif of ‘being sent’ is specially reserved for diviners who are called a נביא.

3. Jeremiah 27.16–22

Continuing from Jer 27.1–15, another word from YHWH is addressed to the priests and all the people in 27.16–18. These verses are also a message of caution and warning about serving Babylon and listening to prophets, but they introduce new themes and ideas

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⁶⁷⁷ See Gen 27.40; Lev 26.13; Deut 28.48; 1 Kgs 12.4, 9, 10, 11, 14; Isa 9.3; 10.27; 14.25; 47.6; Ezek 34.27; Hos 11.4; Lam 1.14; 3.27; 2 Chr 10.4, 9, 10, 11, 14. Friebel, Jeremiah’s and Ezekiel’s Sign-Acts, 144.
⁶⁷⁸ Fischer, Jeremia 26–52, HTThKAT, Freiburg, 2006, 55.
which are distinct from 27.1–15. There is no mention of the yoke of Babylon, but issues regarding the city of Jerusalem, its temple and the vessels of the house of YHWH are among the text’s main concerns.

3.1. Text and translation

And to the priests and all this people I have spoken, saying, Thus said YHWH, Do not listen to the words of your prophets who prophesy to you, saying, ‘Behold the vessels of the house of YHWH will be returned from Babylon very soon’, because it is a lie they prophesy to you.

Do not listen to them. Serve the king of Babylon and live. Why should this city be a waste?

If they are prophets, and if a word of YHWH is with them, let them intercede with YHWH of Hosts so that the remaining vessels in the house of YHWH, and the house of the king of Judah, and in Jerusalem would not go to Babylon.

So thus said YHWH of Hosts concerning the pillars, and the basin, and the stands, and the rest of the remaining vessels in this city,

which Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, did not take when he exiled

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68 BHS reads לבללי for בבל in L. Typically לבללי is the negative of the infinitive construct, sometimes a yiqtol verb (GKC §15a; see Exod 20.20). The perfect tense verb here is incorrect (Joüon-Muraoka §60; GKB, §28b). See also Jer 23.14. For these grammatical reasons, I adopt the reading proposed in the apparatus criticus.

69 BHS reads (probabiliter) לע for אל. On the phrase כי הוא אמר יהוה (זבא) לע (Jer 22.6; 23.2, 15; 27.21; 36.28), see Seebass, Jeremias Konflikt mit Chananja, ZAW 82 (1970), 415 n. 16; Tov, Exegetical Notes, 89. It seems unnecessary to emend the text here, since the prepositions לע and אל are used interchangeably in Jeremiah. Fischer, Jeremja 26–52, 51. I do not adopt the change proposed in BHS.
Jeconiah ben Jehoiakim, king of Judah, from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem;

(21) for thus said YHWH of Hosts, God of Israel, concerning the remaining vessels of the house of YHWH and the house of the king of Judah and Jerusalem;

(22) to Babylon they will be brought and there they will be until the day of my visitation to them, oracle of YHWH; and I will bring them up, and I will return them to this place.

3.2. The temple vessels

Jer 27.16 opens with a reference to YHWH’s message to the priests and all the people. YHWH has spoken (דבר) to them regarding their prophets, that they should not listen (שמע) to the words of their prophets, who are giving hopeful messages about the return of the כיהנה כדי ליהוה from Babylon. Apparently, Nebuchadnezzar had taken valuable items from the temple after conquering the city (2 Kgs 25.13–17 = Jer 52.17–23; 2 Chr 36.7, 18; Dan 1.2; Jer 28.3, 6), some of which were so large they were broken to pieces in order to transport (see 2 Kgs 24.13 = 2 Chr 28.13).^68 The message of the prophets is that these instruments will return soon from Babylon. As 27.17 indicates, the message of the prophets is incompatible with the ‘submit and live’ position (27.12). Rather than listen to the prophets, YHWH tells the priests and people to serve the king of Babylon and live. Otherwise the city will become a waste (חרבה).

A final section of text in Jer 27.19–22 rounds out the chapter. Unlike the previous sections of text, there is no audience specified in 27.19. There is not much here that directly pertains to prophets, however, the additional references to cultic objects indicates the significance to this domain to prophets—especially as seen in the narrative of 28.1–11. These verses contain a word of doom about the cultic paraphernalia remaining in Jerusalem after Nebuchadnezzar’s first conquest of the city. According to 52.17, 20–21, these items were all made of bronze and were of enormous size (cf. 1 Kgs 7.23; 2 Kgs 16.17; 25.13, 16; 1 Chron 18.8). Jer 27.22 expresses both judgment and hope: YHWH says that all of the remaining instruments in Jerusalem will be taken to in Babylon, but they will remain there only until YHWH takes notice of them (עז איי פכם אים). The vessels will not re-

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main in Babylon forever. YHWH will restore them to Jerusalem, here referred to as הָמוֹס הַיָּהלֶת.⁶⁸³

3.3. Prophets and intercession

One debate in prophetic scholarship concerns the issue of intercession, and whether or not the prophets should be understood as having a formal or official role as ‘intercessors’.⁶⁸⁴ In Jer 27.18 one of the terms related to this idea appears in YHWH’s word concerning the prophets who assure a swift return of the temple vessels. The lexeme מִינָן qal is related to the semantic field of divine consultation, and in Jeremiah is used twice to describe ‘making a request of’ or ‘begging’ the deity (7.16; 27.18).⁶⁸⁵

In Jer 27.18, YHWH encourages the prophets to intercede (מִינָן qal) with him so that the cultic vessels would remain in the Jerusalem temple. The prophets with whom 27.18 is concerned are the ones who in 27.16 claim that the vessels of the house of YHWH will be returned from Babylon very soon. The structure of the verse is built upon two conditional clauses introduced by אָם (‘if’), which set similar ideas in parallel. If they are prophets (גָּאוֹן) and if YHWH’s word is with them (גָּאוֹן יִשָּׁר יְהוָה אֵת), then they will act in a certain manner. Should both conditions be the case, then the prophets are encouraged to intercede with YHWH of Hosts; here the phrase מִינָן qal is a qal jussive. The situation described in Jer 27.16–22 is that the various vessels of the temple and the royal house are scattered between Jerusalem and Babylon. There is both an expression of hope that the remaining vessels will stay, and that the taken ones will return.

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⁶⁸³ For the precise phrase הָמוֹס הַיָּהלֶת, see Jer 7.20; 28.3–4; 6; 29.10; 32.37; 40.2; 51.62. For הָמוֹס הַיָּהלֶת, see additionally 16.9; 19.3–4; 22.11; 24.5; 28.3; 42.18.


⁶⁸⁵ An additional instance in Jer 36.25 describes an instance of begging directed toward a human subject, namely the king. The hitpael form יָשֹׁר יְהוָה in 15.11 is problematic, and though it involves YHWH, should be excluded since it does not describe a human making a request of the deity. There are also textual difficulties in 15.11. See Lundbom, Jeremiah 1–20, 734; Thelle, Ask God, 243–44; Fischer, Jeremia 1–25, 503. Cf. Ittmann, Die Konfessionen Jeremias, 47–48.
As mentioned above, the semantic field of פלל qal involves making a request of the deity,⁶⁸⁶ and it is used with this sense twice in Jeremiah. In 7.16 YHWH instructs Jeremiah against interceding on behalf of the people because he will not listen (מען qal). Three verbs appear in parallel, describing the same activity, as YHWH says not to pray (打ちפאל hithpael) for the people, not to raise up (מען qal) a cry or a prayer, and not to beg of him (מען qal).⁶⁸⁷ The severity of YHWH’s intransigence in 7.16 is widely noted, but as Thelle rightly points out, the prohibition in 7.16 is severe because YHWH refuses to act as the people would normally expect.⁶⁸⁸ It is also important to note the placement of the prohibition in 7.16 immediately following the first part of the ‘temple sermon’ in 7.1–15. YHWH’s instruction not to pray or intercede also assume that these are normal parts of the process of repentance. The rejection of intercession in 7.16 thus has a specific rhetorical function, namely, to sharpen the criticisms which precede it. In other words, the cultic abuses listed in 7.1–15 are of such severity that the usual route to repentance is interrupted; even the process by which the people can negotiate salvation is threatened by their cultic failures.⁶⁸⁹

In a very similar fashion, it is an implicit expectation in Jer 27.18 that interceding (מען qal) with YHWH would be a normal prophetic response to the situation at hand. One reading of the passage sees the two עֹנֶס clauses as sarcastic contrary-to-fact statements. The sense of the two phrases then is mocking: if the prophets really do have YHWH’s word—and they don’t—then let them go ahead and try to beg YHWH. While there are polemical statements in Jeremiah against prophets who do not have the word of YHWH

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⁶⁸⁶ Similar texts in Jeremiah describe a process of divine consultation with (Jer 21.2), יִשָּׁאֵל (37.17: 38.14), and מַלְאָל (37:3: 42.2). On the particular dynamics these verbs involve, see Thelle, Ask God, 192-202.

⁶⁸⁷ The prohibition in Jer 7.16 is similar to the statement in 15.1 that YHWH would not relent even if Moses or Samuel stood (דָּרֶשׁ qal) in his presence, presumably to intercede with him. Also similar is the instruction YHWH gives Jeremiah in 14.11 not to pray for the benefit of the people (אֵל תְּחַפְּלָל בְּעִדּוֹ הָוהָה). See my comments on this passage in chapter 4, section 4.2, page 146.

⁶⁸⁸ Thelle, Ask God, 173.

⁶⁸⁹ Broadly speaking, as is well known, one finds in much of the prophetic literature an alternation between oracles of judgment and oracles of salvation. In Jeremiah 7, 11 and 14, one finds, instead of an oracle of salvation or promise, the prohibition to intercede, like a smack in the face. It is in fact very rewarding to view these texts as a disappointment of an expected alternation between oracles of judgment and the call to repentance.’ Thelle, Ask God, 182, see also 183-84.
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(i.e. 5.13), it is not apparent that the two clauses in 27.18 are negative. The prophets really are encouraged to intercede with YHWH. 

3.4. Summary

A kind of political philosophy is articulated in the ‘submit and live’ message of Jer 27.16–22. As in 27.1–15, Jeremiah addresses another group who has other prophets giving different advice; here the priests and all the people are in view (cf. 26.12, 16). These prophets prophesy lies (cf. 27.10, 14), and the priests and people are warned (‘do not listen’) to them (cf. 27.9, 14, 16).

The prophets who disagree with Jeremiah are encouraged to intercede with YHWH. Some read this statement somewhat sarcastically, as if Jeremiah is goading his opponents with a task they cannot perform. However, this is not a necessary reading, as his disagreement with other prophets does not imply that they cannot intercede with YHWH. There has been some debate concerning an intercessory role in Israelite conceptions of prophecy, but recent studies show that, while not an ‘office’ or an act restricted to prophets, intercession is a normal prophetic behaviour.

4. Jeremiah 28.1–11

Following a chronological notice in Jer 28.1a, the text of 28.1–11 reports how the prophet Hananiah ben Azzur of Gibeon spoke in the Jerusalem temple. Of the 37 instances of the construction ‘[Personal Name], the prophet’, a dozen of them appear in 28.1–17. Hananiah delivers a word from YHWH in the audience of the priests and all the people in 28.2–4.

690 Compare the phrase והדבר אל הנבאים in Jer 5.13.

691 This is similar to the case in Jer 23.22, where the phrase אני אדם מצדני should not be read as a contrary-to-fact statement.

692 Fischer, Jeremiah 26–52, 60.


694 Thelle, Ask God, 177–6; Tiemeyer, Were the Neo-Assyrian Prophets Intercessors?

695 They are ימחriel הנבאים (Jer 28.5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 15) and חנניה הנבאים (28.1, 5, 10, 12, 15, 17). See my discussion in chapter 2, section 2.2.1, page 43. Other named individuals are the subject of verbal forms of נבאים in Jeremiah: Pashhur ben Immer (Jer 20.1–6), Micaah of Moresheth (26.18–19), Uriah ben Shemaiah (26.20–23), Hananiah ben Azzur (28.1–17), Ahab ben Kolaiah and Zedekiah ben Maaseiah (29.21–23), Shemaiah the Nehe-lamite (29.24–32), and Jeremiah of Anathoth (11.21[?]; 20.1; 25.13, 30; 26.9, 12; 29.27).
Chapter 5. Jeremiah 27.1–28.17

Jeremiah responds to Hananiah's oracle in 28.5–9, and 28.10–11 records Hananiah's response. In the temple setting, there are frequent indications of the presence of an audience with the phrase 'לע proceso (28.2, 5, 11, 15). A specific location within the temple is not apparent, though it is likely to be the outer courts. Perspective in the narrative shifts from the first person in 28.1 (אמר אלי) to the third person in 28.5.

4.1. Text and translation

This verse has a Masoretic reading יָרְשָׁו instead of יָרְשָׁו as suggested by K. It appears that the Masorah of K is a mixture of absolute (טעות) and construct (טעות) forms (GKC §134p; see note 28.1 in BHS; cf. Jer 32.1 K בָּשָׁת, Q הבש). The use of a construct in K is an example of genitives 'added to the construct state as nearer definitions' (GKC §128k; see also König §337v, cf. §35f). In my view, Q is the better reading (GKC §134p; IBHS §15.3.1).

BHS reads הבש in place of הבש in L, and cites 6*. It is difficult to justify emendations to particular phrases in Jer 28.1, especially regarding the view of Tov, in note 650 on page 164. The combination of הבש and הבש is awkward, but not impossible, as Tov seems to refer back to 27.3 (cf. 49.34); see McKane, Jeremiah xxvi-lii, ICC, Edinburgh, 1996, 709-10. Thus, I do not adopt the reading of the apparatus criticus.

BHS reads הבש as an abbreviation for הבש instead of הבש. This is not necessary to indicate textual variants; see Tov, Exegetical Notes, 81. It is not necessary to emend L here.
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(1) In that year, the accession year\(^{704}\) of Zedekiah, king of Judah, in the fourth year, the fifth month, Hananiah ben Azzur, the prophet from Gibeon, spoke to me in the house of YHWH in the presence of the priests and all the people, saying,

(2) Thus said YHWH of Hosts, God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon.

(3) Within two years I myself am returning to this place all the vessels of the house of YHWH, which Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, took from this place and brought to Babylon.

(4) And Jeconiah ben Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and all the exiles of Judah who came to Babylon I myself am returning to this place, oracle of YHWH, for I have broken the yoke of Babylon.

(5) And the prophet Jeremiah said to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and in the presence of all the people who were standing in the house of YHWH;

(6) And the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen, may YHWH do so;\(^{705}\) may YHWH establish these words which you have prophesied, to return the vessels of the house of YHWH and all the exiles from Babylon to this place.

(7) Still, hear this word which I myself speak in your ear and in the ears of all the people:

(8) The prophets who were before me and before you from long ago prophesied to many lands and great kingdoms concerning war, and disaster, and pestilence.

(9) The prophet who prophesies concerning well-being—when the word of the prophet comes, the prophet will be known, whom YHWH truly sent.

(10) And Hananiah, the prophet, took the yoke from the neck of Jeremiah, the prophet, and he broke it.

(11) And Hananiah said in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus said YHWH, thus will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, within two years from the neck of all the nations. And the prophet Jeremiah went on his way.

\(^{704}\) The phrase רשת מלכה appears to be a technical term, similar to Babylonian reš šarrūti and Akkadian šarrāt šarrūti, meaning accession year. See also Aramaic רשת מלכה in AP 6.1 (Cowley, Aramaic Papyri, Oxford, 1923, 15-18) and רשת מלכה in the Wadi Daliyeh papyrus (Cross, Samaria Papyri, BA 26 (1963), 113; Friebel, Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts, 138).

\(^{705}\) Here the verb נשון is a qal imperfect which is translated as a jussive (cf. the hiphil imperfect jussive עשה). The imperfect can often replace a jussive to express a willed, contingent action or event. See GKC §107n.
4.2. Jeremiah and Hananiah, part I

Speaking before the priests and people in the Jerusalem temple, Hananiah gives an oracle in Jer 28.2–4 that opens with a standard introduction: הב אמר יהוה סנאתי אלתי ישראל. Hananiah's message is both an oracle of doom against Babylon and an oracle of salvation for Judah. His word focuses on two primary themes: breaking the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, and the return of people and goods to Jerusalem from Babylon. There are a number of repetitions in style and phrasing in 28.2–4, and these are easier to observe when the text is presented as an outline. Consider the following presentation of the oracle:

28.2a Thus says YHWH of Hosts, God of Israel, saying
28.2b I have broken the yoke (שברתי את על) of the king of Babylon
28.3a In two years' time, I will return to this place (משיב אל המкоּם הזה)
The vessels of the house of YHWH
28.3b which Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, took from this place (מן המכוּם הזה)
28.4a and Jeconiah ben Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and all the exiles of Judah who went to Babylon
28.4b I will return to this place (משיב אל המכון הזה)
For I will break the yoke (אשבר את על) of the king of Babylon

Themes from Jer 27.1–15 are repeated in Hananiah's message. Contrary to 27.5–8, 11–12, where YHWH encourages submitting to Babylonian rule, here YHWH says he has broken (שבר qal) the yoke of the king of Babylon. The thrust of YHWH's message in 28.2–4 is very similar to 27.22 as it concerns the vessels of the temple.702 Where YHWH says והשיבתי את מתקים in 27.22, twice the phrase משיב אל המכות הזה assures their return in 28.3–4.

The chapters Jer 27–28 are peculiarly interested in the fate of cultic instruments from the temple of YHWH, which are mentioned only sparingly in the book.703 More de-
tails of YHWH's plan are announced by Hananiah in Jer 28.3–4a. After two years' time, YHWH declares that he will bring back (שָׁבָא hiphil) all of the temple instruments which Nebuchadnezzar took to Babylon. Hananiah uses the phrase אַלּ הֵמְכוֹנוֹת הוה (‘to this place’) in 27.22. In addition to the vessels of the temple, YHWH announces he will return Jeconiah and all of the exiles (כָּל-לֶחֶט הָיוֹדֵה) from Babylon.295

The theme of the yoke is then reprised as it forms an inclusio in Jer 28.2b and 28.4b. YHWH declares he has broken (שָׂבַר qal perfect) the yoke of the king of Babylon in 28.2b, and in 28.4b he assures that he will break (שָׂבַר qal imperfect) the yoke.

The narrative continues in Jer 28.5 where the character of the prophet Jeremiah is introduced. He affirms Hananiah's oracle, also in the presence of the priests and people. A new detail is added in 28.5, though, as the audience is described as standing (ועמד) in the temple of YHWH. This may refer to a technical or cultic act, or it may indicate to the ‘official’ status of the audience. Neither option is incontestable, but small variations in the midst of repetitions in the text ought not be ignored. Another detail, in contrast to Hananiah's speech in 28.2–4, Jeremiah's speech is not marked with a formulaic phrase to indicate divine speech.

Jeremiah's response follows in Jer 28.6–9. Again, his words lack a formula indicating divine speech. Almost all commentators are struck by Jeremiah's initial response in 28.6.296 He affirms Hananiah's message with two phrases including jussive verbs: אתּ קָנֹן (‘amen, may YHWH do so’), and יִקְּם הָיוֹדֵה אֶתּ דַּרְכֶךָ אֵשֶׁר נָבָא (‘may YHWH establish your words which you prophesied’).297 Because Hananiah's message contradicts 27.5–8, 11–12, some explanation must account for Jeremiah's positivity. His formal language, the importance of the location, the seriousness of the content, the use of ‘official’ titles, and the public context all hint at a ritual response.

It is at this point that a short comment is in order on the ‘formal’ and ‘ritual’ features of the text I have mentioned. One of the problems identified in this pericope is the

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294 For the precise phrase, see Jer 7.20; 28.3–4, 6; 29.10; 32.37; 40.2; 51.62. For מִקְוֹנָה הוה, see additionally 16.9; 19.3–4; 22.11; 24.5; 28.3; 42.18.
295 For the phrase בַּל-לֶחֶט הוה, cf. Jer 24.5.
296 See, e.g. Bright, Jeremiah, 203; Rudolph, Jeremiah, 179.
297 Along with many commentators, I translate the imperfect verb יִשָּׁת (‘is’) as a jussive. See translation above. This is only one of two instances of יִשָּׁת in Jeremiah (cf. Jer 11.5). For other instances of the phrase כִּי יִשָּׁת, though with imperfect verbs, see Deut 3.21; 7.19.
prolific use of titles within it. In most instances, the use of נביא as a title in Jeremiah is dismissed as a secondary expansion; for example, of the 31 times Jeremiah is called a נביא, only four are found in the Greek versions.⁷⁰⁴ In this view, Jer 28.1–17 is a case in point: Hananiah and Jeremiah are called a נביא six times each, while the Greek only records Hananiah as a ψευδοψεύδης in 28.1 (=§ 35.1).⁷⁰⁵ Thus, according to Gonçalves, the Greek version ‘témoigne ainsi d’une version de la dispute qui ne considérait pas encore Jérémie prophète’, and the Masoretic text ‘témoigne ainsi de la consécration de Jeremie comme prophète.’⁷⁰⁶ However, Cryer pointed to the ritual significance of location, titles, and audience in the “priestly” capacity of Israelite prophets.⁷⁰⁷ The key piece of evidence is Hananiah’s use of a time limit for his oracle in 28.3. According to Cryer, this time limit has a formal similarity to more ‘technically’ oriented divinatory methods.

The formal characteristics of this passage suggest to Cryer that it may be related to the question of whether or not the ‘omen sacrifice’ (i.e. extispicy or hepatoscopy) was practiced in ancient Israel. The view that it was at least known in Israel has won some impressive support in the past, as Gunkel and Mowinckel held this view, and more recently Loretz has supported the claim based on evidence from Ugarit.⁷¹ Cryer reassessed the possibility on the basis of texts ‘which refer to a clearly defined omen consultation’: Judg 18.2–24; 20.18–28; 1 Sam 9.22–24; 14.2–19, 35–37; 21.2–7; 23.1–12; 30.7–8; 2 Sam 2.1; 21.1; 24.11–15.⁷³ These texts all ‘reveal an impressive array of formal similarities’, where in every instance, and sometimes quite artificially, they signal the location, time, cultic equipment, technical language, personnel, and enquirers involved in the consultation.⁷⁴ In Jer 28.1–11, many of the same features are present:

1) the name of the diviner in question (Hananiah ben Azzur) 2) the date 3) the place (in the house of Yahweh) 4) the prediction 5) the enquirers (v i: the priests

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⁷⁰⁴ Jer 42.2; 43.6: 43.1; 51.59. (=§ 28.59: 49.2; 50.6: 51.31).
⁷⁰⁵ Gonçalves, Les « Prophètes Écrivains », 176-77; Stipp, Prophetentitel und Eigennamme.
⁷⁰⁷ Cryer, Divination in Ancient Israel, 293.
⁷³ Mowinckel, Psalmenstudien, 1, SSKH.1921/4, Kristiana, 1921, 145-46; Gunkel, Genesis, 5. Auflage, GHK.AT 1/1, Göttingen, 1922, 43; Loretz, Lebenschau, Sündenbock, Asasel in Ugarit und Israel, UBL 3, Altenberge, 1985, 26, 81-112. For these and additional references, see Cryer, Divination in Ancient Israel, 295-305. Schmitt, Mantik im Alten Testament, 47-48.
⁷⁴ Cryer, Divination in Ancient Israel, 298.
⁷⁴ Cryer, Divination in Ancient Israel, 299-301.
and all the people) 6) the adannu of the prediction (v 3: within 2 years)\textsuperscript{715}

For Cryer, these features are all similar to diviner’s protocols found throughout the ancient Near East, the best examples of which come from the Neo-Assyrian period.\textsuperscript{716} These similarities do not suggest that the texts are remarkably early; Cryer takes the opposite view, that they are late, since they are ‘reluctant to affirm that we actually have to do with extispicy.’ Rather, they show that the traditions in the Hebrew Bible were familiar with the omen sacrifice, and this provides a ‘formal model’ for the interpretation of the texts. Similarly, I do not think that Jer 28.1–11 shows any indication of an actual omen sacrifice. Instead it does show that formal procedures evident in the text can be explained on the basis of known divinatory practices which were at least known, if not practiced, in ancient Israel. More to the point in the present investigation, the conclusion to be drawn from this parallel is that ‘[t]his observation alone is sufficient to bring into question the separate status of at least some of the Israelite prophets from their priestly colleagues.’\textsuperscript{717}

Returning back to the ‘flow’ of the narrative, in Jer 28.7, Jeremiah’s apparent acceptance of Hananiah’s message is more qualified than his initial שאל. A contrastive ‘however’ (אך) begins his request for Hananiah to listen (שמע) to what he has to say. Again, there are no indications of a quotation of divine speech as Jeremiah asks Hananiah to listen to his word (הדבר). Again, the language is formal and the presence of an audience is acknowledged. Jeremiah speaks his word to Hananiah and all the people, but the priests are unmentioned (cf. 28.1, 5). Jeremiah then proceeds to respond without at all addressing the specifics of Hananiah’s oracle. Instead, he offers a general word which has to do with prophetic activity itself.\textsuperscript{718}

Following Jeremiah’s statement on prophecy, Hananiah performs a sign-act where he takes the yoke bars (ڇڇ) from Jeremiah’s neck and Hananiah breaks them (cf. Jer 27.2).\textsuperscript{719} The text offers no detail as to how Hananiah does this, leading some to speculate

\textsuperscript{715}Cryer, Divination in Ancient Israel, 294.
\textsuperscript{716}To be brief, if we seek a model of divinatory report from the ancient Near East in which such features as the location, the time, the deity... the enquirer, the officiant, and even the technical terms “to enquire” (Heb. שלוח) and “to draw near” (Heb. קָרָא) are attested, the Neo-Assyrian “query” texts provide good subjects for comparison. Cryer, Divination in Ancient Israel, 302. The relevant texts cited by Cryer have been published recently in Starr, Queries to the Sangod, SAA 4, Helsinki, 1990. For a discussion of their formal features, see pp.xvi–xxix.
\textsuperscript{717}Cryer, Divination in Ancient Israel, 294.
\textsuperscript{718}See section 4.3, page 183.
on the strength required of Hananiah to perform such an action,\textsuperscript{720} whether he used a particular technique,\textsuperscript{724} or acquired a kind of wild strength from a state of ecstasy.\textsuperscript{724} None of these concerns are expressed in the narrative in 28.10–11. What is clear from the text is the symbolic importance of the act. Hananiah’s sign-act derives its meaning from this context, not from it’s impressiveness as a feat of strength. Hananiah ‘performs’ his oracle to give it more rhetorical and persuasive power.\textsuperscript{723}

Speaking in the audience of all the people, Hananiah interprets his sign-act.\textsuperscript{724} In the same way that Hananiah broke Jeremiah’s yoke, YHWH will break (שבר qal imperfect) Nebuchadnezzar’s yoke (cf. 28.4b).\textsuperscript{725} Promising the same two year time frame found in 28.3a, YHWH will break the yoke from the neck of all the nations (משל תואר כל העמים). Hananiah is making claims for YHWH’s authority beyond Judah, in a real sense functioning like a נביא לגוים (cf. 1.5). This part of the chapter’s narrative in 28.1–11 ends simply with Jeremiah going his own way (לדריך). The description is rather understated, and does not reveal much of anything concerning Jeremiah’s reasons for leaving.

4.3. Prophecy according to Jeremiah

One of the most unique statements regarding the nature and function of prophecy in Jeremiah is Jer 28.8–9.\textsuperscript{726} It is a general description on the prophetic tradition put on the mouth of Jeremiah, and it bears great significance for the interpretation of the nature of prophecy in Jeremiah. As such, it merits close attention here.

In the narrative context of Jer 28.1–11, Jeremiah’s statement on prophecy occurs in his response to Hananiah’s oracle in 28.2–4. After indicating the presence of the audience in 28.5, the narrative reports again that Jeremiah spoke without a formula indicating di-

\begin{itemize}
  \item [720] There is a gender disagreement between the feminine מושה and the 3ms suffix on ריבריהו (‘and he broke it’).
  \item [724] Most recently, see Smelik, A Prophet Context, 257.
  \item [725] See Selms, \textit{Jeremia}, II, POUIT, Nijkerk, 1974, 47.
  \item [724] Duhm, \textit{Jeremia}, 225. Weiser connects Hananiah’s act to the statement in 1 Kgs 18.46 where יד יהוה והיתה על אליעזר (‘the hand of YHWH came over Elijah’). \textit{Weiser, Jeremia} 25.15 - 52.34, 247 n. 2.
  \item [723] See my comments in note 702 on page 179.
  \item [724] Here in Jer 28.11 Hananiah’s name appears without הנביא (cf. 28.15).
  \item [724] In contrast to Jer 28.4b, Nebuchadnezzar’s name is included in 28.11.
  \item [726] I might suggest Jer 28.8–9 as the best candidate to alleviate Stökl’s regret that ‘there are no ancient Near Eastern texts which muse on the way in which prophecy works’. \textit{Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East}, 13.
\end{itemize}
vine speech. Almost all commentators are struck by Jeremiah’s initial response in 28.6. Quite frequently, they will say that these statements are sarcastic, ironic or contrary-to-fact. He essentially affirms Hananiah’s message, first by saying ‘amen’ (אמון). Together with the two phrases with jussive verbs, the אמן suggests that Jeremiah’s response has a formal character. He affirms that YHWH would do as Hananiah has said (בכתיב היוה) and that YHWH would establish the words he prophesied. But then Jeremiah pivots, requesting that Hananiah would listen (שמע נא) to a word from Jeremiah. Again, the audience is referred to in 28.7, except here Jeremiah uses a different phrase, directing his speech to both Hananiah and the people gathered in the temple (אנני דבר יאָמִים ויהוה). The other instances of this phrase have an ‘official’ character in Jeremiah, appearing both in the prophet’s trial proceedings (26.11, 15) and in the reading of his scroll in the temple and before the king (36.6, 10, 13–15, 20–21; cf. 29.29).

4.3.1. Salvation and doom

The content of Jeremiah’s response is found in Jer 28.8–9. Here he summarises the elements of prophetic speech generally by describing their activity. Two closely related statements are made in 28.8–9, the first concerning the plural הנביאים and the second concerning the singular הנביא. These verses have been, and continue to be, an integral text for the so-called ‘true versus false prophecy’ debate. Many of the most salient aspects of the debate rest on particular readings of 28.8–9; it is no exaggeration to say these verses are at the heart of the discussion. In the following discussion I will illustrate the importance of the text—and offer a different reading.

The statement in Jer 28.8 begins by referring to prophets of the past. Jeremiah acknowledges the prophets who lived before himself and Hananiah ‘from earliest times’ (胱 השעולים). This description essentially claims that there has been a long history of prophecies...

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727 ‘Initially Jeremiah is ironic’ Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 102. Micaiah ben Imlah’s initial response to Ahab is often referred to as a parallel (1 Kgs 22.15); see, e.g., Holladay, Jeremiah 26–52, 127. To be fair, there are general similarities between the narratives in Jer 28.1–17 and 1 Kgs 22.1–38; however the latter has a very different setting with different socio-historical conventions at work in it. See Kelly, Prophets, Kings and Honour.

728 The lexeme אמן is a ‘solemn formula’ used to express ‘the validity of a curse or declaration’ (Num 5.22(x2); Deut 27.15–26; Jer 11.5; Neh 5.13; cf. Isa 65.16) or an ‘acceptable order’ (1 Kgs 1.36). HALOT I, 64.

729 This translation, ‘taking the sense of olam to be adequately represented for most cases by “the remotest time”’, is suggested by Barr, Biblical Words for Time, 73. Barr credits this view to Jenni, Das Wort olam, ZAW 64 (1952), 197–248. Cf. DCH VI, 300–7.
ets which leads up to the current moment, and that both Jeremiah and Hananiah are a part of a long and established tradition. The phrasing suggests no qualitative difference between the two of them.

The latter half of Jer 28.8 uses the verb נב א niphal to describe the activity of these prophets who preceded Jeremiah and Hananiah. The verb combines with three different prepositions in this clause. The first two nominal phrases, ‘many lands’ (ארץ רבו) and ‘great kingdoms’ (מלכות נרלו), are related to the verb נב א niphal with על and על respectively. These prepositions share a significant amount of semantic overlap when used with the verb נב א niphal and appear to have the same basic sense. Whether rendered ‘to’ or ‘against’ many lands and great kingdoms, the sense that is expressed is that the prophets have prophesied in relation to a variety of people and powers, including, but not limited to, Israel and Judah. This prophesying occurred, as it was normal and expected in the ancient Near East, during times of crisis.

Following the reference to many lands and great kingdoms, three items are listed as a part of the ancient prophetic tradition: war (למלחמה), disaster (לזרע) and pestilence (לدينة). All three lexemes are semantically related, being generally concerned with disaster, threat and crisis, and all three bear the prefixed preposition ל. The dominant interpretation of these terms understands them as summaries of the traditional content of

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79 Note the range and flexibility of senses listed in IBHS §11.2.2a (גי) and §11.2.13a–g (לי). A good illustration of the semantic overlap between על and על with נב א niphal appears in Jeremiah’s trial narrative in chapter 26. There the priests and prophets seek the death penalty for Jeremiah who declares נב א in Jer 26.11 (so also 26.12), and in the same narrative the elders mention the case of Uriah ben Shemaiah in 26.20. Both instances of the verb נב א niphal take the same object and both prepositions describe the same activity, as the phrase נב א ורבע נב א נב א niphal suggests. NB, the forms are perfect in 26.11–12 and imperfect in 26.20, but I have not observed a difference in usage (i.e. perfective/imperfective) with prepositions in verbal forms of נב א.

80 Again, note IBHS §11.2.2a; §11.2.10d. Translators typically favour translating the phrase with prepositions such as ‘against’, which takes a more direct cue from the negative sense of the words for war, disaster and pestilence; see e.g. ‘against’ ; ‘gegen’ in ; ‘contre’ in Condamin, Jérémie, 206. Cf. ‘über’ in Lange, Vom Prophetischen Wort zur Prophetischen Tradition, 364; Fischer, J eremia 26–52, 65. Compare this with Lundbom’s translation: ‘they prophesied to many lands and against great kingdoms of war and evil and pestilence’. Lundbom, Jeremiah 21–36, 325.
these prophets’ oracles.\textsuperscript{734} To paraphrase this reading, the prophets have always declared bad news for the nations.

The trouble with this reading is that it does not seem to follow the semantics of the verbal phrase נִבְּא. In syntagmatic and syntactic terms, the verb נִבְּא does not seem to use ל to mark a direct object. For example, the phrase נִבְּא הָאָרֶץ as a direct object in Jer 20.1, while נִבְּא לְ to uses indirect objects in a datival sense, usually ‘to’ in reference to a person and ‘concerning’ in reference to a concept or idea.\textsuperscript{735} So it does not follow that לְniphal marks the things which are said by a prophet; rather, these terms relate to the action described by נִבְּא niphal in the situations which have traditionally prompted prophetic activity. Thus, in this improved reading, the basic thrust of Jeremiah’s claim is there is a long and established tradition of prophesying about, or in times of, war, disaster and famine. And according to current accounts of the phenomenon of prophecy in the ancient Near East, this was generally true of prophetic behaviour and practice in the Levant and Mesopotamia. Prophets were active in times of crisis.

Much hinges on the interpretation of the following statement in Jer 28.9. Continuing his description of prophets and their activity, Jeremiah next discusses the prophet who prophesies about well-being (נִבְּא אֲשֶׁר נִבְּא לְשָׁלוֹם). Where the plural נבאים appears in 28.8, here there is a reference to the singular נבא. Just as with the negative terms for war, disaster and famine, here the word for well-being (שלום) is prefixed with ל and related to נבא niphal as a dative; the reference is to the prophet who prophesies ‘about’ or ‘concerning’ well-being. In the following clause in 28.9b, Jeremiah describes the recognition (לְniphal) of a prophet as being sent by YHWH. When the word of the prophet comes (בָּא וְדַר נבאים), that prophet, whom YHWH truly sent (אשר שָׁלֹם יְהוָה בָּא וְדַר נבאים), will be recognised as such. The notion of ‘truth’ is associated not with the word of

\textsuperscript{734} I think that de Jong too heavily emphasises a ‘predictive’ element in the prophetic activity described in Jer 28.9 when he states: ‘The preposition ל is used to refer to the content of their prophecies without actually citing them. Here מַלְכִּים functions as the shortest possible description of bad fortune, disaster, destruction, loss of power, military defeat, etc. Prophecying “war” against a mighty country [or] kingdom is not a neutral forecast of future events, but reveals a divine decision that will be carried out by divine force. To prophesy “war” against a mighty kingdom is to declare that God has decided to ruin that kingdom.’ Jong, Fallacy of “True and False”, 9-10.

\textsuperscript{735} Cf. ‘Because of the extreme variety of its meanings, ל often has a rather vague value.’ Joöin-Muraoka §133d. See also IBHS §11.2.10a–i. See my comments on the constructions ל נבא נבאים in chapter 2, section 2.2.3, page 70.
a prophet but with his authorisation (נָשָׁל qal). Thus what is at stake is not necessarily the truth of the prophetic word, but rather the reliability of the prophet (cf. 26.15).

It is very commonly argued that Jer 28.8–9 presents a contrast between two distinct types or traditions of prophecy, namely, salvation and doom. To take but two prominent examples, Fischer describes the encounter between Hananiah and Jeremiah in terms of a programmatic encounter between two different prophetic types represented by Hananiah and Jeremiah. Yet current scholarship is increasingly questioning these categories and their application to prophetic books or prophetic traditions. Similarly, Moerbeys thinks 28.8 gives the weight of precedent to prophecy of doom, so a message of peace ‘invites suspicion’. However, this type of concern does not apply only to salvific oracles; when Jeremiah delivers an oracle of doom for Jerusalem and Judah, in 26.15 he assures his harshly sceptical audience not to kill him because he is truly sent by YHWH (יהוה שלוחה יהוה).

734 See, e.g., Duhm, Jeremia, 225; Giesebrecht, Jeremia, 152; Condamine, Jérémie, 206; Volz, Jeremia, 265; Wambacq, Jeremias, BOT, (1957). 185; Aeschimann, Jérémie, 162; Rudolph, Jeremia, 179-81; Selms, Jeremia, I, 38-40; Hosfeld and Meyer, Prophet gegen Prophet, 96-99; Selms, Jeremia, II, 46-47; Carroll, Jeremiah, 544-45; Hermisson, Kriterien, ZThK 92 (1995), 134-37; McKane, Jeremiah xxvi-lii, 718-19; Lundbom, Jeremiah 21–36, 334-35; Fischer, Jeremia 26–52, 73-74; Allen, Jeremiah, 316-17; Hibbard, True and False Prophecy, 348.

735 ‘Hananjas Name (»JHWH ist gnädig«, s. oben V 1) ist nicht nur Bezeichnung für eine Einzelperson, sondern für einen Prophetentyp und dessen Programm. Damit erhebt sich die Auseinandersetzung in Jer 28 über die Ebene eines einmaligen Konfliktes hin zu einer grundsätzlichen Differenz. Hananja steht für jene Art von Prophetie, die den Erwartungen der Leute entgegenkommt und sie gewaltsamem Auftreten (vgl. V 10) eindrucksvoll darstellt.... Ihr gegenüber steht in Jeremia eine Haltung, die sich in einer alten Tradition von Unheilspropheten (V 8) weiß. Erst im Durchgang durch großes Leid kann wieder auf ein besseres Leben gehofft werden; diese Erneuerung bleibt Werk Gottes, der den menschlichen Wunsch nach Aufrichten (V 6, in Nähe zum Namen Jeremias, »JHWH möge erhöhen!«, s. die Auslegung zu 1,1) erfüllt. Beide Propheten setzen also auf Gottes Gnade, doch unter verschiedenen Voraussetzungen [emphasis original].’ Fischer, Jeremia 26–52, 79-80.

736 An excellent illustration of the problem in relation to Isaiah is Williamson, Prophet of Weal or Woe? The point was already stressed by Roberts nearly twenty years ago: ‘Indeed, much of the older discussion of prophetic conflict which often assumed clear and obvious distinctions, sometimes terminologically marked, between true and false prophecy corresponding to such contrasts as cultic versus non-cultic, professional versus non-professional, group versus individual, salvation versus judgment, was never convincing, and deserves to be consigned to oblivion.’ Roberts, Blindfolding the Prophets, 138.

737 ‘How, then, should Jeremiah’s response to Hananiah be understood? His words are both ironic and ad hominem, and might be paraphrased: Fine. May YHWH indeed bring peace/restoration (shalom), which I as well as you hope for (27:22). But the precedent of true prophecy speaks judgments which are so searching that speedy restoration is hardly possible. When a message goes against precedent, it invites suspicion such that one should only believe it when one sees it.’ Although Jeremiah is prima facie offering a criterion of discernment, its prime contextual thrust is a rhetorical gesture in a situation where nobody is heeding him anyway — not a criterion but a caveat.’ Moerbeys, Prophecy and Discernment, 107, cf. 70-73.
One aspect of the text which also problematises these views is the inexact parallel between Jer 28.8 and 28.9. As already noted, Jeremiah discusses the tradition of prophets, plural (חכמים), before then discussing the particular case of the prophet, singular (הנביא). According to the doom-versus-salvation view, this implies the weight of the tradition is behind the doom prophets, while the lonely salvation prophet must justify himself before being accepted. However, an additional difference is the lack of an audience for the singular prophet. The prophetic activity described in 28.8 occurs in relation to many lands and great kingdoms, yet 28.9 does not indicate for whom or for what the prophet prophesies well-being.

To prophesy פִּנָּח basically means to provide divine assurance. In Jeremiah, there are multiple instances where the lexeme פִּנָּח occurs as a part of a prophetic oracle (see 6.14 = 8.11; 14.13). Consider also the phrase פִּנָּח יָדוֹ הָנֵבֶא in Jer 4.10 and 23.17. In both instances the assurance that ‘it will go well for you’ is related to an impending threat; in 4.10 the phrase is tragic, as the people are deceived while in mortal danger (נִנְנָה הָרָע). In 23.17 it parallels a reassuring oracle that no disaster רֶעָה will come.

It is important to stress that prophetic oracles of reassurance and comfort do not necessarily imply passivity. It widely recognised that prophetic speech, in a fundamental sense, is speech which attempts to influence human behaviour; however it is sometimes assumed that this attempt to influence is more pronounced in a word of doom, as negative oracles produce a change in behaviour, often described with פִּנָּח qal. Moberly asserts that a ‘fundamental axiom about prophecy’ is that whatever ‘a prophet says on behalf of God seeks a particular kind of response – turning from sin, or avoiding a turn to sin, as the case may be.’ Consequently, ‘when the prophet announces impending disaster, what he seeks is a response of turning to God.’ This is a very limited account of the potential changes in behaviour that oracles of salvation can encourage. A case in point is the use of the formula אַל תְוַפֵּד in prophetic oracles, a phrase which is deeply connected to war contexts (e.g. 2 Chr 20.15–17). While there is a variety of uses of the phrase in the Hebrew

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738 Though it is often understood primarily with the sense ‘peace’, פִּנָּח has a wide semantic range. See DCH VII, 365–70.
739 Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 52.
740 Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 54. Cf. his statement that ‘true prophecy speaks of judgments which are so searching that speedy restoration is hardly possible’ (p. 107).
741 Variations of this phrase are widely attested in the ancient Near East. See Dion, “Fear Not” Formula, CBQ 32 (1970), 565–70; Weippert, »Heiliger Krieg«, ZAW 84 (1972), 460–93; Toorn, L’oracle de victoire, 73-79;
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Bible, it certainly does more than suggest passivity. This is evident in 1.4–10, where YHWH instructs Jeremiah to go and speak where he is instructed to do so; the reassurance הוא ניסין is an encouragement for Jeremiah to perform his newly assigned tasks he was initially reticent to accept (cf. 1.6). Thus, in my view, the statements in 28.9 do differ from 28.8, but they refer to the same prophetic function.

It must also be stressed that the specific threat under discussion in all of Jer 27.1–28.17 is Babylon. Jeremiah directly addresses the question of whether or not to serve the Babylonians in 27.5–11. The basic summary of his position is to submit and live, because not doing so will only bring death and destruction (27.17). Hananiah takes the opposite position in 28.2–4. YHWH has broken Babylon’s yoke, and by implication Judah should not serve. Here both prophets are engaged in the same process described in 28.8; they prophesy ‘against’ lands and kingdoms—Hananiah against Babylon, Jeremiah against Syria-Palestine—and both of their oracles concern the crisis brought upon Jerusalem by Babylonian siege and attack. Thus, the ‘well-being’ assured by the prophet in 28.8 is analogous to Hananiah’s encouragement to resist Babylon. It is not an assurance of peace but one of success.

4.3.2. Discernment and Deuteronomy 18.20–22

Another common reading of Jer 28.8–9 draws a contrast between different ‘types’ of prophecy. Taking a cue from the phrase אשר יveal הוא אמרת, if these verses contrast two types of prophets, one acceptable and another unacceptable, then there must have been some way to tell the difference between them. This has prompted a number of studies on ‘discernment criteria’ for dividing the true prophet from the false.

This search for discernment criteria has led many to appeal to Deut 18.20–22 as a related text, usually claiming that Jer 28 shows dependence on the Deuteronomic text. In order to assess the comparison, it is necessary to look at the key portions of the Prophetengesetz in Deut 18.9–22 and consider its function in the context of Deuteronomy. The

Nissinen, Fear Not, 149-51.

744 Contrast with Jong, Fallacy of “True and False”, 11.


regulations for divinatory practices in 18.9–22 contain a series of instructions given by YHWH which concern the means by which knowledge of the divine will may be acquired. There are strict prohibitions against practices which are deemed ‘Canaanite’ in 18.9–14. Upon entering the land of promise, the Israelites are strictly prohibited from practicing any of the abominations (תועבות) of the local population. Child sacrifice (מעהר בן בוות) divination (ממכש), augury (ממעות), soothsaying (מכהש), witchcraft (שלא אב רدين), spell-casting (בתו תרה), consulting ghosts and spirits (דרש אל המזאות) are all considered abominations.\(^{745}\) YHWH has not assigned these methods to Israel (ואתה לא כל מה לדבר אלוהים). These practices are to be completely avoided because they risk compromising the people’s complete and singular devotion to YHWH.\(^{746}\)

In place of these ‘non-Israelite’ divinatory practices, prophecy is given a privileged status in the Deuteronomistic perspective as the sole means by which the people gain access to the divine will. In Deut 18.15 (cf. 18.18), YHWH promises the people a prophet (נביא) from among their brothers who will be ‘like me’, that is, like Moses.\(^{747}\) YHWH will raise up (קם hiphil) this prophet to whom the people will listen (שמע qal) instead of the Canaanite diviners. He will put his word in the prophet’s mouth and will instruct him on what to say (18.18; cf. Jer 1.7, 9; 5.14). Anyone who does not listen will be punished (Deut 18.19).

Two statements then appear in Deut 18.20–22 which are highly influential in most interpretations of Jer 28.8–9. First, in Deut 18.20 YHWH declares to the people that any prophet who speaks in his name presumptuously (דר זר hiphil), without being instructed (נביא piel) to do so or in the name of other gods, shall die. The reference to death in 18.20 is rather general; no specific prescription details the means by which the prophet will perish.\(^{748}\) Given the context of 18.9–14, there is a clear concern about apostasy in this warning; any hint of following אלוהים אחרים is unacceptable in the eyes of the Deuteronomistic writers. In the conclusion of the Hananiah narrative in Jer 28.17, a short notice states that

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\(^{747}\) The phrase ממערות מסלך כנני in Deut 18.15 emphasises that the prophet will be Israelite, as opposed to non-Israelite. Many have sought to identify a specific ‘prophet like Moses’ or a *successio mosaica*, as noted previously in chapter 3, section 2.4, page 96.

\(^{748}\) Nicholson, *Deuteronomy* 18.9-22, 156.
Hananiah died not long after his encounter with Jeremiah. Since his death functions to validate Jeremiah and his standing as a prophet (cf. 28.15–16), it is not necessarily viewed as a punishment for apostasy.

Second, in Deut 18.21–22, YHWH addresses the natural follow-up question: How can one know if a prophetic word does not come from YHWH? The question is clearly related to the primary concern of the text to promote a singular allegiance to YHWH. If a prophet speaks in YHWH’s name and the word does not happen or come (לֹֽאֲלֵה הָיוֹת הַדְּבֵר לְלָא בוֹא), then it was not a YHWH word (18.22). In this case, the prophet has spoken his word presumptuously (בֹּדֵד), and the people are not to fear (רַע qal) him. Nothing more is said about the content of the prophet’s message, nor the prophet himself.740

It is clear that the text in Deut 18.20–22 is guided by very different concerns than those in Jer 28.8–9. Issues related to apostasy and following other gods than YHWH dominate in Deut 18.20–22. One listens to a prophet only if he has YHWH’s word. In Jer 28.8–9, Jeremiah discusses the issue of prophets assuring success or well-being in situations of crisis. Here the authority of a prophet is in question when that prophet speaks positively about the people’s prospects during a time of crisis.

It is also difficult to say that either text establishes any criteria as such for telling the difference between ‘true’ and ‘false’ prophecy. As it has been observed, Deut 18.20–22 and Jer 28.8–9 do not offer much practical guidance on how one decides whether or not to heed a prophet’s word. The view they take of a prophet’s words is retrospective; after their words have (or have not) come, the prophets’ audience will then know whether or not they are truly sent or have YHWH’s word. For good reason, scholars have mostly abandoned the search for discernment criteria.

4.4. Summary

One of the most interesting texts concerned with prophecy is Jer 28.1–11, as it boasts one of the only general statements about prophecy in the book. In 28.8–9, Jeremiah responds

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740 It is incorrect to assert that, in Deut 18.22, ‘prophecies of doom are at issue, since people are told that, when prophecies go unfulfilled, “You need not be afraid of him”’ [emphasis original]. Lundbom, Jeremiah 21–36, 335. So also Crenshaw, Prophetic Conflict, 53; Childs, Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context, 133–34. There is no interest in Deut 18.9–22 to distinguish between ‘doom’ and ‘salvation’ in divinatory practice, and the sense of רע qal is can be used to describe a kind of fearful reverence or respect; see Ps 22.24; 33.8; cf. Deut 1.7; 1 Sam 18.15. See DCH II, 336–37; HALOT I, 185.
to Hananiah's oracle with a description of the activity common to the prophetic tradition. Prophecy concerning 'many lands' (ארץ רבית) and 'great kingdoms' (מלכות גלות) dealt with some of the major crises ancient societies faced. All societies facing the threats of war (מלחמה), disaster (רעה) and pestilence (הブラック), of course, experience anxiety, uncertainty and concern, and prophets provided guidance on these matters. All three lexemes are semantically related, being generally concerned with crisis. The nature of the statement in 28.8–9 is therefore related to the situations which have traditionally prompted prophetic activity, not to the content of prophetic speech. This contrasts with the traditional reading of this passage, that 28.8–9 demarcates between prophets of doom and prophets of salvation. Rather, the basic thrust of Jeremiah's claim is there is a long and established tradition of prophesying about, or in times of, war, disaster and famine.

My reading of Jer 28.8–9 is based in part on the semantics of the verb נבא. The combinations of verb נבא niphal with ל and על share a significant amount of semantic overlap. When used with the verb נבא niphal and appear to have the same basic sense. The sense that is expressed in 28.8 is that the prophets have prophesied in relation to a variety of people and powers, including, but not limited to, Israel and Judah. Also, the verbal construction נבא ל is primarily datival, that is, 'to' in reference to a person and 'concerning' in reference to a concept or idea (28.8; cf. נבא ל in 20.1). Thus, the list of l filibah in 28.8 does not indicate the things spoken by a prophet, but the situations which have traditionally prompted prophetic activity. The typical reading, that prophets traditionally announce war and disaster, rests on the assumption that Cryer called 'the silly—but widely held—belief that divination has to do with "predicting the future."' Prophets were especially active in times of crisis, and Jeremiah seems aware of this tradition. The alternative reading I have suggested corresponds much more closely to current accounts of the phenomenon of prophecy in the ancient Near East as a form of divination.

Other key aspects of the ‘true’ versus ‘false’ prophecy debate rest on Jer 28.8–9. It is often assumed that there is a relationship between this text and the criterion for discern-

754 See Tiemeyer, Prophecy as a Way of Cancelling Prophecy; Nissinen, Prophecy and Omen Divination, 341; Jong, Fallacy of “True and False”, 4.
755 See note 734 on page 187.
756 See IBHS §11.2.2a (��) and §11.2.13a–g (��). See also Duhm, Jeremiah, 225.
757 Cryer, Divination in Ancient Israel, 122, see also n. 1.
ment in Deut 18.20–22. However, some scholars now doubt that Jeremiah depends on this text, and their respective contexts highlight the differences between them. The mention of ‘truth’ (אמת) in 28.9 has reinforced the traditional view of salvation versus doom, as well as the implication that certain prophets could be ‘false’. However, more recent scholarship recognises that the concept of ‘false’ prophecy is based on a fallacy. Neither the prophet nor his message are connected to the concept of truth in 28.9. Rather, it is the prophetic authorisation, ‘being sent’ (שלח qal), that is at stake (cf. Deut 18.22). The key issue is not necessarily the truth of the prophetic word, but rather the reliability of the prophet (cf. Jer 26.15). Lastly, interpreters often see an implied contrast between doom and salvation in 28.8–9; since prophecies of doom encourage repentance, they are more ‘true’ than prophecies of salvation. However, oracles of reassurance and comfort do not necessarily imply passivity. In a fundamental sense, all prophetic speech attempts to influence human behaviour, and the statements in 28.8–9 refer to the same prophetic function.

The setting of Jer 28.1–11, in the context of the Jerusalem temple and in the presence of the priests and all the people, imparts an added significance to the encounter between Hananiah and Jeremiah. As Cryer has observed, the formal similarities of 28.1–11 are quite similar to those of the so-called ‘omen sacrifice’ texts. While recent scholarship does seem to show that extispicy was known in ancient Israel, it is far too speculative to claim it is present in 28.1–11. However, these formal features of the text observed by Cryer, in my view, should not go unnoticed. Formal language, the importance of the location, the seriousness of the content, the use of ‘official’ titles, the presence of priests, mention of cultic instruments, and the temple context are hints of a ritual or cultic practice that at least reinforce the connections between prophets, priests and the cult.

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5. Jeremiah 28.12–17

Following the first episode in Jer 28.1–11, the second half of the text in 28.12–17 narrates another interaction between Hananiah and Jeremiah. The text clearly represents these two textual units as related halves. A word of YHWH comes to Jeremiah after Hananiah had broken the yoke from Jeremiah’s neck. This short account of what happened in 28.10–11 treats it as a separate event, and assumes a new setting for what follows in 28.12–17. Unlike 28.1–11, there are no indications of location or audience in 28.12–17. Nebuchadnezzar’s yoke is the dominant theme of 28.12–17; the return of people and goods from Babylon is not mentioned again. Two oracles are delivered by Jeremiah; the first pertains to the yoke (28.13–14) and the second pertains to Hananiah (28.15–16). A historical notice in 28.17 concludes the narrative.

5.1. Text and translation

767 BHS deletes the phrase from L in Jer 28.14, and suggests it is from 27.6 (cf. BHS עם אהל אתה נשתה ל ’לעביד). In support of this emendation, the apparatus criticus notes the phrase is absent from 64. Many others adopt this view; see, e.g., Duham, Jeremiah, 226; Rudolph, Jeremiah, 180; McKane, Jeremiah i–xxv, 714. I prefer to read L as it stands.

768 BHS deletes the phrase noting its omission from 64, and suggests it is from Deut 13.6 (cf. 18.20). The phrase also missing in 64. See Janzen, Studies in the Text of Jeremiah, 48. Some interpreters think passages in Jeremiah influenced Deuteronomy’s laws regarding prophecy. See Sharp, Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah, 147–55; Nicholson, Provenance of Deuteronomy, ZAW 124 (2012), 528–40. Here I prefer to read L as it stands.

(12) ויהי דבר יהוה לא ירמות את עביד תחנה נביאים כאלה המשותם מר_distribution
לעבדו את עבידת ישראל על בורל הצר על צתר כלאתו מהות אהל
יכ חמד יהוה שבאתו לארץ ישראל ועליתו על צתר הכלאתו
לעבד ואת התשדד Макל יבגל נבואים כנה צאת לשלך יהוה ואחת
לבם חמד יהוה ממחלות מחליהם ושנה את מה בחרת ואל
(13) אַלָּלָה

(14) And a word of YHWH came to Jeremiah after the prophet Hananiah broke the yoke from the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, saying,

(15) Go and say to Hananiah, saying, Thus said YHWH, bars of wood you broke, and made instead bars of iron.
For thus said YHWH of Hosts, God of Israel, an iron yoke I have placed on the neck of all these nations to serve Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and they will serve him; even the beasts of the field I have given to him.

And the prophet Jeremiah said to the prophet Hananiah, Listen, Hananiah, YHWH did not send you and you have made this people trust a lie.

Therefore, thus said YHWH, Now I am sending you, off the face of the ground. This year you will die because you spoke rebellion against YHWH.

And Hananiah the prophet died that year in the seventh month.

5.2. Jeremiah and Hananiah, part II

Following the episode in Jer 28.1–11, a word from YHWH comes to Jeremiah instructing him to go and speak to Hananiah. In contrast to all of the previous times he spoke in 28.1–11, Jeremiah introduces his word with the phrase לא אמר יהוה (28.13, 14, 16). Jeremiah then delivers an oracle in 28.13–14 from YHWH that is a negative reading of Hananiah’s sign-act: he broke bars of wood (משות עצם) but has made instead bars of iron (метוט ברזל). Iron can have repulsive or fearful overtones, and is often semantically related to foreign oppression (cf. Deut 28.48). This reinterpretation of Hananiah’s action turns his message of salvation to Judah and the nations into something brutal and harsh.

YHWH outlines more negative consequences of Hananiah’s act in Jer 28.14. YHWH says he has placed an iron yoke neck of all these nations (כל הגוים האלה). The only available candidates in the context of 27.1–28.17 are Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon from 27.3. Jer 28.14 also reintroduces the theme of service (עבד) given to Nebuchadnezzar by both nations and beasts, which is part of the message delivered to these nations in 27.6. So Jeremiah also functions as a בנוכי ל דואר.

Another word follows in Jer 28.15–16 which pertains directly to Hananiah. Jeremiah again asks Hananiah to listen (שמע נא) to what he has to say (cf. 28.7). Jeremiah claims that YHWH did not send him (לא שלחתי יהוה), and accuses him of causing the people to trust (בשת hiphil) in a lie (cf. 29.31). As a result, YHWH says he is sending (שלח piel) him from of the face of the earth (מעל פני הארץ); this is a euphemism for death, made clear by the following claim that Hananiah will die that same year. Hananiah has spoken ‘rebellion’ (חרה) against YHWH (cf. 29.32).

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76b The same phrase לא שלחתי יהוה appears in Jer 43.2, where it is an accusation made against Jeremiah.
The narrative concludes with a simple chronological notice in Jer 28.17. Hananiah the prophet died that same year, in the fifth month. Based on the chronology of 28.1, the entire narrative of 28.1–17 encompasses a two month time period.

5.3. Summary

A second encounter between Jeremiah and Hananiah in Jer 28.12–17 following the episode in 28.1–11. Jeremiah then delivers an oracle in 28.13–14 from YHWH that is a negative reading of Hananiah’s sign-act: he broke bars of wood (מָטַת עץ) but has made instead bars of iron (מָטַת ברזל). This reinterpretation of Hananiah’s action turns his message of salvation to Judah and the nations into something brutal and harsh. Because of the reference to rebellion (סִירָה) against YHWH and Hananiah’s death notice (28.15–17), this text is often read in light of Deut 13.6 or 18.20–22. Thus, Hananiah’s death exposes him as a ‘false’ prophet. However, fulfilment and non-fulfilment are crude measures of prophetic authenticity and authority. The text here does not seem to imply a general test of fulfilment for prophecy; instead, the notice in 28.17 simply confirms Jeremiah’s authority as a prophet.

6. Conclusion

Out of the tension between contrasting prophetic messages, Jer 27.1–28.17 illustrates several key aspects of the nature of prophecy according to the book. The yoke of Babylon is a thematic concern of 27.1–28.17. The text reports various prophetic messages about whether or not the kings of Syria-Palestine should serve the Babylonians or revolt. Jeremiah’s position, submit and live (27.16–22), relates serving Babylon and serving YHWH together. Rival foreign and domestic diviners, including the prophet Hananiah from Gibeon, take the opposite position, do not serve (27.10, 14; 28.2–4). Jeremiah warns against heeding
these messages (27.9, 14, 16), and calls them lies (27.10, 14; 28.15). The stage is set, so to speak, for a discussion of what prophets do and how they function.

One of the primary questions scholars have sought to answer in relation to this text is how one should distinguish between these prophetic messages. A simple logic guides the traditional analysis. If two prophetic messages oppose one another (i.e. serve/do not serve), both cannot be right. How is this decided? One solution is to appeal to the means of revelation. Since the divinatory specialists listed in Jer 27.9 includes specialists who are rejected by Deuteronomy (Deut 13.2–6; 18.9–22 cf. Jer 14.14; 29.7), or presumably speak on behalf of false gods, their message cannot be accepted. However, YHWH prophets take the same position in 27.10 and 27.14 (cf. 28.2–4), and the text does not suggest that the message is false because it derives from illicit means of inspiration.\(^76\) It assumes all of these individuals are engaged in the same intellectual activity of prophesying (נביא לכם). It does seem clear that the motif of ‘being sent’ is specially reserved for diviners who are called a נביא דברי. This is the one difference between the two warnings not to listen (cf. Jer 27.10, 15). However, in terms of their function, it is clear that the prophets and diviners are more alike than not.

Perhaps, the argument goes, Deuteronomy helps in another way. A ‘wait and see’ test seems to judge Hananiah as ‘false’ when his death is recorded in Jer 28.17. Because he spoke rebellion (网站地图) against YHWH (cf. Deut 13.6; 18.20–22), and because Jeremiah’s prediction came true (Jer 28.15–17), Hananiah’s death has the twofold function of exposing him as a ‘false’ prophet,\(^77\) and confirming Jeremiah as a ‘true’ prophet.\(^78\) Fulfilment and non-fulfilment, it seems, are tests for prophetic veracity. However, scholars have long recognised that fulfilment and non-fulfilment are crude measures of prophetic authenticity and authority.\(^79\) One should not draw a general test for prophecy from this context.

It is also not clear that differentiation between cultic and non-cultic prophets marks true prophecy from the false. For example, some read the encouragement given to

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\(^{76}\) Additionally, an obvious point some commentators seem to miss is that, from a rhetorical perspective, the audience in 27.1–11 is made up of non-Judaean kings. Hypothetically speaking, whether or not deuteronomistic tradition accepted their diviners would be entirely irrelevant to them. Lundbom, Jeremiah 21–36, 317-18; Fischer, Jeremiah 26–52, 55; Allen, Jeremiah, 308. Cf. Barstad, No Prophets?, 47-48.

\(^{77}\) Smelik, A Prophet Context, 259. This is interpreted as an ‘ironic’ fulfilment of his prediction and Jeremiah’s claim that he was not ‘sent’. Fischer, Jeremiah 26–52, 78-79; Allen, Jeremiah, 318.

\(^{78}\) Carroll, Jeremiah, 546-47, 550.

Judaean prophets in Jer 27.18 to intercede (יָדַ֫ה qal) with YHWH as sarcastic or contrary to fact.\textsuperscript{773} The debate over whether or not Israelite prophets had a special intercessory role rooted in the cult, as Thelle has shown, obscures the larger patterns of prayer and intercession in the Hebrew Bible.\textsuperscript{774} While not an ‘office’ or an act restricted to prophets, intercession should be considered a normal prophetic behaviour.\textsuperscript{775} Similarly, the setting of 28.1–11, with both Jeremiah and Hananiah in temple and in the presence of the priests and all the people, does not appear to distinguish cultic and non-cultic forms of prophecy. As Cryer has observed, the formal elements of 28.1–11 resemble rituals for cultic forms of divinatory inquiry.\textsuperscript{776} The ritual and cultic features of the text reinforce the connections between prophets, priests and the cult.

The crux of the passage, and perhaps the crux for the ‘true’ versus ‘false’ prophecy debate, comes in Jer 28.8–9. The dominant interpretation of this text has contrasted between two distinct types of prophecy: salvation and doom.\textsuperscript{777} In the classic scholarly construct of prophecy, it was thought that ‘Unheilsprophetie war die Regel’.\textsuperscript{778} Only prophecies of doom could have encouraged the desperately sinful Israelites to repent, the key element of prophecy; prophecies of salvation, accordingly, were treated with increased suspicion.\textsuperscript{779} However, the scholarly construct has changed rather drastically, as scholars now are much less dismissive of salvation in prophetic speech; in some cases it is regarded as the most ‘authentic’ forms of ‘early’ prophetic speech.\textsuperscript{780} In a more fundamental sense, the distinctions between ‘salvation’ and ‘doom’ are simply conventional; all proph-

\textsuperscript{773} Fischer, Jeremiah 26–52, 60.

\textsuperscript{774} Rad, Die falschen Propheten, 109-20; Boer, De voorbede in het Oude Testament; Hesse, Die Fürbitte im Alten Testament; Thelle, Ask God, 117-19. In some studies, the idea of a particular intercessory ‘office’ is connected to a cultic office or role. See, e.g., Reventlow, Liturgie und prophetisches Ich; Jeremias, Kultprophetie und Gerichtsverkündigung.

\textsuperscript{775} Thelle, Ask God, 117-61. See also Tiemeyer, Were the Neo-Assyrian Prophets Intercessors?

\textsuperscript{776} Cryer, Divination in Ancient Israel, 295-305. See also Schmitt, Mantik im Alten Testament, 47-48.

\textsuperscript{777} See note 734 on page 187.

\textsuperscript{778} Wolff, Hauptprobleme alttestamentlicher Prophetie, 465. See also Jeremias, Kultprophetie und Gerichtsverkündigung; Jeremias, Vollmacht des Propheten; Vogels, Comment discerner le prophète authentique ? 689-91.

\textsuperscript{779} Moberly, Prophecy and Discernment, 52-54, 107.

\textsuperscript{780} See, e.g., Kratz, Neue in der Prophetie; Jong, Isaiah; Blum, Israels Prophetie im altorientalischen Kontext; Jong, Biblical Prophecy—A Scribal Enterprise, VT 61 (2011), 39–70; Williamson, Prophet of Weal or Woe?, 273-300, cit. 283.
thetic speech attempts to influence human behaviour, and the statements in 28.8–9 refer to the same prophetic function.781

The semantics of the verb נַבֵא supports my conclusions. The combinations of verb נַבֵא niphal with אל and על express the same basic sense of prophesying in relation to something; one should not construe על as negative.782 Similarly, the verb נַבֵא does not use the verbal construction נַבֵא ל to mark a direct object (28.8; cf. Jer 26.15). The use of נַבֵא ל is primarily datival, that is, ‘to’ in reference to a person and ‘concerning’ in reference to a concept or idea. Thus, when Jeremiah claims that prophets from ages past have prophesied war (מלחמה), disaster (רעה) and pestilence (דבר), this does not indicate the things spoken by a prophet, but the situations which have traditionally prompted prophetic activity. Thus, the statement in 28.8–9 does not concern prophetic predictions of war and peace.783 Rather, the claim is that prophets have been especially active in times of crisis. This corresponds with current accounts of the phenomenon of prophecy in the ancient Near East.

Finally, it should be stressed that the mention of truth (אמת) in Jer 28.9 does not describe true prophets but true authority. The mention of ‘truth’ (אמת) in 28.9 has reinforced the traditional contrast of salvation versus doom, as well as the implication that certain prophets could be ‘false’ according to the criterion set forth in Deut 18.20–22.784 However, the differences between these texts are greater than is often assumed,785 and recent scholarship views the concept of ‘false’ prophecy is based on a fallacy.786 Neither the prophet nor his message are connected to the concept of truth in 28.9. Instead, it is prophetic authorisation and legitimacy that is at stake in 28.9, as אמר modifies the thematic verb שלח. What is at stake is whether or not the prophet is ‘sent’ (שלח qal) and therefore reliable (cf. Jer 26.15), not whether the message is true or false.

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781 See Barstad, Sic dicit dominus.
782 See IBHS §11.2.2a (781) and §11.2.13a–g (782).
783 This reading avoids what Cryer called ‘the silly—but widely held—belief that divination has to do with “predicting the future”’. Cryer, Divination in Ancient Israel, 122, see also n. 1.
784 Lange, Vom prophetischen Wort zur prophetischen Tradition, 84–85; Schmitt, Mantik im Alten Testament, 130; Smelik, A Prophet Context, 255–56.
786 Nissinen, Die Relevanz der neuassyrischen Prophetie, 251; Jong, Fallacy of “True and False”.

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Chapter 6. Conclusion

All roads must lead somewhere, and the present chapter will bring this investigation to its conclusion. The guiding interest of this work has been to explain ‘what we talk about when we talk about prophets’ in the book of Jeremiah. The following represents my account of the ‘conversation’ in three parts: (1) a summary of findings in this investigation; (2) contributions to research and current debates; and (3) implications for further research.

1. Summary of findings

Certain themes and points of emphasis emerged over the course of this investigation. The consistency of these themes in both the semantic analysis and close readings is significant. In the introduction, I framed my work as an intervention to the so-called ‘false prophecy’ debate, and I have dealt with various aspects of the discussion throughout my analysis. To answer the question of ‘false prophecy’, one must have an idea in mind of what a prophet is. I have focused on this question throughout by drawing attention to the nature and function of prophecy in Jeremiah. In this summary of findings, I outline the main contributions of this investigation in relation to this debate, and demonstrate the need to shift the discussion’s emphasis away from the idea of ‘falsehood’ in the direction of ‘legitimacy’.

Rather than re-summarise my findings chapter by chapter, I have assembled them together under thematic headings. In doing so, it is my aim to demonstrate the integrated nature of my conclusions; in the semantic analysis of the lexeme נביא and the close readings of Jer 1.4–19, 23.9–40 and 27.1–28.17, similar results have been found. The synthesis of my results constitutes an explanation of ‘what we talk about when we talk about prophets’ in the book of Jeremiah.

1.1. Function and nature of prophecy

A consistent description of some basic aspects of prophecy were found in this study. The Hebrew lexeme נביא, a denominative noun, is the word used to refer to a prophet. As it is
used in Jeremiah, it seems best to understand this as a reference to a function. This is seen in part by the nature of נביא נב transmitted as a denominative; for example, the most frequent association with verbs from נביא is with the lexeme נביא, and the most frequent subject for finite forms of נביא is the plural נביא. Prophecy involves a range of behaviours and activities conceptually related to the transmission of information from the divine realm. This information takes various forms, such as warning, threat, reassurance, comfort, criticism, encouragement, advice and intercession. Additionally, prophets are described as performing the same intellectual activities as other diviners (cf. Jer 14.14; 27.9; 29.7), and are closely related to priests.

Prophetic messages are communicated to their recipients with the aim of influencing behaviour; for example, prophets give encouragement to take a particular course of action, or issue threats should a particular course of action continue. As in the case of Jeremiah’s commission, the prophetic function affects a range of social strata, including its highest levels of organisation (cf. Jer 1.10, 15, 18). The same is true of other prophets, who are described as communicating with royal figures, cultic functionaries, popular audiences, and other prophets. The semantic associations of נביא with verbs of communication (qal, piel, הדר מנה, מנה qal, נא מנה qal, נא piel, ענה qal) show the importance of this activity.

1.2. Dreams and visions

There is some debate in current scholarship concerning the relationship between prophecy and dreams. In terms of the means of communication between deity and prophet, a

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78 Semantic associations between both singular and plural forms of נביא are very similar.
80 Cf. Stökl,にく רבי, SAHD, §5, A.1.
81 The reference to intercession in Jer 27.18 is a part of wider patterns of divine consultation. While not an ‘office’ or an act restricted to prophets, intercession should be considered a normal prophetic behaviour. Thelle, Ask God, 117-61. See also Tiemeyer, Were the Neo-Assyrian Prophets Intercessors?
82 In support of viewing them together, see Huffman, Company of Prophets, 48, passim; Nissinen, What is Prophecy?, 21-22; Schmitt, Mantik im Alten Testament, 56-57; Huffman, Prophecy in the Mari Texts, 205-13, esp. 208-9. In support of a distinction between them, see Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 10, 98, 222-23.
formal difference between 'seeing' and 'speaking' does not seem to imply a functional difference.\(^{794}\) The dreams of the prophets are criticised not because they are dreams per se. In Jer 23.16–24, the most sustained discussion of dreams in the book, prophets who dream are criticised, but not necessarily on the basis of the means of their inspiration. Their dreams are criticised because they lead the people into apostasy, and the same warning not to listen (שמע) applies to words and dreams (23.16; cf. 27.9). The function of words and dreams appears to be the same. The verbs נבא and הָלָל are used in parallel and they share some semantic overlap. As they are found in Jeremiah, I would not draw a sharp distinction between prophetic messages and dreams, as they appear well within the prophetic purview.\(^{795}\)

Similarly, visions are portrayed as an important part of prophecy. As a part of prophetic speech, a vision (ionate) functions to add legitimacy to the message of a prophet.\(^{794}\) This is evident in Jer 1.11–14 (cf. 4.23–27; 24.1–10) and in 23.16; visions are found in a cooperative relationship with speech and they function to legitimate prophetic speech. Jer 23.18, 22 cites prophetic participation in the divine council, a common feature of prophecy in the ancient Near East, as a mark of legitimate prophecy; there is good reason to read this as another reference to a vision that legitimates a prophet.\(^{796}\) Previously, scholars have sought to privilege the concept of the 'word' over other forms of prophetic inspiration.\(^{796}\) While it is equally dubious to make visionary experience a necessary grounds for authentic prophetic experience (i.e. ecstasy), the texts and semantic data in my analysis do not support a sharp division between types of prophetic inspiration. Claiming that one has had a vision serves to underwrite a prophetic message with greater authority. In my view, this suggests a cooperative relationship between vision and speech in prophecy.\(^{797}\)

\(^{794}\) This is in contrast to the view of Stökl. In his view, since visions 'have their own terminology' this demonstrates 'that they were a form of communication distinct from prophecy.' Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 223.


\(^{796}\) Behrens, Prophetische Visionsschilderungen, 66-70; Hayes, Role of Visionary Experiences; Schmitt, Mantik im Alten Testament, 49-50.


\(^{798}\) See, e.g., Parker, Possession Trance and Prophecy; Zimmerli, Visionary Experience in Jeremiah, 115; Shead, Mouth Full of Fire, 122, 186-87.

\(^{799}\) Mayes, Prophecy and Society in Israel; Schmitt, Mantik im Alten Testament, 49-50.
1.3. Being sent

The prophetic claim to be sent (נביא qal) is a common pattern found in the ancient Near Eastern concept of prophecy. This concept is used to reinforce the authority and authorisation of a prophet to speak on behalf of the deity. Semantically, the field of command or instruction (שם piel, מות hiphil and נביא qal) is significant for the lexeme נביא, and the most frequent use of the verb נביא takes דב as its object. Jeremiah is often described as a ‘prophet like Moses’ based on Jer 1.4–10, but one also could say that Jeremiah’s ‘prophet like-ness’ is more fundamentally related to the ‘sent’ motif. In the context of Jer 23.9–40, where prophetic legitimacy is a major theme, the concepts of being sent (נביא), commanded (דב) and spoken to (דבר) in 23.16–22 follow the general pattern; they are used in a polemical context to denigrate the authority and authorisation of prophets to speak on behalf of YHWH. When prophet messages are rejected along with those of other diviners in 27.10 and 27.15 with the same language, it is only the prophets who are accused of not ‘being sent’. The motif seems specially reserved for diviners who are called a נביא.

In the key text Jer 28.9, truth (אמת) is associated with the thematic verb נביא qal. In contrast to a common reading of the passage, that the text contrasts true and false prophets, what is at stake here is whether or not the prophet is ‘sent’ (נביא qal) and therefore reliable (cf. 26.15), not whether the message is true or false. Thus, the mention of truth (אמת) in 28.9 does not describe true prophets but true authority, underscoring the significance of the motif in Jeremiah. The mention of ‘truth’ (אמת) in 28.9 has reinforced the traditional contrast of salvation versus doom, as well as the implication that certain prophets could be ‘false’ according to the criterion set forth in Deut 18.20–22. However, the differences between these texts are greater than is often assumed,

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798 On the prophetic Sendungsbewusstsein, see Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel, 182-97; Huffmon, Company of Prophets; Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 221-24.
800 The connection to Deuteronomy here is more problematic than is often assumed. See Schmidt, Jeremia 1–20, 47-48; Nicholson, Deuteronomy 18:9-22, 154-55. Cf. Achenbach, “Prophecy like Moses”, 446; Römer, Comment distinguier ?, 117.
801 See note 734 on page 187.
802 Lange, Vom prophetischen Wort zur prophetischen Tradition, 84-85; Schmitt, Mantik im Alten Testament, 130; Smelik, A Prophet Context, 255-56.
arship views the concept of ‘false’ prophecy is based on a fallacy. 804 Neither the prophet nor his message are connected to the concept of truth in 28.9. Instead, it is prophetic authorisation and legitimacy that is at stake in 28.9.

1.4. Prophets, priests and cult

General similarities between priests and prophets have long been recognised by scholars, 805 but the nature of their relationship remains debated. As a result of this investigation, several factors lead to the conclusion that they are closely related. Prophets and priests are criticised in the same terms, with similar language, metaphors and conceptual themes (e.g. Jer 23.9–15). The semantic fields of worship and religious service (אזרות qal, היפ萋 hiphil, והשפתප hishtaphel, ותאמר qal, ותאמר qal, hiphel, שמע שמע), and of purity or integrity (اتحاد qal, או שימש qal, תעשת hiphil) are associated with the lexeme נביא in Jeremiah. Critical passages demonstrate that the prophets and נביא are associated with shared concerns for the ‘proper conventions for worshipping YHWH’. 806 The implicit assumption of these criticisms is that the prophets, together with the priests, have failed in their expected functions. 807 Furthermore, their activities and functions overlap, as both prophets and priests are involved in the same processes of divinatory inquiry.

In semantic terms, the paradigmatic relationships between מלך and שרי and between כהן and נביא are interrelated and follow a pattern: as מלך relates to שרי, so כהן relates to נביא. The closest word to נביא, in terms of consistency and frequency of association, is כהן, and the two are used together as a ‘word pair’. This is a major conclusion. It is a semantic piece of evidence which suggests that the prophets and נביא are both related to the same domain of activity, particularly the cult. 808 In a similar fashion, Tiemeyer has called the prophet and priest pair a ‘merism’; this investigation would support the claim, and I

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804 Nissinen, Die Relevanz der neuassyrischen Prophetie, 251; Jong, Fallacy of “True and False”.
805 See, e.g., Haldar, Associations of Cult Prophets; Tilson, False Prophets in the Old Testament, 427; Cryer, Divination in Ancient Israel, 286-95; Grabbe, Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages, 112-13.
806 Zevit, Prophet versus Priest Antagonism Hypothesis, 192.
807 Tiemeyer observes that the priests are not criticised in Jeremiah apart from the prophets. Tiemeyer, Priests and the Temple Cult, 256-57.
808 This confirms a view already held among some scholars. See, e.g., Gonçalves, Les « Prophètes Écrivains », 167; Zevit, Prophet versus Priest Antagonism Hypothesis, 203-09; Hilber, Cultic Prophecy in the Psalms, 29.
would agree that there is not a sharp distinction between them. Prophets and priests are collaborative partners.

One should be careful not to assume that this is evidence for a sociological assertion that there is a specific type of ‘cultic’ prophets associated with temples as professionals. The influence of the ‘often-made dichotomy between free, charismatic prophets and the so-called cultic or court prophets’ should not be underestimated, even if it ‘should no longer be upheld as a fundamental, generally applicable distinction’. For example, the debate over whether prophets had a special intercessory role rooted in the cult, as Thelle has shown, obscures the larger patterns of prayer and intercession in the Hebrew Bible. The ‘false prophecy’ debate has often supposed a contrast between cultic versus non-cultic types of prophecy. In my view, the parallels between נביא נביא and suggest more than a type of prophet associated with the cult, or that together the prophet and priest could be considered ‘members of the elite’. Instead, particularly on the basis of the semantic data, I prefer to say that the נביא נביא and seem to share similar functions and concerns related to worship and service rendered to YHWH, and ascertaining his will.

1.5. Salvation and doom

In Jeremiah’s commission as a נביא in Jer 1.4–10, prophecy is construed as both positive and negative, and the text does not authorise one kind of prophetic message over another. In the ‘false prophecy’ debate, however, the critically important text of 28.8–9 has been understood to contrast two distinct types of prophecy: salvation and doom. This

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809 Tiemeyer, Priests and the Temple Cult, 234. See also Haldar, Associations of Cult Prophets; Tilson, False Prophets in the Old Testament, 427; Cryer, Divination in Ancient Israel, 286-95; Grabbe, Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages, 112-13.
810 Against the views found, e.g., in Jeremias, נביא, THAT II, 10; Bergman, Ringgren, and Dommershansuen, §7, THWAT IV, 77-78.
811 Nissinen, What is Prophecy?, 23.
812 Rad, Die falschen Propheten, 109-20; Boer, De voorbede in het Oude Testament; Hesse, Die Fürbitte im Alten Testament; Thelle, Ask God, 17-19. In some studies, the idea of a particular intercessory ‘office’ is connected to a cultic office or role. See, e.g., Reventlow, Liturgie und prophetisches Ich; Jeremias, Kultprophetie und Gerichtsverkündigung.
813 Stökl, §5. 3. 3. 3. Compare this with his claim that ‘[t]he נביא נביא seems to have been an official, professional prophet.’ Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 200.
815 See note 734 on page 187.
reading was driven in part by the classic scholarly construct of prophecy, likening the Israelite prophets to Protestant reformers. Scholars tended to prefer oracles of doom as more authentic to the Israelite prophetic tradition, but this tendency has changed drastically. In a fundamental sense, stressed by the view that prophecy is a form of divination, ‘salvation’ and ‘doom’ are less rigid categories than previously thought.

Several of the conclusions of my investigation of Jer 28.8–9 support this change in perspective. Together with the updated critical paradigm of prophecy, two conclusions from the semantic analysis of the verb נבאים are critical pieces of evidence. First, the verb נבאים does not often take a direct object. In most cases, then, one does not prophesy things so much as one prophesies about, with or concerning things. The construction נבאים ли in 28.8 (cf. נבאים ли in 20.1) has a dative sense, meaning ‘to’ in reference to a person and ‘concerning’ in reference to a concept or idea. Similarly, the combinations of verb נבאים niphal with אל and על express the same basic sense of prophesying in relation to something; one should not construe על as negative. The claim in 28.8–9 is that prophets from ages past have prophesied about war (מלחמות), disaster (רעיה) and pestilence (דבר) on behalf of ‘many lands’ and ‘great kingdoms’. This recalls Jeremiah’s commission as a נביא לעם in 1.4–10, where prophecy relates to nations (גויים), kingdoms (מלכות) and tribes (מפורשות), as well as war and siege (11–14; 15–19). Therefore, the statement in 28.8–9 does not concern prophetic predictions of war and peace. Rather, the claim is that prophets have been especially active in times of crisis. Jer 28.8–9 should no longer be cited as evidence for different ‘types’ of prophets.

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80 Wolff, Hauptprobleme alttestamentlicher Prophetie, 465; Jeremias, Kulthropetie unGerichtsverkündigung; Jeremias, Vollmacht des Propheten; Vogels, Comment discerner le prophète authentique ?, 689-91.

87 See, e.g., Kratz, Neue in der Prophetie; Jong, Isaiah; Blum, Israel’s Prophetie im altorientalischen Kontext; Jong, Biblical Prophecy—A Scribal Enterprise; Williamson, Prophet of Weal or Woe?, 273-300, cit. 283.

88 See Barstad, Sic dicit dominus; Jong, Isaiah, 311-13; Jong, Fallacy of “True and False”, 16-19; Williamson, Prophet of Weal or Woe?, 285.

89 See IBHS §11.2.2a (�ו) and §11.2.13a–g (�ו).

90 This accords with Nissinen’s description of divination as ‘a method of tackling the anxiety about the insecurity of life and coping with the risk brought about human ignorance.’ Thus the diviner, ‘by virtue of their background, education, or behavior’ is able to gain access to super-human knowledge that is sufficient for alleviating this anxiety. Nissinen, Prophecy and Omen Divination, 341. This reading avoids what Cryer called ‘the silly—but widely held—belief that divination has to do with “predicting the future.”’ Cryer, Divination in Ancient Israel, 122, see also n. 1.
Chapter 6. Conclusion

1.6. Legitimacy and authority

A red thread which runs between the three texts of Jer 1.4–19, 23.9–40 and 27.1–28.17 is a concern for prophetic legitimacy. Too often, biographical readings locate the authority or legitimacy of a prophet in their personal qualities, even in purely ‘literary’ constructs of biography.\(^8\) Cultic critiques of unfaithfulness toward YHWH are read as indictments of moral character;\(^9\) the divine council is borne out of ‘intimacy with YHWH’ that is proven in personal conduct,\(^10\) an encouragement to pray is mockingly ironic.\(^11\) Claims such as these miss the point. Good people can give bad advice, and the pious can be naïve. Also, especially in the ancient world, it would be a risky enterprise to take the word of an upstanding individual against the advice of trusted institutions. In reality, human decision-making is a complex enterprise and the prophets, as diviners, were a part of a complex social and cultural fabric that viewed the divine realm as an important source of knowledge.\(^12\) Prophets appealed to a variety of means by which they could claim trustworthiness; the important first step is to at least recognise that they felt the need to do so, and the second is to identify the patterns of these appeals.

Nearly every aspect of 1.4–10 is directly related to the issue of legitimacy: divine support from the womb (1.5); Jeremiah's low rank as a נער (1.6); being ‘sent’ and ‘commanded’ to go and speak on YHWH’s behalf (1.7); the encouraging expression to ‘fear not’ and reassurance (1.8; cf. 1.19); YHWH placing his word in Jeremiah’s mouth (1.9); being ‘appointed’ (טולק hiphil) to a position of authority (1.10). Two visions portray Jeremiah as an effective prophet in 1.11–14 (cf. הובא לארות in 1.12). In the face of opposition, Jeremiah will be a fortress resistant to attack (1.18).

Criticisms in Jer 23.9–15 point to the failures of prophets and priests to fulfil their cultic obligations. In 23.16–22, the concepts of being sent (שלח), commanded (זוהי) and spoken to (דבר) in 23.16–22 follow the pattern of ancient Near Eastern conception of prophecy. These ideas are conceptually related to legitimacy as they claim authorisation for a prophet to speak on behalf of the deity. Similarly, the use of visions in a cooperative

\(^8\) For example, Fischer, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 143.
\(^9\) Epp-Tiessen, *Concerning the Prophets*, 206.
\(^10\) Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 74, 81.
\(^12\) Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 121–22.
relationship with speech function to legitimate prophetic speech (cf. 1.11–14). The references to the divine council in 23.18, 22 are concerned with prophetic legitimacy; there is good reason to read this as another reference to visionary experience underwriting a prophetic message with greater authority.

In distinction to their divinatory colleagues, prophets who speak in YHWH’s name are accused of not being sent in Jer 27.15 (cf. 27.9, 14). Given the shared language in 27.10 and 27.15, it seems clear that the motif of ‘being sent’ is specially reserved for diviners who are called a נביא. Jeremiah’s general statement on prophecy in 28.8–9 highlights the motif of being sent; it is prophetic authorisation and legitimacy that is at stake in 28.9, as modifies the thematic verb שלח. The prophet who is ‘sent’ can be relied on for good advice.

2. Contributions to research
In addition to the contributions to the so-called ‘false prophecy’ debate outlined above, a few aspects of this investigation concern other debates concerning prophecy. I have selected two which are closely related to the themes of this work: (1) the definition of נביא; and (2) cultic prophecy.

2.1. Definition of נביא
According to the etymological view, the lexeme נביא derives from Akkadian nabû and should be understood as ‘one who is called’. Two aspects of this claim are questionable in light of this investigation. First, there is little data in the Hebrew Bible that makes use of this sense of ‘call’. In Jeremiah, prophet’s commission or claim to legitimacy is never described with קרה but always with שלח or צוה. Similarly, the active meaning supported by Fleming, ‘one who calls’, only finds marginal support. In 1 Kgs 18.26, the prophets of Baal call on the name of Baal with the expectation that they will summon his presence (cf. 1 Kgs 18.29), and in 2 Kgs 5.11, Elisha is expected to call upon the name of YHWH in order to heal someone’s sickness. Fleming suggests that the biblical portrait emphasises the ‘divine initiative in prophecy’, and rejects messages that ‘come from the prophet’s own mind (see, e.g., Ezek 13:17)’; so, he concludes that the active sense of נביא is ‘unconsciously displayed’
in the ‘activity of illegitimate prophets.’\textsuperscript{826} Not only is this speculative, but it’s basic argument dresses the evolutionary paradigm of ‘primitive’ and ‘classical’ prophecy in etymological garb. In a similar vein, Mullen, claims that the sense of נביא as ‘one who is called’ is evident in the prophet’s participation in the divine council, ‘for the prophet was called to proclaim the will of the deity which was issued from the assembly.’\textsuperscript{827} At the end of his etymological discussion, Stökl admits that there is ‘no indication that Israelites or Judeans would have understood it to mean anything else but simply “prophet” in the post-exilic period’.\textsuperscript{828}

It is far more productive to explore the semantic relations of the lexeme נביא in order to define it. From a semantic perspective, as I have outlined it in Jeremiah, it is more informative to say that הנב and נביא are semantically related, that הנביא is strongly associated with communication, worship and religious service. From these observations, one can then proceed to describe and explain the construct of prophecy and what it means to be a נביא. I am afraid that the seminal views of Barr are too often acknowledged but passed over in discussions of the meaning of נביא. Therefore my appraisal of the value of the etymological definition of נביא as ‘one who is called’, outside of purely historical discussions of language use, is largely negative.

2.2. Cultic prophecy

What relationship did prophecy have to other established institutions in ancient Israel? This continues to be one of the driving questions in research on prophets. Organised worship, as practiced in rituals and sacral locations, is one such institution that has attracted significant attention in modern scholarship.\textsuperscript{829} ‘Cultic prophecy’, a term for prophetic activity which was practiced in cultic or liturgical settings, has been the subject of much debate since the early 20th century. Strongly influenced by form-criticism, the debate arose largely from the recognition that aspects of the psalms closely resembled prophetic speech.\textsuperscript{830} Because the psalter is thought to reflect the cultic practices of ancient Israel,

\textsuperscript{826} Fleming, Etymological Origins of the Hebrew ה’ב, 223.
\textsuperscript{827} Mullen, Divine Council, 216.
\textsuperscript{828} Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 167.
\textsuperscript{829} Blenkinsopp, History of Prophecy, 22-25. For much of the following, I have found Hilber’s review of scholarship to be very helpful; see Hilber, Cultic Prophecy in the Psalms, 1-39.
\textsuperscript{830} Gunkel and Mowinckel represent the major positions in the early debates on this topic. Gunkel
the presence of prophetic speech in the psalms suggests, by extension, that prophets were involved cultic practices along with other religious functionaries.

Gunkel, saw the ‘prophetic speech’ of the psalter as essentially imitative; speech-forms of prophetic proclamation made their way into cultic practice by means of shared eschatological theology, which were then articulated by priests in the cultic ritual.\textsuperscript{530} Mowinckel, in contrast, asserted that these psalms originated in speech by prophets in cultic contexts and were later adopted into the psalter from the cult.\textsuperscript{834} For the most part, the debate is roughly divided between supporters of the views of Gunkel and Mowinckel.\textsuperscript{531}

Part of the disagreement between Gunkel and Mowinckel, as Hilber notes, regarded their differing perspectives on how prophecy is defined. While Mowinckel thought anyone who was able to provide answers to inquiries concerning the divine will,\textsuperscript{534} Gunkel thought that because this definition was so broad, it ‘created a space in the cult for prophets where none actually exists.’\textsuperscript{835} However, as Barton points out, the notion of ‘cult’ is part of the problem in these discussions. Scholars operate with such a variety of festivals, liturgies, rituals and celebrations in their conceptions of the cult that it becomes difficult to know what it is prophets are associated with in the debate.\textsuperscript{836}

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\textsuperscript{530} Gunkel, Einleitung in die Psalmen, zu Ende geführt von J. Begrich, 4. Auflage, Göttingen, 1985, 330, 346-47, 373-74. In general agreement with Gunkel's position, see, e.g., Rowley, Nature of Prophecy, HTbR 38 (1945), 1–38; Quell, Wahre und falsche Propheten, 51-52; Spieckermann, Rede Gottes und Wort Gottes, in: Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung, ed. Seybold and Zenger, HBS 1, Freiburg in Breisgau, 1994, 157–73; Hossfeld, Das Prophetische in den Psalmen, in: Ich bewirke das Heil und erschaffe das Unheil (Jesaja 45, 7), ed. Diedrich and Willmes, FZB 88, Würzburg, 1998, 223–43. As Hilber notes, part of how Gunkel and Begrich ruled out prophets from being the speakers of these statements in the cultic liturgy is that their “free inspiration of the moment” (as well as ecstatic behaviour) would preclude them from participating in the more fixed, ritual forms of the cult. Hilber, Cultic Prophecy in the Psalms, 8.

\textsuperscript{831} Mowinckel, Psalmenstudien, II, SVSK.HF 1921/6, Kristiania, 1922, 2–4. See also Mowinckel, Psalmenstudien, III, SVSK.HF 1922/1, Kristiania, 1923, 4-29. In general agreement with Mowinckel's position, see, e.g., Rad, Die falschen Propheten, 113-17; Plöger, Priester und Prophet; Johnson, Cultic Prophet, revised ed., Cardiff, 1962; Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel, 78-83; Eissfeldt, Einleitung in das Alte Testament, 94-100; Jeremias, Kultprophetie und Gerichtsverkündigung, 1-10.

\textsuperscript{531} A third perspective, outlined by Gillingham, shifts the discussion to the post-exilic period; while there is little evidence of oracular material in the psalter, and it is mostly ‘indirect, future-orientated, didactic’, the psalter is received in the post-exilic period as ‘words now imbued with a prophetic spirit’ fulfilled in the present. Gillingham, New Wine and Old Wineskins, in: Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel, ed. Day, LH-BOTS 531, London, 2010, 379–90. Examples of this perspective include Spieckermann, Rede Gottes und Wort Gottes; Hossfeld, Das Prophetische in den Psalmen.

\textsuperscript{834} Mowinckel, Psalmenstudien, II, 5.

\textsuperscript{534} Quotation from Hilber, Cultic Prophecy in the Psalms, 7. For Gunkel's views, see Gunkel, Einleitung in die Psalmen, 368-74, esp. 371-72.

\textsuperscript{835} Barton, Prophets and the Cult, in: Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel, ed. Day, LH-BOTS 422, London,
Chapter 6. Conclusion

One particular issue in the cultic prophecy debate concerns the relationship between priests and prophets. The results of my analysis may prove useful to this debate insofar as it confirms the close association between נבאים and נביאים. Both of these terms are related to the same domain of activity, and appear to function together as collaborative partners. The shared conceptual themes and semantic domains of the two terms, as well as implicit assumption in critical contexts that the נביאים and נביאים share concerns for the regulation of the cult,\(^\text{837}\) suggests that it is highly likely that prophecy and cult are closely related. My conclusions follow those of Hilber when he notes that in Jeremiah there is a great deal of cooperation between prophets and priests that suggests the cult is their shared domain (e.g. Jer 20.1–6; 23.11, 33–40; 29.26; 35.4). In his view, ‘evidence favours the existence of cult prophets who contributed to worship and were not merely using the occasion of a religious gathering to proclaim a message outside of the text of the liturgy.’\(^\text{838}\) However, rather than use the term cultic prophecy de Jong prefers to ‘simply call it prophecy, since in historical terms prophecy was always someway related to the cult.’\(^\text{839}\) The findings of this investigation, I think, support the view of de Jong better than that of Hilber. The importance of the cult for prophecy in Jeremiah should not be underestimated.

3. Summary

Over the course of this study I have referred to the study of prophecy in Jeremiah in terms of a conversation, a series of ‘things we talk about’. Not only is the scholarly conversation rich in perspectives, but so also is the text of Jeremiah. Prophecy is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon in both literary and social form. In bringing these two constructs together and drawing on each in order to explain the nature of prophecy in Jeremiah, I have contributed to a series of long-standing debates in a new way. As a contribution to the modern-day, critical discourse on prophecy, it is my hope that this work will help to keep the conversation going.

\(^{837}\) Zevit, Prophet versus Priest Antagonism Hypothesis, 192.

\(^{838}\) Hilber, Cultic Prophecy in the Psalms, 29.

\(^{839}\) Jong, Fallacy of “True and False”, 17. See also Jong, Isaiah, 294–98.

2005, 308–41. Another complication is the fact that categories of ‘cultic’ and ‘royal’ are often blurred in the Weltanschauung of ancient texts, which means that it is also difficult to differentiate between prophetic functions in temples against those in royal courts. See, e.g., Hilber, Royal Cultic Prophecy, in: “Thus Speaks Ishtar of Arbela”, ed. Barstad and Gordon, Winona Lake, IN, 2013, 161–86.


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