ALLUSIONS IN JEREMIAH 4:23–26: LOCAL OR GLOBAL SCOPE?

Slaviša Janković, PhD, Assistant Professor of Old Testament,
Middle East University, Beirut, Lebanon

Scholars have noted a special status of Jer 4:23–26, and for some 4:23–28, in Jeremiah and the rest of the OT. It has been described as "the most powerful descriptions of the Day of the Lord in the OT" [1], "the most dramatic one its kind" [2], and one can add a unique passage in the book of Jeremiah [3]. Some leading scholars of Jeremiah hold that the phrase תהו ובהו (formless and void) [4], in Jer 4:23 alludes to Gen 1:2. This allusion led them to conclude that this literary unit conveys universal undoing of creation, i.e. de-creation [5]. The present study affirms that the allusions of Jer 4:23–26 to Gen 1:2 and other texts in Gen 1–3 are well established [6], but suggests that allusive links between Jer 4:23, along with vv. 24–26, to Gen 1–2 do not convey the idea of universal de-creation of the entire planet, but rather describe destruction of the land of Judah [7]. This understanding of Jer 4:23–26 is based on the contextual reading of Jer 4:23–26 along with its allusions and the texts alluded to.

The present study unfolds in five steps. The first step is to verify whether Jer 4:23–26 is a distinct pericope and establish delineation of its context. Secondly, the overall meaning of the context will be established and later reinforced by its allusions. The next step is to establish

---

[1] John Bright, *Jeremiah*, AB 21 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), 32–33.

[2] John A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, NICOT 22 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 230.

[3] Based on a detailed study of doublets in Jeremiah by Geoffrey H. Parke-Taylor, Jer 4:23–26 is a unique text within the book of Jeremiah. Geoffrey H. Parke-Taylor, *The Formation of the Book of Jeremiah: Doublets and Recurring Phrases*, SBLMS 51 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), See also Louis Stulman, *Jeremiah*, AOTC (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005),

[4] The phrase is considered a hendiadys. See "תהו," *HALOT* 4: 1690; Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 139; Hyun Chul Paul Kim, "Tsunami, Hurricane, and Jeremiah 4:23–28," *BTB* 3 (2007): 55.

[5] James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *JBL* 88 (1969): 11; William L. Holladay and Paul D. Hanson, *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 1–25*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 164; Brevard S. Childs, *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament*, SBT 27 (Naperville: A.R. Allenson, 1960), 76–77; Bright, Jeremiah, 32–33; Andrew Watterson, *Commentary on Jeremiah: The Word, the Words, and the World* (Waco: Word Books, 1977), 66; Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 65–66; Michael A. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 321; Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah Closer Up: The Prophet and the Book*, HBM 31 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010), 43; Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 230; Elmer A. Martens, *Jeremiah*, BCBC (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1986), 62–63; William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah: A Fresh Reading* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1990), 84-85; John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 85–86.

[6] For compelling arguments that Jer 4:23–26 alludes to Gen 1–3 see Michael Fishbane, "Jeremiah IV 23–26 and Job III 3–13: A Recovered Use of the Creation Pattern," *VT* 21 (1971): 152; Nancy C. Lee, "Exposing a Buried Subtext in Jeremiah and Lementations: Going after Baal and ... Abel," in *Troubling Jeremiah*, ed. A. R. Diamond, et al. vol. 260 of JSOTSS, eds. John Jarick, et al. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 394; Walter Brueggemann, *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah*, OTT (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 135–143; Kim, "Tsunami, Hurricane, and Jeremiah 4:23–28," 55; Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 21B (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 142, 451; Ibid., *Jeremiah Closer Up*, 43; Bernhard W. Anderson, *Creation Versus Chaos: The Reinterpretation of Mythical Symbolism in the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 12; Dalit Rom-Shiloni, "Jeremiah and Inner Biblical Exegesis," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jeremiah*, ed. Louis Stulman and Edward Silver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 304.

[7] Theodore Ferdinand Karl, *Bible Commentary: Jeremiah* (Saint Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1953), 70.

the connection between Jer 4:23–26 and its context. The fourth step is identification of the allusions in Jer 4:23–26. Finally, the present study will suggest the role of תהו ובהו and other allusions in Jer 4:23–26.

I. LITERARY DISTINCTIVENESS OF JEREMIAH 4:23–26

The confirmation of Jer 4:23–26 as a pericope is in twofold contradistinction to the alternative claim regarding the delimitations of this vision. Firstly, some scholars believe that Jer 4:23–28 is a pericope rather than Jer 4:23–26 [8], and then claim that vv. 27 and 28, especially the phrases "Yet I will not execute a complete destruction" and "I will not change My mind, nor will I turn from it", respectively, point to that direction. The emphasis of v. 27 that God will not destroy the entire world matches the fact that God did not destroy the entire world at the event of flood. He saved Noah and his family. Accordingly, v. 27 alludes to the Flood account (Gen 6:8.13.14.17.18; 7:4; 9:11.15). At the same time, v. 27 contradicts God's plan "to make an end to all flesh" embedded in God's plans for humanity at the time of the flood (Gen 6:13, 17; 7:4). Secondly, the fact that God would not repent from the destruction of the world conveyed in v. 28 refutes the facts that God did repent for creating the humans who had become evil (Gen 6:6–7) [9]. The final analysis of such interpretation of the allusions suggests that the contradictions should be kept together. Namely, "If read together, Jeremiah's vision heightens the notion that God is determined not to change the divine plan of bringing destruction" [10]. This interpretation introduces confusion about the purpose of the allusions. It suffers greatly since it eliminates one of the two concepts; total destruction, in this case.

Victor Eppstein marshaled a crucial insight that discredits cosmic interpretation of Jer 4:23–26, advocated by John Bright as one of the leading proponents of this view, when he stated: "One difficulty with Bright's interpretation lies, of course, with in the fact that Jeremiah's view of history, like that of the other literary prophets, was as incompatible with apocalyptic eschatology as von Rad cogently argues." [11]. This line of thinking about the allusions in Jer 4:23–26 contains contradictions and as such poses substantial difficulties to determine the purpose of Jer 4:23–28 thus invalidating the claim that Jer 4:23–28 itself is a pericope [12].

Secondly, accepting Jer 4:23–28 as a distinct pericope rules out significant sequences and developments of thought in the poem, which will be discussed below. Verses 27–28 are an explanation of the vision found in Jer 4:23–26 [13], thus representing the second part of the inclusion. As such they do not belong to Jer 4:23–26 pericope.

---

[8] Kim, "Tsunami, Hurricane, and Jeremiah 4:23–28," 57. See also Kathleen M. O'Connor, "The Tears of God and Divine Character in Jeremiah 2–9," in *Troubling Jeremiah*, ed. A. R. Diamond, et al. vol. 260 of JSOTSS, eds. John Jarick, et al. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 394; Daniel C. Olson, "Jeremiah 4.5-31 and Apocalyptic Myth," *JSOT* 73 (1997): 84; Victor Eppstein, "The Day of Yahweh in Jeremiah 4:23–28," *JBL* 87 (1968): 93; Angela Bauer, "Dressed to be Killed: Jeremiah 4:29-31 as an Example for the Function of Female Imagery in Jeremiah," in *Troubling Jeremiah*, ed. A. R. Diamond, et al. vol. 260 of JSOTSS, eds. John Jarick, et al. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 295. J. A Thompson's position is contradictive as he seems to hold both 4:23–26 and 4:23–28 are literary units. See pages in his commentary on Jeremiah respectively. Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, lxxxiii, 229.

[9] Kim, "Tsunami, Hurricane, and Jeremiah 4:23–28," 57.

[10] Ibid., "Tsunami, Hurricane, and Jeremiah 4:23–28," 57.

[11] Eppstein, "The Day of Yahweh," 95.

[12] For additional critique of the view that Jer 4:23–28 is a periscope see Terence E. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, Smyth & Helwys Bible commentary (Macon, Ga.: Smith & Helwys Pub., 2002), 100–101.

[13] Holladay and Hanson, Jeremiah 1, 151; Jacques van Ruiten, *Back to the Chaos: The Relationship Between Jeremiah 4:23–26 and Gen 1: Re-interpretations of Genesis 1 in the Context of Judaism, Ancient Philosophy, Christianity, and Modern Physics* in The Creation of Heaven and Earth (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 23.

1. *Literary Pointers in Favor of Literary Distinctiveness of Jeremiah 4:23–26*

The beginning and end markers of Jer 4:19–31, the immediate literary context of Jer 4:23–26[14], also confirm the parameters of the pericope. Namely, within this literary unit, the beginning of Jer 4:23–26 is delineated by the shift of the content and literary structure [15], while its end is delineated by the shift of content, prophetic formula, and person [16]. The poem is additionally separated from its literary context by the use of the same word, ראיתי, at the beginning of each line [17]. The pericope is also defined by the structure of its immediate context, as the following structure shows:

- A.   v. 19 Jeremiah cries (a belly [מעה]), a sound of war, a trumpet (קוֹל שׁוֹפָר), alarm (תְּרוּעָה)
  - B.   v. 20 The whole land is devastated (שׁדד), tents (אֹהֶל) and curtains (יְרִיעָה)
    - C.   v. 21 The presence of the war; call of a trumpet (קוֹל שׁוֹפָר) and a standard (נֵס)
      - D.   v. 22 Yahweh's first statement
        - a. For My people are foolish, they know Me not,
        - b. They are stupid children, and they have no understanding,
        - c. They are shrewd to do evil, but to do good they do not know,
        - E.   vv. 23–26 Four prophet's views (center of a literary unit)
          - a Earth and heaven (4+3)
          - b mountains and hills (4+2)
          - a' man and birds (4+3)
          - b' fruitful land and cities (4+2)
          - c from the Lord and His anger (2+3= finale)
      - D'. v. 27–28 Yahweh's second statement
        - a. Devastation but not total (declaration-negation) [v. 27]
        - b. Earth mourns and Heaven is dark (declaration-declaration) [v. 28 a-b]
        - c. Devastation definite (double declaration-double negation) v.28 c, d
    - C'. v. 29 The cities forsaken, a voice of the horseman (קוֹל פָּרָשׁ) and a bowman (קֶשֶׁת)
  - B'. v. 30 The Desolated One (שׁבד)
- A'. v. 31 She cries (birth pains [צָרָה]), the voice of the daughter of Zion (קוֹל בַּת־צִיּוֹן) [18].

The literary markers identified at the beginning and the end of Jer 4:23–36, its literary distinctiveness and place within its immediate literary context of Jer 4:19–31, and the shift in content between 4:19–22 and 4:27–31 form compelling arguments to view Jer 4:23–26 as a separate literary unit versus claims that Jer 4:23–28 is a literary unit [19]. Additional details in favor of this position are shared below.

---

[14] The immediate context of Jer 4:23–26 consists of three distinct pericopes, 4:19–22; 4:23–26, and 4:27–31. The shifts in content in 4:19 (content: proclamation/personal experience, person: corporate–Judah/personal–Jeremiah or God) and in 5:1 are in place, person and theme (shift in location: unknown/ Jerusalem, theme: pain/search).

[15] In terms of content the text moves from prophet's personal experience to vision whereas in terms of literary structure it shifts from an inclusion to a synthetic parallelism.

[16] In terms of content the text alternates from vision to its explanation marked by introductory formula: "For thus says the Lord." A person changes from Jeremiah to God.

[17] William McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 106; Timothy M. Willis, *Jeremiah/Lamentations*, CPNIVCOTS (Joplin: College Press Pub. Co., 2002), 75.

[18] The structure was proposed by Dragan Stojanović. (personal correspondence). I added "C" element, as a finale of the central part along with other small modification and additions.

[19] For the same view see also Muilenburg, "Form Criticism," 11; John Goldingay, *God's Prophet, God's Servant: A Study in Jeremiah and Isaiah 40-55* (Carlisle, UK: The Paternoster Press, 1994), 32–33; Lundbom, *Jeremiah Closer Up*, 34, 42–43; Andrew J. Dearman, *Jeremiah and Lamentations: From Biblical Text ... to Contemporary Life*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 87; Marjo C. A. Korpel, "Who Is Speaking in

2. *Literary Genre of Jeremiah 4:23–26*

Poetry is an undisputed genre of Jer 4:23–26 [20], and it is evident that the poem consists of two stanzas which are recognized by its literary pattern and grammar [21]. At the level of lines, the poem is arranged in a parallel pattern [22], with constant change in different levels of thought [23]. These levels of thought imply that the poem refers to a universal scope in vv. 23 and 25 while it refers to a local situation in vv. 24 and 26 [24]. In addition, synthetic parallelism [25], keeps the distinction between the two levels of thought evident, as the diagram shows:

> a v. 23 Earth and heaven
>   b v. 24 mountains and hills
> a' v. 25 man and birds
>   b' v. 26 fertile land and cities
> c v. 26c the anger of the Lord [26].

Nevertheless, a conceptual framework of Jer 2–6, as a wider literary context of Jer 4:23–26, contains two facts that disprove the universal scope in vv. 23 and 25. First, due to the covenantal backdrop identified in Jer 2–6, it is plausible to suggest that the entire poem deals with a local context; the land of Judah. Second, the allusions in these two verses do not refer to a universal scope in order to introduce universal destruction but rather to reinforce the impending local destruction [27]. The rhetorical flavor of these text is highlighted below.

Of significance is an auditory pattern with obvious and steady syllable diminution. According to the Masoretic vocalization, the first line has twenty-five syllables, the second twenty-one, the third twenty, and the fourth line has nineteen syllables [28], which places the emphasis on the opening line. This syllabic diminution stresses the first allusion in the poem, which is already emphasized by its priority in the sequence.

Jeremiah 4:19-22?: The Contribution of Unit Delimitation to an Old Problem," *VT* 59 (2009)): 96–97; F. B. Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, NAC 16 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1993), 86; McKane, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah, 106; Katherine M. Hayes, "Jeremiah IV 23: tōhû without bōhû," *VT* 47, (1997): 247; Peter C. Craigie, *Jeremiah 1–25*, WBC 26 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 81.

[20] William L. Holladay, "The Recovery of Poetic Passages of Jeremiah," *JBL* 85 (1966): 403.

[21] "…the first one is characterized by starting with the pattern of expression which places the object between ראיתי and והנה, the second stanza is characterized by placing the object after the pattern of expression." Jacque Doukhan, "The Literary Structure of the Genesis Creation Story" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1978), 64; Holladay, "The Recovery of Poetic Passages of Jeremiah," 405.

[22] It generally features two sets (or panel) of units, in which the units of the first set are matched in the same order by those of the second set. David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 28–29.

[23] v. 23 corresponds to v. 25, while v. 24 corresponds to v. 26." Doukhan, "The Literary Structure of the Genesis Creation Story," 64.

[24] Ibid., "The Literary Structure of the Genesis Creation Story," 64.

[25] The thought presented in the first line is developed or completed in the second one. Fishbane, "Jeremiah IV 23–26 and Job III 3–13," 151. See also Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 227–228; Ángel Manuel Rodríguez and Gerhard Pfandl, "Reading Psalms and the Wisdom Literature," in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. George W. Reid (Silver Springs: Biblical Research Institute, 2005), 165.

[26] Holladay, "The Recovery of Poetic Passages of Jeremiah," 405; Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 114.

[27] Holladay, "The Recovery of Poetic Passages of Jeremiah," 405; Doukhan, "The Literary Structure of the Genesis Creation Story," 64–65.

[28] Holladay, "The Recovery of Poetic Passages of Jeremiah," 405.

II. THE KEY THEME OF JEREMIAH 2–6

Jeremiah 2–6 is a broad literary context of Jer 4:23–26 which is evident by the introductory formulas [29], the shift in content and possibly place and time in Jer 2:1 [30], and by the shift of place, content, time and genre in Jer 7:1 [31]. The covenantal backdrop of Jer 2–6 consists of two themes; national apostasy (2:5–4:2) and punishment from the north (4:5–6:30) [32]. The content and form of ch. 2 fits a so-called *rib* pattern of a political lawsuit when a lesser king or an inferior offends his overlord or superior [33]. Jeremiah's first appeal is presented as if God had a case against His people, who had entered into forbidden alliances, both with surrounding nations and their deities [34].

The dominance of the covenant theme in Jeremiah has been noted by many scholars [35]. One of the key indicators of this dominance is a frequent use of the covenantal verb שׁוּב "to return, repent." It is used in the book of Jeremiah more than in any other prophetic book [36]. Holladay singled out one hundred sixty-four covenantal uses of שׁוּב in the OT. Based on the frequent uses of this verb he stated that:

"Almost 30% of all the instances in the OT are to be found in the book of Je (48 instances), while in the book of Is, of roughly the same length, we find 6% of the occurrences (10). The root *subh* in covenantal contexts is thus a usage of marginal importance to some writers and sources in the OT, and of great importance to others, particularly to those in the Jeremianic tradition… " [37].

---

[29] It is marked by two YHWH-word transmission formulas in 2:1 and again 7:1. Marvin A. Sweeney, "Structure and Redaction in Jeremiah 2-6," in *Troubling Jeremiah*, ed. A. R. Diamond, et al. vol. 260 of JSOTSS, eds. John Jarick, et al. (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 208.

[30] The narrative shifts from speaking about Jeremiah and his call to a new section which will deal with Israel and eventually with Judah.

[31] The text shifts from the unknown place to the known, i.e. from an unnamed place in Jerusalem to the door of the temple, from the judgment/curse flow to a discussion, and finally from poetry-prose mix to a narrative. Besides these delimitation points the opening verses 2:1–3 form an opposite counterpart to the closing verses 6:27–30. Robert P. Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant: Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 115.

[32] Ibid., *From Chaos to Covenant*, 60; Michael J. Hunter, *A Guide to Jeremiah* (Cambridge: University Press, 1993), 37; Mark E. Biddle, "Jeremiah: Content and Structure," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jeremiah*, ed. Louis Stulman and Edward Silver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 255; Huey, Jeremiah, Lamentations, 60–103; R. E. Clements, "Jeremiah 1-25 and the Deuteronomistic History," in *Understanding Poets and Prophets: Essays in Honour of George Wishart Anderson*, ed. A. Graeme Auld, vol. 152 of JSOTSS, eds. David J. A. Clines and Philip R. Davies (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 97; Muilenburg, "Form Criticism," 5. See also Table 1 of the present study, too.

[33] "The shape was as follows: 1. An appeal to the vassal to pay heed, and a summons to the earth and the sky to act as witnesses; 2. A series of questions each of which carried an implied accusation; 3. a recollection of past benefits bestowed on the vassal with some statement of the offenses by which he had broken his treaty (covenant); 4. A reference to the futility of ritual compensations, recourse to foreign cults, or other kinds of aid; 5. A declaration of culpability and a threat of judgment." Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 159–160. See also Lee, Exposing a Buried Subtext in Jeremiah and Lementations, 96; Louis Stulman, "The Prose Sermons as Hermeneutical Guide to Jeremiah 1-25: The Deconstruction of Judah's Symbolic World," in *Troubling Jeremiah*, ed. A. R. Diamond, et al. vol. 260 of JSOTSS, eds. John Jarick, et al. (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 48.

[34] John M. Bracke, *Jeremiah 1–29*, WBC M. Bracke (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 33; Stulman, The Prose Sermons as Hermeneutical Guide to Jeremiah 1-25, 48; O'Connor, The Tears of God, 389.

[35] Lundbom, *Jeremiah Closer Up*, 51, 65–68.

[36] Thompson, The Book of Jeremiah, 76.

[37] William L. Holladay, *The Root Subh in the Old Testament with Particular Reference to Its Usages in Covenantal Contexts* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1958), 118.

Jeremiah 2–6 abounds with allusions that reinforce the dominance of the covenant theme in Jeremiah. Those relevant to this research are listed in Table 1:

TABLE 1: The Allusions of Jer 2–6		
Jer 2:6	עלה – bring up (to bring up)	Exo 3:8; 17:3; 32:1.4.7.8.23; Num 20,5; 21:5; 32:11; Lev 26:13.45; Deut 5:6; 20,1
Jer 2:7	טוב – good	Deut 8:7–10; 28:12
Jer 2:7, 4:26	כרמל – fruitfulness	Deut 8:7–9; 11:10–15 emphasis on land's fruitfulness (Gen 1:9–13 functionality)
Jer 2:13.17.19.29; 5:7.19	עזב – to forsake, abandon	Deut 28:20; 29:24; 31:16; 31:6=17; 11:16
Jer 2:21; 4:1; 5:23; 6:28	סור – to turn aside	Exo 32:8, Deut 4:9; 5:32; 9:12.16; 11:16.28;17:11.17.20; 28:14; 32:29
Jer 2:32; 3:21	שׁכח — to forget	Deut 4:9.23.31; 6:12; 8:11.14.19
Jer 4:7.27; 5:17; 6:6	Cities desolated	Lev 26:31 (sanctuary=Lam 4:1).33; Deut 28:3.16
Jer 4:27; 5:17; 6:6	שְׁמָמָה – desolation	Lev 26:22–35, 43
Jer 4:27; 5:18	Few in number–remnant	Lev 26:39.44; Deut 28:62
Jer 5:17	Enemy אכל crops	Lev 26:16; Deut 28:33
Jer 5:17	Enemy אכל children	Lev 26:29; Deut 28:32.53
Jer 5:17	Enemy אכל cattle	Deut 28:31.51
Jer 5:19	Exile	Lev 26:41

1. *A Proposed Identification of the Allusions in Jer 4–6*

The first theme (2:5–4:2) of Jer 2–6 contains allusion to the covenant found in the phrase "...the Lord who brought you up (עלה) out of the land of Egypt..." Jer 2:6 [38]. This allusion refers to the covenant between God and Abraham, for the Exodus partially fulfills the promise to Abraham. It is also the basis for the covenant between God and Israel and the historical beginning of the Hebrew nation (Ex 20,2) [39].

The next allusion is כרמל, found in 2:7 can refer to either 1) a city 12 km. south of Hebron; 2) a mountain ridge south of Haifa; or 3) fruitfulness as a general concept. Fruitfulness is the only possible meaning in this context since Mount Carmel is in the North region which had already been abandoned by Jeremiah's time, while the city Carmel is in the

---

[38] Ibid., *Jeremiah: A Fresh Reading*, 36, 43–44.
[39] "Covenant," *SDABD* 8:243–244.

Southern desert region, which is barren. In Deut 8:7–9 and 11:10–15 God revealed that the Promised Land would be very fruitful (כרמל) [40]. So, כרמל itself alludes to the Promised Land.

The next set of allusions consists of three verbs, עזב [41], סור [42], and שכח [43], employed to denote the breaking of the covenant. The most vital verb is עָזַב, used in Deut 28:20 as the main reason for the curses and the first listed evil committed in Canaan.

The approaching judgment, considered a covenantal curse, is introduced at the beginning of the second theme (4:5–6:30) of Jer 2–6 [44]. Lexis used for the desolation of the cities in 4:26 and in covenantal texts is different but that does not prevent one from establishing a thematic link between the desolation of the cities in Jer 4:26, on the one hand, and Lev 26:33, 33 and Deut 28:16, on the other hand. The desolation of the land in Jer 4:27 and Lev 26:33 is expressed by the same noun שממה.

The allusion in Jer 5:17, refers to the enemies of Judah eating its crops, her children and cattle. The verb used in Jer 5:17, אכל, and in covenantal texts three more emphatic verbs, נתן, טבח, and גזל, are utilized to convey the destruction of the children and cattle [45]. Also, the objects of the enemy's actions with regards to the crops are also different [46]. However, this does not prevent the reader from recognizing a link because both texts referring to the crops, cattle and children as the objects of the enemy's harmful actions.

Leviticus 26 portrays different levels of curses starting with the least severe and ending with the most severe ones [47]. Except for Lev 26:21–22, Jeremiah choose one point from each of the levels which may demonstrate that Jeremiah's high acquittance with the penalties for covenant betrayal. Having in mind the overall covenantal background of Jer 2–6 it is highly probable that he referred back to the texts of covenantal curses.

The final stage of curses, exile, is introduced in Jer 5:19 thus alluding to already known and declared disciplinary measure for infidelity in Lev 26:41. These two texts speak from different perspectives but the final result is the same, exile. Regardless of the intensity of the curses found in Deut 28:62 and Lev 26:44 God stated He would not totally destroy His people, neither would He forget them.

In summary, the allusions of the first theme in Jer 2–6 point back to the covenant and its contravention, while the allusions of the second theme point back to the covenantal curses incurred due to Israel's disloyalty. This list of allusions suggests that Jeremiah alluded to the covenant and its curses which he knew very well and intentionally used in his messages to the covenantal people.

---

[40] Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *The Prophecy of Jeremiah*, trans. James Martin BCOT 21 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952), 116.

[41] The first one is the most important because it is mentioned in Lev 26 and Deut 28 while the other two just represent similar ideas.

[42] Dynamic of the verb strongly relates the breaking of the covenant in Jer 2–6 to Deuteronomy. Out of 7 uses with the meaning of leaving God in Jeremiah, 4 of them are used in Jer 2–6. Interestingly, it is used only once in Deuteronomy, Exo 32:8 with a "breaking the covenant" meaning in entire Pentateuch.

[43] Similar to the previous one, this verb is not mentioned in the Pentateuch with the meaning of breaking the covenant except in Deuteronomy, as is stated in the Table 1.

[44] Holladay and Hanson, Jeremiah 1, 132; Stulman, The Prose Sermons as Hermeneutical Guide to Jeremiah 1-25, 48–49; O'Connor, The Tears of God, 391.

[45] Deut 28:32 reads it "Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people…" Deut 28: 31 reads it "Your ox shall be slaughtered before your eyes, but you will not eat of it; your donkey shall be torn away from you, and will not be restored to you; your sheep shall be given to your enemies..." Deut 28:51 contains אָכַל but summarizes domestic animals in פרי בהמתך "fruit of your domestic animals."

[46] Lev 26:16 reads "you will sow your seed uselessly, for your enemies will eat it up" and Deut 28:33 reads "A people whom you do not know shall eat up the produce of your ground and all your labors."

[47] Different levels of curses are located in the fooling passages: 26:14–17, 18–20, 21–22, 23–26, 27–39. John E. Hartley, *Leviticus*, WBC 4 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 456; Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 452.

Such different understanding of allusions of the wider literary context of Jer 4:23–26 presents a totally fresh background to Jer 4:23–26 and has a strong impact on its meaning, i.e. the destruction mentioned in the poem is oriented towards the land of Judah and not the entire world [48]. Since the unity of Jer 2–6 was disputed among theologians which rules out the suggested background of the poem, a discussion on this issue follows.

III. LITERARY AND CONCEPTUAL LINK BETWEEN JEREMIAH 4:23–26 AND JEREMIAH 2–6

Contrasting critical scholars who believed that disunity is obvious in Jer 2–6, Giorgio R. Castellino proved the coherence of Jer 2–6 [49], through similarity of literary structures, despite diversity of content and style [50]. Moreover, the connectedness of Jer 4:23–26 to these chapter on a lexical level also confirms its unity, especially the words listed in Table 2.

TABLE 2: The Linking Lexis of Jer 4:23–26 and Jer 2–6		
4:23	ארץ (earth, land)	2:7.15; 3:1–2.9.18; 4:5.7.20.27.28; 5:19.30; 6:8.12.19
4:23	שמים (heaven)	2:12; 4:28
4:24	הר (mountain)	3:6, 23
4:24	גבעה (hill)	2:20; 3:23
4:24	רעש (to shake oneself)	4:13; 6:14
4:26	כרמל (land of fruitfulness)	2:7

[48] The view that Jer 4:23–26 concerns the land of Judah is widely accepted among scholars in the past and nowadays. Ebenezer Henderson, *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah and that of The Lamentations* (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1851), 32; Bright, Jeremiah, 54; Dearman, Jeremiah and Lamentations, 87; Ludwig Köhler, *Old Testament Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), 423; Eppstein, "The Day of Yahweh," 95; Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant*, 66; Huey, Jeremiah, Lamentations, 86; R. K. Harrison, *Jeremiah and Lamentations: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 21 (Inter-Varsity Press, 2009), 77; Steed Vernyl Davidson, "Playing with Death: Violent Exceptions and Exceptional Violence in the Book of Jeremiah," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jeremiah*, ed. Louis Stulman and Edward Silver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 673; Mary Mills, "Jeremiah's Deathscapes," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jeremiah*, ed. Louis Stulman and Edward Silver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 412. The view of some scholars who see that in its final anlysis Jer 4:23–26 does refer to the land of Judah are valid. "The description of the destruction of the universe is a symbolic representation of the destruction of the land of Judah". Johannes Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), 127, 371 n. 152. For the same interpretation see Charles H. Dyer, *Jeremiah*, BKCOT 1 (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1985), 1136; Anderson, *Creation Versus Chaos*, 13; Craigie, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 81–82.

[49] Critical commentators see Jer 1–25 as a collection made up of larger or smaller fragments very different in style (poetry, prose, narratives, sayings, etc.) and content (prophecies, warnings, threats, autobiography, etc). Giorgio R. Castellino, "Observations on the Literary Structure of Some Passages in Jeremiah," *VT* 30 (1980): 398. R. E. Clement and Louis Stulman working out of different hermeneutical schools both concluded that Jer 2–6 represents a unit. Stulman, The Prose Sermons as Hermeneutical Guide to Jeremiah 1-25, 43, 48–49; Clements, Jeremiah 1-25 and the Deuteronomistic History, 94–107. Also, see Sweeney, Structure and Redaction in Jeremiah 2-6, 203; Carroll, Jeremiah, 168; Eppstein, "The Day of Yahweh," 96–97.

[50] Jeremiah's pattern consists of three phases: A. the subjective perception of the impending disaster, in a mood of oppressing anguish (4:19–22), B. the objective vision of the havoc in nature (4:23–26), and C. the impact of the catastrophe in full force, together with the vain (because insincere) waking up of the nation when disaster comes (4:27–31). For the 4 other passages see. Carroll, Jeremiah, 168; Eppstein, "The Day of Yahweh," 96–97.

4:26	עיר (town, city)	2:15; 4:5.7.16.29; 5:6.17; 6:6
4:26	חרון (anger, fury)	4:8

The lexis of Jer 4:23–26 is consistently used in Jer 2–6 with the same meaning or in reference to the same entities. An examination of the use of the following nouns ארץ [51], עיר [52], כרמל [53], גבעה [54], and חרון [55], along with the verb רעשׁ [56], indicates its unity. These two points imply that the content and the meaning of Jer 4:23–26 is organically embedded in the conceptual framework of Jer 2–6. Accordingly, covenantal curses form the backdrop of the poem thus influencing the interpretation of its content and meaning.

This claim is reinforced by the comparison between Jer 4:23–26 and other eschatological texts of the OT provided in Table 3.

TABLE 3: The Comparison of Eschatological Texts of OT and Jer 4:23–26									
	Joel	Hag	Zech	Zeph	Oba	Mal	Am	Isa	Ez
The day of the Lord	1:15; 2:1.11.31; 3:14	2:23	12:3–4.6; 14:6–7.13	1:7.14–18	1:15	4:5	5:18.20	13:6.9; 24:21; 26:1	38:10.19; 39:8.11
Surrounding cities	3:4.12.19	2:22	9:1–8; 11:1–3; 12:2–3.6; 14:2.3.12.14	1:4.5.11; 2:4–5.8–9.12–3:4	1:15.21			24:6–7.10	38:1.5–6; 39:6
All mankind	2:3.28.32; 3:2.9.12.19	2:22	11:6; 12:2–3	1:18; 3:6.8	1:15.21			24:6; 26:9.21; 25:7–8	38:20; 39:7.2.23

Besides other features of eschatological texts of the OT, they always refer to: 1. the day of the Lord accompanied by adjective such as great, terrible…, 2. the surrounding cities, countries, and 3. all mankind or Earth. None of these features appear in Jer 4:23–26. The fact that the poem does not contain the lexis of the eschatological OT texts can be taken as an additional argument toward a local destruction. This point fits the suggested covenantal backdrop, and in terms of it meaning it points against universal destruction or de-creation.

In summary, Jer 4:23–26 is embedded within covenantal background found Jer 2–6 demonstrated by the similarity of literary structures and lexis in covenantal curses in Lev 26 and Deut 28. In addition, a comparison of Jer 4:23–26 with other eschatological texts of the OT showed that this poem is not concerned with the end of the world but the people of Judah. Based on these findings, the present study adds additional arguments toward the

---

[51] The noun is used nineteen times referring to the land of Judah and also twelve times not referring to it.

[52] The noun is used eight times referring to the cities of Judah and four times not referring them.

[53] The noun is used five times in Jeremiah and out of three uses with the meaning of fruitfulness two are found in chapters Jer 2–6.

[54] Besides one occurrence in Jer 4:23–26 it is mention twice in Jer 2–6 which means three times out of a total of nine times in the entire book.

[55] Out of nine occurrences in the entire book, the noun is used two times in Jer 2–6.

[56] The verb is used only five times in the entire book and it is found three times in Jer 2–6.

understanding that Jer 4:23–26 is a prediction of a local not a universal destruction, i.e., destruction of Judah due to its covenantal unfaithfulness. This claim is in harmony with the entire Old Testament teaching that sin brings destruction to the one who commits it (Exod 20:5; Deut 30:15–20; Ezek 18:10–20). Such meaning of Jer 4:23–26 builds the basis for a different identification of its allusions.

IV. The Events Referred to in Jeremiah 4:23–26

The first significant observation regarding the objects mentioned in Jer 4:23–26 is that they are all mentioned in both Lev 26 and Deut 28 as well as in Duet 8 and 11 [57]. Besides sharing lexical links these texts also share contextual and thematic consistency [58]. On the basis of this correspondence it becomes evident that Jeremiah systematically and intentionally alluded to those covenantal texts.

The second significant fact is that the allusions of the poem show up in a sequence that follows its parallel arrangement as mentioned above, which means that vv. 23 and 25, besides covenantal texts, also allude to the creation account, i.e. texts that are universal in their scope while vv. 24 and 26 will constantly allude to the covenantal texts.

TABLE 4: The Allusions of Jer 4:23–26		
Jer 4:23	Earth and Heaven	Lev 26:19; Deut 28:23; Gen 1:2
Jer 4:23	Emptiness	Gen 1:2
Jer 4:24	Mountains and hills	Deut 8:7.9; 11:11 (mountains); (Gen 1:9–13 dry ground +vegetation)
Jer 4:25	No man, no birds	Lev 26:43; Gen 2:5
Jer 4:26	Fruitful land becomes desert, unfruitful	Lev 26:20; Deut 8:7–9; 11:10–15 land's fruitfulness (Gen 1:9–13 functionality); Deut 28:3.16
Jer 4:26	Cities desolated	Lev 26:31 (sanctuary=Lam 4:1).33
Jer 4:26	God's face, Lord's anger	Lev 26:9 (positive).17 (negative); Deut 11:17

Even though the placement of תהו וָבהו after "earth and heaven" led many scholars back to the same phrase in Gen 1:2 [59], a plausible the alternative is to connect "earth and heaven" with covenantal texts since both entities are under God's curse in the case of covenantal

---

[57] A strong connection between the book of Jeremiah and Deuteronomy has been well-established. See Clements, Jeremiah 1-25 and the Deuteronomistic History, 93–113; Lundbom, *Jeremiah Closer Up*, 65–66.

[58] The identification of the allusions in this study rests on the works of Jon Paulien, "Allusions, Exegetical Method, and the Interpretation of Revelation 8:8:7–12" (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1987); David Ryan Klinger, "Validity in the Identification and Interpretation of Literary Allusion in the Hebrew Bible" (PhD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2010); Richard B. Hayes, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1989).

[59] Even those scholars who argue that Jer 4:23–26 overall refers to the destruction of the land of Judah claim that Jer 4:23 is not related to the land of Judah. Eppstein, "The Day of Yahweh," 96.

betrayal (Lev 26:19, Deut 28:29). Fishbane's claim that Jer 4:23–26 represents the opposite account of Gen 1:1–10 [60], suffers for multiple reasons [61].

Firstly, the literary structures of the two texts are remarkably different; Jer 4:23–26 is a complete literary pericope written as a poem while Gen 1:1–10 is part of the pericope of Gen 1:1–2:4a whose literary structure is complex and still the subject of scholarly debate [62]. This means that even if the connection between Jer 4:23–26 and Gen 1:1–10 existed, Jer 4:23–26 would represent the opposite account of creation only partially. A substantial mismatch at the level of allusions based on lexis diminishes considerably the purpose of de-creation assigned to Jer 4:23–26.

Secondly, the word order of all shared entities in Jer 4:23–26 and Gen 1:1–2:4a is different. The order in the creation account is light/heaven, heaven/earth, birds/man while in Jer 4:23–26 it is reversed [63]. Further, Jer 4:23–26 does not contain elements such as luminaries and the Sabbath which Gen 1:1–2:4a does, while in contrast, it does contain mountains and hills, which are not mentioned Gen 1:1–2:4a.

Finally, the contexts of the two texts are also significantly different; the creation account portrays the creation of the world while Jer 4:23–26 and Jer 2–6, as its literary context, declare Judah's destruction as the party in covenant with God and suffering curses for the covenantal infidelity. Also, Fishbane argues that God's anger matches the Sabbath rest. Yet, the parallel between them is only a potential etymological link of the Babylonian term *šapattu*-the 15th day of the moon's cycle, a day of quiet, and the Hebrew word שבת.

Even though the merism [64], "earth and heaven", which represents the universe, is attested in the OT [65], here in Jer 4:23–26 it does not fit the context. God is dealing with his covenantal people and not with the entire universe. Because the poem has a well-established covenantal background, the phrase תהו ובהו does not introduce de-creation of the entire planet since this is not the punishment for covenantal disloyalty. As demonstrated above, the proposals of Fishbane, Kim and Althann, in which they claim that Jer 4:23–26 presents de-creation, mostly through interpretation of particular lexis of v. 23, faces obvious flaws. In the overall covenantal framework expressed in the book of Jeremiah Jack R. Lundbom noted "that belief in Yahweh's creation of heaven and earth goes hand in hand with a belief in Yahweh's covenant with Israel" [66]. So, Jeremiah's use of the "heaven" and "earth" does not necessarily and only allude to Gen 1:2 to communicate de-creation but to the covenantal curses, too, to point to a local judgment over Judah.

Contrary to them, the proposal of the present study is that "earth and heaven" in v. 23 are not to be taken as a generic designation, but as the land of Judah itself and the heaven over Judah [67], since this is one of the clear punishments for covenantal betrayal. Instead of serving as the allusion which conveys de-creation the phrase תהו ובהו reminds the covenantal people

---

[60] Fishbane, "Jeremiah IV 23–26 and Job III 3–13," 151.

[61] McKane, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah, 108.

[62] Doukhan, "The Literary Structure of the Genesis Creation Story," 164–179.

[63] Gen 1:1–2:4 is a historical poetry while Jer 4:23–26 is a poem. Order of words in Gen 1:2 is, light/heaven, heaven/earth, birds/man while in Jer 4:23–26 the order of these pairs is reversed. Ibid., "The Literary Structure of the Genesis Creation Story," 108; Carroll, Jeremiah, 169.

[64] Robert Althann, *A Philological Analysis of Jeremiah 4–6 in the Light of Northwest Semitic*, BO 38 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1983), 97–98; Kim, "Tsunami, Hurricane, and Jeremiah 4:23–28," 55; Jože Krašovec, *Der Merismus im Biblisch-Hebräischen und Nordwestsemitischen* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1977), 11.

[65] "שָׁמַיִם," *HALOT* 2: 1560; Austel J. Hermann, "שמה," *TWOT* 2: 937.

[66] Lundbom, *Jeremiah Closer Up*, 52.

[67] *HALOT*, 2: 1560.

of the identity of the God who enunciates this destruction. As such it represents a strong rhetorical urge [68], to the covenantal people who grew complacent in their sinful life style.

Terence E. Fretheim logically captured the purpose of the rhetoric in Jer 4:23–26 in the following way: "The use of such lively metaphors has the rhetorical function of impressing the issue upon the minds of readers in a way that no more abstract or literal language can" [69]. It represents a serious and sobering warning that the God, the Creator of the Universe, is at the midst of this doom as its Originator. This interpretation makes the most sense in the covenantal context established in present study because the God of the covenant is also the God of Universe.

Next, the allusion that contains only a local level of thought, is found in "mountains and hills" which are taken by scholars as generic entities, a symbol of stability [70], which is falling away. As noted in Table 2 this pair always has a negative connotation referring to Judah's harlotry. Consequently, it makes more sense that in Jer 4:23–26 "mountains and hills" refer to the ones in Judah and not generic ones. These were mountains on which Judah was performing harlotry and forsaking her Lord, convinced that she may reach salvation through worshiping other gods. This is the reason why they are the object of God's anger (Jer 3:23). By making these mountains and hills shake and by moving them to and fro God shows his supremacy over all other gods [71]. Also, when God Himself described Canaan he said that the mountains will be a specific feature of the Promised Land as shown in Table 4. Thus, "mountains and hills" should be taken as the literal mountains of Judah. The allusions of Jer 4:23–26 to Deut 8:7.9; 11:11 given in Table 4 are based on lexical and contextual links [72].

The next line changes the level of thought from alluding to the local to the universal text. The phrase "man and birds" is usually taken as representative of all creation [73]. This claim is correct but not because the pairs represent a proper merism [74], but because it forms a kind of defective merism which follows the parallelism of the poem [75].

Holladay noted a link between אין האדם in 4:25 and ואדם אין in Gen 2:5 [76]. The absence of man from the land is also found in Lev 26:43 which does not share a lexical connection, but definitively shares a thematic and contextual connection to 4:25 [77]. Since the poem predicts doom over Judah it is plausible to assume that Jeremiah may have had in mind both Lev 26, and Gen 2:5. This is not to say that no one will be left after the destruction, as Gen 2:5 suggests, because even after the exile some people were left in Judah [78]. Rather this allusion acknowledges another side of God, emphasized in the second creation account, namely His intention to be in relationship or covenant with the humanity [79]. This allusion represents the

---

[68] Lundbom, *Jeremiah Closer Up*, 44; Dearman, Jeremiah and Lamentations, 87; Abraham Joshua, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 10; Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 7, 94. A strong rhetoric is recognized in Jer 4:23–26. See Anderson, *Creation Versus Chaos*, 13; Lee, Exposing a Buried Subtext in Jeremiah and Lamentations, 107.

[69] Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 94.

[70] Kim, "Tsunami, Hurricane, and Jeremiah 4:23–28," 55; Holladay and Hanson, Jeremiah 1, 165.

[71] Tremper Longman, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, NIBCOTS 14 (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 51.

[72] Jer 4:23–26 addresses the mountains and hills of Judah while Deut 11:11 is a geographical description of the same land. The covenantal context is strongly emphasized in both texts.

[73] Kim, "Tsunami, Hurricane, and Jeremiah 4:23–28," 55; Longman, Jeremiah, Lamentations, 51.

[74] Two extremes for the entire creation would be bird and fish or man and beasts not man and bird.

[75] Since v. 23 contains earth and heaven it is expected to have residence in both places in v. 25, the corresponding verse. Man is listed first, following the order of v. 23 and then birds instead of beasts or fish.

[76] Holladay, "The Recovery of Poetic Passages of Jeremiah," 165.

[77] McKane, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah, 107.

[78] Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 101.

[79] Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 112–113; Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 82; Goffrey H. Parke-Taylor, *Yahwe: The Divine Name in the Bible* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Univerity Press, 1976), 7.

second part of the one stated in v. 23, i.e. the Universal God is also the God of covenant, the personal God of Israel. This fits the overall picture of the doom which was the result of covenant disloyalty toward the God of the covenant.

Following the established order of switching the levels of thought the next allusion is limited to the local environment. As mentioned above fruitfulness is one of the crucial features of the Promised Land. In Jer 2:7, כרמל accompanied by the definite article is in construct with ארץ to make it define, but here in Jer 4:26 it stands without the definite article, which is significant [80], and it emphasizes the important quality of the Promised Land; fruitfulness. As Table 4 indicates Deut 8:7–9, 11:10–15, 28:3 contain imagery of the Promised Land that expresses its fruitfulness. But in contrast, Lev 26:20 and Deut 28:16 speak about the curse over the land as a result of covenantal infidelity. Due to this dynamic it would be reasonable of Jeremiah to allude to those texts because of his deep interest in the covenant and the sameness of the contexts he was connecting.

Though different words are used to express the desolation of Judah's cities in Lev 26:31, 33 and Jer 4:26 the allusion is obvious because the destruction of the cities falls into the fifth and the most severe level of curses along with the destruction of the sanctuary (Lev 26:27–39). This allusion may also imply the destruction of the sanctuary nuance which is not mentioned in Jer 4:26, but also happened during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem.

Finally, the finale of the poem explicitly expresses the source of the doom, the Lord himself, who already was introduced implicitly by the allusions. Through the same lexis Jer 4:26 alludes to Deut 11:17 which speaks about God's anger aimed against Israel for their unfaithfulness. Lev 26:9 and its counterpart, 26:17, are also connected through a shared lexis. Thus 4:26 contains all of the roots that refer to anger in these covenant texts.

V. THE IMPACT OF THE ALLUSIONS IN JEREMIAH 4:23–26 ON ITS MEANING

The allusive relationship of Jer 4:23–26 and Jer 2–6 to Lev 26 and Deut 28 along with chs. 8 and 11 confirm the meaning of the poem established through exegesis; the poem depicts a local destruction of Judah due to its covenantal infidelity. This view has been and continues to be held by the modern and previous scholars. Besides covenantal texts, Jeremiah also alluded to Gen 1:2 and 2:5. His purpose was not to communicate de-creation as such measure was never envisioned nor verbalized in God's dealing with the infidelity of ancient Israel. Jeremiah rather used allusions to Gen 1:2 and 2:5 for twofold rhetorical purposes. First, his potentially wanted to assure the covenantal people that God, the Creator and God of the Covenant, is in charge of the doom incurred by Israel's covenantal unfaithfulness with the punitive purpose for covenantal people. Second, following the tone of his entire book prophet Jeremiah used this opportunity to urge the covenantal people to repent and amend their immoral life style.

This understanding of Jer 4:23–26 and its allusions is supported by the following facts:

1. Covenant, as the background to Jer 2–6, acts as a limiting factor for interpretation of Jer 4:23–26 along with its allusions
2. Lexis of Jer 4:23–26 strongly relates it to Jer 2–6 as its literary context
3. Jer 4:23–26 begins the section within Jer 2–6 that addresses the covenantal curses over Judah
4. The ultimate punishment for covenantal unfaithfulness is not a de-creation but exile with the hope of a new beginning

---

[80] Out of three uses of כַּרְמֶל with the meaning of fruitfulness only two of them use the definite article, 2:7 and 4:26. The third use, 48:33, describes Moab.

5. "Not a full end" in v. 27 speaks about the new beginning and that even Judah will not be destroyed completely, i.e. by the process of de-creation

6. Historically no other nation was punished by God during the period of the end of seventh-century and the beginning of sixth-century BC but Judah and this punishment did not end in total destruction

7. Because Jeremiah prophesied concerning Judah who was unfaithful to the covenant, the allusions must refer to Judah, which would reject the idea of de-creation for covenant punishment

8. There are no references, either before or after 4:23–26, to its universality but multiple lexical and topical links in Jer 2–6 tie it strongly to the local context

9. The poem, Jer 4:23–26, does not share features of any of the Old Testament apocalyptic texts

10. Potential apocalyptic lexis within Jer 4:23–26 acts as rhetorical intensifier of the warnings directed to the local context

The primary meaning of Jer 4:23–26 suggested in the present study does not eliminate a well-known and established fusion of prophetic and apocalyptic visionary content common in the OT [81]. Rather, it suggests that the primary meaning of Jer 4:23–26 and its allusions refers to the local context.

---

[81] Referring to the allusions in Jer 4:23–26 Peter C. Craigie cogently noted: "There are the seeds of apocalyptic thought in this visionary account, nourished by the imagery of creation employed in the communication of the message of judgment. The immediate sense of the passage and the immediate context confine the thrust of the words to Judah's coming judgment at the hands of a pagan foe. But the imagery of creation, the *Urzeit*, when it is converted to speak of a return of primeval chaos, necessarily evokes the end." Craigie, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 82. See also Brevard S. Childs, *The Church's Guide for Reading Paul: The Canonical Shaping of the Pauline Corpus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 217–218; Melvin L. Sensenig, "Jehoiachin and His Oracle: The Shaphanide Literary Framework for the End of the Deuteronomistic History" (PhD diss., Graduate Board, 2013), 268-269; Joel Badina, "The Millennium," in *Symposium on Revelation: Exegetical and General Studies, Book 2*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook. vol. 7 of Daniel and Revelation Committee Series (Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 237.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Siegfried H. Horn, eds. *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*. Washington, D.C: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1979.

The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament. Edited by Ludwig Köhler, Walter Baumgartner, M. E. J. Richardson, and Johann Jakob Stamm. 2 vols. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2001.

The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament. Edited by Ludwig Köhler, Walter Baumgartner, M. E. J. Richardson, and Johann Jakob Stamm. 4 vols. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2001.

Althann, Robert. *A Philological Analysis of Jeremiah 4–6 in the Light of Northwest Semitic*. BO 38. Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1983.

Anderson, Bernhard W. *Creation Versus Chaos: The Reinterpretation of Mythical Symbolism in the Bible*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.

Archer, Gleason L. *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*. Rev. and expanded ed. Chicago: Moody Press, 1983.

Badina, Joel, "The Millennium." Pages 225–242 in *Symposium on Revelation: Exegetical and General Studies, Book 2*. Edited by Frank B. Holbrook. vol. 7 of Daniel and Revelation Committee Series. Silver Spring: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992.

Bauer, Angela, "Dressed to be Killed: Jeremiah 4:29-31 as an Example for the Function of Female Imagery in Jeremiah." Pages 293-305 in *Troubling Jeremiah*. Edited by A. R. Diamond, Kathleen M. O'Connor, and Louis Stulman. vol. 260 of JSOTSS. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.

Biddle, Mark E., "Jeremiah: Content and Structure." Pages 235–251 in *The Oxford Handbook of Jeremiah*. Edited by Louis Stulman and Edward Silver. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Bracke, John M. *Jeremiah 1–29*. WBC M. Bracke. Louisville, KY: Westminister John Knox Press, 2000.

Bright, John. *Jeremiah*. AB 21. Garden City: Doubleday, 1965.

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Theology of the Book of Jeremiah*. OTT New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Carroll, Robert P. *From Chaos to Covenant: Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah*. New York: Crossroad, 1981.

Carroll, Robert P. *Jeremiah: A Commentary*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986.

First Name. "Observations on the Literary Structure of Some Passages in Jeremiah." *VT* 30 (1980): 398–408.

Childs, Brevard S. *The Church's Guide for Reading Paul: The Canonical Shaping of the Pauline Corpus*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

Childs, Brevard S. *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament*. SBT 27. Naperville: A.R. Allenson, 1960.

Clements, R. E., "Jeremiah 1-25 and the Deuteronomistic History." Pages 93–113 in *Understanding Poets and Prophets: Essays in Honour of George Wishart*

Anderson. Edited by A. Graeme Auld. vol. 152 of JSOTSS. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993.

Craigie, Peter C. *Jeremiah 1–25*. WBC 26. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991.

Davidson, Steed Vernyl, "Playing with Death: Violent Exceptions and Exceptional Violence in the Book of Jeremiah." Pages 648–660 in *The Oxford Handbook of Jeremiah.* Edited by Louis Stulman and Edward Silver. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Dearman, Andrew J. *Jeremiah and Lamentations: From Biblical Text ... to Contemporary Life*. NIVAC. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

Dorsey, David A. *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi.* Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999.

Doukhan, Jacque. "The Literary Structure of the Genesis Creation Story." PhD diss., Andrews University, 1978.

Dyer, Charles H. *Jeremiah*. BKCOT 1. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1985.

First Name. "The Day of Yahweh in Jeremiah 4:23–28." *JBL* 87 (1968): 93–97.

First Name. "Jeremiah IV 23–26 and Job III 3–13: A Recovered Use of the Creation Pattern." *VT* 21 (1971): 151–167.

Fishbane, Michael A. *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985.

Fretheim, Terence E. *Jeremiah*. Smyth & Helwys Bible commentary Macon, Ga.: Smith & Helwys Pub., 2002.

Gane, Roy. *Leviticus, Numbers*. NIVAC. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004.

Goldingay, John. *God's Prophet, God's Servant: A Study in Jeremiah and Isaiah 40-55.* Carlisle, UK: The Paternoster Press, 1994.

Harrison, R. K. *Jeremiah and Lamentations: An Introduction and Commentary*. TOTC 21. Inter-Varsity Press, 2009.

Hartley, John E. *Leviticus*. WBC 4. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992.

First Name. "Jeremiah IV 23: tōhû without bōhû." *VT* 47, (1997): 247-249.

Hayes, Richard B. *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul.* New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1989.

Henderson, Ebenezer. *The Book of the Prophet Jeremiah and that of The Lamentations.* London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1851.

Hermann, Austel J. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.* Edited by R. Laird Harris, Gleason Archer, and Bruce Waltke. 2 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981.

Holladay, William L. *Jeremiah: A Fresh Reading.* New York: Pilgrim Press, 1990.

First Name. "The Recovery of Poetic Passages of Jeremiah." *JBL* 85 (1966): 401–435.

Holladay, William L. *The Root Subh in the Old Testament with Particular Reference to Its Usages in Covenantal Contexts.* Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1958.

Holladay, William L. and Paul D. Hanson. *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 1–25*. Hermeneia. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.

Huey, F. B. *Jeremiah, Lamentations*. NAC 16. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1993.

Hunter, Michael J. *A Guide to Jeremiah.* Cambridge: University Press, 1993.

Joshua, Abraham. *The Prophets.* 1st ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1962.

Karl, Theodore Ferdinand. *Bible Commentary: Jeremiah*. Saint Louis: Concordia Pub. House, 1953.

Keil, Carl Friedrich and Franz Delitzsch. *The Prophecy of Jeremiah.* Translated by James Martin. BCOT 21. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952.

First Name. "Tsunami, Hurricane, and Jeremiah 4:23–28." *BTB* 3 (2007): 54–61.

Klinger, David Ryan. "Validity in the Identification and Interpretation of Literary Allusion in the Hebrew Bible." PhD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2010.

Köhler, Ludwig. *Old Testament Theology.* Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957.

First Name. "Who Is Speaking in Jeremiah 4:19-22?: The Contribution of Unit Delimitation to an Old Problem." *VT* 59 (2009)): 88-98.

Krašovec, Jože. *Der Merismus im Biblisch-Hebräischen und Nordwestsemitischen.* Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1977.

Lee, Nancy C., "Exposing a Buried Subtext in Jeremiah and Lementations: Going after Baal and ... Abel." Pages 87-122 in *Troubling Jeremiah.* Edited by A. R. Diamond, Kathleen M. O'Connor, and Louis Stulman. vol. 260 of JSOTSS. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.

Lindblom, Johannes. *Prophecy in Ancient Israel.* Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962.

Longman, Tremper. *Jeremiah, Lamentations.* NIBCOTS 14. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008.

Lundbom, Jack R. *Jeremiah 21-36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary.* AB 21B. New York: Doubleday, 2004.

Lundbom, Jack R. *Jeremiah Closer Up: The Prophet and the Book.* HBM 31. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010.

Lundbom, Jack R. *Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric.* Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997.

Martens, Elmer A. *Jeremiah.* BCBC. Scottdale: Herald Press, 1986.

McKane, William. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah.* ICC. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986.

Mills, Mary, "Jeremiah's Deathscapes." Pages 405–419 in *The Oxford Handbook of Jeremiah.* Edited by Louis Stulman and Edward Silver. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.

First Name. "Form Criticism and Beyond." *JBL* 88 (1969): 1-18.

O'Connor, Kathleen M., "The Tears of God and Divine Character in Jeremiah 2–9." Pages 387-403 in *Troubling Jeremiah.* Edited by A. R. Diamond, Kathleen M. O'Connor, and Louis Stulman. vol. 260 of JSOTSS. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.

First Name. "Jeremiah 4.5-31 and Apocalyptic Myth." *JSOT* 73 (1997): 81–107.

Osborne, Grant R. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006.

Parke-Taylor, Geoffrey H. *The Formation of the Book of Jeremiah: Doublets and Recurring Phrases.* SBLMS 51. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000.

Parke-Taylor, Goffrey H. *Yahwe: The Divine Name in the Bible.* Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Univerity Press, 1976.

Paulien, Jon. "Allusions, Exegetical Method, and the Interpretation of Revelation 8:8:7–12." PhD diss., Andrews University, 1987.

Rodríguez, Ángel Manuel and Gerhard Pfandl, "Reading Psalms and the Wisdom Literature." Pages 163–182 in *Understanding Scripture: An Advenstist Approach.* Edited by George W. Reid. Silver Springs: Biblical Research Institute, 2005.

Rom-Shiloni, Dalit, "Jeremiah and Inner Biblical Exegesis." Pages 282–310 in *The Oxford Handbook of Jeremiah.* Edited by Louis Stulman and Edward Silver. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Ruiten, Jacques van. *Back to the Chaos: The Relationship Between Jeremiah 4:23–26 and Gen 1: Re-interpretations of Genesis 1 in the Context of Judaism, Ancient Philosophy, Christianity, and Modern Physics*. The Creation of Heaven and Earth Leiden: Brill, 2005.

Sailhamer, John. *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.

Sensenig, Melvin L. "Jehoiachin and His Oracle: The Shaphanide Literary Framework for the End of the Deuteronomistic History." PhD diss., Graduate Board, 2013.

Stulman, Louis. *Jeremiah*. AOTC. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005.

Stulman, Louis, "The Prose Sermons as Hermeneutical Guide to Jeremiah 1-25: The Deconstruction of Judah's Symbolic World." Pages 34-63 in *Troubling Jeremiah.* Edited by A. R. Diamond, Kathleen M. O'Connor, and Louis Stulman. vol. 260 of JSOTSS. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.

Sweeney, Marvin A., "Structure and Redaction in Jeremiah 2-6." Page 463 p. in *Troubling Jeremiah.* Edited by A. R. Diamond, Kathleen M. O'Connor, and Louis Stulman. vol. 260 of JSOTSS. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.

Thompson, John A. *The Book of Jeremiah*. NICOT 22. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.

Watson, Wilfred G. E. *Classical Hebrew Poetry: A Guide to its Techniques*. London: T & T Clark, 2005.

Watterson, Andrew. *Commentary on Jeremiah: The Word, the Words, and the World.* Waco: Word Books, 1977.

Willis, Timothy M. *Jeremiah/Lamentations*. CPNIVCOTS. Joplin: College Press Pub. Co., 2002.