The Earth Mourns/Dries up in Jeremiah 4:23-28:

A Literary Analysis Viewed through the Heuristic Lens of an
Ecologically Oriented Symbiotic Relationship

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Acknowledgement Declaration

This thesis submitted for assessment is the result of my own work, and no unacknowledged assistance has been received in its planning, drafting, execution or writing. All sources on which it is based have been acknowledged in writing, as has the supervision which I received in the process of its preparation.

Name: Valerie M. Billingham

Signature:

Date: 14 May 2009
Abstract

In this thesis a detailed literary analysis of Jer 4:23-28 is undertaken in order to highlight the force of the text, especially in relation to the metaphors of the reversal of creation and the mourning/drying up of the earth. This study also develops a combined heuristic lens which incorporates the perspectives of several ecologists, including specific indigenous people, along with Norman Habel’s notion of a land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship. This lens is employed through which to view Jer 4:23-28 and several biblical and non-biblical ANE texts which utilize similar words, phrases and images. It is argued that Jeremiah is attentive to the character of the earth and sensitive to its voice as it communicates through its unique language of movement and fertility. With the breakdown of the symbiotic relationship, the earth communicates its distress at the absence of its exiled people through its lack of productivity and the violent movement of its land forms. In a final gasp the earth raises its voice in mourning/drying up.
Acknowledgements

While I have busied myself with life, this thesis has hovered in the background for many years waiting to be written. The book of Jeremiah has long been my companion. Working in Christian ministry, I have often been inspired to continue preaching, teaching and studying the bible after reading Jeremiah’s words: ‘And I said, I will not mention him or speak again in his name, but it was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones and I was weary of holding it in and I was not able’ (Jer 20:9). The intensity and motivating force of the biblical text has also been my experience, and I thank Jeremiah for expressing it so forcefully and meaningfully.

My love, appreciation and thanks go to my family members who have exhibited great patience and understanding in sharing their home with Jeremiah. My parents, George and Doris Newton (dec.), and my brother and sister-in law, Robert and Jill Newton, provided a safe and encouraging basis from which to launch into my fields of interest. My husband, John, has been the technical expert, library courier, draft deliverer and general encourager: ‘You’ll get there.’ My children and their partners have graciously accepted that their mother has different interests to those of their friends’ mothers: ‘But Mum, that’s who you are and what you do. You’re different.’ Thank you Jayne, Susan and Peter, Tracey and Andrew, and Cameron. My grand daughter, Sarah (6), could read her name in Hebrew at three years of age. Emily (3) and Emma (1) are working on the task. They all know to give the pile of papers in my study a wide berth: ‘Be careful! That’s Granny’s thesis.’

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1 All biblical quotations are my translation unless otherwise noted.
Thank you to the members of Wandin Baptist Church who, though they have not always understood what I was doing or why I was doing it, have encouraged and taken an interest. Special thanks to Di Hubbard and Dr Harold Taylor for reading drafts, and Arline Myers for friendship and support.

I am grateful to my supervisors, Dr Merryl Blair and Dr Mark Brett. Merryl’s love of Hebrew poetry, knowledge, encouragement, pastoral care and sense of humor have made everything possible and most of it enjoyable. Mark’s knowledge, wisdom and expertise have kept me on track, especially when I was tempted to follow interesting but irrelevant paths of research. Thank you to all the librarians who have helped me with unusual requests, especially to Lorraine Mitchell and Beryl Turner of Geoffrey Blackburn Library at Whitley College. From time to time fellow students have asked, ‘What is your thesis about?’ Thank you to those who stayed to hear the answer. Their interest and shared journeys have been an encouragement.

This list of acknowledgements would be incomplete without thanking the earth for its provision, companionship and communication. Though this study is titled ‘The Earth Mourns/Dries Up’, along with Jeremiah, it is my hope and prayer that with a positively operating land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship the earth will see fit to rejoice and flourish.
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<tr>
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<td>Biblical Archaeologist</td>
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<td>BS</td>
<td>Bibliotheca Sacra</td>
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<td>BTB</td>
<td>Biblical Theology Bulletin</td>
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<td>HBT</td>
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### Other Reference Material

- **ABRL**: Anchor Bible Reference Library
- **BHS**: *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*
- **ICC**: International Critical Commentary
KJV  King James Version
*The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments. Translated out of the original tongues and with the former translations diligently compared and revised by His Majesty's special command*, London: Oxford University Press, 1957

NICOT  The New International Commentary on the Old Testament

NIV  New International Version of the Bible

NJPSV  The New Jewish Publication Society Version

NRSV  New Revised Standard Version of the Bible

Septuagint  *The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament with an English translation and with various readings and critical notes*, London: S. Bagster and Sons, 1900


**Other Terms**

ANE  Ancient Near Eastern
BCE  Before the Common Era
EB  The Earth Bible
EBT  The Earth Bible Team
HB  Hebrew Bible
HC  Holiness Code
OT  Old Testament
NT  New Testament
Other preliminary comments

All texts analysed and referred to follow the versification of the BHS Masoretic Text.

Unless otherwise acknowledged, English translations of the biblical texts are my own.

All scholarly quotations are in italics.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Translation of Jer 4:23-28

23 I looked at the earth and behold it was desert and empty, and to the heavens and there was no light.

24 I looked at the mountains and behold they were quaking, and all the hills were shaking themselves.

25 I looked and behold there was no human being, and all the birds of the heavens had flown away.

26 I looked and behold the fertile land was without pasture, and all its cities were destroyed before YHWH, before his burning anger.

27 Because thus YHWH has said, ‘All the earth will be desolation, and I will not make a full end.

28 On account of this the earth will mourn/dry up\(^2\) and the heavens above become dark, because I have spoken, I have planned; and I have not repented and I will not turn from it.’

1.1 Introduction

In this thesis a literary study of the Hebrew text (MT) of Jer 4:23-28 is undertaken in relation to Jeremiah’s vision of the reversal of creation and his presentation of the earth as a character which raises its voice in its unique language of movement, infertility, depletion and mourning/drying up.\(^3\) The prophet presents a powerful image of

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\(^2\) See 3.10 of this study for a discussion of semantic issues relating to \(X\rho\)\(\eta\) \(\lambda\beta\).

\(^3\) The name ‘Jeremiah’ and the designation ‘the prophet’ are employed in this study to indicate the author assumed by the text rather than the historical ‘author’. Walter Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up, To Tear Down. Jeremiah 1-25* (International Theological Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, Edinburgh: Handsell, 1988), 11-12 describes ‘Jeremiah’ or ‘the prophet’ as ‘the agent behind and within the text’ who depicts a
the land lacking the creative order of a covenantal relationship between its people and YHWH, and suffering because its people are absent. After introducing the parameters of the study the heuristic lens of an ecologically oriented symbiotic relationship is developed (chap. 2) and used through which to view Jeremiah’s presentation of the relationship between the land, the people and YHWH, issues associated with land loss and the communication of the character of the earth. The lens is employed in viewing a literary analysis of Jer 4:23-28 (chap. 3), as well as a comparison between the passage and several biblical texts and an ANE poem which express similar words, phrases and images (chap. 4). Chapter 5 draws the thesis to a conclusion, making brief suggestions as to the possible application of the study.

It is acknowledged that any reading of a text is influenced by the orientation and experiences of the reader/s, which Gadamer calls our ‘horizon of expectation’, and so there is a brief exploration of the influences which have shaped the author of this thesis. However, it is argued that the reading approaches of others can also inform and shape our methods of reading. Thus the eco-perspectives of The Earth Bible Team are employed...
along with Norman Habel’s notion of a land-people-YHWH symbiosis in developing a heuristic lens through which to view the earth’s devastation and suffering as presented in Jer 4:23-28. This lens is referred to as ‘an ecologically oriented symbiotic relationship’. Some ecologists and indigenous people understand the earth to be a character with which a relationship is possible. They also describe their capacity to attend to the voice of the earth and to receive its communication. The experiences of specific indigenous people are referred to in order to throw light on Jeremiah’s presentation of the communication of the character of the earth as it occurs throughout his book and especially in 4:23-28.

The heuristic lens is directed towards several biblical and non-biblical texts that employ similar words, phrases and images, and a comparison is made between them and Jer 4:23-28. This is done in order to show how the insights gained by viewing a text through this lens highlight similar characterizations of land. While several other prophets are attentive to the character and communication of the land, it is argued that Jeremiah has a particular sensitivity towards the earth and a capacity to attend to its voice as it communicates its distress in the forms of lack of order, darkness, the violent movement

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7 Norman C. Habel, “Introducing the Earth Bible,” in Readings from the Perspective of Earth, EB 1, ed. Habel, 26 notes that while many modes of earth consciousness exist (eg. political, rural, artistic, indigenous), a new earth consciousness invites reading the Bible in kinship with the earth.

of its hills and mountains, infertility and the absence of its people and birds (4:23-26). According to Jeremiah, while the people of Israel, YHWH and the prophet suffer through the experience of exile, the land is also a character which experiences anguish due to the separation from its people. The prophet is attentive to the character of the earth, as in a final gasp, it raises its voice in mourning/drying up (4:28).

1.2 The Author’s Horizon of Expectation

One’s frame of reference is a complex construction. Jean-Luc Nancy notes that ‘a world is a multiplicity of worlds’ in which there is sharing and co-existence.\(^9\) Elvey explains that it involves ‘both a contingent socio-cultural matrix and a worldview (or worldviews), which may be dependent on – but will also construct my relationship to – the community of Earth’. She states that ‘our worlds and worldviews not only construct our understandings of Earth, but also reflect them’.\(^10\)

The multiplicity of worlds we construct and inhabit is always exceeded by the plurality of the Earth community and indeed the wider universe that our worlds at best approximate. Within this multiplicity of Earth and world, the world of the text is itself plural.\(^11\)

Our reading of a text is determined very much by who we are in terms of our orientations and experiences, our ‘horizon of expectation’. Culture, gender and educational background are just some of the influences that shape us as readers.\(^12\) A brief account of

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\(^12\) Polk, *The Prophetic Persona*, 16 stresses that in order for a reader to make any sense of a text there must be a set of conventions, expectations and competencies. Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 11 recognizes that all methodologies for reading biblical texts ‘are subject to the guiding interests of individual users’, noting that the reader’s interests and experiences shape interpretation (23). See also Catherine Keller, *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (London: Routledge, 2003), 104 and Mark G. Brett, ‘Earthing the Human in Genesis 1-3,’ in *The Earth Story in*
some of the influences that have shaped the horizon of expectation of the author of this thesis is now undertaken. Although I cannot identify all of my formative experiences, it would seem that some of my childhood pursuits, interests, education and travel have combined to influence my reading of biblical texts such as Jer 4:23-28.

I am an Australian-born woman whose distant ancestors emigrated from Britain. I grew up in a small and affirming nuclear family in the outer Melbourne suburbs of Seaford and Frankston. My childhood home was situated on the Nepean Highway between Port Phillip Bay and Kananook Creek which is situated in Boonwurrung country, though at the time I was not aware of this. I spent much of my youth fossicking amongst the plant and animal life that eked out an existence along the foreshore by Seaford beach, as well as exploring the marine life that flourished on the bottom of the bay. No doubt my childhood ecological pursuits fostered an ongoing interest in and respect for trees, plants, animals, birds, fish, spiders and insects. It may be that my interest in nature can be described as a relationship with the earth and the earth community, though I did not think of it in those terms during my pre-critical childhood.

Though I grew up in Boonwurrung country I cannot recall meeting or seeing any of those people. Nevertheless, I have long been drawn towards investigating indigenous people groups and tribal lifestyles. Perhaps it was my fascination with the environment that led to this attraction. Whatever the initial source, my interest in indigenous people has been nurtured during various travels throughout central and northern Australia, rural Fiji, Northern Vietnam and central Africa. During these trips I have been impressed by what I have observed and heard of interconnected and respectful relationships between

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the local traditional inhabitants and their lands. I have noticed that the various people
groups and their respective lands exist in a familiar harmony with each other and that part
of the self-identity of the people is derived from their intimate knowledge of and
relationship with their land. Furthermore, in Central Australia I have experienced a strong
sense of the earth’s presence and have felt that in some way it has been reaching out to
me. At the time I did not think of the earth as a character but as I ponder these
experiences I wonder if the earth was trying to communicate with me. Though I am not
sure exactly what I mean by it, I have often described these experiences as the earth
connecting with my spirit. While Aboriginal people groups differ greatly throughout
Australia, my Central Australian experiences have led me to wonder more on the nature
of the connection between people and their lands. I have also become concerned about
the apparent invisibility of the traditional inhabitants of the Boonwurrung country in
which I spent my early years and wonder if there are issues of exile to be explored in this
region. I am beginning to make connections between issues of dislocation that face many
indigenous people groups and those of Jeremiah’s exiled people.

During my studies in the Middle Eastern Studies Department of the University of
Melbourne in the 1970s I developed an interest in reading the HB in Hebrew. This
interest became a commitment that has continued during studies at Whitley College in the
1990s and 2000s. I have a particular fascination with Hebrew words that express more
than one nuance, hence my interest in words such as λβ). Poetic structures and
emphases are another area of interest. The prophet Jeremiah has been a companion for
many years. In my experiences as a woman in the male dominated sphere of Christian
ministry, I have identified with his struggles regarding his call and ministry. As I read
and reread the book of Jeremiah, the text of 4:23-28 seems to take on a life of its own and cry out for a detailed literary analysis.

As a secondary school teacher for almost twenty years I have developed an appreciation for and commitment to young people. Working for some years as a student welfare coordinator and then as a school chaplain I found myself advocating for socially and academically challenged students. I was especially concerned with raising their self esteem and increasing their ability to express themselves appropriately. Perhaps it was my experiences with some of these students that prompted me to take an interest in some of the marginalized and voiceless characters of Scripture. Recently I have discovered the presence of the character of the earth in the bible and am beginning to focus on ways in which to facilitate hearing its voice especially in Jer 4:23-28 and other related texts.

Environmental interests, a fascination with indigenous lifestyles and perspectives, a sympathy with the marginalized and voiceless members of the biblical and contemporary communities, and a commitment to reading the HB in the Hebrew language are some of the influences that have come together to form my horizon of expectation as I read the bible. Recently my approach to reading various biblical texts has also been intentionally informed and shaped by ecological perspectives, especially those of the EBT, indigenous experiences and Habel’s notion of a land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship. I have attempted to draw together my horizon of expectation, the ecological perspectives of the EBT, specific indigenous experiences of relationship with land and Habel’s notion of symbiosis to form a ‘multi-focal’ lens through which to view the text of Jer 4:23-28. Thus, in this thesis a literary analysis of the MT of Jer 4:23-28 is
undertaken and viewed through the heuristic lens of an ecologically oriented symbiotic relationship.

1.3 The Earth as a Character which Communicates

Characterisation is a powerful literary tool. Jeremiah introduces the three parties of the land-people-YHWH symbiosis as characters and reveals their thoughts and feelings through their communication. Just as the people and YHWH are accepted as subjects so the earth is presented as a character which has consciousness and is capable of expressing itself in its own particular ways. Rather than being archetypal, the individual character of the earth is revealed through its communication of actions. The earth expresses its state of wellbeing through its fertility, and its sense of malady is frequently conveyed through drought and depletion. Jeremiah refers to the earth using a variety of terms including $\chi\rho$, $\eta\mu\delta$ and $\eta\lambda\varepsilon\nu$. Though in the HB $\chi\rho$ is usually employed in a cosmic sense and $\eta\lambda\varepsilon\nu$ is normally used in a particular sense, Jeremiah seems to prevaricate in his usage. In his use of $\chi\rho$, sometimes it is difficult to determine whether he is referring to the whole earth or the land of Israel. The occasional use of cosmic metaphors in referring to $\eta\lambda\varepsilon\nu$ also seem to express a more universal area than the

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13 Though it employs the term this thesis does not attempt to define consciousness, however, it is noted that it involves and is noticeable in relationship. Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story from the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era: A Celebration of the Unfolding Cosmos* (London, Arkana: Penguin Books, 1963), 37 states that ‘the nature of anything is shown in the role it plays in the universe.’ Friederich Schleiermacher, F., *The Christian Faith: English Translation of the Second German Edition* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963), 6 discusses the notion of self-consciousness. See also Louis Roy, “Consciousness according to Schleiermacher,” *JR 77*, no. 2, 1997, 223. V. Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993), 131 does not accept that consciousness can be imputed to the non-human, however, her focus on intentionality which elicits direction, purpose and movement beyond the entity may have some affinity with some biblical presentations of the earth.

14 Kristen M. Swenson, “Earth Tells Lessons of Cain,” in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, eds. Norman C. Habel and Peter Trudinger (SBL Symposium Series 46; Atlanta: SBL, 2008), 32 states that though $\chi\rho$ ‘may be understood as the grand terrestrial globe on which we live; sometimes the term is used of particular territories,’ and $\eta\mu\delta$ often indicates ‘dirt from the ground’, and ‘soil, the arable earth out of which things grow’.

prophet’s land. While he uses cosmic references, it is argued that Jeremiah’s main concern is with the land of Israel and with the people of YHWH who inhabit it.

An ecological reading of Jer 4:23-28 and several other relevant texts is undertaken in order to attend to the character of the earth and hear its voice. It is acknowledged that androcentric and anthropocentric forces have influenced many readings of these texts and so several ecofeminist approaches are employed to assist in reading them. In affirming attempts to attend to the character and communication of the earth in the bible ecological feminists seek to expose readings which devalue, oppress and destroy the earth. Elvey argues that such approaches include revision, liberation, theological reconstruction, surplus of meaning and engendered plurality. Habel’s reading of ‘geophany’ is also a helpful approach in attending to the character and communication of the earth in the texts under study. Some indigenous voices have a vocabulary for

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15 Habel, “Introducing the Earth Bible,” 28 stresses the importance of listening to the earth as a subject rather than as a topic or backdrop. Elvey, An Ecological Feminist Reading of the Gospel of Luke, 15 points out that in order to read biblical texts from an ecological perspective it is important to acknowledge that the text, its writers and its readers are part of ‘an Earth community’ in that they are all formed from the matter of the earth. She describes this relationship as ‘the material indebtedness of the text to Earth’. She also warns that we have a limited ability to speak on behalf of the earth (24). See also Mary Catherine Bateson, “Introduction,” in Steps to an Ecology of Mind, ed. Gregory Bateson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1f. Brett, “Earthing the Human in Genesis 1-3,” 73-86 also points out that biblical interpretation in itself is not the same as ‘listening to earth’. See also Anne F. Elvey, “Earthing the Text? On the Status of the Biblical Text in Ecological Perspective,” ABR 52, 64-79.

16 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her. A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins (London: SCM, 1983), 43-48 states that as biblical language is in itself androcentric, ways in which to break the silence of the text must be found. See also Habel, “Introducing the Earth Bible,” 37; Norman C. Habel, “Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics,” in Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics, eds. Habel and Trudinger, 1-3.


18 See Elvey, An Ecological Feminist Reading of the Gospel of Luke, 10-14 for an outline of these ecofeminist approaches. Feminist hermeneutics of suspicion and retrieval have not been employed in reading Jer 4:23-28 and other texts. In this study the character and voice of the earth are sought in the texts as they are presented in the MT; there is no attempt to retrieve anything from their silences.

19 Norman C. Habel, “Geophany: The Earth Story in Genesis 1,” in The Earth Story in Genesis. EB 2, eds. Habel and Wurst, 34-48 defines ‘geophany’ as ‘a manifestation or revelation of Earth’ (35). He reads Gen 1 as a story of the origin, appearance and activating of the earth, understanding the earth as the primary
describing their experiences of receiving the messages conveyed by the earth. Thus, current indigenous vocabulary is employed in examining Jeremiah’s attendance to the voice of the earth, especially as it is expressed in 4:23-28.  

1.4 The Land, the People and YHWH in an Ecologically Oriented Symbiotic Relationship

Jeremiah’s presentation of a strong relationship between the land, the people and YHWH is examined using perspectives gained from Norman Habel’s notion of a land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship, the eco-justice approach of the EBT and indigenous experiences. The heuristic lens formed by a combination of these perspectives is referred to throughout this thesis as ‘an ecologically oriented symbiotic relationship’.  

It is noted that Jeremiah does not understand his Israelite contemporaries to have their indigenous origins in the land of Palestine, and, indeed, works from an introduced consciousness. However, the prophet presents an image of an agrarian people group who have a strong bond with their land and understand issues of life and faith through that connection. Israel finds its self-definition through its relationship with the land. Therefore, while acknowledging that there are cross cultural issues involved, some

subject and humans as secondary. Elvey, An Ecological Feminist Reading of the Gospel of Luke, 27 advocates reading ‘the material given,’ suggesting that the text is embedded in the earth.  

20 Wali Fejo, “The Voice of the Earth: An Indigenous Reading of Genesis 9,” in The Earth Story in Genesis, EB 2, eds. Habel and Wurst, 144 states that the earth speaks through rain, storms, trees and rivers. When the earth is hurt its voice gets louder. Swenson, “Earth Tells Lessons of Cain,” 31 states that she is intentional in listening for the voice of the earth in biblical texts and seeking to give it ‘space for expression, an opportunity to be heard’.  

21 Habel, “Introducing the Earth Bible,” 32-34 states that, in seeking to increase its consciousness of and sensitivity towards the earth, the EBT reflects with the earth (rather than about it) in dialoguing with the text. Swimme and Berry, The Universe Story from the Primordial Flaring Forth, 1 states that people have not yet attained ‘a meaningful approach to the universe’. J. S. Croatto, Biblical Hermeneutics: Toward a Theory of Reading as the Production of Meaning (New York: Orbis, 1987), ix-x states that efforts must be made ‘to acquire the theoretical instrumentation that will enable us to reread the Bible in such a way as to tap its “reservoir of meaning” so that it “speaks to us in the present”’. The heuristic lens which has been developed may be one of many such instruments.
current matters of indigeneity, especially in relation to land, are considered to be relevant to the relationship between Jeremiah’s people and their land.

Jeremiah presents the notion of the intimate relationship between the land, the people and YHWH being held together by covenant.\(^{22}\) When the covenant is broken by the negative social and religious behaviour of the people, the symbiotic relationship is undone. The removal of many Israelite people from their land through exile constitutes a breakdown of the symbiotic relationship and a separation of the three parties. As they are dependant upon each other for their wellbeing, the breakdown of the relationship represents a catastrophe which causes grief to each party of the symbiosis who express their distress in their own unique forms of communication.\(^{23}\) However, the people, YHWH and the land ultimately belong together and Jeremiah declares that the life-giving symbiosis will be re-established by the formulation of a new covenantal relationship and the return of the people to the land. At that prospect they all raise their voices in rejoicing.

### 1.5 Covenant in the Book of Jeremiah

The heuristic lens of an ecologically orientated symbiotic relationship is employed in viewing Jeremiah’s presentation of Israel’s covenantal relationship with YHWH and the experience of land loss. Though issues associated with the prophet’s perspective on covenant are addressed in greater length in chapter 2 of this study, at this point it is noted that he understands the covenantal relationship between YHWH and the

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\(^{22}\) In an indigenous Australian perspective Fejo, “The Voice of the Earth,” 143 states that God makes a covenant with all living things, including animals, birds and other creatures. ‘God personally bonds with all parts of creation in one embracing covenant’, he states (146).

\(^{23}\) At various times Jeremiah’s voice is depicted as representing the voices of the people, the land and YHWH. Sometimes the voices of the three characters are intertwined. For a discussion of the possible identities of various voices in Jeremiah see Joseph M. Henderson, “Who Weeps in Jeremiah VIII 23 (IX 1)? Identifying Dramatic Speakers in the Poetry of Jeremiah,” \textit{VT} 52/2 (2002): 191-206.
people to include and affect the land. Issues of covenant are central to the book with its many references to covenantal qualities and actions. However, it is clear that the people have broken the covenant with the immediate context of Jer 4:23-28 describing the people’s lack of knowledge of YHWH and YHWH’s ways (e.g., 4:22; 5:4-5; 6:16-20). Providing a focus on covenant, Jer 11 refers to Israel’s exodus from Egypt and entry into the land of promise and fertility (vv. 4-5). Israel’s subsequent rejection of YHWH and neglect of the terms of the covenant leads to the destruction and desolation of the land (vv. 8-16).

Though it is not always obvious which of Israel’s many covenants Jeremiah refers to in any given instance, he clearly promotes Mosaic/Deuteronomic orthodoxy. Human freedom to accept or reject the covenant affects the land. When the people uphold the terms of the covenant the earth is fertile and when the covenant is broken the earth becomes desolate and depleted. Employing the pre-existing cosmology of Gen 1, Jeremiah presents the metaphor of the reversal of creation, thereby challenging notions on the forces that maintain creational order. Though he generally values the cultic

24 A general discussion on Jeremiah’s presentation of covenant is undertaken in 2.10 where the inadequacies of the royal-priestly ideology are addressed. Also examined are ways in which Jeremiah’s emphasis upon Israel’s leaders reflects and includes covenantal issues. See further Bernard W. Anderson, “Co-existence with God: Heschel’s Exposition of Biblical Theology,” in Abraham Joshua Heschel: Exploring His Life and Thought, ed. John C. Merkle, (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1985), 47-65.

25 Bernhard W. Anderson, Contours of Old Testament Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 79-236 provides an overview of various covenant theologies, especially those of Abraham, Moses and David. Anderson locates Jer 4:23-26 squarely within the Mosaic tradition because of its great stress upon human freedom: ‘it is human freedom that makes the present precarious’ (190). He also notes the similarities between the calls and ministries of Moses and Jeremiah (185-192). However, while acknowledging his emphasis upon the Mosaic covenant this thesis argues that Jeremiah presents an intertwining of several covenantal theologies. Jon D. Levenson, Sinai and Zion: an entry into the Jewish Bible (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985) 99-102 points out that the Davidic covenant does not replace the Sinai covenant. The emphases of the latter is upon history and morality, whereas the focus of the former is upon the constancy of God’s rule and the perpetuity of the monarchy. See also George Ernest Wright, “Introduction to and Exegesis of the book of Deuteronomy,” in Interpreter’s Bible. Vol. 2, ed. G. A. Buttrick, (New York: Abingdon, 1951), 311-537; Patrick D. Miller, Deuteronomy (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox, 1990).

26 The Mosaic covenant is conditional upon the behavior of the people, e.g., Ex 11:26-28; 19:3-5; Deut 29:1-30:20; Josh 24:15. For a discussion on divine sovereignty and human freedom see Anderson, Contours of Old Testament Theology, 148-152.
system, he points out that the temple has no intrinsic power to maintain the earth’s order or to protect Israel (e.g., 7:3-7).\textsuperscript{27} At the outset YHWH calls him to exercise a subversive role against Israel’s leaders who represent the royal-priestly ideology (1:18-19). The prophet also addresses the issue of covenantal endurance. While God’s covenant with Noah is eternal (\textit{Mλ} \textit{τοπός}), Jeremiah presents another tragedy of cosmic proportions in the reversal of creation metaphor. Similarly, the everlasting covenant of Zion is challenged in the events of the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple and the demise of the monarchy. Though the prophet attacks Davidic-Zion orthodoxy, he also presents the notion of a renewed Zion ideology in the restoration of the Davidic monarchy and the reinstatement of the priestly order through the Levites. However, Jeremiah’s new Zion covenant includes a return to the Mosaic covenant (23:5-6).\textsuperscript{28} The reestablishment of the symbiotic relationship through the formation of a new covenant and the people’s return to the land elicits a joyful response from the earth through its abundant produce. Through the metaphor of the reversal of creation, and the hope of renewal and restoration the prophet invites readers to develop a fresh perspective on issues of covenant.\textsuperscript{29} A recommitment to the covenantal theologies of Gen 1 and 9, Moses and Zion is required. Only then can the order and vitality of the earth be re-established.

\textbf{1.6 Jeremiah and Land Loss}

According to Jeremiah, as no part of the symbiosis can exist in a healthy state without the others, the breakdown of Israel’s covenantal relationship with YHWH

\textsuperscript{27} Anderson, \textit{Contours of Old Testament Theology}, 191 argues that the temple sermon constitutes ‘a transition from Mosaic to Davidic theology’.

\textsuperscript{28} For a discussion on mountain symbolism see Levenson, \textit{Sinai and Zion}, 89-178.

\textsuperscript{29} Anderson, \textit{Contours of Old Testament Theology}, 190 states that ‘the present catastrophe is God’s way of alerting people, through prophetic messengers, to the true seriousness of the crisis’.
adversely affects the land. Various creation traditions, such as the Genesis texts, present the notion of the covenantal ordering of creation; however, Jeremiah understands the breakdown of the covenant in terms of a destructive process of decreation which he portrays as a powerful and devastating reversal of creation. The land, the people and YHWH belong together in a symbiotic relationship. When that relationship is destroyed and the people are exiled from the land, each party of the symbiosis suffers, mourning the absence of the other parties. In an ecological perspective, Jeremiah presents an image of the earth as a character which raises its voice in mourning/drying up (4:28) in its distress at the separation from its people.

One issue that concerns the exiles is that of interpretation of trauma. ‘Why does YHWH our God do all these things to us?’ they enquire. Jeremiah presents a theological perspective which links social, religious and political issues with the state of the land. Though he expresses multiple, and sometimes conflicting, perspectives on the possibility of Judah’s existence as a people group with and without its land, the earth and the people’s relationship with it are important themes throughout the book. As with the perspectives of some indigenous people groups regarding their lands, the earth is central to Israel’s sense of wellbeing, and the prophet’s hope and intention is that the people will live positively within their own land. However, a process of judgement and decreation is required in order to make the people and the land suitable for co-existence.

Somewhat paradoxically, the book of Jeremiah also proclaims the survival of the people and the land in a state of separation from each other. The prophet presents an

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image of the Israelite people flourishing in Babylon (chap. 29) and returning to their land in the future to re-establish the symbiotic relationship. However, though the population is severely depleted, the land is enabled to produce crops through the tending of the poor people who remain in it and of the diaspora who return to assist with the harvest. Nevertheless, Jeremiah also presents the notion of the land having space to heal through the expulsion of many of its people.\textsuperscript{31} Though there will be a time of separation, the land, the people and YHWH will ultimately experience a restoration of their symbiosis which is made possible by the establishment of a new and indestructible covenantal relationship.

1.7 A Synchronic Approach

A synchronic approach has been chosen in this thesis because of the interpretive possibilities it allows in undertaking an extensive analysis of the world of the text and in reading it through the heuristic lens of an ecologically oriented symbiotic relationship.\textsuperscript{32} This study focuses upon the text in its final form as it is presented in the MT.\textsuperscript{33} While it is acknowledged that the Babylonian exile forms a backdrop to the text, no attempt is made to locate the events of the exile within the text.\textsuperscript{34} Though various voices are expressed throughout the book of Jeremiah, this study is not concerned with identifying such voices or with issues of their source.\textsuperscript{35} Brett refers to ‘intentional hybridity’ which he describes

\begin{footnotes}
\item[31] Cf. Lev 26:34-35, 43.
\item[32] Hill, \textit{Friend or Foe?} 10f. argues that a synchronic approach goes beyond source-critical and redactional approaches to offer many interpretive possibilities ‘through a more extensive analysis of the world of the text’ (11).
\item[33] Though the MT is used in this study of Jer 4:23-28 and other relevant texts, where significant differences occur in other manuscripts such as the LXX, they are noted and discussed especially in chap. 3. However, the MT is read as a literary text in its own right.
\item[34] James Barr, “The Synchronous, the Diachronic and the Historical: A Triangular Relationship?” in \textit{Synchronous or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis}, ed. Johannes C. de Moor, (OTS 34; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 1-14 seeks to diminish the opposition between synchrony and diachrony, arguing that historical issues undergird any synchronic reading of a text.
\item[35] It is acknowledged that though the text may have undergone numerous revisions by many editors during the journey to its current form, for the purposes of this study the text is taken as it now appears in the MT. R. Polzin, \textit{Moses and the Deuteronomist. A Literary Study of the Deuteronomic History} (New York:
\end{footnotes}
as ‘a blending of two or more voices, without compositional boundaries being evident, such that the voices combine into an unstable chorale’. ‘Hybridisation takes the focus off particular editorial additions and allows a more holistic consideration of the texts’, he states, explaining that the notion of holism ‘expects complexity and contradiction, not unity’. Polk identifies the biblical text as,

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\text{a relatively coherent whole whose meaning is primarily a function of the internal relations among its parts, over against the diachronic perspective that regards meaning as adhering only to the text’s (hypothetically reconstructed) independent parts, as bound to the (supposed) time of its composition, and as grounded in the (inferred) intentions of its (mostly anonymous) authors, while ignoring, dismissing as illegitimate, and/or leaving to homiletics the question of an overall coherence of the text in its completed form.}
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He stresses that in a synchronic approach the emphasis is on the reading process rather than the writing or compositional process. Thus, though it is recognized that it is not necessarily the case, for the purposes of this study the text is treated as a unified whole. Ricoeur refers to ‘a reverence for the sense of the given text, the “last” text’. Understanding the text as testimony or revelation, he argues that all discourse is event which is invested with meaning. ‘The experience as experienced, as lived, remains private, but its sense, its meaning, becomes public.’ It is the public domain of the MT of Jer 4:23-28 and other relevant texts which is taken as testimony to the presence of the character of the earth and its communication.

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Seabury, 1980), 17 concedes that there may be ‘several different viewpoints within the narrative’ of a text. Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up*, 7-10 summarizes possible layers of composition, including core poetic utterances of the historical Jeremiah, narrative accounts of Baruch and extended editorial work by Deuteronomists and others. However, while a history of composition is acknowledged, in this synchronic study there is no quest for an original text.


Polk, *The Prophetic Persona*, 18. 37

Polk, *The Prophetic Persona*, 16. Barr, “The Synchronic, the Diachronic and the Historical,” 5 states that the MT is, in fact, ‘a veritable linguistic museum.’ 38


In his classic discussion, Saussure addresses the notion of ‘synchronic’ semantics in which words are understood within the context of their linguistic system. Rather than studying the whole history of a word’s usage, the focus is upon the range of possible options available to a speaker at any particular moment.

The synchronic study of language is an attempt to reconstruct the system as a functional whole, to determine, shall we say, what is involved in knowing English at any given time; whereas the diachronic study of language is an attempt to trace the historical evolution of its elements through various stages. The two must be kept separate lest the diachronic point of view falsify one’s synchronic description …. Language is a system of interrelated items and the value and identity of these items is defined by their place in the system rather than by their history.

In this synchronic reading it is argued that an ecological awareness will enable readers to attend to the voice of the earth in the text.

While acknowledging that there are at least three worlds associated with any biblical text, (the world behind the text, the world in the text and the world in front of the text), the main foci of this study are those of the world in the text and the world in front of the text. The search for the world behind the text employs socio-cultural and historical critical readings in order to ascertain the social, cultural, political and theological situation from which the text emerged. Though the world behind the text is acknowledged it is not the primary concern of this study. Chapter 3 of this thesis pays particular attention to the world in the text. The tools of rhetorical criticism are employed

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42 Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, 12.
in a close reading of Jer 4:23-28 in order to identify ways in which a new perspective or worldview is created by the choice, arrangement and repetition of words and phrases. The world in front of the text constitutes the worldview of the reader/s. However, in this thesis it is argued that the reader’s horizon of expectation may be informed by other contemporary worldviews, in particular those of some ecologists and indigenous people. This study refers to Habel’s notion of a land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship, the EBT’s ecojustice principles and the experiences of some indigenous people with their lands.

1.8 A Literary Study of Jer 4:23-28

A literary study of the text of Jer 4:23-28 is undertaken and viewed through the heuristic lens in order to reveal some of the ways in which the prophet attends to the character and voice of the earth. The text facilitates links with other parts of Jeremiah and reveals his countercultural perspectives on issues such as covenant, exile and hope for the future. All readings of texts from the HB, including that of Jer 4:23-28, are the author’s own translations unless otherwise stated. This is done in order to ensure that the same Hebrew word is translated consistently with the same English word. Though the readings are sometimes awkward in English, in some instances the order of the Hebrew is employed in order to recognise the poetic form and the rhetorical thrust of the text. All

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46 Issues of interpretation that impact the author’s translation of Jer 4:23-28 are addressed in chap. 3 of this study.
references and quotations from the HB employ the numbering system of the MT. Though the importance of employing inclusive language is acknowledged and adhered to in this thesis, names, metaphors and pronouns for God in quotations from the HB use the masculine gender in order to be as authentic as possible to the text.\textsuperscript{47} Employing some of the tools of rhetorical criticism, this study seeks to enter the world presented by the text through its choice and arrangement of words and phrases. It is acknowledged that the text may be presenting a worldview of its own imagination and/or be reflecting the events and attitudes of the world in which it was constructed, nevertheless, it is the world of the text and its metaphors which are the foci of this study.

In this study of the text of Jer 4:23-28 a literary analysis employs some of the tools of rhetorical criticism. It is stressed that this study merely employs tools of rhetorical criticism rather than fully immersing itself in the technicalities of the rhetorical critical method. Inherent within the approach of rhetorical criticism is the notion that the form and content of a given text are mingled so as to achieve an organic unity and that the meaning of a text is derived from an analysis of its intertwined form and content.\textsuperscript{48} “Proper articulation of form-content yields proper articulation of meaning”, Trube helpfully explains in her examination of Muilenburg’s rubric of rhetorical criticism.\textsuperscript{49} It is precisely this articulation of meaning which is of interest in this study. While rhetorical

\textsuperscript{47} Lawrence D. McIntosh, \textit{A Style Manual for the Presentation of Papers and Theses in Religion and Theology} (Centre for Information Studies in association with Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association. Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools, 1994), 40-41.


\textsuperscript{49} Trible, \textit{Rhetorical Criticism}, 91examines James Muilenburg’s rubric of Rhetorical Criticism in which he moves beyond the approach of form criticism to give attention to the unique aspects of a text. See James Muilenburg, “Form Criticism and Beyond,” \textit{JBL} 88 (1969), 1-18.
criticism takes an intrinsic approach to reading the text, it recognises that extrinsic issues such as historical background, archaeological data and social setting have influenced it. Nevertheless, while it is acknowledged that diachronic issues of interpretation impact upon Jer 4:23-28, in this study the text is read synchronically, as it appears in its final form in the MT.\(^5\)

A close reading of the text of Jer 4:23-8 will be undertaken noting linguistic structures such as the words and phrases employed, as well as their arrangements within the text.\(^5\) Form criticism seeks to identify the form and genre of a given text, and while rhetorical criticism utilises the form critical approach it also endeavours to study the unique and peculiar features of any given text.\(^5\) The aim of such an analysis in this thesis is to determine a particular understanding of the text in an endeavour to discover something of its rhetorical purpose, and particularly to identify the character and communication of the earth. ‘Rhetorical Criticism shows the patterns of relationships residing in the very words, phrases, sentences, and larger units’, Trible states in her detailed study of the rhetorical critical approach.\(^5\) Rhetorical criticism employs the method of examining the content of a text (inventio) with the view to locating within it some structure (dispositio) and style (elocutio). It seeks to identify structural patterns, verbal sequences and stylistic devices which may reveal something of its rhetorical

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\(^5\) Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 94 states that ‘Rhetorical Criticism begins and ends with the final form of a text, though it is not limited to that form.’ Amador, “Where Could Rhetorical Criticism (Still) Take Us?” 195-222 notes that rhetorical criticism’s past concerns with issues such as the original audience have moved on to work at a more synchronic level.

\(^5\) Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (USA: Basic Books, 1981), 3 states that ‘the minute choice of words, reported details, the pace of narration, the small movements of dialogue’ are all important in analyzing literature.

\(^5\) Muilenburg, “Form Criticism and Beyond,” *JBL* 88 (1969), 9 suggests that form should be a means of identifying the uniqueness of a text rather than an end in itself.

\(^5\) Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 97 also stresses that there are ‘limits to language as well as the power of language to specify and signify’.
thrust. It is important not only to examine what the text says but also how it says it. Discerning the structure of a text involves examining its individual parts and showing how they work together. It also involves identifying literary devices and explaining ‘their functions in marking sequences and shifts within units’. It is assumed that a specific text is deliberately arranged with some sort of literary and theological intent. The major purpose of such a carefully worded composition is to deliver a message that will have a certain emphasis which seeks to impact its readers. In line with the characteristic emphasis of a synchronic approach, it is acknowledged that any mention of readers does not simply refer to the original readers of the text but also includes current readers. Patrick and Scult state that, ‘Modern scholars of rhetoric, and literary critics have expanded the range of rhetoric to include the ways authors of narratives construct the relationship to their readers.’ One of the aims of rhetorical criticism is to look for indicators which reveal how the implied author intends the text to function for the readers. ‘These cues and indicators are communicated through the speaker’s management of conventional forms of discourse prevalent in the community to which the speaker and audience belong.’ It is also acknowledged that meaning may reside in the author, the text and the reader.

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55 Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 27.
56 Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 121 assumes that the text is ‘com-posed’ and has intentionality. See also p. 26. Similarly Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation*, 20 describes a ‘symbiotic relationship between poetics and interpretation’.
57 Dale Patrick and Allen Scult, *Rhetoric and Biblical Interpretation* (JSOTSup 82; Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1990), 141 note that the focus of classical rhetoric upon public speaking and written correspondence is too narrow for the interpretation of the HB, and an expanded approach is required.
59 Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 99 poignantly describes meaning in the metaphorical terms of the author as the window, the text as the picture and the reader as the mirror. She acknowledges that texts may reveal ‘other than their flesh – and – blood authors intend’ (97). She also states that ‘meaning may center in the
Presenting the view that biblical narrative may be characterized as ‘primary rhetoric’, Patrick and Scult state that ‘rhetoric’ is ‘the means by which a text establishes its relationship to its audience in order to achieve a particular effect’ and, as such, it employs language in ‘the art of persuasion’. Generally prophetic literature seeks to persuade its readers towards a certain course of understanding or behaviour, and, therefore, it can be defined as rhetorical literature. While issues of the original audience are not the focus of this synchronic study, it is noted that Jer 4:23-28 is a persuasive piece of literature in that it presents a proposition of a world which is out of covenantal order. According to Jeremiah, a change is required in the perspective or worldview of the audience. He seeks to challenge an inadequate view of the world and open the way to a new interpretation. Thus, poetry and rhetoric work together in this text to present a world in desolation and depletion in order to persuade readers to change their prevailing worldviews. Through the literary vehicles of poetry and discourse the prophet employs figures of speech which stretch the meanings of words and engage the readers in the world (mimetic theories), or in the audience (pragmatic theories) or in the text (objective theories), as well as in the author (expressive theories)’ (27). All of these orientations contain a theological dimension. Berlin, Poetics and Interpretation, 82 states that, ‘The reader is no passive recipient of a story, but an active participant in trying to understand it.’ When different perspectives are presented in a text the reader must struggle to establish her/his own perspective and form her/his own psychological point of view.


This study uses the term ‘worldview’ in the sense of perspective. Jeremiah does not propose a new cosmology but an alternative perspective. He does this through the creation of a literary ‘world’ which might influence the perspectives of readers. See Paul Ricoeur, “Biblical Hermeneutics,” Semeia 4 (1975), 30-148.

Gerald Morris, Prophecy, Poetry and Hosea (JSOTSup 219; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 42 argues that poetry and rhetoric are two different genres in that poetry reveals while rhetoric persuades. However, he also states that they may co-exist in prophetic works.
The rhetorical author attempts to persuade the readers through her/his writings that there is something wrong about the existing perspectives which needs to be put right; and that they need to take action to correct the situation. This is especially true in biblical prophetic literature in which the prophets’ interpretations of world situations are often presented as occurring through divine initiative and actions. Situations which are not right are interpreted by the prophets as being so because of the wrong attitudes or actions of God’s people. Presentations of destabilised realities which do not allow for positive outcomes are designed to shake people out of their complacency and open up new possibilities to them. Themes or narratives common to the memories and/or experience of the readers and the authors may be presented in alternative ways, thus creating a destabilising effect and critiquing prevailing ideologies. Tragedies act as warnings or punishments to the people, persuading them to live according to God’s ways. They also serve to provide alternative perspectives for the people to make sense of events and tragedies, and in so doing, they provide some sort of theological order. In Jer. 4:23-28 the prophet employs the metaphor of the reversal of creation and the voice of the mourning/drying up of the earth to present a message that

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63 See Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, (eds.), *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (Chicago: Chicago Press, 1995), 82 for a discussion on how ‘figures of speech twist the meaning of a word.’
64 Brueggemann, “The Book of Jeremiah,” 118 states that Jeremiah’s language is designed to ‘shock’, ‘call attention’, ‘break the routine’ and present ambiguities to provoke the readers to ‘redescribe’ settled issues. Patrick and Scult, *Rhetoric and Biblical Interpretation*, 34 state that the rhetor ‘attempts to correct the situation through the audience – to get the audience to make it right by affecting them through discourse’.
Kalinda Rose Stevenson, *Vision of Transformation. The Territorial Rhetoric of Ezekiel 40-48* (Altanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1996), 157 states that ‘a visionary is one who is able to see the possibility of change in an existing society … The visionary sees radical social change as a real possibility’.
65 Patrick and Scult, *Rhetoric and Biblical Interpretation*, 36 state that, ‘A story cannot be told without inventing connections between events – connections which lend moral direction to the story as a whole.’
the world of the readers is lacking in covenantal order and requires re-ordering through a
new perspective and a return to a covenantal relationship with YHWH. 66

The tasks of rhetorical criticism include delimiting the text and discerning its
structure. The limits of a rhetorical unit may be defined by identifying certain framing
devices such as climax, inclusio (a parallel arrangement of words at the beginning and
ending of a unit) and chiasm (a series of inclusios). 67 Repetition of key words, phrases or
themes, and the use of images and metaphors may also indicate a rhetorical unit. An
examination of a rhetorical unit and comparison of it with the wider literary context
reveals rhetorical shifts, as well as the ways in which the text in question relates to the
wider literary context.

Changes in normally expressed formulae are particularly significant in a text.
They may correct errors in past accounts of the story, point out that the traditional
formula is not being adhered to by the readers, or present a new way of having a
relationship with God. ‘In a world where formula meant sanctity, a departure from
formula made a powerful statement’ state Patrick and Scult, ‘one important way to move
a community from one way of relating to divinity to another would be to change the form

66 Recent theorists argue that metaphor is foundational to language and knowledge. Janet Martin Soskice,
*Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 47 presents an interanimative view of
metaphor in which tenor and vehicle ‘conjointly depict and illumine’ one subject. The vehicle presents the
underlying subject of the metaphor and is only accessible through the metaphor. Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of
65 states that a metaphor is a figure of speech which gives ‘an unaccustomed name to some other thing,
which thereby is not being given its proper name’. See also Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 46f.; Fager,
*Land Tenure and the Biblical Jubilee*, 52-59; Hill, *Friend or Foe?* 24-34.

67 Trible, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 27 defines ‘climax’ as ‘a series of parallel items in ascending order of
intensity,’ ‘inclusio’ as ‘parallelism of words, phrases, or sentences between the beginning and the ending
of a unit’ and ‘chiasm’ as ‘a series of inclusios’. See also Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry. A
Guide to its Techniques* (JSOTSup 26; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 282f. for a discussion of these
terms.
of the sacred text, the medium through which the community related to the deity. In Jer 4:23-28, by employing images of the pre-existing cosmology of Gen 1, the prophet presents the notion of the covenantal order of creation as destabilised in a reversal of creation and a return to a state of pre-creation emptiness and desolation. The character of the earth raises its voice in an expression of its suffering due to the separation from its people. The text in question will be studied to determine ways in which Jeremiah seeks to guide his readers into an alternative perspective on exile and to invite them into a new covenantal relationship with YHWH which will facilitate their return to their land. Thus, he seeks to initiate them into ways in which the symbiotic relationship between the people, the land and YHWH can be restored.

1.9 An Outline of Jer 4:23-28

The text to be examined is Jer 4:23-28. Though the speaker is not formally introduced, the first part of the text is presumably an account of the prophet’s vision of the destruction and depletion of the earth and the heavens. Echoing the general thrust of biblical creation traditions, the text presents a scene of the reversal of creation with the earth being desolate and empty, and the heavens lacking light. There is instability in the earth with the mountains quaking and the hills shaking themselves. The people have disappeared and the birds have flown away. The earth has lost its fecundity and the cities have been destroyed. The theological interpretation is that YHWH is responsible for the scene of destruction. YHWH’s speech then explains YHWH’s destructive intentions for the earth and the heavens. However, there is a contradictory note in the threat in that the

68 Patrick and Scult, Rhetoric and Biblical Interpretation, 38. Katherine M. Hayes, The Earth Mourns: Prophetic Metaphor and Oral Aesthetic (Atlanta: SBL, 2002), 79, 216-236 notes that any variation from the familiar recurring phrases and expressions is very noticeable, and such modifications serve to increase the impact of the whole literary context.
destruction of the earth will not be complete. Though divine responsibility is acknowledged, the earth is also understood to be acting within this scene of destruction in its depletion, violent movements and intention to mourn/dry up (4:28). However, while the earth is an active participant, the prophet’s theological perspective is that the devastation occurs because of YHWH’s unwavering determination and plan.

1.10 Intertextuality

The heuristic lens is also turned towards several other texts which employ similar words, phrases and/or images to those presented in Jer 4:23-28. The intention is to look for the character of the earth within the texts and listen to its voice. Jer 4:23-28 is briefly compared with several biblical creation traditions, the Deuteronomists and a non-biblical ANE text, noting the use of similar language, images and notions. A more detailed comparison is made between Jer 4:23-28 and Jer 12:1-4, 7-13, Isa 24:1-20, 33:7-9, Hos 4:1-3 and Joel 1:5-20 because these texts have extended similarities to Jer 4:23-28, especially in terms of their choice of words, phrases and/or images. After an examination of the ways in which these texts present a relationship between the people, the land and YHWH, and their attention to the character and communication of the earth it is argued that in Jer 4:23-28 the prophet’s ecological awareness and capacity to attend to the earth’s voice has some similarities with the experiences of current indigenous people with their lands.

1.11 Summary

While chapter 5 formally concludes this study, at this point it is sufficient to say that a literary study of Jer 4:23-28 is undertaken, employing some of the tools of rhetorical criticism, in order to determine something of Jeremiah’s emphases in presenting the
vision of the reversal of creation, the metaphor of the earth raising its voice in mourning/drying up and the theological interpretation of the scene of devastation. The ecojustice principles of the EBT, some specific indigenous experiences of relationships between people groups and their lands, and Habel’s land-people-YHWH model of symbiosis are combined to form a heuristic ‘multi-focal’ lens through which to view Jeremiah’s presentation of the close and interdependent relationship between the Israelite people and their land. It is argued that the symbiotic relationship is held together by covenant and that the breaking of the covenant leads to a dismantling of the relationship and the exile of many of its people. The various parties of the symbiosis express their suffering at being separated from each other. The land, the people and YHWH all raise their voices in anguish. In a way which resonates with some current eco-perspectives, the earth is presented as a character which is capable of communication. It is not an inert form that merely suffers the destruction which is inflicted upon it by YHWH and the people. The earth actively contributes to YHWH’s destruction of the land with the landforms quaking and shaking, and the earth losing its fertility. The earth participates in its state of desolation and depletion, and expresses its anguish in its action of mourning/drying up (4:28).

Though YHWH’s stated intention is to utterly destroy the earth (4:28), there is a contradictory note expressed in that YHWH ‘will not make a full end’ of it (4:27). A message of hope is presented elsewhere in the book in the continuity of the relationship between the people and the land through the ongoing presence of the poor remnant, the return of the diaspora and Jeremiah’s redemptive purchase of his uncle’s field. Thus, the earth is not completely destroyed and the relationship between the people and the land is
maintained, albeit to a limited extent. Jeremiah presents a message of hope for the future which will be achieved through the formation of an indestructible covenant and the return of the people to the land. While Jer 4:23-28 expresses the earth’s suffering at the separation from its people and its return to a state of pre-creation desolation, it also presents a message of hope in YHWH’s declaration not to completely destroy the earth. Thus, the text includes a glimpse of the restoration of the land-people-YHWH symbiosis and the reunion of the people with the land which is expressed elsewhere in the book. However, while some continuity between the people and the land remains and there is hope for the future restoration of land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship, each party of the symbiosis suffers greatly in its separation from the others. The land, the people and YHWH belong together. As indigenous people often express their capacity to hear the voice of their lands, so Jeremiah is sensitive to the communication of the character of the earth as it raises its voice in mourning/drying up at the absence of its people (4:28).
Chapter 2: The Land, the People and YHWH in an Ecologically Oriented Symbiotic Relationship

2.1 Introduction

The relationship between the land, the people and YHWH is examined here in the light of Norman Habel’s notion of a land-people-god symbiosis, the six ecojustice principles of the Earth Bible Team, and some specific eco-perspectives, including those of several indigenous authors. The heuristic lens formed by the combination of these perspectives is referred to as ‘an ecologically oriented symbiotic relationship’. The method is heuristic in that it elicits questions rather than determining the outcomes of interpretation.

Jeremiah presents the notion of the Israelite people having a strong connection with their land, so much so that they understand issues of life and faith in terms of land. He perceives the people, YHWH and the land to be separate, though interdependent, characters which have the capacity to express their feelings and intentions through words and/or actions. EBT’s perspective of the land as a character that has a voice with which it is able to communicate is helpful in considering Jeremiah’s metaphors of the earth’s return to a state of pre-creation desolation and the raising of its voice in mourning/drying

Though Jeremiah does not work from an indigenous self-consciousness, it is argued that the interface between the biblical text and indigenous cultures can provide a heuristic lens through which to view his presentation of the close relationship between the people, the land and YHWH, as well as the communication of the earth in its suffering at being separated from its exiled people.

Several current authors on ecological issues are consulted in order to understand something of the close relationship that exists between some people groups and their lands, as well as the devastating impact of land loss. As many indigenous people describe their capacity to receive the communication of the earth, so it is argued that

__George Lakoff__, “The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor,” in *Cognitive Linguistics: Basic Readings*, ed. Dirk Geeraert, 185-188 (Berlin, New York: Mouten de Gruyter, 2006) rejects the traditional division between literal and figurative language with its understanding of metaphor as figurative language. He argues that ‘the locus of metaphor is thought, not language’ (186). I am suggesting that some indigenous thought is informative in reading Jeremiah’s metaphors of the reversal of creation and the mourning/drying up of the earth.


Jeremiah has the sensitivity to hear the earth’s voice raised in suffering when separated from its people, as well as shouting at the joyous prospect of its reunification with them. These voices are taken as heuristic clues, along with the EBT’s principles.

2.2 Norman Habel’s Notion of a Land-People-God Symbiosis

The term ‘symbiosis’ means ‘living together, the mutualism of a close relationship, which has advantages for and enhances the life of all participants’, explains Shirley Wurst. Her definition is kept in mind in considering Norman Habel’s notion of the symbiotic relationship between the land, the people and YHWH that is employed in examining Jeremiah’s presentation of their close and interconnected relationship. According to the prophet, the intimate relationship is held together by Israel’s covenant with YHWH. When the people live in positive interaction with each other and with YHWH, the land prospers. However, when they are unfaithful in their social and religious duties, the land suffers drought and infertility. Through disobedience to the covenant the symbiotic relationship is broken. As no part of the symbiosis can positively exist without the others, the removal of many Israelite people from their land through exile can be understood in terms of the demise of the symbiotic relationship. Jeremiah’s interpretation of the phenomenon of exile concerns the breaking of the covenant and the dismantling of the symbiosis. The breakdown of the relationship represents a catastrophe of enormous proportions that causes grief to each party of the symbiosis. Wurst provides an apt description of the implications of symbiotic breakdown:

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73 The communication of the earth will be addressed in greater detail in 2.11 of this study.
75 Deut 27-28 enunciate blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience in terms of fruitfulness and unfruitfulness. See 4.3 of this study.
As their lives depend on and are sustained by the close connection between them, the participants also become vulnerable: not only are they susceptible to their own weaknesses; when other parties are invaded or suffer, so do they all.\textsuperscript{76}

Fretheim describes the world as ‘a giant spiderweb’ in which the actions of any creature ‘reverberate out and affect the whole, shaking the entire web in varying degrees of intensity’.\textsuperscript{77} Thus, in the book of Jeremiah the reverberations of grief are expressed in terms of the prophet’s anguish, the grief of the people, and the mourning of YHWH (though the suffering of these parties is often intertwined). However, the prophet is also sensitive to the distress of the earth. Using the metaphor of the reversal of creation, Jeremiah presents a powerful image of $\text{Xr} \eta \lambda \beta$, the land mourning/drying up because it lacks the creative order of a covenantal relationship between the people and YHWH. As a member of the land-people-god symbiotic relationship, the earth raises its voice in its expression of grief due to its separation from the people.

\textbf{2.3 The Earth Bible Team’s Six Ecojustice Principles}

The EBT views the earth as a character, a non-human ‘thou’ or ‘other’ which is ‘a living entity, both biologically and spiritually’.\textsuperscript{78} The team defines the earth as ‘a complex of ecological systems, and all the components of those systems – from rocks to rainbows’.\textsuperscript{79} It has developed six principles that are ‘the basic understandings about ecojustice shared by the group of people who have developed the Earth Bible series’.\textsuperscript{80} The principles provide a basis for articulating key questions in reading and interpreting the Bible. The EBT seeks to focus on the earth as a character in the text rather than as

\textsuperscript{76} Wurst, “Retrieving Earth’s Voice in Jeremiah,” 177.
\textsuperscript{79} EBT, “Guiding Ecojustice Principles,” 43. While EBT refers to ‘Earth’, this thesis employs the nomenclature ‘the earth’ for the sake of consistency with the rest of the study.
\textsuperscript{80} EBT, “Guiding Ecojustice Principles,” 38.
God’s creation or the people’s property. In doing so it employs a process of ‘suspicion and retrieval’, suspecting that texts are likely to be anthropocentric and that the character of the earth may be ‘unnoticed, suppressed or hidden’ in a text.\textsuperscript{81} The EBT presents a process of ‘countercoherent’ reading which Habel describes as ‘alternative readings of the text that both make sense – cohere – and challenge the dominant reading and/or the tradition of interpretation associated with this reading’.\textsuperscript{82} Thus, the EBT recommends rereading texts in an effort to retrieve the character and voice of the earth. This thesis also seeks to identify the character and communication of the earth in Jer 4:23-28 and other relevant texts, and to hear the earth’s voice more strongly. Though the character and communication of the earth are discussed in greater detail in 2.11 of this thesis, at this point a brief discussion is undertaken regarding ways in which Jeremiah’s presentation, especially in 4:23-28, resonates with the EBT’s six ecojustice principles.

The EBT’s first ecojustice principle is that of intrinsic worth: ‘The universe, Earth and all its components have intrinsic worth/value.’\textsuperscript{83} This is not a utilitarian value or as a reflection of God’s creative powers but worth of its own that honors the earth as a subject in its own right.\textsuperscript{84} The earth is not to be understood or treated as a commodity or

\textsuperscript{81} EBT, “Guiding Ecojustice Principles,” 39. The EBT points out that Western dualism has tended to devalue the earth ‘as belonging to the weak and subordinate side of the pairings’ (41). They also discuss presentations of the earth as female (e.g., ‘Mother Earth’ and ‘Mother Nature’) and the use of the feminine pronoun as possibly devaluing the earth (42). Though it is stressed that the earth is understood as a character, this study employs the neutral pronoun ‘it’ in order to avoid issues of gender. See also Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “The Will to Choose or to Reject: Continuing Our Critical Work,” in Feminist Interpretation of the Bible, ed. Letty M. Russell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 125-136.

\textsuperscript{82} Editor’s footnote 1, EBT, “Guiding Ecojustice Principles”, 40. Ernst M. Conradie, “Towards an Ecological Biblical Hermeneutics: A Review Essay of the Earth Bible Project,” Scriptura (2004): 135 notes that while the EBT’s six ecojustice principles offer ‘an innovative and resolute articulation of such a heuristic key’ and are strong in critiquing the anthropocentrism underlying biblical texts, ‘such a critique remains insufficient for an ecological hermeneutic’.

\textsuperscript{83} EBT, “Guiding Ecojustice Principles,” 42.

\textsuperscript{84} EBT, “Guiding Ecojustice Principles,” 44 argues that in Gen 1 God discovers that the earth is good rather than making it so by divine declaration. Thus, in this text the earth has an intrinsic value. While acknowledging that people are part of the community of the earth, this thesis examines them independently
property but rather as kin and partner with its people and YHWH. Jeremiah honors the character of the earth by attending to its voice especially in Jer 4:23-28.

The Principle of Interconnectedness (Ecojustice Principle 2) states that ‘Earth is a community of interconnected living things that are mutually dependent on each other for life and survival.’

The EBT refers to a ‘complex web of interrelationships’ between every species of the earth’s community, including people. Jeremiah’s presentation of the earth, the people and YHWH existing in a symbiotic relationship finds some resonance with this principle. Though at times the identities of the members of the symbiosis are intertwined, in other instances Jeremiah presents them as separate entities. There is constant communication between the characters of YHWH and the people. However, YHWH also addresses the earth (e.g., 16:19; 22:29) and the earth cries out to YHWH (e.g., 4:28; 12:11; 23:10).

The third ecojustice principle states that ‘Earth is a subject capable of raising its voice in celebration and against injustice.’ The earth has a voice and the various species inhabiting it also have voices. The EBT stresses that in using the term ‘voice’ it does not imply ‘an anthropocentric act, making Earth into a human subject.’ The earth does not

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from the earth in order to ascertain ways in which the symbiotic relationship operates and to attend to the character and voice of the earth.

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EBT, “Guiding Ecojustice Principles,” 44. B. Morito, Thinking Ecologically: Environmental Thought, Values and Policy (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2002), 70 argues that that there is a dynamism of relationship within the members of the earth community.

EBT, “Guiding Ecojustice Principles,” 44. The team points out that anthropocentric readings of the bible assume that humans are of a different and superior order to other life forms, whereas this principle understands all of the earth’s species to be valued.

Fretheim, God and World in the Old Testament, 172 states that the land has ‘a relationship with God that is independent of God’s relationship to the human’.


EBT, “The Voice of Earth: More than Metaphor?” 23. Madipoane Masenya, “An Ecobosadi Reading of Psalm 127:3-5,” in Habel (ed.), The Earth Story in the Psalms and the Prophets, EB 4, 110-111 undertakes an ecobosadi reading (a women’s liberationist approach in an African-South African context) of Ps 127:3-5, arguing that many Western anthropological readings of the bible have devalued and marginalized the earth by relegating it to an inferior role. In doing so they have stripped it of its identity and caused it harm.
use human language; instead it has distinctive modes of expression that are appropriate to it and often physical in orientation. Different species of the earth communicate in their own unique ways. The earth’s languages include ‘gesture, sign, image or sound, that send a message – whether to humans, to other members of the Earth community or to God’.  

‘Many indigenous peoples claim to have the capacity to hear the wilderness sing and communicate in a variety of ways. They explain that trees, rivers, bears and deer all have distinct voices.’  

The EBT states that those who have experienced the earth as a subject ‘are committed to hearing the voices of Earth’.  

Stressing the need for people to attend to the earth’s voice, the EBT suggests that people who possess a particular sensitivity to the voice of the earth, such as some ecologists and indigenous people, may act as mediators to the rest of humanity. Though Jeremiah’s presentation of the character and communication of the earth is addressed in greater detail later, here it is noted that he acknowledges the character of the earth and has the capacity to hear its voice particularly as it expresses its suffering at the judgment of YHWH and at the separation from the sinful people. The earth communicates in its unique language of violent movement, disorder, darkness and infertility, as well as crying out in mourning/drying up (4:23-28). However, according to Jeremiah the earth also raises its voice in joy at the prospect of reunification with its people. Its joyful communication takes the form of the

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by denying it a voice. Though the earth cries out through various texts in the HB, its voice has not been heard because the ability to detect it has been lacking.  

90 EBT, “The Voice of Earth: More than Metaphor?” 23 employs the term ‘voice’ to refer to the communication of the earth and the earth community. It discusses ‘voice’ as metaphor stating that it is people’s way of recognizing Earth as communicating as an equal but different “thou” (24).  

91 EBT, “The Voice of Earth: More than Metaphor?” 26. Sally McFague, Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 37 notes a tension between the interaction of the two thoughts involved in a metaphor. However, EBT points out that by viewing the communication of the earth through an indigenous lens there may not be a tension (26).  


reestablishment of order and light, and the flourishing of the land in abundant produce (chaps. 30-33).

The Principle of Purpose (Ecojustice Principle 4) states that ‘the universe, Earth and all its components, are part of a dynamic cosmic design within which each piece has a place in the overall goal of that design’ and that ‘Earth is a complex of interacting ecosystems; it functions according to an inbuilt design of purpose.’\(^9^4\) The EBT explains that to upset that purpose is a great tragedy for the earth and its components. In Jeremiah the land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship has been dismantled due to the breaking of the covenant. Jer 4:23-28 describes the tragic consequences of upsetting the design and purpose of the earth. However, the prophet also presents an image of an ideal world in which all the elements that make up the earth (sea, sky, ground, stars, trees, people, etc.) exist in a positive and ordered relationship with each other and with YHWH that is held together by a new covenant (e.g., chaps. 30-33).

The Principle of Custodianship (Ecojustice Principle 5) states that ‘Earth is a balanced and diverse domain where responsible custodians can function as partners, rather than rulers, to sustain a balanced and diverse Earth community.’\(^9^5\) The different components of the earth are coequal in their custodianship towards each other. While humans have a mandate to tend and care for the earth (Gen 2:15), the earth has the responsibility of providing food, shelter, beauty and riches to sustain the people. In line with Ecojustice Principle 5, in Jer 4:23-28 the people are responsible for keeping the covenant which holds the symbiotic relationship together. When they fail to uphold the terms of the covenant, the earth withholds its fertility, reverting to a state of disorder.

\(^9^5\) EBT, “Guiding Ecojustice Principles,” 50.
instability and desolation. According to Jeremiah, the earth, the people and YHWH belong together in an ecologically oriented symbiotic relationship in which each party makes its contribution to mutual custodianship.

The Principle of Resistance (Ecojustice Principle 6) states that ‘Earth and its components not only suffer from injustices at the hands of humans, but actively resist them in the struggle for justice.’ The HB often presents God as punishing the people by sending plagues and curses upon the earth (e.g., Deut 28), as well as the people mistreating or neglecting the earth. In both these situations the earth is presented as a passive victim. However, some texts portray the earth as suffering with the people (e.g., Jer 12:4, 7-11; Hos 4:1-3), while in other texts the earth actively works to resist injustice and punish the people (e.g., Gen 3:18; Jer 4:23-28; 12:13; Isa 24:10-12). The earth is also a responsible character which is capable of acting as a competent witness:

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for YHWH has spoken: I have brought up sons but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his owner and the donkey his master’s manger but Israel does not know, my people have not understood (Isa 1:2-3).

In resisting injustice, the earth sometimes takes the initiative to spring back to life (e.g., Jer 31). Thus, the earth is proactive and responsible in its dealings with the people and with YHWH. As well as raising its voice through its state of order, movement and fertility, the earth also exercises the EBT’s ecojustice principle of resistance. Through its actions in Jer 4:23-28 the earth is resisting the evil actions of the people and working with YHWH to struggle for justice.

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97 See also Josh 24:27; Mic 1:2 and 6:1-2. Rose, Reports from a Wild Country, 32 states that there is a moral duty by both people and the natural world to remember and witness woundedness caused by violence and exile.
While all of the EBT’s ecojustice principles are considered to be relevant to Jeremiah’s vision of the reversal of creation, this thesis particularly focuses on the third principle which recognizes the earth as a subject that is capable of communication. Through its own unique language of movement, depletion, infertility and mourning/drying up the earth expresses its distress at the breakdown of the symbiotic relationship with YHWH and the people. Jeremiah is one of those ecologically aware people who has the sensitivity to hear the voice of the earth.

2.4 Some Current Indigenous Perspectives on Land-People-Deity Relationships

It is acknowledged that care must be taken in making any comparisons between perspectives of indigenous groups and those of Jeremiah and his people. In that there are differing perspectives expressed by different traditional tribal communities, as well as a variety of biblical perspectives, the process of relating any indigenous views to biblical texts requires several cultural leaps. Nevertheless, it would appear that certain cultures provide ways of illuminating the text better than others. Brett states that some African scholars identify analogies between traditional tribal societies and biblical world views. The International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs describes an inner ‘essence’ which all indigenous people have in common and which is characterized by an intense relationship with the earth.

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99 Though it is beyond the scope of this study, it is acknowledged that in the Australian context it is a hermeneutical imperative to consider postcolonial approaches to biblical texts. A fuller consideration of postcolonial critiques will require a more detailed engagement with YHWH’s imperial jurisdiction. See Mark G. Brett, Decolonizing God. The Bible in the Tides of Empire (Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2008).


language, culture, traditions and value systems, Longchar also stresses that in terms of worldview and experiences such communities share many similarities. He stresses that land is central to the worldview of indigenous peoples throughout the world and that this has been the case in all eras from ancient to current. In addressing issues of cultural exegesis, Smith-Christopher points out the obvious: ‘all readings are cultural’. He argues that the more readings of a text from different cultural perspectives the better because each one gives fresh perspectives and insights.

Multiculturalist approaches to textual interpretation, by intentionally seeking and encouraging readings that are consciously influenced by the cultural identities and experiences of the persons involved in the exegetical process, will result in improved readings.

In examining Longchar’s indigenous perspectives, it is worth keeping in mind Sevati Tuwere’s broad definition of the term ‘land’ which includes issues of ‘economics, politics, history, sociology, ethnicity, tradition, identity and spirituality’. Concepts of ‘land’ incorporate an extensive range of issues relating to the identity, history and spirituality of the population. Arthur Walker-Jones describes the Fijian concept of ‘land’ (called vanua) as the village, district or country which includes farmlands, forests, fishing grounds, birds, animals, vegetation and physical elements, a perspective that is elements of our application of cultural exegesis. Even though there are cultural differences, still we understand the depth of each other’s spiritual connections – to Creator, to land, to each other.’

102 Longchar, “Reading the Bible from the Perspective of Indigenous People’s Experience,” 1-12.
104 Smith-Christopher, ed., Text and Experience, 18.
105 Smith-Christopher, ed., Text and Experience, 22.
107 Habel, The Land is Mine, 1 notes that while the common English usage of the word ‘land’ refers to physical realities such as dirt, rocks and sand, it also reflects social constructions which incorporate a range of meanings for different people groups.
similar to Aboriginal ‘country’.\textsuperscript{108} Emphasizing their connection with \textit{vanua}, Fijian people are known as \textit{lewe ni vanua}, ‘the inner part of the land’. ‘Without people the \textit{vanua} is like a body without a soul,’ he explains.\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Vanua} incorporates the beliefs, values and practices of the people, with the spirits of ancestors and ancestral gods perceived to be present and active in the land. Thus, in Fijian thought, the deities, the people and the earth are interrelated and interdependent in their support of the life of the \textit{vanua}.\textsuperscript{110} Weiner describes the Foi people of Papua New Guinea, noting that society, language, dwellings, movement and time exist in an interconnection with territory. The movement of water is central to Foi perspectives on life, death and reproduction. Deceased relatives are remembered through the sights and sounds of the forests and rivers. Places are named according to the availability of food. Thus, many aspects of Foi life are understood in terms of land.\textsuperscript{111}

In examining indigenous perspectives on issues of faith, Longchar states that the Creator is pre-eminent, and that in some indigenous thought the land also has creative power and indeed is co-creator with the Creator. Gen 1:24 may express a similar perspective: ‘Let the earth bring forth living creatures.’ Longchar considers the land to be sacred and inseparable from the Creator. The Creator is manifested through creation, with land being the symbol of all living creatures, the spirit(s) and the Creator. The land and its features are ‘religious objects’ which have the ability to communicate with the

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\textsuperscript{108} Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Understanding Country, \textit{The Importance of Land and Sea}, 2 defines ‘country’ as ‘place of origin, literally, culturally or spiritually’. It encompasses ‘all the values, places, resources, stories and cultural obligations associated with that geographical area’.


\textsuperscript{110} Walker-Jones, “Psalm 104: A Celebration of the \textit{Vanua}”, 85.

\textsuperscript{111} Weiner, \textit{The Empty Place}, 1-22. The Foi call the Hegeso area ‘the empty’ place because there is no meat available there.
people. Moses’ conversation with Elohim who spoke from within a burning bush (Ex 3:1-22) and Elijah’s expectation of YHWH’s appearance in wind, earthquake and fire (I Kgs 19:9-13) are two of many such incidents in the HB which have some resonance with Longchar’s description of the Creator’s communication through creation. Longchar also points out that indigenous religions do not have founders, reformers or guides who are worshipped or adored, with religious activities being centered in the land. Yahwism would seem to differ in this regard in that while it has its respected founders and centers its worship on a deity who identifies intimately with the land in many instances, it is quite separate from it in others. Nevertheless, as with the indigenous religions Longchar describes, the religious activities of Yahwism are also presented as land centered in many texts in the HB.

According to Longchar, in some indigenous perspectives the Creator is the ultimate owner of the land but, though the people are free to live in it, they do not own the land, or, if there is any concept of ownership, it is in a tribal or community sense that is temporary. Consequently, individuals cannot claim exclusive land ownership and selling the land is unthinkable. In fact, in many instances it is the land which owns the people and gives them their identity. The life, history and spirituality of many indigenous people are bound up in their land and there are devastating and far reaching implications for the people and the land if the land is lost or destroyed. The logical consequence of land loss is the loss of identity of the family, clan or village. Land loss is so devastating to

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112 Land centred Yahwistic activities include offerings of the first fruits in the sacrificial system e.g., Ex 23, 34; Lev 2, 23; Num 18, 28; Deut 26.
113 Longchar, “Reading the Bible from the Perspective of Indigenous People’s Experience,” 3-5
114 Mark S. Smith, The Early History of God. Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990), xxiii discusses the emergence of Yahwism from the religion of the Canaanites. However, some of Yahwism’s land based practices are condemned by Jeremiah as Canaanite practices.
some indigenous people that, according to Longchar, ‘A person who is not deeply rooted in the land cannot become a good citizen. He/she is like a stranger without an identity and a home.’\textsuperscript{115} Similarly, in an African reading of Ps 104 Abotchie Ntreh explains that land, as a piece of the earth, must remain in relationship with its family, clan or people group. It is never to be sold without consent to those outside the family to which it belongs. Retaining a relationship with the land ensures that the earth experiences peace. Ntreh explains that if territorial boundaries are not maintained the earth is shaken.\textsuperscript{116} In some instances the HB also presents the notion of the inalienability of the land even when the clan and the land are separated (e.g., HC in Lev 25:23; 26:34-36). Ntreh’s image of the earth shaking because of the movement of territorial boundaries resonates with Jeremiah’s description of the hills shaking and mountains quaking in response to the absence of its people (4:23-26).

While seeking to tread warily, it is argued that, in view of Jeremiah’s emphasis on the close and interdependent relationship between the land, the people and YHWH, their symbiotic relationship can be viewed in the light of some current perspectives on relationships between indigenous groups, their land and their deities. Jeremiah’s presentation of the devastation and suffering of land loss through exile can also be enlightened by viewing it through these grids. Thus, the prophet’s use of the metaphors of the reversal of creation and the mourning/drying up of the earth in 4:23-28 are examined

\textsuperscript{115} Longchar, “Reading the Bible from the Perspective of Indigenous People’s Experience,” 4.
in the light of an ecologically oriented symbiotic relationship that includes some specific indigenous experiences.

2.5 Australian Aboriginal Experiences of Connection with Land

As land takes centre stage in many texts in the HB and the worldviews of Australian Aboriginals are generally land-centered, it is argued that a consideration of some Aboriginal perspectives on the place of land in ethnic self-definition and wellbeing throws light on Jeremiah’s notion of the strong and interdependent relationship between the land and its people, as well as the catastrophe of their separation through exile.\textsuperscript{117}

Aboriginal theologian, Anne Pattel-Gray, argues that

\begin{quote}
Australian Aboriginal people have much to offer in the area of cultural exegesis, as we have lived in harmony with the Creator and the creation for – literally – tens of thousands of years... 
Aboriginal exegesis and interpretation of the biblical texts is rich and full of vitality. It is a unique form of scholarship, often conducted in close contact with God’s creation. It is an expression of our daily lives, our family systems, our connectedness to everything around us.\textsuperscript{118}
\end{quote}

In describing the kinship groups of the Aboriginal people of Groote Eylandt, Turner refers to ‘territorially-defined’ groups who understand the land as a ‘Dreamtime substance’ that incorporates notions of religion, kinship, marriage, law and provision.\textsuperscript{119}

Galarrwuy Yunupingu describes the exceptionally close relationship that some Aboriginal people have with their lands:

\begin{quote}
For a discussion on the importance of land in the HB see 2.6 in this thesis. See Brett, “Interpreting Ethnicity,” 4-5 for a discussion on land in Aboriginal self-definition. Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Understanding Country, \textit{The Importance of Land and Sea}, 2-4 points out the diversity of perspectives on land of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, however, the Council acknowledges that spirituality customary laws and kinship systems are linked to land. Swain, \textit{A Place for Strangers}, 2 states that Aboriginal people understand their sense of being in terms of place and space.
\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{118} Pattel-Gray, “Dreaming: An Aboriginal Interpretation of the Bible,” 247 also states, ‘We have lived in relationships of justice and peace with each other and with the land.’ Habel, \textit{The Land is Mine}, 2 notes that: ‘For Aboriginal Australians the land is sacred, filled with ancestral dreamings that determine kinship, sacred site, and ceremony. All species of life, including humans are bound to the land. Land does not belong to people; people belong to the land.’

\textsuperscript{119} Turner, \textit{Life Before Genesis}, 53-54. After examining Australian and Canadian Aboriginal society and mythology in relation to the book of Genesis, he concludes that in their ‘Stone Age’ level of technological development Australian Aboriginal people have achieved peace, order and good government.
\end{quote}
Land is very close to the Aboriginal heart and we can actually feel sorry for the land, like you would feel sorry for someone who has been hurt . . . Our relationship with the land is much closer spiritually, physically, mentally than any other relationship I know of . . .

The land is active in caring for its people (Ecojustice Principle 5):

Land gives us value, and our Spirituality is in the land. The goodness that is in the land – in the trees, in the rocks, in the beauty of the landscape and nature itself – enables us to breathe, live and enjoy. The land feeds and nurtures all the time, just like mothers always look after their children. If you do not have your mother with you, the land provides just about everything you need.

Nancy: When I travel around my country I won’t starve. I know I’ll find good tucker because I have the right sweat for my country. It’ll look after us, because we are one and the same. You only need to call out. Talk to the land, it gives us life.

As a character in its own right the land has a life of its own:

Our Aboriginal Spirituality is alive and everything we see in the God-given nature – the trees, bushes and creatures – is alive and not dead. Our religion can be seen as a particular view of the universe and sets of relationships with it; relationships which include people, gods, Spirit, magical power, totems, the land, features of the landscape, living creatures, plants and all physical objects. All of these are, in some sense, potential sources of power.

The land also initiates communication:

When you go to different places, you see rocks, pretty rocks, and waterholes, wonderful waterholes with a lot of fish; there is a spirit there. You can see and hear the Spirit, close by, whispering.

Country produces a communicative web. It talks about itself all the time, and its language is sensual. Taste, touch, sound and sight reverberate to the messages that country gives out.

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120 Galarrwuy Yunupingu, “Concepts of Land and Spirituality,” Aboriginal Spirituality, ed. in Pattel-Gray, 6-8. Though there is relatively little published material on the relationship between Aboriginal people and the land written by Australian Indigenous people, the importance of land is abundantly portrayed in Aboriginal art e.g., Sutton, ed., Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia. Swain, A Place for Strangers, 84-85 states that every person has a homeland or ‘Abiding Place’.


122 Deveraux, “Looking at country from the heart,” in Tracking Knowledge in North Australian Landscapes, eds. Rose and Clarke,73 Nancy refers to the MakMak homeland within the Wagait floodplains in Northern Territory. Swain, A Place for Strangers, 52 points out that the land’s provision is not exclusive to its inhabitants; it also provides for visitors.


Some Aboriginal people acknowledge that they derive their life and wellbeing from their relationship with their land. Anne Pattel-Gray states, ‘Our entire worldview is centred around harmonious relationships between Creator and creation, between people and land, and between ourselves and our brothers and sisters.’ Stressing the importance of land to Aboriginal self-definition and spirituality, she explains, ‘We see land as an extension of our physical, spiritual and emotional form, and as the essence of our life-force, to the point that all life and creation are revered and valued.’ Similarly, Christine Morris states, ‘The crux of this relationship is that Aborigines see themselves and everything in their worldview as being “of” the land rather than living “on” the land.’ In the Dreaming ‘The laws were such that everything upon the land was interrelated by societal relationships. Animals, the topography and humans were all one and the one emanated from the land.’ Comparing Australian Aboriginals with indigenous people groups in Papua New Guinea, Rumsey states that their cosmologies are grounded in the land. He notes that the primordial beings both formed and are present in the landscape.

Land is not readily dispensed with in the social identity of indigenous peoples, states Brett, explaining that the indigenous identity of the Australian Aboriginals is

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125 Rose, Country of the Heart, 42.
inextricably bound up with their tribal lands.\textsuperscript{132} Cynthia Rowan describes the negative impact that enforced absence from the land has upon Aboriginal ethnic self-identity.

People who cannot return to their tribal land have ‘no sense of belonging’, she states.\textsuperscript{133}

Aborigines in these situations are living in cultural isolation and their spirit is slowly eroding. From time to time you need to go back to your country, back to your family and back to your friends. You need to go back to strengthen your spirituality. Our Ancestors have been practicing this for many generations by sitting quietly in the bush, just listening to the birds, feeling the wind caressing their faces, just quietly sitting there and feeling the Spirituality of the land and all it holds. That is strengthening your spirituality.\textsuperscript{134}

Rowan’s inference is that if indigenous people cannot return to their lands they inevitably suffer in terms of self-identity, security (belonging), and spirituality. ‘No. I can never stay too long. Otherwise I will get properly homesick. I mean really sick’, states an Aboriginal woman named Nancy.\textsuperscript{135} Aboriginal theologian, George Rosendale, describes the history of the Aboriginal people of Hope Vale in Queensland who in 1943 were forcibly relocated to Palm Island and Woorabinda. He recalls the spiritual links of these Aboriginal people with their ancestral lands and the negative effect relocation had on their spirituality. He describes their separation from their land as an exile experience: ‘We were taken from our land and brought down to Woorabinda. We had to live in exile … Where it affected them most was in the area of their spirituality’.\textsuperscript{136} Swain explains that prior to Western influences Aboriginal people had a ‘structured locative interdependence’ in which extended separation from their tribal lands meant the destruction of ‘the world-pattern on which one depends’.\textsuperscript{137} The Rainbow Spirit Elders

\textsuperscript{132} Brett, “Interpreting Ethnicity,” 20. Turner, \textit{Life before Genesis}, 479 states that Aboriginal Australia is made up of many ‘promised lands,’ each with its own chosen people.


\textsuperscript{134} Rowan, “Aboriginal Spirituality: A Sense of Belonging,” 19.

\textsuperscript{135} Deveraux, “Looking at country from the heart,” 74.


\textsuperscript{137} Swain, \textit{A Place for Strangers}, 54.
state that the act of separating the people from their land is tantamount to murdering their spiritual strength and values:

Stealing our land means stealing our souls, stealing what is most precious and dear to us, stealing our freedom and the spiritual strength within us. Stealing our land means taking our lives. Stealing our land is murder.¹³⁸

The experiences of several Aboriginal authors reinforce the negative impact which prolonged and forced separation from the land has upon their sense of spiritual and social wellbeing.¹³⁹

Though it is acknowledged that Aboriginal notions of the divine vary and differ from Israelite perspectives, it is argued that Jeremiah’s presentation of the close relationship between YHWH and the land of Israel finds resonance with some Aboriginal descriptions of the interconnectedness between indigenous deities and the lands of their people groups. In the description by Christine Morris regarding Aboriginal ethnic self definition, spiritual beings are considered to be inextricably linked with the land. She states that ‘Creator Beings are in the land. Their Spirit is ever-present in the land and can be called upon at any time.’¹⁴⁰ She also states that ‘Everything upon the land was interrelated by societal relationships. Animals, the topography and humans were all one and the one emanated from the land … the Creator Beings are in the land.’¹⁴¹ The Rainbow Spirit Elders explain that inside each Aboriginal person ‘is spirit and land, both given to me by the Creator Spirit. There is a piece of land in me, and it keeps drawing me back like a magnet to the land from which I came. Because the land, too, is spiritual.’¹⁴²

They describe the physical and personal links which each Aboriginal person has with their land when at the time of their birth their mother places the afterbirth and umbilical cord in the ground so that the blood will guide the person’s spirit to travel back through the land to their home country and link with their spiritual origins.¹⁴³ They state that ‘The Creator Spirit filled the land with numerous life-forces and spirit forces. The Creator Spirit causes these life-forces to emerge from the land and its waters as plants, animals, fish and birds.’¹⁴⁴ According to the Rainbow Spirit Elders and Jeremiah’s people, the whole natural realm is interrelated with the spiritual beings and humanity. It is argued that there are some similarities between Aboriginal perspectives and the way in which Jeremiah presents the earth as a character with which YHWH has a relationship.

According to Aboriginal thought, it is not only the people who suffer when separated from their land, for the land and the Creator Spirit also suffer when they are absent from the people. Some Aboriginal people describe a capacity to attend to the voice of the earth. Rose refers to a particular kind of ‘presence-to-the-world’ which is available to social and ecological ‘others’. By exercising this ability they are ‘attentive and alert to the here and now of life’.¹⁴⁵ The Rainbow Spirit Elders quote an Aboriginal man’s experience as he hears the earth cry: ‘It tears me apart. I grieve with the Creator when I hear the land crying.’¹⁴⁶ Similarly, Bill Neidjie reports, ‘I feel it in my body, with my blood. Feeling all these trees, all this country. When this wind blows you can feel it. Same for country … you feel it.’¹⁴⁷ The Rainbow Spirit Elders describe situations in

¹⁴⁵ Rose, *Reports from a Wild Country*, 214 describes such a presence as ‘situational and relational, connective, mutual and committed’.
which the land, the people and the Creator Spirit cry out in anguish at their separation from each other. The land cannot survive without its links with the Creator Spirit and its people. It dies without this life-giving relationship:

The Creator Spirit is crying because the deep spiritual bonds with the land and its people have been broken. The land is crying because it is slowly dying without this bond of spiritual life. The people are crying because they long for a restoration of that deep spiritual bond with the Creator Spirit and the land.148

The Creator Spirit is crying because the land is dispossessed. The land is crying because the people assigned by the Creator Spirit to be its custodians have been torn from it by force. The people of the land are crying because they are unable to fulfill their responsibilities as the custodians of the land.149

As custodian of the sacred places, the earth experiences anguish when they are destroyed:

‘The land is crying because the stories and rites associated with these sacred places are being forgotten.’150

Though human descriptions of the communication of the earth are anthropomorphic, it is clear that the earth expresses itself in its own unique language. The distress of the earth is described in terms of lack of vegetation and the depletion of animal life, images which resonate with the communication of the suffering earth in Jer 4:23–28.

The Creator Spirit is crying because the life-forces formed in the land are being destroyed. The land is crying because these life-forces are not bringing forth rich vegetation and abundant animal life. The people are crying because they are prevented from maintaining the law that once maintained this life.151

I understand that Mother Earth is suffering because there is so much devastation. Trees are dying and have to be cleared away, lands are being cut by flood waters and many other types of environmental destruction are taking place. That is when you experience the suffering of the Spirit of the Land.152

148 The Rainbow Spirit Elders, Rainbow Spirit Theology, 42.
149 The Rainbow Spirit Elders, Rainbow Spirit Theology, 45.
150 The Rainbow Spirit Elders, Rainbow Spirit Theology, 44.
151 The Rainbow Spirit Elders, Rainbow Spirit Theology, 46.
The earth needs restoration: ‘The land is crying because it is not given the rest and respect which would enable it to be restored.’ However, the land is also active in resisting evil and injustice (Ecojustice Principle 6). Referring to the powerful and protective influence of the Ancestors present in the land during the European settlement of Australia Yunupingu explains that ‘The land is not being lost to anyone. You cannot fight that Spirit. You cannot change the Spirit of this country. It is still here.’

In summary, many Aboriginal people have land-centered perspectives on life and faith. Land is not readily lost to them and the prospect of forcibly leaving it for an extended period has repercussions for their sense of self-identity, security and spirituality. Similarly separation from their land adversely affects Jeremiah’s people and it also causes great grief to the land. Thus, the experiences of some Aboriginal experience sheds interpretive light on Jeremiah’s presentation of Israelite land loss through exile and the anguish expressed by the earth as it raises its voice in suffering at the absence of its people.

2.6 The Importance of Land in the Hebrew Bible

Land is a focus throughout much of the HB. and its derivatives occur in the HB two thousand five hundred and four times, while and its derivatives occur two hundred and thirty times. The patriarchal narratives revolve around the promise of land, with the people frequently journeying in and out of it. During the Exodus

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153 The Rainbow Spirit Elders, Rainbow Spirit Theology, 51.
155 Weinfeld, The Promise of the Land, 183 states that Israel is ‘preoccupied’ with land. Habel, The Land is Mine, 2 states that in all cultures and contexts land is ‘a dominant reality’ which shapes our worldview. ‘Land is the ground of our being’. It also shapes the worldview of the Israelites.
wanderings the people prepare to enter the land which YHWH has promised them, while the conquest stories tell of their struggles to take possession of it. The books of Judges, Kings and Chronicles focus on land gain and land loss. With a strong emphasis on land and issues associated with it, it is clear that many biblical books address matters of faith and life from an ‘ecological’ perspective. However, while there is no unified theology of land in the HB and many theologies of land are expressed, YHWH is consistently presented as the owner and giver of the land and the people are understood to be in a close relationship with both YHWH and the land.\textsuperscript{157}

One significant variance in land theology in the HB concerns whether the Israelites can exist as the people of YHWH outside the land. Priestly literature presents the people of Israel as YHWH’s people wherever they happen to find themselves, inside or outside the land. The HC, in particular, envisages a strong connection between the people and the land. However, it also presents the notion of the expulsion of the people from the land as a consequence for polluting it.\textsuperscript{158} In the HC it would appear that both the Israelite and the pre-Israelite populations are exiled from the land.

Do not defile yourselves with all these, for with all these things the nations which I am casting out before you have defiled themselves. And the earth is defiled and I will call it to account for its iniquity, and the earth shall vomit out its inhabitants. But you shall keep my statutes and my judgments and shall not do any of these abominations, the citizen and the stranger who is staying in your midst. For all these abominations have the men of the earth who were before you done and the earth is polluted. And let not the earth vomit you out for polluting it as it vomited out the nation that was before you. For all who do any of these abominations shall be cut off, even the people who are doing them, from among their people. And you shall keep my charge so as not to

\textsuperscript{157} Christopher J. H. Wright, God’s People in God’s Land. Family, Land, and Property in the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, Exeter: Paternoster, 1990), 9-10 states that the notion of the land as YHWH’s gift is fundamental and persistent in the HB. See also Claus Westerman, The Promises to the Fathers. Studies on the Patriarchal Narratives (Trans. David E. Green; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 143-149.

do any of the abominable customs which were done before you and you shall not defile yourselves with them, I am YHWH your God. (Lev 18:24-29).

And you shall keep all my statutes and all my judgments and shall do them, and the earth to which I am bringing you to live shall not vomit you out. And you shall not walk in the statutes of the nation which I am casting out before you for all these things that they have done, and I am disgusted with them. But I have said to you, “You shall possess their land and I am giving it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey; I am YHWH your God who has separated you from the nations. (Lev 20:22-24).

Schwartz argues that the expulsion of the people from the land is not the act of invaders and/or YHWH but is achieved through the agency of the land:

The defiled inhabitants of Canaan, past and future alike, are likened to a nausea-inducing food substance. The land is depicted as a person who habitually becomes so sickened by this substance that he cannot ingest it. Each time it enters his gullet, the gag reflex is activated, and he has no choice but to vomit out the contents.159

Though the anthropomorphic imagery is unnecessary, Schwartz’s description resonates with the thrust of this thesis that the character of the earth acts independently to expel its people from the land. The earth’s state of desolation and the depletion of its natural resources may have prompted the pre-Israelite population to emigrate from the land as Schwartz postulates, however, they are also its ways of communicating its distress and opposing injustice. The HC presents the view that the land is fertile and bountiful when in a positive relationship with its people, whoever they might be. The people’s sin pollutes the land which withholds its rain, fertility and produce, possibly prompting its inhabitants to leave. Schwartz argues that the land’s negative reaction to human wrongdoing is part of its inherent nature, that its allergic reaction is ‘intrinsic to the land of Canaan itself’.160

According to the HC the pre-Israelite population committed abominable acts which polluted the earth and separated them from it. Those people and their deities existed in a

159 Schwartz, “Reexamining the Fate of the ‘Canaanites,’” 165.
160 Schwartz, “Reexamining the Fate of the ‘Canaanites,’” 168 argues that according to HC the pre-Israelite population had departed before the arrival of the Israelites. Though this thesis is not concerned with issues of the chronological sequence of the settlement of Canaan, the notion of the expulsion of the pre-Israelite population may have some relevance to Israel’s exile experience. Any people who violate the symbiotic relationship are evicted.
relationship with the land which was unsustainable. Perhaps the relationship of the pre-Israelite people with the land was always a mismatch which was doomed to failure in that according to the Priestly literature the land had always been designated for a relationship with the Israelites and YHWH. This thesis argues that the land, the people and YHWH cannot thrive in a healthy symbiotic relationship without positive interaction and co-operation with each other.

The Deuteronomists see the Israelites as inseparably connected to the land, so much so that they, YHWH and the land are all negatively impacted when separated from each other. According to Deuteronomic literature, the land is YHWH’s gift to the people (ηλευ) and they achieve their identity through their relationship with the land and with YHWH. However, the gift of land has accompanying responsibilities. The people must be faithful to YHWH and treat each other with justice and righteousness. It is only through leading positive religious and social lives that they can remain within the land, declare the Deuteronomists. Israel’s relationship with YHWH is often described in filial terms as a relationship which is not only unique and loving but also requires faithfulness and obedience. The parent-child relationship is held together by the covenant and inevitably involves a connection with the land.161 Jeremiah’s understanding of Israel’s relationship with the land is closely aligned to Deuteronomistic perspectives.162

Several prophets, including Jeremiah, provide a theological interpretation for Israel’s relationship with the land, linking the social and religious sins of the people with

161 Wright, God’s People in God’s Land, 21 states that the father-son relationship is more or less synonymous with covenant relationships. ‘As a living, personal relationship, Israel’s “sonship” involved this organic tension or duality by its inherent nature’ (15). See Deut 32:5; 6,18,19; Jer 3:14.
land loss. For these prophets the land acts as a kind of barometer that registers the wider implications of social behavior. When the people are unfaithful to YHWH and treat each other negatively, the land suffers, often in drought. The wellbeing of the land is linked with various covenants between YHWH and the people. The land suffers and/or is lost to the people when the covenantal relationship is broken. In extreme circumstances, YHWH and the land work together to expel the people. Separation from the land in the form of exile is a disaster of enormous proportions. The people can only return when their relationship with YHWH has been restored and renewed.

2.7 Images in Jeremiah Which Reflect a Close Relationship between the People and the Land

As well as in chap. 4 the wider book of Jeremiah includes many earthy images which reflect a close relationship between the people and the land. Images of fertility, water sources, drought, domestic and wild animals, trees and crops all feature abundantly in the book. Jeremiah presents a picture of a people group who understand their life and faith in terms of their natural environment. They live in close contact with the land and their experiences are often interpreted through the use of natural metaphors. Jeremiah describes the Israelites as an agrarian people who work with the land and have a close connection with it, so much so that they understand their social and religious lives to have an impact upon the wellbeing of the land. The prophet presents the land as a character

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163 Stevenson, *Vision of Transformation*, 147 notes that exile is ‘fundamentally an oppressive experience’ because it involves ‘complete denial of access to the area of origin’. The identity of some people is threatened because it is inextricably linked with location. Robert L. Cohn, “Biblical Responses to Catastrophe,” in *Judaism* 35 (1986), 263 states that exile is ‘the deepest possible blow, stabbing at the national raison d’être, the cosmological heart of the Israelite world-view’.

164 Carol Meyers, “The Family in Early Israel,” in *Families in Ancient Israel*, eds. Leo G. Perdue, Joseph Blenkinsopp, John J. Collins and Carol Meyers, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 3 describes the early Israelites as ‘farmers’, ‘small holders’, ‘agriculturalists’, and ‘rural cultivators’. She states that ‘their identity and survival were integrally connected with their material world – more specifically, with their arable world’ (13). While Meyers’ presentation of the rural identity of the Israelites
which is capable of communicating its joy and suffering. The people’s close connection with the land facilitates their sensitivity to it and their capacity to attend to its communication. Somewhat paradoxically, Jeremiah also presents the land as taking part in the judgment of the people. When the people break the covenant that holds the symbiotic relationship together YHWH and the land turn against the people and ultimately expel them from the land. However, in a curious contrast, the letter to the exiles (chap. 29) also presents the notion that they will flourish away from their land. However, it is only for a specific time that Babylon acts as their land, for the expectation is that the people will return to the land of Israel. Nevertheless, while the land cries out in distress at the separation from the people, their absence allows its renewal, enabling it to receive them back in a restored relationship.

At the outset, the central themes of YHWH’s placement of the Israelites in the land and their removal from it are expressed by Jeremiah in the rural images of planting and uprooting (e.g., 1:10; 2:21; 11:17; 12:14-17). YHWH states, ‘I planted you a choice vine’ (2:21) and though the Israelites later turn against YHWH and become ‘a foreign vine’ (2:22), initially they were ‘a true seed’ (2:21) which YHWH took and planted in the land. Jeremiah reinforces the theme of planting in the promise that when the Israelites are to re-enter the land after exile YHWH will re-plant them and they will never again be

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Stevenson, Vision of Transformation, 154-157 states that violations of YHWH’s territory result in YHWH’s abandonment of the land, e.g., ‘And he said to me, Son do you see what they are doing, the great abominations which the house of Israel is doing here that I should be far away from my sanctuary?’ (Ezek 8:6; see also chaps. 8-11).

165 Stevenson, Vision of Transformation, 154-157 states that violations of YHWH’s territory result in YHWH’s abandonment of the land, e.g., ‘And he said to me, Son do you see what they are doing, the great abominations which the house of Israel is doing here that I should be far away from my sanctuary?’ (Ezek 8:6; see also chaps. 8-11).
uprooted (31:27-28; 32:41; 42:10). People living in dependence on the land know about the importance of proper planting and the destruction of uprooting.

The fertility of land is always an important aspect of life for people who are dependent upon it for their survival. Their lives revolve around what the land can provide for them. The earth is the responsible custodian of its people (Ecojustice Principle 5). While it certainly has covenantal links, the familiar expression of ‘the land flowing with milk and honey’ also portrays the productivity of the land (11:5). YHWH promises that Israel will be brought ‘into a fertile land to eat its fruit and its goodness’ (2:7) and that after experiencing exile ‘I will bring Israel again to his own pasture and he will feed on Carmel and Bashan and Mount Ephraim and Gilead. He will satisfy his soul in those days’ (50:19-20). The importance of fertile pasture is a recurring theme throughout the book. The provision of good pasture for the flocks and herds is crucial to the existence of the rural Israelite people (e.g., 31:12; 3:24). The produce of the land is central to the economic wellbeing of the population, with olives (15:3), figs (8:13) and oil (31:12) featuring throughout the book of Jeremiah.

They will come and sing in the height of Zion; and be radiant over the goodness of YHWH, for grain and for new wine and for oil, and for the young of the flock and herd. And their life will be like a watered garden (31:11).

In an ecologically oriented spiritual perspective Jeremiah triumphantly celebrates the future wellbeing of the land and its people through images of the land’s fertility.

Abundant water supplies are crucial to the existence of all people and especially to agrarian people who live in close dependence upon the land. Thus, it is significant that rivers, springs and rainfall figure prominently throughout the book of Jeremiah in describing issues of life and faith. YHWH, who is portrayed as the provider of the land’s

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water sources, is poignantly described as ‘the fountain of living water’ (2:13). It is YHWH who gives ‘both the former and the latter rains in its time. He keeps the appointed weeks of harvest for us’ (5:24-25). ‘Are there among the worthless idols of the nations those who make rain fall or can the heavens grant it?’ enquires Jeremiah, only to provide the answer to his own question, ‘Is it not you, YHWH our God’ (14:22). In a way which resonates with indigenous perspectives, Jeremiah understands that YHWH alone has the power to provide water for the land of Israel. Speaking in agrarian terms, an indignant YHWH asks his people, ‘Have I been a wilderness to Israel or a land of darkness?’ (2:31) As the deity of the land YHWH provides fertile conditions, including water supplies. Jeremiah includes a graphic description of YHWH as the power behind all that the land provides:

It is he who made the earth by his power; who established the world by his wisdom and by his understanding has stretched out the heavens. When he sounds, the waters in the heavens roar; he makes clouds rise from the end of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain and brings forth the wind from his storehouses (10:12-13).

YHWH and the land have a special and interdependent relationship as two of the members of the triadic symbiosis. Jeremiah describes the paradigm of a faithful Israelite as a ‘tree planted by the waters and by the stream sends out its roots’ (17:8). Resonating strongly with some indigenous connections with land, Jeremiah asks why the people would even think of leaving their land and drinking foreign water: ‘Now why go to Egypt to drink the waters of the Sihor and why go to Assyria to drink the waters of the River?’ (2:18). An inference is that people should drink their own land’s water and the act of leaving their land and its water supplies constitutes desertion of both the land and the

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168 See also Jer 2:8. Hosea also wrestles with the issue of Israel’s tendency to seek provision from Baal (chap. 4-14).
169 E.g., The Rainbow Spirit Elders, Rainbow Spirit Theology, 42-46; Longchar, “Reading the Bible from the Perspective of Indigenous People’s Experience,” 3-5.
deity. One of the reasons that Israel’s judgment has come about is because the people have not remained faithfully within their land. They have absented themselves from the land in which YHWH offers protection.

My people are like lost sheep; their shepherds have led them astray; they turned them away on the mountain; they are gone from mountain to hill; they have forgotten their resting place. Whoever found them devoured them (50:6-7).

Similarly they have chosen to absent themselves from their deity who yearns for them, ‘Why do my people say, “We roam; we will not come to you?”’ (2:31). According to Jeremiah the Israelite people belong in their land in much the same way as indigenous people acknowledge that they belong in their lands. There is a sense in which some indigenous people believe that they are not free to sever connections with their land because the people, their land and their deities belong together. Similarly, in an ecologically oriented symbiotic perspective, Jeremiah presents the notion of the land, the people and YHWH co-existing.¹⁷⁰

Jeremiah describes lands which are not part of YHWH’s territorial domain as infertile, drought-stricken places. In their journey to the fertile land of Israel, YHWH’s people travel through ‘the desert through a land not sown’ (2:2) and through ‘a wilderness and in a land of deserts and of pits, in a land of drought and darkness’ (2:6). Part of Jeremiah’s message is that the Israelites cannot find sustenance in a land which is not their own.

Throughout the book there are images of the land experiencing great hardship in the form of drought. Nevertheless, this experience is considered to be abnormal and, at

¹⁷⁰ One of the anomalies of Jeremiah’s message is that though the land, the people and YHWH belong together and can only thrive in a symbiotic relationship, the people are encouraged to live positive and productive lives in Babylon (chap. 29). The notion of Babylon taking the place of Judah is dealt with in greater detail in 2.10 of this thesis. While the promise is that the Israelites will flourish away from their land it is clear that the hope and expectation is that they will return to Judah to reestablish the symbiotic relationship.
times, it outrages the prophet that it should occur. He understands that drought comes upon the land as a result of the misdemeanors of the people. ‘How long will the land mourn/dry up and the grass in every field wither?’ he laments (12:4). As a result of the behavior of its people and a curse ‘the land mourns/dries up and the pastures of the wilderness wither’ (23:10). Those who do not trust in YHWH are likened to ‘a bush in the desert; ... he will live in the dried places in the wilderness, in a salt land where no one lives’ (17:6). During the years of Israel’s exile ‘this whole country will become a waste’ (25:11). So, the land raises its voice in mourning/drying up (4:28) as an expression of its distress at the behavior of its people and at its separation from them. In a positively operating symbiotic relationship the land is fertile and well watered. As a responsible custodian it provides abundantly for the needs of its people.

As YHWH’s people, Israel is expected to remain within the land that YHWH has provided for them and also to maintain allegiance to YHWH alone. Israel’s defection from YHWH to the gods of Baal is described in the environmental images of the mating of animals. Israel’s desire for the Baals reminds Jeremiah of the sexual cravings of female camels and the behavior of wild donkeys during the mating season (2:23-24). The prophet employs lusty and earthy images. The animal kingdom is also employed to describe the waywardness of Israel which is likened to a horse which ‘rushes into battle’ in enthusiastic pursuit of evil (8:7). In order to enhance his description of Israel’s social misdemeanors Jeremiah plucks a perverse partridge from the air: ‘As a partridge broods and does not hatch is he who makes riches without justice’ (17:11). Israel is expected to be faithful to the land and to YHWH, and Jeremiah enlists the services of a range of birds and animals, which he considers to be the epitome of unfaithfulness, to explain the
negative impact of their misplaced loyalty. However, there is some ambivalence in his presentation, for while the sexual practices of various animals and purposeful charges of horses are frowned upon by Jeremiah, several birds are elevated as paradigms of religious faithfulness: ‘The stork in the skies knows her seasons, and the dove and the swift and the thrush observe the time of their migration but my people do not know the judgment of YHWH’ (8:7).

The symbiotic relationship which is held together by the covenant has been broken because of the sinful behavior of the people. So YHWH and the land join forces to bring judgment upon the people. In doing so the land actively resists human injustice (Ecojustice Principle 6). YHWH declares, ‘Behold I will send serpents among you, vipers that cannot be charmed and they will bite you’ (8:17). ‘I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a den of jackals’ (9:10; see also 10:22). ‘My inheritance has become to me like a speckled bird. The birds are all around against her. Go and gather all the beasts of the field; bring them to devour’ (12:9). The law of the jungle prevails in Israel. The strong attack the weak, and the weak are identified as YHWH’s people who have declined in strength because of their religious and social indiscretions. Animals are among YHWH’s designated implements of destruction. ‘I will appoint over them four kinds of destroyers against them,’ declares YHWH, ‘the sword to kill and the dogs to drag away and the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the earth to devour and to destroy’ (15:3). The destruction that Jeremiah describes is so devastating that no one is left to perform the normal burying rites, and animals lurk to scavenge and desecrate the bodies:

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They will not be mourned or buried, they will be like dung on the face of the ground. They will perish by sword and by famine, and their bodies will be food for the birds of the heavens and for the beasts of the earth (16:4).

The prophet employs members of the animal kingdom to paint a devastating picture of destruction. In an intermingling of environmental and political images the violent attack of a lion is used to describe the successive invasions of Israel: ‘Israel is a scattered flock that lions have driven away. The first to devour him was the king of Assyria; the last one who crunched his bones was Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon’ (50:17).

However, while the land joins YHWH in meting out judgment upon the people, it also suffers as a result of YHWH’s anger.172 ‘Therefore thus says YHWH: “Behold! My anger and my wrath will be poured out on this place, on man and animal, and on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground, and it will burn and not be quenched”’ (7:20). Punishment is inflicted by fire, which destroys the vegetation: ‘I will kindle a fire in its forests that will consume everything around it’ (21:14). A storm brews: ‘Behold! The storm of YHWH has gone forth in wrath, a tempest it will whirl on the head of the wicked’ (23:19; see also 25:32 and 30:23). The land suffers in the failure of its produce: ‘I will completely take them away’, says YHWH. ‘There will not be grapes on the vine nor figs on the tree, and the leaf withers’ (8:13). Some of the earth community are silent and absent: ‘The voice of cattle is not heard. From the birds of the heavens even to the beast of the field have fled, they are gone’ (9:10; see also 8:13, 11:16 and 12:13). The destruction of the holy sites is described in rural terms: ‘Zion will be ploughed like a field and Jerusalem a heap of ruins, the mountain of the house of the high places will become a forest’ (26:18). The people have broken the covenant that holds together the symbiotic relationship and so the land joins YHWH in punishing them. However, the land also

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172 See 2.12 of this thesis for a discussion on reasons for the earth’s suffering.
suffers with the people in YHWH’s judgment. It is as though the three parties of the symbiosis wrestle with each other as their relationship disintegrates.

Jeremiah describes YHWH’s anguish for the land: ‘I will take up weeping and wailing for the mountains and a dirge for the pastures of the wilderness’ (9:9). YHWH’s love for the land turns to hate due to the unfaithfulness of the people: ‘My inheritance has become to me like a lion in the forest. She gave her voice against me; therefore I hated her’ (12:8). The negative actions of the people adversely affect the other parties of the symbiosis. However, the promised re-establishment of the symbiotic relationship is described in terms of nature’s bounty: ‘I will make them walk by torrents of water on a way where they will not stumble’, promises YHWH, ‘because I am a father to Israel’ (31:9). When the people are reunited with YHWH and their land, the earth will rejoice in producing abundant crops.

They will come and sing in the height of Zion; and be radiant over the goodness of YHWH, for grain and for new wine and for oil and for the sons of the flock and the herd. Their life will be like a watered garden and they will not continue to languish any more (31:11).

In summary, Jeremiah employs many and varied ecological images in describing the relationship of Israel with the land, the unfaithfulness of the people towards YHWH and the judgment of YHWH. Though he states that Israel is not indigenous to the land of Palestine/Israel, having entered the land from somewhere outside, Jeremiah presents a picture of a people who are in very close contact with their natural environment. The prophet’s image of the interdependence of land, animal life, humans and YHWH describes a people group who know their land well. The strong connections between the people, the land and YHWH can be understood as an ecologically oriented symbiotic relationship. However, the symbiosis is destroyed by the breaking of the covenant. While the land joins YHWH in meting out punishment upon the people, it also suffers with
them in YHWH’s judgment. It cries out in mourning/drying up at the separation from its exiled people (4:28).

2.8 Universal and Territorial Dimensions of YHWH’s Jurisdiction

Though it is not commonly an indigenous perspective, it is noted that Jeremiah sometimes presents YHWH as having universal jurisdiction. Within the context of charges against lying prophets, YHWH claims to have both universal and imminent influence. The prophets cannot escape YHWH’s impenetrable gaze and pervading presence. ‘Am I a God from nearby,’ enquires YHWH, ‘and not a God afar? Or can anyone hide in hiding places so that I do not see him?’ says YHWH. ‘Do I fill heaven and earth?’ says YHWH (23:23-24). Whether Jeremiah has a sense of the omnipresence of YHWH is debatable, but he certainly presents a picture of YHWH’s influence extending beyond the land of Israel. YHWH is clearly not geographically bound. In contrast to the ineffectual idols of the surrounding nations YHWH is the creator of the universe:

It is he who made the earth by his power, who established the world by his wisdom and by his understanding has stretched out the heavens. At his instruction there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, he causes the mists to ascend from the end of the earth, he makes lightening for the rain and brings the wind forth from his storehouses (10:12-13).

Though the Babylonian king will rule over Israel, YHWH’s power is far greater than his: ‘I made the earth, the man and the animals that are on the face of the earth by my great power and by my outstretched arm’ (27:5). Though primarily dealing with issues of covenant, Jeremiah extends YHWH’s statement of creative activity to include a claim of universal jurisdiction: ‘and now I have given all these lands into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon my servant’ (27:6). According to the prophet, YHWH has an influence which extends beyond territorial boundaries, even directing the affairs of the other nations (e.g., 1:10; 18:9; 25:15-29). So extensive is divine influence
that YHWH will call upon the nations to act as witnesses to the restoration of Jerusalem:

‘It will be to me a name of joy, praise and glory before all nations of the earth that shall hear all the good that I do for them; and they will fear and tremble for all the goodness and all the peace that I do for it’ (33:9). Though, from an indigenous perspective, the notion is inherently imperialist, Jeremiah sometimes presents YHWH as having universal jurisdiction with the power to occupy and influence any land.¹⁷³

Nevertheless, in greater resonance with indigenous perspectives, Jeremiah also presents YHWH as demonstrating many aspects of a territorial deity. Though YHWH has influence over many lands, YHWH also has a close and long-standing relationship with the land of Israel (e.g., Jer 3:19; 12:14-17; see also Deut 32:8-9).¹⁷⁴ Jeremiah often presents YHWH having connections with geographical formations, animal life and people. As the territorial deity YHWH has the responsibility of supplying life-giving rain to the land (e.g., Jer 3:3; 5:24; 14:22; 31:12).¹⁷⁵ A character of deep passions, YHWH expresses the strong emotions of sorrow, lament, weeping, wailing, grief, pain, anguish, heartache, regret, and anger at the breakdown of the divine relationship with the people.

¹⁷³ Habel, *The Land is Mine*, 80 notes that while YHWH is depicted in Jeremiah as a deity who is present throughout the earth and is in control of all nations, YHWH also operates as a localized deity who sends thunder and storms (e.g., Jer 10:13; 25:30-32; 51:15-16). There is an unresolved tension between local and universal jurisdiction in Jeremiah’s characterization of YHWH.

¹⁷⁴ Paul Sanders, *The Provenance of Deuteronomy 32* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 154-160 discusses various readings of λρχψ ψνβ (MT) in Deut 32:8b, accepting LXX ajggelwn qeou which is supported by Qumran cave fragments and Greek papyrus Fouad 266. He acknowledges that this may imply the existence of divine beings next to YHWH and that the allocation of Jacob to YHWH (v. 9) may suggest that El Elyon is a different and superior deity to YHWH. Thus, YHWH would appear to have a more local jurisdiction than El Elyon. The local jurisdiction of the historical YHWH is a matter for history of religion research. Given the rhetorical methodology of this thesis, it is sufficient to note that there is an unresolved tension between local and universal jurisdiction in Jeremiah’s characterization of YHWH. While acknowledging difficulties of interpretation, this thesis stresses the notion that in the HB, and especially in Jeremiah, YHWH is portrayed as having a special connection with the land and people of Israel.

¹⁷⁵ Habel, *The Land is Mine*, 78 states that in contrast to wilderness areas YHWH’s land is pleasant, fertile and productive like Eden (e.g., Jer 2:7; 12:10). YHWH jealously guards the land’s fertility.
and the land (e.g., 3:19-20; 4:26; 7:20; 9:10, 17-18; chap. 12; 13:17; 32:41; 44:4). Chap. 12 especially expresses the depth of that relationship, as YHWH remonstrates with the wayward people and the land suffers attack, desolation and depletion.

Though Yahwism is the ‘official’ faith tradition of Israel, the gods of Palestine often pose an attraction to the Israelites. Baalism, especially, seems to have spiritual links with the land that are appealing to Israel, yet distinguishable from Yahwism. It clearly exasperates Jeremiah that his people worship deities other than YHWH and conduct their spiritual activities using members of the earth community such as stones, hills and trees (e.g., 2:27; 3:6, 9, 13; 10:2-5, 8-9). The prophet challenges them to return to YHWH and to devote themselves to Yahwism alone. The land, the people and YHWH belong together in an exclusive relationship. There is no place for allegiance to other deities. Jeremiah acknowledges that there are different ways of worshipping different gods in different lands but declares that Israel must worship YHWH in appropriate ways in YHWH’s land (e.g., 6:20). Syncretism of worship is not acceptable (e.g., 7:30-31; 19:13). Israeliite religion must be based on the worship of YHWH alone. The ultimate consequence of following other gods is a disruption to the land-people-god symbiosis: ‘You have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your land, so you will serve strangers in a land which is not yours’ (5:19). YHWH is the deity who is the rightful member of

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177 Habel, The Land is Mine, 77 states that Jeremiah presents ‘a jealous rivalry between YHWH and Baal over who was entitled to claim Canaan as their rightful ηλξυ’. Jeremiah presents a vehement condemnation of Baal and Canaanite fertility rites (e.g., Jer 2:8, 23).
the symbiosis and other gods have no place in that relationship. Though they are instructed to live and multiply in Babylon (chap. 29), the land, the people and YHWH can best experience health and wellbeing when they coexist in a positive and interdependent symbiotic relationship.

Thus, although Jeremiah sometimes understands YHWH as having universal jurisdiction, he has a stronger presentation of YHWH as a territorial god with an intimate and caring relationship with the land and people of Israel.\(^\text{178}\) Clearly, Jeremiah’s portrayal of YHWH as a territorial deity finds more resonance with indigenous perspectives.

### 2.9 Israel as the ηλξν of YHWH

The book of Jeremiah is among several biblical books which refer to the intimate relationship between the land and YHWH by employing the term ηλξν. Often translated as ‘inheritance’ (NIV) or ‘heritage’ (NRSV), the legal meaning of ηλξν is narrower in that it refers to a portion of the entire patriarchal estate which has been divided up between its heirs. It does not refer to property that has been acquired by any means other than inheritance, such as purchase, gift or some other transaction. Though the strict legal usage of ηλξν is not always adhered to in the HB, Lipiński argues that it lies behind ‘every instance of theological and metaphorical sense’ in which it is used.\(^\text{179}\) ηλξν includes both landed property such as parcels of land (Ruth 4:3), fields (Num 16:14), vineyards (1 kg 21:1-19) and houses (Judg 11:2; Mic 2:2; Lam 5:2; Prov 19:14), as well as flocks (Mic 7:14), slaves (Lev 25:44-46), money (Eccl 7:11-12) and chattels (Prov 19:14). In the HB it is of the utmost importance to keep the patrimonial estate

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\(^{178}\) See Smith, *The Early History of God*, 1f. My rhetorical methodology does not concern itself with a detailed history of religion.

intact and within the family. ηλξν is bequeathed to the descendents permanently (Μλ(λ e.g., Ex 32:13; Lev 25:46; Pss 37:18; 119:111; 1 Chron 28:8). There is no legal means by which Israelites may acquire or dispose of their ηλξν except by passing it on to their heirs. It must remain within the kinship group.180 The moving of boundary markers (τολβγ) is expressly forbidden (e.g., Deut 19:14; 27:17; Hos 5:10; Job 24:2; Prov 15:25; 22:28; 23:10). Important links with ancestors are maintained when the ηλξν contains the family tomb (e.g., Gen 23; Josh 24:30, 32f.; Judg 2:9; 1 Sam 25:1; 1 Kgs 2:34), and this is a further reason for keeping the ηλξν within the family.181 The incident involving Ahab’s acquisition of Naboth’s vineyard demonstrates the lengths to which Israelites must be prepared to go in order to keep the ηλξν within the family (1 Kgs 21).182 Though Ahab offers to pay a fair price for Naboth’s vineyard or to exchange it for a better vineyard (1 Kgs 21:2), Naboth refuses, declaring: ‘Far be it from me by YHWH that I should give the ηλξν of my fathers to you’ (1 Kgs 21:3). Naboth pays with his life for his determination to keep the ηλξν within his family (1 Kgs 21:13).

Special legislation provides for the retention of the land within the kinship group in the absence of male heirs. A daughter who inherits land is required to marry a relative of her father, ensuring that the land is kept within the kinship group (e.g., Zelophehad’s


181 E. Bloch-Smith, Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 122-123 argues that in some contexts Μτηλλα refers to ancestral deities (e.g., Gen 28:22; 31:52-54 and 46:1). Thus, the ηλξν may also be inalienable because it has been given by the divinized ancestors. See also Brett, “The Loss and Retrieval of Ancestral Religion,” 5f.; Lipiński, ‘λξν’ in TDOT, Vol. IX, 326-327.

182 Meyers, “The Family in Early Israel,” 19 states, ‘The specific identification of each family household with its inhabited domain (“patrimony” or “inheritance”) was especially strong.’
daughters in Num 27:1-11; 36:24f.). When, through dire circumstances such as extreme poverty, a person cannot maintain the family estate, a kinsman-redeemer (λγ) is expected to take possession of it in order to keep it within the family (e.g., Lev 25:25-28; Jer 32:6-15; Num 27:11; Ruth 4). The Jubilee regulations provide for the return of land to the family (Lev 25:10, 28). While the Lev 25:24-28 regulations do not allow for compensation in a λγ transaction, this occurs several times in the HB (e.g., Ruth 4; Jer 32:6-15). Thus, Jeremiah performs his λγ duties by redeeming his uncle’s field by means of an elaborate legal transaction which includes the exchange of money (Jer 32:6-15). While this will be discussed in greater detail later, here it is sufficient to note that Jeremiah acts as his uncle’s λγ in order to keep the field within the family during the period of exile.

Acknowledging that ηλξν is a Deuteronomistic motif which is based on the ancient practice of patriarchal inheritance and having made some general observations on its legal implications, attention is now turned to some of the ways in which the term is employed in the book of Jeremiah. Occurring fourteen times, ηλξν features as one of the strong themes of the book. According to Deut 32:8-9, Elyon allocated a separate ηλξν to each of the nations of the earth (cf. Jer 3:19 and 12:14-17). Jeremiah understands that the ηλξν which was allocated to YHWH was Israel and it is to this

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183 While Deuteronomic centralization may appear to undermine clan land rights Brett, “The Loss and Retrieval of Ancestral Religion,” 8 notes that historical narratives influenced by the Deuteronomists include significant theological defenses against the abuse of monarchic power which would strip vulnerable Israelites of their ancestral lands (1 Kgs 21:17-24; 2 Kgs 9:30-10:11; see also Deut 19:14). He points out that the books of Genesis, Leviticus and Deuteronomy respect ancestral land rights and that ‘redemption’ in the Torah is inextricably linked to land (11).

184 See 2.13 of this study for an extended discussion on the kinship implications of Jeremiah’s purchase of his uncle’s field.

land that YHWH led the people to plant them (2:21; 5:10; 8:13; 11:7; 31:27-28). YHWH is a loving father who gives his children Israel ‘a pleasant land, a beautiful ɳλξν among the nations’ (3:19). YHWH’s land produces abundant crops (e.g., 3:3; 5:24; 31:12) and it is YHWH who is the source of its fertility (e.g., 14:12). In an interwoven relationship, the land is described as the ɳλξν of both the people (17:4) and YHWH (2:7), and the people are also described as the ɳλξν of YHWH (10:16). This thesis argues that in the book of Jeremiah the notion of ɳλξν is one of the symbols of the symbiotic relationship between the land, the people and YHWH.

2.10 Covenant and Land in Jeremiah

The theme of covenant is central to the book of Jeremiah, with the term τψρβ occurring twenty-four times. It is argued in this thesis that the land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship is held together by a covenantal relationship. As the covenant contributes to creating and sustaining the order of creation, so Jeremiah’s metaphor of the reversal of creation (4:23-26) represents a breakdown of the covenantal ordering of the symbiotic relationship. The exile precipitated a theological crisis which addressed

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186 Habel, *The Land is Mine*, 77 explains that El Elyon’s apportioning of land involved establishing fixed boundaries for the people and their deities. ‘Lands were primordial allocations from on high. YHWH’s allotted ɳλξν was Israel, both the land and the people’ (Deut 32:9).


188 Habel, *The Land is Mine*, 76 notes that ɳλξν is ‘a central symbol of this intimate bond among YHWH, Israel and the land’.

189 Though the phrase ‘the covenant’ is employed in this thesis it is acknowledged that Jeremiah presents aspects of several of Israel’s covenants. Thus, unless otherwise designated, ‘the covenant’ refers to Israel’s covenantal relationship with YHWH rather than any specific covenant. Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology*, 76 notes that the term ‘covenant’ does not have a single meaning. It is a ‘pattern of symbolism’ which represents the relationship between YHWH and Israelites. Summarizing the various covenants, he states that ‘the Abrahamic covenant deals with the relation between the universal and the particular’, ‘the Mosaic covenant deals with the relation between God’s sovereignty and human freedom’ and ‘the Davidic covenant deals with the mystery of divine transcendence and immanence’ (78). All of Israel’s covenant theologies proved to be inadequate in understanding exile, prompting prophets like Jeremiah to reformulate the covenantal relationship.
covenantal issues such as God’s presence and consequences for sin. Anderson explains, ‘The problem of suffering – some would call it the problem of evil – precipitated a crisis in covenant theology.’\footnote{Anderson, \textit{Contours of Old Testament Theology}, 243.}

There are many terms describing qualities often associated with covenantal relationships, such as obedience, truth, kindness, justice, faithfulness and righteousness (e.g., 5:1, 3; 7:23; 9:24; 10:24; 11:1-12; 21:12; 35:1f.). Also featured are covenantal actions such as caring for and upholding the rights of orphans and widows (e.g., 5:28; 7:6; 22:2-3). Many violations of the covenant are referred to, such as unfaithfulness, disobedience, swearing falsely, wickedness and lying (e.g., 5:11; 7:24; 8:6, 10; 9:1-6; 16:11). It is clear that the people’s refusal to adhere to the terms of covenant leads to the breakdown of the life-giving land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship. Their sin is firmly entrenched at both personal and systemic levels: ‘The sin of Judah is written with an iron stylus, it is engraved with a point of a diamond on the tablet of their heart and on the horns of their altars’ (17:1). The immediate context of Jer 4:23-28 supports the wider theme of the breakdown of the covenantal relationship, with YHWH declaring that the people lack the knowledge associated with the covenant: ‘My people do not know me, they are stupid children, they have no understanding’ (4:22; see also 5:4; 8:7; 9:24). The violation of the covenantal law is presented as a failure to hear and accept the words of YHWH: ‘They have not listened to my words and have rejected my law’ (6:20; see also 8:8-9; 9:13; 6:11). The people lack knowledge of and commitment to the ways of YHWH (5:4-5; 6:16) and thus, precipitate a breakdown of the covenantal relationship. The reversal of creation metaphor acts to support Jeremiah’s wider theme of covenant breaking, expressing the ultimate outcome of the situation in terms of a return to pre-
creation desolation. The land-people-YHWH symbiosis is shattered and the order and fertility of creation is destroyed.

While it is not always obvious which of Israel’s many covenants is referred to in any given instance, it is clear that Jeremiah promotes Mosaic/Deuteronomic orthodoxy. Yet the images of order, stability and fertility of the Gen 1 creation tradition undergird Jeremiah’s presentation of the reversal of creation in 4:23-28. By presenting the Priestly cosmology in reverse the prophet challenges perspectives on the forces that maintain creational order. God’s covenant with Noah to never again flood the earth (Gen 9) may have some parallels with the hope expressed in Jer 4:27 and chap. 33. However, at the same time Jeremiah also challenges the everlasting covenant of Noah (Mλ) τψρβ). While God promises ‘the waters will not again become a flood to destroy all flesh’ (Gen 9:15), the prophet declares that a tragedy of cosmic proportions will envelop the earth again. While Noah’s catastrophe is wet and Jeremiah’s is dry, despite the promise of the Noachic covenant, the earth is devastated again. The unconditional Davidic covenant is challenged by the conditions of the Mosaic covenant, and yet it is re-established.

With a constant concern for the earth, in chap. 11 Jeremiah focuses attention on the Mosaic covenant, stressing that YHWH led the Israelites out of the land of Egypt (v. 4) ‘to give them a land flowing with milk and honey’ (v. 5). The people are called to dwell in the land as the people of God: ‘You will be my people and I will be your God’

191 See Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology*, 79-236 for a discussion on Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic covenant theologies. He notes that in the HB ‘the covenants are interrelated, and interact with each other’ (240).
192 See 3.9 and 3.10 for discussion on the dry nature of Jeremiah’s scene of the earth’s devastation.
However, they do not listen to the words of the covenant, stubbornly preferring to neglect its obligations and to follow their own evil ways. As a consequence they incur YHWH’s curses (v. 8) and head towards inescapable disaster (v. 11). In an eco-perspective, the prophet employs rural imagery such as fruitful olive trees with burnt and broken branches to symbolize the destruction of the land following the breakdown of the covenant (v. 16).

Jeremiah also challenges the Zion ideology. In 2 Sam 23:5 David declares:

‘For is not my house with God?
For he has made an everlasting covenant (Mλυρββ) with me, ordered in all things
And sure for all my salvation and all my desire, will he not make it grow?’

However, with the fall of the city of Jerusalem and the temple, the demise of the Davidic monarchy and the exile of many Israelite people from the land, all of which are symbolic assurances of the election and protection of YHWH, a total reappraisal of Israelite identity and theology is required. Jeremiah’s presentation of the reversal of creation in 4:23-28 constitutes a direct assault on Davidic-Zion orthodoxy. Steck explains that

194 See also Jer 7; Ex 19:5; Deut 4:20; 26-28; 1 Kgs 8:51; Isa 48:10.
The key to the structure of the Jerusalem cultic tradition lies in the fundamental understanding that Zion is the mountain of God, the mountain of the world where the earthly and heavenly spheres intersect. This place above all others thereby relates to the world as a whole. On top of this mountain YHWH sits enthroned as king of the world, as Lord of heaven and earth. Jerusalem, the city on this mountain, is quite simply God’s city, God’s residence. Correspondingly, the scope of action of this YHWH of Zion is *eo ipso* not merely the land of Israel but the world as a whole.\(^{196}\)

Zion is considered to be invincible. The king of Jerusalem serves as YHWH’s regent over the whole world. While the king reigns and Jerusalem stands the land is stable and fruitful.\(^{197}\) Jeremiah’s account of the fall of Jerusalem (chap. 52) and the exile of Judah’s last king (chaps. 21, 22, 27, 37 and 39) not only refers to the demise of the monarchy but also attacks the stability and order of the whole earth. Following Deuteronomistic ideology the prophet presents the notion that prevailing views of the Davidic-Zion covenant are inadequate. However, Jeremiah also presents the notion of a restoration of the Davidic covenant which will be everlasting:

> Behold the days are coming, says YHWH, that I will establish the good thing about which I have spoken to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will make a righteous branch of David grow and he will do judgment and righteousness in the earth. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety and this is the name by which she will be called, YHWH our righteousness. For thus says YHWH, David will not be cut off from having a man sitting on the throne of the house of Israel (Jer 33:14-17).

Included in the new covenant is the notion of the reinstatement of the priestly line: ‘And for the Levitical priests a man will not be cut off from offering burnt offerings before me

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and making grain offerings smoke and performing sacrifices all the days’ (Jer 33:18). Thus, Zion creation theology is re-conceived within a more cosmic ‘Priestly’ view.\textsuperscript{198}

From a Deuteronomic perspective the order of creation is maintained by obedience to the covenant, while disobedience elicits YHWH’s punishment in terms of negative consequences for the people and the land. Jeremiah advocates a return to Deuteronomic ideals. While he reflects different stances on the relationship between theology, social responsibility and politics, in an interpretation that challenges prevailing Zion beliefs he links the crisis of the Babylonian invasion with YHWH’s response to the breaking of the covenant and the demise of the land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship. Presenting YHWH as the destroyer of Israel he provides a poignant image of the land reverting to a state of pre-creation desolation due to the breakdown of the covenantal relationship. The earth raises its voice in mourning/drying up at the separation from its people. In presenting these powerful images the prophet invites readers to develop a new view of the world, especially on the issue of covenant. Nevertheless, his prophetic task is also to provide a message of hope, renewal and restoration for Israel. Thus, he offers an alternative perspective of hope for the re-establishment of the Mosaic and Davidic covenants which will allow Israel, YHWH and the land to be reunited in an indestructible and enduring symbiotic relationship.

The Sinai covenant and the creation traditions form a basis for the royal-priestly ideology, against the power and endurance of which Jeremiah mounts a sustained attack.\textsuperscript{199} It has no intrinsic power to protect Israel from destruction nor can it preserve

\textsuperscript{198} It is acknowledged that the equality of the priests and Levites is a Deuteronomic notion rather than Priestly.

\textsuperscript{199} This thesis follows Habel, \textit{The Land is Mine}, ix in his neutral understanding of ‘ideology’ as ‘a wider complex of images and ideas which may employ theological doctrines, traditions, or symbols to justify and
the earth. Jeremiah does not criticize the temple itself but rather the people’s elevation of it above the principles of the Deuteronomistic law. According to Jeremiah the proper application of the Deuteronomistic covenant will sustain the people, not the monarchy, the priesthood, or the sacred sanctuary. Nevertheless, the covenant has been broken and the presence and activities associated with the monarchy and the temple cannot save the earth from returning to a state of pre-creational desolation, nor can they prevent the people from being taken away from their land into exile. The reversal of creation metaphor strikes at the very heart of the whole covenantal system and, indeed, is a statement of its undoing. The acknowledgement in Jer 4:23-28 that YHWH is responsible for the destruction of the earth and the darkening of the heavens is a clear statement that YHWH’s intentions and actions cannot be controlled by the structures and processes of the royal-priestly ideology. Jeremiah generally values the cultic system, including the Jerusalem Temple, the sacrificial system, the Ark of the Covenant, circumcision and Sabbath observance, and is not opposed to Josiah’s rule (e.g., 22:15-16;

promote the social, economic and political interests of a group within society’ (see also 10-11). See also Anderson, Contours of Old Testament Theology, 197. It is acknowledged that there are several systems of royal-priestly covenant represented in biblical texts. As with the Deuteronomists, Jeremiah merges several traditions, referring at various times to the Sinai covenant and Josiah’s attempted reform. He attacks the sacrificial system (7:21-26), a fire cult in Topheth (7:30-34) and the astral cults (8:1-3), thus, exposing the corruption of prevailing cultic practices. Nevertheless, he is generally more concerned with false community views regarding the independent power of the temple cult to protect the land and particularly with its separation from ethical living.


Anderson, Contours of Old Testament Theology, 208 affirms that creation theology is included in the Davidic covenant.
Nevertheless, he understands that the institution of the temple as a representative of the royal-priestly ideology has no intrinsic value to save the land from destruction.

The temple represents the royal-priestly ideology. In delivering his messages of judgment Jeremiah situates himself within the symbolic space of the temple, standing at its gate (7:2) and in its courtyard (26:2). When banned from its precincts, on his behalf his amanuensis Baruch reads the scroll of judgment in the temple (36:1f.). The social and religious misdemeanors of the people are also linked with the sacred space of the temple when Jeremiah asks how, after stealing, murdering, committing adultery and perjury, and burning incense to Baal, they can have the gall to ‘come and stand before me in this house, which has been called by my name’ (7:10; see also 7:11; 11:15 and 32:34). The people are repeatedly told that the temple ideology cannot provide protection. The prophet clearly links the conditions of the covenant with the relationship between the people and the land:

Thus says YHWH of hosts the God of Israel. Amend your ways and your doings and I will cause you to live in this place. Do not trust in the words of a lie, saying “The temple of YHWH, the temple of YHWH, the temple of YHWH are these”. Because if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you indeed practice justice between a man and his neighbor, if you do not oppress the stranger, the orphan and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place or you do not walk after other gods to hurt yourself. Then I will cause you to live in this place in the land that I gave to your fathers from forever even to forever. (7:3-7).

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203 Habel, *The Land is Mine*, 21 states that according to royal ideology the temple is the centre of both the empire and the universe (1 Kgs 8:6). Keith W. Whitelam, “The Symbols of Power: Aspects of Propaganda in the United Monarchy,” *BA* 49 (1986), 171-172 explains that the restricted access to the temple demonstrates the king’s placement at the sacred centre of the cult.

204 Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 166-167 suggests that Jeremiah’s sermon is not against the temple. Rather he attacks the notion of the temple as ‘the locus of ultimate security’ without ‘ethical pre-conditions’ (166).

It is one of the contradictions of Jeremiah’s message that while the temple sermon presents a conditional theology which allows for repentance, the certainty of judgment is presented elsewhere. However, ironically, the sacred place of the temple experiences divine punishment along with the people: ‘Therefore to the house that is called by my name in which you are trusting and to the place which I gave to you and your fathers I will do as I have done to Shiloh’ (7:14). The temple is incapable of protecting itself, let alone the people and the land.

On the one hand, Jeremiah seems to imply that the covenant will eventually become redundant: ‘In those days, says YHWH, They will no longer say, “The ark of the covenant of YHWH”. It will not come to their heart nor will they remember it nor miss it nor will it be made again’ (3:16). However, he also presents a promise of the re-establishment of the monarchy which will provide protection for Israel: ‘And I will set up over them shepherds who will tend them and they will not fear or be terrified again, they will not be missing, says YHWH’ (23:4). The Davidic covenant will be restored, declares YHWH:

Behold the days are coming, says YHWH, when I will set up for David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the earth. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel shall dwell safely and his name will be called YHWH our righteousness (23:5-6).

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206 Christopher R. Seitz, *Theology in Conflict* (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), 203-214 provides a diachronic explanation for this contradiction. Noting the similarities of language and thrust between Jer 29:11-14, Deut 30:1-10 and 1 Kgs 8:33-34 Seitz argues that Jer 27-29 constitutes an editorial overlay whose purpose is to condemn the post-597 Judahite community and focus on the fate of the exiles. Also noting the fact that Ezekiel does not seem to know of a fixed seventy year period of exile (see chap. 4) Seitz suggests that Jer 29:10f. may have been influenced by Ezekiel in response to the tensions between the communities of Judah and Babylon. In the light of the exilic experience the welfare of the exiles becomes Jeremiah’s prime concern.
Using the covenantal themes of turning and returning, Jeremiah states that the people will turn to YHWH and return from captivity to the land (e.g., 29:14; 30:3; 18; 31:16). YHWH promises restoration through the re-establishment of the symbiotic relationship which will be held together by a new, indestructible and everlasting covenant.

An important feature of the restored symbiosis is the fertility of the land:

And they will come and sing in the heights of Zion and be radiant over the goodness of YHWH, for the grain and new wine and oil and for the young of the flock and the herd and their life shall be as a watered garden and they will not continue to languish any more (31:11-12. See also vv. 5, 8, 9, 10 and 35).

Though the covenantal relationship has been broken and the symbiotic relationship has been undone, YHWH will establish a new and unbreakable covenant with the people which will facilitate their return to the land. With the prospect of the restoration of the symbiotic relationship the earth waxes lyrical as it expresses its joy through fertility and abundant production.

An emphasis upon leadership in the book of Jeremiah brings the bureaucracy of the monarchy into focus and thus serves to reinforce issues relating to the royal-priestly ideology. Kings, officials, priests, prophets and scribes are referred to in abundance and frequently named. Many leaders are criticized by Jeremiah for incompetence, corruption and willful misleading of the people (e.g., 5:31; 14:13-18; 27:16-22; 28:9; 29:8; 6:13). The prophet declares that every level of society is involved: ‘Because from the least to the greatest everyone cuts off a profit and from the prophet even to the priest

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207 Though YHWH constantly pleads with Israel to return to YHWH (e.g., 3:10-22; 4:1, 7:3, 8:4) the people refuse and so YHWH will turn away from the people (6:8). Thus, YHWH’s anger will not be turned away (e.g., 4:8, 28; 30:24).

208 Fretheim, Jeremiah, 9 states that the naming of over fifty political and religious leaders (especially in chaps. 20-45) shows the extent of the opposition towards the prophet and his message. Habel, The Land is Mine, 11 explains that the emphasis upon Judah’s leaders indicates that Jeremiah is addressing the political issues surrounding the fall of Jerusalem and is in conflict with the ruling powers. For a detailed study of kings in the book of Jeremiah see John Brian Job, Jeremiah’s Kings. A Study of Monarchy in Jeremiah. (Society for Old Testament Study Series; Burlington: Ashgate, 2006).
everyone deals falsely’ (6:13 and 8:10). Jeremiah is involved in a theological struggle for prophetic authenticity and authority to deliver the word of YHWH.\textsuperscript{209} The battle revolves around the issue of land retention which is linked to Israel’s leadership. In the first chapter YHWH announces the prophet’s appointed task to stand ‘against the whole land – against the kings of Judah, against her rulers, against her priests and against the people of the land’ (1:18-19). Jeremiah is called to exercise a subversive influence against Israel’s leaders who represent the royal-priestly ideology which fails to protect the land from destruction and allows it to return to a state of pre-creation desolation (4:23-28). He warns that war, famine and plague are coming upon Israel (e.g., 15:4; 21:7, 9; 27:8; 38:2). Instead of working to maintain the symbiotic relationship many Israelite leaders contribute to its demise and consequent land loss. Jeremiah stands at odds with the majority of the Judean leaders. His recommendation to surrender to the enemy and go cooperatively into exile in Babylon is interpreted by the officials as treason: ‘This man does not seek the peace of this people but their evil’ (38:4). His warning against fleeing to Egypt is ignored, resulting in a mass exodus which includes him (43:4-7). Jeremiah’s attacks on the royal and religious officials constitute a rejection of the royal-priestly tradition, which fails to protect the land from a return to pre-creation desolation (4:23-28) and the destruction of the symbiotic relationship. While Jeremiah works against many of the nation’s leaders, at the same time, he stands in the company of a long line of conventional prophets who prophesy war, disaster and plague against the nations (28:8). Thus, in combining radicalism and traditionalism he both supports and subverts the

\textsuperscript{209} Leuchter, Josiah’s Reform, 128-135 argues that Jer 8:4-12 presents a polemic against the prophets and priests who have subordinated their religious duties to the monarchic powers. See also Fretheim, Jeremiah, 6.
variety of prevailing views on social, religious and political issues in Israel, and particularly its relationship to the land.

In an eco-perspective, the prophet employs several Judean monarchs as paradigms of land-losing and land-keeping kings (e.g., chap. 22). In rural imagery the monarchs are described as good and bad shepherds (e.g., 23:4; 25:34-36; 50:6). As a land-keeping king, Josiah ‘judged the cause of the poor and needy and it was well for him’ (22:16). In stark contrast, Jehoiakim ‘builds his house without righteousness and his upper rooms without justice’ (22:13), being more concerned with his building programs than the welfare of his people (22:13-14, 17). The prophet declares that YHWH will hurl Jehoiakim’s son Jehoiachin out of the land (22:25-26). While the prophet Hananiah prophesies that Jehoiachin will be restored to the throne after two years in exile, Jeremiah states that he will never return to Judah and that his offspring will not continue the Davidic monarchy (22:24-30). It is the last king of Judah, Zedekiah, who receives Jeremiah’s fullest attention. The king commits the covenant breaking offence of ignoring YHWH’s words (37:2). Likened to a basket of rotten figs, Jeremiah declares that the king and his officials will become ‘an agitation for evil to all the kingdoms of the earth, a reproach and a proverb for jibe’ (24:9, see also 34:1f.). Thus, YHWH announces that Zedekiah will be ‘given to the king of Babylon’ (37:17; see also chaps. 21, 22; 27:12-15;

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211 Anderson, Contours of Old Testament Theology, 242 notes that though Josiah did his utmost to introduce reforms which upheld covenantal obligations Israel still suffered.
212 Anderson, Contours of Old Testament Theology, 192 suggests that Hananiah’s promise of the restoration of the Davidic throne indicates his trust in the Davidic covenant (chap. 28). In the final chapter Jeremiah records the more humane treatment of King Jehoiachin by the Babylonian king Evil-Merodach (52:31-34). See Job, Jeremiah’s Kings, 61-96 for a detailed discussion on Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin.
213 Though there is some rapport between Zedekiah and Jeremiah (chaps. 21, 37-43), the king is presented as a vacillating king who seeks the prophetic word but is powerless to respond to it because he is controlled by his officials (chaps. 37-43).
39:6-7 and 52:11). The king of Judah is taken into the custody of the enemy king. Thus, in keeping with his critique of the royal-priestly ideology, Jeremiah condemns the Israelite monarchy and announces its demise.\textsuperscript{214}

However, paradoxically, Jeremiah also delivers a promise of the restoration of the Davidic monarchy (e.g., 23:5; 30:21; 33:15). Ruling with wisdom, justice and righteousness, the promised monarch is a covenant-keeping king. The name of the post-exilic king will be, ‘YHWH our righteousness’ (23:6), a word play on Zedekiah’s name which expresses hope for monarchic restoration (‘Zedekiah’ ωηψθδχ cf. ‘YHWH our righteousness’ ωνθδχ ηωηψ).\textsuperscript{215} Thus, while Jeremiah sees hope for the re-establishment of the monarchy after exile, he opposes the royal-priestly ideology and declares that it is incapable of protecting Israel from land loss. Though the monarchy is not directly referred to in 4:23-28, it is clear that the royal-priestly ideology, and its associated covenant, is under attack. It does not have the power to maintain the land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship or to protect the earth and its people from destruction.

Consistent with his ecological emphasis, the land of Babylon is often the focus of the prophet’s attention. The term ‘Babylon’ (חבלם) occurs one hundred times in Jeremiah. In chaps. 2 to 20 Babylon functions as an ‘organising metaphor’ for land loss, exile and


The figure works to bring together other metaphors of attack such as an invading army (4:5-6, 14; 5:15-16; 6:22-23), a lion (4:7; 5:6), a leopard (5:6); harvest (6:9), return to pre-creation desolation (4:23-28) and exile (5:19; 8:3). The literary proximity of the sights and sounds of battle to 4:23-28 suggest that the scene of human and animal depletion, the desertification of the land and the ruination of the cities occurs, at least partly, due to attack (4:19-29). Throughout the book the prophet employs several code words for alarm and danger. The word ‘enemy’ (בֵּית) occurs nineteen times. Though the enemy is not specifically identified, the term is often used in association with YHWH as the subject and Judah as the object of the attack (e.g., 15:9; 18:17; 19:7; 21:7; 34:20). Thus, the enemy serves as YHWH’s instrument to punish Judah.

However, the attacker is also frequently referred to as ‘the threat from the north’ with the term ‘north’ (יוֹם נַחֲלָה) occurring twenty five times. ‘From the north evil will be loosed on all the inhabitants of the land’, declares Jeremiah (1:14. See also 1:13; 10:22; 13:20; 15:12; 25:9). Jeremiah’s use of the iconic term יְוֹם נַחֲלָה is highly ironic given the connection between Zaphon and Zion theology. Also ironic is the fact that YHWH is identified as the source of the northern attack: “For lo I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north”, declares YHWH’ (1:15).

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216 Hill, Friend or Foe? 18 states that an ‘organising metaphor’ is one which is ‘central or fundamental to the structure of the text’.
217 Habel, The God of Jeremiah, 53 notes that ‘north’ is an appropriate symbol for Judah’s attackers because it is the direction from which most invasions came. However, it is also a symbol for the abode of the gods in the ANE world.
218 Hector Avalos, “Mount Zaphon,” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary. Vol. 6, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1040-1041 notes that while in Canaanite mythology Mount Zaphon was the sacred mountain of Baal-Hadad, in the HB YHWH created Zaphon (Ps 89:13). In Ps 48:2-3 Zion and Zaphon appear to be identified. Lipiński, “יְוֹם נַחֲלָה” in TDOT Vol. XII, 441 does not find mythological connotations in יְוֹם נַחֲלָה in the above Jeremian texts, concluding that it indicates that Israel’s enemies usually came from the north. However, Hill, Friend or Foe? 48 argues that ‘the north’ signifies divine origin in Jeremiah (4:6; 6:1, 22; 10:22; 25:9; 46:24; 47:2; 50:3, 9, 41; 51:48). In that Jeremiah presents Babylon as the place of Israel’s renewal, he is not adverse to revising the theological significance of places,
It is also ironic that Babylon is represented as a place of provision, growth, renewal and worship (chaps. 21 to 24, 27 and 29). Life in Babylon is described in similar terms to life in Judah with the Deuteronomic promises coming to fruition there (29:4-7).219

Thus YHWH God of Israel says, “Like these good figs so I will acknowledge for good the exiles of Judah whom I have sent out of this place to the land of the Chaldeans. For I will set my eyes on them for good and I will bring them back to this land. And I will build them and not tear them down, and I will plant them and not uproot them. And I will give to them a heart to know me that I am YHWH and they will be my people and I will be their God; for they will return to me with their whole heart (24:4-7; see also 29:5-7).

The prophet declares that those who remain in Judah have no claims to it or to protection within it and the landless exiles are promised the establishment of a new relationship with YHWH and the land (29:11-13; chaps. 30, 31 and 33). Jeremiah identifies Babylon’s monarch as YHWH’s servant who carries out YHWH’s judgment on YHWH’s people. With the use of the designation ‘my servant’ (ψδβς 25:9; 27:6) Jeremiah gives him ‘a standing equal to that of the greatest of Judah’s rulers’.220 YHWH gives Nebuchadnezzar universal jurisdiction: ‘And now I have given all the earth into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon my servant and I have also given him the beast of the field to serve him and all nations shall serve him’ (27:6-7). One of the tasks of the Israelite monarch was to keep the covenant which maintains the order of creation, so, in

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219 Hill, Friend or Foe? 127-143 notes the striking similarities between Babylon and Judah in chaps. 27 and 29. Babylon is described in terms of Judah’s sacred traditions. Davies, The Territorial Dimension of Judaism, 15 states that Jeremiah presents a positive view of exile. Fretheim, Jeremiah, 36 notes the remarkable correspondence between the actions of God and those of Nebuchadnezzar.

bestowing that task upon Nebuchadnezzar, YHWH is effectively making him king of Judah. YHWH is fighting with Babylon against Judah and to resist Nebuchadnezzar is to resist YHWH (27:5-8).

The exiles are urged to co-operate with their attackers, relocate to Babylon, embrace its life and seek its peace (Moššè) as though it is Jerusalem (chap. 29). Thus, Babylon functions as a place of physical and spiritual healing. Babylon is identified as the place from which the Israelites will return to Judah (chap. 24). Thus, the figure of Egypt in the Sinai covenant is replaced by that of Babylon in the new covenant. Jeremiah presents Babylon as the place from which life emanates and Egypt as the place of death (chaps. 42-46). In a subversive approach the roles of Judah and Babylon are reversed. The chosen Judah is now rejected and the rejected Babylon is now the chosen instrument of YHWH’s judgment and renewal. Babylon is presented as both the land taker and the land giver. The once sacred land of Judah is unfit for the habitation of its people and the once profane place of Babylon is now a land in which the exiles find security and peace. Paradoxically, the people flourish in their relationship with YHWH outside the land of Israel. However, Babylon acts only in a caretaker role as the land of growth, for the hope, promise and expectation is always for return to the land of Israel and a restoration of the symbiosis through a new covenantal relationship and a restored monarchy.

221 W. H. Schmid, “Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation,” in Creation in the Old Testament, ed. Bernard W. Anderson, 105 states that in the ANE ‘the king was understood to be the earthly guarantor of the order of creation’. Job, Jeremiah’s Kings, 144-149 discusses Jeremiah’s designation of Nebuchadnezzar as YHWH’s δβ(.

222 Hill, Friend or Foe? 18f. states that while in chaps. 27 and 29 Babylon is presented as having a co-operative relationship with YHWH, in chaps. 50-51 it is punished along with Judah for its sin against YHWH.

223 Stulman, Order amid Chaos, 120f. states that in Jeremiah ‘outsiders are employed to punish the unacceptable behavior of insiders’. The prophet presents ‘an inverted category of “elect” rather than one of dangerous deviants’ (126).
2.11 The Communication of the Character of the Earth in Jeremiah

Jeremiah is one of several books in the HB that present the earth as a subject which is capable of communication. In a perspective that resonates with the ecojustice principles of the EBT and with indigenous worldviews, these books present the earth as having a unique character and consciousness, as well as its own means of communicating. The authors of these books have the capacity to attend to the voice of the earth as it communicates in rejoicing and sorrow. Many members of the earth community (e.g., land, trees, seas, sun, moon, stars) join the chorus, expressing themselves in their unique language of rain, storm, movement and fertility (e.g., Pss 65:9-14; 104; 114:4). While the earth sometimes trembles at the presence of YHWH (e.g., Pss 77:17-19 and 114:7-8), at other times it exuberantly worships God:

The heavens are recording the glory of God and the skies declare the work of his hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech or words where their voice is not heard. Their voice has gone through all the earth, their words to the end of the world (Ps 19:1-5).

Praise YHWH. Praise YHWH from the heavens, praise him in the heights. Praise him all his angels; praise him all his hosts. Praise him sun and moon, praise him all stars of light. Praise him O heaven of heavens and waters that are above the heavens. Let them praise the name of YHWH, for he commanded and they were created. He made them stand for ever and ever; he gave a decree and it will not pass away. Praise YHWH from the earth, the sea monsters and all depths; fire, hail, snow, smoke, stormy wind fulfilling his word; the mountains and all hills, fruit trees and cedars; beasts and all cattle, creeping things and all birds (Ps 148:1-10).

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224 E.g., Isa 4:2; 6:3; 8:22; 11:9; 14:7-8; 24:18-19; Hos 2:21-22; Joel 2:10; 3:16.
The presence and nature of a character are determined by attending to narrated description, epithets, physical appearance, actions, direct speech, interior monologue and the narrator’s statements about attitudes, motives and intentions. Berlin explains that characters are flat when they are built around a single quality or trait and do not stand out as individuals. Round characters, on the other hand, are ‘more complex, manifesting multiple traits’. Though it is beyond the scope of this study to try to identify particular traits of individual members of the earth community (such as trees, mountains and rivers), it is argued that Jeremiah presents the earth as a round character which can be known through its appearance, actions (especially in relation to human characters) and speech. It is argued that the earth’s speech is expressed through its actions. Fejo likens the earth’s communication to human body language, as it speaks through rain and storms, and the actions of trees and rivers. The earth’s voice increases in volume when it feels hurt.

Throughout the book of Jeremiah the earth is presented as a character which communicates in its own language. The prophet has a sensitivity towards the earth that enables him to hear its voice as it expresses its joy and sorrow. The land, the people and YHWH exist in a symbiotic relationship, the destruction of which negatively affects all parties. Thus, throughout the book of Jeremiah a deep sense of suffering is expressed by YHWH, the people and the land. It is argued that the anguish of Jeremiah’s people

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229 Habel, *The Land is Mine*, 94-95 states that landlessness is crucial to Israel’s future. The people need to die to the land. Without this no new beginning in the land is possible. Davies, *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism*, 15 states that YHWH can exist without the people, however, this thesis argues that any separation of the people and YHWH is a temporary arrangement, with the hope and expectation being for their reunification.
resonates with the sense of mourning expressed by indigenous people when they are forcibly separated from their lands. As Jonathan Smith puts it,

To be exiled is to be cut off from the land, from the blessing, from the ancestors, from the history, from life, from creation, from reality, from the deity … To be exiled is to be in a state of chaos, decreation, and death; to return from exile is to be re-created, reborn.230

In deep mourning the earth expresses its suffering through lack of creative order, the desertification of the fruitful land, the absence of people and birds, the darkness of the heavens and mourning/drying up (e.g., 4:23-28; 12:4,11). The parched state of the earth is one of the ways in which it communicates its lack of health: ‘How long shall the earth mourn/dry up and the grass of every field wither from the evil of those who dwell in it?’ (12:4).

Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard, they trod my portion, they have made my portion my pleasant field a desolate wilderness. It has been made a desolation, it dries up/mourns to me, all the earth is made desolate but no man lays it to heart (12:10-11).

‘For the earth is full of adulterers because of a curse, the earth mourns/dries up, the pastures of the wilderness are dried up and their course is evil and their might is not right’ (23:10). The absence of people, birds and animal life declares the breakdown of their relationship with the earth and its inability to sustain them: ‘For they are burned up without people passing through and the voice of the cattle is not heard. The birds of the heavens and the beasts of the field have fled and are gone’ (9:10). ‘Therefore thus says the Lord YHWH: “Behold my anger and my wrath will be poured out on this place, on man and on animal; and on the trees of the field and on the fruit of the ground and it will burn and not be quenched”’ (7:20). The landforms express their distress by moving violently. ‘The snorting of his horses and the neighing of his stallions is heard from Dan; all the earth quakes for they come and devour the earth and everything in it, the city and

230 Smith, Map is not Territory, 120.
those who live in it’ (8:16). ‘And YHWH God is true, he is the God of the living and the everlasting king; at his wrath the earth shall quake and the nations cannot endure his indignation’ (10:10). ‘And the earth shall tremble and writhe for YHWH’s purposes against Babylon shall stand to make the land of Babylon a desert without anyone living there’ (51:29). As will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, in 4:23-28 the prophet focuses on the earth as it expresses its distress at the breakdown of the symbiotic relationship. In the prophet’s visionary state he has the capacity to sense and receive the communication of the earth. He is sensitive to the great suffering of the earth as it expresses its anguish.

However, though the earth clearly expresses its suffering in the book of Jeremiah, it also shouts at the joyous prospect of reunification with its people. The earth expresses its joy through fertility and abundant produce:

And they will come and sing in the height of Zion and beam over the goodness of YHWH, for grain and new wine and oil and for the young of the herd. Their life shall be as a well watered garden and they will not languish any more. Then the virgin shall rejoice and dance, both young men and old together; for I will turn their mourning/drying up into joy and I will comfort them and make them rejoice from their trouble. And I will fill the priests with abundance and my people will be satisfied with goodness, says YHWH (31:11-13).

The earth is jubilant at the prospect of the return of its people and rejoices through its language of fertility and abundance. Its joy is contagious and the people join it in celebration. The constant yearning of the exiled Israelite hearts is for return to and reunion with their land.

In summary, in the HB the earth is presented as a character which is capable of communication in its unique language. Jeremiah’s close relationship with the land enables him to attend to the communication of the earth as it expresses its sorrow in the

231 Ntreh, “The Survival of Earth,” 100 notes that God has placed the earth on its foundations so that it cannot be shaken and that tampering with territorial boundaries can cause the earth to shake.
violent movement of its landforms, lack of fertility of its fruitful places and the mourning/drying up of the earth (4:23-28). The prophet is also sensitive to the joy of the land as it anticipates the return of its people. Its deep sense of gladness is expressed in the fertility of the earth, the provision of water and the abundant produce of the land (31:11).

2.12 Why the Earth Suffers

‘Why is the earth ruined and burned like the wilderness so that no one passes through?’ YHWH remonstrates (Jer 9:11). Jeremiah presents an image of the earth community suffering in its lack of creative order, the absence of light in its heavens, the violent movement of its land forms, the depletion of its fertility, the vacation of its birds and people, the destruction of its cities and the mourning/drying up of the earth (4:23-28). However, the prophet does not clearly articulate the reason/s for the earth’s suffering. The religious, social and political sins of the people pollute the earth which requires a separation from them in order to heal. Furthermore, YHWH metes out judgment upon the people that also affects the earth. However, the earth may be complicit in the sins of the people and also deserve YHWH’s punishment. All or some of these reasons may contribute to the earth’s suffering, however, in this thesis it is argued that the earth cries out in anguish because of the absence of its people which it sorely misses. The earth flourishes in health and joy when in a positively functioning symbiotic relationship with YHWH and the people.

The earth is impacted by the negative social and religious behavior of the people (e.g., 2:12; 3:3; 5:24-25; 14:4). Though YHWH punishes the people, their wicked actions also bear negative fruit for the earth (e.g., 21:14; 32:19).  

232 Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 31f. argues that the people’s choices affect both the earth and God. ‘Given the interrelatedness of all creatures’ the people’s sin has a ‘negative fallout’ which affects the land (34).
is furious, expressing ‘burning anger’ (4:26) and intending to mete out judgment. Though it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between the land and the people, the land is clearly a recipient of YHWH’s punishment along with the people. However, even though it may be that the destruction is intended to pass judgment upon the people, the land seems to take the brunt of the devastation. Possibly referring to the land, Jeremiah describes \( \eta \lambda \xi \nu \) as a target: ‘My \( \eta \lambda \xi \nu \) is like the speckled bird which all the birds gather around to attack’ (12:9).\(^{233}\) ‘I have forsaken my house, I have left my \( \eta \lambda \xi \nu \)’, declares YHWH who expresses hatred for \( \eta \lambda \xi \nu \) (12:8) and calls for wild beasts, shepherds and armed invaders to destroy the vineyards and fields, making them parched and desolate (12:11-12). The harvests will fail because of the anger of YHWH (12:13). Thus, it would appear that YHWH intends the earth to suffer. YHWH presents a deliberate plan and unwavering intention to destroy the earth: ‘I have spoken, I have planned; and I have not repented and I will not turn back from it’ (4:28). As noted in 3.12 and 3.13 of this study there are several phrases and conjunctions in chap. 4 that emphasize YHWH’s responsibility in the destruction of the earth: ‘From the face of YHWH, from the face of his burning anger’ (\( \omega \pi \) \( \nu \omega \rho \xi \psi \nu \mu \eta \omega \eta \psi \psi \nu \mu \) v. 26); ‘Because thus says YHWH’ (\( \eta \omega \eta \psi \rho \mu \) \( \eta \kappa \psi \kappa \) v27); ‘On account of this’ (\( \tau \zeta \lambda \) v. 28a); ‘On account of because I have spoken’ (\( \psi \tau \rho \beta \delta \psi \kappa \lambda \) v. 28b). YHWH’s anger motivates the determination and intention to destroy the earth and allow it to suffer. It may be that the earth is an innocent victim caught in the crossfire between the sinfulness of the people

\(^{233}\) Habel, *The Land is Mine*, 85 states that Jeremiah’s use of \( \eta \lambda \xi \nu \) in this text is deliberately ambiguous in order to emphasize the symbiotic relationship between YHWH, the people and the land. ‘The land owner and the land are joined in pain.’
and YHWH’s angry judgment. Whatever the reason for its suffering, it is clear that the earth cries out in pain.

YHWH’s anger is provoked by the evil actions of the people and their lack of knowledge of YHWH (4:22). Clearly, the people have sinned against each other, against YHWH and against the land, and rightly deserve the punishment which YHWH inflicts upon them. In some ANE perspectives political, religious and social issues are all aspects of the created order and so the behavior of the people is linked with the wellbeing of the land.234 In their religious sin the people pollute the land, the special \( \eta \lambda \xi \nu \) of YHWH, and so the land suffers because it has been defiled: ‘And you came and defiled my land and you made my \( \eta \lambda \xi \nu \) an abomination’, YHWH declares (2:7). YHWH unequivocally announces that ‘those who live in it are evil’ (12:4). The land is defiled by Israel’s adherence to the Baal cult and its associated fertility practices (2:20, 23) which Jeremiah describes in the imagery of the adultery of a faithless wife (3:1-10). Jeremiah’s use of sexual images borders on crudity as he describes Israel’s lusting after Baalism: ‘And under every green tree you lay down like a harlot’ (2:20); ‘She defiled the land and fornicated with stones and with trees’ (3:9). YHWH, as an aggrieved husband, threatens to divorce Judah (3:6-10), an action which in Deuteronomistic law forbids her return (Deut 24:1-4). Such an action would cause further pollution to the land: ‘Would not that land be greatly defiled?’ (Jer 3:1).235 Baal worship pollutes YHWH’s \( \eta \lambda \xi \nu \) and consequently YHWH is compelled to expel the offending people. In attacking the Baal cult Jeremiah promotes the worship of YHWH alone for YHWH’s people in YHWH’s land. The

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234 Schmid, “Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation,” 105 states that in ANE thought drought, famine or invasion are often understood to be the result of legal offenses.

235 See Habel, The Land is Mine, 80-82 for a detailed discussion on Baalism and the faithless wife metaphor in Jeremiah.
worship of Baal threatens the land‐people‐YHWH symbiotic relationship (9:11‐16).\textsuperscript{236} YHWH’s people lack knowledge of their deity and divine ways (4:22; 5:5). They believe that YHWH is ignorant of their sins and incapable of punishing them (3:3‐4; 5:12; 7:9; 12:4). However, Jeremiah declares that YHWH is well aware of the religious infidelity of the people and its consequent defilement. Consequently, in keeping with Deuteronomistic law, the people are separated from the land as punishment for their religious sins.

The land is also polluted by the negative social behavior of its people, especially that of injustice to the socially disadvantaged and vulnerable. The poor, and especially widows and orphans need to be treated with justice and mercy in order for the land to flourish. Jeremiah links the Baal cult with justice issues: ‘Also the blood of the lives of the poor innocents is found on your skirts’ (2:34). He also links drought with legal injustice to the poor: ‘Your iniquities have turned these things away’ (5:25). ‘These things’ presumably refers to YHWH’s provision of ‘the former and the latter rain in its time’ and ‘the appointed weeks of the harvest’ (5:24). YHWH declares that the people are so evil that ‘they pass over the deeds of the evil, they do not plead the cause of the orphan so that they may prosper and they do not vindicate the right of the poor’ (5:28). Jeremiah announces that allegiance to the Baal cult and the denial of justice to the poor provokes YHWH’s judgment in the form of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple (7:14). The land is polluted by the people’s failure to live in the ways of YHWH (4:22)

\textsuperscript{236} Habel, The Land is Mine, 75 argues that the ideology of the symbiotic relationship is espoused by a YHWH‐alone party in order to counter a revival of Baalism. ‘YHWH has inalienable tenure over the land. Canaan is YHWH’s own possession, a domain always destined to be YHWH’s land’ (76). Zimmerli, ‘The ‘Land’ in Pre‐Exilic and Early Post‐Exilic Prophets,” 25 states that in the cultic defilement of the land, Israel encroaches on God’s own possession, compelling God to respond in judgment.
and the rains are withheld because of lack of social justice. Thus, Jeremiah links the wellbeing of the earth with justice issues.²³⁷

A third means of the pollution of the land is through Judah’s political alliances. Linking religion and politics, Jeremiah states that in seeking aid from Egypt and Assyria, Judah is forsaking YHWH and committing adultery and idolatry (2:13-19).²³⁸ According to Jeremiah such political maneuvering indicates a belief that YHWH is incapable of protecting the land. Through these alliances ηλζν experiences pollution. The inevitable judgment is the removal of the people from the land (11:15; 16:18). Thus, the land is polluted because of the religious, social and political sins of its people. YHWH evicts the people and provides the land with space in which to recover from pollution. The land must experience the suffering of separation from its people in order to be renewed to receive them back.

While there is no doubt that the people have sinned and provoked YHWH’s judgment upon themselves, mystery surrounds the reason/s for the destruction of the earth. What has the earth done to deserve YHWH’s displeasure? It could be argued that the earth has been complicit in the people’s religious sin. Jeremiah accuses the people of manufacturing their idols from trees and adorning them with silver and gold, all of which are the products of the earth and members of the earth community (10:2-5, 8-9). Similarly, Israel’s erroneous worship is described as fornication which takes place ‘on every high hill and under every green tree’ (3:6; see also v. 13). ‘She defiled the land and fornicated with stones and trees’ (3:9). The leaders (kings, rulers, priests and prophets) declare that their lives derive from trees and stones (2:27). Jeremiah accuses Israel of

²³⁷ See discussion in Habel, The Land is Mine, 83.
²³⁸ Habel, The Land is Mine, 83-84 states that in the ANE politics and idolatry are linked. See also Douglas Stuart, Hosea – Jonah (Word Biblical Commentary 31Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 76.
worshipping the sun, the moon and the stars (8:2). However, it is unclear whether the earth is a willing participant in the people’s religious sin or an unwitting partner. If the earth deliberately participates in the sin of the people it may deserve YHWH’s judgment along with the people. However, if the people employ its services in their sinful acts against its will, the earth may be a passive and innocent victim which does not deserve YHWH’s judgment. Wurst argues that ‘Earth’s body is punished by God in order to cleanse and purify a wayward partner’ (the people) and that YHWH’s actions constitute an assault of the earth.\textsuperscript{239} It is uncertain whether the earth has been willingly involved in the people’s sinful actions and whether YHWH’s destructive actions towards it are warranted. However, the earth is certainly negatively impacted by YHWH’s judgment and experiences pain. The land suffers from drought (3:3; 5:23-25; 12:4, 13; 14:2-6), the wickedness and neglect of the people (2:7; 3:2-3; 12:8, 11) and invading armies (2:15; 4:7, 26-27; 9:10-12; 10:22; 12:10-11). Thus, the land would appear to be a victim which doesn’t stand a chance against multiple onslaughts.\textsuperscript{240} If YHWH’s judgment is directed at the people it also negatively impacts the land.

Although YHWH takes responsibility for the devastation of the earth (4:28), the various members of the earth community act of their own volition. The verbal structures indicate that YHWH does not force the landforms to move, but rather, that the earth performs the actions, with the mountains taking the initiative to quake and the hills choosing to shake themselves (4:24). Likewise, rather than being evicted from the land, it would seem that the birds fly away on their own initiative (v. 25). Similarly, the land

\textsuperscript{239} Wurst, “Retrieving Earth’s Voice in Jeremiah,” 174.
\textsuperscript{240} Fretheim, \textit{God and World in the Old Testament}, 178 argues that the land has done nothing to deserve these combined onslaughts. He stresses that the land and its animals have been called by God to the ‘vocation’ of suffering (37). Habel, \textit{The Land is Mine}, 84 argues that ‘the land is a victim who suffers as a result of the crime and the punishment of Judah.’
chooses to express its suffering in raising its voice in mourning/drying up (4:28). It may be that the earth is undertaking its various actions in response to the people’s sin and/or YHWH’s punishment. Perhaps the earth is angry with the people for their sinful ways and resisting injustice (Ecojustice Principle 6). Whatever the reason, the earth need not necessarily be understood as a passive victim of the actions of YHWH and/or the people. The earth is an assertive character which is quite deliberately undertaking the actions that are portrayed in the prophet’s vision and through its agency communicating its distress.

It may also be that the earth is not merely reacting mechanically in its actions and communication. It is certainly capable and competent when YHWH asks it to perform official duties as a witness to the evil of the king (22:19). Rather than being an inert victim, the earth is a character which is capable of being proactive. Thus, as it has acted as a witness to the establishment of the covenant (e.g., Josh 24:27; Isa 1:2; Mic 6:1-2), in ‘decreation’ it is also acting as an official witness to the breakdown of the covenant. Perhaps it is even involved with YHWH in the eviction of the people from the land. In moving land forms, lack of fertility, absence of animal life, darkness and desolation (4:23-28), the earth may be taking an active part in YHWH’s judgment and vomiting out its inhabitants (cf. Lev 18:24-28). If the causal phrase τοῦ ζημίας λαθρείας (‘on account of this’ 4:28) refers to the preceding desolation of the earth (v. 27) and this desolation is an action that the earth chooses to perform, it may be that the earth is taking an active role in conjunction with the actions and intentions of YHWH. If so, the earth is actively resisting the injustices that the people perform against it (Ecojustice Principle 6).

In a symbiotic relationship, when one party sins all are affected in some way and when one party judges another, the repercussions flow on to the third party. When one
suffers, all experience grief. In their interconnectedness, all are vulnerable to the actions and attitudes of the others. Not only do they experience their own actions and responses but they are also susceptible to the actions and experiences of the other parties of the symbiosis. Thus, according to Jeremiah the land’s experiences are as important as those of the people and of YHWH. He is sensitive to the character of the earth and attentive as it raises its voice in suffering.

In summary, the idealized image of the land, the people and YHWH interacting in a positive relationship is marred by the prophet’s description of the land in a state of destabilization, depletion and mourning/drying up (4:23-28). The life giving and affirming covenantal relationship is broken because of the negative social and religious behavior of the people which pollutes the land. Thus, YHWH expels the people from the land in order to give it time and space to renew itself ready for their return. However, while a period of separation allows the earth to heal, the ideal is that the land functions best in a life sustaining symbiotic relationship which contributes to its stability and fertility. Nevertheless, it is one of the enigmatic aspects of Jeremiah that while the earth may be involved in YHWH’s action of evicting the people, acting as an official witness to the breakdown of the covenant and in working in resistance to injustice; it also misses the people and suffers due to their absence. Hence, the earth expresses its distress at its separation from its people through lack of order, darkness, the movement of the hills and mountains, the depletion of its fertility, the absence of the birds and people and

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241 Wurst, “Retrieving Earth’s Voice in Jeremiah: An Annotated Voicing of Jeremiah 4,” 177. Habel, The Land is Mine, 88 states that ‘the suffering land ideology highlights the personal anguish of all three partners of the land-god-people relationship. In symbiosis, when one suffers, all suffer.’

242 Habel, The Land is Mine, 148 states that ‘the fate of the land is as important as the fate of the people … The land is not a passive object but an active partner living in a close relationship with the people who dwell on this soil.’

243 E.g., A Sabbath rest as in Lev 26. While the exiles are encouraged to live and multiply in Babylon (chap. 29), it is always with the hope and expectation of their return to Israel.
the destruction of its cities. In great suffering because of the absence of its people the earth raises its voice in mourning/drying up (4:28).

2.13 Continuity of the Land-People Relationship

Even though there are no human beings left in the land (4:25), Jeremiah is careful to present the notion of the continuity of the people with the land of Israel (4:27). In the midst of devastation, a tenacious image of resilience is presented. EBT’s second ecojustice principle states that ‘Earth is a community of interconnected living things that are mutually dependent on each other for life and survival.’\(^{244}\) Ideally, the land, the people and YHWH belong together in a positively operating and mutually sustaining symbiotic relationship. Jeremiah presents a tiny crack of possibility for the continuity of their relationship in the phrase ‘and I will not make a full end’ (4:27), a notion which is developed further in the purchase of the field, his delayed departure, the presence of the poor of the land, the returning diaspora and the promises of the return of the Babylonian exiles.\(^{245}\) Jeremiah portrays a ‘powerful and life-affirming’ resilience in images of continuing connection between the people and the land.\(^{246}\)

Jeremiah sets the purchase of his uncle’s field firmly within the context of King

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\(^{244}\) EBT, “Guiding Ecojustice Principles,” 22.

\(^{245}\) Though historical issues are not the focus of this study it is noted that the extent of the Babylonian exile has been debated. Hans Barstad, The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah during the “Exilic” Period (Symbolae Osloenses 28; Oslo: Scandinavian Univ. Press, 1996), 20f. argues that the Chronicler’s image of the land being ‘emptied’ (20) is an exaggeration which may be motivated by property disputes between the returning exiles and those who remained in the land. Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, A Biblical Theology of Exile (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 45-49 argues that with the demise of the Davidic monarchy and the destruction of the Jerusalem temple there were significant changes to the political and religious life of Judah. Thus, political motives may have prompted an exaggeration of the number of the exiles. While Jeremiah’s idealized notion is one of an empty land, he acknowledges that the poor remained in the land (39:10; 40:7; 52:16) and that the diaspora returned to help with the harvest (40:12). Thus, the land was not completely emptied of its inhabitants.

\(^{246}\) Rose, Reports from a Wild Country, 214 states that ‘presence in the engaged mode is closely akin to the connectivities of flourishing and resilient life processes. In accepting the challenges to be present in ethical relation and mutuality, we take a human stance that aligns us with the world.’ See also 179f.
Zedekiah’s arrest (32:1-6) and the siege of Jerusalem (32:24-29). As all is lost in the unfolding disaster the plan to purchase the field comes to Jeremiah as a divine injunction:

And Jeremiah said the word of YHWH came to me saying ‘Behold Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle shall come to you saying “Buy for yourself my field which is in Anathoth for to you is the right of redemption to buy it”’. So Hanamel son of my uncle came to me according to YHWH’s word to the court of the guard and said to me ‘Please buy my field which is in Anothoth in the land of Benjamin for to you is the right of possession and to you is the right of redemption. Buy it for yourself’ and then I knew that it was the word of YHWH (32:6-8).

In purchasing the field Jeremiah acts as his uncle’s kinsman-redeemer (λγ). While he may not have known of Lev 25, it is noteworthy that the HC presents a similar conception of the duties of the λγ. The theological justification for family retention of land is stated: ‘And the earth shall not be sold in perpetuity for the earth is mine; for you are aliens and tenants with me. And in all of the land of your possession you must give a redemption for the earth’ (Lev 25:23-24). YHWH is the custodian of the land and the redemption of the land must occur in order to maintain the bond between the family and the land. The act of redeeming the land provides care for both the family and the land (Ecojustice Principle 5). To let the family plot pass out of the possession of the clan represents a breaking of family bonds and a neglect of family responsibility (e.g., 1 Kgs 21:3; Mic 2:26; 4:4; 1 Kgs 5:5). There are strict regulations to follow in order to keep the family plot within the family: ‘If your brother has become poor and has sold his property, then his kinsman redeemer (βρην oλγ) comes to him and redeems (λγ) what his brother has sold’ (Lev 25:25). The Jubilee Year makes provision for the person who had no kinsman redeemer (βρην oλγ) to have family property returned to him after fifty
years (Lev 25:28). The act of reunification provides care for both the family and the land in their life giving symbiotic relationship with YHWH and in mutual custodianship.\textsuperscript{247}

So, it is within the provision of the laws concerning the inalienability of ancestral land that Hanamel appeals to his relative to become his kinsman redeemer (βρθη ολγ) in buying his field in Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin. Though Jeremiah cannot care for the plot because he is in prison, has no heirs to whom to pass it on and is about to be exiled to Egypt, he agrees to act as kinsman redeemer (βρθη ολγ) and proceeds to buy the field. The legal transaction of the redemption is described in great detail. The terse instruction to ‘buy’ (ηνθ) the field (Jer 32:6, 8, 25) contrasts strongly with the nine verbs which are employed describing the implementation of the deal: ‘And I bought’ (ηνθθ) v. 9), ‘and I weighed the silver for him’ (Πσκητ ολγ ηλθθ) v. 9), ‘and I wrote in the book’ (ρπσβ βτκ) v. 10), ‘and sealed it’ (Μτξ) v. 10), ‘and called witnesses’ (Μψδ δ) v. 10), ‘and weighed the silver on the scales’ (Μψνξμ Πσκη λθθ) v. 10), ‘and I took the book of the purchase’ (ηνθμη ρπστ ξθ) v. 11), ‘and I gave’ (Ντ) v. 12) ‘and I commanded’ (ηογ) v. 13). The transaction of sale is meticulously observed and recorded before witnesses. The deeds are carefully stored so that they will last a long time (v. 14). A theological interpretation is provided for the sale: ‘For thus YHWH of hosts the God of Israel says, “Houses and fields and vineyards will again be acquired in this land”’ (32:15). The purchase of the field may represent the symbolic

\textsuperscript{247} While the HC urges the retention of the family-land relationship and Jeremiah models that ideal in his action of purchasing his uncle’s field, Ezekiel holds a more revisionist view of the restoration which reshuffles the tribal connections. Stevenson, \textit{The Vision of Transformation}, 80-95 works from a human geography perspective in examining the theme of inheritance as territorial (social) access. She argues that Ezekiel’s concern is for ‘equality and differentiation of status’ (83), not physical division of land. The prophet’s vision offers ‘a radically restructured society’ with YHWH in the midst (165). See Zimmerli, “The ‘Land’ in the Prophets,” 258-259 for a discussion on tribal allotments and honoring of YHWH.
redemption of the whole land in which Jeremiah enacts the redeeming purposes of
YHWH. As YHWH intended destruction to the land, now YHWH brings good. The land
and the people will be reunited and have a future together (32:42-44). The ancient
institution of redemption of the land promises the restoration of life in the land and
reunion with the family plot. Jeremiah’s purchase of the field is linked with Israel’s
salvation history through his prayer which celebrates the Sinai covenant (32:17-25).248
However, for the purposes of this study it is important that Jeremiah’s purchase of his
uncle’s field provides a physical link with the land. Though the exile of many Israelites is
imminent, the land remains within his clan. Jeremiah may be attacking the prevailing
ideology that land is commodity which serves the needs of the city and pointing out that
land needs to be afforded its intrinsic worth (Ecojustice Principle 1).249 At first glance
the land appears to be passive in its redemption, a mere commodity which is purchased
by the prophet. However, YHWH’s promise that fields and vineyards will again be
purchased (32:15) includes the notion of the land’s action and communication. The veiled
assumption is that, in an expression of joy at being reunited with its people, the land will
again be fruitful. Thus, the land actively rejoices in its redemption and expresses hope
beyond exile.

In maintaining a link with the land Jeremiah delays his departure for as long as
possible. The Babylonian commander Nebuzaradan offers him freedom of choice in his
destination: ‘Behold the whole earth is before you; go wherever is good and right in your

248 Habel, The Land is Mine, 91 argues that the purchase of the field represents a paradigm of hope similar
to Abraham’s purchase of land in Canaan (Gen 23:1-20). See also Fager, Land Tenure and the Biblical
Jubilee, 33-34. Hill, “The ‘Return Motif’ in Jeremiah,” 24 describes the purchase as a ‘redeeming action’
through which Jeremiah dramatizes hope for the future. See also Davies, The Territorial Dimension of
249 As argued in Gunther H. Wittenberg, “The Vision of Land in Jeremiah 32,” in The Earth Story in the
Psalms and the Prophets, EB 4, ed. Habel, 141-142.
eyes’ (40:4). Jeremiah chooses to stay in the land and maintain continuity with it. His vision is that after the desolation, purging and exile, the land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship will be restored. Although he is swept up in the evacuation to Egypt, his decision to stay in the land for as long as possible is a tangible statement that the symbiosis will be reestablished.250

Jeremiah also presents the theme of the continuous relationship between the people and the land through the ongoing presence of the poor within the land. While many of the Israelite people are separated from the land as they are taken into exile, there are some politically insignificant folk who remain in the land and thereby provide a token continuity with it: ‘And Nebuzaradan the chief of the executioners left in the land of Judah the poor people who did not own anything and on that day gave them vineyards and fields’ (39:10; see also 40:7; 52:16).251 These poor landless peasants become landed people when they are given vineyards and fields to farm (39:10; 52:7). Jeremiah does not address the issue of family connection. Though the poor are allocated farms to tend there is no indication as to whether this is done on the basis of need, tribal connection or some other justification. The poor may merely be custodians until the rightful family returns.252 Encouraged by the presence of the poor, Israelites who have been living outside Judah in Moab, Ammon, Edom and elsewhere are prompted to return to help with the harvest (40:12). Though it is unknown if family connections are maintained, the land is at least

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250 Habel, *The Land is Mine*, 91 states that Jeremiah’s ideology embraces ‘a stubborn vision’ that the symbiosis will be restored.
251 Habel, *The Land is Mine*, 93 argues that the presence of the poor of the land introduces an egalitarian aspect to the new community in which rather than just the educated elite, all people will be endowed with the knowledge of God (31:33-34). See also Fager, *Land Tenure and the Biblical Jubilee*, 45-46.
252 Sutton, WIK: Aboriginal Society, territory and language, 57 discusses the difference between custodians and traditional owners in the Cape Keerweer area of Cape York, noting that ‘established tenureship is validated by mythology, while access is based on either tenureship or a kin linkage to those with tenure.’ However, custodianship is an option, in that when a clan is threatened with extinction the last members may appoint successors as land-holders (74).
cared for by the people and enabled to maintain its fertility. Though the care for the land may be geographically limited and may not be family orientated, the presence of the remnant ensures that at least a token relationship is maintained between the Israelites and their land. The poor and the returnees act as caretakers for the land until the appropriate families can return. However, while Ezekiel’s reconnection of the people and the land includes a redistribution of tribal areas (chaps. 40-48), Jeremiah’s restoration implies a return to the old family allocations (chaps. 29-33). This constitutes a confluence of Jeremiah with the HC and Deuteronomy. With echoes of the Sinai covenant, YHWH states ‘And they will be my people and I will be their God’ (32:38 cf. Ex 6:7 and Lev 26:12). As Jeremiah redeemed his uncle’s field, so YHWH declares:

They will buy fields for silver and write in a document and seal it and call witnesses in the earth of Benjamin, and in places around Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the mountain, and in the cities of the lowland, and in the cities of the Negev, for I will bring back their captivity (32:44).

While Ezekiel’s restoration may be ecologically acceptable, Jeremiah’s tribal connection resonates more closely with indigenous perspectives. With the reestablishment of the land–people–YHWH symbiotic relationship the land acts in mutual custodianship by producing crops that sustain the people (Ecojustice Principle 5).

In summary, through the purchase of his uncle’s field, his decision to stay in the land, the presence of the poor and the return of the diaspora, Jeremiah presents the notion of the continuity of the people of Israel with their land and the hope for the survival of the land until the return of the exiles. Though Jeremiah announces several times that the

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253 Stevenson, *Vision of Transformation*, 149 argues that Ezekiel envisages ‘not re-storation or re-formation but trans-formation,’ in that a new world is created. An exploration of this perspective may be relevant to a future study of Jeremiah’s vision of the reversal of creation, especially in relation to the return of the exiles. Davies, *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism*, 15-17 states that Jeremiah saw no sense of urgency in the people’s return to the land. However, he also acknowledges that the prophet longs for this, a view which is also expressed in this thesis.

254 Leuchter, “Ezra’s Mission and the Levites of Casiphia” argues that Ezra also includes a confluence with HC and Deuteronomy.
whole land will be destroyed (e.g., 4:27; 14:12; 15:6), he also states that YHWH will not
destroy it completely (e.g., 4:27; 5:18; 30:11). Though much of the population is taken
away from the land into exile, the presence of the remnant provides scope for respite
from complete destruction. The farming and harvesting activities of the poor and the
returned diaspora mean that some of the land is spared a return to pre-creation desolation.
The purchase of the field also means that at least one parcel of land remains linked to its
rightful clan. The bonds between the land and the family are maintained, albeit in a
limited way. At least some of the land is not completely destroyed and, in mutual
custodianship, the poor tend the land and the land produces crops which sustain the
people. Thus, a continuity of the relationship between the people and the land is
maintained. The promise of the return of the Babylonian exiles has substance (chaps. 29-
33) in that there is a land to which to return. In view of his strong message of hope,
Jeremiah does not explain why the earth sees fit to raise its voice in mourning/drying up.
It remains one of the enigmatic aspects of the text. Nevertheless, even though the prophet
offers hope, in view of the devastation and the breakdown of the symbiotic relationship
the earth’s lament in the darker passages is entirely reasonable.

The covenantal relationship has been broken by the sinful behavior of the people.
YHWH announces judgment and expels the people from the land. Employing the
services of the Babylonians, YHWH authorizes the invasion of Israel and the exile of
many of its inhabitants. The land is distressed at the breakdown of the land-people-
YHWH symbiotic relationship. It expresses its suffering through its desolation, darkness,
the violent movement of its landforms, lack of fertility, the absence of its inhabitants and
mourning/drying up (Jer. 4:23-28). Without the support of the life-giving symbiosis, the
land returns to a state of pre-creation desolation, lacking productivity and habitation. However, while it misses the people, the period of separation allows it to rest and recuperate. At the same time, the people experience renewal through the experience of exile. According to Jeremiah it is the Babylonian exiles who are the ultimate heirs to the land of Israel (chs. 29-33). YHWH sets up a renewed Mosaic covenant which is imbedded in an everlasting covenant that allows them to return to the land and to re-establish their relationship with it. At this prospect the land and the people rejoice (30:12-14).

2.14 Summary

An examination of Jeremiah’s metaphors of the reversal of creation and the mourning/drying up of the earth through the heuristic lens of an ecologically oriented symbiotic relationship throws light on the intensity and interconnectedness of the relationship between the people, the land and YHWH. Through the use of many land based images, Jeremiah presents a picture of Israel as a rural people who live in close connection with the land and understand issues of life and faith in environmental terms. The land, the people and YHWH derive their sense of wellbeing from their positive relationship which is held together by covenant. The people and the land are both YHWH’s ηλζυ. With the importance of family based connections, every effort must be made to keep the land within the clan. As with the experience of indigenous people when forcibly separated from their lands, Jeremiah describes the suffering of the people at the prospect of exile. However, YHWH and the land also suffer in the absence of the people. The life giving symbiotic relationship has been broken and all the parties suffer. The prophet presents the earth as a character which expresses its distress. As with some
indigenous experiences, Jeremiah has the capacity to attend to the communication of the earth as it expresses its suffering at the separation from its people. The earth’s communication takes the form of lack of order, darkness, the violent movement of its landforms, depletion of its fertility, the absence of its birds and people and the destruction of its cities (4:23-28). In its anguish it also raises its voice in mourning/drying up (4:28). Though the earth suffers through the separation from its people and the judgment of YHWH, it is not merely a passive victim of the people’s sin and YHWH’s anger. It also unleashes its own destructive powers and, in an act of resistance against injustice, participates with YHWH in the eviction of its people. While the earth misses its people, some continuity of relationship between the people and the land is maintained with Jeremiah’s purchase of his uncle’s field, his delayed departure, the ongoing presence of the poor and the return of the diaspora from neighboring regions. However, the Babylonian exiles are the true heirs to the land and, after a period of separation, they will return to reform the ecologically oriented symbiotic relationship through a newly formed and remodeled everlasting Mosaic covenant with YHWH.
Chapter 3: A Literary Analysis of Jer 4:23-8

3.1 Introduction

Jer 4:23-28 presents the powerful metaphorical construction of the reversal of creation which portrays the return of the earth and the heavens to a state of pre-creation desolation. In the prophet’s vision the earth lacks order, the heavens are devoid of light, the hills and mountains are moving violently, the cities are destroyed, the fertile land becomes a desert, and the people and birds vanish from the land. All of these actions constitute the communication of the character of the earth. The prophet’s theological interpretation is that the earth’s devastation and depletion is due to YHWH’s intention and motivation. The metaphor of the reversal of creation operates as a destabilising tool in relation to prevailing belief structures concerning the endurance of the covenantal order of creation. The scene of the process of decreation presents an image of a world in which the creational order is destroyed. It invites the readers to hear the voice of the earth and to form a new worldview with a new order for creation.

The aim of this study is to examine how a metaphorical world is constructed and for what rhetorical effect, and by doing so to be attentive to the character of the earth and to hear its voice. The broad rhetorical units within which Jer 4:23-28 is situated will be examined as points of reference. The rhetorical structure of the text will then be discussed and related to its literary context, thus determining how a metaphorical world serves to advance the rhetorical thrust of Jeremiah as a whole. A detailed study of the text will reveal something of its rhetorical intention, especially in relation to its destabilising effect on an inadequate worldview. Jer 4:23-28 subverts some commonly held convictions and invites its readers to formulate an alternative perspective on exile. The metaphorical
world of the text is constructed through the choice and arrangement of words which relate to and influence each other in order to make a bold and provocative statement concerning the wellbeing of the earth and the earth community.  

3.2 Some Explanatory Notes Regarding the Following Translation of the Text

Though the author’s translation has already been presented in the introduction of this thesis, a ‘word-for-word’ translation of the text (from the MT) is now undertaken, briefly noting textual variances and arguing for a particular translation where more than one alternative is possible. It is acknowledged that any translation involves an element of interpretation and, as such, it is necessarily a rhetorical activity. The intention in this translation is to interpret the text as the best text it can be with its fullest meaning; however, it is acknowledged that in some instances the translation is awkwardly literal. Employing the same English word for the equivalent Hebrew word in all occurrences within the text assists in identifying the repetition of words and/or phrases. Something of the structure of the text is also revealed by using the Hebrew order of the words in the English translation. This aids the location of emphases which may be masked in

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255 Patrick and Scult, Rhetoric and Biblical Interpretation, 19 explains that the author’s artistry ‘seeks to persuade its readers to accept the depicted world as their world’. Ricoeur, Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, 112 describes the ‘imaginative variations which literature carries out on the real’. Hill, Friend or Foe? 16 states that the text has the capacity to ‘project or configure a world and thereby to describe reality’. See also Gerald O. West, Biblical Hermeneutics of Liberation, Modes of Reading the Bible in the South African Context (2nd revised ed. The Bible and Liberation Series, Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications; Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 29f. Bemoaning Western literalism and insensitivity to symbolic language, Paul Ricoeur, The Symbolism of Evil (Trans. Emerson Buchanan; Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), 351 proposes a philosophical analysis of symbolic and metaphorical language in order to enable a ‘second naïveté’ in reading texts. Lewis S. Mudge, “Paul Ricoeur on Biblical Interpretation,” in Essays on Biblical Interpretation, ed. Paul Ricoeur (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 630-636 states that the resurrection texts of the NT present a world which invites hope and freedom. Similarly, through the metaphor of the reversal of creation Jeremiah proposes the possibility of a different perspective on exile. See Lakoff, “The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor,” 185-238 for a discussion on metaphor as ‘primarily conceptual, conventional, and part of the ordinary system of thought and language’ (186). See also the classic work of Michael Reddy, “The conduit of metaphor. A case of frame conflict in our language about language,” in Metaphor and Thought, ed. Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 164-201.
translations which express correct English grammatical constructions. The number of Hebrew words also contributes to identifying some features of the structure of the text. In the following translation they are indicated by the use of hyphens joining two or more English words which are translated from one Hebrew word or from Hebrew words joined with a Maqeph.

3.3 The Text of Jer 4:23-28 (MT)

Μρω) Νψω Mψμ#η−λω οηβω οητ−ηνηω
Χρ(η−τ) ψτψ)ρ 23

ωλθλθτη τω(βγη−λκω Mψ#(ρ ην
ηω Mψρηη ψτψ)ρ 24

ωδδν Mψμ#η Πω(−λκω Μδ
η Νψ) ηνηω ψτψ)ρ 25

ησηψ ψνπμ ωχτν ωψρ(−λκω ρβδμη λμ
ρκη ηνηω ψτψ)ρ 26

ωπξ) Νορξ ψνπξμ

ησηψ ρμ) ηκ−ψκ 27

η#() ψ ληκω Χ

ρη−λκ ηπητ ημμ#
3.4 The Author’s Translation of Jer 4:23-28 Following the Order of the Hebrew Text (MT)

V23 I-looked the-earth and-behold-desert and-empty,
and-towards-the-heavens and-no lights.

V24 I-looked the-mountains and-behold quaking,
and-all-the-hills shook-themselves.

V25 I-looked and-behold not the-human-being,
and all-fowl of the-heavens were-flown-away.

V26 I-looked and-behold the-fertile-land the-wilderness,
and-all-its-cities were-destroyed from-face-of YHWH,
from-the-face-of the-burning-of his-anger.

V27 Because-thus says YHWH,

256 The object marker τ (MT) is acknowledged rather than ejpi ('upon') as in LXX.
257 LXX omits o οητ.
258 ωλθ λθη is the hithpolel mood of λλθ which denotes a variety of words such as ‘shake’, ‘vibrate’, ‘slight’, ‘swift’, ‘trifling’ and ‘cursed’. BDB, 886 reads ωλθθηθη as a reflexive: ‘shook themselves’. Christo J. J. van der Merwe, Jackie A. Naudé and Jan H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 84 states that the verbal form usually indicates a reflexive or reciprocal action. Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 360 argues for the meaning of ‘movement back and forth’ which presents an image of the ‘hills being tossed about as if they had little or no weight’, even ‘airborne hills’ (362). See further discussion in 3.13 of this study.
259 Following Τ λμρκη (‘the-fertile-land’)α οηξη refers to arable land generally rather than LXX, V and Peshitta which assume a locality.
260 Some Hebrew manuscripts read oτξν. LXX reads ejmepurismeavnai, V reads destructectae sunt.
“Desolate” will-be all-the-earth

and-a-completion not I-will-make.

V28 On-account-of-this will-mourn/ dry-up the-earth,

and-become-dark the-heavens from-above,

on-account-of because-I-have-spoken, I-have-planned

and-not I-will-repent and-not I-will-turn-back from-it.

3.5 A Brief Note on Textual Variants in Jer 4:23-28

Few textual variants occur in the text of Jer 4:23-8 and most of those that do appear have little impact upon its overall message. Nevertheless, a brief study of the textual variants will be undertaken and some discerning comments will be offered as to possible reasons for the variations. However, it should be noted that, having discussed these variants, this synchronic study refers to the text as it is in its final form in the MT.

In v. 23 the object marker τ) is replaced in the LXX by ejpi; (‘upon’) which offers a minor variation in format with little impact upon the meaning. Perhaps of more interest is the fact that in v. 23 S, V and the LXX read only oujde;n (‘void’ or ‘nothing’) in the place of ωηβω ωητ. The occurrence could conceivably be a

261 Μυ# can also be read as ‘awestruck’, ‘appalled’ and ‘deserted’. See BDB 1031 for other readings.
262 ηλη can also be read ‘completion’, ‘complete destruction’, ‘consumption’, ‘annihilation’: BDB 478.
263 The MT τλ is employed rather than any attempts to harmonise with the message of destruction in the rest of the text. See discussion in 3.13 of this study.
264 λβ) includes the dual nuances ‘to mourn’ and ‘to dry up’. It is argued that both usages come into play in this text and so the pairing ‘to mourn/dry up’ is employed in translation, however, ‘to mourn’ is placed first in the pair in order to emphasise the interiority of the character of the earth which communicates its sense of mourning in ‘drying up.’ See discussion in 3.10 of this thesis.
265 BDB, 636-637 list several translations for Μεν, including ‘be sorry’, ‘console oneself’, ‘moved to pity’, ‘have compassion’, ‘rue’, ‘suffer grief’, ‘repent.’
266 The order of MT is followed rather than the order of LXX.
haplography.\textsuperscript{267} Alternatively \textit{oujde;n} may constitute a shortened form or summary rendition of \textit{ωνβως ωητ}.\textsuperscript{268} A possible explanation is that part of the phrase was missing in the Hebrew \textit{Vorlage} of the LXX and was added later, perhaps in an attempt to echo Gen 1:2. However, it should be noted that the phrase \textit{ωνβως ωητ} is rendered quite differently in Gen 1:2 in the LXX (\textit{ajo´ratoß kai; ajkataskeu´astob} ‘invisible and formless’) and that \textit{oujde;n} is not used at all. \textit{ωητ} occurs elsewhere in the HB to represent desert, wasteland or wilderness (e.g., Deut 32:10; Ps 107:40; Job 6:18; 12:24; Isa 34:11; 45:18), and at times expresses an image of desolation. The scene of devastation and drought portrayed in Jer 4:23-26 may have been expressed by Jeremiah or a later editor with the addition of \textit{ωνβως}, thus adding to the impact of the prophet’s vision.\textsuperscript{269}

\textit{λμρκη} (‘the-fertile-land’ v. 26) refers to general arable land in T, but LXX, V and Peshitta assume a specific locality. This study reads the more general sense which has the effect of accentuating the extent of the destruction of the earth. Some Hebrew manuscripts read \textit{ωτχνv} (‘burned’) instead of the MT reading of \textit{ωχτv} (‘destroyed’) in v. 26. The LXX follows the former reading (\textit{ejmpepurisme´nai}) whereas V and the Peshitta adopt the latter reading. This variation provides little change in the overall picture of ruination in the text, as destroyed cities were usually burnt. Also making little

\textsuperscript{267} For a discussion of haplography in this instance see Lundbom, \textit{Jeremiah 1-20}, 360.
\textsuperscript{268} McKane, \textit{A Critical and Exegetical Commentary}, 107 suggests that this may be ‘a compacted rendering’ of \textit{ωνβως ωητ}.
\textsuperscript{269} See further discussion in 3.9 of this thesis and especially David Toshio Tsumura, \textit{The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2. A Linguistic Investigation}. (JSOT 83; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 43f. who argues that the scene in Gen 1 is of barren unproductivity.
difference to the sense of the text, ψνπμ (‘from-face-of’ v. 26) is read as ψνπμω in V, S, LXX and other manuscripts.\textsuperscript{270} The LXX adds ḫfanı́sqhsan to Ὺπξ (v. 26).

The MT reading of the negative ḫl in v. 27 (η#( ) ḫl ηλκω ‘a-completion not I-will-make’) presents some problems regarding consistency in the text which otherwise expresses a theme of utter and absolute destruction. One option is to delete ḫl as an intrusion, with its source being 5:18, possibly having been added as a modification in the light of the exilic experience.\textsuperscript{271} However, there is no textual support for such a reading. Thompson prefers ηl instead of ḫl, reading the phrase as η#( ) ηl ηλκω (‘I will make her a total destruction’) which is consistent with the theme of extensive destruction expressed in the preceding the text, as well as with YHWH’s statement of determination to destroy which follows:

*ηνμμ βω#–)λω ψτμξν)λω ψτμξ ψτρβδ (‘I-have-spoken, I-have-planned and-not I-will-repent and-not I-will-turn-back from it’ v. 28b).\textsuperscript{272} The phrase may have a harsh intention, such as ‘I have not yet made an end to the devastation’, meaning that even though the destruction is already extensive, YHWH intends to wreak even more havoc than has already taken place. Lundbom postulates that ḫl may have originally been asseverative as in a question such as ‘And will I not make a full end?’ which assumes an

\textsuperscript{270} The reading ‘from-face-of’ is employed in this word-for-word translation rather than ‘before’ as in the free flowing translation in chap. 1. This literal reading emphasizes the person and presence of YHWH which correlates with the character of the earth. H. Simian-Yofre, “Mυνπ” in TDOT, Vol. XI, 595-612 notes that when used in conjunction with YHWH Mυνπ usually denotes presence in either positive or negative personal relationship. When expressed in the construct form it conveys physical or spiritual distance, or causality (as in Jer 4:26). David F. Ford, Self and Salvation. Being Transformed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 193-215 provides an overview of many occurrences and translations of Mυνπ in the HB, concluding that its use is often ‘salvation-oriented’ (202).


answer such as ‘Indeed I will’ or ‘Indeed I will not’.\textsuperscript{273} If the MT is retained, though there are apparent inconsistencies within the text, the limiting of the destruction may express a ray of hope. A message of uncertainty or reluctance on the part of YHWH may be presented, possibly even a yearning, not to fully destroy the earth.\textsuperscript{274} Jeremiah certainly picks up the theme later: ‘For I will make a full end of all the nations … but of you I will not make a full end’ (30:11). The retention of the phrase provides the possibility for at least some of the earth to be spared in order to undertake its task of mourning/drying up (4:28). Some continuity of Israelite existence in the land is maintained with the presence of the poor of the land, the return of the diaspora and the prophet’s purchase of his uncle’s field (chaps. 32, 39, 40 and 52). The book also expresses a strong message of hope concerning the restoration of the land and the return of the people after a period of exile (e.g., chaps. 29 to 33). Thus, the negation in 4:27 is consistent with the hope presented elsewhere in the book.

Whereas S and V follow the MT in reading Χρη ιοῦ (4:28) as a future mood (‘will-mourn/dry-up-the-earth’), the LXX disambiguates the Hebrew in rendering the verb in the jussive form (פנָּקֵית וּפֶה ‘let [the earth] mourn’). The phrase which follows is similarly rendered in the LXX as καὶ σύκοτας ὀξὺν (‘and let [the-heavens] become-dark’ 4:28). The use of the jussive form of the verb conveys the sense that the earth’s mourning/drying up is due to the command of YHWH. However, retaining the future tense as in the MT places the emphasis on the earth’s initiative and

\textsuperscript{273} Lundbom, Jeremiah 1-20, 361. See also McKane, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary, 109.
\textsuperscript{274} Brueggemann, To Pluck Up, 57 notes that YHWH’s reluctance to destroy the land provides the community with reason for hope during the experience of exile. See also Brueggemann, A Commentary on Jeremiah, 60 and Fretheim, Jeremiah, 94-95. Victor Eppstein, “The Day of YHWH in Jer 4:23-28,” JBL 87 (1968), 96 argues that the image in 4:28 is that of the cosmic earth grieving over Israel. He notes that v. 27 provides for something left to grieve. See also John M. Bracke, Jeremiah 1-29 (Westminster Bible Companion; Louisville: John Knox, 2000), 50.
action in its mourning/drying up, thus providing a greater impact in regard to the
prophet’s portrayal of the character and communication of the earth. The use of the future
tense reinforces the notion of the actions being those of the earth and the heavens.
Though YHWH’s destructive intentions are involved, there is a sense in which the
landforms act of their own volition rather than being inert objects that are instructed to
move or are acted upon by YHWH.

Lundbom discusses the option of deleting λ( from v. 28b as dittography from the
preceding usage, but such a reading is not necessary as it may serve to reinforce
YHWH’s responsibility and determination in the impending destruction.275 The MT reads
ψτμς (v. 28) as a verb which could be understood as a first person singular qal (‘I-have-
planned’) or a piel infinitive (‘intending evil’). Though there is little difference in the
overall meaning of the text, the former tense is employed in this translation as it places
more emphasis upon YHWH as the subject in the intention to destroy the earth.

The LXX presents the final series of cola in a different order to that of the MT,
inverting the central phrases and employing future moods for the first and third verbs,
thus ηνμμ βω#–λω ψτμς ουζ (‘I-have-spoken, I-have-planned and-
not I-will-repent and-not I-will-turn-back from it’ v. 28b) becomes διο´τι
ειλα´λhsa kai; ουζ metanoh´sw, ω{r´mhsa kai; ουjk
ajpostre´yw ajp j ajuṭh´β (‘I-have-spoken and not I-will-repent, I-have-
planned and not I-will-turn-back from it’). Though the order of the LXX provides a neat
pattern of statements followed by reinforcing negative responses, it does not change the
overall impact of the message that it is YHWH’s intention to destroy the earth and the

275 Lundbom, Jeremiah 1-20, 28. Brueggemann, A Commentary on Jeremiah, 61 notes that it expresses a
‘powerful resolve on Yahweh’s part to persist until the old creation has been nullified’.
heavens, and their inhabitants. Nevertheless, the order of the MT provides an unusual formation which carries a force of its own, in that YHWH’s intention to destroy is expressed twice, as is YHWH’s determination not to relent. The force of this statement is that there is no doubt whatsoever that YHWH will destroy the earth.

3.6 Jer 4:23-28 as a Rhetorical Unit: Delimiting the Text

Jer 4:23-26 forms part of a collection of oracles extending from 4:5 to 6:30 which describes the threat of military invasion from the north. The motif of invasion intensifies in 4:5-31 and provides the immediate context for the text under scrutiny. While the sights and sounds of battle blare through 4:19-21 and return in 4:29-31, there is a distinct change of theme and pace in 4:23. In stark contrast to the surrounding text, 4:23-26 has a quieting effect as the prophet reports his vision of the destruction of the earth and provides a theological explanation for it. Through the repetition of the particle ηγη the reader is invited into the narrator’s point of view. Though the particle serves a narrative function, it is the poetic structure of vv. 23-26 and the reflective nature of vv. 27-28 which provides the markers for delimiting this text from the surrounding material.276 In the still space of these stanzas the prophet’s vision and theological reflection provide the revelation that the character of the earth suffers and raises its voice in mourning/drying up, and that YHWH is the initiator of the earth’s devastation.

Though 4:23-28 functions as a separate unit, there are clear links between it and the preceding oracles, especially those of vv. 7-8. With an emphasis upon earth (Xρ) in both texts, YHWH declares that there will be ‘desolation’ (Μμ# v. 7 cf. v. 27). Likewise,

276 Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 71 describes 4:23-26 as ‘functioning like a brief flash of insight (or foresight) in a situation of high urgency: an eye in a storm’. McKane, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary, 106 notes that vv. 23-26 are sharply differentiated from the surrounding verses. See also Fretheim, Jeremiah, 100.
in both texts the cities will be ‘destroyed’ (Χτν v. 7 cf. v. 26). The theme of mourning is expressed in both texts, although conveyed through different words: ‘gird yourself with sackcloth, lament and wail’ (ολψλψησιν νδπσ Μψθ# ωργζ) (v. 8) compared with ‘the earth mourns/dries up’ (Χρη λβτ v. 28). Both texts also express the burning anger of YHWH (ωνμμ γωψκπιΠ) v. 8 cf. ωπ Νωγζ ψπμ v. 26), as well as YHWH’s determination not to turn back from the intended destruction: ‘has not turned away from us’ (Νωγζ β#κ λ v. 8) and ‘and I will not repent and I will not turn back from it’ (ηνμμ βωκ λμζν λω v. 28).

A sequential link exists between 4:23-6 and 4:19-22. Employing a similar structure, the two texts begin with the prophet’s speech and conclude with YHWH’s explanation of the preceding events. Both texts record the prophet’s vision of the destruction of the land. In vv. 19-22 Jeremiah looks at (ηρ v. 21) and hears (μ# vv. 19, 21) the destruction which is taking place upon the whole earth (Χρηλκ v. 20), while in vv. 23-26 he looks at (ηρ) the scene of the earth (Χρη) which has been destroyed (vv. 23, 24, 25 and 26) but this time he does not hear the destruction. With the absence of its inhabitants and the devastation of the earth it would appear that there is nothing left to make any noise for the prophet to hear. The similarity in wording of the two texts serves to link, reinforce and inform the two messages.277

While there are clear links, the text of 4:23-26 employs a different literary style to the speeches of the preceding verses. Sharply differentiating it from the preceding text, vv. 23-26 are arranged in the form of a poem consisting of four cola, each of which begins

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277 Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 69 states that each of these texts informs the other and the omission of (μ# actually highlights the lack of use of this sense in 4:23-26. William L. Holladay, Jeremiah I. A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 1-25 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 147-148 understands the two texts to be a single unit.
with the phrase, ‘I looked’ (嫒🐰⁾). After this, v. 27 returns to the speech form employed in the rest of the chapter, commencing with ‘Because-thus says YHWH’ (ηωηψ ₵yclopedia) which forms a theological interpretation concerning the preceding vision. V. 27 includes a deeply reflective account of what appears to be some ambivalence on the part of YHWH regarding the decision to destroy the land (v. 27b). However, ultimately YHWH’s decision to persevere with the intended destruction is affirmed: ‘because I have spoken, I have planned and not I will repent and not I will turn back from it’ (ηγημᵣ βο#📞 λᾲ ςτμξ’ν λᾲ ςτμζ ςτρβδ−ψκ λ( v. 28). The reflective nature of the poem, along with YHWH’s ponderings, serves to set the text apart from the surrounding verses.

3.7 Literary Themes in the Book of Jeremiah

In Jer 4:23-28 the prophet adopts several literary themes which are employed elsewhere in the book. The themes expressed within the text will be examined in relation to those presented in the rest of the book in order to ascertain ways in which the prophet supports his wider themes, as well as to throw light upon his presentation of the land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship and the communication of the character of the earth. In presenting the theme of exile the prophet expresses the notion that the absence of the people from the land affects both the people and the earth. However, the earth is also an active participant with YHWH in the expulsion of the people from the land. Images of drought, infertility and the movement of the landforms feature as aspects of the communication of the earth.

3.7.1 The Earth
Jeremiah’s vision in 4:23-28 focuses on the experience of the earth as it suffers desolation in the form of the depletion of its inhabitants, the desertification of its fruitful land and the ruination of its cities. Working from an eco-perspective the prophet is attentive to the earth as it communicates its distress at YHWH’s anger and judgment, and due to the sin and absence of the people. The earth expresses its anguish through its desolation and the movement of its landforms. As though in a final gasp, it raises its voice in mourning/drying up (v. 28). However, the earth is not an inert or passive victim which is merely impacted by the actions of YHWH and the behaviour of the people. Rather, the prophet portrays it as a character in its own right which acts to make life uncomfortable for the people and ultimately expels them. Throughout the book, the earth (Xρ) and ημδ) and its wellbeing is of great concern to the prophet. Xρ) is used two hundred and forty times in Jeremiah, while ημδ) appears nine times. Many environmental images are also employed in addressing issues of Israelite life and faith. There is a basic understanding that YHWH is the creator and sustainer of the earth (e.g., 10:12-13; 27:5; 31:35-36; 32:17; 33:2, 20, 25; 51:15-16). The land, the people and YHWH exist in a symbiotic relationship with the actions of each party affecting the others. Viewing the book of Jeremiah through the heuristic lens of an ecologically oriented symbiotic relationship facilitates the identification of the character of the earth and enables attention to its communication.

The earth is a focus as early as Jeremiah’s call to ministry where the metaphors of planting, uprooting, building and destroying are employed to describe Israel’s

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278 For general discussions on Xρ) and ημδ) in the HB see Even-Shoshan, (ed.), A New Concordance of the Old Testament, 16-17, 112-119; Tsumura, The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2, 88-90 and Davies, The Territorial Dimension of Judaism, xvii. Though it is noted that Jeremiah employs both of these terms there is no attempt to determine his definitions for them, rather it is merely noted that he presents a sustained environmental focus.
experiences of land retention and land loss. YHWH declares, ‘Today I appoint you … to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow’ (1:10). However, at the outset, the suffering of the land is tempered by the message of hope that it will be rebuilt and replanted in the future (1:10). An inclusio introduces the theme of uprooting and planting. The verbs ‘uproot’ (ὀπτοΰμαι) and ‘tear down’ (κτρισμομαι) are arranged in stark contrast to the verbs ‘plant’ (μαζαμεω), and ‘build’ (κτισμα) (1:10). The contrasting metaphors provide an introduction to their many occurrences throughout the book (e.g., 12:14-17; 18:7,9,11; 24:6; 31:28, 38-40; 42:10; 45:4).

In declaring a devastating message of land loss, YHWH urges Jeremiah to ‘gird up your loins and arise and speak to them all that I command you’ (1:17a). The fact that his message stands in opposition to prevailing views is imbedded in the text which follows: ‘Do not be terrified before them’ (1:17b). Jeremiah has been empowered to stand against ‘the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against her rulers, against her priests and the people of the land’ (1:18). His message is so provocative that it will certainly attract opposition and so YHWH warns that ‘they will fight against you’ (1:19). The opposition directed towards Jeremiah is expressed in environmental imagery, ‘Let us destroy the tree with its fruit and let us cut him off from the land of the living’ (11:19). The prophet remonstrates with YHWH concerning his opponents by using metaphors of land: ‘You planted them and they take root, they grow and even produce fruit’ (12:2). The dispute in which the prophet is involved concerns land retention and land loss, and who decides this issue. It is obvious that Jeremiah’s message of Israel’s land loss is objectionable to his community, as is his theological interpretation that it will occur because of YHWH’s purpose and intention (4:27-28; 21:7; 22:25; 28:14; 29:21).
message presents alternative and unacceptable views on land loss which subvert royal, religious and popular views on land retention (e.g., 1:18; 7:4; 21:1-10; chaps. 27 and 29). Particularly objectionable is his message that the land of Babylon will be the place of Israel’s renewal.

In an eco-perspective, the earth is so important to the book of Jeremiah that the prophet calls upon the character of the earth to act as an official witness to the Judean king’s demise, ‘O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of YHWH’ (22:29). Because of his views on land retention and land loss, Jeremiah becomes alienated from his fellows and is branded as a traitor. Though he chooses to remain in Judah when many of his fellows are exiled to Babylon (20:4; 28:4; chap. 29), ultimately he is taken from his beloved land to Egypt (chap. 42). However, as previously discussed, he maintains a connection with his ancestral land through the purchase of his uncle’s field (chap. 32). A further link with the land is achieved through the presence of the poor of the land and the returning diaspora who act as its caretakers (39:10; 40:7, 12; 52:16). The promise is that the people will return to the land to re-establish the life-giving symbiotic relationship. In view of that promise the earth is loquacious in expressing its joy (31:5-35).

3.7.2 Mourning

The theme of mourning pervades the book of Jeremiah. Though it is not always obvious who is the subject of the mourning, it is clear that the prophet experiences grief in his personal suffering, as well as on behalf of his people, YHWH and the land. YHWH also weeps for the people and the land, and the earth raises its voice in an expression of its anguish at the separation from its people. The mourning of the people, the prophet and YHWH is briefly noted before examining the mourning of the earth.
The people mourn greatly as they suffer the threat of invasion and separation from their land. The crying of the people is so intense that ‘our eyes run down with tears and waters flow from our eyelids’ (9:18, see also 14:17). Their cries are so loud that they can be heard from faraway (8:19; 9:19; 14:2). There is an absence of joy in Judah’s towns and Jerusalem’s streets (7:34). The people are urged to perform the rituals of mourning by putting on sackcloth, rolling in ashes, lamenting and wailing (4:8; 6:26; 7:29), as well as by employing professional mourners (9:17, 20). However, while images of mourning are prevalent in Jeremiah, there are instances when the people are instructed not to mourn because YHWH has withdrawn blessing from them (e.g., 16:5-7). It is too late for mourning rituals. The prophet also suffers greatly, wailing in anguish, writhing in pain and experiencing agony of heart (4:19). His mourning is so intense that he rues the day of his birth: ‘Cursed is the day in which I was born; let the day when my mother bore me not be blessed’ (20:14; see also 20:15-18).

Though it is not always clear whether the subject is YHWH, the prophet or the people, it would seem that several texts in Jeremiah present YHWH mourning. As a member of the symbiotic relationship YHWH weeps for the people and the earth (e.g., 8:21-23; 9:7-20). In great yearning for the people YHWH declares,

>Because of the breaking of the daughter of my people I am broken. I am broken, I mourn, horror has taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Or is there no healer. Then why has the healing of my daughter not come? O that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain that I might weep tears day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people (8:21-23).

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YHWH also raises a lament for the earth: ‘I will take up a weeping and a wailing for the mountains and a dirge for the pastures of the wilderness’ (9:9). Because the people have broken the covenant (9:12-13) YHWH calls for professional mourners to assist the lament: ‘Let them come quickly and take up a lament over us so that our eyes may run down with tears and our eyelids flow with water’ (9:17).

However, it is not only the people, the prophet and YHWH who mourn, for the other member of the symbiosis, the earth, also raises its voice in suffering at the absence of its people (e.g., 4:28; 12:4, 11; 23:10). This study argues that the verb λβ) includes the joint nuances of mourning and drying up, however, in order to stress the interiority of the character of the earth the nuance of mourning is placed first in the pairing ‘to mourn/dry up’. The earth’s mourning is expressed through its action of drying up. The scene of desolation and mourning/drying up pictured in 4:27-28 is echoed elsewhere in the book. YHWH’s judgment is associated with the earth’s experience of dryness and desolation (e.g., 4:10; 12:1; 14:1; 23:7-12). A hot wind bears down upon the people from the bare heights in the desert (4:11). The whole land is drought-stricken and becomes desolate (12:11). The drought is so severe that when the nobles send their young people to the cisterns for water they find none and return with empty vessels (14:3). ‘The ground is shattered because there was no rain in the land’ (14:4). ‘Even the does in the field gave birth and abandoned it because there was no grass. And the wild asses stood on the heights, they snuffed up the wind like jackals, their eyes failed because there was no grass’ (14:4). The prophet remonstrates with YHWH regarding the extent and duration of the drought: ‘How long will the land mourn/dry up and the grass of every field whither?’

See 3.10 of this study for a more detailed discussion on λβ).
(12:4). ‘For because of a curse the earth mourns/dries up and the pastures of the
wilderness wither’ (23:10). The people, YHWH and the land all express their suffering
in their own ways. In its unique method of communicating the character of the earth
mourns/dries up in its distress at being separated from its people (4:28).

Environmental images feature strongly in the book of Jeremiah and the desolation
of the land is also portrayed several times. In the text under scrutiny we read that ‘the
whole land will become desolate’ (4:27). The theme of the desolation of the land is
repeated many times throughout the book: ‘The land will become desolate’ (7:34), ‘Why
does the land perish and become burned like the wilderness that no one can pass
through?’ (9:12), ‘This whole country will become a waste’ (25:11; see also 10:25;
25:38; 33:12 and 44:22). The theme of desolation is reinforced by images of dry pastures
and fields (9:10; 12:10-11), and exposed bones (8:1f.). The description of desolation is
often linked with the declaration that it is YHWH who initiates the destruction and
depletion (7:34; 9:13; 10:25; 25:8-11; 44:22-23). Jeremiah’s vision of desolation, with its
accompanying theological interpretation presented in 4:23-28, works to support the
theme of desolation which is presented in many places throughout the book. Desolation is
one aspect of the earth’s experience of mourning which is occasioned by the breakdown
of the land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship.

While the theme of mourning is strongly presented throughout the book, there is
also a statement of hope that in the promised restoration, joy will take the place of
mourning (31:13, 16). Though it is not a clear link, the hint of the incompleteness of the
impending destruction in 4:27 may have some association with Jeremiah’s theme of
restoration and return. Ultimately the people will return to their land and joy will take the

281 More attention is given to Jer 12:1-4 and 7-13 in 4.4 and 4.5 of this study.
place of mourning. Instead of expressing its mourning and drying up the earth will eventually spread abroad its joy in fertility as the life-giving symbiotic relationship is restored (e.g., 31:5-35).

3.7.3 Exile

The theme of the exile of the people and its impact upon the earth undergirds Jer 4:23-28 in the images of lack of order, moving landforms, absence of people and birds, desertification of the fertile land and ruination of the cities. Clearly the symbiotic relationship has broken down and the earth is suffering due to the separation from its people. Thus, Jer 4:23-28 supports the theme of exile which appears elsewhere in the book. The theological interpretation of exile expressed in 4:27-28 is also presented in other texts within Jeremiah. YHWH declares that the people must leave their land (9:19; 10:17; 14:18) and go to ‘a distant land’ (8:19). They will be forced to go into exile (13:19; 22:10), captivity (15:2) and enslavement (15:14). Jeremiah’s theological interpretation is that exile occurs as a result of YHWH’s intention. Though the sin of the people is involved, it is YHWH who will evict them from their land: ‘I will hurl out’ (10:18) and ‘I will throw you out’ (16:13; see also 22:26-7). The message of YHWH’s initiative in Israel’s exile is supported in the text being studied. YHWH’s anger, word, plan and unwavering intention are linked with the absence of the people by the phrases ‘before his burning anger’ (4:26), ‘because thus YHWH has said’ (v. 27) and ‘on account of this … because I have spoken, I have planned; and I have not repented and I will not turn from it’ (v. 28).

However, in an eco-perspective, the prophet also presents the character of the earth taking an active part in the expulsion of the people from the land. With violently moving
landforms, drought conditions and infertility, human habitation is clearly made difficult. Thus, though the people have broken the covenant and YHWH brings the judgment of evicting the people, the earth is also actively involved in their expulsion.

Even though Jeremiah’s message is that the people and the land are to be separated, the strong hope, expectation and promise is that they will be reunited. Therefore, it is only in the context of hope that the people can flourish outside their land (24:1f.; 29:1f.). Though it is acknowledged that some will never return to their land (22:10; chaps. 26 and 27; 34:1-4), others will be restored after a period of exile in Babylon (25:1-14; 27:1f.; see also 3:18; 23:8 and 33:7). Though it is by no means certain, it may be that YHWH’s ambivalence in the intention to destroy the whole land expressed in 4:27 reflects something of the hope of restoration and return presented elsewhere in the book. As discussed in 2.13 of this study, links between the people and the land are maintained in Jeremiah’s purchase of his uncle’s field, the presence of the poor remnant and the return of the diaspora. Thus, in being tended by some representatives of its people, the land is enabled to flourish during the absence of many of its people and is prepared for their return. Nevertheless, while hope exists, the images of desolation, depletion and mourning/drying up of the land presented in 4:23-28 support the images of exile, and the separation of the people and the land presented elsewhere in the book.

In summary, by employing an eco-perspective, the book of Jeremiah presents the general literary themes of the earth, mourning and exile, all of which are also expressed in 4:23-28. Jeremiah’s vision of the reversal of creation and his theological interpretation of YHWH’s responsibility (4:23-28) work to support the themes presented throughout the book. While total devastation is described several times, there is, however, some
inconsistency expressed throughout the book regarding the extent and certainty of the
destruction of the earth. There seems to be some ambivalence on the part of YHWH as to
whether the destruction will be complete (4:27). On the one hand, YHWH announces
with unwavering certainty ‘all the earth will be desolate’ (4:27; see also 14:12 and 15:6)
and ‘because I have spoken, I have planned and I will not repent and I will not turn back
from it’ (4:28). Yet, on the other hand YHWH also declares, ‘I will not make a
completion’ (4:27; see also 5:10, 18 and 30:11). YHWH certainly plans destruction
(4:28), however YHWH also has other plans: ‘I know the plans I am planning for you,
says YHWH, plans of peace and not for evil, to give you a future and hope’ (29:11). At
times there seems to be the possibility of avoiding disaster through repentance (26:3;
36:3), whereas at other times YHWH declares that no healing is available (30:12; 15:1).
Thus, throughout the book Jeremiah presents mixed messages regarding the totality,
certainty and endurance of the destruction of the earth.\textsuperscript{282} The presence of the remnant,
the return of the diaspora and the retention of Jeremiah’s uncle’s field within his clan
provide a token continuity of existence for the people with their land. These links mean
that the symbiotic relationship between the land, the people and YHWH endures, albeit in
a minimal state. They stand as symbols of YHWH’s statement that the destruction of the
earth will be incomplete. When YHWH says ‘I will not make a completion’ (4:27), the
remnant and the field bear witness that total destruction of the land has not taken place.
Thus, there is a strong message of hope. The Babylonian exiles will be restored to the

\textsuperscript{282} Fretheim, Jeremiah, 101 states that Jeremiah’s mixed messages reflect the situation in which the exiles
found themselves – ‘they were alive’. The notion that the world does not completely end is important for
Jeremiah’s claims that the exiles would return (chaps. 31-33). Stulman, Order amid Chaos, 56 argues that
chaps. 1-25 contain only ‘faint traces of hope’ while chaps. 26-52 describe a new world view which
provides hope and new beginnings.
land. The life-giving symbiosis will be restored, and the earth will joyously raise its voice in flourishing fertility.

3.8 Literary Techniques Employed in Jer 4

The presentation of point of view by the use of direct speech is a tool commonly employed in biblical literature. The point of view does not necessarily remain constant, sometimes switching between characters. The narrator’s voice may also be heard throughout the text at times, especially in introductions. 283 Jer 4 consists predominantly of a series of speeches by the prophet and YHWH, though it is not always clear who is the subject of a given speech. 284 Through the literary devices of variety and play of perspectives several scenes of devastation are portrayed. Though there is no conflict in ideology, through the speeches of YHWH and the prophet the scenes move between distant and intimate perspectives on the destruction. 285 Jer 4:1-9 presents several speeches by YHWH, beginning with a plea for Israel to turn away from idols and swear allegiance to YHWH (vv. 1-2). YHWH then directs a similar plea to Judah (vv. 3-4). YHWH warns of the disaster from the north which will destroy the land, the cities and the people. The alarm is raised by sounding the trumpet, crying aloud (v. 5) and raising the signal (v. 6). The threat from the north is described as a disaster of terrible destruction which is likened to a raging lion. The day of YHWH will strike terror into the hearts of the king, the priests and the prophets (vv. 6-9). The theological interpretation is that the destruction will occur because of YHWH’s fierce anger which cannot be averted (vv. 5-8). A

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283 Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 6 notes that, ‘Dialogue conveys a sense of urgency as various voices get into the conversation about the nature of the crisis at hand and what to do about it.’ See also Berlin, *Poetics and Biblical Interpretation*, 56-7.
A brief dialogue then takes place between YHWH and the prophet. The prophet accuses YHWH of deceiving the people with the false promise of peace (v. 10). YHWH responds, announcing that a destructive wind will deliver YHWH’s judgement (v. 11). Hints of drought are present in the threat, with the advancing army being described in images of a powerful scorching wind from the barren heights in the desert, clouds, a whirlwind and eagles (vv. 11-13). It is not obvious whether it is the prophet or YHWH who is speaking in v. 13. The literary device of ambiguity of voice facilitates the merging of the perspectives of YHWH and the prophet. The distant overview becomes an intimate presence. The pace of the discourse is frantic. One can almost hear the pounding of the hooves of the attacking army’s horses and the shrieks of panic from the fleeing inhabitants (vv. 13-15). In the speech which follows YHWH takes responsibility for the destruction (vv. 16-17). The subjects of the following series of speeches are again unclear. The speaker links the people’s behaviour with the impending judgment in a cause and effect relationship (v. 18 cf. vv. 1-2 and vv. 3-4). The northern invader is identified with YHWH’s judgement upon the people for their negative actions and attitudes (v. 18). It is unclear whether the writhing pain and restlessness of heart are experienced by the prophet or YHWH (v. 19) but the effect is to bring the distress of invasion into the personal realm. The scene builds to a crescendo: ‘Ruin upon ruin calls out, for the whole earth lies in devastation’ (v. 20). The description of the people as foolish and stupid children who lack understanding and knowledge of YHWH seems to

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286 Sternberg, The Poetics of Biblical Narrative, 158-185 states that through the device of play of perspectives (including ambiguity) between God and the narrator, God is presented as omnipresent and actively involved.
identify YHWH as the speaker, either continuing the speech or commencing another speech (v. 22). Through the literary technique of point of view, both alternating and ambiguous, the impending invasion from the north is linked with the people’s lack of knowledge of YHWH and their evil behaviour. Thus, it is Israel’s lack of knowledge of YHWH and failure to act positively that leads to the prophet’s vision of destruction and the reversal of creation described in vv. 23-26.

The prophet’s use of the literary device of direct speech will be examined in more detail later in this study. At this point it is sufficient to note that there is a clear change in subject matter and literary style in 4:23-26. While expressed in the form of a poem and lacking an introduction of the speaker it is clearly presented as a speech, presumably by the prophet, which performs a narratological function.

The text which immediately follows 4:23-28 is expressed in narrative style and addresses the theme of war (vv. 29f.) with horsemen and archers echoing the earlier images of chariots and horses (v. 13). The theme of deserted towns (v. 29) also echoes earlier descriptions of ruined cities (vv. 7 and 26). The unacceptable behaviour of YHWH’s people is again addressed (v. 30 cf. v. 1). The chapter concludes with the image of a woman experiencing painful childbirth whilst under attack. She is ‘gasping for breath’, ‘stretching out her hands’, ‘fainting’ and ‘dying at the hands of murderers’ (v. 31). The image of the suffering woman may express the theme of the suffering of the people of Israel as they contemplate the experience of separation from their land and their deity. The king, the officials, the priests, the prophets and the woman together may represent the people. The suffering of the people, YHWH’s anguish (or that of the prophet as YHWH’s representative) (v. 19) and the mourning/drying up of the earth, as

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287 See 3.13 of this study.
well as its ruination and lack of fertility (vv. 3, 7, 20, 28) mean that all of the members of the symbiotic relationship suffer in the impending devastation.

The character of the earth (Χρ) dominates the chapter with images of attack and destruction involving it. However, the earth is not only an inert and passive recipient of the destructive forces of war, for it also acts of its own accord in bringing devastation. V. 5 records that the people of Judah and Jerusalem are instructed to ‘blow a ram’s horn in the earth’ (Χρ)β ρπω# ω(θτω). In v. 7 a lion and a destroyer of nations have come ‘to make your earth a waste’ (ημ#λ Kχρ) Μω#λ), while v. 16 announces that ‘besiegers are coming from a distant earth’

(θξρμη Χρμ Μψβ Μψρχν). In v. 20 ‘the whole earth is devastated’

(Χρη−λκ ηδδ#). The object of the prophet’s vision is the earth in v. 23: ‘I looked at the earth’ (Χρη−τ) ψτψρ). YHWH declares that ‘the whole earth will be ruined’

(Χρη−λκ ηψητ ημμ# v. 27) and the climax is that ‘therefore the earth will mourn/dry up’ (Χρη λβ)τ ζ−λ( v. 28). Also reflecting the theme of earth is the image of untilled ground of v. 3, ‘till you the untilled ground’ (ρψν Mκλ ωρψν) and the desertification of the fruitful land in v. 26 ‘the fruitful land was a desert’

(ρβδμη λμρκη).

There are several other themes expressed throughout Jer 4. Towns and cities appear in vv. 5, 7, 26 and 29. The evil actions of the people are referred to several times (vv. 1, 4, 22 and 30). The absence of humans is noted twice (vv. 25 and 29). YHWH’s wrath and burning anger flare in vv. 4 and 26, and YHWH’s unrelenting determination to mete out judgment is featured in vv. 8 and 28. The impending invasion is expressed in the images of horses and horsemen in vv. 13 and 29, and the trumpets blare in vv. 5, 19 and
21. While these themes are addressed several times throughout the chapter, it is the theme of the earth and its suffering which is the focus of this section of the prophet’s message.

3.9 οὐ̂σιον οὕτως: Pre-Creation Desolation

Several translations of the phrase ὁνήσιον οὕτως, are possible, including ‘waste and void’ (NRSV), ‘formless and empty’ (NIV), ‘invisible and unformed’ (ajóratoß kai; ajkataskeu´astoß LXX), ‘an emptiness and nothing’ (ke´nwma kai; oujqe´n Aquila), ‘a nothing and a nothing’ (qe;n kai; qujqe´n Theodotian), and ‘(became) unworked and indistinguishable’ ([ejge´neto] ajrgo;n kai; ajdia´kriton Symmachus). While the word οὕτως occurs twenty times throughout the HB, the phrase ὁνήσιον οὕτως occurs only in Gen 1:2 and Jer 4:23, and the parallel word pair is used in Isa 34:11. Von Rad refers to the situation in Gen 1:2 as a state of ‘chaos’ in which ‘creation moves from the chaos to the cosmos of the entire world’.288

Many other scholars understand ὁνήσιον οὕτως to express a notion of pre-creation chaos, a situation of disorder that stands in opposition to creation.289

Talmon compares the earth’s pre-creation state to the Ugaritic myth which portrays Mot (death) waging an ongoing battle to turn the earth into desert and Yam (sea) constantly threatening the earth with flood. Some scholars link foreign invaders with the mystical forces of chaos. Von Rad proposes that the Genesis 1 creation tradition presents the notion of the earth emerging from a situation of ‘wet chaos’. Wenham understands the Genesis 2 tradition to refer to the earth’s beginnings from a state of ‘dry chaos’. Thus, it may be that the scene of dryness and desolation in Jer 4:23-28 evokes the notion of ‘dry chaos’. However, while acknowledging the scenes of wet and dry beginnings in the Genesis creation traditions, this thesis focuses on the earth’s state of desolation as one of lack of productivity and habitation. Hayes argues that in the HB the notions of flood and drought sometimes come together to represent the earth’s return to an ‘inchoate’ state. For Jeremiah the issue may be that the earth is desolate as it was in

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294 Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 57. See also Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, 41-42. Jon Douglas Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil. The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 3-47 argues that though creational order has been established in the earth, YHWH is involved in an ongoing struggle against the forces of chaos to maintain that order.
its beginnings, whether wet or dry. Nevertheless, he does seem to evoke images of dry desolation similar to the scene of dryness described in Genesis 2.\textsuperscript{295}

Tsumura argues that the phrase οὐντός οὐρα in Gen 1:2 has nothing to do with the notion of ‘chaos’.\textsuperscript{296} After an examination of the etymology of the phrase Tsumura concludes that the Gen 1 tradition describes the earth in a state of emptiness and disorder, an unproductive and uninhabited place which had ‘a watery beginning’. The Gen 2 creation tradition presents the earth as having a dry beginning, springing to life and growth after the provision of water. In both accounts the earth is presented in a pre-creation state of ‘not yet’ in a situation of productiveness and habitation.\textsuperscript{297} Tromp argues that οὐρα emphasizes the concrete sense of desolation, aridity and unproductiveness rather than an abstract sense of chaos. He reads οὐρα in Jer 4:23 as ‘desert’, noting that it includes nuances of emptiness, aridness, unproductiveness, desolation and lack of habitation. He argues that by placing οὐντός οὐρα (v. 23) in close proximity to images of desolation and dryness Jeremiah evokes images of drying up, emptiness and barrenness in the phrase.\textsuperscript{298} Following Tromp’s observations and Tsumura’s reasoning, this thesis argues that, rather than primordial chaos, the phrase οὐντός οὐρα in Jer 4:23 refers to the earth as reverting to a desolate state that lacks productivity and habitation as in its

\textsuperscript{295} The curses in Deut 28 include images of heat, dust and drought (vv. 22-24).
\textsuperscript{297} Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2*, 20-43, 163-168.
beginnings, especially in Gen 2. Thus, Jeremiah’s vision describes a return to a state of pre-creation barrenness and un-productivity which is referred to in this thesis as ‘desolation’. As it was before creation, in Jeremiah’s vision the earth is desert and empty (v. 23), the fertile land lacks pasture (v.26) and the birds and people are absent (v. 25).  

3.10  Χρηματογραφία του έργου: Το έδαφος πετάγεται/στέγνει

Attention is now turned to the issue of the mourning/drying up of the earth (Χρηματογραφία του έργου) in Jer 4:28 and, especially the meaning/s of λβ) in this text. The lexical unit λβ) is understood to express two meanings: ‘to mourn’ and ‘to dry up’. It is argued that both meanings come into play in 4:28 and so the paired form ‘mourn/dry up’ is employed. When the earth experiences the psychological phenomenon of mourning there is something physical which it enacts. The earth, its landforms, its creatures and the heavens, as members of the earth community, communicate their distress through their own unique language of movement, infertility, drought and darkness (Ecojustice Principle 3). Thus, the earth’s sense of mourning is expressed through its actions of drying up.

When the verb λβ) is paired with human subjects it is consistently translated ‘to mourn’. However, when paired with non-human subjects, readings vary. LXX, Syr and V read λβ) as ‘to mourn’ in Jer 4:28. However, it may be that λβ) has some similarities  

299 Though this thesis works from an ecological perspective, it is acknowledged that Jeremiah’s vision can also be seen from a human perspective. Louis Stulman, Jeremiah (Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 70 states that Jeremiah’s vision depicts the world as it becomes ‘unglued and is void of form, coherence and beauty’. With the erosion of order it is ‘the end of life as it was known’ (71). Bracke, Jeremiah I-29, 50 notes that chaos includes conflict in families and communities, as well as environmental pollution.


301 E.g., I Sam 16:1; 61:2, 3; 66:10; Ezek 7:12, 27 in NRSV, NIV, NEB.
with the Akkadian verb abālu (‘to dry up’). Driver first postulated the presence of two roots within λβ, ‘to mourn’ and ‘to dry up’, locating the latter in twelve HB texts, including Jer 4:23-28. He suggests that there was a ‘gradual transition’ from physical to psychological meanings, explaining that it offers a concrete meaning which is more naturally ascribed to non-human subjects. This thesis argues that in Jeremiah’s presentation the earth is a character which is capable of interior reflection. Furthermore, Driver’s notion that the earth and other non-human subjects may not be capable of mourning is incompatible with the EBT’s principles which understand the earth as a character which has a voice.

Baumann examines the use of λβ in reference to nature and vegetation (e.g., Isa 19:8; Jer 14:2; Lam 2:8), concluding that ‘to dry up’ may be its proper meaning when it relates to natural phenomena. However, Clines rejects the presence of a second root, arguing that consistency with the context is not a valid reason for adopting it. He argues that λβ has one root with one meaning, ‘to mourn’. Hubman also excludes the notion

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302 A. Leo Oppenheim (ed.), Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 1:29b-31b. James Barr, The Semantics of Biblical Language (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 158 helpfully explains that though some biblical words may be cognates of Akkadian words that does not mean that the Hebrew word has the same meaning as its cognate.

303 G. R. Driver, “Confused Hebrew Roots,” in Occident and Orient, being Studies in Semitic Philology and Literature, Jewish History and Philosophy and Folklore in the widest sense, in Honour of Haham Dr. M. Gaster’s 80th Birthday. Gaster Anniversary Volume, eds. B. Schindler and A. Marmorstein (London: Taylor’s Foreign Press, 1936), 75. He also examines Isa 24:4, 7; 33:9; Jer 12:4, 11; 23:10; Ezek 31:15; Hos 4:3; Joel:1:10; Amos 1:2; Job 14:22 (73-82). Hayes, The Land Mourns, 14 understands Driver as proposing one root with two meanings. See discussion on dual meanings in Hans W. Wolff, Joel and Amos (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 19f.; Holladay, Jeremiah 1, 364f.

304 Baumann, “λβ” in TDOT, Vol. I, 47 also stresses that, as such texts invariably refer to judgement, the ideas of ‘humiliation’ or ‘diminution’ as in mourning are clearly evident.

of drought in \( \lambda \beta \), arguing that it is due to the breakdown of the relationship between YHWH and the people that the order and well-being of the earth are affected.\textsuperscript{306}

After examining the use of \( \lambda \beta \) when paired with the earth or a related subject in nine biblical texts, Hayes argues that \( \lambda \beta \) has a single root with both physical and psychological meanings.\textsuperscript{307} She reasons that \( \lambda \beta \) may function as a ‘dead metaphor’ in which the distinction between vehicle and tenor has faded and the word has taken on a life of its own. Thus, in an internalization of external phenomena, the physical signs of drought may be applied to the psychological condition of mourning. She concludes that the nuances of both mourning and drought are included within the one root \( \lambda \beta \).\textsuperscript{308}

Wisely acknowledging the difficulties of translating such words into other languages, as well as of deciding which meaning is primary at any particular time, she adopts ‘to mourn’ as the appropriate meaning of \( \lambda \beta \) in the nine texts she studies, including Jer 4:28. She argues that it reinforces the connection between the nine texts, as well as the association between the human and environmental realms.\textsuperscript{309} While Hayes’ research is detailed and interesting, for the purposes of this study it is not essential to determine the


\textsuperscript{307} Hayes, \textit{The Land Mourns}, 15-17 examines Amos 1:2; Hos 4:1-3; Jer 4:23-28; 12:1-4, 7-13; 23:9-12; Isa 24:1-20; 33:7-9 and Joel 1:5-20. Baumann, “\( \lambda \beta \)” in TDOT, Vol. I, 45 also states that it is likely that there are different meanings expressed within the same root.

\textsuperscript{308} Hayes, \textit{The Land Mourns}, 15-16 notes that in the ancient world mourning was not exclusively a psychological phenomenon but included physical rituals. She argues that mourning rituals in the HB in which the mourner fasts, strips, shaves and bows can be compared with the state of the earth in drought as it fasts, droops, sheds vegetation and is reduced to dust. For mourning rituals see Gary A. Anderson, \textit{A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance: The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion} (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 3-9, 49-53. Doyle, \textit{The Apocalypse of Isaiah}, 165-168 argues that the distinction between the two nuances has been ‘retired’ rather than dying (167).

\textsuperscript{309} Hayes, \textit{The Earth Mourns}, 10-18. Arvid S. Kapelrud, \textit{Joel Studies} (Uppsala Universitetsårskrift 1948:4; Uppsala: Lundequist, 1948), 37-38 notes that drought and mourning are linked in ANE seasonal mourning ceremonies which commemorate the death of a god (Tammuz or Baal). While Hayes points out that such mourning ceremonies are unsubstantiated in Israel, she notes that there are parallels between mourning rituals and drought conditions in the HB (15). Delbert R. Hillers, “The Roads to Zion Mourn,” \textit{Perspective} 12/1-2 (1971), 121-134 argues that the biblical use of \( \lambda \beta \) derives (probably unconsciously) from a Ugaritic myth in which the goddess Anat mourns the death of Baal, the rain god.
number of roots from which λβ) derived, rather, the point that it expresses two nuances is important. Clines’ observation that everything mourns in its own way is also relevant. Thus, in this thesis it is argued that the character of the earth expresses its mourning by its action of drying up.

In Jer 4:28 the lexical item λβ) exhibits many of the attributes of ‘vagueness’ in that ambiguity between the two meanings cannot readily be resolved. The term may best be described in terms of ‘polysemy’ in the sense that its meanings are separate yet merged. It is argued that both psychological and physical nuances come into play in Jer 4:28 and so, in this instance, the pairing ‘to mourn/dry up’ is employed as the appropriate meaning for λβ). ‘To mourn’ is placed first in the pair in order to emphasise the interiority of the character of the earth which communicates its mourning through its language of ‘drying up’ which is placed second in the pairing.

In Jer 4:23-28 the prophet employs λβ) within close proximity to other verbs which also express physical and psychological nuances: ρδθ and Μµ#. Such usages reinforce the dual nuances expressed in λβ). Though often translated as ‘to be dark’, ρδθ also includes the aspect of mourning, thus expressing both physical and psychological nuances. Linking the darkening of the heavens in Jer 4:28 with mourning, Hayes argues that ρδθ evokes images of the darkening of the mourner’s body.

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311 See Cruse, *Lexical Semantics*, 80 for a discussion on the individual lexical unit as ‘the primary operational semantic unit’. David Tuggy, “Ambiguity, polysemy, and vagueness,” in *Cognitive Linguistics*, ed. Geeraertz, 167 defines the difference between ambiguity and vagueness as ‘a matter of whether two or more meanings associated with a given phonological form are distinct (ambiguous), or united as non-distinguished subcases of a single, more general meaning (vague)’. He applies the term ‘polysemy’ to cases in which meanings are ‘both clearly separable and clearly united. The differences among the categories are gradual, not absolute’ (173). Dirk Geeraertz, “Vagueness’s puzzles, polysemy’s vagaries,” *Cognitive Linguistics* 4/3 (1993), 223-272 argues that the boundaries between ambiguity and vagueness are not always fixed.

312 BDB, 871.
through the application of dust and ashes, as well as abstinence from ablutions. The darkened heavens may also include a reference to storms and clouds as in the sirocco which brings with it drought and famine, turning the cultivated land into a desert. Hayes argues that through the parallelism of ρδθ and λβ) the sense of ‘drying up’ in λβ) is strongly presented. While Hayes’ observations are interesting, it is noted that in employing the qal mood of ρδθ in Jer 4:28 the prophet is indicating that the heavens themselves are performing the action of withholding their light and plunging themselves into darkness. Thus, as members of the earth community, the heavens express their mourning by becoming dark, just as the earth ‘mourns/dries up’ (4:28).

The root מָיוֹן includes the psychological and physical nuances of ‘to be appalled’ and ‘to be desolate’: ‘Appalled/desolate will-be all-the-earth’ (חָרַךְ הַלֵּא רָאָה הַשָּׁמָיִם מָיוֹן 4:27). Although YHWH’s statement concerns the physical state of the earth, through the use of מָיוֹן it also includes the idea that the earth is grieving, a notion that is enhanced by the proximity of λβ in 4:28.

While the dual nuances of mourning and drying up are expressed within λβ, it is noted that many images associated with drought precede the text, such as the ‘scorching wind’ (4:11), the ‘whirlwind’ (4:13) and the predatory eagles (4:13) which reinforce the desolate atmosphere of 4:23-28. Scenes of drought are certainly presented throughout the book of Jeremiah. Chap.12 presents a pervasive picture of drought: ‘It has been made into a desolation, it mourns/dries up to me’ (12:11). In chap. 23 the land is

314 Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 10-18, 77-79.
clearly experiencing major drought conditions: ‘Because of a curse the earth
mourns/dries up, the pastures in the wilderness are dried’ (23:10). Images of drought also
abound in chap. 14 with the use of concrete objects such as empty cisterns and unfilled
jars (14:3). ‘The ground is cracked because there is no rain in the earth’ (14:4). There is
also a lack of pasture for the wildlife (14:5-6). Thus, it may be that, as well as exile, it is
drought which empties the land of its inhabitants, for so devastating and far reaching are
the effects of the drought that the land becomes entirely empty. Not only has the harvest
failed because of the severity of the drought but the earth has also been abandoned by its
birds and animals (9:9-10), as well as its people (6:8).316 It appears that none of them can
find sustenance in the land.

However, while images of drought abound in Jeremiah, they do not override the
voice of the earth raised in mourning. In keeping with the EBT’s eco-justice principles,
which value the character and voice of the earth, it is argued that the earth mourns in a
psychological sense. Nevertheless, it is also acknowledged that the physical manifestation
of that mourning is drought throughout the land.317 The character of the earth expresses
its suffering at the breakdown of the land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship and the
absence of its people by raising its voice in anguish. The mourning/drying up of the earth
is one of the ways in which it expresses its experience of grief.

3.11 Further Occurrences of Χρη λβ in Jeremiah

Jeremiah employs the phrase Χρη λβ three times in all, in 4:28, 12:4 and
23:10, as well as using the form ηλβ in close association with Χρη in 12:11.

317 In Jeremiah’s emphasis upon a return to dry desolation there seems to be a conflating of the Priestly
cosmology with the curses of Deut 28. Leuchter, “Ezra’s Mission and the Levites of Casiphia” argues that
such a conflation occurs in Ezra.
Always linked with the evil behaviour of the people and the judgement of YHWH, the mourning/drying up metaphor portrays the earth being impacted by the actions of the people and the punishing anger of YHWH, and yet, also acting of its own volition. Images of fading fertility, desertification and drought presented throughout the book of Jeremiah reinforce the nuance of drying up in λβ. However, it is argued that as a character in its own right the earth experiences the interior phenomenon of mourning which it expresses in its language of drying up.

The stanza of 12:1-4 is part of a unit which expresses the wider laments of Jeremiah in 11:18-12:6. The prophet pleads with YHWH to punish his enemies (11:18-20) and receives YHWH’s affirmative response (11:21-3). However, to his further request for retribution, YHWH replies that Jeremiah will endure even greater suffering (12:5-6). In 12:1-6 he presents the familiar planting imagery: ‘You have planted them, they have even taken root, they grow, they have even born fruit’ (12:2). He also picks up the covenantal theme of YHWH’s righteousness (θυδχ) and contrasts it with the prosperity of the wicked (12:1) which is then compared with their lack of inner piety: ‘You are in their mouth but far from their reins’ (12:2). In stark contrast to the secrecy of the wicked, Jeremiah’s life and motives are well known to YHWH: ‘But you, YHWH, you know me, you see me; and you have tested my heart toward you’ (12:3). After the prophet’s outburst requesting the slaughter of the wicked sheep (12:3), he presents the theme of the mourning/drying up of the earth, the fading fertility of the fields and the demise of the beasts and birds (12:4). The dual nuances of mourning and drying up are emphasised with the juxtaposition of λβ with #βψ (‘to be ashamed/wither’ 12:4). Thus, as in 4:23-26, the condition of the earth is linked with the negative behaviour of the
people who dwell in it in 12:1-4. In both texts the earth is presented as acting in response to evil human behaviour. The \textit{qal} form of \( \lambda \beta \) in 4:28 suggests that the mourning/drying up is the action of the earth rather than a consequence which is meted out to it by the people or by YHWH.\(^{318}\) Instead the earth takes the initiative to mourn/dry up of its own volition. Mourning/drying up is one of the ways in which the character of the earth communicates its distress.

Though the people are not mentioned, the created order of living things is otherwise represented by the beasts and the birds in 12:4. The phrase, ‘the evil of those who dwell in it (the earth)’ is strategically placed between the sweeping away of the beasts and the birds, and the mourning/drying up of the earth and the withering of the grass (12:4). Though the possible identity of the evil people is discussed in greater detail later, here it is sufficient to note that it is as a result of the evil behaviour of the people that the earth and the grass dry up.\(^{319}\) There is a strong contrast between the flourishing of the wicked (12:2), and the withering of the grass and mourning/drying up of the earth (12:4). The irony is that while the wicked flourish the earth mourns and dries up because of their wickedness. As elsewhere in Jeremiah, the land experiences anguish and dryness because of the evil actions of its people (e.g., 3:1-3; 5:24-5; 14:1-10).

Legal overtones are present in the use of terms such as ‘righteousness’ (\( \theta \psi \delta \chi \)), ‘way’ (\( \Kappa \rho \delta \)), ‘wicked ones’ (\( M \psi (\# \rho \) in 12:1) and ‘evil’ (\( \eta (\rho \) in 12:4), as well as in ‘dispute’ or ‘contend with’ (\( \beta \psi \rho \)) and ‘case’ or ‘judgement’ (\( \rho \beta \delta \) in 12:1). YHWH’s punishment is sought, ‘to pull them out like sheep for slaughtering’ (12:3). The phrase

\(^{318}\) Hayes, \textit{The Earth Mourns}, 94 argues that the nuance of the deliberate action of the earth can be derived because of the use of the \textit{qal} mood of the verb rather than the passive form.

\(^{319}\) See 4.4 of this thesis.
‘and set them apart for the day of killing’ (12:3) resonates with the day of YHWH terminology. The punishment of YHWH may also be presented in the image of the beasts and birds being ‘swept away’ (ηταπσιστος in 12:4). Clearly, YHWH’s punishing power is portrayed in this text. However, the earth also acts in mourning/drying up (in λβ in 12:4). As with 4:23-8, in 12:1-4 both YHWH’s punishment and the mourning/drying up of the earth occur because of the evil of the people. However, rather than only being YHWH’s punishment the earth’s mourning/drying up is also performed of its own volition. The perishing of the ‘beasts and the birds’ represents the demise of the entire animal world and withering of the ‘the grass of every field’ represents the decline of the general vegetation of the earth (12:4).

As in 4:23-28, in chap. 12 the image is one of decreation in which the world returns to its state of pre-creation desolation which includes the absence of animal life and the lack of fertility. It is certainly a disaster of catastrophic proportions and the prophet’s theological interpretation is that it occurs because of the intention of YHWH. However, in an ecological perspective, he also presents the notion of the earth’s initiative in its devastation.

Jer 12:7-13 also portrays a scene of the earth mourning/drying up (λβ). A series of word plays is employed to depict the suffering of the earth. Terms such as ‘my house’ (ψτψβ), ‘my possession’ (ψτλξυν), ‘the love of my being’ (ψπντωδδψις) (12:7) and ‘my vineyard’ (ψμρκ 12:10) often refer to both the land and its people in the HB. However, the mingled images of the earth and the people separate in 12:10-11 where the imagery depicts the earth’s response to the behaviour of its people and again in 12:13 where the people respond in shame to the destruction of the earth. The image of the

See also Gen 2:5; 3:18; Ex 9:22, 25; 10:12; Ps 72:16; Amos 7:2.
mourning/drying up (λβ) of the earth in v. 11 is expressed in the qal mood, indicating an action on the part of the earth.\textsuperscript{321} It is true that it occurs in response to the evil actions of the people and the punitive judgement of YHWH but, rather than being merely a hapless victim, the earth also acts.

It is interesting that the earth’s action of mourning/drying up (λβ) also has an impact upon YHWH who declares that ‘it mourns/dries up upon me’ (ψλ( ηλβ) 12:11). Though it is not directly stated, it is possible that the earth’s action has an impact upon the people: ‘and they are ashamed of your yields’ (Μκψτοββτυ οβ#β ω 12:13) which fail because of the punishment of YHWH and the mourning/drying up of the earth. The people’s careless attitude towards the earth contributes to its desolation (12:11). The earth’s anguish and desolation is emphasised with the use of the root Μμ# (‘to be appalled/desolate’) which occurs three times in 12:11. All parties of the land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship suffer and impact each other in their actions and reactions. The flourishing of each party is adversely affected due to the actions of the other two parties. The earth is a character in its own right which expresses its feelings of anguish on the issue of the breakdown of the relationship between YHWH and the people.

In 4:23-28 and 12:7-13 there is an emphasis upon the punishment of YHWH as compared with the focus upon the evil of the people in 12:1-4. However, it may be significant that in 12:7-13 YHWH’s punishment does not completely destroy the earth and its people in that the people survive to sow wheat and reap thorns, to make themselves sick, to lack profit and to be ashamed of their yields (12:13). Perhaps, as with 4:27, YHWH has not yet meted out full judgement and there is still more to come or

\textsuperscript{321} Fretheim, \textit{God and World in the Old Testament}, 175 states that while λβ in Jer 12 may express drought and desertification, the wider context refers to lament.
alternatively there may be an element of hope expressed in that some of the earth will
survive the intended devastation. While the meaning is unclear, as with 4:27-28 the future
moods employed in 23:12 would seem to indicate that there is yet more destruction to
occur. The scene is one of desolation, destruction, invasion, corruption, infertility and
drought. Human and environmental images are interwoven as the people and their land
are closely connected in their symbiotic relationship. When one party suffers in the
devastation, so do the others (12:11).

Jer 23:9-12 is another text which employs an image in which the earth
mourns/dries up (Xρ) λβ). As with the preceding texts, the earth initiates the action of
mourning/drying up, however, in this instance the earth’s suffering occurs in response to
‘a curse’ (ηλ) 23:10). The dual nuances of mourning and drying up are emphasised
with λβ being placed in juxtaposition to #βψ: ‘the pastures of the wilderness are
ashamed/dry up’ (ρβδμ τω ν #βψ 23:10). These marginal regions are also featured
in 9:10 with the image being one of infertility and drought. The sense of agony and
disorientation of the prophet is linked with the person of YHWH and YHWH’s holy
words in 23:9, while the mourning/drying up (λβ) of the earth is linked with the curse
in v.10. Images of the evil actions of the people surround descriptions of the curse and the
suffering of the earth. A scene including adultery precedes these images, while a
description of an evil curse and abuse of power follow them (v. 10). The word ηλ
(‘curse’) evokes a rich tradition of ANE curses. In Gen 3 the man and the woman are
cursed to struggle in their areas of production.323 YHWH threatens Israel with curses in
Deut 28 and Lev 26. In Deut 29:19-23 YHWH’s curses are associated with the suffering

322 See also Deut 28:22-4; 29:21-6.
323 Nevertheless, in the Noah story the curse is reversed (Gen 9).
of the earth in that it is wounded, diseased, burnt and infertile. Here the curses are sent by YHWH as a punishment for the evil actions of the people (Deut 29:19). Similarly, in Jer 23:10 the land mourns/dries up in response to a curse which is sent as a punishment for the adultery of the people. A disturbing image of impure prophets and priests who have left evidence of their evil in the temple (‘my house’) adds to the list of misdemeanours committed by YHWH’s people (23:11). The juxtaposition of the images of the earth and the adulterers (‘for the earth is full of adulterers’ Xρη ηλμ Μψπνμ ψκ) provides a further link between human behaviour and the mourning/drying up of the earth (Xρη λβ) 23:10). Adding to these links are structural associations where both cola begin with ψκ and end with Xρη. Similarities in consonance and assonance also serve to link the two cola: Xρη ηλμ Μψπνμ ψκ cf. Xρη ηλβ ηλψνπμψκ (23:10). Thus, there would seem to be a link between the adultery of the people, the curse and the mourning/drying up of the earth.324

Through the use of the phrase Xρη λβ) Jeremiah expresses the joint nuances of the ‘mourning’ and the ‘drying up’ of the earth which are associated with the evil behaviour of the people and the judgement of YHWH. However, the suffering is not inflicted upon the earth by either of these parties. The character of the earth communicates its distress at the breakdown of the land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship by raising its voice in drying up in order to express its sense of mourning.325

3.12 The External Design of the Text of Jer 4:23-28

324 Hayes, ‘The Earth Mourns, 122 provides a more detailed discussion of the structural similarities between the two cola.
325 The earth is also involved in the curse of Cain (withholding its crops) after receiving Abel’s blood which cries out from it (Gen 4:11-12).
The external design of a text is divided into stanzas on the basis of mood, tense and subject changes. The text of Jer 4:23-28 comprises two stanzas and within each stanza there are two or more strophes made up of several cola. Each stanza will be examined separately and then it will be determined how the two stanzas relate to each other to make the text a single unit. The numerals on the right side of the translation refer to the strophes.

**Stanza 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strophes</th>
<th>1a</th>
<th>1b</th>
<th>2a</th>
<th>2b</th>
<th>3a</th>
<th>3b</th>
<th>4a</th>
<th>4b</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V. 23 I-looked the-earth and-behold-desert and-void,</td>
<td>ωηβω ωητ–ηνηο Χρη–τη ηπησηρ</td>
<td>and-towards-the-heavens and-no lights.</td>
<td>Μρο Νψο Μψμη–ληο</td>
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<tr>
<td>V. 24 I-looked the-mountains and-behold quaking,</td>
<td>Μψρη ηνηο Μψρηη ηπησηρ</td>
<td>and-all-the-hills shook-themselves.</td>
<td>οληλοθη τω ιψ–λκω</td>
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<tr>
<td>V. 25 I-looked and-behold not the-human-being,</td>
<td>ψτηρ</td>
<td>and all-fowl of the-heavens were-flown-away.</td>
<td>οδην Μψμη Πω–λκω</td>
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<tr>
<td>V. 26 I-looked and-behold the-fertile-land the-wilderness,</td>
<td>ρβδηη λψρθη ηνηο ηπησηρ</td>
<td>and-all-its-cities were-destroyed</td>
<td>ωχτν ωηρ–λκω</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
from-face-of YHWH, 4c
ηωηψ ψνπμ
from-the-face-of the-burning-of his-anger. 4d
οπ≡) Νωρε ψνπ≡μ

Stanza 1 consists of vv. 23-26 (Strophes 1-4). The first three strophes are made up of bicola, while it is argued that strophe 4 is a tetracolon. The cola within this stanza have varying metrical patterns. 326 Strophe 1 has a 4 + 3 metre, strophe 2 has a 4 + 2 metre and strophe 3 has a 4 + 3 metre. Strophe 4 has a difficult metrical pattern which appears to be a metre of 4 + 2 + 2 + 3. Another possible configuration for strophe 4 is that the last two cola could be read as one long cola to give a 4 + 2 + 5 pattern. Alternatively it could be read as two strophes, making five strophes in all, the first of which has a 4 + 2 metre and the second a 2 + 3 metre. The latter reading would establish a metric pattern with the first and third strophes having a 4 + 3 metre and the second and fourth strophes having a 4 + 2 metre. Strophe 5 would then have a different pattern of a 2 + 3 metre. However, this study reads strophe 4 as being made up of four cola, which serve to add emphasis to the expression of YHWH’s responsibility with each of the last two cola beginning with ψνπμ.

Though it will be discussed in greater detail later in this study, it is sufficient at this point to note that there are some significant instances of repetition in stanza 1. The verbal form ψτψ (‘I looked’) occurs at the beginning of vv. 23, 24, 25 and 26, and

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ηνηω (‘and-behold’) is also employed in each of these verses. These two words provide the framework for the stanza. Further to this, the second colon of each strophe commences with the linking copula ο. More repetition is achieved with the use of λκω in the successive strophes 2b, 3b and 4b (vv. 24, 25 and 26). The final two cola of strophe 4 both commence with ψνπμ (v. 26) and two words begin with the letter ( in the second cola of strophes 3 and 4 (Πω(−λκω) ‘and-all-the-fowl’ v. 26 strophe 3b compared with Νψρ(−λκω ‘and-all-the-cities’ v. 26 strophe 4b).

In summary, the external design of stanza 1 consists of a frame formed by the repetition of ψτψρ (‘I looked’) and ηνηω (‘and-behold’). This frame serves to emphasise the force of the prophet’s vision. The metrical patterns throughout the stanza form an orderly arrangement with a 4 + 3 metre in strophes 1 and 3, and a 4 + 2 metre in strophe 2. Strophe 4 begins with the same pattern of four words but concludes with a short and repeated description of YHWH’s acknowledged responsibility for the scene of destruction which is portrayed in the prophet’s vision (4 + 2 + 2 + 3).

Stanza 2

V. 27 Because-thus says YHWH,

ηώηψ ρμ) ηκ–ψκ

Strophes

5a
‘Desolate\textsuperscript{327} will-be all-the-earth
but-a-completion\textsuperscript{328} not\textsuperscript{329} I-will-make.

\textbf{V. 28} On-account-of-this will-mourn/dry-up the-earth,
and-become-dark the-heavens from-above,

\(\lambda(\mu\mu\;\text{Μη\mu\#\; ορδ \thetaω}\)
\text{on-account-of because-I-have-spoken, I-have-planned 7a}
\(\psi\tau\mu\zeta\;\psi\tau\rho\beta\delta-\psi\kappa\;\lambda(\)
\text{and-not I-will-repent\textsuperscript{330}}
\text{and-not I-will-turn-back from-it.\textsuperscript{331}}

The second stanza consists of vv. 27-28 (strophes 5-7). The stanza introduces a change in speaker, as well as changes in mood and literary style. While the subject matter is substantially the same (the destruction of the earth and the heavens), the scene is reported from a different point of view and with a different metre. While stanza 1 reports the prophet’s vision in the past mood (\textit{qal}), stanza 2 employs the future mood in YHWH’s speech which describes events which are yet to take place. The future events will occur due to a past decision of YHWH. Stanza 2 forms a regular pattern with all three strophes arranged as bicola. Strophe 5 has a regular 3 + 3 + 3 metre, strophe 6 has a 2 + 2 + 3 metre and strophe 7 has a 3 + 2 + 2 metre. Alternatively strophe 7 could be

\textsuperscript{327} Other readings include ‘awestruck’ or ‘appalled’. See BDB, 1031.
\textsuperscript{328} Other readings include ‘a complete destruction’ or ‘an annihilation’. See BDB, 478.
\textsuperscript{329} The MT \(\lambda\) is employed rather than any attempts to harmonise with the message of destruction in the rest of the text.
\textsuperscript{330} BDB, 636-637 list several readings for \textit{Μ\xi\upsilon}, including ‘be sorry’, ‘console oneself’, ‘moved to pity’, ‘have compassion’, ‘rue’, ‘suffer grief’, ‘repent.’
\textsuperscript{331} The order of the MT is followed rather than the order of the LXX.
understood to have a 2 + 3 + 2 metre but the repetition of \( \gamma \lambda \omega \) seems to indicate a 3 + 2 + 2 metre.

The significant incidents of repetition in stanza 2 include the uses of the conjunction \( \lambda \) in v. 28 (strophe 6a and strophe 7a). The linking copula \( \omega \) is also repeated in vv. 27 and 28, \( \eta \lambda \beta \omega \) (‘and-a-completion’ v. 27 strophe 5c), \( \omega \rho \delta \theta \omega \) (‘and-become-dark’ v. 28 strophe 6c). The negation \( \gamma \lambda \) is also employed in v. 27 (strophe 5c) and v. 28 (strophe 7b and strophe 7c). The focus on the earth \( (\chi \rho) \) established in stanza 1 is intensified in stanza 2 in v. 27 (strophe 5b) and v. 28 (strophe 6a). The conjunction \( \lambda \) used in close proximity to the conjunction \( \psi \kappa \) provides the frame for the stanza.

3.13 Literary Structures Employed in Jer 4:23-28

The literary device of point of view and the repetition of words and phrases, combined with the strategic use of conjunctions, particles and terms of negation work to create the pace, emphasis and focus of Jer 4:23-28. Following his vision of the destruction of the earth and the heavens, and the depletion of their respective inhabitants the prophet provides a theological interpretation regarding the scene of destruction, stating that it occurs because of YHWH’s word, plan and deliberate intention. However, the earth is an active participant in the scene of devastation, expressing its mourning, and thereby its point of view, at the separation from its people in its actions of drying up.

Though the text of Jer 4:23-28 performs a narratological function, direct speech is employed in order to heighten the dramatic effect of the message and present the internal psychological and ideological points of view of the speakers.\(^{332}\) Emphasis is achieved by employing the multiple perspectives of the characters of the prophet, YHWH, the narrator

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\(^{332}\) Berlin, Poetics and Interpretation, 64. See also Lundbom, Jeremiah, 20-21; Sternberg, The Poetics of Biblical Narrative, 153f.
and the earth, and by shifting quickly from one point of view to another. Through the vehicle of direct speech a subjective portrayal of the experiences, reactions and decision-making processes of the various characters is presented. The overall effect is to increase the rhetorical impact of the prophet’s message.

The narrator’s voice is missing in terms of an introduction of the speaker in vv. 23 to 26, nevertheless, the speaker can presumably be identified as the prophet in view of the fact that YHWH is referred to as a separate person in the address ‘from-face-of YHWH’ (ηωηψ ψνπμ v. 26). However, there is a sense in which Jeremiah is also speaking for the earth. Not only is the literary technique of the point of view of the prophet employed to great effect in the speech but the impact is actually increased by the lack of the intrusion of an introduction or explanation by the narrator. The announcement of impending destruction is suddenly and powerfully presented by the speaker. There is an element of surprise by launching into the speaker’s vision without an introduction. The description is presented as though the speaker is actually present and watching the scene unfold or experiencing a very realistic vision.

In v. 27 the switch in point of view from the implied prophet and the earth to YHWH is used as a transitional device to create a new scene while maintaining continuity with the previous section. The scene commences with the phrase ‘Because-thus says YHWH’ (ηωηψ ρμ ηκψκ v. 27). Vv. 23 to 26 depict the prophet’s vision of the earth, the heavens and their respective inhabitants in various states of movement and depletion. Adding great force, the same scene is then described through the eyes of YHWH (vv. 27-28). The narrator presents a viewpoint at a ‘psychological level’, as

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333 Berlin, Poetics and Interpretation, 67 states that ‘multiplicity of viewpoints helps us to sense the drama’. See also Sternberg, The Poetics of Biblical Narrative, 159-160.
though he is looking into the mind and thoughts of YHWH. The prophet’s theme of the darkness of the heavens is repeated in YHWH’s statement, ‘and-become-dark the-heavens from-above’ (λ(μμ Μψμ#η ορδ θθ v. 28) as compared with the prophet’s statement, ‘and-towards-the-heavens and-no lights’ (Μρθ Νψ Μψμ#η–λθ v. 23). In YHWH’s view the earth is depicted as ‘desolate’ (ημμ# v. 27) and about to ‘mourn/dry-up’ (λβτ v. 28) in comparison with its description by the former speaker as ‘desert and-empty’ (οηβθ οητ v. 23). ‘One of the best ways of presenting multiple points of view is to show different characters speaking differently about the same things’, Berlin helpfully explains.

YHWH and the prophet use slightly different wording to describe the same scenes that appear before them, however, the significance of the different modes of expression is not immediately obvious. It may be that the terms employed by YHWH describe a progression towards an absolute destruction of the earth and the heavens. While the prophet expresses his vision in terms of the negative terminology of an absence of light in the heavens (v. 23 ‘no lights’ Μρθ Νψ), YHWH makes the intentional declaration that there will be darkness in the heavens (v. 28 ‘and-become-dark’ ορδθθο) which may denote an absolute and enduring situation of darkness. The absence of light in the heavens makes them as dark as they were before the order of creation was established. The fact that the light in the heavens has gone is a very unsettling omen. The inference may be that if such an enduring light can be snuffed out, so can the rest of creation. Light symbolises order and, by comparison, darkness means chaos. Lack of light also disrupts

334 Berlin, Poetics and Interpretation, 56.
335 Berlin, Poetics and Interpretation, 76 also states that ‘changes in repeated information can be significant’.
the fundamental rhythms of nature which are required for fertility and cultic observances, so the order of civilisation and religion is adversely affected. Ps 78:69 and Eccl 1:4 declare the durability of the earth and the heavens. The prophet’s vision of the darkness of the heavens presents a destabilising message. The scene of destruction is one of far reaching proportions extending to the entire universe.

Similarly, the lack of order and arrangement of the earth seen by the prophet (v. 23 ‘desert and-empty’ οἱ ἡμεραί οἱ σταθμοί) progresses to a state of utter desolation (‘desolate’ ημμή# v. 27) and mourning/dryness (‘will-mourn/dry up’ λαμμτ v. 28) when described by YHWH. In Jer 4:23-26 the prophet presents a scene of almost completed destruction. While the mountains and hills are still quaking and shaking (4:24), the rest of creation has already been destroyed or is absent. The nominal clauses in vv. 23 and 25 are stative, describing completed actions. The earth is already ‘desert and-empty’ (οἱ ἡμεραί οἱ σταθμοί v. 23), the light of the heavens has already been extinguished (Μπρω Νηψ v. 23), and the humans are no longer there (Μδη Νψ v. 25). The fertile land has already become a wilderness (ρβδη λμρκη v. 26). The prophet is reporting events which have been completed. The sense of completed action is reinforced by the use of perfect mood in two verbs, ‘and-all-fowl-of-the-heavens were-flown-away’ (οĎδν Μψμη Πο (λκ ο v. 25) ‘and-all-its-cities were-destroyed’ (οΧτν οψρ (λκο v. 26). In order to emphasise the desolation of the earth in the first colon of v. 27, the noun ημμή# is placed first instead of employing the normal sentence order of verb, subject, object. The message of complete and utter destruction is thus emphasised. There is an eerie stillness in the scene of completed devastation.

336 McKane, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary, 107 links the darkness with a reversal of the New Year festival, noting that without light there is a fundamental disruption of nature’s rhythms.
The only occurrence of movement is in the quaking of the mountains and the swaying of the hills (ολθλθτη τωβγη–λκω Μψ#(ρ ηνηω Μψρηη v. 24). The actions of the mountains are expressed with a participle as though the movement is ongoing (‘quaking’ Μψ#(ρ v. 24). The movement of the hills is portrayed through the hithpolel mood (‘shook-themselves’ ολθλθτη v. 24) Employing a hapaxlegomenon to accentuate the image of movement, the idea may be one of ‘movement back and forth’ or of the ‘hills being tossed about as if they had little or no weight,’ possibly even an image of them being ‘airborne’. However, this study understands the reflexive mood to be employed and so reads ‘the-hills shook-themselves’. The image is certainly one of violent movement but self initiated actions are also indicated. Jeremiah presents the earth as a character which is capable of expressing itself in its own unique language. The hills, as members of the earth community, express their distress by acting of their own volition and shaking themselves.

Throughout the HB, mountains are normally symbols of stability and strength. However, there are several texts which describe their shaking and quaking as scenes of theophany (e.g., 1 Sam 14:15; Isa 13:13; 41:5; Jer 10:10; 49:21; 50:46; 51:29; Joel 2:10; Ps 18:8; 68:9; 99:1). The image of the shaking earth denotes ‘something terrible, and a token of terrible power’. Some texts link the motif of the quaking mountains with the tradition of the ‘day of YHWH’ (e.g., Isa 13:13). YHWH’s presence is often associated

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337 See the discussion on the possible translations in Lundbom, Jeremiah 1-20, 360, 362.
338 See Magnus Ottosson, “Χρ” in TDOT, 396 for a discussion of moving land forms as theophany. Mc Kane, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary, 107 states that the situation is one of ‘extreme distress’ and catastrophe. See also Hill, “The ‘Return Motif’ in Jeremiah 24,” 139.
339 BDB, 76, 950. Robert P. Carroll, Jeremiah. A Commentary (London: SCM, 1986), 169 states that the images depict the effects of war or earthquake. H. Schmoldt, “#(ρ” in TDOT. Vol. XIII, 589-590 lists several other scenarios in which #(ρ occurs, such as earthquake (Amos 1:1), rattling bones (Ezek 37:7), clattering chariots (Jer 47:3) and trampling boots (Isa 9:4).
with the traditional signs of earthquake, wind, dark skies, depopulation and the desolation of the earth. Whether Jeremiah intends to refer to a theophany here is uncertain but the image is definitely one of instability and lack of order. If a scene of theophany is to be understood, the rhetorical impact of the text is increased. Not only is YHWH acknowledging responsibility for the destruction which is taking place in the land, but YHWH is also present in the devastation.\(^{340}\) This perspective forms a powerful rhetorical image with great theological ramifications. However, focussing on YHWH’s presence within the devastation may detract from attention to the character of the earth. In this thesis it is argued that the landforms are members of the earth community which quake and shake themselves in an expression of their distress. The prophet is one of those ecologically aware people who is attentive to the earth as it expresses its suffering at the breakdown of the land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship and especially at the absence of the people.

The desertification of ‘the-fruitful-land’ (\(\lambda \mu \rho \kappa \eta\) 4:26) represents a destruction of the fructifying work of God in creation (Gen 1:11-13). It is ironic that it is the creative word of God, ‘and God said’ (\(\mathcal{M} \psi \eta \lambda\) \(\rho \mu \) \(\omega\) Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 29) which also destroys, ‘on account of because-I have-spoken’ (\(\psi \tau \rho \beta \delta - \psi \kappa\) \(\lambda\)( 4:28). In Deuteronomistic thought, the barrenness of the land was understood as a divine punishment for disobedience. Deut 28 pronounces a blessing on the land for obedience and a curse upon the fruit of the land for disobedience (vv. 8, 11 and 18).\(^{341}\) The unmistakable message is that the created order returns to its state of pre-creation desolation and lack of fertility. The reading employed in this study understands \(\lambda \mu \rho \kappa \eta\) as

\(^{340}\) YHWH destroys the land of Israel rather than blessing it. See Jer 8 and 9.

\(^{341}\) Ottosson, “\(X\rho\)” in TDOT, Vol. I, 398, 404.
‘the-fruitful-land’ in a general sense, following T rather than in a specific localised sense as in the LXX, V and the Peshitta.\textsuperscript{342} ρβδμ is often employed in biblical literature to refer to ‘desert’ and ‘dry wilderness’, both of which represent hostile and dangerous areas which are frequented by wild animals and outlaws.\textsuperscript{343} It may be that Jeremiah’s use of λμρκη in juxtaposition to ρβδμη in 4:26 echoes 2:6-7, linking the words with the Exodus tradition, the desert wanderings and the settlement in Canaan, thus appealing to Israel’s salvation history and especially to the Sinaitic covenant. Not only is creation reversed, tragically, so is Israel’s salvation history.\textsuperscript{344} The message to Jeremiah’s readers is that the desertification of the fruitful land comes about as a result of the breakdown of the Sinaitic covenant between YHWH and Israel. The land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship has been destroyed, leading to dire consequences for the earth.

YHWH’s musings in v. 27 link with those in previous statements that it is YHWH who is responsible for the devastation which is unfolding (e.g., vv. 8 and 12). In presenting YHWH’s interior reflections the narrator records what seems to be some ambivalence within the mind of YHWH regarding the impending destruction. While YHWH states that ‘desolate will-be all-the-earth’ (v. 27a), an apparently more lenient statement follows ‘and-a-completion not I-will-make’ (v. 27b). Nevertheless, the intention to destroy is reiterated in the following colon, ‘because I-have-spoken, I-have-planned and-not-I-will-repent and not-I-will-turn-back from-it’ (v. 28b). YHWH refuses

\textsuperscript{342} McKane, \textit{A Critical and Exegetical Commentary}, 107 also reads λμρκ as ‘arable land’ following T rather than a ‘locality’ as in LXX.

\textsuperscript{343} BDB, 184 translates ρβδμ as ‘wilderness’, ‘desert land’, ‘uninhabited land’, etc. Jer 2:6 vividly describes such a desolate area.

\textsuperscript{344} Hayes, \textit{The Earth Mourns}, 74-75, 85. See also McKane, \textit{A Critical and Exegetical Commentary}, 107-108; Holladay, \textit{Jeremiah I}, 148, 163; Brueggemann, \textit{A Commentary on Jeremiah}, 59; Bracke, \textit{Jeremiah 1-29}, 50.
to change the decision to mete out judgment (v. 27 cf. v. 8). There is a sense of forceful intentionality and measured responsibility expressed in YHWH’s deliberations.

There is a steady movement of the theme of destruction and loss throughout the poem, especially in vv. 23-26. The progression is achieved by the use of ‘I-looked’ (ψτψρ) in successive cola (vv. 23 and 24) and ‘I-looked and-behold’ in the next two cola (ηνηω ψτψρ v. 25 and 26). The object of the prophet’s vision moves through the scenes which focus on the earth, the heavens and their various inhabitants. The conjunction ω serves to link the theme of destruction throughout the text. In a fast moving pace ι is employed ten times within vv. 23 to 26 and a further four times within vv. 27 and 28. The conjunction acts to connect the scenes and to hurry the readers through the sequences of the prophet’s vision and YHWH’s statement. It is as though the images of destruction and disaster rhetorically tumble upon each other. The readers have not had time to regain their collective composure before the next scene of destruction is upon them.

A new movement is introduced in v. 26b which expresses the theological interpretation that it is through YHWH’s initiative and determination that the destruction is taking place: ‘from-face-of-YHWH, from-face-of-the-burning-of his-anger’ (ωπ Νωρξ ψνπυ ηωηψ ψνπυ v. 26). In the HB whereas many occurrences of Μψνπ express YHWH’s protective presence with YHWH’s face turned towards the recipient in favour (e.g., Pss 4:7; 89:16), the prepositional construct form juxtaposed with

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345 Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 100 states that the repetition of ψτψρ forms ‘a haunting rhythm’. Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 70 notes the dread created by the literary arrangement. See also McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 106.
Rather than favouring Israel, YHWH’s face is turned towards it in angry and destructive intent. The repetition of ψνπμ (‘from-face-of’) serves to emphasise YHWH’s responsibility. This is reinforced and moved forward with the introduction to YHWH’s statement ‘Because-thus says YHWH’ (ηωηψ ρμ) ηκ–ψκ v. 27). YHWH’s accountability is further emphasised by the repeated use of the particle ψκ, ‘Because-of-this’ (ηκ–ψκ v. 27a) and ‘On-account-of because-I have-spoken’ (ψτρβδ–ψκ λ( v. 28). The repetition in this stanza resonates with and reinforces the repetition employed in vv. 23-26. It has an accumulative effect which serves to drive home the message of YHWH’s intentions. Just as the scene of destruction is expressed in a repeated form in vv. 23-26, so the declaration of YHWH’s responsibility for the destruction is also repeated in v. 28.

There is a distraction to the movement presented in v. 27. The conjunction ω is a little word with a big meaning in this part of the text as it introduces a discordant note of incomplete destruction: ‘and-a-completion not I-will-make’ (η(#( ) λο ηλκω v. 27). This theme works against the movement of the rest of the text and in doing so provides a focus. Will YHWH completely destroy the earth or not? There is a surprising element of indecision introduced by the conjunction. Nevertheless, there is a return to the movement expressing YHWH’s intention to destroy the earth in v. 28: ‘On-account-of-this will-mourn/dry up the-earth, and-become-dark the-heavens from-above, on-account-of because-I-have-spoken, I-have-planned and-not I-will-repent and-not I-will-turn-back from-it.’

Simian-Yofre, “Μψνπτ” in TDOT, Vol. XI, 591-592 notes that of the four hundred occurrences of Μψνπτ and its derivatives in the HB, more than one hundred refer to YHWH. In Jer 4:26 causality is the dominant focus (612). As well as causality, a notion of point of view may be expressed with the double use of ψνπμ.
Great emphasis is attained by delving into the reflective processes of YHWH in vv. 27-28 in which YHWH personally acknowledges initiative and responsibility for the impending destruction of the earth and the heavens. While the people are often urged to repent, YHWH also entertains notions of turning back (repenting) from intended punishment if the people repent (e.g., 18:8; 26:3, 13; 42:10). The niphal form of מְצַו which is used in v. 28 serves to stress the nuances of repentance, remorse, regret and sorrow. In a positive expression of the verbal form the subject (YHWH) would be expected to attempt to influence a situation and change the intended course of events. However, the negation of the verb in v. 28 serves to emphasise the notion that YHWH does not regret Israel’s punishment מְצַו. The readers are left in no doubt whatsoever that it is as a direct result of YHWH’s unrelenting intention that the earth, the heavens and their inhabitants will be destroyed.

The poetic form of vv. 23-26 is one of the most striking literary features of the text. A pronounced literary structure occurs in the poignant and forceful arrangement of the first four cola of the text which all begin with the verbal clause ‘I-looked’ (ψτυψ). Each of these clauses is followed either immediately or soon after by the circumstantial clause ‘and-behold’ (ινηω υ v. 23, 24, 25 and 26). The use of the two words in close proximity is the language of vision. They are typical prophetic devices which are also

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347 H. J. Fabry, “Məzəv” in TDOT, Vol. IX, 344 states that מְצַו takes YHWH’s punishment to its final extreme (344).
employed in texts such as Jer 1:11-13; 24:1-3; Amos 7:1; 4, 7-8; 8:1-2; Ezek 1:4; 2:9; 8:7; 10:1, 9; 44:4; Zech 4:2 and Dan 12:5. The combination of the two words usually denotes a vision rather than sensory perception. The repetition of the phrases operates to indicate that the objects of the prophet’s vision (whether physical or psychological) are of great importance. The technique of repetition serves to reinforce the scenes which unfold before the prophet’s eyes. There is a sense of hurried rhythm and urgency in reporting the devastation which Jeremiah beholds. The objects of his vision are the earth, the heavens, the land forms, the humans and the birds. These objects remain the focus of attention throughout the poem. The use of the repeated verbal clause emphasises that what happens to the earth, the heavens and their inhabitants is of critical importance.

The particle ηνη is often employed to introduce new characters or new episodes, or as a statement of perception of a character as distinct from that of the narrator.348 However, in this text a more dramatic effect is achieved by using ηνη within a single character’s monologue. This usage serves to present an internal psychological point of view especially as it is linked with the verb of perception ‘I-looked’ (ιψτψρ).349 Usually ηνη clauses occur singly (one at a time), so it is significant that ηνη is employed four times in quick succession within this stanza. It acts as a catchword which links the cola of the poem, as well as serving as a mnemonic device.350 The emphasis created by the repetition of the particle is unmistakable. The prophet’s viewpoint is of extreme importance, and the essence of what he looks at and beholds is crucial to the meaning of

348 Berlin, Poetics and Interpretation, 62-63. See also Sternberg, The Poetics of Biblical Narrative, 137.
349 Berlin, Poetics and Interpretation, 62 calls this effect an ‘interior vision’.
350 Lundbom, Jeremiah 1-20, 87 notes that catchwords such as ηνη act as key words in a poem, as well as providing links between poems.
the stanza. It is not to be taken lightly by the readers, in fact, they are put on notice to pay close attention to the prophet’s vision.

There is a slight variation between the first two cola as compared with the second group of cola regarding the sequence of the words which follows the initial verb. Vv. 23 and 24 both employ the verbal clause ‘I-looked’ (ιψτψρ) followed by the respective objects (‘the-earth’ Χρη v. 23 and ‘the-mountains’ Μψρηηη v. 24). The object in each colon is then followed by the particle ‘and-behold’ (ηνηω). The first parts of the stanzas in vv. 25 and 26 are arranged slightly differently to those in vv. 23 and 24, with the particle ηνηω immediately following the verbs and the objects placed after the verbs. Such variations in sequence serve to increase the intensity expressed throughout the text. The pace of the description of the destruction increases from the desert and empty earth, and the darkness of the heavens, to the quaking mountains and shaking hills, each colon of which is introduced by ηνηω (vv. 23-24). The intensity then progresses to the further desolation of the absence of human beings from the earth and birds from the heavens, as well as the decline in the fertility of the earth and the destruction of the cities; each colon of which follows the verb and circumstantial clause (ηνηω ψτψρ) v. 25-26). Thus, the sense of desolation increases throughout the stanza and the reader is swept rapidly along from one scene of destruction to another.

A series of variations also occurs in the use of the preposition λ and of the object marker τ in the first two stanzas. The first colon employs the object marker with the object of the prophet’s sight being ‘the-earth’ (Χρητ ι−τ ψτψρ ‘I-looked the-earth’ v. 23a), whereas the second colon employs the preposition ‘towards’ (Μψμι η−λω ηνηω ‘and-towards-the-heavens’ v. 23b) which indicates a more directional gaze towards the
heavens. However, neither the object marker nor the preposition are employed in the
description of the prophet’s further sightings as the pace and intensity of the vision
increases (‘I-looked the-mountains’ ἄρη ντής λευκὰς v. 24a). It is as if there is no time
for such grammatical niceties as the objects of the prophet’s vision appear before him in
rapid succession.

A literary device which is employed to great effect throughout many Hebrew texts
is that of repetition of various words and phrases. A prominent feature of Hebrew
rhetoric, repetition serves to centre thought, give a sense of totality, provide continuity,
signal structure and delimit a unit.351 In 4:23-28 the word ‘earth’ (Xρ) is employed three
times, once at the beginning and twice towards the end of the text (vv. 23, 27 and 28).
The repetition and arrangement serves to surround the text with images of the earth,
reinforcing the message that, at this point, the earth is the focus of attention and the
subject of the concern of both the prophet and YHWH. The topic of the earth is also
alluded to in the references to the land forms of the mountains, the hills and the fertile
land (vv. 24 and 26). The term ‘the-heavens’ (Μψμή) is also employed three times: at
the beginning, the middle and the end of the text (vv. 23, 25 and 28), forming a framing
device and providing another focus of attention. As with the earth and the land forms, the
heavens are also suffering and depleted. In vv. 23 and 28 the heavens are without light
and in v. 25 the birds have flown away. With the suffering of the earth and the heavens,
the inhabitants of each sphere, the humans and the birds, have departed.

The extensive nature of the destruction of the earth, the heavens and their
respective inhabitants is expressed through the repeated use of the term ‘all’ (ὅλον). ‘And-

351 Trible, Rhetorical Criticism, 27.
all-the-hills shook-themselves’ (ὦλθολθτη τω(βγη–λκω v. 24), ‘and-all-fowl of-the-heavens were-flown-away’ (ωδδον Μψμ#η Πω(–λκω v. 25) and ‘desolate will-be all-the-earth’ (Χρη–λκ ηνητ ημμ# v. 27). In the prophet’s view this is no isolated event of destruction with minimal damage. The use of the particle ‘all’ (λκ) indicates the widespread nature of the devastation of the earth, the heavens and their respective inhabitants. Metonymy, where one term or a singular usage represents something much larger, is employed to present a picture of widespread destruction and depletion.352 The ‘human-being’ (Μδη) ‘and-all-fowl of-the-heavens’

(Μψμ#η Πω(–λκω) represent all human and bird life (v. 25), and the phrase ‘all-its-cities’ (ωψρ(–λκω) represents the whole of civilisation (v. 26). The scene of destruction is an extensive event which affects the whole earth as seen by the prophet. Jeremiah’s third image announces the disappearance of the people and the birds

(ωδδον Μψμ#η Πω(–λκω Μδη Νψ) ηνηω 4:25) which may represent the whole animal kingdom, possibly negating the Gen 1 account of their creation (Gen 1:20-28).

There are several instances in which the absence of birds indicates terrible destruction and suffering (e.g., Jer 9:10; 12:4). However, in this instance, it would seem that the birds are absent as they were before God created them. It is as though they had never been in existence.353 The disappearance of the human population may be a reference to exile, however, the image is more fundamental than this in representing the total collapse of

352 See Hill, Friend or Foe? 15 for a discussion of the power of metonymy.
353 Carroll, Jeremiah, 169 explains that birds often appear as consumers of carrion during widespread situations of death as in Jer 7:33; 15:3; 16:4; 19:7; 34:20. However, the absence of birds in this text may indicate that there no dead bodies present for the birds to consume. A more likely explanation is that this is not a post-battle scene but a pre-creation image. See also Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 83.
The people and birds are missing in the scene which is unfolding before the prophet’s eyes and so is the vitality and order that their presence normally represents.

Also employed several times throughout the text are the terms of negation ‘no’ (Nψ)) and ‘not’ (N λ). The images of widespread destruction which affect all of the heavens, the earth, the land forms and the inhabitants are reinforced by the absence of light in the heavens (‘and-towards-the-heavens and-no lights’ Μ ρω Nψ ο v. 23) and the negation of the presence of the people (‘and-behold not the-human-beings’ Μ δη Nψ η ν η ο v. 25). The negative image of the absence of light at the beginning of the first stanza is echoed in the darkness of the heavens at the end of the second stanza (‘and-become-dark the-heavens from-above’ λ (μ μ Μ ψ μ η ο ρ δ θ ο v. 28). The negation N λ is used in association with Nψ to reinforce the overall negative message of the text. However, it is also employed in a contrasting twist to present a positive message of hope and life: ‘and-a-completion not I-will-make’ (η#( ) λ η λ κ ο v. 27). Through the use of the term of negation in this phrase there is a smidgen of hope presented in YHWH’s otherwise negative message.

The particle Ψ is a versatile tool which performs a variety of emphatic and deictic functions in Hebrew literature. However, it is precisely this wide range of usages of the particle in varied contexts within biblical literature which provides a challenge for studying the text in question. Ψ is variously translated as ‘that’, ‘because’, ‘for’, ‘when’, ‘if’, ‘according to’ and ‘even if’ in biblical texts. In view of the range of possible readings it is best understood as serving a function rather than having an independent

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354 Mc Kane, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary, 107.
355 BDB, 453-454.
meaning. In trying to determine the appropriate function for the two usages of the particle in vv. 23 to 28 it is noted that it is first used as a connective to introduce the direct quotation of YHWH’s speech which claims YHWH’s responsibility for the scene of destruction described by the prophet, ‘because-thus has-said YHWH’ (ηωηψ ριυ) ηκ-ψκ v. 27a). This statement is followed by the phrase which describes YHWH’s intention to destroy the earth, albeit incompletely: ‘desolate will-be all-the-earth and-a-completion not I-will-make’ (η#( )λ ηλκωρ Χρη-λκ ηψηπτ ημμ# v. 27). Though the ψκ clause follows the four-fold vision of destruction and depletion described in vv. 23-26, it precedes the main clause, ‘because-thus has-said YHWH’ (ηωηψ ριυ) ηκ-ψκ v. 27a). As such it performs the subordinate function of a circumstantial clause, which in this instance is a causal one that presents ‘a circumstance pertaining to the following clause’. It is due to YHWH’s statement that the desolation will occur. In this instance the use of the particle functions to provide a shock regarding the prophet’s theological interpretation of the destruction of the earth. The reading ‘because’ is employed in this study. Here it has both an emphatic and a causal function. It serves to direct attention to the important statement which follows. The announcement

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356 Anneli Aejmelaeus, “Function and Interpretation of ψκ in Biblical Hebrew,” JBL 105/2 (1986), 194 attempts to recover some ‘inherent rules in the language to regulate and restrict the use of ψκ in order to ensure its comprehensibility’ and avoid ambiguity. She also states that the context and the content of the clause determine its rendering in another language (195). See also James Muilenburg, “The Linguistic and Rhetorical Usages of the Particle ψκ in the Old Testament,” HUCA (1961), 136.

357 Aejmelaeus, “Function and Interpretation of ψκ in Biblical Hebrew,” 195 states that ‘ψκ mainly serves as a connective, a conjunction to join clauses to one another.’

358 Aejmelaeus, “Function and Interpretation of ψκ in Biblical Hebrew,” 196 states that ‘the common denominator of all ψκ clauses preceding their main clauses is that they state a circumstance pertaining to the following clause.’ The great majority of ψκ clauses following the main clause may be characterized as causal clauses’ (199). She uses ‘causal’ in a broad sense to include nuances such as cause, reason, motivation and explanation (202).

359 A. Schoors, “The Particle ψκ,” OTS 21 (1981), 242-243, 264-265 discusses the emphatic and causal functions of ψκ. Muilenburg, “The Linguistic and Rhetorical Uses of the Particle ψκ,” 136 notes that ψκ is ‘a deitic word; that is, it points or shows the way forward’. He also discusses its emphatic use (150).
of YHWH’s speech claiming responsibility for the impending destruction in v. 27 is quickly followed by the prepositional phrase

\[ \text{on-account-of-this will-mourn/dry-up the-earth, and-become-dark the-heavens from-above’ v. 28} \]

which links with and adds force to the previous statement of desolation. It is not clear to which phrase in the previous verse ‘this’ (\(\tau\chi\zeta\)) refers. It could conceivably be the incomplete nature of YHWH’s destructive intention, ‘and-a-completion not I-will-make’ (\(\eta\chi\zeta()\lambda\chi\eta\lambda\kappaomega\ v. 27c\)) or to the desolation of the earth, ‘desolate will-be all-the-earth’ (\(X\rho\eta\zeta\lambda\kappa\chi\psi\eta\tau\eta\mu\mu\#\ v27. b\)). Either way, the destructive force of YHWH’s words is powerfully expressed and is linked with the following description.

The second use of the particle \(\psi\kappa\) then occurs but this time it is placed consecutively with \(\lambda\chi(\psi\tau\rho\beta\delta\psi\kappa\lambda(\text{‘on-account-of because-I-have-spoken’ v. 28}).\)

The repeated use of \(\lambda\chi(\text{in quick succession serves to link the two phrases which commence with it, as well as the phrases which follow it: ‘will-mourn/dry-up the-earth, and-become-dark the-heavens from-above’ (\(\lambda\chi\mu\mu\chi\psi\mu\mu\#\omega\rho\delta\theta\omega\ X\rho\eta\lambda\beta\tau\ v. 28a\)) and ‘because-I-have-spoken, I-have-planned and-not I-will-repent and-not I-will-turn-back from-it’ (\(\eta\nu\mu\beta\omega\#\zeta\lambda\omega\psi\tau\mu\zeta\nu\lambda\omega\psi\tau\mu\zeta\psi\tau\rho\beta\delta\psi\kappa\lambda(\ v. 28b).\)

The particle \(\psi\kappa\) is again used circumstantially in order to express YHWH’s intention and responsibility for the forthcoming destruction. The use of \(\psi\kappa\) twice in quick succession adds rhetorical force to YHWH’s words.\(^{360}\) The consecutive arrangement of the particles \(\psi\kappa\) and \(\lambda\chi(\text{also serves to increase the emphasis that it is YHWH’s words})

\(^{360}\) See Muilenburg, “The Linguistic and Rhetorical Usages of the Particle \(\psi\kappa,\)” 148 for examples of the rhetorical force created by the use of \(\psi\kappa\) in successive lines in Isa 6:5 and 40:1-2.
and intentions that are creating the havoc. All of the phenomena that the prophet
describes in vv. 23-26 (the desert and empty state of the earth, the darkness of the
heavens, the quaking of the mountains, the shaking of the hills, the absence of human
beings and birds, the wilderness state of the fertile land and the destruction of the cities)
have come about because of YHWH’s words and intentions ‘on-account-of because-I-
have-spoken, I-have-planned and-not I-will-repent and-not I-will-turn-back from-it’
(ηνμυ βω#–)λ.ο ψτμξν λ.ο ψτμζς ψτρβδ–ψκ λ (v. 28). Through the use of the ψκ clauses the prophet’s unequivocal message is that YHWH takes full responsibility for the
destruction of YHWH’s people and YHWH’s land. The rhetorical impact is enormous.
There is no doubt that this message is intended to shock Jeremiah’s readers!

The versatile root βω# is employed to great effect in the final strophe when
YHWH declares ‘and-not I-will-turn-back from-it’ (ηνμυ βω#–)λ.ο v. 28). The verb
provides reinforcement to the preceding phrase, ‘and-not I-will-repent’
(ψτμξν λ.ο v. 28), in that YHWH will not change the decision to destroy nor turn back
from that intention. Throughout the prophets, and especially in the book of Jeremiah, the
people of Israel are repeatedly accused of turning against YHWH and constantly urged
by their prophets to return to YHWH. In 8:5 Jeremiah remonstrates:

‘Why then has this people turned away?’ ηζη Μ(η ηβω# (ωδμ
Why does Jerusalem always turn away? τζχν ηβ#μ Μλ#ορψ
They cling to deceit; they refuse to return’ βω#λ ων)
τμρτβ ωθψζζη
Here βο#ς is skilfully employed to express both the faithfulness and unfaithfulness of Israel towards YHWH. While βο#ς is normally a verb of motion, in the prophets it can have a covenantal nuance that expresses a change of loyalty on the part of Israel or YHWH for the other. Jeremiah employs it in 4:23-28 to forcefully conclude the stanza by stating that YHWH is responsible for the impending destruction of the land, the heavens and their inhabitants, and that, surprising and shocking though it may be, YHWH has a strong sense of determination about that destructive decision, choosing not to turn back from it. Thus, the use of βο#ς in this stanza conveys something of a contradiction to its normal covenantal use in prophetic literature. The covenantal relationship has been broken by the people and rather than urging them to return to it, YHWH is not turning back from the intended plan of destruction.

Through the use of literary structures such as direct speech, point of view and repetition of words and phrases the prophet presents the message of the impending destruction of the land. Variations of word order, as well as variations in the use of the preposition λ) and the object marker τ), act to increase the intensity of the prophet’s vision. Employing the conjunction ω several times in quick succession the prophet presents a rapid sequence of images of the destruction and depletion of the earth and the heavens. Through the vehicle of point of view the prophet conveys the theological interpretation that YHWH is responsible for the devastation that is portrayed. The responsibility of YHWH is further expressed through the use of the term υνπιμ and the


362 Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 77 notes that there are forty eight instances of the covenantal use of βο#ς in the book of Jeremiah. He also remarks that in many ways the root βο#ς ‘embodies the germ of Jeremiah’s message’ (80).
particles ἵκ and λ. An element of indecision on the part of YHWH which provides the possibility of hope is also presented. The stanza ‘and-a-completion not I-will-make’ (η(#) λ. ηλκω v. 27) functions to work against the movement of the surrounding text. Nevertheless, the final stanza returns to the theme of YHWH’s unequivocal intention to destroy the earth. The subversive impact of the literary device of the reversal of creation will be addressed later in this study. The term βθ# is also employed in a subversive way to reinforce YHWH’s determination to bring the destruction to pass. All of these literary devices work to provide a destabilising effect regarding the worldview of the readers. They serve to challenge prevailing views and work towards creating an alternative perspective on the world, and especially on issues of covenant, exile, and YHWH’s destructive intentions for the land and the people of Israel. These literary devices work together to express a forceful, surprising and shocking message to the readers.

3.14 Chiasm and Inclusio in Jer 4:23-26

Chiasm and inclusio are mnemonic devices which serve to aid the memory of the readers by signifying deliberate continuity between the beginning and the end of a unit. Inclusio occurs at three levels within the book of Jeremiah: in the arrangement of the book itself, within individual poems in the book and in stanzas within individual poems. If chap. 52 is taken as a scribal summary or conclusion which serves as a

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363 See 3.15 of this thesis.
365 Trible, Rhetorical Criticism, 32.
historical epilogue, then the book of Jeremiah can be understood as ending at 51:64.\textsuperscript{366}

The whole book could then be read as being framed by a chiasmus which begins and ends with the phrase ‘the words of Jeremiah’ (1:1 and 51:64).

1:1 ‘The-words-of Jeremiah son-of-Hilkiah’

\[\omega\eta\psi\theta\lambda\xi-\text{N} \omega\eta\psi\mu\rho\psi\]

\[\psi\rho\beta\delta\]

51:64 ‘Thus-far the-words-of Jeremiah’

\[\omega\eta\psi\mu\rho\psi\]

\[\psi\rho\beta\delta \ \eta\eta-\delta(\]

This chiastic structure works to tie the whole composition together and to present the entire message of the book as the words of Jeremiah.

Chaps. 1 and 20 can be understood as forming a large inclusio which expresses the theme of Jeremiah’s call to ministry and reinforces the authority of his message, as well as including the themes of distress and mourning. Though his ministry was difficult, YHWH had called the prophet before his birth.


\[K\psi\tau\#\delta\theta\eta \ \text{M} \xi\rho\mu \ \gamma\tau \ \text{M}\rho+\beta\omega\]

\[K\psi\tau(\delta\psi \ N+\beta\beta \ K\rho\omega\chi) \ \text{M}\rho+\beta\]

20:18 ‘Why from-the-womb did-I-come-out to-see trouble and-sorrow and-end in-shame my-days?’

ψμψ τ#ββ ολκψω Νογψω λμ(τω)ρλ. ψτγψ Μξρμ ηζ ημλ.

1:1-3 and chap. 52 may also function as ‘an interpretive frame which sets the contents of the book within the context of the Babylonian exile’ and presents the possibility of viewing the post-exilic experience in the light of the exile.367

Many poems within the book of Jeremiah are arranged in the forms of chiasm and inclusio. Thus, the text of Jer 4:23-28 is situated within a book which frequently employs these structures. Two examples of inclusio in Jeremiah’s poems are situated immediately before and after the text being studied. 4:22 is formed by a three line stanza with the phrase ω(δψ )λ. occurring at the end of lines 1 and 3 which makes it an inclusio.

4:22 ‘Because foolish my-people; me not they-know
Children stupid they and not have-understanding they
Wise they to-evil; and-to-do-good not they-know’

ω(δψ )λ. ψτω) ψμ(λψω) ψκ

ημη Μψνωβν λω ημη Μψλκσ Μψνβ

367 Hill, Friend or Foe? 194. See 15-16 for further discussion.
V. 29 is also a three line stanza within the poem of 4:29-31 with the inclusio made by the repetition of ρψ(η–λκ) at the end of the first line and the beginning of the third line.

4:29 ‘From-the-sound-of horsemen and-shooters-of the-bow will-flee all-the-city. They-go into-thickets and-into-the-rocks go-up

All-the-city is-deserted and-not shall-live in-them a-man’

The text of Jer 4:23-28 is immediately surrounded by arrangements of inclusio in a book which includes many structural patterns of chiasmus and inclusio. Thus, with the rhetorical devices employed in such close proximity to the text it may be a profitable exercise to examine Jer 4:23-28 for evidence of chiasm and inclusio. Lundbom examines over forty textual clusters from the book of Jeremiah. Though he finds evidence of chiasm and inclusio in many other poems and speeches within the book of Jeremiah he does not examine Jer 4:23-28 for such structures.368

368 Lundbom, Jeremiah 1-20.
A “I looked the earth and behold desert and empty, and towards the heavens and no lights (v. 23)

Μπο ρωσ νητ
Μψμη λητη οησ ηνη ιτη ηρη ιτη ψτηρ

B I looked the mountains and behold quaking, and all the hills shook themselves (v. 24)

ωλθλθη
toβη ληκω Μψμηρ ηηη ηπηη ηπηρ

C I looked and behold not the human being and all fowl of the heavens were flown away (v. 25)

ωδδν
Μψμη Πω(ληκω Μδη ηηη ηπηη ψτηρ)

C’ I looked and behold the fertile land the wilderness and all its cities were destroyed (v. 25)

ωχτν
ωψρ(ληκω ρδημη ημηκη ηηη ηπηρ)

From face of YHWH, From the face of the burning of his anger (v. 26)

ωπξ Νωρ ινη ηωηψ ινημ

B’ Because thus says YHWH, ‘Desolate will be all the earth but a completion not I will make (v. 27)

η(λ) ιλκω ιρη ικ

ηπητ ιπμπ ηηηη ρμ) ηκ ψκ
A’ On-account-of this will-mourn/dry-up the-earth and-become-dark the-heavens from-above.

On-account-of because I-have-spoken, I-have-planned;

And-not I-will-repent and-not I-will-turn-back from-it.’ (v. 28)

ψτμζς ψτρβδ-ψκ λ( λμμ Μψμ#η

ωρδθω Χρη λβτ τζ-λ( 

ηνμμ βω#-λω ψτμζν λω

With the earth and the earth community (the heavens and their respective inhabitants) being the objects of YHWH’s attention throughout the text, v. 23 forms the beginning of a chiasm with the earth being described as desert and empty and the heavens containing no light.

A ‘I-looked the-earth and-behold desert and-empty, and-to-the-heavens and-no lights’

(v. 23) Μρω Νψω Μψμ#η-λω ηψβω

ωητ-ηνηω Χρη-τ ψτψρ

This image is echoed in v. 28 in the mourning/drying up of the earth and the darkness of the heavens

A’ ‘the-earth will-mourn/dry-up and-become-dark the-heavens above’

(v. 28) λ(μμ Μψμ#η ωρδθω Χρη λβτ
A possible correlation between vv. 24 and 27 is not so clear, though there may be a link between the images of the quaking mountains and the shaking of the hills in v. 24, and the desolation of the earth in v. 27.

B ‘I-looked the-mountains and-behold quaking, and-all-the hills shook-themselves

(v. 24) ωλολοθη τω(βγη–λκω)

Μψ#(ηνηω Μψρηη ψτψ)ρ

B’ ‘Desolate will-be all-the-earth’

(v. 27) Χρη–λκ ηψητ ημμ#

A further correlation may exist in vv. 25 and 26 with the inhabitants of the earth and heavens vacating their respective spheres in v. 25, while the life sustaining fertility of the land and the protection of the cities are absent in v. 26.

C ‘I-looked and-behold not the-human-being and-all-fowl of-the-heavens were-flown-away’

(v. 25) οδδν Μψμηη

Πω(–λκω Μδη Νψ) ηνηω ψτψ)ρ

C’ ‘I-looked and-behold the-fertile-land the-wilderness, and-all-its-cities were-destroyed’

(v. 26) ωχτν ωψρ(–λκω

ρβδηη ιμρκη ηνηω ψτψ)ρ
While it is acknowledged that some of these structures of inclusio are somewhat tenuous, the full pattern of a chiasm is absent due to the lack of a central focal point. The central point would logically be ‘from-face-of YHWH, from-face-of the-burning-of his-anger’ (οτε ἐνίοτε ἀγαθών v. 26) as it gives the reason for all the surrounding activities; however, the phrases are not placed centrally. Perhaps the off-centredness of this climactic statement is a rhetorical device in itself in that its unexpected placement may have the effect of drawing attention to the prophet’s theological interpretation. However, though no clear central point exists, there is a loose system of linking and balancing ideas within the text of 4:23-28 which may be regarded as a series of inclusio.

A further balancing of ideas exists in vv. 27-28, although the order is varied:

(A) ‘Because-thus says YHWH’ 
(B) ‘Desolate will-be all-the-earth’
(C) ‘and-a-completion not I-will-make’

(v. 27)
The impact of YHWH’s speech is repeated in vv. 27-28, albeit employing different words.

(A) ‘Because-thus says YHWH’

(Α’) ‘because I have spoken’

Another set of balancing ideas exists in vv. 27 and 28 in which the image of the desolation of the earth in v. 27 is repeated in the metaphor of the mourning/drying up of the earth in v. 28.
While there is a surprising contrast between the extent of the destruction expressed in YHWH’s declarations in vv. 27 and 28, both phrases present the notion of the intentionality of YHWH and, as such, represent balancing ideas.

Though it is doubtful that the full structure of chiasm is formally employed within Jer 4:23-8 there are, nevertheless, many instances of images that are repeated throughout the text in balanced sequences which serve to reinforce the prophet’s message and act as mnemonic devices. The metaphors of the earth and the heavens returning to their state of pre-creation desolation and experiencing devastation provide a forceful image of a world without covenantal order. The repeated images of the absence of people, birds, cities and fertile pastures express a picture of lack of life and productivity. YHWH’s initiative and responsibility regarding the destruction of the earth is repeated in statements of intentionality and determination. A powerful rhetorical thrust is achieved through the use of the structures of inclusio and partial chiasm.

3.15 The Power of the Prophetic Word
The HB presents the prophetic word as the word of God which has great power. The prophetic word is an event. ‘It has the power to effect that which is articulated … the future of which the prophet speaks already begins to happen once the word has been spoken.’\textsuperscript{369} Though the prophetic message may be repeated, misrepresented or challenged, once spoken it is enduring and cannot be forgotten or ignored.\textsuperscript{370} In his oracles against the nations Amos repeatedly declares that YHWH’s wrath will not be turned back (Amos 1-2). Jeremiah also declares, ‘Is not my word like fire, says YHWH, and like a hammer which shatters a rock?’ (Jer 23:29). Though he longs to be relieved of it, once given, the word of God must be delivered by the prophet: ‘Then I said, I will not mention him or speak in his name again. But it was like a flame burning in my heart, shut up in my bones, and I was weary of holding it in and I was not able’ (Jer 20:9). With the prophetic word being imbued with enormous power it is important for the prophet to authenticate her/his prophetic calling. Thus, Jeremiah claims authority by presenting himself as a Mosaic prophet who is appointed and commissioned by YHWH (Jer 1:4-9 cf. Ex 3:1-4:17).\textsuperscript{371} In a mortal battle with contemporary false prophets he defines a true prophet as one who has stood in the council of YHWH (Jer 23:18, 22) and he is horrified with the public acceptance of the false prophets (5:30-31). The prophetic role is not one

\textsuperscript{369} Fretheim, \textit{The Suffering of God}, 153.
\textsuperscript{370} Alter, \textit{The Art of Biblical Narrative}, 112 states that ‘language evinces the power to translate itself into history’.
\textsuperscript{371} Joseph Blenkinsopp, \textit{A History of Prophecy in Israel. From the Settlement in the Land to the Hellenistic Period} (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 15 notes that the calls of Moses and Jeremiah share the same basic structure with YHWH’s address, confirmation and encouragement, an act of installation, future mission and a vision. Both prophets have words put in their mouths by YHWH (Jer 1:9 and Ex 4:12). Fretheim, \textit{Jeremiah}, 6 notes, ‘The prophet-to-prophet interaction is particularly important … for claims regarding who has the true word of God for these implied readers are highly contested.’
to be taken lightly. The true prophet is empowered by YHWH and speaks YHWH’s words which inevitably translate in actions.\textsuperscript{372}

However, it is not only the words of biblical prophets which are efficacious; it is also their actions and their lives.\textsuperscript{373} In chap. 1 the initial coming of the word of YHWH (ηωηψις – ρβδης) to Jeremiah is described, along with his reluctant acceptance of it (vv. 1, 2, 4, 9, 11, 13). The familiar prophetic formula ‘and the word of YHWH came to me’ (ψλη ηωηψις – ρβδης ψηψω) (1:4, 11, 13) is followed by the expected prophetic response ‘and I said’ (ρσω) (1:6, 12, 14). In chap. 25 the prophet and his message are both rejected (vv. 1, 3, 8, 13, 30), however, he has fulfilled his prophetic task in delivering it. In his refusal to marry, to participate in feasts and mourning rituals (16:1-9) and to perform the prophetic duty of intercession (11:14-17; 14:11-12), Jeremiah embodies YHWH’s message concerning the exilic cessation of communal life.\textsuperscript{374} He is presented as a participant in YHWH’s work of destroying and rebuilding. He is ‘an archetypal figure who stands between two worlds’, declares Stulman.\textsuperscript{375} Thus, the prophetic word is a force with which to be reckoned. The word of the prophet is an event which cannot be averted and will certainly be enacted. The inevitable fulfilment of YHWH’s word is one of the strong themes of the book.\textsuperscript{376}

Jeremiah’s prophetic utterance regarding the reversal of creation is powerful in seeking to provoke a change in the perspectives of his readers on the theological

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{372} Jeremiah writes copiously on the issue of true and false prophets (e.g., chaps. 5-8, 23 and 28). Robert Davidson, The Courage to Doubt. Exploring an Old Testament Theme (London: SCM Press, 1983), 123-124 notes that as Jeremiah’s prophecies had not come to fruition he appeared to be a failure as a prophet.
\item \textsuperscript{373} See Fretheim, Jeremiah, 10; von Rad, A Prophet to the Nations, 346.
\item \textsuperscript{374} Fretheim, The Suffering of God, 157 states Jeremiah’s actions anticipate the absence of normal community living and relationships in exile. Fretheim, Jeremiah, 10 states that the word of God is conveyed through the prophet’s ‘very humanity’ as well as his words and actions.
\item \textsuperscript{375} Stulman, Order amid Chaos, 21.
\item \textsuperscript{376} Hill, Friend or Foe? 23 states that ‘the word of YHWH, whether one of judgment or restoration will come to pass’.
\end{itemize}
interpretation of exile. In a period of deep uncertainty when theoretical models do not relate to experience, prophets are among theorists who search among their foundational stories and local possibilities for illumination and salvation. However, when the master narrative appears to fail, a reinterpretation is necessary to make sense of the new world. In his reversal of creation metaphor Jeremiah seeks to provide a reinterpretation of the events of exile and provoke within his readers the formation of a new worldview.\(^{377}\)

In that the prophetic word can serve both symbolic and proleptic functions it may be that in uttering the prophetic word of YHWH regarding the reversal of creation Jeremiah is effectively putting the scene into action.\(^{378}\) The notion of accessing the archetypal power of creation through recitation is expressed in some ANE literature. Creation myths often preface magical incantations in order to ensure that primordial forces are activated in the specific act. However, the practice of recitation of cosmologies in reverse has destructive power.\(^{379}\) The notion of the power of recitation may be of relevance to Jeremiah’s metaphor of the reversal of creation (4:23-28). If the stability of Hebrew world order is maintained by accessing YHWH’s power through the recitation of the creation stories then that order may be destabilised when the stories are not recited correctly. A reverse recitation of the archetypal stories may enact chaos rather than order. Thus, Jeremiah’s reversal of creation metaphor may be a tool employed to destabilise the

\(^{377}\) Brueggemann, “Jeremiah: Creatio in Extremis,” 156 states that the prophet’s intent is ‘to imagine and invite the listener of the poem to host a scenario in which nothing reliable or life-sustaining is left. Creation theology here functions to voice a complete, unreserved, elemental negation of all that makes life livable.’  
world order, a type of magical incantation with destructive power which is designed to reduce the world to primordial desolation.

The Hebrew creation stories do not report the production of a physical universe \textit{ex nihilo}. Rather, they recount a struggle for control and order in YHWH’s act of mastery over the primordial world. Pre-creation desolation is brought into productivity so that people, the land and YHWH can co-exist peacefully and supportively. However, the forces of chaos remain as potent forces awaiting an opportunity to break forth in their destructive power. They are subjugated and controlled by YHWH’s maintaining power.\footnote{Levenson, \textit{Creation and the Persistence of Evil}, 3-47 argues that YHWH does not exercise ongoing mastery of creation and that YHWH’s power is spasmodic and continually in need of reactivation. Croatto, \textit{Biblical Hermeneutics}, 37 states that while the ‘founding’ event is ‘originary’ other events can have meaning when ‘aligned with the first’. Schmid, “Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation,” 102-115 states that legal and political order belongs to the order of creation, and must be regularly renewed through appropriate ritual. Fretheim, \textit{Jeremiah}, 105 argues that Jer 4:23-26 refers to the impact of human wickedness upon creation rather than a return to original chaos.} Thus, the world order is fragile and precarious, dependent upon YHWH’s power and Israel’s faithfulness, an arrangement which is formalised through various covenants. If the Hebrew creation stories constitute confessions of faith, they may contribute to the covenantal relationship which holds the land, the people and YHWH together in a symbiosis. The people need to contribute to the maintenance of creation’s order through cultic acts which may serve to renew the covenantal relationship.

Examining ‘the great foundational acts’ upon which the covenants of Sinai and Zion are based, Levenson explains that though the covenants are grounded in historical events, these events are ‘protological’ in that they involve the very beginnings of the covenants. Furthermore, they are brought alive and placed in the experience of the people through recitation.\footnote{Levenson, \textit{Sinai and Zion}, 42, 103.} Failure to perform the acts of recitation in cultic services and/or nullification of such recitation by unethical living leads to a lack of access to YHWH’s power in the
experience of the people. Violation of these covenants leads to the undoing of creation in a process of decreation, a return to pre-creation desolation.

Fishbane’s argument that in the ANE the act of recitation of a creation story evokes the power of origins may be relevant to Jeremiah’s reversal of creation metaphor. If the Hebrew creation stories constitute ‘white magic’, the reversal of the creation story may be understood as ‘black magic’ and an annulment of the original creation event. Fishbane draws parallels between Jer 4:23-26, Job 3:3-13 and other ANE literature in relation to the use of creation formulae as incantations for various purposes such as healing and restoration. Reference to the creation myth ensures the participation of the creator-god in the incantation and that ‘the power of origins is evoked and utilized’ through imitation and assimilation with the archetypal creation pattern. This power is then employed in the magical incantation in order to ensure its efficacy. It is through the recitation of the creation story that the recipient of the incantation is symbolically returned to the primordial time of creation and regenerated with it. If Jeremiah’s message has some sort of black magical power of reversal, the violent actions of his people towards him are understandable, such as putting him in stocks (20:1-6), arresting him (37:1-21), and threatening to kill him (26:1-24). It is clear that Jeremiah goes to great lengths to prove that he is a true prophet and that his words are the authentic words from YHWH. His reversal of creation metaphor constitutes a powerful message from YHWH.

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382 Fishbane, “Jeremiah IV 23-26,” 152 finds in Jer 4:23-26 the same order of creation as in Gen 1:1-2:4a. However, Tsumura, The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2, 37-38 notes that not all of Jeremiah’s terms match those of the Genesis text and that the order is not the same in the two passages.

383 Fishbane, “Jeremiah IV 23-26,” 155-167 cites the use of creation myths in Akkadian literature by magician-priests as a preface to magical incantations for temple restoration rituals to dispel evil forces, in birth incantations and in a quaint healing incantation against toothache. He also cites examples of incantations from Navajo, Polynesian, Indian and Tibetan peoples.
which, in the tradition of biblical prophetic words, cannot be averted and will ultimately be enacted.

3.16 Summary

Through the choice and arrangement of words in 4:23-28 Jeremiah constructs a metaphorical world of the return of the earth to a state of pre-creation desolation. Through the repetition of words and phrases, and the strategic use of conjunctions and particles the prophet vividly describes his vision of the desert and empty state of the earth, the darkness of the heavens, the violent movement of the mountains and hills, the desertification of the fertile land and the absence of the people and birds. Though a chiastic structure is incomplete, patterns of inclusio are employed to emphasize the devastation and depletion of the earth and its community, as well as YHWH’s responsibility in the destruction. The lexical unit  יִזְרָעָה expresses the joint nuances of ‘mourning’ and ‘drying up’. It is argued that the character of the earth’s experience of mourning is expressed in its actions of drying up. Having the capacity to attend to the communication of the earth the prophet hears its voice raised in distress at the breakdown of the land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship (4:28). His theological interpretation is that the scene of destruction is as a result of YHWH’s word, intention and plan. Having established his authority as an authentic prophet of YHWH Jeremiah employs the reversal of creation motif to challenge expectations concerning the wellbeing of the land. In an attempt to shock and appal, he exposes inadequate worldviews and prevailing theological interpretations. Through the metaphorically constructed world of the reversal of creation the prophet invites his readers to form an alternative perspective on issues of faith, covenant and exile.
Chapter 4  Intertextuality

4.1 Introduction

A lone voice produces a particular sound, and issues a particular communication. To recognize that that voice is not lone after all, but in dialogue with another voice, or hosts of voices, is what intertextual reading is all about. A dialogue communicates differently than a soliloquy. In a dialogue all voices help to shape meaning. Each single voice is reinterpreted in light of the others.  

This study understands the term ‘intertextuality’ in the broad sense of the reading of a text in the light of other texts. Having developed the heuristic lens of an ecologically oriented symbiotic relationship through which to view the text of Jer 4:23-28 and become sensitive to its presentation of the character and voice of the earth, this lens is now directed towards several other biblical and non-biblical ANE texts which employ similar words, phrases and/or images. It is hoped that by viewing these texts through this lens the reader may become attentive to the nuances through which the character and communication of the earth are presented and thus be enabled to hear the voice of the earth in the various texts. A brief comparison is made between Jer 4:23-28 and several biblical creation traditions, noting that the creation images and language used in Jeremiah resonate with those employed in the creation traditions. Ways in which the prophet supports and/or subverts traditions of creational order are briefly examined. Though this study is not concerned with issues of historicity, dating, transmission and source, it is

384 Danna Nolan Fewell, Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible (Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation; Louisville: Westminster, John Knox, 1992), 12. She also notes that ‘No text exists in a vacuum. All texts are embedded in a larger web of related texts, bounded only by human culture and language itself. Intertextual reading is inevitable. We cannot, in fact, understand any text without some appeal to other texts’ (17). The word ‘intertextuality’ was coined by Julia Kristeva, “Word, Dialogue and Novel,” in The Kristeva Reader, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 34-61.
acknowledged that there are streams of tradition that are expressed in texts, both written and oral, which other texts seek to ‘displace and decenter’. It is argued that through its choice and arrangement of words and phrases Jer 4:23-28 seeks to decenter streams of tradition concerning the relationship between covenant, the order of creation and the wellbeing of the earth.

A comparison is made between Jer 4:23-28 and two other texts in the book of Jeremiah (12:1-4 and 12:7-13) which express similar themes and language regarding the character and communication of the earth. The texts of Isa 24:1-20; 33:7-9; Hos 4:1-3 and Joel 1:5-20 are also examined through the heuristic lens and in comparison to Jer 4:23-28. These texts have been chosen because they have the most extended similarities to Jer 4:23-28, especially in terms of their choice of words, phrases and/or images. They are examined regarding the ways in which they present a relationship between the people, the land and YHWH, as well as their attention to the character and communication of the earth. They are also studied in order to identify their use of the themes of the mourning/drying up of the earth, its association with the sin of the people and its communication through its actions. Attention is then turned to how these verbal similarities and themes are presented in the general prophetic corpus. Brief comparisons are made between Jer 4:23-28 and several texts in Joel, Amos, Ezekiel and Nahum which may present the earth as a communicating character. These comparisons reveal that

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386 Peter D. Miscall, “Isaiah: New Heavens, New Earth, New Book,” in Reading Between Texts, ed. Fewell, 45 states that ‘To destroy a text’s center is to reduce it to chaos; to decenter it is to move the center elsewhere, an elsewhere that is no longer an absolutely controlling and dominating site. Textual authority and status are in question because the original text no longer has the necessary site and center to exercise its previous authority.’ Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in idem, Image-Music-Text (Trans. S. Heath; Glasgow: Fontana, 1977), 146 states that ‘The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture … the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others.’ It is stressed that this study of intertextuality suspends questions of dating and sequence. Texts are compared and contrasted with no quest for issues of dependence.
Jeremiah is one of several prophets who are attuned to the character and communication of the earth.

A non-biblical ANE text is examined through the chosen heuristic lens and in relation to Jer 4:23-28.\textsuperscript{387} It is argued that while similar language is employed in this text and the earth is certainly the arena for interaction between the people and the deities, the earth is not presented as a character. The earth appears to be a passive entity which is impacted by the people and the gods rather than a character which relates to them, acts of its own volition and raises its voice in dialogue with them.

After comparing Jer 4:23-28 with several biblical creation traditions and prophetic texts it is argued that, while to varying degrees, they all have express a capacity to attend to the earth’s character and voice, the Jeremian text embodies a particularly sensitive ecology. Though other parts of the book present the earth’s messages of joy and sorrow, it is argued that 4:23-28 includes a particularly sensitive rendition of the earth’s voice as it expresses its anguish. It presents a succinct account of the communication of the earth as it raises its voice in its unique language of violent movement, depletion and infertility.

4.2 Biblical Creation Traditions

Though it is acknowledged that the HB presents multiple cosmogonic perspectives, one common thread is that YHWH’s absolute responsibility in creation is affirmed. All perspectives of YHWH’s power and activities are rooted in the metaphor that ‘YHWH reigns’ over the entire universe.\textsuperscript{388} In accordance with divine will and order,


\textsuperscript{388} Stulman, \textit{Order amid Chaos}, 109 states that ‘no realm or power structure lies outside YHWH’s sphere of control’. Schmid, “Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation,” 104-105 states that in the ANE legal and political order belongs to the order of creation, and that the king is the earthly guarantor of the created
creation is reliable and moral, and so the heavenly, human and environmental worlds are connected. In keeping with the notion of symbiosis, human behavior has repercussions in the natural, social and spiritual realms. However, in many of the creation traditions, while YHWH certainly employs nature’s resources to bless, curse and punish, it is argued that the earth is presented as a character that acts and communicates of its own accord.\(^{389}\)

Jeremiah’s vision is reported through the vehicle of the phrases ‘I looked’ (ψτρ) and ‘behold’ (ηνη) vv. 23-26) with his act of seeing resonating with God’s visual activity in Gen 1.\(^{390}\) However, there is a remarkable contrast between the objects of the sightings in the two texts. Whereas God looked at the created order and ‘saw that it was good’ (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31), Jeremiah beholds four scenes of creation in various states of destruction and depletion. The use of the particle ηνη (‘behold’) emphasizes the notion that there is nothing left for the prophet to see.\(^{391}\) Creation has been undone and returned to a state of pre-creation desolation and the prophet beholds the scene of devastation.

Jeremiah’s vision of the decreation of the earth and the heavens (4:23 and 28) resonates with the Gen 1 account of the creation of ‘the heavens and the earth’ (1:1). The order. Habel, The Land is Mine, 25-26 explains that according to the Davidic ideology the monarch is YHWH’s representative on earth and thus rules the whole earth with peace, stability and order.\(^{389}\) Douglas A. Knight, “Cosmogony and Order in the Hebrew Tradition,” in Cosmology and Ethical Order. New Studies in Comparative Ethics, eds. Robin W. Lovin and Frank E. Reynolds (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 145-151 discusses relationships between ethical behavior and creational order. See also Walter Brueggemann, Isaiah 1-39 (Westminster Bible Companion; Louisville: Westminster, John Knox Press, 1998), 262; Fretheim, Jeremiah, 196 and Trible, God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality, 123-139.\(^{390}\) However, it is stressed that this synchronic study makes no claims for priority, rather, it merely notes similarities of themes and wording. Many scholars have noted the similarities in terminology and structure between Jer 4:23-26 and Gen 1:1-2:4a, e.g., Lundbom, Jeremiah, 83; Fishbane, “Jeremiah IV 23-26,” 151-3; McKane, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary, 108.\(^{391}\) Hyun Chul Paul Kim, “Tsunami, Hurricane, and Jeremiah 4:23-28,” BTB 37/2 (2007), 55 also refers to the created woman’s act of seeing in which she saw that ‘the tree was good’ (Gen 3:6). He explains that it is only God who is able to see ‘good’ and thus, Jeremiah’s vision of destruction is understandable and ironically linked with the woman’s sighting.
linking of the heavens and the earth in the texts presents the notion that the whole universe is involved in creation and its undoing. While the Gen 1 creation tradition commences with a scene of disorder and unproductivity, Jeremiah’s earth reverts to a ‘desert and empty’ state (ὁφυβω ὄηπτ Gen 1:2 and Jer 4:23). However, as God speaks light into existence in Gen 1:3 (‘and God said, “Let be light’”), the prophet looks and beholds that ‘there was no light’ (Jer 4:23) and ‘the heavens above become dark’ (4:28). It is clear that the created order has returned to the desert, empty and dark state in which it existed before God imposed creational order.

Mountains and hills are normally stable places. They can also be sacred and secure spaces in which God dwells and to which people turn for protection. It is an unsettling omen that the mountains quake and the hills shake themselves in Jeremiah’s vision (4:24). The moving landforms are reminiscent of a theophany of Sinai proportions (Ex 19:16-25), however, they also undermine the notion of the security and sanctity of many of Israel’s high places (e.g., Pss 48:2, 11-12; 69:35; 76:2; 125:1; Isa 4:5; 8:18; 24:23). In Jeremiah’s vision the mountains and hills take the initiative to move violently and it seems that nothing will stop them. While mountains are often places of stability and divine presence, Jeremiah presents an alternative image of theophany and faith in the quaking mountains and infertile land (4:26). Paradoxically, YHWH is present in destruction, depletion and instability rather than in fire, rain and fertility. Kim identifies an intertextual connection between Jeremiah’s mountains and cities (4:24 and 26), and those of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19). When the angelic messengers warn Lot to flee
to the mountains, he pleads to be permitted to take refuge in a neighboring city (vv. 19-20). However, in Jer 4:24 and 26 neither the mountains nor the cities afford protection.  

In the Gen 1 creation tradition the land flourishes with vegetation, seed-bearing plants and fruit-bearing trees (1:11-12), a lush scene which is depleted in Jeremiah’s vision of the fertile land without pasture (4:26). The fertile land’ (λμρκη) of Jer 4:26 is a synonym for Mount Carmel, one of Israel’s symbols of fertility. The description of the desertification of the fruitful land in Jeremiah (‘the fertile land became the wilderness’ ρβδμη λμρκη 4:26) also resonates with the images of the dry and infertile land in Gen 2:5 (‘and all bushes of the field were not yet in the earth’) Xρβ ηψψψ Μρ+ ηδ#η ξψ# λκω). The fertility associated with the ordering of creation in the Genesis accounts is decentered in Jeremiah’s vision.

While the people come into existence by God’s word in Gen 1:26, they are noticeably absent in Gen 2:5 and Jer 4:25 (‘and human beings not’ Νψ) Μδ)ω Gen 2:5; ‘no human being’ Mδη Νψ Ιερ 4:25). In the Hebrew traditions human morality is associated with the creation motif. Humans and nature conspire to defy YHWH-Elohim in Gen 3 and thus punishment is directed towards the human and environmental spheres. The woman experiences pain in childbirth and the man is condemned to struggle with thorns and thistles in tending the once fruitful earth. The serpent is cursed to crawl on its belly and be engaged in an ongoing battle with the people (Gen 3). The first exilic experience of God’s people occurs in the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of

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393 Kim, “Tsunami, Hurricane, and Jeremiah 4:23-28,” 56 notes that ‘The land flowing with milk and honey is turned to a desert.’
394 While this thesis reads λμρκη as ‘the fertile land’ it is also noted that Carmel is a heavily treed mountainous region in northern Palestine. See 1 Kgs 18:19, 42; 2 Kgs 2:25, 4:25, 19:23; Isa 37:24; Amos 9:3.
Eden (Gen 3:23-24). The second exile follows filial murder when Cain is evicted to wander aimlessly from his land and the ground withholds its crops from him (Gen 4:12). Thus, the fertility of the earth and the characteristics of its animal life are linked with the actions of the people. Jeremiah also links the movement of the landforms, the infertility of the land and the mourning/drying up of the earth with the absence of the people (4:24-28).

Lists containing various representatives of the animal kingdom occur in Gen 1, as well as in some of the prophets. The lists of life forms represent a token sample of all animal life and are in keeping with other ANE lists of animals. The disappearance of birds, animals and/or people is a theme expressed elsewhere in Jeremiah (eg. 4:25; 9:10-11 and 12:4). Zephaniah also employs imagery of the weakening of life forms: ‘(YHWH) will sweep away both men and animals; I will sweep away the birds of the air and the fish of the sea’ (Zeph 1:3). According to all these prophets it is YHWH’s judgment which causes the depletion of people and animals from the earth, birds from the heavens and fish from the sea. Whereas Hosea and Zephaniah include the beasts of the field and the fish of the sea in their lists of disappearing animal life, in 4:23-8 Jeremiah only refers to humans and birds, omitting the beasts and fish. It may be that Jeremiah uses birds to represent all animal life or that the birds are the inhabitants of the heavens and the people serve as representatives of the inhabitants of the earth. Nevertheless, it is significant that all three prophets list the animals in the reverse order to that of Gen 1 creation account. The reverse arrangement presents a powerful rhetorical statement that reinforces Jeremiah’s image of the reversal of creation in 4:23-28. The absence of the people and

396 Gen 1:20-4 lists the creation of the fish, birds and beasts, the order of which is repeated in 1:26 and 28.
birds is linked with the instability of the hills and mountains, the depletion of the fertile
areas and the mourning/drying up of the earth. The presentation of animal life in reverse
order by Jeremiah and other prophets represents the destruction of the created order of the
earth. The land-people-YHWH symbiosis has been dismantled.

Though it is tenuous, Kim suggests a connection between the moving mountains
and hills of Jer 4:24 and Noah’s ark being tossed to and fro as it comes to rest on Mount
Ararat (Gen 8:4). He also links the flight of the birds in Jer 4:25 with their destruction
along with all other creatures in Gen 6-7. 397 It may be that such associations reinforce the
linking of the Gen 1 and 2 creation traditions with Jer 4:23-28. YHWH’s intention to
destroy the earth (‘I have spoken, I have planned; and I have not repented and I will not
turn from it’ Jer 4:28) may be linked with God’s plan to destroy all life in the great flood
(Gen 6:13, 17; 7:4). Likewise YHWH’s decision not to ‘make a full end’ (Jer 4:27) may
resonate with God’s rescue mission for Noah, his family and the representatives of each
animal species (Gen 6-9). God’s promise never to flood the world again (Gen 9:11)
provides hope for the future as does Jeremiah’s declaration of incomplete destruction.

The enduring nature of Jeremiah’s new covenant is described in terms of creation
(sun, moon, stars and sea, 31:35; 33:25-26). Despite the description of the destabilization
of the created order in Jer 4:23-28 in which darkness prevails, the prophet also presents
the notion that YHWH’s new covenant with day and night cannot be broken. Thus,
though the current covenantal relationship is inadequate and cannot be sustained, the new
covenantal relationship will be indestructible. The new land-people-YHWH symbiotic

397 Kim, “Tsunami, Hurricane, and Jeremiah 4:23-28,” 57 draws a parallel between the flight of the birds in
Jer 4:25 and the exploratory activities of the raven and the dove in Gen 8:7-12. However, this link is
tenuous. He also compares the flight of the birds in Jer 4:25 with the withdrawal of various animals and
birds during recent natural disasters such as the tsunami of 2004. He notes that while people are not always
in tune with nature, animals and birds often are (59).
relationship will endure eternally. In an eco-perspective Jeremiah presents the new covenantal life in terms of the wellbeing of the earth. The joy of the earth knows no bounds as it raises its voice in celebration through flourishing crops and increasing herds (chap. 33) as it did in the Gen 1 and 2 creation traditions.

4.3 Jer 12:1-4

Jer 12:1-4 presents the people, the earth and YHWH existing in an interdependent relationship. The heuristic lens of an ecologically oriented symbiotic relationship is employed to examine this relationship and to attend to the character and voice of the earth in the text. At the same time a comparison is made between Jer 12:1-4 and 4:23-28.
V. 1 You are righteous, YHWH

because I contend with you;
indeed about your judgments I speak with you;
why does the way of the wicked prosper;
at ease all the treacherously treacherous?

V. 2 You planted them, also they take root,
they go, also they make fruit;
you are near in their mouth
and far from their affections.

V. 3 And you YHWH you know me, you see me,
and test my heart to you;
separate them like sheep for the slaughter
and consecrate them for the day of killing.

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398 Κλη, ‘they go’ BDB, 229-237. In keeping with the planting imagery NRSV and NIV read ‘they grow’.
Lundbom, Jeremiah 1-20, 645 argues that the repetition of the particle Μγ stresses growth after planting.

399 LXX ‘they have children’.

400 μηλκ literally ‘from their kidneys’ which are the seat of affections BDB, 480.

401 LXX omits ‘you see me’.

V.4 How long will the earth mourn/dry up
and the grass of every field be ashamed/wither
from the evil of those who dwell in it;
the beasts and the bird are swept away
for they said, ‘He will not see our end’.

Set within the context of his first lament (11:18-12:6) Jeremiah employs legal language (θψδχ, βψρ, Μψ+π#μ and Μψ(#ρ 12:1) in his contention with YHWH regarding the evil people whose flourishing is linked with the depletion of the earth. In a scene of decreation reminiscent of Jer 4:23-28 the character of the earth mourns/dries up, the fields are ashamed/wither and the animals are swept away (12:4). This study understands such actions to be the voice of the earth as it expresses its suffering regarding the breakdown of the symbiotic relationship.

While YHWH is referred to in Jer 4:23-28 as the initiator of the earth’s destruction, in 12:1-4 YHWH is addressed in covenantal terms as the righteous judge with whom the prophet contends (v. 1) and who is imbued with knowledge, vision and

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403 BDB, 705 lists several meanings for ηπχ, including ‘sweep away’, ‘snatch away’ and ‘catch up’. S reads τπχ ‘have perished’, V reads consumptum est ‘have been consumed’, LXX reads ἅφανεν ‘has disappeared’. Holladay, Jeremiah 1, 364, 379 suggests a change in the vowels to make YHWH the subject: ‘You (YHWH) have swept away’. S, T and V read the singular ημηβ (‘beast’) which is consistent with the singular Πο(ω) (‘and bird’).
404 S reads Νοτξ ‘our end’, V reads novissima nostra ‘our last things’ and LXX reads οξδου; β ἢ οματ ‘our ways’.
405 Walter Baumgartener, Jeremiah’s Poems of Lament (Trans. David E. Orton; Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1988), 63-71 classifies the text as a poem related to songs of lament. Brueggemann, To Pluck Up, 112-113 states that 12:1-4 forcefully poses the problem of theodicy (cf. Pss 1; 37; 73; Job 24; Hab 1). See also Davidson, The Courage to Doubt, 121-139; Carroll, Jeremiah, 285; Holladay, Jeremiah 1, 376-377; Stulman, Jeremiah, 126-127; Fretheim, Jeremiah, 192-193 states that Jeremiah is impatient for God the impose judgment. Douglas Rawlinson Jones, Jeremiah (The New Century Bible Commentary: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 186-187 compares Jeremiah’s laments in 11:18-20 and 12:1-6 with those of the Psalter (e.g., Pss 44, 74, 83, 123, 129), noting that ‘how long’ is typical lament language.
insight (v. 3). YHWH has the power of life and death over the people (v. 3). In stark contrast to righteous YHWH, the people are presented in terms of unrelenting evil. Remonstrating that their way prospers and they live in peace (v. 1), Jeremiah describes their flourishing in agricultural terms: ‘You planted them, also they take root; they grow, also they make fruit’ (v. 2). His demand for YHWH’s judgment to come upon them is also presented in a rural image: ‘separate them like sheep for the slaughter’ (v. 3). The people are hypocritical in their use of pious words that do not reflect their motives: ‘You are near in their mouth and far from their affections’ (v. 3). They may even believe that YHWH is oblivious to their evil actions and attitudes (v. 4). The prophet distances himself from the evil people in claiming to be subject to YHWH’s knowledge, scrutiny and testing: ‘And you YHWH, you know me, you have seen me and tested my heart to you’ (v. 3). While the people in 12:1-4 are clearly evil and yet flourishing, in 4:25 they are merely absent.

The earth is in a state of decline and suffering in both texts. In 12:1-4 the prophet also states that the earth mourns/dries up (אָבַרִים) and the grasses are ashamed/wither

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406 Craigie, Kelley and Drinkard, *Jeremiah 1-25*, 179-180 point out the ambiguity of the colon in that the prophet either declares YHWH to be the righteous judge or the defendant who is charged with complicity in the inequities of life. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 643 states that KJV’s βηρί) could be read ‘innocent are you’, however, he opts for the reading ‘righteous are you’ which indicates that the prophet is appealing to YHWH as the righteous judge. Nevertheless, he acknowledges that there is an oblique censure of YHWH. Jones, *Jeremiah*, 189 states that YHWH’s righteousness ‘is both the ground of the prophet’s hope for justice and the reason for his perplexity that the wicked prosper’. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 376-377 notes that though YHWH may be innocent, the prophet insists on expressing his complaint against YHWH. Whatever the grounds for the prophet’s contention, this thesis focuses on the contrast between the flourishing evil people and the depletion of the earth.

407 Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 285-286 provides several alternatives for the identity of the wicked people, including other nations, the nation which is threatening Israel, the enemies of the speaker, a community group with a different ideology and members of the prophet’s family. Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up*, 113 associates the wicked with ‘the men of Anathoth’ (11:21). Jones, *Jeremiah*, 187 argues that the wicked are not national enemies because Jeremiah believes that their assault on Judah is commissioned by YHWH. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 644 suggests that they may be later optimistic prophets (e.g., 23:10-11, 14, 25-32; 29:21-23). Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 376 refers to the ‘topsy-turvy world’ of the fall of Jerusalem in which the evil are powerful and successful. Though the identity of the evil people is not the concern of this thesis Holladay’s reflection is helpful. See also Stulman, *Jeremiah*, 126-127; Bracke, *Jeremiah 1-29*, 112-113; Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah*, 118-119.
( INTERRUPTION OF ORDER). The texts employ verbs which express both physical and psychological nuances. The use of these verbs reinforces the connection between the earth and the people, as well as strengthening the image of the earth as a character. In chap. 12 a contrast between the condition of the people and that of the earth is established by the use of two questions: ‘Why does the way of the wicked prosper; at ease all the treacherously treacherous?’ (v. 1) and ‘How long will the earth mourn/dry up and the grass of every field be ashamed/wither?’ (v. 4). The irony is that while the evil people flourish, the earth withers and declines. Though the earth and YHWH combine forces to enable the evil people to thrive, human actions result in the depletion of the earth.

While 4:25 merely states that the birds have flown away, the image in 12:4 is that ‘the beasts and the bird are swept away’. It would appear that the beasts and the bird represent all creatures in 12:4, whereas in 4:25 the birds are sufficient in that representative role. Both texts resonate with the creation traditions in Gen 1 and 2 which include the animals and the birds. In both 4:23-28 and 12:1-4 Jeremiah presents a scene in which the covenantal order of creation is undone and the earth returns to a state of pre-creation desolation. The animal life of the Genesis traditions has vacated the scene.

In an eco-perspective, Jeremiah presents the earth as a character which actively contributes to its state of devastation and depletion. The earth lacks order, light, stability and fertility in 4:23-28 and it mourns/dries up and is ashamed/wITHERS in 12:4. Its state of depletion is clearly linked with the wickedness of the people in 12:1, 2 and 4. The phrase

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408 The reversal of the consonants in  and  supports the sense of destabilization.
409 Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 96-99 sees the connection between the evil of the people and the suffering of the earth as symbolic rather than that the people have done something specific to adversely affect the earth. She points out that the connection between the wickedness of the people and the suffering of the earth is stressed above YHWH’s judgment. See also Breuggemann, Jeremiah 1-25, 113; Carroll, Jeremiah, 286; Lundbom, Jeremiah 1-20, 646; Holladay, Jeremiah 1, 379.
‘from the evil of those who dwell in it’ is arranged between the mourning/drying up earth and the ashamed/withering fields in the first two cola, and the swept away beasts and bird in the third colon (12:4). YHWH’s anger and intention are associated with the devastation of the earth in 4:23-28, whereas in 12:3 Jeremiah calls for YHWH’s judgment to be poured out upon the people: ‘Consecrate them for the day of killing’. The prophet’s demand is reminiscent of the day of YHWH language.\textsuperscript{410} The subject of the final colon is unclear: ‘For they said, “He will not see our end”’ (v. 4). While the speaker may be the wicked people who assume that YHWH is unaware of their evil actions, alternatively it may be the beasts and the bird which are swept away in the preceding colon who are expressing their anguish at being abandoned by YHWH.\textsuperscript{411} If this is so, the voices of the beasts and the bird contribute to the communication of the earth as it expresses its distress in mourning/drying up and being ashamed/withering. In both texts the use of the qal mood in \textit{λβ} (4:28 and 12:4) and \textit{#财政部} (12:4) reinforces the notion of the action of the earth. In an eco-perspective Jeremiah attends to the voice of the earth as it expresses its anguish in its own unique language of movement, infertility and the absence of its animal

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{410} Hayes, \textit{The Earth Mourns}, 98 stresses the semantic and phonological similarities of the roots \textit{ηρσ} and \textit{πόσ} which create strong associations between Jer 12:4 and Hos 4:3 in which the verbs are used in the context of the destruction of the earth’s creatures. In Zeph 1:2-8 \textit{πόσ} is employed in the context of the judgment of the Day of YHWH. Lundbom, \textit{Jeremiah 1-20}, 645 notes the irony of these sanctimonious deaths. However, Holladay, \textit{Jeremiah 1}, 378 argues that domestic killing (culling) is referred to rather than cultic sacrifice. Brueggemann, \textit{A Commentary on Jeremiah}, 119 links the scene of death with 11:9. The tables are turned with Jeremiah’s adversaries experiencing what they proposed for him.

\textsuperscript{411} The LXX addresses the ambiguity of the subject by adding \textit{οδος χαραετος}. Jan de Waard, \textit{A Handbook on Jeremiah} (Textual Criticism and the Translator Vol. 2; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 60 explains that a first hand of 4 QJer reads ‘YHWH will not make you see’ and a second hand reads ‘God shall not see’. However, T, V and S support MT. Lundbom, \textit{Jeremiah 1-20}, 646 points out that it is common in the HB for the wicked to think that YHWH is oblivious to their evil, e.g., Pss 10:11; 73:11; 94:7; Job 22:13; Jer 7:11; Ezek 8:12; 9:9. See also Fretheim, \textit{Jeremiah 192}. Holladay, \textit{Jeremiah 1}, 377 notes that the notion of hypocrisy is foreign to the HB. It is expected that ideas, words and actions are consistent. Any aberration from the expected sequence is shocking. However, it may be the beasts and bird who are distressed by YHWH’s neglect.
\end{footnotesize}
life. The earth suffers because of the breakdown of the land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship.

4.4 Jer 12:7-13

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ψτψβ-τ) ψτβξ( 7

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ψ#πν τωδψυ-τ) ψττν

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. ημμ# ρβδμλ

ψτδμξ τθλξ–τ) οντν

ημμ# ψλ( ηλβ)

ημμ#λ. ημ# 11
V 7 I have forsaken my house,
    I have left my inheritance,
    I have given the beloved of my soul
    into the palm of her enemies.

V. 8 My inheritance has become to me
    like a lion in the forest;
    she gave out her voice against me,
    therefore I hate her.
V. 9 My inheritance is to me the speckled bird\textsuperscript{412},

the birds are all around against her;
go gather all the beasts of the field
bring them to devour.\textsuperscript{413}

V. 10 Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard,

they have trampled my field;
they have made my pleasant field
a desolate wilderness.

V. 11 One has made it a desolation;\textsuperscript{414}
it mourns/dries up to me, desolate;
all the earth is made desolate
because no man lays it to heart.

V. 12 On account of all the heights in the wilderness,
destroyers have come
because the sword of YHWH devours
from one end of earth to the other end of the earth
there is no peace for all flesh.

V. 13 They have sown wheat and reaped thorns;\textsuperscript{415}
they are exhausted, they do not profit;\textsuperscript{416}

\textsuperscript{412} BDB, 840, (βχ ‘dye’, ‘dyed stuff’ and (ωβχ ‘colored’, ‘variegated’. V reads avis discolor (‘a partly colored bird’). S reads ‘a speckled bird’. T reads (‘like fowl that have been scattered’). LXX reads mh; sph’alıon u≫ai’nhβ h≫ klhronomı’a mou ejmoi; (‘is my inheritance a hyena’s cave to me’).

\textsuperscript{413} LXX reads kai; ejlqe´twsan (‘let them come’). V reads properate (‘hasten’). T reads ηλ(Ν οτγψψ (‘will come against her’). However, no audience is indicated.

\textsuperscript{414} V, S and T read ‘they have made her a desolation’.

\textsuperscript{415} LXX employs imperative forms of the verbs.
they are ashamed/whithered\(^417\) of your harvests\(^418\)

from the burning anger of YHWH.\(^419\)

The heuristic lens is now employed in reading Jer 12:7-13 which presents the interwoven perspectives of the land, the people and YHWH as they wrestle with each other in expressing their anguish at the breakdown of their symbiotic relationship. In response to the prophet and with a profound sense of loss, YHWH laments ‘I have forsaken my house, I have left my inheritance, I have given the beloved of my soul into the palm of her enemies’ (v. 7).\(^420\) It is unclear whether ‘my house’ (ψτψβ), ‘my inheritance’ (ψτξγν) and ‘the beloved of my soul’ (ψπαντο θυτησ) refer to the people and/or the earth.\(^421\) The relationship between the people and the earth is, at times, so close

416 V and S read ςω, Aq reads eiklronovmhsan (‘they have inherited’). Several manuscripts replace ηξγ with ηξγν, e.g., V hereditatum acceperunt (‘they have received an inheritance’), LXX οι κληρονομοι αύτων (‘their portions’).

417 LXX reads the imperative αἰσχραν (‘be ashamed’).

418 LXX reads αισχραν (‘be ashamed’).

419 LXX reads αἰσχραν (‘be ashamed’).

420 Lundbom, Jeremiah 1-20, 651 states that YHWH’s speech embodies both judgment and loss. ‘The verbs of rejection, together with three metaphors for Yahweh’s possessions, heighten the sense of divine loss’ (653). With the occurrence of ηξγ five times in chap. 12, Holladay, Jeremiah 1, 386 states that the notion of YHWH deserting ηξγ is unthinkable. He states that YHWH’s love (vv. 7, 10) and hate (v. 8) indicate ‘deep ambivalence’ (385). Bracke, Jeremiah 1-29, 115 also notes that YHWH’s decision to abandon Judah is difficult. See also Fretheim, Jeremiah, 194-195. Stulman, Jeremiah, 128 notes that the repetition of the first person pronoun emphasizes YHWH’s involvement with Israel and the depth of pain over their broken relationship. Brueggemann, A Commentary on Jeremiah, 120-121 argues that the three verbs expressing YHWH’s loss are those of grief rather than judgment. However, he concedes YHWH abandons Judah rather than vice versa. Brueggemann, To Pluck Up, 115 states that ‘when Yahweh withdraws, Judah is helpless and hopeless’ For the purposes of this study it is noted that with YHWH’s withdrawal the symbiotic relationship is dismantled.

421 While in the HB ψτψβ refers predominantly to the people in their kinship groups, it can also refer to the earth, e.g., ‘I will drive them from my house (ψτψβ)’ (Hos 9:15). See 2.9 of this study for a discussion of ηξγ as the people and land of YHWH. See also M. Chaney, “You Shall Not Covet Your Neighbour’s House,” Pacific Theological Review 15 (1982), 3-13; Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 108; Bracke, Jeremiah 1-29, 115. Lundbom, Jeremiah 1-20, 654 argues that it may also refer to the temple. However, Holladay, Jeremiah 1, 384-386 identifies it as Israel. Fretheim, Jeremiah, 195 makes the important point that the temple and the land are interrelated, with blessings flowing from the temple to the land. See also Jones, Jeremiah, 192; Clements, Jeremiah, 54. In view of the symbiotic relationship this thesis acknowledges that the people and the earth are at times inextricably associated.
that it is difficult to differentiate them.\textsuperscript{422} The repetition of the possessive pronoun ‘my’ stresses YHWH’s involvement with the people and the earth. Their close association continues with YHWH’s \( \eta \lambda \xi \nu \) becoming ‘like a lion in the forest’ (v. 8). The relationship between the people-earth/\( \eta \lambda \xi \nu \) and YHWH has deteriorated to the extent that she roars at YHWH and YHWH hates her for it (v. 8).\textsuperscript{423} In a further association of the human and ecological spheres YHWH’s \( \eta \lambda \xi \nu \) is likened to ‘the speckled bird’ which is attacked by other birds (v. 9).\textsuperscript{424} The earth is presented as an interconnected community of living things that are dependent upon each other to the extent that they are sometimes indistinguishable from each other (Ecojustice Principle 2).

In vv. 11-13 the people are presented as separate from the earth, however, the identity of the shepherds is unclear. They could be tenders of flocks and herds, Judah’s

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\textsuperscript{422} Hayes, \textit{The Earth Mourns}, 108 remarks upon the high incidence of ‘wordplay, metaphors and figurative language’ that link the people and the earth in this text. Carroll, \textit{Jeremiah}, 290 states that because of the devastation ‘no one pays any attention to the land any more’. It is disappointing that neither the people nor several scholars pause to listen to the earth’s voice. While Stulman, \textit{Jeremiah}, 128 describes the sorrow of YHWH, the people and the prophet, he does not acknowledge the grief of the character of the earth. See also Jones, \textit{Jeremiah}, 193; Lundbom, \textit{Jeremiah 1-20}, 658. It is heartening that Fretheim, \textit{Jeremiah}, 196 views the devastation from the land’s point of view.

\textsuperscript{423} Carroll, \textit{Jeremiah}, 290 poses the question of whether the lion’s roar is an act of defiance or aggression. Lundbom, \textit{Jeremiah 1-20}, 654 states that the lion represents ‘a contemptuous and impious people’. Craigie, Kelley and Drinkard, \textit{Jeremiah 1-25}, 184 point out that while Judah is often represented in the HB as a strong lion, in this text the image of her roaring against YHWH in aggression or defiance is not a flattering one. Brueggmann, \textit{To Pluck Up}, 116 states that ‘The images bespeak a situation of brokenness, antagonism, hostility, alienation in the land and the people. The poetry is wondrously abrasive in presenting the disjunction between the peaceably ordered kingdom of Yahweh’s vineyard and inheritance, and this community now gone berserk in its destructive, rapacious way.’ Fretheim, \textit{Jeremiah}, 195 notes that the presentation of YHWH as Israel’s prey is remarkable. However, the land-people/ \( \eta \lambda \xi \nu \) is also prey (v.9). This study emphasizes that the symbiotic relationship has deteriorated to breaking point.

\textsuperscript{424} Lundbom, \textit{Jeremiah 1-20}, 655 discusses a range of readings, concluding that the colored bird is strange and untamable. Holladay, \textit{Jeremiah 1}, 387-388 postulates that the bird may have unfamiliar plumage or be stained with blood. Hayes, \textit{The Earth Mourns}, 105 reads the word as (\( \beta \chi \), ‘a hyena’, citing the usage in Sir 13:18. She argues that the hyena’s den represents the land of Judah. Holladay, \textit{Jeremiah 1}, 387 sees Israel as a corpse upon which a scavenging hyena is ready to pounce. Acknowledging the difficulties of interpretation Carroll, \textit{Jeremiah}, 289-290 concludes that the land is prey of one type or another. Whatever the identity of the bird, it is clear that the support and protection of the symbiotic relationship has gone.

\end{footnotesize}
leaders or invading foreign rulers. Whichever they are, it is clear that they are people who have damaged the earth: ‘Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard, they trample my field, they have made my pleasant field a desolate wilderness’ (v. 10). Another unidentified agent, presumably human, also makes the earth desolate (v. 11). The earth suffers due to the lack of human consideration: ‘the whole earth is made desolate because no man lays it to heart’ (v. 11). In fruitless effort reminiscent of Gen 3:17-19 the people ‘have sown wheat and reaped thorns, they are exhausted but do not profit’ (v. 13). The people are linked with the earth in their shame over the disappointing harvests, as well as YHWH’s anger (v. 13). Both the people and the animals lack peace (‘there is no peace for all flesh’ v. 12). In Jer 4:25 the people are clearly differentiated from the earth in their absence from it. However, in 12:7-13 they are closely associated with the earth in their relationship with and enmity towards YHWH. The people and the earth suffer together. They are attacked by destroyers, devoured by ‘the sword of YHWH’ (v. 12) and recipients of ‘the burning anger of YHWH’ (4:26 cf. v. 13). Nevertheless, though they are associated with it in its suffering, the people lack consideration for the earth (v. 11). It

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425 Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 110 argues that, in the light of the destroyers of v. 12, the shepherds may be foreign invaders. She links the birds of prey and beasts (v. 9) with the shepherds (v. 10) (109). See also Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 196. See Mc Kane, *Jeremiah 1*, 316 regarding images of military invasion in the book of Jeremiah. Clements, *Jeremiah*, 84 notes that ‘shepherd’ is frequently used to denote Israel’s kings. See also Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 656.

426 While curses are not invoked here, devouring animals and failing harvests are reminiscent of the curse language of Deut 28 and Lev 26. See Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah*, 122. Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, 196 assumes that the disappointed people are ashamed of their strained relationship with the earth. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 658 links the people’s shame with Joel 1:11, noting that ancient people felt shame over poor harvests. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1*, 388 notes the word play between ὁλέξων and ἤλεξόν. With the breakdown of the symbiotic relationship the earth lacks the fertility to provide for its people (Ecojustice Principle 5).

427 Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 113 states that ‘the sword of YHWH’ is a symbol for the divine warrior. Brueggemann, *To Pluck Up*, 117 notes that the metaphor of the sword wielding YHWH is imbedded in Hebrew covenant tradition (e.g., Ex 22:24). However, while YHWH usually protects Israel with the sword, here it is turned against YHWH’s people and land.
is clear that the symbiotic relationship has completely broken down in 4:23-28 and in 12:7-13.

In 12:7-13 though the earth is linked with the people in its suffering, it also experiences its own anguish and expresses its grief in its unique language. The earth (χρ) is directly named three times (vv. 11-12) and it is referred to by a pronoun twice (vv. 11). It suffers devastation on many fronts. Reinforcing the sense of desolation, Μυ# is employed four times in quick succession:

They have made my pleasant field a desolate wilderness (ημυ# ρβδυλ); one has made it a desolation (ημυ#λ); it mourns/dries up to me, desolate (ημυ#), the whole earth is appalled/desolate (ημυ#ν) because no man lays it to heart (vv. 10-11).

The earth’s desolation is so extensive that ‘all the heights in the wilderness’ are affected; ‘from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth there is no peace for all flesh’ (v. 12). In language reminiscent of, but contrasting with, Gen 1 and 2 creation terminology YHWH orders the animals that are linked with the earth (‘all beasts of the field’) to be gathered and brought to devour YHWH’s ηλξν (v. 9). In a rural perspective, the earth’s agricultural yields are destroyed, with the shepherds ruining the vineyard, trampling the field and making the pleasant field into a desolate wilderness (v. 10). As in 4:26 where the fertile land expresses its anguish by withholding pasture, so in 12:10-13 the destruction of its agricultural areas causes the earth to add to its desolation by mourning/drying up.

The earth is a victim of YHWH’s rejection, assault and anger (12:7, 12 and 13), the destruction of the shepherds and the invaders (vv. 10 and 12), and the people’s lack of

Stulman, Jeremiah, 128 notes the ‘dirge-like quality’ created by the alliteration and cadence of Μυ#. See also Lundbom, Jeremiah 1-20, 657.
care (v. 11).\textsuperscript{429} YHWH has abandoned the people and the earth, and the result is that both lack wellbeing. Nevertheless, as in 4:23-28, the earth is also an active participant in the scene of destruction in 12:7-13. Appearing as a lion she roars against YHWH, provoking YHWH to hatred (12:8). The birds and beasts attack YHWH’s ηλξν (12:9). The earth mounts its own assault against the people by withholding its fertility in 4:26 and producing thorns and disappointing harvests in 12:13. The people are exhausted and ashamed/dried up in their battle with the earth (12:13). As in 4:28, the earth also mourns/drying up in 12:11, expressing its anguish at the breakdown of the symbiotic relationship. The earth’s action of mourning/drying up is directed to YHWH (‘it mourns/dries up to me’), reinforcing the notion of the communication of the earth towards the other members of the symbiosis. As the prophet declares that YHWH ‘will not make a completion’ of the devastation of the earth (4:27), so it may be that the phrases ‘no man lays it to heart’ (12:11) and ‘there is no peace for all flesh’ (12:12) indicate the presence of surviving witnesses to the earth’s devastation.\textsuperscript{430} Thus, both texts present a ray of hope in their scenes of devastation.

\textbf{4.5 Isa 24:1-20}

\begin{quote}
. ηψβσχψπην πησνπ ςο(ς) ηξπκ ηθλωβω χρη θωοβ ηηψη ηνη 1
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{429} Hayes, \textit{The Earth Mourns}, 113-114 argues that the mourning/drying up of the earth is its response to YHWH’s punishment which is meted out through human agents. She notes the juxtaposition of YHWH’s punishment in 12:7-13 to the impact of human evil in 12:1-4. Craigie, Kelley and Drinkard, \textit{Jeremiah I-25}, 184-185 argue that YHWH suffers because of the evil of the people. See also Bracke, \textit{Jeremiah I-29}, 116. Fretheim, \textit{Jeremiah}, 196 makes the important point that, though the land is prey (v. 9), the image of the land as a victim is inadequate because the animals bring resources to fight for it.

\textsuperscript{430} See Holladay, \textit{Jeremiah I}, 388; Bracke, \textit{Jeremiah I-29}, 116. Hayes, \textit{The Earth Mourns}, 117 argues that the mourning earth stands as a warning and ‘silent witness - to those who do not hear the voice of YHWH’. 
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-λ) λπψ δζπη λωθμ σνη ημηω 18
Behold YHWH empties the earth and makes waste and twists its face and scatters its inhabitants.

And as the people so the priest,
As the servant so the master,
As the maid so the mistress,
As the buyer so the seller,
As the lender so the borrower,
As the creditor so the debtor.

The earth will be emptied and utterly stripped
Because YHWH has spoken this word.
4 The earth mourns/dries up, withers,
   The world languishes/weakens, withers,
   The height of heaven languishes/weakens with the earth.

5 And the earth is polluted under its inhabitants, for they have transgressed the laws, violated a statute, broken the everlasting covenant.

6 Therefore a curse devours earth and the inhabitants are held guilty.
   Therefore the inhabitants of earth have dwindled and few men remain.

7 New wine mourns/dries up, a vine languishes, all the glad of heart sigh.

8 The joy of the timbrels has ceased,
   The noise of the revelers has died down,
   The joy of the harp has ceased.

9 They shall not drink wine with the song;
   Strong drink is bitter to its drinkers.

10 An empty city is broken down, every house is shut from entering.

11 A crying over the wine is in the streets,
   All joy is darkened, gladness of the earth is exiled.

12 Desolation is left in the city,
   And a gate is battered and a ruin.

13 For thus it is in the midst of the earth,
   Among the peoples,
   As the beating of an olive tree,
   As the gleanings when the grape harvest is ended.
14 They lift up their voice, they sing for the majesty of YHWH, they cry out from the sea.

15 Therefore in the east glorify YHWH, in the coasts of the sea the name of YHWH God of Israel.

16 From the end of the earth we have heard songs, ‘Glory to the righteous one’.

But I said, ‘Leanness to me, leanness to me, woe to me.’ The treacherous have dealt treacherously, and with treachery treacherous ones have dealt treacherously.

17 Dread and pit and snare on you, inhabitant of the earth.

18 And it will be he who flees from the sound of dread will fall into the pit. And he who climbs up out of the midst of the pit will be taken in the snare.

For windows from on high are opened and the foundations of earth quake.

19 Trembling, the earth trembles itself.

Breaking, earth is breaking itself.

Tottering, earth is tottering itself.

20 Staggering, earth is staggering like a drunkard and it sways like a hut.

And heavy on it its transgressions and it falls and shall not rise again.

Isa 24:1-20 resonates strongly with Jer 4:23-28, as both texts portray powerful images of the earth mourning/drying up, the heavens languishing, and the earth and its landforms moving violently.\(^\text{431}\) Within the bodies of these two texts and within their immediate

contexts YHWH is at work meting out judgment upon the wayward people and inflicting devastation upon the earth. At the same time, the prophets also portray the earth as an active participant in its own destruction. While Jeremiah employs the particle ηνη repeatedly to direct attention to the devastation which is unfolding in his vision (4:23-26), Isaiah also uses it to introduce a scene of destruction (24:1). Jeremiah draws his vision to a close with a picture of the earth mourning/drying up and the heavens becoming dark (4:28). Isaiah concludes his poem with an image of the earth staggering and falling, unable to rise again (24:20).

In Jer 4:23-28 the prophet turns his attention to the earth, employing the word Χρ three times and presenting images of it and its landforms in various states of disorder, depletion, desolation, movement and mourning/drying up. The ecological focus in Isa 24:1-20 is also unmistakable, with the word Χρ occurring fifteen times (vv. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 [twice], 7, 11, 13, 16, 17, 19 [three times] and 20). The use of the term λβτ (‘world’) in v. 4 adds to the notion of the widespread and devastating suffering of the earth. The earth is emptied, made waste, scattered and stripped (vv. 1-2), as well as mourning/drying up, withering and languishing (v. 4). It is polluted and cursed (vv. 5-6), and its produce languishes, is bitter and stripped (vv. 7, 9 and 13). Its human inhabitants are scattered, dwindle, guilty and lacking in joy (vv. 1, 6, 8 and 9), and its cities are broken, ruined and shut (v. 10). The heavens join the suffering of the earth by languishing


432 BDB, 385. Widyapranawa, The Lord is Savior, 141 suggests that the term λβτ is all encompassing, including the whole earth and all humankind. Miscall, Isaiah, 65 states that the repeated use of Χρ emphasizes that ‘the destruction is total’. See also Alec Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 197-198; Watts, Isaiah 1-33, 374. See also Watt’s excursus on Χρ (376) and discussion on Χρ in William L. Holladay, Isaiah. Scroll of a Prophetic Heritage (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 194-195.
(v. 18). The actions of the earth constitute its unique language. In its final act of communication the earth quakes, breaks, splits, totters, staggers, sways and falls (vv. 19-20).

Isaiah’s images of the earth languishing (λμ) and withering (λβν) find some resonance with Jeremiah’s scene of the previously fertile land which is without pasture (ρβδμη λμρκη 4:26). Both prophets employ the verb λβ to describe the mourning/drying up of the earth. Isa 24:4 employs λβ in conjunction with λβν (‘to wither’) and λμ (‘to languish’) which accentuates the image of the dryness of the earth. The scenes in Isa 24:4 and 18-20, and Jer 4:26 and 28 depict the depletion of the earth as its health fails due to the breakdown of the symbiotic relationship.

The actions of the character of the earth in Isa 24:20 can be understood as a personification, with the movements of the earth (vv. 18-20) providing a parallel to the frantic fleeing of the inhabitants (vv. 17-18). The earth staggers like a drunkard with its transgressions weighing heavily upon it (v. 20) and because its inhabitants deal treacherously with each other (v. 16). Then the people and the earth fall, the former into a pit (v. 18) and the latter unable to rise again (v. 20). However, while there are obvious similarities between the experiences of the earth and its inhabitants, it is unnecessary to view the earth in anthropological terms as a personified figure. If the earth is accepted

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433 While ηλβν is omitted in LXX, the MT is followed in this study. BDB, 615 presents several possible translations of λβν, including ‘sink’, ‘drop down’, ‘languish’, ‘wither’, ‘fall’ and ‘fade’. Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 142 points out that λβν often includes the sense of withering, drooping or wilting and that in Isa 40:7-8 it is used in conjunction with Χην ‘to dry up’. It also occurs in Isa 1:30; 28:1, 4; 34:4; 40:7, 8; Jer 8:13. She also draws a comparison between the words of depletion and drying up employed in Isa 24:1-20 and Jer 4:23-28 (149). For further discussion on the use of λβν see Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah, 198. Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 148 argues that the earth is a personified figure that is compared with its inhabitants. See also Stacey, Isaiah 1-39, 149; Widapranuwa, Isaiah 1-39, 145. Otto Kaiser, Isaiah 13-39 (Old Testament Library; London: SCM Press, 1980), 190 notes the impact of the alliterative use of words that begin with π in vv. 17-18. See also John H. Hayes and Stuart A. Irvine, Isaiah. The Eighth Century
as a character in its own right, the actions of the earth in Isa 24:1-20 can be understood as its means of communication. Thus, in Jer 4:23-28 and Isa 24:1-20 the prophets attend to the voice of the earth as it expresses its distress. As with the final utterance of the mourning/drying up of the earth in Jer 4:28, so the earth has the last word in Isaiah’s poem. The message of the suffering earth is hammered home with powerful repetition: ‘Breaking (η(ρ), earth breaks itself (η((ωρτη)), splitting (ρωπ), earth splits itself (ηρωπτη), tottering (+ωμ), earth totters itself (η++ωμτη)’ (vv. 19-20). As with Jeremiah’s use of the *hithpolel* mood to describe the action of the hills in shaking themselves (4:24), so Isaiah’s repeated use of the *hithpolel* emphasizes the self initiated and deliberate actions of the earth. The NIV translates Isa 24:19-20: ‘The earth is broken up, the earth is split asunder, the earth is thoroughly shaken.’ Similarly, the NRSV reads: ‘The earth is utterly broken, the earth is torn asunder, the earth is violently shaken.’ In these readings the *hithpolel* mood in each of the verbal forms is taken as expressing intense movement and/or oscillation. The verbal form of the *hithpolel* can be read as expressing the actions being inflicted upon the earth by another, such as YHWH.

However, in this study of these texts while it is acknowledged that the *hithpolel* mood presents intense movement, it can also express the reflexive sense in which the earth

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Prophet. His Times and His Preaching (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), 303 and Doyle, The Apocalypse of Isaiah, 198f. However, this study stresses the actions of the earth as a character rather than only understanding them as a personification.

435 BDB, 949 ‘to break’ is a possible meaning for (ρ; ‘to split’, ‘to crack’ are alternative meanings for ρωπ (830) and ‘to totter’, ‘to shake’ and ‘to slip’ are alternative meanings for +ωμ (556).

436 The translation in this thesis is similar to NJPSV: ‘The earth is breaking, breaking; the earth is crumbling, crumbling; the earth is tottering, tottering; the earth is swaying like a drunkard; it is rocking to and fro like a hut’ (vv. 19-20). See also Hayes and Irvine, Isaiah, 303. Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 148 argues that the *hithpolel* mood conveys ‘a sense of oscillating motion’, noting that the use of the infinitive absolute with the *hithpolel* mood ‘adds an onomatopoetic dimension’ to the movement of the earth’. She describes the earth’s movements as ‘contortions’. Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah, 204-205 reads (οντ) as ‘reels uncontrollably’. Noting the similarity between (ον) and ξυν (‘Noah’), he argues that the word is reminiscent of Noah’s drunkenness and its associated curse (Gen 9:18-27), however, the link is tenuous.
performs the actions upon itself. The presentation of the earth as a character is reinforced by the omission of the definite article four times in Isa 24:19-20. Thus, in an eco-perspective, it is argued that the violent movements of the character of the earth constitute its means of communication, its voice. Finally, after exerting so much effort in its violent and ongoing movement, in a final gasp the earth ‘falls and shall not rise again’ (24:20).

Continuing the focus on the character of the earth, Isaiah presents the earth’s produce as also expressing itself, with the new wine mourning/drying up (λβ) and the vine languishing (λμ) 24:7). Though in far less detail than Isaiah, Jeremiah states that ‘the fertile land was without pasture’ (4:26), ‘all the earth will be desolation’ (4:27) and ‘the earth will mourn/dry up’ (4:28). Isa 24:7-13 may express the perspective of the people with the failure of the wine and the vine representing the loss of their agricultural and economic pursuits which provide for their physical and social wellbeing. Thus, in contrast to Jeremiah, it may be that Isaiah presents a more particular urban image of the decline of the earth which is less sympathetic to an indigenous perspective concerning the communication of the earth. By emphasizing the psychological nuances of λβ and λμ in v. 7 the verbs may be linked with the absence of celebration and music in vv. 8-9. Thus, the depletion of the earth’s produce of the wine and the vine (v. 7) parallels the people’s loss of the everyday activities of life, as well as their joy (vv. 8-9). However, in

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437 In Isa 24:19 LXX reads αjsporva/ αjsporhqvsetai ह» gh’ (‘the earth is totally perplexed’). Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 144 argues that the imagery of the vineyard does not represent the earth as a whole but rather ‘basic elements of agriculture in Israel’. Watts, Israel 1-33, 380 states that the metaphor of the olive harvest creates ambiguity, with some people mourning because the tree has been beaten and damaged, and others rejoicing at the gathered fruit. However, the image is predominantly one of destruction and sadness. In an ecological focus, Watts, reads v. 19 as ‘The land is thoroughly broken up, land is split apart, land is badly eroded’ (380), a rendering which resonates with the ecological focus of this study.
emphasizing the physical nuances of the verbs in v. 7 the new wine may be understood as

drying up and the vine languishing. λβ) may be read in a figurative sense to indicate that
the strong drink is no longer psychologically cheering (v. 7), however, it may also
express the physical nuance of drying up, with the drink being bitter to taste.\(^{438}\) Given the
communication of the character of the earth in vv. 4-6, it is argued that the motifs of the
decline of the wine and the vine represent the voice of the earth as it expresses its distress
at the absence of its people. The phrase ‘a crying over the wine is in the streets’ (v. 11),
while it may indicate an absence of wine due to invasion, plunder or crop failure, also
represents the absence of the earth’s agricultural cycle and order, and thus, the decline of
the fertility and wellbeing of the earth. By acknowledging the psychological and physical
nuances of the verbs the earth’s voice can be heard throughout the text as it expresses its
anguish through its failing produce, a situation which inevitably leads to the sadness of its
people. In Isa 24:16 the prophet declares, ‘Leanness to me! Leanness to me! Woe to
me!’\(^{439}\) The repeated use of the word ψζδ links the narrator’s cry with the theme of
depletion in the images of wasting (v. 1), stripping (v. 3), mourning/drying up, withering
and languishing (vv. 4, 7), emptying (v. 10) and harvesting (v. 13). The harvesting image
in v. 13 (τλωκ) can be linked with the cry of leanness in v. 16 (ηζδ) and the failing
harvest of vv. 4-9. The decline of the earth’s produce is an expression of the anguish of
the earth as it communicates its suffering at YHWH’s judgment, the absence of the
people and the breakdown of the symbiotic relationship.

\(^{438}\) BDB, 5 and 51.

\(^{439}\) Employing the root ηζδ ‘to grow lean’, BDB, 931 translates ψλψζδ as ‘to me wasting!’ LXX reads
kai; ejrou’sin Ou’ai (‘And they will say, “Alas”), omitting both occurrences of ψλψζδ.
Watts, Isaiah 1-33 translates the phrase as ‘I am ruined. I am ruined’. Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 1-39, 452 reads
‘I have a secret!’ following some earlier translations such as Lucianic, S, V, Sym and Theodotion,
explaining that a seer would lay claim to divine knowledge about the unfolding events. This study follows
the MT in its expression of depletion and sorrow.
While the foci of the two prophets is unmistakably upon the earth, the people are also referred to in both texts. Jeremiah simply states that ‘there was no human being’ (4:25) with no indication as to what has become of the people. Isa 24:6 gives a little more detail but still provides no explanation as to the whereabouts of the people: ‘The inhabitants of earth have dwindled and few men remain’. While the phrase ρ(ζυ #ον) ρ)#νω (‘and few men remain’) may indicate that many people are dead, it could also mean that the majority of the people are absent from the land in exile. In Isa 24:17-18 the people try to flee from the approaching devastation but are prevented by the pit and the trap. At the outset the prophet provides an explanation for the absence of the people as due to YHWH’s activity: ‘Behold YHWH empties the earth and ... scatters its inhabitants’ (24:1) and ‘The earth shall be emptied and utterly stripped, because YHWH has spoken this word’ (v. 3). The central focus of this inclusio is that all classes of people are involved in YHWH’s emptying of the earth:

And as the people, so the priest,  
as the servant, so his master,  
as the maid, so her mistress,  
as the buyer, so the seller,  
as the lender, so the borrower,  
as the creditor, so the debtor (v. 2).

By listing the various classes of people in v. 2 it may be that Isaiah creates a distance between the people and the earth. However, the return to the focus on the earth in v. 3 creates an inclusio in vv. 1-3, with the people as the central point which is surrounded by YHWH’s actions towards the earth. Thus, rather than being distanced from each other, the people and the earth are closely associated. It is clear that the people are linked with the earth in the phrase ‘the inhabitants of earth’ (Xρ) ψβ#ψ v. 6). The image of the
languishing earth (v. 4) parallels that of the dwindling population (v. 6). The people are also linked with the produce of the earth and contribute to its communication as it declines with the sighing of the glad of heart (v. 7), as well as the ceasing of the joy of the timbrel, the noise of the revelers, the joy of the harp, drinking and singing (vv. 8-9). In Jer 4:25 the repetition of the introductory particle ἴνη links the earth, the heavens, the mountains and hills, the infertile land and the cities with the humans and the birds. Isa 24:1 also employs the particle ἴνη to associate the earth and its people. In 24:13 the earth, the produce and the people are linked, with desolation and depletion affecting them all. Similarly, the earth and its inhabitants are associated in 24:18-20. Just as the fleeing person falls into a pit and is trapped by a snare (v. 18), so the earth falls and cannot rise again (v. 20). In a symbiotic relationship, the land, the people and YHWH are linked in Isa 24:1-20, just as they are in Jer 4:23-28. YHWH speaks and acts in destructive power that affects the earth and the people (Isa 24:1, 3, 14). The people’s evil behavior has repercussions for themselves, YHWH and the earth (Isa 24:2, 5-6, 8-13, 16-18). The earth’s actions of movement, depletion and infertility have a negative impact upon the

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440 Childs, Isaiah, 178 notes that the poem in v. 2 ‘embraces all of the earth’s inhabitants cutting across social, economic, and political standing’. In YHWH’s punishment there is no regard for status – its scope is universal. See also Watts, Isaiah 1-33, 377 and A. S. Herbert, The Book of the Prophet Isaiah 1-39 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 148. Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah, 196 presents a neat arrangement of inclusio for Isa 24:1-20 which emphasizes the connection between the earth, the people and the city:
A1 The earth devastated: divine action (vv. 1-3)
B1 The withering of the world: sin and the curse (vv. 4-6)
C1 The song stilled: the fall of the city (vv. 7-12)
C2 The song heard: world wide gleanings (vv. 13-16b)
B2 Personal wasting away: grief over treachery and its outcome (vv. 16c-18d)
A2 The earth broken up: moral/spiritual causation (vv. 18e-20).

441 See also Amos 5:2. Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 1-39, 334 notes that v. 20 expresses a sense of finality for the earth. Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 148 states that the image of the staggering earth in Isa 24:20 is a personification of a drunkard. She argues that it serves to ‘fuse the predicaments of natural world and human inhabitants, so that one is seen in the other’. See also Stacey, Isaiah 1-39, 149. However, this study argues that the notion of personification detracts from the character and voice of the earth.
people, as well as affecting itself (Isa 24:1, 3-9, 11-13, 18-20). The actions of each party of the symbiosis have repercussions for the other parties.

While the scene of the emptiness and the desolation of the city in Isa 24:10-12 can be understood as a human focus, reading the verses from an ecological perspective links the emptiness of the city with the drying up of the earth and the decline of its produce and people (vv. 1, 3-6). The cities and houses are associated with the earth as an aspect of its order which is created and sustained by the covenant. Just as the earth’s fertility declines and its people are absent due to the breaking of the covenant, so its cities are emptied and ruined: ‘An empty city is broken down, every house is shut from entering’ (v. 10) and ‘desolation is left in the city and a gate is battered and a ruin’ (v. 12). The consecutive placing of the phrases ‘in the midst of the earth’ and ‘among the peoples’ in v. 13 links environmental and human realms. Rather than trying to ascertain whether war or drought has caused the city’s decline, it is argued that the image of the empty and broken city represents a lack of covenantal order in the earth. While Jeremiah declares that all the cities (plural) have been destroyed (4:26), Isaiah states that the city (singular) is empty and broken down, and its houses are shut up (v. 10). ‘Desolation is left in the city and the

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443 Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 145-153 reads a sense of social disorder into the image of the empty city (v. 10). Herbert, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah 1-39*, 148 explains that civilization within a city breaks down when order is rejected by its inhabitants. Peter D. Quinn-Miscall, *Reading Isaiah. Poetry and Vision* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2001), 146 suggests that the city represents ‘the proud and arrogant’, ‘the haughty and insolent’. However, the context does not support this view. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Israel*, 201 proposes that an empty city is without God’s order, lacking stability and purpose. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 378-380 discusses the notion of the city as a political and economic centre. Thus, the scene of the empty city may denote far more than the absence of people if it refers to the destruction of the region’s power. Furthermore, if Isaiah’s city is Jerusalem, as postulated by Watts (379), its desolation spells the destruction of Israel. While the political nuances are interesting, for the purposes of this study the image of the ruined city is understood to represent the breakdown of the covenantal relationship.
gate is battered and a ruin”, Isaiah declares (v. 12). Jeremiah makes a similar, though more succinct, statement that there are no people (4:25) and the cities are destroyed (4:26). The noun מְדָעָה (‘desolation’) is presented as the inhabitant of the empty city in Isa 24:12, just as in Jer 4:27: ‘all the earth will be desolation (מְדָעָה).’ The ‘empty city’ (וֹדֵהוּ Isa 24:10) echoes the scene of the ‘desert and empty’ (וֹדֵהוּ וֹדֵהוּ) earth of Jer 4:23 and Gen 1:2. 444 Isa 24:11b provides a summary statement of the combined desolation of the earth and its produce, people and city: ‘Gladness in the earth is exiled’.

The theme of destruction and desolation pervades both texts: ‘All the earth will be desolation’ (Jer 4:27) and ‘desolation is left in the city’ (Isa 24:12). However, both prophets express some hope in the midst of the devastation. While Jeremiah presents the remotest possibility of hope in the phrase ‘I will not make a full end’ (Jer 4:27), Isaiah allows for slight hope in the statement that ‘the inhabitants of earth have dwindled and few men remain’ (Isa 24:6). However, in a positive interlude Isaiah goes further than Jeremiah’s hopeful hint and exuberantly declares:

They lift up their voices, they sing for the majesty of YHWH, they cry out from the sea. Therefore in the east glorify YHWH, in the coasts of the sea the name of YHWH God of Israel. From the end of the earth we have heard songs, ‘Glory to the righteous one’ (Isa 24:14-16).

Isaiah attends to the communication of the earth as it raises its voice in praise of YHWH. However, the following statement: ‘Leanness to me! Leanness to me! Woe to me!’ (ψάλοιοι ψάλοιοι ψάλοιοι v. 16) contrasts strongly with the preceding song of jubilation (vv. 14-16) and draws the poem back to its theme of destruction. Similarly, after expressing an inkling of hope in 4:27, Jeremiah returns to the theme of desolation and YHWH’s intention to destroy the earth in v. 28.

444 See Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah, 201.
While in Jer 4:23 the heavens (Μψυμή) are devoid of light and in v. 28 ‘the heavens (Μψυμή) above become dark’, Isaiah reports that ‘the height of heaven (Μωρμ) languishes with the earth’ (v. 4). While the identity of the subject of this phrase is not immediately obvious, several readings have been proposed. The MT text reads $Xρη−M( Μωρμ λλμ)$ which the NRSV translates as ‘the heavens languish with the earth’ and the NIV expresses as ‘the exalted of the earth languish’. The LXX reads ejpe´nqhsan oi´ u»pshloi; th'ß gh'ß (‘the exalted ones of the earth mourn’). V reads infirmaest est altitude populi terrae ‘the height of the people of the earth has become weak’. BDB presents a variety of readings for Μωρ, including to be ‘high’, ‘lofty’, ‘exalted’, ‘elated with pride’, ‘haughty’ and ‘heights of heaven’.

Thus, the phrase $Xρη−M( Μωρμ$ may refer to people of high station such as nobles.

Hayes accepts the verb λμ as singular with the subject being ‘the height of heaven’ which ‘languishes with the earth’ ($Xρη−M( Μωρμ λλμ))$. She argues that identifying the subject as elevated people seems incongruent with Isa 24:5-6 which refer to all the inhabitants of the earth, and with v. 2 which condemns all classes of people. She points out that Μωρμ is employed again in v. 18 in conjunction with $Xρ$ (v. 19) to refer to ‘heaven’ or ‘sky’. Thus, Μωρμ and $Xρ$ form a natural pairing in v. 4 and vv. 18-19 as do $Xρ$ and Μψμ in Jer 4:23 and 28. Understanding Μωρμ as ‘heavens’ rather than ‘elevated people’ is in keeping with the ecological perspective presented

445 BDB, 678.
446 BDB, 929. Miscall, Isaiah, 65 lists a variety of usages of Μωρμ within the book of Isaiah including to ‘raise’ (7:7), ‘height’ (22:16), ‘arrogance’ (10:15; 26:5), ‘divine exaltation’ and ‘heaven’ (6:1; 32:15; 33:5). See also Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 131-132 and Watts, Isaiah 1-33, 374. Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah, 198 argues that the phrase refers to people rather than place, however, he concedes that it could refer to ‘the upper or spiritual world’ where dark spiritual forces are at work.
Thus, the heavens raise their voice and join the earth in its communication of languishing.

In Jer 4:23-28 the heavens involve themselves in the communication of the earth by withholding their light (vv. 23 and 28). Isaiah, on the other hand, makes the rather confusing statement that ‘the windows from on high are opened’ (24:18). By using the particle υκ the phrase is linked with the preceding image of fleeing inhabitants who are trapped in the pit and the snare (24:18). The conjunction also facilitates the association of the phrase with the scene that follows: ‘the foundations of the earth quake’ (24:18). The expression ‘the windows from on high are opened’ may refer to drenching rain which, in Hebrew thought, emanates from the open windows of heaven.

However, of more significance than such physical detail is the symbolism of the heavens’ open windows. The heavens and the earth together represent the whole universe. The tradition of the flood narrative is invoked with the deluge representing the breaking of the covenantal relationship which holds the heavens and the earth as separate spheres. However, of more importance for the purposes of this study is the notion that the heavenly and earthly realms join together in the communication of their distress at the disruption of the relationship between the earth, the people and YHWH. The scenes in Isa


448 Hayes, *The Earth Mourns*, 148 argues that the opening of heaven’s windows releases the floods of water behind them. She points out that מַעֲרַיִם is employed elsewhere in Isaiah to refer to the heavens e.g., Isa 32:15; 33:5; 57:15; 58:4. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 353 translates מַעֲרַיִם as ‘sluicegates’ which open in the sky and allow the rain to pass. Herbert, *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, 149 states that in the ANE the sky was understood to be a wall which held back the water that fell as rain. See also Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 383 and Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 194. For a discussion on Hebrew cosmology see David Stacey, *Groundwork in Biblical Studies* (London: Epworth, 1979), 105-114.

24:4 and 18 resonate with those of Jer 4:23 and 28 in this regard. According to both prophets, the flight of the people means that they are absent from the land, and the heavens and the earth together express distress at their absence. Thus, the breakdown of the symbiotic relationship has cosmic ramifications.

While the theme of the reversal of the created order is strongly expressed in Jer 4:23-28, it is also presented in Isa 24:1-20 in the images of the earth quaking, breaking, splitting, tottering and falling (vv. 19-20). The earth suffers depletion, withers, languishes and mourns/dries up (vv. 1-7). These activities are signs of lack of creational order. The opening of the windows from on high (24:18) is reminiscent of the flood tradition (Gen 7:11; 8:2). Many images in Isa 24:1-20 would seem to indicate that the earth has returned to a state of pre-creation desolation and lack of productivity.

As there is a departure from poetic form in Jer 4:27-28, so Isa 24:14-16 forms a narrative interlude within the poem. By the use of different literary forms to those of the surrounding texts both prophets provide a theological interpretation for their scenes of desolation. The devastation is due to YHWH’s word (Jer 4:27-28 cf. Isa 24:3) and intention (Jer 4:26 and 28 cf. Isa 24:1). The quaking of the earth, the violent movement of the landforms and the mourning/drying up of the land are typical manifestations of theophany. The earth is the object of YHWH’s destructive power, with YHWH working to empty it, make it a waste, twist its surface and scatter its inhabitants (Isa 24:1). While in Jeremiah the earth is merely described as ‘empty’ (v. 23), in Isaiah YHWH actively empties it out (v. 1) and strips it (v. 3). It would appear that the earth is a passive victim. There is no doubt that YHWH is involved in the devastation of the

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450 E.g., Nah 1:2-8; Isa 64:1-3; Mic 1:4. Doyle, The Apocalypse of Isaiah, 153-161 discusses the notion of YHWH as the enemy of the land.
However, Jeremiah also links the scene of destruction with the evil behavior of the people in the text preceding the poem (4:22), and Isaiah refers to human sin within the narratological section (24:14-16). In Isa 24:16 the root δγβ is employed five times in quick succession to emphasize the extreme wickedness of the people: ‘The treacherous ones (Μψδγβ) have dealt treacherously (ωδγβ), and with treachery (δγβω) treacherous ones (Μψδγβ) have dealt treacherously (ωδγβ)’. Isaiah reports that ‘the earth is polluted under its inhabitants, for they have transgressed the laws, violated a statute, broken the everlasting covenant’ (Isa 24:5). Not only has the social order disintegrated but the covenant which holds together the symbiotic relationship has been broken by the people. The use of the perfect mood in the verbs ρβ(, Πλξ and ρπη, together with the conjunction ψκ, reinforces the connection between the behavior of the people and the pollution of the earth. Thus, while YHWH’s intentions, words, and actions cause devastation to the earth, the evil actions of the people also have a negative impact upon it.

While the quaking and mourning/drying up of the earth, and opening of the windows from on high result from YHWH’s actions towards the earth, they may also be

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451 Barry G. Webb, The Message of Isaiah (The Bible Speaks Today; Leiseter, Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 106 observes that YHWH’s judgment causes more damage to the earth than the people’s wrongdoing. However, this study focuses on the earth’s actions in the scene of destruction.

452 Miscall, Isaiah, 65 points out that the occurrence of the term τψρβ (‘covenant’) is relatively rare in Isaiah, this being its first usage (see also 24:5; 42:6; 49:8: 54:10). He states that cultic imagery is involved in the terms employed in Isa 24:5.

453 Instead of τξτ (‘under’), LXX reads dia (‘through’ or ‘by means of’). However, MT expresses the notion that the earth bears the burden of the evil of its inhabitants. See further discussion in Watts, Isaiah 1-33, 374; Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 152. Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah, 198 argues that the earth is ‘morally sensitive’ to the behavior of its people (e.g., Num 35:33; Ps 106:38; Jer 3:1-2, 9).

454 Watts, Isaiah 1-33, 378 states that the land is negatively impacted when human blood is spilled, e.g., Num 35:33. Murders, wars and executions bring the reproach of the law which affects the earth. Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 154 identifies in the background to this list a reference to bloodshed which she describes as ‘the ultimate violation of the social order’ and one which pollutes the earth. See also Kaiser, Isaiah, 13-39, 183-184; Holloday, Isaiah, 196. Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah, 197 states ‘It is intrinsic to the doctrine of creation that human beings in sin are the supreme environmental threat.’
understood as the actions of the earth and the heavens. As with Jer 4:23-28, the earth is presented in Isa 24:1-20 as a character which acts of its own accord. The earth expresses itself in its unique language as it quakes (#(ρ)), breaks (η(ρ)), splits (ροπα), totters (+ομμ), staggers ((ῳν), sways (δντ), falls (λπν) and cannot rise again (Πστ) (Isa 24:18-20). These images resonate strongly with Jeremiah’s quaking (#(ρ) mountains and shaking (λοτ) hills (4:24). Jeremiah employs the particle ψκ to link YHWH’s intention with the earth’s destruction which follows (4:27-28); whereas Isaiah uses the same particle to link the images of completed destruction in vv. 4-12 with those still to come in v. 13. Both prophets associate the devastation of the earth with the evil of the people (Jer 4:22 and Isa 24:5-6). Isaiah also links the earth’s sufferings with a curse that devours the earth and ‘the inhabitants are held guilty’ (24:6). The earth’s curse and the guilt of the inhabitants are associated by the use of the participle Νκ–λ(. While YHWH presumably enacts the curse, the people provoke it by their evil actions. The use of the conjunction ω reinforces the notion of consequence expressed in Νκ–λ( regarding the curse and the dwindling of the inhabitants (v. 6). The cessation of joy described in vv. 7-9 and v. 11 may also reflect the operation of the curse. Isaiah may present the notion of the earth contributing to the sin of the people: ‘and heavy on it is its transgression’ (Isa 24:20). While ‘the earth is polluted under its inhabitants’ (v. 5), it also seems to be charged with its own transgressions (v. 20). However, the prophet does not explain how the earth transgresses. While there is no doubt that the people’s sin has an adverse effect upon the land, the earth also takes action against the sinful people by withholding its produce.455

455 Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah, 198 states that the earth ‘does not readily yield its bounty to them but turns its productive powers to their disadvantage’.
Thus, the earth is not merely a passive victim of the people’s evil behavior. It actively resists evil and works against the sinful people (Ecojustice Principle 6).

According to Isaiah and Jeremiah the earth contributes to its own destruction by its acts of movement and depletion. In Jer 4:23-28 the earth is ‘desert and empty’, the heavens are dark, the mountains quake and the hills shake themselves, the people and the birds are absent, the fertile land is without pasture, the cities are destroyed and the earth is desolate as it mourns/dries up. Isa 24:1-20 reports that the earth is empty, stripped, mourning/drying up and languishing, as well as lacking in inhabitants, produce and joy. Its city is desolate and ruined. The character of the earth expresses its distress by staggering, swaying, falling and failing to rise again. Jeremiah and Isaiah strongly present the notion of the demise of the symbiotic relationship due to the covenant breaking behavior of the people. As a result YHWH is angry and unleashes destructive power upon the earth, and the people are absent from the land.

4.6 Isa 33:7-9

\[
\psi\kappa\lambda\mu \eta\chi\zeta \omega\theta(\chi, \mathrm{M}\lambda\rho) \mathrm{N}\eta \quad 7
\]

\[
\xi\rho \rho\beta(\tau\beta, \tau\omega\lambda\sigma\mu \omega\mu\nu) \quad 8
\]

\[
\beta\#\xi \lambda \mathrm{M}\psi\rho(\mathrm{M}\mu \tau\psi\beta \rho\pi\eta) \quad 9
\]

\[
\mathrm{N}\omega\nu\beta\lambda \rho\psi\pi\xi\eta \quad \mathrm{X}\rho(\eta\lambda\mu \lambda\beta) \quad . \#\omega\nu
\]

\[
\lambda\mu\theta \quad .
\]

\[
\lambda\mu\rho\kappa\omega \mathrm{N}\#\beta \rho(v\omega \eta\beta\rho(\kappa \mathrm{N}\omega\rho\#\eta \eta\psi\eta) \quad .
\]
V. 7 Behold heroes cry outside
   Messengers of peace weep bitterly.
V. 8 Highways are desolate, those who cross the path cease.
   Covenant is broken, cities are despised, no man is respected.
V. 9 Earth mourns/dries up, languishes/weaken
   Lebanon is ashamed, decayed, the Sharon is like a desert, Bashan and Carmel shake off.

   Jer 4:23-28 and Isa 33:7-9 share several similarities in themes and terminology. Viewi

   ng the texts through the chosen heuristic lens reveals the character of the earth mourning/drying up as it communicates its distress at the breaking of covenant. Both prophets focus on the earth, its vegetation, the people, the cities and YHWH. While these parties are presented as separate entities, they are closely associated with each other, so much so that the actions of one party affect the others. In the texts or within their immediate contexts the prophets explain that the covenant has been broken, the people are absent from the land, the cities are destroyed, the earth’s fertility is depleted and the earth mourns/dries up. Isaiah’s imagery seems to be localized, whereas Jeremiah may present the devastation affecting the whole universe. While the theological interpretation is veiled in the Isaian text, in Jer 4:23-28 there is no doubt that YHWH is responsible for the scene of destruction.

   Set within the context of a complaint, Isa 33:7-9 seeks to elicit YHWH’s intervention regarding the social and ecological state of affairs that is described.\textsuperscript{456} As

with Jer 4:23-28 the particle ηνη is employed in Isa 33:7-9 (Nη) to introduce the scene of desolation. The pace of Jer 4:23-26 is frantic as the images of destruction and desolation rush through the prophet’s vision. A sense of urgency is also created in Isa 33:7-9 with the definite article omitted throughout the text. The immediate literary context of Jer 4:23-28 includes scenes of war and the breaking of the covenant (4:5-22). Isa 33:7-9 occurs within the context of attack (33:1-4), lament (33:1), a plea for YHWH’s help (33:2-6) and YHWH’s speech assuring salvation (33:10-24). The theme of mourning/drying up is presented in the two poems. In Jer 4:23-28 grief is expressed through the earth’s emptiness, desolation and mourning/drying up, as well as in the darkness of the heavens, the movement of the landforms, the absence of human and animal life and the infertility of the land. Isa 33:7-9 also presents several images of mourning, including the weeping of heroes and messengers of peace, the absence of travelers on highways and paths, and the infertility of the land.

The earth takes centre stage throughout Jeremiah’s vision. It is ‘desert and empty’ (4:23), desolate (v. 27) and mourning/drying up (v.28), its mountains quake, its hills shake (v. 24) and its fertile land is without pasture (v. 26). In Isaiah’s poem the earth provides a concluding response to the grief of the people and the breaking of the covenant by its action of mourning/drying up and the depletion of its fertile areas (33:7-9). V. 9 may constitute the earth’s response to the distress of the people (vv.7-8). As with Jer 4:23-28 and Isa 24:1-20, Isa 33:7-9 employs several verbs which express both physical and psychological nuances (λβ ‘to mourn/dry up’ λμ ‘to languish/be weak’,
Thus, the character of the earth communicates in its unique language of infertility, decline and movement.

Jeremiah briefly reports that the fertile land is without pasture (4:26). In Isa 33:9 the regions of Lebanon, Sharon, Bashan and Carmel are specifically named as symbols of fertility. Lebanon conjures images of cedars (e.g., Isa 2:13; 10:34; 14:8; 60:13; Jer 22:6), Sharon sustains flocks and herds (e.g., 1 Chron 27:29; Isa 65:10), Bashan is known for its oaks and well conditioned cattle (e.g., Deut 32:14; Ps 22:13; Isa 2:13; Jer 50:19; Ezek 27:6; Amos 4:1) and Carmel is a heavily treed mountainous region in northern Palestine (e.g., 1 Kg 18:19, 42; 2 Kg 2:25, 4:25, 19:23; Isa 37:24; Amos 9:3). Isaiah’s references (33:9) may be to specific areas within Israel or they may be representative of general fertility. The combination of the place names certainly reinforces the notion of lush growth. However, Isaiah declares that these normally fertile places are depleted: ‘Lebanon is ashamed/dried up (ρψπξη), decayed (λμθ), Sharon is like a desert (ηβρκ) and Bashan and Carmel shake off (ρνο), presumably their leaves (33:9). The scene is one of severe drought in the most fertile regions of Israel. By the use of the qal (λμθ, ρν) and the hiphil (ρψπτη) moods the stress is upon the places acting independently rather than being acted upon by an agent. Lebanon, Sharon, Bashan and Carmel communicate their anguish by the depletion of their fertility. This is the earth’s means of expressing its distress and the prophets are attentive to its voice. As with Isa

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457 λβ in BDB, 5. λμ in BDB, 51. Mμ# in BDB 1030-1031.
458 See BDB, 502. Blenkinsopp, Isaiah 1-39, 354 states that all four places are ‘proverbial for luxuriant vegetation’. Brueggemann, Isaiah 1-39, 262 notes that ‘Lebanon’ refers to fertile mountainous areas, while ‘Sharon’, ‘Bashan’ and ‘Carmel’ are rich agricultural regions. Isa 35:2 rejoices that Lebanon, Carmel and Sharon will again be fruitful places. See also Herbert, The Book of the Prophet Isaiah 1-39, 188.
459 See discussion in Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 167. Sweeney, Isaiah 1-39, 597 argues that v. 9 expresses the solidarity of the people and the land. He also states that the land may be literally downcast by the plundering of the enemy. However, this thesis stresses that the earth is an active agent in its destruction and depletion.
24:4-6, in Jer 4:23-28 and Isa 33:7-9 the languishing and mourning/drying up of the earth is linked with the evil behavior of the people and the breaking of the covenant. Though the clear imagery of decreation presented in Jer 4:23-28 is absent from Isa 33:7-9, it is evoked in some of its terminology, with ηβρ(κ) (‘like a desert’ Isa 33:9) resonating with ρβδμ (‘pasture’ Jer 4:26). While Jeremiah’s description is more forceful, it is argued that the scene presented by both prophets is that of a return to pre-creation desolation and lack of productivity. In an expression of its anguish the character of the earth actively contributes to its own depletion and infertility.

In Jer 4:25 there is a brief reference to the absence of people (Mδη Νψ)), while Isa 33 presents a specific picture of human pathos and depletion: ‘Behold heroes cry outside, messengers of peace weep bitterly’ (v. 7), ‘Highways are desolate, those who cross the path cease (τβ#’) and ‘no man is respected’ (v. 8). Though (v. 7) is read as ‘heroes’ in this study, it is acknowledged that its meaning is uncertain. LXX takes the root as λρ (‘to fear’), reading the first colon as ιδου; δη; εϊν τω’ fοβω’/ uJmw’n aujtoi fobhqvsontai oJvus ejfobeisqe, fobhqvsontai ajf j uJmw’n (‘behold with the fear of you they will be afraid; those whom you fear will fear you’). S, Aq, Sym and Theodotion take the root as ηρ (‘to see’), reading the phrase as ‘I will appear to them’. V reads Μλρ as ‘watchers’ which forms a parallel with the following colon ‘messengers of peace’ (Μωλ# ψβλμ). If Μλρ is linked with λψρ which is a pseudonym for Jerusalem in Isa 29:1-2, Μλρ may be read as ‘people of Ariel’ who may be the inhabitants of
Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{460} Whatever the meaning of $M\lambda\rho$, the general scene is one of mourning which is expressed through the weeping of people and the mourning/drying up of the earth. The highways also contribute to the image of mourning with $\rho\mu\nu$ expressing the dual nuances ‘to be appalled’ and ‘to be desolate’.\textsuperscript{461} As in Jer 4:25, Isaiah presents an image of the land and the people grieving due to their separation from each other.

In Jer 4:26 all the cities are destroyed ($\omega\chi\tau\nu$), whereas in Isa 33:8 ‘cities are despised ($\sigma\mu$).’ Instead of $M\psi\rho$ (‘cities’ MT) some scholars read $M\psi\delta$ (‘treaty’) in order to maintain consistency with the notion of the broken covenant which precedes it.\textsuperscript{462} However, by retaining $M\psi\rho$ (‘cities’) a link is provided with the following image of the people lacking respect. Hayes argues that there is a distinction between the

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\textsuperscript{460} NIV reads $M\lambda\rho$ as ‘brave men’, NRSV reads ‘the valiant’. Also following the theme of bravery Widyapranawa, \textit{Isaiah 1-9}, 205 reads it as the ‘lion of God’. Watts, \textit{Isaiah 1-33}, 494 interprets the ‘valiant’ one as a military figure who is a champion. Motyer, \textit{The Prophecy of Isaiah}, 264 understands the ‘heroes’ to be military leaders who concede their ineffectiveness, while the ‘messengers’ are envoys who have failed in their negotiations for peace. Blenkinsopp, \textit{Isaiah 1-39}, 354 understands the term to refer to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. See also Childs, \textit{Isaiah}, 247; Oswalt, \textit{The Book of Isaiah}, 596; Watts, \textit{Isaiah 1-33}, 493-494. Noting that none of the proposed translations is certain, Hayes, \textit{The Earth Mourns}, 168 postulates that if $M\lambda\rho$ refers to the ‘inhabitants of the underworld’ and $\chi\rho$ is a synonym for Sheol. Thus, the inhabitants cry out and the earth, which is their abode, also mourns. While the reading remains uncertain this study merely notes the distress of the unidentified people.

\textsuperscript{461} The cessation of travel is common practice in grieving rituals. Hayes, \textit{The Earth Mourns}, 170 notes that the image of the ceasing of the travelers resonates with the cessation of joy in Isa 24:8. She also states that the use of $\tau\beta\#$ recalls divine punishment in prophetic literature (165). Miscall, \textit{Isaiah}, 83 understands the messengers to be envoys and the highways to be international routes, with the image being one of the blocking of international assistance for Israel. Widyapranawa, \textit{Isaiah 1-9}, 8 states that all security has gone with marauders waiting on the highways to attack travelers. Stacey, \textit{Isaiah 1-39}, 202 identifies the highways as economic symbols. With their closure trading ceases. See also Sweeney, \textit{Isaiah 1-39}, 423. Quinn-Miscall, \textit{Reading Isaiah}, 74 identifies a theological reference in the highways by which God approaches the people and the people return to Jerusalem. Thus, the highway represents ‘the moral and religious way of life’. Oswalt, \textit{The Book of Isaiah}, 596 also identifies the highway as the way to God, noting that it is a favorite word of Isaiah (7:3; 11:16; 19:23; 35:8; 40:3; 49:11; 59:7; 62:10). Thus, the desolation of the highways may represent far more than the absence of people. Their state of desolation may be of dire theological significance. Acknowledging this discussion, this study understands the desolate highways to be a general reference to lack of human habitation.

\textsuperscript{462} E.g., Hayes, \textit{The Earth Mourns}, 162-166; Webb, \textit{The Message of Isaiah}, 141 state that it may be a particular act of treachery or a pervasive lack of morality which renders agreements meaningless. See also Watts, \textit{Isaiah 1-33}, 494. Oswalt, \textit{The Book of Isaiah}, 596-597 follows Duhm in reading ‘witnesses’ with the notion being that to despise or reject a witness symbolizes the breaking of the covenant. While acknowledging these readings this study reads ‘cities’ with MT, understanding them to be the normal abode of the people.
responses of the earth (33:9) and that of the people (33:7-8), with Lebanon creating an
association between the two. The breaking of the covenant leads to the shame of
Lebanon in its state of decay in contrast to its normal fertility. As with the association
between the earth, the landforms, the heavens, the produce, the people and the cities in
Jer 4:23-28, so the people and the earth are connected in a symbiotic relationship in Isa
33:7-9 and the feelings and actions of one party thus affect the others. Nevertheless,
while he has some perception of the communication of the earth, Isaiah seems to work
from an urban perspective. His focus upon geographical areas, paths, highways, cities and
messengers emphasizes a human perspective, whereas Jeremiah is more attuned to the
class of the earth and its communication in ways which resonate with the
perspectives of several current indigenous peoples.

While YHWH is named as initiating the destruction in Jer 4:23-28, there is only
the slightest hint of YHWH’s action in Isa 33:7-9 in the reference to the covenant in v. 8
which assumes YHWH’s involvement. Nevertheless, YHWH’s power is
acknowledged within the immediate context of Isa 33:7-9: ‘YHWH, favor us, in you we
have hoped, be their arm in the mornings, also our salvation in time of distress. At the
sound of tumult peoples fled, at your exaltation nations scattered.’ (vv. 2-3). And “Now I
will rise up”, says YHWH, “Now I will be exalted, now I will be lifted up.” (v. 10). The
negative behavior of the people is linked with YHWH’s wrath and judgment, as well as
with the infertility and mourning/drying up of the land. Thus, according to both prophets
the covenant has been broken by the wayward people and YHWH’s anger has been
provoked, leading to separation and suffering for the people and the land.

Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 167.
Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 168-169 notes that Isa 33:8 refers to the breaking of the covenant in general
rather than naming a specific covenant. The image is one of ‘general social disorder’ (170).
While Jer 4:27 provides a hint of hope in the phrase ‘I will not make a full end’, Isa 33:7-9 presents a scene of unrelieved gloom and doom. However, in Isa 33:10-24 the prophet offers YHWH’s salvation: ‘He shall live on high places, strongholds of rocks will be his retreat, his bread shall be given and his waters are faithful. The king in his beauty will behold your eyes, they will see a land of far off places’ (vv. 16-17).

Behold Zion the city of our meetings. Your eyes will see Jerusalem, a quiet home, a tent that will not be moved, its stakes will never be pulled up and its cords will not be torn off. But YHWH will be majestic for us there. A place of broad rivers and streams on both sides (vv. 20-21).

‘YHWH is our judge, YHWH is our lawgiver, YHWH is our king. He will save us’ (v. 22). Thus, while Jeremiah offers an inkling of hope within the text under study, Isaiah expresses the promise of the restoration of the land in an adjoining passage. While Jer 4:23-28 has a stronger ecological focus than Isa 33:7-9, it is argued that they are both attuned to the character of the earth as it raises its voice in suffering at the separation from its people. However, in Isa 33:10-24 the earth expresses its joy at the prospect of the reestablishment of the land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship.

4.7 Hos 4:1-3

λρ#ψ ψωβ ηωηψ–ρβδ ω(μ# 1

Χρή ψβ#ος–Μ( ηωηψλ βψρ ψκ

. Χρβ Μψηλ) τ(δ–Ν ψω δσξ–Νψω τμ–Νψ) ψκ

. ω(γν Μψμδβ Μψμδω ωχρπ Πνω βνγω ξχρω #ξκω ηλ) 2

ηβ β#ωψ–λκ λλμω Χρη λβτ Νκ–λ( 3
V. 1 Hear the word of YHWH children of Israel

because a dispute has YHWH with those who dwell in the earth

because no faithfulness, no kindness and no knowledge of God in the earth.

V. 2 Swearing and lying and killing and stealing and adultery break through

and blood against blood touches.

V. 3 On account of this the earth will mourn/dry up and all who dwell in it

languish/weaken with the beasts of the field and with the birds of the heavens and

also the fish of the sea will be gathered up.

Hosea and Jeremiah share similar ideas on the nature of God and the covenantal relationship between YHWH and Israel (e.g., Hos 1-14 cf. Jer 2, 3). They both make frequent use of the covenantal term δσξ (e.g., Hos 2:21; 4:1; 6:4, 6; 10:6, 12 and Jer 2:2; 9:24; 16:5; 32:18; 33:11). They stress Israel’s need for the ‘knowledge of God’

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They understand that the covenant demands complete allegiance to YHWH (e.g., Hos 2:8; 10:12 and Jer 2:4-8, 13; 4:3) and seem surprised that Israel could turn against its loving God to pursue other gods (Hos 2:5-8; 9:10 and Jer 2:10-11). They interpret Israel’s social, political and environmental dilemmas in terms of its failure to adhere to the covenant. Hosea and Jeremiah employ lists of Israel’s social misdemeanors which correlate approximately with the decalogue lists. Hosea itemizes specific offenses such as swearing, lying, killing, stealing, adultery and murder (Hos 4:2), while Jeremiah’s list includes stealing, murder, adultery, and bearing false witness (Jer 7:9). The breaking of the covenant constitutes a defiling of the land which leads to the removal of its people (Hos 9 and Jer 27). Though there are many points of comparison between the messages of Jeremiah and

102 notes that the terms διστασθαι and τυμματα are a common word pair in the HB (e.g., Ex 34:6; 2 Sam 2:6; Ps 25:10; 61:8; 69:14; 86:15; Prov 3:3; Mic 7:20). See also Francis Landy, Hosea. Readings (A New Biblical Commentary; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 53; G. I. Davies, Hosea (The New Biblical Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 114; Marvin A. Sweeney, The Twelve Prophets (Olam. Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry. Vol I; Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 44.


Alice A. Keefe, Woman’s Body and the Social Body in Hosea (JSOTSup. 338; London, New York: Sheffield, 2001), 122f. notes that in Hosea Baal and YHWH are not necessarily two distinct rival deities. λ(β) may also refer to YHWH. However, Douglas Stuart, Hosea – Jonah (Word Biblical Commentary 31; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 48 argues that in Hos 4:5-8 Israel’s lovers are the Baals. See also Limburg, Hosea – Micah, 16-17; Sweeney, The Twelve Prophets, 45.

Hosea, one of the most striking similarities for the purposes of this study is their notion of a causal connection between the people’s lack of faithfulness to the covenant and the decline in the wellbeing of the land. Ultimately, a reversal of the created order occurs and the earth returns to a state of pre-creation desolation (Hos 4:1-3 and Jer 4:23-26).

However, while the land, the people and YHWH are separated from each other, the prophets also present messages of hope for their future restoration (Hos 14 and Jer 30-33).

As in Jer 4:23-28, the word of YHWH is a powerful force in Hos 4:1-3. According to Jeremiah great destruction is unleashed upon the earth by YHWH’s word: ‘Because thus YHWH has said’ (4:26) and ‘The earth will mourn/dry up and the heavens above become dark, because I have spoken’ (4:28). Hosea instructs the Israelites with the vocative statement: ‘Hear the word of YHWH’ (4:1) before describing the scene of desolation. In Jeremiah’s vision the presence and anger of YHWH initiates the destruction: ‘The fertile land was without pasture and all its cities were destroyed before YHWH, before his burning anger’ (4:26). YHWH’s fury is provoked by the people’s failure to adhere to the covenantal requirements of positive behavior and knowledge of YHWH (4:18 and 22). Hosea attributes the decline of the earth to “a dispute (βψρ) to YHWH” (4:1) which is occasioned by the failure of the people to adhere to the terms of the covenant. While in Jer 4:26 YHWH is provoked to anger, in the Hosean text

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469 The vocative phrase ‘Hear the word of YHWH’ also occurs fifteen times in Jeremiah (e.g., 2:4, 7:2, 19:3 and 22:11).

470 James Luther Mays, Hosea. A Commentary (London: SCM Press, 1969), 61 understands βψρ in this instance to be a law suit in which YHWH is both prosecutor and judge, and Hosea is the herald who announces the court’s findings in 4:1-3. Deroche, “The Reversal of Creation in Hosea,” 408-409 argues that βψρ here constitutes a ‘quarrel’ or ‘controversy’ over the agreement between YHWH and Israel which has been violated by Israel and to which YHWH responds with punishment. He explains that a ‘lawsuit’ involves a judge who decides a solution, whereas a ‘quarrel’ is decided between the two disputing parties without appeal to a judge. MacIntosh, Hosea, 127 reads βψρ in a forensic sense. See also
YHWH experiences neglect and betrayal due to the breakdown of the covenantal relationship (4:1-2). According to both prophets YHWH is involved in the decline of the earth.

While Jeremiah refers briefly to the people, noting only their absence (‘no human being’ 4:25), Hosea presents a more sustained human focus. At the outset the ‘children of Israel’ are instructed to hear YHWH’s word (4:1). Hosea identifies the party with whom YHWH has the dispute as ‘those who dwell in the earth’ (4:1), a phrase which clearly links the people with the earth. The failings of the earth dwellers are listed as lack of faithfulness, kindness and knowledge of God, as well as ‘swearing and lying and killing and stealing and adultery’ (4:1-2). Clearly the terms of the covenant with YHWH have been violated by the evil behavior of the people. Then, as if the list of offences is not damning enough, it is followed by the colon ‘blood against blood touches’ (4:2). While the earth suffers the consequences of the covenantal breakdown, the people, who are again linked with the earth, also languish (‘all who dwell in it languish/weaken [יָדַע]’ 4:2). The verb includes the nuances of weakness, feebleness, poverty, insufficiency and worthlessness. The notion is that the people lose their vitality and fade away from the earth. While the earth declines in Jer 4:26, so the people are depleted in Hos 4:2. In Jeremiah’s vision the cities are included in the scene of destruction (4:26) but they are not

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Sweeney, The Twelve Prophets, 43-44; Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, (eds.), The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (Leiden, New York, Koln: E. J. Brill, 1996), 1225-1226. This study focuses on the fact that the earth’s communication takes place within the context of the covenantal relationship.

471 BDB, 47.

472 Sweeney, The Twelve Prophets, 45 argues that through the close proximity of יָדַע and יָדִיעַ Hosea evokes the imagery of the Baal cult’s linking of human behavior with the land’s fertility. See also Deroche “The Reversal of Creation in Hosen,” 400-409; Mary Joan Winn Leith, “Verse and Reverse: The Transformation of the Woman, Israel, in Hosea 1-3” in Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel, ed. Peggy L. Day (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 95. However, this study merely stresses the decline of the people and the earth at the breakdown of their relationship with YHWH.
mentioned in Hos 4:1-3. However, if the cities represent the covenantal order of society, as they are destroyed in Jer 4:26, so the positive covenantal behavior which should take place within their walls is lacking in Hos 4:1-2.

Jeremiah’s primary focus is the earth (Xπ). As it expresses its anguish at the separation from its people and the anger of YHWH, the earth becomes formless, empty, desolate, moving, infertile and mourning/drying up. (4:23-28). Hosea also focuses on the earth (Xπ), especially in Hos 4:1-3. The prophet introduces ‘a dispute (βψρ) to YHWH with those who dwell in the earth’ (4:1). In view of the symbiotic relationship it is significant that while the dispute deals with issues regarding the covenant between the people and YHWH, it also involves the earth. The term (Xπ) is employed at least three times (possibly four) throughout the poem. At the outset the dispute is linked with the earth in the phrase ‘with those who dwell in the earth’ (Xπη ψβ#ω&ψ–Μ( Hos 4:1b). The issues which justify the dispute also include the earth: ‘because there is no faithfulness and no kindness and no knowledge of God in the earth’ (Xπβ Μψηλ& Τ(δ–Νψ)ω δςζ–Νψ)ω τμ–Νψ) ψκ Hos 4:1c). In Hos 4:2 the LXX adds ejpi th’β gh’β which introduces a further usage of (Xπ) into the stanza, reinforcing the role of the earth in the dispute: ‘and stealing and adultery break through in the earth’ (Xπβ ωχρπ Πνω βνγω Hos 4:2). The final reference to (Xπ)

473 Mays, Hosea, 62 states that in Hosea the land is central to YHWH’s relationship with Israel (e.g., 1:2; 2:8f.; 9:3). See also Sweeney, The Twelve Prophets, 45; Laurie J. Braaten, “God Sows the Land: Hosea’s Place in the Book of the Twelve”, SBL 39 (2000), 222. Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 42 states that while there is an interconnection between the earth and the people, the earth is also presented as a separate entity, a notion which is in keeping with the thrust of this thesis.

474 Melissa Tubbs Loya, “‘Therefore the Earth Mourns’: The Grievance of Earth in Hosea 4:1-3,” in Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics (SBL Symposium Series 46; Atlanta: SBL, 2008), eds. Norman C. Habel and Peter Trudinger, 55 notes that the earth is mentioned as often as the deity and more often than human beings.

475 Loya, “Therefore the Earth Mourns,” 55 argues that the role of the people is defined by their relationship to the earth.
in this stanza includes the phrase also found in Jer 4:28, ‘On account of this the earth will mourn/dry up’ (Xml λβτη Νκ–λ( Hos 4:3). Thus, the earth is an important character in the foci of these prophets.

One of the most significant similarities between the messages of Jeremiah and Hosea is that of the striking metaphor of the reversal of creation, a tragedy of enormous proportions (Jer 4:23-26 and Hos 4:3). In his vision Jeremiah presents an image of humans and birds vacating the formerly fruitful and urbanized earth (4:25-26). Hosea describes the demise of the animals, birds and fish. This triad is often employed in the HB and other ANE texts to represent the whole created order.476 It may be significant that no domesticated animals are listed and that there is no reference to plants of any kind. The omissions may indicate the lack of agrarian produce due to severe drought or that the natural realm is depicted rather than the human sphere.477 However, this study understands the scene to represent the animals joining the earth in voicing their concern at the breakdown of the covenantal relationship. With the weakening and fading of the traditional triad of life forms the notion of extensive destruction is presented. Jeremiah merely describes the absence of humans and birds with no indication as to why the animals and fish are not included. The depletion of human and animal life portrayed by

477 See Ben Zvi, Hosea, 113; Sweeney, The Twelve Prophets, 45; MacIntosh, Hosea, 133-134. Stuart, Hosea – Jonah, 76-77 states that the image is one of the land devoid of life. Deroche, “The Reversal of Creation in Hosea,” 403 notes that the list represents all animal life and their demise in the three spheres indicates total destruction.
the two prophets contrasts with their flourishing in the Genesis creation accounts. The prophetic departure from the traditional creation stories is that human and animal life weaken and disappear. The reversal of creation imagery employed by Jeremiah and Hosea works powerfully to subvert the order and abundance depicted in some ANE creation traditions.

Similar lists of animals appear in the biblical flood narratives. ‘And YHWH said, “I will wipe off humankind whom I have created from the face of the earth, from man to beast to the creeping things and to the birds of the heavens.”’

\[\text{#μρ–δ( ημηβ–δ( Μδ)μ ημδ)η ψνπ λ(μ ψτ)ρβ–ρ#)} \text{ Μδ)η–τ)} ηξμ\]

.\(\text{Gen 6:7) Μψμ#η Πω(–δ(ω}\)

In the Priestly account Noah is instructed to rescue two of each kind of life-form:

‘From the birds and its kind and from the cattle and its kind, from all the things which creep on the ground and its kind’

.\(\text{Gen 6:20 οηνψμλ, ημδ)η #μρ}\)

\[\text{λκμ ηνψμλ, ημηβη Νμω οηψμλ, Πωημ)}\]

In the Yahwist account seven pairs of clean animals and two of unclean animals are to be included in the rescue mission (Gen 7:2-3). The destruction extends to all life-forms:

‘From man to cattle to creeping things and to the birds of the heavens, they were wiped off the earth’ (Χρ)η–Νμ οξμψω Μψμ#η Πω(–δ(ω #μρ–δ( ημηβ–δ( Μδ)μ). Gen

\[\text{478 In Gen 2:4-25 YHWH forms ‘every animal of the field and every bird of the sky’ and in Gen 1:26 the man and the woman are given dominion ‘over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky and all animals that crawl upon the earth’}.\]

\[\text{479 Again, it is noted that issues of priority are not the focus of this synchronic study.}\]
7:23). In that humans are not included in the list of declining creatures in the Hosean text it may be that the animals, birds and fish are linked with the earth in its mourning/drying up (Hos 4:3). This reading is reinforced by the use of the preposition \( \beta \) with the beasts and the birds sharing with the earth in the same way that the people are linked with it in vv. 1 and 3.\(^{480}\) It is argued that in Jer 4:25-26 and Hos 4:3 that, as members of the earth community, through their actions of decline the animals, birds and fish add their voices to that of the earth as it expresses its suffering at the absence of its people.

With the extensive destruction portrayed in the images of severe drought and flood there is an compelling argument that both drought and flood are employed in the HB to represent a reversal of creation and a return to pre-creation desolation. In Hos 4:1-3 and Jer 4:23-26 the dry desolation imagery is one in which the earth becomes as dry, infertile and lacking in human and animal habitation as it was in its pre-creation existence in Gen 2. Whether the state of desolation to which creation reverts is wet or dry, the implication is that when the balance established by covenant is upset; the earth’s order is dismantled. Both human and animal life are affected in the ensuing disorder and so is the wellbeing of the earth.

As Jer 4:23-28 associates the disappearance of the people and animals, and the desertification and desolation of the earth with the mourning/drying up of the earth, so Hosea makes strong links between the mourning/drying up of the earth, the weakening of the human inhabitants and the gathering up of the animals, birds and fish (Hos 4:3). The images presented by Hosea are in the form of a succession of scenes regarding infertility,

\(^{480}\) Wolff, *Hosea*, 65 argues for a reading which links the animals and humans with the earth. Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 335 associate the lack of knowledge of God with the beasts, birds and fish. Thus, neither the people nor the animals have knowledge of God. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 45 states that human actions and the state of the natural world are related. Limburg, *Hosea – Micah*, 18 discusses the ecological crisis depicted in Hosea. See also Brueggemann, *The Land*, 119; Ben Zvi, *Hosea*, 113.
depletion and decline. The verb Πσ) is employed to describe the disappearance of animal life (Hos 4:3). Its nuances include those of removing, taking away, gathering up, collecting and perishing. By linking Πσ) with λβ) Hosea expresses the notion that harvesting is associated with the mourning/drying up of the earth. What YHWH had originally sown and planted on the earth, YHWH now gathers up. As with Jer 4:25-26, Hosea’s message is that the earth and its inhabitants will lose their vitality (e.g., 2:4-15; 10:1-2; 13:15). Using the verbs λβ), λλ) and Πσ) in association with Χρ) Hosea stresses the suffering of the character of the earth as it becomes parched and its inhabitants (humans, animals, birds and fish) weaken, dwindle and die.

Jeremiah and Hosea link the mourning/drying up (λβ)) of the earth with the evil actions of its people and YHWH’s judgment. Jeremiah employs the particle ψκ to introduce the theological interpretation of YHWH’s responsibility concerning the devastation described in the preceding vision: ‘Because thus says YHWH’ (ηωηψ ρμ) ηκ–ψκ 4:27) and ‘On account of because I have spoken’ (ψτρβδ–ψκ λ 4:28). Hosea also employs ψκ to link YHWH’s dispute with the unfaithfulness of the people: ‘Because a dispute to YHWH with those who dwell in the earth because no faithfulness, no kindness and no knowledge of God in the earth’

(Xρ)β Μψηλ τ(δ–Νψ)ω δςξ–Νψ)ω τμ–Νψ) ψκ Xρη ψβ#ωψ–Μ(ηωηψλ βψρ ψκ)

(Hos 4:1).

481 BDB, 62. Loya, “Therefore the Earth Mourns,” 59 discusses readings of Πσ) as ‘sweeping away’ and ‘gathering’, noting that they both express ‘the scope of the destruction suffered by creation as a result of Earth’s mourning’. The scene is one of utter annihilation. She argues that v. 3 describes ‘Earth’s final harvest’.
Both Hosea and Jeremiah also employ the preposition \( \lambda \) in order to provide a link of cause and effect. Hosea states, ‘On account of this the earth will mourn/dry up’ \((X\rho)\eta \ \lambda\beta\tau \ \text{Nk} \lambda(\ Hos\ 4:3)\). Jeremiah also states that ‘On account of this the earth will mourn/dry up’ \((X\rho)\eta \ \lambda\beta\tau \ \tau\kappa\lambda(\ Jer\ 4:28)\). He presents a further statement of causality by employing \( \lambda(\) and \( \psi\kappa\) together to emphasize YHWH’s responsibility in the earth’s destruction: ‘On account of because I have spoken’ \(\psi\tau\rho\beta\delta–\psi\kappa \lambda(\ 4:28)\). Both prophets firmly link the desolation of the earth with YHWH’s destructive intentions.

Hosea employs a graphic image of extensive bloodshed: ‘And blood against blood touches’ \((\omega\gamma \ \text{M} \psi\mu\delta \ \text{M} \psi\mu\delta\omega \ Hos\ 4:2b)\). Bloodshed is an image which is employed in other biblical texts and is often linked with the pollution or defilement of the earth. After the murder of Abel his blood is received by the earth from whence it cries to YHWH and his murderer receives a greater curse than the earth does (Gen 4:10-11). As a result of his social sins Cain’s relationship with both YHWH and the earth is severed: ‘You have driven me out today from the face of the earth and from your face I shall be hidden, and I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth’ (Gen 4:14). After the flood YHWH issues the warning that bloodshed will require the shedding of the murderer’s blood (Gen 9:5-6). In the HB the shedding of human blood has negative consequences for the earth: ‘And you shall not pollute the earth which you are in for blood pollutes the

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482 Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 76 reads ‘the idols touch the idols’, arguing that \text{M} \psi\mu\delta\ derives from the root \( \eta\mu\delta\) ‘to be like’ or ‘to resemble’. He reasons that the phrase refers to extensive Baal worship. Wolff, Hosea, 68 argues that it refers to the consequences for the preceding list of offences that deserve the death penalty. Andersen and Freedman, Hosea, 338 propose that the term refers to the shedding of innocent blood in formal ceremonial sacrifice. Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 41-50 identifies a sequential development of offences that culminates in the indictment of bloodshed. Her translation ‘bloodshed strikes against bloodshed’ forcefully expresses the escalation of violence in the community (37). See also Braaten, “God Sows the Land,” 220-221.
Hosea links the scene of excessive bloodshed with the mourning/drying up of the earth which immediately follows in 4:2-3. The LXX makes the association clearer: ἄρα; καὶ; πρεσβύτερος καὶ; φονέας καὶ; κλοπή; καὶ; μοιχεία κεκυταὶ ἐξπέμενα θ' θ', καὶ; αἰματα εἴπεται αἰματία. ("Curse and falsehood and murder and theft and adultery have been poured out upon the earth, and bloody deeds mix with bloody deeds’ Hos 4:2).

Employing an ecological perspective, Hos 4:2-3 and Jer 4:27-28 present a causal connection between the behavior of the people and the health of the earth. When the people behave negatively, YHWH’s anger is provoked and while the people are punished, the earth also suffers. However, the earth also participates in the scene of destruction with its own actions and communication. In Jer 4:23-28 the landforms move violently and the earth becomes desolate and mourns/dries up. In Hos 4:3 the earth also undertakes the activity of mourning/drying up. In texts outside those under scrutiny, Hosea and Jeremiah both employ the image of an unfaithful wife to portray Israel’s unfaithfulness to YHWH (Hos 2:2-5 and Jer 3:1-5, 20). Though the metaphor of the whoring woman usually represents the people of Israel, it may be that Hos 2:2-5 employs it as an image of the fornication of the earth (Xρ)). Through their worship of

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483 Loya, “Therefore the Earth Mourns,” 61 suggests that the earth mourns because ‘Israel’s crimes disorder Yahweh’s creation to such a degree that it can no longer operate as intended at its inception’ at creation.

484 Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 42-45 states that the use of the qal forms of λβ and λμ create a focus on the earth’s actions. Loya, “Therefore the Earth Mourns,” 54-57 argues that the earth is the active agent of YHWH’s judgment that is rendered as a consequence of Israel’s breach of moral order. ‘Earth is the actor in Hos 4:3’ (57). It is both judge and victim,…simultaneously imposing and suffering the sentence of Yahweh’s βητρα against Israel’ (62).

485 The metaphor of stripping (+#π) is employed elsewhere by Hosea to describe the experience of his unfaithful wife (symbolizing the people of Israel): ‘otherwise I will strip her naked’ (ημφηγες νηυπνυ#π–Νπ 2:5). When +#π is linked with λβ and λμ the image is one of the earth, the animal life and the woman all being stripped of fertility and life. See Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 51-54 for a detailed discussion on the stripping of the woman and the earth in Hos 2. She argues that the stripping motif employed elsewhere in Hosea reinforces the hint of the stripping of the earth in 4:3 (54). Braaten, “God Sows the Land,” 222 notes
Baal as the fertility god of the land, the people implicate the earth in their fornication and so both the people and the land bear YHWH’s judgment in the lack of fertility of the earth (Hos 2:5-8). Jeremiah uses the unfaithful wife metaphor to represent the ‘house of Israel’, declaring that ‘as a woman treacherously departs from her companion thus you have been unfaithful to me house of Israel’. (3:20). Earlier in the narrative Jeremiah also links the earth with the activities of the unfaithful woman. In naming the places where her prostitution takes place, perhaps Jeremiah is implicating the earth in the woman’s sin: ‘Look up to the barren heights and see, where have you not been lain with? By the highways you have sat for them, like an Arab in the wilderness’ (3:2). The earth is impacted when the unfaithful woman defiles the land: ‘and you have defiled earth with your fornications and your evil’ (Kτ(ρβω  Κψτωνζβ  Χρ  ψπνζτω  3:2; see also 3:1). It may be that the earth contributes in some unexplained way to the sin of the people and thus also elicits YHWH’s punishment. In addressing ‘those who dwell in the earth’ Hosea perceives YHWH’s dispute to involve the earth with the sin of the people (Hos 4:1). Thus, both Jeremiah and Hosea present a picture of the earth (Χρ) being affected by and possibly implicated in the negative behavior of its people, and also receiving YHWH’s judgment.

The metaphor of the reversal of creation may also be understood in terms of a rite of passage. Through his emphasis on the Exodus, the wilderness wanderings and the promised land, Hosea evokes Israel’s creation and covenantal themes of chaos and order, that as God sows both the land and the people, so in judgment God harvests them. See also Deroche, “The Reversal of Creation in Hosea,” 400-409.

Braaten, “God Sows the Land,” 220f. argues that the agricultural imagery of Hos 2 supports the notion of the land being involved in the fornication of the woman. He states that the earth’s culpability may be connected with the concept of its violation and pollution by whoredom and bloodshed (222). However, he also sees the land as a victim which suffers due to the sins of the people (223-224).
sterility and fertility, death and rebirth. After breaking its covenantal relationship with YHWH, Israel’s experience of land loss and return to a state of pre-creation and pre-covenantal desolation may be seen as a rite of passage through which Israel dies and is reborn to begin a new covenantal relationship with YHWH.\footnote{Leith, “Verse and Reverse,” 95-104 states that Israel’s transformation from suffering to blessing can be seen as a rite of passage. Noting an emphasis upon the ritual stages of human life, she explains that rites of passage typically involve separation, transition and incorporation, all of which occur for the woman/Israel. The land may experience a similar rite of passage in Hos 1-3. See the classic work: Arnold van Gennep, \textit{Les Rites de Passage. The Rites of Passage} (Trans. Monika Vizedom and Gabrielle Caffee; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1960). Braaten, “God Sows the Land,” 224 suggests that the mourning land may encompass a repentance ritual which is followed by restoration.} It may be that Jeremiah also presents the metaphor of the reversal of creation as a rite of passage through which the earth can be re-ordered through the establishment of a new covenant (chap. 31). Thus, the life-giving land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship will be restored, enabling the earth to flourish once again.

In summary, Jeremiah and Hosea present the word of YHWH as a powerful destructive force which is unleashed when the people break the terms of the covenant. Though the land, the people and YHWH are each characters in their own right, they are closely associated, and their actions and attitudes affect one another. Thus, there is a causal connection between the behavior of the people, the anger of YHWH and the wellbeing of the earth. Nevertheless, the earth is not a passive victim of the people’s actions and YHWH’s punishment. It is possibly implicated in the sin of the people and certainly acts independently to contribute to its own destruction. The animals, birds and fish join the earth in the expression of its suffering. By reading Jer 4:23-28 and Hos 4:1-3 through the heuristic lens of an ecologically oriented symbiotic relationship the voice of the earth may be heard as it expresses its anguish at the breaking of the covenant and the
separation from its people. The prophets employ the powerful metaphor of the reversal of creation as a vehicle through which to present the communication of the earth.

4.8 Joel 1:5-20

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) ἡσυχαὶς Κψῷ 19
V. 5 Awake imbibers and weep

and howl all drinkers of wine

over the grape harvest

because it is cut off from your mouth.

V. 6 For a nation has come upon my earth

strong and without number,

its teeth a lion’s teeth

and the jaw teeth of a lioness.

V. 7 It has appalled/devastated my vine

and my fig tree completely broken it,

stripped it and threw away,

its branches have grown white.

V. 8 Howl like a virgin with girded sackcloth

over the husband of her youth.

V. 9 Cut off are the food offering and the libation

from the house of YHWH.
The priests mourn,
the ministers of YHWH.

V. 10 The field is wasted,
the ground mourns/dries up
for the grain is wasted,
the new wine is ashamed/dried up,
the oil tree languishes.

V. 11 Be ashamed farmers,
howl vinedressers
over the wheat and the barley,
for the harvest of the field has perished.

V. 12 The vine is ashamed/dried up
and the fig tree languishes,
the pomegranate and the palm and the apple,
all the trees of the field are ashamed/dried up;
for joy has shamed/dried up from the sons of man.

V. 13 Gird yourselves and lament, priests;
howl, ministers of the altar;
enter in sackcloth,
ministers of my God;
for withheld from the house of your God
are the food offering and the libation

V. 14 Set apart a fast,
call a solemn assembly,
gather the elders,
all the inhabitants of the earth,
into the house of YHWH your God
and cry out to YHWH.

V. 15 Alas, for the day is at hand,
a day of YHWH
as a ruin will come from the almighty.

V. 16 Is not the food cut off before our eyes,
from the house of our God
joy and gladness?

V. 17 The seed shrivels
under their clods,
the storehouses are devastated,
the granaries are torn down,
for the grain has dried up.

V. 18 How the beasts are tongue-tied,
the herds of cattle are confused
for there is no pasture for them,
even the flocks of sheep are perishing.

V. 19 To you YHWH I will call,
for the fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness
and the flame has burned all the trees of the field.
V. 20 Also the beasts of the field crave for you,

the rivers of water have dried up

and fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

Though the book of Joel is known for its emphasis upon the promise of the spirit (3:1-5) and the verbal interaction between YHWH and the people, this thesis argues that 1:5-20 also presents the communication of the character of the earth. The fields raise their voices in anguish by becoming wasted and the ground articulates its distress in mourning/drying up (v. 10). The crops and produce are wasted, dried up and languishing (vv. 10, 12, 16-17), and wild and domestic animals express their anguish in their silence, vexation and perishing (v. 18). Though it is acknowledged that the overall perspective of Joel 1:5-20 is more economically rural than that of Jer 4:23-28, it is argued that Joel also presents the notion of the earth as a character that communicates. Viewing the text from an ecological perspective, the creatures, crops and produce can be understood as being closely linked with the earth, so much so that they are identified with it in this text. Thus, their communication in their language of decline and infertility can be identified as contributing to the voice of the earth. The earth and the people both mourn in Joel 1:5-20, and their distress is directed towards or linked with YHWH. Though the notion of a


489 Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 242 argues that the locusts (v. 4) which cause the depletion of the land represent the Babylonian invasion. This perspective is supported by the reference to the invading army in v. 6. John Barton, *Joel and Obadiah. A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 51 understands the locusts to be literal with their volume being compared to an army. See also James L. Crenshaw, *Joel. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 89-91. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets*, 153 makes the helpful observation that the locusts and the army are ‘the same threat, which takes place both in nature and in the human world’, citing the linking of the natural and human realms in Ex 15; Judg 4-5 and Isa 40-55. See discussion on symbolism of locusts in McQueen, *Joel and the Spirit*, 31-34. Whether they are literal or figurative insects, the point for this study is that the earth’s lack of produce is one of its modes of communication.
symbiotic relationship is not articulated, it is clear that there is a relationship between the earth, the people and YHWH and that it is not functioning positively. Thus, it may be that the anguish that the earth and the people expressed in this text is due to the breakdown of the symbiotic relationship.

The mourning of the people is evident in the images of imbibers and drinkers who weep and howl (Joel 1:5), a virgin who howls over the death of her husband (v. 8), priests and ministers who mourn (v. 9) and lament (v. 13), farmers who are ashamed and vinedressers who also howl (v. 11). With the failure of the harvest joy has gone out of human life: ‘Indeed joy has shamed/dried up from sons of man’ (v. 12). ‘All the inhabitants of the earth’ are linked with YHWH as they are urged to gather and cry out to YHWH (v. 14).

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490 LXX adds ejx oli[nou aujtw'n ‘from their wine’ after mequ'onteB ('drunken'). Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 238 suggests that this addition may be as a clarification because mequ'onteB is ambiguous in that it can mean ‘drenched’, ‘stupefied’ or ‘intoxicated’. He states that the drunks and drinkers represent complacent and heedless people who are unaware of the threats which surround them (242). However, Crenshaw, Joel, 94 argues that Mψροθ# is a positive or neutral term that is paralleled with Νψπυ ωτ#–λκ which includes virtually the whole population. Graham S. Ogden, A Promise of Hope – A Call to Obedience. A Commentary on the Book of Joel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Edinburgh: Handsell, 1987), 20 also states that the words are ‘not necessarily terms of disparagement. They convey the idea of those who enjoy wine.’ Similarly, Barton, Joel and Obadiah, 50 stresses that there is no sense of condemnation for drunkenness expressed but rather the loss of one of life’s pleasures. Thus, rather than expressing a condemnation of drunkenness, the message is that everyday life has been interrupted due to the environmental calamity.

491 LXX reads qρχνψθσν δρμ; me; υδπερ ṅυ mañana ('wait to me more than a virgin'). Crenshaw, Joel, 97-98 discusses the identity of ηλατβ as a virginal betrothed young woman, a newly married woman or a rejected wife, all of whom would mourn the loss of their husband. Ogden, A Promise of Hope, 21 suggests that the young woman’s betrothed has died prior to the wedding, destroying her hopes for the future. Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 238 argues that the age of the woman is not indicated. Whoever the woman is Barton, Joel, 52 helpfully concludes that the image is one of extreme loss and grief. For discussions on the meaning of ηλατβ see G. J. Wenham, “ηλατβ. A Girl of Marriageable Age,” VT 22 (1972), 326-348; M. Tzevat, “ηλατβ. Μψλατβ”, TDOT II (1975), 341-343; Wolff, Joel and Amos, 243. Whatever her identity, the wailing woman conjures an image of deep distress.

492 Crenshaw, Joel, 100 states that the farmers and vinedressers are two classes of workers who are responsible for cultivating the crops upon which Israel’s economy depends. Barton, Joel and Obadiah, 54 points out that the word pair occurs in 2 Chron 26:10 and Isa 61:5 where they are identified as ‘farm workers’ rather than independent farmers. Whoever they are, the relevance for this study is that their crops have failed causing them hardship and distress.

493 Laurie J. Braaten, “Earth Community in Joel: A Call to Identify with the Rest of Creation,” in Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics, eds. Habel and Trudinger, 65 suggests that the phrase ‘all the inhabitants of the
The house of YHWH lacks the agricultural means of providing for the worship of the people and instead hosts a fast. Rather than joyful worship a solemn assembly is called (vv. 14-16). The relationship between the earth, the people and YHWH has clearly been disrupted. Normal life and worship have been interrupted by the lack of the earth’s provision. As with Jer 4:28, Joel uses pairs of verbs which express both psychological and physical nuances (e.g., ‘to be ashamed/dry up’, ‘to languish/lay waste’, ‘to be appalled/devastated’, and ‘to mourn/dry up’). The distress of the people and the earth is often expressed with the same verbs (e.g., vv. 7, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 17), thus strengthening the association of their relationship and the similarity of their experiences of anguish. However, in recognizing the blending of human and environmental communication it is important not to deflect attention from the voice of the earth and deny it individual expression.

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494 Crenshaw, Joel, 104 reads מַעֲנֵי חֹדֶשׁ in v. 14 as ‘old people’ rather than an official class of elders. However, it should be unnecessary to single out the elderly population because the phrase ‘all the inhabitants of the earth’ automatically includes them. Barton, Joel and Obadiah, 56 points to a similar parallel of ‘old men’ or ‘elders’ and ‘the inhabitants of the earth’ in v. 2, arguing that מַעֲנֵי חֹדֶשׁ refers to leaders.

495 Wolff, Joel and Amos, 9 argues that the book of Joel reflects a lament ceremony. See discussion in G. S. Ogden, “Joel 4 and Prophetic Responses to National Laments,” JSOT 26 (1983), 97 and G. W. Ahlstrom, Joel and the Temple Cult of Jerusalem (VTSup21; Leiden: Brill, 1971), 131. However, Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 239 argues that the text lacks the elements of a formal call to communal lament. While it is likely that the cultic leaders are addressed, the whole population is called to lament (formal or informal) and especially those involved in rural pursuits.

496 Crenshaw, Joel, 95 notes that the wellbeing of the people is threatened by both lack of food and the inability to perform religious duties. ‘The failure of the cult was a serious event, one that affected the way YHWH related to the people of Judah’ (99). Barton, Joel, 53 states that crop failure meant that the cult could no longer be ‘serviced’ with the necessary offerings. Braaten, “Earth Community in Joel,” 66 states that ‘while it is common understanding that the proper functioning of the cult maintains the order of creation, or Earth, here the opposite is stated: it is the proper functioning of Earth that maintains the order of the cult! The divine-human interaction in the cult is incomplete without a third partner, Earth.’ Thus, mutual custodianship is not operating.

497 Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 190 argues that the human and environmental spheres blend in ‘a single ritual of mourning’ stating that ‘the focus of the poem moves back and forth between human mourning and the mourning of field, trees, crops, and beasts’ (191).
The communication of the earth in Joel 1:5-20 is expressed predominantly in rural terms. The word ‘field’ (ηδδ#) is employed five times, ‘wine’ (Νψψ) is used three times, and ‘grain’ (Νγδ), ‘fig tree’ (ηντ), ‘beast’ (ημηβ) and ‘pastures of the wilderness’ (ρβδμ τον) occur twice each. The wine is cut off (v. 5), the vine is devastated (v. 7) and is ashamed/dried up (#βψ vv. 10 and 12), the fig tree is broken, stripped, thrown away, blanched (v. 7) and languishing (v. 12), and the oil also languishes (v. 10).498 The harvest has perished (v. 11), all the trees of the field are ashamed/dried up (#βψ), as well as the pomegranate, the date and the apple (v. 12).499 The seed is shriveled and the grain is ashamed/dried up (#βψ). With the depletion of the crops it is inevitable that ‘the storehouses are appalled/devastated (Μμ#), the granaries are torn down’ (v. 17).500 The cattle and sheep suffer through lack of pasture (v. 18).501 This thesis argues that the wasting and languishing of the crops, produce and stock represent the voice of the

498 Ogden, Joel, 21 states that vines and fig trees represent fertile land and abundant production. Barton, Joel, 51 adds that they signify peace and prosperity. Crenshaw, Joel, 99 notes the ‘hammer-like force’ created in v. 10 by the ‘alliteration and concatenation’ of successive word pairs: δδ# and ηδ#, ηλβ) and ημδ, and #ψβοη and #οπφτ. While the designation ‘my vines’ and ‘my fig trees’ (v. 7) may strengthen the association between the earth’s produce and the speaker (YHWH or the prophet as the representative of YHWH or the people), it is stressed that the character of the earth communicates its distress through its declining produce.

499 Barton, Joel, 55 states that all of the most important agricultural products are listed. Crenshaw, Joel, 101 notes that the sale of these fruits contributes to the economy. In the HB they represent the fertility of the land. See Num 13:23; Deut 8:8, 34:3; Judg 1:16, 3:13; 2 Chron 28:15. However, they also represent the voice of the earth.

500 Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 239 examines various readings of Μηψπρμ τζτ το#ρπ α#β (LXX ‘the heifers have jumped at their mangers’; V ‘the work animals are rotting in their muck’), concluding that the meaning is uncertain. However, for the purposes of this study, whether crops or animals are referred to, the voice of the earth is heard through its lack of produce.

501 LXX reads tiv ajpoqhsomen eΩautolβ (‘What will we store in them?’) which continues the imagery of grain storage from the preceding strophe. Crenshaw, Joel, 109 argues that the cattle are personified in their confusion and thus associated with the people. However, it may be that they may be confused as they vainly search for pasture. In the final phrase it is possible to read Μ#v ‘as ‘guilty’ (Crenshaw, Joel, 110) which would also strengthen the association of the sheep and the people. Ogden, A Promise of Hope, 25 states that the cattle and sheep join the people’s lament. This thesis argues that the earth does indeed lament and that its lamentation is expressed through its declining pastures which affects the herds and people.
character of the earth as it expresses its anguish by withholding its fertility. The cycle of agricultural productivity is disrupted. It may be that there is an echo of Gen 1 and 2 creation language in the phrases ‘all the trees of the field’ (v. 12) and ‘the beasts of the field’ (v. 20). As the cultivated areas revert to empty wasteland, so the order and productivity of creation is undone. In an ecological perspective that resonates with that of Jer 4:23-28, the earth communicates through its lack of produce and when ‘the field is wasted, the ground mourns/dries up’ (Joel 1:10).

Fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness; and flame ignited all the trees of the field. Also the beasts of the field crave for you; the rivers of water have dried up and fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness (vv. 19-20).

The fertility of the uncultivated regions is depleted and the earth expresses its distress in the actions of fire and drought. In a perspective which resonates with the reports of many indigenous people that they hear the voice of the earth, so Jeremiah and Joel are attuned to the earth’s communication as it expresses its anguish with YHWH and the people.

There is no specific reference to the reason for the earth’s depletion and mourning in Joel 1:5-20. The people are not accused of wrongdoing. However, in the HB fire, drought and infertility are often presented as the means of YHWH’s punishment for the people’s failure to uphold the law (e.g., Deut 28:38-42; Amos 4:7-9). Thus, a veiled reference to the sin of the people may be expressed. Certainly YHWH’s judgment is involved, for ‘a day of YHWH is near and as destruction from the almighty it comes’

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502 Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 201 takes Joel’s references to trees and beasts in 1:12 and 20 to represent ‘the whole spectrum of creation’. Thus, their destruction represents a return to pre-creation desolation and emptiness (202). See Rolf P. Knierim, “Cosmos and History in Israel’s Theology,” HBT 3 (1981), 59-123 for a discussion on the relationship between agriculture, and cosmic and creational order in Israel.
503 Ogden, Joel, 23 states that the lament is not one of penitence but a plea for help. Similarly, Barton, Joel and Obadiah, 56 postulates that through the lament the people seek to elicit YHWH’s pity. Crenshaw, Joel, 106 points out that the rhetorical question in v. 16 emphasizes the inability of the people to withstand the impending calamity.
504 Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 243 points out that curses often threaten the depletion of productivity of the land e.g., Deut 28:33, 40, 42,51; Lev 26:20.
The earth is also attacked by a strong but unidentified invader: ‘For a nation has come upon my earth strong and without number, its teeth a lion’s teeth and the jaw teeth of a lioness’. Though the wild pastures and trees are victims which are ravaged by fire (vv. 19-20) and the field is destroyed by an unidentified agent (v.10), the earth is otherwise presented as an active participant in the scene of destruction as it mourns/dries up (v. 10) and its rivers dry up (v. 20). Jer 4:23-28 also presents a scene of the earth actively engaging in its own destruction. As the earth mourns/dries up (χρην λθ) in Jer 4:28, so the ground also mourns/dries up (ημοθην λθ) in Joel 1:10. The scenes of dryness, languishing and depletion of the crops and pasture, and the drying up of the rivers may draw out the physical nuance of drying up in the root λθ (Joel 1:10), however, it is argued that as the earth expresses its distress in its movement, depletion and mourning/drying up in Jer 4:23-28, so it communicates its anguish through the withering and drying up of the members of the earth community in Joel 1:5-20.

4.9 Other Prophets

Attention is now turned to the wider prophetic corpus and the heuristic lens is employed to view several texts that employ words and images that are similar to those

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505 Wolff, Joel and Amos, 36 identifies eschatological overtones in Joel’s use of the phrase ‘day of YHWH’. Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 230-231 argues that in the five occurrences of the phrase in the book of Joel (1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14) two days of YHWH are depicted: one that is already happening (1:1-2:17) and one coming in the future (2:18-4:21). Ogden, Joel, 24 argues that ηοηο Μοψ does not represent the judgmental ‘day of YHWH’ but simply ‘a day’ or ‘today’. J. Everson, “The Days of Yahweh,” JBL 93 (1974), 335 states that ‘The day of Yahweh was a powerful concept available to the prophets for their use in interpreting various momentous events – past, future or imminent.’ Barton, Joel, 59-62 also discusses Joel’s use of ηοηο Μοψ, stating that while the punishing day of YHWH may not be presented ‘it is taken for granted that the will of God lies behind natural disasters’ (64). Though the meaning of the phrase is uncertain, YHWH’s judgment is impending and it takes the form of an ecological crisis.

506 Stuart, Hosea-Jonah, 245 notes that the image of the drying of the rivers is ‘stereotypical’ drought language. Locusts, fire and drought serve as literary vehicles for the Babylonian invasion.
expressed in Jer 4:23-28. Dark¬ness, the violent movement of landforms and depletion of the earth’s fertility are ominous features that are often associated with YHWH’s judgment in the prophets (e.g., Joel 2:1, 10; 3:15; Isa 5:30; 13:10; 58:10; 60:2; Amos 5:8, 20; 8:9; 5:18; 13:10; Ezek 30:18). However, this study also understands these phenomena to be aspects of the communication of the earth. When all is not right in the world, especially between the people and YHWH, the earth expresses its disapproval and/or distress through its unique language of movement and depletion. Jeremiah is one of several prophets who have the capacity to attend to the communication of the earth.

Jer 4:23 and 28 presents an ominous scene of darkness, as do Joel, Amos and Isaiah. In Joel the day of YHWH is coming as ‘a day of darkness and gloom’ (2:1) in which ‘the earth shakes, the sky trembles, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine’ (2:10). Amos asks ‘will not the earth tremble?’ at the day of YHWH (8:8). He states that YHWH ‘will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight’ (8:9), ‘that day will be darkness, not light – pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness’ (5:18). Isaiah also declares that ‘the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light’ (13:10). According to these prophets darkness is one aspect of YHWH’s judgment, which while negatively impacting the people, also adversely affects the earth. While Jeremiah does not specifically name the day of YHWH in 4:23-28 the scene of destruction is the type of judgment which is often associated with that day. The moving landforms, infertile land, absence of people and birds, and darkness typically occur on the day of YHWH.

While Jeremiah describes the mountains and hills moving violently (4:24), Ezekiel also reports that

In that day there will be a great shaking in the land of Israel. And at my face the fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the field and all the creeping things that creep on the earth and all the men who are on the face of the earth will shake (וֹהָר(ְפָּד) before my face. And the mountains will be cast down (וֹסֵפַת), the steep places will fall (וֹלִשָׁן) and every wall will fall (לֹאָפַק) to the ground (38:19-20).

The agent of all this shaking is unclear. While it may be YHWH, alternatively, it may the earth and the earth community. The fall of the mountains is expressed in the niphal, however, the use of the qal in three of the verbal forms reinforces the notion that the actions are those of the earth. Nahum also presents the earth acting as ‘the mountains quake before him and the hills melt and the earth is lifted up before him and the world and all those who dwell in it’ (1:5). Though the instability of the landforms is clearly linked with the presence and/or intention of YHWH, it is argued that in each of these texts the landforms independently perform their actions. The earth, the mountains and the hills are presented as characters that move of their own volition. This thesis argues that the movement of the landforms constitutes the earth’s communication, the way in which it raises its voice and expresses itself. Thus, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel and Nahum are among several biblical prophets who have the capacity to attend to the character and voice of the earth.

In biblical literature, as indicated above, depletion of once fertile land is often the result of YHWH’s judgment. Joel announces that the day of YHWH will bring ‘a desert waste’ (2:3), and ‘the fields are ruined, the ground is dried up’ (1:10). Amos also presents a scene of drought and depletion (1:2). In Jeremiah’s vision ‘the fertile land was without pasture’ (4:26). The infertility portrayed in these prophets contrasts strongly with

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508 See especially the blessings and curses of Deut 27 and 28.
the earth’s abundant production in Gen 1 and 2. This thesis argues that the health of the earth is one of the ways in which it communicates, expressing joy through abundance and sorrow through infertility and drying up.

Though the people are not specifically featured in Amos 1:2, YHWH and the earth clearly raise their voices: ‘YHWH will roar from Zion and will give his voice from Jerusalem and the pastures of the shepherds will mourn/dry up and the top of the fertile place withers/dries up.’ The presence of the people may be implied in the places of ‘Zion’ and ‘Jerusalem,’ and in the association of the pastures with the shepherds. Thus, it may be that as in Jer 4:23-28, the land, the people and YHWH all express their suffering due to the breakdown of the symbiotic relationship. As in Jer 4:23-28, in Amos 1:2 the earth expresses itself in mourning/drying up and in withering. In both texts the term λμρκ is understood to represent the fertility of the earth. While the fertile land (λμρκ) is without pasture and the earth is desolate in Jer 4:26-27, in Amos 1:2 ‘the pastures of the shepherds mourn/dry up and the top of the fertile place (λμρκ) withers/dries up’. Both prophets present scenes of the earth’s depletion and dryness. The proximity of #βψ reinforces the dual nuances in λβ) in Amos 1:2. As with Jer 4:23-28, Amos 1:2 links YHWH’s communication with the withering and mourning/drying up

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509 T reads Νοηνκρκ Πωθτ βρξψο ψκλμ ψρδμ Νοδχψο (‘And the dwellings of the kings will become desolate and the fortifications of their castles will become a waste’). Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 27 argues that though ‘the pastures of the shepherds’ may include the people, the phrase predominantly refers to the earth. She states that this phrase and the reference to ‘the top of Carmel’ work together to include the mountains, plains, woods, pasture and specific geographical areas.

510 Stuart, Hosea – Jonah, 302 argues that Zion and Jerusalem represent the Northern cult. Thus, they also represent the people. Hilary Marlow, “The Other Prophet! The Voice of Earth in the Book of Amos,” in Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics, eds. Habel and Trudinger, 78 argues that the earth’s action of drying up its pastures adversely affects the economic well-being of the people.

511 While she acknowledges the influence of #βψ, Hayes, The Earth Mourns, 26 argues that the nuance of mourning is evoked by its coupling with the human reference in the phrase ‘the pastures of the shepherds’. She notes that as the phrase το ν βδμ is a more common expression (e.g., Jer 9:9), the reference to the shepherds draws out a psychological nuance which is reinforced by the proximity of the oracles against the nations (Amos 1:3-2:16) which predict human suffering.
of the earth. The proximity of the oracles against the nations (1:3-2:16) may indicate that the earth’s state of decline is YHWH’s judgment upon sinful Israel and the surrounding nations. The voice of YHWH may represent the theophany of the divine warrior as it roars like a lion and causes the earth to wither and mourn/dry up.\textsuperscript{512}

However, while the suffering of the earth and the judgment of YHWH are clearly linked, it is not necessarily the case that YHWH inflicts the state of dryness upon the earth. It may be that the voice of YHWH is the initiating action and that the dry state of the pastures and the top of the fertile place (\(\lambda\mu\rho\kappa\)) is the earth’s reaction.\textsuperscript{513} The use of the \textit{qal} form of \(\lambda\beta\) reinforces the notion of the earth’s action rather than it being a passive object which is acted upon by YHWH.\textsuperscript{514} While Jer 4:23-28 clearly presents the notion of the decreation of the earth, Amos does not employ this powerful metaphor. Nevertheless, both prophets describe the suffering of the earth and attend to its voice. The land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship has broken down, causing all parties to experience suffering.

If the Book of the Twelve is taken as a single collection, various themes can be traced throughout it. An emphasis on earth (\(\chi\rho\)) can be located within an inclusio which begins with Hos 1:2 and concludes with Mal 3:24. Although throughout these books (\(\chi\rho\)) is often understood as referring to the people of the land, it may also or only

\textsuperscript{512} See Hayes, \textit{The Earth Mourns}, 22-26 for a discussion on YHWH’s voice as the theophany of the divine warrior and YHWH’s roar as the metaphor of a lion. Stuart, \textit{Hosea – Jonah}, 300-301 argues that Amos 1:2 is a curse announcement in which YHWH roars like a lion or thunder. However, there is a sense of futility because rain does not come. Marlow, “The Other Prophet!” 78 states that ‘Earth acts as a mediating voice between YHWH and the people … a conduit for the blessings of fertility or the sorrow of famine.’

\textsuperscript{513} As argued by Hayes, \textit{The Earth Mourns}, 22.

\textsuperscript{514} Hayes, \textit{The Earth Mourns}, 26 argues that though the verb \#\(\beta\psi\) is expressed as a stative, it refers to a state of being rather than that the earth is the recipient of YHWH’s actions. Marlow, “The Other Prophet!” 77 argues that ‘Earth acts as a channel for YHWH’s message rather than being the recipient of divine displeasure.’
relate to the earth. Thus, Braaten suggests that the earth (Xρ) constitutes a central theme throughout the Book of the Twelve with its health being of great concern to the prophets. \(^{515}\) Jeremiah is also concerned with the wellbeing of the earth, especially in 4:26 and 28 where he describes its states of infertility and mourning/drying up. These phenomena are recurring themes in the Book of the Twelve, especially in relation to YHWH’s punishment. Amos reports that ‘the pastures of the shepherds mourn/dry up’ (Mψ(ρη τω)ν ωλβω 1:2). In Joel 1:5-20, though the earth (Xρ) is not specifically mentioned, the ground mourns/dries up (ημδ ηλβ), and the produce of the earth, the grain, vines, oil, beasts, sheep and people, all lie in waste and ruin (5:10). The mourning/drying up of the earth is thus an important theme in the Book of the Twelve, being employed to describe the earth’s condition when YHWH’s judgment comes upon it and the people. However, it is argued that the earth also actively contributes to its state of drought, infertility and mourning/drying up, voicing its distress through them.

This brief comparison of similar images and words employed in Jer 4:23-28 and several texts in the wider prophetic corpus indicates that Jeremiah is not alone in his notion of the land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship. The chosen heuristic lens highlights that as Jeremiah is receptive to the communication of the earth, so several other prophets recognize the earth as a character and have the capacity to hear its voice, particularly as it expresses its distress through its language of movement and infertility.

### 4.10 An Extra-Biblical Ancient Near Eastern Text

The heuristic lens is now directed towards an extra-biblical ANE text to see if it presents ecological perspectives similar to those of Jeremiah. “A Sumerian Lamentation.

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\(^{515}\) See Braaten, “God Sows the Land: Hosea’s Place in the Book of the Twelve,” 219 for a detailed discussion on the use of Xρ in the Book of the Twelve.
Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur” has been chosen for examination because it focuses on the land, the people and the deities.\(^516\) However, while a relationship clearly exists between these three entities it would appear that the earth is presented as a passive being which is utilized by the deities to punish the people. The text seems to lack Jeremiah’s recognition of the earth as a character which acts and speaks of its own volition.

In the Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur the city is attacked by the Elamites and the Suberians but the Sumerian deities are presented as the initiators of its destruction. This perspective resonates with Jeremiah’s theological interpretation that YHWH is the orchestrator of the Babylonian invasion of Judah. There is much mourning undertaken in the Sumerian Lamentation just as there is in the book of Jeremiah. As YHWH and the people mourn in Jeremiah, so five Sumerian laments over the cities of Ur, Sumer, Nippur, Eridu and Uruk express the mourning of the people, the cities and the deities.\(^517\) The lamentations include a long list of deities, each of whom ‘has abandoned his stable, his sheepfold (has been delivered) to the wind’.\(^518\) Each city is instructed to raise ‘a bitter lament set up as thy lament’.\(^519\) After the destruction of each city the deity of that city also weeps: ‘His Ur has been destroyed. Bitter is its lament. Thy lament which is bitter – how long will it grieve thy weeping Lord?’\(^520\) This lamentation resonates with the book of Jeremiah which presents the image of mourning YHWH who rejects the

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\(^516\) “A Sumerian Lamentation. Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur,” in ANET, 455-463.
\(^518\) “A Sumerian Lamentation,” 455.
\(^519\) “A Sumerian Lamentation,” 456.
\(^520\) “A Sumerian Lamentation,” 456, line 46.
people (e.g., 4:19-21; 8:18-9:3; 14:17-18). As Jeremiah’s people mourn, so the Sumerian people groan as they are attacked by storms. There is a strong human focus as many categories of people are listed as groaning and wailing, including men, women, ladies, wives, mothers, fathers, nursemaids, daughters, ‘young lying on their mothers’ laps’ and ‘black headed people’. In Jeremiah the land joins YHWH and the people in mourning, whereas in the Sumerian Lamentation, while the deities, the people and the cities shed tears of mourning, the earth does not join their lament:

O city, a bitter lament set up as thy lament;
Thy lament which is bitter – O city, set up thy lament.
His righteous city which has been destroyed – bitter is its lament;
His Ur which has been destroyed – bitter is its lament.
Thy lament which is bitter – O city, set up thy lament;
His Ur which has been destroyed – bitter is its lament.
Thy lament which is bitter – how long will it grieve thy weeping lord?
Thy lament which is bitter – how long will it grieve thy weeping Nanna?

The shrine and the brickwork are invited to lament, but not the earth:

O thou shrine of Nippur …, a bitter lament set up as thy lament;
O thou brickwork of the Ekur, a bitter lament set up as thy lament.

As with YHWH’s powerful word which initiates the destructive forces of nature in Jer 4:23-28, the powerful forces of the earth are utilized by the Sumerian deities in the destruction of their cities and lands. The deities enlist the devastating power of the elements to punish the people. The refrain is repeated for each city: ‘… has abandoned his/her stable, his/her sheepfold (has been delivered) to the wind’. The destruction of the land through the agent of great storms which are initiated by the Sumerian deities resonates with Jeremiah’s image of a storm sent by YHWH to destroy Israel: ‘The storm

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521 Roberts, “The motif of the weeping God,” 367-8 argues that the subject of these texts is to be understood as YHWH rather than the prophet.
of YHWH will burst out in wrath, a whirlwind swirling down on the heads of the wicked’
(Jer 2:14; see also 23:19; 25:32; 30:23). The fifth song of the Lamentation records that
the god Enlil directs the storms and winds to bring great destruction that causes the
people to suffer greatly:

   Enlil called the storm; the people groan.
   The storm of overflow he carried off from the land; the people groan.
   The storm he carried off from Sumer; the people groan.
   To the evil storm he issued instructions; the people groan.
   To Kinggaluda, the tender of the storm, he entrusted it.
   The storm that annihilates the land he called; the people groan.
   The evil winds he called; the people groan.
   Enlil brings Gibil to his aid.
   The great storm of heaven he called; the people groan.
   The great storm howls above; the people groan.
   The land-annihilating storm roars below; the people groan.
   The evil wind, like the rushing torrent, cannot be restrained.\(^{526}\)

   The storm ever breaking forth – its wail has filled me full.
   Raging about because of the storm,
   Me, a woman, the storm ever breaking forth – its wail has filled me full.
   The storm ever breaking forth – its wail has filled me full.
   During the day a bitter storm having been raised unto me,
   I, although, for that night I tremble,
   Fled not before that night’s violence.
   \(Because\ of\ its\ affliction\) I saw not one good day during my rule, one good day during my rule.
   At night a bitter lament having been raised to me,
   I, although, for that night I tremble,
   Fled not before that night’s violence,
   The storm’s cyclone like destruction – verily its terror has filled me full.\(^{527}\)

However, unlike Jeremiah’s storm it is clear that the Sumerian storm, ferocious though it
is, does not act of its own volition. While the Sumerian storm is powerful and destructive,
attacking ‘unceasingly’ and wearing away the land, it is called forth, directed and
controlled by the deities.\(^{528}\)

   The quaking of the mountains and swaying of the hills in Jer 4:24 are also echoed
in the Sumerian Lamentation: ‘The destructive storm makes the land tremble and

\(^{526}\) “A Sumerian Lamentation,” 458, lines 173-184 states that the Sumerian word which has been translated ‘groan’ can also mean ‘mourn’. Thus, the lament finds some resonance with the mourning people, YHWH and land of Jeremiah’s prophecies.

\(^{527}\) “A Sumerian Lamentation,” lines 88-99.

\(^{528}\) “A Sumerian Lamentation,” 459, lines 203 and 207.
A more literal reading of this line emphasizes the intensity and duration of the destruction: ‘makes the land tremble again and again’. However, while Jeremiah’s hills and mountains take the initiative to move themselves, the Sumerian land appears to be a passive entity that is caused to move by the powerful storm that is in turn directed by the deities. The closest reference to the Sumerian storm as a character is in its failure to weep and its lack of discretion concerning the people: ‘Thy tears have become strange tears, thy land weeps not’.

The storm which knows not the mother, the storm which knows not the father,  
The storm which knows not the wife, the storm which knows not the child,  
The storm which knows not the sister, the storm which knows not the brother,  
The storm which knows not the weak, the storm which knows not strong,  
The storm on whose account the wife is forsaken, on whose account the child is forsaken;  
The … storm, the storm which caused the land to perish,  
The storm ordered in hate which sated the land –  
O Father Nanna, let not that storm establish itself near thy city!

However, the deity clearly has control of the storm and therefore, it cannot be understood as a character of the earth community which acts independently.

With a more sustained focus on human and divine characters, the earth is presented as an inert character that is utilized by the deities in the ANE text “A Sumerian Lamentation”. In contrast, Jeremiah presents the earth as a character in its own right which acts of its own volition and raises its voice in joy and suffering. Thus, this thesis suggests that Jeremian text embodies a greater sensitivity to the character of the earth and a capacity to hear its voice, especially as its expresses its anguish in Jer 4:23-28.

4.11 Summary

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529 “A Sumerian Lamentation,” 459.
531 “A Sumerian Lamentation,” 462, line 342.
532 “A Sumerian Lamentation,” 463, lines 400-407.
533 To develop this hypothesis any further, a comprehensive study of ANE traditions would be required.
A comparison has been undertaken between Jer 4:23-28 and two texts from elsewhere in the book of Jeremiah, as well as several other prophetic texts that employ similar words, phrases and/or images. The various texts have been examined through the heuristic lens of an ecologically oriented symbiotic relationship in order to see ways in which they present the relationship between the land, the people and YHWH, as well as to ascertain their sensitivity towards the character and voice of the earth. An ANE text has also been viewed through the same lens and compared with the Jeremian text.

Several biblical creation traditions present streams of tradition that portray relationships between the land, the people and God. It is clear that positive human behavior is required for the earth to be ordered and productive. A comparison of such traditions with Jer 4:23-28 reveals that Jeremiah works from such streams of tradition in order to present a description of the destabilization of the created order and thereby challenge perspectives on its maintenance.

Jer 4:23-28 has been studied in relation to two other texts within the book (12:1-4 and 12:7-13) that employ similar words and images. Such a comparison serves to highlight and reinforce the prophet’s notion of a symbiotic relationship. It is clear that the relationship has broken down because of the sin of the people and that YHWH sends judgment upon the people and the earth. However, as a character in its own right the earth expresses its distress at the separation from its people and at the anger of YHWH. The earth communicates its anguish through its state of depletion, infertility and mourning/drying up. The animal and bird life contribute to the voice of the earth in their destructive actions, silence and absence from the land. It is argued that Jer 12:1-4 and 7-13 together throw light upon the prophet’s presentation of the breakdown of the
symbiotic relationship and the communication of the earth, especially as it is expressed in 4:23-28.

A more detailed study of several biblical texts was undertaken in order to throw further light upon Jeremiah’s presentation of the symbiotic relationship, his attendance to the character and communication of the earth and his vision of the reversal of creation. Isa 24:1-20, Isa 33:7-9, Hos 4:1-3 and Joel 1:5-20 were chosen for closer inspection because they employ several images, words and phrases similar to those expressed in Jer 4:23-28. Working from an eco-perspective Isa 24:1-20 presents an image of the earth suffering through wasting, stripping, drying up and languishing as its people are depleted and its cities are emptied and ruined. The heavens also languish as they join the earth in the expression of its distress. Isaiah’s repeated use of the hithpolel mood is similar to Jeremiah’s usage which emphasizes the actions of the character of the earth. Both prophets link the destruction and desolation of the earth with the evil behavior of the people. However, compared to Jer 4:23-28, Isaiah presents a somewhat urban perspective on the infertility of the earth with an emphasis upon the adverse effect on the people. While Jer 4:27 expresses only a hint of hope in the scene of desolation, in Isa 24:14-16 the earth breaks forth in joyous song.

While Isa 33:7-9 also has a more urban focus than Jer 4:23-28, it also attends to the character of the earth as it raises its voice in mourning/drying up. The Isaian text presents a sustained human focus with the heroes crying, the messengers weeping, the highways and paths being desolate, and lack of respect among the people and in the cities. The suffering of the people is linked with the fact that the covenantal relationship has been broken. While Jer 4:26 states that the fertile land lacks pasture, Isa 33:9
describes the decline of certain normally lush areas of Israel. Thus the prophets’ messages have some similarity in that they are both attuned to the voice of the earth as is expresses its anguish at the absence of its people. However, it is argued that Jer 4:23-28 has a more sustained focus on the character and communication of the earth.

Hosea brings a dispute to YHWH because of the failure of the people to adhere to the terms of the covenant (4:1-3). He makes a clear association between the wellbeing of the earth and the actions of the people. Both Hosea and Jeremiah understand a causal connection between the lack of covenantal behavior of the people and the decline of the health of the earth. Hosea employs the decline of the traditional triad of beasts, birds and fish to represent the earth’s return to a state of pre-creation desolation, whereas in Jeremiah the birds alone perform this function. Nevertheless, both prophets present the metaphor of the reversal of creation as they attend to the voice of the earth in its mourning/drying up.

Joel 1:5-20 presents the communication of the earth as its crops and produce are wasted, drying up and languishing, and its animals are silent, vexed and perishing. However, though his focus is more economically rural, it is argued that one of the means by which the earth communicates its suffering is by withholding its produce, and so Joel is understood to be somewhat attentive to the voice of the earth. The failure of the harvest saps the joy of the people and the earth, and inhibits the religious life of the land. Thus, all three parties of the symbiotic relationship are affected. As with Jer 4:28, the earth also raises its voice in mourning/drying up in Joel 1:10.

A brief comparison between Jer 4:23-28 and several texts from the wider prophetic corpus reinforces Jeremiah’s presentation of a symbiotic relationship and the
notion of the communication of the earth. Several prophets (Jeremiah, Joel, Amos and Isaiah) present powerful images of darkness being associated with YHWH’s judgment. Working from an eco-perspective, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Nahum present the character of the earth communicating through the violent movement of its hills and mountains. Joel, Amos and Jeremiah associate the depletion, dryness and infertility of the earth with YHWH’s punishment. Amos 1:2 strongly presents the breakdown of the symbiotic relationship with its consequences of desolation and dryness for the earth. The images employed by these prophets resonate with those of Jeremiah in which the earth communicates its distress at the breakdown of the symbiotic relationship through its movement, depletion and mourning/drying up (4:23-28).

The heuristic lens was directed towards “A Sumerian Lamentation. The Sumerian Lamentation of the Destruction of Ur” in order to ascertain whether this ANE text presents the earth as a character that is capable of independent action and communication. While images of suffering people and deities in the text resonate with Jeremiah’s presentation of the grieving of YHWH and the people, the ANE text does not present the earth mourning. As YHWH initiates destruction through the forces of nature in Jeremiah, so strong winds are employed by the Sumerian deities to destroy the land and the people. However, in the ANE text, the earth is not presented as a character which acts of its own volition and its voice is not heard within the text. Thus, the comparison of the text serves to illustrate that the chosen hermeneutical lens does not determine exegetical outcomes.

Several biblical prophetic texts and creation traditions throw light on Jer 4:23-28, particularly in its presentation of the demise of the land-people-YHWH symbiotic relationship and the communication of the earth. Jeremiah is one of several prophets who
are attuned to the voice of the earth as it expresses its distress at the breakdown of the relationship and the absence of its people. However, as Isaiah, Hosea and Joel work from a somewhat urban perspective, and Joel from a rural economy, it is argued that Jeremiah’s attendance to the voice of the earth has more in common with the indigenous perspectives that have been outlined above.
Chapter 5: Conclusions

This final chapter draws together some of the insights which have been gained in undertaking a literary study of Jer 4:23-28 and viewing it through the heuristic lens of an ecologically oriented symbiotic relationship. The text presents the metaphorically constructed world of the earth in a state of desolation, instability and unproductivity. Through the use of the metaphors of the reversal of creation and the mourning/drying up of the earth the prophet presents the notion of the inadequacy of prevailing political, social and theological perspectives on issues of life and faith, particularly critiquing the royal-priestly ideology. In a subversive perspective Jeremiah presents the theological interpretation that land loss occurs due to YHWH’s plan and intention. The symbiotic relationship between the people, YHWH and the land has been broken by the people’s failure to uphold the terms of the covenant. The prophet presents the earth as a character which suffers along with the people and YHWH in their separation from each other through exile. Just as many indigenous people describe their capacity to attend to the communication of the earth, so Jeremiah has the sensitivity to hear the earth’s voice as it expresses its distress at the separation from its people. Elvey’s focus on the contemporary environmental crisis and improving relationships between people and the earth are noted and applauded. Lending support to these goals, this study provides a firm textual basis for conversation with indigenous theologians, as well as employing a positive commonality of vocabulary. While it is hoped that worthwhile lessons may be learned from Jeremiah’s presentation of the metaphor of the reversal of creation and his

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534 Elvey, An Ecological Feminist Reading of the Gospel of Luke, 10 suggests a hermeneutical implication: ‘In terms of human relationships to Earth, the focus turns to the contemporary environmental crisis and the challenge to renew relationships between humans and nature and to create structures, societies or communities in which such renewed relationships are firstly, possible and secondly, facilitated.’
attendance to the voice of the earth, this study does not try to apply such lessons to any
current ecological, social or political situations. It simply seeks to find a way of attending
to the character and the voice of the earth in the text. The application of any insight
gained from this study to our current ecological plight would be the subject of another
study.

In a synchronic reading of the text a literary analysis reveals that Jeremiah
achieves a powerful rhetorical effect by his choice and arrangement of words. Within the
context of invasion the prophet employs the literary techniques of point of view, the
repetition of words and phrases, the strategic positioning of conjunctions and particles,
and the structures of inclusio and partial chiasm. He skillfully paints a word picture of the
desolate state of the earth, the darkness of the heavens, the movement of the mountains
and hills, the unproductivity of the fertile land, and the absence of birds and people (4:23-
26). Through the metaphor of the reversal of creation the prophet seeks to challenge
readers regarding complacency and trust in the power of the royal-priestly ideology to
protect the land. His shocking theological interpretation is that the scene of destruction is
initiated by YHWH. The metaphor of the reversal of creation destabilizes prevailing
belief structures concerning the endurance of the covenantal order of creation. However,
Jeremiah also presents the notion that a symbiosis held together by a new covenantal
relationship based on Mosaic/Deuteronomic orthodoxy will re-establish the peace and
health of the land.

A reading lens was formed by employing the notion of Habel’s land-people-god
symbiosis along with an eco-perspective which includes the views of specific indigenous
authors. With an emphasis on land, Jeremiah presents an image of Israel existing in a
strong connection with the land and YHWH. The three parties of the symbiosis need to interact positively in order to flourish. When separated from each other through exile they all express their suffering. The earth is presented as a character which suffers because of the sin of the people and the judgment of YHWH. However, it is not a passive victim as it takes the initiative to actively participate in YHWH’s destruction and the eviction of the people from the land. Nevertheless, it misses the people and expresses its distress at their absence through its unique language of the movement of its landforms, lack of fertility and mourning/drying up (4:23-28).

The statements of several indigenous authors were drawn on, attesting to the importance of maintaining continuity between indigenous people groups and their lands. Similarly, Jeremiah is careful to present the ongoing relationship between the people and the land through the presence of the poor, the return of the diaspora, the prophet’s delayed departure and the purchase of his uncle’s field. The earth is part of the kinship circle and it is essential to keep it within the appropriate clan. Even though kinship connections may be minimal, or fragile, through maintaining some continuity between the land and the people the land is enabled to produce crops during the period of exile. Though it is a mere hint in 4:27, a strong message of hope is presented throughout the book: the land will be renewed during the people’s absence, and the people will flourish in exile from the land. As the ultimate heirs to the land, the Babylonian exiles will return to re-establish the symbiotic relationship with the land and YHWH which will be held together by a new and indestructible covenant.

Words, phrases and images expressed elsewhere in Jeremiah, and in other biblical and extra-biblical texts are viewed through the chosen heuristic lens and compared with
those examined in Jeremiah in order to identify ways in which they present relationships between various lands, people groups and deities. It is concluded that Jeremiah works to decenter certain streams of tradition regarding creational order. A comparison of Jer 4:23-28 with selected texts from elsewhere in Jeremiah and a few other prophets (Jer 12:1-4, 7-13; Isa 24:1-20; 33:7-9; Hos 4:1-3; Joel 1:5-20) reveals that Jeremiah is one of several prophets who are attentive to the voice of the earth. However, it is argued that his sensitivity is more analogous to indigenous perspectives than what is found in the other prophets. Jeremiah is aware that the human voice needs to hear itself as only one of other voices in the cosmos.

Through the power of the prophetic word Jeremiah presents the metaphorically constructed world of pre-creation desolation. His theological interpretation for this scene, which is subversive of royal-Zion tradition, is that it occurs because of the plan and intention of YHWH. He invites readers to appraise their faulty perspectives on issues of covenant and reasons for exile. Having the capacity to receive the communication of the earth, he reports that it raises its voice in mourning/drying up at the absence of its people (4:28). The people, YHWH and the land belong together in a symbiotic relationship, and it is only in this state that the land can truly flourish. Reading the text of Jer 4:23-28 through the heuristic lens of an ecologically oriented symbiotic relationship throws light on the prophet’s rhetorical thrust in challenging readers to construct a new perspective on issues of life and faith. Moreover, this thesis has shown that indigenous perspectives can assist contemporary readers in attending to the voice of the earth in the texts under study.
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