

## **Yahweh is the Creator of (Heaven and) Earth: The Significance of the Intertextual Link Between Jeremiah 27:5 and 32:17**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper explores the significance of the intertextual link between Jer 27:5 and 32:17 for the portrayal of the prophet in his prayer in Jer 32:17–25. Through the reference to Yahweh as the creator who had made the heaven and the earth, Jer 32:17 recalls Yahweh's decision to hand all earth into the power of Nebuchadnezzar mentioned in 27:5. Jeremiah's purchase of ancestral land as a sign-act proclaiming the restoration of the land should therefore not be placed on the same level as the acts of an optimistic prophet such as Hananiah. However, any doubt with regard to Jeremiah's faith in Yahweh was unfounded.*

### **A INTRODUCTION**

Jeremiah's prayer in Jer 32:17–25<sup>1</sup> is composed of conventional expressions which may be found in a variety of places in the OT.<sup>2</sup> The close agreement between Jer 32:17b–23 and Deut 26:1–15 as far as vocabulary is concerned, is well-known.<sup>3</sup> The links with various texts in the book of Jeremiah itself is of no less importance. Carroll observes that the relation of the book of Jeremiah to other books in the Bible, as well as the structure of the book, gives it a very

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<sup>1</sup> The text arrangement in the MT is followed. Many scholars believe that the Septuagint bears witness to an older Hebrew text than that of the MT. The relationship between the two types of texts is however far from clear. The tendency in the LXX to smooth out the inconsistencies found in the MT is one difficulty that needs an explanation. For a detailed discussion of the issue cf. Georg Fischer, *Jeremia: Der Stand der theologischen Diskussion* (Darmstadt: WBG, 2007), 17–53.

<sup>2</sup> John A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 1980), 586.

<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah 32:21 is virtually a duplicate of Deut 26:8. The second half of Jer 32:22 is almost identical to the latter part of Deut 26:15. This does not necessarily imply a literary dependence, but may be due to the use of a common tradition. Carroll regards the language of the prayer as conventional. Cf. Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah* (OTL; London: SCM, 1986), 625. Wanke thinks that Jeremiah's prayer, Jer 32:16–25, is dependent on Deut 26:1–15. Cf. Gunther Wanke, "Jeremias Gebet nach dem Ackerkauf (Jer 32,16–25) und die Pentateuch: Eine Problemanzeige," in *Auf dem Weg zur Endgestalt von Genesis bis Regum: Festschrift Hans-Christoph Schmitt zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. Martin Beck and Ulrike Schorn; BZAW 370; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 277.

strong intertextual character.<sup>4</sup> Roncace holds that intertextuality forces the reader of the book of Jeremiah into encountering other texts within the book itself.<sup>5</sup> A distinction should be drawn between those instances where a later reader can detect links and similarities between texts and those instances where a text itself makes a conscious allusion to another text.<sup>6</sup> Although the development of the book of Jeremiah was far from systematic, it does not imply that a specific text may not deliberately allude to another text. Jeremiah 32 belongs to the prose discourses, which play an important compositional role in Jer 1–45.<sup>7</sup>

The important role of prayers in the OT is a well-established fact. Samuel Balentine notes that prayers in prose texts in the OT frequently serve as a means of conveying ideological and theological perspectives.<sup>8</sup> Georg Fischer regards prayers as hermeneutical keys to biblical books. Prayers frequently occur at key positions.<sup>9</sup> This is evidently the case with Jer 32:17–25, which is preceded by the account of the prophet purchasing a field in Anathoth. The portrayal of Jeremiah in this prayer, would therefore be of great significance.

It is the contention of this paper that there is an intertextual link between Jer 27:5 and 32:17, which plays an important role in the portrayal of the prophet Jeremiah in his prayer after purchasing a field in Anathoth. I will argue, to use Roncace’s diction, that the reader is invited to consider Jer 32:17 in the light of its intertextual connection<sup>10</sup> with 27:5. The prophet Jeremiah is shown as one who several years before the destruction of Jerusalem had told the envoys who had gathered in Jerusalem to explore the possibility of a rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar, that Yahweh as Lord over the whole earth had given the kingdoms represented by these envoys into the power of Nebuchad-

<sup>4</sup> Robert P. Carroll, “Jeremiah, Intertextuality and Ideologiekritik,” *JNSL* 22/1 (1996): 19.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Roncace, *Jeremiah, Zedekiah, and the Fall of Jerusalem* (JSOTSup 423; New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 19.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Ronald E. Clements, “Prophecy Interpreted: Intertextuality and Theodicy – A Case Study of Jeremiah 26:16–24\*,” in *Uprooting and Planting: Essays on Jeremiah for Leslie Allen* (ed. John Goldingay; LHBOTS 459; New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 32.

<sup>7</sup> See Thomas C. Römer, “How did Jeremiah Become a Convert to Deuteronomistic Ideology?,” in *Those Elusive Deuteronomists: The Phenomenon of Pan-Deuteronomism* (ed. Linda S. Schearing and Steve L. McKenzie; JSOTSup 268; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 192–193. Römer believes that there was a coherent deuteronomistic redaction of Jeremiah.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel E. Balentine, *Prayer in the Hebrew Bible: The Drama of Divine–Human Dialogue* (OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 12.

<sup>9</sup> See Georg Fischer, “Gebete als hermeneutischer Schlüssel zu biblischen Büchern – am Beispiel Jeremia,” in *Congress Volume: Ljubljana 2007* (ed. André Lemaire; VTSup 133; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 219.

<sup>10</sup> Roncace, *Jeremiah*, 32.

nezzar. Although the Babylonian king might claim that his god Marduk had given Jerusalem into his power, Jeremiah beforehand had pointed out that it was Yahweh that delivered Jerusalem into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Yahweh would also bring a new future about in the land, although Jeremiah was not sure how that would happen.

Sometimes one of the two texts echoes a third. In this way all three texts enter a web of relations.<sup>11</sup> Since Jer 32:17 seemingly echoes 2 Kgs 19:15 (parallel in Isa 37:16), the web of relations between Jer 27:5 and 32:17 on the one hand and 2 Kgs 19:15 seems significant. Various scholars have pointed to the existence of intertextual relations between the Isaiah–Hezekiah narratives, 2 Kgs 18–20,<sup>12</sup> and texts in the book of Jeremiah.<sup>13</sup> If a dialogue between Jer 27:5 and 32:17 on the one hand and 2 Kgs 19:15 on the other hand can be established, it could shed light on the relationship between Jeremiah and those opposing his views.

This essay firstly inquires whether an intertextual link between Jer 27:5 and 32:17 can be established. Secondly the relationships of the references to Yahweh as creator in Jer 27:5 and 32:17 to their respective contexts are determined. Finally, Jer 32:17 is read against the background of 27:5.

## **B AN INTERTEXTUAL LINK BETWEEN JEREMIAH 27:5 AND 32:17**

Although the expression עשית את השמים ואת הארץ in Jer 32:17 is identical in form to a similar expression occurring in 2 Kgs 19:15 (parallel in Isa 37:16),<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Roncace, *Jeremiah*, 18.

<sup>12</sup> In contrast to the excepted view that the book of Kings was the original setting of the Hezekiah–Isaiah narratives, Smelik and Seitz have made a case for the priority of the Isaiah version of these narratives. Cf. Christopher R. Seitz, *Zion’s Final Destiny: The Development of the Book of Isaiah: A Reassessment of Isaiah 36–39* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 117. Berges has, however, argued convincingly that these narratives first appeared as special material in the book of Kings and from there were taken over into the book of Isaiah. Cf. Ulrich F. Berges, *The Book of Isaiah: Its Composition and Final Form* (trans. M. C. Lind; HBM 46; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2012), 245–256.

<sup>13</sup> For the intertextual relationships between die Hezekiah–Isaiah narratives and Jer 37:3–10 and 38:1–4, see Roncace, *Jeremiah*, 45, 78. Hardmeier has suggested that the Hezekiah–Isaiah narratives were created during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem to combat the growing willingness to capitulate. Cf. Christof Hardmeier, *Prophetie im Streit vor dem Untergang Judas: Erzählkommunikative Studien zur Entstehung der Jesaja- und Jeremiaerzählungen in II Reg 18–20 und Jer 37–40* (BZAW 187; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990), 463. Seitz, on the other hand, believes that the composition of Isa 36–37 initiated a form of scribal narrative that was imitated in the tradition process of the Book of Jeremiah. See Seitz, *Zion’s Final Destiny*, 107.

<sup>14</sup> Elsewhere in the OT the expression occurs in Gen 2:4; Exod 20:11; 31:17; Ps 146:6 and Neh 9:6.

there is reason to believe that the Yahweh word עשיתי את הארץ in Jer 27:5 has triggered the diction in 32:17. Peculiar to Jer 27:5 and 32:17 is the use of the phrase הגדול ובזרע הנטויה בכח with reference to Yahweh's freedom to act as creator.<sup>15</sup> The two other occurrences of this phrase, those in Deuteronomy 9:29 and 2 Kgs 17:36, have the exodus in view. A comparison of Jer 27:5 and 32:17 shows striking similarities:

Jeremiah 27:5	בכחי הגדול ובזרועי הנטויה	אנכי עשיתי את הארץ
Jeremiah 32:17	בכחך הגדול ובזרעך הנטויה	אתה עשית את השמים ואת הארץ

These close verbal and syntactical correspondences<sup>16</sup> can either be attributed to a direct dependence of Jer 32:17a $\beta$  on 27:5,<sup>17</sup> or both texts should be assigned to the same redaction. Since 32:17a $\beta$  presents an expansion of the utterance in 27:5, the former seems to be the case. An intertextual link between Jer 27:5 and 32:17 can therefore clearly be established.

## **B THE RELATIONSHIPS OF THE REFERENCES TO YAHWEH AS CREATOR IN JEREMIAH 27:5 AND 32:17 TO THEIR RESPECTIVE CONTEXTS**

### **1 The statement that Yahweh is creator of the earth in Jeremiah 27:5 in its immediate context**

After a superscription (v. 1) supplying a date and a setting,<sup>18</sup> Jer 27 breaks into several sub-sections: vv. 2–11; 12–15 and 16–22. Verses 2–11 are introduced by Yahweh's command to Jeremiah to perform a symbolic act by wearing a yoke and sending yokes to the kings of the nations gathered in Jerusalem (vv. 2–3). Verse 4 contains another command: Jeremiah has to send a message through the foreign envoys to their kings. The content of this message is given in vv. 5–11. As creator of the earth Yahweh had given all these lands into the

<sup>15</sup> In the other texts where this expression is attested, Deut 9:29 and 2 Kgs 17:36, it refers to the exodus.

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of correspondences which should be sought as indications of conscious and purposeful dependence, see Richard L. Schultz, "The Ties That Bind: Intertextuality, the Identification of Verbal Parallels, and Reading Strategies in the Book of the Twelve," in *Society of Biblical Literature 2001 Seminar papers* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature: 2001), 44.

<sup>17</sup> See Helga Weippert, *Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde: Ein Beitrag zur Theologie des Jeremiabuches* (SBS 102; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1981), 71.

<sup>18</sup> Since the events depicted in Jer 27 occurred during the reign of Zedekiah (vv. 3, 12), the superscription assigning these events to the time of Jehoiakim is evidently erroneous. For a discussion of the various proposals which had been made, cf. Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36* (AB 21B; New York: Doubleday, 2004), 308–9.

power of Nebuchadnezzar. Verses 6 and 8 comprise the climax of vv. 4–11. Verse 8 discloses the consequences of Yahweh's announcement in v. 6 that he was responsible for Nebuchadnezzar's rise to power. Every nation that did not submit to the Babylonian king will thus be punished.<sup>19</sup> Yahweh's authority to hand all the lands into the power of the Babylonian king stems from his status as creator, אֲנִי עָשִׂיתִי אֶת הָאָרֶץ (v. 5). This statement is introduced by the emphatic "I."<sup>20</sup> In v. 6 Yahweh states emphatically that he had given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Babylonian ideas may provide the background to the notion that as creator of the earth, Yahweh gave domination of the whole earth to Nebuchadnezzar. Lang points to an inscription in which Nebuchadnezzar claims that Marduk, who had created him, entrusted the kingship over all the nations to him.<sup>21</sup> In contrast to the political propaganda claiming that Marduk has given Nebuchadnezzar dominion over all the kingdoms Yahweh proclaims in 27:5 that as Lord of all he commissioned Nebuchadnezzar. Stulman emphasises that the assertion "Yahweh reigns" functions here as "root metaphor." Whatever is said about Yahweh is rooted in this claim.<sup>22</sup>

In the MT of Jer 27:5 הארץ is specified by the phrase וְאֵת הַבְּהֵמָה וְאֵת הָאָדָם.<sup>23</sup> The animals on earth were subordinated to man. Yahweh announces that he will even make the animals subject to Nebuchadnezzar. A yoke, symbol for the subordination of the animals to man, will rest on the nations to signify their subordination to the king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar thus takes the place which is the privilege of man in the creation accounts.<sup>24</sup> The absence of any reference to the heavens is in all likelihood the result of the emphasis on Nebuchadnezzar as the king to whom dominion over the earth had

<sup>19</sup> See Theodor Seidl, *Formen und Formeln in Jeremia 27–29: Literaturwissenschaftliche Studie* (vol. 2; St. Ottilien: EOS Verlag, 1978), 53. Jer 27:7 is absent from the Septuagint and is in likelihood a secondary expansion. Cf. William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 121.

<sup>20</sup> Lundbom, 21–36, 312.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Bernard Lang, "Ein babylonisches Motiv in Israels Schöpfungsmythologie (Jer 27,5–6)," *BZ* 27 (1983): 236–237.

<sup>22</sup> Louis Stulman, *Order Amid Chaos: Jeremiah as Symbolic Tapestry* (BibSem 57; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 73–74.

<sup>23</sup> The Septuagint text of Jer 27 is considerably shorter than the MT. For thorough discussions of the text van Jer 27, cf. discussions by William McKane, "Jeremiah 27,5–8, especially 'Nebuchadnezzar, my servant,'" in *Prophet und Prophetenbuch: Festschrift für Otto Kaiser zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. Volkmar Fritz, Karl-Friedrich Pohlman and Hans-Christoph Schmitt; BZAW 185; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989), 99–108; Arie van der Kooij, "Jeremiah 27:5–15: How do MT and LXX Relate to Each Other," *JNSL* 20/1 (1994): 59–68. Van der Kooij, "Jeremiah 27:5–15," 61 believes that the plus in 27:5 in the MT makes good sense contextually.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Adrian Schenker, "Nebukadnessars Metamorphose vom Unterjocher zum Gottesknecht: Das Bild Nebukadnessars und einige mit ihm zusammenhängende Unterscheide in den beiden Jeremia-Rezensionen," *RB* 89 (1982): 504–505.

been given. However when a similar announcement is made in Isa 45:11–13 with regard to Cyrus, Yahweh is presented as the creator of the earth and the heaven.

Jeremiah’s message to the foreign envoys implied that Judah should not participate in the efforts to get rid of the Babylonian yoke. These implications are explicitly stated in Jeremiah’s address to Zedekiah (vv. 12–15) and the people (vv. 16–22).<sup>25</sup> Firstly, the Judean king is advised not to listen to the prophets telling him not to submit to the king of Babylon. Hill has observed the remarkable similarities between Jer 27:12–15 and 2 Kgs 18:31–32, belonging to the Hezekiah–Isaiah narratives. Both passages contain the masculine imperative plural חַיִּי (“live!”), a form not common in the OT. The warning to Zedekiah (Jer 27:14) not to listen to the prophets echoes the warning of the Rabshakeh to the inhabitants of Jerusalem in 2 Kgs 18:31–32. However, the advice attached to the warning in 2 Kgs 18 is exactly the opposite to the advice given in Jer 27. In contrast to Isaiah who advises Hezekiah to stand against the Assyrians, Jeremiah calls on Zedekiah to submit to the Babylonians.<sup>26</sup>

The warning against the optimistic prophets in Jer 27:12–13, 14, 16 is a leitmotiv in ch. 27.<sup>27</sup> These warnings contrast Jeremiah’s words with those of the optimistic prophets. Jeremiah, proclaiming that Yahweh, creator of the earth, had given the kingdoms presented by their envoys in Jerusalem into the hand of the Babylonians, was speaking the truth. The assertion that Yahweh had given dominion over the earth to Nebuchadnezzar provides the background to the appeals to Zedekiah, the priests and all the people.

The fate of the temple vessels comes into view in the appeal in Jer 27:16–22 to the priests and all the people. The temple vessels which were still left in the temple would also be taken to Babylon. This announcement anticipates Hananiah’s promise of the return of the temple vessels taken to Babylon in 597 B.C.E.. Chapter 27 thus lays the foundation for Jeremiah’s encounter with Hananiah in ch. 28.<sup>28</sup> This encounter should also be read against the background of the assertion that Yahweh as creator had given dominion over the earth to the Babylonian king.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Kelvin G. Friebel, *Jeremiah’s and Ezekiel’s Sign-Acts* (JSOTSup 283; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 149.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. John Hill, *Friend or Foe? The Figure of Babylon in the Book of Jeremiah MT* (BIS 40; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 139–140.

<sup>27</sup> Winfried Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 26–45: Mit einer Gesamtbeurteilung der deuteronomistischen Redaktion des Buches Jeremia* (WMANT 52; Neukirchen–Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 5.

<sup>28</sup> Leslie C. Allen, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 312.

## 2 The Affirmation that Yahweh is Creator of the Heaven and the Earth in Jeremiah 32:17 in its Immediate Context

Jeremiah 32:16–25 is set against the background of Jeremiah purchasing a field in Anathoth. After the resumption of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar's army, the prophet purchased a field belonging to his cousin, Hanamel.<sup>29</sup> The purchase of the field becomes a symbolic act of faith when all is doomed:<sup>30</sup> houses, fields and vineyards will again be bought in the land (v. 15).

Jeremiah's prayer, vv. 16–25, is motivated by misgivings about what he had just done:<sup>31</sup> how could the message of hope, communicated by the symbolic act of purchasing the field in Anathoth be reconciled with the Babylonian army's final assault against Jerusalem (v. 25)? The prayer is introduced by a complaint typical to the book of Jeremiah:<sup>32</sup> אָהֵה אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה ("Ah, my Lord Yahweh"). In two cases, in Jer 4:10 and 14:13, this complaint is related to the rival ministry of the optimistic prophets who announced that Judah's crisis was only temporary and that life would return to normal after a few difficult years.<sup>33</sup>

הִנֵּה is the major structural marker in Jer 32:17–25.<sup>34</sup> In the first sub-unit, vv. 17aβ–23, הִנֵּה introduces the affirmation that Yahweh is creator of heaven and earth. Verse 17 concludes with the inference that nothing was impossible for Yahweh. Verses 18–23 continue with a description of Yahweh's acts. Yahweh is the one who shows love to the thousandth generation, but pays back the iniquity of the fathers into the lap of their children after them (v. 18). Yahweh's eyes are open to mankind's way in order to give to each according to his ways (v. 19). He has made a name for himself: in Israel's history, specifically the exodus, and among human kind (v. 20). The prophet carries on with a recollection of the deliverance from Egypt and the giving of the land which Yahweh had promised with an oath to their ancestors (vv. 21–22). Despite Yahweh's favour, the people were disobedient resulting in the precarious situation in which they found themselves (v. 23). When the syntax of vv. 17–23 is

<sup>29</sup> It did not happen during the temporary lifting of the siege of Jerusalem. Cf. Friebel, *Sign-Acts*, 316–317.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Christopher R. Seitz, *Theology in Conflict: Reactions to the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah* (BZAW 176; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989), 244.

<sup>31</sup> Lundbom, 21–36, 511.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Jer 1:6; 4:10; 14:13. The complaint is also attested in Ezra 4:14; 9:8; 11:13; 21:5.

<sup>33</sup> Louis Stulman, "Conflicting Paths to Hope in Jeremiah, in *Shaking Heaven and Earth*," in *Essays in Honor of Walter Brueggemann and Charles B. Cousar* (ed. Christine R. Yoder, Kathleen M. O'Connor, E. Elizabeth Johnson and Stanley P. Saunders; Louisville, Ky.: John Knox Press, 2005), 51.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Andrew G. Shead, *The Open Book and the Closed Book: Jeremiah 32 in its Hebrew and Greek recensions* (JSOTSup 347; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 56.

taken into consideration, it becomes evident that the focus is on the affirmation that Yahweh is the creator of heaven and earth for whom nothing is impossible. Verse 18 is introduced by two participles, pointing to the subordination of vv. 18–19a to v. 17. From v. 19b pure relative sentences follow, that change into separate sentences in the course of the speech.<sup>35</sup>

הנה also opens the second sub-unit of the prophet’s prayer, Jer 32:24–25.<sup>36</sup> Siege-ramps were being erected around the city (v. 24). Jeremiah then asked the question which was on his mind from the beginning: why did Yahweh order him to purchase the field while Jerusalem was been given into the hands of the Babylonians (v. 25)? Jeremiah wanted to be reassured of Yahweh’s intentions.

The words of Yahweh in Jer 32:26–44 are positioned to be a response to the prayer in 32:16–25.<sup>37</sup> Verse 27, which resolves Jeremiah’s confusion is the focus of vv. 26–44.<sup>38</sup> Verse 27 matches v. 17 with the use of the verb פלא.<sup>39</sup> In addition, Yahweh’s self-asseveration in v. 27 that he is the God of all flesh, corresponds to Jeremiah’s affirmation of Yahweh’s power in creation in v. 17. The assertion implicit in the rhetorical question in v. 27 is generally taken as an assurance that nothing is impossible for Yahweh.<sup>40</sup> Fretheim has, however, made a convincing case for the view that the answer to the rhetorical question is negative. While Jeremiah might have believed that Yahweh would bring a new future about without Jerusalem being destroyed by the Babylonians, it was not possible for Yahweh to bypass the destruction on the way to restoration.<sup>41</sup>

Jeremiah 32:28–29, introduced by לבן, narrates what would happen in the near future: Jerusalem would be delivered into the hands of the Babylonians who would capture the city and set fire to it. Jeremiah 32:30–35, which is introduced by the conjunction כי, provides the reason for Yahweh’s actions. From their youth the people of Judah had done nothing but evil in Yahweh’s sight (v. 30). Jerusalem’s history was one of disobedience towards Yahweh (v. 31). The kings, the nobles, the priests, the prophets, all the people of Judah and

<sup>35</sup> Wilhelm Rudolph, *Jeremia* (3rd, improved ed.; HAT 1/12; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1968), 213.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Shead, *Open Book*, 56.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Walter Brueggemann, “A ‘Characteristic’ Reflection on What Comes Next (Jeremiah 32.16–44),” in *Prophets and Paradigms: Essays in Honor of Gene M. Tucker* (ed. Stephen B. Reid; JSOTSup 229; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 24.

<sup>38</sup> Allen, *Jeremiah*, 369.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Brueggemann, “A ‘Characteristic’ Reflection,” 20.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. for instance Thompson, *Book of Jeremiah*, 593–594; Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 218.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Terence C. Fretheim, “Is Anything too Hard for God? (Jeremiah 32:27),” *CBQ* 22 (2004): 234.

the inhabitants of Jerusalem had turned their backs on Yahweh (vv. 32–35). These sinful acts would be punished before there would be a return to the land, announced in vv. 42–44. In these verses the fulfilment of Yahweh's message of judgement is made the guarantee of the fulfilment of his promise of restoration. Yahweh promises that just as he has brought great evil upon the people, so will he bring upon them all the prosperity that he promised.<sup>42</sup>

Although the historicity of Jeremiah's purchase of the field in Anathoth is an issue of scholarly debate, there is widespread agreement that Jer 32:6\*–15<sup>43</sup> represents the oldest core of the chapter, and has secondarily received a redactional setting (vv. 1–5) and elaboration (vv. 16–44).<sup>44</sup> Rom–Shilomi has persuasively argued for the independent character of vv. 36–41. Focusing on the renewal of an everlasting covenant, these verses introduce a theme otherwise not dealt with in ch. 32.<sup>45</sup> However, already through the addition of vv. 16–35 and 42–44 the significance of Jeremiah's purchase of the field in Anathoth shifts to the time after the destruction of Jerusalem.

Thiel attributed Jer 32:16–44 to the Deuteronomistic redaction of Jeremiah.<sup>46</sup> More recently the notion of multiple Deuteronomistic redactions of the book of Jeremiah, has found support. Albetz, for instance, ascribes chapter 32 to a third Deuteronomistic redaction.<sup>47</sup> Stipp likewise attributes ch. 32 to JerDtr III.<sup>48</sup> For the Deuteronomistic editor(s) of Jer 32 Jeremiah was a prophet that

<sup>42</sup> John Applegate, "'Peace, Peace, When There Is No Peace': Redactional Integration of Prophecy of Peace into the Judgement of Jeremiah," in *The Book of Jeremiah and its Reception* (ed. Adrian H. W. Curtis and Thomas Römer; BETL 128; Leuven: Leuven UP, 1997), 82.

<sup>43</sup> The account of the purchase of the field by Jeremiah in Jer 32:6\*–15 expresses the hope for an ongoing life in Judah. It seems that those left in the land after 597/587 B.C.E. were envisioned. Cf. Römer, "How did Jeremiah?" 196.

<sup>44</sup> Seitz, *Theology in Conflict*, 243; Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion*, 29.

<sup>45</sup> Dalit Rom–Shilomi, "The Prophecy for 'Everlasting Covenant' (Jeremiah XXXII 36–41): An Exilic Addition or a Deuteronomistic Redaction?" *VT* 53 (2003): 207. Stegeman concurs with Rom–Shilomi. She argues that Jer 32:36–41 constructs a world in which the events of 587 B.C.E. belong to the far past, but an everlasting covenant has not yet come. Behind these verses stands a group that pressed for religious renewal. Cf. Janneke Stegeman, "'Reading Jeremiah Makes Me Angry!' The Role of Jeremiah 32[39]:36–41 in Transformation Within the 'Jeremianic' Tradition," in *Tradition and Innovation in Biblical Interpretation: Studies Presented to Professor Eep Talstra on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (ed. Wido Th. Van Reursen and Janet W. Dyk; SSN 57; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 46–47, 55–56.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion*, 30–31.

<sup>47</sup> Rainer Albetz, *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Six Century B.C.E.* (trans. D. Green; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 318–319.

<sup>48</sup> Hermann–Josef Stipp, "Das jüdische und babylonische Jeremiabuch," in *Congress Volume: Ljubljana 2007* (ed. André Lemaire; VTSup 133; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 240.

affirmed that Yahweh was the creator of heaven and earth. At a time when the Babylonian army made the final assault on Jerusalem in the name of their god Marduk, Jeremiah maintained that nothing was impossible for Yahweh.

### C JEREMIAH 32:17 READ AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF JEREMIAH 27:5

Through the reference to Yahweh as the creator who had made the heaven and the earth Jer 32:17 recalls Yahweh's decision to hand all earth into the power of Nebuchadnezzar mentioned in 27:5. Several years before the destruction of Jerusalem Jeremiah had told the envoys of the kingdoms, which had gathered in Jerusalem to explore the possibility of a rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar, that Yahweh as Lord over the whole earth, had given the kingdoms represented by these envoys into the power of Nebuchadnezzar.

In Jer 32 the optimistic prophets are only mentioned cursorily among the list of the Judeans who provoked Yahweh's anger (v. 32).<sup>49</sup> However, through the intertextual link between 27:5 and 32:17 the repeated warnings against the word of the optimistic prophets in ch. 27 are called to mind. Jeremiah's purchase of ancestral land as a sign-act proclaiming the restoration of the land should therefore not be placed on the same level as those of an optimistic prophet such as Hananiah. Jeremiah's sign-act correlated with Yahweh's action after the destruction of Jerusalem. Only after that calamity will fields once more be bought in the land. The siege of Jerusalem would not be lifted and Jehoiachin and the other Judeans, taken to Babylon in 597 B.C.E., would not return, contrary to what was promised by Hananiah.

Through the use of the expression *עשית את השמים ואת הארץ*, Jer 32:17 is in a dialogue with 2 Kgs 19:15. With its intertextual connection with Jer 27:5, Jer 32:17 reverses Hezekiah's point of view articulated in his prayer in 2 Kgs 19:15. For Hezekiah the Assyrians would withdraw as a result of divine intervention. For Jeremiah Jerusalem would be delivered into the hands of the Babylonian king. While Hezekiah could look forward to the destruction of the Assyrian army, for Jeremiah Jerusalem would be destroyed. Berges's view that much is to be said that soon after 701 B.C.E. a Hezekiah tradition of the threat and deliverance of Jerusalem developed which could have exerted its influence of the politics of Zedekiah and those besieged around the year 588 B.C.E., seems plausible.<sup>50</sup> In the light of the existence of intertextual relations between the Isaiah-Hezekiah narratives and various texts in the book of Jeremiah, it is probable that the redactors of Jer 27 and 32 had knowledge of at least some

<sup>49</sup> I cannot agree with Allen, *Jeremiah*, 36, who argues that the use of the complaint *יהוה אלהי אדני יהוה* in Jer 32:17 might be an indication that the subject of true and false prophecy formed the background of Jeremiah's thoughts. The use of the complaint in 32:17 should rather be compared with its use in 1:6.

<sup>50</sup> Berges, *Book of Isaiah*, 296.

form of these narratives. In their discourse with these narratives they demonstrate that Jeremiah was a prophet who spoke the word of Yahweh.

Albertz has suggested that the Deuteronomistic redaction which was responsible for Jer 32:17–27, in an attempt to explain how Yahweh would bring about a change of fortunes, indicated that the basis of the change in fortunes was solely Yahweh, the mighty Creator of the world (32:17) and the God of all flesh (32:17, 27), for whom "nothing is too hard" (32:17, 27).<sup>51</sup> By picturing the prophet Jeremiah as having misgivings about Yahweh's intentions in spite of the fact that he acknowledged that Yahweh was in control, these redactors showed that even a prophet which was sent by Yahweh, could experience uncertainty about Yahweh's intentions.

## D CONCLUSION

The Deuteronomistic editors of the book of Jeremiah wanted to demonstrate that any doubt with regard to Jeremiah's faith in Yahweh was unfounded. In Jeremiah's prayer, ideally appropriate for presenting ideological and theological perspectives, these editors picture him as a person who, a time when it seemed as if the Babylonian gods are more powerful than Yahweh, acknowledged that Yahweh was in control. Through the intertextual link between Jer 32:17 and 27:5 they show that several years before the destruction of Jerusalem Jeremiah had told the envoys, which had gathered in Jerusalem to explore the possibility of a rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar, that Yahweh as Lord over the whole earth, had given the kingdoms represented by them into the power of Nebuchadnezzar. In contrast to the optimistic prophets Jeremiah spoke the truth, although he did not always have a clear picture of the manner in which Yahweh's intentions would be realised. The basis of the change in fortunes of the Babylonian exiles was solely Yahweh, the mighty Creator of the world.

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<sup>51</sup> Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 343.

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