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The Day of the Lord  
RALPH W. KLEIN

The Shape of Hope: Jeremiah's Book of Consolation  
THEODORE M. LUDWIG

The Message of the Deuteronomic Historian  
CARL GRAESSER, JR.

Consolation in 2 Cor. 5:1-10  
FREDERICK W. DANKER

The Theological Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls  
JOACHIM JEREMIAS

A Topical Sermon  
ANDREW W. WEYERMANN

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# The Shape of Hope: Jeremiah's Book of Consolation

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The question of the presence or absence of eschatological ideas in the prophetic writings has been debated for years, with scholars defending both positions.<sup>1</sup> The question is problematic because of the difficulty of defining "eschatology" in a way that will do justice to the prophetic material. If understood strictly as a cosmic cataclysm, as a suprahistorical return to chaos followed by cosmogony, or even as the end of the present order and the beginning of a radically different order,<sup>2</sup> eschatology cannot be said to have a central place in the utterances of the pre-exilic and exilic prophets. Clearly, however, the prophets proclaimed an end to the national existence of Israel, and they also hoped for a national renewal in the future; and in this broader sense we may speak of "eschatology" in the prophetic writings. To help determine the specific shape which hope for the future may take in prophetic thought, this study will deal with one prophetic literary unit that may

be considered a pivotal stage between pre-exilic and exilic prophetic hope: the so-called book of consolation of Jeremiah (chs. 30—31).

The poetic oracles in Jer. 30—31 are grouped together under the eschatological rubric: "Behold, days are coming . . . when I will restore the fortunes of My people" (30:3). The prose sections at the end of chapter 31 also use this rubric (31:23, 27, 31, 38), setting off the "book" (30:2) as one literary unit, related of course to other sections of Jeremiah but evidencing an independent transmissional history.

Volz's masterful exposition has convincingly demonstrated the general literary unity and Jeremian flavor of these poems. He shows that the basic object of hope is the return of the northern Israelite exiles to their homeland. With this as the unifying theme, Volz argues, the book of consolation forms a literary whole with the changing scenes dramatically presenting the ups and downs of hope.<sup>3</sup> While Volz has performed a great service for the

<sup>1</sup> C. F. Whitley, *The Prophetic Achievement* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963), p. 216, concludes "that there is nothing of an eschatological nature in the genuine utterances of the great prophets." Others argue for a real eschatology, e. g., R. E. Clements, *Prophecy and Covenant* (Naper-ville: Alec R. Allenson, 1965), pp. 104 ff.; J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), pp. 360 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 54 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Volz, *Der Prophet Jeremia* (Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung Dr. Werner Scholl, 1922), pp. 281 ff. Also referring all of chs. 30—31 to the hope of north Israel's return are Wilhelm Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 2d ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1958); Elmer A. Leslie, *Jeremiah* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954); Artur Weiser, *Das Buch des Propheten Jeremia*, 2d ed., in *Das Alte Testament Deutsch*, XXI (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959); and Otto Eissfeldt, *Einführung in das alte Testament*, 3d ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1964), p. 487.

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interpretation of the book of consolation by pointing out its underlying north Israelite orientation, his interpretation cannot be followed completely. All references to Judah in these chapters cannot be deleted; there is material here which clearly refers to the destruction and rebuilding of Jerusalem; and some of the poems show a diction and content which places them in literary proximity to Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah. Accordingly, this study will seek to show that the *Trostbüchlein* grows out of words of hope used at various times during Jeremiah's career, spoken and revised again and again by him and his followers to meet the changing situation. It is useful for the purpose of determining the shape of hope in the book of consolation to conceive of three developmental layers or aspects in this collection of poems: the seminal material was spoken early in Jeremiah's career in anticipation of the return of northern Israel and the unification of Israel under Josiah; this basic hope was reinterpreted in the cataclysmic events of Judah's destruction and exile; and, finally, the oracles of hope were repeated and applied during the exile by Jeremiah and by the company of prophets that eventually produced the hope expressed in the latter chapters of Isaiah.<sup>4</sup> We will seek to show that all three layers of hope arise from Jeremiah's fundamental con-

ception of Yahweh's purpose for His elected people. The book of consolation displays the shape of a theologically based hope that is given expression in various historical contexts.

#### I. HOPE FOR NORTH ISRAEL'S RETURN

Jeremiah was a northerner by birth (1:1), and he knew the traditions that were cherished by the northern people (cf. 31:15). It is crucial for an understanding of the shape of his hope to recognize that original elements in the book of consolation refer to the return of the northern exiles. While none of the oracles in these two chapters are dated, several of them (31:2-6, 15-22) are closely related in content to 3:6-14, which is dated "in the days of King Josiah" (thus between Jeremiah's call in 627 B.C. and Josiah's death in 609 B.C.). In 3:6-14 north Israel's exile is called a "decree of divorce," but now Jeremiah is told to proclaim her return:

Go and call out these words to the north  
and say:

Return, apostate Israel — oracle of  
Yahweh,

I will not look on you in anger;

For I am gracious — oracle of Yahweh,

I will not bear a grudge forever. (3:12)

This oracle, stemming from Jeremiah's early years, shows his hope for the physical return of the northern exiles.<sup>5</sup> Also included in this hope is the cultic unification of all Israel at the Zion sanctuary (3:14). And it is in this context that the earliest

<sup>4</sup> John Bright, *Jeremiah* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1965), p. 285, says: "All in all, the safest conclusion is that chapters xxx—xxxi contain genuine sayings of Jeremiah addressed to northern Israel and uttered relatively early in his career (xxx 2-6, 15-22), together with other words of his uttered much later, and that the material has in certain cases been expanded and supplemented in such a way as to apply Jeremiah's prophecies more directly to the situation of the exiles living in Babylon."

<sup>5</sup> *Shûbâh* here is not "repent" but "return to homeland." This passage was probably spoken before the Josian reform: Bernard Duhm, *Das Buch Jeremia* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1901), pp. 15, 47; Rudolph, pp. 23 to 25; Volz, pp. 42—47; Bright, pp. 26—27.

oracles of the book of consolation, notably 31:2-6 and 31:15-22, took form.<sup>6</sup>

The climate of King Josiah's reign was especially fertile for such a hope as this. As part of his great reform movement, he followed a policy of reuniting north Israel cultically and politically with Judah (cf. 2 Kings 23:15-20; 2 Chron. 34:6-7). Most scholars, it is true, follow Rowley's thesis that although Jeremiah initially was favorable toward Josiah's reform movement, he soon saw its "spiritual failure" and turned against it.<sup>7</sup> There is, however, no real evidence that Jeremiah ever opposed Josiah's policies.<sup>8</sup> On the contrary, it is more

likely that Jeremiah was and remained an adherent of Josiah's pro-reform, pro-unification, and (later) pro-Babylonian party. For, after Josiah's death, Jeremiah expressed unbounded enthusiasm for his reign of "justice and righteousness" (22:15-16; cf. 2 Chron. 35:25), and to the end of his life it was precisely the men of Josiah's reform and their sons (especially the house of Shaphan, Josiah's secretary of state) who stood up for Jeremiah again and again (26:24; 36:11 ff., 25; 39:11-14; 40:5-6; 29:3; cf. 2 Kings 22:12). Jeremiah's fierce denunciations of the people's lack of repentance and the falsity of the religious leaders come after Josiah's death, starting with his temple sermon "in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim." (26:1)

The importance of seeing Jeremiah's pro-Josian stance lies in the bearing this has on his early oracles of hope, the main characteristics of which are the return of the northern exiles and the cultic unification of Israel at Zion. Weiser rightly insists that Jeremiah's hope was theologically and not politically motivated; it grew out of the cultic traditions of Israel's election and, as expressed by Jeremiah, lent impetus to the Deuteronomic reform and the expansionist policies of Josiah.<sup>9</sup> Yet the occasion for expressing the cultic traditions in a hope of precisely this shape can be attributed to the historical and political situation that developed in the context of

prove Jeremiah opposed the reform; however, this and similar passages are only general denunciations of the religious leaders. Cf. Volz, p. 77; Rudolph, p. 57.

<sup>9</sup> Weiser, p. 274. Eissfeldt, p. 487, also feels this hope of Jeremiah's was expressed prior to the reform.

<sup>6</sup> Duhm, pp. 243, 247; Weiser, pp. 284-85; Rudolph, pp. 177 ff.; Leslie, p. 94; Albert Gelin, "Le sens de mot 'Israel' en Jérémie XXX to XXXI," *Memorial J. Chaine* (Lyon: Facultés Catholiques, 1950), pp. 163 ff.; F. W. Lofthouse, *Jeremiah and the New Covenant* (London: Student Christian Movement, 1925), p. 212. Some scholars, it is true, place the whole book of consolation later, at the time of Gedaliah. John Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion: Studies in the Life of Jeremiah* (Cambridge: University Press, 1922), p. 303; George Adam Smith, *Jeremiah*, 4th ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers [1929]), pp. 292 ff.; Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), II, 212. At the other extreme, M. D. Goldman, "The Authorship of Jeremiah Chapter XXXI," *Australian Biblical Review*, II (1952), 109-10, thinks 31:1-21 was written soon after the fall of the northern kingdom, long before Jeremiah.

<sup>7</sup> H. H. Rowley, "The Prophet Jeremiah and the Book of Deuteronomy, III," *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy*, ed. H. H. Rowley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1950), p. 174. Cf. Bright, pp. xci ff., lxxiii; Lofthouse, pp. 76 ff.; Rudolph, pp. 73 ff.; Skinner, pp. 106-7; Raymond Calkins, *Jeremiah the Prophet: A Study in Personal Religion* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1930), pp. 87 ff. Adam C. Welch, *Jeremiah: His Time and His Work* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955), pp. 88 ff., thinks Jeremiah opposed the reform from the beginning.

<sup>8</sup> The passage in 8:8 ff. is most often used to

Josiah's expansionist activity in the territory of the defunct northern state.<sup>10</sup>

The oracle in 31:2-6 (like Hos. 2:16-17 Heb.) has the character of a return to the primordial time of salvation:

They found grace in the wilderness,  
A people, survivors of the sword,  
Israel, on the way to its rest.  
From afar Yahweh appeared to me:  
"I have loved you with ancient love,  
Therefore I lead you with steadfast love."  
(31:2-3)

The people of north Israel, now scattered in exile as "survivors of the sword," are pictured in a "wilderness" experience just like ancient Israel.<sup>11</sup> The language immediately suggests Ex. 33:12-17, where the phrase "find grace" (*māṣā' chēn*) is used no less than five times. After a judgment situation (the golden calf incident), Yahweh renews His promise: "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (Ex. 33:14). Thus the elements of the exodus tradition are taken up in Jeremiah's hope for the future of north Israel: they are survivors of Yahweh's judgment, they confront Yahweh in the wilderness, and they find grace on the way to "rest." The content of this "rest" in sacral tradition, especially in the context of the Deuteronomic reform, might well be supplied by Deut. 12:8-14: their "rest" is the land of their inheritance, where they will live in safety after their trip through the

wilderness, and they will make pilgrimages to the central sanctuary to rejoice before Yahweh.

In Yahweh's appearance "from afar," which has overtones of the Sinai theophany, the word of promise is based on His "ancient love" (*'ahabath 'ōlām*), which endures in spite of the punishment He had to inflict on north Israel.<sup>12</sup> Because of this original love for His people, Yahweh will now lead them back to their land with His covenant love. For this picture Jeremiah seems to have drawn on Hosea's vision of Yahweh's love; "I will lead you with steadfast love" (*mēshakīk chesed*) repeats Hosea's description of Yahweh as a father leading his son with cords of love. (Hos. 11:4)

The threefold "again" (*'ōd*) of 31:4-5 demonstrates that Jeremiah's "eschatological" hope for north Israel is very concrete: the land will be rebuilt by Yahweh, and there will again be joyous festivals and vineyards planted in the mountains of Samaria. Jeremiah foresees a real return of the exiles and a renewal of their social and economic life in their homeland. Unification of Israel's cultic life, the other main aspect of Jeremiah's early hope, is also stated strongly here:

For there is a day, the watchmen cry out  
In the hills of Ephraim:  
"Rise! Let us go up to Zion,  
To Yahweh our God!" (31:6)

In the reform of Josiah, Jerusalem was made the one pilgrimage goal for all Israel (cf. 2 Kings 23:15-20; 2 Chron. 34:6-7, 33; Deut. 16:2, 11, 15-16). Jeremiah helped create the climate for that reform with

<sup>10</sup> Bright, p. 26. Leonhard Rost, "Jeremias Stellungnahme zur Aussenpolitik der Könige Josia und Jojakim," *Christentum und Wissenschaft*, V (1929), 71-73, tries to show that Jeremiah's words apply only to those north Israelites still living in north Israel's territory. This is unlikely in view of 31:16, 22.

<sup>11</sup> Volz, p. 288: "eine Wiederholung der uranfänglichen Geschichte."

<sup>12</sup> Weiser, p. 284, notes that *'ōlām* here refers back to the event at Sinai. Luther translates: "ich habe dich je und je geliebet"; Volz, p. 288.

his prophetic description of the herald's cry ringing through the ancient hills of Ephraim (Jer. 31:26), summoning the people for a pilgrimage to Zion, the dwelling of Yahweh.

It is possible that some part of 31:7 also belonged to Jeremiah's early oracle of hope for north Israel: "Save, O Yahweh, your people, Remnant Israel!" Although verses 8 and 9 reflect a later situation, the word of Yahweh in 31:9c could very well have formed the ending of this oracle:<sup>13</sup>

For I am to Israel a father,  
And Ephraim, he is my firstborn.

Once again, Jeremiah draws on Hosean theology (which is based in turn on the election tradition, cf. Ex. 4:22), with its emphasis on the father-son relationship of Yahweh and Israel (Hos. 11:1-4; cf. Jer. 3:19; 31:20). God's paternal, elective love stands at the center, forming the basis for the new experience of grace, out of which comes new life for north Israel and the realization of the union of the whole people at Zion.

The other oracle in the book of consolation which we will use to portray the shape of Jeremiah's hope for north Israel is an artful composition of three short scenes: ancestress Rachel weeping for her children; Yahweh's son Ephraim bemoaning his youthful disgrace; and faithless daughter Israel lost on the road home (31:15-22). The overall effect is a moving portrayal of Yahweh's tenacious love for His destroyed people, a suffering love which guarantees a future for them even under the present dire circumstances. The first scene draws on very ancient tribal traditions of the north:

Listen! in Ramah is heard a sobbing,  
A weeping most bitter.  
Rachel, weeping for her children,  
Refusing to be comforted,  
Because they are not.

As a Benjamite, Jeremiah knew well the grave of Rachel in the vicinity of Ramah (*er-rām*, about 10 kilometers north of Jerusalem).<sup>14</sup> As traditional mother of the tribes of central Palestine, Rachel was viewed as the ancestress of north Israel (cf. Gen. 30:22-24; 35:16-20). In poetic imagery that tugged at the hearts of those who had ties with north Israel, Jeremiah calls them to listen to the century-long lament of Israel's ancestress.<sup>15</sup> No particular repentance or remorse can be implied in Rachel's weeping; this is simply a poetic device to set up Yahweh's word of hope:

Restrain your voice from weeping  
And your eyes from tears.  
For there is reward for your toil — oracle  
of Yahweh,  
And they will return from the enemy's  
land.  
There is hope for your future — oracle of  
Yahweh,  
And the children will return to their  
homeland. (31:16-17)

Rachel's "toil" implies the rearing of children, suggesting north Israel was torn

<sup>14</sup> Cf. 1 Sam. 10:2. The tradition that the grave of Rachel is near Bethlehem rests on the scribal insertion in Gen. 35:19, "that is, Bethlehem"; Rudolph, p. 180.

<sup>15</sup> There is no indication that Jeremiah thought of the spirit of Rachel hovering around the grave; Volz, p. 290. There is also no indication that he is speaking these words to the Judeans being deported from Ramah after the fall of Jerusalem (Jer. 40:1), as maintained by Skinner, p. 305, and Walter Harrelson, *Jeremiah: Prophet to the Nations* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1959), pp. 65-68.

<sup>13</sup> So Volz, pp. 288-89; Bright, p. 281.

away in childhood before mother Rachel could reap reward for her toil,<sup>16</sup> that is, before north Israel as a nation could come to maturity. The proclamation of hope (*tiqwáh*) recalls Hosea's vision of Israel in the wilderness a second time, with the valley of Achor as a door of hope (Hos. 2:17 Heb.; cf. Jer. 29:11). The accent in this scene is on the word "return" (*shábu*), twice repeated; a concrete, physical return of the exiles is envisioned from the enemy's land to their own borders.

While the first scene in this oracle provides no reason for the decree of Israel's return, the second scene (31:18-20) gives a basis in Yahweh Himself. Ephraim is heard in exile, bemoaning the punishment and the disgrace:

Listen! I hear Ephraim lamenting:

"You punished me, and I was punished  
Like an untrained calf.

Return me, and I will return,

For you are Yahweh my God." (31:18)

Parallel to the first scene, again a voice is heard lamenting the fact of the exile. This time Jeremiah visualizes the exiles of the north themselves in a repentant vein (cf. v. 19), using words from a liturgy of repentance<sup>17</sup> and pleading to Yahweh for restoration to their land and renewal of their covenant relationship. Hosea's metaphor of Ephraim as "a trained heifer that loved to thresh" (Hos. 10:11) is changed slightly: Ephraim is an untrained calf that is punished in his "youth." The main emphasis of the scene is not the repentance of Ephraim, brought on by the discipline of the exile. Rather, Jeremiah's idealized scene carries the same effect as the first

scene: the profound grief and mourning in Israel which the destruction of ancient north Israel caused — and the longing which the men of the Josian reform felt for the full restoration of all Israel once again. Ephraim's lamenting (*mitnôdêd*) is a lamenting for the dead, for the disgraced glory of Israel.<sup>18</sup> The emphasis of the scene again lies on the word "return" (*shub*), used both for Ephraim's turning away from Yahweh and for his plea for restoration: "Return me, and I will return."<sup>19</sup> The exiles here are pictured as pleading with Yahweh for restoration to their land, after which their covenant relationship with Yahweh their God can be renewed.

As in the first scene, so again the portrayal of north Israel's plight serves to introduce Yahweh's word of hope. This time Jeremiah uses as a poetic device a debate within Yahweh himself.

Is Ephraim my dear son,

Is he my darling boy,

That as often as I speak against him

I keep remembering him still?

Therefore my bowels churn for him,

I must have mercy on him — oracle of  
Yahweh. (31:20)

<sup>18</sup> The verb *nûd* in qal is used for a lament for the dead (Jer. 22:10; 15:15; 16:5). In hithpo'el, as here, it is used for derisive wagging at disgraced people (Jer. 48:27) and for the earth shaking (Is. 24:20). In Jeremiah's metaphor, perhaps Ephraim as an untrained calf is thought of bolting about in desperation.

<sup>19</sup> The phrase, "Return me, and I will return," is grammatically parallel to the phrase in the preceding line, "You punished me, and I was punished"; the function of the parallelism is to highlight Yahweh as the punisher and the restorer. Volz, p. 290, correctly interprets the passage: "Der göttliche Beschluss der Rückkehr ist freilich nicht an die Bekehrung geknüpft; der Reumütige darf vielmehr bitten: 'lass mich heimkehren, dass ich mich bekehre'; die völlige Hinwendung zu Jahwe, die ruht auf der anfangenden göttlichen Gnade."

<sup>16</sup> So Volz, p. 290; Rudolph, p. 180.

<sup>17</sup> So Weiser, pp. 288—89.

In using such an anthropopathic description of the divine saving process, Jeremiah again shows he is a disciple of Hosea.<sup>20</sup> Like Hosea, he sees that God's ancient father-love continues even in His wrath (31:3; Hos. 11:4); there is no synthesis between Yahweh's love and His wrath except in Yahweh Himself, and Jeremiah describes this as Yahweh suffering within Himself and bringing forth the decree of Ephraim's salvation.<sup>21</sup>

With this theological vision guiding his hope, Jeremiah turns to the exiles in the third scene and issues the call to return (31:21-22).

Set up roadmarks for yourselves,  
Make guideposts for yourselves.  
Consider well the highway,  
The road you walked.  
Return, O maiden Israel,  
Return to these your cities.  
How long will you turn to and fro,  
O faithless daughter?

Once again the main theme of Jeremiah's early poems of hope is here in the word *shub*, used both for Israel's faithlessness and for the call to return home (cf. 31:18-19; 3:12-14). Clearly the repentance of Israel is not a prime consideration; the daughter of Yahweh is still lost and faithless. But God's covenant love will draw His people back (31:3). So Jeremiah calls upon them

<sup>20</sup> Jeremiah's words might well be an adaptation of Hos. 11:8-9:

How can I give you up, O Ephraim?  
How can I give you over, O Israel?

My heart is turned over on Me,  
My compassion grows hot together.  
I will not do the fierceness of My anger!  
I will not again destroy Ephraim!

<sup>21</sup> Volz, p. 291: "Gott ganz zum Menschen geworden ist."

to prepare the way, to mark the route of the return to their cities.

Jeremiah's hope for north Israel's return grows out of Israelite sacral election traditions, transmitted to Jeremiah especially through the Hosean prophecies.<sup>22</sup> From these traditions Jeremiah took the basic concept of Yahweh's covenant love for His people, a love which issues forth from within Yahweh Himself in the tension between wrath and grace. He applied this theological vision to the political situation that developed with the wane of Assyrian power and the rise of the reform movement in Judah, giving shape to a hope for north Israel's return from exile and the cultic unification of all Israel at Zion. It is this hope that forms the underlying layer of hope in the book of consolation.

## II. CATAclysm AND HOPE FOR JUDAH

A second layer of hope in the book of consolation stems from the time of Judah's destruction. When King Josiah was killed in an anti-Egyptian uprising (2 Kings 23:29), the reform movement collapsed, and Jeremiah's hope for the future had to be radically reinterpreted. During the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, Jeremiah looked to the coming doom of the nation as inevitable. He called for national repentance (26:1-6), but at the same time he was certain that there would be no change in the people or their leaders (6:9-12, 27-30).<sup>23</sup> Hopes had risen during

<sup>22</sup> On the relation of Jeremiah's words to Hosea's thought, cf. esp. Karl Gross, "Hoseas Einfluss auf Jeremias Anschauungen," *Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift*, XLII (1931), 241-56, 327-43.

<sup>23</sup> Jim Alvin Sanders, *Suffering as Divine Discipline in the Old Testament and Post-Biblical Judaism*, special issue in *Colgate-Rochester Divinity Bulletin* (Rochester: Colgate-Rochester



Josiah's reign because of the renewal of the covenant, but now there could be only destruction, "because they have forsaken the covenant of Yahweh their God." (22:6-9)

Certain though he was of Judah's final apostasy and doom, Jeremiah still held to the hope of a future for them, as is clear from his letter to the exiles of the 597 B.C. deportation (29:5-14) and his purchase of a field under siege in Anathoth (32:6-15). Here is hope that could not possibly be based on political events; it grew out of his conception of Yahweh's purpose for His people, a purpose to be achieved by both judgment and renewal. This particular layer of hope in the book of consolation is reflected especially in two oracles, 30:5-7 and 30:12-17.

Jer. 30:5-7 is an oracle of the "day of Yahweh" category, using imagery that stems from old cultic traditions (cf. Amos 5:18-20; Is. 2:6-20; Zeph. 1:2-18; Joel 2:1-11).<sup>24</sup> Jeremiah in other places makes use of this imagery to describe God's judg-

Divinity School [1955]). XXVIII, 64 ff., sees discipline (*mûtsâr*) as the key to salvation rising out of punishment. But Sheldon H. Blank, *Jeremiah: Man and Prophet* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1961), pp. 227-28, shows that *mûtsâr* never brought Israel to repentance; therefore, there could be no future before the final curtain.

<sup>24</sup> Scholars differ on the origin of the "day of Yahweh" concept; probably it came either from the cultic holy war tradition (cf. Gerhard von Rad, "The Origin of the Concept of the Day of Yahweh," *Journal of Semitic Studies*, IV [April 1959], 103-8) or in connection with the new year celebration (cf. Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962], I, 189 ff.). In either case, the central meaning is a day, anticipated in Israel's cultus, when Yahweh's purposes for Israel would be fulfilled.

ment on Judah, especially in 4:5-31 and 6:22-26. There a description of an invasion "from the north"<sup>25</sup> combines cosmic elements of the "day" tradition with a description of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. In this context Jeremiah is fond of using the imagery of the daughter of Zion crying out as if in travail before the cruel Babylonian foe (4:31; 6:22-26; 22:23). This imagery is reflected in the "day of Yahweh" poem in 30:5-7:

A cry of panic we have heard,  
Terror, and no peace.  
Ask now and see  
If a male can bring forth.  
Why do I see every man,  
His hands on his loins as a woman in travail,  
Every face turned pale?  
Alas, for great is that day,  
There is none like it!  
It is a time of trouble for Jacob,  
And out of it he will be rescued.

The oracle is undated, but the close literary relation with 4:5-31 and 6:22-26, together with the immediacy of the panic and terror described here, make it likely that the object of reference is the impending destruction of Jerusalem (cf. 21:1-10).<sup>26</sup> Of course, the words are not merely a commentary on political events of the time but are also a theological assertion of hope for a future for Judah in Yahweh's purpose, in spite of the cataclysm.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> That the idea of a foe from the north originated at the time of a feared Scythian invasion seems doubtful; cf. Bright, pp. lxxx f.; Welch, pp. 97 ff.

<sup>26</sup> Bright, p. 279. Volz, p. 285, and Rudolph, p. 173, apply the passage to the political turmoil at the time of Assyria's fall.

<sup>27</sup> Weiser, p. 276, though applying the passage to north Israel, rightly insists that it is not politically but theologically motivated.

The "time of trouble" (*'ēt-tsārāh*) has a greater significance than mere political misfortune; it is a judgment brought by Yahweh Himself upon His own people (in accord with the traditional "day" ideology) in order to accomplish His purpose. And that purpose, Jeremiah holds, leads to salvation for Judah, for "out of it he will be rescued" (30:7b). Here is hope with a bite to it,<sup>28</sup> hope that dares to take the judgment itself as the basis for Yahweh's rescue of His people.

Another oracle in the book of consolation that relates to Jeremiah's hope even in the face of the destruction of Jerusalem is 30:12-17. The taunt-word on Zion, together with the vividness of both the guilt of the people and the freshly experienced destruction, point to a time either during the final stages of the siege or immediately after the fall of the city of Jerusalem.<sup>29</sup>

Incurable is your hurt,  
Critical is your wound.  
There is no medicine for the wound,  
No healing for you.  
All your lovers have forgotten you;  
They care nought for you. (30:12-14a)

The point of the first part of the oracle is the completeness of the judgment. Four different words are used to drive this home (*'ānush*, *nachlāh*, *'ēn rēphu'ōth*, *'ēn rē'ālāh*). The foreign policy of Jehoiaḳim and Zedekiah had been built around a dependence on Egypt and others as allies against Baby-

lon (cf. 2 Kings 23:34-35; Jer. 37:5; 27:3). But now these "lovers" had deserted Judah, and there was none to help. (Jer. 22:20-22)

Again it is clear that Jeremiah, concerned though he is with the historical events, is primarily seeking to give a theological interpretation of those events which seem to be so ruinous of Judean hopes. Drawing from his conception of Yahweh's purpose, he sees that the destroyer is really Yahweh Himself:

For I have struck you an enemy's blow,  
The punishment of a cruel foe.  
Why cry out over your hurt,  
Your incurable pain?  
Because of the greatness of your iniquity,  
Your multiplying crimes,  
I have done this to you! (30:14b-15)

God as the "enemy" of His people is a concept familiar in Israelite prophetic tradition (Lam. 2:4-5; Is. 63:10; cf. Hos. 5:14). Even though the destruction comes at the hands of the Babylonian army as a "cruel foe" (*'akzārī*, Jer. 6:23), in Jeremiah's interpretation of the event it is really Yahweh who is the "cruel foe," for He used the foreign army to punish and destroy His elected people. Thus the destruction is "incurable," for it is done by Yahweh Himself, and none can rescue from His hands. (Cf. Hos. 5:14)

But the oracle continues with an abrupt shift from Yahweh the destroyer to Yahweh the rescuer:

Therefore all who devour you shall be devoured,  
And all your enemies shall go into captivity.  
Your spoilers shall become spoil,  
And all who prey on you I will give for prey.

<sup>28</sup> Blank, p. 213. He says, pp. 226-27, that there was "no road to redemption that did not cross the rubble of Jerusalem's walls and the ashes of the sanctuary."

<sup>29</sup> Those who apply this passage to north Israel must either delete "Zion" in v. 17b or read it "our fields" (*tsēdēnā*) with the Septuagint (which has many inaccuracies in its translation of the book of consolation).

For I will bring health for you,  
 And from your wounds I will heal you —  
 oracle of Yahweh.  
 For they called you, "Outcast,"  
 "That Zion, for whom no one cares."  
 (30:16-17)

The use of "therefore" (*lākēn*) for the transition between verses 15 and 16 is troublesome for most commentators.<sup>30</sup> Yet it is a very important key to the shape of Jeremiah's hope at the time of Jerusalem's destruction. The use of *lākēn* in prophetic oracles to introduce God's judgment on His elected people because of their sin is of course a common prophetic literary form (cf. esp. Amos 3:2). But there is also some evidence of a literary form in which *lākēn* (and *'al-kēn*) are used to introduce a declaration of hope immediately following a statement of judgment (Jer. 16:14; Ez. 36:2-7, 13-15; 37:11-12; Hos. 2:16 Heb.; cf. also Is. 25:3; 30:18; Micah 5:2; Jer. 15:19). The use of "therefore" in this type of literary form would indicate an election tradition preserved in Israel which expressly relates the hope of salvation to be brought by Yahweh to the fact that it was Yahweh who passed judgment on them as His elected people. In the book of consolation, Jeremiah drew on the elective "therefore" in speaking hope for north Israel (31:3, 20). Now, after he interprets the fall of Jerusalem as Yahweh's judgment, he uses the "therefore" to signal the fulfill-

ment of Yahweh's purpose in the restoration and renewal of His people.<sup>31</sup>

An important part of Jeremiah's eschatology here is Yahweh's coming judgment on the nation which, though used as a tool in Yahweh's hands, is still guilty of spoiling and preying on God's people. This concept is drawn from the cultic "day of Yahweh" tradition and is common in prophetic oracles (cf. Is. 10:5 ff.; 14:24-27; Jer. 30:11). Other motifs from Israel's election tradition are also here: Yahweh the smiter becomes Yahweh the healer (Hos. 6:1-3; Deut. 32:39); and Yahweh is roused to saving action by the scorn heaped on His people. (Ezek. 36:2-7, 13-15, 20 ff.; cf. Ex. 32:11-14)

Thus these two oracles show that one layer of hope in the book of consolation was shaped by Jeremiah's reflection over the events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem. He saw that Yahweh's purpose for His people would be achieved by His judgment and by His election love which continued even in the judgment. So Jeremiah speaks the only basis for hope available from Israel's election faith: Yahweh is the smiter; *therefore* Yahweh will be the healer.

### III. A THEOLOGY OF HOPE

Against the background of Jeremiah's early hope for north Israel and his later hope for a healed Judah to rise out of the cataclysm, a third layer of hope can be detected in the book of consolation, a hope which has become a pure theology of salvation. Historically, this layer was given shape by Jeremiah after the fall of Jerusalem, while he was with Gedaliah under

<sup>30</sup> Rudolph, p. 162, thinks the "therefore" is inconceivable here and reads *lākēn* as dittography [sic] for *wēkōl* ("Aber alle"); Leslie, p. 98, transfers v. 16 after v. 17; Smith, p. 296, and Volz, p. 275, say that the "therefore" marks the verse as a gloss; Bright, pp. 271, 286, says the transition is too sharp and "logically unsuitable."

<sup>31</sup> We follow Weiser, pp. 280—81, in seeing *lākēn* as theologically grounded.

Babylonian pension and with Baruch in Egypt, supplemented with further reinterpretation and application by Jeremiah's disciples among the exiles in Babylon. Outstanding characteristics of this layer of hope are the exclusive emphasis on salvation rather than judgment; the similarities in content and diction with the poems of Deutero-Isaiah; and the hope of the creation of a new life for Israel. Since this hope grew out of the earlier oracles of hope, it cannot be strictly separated from them. However, this third layer of hope can be detected to some degree in 30:10-11, 18-22; 31:7-9, 10-14, and in the prose sections found mainly in 31:22b-40. (Cf. ch. 33, also related to this layer of hope.)

It is important for the interpretation of these passages to realize that they stem directly from Jeremiah's theology of Yahweh's love working in judgment toward salvation, as that theology is applied to a changed historical situation. Judah's situation has now become similar to that of north Israel in Jeremiah's early oracles of hope. The judgment is over, and now Yahweh will complete His purpose by the recreation of His people in their land. Accordingly, these passages can be viewed as the transitional stage in prophetic hope which leads to the new creation theology which bursts forth especially in Deutero-Isaiah.

The four poetic oracles reflecting this layer of hope (30:10-11, 18-21; 31:7-9, 10-14) once again bring the undiluted promise of a return to the homeland — this time the promise is directed to the exiles in Babylon.

And you, fear not, O Jacob my servant —

Oracle of Yahweh,

And do not be dismayed, O Israel.

For behold, I will rescue you from afar,  
And your offspring from the land of  
captivity. (30:10)

The introduction of the exiles as Yahweh's "servant" immediately puts the poem in the pattern of election tradition which led to the bold promises of restoration in the latter chapters of Isaiah (cf. Is. 41:8, 10, 13, 14; 43:1-2, 5-6; 44:1-2; 49:12). According to Jer. 30:18-21, there will now be a full *restitutio in integrum*.

Behold, I will restore the fortunes of  
Jacob's tents,  
And have compassion on his dwellings.  
The city will be rebuilt on its tell,  
And the palace will stand in its former  
place. (30:18)

The rebuilding of the city (cf. Is. 44:26-28) will be the occasion for songs of thanksgiving to be heard once again, together with the merrymaking of the people. The ancient promise made to Abraham will be fulfilled, for God will multiply His people (Jer. 30:19; cf. Is. 51:2-3, where these ideas are paralleled). Everything shall be as it was "of old" *keqedem*, cf. Is. 51:9; Lam. 5:21): their children, the congregation (*'edáh*), and the prince (*'addár*) who will rise from the midst of the people and who will, like Moses, be able to approach near to Yahweh (cf. Deut. 18:15-18).<sup>32</sup> Here is no radical new age; this hope is a subdued one, patterned on an ideal time of the past.

The postjudgment reflexion of hope in the book of consolation reaches a poetic climax in chapter 31; the Judean exiles

<sup>32</sup> The "prince" introduced here reflects no royal splendor — *msbl* is used instead of *mlk*; the ideas here are in the sacral, not the political, sphere. Cf. similar ideas in Jer. 30:8-9; 33:14-16; Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Is. 55:3-4.

recite Jeremiah's early poem about north Israel's restoration (31:2-6) and apply it to their own situation. In answer to the cultic cry, "Save, O Yahweh, your people, Remnant Israel!" (31:7), the exiles comfort themselves with the vision of a new exodus, led by Yahweh.<sup>33</sup>

Behold, I will bring them from the north  
land,  
And I will gather them from earth's  
remote parts,  
Among them the blind and the lame,  
She with child and she in travail together,  
A great throng, they will return.  
See, with weeping they will come,  
And with pleading, I will lead them.  
I will make them walk by brooks of water,  
In a straight way, they will not stumble  
in it. (31:8-9)

In this new exodus scene,<sup>34</sup> there is a new expression of the theological vision that years before saw north Israel's return as part of Yahweh's purpose for His people. The return depends completely on Yahweh's work of rescue; He it is that will lead them back from the remote places—the blind and lame, the one pregnant and the one in travail; they all are weeping and pleading, they are helpless to effect their own return. But Yahweh will lead them back, with no stumbling or fainting for thirst in the wilderness.

<sup>33</sup> Here we follow Bright, pp. 281, 286, who thinks perhaps 31:7, 9c originally concluded the poem 31:2-6; the words in 31:8-14 "seem to represent an adaptation and application of Jeremiah's prophecies to the situation of the exiles."

<sup>34</sup> For the "new exodus" march in Deutero-Isaiah, with many of the same images and words, cf. Is. 35:5-10; 40:3-5, 10-11; 42:16; 43:1-7, 18-21; 44:3-5; 46:3-4; 48:20-21; 49:9-13; 51:5-11; 52:11-12; 55:12-13. In Jer. 31:9a the Septuagint reads *tanchúmim* ("consolations") instead of *tachánunim* ("pleadings"); the parallelism favors the Masoretic text (cf. 3:21).

The exiles will return to their land, and there they will begin a new life by partaking of the satisfying goodness of Yahweh their shepherd. Jer. 31:10-14 brings the promise of a renewal of life for the exiles.

Hear the word of Yahweh, O nation,  
And proclaim in the isles afar:  
"The scatterer of Israel will gather him,  
And he will keep him as a shepherd his  
flock."  
For Yahweh has ransomed Jacob,  
And He has redeemed him from a hand  
too strong for him.

And they will come and sing on the height  
of Zion,  
They shall be radiant over the goodness of  
Yahweh,

Over the grain, over wine, over oil,  
And over the young of flock and cattle.  
And their life will be as a garden well-  
watered,  
And never again will they languish.  
Then the maiden will rejoice in dancing,  
And the young men and old all together.

I will turn their mourning to rejoicing,  
I will comfort them, I will give them  
gladness for sorrow.  
And I will satisfy the life of the priests  
with plenty,  
And my people will be sated with my  
goodness.

This poem, fairly breathing the spirit of Deutero-Isaiah,<sup>35</sup> brings the Jeremian hope

<sup>35</sup> Among the many stylistic affinities this passage has with Deutero-Isaiah, cf. the following: "isles" (*'iyyim*) in Is. 41:1, 5; 42:4, 10, 12; 49:1; 51:5; the shepherd feeding his flock, Is. 40:11; the words "ransom" (*pqd*), "rejoicing" (*simchab*), "gladness" (*shashon*) and "sorrow" (*yagon*) in Is. 51:11; cf. 61:3; 60:20; 51:3; "be radiant" (*nhr*) is used elsewhere only in Is. 60:5 and Ps. 34:6 Heb. One of the favorite words of Deutero-Isaiah, "redeem" (*g'l*) is used only here

to its climax with the use of the ancient cultic words "ransom" and "redeem" (*pchd* and *g'l*) to describe the saving activity of Yahweh in renewing the life of His people. The sanctuary at Zion will provide the setting once again for the joyous cultic and social celebration of the "goodness of Yahweh," a goodness experienced especially in the restoration of the produce of the land, signaling the renewal of life for the exiles as the elected people of Yahweh. Jeremiah's eschatology here is sober and concrete; to be redeemed by Yahweh and sated with His goodness will mean life as in a well-watered garden. (Cf. Is. 58:11; 51:3)

A hymnic cosmic oath (31:35-37) perhaps stood as the seal at the end of the book of consolation at one stage,<sup>36</sup> basing the hope on the authority of the Creator. No matter what they have done, the nation Israel will always have a political future "before" Yahweh (*l'p'hānāy*). Here is a combination of Israel's election tradition with traditions of Yahweh as creator — a combination which reaches central importance in Deutero-Isaiah. (Is. 40:12 ff.; 42:5-9; 44:24-28; 45:12-13; 51:9-16)

In addition to the poetic oracles, a number of prose sayings belonging to this layer of hope are included at the end of the book of consolation (Jer. 31:23-26, 27-30, 31-34, 38-40; also 30:3, 8-9). These oracles probably had their own history of transmission apart from the poetic sec-

tions.<sup>37</sup> Once again, in the coming age, the cultic words of blessing will be heard on the holy mount (31:23); Yahweh will stop uprooting His people and will once again plant them (31:27-28; cf. 45:4; 1:10). The boundary line of the rebuilt city will even include the valley of Hinnom, sanctifying the once profane ground (31:38-40; cf. 7:31-32). A somewhat curious view of the new age is reflected in 31:29-30, which reinterprets an old proverbial saying:

In those days, they will no longer say, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the sons' teeth are on edge." But each one will die for his own sin, everyone who eats sour grapes, his teeth will be on edge.

This passage is often used by interpreters to show that Jeremiah broke through to an individualistic understanding of religion. This same proverb is refuted at great length in Ezek. 18:1-32. There it is an integral part of the argument which proves the justness of Yahweh's ways and the possibility for Israel to turn from her way of evil and live. But in Jer. 31:29-30 the proverb is quoted only to suggest that a change from the old custom of collective retribution will come in the future. The purely negative tone of verse 30 hardly fits the tenor of the rest of the book of consolation.<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps the most significant of the prose sections, at least in the history of interpretation, is the new covenant passage (31:31-

and in 50:34 in Jeremiah. For the "garden well-watered" (*gan rāweh*) see Is. 58:11; for being "sated" (*sb'*) with Yahweh's "goodness" (*tūb*) cf. Is. 58:11; 66:11; 63:7. There is a place for priests in the new age in Is. 61:6; 66:21; and Ps. 132:15-16.

<sup>36</sup> Weiser, p. 296; Bright, p. 287.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. The prose sayings are marked by the standard formulae, "days are coming" (30:3; 31:27, 31, 38) and "restore fortunes" (30:3; 31:23).

<sup>38</sup> Volz, p. 279; Rudolph, p. 183, says this passage represents "eine kleinmütige Verengung der gewaltigen Verheissung von 31-34."

34). This is commonly described by scholars as Jeremiah's most important single teaching, which "towers right above any previous prophetic prediction," because of its emphasis on "the inwardness of true religion," "the inward and personal experience of God," etc.<sup>39</sup> It is true, of course, that the form and even the content of the new covenant is precisely that of the old covenant.<sup>40</sup> Yet many scholars feel there is something "new" in the new covenant in the method by which it is instituted; that is, in God's gift of new hearts to the people so they can obey Him. According to this interpretation, the shape of hope in the book of consolation thus climaxes in an ideal personal religion of the future, in the era of the free forgiveness of sins. Each person will be a prophet, for all will have a pneumatic knowledge of God's will written on their hearts.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Cf. e.g. von Rad, *Theology*, p. 212; Skinner, pp. 325—29; Calkins, p. 225; Volz, p. 297; Smith, p. 378; J. W. Miller, *Das Verhältnis Jeremias und Hesekiels sprachlich und theologisch untersucht* (Assen: Van Gorcum and Co., 1955), p. 181; and James Philip Hyatt, "Jeremiah," *The Interpreter's Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), V, 1037.

<sup>40</sup> Walter Lempp, "Bund und Bundeserneuerung bei Jeremia," *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, LXXX (April 1955), 238—39 (abstract of his Tübingen dissertation), tries to show that the content of the new covenant is really new because (1) it is no longer bound to Israel as a nation; (2) it is no longer bound to places and things; (3) the Law is no longer a way of salvation but a revelation of God's will; and (4) the decisive new content is grace and love and forgiveness. But his first two points are incorrect, and the last two are not new; cf. Rudolph, p. 184; Volz, p. 293; John Bright, "An Exercise in Hermeneutics: Jeremiah 31:31-34," *Interpretation*, XX (April 1966), 195.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Martin-Achard, "La nouvelle alliance, selon Jérémie," *Revue de Théologie et de*

Yet this common interpretation of the new covenant passage is somewhat misleading. The decisive words of the passage are 31:33-34:

I will put My torah within them, and I will write it upon their heart, and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And no one will teach his neighbor again, and no one his brother, saying, "know Yahweh"; for all of them will know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them — oracle of Yahweh. For I will forgive their iniquity; and their sin I will remember no longer.

There is little evidence, in the first place, that this passage expresses the climax of the Jeremian teaching on hope. The difference of style by itself is enough to cast doubt on the centrality of the passage in the book of consolation.<sup>42</sup> In the second place, the hope that is expressed here is not the hope of an individual, spiritualized,

*Philosophie*, XII (1962), 91, says, "les deux alliances sont identiques, sans sur un point, a vrai dire décisif, celui des moyens utilisés par Dieu pour en assurer l'efficacité." According to Von Rad, *Theology*, pp. 213—14, God will no longer speak His will but will place it directly in men's hearts; accordingly, the new covenant passage presents "the picture of a new man, a man who is able to obey perfectly because of a miraculous change of his nature." Others speak of the new hearts created by God: Bright, "An Exercise in Hermeneutics," p. 195; Whitley, pp. 165—66; Blank, pp. 209—10. Rudolph, p. 185, feels that falling into sin will no longer be possible in the new covenant era.

<sup>42</sup> Bright, *Jeremiah*, p. 287, usually sober in matters of authenticity, refuses even to raise the question concerning the new covenant passage: "As regards its authenticity, one can only say that it ought never to have been questioned." But Duhm, p. 255, speaks about "the poor, tedious, imprecise style; the prevalence of expressions which the supplementer loves; the complete absence of characteristic images, which are never missing even from the shortest of Jeremiah's verses."

universal religion of the future. Duhm refuted any such interpretation long ago by pointing out that, since there is no "new torah" mentioned here, the "new covenant" can only mean the renewal of the old covenant. Nothing is said of a higher revelation of God, or of man's nature being changed, or of spiritual men who will spontaneously obey God's will. And there is no prediction of a completely new age characterized by the free forgiveness of sin, for forgiveness had always existed in the covenant, as had the covenant formula, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Thus, according to Duhm, there is no radically new religion revealed here; rather, the hope for the future is simply "that everyone among the Jewish people would know the law by heart and understand it, that all Jews would be learned in the law" (cf. Ps. 119:97-99).<sup>43</sup> Duhm's criticism of the common interpretation of the passage may be corrected at points, but it stands as a weighty warning against idealizing the predicted new covenant in such a way as to distort the shape of hope in the book of consolation.

To provide an interpretative context for the new covenant passage, it is useful to note that the important word "new" (*chadāshāh*) marks the passage as a continuation or interpretation of 31:22b: "For Yahweh has created a new thing in the land; a woman encompasses a man." The final cryptic phrase has been the subject

of immense scholarly literature, and there is no agreement on its precise import.<sup>44</sup> However, the use of *chadāshāh* and *br'* in these passages (31:22b, 31-34) relates them directly to the literary milieu of Deutero-Isaiah, where the restoration of Israel from exile and the renewal of her life in Jerusalem is described as a "new thing," "created" by Yahweh.<sup>45</sup> Interpreted especially in the light of the Deutero-Isaian hope, it becomes clear that the new covenant passage (like the other oracles in this layer of hope in the book of consolation) simply promises a renewal of Yahweh's ancient relationship with His people, a relationship that had been sundered by His judgment on their iniquity. Through Yahweh's creative activity, Israel will again be led by the hand in a new exodus and enter into a new covenant with Yahweh their husband (cf. Is. 41:13; 42:6; 54:5-6, 10; 55:3; 59:21; 61:8). The knowledge

<sup>44</sup> For a sample of interpretations offered for the last three words of 31:22b, see Duhm, p. 251 (a woman changes to a man); Harrelson, pp. 68-70 (the "woman" Israel encompasses the exiles); Rudolph, p. 181 (peace so secure a woman can protect a man); William B. Holladay, "Jer. XXXI 22b Reconsidered: 'The Woman Encompasses the Man,'" *Vetus Testamentum*, XVI (April 1966), 236-39 (Israel's warriors have become like women, but now the women will surmount warriors); and Weiser, p. 290 (the renewal of the creation blessing of fruitfulness will produce a new Israel).

<sup>45</sup> The word "new" (*chadāshāh*) is used in Jeremiah only in these two passages (besides its use in a place-name, 26:10; 36:10); "create" (*br'*) is used nowhere else in Jeremiah. However, both words are favorite terms in Deutero-Isaiah, used to describe Yahweh's creation of the new exodus and the new age (cf. esp. Is. 41:20; 43:1, 7, 15, 19; 45:8; 48:6-7; 65:17-18). On the necessity of interpreting the new covenant in the light of Deutero-Isaiah, see Pierre Buis, "La Nouvelle Alliance," *Vetus Testamentum*, XVIII (January 1968), 14-15.

<sup>43</sup> Duhm, pp. 254-58. Against the usual individualistic interpretation, note also that "their heart" (*libbām*) is a collective term and that the phrase "from the least of them to the greatest of them" is a very common expression denoting the totality of the people (cf. Jer. 6:13; 8:10; Jonah 3:5; Ps. 115:13; Esther 1:5).



of Yahweh, the lack of which ruptured the covenant in former days (cf. Hos. 4:6), will be so widespread as a result of Yahweh's new redemptive activity that teachers will no longer be needed (cf. Is. 54:13; 43:10; 41:20). The new exodus and new covenant hope is based, as in previous election tradition (cf. Hos. 2:21; Heb. 3:1; 11:8-9; Jer. 3:12; Ex. 34:6-10), on the enduring mercy and forgiveness of God. It is Yahweh's forgiveness of His people's iniquity, ultimately, that forms the door of hope for Israel's new life. In Deutero-Isaiah, this hope for forgiveness is shaped into a call for the exiles to return:

I have swept away as a cloud your transgressions,  
And like mist your sins.  
Return to Me,  
For I have redeemed you. (Is. 44:22; cf. 43:25)

This hope, which had given birth to the book of consolation many years before (Jer. 31:2-3, 20), sustained the Judean exiles during the long years of captivity. The exilic layer of hope ends, appropriately, where the earliest layer of hope in the book of consolation began: the return of the elected people.

Behold, days are coming—oracle of Yahweh—when I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel and Judah, says Yahweh. And I will return them to the land which I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it. In that time—oracle of Yahweh—I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they, they shall be My people. (30:3; 31:1)

#### SUMMARY

The shape of hope for the future presented in the book of consolation is complex. This study has examined it by separating three layers of hope which reflect the application of Jeremian election theology to three different historical situations. The underlying theological concept centers on a view of Yahweh active in both judgment and grace to accomplish His saving purpose for His elected people. In the Josian era, this concept led Jeremiah to express the hope of north Israel's return from exile and the cultic unification of Israel at Zion. At the time of the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah interpreted the cataclysm as the work of Yahweh in smiting His people, and he held out the hope that Yahweh as the healer would again restore His people and pass judgment on their enemies. During the years of exile in Babylon, the Jeremian theology gave rise to the hope of a new creative act of Yahweh, by which He would lead His people back to their homeland and renew His covenant relationship with them.

We conclude, then, that the book of consolation demonstrates, in one literary composite, the shape which Israel's hope took in the transitional period between preexilic and exilic prophetic thought. The shattering catastrophe of the fall of Jerusalem was taken up into Israel's election faith and formed the creative basis for the hope of a new era of salvation for the covenant people.