

**THE JEREMIANIC CONNECTION:  
CHRONICLES AND THE RECEPTION OF  
LAMENTATIONS AS TWO MODES OF INTERACTING  
WITH THE JEREMIANIC TRADITION?<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract**

*A connection is often made between Lamentations and Chronicles in terms of the ancient Rabbinic tradition of Jeremianic authorship of Lamentations. Second Chronicles 35:25 is normally quoted as the instigation of this tradition, since this verse at the end of the Chronicler's Josiah account connects Jeremiah to the singing of laments (qînôt). Recent scholarship does not attempt to settle the authorship issue in Lamentations, but rather shows how the later reception of Lamentations engages the Jeremianic theology in order to explain some difficult passages in this book. My contribution will be a comparative study in which the different modes of interacting with the Jeremianic tradition by Chronicles and the Lamentations reception will be investigated. The presence of Jeremiah as the most prominent of the classical prophets in Chronicles (in 2 Chronicles 35 and 36) will be studied in comparison with the more recent theories on the engagement of Jeremianic theology in the reception of Lamentations in Persian and later periods.*

**Key Words:** Lamentations, Jeremiah, Chronicles, Authorship, Reception History

**Introduction**

When discussing the authorship of the book of Lamentations, standard commentaries on this biblical book normally refer to the later tradition which links the prophet Jeremiah to Lamentations. These discussions normally include a reference to 2 Chronicles 35:25 as a possible link between Lamentations and Jeremiah.<sup>2</sup> This link is normally constructed with reference to the fact that the Chronicler indicated in the death notice of King Josiah that the prophet Jeremiah sang a lament (Poel form of the verb *qyn*, the stem which is related to the noun *qînah/qînôt*, 'lament/s') after this king's death. The discussions normally do not go any further than suggesting that the particular verb used in this Chronicles text associates Jeremiah with the singing of laments, which is of course the genre of the songs included in the book of Lamentations (which is referred to as *Qînôt* in the Babylonian Talmud [*b. Bath.*

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<sup>1</sup> This article was first presented as a paper at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature held in Chicago, USA, from 17-20 November 2012. I thank the organizers of the 'Literature and History of the Persian Period' Programme Unit for affording me the opportunity to present it there. I also thank Dr Gideon Kotzé who was the initiator of a collection of studies on the book of Lamentations – a book which he has studied very closely in his dissertation (Kotzé 2011). With this study I share in his enthusiasm for Lamentations, but do certainly not expect of him to agree with every word I have written in this article.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. Kaiser (1981:295, 297); Berlin (2002:30); Dobbs-Allsopp (2002:5); Salters (2011:6).

14b]). The suggestion is then either that the prophet Jeremiah (who lived and prophesied during the end phases of the Kingdom of Judah and the beginning of the exilic period) could well have been the author of the laments included in Lamentations, or that the Chronicles text provides an explanation why the later Jewish tradition linked Jeremiah to the book of Lamentations.

Recent scholarship has, however, gone one step further by presenting a more sophisticated picture of how the later Jewish tradition interacted with the book Lamentations. An excellent example of the newer scholarship on this issue is Jason Kalman's analysis of how the Jeremianic theology assisted the later rabbis to overcome some theological difficulties in Lamentations.<sup>3</sup> Kalman shows that, although the later versions, such as the Septuagint, Peshitta and Vulgate, also perpetuated the tradition of Jeremianic authorship of Lamentations in their own way in the superscripts they included,<sup>4</sup> as well as in their positioning of the book in the canon,<sup>5</sup> the later rabbinic traditions went their own way in relating Jeremiah to Lamentations.<sup>6</sup> This is surprising because the Hebrew version of this book mentions nothing about Jeremiah at all.<sup>7</sup>

Kalman, however, does not investigate the role of 2 Chronicles 35-36 in the perpetuation of Jeremianic authorship of Lamentations in later rabbinic traditions. He merely states: "Because of the assumed relationship between these books [i.e., Lamentations and Jeremiah], the rabbis could also mine 2 Chronicles 35-36 where Jeremiah appears for some of the historical data they needed to explain the context of particular passages in Lamentations" (Kalman 2009:33). From this remark it seems as if Kalman suggests that the reference in Chronicles was not necessarily the main reason why the rabbis related Jeremiah to Lamentations.<sup>8</sup> It was rather that – on account of a presupposed relationship between the books – the rabbis saw Chronicles as an additional source for their interpretations of Lamentations.

This aspect has to be investigated further. My hypothesis is that an investigation into how the Chronicler engaged with the Jeremianic tradition could potentially reveal some analogies and differences with the rabbis' engagement with the same tradition. I hypothesize that Chronicles and the Lamentations reception by rabbinic tradition, were two different modes of engaging with the Jeremianic tradition. I will, therefore, in what follows

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<sup>3</sup> See Kalman (2009).

<sup>4</sup> The Septuagint opens the book with the following: "And it happened, after Israel was taken captive and Jerusalem was laid waste, Jeremiah sat weeping and gave his lament over Jerusalem and said: 'How the city sat alone. She who was full of peoples.'" The Peshitta introduces the book with the superscript "The Book of Lamentations of Jeremiah the Prophet", while the Vulgate has the following: "And it happened that, after Israel was driven into captivity, and Jerusalem was deserted, the prophet Jeremiah sat weeping, and he wailed this lamentation in Jerusalem. And sighing with a bitter soul, and mourning, he said: 'O how a city once filled with people now sits alone! The Governess of the Gentiles has become like a widow. The Prince of the provinces has been placed under tribute.'" See Kalman (2009:34).

<sup>5</sup> In the Septuagint, Peshitta and Vulgate the book of Lamentations was similarly positioned after Jeremiah, together with the apocryphal Book of Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah.

<sup>6</sup> Kalman (2009:34-36) describes the extensive ways in which the rabbinic literature established Jeremianic authorship for Lamentations.

<sup>7</sup> Kalman (2009:34) states: "The Hebrew Bible is unique, neither claiming Jeremiah's authorship nor formally arranging the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations in proximity. Despite this, the Jewish exegetical tradition which relies on the Hebrew Bible makes the assumption of authorship."

<sup>8</sup> Kalman does, however, indicate that "[t]his authorship claim is found throughout rabbinic literature and builds on 2 Chr. 35:25 which grounds the tradition in Scripture ..." (2009:35). Although Kalman herewith acknowledges the rabbis' connection of the authorship issue with 2 Chr 35:25, it seems from his further discussion that he considers this as a minor connection in rabbinic thought.

give a more elaborate discussion of Kalman's thesis about the Lamentations reception in rabbinic literature, and – as a comparative study – look at how the Chronicler engaged with Jeremiah's theology. After this comparative study I will attempt a synthesis and some conclusions.

### **Reception of Lamentations and the Jeremianic Theology in Rabbinic Interpretations**

Kalman does not discuss the relationship between Jeremiah and Lamentations with the aim of establishing the authorship of the latter.<sup>9</sup> He rather reflects on why this connection was made by the rabbis in the Talmudic era: “[T]he question of why the Jewish sages of antiquity actively perpetuated and used this tradition must be asked. How did this serve their agenda?” (Kalman 2009:32).

Some scholars have suggested that the Jeremianic connection was made in order to establish the authority of Lamentations in the biblical canon. The issue at stake was therefore not authorship, but rather authority. Kalman does not agree with this view, but rather states: “Lamentations was an accepted part of the Hebrew canon and reasserting the claims of Jeremiah's authorship would have unlikely given it additional authority. However, the attribution helped solve a theological problem, on the one hand, and created a clearly defined framework for the interpretation of Lamentations, on the other” (Kalman 2009:32).

Kalman takes his point of departure in the notion of pseudo-historical authorship as advocated by Jorge Gracia.<sup>10</sup> This notion does not refer to real authorship, but is rather a mental construct that is believed by an audience to be the historical author. The mental construct is accepted as real and historical, because its acceptance delivers some benefits in the interpretation of the work. Kalman uses this notion to indicate that “the rabbis benefited from interpreting Lamentations as if Jeremiah had written it. ... In promoting Jeremiah's authorship the rabbis created a dynamic in which his credibility and piety as a prophet in Judah was used to vouch for Lamentation's theological acceptability” (Kalman 2009:33). This strategy then provided the parameters within which the rabbis could approach the book. On the one hand, they could assume that Jeremiah and Lamentations shared a common theology, and on the other hand, that Lamentations, like Jeremiah, was prophetic and therefore foreshadowed future events.

In Kalman's discussion of the rabbis' Jeremiah (2009:37-39) it emerges that the rabbis regarded Jeremiah as a second Moses. This equation likewise enabled them to draw parallels between the works that were attributed to these two figures, namely the prophetic book of Jeremiah and the Pentateuch, particularly Deuteronomy. The basic theology underlying these works, according to the rabbis, was that following God's ways leads to reward, and sin leads to punishment. This idea enabled the rabbis to interpret the book of Lamentations. As Kalman (2009:38) puts it: “The rabbis understood that the key to properly interpreting Lamentations was to harmonize it with Moses' Torah. To give this a basis in fact, they attributed it to an author who they had accepted was cast from Moses’

<sup>9</sup> For overviews of different theories on the authorship of Lamentations, see e.g. Gous (1992:186-191); Hunter (1996:44-49); Berlin (2002:30-32); Dobbs-Allsopp (2002:4-5); Miller (2002:10-11); Boase (2006:3-6); Salters (2011:4-7).

<sup>10</sup> Kalman refers to JJE Gracia 2002. *A Theory of the Author*. In *The Death and Resurrection of the Author?* (ed.) W Irvin, 161-190. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

mould". The connection of Lamentations with Jeremiah was therefore also indirectly a connection with the Moses theological tradition.

However, the connection with Jeremiah provided the additional benefit to the rabbis that they could also "read Lamentations as if it spoke concerning future events" (Kalman 2009:38). In this way the rabbis found in Lamentations a meaningful response – not so much in the context of the destruction of the first temple – but rather to the calamities of their own time which culminated in the recent destruction of the second temple at the hands of Rome.<sup>11</sup> According to the rabbis, Jeremiah – and therefore also Lamentations – did not speak of an event such as the one the rabbis were facing, but in fact addressed the very calamity which confronted them. The contextualization of Lamentations for the rabbis' own time could be done through its connection with the prophet Jeremiah, and therefore indirectly with the Moses tradition. Simultaneously, the rabbis could also do away with the theological difficulties which were raised by Lamentations.

In general, the theological message of Lamentations builds upon Deuteronomistic views. Some scholars even see Lamentations as a Deuteronomistic response to the pre-exilic Zion theology which neglected the covenantal perspective on the relationship between the following of the commandments of Yahweh and reward, or alternatively between disobeying the commandments and punishment.<sup>12</sup> Kalman (2009:39) summarizes this general theology of Lamentations as follows: "God and Israel are bound by a covenant, wherein God rewards and punishes the nation on the basis of its observance or transgression of the divine law as revealed in the Torah given to her at Sinai". This general theology resonated well with the rabbis' position, and they therefore saw the destruction of Jerusalem as divine justice through which the people's transgressions were punished. Furthermore, the more redemptive view expressed in Lamentations that the destruction is not an end, a view based on the same covenantal understanding, equally resonated with the rabbis' theology.

However, not everything was plain sailing for the rabbis in Lamentations. There were also some passages in Lamentations which appeared theologically disturbing to them. Although Lamentations generally confirms divine justice, some passages seem to undermine the covenantal theology. Verses such as Lamentations 2:5 and 20, as well as 5:20-22 contain cynical and rebellious notes.<sup>13</sup> As Kalman puts it: "These challenges to divine justice which suggest that God acts without pity, abandons his people, and causes

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<sup>11</sup> Kalman (2009:40) states: "In light of Jeremiah's prophetic role and of Lamentations' apparent perpetuation of Deuteronomy-like theology, later generations of exegetes turned to the text with the sense that it not only mourned the loss of the first Temple, but could help explain the communal calamities of later generations. Since Jeremiah was a prophet, Lamentations could be read as prophecy".

<sup>12</sup> Gous distinguishes three groups of views on the authorship of Lamentations. The third group, according to him, set the book against the background of a Zion theology: "According to the third group of theories the author(s) initially supported the theology of Zion and the ideology of salvation. The fall of Jerusalem, however, cast grave doubts upon this belief and forced the author(s) to either accept the prophetic teachings or at least take heed of them. These poems are an attempt to solve this religious crisis and arrive at a new orientation after the initial disorientation; in other words, it is an attempt at a new theology and a new image of God" (Gous 1992:189).

<sup>13</sup> Lamentations 2:5 "The Lord has become like an enemy; he has destroyed Israel. He has destroyed all its palaces, laid in ruins its strongholds, and multiplied in daughter Judah mourning and lamentation"; Lamentations 2:20 "Look, O LORD, and consider! To whom have you done this? Should women eat their offspring, the children they have borne? Should priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord?"; Lamentations 5:20-22 "Why have you forgotten us completely? Why have you forsaken us these many days? Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored; renew our days as of old – unless you have utterly rejected us, and are angry with us beyond measure." (All translations from the NRSV.)

mothers to cannibalize their young, caused Jewish readers some concern” (2009, 42). In this respect, the connection with Jeremiah proved to be very helpful to the rabbinic interpreters.<sup>14</sup>

At the end of his study Kalman comes to the following conclusion:

The book of Lamentations, within the exegetical tradition, stands at a midpoint with the prophet – the point where God and Israel meet. Jeremiah’s work is that of mediator and Lamentations is a work of mediation. From the rabbinic perspective it served to remind Israel that her sins lead down the path of destruction at the hands of a just god; but it likewise sought to remind God that His justice must be tempered with mercy and that within the covenantal relationship atonement allows for redemption. ... As a result of the rabbinic presentation of Jeremiah, the reader should begin to see those troubling passages in Lamentations not as challenging divine justice but as aggressive pleading on the part of a committed advocate for sinful Israel. The dual-tone of Lamentations parallels that of the book of Jeremiah. As a prophet, Jeremiah must announce the word of God and chastise Israel. As communal leader, Jeremiah must act as Israel’s advocate and fight the Divine prosecution – just as Moses had done. ... Since Jeremiah’s purpose was to defend God before Israel and Israel before God, it was not necessary to blunt the particular statements. In perpetuating this perception of Jeremiah, the harsh statements he made in Lamentations had to remain harsh or their efficacy in defence of Israel would be blunted and Jeremiah’s efforts weakened.<sup>15</sup>

After considering Kalman’s more sophisticated reflection on the Jeremianic connection in Lamentations we may now move over to a consideration of this same connection in Chronicles. Are there any analogies?

### Reception of Jeremiah in Chronicles

In two previous publications I studied the role of prophets in Chronicles, particularly the prophet Jeremiah.<sup>16</sup> There I have concentrated on the references to Jeremiah in the last two sections of the book, namely in 36:15-21 and 22-23. We have seen above that Jeremiah also appears in the death notice of King Josiah’s narrative (2 Chronicles 35:25). Another occurrence is in 2 Chronicles 36:12 where Zedekiah is portrayed as an evil king who did not humble himself before the prophet Jeremiah who spoke the word of Yahweh. In all four cases the reference to Jeremiah belongs to the Chronicler’s own material, without any reference in the parallel accounts in Kings (or in the book of Jeremiah, in the case of the Zedekiah narrative).<sup>17</sup> The aim of the present discussion will be to see what these references have in common, in order to determine how the Jeremiah reception took place in Chronicles.

Jeremiah does not feature as a prophetic figure in the death notice of King Josiah (2 Chronicles 35:25), but is rather a composer of a lament for the death of the king. It is indicated in this text that:

Jeremiah also uttered a lament for Josiah, and all the singing men and singing women have spoken of Josiah in their laments to this day. They made these a custom in Israel; they are recorded in the Laments. (NRSV)

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<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of the rabbinic interpretations of the mentioned troublesome verse in Lamentations, see Kalman (2009:sec. 5.1-5.3).

<sup>15</sup> Kalman (2009:49-50).

<sup>16</sup> See Jonker (2007) and (2011).

<sup>17</sup> See Jeremiah 52:1-3.

Most commentaries nowadays merely mention that the expression ‘the Laments’ referred to in this text has nothing to do with the Book of Lamentations.<sup>18</sup> However, Sarah Japhet (whose commentary is still the best standard on 2 Chronicles) has a more elaborate description. She states the following with reference to the connection with the prophet Jeremiah:

A connection between Josiah and Jeremiah is self-evident in view of the biblical evidence; Jeremiah began his mission in the time of Josiah, and outlived him (Jer. 1.1). The mourning over the death of Josiah is attested in Jeremiah’s prophecy concerning Jehoahaz: ‘Weep not for him who is dead, nor bemoan him’ (Jer. 22.10).<sup>19</sup>

In Jeremiah 22 the prophet delivers a message to the sons of Josiah (Shallum/Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim) in which they are accused of not having followed the example of their father. In Jeremiah 22:10 Jehoahaz is contrasted to his father in terms of the mourning which is due for these two kings:

Do not weep for him who is dead, nor bemoan him;  
weep rather for him who goes away,  
for he shall return no more to see his native land. (NRSV)

Although Josiah is not mentioned by name, it is clear that the reference is to this king. In verses 15b-16 the good example of Josiah is called to memory (again, without explicit mentioning of the king’s name):

Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? says the Lord. (NRSV)

Various studies have indicated that these verses form part of a cycle on the kings of Judah which is presented in Jeremiah 21:1-24:10.<sup>20</sup> There is agreement among scholars that this unit shows strong compositional traits, with narrative and poetic sections alternating. Wessels writes the following about this cycle:

In all likelihood the prophet’s pronouncements about the kings were initially a series of disconnected sayings which were later elucidated and explained by comments in prose. Nor was this collection composed and arranged haphazardly: it was deliberately planned so as to highlight certain sentiments of the compilers, to explain situations and achieve didactic purposes.<sup>21</sup>

Wessels and others therefore indicate that the indirect poetic references to Josiah in the above-mentioned verses belong to authentic Jeremianic material which shows strong

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<sup>18</sup> See e.g. Boda (2010:419) and McKenzie (2004:365). See also Brueggemann (2006:178) who remarks: “[A] direct connection between the Book of Lamentations and Jeremiah is not persuasive. That the themes of the Book of Lamentations follow from the oracles of Jeremiah makes sense, so that the two live in the same ‘intellectual world’ of loss and grief. Beyond that, however, no notion of authorship of the Book of Lamentations by Jeremiah is taken to be credible in current critical discussion.” The older commentary of Japhet still hinted in another direction: “As for ‘the Laments’, the reference in v. 25b indicates that a known book is intended, and this may be identified with the canonical book of Lamentations which bears the same name (*qīnōt*) in rabbinic tradition (e.g. BT, Baba Bathra 14b), the reading of which has indeed become ‘an ordinance in Israel’. The tradition that the canonical scroll of Lamentation was composed by Jeremiah, attested by the canon of the Septuagint and the express statement of the Talmud (*ibid.*), may have been earlier. It is thus possible that vv. 24b-25 are an elaboration of biblical and traditional elements, with no additional sources”. (Japhet 1993:1043-1044).

<sup>19</sup> Japhet (1993:1043).

<sup>20</sup> See e.g. Job (2006), Leuchter (2006) and Wessels (2007).

<sup>21</sup> Wessels (2007:861).

affinity with the Deuteronomic tradition, and also sympathizes with Levitical circles.<sup>22</sup> Wessels argues as follows:

It seems highly probable that Jeremiah was in touch with the Deuteronomic tradition. He may have made contact with it by virtue of the fact that rural priests and Levites propagated that tradition, and Jeremiah got to know of this in the priestly city of Anathoth ... Another possibility is that Jeremiah, by virtue of his close association with the Temple where he ministered and with Shaphan and his family, got to know the book of the law that was found in Josiah's time.<sup>23</sup>

Japhet may therefore be right that the connection between Josiah and Jeremiah was already known to the Chronicler from the prophetic material of Jeremiah (whether it was in the form of the prophet's sayings, or – more probable – in the form of the prophetic composition). Although the Deuteronomistic version in 2 Kings 23 did not make reference to Jeremiah in Josiah's death notice, the Chronicler did not take it from thin air, but rather latched onto the prophetic tradition in Jeremiah.

However, one aspect which is not taken into account by Japhet is the fact that different verbs for 'mourning' are used in Jeremiah 22:10 compared to 2 Chronicles 35:25. In Jeremiah the term *bākāh* is used, while the Chronicler employs the verb from the lemma *qyn*, with the noun *qīnāh* used twice in this verse (with plural *qīnōt*). Since the use of the term *qīnōt* as reference to the biblical book of Lamentations dates only from its use in the Babylonian Talmud from a few centuries later, and since this term (as verb or noun) does not occur in Lamentations at all, no relationship between 2 Chronicles 35:25 and Lamentations should be assumed. Quite interestingly, the term occurs most frequently in the prophetic book of Ezekiel (as verb, 4 out of 8 instances; as noun, 10 out of 18 instances – according to SESB searches).<sup>24</sup> It is therefore no unequivocal decision to determine the tradition that the Chronicler latched onto here. The association of Jeremiah with Josiah, and particularly the former's reference to weeping or lamenting over this king, may have been the instigation for the Chronicler to add the information on Jeremiah lamenting King Josiah, and thereby starting a tradition of lament about this king. However, the peculiar use of the term *qīnāh* in Chronicles may have had the function of recalling David's lamenting of Jonathan and Abner (as in the 2 Samuel texts where the same term is used), but more probably may have been an attempt to show affinity with the Ezekiel traditions. This verse in Chronicles may therefore be another example of the author's tendency to merge different – even opposing – traditions; in this case the Jeremianic tradition which had close association with the Levitical priesthood, and the Ezekiel tradition which had more affinity with the Zadokite priesthood.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> See again Job (2006), Leuchter (2006) and Wessels (2007). In another contribution Leuchter investigates the substitution of 'prophets' in 2 Kings. 23:2 with 'Levites' in 2 Chronicles 34:30, and comes to the following conclusion: "The 'Levites' variant in II Chr 34,30 is part of a larger pattern that facilitates the inclusion of Jeremiah into the narrative of Josiah's reign and establishes him as the archetypal Levite-prophet in the closing chapters of the Chronicler's historiography" (Leuchter 2009:44).

<sup>23</sup> Wessels (2007:869). Stipp (1992) and Job (2006:48-49) are both convinced that the Shaphan family, who supported Josiah strongly in his reforms, had a close connection to Jeremiah. Stipp (1992:8) postulates a Shaphanide redaction of Jeremiah in which King Josiah is idealised, but in which the close connection of Jeremiah to the Deuteronomic tradition is also emphasised.

<sup>24</sup> As verb it occurs in 2 Samuel 1:17; 3:33; Jeremiah 9:16; Ezekiel 27:32; 32:16 (3x); 2 Chronicles 35:25. As noun it occurs in 2 Samuel 1:17; Jeremiah 7:29; 9:9, 19; Ezekiel 2:10; 19:1, 14(2x); 26:17; 27:2, 32; 28:12; 32:2, 16; Amos 5:1; 8:10; 2 Chronicles 35:25.

<sup>25</sup> See e.g. the interesting study of Rom-Shiloni (2012) in which she investigates the relationship between the books of the contemporary prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. She comes to the conclusion that the mutual silence between these books should be interpreted against the background of the ideological difference

The addition in 2 Chronicles 35:25 could therefore have benefited the Chronicler's reception of two different – even opposing – traditions. The Jeremianic connection would have strengthened the association with the Deuteronomic tradition (even beyond the Deuteronomistic version in 2 Kings 23), but also with Levitical sentiments, whom he places on at least an equal footing with the rest of the priesthood. However, because the Chronicler also takes pains not to overemphasize the Levites in comparison to the rest of the priesthood, he employed the *qīnāh* term in order to accommodate some Zadokite sentiments.

The occurrence of Jeremiah in 2 Chronicles 36:12 can probably be explained in the same way. In this verse it is said of Zedekiah (another son of Josiah):

He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord his God. He did not humble himself before the prophet Jeremiah who spoke from the mouth of the Lord.<sup>26</sup> (NRSV)

Japhet indicates that the Chronicler opposed the view of postponed punishment (reflected in the Deuteronomistic History's condemnation of Manasseh as the main reason for the exile), and rather wanted to implicate Zedekiah himself for the calamity of God's people. The accusation in 2 Chronicles 36:12 is therefore a very strong expression condemning this last king for what had gone wrong. Japhet states:

The refusal to listen to the Lord's prophets is the most emphasized transgression in the list, repeated again in vv. 15-16. It expresses more than anything else the wilful and obstinate rebellion, perceived as the opposite of 'humility'. The Chronicler may be alluding here to the accounts of the book of Jeremiah, where the prophet's continuous warnings and exhortations fall upon deaf ears. Although they are all in the political realm, Zedekiah's misdeeds illustrate his consistent defiance of the Lord's word.<sup>27</sup>

From the terminology used in the Chronicler's Zedekiah narrative it becomes clear that his reformulation of his source material was intended to emphasize the apostasy involved in the downfall of the Kingdom of Judah. This represents not only the fate of history or international politics – at the core of Judah's downfall lies unfaithfulness to Yahweh, the God of their father David. The Chronicler mentions, as does the Kings source text, that the final nail in the coffin of Judah was when Zedekiah also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar (v. 13). The Chronicler adds, however, that Nebuchadnezzar "had made him take an oath in God's name" The description of Zedekiah taking an oath 'in God's name' is also found in Ezekiel 17:11-21 where the fate of this last king is described, although this information is not present in the narratives in Kings and Jeremiah. It seems then that this is

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between these prophets. Rom-Shiloni (2012:228) argues as follows: "The examples to an implicit disagreement between the prophets are part of a much broader deliberation that reveals itself in the two prophetic books in reference to the fates of the two Judean communities during the early decades of the sixth century (and subsequently through the Persian period). Conflicts over issues of group identity appear after 597 B.C.E., as mutual hostility kindles between Jerusalem and its inhabitants, on the one hand, and the Jehoiachin Exiles, on the other ... This polemic involves contradictory predictions of the fortunes of the last two Davidic kings, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah ..., and opposing definitions of the remnant of the Judean people ... Major conceptions and traditions are drawn into a theological deliberation over conceptions of covenant, land, and exile, and the profound differences between Ezekiel and Jeremiah in the use of these traditions cannot be overlooked".

<sup>26</sup> The remark that King Zedekiah "did not humble himself before the prophet Jeremiah" seems strange. The normal accusation is that the king or people did not humble themselves before Yahweh. Hermann-Josef Stipp shows, however, that the same Zedekiah does not receive similar harsh treatment in the Book of Jeremiah. Stipp (1996:627) notes: "The verdict pronounced by the writers of Chronicles typifies an advanced state of a concept that took shape over a long period of time. Stages of this process are attested in the Book of Jeremiah itself, where we encounter a remarkable variety of attitudes towards this last Davidic king".

<sup>27</sup> Japhet (1993:1069).



another instance where the Chronicler merged references and terminology from both the Jeremianic and Ezekiel traditions.

The next mentioning of Jeremiah is in 2 Chronicles 36:21 which forms a continuation of the previous verse:

<sup>20</sup> He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, <sup>21</sup> to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had made up for its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfil seventy years. (NRSV)

I have argued elsewhere that both infinitive clauses in verse 21 (“to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah”, and “to fulfil seventy years”) have the temporal clause in verse 20 (“until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia”) as antecedent, and not the finite verbs in that verse.<sup>28</sup> The implication of this view is that – not the Babylonian exile – but rather the rise of the Persian kingdom is indicated to be in fulfilment of Jeremiah’s prophecy. The mentioning of ‘seventy years’ clearly comes from Jeremiah’s prophecy.<sup>29</sup> Japhet is probably right when she states: “For the Chronicler ... ‘seventy years’ is not a chronological datum which may be explained by various calculations, but a historical and theological concept: a time limit for the duration of the land’s desolation, established by a divine word through his prophet” (1993:1076).

However, it seems that the Chronicler also alludes to another source in verse 21. The reference to the exile as ‘sabbath’ does not come from Jeremiah, but rather from priestly texts in Leviticus 26.<sup>30</sup> Other terminological similarities strengthen the link with the Leviticus texts.<sup>31</sup> This combination of concepts from the priestly literature and Jeremiah is called by Japhet (1993:1075) “a perfect example of midrashic exegesis”. She argues further (1993:1076): “[T]he Chronicler combines these two different concepts, stemming from such different theological schools, to express one view.” It again (as in the previous two instances where Jeremiah appears) becomes clear that the Chronicler latched onto the Jeremianic tradition, but also took pains to associate with the priestly traditions.

The last occurrence of Jeremiah in Chronicles is in 2 Chronicles 36:22 where it is stated:

<sup>28</sup> See Jonker (2007).

<sup>29</sup> Jeremiah 25:11-14 states: “This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, says the LORD, making the land an everlasting waste. I will bring upon that land all the words that I have uttered against it, everything written in this book, which Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations. For many nations and great kings shall make slaves of them also; and I will repay them according to their deeds and the work of their hands”, while Jeremiah 29:10 reads: “For thus says the LORD: Only when Babylon’s seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place” (NRSV).

<sup>30</sup> In Leviticus 26:31-35 and 43 we read the following: “I will lay your cities waste, will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your pleasing odors. I will devastate the land, so that your enemies who come to settle in it shall be appalled at it. And you I will scatter among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword against you; your land shall be a desolation, and your cities a waste. Then the land shall enjoy its sabbath years as long as it lies desolate, while you are in the land of your enemies; then the land shall rest, and enjoy its sabbath years. As long as it lies desolate, it shall have the rest it did not have on your sabbaths when you were living on it. ... For the land shall be deserted by them, and enjoy its sabbath years by lying desolate without them, while they shall make amends for their iniquity, because they dared to spurn my ordinances, and they abhorred my statutes” (NRSV).

<sup>31</sup> For a more detailed study of these terminological similarities, see Jonker (2007:709-710) and (2011:152-160).

In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in fulfilment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom and also declared in a written edict: ... (NRSV).

Japhet states the following with reference to the closing section in Chronicles:

The final passage of the book is both the continuation and the reversal of what went before. Verses 17-21 recorded the calamity of Jerusalem around two major pivots: destruction of Temple and city, and exile. Verses 22-23 are a reversal of both, citing Cyrus' message that 'The Lord ... has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem ... Whoever is among you ... Let him go up.' This reversal of historical fortunes is also expressed by close affinity of literary detail. In the same way that the destruction was brought about by a foreign king, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, so its reversal is initiated by a foreign king, the successor to world power – Cyrus the king of Persia. The work of these world powers is part of the divine plan in the history of Israel ... As the catastrophe came 'to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah' (v. 21), so the revival comes 'that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah be accomplished' (v. 22).<sup>32</sup>

Although my interpretation of verse 21 is different from Japhet's,<sup>33</sup> I agree with her that verse 22 stands in close connection to the previous verses where Jeremiah is also mentioned, and these verses should therefore be read together. Hugh Williamson suggested in his commentary that the Chronicler's work ended with verse 21, and that verses 22-23 were added from Ezra 1:1-3 in order to form a bridge to the history of the restoration period (Williamson 1982:419). However, one slight change from the Ezra text, namely the change of the word *mippî* (in Ezra 1:1) to *bippî* (in 2 Chronicles 36:22), indicates that it was probably the Chronicler himself who copied those words from Ezra to his own work. This change resulted into an expression which is exactly the same as the Chronicler's own phrase in verse 21.

It is time for a summary of the present main section of my paper. My aim in this section was to study the four occurrences of Jeremiah in Chronicles in order to see whether any patterns can be seen in the way in which the Jeremiah reception took place. If the last-mentioned occurrence is accepted as copied content from Ezra which was moulded to form a continuation of the reference in verse 21, the following emerges: In all three cases (35:25; 36:12; 36:21) the Jeremianic connection serves the purpose of emphasizing the Deuteronomistic tradition which was closely associated with Levitic circles. However, in all cases the Chronicler also employed terminology which is reminiscent of the priestly tradition (from Ezekiel or Leviticus). These observations therefore confirm the general point which Knoppers makes in the introduction of his Chronicles commentary with reference to the Chronicler's compositional technique. He refers to the Chronicler's

... adroitness in drawing upon originally disparate lemmata, his ability to acknowledge and negotiate different ideological perspectives, and his capacity for pursuing his own agenda as he engages a variety of earlier biblical traditions. There is no question that one encounters both pro-Priestly and pro-Levitical passages in Chronicles. Nor is there any doubt that the work draws from Priestly tradition in certain contexts, but from Deuteronomic tradition in others. Rather than an indelible mark of literary disunity, these passages evince the author's concern to mediate different perspectives within the context of the late Persian period or early Hellenistic age.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Japhet (1993:1076-1077).

<sup>33</sup> Whereas I associated the fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecy with the rise of Persian power, she associates it with the destruction of the exile.

<sup>34</sup> Knoppers (2004:93).

## Synthesis and Conclusion

At the outset of this article I stated my hypothesis that an investigation into how the Chronicler engaged with the Jeremianic tradition could potentially reveal some analogies and differences with the rabbis' engagement with the same tradition. I hypothesized that Chronicles and the Lamentations reception by rabbinic tradition were two different modes of engaging with the Jeremianic tradition. Can this indeed be confirmed?

The investigation above indeed confirmed that two different modes of engaging with the Jeremianic tradition are manifested in the rabbinic interpretation of Lamentations and in Chronicles. We have seen, through the excellent study of Kalman, that the rabbis' reception of Lamentations happened in a sophisticated web of available earlier traditions. Figure 1 below is an attempt to show graphically the relationships between the different traditions.<sup>35</sup>

The references to Jeremiah in Chronicles (particularly 2 Chronicles 35:25), as well as the superscript in the Septuagint version of Lamentations, were already available to the rabbis and those references bolstered their acceptance of pseudo-historical Jeremianic authorship for Lamentations. The rabbis' reception of Lamentations happened, so to speak, through the lens of the book of Jeremiah which was closely associated with and influenced by the Deuteronomic tradition. Kalman has indicated convincingly that the rabbis' association of Jeremiah with Lamentations helped them solve some theological difficulties in the latter – difficulties which they experienced on account of their own engagement with the Deuteronomic tradition.

Chronicles, in contrast, does not stand in the same midrashic tradition of interpretation than the rabbinic interpretation. Although some scholars (such as Julius Wellhausen) have typified Chronicles as 'midrash', and some others – following Wellhausen's designation – argue that we see in Chronicles the early stages of rabbinic midrash interpretations, there is not enough evidence to argue that Chronicles (with its reference to Jeremiah composing laments) already relied on Lamentations to start such an interpretation tradition. Chronicles is rather a direct engagement with (mainly) the Deuteronomic tradition through its heavy dependence on Samuel-Kings, as well as its direct references to the prophet Jeremiah. However, our study has confirmed other studies (such as the quoted view of Knoppers above), that the Chronicler also engaged with the Priestly tradition through its terminological allusions to Leviticus and Ezekiel. The Chronicler was clearly a mediator between traditions, and in doing so, he contributed towards the discourse on the relationship between the different priestly factions. It seems then that the main difference between the rabbinic interpretation of Lamentations through the Jeremianic connection and the Chronicler's engagement with earlier traditions is the fact that the Chronicler attempted to merge different traditions (deuteronomic and priestly), while the rabbis took pains to find a coherent scheme of interpretation within one tradition (the deuteronomic tradition). These are clearly two different modes of interacting with the Jeremianic tradition.

However, one should also not miss the similarities between these two modes. Both the Chronicler and the rabbis engaged in contextual interpretation. They were not engaging earlier traditions in a void – they rather interpreted from and for their own contexts. The

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<sup>35</sup> Figure 1 is offered here with full acknowledgement that literary influences and relationships cannot be defined or described with too fixed line diagrams. Those relationships are often too diffused to be boxed into any diagram. However, taking a cue from Brueggemann's (2006:184) bold attempt to show Jeremiah's position in the midst of Old Testament literature diagrammatically, I have attempted to show at least some of the relationships and influences observed in the present study in Figure 1. The solid lines in the diagram indicate direct influence and/or reception, while the dotted lines refer to more indirect influence or allusions. The direction of the arrows is an attempt to show the assumed direction of influence and/or reception.

relationship between the different priestly factions in late Persian Yehud, as well as the strong need for social categorization and identity negotiation in this time, formed the background against which, and for the benefit of which, the Chronicler composed his work. Similarly (as Kalman has indicated), the rabbis interpreted Lamentations in the aftermath of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD. It made theological sense in that context to read Lamentations through the lens of Jeremianic theology in order to interpret it as a message for their own time.

Another similarity between these two modes of interaction with the Jeremianic tradition is that both employ Jeremiah associatively. The Chronicler's import of Jeremiah, we have seen above, is always to associate with the Deuteronomic tradition. The same happens in the rabbinic interpretation: Jeremiah is used associatively in order to emphasize deuteronomic theology and to render Lamentations as prophetic literature. In both these associative engagements Jeremiah functions almost iconically, that is, as an icon for something else (the deuteronomic tradition, or prophetic association).

At the end of this study, one final conclusion should be made: One should not underestimate the complexity of literary influence in antiquity. The lines of influence and reception in antiquity – not unlike today – are diffuse and multidirectional.

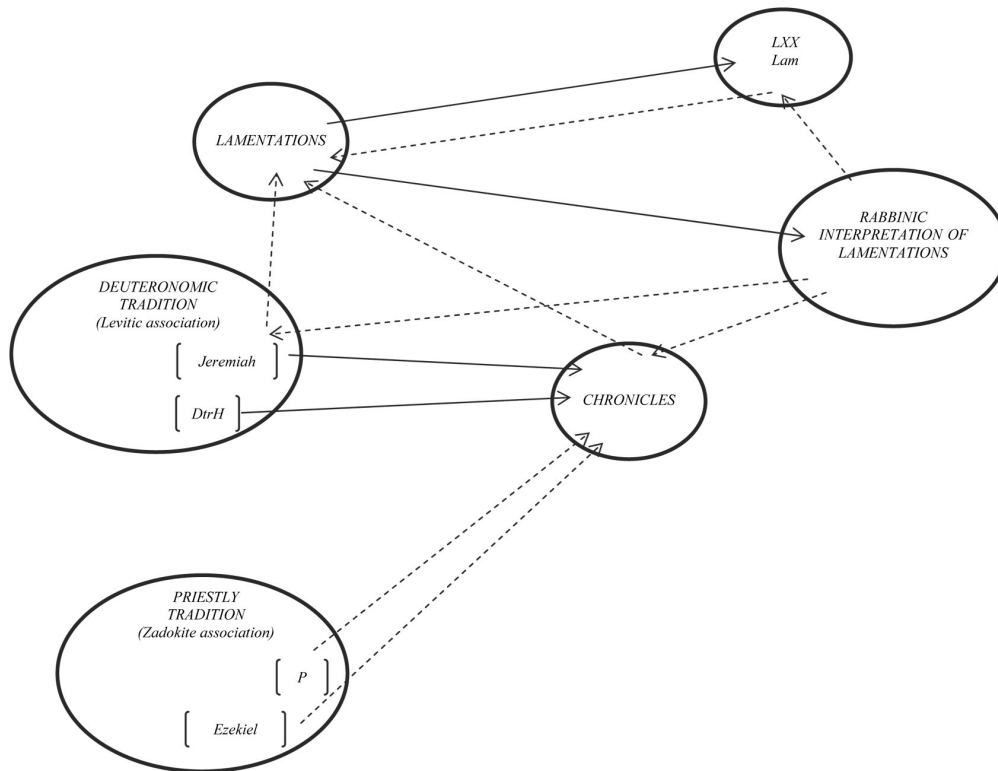


Figure 1

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