MA Theses

2010

Water and Wilderness in Jeremiah 2-15 : the Semantic Network of Metaphors

Martin Isaac Patrick

WATER AND WILDERNESS IN JEREMIAH 2-15

THE SEMANTIC NETWORK OF METAPHORS

by

MARTIN ISAAC PATRICK

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Luther Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment of

The Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

THESIS ADVISOR: RICHARD W. NYSSE

ST PAUL, MINNESOTA

2010

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ESV   English Standard Version

HALOT   *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*

JSOT   *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*

KJV   King James Version

NET   New English Translation

NJB   New Jerusalem Bible

NJPS   New Jewish Publication Society ("Tanakh", 1985)

NRSV   New Revised Standard Version

SJOT   *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*

TNIV   Today's New International Version

INTRODUCTION

Metaphor studies in general have focused mostly, when dealing with metaphors about YHWH, on personal metaphors (such as husband, king, shepherd, etc.).[1] The "wet and dry" imagery within Jeremiah can provide a potentially helpful corrective to the emphasis on metaphors derived from personal characteristics While personal metaphors are certainly the "dominant and most important" metaphors for YHWH, their uses are limited and they are limiting to theology according to K. Nielsen.[2] For Nielsen, the 'impersonal' metaphors, such as water and wilderness, will ""deconstruct" our all too narrow idea of God as a character whose will and plans we are able to exhaust in our language."[3] If we limit ourselves to personal metaphors, we turn YHWH into a constrained person. An antidote following the lead of Nielsen and initially described by Holt's article cited below, then, would be to study the metaphors of water and wilderness within Jeremiah.

The words for "wilderness" and "water," and related words, appear in great

---

[1]Kirsten Nielsen, "'From Oracles to Canon'--and the Role of Metaphor," *SJOT* 17, no. 1 (2003):, 29.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

frequency in Jeremiah 2-15. As an effort to contribute to the reading the 'present form'[4] of Jeremiah, and with an understanding that one theme cannot control the message of the present form, I propose that water functions in multiple tensive ways, such as 'water as life' and 'water as death' within Jeremiah 2-15. Wilderness, too, has similar functions. These metaphors participate in the rhetoric of relationship, lament and disaster from chapter 2 through chapter 15 creating an alternative and overlooked network of consonant and dissonant[5] conceptual metaphors for the relationship and for the disaster between YHWH and Judah.

Louis Stulman has noted three general characteristics of studies that attempt to read the present form of Jeremiah, of which his and ours are a part[6] First, they exhibit some skepticism that the "quest for origins," that is, the world "behind the text," will solve any problems. Second, they are not particularly interested in questions of authorship or dating. And third, they assume that meaning is to be found in the text "in front of us," that is, in the text as we have access to it today, or what is called the 'final form.' These studies show "artful consonance" and "artful dissonance" within Jeremiah. In the process of pursuing a 'final form' reading, commentators are finding art in the connections *and* the tensions and contradictions, whereas in the past the lack of obvious

---

[4]The reading I am proposing does not depend upon a particular historical audience in the history of the composition of the book of Jeremiah. "Final form" is a pragmatic designation; it is the form of the text encountered by the audiences who read modern English translations, for whom the present form of the Masoretic Text of Jeremiah serves as a base.

[5]By this phrase, I mean to indicate that the semantic range (see below) for each word is connected across the text of Jeremiah 2-15 and is often internally contradictory, as will be seen below.

[6]Louis Stulman, *Jeremiah*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 12-13.

connections[7] and the prevalence of contradictions, literary and historical, yielded the conclusion of John Bright that Jeremiah is "a hopeless hodgepodge thrown together without any discernible principle of arrangement at all."[8] This study would prefer to see art even in the dissonance and tension, and will largely ignore questions of dating, authorship, and origin.

In the vein of finding art in connection and contradiction, E.K. Holt has briefly proposed what she calls "Yahweh as water" as a "basic" metaphor within Jeremiah[9] that functions within a "larger network of water imagery in and outside the Book of Jeremiah."[10] While this study cannot comment in detail on the imagery outside of Jeremiah, the network of imagery within Jeremiah 2-15 will be explored. Holt criticizes general attempts at reading metaphor in biblical texts for spending too much time on issues of methodology, and not nearly enough time on the text itself.[11] With that out of the way, she delves into the 'pool' of water imagery.

She notes four aspects of this 'pool' of imagery: 1) there is a great deal of water imagery in the Old Testament; 2) YHWH as water is an immediately intelligible image in Old Testament literature; 3) YHWH as water is an important metaphor in the sense that it can be used as a conclusion to important theological statements; 4) YHWH

---

[7]Often the connections that were not found were related to chronology more than thematics.

[8]Quoted in Stulman, 11.

[9]Else K. Holt, "The Fountain of Living Water and the Deceitful Brook," in *Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible,* ed. Pierre van Hecke, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005), 117.

[10]Ibid., 112.

[11]Ibid., 99.

as water is flexible and can be used in different, if even "contradictory" ways.[12] Holt also

notes the strong connection between "wet and dry" imagery within Jeremiah.[13] Holt does

not delve into the dry imagery beyond this brief statement, which is imagery that this

study will attempt to study. We hope to find its own network within Jeremiah, and to see

in what ways the dry and wet might interact.

Reading Unit

There are distinct reasons for choosing a general reading unit of Jeremiah 2-15,

the most important of which has to do with word frequency. The basic Hebrew word for

water (מים) occurs twenty-nine times within the MT[14] text of Jeremiah 1-52. Of these

occurrences, fourteen fall within Jeremiah 2-15, and at least once in nearly all of these

chapters. Thus, nearly half of the word's occurrences fall within just a quarter of the

book's total chapters. Similarly, the basic word for wilderness or desert (מדבר) occurs

twenty-one times within Jeremiah overall, fourteen of which occur within Jeremiah 2-15.

Thus we find two-thirds of this word's occurrences within a quarter of the book,

measured by chapter. This is most certainly an indication of the importance of these

words to the message within this unit.

---

[12]Ibid., 112. We would prefer the word "tensive" in place of "contradictory."

[13]Ibid., 104.

[14]MT stands for Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible.

Method

Following Holt's lead, we will eschew a distractingly detailed theory of metaphor, but without completely ignoring that matter. In order to understand metaphor we have to start with at least a mild form of methodology, or we will simply be cataloging them. Therefore we will explore a rudimentary methodology of metaphor in the following chapter. We will then explore the 'semantic range' of both מים and מדבר, in order to determine the choice of texts, which will display the prevalence of the ranges, and also the connections and tensions across Jeremiah within these semantic ranges that turn it into a "semantic network."[15] This occurs in a large textual unit, such as Jeremiah 2-15, when two or more semantic ranges occur consistently in close contact or interaction with each other.

---

[15]This terminology came from a conversation with Professor Richard Nysse.

CHAPTER ONE: ON METAPHOR

Introduction

Any discussion that focuses on metaphors should be grounded in some sort of theory of metaphor. Thirty years ago the discussion on metaphor was introduced to the theories of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, as outlined in *Metaphors We Live By*.[16] From surveying recent attempts at reading specific metaphors within the Old Testament, or metaphors within specific texts within the Old Testament, it is apparent that their thoughts and writings form the basis of these studies' efforts.[17] Our study of metaphor too will begin with this work of Lakoff's and Johnson's, then we shall look at some recent attempts at putting metaphor theory into practice, and finally we will propose a hermeneutical framework for this study.

Lakoff and Johnson

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have shown that we don't simply practice metaphor sentence-by-sentence, but rather we think, structure and understand,

---

[16]George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago P, 1980).

[17]Marc Zvi Brettler, *God is King: Understanding an Israelite Metaphor*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament (Sheffield, Eng: JSOT Press, 1989); Nelly Stienstra, *Yhwh is the Husband of His People: Analysis of a Biblical Metaphor With Special Reference to Translation* (Kampen: The Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1993); Gerlinde Baumann, *Love and Violence: Marriage as Metaphor for the Relationship Between Yhwh and Israel in the Prophetic Books*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2003), who shows that even non-English writers have picked up Lakoff & Johnson.

unbeknownst to us, reality through metaphor in a category which is called "conceptual metaphor."[18] The authors argue in *Metaphrs We Live By* that we understand abstract concepts in terms of concrete experience, and we think about many abstracts in metaphorical ways of which we are unaware: "our ordinary conceptual system ... is fundamentally metaphorical in nature."[19] For Lakoff and Johnson, at least in this work, metaphor is not just a linguistic phenomenon, but also a conceptual phenomenon, cultivated by networks of entailments.

This is at odds with the history of metaphor theory, which can be dated to Aristotle. While Aristotle saw that metaphor was more than mere rhetoric, many of those claiming the Aristotelian tradition have ended up concluding that at best metaphor is mere ornament for the text,[20] and at worst that, according to Thomas Aquinas, all figurative language exists for no other reason than to "insinuate the wrong idea, move the passions and thereby mislead the judgment," and therefore is to be "wholly avoided."[21] In direct contrast, Lakoff and Johnson have persuasively shown that our whole conceptual system is rooted in and dependent upon metaphor, which undermines Aquinas' position.

Their primary example is the concept ARGUMENT IS WAR.[22] We "defend" our

---

[18]Lakoff/Johnson, "Metaphors We Live By"., 3.

[19]Ibid., 3.

[20]Paul Ricœur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 13-20; also Stienstra, "Yhwh is the Husband of His People: Analysis of a Biblical Metaphor With Special Reference to Translation", 18.

[21]Stienstra, 20, quoting from John Locke's quotation in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1894 in praise of this understanding of metaphor.

[22]Lakoff/Johnson, "Metaphors We Live By", 4. Conceptual metaphors are indicated by small caps.

"positions," and "attack" our opponent's weaknesses, "looking for openings." In these attacking moves, we hope that our attacks are "right on target" so that we may "gain ground."[23] These reflect more than simple common expressions, they actually disclose the ways in which we understand argument. They structure our approach to an argumentative situation, as evidenced by our inability to think of argument in terms other than war, and as evidenced by the way in which we carry out arguments.[24] This is the normal way in which we talk about arguments, and we speak about them in what we take to be literal terms because we conceive of an argument in terms of "war." These expressions can be said to make the ARGUMENT IS WAR conceptual metaphor's "semantic range" (see below).

This lends itself to a certain amount of systemization of conceptual metaphors. For instance, TIME IS MONEY contains the concepts "time is a valuable commodity" and "time is a limited resource."[25] The latter two concepts are directly related to TIME IS MONEY because money is a limited resource and a valuable commodity. So while they may cause one to speak of time in a slightly different way, ultimately they point to the same understanding. The systematicity of metaphors is not just related to a single concept, but can expand its network and cover multiple conceptual ideas that all derive from the same place. We shall see, as we move into the realm of biblical metaphor, how this becomes important.

These systems of conceptual metaphors, however, tend to hide aspects of the

---

[23]Ibid.

[24]Ibid., 4, 61-68.

[25]Ibid., 7-9.

8

concept from us at the same time as they reveal concepts to us.[26] This hiding of aspects

comes from the conceptual metaphor forcing us to focus on the aspects of the target

concept that clearly fall within the framework of that conceptual metaphor, which then

causes us to ignore aspects that do not fall clearly within that framework.. For example,

in the middle of an intense argument, we may lose sight of aspects of argument that are

not related to war; we may forget what Lakoff and Johnson suggest is the cooperative

aspect of argument. Similarly, because both parties are giving up time, a valuable

commodity, for the argument, there is an economic transaction between the two parties

that is hidden in the ARGUMENT IS WAR system.[27] Lakoff and Johnson thus adopt an "is"

and "is not" aspect of metaphor.

Also important to their theory is the experiential nature of metaphors. Rather

than exhibiting abstract knowledge of something, metaphors exhibit and depend upon the

concrete knowledge of something that comes from experience. They write that "[i]n

actuality we feel that no metaphor can ever be comprehended or even adequately

represented independently of its experiential basis."[28] This experience itself is culturally

specific, and depends partly on the physical environment in which that culture

developed.[29] This lends itself to their premise that "truth is always relative to a

conceptual system that is defined in large part by metaphor."[30] Truth, then, is in some

---

[26]Ibid., 10.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Ibid., 19.

[29]Ibid., 146.

[30]Ibid., 159; also 230-237.

ways subordinate to what the metaphors reveal, which is derived from experience which itself is the result of the physical environment in which a culture has developed.

Lastly, language itself is the subject of an often unrealized metaphorical structure in our culture. Our common understanding of language depends upon what is called the "conduit metaphor," which exhibits the following conceptual metaphors: ideas (or meanings) are objects, linguistic expressions are containers, and communication is sending ideas. The speaker or writer, then, puts ideas (objects) into words (containers) and sends them (along a conduit) to a hearer who takes the ideas/objects out of the word/ containers.[31] We "capture" our ideas, and we also "give" them to others. Some of our words "carry" little meaning, and often our ideas get "buried" in dense writing when we try to "get them across." Lakoff and Johnson cite Michael Reddy, who has estimated that at least 70 percent of expressions about language fall into this conceptualization.[32] It is from this that we can see how dominant this conceptualization is to our culture.[33]

In their analysis of the metaphorizing of language, Lakoff and Johnson reveal several startling things about the way in which our culture at large thinks about metaphor. Most importantly, our cultural expressions suggests that words and sentences have meaning independent of context or speaker. Thus, it would be held that the phrase, "There is something rotten in the state of Denmark" needs no explanation, because the meaning is built in to the sentence. This could be referring to a political situation, as in

---

[31]Ibid., 10.

[32]Ibid., 10-11.

[33]For Lakoff and Johnson, the 'dominance' of a particular conceptual metaphor is indicated not by the number of times one says "Argument is war," but by the number of expressions which are derived from that conceptual metaphor.

the utterance of it by Marcellus in *Hamlet*, or it could simply be referring to an egg that has gone bad somewhere in Denmark.[34] By changing the context, the meaning of the sentence changes, and thus we can see that meaning is not fully contained within the sentence on its own, but is dependent upon context.

In summary, we can say that Lakoff and Johnson suggest the following regarding metaphor: 1) metaphors are linguistic and conceptual, and they are indicative not just of speech patterns, but thought patterns; 2) we structure our understanding of abstract concepts through the use of conceptual metaphors such as ARGUMENT IS WAR; 3) conceptual metaphors are not simply exhibited by utterance of the metaphor itself, but by all the related expressions (the "semantic range"); 4) conceptual metaphors tend to highlight certain aspects of a concept while hiding other aspects; 5) the metaphors we use are dependent upon experience, which itself depends upon the physical environment, and also upon context; and 6) our understanding of language itself is structured by a "hidden" metaphor. From this list we can now predict two major issues regarding the study of metaphors in the Bible.

Lakoff and Johnson argued that truth is relative to a culturally influenced conceptual system and so the first major hurdle in approaching the Bible is clearly the cultural gap. Our cultures influence our conceptual systems, and so in theory at least, different cultures will produce different conceptual systems. We live in a culture that shares very little with the culture of the modern Middle East, let alone the ancient Middle

---

[34]Brettler, 20.

East. First, this raises the issue of translation,[35] and second, the issue of understanding a metaphor that depends upon experiences we may not have had.

Another problem we can deduce out of the Lakoff and Johnson framework is the issue of "highlighting and hiding" which goes along with metaphors that have become practically literal, for these 'dead' metaphors have completely hidden their metaphorical nature to most speakers.. A metaphor that has become literal, for instance, would be one such as the "leg" of a chair or the "foot" of a mountain, or the expressions we use for speaking of argument, as discussed briefly above. In short, we don't realize we're "using" a metaphor. When we know we are using or experiencing a metaphor we are well aware of the similarities and dissimilarities between the abstract concept (e.g., argument) and the concrete concept (e.g., war). In Christian and Jewish communities, the phrases or ideas "YHWH is king," "YHWH is shepherd," or "YHWH is the husband of Israel," for instance, are so common that they may have become literal speech for those communities. We may have lost sight of the ways in which YHWH is *not* king or YHWH is *not* shepherd; YHWH may have become king or shepherd to these hearer.[36]

So far we have described the Lakoff and Johnson approach to metaphors, yielding at least six key insights into metaphors. From this we deduced two major hurdles that we must jump in order to study metaphors in the Bible effectively. At this

---

[35]Stienstra's work (below) touches on the issue of translation, which is important in the realm of gender studies and the marriage metaphor, but may not be an integral issue in the study of water and wilderness.

[36]Sallie McFague has called this literalization of metaphors in religious language idolatrous. She argues, however, that we must not go too far in the opposite direction in which religious language becomes not idolatrous, but irrelevant - they become "just symbols." McFague sees these two (false) options as poles in our society between which most people see no middle ground. Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 2, 4-7.

point we will briefly examine some recent attempts to study biblical metaphors: Marc Zvi Bretter's *God is King*, Nelly Stienstra's *YHWH is the Husband of His People*, and Gerlinde Baumann's *Love and Violence*. We will also look at Pierre van Hecke's description and proposal of the 'conceptual blend.' While these works are obviously dependent upon more than just Lakoff and Johnson, we can get a "feel" for how the study of metaphor operates in the world of biblical studies since Lakoff's & Johnson's initial publication of *Metaphors We Live By*.

Studies of Biblical Metaphors

Brettler's work,[37] published in 1989, approaches the study of his chosen metaphor GOD IS KING by cataloging the ideas about human kingship that the Bible relates. He argues that "any attempt to understand 'God is king' must involve a complete depiction of human kingship in ancient Israel."[38] This exhibits the understanding that metaphor depends, at least to a certain extent, upon the culture from which it came and that reconstructing that culture is important for making sense of a metaphor. This study of the ways in which the ancient Israelites thought about kings leads Brettler to first catalog many examples of this usage and then describe characteristics or 'submetaphors' of "God is king" that he deduces from his collection of metaphors. The meaning of the metaphors is beyond his work, for he seems interested in rebuilding the cultural conceptions of king as evidenced across the Old Testament than in explicating meaning.

---

[37]Brettler, *op. cit.*

[38]Ibid., 13. Also pg. 25: "Popular conceptions of kingship are more important than the historical realities." These he will call the "associated commonplaces," pg. 160.

In 1993, Stienstra noted that there had been few attempts at analyzing a biblical metaphor systematically.[39] She followed in Brettler's footsteps by providing an overview of her chosen metaphor of marriage within the ancient Israelite world, arguing (echoing Brettler) that "without this knowledge it is impossible to attempt the analysis of the biblical marriage metaphor."[40] She utilizes a semantic field approach to find the "donor" field (the word or field which gives it characteristics) and "recipient" field (the word or field that receives the characteristics). For "YHWH is the husband of his people," the donor field is husband and the recipient field is YHWH. The metaphorical concept grows as a result of the interaction between the two fields.[41]

For understanding a biblical text, then, she proposes that "a thorough understanding of a leading, pervasive metaphorical concept is of vital importance to the correct interpretation of a text," and further that "careful analysis of a metaphorical concept is a good way of bridging the gap between the two cultures."[42] The "thorough understanding" necessary is an understanding of what the originating culture has to say about the donor field and the recipient field. Because all cultures conceptualize abstract concepts, she posits, we can easily gain access to a culture as distant as pre-exilic Israel by studying the ways in which that culture structures both the donor and recipient fields. Her detailed analysis of the usage of marriage imagery in the Old Testament leads to her conclusion that Israelite conceptions of marriage differ from modern conceptions of

---

[39]Stienstra, *Op. cit.*, 67.

[40]Ibid., 70.

[41]Ibid., 233.

[42]Ibid., 234.

marriage.[43]

Gerlinde Baumann will announce her intent to follow Paul Ricœur's work, specifically his understanding of the difference between explanation and meaning,[44] and what she refers to as the "reverse action of metaphor."[45] In the former point, 'explanation' is concerned with immanent meaning, that is, the "historic" meaning; whereas 'meaning' is more akin to significance to the modern reader.[46] By the "reverse action of metaphor" she means to examine how these marriage metaphors from the Old Testament can still color our conceptions today of women, men, YHWH and marriage.[47] She will conclude that, using her terminology, searching for explanations will yield different results than will searching for significance.

In this way she speaks to the problem mentioned above of metaphors that have become essentially literal. Baumann deals with the issues raised by metaphors that have become literal, that have been accepted by us even today and that still structure, to a certain extent, the ways in which we think about women, men, YHWH and marriage. While Stienstra was content to show that we can bridge the gap between cultures in a dialog enhanced by translation, Baumann wants to say that while we can do so, it should only be in unraveling the connections in order that we might move beyond them. Baumann spends very little time discussing the methodology of metaphor and prefers to

---

[43]Ibid., 70.

[44]Baumann, *Op. cit.*, 33.

[45]Ibid., 35.

[46]Ibid., 33-34. We might say that explanation answers the question, "What did it mean to them?", while meaning answers the question, "What does it mean for us?"

[47]Ibid., 35.

analyze the text and its reception, as we saw with Holt's article (above).[48]

Most recently, Pierre van Hecke has analyzed what he calls "conceptual blending" in an approach to studying metaphor.[49] Conceptual blending takes the work of Lakoff and Johnson and adds to the relationship of the source domain (donor field) and the target domain (recipient field) by adding at least two more "spaces."[50] One space is the "generic" space that contains the concepts that the source and target domains have in common. The second space is "the blend," in which "[e]lements and relations from the two central spaces are projected into this space and are subsequently blended, thus creating novel conceptual structure."[51] "Meaning" is not to be found simply in the blend, however, but by projecting the blend back into the other spaces (source and target).[52]

Van Hecke surveys Hosea 4:16 to implement his approach, in which Israel is a stubborn cow and YHWH the shepherd. He first ascertains the conceptional background information necessary from the domains of CATTLE DRIVING and SHEPHERDING. The stubborn cow implies a driver who wants the cow to go one way while the cow will not. This is in considerable tension with the image of YHWH as shepherd feeding his sheep, which involves standing back and allowing the sheep to freely graze. The tension of the verse then is how Israel will ever be allowed to graze freely if it will not allow itself to be

---

[48]See Julia M O'Brien, *Challenging Prophetic Metaphor: Theology and Ideology in the Prophets* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), for an excellent attempt to deal with such problems.

[49]Pierre van Hecke, "Conceptual Blending: A Recent Approach to Metaphor," in *Metaphors in the Hebrew Bible,* ed. Pierre van Hecke, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005).

[50]Ibid., 219-220.

[51]Ibid., 221, necessitated by the realization that metaphors often create implications that originated in neither the source nor the target domains.

[52]Ibid., 222-223.

driven by Yahweh. Ultimately, van Hecke shows that Yahweh will not be allowing his sheep to graze, he will instead be driving the cattle, coercing it to stay on the right path, which means that Israel will no longer have the freedom and leisure of sheep.[53] This "blend" requires both source domains (CATTLE DRIVING and SHEPHERDING) but would not have originated in either source domain without the other source domain.

The common feature of the studies of biblical metaphors we have discussed has been their attempts at cataloging the data, of finding the cultural entailments as evidenced by the Old Testament. The bulk of Brettler's work is just this task, while Stienstra only devotes one chapter of her work to cataloging the Old Testament view of marriage, before turning to the biblical text. Van Hecke does not provide a detailed study of passages about shepherds or cattle, although it seems for his verse (Hos. 4:16) and purpose, farming is farming regardless of the time period. His analysis, though, still depends upon an understanding and an explanation of what the concepts of CATTLE DRIVING and SHEPHERDING suggest.

Developing the 'explanation' (the cultural entailments) is what enables one to find the 'significance' of the metaphors. Given the emphasis on collecting the data of the metaphor's entailments in order to make the move to significance, it may be appropriate now for us to explore the concepts that will be dealt with in this study: מים ("water") and מדבר ("wilderness"). A comprehensive evaluation of every usage of these words within the Old Testament would be beyond the scope of this project at this time because מים occurs nearly six-hundred times, while מדבר appears around two-hundred and seventy

---

[53]Ibid., 223-226.

17

times in the canon. This count, of course, does not include the 'semantic field' of the

words.

מים and מדבר: **Entailments and Semantic Ranges**

It is not enough to say that מים and מדבר feature prominently in Jeremiah 2-15;

rather, we must say that words related to "wet and dry" (the "semantic ranges") feature

prominently. In this section we seek to explore briefly the ways in which these semantic

ranges appear in the Old Testament, and their occurrence within Jeremiah. We also must

bear in mind the "experience" of the words for the people of this historical period. The

tensive nature of their usage within Jeremiah will begin to take shape in this overview.

<div align="center">מים</div>

This basic word for water appears within the Old Testament in approximately

530 different verses. As noted by Holt above, the word is a fundamental component of

many stories of the tradition: creation, the Flood, the Red Sea drowning Pharaoh's troops,

standing at the Jordan river waiting to cross into the Promised Land. There is also the

'water in the wilderness' motif, such as Moses making the bitter water sweet and getting

water out of a rock twice (Ex. 17, Num. 20). The scarcity of water in the region allows

the connection to be made between water and divine blessing, such as Jacob's blessing of

his sons in Gen. 49:25.[54] The supply of water in the region is also linked tightly to

settlement patterns. In fact, it could be said that "securing a sufficient supply [of water]

---

[54]In which the "blessings of the deep" (most translations) are the blessing of stable water supply.

represented a major part of activities in the time of the OT and the NT."[55] Not only does water feature in many prominent stories of the Old Testament, it also is a prominent concern in life. In this regard, water serves as an important source of not just life, but also literary richness, a pool of images, as Holt suggested.

We noted above that statistically, in roughly one-quarter of the chapters of Jeremiah (MT), the word for water has nearly half of its occurrences. This, however, does not account for the semantic range of words associated with מים. This range within just Jeremiah 2-15 includes: גשם, מטר, יורה, מלקוש (all with reference to "rain"), שקה ("to drink"), עין ("spring"), מקור ("fountain"), בור and גב ("cistern"), מקוה (translated in 14:8 as "hope" but also means "pool"; see Isaiah 22:11), נהר ("Euphrates" in Jer. 2:18, but also "river"), ים ("sea"), and דמעה ("tears"). These words make up WATER. It is statistically clear that water and its relative words are important within Jeremiah 2-15.

מדבר

מדבר occurs approximately 230 times in the Old Testament, and its usual translation is either "wilderness" or "desert." By far, the wilderness wandering of Israel as it escaped out of Egypt looms largest in the realm of Old Testament usage of "wilderness." Many later uses of the word occur with either a positive (Jer. 2:2) or a negative (Ezek. 20:13) remembrance of this time. The dominant usage of the word as a metaphor in the prophets is in describing the power of YHWH, and as such it functions as either the aftermath of the destruction he brings (e.g., Ezek. 6:14, Hos. 2:3) , or YHWH

---

[55]Gerald A. Klingbeil, "Water," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. 5,* ed. Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 818. See also "Water" in Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, Tremper Longman III, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, (Downers Grove, Il: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 929-932.

changes it into the fruitful land (e.g., Isa. 32:15, 35:1).

The semantic range of מדבר within Jeremiah 2-15 includes the following words: חרבה ("waste"), יבש ("dry up" or "wither"), חרב ("dry up" or "lay waste"), and ציה ("drought" or "dry"). These words make up WILDERNESS. When adding these words to the fact noted above that מדבר has 66% of its occurrences within Jeremiah in chapters 2-15, we can see how statistically dominant this word is within such a relatively small section of the present book of Jeremiah.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we explored the theory of metaphor as developed by Lakoff and Johnson, a theory of the "conceptual metaphor." We also highlighted some attempts at studying metaphor in the Old Testament that have been published since Lakoff and Johnson's first published their theory. In this system, metaphor is not just a figure of speech, but provides the structure through which we understand ourselves and the world. A conceptual metaphor may also structure a literary work, a thesis that we will explore in what follows. In the course of this study we will follow the Lakoff and Johnson-centered approach and we shall see that מים (WATER) and מדבר (WILDERNESS) will serve as conceptual metaphors within Jeremiah 2-15 that will provide structure to YHWH, the people of Judah, the disaster in connected and tensive ways, and possibly the text itself.

We established the semantic range of מים and מדבר above. As this study progresses, we will begin to see the emergence of a semantic network across Jeremiah 2-15. Holt argued that water has a network of images within and without Jeremiah. We argue that wilderness does too, at least within Jeremiah 2-15. Further, the words do not

simply show up with great frequency, they interact with and play with each other. The

metaphors billow and build in sometimes tensive ways that are unseen until the semantic

ranges are taken into consideration: this is the semantic network.[56]

---

[56]The general idea is akin to van Hecke's "conceptual blend."

21

CHAPTER TWO: SETTING THE STAGE

JEREMIAH 2:1-3:5

Textual Analysis

This section is teeming with the metaphors we are interested in and only those

relevant passages from this section will be looked at in depth. We will analyze the

various passages in this unit that make use of "water" or "wilderness" through the lens of

the metaphor methodology that we established in the previous chapter, looking at the

semantic ranges with an eye for a semantic network. After our analysis we will be able to

say how Jeremiah makes use of these words as metaphors and begin to build conceptual

metaphors. These will then be compared against the other sections we will examine in

order to see if these conceptual metaphors might be consistent across Jeremiah 2-15.

In the interests of the reading that is being proposed here, we shall turn to

examine the first instance of water or wilderness in Jeremiah 2:1-3:5, which occurs right

off the bat with a description of Israel following YHWH in the wilderness:
> "I remember
> the devotion of your youth,
> your love as a bride,
> how you followed me in the wilderness,
> in a land not sown.
> Israel
> was holy to the LORD,
> the first fruits of his harvest" (2:2-3a).[57]

---

[57]Biblical quotes follow the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) unless otherwise indicated.

We are clearly dealing with talk about the relationship between YHWH and people. In the period that YHWH recalls here, Israel was holy because it had "devotion," bridal love, and followed YHWH in the wilderness. If Robert Alter's assertion regarding biblical poetry that "the progression of intensifying thematic particles is brought to a culminating flare-up, or compels resolution by a sharp reversal at the end"[58] is correct and applicable here, then the "white-hot point" he describes is clearly on Israel following YHWH in the wilderness, to which 'devotion' and 'love as bride' build and add support.

Rather than a purely metaphorical usage, Jeremiah begins with wilderness in a clear historical allusion. This allusion, however, provides a baseline for the entailments of wilderness, which are fleshed out in the following pericope (4-8) when the people are accused of failing to ask:

> "Where is the LORD
> who brought us up from the land of Egypt,
> who led us in the wilderness,
>> in a land of deserts and pits,
>> in a land of deep drought and deep darkness,
>> in a land that no one passes through,
>> where no one lives?" (2:6).

Following Alter's proposal that poetry intensifies until it climaxes at the end of a thought, this passage modifies the understanding of wilderness presented by 2:1-3. Wilderness alludes to the place where the relationship was at its peak of health. It also seems that the fact that the land was "not sown" contributed to Israel's ability to fulfill YHWH's expectations; the harshness of a landscape that sustains "no one" provided the means to sustain the relationship for the period in which Israel wandered in the wilderness..

---

[58]Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 63, with his qualification on pg. 84 that this occurs in the majority of biblical poetry, but does not occur in all of it.

23

Despite the positive relationship, wilderness is painted here as terrifying; a place where no one lives, and a place where no one would even want to live or could live - except Israel under the care of YHWH.

This pericope tells us about the conception of YHWH: YHWH is the one who led them up out of Egypt, a time in which the Israelites were enslaved, and the one who led the people through the wilderness where the covenant was enacted on Sinai/Horeb. The time of wandering in the wilderness as pictured in 2:1-3 is an idyllic one in which Israel followed YHWH, was devoted to him and loved him as YHWH intended. This is in tension with the wilderness wandering tradition as presented in Exodus-Numbers, however.[59] For instance, in Exodus 16:2, right after camping by "twelve springs of water," the "whole congregation" complains that Moses has brought them into the wilderness to die from lack of nourishment. Again in Exodus 17 the people complain about the perceived likelihood of their death in the wilderness when they could have just as easily died back in Egypt. In the period portrayed by Numbers 11 after enacting the covenant, the people are back to grumbling and complaining. Either the idyllic memory of YHWH is of the moment when the covenant was enacted and all was well, or it represents YHWH "remembering their sins no more," or it is in considerable tension with the general Pentatuechal tradition.

At this point, then, WILDERNESS functions as the place and the time in which Israel and YHWH had a positive relationship, with the entailments of bride-like love and youthful devotion. The idealism of the relationship is tempered somewhat by the

---

[59]Allen notes that this "echoes" the tradition as presented in Hosea, which for him, likely never existed outside of Hosea or Jeremiah. Leslie C. Allen, *Jeremiah*, Old Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 34.

starkness of the reality of the wilderness: deserts, pits, drought and "deep darkness"; a

place where no one lives and no one would want to live, unless YHWH wills it. Because

of the inhospitableness of such a region, WILDERNESS offers no opportunity for Israel to

engage in apostasy; there is no temptation. It is only in the "plentiful land" that Israel's

relationship with YHWH, according to Jeremiah, begins to degrade as they become

"worthless" (2:4).

In 2:12-13 YHWH commands the heavens to be appalled and to "be dry"[60]

because his people have
> "committed two evils:
> they have forsaken me,
>   the fountain of living water,
> and dug out cisterns for themselves,
>   cracked cisterns that can hold no water"

YHWH is imaged as "the fountain of living water" whom Israel has forsaken, which is

evil number one. Evil number two occurred because Israel attempted to build a water

collection system, which failed. In this passage, the cisterns that Israel dug out seem to

indicate that Israel was following after other gods because Israel is base.[61] But perhaps

YHWH has failed in Israel's eyes, perhaps YHWH ran out of water and the people

needed to find another source of water.

YHWH, who from everlasting to everlasting is God (Ps. 90:2), as fountain of

water implies a never-failing source of water, the kind of water source that attracts people

to settle nearby, as all people depend upon water for the sustaining of life. Thus

---

[60]So, Terence E Fretheim, *Jeremiah*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary, ed. R. Scott Nash, et al., (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 66, commenting on verse 12 that (חרב) "be desolate" can also be rendered "be dry." Brown-Driver-Briggs also indicates "dry" as the primary meaning.

[61]Ibid., 66.

forsaking the fountain of living waters is forsaking life itself. Michael de Roche argues

on the basis of two passages of scripture that utilize the word for fountain that forsaking

the fountain of living waters is essentially comparing the relationship between YHWH

and his people in terms of love and marriage.[62] He cites Proverbs 5:15-18 in which he

argues that fountain, cistern and well are metaphors for *bride*, and further that this

passage also contains metaphors for male fertility (springs and channels). He also cites

Song of Songs 4:12-15 that compare the *bride's* fertility to a fountain, spring and pool.

He concludes that Jeremiah 2:13 compares Israel to the husband and Yahweh to the

forsaken bride, acknowledging that this is a "rare, if not unique way" to describe the

relationship, especially given that 2:2 has already positioned YHWH as husband and

Israel as bride.[63]

This case would perhaps be more convincing if the immediate context of this

passage, the pericope of verses 10-13, contained any metaphors of marriage or love. It is

interesting that Proverbs 5:15-18 contain both fountain and cistern, but it is obviously in

the midst of a passage about sexuality and marriage - the same can be said for the Song of

Songs quotation. It is entirely possible that Jeremiah is drawing on this imagery to again

use a metaphor for the sexual-marriage metaphor; however it is not clear that this is the

case unless one starts from the presupposition that "marriage" is the dominant metaphor

for the relationship between YHWH and Israel within Jeremiah. There is no immediate

context to support such a reading in Jeremiah 2:13. It also worth noting that Jeremiah

---

[62]Michael DeRoche, "Israel's "two evils" in Jeremiah 2:13," *Vetus testamentum* 31, no. 3 (July 1981): 369-370. Baumann, 41, also calls Jer. 2:13 marriage imagery.

[63]Ibid*.,* 371.

uses the word for fountain two more times, in 9:1 (English) and 17:13, neither of which are in an explicitly sexual context.

The focus on the marriage metaphor can sometimes go overboard, and we may forget that it cannot convey everything about the relationship between YHWH and people. In some instances, a writer may use other metaphors that are not necessarily dependent upon each other, but are used to open up fresh meanings. Perhaps these other metaphors may interact and play with one another to produce startling new results in a kind of conceptual blending maneuver, but de Roche is not taking that position. My position is that Jeremiah wants the hearer to think about what it means for YHWH to be the "fountain of living waters," and put the marriage and sexual metaphors aside for perhaps just a moment, as a way to increase and enhance the understanding of this relationship, for YHWH as husband cannot convey everything about this relationship.

In addition to functioning as a source for sustaining life, a fountain implies some amount of dynamic force. Springs or fountains burst forth from the ground with a great deal of pressure. Moreover, they appear to be limitless. This is what Philo had in mind when he commented that YHWH is the "everflowing fountain of life."[64] So far YHWH AS FOUNTAIN implies reliability, dynamic force, everflowing waters, and an anchor for civilization. The anchoring reliability lends itself to trust and dependence, for a settlement depends upon the fountain for its survival as they drink from it. And so we may add life's dependence, and the need to "drink from," an aspect that we will come

---

[64] Jack R Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*, ed. W.F. Albright, D.N. Freedman, The Anchor Bible, vol. 21a (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 269, quoting Fishbane. Fretheim echoes this when he writes that "[t]he water metaphors focus on Yahweh as an ongoing source of life," Fretheim, 66.

back.

Jack Lundbom argues that "living waters" simply means "running water."[65]

While Lundbom offers no further comment about this, Leslie Allen adds that this phrase

pictures YHWH "providing never-failing resources for coping with the real world," to

which he compares what the cisterns provide, which is "psuedospiritual sustenance."[66]

We can infer that the "resources" that YHWH provides are true spiritual living, or what

Allen calls "effective living."[67] "Living water," in either case, would simply seem to

reinforce the notions of movement and force and sustenance-providing (however defined)

that we noted previously about FOUNTAIN.

Because Israel has turned its back on YHWH as the resource-providing

fountain in order to secure their resources under their own terms (that fail), they must

seek out new sources of "water." In the next pericope, their cities are portrayed as ruined,

without inhabitants (2:14-19). As such, they turn to Assyria and Egypt for the resources

they need, and the people are asked rhetorically:
> What then do you gain by going to Egypt,
>   to drink the waters of the Nile?
> Or what do you gain by going to Assyria,
>   to drink the waters of the Euphrates?[68]

The obvious answer the question expects is at best, "nothing," and at worst, "disaster."

Here the supply of water in Egypt and Assyria are meant to be understood as "resources";

resources for protection and security and ironic restoration of what was lost in the disaster

---

[65]Lundbom, 267. This is echoed by Allen, op cit, 38.

[66]Allen, 42.

[67]Ibid., 42.

[68]Likewise, in Hosea 7:11, "Ephraim" is senseless and easily deceived, calling to Egypt and then to Assyria. Also Lamentations 5:8: "we made a pact with Egypt and Assyria" for bread (NRSV).

that followed the Israelites abandonment of the "fountain of living waters." To "drink from" the Nile or the Euphrates, then, functions as a metaphor for a dangerous political alliance and reminds the hearer that Israel no longer drinks from YHWH.

This political alliance exhibits at least one function that we noted about the "fountain of living waters." There is certainly dependence upon the "rivers" for survival, but there is also the clear aspect that the inferior party drinks from the waters of the superior party. Another important component of this pericope is that Israel has to go to the new source to get the water they need, language that was absent from the passage about the "fountain of living water." That pericope implied that Israel already had access to this fountain and that there was no need to go chasing after it. Narratively, this pericope implies an amount of "chasing" by Israel, as they go first to Egypt to drink, and then to Assyria. Either they are unable to get what they need, or they are unable to be satisfied. In any case, the people are unable to maintain access to proper water supplies, as they will be disappointed by both nations (2:36).

It is unclear if Assyria is still a threat to Israel for this passage, or if Babylon would have supplanted Assyria as the major threat du jour. If the passage can be located after the fall of Assyria, then this couplet likely introduces Egypt and Assyria as alluding metaphors. Israel has gone to its two historic enemies in search of nourishment after abandoning YHWH. Of its own volition, Israel has returned to the land of slavery, and the land of the first exile - to the scenes of much suffering and death - in search of a source of life to replace YHWH. This passage serves to highlight the folly of that from the perspective of YHWH and prophet through the use of Egypt and Assyria as metaphors.

WATER, then, is more than just the source and sustainer of physical life. It has

the tripartite role of being the source and sustainer of religious, political-military and

physical life. When Israel was drinking from the "fountain of living waters," they had

access to the nourishment they needed for all aspects of life. By turning their back on

that, by rejecting that, they now attempt to fulfill their needs from other sources. The

political-military nourishment from Egypt and Assyria leaves them thirsty, and their own

cisterns leave them thirsty. At this point, Israel has run out of WATER, which means that

Israel has also run out of YHWH.

The text next moves towards the metaphors of sexuality and of cleanliness,[69]

combining these with wilderness. The people are described (2:23b-25a):
> Look at your way in the valley;
> know what you have done -
> a restive young camel interlacing her tracks,
> [24] a wild ass at home in the wilderness,
> in her heat sniffing the wind!
> Who can restrain her lust?
> None who seek her need weary themselves;
> in her month they will find her.
> [25] Keep your feet from going unshod
> and your throat from thirst.

Israel here is likened to a wild animal of the wilderness "in heat," which within the

theology of Jeremiah is surely an allusion to the unstoppable pursuit of other gods. This

"wild ass" to which Israel is likened is the same Hebrew word (פרא) used in the predictive

description of Ishmael in Genesis 16:12. Besides this, the word occurs eleven other times

_____

[69]2:22 does have reference to water, as the people are asked about the perceived effective of washing and its inability to remove the stain of guilt, but I am preferencing usages derived from nature, such as river imagery or rain imagery.

in the Old Testament: four times in Job, twice in Jeremiah[70] and Hosea, and one occurrence each in Joshua, Isaiah, and in Psalm 104. The most descriptive passage of this פרא comes in Job 39:5-8 where we learn that the beast "scorns the tumult of the city" and it "does not hear the shouts of the driver" (Job 39:8), cohering well with the picture of the wild ox just painted by 2:20, who says, "I will not serve!" After all the time the people spent complaining in the wilderness, YHWH brought them to a plentiful land. Yet once there, the people rejected YHWH and the life he granted them, and now ironically have been reduced to the level of a beast that only survives in the wilderness that they were so eager to leave.

Further, this פרא is "at home in" (NRSV, NJB), "used to" (ESV, NJPS) or "accustomed to" (TNIV) the wilderness, all translations of the Hebrew adjectival form of the verb למד, which has reference to learning or teaching. This word functions here in the sense that the major translations convey: the wilderness is the place where the פרא is 'in its element,' it is the place where the פרא has the freedom to 'be itself.' Part of its nature, according to Jeremiah, is that the animal's lust cannot be constrained, and there is no one around to satisfy it. As we saw with Israel seeking WATER without satisfaction, here we see Israel seeking sexual fulfillment without satisfaction. Sexual fulfillment clearly refers to a relationship of some kind to which Israel no longer has access. Thus to WILDERNESS is added the conception of a place where wild animals are free to pursue their own basic instincts and nothing more, and will continue to be driven to seek these desires out until satisfied. Jeremiah depicts Israel as such an animal.

---

[70]The פרא returns again in Jeremiah 14:6 where it is one of the parts of creation that is decimated by the drought, panting for air and going blind for lack of food.

Israel the animal is warned (2:25) against letting its feet "go unshod," from becoming this wild, undomesticated animal. In striking parallel to this command is the command to keep "your throat from thirst." Israel did not have to worry about thirst when it had YHWH as the "fountain of living waters." Now, Israel, acting like the unrestrained wild animal, should let itself be shod so that it will not thirst. They tried this again with their own cracked cisterns, but failed to 'keep from thirst.' They tried drinking from Egypt and Assyria, but gained nothing advantageous for their cause. "Thirst" is the place in the life of Israel caused by forsaking YHWH for the freedom of the wilderness beasts.

The most surprising usage of wilderness occurs in Jeremiah 2:31-32 in which YHWH asks:

> Have I been a wilderness to Israel
> or a land of thick darkness?[71]
> Why then do my people say, "We are free,
> we will come to you no more"?
> [32] Can a girl forget her ornaments
> or a bride her attire?
> Yet my people have forgotten me,
> days without number.

"Wilderness" is not meant to be understood in any positive manner, for YHWH is the innocent victim in this chapter's accusational materials. We have entered a wilderness of relationship rather than one of mere physical landscape. YHWH believes that he has not been a "wilderness" to the people, and thus the people have no valid claim to leave YHWH, who cannot be a wilderness because he is the opposite: he is the "fountain of living waters."

---

[71]If the marriage metaphor was dominant here, we might expect a question like "Have I been a poor husband to Israel?"

WILDERNESS, at this point in Jeremiah, now fully entails the inhospitableness of

arid and empty desert, the lack of water and resources for survival. It is a place where

wild animals reign and civilization is unheard of. It is a place that would cause one to go

in desperate search for water, or to try to build a cistern to collect water to survive. It

would drive a person to do anything to survive, to take the first offer that comes along. In

short, wilderness is death.

In response to Israel's actions, again characterized promiscuously as "waiting

for lovers, like a nomad in the wilderness" which pollutes the land (3:2), the punishment

by YHWH is announced (3:3-4):

> [3] Therefore the showers have been withheld,
> and the spring rain has not come;
> yet you have the forehead of a woman,
> you refuse to be ashamed.
> [4] Have you not just now called to me,
> "My Father, you are the friend of my youth-
> will he be angry forever,
> will he be indignant to the end?"

Israel's actions directly impact the land. Not only has the land been polluted, but the land

will now suffer a drought in response to Israel's apostastatic crime. We also learn that

YHWH's and Jeremiah's goal has been to shame Israel into relenting from its actions.

Withholding water is the literary punishment of choice for the conclusion to chapter 2,

which only cements the land as polluted, turning the land from whatever it was before

into a wasteland, into a wilderness.

Even though Israel abandoned the fountain of living waters, that did not

indicate necessarily that the fountain had run out of water. At the end of the chapter,

however, YHWH refuses to bring rain on the land. The fountain may not be dry, but it is

actively and intentionally now stopped up. Perhaps YHWH has become a wilderness to

Israel. Perhaps YHWH says, "Oh, I've been a wilderness, have I? I'll show you a wilderness!"

Conclusion

In the section 2:1-3:5, the numerous references to water and wilderness form a metaphor set that begins to accumulate force and power as the chapter progresses and will continue to expand and adapt as the text progresses through chapter 14. WATER and WILDERNESS are opposites at this point: WATER is life, sustenance, nourishment, and protection; 'drinking' it involves tying one's self to a particular entity, whether YHWH, Assyria or Egypt. WILDERNESS begins as an historical allusion in YHWH's idyllic remembrance of the early days of covenant, but by the end of the unit we examined, WILDERNESS has taken a dark turn. It has subsumed the entire relationship and become death, emptiness, wild and unrestrained, scary, and the antithesis of everything that WATER stands for. WILDERNESS exists on its own as a physical reality, but can also be brought about metaphorically and physically within the Promised Land by Israel's actions. YHWH's power is presented ultimately in terms of his ability to turn fertile land into wilderness, which we shall see again in the remaining texts we will study.

CHAPTER THREE: FORESHADOWING AND LAMENTING DISASTER

JEREMIAH 4-13

Introduction

Within this unit, there are four main texts that we will focus on regarding the foreshadowing of the disaster that is to come (4:23-28; 5:6-9; 8:14-15; 9:12-16), and two texts that lament the disaster (8:18-9:3; 12:7-13). Water and wilderness and their semantic ranges will play a vital (and yet increasingly anti-vital) role in the prediction passages, while serving to enhance the laments. The analysis in this chapter will move us closer to understanding the systemic and tensive nature of these metaphors.

Foreshadowing Disaster

Textual Analysis

Jeremiah 4:23-28

[23]I looked on the earth, and lo, it was waste and void; and to the heavens, and they had no light.
[24]I looked on the mountains, and lo, they were quaking, and all the hills moved to and fro.
[25]I looked, and lo, there was no one at all, and all the birds of the air had fled.
[26]I looked, and lo, the fruitful land was a desert, and all its cities were laid in ruins before the Lord, before his fierce anger.
[27]For thus says the Lord: The whole land shall be a desolation; yet I will not make a full end.
[28]Because of this the earth shall mourn, and the heavens above grow black; for I have spoken, I have purposed; I have not relented nor will I turn back.

This brief poem presents a vision experienced by Jeremiah of how things will look after the destruction promised by YHWH has occurred. It clearly begins with an allusion to and reversal of creation as portrayed by Genesis 1: the earth is "waste and void" (תהו ובהו). The heavens lack light, the hills and mountains are unstable, and indeed, there was "no one at all, and all the birds of the air had fled" (4:25). The lack of people echoes the image of wilderness presented early in Jeremiah 2. The stability of the creation has been overturned in Jeremiah's vision, and the root cause of it all is Israel.

More importantly the "fruitful land (כרמל) was a desert (מדבר), and all its cities were laid in ruins" (4:26). Jeremiah again connects the desert-wilderness motif with the lack of 'civilization,' which we saw earlier in the description of Israel as the פרא that "scorns" the city. YHWH's power is again portrayed as the ability to turn the fruitful land into desert. This alludes back to 3:3 when YHWH promises that the showers will be withheld, which clearly would turn any fruitful land into a desert and wilderness. This is the "desolation" (שממה) of 4:27 that YHWH has "purposed" and from which he will not relent (4:28).

What we have called the "wilderness motif" earlier returns here, explicitly adding the semantic range of שממה. This word is used six times within Jeremiah 2-15. In 6:8 it is poetically connected with "an uninhabited land" and in 9:11 with "a heap of ruins," and "a lair of jackals." In 12:10 it appears as the devastation caused by the "shepherds" who have trampled YHWH's portion, and words derived from its root are repeated three times in 12:11. Note that these last three references occur within the context of the disaster laments that we will explore in detail below. שממה is clearly a part of the semantic range of מדבר.

Because of the WILDERNESS, the earth shall "mourn" (אבל), which was not among the semantic range of מים that we proposed above. It is unclear if the earth's mourning activities involve tears. The lack of clarity is heightened by the word אבל which can mean "mourn" but can also mean "wither" or "dry up."[72] In the sense of mourning, the word often appears in parallel with another word for wither or dry up such as נבל in Isaiah 24:4 (as in ESV), אמל in Isaiah 33:9, and יבש in Jeremiah 12:4, a word that we introduced as part of the מדבר semantic range. In this instance, NRSV, ESV, NJB, NJPS, TNIV, KJV, and NET all translate אבל as mourn, rather than wither. This word reappears in Jeremiah 12:4 in parallel with wither, that is, it reappears in parallel with WILDERNESS.

This begins to show how complex and important the semantic network idea within Jeremiah is. Also from 4:28, the heavens "grow black" (קדר), a word that reappears in parallel to אבל in Jeremiah 14:2 and is translated there by NRSV as "lie in gloom" and ESV as "lament." קדר also reappears in 8:21 where it describes the state of the lamenter's heart with the help of שמה ("dismay") a word closely related to the word desolation (שממה) in 4:28. Even though we have labeled this section of our study "Foreshadowing Disaster," we cannot escape the mourning, for in Jeremiah the two concepts appear together frequently. It remains unclear if 'mourning' can be a part of the semantic range of מים because it involves tears, or if perhaps it should go along with מדבר, because it involves withering. It clearly, however, belongs within the מים and מבבר semantic network.

---

[72]Ludwig Köhler, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* Vol. 1, ed. Baumgartner, Walter, trans. M.E.J. Richardson (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2001), 7-8.

The actions and the aftermath foreshadowed here will be a direct result of what Israel has done, as related by Jeremiah 2. While YHWH was originally the fountain of living waters and not a wilderness, Israel's actions have prompted YHWH to turn the land into a wilderness, by withholding the rains. This is extended here because the land will be turned into a "desolation." Since there is no one left on the land, the earth and the heavens will mourn, just as YHWH called them to do in 2:12. The connection with Jeremiah 2 is clear, and we are beginning the see the central tension of this semantic network, which comes from YHWH being described WATER, but now giving nothing but WILDERNESS.

Jeremiah 5:6-9

> [6]Therefore a lion from the forest shall kill them, a wolf from the desert shall destroy them. A leopard is watching against their cities; everyone who goes out of them shall be torn in pieces— because their transgressions are many, their apostasies are great.
> [7]How can I pardon you? Your children have forsaken me, and have sworn by those who are no gods. When I fed them to the full, they committed adultery and trooped to the houses of prostitutes.
> [8]They were well-fed lusty stallions, each neighing for his neighbor's wife.
> [9]Shall I not punish them for these things? says the Lord; and shall I not bring retribution on a nation such as this?

In this pericope, it is not the WILDERNESS that is the disaster, but the source of the disaster, enacted here by a "lion" (אריה) from the "forest" (יער) and a "wolf" (זאב) from the "desert" (ערבות), and a "leopard" (נמר). In this disaster, then, the people are described as being "torn to pieces," rather than as suffering drought or withheld rain. YHWH argues once again that he has not been a wilderness, since prior to forsaking YHWH, the children of the people were 'fed to the full' (5:7) and were "well-fed lusty stallions" (5:8), which could not have occurred in WILDERNESS as conceived so far. Yet once again,

YHWH is in control of the WILDERNESS.

Thus מדבר, when not functioning as disaster, contains the elements of disaster, of which YHWH is in control. מדבר retains the conception of inhospitableness and terror that we saw earlier, as well as its anti-civilization stance (watching against the city), and even adds to its arsenal of such things with even more vicious and wild animals. Also in this passage, the blame is placed not on the people in the audience for this message (the "you" of 5:7), but on their children (5:7), who in response to being 'fed to the full' responded inappropriately by visiting prostitutes (5:8). The passage ends with a rhetorical question by YHWH: "Shall I not punish them for these things?" The answer expected is of course, "Yes, yes you should!"

Jeremiah 8:14-15

> [14]Why do we sit still? Gather together, let us go into the fortified cities and perish there; for the Lord our God has doomed us to perish, and has given us poisoned water to drink, because we have sinned against the Lord.
> [15]We look for peace, but find no good, for a time of healing, but there is terror instead.

These two verses are a rephrasing of 4:5[73] in which a similar phrase functions as a last ditch effort for protection from the approaching disaster, and a foreshadowing of 14:19,[74] where there is also no peace or healing. These verses look 'backward' and 'forward' to other texts within Jeremiah 2-15 and center on YHWH as water again, this time, however, giving the people poisoned water to drink.

Earlier we observed that 'drinking' water meant allying one's self to a political

---

[73]4:5: Declare in Judah, and proclaim in Jerusalem, and say: Blow the trumpet through the land; shout aloud and say, 'Gather together, and let us go into the fortified cities!'

[74]14:19: Why have you struck us down so that there is no healing for us? We look for peace, but find no good; for a time of healing, but there is terror instead.

power or to a deity. Apparently Israel has tried to drink from the fountain of living water, only to find waters that kill. WATER no longer nourishes and sustains life, but ends it. Moreover, YHWH (according to the people) has given it to the people for them to drink. Are we to imagine that the earlier effort by YHWH and Jeremiah to convince the people to return to YHWH was successful, and the people tried, only to find that it was too late? YHWH's relentless will and purpose to destroy this people (4:28) apparently includes changing the nature of water associated with YHWH, explicitly turning YHWH himself from a source of nourishment to a source of death. YHWH still refuses to bring the waters of life, and the people experience the terror of the poisonous water that YHWH sends instead.

In the later repetition of 8:15 the people again are killed by YHWH, not by water that kills but by the absence of water. In that passage, the terror they experience is the drought, which more closely connects to the promise of YHWH in Jeremiah 3:3 to withhold the rains. After having forsaken the fountain of living waters, and having gone in search of other sources of water, it is surprising to see the people again drinking from YHWH. Perhaps it was too late for YHWH to offer the living waters again, and it was time for the waters that kill. The tensive nature of WATER within Jeremiah 2-15 begins to be seen.

The source of the disaster, in this passage, will be within the city walls. A fortified city in ancient days was surely a thing to be thought of as safe, and in fact, even the Assyrian army in all its power could not break through the walls of Jerusalem at one

40

point.[75] Earlier, however, YHWH did promise to destroy the fortified cities in which the

people trust (5:17). This adds to the terror of 'YHWH as water,' for not only is YHWH

no longer safe to drink, but the city itself no longer has any defensibility from the disaster

that is coming. There is no peace or good for the people, and the coming disaster will

leave many in need of a healer, in need of the balm of Gilead.

Jeremiah 9:12-16

> [12]Who is wise enough to understand this? To whom has the mouth of the Lord
>   spoken, so that they may declare it? Why is the land ruined and laid waste
>   like a wilderness, so that no one passes through?
> [13]And the Lord says: Because they have forsaken my law that I set before
>   them, and have not obeyed my voice, or walked in accordance with it,
> [14]but have stubbornly followed their own hearts and have gone after the Baals,
>   as their ancestors taught them.
> [15]Therefore thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: I am feeding this
>   people with wormwood, and giving them poisonous water to drink.
> [16]I will scatter them among nations that neither they nor their ancestors have
>   known; and I will send the sword after them, until I have consumed them.

YHWH opens this passage by asking, "Who is wise enough to understand?"

The likely answer, given the whole passage, is that either no one is wise enough to

understand, or perhaps only YHWH's true prophet (Jeremiah). Earlier, it was admitted

that the people are wise, but wise in doing evil (4:22), rather than wise enough to answer

why the land lies in ruin and waste "like a wilderness" (9:12). Only YHWH and

Jeremiah, according to this text, know why, and so it must be explicated: it is because

"they have forsaken my [YHWH's] law" (9:13).

---

[75]2 Kings 19. Sennacherib, saving face in his memoirs, describes shutting Hezekiah up in his city, rather than state that he could not finish the job and take the city, Mordechai Cogan, "Sennacherib's Siege of Jerusalem," in *The Context of Scripture, Vol. 2: Monumental Inscriptions From the Biblical World,* ed. William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, (New York: Brill, 1997 to 2002), 302-303.

In the opening text we examined (Jeremiah 2), the people were accused of forsaking YHWH, the "fountain of living waters," whereas here they are accused of forsaking YHWH's law. Theologically, the "living waters" are not just found in YHWH himself, but are found in the law that he has given to the people. This passage echoes the 'wilderness wandering' and the Sinai/Horeb tradition, recalling the assent the people gave to the law revealed to Moses by YHWH, which promised life. This assent has now been revoked by the people in their attempt to find WATER apart from YHWH. Because the people have withdrawn from their commitment, the land is like a wilderness. Gone are both the living waters of YHWH himself, and the living waters ensured by the law.

YHWH gives poisonous water to drink again, reminding the people that apart from YHWH there is no other source of water. They sought water collection in their cisterns, and they sought water from Egypt and Assyria, but neither of those solutions provided them with any water. Since forsaking the fountain of living waters, the only water to which the people have been assured access is YHWH's poisonous water. This will not kill them as in 8:14, it will scatter the people among the nations. Once scattered, YHWH will send the "sword" after them to "consume" them. Like the lion, wolf, and leopard that were to emerge from the wilderness earlier to tear Israel to pieces, the people will be the victim through being consumed. They will also be the victims of poisonous food and water, fed to them by YHWH, and the remnant will be fed to the sword and wild animals.

Conclusion

In these 'foreshadows' of disaster we find that YHWH's power is described as

the ability to turn fruitful land into desert. WILDERNESS is not only the disaster, but the source of other forms of disaster that will befall the people, adding to the conception of terror. And in a startling and ironic reversal, the "fountain of living waters" has become the fountain of poisonous waters. Twice the people are depicted as being giving 'poisonous' water to drink, displaying the tensive nature of WATER. In the first instance, they will die within Jerusalem; in the second they will die scattered and aimless among nations they have not known, 'consumed' by the sword and the wild animals because they have forsaken YHWH. The "living waters" from 2:13 are extended to include the law of YHWH as well.

We also saw the semantic network between מים and מדבר begin to take shape in the connection between 'mourning' and 'withering' terminology. Mourning is characteristically part of lament, as are tears, but it was unclear if the mourning of the earth involved tears. It was clear that the earth's mourning is strongly connected to withering, highlighting the strong correlation between 'wet' and 'dry' in Jeremiah 2-15. The juxtaposition in the coming lament between "O that my head were a spring of water, and my eyes a fountain of tears" and "O that I had a in the desert a traveler's lodging place" will also reveal how intimately related WATER and WILDERNESS, wet and dry, are.

Lamenting Disaster

Textual Analysis

Jeremiah 8:18-9:19

There are three primary references here that will be examined. The first occurs

at 9:1 & 9:17, 9:2 and 9:10.[76] The first doublet speaks of a ראשי מים, a "head of waters"

and עיני מקור דמעה, "eyes [like] a fountain of tears" (9:1). The second reference has to do

with wishing for a "traveler's lodging place" in the desert (9:22). The third reference we

are interested in here deals with "weeping" for the mountains, and a "lamentation" for the

"pastures of the wilderness." The connotation of WATER again shifts in this section, now

used in tragedy, mourning, lamentation and death, while WILDERNESS again receives

positive connotations.

The major difficulty in interpreting these verses is discerning precisely who is

speaking, and when. Clements indicates that these are the words of Jeremiah, filtered to

us by the hands of the editors responsible for the book we have.[77] Lundbom sees

elaborate play back and forth between Jeremiah, YHWH and the people, but favors

Jeremiah for the first set of verses with which we are interested.[78] Stulman comments

that, "[a]s a divine spokesperson, however, it is impossible to separate Jeremiah

completely from Yahweh."[79] It is important then, that for the crucial verses in our

analysis at least one other commentator is content that 9:1-3 presents YHWH as speaker,

and not Jeremiah as speaker, or as embodied spokesperson for YHWH.[80] The speaker in

---

[76]I will be using the English verse divisions, but it should be noted that the versification in Hebrew is 'off' by a verse from the perspective of English translations.

[77]R. E. Clements, *Jeremiah*, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta: J. Knox Press, 1988), 59-67.

[78]Lundbom, 528 and following.

[79]Stulman, 99, possibly drawing on Fretheim, "Jeremiah" who suggests that we are not asked to make a distinction, but in them "hear the language of both" Jeremiah and YHWH (pg. 148), although YHWH might be the "primary" voice(pg. 152).

[80] Stulman, 100: This verse "presents the speech as the voice of YHWH." Calling it a presentation of YHWH's voice moves beyond the debate of who is actually speaking to the more important debate over who is meant to be heard speaking.

9:18 is very likely YHWH as it is introduced by "Thus says the Lᴏʀᴅ of hosts."

> 8:22-9:1 reads:
> [8:22]Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of my poor people not been restored?
> [9:1]O that my head were a spring of water, and my eyes a fountain of tears, so that I might weep day and night for the slain of my poor people!

The "says the Lord" that comes at the end of 9:3 indicates that in YHWH is the origin of at least some of these words, including "they do not know me" (9:3). Does this 'me' link up with the 'I' and the 'my people' of 8:22-9:3 and thus indicate that YHWH is the speaker of all of these words? The parallel "O that" of 9:1 & 2 seems to suggest the same speaker for these lines, unless Jeremiah and YHWH are going back and forth in some kind of dialogue. If the speaker of "O that" is the same in both of its verses and given the chain of reasons introduced by the כי and a repeated third person pronoun (they), it seems likely YHWH is the speaker of these verses.

It is startling then, that YHWH, the "fountain of living waters" wishes to have a "fountain of tears" for eyes. The same entailments discerned earlier apply for fountain: forceful, never-ending. In 8:14, as we saw, YHWH gave the people poisoned water to drink, which led to their death within the city walls, which positioned YHWH as the source of not just living water, but killing water. Once again, another shift occurs and YHWH is now the source of mourning water, spurned on contextually by the lack of the balm or physician to restore the health of the people. YHWH weeps because even YHWH looks for peace, and finds no peace, and for good, and finds no good (see 8:15).

> We find the same idea in 9:17-18:
> [17]Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider, and call for the mourning women to come; send for the skilled women to come;
> [18]let them quickly raise a dirge over us, so that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids flow with water.

45

The tears generated by the funeral dirge here are not just the product of YHWH's eyes, but of "our" eyes because "death" has taken over the city: it has entered the windows and the palace; it is everywhere and it has "rob[bed] the capital of two generations."[81] And for this, water again flows to the people of Israel from YHWH; but this time it is tears over their death, water which mixes with the water of the prophet Jeremiah's tears, and potentially the people's tears as well.

In these verses, YHWH is the prime source of WATER, only it is "mourning water" instead of living or killing water. YHWH does not produce tears in isolation, though, as the "our" of 9:18 suggests, he participates in the mourning with the prophet, but likely those who are left to mourn. This type of water, at least, does not only flow from YHWH to Israel, but YHWH's and Israel's mourning waters flow together, indicating that YHWH has not fully abandoned Israel.

The remaining references have to do with מדבר rather than with מים. We argued earlier that YHWH is the speaker in 9:1-3, and he exclaims in 9:2:
> O that I had in the desert
> a traveler's lodging place,
> that I might leave my people
> and go away from them!

This wish of YHWH's comes immediately following the wish that his eyes be a fountain of tears. The language and style here would prompt most hearers to place these words in the mouth of Jeremiah. How can YHWH "go away" from the people to book a room at the Midbar Motel? Stulman, however, supports our proposition that these are the words of YHWH: "Yahweh searches for a solitary site."[82] It should be remembered that this

---

[81]Allen, 120.

[82]Stulman, 101.

verse is expressing a desire on the part of YHWH, and not a description of something he has done. YHWH only wishes that he could get away from the people, but ultimately he cannot, and the larger unit concludes in 9:18 with YHWH weeping with the people.

The NRSV translation does well in placing "in the desert" (מדבר) before "a traveler's lodge" as this is the word order that the Hebrew employs, emphasizing "in the desert." Earlier, the 'desert' has been the place of the idealized covenant relationship with Israel (2:2), but then took on ever darker shades until in 5:6-9 the desert became the origination of disaster. This verse now suggests that the desert is a place of solitude and quiet, comfort and respite from the evils of the world. There is now a sense of security in WILDERNESS (of which desert is a part), as we again see the tensive nature of the metaphors across the text of Jeremiah 2-15.

In 9:10, mourning is called for again, in this instance for the mountains, and for the "pastures of the wilderness." As in 9:2, מדבר does not connote waste and void, evil or danger, but connotes instead something positive, something of value. Lamentation is to be made "because they [the pastures of the wilderness] are laid waste so that no one passes through." This language recalls 2:6 when the Israelites were described as being led by YHWH through the "land that no one passes through." Now no one passes through this land because of the destruction. The מדבר is no longer the disaster or the origination of disaster-inducing agents, but is the recipient of the disaster.

As we saw with WATER in the previous portion of our study of 8:18-9:19, WILDERNESS's connotations are drastically changed by Jeremiah. It is no longer the source of disaster, or evil, or to be avoided because it cannot sustain life. It becomes the place where YHWH wishes to seek refuge and security from his people, and that the disaster

47

befalls it is to be lamented along with those among the people who suffered the disaster. WATER and WILDERNESS are intimately connected again in this section, with the parallel "O that" wishes that YHWH expresses in 9:1-2.

Jeremiah 12:7-13

As is commonplace, there is some debate as to who the speaker is in this passage, and also how to delineate the passage. Stulman[83] and Lundbom[84] read the unit within the final form as 12:7-13, Fretheim places it within 12:1-17,[85] while Allen favors 12:7-17 with independent units of vvs. 7-11, 12-13 and 14-17.[86] It seems clear that 12:7 begins something new, because there is a *setumah* following v. 6; the question involves determining where it ends. As the MT stands, there is another *setumah* following vvs. 12 & 13; for Lundbom these indicate the unit should be 7-13. We shall side with Lundbom and Stulman and read 12:7-13, for in addition to the *setumahs,* at 12:7, the text switches from a second-person address to a first-person declaration.

> Specifically in this unit, we are interested in 10-12:
> [10]Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard, they have trampled down my
>   portion, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness.
> [11]They have made it a desolation; desolate, it mourns to me. The whole land is
>   made desolate, but no one lays it to heart.
> [12]Upon all the bare heights in the desert spoilers have come; for the sword of
>   the Lord devours from one end of the land to the other; no one shall be
>   safe.

The whole passage is a lament by YHWH (or at least, as Allen prefers, "spoken in

---

[83]Ibid., 127-129.

[84]Lundbom, 650-660, but vvs. 12 and 13 are later additions to the more original text of 7-11 (651).

[85]Fretheim, 191-202.

[86]Allen, 150-155.

Yahweh's words"). It begins with YHWH declaring his 'feelings' for the people, in sharp

contrast to the idealized time period exhibited in the opening of chapter 2. Intriguingly,

this passage also recalls Jeremiah 5:6 (see above) because YHWH declares that the

people have become to him "like a lion in the forest" (12:8). YHWH is now the one

experiencing disaster. The semantic range of מדבר serves again as an origin for evil. It is

also stated that YHWH "hates" Israel, which has treaty connotations, having reference to

Israel being a covenant enemy in the same way Assyria might be.[87] Lundbom notes that

this is "[d]ivorce talk, pure and simple, and if not that, at least *de facto* separation,"[88]

allowing us to again see that marriage and divorce language in the Jeremiah has as much

connection to legal terminology as it does to emotion.

12:10 begins YHWH's description of what has happened to the "vineyard" and

his "pleasant portion," which is that it has become a "desolate wilderness" (מדבר שממה).

שממה functions as both a noun and a verb in 12:11, and its three-fold usage fully

emphasizes the desolation. This word also appears in Jeremiah 2:12, when YHWH

declares that the heavens should "be appalled" at what the people have been about. שממה

appears in about 50 verses throughout the prophetic canon, and when used in the sense of

'desolate' it indicates what the land will be after YHWH's wrath has been executed: cities

will be laid waste (Ezek. 30:7), highways will be deserted (Isaiah 33:8) and no one will

walk on them (Zeph. 3:6 and Zech. 7:14), and there will no food left (Joel 1:17). The

word שממה seems to entail every bit as much as the common usage of "apocalyptic," or

---

[87]Rodney R. Hutton, "Jeremiah," in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version With the Apocrypha,* ed. Michael D. Coogan, et al., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), note on 12:8, pg. 1081.

[88]Lundbom, 659.

"post-apocalyptic" does in modern English.

In 12:12, 'the desert' is again the source of disaster, this time enacted by "spoilers" (שדדים), but also explicitly "the sword of the Lᴏʀᴅ" that devours (חרב ליהוה אכלה)[89] so much that "no one shall be safe" (woodenly, 'no *shalom* for all flesh'). It is not uncommon in the prophets for a sword to be characterized as "devouring." This appears in Isaiah 1:20, 31:8, Jeremiah 2:30, 12:12, 46:10, and Nahum 2:13, 3:15, for instance. The ravenous appetite of the sword portrayed here lends an insatiability to the destruction that is coming. Coming out of the desert, perhaps the sword was also the victim of the inhospitableness (lack of sustenance) of Wɪʟᴅᴇʀɴᴇss. It is important to note that this is the sword of YHWH, and while the text describes the "spoilers" as the ones coming from the desert, it also connects them to YHWH's sword, explicitly implicating YHWH in what is about to happen as at least as the one for whom these spoilers are acting, and whose appetite needs to be sated.

Conclusion

In this discussion on the disaster laments, we saw that YHWH took on new aspects in this saga, even experiencing his people in the way that his people will experience the lion (5:6). Not only is he the source of living water and killing water, but now of mourning water, which flows freely from his eyes, mixing with the mourning waters of Israel. Instead of Wɪʟᴅᴇʀɴᴇss simply being something to fear, it has now also served as YHWH's preference for respite from the people he will shortly admit to 'hating.'

---

[89]NET, note 38 on Jeremiah 12:12: "The Lᴏʀᴅ's consuming sword." The printed 'translation' they offer is "his [YHWH's] destructive weapon." This precise formulation of words occurs only here in the OT.

The devastation that will befall it is also something to be lamented, and so now we have another positive spin on WILDERNESS. YHWH's lament is over the land that has become שממה, a sort of "post-apocalyptic" wasteland, again connecting mourning and lament with WILDERNESS. This has become such a wilderness, however, because of the "sword of the LORD," that works in tandem with the 'spoilers,' all of which originate from the מדבר, emphasizing WILDERNESS as the origin of destruction and disaster, rather than source of the covenant.

CHAPTER FOUR: EXPERIENCING DISASTER

JEREMIAH 14:1-15:9

Introduction

The first verse of Jeremiah 14 describes this section as the "word of the Lᴏʀᴅ concerning the drought." The nation and people are finally presented as suffering through the drought that has been expected since at least 3:3. As in our previous chapters, the analysis will focus only on those pieces which relate to the reading being proposed by this study. The devastating effects of 'dryness' will be revealed, and the separation between YHWH and people will be complete.

Textual Analysis

Most commentators see a unit that runs from 14:1 to at least the end of the chapter. Clements[90] and Fretheim[91] see it extending to 15:9, while Brueggemann is content to let the last verse of 14 be the end of any suitable pericope.[92] Lundbom reads

---

[90]Clements, 89-96, who calls the section "Lamentation and Despair for Prophet and People"

[91]Fretheim, 217-233, who entitles the section, "It is Too Late!"

[92]Walter Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile and Homecoming* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998), 134-141, calling the section, "No rain on the land."

this section through 15:21,[93] as does Stulman.[94] Stulman articulates this structure for

14:1-15:21:

> Jer 14:1-9 Community Lament   parallels   Jer 14:19-22
> Jer 14:10-12 Divine Response   parallels   Jer 15:1-4 Divine Response
>   Jer 14:13 Jeremiah's Lament
>   Jer 14:14-18 Divine Response
>   Jer 15:5-9 Yahweh's Lament
> Jer 15:10 Jeremiah's Lament   parallels   Jer 15:15-18 Jeremiah's Lament
> Jer 15:11-14 Divine Response   parallels   Jer 15:19-21 Divine Response[95]

While this presents a fine argument for reading 14:1-15:21 as a whole, it does

not acknowledge that the Jeremiah laments of 15:10 and 15:15-18 and the divine

responses elicited focus on Jeremiah's troubles brought on by the message he bears, and

not the troubles of the people - they have little to do with the people's suffering brought

about by the drought. For topical reasons, then, we will exclude the lament/divine

response structure pertaining solely to Jeremiah (i.e., the material following 15:9) and we

will read the unit beginning at 14:1 and extending until 15:9.

A drought (בצר) has reference to such a fundamental aspect of life (drinking

water is essential) to any period of time that it can be as terrifying as any other horror

devised by humanity, nature or deity: even the animals "forsake" their own offspring

because of the drought. R. Carroll argues that drought is such a common feature with

such devastating results in the "areas which produced the [Jeremiah] tradition," that it is

impossible to narrow down a specific physical referent here, however "the composition

---

[93]Lundbom, 691-752, entitling the section, "Variations on the Drought."

[94]Stulman, 132-157, who subsumes this section of chapters 14 and 15 into the "Cries of Distress" of 13:1-15:21.

[95]Ibid., 133.

represents a distillation of such response [to drought, famine, war, etc.] plus theological reflections on a wider range of bitter experiences."[96] This unit offers the reader a typical theological response made by the people in the time of drought, as the people plead with YHWH for deliverance from what is happening, while YHWH fervently rejects all such appeals.[97]

We saw in 3:3 that the rain and showers were withheld because of what the people had been doing. The results of this finally come to a head in this unit: there is drought "because there has been no rain on the land" (14:4), because of what the people have done (as promised by 3:3). Had they not forsaken YHWH, the fountain of living waters, one imagines that they would not now be suffering through this devastating drought. The people relied on their own ability to subsist, apart from YHWH, and now theologically they have suffered disaster. All the city is affected by this drought: the "cry of Jerusalem" goes up to YHWH (14:2), including the rich who send their slaves searching after water, but the slaves cannot find any (14:3).[98] Even the animals are devastated by this drought: the doe forsakes its young, while the donkeys (the פרא returns) can find no air to breathe and their eyes fail them (14:5-6). The drought has consequences beyond the legal relationship between YHWH and people, it affects the entirety of the creation. This is a mode of disaster akin to that of 4:23-28.

The connection between mourning and drying up reoccurs in 14:2:

---

[96]Robert P Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 308-309.

[97]Interestingly, the people don't seem to plead for forgiveness for their sins, merely that YHWH deliver them from what is happening. Perhaps they think that act would be one and the same.

[98]Brueggemann writes, "The severity of the drought is evidenced in that it now touches not only marginal people but even the nobles, who always have the best water supply," 135.

> Judah mourns (אבל) and her gates languish (אמל);
>> they lie in gloom on the ground (קדר),
>> and the cry of Jerusalem goes up.

In 4:28, we saw the connection between mourning and withering, or languishing. In addition in that verse, the heavens "grew dark" (קדר). In the whole of the Old Testament, this is the only verse in which all three of these words occur together. Poetically, קדר echoes the very beginning of the cosmos, before YHWH called light into being. And אמל, derived from Akkadian, has reference to "dryness" or "withering."[99] אבל has the sense of both "mourning" and "dry up," as we observed earlier. All of these dry and pre-creation senses occur here in response to the drought. The land is already dried up, yet now the city will mourn/dry up, too. Perhaps 'mourn' should be placed within the semantic range of WILDERNESS.

The people plead from the recognition that their iniquities (עון) testify against them (14:7) - the people know that their deeds have caused this drought to occur. In 2:13 the people receive the first formal accusation by YHWH of forsaking him (extended to YHWH's law in 9:13), the fountain of living waters, and trying to dig out cisterns to hold water they collect from elsewhere, such as Assyria and Egypt (2:18). Their statement here in 14:7 indicates that the text wishes them to be seen as acknowledging their guilt in this situation, in which YHWH causes a drought by withholding rain.[100] They have forsaken the fountain of living waters from chapter 2 and this drought is their 'just

---

[99]HALOT, vol 1, pg. 63.

[100]Carroll argues that "the circles which produced the book of Jeremiah worked after the fall of Jerusalem and believed it necessary to produce an explanation for that catastrophe: an explanation that would clear Yahweh of doing evil (i.e., a theodicy) and, at the same time, pin blame where they wished," 309. These words are not necessarily the words of the people, but the words that have been constructed for the people, as part of the larger project.

dessert,' which works from the conception of YHWH as source of life established earlier in Jeremiah.

The people recognize the implications of this, asking YHWH why he is like a "stranger in the land" (גר בארץ), a "traveler turning aside for the night" (ארה נטה ללון), like "a helpless man" (איש נדהם),[101] or like a "mighty warrior unable to rescue" (גבור לא יוכל להושיע) (14:8-9a), even though YHWH is in their midst (14:9). They finally echo what they should have asked a long time ago, "Where is YHWH?" All of these accusations against YHWH were prefaced by the confession that YHWH is the "hope of Israel, its savior in time of trouble." Intriguingly, the word translated as "hope" in 14:8 can also mean "pool," as it does in Exodus 7:19 (מקוה). Of course, the possible *double entendre* for מקוה for our purposes is further heightened by 2:13, in which YHWH is called the "fountain" (מקור) of living waters which shares the first three consonants with the word "hope" in 14:8. In 2:13, the people are accused of rejecting the מקור of living waters, and in 14:8 the same people plead to the מקוה of Israel, which like a water source, is a source (or once was) of hope for them.

We saw in 9:2 that YHWH declared his wish to have a "traveler's lodging place" (מלון ארחים) to flee for respite from this people. In this passage, the people ask why YHWH would want to be like a "traveler (ארח) turning aside for the night." All of these people-generated descriptions indicate that YHWH is no longer the source of anything positive. They do not go so far as to picture YHWH as the source of killing, but

---

[101]Lundbom argues for "helpless" over "confused" citing a seventh-century ostracan utilizing דהם in the niphal stem (this word in any form is a *hapax legomena*), 702. "Helpless" seems to fit better because the progression begins to move to absurdity when speaking about YHWH. NET also translates this as "helpless."

YHWH does appear to them to be impotent in the face of the drought, even though YHWH is the one who brought the drought into effect in response to the people's actions.

This irony is not lost on YHWH, who declares that "truly this people have loved to wander (נוע)." They wandered to Egypt and Assyria to 'drink' from their waters after abandoning the source of WATER from which they should drink. And now, they accuse YHWH of acting like one who wanders about aimlessly. At the culmination of YHWH's answer to the people's intercession for help, he instructs Jeremiah not to attempt to intercede, and promises that "by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence I will consume (כלה) them." Consume is an interesting translational choice given the context of the people and creation dying from lack of water and food, however NJPS's "exterminate" would be a better choice here as it indicates the totality of YHWH's intention.[102]

This section throughout appears to be dialogic in nature,[103] however not every party seems to be talking to every other party. The people plead to YHWH, and YHWH and Jeremiah appear to speak with each other, yet YHWH never seems to speak to the people. When the people plead to YHWH, any response to the plea is sent to Jeremiah. It does not appear that the people plead to YHWH through Jeremiah. The image then is one of a party being unwilling to speak to another, and using a third party to send messages. This further heightens the distance and near-complete separation that this passage continues to explore.

---

[102]NRSV, ESV and KJV translate "consume" while TNK, TNIV, and NJB use variations on "end" or "kill." According to HALOT, vol. 2, 476-477, "consume" is a possibility in the Piel (as this occurrence is) but "complete" or "bring to an end" are by far the dominant usage of the Piel's 140 occurrences.

[103]See Fretheim, 217.

In the opening to 14:17-14:22 YHWH's eyes are again imaged as running down with tears for 'his people.'[104] Even though YHWH has announced his intent to כלה ("exterminate") the people, he still weeps for them. In both contexts (9:16-21 and 14:17-18) it is because of death. At the end of the first lament we looked at, 9:22, he announces that "the carcasses of men shall lie like dung upon the fields, like sheaves behind the reaper, with none to pick them up" (NJPS). And so, YHWH looks and sees in 14:18 (in a manner that echoes the observations of Jeremiah in 4:23-28) both "those killed by the sword" and "those sick with famine" (NRSV), presumably lying out in the open with no one to do anything about it. For this, YHWH's eyes run down with tears again painting YHWH as the source of mourning water.

Looking back to 2:3, YHWH describes Israel as "holy to YHWH, the first fruits of his harvest. All who ate (אכל) of it were held guilty." In 15:3 however, YHWH is bringing four kinds of destruction upon the people, including the devouring of them, because of the people's guilt. No longer is it an affront to YHWH to consume the holy people, for King Manasseh's deeds (2 Kings 21:1-18) were so abhorrent that the entire people will face the sword and hungry dogs, birds, and other animals. Instead of suffering alongside the people, now creation begins to strike back, fulfilling the purpose of YHWH by participating in the destruction of the people.

In finishing his answer to the people's final petition in the drought (15:5-9), YHWH reminds them in a self-doxology that they have rejected him, and for this he has destroyed (שחת) them (15:6). In a startling reversal of the Abrahamic promise that

[104]Even into chapter 15, when YHWH speaks, the people are "my people."

Abraham's descendents would be more numerous than the sands of the seas (Gen. 22:17),

YHWH announces that now the widows are more numerous than the sands of the seas

(15:8). Note also that after 15:6 the address has shifted from 2nd person into 3rd person,

suggesting that YHWH will no longer even speak at this people, let alone to or with the

people - he will now only speak about them. The rejection is complete, and the covenant

appears to be broken, just as the people feared.

From the perspective of the people as portrayed here, the covenant is over.

The evidence of this is the drought they suffer through (and that YHWH allows them to

suffer through), and ultimately the military destruction wrought by Babylon, promised in

15:1-9. Physically, the drought is a situation in which water is lacking; theologically, the

drought is a situation in which YHWH is lacking. This becomes clear when YHWH and

Judah are related to YHWH as water source, and people as dependent upon that. Chapter

2 of Jeremiah established this paradigm, which extends beyond "marriage," commonly

understood as the 'controlling metaphor' of this relationship.[105] However, the theological

disaster[106] is never described in terms of marriage, nor does YHWH ever actually divorce

the people. The theological devastation does come to head in terms of a drought,

however. Water/dryness touch upon something even more foundational than marriage:

the ability of life to continue. Without water, life ceases. Without YHWH, Israel ceases.

---

[105]Renita Weems, J, *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex, and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets*, Overtures to Biblical Theology (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), who draws this terminology from T. Fretheim.

[106]"Theological disaster" is a phrase to describe the disaster portrayed by the text itself in Jeremiah 2-15. This is a disaster between YHWH and people. The disaster that occurred in Judah at the hand of Babylon might then be called a historical disaster. I grant that for the writer of the book of Jeremiah that distinction might not exist, but I make the distinction to indicate that my focus is entered on the relationship between YHWH and the people. I am not seeking to recover the historical and political dimensions of the interaction between Judah and Babylon.

Conclusion

In this unit we saw YHWH as source of WATER as the mourning waters. Drought, in a semantic range of WILDERNESS, took on the role of total disaster in the land, or perhaps at least, prelude to total disaster. YHWH says, "You have rejected me... so I have stretched out my hand against you and destroyed you" (15:6), and even those who escaped the initial destruction YHWH "will give to the sword" (15:9). Initially in the disaster, the animals and creation suffered along with the people, but then YHWH begins to use the animals to bring the destruction. Beyond the connection between forsaking YHWH as fountain of living water, and the appearance of a drought, we also saw many other literary connections.

We saw the connections that stretch back to Jeremiah 2 and wrap themselves around the text in between these two sections. The drought is the fulfillment of YHWH's promise to withhold the rain (3:3). The people finally ask, "Where is YHWH?" We saw the echo of the word for fountain from 2:13 (מקור) in the word מקוה ("hope" or "pool") in 14:8. YHWH, who wished for a lodging place in the wilderness in 9:2 acts as if he were present in one, according to the people in 14:8. Once again YHWH's eyes run down with tears over the fate of his people (14:17). Back in the wilderness wandering as described in 2:13, all who ate of Israel, the first-fruits for YHWH, were held guilty. But in 15:3, part of the disaster that will befall the people includes being 'devoured.'

In 2:31, YHWH asked the people if he had been a wilderness to Israel. In that

context, it appeared that that could not be the case, as YHWH is the fountain of living waters, and thus incompatible with wilderness. But in 3:3, YHWH promised to withhold the rain, creating a wilderness. By Jeremiah 14, the drought is at hand, and the land is a wilderness, brought about by the will of YHWH. YHWH may have been the fountain of living waters up to the point at which the Israelites forsook him (2:13) but after that, YHWH turns himself into the source of wilderness. By Jeremiah 14, then, the Israelites might answer the question, "Have I been a wilderness to Israel?" by saying that "You once were not, but now, in response to our actions, you have become a wilderness to us and caused a wilderness in the once fruitful, promised land."

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

In this study we explored the ways in which the Hebrew words מים and מדבר, along with their semantic ranges, function as conceptual metaphors for YHWH, the people, and disaster, among things. We proposed that the function of both of these conceptual metaphors is connected and tensive within Jeremiah 2-15, producing a semantic network across this section of Jeremiah. Let us summarize our findings and the consequences of this study.

מים

In the opening unit we studied, Jeremiah 2:1-3:5, WATER functioned chiefly as a metaphor for relationship, beginning with YHWH who was imaged as the 'fountain of living waters" (2:13). Adding to the aspect of dependence on WATER, Jeremiah asked the people what they gained by 'drinking' from the waters of Assyria and Egypt (2:18). These texts gave WATER the character of something on which people depend for sustenance, nourishment, and protection. In short, WATER is the source on which life and health depend, in terms of religious, political, and personal, in this opening section.

Next, WATER was completely reversed. In 8:14 the people declared that they would go into the fortified cities and wait to die after drinking the "poisoned water" that YHWH had given them to drink. YHWH himself admits that he plans to give them this poisoned water as punishment in 9:15. Thus, YHWH is still the source of WATER, but

now YHWH is the source of water that kills. This ironic shift in the nature of the water

that YHWH provides will undergo one more transformation within Jeremiah.

In one of the two laments we examined, Jeremiah 8:18-9:19, we saw that water

is used for mourning. In 9:1, YHWH declares that he wishes his "head were a spring of

water, and my eyes a fountain of tears." YHWH is not depicted as a 'fountain of living

water' but a 'fountain of mourning water.' Thus the third aspect of water is that of

'mourning water.' This reappears in the closing scene of our reading, at 14:17, when the

people are lamented by Jeremiah.

We see, therefore, that across the unit, WATER has a prominent role. The

repeated use of מים and its semantic ranges indicates the connectedness of this conceptual

metaphor, while the 'living,' 'killing,' and 'mourning' aspects indicate its tensive nature.

As WATER is clearly a 'pool' of imagery from which a prophet can draw, we can confirm

Holt's and my own initial hunches at the systemic nature of its usage within Jeremiah. It

is in tandem with its true opposite מדבר, however, that these metaphors come to the fore

within Jeremiah 2-15.

מדבר

WILDERNESS began its journey in Jeremiah as both a place and time period for

which YHWH has fond memories of his relationship with Israel (Jer. 2:2). By the end of

2:1-3:5, however, it has taken a dark turn and become death, emptiness, wild and

unrestrained, scary, and the antithesis of everything that WATER stands for. This serves

the following texts well, as it sets up everything that follows: WILDERNESS will be death,

usually the source from which death ultimately comes, but also, the death itself.

In the next section, what we termed "foreshadowing disaster," WILDERNESS is prophesied as the source of several forms of disaster that will befall the people, adding to the conception of terror it entails. In 4:23-28, YHWH displays his total power by changing the fruitful land into desert, or WILDERNESS. In 5:6-9, WILDERNESS is the source of a lion, wolf and a leopard, all images of the disaster that is to come. In the laments of Jeremiah 8:18-9:9 and 12:7-13, WILDERNESS takes on at least one new conception: that of refuge from the people for YHWH (9:2). It is also something that should be mourned for in the coming disaster (9:10). And then, in 12:7-13, YHWH laments that his "heritage" (12:7) has become "desolate" (12:11). WILDERNESS was also the source of the disaster, the place from which the "spoilers" come (12:12).

Ultimately, WILDERNESS will function as the disaster, which is portrayed by 14:1-15:9. In that section, drought, as a semantic relative of WILDERNESS, took on the role of total disaster in the land, or perhaps at least, prelude to total disaster. This was evidenced by the lack of life-giving water, yet despite the killing lack of water, the people declare that they know YHWH to be in their midst (14:9). The theological disaster couples itself to the physical disaster when YHWH finally declares that even if "Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn towards this people. Send them out of my sight, and let them go!" (15:1). Thus WILDERNESS functions as physical disaster at the same time as the theological disaster befalls the people of Israel, and the metaphorical antithesis of the water offered initially by YHWH.

Again we see the connectedness and the tensive nature of our favored conceptual metaphors, this time with WILDERNESS, מדבר. Most often the metaphorical concept serves as the origin of the looming disaster, though it occasionally takes on a

more positive role such as when YHWH remembers the 'honeymoon' in the wilderness,
or when YHWH wishes to flee to the wilderness for refuge from the people. Ultimately,
in this reading, WILDERNESS is the disaster that befalls the people, and occurs literally at
the same time that the theological disaster, the separation of YHWH and his people is
finalized. Thus we can say that YHWH and the people suffer theological disaster in two
ways: through WILDERNESS or through lack of WATER.

The Semantic Network

The clearest networking occurs between the conceptions of "mourning" and
"withering," which were active in this text in 4:28 and 14:2. While mourning generally
connotes tears, the Hebrew word used in each of these verses can also have reference to
'drying up.' In fact, outside of Jeremiah, this word for mourn and other words for dry up
often occur in parallel. We also saw YHWH strongly connect 'wet' and 'dry' in 9:1-2,
when he wishes that his eyes were a fountain of tears, and wishes for a lodging place in
the desert. The fountain of tears language, of course, resounds with images of mourning.

The chief instance of mourning on the part of the people occurs in Jeremiah 14,
in the midst of drought, once again connecting mourning with dryness. In all of this, the
people plead to the 'hope' מקוה of Israel (14:8), a word very consonantly reminiscent of
the word for fountain or spring (מקור), which the Israelites forsook in Jeremiah 2:13.
These two words occur together in Jeremiah 17:13. This word for hope used in 14:8
outside of Jeremiah is used in the sense of a pool of water, as in Exodus 7:19. The
people, in a land that is dry, mourn/dry up and plead to the hope/pool of Israel.

In the conclusion to our section on Jeremiah 14:1-15:9, some of the

connections across and between Jeremiah 2 and Jeremiah 14:1-15:9 were noted. I will re-list these here, in order to emphasize the semantic network: The drought is the fulfillment of YHWH's promise to withhold the rain (3:3). The people finally ask, "Where is YHWH?" We saw the echo of the word for fountain from 2:13 (מקור) in the word מקוה ("hope" or "pool") in 14:8. YHWH, who wished for a lodging place in the wilderness in 9:2 acts as if he were present in one, according to the people in 14:8. Once again YHWH's eyes run down with tears over the fate of his people (14:17). Back in the wilderness wandering as described in 2:13, all who ate of Israel, the first-fruits for YHWH, were held guilty. But in 15:3, part of the disaster that will befall the people includes being 'devoured.'

The semantic ranges of both מים and מדבר were developed in the chapter in which we studied an approach to metaphor. There I did not provide an exhaustive list, but chose a list of terms that would occur within Jeremiah. The two terms' semantic ranges of course appear throughout the Old Testament, but within Jeremiah the two terms, we have seen, cohabit many an intriguing number of the same passages. It is not simply that these two words appear with great frequency within Jeremiah 2-15, but they appear together with great frequency, and as shown above, interact with each other in surprising ways. A semantic network, according to my definition proposed at the beginning of this study, occurs when two or more semantic ranges come into close contact throughout a large section of a text. Thus, the semantic network, rather than the separate semantic ranges, participated in the rhetoric of relationship, lament and disaster from chapter 2 through chapter 15.

Relationship between 2:1-3:5 and 14:1-15:9

Having shown how WATER and WILDERNESS network across Jeremiah 2-15, we propose the possibility of a literary *inclusio* of some kind. Jeremiah 2 can be seen to be YHWH's 'case' against the people, laying out the foundation of his claim that the coming disaster is warranted. The chief accusation is that the people have 'forsaken' the 'fountain of living waters' (2:13). Having forsaken this fountain, Jeremiah treats us to images of YHWH as fountain of both killing and mourning waters. While the people, by Jeremiah 14, still have access to mourning and killing water, they no longer have access to the living water.

As a metaphor, the absence of living water brought about by the people's actions as described in Jeremiah 2 leads directly to the experience of the drought in Jeremiah 14. We argued that the drought is not only a physical disaster but a theological disaster. By forsaking YHWH as living water, the people have created both a theological disaster as well as a physical disaster; the two disasters go hand-in-hand. Israel failed to recognize that YHWH as creator desired a relationship with his people and also held the power to withhold the life-giving forces of creation. Thus by spurning YHWH theologically, they spurned the source of all physical well-being as well. When Israel chose to reject YHWH, Israel chose to reject more than a husband, but chose to forfeit life itself, the consequences of which we see in the drought of Jeremiah 14. Thus in our reading, Jeremiah 2 sets up Jeremiah 14, which provides closure to themes from chapter 2, providing an *inclusio* by metaphor for 2-14.

Consequences for Theology

P. van Hecke's proposal of the "conceptual blend" has some similarity to this study's proposal of the "semantic network." The conceptual blend worked in a case such as Hosea 4:16 because there were two conflicting conceptual metaphors in attempt to generate one idea. Within Jeremiah 2-15 and the texts that we looked at, we did not run into this particular problem, and so the pure idea of the conceptual blend did not suit us. The interaction between the metaphors was not particularly tensive, although within the semantic range of the two metaphors we did see some tensions, such as YHWH as source of living *and* killing waters. The chief tension across the study, however, lies in YHWH as WATER and YHWH as WILDERNESS.

If one were to read each 'unit' of Jeremiah (i.e. Jeremiah 2:1-3:5, and 14:1-15:9) as separate units, looking for a specific time in which to locate the origin of the material and then layer editorial revision on top and be content, one would miss the semantic network proposed here. Further, this would miss that while YHWH can ask in a way that suggests a negative response is appropriate, "Have I been a wilderness?" in Jeremiah 2:31, by Jeremiah 14 it seems that YHWH is indeed a wilderness. YHWH, certainly with cause, withholds rain and causes the land to languish under the drought conditions. YHWH is pictured as no longer the source of life through WATER, but the source of death, enacted through WILDERNESS. Only by taking the semantic range of these words into consideration and exploring the semantic networking that takes place across Jeremiah 2-15 does this chief, tensive connection in terms of WATER and WILDERNESS between Jeremiah 2 and 14 become obvious.

Thus both van Hecke's proposal and the semantic network idea, rough as it is, have some future in biblical studies, as they enable aspects of biblical texts that might be missed. Of course, one might come to the conclusion that YHWH is the source of both life and death within the Old Testament, but that Jeremiah cultivates this dichotomy within 2-15 through the use of such closely related concepts as WATER and WILDERNESS might not be apparent. The relative lack of mention of either term in recent commentaries indicates that this is the case. Thus hopefully in the future other networked or blended conceptions will be discerned throughout the Old Testament, opening up new avenues of understanding of the relationship between God and world.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allen, Leslie C. *Jeremiah*. Old Testament Library Louisville. KY: Westminster John
    Knox Press, 2008.

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Poetry.* New York: Basic Books, 1985.

Baumann, Gerlinde. *Love and Violence: Marriage as Metaphor for the Relationship
    Between Yhwh and Israel in the Prophetic Books.* Translated by Linda M.
    Maloney. Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 2003.

Brettler, Marc Zvi. *God is King: Understanding an Israelite Metaphor.* Journal for the
    Study of the Old Testament. Sheffield, Eng: JSOT Press, 1989.

Brueggemann, Walter. *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile and Homecoming.* Grand
    Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998.

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

Clements, R. E. *Jeremiah.* Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and
    Preaching. Atlanta: J. Knox Press, 1988.

Cogan, Mordechai. "Sennacherib's Siege of Jerusalem." In *The Context of Scripture,
    Vol. 2: Monumental Inscriptions From the Biblical World*, ed. by William W. Hallo
    and K. Lawson Younger, 302. New York: Brill, 1997.

Fretheim, Terence E. *Jeremiah*. Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary. Macon, GA:
    Smyth & Helwys, 2002.

Holt, Else K. "The Fountain of Living Water and the Decietful Brook." In *Metaphor in
    the Hebrew Bible*, ed. by Pierre van Hecke, 99-117. Leuven: Leuven University
    Press, 2005.

Hutton, Rodney R. "Jeremiah." In *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised
    Standard Version With the Apocrypha*, ed. by Michael D. Coogan, et al.,
    1057-1146. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Klingbeil, Gerald A. "Water." In *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. 5*,
    ed. by Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, 818-821. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006.

Köhler, Ludwig and William Baumgartner. *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament.* Translated by M.E.J. Richardson. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2001.

Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By.* Chicago: Univ. of Chicago P, 1980.

Lundbom, Jack R. *Jeremiah 1-20: A New Translation With Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Bible 21a. New York: Doubleday, 1999.

McFague, Sallie. *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982.

Nielsen, Kirsten. ""From Oracles to Canon"--and the Role of Metaphor." *SJOT* 17, no. 1 (2003): 22-33.

O'Brien, Julia M. *Challenging Prophetic Metaphor: Theology and Ideology in the Prophets.* Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008.

Ricœur, Paul *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language.* Translated by Robert Czerny with Kathleen McLaughlin and John Costello. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977.

Ryken, Leland and James C. Wilhoit and Tremper Longman III, ed. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*. Downers Grove, Il: InterVarsity Press, 1998.

Stienstra, Nelly. *Yhwh is the Husband of His People: Analysis of a Biblical Metaphor With Special Reference to Translation.* Kampen: The Netherlands: Kok Pharos, 1993.

Stulman, Louis. *Jeremiah.* Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005.

van Hecke, Pierre. "Conceptual Blending: A Recent Approach to Metaphor." In *Metaphors in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Pierre van Hecke, 215-231. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005.

Weems, Renita, J. *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex, and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets.* Overtures to Biblical Theology. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995.